

Child Labour in Belize: A Qualitative Study

Prepared for

**The Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on
Child Labour (SIMPOC)**

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PREFACE

The International Labour Office (ILO), through the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), has transformed the process of prevention and gradual elimination of child labour into a universal cause.

Throughout the world, child labour is a widespread, complex and multi-faceted phenomenon. Nevertheless, the lack of reliable information and of quantitative and qualitative analyses hinders finding effective means to confront the problem. For many years, the lack of information regarding its causes, magnitude, nature, and consequences, has been a considerable obstacle to arrive at a course of efficient action to confront, stop and eliminate this phenomenon that affects millions of children worldwide.

Since 1998, the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour coordinates the Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour (SIMPOC), with the aim of helping participating countries generate child labour data that is comparable among them. SIMPOC's global objective is to generate, by means of household surveys, quantitative data regarding children's scholastic activities, and regarding those economic and non-economic activities that children perform outside of school. Furthermore, SIMPOC aims to collect qualitative data and establish child labour databases. These data have been used as the base for different studies conducted in the participating countries.

The gathering and analysis of reliable data is the basis for developing effective interventions against the work of children. The data gathered in the different countries and the studies conducted based on these data, are meant to facilitate the development, the implementation and the monitoring of policies and programmes against this phenomenon, as well as to promote social attitudes in favour of the sustainable prevention and progressive eradication of child labour.

I am certain that the information presented in this study about child work in the country will contribute to improve the understanding and increase the sensitivity towards the situation of child workers, and will allow the elaboration of better strategies to combat this phenomenon.

Acquiring an increasingly clearer view of this phenomenon, each of the participating countries can undoubtedly envision a more effective process and a shorter path to achieve a world without child labour.

Carmen Moreno
Subregional Coordinator
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Panama, Dominican Republic, Haiti and Mexico

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I would like to thank the Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour (SIMPOC) and the International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) of the International Labour Organization (ILO) for involving Belize in studying the situation of Child Labour in the region. The information generated will help to understand the state of child labour in the country in an effort to illuminate and better the labour conditions of working children and to comply with the national labour laws, the ILO Conventions related to child labour, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

I am grateful to the Ministry of Labour, Local Government, and the Sugar Industry and the Central Statistical Office (CSO) for providing information in a timely manner for this study and for interviews of some officers. Special thanks is extended to Mr. Adelfino Vasquez, Ms. Claire Lamb, and Mr. Ramon Pook, labour officers, Mr. Paul Williams, Acting Labour Commissioner, and Nevia Quewell, statistical assistant.

I also appreciate the assistance of the individuals who voluntarily and honestly gave information in interviews. These individuals are too numerous to be identified individually so I would like to recognize them by group. The groups are working children, parents of working children, principals of schools, heads of government units, managers of businesses, and leaders and field officers of NGOs and workers' organizations.

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The currency referred to in this document is Belize dollars which has the following equivalency.

$$\text{BZ\$2} = \text{US\$1}$$

Executive Summary

The population of Belize in 2001 was 257,310 of which 41 percent was below age fourteen and 50 percent was younger than eighteen years¹. The unemployment rate as of April 1, 1999 was 12.8 percent. The future workforce of the country is highly dependent on the young population. The children of Belize have to be empowered through education, health and socialization to become productive individuals. To accomplish this, child labour, especially the worst forms, needs to be eliminated.

This report is based on qualitative findings, which may represent the situation on the ground, but an empirical assessment would triangulate the findings and provide a higher degree of validity. There is no other empirical study on child labour in Belize besides this qualitative study and its complimentary quantitative component, except for the area-specific child labour survey done in Corozal District from September 2000 to September 2001 as part of a Corozal Child Labour Project. However, there is a lot of anecdotal evidence of child labour. For many stakeholders, child labour is one of a multiplicity of family problems and is presently in the background of all the other issues such as child abuse, family violence, and child maintenance. This study concluded that child labour is a new concept in Belize.

Many children are going to work instead of to school or to play. Their work includes possible worst forms of child labour such as domestic work, work in commercial agriculture, and working street children. Some children are also forced into prostitution/sex tourism and some are trafficked.

The laws governing child labour in Belize are stated in different Acts of the Laws of Belize but none of them use the term ‘child labour’ and they are inconsistent on what the minimum age for working is and who is a child. This makes the laws on child labour open to different interpretations and loopholes. To address this problem, a manual, which draws on existing jurisprudence and academic opinion and interfaces the international and domestic laws, should be developed. Most of the individuals in authority interviewed, except the labour officers, did not know what the minimum age for working

¹ Central Statistical Office, Belmopan.

was and those who said fourteen used the compulsory age for education as their gauge rather than the labour law.

Neither the laws of Belize nor any circulated document in Belize reflect the worst forms of child labour. Consequently, the worst forms of child labour are not understood by most of the stakeholders including parents.

The most comprehensive section of the Laws which deals with child labour is Part Fifteen entitled 'Employment of Women and Children' of the Labour Act which is Chapter 297 of the Laws of Belize (Revised 2000). As a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and three ILO Conventions (58, 138 & 182) dealing with child labour, Belize has an obligation to other states that is binding on the Belizean judiciary. An International Labour Organization Conventions Act was passed in 1999 to allow all ILO Conventions ratified by Belize to have the force of law in Belize. The penalties for violating the minimum age to work and other laws related to child labour range between twenty and fifty dollars, which are considered lenient. These laws are not minimally enforced and no case of violating employers paying the fees was reported.

Child labourers are found throughout the country with higher concentrations in rural agricultural communities and some urban centres. Most children work in commercial and subsistence agriculture, tourism, and out-of-home domestic work. Some are forced into prostitution/sex tourism. There are children who are involved in the worst forms of child labour including hazardous work in commercial agriculture, sexual exploitation, work in the streets, trafficked children and child domestic work.

Child labour occurs mainly in large families, single parent families, and head of families with less than primary school education. Since poverty is the main cause of child labour families should be provided with income-generating alternatives to break the poverty cycle. Another contributing factor is the educational system due to limited classroom space, uninteresting curriculum and language barriers.

There are no projects or programmes in the country that address the issue of child labour. This is further compounded with an inadequate number of labour, truancy, and social development officers, to monitor and ensure that the rights of all individuals including children are upheld.

The Ministry of Education should explore scheduling school holidays to interface with the agricultural seasons especially for rural schools. This would allow children to attend school and engage in agricultural work during their holidays. This would not be an attempt to promote child labour but an effort to ensure the right of the child to an education and would reflect the economic reality on the ground. The Ministry of Education should also make available more space for new students in primary schools, repeaters of grade eight, and high school students. Government should reexamine its compulsory age for schooling to provide for the students who have successfully completed primary school and who have problems meeting the cost of high school or who cannot find available space in high school.

A multi-sectorial strategy to eradicate child labour in the country should be developed along similar lines as the national plan of action to fight against HIV/AIDS. This strategy should mainstream child labour issues into priorities, socio-economic policies, programmes and budgets of civil society and government organizations. Some of the key players should be Ministry of Labour, Department of Human Development, National Committee for Families and Children (NCFC) which oversees the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Health Education Community Participation Bureau (HECOPAB), labour organizations, the School Service Division of the Ministry of Education and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). In this strategy, the Ministry of Labour should work closely with the Truancy Programme of the Ministry of Education to curb child labour since the truancy officers are in the field daily and have a rapport with teachers and children.

There is a dire need for more labour officers to monitor and evaluate all labour activities in the country. I strongly recommend the amalgamation of the Ministry of Labour and the Social Security Board, which would realize synergy in addressing labour issues in the country.

At the international level, Belize should lobby for the introduction of the "Red Card to Child Labour" programme in Belize. This programme has many energetic activities centred around football to build awareness to fight against child labour. Some of these activities include spectators waving the "Red Card against Child Labour" at football games, screaming messages from players and celebrities at games, and

displaying banners of “Red Card against Child Labour.” This programme would be effective in Belize because football is one of the most popular sports in the country. Regionally, Belize should pursue the establishment of bilateral agreements between Belize and Guatemala and Mexico to fight cross-border trafficking of children. This agreement should include the prevention, traffic control, and repatriation of trafficked children. Further research is recommended for Rapid Assessments of domestic work and sexual exploitation.

Introduction

This research was done for the Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour (SIMPOC), which is managed by the International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) of the International Labour Organization (ILO). The main goal of SIMPOC is to assist member countries in establishing the following:

1. A programme for the collection, use and dissemination of tabulated and raw quantitative and qualitative data on the scale, distribution, characteristics, causes and consequences of child labour.
2. A basis for child labour data analysis to be used in planning, formulating and implementing multi-sectorial, integrated interventions, monitoring the implementation, and assessing the impact of policies and programmes.
3. A database on child labour consisting of qualitative information on institutions and organizations active in the field of child labour, child labour projects and programmes, industry-level action, and national legislation and indicators, which will be up-dated on a continuing basis as new information becomes available.

The objective of this study was to collect information on the social, economic, educational, cultural and labour situation of working children in Belize. This information was collected using a variety of data collection techniques. These included observations at work sites, interviews of stakeholders including teachers, truancy officers, social welfare officers, working children, labour officers, educators, parents of working children, government and non-government organizations, workers organizations, and employers. A literature review was also done.

The researcher defines child labour in this study as work that deprives children, younger than 14 years, of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to their physical, mental, moral, spiritual, and social development. Children are expected to do light work in preparation for adulthood. However, is for those children whose rights, as outlined in the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention and the

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, are violated because of the work they do.

This is a baseline study in Belize on child labour and other studies should be done to further understand the problems in an effort to eliminate all forms of child labour, most importantly, the worst forms. A quantitative study to investigate the scope, characteristics and opportunity cost of child labour in Belize should follow. Even though child labour is not yet identified as a major problem in Belize, studies like this one will help to bring the problem to the forefront.

The underlining assumption of this study is that child labour violates children rights and is bad for the child and the society. However, some forms of child work are acceptable. Work that is done without violating the student rights can help children to develop good work ethics. For example, a child can water the plants at home every other day for twenty minutes during the summer months. This could help to promote responsibility, dedication, commitment, etc. in the child. Other examples of work that could help children to be better individuals without violating their rights include mowing the yard on weekends, planting vegetables, bathing the dog, and going to the store.

