

# ASEAN Social Work Journal

■ **THE IMPACT OF GAMES ONLINE VIA  
SMARTPHONE ON SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN  
DEVELOPMENT**

Pairan

Arif

Humairoh Ilmi Ulfa

■ **SOCIAL STRATIFICATIONS OF MIGRANT CARE  
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# FOREWORD

Welcome to the seventh volume of ASEAN Social Work Journal. The journal is published by the Indonesian Social Work Consortium (ISWC). ISWC was established on August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2011 in Jakarta following the formation of ASEAN Social Work Consortium (ASWC) at a regional level meeting in Manila, the Philippines. The main mandate of ISWC is to facilitate strategic initiatives for promoting the roles of social work profession and social work education to enhance the nation's social development policies and welfare services.

This year the 7th ASEAN Social Work Consortium (ASWC) Conference is held in Putrajaya, Malaysia with the theme “Enhancing Inclusivity and Resilience among Community ASEAN Social Work Response”. The conference aims to strengthen the cooperation and networking among stakeholders in ASEAN Member State (AMS) within the context of social work. This conference is also an ideal platform for member countries to share their best practices in the field of social work and to develop customised programmes /activities for the implementation of the ASWC work plan.

This journal is one of the initiatives which complies with the purposes above. This is part of workplan formulated by ASWC which Indonesia is responsible to publish this journal. The birth of this journal is a significant part of the dynamic movement among ASEAN country members. Sharing of knowledge and experience that involve social work and social policy scholars together with policy makers on various areas of social welfare still need to be augmented. We greatly hope that this journal will be able to facilitate productive exchanges of research, practice, knowledge and ideas among social work practitioners, social work educators and students, social policy scholars, government officials and decision makers in order to explore common challenges and potentials of partnership in promoting social welfare mainstreaming in the ASEAN region. The spirit of this journal should lean on these fundamentals.

On behalf of the Indonesian Social Work Consortium (ISWC), I am thanking all of you for your participation and contribution to this journal. The cooperation of the ASEAN members is crucial to ensure the development and sustainability of this journal.

**Drs. H. Toto Utomo Budi Santosa, M.Si**

Chairman of the Indonesian Social Work Consortium

# EDITORIAL NOTES

The articles of this journal are selected from those sent by the authors of ASEAN member countries. I am very pleased to be able to highlight a wide range of issues in this volume 7. This volume highlights several issues on child, youth, migrant worker, cultural sensitivity and poverty.

**Pairan, Arif and Humairoh Ilmi Ulfa** explain the impact of playing games online via smartphone on school-age children. Nowadays, game online through smartphone is a common phenomenon among children. However, in many cases this habit has generated the changes in intellectual, social, emotional and moral development on many school-age children. The finding research indicates that there are negative impacts of game online usage via smartphone on the children's intellectual, social development both in school and home environment. Moreover, it also affects uncontrolled children's moral and emotional development. They become easy to loose their temper.

**Ayako Sasaki & Reiko Ogawa** examines social stratifications of migrant care workers in Japan. This paper examines Japan's recent immigration policy, and its potential impact upon migrants who undertake care work, within the context of international social work. They find that migrants' experiences are quite different depending upon their respective migratory channels, which may create and sustain social stratification, and enhance or worsen the well-being of migrant care workers from Southeast Asia.

**Azlin Hilma Hillaluddin and Zarina Mat Saad** explore about unwanted pregnancy. Unplanned pregnancies, especially those that are unwanted, bring about emotional, financial, physical, and social distress to young mothers in particular. These could lead to problematic behaviors such as baby abandonment, or health and mental health issues. However, there are young women who chose to continue with their pregnancy despite experiencing trauma and stigma of being pregnant out-of-wedlock. Therefore, this research aims to obtain a detailed understanding on the experience and future plans of young women and teenagers who sought protection in shelters across the

country after becoming pregnant out-of-wedlock. The findings indicate that the shelters were seen as a hideaway place due to embarrassment of being pregnant. It also highlights the importance of family involvement in helping the young participants to get their life back on track since many of the participants expressed regret over their actions.

**Florence Flores-Pasos** describes the reduction of child labor through Community organizing. The paper is a case study of a child focused non-government organization's implementation of a time-bound child labor program. It is aimed at reducing the participation of children 5-17 years old in child labor in sugarcane plantations in selected provinces in the Philippines using primarily the community organizing approach. The paper will hopefully be able to impress upon the readers that social work plays a significant role in project management and development, and in ensuring effectiveness in the delivery of the best possible services to different groups.

**Ma Victoria Hinayon-Alarte** explores how child laborers construct child labor by examining their work routines, their reasons for working, their own perception of their current condition, as well as their aspirations. This study adopts the theoretical framework of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory in its study of children's environment. The study reveals that a child laborer's construction of child labor is deeply rooted in the environment of poverty and the daily struggles of want and deprivation they experience themselves and perceive from their parents and other family members. For child laborers, they are in agreement that to work is a noble duty. Moreover, the lack of concrete action by concerned local government units and community organizations perpetuated the construction of labor as "normal" for children. Apathy and negligence by duty bearers to put a stop to this practice is tantamount to a condonation of this human rights violation.

**Yolanda G. Ealdama** discusses cultural sensitivity in social work practice in Southeast Asia. Social work as a profession emerged from the western part of the globe; as such western perspectives are embedded in its theoretical and philosophical tenets. The influence of western perspectives have been taken for granted by social work academicians and practitioners in Southeast Asia who have been using western textbooks and not a few have been educated in the west. This paper further examines the origins of the social work profession in Southeast Asia and the concept of Western Social Work. Taking off from the

Global Social Work Standards for Education and Training, this paper seeks to rediscover few concepts which are common among Southeast Asian people as an initial step towards cultural sensitivity.

**Tan Ngoh Tiong** argues that strengthening social development to reduce poverty requires a multi-disciplinary approach, multi-sectorial participation and planned social intervention. Sustainable poverty alleviation approaches in poorer agricultural segments of Thailand and Indonesia are identified in this paper. Food security and climate change are intertwined relating to the harnessing environment for sustainable living. It is envisaged that breaking the cycle of poverty, and hunger, from a systemic approach, necessitates disruptive interventions. For example, discovering the mechanism of profiteering from middle-men, using technology and direct marketing that would enhance value through changing the logistics and supply chain and the farmers gaining greater control and access to the customers, require both government and business purposeful and value-based intervention. Developing cooperatives and social enterprises, necessitate organizations and also mean greater stakes for the producers and better value for the consumers. This could also provide an economically secure base and social protection for the farmers to deal effectively with poverty.

I hope you all enjoy reading this edition.

**Fentiny Nugroho**

Editor-in-Chief





# THE IMPACT OF GAMES ONLINE VIA SMARTPHONE ON SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN DEVELOPMENT

PAIRAN

ARIF

HUMAIROH ILMI ULFA

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## Abstract

This research aims to clarify and explain the impact of playing games online via smartphone on school-age children. Nowadays, game online through smartphone is a common thing to see among many children. They love so much to play it. However, in many cases this habit has generated the changes in intellectual, social, emotional and moral development on many school-age children. This descriptive research employs a qualitative approach and it takes place at SDN Jember Lor 01, Jember regency. The main and additional informants are determined purposively. While data itself is collected through participation observation, interviews and documentation. To analyse data, the research is implementing Irawan model which applies seven phases, namely; data collection, data transcript, coding manufacture, data categorization, temporary conclusion, triangulation and final conclusion. To test data validity, the researcher is using source triangulation technique. The finding research indicates that there are negative impacts of game online usage via smartphone on the children's intellectual, social development both in school and home environment. Moreover, It also impacts on uncontrolled children's moral and emotional development. They are easy to lose their own temper.

Keywords: Game Online, Smartphone, Children Development

## Introduction

Game online in Indonesia has already attracted many teenagers and children's attention. It offers lots of irresistible features compared to similar old version game like playstation or video game. It is understandable if they prefer game online via smartphone for many reasons. It is easy to carry out and play where and when they wish for. Going online at the moment, is mostly used for accessing entertainment media or playing game online rather than the others. At present times, it becomes a phenomenon that children-- elementary

school students in particular-- are game online lovers. Based on preliminary observation, students of Jember Lor 01 elementary school or SDN Jember Lor 01 are allowed to bring smartphone with them to school.

In term of age classification, according to Nurazmi (2018:05), 32 % of game online users are below 18 years old, and approximately 10 % of teenagers, aged 10 to 18. They play game online three times a day with duration an hour or more. Based on this data, we know that there is a significant interest among children on online game. It becomes a trending topic to discuss nowadays.

According to Mulyani (2018:1). quoted Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia (APJII), (Indonesian internet providers association), internet users in 2013 grew significantly up to 22%. In 2012 there were still 62 millions users and it rose 74.57 million in 2013. In average, they spent more than three hours a day going online, thus it attracted online game industry to grow.

From initial observation, the researcher finds that students of elementary school, SDN Jember Lor 01 in particular, are easy to bring smartphone in school, while school management itself is allowing them to bring smartphone to school.

Normally, childhood is a period to grow and develop. They should be encouraged to be more active to do something useful. However, because of pressure of being accepted as a group member and even a need of isolate life among online game lovers, they are forced to join playing game online. Consequently, it forced their development in many aspects degrade into slow level.

As a comparison, other children who are not playing online game, they mostly spend their break- time to mingle among others, share interesting stories and interact with outside world as normally as possible. School-age period or final age development usually called final development period. In this case they enter school environment and start to develop their interaction with someone else.

Children in school-age period, mostly and normaly fond of to play. They enjoy their childhood, They mingle with others to explore something new. In this phase, children usually are easily distracted their attention with something new like popular game. Barker and Wright in Mar'at (2015:185) stated that children on final phase, age between 7 to 11 years old. spend more than 40% of their free time to interact with their friend. In fact, however, their social

times is interrupted by the existence of game online in their school rather than mingle and play with their own friends.

On school-age period, playing with friends both in school and home environment, has truly impacted on their social skill development. The desire of being accepted by their friends is the most important things and they try as hard as possible to show their existence. They want to be accepted by their classmate.

This desire of being accepted is one factors for elementary students to play game online. They try hard to play game which is so popular among them. Through the same game they played, these kids formed their own play group who have something in common. They play together, even share information on game they are playing.

They love to play game online as they can access internet whenever and wherever they want. Game which is used to play through computer, although still exist, has lost its popularity. Game online via smarphone has replaced its function. Provided with various irresistible features, they become more and more interested to play it. It is common things to see, they play this game during their break-time. They meet together in front of class to play such kind of game. Sometimes they play alone in class or find other comfortable place where they can play freely without any interruption.

Psychologically they feel so exited and satisfied with this toy. They tend to play more and more. Sophisticated display and sound features on their smartphone have made children want to explore game online. There are many kinds game online provided nowadays.

The latest game online with attractive features arises at the moment and it captures their interest and attention. It becomes primary need for school-age students right now. Through writer's obeservation, mostly children --student in 4 to 6 grade--play game online on their gadget. Consciously or not, it definitely impacts both positively and negatively on their development.

Based on research finding by Veronika (2013), Chusna (2017), Satrianawati (2017), Heni (2018), Ramdham (ne2018), smartphone has impacted on slowness of students' motoric development, character, personal and social interaction and students' diligenceness. The fact that students become more instant in studying at the moment.

Due to previous research, this study aims to clarify and explain the impact of playing game online via smartphone on school-age students. Based

on this objective, the benefit to take are as follows;

- a. The research is hoped to be a reference and information in Social Welfare program in conducting similar further research.
- b. It is hoped to add and enrich students' knowledge—students of Social Welfare program in particular—on the impact of game online on school-age development.
- c. It is hoped to give information to students on the negative impact of game online via smartphone.

## Research Method

In this research, the researcher employs qualitative approach as it is an appropriate way to describe needed data. This descriptive research is in line with qualitative approach as researcher try to describe and elaborate the research precisely as seen on scene, SDN Jember Lor 01, Jember regency.

In determining informan, researcher has a basis criteria which considered can complete data. Purposive sampling is a sample taken from data source by certain consideration. In this case, informans are the ones who know best what researcher wishes for. Informans could be an authority teacher and parent. They assist reseacher to explore object or social situation as easy as possible. Mukhtar (2013:94) described in purposive sampling, researcher firstly determined the ones who will become the sample, complete with their status in order to match with the objectives of a study.

The researcher uses informant technique determination in digging data by applying purposive sampling technique. The informant in this research are students who love playing online game via smartphone, parents and teachers.

Technique and tool of data collection on scene is using participation observation technique, thus researcher is actively involved in this group activity. Meanwhile interview is using comprehensive interview technique and keep using interview guideline like written note. Documentation technique is taken into account by using documents such photos and informan recording.

The next step, researcher analyses primary and secondary data colleted from observation and interview by referring Irawan 's opinion (2006:76) who devided data analysis process into seven phases; data collection, data transcript, coding manufacture, data categorization, temporary conclusion, triangulation and final conclusion. Meanwhile data validity test is using source triangulation technique.

## Outcome and Discussion

Internet accessibility through smartphone enriched with various features has truly attracted school-age children. Among those features, game online is the most popular one. This feature is more friendly-user, more fun compared with similar game on personal computer (PC). It will be more fun and exiting as it is supported with 4G internet network, thus game online via smartphone will be more comfortable and nicer than before.

Children from early age, elementary school pupil from 3 to 6 grade especially, have attracted to smartphone at the moment . To play game online they use 3G or 4G smartphone with strong signal in order the game can run smoothly.

Game online itself, is a game application which has several genre, rule of game and certain level. Adventure game online is a kind of games which many children play it most. It offers many special effects to children such sound effect to name a few. It is easy to handle and friendly users. Once they start to play, they tend to play on and on. While other game online offer various strategies and its own uniqueness to play. Thus it is no doubt that many children have addicted and spent most of their time to play game online.

Game online via smartphone which many children love to play has many challenges in order to beat the enemy. Those games are as follows:

### a. Clash of Clans (COC)

COC is a kind of strategy game. It builds community, trains troops and counter another player in order to get gold, or trophy called elixir and dark elixir. This game has built barrier to protect players from other players counter attack. It also enhances skill of troops. According Refo (2013:130) in Malid (2017:3) *Clash of Clans* is a video game strategy on smartphone developed by Supercell, a Helsinki-base video game manufacturer. This multiplayer game online requires internet connection to play.. This game is specially designed to create virtual community among the players which is called clan. The players who are involved in this game are as social group from several organisms. It is formed as there is a good interaction and communication between one and another. They share single environment as they have same interest and habitat. In a human community, each person within this group has similar trust, intention, resources, preference, condition and need.

Completed with interesting features, COC has attracted children

attention to play. It also happens on students of SDN Jember Lor 01, Jember regency. They play this game, pump their adrenalin and speed to beat their competitor. They also play this game together with their friends in a single group to communicate and interact to beat their competitor

## **b. Mobile Legends**

Mobile legends is a game MOBA (Massive Online Battle Arena). It involves two teams to counter each other and it called "minions". According to Funk (2013) in Iqbal (2018:3) mobile legends has combined two kinds of genre; Real Time Strategy (RTS) and Role Playing Game (RPG). In this game, a player performs one character to beat enemy base. Each character they play called hero, has skill with his strenght and weakness, so they need to collaborate with other member of team to win the game.

This game is a second favourite one after COC. Different with COC, mobile legend depend mostly on strategy to win the game. A hero in mobile legend is more variety than COC. Students of SDN Jember Lor 01, Jember regency also play this such kind of game.

Students like to play these game via smartphone as it is so easy to handle. They can play it whenever and wherever they want. Smartphone is more practicable compared to video game. They get their own satisfaction especially when they win the game. From this satisfaction feeling, they tend to play again and again. So it will be a kind of simultaneously addiction.

Students of SDN Jember Lor 01 have started to play game online via smartphone since they are in first grade or seven years old. As time goes by and they grow older, the passion to play game escalate in a rapid scale. They do not aware that too much playing game online have influenced their moral, intelectual, emotional and feeling development. Due to its negative impacts of online game on school-age of SDN Jember Lor 01, the researcher elaborates the impacts as follows:

### **1. Intellectual Impact**

Game online via smartphone has brought negative impact on students' school grade. The elementary school students have experienced intelectual changes. For those who love playing game online via smartphone, their school grade declines significantly. They become so lazy to study and it's truly effect on their school grade. Teacher who acts as informan show the academic report of students school grade. It is clearly seen, the average school grade for those

who like to play game online is going down constantly. It is lower than before they play game online. The teacher as an informan said;

*“students who love to play game online via smartphone their school grade report is low. It is because they are lazy to study and when teaching and learning process is underway they hard to focus and concentrate on the subject”.*

Apart from grade degradation, another bad impact or influence of game online is students' intellectual both in class and in their daily life. In their daily routine, students tend to be quiet and it effect on their respond in answering question of their teacher. Thus it effect on students development. Parents of students also stated similar respond. A parent said,”

*“after constantly playing game online through smartphone at home, my kid tend to be more quiet and live isolated. My kid become so lazy to study and when we ask them to, he will easily be angry”.*

One of the example intellectual development of school-age children is shown on their remembering capacity. If they remember well anything what they taught in class, it means their intellectual development is in good condition. It's also measured on the easiness of students in grasping information from school and his surrounding environment. However these indicators are not in accordance with the fact found in SDN Jember Lor 01 Jember regency. They lost their remembering capacity because of playing game online via smartphone too much.

## **2. Impact on Children Social Development**

Socialization process put children as an active individual to do socialization. In searching for the objective pattern of socialization, someone should make new adjustment in line with the escalating of group influences, the changes of social attitude, new value of social grouping and friendship selection, value of support and rejection .

Children who love to play game online frequently, will bring the impact of game online in their social life. It happens on students of SDN Jember Lor 02, Jember regency. Students of this school have a distance friendship whether with their friend or with a member of their family.

Lack of parents' supervision on the other side, has also made children prefer choose playing game online rather than mingle with their own friends who do not play game. The impact of playing game online through smartphone is bad as children tend to be an isolated person rather than making friend at school or at home. Moreover students' interest to do other activity outside

game online, especially school activity degrade significantly. This is in line with what parents said,:

*“My kid love so much playing game onlie through smartphone. Consequently he is so rarely playing with his classmate or his friend at home. He likes to live alone and keep playing with his toys, game online in his handphone”*

Children who love to play game online tend to choose friends who have same hobby or playing the same game they love. One of students ‘ parent said:

*“My kids prefer to make friends with those who love playing game online, although his friends are not from close neighborhood. For him it does not matter as long as they can play game online together”.*

### **3. Impact on Chilren Moral Development**

The development on moral is created from imititation process. Whithin this moral development process, if children imitate something bad, it will surely influence children attitude. The phenomenon of playing game online via smartphone among students of SDN Jember Lor 01 Jember regency will influence their moral development process. They will imitate the negative side of game online. There are lots of negative influences for those who love to play game online via smartphone. Some of bad impacts are, lazy to study, indisciplinatory act, tend to tell a lie and like cheating.

Those who play game online too much, tend to neglect most of their school duty like doing homework. They are lazy to study, as they so exited in exploring game online and it give them excitement and satisfaction feeling. Children have been influenced by the firendly-users features of smartphone. They are nor interested anymore to play same game in computer. This becomes main reason, why children like playing game online.

Parents supervision in this case, does not work out properly. Children keep playing game on and on, without any willingness to reduce the frequency of playing online game in their handphone.

Furthermore, other impact of too much playing game online, children tend to tell a lie without any good reason. Children are dare to tell a lie to their parent. They also become indiscipline in their daily life activity. They are not punctual anymore in completing their duty as a student or as a kid at home. They prioritise spending their own time mostly on playing game online rather than doing religious things like five time praying or even eating. Studying as their main priority will be deleted in their mind.



Children who love playing game online too much will easily forget all moral value they should do. They enjoy telling a lie to their parent just prioritising playing game and become indisciplinary person. Unregular eating pattern will surely impact on their health, while laziness of studying will influence on their school grade. They also tend to cheat on test or homework given by their teacher.

#### **4. Impact on Emotion and Children Feeling**

Children who play game online will certainly have up and down emotion and feeling. This emotion and feeling are shown when they feel uncomfortable or face something they do not wish for. They can not control their feeling and emotion. Whenever playing game online, emotion and feeling of children are influences by habit and it will give bad impact on them.

These changes will influence their social life whether at school or at home. If all these influences are not paid attention, children will hard to control their feeling and emotion. They will easily loose temper and offended. Moreover they will like saying bad word when they are angry. Normatively, school-age children are not allowed to say something bad. It is impolite according to social norm

Commonly, the interest of playing game online start when children are seven years old and it will escalate when they grow older. Psychologically, they will more motivate to play more and more as they will get satisfaction on it. This satisfaction will drive them to engross and explore more all the features exist on game online like sound and display. They will surf more and more on game online world.

For them, game online bring its own excitement and they do not aware the danger. They will forget the fact, what they do is just a wasting time only.

Based on explanation above, it's clearly seen that children welfare is not fullfild. According to new government law on social welfare 2019 article 1 stated "Social welfare is a condition where material, spiritual and social need of citizen is fullfild. It is needed in order they live properly and able to develop and have capablity to do their social function."

The development of school-age children who love playing game online via smartphone is indeed impact on their social life. They lack of self-confidence in expressing themself at school and at home environment. They also reduce sosial interaction with their own friends. This will, for sure make children' social welfare do not develop properly.

Apart from state law on Social Welfare, bad influence of game online also influence children social welfare as stated on paragraph 1 article 1a UU RI No. 23 year 2002 on children protection. It says children social welfare is a life order which will guarantee children to grow and develop normally, physically, psychologically and socially.

However, it turns out that it does not happen on elementary school students who play game online via handphone, whereas their development is not guaranteed at all.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the explanation above, we conclude that school-age children who like playing game online through smartphone motly have bad impacts. These impacts are as follows;

1. Intellectual impact on school-age children is seen on downturn of school grade and academic achievement. Children become inactive in class when teacher ask question on previous lesson and even when teacher is asking quiz. Remembering capacity is lower than before and forget all the lesson they have already been learnt. Even they feel hard to concentrate and have difficulty in grasping lesson
2. Impact on social development, is seen on their capability in communicating betwen children and parent or children and their friends. Their frequency of communication is lower than before. Children are alienated from their social environment. Children tend to be a selected person. It means they only make friend with someone who has same hobby in playing game online via smartphone. Children have difficulty in adjusting with their environment. They like to live alone and become a quiet person and feel reluctant playing with their neighbourhood friend.
3. Impact on moral development is shown on their bad attitute like telling a lie to parents, like cheating at school, wasting time and indisciplinatory act and become lazy to study. They dare to tell a lie in order to get what they want (playing game). They neglect their duty like studying, eating and doing religious things like five times praying because they prioritise their time mostl on playng game online.
4. Impact on feeling and emotion is seen on uncontrollable attitude of the children. They are easy to get angry when facing something they

do not wish for. They are dare to say bad word and rude when they are playing game online or even when play joke with friends. Those are, something not supposed to be happened on school-age children. Their feeling are easily offended when play joke with friends.

## Suggestions

Based on the research, related to the impact of game online through smartphone on school-age development, the writer accumulates several suggestions as follow:

1. For elementary school management, due to apply 2013 curriculum, it will be better if teachers use laptop in searching subject teaching material. While the need to contact or communicate with parents, it would be better if teachers use phone school.
2. For parents, they are supposed not to give full freedom to their school-age children in using smartphone as it will bring bad impact on children development. Parents should strict in taking control to their children.

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# Social Stratifications of Migrant Care Workers in Japan

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## Abstract

This paper examines Japan's recent immigration policy, and its potential impact upon migrants who undertake care work, within the context of international social work using qualitative data from the authors' interviews. We found that migrants' experiences are quite different depending upon their respective migratory channels, which may create and sustain social stratification, and enhance or worsen the well-being of migrant care workers from Southeast Asia.

Keywords: Migrant care workers, social stratification, migratory channels

## Introduction

### 1) Background and Research Objectives

The issues of migration and migrant workers in general have become very critical in the social work field, since this topic is significantly related to the economic growth and well-being of people in both the sending and receiving countries (Ogawa and Wang, 2017). The Asia-Pacific region is experiencing an unprecedented level of population aging, which will triple from 453 million to 1.26 billion between 2012 and 2050 (UNFPA, 2012). Population aging is particularly salient in East Asia, where the demographic transition is taking place at a much faster speed than in Western countries. Responding to the demographic change of population aging in East Asia, the number of migrant workers undertaking reproductive labor such as domestic/care work is increasing. This trend constitutes a social phenomenon called the "feminization of migration."

