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KASAMBAHAY JOURNAL

KASAMBAHAY JOURNAL is an official publication of Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc. Kasambahay is a contraction of *kasama sa bahay* which literally means, companions or partners at home.

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Doing things together

*Kasambahay partners
share a piece of
the action*



By **Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc.**

As the time-bound project concludes, the work seems to have just started.

Visayan Forum (VF) is about to complete its target commitments for the time-bound project supported by the International Labour Organization-International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labor (ILO-IPEC). Today, there are more partners focusing on child domestic workers compared to 2004 when the time-bound program was launched. Now is the time to look forward and plan the next steps while also looking back and learning from the past successes and challenges.

"In a nutshell, the work became more systematic. Aside from the usual counseling, rescue and filing of legal cases, our social workers have spent more quality effort to capture every detail about each child. Trainers have reached out to new partners who are willing to learn how to set up programs in the context of their mandates. Advocates have turned into champions in every right, scouring every medium available from personal advocacy to public spheres," says Cecil Oebanda, VF President, as she reflects on VF's experience during this stage of the Kasambahay Program.

Since 2004, VF and its local partners have reached out to and assisted 2,335 child domestic workers as well as prevented 1,468 highly-at-risk children from sliding

into the sector. VF has trained 515 frontline personnel on organizing techniques, service linkages, and maximizing advocacy opportunities. For the first time, partners from different regions have gathered face-to-face to sum up their experience with VF.

It was also during this period that a major summit – the 1st National Domestic Workers Summit – was realized. The executive branch echoed the call for greater recognition of the domestic worker when on April 24, 2006, President Gloria Arroyo issued Presidential Proclamation 1051 setting aside April 30th as "a special day to honor and give recognition to the hidden, yet massive army of everyday workers, to generate greater awareness of the importance and contribution of domestic workers."

Recognizing child domestic work as an urgent development challenge did not happen overnight. Since VF started working on the issue in 1995, its constellation of partners has grown amazingly. The key to our success lies in a combination of factors ranging from changing attitudes, community learning, multi-sectoral cooperation, and greater empowerment of this invisible sector. Today, many institutions take pride in their role in advancing the interests of domestic workers. The national program for child domestic workers called the Kasambahay Program has truly evolved into a model national program.

A time-bound approach

The Philippines is an integral part in the formation of ILO Convention 182 that calls for immediate national action against the worst forms of child labor. In 1997, groups working on child labor started the Global March Against Child Labor

Campaign, a worldwide movement instrumental to the approval and massive ratification of ILO 182. VF served as the Southeast Asia Secretariat for this campaign.

Given this history of successful collaboration, it was not difficult for the same organizations to work together under the time-bound program approach.

VF is one of the key organizations focusing exclusively on the plight of child domestic workers. In fact, VF is the only ILO-IPEC partner approved to work in all eight provinces and at the national level.

Under the Kasambahay Program there are three interrelated objectives contributing to the empowerment of domestic workers:

1. To provide services for child domestic workers
2. To mobilize and train stakeholders
3. To campaign for new policies and advocate social changes

The first objective encompasses the provision of specific services for child domestic workers especially counseling, hotline, shelter, non-formal education and vocational support. By mid-term, the Kasambahay Program expanded educational support to include formal education opportunities for child domestics. Bringing back and maintaining children in schools is an important way to prevent other highly-at-risk children from sliding into other worst forms of child labor, such as prostitution.

VF's second objective is the mobilization and training of key stakeholders on effective service provision, organization of domestic workers, drafting of local ordinances, and synergetic network building. VF sustains our newly formed networks in each province through regular meetings and joint action.

An important aspect of our partnerships is to provide better coordination so that domestics do not fall into the cracks of implementation. Another important aspect is working together to lobby for local legislation. VF has also built the capacity of communities to react to reports of abuse and possible illegal recruitment activities.

The key project partner is the child domestic worker. SUMAPI is an organization of domestic workers in the Philippines that serves as the voice of the sector by speaking for the domestic workers who do not have the opportunity to speak out on their own. SUMAPI also serves as a second family of the domestic workers many of whom are away from the natural support of their families. If any member faces a problem or obstacle, other SUMAPI members are there to offer support and guidance.

The third VF objective is to embark on changing attitudes through sustained advocacy campaigns. A key part of this strategy is the passage of the Batas Kasambahay or Magna Carta for Household Helpers, which was conceptualized more than a decade ago.

The key to VF's success is our close working relationship with legislative staff and implementing agencies at the city and municipal levels. VF implemented its training strategy using two breakthrough manuals. The first is "Training Manual for Advocates on the Rights of Child Domestic Workers," that the ILO developed for Southeast Asia. The second publication is "Child Domestic Workers: A handbook on good practice in program intervention," developed by the Anti-Slavery International and its partners like VF.

Because of its pioneering work and extensive experience on the issue, the VF has nurtured interest in this special sector through extensive training and partnerships that have permeated at all levels of society – from the local to the national level.

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The end of child labour within reach

ILO-IPEC Manila has lessons to share from its efforts to stamp out worst forms of child labor in the Philippines

By Stephanie Ann Brewer

IF CURRENT TRENDS CONTINUE, the worst forms of child labor can be eliminated worldwide within the next decade. A future where children are free from slavery, forced labor, trafficking, and hazardous or exploitative work may be within reach.

This positive outlook comes from the International Labour Organization's (ILO) recent global report¹ which reveals that the past four years have seen an 11% decrease in child labor worldwide, with a 26% reduction in the number of children engaged in hazardous work.

ILO has urged all countries to commit themselves to the abolition of child labor in its worst forms by the year 2016, in line with sweeping national ratifications across the globe of ILO Convention No. 182, or the "Convention Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor."

To achieve this goal, ILO has urged countries to design and put in place by 2008 time-bound measures for the eradication of the worst forms of child labor – a step that has already been taken in the Philippines.

Six years ago, the Philippines ratified Convention 182. By June 28, 2002, it had become one of the first countries to launch a Time-Bound Program (TBP) for the elimination of the worst forms of child labor, a key program in support of the overarching National Program Against Child Labor (NPACL).

The NPACL is anchored on the vision of harnessing collective action of social partners to eliminate the worst forms of child labor and to transform the lives of child laborers, their families, and communities by enhancing their sense of self-worth, empowerment and development.

Social partners have targeted a 75% reduction in the number of children in the worst forms of child labor by the year 2015. Notably, based on consultations undertaken in preparation for the TBP, child domestic labor is included as one of six priority sectors of child labor to be targeted, along with sugarcane plantations, pyrotechnics, deep-sea fishing, mining and quarrying, and prostitution.

The US Department of Labor has supported ILO-International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) Manila to implement a five-year support project which pursues a two-pronged strategy in tackling child labor. The two-pronged strategy follows from the need to simultaneously strengthen the "enabling" environment for the elimination of the worst forms of child labor through such actions as awareness-raising and policy advocacy, while also engaging in direct interventions with vulnerable children, families, and communities.

ILO-IPEC Manila has been working with its local partners to educate the public about the worst forms of child labor; facilitate educational and economic opportunities for families identified as at risk of sending their children into child labor; build local capacity to detect, remove, and rehabilitate child laborers; and ensure that child labor-related concerns are mainstreamed into local and national policies.

Among its key partners is the Visayan Forum Foundation (VF) which works on child domestic work issues. As of June 2006, a two-year VF project within the Philippine Time-Bound Program (PTBP) framework has been completed. This action plan included activities to strengthen the capacity of local governments, employers' and workers' organizations, school and church groups, and children themselves to implement positive actions for child domestics.

The program also included policy advocacy, awareness-raising on good practices in addressing child domestic labor, and outreach and empowerment activities for child domestic laborers.

Removing children from worst forms of child labor

Former Labor and Employment Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas reported that some 12,500 children have been removed from the worst forms of child labor and extended educational assistance under the PTBP as early as July of 2005.²

These children were found working in pyrotechnics, prostitution, domestic labor, mining and quarrying, deep-sea fishing, and sugar cane plantations in Bulacan, Metro Manila, Iloilo, Camarines Norte, Negros Occidental, Oriental Negros, Cebu, and Davao.

The DOLE's Bureau of Women and Young Workers (BWYW) report also indicated that the children were among those identified through the baseline surveys conducted in 2003 and 2004 by IPEC through its local partners.

The BWYW report revealed that a total of 12,757 children were found engaged in the worst forms of child

labor, of which over 12,300 children have been enrolled in formal education through a collaborative arrangement between the PTBP and World Vision, Plan International, ERDA, and the Christian Children's Fund.

Another 77 child laborers have been provided with non-formal education and 116 others with vocational skills training. Approximately 3,732 child workers enrolled in formal education have also been provided with school uniforms, books, school supplies, and financial support.

Sto. Tomas said the provision of educational and skills training assistance to the children is aimed at enabling them to engage in more productive economic activities than those that had subjected them to the worst forms of child labor.

"Education is the best form of intervention that would eliminate the worst forms of child labor," she said. "At the same time, livelihood assistance is extended to families of child workers to prevent their children from engaging again in the worst forms of child labor."

ILO-IPEC continues to support its partners in their efforts to combat child labor. Recently, for example, it released P7.1 million to two of its non-government organization partners in Negros Oriental that are involved in the campaign to wipe out child labor.³

Of the amount, P4.1 million will be given to the livelihood and education components of Goretta Foundation's Children at Risk and Children in Labor, to be used in its programs in Sta. Catalina, Siaton, Basay, Bais City, Mabinay, and Bayawan City.

The remaining P3 million will go to the Association for the Welfare of Filipino Children for its school-based guidance counseling and tutorial program in Ayunon, Siaton, and Sibulan.

Enhanced policies

Early on, a crucial development in the fight against child labor occurred during the TBP. The Philippines enacted RA 9231, or the Anti Child Labor Law of 2003, which reflects the principles of ILO Convention 182.

RA 9231 criminalizes and mandates stiff penalties (including fines of 100,000 to 1 million pesos and/or imprisonment for 12-20 years) for those who employ or facilitate the employment of children in the worst forms of child labor. To date, nobody has yet to be prosecuted under this new law.

A creative and proven way to increase public awareness about this law is to encourage TV producers to display a banner focusing on the importance of having secured a Working Child's Permit (WCP) "as [children's] employment in such public entertainment

¹ILO, The End of Child Labour Within Reach, Global Report under the Follow-Up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (2006).

²DOLE -Information and Publication Service, Children Removed from Worst Forms of Child Labor Given Education, July 13, 2005, lifted from: <http://www.op.gov.ph/printerfriendly.asp?newsid=11344>.

³ILO-IPEC okays P7.1M for NegOr Child Program, December 17, 2005, lifted from: <http://www.sunstar.com.ph/static/dum/2005/12/17/news/ilo.1pec.okays.p7.1m.for.negor.child.program.html>

As of June 2006, a two-year VF project within the Philippine Time-Bound Program (PTBP) framework has been completed. This action plan included activities to strengthen the capacity of local governments, employers' and workers' organizations, school and church groups, and children themselves to implement positive actions for child domestics.

or information is essential.⁴

Child participation is also seen in action as working children have been given an increased role in the formulation of national policies such as the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan and the Education for All National Action Plan.

Mainstreaming child labor concerns remains quite a challenge. However, some meaningful progress has been made on the level of local government. A few local governments specifically in Quezon City and Makati have passed local ordinances to provide for the large-scale registration of domestic workers within their jurisdictions.

Lessons

While it is still very early to assess the full impact of IPEC's support project, several important lessons are already emerging. The following insights stem from Visayan Forum's implementation of its action plan on child domestic labor, which has resulted in the withdrawal of more than 1,700 children from exploitative domestic work; the prevention of more than 1,300 other children from becoming domestics; and the return to formal schooling for many domestic workers.

First, more serious efforts must be made to popularize the provisions of the Anti Child Labor Law or RA 9231. This law has yet to gain any significant level of awareness among front-line law enforcers and labor inspectors. There are still many misconceptions about it stemming from a lack of appreciation about

the debates of child labor. Implementation rules for this law need to be thoroughly discussed in consonance with recently enacted laws on trafficking and local policies for the registration of domestics. In the future, advocacy efforts should target the expansion of broad public support and clearly inform all actors of the role that they play.

Second, implementation of child labor programs requires effective functioning and coordination among different agencies. Without sufficient political will and financial commitment, new policies remain ineffective. For example, quick response teams cannot sustain removal and rescue of exploited children without the help of other institutions, mainly civil society groups, to provide shelter and re-integration services. Likewise, efforts to prevent children from entering the worst forms of child labor should be tied to access to quality education, which remains problematic.

Third, there is an urgent need to involve and build the capacity of local government actors (such as at the city and barangay level) so that the provision of services and programs to child laborers will be sufficiently supported by existing local infrastructures. Without a strong sense of ownership, local agencies cannot be expected to embark on large-scale actions to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. Still, most local government units suffer from overstretched financial and human resources. In most cases, only one or two focal persons in a certain agency are tasked to monitor children, mobilize partners and deal with complaints from parents.

In a related manner, it is also desirable to establish a regular monitoring mechanism to track the increase or decrease of child labor in various areas of the Philippines; a proposal currently pending before national-level authorities could help to address this need, as it would allocate funding for a 5-yearly Survey on Children.

Fortunately, the lessons learned over the past few years help to point the way into the future. Notably, as the fight against child labor moves forward, priority attention should be paid to increasing cooperation with and capacity-building of local actors including local government units, parents, communities, and of course children themselves.

Indeed, working together to bring the dream of ending child labor within reach remains a continuing battle, and it will take all of our combined efforts to achieve victory.

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TRI-PARTITE PARTNERS brainstorm in a series of consultations to identify challenges faced by the domestic workers sector.

ILO-DOMWORK Project: Protecting domestic workers from forced labor and trafficking

AN INTENSIFIED FOCUS on the plight of adult domestic worker issues, both locally and overseas, has enhanced the programs of International Labor Organization (ILO) tripartite partners. The Philippines and Indonesia have made significant efforts to combat forced labor and trafficking practices affecting thousands of domestic workers.

The DOMWORK Project (Mobilizing Action for the Protection of Domestic Workers against Forced Labour

and Trafficking in Southeast Asia) aims to strengthen the protection of domestic workers in the said region. Its design is based on the recommendations made during the 2003 Hong Kong Consultation conducted by the Special Action Programme to Combat Forced Labour (SAP-FL) in conjunction with Anti-Slavery International (ASI) and Asian Migrants Centre.

ILO describes trafficking and forced labor as "the underside of globalization." With recent legislations in place in both countries to punish trafficking, a detailed

focus on forced labor dimensions has become urgent and necessary.

The initial project phase, from July 2004 to July 2006, entailed comprehensive work on legislation, capacity-building, organization and self-representation. In the Philippines, ILO has expanded its work with tripartite groups to NGOs as well as domestic workers' associations such as Samahan at Ugnayan ng mga Manggagawang Pantahanan sa Pilipinas (SUMAPI). During this period, notable achievements include:

- Drafting a new version of the proposed *Batas Kasambahay*, a model local ordinance and a model employment contract based on a series of multi-partite consultations including the Senate Labor Committee

- Supporting Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) with the needed amendments to the Recruitment Regulations to raise their level of responsibility and professionalize the operations of private recruitment and placement agencies

- Pushing for the ratification of ILO Convention No. 29 on Forced Labour, ILO Convention No. 97 on Migration for Employment and ILO Convention No. 143 on Migrant Workers.

