



Reaching Out Beyond Closed Doors

A Primer on Child Domestic Labor in the Philippines

Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc.

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the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Reaching Out Beyond Closed Doors
*A Primer on Child Domestic Labor
in the Philippines*

Ma. Cecilia Flores-Oebanda
Roland R. Pacis
Jerome A. Alcantara

Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc.
Manila 2004

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AKAP	Adhikain para sa Karapatang Pambata
BBK	Bantay Bata sa Komunidad
CDL	Child Domestic Labor/ Child Domestic Laborer
CDW	Child Domestic Work/ Child Domestic Worker
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development
DOLE	Department of Labor and Employment
ILO-IPEC	International Labour Organization—International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour
NCR	National Capital Region
NPACL	National Program Against Child Labor
PPA	Philippine Ports Authority
PHIC	Philippine Health Insurance Corporation
PTBP	Philippine Time-Bound Program for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor
QCPDF	Quezon City Parks Development Foundation
RMI	Religious of Mary Immaculate
SSS	Social Security System
SUMAPI	Samahan at Ugnayan ng mga Manggagawang Pantahanan sa Pilipinas
UN CRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
VF	Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc.

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CONTENTS

Foreword	13
Chapter 1	
Child Domestic Laborers in the Philippines	16
Defining Child Domestic Work and Child Domestic Labor	18
Chapter 2	
Child Domestic Labor—A Worst Form of Child Labor	28
ILO Convention 182 and Child Domestic Labor as a Worst Form of Child Labor	29
Legal Protection for Child Domestic Laborers	
Laws for Domestic Workers	
Laws for the Protection of Children	
The Way Forward: Crafting Effective Response and Approaches	34
What’s in a Name: Giving Importance to the Kasambahay	36
Chapter 3	
The Kasambahay Program: Piloting Innovative Approaches	38
The Philippine Time Bound Program for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor	39
Targeting Child Domestic Laborers within the Philippine Time- Bound Program: The Kasambahay Program as a Catalyst for National Action	40
The Kasambahay Hotline—Facilitating Quick Action to Rescue CDLs	41
Providing Direct Actions	42
<i>Bantay Kasambahay</i>	44
Education as a Central Approach	45
Organizing and Capacity Building	46
Bahay Silungan sa Daungan: Plugging the Leaks	47
Policy Advocacy	48
What We Can Do	49

FOREWORD

Employing children as domestic workers is a socially and culturally accepted practice in Philippine society. With slavery as its historical root, domestic work is an old occupation. Not even the tremendous advances in technology have stopped the number of domestic workers from rising. Since domestic work is widely accepted, affordable and accessible—employing domestic workers is a practice that is part and parcel of the everyday life of Filipino households. It is sad to say that even in this globalizing world, many domestic workers remain trapped in households as modern-day slaves, and most of them are children.

While it is difficult to generalize the relationship between individual employers and their child domestic workers—for there are employers who are very exploitative and abusive and there are those who are supportive of their workers—they play a vital role in each other’s life. Employers need to realize that these workers free us from the drudgery of domestic tasks. They make double-income families possible. They enable many women to engage in more profitable economic activities. Employers should recognize in return that they can contribute to the growth of our domestic workers.

This primer is Visayan Forum Foundation’s effort to share basic knowledge and information to respond effectively to the issues and needs of child domestic laborers and of the domestic work sector as a whole. It is also our hope that this primer will help our policy-makers examine the myths that surround the sector, and break their invisibility and marginalization. This also hopes to improve legislative policies and provide an environment of standardization of employer-employee relationship by providing special protection for child domestic laborers. This serves as a guide on how to attack the issue holistically and reveal its connection to other issues like trafficking, forced labor, gender discrimination and other violations of children’s rights. Lastly, this is our simple contribution to the overall efforts in bringing dignity to our domestic workers—our partners in nurturing our children, homes and families.



Ma. Cecilia Flores-Oebanda
President, Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc.

1

Child Domestic Labor in the Philippines

Child Domestic Laborers in the Philippines

In the Philippines, children in domestic labor remain as one of the largest classes of working children. We can find them everywhere, doing all sorts of chores—washing clothes, taking care of children, cooking, cleaning the house—yet we don't seem to notice them.

According to the *April 1995 National Statistics Office (NSO) Labor Force Survey*, there were 301,701 domestic workers or househelpers 19 years old and younger, the majority of whom (272,819) are between 15–19 years old. The same survey revealed that there were 28,882 children between 10–14 years old working as domestic workers.

The International Labour Organization-International Program on the Elimination of Child Labour (ILO-IPEC) released a survey in that same year showing that 35,770 children aged 5–17 years old who worked as housekeepers lived and worked away from home. Six years later, the *2001 NSO Survey on Children 5–17 Years Old* reported that 230,000 children worked in private households. The same survey counted 120,000 children living away from home employed in private households.

While the numbers may already be large enough to cause alarm, these are very conservative figures. Visayan Forum, drawing from more than a decade of working with child domestic laborers, declares that there are at least one million children engaged in domestic work. Evidently, existing data-gathering systems are not adequate to pierce through the shroud of invisibility that covers these children.

Massive yet invisible; important yet ignored

Employing children for domestic labor has already been ingrained in our culture; people think that it is natural, even fashionable, to hire a child to tend to the needs of the family. We have become so used to them that we take very little notice of the fact that we might be condemning these children to a lifetime of bondage.

We have also come to rely on these children to free us from the drudgery of everyday domestic tasks. Child domestic laborers make double-income families possible. Women who used to be tied down with household work are now free to engage in more profitable economic activities.

A Closer Look

In preparation for the Philippine Time-Bound Program, Visayan Forum and partners are conducting a continuing baseline survey and profiling of child domestic laborers in NCR, Davao, Iloilo, and Bacolod, covering 1,479 children. Here are some of the highlights (as of June 2004):

- Child domestic laborers (CDLs) are very young, mostly 12 to 17 years old, 92% are female
- Eighty-three per cent live in the homes of their employer. 54.9% have no days off
- Almost half (40.9%) come from families working in the agricultural sector.
- Majority of CDLs listed in NCR have already stopped studying. A significant portion (25%) of children surveyed in this area said that they went to the city to gain more work experience. A large number (25.9%) have siblings also working in the city
- In Bacolod and Iloilo, education is the main motivation for child domestic laborers, with more than half going there to study
- Davao registered the largest number of surveyed CDLs. The area also documented the youngest case of child domestic labor, with two six-year old children already working.

It is ironic that while child domestic laborers have been able to free women from gender-ascribed household chores, many of them, mostly female, are languishing silently behind closed doors.



Parents of child domestic laborers think that by sending their children to work in private households, they can raise money for the needs of the family and, at the same time, educate their children and prepare them for adult life. For some, they have no choice but to use their children as “payment” for debts.

For most poor families, domestic work is their only passport to a better life. Domestic work is often viewed as the safest work for children. But will domestic work really lead to a better life for the child? Is it really safe?

Defining Child Domestic Work and Child Domestic Labor

A major obstacle in coming up with accurate data on child domestic work is the lack of a clear and official definition of domestic work.

The Philippine Labor Code defines domestic or household services as “... services in the employer’s home, which are usually necessary and desirable for the maintenance and enjoyment thereof, including ministering to the personal comfort and convenience of the members of the employers’ household ...”. For the Philippines, children are those below 18 years old or those who because of physical, mental, or other incapacities, cannot decide or take care of one’s self.

Our current definition of domestic work is vague and does not provide us with a conceptual handle that could help us determine who really belong to the domestic work sector. This vagueness precludes us from formulating actions responsive to the special nature of their work and lives. Furthermore, this definition is dangerous because it can be used to justify abuses or can be seen as a license to commit abuses.