International organizations such as the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) worked together with transnational civil society networks to identify the vulnerability of migrant domestic/care workers, and advocate for their protection. This

resulted in the ILO189 Domestic Workers Convention, which transformed the idea of domestic work from being unpaid to comprising proper labor with decent working conditions (Boris and Fish, 2015). So far, Japan has ratified neither the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, nor the ILO Convention 189. Without an international framework or commitment to international norms for ensuring safe migration processes, the current situation in Japan risks making migrant care workers more vulnerable.

This paper examines Japan's recent immigration policy, and its potential impact upon migrants who undertake care work in the context of international social work. While Japan has been reluctant and restrictive toward the acceptance of migrants, several developments have taken place over the past decade due to demographic transitions—and several new channels for elderly care have opened up beginning in 2008. While significant deregulation of the migration regime is taking place, some migrants have contributed to the deepening of relationships between Japan and Southeast Asia following their return from Japan. Our aim is to discuss the potential risk of the current differentiated migratory channels, which may enhance or worsen the well-being of migrant care workers from Southeast Asia.

## **2) Review of the literatures**

Scholarship on care and migration has flourished over the past several decades, investigating the intersection of gender, race, class and power relationships at local, national and global levels (Anderson and Shutes, 2014; Michel and Peng, 2017). The globalization of care work represents the expansion of the traditional gendered division of labor across the globe, where new forms of mobility and domination have been created. Compared to old forms of imperialism, which exploited resources from the colonies, Hochschild (2002: 27) argues that contemporary forms of imperialism take on a new form of extracting emotional labor from women of the Global South. Numerous studies have also revealed the vulnerability of migrant women who undertake care/domestic work in private homes (Parrenas, 2003; Lan, 2006; Constable, 2007).

There has been little effort, however, to bridge the gendered aspect of migration and immigration policies that are stratifying migratory flows, both working to shape migrants' well-being. In other words, this paper demonstrates that it is not just global capitalism and welfare regimes that shape the condition of migrant care workers. Rather, existing immigration policy, including its different



channels, also has a significant impact upon the stratification of migrants.

### 3) Methods

We conducted interviews with migrant care workers and Japanese care facilities. Based on the Japanese government's data and qualitative data from our interviews, this paper will serve as an interim report to explore how recent changes in Japan's immigration policy would create and sustain social stratifications among migrant workers in the country. First, we examine the current situation in Japan, illustrating differentiated migration channels. Second, we explore migrants' experiences in Japan and in their home countries after they return. Finally, we discuss implications and future suggestions regarding the migration of care workers between Japan and ASEAN countries in the context of international social work.

## Research Results

### 1) Care and Migration in Japan

Despite the declining population in Japan, immigration is discussed only minimally, and the political leadership is reluctant to commit itself to build a social consensus on accepting migrants in the “un-skilled” sector<sup>1</sup>. After several revisions of existing immigration law in order to promote economic growth, 14 occupations were opened up in the “un-skilled” sector via the revised immigration law of December 2018. This change is expected to attract 345,000 workers over the next five years. However, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) maintain the position that this opening-up should not be taken as an official immigration-related policy<sup>2</sup>. The LDP defines migrants as those who have permanent residence at the time of entry, and does not include labor migrants who are not expected to settle in Japan (LDP, 2016).

Even though there is no immigration policy by the LDP's definition, there are migrants in Japan according to the UN definition. The UN holds that a migrant is any person who is moving, or has moved, across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person's legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or

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<sup>1</sup> There is a strong anti-immigration sentiment within the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) that resonates with the social discontent on accepting foreigners.

<sup>2</sup> See for example, *Nihon Saiko Senryak* (2016) and LDP's position paper titled “*Kyosei no jidai ni muketa gaikokujin rodosha ukeire no kihonteki kangaekata*” (2016).

involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is (UN, n.d). As of December 2018, the number of the “foreign” population in Japan is over 2.7 million. This group comprises approximately 2 % of the total population, and more than half of these are permanent or long-term residents (E-stat, 2018). Migrant workers are largely concentrated in production industries, construction and agriculture. In response to demographic changes, however, the reproductive sector (including long-term care) has gradually opened over the past decade.

Several structural conditions shape the migratory flow of care workers who come to Japan. First, Japan is the world’s most aged society, with the fastest growing aging population. Persons above 65 years old comprise 27.7% of the total population, or more than 35 million people (Cabinet Office, 2018), and the sustainability of both social security and service provisions for long-term care has become a major social issue. The total population has already started to decline, and the labor shortage in the field of long-term care is estimated to reach 377, 000 by 2025 (MHLW, 2017a).

Secondly, Japan introduced Long-Term Care Insurance (LTCI) in 2000 in order to support elderly care. Between 2000 to 2016, the number of the elderly requiring care increased from 2,180,000 to 6,220,000, and the number of care workers also expanded from 549,000 to 1,833,000 (MHLW, n.d.). The socialization of care through LTCI contributed toward the expansion of the care labor market by inviting private sector entities to participate. The salary of care workers, however, was kept low compared to other sectors. This wage structure created the conditions for a chronic shortage of care labor.

Finally, the majority ruling party, together with strong support from the business sector, took the lead to open up the labor market to migrant workers. Due to a lack of consensus among LDP members, as well as an entanglement of domestic politics, migration channels were opened without substantial discussion on the long-term prospects for social integration.

Various migration channels for elderly care have gradually opened up since 2008, despite not having a comprehensive immigration law or much coordination. First, the government began accepting care workers and nurses under an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with Indonesia (2008), the Philippines (2009), and Vietnam (2014), where migrant care workers are trained and made to take the national certified care worker examination in Japanese. The rationale for EPA was not to mitigate the shortage of labor, and it

was considered to be an “exceptional case”. Secondly, the government added care work in the occupational list for the Technical Intern Trainee Program (TITP), which aims to transfer skills to developing countries. Thirdly, the new residence status of *kaigo* (elderly care) was created for international students who study in caregiving schools and become certified. Finally, the Act on Amending the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act was passed in December 2018, and enacted in April 2019. The Act creates a new residency status of “Specified Skilled Worker (SSW)” for 14 industrial fields, such as elderly care, building, cleaning, construction, agriculture, fisheries, and food service<sup>3</sup>.

The care sector in Japan welcomed the revision in principle, with the understanding that it would mitigate the labor shortage. Consequently, hardly any major opposition was raised. The care sector in general is having a hard time recruiting the younger generation, and the labor shortage has been chronic. A newspaper on elderly care welcomed the migrants as a driving force for the care sector to develop expertise and management skills (Shiruba Shinpo, 2019).

Figure 1 illustrates the series of migratory channels that were introduced with no substantial discussions, appropriate coordination, or harmonization of frameworks.

Employment models	Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)	Technical Intern Training Program (TITP)	International Students in Caregiving Schools	Specified Skilled Worker (SSW)
Starting Year	2008	2017	2017	2019
Aim	Attached to free trade agreement. Not for labor shortage.	Transfer of technology to developing countries. Not for labor shortage.	To attract highly skilled human resources.	To address the labor shortage.
Length of Stay	Four years. Once certified, no limitation for extension.	Five years, but may transfer to Specified Skill Worker	No limitation once certified	Five years
Legal framework	Bilateral Agreements with Indonesia, Philippines and Vietnam	Law on Appropriate Implementation and Protection of Technical Interns. MOU with sending countries	Revised Immigration Law	Revised Immigration Law/ MOU with sending countries

3 See <https://www.iitco.or.jp/en/skill/> for details.

Institutional Framework	Government and semi-government institutions in the sending and receiving countries. Japan International Corporation of Welfare Service (JICWELS), National Board (Indonesia), POEA (Philippines) and DOLAB (Vietnam).	Private licensed agencies in the sending and receiving countries are in charge of recruitment, training and matching. Organization for Technical Intern Training (OTIT), a semi-governmental institution, is in charge of monitoring and support.	Caregiver schools often accept applications through private agencies.	Registered Support Organization in Japan will be in charge and direct hiring is also allowed.
Eligibility to apply	Graduate of nursing schools (Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam) or four- year university with any major and an accredited caregiver license (Philippines).	Above 18 years old, with one year of experience and stipulation to utilize the skills obtained in Japan after returning to their home countries.	High school graduate	Above 18 years old. No educational requirement.
Japanese language training and level required at the time of entry	Approximately one-year free Japanese language training. For Vietnam, JLPT Level 3 is required.	JLPT Level 4	Ideally JLPT Level 2, but depends on the school's admission policy.	Japanese language and skill tests

Figure 1: Different Channels for Migrants in the Care Sector

These diverse and complicated channels, and a lack of information in the sending countries, create space for private agencies to maneuver within the migration industry in order to seek opportunities for profit-making. The following sections will briefly illustrate the differences among the above four channels.

### (1) Channel 1: EPAs as a Subsidiary to Free Trade

The first wave of migrant care workers came under Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) that were signed with the Philippines (2006), Indonesia (2007), and Vietnam (2008). Responding to a proposal from the Philippines, and in line with the immigration policy to accept only highly-skilled workers, the Japanese government made a “political compromise” to accept migrant nurses and care workers. Care workers who come via EPAs must pass the national exam on care work, which is administered in the Japanese language, within four years. All migrants who come under EPAs are graduates from either university or nursing school. Migrants receive one year of free Japanese language training, and continue to study while working. The government agencies are in charge of recruitment, deployment, training and allocation of caregivers, so there is no financial burden on the migrants. As of 2018, a total of

3,608 nurses and care workers are residing in Japan (E-Stat, 2018).

## **(2) Channel 2: TITP as de facto Guest Workers**

A Technical Internship Training (TITP) program began in 1993, and went on to be expanded and reformed several times. Currently, more than 300,000 trainees from countries including Vietnam, China, Indonesia, and the Philippines are working in 80 different occupations such as agriculture, fishery, construction, welding and metal processing (MHLW, 2019a; MLITT, 2019). The basic premise of the program is to transfer skills and knowledge to developing countries as a premise of international co-operation. However, the hidden aim is to secure unskilled workers without allowing them to settle. TITP has become a de facto channel for importing cheap, un-skilled labor, and has been severely criticized by civil society and the international community. Due to weak enforcement of labor laws and the lack of a proper monitoring system, human rights violations have been rampant, and numerous trainees have become undocumented (MHLW, 2019b; MOJ, 2019:51).

In 2017, “care work” was included within the occupation list, with added requirements for Japanese language proficiency. TITP care workers are expected to have acquired Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) N4, which is the second-lowest level and requires very basic conversation. As of March 2019, just 1,823 have been approved for care work, which comprises 0.5% of total TITP workers (OTIT, 2019).

## **(3) Channel 3: International Students as Potential Bonded Labor**

There are less than 400 caregiving schools throughout Japan, including two-year vocational schools, two-year junior colleges, and four-year universities. However, care work is not a very popular career choice for the Japanese young generation, and caregiving schools have faced constant difficulties in recruiting students. In 2018, the average student enrollment rate of all caregiving schools fell to 44.2% of capacity (Kaiyokyo News, 2018).

Medical visas existed for medical professionals such as doctors or nurses, but prior to 2017, there was no visa available for care workers. Under the new *kaigo* visa, international students may stay for an indefinite period once they become certified care workers. Because international students can work for a maximum of 28 hours per week, the care facilities welcomed the revision. Consequently, caregiving schools can fill their student capacity, and care facilities can mitigate the existing labor shortage by employing international students as part-time workers. As a result, the number of international students

who are entering caregiving schools through recruitment agencies is on the increase (Fig. 2).

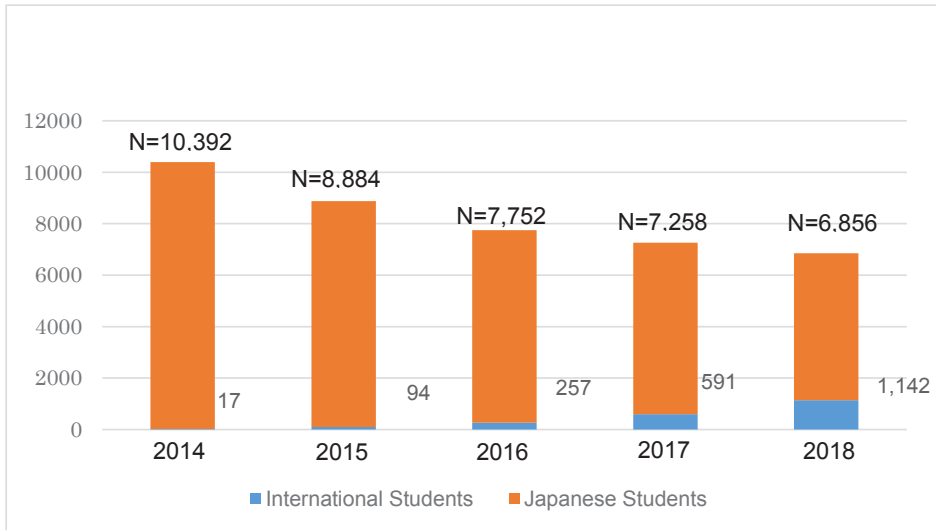


Figure 2: Total Student Enrollment and Number of International Students in Caregiving Schools (Kaiyokyo News, 2018)

#### (4) Channel 4: Specified Skilled Workers (SSW) as a New Form of Guest Worker

The revised immigration law created a new category to accept migrants. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that “the new status of residence is aimed at addressing the serious labor shortage in Japan by accepting experienced foreign human resources with specific expertise and skills”. The exact meaning of “experienced foreign human resources with specific expertise and skills” is not clear, except that each job category will be measured by its own “skill test” and Japanese language test. There is also no way to assess the validity of such tests, which are conducted by private organizations.

One of the major changes from TITP to SSW is that migrants can be employed directly by employers without going through private agencies, and they can change their employers if they wish to do so. Also, there is no supervising organization like JICWELS or OTIT. Rather, migrants are supervised directly by the Ministry of Justice.

The sending countries have expressed concerns regarding the SSW program in two ways. First, there is a discrepancy in the laws between Japan and the sending countries. SSW allows direct hiring and changing employers,

but some countries such as the Philippines and Vietnam require migrants to go through sending agencies. The Philippines, which has the most progressive labor protection laws, conducts monitoring of Japanese employers that employ Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs). OFWs are obliged to report to the Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO) if they change employers. Japanese employers must be verified by POLO by submitting a copy of their company profile and registration, a list of tasks and duties, and even proof of salaries actually received by Japanese employees who perform similar work. In case of direct hiring, the employer may not be aware of the laws in the sending countries. Vietnam is also discussing the terms and conditions of SSWs, as well as the extent to which the sending agencies must be responsible for Vietnamese who are under the SSW program.

Secondly, migration has already become an industry by bringing huge benefits to private agencies and politicians in both the sending and receiving countries. The issue of direct hiring, and of permission to transfer employers, changes the dynamics between the sending agencies, employers and migrants—and the issue of who will pay how much money has become complicated. We also have yet to see the impact of the SSW program in the care labor market.

## **2) Migrant Experiences in Stratified Care Work in Japan**

### **(1) EPAs as a “Model” of Migrant Care Workers**

One of the reasons that the different channels for acceptance of migrant care workers did not raise much opposition can be attributed to the “successful” acceptance of EPAs. EPA migrants have gone through approximately one year of Japanese language training before they start working, and their employers are obliged to support their studies so that they can pass the national care work exam (*kaigo fukushishi*). As a government-sponsored migration project, EPA is strictly regulated, and the institutional governance mechanism is transparent.

Since implementation of the EPA often resulted in foreign staff being employed for the first time, many Japanese care facilities were anxious in the beginning. However, there was a turning point after which they became welcomed and accepted. In research conducted by three care facilities in Tokyo that employ EPAs, Japanese staff (n=103) were asked about their opinions regarding working with foreign staff, among which most were EPA workers. In response to the question “How do you evaluate the foreign staff as part of the team?”, 36 responded that the foreign staff are “extremely appreciated”, 45

responded “highly appreciated”, and 20 responded “well appreciated”. No one responded “don’t appreciate” or “not at all appreciate,” and just one replied “other” (Tokyo Council of Welfare, 2019). This indicates that EPA workers are well accepted and appreciated by the care facility, as well as by Japanese co-workers.

Some EPAs have already become leaders and managers supervising the Japanese staff. Some have passed the care manager or nurse exam after becoming certified, and their citizenship status allows them to stay for an indefinite period. Over the past ten years, substantial development of human resources to support EPA workers has been observed (Ogawa, 2018).

A number of EPA care workers pointed out that they trusted EPA because it is a government program, and there are no agency fees. EPA care workers regard the program as being safe and transparent. One Indonesian EPA care worker who introduced EPA to his friends compared EPA and other channels, and said that he will not recommend other channels (including TITP and being an international student) because they cannot be trusted. He has seen numerous cases of deception among his Indonesian fellows and peers from other countries, wherein the initial promise of working conditions and living arrangements were easily broken.

Positive acceptance of EPA workers is also supported by the high educational background and one year of Japanese language training, which provide bases from which to jump-start the work. Most EPA workers are trained as nurses, and are well equipped with knowledge of disease, medicine, and bodily care. These factors have contributed to such positive acceptance.

Those who pass the EPA requirements can move freely between their home countries and Japan, and may bring their families with them. As of 2018, 361 were staying under an EPA family visa (E-stat, 2018).

## **(2) TITP trainees**

Contrary to EPA, the TITP and other migration channels are run by private agencies. TITP care workers are expected to obtain Japanese proficiency level N4, which requires more than 300 hours of study. In recent years, numerous language schools have mushroomed both in Japan and in the sending countries to provide “training”, which often becomes a fertile ground for exploitation. Private recruitment agencies in both countries are actively seeking profit from both employers and migrants, and without the strict enforcement of regulation, fees can vary.



The global labor market is not simply governed by market forces, but also by the laws and bargaining power in the sending countries. These factors also affect the way migration has been shaped. In the Philippines, it is prohibited to charge migrants any fees, while in Vietnam, there is a maximum amount that can be charged to the migrants. The policies of the sending and receiving countries create a dynamic in terms of the extent to which migrants must shoulder debt—a situation that in turn affects the well-being of the migrants and the left-behind families.

Meanwhile, the migrants are likely to be paid just minimum wage. The extra cost for Japanese language training suppresses migrants' wages in order for the private agencies to make their businesses viable. In other words, the requirement for Japanese language training under TITP care work became a good reason for private agencies to charge exorbitant fees for their services.

### **(3) International Students**

The number of international students has increased rapidly since 2009 due to the government policy of accepting 300,000 international students, which was announced in 2008. According to the Ministry of Justice, there were a total of 337,000 international students in Japan as of 2018 (E-Stat, 2018), among which approximately 90% (298,461) are working. The top three countries of origin are Vietnam (120,739), China (78,473), and Nepal (44,541), which consists of more than 80% of working international students. While most of them work in the service sector, at least 2,739 international students were working in the care sector (MHWL, 2018).

In 2017, Sasaki conducted interviews at a Japanese language school in western Japan with four international students who had arrived from Indonesia in 2016 to study Japanese language for one and a half years. Two of them had graduated from nursing school in Indonesia, and the rest were high school graduates. Before they came to Japan, they finished a three-month Japanese course in Indonesia, although the course was only held for two months, with a one-month vacation. They were informed by the “teacher” of the school that they could continue to study Japanese while working in Japan. The teacher seemed to be reliable, since he used to study at a university in Japan and his son was also working in Japan. They were also informed that what they were doing was called “*kaigo*,” and that after they finished the Japanese language course in Japan, they would have the possibility to continue to work in Japan. They believed

what he said, decided to come to Japan, and paid about 200,000 yen (= \$ 2,000) to the teacher to prepare for their study abroad experience in Japan. The teacher also told them that if they quit in the middle of the course, they would have to pay an additional 500,000 yen (= \$ 5,000).

The tuition fee for Japanese language school in Japan was about 800,000 yen (= \$ 8,000) for one and a half years, but, the students were not well-informed, and believed that they did not have to pay. They were also told that they did not have to worry about living costs, and they could use all the money that they would earn. However, once they arrived in Japan, they realized that this was not true, and that they had to pay for their tuition, study materials, and living costs from the income of their part-time work. Also, they noticed that they had no chance to work immediately after they finished the Japanese language course, unless they instead would have to transfer to a caregiving school and complete another two-year “*kaigo*” course.

Usually, international students enrolled in caregiving schools are expected to acquire the JLPT N2 level, which requires 1,000 to 2,000 hours of study. In many cases, therefore, they must be enrolled in Japanese language schools before they begin a “*kaigo*” course. For these students, the tuition fee at least for one year in a language school and two years in a caregiving school, together with living costs, would add up to several million yen by the time they became certified care workers. Sometimes local governments provide student loans, but often these do not even cover tuition fees. Consequently, students must work as part time care workers under the name of “on-the-job training”.

Japanese language courses for the informants were only held in the morning, from 9:00 to 12:30 on weekdays, but the teacher was not qualified, and the quality of teaching was very poor. In the afternoon, they had to work at a nursing home, rehabilitation center or day-care center that were all run by the same company. Two of them who graduated from nursing schools were doing care work, but the other two had to do cleaning, bed making, and transferring the elderly. In Japan, as elsewhere, the minimum-level wage means that they will barely be able to sustain their living costs. In fact, they were paid 950 yen (= \$ 9.50) per hour, which is higher than the minimum wage in that area. However, as they had to use about 80% of their earnings to pay back the tuition, study materials, rent, and utility costs, their life was in reality below the poverty line in Japan. After all, they were not able to pass the language level

required to enter caregiving school, and decided to go back once they finished their language course.

One caregiving school in Tokyo had a total of 48 international students, but only eight of these were able to graduate due to language and financial issues. Also, in another caregiving school in Tokyo, about 40 international students (around half of the total number of international students) were not able to renew their visa, due mainly to overwork as part-timers the previous year when they were learning at a Japanese language school.

#### **(4) Returned Migrant Care Workers**

Returned migrants are working by making use of their experience working in Japan. Japanese language skills and knowledge of Japanese working style are appreciated by companies that have relationships with Japan, although migrants are not able to make use of professional education and skills they have acquired (Sasaki, 2016; Kurniati et al., 2017).

The EPA care workers, once certified, have the freedom to move to other care facilities or to return to their home countries. A care facility in Western Japan employing a large number of EPA workers calculates that for those who arrived between 2011 to 2013 and passed the examination, the retention rate as of February 2018 was 37.5%, 40.0% and 46.7% in respective years. For those who return to their home countries, the certified care worker license also does not contribute to their career development, since long-term care work is not established as an occupation in Southeast Asia. Indonesians who come under EPAs are all qualified as nurses, but those who were employed as care workers have found it especially difficult to return to nursing after spending four years in Japan. Even so, for such persons, Japanese language and experience working in Japanese institutions are appreciated by Japanese companies in Indonesia (Kurniati et al., 2017).

Sasaki also researched a total of 17 Indonesian EPA care workers and returnees in 2015 and 2016, among which seven Indonesians still have jobs as care workers in Japan, and ten of them had returned to Indonesia as of 2016. Four out of ten passed the national exam, but still went back to Indonesia. The research found that the ten returnees' current working conditions can be categorized within three types. The first is that of employment within the health care sector in Indonesia, such as health care managers in senior living centers for the rich that had been built jointly by Indonesian and Japanese

companies. The second is employment within Japan-related industries as translators or staff. The third category comprises those in other situations, including housewives and the unemployed. Some returnees stated that they wanted to open their own school in the near future, or to use their EPA experience to work as teachers. Their career paths are not limited within the health care field, but they are exercising their agency by using the human and social capital that they acquired through working in Japan.

For EPA workers, support from the government and employers is critical to acquire a high level of Japanese language and become a certified care worker. However, as we have demonstrated in the case of international students, the issue is that some of the migrants might not be able to make use of their working experience in Japan. The limited law enforcement, and the shift from the state-sponsored EPA to market-oriented channels, increases the risk for migrants to fall into debt bondage, and to be unable to enjoy the quality of life both in Japan and at home after they return.

## **Discussion: Social Stratifications of Migrant Care Workers in Japan**

The above-mentioned channels and return migration raise several concerns. The first is the failure of existing institutions to bring fair labor practices. The four channels require different educational background and language skills, and offer different citizenship status and career prospects. The government subsidizes the educational cost for EPA workers to study and pass the exam, and once they pass, they can continue to stay and bring their families. Some EPA workers who once returned to their home countries are coming back to work in Japan after getting married and having children. This is not the case for those under the TITP and SSW programs, who work under private brokerage as “guest workers”.

For TITP and SSW participants, no educational background is required except being above 18 years old. Except for EPA workers, all of the other channels are mediated by private recruitment agencies that may charge exorbitant placement fees—and there is no public system to support the study of TITP and SSW workers. Theoretically, the certificate of care work becomes an entitlement for them to gain citizenship, but without any support from either the employer or the government, it may remain only in theory. For international students studying care work, it costs approximately 6 million

yen to finish schooling, which will in turn take years to pay back.

