



CHILD LABOUR IN THE CARIBBEAN

**WHAT YOU SHOULD
KNOW — AND HOW TO
GET HELP**

by  **FREE THE SLAVES**

LET'S START WITH SOME IMPORTANT WORDS

Who is a child? Anyone under the age of 18. That means if you are 17 or younger, you are a child, and you have rights that are meant to keep you safe.

What is child labour? Child labour is when children are made to do work that is harmful to their body and mind, or that stops them from going to school. It is not the same as helping out at home or learning a skill from your family in a safe way. Child labour is work that takes away your time to learn, play, rest, and grow.

What are the "worst forms" of child labour? Some types of child labour are considered especially dangerous. These include being forced to work to pay off a family debt, being used in illegal activities like carrying drugs or weapons, and being treated like you belong to someone else. These situations are never okay, and they are against the law in every Caribbean country.

How does child labour affect young people? Children who are made to work in these ways often feel tired, lonely, worried, sad, or hopeless. It can be hard to focus in school — or to go to school at all. That is why child labour is something that communities, families, and governments are working together to stop.

The good news is that child labour is going down around the world. But there are still about 138 million children working full-time who do not get to go to school or have enough time to play and live their childhood fully.

If you or someone you know is in a situation like this, there are people who can help.

Look at the end of this guide for a number you can call in your country.

IS YOUR COUNTRY LISTED HERE?

Antigua & Barbuda

Bahamas

Barbados

Belize

Dominica

Grenada

Guyana

Haiti

Jamaica

Montserrat

Saint Kitts & Nevis

Saint Lucia

Saint Vincent & the Grenadines


Suriname

Trinidad & Tobago

THEN THIS GUIDE IS FOR YOU!



WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE CARIBBEAN?



In the Caribbean, about 1 in every 8 children has to work. Many of them are very young, between 5 and 11 years old.

More boys than girls are child labourers, but that does not mean girls are not affected. Girls often do housework and take care of younger children or elderly relatives, and this kind of work is harder to see.

The most common types of child labour in the region include housework for other families, selling goods in the street, farming, construction, manufacturing, and mining.



How old should a child be to work?



HOW OLD DO YOU HAVE TO BE TO WORK?



Every Caribbean country has a law that says how old you must be before you can start working. These laws exist to protect you. Here is the minimum working age in each country:

Country	Min Age	Country	Min Age	Country	Min Age
Antigua & Barbuda	16	Grenada	16	Saint Kitts & Nevis	16
Bahamas	14	Guyana	15	Saint Lucia	15
Barbados	16	Haiti	15	Saint Vincent & the Grenadines	14
Belize	14	Jamaica	15	Suriname	16
Dominica	14	Montserrat	14	Trinidad & Tobago	16

If someone is asking you to work and you are younger than the age listed for your country, that is not okay, and you have the right to say something about it. The numbers listed at the end are here to help you get support.



WHAT IS HAPPENING IN SOME COUNTRIES RIGHT NOW?

Belize In Belize, about 1 in every 8 children is in child labour. The youngest children, aged 5 to 11, and children from the poorest families are most affected. Some children are being hurt or taken advantage of. Others are involved in dangerous or illegal activities, like carrying drugs or weapons, or doing risky work on farms, building sites, or fishing boats.

Guyana In Guyana, child labour is most common among children aged 5 to 11, especially in the countryside and in families with very little money. Some children are being hurt or used by others. Some do dangerous work on farms, in mines, on building sites, or in jobs like helping in other people's homes, selling things on the street, or begging.

Haiti In Haiti, children work in farming, fishing, and construction. Some also do housework for other families, sell things on the street, beg, or wash cars. Some children are used to carry drugs, and some are pulled into criminal groups.

Jamaica In Jamaica, dangerous child labour continues in farming. Some children are forced to work in homes or beg. Others are brought into groups that do harmful or illegal things. It is also becoming more common for children to be involved in scams or to carry drugs or weapons.

Suriname In Suriname, some children — especially in rural areas — are doing jobs that are not safe. This happens more in families with little money. Children may work in mines, on building sites, in forests, or on farms. Some are also used by others or made to do dangerous things like selling drugs or working on the streets.

Trinidad and Tobago In Trinidad and Tobago, some children are doing unsafe work, especially in cities. This is more common in poorer families. Some children work around dust, smoke, very hot or cold temperatures, or loud noise, or are asked to carry heavy loads.



WHY ARE SOME CHILDREN MORE AT RISK?

There is no single reason why a child ends up in child labour. It usually happens because of a mix of challenges. Here are some of the most common ones:

Money struggles. When families do not have enough money, especially during hard times, children sometimes have to help by working. This can lead to situations that are unsafe or unfair.

