



# ONE VOICE

The Official Publication of Church People - Workers Solidarity (CWS)

APRIL-JUNE 2017 ISSUE



VOLUME 2 NO. 5

## EDITORIAL

# FOOD & JUSTICE FOR EVERYONE

According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (UNFAO), the majority of the world's poor live in rural areas and agriculture is a source of livelihood for 86 percent of rural poor. UNFAO also reported that nearly eight out of every ten working poor live in rural areas and less than twenty percent of agricultural workers have access to basic social protection. Child labor is also prevalent in rural areas where "almost sixty percent of all child labor is found in agriculture, affecting nearly 100 million children." (UNFAO, *The State of Food and Agriculture*, 2011) A similar report by the International Labor Organization (ILO) said that of the approximately 1.1 billion workers active in agricultural production worldwide, nearly half are in wage labor and millions of these agricultural workers "earn wages that place them on the bottom rung of the rural poverty ladder and even below the minimum level." (ILO, *Decent Work in Agriculture*, 2003) The ILO survey concluded that "a series of vicious circles are lowering wages and



Protest action held by Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas last April calling for genuine land reform and struggle for just and lasting peace.

protections for hired farm workers and encouraging rural-urban migration and international migration." (ILO, 2003)

This worldwide phenomenon of slave-like conditions among agricultural workers is commonplace in the Philippines. Vast hectares of agricultural lands are converted into plantations exclusively for export. Dole Corporation, Del Monte Philippine Packing Corporation, Tagum Development Corporation, United Brands and Su-

mitomo Fruits control hundreds and thousands of hectares of land in Mindanao through Agribusiness Venture Agreements. Just recently, the Philippine government opened its door to foreign oil palm production. It plans to convert 80,000 hectares of land for palm oil production and will eventually expand to 300,000 hectares all over the country. This massive accumulation by dispossession is directly affecting poor farmers and are forcing them into



precarious conditions. Last January, a total of fifty-two sacadas or migratory sugar workers recruited from Bukidnon province were rescued by Unyon ng Manggagawang Agrikultural (UMA) from their slave-like, dehumanizing conditions in Hacienda Luisita. The sacadas who were promised to be paid P450 per day were reportedly paid as little as P9.50 daily. For almost two months, these workers were subjected to worst forms of exploitation and contractualization in the Cojuangco-Aquino-owned Hacienda Luisita.

Large scale land conversion and corporate land-grabbing are displacing thousands of farmers across the country. Driven off from their lands, these farmers are forced to work in slave-like

conditions in the urban centers. Pope Francis' latest eco encyclical *Laudato Si* highlights the implications for the way we grow our food and till the Earth and at the same time provides a radical challenge on how the production, distribution and consumption of food should be managed. In the encyclical, farm-related terminology is used more than 30 times as Pope Francis explores everything from pesticides' contribution to water pollution, to the threat of widespread use of genetically modified organisms to the economic vitality of small scale farmers. *Laudato Si* affirms the dignity of farming as a privileged vocation and at the same

time challenges many predominant practices in agriculture. The encyclical believes that farmers have a unique vocation to care for God's creation and to cooperate with it to advance the common good.

Recently, the International Catholic Rural Association (ICRA) published a document on the "Vocation of the Agricultural Leader". It criticizes agro-corporations which treat agriculture "exclusively in terms of profit" which resulted to "harmful results for both human communities and the natural environment." It pointed out the risks of market dominated agriculture "in favor of powerful, private interests" where small family farms "are being squeezed out of existence by the powerful forces of a global market" and small farmers are "pushed off their land and into poverty."

The social teachings of the church invite us to see food production and distribution not as "a transaction devoid of moral content and ultimate significance." It teaches us that agriculture "should be thought of as a vocation, a form of life through which God can be known, served and glorified. ■"

**“The sacadas who were promised to be paid P450 per day were reportedly paid as little as P9.50 daily.”**

## More peasant killings surface as slain farmworkers' leader buried in Negros

Unyon ng mga Manggagawa sa Agrikultura (UMA), February 13, 2017

**B**ACOLOD CITY – Hundreds of farmers and sugar workers marched the streets of Murcia, Negros Occidental to call for justice for slain peasant leader Alexander Ceballos, who was killed by suspected paramilitary elements last January 20.

