

In 2012, Guyana made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. In collaboration with the ILO, the Government continued to implement programs to reduce child labor under the Tackle Child Labor through Education (TACKLE) project. During the reporting period, labor inspectors participated in training on child labor and the Commission on the Rights of the Child launched a 5-year strategic plan. However, Guyana's legislation does not fully protect children from the worst forms of child labor. Children 17 years of age are legally permitted to engage in some hazardous activities, and the law fails to protect children in domestic service. Further, the National Steering Committee on Child Labor appears to be inactive. Children in Guyana continue to engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in dangerous activities in agriculture and commercial sexual exploitation.

Statistics on Working Children and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5-14 yrs.	23.0 (44,787)
Attending School	5-14 yrs.	94.5
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs.	23.2
Primary Completion Rate		85.5

Sources:

Primary completion rate: Data from 2011, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2013.(1)

All other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from MICS3 Survey, 2006-2007.(2)

Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Children in Guyana are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including in dangerous activities in agriculture and commercial sexual exploitation.(3-8) Children working in agriculture in Guyana may be exposed to hazards, including lifting and carrying heavy loads and working with pesticides.(4)

Guyanese children work in domestic service.(6, 9-11) The practice of sending children from poor rural families to live with wealthier relatives or friends in urban areas sometimes results in domestic servitude.(7, 12) Children in domestic service may work long hours performing strenuous tasks without sufficient food or shelter. These children may be



isolated in private homes and are susceptible to physical and sexual abuse.(13, 14)

Children in Guyana, including girls as young as 12, are involved in commercial sexual exploitation in Georgetown and the country's interior. There are reports of young girls being trafficked to mining communities for commercial sexual exploitation.(3, 5-8, 15-21)

Although evidence is limited, reports indicate that some children work in hazardous occupations like construction, welding, and mining, including gold mining. Children may also do dangerous work in forestry and fishing.(3-8, 10, 21, 22) Children working in fishing may work long hours, perform physically demanding tasks, and face dangers such as drowning.(23, 24) Children working in forestry are believed to engage in both logging and the preservation of lumber. Logging may require children to use dangerous tools and carry heavy loads, while preserving lumber can expose them to toxic chemicals.(9) In mines, children work with unsafe equipment and toxic substances, and are vulnerable to violence.(3, 25)

There are reports of children working on the streets, but information on specific hazards is unknown.(6, 9-11)

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Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Guyana’s Employment of Young Persons and Children Act and the Education Act both set the minimum age for employment at 15. Children younger than age 15 may be employed in family businesses or technical schools, provided such work is approved and supervised by the public authority.(3, 26, 27) The Act also prohibits the employment of children under age 18 in industrial work, at night, and in work that may jeopardize their health, safety, or morals. However, the law does permit night work for children between ages 16 and 17 who are engaged in work that requires continuity through day and night, including certain gold mining processes and the production of iron, steel, glass, paper, and raw sugar.(26)

International Conventions and Selected Laws on Child Labor and Education

	C138, Minimum Age	✓
	C182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
	CRC	✓
	CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
	CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓
	Minimum Age for Work	15
	Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18
	Compulsory Education Age	15
	Free Public Education	Yes

Guyana’s Occupational Safety and Health Act prohibits children under age 15 from working in factories and stipulates that persons under age 18 may be removed from factory work if authorities or inspectors determine that they are engaged in activities that are hazardous to their health or safety.(28) The Government has issued a list of 22 hazardous occupations and processes that could threaten the health, safety, or moral or personal development of children. The list includes work such as mining, construction, factory work, and certain agricultural activities.(4, 29) However, the list prohibits only children 16 years of age and younger from engaging in specified hazardous

activities.(29) Therefore, children 17 years of age are not fully protected from engaging in hazardous work in all sectors.

