Nicaragua

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

In 2001, approximately 15.7 percent of boys and 5.8 percent of girls ages 6 to 14 were working in Nicaragua. The majority of working children were found in the agricultural sector (62.5 percent), followed by services (31.8 percent), manufacturing (5.3 percent), and other sectors (0.4 percent).3070 Children work in the production of such crops as coffee, corn, sugar, and

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### Selected Statistics and Indicators on Child Labor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent of children 6-14 estimated as working in 2001:</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum age for admission to work:</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age to which education is compulsory:</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Free public education:</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gross primary enrollment rate in 2004:</td>
<td>112%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net primary enrollment rate in 2004:</td>
<td>88%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent of children 6-14 attending school in 2001:</td>
<td>85%</td>
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<tr>
<td>As of 2003, percent of primary school entrants likely to reach grade 5:</td>
<td>59%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ratified Convention 138:</td>
<td>11/2/1981</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILO-IPEC participating country:</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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</tbody>
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3065 UCW analysis of ILO SIMPOC, UNICEF MICS, and World Bank surveys, *Child Economic Activity and School Attendance Rates*.


3070 UCW analysis of ILO SIMPOC, UNICEF MICS, and World Bank surveys, *Child Economic Activity and School Attendance Rates*. 

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tobacco. Children also work in street sales and personal services, such as domestic service in third-party homes. They can also be found working in markets, restaurants and hotels. A small percentage of children engage in mining, stone quarrying, construction, and transport. The majority of children work in the informal sector, and some are engaged in garbage dump scavenging.

Child prostitution and sex tourism are problems in Nicaragua. Nicaragua is a source and transit country for children trafficked for sexual exploitation. Children are trafficked within Nicaragua from rural to urban areas. Children from poor rural areas between the ages of 13 and 18 are among the most vulnerable to trafficking. The most prevalent form of internal trafficking is believed to be the commercial sexual exploitation of minors. Children are also trafficked from Nicaragua to other parts of Central America to work in bars and nightclubs, with Guatemala as the primary destination for girls engaged in prostitution.

Children 14 to 16 years cannot work without parental permission. Adolescents 14 to 18 cannot work more than 6 hours a day or 30 hours a week. Adolescents are also prohibited from engaging in work that endangers their health and safety, such as work in mines, garbage dumps, and night entertainment venues, and work that may interfere with schooling. The law provides for fines for violations of child labor laws. The National Commission for the Progressive Eradication of Child Labor and Protection of the Young Worker (CNEPTI) receives revenues from fines.

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The law sets the minimum age for employment at 14 years. A ministerial resolution also specifically prohibits children under 14 from work in export processing zones, while another prohibits contracting children under 16 for work at sea.

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The Constitution prohibits forced labor, slavery, and indentured servitude, although children are not specifically mentioned. The Constitution was amended in 1995 to prohibit military conscription. The minimum legal age for entry into the armed forces is unclear.

Prostitution is legal for individuals 14 years and older, but the promotion and procurement of prostitution is prohibited by law. The law establishes a penalty of 4 to 8 years of imprisonment for those found guilty of recruiting children under 16 years into prostitution, and 12 years of imprisonment for recruiting children under 12 years.

Promoting, filming, or selling child pornography is prohibited. The government has approved a law calling for the criminalization of sex tourism, which imposes a penalty of imprisonment of 5 to 7 years for convicted offenders. Trafficking in persons is penalized with 4 to 10 years of imprisonment.

The Ministry of Labor is responsible for enforcing child labor laws. Within the Ministry of Labor’s Inspector General’s Office, there is a Child Labor Inspector’s Office; however, the Office does not have its own inspectors. The country’s 72 general inspectors and 18 hygiene and safety inspectors are responsible for carrying out regular inspections throughout the country to monitor labor conditions, including child labor violations. The Ministry of Government is responsible for law enforcement in the country, operates an anti-trafficking office, and leads the National Coalition against Trafficking in Persons. The Office of the National Prosecutor, through its specialized Women and Children’s unit, is responsible for prosecuting trafficking cases. The Office of the Human Rights Prosecutor also has separate Special Prosecutors for Women, Children, and Adolescents who investigate trafficking cases. However, the U.S. Department of State notes that the laws addressing trafficking in persons do not protect all...
adolescents under 18 years and that government progress in victim assistance, protection and prosecution of traffickers was limited. In addition, the deficit of data collection and registration of trafficking of persons cases and loose immigration controls between the borders of Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala further weaken government efforts to pursue enforcement actions against traffickers effectively.3098