The problem arises when some TITP or SSW workers are recruited from nursing schools in the sending countries. Migrants in different channels may come from the same or similar pool of graduates from nursing schools, and due to the lack of information in the sending countries, migrants will choose whatever option is available for them without knowing the consequences. However, their point of entry into the four different channels significantly affects the economic costs (payment to agencies), working conditions, salaries and benefits, citizenship, and career prospects. The care facilities will only invest in those who can work longer, but not in “guest workers” —thereby affecting the quality of care, as well as staff work ethics, over the long term.

Modern society has developed the principle of fairness, wherein an individual will be evaluated on their personal ability and effort. Japan’s migration regime for care workers is designed against this fairness principle, because one’s future depends upon the particular point of entry that has been taken. Migrants in the lower strata likely come with huge debts, and are employed under the minimum wage. Since their period of stay is pre-decided, the only option left might be to become undocumented if they cannot accumulate enough capital. If that is the case, migration to Japan and return processes might result not only in wasting money and time, but also de-skilling without being given a chance to develop their capabilities.

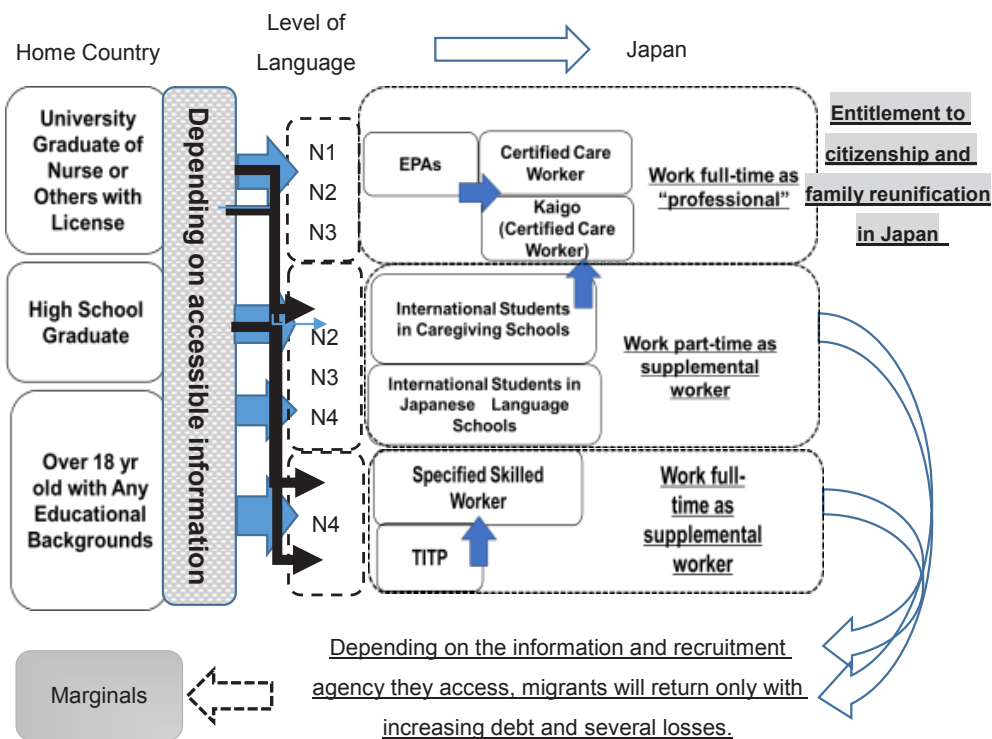


Figure 4. Social Mobility /Stratifications Among Migrant Care Workers

## Conclusion: Migrant Care Workers in the Context of International Social Work

This paper explored how the recent changes in the immigration policy in Japan would affect migrant care workers by focusing on four different channels. The migration of care workers, which started under EPA, already has ten years of experience—thereby paving the way for three more migratory channels in a deregulated manner. While EPA has been successful in bringing positive impacts and cultural understanding at the grass-roots level, the new channels raise the issue of fairness, transparency, and accountability in recruitment and treatment.

Within the context of the receiving societies, the issues of population aging, increasing labor force participation ratio for women, decreasing multi-generational households, and retrenchment of social expenditures are common characteristics that lead to growing dependency on migrants. On the contrary, from the perspective of the sending countries, the diversification of destinations has increased their bargaining power to raise wages and increase protection for their people who migrate abroad. The narrowing of wages

between both sending and receiving countries, and among the receiving societies, also contributes to the changing dynamics of migration.

With the development of global governance frameworks including Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (2018) and ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of Rights of Migrant Workers (2017), the failure of the state to install proper policy measures will result in the failure to secure a quality workforce and risk the life of migrant workers. This will jeopardize the quality of life of the elderly, force migrants into vulnerable positions, and also affect the diplomatic relationship between the sending and receiving countries.

In the age of digital media, migrants are well aware of the reality of the destination countries through friends and social networks. We are already seeing reports of TITP human rights violation cases being spread to the sending countries, which affects migrants' decisions. On the other hand, people are prone to fake information, being deceived, and making decisions based on limited knowledge. It might be necessary for social workers to inform prospective migrants regarding the consequences of migration, so that each of them will be able to select the best migratory channel for their own unique situation. It could also be necessary for social workers to provide educational support for prospective migrants to acquire knowledge and skills in order to fully exercise their rights and capabilities. In this regard, social workers both in Japan and the sending countries must cooperate with each other to ensure people's quality of life and the betterment of well-being within the context of international social work.

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# UNWANTED PREGNANCY: EXPLORING EXPERIENCE AND FUTURE PLANS OF UNMARRIED YOUNG WOMEN AND TEENAGERS IN SHELTERS

AZLIN HILMA HILLALUDDIN\*

ZARINA MAT SAAD\_

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## ABSTRACT

Unplanned pregnancies, especially those that are unwanted, bring about emotional, financial, physical, and social distress to young mothers in particular. These could lead to problematic behaviors such as baby abandonment, or health and mental health issues. However, there are young women who chose to continue with their pregnancy despite experiencing trauma and stigma of being pregnant out-of-wedlock. Therefore, this research aims to obtain a detailed understanding on the experience and future plans of young women and teenagers who sought protection in shelters across the country after becoming pregnant out-of-wedlock. Face to face interviews were conducted with 10 participants aged between 16 to 23 years old in four women shelters across Malaysia. The focus of this paper only covers those who got pregnant by consensual sex. The findings indicate that the shelters were seen as a hideaway place due to embarrassment of being pregnant out-of-wedlock rather than a secure place that offers support during great distress. It also highlights the importance of family involvement in helping the young participants to get their life back on track since many of the participants expressed regret over their actions. Hence, it is recommended that social service agencies that work with this group of clients to prepare and follow through individual case plans.

Keywords: teenage pregnancy, premarital pregnancy, unwanted pregnancy

## INTRODUCTION

Being pregnant and unmarried adolescent is considered as undesirable social situation in many cultures around the world. Not only the phenomenon is frowned upon, there are also many risks associated with being a young unmarried mother. Young mothers (particularly teenage girls) present with the most risks. These include threats to baby and mother's health, substance abuse, impediment to education opportunities, and also costs to the government (such as the building of shelters and providing welfare assistance) (Kohn, 2013; Leve, Kerr, & Harold, 2013; Pazol, Warner, Gavin, Callaghan, Spitz, Anderson, Barfield, & Kann, 2011, Khairani Omar, Suriati Hasim, Noor Azimah Muhammad, Aida Jaafar, Syahnaz Mohd Hashim & Harlina Halizah Siraj, 2010; Azmawaty Mohamad Nor, Shanina Sharatol Ahmad Shah, Usharani A/P Balasingam, Zaida Nor Zainudin, 2019; Ngum Chi Watts, Liamputtong & Mcmichael, 2015).

Teenage pregnancy is a societal concern in many parts of the world. In the United States (US) for example, where pregnancy rates are among the highest when compared with other developed countries, it is estimated that 39.1 babies were born per 1,000 teenage mothers in the year 2009 (Pazol, et. al., 2011). There were 410,000 girls aged 15–19 years who gave birth in the US that year alone. The rates were higher among minority teenage girls when analysis was done based on ethnicity. The rates for babies born to teen mothers were 59.0 per 1000 births among African American mothers and 70.1 per 1000 births among Hispanic mothers. Pazol and her colleagues (2011) found that among the surveyed teenagers who confessed of having sexual intercourse, almost a third of them reported never having any discussion with their parents regarding sex or contraceptive methods. In contrast, in Malaysia, teenage pregnancy is reportedly higher among the Malay majority in the community. It is estimated that 83.3 babies are born out of wedlock in Malaysia every day. There were 17,303 illegitimate babies born to Malay mothers in the year 2009 (Mohd Azis Ngah, 2010).

Literature search on this issue found a changing trend in adolescents' decision regarding the care for their soon-to-be-born babies. In the 1980's for example, Leibowitz, Chow, and Eisen (1986) found that American adolescents prefer to continue the pregnancy and deliver the baby with no intention of getting married, get married in order to legitimize the birth of their baby, or to perform abortion. Meanwhile, later studies for example a study in the 1990's by Dworkin, Harding, and Schreiber (1993) found giving up their babies for adoption as a viable option for unmarried pregnant teens, although more than

half later decided to keep the baby after they gave birth to the babies. The focus of more recent literature found grief and trauma reported among young mothers who lost custody of their babies or gave the babies away for adoption. (Janzen & Melrose, 2016; Memarnia, Nolte, Norris, & Harborne, 2015; O'Leary Wiley, & Baden, 2005).

Among the popular decisions taken by families whose young unmarried daughters are pregnant is to send the adolescents to women and girls shelters after discovering pregnancy. In Malaysia, it is common that women shelters which accommodate pregnant unmarried young mothers are seen as places to rehabilitate those who have “committed sins”, including the (mis)perception that these places are punishment or correctional facilities. However, studies have found that pregnant teens in shelters should not be deprived of their needs. Driskill (1998), for example, found that residential care facilities should be aware of six categories of needs for pregnant teenagers which are socialization, emotional, mental / intellectual, physical / health, functional and spiritual needs. Likewise, Woo and Twinn (2004) who conducted a study on pregnant teenagers in a Hong Kong shelter also found six perceived needs which are acceptance of pregnancy, psychological reactions during pregnancy, use of contraception and health advice, social support, love and romance. Both of these studies highlighted the awareness that pregnant young mothers who seek shelter are not living in a void space where all connections to their social surroundings are being cut off. They need to be given support and assessed for provisions of proper services.

This research project was made possible by the funding of the Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS) from the Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia. The purpose of the larger research project was to examine the experience of unmarried young mothers, including teenage girls, who seek protection in women's shelters while waiting for the birth of their babies. The focus of this article is specifically on exploring pregnant young women and teen's experience and future plans for themselves and their unborn babies.

## **METHODS**

This research was conducted with 10 pregnant young mothers in four women and girls shelters; two were government-funded shelters while the other two were private shelters. The approval to conduct research was sought from the private shelters and Department of Social Welfare Malaysia (*Jabatan*

*Kebajikan Masyarakat Malaysia* or JKMM) headquarters in Putrajaya. Table 1 shows the demographic profile of respondents. Their age range was 16 to 23 years old. All of them got pregnant by consensual sex.

**Table 1**  
*Demographic profile of respondents*

Location / Participants' ID Code	Age	Alleged reason for pregnancy
Northern Region (private)		
KDP1	17	Consensual
KDP3	19	Consensual
KDP5	23	Consensual
Central Region (private)		
SLP1	23	Consensual
SLP2	16	Consensual
SLP3	19	Consensual
SLP4	21	Consensual
SLP5	16	Consensual
Central Region (government-funded)		
BGG1	16	Consensual
East Malaysia (government-funded)		
KKG1	17	Consensual

Prospective participants were approached for their consent to be included in the research. The research only commenced once approval and consents were obtained from all parties involved.

Since the issue being addressed by the research involved potentially sensitive and/or traumatic experience, special care was taken into consideration by the researchers before embarking on and during data collection. Rapport building was crucial before we began with data collection. We introduced ourselves as researchers and lecturers from Universiti Utara Malaysia and explained the purpose of our research. We clarified that confidentiality was extremely important in the research. Therefore, no identifying information of

the participants would be revealed and we explained that the participants may opt to withdraw at any time during data collection. Asking non-threatening rapport questions such as asking for participants' names, family background and interests was useful to engage participants in the study. Initial engagement through group work was found useful as a rapport building approach whereby the participants were gathered in a group and the researchers acted as moderators. This method appeared to be less intimidating than direct one-to-one approach during first encounter and helped to encourage the participants to open up later on. Group work was utilized before and after data collection.

## RESULTS

Participants were asked about their decision to enter women shelter and their future plans for self and unborn babies. Two themes emerged from the present research (a) decision to enter shelter, and (b) plans and arrangement for self after leaving the shelters.

### Decision to Enter Shelter

An overarching theme for the reason to enter the shelters is due to feeling embarrassed and ashamed for being pregnant out of wedlock. This was expressed by all respondents, for example KDP3 stated:

*“(Nak) Lindung perut nilah. Tak mahu bagi orang nampak.... Tak mahu malu family.”*

*[To hide my tummy. I don't want people to know.... I don't want my family to feel embarrassed.]*

An important point to note is that all the respondents were sent to the shelters (both government-funded and private) by family members, regardless of whose decision it was for them to enter the shelters. Therefore, some degree of family interest was involved during their admission into the shelters.

Majority of the respondents were referred to the shelters by other people. Those who sought protection in the private shelters were referred to the shelters by family members such as parents, siblings, or extended families (e.g., uncles, aunts, etc.). SLP5 for example disclosed:

*“Hmm, family la (yang hantar). (Saya) tak nak..... Ikutkan nak kahwin. Lepas tu, ayah tak bagi.”*

*[Hmm, my family (sent me here). No (I don't want to come here)..... Actually I wanted to get married but my father disapproved.]*

SLP1 also disclosed similar parental pressure to enter the shelter.

*“Ayah dan family la (yang hantar)... (Saya) tak nak... Takpe, (kalau tak masuk sini) saya duduk dengan kakak saya.”*

*[My father and my family (sent me here)... No (I don't want to come here)... It's ok, (if I don't come here) I can live with my sister.]*

Although age was projected to be related to self-determination to enter the shelter, it was found that this was not the case for the participants as four of the referred participants were above 18 (KDP3, SLP1, SLP3, SLP4). SLP4 related how she was sent to the shelter.

*“Ibu yang hantar, ibu yang cari (rumah ni)... Tak (saya tak nak datang sini)..... Hari tu memang dah rancang nak kahwin tapi last minute ibu tak bagi.”*

*[My mother sent me here, she searched and found (this shelter)... No (I don't want to come here)... I had planned to get married but my mother disapproved at the last minute.]*

## **Plans and Arrangement for Self after Leaving the Shelters**

As mentioned previously, one respondent had married her boyfriend. Majority (n =10) of the rest had no plans of getting married. Those who were students stated that they wanted to get back to school or college. While those who were working, wanted to continue working or find another job. KKG1 who is a student reported:

*“Hmmm..... macam terfikir lah lepas bersalin kan mesti banyak tanggungan lagi bila kena jaga baby nanti. Terfikir lah macam mau belajar lagilah.”*

*[Hmmm.... I've been thinking that after I deliver the baby, my responsibilities will increase when I have the baby. I think I want to continue my study.]*

Similarly, another student, KDP4, also reported issue:

*“(Boyfriend) Tak contact pun..... Tak tahu lah. Macam tak nak cari (dia) dah..... Lepas bersalin nanti nak sambung sekolah balik.”*

*“(My boyfriend and I) We've lost contact..... I don't know. Feel like I don't want to have any connections with him anymore.... After delivery, I want to go back to school.]*

Four other respondents reported plans of getting married to their boyfriends after discharge from the shelter. These were participants who were unwillingly sent to the shelters by their family. However, they also mention of wanting to continue with their study. SLP5 reported:



*“Dah bersalin nanti tak tahu lah..... Lepas tu, lepas 2 tahun tu baru sambung study balik..... Nak kahwin je (ketawa).”*

*[After I give birth, I don't know..... Then, after 2 years I will continue my study..... Just want to get married (laughs).]*

Likewise, SLP4 who was sent to the shelter by her mother related her plans after leaving the shelter:

*“Nak keluar dari sini. Tak nak lah duduk sini. Nak kahwin dan ada life sendiri. Lepas tu dah ada baby esok nak kerja sementara then sambung belajar balik.”*

*[I want to leave. I don't want to stay here. I want to get married, have a life, When I have the baby, I'll find a temporary job then I'll continue my study.]*

## **DISCUSSION**

The study provides insight into young women and teenagers' unwanted pregnancy, with particular focus here on their experiences and future plans. The paper is based on qualitative research – i.e. in-depth interviews with ten participants who experienced unwed pregnancy by consensual sex - and the findings cannot be taken as representative of the experiences of all teenagers and young women in Malaysia. However, the findings of the research indicate the importance of family support and involvement in helping young girls who are involved in unwanted premarital pregnancy. Apart from family involvement, intervention suggestions should include the necessity to assess the individual needs of each pregnant young woman and tailor intervention plans accordingly.

Management of the shelters should be aware that pregnant young mothers have psychosocial and health / mental health needs as identified in the studies by Driskill (1998), Woo and Twinn (2004) as well as Azmawaty Mohamad Nor, Shanina Sharatol Ahmad Shah, Usharani A/P Balasingam, and Zaida Nor Zainudin (2019). Based on the findings of the current research, there are six aspects that should be taken into consideration in planning for intervention with this group of clients. These are family support, spiritual needs, psychosocial needs, health care needs, educational/career plan, and plan for the baby.

Above all, attention should be given to the cause of pregnancy such as consensual sex or rape at initial intake. Specific care should be paid on cases involving incest, since there is a high potential that these cases involved psychological trauma. Hence, assessments should also be done to examine

whether the young mothers are experiencing any mental health concerns, such as trauma or depression. It should be noted that trauma may also be present among cases that are non-rape and non-incest. This is because what appear to be consensual sex cases may involve elements of unknown sexual abuse. On top of that, being pregnant at a young age is usually unexpected and may present as a very challenging situation to deal with. Mental health concerns should be referred to a proper mental health service professionals such as psychiatrists or certified psychologists.

Strength-based intervention strategies that center upon highlighting individual strengths, familial support and strong points will help young pregnant mothers to hold a positive outlook of their future. Since the girls are usually still in school, educational plan should be included in the intervention plan. Otherwise, career plan would be the alternative plan for those who are no longer in school. Discussion concerning plans for the unborn baby should also be done, which include asking what the adolescents and their family wish to do. Spiritual or religious approach is recommended to assist adaptation and increase resilience. Therefore, provision of social work and counselling services should be sensitive to the local context of being pregnant out of wedlock while upholding social work values.

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# Reducing Child Labor Through Community Organizing: A Case Study

FLORENCE FLORES-PASOS

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## Abstract

The paper is a case study of a child focused non-government organization in implementing a time-bound child labor program aimed at reducing the participation of children 5-17 years old in child labor in sugarcane plantations in selected provinces in the Philippines using the community organizing approach. The paper will hopefully be able to impress upon the readers that social work plays a significant role in project management and development, thus, in ensuring effectiveness in the delivery of the best possible services to different clientele groups.

Keywords: child labor, community organizing, project development and management, people's participation, social work

## Introduction

Child labor is one of the key issues affecting children in the Philippines. A survey made by the National Statistics Authority revealed that there are 5.5 million working children, ages 5-17 years in the country of which almost 3 million are in hazardous work (NSO, 2011). The number of children in hazardous work showed a 25% increase from 2.4 million in 2001. The 2011 survey further revealed that over sixty percent (62.4%) of working children were found in agriculture and 30% were found in the service sector.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) defines child labor as “work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity”. In the Philippines, child labor is defined as “any form of work or economic activity performed by a child that subjects him or her to exploitation, or is harmful to health and safety, physical and mental or psychosocial development” (RA 9231). ILO described the worst forms of child labor as situations where children are working for long hours and even during the night underwater, at dangerous heights, in unhealthy environment and are exposed to physical, emotional and sexual abuse. The National Child Labor Committee (NCLC) led by the Department of Labor and Employment, has identified six (6) concrete

worst forms of child labor in the Philippines, namely, children working in sugarcane plantations, pyrotechnics, deep sea fishing, domestic work, mining and prostitution or commercial sexual exploitation (ABK, 2011).

The production of sugarcane involves many different hazardous tasks for children. According to the Sugarcane Alliance, cutting sugarcane is hazardous. However, the ABK2 project's Hazard Analysis Research of sugarcane in 2009, which was reinforced by the Rapid Assessment in 2011, found that hazards for children are not only in cutting sugarcane but also in planting, weeding, and hauling. A dissertation study on agricultural injury hazards in the Philippines revealed that 37.1 percent of children who used tools while working in agriculture reported at least one injury (Castro, 2007). Child labor is a child protection concern that needs to be addressed with urgency. However, it is a complex issue that needs an integrated and multi-sectoral response and the engagement of key stakeholders in the community.

In 2011, the ABK3 LEAP (Livelihoods, Education, Advocacy, Protection), a time bound child labor project was organized and implemented by six non-government organizations in the Philippines from until 2016. Funded by the United States Department of Labor (USDOL), the project offered a sustainable and innovative approach to reducing child labor in sugarcane plantations through an integrated program. The implementers of the project were Childfund Philippines, World Vision development Foundation, Inc. (WDFI) (lead agency), the Educational Research and Development Assistance (ERDA) Foundation, Inc., Sugar Industry Foundation (SIFI), Community Economic Ventures, Inc. (CEVI) and UP Social Research and Development, Inc. (UPSARDF). Based on a rapid appraisal, provinces were identified to have the highest incidence of child labor, consistent with the NSO data. These were, Batangas, Camarines Sur, Iloilo, Negros Occidental, Negros Oriental, Cebu, Leyte, Davao del Sur, Bukidnon.

The ABK 3 LEAP utilized community organizing (CO) as a project implementation approach and method all throughout the project life. An important aspect of organizing is enjoining the community to participate meaningfully, set up the structures to facilitate collaboration, collectively take action and in the process develop a sense of ownership among them towards the reduction of child labor and the betterment of the lives of children engaged in hazardous work.

This paper describes the community organizing work made by ERDA

Foundation, Inc., one of the project implementers of ABK 3 LEAP as it implemented the ABK 3 LEAP project within four (4) years and how CO paved the way to the strengthening of different community structures that played complementary and interrelated roles all towards the reduction of child labor in sugarcane. The conscious use of ERDA of CO and its different phases proved to be instrumental in achieving the desired project outputs and outcomes efficiently and effectively.

With project implementation came social preparation at the onset, which was characterized by the setting up of the project: getting the right people for the job, setting up the offices, preparing the budget and work plans, gathering data for the baseline and establishing contacts in the community through courtesy visits, consultations and proper communication of the goals and objectives of ABK 3 LEAP. Part of social preparation was getting the commitment of the local government and other community stakeholders to work with the project inasmuch as it aimed to emancipate the plight of the children who are the future citizens and leaders of the community.

The process involved also the consistent education and training of the project team and the stakeholders, discussing with them child labor, its causes and effects and education issues and capacitating them to do something about these through the orientation sessions, situational analysis sessions, consultation sessions and formal trainings focused on human rights and children's rights, applicable laws, leadership, livelihood trainings, monitoring and evaluation trainings and related topics.

## **ERDA Foundation, Inc. and ABK 3 LEAP**

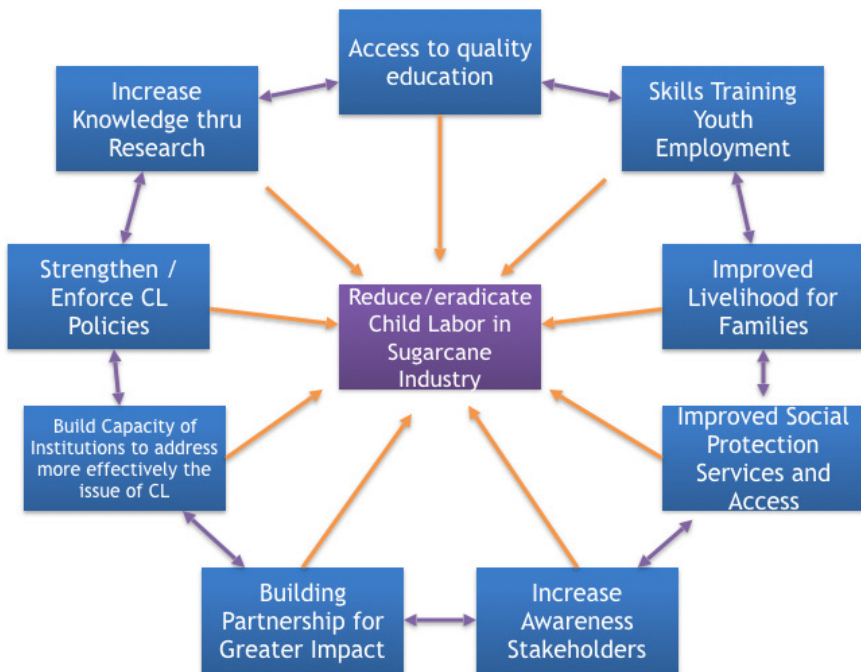
ERDA is a child focused, non-stock, non-profit non-government organization that assists poor but deserving children through its primary strategy: education. ERDA Foundation is an NGO that contributes to social development through working with communities to ensure a better life for children and their families. The programs and services of ERDA have been helping the government through the disadvantaged Filipino children, youth and families for 45 years now. It has contributed in improving the situation of the target marginalized families of the country. ERDA's main program, Operation: Back to school, has assisted more than 800,000 poor children and youth in their education through the provision of financial and material assistance and support services like livelihood, health, capability enhancement, advocacy and

network building. Advancing the welfare and rights of children is ERDA's niche. It has also been organizing parents associations and children's associations for them to be able to participate meaningfully in community development and local governance apart from its intensive advocacy and networking activities towards the promotion of children's rights.

