

## A Study of Child Labor in the Philippines

A Study of Child Labor in the Philippines THESIS STATEMENT: Exploitation of child workers continues in the Philippines due to the inefficiency of the policies promulgated by the government to eradicate child labor. For all children who are deprived of their rights. “But even we have a responsibility too. Because while nobody is angered by their conditions or realizes the waste of a future that is being slowly squandered, they will remain in this world and they will cease to be children...” I. INTRODUCTION: All people were born with rights. Children are people too; so, children also have rights. These rights are violated through child labor. Child labor is defined as, “the employment of a child in a business or industry especially in violation of state or federal statutes prohibiting the employment of children under a specified age.”<sup>1</sup> Obviously, it has become a rigid social problem the world over, specifically in third world countries such as the Philippines where child labor is widespread. The authors of this paper will tackle the cases of child laborers, specifically in the city and in provinces of the Philippines. And as for it being one of the social problems existing in the country, does the Philippine government look for ways to manage or better yet, eradicate child labor? The paper focuses on this. It is a known fact that the disadvantages outnumber the advantages of child labor. The researchers present three points, so the reader could better view the advantages and the disadvantages of the said problem. The historical background could help the reader to understand more of child labor. The purpose of this study is to present the rapid growth or increase of child laborers in the Philippines. Another would be to discuss the effects of child labor to the family, economy, and to the self. Lastly, to cite ways on how to stop child labor.

<sup>1</sup> “Child labor,” Webster’s Third New International Dictionary. 1 II. Analysis: A. Historical Background Industrial child labor first appeared with the development of the domestic system. In this type of production an entrepreneur bought raw materials to be “put out” to the homes of workmen to be spun, woven, sewn, or handled in some other manner. This permitted a division of labor and a degree of specialization among various families. Pay was by piece, and children were extensively used at whatever task they could perform. This system was important in England and in North America from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century and it lingers up to the present in some industries and, in some countries including the Philippines. B. Child labor in the Philippines The kid who is coerced to beg on streets and helps make money for professional beggars. The child prostitute who helps buoy the tourist trade. The emancipated body digging out soil in mines and quarries. The girl working as indentured servant in a private home. The child scavenging in dumpsites. The runner helping distribute illegal drugs. The nubile girl working as a dancer in a night spot, and the teenage starlet exposing mere skin than necessary on the theater screen. Truly, child labor has many faces. It is a work performed by children either endangers their health or safety, interferes with or prevents their education, or <sup>3</sup> keeps them away from play and other activities important to their development.

<sup>2</sup> Children have rights. Government bureaucrats and the do-gooders tell us that. But we look around and we see a widespread denial of those rights. We can’t deny the fact that every year, the number of child laborers increases. International Labor Organization estimates that the government place the number of child laborers in the country at eight hundred thousand (800,000), but actual figures may be as high as five million (5,000,000).

<sup>3</sup> “ No. of child laborers Region 1.....	56,000 Region
2.....	56,000 Region 3.....
4.....	104,000 Region 5.....
6.....	96,000 Region 7.....
8.....	48,000 Region 9.....
10.....	48,000 Region 11.....
12.....	40,000 NCR.....
CAR.....	24,000 TOTAL.....

4 The tally above by the International Labor Organization, simply shows that there is a proliferation of the problem on child labor in the Philippines. \_\_\_\_\_ 2”Child labor,” New Illustrated Webster’s Dictionary. 3Emerson G. Cuyo, “Children Labor in the Philippines,” Philippine Daily Inquirer, 20 June 1997, p. 16. 4ibid, p16 4 1.City The number of children working in the cities are more than seventy thousand (70,000).

5 These children really struggle to survive in the city. Majority of them cannot be seen during the day since they are working in large factories and in houses if not they’ll be working as prostitutes at night. The Philippine garment industry commonly uses child labor in manufacture of products exported to the United States.

6 Children workers are also found in food processing; the manufactures of wood and rattan furniture, fire works or pyrotechnics, plastic bags, and foot wear. In Metro Manila alone, between forty-five to fifty thousand (45,000-50,000) are child laborers.

7 One of the reasons of the rapid growth of child labor in the city is because they are recruited from the provinces and were promised to have a good life here. Another is that they were forced to work due to poverty. Since children are more industrious compared to other people who are in the right age to work, employers usually get them. According to the Department of Social Welfare and Development, majority of the child laborers that they have handled usually goes home to their families after their work is done.

