

CHILD LABOR

IN THE SUGAR INDUSTRY:

A CURSORY ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

This is an assessment inspired and commissioned by the ILO particularly its International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC). ILO, the UN's arm in the field of labor, has been dedicated to the uplift of the laboring class into a situation characterized by freedom from exploitation and poverty, fullness of human dignity, human rights, and development, and participation in the decision-making process that affects the enterprises and the economy in general. To achieve its purpose, ILO believes in and employs the tripartite approach. This approach mobilizes the three sectors directly involved in the labor field, namely, the labor sector represented by the trade union, the business or management sector represented by its employers association or federation, and the government sector represented by its labor department or ministry.

In its concern for labor, ILO through its international conferences (or International Labor Conferences) participated in by the representatives of the three sectors of the various member countries has set international standards meant to be applied by them in their respective countries with consideration of the particular circumstances of such countries. These standards rules against slavery, forced labor, child labor especially and immediately its worst forms, deprivation of employment, suppression of union rights, and others.

Its stance against child labor and concern for the laboring children took a program and even an organizational form, the International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC). During the first half of the 1990s, the ILO-IPEC began to set up its units in a number of Third World countries. In 1995, it began in the Philippines. Since then, it has supported projects by governments, non-government organizations, trade unions and even employers associations. These projects include, among others, organizing of

working children and support groups, networking with other groups, advocacy and mobilization. From such projects, various organizations of child workers have emerged and, in 1998, they made possible the Global March against Child Labor. From the Philippines which was chosen as the take-off country, such organizations marched and joined the many others in other countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America and continued the march in Europe up to Geneva where the International Labor Conference was then to meet and discuss the problem of child labor.

In 1999, due to the massive influence of the working children, the tripartite conference promulgated and approved the convention that expresses their determination to eradicate immediately the worst forms of child labor. Dubbed as the Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention, the ILO Convention 182 spells out the four worst forms of child labor in as follows:

- 1) all forms of slavery such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage, and serfdom and forced or compulsory labor including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;*
- 2) the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances;*
- 3) the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaty; and*
- 4) work which, by nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.*

It inspires and motivates the major forces (governments, employers associations, trade unions, and NGOs) to work together for the immediate eradication of such forms of child labor. And it has led to their present preoccupation with so-called time-bound projects (TBPs).

In certain countries where ILO-IPEC is at work, TBPs are now at the forefront of all its projects. They are meant to put into concrete practice the ILO Convention 182 and to yield results connoting the eradication of the worst forms of child labor in well-selected and assessed areas. In the Philippines, we are at the preparatory stage which includes, among others, a cursory assessment of the identified worst forms of child labor, a workshop

on the cursory assessments, and a selection of the forms to which TBPs shall be addressed.

This paper is a cursory assessment of the child labor that has been operating in the sugar cane plantations. It seeks to expose a wholistic view of such reality so that we could see and understand the interrelationships that constitute it and see what could be done to eradicate it systematically and in a span of time.

DEFINITION

1. CHILD LABOR AND ITS WORST FORMS

Child labor is the engagement or participation of children in the production of goods or services. Production operates in various fields, in industry, services, trade, agriculture, etc.. Where children are involved, where they are involved in the making of values, use-values and/or exchange values, there is labor by children or child labor.

More often, child labor operates to the disadvantage or even destruction of the children. Thus, the ILO's definition runs as follows:

...work situation where children are compelled to work on a regular basis to earn a living for themselves and their families, and, as a result, are disadvantaged educationally and socially, where children work in conditions that are exploitative and damaging to their health and to their physical and mental development; where children are separated from their families often deprived of educational and training opportunities, and where children are forced to lead prematurely adult lives. (in Dionela & Giovanni, 1996)

Unsurprisingly, relative to child labor, ILO has always been known for its long-range goal, elimination of child labor, and, for the realization of such, it has organized and directed IPEC.

“More often” means not all child labor are disadvantageous? Let us listen to what people in the heat of the fight against child labor are saying. Various organizations have come to agree on differentiating between child work and child labor. They emphasize that all those activities engaged in by children

which are light, do not tie them to long hours, are not hazardous to their physical, mental, psychological, social, moral and spiritual development, do not impede their education, and others belong to the category of “child work”, while those activities which are heavy, tie them to long hours, are hazardous, are adversely affecting their schooling, etc. constitute child labor. They are therefore one in that all child labor are disadvantageous to the working children.

Meanwhile, an inclusive presentation of child labor has been made by Professor Ben White, a Dutch sociologist based in Bangkok who has had direct involvements in various anti-child labor initiatives in Thailand. He talks about a “continuum of child labor” which represents the whole range of all the various forms of child labor. Such continuum encompasses all those forms from the left extremity of the pole through the mid-section and up to the right extremity. It includes those forms at the left extreme which are at the least acceptable, then those forms which are less acceptable but can be tolerated, then those forms which are unacceptable but can be remedied, and then those at the right extreme which are worst and demand urgent intervention for their eradication.

Certainly, advocates of White’s view do not go for the elimination of child labor in general. They set different objectives for different forms of child labor such as: maintenance and development for those acceptable forms; modification and improvement for the less acceptable ones; repair or reform for those unacceptable but yet reparable ones; and immediate eradication for the worst forms.

The differences among the views are just insignificant as they all strive to proceed from the standpoint of the best interest of the working children and seek to listen to the child workers and learn from them. Moreover, in practice, they are involved in similar activities and/or activities that complement or support each others’. In fact, they actively participated in the Global March and the subsequent mobilizations for an anti-child labor ILO Convention and its ratification in different countries. Now, they embrace ILO Convention 182 and are eagerly involved in programs and activities, individual and collective, meant for the immediate elimination of the worst forms of child labor.

Set for immediate eradication are the “worst forms of child labor” which include the above-mentioned four categories. In the Philippines, all such

categories are present. There is child slavery in the form of bonded child labor or debt bondage and also recruitment of children into armed groups that have been fighting the government. KDF has been engaged in search, inspection and rescue operations with the DOLE and NBI which lead to the redemption of illegally detained, overworked and yet unwaged children from certain factories and sweatshops in Metro Manila and the surrounding provinces. There is also the use of children in prostitution and pornographic performances. ECPAT talks about some 60,000 children trapped in prostitution, Bahay-Tuluyan has concrete experiences in joint operations with the police that arrested and put in jails pedophiles and freed child victims. There is also the use of children in drug trafficking. A GMA network's social awareness program showed through the use of secret miniature TV cameras how children are used by syndicates in the distribution of shabu in Divisoria. And, of course, there are a lot of hazardous occupations where children are among the workers; these occupations include those in certain factories where deadly equipments are in operation, chemical industries, construction, pyrotechnic, quarrying, mining, deep sea fishing, plantations, and others.

2. SUGAR CANE CHILD LABOR

A great deal of child labor in the Philippines is at work in the rural areas particularly in the vast field of agriculture. It includes the numerous working children engaged in work in their own farms, farms of neighbors or farms in other places. It also includes those involved or employed in commercial farms and plantations owned by a few landowners in their communities, absentee landlords based in Metro Manila or other major cities, or foreign multinational companies.

Now, this particular writing is about those in the plantations specifically sugar plantations. It is about child labor in the midst of sugar production. Does it exist? What is it? What does it consist of?

No doubt, child labor in the sugar plantations exists in many places in the country. A number of well-acclaimed documentary films, more television episodes and talk shows, and advocacies of NGOs based in Negros, Ormoc, Sarangani, etc. have long exposed it and have sought to build public awareness and responsibility in response to it. It is a reality which demands

immediate concern and intervention in favor of the children, for the rights, development and future of the children.

