

In 2014, Suriname made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government approved the Roadmap to Combat Human Trafficking in Suriname and investigated and prosecuted human trafficking cases. However, children in Suriname continue to engage in child labor in mining and in the worst forms of child labor in commercial sexual exploitation. Additionally, Suriname has not raised the compulsory education age to be equal the minimum age for employment and does not collect or publish data on child labor inspections and violations.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Suriname are engaged in child labor, including in mining. Children are also engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking.(1-8) Table 1 provides key indicators on children’s work and education in Suriname.

Table 1. Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5-14 yrs.	6.4 (6,671)
Attending School (%)	5-14 yrs.	95.8
Combining Work and School (%)	7-14 yrs.	6.6
Primary Completion Rate (%)		87.7

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2011, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2015.(9)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children’s Work Project’s analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 4, 2010.(10)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children’s work by sector and activity.

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Harvesting crops,* applying pesticides,*† carrying heavy loads*† (1, 3)
Industry	Mining, particularly gold mining (1-6)
Services	Street work,* including vending* (1, 3, 5, 6, 11)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking* (1-3, 5-8)

* Evidence of this activity is limited and/or the extent of the problem is unknown.

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a) – (c) of ILO C. 182.

Children, predominantly boys, work in Suriname’s gold mines.(1, 3-5) In gold mining, children carry heavy loads and are exposed to mercury, excessive noise, and extreme heat. Child miners are vulnerable to being crushed by collapsing sand walls.(4) While recent reports suggest that children’s involvement in street vending may be declining, the commercial sexual exploitation of children, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, continues to be a problem, including in mining camps in the country’s interior.(1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 11)




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II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Suriname has ratified most key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

	Convention	Ratification
	ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	
	ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
	UN CRC	✓
	UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	
	UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The Government has established laws and regulations related to child labor, including its worst forms (Table 4).

Table 4. Laws and Regulations Related to Child Labor

Standard	Yes/No	Age	Related Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14	Article 17 of the Labor Code (1, 3-6, 12)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 20–21 of the Labor Code (1, 3-5, 12)
Prohibition of Hazardous Occupations or Activities for Children	Yes		Articles 2–3 of the Decree on Hazardous Labor (13, 14)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 15 of the Constitution (5, 15)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 307 of the Penal Code (5, 6, 12, 16)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 298 of the Penal Code (1, 3, 5, 6, 12)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 253 and 306–307 of the Penal Code; Articles 3-4 and 12 of the Narcotics Act (1, 3, 5, 6, 12)
Minimum Age for Compulsory Military Recruitment	N/A*		
Minimum Age for Voluntary Military Service	Yes	18	Article 9 of the Legal Status of Military Personnel Act (17, 18)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	12	Article 39 of the Constitution; Article 20 of the Law on Basic Education (4, 6, 13, 15)
Free Public Education	Yes		Articles 38–39 of the Constitution (15)

* No conscription (17)

Article 20 of the Law on Basic Education requires children to attend school until they are at least age 12.(13) This leaves children between ages 12 and 14 particularly vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor, as they are no longer required to attend school and are not legally permitted to work.(1, 4) The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labor, Technology, and Employment (MLTE) began collaborating to draft legislation that would raise the compulsory education age to 16, pending parliamentary approval.(19)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor, including its worst forms (Table 5).

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Labor, Technology, and Environment (MLTE)/ Department of Labor Inspections	Enforce laws related to child labor in the formal sector.(4, 5)
Ministry of Justice and Police	Enforce criminal laws related to child labor. Monitor and enforce child labor laws in the informal sector, including on the streets.(3, 5, 6) The Youth Affairs Police covers law enforcement involving children under age 18 and is jointly responsible for child labor-related crimes.(3, 5) The Trafficking in Persons Unit of Police investigates reports and allegations of trafficking in persons and forced sexual exploitation nationwide, including cases involving children.(5, 6)

Law enforcement agencies in Suriname took actions to combat child labor, including its worst forms.

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2014, the MLTE employed 66 labor inspectors, a decrease of 14 since 2013.(6, 19) There are no child labor-specific inspections; however, standard training for all labor inspectors includes identification of child labor violations.(6, 19) Labor inspections involve site visits and desk reviews; inspectors have the authority to assess penalties, which vary from fines to suspension of licenses. The MLTE collected data on the number of labor inspections conducted in 2014, but it has not made this information publicly available. There were no reports of child labor violations or of children who were removed by labor inspectors, nor were any penalties issued or fines collected that were related to child labor violations.(19)

Criminal Law Enforcement

The Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Unit of Police has 13 full-time officers and has insufficient staff and resources. TIP officers and regular police officers both need additional training to refresh their knowledge from the basic course and learn updated techniques.(19)

In 2014, the TIP Unit of Police investigated 15 potential cases of sex trafficking and 4 potential cases of forced labor; three underage girls were removed from forced prostitution and were provided with basic necessities as a result of investigations in 2014. According to the Prosecutors' Office, investigations are initiated only as a result of complaints filed and are limited by a lack of resources, especially for travel to the interior of the country.(19, 20) When the Youth Affairs Police finds children working on the street, these children are sometimes registered and sent home without being referred to any relevant services.(5, 6) Child trafficking victims are referred to shelters operated by NGOs; however, in 2014, some were placed in juvenile detention facilities due to lack of space in the shelters.(1, 3, 16)

In 2014, three new cases were presented for prosecution for forced child prostitution.(19) During the reporting period, 10 persons were convicted on charges of sex trafficking of minors. Sentences varied from 1 to 9 years of imprisonment.(19)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor, including its worst forms (Table 6).

