

Decent Work Agenda in the Philippines: A Capacity Assessment

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Abstract : At the turn of the millennium, development paradigms in the international scene revolved around one goal: elimination of global poverty without comprising human rights. One measure which achieved high endorsement and visibility in the world of work is the Decent Work Agenda (DWA) championed by the United Nation's (UN) specialized agency for work, the International Labour Organization (ILO). The DWA has been thoroughly promoted and recommended as an ingredient of development planning and a poverty reduction strategy, particularly in developing countries such as the Philippines. The global imperative of economic growth is measurable not only in the numbers raked in by countries in terms of expanding economy but also by the development and realization of the full capacities of their people. Decent work (DW), as an outcome and not just a development approach, promises poverty eradication by means of providing both quantity and quality work that is accompanied by rights, representation, and protection. As a party to these international pacts, the Philippines is expected to heed the call towards a world free from poverty through well-endorsed measures such as the DWA with the aid of multilateral and donor organizations such as the ILO. This study aims to assess the capacity and readiness of the Philippines to achieve the goals of the DWA. This is a qualitative research using the sociological and juridical lens in the desk analysis of existing Philippine laws, policies, and programs vis-à-vis decent work indicators set forth by the ILO. Interview with experts on the Philippine labor situation is conducted for further validation. The paper identifies gaps within the Philippine legal system and its collection of laws, acts, presidential decrees, department orders and other policy instruments aimed towards achieving the goals of the DWA. Among the major findings of this paper are: the predisposition of Philippine labor laws towards the formal sector; the need for alternative solutions for the informal sector veering away from the usual dole-outs and livelihood projects; the needs for evaluation of policies and programs that are usually self-evaluated; the minimal reach of the labour inspectorate which ensures decent work; and the lack of substantial penalty for non-compliance with labor laws. The paper concludes with policy implications and recommendations towards addressing the potholes on the road to Decent Work.

Keywords : decent work agenda, labor laws, millennium development goals, poverty eradication, sustainable development goal

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