We have got to do something to stop this particular fraction of history. Amid the sugar cane blades, thousands of children have been robbed off their childhood. They are now groomed to become the successors to and continuers of the outgoing generations of sugar workers. They are on the way to the same pit. They are in fact wallowing in the same pit, but, when they shall reach their adulthood, the pit shall have become deeper, broader and more sticky --- the pit of poverty, deprivation and futurelessness. For the sake of the children and the future of our society, we must stop once and for all this historical tragedy.

What is it? Child labor in the sugar industry.

Child labor in this particular respect, like all other types of child labor, refers to the engagement or participation of children below eighteen years of age, this time, in the production of sugar. A child worker in the sugar plantation or the broader sugar industry refers to the child aged 17 or below who is engaged or who participates in the process that produces raw sugar and sugar products that are for consumption and for sale in the local and world market.

One thing sure at least in the Philippines is that the sugar cane child worker is not engaged in the entire flow of the production process. The sugar production flow goes through three phases, namely, the cane growing phase, the sugar milling phase and the sugar refining phase. The first phase takes place in the sugar cane field or plantation; the second one in the sugar mill; and the third in the sugar refinery. Child labor operates only in the cane growing phase, but it is in that phase where most workers are involved. In this phase, the children side by side with the more numerous adult workers grow canes, harvest them, and haul them up to the truck.

The child may be working as a member of his family the members or many members of which are the ones doing the work and among whom only one who is the father gets paid. In this case, the child worker is an unpaid member of a collective labor force led and represented by the only paid worker, the father. If his family is big, he may not only be the child worker, he may be in the company of his older and/or younger brothers and/or sisters.

Or he may also be directly employed by the plantation in which case he gets paid for the number of hours he spends doing his job. In this situation, he works as an independent worker, he is regarded separately, separately from his father or family and separately from all other individual workers. He is one party in an employer-employee relationship with the plantation owner represented by his kapatás or foreman/forewoman who directly oversees him.

A great number of child workers are participants in the making of sugar particularly in the production steps of planting, harvesting and some hauling. Together with many adults including their parents and older brothers and sisters, they make possible the daily existence and operations of the sugar plantations. They are part and parcel of the labor force that propels the sugar industry throughout the country. Sad to say, an undeniable reality has been that the sugar workers are among the most exploited sector of the Filipino working class and the children among them are not any less “most exploited” but are even more “most exploited” than their adult companions.

The majority of the child workers are parttime, because they go to school and they work only on Saturdays, Sundays, holidays and vacation times. But there is some fluidity in this situation for many of the schooling and parttime child workers drop out of school and become fulltimers. Meanwhile, fulltimers are fulltime continuously but only during the 8-month period of the preparation, planting, weeding, fertilizer application and cultivation. But, during the slack period of 4-5 months, they are out of jobs, they must get engaged in various activities in order to survive or maintain the lives of their families, while waiting for the harvest time. They are indeed seasonal workers and have to be temporarily employed during the slack period.

INCIDENCE OF SUGAR CANE CHILD LABOR

1. SOME FIGURES FROM NSO, SRA AND NGOs

There has not yet been a survey of the extent of child labor in the sugar industry. But there are some figures that we can discuss and which can shed some lights on the child labor incidence. These figures include those of the NSO 1995 nationwide child labor survey and those from the Sugar Regulatory Administration and those from the local KDF units in the

provinces of Negros Occidental, Leyte and Sarangani. These are the following:

1) There were 3.7 million child workers throughout the country. Of this total, 2.7 million or 75% were agricultural and related workers.

2) In all regions except NCR, most children were engaged as agriculture, animal husbandry and forestry workers, fishermen and hunters. Those in NCR were mostly sales workers and service workers.

3) The dominant industry engaged in by child workers was farming. 2.1 million were the child farmers or farm workers. 73% were boys. More than 2/3 of them or 71% were unpaid workers in their own household farms or businesses.

4) Meanwhile, there were more than 500,000 workers in the sugar industry in 1992. To be exact, the figure was 556,000. This figure came from Arsenio Yulo, then chairman of the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA), in his paper entitled "Status of the Sugar Industry in the Philippines" published in the Proceedings of the National Tripartite Congress on the Republic Act 6982 held in January 1992. Ibon Facts and Figures put it as "556,000 (farmers and agricultural workers)" and "... the industry (involves milling and refining) employs around 25,000."

5) More data concerning the labor force in the sugar industry point to the fact that such number as 556,000 workers included, among others, child workers aged 15 to 17.

6) Based on the data gathered by and on the experience itself of such NGOs as the Child Labor Center in Negros (CLCN) which no longer exists and the Exodus from Child Labor to Integration, Play, Socialization and Education (ECLIPSE) in Leyte and Kamalayan Development Foundation, Inc. (KDF) in Negros Occidental and Southern Mindanao, the sugar cane workers include not only children aged 15 to 17 but also the more numerous children aged 7 to 14. Indeed, child labor in the sugar plantations refers to labor by children aged 17 down to as young as 7 years of age. But included in the total of 556,000 are only those aged 15 to 17 but not those aged 7 to 14. To conform with reality, such number, 556,000, should be increased to include the many working children aged 7 to 14.

7) ECLIPSE which has organized more or less 2,000 child workers in several sugar haciendas in Ormoc City and the two municipalities of Kananga and Albuera said that there are close to 3,000 sugar cane child workers in Ormoc City, 340 in Kananga and 250 in Albuera. KDF-Negros Occidental based in Isabela, while doing organizing work among the children, youth and parents in certain portions of the three municipalities of Isabela, Hinigaran and Binalbagan has immersed itself among some 1,500 working children linked with various haciendas. KDF-Southern Mindanao which has been also at work among the child workers in certain barangays of Malungon, Sarangani got the figure of 340 working children in the haciendas from the local government.

Indeed, child labor is a reality in the industry; and it is a daily massive violation of the country's child labor law. It readily violates the provision prohibiting the employment of children 14 and below in such undertaking which is not a family enterprise and in which not members of the owner's family are engaged and in such undertaking the employment of whom deters their education and hampers their physical, mental, social, etc. aspects of development. It is also a violation of the provision prohibiting the employment of children aged 15 to 17 in hazardous occupations. It belongs to one of the worst forms of child labor identified and exposed by the ILO Convention 182 which said Convention seeks to immediately eliminate, it belongs to the category of hazardous occupations particularly those involving the use of deleterious chemicals (fertilizers and pesticides), the long exposure to the heat of the sun, the use of heavy tools and the carriage of heavy loads.

2. SUGAR CANE CHILD LABOR IN AT LEAST 10 REGIONS

Sugar cane child workers are all over the country, in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. Together with the adult workers, they work in more than 400,000 hectares of land. In 1987, there were only 269,058 hectares planted to sugar. But, in 1991, this rose to 370,000 hectares and in 1992 to 400,000 hectares. At present, there are more than 400,000 hectares. These vast lands planted to sugar cane are distributed as small farms (5 to 10 hectares), medium farms (10 to 25 hectares) and large farms (25 hectares and up).

Farm Size	Net Return per Hectare
-----------	------------------------

Small farms (5-10 hectares)	P 3, 144
Medium farms (10-25 hectares)	P 1, 234
Large farms (25 and up)	P 1, 387

Among the large farms, there are those plantations that occupy 100 hectares and more owned by some 400 sugar landlords.