Members of the National Federation of Sugar Workers (NFSW), Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) and the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) in

Negros organized a series of burial marches-turned-protests in the province since January 22, the 30th anniversary of the Mendiola Massacre. A luksang parangal or tribute program for Ceballos was also organized by NFSW beside the Murcia town church the night before the burial which was held, February 1, at the Murcia municipal cemetery.

Ceballos was a regional council member of the NFSW and district

area coordinator for Murcia and Salvador Benedicto towns where the bungkalan or land cultivation areas have been established by organized farmworkers. NFSW is affiliated with the national farmworkers center Unyon ng mga Manggagawa sa Agrikultura or UMA.

UMA Secretary General Danilo Ramos said that another farmer, Wenceslao Pacquiao, was shot dead January 25 while ploughing a land cultivation area in Barangay San Benito, Calatrava town, around 75 kilometers east of Bacolod City. Pacquiao was a member of the KMP.

Human rights group KARAPATAN reported that Ceballos and Pacquiao are among four peasants across the country killed in January 2017 – the two others are lumad or indigenous peoples' leaders in Mindanao.

But on January 31, farmworkers in Negros marched with three mock coffins to symbolize the killing of three local farmers. Aside from Ceballos, two other farmers were shot dead last month in connection with agrarian disputes in the upland town of Don Salvador Benedicto alone.

The other victims were identified as Jovani Paguntalan and Iver Mulasi, both residents of Barangay Pandanon, Don Salvador Benedicto. Paguntalan was reportedly shot dead on January 2, while Mulasi, chairman of the Nieves Agro Cooperative was also felled by gunshots on January 16 – only a few days before Ceballos was gunned down in front of his home in Barangay Pandanon Silos in Murcia, a village very near the boundary of Don Salvador Benedicto.

This means that counting Pacquiao, four farmers were shot dead within the first month of 2017 in Negros Occidental province alone.

NFSW Chairperson Rolando Rillo said gangster-type violence and impunity reign in Don Salvador Benedicto town where the incumbent mayor, Marxlen dela Cruz is the son of notorious landgrabber, ex-Mayor Nehemias "Nene" dela Cruz. The elder dela Cruz is also a known ringleader of the paramilitary group RPA-ABB.



Alexander Ceballos

Ceballos received death threats from the dela Cruz camp for leading the land cultivation campaign in Barangay Igmaya-an and other areas in Don Salvador Benedicto and Murcia. A few days before the killing, a certain Jigger Costan, close-in security of ex-Mayor dela Cruz, was seen loitering near the NFSW office in Bacolod City, where a meeting of council members was then taking place.

There are also reports that local leaders of the NFSW, KMP and BAYAN in Negros have also been receiving threats and harassment from Costan and suspected state elements following Ceballos's killing.

"The spate of peasant killings will not stop until the country's fundamental land problem is addressed. Negros Island remains to be a bastion of feudal oppression and the centuries-old hacienda system. Farmers continue to fight for genuine land reform," said Ramos. ■

## CWS marks its 5th year anniversary

CWS marks its 5th anniversary, looks at stronger presence in various parts of the country in next three –five years.

Since its launch in Cebu City five years ago, the Church People - Workers Solidarity (CWS) celebrated its five fruitful years on November 23-24 in Quezon City. Most Rev. Gerardo Alminaza, DD, Bishop of San Carlos, Negros Occidental, himself, CWS co-chairperson, in his keynote speech underscored the difficulties and problems besetting workers and how these problems present challenges and inspiration to church people to be in solidarity. 'CWS was established and

continue to exist in a condition where Filipino workers' rights and dignity are under attack from low wages, unsafe working conditions, lack or absence of security of tenure engendered by massive flexibilization, violence and repression of their right to organize unions. Workers are forced to migrate to other countries to support their families. They too face similar violations against their dignity and rights. We see this situation will continue as neoliberal policies and programs inflict harms on the lives of the workers and the poor. Thus, we need to strengthen our commitment to

uphold the workers' rights as we look forward to another five years or more.