Background

Belize is located in northern Central America at 15 degrees 53' to 18 degrees 30' North latitude. She is bordered to the North by Mexico, to the South and West by Guatemala, and by the Caribbean Sea in the East. Belize is 174 miles (74 kilometres) long and 68 miles (109 kilometres) wide at its widest point and has an area of 8,867 square miles (22,700 square kilometres), which is approximately twice the area of Jamaica but her population was 240,204² in 2000 which was approximately one-tenth that of Jamaica. Belize is a Caribbean country and is the only English-speaking country in Central America. She shares similar economy, culture, and politics to other Caribbean countries.

Belize is divided into six administrative districts. The major economical activity in the two northern districts is sugar production, in the west it is tourism and cattle, and in the Southern districts it is citrus, banana, and tourism. Belize City is the commercial capital with approximately one-fifth of the country's population. Fishing and tourism are the economical activities of the cayes.

CSO reported that the unemployment rate in 1999 was 12.8%. And according to the Census Report, in 2000, 50% (71,422) of the working-age population was employed and 70% of the males and 30% of females were employed. In 2000 1.2% of the employed population was between 14 and 19 years inclusive. Sixty-six percent of the workforce was employed in the service sector, 27.6% in the agriculture sector, and 6.4% in the manufacturing sector. The literacy rate according to the 2000 Census was 75.1%. The Ministry of Education consistently offers adult literacy programmes to increase this rate.

In 2000 the mean income was \$835 per month³. More males were in the annual income brackets of \$27,360 and above than females, and more females were in the income brackets of \$5,459 and less than males. There was a noticeable difference in income between geographical areas. For example, Toledo district had the highest percentage (23%) that earned less than \$1,400 per annum and Belize district had the

² Population Census Major Findings, CSO.

³ Ibid.

lowest with less than 1%. In 1995, according to the Health in the Americas Belize Chapter, 33% of Belizeans lived in poverty, with 13% being very poor.

The 1995 Poverty Assessment by the Government shows that Toledo district has the highest level of poverty with a poverty rate of 58% and almost half of the households in the district were classified as poor. Forty-seven percent of the households and 40% of the individuals in the Toledo district were indigent. The Mayas are the dominant ethnic group in Toledo and 66% of them were poor and 30% were indigent. Overall the Mayas account for almost one quarter of the country's poor⁴. A National Height Census of children aged six to nine years old conducted in 1996 showed that most of the stunting was found in the Toledo district (39%). A poverty assessment was done in 2002 but the report is not completed.

In 2001 the per capita income was \$5,318 and the inflation rate was 1.1%.

There are eleven ethnic groups in the country and according to the 2000 Census the majority of people in Belize are Mestizo/Spanish (48.7%), followed by Creole (24.9), Garifuna (6.1%), and Maya Ketchi (5.3%). The other smaller ethnic groups include Maya Mopan, Mennonite, East Indian, Maya Yucatec, Caucasian/White, Chinese, and Black/African. The Mestizo/Spanish are concentrated in the Northern and Western districts, the Creoles in Belize District, the Garifuna in Southern districts and the Mayas in Toledo District. The Mennonites are mainly in the Cayo and Orange Walk Districts⁵. English is the official language of the country but each of the ethnic groups also communicates in its own language. Spanish and Creole are widely spoken.

In 2000, 52.3% of the population resided in rural areas and 47.7% in urban centres and 15% were immigrants of whom 73% were from Central America mainly from Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras⁶. These immigrants came to work mainly in the agricultural sector and are found throughout the country with higher concentrations in Cayo and Stann Creek Districts. Those who work in the agricultural industry would typically engage most members of the family in their work. These immigrants provide a service to the agricultural sector that many Belizeans are unwilling to supply. The constant influx of Central American immigrants to Belize has contributed to the change

⁴ Health in the Americas Belize Chapter.

⁵ Population Census Major Findings, CSO.

in ethnic composition of the country. In 1991 the leading ethnic group was Creole (Blacks) (29.8%) and Mestizo/Spanish (43.7%) and in 2000 it was Creole (Blacks) (24.9%) and Mestizo/Spanish (48.7%).

In 1991 life expectancy at birth was 71.8 and females (74.07) had a life expectancy of approximately 4 years more than males (69.95) and according to the 2000 Census the fertility rate was 3.7%. In 1999 the under-five mortality rate, which is a critical indicator of the well being of children, was 43⁷. For the same year Belize was ranked 82nd in the world⁸ for her under-five mortality rate with one being the highest mortality rate. The mortality rate is the probability of dying between birth and exactly five years of age expressed per 1,000 live births. The number one cause of death in the general population in 2000 was pulmonary circulation and other forms of heart diseases (12.8%), the second cause was hypertensive diseases (11.2%), the third was cerebrovascular diseases (8.0%), the fourth was ischaemic heart diseases (7.2%), and the fifth was diabetes (5.8%)⁹.

⁶ CSO.

⁷ The State of the World's Children 2001.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ National Health Information & Surveillance Unit, Ministry of Health.

1.0 The Nature, Trends and Characteristics of Child Labour

1.1 Causes and consequences of child labour

Child labour in Belize is caused mainly from poverty and is exacerbated by cultural practices, large families and lack of education. The children who work do not work on their own volition but do so because their parents force them. A few exceptions are children who prefer to work than to attend school because there is little or no interest in school. Working could put children at a disadvantage to develop physically, mentally, economically, and socially. In Belize, working children are in many cases total or partially deprived of a primary and / or a secondary school education; totally because they are taken out of schools permanently, and partially because they go to school but are absent some days to work, or go to school everyday but have little or no time to study at home due to their work. This deprives the child of an education and perpetuates poverty within the family. This is what one child in the Corozal Child Labour Project had to say:

“I am 12 years old and my brother is 10 years old. We don’t go to school because we go out with our father to collect and load rocks into a truck to sell daily.”¹⁰

The shortage of labour officers restricts monitoring of child labour and so most cases of child labour in the formal sector go unnoticed and are not challenged¹¹.

Working children are also physically damaged by the tools and materials they work with. For example, many children get cut in the cane fields and are strained by lifting rocks in the agricultural fields in the Northern Districts and boxes of fruits in the Stann Creek District. In an effort to be productive, to satisfy their parents and employers, children tend not to eat on time, eat a balanced meal, and have adequate rest for their age and leisure time. These all contribute to stunt the physical development of the working children especially the Mestizo/Hispanic children who are small in stature.

¹⁰ Corozal Child Labour Project Booklet of Recommendations.

¹¹ Mrs. Eva Middleton, Director of the Child Labour Project in Corozal and Mr. Adelfino Vasquez, Labour Officer in the Ministry of Labour, shared this view.

The working children in Belize have very little time to play and socialize, two basic needs and rights of children. As a consequence, these children will not develop to be very productive individuals later in their lives like others who were awarded the opportunities to play and socialize during their formative years.

There is a strong correlation between income and education. When children become adults and need to provide for their own families they might not be able to do so adequately because they have little or no education.

The society would also pay the consequences of children working because these individuals will continue to perpetuate the poverty of the family. These individuals most likely will be poor parents who will require their children to work and the vicious cycle of poverty will continue. These families will increase the need for social support services, which will mean an increase in cost to the society. For example, there will be a need for more truancy officers and well-fare officers because the number of working children will increase. A good example of this is a single parent mother with ten children in Roaring Creek, Cayo District. The mother sends the eldest daughter, who is twelve years old, to sell food at the bus terminal in Belmopan in the evenings after school. The girl got pregnant. How will this individual now provide for herself and her child? These children might also resort to criminal activities because of being poor; this would mean more work for the police and the courts and the need for more protection of individuals, families, homes, businesses, etc. Most of the parents of working children interviewed were from poor families and they also were working children themselves.

Sexually exploited/abused children are also vulnerable to contracting sexually transmitted illnesses (STIs), including HIV/AIDS, and unwanted pregnancy. Their vulnerability is critically high because they don't have a choice and their perpetrators are usually older persons who have been previously exposed to sexually transmitted illnesses and can be considered a part of the most vulnerable group for the transmission of STIs.

1.2 Child labour in the context of family income, working time, workplaces, gender issues, age, geographical and sectorial distribution

Child labour is influenced by many factors. The most pertinent context of child labour, including family income, working time, workplaces, gender issues, age geographical and sectorial distribution, are discussed in this section. Almost all of the Government agencies or NGOs that should be dealing with issues related to child labour as part of their portfolio, did not except for the truancy officers in the Ministry of Education and the labour officers in the Ministry of Labour. The feedback was that they had very little knowledge of child labour laws and occurrence and no working experience with working children. This absence in policy and thought is reflected in the fact that there was no child labour case in the Family Court or the Magistrates Courts that could be recalled by the head of these courts.

Family income

The income of the family of the children who are working is typically below \$25.00 per week. The poverty line reported by the government for 1995 was \$105.82 per month for a family of five comprising two adults, male and female, two children under age twelve, and one teenager (CSO, 1996) and the overall average weekly income of families was \$206.58 in 2000. The data for the 2002 poverty assessment are not yet available.

Parents of working children are labourers who earn minimum wages if and when they work. Because most of the working children are from large families, i.e., eight to twelve children, this income is not adequate to maintain the family. This necessitates efforts on the part of the older children to work to supplement the family income. The children are usually tightly spaced in age with one or two years differences with young adolescents being the eldest. In other cases, the child might be the only one or the oldest one living with a parent or grandparent who is sick or unemployed, so the child has to support the family. One child in Corozal described her situation as follows:

“My mother is pregnant and will have the tenth child, my 16 year old sister is also pregnant. The three boys ages twelve, ten, and nine work hard daily cutting wood, burning them into charcoal and bagging them for sell. We also work as cane cutters and field cleaners with our father. When the money is collected our father buys alcohol and gets drunk sometimes.”

Working time

The School Attendance Service of the Ministry of Education has placed many children back into school. The vigilance of the truancy officers has reduced absenteeism in schools so children who have to work would work in the evenings after school. As an example, in Orange Walk District the truancy officers arranged for students to do their selling in the evenings or after school. This practice contravenes the law because they work for more than two hours on a school day and work after six o'clock, but this is a pragmatic solution for this situation because the child gets to work and go to school. This practice has not resulted in any reported sexual exploitation. Children, who have dropped out of school or who have been absent themselves on certain days, work from early morning to late evening. Some school children reported starting their day at five in the morning to prepare food for their parents to sell and one child reported starting her day at three in the morning to prepare the meat for tacos for her father to sell. The children from Belize City who are involved in prostitution mostly engage in these activities during the late evenings and nights¹².

