



Mrs Sharon Morris-Cummings, Director Ag.
Remarks for ILO's Capacity Building Workshop on Child Labour
TUESDAY 29 OCTOBER 2022

Salutations

Official from the International Labour Organisation
Officials from the Ministry of Labour
Specially invited guests
Staff of the Authority
Members of the Media

Good morning.

I am pleased to be among you this morning to give brief remarks and to thank the organisers for this privilege. However, I am not pleased that in this year, 2022, heading into 2023, we have to strategise, build capacity and plan joint approaches to put an end to child labour. I therefore commend and applaud the collaborative work by the Ministry of Labour and ILO gathered here today, to end maltreatment against our children.

Child labour, in many cases, involves children who are either exploited by adults for free labour, forced to work to provide for themselves or to help their families meet every day needs. Even within the homes and within family businesses, child labour can go unnoticed and becomes somewhat difficult to detect.

Child labour, like child abuse, is a hidden pandemic. The United Nations notes there are approximately 160 million children between five and seventeen who are victims of child labour¹. In Latin America and the Caribbean region, between 2016 and 2020, there was progress in the reduction of child labour... falling by

¹ <https://www.alliance87.org/interactive/child-labour-stats/>

2.3 million which led to increased social protection coverage and school enrolment². However, that progress sadly was reversed by the very visible pandemic of COVID-19.

By mid-2021, UNICEF warned that the pandemic was upsetting efforts to eradicate child labour in Latin America and the Caribbean by 2025. Prolonged school closures, sudden increases in poverty among the most vulnerable families were eroding crucial progress made over the prior years. UNICEF noted that over 50 percent of children involved in child labour were doing work that was dangerous to their health, well-being³ and of course their education,... all fundamental children's rights.

So, this workshop is ideally timed. Having emerged from pandemic restrictions, with children back in school, it is vitally important to ensure that children who were previously incorporated into the school system do not slip away, having had to fend for themselves in many ways during the pandemic. Importantly, it is an approach that involves cooperation. Therefore, the Ministry of Labour's Inspectorate Unit, OSHA, the Counter Trafficking Unit, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, the Children's Authority and the International Labour Organisation, can all work together to eradicate the scourge child labour.

We must continue to build capacity to recognise, eliminate and prevent cases of child labour... within our society. To do this, updated training is vital, collaboration among stakeholders is necessary.

We commend the work of the ILO has been tackling child labour in the region. A Rapid Assessment (RA) on some of the worst forms of child labour (WFCL) in Trinidad was undertaken as a result of decisions taken at the International Labour Conference in June 1999 at which the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No.182), together with Recommendation No. 190 were unanimously adopted⁴.

This assessment which focused on four occupational areas noted that of the 93 children interviewed, most came from poor and vulnerable communities and had only attained some level of primary school education.

² <https://www.alliance87.org/interactive/child-labour-stats/>

³ <https://www.unicef.org/lac/en/press-releases/pandemic-pushing-latin-america-and-caribbean-more-off-track-in-ending-child-labour>

⁴ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---americas/---ro-lima/---sro-port_of_spain/documents/publication/wcms_308992.pdf

While trends from this data from 2001 may have changed with the passage of time, our own reports indicate that children are often seen peddling items for sale on the nation's roadways and beaches. Therefore, the need for a collaborative approach to reduce incidents of child labour and child abuse is required to ensure that no child is exploited and or continues to suffer from such abuse. We must ensure that every child lives to see their full potential, but this can only occur when every right is afforded to every child regardless of their gender, race, socio-economic status and or religion.

Despite its challenges, the Children's Authority has been able to make significant strides in effecting its mandate to provide care and protection for children at risk of abuse in Trinidad and Tobago. In May 2021, the Authority formed the Investigation and Intervention Unit (IIU), merging the former Investigation and Child and Family Services Units... as we began transitioning to a new Best Interest Regional Case Management Model⁵. This improved approach is designed for collaboration. It is designed for prompt and effective service delivery. It is designed for more timely intervention rates

At the Authority, our vision calls on us to make child protection everybody's business. This Capacity-building Workshop on Child Labour is providing us with that chance... to ensure that we can connect with you, our key stakeholders, to ensure that we have collaborative strategies based on multidisciplinary approaches to ensure the well-being of our children, because the protection of our children from societal ills requires a multi-pronged "all-hands-on-deck" approach.

I anticipate the information sharing and dialogue over the next two days to be extremely productive... not only for the representatives of the Children's Authority here today, but for all involved.

I expect this capacity building workshop will be enlightening. We can all learn from what is happening around the region, be aware of the best practices and strive to the gold standard for eradication strategies.

These sorts of exchanges are not only be beneficial to improve the work we all do, but will also redound to the protection of our children.

Ladies and gentlemen, I commend this capacity building workshop to you and commit the Authority to continued collaboration in this regard as child protection is everybody's business.

⁵ CATT's Annual Report

I thank you.