

## SRA-GAD and Extension Teams Undergo Training on Child Labor



World Vision Operations Manager Mr. Jason Befus is happy to know the huge interest of the participants in taking action of what was learned during the seminar. Right photo shows SRA GAD Vice Chair Dr. M. Dina Padilla Fernandez welcoming the participants during the formal opening of the worthwhile event.



In an effort to further enhance and beef up the nationwide conduct of Gender and Development and Farm Management Decision-making Skills Training at the Mill District level, the SRA-GAD TWG and select RDE personnel (Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao) participated in a “Trainers’ Training on Child Labor” sponsored by World

Vision on September 3-4, 2014. The successful event was held at the nature-themed Balay Indang in Cavite.

With the main goal of obtaining a broader and deeper understanding on the timely and relevant topic of Child Labor that would be incorporated in the upcoming GST’s and FMT’s, the participants really learned a lot from the modules presented by the speakers/facilitators coming from ABK 3 LEAP at World Vision Development Foundation, Inc. headed by Mr. Jason Befus (Operations Manager), Ms. Daphne Culanag (Project Director), Mr. Dan Braza (Program Coordinator, Sugar Industry Foundation, Inc.) and Ms. Judy Ann Gonzaga (Advocacy Consultant).

Dr. Dina Padilla-Fernandez, SRA-GAD Vice-Chair, welcomed the group and gave a brief background of the activity. She noted that SRA is mandated to uplift the living condition of its sugarcane workers. As such, the agency shall devote huge attention and ensure the welfare of its sugarcane farming families especially the children.

Day One officially started with Ms. Culanag’s lecture on the “Perspectives on Child Labor and Hazardous Work in Agriculture.” She shed light on the rights of children, reasons why children work, what hazardous work is for children and why working children are more vulnerable. Ms. Culanag followed it up with the “Legal Framework for Eliminating Hazardous Child Labor” that tackled the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, ILO Convention 138 and 190, Philippine Laws related to Child Labor like RA 7610, RA 7658 and RA 9231.

One of the day’s salient presentations was about the project ABK 3 LEAP. “ABK” means Pag-aaral ng Bata Para sa Kinabukasan while “LEAP” stands for Livelihoods, Education, Advocacy and Protection to Reduce Child Labor in the Sugarcane Areas. Ms. Culanag proudly explained the integrated strategy being adapted by the group in its aim to reduce Child Labor in sugarcane areas. The said approach includes: access to quality education, skills training youth employment, improved livelihood for families, improved social protection and services access, build capacity of institutions to effectively address Child Labor, increase knowledge through research, strengthen/enforce Child Labor policies, build partnership for greater impact and increase the awareness of stakeholders.

In the afternoon, Mr. Braza and Ms. Gonzaga merged forces in tackling “Child Labor in Sugarcane Farms: Children’s Work Environment” which tried to answer pertinent questions such as: “Where are the children in all activities/phases in sugarcane production,” “Are there age and gender differences in their work,” and “What work-related problems do they experience?”

There was an active discussion on the Voluntary Code of Conduct (VCC) that highlighted the provinces which have VCC namely, Bukidnon, Batangas and Negros Occidental. In line with this, participants agreed that there ought to be a VCC per mill district and that there should be a section in the VCC which says that any violation may be prosecuted under RA 7610. The participants also enjoyed the role-playing portion in which they were divided into groups and made to dramatize the lives of some working children in sugarcane farms as a form of case study analysis.

The second day of the training started with Mr. Befus’ lecture on the “Occupational Safety and Hazard Sugarcane Farms.” He presented the types of occupational risks and the matrix as to its degree, whether low, moderate or high.

The final activity was the making of an Action Plan in which the four teams (GAD-L& M and Visayas and Extension-L & M and Visayas) collaborated on how to disseminate awareness and help in the elimination of Child Labor in the sugar industry. In the plenary presentations, the following methods were cited: GST’s (Gender Sensitivity Trainings), Farm Management Seminars, OPSI, Child Labor Seminar for SRA Extension employees, EWA seminars, planters’ associations’ general assembly and the media (specifically, radio).

The SRA-GAD (L & M) will start integrating Child Labor awareness in their upcoming GST’s for this year. For 2015, the group came up with the tagline: Towards a Unified and Better Outreach (TUBO) “Child Labor-Free Advocates for National Empowerment (CANE) Working for Sustainable Growth and Resiliency (SUGAR)” in which much more time will be devoted to the discussion of Child Labor in the seminar. For their Bacolod counterpart, they will start the integration during the first quarter of 2015. In the case of the Extension teams, they will start during the last quarter of this year.

On its end, World Vision was happy seeing that the participants were eager to push the advocacy. In fact, they asked for the formation of a core group from SRA who will plan the design of the modules with them. They also asked for a full list of all GAD and Farm Management trainers, Extension workers and Mill District Officers to help them plan their next steps.



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