

Organizing and Building Union Power

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By:



Philippines

The Philippine Electronics Industry

- The Philippine semiconductors and electronics industry is the largest contributor to the country's manufacturing sector.
- It accounted for 41% of total exports, brought in US\$ 918 million-worth of foreign and domestic investments, and employed over 2.2 million workers.



The Philippine Electronics Industry

- The potential of the industry remains high.
- Most electronics companies are located in the export processing zones (EPZs) across the country.
- The industry works with the Philippine government through the Semiconductors and Electronics Industries in the Philippines, Inc. (SEIPI).



The Philippine Electronics Industry

- SEIPI and the government develop the industry's labor force, including strengthening industry-academe linkages through the promotion of more apprenticeship and immersion programs among firms and training schools.
- Government scholarship/training program for operators and technicians have presented problems to unions as they promote precarious work arrangements.



Organizing Campaign at Yu Jin Optical Electronics, Inc.

- The campaign started in September, 2015.
- Yu Jin is a Korean-owned producer of electronic components such as antennas, switches, and waveguides.
- It has 800 workers (500 regular, 300 agency-hired). Company is located inside the Cavite Export Processing Zone.
- Identified issues include non-regularization, lack of grievance mechanism, illegal suspension & termination, bad treatment to workers, non-payment of benefits except for minimum wage



Organizing Campaign at Yu Jin Optical Electronics, Inc.

- The organizing campaign is affected by the cases at Hitec RCD, which is located in the same EPZ:
 - CE result at Hitec: #of qualified voters= 128; # votes cast=105 Yes to union =52; No=51; Spoiled=2
 - Hitec management appealed CE result. Union lost as per the DOLE decision. Case is now on appeal.
 - Management action during the last 8 months:
 - Offered early retirement
 - 3-day work week
 - Retrenchment program
 - ALU filed Illegal dismissal cases; hearing on-going



Organizing Campaign at Yu Jin Optical Electronics, Inc.

- ALU solicits solidarity support to pressure Hitec RCD owner to sit down with the union. *(There are other Hitec companies in Korea, China, Japan, Germany and the USA).*
- Leaders from other ALU local unions are mobilized during meetings with Yu Jin employees.
- Dismissed Hitec workers are engaged in other federation campaigns.



Organizing Campaign at Yu Jin Optical Electronics, Inc.

- Information & education campaign is extended to other EPZ workers. Entry points include:
 - Labor laws and standards, including the Labor Law Compliance System
 - OSH and gender issues
 - Code of conduct / corporate social responsibility
- Groundwork is complemented by networking efforts with other unions (IndustriALL affiliates) operating in the area.



Organizing Campaign Strategies (FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION)

- Expand educational program beneficiaries to include management representatives, EPZ Labor Center personnel and local government, in collaboration with the Department of Labor & Employment (DOLE), Phil. Economic Zone Authority (PEZA), local government unit (LGU).
- Set up an office in Cavite where EPZ workers can easily go for information and assistance.
- Include paralegal counselling/services.
- Pursue community organizing alongside initiatives for EPZ workers.



Initiatives relative to Organizing Non-Manual Workers

- ALU local unions of supervisors, technical & office workers normally cover companies where our rank-and-file unions are.
- Supervisors & technical workers are often not keen on organizing themselves because generally, they have better work conditions and many of them are members of professional organizations.
- In unorganized establishments, supervisors are used by management to exploit workers, and suppress their right to organize.



Initiatives relative to Organizing Non-Manual Workers

- Some tested organizing concepts:
 - “Big brother, small brother”
 - “The Golden Rule also equates to the Rule of Law”
 - “Walk the Talk”
 - “Building strong, responsible unions is good economics”



Initiatives relative to Organizing Women Workers

ISSUES

- Low women participation & representation in trade unions & workplaces.
- Women/gender policies either non-existent or not fully implemented.

RESPONSES

- Institutionalization of the legal framework for women representation at federation & local union levels via:
 - Review/amendment to Constitution & Bylaws
 - Gender quota
 - Budget allocation
- Operationalization of Women/Gender & Dev't. Committees.



Initiatives relative to Organizing Women Workers

ISSUES

- Poor working conditions.
- Poor workplace compliance to labor laws and standards.

RESPONSES

- Women participation in workplace compliance monitoring through the women/ gender & dev't. committee
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- Inclusion of women-specific laws & policies in the Labor Law Compliance System (LLCS) Checklist.
 - Participation in the Checklist review



Initiatives relative to Organizing Women Workers

ISSUES

- Low awareness & implementation of women-specific & related laws, policies and programs. *(such as anti-SH, anti-discrimination, anti-VAWC, magna carta of women, breastfeeding & lactation, solo parents law, RH law, representation, budget allocation, etc.)*

RESPONSES

- Conducted capacity building for women leaders & members:
 - Gender Sensitivity
 - Legal literacy
 - Training for women organizers & educators/trainers
 - Cascading activities
- Drafting of model module on women
- Drafting of model CBA provisions on women-specific laws, policies & programs



Initiatives relative to Organizing Women Workers

ISSUES

- Maternity protection far below international standards.

