

In 2015, Belize made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government provided training to enforcement officials on its trafficking in persons and commercial sexual exploitation legislation, both passed in 2013. However, children in Belize are engaged in child labor, including in the production of sugarcane, bananas, and citrus fruits, and in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Important gaps in the country's legal framework remain. Belize does not set a minimum age of 14 for work for all sectors, and the country lacks a list of hazardous occupations that are prohibited for children. In addition, the Government does not appear to have programs that aim to reduce child labor in agriculture, a sector in which it remains prevalent.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Belize are engaged in child labor, including in the production of sugarcane, bananas, and citrus fruits. Children are also engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. (1, 2) The 2013 Report of the National Child Activity Survey, conducted by the Government in collaboration with ILO-IPEC, estimates that 5,565 children work, of which 3,528 are engaged in child labor and 3,381 are engaged in hazardous work. (3) Over half of working children are employed in two industries, in agriculture and in trade and repairs. (3) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Belize.

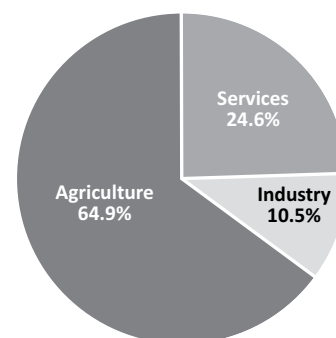
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5-14 yrs.	1.6 (1,405)
Attending School (%)	5-14 yrs.	94.5
Combining Work and School (%)	7-14 yrs.	1.2
Primary Completion Rate (%)		102.1

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2014, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2015. (4)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's Analysis of Statistics from National Child Activity Survey, 2013. (5)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



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	Production of beans,* bananas, citrus fruits, cereals,* corn,* rice,* sugarcane, papayas,* and vegetables* (3, 6-11)
	Fishing,* including for fish,* lobster,* and conch* (3)
	Butchering or livestock raising,* including poultry* and cattle* (3)
Industry	Construction,* carpentry,* masonry,* wood carving* (3)
	Quarrying,* activities unknown (11)
Services	Street vending* (8)
	Retail vending* (3)
	Farm work,* yard work,* including chopping, using lawnmowers and machetes (3)
	Seamstressing* (3)
	Working and cooking in food service,* including wielding large mixers and grills (3)

Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (cont)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Auto repair* (3)
	Pumping gas* (3)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1, 2, 9-14)

* 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.







Agricultural work and street vending are reported to often take place in the company of parents.(8-10) The 2013 Report of the National Child Activity Survey estimated that 60 percent of working children engage in hazardous work, primarily in craft and trade, or in elementary occupations, such as yard cleaning, construction, farm or kitchen help, or common labor.(3) According to the 2013 Report of the National Child Activity Survey, the majority of children in hazardous work are boys, ages 14 to 17 years old, who reside in rural areas.(3)

Some reports indicate that some children working in the agricultural sector may be vulnerable to human trafficking or forced labor. (2) Children’s access to education is sometimes hindered when schools charge fees and parents must pay for textbooks, uniforms, and meals.(12, 15, 16)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Belize has ratified all 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	✓

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	12	Articles 54, 164, and 169 of the Labor Act; Articles 2 and 3 of the Shops Act (17, 18)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	14	Articles 2 and 7 of the Families and Children Act; Articles 2 and 164 of the Labor Act (17, 19)
Prohibition of Hazardous Occupations or Activities for Children	No		
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 8 of the Constitution; Articles 157 and 158 of the Labor Act (17, 20)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 11–14 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Act, 2013; Article 9 of the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (Prohibition) Act, 2013; Articles 49–51 of the Criminal Code (21-23)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 2, 11, 13, and 14 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Act, 2013; Articles 2–9 of the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (Prohibition) Act, 2013; Articles 49–51 of the Criminal Code (21-23)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations Related to Child Labor

Standard	Yes/No	Age	Related Legislation
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		
Minimum Age for Compulsory Military Recruitment	N/A*		
Minimum Age for Voluntary Military Service	Yes	18	Article 16 of the Defense Act (24)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	14	Articles 2 and 59 of the Education and Training Act; Articles 2 and 34 of the Education Act (15, 25)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 70 of the Education and Training Act; Article 45 of the Education Act (15, 25)