Sugar cane plantations operate in all regions except NCR, CAR, Western Mindanao, and Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). The major sugar plantations are in the following regions and provinces:

Major Sugar Plantations (Linked with Sugar Mills)	Region	Province
1. Those linked with Hind Sugar Company	Region I	Pangasinan
2. Those linked with CARSUMCO (Cagayan Robina Sugar Milling Company)	Region II	Cagayan
3. Those linked with WESCOR (Western Agri Ventures) 4. Those linked with Central Azucarera de Tarlac 5. Those linked with BASECOM, Inc.	Region III	Tarlac Pampanga
6. Those linked with Central Azucarera de Don Pedro 7. Those linked with Batangas Sugar Central, Inc.	Region IV	Laguna Batangas
8. Those linked with PENSUMIL (Penafracia Sugar Milling Company)	Region V	Camarines Sr
9. Those linked with Capiz Sugar Central, Inc. 10. Those linked with Monomer Sugar Central, Inc. 11. Those linked with Passi (Iloilo) Sugar Central, Inc. 12. Those linked with New Frontier Sugar Corporation 13. Those linked with San Carlos Sugar Milling Company Inc. 14. Those linked with Danao Development Corporation 15. Those linked with Sagay Central, Inc. 16. Those linked with Lopez Sugar Corporation 17. Those linked with Victorias Milling Company, Inc. 18. Those linked with Sunnix Management Corporation 19. Those linked with Hawaiian-Philippine Company, Inc. 20. Those linked with First Farmers Holding Corporation 21. Those linked with Ma-ao Sugar Central Company, Inc. 22. Those linked with Central Azucarera de la Carlota 23. Those linked with BISCOB (Binalbagan-Isabela Sugar Company) 24. Those linked with Dacongogon Producers Cooperative Marketing	Region VI	Capiz Iloilo Negros Occ

Association 25.Those linked with SONEDCO (Southern Negros Development Corporation)		
26.Those linked with URSUMCO (Universal Robina Sugar Milling Company) 27. Those linked with Central Azucarera de Bais 28. Those linked with Herminio Teves and Company (Tolong) 29. Those linked with Bogo-Medellin Milling Company, Inc. 30. Those linked with Durano III and Sons, Inc.	Region VII	Negros Or. Cebu
31. Those linked with Hideco Sugar Milling Company, Inc.	Region VIII	Leyte
32. Those linked with Busco Sugar Milling Company, Inc. 33. Those linked with Crystal Sugar Company, Inc.	Region X	Bukidnon
34. Those linked with Davao Sugar Central Company, Inc.	Region XI	Davao del Sur/Sarangani

In Luzon, there is a relative concentration of sugar cane in Region III or Central Luzon particularly in the provinces of Tarlac and Pampanga. In the Visayas, there is the heaviest concentration in Region VI or Western Visayas particularly in the province of Negros Occidental. Relative to the rest of Mindanao, Region XII or Central Mindanao especially the province of Bukidnon has more sugar.

Nationwide, the single biggest concentration is Negros Occidental, thus it has been dubbed as the country's "sugar bowl". It is home to the biggest sugar cane plantations each of which produces 1.0 to 2.5 tons of cane milled every year. These plantations include Victorias, BISCO, Lopez, Hawaiian-Philippines, Carlota, and others. KDF operates a unit based in Isabela which organizes the sugar cane workers and child workers in the municipalities of Isabela, Hinigaran and Binalbagan. The unit reported 1,500 child workers who worked in the sugar haciendas of Isabela. Some of the child workers were daily wage earners, while others helped their parents in complying with their agreements or contracts with their landlords.

No doubt, children are present in all the above-mentioned plantations and others. Together with the adult workers including their parents and others, they produce one of the country's principal agricultural products, sugar. In terms of volumes of their produced, they produce more than what their counterparts produce as rice, corn, coconut and banana.

Region	Cereals	Major Crops
---------------	----------------	--------------------

	Production (KG) 1999				
	Rice	Corn	Coconut	Sugarcane	Banana
CAR	221,370	67,005	729,352	-	22,886
I	1,081,888	180,706	70,589,213	-	49,722
II	1,708,809	1,029,863	32,576,035	109,147,000	236,456
III	1,842,654	77,174	3,366,294	1,148,504,000	29,255
IV	1,207,477	96,918	1,522,013,360	1,875,929,000	154,384
V	720,247	83,541	458,841,197	240,083,000	13,076
VI	1,531,728	68,510	279,716,060	13,282,318,000	193,155
VII	208,364	138,618	347,701,076	2,289,125,000	87,595
VIII	506,397	45,813	1,645,281,198	831,929,000	127,110
IX	326,146	125,702	1,256,733,602	-	125,413
X	332,008	525,714	400,899,586	1,780,102,000	187,176
XI	680,840	679,422	2,817,544,979	415,770,000	1,695,331
XII	793,985	745,583	340,470,170	239,025,000	365,203
CARAGA	280,209	37,434	438,130,727	-	201,917
ARMM	344,503	682,590	889,443,302	-	238,742
TOTAL	11,786,625	4,584,593	10,396,775,257	20,954,281,000	3,727,420

In 1999, the labor force in the sugar industry including adult workers as well as child workers aged 7 to 17 in the various plantations or haciendas produced nearly 21 billion kilograms of sugar. They did it in ten regions. Those in Region VI which includes, among others, Negros Occidental, did yield the biggest share, 13,282,318,000 kilograms, followed by those in Region VII, then Region IV and Region X. They certainly did such a sizeable contribution to the national economy. Indeed, they have been doing such significant share to national growth and development.

SUGAR CANE CHILD WORKER

1. CHILD WORKERS, THEIR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

The sugar cane child workers are boys and girls, but there are more boys. Some are aged 7 to 9 and others, 15 to 17, but the most numerous are those 10 to 14 years old who are struggling to complete their elementary schooling or have already complete it. Except those who have found links with a good NGO or PO and found such links to be meaningful, they are generally less interested in schooling and they need to resist the appeal of the cash that can be had by working in the plantation. The youngest are 7 years old who are

not making the first step in elementary education or are in Grade I while doing plantation work on non-school days.

Many child workers, now aged 10 and above, started their work before reaching their teenage years. Most of them started when they were between 9 and 12 years old, but there were those who began earlier, when they were 7 or 8 years old.

The majority are studying, but their number decreases as some drop out before the end of the school year. Educational attainmentwise, most are either elementary graduates or in their elementary grades, only a few are in their high school years, and fewest are those who have finished their high school.

They include the part-time workers and the full-time workers. The part-time workers are schoolers, while the full-time workers are out-of-school. At the beginning of every school year, the bigger number are the part-timers or schoolers who do their part-time work during Saturdays, Sundays, holidays and vacation times. But, as the school year rolls on, more and more of them extend their working days to occupy two and then three school days, obviously jeopardizing their school performance and attendance. Thus, before the end of the school year, many of them drop out and part-time workers become full-time workers. A datum from those in the field of education says that, upon entering the door of Grade II, 60% of those who were enrolled in Grade I have already left their school.

They are small and short boys and girls --- small and short for their ages. The majority of those who are 10 to 17 years old have heights shorter than 5 feet. There are those who are relatively taller but thinner. They are underweight and under-height --- showing their growth to have been stunted and they themselves to have been in a state of malnutrition.

Many of them look older than their reported ages as manifested by their physique. In fact had it not been for their height, they could already be mistaken for adult workers long exposed to backbreaking work.

They are dark-skinned not because they were born with such color or their parents have that type of skin but because they have been exposed to the sun. And they do not have good and many clothes manifesting family poverty and low earnings.