- Assisting DOLE's Bureau of Women and Young Workers (BWYW) to develop a worker education program which can be used as an orientation facility at the pre-employment and employment stages for local domestic workers. The BWYW has completed the training curriculum, training workbook, trainers manual and a flyer for employers for this purpose. It has also completed a pilot run through the cooperation of the Philippine Organization of Private Recruitment Agencies (POPEA) which will function as one of the alternative delivery channels for this program.

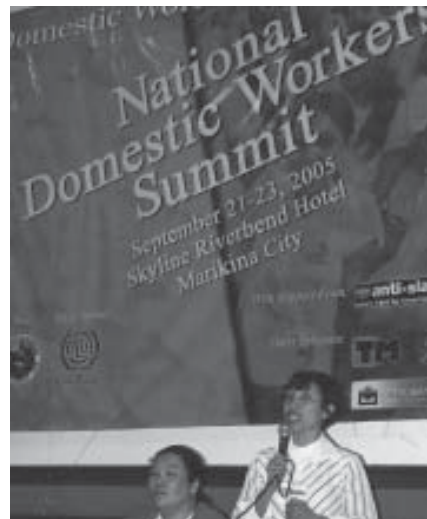
- Producing information and educational tools such as *Handa Ka Na Ba?*, a pre-employment orientation video for migrant domestic workers developed by the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), and the CD-ROM training tool on forced labor and trafficking of domestic workers for consular officials and foreign service staff of the Department of Foreign Affairs-Foreign Service Institute (DFA-FSI).

Forced labor- All work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily. *ILO Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Forced Labour, 1930, No. 29*

- Wide dissemination of DOMWORK's baseline research, "An Analysis of the Situation of Filipino Workers," authored by ILO Consultant Nicole J. Sayres, which can be downloaded from the ILO website.

- Supporting the production of significant service tools on training regulations for household services. The Board of Trustees of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) approved this reference guide in March 2005, which covers skills training, testing and certification of domestic workers. It defines the training curriculum and standards of competency which will be used in skills assessment. The whole facility has been pilot-tested on Kuwait-bound domestic workers under a special employment program for Mindanao. The first batch of trainers and assessors has already been trained. Upon the return of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo from her visit to Saudi Arabia last May, the government started preparations to promote the application of this program to domestic workers going abroad.

- Supporting Visayan Forum in convening the first National Domestic Workers Summit held on September 21-23, 2005, publishing "Trafficked into Forced Labor: Selected Case Studies of Domestic Workers in the Philippines" and holding the first



SOFIA ARCE presents recommendations from local domestic workers. Beside her is Ma. Patricia Bocota from the overseas domestic workers group.



BODY MAP. Participants outline fears, hopes, thoughts and aspirations of domestic workers

official *Araw ng Kasambahay* (See related stories on pp. 10, 20 & 26).

- Supporting SUMAPI in a series of capability-building sessions on basic human rights, principles of collective bargaining, strategic planning, resource mobilization, organizing and financial management, as well as the data-basing of their members.

- Working with the Federation of Free Workers (FFW) to conduct community-based socio-demographic profiling and awareness-building among domestic workers. The survey analysis in the Dagat-dagatan area will soon be available.

- Supporting the Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP) in conducting nationwide consultations for the drafting of an *Employers' Code of Ethics in the Employment of Domestic Workers* and its sector position for the *Kasambahay Bill*.

- Facilitating a series of workshops and producing IEC materials to mainstream outputs of the DOMWORK project. IEC materials produced include ILO posters, 2006 calendar, a compilation of the Domestic Workers' Handbook, etc.

While a second project phase is still being worked out, ILO is confident that the partners will continue these initiatives. During the terminal evaluation conference, partners validated the need to mobilize future resources towards improving and integrating research and data; strengthening a DOMWORK Summit network of partners to push for laws, policies and programs to translate the 10-point Decent Work Agenda for Domestic Workers into action; sustaining awareness-building and good practices documentation, especially in working with employers themselves; developing critical direct interventions including worker training, legal protection, and cooperativism as well as supporting special service programs on special days; continuous capacity building especially among domestic workers, local government units and other trainers; and institution building and networking towards meaningful consultation of partners and integrating gender dimensions into the program.

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A call to action

Kasambahay and partners take big step towards making domestic work a decent work

BEATRIZ LEFT SCHOOL to work as household help in Manila. While Patricia left her own kids to take care of other children in Hongkong.

Many women and children like them want to be free from the bondage of poverty while ironically confined in the privacy of their employers' homes. There is little or no chance to be heard. They remain out of reach, hidden, invisible, languishing behind closed doors.

At the first National Domestic Workers Summit, local and overseas domestic workers joined forces for the rare chance to put forward the realities of domestic work and raised a common voice to uplift their sector.

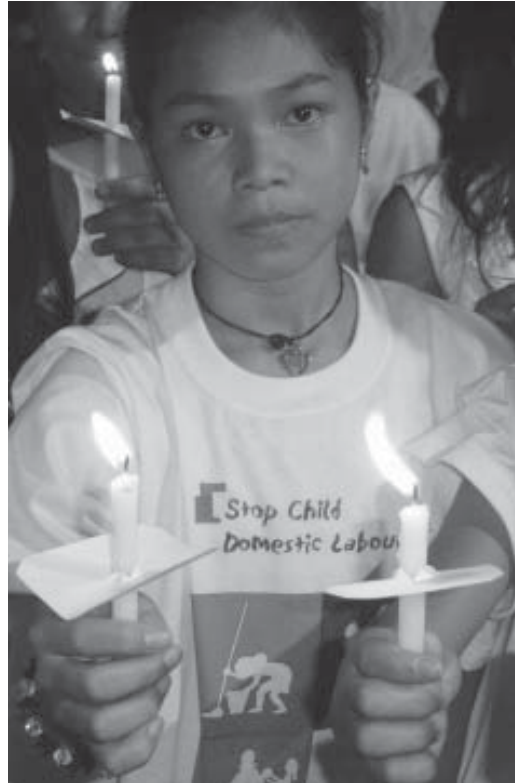
This pioneering initiative was convened by Visayan Forum and partners led by the International Labor Organization (ILO) DOMWORK to elevate the level of discussions on programs and policies for domestic workers at the national policy-making level. Domestic workers came face-to-face with officials from the national and local government, international institutions, faith-based groups, NGOs, and employers' groups, in a number of workshop and plenary sessions from September 21-23, 2005 at the Skyline Riverbend Hotel in Marikina City.

Domestic work is decent work

The National Domestic Workers Summit is the first of its kind in the country, and even in Asia. Its theme, "Domestic Work is Decent Work," took on the ILO principles promoted worldwide, for all sectors including the informal sector. Decent work simply means "productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity." All workers must be free from risks and abuses at work, ensured of training and employment alternatives, and protected by government through social services and responsive programs for those at risk.

This landmark event led to a number of firsts in the advocacy for domestic workers' rights. Apart from having gathered domestic workers from different regions to participate in constructive engagements with partners, it is also the very first to have crafted a **Ten Point Decent Work Agenda** for the sector and a **Social Compact** that signified and strengthened the partners' commitment (see related sections).

The 300 Summit delegates and participants crafted this national agenda to address priority issues and



concerns of the sector. The ten policy and program recommendations were strategically formulated through a series of discussions and consultations with domestic workers and partners.

The Samahan at Ugnayan ng mga Manggagawang Pantahanan sa Pilipinas (SUMAPI)

conducted focused group discussions with local domestic workers while the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) facilitated a consultation with government and industry sectors on migrant workers prior to the actual Summit. Migrant groups have also conducted consultations with domestic workers in Hongkong.

From these pre-summit consultations, priority issues and concerns of the local and overseas domestic work sector were identified and highlighted their vulnerability and their need to be well-informed about their rights and the protective services available for them. These were further discussed in the Summit's small group sessions which focused on the following themes: a) rights at work; b) employment and education; c) social protection; d) children of migrant workers, and e) social dialogue and tripartism.

One important action point in this agenda is the immediate passage of the Batas Kasambahay. Worth noting is the fact that the roots of the Summit stemmed from the long-drawn campaign to lobby for this pending bill. There is a growing recognition that improving standards on the sector here at the local front is an important step towards lobbying for stricter implementation of standards and policies by other countries as well, most specially host countries of migrant domestic workers. VF has experienced many difficulties to protecting the rights of abused domestic workers because of the lack of legal standards and implementing mechanisms in the ground.

The national clamor for the passage of Batas Kasambahay was most evident during the third day of the Summit when the one million signatures gathered from different regions were formally turned over to then Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Secretary Patricia St. Tomas. After almost five months, Visayan Forum and partners reached its one million mark that signifies the strong demand for Congress to pass this landmark bill for the domestic work sector. This coincided with the release of the Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey last year which showed that 87% among Filipinos approve of the Batas Kasambahay.

GMA's support to the kasambahay

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo was represented by Secretary St. Tomas who delivered the final keynote address on her behalf.

Despite her absence, the President's support to the sector overwhelmed the hundreds of domestic workers who have long been awaiting genuine efforts from the government. She did not only recognize the sector's important contribution to the society and to the nation but also called on everyone to use the term "kasambahay" when referring to domestic workers.

But what earned the loudest applause was the President's declaration of support for the passage of the

Kasambahay bill.

"It's about time that we study and talk about his proposed bill and I hope the Congress will heed this call," says the President.

She particularly called on the DOLE to launch a massive campaign against overseas and local employment agencies that violate domestic workers' rights. She also asked other government agencies such as the Department of Justice, Department of Interior and Local Government and the Department of Foreign Affairs to work with the DOLE in the campaign against illegal recruitment.

The President also recognized the efforts being made by the different sectors — government agencies, LGUs, civil society groups and employers, in pursuit of giving recognition and importance to the rights and welfare of domestic workers.

Sto. Tomas herself echoed the same support expressed by the President. Apart from emphasizing the importance of an employment contract and of setting up a mechanism for the certification of domestic workers, she also encouraged the delegates to register as SSS members.

The Summit was an opportune time for other officials of the government, international institutions, employers' groups, and NGOs to express their support to the domestic work sector. Among them: then *ILO Director for Sub-regional Office for Southeast Asia and the Pacific* Werner Konrad Blenk, *Department of Foreign Affairs Undersecretary for Migrant Workers' Affairs* Jose Brillantes, *Anti-Slavery International Campaigns Officer* Sarah Williams, *Employers Confederation of the Philippines' Nomer Macalalad*, and *Bishops-Businessmen's Conference for Human Development National Co-Chairman* Ricardo Pascua.

Moving forward

Sharing of good practices and personal experiences was done not just through plenary and workshop sessions. There were also booths and photo exhibits showcasing the projects and services of social partners.

Everyone was enthusiastic, motivated and challenged by the experience of being part of the National Domestic Workers Summit. This three-day event was another historic achievement not only for the domestic workers but also for VF and its partners who share the common goal of advancing the rights and welfare of the massive yet marginalized domestic work sector.

In one way or another, the objectives were achieved and the expectations were met. But as what VF President Cecilia Flores-Oebanda stressed in her speech, "We will not be contented unless we have translated into action what we have thought of and discussed here. That will be the next step."

As many cases of abuse of domestic workers here and abroad continue to fall into ever-widening fissures in our laws and implementing structures, the Summit posed the challenge of translating commitments into action, not just mere talk.

National Agenda on Decent Work for Domestic Workers

"We want to be called 'kasambahay,' not just maids or helpers at home. We are your companions at home, your partners in life."

(This summary report was submitted and approved on day 3 of the first ever National Domestic Workers Summit held at the Skyline Riverbend Hotel, in Marikina City last September 21-23, 2005. This is a summary of the discussion among 200 local and migrant (overseas) domestic workers, in consultation with more than 100 social partners from the civil society and religious sector, government, employers' groups and recruitment agencies. For more details, contact the Visayan Forum Foundation, summit convener, at director@visayanforum.org or visit our website at www.visayanforum.org.)

THE DOMESTIC WORK SECTOR is an important sector because of the many cross-cutting issues associated with their work environment.

- Human Rights: Domestic workers lost their dignity. They are victims of discrimination. They need protection against abuse.

- Labor: They comprise a big sector that lacks labor protection, mostly receives low salary and benefits, and works with an unclear relationship to their employers.

- Economic: They greatly contribute to the Filipino family and society. They regularly send remittances to their families. In this era of globalization, they also form part of the multiplier effect in the national economy.

- Trafficking: Most are vulnerable to exploitation and take risks without proper documents during the migration process.

- Cultural: Domestic work is deeply rooted to culture. Yet, degrading words such as *chimay*, *achay*, *muchacha* and slaves, are still being used to refer to them. Even their own relatives for whom they work often abuse them. Their families take the brunt of separation, and suffer from familial disintegration and compromised values.

- Gender: They are a group composed mostly of women and young girls. Yet they also set working women free from the clutches of household chores. Many have also become victims of sexual abuse.

- Children's rights and child labor: Many domestic workers are children who cannot go to school. They suffer exploitative working conditions that compromise their health, safety and morals. They work under dangerous conditions that are considered hazardous and therefore, unacceptable.

FIRST DAY opening ceremonies of the National Domestic Workers Summit held at the Skyline Riverbend Hotel in Marikina City.

The emergence of this sector is deeply rooted to a number of factors:

- Poverty remains a primary push for women and children to engage in domestic work. Yet even when they are already working, most remain tied to debt and extreme poverty. Despite the odds, some have succeeded in breaking free from low social and economic status through their own efforts and with the support of many sectors/agencies.

- Despite its massive number, the domestic work sector remains hidden and invisible. In the Philippines, there are an estimated 600,000 to 2.5 million domestic workers who mostly start working at a tender age. Overseas, the government documented 67,694 newly hired domestic workers in 2004. According to the Department of Foreign Affairs, out of the 140,000 migrant workers in Hong Kong, 120,000 of them are domestic workers. Whether found locally or overseas, domestic workers remain scattered and hidden inside private homes. They are difficult to protect and are deprived of opportunities.

- In the labor sector, domestic workers are the least compensated. They receive low salary and often lack days off and social security. Despite this reality, many of them still dream of being treated by their employers as part of the family, and not just ordinary workers.

- There are difficult realities that Filipino domestic workers face overseas. More than 90% remain undocumented. Subscribed under the legal context and processes of their host countries, many fall easy prey to forced labor because they are at the mercy of their recruiters and employers. They also lack alternative options and seldom seek support of embassies despite the presence of mechanisms for on-site monitoring.

The Situation

There are over-arching issues that domestic workers face inside in the country and overseas. Many stories have been told and heard during the Summit. These are the stories about pains that have hurt the body, mind and spirit. These are stories about how their human dignity has been debased.

- Pervasive violation of labor rights such as the right to a just salary, regular days off and social benefits. Rarely do formal contracts exist and if they do, they are not clearly explained to the domestic worker. Recruiters change certain provisions or employers do not actually comply with them. Many domestic workers end up as victims and become vulnerable to abuse and punishment, especially the children. Many also become victims of trafficking, including the huge majority of undocumented domestic workers. Child and adult domestic workers face many risks, but have limited means to redress grievances.