The children who sell at the bus terminals do so in Orange Walk, Corozal, and Cayo from as early as six in the morning to about seven in the evening. These children are mainly Guatemalan nationals who are not attending school and typically work for an agent who brought them to Belize. Creole, Garifuna and Mestizo children who do street vending do so mainly after school and on weekends. For jobs like chopping yards and agricultural work, children work from early morning before the sun gets hot until late evening, which ranges between five in the morning and six in the evening. For baby-sitting and house sitting, work starts around seven in the

¹² Director of Human Service, Ministry of Human Development.

morning until about four or five in the evening. Lunch break would typically be about half an hour.

Work places

The working children of Belize are involved in a variety of jobs. The most common areas are commercial and subsistence agriculture, street vending, and domestic service. Most of the working children in agriculture cut cane, harvest beans and citrus, and collect rocks in agricultural fields. Some also work in milpas (rotating farms) owned by families. The children who do vending work in their respectful communities and at bus stations. However, there are some children from Stann Creek who go to sell fruits and vegetables in Belize City and some from rural Toledo who go to Mango Creek and Belize City to sell crafts. Many of the working children can be seen at markets throughout the country selling fruits and vegetables with their parents or someone else. This was evident in Punta Gorda Town, Belize City, and San Ignacio Town.

The managers of factories uphold the minimum age of sixteen years for employment. Consequently, children are not working in factories. At one of the factories visited for this study, a flier on the notice board regarding standards for “vendors” had a section on child labour. This company exports its products to the United States. The notice states that “... will not tolerate the use of child labour in the manufacture of products it sells... No person shall be employed at an age younger than 15 (or 14 where the law of the country of manufacture allows) or younger than the age for completing compulsory education in the country of manufacture...”¹³

The children involved in prostitution operate out of their homes and go to a location of their clients’ choice. These children function on their own in what could be considered an “informal” business. The children that were suspected of being involved in some form of prostitution did not give any details of their activities. The Human Development Office reported that it experiences the same problem in trying to help children suspected of being victims of prostitution.

¹³ This notice is from Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. in the United States

Gender issues

Both girls and boys are involved in child labour with the majority being boys at an approximate ratio of three to two. This ratio might be closer because there is a likelihood that girls are undercounted as they are engaged to a greater extent in prostitution/sex tourism, and domestic work, which are more hidden forms of child labour than the agriculture and street selling that boys tend to engage in. The boys do traditional male-work like cutting with a machete and farming and the girls do traditional female-work like cooking and baby-sitting. Boys are the ones who work in agriculture and sell at bus stations while the girls traditionally engage in domestic work and selling in around the community. Both are exposed to prostitution. According to the school wardens and the social well-fare officers in Corozal District, Orange Walk District, and Belize City, children are involved in pornography but they have no concrete evidence to substantiate the claim. The Director of Human Services in Belize City reported that almost on a daily basis they have cases of out-of-school children engaged in prostitution/sex tourism. The main challenge of these cases is that the children and their parents do not give evidence. Instead, some parents support the children and encourage them not to give evidence.

Among the Mayas and the Mestizos, if they can only send one of two children to primary or high school, they will send the boy and keep the girl at home. If they need domestic work done they would keep the girl at home but if they need to take one of the children to the farm or to work in the field they would take the boy. The Mennonites, on the other hand, close their schools during harvest time so that their male children could work but they get the same number of days in school as other children who attend schools that follow the set school holidays.

Age

Children who work age range from eight to thirteen years. Children between the ages of fourteen and seventeen inclusive are also working but they are allowed to do some jobs by the Laws of Belize under certain conditions such as time of the day. The principal of one of the schools visited said that in Orange Walk most of the children who are working are between eight and eleven years. The younger

children, eight to ten years, do vending and domestic work while the ones who would be involved in agriculture were between twelve and thirteen years old.

Almost all companies in Belize offer employment to high school students between fourteen and seventeen inclusive to assist students who need money for their education. There are many individuals in this age range that have left school and are working especially in the agricultural sector (sugar, banana, and citrus).

Mr. Freddie Cabb of the Corozal Labour Project said that a child under fourteen years should not work if he has not finished primary school but if he is finished, he should be allowed to do certain work.

Geographical and sectorial distribution

Most child labour occurs in the rural areas where the highest incident of poverty exists in Belize. Most working children work in the agricultural sector (citrus, banana, and sugar) and the others work in commerce as street vendors. The poor families who don't have any or very little skills drift towards the agricultural industries to reside and find jobs. This is evident in the banana, citrus and sugar operations. When the families are desperate the children are forced to work to help sustain the family. Some rural children work in the adjacent city as vendors. About two-thirds of the street vendors interviewed were children from Guatemala. The children only come to Belize to work.

From the information collected and the visits made, there seems to be more children working in Corozal, Orange Walk, and Stann Creek districts than the other districts because of the high presence of commercial agricultural activities. This claim needs to be empirically validated.

In rural Toledo District the Mayas take their children to work on the family farm during the planting and harvesting periods of the year. Children of both genders are taken out of school to be engaged in the agricultural work of their families. The females would help cook and baby sit and the boys would go to the farm. The females in the Maya communities leave school when they are fourteen or younger, if they are not high school bound. They would leave to learn survival skills at home. This aspect of the Mayan culture is however dissipating. According

to Mr. Kukul, who is the District Education Center Manager for Toledo and a Maya himself, the root of child labour among the Maya is survival driven and not money driven. He said if school is not perceived as being successful, then the earlier children learn survival skills the better for them. The boys learn how to use a machete and the girls how to cook.

1.3 Economic sectors in which child labour exists

In Belize, child labour outside of the family exists mainly in the agricultural and commerce sectors and to a limited extent in the tourism sector. Children work in agriculture for their family and for companies and individuals who either employ them directly or through someone. In the citrus industry, Del Oro, the citrus company, contracts out the harvesting of fruits and the contractor hires individuals to work. These individuals then get others usually their family members including children to work for them to get the job done. Some of these other individuals and family member are illegal aliens. In the Northern district many of the working children work in the sugar industry and others work in the production of beans and other agriculture crops.

Most children who work in agriculture work all day from early morning to late evening and are exposed to the gruelling weather conditions of sun and rain. Because of the nature of their work they are subjected to injuries from machete and other tools and from lifting things. Their lives are further marginalized by the cold unbalanced meals they have comprised of mainly a staple food such as rice, corn or flour.

Some working children work in commerce, selling snacks, newspapers, and arts and crafts. Most of the children who do vending at the buses are from Melchor de Mencos, Peten, Guatemala. Children of families with small businesses typically work in the business selling after school. This is evident in many Chinese businesses that don't sell liquor and in grocery shops and stores. Many high school students work in the Corozal Free Zone during the weekends and holidays.

Some children sell arts and crafts to tourists in places like Succotz near the Mayan ruin of Xunantunich in the Cayo District and Nim Li Punit, in Toledo District, and in a few places like Hopkins, Stann Creek District and Caye Caulker, Belize District, children sell bread and other food products. A few children are also allegedly involved in sex tourism in Orange Walk, Corozal, and Cayo Districts.

The children who sell in family owned businesses are usually from the lower middle class or higher. And those who work in agriculture and are street vendors are considered among the poorest families in the country. Some of the basic needs of families of working children are satisfied by having their children work which although is helpful to the family in the short run in the long run is destructive to the individual. Working children grow up with little education and low self-esteem, which later make them poor parents.

According to the teachers and truancy officers many of the working children under fourteen years regularly absent from or drop out of school. These children are both males and females who work mainly in agriculture and do domestic work, respectively. These children are deprived of some of their fundamental rights including rights to education, play and rest. The females are also vulnerable to sexual abuse that could lead to pregnancy and the contracting of sexual transmitted illnesses including HIV/AIDS. The principal consequence of child labour for males besides the deprivation of their rights is being vulnerable to injuries as discussed above.

1.4 Risks of working children

Realistically there is immediate financial gratification in child labour. Unfortunately, this gratification is short term. The state of national and international needs demand a community with the skills necessary to be productive. When children work instead of receiving an intrinsically more valuable asset, an education, they will be condemned to lifelong poverty.

According to Mr. Novelo, of the Corozal Child Labour Project, the jobs performed by working children do not allow for their personal development and well-being. Many children are taken to the clinics and hospitals in Orange Walk and

Corozal Districts to receive treatment for injuries sustained in agricultural fields. These include cuts, broken bones, dehydration, and strains. Many of the children who, work in agricultural fields in an effort to accomplish a task, over extend themselves, which stunts their optimal growth, and development. This is also compounded with unbalanced and nutritionally deficient meals. The researcher observed two children harvesting beans in Little Belize who had corn tortilla, beans and “Kool Aid” for lunch. Some poor children in Orange Walk and Corozal who go to school and not work would have similar meals but since they are not working, would more likely have the required number of daily calories than these two children.

Children who do street selling are also at risk for sexual molestation, rape, harassment, and physical and verbal abuses. Children will also lie to ensure that their task of selling is successfully completed. One child in Orange Walk Town said that if she goes home without selling all her panades her parents would lash her so one time she and her little brother ate all the panades. They told their parents that they sold all their panades and a little boy beat them up and took their money. Two girls in rural Toledo had a sexual relation with a man who would buy most of the food they sold around the village.

Mrs. Archer, one of the truancy officers in Toledo, said there is a need for training in parenting to help address the problems children are facing and to reduce the vulnerability of children to abuses and the violation of their rights. Many of the instances of child labour and abuses of children she observes are with stepparents.

1.5 Terms of work for working children

Working children in Belize are not given any written contract or job description. The information typically given to the child regards payment, how the work is to be done, and when the task is to be completed and would be orally given. In cases where the child works outside of the home the parent or guardian acts as the agent for the child to get the job and to collect on behalf of the child. A child in such case would earn between \$30 and \$60 per week of which the child might receive no payment directly or up to \$10. When children work for their families as

in selling food or with their families as in the harvesting of beans and oranges, they are not paid but their families are. There is no evidence of children working to pay off debt.

Working children typically would have a minimum task to complete, e.g., sell a specific amount of items or cut a specified amount of cane. They are paid based on task completed. Mr. Lord, a labour officer, said that children are involved in “unsupervised productive agriculture”. This is when a person is given a job and the contractor does not supervise the job. He only checks the finished job. It can be concluded that working children are treated as if they don’t have rights. For example, a male child in Punta Gorda Town who “chops yard” gets two dollars of the thirty-five dollars paid for the job. His stepfather gets the balance. In cases with children who do domestic work, the goal is to get the job done regardless of the deprivation of the individuals to an education.

In poor families and families in which the child is the only one who is capable of working the child is forced to work. There are many cases in which the child is living with a grandparent or a mother who was incapable of working so the child was forced to work. In some poor families the children have no choice but to go with the other family members to do jobs, like picking oranges, that earn money for the family. The only organized child labour in the country is the Guatemalan children who sell on the street for an agent who brings them to Belize. Some sexually exploited/abused children are organized by agents.

