



PASUGUAN NG PILIPINAS

WASHINGTON, D.C.

EMBASSY OF THE PHILIPPINES

04 May 2010

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

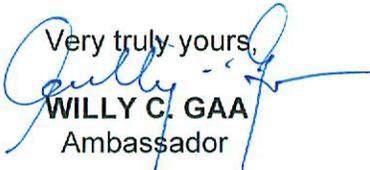
With reference to the recent public meeting of the Consultative Group to Eliminate the Use of Child Labor and Forced Labor in Imported Agricultural Products, I am pleased to provide the attached updates on what the Philippine government has accomplished in this effort.

In summary :

- From 2004-2008, the number of working children in the Philippines declined from 2.357 million in 2004 to 2.153 in 2008, showing a 9% decline
- The Philippine government has institutionalized policies to eliminate the worst forms of child labor
 - The Philippine Program Against Child Labor is a tripartite (government, employers group and workers organizations) effort to combat child labor, which has come up with a strategic framework for 2007 – 2015 towards a child labor free Philippines
 - Republic Act 9231, otherwise known as the Anti-Child Labor Law of the Philippines, was passed in 2003
- In relation to the Philippine government's ratification of ILO Convention No 82 (Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor), the Philippines' participates in a Time Bound Program, which has contributed significantly to the reduction of child laborers in deep sea fishing, mining, pyrotechnics production, prostitution, sugarcane plantations and domestic labor.
- In 2008, the Philippine government launched a program to provide livelihood support for the families of child laborers, to allow them to remove their children from hazardous work.
- The government also continues to provide educational assistance for child laborers, including vocational skills training to prepare the children to take on safe and age-appropriate employment
- Police action continues to rescue child laborers. In 2009 alone, 79 child workers were rescued
- Regulatory mechanisms remain in place, including regular labor inspection and workplace monitoring

Should you have any questions on our submission, I will be happy to send a team to brief your office on the particulars of our report.

Very truly yours,


WILLY C. GAA
Ambassador

HON. TOM VILSACK

Secretary of Agriculture

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PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT STATEMENT CONCERNING MULTI-SECTORAL ACTION AGAINST CHILD LABOR IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR IN THE PHILIPPINES

The Philippines remains steadfast and aggressive in its effort at eliminating the worst forms of child labor in the country, including those in the agricultural sector. The Philippine Department of Labor and Employment together with the multi-sectoral partners have been successful in creating an enabling environment both at the national and local levels for removing children from hazardous working conditions and providing them with the needed support services so they can obtain education and enjoy their rights as children. The collective efforts of the multi-stakeholders have eased the problem of child labor in the Philippines.

Declining Child Labor Incidences in the Philippines and in Agriculture

The efforts of the Philippine government and the social partners in addressing the problem of child labor have resulted in the decline in the number of working children 5-17 years old by 9.0% from 2004 - 2008, as shown in the 2009 Gender Statistics on Labor and Employment¹. Significant decline can also be seen in the 5-9 years age group at 47%.

Agriculture, hunting and forestry industry group mirrored the same trend. The number of working children in this major industry group went down by 13% in 2008. A significant decline is found in the age group 5-9 years old where the number of working children was cut by 52% over the last 5 years.

The major strategies employed by the Philippine government and the social partners are described hereunder.

Sustained Philippine Government Action to Eliminate Child Labor

The Philippines has come a long way in creating an enabling environment for the elimination of the worst forms of child labor. Policies and programs at the national and local levels have been institutionalized to ensure stability and consistency in implementation.

¹ GSLE is a regular publication of the DOLE – Bureau of Employment Statistics which brings together related sex-disaggregated indicators and data available from the various government agencies

1. *Philippine Program Against Child Labor: Towards a Child Labor - Free Philippines*

The Philippine Program Against Child Labor (PPACL) represents the concerted efforts of various stakeholders - national and local governments, employers' groups and workers' organizations, non-governmental organizations and international welfare and social development institutions - in the fight against child labor. The DOLE leads the network of stakeholders in working towards the progressive elimination of child labor through prevention, protection and removal of children from hazardous and exploitative work and, as may be appropriate, healing and reintegrating child labor victims into society. The multi-stakeholder network has evolved over years of partnership in a social movement espousing varied but inter-linked approaches and strategies in addressing child labor.

The PPACL Strategic Framework 2007-2015 envisions a CHILD LABOR-FREE PHILIPPINES. It aims to transform the lives of child laborers, their families and communities, into one devoid of hazards to safety and health, and with a sense of self-worth and empowerment.