- Many domestic workers have reached low level of education and are not prepared for the realities and languages of other countries. Thus, they become vulnerable to abuse. Many of them return to the Philippines after their contracts yet they remain

unprepared and untrained to find work inside the country or to engage in business. Only a few have the opportunity for alternative education to be able to find higher paying jobs so they either remain domestic workers or end up unemployed.

- Child domestic workers face special problems such as the lack of access to education or the inability to study due to long hours of work. It takes a long time for many child domestic workers to finish their education. Many are even compelled to drop out of school because their low salaries are not commensurate with their expensive educational expenses.

- Domestic workers are easy victims of physical, sexual and psychological abuse. When abused, immediate help is impossible or inaccessible because they are hidden in private households. Legal cases are slow to prosper, especially when faced with the particularities of the justice system of different countries. Domestic workers are also vulnerable to reproductive and health problems brought by the pressures of work and isolation from their families when working abroad. They lack security in times of sickness or accidents. Even when already registered with the Social Security System (SSS), domestic workers as well as their employers cannot afford to regularly pay for their contributions.

- Family relations and values tend to weaken due to long separation. The children of domestic workers often become victims of discrimination and 'unusual' perceptions by their friends and schoolmates. Many family members also lack protection and access to communication especially when parents face serious problems abroad.

- There is lack of mechanisms for regular consultations among domestic workers, employers, government, and other sectors. Domestic workers also find it difficult to genuinely participate in empowerment activities because they lack regular days off. They also lack the capacity and opportunity to negotiate with their employers and with the government.

What must be done

1. Strengthen existing laws and implement new laws that uplift and raise the standards of decent work for the protection of domestic workers' labor rights. For example, it is timely to immediately pass the **Batas Kasambahay** or **Domestic Workers Bill** which will require the use of standard contracts. This is based on provisions that effectively update the Labor Code using principles of the Forced Labor Convention and ILO Convention No. 182. It is also important to continuously build partnerships with destination countries of our domestic workers towards strengthening their laws in accordance to the principles of the International Labor Organization. It is necessary to continue disseminating code of conduct and good practices in interventions, especially to help strengthen implementation of laws by partners from among the ranks of the labor attachés, embassies, government employees, civil society, recruitment agencies and local chambers of commerce.



Young girls attentively listen during their night class at the Negros Occidental High School in Bacolod City.

Many stories have been told and heard during the Summit. These are the stories about pains that have hurt the body, mind and spirit. These are stories about how their human dignity has been debased.

2. Strengthen and clarify the appropriate **mechanisms to monitor the conditions** of domestic workers hidden inside the private households of their employers. One preventive measure can be the immediate drafting of a comprehensive orientation module which effectively and carefully explains where and how an abused domestic worker can seek help. There is also a continuing need to strengthen agencies that are based in the countries where these workers are deployed. In the same local context, grievance mechanisms must be clearly set up for domestic workers who wish to report against recruiters and to settle complaints with employers. These mechanisms include the use of effective hotline center

and quick action team in different *barangays*, DOLE offices, and other *Kasambahay* desks by NGOs. More specifically, local ordinances also play a big role in the registration and prioritizing services for the domestic workers.

3. Conduct continuous and comprehensive orientation on **migration realities** for those planning to work as domestic worker. This advocacy should reach their families down to the barangay level. We do not advocate the end of safe migration but rather the protection of hopeful domestic workers. There is a need to inform workers about particular realities in the destination countries while the worker is still in the process of application.

4. Attack the trafficking dimension of domestic work as a matter of urgent priority. Institutions should work to provide sufficient information and relevant services for the victims about the nature of trafficking and how to report traffickers. Continue to monitor trafficking activities in exit ports, airports, and other trafficking "hotspots." Legitimate recruitment agencies play a big role in policing their own ranks against illegal recruitment practices. A continuing challenge is how to protect the rights of undocumented migrants who often engage in domestic work and later fall to prostitution.

5. Draft a comprehensive **Training, Livelihood and Reintegration Program** for the domestic workers. Assist 'exit-domestics' through continuous retraining, re-skilling, orientation and vocational trainings for self-development. It is crucial in the long term to train and organize domestic workers as entrepreneurs, and guide them about possible investments, savings mobilization, and other income-generating possibilities. Enhance the implementation of the Development of Skills Enhancement and Certification Program of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and the DOLE program, Development of Labor Education for Domestic Workers.

6. Make the **right to education** a national priority, especially for child domestic workers. Sustaining them in school also requires crucial support from their employers. Immediately popularize different existing programs such as alternative learning systems, night schools and Sunday schools. Targeting child domestic workers who already stopped their schooling, the *Balik Paaralan Campaign* (Back to School Campaign) is a relevant strategy across educational centers scattered in provinces, which are destination areas as well. Many child domestic workers may also like to pursue special arrangements such as the "Study Now, Pay Later" program that can be supported by local institutions or philanthropists, or the DOLE's special program for Kasambahays with job placement component.

7. Introduce and strengthen Social Protection schemes that can be made available for kasambahays working

locally and overseas. The present SSS and Philhealth program should be strictly monitored to ensure accessibility to domestic workers. Barangay units can help provide access points to make it easier for domestic workers and employers to pay their remittances and contributions. This requires making domestic workers more aware of the existence of such programs and what documents they need to maximize their benefits. In another light, Kasambahay safehouse centers should be made available to sensitive cases of abuse. Cooperation among "services networks" working abroad is also important, but must be made visible to domestic workers. Members of these service networks should also be ready to address reproductive health issues. Existing sensitivity trainings for labor attachés should be continued, and the present practices of charging excessive recruitment fees should be reviewed.

8. Generate understanding about the effects of migration on children and family members left behind. The OWWA must immediately include family matters both in pre-departure and pre-employment orientation seminars (PDOS and PEOS). In the long run, it is also necessary to study what relevant and practical information such as proper contact information may be included in these modules.

9. Immediately declare a Domestic Workers' Day (Araw ng mga Kasambahay) for all Filipino domestic workers to celebrate here and abroad. **Genuine recognition of their domestic workers' contribution to national development** can be taken a step further by ordaining mandatory registration for the domestic workers in the barangay or local government level. This strategy will help organize domestic workers into associations such as the SUMAPI which is presently based in schools, parks and churches. Train and sustain organized domestic workers as support groups to better access benefits,

information and services. It is also important to organize the children of domestic workers like the Clubs of Sons & Daughters of OFWs. Important information can be learned through the concerted efforts of these groups. NGOs play a major role in empowering domestic workers on how to negotiate with the employers and the government.

10. Domestic work should be **recognized as decent work**. This is an immediate challenge to advocacy. Discrimination, which perpetuates low social regard to domestic work and household work, may be addressed through sustained advocacy efforts. A major part of the advocacy campaign is information dissemination about the available services. Positive messages must be instilled in all the activities. For example, launching a "Model Employer and Kasambahay Campaign" inside and outside the country should be considered. Advocacy on migration realities reach a wide angle of the public and among the communities. This includes particular institutions like schools through a review of Department of Education Department Order 247 series of 1988 (integration of migration in the curriculum)

The Domestic Workers Summit has just started. Tripartite partners continue to play a major role, including NGOs. There is a need to review, refine and strategize this national agenda. There must also be continuous consultation with domestic workers and concrete action. Let us not forget the words from a child of a migrant, "We are just asking. If you'll respond, please make it fast." (*Kung iyong tugunan, bilisan nyo naman.*) While another domestic worker said, "It is our right to dream, being a domestic worker is not the end." (Karapatan naming mangarap, ang pagiging Kasambahay ay hindi katapusan.)

Many still await our next steps.



VF staff, partners and the kasambahay together discuss the issues of local and overseas domestic workers.



Deklarasyon ng Pagbubuklod ng mga Sektor ng Lipunan tungo sa Disenteng Trabaho para sa Kasambahay

This Social Compact was signed by key stakeholders on day 3 of the first ever National Domestic Workers Summit. It describes the process of constructive engagement between social partners and domestic workers towards mainstreaming of identified priority issues and concerns.

KAMI, ANG MGA OPISYAL at kawani ng mga ahensiya ng pamahalaan, organisasyon ng mga employers at mga negosyante, mga unyon at organisasyon ng mga manggagawa, mga non-government organizations, internasyonal na mga institusyon, at iba pang mga sektor ng lipunan ay:

Kiniikilala, na ang mga kasambahay o domestic workers, sa loob o sa labas ng Pilipinas, ay isang napakalaki at importanteng sektor ng lipunan; na ang kanilang trabaho at serbisyo ay may mahalagang kontribusyon sa pag-unlad ng pamilya at lipunang Pilipino; at ang kanilang trabaho ay nararapat lamang na ituring na disente at pag-ukulan ng karampatang respeto; at bigyan ng halaga ang kanilang mga karapatan;

Gising, sa katotohanan, na dahil sila ay nakatago sa loob ng tahanan ng employer at karamihan sa kanila ay kabataan at kababaihan, o hindi mataas ang antas ng pinag-aralan, ang mga kasambahay sa loob at labas ng bansa, ay nakararanas ng mga paglabag ng kanilang mga karapatan, naaabuso ng pisikal, sekswal at emosyonal, at dumadami ang mga batang kasambahay na nagiging biktima ng trafficking, sapilitang pagpapagawa, at pagkakatali sa utang;



Mulat, na ang mga kasambahay ay vulnerable sa abuso at parating may naka-ambag panganib habang sila ay nagtatrabaho; dahil dito nararapat lamang na palakasin ang mga polisiya at programa na nangangalaga at nagbibigay proteksyon sa kanilang mga karapatan bilang manggagawa; magkaroon ng patas na pasahod, benepisyo, at pamantayan kapalit ng kanilang serbisyo; at magkaroon ng mga programa at serbisyo na tutugon sa kanilang mga suliranin at magbibigay ng pagkakataon na mapaunlad ng mga kasambahay ang kanilang mga sarili;

Kimikilala, na karapatan ng mga kasambahay ang mag-organisa at magbuo ng asosasyon at magkaroon ng pagkakataon na makilahok sa mga usapin, desisyon, at gawain na para sa kanilang kapakanan at ng kanilang pamilya; na ang partisipasyon ng mga kasambahay at kanilang pamilya sa pagbuo ng mga polisiya at programa ay magtitiyak na ang mga ito ay angkop at epektibo; kung kaya't nararapat lamang na ang kanilang partisipasyon ay hikayatin at suportahan ng lahat ng sektor;

Batid, na sandigan ng isang matiwasay at makataong lipunan ang matibay at nakabubuting relasyon sa pagitan ng employer at kasambahay; kung kaya't dapat ay ating hikayatin ang isang relasyon na kung saan ang mga kasambahay at employer ay may respeto at pagkilala sa karapatan at responsibilidad ng isa't isa;

Bilang tugon, kami ngayon ay nagbubuklod at nagsasama-sama upang maisulong ang mga polisiya at mga programa na magpapabuti sa kanilang kalagayan, na nakasaad sa Decent Work Agenda para sa mga Kasambahay na binuo ngayong National Domestic Workers Summit.

Kami rin ay nangangako na gagawin ang mga sumusunod:

Sa mga Kawani at Opisyal ng Pamahalaan, Nasyonal man o Lokal

Kasama ng iba pang mga social partners, bubuo ng mga polisiya, batas, at mga regulasyon na halaw sa mga resulta ng National Domestic Workers Summit na siyang magiging gabay para sa mga gawain upang mapangalagaan at maitaas ang antas ng trabaho at kabuhayan ng sektor;

Pag-amyenda at pagpapatupad ng Artikulo 29 at 30 ng RA 8042.

Bubuo, magpapatupad at maglalaan ng sapat na pondo sa mga ispesyal na programa upang matiyak na ang mga karapatan ng mga kasambahay ay mapapangalagaan at mabibigyan ng sapat na halaga ang kanilang kontribusyon;

Maglalaan at magbibigay ng oportunidad sa mga kasambahay na makilahok sa mga usapan at mga desisyon tungkol sa mga batas, polisiya, at programa na may direktang epekto sa kundisyon ng trabaho at antas ng kabuhayan ng mga kasambahay;

Sisiguraduhin ang pagpapatupad ng Anti-Trafficking



Contingent of the Religious of Mary Immaculate joins the festive march around the QMC Elliptical Road during the Araw ng Kasambahay celebration.

“...ang kanilang trabaho at serbisyo ay may mahalagang kontribusyon sa pag-unlad ng pamilya at lipunang Pilipino; at ang kanilang trabaho ay nararapat lamang na ituring na disente at pag-ukulan ng karampatang respeto; at bigyan ng halaga ang kanilang mga karapatan.”

Law, RA 8042, at RA 7610 na nangangalaga at nagbibigay proteksyon sa mga kasambahay at kanilang pamilya.

Lahat ng mga nabanggit ay ipapalaganap o “popularize” para sa lahat.

Sa mga Trade Unions at Samahan ng mga kasambahay

Kasama ng iba pang mga social partners, tutulong sa pagbabalngkas at pagpapatupad ng mga programa at polisiya para sa mga kasambahay;

Pag-iibayuhin ang pag-oorganisa at pagbibigay ng tinig sa sektor upang ang mga ito ay maging instrumento sa pakikipag-negosasyon para sa patas at makatao na pasahod at benepisyo para sa mga kasambahay;

Pag-yayamanin ang mga kasalukuyang pamamaraan ng pag-oorganisa at pagsasanay upang ang mga kasambahay ay maging mas produktibong mga kasapi ng lipunan.

Sa mga Employers at Industry Associations

Kasama ng iba pang mga social partners, tutulong sa pagbabalngkas, pagpapatupad at pagsisiguro na maipatupad (monitor) ang mga programa at polisiya para sa mga kasambahay;

Pai-igtingin ang pagtataguyod (advocacy) upang mapapalaganap ang mga alituntunin sa tamang relasyon at pagtrato sa mga kasambahay;

Maghikayat sa hanay upang mapalawak ang mga programang pang-kagalingan at pagsasanay para sa ating mga kasambahay.

Pag-aralan at isalin sa mga gawain ng mga employers at recruitment agencies ang mga batas na sumusuporta at nagbibigay proteksyon, tulad ng Anti-Trafficking Law at RA7610.

Sa mga NGOs, simbahan, faith-based organizations, media, at iba pang mga sektor ng lipunan

Kasama ng iba pang mga social partners, tutulong sa pagbabalngkas at pagpapatupad ng mga programa at polisiya para sa mga kasambahay;

Palalawakin at ipaalam ang mga serbisyo na kasalukuyang pinapatupad upang agarang tumugon sa suliranin at pangangailangan ng mga kasambahay.

Tutulungan ang mga kasambahay sa kanilang pag-oorganisa, pagpapatibay ng mga hanay at pagkuha ng malawakang suporta;

Magpapatibay ng mga ugnayan at magbibigay ng mga mungkahi sa iba't ibang mga ahensya ng pamahalaan upang masiguro ang mas epektibong tugon sa suliranin ng mga kasambahay.

Sa mga Internasyonal na Institusyon

Magkasundo, magkaisa sa layunin ng kasambahay upang suportahan, teknikal man, pinansiyal, o sa pagtataguyod (advocacy), ang mga sinusulong na gawain at reporma ng mga social partners sa Pilipinas;

Magiging instrumento sa pagpapaunlad ng kaalaman, kakayahan, at pagpapahalaga (values) sa layunin ng kasambahay sa pamamagitan ng pagbabahagi ng karanasan sa Pilipinas at sa iba pang parte ng mundo sa pagsusulong ng kapakanan ng mga kasambahay.

