

Bhutan

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

The ILO estimated that 49.4 percent of children ages 10 to 14 years in Bhutan were working in 2002.⁴⁸⁷ Children are found working in agriculture, particularly on family farms.⁴⁸⁸ Foreign child workers are found in road construction.⁴⁸⁹

Primary education is free and compulsory.⁴⁹⁰ In 1998, Bhutan had a gross primary enrollment rate of 71.9 percent.⁴⁹¹ While the primary school enrollment is increasing more rapidly for girls than boys,⁴⁹² the gross enrollment rate was still significantly higher for boys (82.1 percent) than girls (61.5 percent). The net primary enrollment rate was 52.9 percent in 1998, with 58.4 percent for boys and 47.2 percent for girls.⁴⁹³ Gross and net enrollment ratios are based on the number of students formally registered in primary school and therefore do not necessarily reflect actual school attendance. Recent primary school attendance statistics are not available for Bhutan. In 2001, the completion rate for primary education was 60 percent for girls and 59 percent for boys.⁴⁹⁴ As of 2000, 91.0 percent of children who started primary school were likely to reach grade 5.⁴⁹⁵ The education system suffers from lack of teachers and classrooms.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁸⁷ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2004* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2004.

⁴⁸⁸ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2003: Bhutan*, Washington, D.C., February 25, 2004, Section 6d; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2003/27945.htm>. See also UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Initial Reports of State Parties due in 1992: Bhutan*, CRC/C/3/Add.60, prepared by Government of Bhutan, pursuant to Article 44 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, October 1999, para. 32. See also U.S. Embassy- New Delhi, *unclassified telegram no. 5903*, September 17, 2004.

⁴⁸⁹ U.S. Embassy- New Delhi, *unclassified telegram no. 5903*.

⁴⁹⁰ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Bhutan*, Section 5.

⁴⁹¹ UNESCO, *Education For All: Year 2000 Assessment* [CD-ROM], Paris, 2000.

⁴⁹² In 1998, 45 percent of the student population consisted of girls. See Royal Government of Bhutan, *Bhutan National Human Development Report- 2000*, The Planning Commission Secretariat, 2000; available from <http://www.dop.gov.bt/rep/nhdr2000.pdf>.

⁴⁹³ UNESCO, *Education for All*.

⁴⁹⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Bhutan*, Section 5. Primary education comprises seven years: preparatory, and grades one through six. Secondary school comprises grades seven through ten. See Royal Government of Bhutan, *Bhutan National Human Development Report- 2000*, 22.

⁴⁹⁵ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2004*. This percentage may hide the fact that many children promoted to grade five may combine school and work. In addition, little is known in regard to Bhutanese standards for promoting children through primary school.

⁴⁹⁶ UNICEF, *Committed Partner in Progress*, [online] [cited May 20, 2004]; available from <http://www.unicef.org/bhutan/unicefbh.htm>. See also UNICEF Australia, *Perspectives on Development: Bhutanese Schools and How Can We Help?*, [online] [cited May 20, 2004]; available from <http://www.unicef.org.au/whatWeDoPerspective3.asp>. See also Royal Government of Bhutan, *Bhutan National Human Development Report- 2000*, 22.

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Regulation for Wage Rate, Recruitment Agencies and Workmen’s Compensation Act (1994) prohibits the employment of children.⁴⁹⁷ The minimum age for employment has been established at 18 years of age.⁴⁹⁸ Children are permitted to enlist in the armed forces, however, at 15 years of age.⁴⁹⁹ Forced or compulsory labor is prohibited by Bhutanese law.⁵⁰⁰ Trafficking in persons is not specifically prohibited.⁵⁰¹ The Ministry of Labor is responsible for investigating child labor violations.⁵⁰² The ministry conducts 10-15 inspections per week, most of which are in the construction sector.⁵⁰³ In 2004 the National Assembly passed the Bhutan Penal Code 2004, which criminalized sex crimes and offenses against children.⁵⁰⁴

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

In August 2004, the National Assembly ratified the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Convention (SAARC) on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution.⁵⁰⁶ The government is working with the UNDP to improve policies that address the needs of the country’s poor and impoverished.⁵⁰⁷ The Youth Development Fund established by King Jigme Singye Wangchuck in 1998 provides assistance for new youth activities and programming.⁵⁰⁸

Selected Child Labor Measures Adopted by Governments	
Ratified Convention 138	N/A ⁵⁰⁵
Ratified Convention 182	N/A
ILO-IPEC Member	
National Plan for Children	
National Child Labor Action Plan	
Sector Action Plan	

UNICEF is working with the government to improve the country’s education system, with special emphasis on women, children, and disadvantaged students. Efforts are focused on improving primary,

⁴⁹⁷ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Initial Reports of State Parties: Bhutan*, para. 32.

