

*In 2012, Suriname made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government ratified the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography. The Government also carried out a desk survey on child labor, identified and provided services to victims, and pursued prosecutions related to the worst forms of child labor. The Government continued to expand education programs for vulnerable populations. However, Suriname has not raised the minimum age for compulsory education to equal the minimum age for employment, nor approved a national policy to combat child labor. Further, the Government does not participate in specific programs dedicated to reducing the worst forms of child labor. Children in Suriname continue to engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation.*

### Statistics on Working Children and Education

| Children                  | Age       | Percent     |
|---------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Working                   | 5-14 yrs. | 8.0 (8,044) |
| Attending School          | 5-14 yrs. | 94.0        |
| Combining Work and School | 7-14 yrs. | 8.1         |
| Primary Completion Rate   |           | 86.0        |

#### Sources:

**Primary completion rate:** Data from 2009, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2013.(1)

**All other data:** Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from MICS3 Survey, 2006.(2)

### Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Children in Suriname are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation. Children also engage in dangerous work in agriculture.(3-5) Children working in agriculture may use dangerous tools, carry heavy loads, and apply harmful pesticides.(6, 7)

Children, predominantly boys, work in dangerous conditions in Suriname's gold mines.(3-5, 8, 9) In gold mining, children carry heavy loads and are exposed to mercury, excessive noise, and extreme heat common to Suriname. Child miners are vulnerable to being crushed by collapsing sand walls.(8)

The commercial sexual exploitation of children continues to be a problem, including in mining camps in the country's interior.(3-5, 9, 10) Limited evidence suggests



girls are also trafficked within Suriname for commercial sexual exploitation.(4, 10, 11)

Although some sector-specific research has been conducted, recent information and statistics on child labor in Suriname remain limited. The Government carried out a desk survey in 2012 to compile all available data on child labor in Suriname from the past 10 years. The results of the desk review are expected to be finalized and published in 2013.(5, 12)

There are reports of children working on the streets but this phenomenon may be declining and information about specific hazards is unknown.(3-5, 9, 13-15)

### Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Labor Code of 1963 sets the minimum age for employment at 14 and the minimum age for hazardous work at 18.(3, 5, 8, 9, 16) However, the Labor Code allows children 12 or older to work in positions that facilitate professional skill development or that, by their nature, must be performed by a child, provided the work is not physically or mentally demanding or dangerous.(8, 17) Children under age 18 are prohibited from working between 7 p.m. and 6 a.m. Children under age 15 are banned from working on boats.(3, 5, 8, 9) In addition to the Labor Code, the Safety Act also limits children's engagement in hazardous activities. It prohibits children under age 18 from engaging in activities that may be injurious to their health and safety.(16) The Government has established a list of hazardous activities prohibited for children under 18.(18)

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The Constitution bans forced or compulsory labor.(9, 19) Suriname's Penal Code prohibits prostitution as well as the use of children for the production of pornography and illicit activities.(3, 5, 9, 16) In 2012, Suriname ratified the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography.(20)

## International Conventions and Selected Laws on Child Labor and Education

|                                                                                     |                                                                                         |     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
|    | C138, Minimum Age                                                                       | No  |
|                                                                                     | C182, Worst Forms of Child Labor                                                        | ✓   |
|    | CRC                                                                                     | ✓   |
|                                                                                     | CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict                                                 | No  |
|                                                                                     | CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography | ✓   |
|    | Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons                                              | ✓   |
|   | Minimum Age for Work                                                                    | 14  |
|                                                                                     | Minimum Age for Hazardous Work                                                          | 18  |
|  | Compulsory Education Age                                                                | 12  |
|                                                                                     | Free Public Education                                                                   | Yes |

The Penal Code also proscribes all forms of human trafficking.(9, 16, 21) The Narcotics Act prohibits the use of a child by an adult for illicit activities, including drug trafficking.(9)

The Legal Status of Military Personnel Act sets the minimum age for appointment to the military at 18.(9)

The Constitution guarantees free education at all levels and makes primary education compulsory.(19) The Compulsory School Attendance Act requires children to attend school until they are at least age 12.(5, 8, 9) Children between ages 12 and 14 are particularly vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor, as they are no longer required to attend school and are not legally permitted to work.(3)

## Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

The National Commission for the Elimination of Child Labor NCECL is responsible for coordinating efforts to combat child

labor. It comprises 11 members, with representation from the Presidential Commission on Child and Adolescent Policy; the Ministries of Social Affairs, Education, Regional Development, Justice and Police (MJP), and Labor, Technology and Environment (MLTE); labor unions; private sector entities; academic institutions; and NGOs.(3, 5, 22) NCECL is tasked with formulating a national policy to eliminate child labor; monitoring Suriname's compliance with international child labor standards; and executing programs to raise awareness about, prevent, and combat child labor.(22)

The Department of Labor Inspections within MLTE is responsible for enforcing child labor and related laws.(4, 8, 9) MLTE employs 80 inspectors, an increase over the 63 inspectors employed in 2011.(5, 9) During the reporting period, it conducted inspections of companies to check for compliance in various areas, including child labor.(5) Information on the number of inspections and child labor violations found in 2012 is not available.(5)

