

# Suriname

*In 2011, Suriname made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. During the reporting period, the Government participated in efforts to raise awareness about trafficking in persons, including child trafficking. However, Suriname has neither adopted a list of hazardous activities prohibited for children nor raised the minimum age for compulsory education to be equal to the minimum age for employment. Further, the Government has not approved a national policy to combat child labor and does not participate in programs to target the problem. Children in Suriname continue to engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in street work and prostitution.*

## Statistics on Working Children and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5-14 yrs.	8.0 (8,044)
Attending School	5-14 yrs.	94.0
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs.	8.1
Primary Completion Rate		86.0

### Sources:

**Primary completion rate:** Data from 2009, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012.(1)

**All other data:** Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from MICS3 Survey, 2006.(2)

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

Children in Suriname are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including in street work and prostitution. Child street work includes ambulatory vending.(3-6) On the streets, children are vulnerable to severe weather, traffic accidents and crime.(7) Children in Suriname also work in agriculture.(3, 6) Children working in agriculture may use dangerous tools, carry heavy loads and apply harmful pesticides.(8)

Children work in dangerous conditions in Suriname's gold mines.(3-6, 9) 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.(9)

Child prostitution continues to be a problem, particularly in mining camps in the country's interior.(3, 5, 6, 10) Limited evidence suggests girls are trafficked within Suriname for commercial sexual exploitation.(4) There were two reported



cases of internal trafficking in Suriname in 2011 for under-aged sex work.(11)

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. The study was originally planned for implementation in 2010, but it has faced delays and is now expected to be conducted in 2012.(3, 9)

## 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.(3, 5, 9, 12) However, the Labor Code allows children who have reached the compulsory education age of 12 to work in positions that facilitate professional skill development or, by their nature, must be performed by a child, provided the work is not physically or mentally demanding or dangerous.(9, 13) Children under age 18 are prohibited from working between 7 p.m. and 6 a.m. Minors under age 15 are banned from working on boats.(3, 5, 9) 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.(12) The National Commission for the Eradication of Child Labor (NCECL) created a draft state decree containing a list of hazardous activities prohibited to children under age 18. However, the Government has not yet adopted the list.(3, 5)

	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

The Constitution bans forced or compulsory labor.(5, 14) Suriname's Penal Code prohibits prostitution as well as the use of children for the production of pornography and illicit activities.(3, 5, 12) The Penal Code also proscribes all forms of human trafficking.(4, 5, 12, 15) The Narcotics Act prohibits the use of a child by an adult for illicit activities, including drug trafficking.(5)

The Legal Status of Military Personnel Act sets the minimum age for appointment to the military at 18.(5)

The Constitution guarantees free education at all levels and makes primary education compulsory.(14) The Compulsory School Attendance Act requires children to attend school until they are at least age 12.(5, 9) 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 are not legally permitted to work.(3) In 2010, the Government introduced a law that would establish education as compulsory for 11 years, compelling children to stay in school until the age of 17. The law has not yet been passed.(3, 5, 9)

## Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

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.(3, 16) 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 to children and monitoring Suriname's compliance with international child labor standards.(16)

The MLTE is responsible for enforcement of child labor and related laws.(5, 9) MLTE employs 63 inspectors.(5) During the reporting period, it conducted inspections of companies, checking for compliance in various areas, including child labor.(5) Regulation of the gold sector was recently reorganized to include more oversight in the mines and registration of workers.(11) Labor inspections in 2011 did not reveal any child labor violations.(5)

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 covers law enforcement involving children under age 18 and is jointly responsible for child labor-related crimes.(5) The Youth Affairs Police regularly stop children who are working on the streets.(11) However, children found working by the youth police are generally registered and sent home without being referred to any relevant services.(5)

The MLTE chairs the Anti-trafficking Working Group, and coordinates the Government's anti-trafficking efforts.(3-5) It has seven members, six from government agencies and one representing the NGO community. The Working Group's initiatives include those that target the worst forms of child labor, such as forced child prostitution.(3, 5)

The MJP's Anti-trafficking Police Unit (TIP) investigates reports and allegations of trafficking in persons nationwide, including those involving children.(4, 5, 17) The TIP Unit conducts bimonthly checks of brothels to ensure children are not being exploited in prostitution or held in conditions of forced labor.(5, 17) The Unit currently employs three officers.(5) Child trafficking victims are referred to shelters that provide the necessary services.(3, 15)

The TIP Unit reported two cases of child trafficking for prostitution in 2011.(11) In the first case, eight suspects were arrested in connection with the case but charges have yet to be filed. In the second case, two suspects were arrested and both are currently being prosecuted.(11)

## Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government has drafted a National Children's Action Plan 2009-2013 that addresses child labor issues, but it has not

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yet been approved by the Council of Ministers.(9) The Anti-trafficking Working Group also drafted an Anti-trafficking Plan of Action. However, the Plan has not yet been approved and implemented.(4)

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.(5)

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

The Government of Suriname has implemented several programs related to child trafficking. However, research found no evidence that it has carried out programs to address other worst forms of child labor, including agriculture, street work, commercial sexual exploitation or gold mining.

During the reporting period, the Government reimbursed NGO shelters that had provided services to victims of

trafficking, including children.(4) Suriname's Child and Youth Hotline provides confidential advice to children in need, including victims of the worst forms of child labor.(6, 17) The Government also runs a TIP hotline for citizens to provide police information about trafficking cases.(4, 15) In March 2011, the Government launched a trilingual television campaign to raise public awareness about the hotline to increase its effectiveness.(4)

The Government's Victim's Care Bureau offers services to victims of trafficking, domestic violence, and children working on the street after they are picked up by the police. The Bureau provides social services including psychological counseling and temporary shelters.(18)

The Government implements a school feeding program for children from low-income families.(5) It also participates in a \$14 million program to improve basic education in collaboration with the Inter-American Development Bank. The project aims to enhance education quality and reduce student dropout rates.(5) However, the question of whether these programs have an impact on child labor does not appear to have been addressed.

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

Area	Suggested Actions	Year(s) Action Recommended
Laws and Regulations	Adopt and enact the list of hazardous occupations prohibited for children under age 18.	2009, 2010, 2011
	Raise the compulsory education age to at least 14, the minimum age for work, by passing education legislation introduced in 2010.	2009, 2010, 2011
Coordination and Enforcement	Create a mechanism to refer children discovered in exploitive labor to appropriate services, helping prevent their return to work.	2010, 2011
Policies	Finalize planning and carry out implementation of the national child labor survey, making its results publicly available.	2010, 2011
	Approve and implement the National Children's Action Plan.	2011
	Approve and implement the Anti-trafficking Plan of Action.	2011
Social Programs	Expand and develop social programs to assist children engaged in or vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor, particularly in agriculture, street work, commercial sexual exploitation and mining.	2009, 2010, 2011
	Assess the impact that existing programs may have on child labor.	2009, 2010, 2011

## REFERENCES

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2. UCW. *Analysis of Child Economic Activity and School Attendance Statistics from National Household or Child Labor Surveys*. February 2, 2012. Reliable statistical 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 on children’s work in general are reported in this chart, 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.
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