

# Suriname

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

In 1998, the Government of Suriname conducted a broad survey in order to collect information on the extent, nature, conditions, and causes of child labor in Suriname.<sup>2385</sup> The government's Bureau for Children's Rights works with UNICEF to address the violation of children's rights and to promote educational opportunities.<sup>2386</sup>

## Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

Statistics on the number of working children under the age of 15 in Suriname are unavailable. However, reports indicate that children work in agriculture, mining, street vending, family businesses, gas stations and construction, and prostitution and, in the informal sector, wash cars and sell newspapers and other items.<sup>2387</sup>

Child trafficking and sexual exploitation reportedly occur in Suriname. Girls are brought from the interior of the country to Paramaribo, the capital city, or to gold mining locations to work as prostitutes.<sup>2388</sup> In addition, Suriname is a transit country for smuggling Chinese children to the United States—in some cases, to enter into bonded labor situations.<sup>2389</sup>

Under the Compulsory School Attendance Act, children in Suriname must be provided with the opportunity to attend school between ages 7 and 12.<sup>2390</sup> Although most of the costs of

---

<sup>2385</sup> Ambassador Arnold Halfhide, Embassy of the Republic of Suriname, Washington, D.C., letter to USDOL official, November 29, 2000 [hereinafter Halfhide letter].

<sup>2386</sup> U.S. Embassy-Paramaribo, unclassified telegram no. 810, October 2001 [hereinafter unclassified telegram 810].

<sup>2387</sup> ILO, *Review of Annual Reports Under the Follow-Up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work: Compilation of Annual Reports by the International Labor Office*, Part II, UN Document No. GB. 277/3/2 (Geneva, 2000), 359. See also unclassified telegram 810 and Halfhide letter.

<sup>2388</sup> The government acknowledges that in recent years child prostitution has become a problem. See *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2000—Suriname* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, 2001) [hereinafter *Country Reports 2000*], Section 5, at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2000/wha/index.cfm?docid=832>. See also Halfhide letter.

<sup>2389</sup> *Country Reports 2000* at Section 6f.

<sup>2390</sup> UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Initial Report of States Parties Dues in 1995: Suriname*, CRC/C/28/Add.11 Section III A (Geneva, September 1998).

primary schooling are covered by the government, parents must pay school registration fees and provide school supplies and uniforms, which are barriers to education for poor and large families.<sup>2391</sup> Some school-age children are unable to attend school because they lack transportation, school facilities, or teachers.<sup>2392</sup> In 2000, 77.5 percent of primary school-age children in Suriname were attending primary school. School attendance in the rural interior, which was 61.2 percent, is significantly lower than in the rest of the country.<sup>2393</sup>

## Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The law sets the minimum age for employment of children at 14 years.<sup>2394</sup> Under Article 18 of the Labor Act, children who have reached age 12 may work if the work is necessary for training or is specifically designed for children, does not require much physical or mental exertion, and is not dangerous.<sup>2395</sup> Article 20 of the Labor Act prohibits children from performing night work or work that is dangerous to their health, life, or morals.<sup>2396</sup> The Constitution prohibits forced labor.<sup>2397</sup>

The country's Labor Inspection Unit, in cooperation with the Juvenile Police Division, enforces child labor laws.<sup>2398</sup> Although the government has enacted laws to combat child labor, the legal provisions for implementation of all child labor laws are not yet in place,<sup>2399</sup> and enforcement remedies are not adequate, partly because there are too few labor inspectors and too small penalties to deter employers.<sup>2400</sup> About 200 labor inspections are conducted in Suriname annually, but only "warnings" about child labor violations have been issued.<sup>2401</sup>

The Government of Suriname has not ratified ILO Convention 138 or ILO Convention 182.<sup>2402</sup>

---

<sup>2391</sup> Unclassified telegram 810.

<sup>2392</sup> *Country Reports 2000* at Section 5.

<sup>2393</sup> Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2 (MICS2), Suriname, Final Report (draft), at <http://www.childinfo.org/MICS2/nat/MICSrepz/MICSnatrep.htm>.

<sup>2394</sup> Unclassified telegram 810.

<sup>2395</sup> Halfhide letter.

<sup>2396</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2397</sup> Constitution of Suriname, 1987, with 1992 reforms, Article 15.

<sup>2398</sup> Unclassified telegram 810.

<sup>2399</sup> According to government sources, the mechanisms for enforcing Articles 18 and 20 are not yet in place. *See* Halfhide letter.

<sup>2400</sup> Unclassified telegram 810.

<sup>2401</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2402</sup> ILO, International Labour Standards and Human Rights Department, at <http://webfusion.ilo.org/public/db/standards/normesappl/appl-ratif8conv.cfm?Lang'EN>.

*NOTE: Hard copies of all Web citations are on file.*