

In 2014, Guyana made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Ministry of Labor, Human Services and Social Security held a forum on World Day Against Child Labor to discuss the implementation of systems to combat child labor and raise awareness throughout the country. The Ministerial Task Force on Trafficking in Persons released a 2014–2015 Action Plan and held a series of talks to educate communities on human trafficking. The Government continues to provide free uniforms and school meals to encourage school attendance. However, children in Guyana continue to engage in child labor in agriculture, and in the worst forms of child labor in commercial sexual exploitation. Guyana's legislation does not fully protect children from the worst forms of child labor, and the labor inspectorate lacks sufficient funding and capacity to carry out inspections. The Government does not have a comprehensive policy to combat child labor and existing social programs do not fully address the extent of the problem.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Guyana are engaged in child labor, including in agriculture. Children are also engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation.(1-8) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Guyana.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	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 (%)		85.3

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2012, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2015.(9)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 3, 2006-2007.(10)

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	Farming,* activities unknown (2-4, 7, 8, 11, 12)
	Forestry,* including logging,*† preservation of lumber,* and work in sawmills*† (2-4, 7, 8, 12)
	Fishing,*† activities unknown (3, 4, 11)
Industry	Construction,*† activities unknown (3, 4)
	Welding*† (4)
	Mining,† including gold mining*† (1-4, 7, 8, 11-15)
Services	Domestic service* (3)
	Work in bars and restaurants* (3)
	Street vending* (3, 16)

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity (cont)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor†	Commercial sexual exploitation sometimes as a result of human trafficking* (1-8, 12, 17)

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

† 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 Guyana, including girls as young as age 12, are involved in commercial sexual exploitation in Georgetown and in the country's interior. There are reports of young girls being subjected to commercial sexual exploitation in mining communities as a result of human trafficking.(4-8, 18) In 2011, with assistance from the ILO, the Government conducted a Child Labor Rapid Assessment to better understand the nature of child labor in the country.(19) However, the results of that survey have not yet been released to the public.(4)

Although the Constitution of Guyana guarantees free education, some primary schools continue to charge fees and have even attempted to prevent children from attending school for failure to pay.(20, 21) In attempts 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 fees from parents, and that no child may be excluded from school for non-payment.(21)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Guyana has ratified all 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, 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	15	Articles 2–3 of the Employment of Young Persons and Children Act; Article 17 of the Education Act (1, 22, 23)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Part 1, Article 2 and Part 2, Article 3 of the Employment of Young Persons and Children Act; Articles 17 and 41 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (22, 24)
Prohibition of Hazardous Occupations and/or Activities for Children	Yes		List of Hazardous Occupation and Processes in Guyana (11, 25-27)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 40 of the Constitution; Article 3 of the Combatting of Trafficking in Persons Act (28, 29)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 3 of the Combatting of Trafficking in Persons Act (29)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 3 of the Protection of Children Act (30)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 50 of the Protection of Children Act (8)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations Related to Child Labor (cont)

Standard	Yes/No	Age	Related Legislation
Minimum Age for Compulsory Military Recruitment	N/A*		
Minimum Age for Voluntary Military Service	Yes	18	Article 18 of the Defense Act (31)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Articles 13 and 22 of the Education Act (23)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 27 of the Constitution (28)

* No conscription (8, 32)

Although the Employment of Young Persons and Children Act prohibits night work in industrial undertakings, and hazardous work for anyone under age 18, the law does not fully protect adolescents ages 16 and 17 from engaging in hazardous work. Part 1, Article 2 of the Employment of Young Persons and Children Act only prohibits night work for minors employed in industry and provides an exception allowing adolescents over age 16 to perform certain work requiring continuity through day and night, including gold mining reduction work and the production of iron, steel, glass, paper, and raw sugar, without provisions to ensure that their health, safety, and morals are fully protected or that they receive specific instruction or training in these activities.(22) Moreover, the List of Hazardous Occupation and Processes in Guyana only prohibits children under age 16 from engaging in hazardous activities.(11, 25-27)

While Article 351 of the Criminal Law Offences Act prohibits the selling, publishing, and exhibiting of obscene material, Guyanese law does not explicitly outlaw child pornography.(3, 12, 29, 33, 34) In October 2014, a state-owned newspaper published pornographic images of children; the Ministry of Labor, Human Services, and Social Security (MLHSSS) Web site stated that the law should be updated to address cybercrimes.(35)

