

In 2019, Guyana made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government drafted and began implementation of the National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labor and launched an updated Inter-Ministerial Task Force on Combating Trafficking in Persons National Plan of Action, which establishes mechanisms to address human trafficking, including child trafficking. In addition, the government drafted a revised Combating Trafficking in Persons Bill, which would increase the legislative protection for victims, including children. However, children in Guyana are engaged 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. Law enforcement agencies have insufficient financial and human resources to enforce laws related to child labor, including its worst forms, and existing laws do not fully prohibit using children in certain forms of child labor. Moreover, the government does not have targeted social programs to fully address the extent of the child labor problem in the country.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Guyana 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. (1-7) The 2014 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 5 indicated that children living in Guyana's interior are more likely than other children to be engaged in child labor, with 37 percent of children ages 5 to 17 living in the interior engaged in child labor. The survey also indicated that 41 percent of children living in Amerindian households engage in child labor, with 34 percent of these children engaged in hazardous work. (3) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Guyana.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	20.1 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	97.1
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	22.1
Primary Completion Rate (%)		97.4

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2012, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2020. (4)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 5 (MICS 5), 2014. (5)

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	Farming,† including the production of cabbage, cherries, limes, rice, squash, sugarcane, and charcoal (1,6-14)
	Forestry, including logging,† preservation of lumber, and work in sawmills† (1,3,8,10,14)
	Raising animals, including chickens (8)
	Fishing,† activities unknown (1,8,15)
Industry	Construction,† activities unknown (8,14,15)
	Mining,† including gold mining and bauxite mining (3,8,10,14)
Services	Domestic work (1,6,8)
	Welding† and working in scrap iron yards (1,6,8)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Working in stores, bars, and restaurants (1,6,8,16)
	Street work, including selling fruit, washing cars, and begging (1,6,8,11,12,17)
	Cleaning boats and ferries, and helping load luggage and goods (8)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor†	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1,2,7,8,10-12,14,15,18)
	Use in illicit activities, including planting marijuana and smuggling drugs, weapons, and goods (6,8)

† 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.

Children in Guyana, including girls as young as age 12, are involved in commercial sexual exploitation in Georgetown and in the country’s interior. There are reports of young girls in mining communities being subjected to commercial sexual exploitation as a result of human trafficking. (1,6-9) Children are engaged in informal, small-scale mining in which they wash gold, operate dangerous machinery, and are exposed to hazardous chemicals. (8,9)

Children in Guyana’s interior and rural areas have limited access to education due to poor infrastructure, long distances to schools, transportation costs, and a shortage of qualified teachers. This leads to decreasing enrollment and high dropout rates among students, particularly in secondary school. (6,8,9,19,20)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Guyana has ratified all 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	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Guyana’s legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including insufficient prohibition of commercial sexual exploitation of children.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Articles 2–3 of the Employment of Young Persons and Children Act; Articles 17–22 of the Education Act (21,22)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Part 1, Article 2, and Part 2, Article 3 of the Employment of Young Persons and Children Act; Articles 17, 41, 46, and 75 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (21,23)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		List of Hazardous Occupations and Processes in Guyana; Part 1, Article 2 of the Employment of Young Persons and Children Act; Articles 17, 41, and 75 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (21,23,24)

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

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Forced Labor	No		Article 40 of the Constitution; Article 3 of the Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act (25,26)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 3 of the Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act (26)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Article 50(3) of the Protection of Children Act; Article 3(2) of the Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act (26,27)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		Article 50(1) of the Protection of Children Act (27)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 18 of the Defense Act and Defense Amendment Act (28,29)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Articles 13 and 22 of the Education Act (22)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 27 of the Constitution (25)

* No conscription (1)

Guyanese law does not criminally prohibit forced labor. (25, 26) Guyanese law does not sufficiently prohibit all commercial sexual exploitation of children as it does not prohibit the use of children for prostitution or pornographic performances or production of pornography. The law does, however, adequately prohibit the procuring and offering of children in prostitution and pornography, as Guyana's Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act prohibits the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation, which in turn includes prostitution and child pornography. (9,26,30) Although Article 50(1) of the Protection of Children Act prohibits selling or giving drugs to children, the law does not specifically prohibit the use, procuring, or offering of a child for the production and trafficking of drugs. (18,27) During the reporting year, Guyana acceded to the 1996 Hague Convention on Jurisdiction, Applicable Law, Recognition, Enforcement and Co-operation in Respect of Parental Responsibility and Measures for the Protection of Children (the Child Protection Convention) and the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. (1,31)

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 operations of the Ministry of Social Protection that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Social Protection	Monitors and enforces child labor laws in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Forestry Commission, Geology and Mines Commission, National Insurance Scheme, and Guyana Police Force. The Chief Labor Officer handles special investigations stemming from child labor complaints and oversees routine labor inspections. (9) Includes a Trafficking in Persons Unit and the Childcare and Protection Agency, to which children identified during labor inspections are referred. (9) Reported six new investigations of child labor during the reporting period, two of which were for commercial sexual exploitation of a child. (1)
Guyana Police Force	Enforces criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor, including human trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and the use of children in illicit activities. Works in consultation with the Director of Public Prosecutions, Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of Social Protection, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs, depending on the circumstances of each case. (9)
Ministry of Public Security	Leads enforcement of human trafficking laws. Chairs the Inter-Ministerial Task Force on Combating Trafficking in Persons. (9)