The proposed Magna Carta on Household Helpers seeks to remedy this loophole by coming up with a definition that limits the types of work that will fall under the classification of domestic work: “...tasks ascribed as normal household chores within a specific household for which he/she is being paid by the employer. The term (household helper) includes the maids, cooks, houseboys, family drivers, and yayas who provide daily service to a single, specific household either on a live-in or live-out basis.”

The definition from the International Labor Organization (ILO) expands the definition of domestic work: “Household tasks performed as an economic activity in the household of a third person ... usually exclude domestic chores carried out by members of the family.” This definition recognizes the practice of working not only for cash but also for other benefits such as free meals, board and lodging, or support to education.

The ILO also provides us with a guide on what forms of child domestic work are intolerable, what we consider as child domestic labor, and should be immediately addressed.

- If it is done by children under the minimum working age (under Philippine laws, below 15 years old)
- If it is done by children 15–18 years old under slavery-like, hazardous, or other exploitative conditions
- If it is extremely hazardous because of the tasks given, conditions of work or physical, emotional and sexual abuse; practices similar to slavery such as debt bondage or forced labor, and child domestic labor into which a child has been trafficked

This clearly differentiates child domestic work and its worst forms (termed as child domestic labor) from other non-hazardous domestic tasks such as may fall under being a “helping hand”, where the task that is undertaken by a child of any age as part of daily chores in their own family home, does not interfere with any of the child’s rights under international law, and does not constitute economic activity.

They are vulnerable

Child domestic laborers are very young, usually aged 15–17 years old. The youngest documented cases are those from Davao (as young as six years old) and Bacolod (eight years old). As a sector, domestic work is seen as a “woman’s work,” hence a majority of those who enter this sector are female. In the 2002 Labor Force Survey, 92% of the surveyed domestic workers are female, while among the 230,000 children working in private households, 82.2% are female. Most domestic workers are vulnerable to abuses because of their gender and age.

They are hidden behind the closed doors of their employers, making them inaccessible to government inspectors, statisticians, NGO workers, local government officials, and even to neighbors and passers-by. Abuses are undetected and unreported and the policy, administrative, and regulatory machinery of government are not attuned to effectively monitor their conditions and provide immediate interventions. Exploitation may happen—but the outside world will not be able to see it happen, much less do anything about it.

The open-ended definition of domestic workers or household helpers in the Labor Code, instead of serving as the basis for protective actions, instead contributes to the exploitative situation by lending itself to various interpretations (*see inset on Defining Child Domestic Work and Child Domestic Labor*). The future of the child is dependent on the good heart of the employer and on what the employers see as their “... personal comfort and enjoyment...”

The inability of our laws to set a standard for relationships also opens the child domestic laborer to exploitation. They are not employees. Yet they can also never be part of the employers’ family. Yet the employer exercises complete authority over the child—as guardian and as steward—able to do whatever he or she feels to be necessary to “bring the child up properly”, even using cruelty as a form of “discipline.”

Child domestic laborers work far away from their families and from their natural support systems. As children who are strangers to city life, they are reluctant to seek outside assistance even in cases of extreme abuse. They do not know where they can ask for help and who their friends or foes are. Because of this lack of knowledge and other relevant information, the child is reluctant to get out of an abusive relationship with an employer.

In some cases, they are not allowed to go out of the employers' house or have a day-off. Their world is limited to the corners of their employers' home, which, in cases of abuse and exploitation, becomes a virtual prison cell for the child.



Roselle

Roselle has worked for 11 employers just to be able to go to school. She was employed as a domestic worker as early as 9 years old. The anguish and pain she experienced throughout these years have corrupted her childhood.

When she was 12, she was nearly raped by a 70-year-old man, her employer's father, who tried to win her over with money and food. After leaving her former employer, she moved to work in another household where she slept at the nipa hut located outside the main house. In this household, she was fed with leftover food; her work entailed doing all the household chores by herself. She also went through the ordeal of being hit, her hair pulled, and even slapped, not only by her employer but by other members of the household. Her duties included carrying feeds uphill where the pig sty was situated. One of her former employers paid her PhP1 (US\$.02) a day, and at times nothing.

Because of her fervent desire to finish her education, she attended night school. After doing back-breaking work during the day, she would walk to school daily, and return home exhausted, facing still another load of household chores. Once, she came home at 6:30 pm because they had some practice in school. However, her employer did not care about her reason for coming home later than expected. Roselle was simply locked out of the house until dawn. Now that she is shielded from her former employers, she helps the Visayan Forum advocate for the rights of CDWs.

They endure slave-like conditions

So much is expected from child domestic laborers by their employers. They are expected to do all types of heavy work: cleaning the house, doing the laundry, ironing clothes, taking care of the children, cooking, even massaging their employers. To think that these are children—their physical and mental faculties are not yet well-developed to meet the rigors of everyday toil. They are expected to perform multiple tasks for multiple employers. And they are expected to do this for at least 15 hours a day, to be on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, with no day off for most cases.

Child domestic laborers do all this work in exchange for a few measly pesos. They are considered lucky if they receive the minimum wage of P800 a month. Actually, they are lucky if they get paid at all. Most child domestic laborers pay off the debts of their parents, the placement fee of the recruitment agency, the cost of their transportation, food, and lodging. These children have no social protection. If the child domestic laborer or any family member falls ill, meets an accident or any form of contingency, the child will have to borrow money again. Hence, they are in perpetual debt and they work for money that they have not received and probably never will.

Gemma

To his utter shock, Manong Mando, a taxi driver in Davao, read in a tabloid that his daughter Gemma was in jail. Her employer accused her of putting rat poison in their food. Manong Mando could hardly believe and accept his daughter's sad plight because months earlier, Gemma was writing to him that she was always maltreated at work. She was literally crying to be rescued.

Manong Mando sought the help of the local social worker, who referred him to Visayan Forum. The NGO, together with Adhikain para sa Karapatang Pambata (AKAP), provided free transportation and legal assistance to help him free his daughter from prison. He had to leave his work for more than three months, and visited his daughter at the DSWD Juvenile Center in Manila everyday until the court agreed that the trial be held in Davao.

They endure abuse

CDLs commit mistakes, as all humans do. But unlike most humans, mistakes committed by CDLs are often met with insults. They actually endure insults on a daily basis—they are called *tanga*, *boba*, *batugan*, *malandi* (roughly translate to, respectively, stupid, dumb, sloth, harlot-like in flirtiness). These insults leave a scar on the child, making them meek, passive, and insecure. They lose their self-respect. It is no wonder that most CDLs are ashamed of themselves and their work. They usually deny their job as domestic workers if approached or asked.

These children suffer from physical abuse, often in the guise of teaching them “discipline” and “improving their performance.” Visayan Forum has documented various forms of cruelty imposed on “under-performing” child domestic laborers. They are slapped, kicked, beaten, in some cases, to the point of death. One child was made to drink acid used for unclogging drainage. Another was burned by her employer with a flat iron. One was made to kneel on a wooden stool for hours with fire extinguishers on both hands.



Girls are vulnerable to sexual molestation. In Cebu City, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) revealed that in the 1990’s, eighty per cent of reported victims of rape, attempted rape, and other acts of sexual abuse were from child domestic laborers.

It is, of course, arguable that these are isolated cases. It can even be argued that there are more “good-hearted, conscientious employers” than those who actually abuse their child domestic laborer. Even cases of abuse can be construed as “handling them with iron hands, for their own good.” But the point is that these abuses can happen to child domestic laborers anytime. For lack of accepted legal and moral standards, child domestic laborers can only pray that they serve under employers who, at the very least, will not kill them.

We may never know the extent of these abuses because these are hidden from our eyes or, worse, we may see them but decide that it is better for them to remain invisible.

