

Suriname

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

The ILO estimated that less than 1 percent of children ages 10 to 14 years in Suriname were working in 2002.³⁷⁵⁸ According to the ILO, economically active children work in agriculture, fishing, timber production, mining, domestic service, construction, the furniture industry, and as street vendors.³⁷⁵⁹ The ILO found that while hours of work vary substantially, 41 percent of those surveyed worked more than 5 hours per day. Children also work without adult supervision in some cases.³⁷⁶⁰ Commercial sexual exploitation of girls and boys is allegedly increasing in Suriname.³⁷⁶¹ There were reports of girls being trafficked to and through the country for commercial sexual exploitation.³⁷⁶² Sexual exploitation of Maroon girls in the interior of the country is also reportedly a concern.³⁷⁶³ Young Maroon children also work in the transportation and agricultural sectors.³⁷⁶⁴

The Constitution of Suriname mandates free and compulsory primary education.³⁷⁶⁵ Despite this Constitutional guarantee, most public schools impose school fees.³⁷⁶⁶ Under the Compulsory School Attendance Act, children in Suriname must be provided with the opportunity to attend school between ages 7 and 12.³⁷⁶⁷ In 2001, the gross primary enrollment rate was 125.8 percent, and the net primary

³⁷⁵⁸ According to the ILO, 0.4 percent of children were working. See World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2004* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2004.

³⁷⁵⁹ 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, 30, 46, 52, 60; available from http://www.ilocarib.org.tt/system_links/link6tst.html.

³⁷⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 49, 70.

³⁷⁶¹ 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 166; available from <http://www.hri.ca/fortherecord2000/documentation/tbodies/crc-c-28-add11.htm>. See also Marten Schalkwijk and Wim van den Berg, *Suriname The Situation of Children in Mining, Agriculture, and other Worst Forms of Child Labour*, 46. See also Arnold Halfhide Ambassador of Suriname to the United States, letter to USDOL official, November 29, 2000.

³⁷⁶² U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2003: Suriname*, Washington, D.C., February 25, 2004, Section 6f; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2003/27920.htm>. See also U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2004: Suriname*, Washington, DC, June 14, 2004; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2004/33198.htm>.

³⁷⁶³ U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *unclassified telegram no. 431*, June, 2004. Maroon people are descendants of African slaves and have a distinct culture based on African and Amerindian traditions. Numbering approximately 60,000 people, they represent 15% of the total population in Suriname. See *Suriname Background*, Rainforest Foundation US, 2004 [cited November 30, 2004]; available from <http://www.rainforestfoundation.org/1surinameback.html>.

³⁷⁶⁴ U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *unclassified telegram no. 678*, August 2004.

³⁷⁶⁵ Right to Education, *Constitutional Guarantees: Suriname*, [database online] [cited March 24, 2004], Article 39; available from <http://www.right-to-education.org/content/consguarant/suriname.html>.

³⁷⁶⁶ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Suriname*, Section 5.

³⁷⁶⁷ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Initial Reports of States Parties: Suriname*, para. 118.

enrollment rate was 97.4 percent.³⁷⁶⁸ Gross and net enrollment ratios are based on the number of students formally registered in primary school and therefore do not necessarily reflect actual school attendance. In 2000, the net primary attendance rate was 78 percent. School attendance is significantly lower in the rural interior than in the rest of the country at 61.2 percent. As of 2000, 84.0 percent of children who started primary school were likely to reach grade 5.³⁷⁶⁹ Problems within the education system include an inefficient allocation of resources, low teacher quality, outdated curricula, a shortage of instructional materials, and limited monitoring of school performance. Less than 1 percent of children finish senior secondary school (12 years of schooling).³⁷⁷⁰ In addition, classes are taught in Dutch.³⁷⁷¹ Although the government covers the majority of primary school costs, parents must pay school registration fees and provide school supplies and uniforms. These costs limit access to education for children from poor and large families.³⁷⁷² Lack of transportation, appropriate facilities, and a teacher shortage also present barriers to school attendance.³⁷⁷³ Parents who permit their children to work, in violation of child labor laws, can be prosecuted.³⁷⁷⁴

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Labor Act sets the minimum age for employment at 14 years.³⁷⁷⁵ 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.³⁷⁷⁶ Article 20 of the Labor Act prohibits children from performing night work or work that is dangerous to their health, life, or morals.³⁷⁷⁷ Children below the age of 15 are prohibited from working on fishing boats. Violations of child labor laws are punishable by fines and up to 12 months in prison.³⁷⁷⁸

The Constitution prohibits forced labor.³⁷⁷⁹ Prostitution is illegal,³⁷⁸⁰ and procuring a minor child for sexual

³⁷⁶⁸ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2004*. For a detailed explanation of gross primary enrollment and/or attendance rates that are greater than 100 percent, please see the definitions of gross primary enrollment rate and gross primary attendance rate in the glossary of this report.

³⁷⁶⁹ Government of Suriname, *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2- Suriname: Final Report (draft)*, UNICEF, March 2001, 6; available from <http://www.childinfo.org/MICS2/newreports/surinam/surinamreport.PDF>.