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Labor Law Enforcement

In 2019, labor law enforcement agencies in Guyana took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Social Protection that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including human resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2018	2019
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$235,000 (9)	Unknown (1)
Number of Labor Inspectors	15 (9)	14 (1)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	No (9)	No (1)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (9)	Yes (1)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A (9)	N/A (1)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (9)	Yes (1)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	1,733 (9)	1,306 (1)
Number Conducted at Worksite	1,733 (9)	1,306 (1)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	21 (9)	6 (1)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	0 (9)	Unknown (1)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	0 (9)	Unknown (1)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (9)	Yes (1)
Routine Inspections Targeted	No (9)	Yes (1)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (9)	Yes (1)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (9)	Yes (1)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (9)	Yes (1)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (9)	Yes (1)

In 2019, the government conducted routine inspections that targeted high-risk sectors, including agriculture and mining, while no targeted inspections were conducted in 2018. (1) However, the number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of Guyana's workforce, which includes more than 313,000 workers. According to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 15,000 workers in developing economies, Guyana would employ roughly 21 inspectors. (32,33) In 2019, the number of labor inspectors decreased to 14. The government recognizes that the number of inspectors is not sufficient to adequately monitor Guyana's workforce, including in the interior where child labor is most prevalent. (1,8,9,14) Furthermore, inspectors have insufficient resources to conduct inspections in remote areas, including transportation and accommodation. (9)

The government has acknowledged challenges in monitoring and enforcing the provisions established in Articles 41 and 46 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act, which aim to protect children from work that may harm their physical health or emotional development. (34)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2019, criminal law enforcement agencies in Guyana 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 human resource allocation.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2018	2019
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Yes (9)	Unknown (1)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A (9)	Unknown (1)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (9)	Unknown (1)
Number of Investigations	30 (35)	6 (1)
Number of Violations Found	21 (9)	Unknown (1)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	11 (35)	6 (1)

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2018	2019
Number of Convictions	1 (35)	1 (1,2)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to The Worst Forms of Child Labor	0 (9)	Unknown (1)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (9)	Yes(1)

The government has acknowledged that there is an insufficient number of staff members in the Ministry of Social Protection's Trafficking in Persons Unit. (13,36) In addition, with only 33 justices and magistrates, the courts have a backlog of cases and more than a 2-year waiting period on all legal matters. (17,37) In 2019, the Director of Public Prosecutions prosecuted nine persons suspected of human trafficking. Of these, six prosecutions were initiated during the previous reporting period. (2) The government convicted one person for human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of a child during the reporting period. (2)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including efforts to address all forms of child labor.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Inter-Ministerial Task Force on Combating Trafficking in Persons	Reports on the nature and magnitude of human trafficking in Guyana and documents the government's response. Carries out public education campaigns and promotes prevention measures. (1,9) Combats commercial sexual exploitation of children and the use of children in illicit activities. Members include participants from 16 government ministries. (1,17,38) Chaired by the Minister of Public Security. Participating member agencies include: the Ministries of Amerindian Affairs, Natural Resources and Environment, Education, Legal Affairs, and Foreign Affairs. (1,17,39) In 2019, drafted and began implementing the Inter-Ministerial Task Force on Combating Trafficking in Persons National Plan of Action. Also led a number of successful raids at suspected human trafficking sites; conducted awareness and sensitization campaigns across Guyana; trained law enforcement officers, social workers, and prosecutors in victim-centered investigations and prosecutions; and drafted a revised Combating Trafficking in Persons Bill, which would increase legislative protection for victims, including children. (1,2)
National Tripartite Committee	Addresses national labor legislation and policy. Includes representatives from government agencies, labor unions, and employers, including the Ministry of Social Protection, Consultative Association of Guyanese Industries, Guyana Trades Union Congress, and the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Guyana. (17,40,41) Research was unable to determine whether the National Tripartite Committee was active during the reporting period.
Commission on the Rights of the Child	Protects and promotes children's rights in accordance with the UN CRC, which includes addressing the worst forms of child labor. Reported to be active in 2019, but did not finalize its new strategic plan. (1)

Although the government has established the Inter-Ministerial Task Force on Combating Trafficking in Persons, research found no evidence of mechanisms to coordinate efforts to combat other worst forms of child labor.

