

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

The Government of Suriname developed a Policy Plan Concerning Children 2002–2006, which addresses the worst forms of child labor and child policy in general.<sup>4132</sup> In 2001, the ILO initiated a two-year 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. As part of this effort, a survey to assess the situation of children working in mining, agriculture, and other worst forms of child labor in Suriname was released in 2003.<sup>4133</sup> The government's Bureau for Child Rights, which became operational in June 2001,<sup>4134</sup> works with UNICEF to address the violation of children's rights and to promote educational opportunities.<sup>4135</sup>

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.<sup>4136</sup> 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.<sup>4137</sup> The Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing provides child allowances, free medical care and subsidies for school uniforms, shoes and supplies for targeted low-income households.<sup>4138</sup>

## Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

In 2001, the ILO reported that less than 1 percent of children ages 10 to 14 years in Suriname were working.<sup>4139</sup> According to the ILO child labor assessment, children work in agriculture, fishing, timber production, mining, domestic service in third-party homes, construction, the furniture industry, and as vendors selling a variety of goods.<sup>4140</sup> The report found that while hours of work vary substantially, some children work more than five hours per day.<sup>4141</sup> Children also work without adult supervision in some cases.<sup>4142</sup> Children working in mining are exposed to dangerous substances such as mercury.<sup>4143</sup>

<sup>4132</sup> The government established a steering committee composed of representatives from relevant agencies to coordinate and implement the plan. See 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.

<sup>4133</sup> Marten Schalkwijk and Wim van den Berg, *Suriname The Situation of Children in Mining, Agriculture, and other Worst Forms of Child Labour: A Rapid Assessment*, ILO Subregional Office for the Caribbean, Port of Spain, November 2002; available from [http://www.ilocarib.org.tt/system\\_links/link6tst.html](http://www.ilocarib.org.tt/system_links/link6tst.html). See also ILO official, electronic correspondence on ILO/CIDA Regional Child Labour Project to USDOL official, October 6, 2003. 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. See Arnold Halfhide, letter to USDOL official, November 29, 2000.

<sup>4134</sup> ECPAT International, *Suriname*, in ECPAT International, [database online] 2003 [cited July 7, 2003], "Protection"; available from [http://www.ecpat.net/eng/Ecpat\\_inter/projects/monitoring/online\\_database/index.asp](http://www.ecpat.net/eng/Ecpat_inter/projects/monitoring/online_database/index.asp).

<sup>4135</sup> U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *unclassified telegram no. 972*, October 16, 2002.

<sup>4136</sup> ECPAT International, *Suriname*, "Protection".

<sup>4137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4138</sup> UNICEF, *National Report on Follow-up to the World Summit on Children: Suriname*, 2001, 22; available from [http://www.unicef.org/specialsession/how\\_country/edr\\_suriname\\_en.PDF](http://www.unicef.org/specialsession/how_country/edr_suriname_en.PDF)

<sup>4139</sup> According to the ILO, 0.4 percent of children were working. See World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2003* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2003.

<sup>4140</sup> Marten Schalkwijk and Wim van den Berg, *Suriname The Situation of Children in Mining, Agriculture, and other Worst Forms of Child Labour*, 30, 46, 52, 60.

<sup>4141</sup> *Ibid.*, 49, 57.

<sup>4142</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>4143</sup> *Ibid.*, 70, 74.

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The Constitution of Suriname mandates free and compulsory primary education.<sup>4144</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>4145</sup> 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.<sup>4146</sup> In 2000, 84 percent of children who entered the first grade of primary school reached the fifth grade.<sup>4147</sup> Problems in the education system include inefficient allocation of resources, lack of accountability for teachers, very limited monitoring of school performance, low quality, high repetition rates, and high dropout rates at the secondary school level.<sup>4148</sup> In addition, school is taught in Dutch and many students do not speak Dutch at home.<sup>4149</sup> 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.<sup>4150</sup> Lack of transportation, facilities, and teachers poses barriers to school attendance.<sup>4151</sup>

## Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Labor Act sets the minimum age for employment at 14 years.<sup>4152</sup> 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.<sup>4153</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>4154</sup>

The Constitution prohibits forced labor.<sup>4155</sup> Prostitution is illegal,<sup>4156</sup> and procuring a minor child for sexual activities is prohibited by the Criminal Code.<sup>4157</sup> The legal age for sexual consent is 14 years.<sup>4158</sup>

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<sup>4144</sup> Right to Education, *Constitutional Guarantees: Suriname*, [database online] [cited July 7, 2003]; available from <http://www.right-to-education.org/content/consuarant/suriname.html>.

<sup>4145</sup> 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, para. 118; available from <http://www.hri.ca/fortherecord2000/documentation/tbodies/crc-c-28-add11.htm>.

<sup>4146</sup> Government of Suriname, *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2- Suriname: Final Report (draft)*, UNICEF, April 16, 2001, 6; available from <http://childinfo.org/MICS2/newreports/surinam/surinamreport.PDF>.

<sup>4147</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4148</sup> Less than one percent of children finish senior secondary school (12 years of schooling). See IDB, *Profile I- Suriname: Support for Primary Education*, project document, February 10, 2000, 2, 4; available from <http://www.iadb.org/EXR/doc98/pro/psu0023.pdf>.

<sup>4149</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>4150</sup> U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *unclassified telegram no. 810*, October 2001.

<sup>4151</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Suriname*, Section 5.

<sup>4152</sup> U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *unclassified telegram no. 810*.

<sup>4153</sup> Halfhide, letter, November 29, 2000.

<sup>4154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4155</sup> *Constitution of Suriname 1987, with 1992 reforms*, Article 15; available from <http://www.georgetown.edu/pdba/Constitutions/Suriname/english.html>.

<sup>4156</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2003: Suriname*, Washington, DC, June 11, 2003; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2003/21277pf.htm>.

<sup>4157</sup> Article 305 as cited in *Suriname: Articles relating to trafficking of women and children, prostitution, coercion, and procuring*, in The Protection Project Legal Library, [database online] [cited July 7, 2003]; available from <http://209.190.246.239/protectionproject/statutesPDF/Suriname.pdf>.

<sup>4158</sup> 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. See U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Suriname*, Section 5.

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The country's Labor Inspection Office, in cooperation with the Juvenile Police Division, enforces child labor laws.<sup>4159</sup> Although the government has enacted laws to combat child labor, enforcement remedies are not adequate, partly because there are too few labor inspectors and a penalty structure that fails to deter employers.<sup>4160</sup> About 20 labor inspections are conducted in Suriname annually; no violations of child labor laws were discovered in 2002.<sup>4161</sup> The Labor Inspection office, however, does not enforce the laws in the informal sector.<sup>4162</sup>

The Government of Suriname has not ratified ILO Convention 138 or ILO Convention 182.<sup>4163</sup>

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<sup>4159</sup> U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *unclassified telegram no. 810*.

<sup>4160</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4161</sup> U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *unclassified telegram no. 972*.

<sup>4162</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4163</sup> ILO, *Ratifications by Country*, in ILOLEX, [database online] [cited July 7, 2003]; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/newratframeE.htm>.