

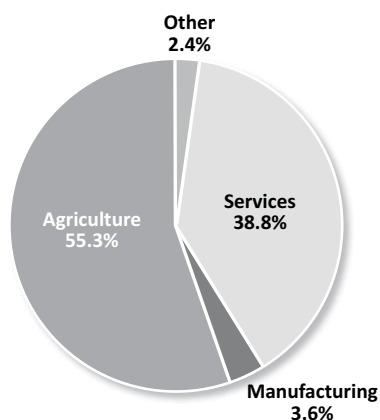
In 2011, Belize made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government worked with UNICEF to conduct a survey to collect information on child labor, among other topics. The Government also continued to implement the National Child Labor Policy and established a new Early Childhood Development Policy that aims to develop innovative programs targeting families of child laborers. In addition, the Government began implementing a cash transfer program to combat poverty and increase children's school attendance. As part of an overall 25 percent allocation of the national budget to education, the Government is also expanding secondary education and teacher training. However, Belize has not yet adopted into law the list of hazardous occupations included in the 2009 National Child Labor Policy and labor inspectors lack adequate resources to enforce child labor laws. Children also continue to be engaged in the worst forms of child labor, particularly in dangerous activities in agriculture and commercial sexual exploitation.



Statistics on Working Children and Education

| Children | Age | Percent |
|---------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| Working | 5-14 yrs. | 6.3 (33,660) |
| Attending School | 5-14 yrs. | 93.2 |
| Combining Work and School | 7-14 yrs. | 6.2 |
| Primary Completion Rate | | 105.3 |

Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Sources:

Primary completion rate: Data from 2010, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012.(1)

All other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from SIMPOC Survey, 2001.(2)

Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Some children in Belize are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including in dangerous activities in agriculture and commercial sexual exploitation.(3-6) Recent information on the worst forms of child labor and child labor in general in Belize is anecdotal.(3) Limited evidence suggests that children in rural areas work in agriculture after school, on weekends and during vacations.(7) They harvest bananas, citrus and sugar.(3) While country-specific information on the dangers children face in agriculture is not available, research studies and other reports have documented the dangerous nature of tasks in agriculture and their accompanying occupational exposures, injuries and potential health consequences to children working in the sector.(6)

In urban areas, children are found shining shoes and selling food, crafts and other small items.(5) While country-specific information on the dangers children face in street work is not available, research studies and other reports have documented the dangerous nature of tasks in street work and their accompanying occupational exposures, injuries and potential health consequences to children working in the sector. Children are also victims of commercial sexual exploitation.(4-6) Some poor families push their school-aged daughters to provide sexual favors in exchange for gifts and money, which is sometimes used to cover expenses associated

with schooling.(8) There are reports of children exploited in sex tourism and as victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation.(4, 5, 9, 10)

Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Labor Act of Belize sets the minimum age for work at age 14, although children ages 12 to 13 may engage in non-industrial jobs and other light work. The Act prohibits the employment of children under age 15 on vessels.(11) The Families and Children Act prohibits the employment of children under age 18 in hazardous work. While the 2009 National Child Labor Policy identifies a list of hazardous occupations prohibited for young workers, the Government of Belize has not yet adopted this list.(12-14)

| | | |
|---|---|-----|
|  | C138, Minimum Age | ✓ |
| | C182, Worst Forms of Child Labor | ✓ |
|  | CRC | ✓ |
| | CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict | ✓ |
| | CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography | ✓ |
|  | Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons | ✓ |
|  | Minimum Age for Work | 14 |
| | Minimum Age for Hazardous Work | 18 |
|  | Compulsory Education Age | 15 |
| | Free Public Education | Yes |

The Constitution prohibits forced labor.(15) Belizean law also prohibits the voluntary or compulsory recruitment of children under age 18 into military service.(16)