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 a lack of child labor elimination and prevention strategies in the National Education Policy.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
National Policy Toward the Elimination of Child Labor (2018–2025)	Aims to prevent and eliminate child labor in all its forms by 2025 by reconciling gaps and inconsistencies between existing national policies and ratified international conventions. Establishes a national framework to coordinate, enforce, monitor, and evaluate all efforts to combat child labor, and increases protections for vulnerable indigenous children in the hinterland. (42) Approved in April 2019. (1,43)

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Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

Policy	Description
Inter-Ministerial Task Force on Combating Trafficking in Persons Action Plan (2019–2020)†	Seeks to prevent and raise awareness about human trafficking, provide direct assistance to victims, improve law enforcement's capacity to identify and respond to human trafficking, and strengthen interagency coordination and referral mechanisms. (1,44) Establishes mechanisms to protect victims of all forms of human trafficking, prevent trafficking in persons, and prosecute human traffickers. Provides for the review and amendment of the Combating Trafficking in Persons Act. (2)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (45)

The National Education Policy does not include child labor elimination and prevention strategies. The Commission on the Rights of the Child began drafting a new strategic plan to replace the previous 5-Year Strategic Plan; however, research was unable to determine whether the new strategy includes child labor elimination and prevention strategies. (9,34,45) In 2019, the government drafted a National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labor (2019–2025). (1)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2019, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including adequacy to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Guyana Decent Work Country Program (2017–2021)†	Aims to improve working conditions and increase respect for international standards, social protection, economic opportunities, and social dialogue. Includes plans to conduct research and raise awareness on child labor, develop a national child labor policy, and establish coordination mechanisms to prevent and respond to child labor and forced labor. (46) During the reporting period, the government began the implementation of its Decent Work Country Program. (1) However, research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Guyana Decent Work Country Program during the reporting period.
Shelter for Domestic Violence Victims†	Government-funded, NGO-run shelter that houses victims of domestic violence and human trafficking, including children. Provides services, including psychological counseling and practical skills training. (9) Accommodates teenage girls under age 16 who are placed at the shelter at the request of the government's Childcare and Protection Agency. (9) Receives \$50,000 annually from the government, and continued to receive funding during the reporting period. (1,48)
Government-Funded School Programs†	School Meals and Uniforms provides hot meals to 16,000 students at schools in the interior and transportation for students in several remote areas. All students in government-run schools, from nursery to secondary school, receive vouchers to purchase school uniforms, shoes, and backpacks. (17) Active in 2019. (1,9) The 5Bs Program provides boats, buses, bicycles, books, and breakfast to school children to improve access to education. (1,14,20,49)
Child Advocacy Centers	Funded by private sector donations and UNICEF, and implemented by the Ministry of Social Protection and NGOs to provide services for abused children. (50) The Ministry of Social Protection's Childcare and Protection Agency oversees the centers and makes referrals. (50) During the reporting period, the government increased the number of Child Advocacy Centers to seven, and the centers were functioning during the reporting period. (1)
Board of Industrial Training†	Government-funded program that aims to deter early school dropouts by providing job skills to at-risk youth between ages 15 and 17 who may not otherwise be able to complete their formal education. (9) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Board of Industrial Training during the reporting period.

† Program is funded by the Government of Guyana.

The scope of government programs targeting the worst forms of child labor is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, including child labor in the mining industry and the commercial sexual exploitation of children. (14,48)

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 Guyana (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law sufficiently prohibits forced labor.	2019
	Ensure that the law sufficiently prohibits all commercial sexual exploitation of children by prohibiting the use of children in pornography and prostitution, including in prostitution outside establishments.	2010 – 2019
	Ensure that the law sufficiently prohibits the use of children for illicit activities by prohibiting the use, procuring, or offering of a child for the production or trafficking of drugs.	2016 – 2019
Enforcement	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2019
	Increase the number of labor inspectors trained and responsible for providing enforcement of child labor laws to ensure that a sufficient number of inspectors are available to carry out labor inspections.	2015 – 2019
	Publish information on the Labor Inspectorate's funding, as well as other labor law and criminal law enforcement efforts.	2015 – 2019
	Authorize the Labor Inspectorate to assess penalties.	2016 – 2019
	Ensure that the Labor Inspectorate receives sufficient resources to monitor the interior, where child labor is most prevalent, and in other remote areas.	2011 – 2019
	Ensure the appropriate application of Articles 41 and 46 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act to protect children from work that may harm their physical health or emotional development.	2015 – 2019
	Ensure that the Ministry of Social Protection's Trafficking in Persons Unit is sufficiently staffed to carry out its mandate.	2018 – 2019
	Dedicate more resources, including judicial personnel, to address the backlog of cases and ensure that cases are concluded in a timely manner, including cases related to the worst forms of child labor.	2010 – 2019
Coordination	Establish coordinating mechanisms to combat child labor, including all of its worst forms.	2014 – 2019
	Ensure that the National Tripartite Committee engages in regular meetings and coordination efforts.	2014 – 2019
Government Policies	Ensure that child labor elimination and prevention strategies are integrated into the newly drafted 5-Year Strategic Plan on the Rights of the Child and the National Education Policy.	2010 – 2019
Social Programs	Ensure that children are not prevented from attending school because of transportation costs and lack of infrastructure.	2014 – 2019
	Increase the number of qualified teachers, particularly in rural and interior areas.	2015 – 2019
	Develop new initiatives and expand existing programs to reach all children involved in the worst forms of child labor, including programs addressing child labor in the mining industry and the commercial sexual exploitation of children.	2010 – 2019
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the Guyana Decent Work Country Program and the Board of Industrial Training.	2018 – 2019

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