

Guyana

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

An estimated 26.3 percent of children ages 5 to 14 years were counted as working in Guyana in 2000. Approximately 28.7 percent of all boys 5 to 14 years of age were working compared to 23.9 percent of girls in the same age group.²¹⁷⁶ Children work as porters, domestic servants, street vendors, and waitresses in bars and restaurants.²¹⁷⁷ Some are found working in sawmills, markets, mining, and the illicit drug trade.²¹⁷⁸ There are cases also of children engaged in prostitution in port areas, gold and diamond mining areas, and the capital city of Georgetown.²¹⁷⁹

Guyana serves as a country of origin, transit, and destination for trafficking of young women and children for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The trafficking of Amerindian girls from the Hinterland (Guyana's interior) to the coast for prostitution or domestic servitude accounts for most trafficking, although Guyanese girls are also trafficked to Suriname and other countries within the region.²¹⁸⁰

The Education Act (Chapter 39:01) makes provision for access to education and also restricts employment of children.²¹⁸¹ Primary education in Guyana is free and compulsory for children ages 5 years and 9 months to 15 years. However, children are expected to remain in secondary school and/or community high school until they are at least 16 years old.²¹⁸² In 2002, the gross primary enrollment rate was 124

²¹⁷⁶ UCW analysis of ILO SIMPOC, UNICEF MICS, and World Bank surveys, *Child Economic Activity and School Attendance Rates*, October 7, 2005. In 2000, approximately 11,000 children ages 15 to 17 years (and of legal working age) were formally employed. See Editorial, "Putting Children First," *Stabroek News*, January 31, 2004, [cited June 27, 2005]; available from <http://www.landofsixpeoples.com/news401/ns40131.htm>. Reliable data on the worst forms of child labor are especially difficult to collect given the often hidden or illegal nature of the worst forms, such as the use of children in drug trade, prostitution, pornography, and trafficking. As a result, statistics and information on children's work in general are reported in this section. Such statistics and information may or may not include the worst forms of child labor. For more information on the definition of working children and other indicators used in this report, please see the "Data Sources and Definitions" section of this report.

²¹⁷⁷ George K. Danna, *Guyana: The Situation of Children in the Worst Forms of Child Labor: A Rapid Assessment*, International Labour Office, Port of Spain, October 2002, 34. UNICEF reported that from 1999-2001, 19 percent of children ages 5 to 14 were considered involved in labor activities. See U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2004: Guyana*, Washington, DC, February 28, 2005, Section 6d; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41763.htm>. See also *Stabroek News*, *Child labour here seen as significant*, [online] July 20, 2005 [cited July 22, 2005]; available from <http://www.stabroeknews.com/index.pl/article?id=24675062>.

²¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷⁹ ECPAT International, *Guyana*, in ECPAT International, [database online] [cited June 27, 2005]; available from http://www.ecpat.net/eng/Ecpat_inter/projects/monitoring/online_database/. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Guyana*, Section 5.

²¹⁸⁰ Foreign victims are also trafficked to Guyana from Brazil, and may be transited through Guyana to Suriname. See U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report*, Washington, DC, June 3, 2005; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2005/46612.htm>.

²¹⁸¹ U.S. Embassy- Guyana official, email communication, August 8, 2006.

²¹⁸² Ministry of Education, *Strategic Plan 2003-2007*, Planning Unit, Georgetown, June 2002. See also National Development Strategy Secretariat, *National Development Strategy, Vol. 3: The Social Sectors, Ch. 20: Education Policy (draft)*, Ministry of Finance, [online] March 26, 1996 [cited June 28, 2005]; available from <http://www.guyana.org/NDS/chap20.htm>.

percent and the net primary enrollment rate was 99 percent.²¹⁸³ Gross and net enrollment ratios are based on the number of students formally registered in primary school and therefore do not necessarily reflect actual school attendance. In 2000, 95.8 percent of children ages 5 to 14 years were attending school.²¹⁸⁴ Although the government has made concerted efforts to increase enrollment rates and to return dropout children to school, dropout rates, particularly among boys, remain high.²¹⁸⁵ As of 1999, 77 percent of children who started primary school were likely to reach grade 5.²¹⁸⁶ The Education Act includes penalties for parents who do not ensure that their children attend school. However, enforcement is weak since the relevant departments lack the necessary human and financial resources to provide the support that is required. In addition, support mechanisms in the police force and judicial system are not adequate.²¹⁸⁷

