

In 2018, Suriname made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government ratified International Labor Organization Convention 138 concerning the minimum age for admission to employment, acceded to the Protocol to the Forced Labor Convention, and amended the Law on Labor for Children and Young People, raising the minimum age of work to 16 years. In addition, the Interdepartmental Working Group on Trafficking in Persons presented the 2019 National Action Plan on Trafficking in Persons, the government published the results of the 2017 Child Labor Survey and created a referral mechanism between criminal law enforcement authorities and social services. However, children in Suriname engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in mining. Although the government made meaningful efforts in all relevant areas during the reporting period, prohibitions related to the use of children for illicit activities do not meet international standards. In addition, the compulsory education age does not reach the minimum age for employment, leaving some children more vulnerable to labor exploitation.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Suriname engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in mining. (1-4) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Suriname. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	6.4 (6,671)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	95.8
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	6.6
Primary Completion Rate (%)		89.2

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2017, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2019. (5)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 4, 2010. (6)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Harvesting crops, applying pesticides,† carrying heavy loads† (4) Fishing and forestry (7,8)
Industry	Mining, particularly gold mining (1,3,4,7,9) Construction,† including carrying heavy loads† (10)
Services	Street work, including vending (4) Domestic work (7)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1-4,7)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor per se under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Suriname

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT




Children in Suriname, mostly boys, work at carrying heavy loads in small-scale gold mines. These children risk exposure to mercury and cyanide, excessive noise, extreme heat, and collapsing sand walls. (1,4,9,10) Children, including children from Guyana, are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation in Suriname, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, including in informal mining camps in the country's remote interior. (2,4,7,10)

Although Suriname's net attendance ratio for primary school is 96 percent, it is only 53 percent for secondary school, and research indicates that secondary school attendance in the interior is as low as 21 percent. Children from low-income households, particularly in the interior, face difficulties accessing education due to long distances to schools, transportation costs, and school fees. (1,4,11,12) In 2018, school fees increased for both public and semi-private schools. (4)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Suriname has ratified most key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

In January 2018, the government ratified ILO Convention 138 concerning the minimum age for employment. (13)

The Government of Suriname also signed accession to the Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labor Convention of 1930, (No.29). (4)

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Suriname's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the compulsory education age, which is below the minimum age for work.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Articles 1 (j-l), 3 and 11 of the Children and Youth Persons Labor Act; Article 17 of the Labor Code (14,15)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 1 (k-l) and 11 of the Children and Youth Persons Labor Act; Article 1 of the Decree on Hazardous Labor for Youth (15,16)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 2-3 of the Decree on Hazardous Labor for Youth; Article 11 of the Children and Youth Persons Labor Act (15,16)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 15 of the Constitution; Article 334 of the Penal Code (17,18)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 307 and 334 of the Penal Code (18)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 293, 303, and 306 of the Penal Code (18)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 9 of the Legal Status of Military Personnel Act (19)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	No	12	Article 39 of the Constitution; Article 20 of the Law on Basic Education (17,20)
Free Public Education	Yes		Articles 38–39 of the Constitution (17)

* No conscription (21)

In July 2018, in accordance with the Government of Suriname’s ratification of ILO Convention 138, the Suriname National Assembly approved and signed a new Law on Labor for Children and Young Persons, which raises the minimum age for work for children to age 16. (4,15)

Article 20 of the Law on Basic Education requires children to attend school until they are at least age 12. (22) This leaves children between ages 12 and 16 particularly vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor, because they are no longer required to attend school but are not yet legally permitted to work.

The Constitution guarantees free public education for all citizens, and the September 2014 amendment to the Citizenship and Residency Law granted citizenship to children born in Suriname of foreign-born parents. Sources indicate, however, that a small number of children born in Suriname to foreign parents before September 2014 remain ineligible to receive citizenship and free public education. (1,17,23)

The Penal Code establishes penalties for the production and trafficking of drugs, but it does not appear to specifically prohibit the use, procuring, and offering of a child in the production and trafficking of drugs. (18)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the authority of the Ministry of Labor that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Labor	Enforces laws related to child labor. (10)
Police	Enforce criminal laws related to child labor. (10) Include the Youth Affairs Police, which cover law enforcement involving children under age 18 and are jointly responsible for child labor-related crimes. In addition, include the Police Trafficking in Persons Unit, which investigates reports and allegations of human trafficking and forced sexual exploitation nationwide, including cases involving children. (24)
Prosecutor’s Office	Investigates and prosecutes human trafficking cases. (25)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2018, labor law enforcement agencies in Suriname took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including targeted inspections in risk-prone sectors.