* No conscription.(26)

Article 169 of the Labor Act sets the general minimum age of employment at 12 years, which does not conform to international standards.(17, 27) However, Article 3(1) of the Shops Act sets the minimum age at 14 for work in wholesale or retail trade or business.(18)

Belizean law is not consistent with international standards on hazardous work. Under Article 164 of the Labor Act, children under age 14 are prohibited from working in industrial undertakings.(17) In Article 2 of the Labor Act, industrial undertakings include activities such as mining, manufacturing, and construction.(17) Although Article 7 of the Families and Children Act prohibits children under age 18 from being employed or engaged in any activity that may be detrimental to their health, education, or mental, physical, or moral development, Belizean law does not specify which activities are included in this; however, this article is subject to the Labor Act, which explicitly permits children over age 14 to work in industrial undertakings.(19) Research determined that Belizean law lacks a list of comprehensive activities that are prohibited for all children under age 18.

The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (Prohibition) Act and the Criminal Code prohibit all forms of child sexual exploitation, with the former explicitly prohibiting child pornography.(22, 23) Article 3(2) of the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (Prohibition) Act, however, permits consensual sex with a child age 16 or 17, including cases in which a person gives or promises remuneration, gifts, goods, food, or other benefits. This provision leaves these children vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor.(22, 28) Research could not determine whether laws prohibit the use of children in specific illicit activities, such as drug trafficking.(29)

Although Article 70 of the Education and Training Act and Article 45 of the Education Act make primary and secondary education tuition-free in Belize, schools may charge fees, with the approval of the chief education officer.(15, 25)

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, Local Government, and Rural Development	Identify cases and enforce laws related to child labor and hazardous child labor through its Labor Department.(6, 10, 11)
Ministry of Human Development and Social Transformation, Department of Human Services	Receive referrals for child labor cases; train immigration officials, labor inspectors, and the Belize Police Department (BPD) in making referrals; and handle human trafficking cases.(6, 9, 30) Provide victims with welfare services, including medical and social services and counseling assistance.(11, 31)
BPD	Investigate cases of commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking through its Sexual Offense and Family Violence Units.(6, 7, 9)
Office of the Director of Public Prosecution	Prosecute criminal offenses, including cases of commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking.(32)

Belize

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT

Labor Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether labor law enforcement agencies in Belize took actions to combat the worst forms of child labor.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2014	2015
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (10, 33)	Unknown (11)
Number of Labor Inspectors	26 (10)	24 (11)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Unknown	Unknown (11)
Training for Labor Inspectors		
■ Initial Training for New Employees	Unknown	Unknown (11)
■ Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A	N/A (11)
■ Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown	Yes (11)
Number of Labor Inspections	1,800 (31)	Unknown* (11)
■ Number Conducted at Worksites	Unknown	Unknown (11)
■ Number Conducted by Desk Reviews	Unknown	Unknown (11)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (10)	Unknown (11)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (10)	Unknown (11)
■ Number of Penalties Imposed That Were Collected	Unknown (10)	Unknown
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Yes‡ (10)
■ Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (10)	Yes‡ (10)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (10)	Yes‡ (10)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown	Unknown
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (10)	Yes‡ (10)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes	Yes (11)

* The Government does not make this information publicly available.

‡ Data are from January 1 to December 31, 2014.

In 2015, the Labor Department employed 24 labor inspectors in 9 offices throughout the country, a decrease from 26 inspectors in 10 offices in 2014.(9-11) The budget allocated to the Labor Department for the reporting period was \$841,666, an increase from \$765,000 in 2014; however, the exact amount dedicated to labor inspections is unknown.(11, 31) Labor inspectors conduct both routine- and complaint-driven labor inspections, but information on the number of complaints is not available. Reports indicate that labor inspections in rural, agricultural areas were hampered by a lack of resources, including vehicles and fuel.(10)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2015, criminal law enforcement agencies in Belize took actions to combat the worst forms of child labor (Table 7).

