

# Tonga

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

The Government of Tonga has established goals to further improve the educational system through the Ministry of Education's 1996 Strategic Plan. The plan calls for the establishment of universal access to quality basic education up to grade six, and plans to increase the compulsory school age to 17, or grade six. It also calls for strengthening the Ministry of Education and enhancing training, expanding and developing vocational and distance education and establishing formal pre-school programs.<sup>3586</sup> The Governments of Australia and New Zealand are assisting the government in improving its primary educational facilities.<sup>3587</sup>

## Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

Statistics on the number of working children under age 15 in Tonga are unavailable. The U.S. State Department reported no known incidences of child labor in 2001.<sup>3588</sup>

Education is free and compulsory between the ages of 6 and 14, or until the completion of grade 6.<sup>3589</sup> In 1995, the gross primary enrollment rate was 122.2 percent, and the net primary enrollment rate was 95.3 percent.<sup>3590</sup> Primary school attendance rates are unavailable for Tonga. While enrollment rates indicate a level of commitment to education, they do not always reflect children's participation in school.<sup>3591</sup>

## Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Constitution prohibits slavery.<sup>3592</sup> Forced or bonded labor is also prohibited, and is not known to occur.<sup>3593</sup> The Criminal Code provides legal restrictions on acts of trafficking. Soliciting for

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<sup>3586</sup> UNESCO, *Education for All 2000 Assessment: Country Reports - Tonga*, prepared by Ministry of Education, pursuant to UN General Assembly Resolution 52/84, 2000, Part 3, 11.0 [cited November 6, 2002]; available from <http://www2.unesco.org/wef/countryreports/tonga/contents.html>.

<sup>3587</sup> AusAID, *Country Brief- Tonga*, [online] [cited September 5, 2002]; available from [http://www.ausaid.gov.au/country/cbrief.cfm?DCon=8494\\_3966\\_5283\\_4961\\_7927&CountryId=19](http://www.ausaid.gov.au/country/cbrief.cfm?DCon=8494_3966_5283_4961_7927&CountryId=19).

<sup>3588</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2001: Tonga*, Washington, D.C., March 4, 2002, 1203, Section 6d [cited December 18, 2002]; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/eap/8380.htm>.

<sup>3589</sup> According to the report, Tonga has been internationally recognized as having achieved universal primary education. UNESCO, *EFA Country Report: Tonga*, Part I, Section 3.0.

<sup>3590</sup> UNESCO, *Education for All: Year 2000 Assessment* [CD-ROM], Paris, 2000.

<sup>3591</sup> For a more detailed discussion on the relationship between education statistics and work, see the preface to this report.

<sup>3592</sup> This does not apply to those being punished under the law. *Constitution of Tonga*, Part I, Clause 2, [cited October 3, 2002]; available from [http://www.vanuatu.usp.ac.fj/paclawmat/Tonga\\_legislation/Tonga\\_Constitution.html](http://www.vanuatu.usp.ac.fj/paclawmat/Tonga_legislation/Tonga_Constitution.html).

<sup>3593</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Tonga*, 1203, Section 6d.

prostitution, or profiting from prostitution, are both prohibited under the Criminal Code. Penalties for these offenses range from imprisonment for six months to two years, and in some cases, the whipping of males convicted a second time.<sup>3594</sup> The Criminal Code also prohibits any person from procuring or attempting to procure any girl under the age of 21 for the purposes of unlawful sexual exploitation. The punishment for this offense is imprisonment for up to five years. The abduction of women and girls is also illegal under the Criminal Code, with penalties ranging from five to seven years imprisonment.<sup>3595</sup>

The Government of Tonga is not a member of the ILO, and as such has not ratified ILO Convention 138 or ILO Convention 182.<sup>3596</sup>

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<sup>3594</sup> Government of Tonga, *Criminal Code of Tonga*, [cited October 3, 2002]; available from [http://vanuatu.usp.as.fj/Paclawmat/Tonga\\_legislation/Consolidation\\_1988/Tonga\\_Criminal\\_Offences.html](http://vanuatu.usp.as.fj/Paclawmat/Tonga_legislation/Consolidation_1988/Tonga_Criminal_Offences.html).

<sup>3595</sup> *Ibid.*, Articles 126, 28-29.

<sup>3596</sup> ILO, *Ratifications by Country*, in ILOLEX, [database online] [cited August 29, 2002]; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/newratframeE.htm>.