The Trafficking in Persons Prohibition Act of 2003 bans the trafficking of all persons, including children. This Act, along with the Criminal Code, considers sexual exploitation, including child pornography, to be a crime.(4, 17) The Criminal Code prohibits sex with a female under age 14 and the procurement or attempted procurement of a female under age 18 for the purpose of sex.(4, 18) However, the

latter does not apply when an underage female is considered “a common prostitute or of known immoral character.”(18) A 2006 ILO study points out that Belizean legislation does not cover boys nor does it provide a consistent definition of a “child.”(4) The Labor Code defines a child as under the age of 14 while the Criminal Code includes different ages, which has led to ambiguity when enforcing legislation.(4) During the reporting period, the Ministry of Human Development drafted legislation that would strengthen legislation to combat commercial sexual exploitation.(19)

The Education Act of 2010 establishes free and compulsory education until age 15.(20) However, access to education is hindered by school fees, lack of transportation and few trained teachers. Schools are allowed to charge fees and parents must pay for textbooks, uniforms and meals.(10, 21) More than 50 percent of primary school teachers do not have teaching qualifications.(21)

Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

The National Child Labor Committee (NCLC) coordinates efforts to combat child labor, including the implementation of the National Child Labor Policy. It is led by the Ministry of Labor, Local Government and Rural Development (MOL) and is made up of 15 government and civil society members.(3, 14) The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Committee is led by the Vice-Minister of Human Development and Social Transformation, and includes 12 other government agencies and civil society organizations.(3, 22, 23)

The MOL conducts labor inspections and enforces labor legislation. It has 23 labor inspectors in 10 offices throughout the country.(3) The MOL mandates that its offices conduct a minimum of four inspections per week. However, labor inspectors lack resources such as vehicles to carry out labor inspections and they are sometimes required to perform non-labor, inspection-related duties, which may give them less time to perform on-site labor inspections.(3) No information is available about the number of inspections that involved cases of child labor, the number of children found working illegally or the results of those inspections.

The MOL trains labor inspectors on a regular basis. To improve labor inspection reporting quality, the MOL included child labor and trafficking-in-persons issues in standardized reporting forms in 2011.(3) The MOL annual budget is less than \$500,000.(3)

Legislation on human trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation and the use of children in illicit activities is enforced by the Department of Human Services (DHS) of the Ministry of Human Development and Social Transformation and the Belize Police Department (DP). The Sexual Offense and Family Violence units of the Police Department conduct investigations of these crimes.(3) More than 400 law enforcement officials from DHS, DP, the MOL and Immigration officials received training on trafficking in persons supported by the Government of France, IOM and the U.S. Department of Justice.(3, 23)

During the reporting period, the DP and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions conducted investigations related to “carnal knowledge” of minors. Two individuals were convicted of human trafficking in January and February 2012, one of them for attempting to recruit an underage girl for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation.(23-25) Despite these efforts, law enforcement officials do not have adequate resources such as vehicles and surveillance equipment to perform their work.(23)

The Government has established a protocol to receive reports of child commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking from NGOs, and to assist child victims.(3, 23)

To ensure that children stay in school, the Education and Training Act of 2010 authorizes school community liaison officers to visit homes and inquire about the school attendance of children up to age 14, the compulsory school age.(3, 26) The truancy officers are also authorized to enforce the provisions within the Act and prosecute those in violation.(26)

Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The National Child Labor Policy guides efforts to combat child labor, especially the worst forms. Its priority areas include legislation and enforcement; education and training; awareness-raising and advocacy; and institutional strengthening and provision of social services for victims of child labor.(14) In 2011, as part of the implementation of this policy, the NCLC drafted child labor legislation that was discussed with the Labor Advisory Board, labor unions and the private sector.(3)

The National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents (2004-2015) seeks to ensure that the rights of children are fulfilled. It aims to prevent and eliminate the worst forms of child labor by revising labor legislation, developing protocols to improve inter-agency coordination, increasing institutional capacity to enforce legislation, strengthening child labor

prevention programs and carrying out awareness-raising campaigns.(27) Belize mainstreamed child labor into its National Poverty Elimination Action Plan (2007-2011), which seeks to combat poverty and foster economic growth.(28)

