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Decent Work for All

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Challenges in ratifying ILO Convention 187

By Mirma Mae Tica
ILO Intern

Each year, millions of work-related accidents, injuries and diseases take a toll on human lives, businesses, economies and the environment. In economic terms, the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that US\$1.25 trillion or four per cent of global gross domestic product, is spent on work-related accidents and diseases, compensation to workers, interruption of production and medical expenses.

In the Philippines, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) states that only a small portion of the country's 33 million workers are protected by Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) programmes and services. "We have yet to cover a wide portion of the Philippine work force with OSH programmes and services, making it a challenge," said Undersecretary Lourdes Trasmonte of DOLE. "Japan and Korea have ratified ILO Convention No. 187, a Promotional Framework on OSH; Philippine action in ratifying the convention is not far behind."

Safety and health play a prominent part in the ILO Decent Work Agenda. "Safety and health is a means to make decent work a reality, giving personal dignity, family stability, and peace in the community. Not ensuring safety and health in the workplace has a high cost not only for families, but for employers and their companies through loss in productivity and legal fees," said Keiko Niimi, Deputy Director of the ILO Subregional Office in Manila. To manage risk and promote a culture of prevention globally, a joint resolution was signed by over 200 representatives of employers, workers, government and non-government organizations, United Nations agencies, OSH advocates and partners on the World Day for Safety and Health at Work, 28th April.



Child star and young actress Sharlene San Pedro tells children including former child labourers to study hard and to stay in school. World Day against Child Labour coverage on page 3. (Photo by ILO / M. Rimando)

Amending the Philippine Labor Code

By Minette Rimando
Senior Communication and
Public Information Assistant

"The Labor Code of the Philippines has been there for a long time. It requires amendments but apart from productivity, competitiveness and flexibility, we should also consider the pillars of decent work – rights at work, employment, social protection and social dialogue," said Romeo Lagman, Undersecretary of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE).

Enacted in 1974, the Labor Code of the Philippines stands as the law governing employment practices and labour relations. It prescribes the rules for hiring and employment termination, conditions at work, union membership, benefits and collective bargaining.

Recognizing the importance of amending the Labor Code, the Employers' Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP) initiated a dialogue among key players on "Defining the Legislative Labor Agenda" held in May 2008. Senator Edgardo Angara of the Philippine Senate, Representative Magtanggol Gunigundo of the House of Representatives, Undersecretary Romeo Lagman of DOLE, Atty. Sonny Matula of the Federation of Free Workers (FFW) and Ernesto Santiago, President of the Semiconductors and Electronics Industries in the Philippines participated in the dialogue.

Senator Edgardo Angara said they are

reviewing the whole gamut of the Labor Code in the Senate. "The Labor Code has been promulgated three decades ago but the world has changed and we have to adapt to present times which is more dynamic and progressive," said Angara. "We need to adjust the Labor Code to the present demand to make it more flexible and we can't afford to lose time."

Flexible working hours, education and training, productivity, career paths for young people are among the issues Angara mentioned in reforming the Labor Code. Angara emphasized it is not only changing provisions of the Labor Code, but looking into the context of employment and investing in human resource development.

"People are really our main source of competitiveness. It is not low cost of labour, but it is really the people," said Ernesto Santiago of the Semiconductors and Electronics Industries which is the largest export industry and generator of gross domestic product in the Philippines.

On the other hand, Atty. Sonny Matula of FFW said the main concern for them and other trade unions is how to organize more workers in the Philippines. "Our labor code must be amended to address organizing workers and providing labour justice," said Matula. He cited that less than 10 per cent of workers in the country are covered by Collective Bargaining Agreement. He also cited the need to consider not only workers in the formal sector, but also those in the informal economy, in amending the Labor Code.

Decent Work for All

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EDITORIAL

The world of work is constantly evolving with globalization quickening the pace change. Since its creation in 1919, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has adapted to meet the requirements for economic progress and social justice. Amid widespread uncertainty in today's world of work, ranging from financial turmoil and economic downturn to growing unemployment, informality and insufficient social protection, the governments, workers and employers of the ILO at the June 2008 International Labour Conference adopted a landmark Declaration designed to strengthen the ILO's capacity to promote its Decent Work Agenda and to forge an effective response to the growing challenges of globalization. ILO Director-General, Mr. Somavia said the Conference had "placed decent work at the heart of the ILO's institutional system" through the adoption of the "Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization".