2.0 Legal and Regulatory Framework

2.1 National and international legislation on child and adolescent labour

The definition of child and adolescent labour in Belize is confounded with multiple definitions of a child in the laws of Belize and other judiciary documents. Table 1 shows the different definitions of a child.

The Constitution of Belize states, “no person shall be held in slavery or servitude and no person shall be required to perform forced labour” (Constitution of Belize, 2000, p. 22). It further qualifies what is forced labour. There is no specific reference to or interpretation of ‘child labour’ or ‘minimum age for employment’ in the constitution or in The Labour Act (Chapter 297 of the Laws of Belize). However, the Labour Act makes reference to ‘employment of children’, ‘contracts by children and young persons’, ‘non-adults to be recruited’, etc. A ‘child’ according to this Act is a person who is under the age of fourteen years and a ‘young person’ is a person who is fourteen years but is not yet eighteen years. According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child is anyone who is below the age of eighteen years (UNICEF, 1998). So the labour laws of Belize allow for child labour as child is defined by this Convention.

Based on ILO Convention 138, Belize has set its minimum age for employment at 14 years. Belize has a law that the ILO conventions ratified by her supersede the laws of Belize. The minimum age for employment is not clear in the Labour Act of Belize because the Act indicates 12, 14, and 16 years. For example, Section 169 which is the most explicit section on minimum age states that “no child shall be employed so long as he is under the age of twelve years” (p. 96), but the Minister of Labour has the power to make regulations otherwise. On the other hand, Section 164 of the same Act states that “no one shall employ a child” and a child is defined as anyone under the age of fourteen years. (p. 94).

According to the Labour Act a person who is not yet eighteen years could work because the labour law states that any person who is under the age of eighteen years shall be competent to enter into a contract of service otherwise as an employer (Section 31). This law does not give a flooring age but the Education Act states that all children should

be in school until they are fourteen years (Chapter 36, Section 2). So this would mean that one could not enter into a contract if he is younger than fourteen. The Act also states that ‘no one shall employ a child in a public or private industrial undertaking or in a branch thereof’ (Labour Act, p. 94).

Table 1: Definition of a child

Source	A child is ...
Labour Act	a person who is under the age of 14 years
Families and Children Act	a person who is under the age of 18 years
ILO Convention 138	a person who is under the age of 14 years
ILO Convention 182	a person who is under the age of 18 years
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child	a person who is under the age of 18 years
Education Act	A child of compulsory school age is anyone who is between the ages of 5 and 14 years

Note: ILO Convention 138 defines a child as a person under the age of 18 but according to the Convention, in the case of Belize, the minimum age for employment is 14 years.

The issue of a child working under a contract is further clarified by Section 54 of the Labour Act which states that a child who is anyone younger than fourteen years is not allowed to enter into a contract, but a young person (14-17 years old) shall enter into a contract except for employment in an occupation approved by a labour officer as not being injurious to the moral or physical development of non-adults. Similarly, a child or young person cannot be recruited, but a young person may be recruited as an exception with permission from the Labour Commissioner and with consent of his parents or guardians (Section 71 of the Labour Act).

The Labour Act clearly qualifies working conditions for children. These conditions include the right to certain hours to attend school, sleep and rest (prohibition of night work) and the physical and moral effects of the work on the child (See Appendix A.). The Act recognizes the UN Convention of the Child which states that “the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education, or to be harmful to the

child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development" (UNICEF 1998, p. 46).

The Labour Act provides for appropriate regulation of the hours and conditions of employment of children as stipulated by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The law states that a person under the age of sixteen has the right to at least the twelve consecutive hours between 6:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. and for one who is sixteen or seventeen, at least twelve consecutive hours between 5:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. The law also states that a person under eighteen should not be employed at night in a public or private industrial undertaking. There are, however, exceptions for males who are sixteen but not yet eighteen, to work at night. There is no mention in the Act, of employment that is harmful to the child's spiritual, moral and social development, as is required by Article 32 of the UN Convention on the Right of the Child.

The Labour Act under the section that deals with employment of women and children accounts for the provisions called for by Article 32 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This Article calls for, "a) a minimum age or minimum ages for admission to employment, b) appropriate regulation of the hours and conditions of employment, and c) appropriate penalties or other sanctions to ensure the effective enforcement of the present article" (UNICEF 1998, p. 46). (See Appendix A for a list of some of the laws related to child labour in Belize, which indicate compliance with this Convention.) The Article of the Convention dealing with child labour is general in that it does not set any specific standard. For example, it states that a country should set minimum ages for employment. So regardless of what ages are set, they would be in compliance with the Convention. The authors of a manual for the use of the Convention in Canada said that "... its language may be too general to mandate a specific result in any given case¹⁴" in Canadian courts. Belize was the fifth country to ratify this Convention and has complied with its provisions by setting a minimum wage and regulating working conditions. The penalties or other sanctions to ensure the effective enforcement of the Article on child labour seem trivial. Employment of a child "is liable

¹⁴ Taken from "The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: A Practical Guide to Its Use in Canadian Courts".

on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding twenty dollars or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two months” (Labour Act, p. 98).

According to the Families and Children Act of the Laws of Belize, a child who is defined in this Act as anyone under the age of eighteen, shall be deemed unable to maintain himself by reason of tender age. This gives a person under the age of eighteen the freedom and right not to work. Because of poverty some persons under the age of eighteen have to work to meet their basic needs or they might have to resort to criminal activities to meet their needs. Mr. Adelfino Vasquez, a labour officer, shared this personal perspective. He also strongly subscribes to empowering individuals and encourages children to continue their education even if they have to work.

The Ministry of Labour subscribes to the aims and objectives of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and implements, as far as possible, the standards set out in certain ILO Conventions and Recommendations (Ministry of Labour, 2001). Belize has ratified 42 ILO Conventions of which 38 are enforced and three are related to child labour (58, 138 and 182). See Table 2 for these conventions. Conventions 5, 7, 10, and 15 are now incorporated into 138 so they are not enforced.

Table 2: ILO conventions related to child labour ratified by Belize

Convention No.	Convention	Minimum Age	Ratified
58	Minimum Age (Sea) Convention (Revised), 1936	16	15 th December, 1983
138	Minimum Age Convention, 1973	14	6 th March, 2000
182	Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999	18	6 th March, 2000

Convention No. 58 on Minimum Age (Sea) Convention (Revised) 1936 is reflected in our Labour Act with the same minimum ages of fifteen. The Labour Act refers to stokers, which are not found in Belize, but reflects our inherited colonial law.

Convention No. 182 on Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention is a part of the laws of Belize because Belize is a signatory to the Convention. The worst forms of child labour as defined by this convention are:

1. all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour;
2. the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography;
3. the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs;
4. work, which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

2.2 Legal loopholes

A loophole is the minimum age for employment of twelve years cited in Section 169 of the Labour Act and that of the ILO Convention given as fourteen years. The Shop Act also gives fourteen as the minimum age for employment which when compared with the Labour Act further implies that children can work if they are twelve years and older. The Labour Act should be changed to fourteen years to be consistent with the Rights of the Child Convention and ILO Convention No. 138 on minimum age. Belize has a law that states that the ILO Conventions supersede the Labour Act.

If a child finishes primary school at twelve years but does not have the economic means to attend high school and is not given any support from anyone including the government, is it acceptable for this individual to work? Or should this child be left to socialize in a way that may result in unacceptable behaviour including a criminal one? Some people interviewed believe that these individuals should be given the opportunity to help themselves. One parent said “Idle hands are the devil’s workshop.”

Since the education law states that education is compulsory until fourteen, should the Government provide for students, regardless if it is primary or secondary, until they are fourteen? There is not enough space in high schools for all students who are qualified to continue for entrance, so some students will have to do something other than go to school.

A working child in Belize could go unnoticed if he is attending school regularly and working outside school hours. Such a child would not be sought by truancy officers

and any organization or government agency, including the Ministry of Labour, would not notice this individual because child labour is not part of their portfolio. Of all the labour officers interviewed, approximately fifty percent of the thirteen labour officers in the country, none had processed a child labour case.

Sanctions

An employer with employees who are not yet eighteen years are required to keep a register of the names, date of birth, and hours of work of each such employee. Failure to comply with this law could result in a fine not exceeding fifty dollars or imprisonment for a term not exceeding four months. The penalty for not keeping a register is more severe than employment of a child for which the penalty is only twenty dollars or imprisonment for a term not exceeding two months.

There are no sanctions in Belize's laws for those who engage children in the worst forms of child labour.

2.3 Legal measures applicable to the cases of child labour

The pragmatic measures applied to cases of child labour is for the school teacher or principal, in the case of a child who is attending school, to report the case to the truancy officer, who, along with the police and sometimes with a social welfare officer, investigates the case. This happens when the child is absent from school. If he is working and not being absent his case will typically go unnoticed, except for very poor performance in school that the teacher could attribute to extra curricular activities. The effort of the truancy officer is to work with the parents and the child to get the child in school, if he is out of school, and to provide conditions conducive to attendance and good performance in school. No legal action has ever been taken against anyone regarding child labour in Belize. However, parents and guardians have been taken to court because their child was absent more than the maximum number of sessions permitted. In most of these cases the child was absent in order to work.

If a child is working the onus is on all concerned individuals to report the case to the relevant authority, who would then process the case. This has however never been done in Belize.

3.0 Social and Economic Policies

3.1 Educational policies

The longstanding policy of the Government is to have a literate society, which is not only generally educated but also prepared for the world of work, hence a compulsory school age of five to fourteen. Children in the compulsory age range are not expected to be hired as paid wage earners, but it is expected that they will begin to learn the importance of work. A large number of primary school graduates do not go on to high school. Some of which are still below the age legally allowing them to be paid workers or apprentices. Those in the rural areas can work alongside the family, but the children are hampered from achieving an upward climb in the workforce. Those who go on to secondary school get a chance to begin to prepare for a career but socioeconomic considerations may result in failure, and among those who succeed many are not prepared to be absorbed in the workforce or cannot enter because of the scarcity of opportunities.

Much of the failure of the school system can be attributed to the school programmes' inability to hold the students and not have wastage and prepare them for work. But failure also results from the disadvantages of the poorer students and those in rural parts whose families, because of their own lack of education and their poverty, cannot support their children through school financially.

