



Ang

UMA

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TEMP 
MUERTI 

PAG-UULAT HINGGIL SA GUTOM AT KAHIRAPAN SA KANAYUNAN



WACC

communication for all

THIS PUBLICATION IS PART OF **TIEMPO MUERTO: REPORTING ON HUNGER AND POVERTY** in the Philippine Countryside, a media monitoring project of the Unyon ng mga Manggagawa sa Agrikultura (UMA Pilipinas).

UMA's **Tiempo Muerto** project monitored sugar workers' issues and media reporting on hunger and poverty during the 2016 tiempo muerto or dead season. UMA established media monitors in major sugar-producing areas such as North and Central Luzon, Southern Tagalog, Negros Island, and Northern Mindanao.

Tiempo muerto refers to the off-milling season when sugar production temporarily grinds to a halt and sugar workers are left without any stable source of income.

Through this project, media practitioners are urged to shed light on issues behind hunger and poverty in the country's sugarcane areas and amplify the voices of our oppressed sugar workers.

This project is supported by the **World Association for Christian Communication (WACC)**.



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Tiempo Muerto

REPORTING ON HUNGER AND POVERTY IN THE PHILIPPINE COUNTRYSIDE



THE SITUATION OF AGRICULTURAL WORKERS, particularly during the tiempo muerto phenomenon which plagues sugar areas in the Philippines every year, is a subject rarely discussed in mainstream media. Through the Tiempo Muerto project, UMA sought to break the inadvertent blackout on this specific poverty issue affecting sugar workers.

For six months, from the onset of tiempo muerto in March up till its peak in August, UMA's media monitors sifted through news reports to show how rare sugar workers' issues are covered by mainstream media. UMA organized press events and released statements, newsletters and monitoring updates to prod media practitioners to improve their coverage, especially when particular issues are underreported or sensationalized.

The project not only shattered the media black-out on tiempo muerto – it achieved all of its immediate aims and more. It spurred awareness on media platforms among UMA-affiliated organizations and helped improve

practices among our friends in the media. The improved coverage of the plight of farmworkers garnered public support. It is a hard battle for genuine land reform and justice. Meanwhile, the strength of collective action pushed agencies to act and provide aid for communities in dire hunger conditions.

The social media component of the project, or popularization (reposting and “sharing”) of monitored media reports in UMA's social networks, made these achievements tangible through real-time discussions on government accountability, and immediate call for food support and aid. Crucial emergency situations were also relayed faster.

The project commenced with a media training in cooperation with the National Federation of Sugar Workers (NFSW), held March 12-13 last year in Bacolod City and attended by a total of 38 participants from various sugar areas across the country. Resource persons include Inday Espina-Varona and Nonoy Espina, both respected journalists from Negros, and cultural worker Ericson Acosta.



KMP's hashtag
**#Bigas
Hindi
Bala**

*(Rice not Bullets)
raised awareness
and support for
drought-stricken
farmers in
Cotabato*

The training established monitors for Negros, the largest sugar-producing area in the Philippines, as well as Bukidnon, Tarlac, Batangas and Isabela. UMA then held a press conference, March 14 at the Negros Press Club, covered by local journalists and later featured in primetime news of a local TV channel.

Bigas Hindi Bala

THE TIEMPO MUERTO CRISIS IN 2016 WAS aggravated by drought caused by the El Niño phenomenon. Among prominent reports monitored come from various areas in Negros and in Hacienda Luisita, Tarlac where the hacienda system and violent land disputes persist. A barrage of media reports covered the violent dispersal of a farmers' protest in Kidapawan, North Cotabato and other parts of Mindanao hit by El Niño.

Efforts were made to improve discussions on the sensationalized coverage of the April 1 "Kidapawan Massacre," where thousands of farmers demanding food aid were violently dispersed by state forces.

The online hashtag #BigasHindiBala (Rice not Bullets), made popular by militant peasant organization Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas or KMP became instrumental in raising overwhelming public support and obtaining food aid for drought-stricken farmers in Cotabato. Similar actions were mounted across Mindanao, such as the sugar workers' protests led by OGYON-UMA in Bukidnon.

On April 21, UMA organized a press event in Quezon City to feature the Kidapawan Massacre. Two female survivors of state violence – one from Luisita and a lumad from North Cotabato – told their own story so that media may accurately report on their plight.

The increase in media reports and social media discussion on sugar workers' issues also sparked interest for multi-media projects on the tiempo muerto issue. In June, filmmaker Malu Maniquis of the Concerned Artists of the Philippines proposed to shoot a documentary on the effects of tiempo muerto on peasant women.

Two batches of computer students from the Dela Salle University – College of St. Benilde also volunteered to develop a database for monitoring the media reports. The students were made aware of the plight of sugar workers through exposure trips to Batangas also in June.

When the actual tiempo muerto crisis peaked in August, consistent media coverage in TV, print and radio was monitored especially in Negros, where there is usually a media black-out on the issue. Mass actions by NFSW-UMA and KMP – usually ignored by the press – were echoed to the public and concerned government agencies. UMA Secretary General Danilo Ramos was invited by local TV and radio stations to talk about tiempo muerto live in their special public affairs programs.

Affected farmers would see the difference – people sought out peasant organizations to forward their donations, while government agencies like the Department of Social Welfare and Development immediately released food packs for families affected by tiempo muerto. The Department of Labor also promised emergency employment for affected sugar workers. Government institutions were pushed to carry out their mandate in relation to the crisis, while the local government in Escalante City provided not only immediate food aid but also support for succeeding community cultural activities.

Farmworkers led by NFSW-UMA picket the DOLE regional office in Bacolod City



Various initiatives

SOON AFTER SUCCESSFUL MASS ACTIONS in Negros, a Report Back activity was held August 25 in Quezon City. Two short videos produced by UMA for the tiempo muerto campaign were launched.

On August 30 - 31, a National Sugar Workers' Summit was organized by UMA. The delegates then staged a picket at the Sugar Regulatory Administration to air demands forged by sugar workers from across the country. In Batangas and Bukidnon, sugar workers would later clinch socio-economic projects from government's amelioration program.



UMA would have been wrapping up the tiempo muerto project by September, but the interest it generated paved the way for many other related activities.

In Negros, the NFSW hosted a National Cultural Conference in Escalante City from September 15 - 20. Excerpts from "Tiempos Muertos," a play by activist cultural group Sinagbayan was first performed in this event. The festival culminated with a theatrical re-enactment of the 1985 Escalante Massacre, which promptly landed in the news and reminded the public of atrocities committed against sugar workers during the Marcos dictatorship.

In October, UMA and its Luisita Watch network held acting workshops for children of sugar workers in Tarlac in preparation for the 12th Hacienda Luisita Massacre commemoration. A People's Cultural Caravan for Land, Justice and Peace was held from November 14 - 16. Sinagbayan's "Tiempos Muertos" was also brought to Hacienda Luisita.

A scene from **SINAGBAYAN's "Tiempos Muertos"**



TABLU's onsite theatrical re-enactment of the 2004 Hacienda Luisita Massacre.

A new cultural group of young street theater actors, TABLU or Luisita People's Theater, was formed. TABLU's staging of an onsite theatrical re-enactment of the 2004 Hacienda Luisita massacre was the highlight of the 3-day cultural caravan.

The project also encouraged university students to engage in research on sugar workers. By October, students from the University of the Philippines in Manila produced research and a 25-minute documentary, "Sa Kusog Sang Obrero" (With the Strength of Workers), detailing work conditions in sugar areas, the tiempo muerto crisis, and a critique of the Social Amelioration Program (SAP).

Sa Kusog Sang Obrero, a documentary by UP Manila students

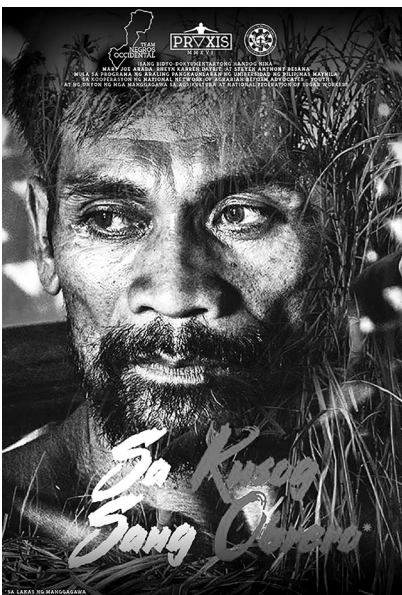
rights violations and political killings in peasant communities, and corruption in the implementation of the SAP.

In December, sugar workers from Negros joined the Lakbayan ng Visayas protest caravan in Manila. Even during Christmas, UMA would "rescue" sacadas trafficked in Hacienda Luisita due to poverty in Mindanao areas still reeling from effects of tiempo muerto.

This year, sugar workers are poised to launch bigger militant actions against neoliberal economic policies such as aggressive land use conversion, expansion of giant agribusiness plantations, HFCS importation, and contractualization.

Sugar workers are determined to echo the call for free land distribution, and finally dismantle the centuries-old hacienda system which constrains farmers and agricultural workers under feudal and semi-feudal bondage.

The unabated spate of political killings in the Philippines targeting peasants and activists has claimed the lives of two prominent sugar workers' leaders in the past few months – Ariel Diaz, UMA organizer in Isabela, and Alexander Ceballos, a district coordinator of the NFSW-UMA in Negros Occidental. We dedicate this to their memory. ■



The cultural events held in Escalante City and Hacienda Luisita also tackled tiempo muerto and the plight of sugar workers across the country. Sinagbayan's "Tiempos Muertos" also had a theatrical run at the Department of Agrarian Reform in December.

The project opened up opportunities to air and address other related issues on state accountability, militarization, rampant

Genuine Land Reform

IS KEY TO END YEARLY TIEMPO MUERTO CRISIS

*This annual crisis period **tiempo muerto** the locals also call **tigkiriwi** – an odd period when the sugar industry’s work force collectively grumbles in hunger and pain.*

BACOLOD CITY, AUGUST 12, 2016 – NANAY Lani holds up her pay slip, a small piece of paper more akin to a list of dues that the kind proprietor of your neighborhood sari-sari store hands you to emphasize that you cannot get any more “credit” (utang or debt). The pay slip is handed to Nanay Lani by the hacienda’s enkargado (supervisor) every 15 days, usually to prove that she will only take home less than a hundred pesos in cash for her toil as farmworker in the sugarcane fields.