CWS took note of its accomplishments over these past five years, some of which are: assisting various labor rights educations for workers, facilitation of church people exposure programs on workers' life at work and in communities. It recognized too as one of its accomplishments, the completion of the Catechism on Labor, as a basic reference in reminding the Church commitment on workers as emphasized in its various social doctrines. The booklet now has reached hundreds of

workers and church people, and had gone several printing but as delegates noted, it is not enough yet. Translating and printing in Filipino and Hiligaynon are underway.

In the next three years, the assembly of about 100 representatives from different churches and workers organizations as well as trade unions from Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao, vowed to establish CWS regional chapters in Visayas, Mindanao and other parts of Luzon where it is not yet existent. CWS chapters exist in Central Luzon, National Capital Region and Northern Mindanao. Delegates committed to focus on priority sectors and areas where workers are concentrated and have reported to be in more difficult situation such as the Special Economic Zones or Export Processing Zones, agribusiness plantations and mining.

The gathering also agreed to work on the following:

- Increase the effort in conducting human rights education and skills training for both workers and church people.
- Conducting a massive campaign on the issues of workers' wages, employment

and labor rights and work for the holding of National Summit of the church people and workers on contractualization.

- Encouraging and facilitating immersion programs for church people and look at different possibilities for integrating them in workers' factories and communities
- Work in parishes and dioceses towards establishing labor desks or ministry to assist the needs of the workers.

In addition, representatives were also urged to monitor and support the peace negotiation between the government and the National Democratic Front as they tackled socio-economic reforms that are essential in addressing the multifaceted problems besetting the workers.

As the two-day gathering ended, everyone was reminded of Bp Alminaza's call to face the future with hope and dignity and cited that "at the heart of this world, the Lord of life, who loves us so much, is always present. He does not abandon us... He has united himself definitively to our earth, and his love constantly impels us to find new ways forward" (Laudato Si, # 245). ■



**“At the heart of this world, the Lord of life, who loves us so much, is always present. He does not abandon us... He has united himself definitively to our earth, and his love constantly impels us to find new ways forward.”**

## Church Teachings on Agriculture and Farm Workers

Jerry D. Imbong

**M**ario Bagnaran, a contractual worker at a large agri-company in Bukidnon left for Hacienda Luisita in November last year with the hope of getting higher wages and better working conditions. Mario, together with more than 200 sakadas or seasonal agricultural workers left their families in Bukidnon, Cotabato, Davao

provinces, Misamis Oriental, and Lanao del Norte. They were promised a package consisting of a daily wage of P450 plus benefits, meals, including provision for board and lodging, water and electricity. Their contracts promised health and accident insurance, Social Security, Philhealth and Pag-Ibig, plus and travel

to and from Luisita. They were promised P7,000 cash advance in three tranches. Their contracts also indicated that they would be given free food, rice, medicines, and housing. Not one of these promises was fulfilled.

The sakadas worked for more than thirteen hours a day, from 4 a.m. until 5 p.m. for a salary way below the minimum wage of P334 per day in Tarlac. They were housed in cramped, poorly ventilated bunkhouses in barangay Mapalacsiao near the Central

Azucarera de Tarlac in Hacienda Luisita, a sugarcane plantation owned by the Conjuanco-Aquino clan. Based on weekly payrolls obtained by Unyon ng Manggagawa sa Agrikultura (UMA), the sakadas got P9 to P128 per day due to numerous deductions for food and other provisions, including plates, rice cooker, and even the bolo they used to cut sugar cane.

No free meals were given. Instead, as Rosalito Bravo narrated, there were weeks when they were not given anything to eat but were still required to work for 12-14 hours a day. Danilo Ramos, UMA secretary general describes the farm-workers' conditions as "modern-day slavery."