In 2006, Guyana’s Parliament passed an amendment to the Employment of Young Persons and Children Act that defined all the worst forms of child labor. However, the President did not sign the draft amendment into law, and Parliament has not resubmitted it.(5, 8, 30) Other laws protect children from some of the worst forms of child labor. The Constitution of Guyana prohibits forced labor.(31) Human trafficking is prohibited under the Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act of 2005.(32) The trafficking law criminalizes child trafficking for exploitation in prostitution or pornography, but Guyana does not have legislation that addresses these issues outside a trafficking context. Though the Criminal Law Offences Act prohibits the selling, publishing, and exhibiting of obscene material, it does not explicitly proscribe child pornography.(3, 5, 6, 33-35) Research found no evidence of other laws that would protect domestic servants.

Guyana’s Defense Act prohibits persons under age 18 from bearing arms as members of the Guyana Defense Force. According to the Act, children may voluntarily enter the military at age 16 and serve as unarmed apprentices until age 18.(36, 37) The Defense Act was amended in 2011 to raise the enlistment age to 18.(38, 39)

The Education Act makes education compulsory to age 15.(27) The Constitution of Guyana guarantees the right of free education from nursery school through secondary school, including non-formal schooling.(27, 31, 40, 41) Despite the legal guarantee of free education, some primary schools continue to charge fees and some have attempted to prevent children from attending school for failure to pay.(39) However, the Government is attempting to address this problem. The Ministry of Education has publicized guidance advising parents and educators that only the Parent Teacher Association has the authority to approve and collect monies from parents and that no child may be debarred from school for non-payment of these fees.(39)

Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

The Government has established a National Steering Committee on Child Labor (NSCCL), tasked with recommending policies and programs to eliminate child labor in all its forms.(5) The NSCCL is a committee within the Ministry of Labor, Human Services, and Social Security

(MOLHSS).⁽⁴²⁾ Membership includes the National Commission on the Rights of the Child, the Bureau of Statistics, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Health, and the Guyana Police Force (GPF). The Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, the National Teacher's Union, and the University of Guyana are also represented.⁽⁴²⁾ However, the NSCCL has reportedly stopped meeting on a regular basis, potentially limiting its ability to carry out its mandates.⁽⁴³⁾

Guyana's Commission on the Rights of the Child is responsible for protecting and promoting children's rights in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which includes addressing the worst forms of child labor.⁽⁸⁾

Guyana also has a National Task Force for Combating Trafficking in Persons (NTFCTP), chaired by the Minister of Home Affairs.^(3, 44) Other participants are drawn from MOLHSS and the Ministries of Legal Affairs, Foreign Affairs, and Amerindian Affairs, as well as several NGOs. The NTFCTP is charged with reporting on the nature and magnitude of trafficking in persons in Guyana; documenting the Government's response; and carrying out public education and prevention measures.⁽⁴⁵⁾ The NTFCTP meets monthly.^(5, 8)

MOLHSS collaborates with the Ministry of Education, the Guyana Forestry Commission, the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission, and the GPF to monitor and enforce child labor laws. MOLHSS takes the lead on routine labor inspections and special investigations stemming from child labor complaints.⁽⁸⁾ MOLHSS employs 10 labor inspectors. In 2012, they conducted over 1,311 workplace inspections, none of which revealed child labor violations.⁽⁸⁾ Although MOLHSS collects information on child labor cases, it does not make such data publicly available.^(5, 8) According to the Ministry, there are sometimes delays in accessing resources to carry out inspections, particularly in remote areas.⁽⁸⁾ In 2012, labor inspectors received specialized training in child labor issues.⁽⁸⁾

GPF takes the lead in enforcing criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor, including trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. The police work in consultation with the Ministry of Home Affairs, MOLHSS, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, depending on the circumstances of cases.⁽⁸⁾ However, government capacity to carry out prosecutions is limited. With only 33 justices and magistrates, the courts have a backlog of cases on all matters of law with more than a 2-year waiting period.^(5, 6, 8, 16, 37)

Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

In 2012, the Commission on the Rights of the Child launched a 5-year strategic plan.⁽⁸⁾ Research did not reveal whether the plan explicitly addresses child labor.

