Guyana is a country in Northern South America and part of Caribbean South America, bordering the North Atlantic Ocean, between Suriname and Venezuela.

Guyana’s economy is dominated by the production and processing of primary commodities, of which sugar, gold, and bauxite are the most important. Much of the country is undeveloped, with more than 90% of the population and almost all of the agriculture concentrated in the narrow coastal plain. The interior is sparsely settled, and communications are poor. The bulk of the population is engaged in agriculture, either as laborers on sugar plantations or as peasant cultivators of rice. Although sugar and rice continued to be important export earners, bauxite and gold share comparable percentages of national exports.

A social insurance system covers almost all employed and self-employed persons between the ages of 16 and 59.

Guyana’s HDI value for 2013 is 0.638— which is in the medium human development category— positioning the country at 121 out of 187 countries and territories. Between 1980 and 2013, Guyana’s HDI value increased from 0.516 to 0.638, an increase of 23.6% or an average annual increase of about 0.65%.

Among the main social challenges that Guyana faces are the following: violence against women, including domestic violence, remained widespread in 2004, crossing socio-economic and racial lines. Housing is a critical problem, as is the lack of adequate water supplies and of effective waste disposal and sewage systems. Although educational standards are high, educational development has suffered from shortages of teachers and materials.
The situation of child labour
Legal framework regarding child labour

**Ratified International Standards**
- ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), 09/08/2013.

**National Legislation**
- Education Act, enacted 1998.
- Employment Young Persons and Children Act (Chapter 99:01) (No. 14 of 1933).
- List of Hazardous Occupations and Processes.
- Protection of Children Act, No. 17, enacted 2009.
- Sexual Offences Act.

Child labour below minimum age (15) for admission to employment: 44,787 (23%) (MICS, 2006-2007)

**Causes of Child Labour**
- **Economic factors**, including poverty as one of the main causes of child labour.
- **Lack of information**, and tolerance of children working.

**The country’s response to child labour**

**Education Policies and Programs**
- National Education Policy. Aims to provide equal access to quality education for all children and eliminate barriers to education, especially for the poor.
- 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 receive vouchers to purchase school uniforms, shoes, and backpacks.

**National Decent Work Program**
Incorporate sensitization on child labour into the ministry’s training schedule for employers and employees.

**Children and adolescent policy**

**Strategy for prevention and eradication of child labour**
- Tackle Child Labour through Education. Aims to increase school attendance, by reducing truancy and school dropout rates.
The country's response to child labour

Themes/sectors prioritized in the strategy for prevention and eradication of child labour

1. Agricultural sector.
2. Shops and Restaurants, especially in remote areas.
3. Mining sector which may include worst forms of child labour.
5. Sawmill and Lumber Dealers.

Accomplishments

1. Establish a register to record reports on child labour.
2. Complete the country report on ILO Convention on Minimum Age.
3. Successfully executed a Peer Counselling Initiative in schools (students of senior secondary schools counselling students from schools in areas where they may likely to be engaged in child labour).
4. Sensitize parents and teachers on child labour at their Parent Teachers Association's meetings (PTA's).
5. Have a Declaration of Commitment signed to fight child labour by key stakeholders.

Development Cooperation

Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)
- Strengthening national capacities of CARICOM country members, 2006.

European Commission
- Tackling Child Labour Through Education (TACKLE) (Funded by European Commission), 2008-2012.
Challenges to face child labour

1. Despite the legal guarantee of free education, some primary schools continue to charge fees.
2. Extend protections of children working at night beyond those employed in industry.
3. Amend the list of hazardous work to protect children under age 18 in all listed sectors.
4. Enact a law to prohibit explicitly child pornography.
5. Ensure sufficient resources are allocated in a timely manner to facilitate labor inspections.
6. Dedicate more resources, namely judicial personnel, to resolving court cases, including those involving the worst forms of child labor.
7. Ensure the NSCCL engages in regular meetings and coordination efforts.
8. Assess the impact of the Strategic Plan on Children’s Rights and the National Education Policy on addressing child labor.
9. Expand national education policy to achieve free universal education, as guaranteed by law.
10. Develop new initiatives and expand existing programs to reach all children involved in the worst forms of child labor.
11. Assess the impact the school meals program may have on child labor.

Sources