Just recently, some 112 sugarcane workers were rescued from Isabela Ecofuel sugarcane plantation in Barangay Alicaocao, a bioethanol plantation. The workers complained of inhumane conditions and unpaid salaries which were allegedly below the minimum wage. Most of them came from the provinces of Sarangani, Bicol, Negros Oriental and General Santos City. Three of the workers were minors.

Such is the despicable conditions of thousands of farmers and indigenous peoples who are displaced from their lands brought about by massive land-grabbing by big agro-corporations. In November last year, President Duterte pushed for the development of around 80,000 hectares in the country for oil palm plantation with Malaysia as the target market. The government also plans to expand the investment to 300,000 hectares of oil palm plantation throughout the country. Extensive land conversion has forced small farmers to be uprooted from their lands. According to the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), between 1988 and 2016, a total of 97, 592.50 hectares of agricultural land

were approved for conversion to non-agricultural purposes.

The Church views farm work as a "vocation". In a document published by the International Catholic Rural Association (ICRA) and the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, the Church views agriculture as "a human enterprise that employs more men and women than any other economic area and provides the basics of life." It added that questions of human dignity and the common good—the guiding principles of Catholic social teaching—are certainly "ever present in the contemporary farming and food system." Hence, the church called on all who work in agricultural production to "carry out their work with the larger questions of human dignity and the common good."

In his speech at the World Meeting of Popular Movements in Sta. Cruz, Bolivia last February 2015, Pope Francis commented on the experiences of farmers and indigenous peoples worldwide. He said something is wrong in a world "where there are so many farm-workers without land, so many families without a home, so many laborers without rights, so many persons whose dignity is not respected." The Pope pointed out that land grabbing, deforestation, expropriation of water and inappropriate use of pesticides are just "some of the evils which uproot people from their native land." Speaking in front of representatives from United Nations Food and Agriculture Organizations (FAO), the Pope pointed out the catastrophic effects of land grabbing on the lives of the poor: "The hoarding of arable land by transnational firms and States is increasingly worrisome, since it not only deprives farmers of essential asset, but also directly affects the sovereignty of nations." He added that most developing countries in the world produce food that "goes to foreign countries, and the local

population is doubly impoverished because they have neither food nor land." In the Philippines, for example, widespread agricultural plantations for export are prevalent. Sugarcane, coconut, tobacco, abaca, rubber, oil palm, mango, banana, pineapple and other fruits are exported to countries like the United States, Canada and Japan. Big multinational corporations like Dole Corporation, Del Monte Philippine Packing Corporation, Tagum Development Corporation, United Brands, at Sumitomo Fruits control hundreds and thousands of hectares of land in Mindanao through Agribusiness Venture Agreements (AVA). In his recent encyclical *Laudato Si*, the Pope denounced a "dominant economic system" that "excludes many from their just fruition." The Pope lamented how "economies of scale, especially in the agriculture sector, end up forcing smallholders to sell their lands or abandon their traditional crops." (LS, #129)

In a period of neoliberal globalization, where workers are treated as disposable commodities, the Pope reminds us to uphold the dignity and defend the rights of farm workers. The Church highlighted the "unique role" of farm workers in the "fulfillment of God's plan." Through their determined labor, those who work the agricultural sector "cooperate with divine providence and make God's care for each one of his children." (ICRA, 2016) The church challenges us to promote a culture of agricultural work that has its foundations as well as its goals in the centrality of the human person, in openness to others and in gratuitousness. As the Pope pointed out, "it is possible to combine being Christians with acting as Christians in the concrete circumstances of agricultural life." ■



## CHRIST AND THE AGRICULTURAL WORKERS

Bishop Gerardo A. Alminaza, D.D.

*"Give them food yourselves!" - (Mark 6:37)*

Isn't it ironic that the very sector that makes it possible for us to have food on our table are among the poorest? Why are they often the ones who go hungry and their children are mostly malnourished, unable to go to school? How can we remain undisturbed when a greater number of our sisters and brothers are excluded from opportunities to live with dignity, enjoying their God-given rights?