RESPONSES

- Campaign for increased maternity protection.
 - Provided inputs & campaigned for the passage of a bill increasing maternity benefits.
 - Advocated for the inclusion of MP in labor's legislative agenda.
 - Attended to TV/radio interviews and guestings.
 - Networking activities



Initiatives Relative to Organizing the LGBT sector

- Provided legal assistance to a gay worker who was illegally dismissed on account of being a person living with HIV (PLHIV). Worker won the case.
- Assists in the on-going organizing campaign involving LGBT workers in beauty parlors and spas in Bataan, Central Luzon.



Initiatives relative to Organizing Young Workers

ISSUES

- Aging union leaders; second liners need to be fully developed.
- As per government statistics, majority of HIV cases involved the youths.

RESPONSES

- Implemented the Mentor-Mentee program.
- Prioritized young members to participate in training programs.
- Formalized the ALU Regional Youth Committees.
- Conducted 4 regional HIV/AIDS awareness-raising activities for young workers.



Initiatives relative to Organizing Young Workers

ISSUES

- Young workers have limited understanding and appreciation of trade unions and its workings.

RESPONSES

- Included labor education in all technical-vocational courses offered by ALU Training Center.
- Campaigned for the passage of a pending bill that integrates labor education in the high school curriculum.
- Currently devising IECs and methodologies to suit the language of young people.



Initiatives relative to Organizing Young Workers

ISSUES

- According to the Labor Force Survey, the highest unemployment rate covered young persons (aged 15 to 24).
- In terms of educational attainment, the proportion for unemployed persons was highest for high school graduates.

RESPONSES

- Provided inputs to improve the Public Employment Service Office (PESO) operation and services, a government unit that connects jobseekers and employers.
- Prioritized young workers for scholarships at the ALU Training Center.



Initiatives relative to Organizing Precarious Workers

ISSUES

- Contractualization worsens. Companies insist that the scheme keeps them in operation given the fluctuating product demand.

RESPONSES

- Legislative level: Campaigns for the passage of the Security of Tenure bill.
- Executive level: Challenge the full implementation of DOLE Department Order 18-A, which regulates contracting and subcontracting arrangements.
- Enterprise level: Sustains negotiations on defining “lean” and “peak” months.



Initiatives relative to Organizing Precarious Workers

ISSUES

- The government's Dual Training System and Apprenticeship Program are used by employers to prevent trainees/apprentices from becoming regular employees.

RESPONSES

- Sustains complaints to correct abuses of the DTS at the legislative, executive & workplace levels. Thus far, over 100 trainees have been regularized in Bataan EPZ.
- Provided inputs to the revisions of the Apprenticeship law.



Initiatives relative to Organizing Precarious Workers

ISSUES

- Cooperatives operate as manpower agencies.

RESPONSES

- Filed test cases, 285 workers involved. One case was won, now on appeal.



Initiatives relative to Migrant Workers

- For sea-based members, struggles to close better CBAs; and improve federation services to seafarers and their families.

- ALU has no land-based members overseas. However, it calls for a review of the government's overseas employment policy, to:
 - Limit deployment to countries with which Philippines has a bilateral agreement or similar arrangement.
 - Market skills and competencies rather than cheap labor.
 - Ensure labor is represented in the economic mission team.
 - Pursue preventive rather than reactive policies and programs.
 - Improve and strictly implement Pre-employment seminar (PEOS) and Pre-departure orientation seminar (PDOS).
 - Provide continuous training to personnel in Philippine embassies and consulate offices worldwide.



Challenges

- Non-standard forms of employment promotes further informalization of labor. The security of tenure legislative measure is not a priority of the government.
- The implementation of existing labor laws and standards remains a major challenge.
- Slow resolution of labor cases puts unions & workers at a disadvantage position.
- Despite existing policies, management and local government intervention remains to be a major challenge in union organizing.



Challenges

- Labor participation in policy-making structures, processes and social dialogues can still be improved.
 - research-based/statistically sound recommendations
 - Aptitude & access to technological innovations
 - Several voices singing one tune
- Different, if not opposing positions of unions on issues affecting workers weaken the labor sector's negotiating power.
- Having worker-champions in government: legislative, executive, judiciary.



End of presentation.

Thank you.

