INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

ICFTU OnLine…
021/090205

Child and forced labour in post-conflict Sierra Leone

Brussels, 9 February 2005 (ICFTU Online): Today sees the release of a new ICFTU report on core labour standards in Sierra Leone which coincides with this week's trade policy review of the West African country being conducted by the World Trade Organisation. The report, which shows serious violations, particularly concerning child labour and forced labour, covers the range of core labour standards including trade union rights, non-discrimination at work, the elimination of child labour and the prohibition of forced labour.

Child labour is widespread in Sierra Leone and law enforcement is weak. Several thousand children work in diamond mining, mainly boys, in an environment which closely resembles slave labour. They work long hours and in harsh conditions, engaging in activities like digging, sifting and shifting.
Many children work in family businesses or on family farms. Overall, statistics show that an overwhelming 71.6% of children between the ages of 5-14 years are working, either in paid or unpaid work.

Moreover, the report notes that following the conflict, many former child soldiers have been forced into mining activities, whilst disturbingly, many women and girls have been kept in slavery for sexual exploitation. Furthermore, conflicts in neighbouring countries have led to re-recruitment of former child soldiers in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire.

To read the full report: http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991221210&Language=EN

The ICFTU represents 145 million workers in 233 affiliated organisations in 154 countries and territories. ICFTU is also a partner in Global Unions: http://www.global-unions.org

For more information, please contact the ICFTU Press Department on +32 2 224 0206 or +32 476 621 018.

You are currently subscribed to icftu-online as: Rainer.Gries@fes.de
To unsubscribe send a blank email to leave-icftu-online-167589G@forum.icftu.org