In Sitio Pandayan, Barangay Gabon in Calasiao, Pangasinan, blacksmithing or ‘pagpapanday’ has been every local’s lifeblood. The country’s history already recorded Pangasinan’s golden inheritance even before World War II.

At present, the sitio made their legendary, yet, arduous blacksmithing craft as their major income-generating livelihood with bolos and swords as their major products.

With their bare hands and carabao horns as blade handles, these Pangasinense Pandays have endured the fiery trade of heating discarded metals in an open fire pit and heftily pounding these into various iron-made products.

Preserving the rich history while sustaining productivity, the Department of Labor and Employment Regional Office I, in partnership with the local government of Calasiao, extended its assistance to the Aliguas Blacksmith Workers Association (ABWA) with a P396,562.50 grant to benefit 83 blacksmith-members.

DOLE Regional Office No. 1 Director Grace Ursua said the assistance is not a dole-out, but a means of preserving and improving the enduring craft and livelihood of the people of Calasiao.

“We hope to see this local industry transform into a world-class enterprise, not only in terms of its products, but through the institutionalization of decent work in the work shops of our local blacksmiths,” Ursua said as she led the awarding of the grant made under the DOLE’s Integrated Livelihood Program towards Community Enterprise Development (DILP-CED) at the Calasiao municipal hall.

In her report to DOLE Secretary Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz, Ursua said the assistance will bring together DOLE’s convergent partners, namely, the local government of Calasiao and its Public Employment Services Office; Departments of Trade and Industry; Science and Technology; and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority.

“The DOLE’s assistance to the ABWA does not end with the financial grant. Together with our partners, we aim to refine the skills of our blacksmith workers and improve their productivity and competitiveness through the introduction of occupational safety and health in their workshops; productivity enhancement training; and hands-on training on bolo and swords making,” Ursua explained.

ABWA President Joel Magalong expressed his thanks to the DOLE and its partners for supporting their treasured livelihood.

“We are very happy for the assistance extended by the DOLE to the Association. It is of great help to us as we continue our livelihood that we have been doing for decades,” Magalong said, adding the ABWA members have been engaged individually in blacksmithing since 1990.

DOLE’s livelihood assistance brings to life the ‘Pandays’ of Pangasinan

Shifting gears towards sustainable employment creation and productivity in local communities, Labor and Employment Secretary Baldoz stressed that the regional offices’ implementation of the DILP and delivery of livelihood packages shall not merely focus on providing financial assistance, but on empowering more communities and worker groups in managing their own community-based enterprises.

“Beyond capacitating our beneficiaries financially, the DOLE now acts as the community’s partner in generating income and employment by assisting them in developing more community-based ventures out of their ingenuity in maximizing their own existing resources,” Baldoz said.

“We are now moving forward in boosting sustainable employment creation and productivity in the regions as we continue to provide equal and viable opportunities to help and empower our workers to attain productive jobs within their reach,” she added.
Labor and Employment Secretary Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz reported the recent announcement of the Hong Kong Labor Department that the government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region is increasing the monthly minimum allowable wage (MAW) of foreign household service workers by HK$180, or 4.8 percent, from HK$3,740.00 to HK$3,920.00, and the monthly food allowance by HK$100, or 12.9 percent, from HK$775.00 to HK$875.00.

“The HK Labor Department made the decision following its annual review of the MAW for foreign household service workers. The review took into consideration Hong Kong’s general economic and employment situation, relevant income movements, price changes and HK labour market situation,” said Baldoz, who was apprised of the development by Labor Attache to Hong Kong Manuel C. Roldan.

Hong Kong’s standard employment contract for hiring foreign HSWs requires employers to provide foreign HSWs with free food. Employers may also opt to pay their workers food allowance in lieu of free food. However, most employers in Hong Kong practice the former, i.e., pay the HSWs food allowance in cash.

In his report to Secretary Baldoz, Labor Attache Roldan said the new minimum wage and allowance shall apply to employment contracts signed by parties starting 20 September 2012, and does not apply or affect prevailing contracts or contracts signed until 19 September 2012. These contracts shall bear the previous rates.

“This is a welcome development for our HSWs because the Hong Kong government has always been protective and considerate in looking after the welfare of expatriate workers,” Baldoz said.

A press statement of the HK-SAR’s Labor Department said “the MAW and food allowance are only a minimum standard which are set to protect foreign domestic helpers from exploitation and to protect local workers from competition with low-wage foreign workers.”

“Employers may choose to give FDHs better terms than the MAW and food allowance, depending in their individual situations,” according to the statement.

“I have ordered our POLO to closely coordinate with the Hong Kong Immigration to implement this new wage policy with regards to the timeline set,” she further added.
The adoption by the hotel and restaurant industry of the western province of Pangasinan and by the tourism industry of Oriental Mindoro of their respective voluntary codes of good practices (VCGP) will definitely help the administration of President Benigno S. Aquino III achieve its twin goals of increased productivity and improved workers' safety in the regions' booming tourism, hotel, and restaurant industry, Labor and Employment Secretary Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz said.

Baldoz, citing the reports of DOLE Regional Office No. 1 Director Grace Ursua and Regional Office No. 4-B Director Zenaida Angara, commended the signing of the industry VCGPs as another concrete step to ensure voluntary compliance by companies with all general labor standards and occupational safety and health standards, to promote harmonious labor-management relations, and to enhance industry productivity and competitiveness in the hotel, restaurant, and tourism industry.