“Here,” Nanay Lani shows the piece of paper, “I took home only Php 43.42 for 15 days work.” That she earned during the boom of harvest and milling season. She takes home a measly amount because her debts from the hacienda’s “cooperative store” for rice and other supplies were already deducted.

“Now it’s tiempo muerto (dead season) and work is scarce. Even if we get some work, we no longer take home any cash. We even incur so much debt during this tiggulutom (season of hunger),” she says.

Her face melts into an anguished expression. This annual crisis period tiempo muerto the locals also call tigkiriwi – an odd period when the sugar industry’s work force collectively grumbles in hunger and pain.

In Bacolod City, the capital of the country’s reputed “sugar bowl” Negros Occidental province, farmworkers are now on the third day of tiempo muerto-related protests led by the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP)-Negros and the National Federation of Sugar Workers (NFSW), the local affiliate of the national agriworkers center UMA.

Last Wednesday, hundreds of farmworkers like Nanay Lani tore up their pay slips in a picket in front of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) regional office here in the city. Protests were also held in Escalante City, 63 kilometers north of Bacolod.

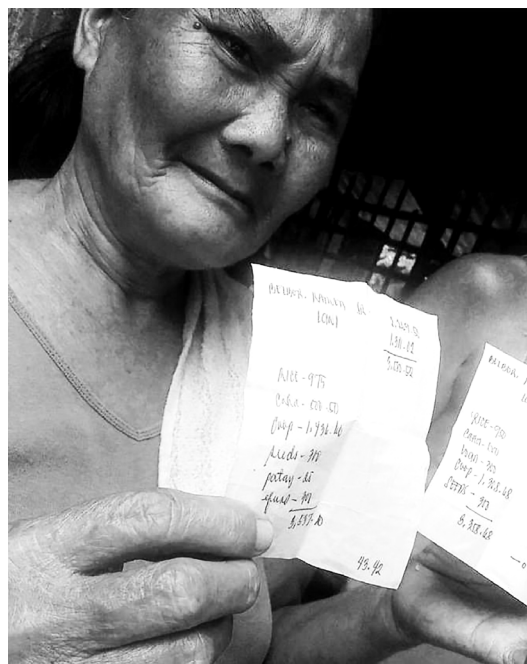
Today, farmworkers from different municipalities will converge at the Negros Occidental Provincial Capitol to form a human chain. Sugar workers demand that the provincial government’s Php 40 M calamity funds, and the multi-million Social Amelioration Fund (SAF) handled by DOLE, be utilized to provide immediate relief to affected workers.

This year, tiempo muerto is aggravated by drought caused by El Niño. The province declared a state of calamity last April. However, NFSW Chairperson Rolando Rillo says that farmworkers are not totally “helpless” during this yearly crisis period.

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Hundreds of farmworkers like Nanay Lani tore up their pay slips in a picket in front of the DOLE regional office in Bacolod City. Protests were also held in Escalante City, 63 km. north of this city.



“Negros has a long history of struggle against exploitation and oppression by the island’s elite who also hold powerful positions or influence in national politics,” said Rillo.

“Negros remains a playground of caciques and landlords. Peasant unrest is constant.”

UMA Secretary General Danilo Ramos, who joined the local protests, said that aside from immediate aid, government must support farmworkers who are asserting their land rights.

In many areas, organized farmworkers have already embarked on land cultivation initiatives. But these “bungkalan” areas most often meet violent opposition from the landlords.

“The failure of the government’s land reform program CARP is most visible here in Negros. Farmworkers will not have to beg for aid during tiempo muerto if their initiatives for food security are given full support,” said Ramos.

Life is indeed bitter for our toiling sugar workers but their organized ranks are determined to wage various struggles to end hunger and the tiempo muerto.

In Congress, UMA supports the passage of House Bill 555, or the Genuine Agrarian Reform Bill (GARB) proposed by Anakpawis Partylist. Ramos also said that government must pursue exhaustive socio-economic reforms (SER) and implement genuine land reform and national industrialization.

“A program and comprehensive agreement on SER provide us strong basis to support the ongoing peace talks between the government and the National Democratic Front (NDF). Tiempo muerto will continue to be a season of hunger and death for sugar workers every year, until the country’s fundamental land problem is addressed.” ■

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PHOTOS: AMEL SABANGAN, NADJA DE VERA, VINCENT SILARDE, EFREN RICALDE **ADDITIONAL RESEARCH:** STEVEN ANTHONY BESANA, RHEYN KAREN DAYRIT, MARY JOE ARADA **ARTWORKS:** RENAN ORTIZ, ALDEN SANTIAGO, LEEROY NEW **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:** National Federation of Sugar Workers (NFSW), Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), Anakpawis Partylist, Office of Anakpawis Rep. Ariel Casilao, AMIHAN – Nat’l Federation of Peasant Women, PAMALAKAYA – Pilipinas, SENTRA, Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants (APMM); Rural Missionaries of the Philippines (RMP)-National Office and Northern Mindanao Region (RMP-NMR); National Network of Agrarian Reform Advocates-Youth (NNARA-Youth); SINAGBAYAN; UP Manila Development Studies Dept. and Prof. Pipoy Linatoc; DLSU-College of St. Benilde Center for Social Action; Concerned Artists of the Philippines and Ms. Malu Maniquis ; KAISAHAN-Batangas; UMA-Cagayan Valley; AMBALA and TABLU; Inday Varona, Nonoy Espina, Ceradoy-Lemay family, & Kristine Malagueno.



MGA KAHINGIAN NG MGA MANGGAGAWANG-BUKID SA TUBUHAN AT MANGGAGAWA SA INDUSTRIYA NG ASUKAL AT BIOFUEL



NAPAKAHALAGA NG PAPEL NG ATING mga manggagawang agrikultural at manggagawang-bukid sa tubuhan. Kami ang katuwang ng mga magsasaka sa paglikha ng pagkain ng sambayanang Pilipino. Nag-eempleyo ng mahigit 600,000 manggagawa ang 19 lalawigan na lumilikha ng produktong asukal at biofuel mula sa tubo. Mga 5 milyong Pilipino ang umaasa sa kabuhayan sa mga tubuhan.

Kami ang lumilikha ng pagkain, subalit kami at ang aming pamilya ang walang makain at dumaranas ng matinding kagutuman at pagsasamantala. Dulot ito ng kawalan ng sariling lupang mabubungkal, monopolyo sa lupa ng mga panginoong maylupa, at dayuhang kontrol at pag-aari ng mga multinasyunal at transnasyunal na korporasyon (MNC at TNC).

Wala pa ring tunay na reporma sa lupa, at sa halip ay ipinapatupad ang mga kontra-mamamayang batas, programa at polisiya tulad ng Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP), Sugar Industry Development Act (SIDA), at mga neoliberal na patakaran at dipantay na kasunduang pang-ekonomiya gaya ng GATT-WTO, APEC, at AFTA na pawang dikta ng imperyalismo.

Pahirap ang sistemang pakyaw kung saan ang mga manggagawang-bukid sa tubuhan ay kumikita lamang ng nasa Php 1,000 hanggang

1,500 sa loob ng labinlimang araw ng pagtatrabaho sa panahon ng kabyaw o milling season; habang nasa Php 200 hanggang 500 lamang kada kinsenas ang pinakamalaking sinasahod tuwing tiempo muerto (dead season) o off-milling season.

Sa panahong ito ng matinding taggutom ay hindi namin natatamasa ang mga benepisyo mula sa Sugar Amelioration Program (SAP) upang kahit paano ay maibsan ang binabalikat na hirap. Higit na mas masahol pa ang kalagayan ng mga sakada o tinaguriang migratory sugar workers.

Dagdag pang nagpapahirap ang militarisasyon sa kanayunan at talamak na paglabag sa karapatang tao sa pangunguna ng AFP, PNP at private army at security guard ng mga panginoong maylupa, dambuhalang mga korporasyon, at iba pang mangangamkam.

Kung kaya, nagkakaisa kami na ihapag ang sumusunod na mga lehitimong panawagan para sa interes, kapakanan at kagalingan ng aming hanay at ng buong sambayanan.

Ang mga ito ay pinagtibay sa Ikalawag Pambansang Pagtitipon ng mga Manggagawa sa Asukal (2nd National Sugar Workers Summit) na ginanap sa Quezon City mula Agosto 30 - 31, 2016:

1. Ipatupad ang tunay na reporma sa lupa at pambansang industriyalisasyon. Libreng ipamahagi ang lupa sa mga magsasaka, manggagawa sa agrikultura at manggagawang-bukid. Wakasan ang monopolyo sa lupa ng mga panginoong maylupa at mga lokal at dayuhang agrikorporasyon sa bansa. Ibasura at itigil ang iba't ibang iskema na nagkakait sa karapatan sa lupa ng mga magbubukid gaya ng Stock Distribution Option (SDO), at mga Agribusiness Venture Agreement (AVA) tulad ng leaseback, contract growing, corporative scheme; maging ang sugar block farming, at rentahan o aryendo. Kamtin ang lupa at hustisya para sa mga manggagawang-bukid sa Hacienda Luisita at sa buong bansa.

2. Isabatas ang Genuine Agrarian Reform Bill (GARF) o House Bill 555 ng Anakpawis Partylist at Makabayan bloc.

3. Ibasura ang liberalisasyon sa industriya ng asukal at agrikultura ng bansa na kaakibat ng deregulasyon, pribatisasyon at denasyunalisasyon o mga neoliberal na dikta ng imperyalistang globalisasyon. Ibaklas ang agrikultura ng bansa sa GATT-WTO, APEC, AFTA at iba pang di-pantay na kasunduan sa ekonomya at kalakalan.

4. Itaas ang sahod ng mga manggagawa sa mga ilohan, planta, at manggagawang-bukid sa tubuhan. Itakwil ang sahod-alipin sa mga manggagawang agrikultural na dulot ng iskemang pakyaw, at iba pang anyo ng paglabag sa mandated daily minimum wage ng mga manggagawa sa agrikultura. Ipatupad ang pambansang minimum na sahod na Php 750 kada araw para sa mga manggagawa sa pribadong sektor.

