

In 2021, Guyana made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government increased its number of inspectors from 17 to 22, exceeding the International Labor Organization's recommendation of 19 inspectors. Guyana also added \$250,000 to the country's national budget to fund a shelter that serves adults and children who are survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking. 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 perform dangerous tasks in mining. Guyana does not meet the international standard for hazardous work for children because it allows children ages 16 to 17 to conduct night work in industrial activities. In addition, law enforcement agencies have insufficient resources to conduct inspections in remote areas, including a lack of transportation and accommodation.



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 perform dangerous tasks in mining. (1-6) 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. (1) 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	10.1 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	96.9
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	18.5
Primary Completion Rate (%)		97.4

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2012, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022. (2)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS 6), 2019-20. (3)

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 (4,5,7-13)
	Forestry, including logging,† preservation of lumber, and work in sawmills† (1,5,7-9)
	Raising animals, including chickens (9)
	Fishing,† activities unknown (5,7-9,14)
Industry	Construction,† activities unknown (5,9,14)
	Mining,† including gold mining and bauxite mining (1,5,9)
Services	Domestic work (4,5,9)
	Welding† and working in scrap iron yards (4,5,9)
	Working in stores, bars, and restaurants (4,5,9)

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT

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 (4,5,9)
	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 (7-9,11,13-16)
	Use in illicit activities, including planting marijuana and smuggling drugs, weapons, and goods (4,9)

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

Guyana has compulsory education for children ages 6 to 15 years. (5,17) During the reporting period, UNICEF reported that it worked with the Government of Guyana to collect data and review legislative measures for a child labor report. (5) However, 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. (4,8,10,18) 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. (5)

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 (17,19)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No	18	Part 1, Article 2, and Part 2, Article 2 of the Employment of Young Persons and Children Act; Articles 17, 41, 46, and 75 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (19,20)

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

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		List of Hazardous Occupations and Processes in Guyana; Part I, Article 2 of the Employment of Young Persons and Children Act; Articles 17, 41, and 75 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (19-21)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 2–3 and 8 of the Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act; Article 40 of the Constitution (22,23)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 3 of the Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act (23)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Articles 2(e) and 3(2) of the Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act; Article 50(3) of the Protection of Children Act (23,24)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		Article 50(1) of the Protection of Children Act (24)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 18 of the Defense Act and Defense Amendment Act (25,26)
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 (17)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 27 of the Constitution (22)

* Country has no conscription (7,27,28)

Guyana prohibits the employment of children under age 15, with an exception for work in family businesses, under the Employment of Young Persons and Children Act. Guyana allows work starting at age 15, such as office work, cashier, call center services, and labeling assistant positions at supermarkets. (19) However, Guyana does not meet the international standard for hazardous work for children because it allows children ages 16 to 17 to perform night work in industrial activities and does not adequately protect children from hazardous work that may jeopardize their health, safety, or morals. (19)

Although Article 50(1) of the Protection of Children Act and the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substance Act both prohibit 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. (16,24,29,30) In addition, Guyanese law does not sufficiently prohibit all commercial sexual exploitation of children because it does not prohibit the use of children for prostitution. (23)

A revision to the Combatting Trafficking in Persons Bill was drafted by the Government of Guyana in 2019, but as of the time that this report was written, it has still not been introduced into the National Assembly. (28)

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.