But they are generally good boys and girls. They are humble, silent and shy and therefore less active. But they are industrious and obedient to their parents and other worthwhile authorities. They are hardworking, they have the capability for psychological and economic independence. Amid poverty and hard labor that earns only very little, they still have dreams. They want to be a policeman, a soldier, a teacher, a social worker, a nurse, a lawyer, even a doctor, etc.. Thus, due to their good qualities, as soon as they become aware and become organized, they become a fountain of children leaders and advocates. And, as they embrace the value of their rights, education and the future, these leaders and advocates become a fountain of student leaders and honor students in their respective schools.

They are sons and daughters of poor families made up of 6 to 10 or more members. They are the eldest, second to the eldest, third to the eldest, and so forth and so on. Most have parents and live with them in poor huts where the household heads are their fathers. Many have both parents working, while some have mothers who are preoccupied with attending to their younger siblings. Many have other members of the family working, have 2 or 3 additional members doing work in the same or other plantations. However, despite the active economic participation of 3 or 4 members, many families earn only less than P900 weekly, while other families earn a little bit more, between P900 and P1,500. Only a handful earn more than P1,500 weekly.

The child workers in the sugar plantation are mostly children of sugar workers and peasants. They are inheritors of their father's or mother's "profession" and also their poverty. They are continuing their parents economic sufferings and strivings. In fact, they are on the way to the lot of worse poverty.

Their families are usually or mostly migrant families. Thus, they reside within the hacienda (if their parents are *dumaans*) and outside the hacienda (if they are *pangayaws* or *sacadas*). Those who live within the hacienda feel indebted to the landlords, while those living outside and far from the hacienda want a place within or near the hacienda so as to be closer to their workplace. In such situation, they tend to see no more life or possibilities in any world unconnected with the landlord and the hacienda. So, to be able to differentiate the myths from the realities and act in accordance with such realities, they need conscientization, organization and empowerment.

Their communities are the “barracks” within the hacienda or the rural poor communities outside the hacienda. The real power in these communities are in the hands not of the barangays but of the hacendero or landlord. But the workers and the child workers can build their own power by way of organizing and linking with the Pos and NGOs in other haciendas and barangays and those in the municipal or city, provincial, regional and/or national levels.

2. CHILD WORKERS AND THE SCHOOL

Based on the ILS study, majority of the child workers in the sugar plantations are schoolers, more or less 2/3 or 64%. But a 36% non-schoolers is quite big in the face of a government information that more than 90% of the school-age Filipino children are pupils or students. The schoolers are mostly elementary pupils, while a few, 10%, are in their high school.

The non-schoolers are elementary graduates, while a very few are high school graduates. This means that there are more in-schoolers among younger boys and girls, aged 14 and below, than among the older ones, aged 15 to 17. And these in-schoolers are more numerous during the first days or first quarter of the school year. Their number indeed decreases as the school year rolls as a sizeable number quit schooling due to the attraction of the cash-generating plantation work and/or to the pressures imposed by their parents or by the demands of their teachers or both.

Most started studying when they were 7 years old. There were those who persevered as parttime workers and fulltime pupils and are now elementary graduates or are now in their first, second, third or fourth high school year. But they are only a handful. The more numerous are those who had to quit once or twice or more and thus are still in their elementary grades. There are also those who quit schooling and have no more plans of returning to school. And there are those who had not stepped any school ground and are now 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 or even 17 years old and have just entered their Grade I.

Thus, many are three or more years late for their current educational grade or year. For instance, there are 12-17 year-olds who are yet in their early elementary grades. According to a public school teacher in Ormoc City, from every batch of 100 Grade I enrollees, after 6 years of schooling only 20

arrive at the commencement exercises and receive their elementary diplomas; and, after 4 more years of secondary schooling, only 10 are called to climb the stage for their recognition as high school graduates.

It is worth noting that every school year throughout the country starts in June when slack period is still on in the plantations but the fourth month of the school year, September, coincides with the end of the slack period and the beginning of intense activity in the plantations. As discussed later, labor in the sugar cane plantations occupies the period from September to April and it is followed by the slack period from May to September when the canes are maturing and everyone is waiting for the harvesting time and everyone has no work in the plantation. But, upon arrival of September, everyone is revived and is put to work. After 5 months of no work and probably no food or less food or debts piled, everyone indeed is hungrily ready for the resumption of plantation work. Thus, tremendous attraction and pressures are hoisted upon every schooling child worker, thus pushing many of them out of their classrooms for days and later weeks and eventually pushing them out of the school itself for the rest of the year.

Are sugarlands lacking in schools? Here are some data from an internet source regarding certain nationwide educational situation:

- 1) More than half of the more or less 42,000 barangays (the exact number of barangays in 2001 was 41,943) throughout the country do not have provisions for a pre-school. Only 19% of the children aged 4 to 6 years old are able to go to public and private pre-schools.
- 2) More than 1/3 of the barangays could not offer the required 6 years of elementary education. These barangays have primary schools (Grade I up to Grade IV) but not elementary schools (Grade I up to Grade VI).
- 3) According to the PDI, May 18, 1997 issue, 60% of the children drop out when they reach the second grade.
- 4) 61 towns (out of 1,511 towns) or 4.03% throughout the country have no high schools.

Children are certainly affected by such situation especially those more marginalized or disadvantaged ones including the working children in the sugar plantations. However, we just have no available data regarding the regional or provincial distributions of such reality.

What do we have then for children in the sugarlands? Let's consider the following data from the DECS regarding the various public and private elementary and secondary schools throughout the country and per reionsg.

Region	Number of Schools (SY 1999-2000)			
	Level of Education			
	Elementary		Secondary	
	Government	Private	Government	Private
NCR	476	710	135	456
CAR	1,293	61	139	81
I	2,285	173	392	197
II	1,991	97	173	97
III	2,600	487	307	309
IV	4,295	877	621	564
V	2,947	127	376	144
VI	3,261	87	404	149
VII	2,799	182	310	210
VIII	3,426	73	328	82
IX	2,173	67	203	74
X	1,561	132	161	154
XI	2,083	274	234	175
XII	1,411	117	161	113
CARAGA	1,510	82	143	111
ARMM	1,646	9	106	19
TOTAL	35,757	3,555	4,193	2,935

Take Region VI where lie the biggest regional concentration of sugar plantations and the biggest number of sugar cane child workers. It has 3,261 public elementary schools, 87 private elementary schools, 404 public secondary schools and 149 private secondary schools. Relative to the other regions, it has more public schools. With 3,261 it has the third highest number of public elementary schools, the first belongs to Region IV (4,295) and the second to Region VIII (3,426). And with 404 it has the second highest number of public high schools, second only to Region IV which has 621 high schools.

As to private schools, expectedly, Region VI rates relatively low in both elementary and secondary schools. It has only 87 private elementary schools and 109 private high schools. Its places are 6th and 8th from those which have

the least number of private elementary and high schools. No doubt, these schools are least important to the child workers who or whose families can even hardly afford the so-called “free education” of the public schools.

So, as far as the number of schools are concerned, there are schools particularly public elementary and secondary schools for all children including the sugar cane child workers. They are the same schools in all regions including those which have sugar lands. And they are relatively more in the region where the biggest concentration of sugar plantations and sugar mills are in operations. The limitation is that, as one of the findings say, the number is not enough as expressed by the fact that 1/3 of the 41,943 barangays throughout the country lack the complete 6-year elementary education, and 4.03% of the towns have no high schools.

3. WHY WORK IN SUGAR PLANTATIONS?

The Institute of Labor Studies of the DOLE in its monograph entitled *Child Labor in Agriculture: Causes, Condition and Consequences* cited a number of research work and their findings on the factors that lead children to work in agriculture. According to the monograph, the earlier study made by Catalla and Macavinta on the working children in the vegetable industry of Benguet in 1986 pointed to two main reasons why children were employed in such industry. These were that they responded to the necessary manpower requirements in the area and that they were just docile.

