

Honduras

Government Policies and Programs to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government of Honduras has been a member of ILO-IPEC since 1996.¹¹⁸⁷ In 1998, the National Commission for the Gradual and Progressive Eradication of Child Labor was established by the government to coordinate all activities to combat child labor, and to mainstream working minors into educational programs.¹¹⁸⁸ The Commission is currently working with ILO-IPEC project with funding from USDOL to prevent and remove children from full-time work in the melon sector of Choluteca and in commercial coffee farms in Santa Barbara.¹¹⁸⁹ A similar ILO-IPEC program in the tobacco sector coordinates in El Paraiso with the Honduras Committee for Human Right.¹¹⁹⁰ The Honduras National Institute of Statistics, in consultation with the Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MOL), is beginning fieldwork to conduct a national child labor survey, with funding from the USDOL and assistance from ILO-IPEC's SIMPOC, to determine the number of working children between the ages of 5 and 17 in the country.¹¹⁹¹ In September 2001, the MOL implemented an education campaign, in collaboration with the Honduran Private Business Council, to increase industry awareness of the worst forms of child labor.¹¹⁹²

The government is also collaborating with the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation on child labor public awareness and information collection strategies, with UNICEF on capacity building and public awareness activities, and with Save the Children–UK on activities related to its national plan of action and child labor in the diving sector.¹¹⁹³

The government has initiated several programs in order to improve children's access to quality, basic education. The Ministry of Education provides very poor families with stipends for

¹¹⁸⁷ ILO-IPEC, *Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor in the Melon Plantations in Honduras*, project proposal (Geneva 2000) [hereinafter *Child Labor in the Melon Plantations*], 5.

¹¹⁸⁸ In June 2000, the Ministry of Labor and Social Security published a report on its efforts and focus on inspection, capacity building, surveys, awareness raising, and coordination between agencies. See U.S. Embassy – Tegucigalpa, unclassified telegram no. 2157, June 2000. See also *Informe Trabajo Infantil en Honduras*, (Secretaria de Trabajo y Seguridad Social, 2000) [hereinafter *Informe Trabajo Infantil*] [document on file].

¹¹⁸⁹ *Child Labor in the Melon Plantations*. See also ILO-IPEC, *Prevention and Progressive Elimination of Child Labor in the Coffee Industry in Honduras*, project proposal (Geneva, 1999).

¹¹⁹⁰ U.S. Embassy–Tegucigalpa, unclassified telegram 2159, June 2000 [hereinafter unclassified telegram 2159].

¹¹⁹¹ ILO-IPEC, *SIMPOC: Central America*, project proposal (Geneva, 1999).

¹¹⁹² U.S. Embassy–Tegucigalpa, unclassified telegram no. 3211, October 2001 [hereinafter unclassified telegram 3211].

¹¹⁹³ *Informe Trabajo Infantil*.

school supplies and makes available radio and long distance learning for children in distant rural areas with few schools.¹¹⁹⁴ Regional committees of child defense volunteers also try to convince parents to send their children to school.¹¹⁹⁵

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

In 1999, the ILO estimated that 17.3 percent of children between the ages of 10 and 14 were working in Honduras.¹¹⁹⁶ According to a study undertaken by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, in association with UNICEF and the Honduran Institute for Childhood and the Family, nearly half of all working children work in agriculture, cattle farming, or fishing.¹¹⁹⁷ Twenty percent work in manufacturing, mining, electricity, gas, and construction. The remaining 30 percent work in commerce, transportation, finance, or service industries. Two-thirds of working children work without compensation to supplement family incomes derived from family farms or for small businesses.¹¹⁹⁸

According to ILO-IPEC, the worst forms of child labor in Honduras include: prostitution (particularly in the tourist sector along the North Coast); fireworks manufacturing (in Copan); marine diving (on lobster boats in the Mosquito coast); work in limestone quarries and garbage dumps (in the two large cities of Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula); and agricultural work (in the coffee and melon industries).¹¹⁹⁹ Children have also been used to sell drugs in Olancho and Comayagua.¹²⁰⁰

Education is free and compulsory in Honduras for six years.¹²⁰¹ In 1999, the gross primary enrollment rate was 97.3 percent and the net primary enrollment rate was 85.7 percent.¹²⁰² Among working children, an estimated 34 percent complete primary school.¹²⁰³ A lack of schools prevents

¹¹⁹⁴ Unclassified telegram 3211.

