

Belize

<i>Selected Statistics and Indicators on Child Labor</i>	
Percent of children 5-14 estimated as working in 2001:	6.3% ³⁸⁵
Minimum age for admission to work:	12/14/16 ³⁸⁶
Age to which education is compulsory:	14 ³⁸⁷
Free public education:	Yes ^{388*}
Gross primary enrollment rate in 2004:	124% ³⁸⁹
Net primary enrollment rate in 2004:	95% ³⁹⁰
Percent of children 5-14 attending school in 2001:	93.2% ³⁹¹
As of 2000, percent of primary school entrants likely to reach grade 5:	91% ³⁹²
Ratified Convention 138:	3/6/2000 ³⁹³
Ratified Convention 182:	3/6/2000 ³⁹⁴
ILO-IPEC participating country:	Yes, associated ³⁹⁵
*Must pay for school supplies and related items.	

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

In 2001, approximately 8.1 percent of boys and 4.6 percent of girls ages 5 to 14 years were working in Belize.³⁹⁶ The majority of working children are found in the agricultural sector (55.3 percent), followed by services (38.8 percent), and manufacturing (3.6 percent).³⁹⁷ Most working

³⁸⁵ UCW analysis of ILO SIMPOC, UNICEF MICS, and World Bank surveys, *Child Economic Activity and School Attendance Rates*, March 1, 2007.

³⁸⁶ Government of Belize, *Labour Act (Revised)*, (December 31, 2000); available from <http://www.belizelaw.org/lawadmin/index2.html>. Chapter 297, Sections 1, 2, 164, and 169. See also SIMPOC and the Central Statistical Office of the Government of Belize, *Child Labour in Belize: A Qualitative Study*, ILO, February 2003; available from http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipecc/simpoc/belize/report/be_qual.pdf.

³⁸⁷ Government of Belize, *Education Act*, Chapter 36, (Revised Edition 2000); available from <http://www.belizelaw.org/lawadmin/PDF%20files/cap036.pdf>.

³⁸⁸ U.S. Department of State, "Belize," in *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2006*, Washington, DC, March 6, 2007, Section 5; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78880.htm>. See also UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding Observations: Belize*, March 31, 2005, para 60; available from [http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/0/15d955c522246114c125702100421174/\\$FILE/G0540865.pdf](http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/0/15d955c522246114c125702100421174/$FILE/G0540865.pdf).

³⁸⁹ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, *Gross Enrollment Ratios, Primary; accessed December 20, 2006*; available from <http://stats.uis.unesco.org>.

³⁹⁰ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, *Net Enrolment Rates. Primary.*, December 20, 2006; available from <http://stats.uis.unesco.org>.

³⁹¹ UCW analysis of ILO SIMPOC, UNICEF MICS, and World Bank surveys, *Child Economic Activity and School Attendance Rates*, October 7, 2005.

³⁹² UNESCO Institute for Statistics, *Survival Rate to Grade 5. Total*, accessed December 18, 2006; available from <http://stats.uis.unesco.org>.

³⁹³ ILO, *Ratifications by Country*, [cited October 18, 2006]; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/ratifce.pl?Belize>.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ ILO-IPEC, *All About IPEC: Programme Countries*, [online] 2001 [cited March 7, 2007]; available from http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipecc/about/countries/t_country.htm.

³⁹⁶ UCW analysis of ILO SIMPOC, UNICEF MICS, and World Bank surveys, *Child Economic Activity and School Attendance Rates*.

³⁹⁷ UNICEF MICS UCW analysis of ILO SIMPOC, and World Bank surveys, *Child Economic Activity and School Attendance Rates*, March 1, 2007.

children are found in rural regions,³⁹⁸ where they work on family plots and in family businesses after school, on weekends, and during vacations.³⁹⁹ They also work in citrus, banana, and sugar fields.⁴⁰⁰ In urban areas, children shine shoes, sell food, crafts, and other small items; they also work in markets.⁴⁰¹ The practice of minors engaging in prostitution with older men in exchange for clothing, jewelry, or school fees and books is reported to occur throughout the country.⁴⁰²

Belize is a transit and destination country for children trafficked for labor exploitation.⁴⁰³ Girls in particular are trafficked within the country for sexual exploitation.⁴⁰⁴ There have been reports of instances where child sexual exploitation and trafficking are arranged by family members.⁴⁰⁵

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Labor Act of Belize sets the minimum age for work as 12, 14, and 16 years in different sections of the text; thus, it has been criticized as being unclear.⁴⁰⁶ According to the Labor Act, children 12 to 14 years may participate only in light work after school hours and for a total of 2 hours on a school day or a Sunday, and only between 6 a.m. and 8 p.m.⁴⁰⁷ The minimum age for employment near hazardous machinery is 17 years.⁴⁰⁸ The Labor Act sets penalties for non-compliance with minimum age standards that include fines and imprisonment up to 2 months, and up to 4 months in the case of a second or subsequent offense.⁴⁰⁹

The law prohibits persons under 18 years from engaging in any forms of harmful employment.⁴¹⁰ Forced and bonded labor are prohibited.⁴¹¹ Although there is no law establishing a minimum age

³⁹⁸ Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labor (SIMPOC) and the Central Statistical Office of the Government of Belize, *Child Labour in Belize: A Statistical Report*, ILO, 2003, xix; available from http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipecc/simpoc/belize/report/be_natl.pdf. See also ILO-IPEC SIMPOC, *Child Labour and Education in Belize: A Situational Assessment and In-depth Analysis*, ILO, June 2003, ix; available from http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipecc/simpoc/belize/report/be_depth.pdf.

