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WORKING CHILDREN IN OUR MIDST

(First of a Three-Part Series)

A **child** is an individual below 18 years of age. This definition is contained in the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999). It is also stated in the 1992 Republic Act 7610 (Special Protection of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act) that was amended in 2003 by R.A. 9231 (An Act Providing for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor and Affording Stronger Protection for the Working Child). On the other hand, the 1997 UNESCO International Standard Classification of Education states that the customary or legal age of entrance to primary schooling is not younger than five years. Taking into consideration these international perspectives and local laws, statistical inquiries on working children focus on those aged 5-17 years old.

There has been two nationwide surveys of children (1995 and 2001) conducted by the National Statistics Office (NSO). In both instances, these undertakings were provided assistance by the International Labour Organization-International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour. Starting with the October 2003 round of the Labor Force Survey (LFS), the NSO collected data on the economic characteristics of children 5 to 9 years old in addition to those 10 years old and over.

However, with the revisions in the LFS questionnaire beginning April 2005 survey round, only the inquiries on the industries and occupations of the working children 5-14 years old years were retained. (The country's labor force consists of persons at least 15 years old). However, a query on the schooling status of those 5-24 years old was added which was not asked in previous rounds of the LFS.

The data on working children are not part of the regular releases of the NSO and have to be sourced from the LFS public use files, the latest of which is for January 2005. These statistics are not comparable with those from the 1995 and 2001 Surveys of Children which used past 12 months as reference since the LFS uses a shorter reference period of past week.

There were 2.128 million working children in January 2005, accounting for 8.4 percent of the 25.308 million child population aged 5-17 years old.

Around one out of 12 children aged 5-17 years old were working

In January 2005, there were 25.308 million children 5-17 years old. Of this number, 8.4 percent or 2.128 million were working¹. Although there were as many males and females in the child population, about two-thirds (64.7%) of those working were males. Relative to their corresponding population, 10.7

percent of the male children were working and only 6.1 percent of the female population. (Table 1)

Close to six out of 10 of the working children belonged to age group 15-17 years old (58.7% or 1.248 million) while 6.2 percent (132,000) were in the

¹ Work is defined in terms of economic activity which encompasses paid and unpaid work of children including illegal work, whether in the formal or informal sectors. It is distinct from child labor which needs to be eliminated as it deters the child from natural development and exposes him/her to hazardous work. Presently, there is no data series on child labor.

5-9 age group. The oldest age group recorded the highest proportion of working children at 21.9 percent (15 years old is the minimum employable age) and

the youngest age group at 1.4 percent. Regardless of age group, the males had higher proportions of children at work than their female counterparts.

Northern Mindanao and Eastern Visayas accounted for one-fourth of the working children

Developed regions like CALABARZON, National Capital Region and Region III-Central Luzon had the most number of children 5-17 years old at 2.833 million, 2.794 million and 2.461 million, respectively. Nevertheless, these regions were observed to have the least proportions of working children: NCR - 2.1 percent, CALABARZON - 3.6 percent and Region III - 4.5 percent.

Eastern Visayas (221,000 or 15.6%) posted the most number of working children and highest proportions as well. Other regions with double-digit incidence of working children were Caraga (11.4%), MIMAROPA (11.2%), Region V-Bicol (11.0%), Region II-Cagayan Valley (10.7%) and Region IX-Zamboanga Peninsula (10.1%).

On the other hand, less developed regions like Region X-Northern Mindanao (324,000 or 25.5%) and Region VIII-

It was only in NCR where the proportion of working males to male child population was lower than that of the females.

Regions with high incidence of working children have high underemployment rates

Total underemployment rates² in the less developed regions mentioned earlier ranged from 16.2 percent (Region IX) to 32.7 percent (Region X). Underemployment rates of household heads were even higher at 18.1 percent to 38.2 percent, similarly observed in both regions. (Table 2)

These regions generally have lower unemployment rates than the more developed areas like NCR. These observations indicate a close relationship between underemployment rate and incidence of working children in less developed areas. Also, underemployment is the more serious concern in these regions.

Most of the working children are elementary undergraduates

The working children were mostly single (2.107 million). Some 20,000 were married and about 1,000 were widowed. (Table 3)

Most of the working children were elementary undergraduates (845,000 or 39.7%). More than one-fourth (568,000 or 26.7%) has reached high school and 18.8 percent (401,000) has completed primary education. Less than nine percent (185,000) has completed secondary education.

About 84 percent of the working children were sons (1.219 million) or daughters (565,000) of the household heads. Some 7,000 were heads of households or wives/spouses.