They are exposed to hazards

Although we consider domestic work as “safe”, is it really safe for children? Not if they are made to work difficult tasks for very long hours. Not if they are made to use chemicals, insecticide, and harmful cleaning materials. Not if they are made to use electrical and mechanical equipment without any training or safety precautions. Not if they are made to do work that exposes them to sexual abuse and molestation, like giving a massage to male employers. They braved the odds by leaving their families and placing their fate in the hands of recruiters or traffickers.



The dreams and aspirations of young women and children are fertile hunting grounds for recruiters and traffickers. A significant number of child domestic laborers are trafficked— “... recruited, transported, transferred, harbored, or received by means of threat, use of force, deceit, or other dubious means, for exploitative purposes, usually for prostitution, slavery, forced labor, and debt bondage ...” (From Republic Act 9208).

Domestic work, which is perceived as safe, and promises of high pay and educational opportunities, are used to lure girls and young women to prostitution and other worst forms of child labor. These children face far more uncertainties. During the recruitment stage, they may have no idea where they are going to work or if they are really going to work as domestic workers under the promised terms and conditions. Their only contact in the city is the recruiter or the trafficker. If they face danger or abuse or if they fall into prostitution or other forms of exploitation, they can only turn to the trafficker—not exactly the most trustworthy person.

Trafficking aggravates the situation because these children are treated as commodities – sold to the highest bidder without any assurance for their safety and well-being.

Why did they take their chances?

The initial results of the baseline and profiling survey of Visayan Forum revealed the following:

- A large percentage are forced to work as domestic laborers because of hunger and poverty (37%)
- The quest for quality and accessible education is a big motivation for them to work as child domestic laborers. However, they continued experiencing difficulties.
- 19.6% said that they came to the city to look for better educational opportunities
- Almost all of the 1,479 surveyed children expressed desire to continue studying
- 50% of the child domestic laborers have dropped out of school in the past, with half of these citing poverty as the main reason
- For NCR, Bacolod, and Iloilo, an overwhelming majority (60%) have already dropped out

All for the hope of a better life

Children endure all of these because they feel that domestic work is their only ticket to escape poverty and hopelessness. Most CDLs agreed to leave their families and work because they dream of getting quality education while working. However, in most cases, they are deprived of education and the opportunity for self-development. As soon as they start working, they find out that they are tied to a 24-hour workload.

For those who continued to dream, the employer's lack of support may be the next stumbling block. Some employers feel that schooling conflicts with the work of the child. Either the employer deducts money from the child's wages or the child is made to choose between continuing her work and continuing her studies. For the child domestic laborer who has no other means of support, who is the breadwinner for the family, or who pays off the debt of her family, it was never really a "choice."



Still, some persevere. And some have been lucky enough to have employers who value their child domestic laborers. Even then, if they have to hurdle another stumbling block—the education system. There are not enough schools with night or Sunday schools to accommodate the special condition of child domestic laborers. Even if the public school system is supposed to be free, transportation expenses, uniforms, school fees, school projects and other requirements strain the child's finances. Contingencies experienced by their own families and the employers' household, such as accidents, illnesses, and other emergencies, force them to miss school more often than other students. Most of them are already too old for their grade level and are embarrassed to sit in the same classroom with much younger children. They do not participate in class discussions; they get discouraged easily, and are not resilient enough to face occasional failures in class.

All these conspire to deny child domestic laborers the chance to realize their dreams. All these conspire to perpetuate the vicious cycle of poverty.

2

A Worst of Form Child Labor

A Growing Phenomenon

Domestic work is an old occupation. The work is necessary but it is also deemed as lowly, tiring, repetitious, and the time spent on it could be channeled to more profitable endeavors. The rise of urban centers and the middle class has exacerbated the phenomenon, and with this comes the demand for younger, more subservient household servants. As more and more once-traditional housewives seek remunerative work outside their homes, the demand for young domestic laborers also increases.

The same expansion of urban centers and the middle class has attracted young migrants to venture outside of their own provinces. Armed conflicts, the uneven development between the urban and rural areas, and widening economic disparities—have driven people out of their communities, most of them looking at urban centers as the new Promised Land. Traffickers are working overtime to lure young girls into cities, using “safe” domestic work as their bait.



The beliefs and values of child domestic laborers, their parents, and the employers all contribute to the rise of child domestic labor and, unfortunately, cases of abuse and exploitation of women and children.

Child Domestic Labor as a Worst Form of Child Labor

It is clear that the lives and the working conditions of child domestic laborers are under very exploitative terms. When one or more elements of child labor are present, it is our moral and legal obligation to alleviate the conditions of the child trapped under these circumstances. If the child suffers from life-threatening abuse or is exposed to imminent danger, the child should be immediately removed from work.

Even if the child does not experience at the moment any of the conditions listed above, there is a high probability that the child domestic laborer will fall into exploitative and abusive conditions characteristic of worst forms of child labor. This is because the very nature of their work makes exploitation and abuse imminent, unless we do something to protect them.

Indications Toward Worst Forms of Child Labor

- Work at a very young age under minimum age for employment
- Mostly girls
- Work far away from home
- Work in isolation or behind closed doors of the employers
- Work during the night
- Abused or at risk of physical violence or sexual harassment
- Bonded by debt
- Work with very little pay or no pay at all
- Work excessive hours
- Exposed to safety and health hazards
- Sold or trafficked
- Missing out on education and other means of self-improvement

ILO Convention 182 and Child Domestic Labor as a Worst Form of Child Labor

Most of the conditions that ILO Convention 182 and its accompanying instrument, ILO Recommendation 190, has deemed as “worst forms of child labor” and “hazardous work” are indeed present in many cases of child domestic labor.

“Worst Forms Definition” from ILO Convention 182 and Recommendation 190	Conditions of Work of Child Domestic Laborers
(a) All forms of slavery or practices similar to 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	<p>Child domestic laborers who are sold or trafficked</p> <p>CDLs who are treated like slaves, as property of the owner, and traded into other households</p> <p>CDLs who are used as payment for debts</p> <p>CDLs who cannot leave their employers because they have to pay off the cash advances, placement fees, finders fees, transportation and food, and other expenses incurred during the recruitment and placement process</p>

<p>“Worst Forms Definition” from ILO Convention 182 and Recommendation 190</p>	<p>Conditions of Work of Child Domestic Laborers</p>
<p>b.) Work which by nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children</p>	<p>The fact that they work inside the households of their employers; they are from the most vulnerable sectors; and that existing laws and their mechanisms for implementation are not relevant to their actual conditions make them defenseless against various forms of abuse</p>
<p>c.) Work which exposes children to physical, psychological, or sexual abuse</p>	<p>CDLs who are highly vulnerable to physical, verbal, emotional, and sexual abuse</p>
<p>d.) Work with dangerous machinery, equipment, or tools</p>	<p>CDLs who are made to operate electrical equipment and other instruments that they are not familiar with</p>
<p>e.) Work in unhealthy environment which may, for example, expose children to hazardous substances, agents, or processes, or to temperatures, noise levels, or vibrations damaging to their health</p>	<p>CDLs who are exposed to dangerous cleaning agents, cooking fluids, and other dangerous chemicals</p> <p>They are made to work under difficult and unhealthy working conditions like extreme temperatures, live in sub-human quarters</p>
<p>f.) Work under particularly difficult conditions such as work for long hours or night-work where the child is unnecessarily confined to the premises of the employer</p>	<p>CDLs who are on-call 24 hours a day; they may be awakened during the middle of the night to tend to the needs of their employers</p> <p>Many are denied of their “day-off” and confined to the house</p> <p>All contact with family members and friends can be cut off anytime, and they are hidden from the government and social protection</p>

Laws for Domestic Workers

There are existing local and international laws that could be used to promote the welfare of child domestic laborers. Due to the the absence of a law that sets specific standards, programs, and policies for these children, NGO workers and the government turn to these laws in order to give domestic workers a semblance of protection.