5. Itaguyod ang ligtas at makataong kondisyon sa paggawa at kaseguruhan sa trabaho. Itigil ang kontraktwalisasyon. Parusahan ang mga lumalabag sa karapatan ng mga manggagawa at mga kaso ng pagpapabaya sa kaligtasan at kalusugan ng mga manggagawa sa mga lugar ng trabaho.

6. Ibigay ang maagap na ayuda para sa mga manggagawa sa panahon ng tiempo muerto o off-milling season, at sa tuwing may mga sakuna at kalamidad.

7. Ibalik sa mga manggagawa ang Sugar Amelioration Fund (SAF). Direktang ipamahagi ang SAF sa mga benipisyaryo sa pamamagitan ng mga unyon, organisasyon o kooperatiba ng mga manggagawang agrikultural. Ituloy ang malawakang imbestigasyon sa istatus ng implementasyon ng Social Amelioration Program (SAP) at Social Amelioration and Welfare Program (SAWP) sa industriya ng asukal at biofuel. Itulak ang kabuuang awdit sa pondo at imbentaryo ng mga proyekto, istruktura o ari-arian na naipundar nang dahil sa SAP at SAWP.

8. Maglaan ng lupaing mapapagtanman ng pagkain para sa mga manggagawang agrikultural sa mga asyenda at plantasyon. Suportahan at kilalanin ang sama-samang bungkalan at mga inisyatiba ng mga magbubukid para sa seguridad sa pagkain.

9. Itigil ang land-use at crop conversion sa mga tubuhan, na para diumano sa mga “proyektong pangkaunlaran” at agresibong ekspansyon ng mga dambuhalang plantasyon na kontrolado ng mga dayuhang agrikorporasyong MNC at TNC. Ang mga ito ay nagdudulot ng marahas na pagpapalayas at pangangamkam, pagkasira ng kalikasan, at kagutuman sa mga komunidad.

10. Ipatupad ang pambansang industriyalisasyon at mga kongkretong hakbang sa pagpapaunlad ng industriya ng asukal at biofuel nang may malalim na pagsasaalang-alang sa kagalingan at kapakanan ng mga manggagawa sa industriya; sa pangangailangan sa konsumo ng mamamayang Pilipino; at sa pagpapaunlad ng iba pang lokal na industriya na nakadepende sa mga produktong mula sa tubo.

11. Itigil ang militarisasyon sa kanayunan, pampulitikang panunupil, pamamaslang at paglabag sa karapatang tao. Hustisya para sa mga biktima. Ibasura ang gawa-gawang kaso laban sa mga manggagawa at magbubukid. Karampatang bayad-pinsala sa mga sinirang pananim at ari-arian ng mga biktima. Palayain ang lahat ng bilanggong pulitikal.

12. Suportahan ang usapang pangkapayapaan sa pagitan ng Gobyerno ng Republika ng Pilipinas at Pambansa-Demokratikong Prente ng Pilipinas (GPH-

NDFP peace talks) lalo na hinggil sa pagtalakay at pagkakasundo sa kinakailangang mga sosyo-ekonomikong reporma gaya ng libreng pamamahagi ng lupa at pambansang industriyalisasyon. Ang malalim na pagtalakay at pagresolba sa mga ugat ng armadong tunggalian ang siyang tutugon sa hinaing ng mamamayang naghihimagsik at magdudulot ng makatarungan at pangmatalagang kapayapaan sa ating bayan.

Nilagdaan ng mga kinatawan ng mga unyon, pederasyon, asosasyon at organisasyon ng mga manggagawang-bukid sa tubuhan at mga manggagawa sa mga ilohan at planta ng asukal at bioethanol.

PINAGTIBAY:

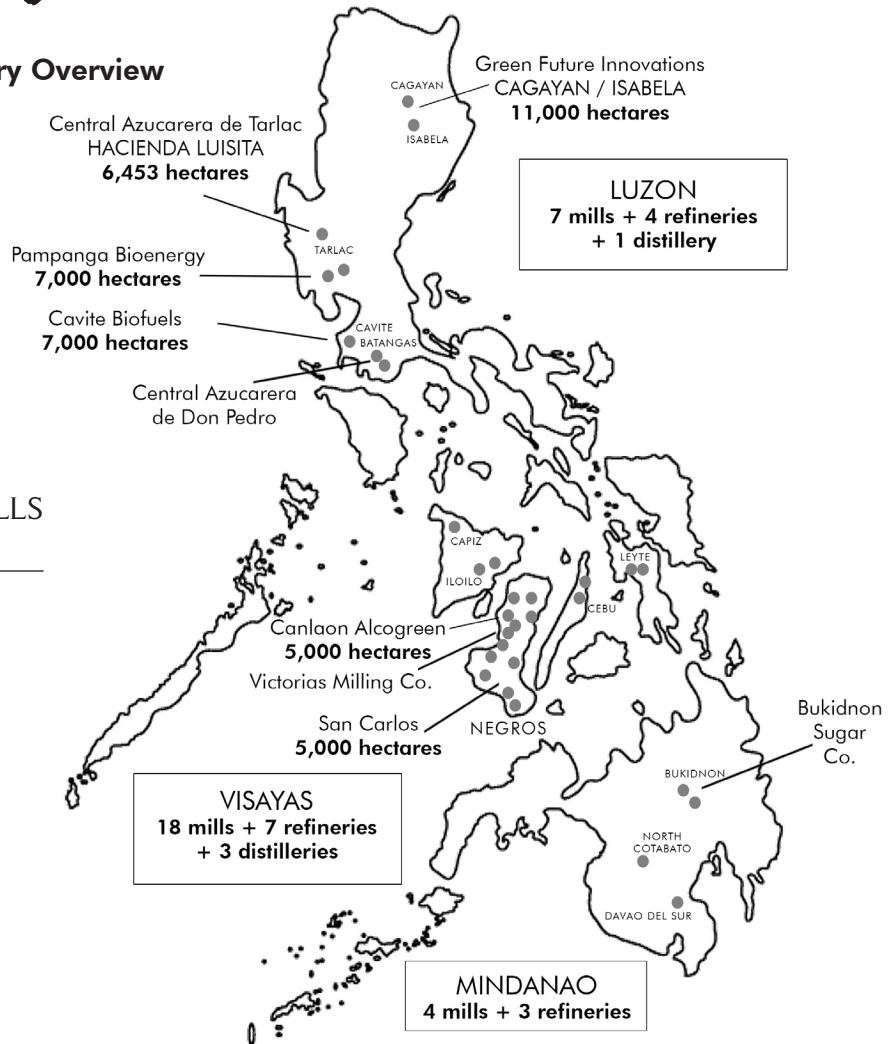
Unyon ng mga Manggagawa sa Agrikultura (UMA) | National Federation of Sugar Workers (NFSW) | KAISAHAN – Batangas | Alyansa ng mga Manggagawang-Bukid sa Asyenda Luisita (AMBALA) | UMA-Isabela, Cagayan Valley | Nagkahiusang Mag-uuma sa Davao del Sur (NAMADDS) | OGYON-Bukidnon



Sugar Workers Summit

Sugar Industry Overview

MAP OF PHILIPPINE SUGAR MILLS & BIOETHANOL DISTILLERIES



Sugar Industry Crop Year 2011-2012*

Data from the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA)

Industry Contribution to PHL economy	P70B annually
Area Planted	422,500 Hectares
No. Farmers**	62,000
No. of Operating Sugar Mills	29
Total Milling Capacity	185,000 Tons Cane / Day
No. of Operating Sugar Refineries	14
Total Refining Capacity	8,000 MT/Day
No. of Bioethanol Distilleries	4
Total Annual Rated Capacity	133 million liters

* Note that there is no mention of sugar workers statistics in this overview. **There are 600,000 workers in the sugar industry according to the SRA.**

** Farmers = sugar planters. Data does not reflect if they contribute to productive labor.

SDO Areas in Negros

Hacienda or Corporation	Location	Landlord / Management	Area in hectares	No. of "beneficiaries"
Archie Fishpond, Inc.,	Hda. Pag-asa, Brgy. Luna, Cadiz City	Arsenio Al. Acuna Agricultural Corp	102	155
Archie Al. Acuna Agricultural Corp.,	Hda. Dau, Brgy. Burgos, Cadiz City	Arsenio Al. Acuna Agricultural Corp.	108	93
Elenita Agricultural Dev't Corp.	Hda. Elenita, Brgy. Burgos, Cadiz City	Arsenio Al. Acuna Agricultural Corp.	113	82
Ma. Clara Marine Ventures, Inc.,	Brgy. Calumanggan, Bago City	Arsenio Al. Acuna Agricultural Corp.	58	58
Palma Kabankalan Agricultural Corp.,	Hda. Palma, Ilog	Arsenio Al. Acuna Agricultural Corp.	219	113
Tabigue Marine Ventures, Inc.	Hda. Tabigue, Brgy. Tabigue, EB Magalona	Arsenio Al. Acuna Agricultural Corp.	50	64
Ledesma Hermanos Agricultural Corp.,	Hda. Fortuna, Brgy. Buluangan, San Carlos	Julio A. Ledesma	1,024	747
Negros Industrial By-Products and Processes, Inc.,	Hda. Najalin, Brgy. Nagasi, La Carlota	Rodulph E. Jularbal and Joaquin G. Teves	438	273
SyCip Plantation, Inc.	Negros Oriental	Teves Family	685	

Agrarian Cases in Negros Island

LAND MONOPOLY OR THE TRADITIONAL reign of hacenderos is still very much pronounced in the Negros Island Region, where around 48% of Philippine sugarcane is produced. Aside from the prominent Hacienda Luisita case, the situation of thousands of sugar farmworkers in Negros prove that the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) was a complete sham.

Continuing land disputes clearly show that CARP was nothing but a failed, bloody and costly pro-landlord program. Sugar workers still push for a genuine program for land reform and national industrialization that may be implemented through the adoption of a true pro-peasant policy, enactment of the Genuine Agrarian Reform Bill (GARB) or exhaustive socio-economic reforms through the peace process.

In Negros, it is reported that only 40% of the land reform target was implemented. Agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs) may have received their certificates of land ownership award (CLOA) but actual installation or physical land distribution remains to be seen. There is a need to investigate snail-paced land acquisition and distribution (LAD) processing on one hand, and speedy cancellation of CLOAs on the other.