The PPACL formulated five strategic directions and goals in order to achieve a child labor-free Philippines, namely: 1) establishment of a functional multi-level information system; 2) institutionalization of a strategic partnership and intensified advocacy and action at all levels; 3) improved access to quality and integrated services; 4) mainstreaming of child labor agenda in development policies and programs at all levels; and, 5) strengthened enforcement and compliance with relevant laws and policies.

A *Plan of Action for 2008-2010* was developed by the program partners to translate the PPACL Framework into concrete programs, projects and activities with specific indicators as benchmark for successful implementation.

2. *Narrowing Decent Work Deficits: The Philippine Common Agenda 2008-2010*

The elimination of the worst forms of child labor is one of the priority outcomes of the **Philippine Decent Work Common Agenda (2008-2010)** as it ensure that standards and fundamental principles and rights at work are promoted and realized. To achieve this, the tripartite partners formulated programs that were committed as priorities for implementation, such as the - DOLE's *Sagip Batang Manggagawa (Rescue Child Laborers)* and *Kabuhayan Para Sa Magulang ng Batang Manggagawa (KaSaMa) Project* or *Livelihood for Parents of Child Laborers*; the Workers Alliance for Child Labor, and the Employers' Advocacy Against Child Labor.

3. Enforcement of Republic Act No. 9231 otherwise known as Anti-Child Labor Law of 2003

The Philippines has a very strong legal framework, which proscribes child labor, particularly its worst forms, in all industries. In December 2003, Republic Act No. 9231 (*An Act Providing for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor and Affording Stronger Protection for the Working Child, Amending for this Purpose Republic Act No. 7610, as Amended, Otherwise Known as the "Special Protection of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation, and Discrimination Act"*) was passed into law to protect and remove children from the worst forms of child labor. It renders unlawful the use of the services of children and penalizes its violation with life imprisonment and fine.

To facilitate effective implementation of RA 9231, the DOLE in 2009 and in coordination with the UNICEF, conducted *Training for Labor Inspectors, Hearing Officers and Sheriffs on the Effective Enforcement of RA 9231 and RA 9208 (Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003)*.

4. The Philippines' Action to Address Child Labor in the Agricultural Sector

The DOLE, together with its multi-sectoral partners, has stepped up its efforts to remove children from hazardous work in the production of agricultural products such as rice, banana, sugarcane, rubber, corn, tobacco and coconut. Policies have likewise been developed and institutionalized to strengthen anti-child labor programs and responses. Livelihood and income augmentation schemes have been introduced to help families of child laborers. Skills training for parents and older siblings of child laborers have also been provided in partnership with local government units. Monitoring of workplaces and improvement of the work environment have been undertaken through the existing labor standards enforcement mechanism. Innovative and remedial educational programs were implemented, while health services were likewise given to child laborers. And lastly, advocacy initiatives thru mobilizing community support to end child labor in their respective areas were conducted.

In the Sugar Industry- Several anti-child labor advocates and organizations are undertaking initiatives to remove children from the condition of child labor. Among them are:

Sugar Tripartite Council - a tripartite body created to manage the social amelioration fund for sugar workers, and develop and recommend policies affecting the sugar industry. It has committed to support the anti-child labor program of the Labor Department by assisting in the implementation of projects that would augment the income of sugar workers in order that their children may be removed from work that are hazardous and deprive them of education.

Sugar Industry Foundation, Inc. (SIFI) - a non-profit organization in the sugar industry which provides services to sugar workers and implements programs to address the problem of child labor, such as supporting formal and vocational education for child labourers, providing livelihood opportunities for parents of working children, implementing income augmentation programs for sugar workers, and undertaking information dissemination on the perils of child labor.

Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP) - the national association of employers, together with the *SIFI* and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) it provides vocational training to working children to remove them from hazardous work and provides them with alternative non-hazardous work.

Trade Union Congress of the Philippines - a trade center for labor organizations. It created an association of child labor monitors (U-CLAMORS), an anti-child trafficking advocates, and has initiated the withdrawal of some child labourers in 3 big sugar plantations in the Western Visayas.

National Coalition Against Child Labor in Commercial Agriculture - led by a non-government organization that undertakes campaigns against child labor through sharing of ideas and experiences among target beneficiaries; capacity-building; moral, technical, organizing and mobilizing support, among others;

Laura Vicuna Foundation, Inc. - a non-profit organization that undertakes social protection advocacy against child labor in the sugarcane industry;

Exodus from Child Labor to Integration, Play, Socialization and Education (ECLIPSE)- launched a program for transporting working children from plantation to education;

St. Ma. Goretti Foundation - implemented the *Alternative Learning System (ALS)* in sugarcane farm communities in Negros Oriental.