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Employment of Young Persons and Children's Act prohibits employment of children under the age of 15, with some exceptions. Children less than 15 years of age may be employed in technical schools provided such work is approved and supervised by the public authority.²¹⁸⁸ Children younger than 16 years are prohibited from working at night.²¹⁸⁹ Forced labor, including by children, is prohibited by the Constitution.²¹⁹⁰ The Defense Act sets the minimum age for enlistment in the armed forces at 18 years, and there are no reports of illegal recruitment or enlistment in Guyana.²¹⁹¹

In December 2004, the National Assembly passed a comprehensive anti-trafficking law, which carries penalties of three years to life imprisonment.²¹⁹² In December 2004, the age of sexual consent was raised from 13 to 16 years, thus prohibiting sex with children less than 16 years of age, regardless of profession of consent.²¹⁹³ Although child pornography is not specifically mentioned in the Act, Section 350 prohibits the selling, publishing, or exhibiting of any obscene matter.²¹⁹⁴ Owning or operating an establishment allowing sex with a girl under 15 years is punishable by up to life imprisonment.²¹⁹⁵

²¹⁸³ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, *Gross and Net Enrollment Ratios, Primary*; accessed December 2005; available from <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?ReportId=51>. For an explanation of gross primary enrollment rates that are greater than 100 percent, please see the definition of gross primary enrollment rates in the "Data Sources and Definitions" section of this report.

²¹⁸⁴ UCW analysis of ILO SIMPOC, UNICEF MICS, and World Bank surveys, *Child Economic Activity and School Attendance Rates*.

²¹⁸⁵ The quality of education, teacher availability and training, and wider educational disparity in the hinterland region contribute to higher dropout rates. See UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 44 of the Convention*, prepared by Government of Guyana, pursuant to Concluding Observations: Guyana, February 26, 2004, para. 47; available from

[http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/385c2add1632f4a8c12565a9004dc311/9a78affeb522f20dc1256e6d0038946a/\\$FILE/G0440531.pdf](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/385c2add1632f4a8c12565a9004dc311/9a78affeb522f20dc1256e6d0038946a/$FILE/G0440531.pdf).

²¹⁸⁶ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, *School life expectancy, % of repeaters, survival rates*; accessed December 2005; available from <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?ReportId=55>.

²¹⁸⁷ U.S. Embassy- Guyana official, email communication, August 8, 2006.

²¹⁸⁸ Government of Guyana, *Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act (Chapter 99:01) [consolidated up to 1973]*, No. 14 of 1933; available from <http://natlex.ilo.org>.

²¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁹⁰ *Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana*, Article 140; available from <http://www.georgetown.edu/pdba/Constitutions/Guyana/guyana96.html>. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports-2004: Guyana*, Section 6c.

²¹⁹¹ Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, "Guyana," in *Global Report 2004*; available from http://www.child-soldiers.org/document_get.php?id=828.

²¹⁹² U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2005: Guyana*.

²¹⁹³ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Guyana*. See also Interpol, *Legislation on Sexual Offences Against Children*, [database online] [cited June 28, 2005]; available from <http://www.interpol.int/public/Children/SexualAbuse/NationalLaws/csaGuyana.asp>.

²¹⁹⁴ Interpol, *Legislation on Sexual Offences Against Children*, U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Guyana*, Section 5.

²¹⁹⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Guyana*, Section 6d.

Although there are laws that restrict child labor, the U.S. Department of State reports that cases are unreported and enforcement is weak.²¹⁹⁶ According to the U.S. Department of State, the Ministry of Labor lacks sufficient inspectors to enforce child labor laws effectively, particularly in the country's interior.²¹⁹⁷ Reports from the Government of Guyana also indicate that trafficking oversight and enforcement are particularly weak in the country's interior.²¹⁹⁸

Current Government Policies and Programs to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Ministry of Labor, Human Services and Social Security has overall responsibility for issues related to labor, family welfare (including child welfare) and trafficking in persons, including implementing and monitoring programs and activities. It also has responsibility for enforcing the law with the support of the police force.²¹⁹⁹ In 2005, an inter-agency National Task Force was established and a National Plan of Action was completed to combat trafficking.²²⁰⁰ In addition, the government has led a series of town hall meetings and created anti-trafficking public service announcements²²⁰¹

Selected Child Labor Measures Adopted by Governments	
Ratified Convention 138	✓
Ratified Convention 182 (2001)	✓
ILO-IPEC Associated Member	✓
National Plan for Children	
National Child Labor Action Plan	
Sector Action Plan (Trafficking)	✓

