

Guyana

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

In 2024, Guyana made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government increased its commitments to funding its social programs to improve education and school attendance. It raised its “Because We Care” cash grant payments from \$163 to \$209 for all school-age children in the country, and the government deployed a lower earth satellite internet connectivity project, connecting 169 of 253 rural communities and schools to high-speed internet. In addition, it carried out a number of trainings and awareness-raising campaigns for representatives of diverse government agencies and communities across the country. Finally, in October, the government presented an Action Plan to advance the Child Labor Policy, which will use information from assessment results to allocate additional resources in high-priority areas in the country. However, Guyanese law 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. It also does not prohibit all commercial sexual exploitation of children, since it does not fully prohibit the use of children for prostitution. In addition, enforcement agencies have insufficient resources for conducting inspections in remote areas, including a lack of transportation and accommodation.

PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Statistics on Children’s Work and Education		
Children	Age	Percent and 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 operation of heavy machinery, exposure to dangerous chemicals such as mercury, cyanide, and ammonium nitrate, 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.

Area	Suggested Action
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 18 from engaging in hazardous work, including conducting night work in industrial activities.

Area	Suggested Action
Enforcement	Publish information on labor inspectorate funding.
	Establish a mechanism to assess civil penalties.
	Invest in data collection systems, implement a centralized mechanism to monitor child labor cases and, in particular, a digital tracking system for labor inspections to track the worst forms of child labor.
	Remove barriers and delays to enforcement and prosecution and make judicial processes more efficient.
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate receives sufficient resources to conduct inspections. Assign more technical, administrative, and specialized staff trained on child labor issues. Also provide adequate transportation, including planes, all-terrain vehicles, and boats, and proper 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 throughout the country, including in Region 4 (Demerara-Mahaica).
	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.
	Make sure that the National Steering Committee on Child Labor has sufficient human, administrative, and technical resources to meet regularly and coordinate efforts of government agencies to combat and prevent child labor. Publish information about the activities of the National Steering Committee on Child Labor.
Government Policies	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement key policies, including the National Policy Toward 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 implement social programs to support children from Brazil, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Suriname, and Venezuela, especially girls from the Bolivar state in Venezuela and children from mining, rural areas, and impoverished communities.
	Continue to 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

Young people in transit from hinterland and rural areas, impoverished communities, and native communities, and those without education are the most at risk for human trafficking and the worst forms of child labor. Children from Brazil, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Suriname, and Venezuela, including native girls from the 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 teachers, and insufficient teaching and learning materials. Rural and riverine communities also lack various forms of information technology. While in 2004 the government made a deal to start connecting rural communities to Starlink (a satellite-based internet company), there is still limited availability of electricity, which hinders access to education.

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.

Laws and Regulations on Child Labor			
Standard	Age	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	15	✓	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	✗	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		✓	Sections 2 and 9 of the Combating and Trafficking in Persons Act No. 7 of 2023
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children		✗	Section 2, 4, 6, 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	✓	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	✓	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

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. Also, Guyanese law does not fully 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 2024, labor and criminal law enforcement agencies in Guyana took actions to address child labor. However, the lack of sufficient staffing and 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 February 2024, the Ministry of Labor carried out an awareness-raising campaign on the harmful and lasting effects of child labor across the country, including in indigenous communities.

Guyana Police Force: 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 Amerindian Affairs, depending on the circumstances of each case. The Guyana Police Force's Trafficking in Persons Unit also investigates reports of human trafficking.

Enforcement Mechanisms and Efforts

Has a Labor Inspectorate	Yes
Able to Assess Civil Penalties	No
Routinely Conducted Worksite Inspections	Yes
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes
Has a Complaint Mechanism	Yes
Imposed Penalties for Child Labor Violations	Yes
Conducted Criminal Investigations for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Yes
Imposed Penalties for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Yes

In 2024, **20** labor inspectors conducted **3,042** worksite inspections and found **17** child labor violations. The government also conducted **1** investigation into suspected cases of the worst forms of child labor, with **1** new prosecution initiated, and **6** prosecutions carried over from the previous reporting period. **2** perpetrators were convicted in those cases.

COORDINATION, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

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

Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

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. The committee did not meet during the reporting period.

Guyana established policies related to child labor. However, it is unclear whether the National Policy Toward the Elimination of Child Labor and National Action Plan was implemented during the reporting period.

Key Policies Related to Child Labor
National Policy Toward 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. In October 2024, Guyana presented an Action Plan to Advance the National Policy by evaluating the results and ensuring its effective implementation.
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. In 2024, the Task Force, in coordination with the Ministry of Home Affairs, worked on building capacity of enforcement personnel, providing laws and regulation training on human trafficking, human smuggling, and child labor and revictimization prevention.

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, construction, and fishing, and in all regions, including the interior of the country, where child labor has been identified.

Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor
Child Advocacy Centers: Funded by private sector donations and UNICEF, and implemented by MHSSS, the UN Population Fund, and NGOs (ChildLinK and Blossom Inc.) to provide services for abused children. The MHSSS Childcare and Protection Agency oversees centers and makes referrals. During the reporting period, 16 centers were active.
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 were eligible to receive government vouchers to purchase school uniforms, shoes, and backpacks. In 2024, the government increased the “Because We Care” annual cash grant from \$186 to \$209 (GY\$43,770) and covered public and private schools. The government also has programs that provide hot meals, breakfast, juice, and biscuits to improve attendance and enrollment in schools. During the reporting period, over \$229 million was allocated to these programs, including “Because We Care.” More than 179,000 children benefited from the government’s textbook program, and an additional 126,000 children received daily meals through the school feeding program. In addition, the government constructed new schools and started virtual training for teachers from Monkey Mountain.
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.

‡ 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.

For references, please visit dol.gov/ChildLaborReports