Agricultural workers are one of the sectors whose rights are being violated. Most of them are landless peasants working in slave-like conditions. Some are either killed or threatened because of land disputes. In January, there were four peasants killed across the country - two were Lumad leaders from Mindanao, others were peasant leaders from Negros. The Union ng Manggawa sa Agrukultura (UMA)

condemns the killing of peasant leaders. In addition to the plight of agricultural workers is the fight to stop the trafficking of sacadas from Mindanao to Luzon. Recently UMA were busy rescuing and helping quite a number of sacadas or what they called "migratory sugar workers" who fled from a slave-like condition in Hacienda Luisita, Tarlac. According to UMA and Kilusan ng Mangagawa sa Pilipinas (KMP), the farmers from Mindanao were trafficked and exploited in Hacienda Luisita. The farmers (sacadas) from Mindanao were brought to Luzon last November 16, 2016. They were forced to work from 4am to 5pm and were given below minimum wages. The sacadas were landless and desperate for a good paying job. According to the sacadas, Baitus the recruiter promised them "that they would get a 'Tarlac package' consisting of a daily wage of P450 plus benefits and insurance, free meals and provisions, board and lodging, and travel to

and from Hacienda Luisita. They said that they will be housed in a hotel very near a hospital so that medical needs and work-related accidents would be immediately attended to. The sacadas were also promised a P7,000 cash advance in three tranches". However all the promises were unfulfilled. Instead, they were treated like slaves. The rescued sacadas elevated their complaints against the Cojuangco's and Lorenzo's of Hacienda Luisita to National Labor and Relations Commission (NLRC)

In Scriptures we all know that when the Israelites groaned, God heard their groaning. God sent Moses to liberate them from oppression and slavery. The Exodus is the narrative account of Israel's historical faith in a liberating God who was and is sensitive to their pain and groaning and who "came down" to liberate them from oppression. Although the story of Exodus is not what people would deem to be an historical account based on modern definition of history, it does deal very directly with the crucial question of God's action in the historical and socio-political spheres. God does indeed see the affliction of those who are oppressed, God hears their cries and God desires to deliver them from the bondage of slavery. The commissioning of Moses reveals that our religious experiences have socio-political implications. The burning bush experience of Moses called him to choose public responsibility and commitment to the plight of the Israelites over his personal future. The God of his forefathers entrusted him with the divine task of liberating the Israelites from oppression and slavery.

Today we are in need of a new Moses who will stand with agricultural workers in denouncing injustices and commit to their struggles for justice and libera-



tion. The challenge of Moses today demands Mosaic prophetism. Prophetism is a complete denunciation of all the injustices in the world accompanied with readiness to suffer the consequences of radical giving of oneself for justice and peace. Just like Moses who was asked to take off his shoes, we are also challenged to remove our sandals in order to denounce unjust structures that exploit our sisters and brothers. As Christians to be a prophet is a vocation received through baptism and it should be lived out in history both in words and actions involving our whole lives. Prophets are the ones who listen attentively to the word of God and speak on behalf of God condemning the injustices in society and challenging the people to social conversion. It is the duty of the prophets to challenge the powerful, the oppressor, the exploiter,

the alienated person, the workers, even the poor, the activists, the politicians, the religious sisters/priests/brothers, the missionaries and the hierarchical church. To be a prophet also means to listen compassionately to the outcry of the poor, the oppressed and the suffering of the people in their midst. Suffering and weeping with them in solidarity is a prophetic act in a world where people are pre-occupied with their personal concerns. The attitude of consoling the afflicted and challenging the unjust people as well as unjust structures is a prophetic call for all Christians. This is what it means to be a Christian today in a world where millions of people are suffering and exploited from modern forms of slavery. History tells us that the current world order based on neoliberal capitalism is extremely hostile to the prophets. This makes the

prophetic vocation terrifying but challenging today. Yet Pope Benedict XVI advises us, "It is not by sidestepping or fleeing from suffering that we are healed, but rather by our capacity for accepting it, maturing through it and finding meaning through union with Christ, who suffered with infinite love" (Spe Salvi, no. 37).

Together with Agricultural Workers suffering from slave-like condition and groaning for justice as well as for free land distribution, we from the Church People - Workers Solidarity (CWS) condemn the killing of peasant leaders! We reiterate our call to Stop Trafficking of Sacadas. ■

Stop Lumad Killings!  
Stop Peasant Killings!  
Stop Trafficking of Sacadas!  
Justice for Agricultural Workers!



## Panoorin ang “Kontrata” sa facebook page ng Mayday Multimedia!

Abangan ang lunsaran ng  
SINE OBRERO sa inyong  
mga lokal na yunit!

 [fb.com/maydayPH/](https://www.facebook.com/maydayPH/)

**mayday**  
MULTIMEDIA



## CWS ACTIVITIES JULY – DEC 2016



Last July 2, 2016 the CWS held a Pre- Summit on Contractulization. It was held at Fr. Conrado De la Cruz Mission Hall, 14th Street, New Manila, Quezon City. The Pre-Summit was well attended by workers from different institutions. Labor Under Secretary Joel Maglunsod was the speaker on this pre- summit.

The CWS and the United Methodist Church had an Exposure last July 11, 2016 at Golden Fortune Picket line, Binondo Manila. The construction workers were removed from their work. They did not receive a just wage. Golden Fortune is owned by a Chinese Capitalist. The construction workers shared that Golden Fortune was not paying their SSS and not giving them any benefits.







In support of Peace Talks between GRP and NDFP, the CWS and CICM held a Peace Forum on Developments, Status and Prospects of Peace talks last July 22, 2016 at 1st Floor, Mary Hill School of Theology, Gilmore St. cor. 14th Street, New Manila, Quezon City. After the forum the participants went out to the street holding a symbol for peace. Others had it written on placards to let the public know that the Church People are advocating Peace Talks.



The CWS in partnership with Union ng Manggagawa sa Agrikultura (UMA) held a Forum on Agricultural Workers Situation and Protest Action In Support on Peace Talks last August 5, 2016 at Fr. Conrado De la Cruz Mission Hall, 14th Street, New Manila, Quezon City





The CWS in partnership with CICM held a Collective Bargaining Agreement Training last August 13, 2016 at Fr. Conrado De la Cruz Mission Hall, 14th Street, New Manila, Quezon City.



## CWS Regional News Bits

October 12, 2016

### CWS-NMR Launching

Forum-Launching of Church People-Workers Solidarity in Northern Mindanao held at Iglesia Filipina Independiente, Diocesan Christian Education & Nurture Training Center (DCENT Center, Bulua, Cagayan de Oro City).

Theme: " Taong-Simbahan makighiusa sa pakigbisog sa mamumuno alang sa trabaho,suhulan, katungod ug malungtarong kalinaw."

It was attended by 70 church people from Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI);United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) and `United Methodist Church (UMC). It was also attended of 30 workers from the different unions & organizations such as Workers Union of Bagong Buhay Arrastre Incorporated (WUBBASI), CEPALCO Labor Union (CELU); Mindanao Container Corporation Employee Labor Union (MCCELU-NAFLU-KMU); Tianli, Import and Export Inc.; Agrotec Workers Association, Port Steel Cargo, Lugait; Boreto-Holcim; Asiapro Cooperative; Apson Farm Company; at T'nalak (Dole Stanfilco)

August 9, 2016  
**CWS-SWN Activity**  
**Central Luzon**

**CBA Tactics Seminar**  
 Sto. Cristo Quasi-Parish,  
 Pulilan, Bulacan: Again, in  
 cooperation with Bulacan  
 Workers Alliance, a  
 Seminar regarding tactics  
 on Collective Bargaining  
 Agreement was held.



**Peace based on Social Justice Forum**

Guiguinto United Methodist Church: As support to the ongoing peace talks between the government and the NDFP, a peace forum was held.