Suriname

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2017	2018
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (10)	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspectors	73 (10)	73 (4)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (10)	Yes (4)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (10)	Yes (4)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A	Yes (4)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (10)	Yes (4)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	Unknown (10)	Unknown
Number Conducted at Worksite	0 (10)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (10)	0 (26)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A (10)	N/A (4)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (10)	N/A (26)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Yes (4)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown	Unknown
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (10)	Yes (4)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Yes (4)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (10)	Yes (4)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	No (10)	No (4)

The government does not collect or publish data on child labor inspections and violations. Labor inspections are mainly conducted near coastal areas, and the Ministry of Labor noted that there is an insufficient number of labor inspectors to ensure the enforcement of labor laws, particularly in mining and agricultural areas, fisheries, and the country's interior. (1, 10, 21, 27, 28) There are no dedicated child labor inspectors; however, all labor inspectors are trained and authorized to enforce child labor laws. (4)

Although the Ministry of Labor does not provide funding information, it did report that its funding is insufficient to adequately cover all sectors in the country, including the formal and informal sectors. In addition, high-risk sectors are not specifically targeted because labor inspectors mainly conduct routine inspections in the formal sectors, which have lower incidences of child labor. (4)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2018, criminal law enforcement agencies in Suriname took actions to combat child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including allocation of financial and human resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2017	2018
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Yes (10)	Yes (4)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A (10)	N/A (4)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (10)	Yes (4)
Number of Investigations	4 (10)	Unknown
Number of Violations Found	3 (10)	1 (29)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	8 (10)	0 (29)
Number of Convictions	2 (10)	7 (30)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to The Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	Unknown
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	No (10)	Yes (4)

During the reporting period, authorities reported a sex trafficking case involving a minor found working in a massage salon; the case is still under investigation. (30) Furthermore, there were seven child trafficking

convictions secured during 2018, with sentences ranging from 1 to 5 years. UNODC provided trafficking in persons training to 34 criminal law enforcement officials. (31) Additional human trafficking training was also given to all new police recruits, and Surinamese authorities also received training from the Brazilian Police Attaché. (30)

The Ministry of Justice and Police established a referral mechanism to assist human trafficking victims, including children, to the Bureau of Victim Services for shelter, medical services, and access to social workers, and to the Bureau for Legal Aid for legal assistance. (4)

The number of investigators is insufficient to respond to human trafficking cases and, according to the Prosecutor's Office, investigations are initiated only as a result of complaints filed and are limited by a lack of resources, especially for travel to the interior of the country. (10,27,32-34) When the Youth Affairs Police find children working on the street, these children are sometimes registered and sent home without referrals to any relevant services. (10,24,34)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Commission on Combatting Child Labor	Coordinates and monitors efforts to combat child labor. Serves as the leading body in drafting child labor policies, conducting research on child labor, and conducting research on the social economic circumstances of children involved in child labor. (4) In 2018, began drafting the National Action Plan on the Elimination of Child Labor. (4)
Trafficking in Persons Working Group	Coordinates the government's anti-human trafficking efforts. Provides care to victims of human trafficking through government-supported NGOs. (24) Comprising nine government agencies. (10) Includes organizations that target the worst forms of child labor, such as the commercial sexual exploitation of children. (24) In 2018, drafted the National Action Plan for the Prevention and Response to Trafficking in Persons and launched a nationwide awareness campaign on human trafficking. (30)
Integrated Child Protection Network	Led by the Ministry of Social Affairs and includes the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice and Police, Office of the First Lady, National Assembly, and NGO stakeholders, with support from UNICEF. (10) In 2018, the Network established a technical commission that meets monthly and is working to address child protection issues, including drafting a referral system between government and social services and a data collection system to record reported cases, in addition to providing training to service providers. (4)

Although the National Commission on Combatting Child Labor had been inactive since 2014, it was reestablished and active during the reporting year. (4)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including implementing a national child labor action plan.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
Roadmap to Combat Human Trafficking in Suriname (2014–2018)	Outlined a policy to combat human trafficking through 2018. (33)
National Action Plan for the Prevention and Response to Trafficking in Persons (2019)†	Aims to combat and prevent human trafficking, including through the prevention, protection, and reintegration of victims, and the prosecution of perpetrators of trafficking in persons. (35)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