In the Banana Industry - The *Philippine Banana Growers and Exporters Association (PBGEA)* a group composed of major banana exporters and growers, strictly prohibits the use of child labor among its members, including its supply chain which includes a group of small banana growers and agrarian reform beneficiaries that supply Cavendish banana to PBGEA and which also discourage the use of child labor.

The *Dole Stanfilco and Sumifru (Philippines) Corporation*, two of the largest players in the banana export industry and members of PBGEA, are both SA-8000-2008 certified and bound by the certification standards that ensure against the use of child labor in the supply chain.

Other associations of banana growers that do not engage child laborers are the *Liberty Banana Growers Multi-Purpose Cooperative*, and *LST Growers* in Mindanao.

In the Tobacco Industry - The project *Eliminating Child Labor in the Tobacco Industry (ECLTI)* was launched by the Labor Department in 2003 in the tobacco growing areas in Northern Luzon through the support of the Geneva-based **Eliminating Child Labor in Tobacco Growing (ECLT) Foundation** with the objective of contributing to

the elimination of child labor through a comprehensive program for children working in the tobacco industry in the Ilocos region. The activities under the program include taking children out of tobacco fields and bringing them back to school. It involved the participation of other stakeholders such as the managements and labor unions of Philip Morris Phil. Manufacturing, Inc.; Trans-Manila, Inc.; Continental Leaf Phil; and Northern Tobacco Redrying Co.

The program which was completed in 2009 resulted in the provision of educational assistance to 300 children in tobacco farming as well as alternative livelihood for their families.

5. Philippine Time-Bound Project and the ABK Initiative: Reducing child labor incidence and protecting children who are at risk

The Philippine Time Bound Programme (PTBP), implemented in relation to the Philippine Government's ratification of ILO Convention No. 182 (*Convention Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor*), had major contributions to the reduction in the number of child laborers in deep sea fishing, mining, pyrotechnics production, prostitution, **sugarcane plantations** and domestic labor. From 2003-2007, the number of working children who have been withdrawn or prevented from falling into child labor through the ILO-IPEC and ABK support projects to the PTBP exceeded the target that was set for the program. The PTBP target areas were Bulacan in Region 3, Camarines Norte in Region 5, Iloilo and Negros Occidental in Region 6, Cebu and Negros Oriental in Region 7, Davao and Compostela Valley in Region 11 and the Cities of Quezon, Pasay and Manila at the National Capital Region. The PTBP was supported by the US DOL through the ILO-IPEC and World Vision.

Under the ABK 2/TEACH Now Initiative, children engaged in or at risk of the worst forms of child labor in nine (9) provinces in seven (7) regions are sought to be withdrawn and educated. Children working in sugarcane plantations and those at risk are also targeted to benefit from the program.

6. Livelihood and Entrepreneurial Activities for families of child laborers

In 2008, the DOLE launched a program for *Strengthening the Livelihood Formation and Enhancement Services for Women, Youth and Child Laborers' Parents and Older Sibling*, in efforts to mainstream the concerns of women and young workers including child laborers. The strategy for implementation is the *Kabuhayan para Sa Magulang ng Batang Manggagawa (KaSaMa)* Project or *Livelihood Opportunities for the Parents of Child Laborers*, a support program under the Capacity Building for Livelihood for women, youth and

other sectors in the informal economy. The *KaSaMa* Project targets the parents and older siblings of child laborers who will be empowered as responsible family members earning income through livelihood undertakings.

The *KaSaMa* Project aims to contribute to the prevention and elimination of child labor by providing families of child laborers access to decent livelihood opportunities for enhanced income. For 2009, a total of 360 parents of child laborers were provided with livelihood assistance amounting to P5,197,384.15 (\$114,228). As a result of the livelihood assistance, the parents of child laborers subsequently prevented and/or removed their children from engaging in hazardous work. It covered Regions I, III, IV-A, V and VI which have child laborers engaged in sugarcane plantations, and other worst forms of child labor.

In February 2010, the DOLE Secretary directed all DOLE Regional Offices to allocate at least 5% of the Workers Income Augmentation Program (WINAP) funds for the continuous implementation of the DOLE Child Labor Prevention and Elimination Program.

7. Educational Assistance for child laborers

Making education available to children is believed to be the best way to remove them from child labor. It is in this regard that Project Angel Tree was launched by the Labor Department to provide a vehicle for donors and sponsors to share to underprivileged child laborers the fruits of their successes. The DOLE through its Regional Offices, promoted active participation and support of program partners, business sector, civil society organizations and private individuals to contribute to the prevention and elimination of child through an array of educational assistance including donation of school supplies, uniforms, tuition fees or stipend. In 2009, about 7,199 child laborers including those working in sugarcane plantations, received educational assistance under the **Project Angel Tree**.