Hard to get to school. In some areas, especially in the countryside, schools may be far away, school supplies may be limited, or there may not be a way to continue to higher levels. When children leave school early, they are more likely to start working young — often in farming, fishing, or other informal jobs.

Unsafe homes. Some children live in homes where they are not safe or cared for. When young people leave these situations, they may have to earn money on their own, which can put them at risk.

Families who have moved. Children whose families have come from another country or region may face extra challenges. It can be harder to go to school, get help, or find stable work, so children may end up working to support their family.

Tradition and culture. In many communities, children help with family farms, fishing, or small businesses. Adults often see this as a way to teach responsibility and skills. And in many cases, it can be. But it is important to make sure that this kind of help does not become unsafe or unfair, and that children still get to go to school and have time to rest and play.



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN CHILDREN ARE MADE TO WORK?

Child labour can affect your life in many ways — your body, your feelings, and your future.

Your health. Dangerous work can cause injuries and make you sick. Some children are exposed to unsafe conditions that can cause long-term harm.

Your feelings. Working at a young age, especially in difficult conditions, can make you feel sad, worried, scared, or alone. It can be hard to feel confident or to enjoy the things you should be able to enjoy at your age.

Your education. Children who work often miss school, fall behind in their lessons, or stop going to school altogether. This can affect the opportunities you have later in life.

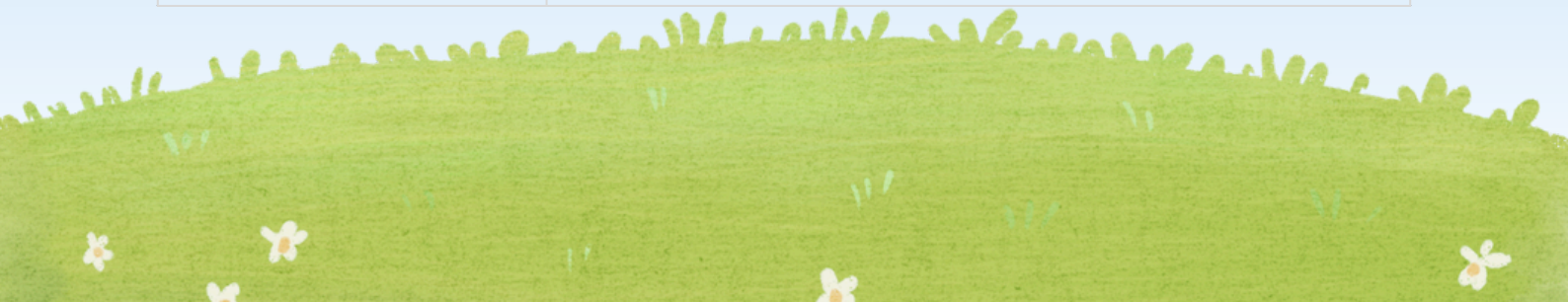
Your family. Sometimes, when one child in a family works, brothers and sisters may have to start working too. And if a parent had to work as a child, their own children may end up in the same situation. This is called a cycle — and it can be broken, but it takes support.



YOU ARE NOT ALONE — AND YOU DESERVE HELP

If you or someone you know is being made to work in a way that feels wrong, unsafe, or unfair, please reach out. You do not have to handle this by yourself. There are people in your country who are ready to listen and help.

Country	Emergency Contact
Antigua & Barbuda	Child Protection Hotline (464-3531), TIPPU (562-7089)
The Bahamas	Child Abuse Hotline (322-2763), Labour Dept. (302-2550)
Barbados	Child Care Board (5355-2800), Police Dept. (211)
Belize	Labour Dept. (822-2679)
Dominica	Social Welfare Division (266-3080), Labour Division (266-3194)
Grenada	Dept. Of Labour (440-2532), Police (911), Child Protection Authority (435-0293)
Guyana	Ministry of Labour (226-6115), Child Care and Protection Agency (225-2125 to 2127)
Haiti	IBESR (2816-1554), MAST (2940-0928)



Country	Emergency Contact
Jamaica	Helpline (211), Child Labour Unit (922-9500)
Montserrat	Labour Dept. (491-4010), Police (491-2555)
Saint Kitts & Nevis	Child Protection (662-6833), Ministry of Labour (467-1100), Nevis Dept. of Labour (469-5521)
Saint Lucia	Dept of Labour (468-3186/3183), Division of Human Services (452-7204), Crisis Centre (712-7574), Anti-Trafficking Hotline (847)
Saint Vincent & the Grenadines	ATIP Unit (456-1750), Dept of Labour (457-1789)
Suriname	Ministry of Labour (475-241), TIP Helpdesk (400418)
Trinidad & Tobago	Children's Authority (800-2014), Counter Trafficking Unit (800-4288)

Remember: Asking for help is not a sign of weakness. It is one of the bravest things you can do — for yourself, or for someone you care about.



WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

