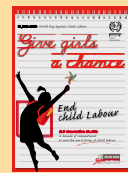




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International
Labour
Organization

Decent Work for All

ASIAN 2006
DECENT WORK
DECADE 2015

Quarterly Newsletter of the ILO in the Philippines

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President Arroyo declares ILO Week

President Macapagal-Arroyo declared April 21 to May 1, 2009 as International Labour Organization (ILO) Week.

Through Proclamation No. 1754, the President pointed out that as an active member of the ILO since 1948, the Philippines “wished to enhance its commitment to pursue the ideals and principles of the ILO”.

The Philippines, “through ILO social partners - the Government, Employers’ and Workers’ Organizations - reaffirmed its full support and cooperation with ILO mandate of promoting international peace and justice,” the President said.

The President issued the proclamation as the ILO observed its 90th anniversary, on the 25th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Philadelphia, a vital annex of the ILO Constitution.

In Proclamation 1754, President Arroyo called on the Secretary of Labor to “spearhead and coordinate activities nationwide to celebrate International Labour Organization Week in close cooperation with the Employers’ and Workers’ Organizations”.

She also urged all heads of departments, bureau, offices, agencies and instrumentalities of the government, non-government organizations, and the private sector to actively lead events and programmes to commemorate the week.

Schools nationwide, especially elementary and high schools, were enjoined to hold ILO awareness activities, particularly during the celebration of the ILO Week.

The President also urged the active support of the Office of the Press Secretary, members of the mass media, and cultural and civic organizations to foster ILO awareness in the country.

The proclamation was signed by the President on April 14.



The ILO celebrated its 90th anniversary with a wide range of high-level activities during the week of 21-28 April 2009 based on the theme “90 years of working for social justice”.
(Illustration by Gill Button)

Decent work and social justice in times of crisis

By Minette Rimando, ILO

As it marked its 90th anniversary, the ILO Subregional Office in Manila initiated a forum on Decent work and social justice in times of crisis. Discussants examined impacts of the global crisis on the labour sector and assessed means to move forward toward sustainable economic recovery.

Over 300 officials from government and non-government organizations, employers, workers organizations, academic institutions, media, UN agencies, embassies, international organizations and project partners participated in the forum.

Gyorgy Sziraczki, ILO Senior Economist, presented trends and impacts of the crisis in Asia and the Pacific. “The crisis which started in the past

year has turned into an economic crisis, a job crisis and a social crisis,” said Sziraczki. He cited women, migrant workers and young people as among those most vulnerable. He stressed that progress in poverty reduction was slowing because of expansion of the informal sector.

Sziraczki highlighted the need for decent work for economic recovery and sustainable development. The crisis could provide an opportunity to progress in health care reform and measures should form the basis of social protection for all. He recommended tackling short-term challenges, while focusing on long-term priorities and enabling a sound policy environment.

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Decent Work for All

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Linda Wirth

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Keiko Niimi

MANAGING EDITOR

Minette Rimando

CONTRIBUTORS

Melo Acuna

Robert Ela

Aries Rufo

Julita Yap

LAYOUT & DESIGN

Minette Rimando

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ILO SUBREGIONAL OFFICE FOR SOUTH-EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

19F Yuchengco Tower RCBC Plaza

6819 Ayala Avenue,

Makati City, Philippines

Tel. No. +63 (2) 580 9900

Fax. No. +63 (2) 856 7597

E-mail manila@ilo.org

www.ilo.org/manila



Decent work and social justice in times of crisis

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Linda Wirth, ILO Director, provided a preliminary snapshot of the economic and social impact of the crisis in the Philippines. She highlighted that amid the economic crisis, social expenditure should not be compromised and workers' rights for decent work not be shortchanged.