ERDA has been part of the consortium that implemented a series of child labor projects from 2003 to 2007. The third project, ABK 3 LEAP covering 2011-2016, ERDA got a 25% share of the USD 15 million grant from the United States department of Labor (USDOL). In terms of geographical coverage, ERDA worked with 5 provinces, 12 municipalities and 43 barangays and with more than 6,000 families in a span of 4.5 years in the ABK 3 LEAP project. Its project team is composed of a project manager, an education officer, a livelihood officer, a monitoring and evaluation officer and 10 provincial engagement officers who are considered as frontline implementers. The project aimed for the following goal: **Reduction of child labor in sugarcane plantations** and the following objectives: (1) facilitation of direct educational and livelihoods services and linkages for 12,000 children and 5,000 households, respectively; (2) strengthening the capacity of local and national structures and institutions; (3) policy advocacy, awareness raising, leveraging government and private sector partner commitment and; (4) supporting research to provide reliable data on child labor in sugarcane. Figure 1 shows the integrated strategies of the ABK 3 LEAP and the illustration of its theory of change. The project believed that through the effective and efficient implementation of these strategies within a definite time frame, cases of child labor in the sugarcane industry will be reduced or eradicated. Of course, through the various awareness raising campaigns and other activities of the project, child labor will hopefully be prevented.



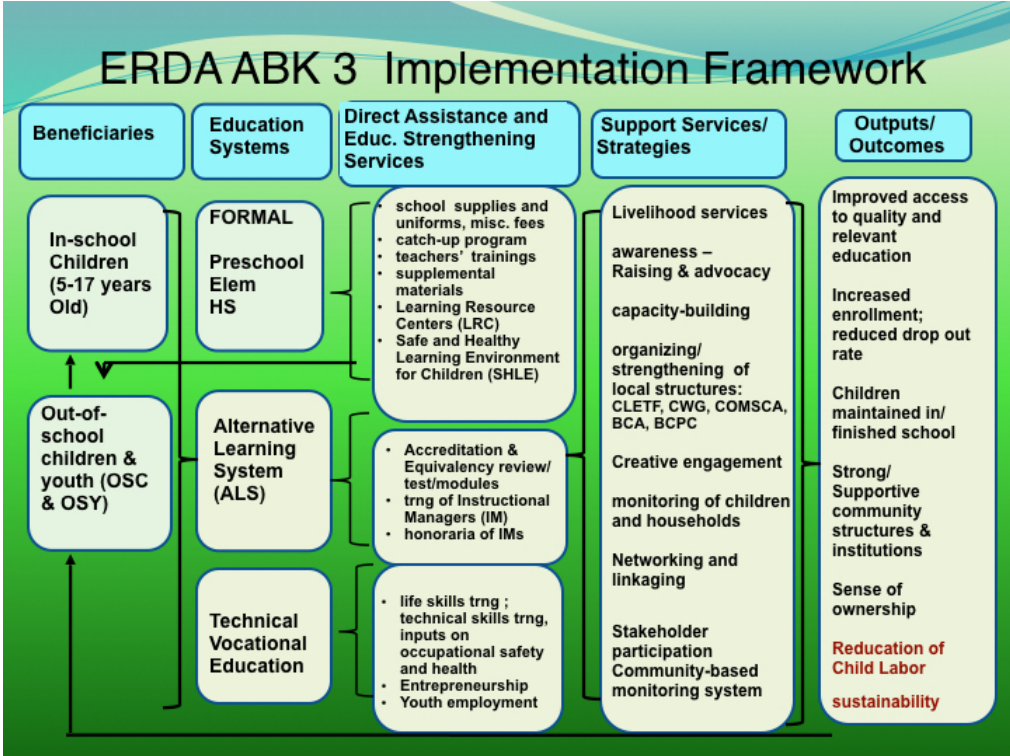
**Figure 1: general Integrated Strategies of ABK 3 LEAP**



These integrated strategies revolve around the output areas of ABK 3 LEAP which are the provision of direct services to children and households through education and various livelihood programs, respectively, strengthening the capacities of local structures, awareness-raising and advocacy, networking and linking and the utilization of research to improve policies and programs on child labor.

Based on these strategies, ERDA came up with its own project implementation framework with more specific strategies and activities towards certain outputs and towards the achievement of the objectives and goal of the project. It must be noted that each implementing agency of the ABK 3 LEAP has its own project implementation design.

Figure 2: ERDA ABK 3 Implementation Framework



The above diagram illustrates the main beneficiaries of the project who are the working children who are both in-school and out-of-school. The in-school children are assisted in their formal education in preschool, elementary and high school. Those who are out-of-school are assisted through the Alternative Learning System (ALS) and technical vocational education with courses such as cosmetology, haircutting, massage, commercial cooking, beadwork and candle-making. The educational strengthening services are the different provisions under each education system. Under the formal school system, children and youth are assisted through the provision of annual school supplies and uniforms and miscellaneous fees, catch up program using a literature based approach to learning or using stories as springboard to different discussions including children rights and issues. Learning resource Centers are also developed to serve as a venue for meetings of the different structures and for children to read books and have different awareness-raising sessions. Schools are also assisted to have a safe and healthy learning environment for children. ABK 3 had fund provisions for classrooms, books, improvement of water and sanitation facilities and other school facilities. In relation to

ALS, cash assistance are provided for the children/youth's accreditation and equivalency test and modules, training of instructional managers and for their honoraria. With regards to the technical Vocation Education and Training (TVET), trainings on occupational safety and health and entrepreneurship and youth services are provided to the out-of-school youth. As support services to the educational services, various livelihood programs have been implemented for children and household members.

Organizing and capacity building of structures, awareness-raising and advocacy, creative engagement or partnerships, networking and linking, monitoring and evaluation are conducted to ensure that the structures and various stakeholders will work together to achieve the intended results. These results are: 1) improved access to quality and relevant education; 2) increased enrollment rates and reduced drop out rates in schools; 3) children are maintained in school and are able to finish their education programs; 4) there are strong structures and institutions such as families which have a sense of ownership of the project. These will eventually lead to the reduction of child labor and the sustainability of all the project initiatives.

## **Basis for Community Organizing**

The reduction of child labor and the need to emancipate the children from hazardous work, and to protect their rights in the process were the compelling reasons why ERDA and its co-implementors in the ABK 3 LEAP needed to do community organizing and form several structures in the community. These structures were envisioned to assist in influencing policies at the local level and towards the sustainability of the anti child labor campaign. Among these structures were: the Child Labor Educations Task Force (CLETF), which served as the main coordinating and consolidating body of child labor concerns in every municipality, the Community Watch Group (CWG) composed of the parents of ERDA beneficiaries who were tasked to monitor the children in their work activities and education, the Barangay Children's Associations (BCA) composed of children, 10-17 years old who were capacitated to become young leaders and active participants in home, school and community affairs especially in local governance, the Barangay Council for the Protection of Children (BCPC), the frontline structure that protects and promotes the survival, development, protection and participation rights of children and the Community-managed Savings Credit Association (CoMSCA), a self-managed group with a safe and reliable method that provides profitable

microfinance services such as savings, credit and insurance to members, utilizing its own pooled financial resources. To date, CoMSCA has been the most sustainable among the structures and groups organized by ERDA in its areas as evidenced by the sustained operations of all the groups organized. Its success is unprecedented and extensive, touching more lives even outside the project.

## **The Community Organizing Process**

As mentioned earlier, ERDA utilized the CO process in implementing ABK 3 LEAP. It turned out that this strategy is effective as evidenced by the perfect fit of the project implementation activities with the CO phases and steps.

## **Environmental Scanning**

During this phase, the project conducted a rapid appraisal of child labor in sugarcane in the Philippines that resulted in the selection of priority regions to be covered. It was also during this time that the project proposal was developed through a series of consultations with different stakeholders with the active involvement of the project managements and staff. The UPSARDF led the baseline survey to determine the profiles of children, households and the incidence of child labor in every geographical area. This was needed for the project to prioritize the cities/municipalities and barangays that it will cover. An in depth baseline study was conducted after to gather more data on the children and households that served as basis for the development of concrete interventions.

## **Social Preparation**

### **Training and orientation of of staff**

Before going to the community, ERDA focused on capacitating its staff towards sound project management and implementation. A formal consultation workshop with all the staff was initially conducted for a deeper understanding of the project and its components. The staff attended also a reorientation on the community organizing (CO) process as a strategy in implementing ABK 3 and an operational planning per province. The consultation has made the staff better prepared for the implementation and project management as a whole.

### **Orientation Sessions in the Areas**

The orientation sessions on the issue of child labor in sugarcane plantations and ABK 3 LEAP were done with different stakeholders to increase their awareness which would be the first step for them to get involved. Likewise, ERDA conducted formal consultations with every municipal stakeholders and partners such as the LGU officials, City/Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office, Department of education (DepEd), Health, Philippine National Police (PNP), Municipal Local Government Office (MLGOO), Barangay officials, parents, teachers, children, the sugarcane planters and others to facilitate commitment-setting and continuously engage everyone that would lead to the sustainability of the project or some project components. During these initial coordination and partnership efforts, ERDA already introduced to the stakeholders the idea of executing a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the respective LGUs which they positively responded to.

## **Community Integration and Contact-Building**

### **Courtesy Calls to Partner LGUs, Line Agencies, and other Key Stakeholders**

ERDA conducted courtesy calls and initial consultations with local government officials particularly the Governors, Mayors, administrators, line agencies like the Department of labor (DOLE), Municipal Social Welfare and Development (MSWD), Department of Local Interior and Local Government (DILG), Department of Education (DepEd) school principals and teachers, children and parents and other key stakeholders. Courtesy calls and consultations with local partners and stakeholders in the provinces, municipalities and barangays have been done to facilitate counterpart resources and their involvement in the project and to make them aware of and support the project's baseline efforts.

### **Municipal Consultations and Commitment Setting**

The consultations involved representatives from the covered provinces, municipalities/cities on separate schedules per area. The consultations aimed at facilitating the re orientation of the participants on the rights of the child, child labor and child work and the ABK 3 LEAP project. It was also an avenue for the stakeholders, ABK 3 included, to present current efforts and programs that contribute to the welfare of children and families particularly those in sugarcane areas for possible convergence and to feel free to ask questions in relation to the project and the children's situation. The result of the consultations was the commitment-setting by the different stakeholder

groups: DepEd, MSWD, DILG, Police, Mayor's Office, barangay officials, children and parents and the private sector including planters, millers and other businessmen. This is part of contact-building in organizing and the start of the establishment of partnerships to facilitate the eradication or reduction of child labor in sugarcane areas. These consultation sessions also served as the foundation for creative engagement and commitment setting of the different partners. The commitment of each stakeholder group served as the legal testimony of the ABK3 LEAP in working with the partners for the past five years. ERDA strongly believes that the establishment of a good relationship and partnership with local stakeholders will pave the way to the sustainability of the project. By working together, all parties will have a sense of ownership of the efforts and fruits of their labor and will therefore be inspired to continue even after the project.

The project conducted also barangay stakeholders consultations that were attended by the different stakeholders from covered barangays. Part of the consultation was the orientation about the project, ERDA, laws protecting children, Child Labor 101, Status of the project implementation in the Barangay, and most importantly the commitment setting by the participants. Their commitments include monitoring of the education and work status of the children, participation in the project's activities, willingness to give counterparts either monetary or in kind, strengthening of BCPC and formulation of ordinance at the barangay level.. Since most of the activities were to be initiated at the barangay level, the said consultation was significant towards the implementation of the project. The activity also helped participants to have a clearer picture about the project and the real situation of child labor within the barangay. The barangay stakeholders' commitments served as the basis for planning and assessment of accomplishments among the stakeholders.

In relation to sugarcane stakeholders, several efforts have been done in the areas to engage or influence them. The attendance of ERDA in the quarterly District Tripartite Council meetings has been on a regular basis in the area of Batangas. In the meetings, planters, workers and the government sector represented by the Department of Education are continuously updated on ABK 3 activities and its campaign of reducing child labor in sugarcane areas. This was hoped to influence the group to admitting that children have no place in the sugarcane plantations as opposed to the view of some members that it is but right that children should help their parents in augmenting their income.

It is also an avenue for policy advocacy especially on the part of the planters.

### **Leadership development and Organizational Development:**

This phase entailed the formation of more formal structures and inclusion of more formal procedures of planning, implementing, and, evaluating. This was also the occasion where the organized groups and leaders are given trainings in managing their own programs/ concerns. This was a period of gaining the support of local leaders, achieve a common understanding with LGU staff of process, and arrange coordination of activities with LGU staff. The more relevant activities conducted during this phase include spotting of potential community leaders, small group building, formation of working groups/ committees, and, enhance values and leadership.

The process involved also the continuous education and training of the project team and the stakeholders, discussing with them child labor and education issues and capacitating them to do something about these through the orientation sessions, consultation sessions and formal trainings.

An important aspect of this phase is helping the community set up the structures to facilitate collaboration and sense of ownership. The structures formed needed not be formal, there had to be leadership in some way to keep tasks connected and meaningful. In ERDA-ABK3 LEAP, hence, the Child Labor Education Task Force (CLETF ) as a municipal structure was set up, which will then coordinated and consolidated the work that ABK 3 and the partners did to reduce child labor in sugarcane plantations. Ensuing efforts of ABK 3 LEAP were then realized under the wing of the CLETF. The organizing of the Barangay Children's Associations (BCA), Community Watch groups (CWG), Community Manages Savings and Credit Association (CoMSCA) and Barangay Council for the Protection fo Children (BCPC) followed. These structures held planning sessions to develop their constitution and by-laws, hold an election and develop their operational plans. below are more details about the structures organized and strengthened by ERDA:

#### **Child Labor Education Task Force (CLETF)**

*The CLETF is a community structure that responds to child labor through “bayanihan” (working together), a concept of engaging all community members to contribute resources and respond with action to issues such as child labor on a voluntary basis. Without it, stakeholders will tend to work separately or individually and child labor concerns will not be dealt with systematically.*

The CLETF is composed of municipal and barangay stakeholders who are willing and/or mandated to work for the welfare of children. The CLETF was trained on awareness-raising, advocacy, and creating partnerships with government and the sugar industry to eliminate exploitative child labor in their community. Education is the main child labor related issue being responded to by the CLETF. Meaning, the CLETF may go as far as advocating, networking, developing programs, influencing policy and fund-raising, but the direction of all these is towards the education of child laborers and/or those at risk. Hence, the CLETF may also act to protect child laborers through rescue operations, law enforcement and other activities which are not necessarily directly related to education. However, the CLETF does these in order to free the children from any barrier as a cause or result of child labor that would cause them not to go to school or discontinue schooling. Simply stated, the CLETF does everything to open for every child laborer and at risk child opportunities for education. ERDA-ABK3 LEAP has strengthened this structure to be able to sustain the anti-child labor campaign in the sugarcane plantations.

### **Barangay Council for the Protection of Children (BCPC)**

The BCPC is mandated by law to be organized in every barangay to design and implement plans for the promotion of child and youth welfare. It includes representatives of children, youth, government, and organizations concerned with child rights and welfare. ABK3 LEAP worked with the BCPCs towards advocating for local policies against exploitative child labor in sugarcane.

On the second year of the project, ERDA commenced its capacity-building efforts to organize and strengthen the barangay council for the protection of children (BCPC) in ABK 3 covered barangays. The participants were mostly barangay officials like the barangay captain, secretary and councilors. Incorporated in the training as one of the outputs was the drafting of resolutions on child labor that would be forwarded to the barangay councils for adoption and passage. The BCPC had as one of its committees a child monitoring committee and this is where the concern of child labor monitoring was to be mainstreamed.

### **Barangay Children's Association (BCA)**

The BCA is a mass-based organization of children at the community level that promotes children's rights. Membership are all children in the barangay below 18 years old. The BCA is one of the avenues for children in realizing their right to participation, among others. It is also an opportunity for children to



develop their leadership and organizational management capacities towards responding to their issues and concerns at the barangay and/or city levels. The BCAs received training, divided by age groups of 5-11, 12-14, and 15-17, on leadership, advocacy, and hazards in sugarcane work. The BCA representatives were given a slot at the BCPC hence the children have had more chances of influencing policies and programs. The children who are members of the BCA became potential candidates for the “Sangguniang Kabataan” (SK) with the assurance that the children are better prepared for their role in governance than those children who are usually randomly selected to run and do not necessarily have child rights orientation and the necessary leadership skills and values for them to do their job well.

### **Community Watch Groups (CWGs)**

The CWG is an organization of parents, teachers, children, barangay officials and other community members whose goal is to ensure children’s protection, participation and right to education and whose focus is the monitoring of children engaged in child labor (CL): hazardous child labor (HCL) and worst forms of child labor (WFCL) and at risk children. In the context of ABK 3, the goal of monitoring of the CWGs is to ensure that children are in school, participating actively in the community and not engaged as child laborers in sugarcane plantations.

The function of the CWGs was not only limited to being monitors of assisted children and households. They are also active village agents of COMSCA/COMSA as they have been in-charge of the formation of these groups and also in the monitoring of formed COMSCA/COMSA groups. Proximity of the houses, significant ratio between CWGs against the number of Households and extreme weather condition during their school and house visits remains to be the challenges for some CGWs. ERDA –ABK3 LEAP was able to organize a total of 407 CWGs throughout the project.

### **The Community Managed Savings and Credit Association (CoMSCA)**

CoMSCA’s purpose is to provide a safe and reliable place for individuals to save; and to receive a profit on those savings. This enables members to meet household and small business expenses without the trouble of approaching a moneylender or micro finance institution (MFI). While the amount of money is small, it is easy to obtain and can solve immediate problems. The CoMSCA system uses a cash-box and is a safer place to save than keeping cash in a cupboard or under a mattress. The CoMSCA system insures everyone an

attractive and fair profit on savings. The passbook-based record-keeping of CoMSCA prevents quarrelling and unfair treatment from literate members. CoMSCA may have a social fund to offer members mutual support and a form of self-insurance. CoMSCA has regular democratic elections and a standardized process that cannot be easily swayed and these can be seen through eight (8) modules of CoMSCA that guide its activities.

A total of 226 CoMSCAs were formed over the course of project implementation, with 5549 members, 3645 are assisted household members. Many enticed to join even non-ABK3 families such as barangay officials, teachers and other individuals as it gained popularity in the communities. Females outnumbered male savers, as 88% of the total members are females. Education, basic needs, health and business outlays are the main reasons for getting loans. Savings, together with the income were returned to members every end of the cycle. Savers dispensed the proceeds productively. Majority used them for business and basic needs. As families were able to access basic financial services through CoMSCA, many members were able to reduce their financial vulnerabilities, among other benefits. They bought livestock, set up variety stores, added capital to their existing small trading enterprises and some earmarked the savings for the school expenses of their children. Further, there are some savers who allotted their money to house improvement and repair. CoMSCA members proved the profound impact of the metal box with three keys. They are motivated to earn more and save more for their families.

## **Strengthening and capacity-building of groups and structures**

ERDA consistently conducted a wide array of trainings and seminars for the different structures for them to be strengthened and capacitated as they continued to perform their roles towards the reduction of child labor in sugarcane plantations.

### **Project Development and Management:**

During this phase, ERDA mobilized the different project beneficiaries and stakeholders and provided the CLETF the opportunity to spearhead the planning and implementation of the different programs, services and activities of the project as follows.

#### **Learning Resource Center (LRC)**

The setting up of LRCs in the communities remains an avenue for collaborative efforts among stakeholders. Each Learning Resource center is provided with set of story books, art materials, workbooks other kinds of library books and supplemental materials. Storytelling sessions, meetings and other planning activities are conducted in each LRCs. It continue to serve as venue for several activities such as catch-up sessions with BEST and BCAs, CoMSCA and CoMSA meetings, CWG and BCPC meetings, etcetera. In some areas, the distribution of school supplies and uniforms was also held at the LRC.

The established Learning Resource Centers across the provinces and municipalities equipped with educational materials including story books, art materials, and other learning materials continue to serve as venues for several activities such as catch-up sessions with BEST and BCAs, CoMSCA and CoMSA meetings, CWG and BCPC meetings, and others. Some barangay councils had passed local policies to allocate annual budget to support either the LRC or the Catch-up Program.

### **The *Negoshow with the mobile schools***

The project developed mobile schools that operated in all the provinces to bring fun and creative learning in schools and in the barangays. The mobile schools were able to visit and/or conduct learning sessions in barangays with the help of community partners and volunteers. Together with the mobile school teachers, BEST and BCA members, the mobile schools are instrumental in facilitating creative engagements in the community. Activities include, storytelling sessions, film viewing, arts and crafts, interactive games, and others. The schools where the emo and ekkab are operating during weekdays, have shown invaluable support and express gratitude to the program. In the barangays, the BCPC continues to support the program through allocation of funds for the snacks of volunteers. Truly, the mobile school program not just bring smiles to children but to the community as a whole. The said mobile schools have been endorsed to the communities when the project ended in 2016.

### **Fiesta Pambata**

Playing is always a major component of ERDA's programs. Another way of boosting the interest of the children is to let the children engage in different forms of activities and play. The Fiesta Pambata is an activity that upholds the value of play in a child's/adult's life. Fiesta Pambata is an activity that engaged

children in Filipino games and activities. There were games like kadang-kadang (waking in stilts), bao (coconut), pabitin, palayok, food preparation (children made binignit or guinataang halu-halo), bracelet-making, Filipino dance, Filipino song, storytelling and relay games. The theme is about embracing the Filipino culture – food, games, song, dances- that children/adult forget because of too much exposure to technology/modernization.

Each child was able to join in at least 2 or 3 activities. There were activities that were simultaneously played and there were activities that were participated in by children in consideration of their height like the pabitin and the basag palayok.

With the aim of providing other ways of boosting the interest of children through play and different learning activities, the Fiesta Pambata (Children Festivity) was an activity that upholds the value of play in a child's/adult's life. There were various activities both enjoyed by the children and adults including food preparation, bracelet-making, Filipino dance, Filipino song, ball games, relay games, face painting, embroidery, toy making, quilt-making, arts and crafts, etc.

### **Safe and Healthy Learning Environment for Children (SHLE)**

Creating a child-friendly learning environment for students will not only involve the improvement of school buildings and sanitation facilities, but also the establishment of school-based health and nutrition programs with an outreach program on nutrition at the community level, model gardening for replication at the family level, as well as access to potable water systems and sanitation facilities. A safety and health assessment of every school and learning/training center was conducted in coordination with DepEd and the LGU in the first year of implementation. Based on the results of the assessments, improvements to meet the DepEd minimum quality standards for schools is made with funds leveraged from the community, the sugar industry and the government, as well as funds from ABK3 LEAP.

School safety and protection were also strengthened by developing guidelines and codes of conduct against bullying and child abuse by teachers, training, coaching, and supporting parents and school personnel on positive discipline practices, establishing a school and community reporting and monitoring system on child abuse, and incorporating protection policies and management plans at the school and community levels. The promotion of healthy learning environment for children through infrastructure assistance

or support was successfully facilitated in all areas, with the help and support of school and local partners.

### **Teachers Training Series (TTS)**

Teacher Training Series has been streamlined to a more manageable length and content. Two five-day training events were held, one in August 2013 and a second in August 2015. The first training aims to promote the capacity of teachers to become child rights and child labor advocates, and the second series looked at ways that the ABK3 school-based initiatives could be sustained. Many of the teachers trained demonstrated profound commitment to the issue of child labor and child rights and expressed their own efforts in going beyond their classroom duties in monitoring children's welfare and child labor (from ABK3 Evaluation Report)

The sessions included topics on Child Rights Advocacy, Child Focused-Disaster Risk Reduction (CF-DRR), /Rights-based Parenting Education, Drama in Education, Child Protection Policy, Youth Employment and Catch-up Program. Additional topics include clarifications on some children's tasks in the sugarcane farms using the OSH Hazard Analysis as guide. At the end of each cluster trainings, the participants were able to discuss initial rollout plans and commitments.