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2014	2015
Training for Investigators		
■ Initial Training for New Employees	Unknown (10)	Unknown (11)
■ Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (10)	N/A (11)
■ Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (10)	Yes (11)
Number of Investigations	Unknown	Unknown (11)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown	0 (30)
Number of Convictions	0 (34)	0 (30)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Unknown	Yes (11)

In 2015, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecution employed nine criminal prosecutors, a number reported to be insufficient to effectively investigate all criminal offenses in the country, including the worst forms of child labor.(32)

In 2015, the 24 labor inspectors of the Labor Department worked with the BPD to enforce criminal laws on the worst forms of child labor.(11) The BPD investigated seven new human trafficking cases involving six individuals, four of whom were children.(30) No prosecutions and no convictions were documented during the reporting period.(30) As of 2015, the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions noted that no human trafficking convictions have been made since 2005.(34) Reports indicate that criminal investigators and police officers lacked sufficient resources, including vehicles, to effectively investigate violations of criminal law, including the worst forms of child labor.(32)

The Women’s Department of the Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation provided training on human-anti-trafficking during the reporting period.(11) It worked with a local NGO, the Child Development Foundation, to provide training on child abuse and protection to 101 frontline officers, including police, labor, immigration, and social workers.(11) In addition, the International Law Enforcement Academy provided a 5-day training for 8 police officers on Trafficking in Persons and Child Exploitation.(30)

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 8).

Table 8. Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Child Labor Committee	Coordinate efforts between ministries to combat child labor and implement the National Child Labor Policy. Led by the Ministry of Labor and 14 government and civil society members.(6, 7, 27)
Anti-Trafficking in Persons Council	Identify and rescue human trafficking victims, train law enforcement officials, and educate the public about the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Led by the Vice Minister of Human Development and Social Transformation and includes 12 other government agencies and civil society organizations.(2, 6, 7, 33)
National Committee for Families and Children	Promote, monitor, and evaluate Belize’s compliance with its national and international commitments to children, including the UN CRC, which includes protections against the commercial sexual exploitation of children and the use of children in illicit activities, such as drug trafficking.(31)

The National Child Labor Committee is responsible for implementing the National Child Labor Policy;(27) however, research could not determine whether the committee has convened during the reporting period.(11)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government of Belize has established policies related to child labor, including its worst forms (Table 9).

Table 9. Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
National Child Labor Policy	Establishes a rights-based framework to eradicate child labor. Focuses on priority areas that include strengthening current child labor laws, creating new legislation to address existing gaps, and providing educational assistance to children who have been or who are currently engaged in child labor.(7, 35) Promotes awareness and advocacy efforts, the strengthening of government institutions and services, and the training of labor officers to identify and provide care to children engaged in child labor.(7, 27, 35)
Anti-Trafficking in Persons Strategic Plan of Action (2013–2015)	Charts a human rights, victim-centered approach to human trafficking that focuses on prevention, protection, and prosecution. Developed in 2012 with the IOM. Defines the roles and responsibilities of the constituent members of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Council.(2)
CARE Model	Coordinates the protection, care, and monitoring of sexually exploited and trafficked children. Outlines the role of the Department of Human Services and the BPD in receiving allegations of commercial sexual exploitation of children, makes referrals to other agencies for services, and protects children from future exploitation.(6, 33)
National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents (2004–2015)	Calls for the revision of child labor legislation and includes the following three aims: (1) to establish protocols to improve interagency coordination, (2) to increase institutional capacity to enforce legislation, and (3) to strengthen child labor prevention programs, including the creation of awareness-raising campaigns. Prioritizes child labor issues, including the worst forms of child labor.(2, 36, 37)
National Development Framework, Horizon 2030*	Promotes economic growth and national well-being. Recognizes education as a basic human right and ensures access to quality education up through secondary school.(38, 39)

Table 9. Policies Related to Child Labor (cont)

