

# Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

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

The Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines through its Ministry of Education is participating in the implementation of the OECS Education Strategy, through which the OECS territories aim to improve their education systems. The government is also collaborating with UNICEF, UNESCO and other organizations to improve the level of educational services.<sup>3101</sup> School textbook and feeding programs aim to improve the participation rate of children at the primary level.<sup>3102</sup> The government has also established a program to reintegrate street children into their families.<sup>3103</sup>

## Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

Statistics on the number of working children under the age of 15 in St. Vincent and the Grenadines are unavailable.<sup>3104</sup> However, children are known to work on family-owned banana farms, particularly during harvest time, or in family-owned cottage industries.<sup>3105</sup> Commercial sexual exploitation of children occurs in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.<sup>3106</sup>

Education is neither compulsory nor free.<sup>3107</sup> The government investigates cases in which children are withdrawn from school before the age of 16, but the teachers' union estimates that 8 to 10

---

<sup>3101</sup> UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, *Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 44 of the Convention: Saint Vincent and the Grenadines*, CRC/C/28/Add.18, United Nations, Geneva, October 2001, para. 311 [cited October 8, 2002]; available from [http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/898586b1dc7b4043c1256a450044f331/233cbd03c45af4fec1256b490053e099/\\$FILE/G0145063.pdf](http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/898586b1dc7b4043c1256a450044f331/233cbd03c45af4fec1256b490053e099/$FILE/G0145063.pdf).

<sup>3102</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 350.

<sup>3103</sup> UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child: St. Vincent and the Grenadines*, CRC/C/15/Add.184, United Nations, Geneva, June 13, 2002, 13.

<sup>3104</sup> U.S. Embassy- Bridgetown, *unclassified telegram no. 1758*, September 2001.

<sup>3105</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2001: Saint Vincent and the Grenadines*, Washington, D.C., March 4, 2002, 3042-43, Section 6d [cited September 3, 2002]; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/wha/8239.htm>.

<sup>3106</sup> UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding Observations: St. Vincent and the Grenadines*, 14. See also UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, *Consideration of Reports: Saint Vincent and the Grenadines*.

<sup>3107</sup> The Education Act of 1992 provides the framework for instituting compulsory education, but this has yet to be accomplished. See UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding Observations: St. Vincent and the Grenadines*, 12. See also Minister of Social Development, Cooperatives, the Family, Gender, and Ecclesiastical Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, The Honourable Mrs. Girlyn Miguel, Statement at the United Nations Special Session on Children, May 10, 2002, [cited December 31, 2002]; available from <http://www.un.org/ga/children/stvgE.htm>. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Saint Vincent and the Grenadines*, 3041-42, Section 5. See also UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, *Consideration of Reports: Saint Vincent and the Grenadines*, para. 313-17.

percent of secondary school children did not attend school in 2001.<sup>3108</sup> Primary school leavers are believed to work illegally as apprentices.<sup>3109</sup> In 1998, the gross primary enrollment rate was estimated at 90.5 percent, and the net primary enrollment rate was estimated at 83.5 percent.<sup>3110</sup> Attendance rates are not available for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. While enrollment rates indicate a level of commitment to education, they do not always reflect children's participation in school.<sup>3111</sup>

## Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children's Act of 1990 sets the minimum age for employment at 16 years,<sup>3112</sup> but since children often leave school at the age of 15, many begin work as apprentices at that age.<sup>3113</sup> Forced or compulsory labor is prohibited by law, and it is not known to occur.<sup>3114</sup> The Labor Inspectorate at the Department of Labor is authorized to investigate and address child labor legislation, and conducts annual workplace inspections.<sup>3115</sup> No violations have been reported, and employers are believed to generally respect the law in practice.<sup>3116</sup> Prostitution of girls under the age of 15 is prohibited by the Criminal Code.<sup>3117</sup> There are no laws

---

<sup>3108</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Saint Vincent and the Grenadines*, 3041-42, Section 5. See U.S. Embassy- Bridgetown, *unclassified telegram no. 1758*, which reports a higher rate of 13 percent truancy among primary school age children.

<sup>3109</sup> International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, *Internationally Recognised Core Labour Standards in the WTO Members of the Organisation of East Caribbean States (OECS)*, Geneva, February and June 2001, [cited August 30, 2002]; available from <http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991212900&Language=EN>.

<sup>3110</sup> UNESCO, *Education for All: Year 2000 Assessment* [CD-ROM], Paris, 2000. Ministry of Education statistics show primary school enrollment declining from 1994 to 1997. The Ministry of Education reported that the total number of enrolled primary schoolchildren aged 5 to 15 fell from 23,338 in 1994 to 21,628 in 1997. Over the same period, the total enrollment of secondary schoolchildren aged 11 to 19 ranged from 7,464 in 1994 to 7,690 in 1997, reflecting a significant problem with retention between primary and secondary levels. See UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, *Consideration of Reports: Saint Vincent and the Grenadines*, Tables 7 and 8.

<sup>3111</sup> For a more detailed discussion on the relationship between education statistics and work, see the preface to this report.

<sup>3112</sup> U.S. Embassy- Bridgetown, *unclassified telegram no. 1758*.

<sup>3113</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Saint Vincent and the Grenadines*, 3042-43, Section 6d.

<sup>3114</sup> *Constitution of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines*, Article 4 [cited September 5, 2002]; available from <http://www.georgetown.edu/pdba/Constitutions/Vincent/stvincent79.html>. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Saint Vincent and the Grenadines*, 3042-43, Section 6c.

<sup>3115</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Saint Vincent and the Grenadines*, 3042-43, Section 6d.

<sup>3116</sup> U.S. Embassy- Bridgetown, *unclassified telegram no. 1758*.

<sup>3117</sup> Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, *Criminal Code*, [cited December 18, 2002]; available from <http://209.190.246.239/protectionproject/statutesPDF/St.Vincent&GrenF.pdf>.

that specifically address trafficking in persons, and there were no reports of trafficking involving the country in 2001.<sup>3118</sup>

The Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines has not ratified ILO Convention 138 but ratified ILO Convention 182 on December 4, 2001.<sup>3119</sup>

---

<sup>3118</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Saint Vincent and the Grenadines*, 3042-43, Section 6f.

<sup>3119</sup> ILO, *Ratifications by Country*, in ILOLEX, [database online] [cited September 3, 2002]; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/newratframeE.htm>.