8 It is also observed that they seldom”Child Labor drive Pushed,” Manila Bulletin, 19 January 1998, p. 1. 6Natasha Viscara, “Government Blamed for Rise in Child Labor Abuses,” hilippine work alone, they are in groups with their friends or guided by their “managers” usually pimps or policemen. “DSWD also noted that children who don not have families to go home to; they often live in pushcarts, streets, drainpipe, cemented pavements, or even on stagnant water.”

9 Some of the children that have stayed with them tried to escape because they prefer in streets, working and earning money even though they are paid in small amounts and very hazardous. “This like the case of Arnulfo Berano who finished who finished only third grade and is now working at a rice store and gets one hundred pesos(P100.00) a month for carrying sacks of rice. He said it is better be on that store rather than being like a prisoner with the DSWD.”

10 “Eddie Malasi, fifteen years old said, he dropped out of school and left home because there was not a day that his father forced him to work or else he was beaten.”

11 There is also this so called “legal” child labor in the city. It is the girls who are involved in the entertainment industry. They deny their real age and pretend to be eighteen years old. 1. Province “Based on the statistics there are six hundred to seven hundred thousand(600,000-700,000) child laborers in the provinces and is larger than that of the city’s.”

12 It is because children there help their parents in earning a living and sometimes they are forced to stop schooling. Some of them work as a farmer, fisherman, takes care of their siblings, or serve as a housemaid of their rich neighbors and what is worse is that they work as a payment for their families’ debt. “Take the case of Abrelia Pablo, thirteen years old. For six hundred pesos (P600.00) a month, with free meals and housing, Abrelia lived with her employer at the Midsayap Golden Miki factory in Cotabato where she works from 6:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Monday to Saturday as a packer. When she was new at work, the tips of her fingers were cut by machines in the factory that has no machine guards.”

13 “Then there are Ronald and Felix, both thirteen years old, who carry cement bags by the hundreds each night at the Pulauan Port in Dipolog, and Joel, fourteen , who survived several cave-ins on Mt. Diwalwal on Mindanao.”

14 Another is the case of the children in the documentary *Minsan Lang Sila Bata (Only Once They Are Children)*. “ Their stories show millions of Filipino children at this moment backbreaking, dangerous and filthy work for pitiful wages and enjoying a small portion of the rewards of their work.”

15 “Tikboy, for instance, works from 10 p.m. to 3a.m., at the Cebu slaughterhouse, charged with shaving off the remaining hair on pig carcasses. For five hours’ labor spent amid the stench and noise of dying animals, slipping on blood and guts, and dodging sharp knives and chains. Tikboy’s earnings is a small plastic bag of pork fat, gristle and sometimes a little meat, which he will sell in the market for money to give to his mother. But he is even luckier than Delena, her brothers and other children working as hornals in Ormoc. Tikboy at least has the momentary pleasure of holding cash in his hands. Delena’s labors are chalked up to pay off her family’s debts to the haciendero, incurred during the fallow season when, with no work and no income, her family must borrow against future wages for their subsistence. It’s difficult work, especially in the heat of the day, and also dangerous work , wielding sharp bolos to whack at weeds, then gathering them to be burnt.”

16 “Bobbi, who counts as his real family a gang of teenage boys working as cargo handlers at the pier, wants to be a lawyer when he grows up. He has stopped going to school and with his work: hauling cement bags on his head from the cargo hold to the boat deck, inhaling cement dust that stings his nostrils and lungs.”

17 There seems no end to the range of jobs that these children do, either by force or by choice. Still poverty is the reason why these children in the provinces work. Obviously the governments efforts’ in protecting them and lessening this child laborers are not enough. A. Disadvantages of Child labor  
1. Family “A study of Department of Labor and Employment showed that here in the Philippines seventy percent (70%) of these working children return home every evening.”

18 They in short are not burdens to their families. On the contrary, they contribute to the family’s income. They are often recruited by people who exploit child labor and in the process they are being totally deprived of school education and the opportunity to experience the wonder years of their lives which is their childhood. “They deprived of their rights to a well rounded development of their personality, rights to balance diet, clothing, shelter and healthy life. Most of all the right to education.”

19 Some of these children are forced to work at a very young age about three to five years old by their parents. Often these parents become too dependent on their children up to the extent that they just stay home and let their children work and simply waits for the wages. But in some cases, parents do not really want their children stop going to school and work. They try their best to earn in order to sustain the needs of the family but due to circumstances they have no choice but to let their children help them to earn a living . Because of child labor they don’t have a deep relationship with each other. “The family is, in fact, the communities first socializing agency and the source of its strength and stability.”

