



Regional
Technical
Meeting
on Skills
Development
> page 3



Celebrating
Working Women:
Breaking boundaries,
Driving change
> page 4



ADB launches
Core Labour
Standards
Handbook
> page 4



International
Labour
Office
Manila

Decent Work for All

Quarterly Newsletter of the ILO in the Philippines

Volume 5, Issue 1 • April 2007

Local government supports work safety and health programme for farmers

By Jesus Macasil, Jr.
Programme Assistant

Provincial and municipal officials in Davao del Sur gave their full support to an Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) programme. The Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) recently launched OSH-WIND (OSH-Work Improvement in Neighborhood Development) in selected areas to help banana farmers improve their working and living conditions.

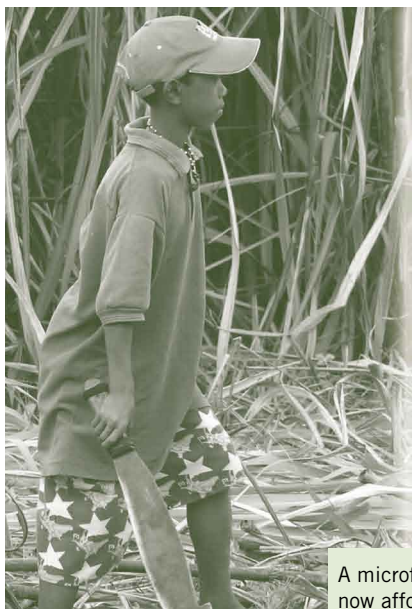
Atty. Edwin Salvilla represented Governor Gementiza at the launching. He welcomed the programme that addresses vulnerability of farmers to chemical hazards. Atty. Salvilla stressed that the provincial government is ready to support DAR to implement the programme. Meanwhile, provincial officials of two programme areas have mobilized barangay officials in conducting a survey of banana farmers.

The OSH-WIND programme is supported by ILO to assist DAR in responding to the growing concern about the lack of OSH awareness and poor working conditions for farmers.



**APRIL 28
WORLD DAY
FOR SAFETY AND
HEALTH AT WORK**
www.ilo.org/safework/safeday

**Making Decent Work a Reality
- Safe and Healthy Workplaces**



A microfinance programme has boosted the livelihood of parents who can now afford to send children back to school, thwarting child labour.
(Photos by M. Rimando/ILO & J. Fortin/IPEC)

Microfinance improves livelihood of parents; school-based programme prevents child labour

By Mitchell Duran
IPEC Programme Officer

A microfinance programme set up to help poor families in four towns in Oriental Negros is improving the livelihood of parents, who can now afford to send their children to school. And since children can focus on schoolwork, no dropouts have been reported, a number have graduated, and some have improved their academic performance.

The situation about two years ago, however, was somewhat bleak. Parents could not give priority to education largely due to a lack of means to meet family needs beyond the most basic and immediate. To augment family incomes and survive, children were forced to work. Child labour persisted in the province.

Supported by ILO-IPEC, the Association for the Welfare of Filipino Children, Inc. (AWFCI) – a registered child welfare institution – implemented an action programme in the towns of Ayungon, Bindoy, Sibulan and Siaton. AWFCI started a microfinance programme to complement livelihood ventures including livestock dispersal, food processing, and upland fish farming.

From a collection of P5 each day from members as capital investment in 2004, the capital fund has surpassed P1 million. With a membership of 550, loan releases amount to P200,000 per month. Loan repayment rates are reported to be high due to increased incomes of member-beneficiaries. The programme's service will be expanded to neighboring communities.

AWFCI's school-based programme has benefited 1,800 children. The programme includes tutorial classes, value formation sessions, and recreational activities. The strong support of school officials, the Department of Education (DepEd) and concerned local government units was instrumental to the success of the programme. Children claim that without the programme, they would have dropped out of school and followed their parents' footsteps to work in sugarcane farms or on fishing boats.



**To know more about the
International Programme
on the Elimination
of Child Labour in the
Philippines, please visit:**
www.ilo.org/manila/ipec

Decent Work for All

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Linda Wirth

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Keiko Niimi

MANAGING EDITOR

Minette Rimando

CONTRIBUTORS

Lourdes Kathleen Cacho
Mitchell Duran
Jesus Macasil, Jr.
Junko Nakayama
Maria Asuncion Ortiz
Ma. Concepcion Sardaña
Sanchir Tugschimeg
Julita Yap

LAYOUT & DESIGN

Minette Rimando

Decent Work for All is published quarterly by the ILO Subregional Office in Manila. The electronic version can be accessed at www.ilo.org/manila. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of the ILO.