### **World Day Against Child Labor (WDACL)**

In line with the celebration of the World Day Against Child Labor (WDACL) on June 12, different activities were conducted and initiated by the Child Labor Education Task Force (CLETF), schools, local government units and the ERDA- ABK3 LEAP in partnership with different stakeholders. These activities were: Parade- where different stakeholders namely LGU officials, DepEd personnel, teachers, parents,volunteers/CWG's, students coming from different schools participated; Contests (Slogan- Making, Essay Writing, and Poster-Making) participated by students from invited schools and; Theater Arts Group presentation in programs. ERDA took the opportunity to celebrate the WDACL in time for the other activities like the distribution of school supplies and uniforms and other usual activities of the ABK3 LEAP.

### **Children's month celebrations**

The project encouraged all barangays under the program to organize and undertake children's activities during the Children's Month Celebration in October every year.

### *Life Skills Training*

This program intended to bridge the transition from youth to adulthood by equipping the youths with necessary life skills and technical skills to be competent individuals. The training aimed to enhance children's awareness about their personal strengths, self-image and present lives as a springboard to defining their choices and carrying out their strategies to achieve their goals. Creative activities and workshops were done to engage the children, and stimulate discussion, and reflection among them. The self-awareness activity stressed on the importance of knowing one's self and recognizing one's own special qualities. The life skills or "soft skills" training for employment included a wide range of topics divided into the areas of self-awareness, career planning, financial literacy and youth entrepreneurship. Career planning included topics such as resume making and job interview skills. Topics such as occupational safety and health, decent work, effective communication, leadership and decision making were also included. (from ABK3 Evaluation Report)

### **Technical Vocational skills for children ages 15-17**

A total number of 531 children ages 15-17 attended a one-day skills training event in the 5 provinces covered by of the ABK3 LEAP. Several training skills were available to which the children can choose from. The goal was to provide skills for children ages 15-17. This is also an opportunity for the children to earn extra income once they apply what they have learned. The following skills are were provided : 1.Basic Hair Cutting; 2)Therapeutic Massage; 3) Candle making; 4) Beads/Bracelet making; 5) Barista; 6) Manicure and pedicure; and, 7) Basic cooking.

### **Enterprise Development: FAITH (Food Always in the Home)**

FAITH gardening has been part of the way of living of assisted households across the project areas although growing of good vegetables posed a challenge during the El Niño phenomenon in the country. Nonetheless, the assisted households continuously raised backyard animals like native chickens, goats and hogs as well as households trained in vermicast production. More or less 2,000 households attended the FAITH gardening training in all areas and received gardening kits which consist of farm tools such as hoe, pick mattock and shovel, and seed packs containing eggplant, bitter gourd (ampalaya), lima beans (patani), hyacinth bean (bataw), string beans (sitaw), squash, okra, davao beans, sweet corn, red beans, pigeon pea (kadios), bush beans,

cucumber and white squash (upo). After the training, they set up their own communal and household gardens to practise their newly acquired natural farming skills. The gardening became a fruitful community activity wherein Barangay Officials, school and other individuals contributed from demo farm development, venue, collection of animal manure and bamboo to food preparation. Demo farms within the Barangay were maintained by the assisted households as their communal garden. While in some areas with limited space, demo farms were developed in the school perimeter. The maintenance of the vegetable gardens were then endorsed to the school. It is good to note that trained Farmer Technicians were in the front line in giving inputs on natural farming system, organic fertilizer production and seed propagation.

Farmer technicians were trained at the Asian Rural Life Center in Mindanao and were now strongly involved in the series of training in their respective areas. They also developed their own model gardens and farms for other households to see. As an offshoot of the Mindanao training, more or less 400 household members were trained by farmer technicians about natural farming.

## **Sustainability Phase:**

The relevant features of this phase are: the community structures have already been established and the community members are already actively participating in the different committees and are already functioning by way of planning, implementing and evaluating. Overall, the strategies used were: education and training, networking and linkaging conduct of mobilization on development concerns and developing second liners.

The CO Principles applicable in this phase are: (1) The responsibility to direct change lies within the people; (2) People's Participation should be geared towards the promotion of the interest of the greater majority. (3) People can be mobilized only if they feel they are affected by the problem or that they benefit from a certain project and ; (4) organizing work is biased for the poor .

Through this project and the use of CO as framework in working with individuals and group members of Community organizing is not an end in itself, it is a means.

Even if the project has been designed to have the best services and activities, if this system of following an implementation strategy is not deliberately done, then there is a risk that implementation will not be

that efficient and the resources: human, financial and material will not be maximized towards the attainment of the project goals and objectives.

During this phase, several activities have been conducted:

### **Meetings and continuous capacity-building of leaders and groups and structures**

The project encouraged and motivated all barangays under the program to conduct monthly meeting of the groups organized like the CLETF, BCPC, CWG, COMSCA, etc. Likewise, it encouraged community groups to conduct periodic team-building to continuously sustain the spirit and motivation of cooperation and working together for the sustainability of child labor programs and services in their respective barangays.

### **Establishment of Child labor Monitoring System (CLMS) per municipality**

Months before the project ended, a child labor monitoring system (CLMS) has been established in the targeted six (6) cities/municipalities covered by ERDA. Through the CLMS, the children and household will be tracked and corresponding interventions will be made based on the findings of regular monitoring work that will now be done by the Local Government Units through the City/Municipal Social Welfare and development Office. Through the CLMS the LGUs will also be able to generate data needed for their planning and programming to continuously fight child labor in sugarcane plantations and related issues.

### **Formation of CoMSCA Federation, BCA Federation, CWG Federation and Organizational Development**

Federations have also been formed to facilitate the representation of the structures in LGU interagency councils and similar structures. Through the federations, the people became stronger and more consolidated as an organizations.

## **Challenges Encountered:**

One major challenge that the ABK 3 LEAP encountered in its organizing process was the lack of support and “buy-in” of some local chief executives. It is either because they had other priorities in mind and not necessarily the eradication or reduction of child labor. Some municipalities/cities hardly invest on children as a matter of fact, child protection is not an institutionalized system and budget for children has always been low. The local government code provides only for 1% of LGU IRA to be given to the most marginalized



and poorest participants. Another reason for the cold shoulders of some politicians on the issue of children is the fact that most, if not all of them are also owners of tracts of land even in sugarcane plantations. Another challenge is the time of the participants or sectors organized to attend meetings, sessions and activities: children were only available on weekends so it was not easy mobilizing them. The attitude of some stakeholders such as not attending meetings and consultations and attending only if there were items to be given by ERDA was also a challenge.

## **Good Practices:**

ERDA's utilization of the community organizing process in the implementation of a time bound project in the communities is in itself considered a good practice. Through the use of CO, the different stakeholders were able to participate and be part of the whole process of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation thereby making them self-reliant in the long run.

Working in the context of a consortium involving different organizations and implementers has also been a good practice of the ABK series. World Vision, ERDA and ChildFund have always embarked on similar projects and emerged as successful in their partnerships and were able to produce their deliverables that resulted into good outcomes. The awarding of three consecutive projects of the consortium: ABK 1, ABK 2, ABK 3 is a proof of this effective partnership.

## Analysis and Conclusion:

### The Community Organizing Framework used by ERDA:

Figure 3: ERDA's Community Organizing Framework



The above diagram illustrates the different community organizing concepts that ERDA used as an integrated approach in implementing a time-bound project with multi-stakeholder participation that aims to produce sustainable outcomes. At the center, the pyramid are the three (3) interrelated elements of community organizing. Education and training entails the raising of the level of awareness of the ABK 3 stakeholders on the situation of children in hazardous work and the poor households where they come from towards critical thinking and action, the development and enhancement of their potentials and capacities in order that they can participate actively in the process. Organization building involves the setting up of the organization, the structures, systems and procedures that were usually reflected in the organizations' constitution and by-laws and sets of rules. The organization becomes the avenue for the expression of the power of the people. Resource mobilization is needed to maximize the use of available resources for

the project and these include the people themselves, funding, external resources and these were done through the implementation of the different activities of the project, networking and linkaging. The three models of community organizing are included in the framework because they were used simultaneously to be able to achieve optimum results. The organizing of the CoMSCA groups and CWGs are examples of locality development because the members are involved in planning, implementation and evaluation of their activities and were organized as volunteers working in the spirit of self-help and in the process developing their indigenous leadership. The project used social planning as a model with the organization of the CLETF wherein various agencies are represented to work together to solve the issue of child labor in their communities and come up with resolutions to aid policy making with the articpation of different stakeholder groups including children and parents groups. The social action model was used by the BCAs as they engaged in issue analysis and wrote resolutions and declarations, gave these to policy makes and they were also represented in the BCPC and the CLETF to voice out their concerns. Since ABK 3 has had a pre-designed set of strategies based on the results of the baseline studies and rapid appraisal, the organizing approach that it mainly used was project based organizing. However, since it tackled the issue of child labor and the economic issues of the children's families, it can also be considered as issue-based organizing involving different sectors: children, parents, local government officials and government line agencies, etc. All the organizing efforts and processes of ERDA ABK 3 LEAP were guided by the principles of participation, empowerment and sustainability, concepts that have been illustrated also throughout this paper.

By the second quarter of 2016 ERDA ABK 3 LEAP has achieved its major outputs thus its overall purpose of withdrawing and preventing children from child labor through the provision of an integrated set of services within four years and nine months. The project has likewise contributed to the goal of the National Program Against Child Labor (NCLC) of reducing the engagement of children from one of the worst forms of child labor, that is, in sugarcane plantations. As of this period, 88% of the 8,543 children or 66% of children assisted by the project have stopped working and have been withdrawn from child labor. ERDA has contributed significantly to the achievement of the goal of ABK 3 to decrease the number of child laborers in sugarcane areas by 85% by the end of the project.

The parents of child laborers reported that they were able to save on

education costs because of the project's direct assistance and the livelihood opportunities given to them. Those who are members of the Community Managed savings and Credit Association (CoMSCA) groups savings and earnings from other small scale businesses were used to support the other school needs of the children like transportation, projects and meals to continuously encourage them to remain in school. Aside from helping their own families, volunteer parents participated in monitoring the children as community watch group members.

Generally, all the efforts in organizing and strengthening of structures and even the involvement of partners in education and livelihood programs, with leveraging of resources and providing the people a chance to participate in matters affecting them form part of the sustainability efforts of the project. The integration of the different ABK 3 initiated structures in government structure and the passage of municipal children's welfare codes and municipal and barangay ordinances on child labor are also mechanisms for sustainability. ERDA always tried to make every program and structure mainstreamed in local development plans so that they will still function even after the project. The technology of planning, implementing and monitoring activities through the example of ABK 3 is also passed on the partners in the process facilitating their sense of ownership and self-reliance.

Based on the outputs and outcomes of ERDA's organizing work in communities, there is no doubt that the Foundation has played a key role in the strengthening of the various structures so that they could influence policies, assist children in their education and be able to protect the rights of children involved in child labor and eventually reduce the incidence of child labor in sugarcane plantations.

It has to be noted, however, that organizing for empowerment and transformation does not end with achieving outputs. People have to constantly be able to engage in community education activities, capacity building, organizational strengthening and mobilization. As such, they will be able to tackle other underlying issues that cause their poverty, that cause child labor and other issues on children and community issues for higher level outcomes and impact.

Now that the ABK 3 Project has ended, ERDA has adopted the good practices of the project and is now having integrated programs in the urban communities it covers. More importantly, ERDA's approach in terms of the

duration of assistance to children, families and communities is now “time-bound” as opposed to its previous approach of providing assistance for an unlimited period of time.

At the macro level, the ABK 3 LEAP as a project has been able to contribute to the reduction of child labor. According to Ruth Bowen, external evaluator (2016), ABK 3’s integrated program approach and the implementation strategies were effective in achieving the project objectives and in reducing the incidence of child labor in sugarcane plantations based on the project indicators set (ABK 3 Evaluation, 2016).

## **Implications to social work practice**

There are several implications that can be drawn from ERDA’s experience in contributing to the reduction of child labor through community organizing for social work practice. Generally, the project was implemented with a lot of social work practice features, which is believed to be instrumental in its success.

First, it is possible to **integrate the different models of and approaches in community organizing in one project implementation** as illustrated above. The locality development model, the social action model and social planning model were all utilized by the project. Also, while it was a project based community organizing approach, the ABK 3 LEAP applied also the sectoral approach in CO having organized the children, parents and local government unit departments and other community stakeholders. These were done with maximum people’s participation.

Second, if meaningful change is to be effected in the life of a marginalized sector such as the child laborers, it is always best to use the generalist approach in social work practice and in project implementation. The ERDA ABK 3 LEAP experience illustrated clearly **social work’s person-in-environment or systems approach** in trying to reduce child labor in the sugarcane plantations of the areas covered through multi-level interventions. The project implementation framework of ERDA ABK 3 LEAP focused on the situation of the child, the child’s family and community and involved various stakeholders including the local government unit in a total problem solving approach. Consequently, there had been a wide array of interventions and services that utilized social work models and approaches. These were direct provision (school supplies, uniforms, payment of school fees, start-up kits,

catch-up programs, trainings, etc.); intercession-mediation (free use of private lots for demo farms, access to TVET programs, school and barangay facilities, etc.); functional approach (most of the resources used came from the ERDA ABK 3 LEAP project); advocacy (massive awareness-raising and policy advocacy at different levels involving the community structures organized by the project); working with the elite (the project staff collaborated closely with the local chief executives, sugar plantation owners, legislators and school administrators to facilitate policy and program development); documentation (the project had an efficient documentation and reporting system and even a monitoring and evaluation system that facilitated the tracking of indicators of outputs and outcomes and improvement of service delivery mechanisms), among others.

Third, social workers play a very crucial role in project development and management. The project employed mostly **social workers** (10 out of 14 in a team), **that performed their different functions** throughout the project life. They were direct service providers, facilitators, advocates, documenters, researchers, brokers, mediators, enablers and catalysts of change.

Fourth, different social work methods, when combined in practice, facilitate immediate positive results. While the focus of this paper is the effective utilization of CO as an approach in project implementation, the **other social work methods** such as working with individuals and groups, social research and social administration were also a significant part of the whole project. Social administration was crucial because project development and management was the core concern, there were resources that needed to be properly organized and utilized such as the project funds, the project team, the various equipment used and other materials under a time bound scheme. Social research was a big part of the process from the time the project proposal was being prepared, the rapid appraisal, baseline surveys, monitoring and evaluation activities and endline survey were crucial. Also, the project conducted several researches to generate data that would be of help to policy formulation and improvement.

Lastly, the use of the social work generic problem solving process, guiding values, principles and ethics should be embedded in practice. While integrating all the social work methods, community organizing models and approaches, social work interventive models and approaches, roles of social workers, the project administrators and implementers consciously used the **generic problem solving process** of assessment, planning, intervention,

evaluation and termination and were guided by the **values, principles and ethics** of the profession to bring about the best possible service to the different clientele groups they worked with and change in the lives of the child laborers, their families and communities.

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## **Authors' Brief Bio**

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# Child Labor in the Eyes of A Child: A Study on How Child Laborers Construct Child Labor

MA VICTORIA HINAYON-ALARTE

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore how child laborers view the idea of child labor. It explored the nature of this practice at Sitio Ese in Rodriguez, Rizal Province by examining their work routines, their reasons for working, their own perception of their current condition, as well as their aspirations. The importance of this study is supported by the literatures that have prevailed in the country and the social implications of the situation on the child worker. It surveyed 10 child laborers, five boys and five girls with ages ranging from 10-14, working at a quarry site, all of whom still go to school.

The study made use of case studies constructed through structured interviews, focused group discussions, child sensitive creative techniques (i.e socio-drama and art activity), and collateral interviews with the children's parents, teacher/advisers, friends, sitio leaders and barangay leaders. It adopted the theoretical framework of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory in its study of children's environment.

The study revealed that a child laborer's construction of child labor is deeply rooted in the environment of poverty and the daily struggles of want and deprivation they experience themselves and perceive from their parents and other family members. For child laborers, they are in agreement that to work is a noble duty. Moreover, the lack of concrete action by concerned local government units and community organizations perpetuated the construction of labor as "normal" for children. Apathy and negligence by duty bearers to put a stop to this practice is tantamount to a condonation of this human rights violation.

This study therefore proposes a child's right based approach and integrative conceptual framework for developing policies and programs for child laborers.

The main aim of this study is to allow children to express their own construction of what child labor is.

**General Objective:** To explore/describe how child workers construct child labor.

**Specific Objectives:**

1. To present the socio-economic profile of selected child workers in quarrying area in Sitio Ese.
2. To identify child workers' viewpoint regarding;
  - 2.1 Reasons for working
  - 2.2 Conditions of their work
  - 2.3 Aspirations
3. To identify services and responses by government and non-government organizations in the area.
4. To recommend policy and program that would help child workers in the area.

## **Significance of the Study**

This paper aims to study how child laborers construct child labor – how child laborers themselves construct and interpret their realities and what becomes meaningful to them, and their interaction with other child laborers. This study seeks to examine child labor from the viewpoint of the children themselves. As such it does not assume regularities independent of social actors. Rather this will be based on the premise that although reality may be apprehended by people as ordered, already objectified and structured, it is an intersubjective world where meanings are constructed and negotiated (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Furthermore, this study will contribute to the body of knowledge on the subject in the Philippines and abroad, but with emphasis on the context of the child laborers themselves.

This study may also provide the basis for stakeholders, policy makers, and social welfare practitioners from government, private sector, and civil society to develop appropriate strategies to respond to child labor.

A review of literature and related studies derived from books, journal editorial, online articles and publications on the issue related to Child Labor. Most of the studies are focused on child labor in the context of family's economic survival and how society perceives the problem, while other studies

explore the experiences of children in the production of goods and services and their detrimental effects. Also in this review are various child labor policies and recent reports on the status of Filipino children.

## I. Child Labor Perspectives

Child Labor refers both to an economic practice and its attendant social evil (Fuller 1999). It is a social evil in three circumstances: (1) the actual job, (2) the danger to which the work exposes the children, and (3) the “desirable opportunities” deprived to child laborers. Moreover, the definition of KDF: Child Labor referred to all those forms which exploit the children, deter or hamper or deprive them of their education, and operate contrary to or militate against the physical, intellectual, psychological, social, moral and/or spiritual development of the child.

In DOLE National Sourcebook 1993 they defined child labor as the gainful employment of children below 15 years of age, for wage and/or other forms of remuneration, whether on full time or part-time basis in formal or informal sectors involving the production of goods or rendering of services.

Some studies defined Child labor in varied ways:

A child worker is “any person below 15 years old who is engaged in economic activity whether inside or outside home” (IIR 1986).

*“Child labor, which was referred to interchangeably with child work, shall be defined to mean the purchase of children’s labor power so as to make a profit out of it” (Rivera 1989).*

*“ Child Labor constitutes services engaged in by a person not yet of age that realize the goals of economy; the services rendered by a young worker for wages as distinguished from the rendered by an entrepreneur” (Mish, Webster’s Ninthe New Collegiate Dictionary 1983).*

Child Labor is “the participation of children in a wide variety of work situations, on a more or less regular basis, to earn a livelihood for them or for other. Children’s work may be paid or unpaid, and remuneration for their efforts may be made by adults rather than to themselves, or assessed in non-material ways or (such as food, education, shelter or clothing). Very rarely are children able to determine the prices of their own labor” (ILS 1994).

# 1. Causes of Child Labor

## The Family Context

Most children start working by helping their families, before they go out and work for others. They do so partly because of poverty but also, in many societies, because cultural values and expectations view this as a natural and “right” way to introduce a child to the roles and responsibilities linked to being a member of a family and to growing up. (ILO 2004).

A common aspiration among Filipino children, especially the younger ones, is to have a happy family. The wish to pursue one’s education is often rationalized by the hope of being able to help improve the life of one’s family.

A common trait among the poor in the Philippines is for young boys and girls to embark on any work that will help generate income for their daily family needs, including their own. It hardly matters whether the child is paid individually, or as part of the family’s job contract. A hardworking child is the pride of the family, and is in turn proud to be able to help his family. (International Save the Children Alliance 1997)

## 2. Poverty as a push factor

Some of the underlying causes of child labor are poverty, insufficient or unbalanced economic growth, and in some cases structural adjustment policies. Without more equitable income distribution and general adult access to employment, and as long as economic growth is seen in terms of a higher gross national product, the problem will remain. (Forastier 1997)

Poverty at a country level is indeed both a cause and a consequence of child labor. (ILO, 2004). According to them, there are two broad reasons why lower-income countries are likely to have more child labor. Firstly, they are likely to have more households in extreme poverty, a condition which is conducive to child labor in all its forms. Secondly, it is known to display social and economic patterns that are known to result in higher rates of child labor.

The emergence of child labor came from the belief that poverty of the child worker’s family, household and community form their backdrop. It assumes that poverty can be traced to a situation characterized by a crisis in employment (unemployment, underemployment and low wages). The families of child workers eked out a living from small scale, home-modes of production that was seasonal and/or occasional. Hence child labor is seen as among the household coping strategies by Filipino families who view children

as potential income providers and as part of family support (1994; IIR 1986; Tungpalan; Veneracion 1989).

Moreover, according to Balleca (1987), the global network of capitalism created modes of production in low-income countries that inevitably created inequality and poverty, not only among the populace of one society but among all the countries of the world. In the process of capitalist accumulation, countries of the world were stratified by their ability to contribute to the expansion of global capitalist centers.

Under the guise of comparative advantage, a global division of labor was decided upon with the low-income countries assigned the role of resource producer, hence the necessity of having a large supply of cheap, docile labor (like children). These modes of production created wealth for a few, weath for some capitalist social formations, but poverty for the many across articulated social formations that were not fully capitalist.

Child Labor is associated with poverty. Poverty is related to unemployment and unjust relations in production (Tungpalan, 1992).

### **3. Psychosocial disadvantages**

The book “*Children at Work*” presented one of the effects of child labor is the damages children’s physical and mental health; because of its premature incorporation into the workforce, they often have to perform tasks which are not suited to their physical and mental abilities. Working children are more vulnerable to physical and psychological stress than adult workers.

The motivation for them to start working and keep their jobs is to be able to provide for their families, a heavy responsibility at an early age. Children react differently from adults when exposed to similar risks. For example, child workers may prefer to face challenge rather than be considered weak by other playmates and therefore may attempt the riskiest tasks.

Regular employment or work deprives children of time and opportunity to go through normal development at the most critical stage of life due to pressure from for survival. Children who are exhausted, hungry or anxious because of work would be at a disadvantage at school compared with their non-working counterparts. Work may also have a long-term negative impact on social development, when it leads to no education or poor education and low employment prospect.

In their book **First Things First in Child Labor**, A. Bequle and W.E Meyers

(1995) explain that when work becomes burdensome or abusive, or is divorced from the links to family it can have serious negative effects on the psychological development of children. If it occupies so much time that children no longer have any opportunity to play or socialize with other children, their social and psychological development can be seriously stunted. On the WHO sponsored review of studies (WHO, 1987) on the social and psychological problems of children most common reaction are: (1) withdrawal; (2) regressive behavior; (3) premature ageing; (4) depression; (5) inferior status identity; and (6) resistance.

## **II. Institutional Mechanisms that will protect children from child labor abuses.**

### **1. United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**

Reviewing the United Nations-Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN-CRC), salient points were considered in the study of child labor. Since its adoption in 1989 after more than 60 years of advocacy, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child has been ratified more quickly and by more governments (all except Somalia and the US) than any other human rights instrument.

This Convention is also the only international human rights treaty that expressly gives non-governmental organizations (NGOs) a role in monitoring its implementation (under Article 45a).

The basic premise of the Convention is that children (all human beings below the age of 18) are born with fundamental freedoms and the inherent rights of all human beings. Many governments have enacted legislation, created mechanisms and put into place a range of creative measures to ensure the protection and realization of the rights of those under the age of 18. Each government must also report back on children's rights in their country.

The CRC articulates these rights more completely and provides a set of fundamental principles that shape the way in which we view children. It calls for the provision of specific resources, skills and contributions necessary "to ensure the survival of children to their maximum capability. The articles require the creation of the means to protect children from neglect, exploitation and abuse" (United Nations Children Emergency Fund 2007). Below are the summaries of the UN CRC ARTICLES which are relevant to this study.

**Article 1** The Convention defines a 'child' as a person below the age

of 18, unless the laws of a particular country set the legal age for adulthood younger. The Committee on the Rights of the Child, the monitoring body for the Convention, has encouraged States to review the age of majority if it is set below 18 and to increase the level of protection for all children under 18.