Wirth suggested a number of responses:

- Frontloading investment in public works
- Support to productive enterprises, in particular small businesses
- Investing funds at the local level for job creation, rural development, and credit for micro and small and medium enterprises (SMEs)
- Intervention to assist the reintegration of Returning Overseas Filipino workers (OFWs)
- Enhancing social protection systems, social safety nets and conditional cash transfers through basic social security floors
- Preparing for longer-term recovery by making employment and decent work central to economic planning, implementation and monitoring for results and addressing systemic problems, and
- Strengthening social dialogue: stronger cooperation and dialogue among government, employers and workers.

EDITORIAL

The global financial crisis has had widespread consequences for the world's labour markets. It has posed a grave threat to the livelihoods, health and well-being of millions: already more than 1.2 billion workers in poverty prior to the crisis and more than 620 million living in extreme poverty.

The UN framework response to the global and financial crisis included:

- Additional financing for the most vulnerable: advocating and devising a joint World Bank - UN system mechanism for the common articulation and implementation of additional financing, including through the World Bank proposed Vulnerability Fund.
- Food Security: strengthening programmes to feed the hungry and expanding support to farmers in developing countries.
- Trade: fighting protectionism, including through the conclusion of the Doha round and strengthening aid for trade initiatives and finance for trade.
- A Green Economy Initiative: promoting investment in long-term environmental sustainability and putting the world on a climate-friendly path.
- A Global Jobs Pact: boosting employment, production, investment and aggregate demand, and promoting decent work for all.
- A Social Protection Floor: ensuring access to basic social services, shelter, and empowerment and protection of the poor and vulnerable.
- Humanitarian, Security and Social Stability: Emergency action to protect lives and livelihoods, meeting hunger and humanitarian

needs, protecting displaced people and shoring up security and social stability.

- Technology and Innovation: developing technological infrastructure to facilitate the promotion and access to innovation.
- Monitoring and Analysis: strengthening macroeconomic and financial surveillance and implementing an effective economic early warning system; urgently establishing a UN system-wide vulnerability monitoring and alert mechanism to track developments, and report on the political, economic, social and environmental dimensions of the crisis.

The global economic crisis threatens advances made under UN-led Millennium Development Goals; it threatens to undermine progress towards reducing poverty. Thus, the core message of social justice and decent work is more significant than ever as we trace the history of the ILO 90 years ago. However, we have to also look at the current crisis as an opportunity. Many positive initiatives with enduring effects were born out of crisis. Where there is a will, there is a way! The Philippines and other Asian countries are capable of pursuing decent work but there should be short-term emergency assistance and long-term goals to make employment centred to economic and social policy making and to establish systems to guarantee universal access to social security.

Linda Wirth
Director

The global crisis: our response

By Robert Ela, Employers Confederation of the Philippines

President Gloria-Macapagal Arroyo was the principal Guest of Honour and Speaker at this year's 30th National Conference of Employers (NCE XXX) held in April 2009 at the Manila Hotel.

Chaired by ECOP Honorary President Rene Soriano and co-chaired by ECOP Treasurer Ambassador William Co, NCE XXX was opened to examine survival and growth measures required to sustain jobs and businesses, flesh out needed structural reform to push the country above the gloom pervading the global economy, and define critical steps that employers could take to ensure business survival and economic growth.

Organized by the Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP), the conference tackled "The Global Crisis: Our Response".

"We should transform the crisis to our advantage. We should not delude ourselves in the thought that our resilience alone will enable us to survive, endure and overcome the present global crisis," Soriano emphasized.

ECOP President Sergio Ortiz-Luis, Jr. expressed grave concern over job displacement arising from the adverse impact of the crisis. "The country's export manufacturing winner, electronics, and the

export service winner, the call center/BPO sector, are feeling the pressure of reduced demand," he pointed out.

President Arroyo made policy pronouncements in response to the business community's concern for key survival and growth measures required to sustain jobs and businesses, needed structural reform, and business and labour reform measures to spur business and job growth.