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Labor	Investigates reports of child labor, conducts routine labor inspections, and refers children identified during labor inspections to Ministry of Human Services and Social Security's (MHSS) Countering Trafficking in Persons Unit (C-TIP) and the Childcare and Protection Agency. (8,31) C-TIP, under the supervision of the Director of Public Prosecutions, prosecutes trafficking in persons cases. (8) Promotes public messaging on child labor. (27) During the reporting period, held an event with public stakeholders for World Day Against Child Labor. (32)
MHSS	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 (staffed by five personnel) and the Childcare and Protection Agency, to which children identified during labor inspections are referred. (10,33) During the reporting period, held a training workshop in partnership with C-TIP on identifying cases of trafficking in persons. (14,34)
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 Home Affairs (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)
MOHA	Leads enforcement of human trafficking laws, including the Guyana Police Force and Immigration Support Services. (6,35)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2021, labor law enforcement agencies in Guyana took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including lack of authorization for inspectors to assess civil penalties.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (8)	Unknown (5)
Number of Labor Inspectors	17 (8)	22 (5)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (19)	Yes (19)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (8)	Yes (5)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A (8)	N/A (5)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (8)	Yes (5)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	736 (8)	860 (5)
Number Conducted at Worksite	736 (8)	860 (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	2 (8)	0 (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (8)	Unknown (5)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (8)	Unknown (5)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (8)	Yes (5)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (8)	Yes (5)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (36)	Yes (36)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (8)	Yes (5)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (8)	Yes (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (8)	Yes (5)

During the reporting period, the government conducted routine inspections that were targeted at high-risk sectors. (5) In addition, the number of labor inspectors increased from 17 to 22, which exceeds the ILO technical recommendation of 19 inspectors for a country of Guyana's size. (5,9) Although not publicly available, research indicated that funding for the labor inspectorate was sufficient; however, inspectors have insufficient resources to conduct inspections in remote areas, including transportation and accommodation, which was exacerbated by the pandemic. (5,8) Moreover, 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. (37)

Inspectors are permitted to conduct unannounced inspections in all sectors, but they are not authorized by law to assess penalties for labor law violations. When general labor violations are found, the employer is informed of the labor violation(s) and is given a period to rectify the violation. (5) If inspectors find child labor violations, they may report the employer to the Chief Labor Officer or police for investigation. (5,19) The Chief Labor Officer can file a case against an offending employer with a magistrate judge, who may impose a civil penalty. The welfare and social service officers of the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security have the right to access private premises if there is a child labor investigation. (5)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2021, criminal law enforcement agencies in Guyana took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including lack of data on violations and prosecutions of criminal law.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Yes (8)	Yes (5)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A (8)	N/A (5)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (8)	Yes (5)
Number of Investigations	2 (8)	8 (5)
Number of Violations Found	0 (8)	Unknown (5)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	0 (8)	Unknown (5)
Number of Convictions	0 (8)	0 (5)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	No (8)	No (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (8)	Yes (5)

In 2021, authorities reported 9 instances of children in forced labor and 14 instances of young girls in commercial sexual exploitation. Guyana law enforcement agencies also reported five violations related to child labor, three of which were forced child labor violations and two commercial sexual exploitations. (5) The Guyana Police Force reported that 15 child survivors were removed from exploitation conditions and were referred to the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security. (5) In addition, in the first half of 2021, the Guyana Police Force reported 14 cases of trafficking in persons involving 49 survivors, the majority of whom were subject to commercial sexual exploitation. Of this group, 8 survivors were under the age of 18. (38)

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 coordination among agencies.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Steering Committee on Child Labor	Works with various government agencies to enforce laws on child labor. Chaired by the ministerial advisor for the Ministry of Labor. (5) 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. Re-instated in 2020. (5) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken during the reporting period. (5,33)
Ministerial Task Force on Trafficking in Persons	Reports on the nature and magnitude of human trafficking in Guyana and documents the government's response. Divided into a ministerial arm and a technical arm, with six subcommittees. (39) Carries out public education campaigns and trainings, and promotes prevention measures. (7,10) Addresses commercial sexual exploitation of children and the use of children in illicit activities. (5,40) Co-chaired by MOHA and MHSS. (5,6) Also serves as the coordinating body for efforts to address the worst forms of child labor, and the management body for child labor referrals. (5) During the reporting period, the committee met monthly and drafted the 2021-2025 National Action Plan. (28,33) The committee also conducted additional consultation on the proposed Trafficking in Persons (TIP) bill, which was initially drafted in 2019. (28)

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Commission on the Rights of the Child	Protects and promotes children's rights in accordance with the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, which includes addressing the worst forms of child labor. (8,44,45) Active during the reporting period, though it has not yet finalized its strategic plan. (5)

