



DOLE Good News

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT

Fifty-nine year-old Francisco Enciso, a fisherman from San Antonio, Northern Samar, has a reason to display a wide grin these days.

As a fisherman, Enciso used to catch fish using a primitive net; scanty, old fishing gear; and a middling little boat. "We make the most of what we have when we venture out to sea," he said.

"Almost all of us, fishermen, in this village still use the typical nets. Our sea is rich, but our fishing gears are poor. That is why we welcome any development. We want to increase our catch," Francisco added.

Francisco, one of 45 fishermen in Northern Samar who have been assisted by the DOLE, has seen things change for the better.

On the first week of July, he and his fellow fishermen attended a ceremony at the municipal hall of San Antonio where he met, for the first time, Department of Labor and Employment Regional Office No. 8 Regional Director Exequiel Sarcauga.

Sarcauga was there to turn over to the fishermen P596,250 in grant assistance for their Lagarity Fishing Project, a fishing livelihood project seen to stabilize and increase the income of the 45 fisherfolk beneficiaries.

"I share the hope that this livelihood assistance will truly help each one of you start a new chapter and make San Antonio's fishing industry flourishing in the coming months," Sarcauga told the fisherfolk in his pep talk.

For San Antonio's residents, the sea has been--and will be--their main source of sustenance. Heavily dependent on the sea, the residents of the fifth class municipality eagerly awaited assistance for their fishing, especially at these hard times after the onslaught of super typhoon Yolanda.

The grant was in the form of nine sets of sturdy, motorized fishing boats, fishing nets, and other fishing gear. The DOLE grouped the 45 fishermen into nine groups with five members each and each group received a set of the livelihood grant assistance.

45 fishermen of Northern Samar grateful to DOLE for P596,000 livelihood grants



As part of the DOLE's livelihood assistance program, DOLE Regional Office No. 8 Regional Director Exequiel Sarcauga (6th from left), turns over fishing gears to fishermen of San Antonio, Northern Samar.



"We at the Department of Labor and Employment are happy to present to you this livelihood assistance. However, we entreat you to use this grant responsibly. It is our hope that these fishing boats will really help you increase your yield, so that the cost of fish in San Antonio will be cheaper for the residents. In a year's time, we hope to come back and personally see how you have nurtured your livelihood," Sarcauga intoned.

Francisco and his fellow fishermen were profuse with thanks to the DOLE. "This is, indeed, a boon to our livelihood as fishermen," they said.

So was San Antonio Mayor Rudy Baguiso and his Vice Mayor Flordeliza Esquilon. The two officials also expressed their gratitude to the DOLE for bringing in the assistance 'within reach' of the disadvantaged workers in the far-flung municipality.

"In my years as municipal mayor of San Antonio, this is the first time that a DOLE regional director will come to deliver assistance. Never in my imagination did it occur that a place as isolated and as far as ours could be reached by the DOLE. Thank you to Director Sarcauga and his Field Office Head, Patria Bigcas, for bringing this good tidings to our municipality," Mayor Baguiso said, who promised to monitor the fishing project for three years.

Economy generates 1.654 million employed persons as of April—Baldoz

President Benigno S. Aquino III delivers his State of the Nation Address with a generally positive employment picture, Labor and Employment Secretary Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz observed, as she said the economy as of April 2014 has generated 1.654 million employed persons, an employment growth of 4.5 percent.

Citing the April 2014 Labor Force Survey of the Philippine Statistics Authority, Baldoz said employment had risen from 37,011 million in April 2013 to 38,665 million in April 2014, which translated into an increase 1.654 million employed persons year-on-year.

“The April 2014 Labor Force Survey, which is the second survey round to be made this year, yielded a more positive employment outlook compared to the April 2013 Labor Force Survey,” Baldoz said.

“There is also a marked increase in labor force participation in April 2014, she said, citing that Labor force participation rate increased from 63.8 percent in April 2013 to 65.2 percent in April 2014. Consequently, employment rate steadily increased from 92.4 percent in April 2013 to 93.0 percent in April 2014,” she added.

The labor and employment chief said the increase of 1.654 million employed persons are distributed as follows:

- Services, 929,000 (4.8 percent), composed of wholesale and retail

“The next round of the Labor Force Survey will sustain the country’s robust employment situation and this is anchored on the overall effort and commitment of the government, including the DOLE, to implement programs, projects, and services that facilitate employment and make the business climate conducive for job creation and job generation.”

