

In 2014, Trinidad and Tobago made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government signed the Declaration of the Regional Initiative: Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labor, which includes Trinidad and Tobago's participation in the regional coordination of child labor elimination strategies. The Government also participated in a regional dialogue on child labor in the First Meeting of the Working Groups of the XVIII Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor. Labor inspectors and rural labor advocates participated in specialized workshops on child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children. Although the problem does not appear to be widespread, children are engaged in child labor, including in agriculture, and in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. The Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, which is mandated to protect children's rights by the Children's Authority Act of 2000 and the Children's Authority (Amendment) Act of 2008, is still not fully operational. The Government also has yet to ratify a list of hazardous occupations prohibited for children.

I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Although the problem does not appear to be widespread, children are engaged in child labor, including in agriculture, in Trinidad and Tobago. Children are also engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking.(1-3) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Trinidad and Tobago.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	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 (%)		94.8

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2010, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2015.(4)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 3, 2006.(5)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Activities unknown* (1, 6, 7)
Services	Domestic work* (6)
	Garbage scavenging* (8)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking* (1-3)
	Used in illicit activities, including in drug and arms trafficking* (2, 9)

* Evidence of this activity is limited and/or the extent of the problem is unknown.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a) – (c) of ILO C. 182.

A lack of data on the nature and prevalence of the worst forms of child labor precludes the development of policies and programs that address child labor issues, including in agriculture, garbage scavenging, and commercial sexual exploitation. While the

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Government has previously expressed interest in conducting a National Youth Activity Survey that would inform such policies and programs, it has yet to produce do so.(10)

There is limited evidence that girls from the Dominican Republic, Guyana, Venezuela, and Colombia are subject to commercial sexual exploitation in brothels and clubs in Trinidad and Tobago as a result of human trafficking.(2)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Trinidad and Tobago has ratified most key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

Trinidad and Tobago has not ratified the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.

The Government has established laws and regulations related to child labor, including its worst forms (Table 4).

Table 4. Laws and Regulations Related to Child Labor

Standard	Yes/No	Age	Related Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Article 2 of the Miscellaneous Provisions (Minimum Age for Admission to Employment) Act (11)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No		
Prohibition of Hazardous Occupations or Activities for Children	No		
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 16–19 of the Trafficking in Persons Act (12)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 16–19 of the Trafficking in Persons Act (12)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 17 and 21 of the Sexual Offences Act; Part V, Articles 11–16 and 24 of the Children Act; Articles 16–19 of the Trafficking in Persons Act (12-14)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Part VII, Article 37 of the Children Act (15)
Minimum Age for Compulsory Military Recruitment	N/A*		
Minimum Age for Voluntary Military Service	Yes	18	Part IV, Article 19 of the Defence Act (16)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	12	Chapter 39.1 of the Education Act (17)
Free Public Education	Yes		Chapter 39.1, Part I, 11.1 of the Education Act (17)

* No conscription (16)

Trinidad and Tobago's Miscellaneous Provisions (Minimum Age for Admission to Employment) Act sets the minimum age for employment at 16.(11) However, current legislation does not establish a clear minimum age for hazardous work. The Government has not developed legislation on the prohibition of hazardous occupations and activities for children, even though it has reportedly been developing a hazardous occupations and activities list since 2004.(7, 18)

The Children Act, which was passed in 2012 to replace the Children Act of 1925 and to strengthen legislative frameworks that protect children’s rights, still requires “proclamation” by the President to take effect.(1)

Trinidad and Tobago has no compulsory military service and the minimum age for recruitment into the armed forces is 18. However, those between the ages of 16 and 18 who are willing to join may do so with written approval from a parent or guardian.(19)

The Education Act provides for free and compulsory schooling for children ages 6 to 12.(17, 18, 20) Children in Trinidad and Tobago are required to attend school only up to age 12. This standard makes children ages 13 through 15 vulnerable to child labor, as they are not required to attend school but are not legally permitted to work.(7, 18) The Children Act seeks to amend the Education Act by raising the minimum age of compulsory education to 16, making it commensurate with the minimum age for work.(1, 18)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor, including its worst forms (Table 5).