20 It is here that the child learns obedience, cooperation, respect for the rights of others. It is here also that the parents have constant occasions to rise above selfishness in responding to the needs of their children but still there are children engaged in child labor. “All the children say they bear no grudge to their parents for letting them work, because they say, if they don’t all them will go hungry.”

21 If letting these children work is an answer to family's poverty then this work which keeps them away from school will also perpetuate their poverty. Without an education these children and their families are doomed to stay on this generation cycle forever.

- 1) Every child is endowed with the dignity and worth of a human being from the moment of his conception, as generally accepted in medical parlance, and has, therefore, the right to be born well.
- 2) Every child has the right to a wholesome family life that will provide him with love, care and understanding, guidance counseling, moral, and material security. The dependent or abandoned child shall be provided with the nearest substitute for a home.
- 3) Every child has the right to a well-rounded development of his personality to the end that he may become happy, useful and active member of the society. The gifted child shall be given the opportunity and encouragement to develop his special talent. The emotionally disturbed or socially maladjusted shall be treated, with sympathy and understanding, and shall be entitled to treatment and competent care.
- 4) Every child has the right to a balanced diet, adequate clothing, sufficient shelter, and proper requirement of a healthy vigorous life.
- 5) Every child has the right to be brought up in an atmosphere of morality and rectitude for the enrichment and strengthening of his character.
- 6) Every child has the right to an education commensurate with his abilities and the development of his skills for the improvement of his capacity in service for himself and for his fellowmen.
- 7) Every child has the right to a full opportunity and wholesome recreation and activities, individual as well as social, for the wholesome use of his leisure hours.
- 8) Every child has the right to protection against exploitation, improper influence, hazards, and other conditions or circumstances prejudicial and other moral development.
- 9) Every child has the right to live in a community and a society that can offer him an environment free from pernicious influences and conducive to the promotion of his health and the cultivation of his desirable traits and attributes.
- 10) Every child has the right to the care, assistance, and protection of the state particularly when his parents and or guardians fail or unable to provide him with his fundamental needs for growth, development, and improvement.
- 11) Every child has the right to an efficient and an honest government that will deepen his faith in democracy and inspire him with the morality of the constituted authorities both in their public and private life.
- 12) Every child has the right to grow up as a free individual, in an atmosphere of peace, understanding, tolerance, and universal brotherhood, and with the determination to contribute his share in the building of a better world.

22 It was said that children have rights, but then again, due to child labor, these so called rights are violated and somehow taken away from them. The children are fully aware of their situations, the fact is that child laborers are the most prone to abuse and hazardous working conditions, since they are more docile for they will do any difficult work. "According to the International Labor Organization, about 2.2 million children were exposed to hazardous environment; 1.8 million reported hazardous physical environment. In 1995, some thirty-five thousand (35,000) Filipino children aged five to seventeen (5-17) reported they have suffered from work-related injuries or illnesses."

23 "Another survey resulted that in every one hundred (100) injured or sick children, approximately three(3) had to stop working permanently because of the illness or injury suffered."

24 This only shows that the health of these individuals are at stake. Since they are still young, their resistance is not strong also they are really prone to sickness and this may lead to their death. The dangers to their lives are obvious and extreme: long term psychosocial damage, corruption of moral and spiritual values, the risks of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, including the threat of physical violence and abuse. Children in immediate danger are those suffering from physical, mental and emotional harm. Being forced to work also deprives them of education. The most brutalized are the child prostitutes, many of whom recover from physical and emotional trauma. Proper care is the best investment that the elders could give to the young in building up a better world in one's country who gives priority to its children is indeed blessed and its future as sure. It must be realized that in the cycle of life, the children are next in line. D. Government on Child Labor From the time of the late Ferdinand Marcos up to now, many laws were approved to fight child labor. But as we can observe, there are still costs of working children. Filipinos can only dream of the day when no child is deprived of education and normal childhood. The government has tried to curb child labor, pushing for the enforcement of age limits in the work place, providing protection for young workers. The efforts have largely failed because of the lack of muscles to back up these laws. 1) Efforts "Every children has given a right to live a normal life, the rights of a children began with the League of Nations, adoption of the general declaration of the rights of a child in 1924"

25. In 1948, the United Nations General Assembly approved a universal declaration of human rights within which the rights of children were implicitly included. "The United Nations declaration of the rights of the child was added by 1959."