Policy	Description
Ministry of Education, Early Childhood Development Policy (2011–2015)	Promotes the rights of children, from conception to age 8, and provides support to all primary caregivers. Aims to develop innovative programs that target families of child laborers, particularly those engaged in the worst forms of child labor, and to ensure those children attend school.(40)
Ministry of Education, Belizean Education Sector Strategy (2011–2016)*	Aims to improve the quality and accessibility of education by focusing on retention rates, years of attendance, and teacher training. Stems from collaboration among the Ministry of Education, the Caribbean Development Bank, and other educational stakeholders.(41)
Declaration of the Vice-Ministers of the XX Regional Conference on Migration	Aims to strengthen regional cooperation to protect the human rights of migrants, especially youth and children, in countries of origin, transit, and destination, including by increasing opportunities for education and employment. Adopted by Belize at the XX Regional Conference on Migration in Mexico City (November 2015).(42, 43) In 2015, the Government of Belize participated in two meetings with the Ad Hoc Group on Migrant Children and Adolescents of the Regional Conference on Migration to identify ways for member states to increase protections for underage migrants and refugees. These meetings promoted the exchange of information on migrant children’s rights and experiences, the guiding principles relating to migration, and the holistic protection of children and adolescents.(44)

* Child labor elimination and prevention strategies do not appear to have been integrated into this policy.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2015, the Government of Belize funded and participated in programs that may contribute to the prevention or elimination of child labor (Table 10).

Table 10. Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Building Opportunities for Our Social Transformation Program (2011–2015)†	Government-run, conditional cash transfer initiative to reduce poverty, funded in part by the World Bank, provides monetary incentives for families that comply with program requirements.(7, 45) Families must ensure that children ages 5 to 17 maintain an annual school attendance record of 85 percent.(6, 7, 45, 46) Program continued to expand in the southern most districts during 2015.(47)
Primary School Completers Subsidy Program†	Government-funded education program, increases school enrollment by providing families with cash subsidies, contingent upon children completing primary education.(7, 10, 48)
Certification of Primary School Teachers Program†	Countrywide teacher training program, improves quality of instruction, school attendance, and completion rates.(7)
Special Envoy for Women and Children Outreach Program†	Special Envoy for Women and Children campaign, raises awareness of the commercial sexual exploitation of children; includes hosting conferences and producing public service messages.(9, 10)
Global Action Program on Child Labor Issues Project (2011–2017)	USDOL project, established by the Hague Global Child Labor Conference in 2010 and implemented by the ILO in approximately 40 countries, to support the priorities of the Roadmap for Achieving the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor by 2016. Aims to improve evidence base on child labor through data collection and research.(49)
UNICEF Country Program (2013–2016)	UNICEF program to advance the rights of children by building institutional capacity to reduce disparities and inequalities, promote early childhood development, and increase educational opportunities. Geographic areas of focus include southern Belize and the south side of Belize City.(50)
Make Your Child Count Birth Registration Campaign (2011–2015)	UNICEF project that encourages parents to register children at birth to facilitate their access to education and health benefits.(10, 51)

† Program is funded by the Government of Belize.

Although the Government of Belize has a program to address the commercial sexual exploitation of children, research found no evidence that the Government has carried out programs to assist children working specifically in agriculture. The Government continues to face budgetary constraints for social programs that address child labor, and poverty remains high.(9)

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 Belize (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor, Including its Worst Forms

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure the law prohibits commercial sexual exploitation with children ages 16 and 17.	2013 – 2015
	Ensure the minimum age for work is 14 in all sectors.	2013 – 2015
	Adopt a list of hazardous occupations and activities prohibited for children and ensure that all children under age 18 are prohibited from engaging in hazardous work.	2009 – 2015
	Ensure that laws prohibit the use of children in specific illicit activities, such as drug trafficking.	2013 – 2015
Enforcement	Ensure that law enforcement agencies have sufficient resources to conduct labor inspections and criminal investigations.	2009, 2011 – 2015
	Make information publicly available on enforcement efforts to combat the worst forms of child labor, including the number of trainings, complaints, criminal investigations, convictions, and penalties.	2009 – 2015
	Make information publicly available on labor inspectorate responsibilities, including authority to assess penalties and conduct unannounced inspections, number of labor inspections conducted, and child labor violations found.	2015
Coordination	Conduct regular meetings of the National Child Labor Committee and develop concrete goals for the committee.	2015
Government Policies	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into national education and development policies.	2012 – 2015
Social Programs	Increase access to education by eliminating all fees and by providing textbooks, uniforms, and meals.	2011 – 2015
	Develop new programs aimed at reducing the worst forms of child labor, including in agriculture and commercial sexual exploitation.	2009 – 2015

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