- The Philippine Labor Code or Presidential Decree 442, enacted in 1974, sets the minimum employment standard for domestic workers or household helpers in general. Subsequent amendments to the Labor Code pegged the minimum wage for domestic workers at P800 (about 15 US dollars) a month. It also contains general provisions on occupational safety and health, opportunity for education and training, board, lodging, and medical attendants, terms of contract, and employment certification and records. The Labor Code also prescribed remedial measures for violations of standards enshrined in the law.
- Republic Act 7655 provides for the mandatory inclusion of domestic workers earning a minimum of P1,000 a month into the Social Security System (SSS). Employers are required to pay for their share for the monthly contributions.

Laws for the Protection of Children

- At the International level, various treaties and conventions have been adopted and ratified by the Philippines to serve as a framework for policy and action for the protection of children. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child (UN CRC) was a milestone in international law because it accorded to all children special rights that they must enjoy and that State parties must endeavor to protect. It tasked governments to come up with programs and policies for the best interest of the child.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) came up with ILO Convention 138, where State parties agreed on a minimum age of employment. ILO Convention 182 came as a result of intense lobbying from civil society to come up with international standards for immediate action on worst forms of child labor. The Philippines has ratified these International Conventions and is duty-bound to enact and implement measures to ensure compliance with its provisions.

- The Philippine Labor Code sets the minimum employment age at 15 years old. It also provides for the minimum age of employment for hazardous occupations at 18 years old. DOLE Department Order No. 4 clarified what are to be considered as hazardous occupations, including those in farming, fishing, quarrying, mining, deep-sea fishing. However, DOLE Order No. 4 is deemed inadequate because it prohibited specific occupations, without considering the exploitative and hazardous conditions that may be attendant in other occupations not included in the list. Under DOLE Order No. 4, a 16-year-old child employed as a domestic worker who is being made to clean windows of their high-rise apartment is not included in the prohibition.
- Republic Act 7610, the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation, and Discrimination Act, is noted for innovative provisions for the protection of children. It mandates inter-agency coordination in providing protection to children. However, this law was severely criticized because it reversed the standing policy of prohibiting the employment of those below 18 years old. After less than a year came its amendment, RA 7658, re-instituting the prohibition of employing children below 15 years old, allowing for only two exceptions: children working under the sole and direct supervision of parents where only family members are employed and for children involved in entertainment. The law provides for strict requirements for the employment of children under these two exceptions.
- Republic Act 9231 or "An Act providing for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor and Affording Stronger protection for the Working Child.", was enacted in January 2004, . Children below 18 years old are not allowed to engage in occupations considered as "worst forms of child labor." It went beyond DOLE Order No. 4 on Hazardous Work because RA 9231 not only prohibits employment in specific hazardous occupations but also prohibits the employment of children in situations or conditions that can endanger their physical, mental, or emotional well-being.
- Republic Act 9208, the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003, provides for integrated actions among all stakeholders to curb trafficking in persons. The law defines trafficking as "... and taking advantage of a person's vulnerability for the purpose of exploitation." According to the law, exploitative situation includes, but is not limited to, prostitution, other forms of sexual exploitation such as pornography, bonded labor, servitude, and slavery. It follows the lead of RA 7610 of

inter-agency and multi-stakeholder approaches to curb trafficking in persons. It places special attention to children and includes among its punishable offenses the trafficking for slavery-like or bonded work. Under this law, parents, siblings, relatives or other authorities who recruited the child for exploitative purpose are not only liable but will receive the maximum penalty prescribed by this law.

Gaps in Existing Laws for Child Domestic Laborers

The definition of household help, as discussed above, is vague and can be misconstrued. The Labor Code also excludes domestic workers who work not for wages but for other forms of remuneration, like board and lodging, free meals, and the like. The provisions are outdated, specifically those setting wage standards. Monitoring compliance with the law also poses a challenge to government and NGOs since the existing regulatory mechanisms for ensuring adherence with labor standards are not applicable to private household settings.

RA 7655 fails to take into consideration the fact that the minimum wage for domestic workers is still pegged at P800. While the law provides for enrollment of domestic workers into the pension scheme handled by the SSS, it does not cover health insurance since this has already been transferred to the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PHIC). The implementation of the law also suffers from lack of serious efforts to disseminate information to domestic workers and their employers and from the fact that domestic workers cannot access these offices on Mondays to Fridays, because Sunday is usually their day off.

Laws that can be used in favor of child domestic workers are few and far between. While specific provisions of the laws discussed above cover certain conditions of the work and lives of child domestic laborers, these fail to provide a legal and policy environment that will give us a benchmark for sustainable employer-employee relationship and a framework for a long-term approach to develop and emancipate the sector and ensure their enjoyment of rights and benefits accorded to them by law. Scattered policies and instruments fail to set a course for national and local actions to promote the welfare of child domestic workers. These gaps account for the incongruity between the intent of the laws and the actual implementation of these laws when applied to the special conditions of child domestic workers.

The Magna Carta for Household Helpers

A pioneering piece of legislation, the proposed Magna Carta for Household Helpers, or the *Batas Kasambahay*, was developed to fill in the gap in terms of laws for the protection of domestic workers. According to its major sponsor, Rep. Jack Enrile, the bill “seeks to institutionalize and uplift minimum working parameters and standards of the household helper industry, and strives to bring this traditionally informal labor sector closer towards the benefits and protection accorded by law to the more formalized sectors of the labor force—without losing sight of the singular peculiarities traditionally inherent in the relationship between the employer and the Kasambahay.”

The *Batas Kasambahay* updates the Labor Code provisions on minimum working standards to make it more attuned to the realities faced by domestic workers. For child domestic laborers, it expressly prohibits the employment of children below 15 years old. It strictly regulates the terms of employment of children 15 to 17 years old into domestic work by providing for maximum hours of work per day and minimum wage standards, by prohibiting their engagement into night work and hazardous work, and by institutionalizing immediate services to child domestic laborers in distress. It also mandates special provisions to make education and training accessible to domestic workers.

Despite its radical break from the traditional concept of domestic work or household help, the *Batas Kasambahay*, developed and advocated for by NGOs and social partners led by the Visayan Forum, Samahan at Ugnayan ng mga Manggagawang Pantahan sa Pilipinas (SUMAPI), and the Ateneo Human Rights Center-AKAP has gained tremendous support from other NGOs, government agencies, and international institutions since the 10th Session of Congress (1995–1998). Hopefully, its momentum will be carried over and enacted by the next session of Congress (2004–2007).

The Way Forward: Crafting Effective Response and Approaches

The phenomenon of child domestic labor is complex and some of the factors that drive children into domestic labour are rooted in poverty, social inequities, gender biases, ignorance of the risks of domestic service, lack of access to education or poor quality of education, and traditional, cultural hierarchies. These factors are far-reaching and some have persisted throughout the centuries. It will surely take more than piece-meal, individual initiatives to make a dent on the problem.

While much has been accomplished in highlighting the concerns and the situation of child domestic laborers and drawing national attention to their plight, there is still a need to match heightened awareness with concrete local-level action. Government agencies and organizations need to recognize and include child domestic laborers in their policies and programs, not merely as peripherals, but as actual targets for interventions. Similarly, the concerns and special conditions of child domestic laborers need to be integrated in their practices and approaches for delivery of services.

