

ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

International Instrument	Signature	Ratification, Acceptance (A), Approval (AA), Accession (a), Succession (d)	Entry Into Force
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child		26 Oct 1993	
UN Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child prostitution and Child Pornography		15 Sep 2005 a	
Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons		29 Oct 2010	
UN Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict		29 Mar 2011	
UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance	29 Mar 2010		
Hague Convention on International Child Abduction			

In St. Vincent and the Grenadines, there are eight laws that refer directly or indirectly to missing children:

1. Juveniles Act of 1952;
2. Law of Minors Act 1987 (amended in 1992);
3. Criminal Code Act of 1988;
4. The Domestic Violence Summary Proceedings Act of 1995 (amended, Domestic Violence Act of 2015);
5. Status of Children Act of 2011;
6. Children (Care and Adoption) Act of 2011;
7. The Prevention of Trafficking in Persons (PTIP) Act (No. 27 of 2011); and
8. Cybercrime Act of 2016.

General Child Protection

Children and adolescents make up approximately one third of the population in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.¹ A 2017 situational analysis conducted by UNICEF found that the primary issue affecting children and adolescents (ages 0-19) in St. Vincent and the Grenadines is poverty.² The study included interviews with 115 representatives of government and civil society, as well as focus groups that identified the following as the most vulnerable groups in the country: children ages 0-15 years living in poor female-headed households; adolescent girls and boys; children in residential care centers; children of migrant families; and children in conflict with the law.³ The 2013-2025 National Economic

¹ UNICEF, *Situation Analysis of Children in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines*, 2017, at https://www.unicef.org/easterncaribbean/ECAO_SVG_Sitan_2017.pdf (last visited Mar. 6, 2019).

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

and Social Development Strategy (NESDS) was enacted to reduce poverty and protect the most vulnerable.⁴

The government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines established a National Child Rights Committee to provide oversight and guidance to the Child Protection Unit, the national authority on child protection issues.⁵ In November 2016, the Committee became a regulatory commission with numerous sub-committees, one of which is the Management Committee responsible for “national oversight on selection and recruitment of Foster Parents, Output and Outcome effects of interventions for children in care and rehabilitation, and external or independent reporting and monitoring of cases.”⁶

The Family Services Division of the Ministry of National Mobilization, Social Development, Local Government, Gender Affairs, Family Affairs, Persons with Disabilities and Non-Governmental Organisations (Ministry of National Mobilization)⁷ is the government agency responsible for monitoring and protecting the welfare of children and other minority groups in the country.⁸

In April 2016, the Ministry, in coordination with UNICEF, launched a National Child Protection Policy; St. Vincent and the Grenadines was the first country in the Eastern Caribbean to adopt such a national policy. Consistent with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the National Child Protection Policy is a “macro-based Legal and Social Protection Strategy aimed at strengthening national protection systems, supporting social change, promoting child protection in conflict and natural disasters, building evidence and knowledge management and convening as well as catalyzing agents of change.”^{9,10} The Policy included the establishment of a Child Development Division “aimed at improving access to programmes that promote psych-social development of children in child abuse and conflict environments.”¹¹

The Child Development Division was implemented in 2016 and is located in the Child Protection Unit and is operated under the National Child Protection Network that addresses all areas related to the protection of children’s rights.¹² The Division provides a variety of services including: Liberty Lodge Crisis & Rehabilitation Centre; Child Abuse & Rehabilitation Counseling; Diversion; Child Protection; Child Maintenance; Foster & Kinship Care; Adoption; Awareness Campaigns; Truant Students Rehabilitation; Children Against Poverty (CAP).¹³ The Division is responsible for the processes of

⁴ *National Economic and Social Development Plan (NESDP) 2013-2025 of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines*, at <https://observatorioplanificacion.cepal.org/sites/default/files/plan/files/SanVicenteylasgranadinascompleto.pdf> (last visited Mar. 6, 2019).

