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News

Gov't spending \$23m to combat child labour

BYRON BUCKLEY, Senior political reporter
Thursday, October 18, 2001



BUCHANAN... we are targeting are the worst forms of child labour

OVER the next two years, government plans to spend \$23 million on a programme to combat the incidence of child labour in Jamaica, Donald Buchanan, minister of labour and social security told Parliament Tuesday.

Ambassador Marjorie Taylor, special envoy for children, will head a national steering committee with responsibility for implementing the programme, a major component of which includes the development of a national database on child labour. This will be carried out by the Statistical Institute (STATIN) of Jamaica as part of its labour force survey in April 2002, Buchanan disclosed.

Other components include the implementation of a national campaign to raise the level of awareness on the issues of child labour; the development and implementation of measures to withdraw and prevent children from involvement in child labour; and the strengthening of the institutional capacity of entities to address child labour issues.

"What we are targeting are the worst forms of child labour, which hinder the educational and physical development of the child... we are seeking to achieve optimum development of our human capital," Buchanan told the legislature while making his contribution to the sectoral debate.

A 1994 study, sponsored by the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) and carried out by the

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STATIN, estimated that 22,000 or 4.6 per cent of children within the ages of six and 16 years were involved in child labour.

Surveys, sponsored by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) since November last year identified more than 4,000 children who were engaged in child labour in the tourism sector in Montego Bay and Negril, the informal sector in the Spanish Town Area and the fishing area of Rocky Point in Clarendon.

At the international level, the ILO estimates that there are about 250 million children working as child labourers, with at least 120 million working full-time without attending school and about 50 million are engaged in the worst forms of child labour. Latin America and the Caribbean account for seven per cent of the global figures.

Jamaica is yet to ratify ILO conventions numbers 138 and 182 relating to Minimum Age for Admission to Employment and Elimination of the worst forms of Child Labour. Buchanan said on Tuesday that these conventions would be ratified on the passage of the Child Care and Protection Act, which has already been drafted and reflects the guidelines of ILO conventions.

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