

Suriname

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

The Government of Suriname recently launched its Policy Plan Concerning Children 2002-2006, which addresses the worst forms of child labor and child policy in general.³³⁹¹ In 2001, the ILO initiated a project to identify, eliminate and prevent the worst forms of child labor in the English and Dutch-speaking Caribbean through the development of national and sub-regional capacities to implement ILO Convention 182. A survey to assess the child labor situation in Suriname began early in 2002.³³⁹² The Government Bureau for Child Rights, which became operational in June 2001,³³⁹³ works with UNICEF to address the violation of children's rights and to promote educational opportunities.³³⁹⁴ 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.³³⁹⁵

The Justice Department has conducted an inventory of national legislation on child abuse and exploitation to ensure its conformity with the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.³³⁹⁶ The Bureau for Child Development, an office within the Foundation for Human Development, provides training to the Department of Justice, the police and health workers to sensitize them about child rights and child abuse. This exercise is now a standard component of police cadet training.³³⁹⁷ The Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing provides general child allowances, free medical care, and subsidies for school uniforms, shoes, and learning material for targeted low-income households.³³⁹⁸

³³⁹¹ Department of Labour, Technological Development, and Environment, *Request for Information on Efforts by Certain Countries to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labour*, October 11, 2002.

³³⁹² ILO-IPEC, *Major ILO Donor-funded Projects: Identification, Elimination and Prevention of the Worst Forms of Child Labour in the Anglophone- and Dutch-Speaking Caribbean*, ILO Caribbean Office and Multidisciplinary Advisory Team, [online] [cited November 22, 2001]; available from http://www.ilocarib.org.tt/system_links/projects.htm.

³³⁹³ ECPAT International, *Suriname*, in ECPAT International, [database online] 2002 [cited September 5, 2002], "Protection"; available from http://www.ecpat.net/eng/Ecpat_inter/projects/monitoring/online_database/index.asp.

³³⁹⁴ U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *unclassified telegram no. 810*, October 2001.

³³⁹⁵ Arnold Halfhide, Ambassador, Embassy of the Republic of Suriname, letter to USDOL official, November 29, 2000.

³³⁹⁶ ECPAT International, *Suriname*, "Protection".

³³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

³³⁹⁸ UNICEF, *National Report on Follow-up to the World Summit on Children: Suriname*, 2001, 22 [cited September 5, 2002]; available from http://www.unicef.org/specialsession/how_country/edr_suriname_en.PDF.

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

In 2000, the ILO reported that less than 1 percent of children ages 10 to 14 years in Suriname were working.³³⁹⁹ Reports indicate that children work mainly in the informal sector and are engaged in street work as newspaper or fruit and snack vendors. Children also work in market places, supermarkets and other enterprises.³⁴⁰⁰ Children are also reported to work in the mining sector.³⁴⁰¹

Child trafficking and sexual exploitation reportedly occur in Suriname.³⁴⁰² Increasing numbers of street children are working in the commercial sex industry in the capital city, Paramaribo,³⁴⁰³ and girls are also exploited sexually in gold mining areas in the interior.³⁴⁰⁴ In addition, there have been reported cases of pornography involving girls.³⁴⁰⁵ Suriname is also a transit country for smuggling Chinese and Indian children to the United States, often to enter into bonded labor situations.³⁴⁰⁶

Under the Compulsory School Attendance Act, children in Suriname must be provided with the opportunity to attend school between ages 7 and 12.³⁴⁰⁷ In 2000, the net primary attendance rate was 77.5 percent. School attendance in the rural interior, which was 61.2 percent, is significantly lower than in the rest of the country.³⁴⁰⁸ The main problems in the education system are high levels

³³⁹⁹ According to the ILO, 0.4 percent of children were working. World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2002* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2002.

³⁴⁰⁰ ILO, *Review of Annual Reports under the Follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work: Part II- Compilation of Annual Reports by the International Labor Office*, International Labor Organization Governing Body, Geneva, March 2002, 3.

³⁴⁰¹ ILO, *The effective abolition of child labour: Suriname*, 2001, [cited September 5, 2002]; available from <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/gb/docs/gb280/pdf/gb-3-2-abol.pdf>.

³⁴⁰² U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2001: Suriname*, Washington, D.C., March 4, 2002, 3048-50, Section 5 [cited December 18, 2002]; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/wha/8235.htm>. See also U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *unclassified telegram no. 977*, October 2002. See also Halfhide, letter, November 29, 2000.