During the reporting period, Belize developed the National Development Framework, Horizon 2030, which lays out its strategy to promote economic growth and improve well-being. One of its principal pillars is to recognize education as a basic human right for all children and to provide access to quality education at least through secondary school.(29, 30) The Ministry of Education established the Early Childhood Development Policy for Belize to promote the rights of children and support the role of parents and families as primary caregivers. This policy aims to develop innovative programs that target families of child laborers, particularly those engaged in the worst forms of child labor, and to ensure that children stay in school and do not work.(31)

In 2011, UNICEF, in close cooperation with the Government of Belize, released a study on women and children, which points out that the lack of information on child labor hinders efforts to address this issue.(10) To respond to the paucity of information on child labor, the Government worked with UNICEF to carry out a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey to collect information on child labor, among other topics, in Belize. The results of the survey will be available in 2012.(3)

The Government, along with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the National Trade Union Congress, reviewed the National Decent Work Program (2009-2011) and approved it for the period of 2012-2015. The Program prioritizes labor legislation such as child labor laws.(32)

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

In 2011, the Government of Belize raised awareness of child labor and human trafficking, assisted child victims of commercial sexual exploitation and those at risk of being engaged in such practice and supported local NGOs' efforts to combat commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking.(3, 9, 23, 33) The MOL and DHS conducted an awareness-raising campaign to combat child labor and labor exploitation in areas that produce bananas and citrus in Southern Belize.(3)

In December 2011, the Government of Belize began to participate in a 4-year global project, funded by USDOL, to combat child labor. In Belize, the project will support child labor survey activities.(34) The Government also continues to

participate in a 2-year, \$250,000 project to address trafficking in persons, funded by USDOS.(35) Research has not identified other government programs designed to address the other worst forms of child labor, such as agriculture and street work.

Since February 2011, the Government of Belize has been implementing a cash transfer program to combat poverty. It supplements household income conditioned upon 85 percent school attendance for families with children ages 5 to 17 and 100 percent immunizations for families with children ages 0 to 5.(3, 36) It currently benefits 4,300 families.(37, 38) The Government also provides subsidies to families in southern Belize conditioned upon children completing primary school.(39) Despite these efforts, more than 40 percent of the Belizean population is poor and 16 percent live in extreme

poverty. In rural areas, poverty reaches higher levels. In the Toledo district, with a large population of indigenous Maya, more than 64 percent are poor.(36)

In 2011, the Government allocated 25 percent of the national budget to education, seeking to expand access to secondary education, improve teacher education and provide child care and early childhood education. It launched a training program for teachers from rural areas and established a certificate in primary education for teachers to acquire teaching skills.(3, 40, 41) In May 2011, Belize began to participate in a \$1.2 million project to improve its teaching force, supported by the IDB.(42) It is too early to assess the impact these programs have had on child labor reduction.

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

| Area | Suggested Actions | Year(s) Action Recommended |
|------------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| Laws and Regulations | Adopt a list of hazardous occupations prohibited for children. | 2009, 2011 |
| | Streamline the definition of a child in existing legislation. | 2011 |
| | Amend existing laws on sexual exploitation to extend protections to all children. | 2009, 2010, 2011 |
| Coordination and Enforcement | Make information publicly available on enforcement efforts to combat the worst forms of child labor, including the number of complaints, investigations, convictions and penalties. | 2009, 2010, 2011 |
| | Ensure that labor inspectors have sufficient time in their portfolios to conduct labor inspections and resources such as vehicles and that law enforcement officers have adequate equipment. | 2009, 2011 |
| Policies | Continue to increase access to education by eliminating fees and providing transportation and materials. | 2011 |
| | Conduct research to determine the extent and nature of the worst forms of child labor, particularly in agriculture, street work and commercial sexual exploitation. | 2010, 2011 |
| Social Programs | Develop programs aimed at reducing the worst forms of child labor, including agriculture and street work. | 2009, 2010, 2011 |
| | Expand anti-poverty programs aimed at vulnerable families in rural and urban areas. | 2011 |

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