

In 2012, Trinidad and Tobago made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Trafficking in Persons Act of 2011 was enacted, enabling enforcement officials to implement the law, and the Children Act of 2012 was adopted in an effort to strengthen legislative frameworks protecting the rights of children. The Government also created a Counter Trafficking unit to assist victims and investigate child trafficking cases. However, some policy gaps relating to child labor remain. The Government has yet to conduct the planned national child labor surveys to assess the prevalence of the problem and has not established a clear minimum age for hazardous labor. While the prevalence is thought to be small, reports indicate that children may be engaged in the worst forms of child labor in Trinidad and Tobago.

Statistics on Working Children and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5-14 yrs.	3.0 (5,975)
Attending School	5-14 yrs.	97.8
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs.	3.3
Primary Completion Rate		91.0

Sources:

Primary completion rate: Data from 2010, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2013.(1)

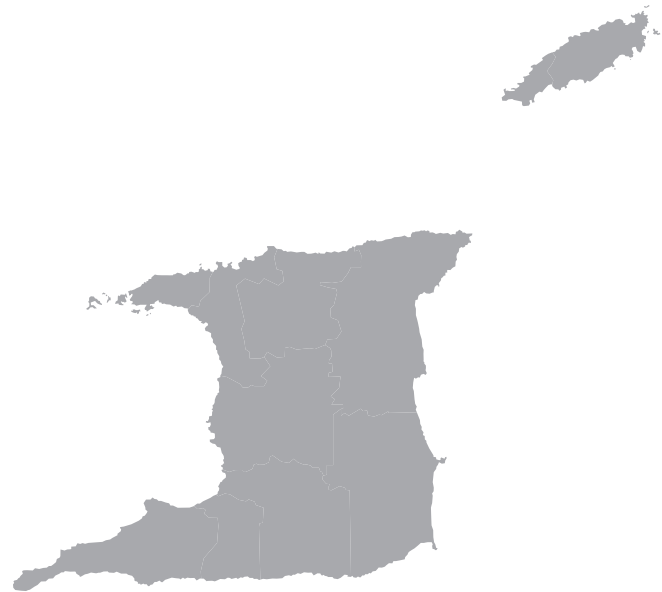
All other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from MICS3 Survey, 2006.(2)

Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

While the prevalence is thought to be small, reports indicate that children may be engaged in the worst forms of child labor in Trinidad and Tobago. There is limited evidence suggesting that children are involved in dangerous activities within the agricultural sector.(3, 4) They may use dangerous tools, carry heavy loads, and apply harmful pesticides.(5, 6) There is also limited evidence indicating that children may also be engaged in prostitution and trafficked for sexual exploitation.(3, 7, 8)

Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Trinidad and Tobago's Miscellaneous Provisions (Minimum Age for Admission to Employment) Act (2007) sets the minimum age for employment at 16.(9) It also prohibits



children younger than age 18 from working between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m., except in family enterprises.(10, 11) Current legislation does not establish a clear minimum age for hazardous work, nor is there a list of hazardous occupations, even though the Government has been developing one since 2004.(12, 13)

International Conventions and Selected Laws on Child Labor and Education

	C138, Minimum Age	✓
	C182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
	CRC	✓
	CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	No
	CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	No
	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓
	Minimum Age for Work	16
	Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No
	Compulsory Education Age	12
	Free Public Education	Yes

The Sexual Offences Act (1986), the Children Act (1925), and the Trafficking in Persons Act (2011) prohibit the commercial

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sexual exploitation of children, including prostitution and pornography.(14-17) The Trafficking Act also prohibits trafficking in children for the purposes of exploitation or use in illicit activities. This reporting period the Government enacted the Trafficking in Persons Act (2011), enabling enforcement officers to carry out and implement the law.(18) The Government also passed the Children Act (2012), which is meant to replace the current Children Act of 1925 and strengthen legislative frameworks that protect the rights of children. However, the Act has yet to be enacted.(4, 12, 18-21)

The Constitution guarantees the right to “life, liberty, security of the person and enjoyment of property and the right not to be deprived thereof except by due process of law.” This appears to prohibit forced labor.(15, 22)

Trinidad and Tobago has no compulsory military service and the minimum age for recruitment to the armed forces is 18. However, those who are willing to join between the ages of 16 and 18 may do so with written approval from a parent or guardian.(23, 24) Although, in practice, children between the ages of 16 to 18 are not recruited, the Government is considering amending the Defence Act to set the minimum age for enlistment to 18.(25, 26)

The Education Act provides for free and compulsory schooling for children between the ages of 6 to 12.(4, 27) This leaves children between the ages of 12 through 15 particularly vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor, as they are not required to be in school and are not legally permitted to work.(13)

Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

The National Steering Committee for the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor coordinates government efforts in combating child labor. The Committee drafted a new National Plan of Action against Child Labor, but it has yet to be adopted.(4, 12, 28) The inter-ministerial National Task Force against Trafficking in Persons, established by the Trafficking in Persons Act, is responsible for coordinating efforts to combat trafficking in persons, preventing child trafficking, providing assistance to trafficked victims, and prosecuting traffickers.(14)

The amended Children’s Authority Act of 2008 empowers the Children’s Authority of Trinidad and Tobago to enforce all laws pertaining to children’s welfare, including prosecuting those who abuse or neglect children.(3, 29, 30) Under the legislation, the Children’s Authority was mandated to carry out several strategic objectives, including the coordination of social

services, both preventative and curative, for all children and their families. Currently, however, the Children’s Authority is not operational.(3, 29, 30) The Government’s Child Protection Task Force was responsible for protecting children and educating communities about child abuse, including child labor. As of this reporting period, it is no longer operational.(3, 4, 10)

The Ministry of Labor and Small and Micro-Enterprise (MLSME), the Ministry of the People and Social Development (MPSD), and the police are responsible for monitoring and enforcing child labor laws. The Labor Inspectorate Unit (LIU) of MLSME investigates child labor violations in the workplace.(3, 4) It enforces hazardous labor laws through the Occupational Safety and Health Authority and forced child labor laws together with the MPSD. The LIU has 16 labor inspectors.(4) During the reporting period, the LIU conducted 1,291 labor inspections and identified no cases of child labor. Their annual budget was approximately \$95,000 and general funding was provided for recurrent expenditures.(4) Resources are believed to be adequate for the scope of the problem.(4) Labor inspectors receive ongoing training on child labor and are able to carry out unannounced inspections when they have reason to believe children are working illegally.(4) However, employers are within their rights to refuse the inspectors entry into the workplace. If they do, inspectors must then apply for a warrant to enter and inspect the facility.(4, 18, 31)

The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions enforce all criminal laws, including the trafficking of children for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation and engaging children in illicit activities, such as the sale of drugs.(3, 4, 7) The Counter Trafficking Unit was established this reporting period. Housed within the Ministry of National Security, the Unit is responsible for investigating trafficking cases, and for referring potential victims to shelters and social service providers.(4) There were some investigations into potential sex and labor trafficking cases, as well as the sale of illicit drugs, but none involved children. In 2012 there were no charges or prosecutions relating to human trafficking.(3, 4, 7, 18)

Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Since 2006, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has indicated their intent to conduct a National Youth Activity Survey. To date, however, the survey has not been carried out.(12) The Government has also indicated that it will use the survey results in the National Policy for the Prevention and

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Elimination of Child Labor, but until the survey is completed, the proposed Policy will remain in draft form.⁽¹²⁾ The lack of data collection on the nature and incidence of the worst forms of child labor precludes the development of policy and programs to address relevant child labor issues, including in agriculture and prostitution.

Social Programs to Eliminate or Prevent the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government has several programs designed to encourage children to remain in school, including a school meal program providing breakfast and lunch to children from low-income families, a book grant program, and a School Support Services

Program to aid high-risk students with homework, counseling, and other services.^(3, 4)

The MLSME continues to raise awareness about child labor and disseminates information on its negative effects through newspaper messages. The MLSME also transmits the information through its radio program, "Labor Link."⁽⁴⁾

Suspected victims of human trafficking are offered some direct social services by the Government and through NGOs that receive government funding.⁽⁷⁾ It is not clear whether programs to address child labor in agriculture and prostitution are needed, despite limited reports of its existence, given the overall lack of information on these problems.

Based on the reporting above, the following actions would advance the elimination of the worst forms of child labor in Trinidad and Tobago:

Area	Suggested Actions	Year(s) Action Recommended
Laws and Regulations	Clearly specify in the law a minimum age for hazardous employment and establish a list of hazardous occupations prohibited to children under age 18.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
	Enact the Children Act of 2012 to ensure legislative frameworks protecting the rights of children are strengthened.	2012
	Raise the age of compulsory education to 16, the established minimum age for work.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
Coordination and Enforcement	Operationalize the Children's Authority, as mandated in the Children's Authority Act of 2008, ensuring it is able to implement its strategic objectives and enforce all laws pertaining to children's welfare.	2012
	Operationalize the Child Protection Task Force, ensuring that it is able to continue its protection and educational efforts against child labor.	2012
Policies	Adopt and implement a National Plan of Action Against Child Labor.	2011, 2012
	Conduct the planned National Youth Activity Survey to assess how best to address the worst forms of child labor in Trinidad and Tobago, especially in agriculture and prostitution.	2011, 2012
Social Programs	Assess the need to implement programs to address the worst forms of child labor, including in agriculture and prostitution.	2011, 2012

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