The Declaration calls for a new strategy to sustain open economies and open societies based on social justice, full and productive employment, sustainable enterprises and social cohesion. The Declaration acknowledges the benefits of globalization but calls for renewed efforts to implement decent work policies as the means to achieve improved and fair outcomes for all.

Specifically, the Declaration establishes a new foundation on which the ILO can effectively support the efforts of its constituents to promote and achieve progress and social justice through

the four strategic objectives of the ILO through the Decent Work Agenda – employment, social protection, social dialogue and tripartism, and fundamental principles and rights at work. The Declaration also underscores the indivisibility of these 4 objectives for achieving Decent Work.

The annual International Labour Conference, this year attracted more than 4,000 delegates representing governments, workers and employers from the ILO's 182 member States. The Conference also held wide-ranging discussions on rural poverty reduction, enhancing skills development, and considered a number of issues regarding adherence to international labour standards. In addition, it hosted a high-level panel discussion on the global food crisis and marked the annual World Day Against Child Labour.

Philippines was well represented by Hon. Marianito Roque, the new Secretary of Labour and Undersecretary Romeo Lagman of the Department of Labor and Employment.

Mr. Miguel Varela, of the Employers Confederation of the Philippines headed the employers' delegation while Mr. Alejandro Villaviza of the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines headed the workers' delegation. ILO Manila looks forward to working together with the tripartite constituents on making the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization a reality in the Philippines!

Linda Wirth
Director

Education: the right response to child labour

Message by Keiko Niimi

Deputy Director

World Day against Child Labour 2008

Close your eyes and take a deep breath. Imagine the scent of jasmine. Who knows the sampaguita? In some countries, they capture its fragrance in perfume. Children, young kids of 10 and 11, pick the sampaguita in the evening. They collect the flower and carry it in heavy baskets – tired and thin, perhaps wishing that they could eat dinner and play with their brothers and sisters, rather than trudge through the fields. Why children? Perfume makers who buy the sampaguita want fresh flowers; they need them unbruised. And they have learned from experience: only the fingers of young children are soft - gentle enough to handle the fragile flower. Why do they work at night? The sampaguita is shy; it releases its freshness, its perfume only in the darkness.

Take a deep breath and close your eyes again. This time imagine the taste of chocolate. Who among you enjoy eating chocolate? Did you know that some children – children your age – don't go to school because they pick cocoa beans to make chocolate. They toil in the sun, hour after hour, day after day, when the trees are pregnant, heavily laden with beans, swatting away flies and mosquitos, getting scratches, heaving their baskets. The children who harvest the beans never taste

what you have tasted, chocolate that is sweet and mouthwatering. They only know the bitterness of the heavy cocoa bean.

Child labour is not pretty. Child labour takes place in many countries, in many situations, and is a scourge, causing great suffering. Families do not send their children to work because they want to send them. They may have no alternative. Some children even in this, the 21st century, work for their own survival, for a mouthful of food and a few pennies or pesos to help their families.

Today we come together for the World Day against Child Labour. And this year we focus on Education, seen to be the right response to child labour. When families are poor, children are too often forced to work. They work, dropping out of school, risking their health, sometimes risking their lives to make a meager wage. More than ever, children need good education to prepare for decent jobs or help them to start their own business.

A working child, carrying heavy loads, scavenging in dumpsites or harvesting in fields, may earn 40 or 50 pesos a day - enough to keep a family from falling apart. Yet, a few pesos cannot change a child the way an education can. Can we allow the childhoods of our children to be wasted in work?

The International Labour Organization, together with partners in an alliance, works with child workers and their families. The ILO

recognizes the efforts of partners. Together, through the alliance against child labour, we have achieved significant gains. However, fighting child labour remains a challenge. One way to fight is through improving access to education. We need to get our children into school and keep them there. We need to bring child workers back to school and ensure that they stay and study until they grow up and have acquired an education.

On this World Day against Child Labour, as we focus on education, the ILO Director-General calls all peoples to work together. We call for:

- Education for all children,
- Education that reaches out to child workers and excluded groups,
- Education that is funded and resourced with enough teachers and schools and text books,
- And Education for all children - which requires decent work for parents so children do not have to work.

The number of working children under 15 fell in the Philippines from 2003 to 2005. With concerted effort, we can ensure that the number will continue to fall, but we need your help. What is your role? What are you doing to keep your friends and yourselves in school; what can we do as parents to keep our children and our neighbour's children around the world in school?

Take a deep breath and imagine the sampaguita. Is its lovely scent not enough to spur you to care?