**Article 2** The Convention applies to all children, whatever their race, religion or abilities; whatever they think or say, whatever type of family they come from. It doesn't matter where children live, what language they speak, what their parents do, whether they are boys or girls, what their culture is, whether they have a disability or whether they are rich or poor. No child should be treated unfairly on any basis.

**Article 3** The best interests of children must be the primary concern in making decisions that may affect them. All adults should do what is best for children. When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children. This particularly applies to budget, policy and law makers.

**Article 6** Children have the right to live. Governments should ensure that children survive and develop healthily.

**Articles 12 of the CRC** When adults are making decisions that affect children, children have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions taken into account. This does not mean that children can now tell their parents what to do. This Convention encourages adults to listen to the opinions of children and involve them in decision-making -- not give children authority over adults. Article 12 does not interfere with parents' right and responsibility to express their views on matters affecting their children. Moreover, the Convention recognizes that the level of a child's participation in decisions must be appropriate to the child's level of maturity. Children's ability to form and express their opinions develops with age and most adults will naturally give the views of teenagers' greater weight than those of a preschooler, whether in family, legal or administrative decisions.

**Article 32 of CRC** recognizes the right of the child "to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development". (UNICEF 2007). In this respect, and taking into consideration the relevant provisions of other international instruments, State Parties are enjoined to undertake the following measures:

- Provide for a maximum age or minimum ages for admission to employment;
- Provide for appropriate regulation of the hours and conditions of employment, and
- Provide for appropriate penalties or other sanctions to ensure the effective enforcements of the present article.

Hence, there is global agreement that childhood should primarily spent getting basic education and that, for this reason (among others), children below the age of 15 should not be involved in productive work activities. Moreover, all persons below the age of 18 need to be prevented from engaging in work that is hazardous or may interfere with their education, or are harmful to their physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.

## **2. Laws Providing Protection for Children's Rights**

In 1986, the year of EDSA 1, Filipinos began the process of crafting a new Constitution that was ratified in 1987. It spanned a decade's work when the world's attention had been called by the UN Convention on the Rights of a Child, and worldwide discussions finally led to the UN Declaration of Children's Rights in 1989. It was also during this period that the Philippines ratified International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention No. 138 on the minimum age of employment. It was also the time when independent Government Organization and Non-Government Organizations undertook studies on child labor. Alarmed and concerned with the findings, the latter proposed the advocacy project called Breaking Grounds for Community Action on Child Labor (BGCACL) to the UNICEF. This project, BGCACL, aimed to improve the conditions of children and their families through a community based action-research program. The concern for child laborers was adopted as an integral part of the Philippine government's concern for children in its 1991 ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In 1994, Philippines became a participating country in the ILO's **International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC)**, which aimed to encourage and support measures to reduce the use of children in hazardous and dangerous employment.

The results of the 2001 Survey on Children 5-17 years old (SOC) by the National Statistics Office indicated a growing trend of economically active children. From 1995, the number of working children in the country went up an estimated 400,000 to reach the four million mark in 2001. The findings indicate



that many young persons are being drawn to the country's labor force, in the forcing them to leave childhood behind at an earlier age.

The survey also revealed that children work to help their own household enterprise and to supplement their own family income, and that more and more children are starting early – the proportion of employed very young children (5-9 years old and 10-14 years old age groups) to total working children increased. Moreover, the survey indicated that the overwhelming majority gave their earnings, either wholly or partly, to their families. It is therefore imperative to take into account of the economic contribution of children, particularly in the light of present economic trends.

In the latest nationwide survey conducted by the Social Weather Station (SWS) "On Child Labor: Employment of children ages 14 years old and below from May 14 to 23, 2005" commissioned by ILO-IPEC, a very high majorities of the respondents knew that there are child laborers in their locality such as Construction and Maintenance Laborers, Sugarcane Farmer, Rice Farmer, Quarrying, Mason and Concrete Finisher inland/Coastal Waters Fishermen Sidewalk Vendors and other Personal Services/Workers.

Given this distressing data on child labor cases, there are numerous child advocate organizations that are exerting efforts to lessen, if not totally eradicate, child labor by advocating the vulnerability of child labor and the rehabilitation of child laborers. What do they feel and think about their present situation?

The Philippine government has laws aimed at protecting children and illegalizing child labor. Article 139 of the Labor Code sets minimum employable age at 15 years old yet prescribes exception to this. A Survey on Children in 2001 (NSO & ILO-IPEC 2003) highlights the following situation of child workers in the Philippines.

Of 104 million Filipino households in 2001, about a fourth (2.7 million) had children working either in their own household-operated enterprises or in other household. Two-thirds of these enterprises were in agriculture, and a third in services. Households with working children fared less well on economic indicators than those without working children (I,e on income and expenditures, housing and household amenities).

There were 4.18 million children working under these circumstances, with boys outnumbering girls two-to-one in both urban and rural areas. Close to two-thirds of working children did so within their own household farms or

businesses. A fifth of the children worked in private establishments (21%) in private households (9.3%) or was self employed (4.4%). A ratio of two boys to one girl was observed in agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing; on the other hand, more than half of all child workers in service occupations were girls.

A majority of the working children were at least 10 years of age, with median ages of 14-15 years, although 7% of the girls and 6% of the boys were between the ages of 5 to 9.

The most common reasons given by the children for their labor participation were economic in nature to help in their family farms or businesses and to add to family's income. Less than 10 percent of either girls or boys said they worked in order to gain experience, acquire training or to "learn the value of work."

A fourth of the children worked the whole year; the rest worked either only during the summer vacation, or had short-term casual jobs. Hence, majority of both boys and girls combined schooling with working (60%), with girl children enjoying a slight advantage over boys. On the average, the children worked 1 to 4 hours daily, for 3 ½ days in a week. But there was a higher proportion of girls who worked longer hours and for more days in a week.

Upon initial inspection, one may think that the plight of child workers in the Philippines is not that bad. However, the survey reveals that more than half of working children have been exposed to hazardous environments in their work places. These risks included physical, biological and chemical hazards and the children were often exposed to a combination of any or all of these.

The Philippine ratification of ILO Convention 138 concerning minimum age of admission to employment and ILO Convention 182 defining and prohibiting the worst forms of child labor signal's the country's commitment to combat child labor.

Meanwhile, RA 7610 (Special Protection of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act), and later amended by RA 7658, provides for specific provisions under which children below 15 may be employed. It is hoped the study results can contribute to the conceptualization of a holistic approach in responding to the problem of child labor by according prime importance to the children's needs.

According to Amaryllis T. Torres, Ph.D, et. al. 2007 in **Nurturing Children for a Better Future: Gains and Prospect Against Child Labor**, the 1987

Philippine Constitution incorporates guarantees over the rights of the children to assistance “including proper care and nutrition and special protection from all forms of neglect, abuse, cruelty, exploitation and other conditions prejudicial to their development” (Philippine Constitution, Art. XV, Sec 3). It was followed by the creation and enactment of important legislations to protect children from abuse and exploitation.

Moreover, RA 7610, also known as the Special Protection of Children against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act, was one of the first comprehensive laws that sought to address various forms of abuse, neglect, cruelty, exploitation and discrimination endured by children. While RA 7658 amended Art VIII of the previous law and specifically prohibits the employment of children below 15 years of age in public or private undertakings, it makes an exemption for children who work directly under parental supervision (or under the responsibility of a guardian) provided that the employment “neither endangers life, safety and morals, nor impairs normal development” and that the child will be given primary or secondary education. The law also allows the employment of children in movies, television, music and the performing arts, but their work contracts have to be undertaken by their parents with the approval of DOLE.

The latest legislation that provides specific guarantees over the rights of working children is RA 9231 (2003), also known as Act Providing for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor and Affording Special Protection for the Working Child Amending R.A. 7610, the Special Protection of Children against child abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act. It amends sections of RA 7610, to include special protection to children in child labor and its worst forms, and to protect and rehabilitate children who are gravely threatened or endangered by circumstances which affect their survival and normal development. It deems the best interest of the child paramount consideration in action concerning them, consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The law expands the section on the Employment of Children, incorporates the amended provisions in RA 7658, and add new sections that regulates the hours of work of a child, gives membership of the children’s wages to them, and requires the establishment of a trust fund for children who earns at least P200,000 annually. RA 9231 prohibits the worst forms of child labor, and at the same time the law also stipulates that no employed children shall be deprived of formal or non-formal education, and should be provided with at least

primary or secondary education.

The Department of Education (DepEd) was instructed to formulate and implement relevant alternatives, educational programs for working children. DOLE is also given the authority to close any business firm or establishment found to have violated any provision of RA 9231.

Corollary to these plights, the Local Government Code of the Philippines (RA 7160, 1991) provides for the protection and total development of children, particularly those below 7 years of age, and adopts measures towards the prevention and eradication of drug abuse, child abuse, and juvenile delinquency.

### **3. State of the Filipino Children Report**

The Council of the Welfare of Children (CWC, 2008) notes the gains in protecting and promoting the rights of Filipino children. At the same time it examines the challenges that the country is negotiating to ensure the wellbeing of children especially those affected by natural and man-made disasters, including armed conflict.

According to the report, poverty is harshest on children, brought about by disasters which destroy livelihoods, damage properties, displace populations, isolate communities and claim lives. Rendered vulnerable, survivors become susceptible to a host of after effects, the worst of which, aside from death itself, is poverty. This however, does not occur only in aftermath of disasters. It is a result of continuous disparities.

Moreover, the Philippine government together with the Council of the Welfare of Children devised the National Plan of Action for Children (NPAC) in 2005. NPAC is the first medium-term plan of action for Child 21. Setting the direction for child rights protection covering the period 2005 to 2025, the NPAC is known for its four counts:

1. It aligns its goals and targets with global commitments particularly the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and World Fit for Children (WFC);
2. It articulates its indicators with the four categories of child's rights namely survival rights, protection rights, development rights, and participation rights;
3. It adopts the rights-based approach (RBA) in policy making, planning, and programming pioneered by the Philippine Plan of Action for

Children; and

4. It integrates into planning framework the life cycle perspective that categorizes the children sector into Unborn Child, Infancy (0-1 years old), Early childhood (1 year to less than 5 years old), middle childhood (5 to less than 10 years old), and Early and Late Adolescence (10 to less than 18 years old).

NPAC concretizes Child 21 - The Philippines' roadmap in building a child sensitive and child friendly society by the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the country's commitment to Filipino children. NPAC has four phrases of implementation:

- NPAC 1 (2005-2010): Disparity Reduction
- NPAC 2 (2011-2015): Catching Up with the MDGs
- NPAC 3 (2016-2020): Sustaining the Gains
- NPAC 4 (2021-2025): Achieving Child 21 Vision

As part of the report, the Philippines now stands at a critical juncture as NPAC 1 is about to commence this year. To jumpstart the achievement of its goal of reducing disparities among the children across the region and throughout their life stages, NPAC1 articulates three key issues that are considered monumental hurdles: poverty, low priority for social services in the national budget, and weak implementation of laws. Accordingly the convergence of this issue adversely impacts the Filipinos quality of life. The shock is punishing on children. If these issues are not adequately addresses, the country will continually catch up.

In line with this, NPAC 1 targets will not be achieved if these issues are not addressed. Consequently, NPAC 2, 3 and 4 will be sacrificed, and the well being of the Filipino children along with them. NPAC correctly identifies the family, local communities, nongovernmental organization (NGOs), people's organizations, schools, local government units, the national government, mass media, and children's well being. As NPAC 1 nears its conclusion, it reiterates its call for convergence of services that protect and promote the rights of children throughout their life cycle.

Available literature mapped out poverty as the number one reason for perpetuating child labor. It is traceable to the global network capitalism, creating a nation that has crisis in employment, underemployment and low wages; with this more families resorted to view children as income providers as part of the family support mechanism. Children who work in high-risk conditions have a higher tendency for psycho-social problems than unemployed children. Regular employment deprives children of time and opportunity to go through

the process of normal development due to the pressure of survival; this would also lead to poor education or no education at all.

This distressing reality moved for the creation of United Nations-Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN-CRC). A global policy addressing the protection of children in any forms of abuse, the basic premise of this Convention is that children (all human beings below the age of 18) are born with fundamental freedoms and the inherent rights of all human beings. Many governments have responded through legislations and policies that put into place a range of creative measures to ensure the protection and realization of the rights of those under the age of 18. Each government must also report back on children's right in their country.

The Philippine government was among the first to respond to the UN Declaration of Child's Rights in 1989, proposing the advocacy project *Breaking Grounds for Community Action on Child Labor (BGCACL)* to the United Nations International Childrens Emergency Fund (UNICEF). Since then, the Philippines became a participating country in the International Labor Organization's International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labor (ILO-IPEC ), which aims to encourage and support measure to reduce the use of children in hazardous and dangerous employment.

### **III. Research Methodology**

This is a qualitative study focused on the following areas:

1. The present socio-economic profile of the selected child workers in quarrying site.
2. The child viewpoint regarding reasons for working, the condition of their work and their dreams and aspirations,
3. Analysis on the services and responses by LGU (Sitio Lider, Barangay Chairman and Municipal Social Workers) and Non-Government Organization in the area towards child labor.

In this research study on how child laborers construct child labor, the researcher utilizes grounded theory as part of the methodology. Grounded theory is not preconceived theory or a priori theory. It is theory grounded in data that is methodically acquired during the course of the research (Glaser & Strauss 1967). To add on, Glaser and Strauss (1967) point out that grounded theory is capable of generating two major types of theory, "substantive" and "formal". According to them, substantive theories are developed from work in a specific area and do not endeavor explanations outside the existing area

of inquiry. On the other hand, a formal theory has explanatory power across a range of situations. In short, these two types of theory are differentiated by the degree of generalisability. In Glaser and Strauss's opinion, substantive theories are used as "a springboard or stepping stone to the development of a grounded formal theory" (Glaser & Strauss 1967).

Methodologically as the theory was to be 'discovered from the data', the main point here was to avoid 'preconceived' ideas. In grounded theory, Glaser and Strauss stress that "initial decisions are not based on a preconceived theoretical framework" (Glaser & Strauss 1967). In other words, grounded theory requires a researcher to approach the problem situation with an open mind and allow the evidence accumulated to dictate the 'emerging' theoretical agenda. Although it is commonly thought that grounded theory requires the researcher to enter the problem situation with limited knowledge (Goulding, 2002), this is not what Glaser and Strauss intended. No researcher would enter the field with a totally blank sheet but rather would have their own disciplinary trainings that provide perspectives from which to investigate the problem. These bodies of knowledge provide theoretical sensitivity that support understanding of data collected during the research process (Glaser 1978). Thus, the importance to avoid preconceptions and be more open-minded enables the researcher to be "theoretically sensitive so that he can conceptualise and formulate a theory as it emerges from the data" (Glaser & Strauss 1967, p. 46).

Given the exploratory nature of the study, a qualitative approach was used. Two specific qualitative data collection techniques were used in this study; case studies and focus group discussions (FGDs). In order to cater for validity, the finding from the case studies through the process of narrative interview (NIs) was brought back to the participants in the form of FGDs. This strategy served to check the participants, in a collective setting, with the findings that gathered from them. Participants' validation strategies fed the findings back to the participants to see if they regarded the findings as a reasonable account of their experience (Mays & Pope, 1995). According to Brink (as referenced in Long & Johnson 2000) the use of respondent validation ensures stability. Thus FGDs can be used mainly as a strategy for validation.

Moreover, the researcher also utilized the child sensitive methods such as play, visual art, and role play in gathering data for analysis. It is believed that such expressive techniques and helping activities are very relevant to recovery from a stressful event in life. Activities that help children express

themselves can facilitate coping, working out inner pains and problem solving (De Castro et.,al., 2004).

The researcher also made a purposive selection of participants with the help of the Brgy Captain Edgardo “Umpek” Sison and the Third Year BS Social Work students who made their community immersion in the area.

The bases for the selection of child laborers were: resident of Sitio Ese, they are among the children working in the quarrying site in the Sitio. The children are members of the group work ages 10-14 years old; they have been a members of the Group whom the students have organized and undergone intensive intervention (i.e counselling, tutorial, home visits, and medical assistance).

The output of the students was reviewed, studied, and the researcher found 76 cases of child labor. From this total, ten were selected: Arian 10, Liezeth 11, Maricris 12, Nhealyn 13, Dorecel 14, Archie 10, Jonnel 11, Jervin 12, Dhan Alwin 13, and Nonylon 14.

For the scheduled interview, the researcher formulated five interview guides: one each for the child laborer, their parents and siblings, teacher-advisers and for the Government Organizations such as the Sitio lider, Brgy Chairman and the Municipal Social Worker and Non Government Organization.

Since child labor is a sensitive issue and is very complex, data gathering was conducted in a very meticulous way. The researcher divided the participants into two groups: the boys (*kasibulan* group) and the girls (*kasikatan* group). The researcher made scheduled sessions with each group in collecting data via sequential creative techniques, interviews and workshops. In the process of interacting with the children, immersion in the activities of the children and observations of their everyday activities were noted to be able to facilitate the deeper probing of the research objective.

To be able to save time and to easily establish rapport with the children, the researcher and five research assistants invited the children to form two groups (*kasikatan* and *kasibulan* ). The *kasikatan* group is scheduled in the morning while the *kasibulan* group is in the afternoon. After the round of introductions, the researchers explained the purpose of the study and sought the consent of the subjects and that of their parents.

First, the research assistants facilitated the conduct of an individual art activity (Appendix J and K: Art Activity of the child laborers). They instructed the children to express through drawings their thoughts and feelings towards



the task.

Second, the researcher interviewed the participant's parents and siblings of the child laborer individually. The questions focused on the dynamics of the participation of their children in the quarrying site, their basic notion on child labor (Appendix C : interview Guide for the Parents ). The answers were recorded and transcribed.

Third, the group met again in a workshop. They watched a video of a role play, played by the research assistants. The participants were tasked to do a play with the same theme but this time they themselves as the actors/actresses. The Socio-Drama was again processed, afterwards followed by a discussion on child labor (Appendix J: Guide to the Socio-Drama Activity for Child Laborers).

Fourth, the researcher interviewed the advisers of the child workers, (Appendix B: Interview Guide for Teacher-Adviser).

Fifth, the researcher interviewed the church leader of the religious affiliation of the children, (Appendix G: Interview Guide for the Church Leader).

Sixth, the researcher interviewed the Barangay Captain, Sitio Leader and Municipal Social Worker in charge of the child and youth welfare in the municipality, (Appendix E,F and H: Interview Guide for Barangay Captain, Sitio Leaders and Social Worker).

Finally, the researcher interviewed the child worker actively working in the quarrying site,(Appendix B : Interview Guide for the Child Workers).

Interviews with the adults were conducted at their convenience. The children's parents preferred to be interviewed at home while the teachers, church leaders, social workers, barangay chairman and other sitio officials preferred to have them at their respective offices. The interview with the child workers were conducted in a nipa hut beside the Wawa River, where most of the child participants relaxed after a hard day's work in the quarry site.

Most of the parents and child participants became emotional while being interviewed. After their respective sessions, they were able to unburden from their hurt, anger, and frustration in what became a cathartic experience for the interviewees. As a token of gratitude, the children were provided with school supplies and sumptuous snack but received no monetary compensation.

## **IV. ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS**

This study ascertains the social ecology of children to be able to grasp the views of the children on working. The interaction between the factors in the children's maturing biology – their immediate family and community environment as well as the societal landscape – actively fuels and steers their development. Changes or conflicts in any layer will greatly affect other layers. This obviously states that to study a child's worldview, in this case the child's own construction of child labor, one must not look only at the child and his immediate environment, but also at the interactions going on at the larger environment.

The children working in Sitio Ese are vulnerable and susceptible to negative developmental outcomes. Vulnerable since this children do not know when will an accident occur, or when there is a developing danger ahead. But obviously, they can provide for what they need, and of their families. They have to wake up early to work, attend school unprepared for the lesson and hurry back to work to be able to meet the deadline, resulting to low grades and the worse is drop out. In spite of the haggled routine, the thought of making themselves useful by doing so for the family eases the burden. Filipino possesses a genuine and deep love for family. To a Filipino, one's family is the source of personal identity, the source of emotional and material support, and one's main commitment and responsibility (Ramos, 1993).

But they too recognize their many abilities such as attending school and being able to provide for their needs. Being aware of their capacities helps build their confidence and encourages them to further do things that they could do. They feel affirmed when they are being told of their contribution to the economic survival of the family, this also increases their self worth. The children in this study have developed resiliency. It is the ability of the children to persevere and adjust when faced with life's adversity. A trait Filipinos are noted for by the whole world, the ability to smile when faced with different challenges. But analysing deeper on the context of the children's perspective, they became resilient because they have to be able to survive; they have no choice, because the duty bearers leave them with no choice.

The parents of the children have accepted the fact that their children are working to be part of the work force inside the family. Their contribution to the family's income is a source of livelihood. Their reasons were to prevent the children from becoming "lazy adult" and to teach them how to live an independent life. The parents themselves shaped the resilient attitude of the

children. They have helped their children to dream and aspire for a better future far better to what they have. They strongly believe that to be able to break the cycle of poverty one has to be educated. And this belief was a constant reminder to the children to persevere and take advantage of their youth to work and at the same time study and eventually finish it to be able to have a stable and reliable income.

The parents of the children lacks understanding about children's rights, obviously so because they are unaware of the fact that they too are considered perpetrators and child abusers since they deliberately or undeliberate pushed their children to child labor to be able to support all their needs, instead of providing for their needs. Their common defense is that they don't want their children to become lazy. This understanding of the parents is culturally rooted on the Filipino values on hard work and resiliency. It is self durability amidst challenges and adversity, which the parents have been preparing them.

## **1. Local Government Unit and Non Government Organization as Meso System Perpetuating Child Labor as “Normal” by Inaction and Denial.**

The responses made by the Local Government Unit that includes the teachers, and the Social Worker, implied that they are not fully aware of the mandate set by the national government for the protection of children. The statements made by the barangay chairman is politically motivated in nature since he himself mention that there have been quarry site in the area and yet there is no any single case of child labor case filed in the barangay. This statement is true; however he also said that the quarry provided livelihood for the settlers. He also passes the burden to the local government unit as the office that issues the permit to operate, when he was made to realize that there are also children working and that their development are at stake. The chairman draws his position in the fact that the people need a source of income and the existence of the quarry industry is a big help in this area because the work does not require qualifications. Obviously, he only looked at livelihood the quarry operation could provide setting aside the fact detrimental to the health of the adult worker, to the environment, and to the development of the children who are also working in the quarry site.

The role of the non-government organizations in the area particularly the faith based organizations and church affiliates of the children provided the spiritual, psycho-social support for them as well as to their families. Through

sharing, the children were able to debrief themselves of all their feelings and at the same time gives them hope, that no matter how difficult their circumstances are, God will always help them survive and that he is listening to every wishes and grief that through faith in higher power all the hardship that they are experiencing will be rewarded. They also give medical assistance through medical missions, feeding program and educational assistance. However, the role of the non-government organization is not responsive to the eradication of child labor in the area, for they are not directly addressing the issue, although they are providing help to the children. Unnoticeably, the children also drew their strength from them, and in a way they are also becoming dependent for the material support they are providing. In a way, the services of the non-government and church based organizations are only on a short term basis, they only provide for the immediate and felt needs of their beneficiaries, a condition that continuously prevails among non-governmental organizations leaving the families merely recipients of services rather than self reliant and self sustaining.

Generally, the children in this study are all studying. The teacher/ advisers are all aware that the children are child workers of Sitio Ese, they all agreed that children should be given proper education and must not be allowed by their parents to work since this would affect their education. The only interventions that they give to these children are some consideration in attendance and in the submission of projects. This intervention in school can also contribute to the understanding that the children are given support since special considerations are being given. This response of the school to the children is indirectly tolerating the situation and not directly addressing the issue of child labor.

In the Municipal level, the Municipal Social Welfare and Development Department is the legitimate representative from the Local Government Unit in this study specifically represented by the social worker in charge of the Child Welfare Unit. Statements made by her showed that there are not specific services intended for children faced in hazardous form of child labor. She also stressed that their office is unaware of the issue of children working in the quarry. This only showed that in spite of the fact that the State already recognizes the full realization of the child's rights and commitment to the progressive implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the intense pursuit of the constitutional mandate, laws have been enacted that aim to strengthen families and children for their rights to be protected.

Still existing mechanisms for their enforcement remains weak.

The role of the “duty bearer” as providers, enablers, nurturers and protectors are not being felt directly by the children. The children detest their participation in the responsibilities being bestowed on them beyond their age. The world that the adults as “duty bearers” created for them is a society that put to test their resiliency to the limits and that created a vulnerable state detrimental to their development. But this same society is where their development also depends upon, being allowed to engage with more responsibilities they become more capable. But this capabilities, potentials and capacities of the children as future hope of the nation are being wasted by the adults because of poverty.

The “duty-bearers,” particularly the parents wanted their children to grow up to become productive and responsible adults and citizens. They are expecting them to carry with them the values and culture that shaped them their identities. They wanted them to live a better life and enjoy the things that poverty has deprived them of. On the contrary as their children live in a particular situation wherein dominated by adult’s influences, something must be made to redefine the knowledge, culture and values of the duty bearers about the role and place of the children in their lives.

## **2. The Social Ecology of the Child Laborers**

The *micro system* is the structure which has direct contact towards the children like their families. The *meso system* is the connection between the child’s micro system, the children’s family and their neighbourhood, church, local government units and school. Since the children spend great number of hours working within the neighbourhood and their neighbours as co-worker, this made the children internalized that working is a normal thing to do. The *exosystem* of the children is the interaction with some structure of the micro system which is best described to be the neighborhood, the workplace of the parents which is also the work place of the children as well as majority in the neighborhood; the community based a family resource that has a great influence over the children.

In addition, modelling played a big factor in motivating the practice of child labor, the parents themselves have somehow shaped the childr worker’s decision to work and this also influenced them to choose the same work as their parents. However on the *macro system* of the children is the outside force that influences the children’s outlook. This can be seen through the

influenced brought about by the structure around the children's socio-cultural context, the cultural value attached to the concept of a child who is working is viewed as noble for he/she will work for the sake of the family, even if it takes away their childhood and the chance of actively participating in school and enjoying their youth. However, the *chronosystem* deals with the changes on the outside force that influence the children's outlook. This element of the system on the children's development is describe as the children gets older; they may react differently to environmental changes and may be more able to determine more how that change will influence them. The advocacy work that the media, non-government organization , faith based organization and even the national government on child labor has reached the minds and hearts of the child laborers of Sitio Ese, they have gained awareness that children their age should be pre-occupied with school related activities and utilizing their potentials to become responsible adults in the future.

The coonnection between the elements of the social system close to the children define their idea of their social ecology. Regardless of age group the children described their life as revolving around their parents, siblings and other relatives whom can be grouped under the microsystem that is signified by the family. The children also made mention of their classmates, church mates, church leaders, sitio leaders, other local government leaders and neighbours to be part of their mesosystem and exosystem embodied by the community that have the great influence over them. Moreover, the school and the church are the social institutions nearer to the children. For the children, the flow of these systems into the dynamics of their community life gives them their identity. These also constitute their social protective factors that enable them to engage in enriching their socio-cultural interaction and usher them into the collective life as members of the community.

Thus, the children formed their aspirations as they gained understanding, that to be able to have a good life; they need to be educated to access the passport out of poverty. This influenced, motivated and moved the children to work to be able to help out in the family and to support their education.

## **V. CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **A. Conclusions**

1. The ten children in this study, with ages ranging from 10 to 14 years old, have been exposed and influenced by their parents to become child

- laborers. The children's parents became their models in providing support for the families survival needs.
2. Exposure to working at an early age hampers the education of the children in the study seven of ten performs below average level in school. That usually resulted from dropping out and eventually becoming out of school youth.
  3. Resilience amidst the severe effect of child labor in the quarry site can be attributed to the strong support from the social ecology of the children; their families, peers, teachers, pastors and community. This also became their shield in overcoming deprivation, stress and trauma.
  4. Workplace accessibility adversely entices children to engage in hazardous work such as the case of the children in this study.
  5. These children developed idealisation from the approval, support and acceptance of their present situation from the "duty bearers"; significant persons around them that develops a positive outlook in life despite of poverty.
  6. This study ascertain for a chance to look at the need for "duty bearers" to reframe their perspective about children's capacities, potentials and capabilities away from the idealisation brought about by cultural influences.

## **B. Implications**

The research findings have a serious implications. Firstly, a critical understanding on the Rights of the Child as prescribed by the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It should be closely viewed in this context for children's work must not jeopardize its bio-psychosocial development. This also gives recognition to the children's rights to development and participation, their access to opportunities and the right for nurturing their potentials, and become part of shaping their present and their future. This study ascertains the need to promote and safeguard the rights of the children through the child's rights perspective in local governance.

Secondly, programs and services addressing child labor should not be limited to direct service such as child protection approaches, but also to the understanding of the child's rights and community building.

Thirdly, this study can be a source for a baseline data for the formulation of policies and laws for the protection of children.

Lastly, there is the challenge to Administrators to engage in integrative social work practice and to link programs and services at the micro and mezzo levels through the initiatives at the macro level. It is necessary to advance and adhere to the child 's right based strategies in addressing issues on children that would respond in building a child sensitive and child friendly society by the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the country's commitment to the Filipino Children.

### **C. Recommendations**

Children have their own way of looking at reality (Magpoc, 2000), they have constructed their needs and aspirations on how they see things. Through the different art activities, socio drama, life skills activities and focused group discussions, they have constructed child labor anchored on the influence of the adults. However, as it appears hidden in the narratives they gained consciousness that they need to be liberated of the responsibilities being shouldered to them by the adults, which children their age should be socializing, learning and enjoying school life. They too are aware that poverty is a big push factor why these things are happening to them that is why they are valuing education for they believe that being educated is their only gate pass out of poverty.

The views of the significant persons in the barangay up to the municipal level showed lack of in depth understanding on the different laws and policies regarding children's rights that could be attributed to the weak enforcement of the laws.

Figure 1.3 shows the proposed framework that social administrators and development workers may use in developing programs to promote the rights and total well being of the children. This framework is adopted and modified framework from the study of Elma Solis - Salamat on Domestic Violence: Effects on the Social Behavior of Exposed Adolescent Girls and Boys.



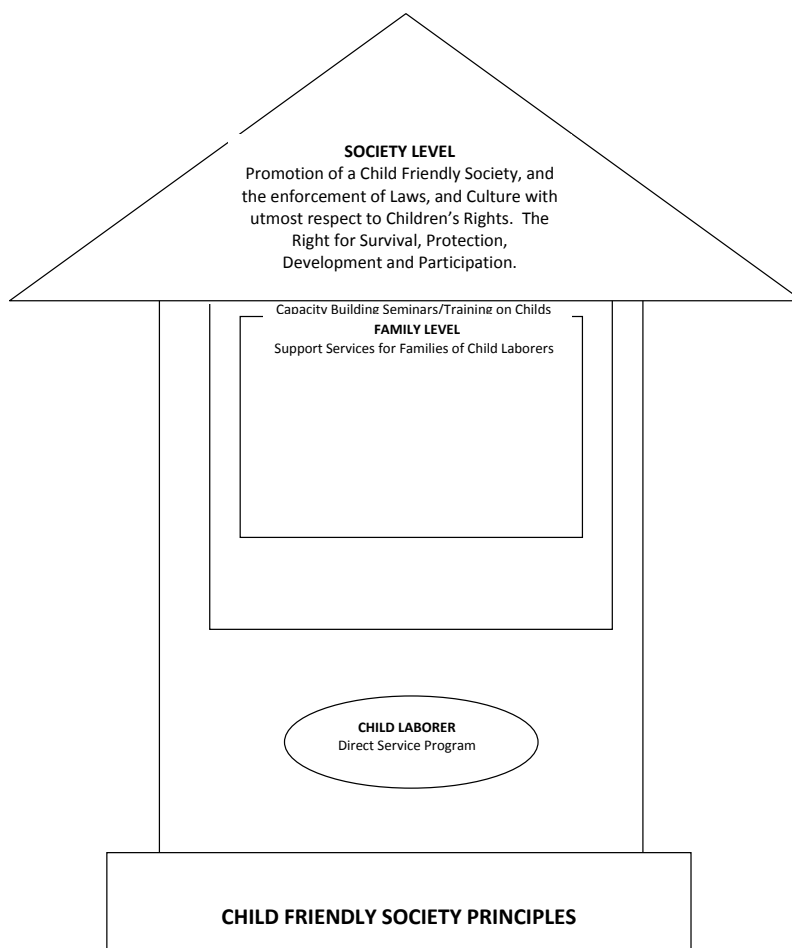


Figure 1.3 Integrative Conceptual Framework in Setting-up Program & Services for Child Laborer

This framework depicts a shelter or a home where child laborers ought to feel safe, secured, love, respected, and accepted. A shelter should not be limited to family members alone but with responsible adults who could provide the psycho-social, spiritual and developmental needs of the child/ren. Utilizing this framework, recommendations are hereby given in the following areas – social policy and program development.

## 1. Social Policy

- Enforced implementation of the different laws and policy on children's rights.
- National and local government unit should implement, abide and comply with the Executive Order No. 310 Authorizing the Adoption

and Implementation of the Philippine National Strategic Framework for Plan Development for Children, 2000-2025 or Child 21 and its Accompanying Medium Term Plan and Framework.

- Policy makers should implement and monitor E.O 310, specifically the enforcement of penalty to the perpetrators.
- Programs and Services of non-government organization should be synchronized with the Barangay Council for the Protection of Children.

## 2. Program Development

### **Direct Service Program**

- Direct service providers should formulate a child protection program particularly to those children victims of child labor in any forms, such as rescue and safety planning.
- Direct service providers should always take into account the four major rights categories to be able to achieve the child-friendly society.

### **Children's Support Group Program**

- People's organization and non-government organization should create activities that will stimulate children to express their own views in a therapeutic means like art activities, play sessions and create children organization wherein children's leadership skills will be honed as future leaders of the nation.

### **Information and Education Program**

- To redirect the way children view child labor based on their parents perception, seminars on child's right should be designed and provided for them. At a very early age, children should learn to protect their right, so as to break the cycle of abuse.

### **Training, Organizing and Advocacy**

#### **Family Level**

- Social workers and other development workers should organize support measures that will ensure the capacity of the families for a sustainable income generating projects and livelihood services that will redirect children's capacity to a more developmental endeavour.

#### **Barangay Level**

- Child Advocates should conduct trainings and seminars to barangay officials on the effects of child labor and other forms of abused to children.
- Community, youth, faith based organization and educational institutions should be educated on the different effects of child labor and other forms of abused to children.
- Barangay officials should be trained on how to handle cases of child abuse.

### School Level

- School based counselling program which includes sensitivity to children's issues can be put up in primary and secondary schools. This will facilitate children in opening up and sharing their pent up feelings and prevent school drop-outs.
- Teachers should be taught and trained on how to identify psychological symptoms of any form of child abuse among students. This is another way of providing support on the psycho-social development of the students.

### Societal Level

- Organizations and individuals should take into account the promotion on the welfare of children through child's right-based approach to be able to achieve child-friendly society.
- Rejection of cultural traditions that will put the development of any child to a vulnerable state.

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# Cultural Sensitivity in Social Work Practice in Southeast Asia

YOLANDA G. EALDAMA

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## Abstract

Social Work as a profession emerged from the western part of the globe; as such western perspectives are embedded in its theoretical and philosophical tenets. The influence of western perspectives have been taken for granted by social work academicians and practitioners in Southeast Asia who have been using western textbooks and not a few have been educated in the west. This paper examined the origins of the social work profession in Southeast Asia and the concept of Western Social Work. Taking off from the Global Social Work Standards for Education and Training, this paper seeks to rediscover few concepts which are common among Southeast Asian people as an initial step towards cultural sensitivity.

Key words: culturally sensitive social work, global standards, Southeast Asian concepts

## Introduction

The social work profession developed Global Standards for Education and Training (IASSW, ICSW, IFSW, 2004) with the inclusion of cultural sensitivity among other important concepts. This paper traced the influence of Western social work paradigms in Southeast Asia as take off for the necessity of implementing the Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training. As an initial effort towards cultural sensitivity in the region, this paper, culled out common cultural concepts in Southeast Asian Region in order to spark interest in cross cultural research among social workers.

## Origins of Social Work in Southeast Asia

Social work as a profession evolved from charity engagements of middle class Judeo Christian volunteers to an internationally recognized profession which we know today. The spread of the social work profession in Asia particularly in South East Asia, varies in scope and modes. In the Philippines, the need for the professionalization of social work took urgency with the

establishment of social welfare agencies like the Social Welfare Commission (Villoria & Martinez, 2003). Women who were deemed potential leaders were offered scholarships to take graduate studies in social work in the United States of America, among these were Josefa Jara Martinez and the women who envisioned of the Philippine Association of Social Workers in 1948, Josefa Llanes Escoda, and Petra de Joya among others (Veneracion, 2003). Upon the return of these women to the Philippines they assumed positions in government and non-government organization and some pioneered the institution of social work program in several universities.

Fahrudin and Yusuf (Fahrudin & Yusuf, 2016) provided an overview of the development of the social work academic program in Asia particularly South East Asia. According to Fahrudin and Yusuf (2016), in Malaysia, professional social work was introduced by the British Colonial Administration way back in 1930 but it was only in 1952 when the University of Malaya in Singapore offered social work as an academic program (Fahrudin & Yusuf, 2016). In Indonesia, the authors explained that the professionalization of social work started with *Sekolah Pembimbing Kemasyarakatan* in Solo, Central Java through a decree of the Ministry of Education, No. SK:24/C, 04-09-1946. The school which trains employees of the Ministry of Social Affairs was established through the joint efforts of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Affairs. Twenty five graduates of this school were sent to the Netherlands to take up post graduate trainings in 1952. In Thailand, social work started as a one-year training program by the Council of Women Culture for its employees. This program however was terminated after three years for various reasons. It was only in 1954 when a four-year social work program was offered by the Thammasat University under its Faculty of Social Administration. Vietnam recognized the importance of the social profession in 1986, during its economic reform period but the academic offering of the social work program started in 1995. Colonization has been influential in the development of the social work profession and education in South East Asia with the exception of Thailand, although pioneer social work educators in Thailand obtained their social work degree in the West. Fahrudin and Yusuf (2016) argued that in the case of Indonesia although Dutch and Japanese occupations bear little influence on its social welfare system and social work curriculum development, the American Model of Social Work Education shaped its social work curriculum, courtesy of consultants from the United States brought in by the United Nations Development Program. Moreover, pioneer social work educators in Indonesia

were trained in the United States just like their counterparts in the Philippines.

As the Social Work Global Standards require cultural sensitivity for social workers, this paper culled out cultural concepts common among Southeast Asians as attempt to sensitize social workers in the region regarding the taken for granted cultural milieu.

## **Western Social Work**

The term western social work according to Mel Gray and Jan Fook (Gray & Fook, 2004) refers to British and North American social work which were brought to Asia and Africa by the colonizers. As Fahrudin and Yusuf (2016) reported early social work educators in the Southeast Asian region were educated in the west and the type of social work transferred to this region is characterized by “agency base ,individual focused case work” (Gray & Fook, 2004). The focus on case management is still prevalent in the European context as the revealed in the study, “European Perspectives on Social Work: Models of Education and Professional Roles” by Janet Boddy and June Statham (Boddy & Statham, 2009). The study by Boddy and Statham (Boddy & Statham, 2009) found out that the prevailing social work practice is still residual and recommended for a conceptualization of social work which is “progressive universalism” which can be translated to the transformative model of social work which considers the whole range of interventions from micro to macro.

Shek (Shek, 2017) argued that the challenge for social workers in the Asia-Pacific Region is on the “essence of social work.” In connection with this he asked , “whether social work theories and intervention methods developed in the West can be used in the Asia-Pacific Region without problems.” The issue according to him is “whether social work theories are universally applicable (i.e. cultural universalism) or there are unique cultural characteristics impairing the generalizability of theoretical models (i.e. cultural relativism).” He pointed out a criticism on Western theories which are grounded on individualism and underpinned psychosocial interventions constructed by Western social worker practitioners. Furthermore, Shek (2017) pointed out several challenges in promoting culturally sensitive social work practice in Asia-Pacific, these are:

*“First, most of the existing psychosocial assessment tools are developed in the West and there is a severe lack of validated psychosocial assessment tools. While researchers in the non-English speaking Asia-Pacific countries may use translated Western measures, such translated measures are seldom validated. On top of this, there are few attempts to develop indigenous assessment tools and conduct related*

*validation studies. Second, theoretical models used in social work research in the region are mostly imported from the West and there are relatively few research studies on the development of indigenous theoretical models. Third, there are very few longitudinal studies in the region. Obviously, without longitudinal studies, dynamic changes in service user populations, policy developments and practice implementation cannot be properly captured. Fourth, studies on social work education are few in the region (Shek et al., 2007). Finally, compared with the West, there is a paucity of evidence-based practice research in the region as a whole, although this may be greater in Australasia where there is also a trend towards placing national data within international comparative contexts.*

## **Global Social Work Standards and Cultural Sensitivity**

Social Work is one of the professions which developed and instituted global standards including a global definition of social work. Recognizing the need for sensitivity to and critical appreciation of the various dimensions of social realities it seeks to improve and transform, the Global Standards on Social Work Training and Education (IASSW, ICSW, IFSW, 2004), incorporated the following statements which reiterated the importance of understanding and sensitivity to the social and cultural realities in the milieu of operation:

1. *Standards regarding the school's core purpose or mission statement*
  - 1.1. *Reflects aspiration towards equity with regard to the demographic profile of the institution's locality. The core purpose or mission statement should thus incorporate such issues as ethnic and gender representation on the faculty, as well as in recruitment and admission procedures for students.*
2. *Standards regarding programme objectives and background*
  - 2.7 "As social work does not operate in a vacuum, the programme should take account at the impact of interacting cultural, economic, communication, social, political and psychological global factors."
3. Standards with regard to programme curricula including field education
  - 3.4 Recognition and development of indigenous or locally specific social work education and practice from the traditions and cultures of different ethnic groups and societies, insofar that such traditions and cultures do not violate human rights.

#### 4. Standards with regard to core curricula

##### 4.1. Domain of the Social Work Profession

- *Knowledge of how traditions, culture, beliefs, religions and customs influence human functioning and development at all levels, including how these might constitute resources and/or obstacles to growth and development.*
- *A critical understanding of social work's origins and purposes.*
- *Understanding of country specific social work origins and development.*

These statements on the importance of understanding the origins of social work and the relevance of understanding the social and cultural landscape where social workers find themselves served as impetus for the exploration of the underpinnings of social work philosophical and theoretical perspectives and the mapping out of general worldviews common among the South East Asian people.

On top of the Global Standards in Social Work Education and Training, social workers all over the world spearheaded by the three renowned international organizations, namely, the International Association of Schools of Social Work, the International Federation of Social Workers and the International Council for Social Welfare crafted through a participatory process the global definition Social Work as a profession, to wit.:

*“Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledges, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. (IASSW, 2014)*

It has to be noted that “indigenous knowledges” was specifically added to emphasize that social workers should not only be adept in conventional theories but also in “indigenous knowledges”.

## **Western Social Work vis-à-vis Southeast Asian Concepts**

People in Asia in this case Southeast Asia are not homogenous. Cultural traditions and religious beliefs are diverse as the languages among and within

nation-states but Pannikar (Pannikar, 1969) argued that “(F)rom Japan to India the civilizations of Asian countries are united by common features which can not be explained solely by the influence of Buddhism.” What perspectives are common among these nations of diverse cultures and religions? Southeast Asian indigenous perspectives have been influenced by Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and animism (McLaren, 2017). Buddhism and Hinduism are based on monism which is the belief in the unity of the nature of all things. Corollary to this is the belief that the whole is important than the individual components. Belief in the supreme being underpin the Islamic perspective while the non-Islamic perspective is underpinned by cycles as in the belief in karma and reincarnation. Since Hinduism and Buddhism preceded Islam in Southeast Asia traces of monism can still be found in ethnic worldviews. Southeast Asian are basically influenced by Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam with the exception of the Philippines which was greatly influenced by Christianity. Even if majority of the Filipino people embraced Christianity indigenous worldviews are still in operation in indigenous communities (Jocano, 2001).

Southeast Asian cultures are underpinned by cyclicity, harmony and collectiveness or communitarianism and spirituality including indigenous spiritual beliefs. In contrast, Western cultures are underpinned by linearity, frankness or directness, individualism and secularity.

Linear perspective underpins the modernization theory which is the dominant paradigm in development theory. Modernization theory which took off from the writings of Max Weber and expounded by Talcott Parsons (Martinussen, 1997). Modernization Theory promotes the transition of the so called traditional societies to modern societies patterned from Western models. Proponents of this theory believe that traditional cultures and perspectives are hindrances to societal development. The Modernization theory was interspersed with modern economic theory and later became the dominant paradigm in development planning (Nedeerven Pieterse, 2010). Although this theory has been contested by critics and development workers like social workers it is still is the dominant paradigm of government planners in the Southeast Asian region. If social work is a product of modernity, there is a tendency for western educated social workers to embrace modernity without being critical. This is the reason for social workers to propose a critical approach to social work practice (Fook, 2012) (Allan, Briskman, & Peace, 2009). Furthermore more, social work writers also proposed ethnic sensitive and culturally sensitive social work practice.

Frankness and individualism are embedded in western psycho-analytical theories and interventions, Shek (Shek, 2017) opined that Western family therapies may have to be modified because Asians have the tendency to avoid confrontations within the family and they will try to create harmony within the family.

The tension between Western Educational Paradigms and Cultural Sensitivity revolves around two propositions according to Gray and Fook (Gray & Fook, 2004):

1. *Social work is a Western invention and a product of modernity. The notion of progressive change fits this paradigm. The question is ‘whether or not, for example, Western perspectives on practice are really responsive to the personal and social needs of the population of other regions’ (Goldstein, 1986) cited in (Gray & Fook, 2004).*
2. *Indigenisation is postmodern to the extent that it questions the dominance of ‘social work as a Western invention’ and seeks to relate it to local culture, history, and political, social and economic development. Implicit in the indigenization side of the debate is the question of ‘whether it is incumbent on particular nations to develop their own orientations to social work practice’ (Goldstein, 1986) in (Gray & Fook, 2004). This can also be extended into the question of whether national boundaries or commonalities make the most responsive basis for ‘localized’ practice, or whether in fact there might be less structural or static boundaries based on shared experiences, which provide a more appropriate framework for practice.*

As Southeast Asia is in the stage of creating a community of nations with the strengthening of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) it is imperative that social work educators and practitioners in the region looked for commonalities among themselves. In terms of geography, Southeast Asian nations’ boundaries are basically porous and migration and cross migration activities are common hence shared beliefs and worldviews can be found amidst diverse cultural practices, ethnic languages including historical experiences.

## **In Search of Common Southeast Asian Concepts**

A review of the cultural atlas revealed that Asian Cultures which include Southeast Asian Cultures share common conceptual beliefs like “face”,

“harmony” and “collectiveness” or “communitarianism”. This writer would add “spirituality” as one of the common conceptual beliefs in the region.

*“Face is the quality embedded in most Asian cultures that indicate a person’s reputation, influence, dignity and honour. By complimenting a person, showing them respect or doing something to the effect of increasing their self-esteem, you give them face. Similarly, people can lose face, save face and build face. Therefore, in cultures that have an awareness of face, individuals usually act deliberately and with restraint to protect their self-worth and peer perception. Conservative conduct is the norm, as people don’t want to stand out and/or risk losing face by doing something inappropriate. For many, the fear of letting down the family or society dominates almost everything else.” (IES, 2019)*

*People are often sensitive to denigration and so corrective remarks are made delicately. Pointing out someone’s error, criticizing them or laughing at them are all actions that can make a person lose face. Thus, indirect approaches to communication are often taken as much as possible. Furthermore, emotive outburst are seen as particularly embarrassing or shameful for the person losing control of their emotions. (IES, 2019)*

Cambodians maintain face by maintaining a calm demeanor avoiding outburst of anger and they often show a neutral reaction to situations maintaining a stoic stance. Indonesian culture is considered a restraint culture. Restraint conduct is the norm as people do not want to lose face. In Laos display of emotions just like the Indonesian are restraint and they normally exhibit calmness. In Malaysia maintaining a “face” is captured in the concept “budi”. “Budi” is synonymous with virtue, morality and politeness. The one who practices “budi” is called “halus” (refined) and considered “budi bahasa” (man of culture). In the Philippines, Filipinos as they are called, have the concept of “hiya” which is roughly translated as “shame” or “embarrassment”. “Hiya” actually means a “sense of propriety”. To be “walanghiya” means one does not have a “sense of propriety”. In Thailand, the concept of “face” is embodied in the phrase “a country of smiles”. Thais have the reputation of being polite and courteous as expressed in their greetings and salutations.