—Secretary Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz

trade, financial, insurance, banking, administrative and support service activities, including business process outsourcing;

- Industry, 374,000 (6.3 percent), composed of manufacturing, electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning; and
- Agriculture, 352,000 (3.1%), composed of agriculture, hunting and forestry.

Baldoz noted that one prominent aspect of the robust employment growth was the growing private sector and wage employment.

“Based on the survey, the number of wage and salary workers increased by 909,000 (4.3 percent) from 21.310 million a year ago to 22.219 million year-on-year. This is a good employment indicator because wage and salary workers, or the so-called formal sector workers, are more protected,” she explained.

By class of worker, the 1.654 million increment in employed persons belong to wage and salary workers (909,000); self-employed without any paid employee (329,000); unpaid family workers (302,000); and employer in own family-operated farm or business (114,000).

Regionally, Baldoz said 14 of the country’s 16 regions experienced gains in employment, with Region 4-A leading at 325,000 (6.9 percent); followed by Region 3 at 205,000 (5.2 percent); Regions 7 at 186,000 (6.3 percent); NCR at 185,000 (4.1 percent); Region 11 at 181,000 (10.1 percent); Region 6 at 173,000 (5.9 percent); ARMM at 134,000 (11 percent)

The other regions that recorded employment gains were Region 1 (87,000); Region 10 (83,000); Caraga (52,000); Region 12 (51,000); Region 4-B (44,000); Region 5 (26,000); and CAR (4,000).

“Only three regions suffered from employment losses. These are Region 2, which lost 42,000; Region 8 (-13,000); and Region 9, which recorded a negative 27,000,” Baldoz said.

Barring any major setback, Baldoz expressed optimism that the next round of the Labor Force Survey will sustain the country’s robust employment situation.

“This optimism is anchored on the overall effort and commitment of the government, including the DOLE, to implement programs, projects, and services that facilitate employment and make the business climate conducive for job creation and job generation,” she concluded.

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DOLE Good News

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Cagayan de Oro City--Labor and Employment Secretary Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz commended the five DOLE regional offices under the Mindanao cluster for being the first island cluster to receive the ISO certification of their systems and processes.

“I congratulate the Mindanao cluster team, headed by Undersecretary Rebecca Chato, together with the Regional Directors and their dedicated staff who made this remarkable achievement a reality. This only shows that the Mindanao cluster works as one towards our goal of ensuring service excellence to the public, especially to workers in the grassroots,” said Baldoz in her remarks at the Mindanao cluster consultation held in this city.

Baldoz received the good news about the completion of the ISO certification of the five DOLE Regional Offices in Mindanao from Usec. Chato who also attended the consultation.

DOLE Regional Office No.9’s ISO certification was the last to be achieved by a DOLE regional office in the island, hence making all DOLE regional offices in Mindanao ISO-certified.

“This would lead to greater efficiency and transparency as the DOLE frontline offices for all Mindanaoans,” said Baldoz.

The DOLE regional office in Zamboanga, together with its field offices in all the provinces in the region, has been bestowed with ISO 9001:2008 Quality Management System (QMS) certificate on 5 July 2014.

No less than Labor and Employment Secretary Baldoz will lead the awarding, together with DOLE Regional Office No. 9 Director Sisinio Cano and Certification International Philippines (CIP) Managing Director Renato Navarrete on 8 July 2014.

The full cooperation of the regional and field offices staff in the DOLE Zamboanga region to improve the delivery of Department’s programs resulted to 56 enrolled processes covered by the ISO certification, of which 13 are frontline services.

On 3 October 2011, DOLE Regional Office No. 12 earned the distinction of being the first regional office of the DOLE to achieve ISO certification under the tenure of Secretary Baldoz.



COMPLETING THE ISO-CERTIFIED MINDANAO CLUSTER. The DOLE regional office in Zamboanga, together with its field offices in all the provinces in the region, has been bestowed with ISO 9001:2008 Quality Management System (QMS) certificate. Labor and Employment Secretary Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz led the awarding, together with DOLE Regional Office No. 9 Director Sisinio Cano and Certification International Philippines (CIP) Managing Director Renato Navarrete.

Towards greater efficiency and transparency: DOLE’s Mindanao regions now all ISO-certified

In 2012, DOLE Caraga followed suit, also achieving ISO 9001:2008 for its quality management system in time for the DOLE’s 79th Foundation Anniversary on 8 December.

This year, back-to-back ISO certifications were awarded to DOLE Regional Offices No. 10 (Northern Mindanao Region) and 11 (Davao Region) on 12 February and 10 March, respectively.