⁵ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *List of issues in relation to the combined second and third periodic report of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Addendum – Replies of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the list of issues*, Jan. 25, 2017, at https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CRC/Shared%20Documents/VCT/INT_CRC_RLI_VCT_26390_E.docx (last visited Mar. 20, 2019).

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ The Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Ministry of National Mobilization, Social Development, Local Government, Gender Affairs, Family Affairs, Persons with Disabilities and Non-Governmental Organisations, *Cooperative Division*, at <http://www.mobilization.gov.vc/mobilization/> (last visited Feb. 6, 2019).

⁸ The Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines: Ministry of National Mobilization, Social Development, Family, Gender Affairs, Persons with Disabilities and Youth, *Family Services Division*, at <http://mobilization.gov.vc/mobilization/index.php/family-services-division> (last visited Feb. 6, 2019).

⁹ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *supra* note 5.

¹⁰ *St. Vincent launches national child protection policy*, IWITNESS NEWS, Apr. 20, 2016, at <https://www.iwnsvg.com/2016/04/20/st-vincent-launches-national-child-protection-policy/> (last visited Feb. 6, 2019) (on file with the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children). See also, *Report of St. Vincent and the Grenadines*, XIII Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, Oct. 2016, at https://conferenciamujer.cepal.org/13/sites/default/files/pages/files/report_-_st_vincent_and_the_grenadines.pdf (last visited Feb. 6, 2019) (on file with the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children).

¹¹ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *supra* note 5.

¹² United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Human Rights Committee examines the state of civil and political rights in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in absence of a report*, Mar. 6, 2019, at <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24272&LangID=E> (last visited Mar. 7, 2019).

¹³ *Id.*

reporting; intake; investigation and assessment; alternative care and rehabilitation (treatment); and reintegration/adoption related to child development matters.¹⁴

Amended in 2015, the Domestic Violence Summary Proceedings Act of 1995 provided a limited legal framework for the protection of children. The Domestic Violence Act of 2015¹⁵ defines domestic violence as violence demonstrating any controlling or abusive behavior that harms the health, safety, or well-being of a person or any child and includes, but is not limited to, threats or actions of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse as well as economic abuse, intimidation, harassment, stalking, damage to property, and entrance into the other's residence without consent when the parties reside in different locations.

The Cybercrime Act of 2016 addresses crimes involving technology and encompasses crimes against children such as child sexual abuse material (CSAM).¹⁶

Despite these protections, the Committee on the Rights of the Child noted in its March 2017 Concluding Observations that there is a persistently high prevalence of child abuse, including neglect and physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and incest, in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.¹⁷ This is compounded by a low prosecution and conviction rate for the sexual abuse of children. The Committee further noted concern that the prostitution of children is frequently justified by victims and their families as a way to cope with poverty.¹⁸ There is growing recognition throughout the country that incest and abuse of children within the family is significant.¹⁹ Police enforcement and current policies are seen as insufficient to identify and address the current problems and, as a result, the majority of the community chooses to look away rather than confront the issue, despite its prevalence.²⁰

More than 300 cases of child abuse were reported in 2017.²¹ Of these cases, 20% were sexual abuse, 37% were physical and emotional abuse, and 43% were cases of neglect.²² The data collected showed that girls were victimized more often than boys (63%) and 53% of child abuse and neglect cases were of children younger than 12 years of age.²³

The Statistical Office's official statistics of reported crimes from 2013-2017 show 118 violent crimes reported in 2016 and 113 in 2017; three reported incidents of rape in each 2016 and 2017; one reported case of incest in 2017; 19 "other sexual crimes" in 2016 and 20 in 2017; and a significant increase in reported domestic violence, with three cases in 2016 and 33 reported in 2017.²⁴ None of

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ Domestic Violence Act of 2015, at http://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20caribbean/attachments/pages/svg%20domestic%20violence%20act_-_07072015082955.pdf?la=en&vs=1606 (last visited Feb. 28, 2019).

