

# Suriname

*The Government of Suriname provides some legal protections to prevent the worst forms of child labor. However, gaps remain in the legislative framework and enforcement of laws related to child labor. Further, the Government lacks a comprehensive policy to address child labor. Children in Suriname continue to engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in agriculture and prostitution.*



## Statistics on Working Children and School Attendance

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5-14 yrs.	8.0*
Attending School	5-14 yrs	94.0
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs	8.1

\* Population of working children: 8,044

## Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Children in Suriname are engaged in the worst forms of child labor,<sup>5414</sup> including in agriculture and prostitution.<sup>5415</sup> Children's work in agriculture commonly involves using dangerous machinery and tools, carrying heavy loads and applying harmful pesticides. Children are also believed to be involved in dangerous work in street vending and mining.<sup>5416</sup> Children working on the streets may be exposed to multiple dangers, including severe weather, vehicle accidents and criminal elements.


Child prostitution is a problem, particularly in Paramaribo and around mining camps in the country's interior.<sup>5417</sup> Anecdotal evidence and reports from local NGOs suggest boys and girls are trafficked to the interior for commercial sex as well as forced labor in mining.<sup>5418</sup>

Recent information and statistics on child labor in Suriname remain limited. With funding from UNICEF, the Government is coordinating the launch of a child labor survey. However, the survey was not implemented in 2010 as intended.<sup>5419</sup>

## Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Labor Code of 1963 sets the minimum age for employment at 14 and the minimum age for hazardous work at 18.<sup>5420</sup> Children under age 18 are prohibited from working between 7:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. Minors under age 15 are banned from working on boats.<sup>5421</sup> The Safety Act also limits children's engagement in hazardous activities, prohibiting children under age 18 from engaging in activities that may be injurious to their health and safety.<sup>5422</sup> The National Commission for the Eradication of Child Labor (NCECL) created a draft state decree containing a list of hazardous activities prohibited for children.<sup>5423</sup> However, the Government has yet to adopt this hazardous activities list.<sup>5424</sup>

The Constitution bans forced or compulsory labor.<sup>5425</sup> Suriname's Penal Code prohibits prostitution as well as the use of children for the production of pornography and illicit activities.<sup>5426</sup> The Penal Code also proscribes all forms of human trafficking.<sup>5427</sup>

	C138, Minimum Age	No
	C182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
	CRC	✓
	CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	No
	CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography	No
	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓
	Minimum Age for Work	14
	Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18
	Compulsory Education Age	12
	Free Public Education	Yes

Suriname does not have military conscription. The law does not set a minimum age for voluntary recruitment into the armed forces.<sup>5428</sup>

The Constitution guarantees free education at all levels and makes primary education compulsory, which is completed around age 12.<sup>5429</sup> Children between ages 12 and 14 are particularly vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor, as they are no longer required to attend school and cannot yet work legally.<sup>5430</sup> During the reporting period, the Government introduced a law that would establish 11 years of compulsory education, compelling children to stay in school until the age of 17. The law has not yet been passed.<sup>5431</sup>

### Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

The NCECL is responsible for coordinating efforts to combat child labor. It comprises 11 members, with representation from the Ministries of Social Affairs, Education and Labor, Technology and Environment (MLTE) as well as labor unions, private sector entities, academic institutions and NGOs.<sup>5432</sup> NCECL is tasked with formulating a

national policy to eliminate child labor, developing programs that target indigenous children, establishing a list of hazardous work prohibited for children and monitoring Suriname's compliance with international child labor standards.<sup>5433</sup>

The Anti-trafficking Working Group, chaired by the Ministry of Labor, coordinates the Government's anti-trafficking efforts.<sup>5434</sup> It has seven members, six from government agencies and one representing the NGO community. Initiatives overseen by the Working Group include those that target the worst forms of child labor such as forced child prostitution.<sup>5435</sup>

MLTE is responsible for enforcement of child labor and related laws.<sup>5436</sup> MLTE employs 63 inspectors.<sup>5437</sup> During the reporting period, it conducted inspections of companies, checking for compliance in several areas, including child labor.<sup>5438</sup>

