

# Barbados

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

In October 2001, the Government of Barbados launched a pilot national child labor study, in cooperation with the ILO Caribbean Office, to assess the extent of worst forms of child labor in Barbados.<sup>268</sup> Preliminary regional research has shown that worst forms of child labor may exist in the criminal and informal sector in many Caribbean countries.<sup>269</sup> The Government of Barbados and labor unions, like the Barbados Workers Union, have continued to work to prevent child labor in the formal sector within the country and across the Caribbean region.<sup>270</sup> The Government continues to ban all imports from countries where child labor was utilized in the production process.<sup>271</sup>

The Ministry of Education has committed itself to a seven-year Education Sector Enhancement Program to rehabilitate school buildings, ensure that primary and secondary schools are equipped with computers, and train teachers to help children become computer literate.<sup>272</sup> The government has established an Educational Media Resource Center to review software for use in the country's schools, especially in relation to the programs intended to promote computer literacy.<sup>273</sup>

## Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

According to ILO and the government, there are no working children under the age of 15 in Barbados.<sup>274</sup> Information on child labor practices in the informal sector is limited. The government is willing to investigate and inspect cases of child labor if incidents of child labor should arise.<sup>275</sup>

---

<sup>268</sup> In 1999, the Government of Barbados and other delegates to an ILO Caribbean Tripartite Meeting on the worst forms of child labor agreed to conduct further data collection and in-depth research to determine the extent and nature of child labor in the Caribbean. Peter Richards, *Labor-Caribbean: Region Takes Stock of Child Work*, Inter Press Service, [online] May 7, 2002 [cited August 13, 2002]; available from <http://www.globalmarch.org/clns/daily-news/may-2002/may-7-2002-3.htm>.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

<sup>270</sup> U.S. Embassy- Bridgetown, *unclassified telegram no. 1782*, September 2001. See also U.S. Embassy- Bridgetown, *unclassified telegram no. 1511*, May 1997.

<sup>271</sup> U.S. Embassy- Bridgetown, *unclassified telegram no. 1782*.

<sup>272</sup> UNESCO, *Education for All 2000 Assessment: Country Reports- Barbados*, prepared by Ministry of Education, pursuant to UN General Assembly Resolution 52/84, 2000, Part II, Analytic Section [cited August 13, 2002]; available from [http://www2.unesco.org/wef/countryreports/barbados/rapport\\_2.html](http://www2.unesco.org/wef/countryreports/barbados/rapport_2.html).

<sup>273</sup> Ibid.

<sup>274</sup> World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2002* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2002. According to the Ministry of Labor, Sports, and Public Sector Reform, there were no known cases or evidence of child labor and the worst forms of child labor in Barbados. U.S. Embassy- Bridgetown, *unclassified telegram no. 1782*.

<sup>275</sup> U.S. Embassy- Bridgetown, *unclassified telegram no. 1782*.

Education is free of charge in government institutions and compulsory between the ages of 5 and 16. School attendance is strictly enforced.<sup>276</sup> In 1996, the gross and net enrollment rates were 97.3 percent.<sup>277</sup> Primary school attendance rates are unavailable for Barbados. While enrollment rates indicate a level of commitment to education, they do not always reflect children's participation in school.<sup>278</sup>

## Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

According to the Miscellaneous Provisions of the Employment Act, 16 years is the minimum age for employment in Barbados, and children are not permitted to work during school hours.<sup>279</sup> The Minister of Labor must authorize apprenticeships and vocational training. A child undertaking an apprenticeship must have a certificate from a medical professional certifying that the apprentice or trainee is fit to meet the requirements of the job.<sup>280</sup> The Police Force and the Department of Labor have jurisdiction over the monitoring and enforcement of child labor legislation,<sup>281</sup> and labor inspectors conduct spot checks of businesses and check records to verify compliance with the law.<sup>282</sup>

The Constitution prohibits forced labor.<sup>283</sup> Any adult who has sexual intercourse with a child under 14 years of age may be imprisoned for life. If the child is between 14 and 16 years of age the

---

<sup>276</sup> School attendance officers and parents can be fined or imprisoned (for no more than 3 months) for failure to enforce attendance. Ibid.

<sup>277</sup> World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2002*. Most children complete primary school at the age of 11, at which point they must take a standardized test which determines whether the children qualify for formal secondary school or a trade school. The government notes that the population figures used to determine the net and gross education rates were extrapolated from the 1990 census and therefore may skew the enrollment rates. UNESCO, *EFA 2000 Report: Barbados*, Part II, Analytic Section. See also UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties under Article 44 of the Convention*, CRC/C/3/Add.45, United Nations, Geneva, February 1997, para. 173.

<sup>278</sup> For a more detailed description on the relationship between education statistics and work, see the preface to this report.

<sup>279</sup> Employment Act, Sections 14 (1), (2) stipulates that no person may employ of children of compulsory school age during school hours. See U.S. Embassy- Bridgetown, *unclassified telegram no. 1782*. See also UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Consideration of Reports*, para. 202.

<sup>280</sup> The Employment Act, Chapter 42, Section 2, 20, 29, and 30 also establishes guidelines and penalties to ensure that the apprenticeship or training does not become exploitative. U.S. Embassy- Bridgetown, *unclassified telegram no. 1782*.

<sup>281</sup> According to the Employment Act, Section 17 and 19, police have the authority to enter any business under suspicion of using child laborers in order to inspect the facilities. According to the Employment Act, Section 15, the penalty for violating child labor legislation is imprisonment for up to 12 months or a fine of up to USD 1,000. Ibid.

<sup>282</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2001: Barbados*, Washington, D.C., March 4, 2002, 2595-96, Section 6d [cited December 13, 2002]; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/wha/8290.htm>.

<sup>283</sup> *Constitution of Barbados*, Article 14 [cited August 15, 2002]; available from <http://www.georgetown.edu/LatAmerPolitical/Constitutions/Barbados/barbados.html>.

person may be imprisoned for 10 years.<sup>284</sup> Procurement of all persons for prostitution is illegal and punishable with 15 years in prison.<sup>285</sup>

The Government of Barbados ratified ILO Convention 138 on January 4, 2000 and ILO Convention 182 on October 23, 2000.<sup>286</sup>

---

<sup>284</sup> *Criminal Code*, Article 7, Section 12(1)(2) [cited August 15, 2002]; available from <http://www.protectionproject.org>.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 13.

<sup>286</sup> ILO, *Ratifications by Country*, in ILOLEX, [database online] [cited August 15, 2002]; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/newratframeE.htm>.