Another study on the same phenomenon in the same industry and same province by Boquiren in 1988 revealed factors that influenced the children’s decision to work and the conditions in the farm that encouraged employment of children. The factors included the children’s personal characteristics, family situation, peer influence and certain community characteristics, while the conditions were weak family ties and/ or communication network, low level of awareness with regards laws or policies having to do with child labor among the people, lack of any mechanism or effort to monitor and regulate child labor participation, and weaknesses of the current laws meant to protect them from exploitation.

A study of the child labor situation in the sugar plantations in Pampanga in 1992 underlined the role of the parents in the employment of their children. The majority of the parents just needed cash and regarded child labor as a

means of generating an additional income. Thus, they even sought jobs for their sons and daughters in the plantations.

A relatively recent annual publication on the problem of child labor worldwide by the US Department of Labor was focused on child labor in commercial agriculture. It enumerated several factors that have caused quite a massive children's employment in commercial farms and plantations. These factors are as follows: the family's need for additional income; lack of educational capability on the part of the parents and of educational opportunities in the community; low regard for education among the parents; a prevalent view that child labor is beneficial to the child, family and society; lack of government's surveillance, enforcement and intervention; and low priority put by the government on materializing a truly free, universal and compulsory elementary education in the rural areas.

Furthermore, the more recent ILS monograph identified the following as the reasons why children joined the labor force in the sugar plantations and rice fields: to help their families, to be economically independent, to be with/like his/her friends; and others like to gain experience, to pass the time, and to obey their mothers who told them to work. Of all such reasons, the number one was to help their families, to augment the family income, to add to the family's capability for subsistence.

Most child workers got their jobs through their parents. The parents then did not only encourage their children to work in the plantations but even ask the hacienda owners and/or other influential persons related to the hacienda to get their sons and/or daughters enlisted into the hacienda's labor battalions. For the rest, they got their employment by directly presenting themselves before the hacienda management or applying for any vacancy in the plantation or getting referred to by friends who know somebody in the management.

There was recruitment, and some children were recruits of *contratistas* but such means of joining the labor force had not been a prevalent one. Landlessness and joblessness prevailed in the countryside, pushing hundreds of thousands of poor people to beg for jobs before moneyed people especially plantation owners and pressing upon them to accept whatever type of jobs including those that earn even way below the legal minimum wage and deprive them of all the benefits provided by the law. These people indeed do not need to be recruited. The more so when we talk about those

who live within the compound of the hacienda and who have nurtured the belief that life is just not possible without or outside of the hacienda.

Aside from the push or supply factors, there are other factors that contribute to bringing the children into the midst of the plantations. Child labor indeed is not just a one-sided children’s decision, forced or voluntary, to work, it is also dependent upon the decision of the plantation owner or the contratista. There is the supply of child workers, but is there a demand for them? Does the plantation owner need them? What are the factors that make him decide to hire them?

The ILS study enumerates three factors or reasons: 1) child workers serve as substitutes for adult workers; 2) child workers are seen as equal to adult workers, they do what adults are doing and receive what they receive; and, 3) by hiring the children, the owner thinks he is helping their families.

NATURE OF SUGAR CANE CHILD LABOR

1. WORK ACTIVITIES IN THE PLANTATION

The sugar production flow goes through distinct phases, namely, the cane growing phase, sugar milling phase and sugar refining phase. Each phase consists of the activities shown below:

Cane Growing	Sugar Milling	Sugar Refining
Farm inputs	Sugar Mill	Sugar Refinery
CANE GROWING	MILLING: Juice	AFFINATION
CANE HARVESTING	CLARIFICATION	MELTING
CANE HAULING	EVAPORATION: Syrup	CLARIFICATION & DECOLORIZATION
	CRYSTALLIZATION	CRYSTALLIZATION
	CENTRIFUGATION: Molasses Raw Sugar --- Direct	CENTRIFUGATION Molasses Refined Sugar --- Drying

	Consumption Market	Packaging Market
--	--------------------	------------------

Child labor is part of the laboring process that runs through cane growing and cane harvesting up to a portion of cane hauling. It is not involved in the milling and refining phases.

Together with adult labor, it is involved in the different phases of the cane production process:

- 1) Land preparation phase: the child workers participate in the burning of fields, clearing of the fields of the cane trash, plowing and harrowing. It takes them 14 mandays for each hectare.
- 2) Treatment of canes with fungicide: while the land is being prepared for the planting of canes, child workers are told to treat sugar cane cuttings taken from the top of freshly harvested sugar cane with fungicide. They do this through 7 mandays. They should not be involved in handling chemicals, but they are, and they are not provided with any protective device.
- 3) Planting of sugarcane cuttings: after the land has been prepared, they plant the cuttings or cane points at an average of 2 to 3 laksas (bundles of 10,000 cane points) per hectare. They carry out this activity through 7 mandays
- 4) Weeding: during the early months, they perform weeding 2 to 4 times, each time requiring 4 mandays per hectare.
- 5) Cultivation: this is the turning up of the soil away from and then towards the plant. The child workers do this after the weeding, each time requires 2 mandays per hectare.
- 6) Application of fertilizer: as the sugarcane matures, they apply fertilizer for 3 mandays.
- 7) Harvesting of sugarcane: after a 5-month slack period when the canes are maturing, they are back into operation --- harvesting the sugar

canes. They carry out the harvesting, meaning, the cutting, piling, loading and hauling of canes, through 84 mandays.

They go through all such activities under the direct supervision of a kapatas or foreman/forewoman who makes sure they uninterruptedly do their work with great speed. And those who have had months or years of experience do their job very well to the satisfaction of the kapatas.

The production process discussed above up to the point of milling takes 10 to 13 months, from September to September the following year. But such entire duration is not all work days, weeks and months. The child workers work only from September to April. Then, follows the off-milling season from May to September, a period of five months, when the canes are maturing and there is no work in the plantation and no pay. During such slack period, they can earn only if they are able to get off-farm contractual jobs but such jobs are just very scarce.

Thus, it is during such slack period when recruiters are able to lure child workers to join them to other places especially Metro Manila and to land on other worst forms of child labor. Recruiters promise them easy jobs and higher pays and bring them to such workplaces as the hidden sweatshops and factories in Metro Manila, prostitution dens in Pasay, Quezon City, Kalookan City, and others, high-walled piggeries and poultries in Central Luzon, and oppressive households in subdivisions and villages.

Meanwhile, back at the plantations, after such period of no work, the period of intense activity connected with harvesting and milling sets in. The child workers who missed the recruiters or who preferred not to leave their homes or communities are back into the midst of plantation work --- harvesting and hauling the canes. The intense activity continues after the harvesting and milling, it now consists of the clearing again of the fields, the cutting of cane points and then the planting of the same.

Plantation work is very informal. The hacienda owner, a management staff or a contractor just verbalizes the terms of employment. There is no written contract. And so, there are no regular workers. Another factor that influences the lack of regular workers is the fact that work in the plantation is seasonal.

2. WORK STRUCTURE AND CONDITIONS

The child workers as well as all other workers do their work under the heavy hierarchical structure of power holders and decision-makers. First is the *kapatas* or *cabo* who is a permanent employee and who serves as the time keeper and direct supervisor in the field. He keeps track of the hours put in by those paid on a daily basis. Second is the *encargado* who represents the middle management. He is the main link between the planter-administrator and the workers. *Encargados* are found mostly in haciendas over 5 hectares.