The compulsory primary school age has been five to fourteen years from the time the law was made, but children, especially in the rural areas, have been allowed to go to school earlier than five years and after they have turned fourteen, where space is available. To achieve this end, the church-state system was established. Education is obligatory and free from infant one (grade 1) up to standard six (grade eight) with the equivalent age of 5 to 14 years (Education Act). Students are responsible to buy their books and there are other fees in some urban schools such as security, registration, activity, library, typing, computer, and lab. Students at secondary schools do not pay tuition but they pay a number of fees including laboratory, activity, security and they pay for their books. These fees average approximately \$1,478 per year and range between

\$515 and \$3,490¹⁵. At the tertiary level, i.e., community colleges and the University of Belize, students do not pay tuition during their second year but do for all the other years. Gillett (2000) reported that the average annual cost of primary or secondary education to parents per child, was \$1,000 in 2000.

Over the last ten years the Government of Belize spent 20-25% of its recurrent budgets on education. In 1994 it spent 21% of its recurrent budget and 14% of the total national budget on education and in 2002 it is spending 21.4% of its recurrent budget, which is \$74.1 million, of which 85.8% is for salaries, and 18.6% of the total national budget, on education. This is an indication of the government's commitment to education. But despite this large investment, in 1994, 10% of the primary school age children were not in school, 81% of those who started primary school finished and of those who finished, only 67% went on to secondary school (Ministry of Education 1994). In 2000, 3.1% of the primary school age children were not in school and of those who finished, 87% went on to secondary school. In the same year, approximately 5% of those who were qualified enrolled in tertiary education institutions compared to 15% in the Caribbean and most Central American Countries.

In most primary schools, students are promoted from one class level to another based on academic ability and in others, by age. When students are promoted by age, some students are in classes where they cannot cope with the level of work required. This contributes to student frustration and possible absence and drop out. The Education Act (Revised 2000) states that students at government and government-aided primary schools and students at government secondary schools should not pay tuition fees but must pay special fees approved by the Chief Education Officer. In general students in urban schools pay higher fees than those in rural schools because urban schools provide more services such as typing, computer, and security.

The educational system in Belize is mainly a Church-State system at the primary and secondary levels. The schools Government of Belize (GOB) provides financial assistance to are called grant-aided schools. In these schools the denominations manage the school and the government pays 100% of the salaries of the teachers at the primary

¹⁵ Planning Unit, Ministry of Education.

level and 70% of the salaries of the teachers at the secondary level. GOB also provides 60% of maintenance costs and 70% of capital costs to grant aided primary schools.

The primary school curriculum is academically oriented with currently no vocational subjects. The secondary school curriculum is also academically oriented with the terminal goal of most students to sit for foreign examinations set by the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) and the British Examining Board. Less than twenty-five percent of all secondary schools offer vocational subjects as part of their curriculum. The secondary schools outside of Belize City have stronger vocational and technical courses as part of their curriculum. The most common vocational/technical courses include carpentry, electricity, plumbing, agriculture, technical drawing, masonry and woodwork. Parents, students, teachers, and educators generally place greater value on the academic curriculum leading to passes in external examinations, than the non-academic track in high school. This is manifested well in two junior secondary schools that were established in the early 1960s and early 1970s in Belize City, to offer a vocational curriculum. They did for a few years but by the mid 1990s their curricula were changed to academic with vocational education being a miniscule part of their offerings. Children who want to pursue a vocational / technical education track at the secondary level are going to centres for employment training (CET) which are being established in all districts of the country.

One of the pertinent guiding principles of the policy for the Ministry of Education for the period 1995 – 1999 was the “Protection of Children from labour exploitation, from abuse in homes and institutions, and from adult neglect” (Ministry of Education, 1994, p. 2). Another related principle was “the integration of youth into the development process” (Ibid).

The participation rate at the secondary level was 33.1% in 1998-1999 (Ministry of Education 1999). This low rate of participation was due to the number of available space (National Human Development Report 1999) and the high private cost¹⁶. In 2000-2001, the transition rate to secondary school was 87% and the completion rate of secondary school was less than 50% (Ministry of Education, 2001).

¹⁶ Planning Unit Ministry of Education.

Absenteeism and attrition are challenges of the primary and secondary schools. Out-of-school children exist from grade one to twelve with a relatively high percentage dropping out from grade five to ten (10-15 years). According to the Ministry of Education (MOE) (1994) approximately 97% of the primary school aged children are enrolled and, on average 90% of these students attend school every day. The MOE also reported that “repetition and drop out rates are unacceptable” (p. 8). In 1996, the Ministry of Education (1996) found that one out of every ten children repeated a grade at least once. In 2000-2001 the repetition rate was 9.3% and the dropout rate was 0.7% at the primary level. At the secondary level, repetition for the same period was 7.9% and dropout rate was 8.0% (Ministry of Education, 2001). In the 1998-1999 school year, approximately 46% of the primary school students were taking more than eight years to complete primary school (repeating several times) or were dropping out of school. For the same school year, the Ministry of Education reported that over 14% of the country's five to twelve year olds were not enrolled in primary school (Ministry of Education, 1999). This 14% was obtained by using population estimates from the Central Statistical Office. However, in 2000 the census data showed a 5-12 year old population that was less than the estimates. When the non-participation rate in primary school was calculated using the census data, the figure was closer to 3%¹⁷.

Children would be absent because they have to work for money or care for other siblings. In some cases they do not have the required books, equipment or uniforms so, instead of being penalized or embarrassed, they stay at home. The discourse on the topic of absenteeism and attrition include the relevancy of the curriculum, competition of school with television and other activities in the community, and social and economic factors (Gillett, 2000). At the beginning of the school year in 1998 the Ministry of Education (1999) reported that the low participation in primary education could have been because of "... lack of places in the Infant classes, parents' indifference to the compulsory education law, increasing primary school costs, including registration and other fees, cost of textbooks, opportunity cost to families and travel distance to school" (p 45).

¹⁷ Planning Unit, Ministry of Education.

According to Hamel-Smith (1995) only 34% of high school aged children are enrolled in secondary schools and “there is an alarmingly high failure and dropout rate at both primary and secondary levels” (p. 1). In 1995, approximately 48% of students did not complete secondary school, which meant that approximately 15% of Belizean children who were expected to finish high school that year, did not (UNICEF, 1995 and Smith, 1995). A literacy study done in 1999 for the Literacy Council of Belize cited that a substantial number of young people drop out of school before they are literate in reading, writing and numeracy (semi-illiterates).

Hamel-Smith (1995) also found in her research that there was not a consistent approach across schools to deal with repetition and that repetition was viewed as beneficial by those running schools and parents, and negative by children. Another reason cited for repetition was poverty for which a recommendation was the introduction of a feeding programme, which has subsequently been implemented through the School Health and Physical Education Services (SHAPES).

The 1994-1998 Sector Review highlighted the following as key constraints that inhibited the effective delivery of education in Belize:

1. 20% of students 12 to 14 year-olds from primary schools and 10% from secondary schools were out of school
2. high failure, repetition and truancy rates
3. high drop out rate at the secondary school level. (Lewis-Morter, 2000)

Even though the compulsory age of school is 5 to 14, a student successfully finishing primary school before the age of 14 is not guaranteed a space in a high school. Furthermore, the student has to bear the cost of books and several fees depending on the high school. This change in real cost to the student does not allow for the realization of the law of compulsory education because if the student's parents do not have the money to pay or he cannot matriculate into a high school, he will not be in school until he is fourteen years.

By law the Chief Education Officer is to appoint school attendance officers to make sure that children are attending school (Education Act 2000, Section 38). In the school year 1999-2000 a Community Liaison and Security Office was established. In this same school year it placed 548 students back into school, of which 420 were from

primary schools, 74 from secondary schools, and 54 from alternative programmes. Truancy officers also increased from 38 to 66. This Office is currently a very vigilant and prominent office of the Ministry of Education enforcing the law of compulsory school age throughout the country.

Preschool education is not compulsory. There is an increasing demand for preschools resulting in a rapid increase in the number of preschools throughout the country. The Ministry of Education consequently established a Pre-school Unit to support and supervise preschool education. The Government also pays the salary and provides short-term in-service training for preschool teachers nationwide (Lewis-Morter, 2000). In 2000-2001 school year, there were 98 preschools in the country, which serviced 777 students (Ministry of Education, 2001). In 1994 there were 75 schools, which serviced 10% of the students preschool-aged children, i.e., three to five-year-olds (Ministry of Education 1994). There are five times more preschools in urban areas than in rural areas (Lewis-Morter, 2000).

Scholarships

The Government of Belize in the 2000/2001 school year, offered 2,400 tuition grants, book awards, bursaries and financial assistances to primary and secondary school students valued at \$30 to \$800. For the same school year, the government offered 2,248 scholarships and financial assistances to students attending tertiary schools ranging from \$400 to \$800 with a total cost between \$899,200 and \$1,798,400. These awards are made mainly on the basis of need to those who would not be able to attend school if they were not given any financial assistance. The Government introduced in 1993 and has maintained to date a textbook programme in primary schools. Through this programme, students whose parents cannot afford to buy textbooks are loaned books by the Ministry of Education through their school. The Government also gives an award of \$250 to the top twenty-five students on the Primary School Examination. All the assistances given at the secondary level by the Government are to approximately 10 percent of the student body and 8 percent at the tertiary level¹⁸. In the budget estimates for the 1999-2000

¹⁸ Mrs. Yolanda Gongora at the Ministry of Education, Belmopan, provided this information.

school year, secondary education was allocated over 4 million dollars for tuition, book awards, bursaries and financial assistances (Lewis 2000 p. 51).

Some members of the community, including the former governor general of Belize, also provide different scholarships to needy individuals including books, fees, and uniform, accommodation, and transportation scholarships.

Some high schools, especially the denominational schools, e.g., Saint John's College and Pallotti High School, offer a work scholarship programme, which allows students to attend school without paying fees and buying books¹⁹. This affords many rural children the opportunity to attend high school. This programme is not available in any of the government high schools.

Infrastructure

At the primary level, there is space for all students to enter school at five years old in grade one. However, in the higher grades, grade eight (standard six), for example, space becomes a premium to the extent that some schools do not accommodate repeaters in this grade. The rationale for this policy is that all the students promoted from grade seven will not be accommodated if there are repeaters in grade eight. In the school year 1999-2000, thirty-six percent of primary schools were in rural areas with a 22% student population and the ratio of student per class in urban areas was 34:1 and in rural it was 17:1 (Lewis-Morter 2000). Table 3 shows the number of classrooms along with the total enrolment for primary schools and population of the country. Classrooms are not increasing at the primary and secondary levels to accommodate the increasing population. According to Gillett (2000) "there is much inequity in the deployment of trained and experienced teachers in rural schools" (p. 5). The Government also provides a transportation service to bus students who do not live near a school to the nearest school.