World Day against Child Labour in the Philippines

By Julius Cainglet
Information Officer
Federation of Free Workers

For more than a century now, the Philippines has been celebrating Independence Day on June 12. Freedom is best seen in our Free Press. Yet, freedom is also regarded as a myth by those who feel deprived of the right to speak or harassed into silence for criticizing the establishment. The debate goes on. But the best indicator of the state of our freedom is the state of our children. A lot of children still fall prey to child labour; forced to work despite being under the age of 18 or 15, since it is the employable age.

According to the Labor Force Survey of the National Statistics Office, children aged 5-14 engaged in child labour have decreased from 913,000 in October 2003 to 774,000 in October 2005. However, the Department of Education (DepEd) recently reported that the enrolment rate has gone down from a high of 96.77 per cent in school year 2000-2001, to 83.22 in SY 2006-2007. With the continuous rise in oil and rice prices, coupled with the unabated increase in rates of basic utilities such as electricity and water, expect worse.

It was perhaps the country's destiny that "World Day against Child Labor (WDACL)" was declared by the International Labour Organization on the same day Filipinos commemorate Independence Day: June 12. Its theme could not be more appropriate,

"Education: the right response to child labour". In honour of WDACL, a national celebration was held at the Bulacan State University (BSU) in Malolos, Bulacan on June 13. WDACL 2008 recognized programmes that respond to child labour, with emphasis on education initiatives such as the Alternative Learning System (ALS) as a means for children to get into non-formal education or tutorial services for children in formal education. The smiles of those who took part in the event mirror the mood throughout the day. Emphatic speeches alternated with presentations that feature children—those removed from child labour and are now child leaders.

The main event was the stamping of "handprints" in the Reaffirmation of Commitment to Promote Education as the Right Response to Child Labour. A thumbprint would have involved a solitary finger. Affixing a signature to the document would have used three or four fingers clinging to a pen. But a handprint? It has a more profound symbolism as it makes use of all fingers and even the palm of the hand. That expresses full and total commitment.

Among those leaving their marks were: Governor Jonjon Mendoza of Bulacan, Assistant Secretary Tetey Soriano of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Atty. Sonny Matula, Vice President of the Federation of Free Workers (FFW), Jun Carpio, DepEd ALS Coordinator for Bulacan and Ms Keiko Niimi, Deputy Director of

the ILO Subregional Office in Manila. Also embedding their handprints were members of the National Child Labour Committee-Education Subgroup and the Provincial Committee on Child Labor of Bulacan, who partnered with the FFW and DOLE in leading and coordinating the WDACL program. Children—in the spirit of child participation, stamped their handprints too.

The day started with the celebration of the Holy Mass in the historic Barasoain Church presided by Malolos Bishop Jose Oliveros, D.D. This was followed by a march around Malolos City, through the Provincial Capitol. The march ended at BSU, where a multimedia exhibit has already been set up featuring education initiatives to respond to child labour.

Edielyn Pedrigal, who used to be a child domestic worker, spoke on behalf of the children and thanked the WDACL celebration organizers. Children, who enjoyed the cultural show, literally did not go home empty-handed. Around 200 school bags with school supplies from UNICEF were distributed to them. Additional 100 bags were given by the Bulacan Chamber of Commerce.

Sharing their talents were: Yhael Nellen Tuazon, Aria Clemente, SaBaNa, MCPC of Plaridel, SKMK Subsonic, children from Bagong Silang-Kalookan, Hasik Liwanag, children sa Baliuag, the URC Dance Troupe and the cast of television's Goin' Bulilit. More than a thousand children and adults participated in the day's festivities.



world day against child labour 12 june 2008
education: the right response to child labour



Former child labourers call to stop child labour in the Philippines (left). ILO Deputy Director Keiko Niimi together with child labour partners and advocates express their full commitment to fight child labour (right). (Photo by ILO / M. Rimando)

The empowered workplace National Conference of Employers

By Mirma Mae Tica
ILO Intern

The rules of the game in business and games played have changed workplaces around the world. Globalization and the liberalization of trade have resulted in new modes of information and communication technology and the ways that business is carried out. With change have come new approaches to foster the need for industrial peace, improving productivity and resolving disputes, in turn affecting the way of thinking of employers and employees, and encouraging partnership in the workplace.

The 29th National Conference of Employers tackled new realities in the changing workplace. The NCE themed “The Empowered Workplace” was attended by government officials, policy-makers, lawmakers, industry captains, business and labour leaders and entrepreneurs. It brought together business actors as partners in economic development, a notion captured by John Tan, President of the Federation of the Filipino Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, who stated that, “...when we move as one, we can move our country forward.”

