

Child Labor Seen as Good for Country and Kids by Brazilians

Contributed by Monique Maia
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The International Labor Organization's (ILO) projects coordinator, Renato Mendes, believes that child labor is seen as natural by families that have children and youngsters in this condition and that it is not simply a question of poverty.

"It is culturally accepted that child labor is good for the child and for the country," he said, referring to a report released June 22 by the ILO on workers in the 5-18 age bracket on pineapple plantations in the northeastern Brazilian state of Paraíba.

The study found that, besides the lack of money, the lack of social policies and school structure act as incentives for children to work.

That is why Mendes judges that withdrawing children from the labor market, even though essential, is not enough. "Their time must be occupied in an educational and instructive way."

The three activities to which these youngsters devoted most of their time were sowing, weeding, and fertilizing. Working for 9-12 hours daily, they were exposed to strong sun, rain, dust, and chemical products that can cause cancer.

The study also discovered a 65.1% index of grade repetition in school. The "workers" reported that they experienced fatigue and body pains and, therefore, did not attend classes the way they should have.

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