

In 2013, Suriname made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government began participating in a multi-country USDOL-funded project to enhance capacity to combat child labor. During this time, the Government also implemented a national child labor survey. The Government continued to expand education programs for vulnerable populations and took anti-trafficking efforts by taking steps to establish a shelter for child trafficking victims. However, children in Suriname continue to engage in child labor in mining and in the worst forms of child labor in commercial sexual exploitation. Suriname has not risen the compulsory education age to equal the minimum age for employment. Additionally, Suriname 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 in mining and in the worst forms of child labor in commercial sexual exploitation.(3-8, 10, 11) 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 (%) | | 87.8 |

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2011, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014.(1)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from MICS Survey, 2010.(2)

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 | Activities unknown* (3, 4) |
| Industry | Mining, particularly gold mining (3-8) |
| Services | Street work, including street vending* (3, 4, 6, 7, 9) |
| Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡ | Commercial sexual exploitation sometimes as a result of human trafficking* (3, 4, 6-8, 10, 11) |

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

‡ 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.(3-6) In gold mining, children carry heavy loads and are exposed to mercury, excessive noise, and extreme heat common to Suriname. Child miners are vulnerable to being crushed by collapsing sand walls.(5)

The commercial sexual exploitation of children continues to be a problem, including in mining camps in the country's interior.(3, 4, 6, 7, 11) Limited evidence suggests girls are also trafficked within Suriname for commercial sexual exploitation.(7, 11) According to recent reports, children's involvement in street vending may be declining.(9)




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II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON 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 relevant 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 | Labor Code (3-7, 12) |
| Minimum Age for Hazardous Work | Yes | 18 | Labor Code (3-6, 12) |
| List of Hazardous Occupations Prohibited for Children | Yes | | Decree on Hazardous Labor for Youth (13, 14) |
| Prohibition of Forced Labor | Yes | | Constitution (6, 15) |
| Prohibition of Child Trafficking | Yes | | Penal Code (6, 7, 12, 16) |
| Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children | Yes | | Penal Code (3, 4, 6, 7, 12) |
| Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities | Yes | | Penal Code; Narcotics Act (3, 4, 6, 7, 12) |
| Minimum Age for Compulsory Military Recruitment | N/A* | | There is no military conscription in Suriname (17) |
| Minimum Age for Voluntary Military Service | Yes | 18 | Legal Status of Military Personnel Act (6, 17) |
| Compulsory Education Age | Yes | 12 | Law on Basic Education (4-7, 13) |
| Free Public Education | Yes | | Constitution (15) |

* No conscription or no standing military.

Article 20 of the Law on Basic Education requires children to attend school until they are at least age 12.(4-6, 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.(3)

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 (DLI) | Enforce laws related to child labor in the formal sector.(5, 6) |
| Ministry of Justice and Police (MJP) | Enforce criminal laws related to child labor. Monitor and enforce child labor laws in the informal sector, including on the streets.(4, 6, 7) |

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

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2013, the Ministry of Labor Technology and Employment (MLTE) employs 80 inspectors.⁽⁷⁾ Standard training for all labor inspectors includes identification of child labor violations.⁽⁷⁾ In 2013, the MLTE conducted inspections of companies, checking for compliance in several areas of labor law, including child labor.⁽⁷⁾ However, information on the number of inspections conducted by MLTE and child labor violations found as a result in 2013 is not available.⁽⁷⁾

Criminal Law Enforcement

The Youth Affairs Police (YAP) within Ministry of Justice and Police (MJP) covers law enforcement involving children under age 18 and is jointly responsible for child labor-related crimes.^(4, 6) When the YAP finds children working on the street, these children are sometimes registered and sent home without being referred to any relevant services.^(6, 7) MJP's Anti-trafficking Police Unit (TIP) investigates reports and allegations of trafficking in persons and forced sexual exploitation nationwide, including cases involving children.^(6, 7) In 2013, MJP's TIP organized three human trafficking training sessions for police officers. The unit currently has 14 full-time officers, an increase of 6 inspectors over 2012.^(4, 7, 13) Child trafficking victims are referred to shelters that provide the necessary services.^(3, 4, 16) During the reporting period, four children were identified as potential trafficking victims, and as a result of investigations, the Government referred these victims to NGOs that provided protective services.^(4, 7)