Third is the administrator who represents the top management. Smaller haciendas find no need for an administrator separate from the planter or hacienda owner. Only bigger haciendas, 40 hectares and above, have need for an administrator separate from the planter or owner. And the topmost is the planter or hacienda owner. He owns the plantation and he employs the administrator, *encargado*, *cabo* and workers including the child workers. But there are cases of lessees who pay rent equivalent to 18 or 25% of the sugar produced to the owner of the land for the right to engage in sugar production.

The workers and the child workers work not only to feed all those in the hierarchy but also to pay for the salaries of the *cabo*, *encargado* and administrator and to amass wealth and profit for the planter .

Meanwhile, the workers are typed into three: the “*dumaans*”, “*pangayaws*” and “*sacadas*”. How about the child workers? To what type do they belong?

- 1) The “*dumaans*” are the permanent workers who form the core of the regulars residing year round on hacienda property like the *cabo*.
- 2) The “*pangayaws*” are the temporary workers or casuals who live in nearby communities outside the hacienda and are employed when permanent workers cannot cope with weeding, cutting cane and planting. They are wives and children of *dumaans*.
- 3) The “*sacadas*” are the migratory workers from other provinces. They are hired during planting and milling season and are recruited by *contratistas* who are in turn contracted to provide seasonal workers to the planters.

The child workers indeed do not form another group for they are among the *pangayaws* and the *sacadas*. They are the children of the *dumaans*,

pangayaws and sacadas. But in the field they are grouped together, boys and girls, ten, fifteen, twenty or more of them, under the command of a kapatás. Oftentimes, they are all children, of course, except the kapatás who is usually a woman in her 30s or 40s. Sometimes, one, two or three adults are among the group.

They work 8 to 10 hours a day. Everyone wakes up early at 4 to 5 in the morning, then prepares his breakfast and prepares for work, and then leaves house at a time calculated to arrive at the plantation and start work at 6. He works almost uninterruptedly with only three brief breaks, usually 10 to 20 minutes, one in the morning, then lunchtime, and then the other one in the afternoon. After 8 or more hours, at 4 or 5 in the afternoon, he packs his things and leave for home, feeling exhausted and complaining of some body pains.

There are other children who choose to work only “part-time”, meaning, five to seven hours or three to four hours. Older children aged 15 to 17 tend to work longer hours. Also, non-schooling children set themselves for longer work, eight to ten hours a day.

Sugar cane child workers indeed work at a minimum of two days and a maximum of six days. The schoolers work two days in a week, while non-schoolers work straight six days. But many schoolers no sooner work more than two days in a week. They stretch their length of working days to 4, 5 or 6 days. They are then sacrificing their studies, they skip classes and they go for one, two, three or more absences from their classes.

They receive very small amount of wages --- far below the Regional Wage Board-mandated minimum wage of P139. Most child workers get P50-P60 per day. Those who continue to work beyond 8 hours are given P51-P70. Meanwhile, some younger children receive only P20-P30. Wages are just computed on the basis of their daily work and payments are given at the end of the week.

Many children do not receive their wages in their hands. For the kapatás directly hands over their wages to their parents. The other children receive them directly. Younger children are less likely to get hold of their earnings compared to those aged 15 to 17. And there are more boys than girls who directly get hold of their wages.

There is no consideration for the length of service as the new child workers are given same amount of wages as those who have been working for years.

Many children already are able to recognize some injustice in the wage system. They assert that the wages they they receive are not enough to pay for their work. However, there are children who find no injustice whatsoever and who are contented with what they receive. Well, one of them quips, “It’s better than not earning anything.

Finally, they are all deprived of benefits. “All of them are strangers to the 13th Month pay, paid sick and vacation leaves, SSS coverage, and all other non-wage benefits accorded by the law to the workers.” They have not heard about, known and tasted any benefit from the so-called Social Amelioration Program in the Sugar Industry (SAP). This SAP is a production sharing scheme instituted in the industry by virtue of RA No. 6982 which was signed into law more than a decade ago already, on May 1, 1991 and which was aimed at augmenting the sugar workers’ income and financing socio-economic programs for the improvement of their livelihood and well-being. And they have no hope of becoming truly regular workers or workers who are entitled to all the rights, benefits, privileges and others stipulated in the Labor Code of the land.

3. HAZARDOUS CONDITIONS

The child workers are daily interacting with the various hazards connected with their work in the sugar plantations. These hazards include the following:

- 1) Prolonged exposure to the sun’s heat: the working children already cover themselves with all kinds of thick clothes so as to protect themselves from the scorching heat of the sun. They are minimizing the effect of the sun, but the problem still exists. The effect still operates, and it affects their health. And so, they are prone to headache, fever, flu, colds, cough, etc. as soon as a sudden change in temperature occurs.
- 2) Abrupt exposure to the rain: a prolonged exposure to the heat of the sun followed by an abrupt experience of the rain results in internal

physiological disorder manifested in headache, fever, flu, colds, and/or others.

- 3) Use of a heavy implement: the “machete” or “espading”, the type of bolo used in cutting canes and weeding, weighs 2 to 3 kilos and is just heavy for a child aged 7 to 14 to carry and use in the course of his work. It strains and drains his physical energy. And it can also cause accidents like wounding a part of his foot or arm, cutting off a toe or a finger, and others.
- 4) Carriage of heavy loads: harvesting includes cutting, piling, loading and hauling of canes. The child puts upon his head or shoulders a bundle of canes and carries it through a wooden plank up to the truck. And he does it again and again until all the qualified canes are well placed at the back of the truck. He may fall down from the plank and may be pushed down the ground by the heavy load he carries. He also carries upon his head or shoulder a basket of chop-chop canes and tosses it up to the receiver in the dump truck.
- 5) Use of and exposure to chemicals: he treats the sugarcane cuttings with fungicide, he sprays pesticide, he applies fertilizer. He is physical in contact with chemicals. And he is not well-protected. These chemicals have undoubtedly effects on his physical health. They immediately cause itchiness and wound, but the more deleterious effect is not immediate. The prolonged exposure to chemicals can cause damage on his skin and eyes and can even lead to lung cancer.
- 6) Danger of being bitten by snakes and/or centipedes: there are snakes, centipedes and other harmful reptiles among the thick blades of the can fields, and there are big and poisonous and even deadly ones. And every working child can encounter any of them anytime. And he can only run away from it.
- 7) Social hazards: perhaps, the most damaging hazards are the educational, social and psychological ones. The child is deterred from studying, he is deterred from interacting with his peers, from socializing, and playing. His education is sacrificed, his social development is impaired, his sense of values is not in a proper order. The possibility of a better future is reduced or lost.

The sugarlords do not provide the needed protective gears such as gloves, masks and body shields. Thus, the child workers lack protection against heat, pain, illnesses and accidents as they do their work.. They are no facilities where they can rest or seek cover when they could not longer bear the scorching heat of the sun or the sudden fall of the rain. Health and sanitary facilities are absent in almost all plantations. There are even no comfort rooms near the work place and, sometimes, there are no ready supply of clean water.

SUGARLORDS

In 1989, the National Federation of Sugar Workers-Food and General Trades (NFSW-FGT) listed less than 400 as sugarlords who owned 100 hectares or more of sugarlands. These landlords are distributed in as follows:

Region/Province	Number of Sugarlords Owning 100 hectares or more
Central Luzon	33
North Luzon	3
Southern Luzon	17
North Negros	140
South Negros	125
Leyte	11
Cebu	12
Panay	19
Mindanao	29
Total	389

Again, expectedly Negros had the single biggest concentration of sugarlords. The two Negroses together had 265 of the 389 listed sugarlords or 65% of the sugarlords throughout the country.