There are numerous cases of erroneous Notices of Coverage (NOCs), "chop-chop titles," dummy beneficiaries and other schemes by landlords to evade land reform coverage such as those openly promoted by CARP and DAR – the SDO scheme (revoked in Luisita but still implemented in Negros), various AVAs and the "corporative scheme" implemented by Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco, Jr in his Negros landholdings.

Aryendo

THE ARYENDO — A LAND LEASE SCHEME WITH probable roots dating back to the Spanish colonial period — reemerged as a phenomenon at the height of CARP implementation, especially in vast sugar landholdings in Negros, Southern Tagalog, Central Luzon and Bukidnon. For genuine land reform to be implemented, the aryendo scheme must be put to a stop.

In Negros, the aryendo works as a means to evade CARP coverage, to disperse the employment and therefore divide the ranks of sugar farmworkers who are clamoring for land reform. Big landholdings or haciendas are subdivided by the old landlords and leased to new aryendadors or sugar planters who usually belong also to the landlord class, and new players like small investors and so-called “financiers.” The usual rate for the lease in Negros is at Php 15,000 to 20,000 per hectare per year in low-lying areas, while small planters usually pay Php 8,000 per hectare per year in upland areas. In addition, the former “regular hacienda workers” or *dumaan* now endure even harsher conditions under the unstable aryendo set-up.

In Batangas, the rate is reported to be at Php 28,000 per hectare per year. In Calaca town, 110 hectares of sugarcane plantation was leased to 3 other big planters, Marasigan, Toreja and Castillo. In Nasugbu town, prominent aryendadors are Samonte, Ruben Rodriguez, Andal,

Sumague and others. The aryendo in Batangas and Negros also covers so-called “agrarian reform communities.”

The aryendo in these supposed “land reform” areas is an illicit leaseback scheme where cash-strapped beneficiaries fall victim to swindle and coercion. The aim is to reconcentrate the farmlots purportedly distributed to ARBs, back to the effective control of old and new landlords, usually through brokers and dummy financiers. In such areas like Bukidnon and Negros, ARBs who cannot pay the high cost of land amortization are forced to enter into these agreements. The rate in Bukidnon is from Php 5,000 (Lobregat) to 25,000 (Floirendo) per hectare per year. The rate is usually lower than the yearly amortization required by DAR, therefore defeating the purpose of leasing out the land in order to pay for arrears. There are cases in Bukidnon where the aryendadors are also giant plantation owners or partners like Yaba who is in connivance with local and foreign agricorporations who wish to convert sugar areas into banana, pineapple and other export crop plantations.

Hacienda Luisita in Tarlac has the most peculiar case of aryendo. Even before the 2012 Supreme Court decision for total land distribution, the Cojuangco-Aquinos already unleashed this systematic leaseback scheme through the Luisita Estate Management (LEM) or Cojuangco dummies composed of loyal farm managers, supervisors and business partners. The aryendo was institutionalized by LEM through divisive tactics, disinformation and legal harassment and eviction warnings, primarily to thwart the flourishing *bungkalan* or land cultivation initiative that organized farmworkers started during the Hacienda Luisita strike in

Aryendo is a land lease scheme with probable roots dating back to the Spanish colonial period



2005. When the aryendo was unleashed by the Cojuangcos around 2008, the rate was at a measly Php 1,000 per hectare per year. The scheme targeted former sugar workers who were discouraged by bad palay harvests and debts.

The implementation of fake land distribution by BS Aquino's DAR in 2013 strongly complemented and reinforced the aryendo. DAR personnel were reported to be in active connivance with Cojuangco-Aquino financier dummies in implementing this evil scheme. Beneficiaries were forced to enter into long-term transactions of 3-10 years for a minimum of Php 7,000 per .66 hectare, the size of the farmlot allocated by DAR. Farmlots were already leased even before the "installation process," because photocopies of land reform documents hastily awarded to beneficiaries by DAR conveniently served as "collateral."

Beneficiaries saw it impractical to till the awarded farmlots due to dislocation caused by the tamblo or raffle system of lot allocation, uncertain amortization requirements, and state violence unleashed against farmers who dared question the fake distribution process. The Aquino government's warning that the aryendo will lead to the wholesale disqualification of land reform beneficiaries has impelled farmers to enter into the sale of farmlots, also through the coercion of illicit buyers.

The current report that around 97% of Hacienda Luisita is already "distributed" is refuted by the fact that aryendadors now lord over Luisita, after being coddled by the previous BS Aquino regime and its minions at the DAR. The 4,099 hectares put under BS Aquino's tamblo land reform are now controlled by the likes of Virginia Torres (now deceased), Arsenio Valentino, Noel Villanueva, and the "new owners" of the CAT, Fernando Cojuangco

and Martin Lorenzo, who also control another leaseback firm, Agrikulto, Inc.

Landgrabs & Land-Use Conversion

LAND-USE AND CROP CONVERSION IN SUGARCANE areas became rampant because it is used by traditional landlords to evade land reform. The SRA has even encouraged crop conversion and advised sugar barons in Negros and Bukidnon to tie-up with MNCs and TNCs engaged in giant export crop plantations – like pineapple, banana and oil palm – for them to be spared from the onslaught of trade liberalization in the sugar industry.

Traditional sugar areas in Negros, Batangas, Tarlac and Pampanga are also converted to industrial parks, eco-tourism zones, residential areas and now – PPP solar power projects. Like the promise of "biofuel," environment-friendly energy sources are peddled to the public to legitimize landgrabbing, disenfranchisement of ARBs, and outright, violent eviction and dislocation of farmers and sugar workers.

In Hacienda Luisita, the 55-hectare Tarlac Solar Power Project (TSPP) is an anomalous PPP project entered into by the DoE and PetroSolar, a sister company of RCBC, a banking corporation currently embroiled in a controversial land dispute with Luisita farmers. President BS Aquino sanctioned this project despite glaring irregularities also related to the bogus land distribution process that his administration implemented.

In Negros, there are more than a dozen proposed and ongoing solar power projects in sugar areas such as Bacolod, Silay, Victorias, Cadiz, San Carlos, and La Carlota cities; and Bago, Murcia and Manapla towns. Batangas also has its share of dubious solar power plant projects in the towns of Lian, Balayan, Nasugbu, Tuy and Calatagan.



“Earth-friendly” energy projects are peddled to the public to legitimize land-grabbing

Slave-like Wages and Miserable Working Conditions

AGRICULTURAL WORKERS' WAGES, ESPECIALLY IN traditional sugar areas such as Negros, remain in the lowest, slave-like levels despite profits amassed and vulgar opulence displayed by hacenderos. Historically, the blood and sweat of sugar farmworkers fueled the economic and political influence of the biggest landlord clans. The political clout and state power relished by these names came from the hard toil of sugar workers – Cojuangco, Aquino, Roxas, Araneta, Benedicto, Zubiri, Ledesma, Torres and others.

According to government data, agricultural workers endure the lowest wage rates among workers in every region. The rates, from Php 235 (Eastern Visayas) to Php 334 (Central Luzon) for farm workers, and Php 262 to 364 for mill workers, are but a sorry fraction of the living wage of P1,096 – not even half the amount an average Filipino family needs for their daily subsistence, as prescribed by a 2016 study of IBON Foundation.

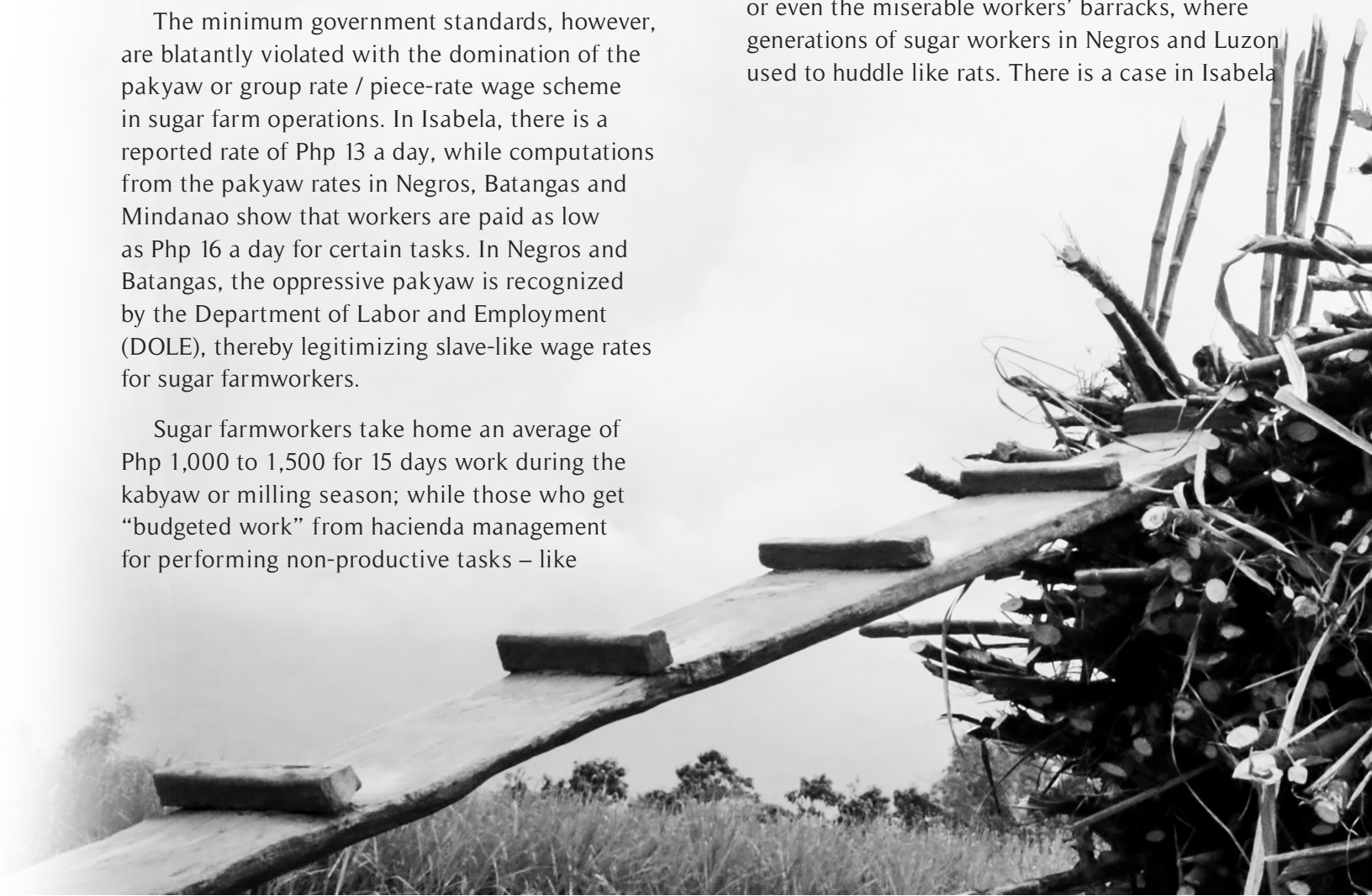
The minimum government standards, however, are blatantly violated with the domination of the pakyaw or group rate / piece-rate wage scheme in sugar farm operations. In Isabela, there is a reported rate of Php 13 a day, while computations from the pakyaw rates in Negros, Batangas and Mindanao show that workers are paid as low as Php 16 a day for certain tasks. In Negros and Batangas, the oppressive pakyaw is recognized by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), thereby legitimizing slave-like wage rates for sugar farmworkers.