Gaps That We Need to Address Immediately

How do we move forward? We deal first with these immediate concerns:

- Generating specific national data on child domestic labor and in mapping where they can be located. These data can be used in designing more appropriate and cost-effective interventions and in lobbying for policy reforms and resource allocations.
- Ensuring that child domestic laborers can access direct services offered by local institutions and making sure that such direct services can be sustained and have a measurable impact on child domestic laborers. These direct services, encompassing psychosocial interventions, should be clearly linked with efforts to bring these children back to school.
- Addressing aspects of the existing educational system that fail to absorb, retain, and nurture child domestic laborers. More notice should be given to the development of non-formal education and a marketable vocational curriculum that trains and teaches students marketable skills. The system should also consider the multiple tasks of the child domestic laborer and the expectations of the employers.
- Organizing, supporting, and learning from efforts to empower child domestic laborers. Children leaders have proven to be very potent advocates and service providers for their own sector.
- Popularization of existing and proposed laws to address scattered, inadequate, and antiquated policies. While the Batas Kasambahay has been lauded for its breakthrough in codifying, improving, and enhancing existing policies for child domestic laborers, it has yet to be enacted by national and local governments.
- Disseminating creative advocacy materials with immediately useful content, especially towards making employers more supportive of efforts to sustain the child's access to basic services.
- Focusing attention on the problem of trafficking to prevent entry and re-entry of children into abusive work.

What's in a Name: Giving Importance to the Kasambahay

Katulong. Alalay. Atsay. Tsimay. Muchacha. Alipin. These terms depict the low regard that our society places on domestic work. Domestic or household work is often deemed as secondary, undesirable, and marginal, a chore that should be done by someone other than the employer who has better or more profitable ways to use his or her valuable time. Society sometimes view domestic work as dirty and sheer drudgery. Hence, someone of lower social status should do it.

The low value that our society places on domestic work extends to the person who is hired to do it. They are the *tsimay* or the *atsay*, while the employers are the *amo* or the master. The practice and the low esteem for domestic work traces its historic roots to slavery during pre-Spanish times, when our tribes had two kinds of what may be considered as domestic servants: the *aliping namamahay*, servants who could own property and the *aliping saguiguilid*, or those who were treated as household properties. These slaves were often captives of war or as payment of debt.



Visayan Forum and the Samahan at Ugnayan ng mga Manggagawang Pantahanan sa Pilipinas (SUMAPI), and their social partners from the government, civil society, workers' group, employers' group, and the media recognize that such low regard for domestic work and workers should be addressed if we are to work for improvements in their conditions. The first step is to make people, especially the Kasambahay and her employer, realize the importance of the domestic worker.

Visayan Forum, SUMAPI, and partners advocate the use of the term Kasambahay, a contraction of *kasama sa bahay* (literally, partners at home) or household partner. The term reflects mutual trust and respect between the Kasambahay and the employer. As partners, they recognize that they have rights and responsibilities and that they should work together to achieve each other's life goals. The growth of one is closely intertwined with the development of the other.

By using this term, we recognize the important work being done by domestic workers—as something that is necessary and supportive to everything else that the employer does.

3

The Kasambahay Program *Piloting Innovative Approaches*

Since 1995, the Visayan Forum has been implementing the Kasambahay Program, aimed at mobilizing national efforts to provide immediate, holistic, and integrated services to child domestic laborers. The Kasambahay Program has played a major role in piloting creative efforts to reach out to child domestic laborers, provide sustainable interventions, and raise national awareness on the plight of the sector.

The Kasambahay Program provides immediate direct services to child domestic laborers at risk. It also works to empower the domestic workers association, the *Samahan at Ugnayan ng mga Manggagawang Pantahanan sa Pilipinas* (SUMAPI). Finally, it works for a more nurturing policy environment for child domestic laborers through advocacy for reforms, anchored on the passage of the Batas Kasambahay.

The provision of immediate direct services to child domestic laborers at risk is centered on five shelters in strategic cities (two in NCR, one each in Batangas, Davao, and Negros Occidental). Telephone hotlines are maintained and are connected to quick action networks organized in key areas. Abused child domestic laborers are provided with pro-active medical, legal, and psychological services including processing seminars and counseling sessions in order to build their resiliency and facilitate the healing and reintegration process. The program reaches out to invisible child domestic laborers through creative workplace monitoring systems.

Sustainability Principles

Actions for child domestic laborers, for it to achieve maximum impact, should be aimed at building cooperation among social partners and establishing synergistic relationships that should lead to the empowerment of the sector. Through these principles, we can make sure that while we work to address and provide for the immediate needs of child domestic laborers, we are also contributing to the dismantling of societal and cultural factors that push and pull children towards worst forms of domestic labor.

- Build a sustainable relationship between child domestic workers and their employers
- Build creative and sustainable partnerships with key institutions
- Holistic approach to child domestic labor
- Develop a comprehensive policy
- Recognize child domestic labour as a distinct child labor problem
- Prevention of child domestic labor at all levels

Education services are an integral part of direct services provided under the program. In partnership with schools and parishes, child domestic laborers are encouraged to continue their education. The program also facilitates the child's enrollment in non-formal education and vocational skills training. Child domestic laborers are protected from contingencies through an educational emergency fund, which prevents them from unnecessarily dropping out of school.

The program utilizes creative and unconventional approaches to reach out to child domestic laborers. In partnership with schools, parishes, and park authorities, and even in ports of entry and exit, Visayan Forum and SUMAPI conduct outreach, recreational, and educational activities to encourage domestic workers to bond together and promote their own interests. SUMAPI has grown from a ragtag band of rescued child domestic laborers to a 5,000-strong national association, linking their members to social protection and other programs that would be beneficial to their members.



The program also established a Resource Center that serves as the center of data and information on child domestic labor. Through the tri-media and its website, Visayan Forum and partners conduct information dissemination campaigns and fuel national support for the passage of the Batas Kasambahay and similar legislation at the national and local levels.

The Philippine Time-Bound Program for the Elimination of Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Philippine Time-Bound Program (PTBP) for the Elimination of Worst Forms of Child Labor of the ILO-International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labor (ILO-IPEC) and the National Program Against Child Labor (NPACL) is our response to our national commitment to "take immediate, effective, and time-bound measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of worst forms of child labour as a matter of urgency". Through the PTBP, national and local efforts and resources will be mobilized and channeled towards the elimination of worst forms of child labor.

The PTBP works on two levels. First, it aims to strengthen the enabling environment for the elimination of worst forms of child labor through intensified efforts in policy and legislative reforms and in raising public awareness. Second, it aims to reduce the incidence of selected worst forms of child labor through focused and integrated action directed at child laborers, their families, and communities.

Target groups of children were identified after a series of broad consultative processes. These children are those in prostitution, mining and quarrying, domestic service or domestic labor, pyrotechnics, agriculture, and deep-sea fishing. Target areas were chosen because of their high incidence of worst forms of child labor and because of characteristics present in these areas that put the children at great risk. The target areas are the National Capital Region, Camarines Norte, Bulacan, Cebu, Dumaguete, Iloilo, Davao, and Bacolod.

Child domestic labor is part of the identified priority sector, in recognition of the magnitude and the inherent dangers that children in this sector face. The challenge is how to transform the policy statements and commitment of support from national agencies and organizations into tangible programs for child domestic laborers.

Targeting Child Domestic Laborers within the Philippine Time-Bound Program: The Kasambahay Program as a Catalyst for National Action

The Visayan Forum Kasambahay Program, banking on its learning and the partnerships that it has developed in its more than a decade of sustained and holistic action on the issue of child domestic labor, will serve as the catalyst for a genuine national movement targeted towards the reduction of incidence of child domestic labor.

The Kasambahay Program will now work towards establishing synergistic efforts in the PTBP areas and in mobilizing key stakeholders and institutions. Good practices and successful strategies will hopefully be mainstreamed into national development efforts, making the invisible child domestic laborers visible to the government and other institutions.

The program aims to make a difference on the lives of at least 3,000 child domestic laborers, their families, and their communities. Sustained, holistic, and integrated actions will be implemented with the active involvement of a broad sector of social partners.

The Kasambahay Hotline—Facilitating Quick Action to Rescue CDLs

The Visayan Forum Kasambahay Program has established 24-hour hotlines to receive reports of CDL abuse and facilitate the rescue and referral process. Here is how it works:

The effectiveness of the hotlines rests on three things: the popularity of the hotline, strict adherence to the process, and an established, trained network that could act fast on reported cases of abuse.

