

Trinidad and Tobago

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

In 1992, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago developed a National Plan of Action that provided assistance to children in especially difficult circumstances. The government has also adopted an education policy that aims to promote secondary school attendance and improve educational opportunities.³⁵⁹⁷

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

In 2000, UNICEF estimated that 1.2 percent of children ages 5 to 14 years were engaged in paid work. Slightly more than one-half of the children in this age group were estimated to perform domestic work for less than 4 hours per day; less than 1 percent spent more than 4 hours per day on such tasks. Overall, 4.1 percent of children were estimated to be currently working.³⁵⁹⁸ Children are also engaged in agriculture, scavenging, loading, unloading and stocking goods, landscaping and gardening, car repair and washing, construction, fishing,³⁵⁹⁹ and begging.³⁶⁰⁰ Children also work as handymen, shop assistants,³⁶⁰¹ or street vendors.³⁶⁰² There have been reports of child prostitution and of children involved in drug trafficking.³⁶⁰³

Primary education is free and compulsory between the ages of 6 and 12.³⁶⁰⁴ In 1998, the gross primary enrollment rate was 101.6 percent, and the net primary enrollment rate was 92.9 percent.³⁶⁰⁵ In 2000, 89.3 percent of primary school-age children were estimated to be attending

³⁵⁹⁷ U.S. Embassy- Port of Spain, *unclassified telegram no. 2243*, October 2002.

³⁵⁹⁸ Children who are currently working in some capacity include children who have performed any paid or unpaid work for someone who is not a member of the household, who have performed more than four hours of housekeeping chores in the household, or who have performed other family work. Government of Trinidad and Tobago, *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2000 -Trinidad and Tobago*, UNICEF, 2000, 36-37 [cited September 1, 2002]; available from <http://www.childinfo.org/MICS2/newreports/trinidad/trinidad.htm>. An ILO-IPEC rapid assessment in 2002 found that approximately 4.1 percent of children ages 5 to 14 years are currently engaged in paid or unpaid work on the island of Trinidad. See U.S. Embassy- Port of Spain, *unclassified telegram no. 2243*.

³⁵⁹⁹ U.S. Embassy- Port of Spain, *unclassified telegram no. 2243*.

³⁶⁰⁰ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Practices- 2001: Trinidad and Tobago*, Washington, D.C., March 4, 2002, 3055-57, Section 5 [cited November 1, 2002]; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/wha/8233.htm>. See also International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, *Internationally-Recognised Core Labour Standards in Trinidad and Tobago*, Geneva, November 12-13, 1998, [cited September 2, 2002]; available from <http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=990916172&Language=EN>.

³⁶⁰¹ U.S. Embassy- Port of Spain, *unclassified telegram no. 2243*.

³⁶⁰² U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Trinidad and Tobago*, 3055-57, Section 5. See also International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, *Internationally-Recognised Core Labour Standards*.

³⁶⁰³ U.S. Embassy- Port of Spain, *unclassified telegram no. 1604*, September 27, 2001.

³⁶⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁰⁵ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2002* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2002.

school.³⁶⁰⁶ Parts of the public school system do not meet the needs of the school age population due to overcrowding, substandard physical facilities, and occasional classroom violence by gangs. The government has committed resources to building new facilities and expanding access to free education.³⁶⁰⁷

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The minimum age for employment is set at 12 years. Children between the ages of 12 to 14 may work only in family businesses. Children under the age of 18 may work only during daylight hours, however, children ages 16 to 18 may work at night in sugar factories.³⁶⁰⁸ There are no laws prohibiting trafficking,³⁶⁰⁹ but the Criminal Code prohibits child prostitution.³⁶¹⁰ The use of children under the age of 16 in pornography is also prohibited.³⁶¹¹

The Ministry of Labor and Small and Micro-Enterprises and the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services are responsible for enforcing child labor provisions.³⁶¹² Enforcement is weak because there are no established mechanisms for receiving, investigating, and addressing child labor complaints. The Ministry of Labor is seeking assistance from the ILO to strengthen enforcement mechanisms.³⁶¹³

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has not ratified ILO Convention 138 or ILO Convention 182.

³⁶⁰⁶ Government of Trinidad and Tobago, *MICS 2000*, 21.

³⁶⁰⁷ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Trinidad and Tobago*, 3055-57, Section 5.

³⁶⁰⁸ U.S. Embassy- Port of Spain, *unclassified telegram no. 1604*. See also International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, *Internationally-Recognised Core Labour Standards*.

³⁶⁰⁹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Trinidad and Tobago*, 3057-58, Section 6f.

³⁶¹⁰ Article 17 of the Criminal Code, as cited in U.S. Embassy- Port of Spain, *unclassified telegram no. 1604*.

³⁶¹¹ Protection Project, "Trinidad and Tobago," in *Human Rights Report on Trafficking of Persons, Especially Women and Children*, March 2002, [cited September 2, 2002]; available from <http://209.190.246.239/ver2/cr/tt.pdf>.

³⁶¹² U.S. Embassy- Port of Spain, *unclassified telegram no. 1604*.

³⁶¹³ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Trinidad and Tobago*, 3055-57, Section 6d.