Guyana's Commission on the Rights of the Child is not represented on the Inter-Ministerial Taskforce on Combatting Trafficking in Persons. (5)

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 implementation of the National Child Labor Policy and National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
National Child Labor Policy and National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labor (2019–2025)	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 address child labor, and increases protections for vulnerable indigenous children in the hinterland. (8,46,47) However, research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the plan during the reporting period.
Inter-Ministerial Task Force on Combatting Trafficking in Persons Action Plan (2021–2025)	Seeks to prevent and raise awareness about human trafficking, provide direct assistance to survivors, improve law enforcement's capacity to identify and respond to human trafficking, and strengthen inter-agency coordination and referral mechanisms. (7,48) With a budget of \$329,944, the plan also provides for the review and amendment of the Combatting Trafficking in Persons Act. (15,33) During the reporting year, drafted and began implementation of the plan, undertook inspections of brothels and bars, launched an information campaign, and held a consultation workshop with key stakeholders to discuss the national action plan for addressing human trafficking, noting the increase in exploitation of Venezuelan immigrants. (28,49)

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (50)

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. (10,37,50)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2021, 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 the inadequacy of programs 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)†	Aimed to improve working conditions and increase respect for international standards, social protection, economic opportunities, and social dialogue. Included conducting research and raising awareness on child labor, developing a national child labor policy, and establishing coordination mechanisms to prevent and respond to child labor and forced labor. (51) In 2021, launched a study of the socio-economic impact of the closure of four large sugar estates on workers. (52)
Shelter for Domestic Violence Victims‡	Two government-funded, NGO-run shelters. One shelter houses survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking, including children. (10) Provides services, including psychological counseling and practical skills training. The second shelter accommodates teenage girls under age 16 who are placed at the shelter at the request of the government's Childcare and Protection Agency. (10) During the reporting year, the government of Guyana added \$250,000 to the national budget to fund the shelters. (5)

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

Program	Description
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. 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. (7,8,13,53-55) Government-funded programs aim 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) During the reporting period, all students in public and private schools from nursery to secondary school were eligible to receive government-based vouchers valued at \$88 to purchase school uniforms, shoes, and backpacks when schools reopened in September. (5,33,55)
Child Advocacy Centers	Funded by private sector donations and UNICEF, and implemented by MHSSS, the United Nations Population Fund, and NGOs to provide services for abused children. (56) The MHSSS Childcare and Protection Agency oversees the centers and makes referrals. (56,57) Three additional centers were opened in 2021, increasing the number of centers to 12. (58)
Regional Initiative Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labor	Initiated by an intergovernmental 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. (59) Research was unable to determine whether program activities were implemented during the reporting period.

† Program is funded by the Government of Guyana.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (5)

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. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law sufficiently prohibits all commercial sexual exploitation of children by prohibiting the use of children in prostitution.	2010 – 2021
	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 – 2021
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2021
	Ensure that the law sufficiently prohibits children ages 16 to 17 from engaging in hazardous work that may jeopardize their health, safety, or morals.	2021
Enforcement	Publish information on the labor inspectorate's funding and the number of child labor violations for which penalties were imposed and collected, as well as the number of child labor violations and prosecutions by criminal law enforcement.	2015 – 2021
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate receives sufficient resources to monitor the interior, where child labor is most prevalent, and other remote areas.	2011 – 2021
	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 – 2021
Coordination	Permit the Commission on the Rights of the Child to join and participate in the Inter-Ministerial Taskforce on Combatting Trafficking in Persons.	2021
	Publish updates on activities undertaken by the National Steering Committee on Child Labor during the reporting period.	2021
Government Policies	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement key policies.	2020 – 2021
	Ensure that child labor elimination and prevention strategies are included in the National Education Policy and the new 5-Year Strategic Plan for the Commission on the Rights of the Child.	2021

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
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 – 2021
	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor, including in fishing and construction, to inform policies and programs.	2020 – 2021
	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 – 2021
	Publish updates on activities implemented through social programs during the reporting period.	2021

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