“These five ISO-certified DOLE regional offices set themselves as exemplars of how they have improved their services delivery mechanisms, reduced process cycle times, and reduced, if not, eliminated graft and corruption,” Baldoz said.

According to Baldoz, the ISO 9001:2008 addresses various aspects of quality management and contains ISO’s best-known standards.

“Achieving ISO certification is making transparency and integrity in governance at the DOLE work; it means adhering to a quality management system in the DOLE that meets international standards in service and program delivery for our clients,” Baldoz explained.

ISO 9001:2008 sets out the criteria for a quality management system. It is the only standard in the ISO family of standards that can be certified. It can be used by any organization, large or

small, regardless of its field of activity. In fact, ISO 9001:2008 is implemented by over one million companies and organizations in over 170 countries.

In place for over a decade now, ISO 9001:2008 certification is used by companies and organizations as a method to benchmark and control quality.

“Being ISO-certified means the DOLE regional offices, bureau, and attached agencies will have a framework to manage their services and ensure continual improvement in all aspects of the services they provide,” said Baldoz, adding that the ISO certifications will be externally-assessed on an on-going basis to ensure that the best practices are maintained.

As she hailed the Mindanao cluster for being ISO-certified, Baldoz posed the challenge to the regional offices to further translate their ISO certifications into action.

“The ISO certification is just the start of a continuous process. Each regional office must continue to aim for transforming their offices by aligning their systems and processes with international standards, always conscious of the DOLE’s commitment to deliver its programs and services efficiently, and with greater transparency and integrity,” said Baldoz.



Focused and comprehensive reintegration services await repatriate OFWs under DOLE's Assist WELL Program

The Department of Labor and Employment has set up a package of comprehensive reintegration assistance and services under its Assist WELL Program to ensure that returning overseas Filipino workers who voluntarily sign up for repatriation, or those who are compelled to go home under mandatory repatriation due to crises or emergency situations, are successfully reintegrated in the mainstream of Philippine society.

Labor and Employment Secretary Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz gave this assurance, saying agencies and offices of the DOLE concerned with local and overseas employment and provision of welfare services for OFWs have converged and now implement the Assist WELL Program that will best address the Welfare, Employment, Legal, and Livelihood needs of repatriated OFWs.

"It is true that many OFWs are hesitant to come home even if the country where they work are in the middle of crisis, or are experiencing political conflict because of their apprehension of being dislocated. The Assist WELL Program aims to address this concern," Baldoz said.

"Thus, I assure our OFW repatriates from countries experiencing crisis situations or emergencies, such as Libya, Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq, Kenya, of a safe and smooth return. The government, through the DOLE, is here to assist you," she added.

A component of the National Reintegration Program for OFWs, the DOLE adopted the Assist WELL Program to ensure the successful reintegration of OFWs repatriated from crisis or emergency situations, pursuant to relevant alert level systems of the national government.

Secretary Baldoz established the program under DOLE Department Order No. 139, Series of 2014.

Relative to Welfare Assistance, the OWWA, as head of Assist WELL Program's welfare assistance committee, provides airport assistance; temporary shelter and accommodation; transport assistance to residence; emergency medical assistance; and stress debriefing.

On employment assistance, the employment assistance committee provides job placement/referral for local employment or overseas employment; and competency assessment and certification for repatriated workers who wish to confirm whether they possess the competencies required in a preferred workplace. This committee is headed by no less than DOLE Undersecretary Reydeluz Conferido.

Undersecretary Ciriaco Lagunzad heads the livelihood assistance committee which provides entrepreneurial development training; livelihood skills training; hands-on business mentoring and support; and business loan assistance.

There are three programs that repatriated workers can avail under livelihood. These are the P2-B Reintegration Loan Fund for OWWA members; Balik-Pinay, Balik-Hanapbuhay for distressed OFWs; and the P10-K Livelihood Assistance for non-documented workers.

Lastly, the legal assistance committee, headed by POEA Administrator Hans Leo J. Cacdac, provides legal advice; conciliation proceedings to afford repatriated workers and their recruitment agencies a venue to discuss the possibility of amicable settlement; assistance in the preparation and filing of complaints for illegal recruitment, recruitment violation, and disciplinary action cases; and counselling during preliminary investigation and hearings of criminal cases for illegal recruitment.

"All concerned DOLE implementing agencies have been directed to allocate and commit funds for the implementation of the Assist WELL Program," Baldoz said.

A Steering Committee, which is chaired by Baldoz herself, oversees the implementation of the Assist WELL Program. It is composed of DOLE Undersecretary Reydeluz D. Conferido, Employment Assistance Committee; Undersecretary Ciriaco A. Lagunzad, Livelihood Assistance Committee; Undersecretary Rebecca C. Chato, Management Services Committee; Philippine Overseas Employment Administrator Hans Leo J. Cacdac, Legal Assistance Committee; and Overseas Workers Welfare Administrator Rebecca J. Calzado, Welfare Assistance Committee.

The members of the Steering Committee are Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) Deputy Director General Irene M. Isaac; National Reintegration Center for OFWs (NRCO) Director Violeta N. Muñoz; Bureau of Local Employment (BLE) Director Dominique Tutay; Bureau of Workers with Special Concerns (BWSC) Director Ahmma Charisma L. Satumba; International Labor Affairs Bureau (ILAB) Director Saul T. De Vries; and Labor Communications Office Director Nicon F. Fameronag.

The various committee chairmen have constituted their respective committees whose members come from the POEA, OWWA, TESDA, NRCO, BLE, BWSC, ILAB, and DOLE's Financial Management Services (FMS).

A Program Secretariat is constituted by representatives from POEA, OWWA, TESDA, NRCO, BLE, BWSC, ILAB and LCO and is headed by the NRCO, who will also maintain the database for Assist WELL Program.

624 repatriates assisted under DOLE's Assist WELL Program; 50 more OFWs from Libya to be assisted

Labor and Employment Secretary Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz said the DOLE, through its Well ASSIST Program, is ready to assist 60 more OFWs who will come home from Libya in the next days as she announced the arrivals reported by Labor Attache Mustafa in Tripoli.

Citing the report, Baldoz said 22 workers in two batches will arrive at 4:00 P.M. on Saturday, 2 August on board QR 926, and at 4:35 P.M., on board EK 333.

On Sunday, 3 August, 15 workers will arrive at 11 P.M. via QR 924; and on Monday, 4 August, 23 workers will enplane from Dubai at 10:10 P.M., or a total of 60 OFWS.

"We have the master list of the names of the new repatriates. Officers of the Repatriation Assistance Division of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) and representatives of the Libya Quick Reaction Team headed by Philippine Overseas Employment Administration chief Hans Leo J. Cacdac will be at the airport to ensure that the returnees get proper assistance," Baldoz said.

She said that the OWWA-led Welfare Assistance Committee under the DOLE's Assist WELL Program, as instructed, provides the following services to OFW repatriates: (1) Airport Assistance. The OWWA facilitates airport procedures and formalities from the tube to airport exit. It also disseminates information and information materials on the Assist WELL Program. (2) Temporary Shelter/Accommodation. This assistance includes free food and accommodation (limited duration only) at the OWWA Hostel to repatriates awaiting onward travel to their home provinces.

(3) Transport Assistance to Residence. The OWWA provides transportation services to repatriates residing in Metro Manila, and boat/bus fare to those going home to the provinces. (4) Emergency Medical Assistance. The OWWA offers medical referral to the airport clinic, as well as ambulance services, upon arrival of repatriates, if they so need. (5) Stress Debriefing. The OWWA provides counseling, especially to repatriates who may have suffered from traumatic experiences.

Related to this, Baldoz said the DOLE has already directly assisted through its Assist WELL Program 624 repatriates, out of the 752 OFW repatriates officially listed by the Department of Foreign Affairs to have arrived since 11 June 2014.

The difference represents the number of OFW repatriates who were directly sent home by their employers and did not avail of RAD meet-and-greet formalities at the airport.

Baldoz said the DOLE, in coordination with the DFA, regularly monitors the situation in Libya through the Philippine Overseas Labor Office.



In Tagum City, DOLE grants P2.26 M in livelihood assistance to PWDs, IPs, and other worker groups

Labor and Employment Secretary Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz announced that the Department of Labor and Employment Regional Office No. 11 has granted livelihood assistance worth P2, 260, 520 to jumpstart the community-based enterprises of 10 worker groups, including persons with disability (PWD) and indigenous people (IP), in Tagum City, Davao del Norte.

Baldoz commended the efforts of the regional office, particularly in making the DOLE's livelihood intervention more accessible to more disadvantaged workers in far-flung areas in the region.

Citing a report of DOLE Regional Office No. 11 Director Joffrey Suyao, Baldoz said the grant will fund the computer and cellphone repair shop of the Tagum City Association of PWDs; the arts and crafts skills training cum production for the IPs; the meat processing cum skills training for the 4H Club of Brgy. Busaon in Tagum City; the motorcycle repair shop and spare parts supply venture of the TAFETRASCO tricycle drivers; and the dressmaking project livelihood cum training for their housewives.

Part of the livelihood assistance grant will also finance the establishment of a grain center (Bigasan ng Bayan) for the Tagum City Urban Poor, Inc.; the general merchandise and catering services enterprise of the Magugpo West Women Organization; the catering services cum training for the 4H Club of Visayan Village; and the coconut shell beads and button production of the Tagum City Coconut Farmers Association.

"We continue to support the informal sectors in Region 11 because they are a vital segment that fuels the local economy," Director Suyao reported.

"These projects have been identified by the beneficiaries themselves. Being demand-driven in nature we have always emphasized their ownership of the projects so they will place great value on them that will hopefully ensure sustainability," he added.

The P2.26 million grant is part of the DOLE's allocation under the Grassroots Participatory Budgeting (GPB) Program. The DOLE Regional Office, in a ceremony at the Tagum Trade Center, Tagum City, turned-over the assistance to Tagum City mayor

Allan Rellon, who encouraged the beneficiaries to make sure the projects grow and prosper.

"Let us take care of these projects, to prove our worth, and in so doing, we can be assured that there will be more projects to come not only from DOLE, but also from other government agencies," said Rellon.

The Mayor said his flagship program, dubbed as EAGLE WINGS, has identified livelihood as a priority agenda.

"Aside from the livelihood projects, all beneficiaries were also provided accident insurance amounting to P99, 480," Director Suyao explained, adding that providing insurance is part of the DOLE's commitment to protect the vulnerable segment of society, particularly workers in the informal sectors.

GPB is a novel approach being employed by the government wherein the poorest local government units in the country will work with civil society organizations and local communities to determine their needs and create projects suitable for their locality, and not to be contended with what are "imposed" on them.





In Region 1, DOLE's TUPAD benefits 511 unemployed with P2.4 million in income support

Labor and Employment Secretary Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz commended the DOLE Regional Office No. 1 for its pro-active stance in providing emergency employment, and thus, immediate income support to, 511 unemployed workers through the Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa ating Disadvantaged/ Displaced Workers, or TUPAD, a component of the DOLE Livelihood and Emergency Employment Program, or DILEEP.

The TUPAD is a community-based (municipality/barangay) package of assistance that provides emergency employment for displaced workers; those who were self-employed and have lost their livelihood, including farmers and fishermen, due to natural or man-made disasters, and the underemployed and the unemployed poor.

Under the TUPAD, worker-beneficiaries work for a minimum of 10 days, but not to exceed 30 days, depending on the nature of the emergency work.

Citing the report of Regional Director Grace Ursua, Secretary

Baldoz said the DOLE Regional Office has allocated P2,496,453 in TUPAD funds for the emergency employment of the 511 workers who were identified by partner local government units as unemployed due to lack of necessary skills, and have difficulty in landing in jobs.

"The money will be used to pay for the salaries, micro-insurance premium, personal protective equipment (PPE) of the beneficiaries who will be engaged in community projects such as ecotourism, repair and/or improvement of common public facilities, de-clogging of canals, debris clearing, basic repair of public infrastructure, repair and/or rehabilitation of farm-to-market roads and similar facilities, tree planting, seedling preparation, and other similar activities," Director Ursua said in her report.

Ursua said the 511 unemployed workers come from the City of San Fernando in La Union, with 69 worker-beneficiaries, and the towns of San Juan, with eight workers; Agoo, 183; Santol, 11; and Sudipen, 240.

DOLE AID THROUGH TUPAD. DOLE Regional Office No. 1 Director Grace Ursua turns over a check amounting to P858,655 to Agoo Mayor Sandra Eriguel for the salaries, personal protective equipment, and micro-insurance of the municipality's 183 TUPAD beneficiaries.

Earlier, Director Ursua turned over a check amounting to P858,655 to Agoo Mayor Sandra Eriguel for the salaries, PPEs, and micro-insurance of the town's 183 TUPAD beneficiaries.

La Union 2nd District Representative Eufranio "Franny" Eriguel attended the check hand-over ceremony, together with Delia Chan, officer-in-charge of the DOLE-La Union Field Office; Gloria Joycelyn Aberin, Agoo Public Employment Service Office Manager and Janet Mendoza, Labor and Employment Officer III.