The hotline has to be part of all information dissemination campaigns. Otherwise, no one will use it. The hotline could also be used pro-actively: by calling up outreached CDLs and using it to monitor conditions of work.

Once a distressed child domestic laborer calls the hotline, the SUMAPI volunteer or the Visayan Forum Social Worker immediately takes down notes on intake sheets containing vital information like name of the caller, name of the employer, address, contact number, and nature of abuse. The information is then referred to partners from the Sagip Batang Manggagawa Quick Action Team or other trusted partners. Law enforcement agencies and social workers conduct rescue operations, after a quick data-gathering and planning session. The rescued child is then placed in the custody of the Visayan Forum, the Social Welfare Office, or other child-care institutions for processing and for healing.

The task of rescuing abused child domestic laborers is dangerous and opens up the institutions involved to harassment and legal suits from the employers. By meticulously following the process and carefully documenting the case, practitioners shield themselves from future law suits and they strengthen future cases that will be filed against erring employers.



The hotline is only as useful as the action that it could facilitate. An organized and trained network of partners—law enforcers, social workers, lawyers, government agencies (in Visayan Forum’s case, the Sagip Batang Manggagawa Quick Action Team members are the core institutions involved), with clear delineation of tasks, and guidelines for rescue and interception ensures that the action is prompt and that those involved are safe.

Partners are involved even after the rescue operations have been conducted. Partners from the Department of Justice, the International Justice Mission, Ateneo Human Rights Center, Child Justice League, and other lawyers' groups assist in facilitating the filing of cases and successful prosecution of offenders. Social workers from the Visayan Forum, from the local government units, and from the DSWD assist each other during processing and resiliency-building sessions, in contacting the parents, and in developing a long-term rehabilitation plan for the child.

Providing Direct Actions

- Creative outreach programs, in partnership with NGOs, government agencies, and institutions such as schools, parishes, and civic groups, are expected to reduce the invisibility of this sector and lead them closer to services and programs designed to meet the peculiar needs and concerns of child domestic laborers as a sector. These outreach programs will target child domestic laborers in need of immediate assistance.
- Baseline data, profiles, and case studies will be generated through the outreach programs as a tool for designing targeted and needs-based interventions and monitoring actual impact of the program in the lives of child domestic laborers.
- The program will continue providing immediate responses to child domestic laborers who are facing abuse and exploitation. It will build on past advances by enhancing and synergizing the capacity of social partners and the support network. Mechanisms for quick action and effective rehabilitation and reintegration programs for child domestic laborers in distress will be strengthened.
- As argued earlier, even child domestic workers who are not yet experiencing abuse and exploitation are in danger of falling into worst forms of child labor. Hence, the program seeks to reduce the extent of vulnerability of these children. This will be done through a range of programs and services, with the provision of education as the anchor. Existing psychosocial interventions will be closely linked with the provision of non-formal and vocational education, with the end goal of facilitating these children's re-entry into the formal education system or expanding their livelihood alternatives. Advocacy and information dissemination seek to prevent the entry of vulnerable children into worst forms of child labor.

Go Where They Are: Reaching Out and Listing Child Domestic Laborers

Lao Tzu said, go to the people. And this is precisely what Visayan Forum, SUMAPI and partners did in order to reach out to this invisible and mobile sector.

Reliable, accurate, and useful data on child domestic laborers are sorely needed. However, the CDLs' invisibility and mobility hinder any attempt to get baseline information about their conditions of work and lives. Hence, in preparation for the PTBP, Visayan Forum and partners conducted a massive registration drive that aims to encourage child domestic laborers to come out and be part of the program.

Visayan Forum and partners went to parks, parishes, schools, and even discos to reach the child domestic laborers. A pilot education program was established in partnership with schools and parishes in order to keep listed child domestic laborers visible. Various NGOs, civic groups, parishes, schools, vocational institutions, student volunteers, Barangays, park authorities, and local government units were tapped for support in identifying child domestic laborers within their auspices. Recreation activities like Disco, SSS registration, Araw ng Kasambahay, outings, and sportsfest were conducted in order to encourage child domestic laborers to participate. To entice employers to allow their child domestics to participate, skills and vocational training were also conducted in selected barangays.

The Quezon Memorial Circle has long been a haven and a resting place for child domestic laborers. But it is very difficult to approach them, much less get information from them and recruit them into joining special education programs. Of course, they would rather dance in the disco area rather than talk about education, their rights and other related matters. The Quezon City Parks Development Foundation, Visayan Forum, and SUMAPI hit on a novel idea—all child domestic laborers would be allowed to enter the disco for free, provided that they register with the Visayan Forum booth placed near the entrance. The ushers, security guards, and even top officials of the QCPDF helped in identifying child domestic laborers entering the disco premises. In two nights, the approach was able to attract at least 50 child domestic laborers.

The program was a source of a number of valuable lessons. First, we learned that it is possible to synergize all the efforts of disparate agencies and organizations towards the common goal of providing integrated services to child domestic laborers. Second, that the multi-sectoral approach is indeed effective and indispensable.

Bantay Kasambahay

More and more people are walking the extra mile to make sure that child domestic laborers are given the chance to work, study, and enjoy their childhood without being abused and exploited. They have gone beyond the mandate of their institutions so that they can remain true to the common vision of a brighter future for all our children.

In Davao, the Assumption College has integrated the promotion of the welfare of the kasambahay as part of the school's vision, mission, and goals. And they have gone beyond words. Teachers regularly monitor the conditions of student child domestic laborers and report potential cases of abuses to social workers. They even helped organize a SUMAPI chapter in the school, which is now conducting regular Bantay Kasambahay operations, composed of home visits and regular discussions with employers.

In Pandacan, Manila, an organization of parent, youth, and children organized themselves into a child watch network, the Bantay Bata sa Komunidad (BBK). The 500 member-strong organization is supported by the Visayan Forum and CARITAS Switzerland in coming up with model initiatives to put a stop to child abuse and exploitation and to prevent the entry of their children into worst forms of child labor. The BBK office, a community and activity center, also houses the office of the Pandacan Chapter of the SUMAPI. Here in Pandacan, SUMAPI, parent leaders and Visayan Forum social workers work hand-in-hand to monitor the conditions of child domestic laborers in the area. These child domestic laborers were identified by the parent-

The Church as an Agent of Change

In Batangas City it is not strange to hear the parish priest Monsignor Boy Oriondo talk during Sunday mass about the rights of domestic workers or announce the activities of SUMAPI and Visayan Forum. After all, he and his parish are not only staunch advocates of the rights of domestic workers—he actually hosts the Kasambahay Program in the premises of the Basilica. The parish helps shape public perception about domestic work, exerting a moral influence over the predominantly Catholic population of Batangas. The parish brings in the weight of morality into an issue where it is most convenient to just stand by the sidelines. The statement of the parish is clear: it is a sin to abuse your domestic worker. It is also a sin to turn a blind eye to abuses.



Education as a Central Approach

Various schools and religious institutions are already implementing education programs for child domestic laborers. These institutions have gone beyond their mandate and, in partnership with other agencies, have developed approaches to encourage CDLs to stay in school.

Their contribution to the over-all effort to protect CDLs is immeasurable. By bringing CDLs back to school, they are diminishing the invisibility and mobility of the sector, thereby mitigating their vulnerability and exposure to hazards. They are also bringing CDLs closer to other services available to the sector like counseling, skills training, alternative livelihood opportunities, psycho-social care, and they enable social workers to monitor the conditions of work of these children.

