President Aquino reaffirms support to youth employment

By Ruth Georget, MDG Fund Joint Programme on Alternatives to Migration: Decent Jobs for Filipino Youth Joint Programme Coordinator

The International Youth Day celebration in the Philippines titled KA JAM: Kabataan (Youth) Jobs and Alternatives to Migration was held on 12 August 2011 in Pasay City. With President Benigno S. Aquino III as Keynote speaker, the event also marked the culmination of the United Nations’ International Year of the Youth. In his message, President Aquino reaffirmed the government’s important role and duty to equip young people with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed as well as provide the opportunities to achieve that success. He added that his administration was aware of the challenges caused by the job mismatch that faced many young Filipinos and understood their concerns on whether the skills they learned in school will enable them to find well-paying jobs.

Attended by more than 500 guests from different sectors, KA JAM highlighted the concerns and issues that young Filipinos face today, particularly in the area of employment and migration. The increasing dropout rates in secondary education, skills mismatch between labour supply and demand, the lack of labour market information for career guidance and counselling, the lack of opportunities to pursue technical vocational courses and entrepreneurship as alternatives, the need to strengthen soft skills to increase employability, these are only but a few of the myriad challenges that face Filipino youth today.

Director Lawrence Jeff Johnson of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Country Office for the Philippines explained that of the 18.2 million Filipinos, aged 15-24, there are 1.5 million unemployed youth striving to find employment opportunities after investing in their skills and education that may not be in demand at home or abroad. He further added that there are 2.3 million employed youth, often unable to invest in their education, who are into different forms of vulnerable employment. “Often characterized by inadequate earnings, poor work conditions, lack of social protection, these youth are often left with little choice but to accept or create whatever work they can find, just so they and their loved ones can survive another day”, he added.

In response, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) led by Secretary Rosalinda Baldoz presented strategies on youth employment and migration that would address the concerns of Filipino youth.

The event was organized by the Spanish funded MDG Fund Joint Programme on Alternatives to Migration: Decent Jobs for Filipino Youth in partnership with the Department of Labor and Employment and National Youth Commission, together with the UN Country Team agencies, ILO, IOM, UNICEF, and UNFPA. The joint programme is aligned with the country’s effort to achieve the Millennium Development Goal 1, Target 1 – B which aims to achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people.
More than 3,400 working children from over 2,100 households are found in Northern Samar. Figures were based on results of a 2010 baseline survey of the International Labour Organization (ILO) conducted in 21 municipalities by the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC).

In Northern Samar, children are often found working in sectors such as informal sales, recycling or garbage collecting, transport and domestic work. What is even alarming is that 70 per cent of these children are not working under the supervision of a parent or guardian.

The Northern Samar Child Labor Committee together with local government officials and barangay council representatives discussed results of the household and educational profile of child labourers on 23-27 May 2011 in Calbayog City.

Guided with the results of the baseline survey, the committee along with local officials planned and designed interventions on child labour. These interventions included action programmes and direct services focused on education, health, skills development and psychosocial aspect including child labour monitoring and integrated service delivery.

The Northehanon Access Center (NAC), Sacred Heart Institute for Transformative Education (SHIFT) Foundation, Inc. and the Provincial Social Welfare Development Office (PSWDO) will serve as proponents and implementing agencies of the action programmes. In response, these implementing agencies have committed to provide funds as counterpart, an indication of their strong commitment and support to the fight against child labour.

A Memorandum of Agreement is set for signing on 15 September 2011 with the ILO Country Office, the Provincial Government of Northern Samar, Department of Labor and Employment Regional Office and other stakeholders of the IPEC project to put an end to child labour in Northern Samar.

The International Labour Organization, Department of Labor and Employment and Technical Skills Development Authority will jointly implement the training for disadvantaged youth in Masbate, Antique, Maguindanao and Agusan del Sur from September 2011 to June 2012. The training targets a minimum of 2,400 out-of-school youth in the four provinces. Under the MDG Fund Joint Programme on Alternatives to Migration: Decent Jobs for Filipino Youth Project Coordinator.

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7 October 2011

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