

In 2020, Guyana made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government established a new Ministry of Labor, which monitors, investigates, and enforces child labor law in collaboration with other government agencies. Guyana also published a National Child Labor Policy with a corresponding national action plan, and it launched a new nationwide trafficking in persons hotline. However, children in Guyana are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also engage in 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 are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking.

Children also engage in dangerous tasks in mining. (1-8) 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. 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	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, 2021. (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 (1,6,7,9-13)
	Forestry, including logging,† preservation of lumber, and work in sawmills† (1,3,7,9,11,13)
	Raising animals, including chickens (9)
	Fishing,† activities unknown (1,7,9,14)
Industry	Construction,† activities unknown (7,9,13,14)
	Mining,† including gold mining and bauxite mining (3,7,9,11,13)
Services	Domestic work (1,6,7,9)
	Welding† and working in scrap iron yards (1,6,7,9)
	Working in stores, bars, and restaurants (1,6,7,9)

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Street work, including selling fruit, washing cars, and begging (1,6,7,9,15)
	Cleaning boats and ferries, and helping load luggage and goods (9)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor†	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1,2,7-9,11,13,14,16)
	Use in illicit activities, including planting marijuana and smuggling drugs, weapons, and goods (6,9)

† 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 subjected to 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. (1,6,8-10) Children are engaged in informal, small-scale mining in which they wash gold, operate dangerous machinery, and are exposed to hazardous chemicals. (7,9,10)

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. (6,7,9,10,17) The lack of information technology and the limited availability of electricity in rural and riverine communities also hindered access to education during the COVID-19 pandemic. (7)

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 (18,19)
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 (18,20)
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 (18,20)

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 (21,22)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 3 of the Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act (22)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Article 3(2) of the Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act; Article 50(3) of the Protection of Children Act (22,23)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		Article 50(1) of the Protection of Children Act (23)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 18 of the Defense Act and Defense Amendment Act (24,25)
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 (19)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 27 of the Constitution (21)

* No conscription (1,26)

Guyanese laws addressing forced labor are not sufficient as they only prohibit trafficking in persons for purposes of forced labor; the law does not explicitly prohibit the use of forced labor itself. (21, 22) Guyanese law does not sufficiently prohibit all commercial sexual exploitation of children as it does not prohibit the use of children for prostitution, 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. (10,22,27) In addition, 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. (16,23)

The government finalized a revised Combating Trafficking in Persons Bill in 2019, but the Bill was not made law during this reporting period. (26)

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 enforcement agencies 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*	Investigates reports of child labor and conducts routine labor inspections and refers children identified during labor inspections to the MHSSS' Countering Trafficking in Persons Unit (C-TIP) and the Childcare and Protection Agency. (7,28) The C-TIP Unit, under the supervision of the Director of Public Prosecutions, prosecutes trafficking in persons cases. (7) Promotes public messaging on child labor. (26)
Ministry of Human Services and Social Security (MHSSS)	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. (10) Includes a Trafficking in Persons Unit and the Childcare and Protection Agency, to which children identified during labor inspections are referred. (10) Reported two new investigations of child labor during the reporting period, including domestic servitude and commercial sexual exploitation. (7) In 2020, began to co-chair the Inter-Ministerial Task Force on Trafficking in Persons with MOHA. (7)

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement (Cont.)

Organization/Agency	Role
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, MOHA, Ministry of Human Services and Social Security, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs, depending on the circumstances of each case. (10) During the reporting period, investigated 13 cases of human trafficking involving child victims. (7)
Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA)	Leads enforcement of human trafficking laws. (10) During the reporting period, trained new police force recruits, immigration staff, police prosecutors, and detectives in best practices to investigate and prosecute human trafficking. (7)

* Agency responsible for child labor enforcement was created during the reporting period.

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2020, labor law enforcement agencies in Guyana took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security (MHSSS) 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	2019	2020
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (1)	Unknown (7)
Number of Labor Inspectors	14 (1)	17 (7)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	No (1)	No (7)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (1)	Yes (7)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A (1)	N/A (7)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (1)	Yes (7)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	1,306 (1)	736 (7)
Number Conducted at Worksite	1,306 (1)	736 (7)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	6 (1)	2 (7)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (1)	Unknown (7)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (1)	Unknown (7)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (1)	Yes (7)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (1)	Yes (7)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (1)	Yes (29)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (1)	Yes (7)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (1)	Yes (7)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (1)	Yes (7)

In 2020, the government continued to conduct routine inspections that targeted high-risk sectors, including agriculture, construction, and mining. (7) However, the number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of Guyana's workforce, which includes more than 313,800 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. (27,30) In 2020, the number of labor inspectors increased from 14 to 17, but 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. (1,7,9,10,13) The significant decrease of labor inspections was a result of the pandemic and the related preventative measures taken by the government, such as business closures, curfew restrictions, and other health and safety restrictions. The labor inspectors were also working on a limited rotation, which contributed to a reduction in inspections. (31) Furthermore, inspectors have insufficient resources to conduct inspections in remote areas, including transportation and accommodation. There are also no inspectors dedicated to child labor, though inspectors continue to include child labor inspections in their schedules, and 15 of the 17 inspectors received training related to child labor and hazardous child labor. (7,10)

The government has acknowledged challenges in monitoring and enforcing the provisions established in Articles 41 (relating to child labor in factories) and 46 (relating to employer duties) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act, which aim to protect children from work that may harm their physical health or emotional development. (32)

The government did not provide information on its labor law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report.