- The Religious of Mary Immaculate (RMI) has been implementing a pioneering Non-Formal Education Program for domestic laborers. Beneficiaries of their scholarship program for domestic workers are trained to become NFE trainers and to assist fellow child domestic laborers pass accreditation examinations. The RMI also conducts vocational training for domestic workers and assists them in developing skills for alternative sources of income.
- The Assumption College of Davao implements a special Sunday School for Child Domestic Laborers. Visayan Forum supports this initiative by coming up with a special educational emergency fund to help student CDLs meet the financial demands of school. SUMAPI mobilizes its members to monitor the conditions of their fellow child domestic laborers.
- The parish priest of Batangas City, Visayan Forum, SUMAPI, and school authorities from the University of Batangas and the Batangas National High School conduct regular “Balik Iskwela” campaigns for night schools. They engage employers in a regular dialogue while social workers, educators, and nuns closely monitor the performance of these CDLs.
- The Negros Occidental High School implements a night high school program. They have also established a Kasambahay Center to serve as the activity center for CDL students. They assist SUMAPI and Visayan Forum in their organizing and rights-orientation activities. More importantly, they are active counselors for child domestic laborers, helping them build their resiliency to enable them to balance work and studies.

Organizing and Capacity Building

Visayan Forum has used child-centered and child participation principles in organizing and training CDLs. SUMAPI members have provided valuable learning experiences, opportunities to make friends and have fun. These social activities promote networking and the strengthening of the outreach capacity of members to CDLs. Through their organizations they were able to engage in service delivery and advocacy for the welfare of their sector. SUMAPI is a key partner to this program as they seek to expand their network to organize and train core groups in other target areas.

SUMAPI: Giving Strength to Fellow Domestic Workers

The Samahan at Ugnayan ng mga Manggagawang Pantahanan sa Pilipinas (SUMAPI) or the Association and Linkage of Domestic Workers in the Philippines has been instrumental in reaching out and providing services to their fellow domestic workers. Established in 1995, it has become a strong support network to their members, acting not only as an advocacy and lobby group, but also as a peer group or *barkada* who understands the concerns and shares the interests of their group.

SUMAPI has pioneered organizing and training strategies for child domestic laborers. They stay in parks, schools, parishes, and ports to talk to CDLs and provide them with information assistance. They conduct recreation activities like sportsfest, discos, outing, talent shows, parties, and service-oriented events like SSS registration and Araw ng Kasambahay. Integrated in all these activities are processing seminars and awareness-raising sessions that are designed to build resiliency and instill pride among CDLs.

SUMAPI is instrumental in reaching out to child domestic laborers who, otherwise, would have just remained in the shadows. They speak the same language and their leaders can relate with them. They share the same dreams and aspirations and have encountered the same problems. It has grown from a ragtag core group into a 5,000-strong network with chapters in Manila, Quezon City, Batangas, Davao, and Negros Occidental. SUMAPI is now looking forward to expanding its network to include other time-bound areas. As a national organization, SUMAPI has brought the issues and concerns of child domestic laborers into the decision-making process. They bring national programs and policies back to where they belong—to child domestic laborers.

Under this program, partners will be provided with the necessary capacities in order for them to formulate, implement, and monitor programs and services responsive to the needs of child domestic laborers. The program will bring them together—social workers, labor inspectors, educators, lawyers, law enforcers, parishes, government officials, legislators, domestic workers organizations, NGOs, children’s associations— to match their various competencies and resources and ensure the provision of responsive, cost-effective, and sustained services for child domestic laborers.

Bahay Silungan sa Daungan: Plugging the Leaks

The Bahay Silungan sa Daungan is present in Manila North Harbor, Matnog Port in Sorsogon, Batangas International Port and Sasa Port in Davao. It is a product of a Memorandum of Agreement between the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) and the Visayan Forum. It provides an immediate set of center-based services which includes temporary shelter, rights-based protective information, counselling sessions, and repatriation. It also provides legal assistance and training for work placement. For longer case management, the halfway house may refer them to other related agencies.

More than that, the Bahay Silungan serves as the center for Port Anti-Trafficking Task Forces, a multi-sectoral group composed of the PPA, law enforcement agencies like the Philippine Coast Guard, PPA Police, and Maritime Police, the major shipping companies like the Aboitiz Group of Transport, Sulpicio Lines, MBRS, and Negros Navigation, and terminal managers. Government agencies like the Department of Justice, Department of Labor and Employment, the Department of Social Welfare and Development, and the city governments are also part of the initiative. Porters, stevedores, and vendors also lend a helping hand. Institutions like the ILO-IPEC, UNICEF, the US Department of State through the Asia Foundation, Terre des Hommes Netherlands, and Plan Philippines provide the much-needed technical and financial support.

The Task Forces act as quick-response teams to reported cases of trafficking. They undertake actions like information dissemination, rescue operations, and preliminary gathering of evidences against traffickers. These Task Forces play a crucial role in the fight for the elimination of worst forms of child labor, specifically child domestic labor. The ports are the last places where we can provide interventions in behalf of these children. Once they have already been trafficked to their destination, all we can do is pray that they fall into good hands.

The Bahay Silungan sa Daungan initiative seeks to address the crucial link between trafficking and child domestic labor and other worst forms of child labor. Since we have already established that a significant number of children who fall into exploitative situations are also victims of trafficking, we can prevent abuse by stopping the trafficking process during transit. Information assistance goes a long way. By giving them the contact cards and the contact numbers of the Bahay Silungan, they know that they can call on someone to help them if they are ever in distress.

Policy Advocacy

National and local advocacy efforts will focus on the passage of the Batas Kasambahay and similar local legislation. It will build on the momentum created by the near-passage of the law during the 13th Session of Congress and generating national and international clamor for its immediate enactment.

The program will focus not only on legislation, but also on good practices, to ensure effective implementation of the law. Resource centers at the area and at the national level will serve as the clearinghouse for information that could help us to support our call to action with concrete data. Through the effective sharing of data and information, we can convince well-intentioned sectors of our society that there are proven methods that could be effective in tackling centuries-old practices, perceptions, and misconceptions that contribute to the proliferation of worst forms of child domestic labor.

The point is to show that, if we are imaginative, creative, and committed enough, we can go around the limitations that we have, ironically, imposed on ourselves. For most people, it may simply be a matter of convincing them to take a closer look beyond closed doors.

When we face an issue as complex and as huge as child domestic labor, we need to be agents of change ourselves. Our contribution need not be enormous. We can do our own little share. Of course, the first thing that we need to do is train our eyes on a sector that we have long neglected and taken for granted.

Each of us, whether we are aware of it or not, plays a role depending on the extent or level of our involvement: whether we choose to perpetuate, alleviate, prevent, or eradicate. Over and above all these, let us remind ourselves of the one over-arching desire of child domestic laborers: to be valued as children and as partners.

What We Can Do

If you belong to a community or organization, you can:

- Mobilize and set up mechanisms to prevent CDWs from going into hazardous circumstances, such as community child-watch systems.
- Influence policies at barangay level and other local government services.
- Build partnerships with organizations that promote alternative sustainable livelihoods and extend micro-financing to communities.
- Register domestic workers at the community level.

If you are a member of a religious organization, you can:

- Establish lay apostolate programs for helping employer-domestic worker relations.
- Counsel and mediate between child domestic workers and their employers.
- Conduct values education sessions for domestic workers and their employers.
- Engage in advocacy through radio stations, parish newsletters, Bible studies, prayer brigades, homilies and sermons.
- Sponsor liturgical services for child domestic laborers.
- Hold specially designed prayer events specifically for the intentions of child domestic laborers.
- Make your organization's facilities available for their meetings.
- Sponsor skills training, as well as educational and recreational activities.
- Generate donations of educational supplies for child domestic workers who are pursuing their studies.

If you are a teacher, you can:

- Periodically check on the welfare of students who are domestic workers.
- Provide counseling for students who are domestic laborers
- Refer student volunteers to help the Visayan Forum's Kasambahay Program.