¹⁶ Cybercrime Act of 2016, at <http://www.assembly.gov.vc/assembly/images/stories/cybercrime%20bill%202016.pdf> (last visited Feb. 27, 2019).

¹⁷ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding observations on the combined second and third periodic reports of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines*, Mar. 13, 2017, at https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%2fC%2fVCT%2fCO%2f2-3&Lang=en (last visited Mar. 6, 2019).

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, *Saint Vincent and the Grenadines: Prevalence and forms of child abuse, including legislation, state protection and availability of child protection services (2008-2011)*, Nov. 4, 2011, at <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5072b0592.html> (last visited Mar. 18, 2019).

²⁰ Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, *Saint Vincent and the Grenadines: Prevalence of sexual abuse against children; laws concerning sexual abuse against children; availability of facilities for abused children*, Oct. 31, 2006, at <https://www.refworld.org/docid/45f147c3a.html> (last visited Mar. 18, 2019).

²¹ 300 child abuse cases reported in SVG in 2017, IWITNESS NEWS, Apr. 11, 2018, at <https://www.iwnsvg.com/2018/04/11/300-child-abuse-cases-reported-in-svg-in-2017/> (last visited Mar. 6, 2019). See also, *Increase in sex crimes reports in SVG*, IWITNESS NEWS, Nov. 8, 2018, at <https://www.iwnsvg.com/2018/11/08/increase-in-sex-crimes-reports-in-svg/> (last visited Mar. 6, 2019).

²² *Id.*

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ Statistical Office, Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning, Sustainable Development, and Information Technology, *Crime Rates by Type of Reported Crimes per 10,000 Population, 2013 to 2017*, at http://stats.gov.vc/stats/?page_id=824 (last visited Mar. 7, 2019).

the data presented is divided by age or gender; hence, it is unclear how many of these acts were committed against children.

General Missing Child Issues

There currently are no laws in St. Vincent and the Grenadines specifically protecting or addressing missing children.²⁵

According to the 2006 *Study of Child Vulnerability in Barbados, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines*, there had reportedly been an increase in the number of street children in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.²⁶ The Minister of National Mobilization proposed laws be revised allowing for the prosecution of parents for child abuse and neglect, echoing concerns of the UN CRC Committee about the added risk of sexual exploitation for payment to street children.²⁷ The CRC Committee further recommended that the country undertake a study on the scope and causes of the issue to develop a legislative framework to assist street children.²⁸

In December 2007, the Ministry of National Mobilization initiated the “Street Children Project” to assess “the nature and extent of the street children phenomenon” in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.²⁹ The project was administered by the National Committee on the Rights of the Child, in coordination with UNICEF, and culminated in a report published in April 2008.³⁰ The study defined “street children” as “any boy or girl...for whom the street (in the widest sense of the word including unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc.) has become his or her habitual abode and/or source of livelihood, and who is inadequately protected, supervised, or protected by responsible adults.”³¹ The study included a survey of 32 children ranging from age six to 17 years of age and predominantly boys (78%), who fit the criteria to some degree.³² The study revealed that while few children considered the street as a place of abode, “many children spend more time on the streets than in any place of permanency.”³³ Half of the children interviewed considered the street a source of livelihood used to help support their families. The interviews showed that children who took to the streets largely came from dysfunctional homes including experiencing parental conflicts, being unwanted by step-parents, or abusive relationships, poverty, and/or financial difficulties.³⁴ Ultimately, the report found that the issue of vulnerable children across the country needed to be urgently addressed.

Several social safety nets have been implemented since the 2008 report was published, such as the establishment of a Child Development Division with jurisdiction over children in need of protection; therapeutic interventions for families and children; additional protection from neglect by way of the Child Care and Adoption Act; and additional residential housing options.³⁵ However, the CRC Committee recommended in its 2017 Concluding Observations that the study be updated and data regularly collected on children in street situations and, based on the data collected, that a national strategy be developed for recovering and reintegrating children in street situations into families.³⁶

²⁵ Missing Children Questionnaire (last reviewed Jun. 26, 2017) (on file with the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children).

