

In 2017, Suriname made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government reinstated the Child Protection Network and conducted a National Child Labor Survey. However, children in Suriname engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in mining. The compulsory education age does not reach the minimum age for employment, leaving some children more vulnerable to labor exploitation. The Ministry of Labor does not target risk-prone sectors, such as mining and agriculture, for inspection. The government does not have formal mechanisms to refer victims of child labor, forced labor, and human trafficking identified by labor or criminal law enforcement authorities to the appropriate social services, and existing social programs are insufficient to address the problem.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Suriname engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in mining. (1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6) 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 to 14	6.4 (6,671)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	95.8
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	6.6
Primary Completion Rate (%)		91.9

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2016, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018. (7)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children’s Work Project’s analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 4, 2010. (8)

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 † (4) Fishing and forestry (3)
Industry	Mining, particularly gold mining (2; 3; 5; 4) Construction, † including carrying heavy loads † (4)
Services	Street work, including vending (9; 4) Domestic work (3)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor ‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1; 2; 3; 6; 4)

† 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 in Suriname, mostly boys, work in small-scale gold mines carrying heavy loads. These children risk exposure to mercury and cyanide, excessive noise, extreme heat, and collapsing sand walls. (2; 5; 4) Children, including children from Guyana, are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation in Suriname, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, including in informal mining camps in the country’s remote interior. (3; 9; 6; 4)

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Although Suriname's net attendance ratio for primary school is 95 percent, it is only 59 percent for secondary school, and research indicates that secondary school attendance in the interior is as low as 21 percent. Children from low-income households, particularly in the interior, face difficulties accessing education due to long distances to schools, transportation costs, and school fees. (10; 2; 11; 4; 12)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR 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 (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Suriname's legal framework to adequately protect children from child labor, including the compulsory education age being below the minimum age for work.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards: Yes/No	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14	Article 17 of the Labor Code (13)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 18 and 20 of the Labor Code (13)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 2–3 of the Decree on Hazardous Labor; Articles 20–21 of the Labor Code (13; 14)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 15 of the Constitution; Article 334 of the Penal Code (15; 16)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 307 and 334 of the Penal Code (16)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 293, 303, and 306 of the Penal Code (16)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment			
State Compulsory	N/A*		
State Voluntary	Yes	18	Article 9 of the Legal Status of Military Personnel Act (17; 18)
Non-state	No		
Compulsory Education Age	No	12	Article 39 of the Constitution; Article 20 of the Law on Basic Education (19; 15; 20)
Free Public Education	Yes		Articles 38–39 of the Constitution (15)

* No conscription (24)

Article 20 of the Law on Basic Education requires children to attend school until they are at least age 12. (20) This leaves children between ages 12 and 14 particularly vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor, because they are no longer required to attend school but are not yet legally permitted to work. The Constitution guarantees free public education for all citizens and the September 2014 amendment to the Citizenship and Residency Law granted citizenship to children born in Suriname of foreign

born parents. Sources indicate, however, that a small number of children born in Suriname to foreign parents before September 2014 remain ineligible to receive citizenship and free public education. (2; 15; 21)

The Penal Code establishes penalties for the production and trafficking of drugs, but it does not appear to specifically prohibit the use, procuring, and offering of a child in the production and trafficking of drugs. (16)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the authority of the Ministry of Labor that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Labor	Enforce laws related to child labor. (4)
Police	Enforce criminal laws related to child labor. (4) Includes the Youth Affairs Police, which covers law enforcement involving children under age 18 and is jointly responsible for child labor-related crimes. (22) In addition, includes the Police Trafficking in Persons Unit, which investigates reports and allegations of human trafficking and forced sexual exploitation nationwide, including cases involving children. (19)
Prosecutor's Office	Investigate and prosecute human trafficking cases. (23)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2017, labor law enforcement agencies in Suriname took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including targeted inspection of risk-prone sectors.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (10)	Unknown (4)
Number of Labor Inspectors	73 (10)	73 (4)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (10)	Yes (4)
Training for Labor Inspectors		
Initial Training for New Employees	Yes (10)	Yes (4)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (10)	Yes (4)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	Unknown* (10)	Unknown (4)
Number Conducted at Worksites	Unknown* (10)	0 (4)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown* (10)	0 (4)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties were Imposed	Unknown* (10)	N/A (4)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that were Collected	Unknown* (10)	N/A (4)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Yes (4)
Routine Inspections Targeted	No (10)	Unknown
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (10)	Yes (4)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Yes (4)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (10)	Yes (4)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	No (10)	No (4)

* The government does not publish this information.