The Ministry of Justice and Police (MJP) is responsible for enforcement of criminal laws related to child labor and for monitoring and enforcement of child labor laws outside of established companies, including on the streets. The youth affairs police cover law enforcement involving children under age 18, and therefore are jointly responsible for child labor-related crimes.<sup>5439</sup> However, children found working by the youth police are generally registered and sent home without being referred to any relevant services.<sup>5440</sup>

The MJP leads efforts against child trafficking.<sup>5441</sup> The special anti-trafficking police unit conducts bimonthly checks of brothels to ensure children are not being exploited in prostitution or held in conditions of forced labor.<sup>5442</sup> The Trafficking in Persons Police Unit (TIPPU) investigates reports and allegations of trafficking in persons, including those involving children.<sup>5443</sup> A child trafficking case is usually resolved within 6 to 9 months.<sup>5444</sup> Child trafficking victims are typically referred to shelters that provide necessary services.<sup>5445</sup>

During the reporting period, two trafficking cases involved minors. Both resulted in prosecutions and convictions.<sup>5446</sup> Information on the number

of inspections, prosecutions and convictions involving other worst forms child labor were not available.

### **Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor**

Research found no evidence that the Government has established a child labor policy.<sup>5447</sup>

### **Social Programs to Eliminate or Prevent the Worst Forms of Child Labor**

The Government participated in a regional project funded by the Canadian government to combat the worst forms of child labor. Project outcomes have included a sub regional workshop on combating child labor among indigenous communities and the formation of a national committee on child labor.<sup>5448</sup>

The anti-trafficking working group runs an information campaign that targets journalists, religious groups, government agencies, youth organizations, labor unions, brothel owners and

NGOs.<sup>5449</sup> The Government also funds shelters that provide services to victims of trafficking, including children.<sup>5450</sup> The Child and Youth Hotline provides confidential advice to children in need, including victims of the worst forms of child labor.<sup>5451</sup> During the reporting period, the Government launched a TIP hotline for citizens to provide police information about trafficking cases.<sup>5452</sup>

The Government implements vocational and educational programs for school drop-outs and other vulnerable children.<sup>5453</sup> The Government is also implementing a program to improve basic education, which is supported by the Inter-American Development Bank. The project aims to enhance education quality and reduce student dropout rates.<sup>5454</sup> However, the question of whether these programs have an impact on child labor does not appear to have been addressed.

Existing social programs are not extensive enough to reach all vulnerable children. In particular, the Government does not have programs that target children engaged in agriculture, street work, mining or commercial sexual exploitation.

### **Based on the reporting above, the following actions would advance the reduction of the worst forms of child labor in Suriname:**

#### **IN THE AREA OF LAWS AND REGULATIONS:**

- Adopt and enact a list of hazardous occupations prohibited for children under 18.
- Establish the minimum military recruitment age at 18.
- Raise the compulsory education age to at least 14, the minimum age for work, by passing education legislation introduced during the reporting period.

#### **IN THE AREA OF COORDINATION AND ENFORCEMENT:**

- Create a mechanism to refer children discovered in exploitative labor to appropriate services, helping prevent their return to work.
- Make information on the number of inspections, convictions and prosecutions related to child labor publicly available.

#### **IN THE AREA OF POLICIES:**

- Adopt policies to address child labor.

#### **IN THE AREA OF PROGRAMS:**

- Finalize planning and carry out implementation of the national child labor survey, making results publicly available.
- Expand and develop social programs to assist children engaged in or vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor, particularly agriculture, street work, commercial sexual exploitation and mining.
- Assess the impact that existing programs may have on child labor.

<sup>5414</sup> Data provided in the chart at the beginning of this country report are based on UCW analysis of ILO SIMPOC, UNICEF MICS, and World Bank surveys, Child Economic Activity, School Attendance, and Combined Working and Studying Rates, 2005-2011. Data on working children, school attendance and children combining work and school are from 2006. Reliable data on the worst forms of child labor are especially difficult to collect given the often hidden or illegal nature of the worst forms. As a result, statistics and information on children's work in general are reported in this section, which may or may not include the worst forms of child labor. For more information on sources used, the definition of working children, and other indicators used in this report, please see the "Children's Work and Education Statistics: Sources and Definitions" section of this report.