²⁶ *A Study of Child Vulnerability in Barbados, St. Lucia and St. Vincent & the Grenadines* 14, UNICEF Office for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, in association with the Governments of Barbados, St. Lucia and St. Vincent & the Grenadines, at https://www.unicef.org/easterncaribbean/cao_resources_vulnerability.pdf (last visited Mar. 20, 2019) (on file with the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children).

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ *Qualitative/Quantitative Analysis Report of a Survey of Street Children in St. Vincent and the Grenadines*, UNICEF, 2008, at https://www.unicef.org/easterncaribbean/spmapping/Implementation/SP%20Poverty/National/2008_Streetchildren_SVG.pdf (last visited Mar. 18, 2019) (on file with the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children)

³⁰ *Id.*

³¹ *Id.* at 7.

³² *Id.* at 20.

³³ *Id.* at 56.

³⁴ *Id.* at 8-9.

³⁵ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *supra* note 5.

³⁶ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *supra* note 17, at 13.

Definition of “Missing Child”

St. Vincent and the Grenadines does not have specific legislation that provides a definition for a “missing child.”

The Law of Minors Act of 1988 defines a “minor” as a person under the age of 18 years.³⁷ The Domestic Violence Act of 2015 also defines a “child” as a person under 18 years of age.³⁸ The Juveniles Act defines a “child” as a person under 14 years of age and a “young person” as a person who has attained the age of 14 and is under the age of 16.³⁹

Abandonment

UNICEF’s 2017 Situation Analysis found that there were five residential homes in the country “providing care and protection for children suffering from neglect and abandonment, sexual or physical abuse or homelessness or whose parent/guardian/caregiver is unable to care for them.”⁴⁰ Approximately 143 children ages 0-18 were taken into care from 2011 to 2015.⁴¹

Article 198 of the Criminal Code criminalizes abandoning or exposing children under the age of two where the child’s life or health is endangered or likely to be seriously injured and provides a penalty of imprisonment of five years.⁴²

According to the Family Services Division of the Ministry of National Mobilization, abandonment is defined as not caring for the child/children for days or weeks at a time.⁴³ Abandoned children have been noted as among the children who have the potential need to go into the foster care system.⁴⁴ A representative of the Ministry of National Mobilization said that in 2012 there were 42 reported cases of child abandonment, and this rose to 72 cases in 2013.⁴⁵

Article 8 of the Juveniles Act states that “any person who, having attained the age of seventeen and having the custody, charge or care of any juvenile, willfully assaults, ill-treats, neglects, abandons or exposes such juvenile, or causes or procures him to be assaulted, ill-treated, neglected, abandoned or exposed, in a manner likely to cause that juvenile unnecessary suffering or injury to health (including injury to or loss of sight, or hearing, or limb, or organ of the body, and any mental derangement) is guilty of an offence” and provides a penalty of imprisonment of two years and a fine of 5,000 dollars on conviction on indictment.⁴⁶

³⁷ Law of Minors Act (1988), Article 2 – Interpretation, at <http://www.cavehill.uwi.edu/lawlibrary/getattachment/ed6e3b83-20ae-4a14-827f-dc51c0d6a4f8/LAW-OF-MINORS-ACT.aspx> (last visited Feb. 6, 2019) (on file with the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children).

³⁸ Domestic Violence Act of 2015, *supra* note 15, at Article 1.

³⁹ Juveniles Act No. 20 of 1952, amended 1992, Article 2 – Interpretation, at <https://www.cavehill.uwi.edu/lawlibrary/getattachment/7f801c7e-1d7c-48e6-b3b4-1dbecb5ef54e/JUVENILES-ACT.aspx> (last visited Mar. 7, 2019).

⁴⁰ UNICEF, *supra* note 1.

⁴¹ *Id.*

⁴² Criminal Code Act No. 23 of 1988, Chapter 171, Article 198 – Abandoning or exposing children under two (on file with the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children).