ILO SUBREGIONAL OFFICE FOR SOUTH-EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

19F Yuchengco Tower RCBC Plaza
6819 Ayala Avenue,
Makati City, Philippines
Tel. No. +63 (2) 580 9900
E-mail manila@ilomnl.org.ph
www.ilo.org/manila



Decent Work for All

The Decent Work for All Newsletter has evolved from the ILO Manila Update (early 1990s) to the ILO Manila Newsletter (2002) to the ILO Subregional Newsletter (2005). Decent Work for All was drawn from the winning newsletter title "Work4All" by Mitchell Duran, IPEC Programme Officer.

As a quarterly publication, Decent Work for All features stories and updates on work-related issues in the Philippines with the goal of advancing decent work in the country.

"The goal of decent work is best expressed through the eyes of people. It is about your job and future prospects, about your working conditions, about balancing work and family life, putting your kids through school or getting them out of child labour. It is about gender equality and equal recognition and enabling women to make choices and take control of their lives."

Director-General Juan Somavia

EDITORIAL

This was an important month for one of ILO's three constituencies. "Reaching Out: Competitiveness, Partnerships and Reforms" was the theme addressed at this year's annual National Conference of Employers held on 20-21 March. The conference helped focus the nation's attention on strategies proposed by the business community to ensure economic development and social progress. Joining forces with government and non governmental actors to move enterprises and workers out of the informal economy is key to reducing poverty. Organizing formal sector actors to reach out to those in the informal economy is a noteworthy step in the effort to halt the growth of informality in the Philippines.

Creation of an enabling business environment - infrastructure development, lowering of energy costs, making it easier to set up a business - was identified as critical for the country to sustain economic growth and increase competitiveness. An enabling environment would help enterprises develop

and expand, creating decent jobs for more men and women. President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo addressed the conference, conferring awards for good practices in labour relations and for child labour free enterprises including those down the supply chain. The Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP) future agenda was presented and included continued support to strengthening small enterprises, advancing the competitiveness agenda, furthering partnerships and tackling labour law and administrative reforms.

In the Philippines, the effort to create decent jobs, jobs with adequate income and which are safe, as a strategy for men and women to work out of poverty with dignity and empowerment is at the heart of the tripartite common agenda. The employers, workers and government are contributing to this goal through their respective mandates and programmes.

Linda Wirth
Director

DOLE: One agency working together

By Lourdes Kathleen Cacho
Programme Assistant

One Agency working with tripartite partners and other stakeholders, and implementing programmes with a special focus on women, young workers and the informal sector is how Secretary of Labor Arturo Brion characterized his department during the opening ceremony of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Annual Corporate Planning Exercise for 2007 held last 17 January.

Overseas employment with an emphasis on the maritime industry, local employment facilitation for young people, skills training for the informal sector, tapping DOLE and local government officials for alternative dispute resolution, social protection for informal sector workers and labour law reform policies were some of the programmes identified as priorities.

Representatives from the Employers' Confederation of the Philippines, Trade Union Congress of the Philippines, Federation of Free Workers and the ILO participated in DOLE's corporate planning.

Education, vocational training heal wounds of armed conflict

By Ma. Concepcion Sardaña
National Professional Officer

Education and vocational training services, complemented by psychosocial counselling, are proving potent in healing emotional and psychological damage suffered by children affected by armed conflict in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

In the last two years, 120 children in conflict area have received counselling and are pursuing primary, secondary and tertiary education through the ILO-IPEC supported 'Salaam Peace' project. With financial support from the U.S. Department Labor, similar projects are implemented by ILO-IPEC in Africa and South Asia.

The programme provided psychosocial counselling to 500 children to help them overcome the trauma of war. Counselling services helped heal the emotional and psychological damage caused by conflict, and fostered a positive outlook toward starting a new life as the children gained self-esteem and confidence.

About 300 children completed vocational skills training in electronics, baking and pastry making, food processing, plumbing, sugar production technology and computer literacy. The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) implemented the action programme through an agreement with the ARMM government, in collaboration with the region's government agencies.

ILO and local governments plan youth employment action

By Maria Asuncion Ortiz
National Project Coordinator

Employment creation should be a fundamental target in local development planning. In many local government units (LGUs) in the Philippines, however, promoting employment is limited to occasional job fairs and short-term skills training. In the case of certain LGUs, local government officials have accepted the challenge of working with private sector, civil society and national government agencies to make employment more strategic and explicit in local plans with increasing decent jobs evident in their communities.