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Labor and Small and Micro Enterprise Development (MOLSMED)	Monitor and enforce child labor laws, in part through the Labor Inspectorate Unit.(1) Enforce hazardous labor laws through the Occupational Safety and Health Authority; coordinate the enforcement of laws related to forced child labor in conjunction with the Ministry of the People and Social Development and the Ministry of National Security.(1)
Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions	Oversee the enforcement of criminal laws in Trinidad and Tobago and lead the Criminal Law Department, which falls under the Ministry of the Attorney General.(21)
Trinidad and Tobago Police Service	Enforce criminal laws, including those against the commercial sexual exploitation of children and the involvement of children in illicit activities, in conjunction with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.(1)
Counter-Trafficking Unit	Investigate trafficking cases since its establishment in January 2013 as part of the Ministry of National Security.(1) Partner with the police and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions to prosecute traffickers, as well as coordinate with government agencies and NGOs to ensure victim protection.(22)

Law enforcement agencies in Trinidad and Tobago took actions to combat child labor, including its worst forms.

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2014, MOLSMED employed 14 labor inspectors in its Labor Inspectorate Unit. The number of labor inspectors per worker is adequate as there is not a widespread child labor problem in the country. These inspectors carried out 704 inspections in 2014, and they found no cases of child labor.(1) Inspectors can carry out unannounced inspections in all sectors, including on private farms. Inspectors can also enter private homes in response to a complaint.(8) MOLSMED reports that inspectors received ongoing training on child labor issues in 2014; the ILO has reported that this training, as well as the number of inspections conducted, is adequate.(1) In 2014, labor inspectors also attended special workshops on forced labor and human trafficking, with a special focus on child trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children. The Labor Inspectorate Unit also provided training with a special focus on child labor to 71 labor advocates from rural communities.(1) Ministerial funding and resources are also believed to be sufficient for the scope of the child labor problem.(1)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2014, the Counter-Trafficking Unit (CTU) employed seven police officers and three immigration officers. During October 2013 to September 2014, the Government allocated an annual budget of \$950,000 for the operation of the CTU; the IOM reported that this budget was sufficient. The IOM also reported that the number of investigators was adequate; however, there is a cited lack of sufficient training and resources for CTU staff.(1) In 2014, the National Library and Information System of Trinidad and Tobago conducted a 1-day training on sex-trafficking prevention for representatives from libraries in the country. There are reports that the CTU needs improved resources for child victims.(1, 9)

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While the CTU did not report any criminal child labor violations during the reporting period, the number of investigations related to the worst forms of child labor is unknown. There was one suspected case of child trafficking during the reporting period; however, the investigation was terminated for lack of evidence.(1)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor, including its worst forms (Table 6).

Table 6. Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Steering Committee for the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor	Coordinate government efforts to combat child labor and oversee the development of national policies on child labor.(1, 18, 23)
National Task Force Against Trafficking in Persons	Coordinate government efforts to combat trafficking in persons and prosecute traffickers. Coordinate the provision of assistance to trafficked victims and develop national policies on trafficking.(1) Established by the Trafficking in Persons Act.(12)
Child Protection Task Force	Review policies and legislation on child protection issues and make recommendations on how public and private stakeholders can reduce risks to children's well-being. Tasked with making recommendations on how the Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago can be made fully functional.(20)

The Child Protection Task Force ended on July 31, 2014, in accordance with its amended Terms of Reference; it had met 16 times before ending. No information is available on whether this task force or a new task force will reconvene in the future.(8)

Reports indicate that coordination among the agencies that are responsible for combatting child labor is *ad hoc* and needs improvement. The National Task Force Against Trafficking in Persons met once in 2014.(1)

The Children's Authority (Amendment) Act of 2008 contains provisions to empower the Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago. This body was conceived through legislative efforts in 2000 and was designed to enforce the laws on children's welfare, promote the rights of children, and provide services for child protection.(24-26) However, the Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago has yet to become fully operational.(1)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has established policies related to child labor, including its worst forms (Table 7).

Table 7. Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
National Strategic Plan for Child Development (2012–2016)	Aims to develop comprehensive initiatives across governmental ministries to promote and protect children's rights, including the elimination of all forms of child labor. Participating ministries include the MOLSMED and the Ministry for Gender, Youth, and Child Development.(1)
National Strategy for Child Rights	Seeks to strengthen mechanisms and structures for protecting children's rights.(1)
National Youth Policy	Seeks to incorporate youth as partners in national development and prioritize youth issues in national policies.(1)
Trinidad and Tobago—UNICEF Strategic Plan (2014–2018)†	Aims to improve the lives of children through five focus areas, including evidence-based policy making, the promotion of children's rights, child protection programming, education, and early childhood development. Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development will coordinate the planning and implementation of initiatives in concert with the UN's 2012–2016 efforts in the Eastern Caribbean.(27)
Declaration of the Regional Initiative: Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labor (2014–2020)†	Aims to increase regional cooperation on eradicating child labor by 2020 through signatories' efforts to strengthen monitoring and coordination mechanisms, government programs, and South-South exchanges. Reaffirms commitments made in the Brasilia Declaration from the Third Global Conference on Child Labor (October 2013), and signed by Trinidad and Tobago at the ILO's 18th Regional Meeting of the Americas in Lima, Peru (October 2014).(28-30)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