⁴³ Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, *supra* note 19.

⁴⁴ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, *Saint Vincent and the Grenadines: Information on the protection and resources by the government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to orphaned children and orphans who have one parent subject to a prohibition order*, May 19, 2011, at <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4e43a66d2.html> (last visited Feb. 6, 2019) (on file with the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children).

⁴⁵ *Child Negligence Awareness*, NBC SVG, Apr. 17, 2014, at <http://www.nbcsvg.com/2014/04/17/child-negligence-awareness/> (last visited Mar. 6, 2019).

⁴⁶ Juveniles Act of 1952, *supra* note 39, at Article 8 – Cruelty to Juveniles.

The Maintenance Act requires that every mother, father, and/or legal guardian provide reasonable maintenance for their children under the age of 16 years.⁴⁷ The term “reasonable maintenance” is not defined in the Maintenance Act; however, the Juveniles Act provides “that a parent or other person legally liable to maintain a juvenile shall be deemed to have neglected him in a manner likely to cause injury to his health if, being able to do so, such parents or other person fails to provide adequate food, clothing, rest, medical aid or lodging.”⁴⁸

Kidnapping and Abduction

The Criminal Code criminalizes abduction in Article 199, but the provision is not specific to the abduction of children. It notes that “any person who, by force, compels, or by any deceitful means induces, any person to go from any place is said to abduct that person and is guilty of an offence and liable, unless some other punishment is provided, to imprisonment for five years.”⁴⁹

Furthermore, kidnapping is criminalized in Article 200, which states “any person who steals and carries away or secretes any person without the consent of that person, or of some person legally authorised to consent on behalf of that person, or who imprisons any person in such a manner as to prevent him applying to a court for his release, or from discovering to any other person the place where he is imprisoned, or in such a manner as to prevent any person entitled to have access to him from discovering the place where he is imprisoned, is said to kidnap that person and is guilty of an offence and liable to imprisonment for fourteen years.”⁵⁰

The Criminal Code contains several other provisions related to abduction and kidnapping including Article 201 – Abducting with intent to convey out of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; Article 202 – Abducting female with intent to marry; Article 203 – Unlawfully taking girl under fifteen from parents; Article 204 – Child stealing; Article 205 – Wrongful concealing or confining; and Article 206 – Other wrongful confinement.⁵¹

Parental Abduction

St. Vincent and the Grenadines is not a signatory to the Hague Convention on Civil Aspect of International Child Abduction. Article 22 of the Law of Minors Act specifies that when a court makes an order regarding the custody of a minor, including an interim order under sections 12(1), 15(1)(a), or 16(a), the child may not be taken out of St. Vincent and the Grenadines while the order is in force, except with the leave of the court.⁵²

Article 203 of the Criminal Code states, “Any person who unlawfully takes, or causes to be taken, any girl under the age of fifteen out of the possession of and against the will of her parents or other person having the lawful charge or care of her, is guilty of an offence and liable to imprisonment for two years.”⁵³

Furthermore, Article 204 of the Criminal Code criminalizes child stealing and specifies that “Any person who, with intent to deprive any parent or other person having lawful charge or care of a child under the age of fourteen, of the possession of such child, or with intent to steal any article on or about such child, by force or fraud takes or entices away or detains such child, is guilty of an offence and liable to

⁴⁷ Maintenance Act No. 52 of 1989, amended 1995, Article 3 – Duty to Maintain Dependents, at <https://www.cavehill.uwi.edu/lawlibrary/getattachment/2e513dec-bbf0-405c-aa8f-759f826ca6f8/MAINTENANCE-ACT.aspx> (last visited Mar. 7, 2019).

⁴⁸ Juveniles Act of 1952, *supra* note 39, at Article 8 – Cruelty to Juveniles.

⁴⁹ Criminal Code Act No. 23 of 1988, *supra* note 42, Article 199 – Abduction.