Article 17 of the Education Act permits children under age 15 to be employed by their parents so long as they do not work on a school day during school hours. The Minister of Labor has indicated that he may propose legislation to further limit the amount of time children can spend working in family-owned businesses. (12)

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, Human Services, and Social Security (MLHSSS)	Monitor and enforce child labor laws in collaboration with the Ministry of Education; Forestry Commission; Geology and Mines Commission; National Insurance Scheme; and the Guyana Police Force. The chief labor officer handles special investigations stemming from child labor complaints and oversees routine labor inspections.(12)
Guyana Police Force	Enforce criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor, including human trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and the use of children in illicit activities.(12)

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

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2014, the MLHSSS employed 18 labor inspectors. Inspectors participated in various training programs related to child labor, including a child labor training workshop in Turin, Italy attended by two inspectors.(12) In commemoration of World Day Against Child Labor 2014, the MLHSSS hosted a forum to discuss the implementation of systems to combat child labor and raise awareness throughout the country.(12) 2014 funding levels for child labor prevention activities within the MLHSSS were unavailable. However, the MLHSSS stated that funds allocated were insufficient to carry out inspections and that there are sometimes delays in accessing the resources needed to carry out inspections in remote areas where law enforcement presence is low.(12) MLHSSS labor inspectors conducted 597 on-site labor inspections in 2014, but did not assess any fines or penalties, or charge any employers with violations related to child labor.(12)

Criminal Law Enforcement

The Guyana Police Force works on criminal cases involving victims of the worst forms of child labor in consultation with the Ministry of Home Affairs; MLHSS; Ministry of Education; and the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, depending on the circumstances of the cases.⁽⁴⁾ The Child Advocacy Center (CAC), established by a MLHSS and NGO partnership, is working to implement child-sensitive investigation procedures, such as video recording of testimony to avoid multiple testimonies.⁽³⁶⁾ 2014 funding levels for programs to combat child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation of children, and use of children in illicit activities were unavailable.⁽¹²⁾

Between April 2014 and December 31, the Government investigated seven trafficking cases involving an unknown number of suspects and prosecuted four suspected traffickers. The number of cases involving children was unavailable.⁽²⁶⁾ In November 2014, a former police officer was sentenced to 4 years in prison for human trafficking and sexual exploitation of a 14-year-old girl and her sister. In a promising break from past practice in human trafficking related cases, the Chief Magistrate denied the offender's request for bail during the appeal process.^(36, 37) In general, the Government's capacity to carry out prosecutions is limited. With only 33 justices and magistrates, the courts have a backlog of cases and more than a 2-year waiting period on all matters of law.^(2, 4, 7, 8, 38) Furthermore, victims of human trafficking who are unidentified as such may be charged for committing crimes as a result of being subjected to human trafficking.⁽³⁶⁾

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Although the Government has established the Commission on the Rights of the Child and the Ministerial Task Force on Combatting Trafficking in Persons, research found no evidence of 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 and Description
Commission on the Rights of the Child	Protect and promote children's rights in accordance with the UN CRC, which includes addressing the worst forms of child labor. ⁽⁴⁾
Ministerial Task Force on Combatting Trafficking in Persons	Report on the nature and magnitude of trafficking in persons in Guyana, document the Government's response, and carry out public education and prevention measures. ⁽³⁹⁾ Meets regularly; chaired by the Minister of Home Affairs. ⁽¹²⁾

The National Steering Committee on Child Labor previously recommended policies and programs to eliminate all forms of child labor; however, this coordinating body was dissolved in 2013 at the conclusion of the Tackle Child Labor through Education (TACKLE) project. Although the Government of Guyana re-established the National Tripartite Committee (NTC) to address national labor policies and the Commission on the Rights of the Child exists, research found no evidence that these bodies function as coordinating mechanisms to address child labor, including its worst forms.⁽¹²⁾

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government of Guyana has established policies related to child labor, including its worst forms (Table 7).

