Highlights of Guyana's efforts in the fight against Child Labour during 2013
Jan 10, 2014

The Government of Guyana and the International Labour Organization signed the Protocol Agreement on October 15, 2008 for the implementation of the Tackle Project in Guyana. The Government through the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security and the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the employers and workers organizations as key partners.

This Tripartite Collaboration embarked on a series of interventions to eliminate Child Labour in all its forms in Guyana.

The ILO defines Child Labour as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and interferes with their schooling by: depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; obliging them to leave school prematurely; or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.

In addition to the many interventions made by the other Tripartite members in 2013, the Government with support from the Tackle Project conducted the following:

- Continuation in 2013 of the School Retention and Child Labour Programme within communities in Region 4. Silver Hill and Soesdyke on the Linden/ Soesdyke Highway. Components of the programme included:

    - Nutrition Enhancement
    - Transportation support
    - Homework Assistance
    - Parent Support Education (PSE)
    - Psychosocial support for parent and children

- Increased awareness on the issue of Child Labour using medium such as sports, PTA's, school assemblies and other sessions with students.

- Incorporate Child Labour as a topic into the Labour Department training sessions.

- Peer Education Programme in Secondary and Primary Schools.

- Erect Bill Boards with key messages in strategic locations across the country (Ministry of Education).

- Observe International Day against Child Labour, June 12, with several activities to promote awareness.

- Forum on Child Labour, mount banners at strategic locations, publish messages by Tripartite partners.

- Amend the list of hazardous work to include more work related activities.

- Print collateral materials to promote public awareness and advocacy such as brochures, posters, pens, T-shirts.

- Translate information on Child Labour into Portuguese and Chinese so that foreign entrepreneurs are aware of the labour laws and Guyana's position on child labour.

- Parenting Education and Enrichment Programmes.

- Mentoring Programme.

- Ministry of Labour Human Services & Social Security, Labour Occupational Safety & Health Department 'zero tolerance' approach to child Labour by conducting inspections on a daily basis with special focus on mining, logging and agriculture.

Inspections:

The Ministry of Labour conducted two thousand two hundred and eighteen (2218) inspections in 2013 and did not find any form of Child Labour during any of these inspections.

Public awareness and outreaches:

The Ministry of Labour during 2013 also conducted outreaches at Charity Market and community and Anna Regina Municipality, Region #2. A truancy campaign which involved the Ministry of Education and the officials of the Regional Administration was conducted in the Charity area.

The MOL also participated in the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission's "Porknockers Day" event held at Bartica, Region #7. Our activities at this event included a quiz, distribution of materials such as posters, brochures, pens, T-shirts and the showing of a film on Child Labour.

Reports of Child Labour in 2013

No report/complaint was made of Child Labour by any citizen/organization to any of our offices.

Social Programmes to Eliminate or Prevent Child Labour.

The Government of Guyana continues to provide hot meals to 16,000 students in the interior locations as well as transportation (by river, land) for students in several remote areas. Interior secondary schools accommodate 5000 children who live in remote areas in dormitories attached to the schools to facilitate their attendance and completion of their school education.

Every child (whether Guyanese or foreign) enrolled in nursery, primary and secondary schools funded by the government are given vouchers at the end of each school year to acquire school uniforms/backpacks or shoes. This has contributed to more poor and low income children attending school and Guyana's achievement of universal enrollment and completion of primary education in accordance with MDG with 100% enrollment and 97% completion of primary education.

The Government's programme to achieve universal secondary education over the next two (2) years has improved attendance and the Government is of the opinion that this will be achieved as planned.

Board of Industrial Training, the TVET Council, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport continue to manage programmes that offer opportunities for young people who may not have finished their secondary education or who obtained very low grades to obtain skills training and employment opportunities.

The MOL is not saying that there may be cases of child Labour in Guyana but the Government, through a multi-sectoral approach through collaboration between the MOL, MHSSS and the Child Care Protection Agency, the MED, MOAA and MCYS continue to educate the public and to take measures to prevent its occurrence, promote children's rights and protect children and work constantly towards the elimination of all forms of child labour.

The constitutional Rights of the Child Commission's annual report to the National Assembly in 2013has not referred to cases of child labour.

Noteworthy is that Guyana ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and their Families in 2010 and the ILO Convention on Domestic Workers in July 2013. Guyana has therefore strengthened its international obligations to protect foreign workers and their families and domestic workers, two areas that in many countries are open to exploitation, including child labour.