

Trinidad and Tobago

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

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago and NGOs are working together to conduct a systematic study of the child labor issue, and the government has recently moved to strengthen legislation.²⁵¹³ In 2000, the government pledged to begin providing universal and free access to secondary school education.²⁵¹⁴ There has also been an ongoing program to build up to 16 more secondary schools and to pay for textbooks for schoolchildren from low-income families.²⁵¹⁵

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

Statistics on the number of working children in Trinidad and Tobago under the age of 15 are unavailable. Reports indicate that children work as beggars, street vendors, and in family businesses.²⁵¹⁶ The prostitution of children and the use of children for trafficking drugs are not widespread, but there is evidence that children are involved in these activities.²⁵¹⁷ There are no reports of trafficking in children.²⁵¹⁸

Primary education is free and compulsory between ages 6 and 12.²⁵¹⁹ Gross and net primary enrollment rates are unavailable. Reports indicate that absenteeism and school dropouts are problems; some parts of the school system suffer from overcrowding and substandard physical facilities.²⁵²⁰

²⁵¹³ ILO, ILOLEX database [hereinafter ILOLEX database], at <http://www.iloex.ilo.ch>.

²⁵¹⁴ U.S. Embassy-Port of Spain, unclassified telegram no. 1604, September 2001 [hereinafter unclassified telegram telegram 1604].

²⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.* See also UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Trinidad and Tobago*, CRC/C/15/Add.82 (Geneva, October 10, 1997).

²⁵¹⁷ Unclassified telegram 1604.

²⁵¹⁸ *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2000—Trinidad and Tobago* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, 2000) [hereinafter *Country Reports 2000*], Sections 6d, 6f, at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrp/2000/wha/index.cfm?docid=833>.

²⁵¹⁹ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Initial Reports of States Parties Due in 1994, Trinidad and Tobago*, CRC/C/11/Add.10, June 17, 1996 [hereinafter *Initial Reports of States Parties*], Section 7, No. 113, and Section 2, No. 27.

²⁵²⁰ In 1995-1996, 21 percent of youth ages 5 to 16 years were absent from the formal school system. See World Bank Group, "Memorandum of the President of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development to the Executive Directors on a Country Assistance Strategy of the World Bank Group for the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago," at [http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/external/lac/lac.nsf/cfl747ccd6587ff952567d6006bdadc/a8ed\(...\)](http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/external/lac/lac.nsf/cfl747ccd6587ff952567d6006bdadc/a8ed(...)). See also unclassified telegram 1604.

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

Under the Children Act, the minimum age for employment in Trinidad and Tobago is 12 years.²⁵²¹ Children from 12 to 14 years of age may work only in family businesses. Children under the age of 18 are prohibited from night work, with the exception of 16- to 18-year-olds, who may work at night in sugar factories.²⁵²² There are no laws that specifically address the sale or trafficking of children, serfdom, debt bondage, or compulsory labor or the use of children in illicit activities such as drug trafficking; however, the government does have criminal codes that prohibits prostitution and the use in pornography of those under age 16.²⁵²³

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services and the Ministry of Labor are responsible for the enforcement of child labor laws. Those found in violation may be subject to a combination of fines and imprisonment; however, there is a lack of enforcement of child labor laws particularly for street vending and begging.²⁵²⁴ Occupational safety and health laws do not include provisions for children in the workplace.²⁵²⁵ Trinidad and Tobago has not ratified ILO Convention 138 or ILO Convention 182.²⁵²⁶

²⁵²¹ *Initial Reports of States Parties* at Section 2, No. 28.

²⁵²² *Country Reports 2000* at Section 6d.

²⁵²³ Unclassified telegram 1604. See also *The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Women and Children: A Human Rights Report: Trinidad and Tobago*, The Protection Project, at <http://www.protectionproject.org> on 11/6/01.

²⁵²⁴ Unclassified telegram 1604.

²⁵²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁵²⁶ ILOLEX database.

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