In November 2018, the government completed consultations on the draft of the National Action Plan to Combat Child Labor, which is awaiting approval from the Council of Ministers. (4,36)

Although research found no evidence that the Roadmap to Combat Human Trafficking in Suriname was implemented in 2018, the Ministry of Justice and Police used the Roadmap as a base to draft the government's National Action Plan for the Prevention and Response to Trafficking in Persons. (4)

Suriname

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2018, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including services for child victims of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Country-Level Engagement and Assistance to Reduce Child Labor (2013–2019)	USDOL-funded capacity-building project implemented by ILO in 11 countries to build local and national capacity of governments to address child labor. In Suriname, aims to improve monitoring and enforcement of laws and policies related to child labor and implement a National Action Plan on the elimination of child labor. (37) In 2018, the project supported the finalization of the Suriname Child Labor Survey, which was published in January 2019. (4) Additional information is available on the USDOL website.
Regional Initiative School to Work Transition Program	Regional Initiative Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labor program, with support from the Cooperation Agency of Brazil and ILO, to assist Caribbean countries, including Suriname, to improve youth transition from school to work. (10,38) Active in 2018. (4)
Child and Youth Hotline†	Government-run hotline that provides confidential advice to children in need, including victims of the worst forms of child labor. (33) Receives approximately 80 calls per day. (32) Active in 2018. (29)
Anti-Trafficking Hotline†	Government-sponsored hotline through which citizens can provide information to the police about human trafficking cases. (33) Although the Anti-Trafficking hotline was inactive during 2018, it was re-established in January 2019 with a simplified number; calls are directed to Trafficking in Persons Unit. (39)
Human Trafficking Awareness Program†	Government-funded anti-human trafficking awareness campaign for press, radio, television, internet, and social media. (22,24,25) In 2018, the Police's Trafficking in Persons Unit trained 100 government officials on awareness, identification, and management of human trafficking cases. (3,29)
Second Basic Education Improvement Program (2015–2040)	\$20 million IDB-funded, 25-year loan implemented by the Ministry of Education to develop curriculums and textbooks, provide teacher training, renovate classrooms, build housing for teachers in the interior, and build a center for teacher training and professional development. Aims to benefit 90,000 students and 6,500 teachers. (25,40) Active in 2018. (4)

† Program is funded by the Government of Suriname.

The government continues to support initiatives to eradicate child labor, but existing social programs are inadequate to fully address the problem. In particular, Suriname lacks programs to assist child victims of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation, as well as children who work in mining and agriculture. (10, 11)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Suriname (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the use, procuring, and offering of a child for illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs.	2015 – 2018
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 into non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2018
	Increase the compulsory education age to at least age 16, the minimum age for work.	2009 – 2018
	Ensure that all children, including children of foreign-born parents, have access to free public education.	2015 – 2018
Enforcement	Publish information on labor law enforcement efforts, including the labor inspectorate's funding, the number of inspections and investigations conducted, the number of inspections conducted at worksites, and whether routine inspections are targeted.	2012 – 2018
	Strengthen the labor inspectorate by initiating targeted inspections based on the analysis of data related to risk-prone sectors and patterns of serious incidents, such as in fisheries and the interior of the country, particularly in mining and agricultural areas in which child labor is likely to occur.	2015 – 2018
	Allocate sufficient funding to ensure that criminal law enforcement officers have the resources necessary to conduct investigations, particularly in the interior of the country and informal mining areas.	2014 – 2018

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Create a formal mechanism to refer victims of child labor, identified by labor or criminal enforcement authorities to the appropriate social services, including children found working on the streets by the Youth Affairs Police.	2010 – 2018
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate is sufficiently funded to cover labor inspections in both the formal and informal sectors of the labor force.	2018
	Impose penalties for convictions related to the worst forms of child labor.	2018
Government Policies	Ensure the National Action Plan on the Elimination of Child Labor is approved and adopted.	2015 – 2018
Social Programs	Develop social programs to prevent and eradicate child labor in agriculture and mining and to improve secondary school attendance, particularly in the interior.	2015 – 2018
	Strengthen social services to assist child victims of commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking.	2014 – 2018

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Suriname

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

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