In October 2006, the Ministry of Labor published the government’s annual list of 49 types of work that are harmful to the health, safety, and morals of children, as required under ILO Convention 182.3099

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

On April 4, 2006, the government’s Policy on Special Protection for Children and Adolescents was enacted. The policy includes special protections for victims of commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking in persons.3100 The government’s National Council for the Integral Attention and Protection of Children and Adolescents is responsible for a 5-year National Plan against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (2003-2008) and a 10-year National Action Plan for Children and Adolescents.3101

Through June of 2006, the Government of Nicaragua participated in a 3-year, USD 3 million USDOL-funded ILO-IPEC Central America regional project to combat hazardous child labor in agriculture. At the regional level, the project withdrew 2,309 children from hazardous agriculture and prevented 2,693 others from becoming engaged in similar activities.3102 The government continues to participate in a 4-year, USD 8.4 million regional project to combat the commercial sexual exploitation of children. The project aims to withdraw and prevent 580 children from commercial sexual exploitation in Nicaragua.3103 The government also participated in a USD 500,000 ILO-IPEC project to combat child domestic work funded by the Government of the Netherlands, which ended in February 2006.3104 As part of an effort to build

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3100 ILO-IPEC, "Stop the Exploitation" ("Alto a la explotación") Contribution to the Prevention and Elimination of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Central America, Panama and the Dominican Republic, technical progress report, RLA/02/P51 - 05/52/USA, September 13, 2006, 2.
3102 ILO-IPEC, Prevention and Progressive Elimination of Child Labour in Agriculture in Central America, Panama and the Dominican Republic (Phase II), project document, RLA/03/P50/USA, September 17, 2003. See also USDOL, ILAB Technical Cooperation Project Summary: Prevention and Progressive Elimination of Child Labor in Agriculture in Central America, Panama and the Dominican Republic (Phase II).
3104 ILO-IPEC official, E-mail communication to USDOL official, November 8, 2005.
capacity to improve labor law compliance among the CAFTA-DR partners, USDOL is providing USD 2.85 million for a project to strengthen outreach efforts in the agriculture sector in the region, where child labor is a serious problem.  

In coordination with the Nicaraguan government, CARE-USA is implementing a USD 5.5 million regional project funded by USDOL to combat exploitive child labor through the provision of quality basic education. The project aims to withdraw and prevent 2,984 children and adolescents from exploitive child labor in the region. The government also implements a project to prevent and eradicate child labor in small-scale mining, and another to combat child labor in the tobacco-growing sector.

Through its Program for Children and Adolescents at Risk, the Ministry of Family works to remove children from work, provide counseling to children and their families, and coordinate with other government agencies, the police, and NGOs to provide services. The ministry also operates a “traffic lights” project to assist children who perform odd jobs around traffic intersections. In addition, the Ministry is responsible for the operation of a shelter that provides services to minor victims of commercial sexual exploitation, and a national hotline for victims of abuse and exploitation.

The Ministries of Government, Education, Tourism, and the Women’s Division of the National Police continued to implement trafficking awareness campaigns specifically for border police, immigration officials, students, teachers, the press and the tourism industry. The government also sponsored an education program in the city of Granada with the Ministry of Tourism to train hotel owners and taxi drivers to discourage the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Also, the Nicaraguan branch of INTERPOL collaborates with its counterparts in Guatemala, El Salvador, and in other countries in the region.

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3106 CARE USA, APRENDO Project: Combating Exploitive Child Labor Through Education in Central America (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua) and the Dominican Republic, project document, 2004.
3107 UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Written Replies by the Government of Nicaragua Concerning the List of Issues (CRC/C/Q/NIC/3), 56.
3109 UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Written Replies by the Government of Nicaragua Concerning the List of Issues (CRC/C/Q/NIC/3), 56.
3113 Ibid.