KAPATID Award Finalists

ECOP used the occasion to bestow Kapatiran sa Industriya (KAPATID) Awards. St. Luke's Medical Center was the grand winner among companies vying for recognition for excellence in industrial relations, productivity and quality, social accountability, strategic visioning and partnering for business and job survival. Finalists included Century Park Hotel, Dole Philippines, Inc., Globe Telecom, Inc., Holcim Philippines Luga Plant, International Container Terminal Services, Inc., PASAR Corp., RCM Manufacturing, Inc., and SM Retail, Inc. Eduardo Rondain, a member of ECOP's Council of Leaders, chaired this year's KAPATID Awards Executive Committee.

RP supports Global Jobs Pact

By Aries Rufo, Newsbreak

The Philippines has expressed strong support for the Global Jobs Pact, which puts the creation of jobs and social protection at the core of stimulus packages and national policies that seek to address the current global economic crunch.

In a statement delivered at the International Labour Organization (ILO) Summit on the Global Jobs Crisis, Labor Secretary Marianito Roque stated: "Now is the opportune time to ensure that the wealth of resources flowing into national economic stimulus programmes is used optimally and equitably."

Roque said the Philippines had responded to the economic crisis as soon as it had broken out, with a stimulus package designed "to protect jobs and create new ones". He referred to the executive order directing all government agencies to set aside part of their approved budgets for the Comprehensive Livelihood and Emergency Employment Program (CLEEP).

Stimulus package

"Our target this year is to employ 500,000 jobless Filipinos. There are also programmes for our overseas workers and those in the merchandise export sector as these two groups are vulnerable in the global crisis," Roque said.

The government launched a P330 billion stimulus package, reportedly the second biggest in the region, in response to the financial crisis. The

package entailed infrastructure spending to create jobs and improve productive capacity.

But some critics said that the huge financial package could be misleading, as some of the items had already been actually included in the 2009 budget but were tagged with a new name.

Government data showed that about 200,000 had been affected by the crisis, but only a portion had resulted in permanent lay-offs.

Human crisis

Roque said the global crisis was not just financial but also a "human crisis".

"Many developing countries, our own included, are hurting from the loss of relatively well-paid jobs in the formal sector—mostly in the electronic components, garments, information technology, mining and other export-oriented industries. And those displaced work-people are retreating into shared poverty of the informal sector," he said.

Roque also reported to the ILO that Filipinos overseas continued to be in demand abroad, cushioning the economy from the adverse impact of crisis. He said that in 2008, eight million Filipinos working overseas remitted \$16.4 billion through the banking system.

While there were few signs that demand for foreign labour had contracted, Roque said the effects of financial losses on migrants should not be ignored

since foreign workers were often the first victims in an economic recession.

Piracy victims

The labour chief also took the opportunity to challenge the ILO to look into the plight of seafarers, especially Filipinos, who were victims of piracy in the Gulf of Aden. "While poverty and lawlessness may have taken hold of that part of the world, this must not infringe on the right of maritime workers to earn a living without compromising their lives."

The Gulf of Aden, in the Arabian Sea between Yemen and Somalia, had been described as a "pirate-alley" with dozens of commercial shipping vessels taken hostage by Somali pirates.

The government had imposed a ban on the deployment of commercial vessels carrying Filipino seafarers to the Gulf following an increase in piracy. Based on government data, about 44 Filipinos in four vessels were being held hostage by pirates.

Since last year, more than 300 Filipinos in 20 ships had been held hostage by Somali pirates.

World leaders, worker delegates and employer groups had gathered in Geneva for a Global Job Crisis. They hoped to come up with a common agenda and a coherent global approach to counter the economic crisis.

ABS-CBN News <http://www.abs-cbnnews.com>
Newsbreak Online <http://www.newsbreak.com.ph>

Economic crisis seen to impact child labour

By Melo Acuna, CBCP News

The present economic crisis will likely send more minors into the country's workforce.

This was the prognosis of several labour leaders and NGO executives gathered for the country's celebration of the World Day Against Child Labour.