At the secondary level, space becomes more of a premium because there is not enough space to accommodate the students who are leaving primary school and want to continue their education. It is estimated that eight hundred students who leave primary school and want to attend high school cannot because of insufficient space. The selection

¹⁹ The Head Master of Saint John's College and Principal of Pallotti shared this information.

process for admission to high school is based mainly on a selection examination. In the 1999-2000 school year, there was need for more spaces at the secondary level and in vocational and technical training. Two of the five enumerated priorities of the Ministry of Education at that time were to increase access to secondary education and to extend access to and enhance quality and relevance of vocational and technical training (Lewis-Morter, 2000).

In the beginning of the 1999 school year, the Ministry of Education started a shift system in three urban government secondary schools to double the enrolment of these schools to increase the accessibility to secondary education. This programme continues today with great success.

At the tertiary level there is enough space for students to be enrolled in higher education but the limiting factors are the range of offerings and cost. Students who are desirous of pursuing economics, law, engineering, etc. at the baccalaureate level and higher, have to seek opportunities outside of the country because these courses of study are not available in Belize. The high cost of education outside of Belize and other factors deter many from pursuing this avenue.

Table 3: Number of classrooms by level.

Year		Enrolment	Number of Classrooms	Population
1997-1998	Primary	53, 118	1,559	230,000
	Secondary	11,260	N/A	
1998-1999	Primary	54,616	1,806	238,500
	Secondary	11,720	N/A	
1999-2000	Primary	55,847	1,890	243,055
	Secondary	12,253	N/A	
2000-2001	Primary	56,559	1,975	249,800
	Secondary	13,143	N/A	

Note: Populations are mid year estimates.

Sources: Ministry of Education Planning Unit and Central Statistical Office.

Alternative educational programmes

In addition to formal education, six to twelve month programmes are offered to persons less than eighteen years through the National 4-H Center and the Youth Development Center. Both of these Centers offer vocational and technical training with

emphasis in agriculture, but their administrations oscillate between different ministries of the Government, which retards their development and effectiveness.

The National Apprenticeship Programme was re-introduced by the GOB in 1988 to assist youths between 14 and 18 years old with finance and with training in tailoring, seamstressing, catering, mechanic, cabinet making, welding, bodyworks, carpentry, masonry, etc. These youths, or young persons as defined by the Labour Act (Revised) 2000, must have completed primary education and show no prospects of entering a secondary school or a vocational institution. (Labour and You, 2001). For entrance into this programme one has to be selected by his area representative and there are spaces for ten trainees per electoral constituency, according to Mr. Adelfino Vasquez. Mr. Vasquez, further claimed that the programme is not effective in Belize City because trainees want to be paid as if they were employed.

Gillett (2000) did a survey to enhance access to education and found that there are children who would like to go back to school but the opportunities for doing so are not available.

Vocational training opportunities of adolescents

A Vocational Technical Training Unit (VTTU) was established in Belize City in 1986 to address the demand for opportunities of skills training for the out-of-school population to meet the requirements of the labour market (Ministry of Education 1994). In 1994 there were nine government vocational/technical high schools. In 1992 the concept of Center for Employment Training (CET) started in Belize and catered for children who could not enter, or dropped out of, high school.

A project entitled Enhancement of Technical Vocation Education and Training started in January 2000 under which a CET will be established in all six districts of the country. This project is for \$40.3 million and is being funded by the Government of Belize and Caribbean Development Bank (CDB). The new mission of the CETs is to equip non-school populations with skills, knowledge, work ethics and credentials to be employed. Students must be at least 15 years old to be enrolled. A wide variety of courses ranging from prevocational and apprenticeship to technician courses are offered on demand using industry standards. The most subscribed courses are catering-

hospitality, automotive, electrical, and electronics. Students pay between \$200 and \$600 for courses that run from one month to a year. The enrolment of CETs ranges between 100 plus in the districts to 350 in Belize City with an attrition rate of approximately 25-30 percent at each centre. According to Mr. Stansmore Bowman, Director of Education and Technical Education Services, this high dropout rate is because students cannot cope with the theoretical component of their programme due to their inability to read and write at the required level, inability to meet the cost of the programme, and the preference to do something other than going to school.

Major limitations in offering vocational/technical education include inadequate facilities, equipment, teaching/learning materials, and trained personnel (Ministry of Education 1994).

3.2 Health policies and programmes

The Government of Belize is the main provider of health services in Belize but there is a fast growing market of private hospitals and health service providers concentrated in Belize City. The National Health Insurance Programme, piloted in 2001, stimulated the emergence of these service providers. The Government provides health services on a 'sliding scale' basis as a strategy to achieving equitable access to health services to the entire population (Government of Belize, 1996). Under this method, the Government does not deny anyone the health services it offers because the person cannot pay for the service.

One of the specific objectives of the current Health Sector Reform Programme (HSRP) is to achieve "... an equitable and sustainable system of health sector financing by setting up a National Health Insurance Fund and focusing public spending on the poor" (Ministry of Health 2000a, p. 22). Prior to the HSRP, a Health Policy Reform Project was implemented and it defined a set of national goals of which the second one was related to children, i.e., "To ensure survival and healthy development of children and adolescents" (Ministry of Health 1998, p. 3).

The strategies of the 1996-2000 Health Plan included the decentralization of services and sensitivity to the specific health needs of children (Government of Belize,

1996). Another strategy of the Ministry of Education is to "put emphasis on community empowerment through health education and promotion" (Ministry of Health, 2000a, p. iii). However these education programmes are usually the first to be cut under budgetary constraints and are usually understaffed and not adequately equipped (Ministry of Health 1998).

According to the "National Human Development Report 1999" only about 50% of the rural population has access to primary health care (National Human Development Report 1999). One of the goals of the Ministry of Health for 2000 was to provide coverage of essential primary level care in remote rural areas (Government of Belize, 1999). The Government, in an effort to increase accessibility to health services, assigned sixty-seven Cuban doctors to villages throughout the country in 2000 (Ministry of Health, 2000a).

All six districts of Belize have a maternal and child health programme typically headed by a public health nurse. This programme provides services that include child health clinics, mobile clinics for the provision of all services to population in remote villages and communities, and health education services of which school visits are a part. Vaccination against immuno-preventable diseases in children coverage in 2000, ranged from 80 percent to 100 percent except for MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine, which was introduced in 2000 and covered between 50 and 60 percent. Vaccines were against tuberculosis, Hepatitis B, diphtheria, pertussis, polio, measles, mumps, rubella, and diphtheria and tetanus (DT), whooping cough and tetanus. The Haemophilus influenza Type B vaccine was introduced in 2001. (Ministry of Education 2000a)

The Ministry of Health in its Maternal and Child Health Draft Operational Norm for 2002 endeavours to achieve and maintain immunization levels at 95% according to the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) Norms. Childhood immunizations are mandatory and parents are served notice to immunize at the time of registration of birth by the Department of Vital Statistics. Clinics for children between one month of age to under five years, monitor children's physical growth and development by taking anthropometric measures at each clinic visit.

A programme for the prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV is in place at all government health institutions. This programme is facilitated through a

technical cooperation with the Ministry of Health of the Bahamas. A Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative is ongoing with at least two districts having achieved 80% of the ten steps to successful breastfeeding, pending certification.

There is a Health Education and Community Participation Bureau (HECOPAB) of the Ministry of Health in all districts of Belize, which helps to educate the communities. HECOPAB also organizes village health committees and assists community nurses and mobile clinics. Many educational activities target school children. According to the Belize National Health Plan 1996- 2000, the five leading causes of hospitalisation in the age group 5 to 19, were "all injuries", respiratory diseases, obstetric causes, diseases of the digestive system and abortion. It further stated that for females 15 to 19, fifty percent of their hospitalisations were because of abortions and deliveries and "... 20 percent of hospitalisation for abortion were in the age group 15 to 19" (Government of Belize 1996, p. 18).

Dental health education and services are provided in each district. Even though the services are not available in villages some rural children are able to access them at their nearest urban centre. In the Ministry of Health Annual Comprehensive Health Report for 2000 many visits to schools and services to children were reported. Each year there is a national dental health week that targets school children.

The Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Ministries of Health and Human Development runs a School Health and Physical Education Service (SHAPES) programme to promote health education and lifestyle programmes, first-aid training, healthful living and sanitation programmes and physical education in pre-, primary and secondary schools. Mrs. Sherlene Tablada in an interview said that SHAPES aims to fulfil the physical, academic, social, and emotional needs necessary for individuals to live healthy lifestyles. She also clarified that SHAPES is a coordinating mechanism as opposed to being an implementing agent. As such, SHAPES promotes, coordinates, monitors, and evaluates the activities that several line-ministries and NGOs perform in schools in the areas of health, health education, physical education and sports. Three concrete benefits of SHAPES are a meal programme in primary schools which promises to reduce absenteeism and school drop-out rate and improve the concentration and nutritional status of students, improved access to regular dental, eye, hearing and

nutritional screening, and a pro-active rather than a crisis approach to reach young people with information in areas such as HIV/AIDS, sexual health, substance abuse, environmental health, safety and nutrition.

The infant mortality rate fell by 4.9% between 1996 and 1998 but the mortality rate for children less than five years did not change (National Human Development Report 1999). This is one of the indicators of the incremental improvement of the health services in general.

3.3 Employment policies

According to Mr. Adelfino Vasquez employment of children would take place in the informal sector and not in the formal sector because the formal sector is subject to monitoring by the labour department and a violation of the labour law would be a public embarrassment for the employer. He did not expect registered businesses to employ children under the legal working age of fourteen. From discussions with leaders of the Labour Department, there is no indication of any policies or regulations that may be applied to the informal sector in the future.

Some employers do not employ children under the age of fourteen years because they cannot physically do strenuous work well. For some companies the cut off minimum age is sixteen. This was the case at the Belize Fruit Packers, a company that packs papaya for export and Hummingbird Citrus Ltd. Del Oro, which is one of the citrus companies of Belize, had its policy posted on its notice board. One of the policies is as follows.

“We will not exploit child labour. Parents may only involve their children in the productive process if their education is not being disrupted and if they are fully protected from potential economic exploitation, and from moral and physical hazard. For young employees, we will adhere to ILO conventions on the minimum age of employment and the Belize Labour Act.”

The Belize Tourism Board is not aware that children in Belize are engaged in sex tourism and do not have any policies concerning same, but categorically states that it would not condone such behaviour.