Sugar farmworkers take home an average of Php 1,000 to 1,500 for 15 days work during the kabyaw or milling season; while those who get “budgeted work” from hacienda management for performing non-productive tasks – like

ronda (nightwatch) and cutting grass – during tiempo muerto or off-milling season take home a maximum of only Php 200 to 500 every 15 days.

These wage rates do not reflect the additional burden, exploitation and dismal conditions suffered by farmworkers – especially the sakada or migratory sugar workers – in the hands of despotic landlords, the supervisors or enkargado, the lead men or kabo and kapatas and the contractors or kontratistas. They usually deduct wages for tithing, donations, favors and their “cut” for recruiting workers. Other expenses, such as transportation to the work place as reported in Isabela, are also deducted from wages.

The sakadas still endure subhuman working and living conditions, prompting contractors to hide them from labor officials and the media. Particularly in Isabela where cane production is relatively new, the know-how and efficiency of long-time sugar workers from Tarlac, Negros and even from Mindanao became quite in demand at first. The sakadas did not have potable water or even the miserable workers' barracks, where generations of sugar workers in Negros and Luzon used to huddle like rats. There is a case in Isabela



where sleeping workers were run over by a truck when they sought temporary shelter underneath the said vehicle. Workers are also transported to cane farms during ungodly hours and made to wait for work under the rain or scorching heat.

Workers in the traditional hacienda set-up also endure usurious charges for basic consumer goods such as rice, canned goods and soap from the management or “cooperative” store. This cycle of debt prevents workers from taking home any cash – many hacienda laborers work only to pay off their debts. Discrimination, or lower wage rates for female workers and the sakada is also reported, especially in upland areas of Bukidnon and Negros.

The problem of child labor, prevalent in haciendas and among the sakada, is the result of the miserable situation of working parents.

This situation is further aggravated by the annual off-milling season or tiempo muerto, when work in sugar areas become scarce or completely absent.

This crop year, tiempo muerto was made even worse by drought caused by the El Niño phenomenon. Isabela, Negros Island, North Cotabato, Davao del Sur and Bukidnon are among the sugar areas that declared a state of calamity.



Latest Wage Rates in Sugarcane Areas in Philippine Peso (Php)

Area	Wage Order / Effectivity	Non-Agri (Mill)	Plantation	Non-plantation
Region II, Cagayan Valley, Isabela Cagayan	Wage Order No. RTWPBII-17 May 14, 2016	300.00	280.00	
Region III, Central Luzon, Tarlac, Pampanga	Wage Order No. RBIII-19 January 1, 2016	334.00	318.00	
Region IV-A, CALABARZON, Batangas	Wage Order No. IVA-17 July 1, 2016	356.50	331.50	311.50
Region VI, Western Visayas, Panay, Negros Occidental	Wage Order No. RBVI-22 May 2, 2015	298.50	266.50	256.50
Region VII, Central Visayas, Cebu, Negros Oriental	Wage Order No. ROVII-19 October 10, 2015	310.00	303.00 (Sugar areas in Cebu cities)	290.00 (Sugar areas in Cebu towns, & whole of Negros Oriental)
REGION VIII, Eastern Visayas, Leyte	Wage Order No. RB VIII-19 February 12, 2017	285.00	251.00	245.00
REGION X, Northern Mindanao, Bukidnon	Wage Order No. RX-18 July 03, 2015	313.00	301.00	
REGION XI, Davao Region, Davao del Sur	Wage Order No. RTWPB-XI-19 December 16, 2016	340.00	335.00	
REGION XII, SOCCSKSARGEN, Cotabato	Wage Order No. RB XII-19 October 9, 2016	295.00	272.00	

CASE STUDY

Workers' Wages at Victorias Milling Corporation (VMC), Victorias City, Negros Occidental*

* Workers are now contracted through an agency, Global Skill Provider

Daily Wage

Accounting/Records	P330
Dump Truck Driver	P335
Repair and Maintenance	P385
Repair and Maintenance	P404





Pakyaw rates in Davao del Sur

Average labor cost per hectare = Php 30,000

Minimum net income of planter per hectare = Php 80,000

If wages are doubled, planters will still earn a minimum of Php 20,000 per hectare

** The rates are almost similar to current rates in Batangas, Bukidnon and Negros*

***laksa = 10,000 pieces*

Task	Wage Rate	Manpower required	Ave. Time to Finish	Daily Ave.Wage
Hornal	P1,500-2000 / ha.	5 persons	2 days	
Pananaad pagkakarga (loading)	P500 / laksa, 4-5 laksa*			
Diskarga (unloading)	P100 / laksa x 5 laksa	5 persons	3-4 hrs	
Pag-aalis ng talopak	P200 / laksa x 5 laksa	5 persons	2-3 days	
Bubod	P350 / laksa x 5 laksa	5 persons	4 days	P16 / day
Araro/tabon	P1500 / ha.	3 persons	1-2 days	
Tabon ng tao	P300/has	3 persons	½ day	
Paghahanda ng pagtiimplahan ng spray- herbicide (lgib)	P7/container x 33 container			
Pag-spray ng herbicide	P250/drum x 3 drums	1 person	4-5 days	P226/day
Hulip (loading) bubod, alis ng talopak at tabon	P2500 / laksa	3 persons	5-6 days	P138 / day
Fertilizer application	P 1500 / ha.	5 person	1 araw	
Sampay	P1500 / ha.	1 person	3 days	
Halabas	P1500 / ha.	1person	4 days	
Tastas/sampay	P1500-P2000 / ha.	1 person	4 days	
Halabas	P1500/ha.	5 persons	4-5 days	P75
Paglilinis sa tabihan	P1000/ha.	1 person	5 days	
Tapas, karga	P118-200/ tons x 10 tons	8 persons	1-2 days	
Loading Allowance	P300/load	8 persons		
Paghahakot kung hindi mapasok ng truck	P3/file x 500 file/truck, ave 70 tons/ ha. = 3,500 files x P3 = P 10,500	8 persons	3-4 weeks	

Benefits and Job Security

THE MECHANISMS FOR BENEFITS AMONG “REGULAR HACIENDA WORKERS” – OR THE DUMAAN, as they are called in Negros – such as the Social Security System (SSS), housing, and healthcare are usually reflected in their pay slips. Wages are further reduced due to these contribution deductions. But over the years, it is observed that only a very small percentage of the sugar workforce can actually avail of these benefits. Most farmworkers’ contributions are deliberately withheld by landlord-employers.

These unremitted contributions are only discovered by the workers once they retire – those who have toiled for decades are told that their contributions are not enough for them to avail of the guaranteed pension. Those who meet accidents in the workplace also discover that they cannot avail of loans or any benefits due to insufficient contributions. Many do not get any form of compensation if accidents or deaths occur outside of work.

Pakyaw rates in Hacienda Cumabat, Silay City, Negros Occidental (60+ hectare farm)

Average Wages (4 respondents): Php 1,980 for 15 days work
 Average Take Home Pay of respondents: Php 450 (with debts deducted)

Task	Wage Rate	Manpower Needed	Ave. Time to Finish	Ave. Daily wage
Karga	P60/tonelada (pakyaw) P60/hectare (pakyaw) x 4 hectares	3 tao 9 tao	6 oras kada araw 1 araw	P 26.66
Tapas Karga	P300/tao (arawan) 20 tonelada P3000 kinsenas (pakyaw) 1 truck	10 tao 8 tao	4 oras 1 araw	P 300
Nagdadamo	P1589 kada ektarya (pakyaw) P120/tao (kada ektarya) (pakyaw)	15 tao 20+ tao	3 oras 3 oras	P 282.48 P 16
Pamatdan	P300-400/tao/ laksa (pakyaw) P587 kada laksa (pakyaw)	1 tao 15 tao	2 days 1/2 araw	P150-200 P 78.26
Nagtatanim	P1800 kada 3 laksa (pakyaw)	12 tao	1/2 araw	P 300

Pakyaw rates in Hacienda San Antonio, Escalante City, Negros Occidental (70 hectares)

Average Wages (10 respondents): Php 1,866.67 for 15 days work
 Take Home Pay of respondents: Zero or negative (debts deducted)

Task	Wage Rate	Manpower required	Ave. Time to Finish	Ave. Daily Wage
nagtatanim	P600 kada laksa (pakyaw)	30 tao	1 araw	P 140
nag-aabono	P80 kada sako (pakyaw) x 20 bags	30 tao	3 oras	P 142.22
nagdadamo	P2,000 kada ektarya (pakyaw)	30 tao	4 oras	P 133.33
karga tapas	P170 kada tonelada (pakyaw)	10 tao	1 araw	
pamatdan	P500 kada laksa (pakyaw)	30 tao	Depende sa bilis	P 16.66

Only 5% of farmworkers in Negros can actually avail of their SSS benefits, according to NFSW. Anomalies and corruption of SSS contributions are also reported in Hacienda Luisita where the Cojuangcos allegedly failed to remit sugar workers' contributions from 1985-1990. The SSS's poor collection efficiency of 40% must be investigated, especially in relation to the plight of sugar workers nationwide.