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2020, 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	2019	2020
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Unknown (1)	Yes (7)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (1)	Yes (7)
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown (1)	Yes (7)
Number of Investigations	6 (1)	2 (7)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown (1)	0 (7)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	6 (1)	0 (7)
Number of Convictions	1 (1,2)	0 (7)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (1)	Unknown (7)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (1)	Yes (7)

The government has acknowledged that there is an insufficient number of staff members in MHSSS' Trafficking in Persons Unit. (12,33) In addition, as of 2021, there are 22 magistrates and 17 judges in Guyana. (34)

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. (1,10) Combats commercial sexual exploitation of children and the use of children in illicit activities. (1,15,35) Co-chaired by MOHA and MHSSS. Participating member agencies include the Guyana Forestry Commission and Guyana Geology and Mines Commission, which focus on child labor and human trafficking in the rural and hinterland regions. (1,7,15) Also serves as the coordinating body for efforts to combat the worst forms of child labor, and the management body for child labor referrals. In 2020, conducted human trafficking awareness training for labor inspectors, occupational safety and health officers, forestry officers from the Guyana Forestry Commission, and insurance investigators. (7) Further, launched its first trafficking in persons hotline in Spanish, planned and executed several sensitization and awareness sessions, hosted a digital symposium on human trafficking, and consulted with various stakeholders in preparation for drafting the National Plan of Action to Combat Human Trafficking for 2021–2023. (26)
National Tripartite Committee	Addresses national labor legislation and policy. Includes representatives from government agencies, labor unions, and employers, including MHSSS, Consultative Association of Guyanese Industries, Guyana Trades Union Congress, and the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Guyana. (15,36,37) 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 2020, but did not finalize its new strategic plan. (7,38,39)

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Although the government has an Inter-Ministerial Task Force on Combating Trafficking in Persons, which also serves as the coordinating body for efforts to combat the worst forms of child labor, research was unable to identify what actions were taken 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. (7,40,41) In 2020, the government published its National Child Labor Policy and a corresponding national action plan, provided training workshops for Ministry of Labor staffers, and disseminated booklets, posters, advertisements, and social media posts to raise child labor awareness. (31)
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 inter-agency coordination and referral mechanisms. (1,42) 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)

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (43)

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. (10,32,43)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2020, 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. (44) 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. (10) Accommodates teenage girls under age 16 who are placed at the shelter at the request of the government's Childcare and Protection Agency. (10) Previously received \$50,000 annually from the government; however, funding was reduced during the reporting period. (1,7)
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. (15) Active in 2020. (7) The Public Education and Transportation Service, previously known as the 5Bs Program, provides boats, buses, bicycles, books, and breakfast to school children to improve access to education. (1,7,13,17,34,45)
Child Advocacy Centers	Funded by private sector donations and UNICEF, and implemented by MHSSS and NGOs to provide services for abused children. (46) MHSSS' Childcare and Protection Agency oversees the centers and makes referrals. (46) During the reporting period, the government opened two new centers, with the total number of functioning Child Advocacy Centers covering over seven regions of Guyana. (7,47-49)

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor (Cont.)

Program	Description
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. (10) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Board of Industrial Training during the reporting period.
Regional Initiative Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labor	Initiated by an inter-governmental cooperation platform made up of 30 countries, with active participation of employers and workers organizations, which seeks to declare Latin America and the Caribbean as the first developing region free of child labor by 2025. In October 2020, Regional Initiative met to discuss the third phase of implementation for 2022–2025, to update its governance mechanisms, and to strengthen ownership and social dialogue. (50)

† 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. (13)

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 – 2020
	Ensure that the law sufficiently prohibits all commercial sexual exploitation of children by prohibiting the use of children in pornography and prostitution.	2010 – 2020
	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 – 2020
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2020
Enforcement	Increase the number of labor inspectors to meet the ILO's technical advice.	2015 – 2020
	Publish information on the labor inspectorate's funding and the number of child labor violations for which penalties were imposed and collected.	2015 – 2020
	Authorize the labor inspectorate to assess penalties.	2016 – 2020
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate receives sufficient resources to monitor the interior, where child labor is most prevalent, and in other remote areas.	2011 – 2020
	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 – 2020
	Ensure that the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security's Trafficking in Persons Unit is sufficiently staffed to carry out its mandate.	2018 – 2020
	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 – 2020
Coordination	Establish coordinating mechanisms to combat child labor, including all of its worst forms.	2014 – 2020
	Ensure that the National Tripartite Committee engages in regular meetings and coordination efforts.	2014 – 2020
Government Policies	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement key policies.	2020
Social Programs	Ensure that children are not prevented from attending school because of transportation costs and lack of infrastructure, and increase the number of qualified teachers, particularly in rural and interior areas.	2015 – 2020
	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor, including in fishing and construction, to inform policies and programs.	2020
	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 – 2020
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the Guyana Decent Work Country Program and the Board of Industrial Training.	2018 – 2020

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