¹¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁹⁶ According to the ILO, 142,170 children were working. ILO, *Yearbook of Labour Statistics 2000*, Geneva [document on file].

¹¹⁹⁷ Unclassified telegram 2159.

¹¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹⁹ See unclassified telegram 3211.

¹²⁰⁰ Comisión Nacional para la Erradicación del Trabajo Infantil, *Diagnóstico y Plan Nacional Para La Erradicación Gradual y Progresiva del Trabajo Infantil* (Tegucigalpa, 2000), 17.

¹²⁰¹ *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2000—Honduras* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. State Department, 2001) [hereinafter *Country Reports 2000*], Section 5, at <http://www.state.gov/g.drl/rls/hrrpt/2000/wha/index.cfm?docid=801>.

¹²⁰² UNESCO, *The Education for All (EFA) 2000 Assessment: Country Reports—Honduras*, at http://www.unesco.org/wef/countryreports/honduras/rapport_2.html.

¹²⁰³ *Child Labor in the Melon Plantations*, 2.

¹²⁰⁴ Ibid.

many children in Honduras from receiving an education, as do costs such as enrollment fees, school uniforms, and transportation costs.¹²⁰⁴ In 1998, Hurricane Mitch damaged more than 3,000 schools nationwide.¹²⁰⁵ The poor quality of education and the lack of vocational education are other education concerns.¹²⁰⁶

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Constitution and the Labor Code set the minimum age for employment at 16 years, with the exception that a child who is 15 years of age is permitted to work with parental consent and Ministry of Labor permission.¹²⁰⁷ An employer who legally hires a 15-year-old must certify that the child has finished, or is finishing, compulsory schooling.¹²⁰⁸ Children under the age of 16 are prohibited from night work and from working in clubs, theatres, circuses, cafes, cantinas, and in establishments that serve alcoholic beverages.¹²⁰⁹ Children under age 16 are limited to working six hours a day and 30 hours a week.¹²¹⁰ The Children's Code prohibits a child of 14 years of age or younger from working, even with parental permission, and establishes prison sentences of three to five years for individuals who allow children to work illegally.¹²¹¹

Article 148 of the Minor's Code criminalizes child prostitution. Children 18 years of age and younger are protected under this law against sexual exploitation, child prostitution and child pornography.¹²¹² The Penal Code also includes provisions that prohibit trafficking in persons.¹²¹³

¹²⁰⁵ U.S. Department of State, Background Notes: Honduras (Washington, D.C., 1999) at http://www.state.gov/www/background_notes [document on file].

¹²⁰⁶ *Child Labor in the Melon Plantations* at 2.

¹²⁰⁷ *Country Reports 2000* at Section 6d.

¹²⁰⁸ *Country Reports 2000* at Section 6d

¹²⁰⁹ Oficina Regional para America Latina y el Caribe, Programa Internacional para la Erradicación del Trabajo Infantil, *Honduras* (San Jose, 1999), 20.

¹²¹⁰ Constitution of the Republic of Honduras, 1982 [hereinafter Constitution of the Republic of Honduras], Chapter 5, Article 128, No. 7, at <http://www.georgetown.edu.pdba/Constitutions/Honduras/honduras.html>.

¹²¹¹ *Country Reports 2000* at Section 6d.

¹²¹² U.S. Embassy–Tegucigalpa, unclassified telegram no. 2902, August 2000.

¹²¹³ *Country Reports 2000* at Section 6f.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Security is responsible for conducting child labor inspections.¹²¹⁴ The Ministry has less than 50 inspectors for the entire country,¹²¹⁵ and is not able to effectively enforce laws in rural areas or in small companies.¹²¹⁶ Despite these problems, in 2001, the Ministry opened a regional office and re-initiated inspections on lobster boats in the Mosquito area, where boat captains illegally employ boy divers. Early in 2001, the Minister of Labor conducted a special inspection of the melon industry in order to uncover the incidence of child labor in that sector.¹²¹⁷ Honduras ratified ILO Convention 138 on June 9, 1980 and ILO Convention 182 on October 25, 2001.¹²¹⁸

¹²¹⁴ *Informe Trabajo Infantil*.

¹²¹⁵ Unclassified telegram 3211.

¹²¹⁶ *Country Reports 2000* at Section 6d.

¹²¹⁷ Unclassified telegram 3211.

¹²¹⁸ ILO, Ratifications of ILO Conventions, IOLEX database, at <http://www.iloex.ilo.ch:1567/english/>.

NOTE: Hard copies of all Web citations are on file.