Generally, many sugar farmworkers beholden to landlords or still trapped in the feudal world of the hacienda – are yet to grasp the concept of these benefits as workers' rights. Their rights to housing, education, sick and maternity leaves, overtime pay, wage differentials, and bonuses, are dangled by landlords and millers as favors and “utang na loob” (debt of gratitude) that reinforce the feudal patronage system. Benefits mandated by law are generally unheard of – only unionized workers dare to struggle to avail of rightful remuneration and money claims. There are so many cases where farmworkers are instantly terminated and threatened by management once they assert their rights – more so when farm workers begin to completely question the feudal reign of landlords and clamor for land reform.

The rights of sugar farmworkers have been undermined further by the spread of the aryendo system. The ranks of those who used to be regular workers in haciendas are dispersed to different planters who have complete disregard for decent wages, rights, and benefits. In many cases, those who used to be regular workers are no longer hired in favor of even cheaper labor brought in by the aryendador. In the aryendo set-up in so called land reform areas, the ARBs who lease out their land lose everything – they have no say in production, and they are no longer hired by aryendadores even as docile farmhands.

Meanwhile, more and more sugar mill workers encounter retrenchment and contractualization. Most are forced to put up with reduced or lost benefits and anomalies in their separation pay. In some mills, as reported in the country's largest sugar mill, Victorias Milling Corporation (VMC), agency or contractual hiring is now the norm, meaning workers no longer enjoy the same benefits – as limited as these may be – as those directly hired by the company. There is also heightened repression and threats of eviction for workers who used to possess housing benefits within the VMC compound, now that they are only hired through agencies, or have completely lost their tenure.

In May 2015, the new management of the Central Azucarera de Tarlac (CAT), under businessman Martin Lorenzo, imposed massive retrenchment or forced termination of all of its workers. Some long-time workers opted to go along with their early and forced “retirement,” but all the young workers rehired by CAT must begin again as contractuales.



*The
Social
Amelioration
Program
or SAP
cannot solve
the roots of
hunger and
poverty in
sugar areas*

SAP and SAWP

With the Social Amelioration Program (SAP) in the sugar and biofuel industries, it is as if government is conceding to the bitter reality of dismal working conditions and slave-like wages in sugar areas. The SAP, according to the DOLE is “a production sharing scheme instituted in the sugar and biofuels industries (that) strengthens the rights of sugar and biofuels workers to their just share in the fruits of production by augmenting their incomes and institutionalizing the mechanism.. to enable the workers and their families to enjoy decent living. The components of these programs include cash bonus distribution, maternity benefit, death benefit and socio-economic projects.”

The first program was enacted in Negros in 1952 as RA 809, while the so-called “Marcos bonus” was institutionalized in the 1970s, with a series of memos and decrees by Marcos and the creation of the Sugar Industry Foundation, Inc. (SIFI) in 1971. The current law implementing the SAP for the sugar industry, RA 6982, was enacted by a sugar empress, Pres. Corazon Aquino, in 1991, while the Social Amelioration and Welfare Program (SAWP) for the biofuel industry was institutionalized via Pres. Arroyo’s 2006 Biofuels Act.

As with the usual benefits that workers are entitled to under law, most sugar workers are not even aware of the bonuses, benefits and projects under the SAP and SAWP. While mill workers get yearly sugar amelioration bonuses as high as Php 12,000, the bonuses for farmworkers are way too low – with an average of Php 200 but can go as low as Php 2, according to NFSW members interviewed for a recent study by UP Manila students. Some do not even

bother to claim their share. In Bukidnon, OGYON reports that farm workers do not receive amelioration bonuses, instead the employers merely organize outings or Christmas parties. In Batangas, KAISAHAN reports that the cash bonus funds (CBF) are withheld by millers and planters and never reach the farm workers, especially since 80% of those who perform the heaviest tasks are sakada or migratory sugar workers.

There is overwhelming evidence, coming from the local unions and associations, and the government itself, through the Commission on Audit (COA), that corruption and anomalies are rampant in SAP implementation. The latest data from the DOLE-BWSC says that a total of Php 606 million in unclaimed and undistributed CBF since 1991 are still unliquidated. The total figure of Php 4.689 billion worth of CBF supposedly distributed to sugar workers also raises questions since these are validated only by “special payrolls” accomplished by millers and planters who have sole discretion over the handling of the fund.

For the SAWP program, the COA reported that the BWSC received Php 24 million for the socio-economic program related fund (20% of lien) from bio-ethanol producers in 2014, meaning that around Php 12.2 million was available for CBF distribution to workers, both in the cane fields and distilleries that year. UMA-Isabela reports that only the supervisors, guards, aides, technicians, drivers, welders and plant operators received cash bonuses from SAWP – but only for that sole crop year. Other workers were just told that they are not entitled to the bonus. No other yearly bonus was ever released to workers since bioethanol production started in the area, according to reports.

Organized sugar workers see the SAP as a mere palliative program which cannot solve the roots of hunger and poverty in the haciendas and sugar areas – it is in fact used to reinforce the feudal patronage system.

There are reports that local DOLE officials, and miller and planters associations flaunt SAP projects as their own “goodwill” to workers, or utilize property and infrastructure as their personal facilities. But in uncovering the loopholes and irregularities of this flawed government program, sugar workers are all the more motivated to strengthen their ranks to point out the main, essential issues and push for exhaustive socio-economic reforms.



Status of Cash Bonus Program Implementation

as of 2nd Quarter of 2016 (Source: DOLE-BWSC)

	1991-1992 to 2003-2004	2004-2005 to 2015-2016	TOTAL
Amount of CBF remitted	2,292,583,730.96	3,103,248,352.82	5,395,832,083.78
Amount of CBF released	2,226,325,374.41	2,803,630,606.07	5,029,955,980.48
Amount of UNCLAIMED CBF	66,258,356.55	299,617,746.75	365,876,103.30
UNCLAIMED CBF remitted to DOLE – RO	50,991,335.09	39,739,973.87	90,731,328.96
Amount of CBF distributed	2,162,390,922.97	2,527,103,094.26	4,689,494,017.23
Number of Workers Benefitted	8,655,568	8,107,596	16,763,164*
UNDISTRIBUTED / UNLIQUIDATED CBF	63,934,451.44	276,527,511.81	340,461,963.25
UNDISTRIBUTED / UNLIQUIDATED CBF remitted to DOLE- RO	5,234,120.30	4,231,340.83	9,465,461.13
Total UNCLAIMED & UNDISTRIBUTED / UNLIQUIDATED CBF	130,192,807.99	576,145,258.56	706,338,066.55
TOTAL UCBF REMITTED TO DOLE-RO	56,225,475.39	43,971,314.70	100,196,790.09
AMOUNT OF UCBF STILL FOR LIQUIDATION by mills, planters associations and planter-members	73,967,332.60	532,173,943.86	606,141,276.47

Sugar and Globalization

SUGAR IS ONE OF THE INDUSTRIES PUT UNDER trade liberalization by the WTO – to remove “preferential treatments” and subject sugar to open trade. In the US, the 2008 Farm Bill supports the local production of beet and sugarcane through restrictions in sugar imports. This utilizes tariff rate quota and enjoys a subsidy of US\$4 billion.

In the EU, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) imposes production quotas; high local prices and export subsidies for local producers; and import tariffs to limit competition. This results to overproduction. Sugar dumped by the EU (sold lower than the actual cost of local production) to the world market causes world prices to drop. The WTO removed its preferential treatment to the ACP (Africa, Caribbean, Pacific) in 2006. Prices under the US tariff rate quota

system are often higher than world market prices.

Sugar will enter the 10th and final year of the Minimum Access Volume (MAV) of 64,050 MT of raw sugar, with tariff rates of 50 percent. The tariff rate for those exceeding the MAV, is at 65 percent. Sugar tariffs are

among the highest in agricultural trade. The Most Favored Nation (MFN) tariffs are unchanged since 2005.

According to deadlines set by the WTO, the EU will remove its production quotas and its minimum payments to sugar-beet farmers by October 2017, which means that EU sugar will soon flood the global market. Meanwhile, the US maintains its subsidies for local production, production quotas and import taxes.

There is also the so-called “ASEAN integration” which removes tariffs between Southeast Asian nations by 2015. Thailand is next to Brazil as top sugar exporter, and it provides generous subsidies to its local producers – an issue that Brazil already brought up before the WTO. Compared to the Philippines, which only has 60 ton canes per hectare productivity – Thailand has 80 ton canes per hectare; Philippine sugar mills have an average of 60% capacity – Thailand has 95%; Haulage is 2530% of the operating cost in the Philippines – it is 0% in Thailand. Thai sugar farms are mechanized and enjoy outstanding infrastructure.

The problem is neoliberalism itself as illustrated by the onslaught of WTO and AFTA. But Philippine policy is in effect saying that we fight the evil of neoliberalism with the implementation of the same destructive neoliberal impositions now found in the provisions of the Sugarcane Industry Development Act (SIDA), the SRA’s Sugarcane Industry Roadmap, and the Biofuels Law.

Sugar industry players view land reform as a big hindrance, even with CARP retention limits or integration of ARBs to form ARCs and sugar block farms. This is likewise promoted by the Sugar Industry Roadmap 2020.

The NFSW flag flies high at a land cultivation area (LCA) in Negros



The low “collateral value” of sugarcane lands is also viewed as a hindrance to the development of the industry. Neoliberal policies are pushed to find market value for land that is equal to private sector ownership. The construction of mills, roads, bridges and other infrastructure for the sugar industry must also be competitive – public funds are being allocated for the private sector to amass profits. The 2007 Biofuels Law also envisioned to combine gas and diesel to biofuels, but only 25% comes from local production, meaning that the country continues to be dependent on imported ethanol from US, Brazil, Thailand, and India.

“Bungkalan”

THE PRACTICE OF SUGAR WORKERS CULTIVATING farmlots for food production was initiated by NFSW unions in Negros, as their assertion of land rights and even as part of collective bargaining with employers or landlords. Meanwhile, the bungkalan or land cultivation campaign initiated by farmworkers during the height of the Hacienda Luisita people’s strike in 2005, has endured despite the odds posed by the powerful landlords.