26 Children has been enshrined in our country and in our constitution. "Meaningful steps are now being taken for promulgation of a consolidated children's chapter that will ensure the adoption of policies and practices in child care in keeping with the spirit of the law."

27 The aspirations, the people, the culture of the country and reflect the ideas adumbrated in the universal declaration of the rights of a child. It is an offense to abandon or expose a child under the age of two years whereby the life of such child is permanently injured. "In the Philippine Constitution it was stated that the state shall strengthen the family as a basic social institution. The natural right and duty of parents in rearing of the youth for civic efficiency and development of moral character shall receive the aid and support of the government. It was also said that the government equally share in the inherent right and duty of parents in training of their children to be good useful, and worthy citizens."

28 After the People Power Revolution, "President Corazon Aquino signed the International Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Participation of Children in the 1989 World Summit and the Philippines, early on, ratified the Convention of the Rights of the Child. Their department has a special program called "Sagip Batang Manggagawa" literally meaning "Save the Child Laborer."

29 This particularly refers to children in bonded or force environment and to those difficult and hazardous circumstances. They pursue to rescue victims and prosecute erring recruiters and employers. "Last November 9, 1993, President Ramos signed a law prohibiting the employment of children below 15 years old. However, it allows employment of children of the said age if they work directly under the management and the responsibility of parents."

30 The House of Representatives has approved two child friendly bills. "One slaps a maximum penalty of 12 years in prison and a fine of P500,000 against the parents or legal guardians and employers of persons eighteen years old and below who are forced to do hazardous jobs. The bill also qualifies as hazardous jobs to those related to farming, hunting, logging, mining, quarrying, transport and navigation, construction and craftsmanship, and production processing occupations that call for the handling of heavy equipment like cables and semi-conductors. The bill makes no mention of child actors and commercial models who might also be subjected to long hours of work."

31 In 1995, our senate ratified International Labor Organization Convention Number 138 on the minimum age for the administration for employment. “President Fidel V. Ramos signed a new law creating a Family and Children’s Court.”

32 In hope to effectively implement this new pillar of justice on behalf of children, including victims of child abuse and intolerable child labor cases. Globalization is upon us with the benefits and perils of liberalized trade. As demonstrated by the foreign currency speculators’ attack on the Philippine Peso and other Asian currencies, the gains of a decade could be wiped out in a matter of days. We have lost money and precious resources for workers, for businesses, for schools, and even for public services. It is obvious that children’s welfare have been jeopardized as well. Even as we faced the old evils of child labor, we see new ones emerging from the global market place. Global march against child labor launched – “A historic event unfolds in Manila last January 17,1998, with a launching of a “Global March Against Child Labor” , an international campaign to champion the cause of some 250 million children worldwide who are forced to work for survival.”

33 Unprecedented in Philippine history, incumbent President Ramos and former President Aquino are taking the lead of the campaign launching. These are just a few of the efforts and laws promulgated by the government but are these policies really implemented? 2. Inefficiency Obviously, the government has so many laws and bills approved but just the same, exploitation of child labor in the Philippines continue inspite of adequate laws enacted in the past fifty years to put a stop tot the practice. According to one survey only a few of these are really implemented or bear little result and another reason for its continued existence is because of the low par enforcement of laws providing protection to the minor workers. It is also pointed that the government has the means to drastically reverse the situation- the revised labor code, violations of those provisions are now treated as criminal offenses. It was stated in the Philippine Constitution, Article II section 4 that the government equally share in the responsibility of the parents in supporting the children but the fact is the government don’t share even just a little bit. What really is disturbing is that President Aquino during her time signed a law which allowed children below 15 years of age work. It was only in 1993, the time of Ramos that he removed and changed this law. “According to the ILO their true mission is to bring the attention of the government officials to end the different forms of child labor. They also result and another reason for its continued existence is because of the low par enforcement of laws providing protection to the minor workers. It is also pointed that the government has the means to drastically reverse the situation- the revised labor code, violations of those provisions are now treated as criminal offenses.”

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35 It was noted that most of the politicians seeking public office are campaigning on the issues of law and order, economic reform and morality and honesty in the government. No one speaks of children-why it is important to educate, feed and house every Filipino child. It has not occurred to them that the stability is not possible in a world where children are deprived of human rights. A sytem that tolerates the enslavement of children in work places and the exploitation of young spawns conditions of violence, crime and disease.

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