In 2007, the District Tripartite Council (DTC) of Cagayan Valley in Region 2 composed of representatives from the sugar field workers, planters and millers of the province took a major part in the launching of Project Angel Tree in the region where 68 children working in sugarcane plantations in Cagayan Valley received various gifts from donors.

8. Advocacy and Community Mobilization

The DOLE and its Regional Offices have intensified the conduct of advocacy activities, particularly on child labor laws and policies through briefing dialogues, round table discussions, orientation, caravan, guesting in radio programs and distribution of IEC materials. These activities were directed at increasing awareness of

local officials, private recruitment and placement agencies, federation of sugarcane growers, academe, non-government organizations, workers groups, students, child laborers and their families and other groups on the welfare and protection of children.

A major activity in the 2007 World Day Against Child Labor Celebration was the conduct of a Forum on Child Labor in Agriculture by the National Child Labor Committee. The forum aimed to: 1) raise awareness on the situation of child laborers in the agricultural sector; and, 2) take action to ensure that children do not carry out hazardous work in agriculture. The forum served as a venue for sharing program initiatives to eliminate child labor in agriculture specifically in sugarcane plantations. The highlight of the activity was the signing of a document providing for a Call to Action on the elimination of child labor in agriculture by officials of the Department of Labor and Employment, Department of Agriculture, Department of Agrarian Reform, Employers Confederation of the Philippines, Trade Union Congress of the Philippines and Federation of Free Workers. The signatories committed to work together to build on existing laws, policies and programs to draw up a focused and effective plan of action for a time-bound program to eliminate child labor in the agriculture sector.

9. Labor Inspection and Workplace Monitoring

The DOLE's monitoring of child labor is integrated in the conduct of regular labor inspections. In the year 2008 up to August 2009, 895 establishments were inspected² in the province of Negros Occidental alone. The efforts yielded negative involvement of children in the sugarcane plantations that were visited.

10. Rescue of Child Laborers

The *Sagip Batang Manggagawa (Rescue Child Laborers)* Quick Action Teams had been successful in rescuing children in abject conditions and hazardous undertakings. In 2009 alone, 79 child workers were rescued during 16 rescue operations. In 2008, among the child laborers rescued were four (4) children working in a sugarcane farm in Batangas province. The rescued children were reintegrated back to their families and provided with appropriate services by the inter-agency partners of the Philippine Program Against Child Labor.

11. Training

The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority worked in partnership with the Employers' Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP) and the

² DOLE RO VI Report on Child Labor Program in Negros Occidental, September 2009

Sugar Industry Foundation, Inc. in Negros Occidental to provide vocational skills training to child workers. The project aims to remove children from hazardous work and provide lawful work and livelihood opportunities to children. The training activities were designed to equip children to fit in safe jobs, including those in the sugar industry.

Future Actions of the Philippine Government

To respond to the challenge of eliminating child labor incidence in the agriculture as well as in the other sectors and industries where the use of child labor is prevalent, the Department of Labor and Employment will ensure that the identified sectors or industries will be prioritized in the implementation of the Philippine Plan of Action on Child Labor based on the 2007-2015 Strategic Framework with the vision for a **Child Labor-Free Philippines**. The sectors will also be the DOLE focus in the new ILO-IPEC Project in the Philippines.

Among the priority activities that the Philippine Government will undertake are the following:

On Research, the DOLE will continue to commission surveys to determine the extent of child labor incidence in the identified sectors so that appropriate policies, programs and services may be developed and implemented.

On Inspection and Monitoring, DOLE will focus inspection in industries where there are alleged child labor cases. It will also create a special monitoring team that will look into and rectify incidence of child labor in small agricultural farms, among other work places. It will also monitor the use of the allocated funds for child labor prevention and elimination in the agricultural sector to ensure that they are used for the purpose.

On Advocacy, DOLE and its programs partners will intensify advocacy efforts focusing on employers and job providers in the agricultural sector, including parents of children working in farms or plantations.

On Alliance and Network Building, DOLE will dialogue with key players in the agricultural sector and relevant government agencies to discuss child labor-related issues and concerns with the end in view of working out specific interventions to address them. We will allow child workers to participate in the dialogues so that they can be part of the solution to the problem. We will also closely work with local government units to ensure that they put in place legal frameworks and allocate funds for anti-child labor activities.

Through a social accord, DOLE will get the commitment of the employer members of the Tripartite Industrial Peace Councils not to use the services of child workers, or to contract out or deal with suppliers who engage children in their undertakings.

We will assist in organizing inter-agency bodies at the communities where child laborers are present to ensure these children's access to educational, health and other appropriate services.

The goal of the Philippine Government is obviously to continue to make significant progress in problem of child labor and move further towards a child labor-free Philippines.