The Ministry of Gender, Youth, and Child Development is currently drafting a National Child Protection Policy, which will include child labor and trafficking. This policy will address obtaining data and implementing policies related to child labor in Trinidad and

Tobago.(1) However, the Government has yet to produce an action plan to implement policies that call for the prevention and elimination of child labor.(18)

In September 2014, Trinidad and Tobago participated in the First Meeting of the Working Groups of the XVIII Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor to foster continued dialogue and cooperation on labor issues throughout the Americas. Held in Bridgetown, Barbados, these discussions promoted the exchange of information on policies and programs that seek to formalize the informal sector, uphold workers' rights, and prevent and eliminate child labor.(31)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2014, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago funded programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, including its worst forms. The Government has other programs that may have an impact on child labor, including its worst forms (Table 8).

Table 8. Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
MLSME Programming‡	Aims to raise awareness about child labor and disseminate information on its negative effects through MLSME outreach programs and participation in awareness-raising activities organized by other agencies, including government ministries and trade unions.(8)
Educational Programming*‡	Ministry of Education programs that encourage children to remain in school, including a school meal program that provides breakfast and lunch to children from low-income families; a book grant program; and a School Support Services program that helps high-risk students with homework, counseling, and other services. In 2014, provided more than 43,000 free breakfasts and 98,000 lunches to students based on the family's socioeconomic level.(1)
Empowerment Social Strategies (PRESS ON) Initiative*‡	Ministry of the People and Social Development poverty-reduction initiative that targets at-risk populations, including children, and that focuses on providing food security, youth training and skills development, and educational support.(1)
National Child Registry‡	Government program to help provide an effective method for monitoring child welfare and development.(1)
National Youth Services Directory†‡	Ministry for Gender, Youth, and Child Development and National Youth Policy directory. Serves as a hub for locating psychological, educational, and recreational activities; programs; and services for the public and especially for youth.(1, 32)

* The impact of this program on child labor does not appear to have been studied.

† Program was launched during the reporting period.

‡ Program is funded by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Research found no evidence of programs to specifically address child labor in agriculture or the worst forms of child labor in commercial sexual exploitation.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor, including its worst forms, in Trinidad and Tobago (Table 9).

Table 9. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor, Including its Worst Forms

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ratify the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.	2013 – 2014
	Ensure that hazardous work is prohibited for all children under the age of 18.	2009 – 2014
	Determine hazardous occupations or activities prohibited for children in consultation with employers' and workers' organizations.	2009 – 2014
	Enact the Children Act of 2012 to ensure that legislative frameworks protecting the rights of children are strengthened.	2012 – 2014
	Raise the age of compulsory education to 16, the established minimum age for work, either through the enactment of the Children Act or in separate legislation.	2009 – 2014

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Table 9. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor, Including its Worst Forms (cont)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Make publicly available the number of criminal investigations conducted regarding the worst forms of child labor.	2013 – 2014
	Ensure that there are sufficient resources and training for trafficking prevention staff and resources for victims of child trafficking.	2014
Coordination	Operationalize the Child Protection Task Force, ensuring that it is able to provide protection and educational efforts against child labor.	2012 – 2014
	Ensure that the National Task Force Against Trafficking in Persons convenes to continue coordinating efforts to combat trafficking in persons.	2012 – 2014
	Ensure that the National Steering Committee for the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor actively coordinates governmental efforts to combat child labor.	2013– 2014
	Operationalize the Children’s Authority, as mandated in the Children’s Authority Act of 2008, to ensure that it is able to implement its strategic objectives and enforce laws pertaining to children’s welfare.	2012 – 2014
Government Policies	Adopt and implement a National Plan of Action Against Child Labor.	2011 – 2014
Social Programs	Conduct the National Youth Activity Survey to assess how to best address child labor in agriculture and the worst forms of child labor in commercial sexual exploitation.	2011 – 2014
	Assess the impact that educational and poverty-reduction initiatives may have on reducing child labor.	2013 – 2014

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