⁴⁹⁸ U.S. Embassy- New Delhi, *unclassified telegram no. 5903*.

⁴⁹⁹ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Summary Record of the 715th Meeting: Bhutan*, United Nations, Geneva, June 2001, para. 23.

⁵⁰⁰ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Bhutan*, Section 6c.

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*, Section 6f.

⁵⁰² U.S. Embassy- New Delhi, *unclassified telegram no. 5903*.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁵ The Government of Bhutan is not a member of the ILO, and is thus unable to ratify ILO conventions.

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁷ UNDP, *Developing Bhutan’s poverty monitoring system*, UNDP Bhutan, [online] October 2002 [cited May 21, 2004]; available from http://www.undp.org.bt/fact_sheets/povertyFS.PDF.

⁵⁰⁸ Government of Bhutan, *The Youth Development Fund*, [online] 2004 [cited May 21, 2004]; available from <http://www.youthdevfund.gov.bt/>. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Bhutan*. See also UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Summary Record: Bhutan*, para. 8. See also Kuensel Newspaper, "Sports: promoting wholesale education," (Thimpu), January 13, 2001; available from <http://www.bootan.com/kuensel/20010113/sports.htm>.

non-formal, and special education, as well as providing teacher training and essential school supplies.⁵⁰⁹ The World Bank financed an education program with an emphasis on strengthening basic education in rural areas through June 2004. The Ministry of Health and Education implemented the project, which is designed to construct new schools, upgrade existing facilities, expand and improve teacher education, revise curriculum and examinations, and introduce decentralized school monitoring and evaluation through the training of central staff and head-teachers.⁵¹⁰ The World Bank is supporting another project to improve access to primary and secondary education, by financing the capital costs of schools, and improving the quality and relevance of education at all levels. The project is scheduled to run through 2009.⁵¹¹ The ADB and the Government of Germany is financing a USD 12.5 million skills training project, targeting unemployed youth in rural areas, with an emphasis on women and economically disadvantaged. The Government of Bhutan's National Technical Training Authority serves as executing agency for the project, and the Government of Bhutan will contribute approximately USD 3 million to this project.⁵¹²

⁵⁰⁹ UNICEF, *Second Chance at Literacy*, UNICEF in Bhutan, [online] [cited May 21, 2004]; available from <http://www.unicef.org/bhutan/educat.htm>. In addition, the Education Department is launching an "inclusive education" program that will integrate students with disabilities into regular schools by renovating one school in each of the 20 school districts to provide basic facilities for disabled students and training for teachers. See UNICEF, *Disabled Children Join Mainstream*, UNICEF in Bhutan, [online] [cited May 21, 2004]; available from <http://www.unicef.org/bhutan/disable.htm>.

⁵¹⁰ World Bank, *Bhutan- Second Education Project*, [online] May 20, 2004 [cited May 20, 2004]; available from <http://web.worldbank.org/external/projects/main?pagePK=104231&piPK=73230&theSitePK40941&menuPK=228424&Projectid=P009574>.

⁵¹¹ World Bank, *Education Development Project*, May 20, 2004 [cited May 20, 2004]; available from <http://web.worldbank.org/external/projects/main?pagePK=104231&piPK=73230&theSitePK40941&menuPK=228424&Projectid=P074114>.

⁵¹² ADB, *Reforming Skills Training in Bhutan to Boost Growing Private Sector*, ADB.org, [online] 2004 [cited October 25 2004]; available from <http://www.adb.org/Documents/News/2001/pi2001064.asp>. See also ADB, *Reforming Skills Training in Bhutan To Boost Growing Private Sector*, [online] 2001 [cited May 21, 2004]; available from <http://www.adb.org/Documents/News/2001/nr2001064.asp>.