⁵⁰ Criminal Code Act No. 23 of 1988, *supra* note 42, Article 200 – Kidnapping.

⁵¹ *Id.*

⁵² Law of Minors Act (1988), *supra* note 37, Article 22 – Restriction on Removal of Minor from Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

⁵³ Criminal Code Act No. 23 of 1988, *supra* note 42, Article 203 – Unlawfully taking of a girl under 15 from her parents.

imprisonment for seven years.”⁵⁴ It is a defense if the accused claims in good faith a right to possession of the child.⁵⁵ As a result of this Article, parental abduction is not considered to be a crime.

UNICEF has noted that the limitation of protection of children only up to 14 and 15 years of age for these offenses is an obvious weakness in the rights of the child to be protected from abduction.⁵⁶

To obtain a passport for a child, an application certified by a Magistrate, Justice of the Peace, Notary Public, or other specified official must be submitted to the Passport Office along with two copies of the child’s photograph and the child’s birth certificate if born in St. Vincent and the Grenadines; if born outside of the country the father’s or mother’s birth certificate and marriage certificate (if applicable) also are required. A child under 16 years of age must have the written consent of a parent or legal guardian.⁵⁷

Reporting Mechanism

There is no clear mechanism in place to report missing children to law enforcement or other organizations. The Royal St. Vincent and the Grenadines Police Force (Royal Police) operates several emergency telephone lines: 999, 911, and 112.⁵⁸ Crimes also can be reported online or at a local police station. Cases of missing children may be reported to the Family Services Department (tel. 784-450-0395), which refers all reports of child abuse to the Royal Police for action.⁵⁹

Investigation of Missing Child Cases

No written policies could be found regarding law enforcement’s response to missing children reports.

National Database

No information was found concerning a national database specific to missing persons or missing children; however, St. Vincent and the Grenadines is a member of INTERPOL since October 1985 and has access to the International Child Sexual Exploitation (ICSE) image and video database and other INTERPOL databases.⁶⁰

According to the Judiciary of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the birth of a child must be registered within three months in the district where the baby was born.⁶¹ The birth registry does not appear to be electronically accessible by the public. Copies of birth certificates can be obtained from the Civil Registry Department for a fee.⁶²

Under the auspices of the Universal Civil Identity Program in the Americas (PUICA), the Organization of American States (OAS) implemented the Caribbean Civil Registry and Identity System (CCRIS) in St.

⁵⁴ Criminal Code Act No. 23 of 1988, *supra* note 42, Article 204 – Child Stealing.

⁵⁵ *Id.*

⁵⁶ UNICEF, *supra* note 1.

⁵⁷ Application for a St. Vincent and the Grenadines Passport for a child under 16 years of age, at <http://www.gov.vc/images/citizens/PDF/childpassportform.pdf> (last visited Mar. 7, 2019) (on file with the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children). See also, http://security.gov.vc/security/images/stories/Immigration/child_passport_form%20b.pdf.

⁵⁸ The Royal Police of St. Vincent and the Grenadines Force, *Emergency Numbers*, at <http://rsvgpf.gov.vc/rsvgpf/index.php/about-us/contact-us> (last visited Mar. 7, 2019).

⁵⁹ U.S. Department of State, *Saint Vincent and the Grenadines 2017 Human Rights Report*, at <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/277603.pdf> (last visited Mar. 18, 2019) (on file with the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children).

⁶⁰ INTERPOL, *Member Countries – St. Vincent & the Grenadines*, at <https://www.interpol.int/Who-we-are/Member-countries/Americas/ST-VINCENT-GRENADINES> (last visited Mar. 7, 2019).

⁶¹ The Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, *Birth Registration*, at http://www.judiciary.gov.vc/judiciary/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=43&Itemid=84 (last visited Mar. 7, 2019).

⁶² The Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, *Birth Certificates*, at http://www.judiciary.gov.vc/judiciary/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=31&Itemid=88 (last visited Mar. 7, 2019).