4.0 Targeted Actions

4.1 Governmental programmes

The Government of Belize through the Ministry of Labour implemented a child labour project, called the Butterfly Project, to eradicate and prevent the worst forms of child labour. The National Organization for the Prevention of Child Abuse (NOPCA) managed the project, which ran from September 2000 to September 2001 in the Corozal District. The Executive Director of NOPCA said Corozal was selected because "there are several industries in the Corozal area including agriculture and the sugar industry" (News 5 On-line 14-11-2000). This project was funded by USAID and FUNPADEM, an organization promoting peace and unity in Central America. Although the project was not funded by government the negotiation for its implementation in Belize was done by the government so it is considered a government project.

The objectives of the project were: 1) to eliminate the worst forms of child labour in Corozal, 2) to encourage parents/children to further their education (stay in school), and 3) to empower children, youths and parents through skills, education, business training and literacy programmes (Information Package, Corozal Child Labour Project). The project was implemented in ten schools in rural and urban Corozal District. There was great interest from other schools.

The two field officers of the Butterfly Project found the main cause of child labour in Corozal to be poverty as six out of every ten children under eighteen were working. Many of the working children were from large families. Most working children were involved in the worst forms of child labour including agricultural work such as cutting cane, picking beans or removing rocks from fields. Many were also street vendors selling for their parents and working from five o'clock in the morning to seven in the night. If they go home without completing their sale they would be punished, in many instances, by cruel whipping. Most of the girls did domestic work and were from single-parent homes and homes where two parents were working. Others were also forced into prostitution/sex tourism. The parents handled the earnings for most of the children.²⁰

²⁰ Director and field officers of the Butterfly Project.

The project offered training in pastry, small business management, personal development, hygiene and safety for working children.

Mr. Cabb and Mr. Novelo are highly motivated individuals who continue to counsel children who seek them out even after the completion of the project.

Besides this Project in Corozal, there is no other government sponsored or organized project or programme in the country specifically targeted to better the conditions of working children. However, two other efforts of the government through the Ministry of Education impact indirectly on working children, the Truancy Programme and the School Health and Physical Education Service (SHAPES). The Truancy Programme enforces the compulsory age for primary education, which is fourteen years. Through this programme children not in school, including working children, are identified and efforts made, sometimes with assistance from other departments, to return them to school. SHAPES along with the Belize School Canteen Association have established canteens in schools with nutritional needs. Parents and teachers supplement the children's diet by providing lunch and snacks either free or at a minimal price. This attracts some of the poorer students who would not come to school because they would go hungry all day without this assistance.

4.2 NGO-implemented programmes

The only NGO in Belize that had a project specifically targeting working children is the National Organization for the Prevention of Child Abuse (NOPCA), which was the implementer for the Child Labour Project described above. This organizations portfolio is primarily child abuse, of which child labour is a silent component. No current objective or programme of NOPCA relates to child labour.

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

Many issues of child labour were identified in this research. Most of the stakeholders interviewed, including labour officers, teachers, social welfare officers and policemen, did not consider child labour a problem in Belize. They also did not consider some acts of children, such as prostitution/sex tourism, to be child labour but as child abuse. Children engaged in prostitution/sex tourism are considered by these stakeholders to be a growing problem. And the issue of child labour is not being addressed in Belize because there is no organization or government agency that is consciously fighting against it, even though there are organizations fighting for the rights of children.

The following specific conclusions are made.

1. Child labour is not a part of the national discourse on 'child' issues. There are no articles or news stories on child labour in the newspapers, on television, radio and in any other forum. Awareness of child labour is now being introduced in Belize despite its long-standing manifestation.
2. Child labourers are found throughout the country with higher concentrations in rural agricultural communities and some urban centres. Child labour is however not identified as a major problem in Belize. Most children work in commercial and subsistence agriculture, tourism, and do domestic work; and some are even forced into prostitution/sex tourism. There are children who are involved in the worst forms of child labour including hazardous work in commercial agriculture, sexual exploitation, working street children, trafficked children and child domestic workers. Child prostitution exists throughout the country with higher concentration in Orange Walk Town, Stann Creek District and Belize City.
3. Child labour primarily occurs in large families, single parent families, and families whose heads have less than primary school education. The main cause is poverty. Working children are bound to perpetuate a cycle of poverty because

they too will not be able to adequately provide for their own families as adults because of low education levels.

4. Children who are street vendors are mainly from Guatemala who come to Belize to work.
5. There are several issues within the educational system that contribute to children working. First there are limited spaces in primary and secondary schools, especially at the secondary level. Many students in urban primary schools are not allowed to repeat courses after they have failed. There is not enough space in secondary schools to accommodate students leaving primary schools, so some children are forced to enter the labour market instead of continuing their education. Secondly, the school curriculum is unattractive to some children. Thirdly, school is an unwelcome challenge because instruction is in English and children's first and in some cases second language, is not English.
6. There are contradictions among different laws regarding the minimum age for employment. The official age is 14 years, which complies with ILO Convention 138, but it is not explicitly stated in the Labour Act. Because there is not a consistent definition of a child and no definition of 'child labour' in our laws, the concept of 'child labour' is opened to different interpretations. The laws of Belize need to be revised to reflect the UN Conventions and the ILO Conventions that Belize has ratified so they can become widely known, less confusing, more certain, and are easier to administer.
7. International and national laws exist against child labour but they are not enforced.
8. Belize is a signatory to the ILO Conventions on child labour and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, there is no policy or operation strategy in Belize, other than the documents of the Conventions, being used to implement these international laws. Furthermore there is currently no programme or project except for the Child Labour Project in Corozal, which ran for a year and ended September 2001. The political will and commitment to eliminate child labour exists but there is need to move from rhetoric to concrete action. The laws pertaining to child labour are not well known. For example, the Child Labour

Project in Corozal reported that 99.9 % of the children and citizens who participated in the project were not cognizant of the laws related to child labour.

9. The worst forms of child labour are not reflected in any circulated document or the laws of Belize.
10. The penalties for violating the minimum age to work and other laws related to child labour are lenient.
11. The present team of labour officers in the Ministry of Labour, Local Government, and the Sugar Industry are not sufficient in numbers to effectively monitor and ensure that the rights of all individuals, especially children, are upheld.

5.2 Recommendations

Belizeans do not consider children working as a violation of the individuals' rights except when they work and should be in school. The Truancy Programme in the Ministry of Education is effective in ensuring that school-aged children are in school. The following recommendations are made considering the country's developmental needs and the need to minimize child labour and eliminate the worst forms of child labour as violations of a child's rights.

The recommendations are presented with an indication of to whom they are addressed and whether they are short term or long term priority.

The **National Committee for Families and Children** should address the following recommendations (1- 3):

Short term

1. The laws of Belize governing child labour should be revised and the word "child labour" defined and used. To compliment this effort, a manual with supporting information for employers needs to be written that articulates the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the ILO Conventions ratified by Belize and all the laws governing children in the country, to provide social workers, educators, truancy officers, lawyers and judges with a practical tool to promote the rights and well-being of children.

2. The laws of Belize need to reflect the worst forms of child labour. The laws also need to be more stringent for offences related to child labour. The political will must also be cultivated to enforce international and national child labour laws.

Long term

3. Stakeholders who can help to eradicate child labour, including labour officers, teachers, social welfare officers and policemen and the Belizean community on a whole should be educated on the rights of the child and on issues related to child labour.

The **Ministry of Education** should address the following recommendations (4 – 6).

Long term

4. The Ministry of Education should make available more space for new students in primary schools, repeaters of grade eight, and high school students. This would hopefully ensure that students attend school rather than go to work.
5. Government should re-examine its compulsory age for schooling in light of providing for the students who have successfully completed primary school and have problems meeting the cost of a secondary education and make space available for those willing and capable of attending high school. Opportunities must also be provided for children who later in life decide to return to school.
6. Government should support education so that education can in turn be a solution to poverty consequently child labour. This support can be through increased classroom space, the nutrition programme in primary schools, and the textbook programme.

Recommendations (7 - 13) are addressed to the **Department of Human Development**.

Short term

7. A multi-sectorial strategy to eradicate child labour in the country should be developed along similar lines as the national plan of action to fight against HIV/AIDS. This strategy should mainstream child labour issues into priorities: socio-economic policies, programmes and budgets of civil society and government organizations. Some of the key players should be the Ministry of Labour, Department of Human Development, Immigration Department, National Committee for Families and Children (NCFC) which oversees the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, HECOPAB, labour organizations, and the School Services Division of the Ministry of Education.
8. Belize should lobby for the introduction of the “Red Card to Child Labour” programme in Belize and in the region since football is a popular game in Belize.
9. Rapid Assessments are needed in Belize for domestic work and sexual exploitation because it is suspected that many children are involved in these sectors and, if so, they need urgent and systematic attention.

Long term

10. The Human Development, Immigration, and Labour Department under the leadership of the Department of Human Development should work together to eliminate the street vendors including those from Guatemala. Strategies to achieve this goal include educating parents about child rights, developing income generating activities for parents/guardians of working children, and eliminating the migration of children from Guatemala to Belize to work.
11. Parents should be educated on the value of keeping children in school and the rights of the child. This may be done through the Community Parenting Programme (COMPAR).
12. Since poverty is the main cause of child labour, families should be provided with income-generating alternatives.
13. Bilateral agreements between Belize, Guatemala and Mexico, to fight cross-border trafficking of children, should be negotiated and implemented. This agreement should include the prevention, traffic control, and repatriation of trafficked children.

Recommendations (14 - 15) are addressed to the **Labour Department**.

Long term

14. The Ministry of Labour should work closely with the Truancy Programme and the Ministry of Education to curb child labour since the truancy officers are in the field daily and have a rapport with teachers and children.
15. There is a dire need for more labour officers to monitor and evaluate all labour activities in the country. I strongly recommend the amalgamation of the Ministry of Labour, the Social Security Board, and the Employment Agency of Beltrade, which would realize synergy in addressing labour issues in the country.