If you are a student, you can:

- Attend orientations and other activities of the Visayan Forum's Kasambahay Program.
- Help in distributing flyers and other advocacy materials in the school.
- Participate in tutorial sessions organized by SUMAPI.
- Organize street drama presentations on the plight of domestic laborers, which are usually showcased during advocacy campaigns.
- Help document the Kasambahay program and give feedback on the impact of the activities on the beneficiaries.
- Share basic knowledge, skills and values with the child domestic laborers (such as literacy and numeracy).
- Assist in databasing the CDLs reached by the program.

If you are a member of a school's policymaking body, you can:

- Create and provide alternative education schemes for domestic workers, such as Sunday school, night school, or distance education.
- Offer vocational skills training, or empowerment training on topics such as theater arts, leadership, organizing, and child protection laws.
- Adapt the national syllabus to child domestic workers' needs
- Assist in translating the laws into training modules.
- Offer your space and facilities for activities.

If you are a service provider, you can:

- Promote the importance of education and training (formal and non-formal), including education for parents, teachers, employers, workers, field staff, and volunteers. Make education more accessible and relevant to the special needs of domestic workers.
- Create telephone hotlines and other quick response mechanisms.
- Coordinate legal protection and enforcement, including the investigation and prosecution of cases of abuse.
- Set up crisis intervention/welfare/halfway centers that provide holistic programs for needy domestic workers, such as drop-in facilities/temporary shelter, psychosocial counseling, health monitoring, recreation and services, legal assistance, alternative education/skills trainings, and repatriation services whenever necessary.
- Develop non-conventional approaches in reaching out to the invisible ones and set up outreach activities in parks, schools, churches and accessible workplaces.

- Involve domestic workers at all levels of program implementation and social advocacy.
- Build strategic alliances with various sectors/groups (government agencies, non-government organizations, people's formations, workers, employers, church, academe, media and civil society groups).
- Place greater emphasis on all aspects of prevention, particularly direct prevention, and recognize that prevention also involves keeping child domestic workers from being pulled into worse circumstances, such as homelessness and prostitution.
- Act against deceptive recruitment and trafficking of children into domestic work, especially in entry/exit points, such as bus stations and ports.
- Provide additional interventions for parents and communities to prevent children from migrating for work, such as educational and livelihood programs, medical missions, and other initiatives.
- Advocate a paradigm shift from vulnerability to competence among caregivers.

If you are a researcher, statistician or information manager, you can:

- Conduct both quantitative and qualitative studies with working children and their families, under the conditions of ILO 182/ Recommendation 190 using action participatory methods.
- Develop an accessible and understandable database on the issue.
- Present models of effective approaches and programs
- Determine the magnitude of the sector from NSO surveys. If this is unavailable, work out its inclusion in national surveys.
- Practice ethics in the conduct of researches, especially sensitivity to children's and women's issues, as well as the ethics of confidentiality

If you are a law enforcer, you can also:

- Define operational guidelines regarding hazardous and illegal forms of domestic service.
- Act against deceptive recruitment and trafficking.
- Create hotlines for quick response and as a preventive mechanism.
- Develop coordinated inter-agency monitoring and surveillance strategies, and a non-violent or non-confrontational approach during rescue/pull out operations
- Conduct seminars/trainings to sensitize their ranks on the issue.
- Improve the proper and efficient documentation and databasing of

If you belong to the media, you can also:

- Cover public awareness-raising activities to change the perception of on the issue of child domestic work throughout society.
- Practice responsible journalism and media ethics; observe sensitivity to the issues of child domestic work and child labor.

If you are a legislator or policymaker, you can also:

- Recognize domestic service as work, and as such, subject to legal provisions and regulation.
- Integrate the domestic work agenda in policies regarding national development, poverty alleviation, social protection and education.
- Support the passage of Batas Kasambahay and enact national policies on domestic work that provide a legal framework for domestic work, including employer-employee relationship, work contract, and social security and health benefits, among others.
- Encourage voluntary codes of practice concerning the employment of child domestic workers.

If you employ a domestic worker, you can also:

- Recognize that you have more influence and decision-making power over your domestic worker—more than any other person in her life. Use this influence wisely and lovingly.
- Contribute to the growth of your household hero and/or heroine, by giving better pay and benefits, humane treatment, and even continuing education. It is also important that you and your kasambahay “level off” on your expectations from each other. Such terms should be reasonable and agreed upon.
- Treat your domestic workers as an integral part of the family, partners in our home, and not merely replaceable servants.
- Treat your helpers with humanity, and in return they will give you loyalty and productivity.

If you are a domestic worker, you can also:

- Participate in the annual Araw ng Kasambahay
- Assist in conducting Kasambahay orientation seminars, education and training and other promotional activities.
- Negotiate with your employer based on your rights, or obtain assistance in negotiation



Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc.

VISAYAN FORUM FOUNDATION, INC. is non-profit, non-stock and tax exempt non-government institution in the Philippines established in 1991. VF works for the welfare of marginalized migrants, especially those working in the invisible and informal sectors, like domestic workers and trafficked women and children.

It is licensed and accredited by the Department of Social Welfare and Development to provide residential care and community-based programs and services for women and children in especially difficult circumstances.

It is most known for its pioneering and documented work on domestic workers in the Philippines, especially in pushing for the Domestic Workers Bill or Batas Kasambahay. It is also at the forefront of providing services to trafficking victims through its Halfway Houses in major Philippine ports.

Our Programs

Kasambahay Program

National Action on Child Domestic Labor in the Philippines

The Kasambahay Program is our pioneering work on the issue of child domestic labor and domestic workers as a sector. The uniqueness of the program lies in the active involvement of domestic workers themselves in its implementation. The program provides specialized crisis services to reach out to abused domestic workers that are, by nature, scattered and invisible.

We also build the capacities of partner stakeholders because we believe that no single institution can address the issue alone.

In order to improve the working conditions of domestic workers, we are lobbying for the passage and implementation of the Domestic Workers' Bill or the Batas Kasambahay.

Anti-Trafficking Program

Halfway Houses for Trafficked Women and Children at the Ports and Beyond

To curb local trafficking in the country, we set up strategic Halfway Houses in various seaports across the archipelago in cooperation with the Philippine Ports Authority. These port halfway houses provide center-based protective care services. Through this strategy, we document cases of trafficking within the country and cases bound for abroad. We also mobilize and build the capacity of the port community through the Anti-Trafficking Task Force at the Port. To prevent trafficking, we do advocacy work in source communities and transit routes through tri-media dissemination campaigns.

To bring the issue of trafficking beyond the ports, VF established the Multi-Sectoral Network Against Trafficking in Persons (MSNAT), a national civil society-led initiative that aims to provide direct action, build capacities of partners, advocate for policy reforms, and expand networks with local and international agencies.

Program for Migrant Working Children

Community-Based Interventions and Child Watch Network

To address the root causes of child labor, we model innovative community-based programs involving parents, children and youth in the urban poor communities of Paco and Pandacan in Manila and in the source region of Negros Occidental.

The program entails the provision of specialized community-based services and the organizing of parent and children's organizations guided by child participation principles. We conduct local advocacy as well as provide technical assistance for savings and credit loans for the poor.

We established the Bantay-Bata sa Komunidad or Community Child Watch Network to monitor the condition of working children and cases of child abuse. Parents play a very important role by watching out for traffickers and by ensuring that the children go to school. Children and youth members of the community also organize their own workshops, seminars and sportfests.

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This publication looks into child domestic work as a distinct issue from child labor. Considered as modern day slaves, they work in private households under exploitative conditions and have difficult access to education. Mostly girls as young as eight years old, they are migrants and are easy victim of trafficking. The Philippine government considers child domestic labor as among the worst forms of child labor. Updating laws and enhancing outreach programs will truly make them visible to national policies.



**Visayan Forum
Foundation, Inc.**



**International Labour Organization
International Programme on the
Elimination of Child Labour**

**Philippine Time-Bound Program for
the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor**