

SRA Attends Forum on Child Labor

The Sugar Regulatory Administration attended a research forum sponsored by the University of the Philippines Social Action for Research and Development Foundation, Inc. (UPSARDFI) on August 13, 2015 held at the Bulwagang Tandang Sora of the College of Social Work and Community Development, UP, Diliman, Quezon City.

The event highlighted studies on Child Labor in the sugarcane industry conducted under the ABK3 LEAP program of World Vision, Inc. which is considered as the world's largest children's charity. ABK means "Pag-aaral ng Bata para sa Kinabukasan while LEAP stands for Livelihoods, Education, Advocacy and Protection to reduce Child Labor in Sugarcane Areas.

Dr. Dina Padilla-Fernandez (Chief Agriculturist, Luzon & Mindanao) and Joseph Peter R. Gonzales (Training Specialist II) joined representatives from other agencies to the forum titled, "Kaligtasan, Kabuhayan, Karapatan: Mga batang Manggagawa sa Tubuhan." The event's prime aims were to: a) disseminate the highlights of the research findings from the studies undertaken by the ABK3-UPSARDFI and the University of St. La Salle Bacolod; b) gather feedback from the various stakeholders regarding implications of the research results; and c) identify recommendations for possible policy and program reforms to improve Child Labor conditions in sugarcane .

First to take the floor was Dean Jocelyn T. Caragay who presented the "Baseline Study of ABK3 LEAP Areas." A total of 1, 847 child workers were surveyed. The study finds the demands on child labor in a situation of multiple burdens of domestic responsibilities, the hazards and pressures of work in the sugarcane farms as well as the demands of school work. Among the study's recommendations are: a) creation of more livelihood opportunities; b) design and implementation of market-driven skills training program; c) conduct of educational program especially among parents and



children themselves to be continuously aware of the risks and hazards faced by child laborers in farm work as well as the need for the latter to pursue their education; d) expanding children's access to educational facilities, scholarships and support programs for formal education and alternative learning systems; e) enforce existing ordinances and policies to reduce Child Labor in the sugarcane industries.

The next presentation was on the "Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Analysis on Hazardous Work of Child Workers in Sugarcane Production" reported by Dr. Ma. Theresa V. Tungpalan. The study analyzed the work hazards and risks child workers experience in the different stages of sugarcane production.

Among its recommendations are: a) strict enforcement of Child Labor laws and guidelines (limiting age of child workers to 15-17 years old, work days, no night work, etc.); b) provision of additional safety provisions for Child Labor (decent wages and benefits for child workers, on-farm safety measures for children, use of child-appropriate protective gears, etc.); c) support programs for OSH (advocacy and information campaign on hazardous work for children, integrated social protection programs for poor rural households, etc.) d) program and policy reforms (policy advocacy at the ground level, formulation and implementation of OSH guidelines and standards for Child Labor in agriculture, etc.); and e) Follow-up Activities (validation and consultation of the study's classification of work-related risks, research on biohazards, etc.)

The third study highlighted was on "Migration Patterns of Sacada Children

and their Families in Selected Sugarcane Plantations in the Philippines" as presented by Dr. Beatriz P. del Rosario. Some important points for policy recommendations are: 1) raise awareness of policy-makers on the plight of sacadas; 2) amend and strengthen the Social Amelioration Act; 3) create special laws to address the needs of sacadas; and 4) engage academic institutions to inform sacadas of their rights through its outreach programs.

Last to be presented was the study on "Land Reform Implementation in Selected Sugarcane Farms and Its Implications on Child Labor" by Dr. Emmanuel de Luna. The research aims to: a) review the socio-economic situation related to children in the research areas where land reform in sugarcane was implemented; b) describe the process and extent of implementation of land reform in sugarcane farms; c) identify the effects of land reform on children in sugarcane farms as perceived by the parents, land reform implementers and other service providers; and d) assess the current state of land reform implementation and its policy and practical implications to child workers in sugarcane farms.

After the formal presentations, the body went into workshop to determine: 1) clarification on the presentation and 2) policy and program for recommendations.

A plenary presentation was the affair's culminating activity, like the OSH team recommending that all types of risks (Low, Medium and High) should be officially classified by the Department of Health (DOH). It was also suggested that there should be data profiling, database monitoring, further validation and continuous convergence programs. There was also the point on the Social Amelioration Program where all workers in the sugarcane industry should be basically covered.

In closing, World Vision Operations Manager Mr. Jason Befus thanked and commended everybody who found time to attend and stressed their commitment to eventually eradicate Child Labor in the local sugarcane industry. - **Joseph Peter Gonzales**