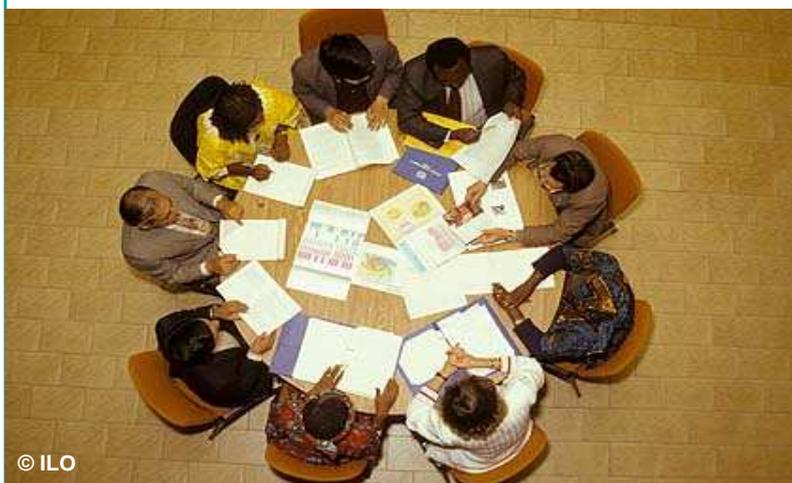


Action Programme on Strengthening Social Dialogue in the Water Utilities Sector



International
Labour
Organization

The Challenge



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Limited access to safe water brings a long list of water-related diseases that hamper the productivity of community members. While the United Nations General Assembly consider access to safe water as a human right, many still do not enjoy it, especially in developing countries. Access to equitable, reliable and universal access to water and sanitation remains elusive to many areas such as in the Philippines.

In making utilities like water more accessible to the public, enabling workers to participate in the reform design is important since they know the field very well.

Having a transparent social dialogue between workers and employers in the sector could lead to better services and improved access to water and sanitation. The lack of resolution for tensions may obstruct inclusive economic growth making decent and productive work far-fetched. The absence of social dialogue may negatively affect the reform of the water sector.

The Response

In June 2010, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has launched the Action Programme on Strengthening Social Dialogue in the Water Utilities Sector in the Philippines as a response to the increasing demand of improving the efficiency of water utilities in the country. The ILO, given its expertise on social dialogue, assists social partners in forming joint strategies and actions on water utilities.

Improved access to water provide income opportunities and health benefits to the beneficiaries in the communities while promoting their productivity. Social dialogue serves as a vital tool for both workers and employers in attaining growth while helping improve the condition within their communities.

ILO and the Local Water Utilities Administration (LWUA) have agreed to cooperate in the implementation of the Action Programme along with more than 15 water districts, public sector unions, stakeholders in water utilities and selected government agencies which composed the National Steering Group (NSG), organized to provide advice and strategic support to the Action Programme.

Looking at the achievements of the Action Programme, the NSG realized the need to strengthen social dialogue not only in the water utilities sector where most workers are public servants but also in the entire public sector set-up in the country. The NSG, among its proposed follow up activities decided to draft and Executive Order institutionalizing social dialogue in the country.

Key Statistics

- In 2008, the Philippines had a population of almost 90 million, in which 82 per cent of households had access to safe water, while 77 per cent had toilets, based on the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).
- LWUA has 460 operation water districts serving 13 million Filipinos.
- There are currently 3100 barangay water services associations and 500 rural water supply associations.

Objective

- The Action Programme aims to assist the Philippine government and social partners in developing joint strategies and actions to extend and improve efficiency of public water utility services. Major means of action include facilitation and capacity building to strengthen exchange of information at the enterprise level.

Achievements

- The Action Programme NSG was formed, composed of representatives from the ILO's tripartite partners and small water providers.
- The Action Programme obtained the commitment of organizations such as Civil Service Commission (CSC), DOLE, DILG, Cooperative Development Authority (CDA), water sector unions, employers, and owners of provincial and municipal districts to support the goals of the project.
- Public sector unions have formed network in order to help organize workers in the water utilities sector.
- Public sector unions who are members of the NSG have come together to push for the ratification of ILO Convention No. 151 or the Labour Relations (Public Service) Convention.
- Drafted Executive Order on Institutionalizing Social Dialogue in the country which would strengthen not only public sector unionism but private sector unions as well.



Relevant ILO Conventions and Recommendations

- Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144)
- Labour Relations (Public Service) Convention, 1978 (No. 151)

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