<sup>5415</sup> U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, reporting, March 17, 2011, 1.2. See also U.S. Department of State, "Suriname," in Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2010, Washington, DC, April 8, 2011, sections 6, 7d; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/wha/154520.htm>.

<sup>5416</sup> U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, reporting, March 17, 2011, 1.2. See also U.S. Department of State, "Suriname," in Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010, Washington, DC, June 14, 2010; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2010/142761.htm>. See also U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2010: Suriname," section 7d.

<sup>5417</sup> U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, reporting, March 17, 2011, 1.2. See also U.S. Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010: Suriname."

<sup>5418</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010: Suriname."

<sup>5419</sup> U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, reporting, March 17, 2011, 6.1.

<sup>5420</sup> Clive Pegus, A Review of Child Labour Laws of Suriname- A Guide to Legislative Reform, ILO Subregional Office for the Caribbean, June 2005, 25, 27. See also U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, reporting, March 17, 2011, 2.2.

<sup>5421</sup> U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, reporting, March 17, 2011, 2.3.

<sup>5422</sup> Pegus, A Review of Child Labour Laws of Suriname, 27.

<sup>5423</sup> ILO Committee of Experts, Individual Direct Request concerning Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) Suriname (ratification: 2006) Submitted: 2010, August 10, 2010; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/pdconv.pl?host=status01&textbase=iloeng&document=25337&chapter=9&query=Suriname%40ref&highlight=&querytype=bool&context=0>.

<sup>5424</sup> U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, reporting, March 17, 2011, 2.3.

<sup>5425</sup> Government of Suriname, 1987 Constitution with Reforms of 1992, (1992), article 15; available from <http://www.georgetown.edu/pdba/Constitutions/Suriname/english.html>.

<sup>5426</sup> U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, reporting, March 17, 2011, 2.4. See also Pegus, A Review of Child Labour Laws of Suriname, 29.

<sup>5427</sup> U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, reporting, March 8, 2011. See also Pegus, A Review of Child Labour Laws of Suriname, 29.

<sup>5428</sup> U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, reporting, March 17, 2011, 2.4b. See also Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, "Suriname," in Child Soldiers Global Report 2008, London, 2008; available from [http://www.childsoldiersglobalreport.org/files/country\\_pdfs/FINAL\\_2008\\_Global\\_Report.pdf](http://www.childsoldiersglobalreport.org/files/country_pdfs/FINAL_2008_Global_Report.pdf).

<sup>5429</sup> Government of Suriname, Constitution, article 39.

<sup>5430</sup> U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, reporting, March 17, 2011, 2.2.

<sup>5431</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5432</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2010: Suriname," section 7d. See also U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, reporting, March 17, 2011, 3.

<sup>5433</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2010: Suriname," section 7d.

<sup>5434</sup> U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, reporting, March 17, 2011, 4.2. See also U.S. Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010: Suriname."

<sup>5435</sup> U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, reporting, March 17, 2011, 4.2, 5.2. See also U.S. Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010: Suriname."

<sup>5436</sup> U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, reporting, March 17, 2011, 4.2.

<sup>5437</sup> Ibid., 4.3. See also U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, reporting, February 19, 2010.

<sup>5438</sup> U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, reporting, March 17, 2011, 4.3.

<sup>5439</sup> Ibid., 4.2.

<sup>5440</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5441</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5442</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010: Suriname." See also U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, reporting, February 19, 2010.

<sup>5443</sup> U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, reporting, February 19, 2010.

<sup>5444</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5445</sup> ILO Committee of Experts, Individual Direct Request C182: Suriname (2010).

<sup>5446</sup> U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, reporting, March 17, 2011, 5.6, 5.10.

<sup>5447</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>5448</sup> Ibid., 7.1.

<sup>5449</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010: Suriname.”

<sup>5450</sup> U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, reporting, March 8, 2011.

<sup>5451</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2010: Suriname,” section 6. See also U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, reporting, February 19, 2010.

<sup>5452</sup> U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, reporting, March 8, 2011.

<sup>5453</sup> U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, reporting, March 17, 2011, 1.2.

<sup>5454</sup> Inter-American Development Bank, Program for Improving Basic Education, Project Profile, March 11, 2010; available from <http://www.iadb.org/projects/project.cfm?id=SU-L1019&lang=en>.