³⁷⁷⁰ 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>.

³⁷⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁷⁷² U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *unclassified telegram no. 810*, October 2001. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Suriname*, Section 5.

³⁷⁷³ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Suriname*, Section 5.

³⁷⁷⁴ U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *unclassified telegram no. 678*.

³⁷⁷⁵ U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *unclassified telegram no. 810*.

³⁷⁷⁶ Ambassador of Suriname to the United States, letter, November 29, 2000.

³⁷⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁷⁸ U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *unclassified telegram no. 568*, September 8, 2003.

³⁷⁷⁹ *Constitution of Suriname 1987, with 1992 reforms*, Article 15; available from <http://www.georgetown.edu/pdba/Constitutions/Suriname/english.html>.

³⁷⁸⁰ U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2004: Suriname*.

activities is prohibited and punishable with up to three years in prison.³⁷⁸¹ The legal age for sexual consent is 14 years.³⁷⁸²

The Ministry of Labor’s Department of Labor Inspections, in cooperation with the Juvenile Police Division, enforces child labor laws.³⁷⁸³ However, due to staff shortages and lack of funding, child labor investigations are inadequate and do not take place outside of urban areas.³⁷⁸⁴ The Labor Inspection office does not enforce the laws in the informal sector.³⁷⁸⁵ No violations of child labor laws were reported in 2003.³⁷⁸⁶ The Ministry of Social Affairs’ Bureau for Child Rights is responsible for implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.³⁷⁸⁷

Current 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 child policies and the worst forms of child labor.³⁷⁸⁸ The government coordinates with ILO/IPEC on the second phase of a regional child labor project in the English and Dutch-speaking Caribbean. The project aims to identify and raise awareness about specific worst forms of child labor in Suriname, establish a national child labor committee, and train labor inspectors and other personnel.³⁷⁸⁹

Selected Child Labor Measures Adopted by Governments	
Ratified Convention 138	
Ratified Convention 182	
ILO-IPEC Associated Member	✓
National Plan for Children	✓
National Child Labor Action Plan	
Sector Action Plan	

The Justice Department has been reviewing 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. 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 to child rights and child abuse issues. This exercise is now a standard

³⁷⁸¹ 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 April 30, 2004]; available from <http://209.190.246.239/protectionproject/statutesPDF/Suriname.pdf>.

³⁷⁸² See U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Suriname*, Section 5.

³⁷⁸³ U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *unclassified telegram no. 810*. See also U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *unclassified telegram no. 568*. See also U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *unclassified telegram no. 678*.

³⁷⁸⁴ U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *unclassified telegram no. 568*. See also U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *unclassified telegram no. 810*.

³⁷⁸⁵ U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *unclassified telegram no. 972*, October 16, 2002. See also U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *unclassified telegram no. 568*.

³⁷⁸⁶ U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *unclassified telegram no. 568*.

³⁷⁸⁷ U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *unclassified telegram no. 678*.

³⁷⁸⁸ 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.

³⁷⁸⁹ The project is being implemented in Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Bahamas, Suriname, Belize, and Guyana. ILO-IPEC official, email communication to USDOL official, May 4, 2004.

component of police cadet training.³⁷⁹⁰ The Ministry of Justice and Police heads an anti-trafficking commission comprised of several government ministries and a local NGO. The Public Prosecutor's Office established a "Special Victims Unit" and telephone hotline to assist victims of trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.³⁷⁹¹ In July, members of government and civil society attended a one-day counter-trafficking training session provided by the IOM that focused on strengthening their capacity to respond to the trafficking of women and children.³⁷⁹² A follow-up 2-day counter-trafficking seminar was held in October 2004 for government counterparts, NGOs, and community representatives.³⁷⁹³

The Ministry of Education and Community Development will implement an Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) funded project to reform the education sector. Project activities include the creation of a new curriculum, teacher training, rehabilitation of schools, improving school management, and building the capacity of the Ministry of Education and Community Development.³⁷⁹⁴

³⁷⁹⁰ ECPAT International, *Suriname*, in ECPAT International, [database online] 2003 [cited July 7, 2003]; available from http://www.ecpat.net/eng/Ecpat_inter/projects/monitoring/online_database/index.asp.

³⁷⁹¹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Suriname*, Section 6f.

³⁷⁹² Niurka Pineiro, *Suriname - Counter-Trafficking Training for National Authorities*, IOM, July 16, 2004 [cited August 20, 2004]; available from <http://www.iom.int/en/news/pbn160704.shtml>.

³⁷⁹³ Jean Phillipe Chauzy, *Suriname- Counter-Trafficking Seminar*, Press Briefing Notes, IOM, October 26, 2004.

³⁷⁹⁴ *Suriname, IDB Sign Loans for Education and Health*, Inter-American Development Bank, March 31, 2004 [cited April 7, 2004]; available from http://www.iadb.org/NEWS/display/PRView.cfm?PR_Num=73_04&Language=English.