MJP is responsible for enforcing criminal laws related to child labor and for monitoring and enforcing child labor laws outside of established companies, including on the streets. The Youth Affairs Police covers law enforcement involving children under age 18 and is jointly responsible for child labor-related crimes.(5, 9) However, when the Youth Affairs Police find children working on the street, these children are sometimes registered and sent home without being referred to any relevant services.(9)

MLTE chairs the Anti-trafficking Working Group, and coordinates the Government's anti-trafficking efforts.(3, 5, 9, 11) It has seven members: six from government agencies and one representing the NGO community. The Working Group's initiatives include those that target the worst forms of child labor, such as forced child prostitution.(3, 5, 9) During the reporting period, the working group met on a monthly basis.(11)

MJP's Anti-trafficking Police Unit (TIP) investigates reports and allegations of trafficking in persons nationwide, including those involving children.(9) TIP conducts bimonthly checks of brothels and night clubs to ensure children are not being exploited in prostitution or held in conditions of forced labor.(9, 23) The unit currently has 12 full-time officers.(5) Child trafficking victims are referred to shelters that provide the necessary services.(3, 5, 21)

According to the Government, there are five ongoing prosecutions involving the worst forms of child labor, all of which commenced in 2011 or 2012. They involve trafficking

and commercial sexual exploitation of children.(5) One case involves a local government official accused of trafficking underage girls for prostitution.(10) Seven victims were removed from exploitation in the worst forms of child labor during the reporting period.(5)

### Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government has drafted a National Children's Action Plan 2009-14 that addresses child labor issues, but it has not yet been approved by the Council of Ministers.(8) The Anti-trafficking Working Group also drafted a plan titled "Roadmap Suriname to Combat Human Trafficking 2012-2016." However, the plan is currently being discussed with stakeholders and has not yet been approved and implemented.(11, 24)

Suriname's Ministry of Transport, Communication, and Tourism participates in the Joint Group for the Elimination of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Tourism. The Group, which comprises members from the Ministries of Tourism of 10 Latin American countries, implements awareness-raising campaigns throughout the region.(5, 9)

Suriname is a member of the Joint Regional Group for the Americas, which conducts child labor prevention and awareness-raising campaigns in tourism and whose members include Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela.(25)

### Social Programs to Eliminate or Prevent the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government of Suriname has implemented several programs related to child trafficking. However, research found no evidence that it has carried out programs to address other

worst forms of child labor, including agriculture, street work, commercial sexual exploitation, or gold mining.(5)

During the reporting period, the Government continued to work with NGO partners to provide services to trafficking victims, including children.(11) Suriname's Child and Youth Hotline provides confidential advice to children in need, including victims of the worst forms of child labor.(4, 23) The Government also runs an anti-trafficking hotline for citizens to provide information to police about trafficking cases.(10, 11)

During the reporting period, the Anti-trafficking Working Group carried out trainings on human trafficking in the districts of Paramaribo and Nickerie for law enforcement officials, educators, judicial and immigration officials, and the Youth Parliament. It also conducted awareness-raising activities, including newspaper spots to warn young people of misleading job offers, a 1-day training for Youth Parliamentarians, and a training for government information officers.(10)

During the reporting period, the Government continued to participate in a number of education programs. In 2012, the Ministry of Education launched a free afterschool program for primary students, which offers meals and homework assistance, and continued to implement a school-based feeding program for children from low-income families.(5, 9, 12) The Government also participates in a \$14 million program to improve basic education in collaboration with the Inter-American Development Bank. The project, implemented through the Ministry of Education, aims to enhance education quality and reduce student dropout rates.(5, 9) The five major project components are enacting institutional reform, updating school curricula, improving educational materials, enhancing teacher capacity, and providing technical assistance.(5) However, the question of whether these programs have an impact on child labor does not appear to have been addressed.

### Based on the reporting above, the following actions would advance the elimination of the worst forms of child labor in Suriname:

| Area                         | Suggested Actions                                                                                                                     | Year(s) Action Recommended |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Laws and Regulations         | Raise the compulsory education age to at least 14, the minimum age for work.                                                          | 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012     |
| Coordination and Enforcement | Collect and make publicly available information of labor inspections and violations related to the worst forms of child labor.        | 2012                       |
|                              | Create a mechanism to refer children discovered in exploitive labor to appropriate services, helping to prevent their return to work. | 2010, 2011, 2012           |

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| Area            | Suggested Actions                                                                                                                                                                                       | Year(s) Action Recommended |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Policies        | Conduct a study to better understand the extent and nature of the worst forms of child labor in Suriname in order to design appropriate policies and programs.                                          | 2010, 2011, 2012           |
|                 | Approve and implement the National Children's Action Plan.                                                                                                                                              | 2011, 2012                 |
|                 | Approve and implement the Anti-trafficking Plan of Action.                                                                                                                                              | 2011, 2012                 |
| Social Programs | Expand and develop social programs to assist children engaged in or vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor, particularly in agriculture, street work, commercial sexual exploitation, and mining. | 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012     |
|                 | Assess the impact that existing programs may have on child labor.                                                                                                                                       | 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012     |

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