

Bhutan

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

The Government of Bhutan is actively working with UNICEF to improve the country's education system, with special emphasis on women, children, and disadvantaged students. Efforts are focused on improving primary, non-formal, and special education, as well as providing teacher training and essential school supplies.³⁴⁹

The World Bank is also funding an education program implemented by the Ministry of Health and Education aimed at increasing the number of graduates from basic education, raising levels of learning, and strengthening the management and administration of basic education. To achieve these goals, the project is constructing new schools and upgrading existing facilities, expanding and improving teacher education, revising curriculum and examinations, and introducing decentralized school monitoring and evaluation through management training.³⁵⁰

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

In 2000, the ILO estimated that 51.1 percent of children ages 10 to 14 years in Bhutan were working.³⁵¹ Although detailed information on the sectors in which children are working is limited, it is reported that children are often engaged in agricultural work on family farms.³⁵²

Education, including technical and vocational education, is free up to the tertiary level for all children aged 6 years or older in Bhutan.³⁵³ In 1998, Bhutan had a gross primary enrollment rate of 71.9 percent. Gross enrollment varied between sexes, with boys enrolled at a rate of 82.1 percent and girls at 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.³⁵⁴ The completion rate of at least seven years of

³⁴⁹ UNICEF, *Second Chance at Literacy*, UNICEF in Bhutan, [online] [cited October 1, 2002]; 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 July 8, 2002]; available from <http://www.unicef.org/bhutan/disable.htm>.

³⁵⁰ World Bank, *Bhutan- Second Education Project*, project appraisal document, 17335, Washington, D.C., February 3, 1998, [cited October 1, 2002]; available from <http://www4.worldbank.org/projects/Project.asp?pid=P009574>.

³⁵¹ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2002* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2002.

³⁵² U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2001: Bhutan*, Washington, D.C., March 4, 2002, 2407-08, Section 6d [cited December 26, 2002]; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/sa/8228.htm>.

³⁵³ 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.

³⁵⁴ UNESCO, *Education For All: Year 2000 Assessment* [CD-ROM], Paris, 2000.

schooling in 1999 was 60 percent for girls and 59 percent for boys.³⁵⁵ Primary school attendance rates are unavailable for Bhutan. While enrollment rates indicate a level of commitment to education, they do not always reflect children's participation in school.³⁵⁶ Most of the primary schools in southern areas of Bhutan were closed in 1990. The closure of the schools in these areas, which are heavily populated by ethnic Nepalese, effectively limits the ability of ethnic Nepalese to obtain a basic education.³⁵⁷

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Regulation for Wage Rate, Recruitment Agencies and Workmen's Compensation (1994) prohibits employment of any kind for children;³⁵⁸ however, the law does not establish a minimum age.³⁵⁹ The minimum age of 18 that was established for marriage, as amended in the Marriage Act of 1996, for all practical purposes sets the age of majority as 18 in all matters of the state.³⁶⁰ Bhutanese law prohibits forced or compulsory labor, but does not specifically mention children, although there are no reports that such practices occur.³⁶¹ Trafficking in persons is not specifically prohibited, but there were no reports that persons were trafficked to, from or within the country.³⁶²

Bhutan is not a member of the ILO and therefore has not ratified ILO Convention 138 or ILO Convention 182.³⁶³

³⁵⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Bhutan*, 2404-07, Section 5.

³⁵⁶ For a more detailed discussion on the relationship between school statistics and work, see the preface to this report.

³⁵⁷ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Bhutan*, 2404-07, Section 5.

³⁵⁸ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Initial Reports of State Parties: Bhutan*, para. 32.

³⁵⁹ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Summary Record of the 715th Meeting: Bhutan*, United Nations, Geneva, June 2001, para. 23. The Government of Bhutan does not have a written Constitution. See U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Bhutan*, Introduction.

³⁶⁰ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Summary Record: Bhutan*, para.41.

³⁶¹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Bhutan*, 2407-08, Sections 6c and 6f.

³⁶² *Ibid.*

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, 2407-08, Section 6d.