Through the ILO-Canadian International Development Agency Youth Employment Project, LGU decent work champions have organized employment action planning fora. The six workshops held in January and February

this year respectively in Guimaras, Concepcion Iloilo, Davao, Cotabato, Dumaguete, La Castellana Negros Occidental brought together participants from LGU planning offices, employment and livelihood service agencies, education and training institutions, youth, enterprises and other partners. Representatives met to mainstream local employment issues. Many participants appreciated having been introduced to and involved in a practical and action-oriented planning, targeting job creation and the development of local industries.

Action points were identified to create local environments for new and existing enterprises to succeed, generate more and productive jobs for youth and to prepare and link local youth to available job and entrepreneurial opportunities. Participating agencies expressed interest in using the youth employment survey and planning tools on a wider scale.

Philippines Development Forum

The Philippines Development Forum (PDF) is the primary mechanism of the government for facilitating substantive policy dialogue among stakeholders on the country's development agenda.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo stressed the need to pull in massive investment to create jobs and beat poverty in the PDF 2007, held on March 8-9 in Cebu City.

"Creating good paying jobs, stable prices, and bringing the benefits of a strong economy to every Filipino in every service is the focus of the national agenda," said Arroyo. "We hope

for the day when enough good jobs are created in the Philippines so that hard working Filipinos don't have to go abroad for their work. We see a day when going abroad for a job is a career choice, not the only option for work."

Currently, the PDF has seven working groups. These focus on Millennium Development Goals and social progress; growth and the investment climate; economic and fiscal reforms; governance and anti-corruption; decentralization and local government; sustainable rural development; and Mindanao.

For more information, please visit <http://pdf.ph>.

Employers discuss minimum wage fixing in the Philippines

By Sanchir Tugschimeg
Employers' Activities Specialist

Improving the effectiveness of the wage setting mechanisms is one of the policy priorities for the Employers' Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP). To discuss the issue, ECOP invited its representatives on the Regional Tripartite Wages and Productivity Boards (RTWPBs) to participate in the consultation workshop, held in Manila on 21-22 March 2007.

The workshop addressed a wide range of issues and challenges in the current wage setting system, such as limited capacity of the RTWPBs, absence of productivity criteria in the currently used methodology, effects of fragmentation of the union movement, effects of legislated wage setting. Specific session was devoted to the discussion of the ILO standards on wage-setting.

Participants made a number of recommendations including strengthening of RTWPBs, promoting productivity and mainstreaming it into the wage setting, promoting wage bargaining approach, rationalizing the wage-setting to improve the competitiveness and employment creation potential of Philippines industry of collective or individual wage bargaining in support of a free market economy, with workers enjoying

Skills development for economic empowerment and poverty reduction



By Junko Nakayama
Vocational Training Officer

To explore effective approaches to skills development for reducing poverty, ILO and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) of the Philippines organized a regional technical meeting on skills development for economic empowerment and poverty reduction from 30 January to 1 February. Tripartite participants - government, employers' and workers' representatives from Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines and Sri Lanka were invited to the meeting. Participants discussed approaches to skills development as well as the role of social partners in realizing economic empowerment. At the end of the meeting, the representatives presented plans of action to implement skills development programmes in their respective countries. (Photo by: M. Rimando/ILO)

Labour standards enforcement

By Jesus Macasil, Jr.
Programme Assistant

The Bureau of Working Conditions (BWC) of DOLE has developed manuals for regional implementers to use in improving the enforcement of labour standards across the country. Orientation courses will be carried out for companies to self assess (SA) as well as benefit from Technical Advisory Visits (TAV) under the new Labour Standards Enforcement Framework (LSEF).

The ILO supports BWC in implementing means to enforce labour standards. This support includes consultation and validation workshops with labour inspectors and employers. BWC will produce additional information, education and communication materials to further augment the effectiveness of LSEF training.

Celebrating Working Women

By Minette Rimando
Public Information Assistant

For the first time, the ILO in the Philippines marked International Women's Day unifying the ILO theme "Celebrating Working Women: Breaking boundaries, driving change" and the UN's "Ending impunity for violence against women and children".

