

GUYANA

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

In 2023, Guyana made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government passed the Combating and Trafficking in Persons Act No. 7, which prohibits the use, procuring and offering of children for the production or trafficking of narcotics; classified child pornography as a form of commercial sexual exploitation; and enabled higher penalties and charges if the victim of a crime is a child. It also increased its 'Because We Care' cash grant payments by 32.8 percent for all school-age children, including migrant children. In addition, it provided enforcement personnel with several trainings on child labor, including trainings on human trafficking indicators and refresher courses. However, despite these efforts, Guyana does not meet international standards for prohibition of hazardous work because it allows children ages 16 to 17 to conduct night work in industrial activities. Guyanese law does not fully prohibit all commercial sexual exploitation of children, since it does not impose harsher charges for the use of children for prostitution. In addition, Guyanese law enforcement agencies have insufficient resources for conducting inspections in remote areas, including a lack of transportation and accommodation, and difficulties in prosecuting cases promptly even with abundant evidence.



PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent of Population
Working	5 to 14	10.1% (Unavailable)
Hazardous Work by Children	15 to 17	Unavailable
Attending School	5 to 14	96.9%
Combining Work and School	7 to 14	18.5%

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.

Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity



Agriculture

Farming,[†] fishing,[†] and forestry, including logging.[†]



Industry

Construction[†] and mining.[†]



Services

Domestic work, welding,[†] working in bars and restaurants, street vending, washing cars, and begging.



Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor[‡]

Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking; use in illicit activities, such as selling drugs; and engagement in hazardous tasks in mining, including operating heavy machinery, exposure to dangerous chemicals, and vulnerability to injury or death in case of collapsing mines.

[†] 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.



SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

The suggested government actions below would close gaps USDOL has identified in Guyana's implementation of its international commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

Legal Framework

Criminalize the use of children in prostitution.

Criminalize the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.

Ensure that the law sufficiently prohibits children ages 16 to 17 from engaging in hazardous work, including conducting night work in industrial activities.

Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Enforcement

- Publish information on labor inspectorate funding.
- Remove barriers and delays to enforcement and prosecution and make judicial processes more efficient.
- Ensure that the labor inspectorate receives sufficient resources, including staffing and transportation and accommodation for staff, to monitor the interior and other remote areas, where child labor is most prevalent.
- Ensure that the number of inspectors is sufficient to conduct inspections in the most industrially dense region, Administrative Region 4.
- Collect and publish information on criminal labor enforcement for all of the worst forms of child labor, including reporting on the number of children identified in the worst forms of child labor and the number of imposed penalties against perpetrators.
- Ensure that fines for labor violations are high enough to serve as a preventive measure.

Coordination

- Permit the Commission on the Rights of the Child to join and participate in the Ministerial Taskforce on Combating Trafficking in Persons.
- Publish information about the activities of the National Steering Committee on Child Labor and the coordination of efforts by government agencies to combat and prevent child labor.

Government Policies

- Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement key policies, including the National Policy Towards the Elimination of Child Labor and National Action Plan.

Social Programs

- Ensure that children are not prevented from attending school because of a lack of access to transportation and lack of infrastructure, and increase the number of teachers, particularly in rural, riverine, and interior areas.
- Plan and deliver special targeted social programs for migrant children and young people from rural, impoverished, and indigenous communities. Increase monitoring in mining communities and urban areas and provide targeted support to young girls.
- Increase spending on social services to address sustained poverty, especially in rural areas. Further expand ‘Because We Care’ cash grants to provide the necessary support for school children and their families in order to prevent school dropouts.
- Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor, including in agriculture, forestry, fishing, mining, and construction, to inform policies and programs.
- 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.

 **CHILDREN AT HIGHER RISK**

Migrants, young people from rural, impoverished, and indigenous communities, and those without education are the most at risk for human trafficking and the worst forms of child labor. Migrant children from Brazil, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Suriname, and Venezuela, including indigenous girls from Bolivar state in Venezuela, and young girls from Guyana are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation in mining communities in the interior and urban areas.

 **BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS**

Children in Guyana’s rural and riverine areas have limited access to education due to long distances between homes and schools, problems accessing transportation, shortages of qualified teachers, and insufficient teaching and learning materials. Rural and riverine communities also lack information technologies and have limited availability of electricity and internet connectivity, which hinders access to education in times when it needs to be provided remotely.



LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Guyana has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor. However, Guyana’s laws do not meet international standards on the full prohibition of commercial sexual exploitation, including child prostitution, and military recruitment by non-state armed groups.

Child Labor Laws and Regulations	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work, 15 Years		Sections 2 and 3, and Part 2, Article 2 of the Employment of Young Persons and Children Act; Articles 17–22 of the Education Act
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work, 16 Years		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
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children		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
Prohibition of Slavery, Debt Bondage, and Forced Labor		Sections 2, 4 and 9 of the Combating and Trafficking in Persons Act No. 7 of 2023; Article 140 of the Constitution
Prohibition of Child Trafficking		Section 2 and 9 of the Combating and Trafficking in Persons Act No.7 of 2023
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children		Section 2 and 40 of the Combating and Trafficking in Persons Act No.7 of 2023; Article 50(3) of the Protection of Children Act
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities		Article 50(1) of the Protection of Children Act; Sections 2, 4 and 9 of the Combating and Trafficking in Persons Act No.7 of 2023
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment, 18 Years		Article 18 of the Defense Act and Defense Amendment Act
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*	
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups		
Compulsory Education Age, 15 Years		Article 38E of the Constitution; Articles 13 and 22 of the Education Act
Free Public Education		Articles 27 and 149H of the Constitution

* Country has no conscription

In 2023, Guyana passed a new Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act No.7, 2023, which expanded the meaning of exploitation to include the use, procuring, or offering of a child for the production or trafficking of narcotics; clarified the prohibition against the use, procuring, or offering of a child for child pornography; and enabled higher penalties and charges if the victim of human trafficking is a child. However, Guyana’s hazardous work prohibitions for children do not meet international standards because children ages 16 to 18 are permitted to perform night work in certain industrial activities. Guyanese law does not sufficiently prohibit all commercial sexual exploitation of children because it does not prohibit the use of children for prostitution. Furthermore, Guyanese law does not criminally prohibit the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.



ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

In 2023, labor and criminal law enforcement agencies in Guyana took actions to address child labor. However, the lack of sufficient transportation resources for conducting inspections in remote regions of the interior as well as barriers and delays to enforcement and prosecution hindered enforcement actions.

Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Ministry of Labor: Investigates reports of child labor, conducts routine labor inspections, and refers children identified during labor inspections to the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security’s (MHSSS) Countering Trafficking in Persons Unit (C-TIP) and the Childcare and Protection Agency. 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 and given a period of time to rectify the violation. If inspectors find child labor violations, they may report the employer to the Chief Labor Officer or police for investigation. 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 services officers of MHSSS have the right to access private premises if there is a child labor investigation. C-TIP, under the supervision of the Director of Public Prosecutions, prosecutes trafficking in persons cases. In June 2023, the Ministry of Labor introduced a new initiative, an art competition for children with a theme of social justice and ending child labor, among other activities dedicated to the Day Against Child Labor to raise awareness on this issue.

Guyana Police Force (GPF): Enforces criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor. Works in consultation with the Director of Public Prosecutions, Ministry of Home Affairs, MHSSS, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Indigenous Peoples’ Affairs, depending on the circumstances of each case. GPF’s Trafficking in Persons Unit also investigates reports of human trafficking.

Enforcement Mechanisms and Efforts

Has a Labor Inspectorate	Yes	Has a Complaint Mechanism	Yes
Able to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes	Imposed Penalties for Child Labor Violations	Yes
Routinely Conducted Worksite Inspections	Yes	Conducted Criminal Investigations for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Yes
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes	Imposed Penalties for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Unknown

In 2023, **20** labor inspectors conducted **3,900** worksite inspections and found **1** child labor violation. There were also **3** investigations into suspected cases of the worst forms of child labor, with **3** new prosecutions initiated, and **3** prosecutions were carried over from the previous reporting period. However, **0** perpetrators were convicted from those cases.



COORDINATION, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Guyana established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor. However, this mechanism lacks institutional capacity, including human, administrative, and technical resources.

National Steering Committee on Child Labor: Includes the Ministry of Labor, MHSSS, Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Home Affairs, Guyana Child Protection Agency, Guyana Women Miners Association, Guyana Geology and Mines Commission, Guyana Forestry Commission, Guyana Gold and Diamond Miners Association, and the Private Sector Commission. The committee is chaired by the ministerial advisor for the Ministry of Labor. According to reports, the committee was revived in 2020 and was active during the reporting period, but there is a lack of transparency regarding its specific activities.

Coordination, Policies, and Programs (Cont.)

<p>Key Policies Related to Child Labor</p> <p>Guyana established policies related to child labor. However, it is unclear whether the National Policy Towards the Elimination of Child Labor and National Action Plan was implemented during the reporting period.</p>	<p>National Policy Towards the Elimination of Child Labor and National Action Plan (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 efforts to address child labor. However, research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the plan during the reporting period.</p> <p>Ministerial Taskforce on Combating 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 interagency coordination and referral mechanisms. With a budget of \$329,944, the plan also provides for the review and amendment of the Combating and Trafficking in Persons Act, which was passed in 2023. To implement the plan, the government conducted anti-human trafficking awareness and sensitization sessions in schools, indigenous communities, and migrant settlements, targeting 1,500 migrants, on labor policies and regulations, indicators of human trafficking, and work permit processes.</p>
<p>Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor</p> <p>Guyana funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. However, these social programs are inadequate to address the problem in all sectors, including mining, agriculture, forestry and fishing, and in all regions, including the interior of the country, where child labor has been identified.</p> <p><i>† The program is funded by the Government of Guyana.</i> <i>‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor.</i></p>	<p>Child Advocacy Centers: Funded by private sector donations and UNICEF, and implemented by the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security, the UN Population Fund, and NGOs (ChildLinK and Blossom Inc.) to provide services for abused children. The Ministry of Human Services and Social Security Childcare and Protection Agency oversees the 12 centers and makes referrals. In 2023, the government announced that it will open one more center in Lethem, Region Nine.</p> <p>Government-Funded School Programs:[†] Aim to deter early school dropouts by providing job skills to at-risk youth who may not otherwise be able to complete their formal education. All students in public and private schools from nursery school to secondary school, including migrant children, were eligible to receive government vouchers to purchase school uniforms, shoes, and backpacks. In 2023, the government increased the ‘Because We Care’ annual cash grant from \$140 to \$186 (GY\$40,000). The government also has programs that provide hot meals, breakfasts, juice, and biscuits to improve attendance and enrollment in schools. Over \$10 million was allocated to these programs and a total of 87,634 children benefited from school feeding in 2023. In addition, the government provides transportation for students in several remote areas, and books for school children.</p> <p>Guyana Improving Human Capital through Education Project (2022–2027): A World Bank-funded project to provide \$44 million to the Ministry of Education of Guyana. The project is focused on improving secondary level education and technical and vocational training, facilitating access to quality education, and providing training for teachers.</p>

For information about USDOL’s projects to address child labor around the world, visit dol.gov/ILABprojects
 For references, please visit dol.gov/ChildLaborReports