

122,000 Brazilian Kids Started Working in 2005

Contributed by Elma Lia Nascimento
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Brazil's non-governmental organization National Forum on Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor (FNPETI) has just created an Internet portal where the group not only speaks out about its work in favor of eliminating child labor in Brazil but also encourages people to denounce cases involving children who are working.

The FNPETI has joined forces with the Brazilian Institute of Information on Science and Technology (Ibict) and has the support of the International Labor Organization (ILO). The new site has news on the activities of the national and state forums as well as information on legislation, links, publications and all sorts of news related to child work.

Created in November 1994, the FNPETI presents itself as a non-governmental space for the articulation and mobilization of institutional agents in charge of policies and programs dealing with child labor. The organization has representatives from four areas: workers, employees, NGO's. The National Forum also counts on the help of UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) and ILO.

"This is an instrument for reporting data and information. We are able to receive complaints on cases of child labor and present proposals so that the Brazilian society knows why public policies in Brazil are not being effective in the fight against child labor," says Isa Maria de Oliveira, executive secretary of the FNPETI.

An Ibope survey has shown that 78% of Brazilians, between the ages of 16 and 24, think that no one should start working before they are 16. This same group says that those who use child labor should be sent to jail.

According to data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics's (IBGE) National Household Survey (Pnad), about 122,000 new children between the ages of 5 and 15 started to work in 2005.

"Our intention, in the first semester of 2007," says Oliveira, "is to once again get into an agreement with the newly elected governors and the president in order to guarantee that the public policies really result in a significant reduction of child labor".

According to Márcia Lopes, executive secretary of Brazil's Social Development and Hunger Alleviation Ministry, the integration of the Child Labor Eradication Program Child (Peti) into the Bolsa Família (Family Voucher) program will help in identifying children who work in all Brazilian municipalities.

"We are including all the children who were working or that are shown as working in the unified register. We think the eradication of child labor will only happen when the Brazilian communities identify where these children are. We know this is hard work. Child labor is something hidden, mostly when dealing with girls who work as maids and even in the rural area," Lopes says.

Fórum Nacional de Prevenção e Erradicação do Trabalho Infantil (FNPETI) - www.fnpeti.org.br.