"Women and children are the most vulnerable," said Hadja Bainon Karon, peace activist and Chairperson of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) Women's Committee. "I witnessed a pregnant woman being raped and thousands of women and men killed in a massacre," said Karon. Many sacrificed their lives for the cause of the Bangsamoro, including her husband. Yet, Karon continued her noble battle to fight poverty and promote peace, working with Moro women all over Mindanao for productive livelihood.

Fighting for women's rights is also in the blood of Atty. Rowena Guanzon. A lawyer and legal counsel, Guanzon pioneered laws on trafficking and violence against women and defended victims of sexual harassment. "The truth is, violence against women is committed by 98 percent of men. We only have a few women lawyers on human rights and some are even being killed," said Guanzon.

Cecile Oebanda-Flores, Executive Director of the Visayan Forum, advocates for over 1.2 million domestic workers struggling to be recognized. Oebanda started working at the age of five due to poverty. She joined the New People's Army and was imprisoned despite her pregnancy. "My tragic experiences are nothing compared to the traumatic experiences of domestic workers and trafficked victims. We need to fight for these voiceless and vulnerable women," said Oebanda.



The Philippine Daily Inquirer, through Vice President Ronaldo Suarez, shared how it promoted equal opportunities for women and men. "While other companies shy away from women, we provide added benefits and recognize family responsibilities. We firmly believe in work-life balance," said Suarez. Currently, the Inquirer has a day care center in the office where reporters and employees can leave their children. The Inquirer also has a Council on Sexual Harassment and a female union president espousing women's rights.

Susanita Tesiorna, Council Member of the National Anti-Poverty Commission - Workers in the Informal Sector and Dr. Laraine Abad-Sarmiento, Head of the Microfinance for the Informal Sector have committed themselves to empowering women in communities. Yet more work remains to be done. In the Philippines, women continue to work in large numbers in the informal economy and in domestic work. Despite the difficulty of organizing women, both have succeeded in addressing violence and moving women from the margins to the mainstream. For more information, please visit www.ilo.org/manila/mtevents/women07.htm.



Gender equality advocates share their struggles and experience in the ILO International Women's Day Forum. (Photo by M. Rimando)

ADB launches Core Labour Standards Handbook

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) have launched the Core Labour Standards Handbook to raise awareness on labour standards and set guidelines for operational activities, resulting in increased social responsibility, sustainability and reduced vulnerability.

"Both ADB and the ILO aspire to an Asia and the Pacific region free of poverty and to provide decent jobs to its citizens," said ADB Deputy Director General Shyam Bajpaj. "We at the ADB firmly believe that the poor and vulnerable members of society do not need just any kind of employment; they are entitled to decent work."

Progress in compliance with labour standards has been uneven in Asia and the Pacific. Some 127 million children aged 5 to 14 work in the region, and bonded labour continues to exist in developing countries. Discrimination in the workplace continues and many workers risk

exposure to health hazards and accidents that could be easily avoided. The ADB believes that decent working conditions help reduce poverty, raise living standards, and enhance the quality of economic growth by increasing productivity.

The core labour standards became an integral part of the ADB when it approved its Social Protection Strategy in 2001. ADB complies with internationally-recognized core labour standards in designing and implementing its projects. If, for example, an ADB-financed project is found to be using child labour, or discriminating against the employment of women, corrective measures are applied.

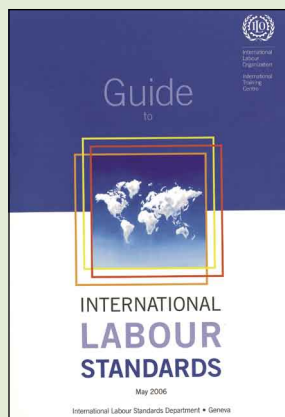
The handbook launch in December 2006 at ADB Headquarters involved government, workers' and employers' representatives in the Philippines, as well as civil society organizations.

For more information on the Core Labour Standards Handbook, please visit www.ilo.org/manila or www.adb.org.

MUST READS

Guide to International Labour Standards

Increasing awareness of international labour standards considered to be the most relevant and promoting their broader application, thereby helping member States build a world in which each man and woman can have access to decent work. These are the objectives towards which the guide intends to contribute. For more information, please visit www.ilo.org/publication.



ADB Core Labour Standards

The handbook provides information about Core Labour Standards (CLS), explains the difference between core and non-core standards, and presents examples of good practices in the application of CLS in ADB operations. The publication provides practical knowledge on how CLS can be upheld by ADB staff and government counterparts. For more information, please visit www.ilo.org/manila or www.adb.org.