Sa mga Anak at Ka-pamilya ng Kasambahay

Pauunlarin ang mga sarili upang maging produktibong mamamayan bilang pagpupugay sa sakripisyo ng mga magulang o ka-pamilya ng mga kasambahay;

Magiging isang tulay upang lalong mapatibay ang mga pamilya ng mga Kasambahay.

Pag-oorganisa at pakikipag-ugnayan sa hanay ng mga anak at pamilya ng mga kasambahay.

Itala ang mga karanasan ng mga anak at pamilya upang maipalamanan sa mga itinataguyod ng usapin ng kasambahay at ng kaniyang pamilya.

Sa mga Kasambahay

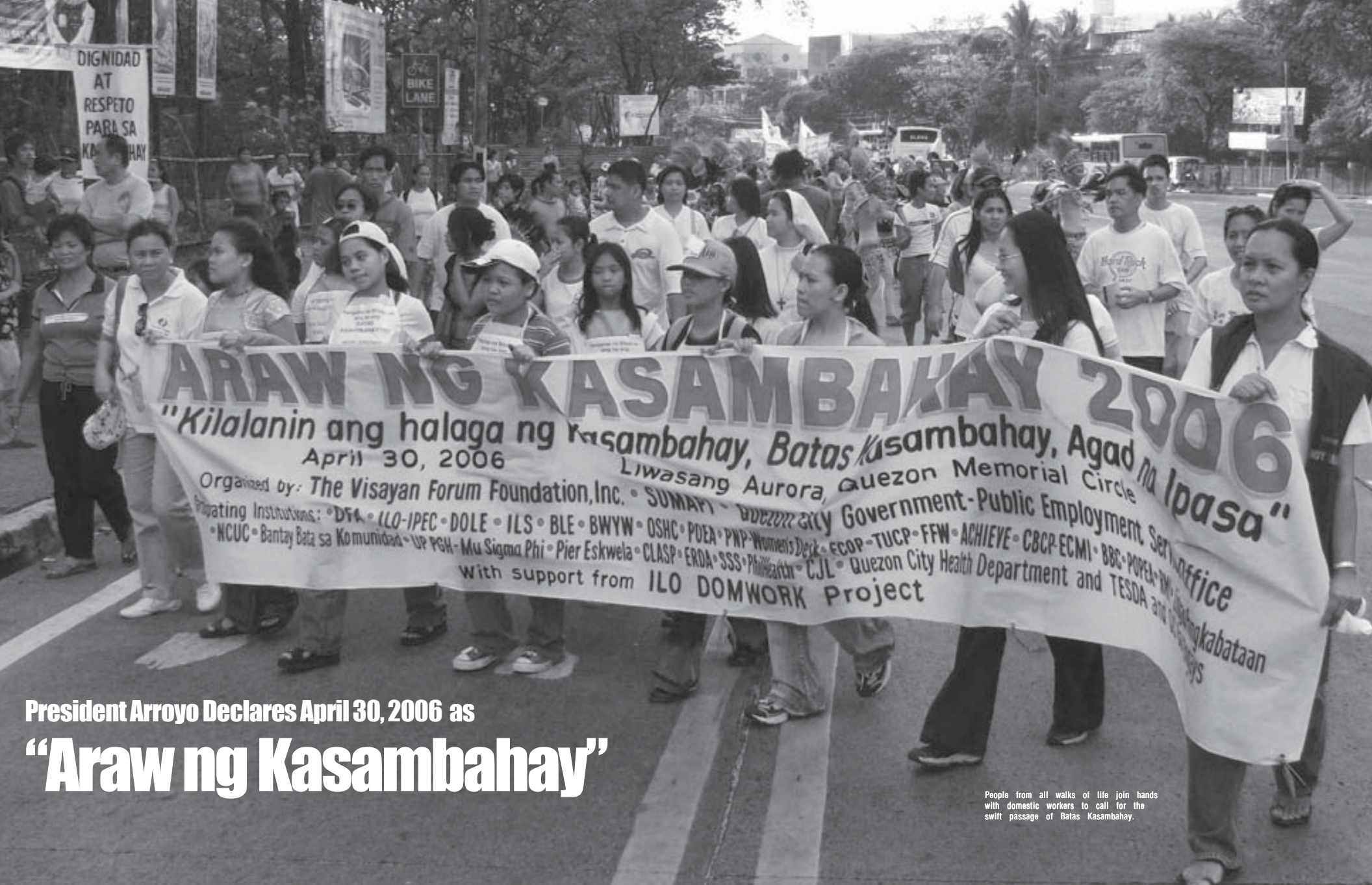
Kasama ng iba pang mga social partners, tutulong sa pagbabalngkas at pagpapatupad ng mga programa at polisiya para sa mga kasambahay;

Pag-iibayuhin ang pag-papabuti sa sariling buhay upang maging tagumpay at maging ehemplo at inspirasyon sa kapwa kasambahay;

Pangangalagaan ang pagpapahalaga ng mga social partners sa pamamagitan ng pagkakaroon ng seryosong pagkilos tungo sa sariling pag-unlad;

Lalong pagtitibayin ang aming hanay upang maging epektibong tagapag-sulong ng kapakanan ng kasambahay;

Magsusulong para sa mas mabuting relasyon sa employers at makapag-ambag upang ang mga kasambahay ay maging tunay na katuwang sa buhay ng mga employers.



DIGNIDAD
AT
RESPETO
PARA SA
KASAMBAHAY

BIKE
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ARAW NG KASAMBAHAY 2006
"Kilalanin ang halaga ng Kasambahay, Batas Kasambahay, Agad na Ipasa"
April 30, 2006
Organized by: The Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc. • SUMAPP • Quezon Memorial Circle
Liwasang Aurora, Quezon Memorial Circle
Participating Institutions: • DFA • ILO-IPEC • DOLE • ILS • BLE • BWYW • OSHC • PDEA • PNP-Women's Desk • ECOP • TUCP • FFW • ACHIEVE • CBCP-ECMI • BBC-POPE • Bantay Batz sa Komunidad • UP PGH • Mu Sigma Phi • Pier Eskwela • CLASP • ERDA • SSS • PhilHealth • CJL • Quezon City Health Department and TESDA and other agencies

President Arroyo Declares April 30, 2006 as
"Araw ng Kasambahay"

People from all walks of life join hands with domestic workers to call for the swift passage of Batas Kasambahay.

Special activities nationwide mark the occasion

THE ANNUAL "Araw ng Kasambahay" celebration of domestic workers and partners was made especially significant this year by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's Proclamation No. 1051, declaring April 30, 2006 as National Domestic Workers' Day.

In the said Proclamation, the President recognized that "it is important to set aside a special day to honor and give recognition to a hidden, yet massive army of every day workers, to generate greater public awareness of the importance and contribution of domestic workers."

This prompted government line agencies to support the first nationwide celebration of the Araw ng Kasambahay.

Nearly 5,000 domestic workers and their supporters from various NGOs, worker and employer groups, schools, faith-based groups and international institutions participated in simultaneous celebrations held nationwide. Festivities were held not only in Manila but also in the key cities of Batangas, Cebu, Bacolod, Iloilo and Davao.

Visayan Forum (VF) President Ma. Cecilia Flores-Oebanda said that these events also gave the domestic workers a chance to vent their frustration over the long-delayed passage of the Magna Carta for Household Helpers or *Batas Kasambahay*.

"Last year, a National Domestic Workers Summit was held, a National Domestic Workers Agenda was developed and 1 million signatures in support of *Batas Kasambahay* were collected and submitted. But no single step has been made to move this bill in Congress. Policy-makers can still fast-track this bill; it is never too late because the public and the international community have been waiting for the past 10 years," Oebanda said.

Linda Wirth, the International Labour Organization (ILO) Director for Subregional Office for South-East Asia and the Pacific, added that "the

The *Araw ng Kasambahay* is marked on the last Sunday before Labor Day to honor and give recognition to *kasambahays*, our partners at home. Since 2000, VF and SUMAPI have spearheaded the celebration of this special day together with their partners from the government, international institutions, NGOs, schools and faith-based groups. Through the years, the observance of the Araw ng Kasambahay has provided domestic workers and advocates an effective platform to intensify public awareness on the significance, contributions and plight of domestic workers.



Singer-composer Joey Ayala inspires and moves the audience with his alternative music during the Araw ng Kasambahay concert at the Liwasang Aurora, QMC.

Workers Affairs (DFA-OUMWA), the Religious of Mary Immaculate (RMI), and SUMAPI disseminated information materials to all participants and walk-in individuals. Some domestic workers also availed of the jobs fair conducted by the Philippine Organization of Private Employment Agencies (POPEA).

Rewarding excellence

During the affair, VF launched the national search for exemplary employers of domestic workers (Gawad Employer), which will be presented on the Araw ng Kasambahay celebration next year.

Other VF partners who were honored for their distinctive efforts were:

- DZMM Radyo Patrol for its *Search for Natatanging Kasambahay* and for highlighting domestic work issues and concerns in its programs

- Alan Palma and Benilda de Mesa, both domestic workers from Batangas who were the first awardees of DZMM's *Search for Natatanging Kasambahay*

- The City Government of Makati for enacting an ordinance requiring the registration of domestic workers and setting up comprehensive services for abused domestic workers

- Barangay Quirino 2-A of Quezon City under the leadership of Chairman Noel Agdeppa for reaching out and organizing domestic workers at the barangay level

Regional celebrations

VF partners in Batangas, Iloilo, Bacolod, Cebu and Davao also launched weeklong radio and television guesting, focus group discussions with stakeholders, information dissemination drives and seminar-workshops on developing local ordinance for the domestic workers.

The regional agencies of SSS, PhilHealth, DOLE, PNP, Department of Justice (DOJ), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and DFA as well as paralegal groups, local health offices and Gender and Development Councils of LGUs set up desks and booths to exhibit and popularize their services and programs for domestic workers.

Religious groups also lent their voice to the call to recognize the important contributions of domestic workers. The Archdiocese of Lipa, in particular, issued a pastoral letter which was echoed in the Sunday mass homilies in the different parishes of Batangas.

In Cebu, a 100-car motorcade took the city by storm. VF also showed video documentaries in critical areas in each of the cities mentioned to reach a wider audience.

Silent voices joined together

From filthy jails to the privileged Senate halls, domestic workers are finding ways to make their collective voices heard

IT WAS A HOT MONDAY NOON when Mila Tibubos and Rebecca Ballesteros visited three women detained at the Pasig City Jail to bring a few days' supply of noodles and biscuits. The three women cramped with four other inmates in the detention cell were domestic workers separately accused of stealing from their employers. Although the police didn't want to detain them, they had been languishing in jail for two weeks because no witnesses vouched for their innocence and there was no lawyer to guide them. The domestics were waiting for the courts to decide whether to pursue the case against them or not, but they had no idea what they would do when that day finally comes or if that day would ever come at all.

Rebecca, head social worker of Visayan Forum (VF), and Mila, the third national president of *Samahan at Ugnayan ng mga Manggagawang Pantahanan sa Pilipinas* (SUMAPI) learned about the detained domestics' stories through the SUMAPI hotline. Housed in VF's center, the hotline receives reports ranging from beatings, sexual assault, unpaid wages, lack of days off, to mere boredom of domestics doing repetitive tasks, day in and day out.

SUMAPI, a self-help organization of domestics established in 1995, spun off from VF's early efforts in reaching out and organizing domestic workers who frequent Luneta Park on their days off.

Organizing SUMAPI is VF's pioneering strategy because it provides space for the members to participate meaningfully in designing and implementing activities for their fellow domestics. Gathering and raising the consciousness of a critical mass of domestics who were initially unaware of their rights took years of confidence-building based on a solid combination of immediate and caring set of direct services. These services—including counseling, shelter, and legal aid — are concentrated on young and vulnerable domestics who have no support system in the city.

Today, SUMAPI has grown into a network of at least 8,000 domestics scattered across Manila, Batangas, Iloilo, Bacolod, Cebu and Davao.

Outreach program

While the bulk of SUMAPI's membership are domestics attending night schools, their core group members have sustained outreach program to hundreds of unknown and silent domestics who regularly visit the city's major parks on their days off to meet their town mates and friends.

Bacolod Plaza, for instance, still offers diverse attractions to domestic workers who hear mass at the

basilica across the street on Sundays. The plaza is also located near the jeepney hub, a common meeting place for friends.

One cloudy Sunday, some SUMAPI leaders who are studying at the Negros Occidental High School's (NOHS) night class decided to meet with other domestics passing by the plaza. They set up a volleyball and badminton game to enjoy the participation of their new, shy acquaintances.

"We make friends right away. Later when they learn that we are also domestic workers, they would share bits of information on where they work, how to contact them and often about their conditions of work," says Arkie Yagomyom, president of SUMAPI's NOHS core group.

Other core group members distributed flyers and brochures and readily showed their SUMAPI identification card upon request, proof that domestics themselves are the organization's most effective recruiters because they easily gain their fellow domestics' trust.

At the Quezon Memorial Circle, SUMAPI volunteers would coordinate with the park's management to allow domestic workers to enter a regular outdoor disco for free, provided they register with the VF booth near the entrance. They have also started to work with several barangay chairmen and community leaders to help identify domestic workers through door-to-door visits.

SUMAPI envisions a society where domestic workers enjoy respect, freedom, justice and equitable access to the fruits of development and where domestic workers are given the opportunity to realize their potentials, with love for God and fellow citizens.

SUMAPI's key guiding concepts

- K- aibiganin sila. (Make friends with them.)
- A- talayan sa kaniyang kahinaan. (Assist them in their weaknesses.)
- S- ikapin na maintindihan ang sektor. (Try to understand the sector.)
- A- muhin ang amo. (Get your employer's trust.)
- M- agsilbing ehemplo. (Be a good example.)
- B- igyang-pansin ang mas nakatago. (Give attention to the hidden domestics.)
- A- lagaan ang partners. (Sustain partnerships.)
- H- ikayatin na sumali sa mga pagkilos. (Encourage them to join the activities.)
- A- ksyunan ang mga plano. (Implement the plans.)
- Y- ayain ang iba at magpakarami. (Invite others to join and increase in number.)



MILA LUNA TIBUBOS, SUMAPI National President, together with VF President Cecil Oebanda and other SUMAPI leaders, presents the one million signatures to then Senate President Franklin Drilon and Senate Labor Committee Chair and Batas Kasambahay author, Jinggy Estrada.

In Davao, Batangas, Bacolod and Iloilo, outreach to domestic workers is concentrated in schools offering night classes. Through the years, SUMAPI's membership has grown through these institutions and their sympathetic teachers and principals who observe how enrolled domestics cope with their studies.

Emergency educational support is a core service that VF makes available to domestics enrolled in night schools. This prevents domestics from dropping out of school, which usually happens midway through the school year. It is usually the domestics' classmates who notice signs of abuse or difficulty coping with schoolwork. They immediately notify the VF social worker or the teacher for assistance.

