

# **CHILD LABOR IN DIGOS CITY: A BASELINE STUDY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research is a baseline study on child labor in Digos City. It involves a formulation of a plan for social work interventions based on the findings. It is premised on a strong belief that the problem on child labor could only be appropriately addressed if its actual extent is known.

A total of two hundred sixty (260) children was used in this study. The descriptive method was utilized. A modified structured questionnaire was used based on the objectives of the study.

The statistical tools used were percentage computation and weighted mean.

Findings of the study showed that child labor, as a complex issue, is a reality all of us must have to confront as long as poverty and social inequity exist. Faced with economic difficulties, children are left with no other alternative but to engage in any income-generating work or related endeavours.

Consequently, child labor deprived the children of their inalienable right to live as children. Working children faced the damaging effects of work on their health, on their studies, and the concomitant detriment on their psycho-social beings.

Furthermore, this study showed that there is indeed that necessity on the part of the children and their respective families for these children to engage in work. Ironically, absolute eradication of child labor is tantamount to depriving the children and their families of the right to survival, right to education, and a right to wholesome family life. Thus, with this grim reality, it becomes imperative for the society to ensure their protection and to provide them with much-needed assistance.

The study, based on its findings, recommends multifaceted social work interventions. These include the following: organization of working children, provision of support services to child laborers and their families, organization of parents, guardians and other care benefactors, and establishments of some protective mechanisms that may provide protection of the children's rights.

## Chapter 1

### **INTRODUCTION**

Child labor is a global problem. The International Labor Organization in 1997 reported that some 250 million children in developing countries, between the ages of 5 and 14 work. Of this total, nearly 120 million children work full-time and 130 million children work part-time. Child labor also exists in industrialized countries, *i.e.*, Italy, Portugal, United Kingdom and the United States. The most intolerable forms of child labor include slavery, debt bondage, child prostitution, and works in mining, brass molding, carpet weaving, match and glass industries.

Asia accounts for the largest share of these juvenile laborers with 61 percent or nearly 153 million. Thirty two percent, or 80 million are in Africa, and 7 percent or 17.5 million live in Latin America.

A 1995 survey conducted by the National Statistics Office with assistance from the International Labor Organization and International Program for Elimination of Child Labor show that three out of twenty children, or some 3.7 million children from five to 17 years old, are working children. Of this number, more than two-thirds are rural working children. Sixty percent of them are exposed to either hazardous or subhuman conditions, leaving them malnourished, and susceptible to respiratory infections and sexually transmitted diseases. More often than not, they are physically and intellectually stunted and are possessed of low self-esteem.

There is a high incidence of child labor in Southern Mindanao. Child labor increases in economically depressed areas as well as in high growth areas or tourist areas. In Davao City, most of these children are in the service sector such as vending, household helping, shoe shining, and other related works, although about 75 percent of them manage to juggle both work and school. In the event of employment, they drop out of school.

The children of the City of Digos in the Province of Davao del Sur are not spared from these situations. In the marketplace, children are engaged in vending smoke cellophanes, shopping bags, spices, vegetables and other dry goods in order to help augment the family income. Some of them are doing jobs in return for minimal pay. They peddle loads of vegetables, fruits for traders and for customers. A number of them work in small-scale businesses. Their work includes cooking and packing biscuits, cookies, kropec and other food delicacies. The boys do odd jobs like car-washing in gasoline stations and parking lots. There are those who work in rice and corn mills and dryers. They regularly carry heavy loads and are exposed to the scorching heat of the sun. These children seldom eat regular meals, are deprived of wholesome play and recreation and, are exposed to petty crimes and misdemeanors such as theft, shoplifting, rumbles, snatching, swindling and others. They have imbibed the street jargon of the subculture and they have failed to appreciate the value of peace.

A UNICEF Report entitled "The State of the World's Children", as published in the Philippine Daily Inquirer on November 28, 1999, describes the existing statistics of child laborers as inadequate and unreliable and the process of data collection fraught with complications. The report stresses the need for reliable measurements of the prevalence of child labor, for all the agencies, organizations and all concerns to work together in this gigantic task. Without this clearer information, the true scale of the problem will remain unknown. What has long been hidden in the shadows will emerge into the light, fully and finally, when it can be measured, and thus systematically move to eradicate them.

Child labor exists in Digos City. However, there has never been a study conducted to provide a concrete picture of the situation. This study therefore is conducted in order to address this vacuum and for this researcher to heed the challenge in making her contribution in the field of research by establishing statistics on child laborer in her own locality.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem posed in this research is to find out the child labor situationer in Digos City. This study is also aimed at formulating a proposed plan for social work interventions.

### **Specific Objectives**

Specifically, this study aims to determine the following:

1. To know the socio-demographic and economic profile of working children and their families;
2. To know the economic benefits of working;
3. To know the effects of work on studies;
4. To know the problems encountered by children in school;
5. To know the dangers and hazards of work;
6. To know the children's perception of present job; and
7. To know the aspirations of working children;

### **Scope and Delimitation**

The study is limited to child laborers, ages five (5) to seventeen (17) years old, in five barangays namely: Barangays Zone I, Zone II, Zone III, San Miguel and Tres de Mayo, for a period of three months -- January to March 2002. These barangays, out of the twenty-six barangays in the city of Digos, are chosen as the research environments of this study because of their respective population, location and accessibility by transportation. They are thickly-populated areas located at the center of the city and are known as melting pots of child laborers. The areas are adjacent to one another and therefore provide accessibility insofar as transportation and communication are concerned.

### **Importance of the Study**

The outcome of this study will benefit the following:

1. The City Social Welfare and Development Office will utilize the outcome of research as bases of planning, policy formulation and

implementation of social welfare programs. This serves as a springboard in coming up with strategies and approaches in taking action which will address the problem on child labor.

2. The Local Government Unit may use it, in aid of legislation, as bases for appropriation and budget allocation for social welfare programs and services.

3. The child laborers, as direct beneficiaries of the programs and services that will be formulated as a consequence of this study, will be given the needed intervention.

4. Other organizations, governmental and non-governmental, agencies and entities may utilize the study for their future plans and actions.

### **Operational Definition of Terms**

For the benefit of the reader, the following terms have been defined operationally, to wit:

1. *Child labor* is the incorporation of children into a range of different employment relations. It means work situations where children are compelled to earn a living for themselves and their families and where children are engaged in works that are exploitative and damaging to their health and to their physical and psycho-social development.

2. *Work conditions* refer to the location of work or situation of workplace, the number of hours the children are working, the amount of income, how it is

earned, and other benefits received, as well as the hazards and negative effects that the children encounter in the workplace.

3. *Hazards* are risks faced by children at the workplace, such as exposure to chemicals, contaminants, filthy environment and the like, which may result to injuries or illnesses. These have negative effects on studies and usually result to the children's deprivations of play, rest and recreation.

4. *Aspirations* mean what the children want to be when they grow up, or what they want to achieve in the future.