³⁹⁹ U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2006: Belize," Section 6d.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

⁴⁰² Ibid., Section 5.

⁴⁰³ U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *Reporting*, March 2, 2007.

⁴⁰⁴ U.S. Department of State, "Belize (Tier 3 Watch List)," in *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2006*, Washington, D.C., June 5, 2006; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2006/65988.htm>.

⁴⁰⁵ U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2006: Belize." See also, U.S. Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report- 2006: Belize."

⁴⁰⁶ *Labour Act (Revised)*. Chapter 297, Sections 1, 164, and 169. See also, SIMPOC and the Central Statistical Office of the Government of Belize, *Child Labour in Belize: A Qualitative Study*, 11. See also, U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *reporting*, December 22, 2006.

⁴⁰⁷ *Labour Act (Revised)*, Section 169.

⁴⁰⁸ U.S. Department of State, "Belize," in *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2005*, Washington, DC, March 8, 2006, Section 6d; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61716.htm>.

⁴⁰⁹ *Labour Act (Revised)*, Section 172(1).

⁴¹⁰ Government of Belize, *Families and Children Act, Revised Edition* (December 31, 2000), Part I, Articles 2(1) and 7; available from <http://www.belizelaw.org/lawadmin/PDF%20files/cap173.pdf>.

⁴¹¹ *Constitution of Belize*; available from

<http://www.georgetown.edu/LatAmerPolitical/Constitutions/Belize/belize.html>. See also U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2006: Belize," Section 6c.

for conscription into the military, the minimum age for voluntary enrollment is 18 years.⁴¹² The law punishes trafficking offenses with imprisonment of up to 5 years and fines.⁴¹³ The law also prohibits sex with a female younger than 14 years and provides for a penalty of 12 years to life imprisonment. The sentence for the same act with a girl 14 to 16 years is 5 to 10 years.⁴¹⁴

Inspectors from the Departments of Labor and Education are responsible for enforcing child labor regulations.⁴¹⁵ The Department of Human Services of the Ministry of Human Development and Housing is responsible for the protection of child labor victims.⁴¹⁶ The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Committee has linked a number of government agencies to fight trafficking, including the police; public prosecutors; the Department of Immigration; the Ministries of Home Affairs, Foreign Affairs, and Human Development; the National Committee for Families and Children; and the Government's Press Office. A tripartite team of police, immigration, and social workers from the Ministry of Human Development conducted raids in 2006, identifying seven trafficking victims.⁴¹⁷

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

The National Committee for Families and Children (NCFC) provides nationwide training programs for front line police and immigration officials on trafficking.⁴¹⁸ With funds from the IDB and in collaboration with UNICEF, the Ministry of Human Development is engaging in a program to strengthen the government's capacity to combat human trafficking.⁴¹⁹

The Government of Belize continues to participate in a USD 8.8 million regional project funded by USDOL and implemented by ILO-IPEC aimed at combating commercial sexual exploitation of children.⁴²⁰ The project aims to withdraw 713 children and prevent 657 children from commercial sexual exploitation in the region.⁴²¹

⁴¹² Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, "Belize," in *Global Report 2004*; available from http://www.child-soldiers.org/document_get.php?id=810.

⁴¹³ U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2006: Belize." Section 5.

⁴¹⁴ *Criminal Code, Chapter 101*, (Amended May 31, 2003); available from <http://www.belize-law.org/lawadmin/index2.html>.

⁴¹⁵ U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2006: Belize," Section 6d.

⁴¹⁶ Belize Labour Commissioner, Electronic communication to USDOL official, August 26, 2005.

⁴¹⁷ U.S. Embassy- Belmopan, *U.S. Embassy -Reporting, March 2, 2007*.

⁴¹⁸ U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2006: Belize," Section 5.

⁴¹⁹ Inter-American Development Bank, *Projects*, [cited September 25, 2006]; available from [http://www.iadb.org/projects/Project.cfm?project=BL-T1004\\$Language=English](http://www.iadb.org/projects/Project.cfm?project=BL-T1004$Language=English).

⁴²⁰ ILO-IPEC, *Contribution to the Prevention and Elimination of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Central America, Panama and the Dominican Republic*, project document, RLA/02/P51/USA, 2002, 2005.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*