Second family

"We talk to each other on the phone."
 "(We) visit each other at our workplace."
 "(We) help during outreach or sometimes with schoolwork."
 "(Our) friends help us to find new jobs."
 "Since I've been involved with SUMAPI, I have reported a rape case to the police and another case where a domestic worker was thrown out of her employer's house in the middle of the night." *

For many domestic workers living away from their loved ones, SUMAPI has become a second family that

protects and looks after them. Members easily develop strong ties because they share their innermost feelings and personal lives during recreation, workshops, and trainings.

Edith Marayag-Dela Serna, for instance, was a very shy person when VF first came in contact with her many years ago. At the time she was heavily indebted to her employers and was told that she couldn't pay off her accruing debts even if she were to work for them for life.

When Edith became a SUMAPI member, she made regular follow-up calls during weekdays to domestics she met in the park. She knew how domestics withhold information out of fear of incriminating their employers. But through the hotline service, Edith convinced a number of domestics to sign up with the Social Security System (SSS) and PhilHealth. She has also documented hundreds of cases that have been referred to licensed social workers for follow-up services such as professional counseling, legal advice, rescue and return to families.

*Excerpts from Child Domestic Labor in South East and East Asia: Emerging Good Practices to Combat it by Ayaka Matsuno and Jonathan Blagbrough, published by the International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (ILO-IPEC), Bangkok, Thailand, 2005.

Voice of freedom

Aware of their rights and positive contribution to society, domestic workers are finding their voices through advocacy.

Mercy Cloris and other SUMAPI leaders, for example, frequent the radio station DWAM in Batangas to promote their plans and activities in the program "Batangas Frontline." Marie Luwalhati and Lemuel Guico, the program's hosts, never get tired of inviting them because of their passionate commitment to advocacy.

In Davao, Peejay Cabanilla, a former volunteer worker who is now a full-time VF trainer, is also a regular guest at a local radio station.

"Not all domestics have the opportunity to personally lobby at the Senate for the immediate passage of Batas Kasambahay," Mila said in the recently completed "Freedom Within Reach" video documentary. "It is our task to serve as a voice for the many domestics who have been silent for a long time."

SUMAPI caught the nation's attention during the first Domestic Workers' Summit in 2005 when its members from across the country gathered to highlight their plight and to draft recommendations to uplift their

situation. Together with their overseas counterparts, they drafted a Ten Point Decent Work Agenda for Domestic Workers, a cornerstone of their future advocacy. (See related story on p. 12)

SUMAPI has also been VF's staunch partner in mobilizing domestic workers for the yearly Domestic Workers' Day celebration. The nationwide celebrations are anchored in public parks where domestics organize themselves the whole year through. On the day itself, SUMAPI members troop to SSS registration booths, counseling centers as well as booths of other government agencies that provide services to domestics.

Molding reserved domestics into effective advocates, however, demands enormous personal courage which is not developed overnight.

Most of SUMAPI's advocates are still waging legal battles against their abusive employers. Although they courageously come out to testify about the abuses they survived, it takes resiliency to push for the humane treatment of domestics as "partners at home."

It also requires them to carefully analyze the cracks in legislation and implementation failures so that they may more meaningfully engage in dialogue with policymakers. But their maturity comes from their active



SUMAPI members conduct rights-awareness orientation at the QMC.

VF publishes stories of domestic workers trafficked into forced labor

Elena was just 15 years years old when her parents traded her for P500 to a recruiter in Misamis Oriental and sent her to work in Manila.

I refused to go to Manila with the recruiter but my mother said she had already spent the money. I was crying because I had no choice," Elena says.

"It was 12 midnight, I was sleeping in my room when he (her male employer) knocked, saying I must iron his police uniform. Then when I opened the door, he got in and locked it right away. He pointed a gun at me. He also [later] held a pair of scissors. I tried to fight back but he was a huge man and he threatened to kill me. I pleaded and even knelt in front of him. When it was over, I cried and begged him to 'Please bring me back to the recruitment agency. I will not tell anyone.'" In response, he cut strands of Elena's hair to prove his power over her.

Unfortunately, it was not the last time that Elena was violated. Instead, the sexual abuse continued for quite some time. Elena was eventually brought back to the recruitment agency. She immediately told the agency owner everything that had happened to her. But when she asked for help, she was told that since she was no longer a virgin, she might as well be a "sex worker."

Elena escaped and was found aimlessly roaming the Manila pier.



Elena's experience is one of the 17 real-life stories presented in the book, **Trafficked into Forced Labor: Selected Case Studies of Domestic Workers in the Philippines**, the latest publication of Visayan Forum with support from the International Labour Organization (ILO) Manila - Domestic Work Project.

The case studies put a human face to the struggles of domestic workers caught in the nexus of two inter-connected social phenomena – trafficking for exploitation, and exploitation in forced labor. They show how domestic workers were trapped in the cycle of trafficking for forced labor and how they have shown their personal courage to survive and empower themselves despite the odds.

The book hopes to challenge and inspire its varied readers who have important roles to play in addressing the issues and struggles of the domestic work sector.

Trafficked into Forced Labor: Selected Case Studies of Domestic Workers in the Philippines was produced through the collaborative efforts of the VF staffed by Roland Pacis, International Campaigns Officer. It may be also accessed online at the VF website: <http://www.visayanforum.org>.

partnership with local government units, such as Quezon City and Makati, which have recently implemented ordinances for domestic workers.

Further, engaging with different sectors such as trade unions, government and employers' groups also demands a great understanding of the principles of tripartism. There is a ray of hope, however, that facilitating such social dialogues will have positive outcomes, especially in working out concrete actions to advance the Decent Work Agenda for Domestic Workers.

Changing challenges

SUMAPI leaders and members continuously learn and grow not only in terms of numbers but more importantly in terms of self-development. They have evolved from being mere recipients of VF programs and services to actors of their own empowerment. They are already trained as implementers of their own programs and services, and they continuously aim to train more leaders to manage the future projects of the organization.

These leaders learn the basics in establishing meaningful partnerships not only with social partners in government and civil society, but more importantly with their own employers. Hence, they have adopted measures to treat employers not as adversaries but as potential partners to support initiatives for domestic workers.

SUMAPI leaders also dream of simpler things like managing their own activity centers in partnership with VF staff.

Mercy, for example, always finds time to tutor fellow domestic workers on how to use computers. "We teach them basic computer skills to help them in their school

projects," she beams.

In Bacolod, VF has helped construct a SUMAPI *tambayan* (hangout), a *nipa* hut beside the night school building. This is where they hold their meetings and group study sessions.

While some SUMAPI leaders have traveled to various cities and even to other countries to meet the representatives of their counterpart organizations, much more remains to be done to empower other leaders to become better advocates for a silent majority that is slowly discovering its distinctive voice.

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A home away from home



AN RMI SISTER teaches basic typing skills to a domestic worker at the Villa Maria Social Center.

The Religious of Mary Immaculate prepares young domestic workers to gain 'equal' footing with their employers

EVERY SUNDAY MORNING, Mary leaves her domestic work to attend special classes at the Religious of Mary Immaculate's (RMI) Villa Maria Social Center in Quezon City. It was her employer who personally encouraged her to enroll at the Center's skills training sessions. She also allows Mary ample time to read and work on her assignments at home.

"I want her to be somebody someday, not just to work for me as a domestic for life," her employer says. Reminded of her daughters who now live with their families, she treats Mary as her own child and helps to fortify the young girl's self-worth.

Mary stopped schooling at fourth grade and had subsequently lost hope of returning to formal classes. It was the Center's personalized tutorial sessions which have renewed the hope of this 17-year-old girl. With her employers' support, she is now slowly but surely reaching for her dream.

Sisters' noble act

Sr. Anne Resurreccion, Directress of the Villa Maria Social Center, is among those who welcome domestic workers like Mary into their abode.

"We want to make them free in the Center. And they can do what they cannot do in their own houses, in their own work places," Sr. Anne says about the Sunday activities they offer.

Just like the other RMI sisters, Sr. Anne contagiously exudes a positive and gentle outlook in life. The girls find their first encounters with the sisters a respite from the difficult adjustments they have to overcome as newcomers in the city.

Thus, it is not surprising that as many as 3,000 young women knock at the doors of the RMI centers every year to seek help and assistance. Many of them learned of RMI's education program through flyers. Other domestics were sent by their employers who were convinced of the good intent of these activities through their personal encounters and telephone conversations with the Sisters.

"We go from house to house. We go to the villages and attend meetings with the pastoral council in the churches. At the same time we take advantage of visiting the girls in the villages. We post posters. We announce in the radio stations inviting girls, those who want to continue their studies," Sr. Anne explains on how they reach out to young domestics and their employers.

RMI was founded by Saint Vicenta Maria Lopez y Vicuña in 1876 for the integral development and education of young working girls. At the invitation of His Eminence Jaime Cardinal Sin, it responded to the needs of the Church in Philippine Society in 1983.

This is in fulfillment of St. Vicenta Maria's dream for the young girls who left their homes to find work in

private families, in factories or to study. She wanted them to find another home in her residences where a friendly and welcoming environment would provide for the girls' human and spiritual development.

Villa Maria is among the four RMI Social Centers in the Philippines that pursues the noble mission of St. Vicenta Maria. The three others are in Alabang (St. Vicenta Maria Social Center), in Sampaloc, Manila (Holy Family Social Center) and in Mabolo, Cebu (Villa Inmaculada Social Center). These Centers are able to provide assistance to as many as 800 young girls every year through the help of a pool of volunteers and trainers. To date, RMI is also planning to put up two more centers outside Manila, particularly in Davao and Bicol. There are over a hundred centers found in 27 countries around the world.

Training and other enriching activities

At the Villa Maria Social Center alone, around 250 young women regularly attend the weekend classes. Students range in age from 13 to 30 years of age. The curriculum is anchored on Christian values and relevant skills that will help young girls prepare for an employment and eventual integration into mainstream society.

The main services offered are:

- Values Formation and Accompaniment
- College Support Program
- Non-formal education Alternative Learning System (ALS)
- Home Study Program
- Skills Training and livelihood programs, and
- Vocational / Modular courses like computer office management, cosmetology, dressmaking, food and kitchen management which are all in line with the girls' interests.

The Villa Maria is a home made conducive for learning. The literacy classes are formally held in different rooms. Some domestics conduct their own group study in small groups in the garden and veranda. RMI has recently put up another building at the back of the main house where there are spacious rooms with complete facilities for their skills trainings. A big open space within the compound is also provided for their recreation. Domestic workers can relax, chat or sing videoke, a welcome respite from the usual household tasks they do on weekdays.

Recently, the RMI constructed a large building that accommodates deserving domestics, especially those who are abused and have no place to escape. To help them heal and recover from the experience, the RMI sisters offer reflection sessions on the culture of sharing and empowerment.

The RMI's close partnership with other institutions has also helped further their cause. This year, it is one of the partner organizations being tapped by Visayan Forum for their computer literacy training program

under the "Stop Trafficking and Exploitation of People Through Unlimited Potential" (step-UP) Project. This is a collaboration between VF and Microsoft Philippines that aims to provide information and technology skills training to underprivileged youth and adults that will expand their employment prospects.

Employers as partners

The support of employers matters in encouraging and motivating domestic workers to actively participate in these activities. RMI recognizes them as partners in ensuring the protection and personal development of domestic workers.

One effective strategy is to send letters to employers informing them of the schedule at the Center so they will also know when their domestic workers will be out for an activity. In return, employers will personally bring their domestic workers to the Center or will willingly shoulder their transportation expenses when needed.

Attendance to their Sunday activities is the important condition set by RMI to employers who seek their help to find domestic workers for their household.

"It's okay if you won't allow the girl for just one Sunday. Just let me know if you have to go to a party or something like that so the girl can't come to us. It's okay. But once I noticed that it remains like that for 3 or 4 Sundays, I really call the employer's attention. I tell them that if you cannot meet our requirements, better bring the girls back to Villa Maria," says Sr. Anne.

Apart from honing the skills of young girls under its fold, RMI has become the answer to many employers who are in need of domestic workers. By word of mouth, many of them have learned about RMI's projects for domestic workers. In no time, requests for *kasambahay* started to pour in.

The process is not that simple, though. Employers have to pass through careful screening before the girls are sent out to work for them. RMI negotiates for fair work and living conditions. Sr. Anne also personally checks the work places, including the rooms to be provided for the girls. Domestic workers, on the other hand, have to be well-prepared for the tasks before they are recommended for job placement. Thus, RMI is able to satisfy the needs of both parties.

"For those girls whom we have found employment, we try to see to it that we keep a close relationship with the employer equal with those of the girls, equal in terms of manner of treatment. Of course in terms of implementation of the program, we are more for the domestic workers. But as much as possible when it comes to employment, we try to treat them equally. The employers have rights to demand and so do we," Sr. Anne further explains.

The girls are also trained on how to manage their finances. They receive their monthly salaries of P2,500 directly from their employers. They would usually send P1,000 for their families in the provinces while P1,000 is spent for their personal needs. The remaining P500 is kept as part of their savings. Sr. Anne makes deposits to

their accounts with corresponding passbooks under their names.

While these efforts try to protect the interests of both parties, there are still employer-domestic worker disputes that require RMI's mediation. The Sisters keep communication lines open and remain fair in helping settle conflicts and problems.

Partner advocates

Since year 2000, RMI has worked closely with VF in some of its projects and activities. They do not only work together in providing skills training and educational assistance to young domestic workers. They also share in advocacy efforts for the passage of Batas Kasambahay (Domestic Workers Bill).

"VF really helped us go deeper into the reality of domestic workers. The reality that I know is the personal reality of the girls. I have a very strong personal contact with the girls as individuals and not as a group. And only with our contacts with VF, with ILO and with other organizations can we see what is the real situation of the domestic workers, their real world. And I admire them really for having that inner strength to fight and to advocate for the welfare of domestic workers," Sr. Anne said of RMI partners in the advocacy.

"As long as we need each other, we'll support each other. As long as we could both help the domestic workers, we will be here" Sr. Anne said about their partnership with organizations like VF.

Nevertheless, their group remains independent from

any social affiliation or involvement.

"Because our real mission is to help these girls so we go out, we reach out to them," Sr. Anne explains.

Strong commitment

Despite its limited means, the RMI has managed to pursue unique efforts that have already benefited hundreds of young women domestics. The RMI Centers have become not just mere structures for their training but also serve as ideal respite from domestic pressures and personal woes.

The RMI has passed the tests and challenges of their mission with flying colors. The overwhelming number of domestics and employers knocking at their doors every year speaks much about their credibility and integrity. It not only increases the number of young girls it serves but also expands its network of partners in pursuit of its noble endeavor for the domestic work sector.

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THESE ARE THE SMILES that greet young girls at the RMI Centers: Sr. Lourdes, Sr. Anne, Sr. Felisa, Sr. Antonia, Sr. Alice, Sr. Esperanza, Sr. Myrna, Mother Ma. Dolores (Mother General), Sr. Lydia (partly hidden), Sr. Amelia and Sr. Rosa.

A Pioneering Act

Quezon City is taking steps to diversify its innovative Kasambahay Program

Without a doubt, the Quezon City government's Kasambahay Program has blazed a trail on how local governments, both here and abroad, can serve the needs of domestic workers.

Mayor Feliciano "Sonny" Belmonte notes that "Quezon City's pioneering effort to create a Kasambahay Program and pass a law promoting the welfare of domestic workers has inspired the other cities in the Philippines and other countries to comprehensively institutionalize efforts at the local levels."