Vincent and the Grenadines.⁶³ The CCRIS in St. Vincent and the Grenadines was completed in 2013 in order to facilitate birth registration and provide uniform vital statistics.⁶⁴ The CCRIS has been implemented in five other Eastern Caribbean countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, Dominica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Saint Lucia.⁶⁵ Research could not determine if the CCRIS is accessible to the public.

In 2017, through a program of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), St. Vincent and the Grenadines, as well as Dominica, St. Lucia, and Grenada (the four Windward Islands), introduced Multi-Purpose Identification (MPID) cards that allow the countries to establish agreements to utilize each other's databases to verify the identification documents of travelers.⁶⁶ The card contains basic biographical and health information with room for additional information to be added in the future. The MPID cards could be used for voting, civil registration, social security and more.⁶⁷

Case Management System

There is currently no case management system for missing children cases.

Alert Mechanism

There is currently no rapid notification system in St. Vincent and the Grenadines to alert the public of missing child cases. The Royal Police Force does have a Facebook page on which information about missing persons is posted. The public also can use this forum to communicate with the police force.⁶⁸

The Royal Police operate a website where photos of and information about missing persons are posted so that the public may assist in locating missing persons and/or provide tips and information that may be helpful to the investigation.⁶⁹ Individuals with information are instructed to contact the nearest police station or call 457-1211.⁷⁰

Awareness-Raising Initiatives

The Ministry of National Mobilization administers a number of awareness initiatives on a variety of child protection issues though not specifically related to the issue of missing children. For instance, St. Vincent and the Grenadines annually commemorates Child Abuse Awareness Month in April.⁷¹ A child negligence awareness campaign is included in these efforts to inform parents across the country that child negligence is a crime.⁷² As part of their "Sixteen Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence" campaign (November 25–December 10, 2018), activities focused on raising awareness of

⁶³ The PUICA initiative supports the efforts of OAS Member States to ensure civil registration and recognition of the right to civil identity for all persons in the region. Organization of American States, *OAS Universal Civil Identity Program in the Americas (PUICA)*, at <http://www.oas.org/en/spa/depm/puica.asp> (last visited Mar. 7, 2019).

⁶⁴ CARICOM, *OAS completes work on Caribbean Registry and Identity System*, Feb. 21, 2013, at <https://caricom.org/communications/view/oas-completes-work-on-caribbean-registry-and-identity-system>. (last visited Mar. 7, 2019).

⁶⁵ *OAS completes work in C'bean Civil Registry & Identity System in SVG*, Feb. 22, 2013, at <https://kentontxchance.wordpress.com/2013/02/22/oas-completes-work-in-cbean-civil-registry-identity-system-in-svg/> (last visited Mar. 7, 2019).

⁶⁶ *St. Vincent and the Grenadines welcomes launch of the Multi Purpose Identification system*, WEFM, May 15, 2017, at <http://www.999wefm.com/st-vincent-grenadines-welcomes-launch-multi-purpose-identification-system/> (last visited Mar. 7, 2019).

⁶⁷ *Multi Purpose ID Card for Vincentians*, NEWS 784, Mar. 21, 2016, at <https://news784.com/local-news/multi-purpose-id-card-for-vincentians/> (last visited Mar. 7, 2019).

⁶⁸ The Royal St. Vincent and the Grenadines Police Force, *Facebook page*, at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Local-Business/Royal-St-Vincent-and-the-Grenadines-Police-Force-162650773815705/> (last visited Feb. 11, 2019).

⁶⁹ The Royal Police of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, *Missing persons*, at <http://rsvgpf.gov.vc/rsvgpf/index.php/news/missing-persons> (last visited Feb. 9, 2019).

⁷⁰ *Id.*

⁷¹ Ministry of National Mobilization, *Press Briefing on Child Abuse Awareness*, Apr. 9, 2018, at <http://mobilization.gov.vc/mobilization/index.php/37-news/205-press-briefing-on-child-abuse-awareness> (last visited Mar. 7, 2019).