Guyana has had a national action plan to combat human trafficking, which prioritizes educational and awareness raising efforts, particularly in the country's interior (16, 19). However, the plan expired in 2011. The Government has expressed its intention to develop an updated plan for 2012-2013.⁽⁴⁶⁾

The Government has also implemented an education policy that aims to provide equal access to quality education for all children. Initiatives adopted under this policy seek to eliminate barriers to education, particularly for the poor.⁽⁴⁰⁾

The question of whether the strategic plan on children's rights and national education policy impact child labor does not appear to have been addressed.

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

The Government of Guyana is participating in the 11-country, approximately \$21 million TACKLE project funded by the European Commission and the African Caribbean and Pacific Group of States.^(6, 8, 47-49) The program, originally set to end in 2012, has received additional funding to run through mid-2013.^(5, 8, 50) TACKLE's main objectives include providing access to basic education and skills training for disadvantaged children, and strengthening the capacity of local and national authorities to collaborate with civil society groups in the formulation, implementation, and enforcement of policies to eliminate child labor.⁽⁵¹⁾ In Guyana, a major aim of the project is to increase school attendance by targeting truancy and decreasing the school dropout rate, particularly among those vulnerable to child labor.^(3, 44, 52) The program also provides entrepreneurial training and life skills education, as well as technical and vocational education. These components target vulnerable, out-of-school, and unemployed youth.⁽⁸⁾

As part of the TACKLE project, the Government engaged in multiple efforts to target child labor during the reporting period. It continued the School Retention and Child Labor Prevention Program, which targets 460 children and 100 parents living in rural areas. Program components include numeracy and literacy, nutrition support, parenting workshops, afterschool care, psychological support, and provision of transportation to and from school.^(5, 8, 53, 54) The program also worked to reduce teacher attrition and build relationships

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between parents and schools.(54) TACKLE’s Voluntary Mentoring Program, aimed at reducing truancy, dropouts, school violence, and child labor, continued to work with secondary school children and their parents.(54-56) The TACKLE project also conducted awareness raising activities about child labor, including in mining communities.(54) In 2011, the Government conducted a Child Labor Rapid Assessment Survey with assistance from the ILO.(52) The results of that survey have not yet been released to the public.(8)

The Government also supports several initiatives to combat and prevent trafficking of children. The Government funds a hotline to assist trafficking victims, run by trained operators.

(7) It also funds a shelter that houses abused and trafficked women and children for up to 6 months. The shelter provides services, including psychological counseling and practical skills training.(3, 5, 8)

In accordance with the national education policy, the Government provides meals at school and free uniform programs for school children. These national programs initially concentrated on the most remote areas of the country.(5, 8, 40, 53, 57)

Although the Government is involved in efforts to combat child labor, efforts are not sufficient to reach all vulnerable children, particularly those engaged in commercial sexual exploitation, agriculture, domestic labor, and other dangerous occupations.

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

Area	Suggested Actions	Year(s) Action Recommended
Laws and Regulations	Amend laws to prohibit all types of night work for children under age 18.	2010, 2011, 2012
	Amend the list of hazardous work to protect children under age 18 in all sectors.	2010, 2011, 2012
	Enact a law to prohibit explicitly child prostitution and child pornography.	2010, 2011, 2012
	Enact a law to provide protections for child domestic servants.	2011, 2012
Coordination and Enforcement	Engage the NSCCL in regular meetings and coordination efforts.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
	Make information on child labor cases publicly available.	2011, 2012
	Ensure sufficient resources are allocated in a timely manner to facilitate labor inspections.	2012
	Dedicate more resources, namely judicial personnel, to resolving court cases, including those involving the worst forms of child labor.	2010, 2011, 2012
Policies	Assess the impact of the strategic plan on children’s rights and the national education policy on addressing child labor.	2010, 2011, 2012
	Expand national education policy to achieve free universal education, as guaranteed by law.	2011, 2012
Social Programs	Make publicly available the results of the Child Labor Rapid Assessment Survey.	2011, 2012
	Develop new initiatives and expand existing programs to reach all children involved in the worst forms of child labor, particularly in commercial sexual exploitation, agriculture, domestic labor, and other hazardous and dangerous occupations.	2010, 2011, 2012

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