

4% or 146,000 Workers in Brazil's Mines Are Children

Contributed by Juliana Andrade
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The World Day Against Child Labor, instituted in 2002 upon an initiative of the International Labor Organization (ILO), was commemorated yesterday, June 12, in Brazil.

This year's theme was the exploitation of children and adolescents who work in mining, considered one of the worst forms of child labor.

According to the IBGE's (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) 2003 National Household Sample Survey, 145,967 Brazilian children and adolescents between the ages of 5 and 17 were occupied in this area, corresponding to 4% of the workforce in the sector.

Although Brazilian laws prohibit children under 14 from working and, when they are 14-15, only allows them to work as apprentices, exploitation of child labor is still a reality in the country.

Throughout Brazil there are approximately 2.7 million working boys and girls, according to the 2003 National Household Sample Survey (PNAD).

The survey also shows that the number of working children and adolescents decreased 47.5%, from 5.1 million to 2.7 million, between 1995 and 2003.

For the executive secretary of the Ministry of Social Development and Hunger Alleviation, Márcia Lopes, Brazil has cause to commemorate the date.

She underscores the importance of initiatives that have made it possible to reduce the exploitation of child labor and mentions the creation of the Program for the Eradication of Child Labor (Peti) as the main advance.

Launched in 1996, the program currently cares for 930,824 children and adolescents between the ages of 7 and 15.

The secretary says that the number of Peti beneficiaries will reach one million in the coming months. According to Lopes, 2.4 million children have been withdrawn from child labor since the program began.

The Ministry released a study recently on Peti beneficiaries, showing that, in a universe of 568,608 beneficiaries, 43.59% came from agriculture and 12.06%, from street vending.

According to Lopes, the federal government expects to eradicate child labor by the end of 2006.

"Brazil is recognized around the globe, because it is the only country in which the State assumed the responsibility for coordinating actions to eradicate child labor," she points out.

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