A landmark ordinance

Quezon City's Kasambahay Program was institutionalized by Ordinance No. 1472, an early Christmas gift to the city's hardworking domestics when it was passed on Dec. 14, 2004. It is widely acknowledged as a landmark ordinance not only in Asia but the rest of the world. The first ever local government initiative for kasambahay supports NGO programs and protects the interests not only of domestic workers but also of their employers.

The ordinance mandates all barangays in Quezon City to register domestic workers whose population remains underestimated. That is why public officials like Councilor Francisco Calalay, Jr. of the 1st District thought of conducting a registration and ID distribution to encourage domestic workers to come out into the open.

"Government should protect not just business establishments but also private residents including our domestic workers. They are our 'invisible engine of development.' By entrusting their children to domestics, employers are free to leave home to work. These workers perform tasks which employers no longer have the time to do," Calalay explains.

Around 400 kasambahay registered in the pilot test conducted in five barangays on May 29, 2006. To date, around 4,000 kasambahays have already registered, 10% of the estimated 40,000 kasambahays¹ working in the city.

The implementing rules and regulations of the ordinance also require the barangays to set up help desks where domestic workers can easily access services linked to the Kasambahay Program of Visayan Forum (VF) and other partners. A barangay desk officer functions as the focal person on domestic work issues, like disputes between domestics and their employers.

"If a certain domestic seeks another employer, for example, the new employer can benefit by asking the applicant to show a working permit issued by the barangay. This is given for free. This also helps us monitor the movement of the domestic from one workplace to another," says Ignacio Santos-Diaz, head of QC's Program Implementation Committee (PIC).

Domestics become "visible" when they obtain a work permit and ID. These documents will make it easier for

them to register with the SSS and PhilHealth and for NGOs like VF and other service providers to reach out to them.

Creative implementation

As the largest city in Metro Manila with more than 2.17 million residents and around 997,000 labor force members, the Quezon City government is facing a stiff challenge in reaching out to the vast, hidden sector of domestic workers. This has prompted the city's Industrial Relations Office (IRO)² to work closely with barangay leaders on its door-to-door campaign.

At first, the leaders promoted awareness using sound systems mounted in roving vehicles. They also posted notices in barangay halls and guested in local radio stations. But its house-to-house campaign proved to be the most effective means to encourage domestics to register. The personal contact with domestics and employers provided a chance to explain the registration in detail and immediately clarify misconceptions.

VF and its partners also helped to set up localized domestic workers' day celebrations in selected barangays. These celebrations immediately caught the attention of domestic workers. Since 2005, the IRO has co-organized with VF massive registration campaigns for domestic workers in its main park, the Quezon Memorial Circle.

Hotline service

Recognizing that domestics who fail to register tend to shy away from reporting abuses, the IRO and Social Services Development Department (SSDD) have also set up a hotline service (924-1412) for the public. A social worker verifies each report by conducting collateral interviews with the caller's neighbors or by seeking the help of barangay officials in the area.

If there are indications of abuse, the SSDD then facilitates the rescue operation for the kasambahay in coordination with barangay officials, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), VF or the Philippine National Police (PNP). The victims are then referred to Camp Crame for medical examination.

According to the SSDD, it has rescued 438 kasambahays since the program began. Most of the victims were female domestic workers from the Visayas and Mindanao regions.

Alternative education program

Diaz says that the QC government has also started an Alternative Learning System (ALS) project as part of their Kasambahay Program despite budgetary constraints.

¹40,000 kasambahays - Based on the report of Ignacio Santos-Diaz, Quezon City's Program Implementation Committee Head, during the National Partners Meeting last April 5-7, 2006



QC OFFICIALS sign their commitment for the passage of Batas Kasambahay. Seated with Sen. Aquilino Pimentel (2nd from left): (L-R) Councillor Ariel Inton, Councillor Francisco Calalay, and QMC Administrator Charito Planas. Also present during the signing were: SUMAPI President Mila Tibubos, RMI Regional Superior Sr. Ma. Amelia Herrero, VF President Ma. Cecilia Oebanda, BBC Co-Chair Meneleo Carlos, ILO-IPEC Chief Technical Adviser Serenidad Lavador, and CAW Board Chairperson Jurgette Honclada.

Selected Instructional Managers (IMs) underwent trainings on how to implement the recommended curriculum. Barangay day care workers also help out in giving orientation to parents about this project during the school opening.

In February, about 44 domestic workers took the ALS exam given by the Department of Education (DepEd) of which three have passed. Passing the exam will automatically certify the domestics' graduation from elementary or high school.

One noteworthy effort is that of Brgy. Chairman Noel Agdeppa who spearheaded the ALS project in Barangay Quirino 2-A. Trained IMs have begun giving free sessions there every Saturdays and Sundays.

After undergoing ALS, domestic workers who wish to go back to school are referred by the barangays to their partners such as the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and VF for enrollment support, and their school supplies and uniform needs. Less than a year since its implementation, the program has assisted around 150 child domestic workers in availing of educational programs offered by local schools and NGOs.

Resource challenges

Diaz admitted they still have a long way to go but they are determined to serve as many kasambahays as they can possibly reach.

Some employers were initially worried that their domestics might demand higher wages and better working conditions once the barangay starts organizing these workers. But the program has managed to allay these fears.

²The Industrial Relations Office (IRO), created on February 9, 1989, is mandated to develop and enhance the cooperation and understanding between management and labor towards industrial peace in Quezon City.

Most of them are also unaware that their SSS contributions would actually be more affordable and cheaper compared to salary advances which domestics usually request in times of medical emergency and other urgent needs (i.e., death in the family).

Providing an immediate response to reports and complaints is also not easy. Adronico Metran, SSDD's Youth Development Officer, says that people easily get disappointed when their reports are not acted on instantly.

"After 5 p.m., only two staff members are left in the office. The callers would feel bad if we cannot respond right away," he explains. To ease the office's burden, VF social workers assist in responding to some reports.

Another challenge is that migrant domestic workers tend to just go back to the province without filing charges against their employers and abusers. "Most migrant domestics usually agree on settlement," Metran laments.

The SSDD also does not have enough funds to shoulder transportation expenses for the domestics' repatriation, especially to the provinces, because it's already beyond the local government's jurisdiction.

Despite such limitations, SSDD offers alternative support, especially for domestics who are residents of Quezon City. They provide skills training and a minimal loan assistance of P3,000 to P5,000.

Diaz says that the city is now studying the feasibility of setting up a cooperative for the informal sector in the city, which includes domestic workers. If this pushes through, this will be another tough act to follow.

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SMILING, YET GETTING IMPATIENT for the long-delayed passage of Batas Kasambahay. Domestics have been awaiting this landmark law for the past 10 years.

When local means vocal

Three key cities follow suit with their own versions of implementing mass registrations

WHILE THE PASSAGE OF A NATIONAL LAW such as the Batas Kasambahay still remains a dream rather than a reality, the cities of Makati and Iloilo and Barangay Bankal in Cebu's Lapu-Lapu City, have already approved their own local ordinances for domestic workers. Their efforts are a huge affirmation of Quezon City's lead. Meanwhile, Baguio is also trying to join the efforts as it recently proposed its own local ordinance.

In the same spirit, other local governments strongly hope that the national law will be passed as soon as possible. The Provinces of Batangas and Cebu sent their own resolutions of support for Batas Kasambahay so that national policy-makers will act on the pending bill.

Makati City

The country's premiere financial district, Makati is the second city to approve an ordinance to help domestic workers. City Ordinance No. 2006-014 which was authored by Councilors Rodolfo Sese and Erlinda Gonzales was unanimously adopted on February 28, 2006. It requires all barangays in Makati to conduct a survey or registration of domestic workers in their respective jurisdictions.

Under section 3 of the ordinance, each barangay should submit the master list of the domestic workers to the Social Welfare Department for data banking.

Iloilo City

The Western Visayas trading center, Iloilo City, had a very good reason to celebrate the Araw ng Kasambahay this year. It just passed its own local ordinance for domestic workers last April 26, 2006 a few days before Labor Day.

City Ordinance No. 2006-073, sponsored by Councillor Jed Patrick Mabilog, also requires all barangays to conduct survey and/or registration of domestic workers in their respective barangays through the Barangay Secretariat. Employers are in fact authorized to register for their kasambahay.

Interestingly, there is strong emphasis on the need to closely assist illiterate domestic workers during registration.

Under Section 7, the barangay chairperson is tasked to keep a record of the domestic worker's new address every time an employer informs them of terminating the employment of a househelper, or when the househelper decides to transfer to another employer.

The Liga ng mga Barangay, the Sangguniang Kabataan, PESO, and the Social Welfare Department form the committee to formulate the necessary implementing rules and regulations.

To strengthen implementation, the city mayor is mandated to forge agreements with city and people's organizations and non-government organizations to provide relevant services for househelpers.

Baguio City

The country's summer capital, Baguio City, also found a champion in Councilor Leandro Yangot who sponsored a similar measure that will require a yearly registration of all domestic workers.

The proposed ordinance seeks to institutionalize the city's kasambahay program which will outline mandatory labor standards, decent employment and income, and access to social services for househelpers.

The ordinance is seen as an effective monitoring tool against possible trafficking and violations of domestic workers' rights. It also provides employers equal protection because the registration will be conducted every year as a major preparatory activity in data-basing.

Implementing bodies from the barangay, city and national government and their respective roles are stated under Section 5.

A Program Implementation Committee, headed by the City Mayor, shall be formed to draft specific guidelines, plans and programs. For technical assistance and other programs and services, partner agencies such as the DOLE, DepEd-CAR, the City Prosecutors Office, and the DILG-CAR will be tapped. All barangays will be tasked to monitor the condition of the domestic workers within their jurisdiction.

This legislative measure is pending at the Office of Councilor Federico J. Mandapat, who is the Chairman of the Committee on Employment, Livelihood, Cooperatives, Handicapped and Different Aabled Persons.

Barangay Ordinance in Lapu-Lapu City

In the progressing province of Cebu, one barangay has passed its own kasambahay ordinance that does not only recognize the important contribution of the sector but also addresses their needs and concerns at the community level.

Barangay Bankal, headed by Hon. Eduardo Cuizon, passed on May 22, 2006 Ordinance No. ELC - 004 that requires all their residents to register their domestic workers. This includes the conduct of an initial massive registration of kasambahay in the community and the maintenance and updating of kasambahay registry.

The ordinance also states specific programs and services that the barangays should provide to domestic workers for their protection and personal development. This includes establishing quick response mechanisms, appropriate education and training schemes, and health and social protection.

Section 4 also sets mandatory services for domestic workers between the ages of 15 and 17 in line with Republic Act 9231. These services include: the establishment of grievance mechanism, conduct of outreach activities, awareness-raising and training, and information seminars for families of domestic workers.

The Barangay Council is tasked to draft the Implementing Rules and Regulations for this Ordinance, formulate a kasambahay program to enhance the sector's social and economic well-being, and provide other technical support as needed.

LGUs raise their voices

While they have yet to pass their own ordinance, the policy-makers in the province of Batangas have strongly expressed support for the Batas Kasambahay.

Located south of Manila, Batangas is a major destination of domestic workers to cater to a growing middle class benefiting from the rapid industrial expansion.

Through Resolution No. 140, the Provincial Council of Batangas called for the immediate passage of the Batas Kasambahay. Unanimously approved last May 4, 2006, the appeal was made to Senate President Franklin Drilon and House Speaker Jose de Venecia as heads of the present Congress.

The resolution, which was sponsored by Board Member Florencio De Loyola, was also sent out to various provincial councils nationwide and other cause-oriented organizations to intensify their support for domestic workers.

In Central Visayas, kasambahay champions also found an ally in the person of Councilor Estrella Yapha of the Province of Cebu, author of Resolution No. 2039-2005. The resolution supports Senate Bill 1678 of Senator Aquilino Pimentel, particularly, the use of the term "kasambahay" to give dignity to domestic work.

Councilor Agnes Magpale co-authored this measure which was unanimously approved by the Council on June 6, 2005.

A strong policy advocacy

The call for recognition and support to the kasambahay sector is continuously reaping concrete results. For the ordinances and proposals already in place, VF lauds the efforts of its partners whom it has worked with in various legislative and policy workshops and other advocacy activities conducted in different areas of the country. VF is also pleased to have supported local government partners in drafting some of these ordinances as an initial step towards the upliftment of domestic workers' rights.

This is just the beginning though. Another important phase to overcome now is the effective implementation and monitoring of these measures to ensure that they will truly serve their purpose for the kasambahay sector.

Doing things together

From page 3

A challenging sector

Out of the six priority sectors of the worst forms of child labor, child domestic workers are conceivably the most difficult to reach. Scattered and invisible, hidden in private homes and historically neglected, domestic workers – both children and adults – are indeed a challenge to identify and engage. They are also the second largest group of working children, next to agriculture. With estimates ranging from 230,000 to 631,000 to 1 million, no one is sure about the exact size of the sector, but there is no doubt that the sector is too large to ignore or neglect.

In terms of abuse and exploitation, child domestics are amongst the most vulnerable because they are young and mostly girls. Such abuses include physical, verbal and sexual abuse. Many also end up as indentured servants, living in slave-like conditions that remain hidden from the public eye.

There are many reasons to cite why domestic work is prevalent in the country. Many people believe that domestic work is safe and accepted as necessary and desirable. Many parents also remain supportive of their children's desire to work as domestics in other households. While poverty still remains the biggest push, the lack of educational opportunities is also a huge driving force for children to enter domestic work.

Children themselves often silently endure slave-like treatment and conditions in the name of a chance to continue schooling. Many traffickers take advantage of such vulnerabilities in order to generate a quick profit by recruiting countless young girls to work in urban households. They promise work in a household in order to lure girls away from their parents, and once they are away from home, they are often funneled into jobs in bars and brothels.

Given the many challenges inherent to child domestic work, there is much that can be learned from the implementation of programs during the time-bound phase. These challenges that emerged came out of the structure of the time-bound program itself, not by intended design, but as a natural consequence of several strategies that were adopted.

For example, the strategy of listing and data-basing is an effective way of taking stock of the size of the sector and the need for services and interventions. Partners were given very detailed documentation tools to use with the child domestic workers. Children were interviewed and from this group, some were chosen to receive educational materials and support, modules, and the like. The problem of raising undue expectations from interviewed child domestic workers naturally came up, especially for those not provided with educational support. Although it is not possible to provide direct services to every child worker interviewed, each young child is equally desirous of the opportunity for self-improvement.

A related consequence of this technical interviewing approach is fatigue among interviewers resulting from the time-intensive data-gathering and data-basing. Interviewing is a time consuming and an exhausting work, and the understaffed local government units and local social workers often had to vie for limited time availability of domestic workers. Many employers also did not want to cooperate in the beginning.

Another key challenge is the general lack of awareness on child labor law. During our series of regional legislative advocacy seminars, misconceptions and confusions surfaced about how the Batas Kasambahay law relates to the Anti-

Child Labor Law or Republic Act 9231. While it is clear that proponents are against child labor, many are misled to believe that Batas Kasambahay tolerates the employment of children in domestic service.

Understandably, another challenge to effective advocacy is continued resistance among some employers. Such resistance stems from the lack of creative ways to engage and empower employers in advocacy efforts. A more positive approach and employer-friendly messages need to continue evolving. Through the involvement of local champions such as religious groups and employers' associations, the reach of the program increased manyfold.