The government does not collect or publish data on child labor inspections and violations. Labor inspections are mainly conducted near coastal areas and the Ministry of Labor noted that there are insufficient labor inspectors to provide adequate coverage to ensure the enforcement of labor laws, particularly in mining and agricultural areas, fisheries, and the country's interior. (10; 24; 25; 4; 2)

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Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2017, criminal law enforcement agencies in Suriname took actions to combat child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including lacking a referral mechanism.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Training for Investigators		
Initial Training for New Employees	Yes (10)	Yes (4)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A (10)	N/A (4)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (10)	Yes (4)
Number of Investigations	4 (26)	4 (4)
Number of Violations Found	2 (26)	3 (4)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	1 (26)	8 (4)
Number of Convictions	2 (26)	2 (4)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	No (10)	No (4)

In 2017, the Police Trafficking in Persons Unit initiated 4 new investigations involving the commercial sexual exploitation of 5 children and referred 3 human trafficking cases, involving 4 child victims, for prosecution. During the year, the Prosecutor's Office initiated prosecutions of eight individuals in two human trafficking cases and achieved convictions against two individuals for the commercial sexual exploitation of a child. (4)

The number of investigators is inadequate to respond to human trafficking cases and, according to the Prosecutor's 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. (10; 27; 28; 29; 4) Law enforcement efforts are also limited by the lack of formal processes for victim referrals. When the Youth Affairs Police find children working on the street, these children are sometimes registered and sent home without referrals to any relevant services. (19; 29; 4)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

Although the government has established a coordination mechanism on human trafficking, research found no evidence that the government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Anti-Trafficking Working Group	Coordinate the government's anti-human trafficking efforts. (22; 19) Provide care to victims of human trafficking through government-supported NGOs. (19; 30) Comprises nine government agencies. (4) Includes organizations that target the worst forms of child labor, such as the commercial sexual exploitation of children. (22; 19)
Child Protection Network	Reinstated in 2017 to prevent child abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Led by the Ministry of Social Affairs and includes the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Police, Office of the First Lady, National Assembly, and NGO stakeholders, as well as support from UNICEF. (4)

VI. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including the implementation of the Roadmap to Combat Human Trafficking.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
Roadmap to Combat Human Trafficking in Suriname (2014–2018)	Outlines a policy to combat human trafficking through 2018. (28)

Research found no evidence that the Roadmap to Combat Human Trafficking in Suriname has been implemented. (23; 24; 31; 4) The government plans to implement a National Action Plan on the Elimination of Child Labor based on the results of the 2017 National Child Labor Survey. (32)

V. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2017, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including services for child victims of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Country-Level Engagement and Assistance to Reduce Child Labor (CLEAR) (2013–2017)	USDOL-funded capacity-building project implemented by the ILO in 11 countries to build local and national capacity of governments to address child labor. In Suriname, aims to improve monitoring and enforcement of laws and policies related to child labor and implement a National Action Plan on the elimination of child labor. (32) In 2017, supported a national child labor survey. (4) For additional information, please visit our website.
Regional Initiative School to Work Transition Program	Regional Initiative Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labor program with support from the Cooperation Agency of Brazil and the ILO to assist Caribbean countries, including Suriname, to improve youth transition from school to work. In February 2017, held a workshop on apprenticeships in Suriname. (4; 33)
Child and Youth Hotline†	Government-run hotline that provides confidential advice to children in need, including victims of the worst forms of child labor. (28) Receives approximately 80 calls per day. (27)
Anti-Trafficking Hotline†	Government-sponsored hotline through which citizens can provide information to the police about human trafficking cases. (28)
Human Trafficking Awareness Program†	Government-funded anti-human trafficking awareness campaign for press, radio, television, Internet, and social media. (19; 23; 20; 30)
Second Basic Education Improvement Program (2015–2040)	\$20 million IDB-funded, 25-year loan implemented by the Ministry of Education to develop curriculums and textbooks, provide teacher training, renovate classrooms, build housing for teachers in the interior, and build a center for teacher training and professional development. Aims to benefit 90,000 students and 6,500 teachers. (23; 34)

† Program is funded by the Government of Suriname.

The government continues to support initiatives to eradicate child labor, but existing social programs are insufficient to fully address the problem. In particular, Suriname lacks programs to assist child victims of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation, as well as children who work in mining and agriculture. (4; 12)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Suriname (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the use, procuring, and offering of a child for illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs.	2015 – 2017
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 into non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2017
	Increase the compulsory education age to at least age 14, the minimum age for work.	2009 – 2017
	Ensure that all children, including children of foreign-born parents, have access to free public education.	2015 – 2017

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (cont)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Make information on labor law enforcement efforts publicly available, including the Labor Inspectorate's funding levels, as well as the number of annual labor inspections conducted.	2012 – 2017
	Strengthen the labor inspectorate by initiating targeted inspections based on the analysis of data related to risk-prone sectors and patterns of serious incidents, such as in fisheries and the interior of the country, particularly in mining and agricultural areas in which child labor is likely to occur.	2015 – 2017
	Allocate sufficient funding to ensure that criminal law enforcement officers have the resources necessary to conduct investigations, particularly in the interior of the country and informal mining areas.	2014 – 2017
	Create a formal mechanism to refer victims of child labor, forced labor, and human trafficking identified by labor or criminal law enforcement authorities to the appropriate social services.	2010 – 2017
Coordination	Establish coordinating mechanisms to combat child labor.	2015 – 2017
Government Policies	Develop and implement a National Action Plan on the elimination of child labor.	2015 – 2017
	Strengthen efforts to prevent and eradicate the trafficking of children, including for commercial sexual exploitation, by implementing the Roadmap to Combat Human Trafficking in Suriname (2014–2018).	2015 – 2017
Social Programs	Develop social programs to prevent and eradicate child labor in agriculture and mining and to improve secondary school attendance, particularly in the interior.	2015 – 2017
	Strengthen social services and shelters to assist child victims of commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking.	2014 – 2017

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