

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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

In October 2002, officials of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago attended a regional meeting, “Eliminating the Worst Forms of Child Labor”, where participants presented new research on child labor and discussed policy ideas to address the problem.⁴³⁵⁵ The government has also adopted an education policy that aims to promote secondary school attendance and improve educational opportunities.⁴³⁵⁶

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

In 2000, UNICEF estimated that 4.1 percent of children ages 5 to 14 years were engaged in work. Approximately 52 percent of working children in this age group were estimated to perform domestic work for less than 4 hours per day; less than 1 percent spent more than 4 hours per day on such tasks.⁴³⁵⁷ Children are engaged in agriculture, scavenging, loading, unloading and stocking goods, landscaping and gardening, car repair and washing, construction, fishing,⁴³⁵⁸ and begging.⁴³⁵⁹ Children also work as handymen, shop assistants, cosmetologists’ assistants, domestic servants,⁴³⁶⁰ or street vendors.⁴³⁶¹ There have been reports of child prostitution⁴³⁶² and of children involved in drug trafficking.⁴³⁶³

Primary education is free and compulsory between the ages of 6 and 12.⁴³⁶⁴ In 2000, the gross primary enrollment rate was 100.4 percent, and the net primary enrollment rate was 92.4 percent.⁴³⁶⁵ In 1999, 99.7 percent of children enrolled in primary school reached grade 5.⁴³⁶⁶ In 2000, 88.7 percent of primary school age children were estimated to be attending school,⁴³⁶⁷ but the public school system does not adequately meet the needs of the school age population due to overcrowding, substandard physical facilities, and occasional violence in the classroom perpetrated by gangs. The government has committed resources to increasing access to free secondary education and building new facilities.⁴³⁶⁸

⁴³⁵⁵ U.S. Embassy- Port of Spain, *unclassified telegram no. 2243*, October 2002.

⁴³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁵⁷ Children who are currently working in some capacity include children who have performed any paid or unpaid work for someone who is not a member of the household, who have performed more than four hours of housekeeping chores in the household, or who have performed other family work. See Government of Trinidad and Tobago, *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2000 - Trinidad and Tobago*, UNICEF, 2000; available from <http://www.childinfo.org/MICS2/newreports/trinidad/trinidad.htm>.

⁴³⁵⁸ U.S. Embassy- Port of Spain, *unclassified telegram no. 2243*.

⁴³⁵⁹ International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, *Internationally-Recognised Core Labour Standards in Trinidad and Tobago*, Geneva, November 12-13, 1998; available from <http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=990916172&Language=EN>.

⁴³⁶⁰ U.S. Embassy- Port of Spain, *unclassified telegram no. 2243*.

⁴³⁶¹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2002: Trinidad and Tobago*, Washington, D.C., March 31, 2003, Section 6d; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2002/18346.htm>. See also International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, *Internationally-Recognised Core Labour Standards*.

⁴³⁶² U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Trinidad and Tobago*, Section 6f. See also U.S. Embassy- Port of Spain, *unclassified telegram no. 1604*, September 2001.

⁴³⁶³ U.S. Embassy- Port of Spain, *unclassified telegram no. 1604*.

⁴³⁶⁴ *Ibid.* See also International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, *Internationally-Recognised Core Labour Standards*.

⁴³⁶⁵ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2003* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2003.

⁴³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁶⁷ Government of Trinidad and Tobago, *MICS 2000*.

⁴³⁶⁸ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Trinidad and Tobago*, Section 5.

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The minimum age for employment is set at 12 years. Children 12 to 14 years of age may work only in family businesses. Children under the age of 18 may work only during daylight hours; however, children ages 16 to 18 may work at night in sugar factories.⁴³⁶⁹ There are no laws prohibiting trafficking,⁴³⁷⁰ but the Criminal Code prohibits procuring a minor under the age of 16 years for the purpose of prostitution.⁴³⁷¹ The punishment for procurement is 15 years imprisonment.⁴³⁷² Trafficking may also be prosecuted under laws addressing kidnapping, labor conditions, procurement of sex, prostitution, slavery, and indentured servitude.⁴³⁷³ The use of children under the age of 16 in pornography is also prohibited.⁴³⁷⁴

The Probation Service in the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services and the Ministry of Labor and Small and Micro-Enterprises are responsible for enforcing child labor provisions.⁴³⁷⁵ Enforcement is weak because there are no established mechanisms for receiving, investigating, and addressing child labor complaints.⁴³⁷⁶

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago ratified ILO Convention 182 on April 23, 2003, but has not ratified ILO Convention 138.⁴³⁷⁷

⁴³⁶⁹ U.S. Embassy- Port of Spain, *unclassified telegram no. 1604*. See also International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, *Internationally-Recognised Core Labour Standards*.

⁴³⁷⁰ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Trinidad and Tobago*, Section 6f.

⁴³⁷¹ Article 17 of the Criminal Code, as cited in The Protection Project, "Trinidad and Tobago," in *Human Rights Report on Trafficking of Persons, Especially Women and Children: A Country-by-Country Report on a Contemporary Form of Slavery*, March 2002; available from <http://209.190.246.239/ver2/cr/tt.pdf>.

⁴³⁷² *Ibid.*

⁴³⁷³ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Trinidad and Tobago*, Section 6f.

⁴³⁷⁴ U.S. Embassy- Port of Spain, *unclassified telegram no. 1604*.

⁴³⁷⁵ *Ibid.* See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Trinidad and Tobago*, Section 6d.

⁴³⁷⁶ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Trinidad and Tobago*, Section 6d.

⁴³⁷⁷ ILO, *Ratifications by Country*, in ILOLEX, [database online] [cited June 12, 2003]; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/newratframeE.htm>.