Promoting international labour standards on Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining in the judiciary and disputes settlement

By Diane Lynn Respall, Senior Programme Assistant

The International Labour Organization (ILO) recognizes the role of the judiciary, mediators, conciliators and arbiters in enforcing national laws and international labour standards in improving the application of international labour standards ratified by the Philippines. Among these are the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention (No. 87) and the Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining Convention (No. 98).

The judiciary plays a vital role in enforcing national laws and international labour standards. ILO standards have been used in recent rulings not only by national jurisdictions of first instance but by the highest jurisdictions in some countries. Conciliators, mediators and arbiters also play equally important role in settling disputes before reaching the judicial courts.

The ILO supports the Philippines in its efforts to enhance the application of international labour standards to foster decent and productive work. Towards the end of 2010, back-to-back seminars on Freedom of Association were held in the Philippines, aimed at improving the use of international labour standards.

“Fair labour practices set out in international labour standards and applied through a national legal system ensure an efficient and stable labour market for workers and employers. In the end, this can help move countries forward,” said Director Lawrence Jeff Johnson of the ILO Country Office for the Philippines.

The ILO strategy in the Philippines also covered other dimensions based on recommendations from the ILO’s supervisory bodies to achieve meaningful impact of freedom of association and right to collective bargaining principles, including the promotion of civil liberties. These initiatives in the Philippines can be summarized into:

- Enhancing knowledge of officials and stakeholders in economic zones on Freedom of Association, Collective Bargaining and Labour Law Implementation
- Equipping officials from the Department of Labor and Employment and the Philippine Economic Zone Authority with techniques on conciliation, mediation and arbitration.
- Promoting strategies to advance investigation, prosecution and conviction of cases involving unionists by initially raising awareness of governments, employers’ and workers’ organizations on the principles of freedom of association, collective bargaining and links to civil liberties and human rights.
Ilocos Sur to set up task force for migrants
By Robert Larga, Going back – Moving on: Economic and Social Empowerment of Migrants Project Coordinator

Ilocos Sur Vice Governor Deogracias Victor Savellano expressed his support to set up a provincial task force that will deal with issues affecting migrant workers in the province. The task force will essentially provide assistance on return and reintegration of migrant workers.

The support to setup a provincial task force was a result of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and Batis Centre for Women meeting with Mr Ferdinand Concepcion, Provincial Social Welfare and Development Officer (PSWDO) and other local stakeholders on 16 February 2011 at the provincial capitol.

While the provincial government has programmes for migrants such as referral services for repatriation and emergency financial assistance on return, the PSWDO has recognized the need to systematize the referral procedures and expand the network of service providers in the province.

The meeting discussed cooperation among local stakeholders including partnering with ILO and Batis to assist returning migrants, especially the exploited and trafficked. The ILO is implementing a European Union funded project on social and economic reintegration assistance for migrants including victims of trafficking. Batis is one of its partner organizations.

Northern Samar pushes Anti-Child Labour Ordinance
By Misael Joan Santos, International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour Provincial Coordinator for Northern Samar

A new provincial ordinance in Northern Samar is set to put an end to child labour. The ordinance, entitled “An Ordinance Defining and Penalizing Child Labour in Northern Samar, and for Other Purpose”, is expected to serve legal framework of efforts to eliminate child labour cases in the province.

Governor Paul Daza has committed to speed up the approval of the ordinance and to allocate funds once approved. The governor aims to make the province child labour-free by 2013.

The ordinance was discussed in a consultation spearheaded by the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), through an Action Programme implemented by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Regional Office in Region 8. The consultation was held on 8-12 November 2010.

The ordinance is geared to improve operations of the newly-formed Northern Samar Child Labor Committee by providing it with the legitimacy in implementing programmes. An important feature of the ordinance is the call for an annual share in the provincial government’s General Annual Fund Budget for implementation. The ordinance helps sustain efforts through integrating the child labour agenda in the legislative and development framework.

Promoting online access to job opportunities
By Rodolfo Coronel, Nurturing Peace, Security and Decent Work through Local Development in Conflict Areas Field Coordinator

Public Employment Service Office (PESO) Managers from the four partner municipalities of the Nurturing Peace, Security and Decent Work through Local Development in Conflict Areas Programme together with Managers in the other municipalities of the Bondoc Peninsula will participate in the training on the Phil-JobNet website to promote access to job opportunities.

The training will be facilitated by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Provincial and Regional Office, supported by the project to enhance capacity of the PESO Managers in using the Phil-JobNet website, either on online or offline mode. It will allow uploading and downloading data and information relevant to the promotion of employment and job matching activities. It will also promote linkages with PESO, potential employers and prospective employees.

Phil-JobNet is an internet-based job and applicant matching system which aims to fast track jobseekers for job opportunities and employers search for manpower. It is the centralized-database facility of the DOLE managed by the Bureau of Local Employment.