Expanding the number 389 to include the more numerous medium and smaller landlords, the number becomes more than 25,000 sugar planters throughout the country. But only 6 % of such total control 44% of all sugar farms larger than 50 hectares, while 63.5% own only 13 % of the sugar farms. This 6% includes, among others, the 389 sugarlords 265 of them are based in Negros.

At present, they propel 36 sugar mills and 16 sugar refineries and work in league with more or less 358 registered traders. The topmost among them are among the biggest names in Philippine business and/or politics. And they always have a sugar bloc in the Congress consisting of congressmen and congresswomen who have vast holdings and interests in the sugar industry and protect such holdings and interests and even expand them for more economic and political power.

They are well-organized. The sugarcane planters are organized in as follows: Confederation of Sugar Producers Associations, Inc., National Federation of Sugarcane Planters, Inc., Panay Federation of Sugarcane Farmers, Inc. and United Sugar Producers Federation of the Philippines, Inc.. The sugar millers have theirs: the Association of Integrated Millers and Philippine Sugar Millers Association, Inc.. And the sugar refiners are organized into a Philippine Association of Sugar Refiners, Inc.

In the service of the sugar industry including the above interests are such government and private agencies as the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA), Philippine Sugar Research Institute (PHILSURIN), Philippine Sugar Technology (PHILSUTECH), Philippine Sugar Alliance (PSA), Sugar Club, and others.

Are these people aware of the problem of child labor in the country? Are they aware of the existence and operation of child labor and even a worst form of child labor in the sugar industry? Can they be moved to exert some efforts to the effect of eradicating immediately such worst form of child labor in the sugar plantations? Is the answer to the last question “Yes, if it serves their interests”?

PAST AND PRESENT EFFORTS

Serious efforts have been undertaken to alleviate the plight of the grossly deprived families of the sugar workers by various sectors since the 1970s. At the forefront of all such efforts have been the sugar workers themselves. Pressed by grave deprivations, they organized themselves into trade unions and sought to improve their living and working conditions, to raise their very low wages and gain certain benefits. Thus, various types of trade unions have developed through the years since Marcos time. There are the right, the middle, the left and others.

The Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP) did help a section of the sugar workers organize themselves into a National Consolidated Union in the Sugar Industry in the Philippines (NACUSIP). The Federation of Free Workers (FFW) also organized its own local union among another group of sugar workers. Then, the National Federation of Sugar Workers (NFSW) brought together various groups of sugar workers for a more militant confrontation with the planters, millers and refiners.

The Church has also been involved in this particular problem. They conducted researches on the plight of the sugar workers and the situation of the sugar industry and based their social action on the findings of such researches during the 1970s and 1980s. They then became active in advocacy and mobilization activities. Since then, they have tried to instill among the workers the firm belief in their collective capability to deal with their immediate problems and influence the changing of oppressive structures and relationships. There were priests and nuns who joined the armed struggle, but the official Church has worked for peace in Negros by partnering with the military and establishing together with them a Church-Military Liaison Committee. They have also been immersed among the grassroots and made possible the establishment and development of basic ecclesial communities.

There have also been NGOs working with the sugar workers, assisting them in their conscientization, organizing and mobilizing work. And, especially during times of crisis in the sugar industry and devastating militarization, private sector foundations and organizations come to Negros and distribute relief goods to victims of human rights violations, dislocation, famine and epidemics.

Disenchanted with what to them are mere palliatives and reformism, many victims of gross injustice and exploitation have gone to the hills and joined

the rebel forces. Thus, sugarlands like Negros and also those in Iloilo, Capiz and Leyte have been hotbeds of insurgencies. Now, two armed groups are not only outdoing each other in getting the support of the exploited population but also fighting and killing each other in certain parts of Negros and Panay.

Meanwhile, the national government and the local government units have had their share of trying to help uplift the poor working people by way of their education, health, social services and many others. But all these have not been sufficient to achieve the set objectives. There has been a law since 1991 which is meant to uplift the economic conditions of the sugar workers by way of a Social Amelioration Program but it seems nothing has yet come out of it that benefits the sugar workers.

EFFORTS FOR THE WORKING CHILDREN

All the efforts mentioned above, no doubt, have had their favorable effects on the children. But such effects have not been adequate to even just deter the aggravation of their situation, much less to uplift them from such situation. There have been child-focused services but all these are charities and welfare services and the manner of delivery is no different from dole-out in which children are seen as mere recipients of the “works of mercy”.

Even efforts that have manifested great dedication to the emancipation of the oppressed and social transformation have had no child-focused component. These have been meant for the interests of the workers, peasants, and other masses but have had no special concern for the child workers. The assumption has been that all such efforts serve everybody among the masses, the women and children included.

It was only with the advent of the CRC-inspired Gos, NGOs, and Pos that the working children in the sugar lands began to be a target of special concern.

Perhaps, the first NGO engaged in combating child labor in the sugar plantation was the Negros Child Labor Center, but it no longer exists.

Now, there are a number of NGOs, national and local, which do work among the child workers in the sugar plantations. Two of them are supported

by the ILO-IPEC, these are ECLIPSE based in Ormoc City and KDF based in Quezon City.

ECLIPSE has been engaged in the organizing of working children in the various sugar haciendas in Ormoc City and the neighboring municipalities of Albueria and Kananga. KDF propels two units that deal directly with child labor in the sugar plantations: the KDF-Negros Occidental Unit which has extended its work from Isabelita to the neighboring towns of Hinigaran and Binalbagan and the KDF-Southern Mindanao which undertakes organizing among the sugarcane workers and child workers in Malungon, Sarangani.

The work of these NGOs consists of the following:

- 1) awareness-building and human rights and child's rights education among the working children, youth and parents;
- 2) organizing of Samahans ng mga Batang Manggagawa (SBMs), SBM-Coordinating Councils, and SBM-federations among the working children and other sectoral associations among the youth and parents;
- 3) advocacy and mobilization highlighting children's rights against child exploitation and the worst forms of child labor;
- 4) development of the children's and people's capability for participation in local governance particularly the BCPC, MSCWC, CSCWC and PSCWC;
- 5) building of relationship with the barangays and the LGUs and organizing of the BCPC in selected barangays;
- 6) educational assistance to working children meant to promote education as an alternative to child labor;
- 7) micro-finance organizing meant to strengthen the family's economic capability and deter the children's engagement in child labor.

Besides ECLIPSE and KDF, TUCP, NACUSIP and, to some extent, Balikatan sa Kaunlaran have been doing organizing and protection work for certain groups of children in Victorias City and other areas in Negros. Five years back, together with the LGU and KDF, TUCP and BSK launched the BCPC movement in Victorias.

Consequently, there has been the development of awareness, organizations, and capability for action and participation among the working children, youth and parents. A growing number of them are now aware of their rights and are expressive and assertive of such rights. They are now gradually

becoming centers of power that influences decision-making in the barangay and municipal and city governments. And they express themselves through meetings, fora, symposia, conferences and celebrations. Under the direction and guidance of the NGOs, they carry out children's marches to express their struggle for their rights, their right to education and freedom from exploitation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Detailed and in-depth assessment of the child labor situation in the sugar industry leading to a more comprehensive grasp of the problem and a sharper approach to its eradication.
2. Continuation, expansion and intensification of the various anti-child labor program interventions in the sugar industry especially the awareness-building, organizing, networking, advocacy and mobilization, educational assistance program, micro-finance and enterprise development. The awareness-building and organizing component should lead to the establishment and strengthening of child workers' associations, federations and coalitions in the local, regional and national levels.
3. Training and development of child workers leaders and advocates in the field of communication and public speaking, organizing, networking, advocacy, etc. so that they become better placed as capable, active and assertive champions of the child workers in general and the sugarcane child workers in particular.
4. Training of groups of child workers in the use of arts and theatre for public presentation, awareness-building, conscientization and advocacy and organization and conduct of cultural, arts and theatrical presentations aimed at conscientizing audiences including sugarlords with respect to the worst forms of child labor in general and the particular worst form in the sugar industry.