Table 7. Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
Five-year Strategic Plan on the Rights of the Child (2012–2017)*	Protects and promotes children's rights in Guyana and advances the UN CRC. ⁽⁴⁾
National Education Policy*	Aims to provide equal access to quality education for all children and eliminate barriers to education, especially for the poor. ⁽⁴¹⁾
Declaration of the Regional Initiative: Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labor (2014–2020)†	Aims to increase regional cooperation on eradicating child labor by 2020 through signatories' efforts to strengthen monitoring and coordination mechanisms, government programs, and South-South exchanges. Reaffirms commitments made in the Brasilia Declaration from the Third Global Conference on Child Labor (October 2013), and signed by Guyana at the ILO's 18th Regional Meeting of the Americas in Lima, Peru (October 2014). ^(42, 43)

Table 7. Policies Related to Child Labor (cont)

Policy	Description
Ministerial Taskforce on Trafficking in Persons 2014–2015 Action Plan†	Aims to prevent and raise awareness of human trafficking, provide direct assistance to victims, improve law enforcement's capacity to identify and respond to human trafficking, and strengthen interagency coordination and referral mechanisms.(36, 44)

* Child labor elimination and prevention strategies do not appear to have been integrated into this policy.

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

In September 2014, Guyana participated in the First Meeting of the Working Groups of the XVIII Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor to foster continued dialogue and cooperation on labor issues throughout the Americas. Held in Bridgetown, Barbados, these discussions promoted the exchange of information on policies and programs that seek to formalize the informal sector, uphold workers' rights, and prevent and eliminate child labor.(45, 46) Throughout the reporting period, government officials conducted a series of talks in schools and with community members to raise awareness of the causes and consequences of human trafficking, as well as of common recruitment techniques.(47)

According to the MLHSSS, the Government of Guyana does not have a comprehensive written strategy for combating and responding to child labor.(12)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2014, the Government of Guyana 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
Trafficking Hotline‡	Government-funded hotline to assist trafficking victims, run by trained operators.(7)
Shelter for Domestic Violence Victims*‡	Government funded, NGO-run shelter that houses victims of domestic violence and human trafficking. Provides services, including psychological counseling and practical skills training.(8) Accommodates teenage girls under age 16 who are placed at the shelter at the request of the Government's Childcare and Protection Agency.(12) Receives \$50,000 annually from the Government.(17)
School Meals and Uniforms*‡	Government program to provide hot meals to 16,000 students at schools in the interior, and transportation for students in several remote areas. All students in government-run schools, from nursery to secondary school, receive vouchers to purchase school uniforms, shoes, and backpacks.(2, 4, 41, 48-50)
Child Advocacy Center* (CAC)	MLHSSS and NGO partnership, established in 2013, to provide services for abused children. MLHSSS' Childcare and Protection Agency oversees and makes referrals to the center; funded by private sector donations.(36, 51)
Board of Industrial Training*	Attempts to deter early school dropouts by providing job skills to at-risk youth between ages 15 and 17 who may not be able to complete their formal education.(12)

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

‡ Program is funded by the Government of Guyana.

In 2014, the Government engaged in efforts to fight trafficking in persons, including in mining areas; the MLHSSS developed public awareness ads and posters, trained 100 representatives from civil society organizations, and conducted activities in 30 schools.(17, 52) However, the scope of Government programs to target the worst forms of child labor is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem.(12) In particular, government resources provided to victims of human trafficking were inadequate in 2014.(17)

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 Guyana (Table 9).

Table 9. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor, Including its Worst Forms

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Extend protections for children working at night beyond those employed in industry.	2010 – 2014
	Ensure that the List of Hazardous Occupation and Processes in Guyana fully protects all children under age 18 from engaging in hazardous work.	2010 – 2014
	Ensure that the law specifically prohibits the production, distribution, and possession of child pornography.	2010 – 2014
Enforcement	Make funding information for the labor inspectorate and criminal law enforcement publicly available and ensure sufficient resources are allocated in a timely manner to facilitate labor inspections, particularly in remote areas.	2011 – 2014
	Dedicate more resources, including judicial personnel, to investigate and prosecute court cases related to the worst forms of child labor.	2010 – 2014
	Ensure that victims of human trafficking are not charged for committing crimes as a result of being subjected to human trafficking.	2014
Coordination	Establish coordinating mechanisms to combat child labor, including its worst forms.	2014
Government Policies	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into the Strategic Plan on Children's Rights and the National Education Policy.	2010 – 2014
	Establish a comprehensive strategy for combatting child labor.	2014
Social Programs	Make publicly available the results of the Child Labor Rapid Assessment Survey.	2011 – 2014
	Ensure children are not prevented from attending school because of failure to pay school fees.	2014
	Develop new initiatives and expand existing programs to reach all children involved in the worst forms of child labor; in particular, increase funding to identify and assist victims of human trafficking.	2010 – 2014
	Assess the impact that existing programs such as the School Meals and Uniforms program, Child Advocacy Center, and Board of Industrial Training may have on child labor.	2013 – 2014

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