

Guyana

Government Policies and Programs to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Officials of the Government of Guyana have attended training workshops aimed at building the capacity of the national statistics agency and the Ministry of Labor to collect and disseminate data on child labor.¹⁶⁷¹ The government has established a drop-in center for street children, and is also building a home for street children.¹⁶⁷²

During the 1990s, the Government of Guyana implemented a Primary Education Improvement Project that enhanced teacher training, produced new primary school textbooks for each pupil and constructed 35 new schools, rehabilitating 64 more.¹⁶⁷³ By 1998, public spending on education was increased to 14 percent of the budget, reaching 5.6 percent of GDP.¹⁶⁷⁴ In 2002, the government received support from the Inter-American Development Bank to modernize and strengthen the country's basic education system.¹⁶⁷⁵ In November 2002, the Government of Guyana was selected to receive funding from the World Bank and other donors under the Education for All Fast Track Initiative, which aims to provide all children with a primary school education by the year 2015.¹⁶⁷⁶

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

Statistics on the number of working children under the age of 15 in Guyana are unavailable. There is a substantial informal sector, which employs 25 percent of the workforce.¹⁶⁷⁷ UNICEF reports that child labor is a serious issue in the informal sector, and it is common to see children engaged in

¹⁶⁷¹ ILO-IPEC, *SIMPOC: Major Activities and Achievements in 1998-1999*, [online] October 31, 2000 [cited August 25, 2002]; available from <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipecc/simnoc/simnoc00/page4.htm>.

¹⁶⁷² UNICEF and Government of Guyana, *Progress Report Towards Attaining the Goals of the World Summit for Children*, October 2000, [cited August 23, 2002]; available from http://www.unicef.org/specialsession/how_country/edr_guyana_en.PDF.

¹⁶⁷³ UNESCO, *Education for All 2000 Assessment: Country Reports-Guyana*, prepared by Ministry of Education, pursuant to UN General Assembly Resolution 52/84, [cited August 23, 2002]; available from <http://www2.unesco.org/wef/countryreports/guyana/contents.html#cont>.

¹⁶⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷⁵ Inter-American Development Bank, *IDB Approves \$30 Million to Modernize Basic Education in Guyana*, [online] June 12, 2002 [cited November 15, 2002]; available from <http://www.iadb.org/exr/PRENSA/2002/cp13802e.htm>.

¹⁶⁷⁶ World Bank, *Education for All the World's Children: Donors Agree to Finance First Group of Countries on Education Fast-Track*, [online] November 27, 2002 [cited November 30, 2002]; available from <http://www.worldbank.org>.

¹⁶⁷⁷ Guyana Education Access Project, *Labour Market Information Survey*, GEAP Knowledge Bank, [online] [cited August 23, 2002]; available from <http://www.sdn.org.gy/geap/kb/index.html>.

street trading.¹⁶⁷⁸ There are reports that children are involved in prostitution in tourist areas, ports and the capital city of Georgetown.¹⁶⁷⁹

Primary education in Guyana is compulsory and free.¹⁶⁸⁰ In 1998, the gross primary enrollment rate was 102 percent, and the net primary enrollment rate was 85.4 percent.¹⁶⁸¹ Attendance rates are not available for Guyana. While enrollment rates indicate a level of commitment to education, they do not always reflect children's participation in school.¹⁶⁸²

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Factories Act and Employment of Young Persons and Children Act of 1999 sets the minimum age for employment at 14 years.¹⁶⁸³ Children under the age of 18 are prohibited from work that could jeopardize their health, safety, or morals. Forced labor is prohibited by the Constitution.¹⁶⁸⁴ The Criminal Law Offences Act protects children from sexual abuse and exploitation, establishing the age of consent for sexual activity at 13 years. Prostitution of a child under 13 years is illegal according to the act, but it is a defense for the accused to claim that he/she believed the child to be at least 13 years.¹⁶⁸⁵ The Ministry of Labor lacks sufficient inspectors to enforce child labor laws effectively.¹⁶⁸⁶

The Government of Guyana ratified ILO Convention 138 on April 15, 1998 and ILO Convention 182 on January 15, 2001.¹⁶⁸⁷

¹⁶⁷⁸ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2001: Guyana*, Washington, D.C., March 4, 2002, 2866-68, Section 6d [cited August 23, 2002]; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/wha/8337.htm>.

¹⁶⁷⁹ ECPAT International, *Guyana*, in ECPAT International, [database online] [cited December 2, 2002]; available from http://www.ecpat.net/eng/Ecpat_inter/projects/monitoring/online_database/.

¹⁶⁸⁰ Government of Guyana, *National Development Strategy, Vol. 3: The Social Sectors*, [online] [cited August 25, 2002]; available from <http://www.guyana.org/NDS/volume3.htm>. Primary education has been compulsory in Guyana for over a century. See UNESCO, *EFA 2000 Report: Guyana*.

¹⁶⁸¹ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2002* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2002.

¹⁶⁸² For a more detailed discussion on the relationship between education statistics and work, see the preface to this report.

¹⁶⁸³ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Guyana*, 2866-68, Section 6d. See also Government of Guyana, *Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act (Chapter 99:01) [consolidated up to 1973]*, No. 14 of 1933, [cited December 13, 2002]; available from <http://natlex.ilo.org>.

¹⁶⁸⁴ *Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana*, Article 140, [cited October 11, 2002]; available from http://www.guyanaguide.com/constitution/cons_title01.html.

¹⁶⁸⁵ Interpol, *Legislation on Sexual Offences Against Children*, [online] [cited December 2, 2002]; available from <http://www.interpol.int/public/Children/SexualAbuse/NationalLaws/csaGuyana.asp>.

¹⁶⁸⁶ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Guyana*, 2866-68, Section 6d.

¹⁶⁸⁷ ILO, *Ratifications by Country*, in ILOLEX, [database online] [cited August 25, 2002]; available from <http://iloex.ilo.ch:1567/english/newratframeE.htm>.