⁷² Ministry of National Mobilization, *Child Negligence Awareness*, at <http://mobilization.gov.vc/mobilization/index.php/26-news/news/152-child-negligence-awareness> (last visited Mar. 7, 2019).

child abuse, child justice, and domestic violence were included.⁷³ The Gender Affairs Division promoted a “Say No to Violence” Against Women and Girls campaign by wearing the color orange on September 25, 2017.⁷⁴

The public relations and compliance department of the Royal Police Force established police youth clubs to develop a closer link between the youths of the nation and the police, facilitating cooperation between the two groups in areas that are of concern to children.⁷⁵

Trafficking

According to the U.S. Department of State’s 2018 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, St. Vincent and the Grenadines is a Tier 2 country, which means that it does not fully meet the minimum standards articulated in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) but is making significant effort to do so.⁷⁶ St. Vincent and the Grenadines is a source and destination country for men, women, and children for sex trafficking and forced labor.⁷⁷

St. Vincent and the Grenadines ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol) in 2010. In 2011, the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons (PTIP) Act was passed to implement the Palermo Protocol in national legislation.⁷⁸ The Act makes trafficking a criminal offense with a penalty of up to 20 years imprisonment and fines. The Act criminalizes the “recruitment, transportation, harbouring, or receipt of a child, or giving of payment or benefits to obtain the consent of a person having control of a child, for the purpose of exploitation” and provides for a penalty of imprisonment for 15 years, a fine of \$250,000, or both.⁷⁹ The penalty is further aggravated when the victim is under the age of 18 years.⁸⁰

The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Unit (ATIPU) was established in 2012 within the Royal Police Force under the PTIP Act.⁸¹ The ATIPU aims to suppress and punish human trafficking and domestic violence, enforce the Act, and raise awareness of the issue through educational campaigns.⁸²

Based on a 2017 U.S. Department of Labor report, the government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines has developed several key mechanisms and policies related to human trafficking and child labor including: the creation of a *National Task Force Against Trafficking in Persons* in 2012; adoption of the *National Plan of Action Against Trafficking in Persons 2016-2020* administered by the Task Force to establish procedures to eradicate human trafficking; and a *National Child Protection Policy Framework 2015-2020* to strengthen national child protection strategies and programs.⁸³

⁷³ Ministry of National Mobilization, *Sixteen Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence November 25th – December 10th, 2018*, Nov. 13, 2018, at <http://mobilization.gov.vc/mobilization/index.php/37-news/227-sixteen-days-of-activism-against-gender-based-violence-november-25-december-10-2018> (last visited Mar. 7, 2019).

⁷⁴ Ministry of Mobilization, *Gender Affairs Division Condemns Violence and Crime*, at <http://mobilization.gov.vc/mobilization/index.php/component/content/archive/2017/9> (last visited Mar. 7, 2019).

⁷⁵ Ministry of National Security, Air & Sea Port Development, at <http://www.security.gov.vc/security/> (last visited Mar. 7, 2019).

⁷⁶ U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2018 - St. Vincent and the Grenadines*, Jun. 2018, at <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/282803.pdf> (last visited Feb. 6, 2019) (on file with the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children).

⁷⁷ *Id.*

⁷⁸ The Prevention of Trafficking in Persons (PTIP) Act (No. 27 of 2011) - Part 1, 2012 (on file with the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children).

⁷⁹ *Id.* at Article 5 – Offence of trafficking in persons.

⁸⁰ *Id.* at Article 8 – Aggravated Circumstances.

⁸¹ The Royal St Vincent & the Grenadines Police Force, *Anti-Trafficking Unit (ATIPU)*, at <http://rsvgpf.gov.vc/rsvgpf/index.php/anti-trafficking-unit-atipu> (last visited Mar. 6, 2019).

⁸² *Id.*

⁸³ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of International Labor Affairs, *2017 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor – Saint Vincent and the Grenadines*, at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/saint-vincent-grenadines> (last visited Mar. 7, 2019).