The quest for harmony is influenced by monism which seeks unity in all things. This aims to balance society. Cooperation and unity are emphasized to keep societal relations in synthesis and operating smoothly (IES, 2019). To maintain harmony, Cambodians have to live peacefully with those who were part of the Khmer Rouge regime who killed millions of their people and those who lost loved ones during the genocide. Harmonious working relationship is very important for Indonesians and so they tend to be indirect and maintain a



gentle and courteous disposition even if are not in agreement with others (IES, 2019). People of Laos belong to different linguistic and ethnic groups but they still strive for harmony among themselves. Malaysians have different ethnic origins but they demonstrate loyalty to their country as they aim for harmony. Harmony in the Philippines has different related concepts “magkaisa” (unity in Tagalog), magkatambayayong (Cebuano, Central Philippines) and maghiliusa (Hiligaynon, Western Visayan Islands). Thailand prides itself as “the land of the free” having avoided colonization by the Western invaders. Political coups may have marred Thailand’s freedom landscape, harmony is maintained by the presence of the King which is also a symbol of unity among the Thais.

*People in collectivist cultures are generally interdependent and feel a sense of responsibility to those around them. Co-operation and collective achievement is emphasised over self-fulfilment and personal gain. Therefore, individuals may be less enticed to act independently. Harmony is considered highly important and competition can sometimes be considered to be counterproductive as individuals are expected to conform and share the same goal as those in their group (IES, 2019)*

In Cambodia, one’s community or extended family is regarded as more important than a individual. Characterized by a multicultural and multi-ethnic communities, Indonesian still maintains collective affiliations to their respective groups or communities. In Laos, collectiveness is interconnected with harmony, the expression “bo penh ngan” which can be translated as “no problem” is a reflection of a predisposition for contentment and acceptance of one’s group or community. Collectiveness in Malaysia can be seen in the affinity to one’s own ethic group or community in the midst of diverse cultural environment. Collectiveness in the Philippines is best expressed in the concept “bayanihan” which is the act of helping each other especially in times of need (Ealdama, 2012). In Thailand, the King is the focal point of unity and to show disrespect for the King is a serious offense.

It is difficult to cull out common cultural perspectives and cultural concepts in a region as diverse as Southeast Asia but it is also enlightening to discover that amidst diversity there are commonalities among these countries and their populations. This paper is an initial attempt to rediscover cultural concepts common among Southeast Asians.

# Culturally Sensitive Social Work Practices in Southeast Asia

A culturally sensitive social work practice was illustrated by Bagus Aryo (Bagus, 2011) in a case study of the Baitul Maal wat Tamwil (BMT) as a Microfinance Institution. Baitul Maal means social and welfare activities while Baitul Tamwil is equivalent to economic activities. BMT incorporated Syariah principles in the microfinance program. BMT seeks to provide capital to the “enterprising poor” and aims for poverty alleviation. Going beyond the conventional microfinance program of providing seed capital for small entrepreneurs, BMT incorporated Islamic principles of Zakat, infaq, shadaqoh and waqaf in its activities. Zakat is a compulsory contribution required for wealthy Muslims, considered as one of the poor pillars of Islam. Infaq and Shodaqoh are synonymous to charity or almsgiving. Waqaf is an asset given in trust to an individual or organization for charitable purposes.

Another study looked into the integration of Buddhist principles and beliefs in community work in Cambodia (Chun, San, & Van Ngo, 2018). The study described how Buddhist principles and beliefs guided the social welfare activities and community work of Buddhist Monks as they worked with the vulnerable sectors of society including abused women. Respondents of the study explained that they were guided by the Buddhist principles of Meta (loving kindness), Karuna (compassion), Mudita (sympathy) and Upekha (equanimity). The respondents also revealed that there was tension between some fundamental Buddhist beliefs and the positive principles that they adhere to. Some fundamentalist Buddhists in the community criticized the monks for helping the poor and the vulnerable because they were supposed to pay for wrongdoings done in the past in consonance with the law of karma. The respondents in this study are not professional social workers but they realized the importance of collaborating with professional social workers. This study will hopefully inspire professional social workers and social work educators in Cambodia to introduce Buddhist principles in the curriculum and in practice.

## Conclusion

Professional Social work in the Southeast Asia is influenced by Western paradigms and for many years, these paradigms were applied without question as to their underpinnings. Western based social workers of Asian origins recognized the hegemonic influence of Western paradigms and early

writings on cultural and ethnic sensitivity emerged from them such as “Social Work with Muslims: Insights from the Teachings of Islam” by Abdullah Barise (Barise, 2006).

In a region as diverse as Southeast Asia, cultural sensitivity is a complex practice, there is need therefore to discover commonalities amidst these diverse cultures and social landscapes. It has to be noted that there are efforts to be culturally sensitive among social work practitioners but perhaps these efforts are not documented.

The writer calls on all social work practitioners and educators in the region to conduct cross country research on indigenous cultural perspectives and concepts which can enrich the social work dictionary at the same time make social work more relevant to Southeast Asian people.

As Carol Noble (Noble, 2004), aptly stated:

*Post colonial social work demands the resurrection of lost voices in the midst of western dominance, while postmodern social work's agenda is to encourage a multiplicity of visions not just one concerned with individual and social change and social justice, but one that reflects a more general concern for accepting differences, cultural diversity and inclusive dialogues. If further collaboration in revising global guidelines is mindful of these ideas then it will represent a positive move forward and unsettle previously established power relationships that have in the past dominated the development of social work programs in the Asia-Pacific region.*

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# Strengthening Social Development to Reduce Poverty: Enhancing Sustainability and Food Security of the Rural Poor

TAN, NGOH TIONG

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## Abstract

Poverty is intimately related with its concomitants in the environment, security and social developments. To tackle rural poverty, and especially the direct conditions that poor farmers face, requires a multi-disciplinary approach, multi-sectorial participation and planned social intervention.

Sustainable poverty alleviation approaches in poorer agricultural segments of Thailand and Indonesia are identified in this paper. Food security and climate change are intertwined relating to the harnessing environment for sustainable living. The need for farmers in the developing world to be empowered to bring about a sustainable harvest towards income security, needs strategic intervention from external agents. It is envisaged that breaking the cycle of poverty, and hunger, from a systemic approach, necessitates disruptive interventions.

For example, discovering the mechanism of profiteering from middle-men, using technology and direct marketing that would enhance value through changing the logistics and supply chain and the farmers gaining greater control and access to the customers, require both government and business purposeful and value-based intervention. Developing cooperatives and social enterprises, necessitate organizations and also mean greater stakes for the producers and better value for the consumers. This could also provide an economically secure base and social protection for the farmers to deal effectively with poverty.

Training in alternative agriculture, in another instance, along with such as methods like integrated farming and organic agriculture, would reduce reliance on fertilizers and the need for purchase of seeds thus reducing the debt owed by some farmers. Besides, the organic products command better value in the agricultural supply chain, reduce carbon footprints and extol a healthier lifestyle.

Better irrigation and control of the water supply in harnessing the environment, as well as greater control of resources through the use of technology are also strategies to enhance production, ensuring food security along with reducing

capital outlay. Working towards sustainable agriculture thus requires clean water and environmental protection which augurs well for the farmers.

Developing of social enterprise and better management techniques, along with helping farmers get out of debts, are some strategies for change towards greater productivity. Non-profit ventures focus on sustainable development and food security. Food security is an attainable goal if channels of production and distribution are aligned with principles of social justice and the MDGs. Advocacy for better economic opportunities and the change of social and environmental conditions can bring better health and wellbeing, not only for rural farmers but also for benefit of the whole of society.

Keywords: poverty, rural development, food security, environmental sustainability

## **Introduction**

Poverty is intimately related with its concomitants in the environment, security and social developments. To tackle rural poverty, and especially the dire conditions that poor farmers face, requires a multi-disciplinary approach, multi-sectorial participation and planned social intervention.

Sustainable poverty alleviation approach in poorer agricultural segments of Thailand and Indonesian society, are identified in this paper. Food security and climate change are intertwined relating to the harnessing environment for sustainable living. The need for farmers in the developing world to be empowered to bring about a sustainable harvest requires strategic intervention from external agents. Breaking the cycle of poverty, and hunger, from a systemic approach, necessitates disruptive approaches.

The world adopted the Sustainable Development Goals for the Millennium Development Goals in tackling global poverty, The Millennium Development Goals, sought to reduce by half global hunger. For SDGs the United Nation's, a set of 17 targets were identified to combat poverty, reduce inequality, improve global health outcomes and protect the planet by 2030. The UN recently target is zero hunger by 2030 (United Nation, 2015).The paper discusses practical strategies to achieve the MDGs and reduce poverty and hunger.

## **The Contexts: Poverty in Indonesia and Thailand**

In Thailand, 7.9% of the population lives below the national poverty line (ADB, 2017). In Indonesia it is higher at 9.8% (ADB, 2019).

According to an IMMF report, 88% of Thailand's 25 million farmers may be in debt. Up to 40% of the farmers in Thailand are reportedly living



below the poverty line, set at 32,000 baht a year (Puey Ungphakorn Institute for Economic Research’s survey reported by Banchongduang, 2018). The Northeastern Region is the poorest in Thailand, with 22 million people, or a third of Thailand’s total population. The farmers in N.E. Thailand, 85% are smallholders. Half of farming households owned below 10 rai of farmland, with an average ownership of 14.3 rai per agricultural family (Banchongduang, 2018). These households are often unable to meet their basic needs from the farm production alone. Although farmers have shown resilience and adaptation to changes in their environment, their income is often insufficient to meet the family’s basic needs. They often fall into debts. One of the poorest group are the Isan farmers in North Thailand. Many farmers still need government, as well as NGOs, to support them to achieve a minimum standard of living.

In Indonesia there is reportedly a reduction in national poverty. In 2016 the Indonesian poverty line at a monthly per capita income of IDR 354,386 (around USD \$27). This figure reflects a low standard of living. Indonesia’s rural poverty rate, which is the percentage of the rural population living below the national rural poverty line, decreased to 20 percent in the mid-1990s (ADB, 2018). Relative poverty, though decreasing, is at 9.8% in 2018 and relative poverty hovers around 26,000 million. Rural poverty, as expected is high at around 14%, based on 2016 Statistics Indonesia (BPS, as reported in ADB, 2018).

**Figure 1: Statistic of Indonesian Poverty & Inequality**

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Relative Poverty (% of population)	11.2	10.7	10.1	9.8 <sup>1</sup>
Absolute Poverty (in millions)	28.5	27.8	26.6	26.0 <sup>1</sup>
Gini Coefficient/ Gini Ratio	0.41	0.40	0.39	0.39 <sup>1</sup>

Source: <https://www.indonesia-investments.com/finance/macroeconomic-indicators/poverty/item301>

President Widodo’s claim based on data from the Ministry of Villages, Disadvantaged Regions and Transmigration, showed lower poverty rates, in Indonesia, from 2017 to 2018, and was reexamined (Coch, 2018; Al Izzati, 2018). Indeed, the percentage of rural poverty fell from 13.93% to 13.2%, in a year, from March 2017 to March 2018. Rural poverty rate fell by 0.73 points and the

number of rural poor decreased from 1.7 million to 1.29 million people in March 2017. The rural poverty gap rate also declined by 0.12 points from 2.49% in 2017 to 2.37% in 2018, while urban poverty rate declined sharply by 1.14 points from 8.16% in September 2014 to 7.02% in March 2018 (Coch, 2018). The good news is that the trend is the decline in poverty.

## **Environment as a Key Factor**

Agriculture depends largely on the environment—both physical terrain, soil, as well as the weather and climate. In N. E. Thailand, for example, constraining soil and climatic conditions adversely affect yield. Water and temperature, flooding, drought, cold as well as heat waves, all affect the crops and harvest.

In Thailand again saw a high rate of deforestation that led to the destruction of 75% of the forest cover of the northeast region over the following quarter of a century, (Barnaud, et al, 2006; Borgen Project, 2018). This was due to the expansion of cash cropping in the uplands as well as swelling population density to more than 100 inhabitants per sq. km - the marginal upper zones of the lowlands, more drought-prone, smaller plots, were also progressively planted with rice (Borgen Project, 2018).

Climate change may have inadvertently caused increase natural disasters, both in numbers and severity. Indonesia suffers from different types of natural disasters such as wind, storms, floods and earthquakes. Rural areas, often with inadequate housing and infrastructure such as roads, sanitation, electricity and water facilities, may be more prone for natural catastrophes (Perkerti, 2018). Infrastructure development would also increase economic activity and can potentially reduce the poverty problem (The Jakarta Post, 2018).

Indonesia has 14.2 million small holders (and poorer) farms with farm size of less than 0.5 hectare, and dry land (17 million hectares), and paddy field (8.1 million hectares) (Sudryanto, 2018). Increase size and scalability would be a key factor towards agricultural production capacity. Small farms are more susceptible to environmental and climatic conditions and do not have the means to take preventive measures.

## **Food Security**

Pricing and production, for example of rice, is a key factor in reducing price volatility and income fluctuations. The Indonesian government seeks to stabilize rice prices through regulations, implementation and policy analysis,

as well as policy recommendations for the government programs. It is vital that food prices do not fluctuate much that the Indonesian food “price stabilization efforts, keep updated records of the price of paddy production ... “ and control “price limits at the milling, trader, and consumer levels” (Kompas, 2018 as quoted in Andoko, et al, 2018). The government intends to measure the volume of rice production and demand. Thus, President Joko Widodo endorses the strategy of the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Trade as an intervention through the state budget.

According to Goueland Jean (2012, as quoted in Andoko, et al, 2018), agricultural price stabilization policy such as storage policy and trade policy should help in poverty reduction. Both the storage and trade policies may in combination result in a “powerful stabilization of domestic food prices. Such a policy mix may need the government to impose certain restrictions, and also to using fiscal transfers from consumers to producers (Andoko, Liu, Johnson & Zmudczyńska, 2018).

For all family farms in Indonesia, 17 percent are beneficiary households spend a high proportion of their income on “food and agricultural inputs, and this limits the capacity of smallholders to re-invest the amount”. Thus the lack of infrastructure, smaller farm sizes due to and markets pose great challenges to food security and productivity.

## **Strategies for Poverty Alleviation**

### **Why Hardworking Farmers are Still Poor?**

The poor are generally more adversely affected by the economic swings and being laid-off in employment. There are structural factors of poverty beyond the control of the rural communities and the farmers themselves.

The small farms generally have “high production costs and debts that keep them from saving and investing”. There is limited availability of family help and labor; no tractor to till the ground or perhaps a buffaloes to till their fields. For buying chemical fertilizers they have to owe the middle-man money. Small producers do not command good pricing of their crops and are subjected to profiteering salesman and in-between businesses. There is often low social mobility and a perpetuation of the cycle of poverty in the rural communities.

### **Disrupting the Market Process**

In discovering the mechanism of profiteering from middle-men, the need

to reduce layers between consumers and producers would help farmers get their fair wages. This intentional disruption augurs well for the producers. Increasing production by using technology and developing direct marketing would enhance value through changing the logistics and supply chain that the farmers gaining greater control and access to the customers. Using disruptive technology such as online marketing and sales as well as third party distribution channels could be an advantage. In closing the loop these links and network could ensure fair prices or wages for the farmers and benefit the consumers as well.

## **Cooperatives**

Developing cooperatives and social enterprises also mean greater stakes for the producers and better value for the consumers (Rambo, 2017). This enhances the scale and negotiation that could also provide a security base and social protection for the farmers to deal effectively with poverty. Economy of scale would help in enhancing control over prices. Thus the cooperative movement would be a viable strategy to exercise some control the unknown.

## **Agricultural Technology**

Better irrigation and control of the water supply in harnessing the environment, as well as greater control of resources through the use of technology are also strategies to enhance production, ensuring food security along with reducing capital outlay. Working towards sustainable agriculture and arable land thus requires clean water and environmental protection. In Indonesia not more than 10% of small holder farms utilize mechanization and technology (FAO, 2018), and the appropriate use of machines and technology would enhance production and enable better income security.

While GM crop production, using seed technology to increase efficiency and production, the impact of GM crops to human health as well as possible harm to the environment are uncertain (IMMF, 2019). IMMF advocates for a reduced use of seed technology to control cost and potential health hazards. This will reduce debt of farmers and over reliance to conglomerates that control seed technology.

## **Social Enterprises and Management**

Developing of social enterprise and better management techniques, along with helping farmers to get out of the debts, are some strategies for change towards greater productivity. Growing entrepreneurial skills is

essential for better farm management (Rambo, 2017). Non-profit ventures focus on sustainable development and food security. Food security is an attainable goal if channels of production and distribution are aligned with principles of social justice and the MDGs. Economic opportunities and the change of social and environmental conditions can bring better health and wellbeing, would certainly go a long way in supporting the rural farmers.

## **Training**

Training in alternative agriculture, in another instance, along with such as methods like integrated farming and organic agriculture, would reduce reliance on fertilizers and the need for purchase of seeds thus reducing the debt owed by some farmers. Using chemicals, on the other hand, in reality continues to sink farmers deeper into debt.

In addition, increasing demand for organic products command better value in the agricultural supply chain. However, growing organic food has challenges, for example, with no pesticides usage, the crops are open to insects and pest infestation which may ruin harvest. Using organically derived natural insecticides and century old proven integrated farming techniques do enhance yield and ensure all-year round harvests of different crops.

Sustainability requires farmers to learn and be able to maintain continuous production of crops year after year as well as new methods of enhancing the production systems with other fruit, vegetable, fish, or livestock so as to improve household food security and achieve better cash income. They should be empowered for participation and self-advocacy for a greener farm and lifestyle.

## **Policy Intervention**

### **Planning and Reform**

Planning, policy and land reforms provide greater access to poor farmers with smaller lots in the hope for better yield and intended effect for the Regulation of the Minister of Agrarian Reform and Spatial Planning in Indonesia (Sudaryant, 2018). The total available arable land of 47.1 million hectares currently, can be increased. It is hoped that the government green planning efforts will ensure sustainable agriculture.

Sudaryant (2018:1) suggested that “promoting access to land consists of: (1) social mapping; (2) improvement on institutional capacity; (3)

business facilitation; (4) improvement on skill; (5) application of appropriate technology; (6) enterprise diversification; (7) facilitation on access to finance; (8) facilitation on access to market; (9) strengthening data base and information on commodity; (10) availability of supporting infrastructures". These programs are useful for the development of sustainable agriculture.

"With these programs then the allocated land to the subject is utilized in a productive manner, and ultimately serves as reliable sources of prosperity" (Sudaryant 2018, 3). Policy aiming at access and equity, thus poverty reduction, will incorporate the above strategies that actually promote social development.

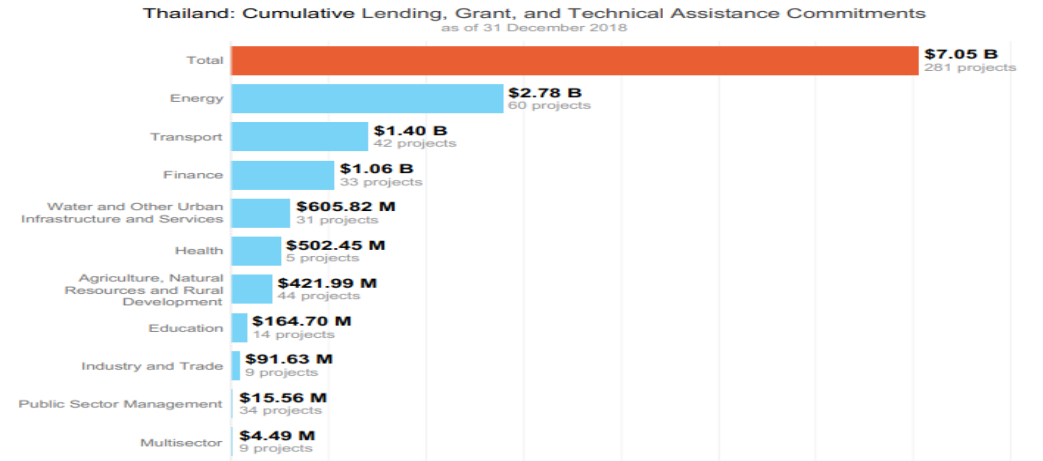
Moreover, macro factors such as trade liberalization brought about by the World Trade Organization have added to the pressure for farmers, for example, to grow Genetically Modified crops. The expensive GM seeds to grow better crops had increased the debt burden of many farmers. To reduce vulnerabilities of the agricultural communities and countries, there is need for strategic shielding of the farmers from the fall outs of unfair trade wars and to enable unhindered production and purchase of their crops.

Overall, multiple agencies and government bodies as well as a multi-disciplinary approach is required for comprehensive approach to poverty reduction.

## **Aid and Technical Assistance**

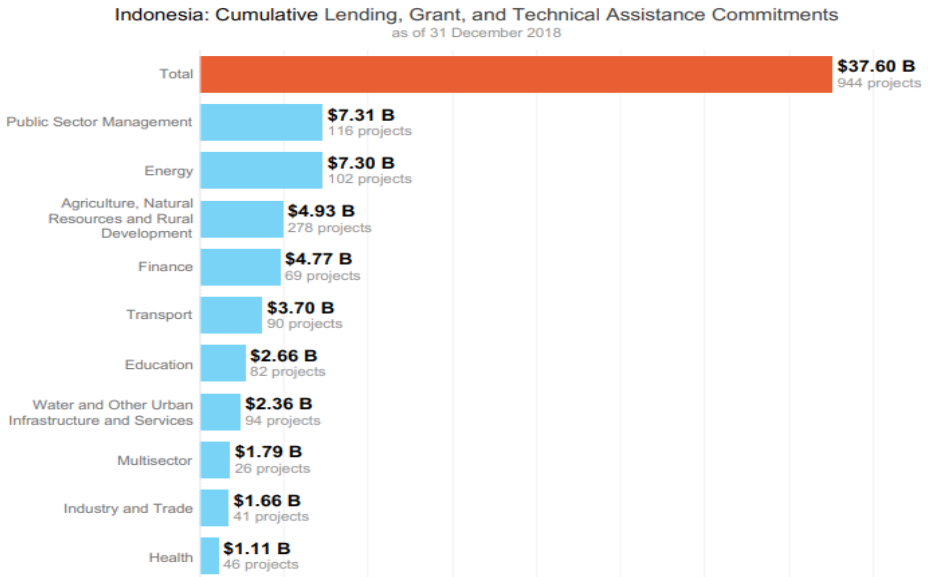
Of the Asian Development Bank's grant and technical assistance, as of December 2018, to Thailand \$ 7.05b, only \$ 421.99m goes to agriculture and rural development; whereas for Indonesia of the \$ 37.6b, agriculture and rural development took up 4.93B, almost 10 times that of Thailand (ADB, 2019). Figures 2 and 3 shows ADB's Cumulative Lending Grant and Technical Assistance, for Thailand and Indonesia, respectively. All said, aid and subsidy needed for agricultural development has to create sustainable growth and not create dependency. Technical assistance for capacity building goes a longer way towards poverty alleviation.

**Figure 2: Cumulative Lending & Technical Grant Thailand (ADB, 2019b)**



Source: Asian Development Bank. *ADB and Thailand: Fact Sheet*

**Figure 3: Cumulative Lending Grant and Technical Assistance, Indonesia (ADB, 2019)**



Source: Asian Development Bank. *ADB and Indonesia: Fact Sheet*

Empowering the rural economy is therefore vital to further breaking the cycle of poverty. Villagers in Indonesia (as with elsewhere) need additional income as they can no longer rely on farming activities to support their families (The Jakarta Post, 2018). If the poverty level in Indonesia is set at a low of Rp 401,220 (USD 28) per capita per month or Rp 13,374 per day, the number of poor would be less (The Jakarta Post, 2018). Having said all, the Government’s

intervention for poverty reduction in terms of cash and non-cash assistance is still warranted and has helped reduced poverty (The Jakarta Post, 2018).

The need for microfinancing, debt repayment and small loans to kick start small businesses and micro-enterprises would be one way for developing self-sufficiency and income security, towards poverty reduction. UN (2015), ADB (2019, 2006) and partners by providing loans, technical assistance, grants, and equity investments seeks to promote social and economic development (ADB, 2018). These provide the vital impetus for rural development and social change setting rural communities in the right direction. The breaking of the cycle of poverty in Indonesia, however, may need yet another generation, and 2030 or sooner though possible, is rather optimistic.

## **Conclusions:**

Social Work and Social Development utilize a systems approach to effectively deal with poverty reduction and at the same time enhancing environmental protection and sustainable development.

Food security is an attainable goal if channels of production and distribution are aligned with principles of social justice and the MDGs. Better economic opportunities and improved environmental conditions can greatly enhance health and wellbeing for rural farmers.

Overall strategies to overcome poverty is to enhance employment and ownership of land, effective use of management expertise and technology, increase access to economic opportunities as well as further food security and protect the environment (Surdyanto, 2018).

At the end of the day, it is not just giving the fish but ensuring fishing skills are updated and the fishing ponds have a variety of fishes. The revitalizing rural communities and poverty eradication need the vital links and collaborative network between the citizens with all levels of the government as well as civil society, educational institutions, and the empowered individual citizen (PSDS, 2018).

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