

PRESS RELEASE

Caribbean joins in commemoration of World Day against Child Labour – June 12

The International Labour Organization will commemorate the World Day against Child Labour on June 12 with activities planned around the world. In the Caribbean, a series of activities has been planned including the launch of a child labour webpage on the website of the ILO Subregional Office for the Caribbean. (www.ilocarib.org.tt/childlabour)

The World Day Against Child Labour was established in 2002 by the ILO to raise the visibility of global and local efforts against child labour and highlight the global movement to eliminate the practice, particularly its worst forms. According to the ILO, there are nearly 250 million child labourers worldwide. Removing more than one million children who work in mines and quarries from one of the worst forms of child labour is the focus of events around the world marking the World Day Against Child Labour on 12 June this year.

In the Caribbean region, rapid assessment studies done in 2001 and 2002 in seven Caribbean countries – Belize, Barbados, Bahamas, Jamaica, Guyana, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago revealed the existence of child labour, inclusive of the worst forms of child labour such as children involved in commercial sexual exploitation, and in hazardous work in mining, construction, scavenging and street work.

The worst forms of child labour refer to work that is likely to harm the safety, health and morals of children under 18, including the use of children in hazardous work, prostitution and pornography, illicit activity such as drug trafficking, and the trafficking of children. These are considered the extreme forms or unconditional forms of child labour, which member States of the ILO have agreed need to be eradicated and prevented as a matter of urgency.

Other than national surveys done in Belize and Jamaica, there are as yet no other studies that effectively quantify the magnitude of child labour in the region. Child labour in the Caribbean remains hidden from public view for the most part, making the problem seem less of a priority. The data, however, point to a definite link between child labour and poverty, and child labour and education. Where households are unable to afford or access educational services of a high quality, they may resort to the use of children for economic activity.

The ILO Subregional Office for the Caribbean, through its Regional Child Labour Project, has been providing on-going support to the seven above-mentioned Caribbean member States in their fight against child labour and the effective implementation of ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour. The project has adopted a multisectoral approach to addressing child labour, given its multidimensional nature and its link to poverty, and has collaborated with Governments in the region to establish National Child Labour Committees in each of the countries.

Comprising members of the Ministry of Labour, other major social ministries such as education, youth and health, employers' and workers' organizations, and non-governmental organizations, each Committee has the responsibility to recommend policies and programmes to their respective governments on the elimination and prevention of child labour, particularly its worst forms.

The following are the Chairpersons of the various National Child Labour Committees that have been established:

Bahamas	Mr. Harcourt Brown, Director of Labour Relations Ministry of Labour and Immigration
Barbados	Ms. Shelley Carrington, Deputy Permanent Secretary Ministry of Labour and Social Security
Belize	Mr. Paul Williams, Labour Commissioner Ministry of Local Government and Labour
Guyana	Mrs. Varshnie Jagdeo, First Lady of Guyana
Jamaica	Ms. Jennifer Edwards
Trinidad and Tobago	Ms. Shanmatee Singh, Director of Research and Planning (Ag.) Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development

The project is also spearheading, in collaboration with the National Committees in Guyana, Belize and Trinidad and Tobago, pilot rehabilitative programmes to withdraw child labourers from the labour force, offering them alternative developmental options and working with their families on alternative sources of income.

Already, twelve Caribbean member States have ratified ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour and ten member States have ratified ILO Convention No. 138 on the Minimum Age for Employment. These countries are working swiftly to assess and address the situation in their own countries. This year, the World Day against Child Labour is being used to highlight the issue of child labour in their respective countries. Planned activities include: