



ONE VOICE

The official publication of the Church People-Workers Solidarity (CWS)

January - June 2015



Volume 2 Number 2

Editorial

The Face of Forced Migration



"I sincerely pray to be saved from death penalty and to be given the opportunity to bring up my children." - Mary Jane Veloso

In his famous October, 2013 interview with the journalist, Eugenio Scalfari, which was published in the Italian newspaper, *La Repubblica*, Pope Francis said that the two biggest social evils which need to be addressed are the loneliness of the old and the unemployment of the young. The Pope stated: "The young need work and have neither one nor the other and the problem is that they don't even look for them anymore. They have been crushed by the present system."

These words of Pope Francis accurately capture the experiences of the millions of Filipinos who are unemployed and who are forced to seek jobs overseas. They, together with their families, are "crushed" by the inhuman and unjust structures in our society.



- 3** **Christ and the Workers:** *Human Labor – Not a Commodity!*
- 5** **Feature:** *More Decent Local Jobs Please!*
- 7** **Feature:** *Trade Union and Human Rights Situation in 2014*
- 11** **Statement:** *On Labor Day, Remember Human Dignity and the Common Good*
- 12** **Petition:** *We support the Filipino workers' call to ban contractualization and to regularize contractual workers*
- 13** **Petition:** *Higher wages for Filipino workers! Implement a National Minimum Wage, P640 daily or P16,000 monthly!*
- 15** **In Photos:** *CWS Activities*

According to a research group, Ibon, the number of overseas Filipino workers (OFW's) far outpaces jobs created in the country. More than 5,000 Filipinos leave the country everyday in order to look for

jobs abroad. This means that more and more Filipinos are being forced to risk their lives abroad, putting themselves in extremely vulnerable circumstances.

Such was the situation of Mary Jane Veloso. Mary Jane was driven to desperation by extreme poverty. She came from a poor family of *sakadas* (farm workers) in Hacienda Luisita. In her letters, she mentioned that she only dreamed of a better future for her children and family. Mary Jane who is a single mother was forced to go abroad to address her family's needs especially her two children. Mary Jane was arrested and sentenced to death in Indonesia for smuggling 2.6 kilograms of heroin. She maintained her innocence and said that it was her recruiter who lent her the bag, where the heroin was secretly stashed in. At the dawn of April 29, 2015, Indonesian President Joko Widodo gave her temporary reprieve to give way to the legal proceedings here in the Philippines on the charges she filed against her recruiters.

The church acknowledges the economic, social and political structures that continually impoverish and disempower the poor. Poverty, massive joblessness and landlessness in the country push our people to look for jobs abroad. Displaced by poverty and victimized by a system that does not uphold their dignity and right for decent living, they are forced to work overseas and to experience exploitation, discrimination and some of the most unspeakable abuses. Mary Jane and other migrant workers are victims of forced migration. Furthermore, the government's labor export policy is "the worst form of state-sponsored human trafficking", victimizing our people who are looking for greener pastures.

Coincidentally, Mary Jane's case has come to public attention as the whole nation sadly remembers in March 2015 the 20th anniversary of Flor Contemplacion's execution in Singapore. Twenty years after Flor, we still witness a gloomy fate of OFW's.

In his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*,



Flor was one of the millions of Filipinos left with no choice but to work in a foreign land in order to provide a better life for their families back home.

“Migrants are men and women like us, our brothers and sisters who seek a better life; hungry, persecuted, injured, exploited, victims of war - they seek a better life. They were seeking happiness.” - Pope Francis

Pope Francis admits that human trafficking and migration problems posed a particular challenge for him: “I have always been distressed at the lot of those who are victims of various kinds of human trafficking. How I wish that all of us would hear God’s cry: ‘Where is your brother?’ (Gen 4:9). Where is your brother or sister who is enslaved? Where is the brother and sister whom you are killing each day in clandestine warehouses, in rings of prostitution, in children used for begging, in exploiting undocumented labour. Let us not look the other way. There is greater complicity than we think. The issue involves everyone! This infamous network of crime is now well established in our cities, and many people have blood on their hands as a result of their comfortable and silent complicity” (EG, 211).

Continue on page 4

ONE VOICE

The official publication of the Church People-Workers Solidarity (CWS)

Editorial Board

Most Rev. Gerardo A. Alminaza, D.D.

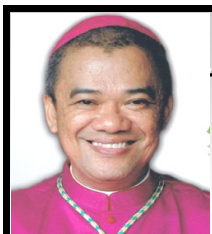
Fr. Quirico Pedregosa Jr., OP

Ms. Venus Culili

Ms. Daisy Arago

Mr. Antonio Balbin

*One Voice is published by the
Church People Workers Solidarity (CWS).*



Bishop Gerardo A. Alminaza, D.D.

CHRIST AND THE WORKERS

Human Labor – Not a Commodity!

Statement for Labor Day 2015

April 29, 2015

Bishop Gerardo A. Alminaza, D.D.

Bishop of San Carlos

Head Convenor

Visayas Clergy Discernment Group

Pope Francis, in his homily on the Feast of St. Joseph, the Worker on May 2013, reminded us, that a society that does not fairly compensate labor, “that does not give work to people and that only looks to its balance books; that only seeks profit is unjust and goes against God.”

Over the years, we have been presenting the Church teachings on labor. We have also presented on-going analyses of the social situation that affects labor adversely. Perhaps, it is now time to be PRO-ACTIVE and make CONCRETE PROPOSALS. Moreover, there is a need to strengthen ORGANIZED LABOR and SUPPORT GROUPS both local and international.

We have elucidated ad nauseam the Church teaching that labor is NOT A COMMODITY. However, the reality is that CAPITAL still lists labor as one of the OVERHEAD EXPENSES. When we negotiate for a flat-rate minimum wage, we are still working within the same INHUMAN PARADIGM of capital that looks on wages as one of the many overhead expenses.

We must get out of the present inhuman box. We must assert that labor is a HUMAN PARTNER of CAPITAL. Without it, capital cannot produce.

In fact, capital was, in the first place, produced by labor.

In view of the above NEW VIEWPOINT and NEW PARADIGM, we suggest that labor will no longer be included in the list of overhead expenses. Rather, when the NET PROFIT is in place, there will be an EQUITABLE division of the collective fruit of the collaboration of labor and capital. In the existing paradigm, the surplus value of labor goes EXCLUSIVELY to capital, and labor is just given a pittance. Now is the time to assert that, without labor AND capital operating TOGETHER, there cannot be profit. So, some kind of PROFIT SHARING is proposed here.

The above proposal will debunk the claim of some capitalists that high wages will not make their business profitable. In view of this, the government has exempted some “distressed” and small businesses from giving the minimum wage. This is not working! Concomitantly, any UNIFORM and ACROSS THE BOARD setting of a minimum wage will face the unequal capacity of small and big capitalists.

The Church social encyclical Mater et Magistra exhorted that remuneration of labor “must be determined in accordance with justice and equity” (MM, 71). This means that workers must be compensated according to the fruits of their labor, which “allow them to live a truly human life.”

Another factor is the fear that FOREIGN INVESTMENTS might not come in if wages are too high. The STATUS QUO is that the government has an UNWRITTEN COME-ON TO FOREIGN INVESTORS, “There is more fun and PROFIT in the Philippines because labor is CHEAP and UNORGANIZED!” If labor is A NECESSARY PARTNER in the negotiations of how much foreign capital will share from the net

profit, reasonable foreign investors might see a different picture.

There must be a STRATEGIC and COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OF ACTION in view of the above NEW VIEWPOINT and NEW PARADIGM. We suggest that a people's conference will craft a proposed LAW embodying the above NEW VIEWPOINT and NEW PARADIGM. Our chances of getting a law passed according to the spirit of the new paradigm are rather slim. But, we use this opportunity to EDUCATE the people through public debate and education program on our proposed law.

The ULTIMATE PURPOSE is to strengthen labor union organizing. This will include a

thorough analysis of the EXTERNAL and INTERNAL FACTORS that hinder and promote genuine labor unions.

Pope Francis said that trade unions are essential for social change. Earlier, St. John Paul II's *Laborem Exercens* has supported the right of workers to form labor unions in order to safeguard their vital interests.

WE GO BACK TO THE BASIC PRINCIPLE – GENUINE CHANGE CANNOT COME FROM ABOVE (e.g. a new law); IT CAN ONLY COME FROM BELOW, LED BY THE VANGUARD WORKERS WHO ARE ORGANIZED INTO STRONG LABOR UNIONS; with the support of other sympathetic sectors of society.

The Face of Force Migration / *From page 2*

On April 18, 2015, Pope Francis, after speaking with Italian President Sergio Mattarella about the continuing wave of migrants hoping to land in Italy and make their way to other European countries, told the crowd that the poor migrants in search of a better life and the unemployed want what all human beings want: life, dignity and a chance to earn a decent living. The Pope reminded European leaders that **migrants are “men and women like us, our brothers and sisters who seek a better life; hungry, persecuted, injured, exploited, victims of war—they seek a better life. They were seeking happiness.”** The Pope is very much concerned on the issue of unemployment that pushes people to seek for jobs in foreign lands: **“The lack of jobs for young people is a cry of pain that must be heard by governments, private businesses and the church community... access to dignity and a future relies on access to a job.”**

In his speech at Malacañang during his visit in the

Philippines, Pope Francis praised the contribution of the Filipino workers who are spread all over the world: “I would also mention the oft-neglected yet real contribution of Filipinos of the Diaspora to the life and welfare of the societies in which they live.”

However, speaking to families at the Mall of Asia Arena, the Pope also warned against the adverse impact of migration and materialism on Filipino families. The Pope warned that “every threat to the family is a threat to society itself.” And because of a global economic system “dominated by profit, new forms of slavery have developed and in some ways they are worse and more inhumane than that of the past.”

Our challenge, as church people is to “to draw near to new forms of poverty and vulnerability, in which we are called to recognize the suffering Christ.” (EG, 210). Our call is to work for a future where no families are torn apart in order to survive.

MORE DECENT LOCAL JOBS, PLEASE!

Quirico T. Pedregosa, Jr., OP

Mary Jane Veloso's story has hugged the limelight not only in the Philippines but also in the region of Asia. Mary Jane has languished in prison since 2010 due to the discovery of heroin hidden in the lining of the bag that she brought with her to Indonesia. She was about to be executed by firing squad on April 28, 2015. Hoping against hope, after so many pleas and prayers for compassion, her death sentence was, at the last minute, suspended.

Was Mary Jane a victim of illegal recruitment? Or was she a victim of human trafficking? Was she an unwitting drug mule? The truth remains to be established. Nonetheless, her case merits special attention and reconsideration. She comes from a poor family, has little formal education, a single mother of two young children and was desperately in need of a job. With such a background, she could have been easily a victim of deception, exploitation or abuse. In fact, prior to her trip and arrest in Indonesia, she had worked as a domestic helper in Dubai; but she had to return quickly to the Philippines without finishing her contract because of attempts of being raped by her employer.

The story of Mary Jane Veloso challenges us to recognize and work together to overcome the painful realities that drive countless Filipinos to find work overseas. Why do Filipino workers seek employment abroad? The answers are many.

However, the most basic reason is crystal-clear, namely, **the lack of decent employment opportunities in the Philippines**. It is the dire lack of sufficient jobs within the country that drives Mary Jane and millions of Filipinos to find work overseas. At the beginning of this year 2015, the unemployment percentage in the Philippines stood at 6.6%, which is rated by the International Labor Organization (ILO) as the highest percentage in Southeast Asia.

Obviously, the efforts of the present government in

generating local jobs do not simply measure up to the demand of providing sufficient jobs to our country's work force. But, can the government create more jobs locally? Yes, it can, if in the name of good governance, it should adopt the following reasonable measures proposed by many observers: (1) promote direct investments in labor-intensive fields, particularly in agricultural and manufacturing sectors; (2) hasten government spending for projects, especially those with approved budgets and available funds (3) and review the CCT (Conditional Cash Transfer) program and use instead the billions of money in programs generating jobs for the poor.

Sad to say, *the government focuses on its labor export policy*. It continues to court foreign governments to welcome and hire more Filipino workers. The statistics speak for themselves. On the average, 5,000 Filipinos leave our ports daily in search of job opportunities abroad. And it is painful to note that on a daily basis too, nine (9) overseas Filipino workers come back dead to the country. Moreover, the human and social cost of overseas employment by force are too high to pay by those who are directly affected by it: husbands and wives separate, children are abandoned or grow up without parental guidance, families are fragmented, individual OFW's (Overseas Filipino Workers) suffer all sorts of human degradation, etc. The tragic stories of Flor Contemplacion, Sarah Balabagan and Mary Jane Veloso are but a tip of the iceberg of the immense human and social toll of seeking employment desperately abroad, notwithstanding the many success stories.

It has to be noted that it is not only **the lack of sufficient number** of local jobs that drives Filipino workers to leave for work abroad. More significantly, it is the lack of "quality-jobs", that is, **the lack of jobs yielding decent living wages to workers** that pushes them to seek employment overseas. Minimum wages have been regionalized

since 1989. As of March 2015 according to the National Wages and Productivity Commission, the daily minimum wage at the NCR, which is the highest, stands at P 481 pesos, and at ARMM, which is the lowest, is at P 250 pesos. Such amounts are dismally way below the level of family living wage. The think tank IBON has recently computed, that for a family of five to six members, the family living wage is at P 1,088 pesos. That only shows that the highest minimum wage (P481 pesos) in the country terribly falls short (by more than 50%) in providing the basic daily needs of a worker and his immediate dependents.

Yet, how many of our local workers are receiving the so-called minimum wages? The total percentage of those who get the minimum or above the minimum wages is but a very small minority of our local workers. It is not a surprise then that our Filipino workers, if they have a way, will leave for employment abroad.

We, at the CWS, are of the conviction that the best and effective antidote to the plight of our Filipino workers, particularly of the Filipino migrant workers, is **the creation within the country of**

sufficient jobs giving decent family living wages to all workers.

In this regard, we appeal to both the public and private sectors to persistently pursue the creation of more decent paying jobs within the country. For, it pertains to the State and to the civil society *to promote the right to work* for everyone. And essentially connected with the promotion of the right to work, it is necessary *to promote and safeguard the right of workers to fair remuneration and income distribution*. It stands to reason that a “just wage” must never be below the level of subsistence of a worker and that of his dependents. *A just wage must necessarily be a living wage—a family living wage* (Cf. Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, nos. 287-294; 301-303).

Until the goal of providing sufficient decent paying jobs (jobs providing family living wages) for all within our shores is attained, forced migration on account of seeking jobs abroad will not stop. And there will be more of painful and tragic cases (recorded or unrecorded) similar, if not worse, to that of Mary Jane Veloso!



“The lack of jobs for young people is a cry of pain that must be heard by governments, private businesses and the church community.. access to dignity and a future relies on access to a job.” - Pope Francis

Trade Union and Human Rights Situation in 2014

Note: As our contribution to the last SONA of PNoy on July 27, 2015, we are reprinting some excerpts of the three - part series of Trade Union and Human Rights Situation in 2014 which was published by Center for Trade Union and Human Rights (CTUHR). The article aptly explained the present situation of the Filipino people especially our workers. (Editorial Board)

Aquino's much-hyped economic growth proved to be meaningless and abstract for the country's poor majority.

Jobs created in 2014 were predominantly precarious and low paying.

- higher unemployment rates. According to Ibon Foundation (2015), unemployment rate is 10.2 percent equivalent to at least 4.1 million workers. Most recent SWS survey, on the other hand, reveals a much higher estimate of 27 percent unemployment rate totalling to 12 million Filipinos (SWS, Feb 2015).

- Employment situation barely improved since Aquino took office in 2010 even if annual GDP growth of the Philippines has been relatively higher than neighboring countries. From 2010 to 2014, employed population only increased by 1.073 million while the number of unemployed increased by 31,000 thus slashing unemployment rate by a mere 0.2 percent from 7.0 percent to 6.8 percent by the end of 2014 (BLES, 2011; BLES, 2015). Underemployed workers also increased by 362,000 in the period covered. The Philippines also continue to register the highest unemployment rate when compared to its East Asian neighbours.

- This virtual conversion of full-time to part-time employment and disproportionate rise of precarious employment compared to wage and salary workers is predictable as destruction of full-time jobs marked the first half of 2014 when big companies suddenly closed down. Notably, a total of 9,600 workers lost jobs after Hoya Glass Disk and Carina Apparel, two multinational companies operating in Laguna

abruptly closed operations on April and February of 2014 respectively (CTUHR, 2014).

- majority of jobs generated in 2014 are also low paying. Based on April 2014 official data on average wages per industry and sub-sectors, seven out of 10 jobs generated in 2014 have wages below the national average wage of P365.89. Major occupation groups where there were huge increments in job generation have average daily wages that fall below P300.00.

- The government's labor export policy combined with dire employment situation in the country continues to drive millions of Filipinos to become overseas migrant workers. Ibon Foundation noted that on the first half of 2014, an average of 6,092 OFWs leave the country daily, an increase of 50 percent from 4,030 OFWs a day in 2010 (Ibon, 2015).

25 years of regionalized poverty wages

- The regionalized wage system dragged down real wages by as much as 21 percent. The regionalized wage system, legalized and institutionalized by RA 6787 or Wage Rationalization Act of 1989, effectively divided workers' right to living wages as it marked its 25th year of implementation in 2014. By the end of 2014, there are 104 minimum wage rates in the country depending on the region, the type of industry and number of employees per establishment (NWPC, no date). This fractionalized wage system has undermined workers' demand for big time, across-the-board wage increases as wage rates are determined separately by regional wage boards per region.

- As a result, workers continue to live in poverty wages as the government refuse to give significant wage hikes across the country. For the year 2014, RWBs approved in only five regions scanty wage 'adjustments' ranging from P5.00 to P13.00 a day and implemented in 10 regions wage adjustments from P2 to P20, most of the latter have been approved in 2013. Meanwhile, there were no wage adjustments approved or implement in six other

Feature

regions in the year 2014 .

- Even the highest wage rate of P466 in Metro Manila however, still fall way below the estimated family living wage of P1,086 a day (Ibon, 2015). Worse still, many workers continue to receive wages below the prescribed minimum wage rates. In some factories in Novaliches and Caloocan, contract workers are paid on piece rate basis. Workers who are mostly women, receive as low as P139 after working for 12 hours of packing and sealing packs of retail peanuts, cracker or chips brands.

Privatizing public goods

- Privatization of public utilities not only added burden to the poor with increased rates and prices but also siphoned public funds to the pockets of big corporations in the form of state guaranteed profits.

- The Aquino administration’s public private partnership program adds burden to the poor as public utilities and services become more costly to benefit corporate interest. Early this year, the Aquino government implemented as much as 87 percent fare hikes in the MRT and LRT train lines despite having no public consultation, severely poor train maintenance and onerous contracts where government pays guaranteed returns of private investors. An estimated PHP 4 to 7 billion of public taxes is reportedly being allotted by the government to subsidize the train lines (Bulatlat, Aug. 2014). Most of these ‘subsidies’ went to profits guaranteed by the government to private investors as well as reneged loans by the same private investors. The government has also been spending at least USD 1.15 million a month as payment for the maintenance operator of MRT3 and yet successive accidents and train stoppage have been experienced by passengers in the last quarter of 2014 (Bulatlat, Sept. 2014).

- Water and electricity rates continuously rise still as a result of privatization schemes.

- Prices of basic commodities, particularly rice also increased in 2014. Retail price of commercial rice rose by as much as 16 percent by the end of 2014 compared to prices in 2013.

Deepening inequality

- After almost five years, the gap between the rich and poor ever widened as the country’s richest amass bigger profits while the huge majority of Filipinos are left in deepened poverty. Precarious employment, depressed wages combined with the government’s privatization schemes combined drags the lives of many Filipinos deeper into poverty. Latest government poverty statistics on January 2013 shows that.



CREATED BY
iMoney
PHILIPPINES
April 2015

SOURCES
Forbes

Note: Jaime Zobel de Ayala, who ranked No. 9 in 2014 with a net worth of \$3.4 billion, is a surprise exclusion from the list, but that’s because the data for his net worth this year is not yet available.

Source: iMoney Learning Centre, April 20, 2015

Feature

- Latest government poverty statistics shows that 1 out of 4 Filipinos live with less than P53 a day while one of every five working Filipinos (21.9 percent) still live below the poverty line (working poor).

- On the other hand, the country's richest individuals and top corporations amass more wealth in shorter period than ever before. From 2009 to 2013, net worth of Henry Sy, the country's richest man tripled from USD 3.8 B to USD 12.7 B. Between 2009 almost 2013, accumulated profits of top 1,000 corporations in the country nearly doubled. From profits amounting to USD 1.55 trillion between 2009-2010, profits of top corporations that dominate Philippine economy already totalled to USD 2.9 trillion from 2011 to 2013 (Ibon, 2015).

Criminalization and anti-union measures heightened

In the year 2014, CTUHR documented a total of 82 cases of trade union and human rights violations that affected almost 10,000 workers. Dismissals, refusal to bargain with the union, and union busting are the most glaring economic violations affecting several thousands of workers. At least one worker was extra-judicially killed while hundreds more were harassed, threatened and detained. Number of victims of legal offensives increased by 75 percent as more unionists were slapped with false criminal charges. Violations of labor standards were also documented even as the government reported high compliance rating of private enterprises with less than 200 workers.

Violations of labor standards

CTUHR documented several cases of labor standard violations notably non-payment of minimum wages; loose regulations and enforcement of occupational health and safety standards keep workers barely protected from occupational deaths and hazards resulting in 11 more worker deaths in the year 2014. Three separate accidents claimed the lives of workers in the following companies: Hanjin Heavy Industries Subic Zambales (1); Asia Metro Tech, Pasay (8); and Ardi Const and Development Corp. (2) **(Note: the latest is the Kentex Fire Tragedy claiming 72 lives**

of workers)

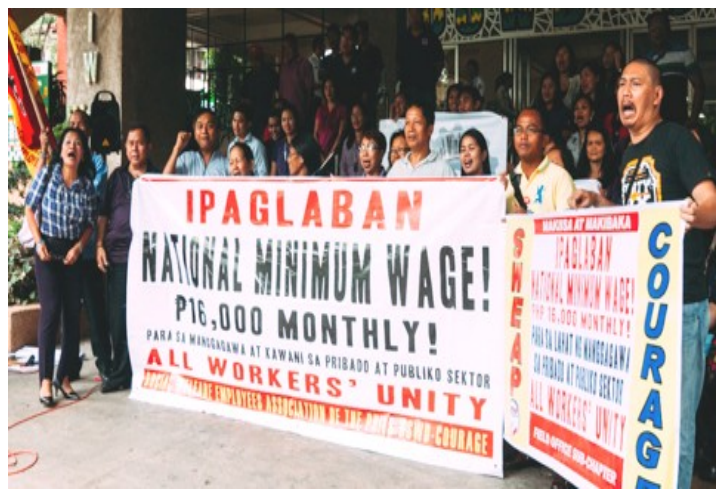
Union rights violations against thousands of workers

Latest government data on union density is still at a low 8.3 percent of wage and salary workers ; workers covered by collective bargaining is only 228,000 or 12.3 percent of unionized workers.

Despite a very low unionization rate and CBA coverage, thousands of workers continue to experience violations of right to union and collective bargaining in 2014. These violations affecting 9,425 workers include union discrimination (8), unjust dismissal (11), refusal to bargain (5), outright union busting (4).

Heightened criminalization of workers and unionists

Criminal offensives against workers heightened as victims of false criminal charges against unionists and workers increase by 75 percent. Charges filed against unionists range from minor crimes such as alarm and scandal to more serious offenses like illegal possession of firearms and explosives and murder. These charges were meant to harass local workers resistance, to quell local organizing or actions or to implicate union leaders in armed offensives of the New People's Army as part of the government's counter insurgency program.



Private and public sector workers unite to demand a national minimum wage. Photo from Pinoyweekly.org

Workers Resistance, Gains, and Prospects for 2015

Underneath the seemingly ‘stable industrial relations’ silenced by hosts of legal offensives and workers’ rights violations is a resurgence of dynamic workers resistance to reclaim their rights and score gains. The formation of All Workers Unity (AWU) to push for a national minimum wage for all workers in the public and private sectors is not only strategic but a long overdue mechanism to break the division imposed by the regionalized wage fixing in the private sector and salary standardization law in the public sector.

Strikes and protests over violations of collective bargaining right

In 2014, 55,171 establishments called for government intervention to resolve industrial disputes over various issues ranging from non-payment of wages, call for regularization of employment, refusal to bargain, dismissals, to union busting.

Resistance in the belly of the strike-forbidden special economic zone

2014 is also witness to one if not the most successful resistance over twin neo-liberal attacks on trade union and collective bargaining rights of workers in a no-union, no strike economic zone. The series of mass protests mounted by thousands of workers at the NXP Semiconductors in Light Industry and Science Park I (LISP I) in Cabuyao, Laguna and their supporters all over the globe from May to September last year, did not only bring back the 12 illegally dismissed union officers but also led to the conclusion of a new collective bargaining agreement. More than the preservation of the lone militant union inside the economic enclave, the mass protests broke the decades of silence and prohibition on concerted actions imposed in nearly all special economic zones (SEZs). The NXP workers’ experience and the global support it generated not only inspired workers from neighbouring factories in the LISP I, but reaffirmed that mixture of mass protests within the factory, national and international pressure as well as media campaign can challenge and weaken even the most formidable

fortress designed to squeeze trade union rights.

LISP I is a special economic zone (SEZs) established in 1991 and like other SEZs, it is known for its anti-union and anti-workers’ strike culture and practices.

Pushing the fight at all fronts versus contractualization, small but inspiring gains

Resistance against privatization and government corruption

- Workers also lodged strong resistance to the Aquino government’s privatization scheme particularly the MRT-LRT railway system and public hospitals. Successive protests led by train workers through RILES Network increased awareness and engagement of the riding public in the onerous contracts between the government and private corporations that run the train lines. The strong public opposition to fare hikes and accidents due to poor maintenance of the train system, prompted congressional investigation and forced the government to delay fare hikes until it was announced on the 3rd week of December when most people are busy with the holidays

- As early as 2013, health workers already led the fight against the privatization, guised as modernization, of the Philippine Orthopedic Center, the lone public hospital that specializes in orthopaedic medicine in the Philippines, alongside 25 other public hospitals that are target for privatization under Aquino’s Public Private Partnership program. Mass walkout and protest actions of hospital personnel with support from patients and public were held as early as 2013 and sustained in 2014.

- Workers groups were also among those who led the movement against massive corruption in the Aquino government. A year after the million people march that denounced the pork barrel scam in Napoles NGOs last August 2013, another million people march was held on August 2014, this time exposing and condemning Aquino’s illegal and unconstitutional use of funds through the Disbursement Acceleration Program and working towards the abolition of the pork barrel system through a people’s initiative.

Continue on page 13

Statement

On Labor Day, Remember Human Dignity and the Common Good 'thou shalt not' to an economy of exclusion and inequality Church People-Workers Solidarity (CWS) Statement on Labor Day 2015



This Labor Day, as we take time to honor our workers, we also take time to pause and reflect on the meaning of work, the contributions of workers, and the important role of labor movement in our economy and nation.

Our country continues to struggle with an economy that is not producing enough decent jobs. Millions of Filipinos suffer from unemployment, underemployment and are living in poverty as their basic needs too often go unmet. There are now an estimated 4.5 million unemployed Filipinos and 7.3 million underemployed—the highest in Asia! The link between joblessness and poverty is undeniable, as Pope Emeritus Benedict pointed out: “in many cases, poverty results from a violation of the dignity of human work, either because work opportunities are limited or because a low value is put on work and the rights that flow from it, especially the right to just wage and the personal security of the worker.” (Caritas in Veritate, 63) In our Catholic tradition, work is more than a way to make a living. Work is an expression of our dignity and a contribution to the common good; it is a way to participate in God’s continuing work of creation. In a Labor Day message in 2013, Pope Francis emphasized the importance of work: “Work is fundamental to the dignity of a person. Work, to use an image, ‘anoints’ us with dignity, fills us with dignity, makes us similar to God.”

Today, workers are faced with daunting challenges. The present exploitative relations of production leave workers no choice but to sell their labor power in order to survive. Workers are, collectively, compelled under the threat of poverty to sell their capacity to work in order to get access to basic needs. For decades now,

workers have experienced worsening hunger and poverty because of the intensifying attacks on the minimum wage while big businesses earn super profits and become very wealthy. The minimum wage is less than half of the estimated family living wage. This is aggravated by how wages hikes are so few and small that the minimum wage is barely able to keep up with the rising cost of living. It is this very bleak scenario that Pope Francis describes as “the powerful feeding upon the powerless.” And as a consequence, masses of people “find themselves excluded and marginalized: without work, without possibilities, without any means of escape”. “Human beings are themselves considered consumer goods to be used and then discarded.”

The neoliberal economic doctrine that the government staunchly defended openly destroyed all victories gained by workers through centuries of collective struggle. The right to organize and form unions, for example, is being vigorously attacked before our very eyes. Unions and other worker associations have a unique and essential responsibility in advancing the rights of workers. The Catholic church has long taught that unions are “an indispensable element of social life” and are examples of the traditional Catholic principles of solidarity and subsidiarity in action. At their best, unions demonstrate solidarity by bringing workers together to speak and act collectively to protect their rights and pursue the common good.

Also, Filipinos and workers of the world consider the institutionalization of eight-hour working day as one of the hard-won gains of the labor movement. This law is unfortunately
Continue on page 22

We support the Filipino workers' call to ban contractualization and to regularize contractual workers

We, Churchpeople Workers Solidarity (CWS) fully support the struggle being waged by Filipino workers and employees, both in the public and private sectors, in order to ban contractualization and to regularize contractual workers.

Whatever it is called under the different schemes that legalize it, contractual employment is a bane to Filipino workers and employees. It means meager wages, often less than the legally-mandated minimum. It means, for many, being robbed of benefits. It means being in danger of losing one's job every six months and of being laid off for the flimsiest reasons. It means being prevented from forming unions, even from simply asserting one's rights. Contractuals are often made to carry out the dirtiest and most dangerous tasks in companies.

Contractual employment means, in sum, continuing if not worsening poverty despite having worked hard. Contractual employment therefore means the wholesale violation of workers' most basic trade-union and even human rights. It should therefore be banned. All contractuals should be regularized.

We express disapproval of the fact that contractuals now comprise the majority of workers and employees in the country. From the service sector, which employs the most workers in the country, to the manufacturing sector, from special economic zones to agro-corporations, and from the construction sector to the public sector as a whole – the majority of Filipino workers and employees is

now composed of contractuals.

We are calling for the immediate scrapping of all policies that legalize contractual employment: from the Labor Code of 1974 to the Department of Labor and Employment Order No. 18-A Series of 2011 in the private sector, and from the privatization of government employees to orders from the Civil Service Commission – all of these must go.

In the private sector, contractual employment is being promoted to boost the profits of employers. In the public sector, contractual employment is being promoted to boost the kickbacks of corrupt top politicians, payments for debt servicing, and subsidies for big capitalists. These are explanations, but cannot stand as justifications for the anti-worker and anti-employee practice of contractualization.

The basic rights of workers and employees are being violated in order to advance the interests of an elite few. This is most unjust and should not be the case. The elite few cannot go on violating the rights of the impoverished majority in order to advance its interests.

We therefore unite with the struggle of the Filipino workers and people for the banning of contractualization and the regularization of contractuals. We vow to support this campaign through various means. We enjoin other sectors of society to stand up for this just demand. We are calling on the government to uphold the dignity of workers by banning the crime that is contractualization.

Petition

Higher wages for Filipino workers! Implement a National Minimum Wage, P640 daily or P16,000 monthly!

We Churchpeople Workers Solidarity (CWS) are calling for higher wages for Filipino workers and employees in both the private and public sectors and we support, in particular, the call for the implementation of a National Minimum Wage in the amount of P640 daily or P16,000 monthly.

Filipino workers and employees from both the private and public sectors constitute some of the most productive sections of our society. Yet, they have been mired in poverty, hunger and indebtedness for decades now. They contribute so much to the creation of wealth in the country but they don't get enough to feed their families and give their families a decent life. Capitalists and the government have refused to give them living wages in serving the interests of a minority in society.

The minimum wages in the country's private sector are insufficient to meet the daily needs of the families of workers and employees. The Metro Manila minimum wage, the highest in the country, is currently at P481, a far cry from the P1,088 Family Living Wage and constitutes a mere 43 percent of the latter.

The Family Living Wage (FLW) is a computation of the amount needed daily by an average Filipino family composed of five members to live decently. The government started computations of the FLW but it discontinued the latter because the results run contrary to the government's thrust of justifying meager wages. Independent think-tank Ibon Foundation has continued computations of the FLW and the P1,088 figure comes from its April 2015 study.

The minimum salary in the country's public sector is also meager, if not more so. Government employees under so-called Salary Grade 1 receive a mere P9,000 salary per month. The situation for those under Salary Grade 2-4 is not significantly different.

We have to bear in mind that while the minimum wage in Metro Manila is already low, the minimum wage levels in regions outside Metro Manila are even lower. The minimum wages in 11 regions of the country do not exceed P290 while those in five regions do not exceed P370.

Successive governments have caused this condition, by approving different but meager wage hikes in various regions. They have worsened the gaps between regional wage levels rather than trying to close the said gaps.

We also have to remember that while the minimum wage levels in the country are already very low, these are not enjoyed by the majority of workers in the country. According to government data, 46 percent of workers receive wages below the minimum and only 25 per cent receive the minimum wage.

There are already more than 1,000 wage levels in the country, as a result of the further fragmentation of the minimum wage caused by the implementation of the Wage Rationalization Law for private-sector workers and employees and the Salary Standardization Law for public-sector workers and employees, both starting in 1989. This is a violation of the dignity common to all workers regardless of the sector where he or she is employed, or the region where he or she is working.

The implementation of a National Minimum Wage in the amount of P640 daily or P16,000 monthly would raise the wages of Filipino workers and employees and would counter various policies aimed at pressing wages down. It would affirm the common dignity enjoyed by all Filipino workers and employees, regardless of the sector or the location in the country.

It would counter the differences and divisions among workers and employees foisted by the regionalization and further fragmentation of the minimum wage. It would give workers and employees immediate relief

in bringing the minimum wage closer to the Family Living Wage.

Contrary to their claims, capitalists can afford to implement a National Minimum Wage in the amount of P640 a day or P16,000 a month. According to Ibon Foundation, the said measure would only amount to a 17 percent reduction in capitalists' profits. This means that the implementation of the measure should not result in massive layoffs and factory closures or in high prices and inflation.

Small Filipino businessmen, who are often cited by big capitalists for the latter's opposition to a wage hike, are burdened not by huge labor costs, but by high power and water rates, high taxes and government kickbacks, trade liberalization and smuggling, and stiff competition from big foreign and local capitalists. We unite with them in opposing the factors that make doing business difficult for them even as we assert the need for a National Minimum Wage in the amount of P640 daily or P16,000 monthly.

The situation is more straightforward for workers and employees in the public sector. The government has the funds to increase the salaries of its workers and

employees, but politicians persist in misappropriating the national budget, corrupting the people's money, and refusing to increase government revenues in ways that would not harm the people.

The victimization of Mary Jane Veloso by an international drug syndicate highlights the need for decent jobs in the country, a principal aspect of which is allowing workers to enjoy a minimum wage that is close to the Family Living Wage. The situation of the workers of Kentex, which has been exposed by the fire that gutted the company's factory last May 13, shows the extent to which capitalists would go to press down wages: give long-standing regulars the minimum while refusing the minimum to contractual workers, which is illegal and plainly unjust.

We are therefore calling for higher wages for Filipino workers and employees both in the public and private sectors. We are calling for the implementation of a National Minimum Wage in the amount of P640 a day or P16,000 a month. We are calling on all workers and all Filipinos to champion and advance these calls. We are calling on all sectors of society – professionals, church people, politicians, personalities – to support the call of the country's workers and people.

Trade Union and Human Rights Situation in 2014

From page 8

Resurgence of Workers Resistance

What will happen to the people of Asia or specifically Southeast Asia may be grim, if we look at the policies by which government and capital are implementing. However, it is this very anti-worker and anti-people neo-liberal policy that are driving hundreds of thousands of workers and the poor to stand up, act and pour into the streets in militant protests.

In Indonesia for example, more than 3,000 strikes, and factory occupations occurred in the last two years forcing some multinational companies to sign on a freedom of association protocol, provide the workers with proper wages and promote thousand contractual

workers into permanent employment status. In Cambodia, thousands of garment workers also went on strike prompting government and companies to increase their wages, albeit short of the workers' demand.

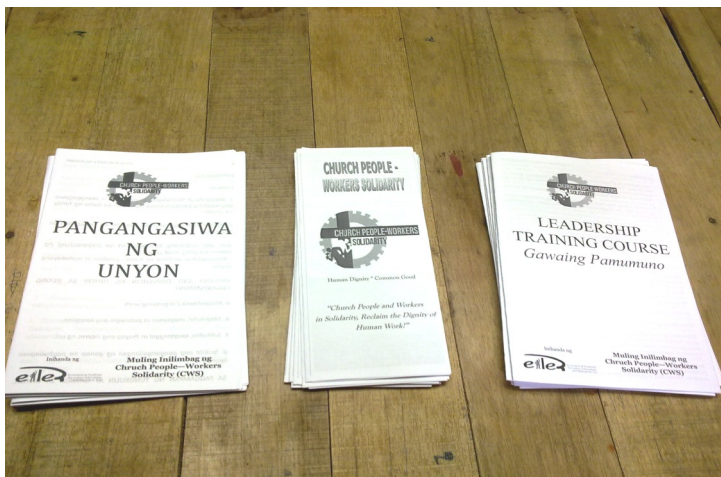
In the Philippines, the resistance has never stopped at different levels, despite the difficulties imposed on union organizing. But then, the new unions organized in 2014, (may be still small in number), to the fight they have won and are winning, are fires to encourage more workers to reclaim their right and power. With more support, encouragement, and creativity, the workers and the poor, will find the courage not just to organize trade unions but to fill the streets and chart their own course, to give the working class, even on the immediate, a reprieve from neo-liberal attacks.

Center for Trade Union and Human Rights (CTUHR)

In Photos: CWS Activities

For the period of January to June 2015, CWS for its **EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAM** focused on raising the organizing and leadership capacity of the workers who were identified to have the knowledge, skills and attitude to be leaders in their respective workers' organizations and unions.

Samahan ng mga Manggagawa ng Reagan Steel Company (NSMR), Samahan ng mga Manggagawa at Kristiyanong Pamayanan (SMKP).



Modules used for the Leadership and Organizing Skills Training



Training in Archdiocese of Manila among workers of Philippine Journal Employees Union, Alyansa ng mga Manininda para sa Kabuhayan at Karapatan (ALMAKKA) and Peoples Democratic Hawkers and Vendors Alliance (PEDHVA)



Training in Diocese of Novaliches among the workers of Longhong Workers' Union, Philcopy Labor Union, Kowloon House Workers' Union, Express Coat Workers' Union, Samahan ng mga Manggagawa ng Robin Company, Nagkakaisang



Training in Diocese of Kalookan among workers of Kalipunan ng mga Manggagawa sa Komunidad

In Photos: CWS Activities

(KMK) and Nagkakaisang Magkakapitbahay sa Tullahan Road (NMTR)



Training in Diocese of Parañaque among Comfoods Employees Labor Association (CELA), Pepsi Cola Labor union (PCLU), Bluestar Workers Labor Union (BWLU) and All Workers Unity of Muntinlupa, Taguig, Parañaque

Also CWS together with the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (CICM) Social Concern Ministry through Fr. JR Mallonga, CICM conducted a Union Management and Grievance Handling Training in CICM Centennial Hall with Atty. Noel Neri of Pro Labor Assistance Center (PLACE) and Leandro Gerodias of Alliance of Nationalist Genuine Labor Organization. The workers' participants totaling 46 were from Journal Employees Union, Aksyon Manggagawa Alcohil Metal Inc. Workers Union, Samahan ng mga Manggagawa sa Express Coat, Kalipunan ng mga Manggagawa sa Komunidad, Samahan ng mga Manggagawa sa Manny Guarin Hauling Service, Germany Trading Workers' Union Alliance of Nationalist Genuine Labor Organization (ANGLO), Samahan ng mga Mangagawa sa South Supermarket, Pentagon Workers Union, and Toyota Motors Phils. Corporation Workers Association.

For the **CAMPAIGN AND ADVOCACY PROGRAM**, CWS continued to actively campaign

In Photos: CWS Activities

the issues of National Minimum Wage of P16,000.00 monthly or P640.00 daily wage for all workers and employees of both private and public sectors, the elimination of contractual employment which leads to wages way below the subsistence level, withholding of benefits, lack of job security, and violations of workers' right to form unions and the Workers' SHIELD (Workers' Safety and Health Inspection and Employers' Liability Decree"), an occupational safety bill to address workers' safety concerns. This bill is in response to the series of deaths of our workers in the workplace, the most recent was the death of 72 or more workers in the Kentex Fire Tragedy.

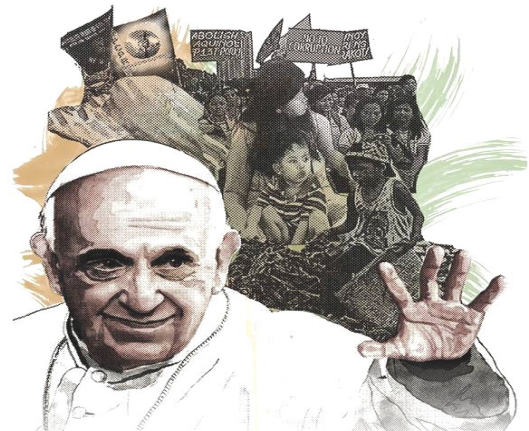
- CWS supports the National Minimum Wage of P16, 000 monthly or P640.00 daily wage for all workers and employees of both private and public sectors.

- CWS was part of the Giving Voice to the Cry of the Poor Postcard & Poster Launching for Pope Francis' visit. The postcards given to Pope Francis was one of the concrete response to Pope Francis call of making the Church a Church of the Poor and for the churchpeople to be with the workers and the marginalized.



GIVING VOICE TO THE CRY OF THE POOR

"AMONG OUR TASKS AS WITNESSES TO THE LOVE OF CHRIST IS THAT OF GIVING A VOICE TO THE CRY OF THE POOR."
-POPE FRANCIS, ADDRESS TO THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY, JUNE 14, 2013



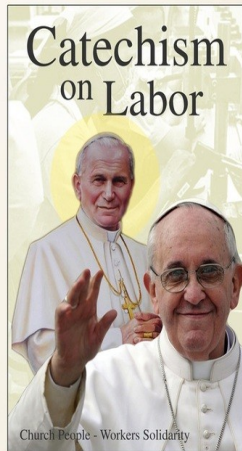
In Photos: CWS Activities

- On January 30, 2015, the module Catechism on Labor on January 30, 2015 was launched at the 4th Floor of San Pio Building, Quezon Avenue, Quezon City. The module was presented by CWS chairperson Most Rev. Gerardo Alminaza, D.D.

BOOK LAUNCHING

Catechism on Labor

30 January, 2015, Friday, 8:00am-12:00nn
4th Floor, San Pio Building, Aula Magna, Institute of Preaching
Quezon Avenue, Quezon City (beside Sto. Domingo Church)



- In commemoration of the May 1, 2015 International Workers' Day, a press conference of churchpeople was sponsored by CWS on April 28, 2015 in the Centennial Conference room of CICM Provincial House. The presscon emphasized on the theme: On Labor Day, Remember Human Dignity and the Common Good ('thou shalt not' to an economy of exclusion and inequality).

The churchpeople who attended the presscon were:
- Fr. Valentine Narcise, CICM of National Clergy Discernment Group

- Sr. Alice Lansang, ICM of Religious Discernment Group
- Bp. Elmer Bolocon of Ecumenical Bishops' Forum
- Rev. Marisol Villalon of United Methodist Church and Promotion of Churchpeople's Response
- Rev. Fr. Dindo Ranojo of Iglesia Filipina Independiente
- Fr. Paul Medina of National Clergy Discernment Group



The panel highlighted the urgent calls:

- Uphold workers' rights! Reclaim the Dignity of the Human Work!
- Demand for social justice, living wage now!
- Support the call for National Minimum Wage – P 16,000.00 monthly!
- Uphold workers' rights and dignity!

In Photos: CWS Activities

- No to contractualization! Yes to Regular Employment Bill!
- Denounce modern forms of slavery, forced labor and prostitution!
- Condemn an economy of exclusion and inequality!
- Save the life of Mary Jane Veloso! Stand against human trafficking and modern day slavery of migrants!



- CWS together with other churchpeople organizations and institutions participated in the May 1, 2015 mobilization after the mass for the workers in Basilica of the Black Nazarene (Quiapo Church)



For its **WELFARE AND SUPPORT SERVICES**, CWS distributed goods to the workers and their families particularly to the Express Coat, Pentagon,

Longhong and Tanduary who are still on strike. Also CWS together with its churchpeople networks distributed school supplies to 300 children of workers from Pentagon, Longhong, Express Coat, Tanduary and Kentex. These school supplies were donated by Promotion of Church People's Response, Ecumenical Bishop's Forum, National Council of Churches in the Philippines and networks of Religious Discernment and National Clergy Discernment Group - Fr. Nielo Cantilado, SVD, Sr. Diane Cabasagan, RGS, Sr. Imani Kosasih, RHF, Sr. Lulu Dulay, ICM, the Queen of Peace community of ICM sisters through Sr. Lydia Lascano, ICM, Franciscan Missionaries of Mary (FMM) congregation through Sr. Angela Jamola, FMM, Congregation of Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine of Siena through Mother Jesusa Enginco, O.P., Congregation of the Sisters Oblates of the Holy Spirit through Sr. Carol Ganson, OSS, Carmelite Missionaries through Sr. Esperlita Trillo, CM, Benedictine Sisters through Mo. Adele Ygrubay, OSB, Ms. Jeff Vito of College of the Holy Spirit-Manila, Caritas Manila and Development Bank of the Philippines Grail.



Express Coat Picket Line



Pentagon Picket Line

In Photos: CWS Activities



Longhong Picket Line



Tanduay Picket Line school supplies distribution



Tanduay Picket Line

For the **INTEGRATION / IMMERSION PROGRAM**, for 6 months CWS facilitated the following: a) Fr. Dindo Ranjo and seminarians of Iglesia Filipina Independiente visited the picket line of Pentagon Workers Union b) Promotion of the Churchpeople's Response (one of the networks of CWS) together with other churchpeople visited and immersed with the workers' families in the Pentagon picket line c) integration/visit to Kentex d. Integration with Tanduary workers.



Fr. Dindo Ranjo of IFI with Pentagon workers on strike



Kentex Children with Churchpeople visitors



PCPR sharing with the children of Pentagon workers

In Photos: CWS Activities



- May 18, 2015 Ecumenical Prayer for Kentex Fire Victims & their Families sponsored by CWS and other churchpeople institutions and organizations like Solidarity with the Workers Network, PCPR, IFI, UMC. It was attended by 200 people including 11 priests, religious congregations, Bulacan State University students among others.



Fact Finding Solidarity Mission in Tanduary Picket Line headed by CWS and CTUHR

- It is also good to mention that a Paskuhan sa Picket Line of Express Coat was held last December, 2014. Churchpeople who attended the Paskuhan were 46 sisters from Institute of Formation and Religious Studies (IFRS), Promotion of Churchpeople's Response (PCPR) staff, 5 sisters from Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (ICM) congregation, staff of Center for Trade Union and Human Rights (CTUHR).



Paskuhan sa Picket Line of Expresscoat



On Labor Day From page 11

being flouted today by some companies, which seem to make 16-hour workday an ordinary work schedule.

The current global economic crisis pushes employers to find ways to implement austerity measures even if it violates the right of workers to decent work. One of the single biggest stumbling blocks to having decent work is the practice of contractualization that gives rise to "endo". Contractualization means starvation for workers. Still, the message of *Rerum Novarum* is very clear: "wealthy owners of the means of production and employers must never forget that both divine and human law forbid them to squeeze the poor and wretched for the sake of gain or to profit from the helplessness of others." (RN, 17)

As we celebrate Labor Day, may we learn to appreciate the value of work as a gift from God. This Labor Day, we from CWS appeals to brothers and sisters in the faith and all men and women of good will for a decisive choice to protect the wretched workers from the brutality of those who make use of human beings as mere instruments for the unrestrained acquisition of wealth. As Pope Francis pointed out: "Men and women who work are dignified. Those who do not work do not have this dignity. But there are many who want to work and cannot. This is a burden on our conscience, because when society is organized in such a way that not everyone has the opportunity to work, then there is something wrong with that society."

Today, millions of working people and their families have urgent and compelling needs. May God guide our actions in creating a more just economy that truly honors the dignity of work and the rights of workers.

Church People-Workers Solidarity (CWS)

CONVENORS

Most Rev. Jose S. Palma, D.D.
Archbishop of Cebu

Most Rev. Broderick S. Pabillo, D.D.
Auxiliary Bishop of Manila

Most Rev. Gerardo A. Alminaza, D.D.
Bishop-Elect, Diocese of San Carlos/Chairperson of CWS

The Most Rev. Ephraim S. Fajutagana
Obispo Maximo of Iglesia Filipina Independiente

Fr. Quirico Pedregosa Jr., OP
Rector of UST Central Seminary

Mo. Mary John Mananzan, OSB
Ms. Minnie Anne M. Calub

National Council of Churches in the Philippines
Cavite Workers' Assistance Center

Msgr. Rommel Kintanar, HP
Visayas Clergy Discernment Group

Msgr. Rey Manuel Monsanto, JCD, HP
Archdiocese of Cagayan de Oro

Ms. Ellen Alejandro

Samahan ng mga Manggagawa at Kristiyanong Pamayanan

Ms. Alet Mariposque

NXP Semi-Conductor Workers Union

Mr. Casmero Mahilum

Visayan Electric Company Employees Union

Mr. Eleazar Abaja

Pinagbuklod na Lakas ng Manggagawa sa Plantasyon ng
Agusan Plantation, Inc.

Ms. Leonida Tundagui

Cordillera Labor Center

Mr. Dexter Datu

International Wiring Systems Workers' Union

Ms. Venus Culili

Ecumenical Institute for Labor Education and Research

Ms. Daisy Arago

Center for Trade Union and Human Rights

Mr. Garry Martinez

Migrante International

Mr. Steve Ranjo

Pagkakaisa ng mga Samahan ng Tsuper at
Opereytor Nationwide

Church People-Workers SOLIDARITY

Room 106, CICM Guest House Building
No. 60, 14th Street, New Manila, Quezon City
Telefax no. (02) 584-3190

Mobile: 0932.515.4066; 0946.468.9826

Email Address: churchfortheworkers@gmail.com