September 2016

**Ecumenical Gathering** for the 9th Day of the Victims of the Hanjin Tragedy in Municipal Covered Court, Castillejos, Zambales and it was attended by the Victims with their Relatives and the laity



### CWS National Capital Region

Last July 12, 2016, the CWS-NCR had a workers' Dialogue at DOLE in Intramuros, Manila with Usec. Joel Maglunsod together with Fr. Rudy Abao and Fr. Jesus Dumauual of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (MSC) and Fr. Efren de Guzman of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD).

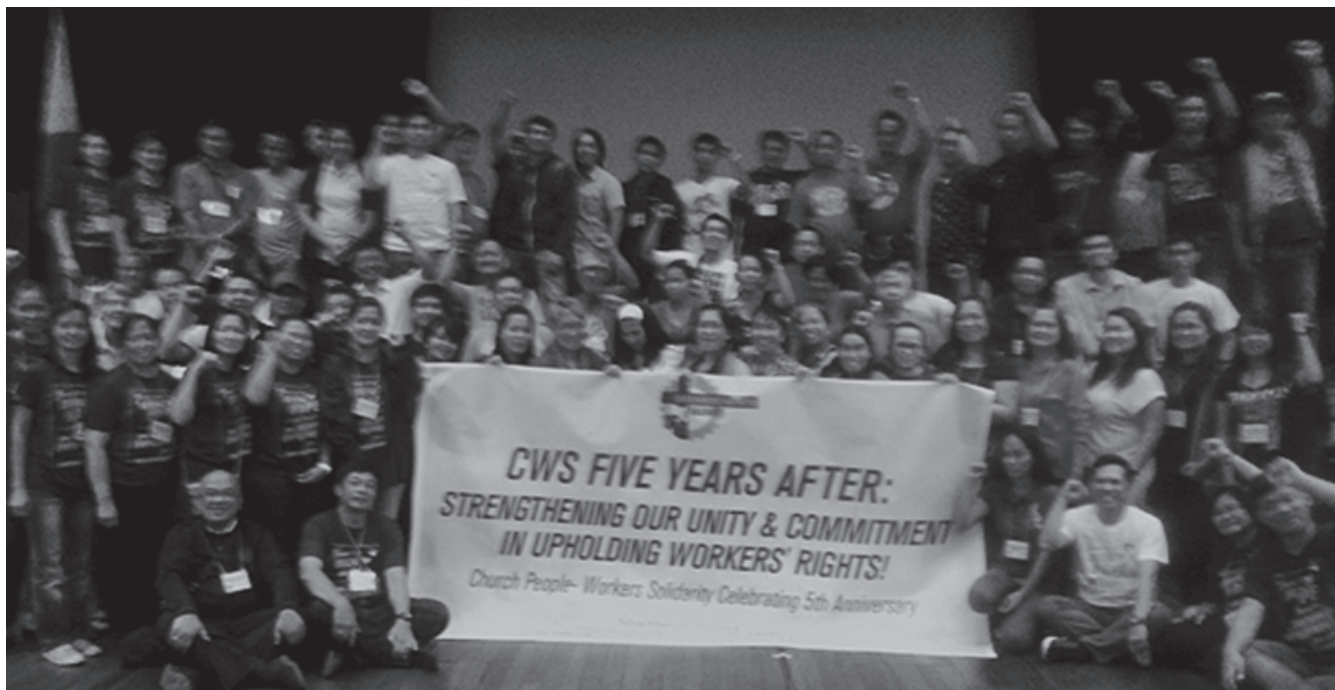


September 27, 2016

### Launching of ALMA-KONTRAKTUAL - Metro Manila Alyansang mga Manggagawa Laban sa Kontraktwalisasyon

It was attended by 360 plus workers from different workers organizations / unions in Metro Manila, it was in Occupational Safety and Health Center in Quezon City.