Table 6. Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Commission for the Elimination of Child Labor	Coordinate efforts to combat child labor, including by researching different forms of child labor, advising on policy related to combating child labor, and formulating an action plan.(6) Comprises 11 members, with representation from the Presidential Commission on Child and Adolescent Policy; labor unions; private sector entities; academic institutions; NGOs; the MLTE; and the Ministries of Social Affairs, Education, Regional Development, Justice and Police.(1, 3, 6)
Anti-Trafficking Working Group	Coordinate the Government's anti-trafficking efforts.(1, 3, 5, 6) Provide care to victims of trafficking through government-supported NGOs.(6, 21) Has seven members, six from government agencies and one representing the NGO community. Initiatives include those that target the worst forms of child labor, such as the commercial sexual exploitation of children.(3, 5, 6)

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During the reporting period, the National Commission for the Elimination of Child Labor (NCECL) continued to lead government efforts to eliminate child labor; the NCECL's mandate expired at the end of 2014 and is pending renewal. In December, the Government announced plans to disband the Anti-Trafficking Working Group and create a new interagency coordinating mechanism to oversee anti-trafficking efforts; the Anti-Trafficking Working Group's current operational status is unclear.(19)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government of Suriname has established policies related to child labor, including its worst forms (Table 7).

Table 7. Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
National Children's Action Plan (2011–2014)	Establishes intergovernmental strategies to address children's rights and child labor. Implemented by the Ministry of Social Affairs.(19)
Roadmap to Combat Human Trafficking in Suriname (2014–2018)†	Outlines policy to combat trafficking in persons through 2018. Approved by the Council of Ministries in April 2014 and is still in the initial stages.(19)
Declaration of the Regional Initiative: Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labor (2014–2020)†	Aims to increase regional cooperation to eradicate child labor by 2020 through signatories' efforts to strengthen monitoring and coordination mechanisms, government programs, and South-South exchanges. Reaffirms commitments made in the Brasilia Declaration from the Third Global Conference on Child Labor (October 2013), and signed by Suriname at the ILO's 18th Regional Meeting of the Americas in Lima, Peru (October 2014).(22, 23)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

In 2013, the NCECL began drafting a National Action Plan on Combatting Child Labor, but the draft has not yet been completed. (6)

In September 2014, Suriname participated in the First Meeting of the Working Groups of the XVIII Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor to foster continued dialogue and cooperation on labor issues throughout the Americas. Held in Bridgetown, Barbados, these discussions promoted the exchange of information on policies and programs that seek to formalize the informal sector, uphold workers' rights, and prevent and eliminate child labor.(24, 25)

The Government of Suriname also participates in several regional initiatives to address child labor in the tourism industry. Suriname's Ministry of Transport, Communication, and Tourism participates in the Joint Group for the Elimination of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Tourism, which comprises members from the Ministries of Tourism of 10 Latin American countries and implements awareness-raising campaigns throughout the region.(3, 5, 6) Suriname is also a member of the Joint Regional Group for the Americas, which conducts child labor prevention and awareness-raising campaigns in tourism; the Group's members include Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela.(26)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2014, the Government of Suriname funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, including its worst forms (Table 8).

Table 8. Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Country-Level Engagement and Assistance to Reduce (CLEAR) Child Labor Project (2013–2017)	USDOL-funded capacity-building project implemented by the ILO in at least 10 countries to build the local and national capacity of the Government to address child labor. Aims to improve monitoring and enforcement of laws and policies related to child labor in Suriname; will implement a National Action Plan on the elimination of child labor and support a national child labor survey.(27)
Child and Youth Hotline‡	Government-run hotline that provides confidential advice to children in need, including victims of the worst forms of child labor. Receives approximately 80 calls per day.(19)
Anti-Trafficking Hotline‡	Government-sponsored hotline through which citizens can provide information to the police about trafficking cases; received no calls in 2014.(8, 19)
Human Trafficking Awareness Programs‡	Government-funded anti-trafficking activities.(6, 13, 21)

Table 8. Social Programs to Address Child Labor (cont)

Program	Description
Basic Education Program (2004–2014)*	IDB, \$14 million project to improve basic education. Implemented through the Ministry of Education. Aims to enhance education quality and reduce student dropout rates.(3, 5) Five major project components are enacting institutional reform, updating school curricula, improving educational materials, enhancing teacher capacity, and providing technical assistance.(3, 6)

* The impact of this program on child labor does not appear to have been studied.

‡ Program is funded by the Government of Suriname.

In 2013, the Ministry of Social Affairs began the process of establishing a shelter for child trafficking victims. However, the shelter was not yet open at the end of the reporting period.(6)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor, including its worst forms, in Suriname (Table 9).

Table 9. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor, Including its Worst Forms

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Increase the compulsory education age to at least 14, the minimum age for work.	2009 – 2014
Enforcement	Make publicly available information on the number of annual labor inspections and violations related to the worst forms of child labor.	2012 – 2014
	Allocate sufficient funding to ensure that all criminal enforcement officers receive adequate training in human trafficking and have the resources necessary to conduct investigations, particularly in the interior of the country.	2014
	Create a mechanism to refer children discovered working on the streets to the appropriate services, thus helping to prevent their return to work.	2010 – 2014
Social Programs	Ensure that child trafficking victims receive appropriate social services and shelter.	2014
	Assess the impact that existing educational programs may have on child labor.	2009 – 2014

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