With support from the Government of Canada, the Government of Guyana is implementing an ILO pilot project providing rehabilitation services to child laborers and targeting children at-risk of exploitation in urban work, vending, loading and transporting, and agriculture.²²⁰² Since September 2005, the Guyanese Government has been participating in a USDOL-funded USD 2 million project to combat exploitative child labor through education.²²⁰³ In addition, the Government of Guyana appointed a National Commission on the Rights of the Child to monitor and coordinate children's rights issues.²²⁰⁴

The importance of access to education and improving the quality of education is acknowledged by the Government of Guyana. The National Development Strategy, which was formulated with input from civil society, identifies various recommendations and the Ministry of Education's Strategic Plan for 2003-2007 includes education goals. The Government's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) also identifies education as a national priority.²²⁰⁵

²¹⁹⁶ U.S. Embassy- Guyana official, email communication, August 8, 2006.

²¹⁹⁷ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Guyana*, Section 6d.

²¹⁹⁸ Guyana Government Information Agency, *Government wants public involvement in Child Protection*, [online] April 4, 2005 [cited June 28, 2005]; available from <http://www.gina.gov/gy/archive/features/f050404.html>.

²¹⁹⁹ U.S. Embassy- Guyana official, email communication, August 8, 2006.

²²⁰⁰ Guyana Government Information Agency, *TIP seminar opens at GWLI*, [online] April 20, 2005 2005 [cited June 28, 2005]; available from <http://www.gina.gov/gy/archive/daily/b050420.html>.

²²⁰¹ Ibid.

²²⁰² The project closed in November 2005. See ILO Sub-regional Office for the Caribbean, *Combating Child Labor in the Caribbean: Pilot Programs*, [online] 2005 [cited June 29, 2005]; available from http://www.ilocarib.org.tt/childlabour/pilot_programme.htm.

²²⁰³ U.S. Department of Labor, *ICLP Projects Funded in FY 2005*, December 15, 2005; available from <http://www.dol.gov/ilab/programs/iclp/projectchart05.htm>. Guyana's General Registrar has made recent efforts to raise awareness of the importance of birth registration. Guyana Government Information Agency, *Parents urged to register children at birth*, [online] April 20, 2005 [cited June 28, 2005]; available from <http://www.gina.gov/gy/archive/daily/b050420.html>.

²²⁰⁴ Stabroek News, *Child labour here seen as significant*.

²²⁰⁵ U.S. Embassy- Guyana official, email communication, August 8, 2006.

From 2003 to 2015, Guyana will receive USD 45 million from various donors to support its Education For All (EFA) initiatives. The three major EFA initiatives in Guyana are: (1) improving the quality of the teaching force in the Hinterland, (2) enhancing the teaching/learning environment in primary schools, and (3) strengthening school community partnerships.²²⁰⁶ As part of the government's initiative in the Hinterland, a specific strategy is being implemented to ensure the inclusion of the Amerindian population in the education system within the regions.

The Government of Guyana is also implementing a Basic Education Access and Management Support (BEAMS) Project to improve school performance through curricular and pedagogical reform, education management reform, and school infrastructure development.²²⁰⁷ The Guyana Education Access Project (GEAP) seeks to implement a common curriculum in the first three grades of secondary school.²²⁰⁸ The Ministry of Education is implementing the Basic Competency Certificate Program, a pilot program in six secondary schools and four instructions centers aimed at providing affordable and high quality vocational education to older children.²²⁰⁹ The Council for Teacher Education coordinated teacher training programs including a distance education certificate program in two Hinterland regions.²²¹⁰ The government has allocated funds for textbooks, school uniforms, and a school feeding program. In addition, the Human Services Ministry offers counseling to students.²²¹¹

²²⁰⁶ World Bank, *Guyana: Education for All- Fast Track Initiative Program, Amerindian People's Strategy*, September 17, 2004, 4-5; available from http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2004/10/06/000012009_20041006102054/Rendered/PDF/ipp95.pdf

²²⁰⁷ Ministry of Education, *Major MOE Projects*, [online] [cited February 2, 2005]; available from <http://www.sdn.org.gy/minedu/about/projects.htm>.

²²⁰⁸ The project is supported by the Government of the United Kingdom. See Ibid.

²²⁰⁹ Government of Guyana, *Poverty Reduction Strategy Progress Report 2005*, June 2005; available from <http://www.povertyreduction.gov.gy/iprsp.htm>.

²²¹⁰ Ibid., 30.

²²¹¹ Guyana Government Information Agency, *Protecting Children - Government's Priority*, [online] April 14, 2005 [cited June 28, 2005]; available from <http://www.gina.gov.gy/archive/daily/b050414.html>.