According to the Government Prosecutor's Office, there were three ongoing child labor cases during the reporting period, all involving trafficking and sexual exploitation. Two were initiated in 2013, and verdicts in all remained pending at the end of the year.⁽⁷⁾

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 (NCECL) | 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. ⁽⁷⁾ Comprises 11 members with representation from Presidential Commission on Child and Adolescent Policy; labor unions; private sector entities; academic institutions; NGOs; and the Ministries of Social Affairs, Education, Regional Development, Justice and Police, and MLTE. ^(3, 4, 7) |
| Anti-Trafficking Working Group | Coordinate Government's anti-trafficking efforts. ^(3, 4, 6, 7) Provide care to victims of trafficking through government-supported NGOs. ^(7, 18) 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 commercial sexual exploitation of children. ^(4, 6, 7) |

In October 2013, the Anti-Trafficking Working Group hosted a 4-day workshop on combatting trafficking in persons for stakeholder groups with the goal of developing a unified strategy.^(7, 18)

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 | Establishes intergovernmental strategies to address children's rights and child labor. Implemented by the Ministry of Social affairs. ⁽²³⁾ |
| Roadmap to Combat Human Trafficking in Suriname | Outlines policy to combat trafficking in persons. Council of Ministries approved policy in April 2014. ⁽¹³⁾ |

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In 2013, the National Commission for the Elimination of Child Labor (NCECL) began drafting a National Action Plan on Combatting Child Labor, but it has not yet been adopted.(7)

The Government of Suriname also participates in several regional initiatives to address child labor. Suriname's Ministry of Transport, Communication, and Tourism participates in the Joint Group for the Elimination of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Tourism. The Group, which comprises members from the Ministries of Tourism of 10 Latin American countries, implements awareness-raising campaigns throughout the region.(4, 6, 7) Suriname is also a member of the Joint Regional Group for the Americas, which conducts child labor prevention and awareness-raising campaigns in tourism and whose members include Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela.(19)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

In 2013, 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† | USDOL-funded capacity building project in at least 10 countries. In Suriname, aims to build local and national capacity of the Government to address child labor by improving monitoring and enforcement of laws and policies related to child labor.(20) Will support a national child labor survey to inform effective policy development.(20) |
| Child and Youth Hotline‡ | Government-run hotline that provides confidential advice to children in need, including victims of the worst forms of child labor.(21) |
| Anti-trafficking Hotline‡ | Government-sponsored hotline through which citizens can provide information to police about trafficking cases, though it received no calls in 2013.(7, 11) |
| Human Trafficking Awareness Programs | Government funds anti-trafficking activities. In 2013, Anti-trafficking Working Group carried out four-day workshop on linking the work of various government agencies to address trafficking in persons.(7, 13, 18) |
| Afterschool Program*‡ | Ministry of Education after-school program for primary students, which offers meals and homework assistance. Ministry of Education continued to implement a school-based feeding program for children from low-income families.(4, 6, 22) In 2013, program expanded to include more primary schools.(7) |
| Basic Education Program* | \$14 million Inter-American Development Bank project to improve basic education. Implemented through the Ministry of Education. Aims to enhance education quality and reduce student dropout rates.(4, 6) Five major project components are enacting institutional reform, updating school curricula, improving educational materials, enhancing teacher capacity, and providing technical assistance.(4, 7) |

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

† Program was launched during the reporting period.

‡ Program is funded by the Government of Suriname.

In addition to the above efforts, the Ministry of Social Affairs began the process of establishing a shelter for child trafficking victims. During the reporting period, the Ministry began hiring and training shelter staff.(7)

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 |
|-----------------|--|-------------------|
| Laws | Increase the compulsory education age to at least 14, the minimum age for work. | 2009 – 2013 |
| Enforcement | Collect and make publicly available information of labor inspections and violations related to the worst forms of child labor. | 2012 – 2013 |
| | Create a mechanism to refer children discovered working on the streets to appropriate services, helping to prevent their return to work. | 2010 – 2013 |
| Social Programs | Assess the impact that existing education programs may have on child labor. | 2009 – 2013 |

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