

For further information please contact:

ILO Sub-Regional Office – Manila: DOMWORK Project

19/F Yuchengo Tower, RCBC Plaza, Makati City

Trunkline: 5809900 Fax: (632) 5809999/6

<http://www.ilo.org>



Mr. Ricardo R. Casco: *National Project Coordinator*

Tel: (632) 5809946

Email: casco@ilomnl.org.ph

Ms. Tonette S. Ducusin: *Project Assistant*

Tel: (632) 5809950

Email: ducusin@ilomnl.org.ph

Mobilizing Action for the Protection of Domestic Workers from Forced Labour and Trafficking in South-East Asia:

The Philippine Component

A Project Brief



DOMWORK

MOBILIZING ACTION FOR THE PROTECTION OF DOMESTIC WORKERS AGAINST FORCED LABOUR AND TRAFFICKING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: THE PHILIPPINE COMPONENT

A Project Brief

Introduction

Domestic work is an integral part of Philippine society. The practice of employing domestic help is embedded in Filipino culture. It may take the form of boarding of less privileged relatives in exchange for their household services or encouraging their migration from the countryside communities to the cities or abroad for employment. Thus, the Filipino domestic worker is commonplace to the Filipino households as well as in many countries hosting foreign domestic workers.

Domestic workers have remained with extreme vulnerabilities based on the very nature of their occupation. They are employed in private households, living with employers family, isolated from their own family and network and hidden from public scrutiny. Being not in the formal sector, they are not adequately covered by labour laws and protection program, have no sector representation, no social security & health coverage, and no ready facility for adjudicating their conflicts with their employers. Because their occupation is mostly a poverty-driven choice, domestic workers usually have no means to finish basic education or formal skills training. Adding to this complex of vulnerabilities, domestic workers are usually young women workers vulnerable to trafficking, sexual abuse and exploitation.

Despite these weaknesses, the demand for domestic workers abroad continues to grow. Lured to a better pay, they face up with debt bondage and adjustment difficulties associated with culture and unfamiliar working conditions. Bilateral agreements for their protection have not been welcomed easily by many host governments.

The Project

This scenario serves as the foundation for the regional project, Mobilizing Action for the Protection of Domestic Workers Against Forced Labour and Trafficking in Southeast Asia.

In 2003, the ILO Special Action Program to Combat Forced Labour (SAP-FL), in conjunction with Anti-Slavery International and Asian Migrants Center, held a consultation in Hong Kong to address the protection of domestic workers in Asia from forced labour and trafficking. This event recognized the need to develop a framework to better protect domestic workers in Asia against the threat of forced labour and trafficking and pursue interventions throughout the migration and movement cycle from source community to final workplaces.

In line with its decent work agenda and consistent with its four strategic objectives and international focus programmes, the ILO adopted the initial phase of this project for the Philippines and Indonesia for the period October 2003 to March 2006, with Department for International Development (DFID) as the donor. The project aims to eradicate the worst forms of abuse of domestic workers in Asia, through an integrated programme of legislation,

capacity building, organization and self representation. The Philippines, in particular, needs to address a number of decent work deficits relevant to domestic workers, local or migrant, being a Decent Work Pilot Programme Country.

Launching Activities

A baseline research project was begun in November 2003 which concluded An Analysis of the Situation of Filipino Domestic Workers. This was followed by an orientation, advocacy and validation workshop on May 2004 which outlined the initial recommendations of the key stakeholders in the Strategy to Implement the Philippine Component of the ILO Project: Mobilizing Action for the Protection of Domestic Workers from Forced Labour and Trafficking in Southeast Asia.

The ILO Sub-regional Office for Southeast Asia and the Pacific subsequently set up the two-man project coordinating team, headed by the National Project Coordinator (NPC), mandated to oversee the action program under a tripartite process of consultation, development, implementation and monitoring. The project team shall be under the close guidance of the Chief Technical Adviser (CTA) for the regional project. They shall operate in close coordination with ILO specialists and other related program teams in view of the cross-cutting nature of the project.

Initial Recommendations on Action Areas

At the regional level, initial recommendations emphasized the need for legal and policy recognition of domestic work, awareness-raising about their vulnerabilities especially to forced labour and trafficking, outreach & empowerment of domestic workers organizations and capacity building for government, worker and employer representatives.

At the national level, the workshop among Philippine stakeholders emphasized, in their recommendations, the need to pass the Kasambahay bill, amend provisions of the Labor Code and Republic Act 8042, improve database through research & other data capture systems, empower the domestic workers for sector representation, address their skills needs, undertake capacity building activities for government organizations, employers, recruiters and improve other special problem-preventive interventions, crises support services and surveillance and prosecution of their abusers.

Multi-sector and Tripartite Cooperation

There is reason to expect that the project will succeed with its objectives with the cooperation of the different agencies of the government and other sectors of society, notably domestic workers associations, NGO's, recruitment agency associations, employer groups and members of civil society.

The ILO Sub-regional Office for Southeast Asia and the Pacific, Manila, offers to stir intensive multi-sector and tripartite consultation and involvement in enabling the Philippines once more achieve milestones in vulnerable workers protection through this Technical Cooperation Project.

Basic Facts on Filipino Domestic Workers

- ❖ **Definition:** The Labor Code of the Philippines defines "domestic or household service" as "service in the employer's home which is usually necessary or desirable for the maintenance and enjoyment thereof and includes ministering to the personal comfort and convenience of the members of the employer's household, including services of family drivers." Maids, cooks, yayas (nannies), drivers, and all-around helpers are the primary categories of domestic helpers.
- ❖ **Duties:** Most domestic helpers perform more than one role within a household, with duties that may include cleaning, laundry, ironing, grocery shopping, cooking, taking care of the children, and driving the members of the household.
- ❖ **Terms of employment:** The current monthly minimum wage for domestic helpers in the Philippines is 800 pesos in Metro Manila and highly urbanized cities, 650 pesos in other chartered cities and first-class municipalities, and 500 pesos for those in other municipalities. Under the Labor Code, live-in domestic helpers are also entitled to lodging, food, and medical assistance. Helpers earning over 1,000 pesos per month must be enrolled in the social security system.
- ❖ **Magnitudes:** Estimates of the number of domestic workers in the Philippines range from roughly 600,000 to 2.5 million. There are also between 230,000 and 1 million child domestic workers in the country. In 2002, over 63,000 Filipinos went overseas as newly-hired domestic workers.
- ❖ **Gender:** The vast majority of local and overseas domestic workers are female. Drivers are the only group of domestic workers that are mostly male.
- ❖ **Place of employment:** Most domestic workers are employed in the National Capital Region, Southern Tagalog, Western Visayas, Davao, Central Visayas, Northern Mindanao, and Central Luzon. The top three countries of destination for overseas Filipino domestic helpers are Hong Kong, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia.
- ❖ **Place of origin:** In the Philippines, domestic workers are likely to be from the Visayas regions, Bicol, Southern Tagalog, and Northern Mindanao. Filipino domestic workers overseas tend to come from the National Capital Region, Southern Tagalog, Ilocos, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Soccsksargen, and Western Visayas.
- ❖ **Recruitment:** Domestic helpers are recruited through a mix of formal and informal channels, with local domestic helpers recruited primarily through informal recruitment.
- ❖ **Violations and abuses:** Common problems faced by local and overseas Filipino domestic workers include long working hours with no time off, non-payment of wages, verbal, physical, and sexual abuse, and a lack of sufficient accommodation. Child and adult domestic helpers also lack opportunities to complete their educations. Domestic helpers are also vulnerable to illegal recruitment, forced labor including debt bondage, and trafficking.