

June 12, World Day Against Child Labour

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS ACCELERATING THE PROCESS OF ERADICATING CHILD LABOUR IN COLOMBIA

The National Committee for the Eradication of Child Labour and Protection of Young Workers, comprising State entities, labour organizations, NGOs and private enterprise, are convening all citizens to learn about the progress made in the fight against the worst forms of child labour, and to assume greater social responsibility for reducing and eradicating them and protecting the work of young persons. This June 12, beginning at 8:00 AM in the National Museum, an event will be held to publicize:

- *Considerations about the problem in Colombia.*
- *The results of follow-up on the actions of mayors and governors to eradicate child labour during 2008.*
- *The various experiences in direct intervention being carried out in the country.*

The urgency of preventing and eradicating the worst forms of child labour will be the central call of the authorities responsible for guaranteeing the rights of children and adolescents, next June 12

The Office of the Inspector General of the Nation, at the initiative of the National Committee for the Eradication of Child Labour and Protection of Young Workers, comprising the Ministries of Social Protection and National Education, the ICBF, the International Labour Organisation, representatives of employers' (ANDI) and workers (CUT, CGT and CTC) organizations – along with representatives of civil society and the signers of the International Cooperation Agreement (COETI) will meet tomorrow to evaluate the progress made and assume greater social responsibility for reducing and eradicating this kind of exploitation.

In the general framework of the (National Strategy to Prevent and Eradicate the Worst Forms of Child Labour and Protect Young Workers, 2008-2015), these institutions have been working to reduce the problem, taking various actions in articulating with the different national-level institutions and in coordination with the Red Juntos ("Together" Network)

The Great Integrated Household Survey, performed by DANE in 2007, showed that in 2003 the number of child labourers was 1,181,000, equivalent to 10.8%; in 2005 it was 1,000,000, dropping to 8.9%; and in 2007 it had declined to 787 thousand child labourers, equivalent to 6.9%. Nonetheless there is concern about clandestine child labour.

Beginning in 2007 the ICBF prioritized attention for children and adolescents involved in the worst forms of child labour – like small-scale mining and sexual exploitation – recognizing that this condition is unacceptable and that nothing justifies children's involvement in these activities. To this end the agency is engaged in various actions

and projects to attend 5,380 children and adolescents and 2,240 families this year, through intervention and psychosocial orientation for the families of working or at-risk children, development of productive units for the adults, and activities for the creative use of free time for the children.

The National Plan of Action for the Prevention and Eradication of the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents has progressed in orienting local prevention and attention strategies, as well as in following up on bills of law for stiffening the sanctions for perpetrators, and also has created a programme of reception of and attention for children that are victims of this situation.

Child labour leads to school dropout and difficulties in children's getting into school, and fosters non-attendance and dropping out of school. Therefore the Ministry of National Education (MEN) is implementing the programme entitled "**Educational Attention for Working Children and Adolescents**", which has a double approach: the first, is oriented to promoting access to the school system, and the second is aimed at coordinating actions for implementing strategies to keep these children in school with economic support to complement the basic education "basket" and programmes for guaranteeing the continuity of educational opportunities for them from preschool through to middle school.

In the area of access and permanence, it is working in partnership with Red Juntos, ICBF and the Ministry of Social Protection. These institutions have identified 10,856 children and adolescents outside the school system, and 4,671 children and adolescents that work and study at the same time. The latter benefit from all the strategies for keeping children that work and study, in school.

UNICEF is working jointly with the ICBF, the Ministry of Education, local authorities and PROINCO in the execution of the "**Pilot Project for Preventing and Eradicating Child Labour**" in Nariño. This project seeks to restore the right to education for 790 children and adolescents while accompanying their families to give them tools for protection against child labour exploitation. The process is being implemented through the **School Going to the Child** strategy, which was developed in Quindío and has been promoted by UNICEF in Colombia since 2000.

The General Labour Confederation and its National Executive Committee are taking actions to sensitize not only the affiliates, but the entire Colombian population, through direct intervention with the vulnerable and affected population in localities like Ciudad Bolívar in Bogotá and Cundinamarca municipalities like Facatitivá and Bojacá.

Children and adolescents thus are participating in activities aimed at promoting their reinsertion into basic and middle education and offering them different initiatives for the use of their free time. It also offers their parents opportunities for training in different job skill areas.

With the passage of Law 1098 – the Code for Children and Adolescents – both mayors' and governors' offices strengthened the articulation among the different instances comprising the Committees for the Eradication of Child Labour at the national, departmental and municipal levels.

The Ministry of Social Protection, in partnership with Save the Children, is promoting direct intervention to re-establish the rights of at least 2 thousand child and adolescent victims of the worst forms of child labour in 23 Colombian municipalities.

The process, although still in the initial stage, is already producing important results. June 12th will be the day for reporting the findings of the monitoring of the mayors' and governors' initiatives for eradicating child labour in 2008, expressing considerations about the problem in Colombia, and presenting the various experiences in direct intervention being carried out in the country.