The gathering was called by the Department of Labor and Employment and the International Labour Organization.

Cecil Oebanda, Visayan Forum Executive Director, said there appeared to be no political will on the part of the Philippine Government to enforce its laws on known child traffickers and illegal recruiters.

"There have been no convictions so far," Oebanda said. She added that there was no budget for programmes to rid the country of child labour.

Flor Cabatingan, a member of the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines' national executive board, said child labourers were almost everywhere.

"You see them in banana plantations in Mindanao, on piers doing chores supposedly for men, in bus terminals doing menial jobs." Cabatingan added that TUCP had prepared modules to train bus drivers, conductors and domestic vessel crewmen to spot would-be child trafficking victims at bus stations and at the country's various ports.

Amihan Abueva, Regional Coordinator of Asia ACT – Against Child Trafficking, said that there had been a marked increase in child prostitutes. Children

brought from other regions were being initiated into the flesh trade not only in hotels and motels but on construction sites.

Federation of Free Workers' Information Officer Julius Cainglet noted that "more and more children, especially girls, would stop schooling and enter the risky world of work as the impact of the global financial crisis deepened."

Speaking before media practitioners at the forum, Cainglet added, "with poverty unchecked and the widening gap between the rich and poor coupled with lesser spending for education, the economic crisis in the Philippines was likely to add even more children to the four million who were already at work instead of getting proper education."

Figures were alarming, he said, as 4,095 workers were laid off in Central Luzon aside from 9,254 on forced leave, reduced hours and other flexible arrangements.

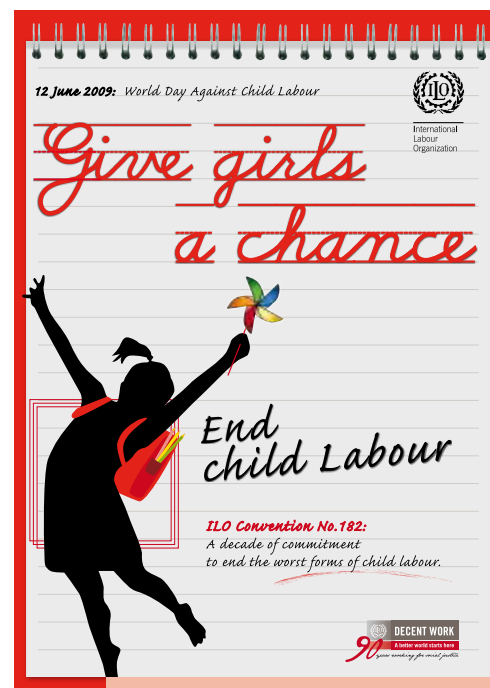
"45,000 had been laid off in March; the government expected job losses to climb to 800,000," according to Cainglet.

He further said that FFW members who remained employed "had been queuing at administration offices, trying to avail of loans being offered in-house and through different government financial institutions for their children's education."

With job losses, a drop in enrolment is expected, Cainglet added. "Girls, especially from the poorest parts of the country who found themselves out of

school, would be under pressure to find jobs which would often lead them to the exploitative hands of criminal elements."

CBCP News <http://www.cbcnews.com/?q=node/9186>



World Day against Child Labour 2009 campaign

ILO: 90 years of working for social justice

"The Philippines, as an active member of the ILO since 1948, wishes to enhance its commitment to pursue the ideals and principles of the ILO. The Republic of the Philippines, through the ILO's social partners - the Government, Employers and Workers Organizations - reaffirms its full support and cooperation with the ILO mandate of promoting international peace and social justice."

- President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo
President of the Republic of the Philippines
in her Presidential Proclamation declaring ILO week in April 2009

"Despite the daunting challenges of the global crisis that continue to threaten economies, businesses and workers all over the world, we must remain steadfast. The crisis must not deter us in doing our work to ensure that decent work is a living reality for our workers and their families. It is decent work that must underpin our collective efforts to mitigate the adverse impact of the global crisis on employment, business, working conditions and labour-management."