³⁴⁰³ ILO, *Review of Annual Reports*, 3.

³⁴⁰⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Suriname*, 3048-50, Section 5. See also Halfhide, letter, November 29, 2000.

³⁴⁰⁵ ECPAT International, *Suriname*, "Child Pornography".

³⁴⁰⁶ U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *unclassified telegram no. 977*. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Suriname*, 3050-51, Section 6f.

³⁴⁰⁷ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Initial Report of States Parties Due in 1995*, CRC/C/28/Add.11, prepared by Government of Suriname, pursuant to Article 44 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, September 1998, Section VII A, Par. 118 [cited October 4, 2002]; available from <http://www.hri.ca/fortherecord2000/documentation/tbodies/crc-c-28-add11.htm>.

³⁴⁰⁸ Government of Suriname, *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2- Suriname: Final Report (draft)*, UNICEF, April 16, 2001, 6 [cited September 5, 2002]; available from <http://www.childinfo.org/MICS2/natlMICSrepz/MICSnatrep.htm>.

of centralization, low quality, and high dropout and repetition rates.³⁴⁰⁹ In addition, language poses a key problem since school is taught in Dutch and many students do not speak Dutch at home.³⁴¹⁰ Although the government covers the majority of primary school costs, parents must pay school registration fees and provide school supplies and uniforms, which are barriers to education for poor and large families.³⁴¹¹ Some school-age children are unable to attend school because they lack transportation, school facilities, or teachers.³⁴¹² Facing increasing economic pressures, children reportedly discontinue their education in order to work.³⁴¹³

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The minimum age for employment of children in Suriname is set at 14 years by the Labour Act.³⁴¹⁴ Under Article 18 of the Labor Act, children who have reached age 12 may work if it is necessary for training or is specifically designed for children, does not require much physical or mental exertion, and is not dangerous.³⁴¹⁵ Article 20 of the Labor Act prohibits children from performing night work or work that is dangerous to their health, life or morals.³⁴¹⁶

The Constitution prohibits forced labor.³⁴¹⁷ Prostitution is illegal, but this law is not enforced.³⁴¹⁸ The legal age for sexual consent is 14 years.³⁴¹⁹

The country's Labor Inspection Office, in cooperation with the Juvenile Police Division, enforces child labor laws.³⁴²⁰ 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,³⁴²¹ and enforcement remedies are not adequate, partly because there are too few labor inspectors and a penalty structure

³⁴⁰⁹ Inter-American Development Bank, *Profile I- Suriname: Support for Primary Education*, project document, February 10, 2000, 2, 4 [cited September 5, 2002]; available from <http://www.iadb.org/EXR/doc98/pro/psu0023.pdf>.

³⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁴¹¹ U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *unclassified telegram no. 810*.

³⁴¹² U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Suriname*, 3048-50, Section 5.

³⁴¹³ U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *unclassified telegram no. 977*.

³⁴¹⁴ U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *unclassified telegram no. 810*. See also Department of Labour, Development, and Environment, *Request for Information*.

³⁴¹⁵ Halfhide, letter, November 29, 2000.

³⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁴¹⁷ *Constitution of Suriname 1987, with 1992 reforms*, Article 15 [cited October 4, 2002]; available from <http://www.georgetown.edu/pdba/Constitutions/Suriname/english.html>.

³⁴¹⁸ U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *unclassified telegram no. 977*.

³⁴¹⁹ The Asian Marriage Law sets the legal age for sexual consent for children of Asian descent at 13 years for girls and 15 years for boys. *Ibid.*

³⁴²⁰ U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *unclassified telegram no. 810*.

³⁴²¹ According to government sources, the mechanisms for enforcing Articles 18 and 20 are not yet in place. See Halfhide, letter, November 29, 2000.

that fails to deter employers.³⁴²² About 200 labor inspections are conducted in Suriname annually, but no penalties for child labor violations have been issued, only warnings.³⁴²³

The Government of Suriname has not ratified ILO Convention 138 or ILO Convention 182.³⁴²⁴

³⁴²² U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *unclassified telegram no. 810*.

³⁴²³ *Ibid.*

³⁴²⁴ ILO, *Ratifications by Country*, in ILOLEX, [database online] [cited October 4, 2002]; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/newratframeE.htm>.