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo stated the need for employers and workers to work as teams, giving employees the chance to excel in the workplace, encouraging creativity and innovativeness to bring out the best.

The Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP) presented a resolution to the President on competitiveness, corporate social responsibility, labour policy legislation, and human management systems. This included implementing sound business practices and carrying out efforts to move informal sector enterprises towards formality, while working towards improved competitiveness under fair globalization. The resolution was rooted in provisions of giving decent work for all.

2008 CHILD LABOUR-FREE AND CHILD FRIENDLY AWARD

The Employers Confederation of the Philippines launched in 2007, the Child Labour-Free and Child-Friendly Award to highlight the many examples adopted by businesses, through corporate policies and concrete programmes, that uphold the rights of children, protect their interests and promote their welfare. Through the annual award, companies are encouraged to apply their policies and practices to their supply chain especially in the informal sector, where conditions are less regulated.

Business Category - Child Friendly Firm:

Central Azucarera Don Pedro, Inc.	CS Garments, Inc.
INDO PHIL Group of Companies	Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.
New City Commercial Corporation-Davao	Johnson & Johnson
Sun Life of Canada (Philippines), Inc.	Vitarich Corporation

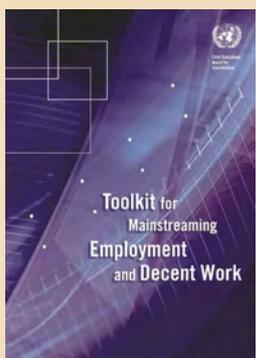
Non-Business Category - Child Friendly Organization:

Sarmiento Foundation, Inc.



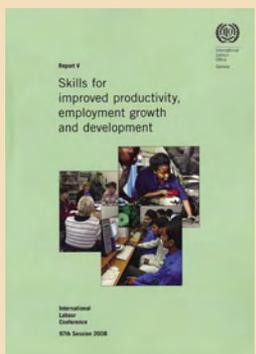
Representatives of Sarmiento Foundation and Vitarich (center) receive the 2008 Child Friendly Award from (l-r) Undersecretary Luzviminda Padilla of the Department of Labor and Employment, Chairman Miguel Varela of ECOP, Vice-President Noli de Castro of the Republic of the Philippines, Employers' Activities Specialist Sanchir Tugschimeg of ILO and President Sergio Ortiz-Luis, Jr. of ECOP. (Photo by ILO / M. Rimando).

MUST READS



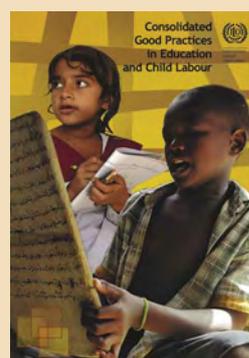
Toolkit for Mainstreaming Employment and Decent Work

One year ago, the UN Economic and Social Council approved a Ministerial Declaration encouraging the UN system to develop a toolkit to promote decent work. Since then, the ILO has worked closely with other agencies through the Chief Executives Board (CEB) chaired by Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. This toolkit was designed to help organizations throughout the multilateral system, assess and improve employment and decent work outcomes of their own policies, programmes and activities.



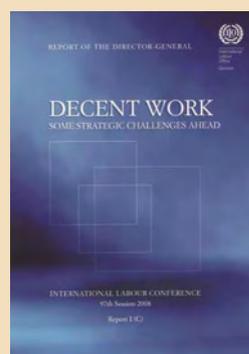
Skills for improved productivity, employment growth and development

This report seeks to examine how, within a decent work perspective, countries can develop their skills base, so as to increase both the quantity and the productivity of labour employed in the economy. It analyses how strategies to upgrade and enhance the relevance of skills training and to improve access to skills for more women and men can instead help countries move to a virtuous circle of higher productivity, employment and income growth, and development.



Consolidated Good Practices in Education and Child Labour

This book presents some of the most important good practices identified by ILO-International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) from thousands of projects and programmes around the world. It shows a first step towards sharing the considerable portfolio of knowledge and expertise in using education as a principal means of combating child labour and in linking the elimination of child labour to the Education For All initiative.



Decent Work Some Strategic Challenges Ahead

A report of the ILO Director-General for the International Labour Conference, 97th session 2008. The report looks into the origins and consequences of financial crisis. As a central theme, the report highlighted the important role of the Decent Work Agenda in promoting balance and equity, in the midst of the global financial turmoil, soaring food prices and economic downturn. Decent work provides pathways to help reduce poverty and inequality.