From 2012 up to the present, bungkalan areas in Luisita went under constant attack – crops were bulldozed, huts razed to the ground, peasants were evicted and barred from the land. A bungkalan leader, Dennis dela Cruz, was killed within the premises of the organization’s pilot farm in 2013.

Despite the odds, the experience in Negros and Hacienda Luisita has empowered farmworkers to boost production and sustainable agriculture and organic farming practices through unity, cooperation and fierce struggle.



Peasant leader Ariel Diaz was murdered barely a week after UMA’s Sugar Workers Summit. Portrait by Alden Santiago.

Sugar workers seek that positive experiences from the bungkalan be further enriched and that the very practice of land cultivation for food security in destitute sugar areas, especially during tiempo muerto, be recognized and supported.

Peasant Killings

ONLY A WEEK AFTER THIS SUGAR WORKERS Summit, on September 7, 2016, one of its delegates, Ariel Diaz, UMA organizer and local leader of DAGAMI-Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) in Delfin Albano town, Isabela, was brutally murdered.

In Negros Occidental, the killing of NFSW leader Alexander Ceballos on January 20, 2017 coincided with protest actions in Manila commemorating the 30th year of the Mendiola Massacre.

We continue to seek justice for Ariel Diaz, Alexander Ceballos and all other victims of political killings and state repression. ■



Si Tatay **Alexander “Ka Sander” Ceballos** ay hindi lang naging matibay na haligi ng sariling tahanan, kundi naging huwarang lingkod ng mga manggagawa at magsasaka. Nabuhay siya ng isang makabuluhang buhay! Siya ang patunay na hindi kailangang maging mayaman o makapangyarihan upang makapaglingkod sa masa. Pagpupugay sa iyong kabayanihan, Ka Sander!



Portrait of Alexander Ceballos by Leeroy New.

Ngayo’y aninag na lang sa sulok ng isipan
 Ngiti mong naguguhit sa mga larawan
 Tinig mo’y malimit nang mapakikingan
 Sa alaala na lamang mababalik-balikan.

Lubos naming nadarama sa tuwina
 Latay na hatid ng pighati at pangungulila,
 Pagmamahal ng isang ama at kasama
 Ang sa ami’y iyong habili’t pamana.

Sa aming puso’y buhay ka kailanman
 Hatid mong pag-asa mananatiling tangan,
 Makasama ka’y aming karangalan
 Liwanag sa daan na aming patutunguhan.

Tatay Sander, hindi ka namin makakalimutan
 Ang dakila mong gawa ang aming kanlungan,
 Muling magbabangon at yapak mo’y susundan
 Patuloy ang laban para sa pagkamit ng katarungan!

Jenith Barros

IKALAWANG SUGAR WORKERS SUMMIT, GINANAP SA QC

MATAGUMPAY NA INILUNSAK NG UNYON NG MGA Manggagawa sa Agrikultura (UMA) katuwang ang National Federation of Sugar Workers (NFSW)-Negros ang Ikalawang Pambansang Pagtitipon ng mga Manggagawa sa Asukal (2nd National Sugar Workers Summit) mula Agosto 30-31, 2016 sa DOLE Occupational Safety and Health Center sa Quezon City.

Dumalo sa pagtitipon ang mga delegado mula sa Isabela, Batangas, Tarlac, Bukidnon, Davao del Sur, Negros Occidental at Panay. Nakilahok naman ang mga militanteng organisasyon at progresibong institusyon gaya ng KMP, Anakpawis, Pamalakaya, Amihan, NNARA-Youth, KMU, EILER, CTUHR at IOHSAD.

Ka Paeng ng KMP, hinirang na DAR Secretary



ISANG BATIKANG LIDER-MAGSASAKA ANG hinirang bilang Kalihim ng Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) sa ilalim ng bagong administrasyong Duterte, batay sa rekomendasyon ng National Democratic Front o NDF.

Tinanggap ni Rafael “Ka Paeng” Mariano ang hamon na pumaloob sa gabinete ni Duterte. Sa unang araw niya sa trabaho noong Hulyo 1, agad namang naiulat ang panggugulo ng mga Cojuangco-Aquino sa Hacienda Luisita. ■



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HULYO - DISYEMBRE 2016

Tulad ng naunang ginanap na unang sugar summit ng UMA noong 2012, tinalakay ang mga isyu ng mga manggagawa sa tubuhan at industriya ng asukal gaya ng kampanya para direktang ipamahagi sa mga benepisyaryo ang bonus at pondo ng Social Amelioration Program (SAP).

Pinagtibay sa deklarasyon ng pagkakaisa ang 12-puntong kahingian o demanda ng mga manggagawa sa asukal, kaakibat ng mga ulat mula sa mga talakayan at workshop na ginanap sa pagtitipon. Pinagtibay din ang muling pagpapalakas at pagpapalawak sa NFSW bilang pambansang pederasyon ng mga manggagawa sa asukal. ■

Si Ka Paeng ay mas kilala bilang mahusay na lider-magsasaka, dating Kinatawan ng Anakpawis Partylist sa Kongreso, at Tagapangulo ng Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP). Ayon kay Ka Paeng, dadalhin niya ang interes at pakikibaka ng masang magsasaka sa loob ng DAR.

Matatandaan na naunang inialok ni Pangulong Duterte ang apat na upuan sa gabinete para sa Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (CPP) – ang DAR, DSWD, DOLE at DENR. Sinabi naman ng CPP na hindi nito matatanggap ang naturang mga posisyon sa gobyerno, sa halip ay magrekomenda na lamang ang NDF ng mga indibidwal na nakikita nitong kwalipikado.

Bukod kay Ka Paeng, inirekomenda rin ng NDF si Propesor Judy Taguiwalo, dating bilanggong politikal at rehente ng Unibersidad ng Pilipinas (UP), bilang Kalihim ng DSWD. ■

MGA SDO SA NEGROS, AVA SA DAVAO, BINASURA NG PARC

KABILANG SA MGA DESISYON NA INILABAS NG Presidential Agrarian Reform Council o PARC sa pulong nito na ginanap noong Setyembre 12 ang pagbabasura ng iskemang Stock Distribution Option (SDO) sa dalawang asyenda sa Negros, at Agribusiness Venture Agreement (AVA) sa isang plantasyon ng saging sa Davao del Norte.

Ini-revoke ng PARC ang SDO sa Wuthrich Hermanos, Inc. sa bayan ng Calatrava town, at sa SVJ Farms, Inc., sa Talisay City, Negros

Occidental. Samantala, ipinawalang-bisa na rin ang leaseback AVA sa Marsman Estate Plantations, Inc. (MEPI) sa bayan ng Sto. Tomas, Davao del Norte.

Matatandaan na SDO rin ang iskemang ipinatupad ni Cory Aquino sa Hacienda Luisita noong 1989. Naunang ipinawalang-bisa ng PARC ang SDO sa Luisita noong 2005, ngunit pinigil ito ng mga Cojuangco-Aquino sa pamamagitan ng isang temporary restraining order o TRO mula sa Korte Suprema. Noong Abril 24, 2012, inilabas ng Korte Suprema ang desisyon sa pagbabasura ng SDO sa Luisita. Gayunman nananatili pa rin ang SDO sa ilang asyenda sa Negros.

Katulad ng SDO, walang pisikal na distribusyon ng lupa para sa mga ARB o benepisyaryo na pumapasok sa kasunduang AVA. Aabot sa 1.2 milyong ektarya ang nakapailalim sa iba't ibang klase ng AVA, ayon sa NEDA.

Ito diumano ang unang pagkakataon na nagtipon ang mga myembro ng PARC matapos ang mahigit sampung taon. Dahil na rin ito sa mga pagsisikap ni DAR Sec. Ka Paeng Mariano, na isang kilalang lider-magsasaka. ■

Ipagpatuloy ang Peace Talks!

FREE FELICIDAD CAPARAL!

PEASANT
ORGANIZER,
UNYON NG MGA
MANGGAGAWA SA
AGRIKULTURA
(UMA)

ARRESTED JANUARY
2009 IN NORTHERN
SAMAR

NOW DETAINED AT
THE CORRECTIONAL
INSTITUTE OF
WOMEN (CIW)



ISANG SIMBOLIKONG PROTESTA ANG ISINAGAWA ng Unyon ng mga Manggagawa sa Agrikultura (UMA) katuwang ang Church-Workers Solidarity (CWS), Agosto 5, upang ipanawagan ang pagpapatuloy ng usapang pangkapayapaan sa pagitan ng gobyerno (GRP) at ng NDF.

Bago ito, isang Peace Forum ang isinagawa ng UMA at CWS. Nanawagan din si Ka Daning Ramos, Pangkalahatang Kalihim ng UMA, na tupdin ng gobyerno ang komitment sa pagpapalaya ng lahat ng bilanggong pulitikal, lalo na't karamihan sa kanila ay mga magsasaka, aktibista, o rebolusyonaryo na nakikibaka para sa karapatan ng mga maralita sa kanayunan.

Kabilang sa mga bilanggong pulitikal si Felicidad Caparal, istap ng UMA, na inaresto sa Samar noon pang 2009. ■

LAPANDAY, BERDUGO!

Mula Disyembre 2016 hanggang bagong taon ng 2017 ay ilang ulit na naghasik ng dahas ang Lapanday Foods Corporation sa Madaum, Tagum City. Nagpakawala ng mga armadong gwardya ang Lapanday laban sa Madaum Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries, Association, Inc., isang grupo ng mga benepisyaryo ng reporma sa lupa na naggigiit na ibalik na sa kanila ang 145-ektaryang erya ng plantasyon ng saging na iginawad na sa kanila ng DAR.

Sunud-sunod na insidente ng pamamaril at pananakot, ang ginawa ng mga gwardya at goons laban sa MARBAI at sa kampuhan na itinirik ng mga magbubukid para magprotesta laban sa pangangamkam ng Lapanday. ■



“REBOLUSYONG PANGKULTURA,” IKINASA SA PAGGUNITA NG MASAKER SA ESCALANTE

SALUDO ANG UNYON NG MGA MANGGAGAWA SA Agrikultura (UMA) sa taunang komemorasyon ng Masaker sa Escalante na pinangungunahan ng National Federation of Sugar Workers (NFSW), Northern Negros Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (NNAHRA) and Teatro Obrero.