5. Networking and partnership-building with the Gos, NGOs, church sector, education sector, trade unions, planters associations, government officials, etc. and development of local, regional and national mechanisms for multisectoral unity, collaboration and approach to the problem of the worst form of child labor in the industry. Examples of such mechanisms are the Municipal, City, Provincial, and Regional Councils (Sub-Committees) for the Welfare of Children and the Council for the Welfare of Children in the national level and also the Regional Child Labor Program Committees and the National Child Labor Programme Committee. In the barangay level, the BCPC. Participation of the children's associations, federations and coalitions should be underlined.
6. Intensifying systematic exodus of working children from sugar plantations through appealing to the planters for involvement and support and expanding the educational opportunities for the working children. Reinstatement of more working children in elementary and high schools. Tie-up with DECS, school administrators, and LGUs for the development child-friendly schools.
7. Development of micro-finance and livelihood projects among the parents of the working children that learn from the experience of model enterprises that have been at work among the poor and from the experience of certain Punla-initiated projects in child labor areas.
8. Development of work with law-makers and law-making bodies in the local and national level in the direction towards legislating the eradication of the worst form of child labor in the sugar industry.
9. Development of work among media for the publicity of the situation of the worst form of child labor in the sugar industry and the systematic efforts of eradicating them in the local and then the national level.
10. Maintenance and development of solidarity with various like-minded organizations in other countries meant to generate support for our efforts here and to support their similar efforts in such countries and to learn from their experiences.

CRITERIA FOR CHOOSING THIS SECTOR

The following are the suitable bases for selecting this sector for a time-bound intervention:

- 1) Existence of the worst form of child labor such as the hazardous child labor in the sugar plantations which find expression in its most deleterious effects on children, on their physical being and health, their rights, development and possibility of a better future.
- 2) Massive character of this child labor in the sugar plantations as depicted by trucks jampacked with working children on the way to the plantation and by groups of 20-30 boys and girls weeding the fields under the command of a kapatás.
- 3) Connection with other worst forms of child labor like trafficking of children, child prostitution, bonded child labor, children's engagement in armed conflict, and other hazardous occupations: efforts meant to eradicate the child labor in the sugar plantations help or support similar efforts meant to eradicate the other worst forms.
- 4) Possibility of working with the sugarlords (the planters associations), making them realize the problem that has been shouldered by the children, persuading them to take a firm stance against the worst form of child labor in the industry and influencing them to act for its eradication from the face of the industry.
- 5) Role played by the sugar industry in the world and national economy: one of the 10 top export earners, a contributor to world economy, an important part of the national economy. We should then act to rid it off the fact that its products are a result partly of the exploitation of the young and small Filipinos aged 7 to 14.
- 6) Possibility of the working children's and people's active participation in the eradication of such worst form of child labor: progress has been made in the development of the consciousness and organizations among the children and people. More and more children, youth and parents are organized to support the cause of the working children expressed in such slogan as "For the children: education, and not exploitation!"

- 7) Certain developments in the realm of multisectoral unity and collaboration among Gos, NGOs, Pos, women, youth, church, private sector, and others have been made in the arena of combating the worst form of child labor in the sugar industry. For instance, the working children's marches in Ormoc, Kananga and Albuera have been enjoying the support and participation of the important sectors in the communities including the LGU, Church, NGOs, trade unions, school administrations, student associations, and others.

- 8) Certainty of goal attainment: there is certainty in attaining the following goals: development and empowerment of working children and people, actions for transformation and development, participation by those in the realm of wealth and power (including the sugarlords), promotion of children's rights, and abolition of the particular worst form of child labor in the sugar industry.

There is also the possibility of generating international support for our struggle in this respect and of contributing our ideas and experiences to similar struggles in other sugar-producing countries in Asia, Latin America, and others.

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 1995 Survey of Children 5-17 National Report, National Statistics Office, December 1998, Manila Philippines.
- The Philippine Sugar Industry: More Bitter Times Ahead for Workers, Ibon Fact and Figures, Vol. 20 No. 24 31 December 1997
- Institute for Labor Studies, Comprehensive Study on Child Labor in the Philippines Monograph Series No. 5 (July 1996)
- Institute for Labor Studies, Effects of Globalization on Child Labor in Selected Philippine Industries Monograph Series No. 1 (November 1994)
- Del Rosario, Rosario and Bonga, Melina A. Child Labor in the Philippines: A Review of Selected Studies and Policy Papers Manila: 2000.
- Child Workers in Asia and Save the Children Invisible Children: Child Work in Asia and the Pacific Thailand: 1997
- International Labor Organization Attacking Child Labor in the Philippines: An Indicative Framework for Philippine-ILO Action Manila: 1994
- Sumagaysay, Marietta B, "Child Labor in Eastern Visayas: A Rapid Appraisal Survey" Philippine Labor Review: Early to Work Vol. 18 No. 1 (1994) 26-109
- US Department of Labor "By the Sweat and Toil of Children Vol. II, Executive Summary

CHILD LABOR
IN THE
SUGAR
PLANTATIONS
A CURSORY
ASSESSMENT

January 2002

CHILD LABOR IN THE SUGAR INDUSTRY: A CURSORY ASSESSMENT

CONTENT

INTRODUCTION

DEFINITION

**CHILD LABOR AND ITS WORST FORMS
SUGAR CANE CHILD LABOR**

INCIDENCE OF SUGAR CANE CHILD LABOR

**SOME FIGURES FROM NSO, SRA AND NGOs
SUGAR CANE CHILD LABOR IN AT LEAST TEN REGIONS**

SUGAR CANE CHILD WORKER

**CHILD WORKERS, THEIR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES
CHILD WORKERS AND THE SCHOOL
WHY WORK IN SUGAR PLANTATIONS?**

NATURE OF WORK

**WORK ACTIVITIES IN THE PLANTATION
WORK STRUCTURE AND CONDITIONS
HAZARDOUS CONDITIONS**

SUGARLORDS

PAST AND PRESENT EFFORTS

EFFORTS FOR THE WORKING CHILDREN

RECOMMENDATIONS

CRITERIA FOR CHOOSING THIS SECTOR

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 1995 Survey of Children 5-17 National Report, National Statistics Office, December 1998, Manila Philippines.
- The Philippine Sugar Industry: More Bitter Times Ahead for Workers, Ibon Fact and Figures, Vol. 20 No. 24 31 December 1997
- Institute for Labor Studies, Comprehensive Study on Child Labor in the Philippines Monograph Series No. 5 (July 1996)
- Institute for Labor Studies, Effects of Globalization on Child Labor in Selected Philippine Industries Monograph Series No. 1 (November 1994)
- Del Rosario, Rosario and Bonga, Melina A. Child Labor in the Philippines: A Review of Selected Studies and Policy Papers Manila: 2000.
- Child Workers in Asia and Save the Children Invisible Children: Child Work in Asia and the Pacific Thailand: 1997
- International Labor Organization Attacking Child Labor in the Philippines: An Indicative Framework for Philippine-ILO Action Manila: 1994
- Sumagaysay, Marietta B, "Child Labor in Eastern Visayas: A Rapid Appraisal Survey" Philippine Labor Review: Early to Work Vol. 18 No. 1 (1994) 26-109
- US Department of Labor "By the Sweat and Toil of Children Vol. II, Executive Summary