## CHURCH PEOPLE – WORKERS SOLIDARITY (CWS) 5TH ANNIVERSARY

Sr. Arlyne Casas, NDS

This year CWS celebrated 5 years of solidarity in upholding workers' rights. The two days gathering was held in Quezon City. The 1st day was filled with inputs on labor situations, peace talks, the challenges that the Church people are facing in responding to the workers' plights, reports from different regions in the Philippines and insights from open forums. The second day was allotted to planning for three years: strengthening our unity and commitment in upholding workers' rights. I was happy listening to their hopes, dreams and desire to have a strong unity and solidarity of Church People – Workers as they continue to explore the four priority concerns of Filipino workers which are: contractualization, unjust wages, the violation of the workers' right to organize, and the forced migration of Filipino workers. The massive exploitation of labor is a

big problem that needs solutions. These four priority concerns are only a manifestation of neoliberal policies. Workers are getting poorer and have limited work opportunities. In Caritas in Veritate, no. 63 it says that "in many cases, poverty results from a violation of the dignity of human work, either because work opportunities are limited (through unemployment or underemployment), or because a low value is put on work and the rights that flow from it, especially the right to a just wage and to the personal security of the workers and his or her family". Exploitation and commodification of labor is rooted in the alienation of the workers from the product of their labor. This kind of working system continues until today, but in an unprecedented and massive scale which is steadily coordinated across the globe. It is for this reason that labor becomes a commodity to be freely bought

and sold at any time (Centisimus Annus, 4). Accumulation of capital, according to Marx increases the division of labor while the workers are restricted to a particular branch of labor or worse to submit to the demands of their employers (Marx, Capital : Critique of Political Economy, pp. 1-13). According to Marx, division of labor enables the capitalists to channel their capital in various places which results in an increase in profits (p. 4). The increase in production gives human labor the capacity to produce larger volumes of products more than what is needed for its sustenance (see McLellan, 1971, p. 111). For Marx the condition of the workers in the capitalist world has made them alienated individuals (Mandel, 1970; Novack, 1970). Alienation is the absolute separation and divorce of ownership of the material conditions of labor from living labor power (Marx,



1974, pp. 128-129). In order to have surplus of labor the capitalist extend the working hours as well as the working days of the workers. Marx in his early writings gave an example of how the workers were exploited and treated as slaves by the capitalist hunger for surplus of labor (Marx, 1974, p. 164).

As Church People – Workers Solidarity it is imperative for us to go back to the wellsprings of our faith in order to reflect and respond to the massive exploitation of labour. In Scriptures, we can read the importance of labour

over capital, for example in Psalm 128:2 “You shall eat the fruit of the labour of your hands; you shall be happy and it shall go well with you.” Our Church’s doctrine also stresses the importance of labor over capital, “labour is always a primary efficient cause, while capital, the whole collection of means of production, remains a mere instrument or instrumental cause” (LE, 12). The Church doctrines and the Word of God are reminding us to make concrete actions in upholding workers’ right as Church People, “Love for oth-

ers, and especially for the poor, is made concrete by promoting justice” (CA, 58).

The two days gathering was indeed a moment to look back on the past five years and look forward with hope despite of the fact that workers economic and living condition have worsened because of neoliberal policy. Listening to the different reports coming from the Regions encourages us to continue and at the same time challenges us to work together so that justice will be served.

### **The Challenge: GLOBAL SOLIDARITY TO STRENGTHEN OUR UNITY AND COMMITMENT IN UPHOLDING WORKERS’ RIGHTS!**

The continuing demand of workers to a dignified employment is a big challenge especially to the present administration as well as to the Christian Churches. President Duterte promised to end contractualization. The Christian Churches have a call to live out the social doctrines especially on labor issues. Pope Francis in his solidarity message to the workers in Italy emphasized that “there is no social hope without dignified employment”. It is imperative for the Church People to understand the plight

of the workers and help them in achieving dignified employment. Another challenge that came out in strengthening Church People –Workers Solidarity in upholding workers’ rights is organizing and mobilizing clergy, religious, contractual workers and parish priests. Finally it is a commitment to work together as sisters and brothers, “the commitment to justice and solidarity, to the building up of a social, economic and political life that corresponds to God’s plan” (CSDC, 40). ■

## ONE VOICE

ONE VOICE is 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

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

churchfortheworkers@gmail.com

churchworkersolidarity.wordpress.com