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APPENDIX A

Part of Labour Act (Chapter 297) on issues related to Child Labour

Section	#	Description
160	1b	With reference to, the employment to persons who are under the age of sixteen years means at least the twelve consecutive hours from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m.; and
	1c	With reference to the employment of persons who have attained the age of sixteen years but are under the age of eighteen years means at least twelve consecutive hours falling between 5 p.m. and 6 a.m.;
161	1b	Subject to other provisions of this Part, no person shall employ during the night, in a public or private industrial undertaking- (b) a person under the age of 18 years.
	2	If a person is employed in contravention of subsection (1), the employer and any person (other than the person employed) to whose act or default the contravention is attributable commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding two hundred and fifty dollars or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months.
162	2	The minister after consultation with any workers' or employers' organizations concerned, may by order authorize the employment during the night of male persons who have attained the age of 16 years but are under the age of eighteen years for purposes of apprenticeship or vocational training in such class of industrial undertakings as are specified in the Order.
	3	When in case of serious emergency the public interest demands it, the Minister, after consultation with any employers' and workers' organization concerned, may by order suspend the prohibition of employment of male persons between the ages of sixteen and eighteen years during the night in any industrial undertaking or any branch thereof.
	4	Where in an industrial undertaking there occurs an emergency which could not have been controlled or foreseen, and which is not of a periodical character and which is approved by the Commissioner and which interferes with the normal working of that undertaking, then, during that emergency, the provisions of section 161 with respect to the employment of persons under the age of eighteen years during the nights shall not apply to male person between the ages of sixteen and eighteen years employed in that undertaking during such emergency.
	5	Notwithstanding section 161, the Minister, if he considers "it expedient to do so, may by order, permit women and male persons between the ages of sixteen and eighteen years to be employed in any industrial undertaking or in any branch thereof during that part

		of the night which falls between 7:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. on condition that the night-rest period of such women and male persons is of not less than twelve consecutive hours duration.
	6	Where the minister considers that the employment of persons under eighteen years of age in a family undertaking wherein only parents and their children are employed is not harmful, prejudicial or dangerous to them, he may by order exempt them from the application of this section relating to the employment of persons under the age of eighteen years, subject to such conditions as he may think fit.
163	1	The employer in a public or private industrial undertaking shall keep a register of the names, dates of birth and hours of work of all women and of all persons under the age of eighteen years employed in that undertaking.
	2	Any employer who fails to comply with this section commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding fifty dollars or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding four months.
164	1	Subject to subsection (2), no person shall employ a child in a public or private industrial undertaking or in a branch thereof.
	2	Subsection (1) shall not apply to work done by children in technical schools if such work is approved and supervised by a public authority.
165	1a	A person under the age of fifteen years; or
	1b	Any other young person unless the master has in his possession and available for inspection by a labor officer, a valid certificate of a registered medical practitioner issued not more than one year previously and certifying that he has examined the young person and found him fit for the employment proposed: provided that any certificate which expires in the course of a voyage shall remain valid until the end of the said voyage.
	2a	Subjection (1) shall not apply- To a vessel on which only members of the same family are employed;
	2b	To work done by persons under the age of fifteen years on school ships of training ships if such work is approved and supervised by a public authority.
	3	The minister may take regulations to provide that authority designated in that behalf by the regulations may issue a certificate permitting a person who has attained the age of fourteen years, and is under the age of fifteen years to be employed on a vessel, if such authority is satisfied, after having due regard to the health and physical condition of such person and to the prospective as well as to the immediate benefit to him in the employment proposed, that such employment will be beneficial to him.
166		The master of a vessel which is registered in Belize as a British ship

		or which is owned by any person or body of persons resident or carrying on business in Belize shall keep a register of the names and dates of birth of all persons under the age of sixteen years employed on that vessel, or a list of such names and dates of birth in the articles of agreement with the crew of that vessel.
167	1	No young person shall be employed on any vessel as a trimmer or stoker.
	2	In any case where a trimmer or stoker is required in a place where young persons of less than eighteen years of age only are available to satisfy such requirements then young persons who are of and over sixteen years of age may be employed in the place of each trimmer or stoker required.
168	1	The employer of any young person employed on a vessel and the parent or guardian of that young person shall, if required by a labor officer, furnish to that officer such information regarding the employment of that young person as that officer may require.
	2	If the master of a vessel fails to keep a register as required by section 166 or refuses or neglects to produce it for inspection by a labor officer or refuses or neglects to furnish any information regarding the employment of a young person as required by subsection (1), he commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding one hundred dollars.
169	a	Subject to any regulations made under section 170 no child shall be employed-
		So long as he is under the age of twelve years; or
	b	Before the close of school hours on any day on which he is required to attend school; or
	c	Before six o'clock in the morning or right after eight o'clock in the evening on any day; or
	d	For more than two hours on any day on which he is required to attend school; or
	e	For more than two hours on any Sunday; or
	f	To lift, carry or move anything so heavy as to be likely to cause injury to him; or
	g	In any occupation likely to be injurious to his life, limb, health or education, regard being had to his physical condition.
170	1	The minister may take regulations with respect to the employment of children, and any such regulations may distinguish between children of different ages and sexes and between different localities, trades, occupations and circumstances, and may contain provisions-
	a	Authorizing the employment of children under the age of twelve years, notwithstanding anything in section 169 (a), by their parents or guardians in light agricultural or horticultural work in their parents' or guardians' lands or gardens only;
	b	Prohibiting absolutely the employment of children in any specified occupation;

	c	<p>Prescribing in relation to children-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The age below which they are not to be employed. ii. The number of hours in each day, or in each week, for which, and the times of day at which, they may be employed; iii. The intervals to be allowed to them for meals and rest; iv. The holidays or half-holidays to be allowed to them; v. Any other conditions to be observed in relation to their employment.
171		Nothing in this section 170 (1) (c) or in section 169(d) or in any regulations shall prevent a child from taking part without fee or reward in an entertainment, the net proceeds of which are devoted to any charitable or educational purpose or to any purpose other than the private profit of the promoters.
172	1	If any person employs a child or young person in contravention of this part or any regulations or order made there under he commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding twenty dollars or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two months, and in the case of a second or subsequent offence, to a fine not exceeding fifty dollars or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding four months.
	2	If any parent or guardian of a child has conduced to the commission of the alleged offence by willful default, or by habitually neglecting to exercise due care, he shall be liable to the like fine or imprisonment.
173		When an offence of employing a child in contravention of this part of any regulations made there under is committed by an agent or workman of the employer, such agent or workman shall on summary conviction be liable to the like fine as if he were the employer.
174		Where a child is taken into employment on the production (by or with the privities of the parent or guardian) of a false or forged birth certificate, or on the false representation by his parent or guardian as to his age, such parent or guardian commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding fifty dollars or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding four months.
175		Nothing in this part shall apply to the exercise of manual labor by any child detained under order of detention in a certified institution under the Certified Institutions (Children's Reformation) Act, or in an orphanage, or by any child receiving instruction in manual labor in any school.
176		This part shall be in addition to and not in derogation of any of the provisions of any other Act relating to the employment of women, young persons or children.

APPENDIX B

Interviews

Name	Position	Location
	Assistant Supervisor Field 1	Cowpen, Stann Creek District
Child X	Working child	Roaring Creek, Cayo District
Child Y	Working child	Stann Creek Valley, Stann Creek
Child Z	Working child	Punta Gorda, Toledo District
Mr. Adelfino Vasquez	Labour Officer	Belize City, Belize District
Mr. Andrew Lord	Labour Officer	Belize City, Belize District
Mr. Bertrand Faux	Manager, Hummingbird Citrus Ltd.	Belmopan, Cayo District
Mr. Cecil Arnold	Human Resource Manager, Del Oro (Belize) Ltd.	Stann Creek Valley, Stann Creek District
Mr. Clyde Martinez	Assistant Teacher, Hopkins Primary School	Hopkins Village, Stann Creek District
Mr. Cyriaco Tush	Assistant Teacher, Galacte Primary School	Galacte Village, Toledo District
Mr. Francis Castillo	Truancy Officer, Stann Creek	Dangriga, Stann Creek District
Mr. Freddie Cabb ²¹	Youth Officer	Corozal
Mr. Gilberto Vivas	Manager, Brooks Tropical Inc.	Calcutta Village, Corozal
Mr. Herbert Lorde	Chief Magistrate	Belize City, Belize District
Mr. Jairo Morales	Supervisor, Marie Sharpe	Stann Creek Valley, Stann Creek District
Mr. John Flowers	Programme Coordinator, National Committee for Families and Children	Belize City, Belize District
Mr. Keith Emmanuel	Principal, Mafredi Primary School	Mafredi, Toledo District
Mr. Miguel Vairez	Principal San Marcos Primary School	San Marcos, Toledo District
Mr. Pedro Kukul	Manager, Toledo District Education Center	Punta Gorda Town, Toledo District
Mr. Ramon Pook	Labour Officer	Corozal
Mr. Raul Mai	Assistant Manager, Belize Fruit Packers	Corozal

²¹ Mr. Cabb worked as an officer on the Corozal Child Labour Project and still helps children who seek his assistance.

Mr. Stansmore Bowman	Director, Employment Training and Education Services	Belize City, Belize District
Mr. Steven Williams	Director, Citrus Research and Education Institute	Stann Creek
Mr. Theodoro Garcia	Truancy Officer	Orange Walk Town
Mrs. Ava Pennill	Director, Department of Human Development	Belize City
Mrs. Esmeralda Polanco	Truancy Officer, Stann Creek	Dangriga, Stann Creek District
Mrs. Eva Middleton	Director Child Labour Project	Corozal
Mrs. Glenda Archer	Truancy Officer	Toledo District
Mrs. Elda Vega	Principal, La Immaculada Primary School	Orange Walk Town, Orange Walk District
Mrs. Nellie Toledano	Vice Principal, La Immaculada Primary School	Orange Walk Town, Orange Walk District
Mrs. Joycelyn Leslie	Belize Tourism Board	Belize City, Belize District
Mrs. Sherlene Tablada	Director, School Health and Physical Education Services	Belize City, Belize District
Mrs. X	Parent of working child	Orange Walk Town, Orange Walk District
Mrs. Yolanda Gongora	Director, General School Services, Ministry of Education	Belmopan
Ms. Claire Lamb	Labour Officer, ILO Desk	Belize City, Belize District
Ms. Diana Castillo	Planning Unit, Ministry of Education	Belize City, Belize District
Ms. Janet Escalante	Truancy Officer	Orange Walk Town, Orange Walk District
Ms. Janet Wright	Personnel Manager, Brodies	Belize City, Belize District
Ms. Judith Alpuche	Director, National Committee for Families and Children	Belize City, Belize District
Ms. Margaret Nicholas	Director, Belize Family Court	Belize City, Belize District
Ms. Y	Parent of working child	Belize City, Belize District
Nestor Novelo ²²	NOPCA Coordinator	Corozal

²² Mr. Novelo worked as an officer on the Corozal Child Labour Project and still helps children who seek his assistance.