Bago ang mismong komemorasyon na kinatatampukan ng isang “reenactment,” nagkaroon din ng isang Pambansang Kumperensya sa Kultura na inorganisa ng Concerned Artists of the Philippines katuwang ang iba pang mga aktibistang grupong pangkultura gaya ng Sinagbayan.

Naganap ang nasabing kumperensya kasabay ng isang theater festival sa Escalante City, Negros Occidental mula Setyembre 15-20. Daan-daang manggagawang pangkultura at artista ang lumahok sa nasabing “reenactment” ng Masaker sa Escalante. Nanawagan ang mga kalahok sa pagsusulong ng isang “rebolusyong pangkultura” at kulturang pambansa, siyentipiko, at makasama. ■

SIGAW NG MGA MANGGAGAWANG AGRIKULTURAL:

“Marcos, hindi bayani!”

NAGSAGAWA NG SUNUD-SUNOD AT MALAWAKANG kilos-protesta ang mamamayan laban sa patagong paglalagak ng mga labi ng diktador na si Ferdinand Marcos sa Libingan ng mga Bayani. Pataksil na isinagawa ang paglilibing kay Marcos noong Nobyembre 18, 2016.

Ayon kay Rolando Rillo, tagapangulo ng NFSW, ang naganap na masaker sa Welgang Bayan sa Escalante noong Setyembre 1985 ay isa sa pinakamabibigat na dahilan laban sa pagtatangi kay Marcos bilang “bayani.” Aabot sa 20 na karamihan ay mga hacienda workers o mga manggagawang-bukid sa tubuhan, ang napaslang sa tinaguriang “Escalante Massacre.”

Noong Nobyembre 25, ginanap sa Luneta, ang dambuhalang kilos-protesta laban sa Marcos Burial na nilahukan ng libu-libong mamamayan. ■



IKA-12 ANIBERSARYO NG MASAKER SA LUISITA, GINUNITA SA ISANG “CULTURAL CARAVAN”

TATLONG ARAW NA “PEOPLE’S CULTURAL CARAVAN for Land, Justice and Peace” ang inilunsad ng Unyon ng mga Manggagawa sa Agrikultura (UMA) mula Nobyembre 14-16, katuwang ang Luisita Watch network at mga lokal na organisasyon ng mga manggagawang-bukid sa Hacienda Luisita – ang AMBALA, SAKDAL, Amihan, MARTYR at ang bagong-tatag na Tanghalang Balen ning Luisita o TABLU. Ginanap ito bilang komemorasyon sa ika-12 taon ng masaker sa Hacienda Luisita.

Nagsimula noong Nob. 14 ang caravan sa tanggapan ng DAR sa Quezon City at dumaan sa mga bayan ng Balagtas at Malolos City sa Bulacan, Angeles City sa Pampanga, at Capas, Tarlac. Sinalubong ng mga magsasaka ang caravan sa harap ng Camp Sevillano Aquino, ang HQ ng AFP Northern Luzon Command sa San Miguel, Tarlac City, kung saan ginanap ang isang maikling protesta.

Lumahok sa mga programa at caravan ang mga kinatawan ng Makabayan bloc, at iba’t ibang organisasyon gaya ng BAYAN, KMP, Pamalakaya, KMU, at Kadamay. Iba’t ibang banda naman ang nagtanggap sa Konsyertong Bayan sa Maria Cristina Park sa Tarlac City noong gabing iyon.

Sa ikalawang araw, Nob. 15, ay naglunsad naman ng buong-araw na bungkalan sa iba’t ibang barangay

ng Hacienda Luisita gaya ng Mapalacsiao, Cutcut at Balete. Mahigit isang libong mamamayan ang lumahok sa ginanap ang solidarity night sa Barangay Mabilog, sa bayan ng Concepcion.

Sa araw ng anibersaryo ng masaker, Nob. 16, ay tampok ang isang malikhaing “reenactment” na itinanghal ng TABLU sa mismong lugar na pinangyarihan nito sa harap ng Central Azucarera de Tarlac. Ang produksyon ng TABLU ay pinaghandaan kasama ng mga kaibigan ng Luisita Watch.

Kabilang sa kanila sina Katsch Catoy na siyang nagdirihe ng produksyon; Joanna Lerio at Edwin Quinsayas, na nagsanay sa mga kabataang mandudula; Leeroy New at Antares Gomez Bartolome na nagbigay ng mga workshop sa sining biswal at paggawa ng mga props; at ang bandang TUBAW, sa pangunguna nina Edge Uyanguren at Clifford Remolador, na kasama ni Nick Sangil at grupong Tambol Bayan na namahala sa tunog at musika. Naging madamdamin ang parangal para sa pitong martir ng Hacienda Luisita na napaslang sa naturang masaker. Marami pang ibang grupong pangkultura ang lumahok sa caravan.

Ang pagsasadula ay humalaw ng inspirasyon sa “reenactment” ng Masaker sa Escalante na taunang ginagawa ng NFSW at Teatro Obrero sa Negros. ■

IMPORTASYON NG HFCS, TINUTULAN

SINUSUPPORTAHAN NG UMA AT NFSW ANG PANAWAGAN ng mga manggagawa at magsasaka sa tubuhan na itigil ang importasyon ng High Fructose Corn Syrup o HFCS.

Mula 2011, halos 1 milyong metriko tonelada ng lokal na asukal na ang nadisloka ng HFCS, na nagresulta ng malubhang pagkalugi ng ekonomiya ng Pilipinas. HFCS na ang ginagamit ng mga dambuhalang kumpanya na bumibili ng lokal na asukal gaya ng Coca-Cola Philippines.

Nagbabala ang UMA na ang kaso ng HFCS ay katulad ng kaso ng iba pang agrikultural na produkto ng bansa gaya ng bigas na apektado rin ng nakatakdang pagtatanggal ng volume at tariff restrictions sa importasyon sa darating na Hunyo 2017. Samakatwid, dadagsa na rin sa bansa ang mumurahing imported na bigas at maapektuhan nito ang milyon-milyong magsasaka.

Ang industriya ng asukal ay malaon nang nakatali sa imperyalistang interes ng US, mula pa sa kolonyal na kalakalang dikta ng US Sugar Quota, hanggang sa pagtugon ngayon sa demand ng Coca-Cola. Mga haciendero at dayuhan ang nagpapayaman mula sa dugo at pawis ng mga manggagawa sa tubuhan. ■

BALITA

Mga sakada mula Mindanao, tumakas sa Luisita

Aabot sa 70 sakada na nirekrut mula sa Mindanao ang na-“rescue” ng UMA mula sa mala-aliping kalagayan sa Hacienda Luisita.

Panahon ng Pasko nang mailigtas mula sa Luisita ang unang batch ng mga sakada sa pamamagitan ng paabot mula sa OGYON-Bukidnon. Ang mga sakada ay mga panahunang manggagawa na nag-aani ng tubo sa panahon ng kabyaw o milling season.

Ang mga sakada ay nirekrut mula sa Mindanao ng isang Billy Baitus, manager ng Greenhand Labor Service Cooperative. Tinugunan ng Greenhand ang atas ng Agrikulto, Inc. na magpadala ng 1,000 sakada para magtrabaho sa Hacienda Luisita. Ang Agrikulto ay isang kumpanya ng mga Cojuangco-Aquino na sangkot din sa pag-aaryendo ng mga loteng sakahan na dapat ay nasa kontrol na ng mga benepisyaryo ng reperma sa lupa.

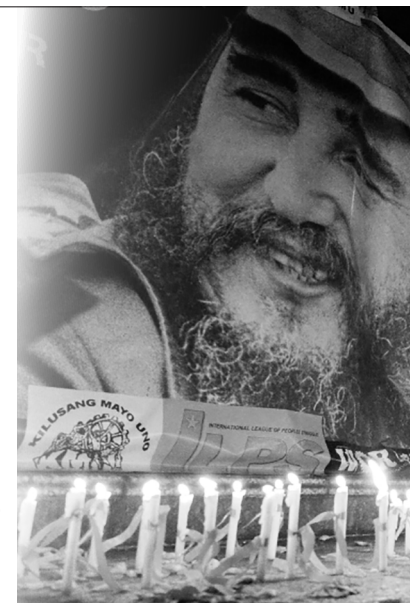
Ayon sa mga sakada, mala-alipin ang naging trato sa kanila. Aabot lang sa Php 9.50 ang arawang sahod ng mga sakada. Ito rin ang halaga ng sahod ng mga manggagawang-bukid sa Luisita noong magwelga sila noong 2004. Ang mga rekruter at employer ng mga sakada sinampahan na ng kaso sa NLRC. ■

PINAKAMATAAS NA PAGPUPUGAY KAY KA FIDEL CASTRO NG CUBA!

IPINAHAYAG NG INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE OF PEOPLES' STRUGGLE (ILPS), ang pakikidalahamhati sa mamamayan ng Cuba sa pagpanaw ni Fidel Castro, dakilang lider-rebolusyonaryo at tagapagtatag ng Partido Komunista ng Cuba. Ang UMA ay miyembrong organisasyon ng ILPS.

Pumanaw si Castro noong Nobyembre 25, 2016 sa edad na 90. Nang magtagumpay ang rebolusyon sa Cuba noong 1959, nanungkulan si Castro bilang Punong Ministro hanggang 1976, at Pangulo ng Cuba mula 1976 hanggang 2006.

Iginawad ng ILPS ng pinakamataas na pagpupugay kay Castro para sa pamumuno ng rebolusyonaryong pakikibaka ng mamamayan ng Cuba at pagkakamit ng dakilang mga tagumpay sa pagtataguyod ng pambansang soberanya at kasarinlan, at pagsusulong ng sosyalismo. Malaki ang ambag ni Castro sa pandaigdigang pakikibaka para sa pambansa at panlipunang paglaya, at pagbibigay-inspirasyon sa mga mamamayan ng daigdig na magpunyagi sa sosyalismo at komunismo laban sa imperyalismong US at lahat ng reaksyon. ■





Palakasin at Palawakin ang NFSW bilang pambansang pederasyon ng mga manggagawa sa tubuhan!

Ipaglaban ang tunay na reporma sa lupa, karapatan, at kagalingan ng mga manggagawa sa tubuhan!

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF SUGAR WORKERS

Pambansang Kongreso, 30 - 31 Mayo 2017, Bacolod City