2 Underemployment rate is defined as the proportion of employed persons still wanting additional work to total employed.

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TABLE 1 - Household Population and Working Children 5-17 Years Old by Age Group and Region and by Sex, Philippines: January 2005
(in thousands except percent)

Age Group and Region	Household Population			Working Children			% Working Children		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Philippines	25,308	12,875	12,433	2,128	1,376	752	8.4	10.7	6.1
Age Group									
5-9	9,716	4,993	4,723	132	81	51	1.4	1.6	1.1
10-14	9,882	4,996	4,886	748	486	261	7.6	9.7	5.4
15-17	5,710	2,885	2,825	1,248	808	440	21.9	28.0	15.6
Region									
National Capital Region	2,794	1,401	1,393	59	26	33	2.1	1.9	2.3
Cordillera Administrative Region	482	248	234	43	30	13	8.9	11.9	5.6
Region I - Ilocos	1,270	645	626	69	50	19	5.5	7.7	3.1
Region II - Cagayan Valley	922	472	450	98	66	32	10.7	13.9	7.2
Region III - Central Luzon	2,461	1,264	1,197	111	71	40	4.5	5.6	3.3
Region IVA - CALABARZON	2,833	1,444	1,389	102	63	39	3.6	4.4	2.8
Region IVB - MIMAROPA	855	444	411	96	62	34	11.2	14.0	8.2
Region V - Bicol	1,791	914	876	197	141	55	11.0	15.5	6.3
Region VI - Western Visayas	2,088	1,055	1,033	180	110	70	8.6	10.4	6.7
Region VII - Central Visayas	1,802	911	892	137	86	52	7.6	9.4	5.8
Region VIII - Eastern Visayas	1,421	733	689	221	150	72	15.6	20.4	10.4
Region IX - Zamboanga Peninsula	1,075	550	525	109	69	40	10.1	12.6	7.5
Region X - Northern Mindanao	1,272	642	630	324	191	133	25.5	29.8	21.1
Region XI - Davao	1,272	639	634	117	77	40	9.2	12.0	6.3
Region XII - SOCCSKSARGEN	1,233	624	609	108	75	33	8.8	12.0	5.4
Caraga	807	411	395	92	59	32	11.4	14.5	8.1
Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao	928	479	450	64	48	16	6.9	10.1	3.6

Note: Details may not add up to total due to rounding.

Source of data: National Statistics Office, Labor Force Survey.

TABLE 2 - Unemployment Rate, Underemployment Rate and Percent of Working Children 5-17 Years Old by Region, Philippines: January 2005

Region	Unemployment Rate (%)		Underemployment Rate (%)		% Working Children
	Total	Household Head	Total	Household Head	
Philippines	11.2	5.6	18.3	18.4	8.4
National Capital Region	17.4	9.6	7.4	8.5	2.1
Cordillera Administrative Region	9.3	6.3	10.9	11.6	8.9
Region I - Ilocos	13.5	6.0	14.7	15.5	5.5
Region II - Cagayan Valley	6.9	2.8	18.6	19.3	10.7
Region III - Central Luzon	12.4	7.4	5.6	6.3	4.5
Region IVA - CALABARZON	13.9	6.9	11.6	13.6	3.6
Region IVB - MIMAROPA	8.5	3.4	18.2	21.0	11.2
Region V - Bicol	8.9	3.4	28.3	35.1	11.0
Region VI - Western Visayas	9.0	4.5	21.0	24.3	8.6
Region VII - Central Visayas	12.3	6.9	14.1	16.6	7.6
Region VIII - Eastern Visayas	9.2	5.2	22.7	25.9	15.6
Region IX - Zamboanga Peninsula	5.8	1.9	16.2	18.1	10.1
Region X - Northern Mindanao	7.4	3.8	32.7	38.2	25.5
Region XI - Davao	8.6	3.2	19.8	22.0	9.2
Region XII - SOCCSKSARGEN	10.2	4.1	22.1	25.3	8.8
Caraga	10.2	6.3	23.5	26.6	11.4
Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao	7.2	0.8	8.0	7.7	6.9

Source of basic data: National Statistics Office, Labor Force Survey.

**TABLE 3 - Working Children 5-17 Years Old by Selected Demographic Characteristics,
Philippines: January 2005**
(in thousands except percent)

Selected Demographic Characteristics	Number			Percent		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Philippines	2,128	1,376	752	100.0	100.0	100.0
Age Group						
5-9	132	81	51	6.2	5.9	6.7
10-14	748	486	261	35.1	35.3	34.8
15-17	1,248	808	440	58.7	58.7	58.5
Marital Status						
Single	2,107	1,367	741	99.0	99.3	98.5
Married	20	9	11	0.9	0.6	1.5
Widowed	1	a	a	b	b	b
Relationship to HH Head						
Head	4	4	1	0.2	0.3	0.1
Wife/Spouse	3	-	3	0.2	-	0.4
Son/daughter	1,784	1,219	565	83.9	88.6	75.1
Brothers/sisters	20	13	7	0.9	1.0	0.9
Son/daughter-in-law	6	2	4	0.3	0.2	0.5
Grandchildren	107	72	36	5.0	5.2	4.7
Other Relative	85	48	37	4.0	3.5	4.9
Domestic Helper	95	6	89	4.5	0.4	11.8
Non-Relative	24	11	12	1.1	0.8	1.7
Highest Grade Completed						
No Grade Completed	113	80	33	5.3	5.8	4.4
Elementary Undergraduate	845	603	241	39.7	43.9	32.1
Elementary Graduate	401	270	131	18.8	19.6	17.4
Highschool Undergraduate	568	331	236	26.7	24.1	31.4
Highschool Graduate	185	85	100	8.7	6.2	13.3
College Undergraduate	17	7	10	0.8	0.5	1.3

Note: Details may not add up to total due to rounding.

a Less than 500.

b Less than 0.1.

Source of data: National Statistics Office, Labor Force Survey.