"Our emergency employment program provides income opportunities to vulnerable workers while giving them better access to social protection and long-term employment," Baldoz said.

Apart from the emergency employment, the TUPAD also provides for the conduct of Basic Orientation on Safety and Health prior to engagement in any project. It also provides for skills training cum production for self-employment, or skills training for wage employment.

DOLE releases P12.25-M for education, livelihood, and health care for sugar workers and dependents



Labor and Employment Secretary Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz announced that its Bureau of Workers with Special Concerns (BWSC) had recently released P12.25 million to the Sugar Industry Foundation, Inc. (SIFI) for the continued implementation of its socio-economic projects (SEPs) for sugar workers and their families.

“The BWSC has released the sum of P12.25 million to the SIFI from the nine (9) percent Socio-Economic Project Fund (SEPF) pursuant to Section 10 (b) of Republic Act No. 6982, otherwise known as An Act Strengthening the Social Amelioration Program in the Sugar Industry, Providing the Mechanics for its Implementation, and for Other Purposes,” said Baldoz.

“The amount represents the 50 percent of the SIFI’s approved 2014 budget of P24.45 million as contained in Sugar Tripartite Council Resolution No. 1, s. 2014,” Baldoz added.

Baldoz, who chairs the STC, explained that the SIFI’s projects are supportive to the proposed Human Resource Development Master Plan, 2014-2016 for the sugarcane industry which is envisioned to improve workers’ competitiveness and productivity.

One of the SIFI’s projects is its college scholarship for qualified children of sugar workers with high scholastic record (general weighted average of at least 85 percent) and its college assistance for dependents who could not be qualified under the scholarship program, but who have maintained a general weighted average of 80 percent, or higher.

Under the scholarship program, SIFI grants a maximum of P11,000 per semester, or P22,000 per year. On the other hand, it grants P6,500 per semester, or P13,000 a year per qualified grantee of its college assistance program.

With the release of half of the SIFI budget, dependents of sugar workers who availed of the college scholarship during School Year 2013-2014, are assured of their benefits while studying, provided that they pass the eligibility requirements.

Baldoz further explained that the SIFI will train sugar workers on various skills to open up self- or wage employment opportunities that will add to the incomes of sugar workers and their dependents.

“To ensure that sugarcane industry has an adequate supply of skilled personnel, the SIFI has vowed to train sugar workers on welding and fabrication, plumbing, electrical installation, machine operation, automotive

mechanic, and other courses with local demand. Also priority is the training for sugarcane farm technicians, a six-month programme on sugarcane growing and farm management,” Baldoz said.

BWSC Director Charmaine Lobrin-Satumba said all trainees should be recommended either by the planters or planters’ associations.

Another SIFI priority is the promotion of health for sugar workers. Under the SIFI Advantage Health Plan, it subsidizes the enrolment of sugar workers and their dependents so they can be covered with free hospitalization benefits, out-patient services, and preventive health care, among others. It also conducts medical-dental missions in far-flung and underserved areas to provide health care services to sugar workers and their families. Services include free medical consultation, dental extraction, free medicine, deworming and other health related services.

The SIFI is one of the DOLE’s major social partners that implements socio-economic projects for sugar workers. Its annual budget allocation for its socio-economic projects is based on the amount of the 9 percent SEPF collected and is computed based on the production share of sugar millers’ organizations and planters’ federations.

For 2014, out of its P24.45 million budget, the SIFI will utilize P15.075 million, or 61.6 percent, for educational assistance, skills training, and enterprise development for 1,916 beneficiaries; P2.4 million, or 10 percent, for health care insurance and medical-dental mission for 14,000 beneficiaries; P300,000, or 1.2 percent, for livelihood support for SIFI mom entrepreneurs and for strengthening farmers’ cooperative covering 175 beneficiaries; P550,000, or 2.2 percent, for special events and projects (documentation, survey/tracking of scholars/graduates and advocacy on family wellness and child labor program) for 1,900 beneficiaries; and the remaining P6.125 million, or 25 percent, for general and administrative expenses to be incurred in project implementation.

Other cooperating entities in these projects are the sugar mills, planters’ associations, such as the Confederation of Sugar Producers Association (CONFED), Panay Federation of Sugarcane Planters (PANAYFED) and Luzon Federation of Sugarcane Growers Association, Inc. (LUZONFED), labor unions, and farmers’ cooperatives, as well as local government units in the covered sugar milling districts.