One important strategy developed is the **Balik Eskuwela** (Back to School) Campaign. While some employers became very supportive of educational offers for domestics, the girls did not show much enthusiasm about vocational training and non-formal education. Many child domestic workers dream of gaining formal education, and VF used this knowledge to convince ILO to shift its focus to formal schooling when it comes to domestic workers.

Finally, the Batas Kasambahay campaign continues to face setbacks and challenges in the Senate. Despite strong international attention and concrete pronouncements from the Executive Branch, the future of the bill in the Senate is still clouded in mystery. It is in this context that VF intensified its drive for the passage of local ordinances, such as those pioneered by the Quezon City local government. Such responses are important in breaking the myth that this sector is too informal to be dealt with.

Partners take lead role

Aside from relevant trainings, one key reason for partners to enjoy healthy involvement with the Kasambahay Program is their renewed enthusiasm to pass a local ordinance. By working together, they are sending a message that the obvious challenges in implementing a local ordinance should not be an excuse to avoid passing needed local legislation.

The lineup of implementing partners varies by province, but in each locality there is an interesting combination of agencies from local government units, religious groups, educational institutions, media, NGOs and child domestic workers.

Lesson 1: Linking Services Together

VF's Iloilo center experienced a dramatic increase in referrals of abused child domestic workers during the past two years. Partners refer as many as 15 serious cases a month through the hotline.

In Manila, news organizations collaborated with VF staff to report on domestic workers found languishing in jails. To expedite the search and rescue of abused domestic workers, VF cooperated with local police and local officials like in Quezon's City's many barangay desks.

VF shelters victims while they consider the possibility of pursuing legal cases. In the meantime, VF relies on a network of service providers such as the Religious of Mary Immaculate (RMI), Don Bosco, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) to provide training and repatriation.

These examples clearly show that linking efforts is crucial. The next step is making this link directly accessible to domestic workers.

During the 1st national meeting of partners, a consensus emerged on the much needed future action:

- Update the directory of service providers in each region
- Conduct further trainings on crisis intervention and life skills

- Train front-line personnel on key issues
- Coordinate licensing and monitoring of recruitment agencies
- Activate connections with other towns which are considered source areas of recruitment
- Mobilize new partners through massive trainings on the anti-child labor law or RA 9231

Lesson 2: Sustaining education initiatives (Back to School Program)

While basic education is free and recognized as a right in this country, our public schools leave much to be desired. Child domestic workers are a special segment of the population that needs innovative school options and flexibility in order for them to continue their education.

Night schools and Sunday school for domestic workers remain few and far between. The demand for alternative school options far outpaces the supply. Schools struggle to adjust their schedules and institute greater flexibility because of financial constraints and limits on the teacher's time.

VF works with some partners to offer educational innovations that meet the needs of domestic workers. The Assumption College of Davao has adapted its usual day school curriculum to provide weekend school opportunities, a modular approach approved by the Department of Education (DepEd). Officials note a relatively high rate of success because students show a keen interest in the program.

Iloilo City is also exemplary because it is the only city in the country that has a local ordinance mandating all schools to set up special curriculums for working students.

VF contributes to the expansion of educational opportunities by regularly campaigning among employers to support back-to-school initiatives. Employers, after all, benefit from better-educated domestic workers.

Retaining domestics in school is difficult. In effect, they carry a double burden of working and studying at the same time, yet their house chores remain heavy. VF and its partners, mainly teachers of these domestic workers, work closely to:

- Strengthen peer support system among child domestic workers
- Counsel those at risk so they do not get discouraged during the school year
- Talk to employers to provide total support
- Enhance teaching methods to improve learning retention among domestics
- Motivate domestics and help them cope with discrimination
- Refer students at risk or already abused

Lesson 3: Local Ordinances

Local ordinances are the building blocks of national legislation. When it comes to the delay in the passage of Batas Kasambahay, the tail has long been wagging the dog.

The local government units are now trailblazing new local ordinances to protect domestic workers within their jurisdictions. For example, the Quezon City Public Employment Service Office-Industrial Relations Office (PESO-IRO) registers and provides identity cards to domestic workers. They help refer and provide training opportunities for those registered.

Local officials are the eyes and ears that monitor conditions in every household. Recognizing the power of barangay leaders to settle disputes, NGOs like the VF have already started to train help desk officers and kagawads to deal with increasing reports through hotlines.

Other cities continue to follow suit. Makati, Iloilo, and Bacolod passed similar ordinances. New drafts are also set

for approval in the cities of Baguio, Batangas, Davao, Bulacan, and Daet and lately Mandaluyong, Marikina and Taguig.

Lesson 4: Together Finding a Voice

New kasambahay champions are now sending a strong signal to society: It is time to act. It is time to get involved.

Domestic worker champions like Fr. Mao in Bacolod put weight into the words that the puts across the pulpit. Also based in Bacolod, Ms. Rose Tan of the Community Life is talking with employers to send their domestics to their formation centers for skills training. Mrs. Roque, a radio announcer in Davao, enjoys chatting with domestic workers as they talk about their rights and struggle as a sector.

Finding a voice for domestic workers requires clear data in each region, thus the VF has embarked on a baseline survey. This survey helps measure the perceptions of domestics about their rights and awareness about the proposed Batas Kasambahay.

Set up with the help of VF, SUMAPI works closely with other organizations to provide a lifeline for domestic workers. They work together to bring about change, in the homes where they are employed, in the public perception of society, and in local and national laws. One of SUMAPI's strengths is that it is run by former domestic workers, people with firsthand knowledge on the problems and insight into possible solutions. They are constantly working to raise awareness on the rights of domestic workers, educating employers and workers, and providing training and support

Lesson 5: Sowing the seeds of attitude change

Just recently, VF together with Anti-Slavery International developed a 15-minute video documentary that dwells on the hopes and dreams of abused domestic workers.

One of its key messages is the immediate passage of Batas Kasambahay as a way to recognize the value of this sector as an economic cornerstone of Philippine society.

The film ends in a positive note by acknowledging how a good employer can powerfully transform the life of a domestic worker and how such a transformation can be mutually beneficial to the employer and the domestic worker.

"For me, an outstanding employer, or elder sister, is to have, or course a give-and-take relationship with the domestic worker. We must love each other because we live together in the house. We help each other and of course we also have to send them to school because they will not be domestic workers for the rest of their lives. They also have to become someone in the future," says Ms. Rose, an employer of two domestic workers now both studying in one of RMI's alternative classes.

The Model Employer Campaign, which aims to give out awards to best employers and to recognize exemplary practices, is now well on its way to being a yearly phenomenon. This idea extended from the innovative radio program of DZMM, a top radio station, which awarded "20 Natatanging Kasambahays" this year.

The Road Ahead

Visayan Forum's partnership with ILO-IPEC during this time-bound program phase provided us a broader platform to build partnerships. The challenge is to sustain and upscale the reach of these partnerships.

Solutions to child labor do not come overnight. Child domestic work is deeply-rooted in Filipino culture. And as long as poverty remains pervasive, there will be ample supply of children seeking employment in private homes. Continuing the struggle for protection, empowerment, and education of child domestic workers is a worthy and much needed goal.



15 years of VF! The national staff, the family that has grown over the years. First row (left-right): Roland, Ben, Yoyong, Polly (VF Batangas), Atty. Garaygay, Cecil, Marina, Caria. Second row (left-right): Angie, Jannis, Vio, Jerome, She, Mila, Nanay Lina, Vincent, Ana, Becca, Maial, Tess, Ghayle, Edith.

Events, Milestones, Campaigns and Cases

VF TURNS 15! From a humble and difficult beginning, Visayan Forum (VF) has already established its credibility as an NGO working for the elimination of child labor and trafficking as evident in the remarkable contributions and achievements it has made since its establishment in 1991. This was highlighted in VF's 15th anniversary celebration held on February 16, 2006 at The Legend Villas in Mandaluyong City. During the celebration, VF gave recognition to the invaluable efforts and support of its partners such as Caritas-Switzerland, the International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Terre des Hommes Netherlands, Plan Philippines, Philippine Ports Authority (PPA), The Asia Foundation, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and USAID-ROLE. Coinciding with the celebration was the signing of new memoranda of agreement between VF and its partner organizations, namely, the International Justice Mission (IJM), Child Justice League (CJL) and the Rotary Club of San Francisco Del Monte, Quezon City.



CECIL OEBANDA receives Anti-Slavery Award from ILO-United Kingdom Director Lord Bill Brett at the Chatham House in London.

2005 Anti-slavery award conferred on VF president

Anti-Slavery International presented the prestigious Anti-Slavery Award to VF President Ma. Cecilia Flores-Oebanda for her outstanding and innovative work to protect migrant workers, particularly child domestics, in the Philippines and its surrounding region. Lord Bill Brett, Director of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in the United Kingdom conferred the honor to Oebanda, the first ever Filipino recipient, last November 29, 2005 at Chatham House, St. James' Square in London, England.

"I sincerely hope that this award will serve as a strong voice and an impetus for greater international attention to the issue and for the generation of concrete programmes for millions of child domestic workers," Flores-Oebanda said.

The Anti-Slavery Award was instituted in 1991 to draw attention to the continuing problem of slavery in the world and to recognize long-term, courageous campaigning by organizations or individuals in the countries most affected by this problem.

DFID supports VF-ICT project for CDWs

The Visayan Forum Foundation and International Children's Trust (ICT) have embarked in a new partnership project to continue the gains of the ILO-IPEC-supported Kasambahay Program. With funding support from the Department for International Development (DFID)-UK, the project, "Empowering Child Domestic

Workers for Full Social Participation," will be implemented in Manila, Bacolod, Iloilo, Dumaguete, Cebu, and Davao for two years. It already started last April 2006 and will end in March 2008.

This project recognizes the rights of child domestic workers (CDWs) especially their rights to protection from abuse and exploitation, access to education and genuine participation in actions that affect them. It focuses on empowering CDWs in six source, transit and destination areas in the Philippines, with a series of highly targeted and inter-multi-layered strategies, including: a) individual empowerment, skills development and sustained school access for 2,000 CDWs; b) creation of peer support networks for socially isolated CDWs through the SUMAPI movement; c) capacity-building and sensitization for all key actors in the life of CDWs – from teachers to local government to employers to the Church; d) close liaison with 12 specific educational institutions to ensure provision of flexible timetabling and curricula which meets the needs of CDWs; e) advocacy to policy-makers for CDW's legal protection in the form of Batas Kasambahay; and f) advocacy to influence wider public opinion, principally countering misconceptions that child domestic work is a "safe" form of child labour and raising awareness of the close links between domestic labour and trafficking.

This integrated project acts for sustainability. It not only builds individual CDW's self-esteem and life skills, but also enhances their access to their rights and

encourages positive life decisions. It also addresses wider obstacles to empowerment, creates a more enabling work, community, school and political environment for CDWs and builds capacity for other stakeholders to enhance their own service provision for this high risk yet invisible group of child laborers.

Microsoft partners VF on anti-trafficking project

Coinciding with the third anniversary of the signing of Republic Act 9208 or the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act, VF and Microsoft Philippines launched the "Stop Trafficking and Exploitation of People through Unlimited Potential" (step-UP) project last May 26, 2006 at the Filipinas Heritage Library in Makati City. The project aims to provide information and technology skills training to underprivileged youth and adults so they can concretely boost their chances of finding better jobs.

This is VF's first computer skills training program which will complement its existing services and campaign against trafficking. The project will be implemented in three of VF's centers, in Manila, Batangas City and Davao City. The training will also be offered through the Community Technology Learning Centers (CTLCs) that VF's ten local NGO partners will operate this year. These NGOs are the Religious of Mary Immaculate (RMI); Catholic Bishops Conference of the

Philippines-Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People (CBCP-ECMI); Lingap Pangkabataan; University of Batangas; Philippine Agency for Community and Family (PACAF) in Davao City; Rizal Memorial Colleges (RMC), also in Davao City; St. Ma. Goretti Foundation in Negros Oriental; Share-a-Child Movement, Inc. (SACMI) in Cebu City; Poblacion Night High School in Lapu-Lapu City; and the Commission on Family and Life (CFL) in Bacolod City.

An estimated 10,000 trafficking survivors and potential victims are expected to benefit from this two-year project.

International rating of RPs anti-trafficking campaign improves

The US Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report released on June 3, 2005 hailed the unique partnership between the Philippine government, NGOs and private shipping companies as one of the "best practices" in combating trafficking in the world. It particularly acknowledged the Anti-Trafficking Task Force at the Port—composed of the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA), VF, Philippine Coast Guard, Maritime Police and private shipping companies like Aboitiz Transport System—as among the international best practices. VF's operation of halfway houses and provision of center-based services to more



Launch of step-UP Project with Microsoft Philippines (from left to right): Vio Montano, Cecil Oebanda, a child being assisted by VF, and Microsoft Philippines PR and Community Affairs Managers: Karrie Ilagan and Mae Rivera-Moreno.

than 4,000 potential victims of trafficking were also cited in the report. Despite the recognition of these efforts, the Philippines was still placed at the “Tier 2 Watch List”.

It was only this year, in the latest TIP report, that the country was removed from the Tier 2 Watch List and moved up to the Tier 2 category. It was noted that the Philippine government has not fully complied with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is already “making significant efforts to do so.” Moreover, the government is said to have “stepped up efforts to implement its anti-trafficking law and made initial progress in implementing strategies to combat trafficking in persons, particularly in prosecuting human traffickers.”

ASI, VF develop new video orientation material

Last May, VF and Anti-Slavery International (ASI) produced the anti-trafficking video, “Freedom Within Reach,” in partnership with Rose McCausland and Sean Edghill of Living Lens, a community video production company based in the United Kingdom. McCausland and Edghill stayed in the Philippines for three weeks to research, film and edit this project. The 16-minute film captures the realities confronting domestic workers in the Philippines and how organizations like VF and the Samahan at Ugnayan ng mga Manggagawang Pantahanan sa Pilipinas or SUMAPI help address the issues. VF is thankful to its partners—the Religious of Mary Immaculate (RMI), the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA), DWAM, a local radio station in Batangas, and the kasambahay interviewees—for their cooperation and support during the shoot.

New publications

Two useful references on child domestic work were released recently by Anti-Slavery International (ASI) to help partners in their advocacy and services for the sector.

“Child Domestic Workers: A handbook on good practice in programme interventions,” written by Maggie Black, is the third of a series published by ASI. A valuable advocacy tool on child domestic work issues, this book is intended to complement the two previous publications: *Child Domestic Workers: A handbook for research and action*¹ and the “Child Domestic Workers: Finding a voice,” which were released in 1997 and 2002, respectively.

The handbook also reflects the views of almost 500 current and former child domestic workers from nine countries who were consulted from May to October 2004. It was formally introduced to partners and advocates during the South East Asia Sub-Regional Field Exchange held in Manila in November 2005.

Practitioners may glean from this handbook a range of examples and lessons learned in the course of

undertaking different types of interventions. It has eight chapters and it does not merely define good practices but articulates them in detail.

Another publication, the “Training Manual for Advocates on the Rights of Child Domestic Workers,” is a helpful teaching tool and training guide for trainers on child domestic work advocacy based on the practical experiences of partner agencies in Southeast Asia. The objectives and strategies for each session are clearly explained and some useful readings on child domestic work and advocacy strategies are cited.

