

Despite Unemployment 3 Million Children Work in Brazil

Contributed by Keite Camacho
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It is estimated that worldwide over two hundred million children and youths work when morally and ethically they should be in school. In Brazil there are three million kids with jobs, while adults go unemployed.

According to Armand Pereira, the director of the International Labor Organization in Brazil, those factors are all interrelated.

Pereira goes on to say that contrary to what many people think, child labor is not a consequence of poverty, it causes poverty.

"The fact is that the poorer a country is, the more children work. Thus it is not poverty that causes child labor, but the lack of moral and legal standards. Our priority must be to get children out of the job market and into school," he says.

Pereira points out that governments and society can improve this situation by making investments in education, income distribution and job creation.

That was done in Brazil between 1992 and 2000 with the result that there was a 40% reduction in the number of working children.

"This worked in Brazil for a number of reasons. The effort was integrated. On one hand there was an improvement in schooling. On the other, families got aid. This two-pronged approach is a model that can be used in other countries," declared Pereira.

What remains to be done, he goes on, is consolidation. That requires joint efforts by officials in the labor sector and the police and courts.

"Brazil is such a big country that the numbers still leave much to be desired," says Pereira, who made his remarks at the 4th High Level Group Meeting on [the government program] Education For All.

The Brasília three-day meeting, which is sponsored by Unesco, runs until tomorrow. Thirty ministers of Education from around the world are participating in the event.

According to Brazil's Minister of Education, Tarso Genro, Brasília is aware of the problem and knows that it needs to deal with it at the government level.

Meanwhile, the Brazilian Minister of Labor, Ricardo Berzoini, declared that there would be no problem getting other ministries to work jointly on the problem, along with civil society organizations and multilateral institutions.

"We need to integrate, get society involved in what would normally be government endeavors. But the eradication of child labor is a question of human dignity which requires a special effort," declared the Minister.

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