- Secretary Marianito Roque
Department of Labor and Employment
in his keynote address for the ILO 90th anniversary

"The ILO as it marks its 90th anniversary is a milestone indeed for its dedication and unwavering commitment of serving

the tripartite constituents for the past nine decades. Since its birth in 1919, the ILO on countless gatherings and activities has been bringing together governments, employers, and workers of member States toward social protection and improving work conditions and quality of life around the globe. Its relevance, indeed, cannot be disputed given its vital labour standards, more so, in the rapidly changing global environment marked by technological and scientific advancements, and in these times of economic adversity."

- Vice President Aniano Bagabaldo
Employers Confederation of the Philippines
in his message for the ILO 90th anniversary

"Labour believes that the correct approach to fighting the challenges of this crisis is by upholding decent work and the dignity of the Filipino people and families. We know that with a "can-do" spirit, commitment, shared sacrifice and collective action, we will get there."

- Atty. Democrito Mendoza
President, Trade Union Congress of the Philippines
in his message for the ILO 90th anniversary

"Those of us who are serious about fulfilling our commitments to the ILO's goal of social justice are called upon to respond quickly and efficiently to end human misery, especially of

the most vulnerable in our respective societies. For us in the trade unions, that response is both simple and workable: let the social partners work together to align our labour and social laws and practice to the principles and standards that ILO has established, and that we, as members of the only tripartite international organization ever established, are duty-bound to implement."

- Atty. Allan Montaña
National President, Federation of Free Workers
in his message for the ILO 90th anniversary

Ninety years of unrelenting efforts to avoid a third world war, revolutions and other armed conflicts by promoting social justice and internationally-recognized labour and human rights, through the unique means of tripartism, is indeed a basis for congratulations to all concerned! We have a small footnote, though. If after nine decades, we are still "Working for Social Justice", and if that will still be the ILO's mandate for the future, then such tripartite efforts have not been sufficient indeed. To our fellow trade unionists, we would like to express our continuing willingness to work with you, especially under the banner of the ILO, towards our common goal of decent work and social justice.

- Chairperson Daniel Edralin
Alliance of Progressive Labor
in his message for the ILO 90th anniversary

MUST READS



Toil and trouble How jobs and decent work are faring amid the crisis

Newsbreak launched a special magazine edition on decent work, Toil and Trouble. The special edition featured in-depth articles which examined current trends and explored various issues on labour and employment. The magazine was launched on 21 April in a forum on decent work and the jobs crisis. Benjamin Diokno, economist and former Minister of Budget and Management; Clarence Pascual, economist and researcher; Commissioner David Diwa Jr, National Wages and Productivity Commission and National Labor Union President; Gyorgy Sziraczki, ILO Senior Economist based in Bangkok; and Linda Wirth, ILO Director based in Manila, served as resource speakers. The forum was attended by media practitioners and labour sector representatives. The special edition is now available online at www.newsbreak.com.ph and sold in Newsbreak outlets and major bookstores nationwide.



Recovering from the crisis: A Global Jobs Pact

On 19 June 2009, the International Labour Conference, with the participation of Government, Employers' and Workers' delegates from the ILO's member States, unanimously adopted Recovering from the crisis: A Global Jobs Pact. This global policy instrument addresses the social and employment impact of the international financial and economic crisis. It promotes a productive recovery centred on investments, employment and social protection.

The fundamental objective of the Global Jobs Pact is to provide an internationally agreed basis for policy-making designed to reduce the time lag between economic recovery and a recovery with decent work opportunities. It is a call for urgent worldwide action: national, regional and global.

Heads of State and Government, Vice-Presidents, Ministers of Labour and leaders of employers' and workers' organizations from all regions voiced vigorous political support for the Global Jobs Pact at the ILO Summit on the Global Jobs Crisis held from 15 to 17 June 2009. It was strongly backed by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in his message to the Summit.