The manual was pre-tested through a 3-day national workshop held on August 29-31, 2005 at The Legend Villas in Mandaluyong City. In this workshop, VF partners and child domestic workers exchanged ideas and experiences and shared their expertise in advocacy.

The manual was prepared by the Center for Integrative and Development Studies Psychosocial Trauma and Human Rights Program of the University of the Philippines (UP CIDS PST). Its development and production was an initiative of the Task Force on Child Domestic Workers in Asia convened by VF.

ILO global report on child labor 2006

“The end of child labour: Within reach”² the global report under the Follow-up to the International Labour Organization (ILO) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, highlights the significant progress made by countries to eradicate child labor. It presents global and regional trends on the decline of child work which is attributed not only to economic growth but also to right policy choices and to gateways of opportunity opened for poor people as exemplified by some countries. The report also reviews efforts made to strengthen the ILO’s International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) and mainstream child labor as part of the Decent Work Agenda.

Also worth noting in this report are the challenges seen in creating a real impact in eliminating child labor. Agriculture and child domestic work are noted to have been “relatively neglected” both at the national and international levels. The main challenge cited in this report is how to best mainstream the eradication of child labor into key development and human rights frameworks.

The report concludes with an action plan built on the three-pillar approach set forth in the 2002 Global Report, but with more focused and defined targets. The proposed action plan rests on these three pillars: supporting national responses to child labor through effective mainstreaming in national development and policy frameworks; deepening and strengthening the worldwide movement; and promoting further integration of child labor concerns within overall ILO priorities regarding decent work as a global goal.

Action programme against CDL in Phnom Penh

Child domestic labor (CDL) is one of the key issues to be addressed in Cambodia, particularly in the



VF staff, ILO-IPEC Senior Program Officer Concepcion Sardaña and other national partners during the Anti-Trafficking Summit on August 23-24 at the Legend Villas.

municipality of Phnom Penh, under the International Labor Organization’s Time Bound Programme. An 18-month action programme has already started to particularly combat child domestic labor in the said municipality. This will include strengthening the legal policy and structural framework for the prevention and elimination of CDL; making relevant stakeholders aware and adept on the issue; and reducing CDL in Phnom Penh through direct interventions.

Key activities will also be conducted in the coming months to achieve these goals. These will cover the provision of direct services, capacity-building activities, advocacy, and formation of special committees.

Partners in this project are the: Municipal Department of Labour and Vocational Training (MDLVT), Municipal Department of Education Youth End Sport (MDEYS), PACT-Against Child Labour, Healthcare Center for Children (HCC), Support Children and Young People (SCY), and Mithsamlanh.

National partners meeting on CDWs

Driven by the desire to empower domestic workers, 45 nationwide kasambahay champions took part in a three-day national meeting on April 5-7 at The Legend Villas, Mandaluyong City. These kasambahay champions—composed of VF staff and partners from Metro Manila, Bulacan, Batangas, Iloilo, Bacolod, Cebu, Dumaguete, and Davao—swapped experiences and lessons they learned in the process of accomplishing their goals and objectives for domestic workers. Likewise, the meeting highlighted the opportunities and challenges faced by each region in implementing their kasambahay program.

A workshop on good practices, particularly in the areas of education (kasambahays going back to school), organizing and mobilizing the kasambahay (finding a voice), and advocacy (sowing the seeds of attitude change) was held during the meeting.

In this workshop, enabling the domestic work sector to fight for their rights and to work for their own advancement was highlighted as the biggest driving force behind all the collaborative efforts of VF and its partners. Empowering this sector, as the participants further noted, also requires support networks and creative approaches to make the interventions not only holistic but also effective and apt to the needs and concerns of the sector.

At the end of the meeting, VF and its partners signified their renewed commitment as they drafted their immediate and long-term plans for the sector.

VF President Cecilia Flores-Oebanda also discussed the priority projects which the organization will implement with its partner organizations/offices in the different regions for the benefit of domestic workers. She likewise assured the participants of their continued partnership in implementing VF’s upcoming projects and activities.

SUMAPI in action

After their strategic planning last November 2005, the Samahan at Ugnayan ng mga Manggagawang Pantahanan sa Pilipinas (SUMAPI) has intensified its support of kasambahays through their projects and activities lined up for this year. In the first half of 2006, capacity-building and advocacy activities were conducted with the support of the ILO Domestic Work (ILO-DOMWORK) Project. Around 350 kasambahays learned about their rights, responsibilities and roles through SUMAPI’s 20 rights-awareness sessions. SUMAPI leaders also participated in two national trainings from May 21-25, 2006 at the La Vista Resort in Pansol, Laguna. The first training was on labor standards and social bargaining and the other on resource mobilization and management. SUMAPI leaders also had the chance to exchange views and experiences on domestic work issues through a social dialogue with partners from the government, employers groups, and NGOs. The discussion led to SUMAPI’s draft plan on how to implement the 10-Point Decent Work Agenda which was one of the major outputs of the National Domestic Workers Summit last year. SUMAPI’s new set of national officers for this year: Mila Luna Tibubos (President), Lilibeth Masamloc (Secretary-General), and Rovelyn Sunio (Treasurer), together with the chapter leaders, are expected to lead and coordinate with SUMAPI members and partners in implementing the organization’s plan and other upcoming activities.

Child laborers call for government action³

More access to education, alternative livelihood programs for their parents, and stricter implementation of laws on children—these were part of a 14-point recommendation drafted by 142 child laborers during the first Visayas-wide Children’s Congress last May 21-23, 2006 in Iloilo City. The congress was organized by the Pag-Aaral ng mga Bata para sa Kinabukasan (ABK) Initiative.

The call on the government for more child-oriented programs and services was made in response to the increasing number of children who live in poverty and are forced to work under the worst conditions, particularly in sugarcane

¹Full text of this report can be accessed at the ILO website: www.ilo.org.

²Excerpts from Children-oriented programs urged, *The Visayan Daily Star*, May 25, 2006 (www.visayandailystar.com).

plantations, pyrotechnic production, mining and quarrying, deep-sea fishing, commercial sexual exploitation and domestic work.

The delegates, who are child laborers in Negros Oriental, Negros Occidental, Cebu and Iloilo, also recommended the organization and activation of the Barangay Councils for the Protection of Children (BCPC).

The Visayas region has one of the highest numbers of child laborers in the country based on the 2001 study of the National Statistics Office. The same study showed that 4 million of the 24.8 million children in the Philippines aged 5 to 17 years old are engaged in child labor.

Anti-trafficking summit

Around 50 representatives from different organizations and institutions swapped stories and exchanged notes on handling trafficking cases in the source, transit and destination areas in the country during the National Summit for Effective Prosecution of Trafficking Cases. The summit was held on August 23-24, 2005 at The Legend Villas in Mandaluyong City. Participants gained a better perspective on the salient features of R.A. 9208 and its implementation, especially on effective prosecution which involves multi-sectoral partnership. The two-day activity ended with a planning workshop per region/area on the specific anti-trafficking activities they intend to undertake until December 2006. Prior to the summit, three



UNIVERSITY OF BATANGAS STUDENTS welcome international visitors during the Field Exchange Program. In foreground is Mr. Jonathan Blagbrough from Anti-Slavery International.

consultation workshops were also conducted in the first half of 2005, particularly, in Luzon (Manila), Visayas (Dumaguete) and Mindanao (Davao), to identify and discuss with regional partners their issues and recommendations in prosecuting trafficking cases in their respective areas.

Southeast Asia Sub-regional field exchange program on child domestic work

Some 22 participants from 12 countries got a closer look of the child domestic work programs and services

of VF's national partners through the Southeast Asia Sub-Regional Field Exchange Program held on Nov. 5-12, 2005.

VF's partners from Costa Rica, India, Peru, Tanzania, Thailand, and Togo joined the 8-day activity together with participants from the Philippines, Indonesia, Cambodia, Laos, Mongolia and Vietnam. VF Protective Care Unit (PCU) head Rebecca Ballesteros, Sr. Anne Resurreccion of the Religious of Mary Immaculate (RMI) and Rovelyn Sunio of Samahan at Ugnayan ng mga Manggagawang Pantahanan sa Pilipinas (SUMAPI) were the Filipino participants in this activity.

The group had some interesting discussions about the projects and practices in their respective countries. The participants also embarked on field visits to RMI's Villa Maria Center, VF Kasambahay Center in Batangas, the University of Batangas, Batangas National High School, Manila North Harbor, the Senate, Quezon City Hall, and the VF Shelter in Manila.

During the field visits, the participants witnessed firsthand how RMI conducts training for domestic workers, how SUMAPI does its Sunday outreach at the Quezon Memorial Circle, and how senators conduct their sessions on proposed bills. Equally fulfilling for the participants were their courtesy meetings and dialogues with officials, partners and stakeholders and their interaction with child domestic workers in the areas they visited.

The last part of the field exchange was the two-day good practices workshop at the Richmond Hotel and the Development Academy of the Philippines on November 11 and 12, 2005, respectively. During the workshop sessions, the participants synthesized their learning from the Exchange Program activities and planned the next steps for their respective organizations and countries.

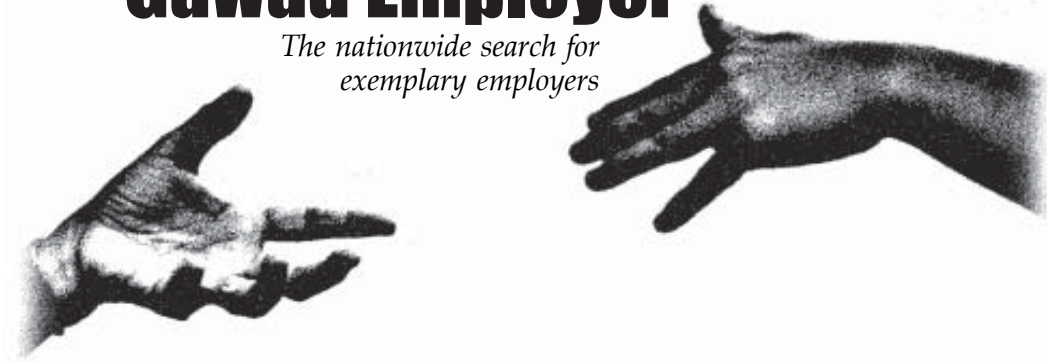
The field exchange in the Philippines is only the first of a series of exchange programs on child domestic work conducted in partnership with Anti-Slavery International with support from Oak Foundation and Comic Relief.

The second field exchange was held in Togo, South Africa on March 24-31, 2006. Other VF staff will also join four more exchange programs outside the country--- in Costa Rica on August 23-25 to be organized by the Defensa de Niñas y Niños - Internacional; in India on September 4-14 with the Arunodhaya Center for Street and Working Children as organizer, and in Peru on September 19-30 to be organized by the Asociación Grupo de Trabajo Redes (AGTR).

The field exchange programme is a follow-up to the International Practitioners Meeting organized on November 22-24, 2004 in Bangkok, Thailand. Through these activities, VF and its partners are expected to generate a deeper understanding of the issues and strategies relating to sustaining interventions for child domestic workers. The activities enable visiting practitioners and the host organizations and its partners to reflect on their work as they immerse in different action plans.

Gawad Employer

The nationwide search for exemplary employers



VISAYAN FORUM has been at the forefront in providing protection and welfare to the domestic work sector. In the services and programs it implements, VF works closely with a multi-sectoral network of partners whose variety of expertise, experiences, and functions create a holistic and balanced approach in addressing domestic work issues.

One of these partnerships is with the employers for whom the domestic workers render household services. Seen as the saving grace to a *kasambahay's* economic woes, employers inevitably become the ruling force on how the household should be managed and how domestic workers should be treated in the privacy of the employers' homes. Employers, therefore, play an important role as partners in the effort to extend decent work standards to domestic workers.

Their importance, however, is often overlooked. In many cases, employers are unjustly portrayed as villains or as exploiters. There are very few inspiring stories featured in the media where employers and domestic workers have fashioned mutually beneficial working relationships.

Though there have been experiences of abuse and maltreatment by employers in most domestic work cases it has handled, VF still believes that there are still those who really regard their *kasambahays* as genuine partners at home. And their good practices must be shared for other employers to emulate.

It is in this light that VF thought of a unique undertaking -- the **Gawad Employer**.

This first nationwide search for exemplary employers of domestic workers was officially launched on April 30, 2006 during the nationwide celebration of Araw ng Kasambahay. It aims to highlight the more positive aspects of employer-employee relationship. It also intends to help establish and popularize moral and ethical standards for establishing professional and personal relationships with their employee-domestic workers. This national search presents a new breed of role models to the public who will also serve as advocacy champions.

The Gawad Employer will actively involve and mobilize social partners so that they can help disseminate information about humane and decent standards of work for domestic workers and, in the process, contribute in challenging the still-pervasive discrimination against the sector.

Participating Institutions

At the national level, the Gawad Employer will be spearheaded by the Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc., the Samahan at Ugnayan ng mga Manggagawang Pantahanan sa Pilipinas (SUMAPI), the Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP), and the Bishop Businessmen's Conference on Human Development (BBC).

Institutions such as government agencies, international institutions such as the International Labor Organization, trade unions, churches, major media networks and other employers groups will also be tapped to support the Gawad Employer. At the local level, ECOP and BBC networks will be incorporated with local multi-sectoral task forces devoted to addressing domestic workers issues.

Mechanics for the Gawad Employer

Nominations will be open to the public until March 2007. Nomination forms will be distributed to all partner agencies and institutions. Regional networks on domestic work will assist in popularizing the award and in soliciting nominees. Major media networks will air regular plugs while media campaigns with national and local

media outlets will help spur greater public interest on the awards.

A National Panel for the Gawad Employer composed of representatives from participating institutions will be convened to screen finalists and to decide on the winners. Five employers each from the National Capital Region (NCR), Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao will be chosen as finalists. The finalists will be chosen based on the criteria enumerated below.

The finalists and the winner will be awarded and presented to the public during the next celebration of the Araw ng Kasambahay (April 29, 2007). Regional finalists will be awarded during local celebrations while the winner will be presented during the National Celebration in NCR.

Prizes

The National Panel for the Gawad Employer will determine the prizes.

Criteria

The Gawad Employer is to be awarded to employers who subscribe to the following standards and conditions:

1. Ensures fair and decent working conditions for domestic workers

- The employer treats the domestic workers in a professional manner and acknowledges his/her role as a partner at home
- The employer extends the following working conditions to domestic workers
- The employer gives monthly salary of above the prevailing minimum wage
- The employer provides benefits and other incentives
- The employer ensures that domestic workers enjoy at least six hours of continuous rest and at least four days-off per month
- The employer grants paid vacation leave
- The employer ensures that domestic workers are enrolled with SSS and PHIC

2. Respects the basic human rights of domestic workers

- Right to privacy
- Right to religion
- Right to protection against abuse and exploitation
- Freedom of association and participation

3. Encourages and supports efforts of domestic workers to self-advancement

- The employer helps domestic workers continue their education
- The employer supports the effort of domestic workers to improve their skills
- The employer supports domestic workers who are looking for alternative means of livelihood or those who are in search of new career paths

Other details and updates about the search will be posted online at VF website: <http://www.visayanforum.org>.