“The hotel, restaurant, and tourism industry has been identified as one of the industries poised to absorb the most number of workers in the next several years. The adoption by the industry tripartite councils (ITCs) of Western Pangasinan and Oriental Mindoro of their respective voluntary codes of good practices will hasten the realization of the hotel, restaurant, and tourism industry’s potential as a key employment generator,” Baldoz said.

“Through the voluntary codes, we aim to build a stronger hotel, restaurant, and tourism industry in the country. We also aim to provide industry stakeholders a mechanism for social dialogue to address industry-specific issues that could foster a favorable investment climate to boost job opportunities, increase workers' employability, enhance productivity, and improve service quality,” she added.

Director Ursua, in her report, said the voluntary code of good practices in the hotel and restaurant ITC is the fourth code in the region. She also said the voluntary code of good practices in the hotel and restaurant ITC is the fourth code in the region.

“The Industrial Tripartite Council for the Hotel and Restaurant Industry for Western Pangasinan adopted the code during a signing ceremony held at the Department of Labor and Employment-Alaminos Field Office, with no less than DOLE Undersecretary Lourdes Trasmonte as witness,” Ursua said.

“The code highlights the ITC members’ commitment to voluntarily establish voluntary standards and adopt measures on the social and employment aspects to improve the province’s hotel, restaurant, and tourism industry, which is expected to get a boost with the near completion of the Alaminos airport,” she added.

The hotel and restaurant ITC through its voluntary code of good practices, shall perform self-assessment and monitor compliance with the code’s salient provisions on self-regulation and with labor and safety and health standards; coordinate for training and education and recruitment and termination of workers; dispute settlement; social dialogue; and productivity improvement.

Co-Chairman for Management Jerry Noel Mateo and Co-Chairman for Labor Ronaldo Torres together with the 19 hotel and restaurant ITC officers and members signed the code.

Also signing the code as an expression of their pledge are the following: Western Pangasinan Chamber of Commerce, Inc.; Association of Safety Practitioners of the Philippines, Inc; Occupational Safety and Health Network; Technical Education and Skills Authority; National Conciliation and Mediation Board; Regional Tripartite Wage and Productivity Board; Provincial Tourism and Health Offices; and the Department of Labor and Employment.

Meanwhile, the DOLE Regional Office in MIMAROPA has done the same proactive efforts in forging the voluntary code of good practices of the tourism industry as the Oriental Mindoro Tourism Industry Tripartite Council (TTITC) inked the 3rd industry code at the resort municipality of Puerto Galera to boost local tourism in the region.

DOLE MIMAROPA Director Zenaida Angara said the code augurs well for the future of the regional tourism industry and will benefit workers, management, and even the local communities by establishing a self-sufficient eco-tourism which shall balance employment and productivity with environmental sustainability.

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Number of ‘Big Brother’ surges to 115; ‘Small Brother’ to 1,036; workers benefited to 256,486

Labor and Employment Secretary Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz reported there are now 115 ‘Big Brother’ and 1,036 ‘Small Brother’ companies enrolled under the DOLE’s Kapatiran WISE-TAV Program, effectively bringing under the umbrella of social protection—benefits from voluntary compliance with general labor standards and occupational safety and health (OSH) standards—256,486 workers.

“These numbers speak a lot. They represent an immense improvement from the March 2012 data of the Bureau of Working Condition showing only 80 ‘Big Brother’ and 840 ‘Small Brother’ companies enrolled in the program and benefiting 209,243 workers,” said Secretary Baldoz.

“These numbers also show strong proof that voluntary compliance and adherence to general labor and OSH standards through the Kapatiran WISE-TAV Program is effective and gaining acceptance and support. We hope to see a culture of voluntary compliance with labor laws as a way of life in this country very soon,” Baldoz added.

The Kapatiran WISE-TAV Para sa Mas Ligtas, Malusog, at Produktibong Manggagawa is a flagship public-partnership program of the DOLE anchored on the ILO’s Work Improvement in Small Enterprises Program, whose action-oriented approach has long proven to link productivity and product quality to safer and better working conditions.

The Kapatiran WISE-TAV encourages large companies, the “Big Brothers” engaged in third-party contracting or sub-contracting to coach or mentor their contractors or subcontractors, the “Small Brothers” to become fully compliant with general labor standards and OSH standards, as well as with other labor laws.

Baldoz credited the credible achievement of the “Big Brother, Small Brother” to the DOLE’s strict implementation of Department Order No. 18-A, or the “Rules Implementing Articles 106 to 109 of the Labor Code, As Amended”.

D.O. 18-A clearly defines legitimate contracting and subcontracting activities to foster responsible and ethical subcontracting. It amends existing regulations on job contracting and subcontracting arrangements under D. O. 18, Series of 2002, and emphasizes a more secured and humane work condition for workers of job contracting firms. It also provides clear-cut rules and regulations aimed at curbing abuses of such practices as “5-5-5”, “6-6-6”, and “endo” (end-of-contract) to boost workers’ protection and productivity.

Under Sec. 35 of D.O. 18-A, principals and subcontractors are encouraged to enroll and participate in the Kapatiran WISE-TAV Program to foster a culture of voluntary compliance with labor standards and OSH standards and also to the DOLE’s Incentivizing Compliance Program under D.O. 115, Series of 2011.

DOLE Undersecretary for Labor Relations Rebecca Chato had said the track of D.O. 18-A is towards developmental compliance.

“We would like to foster a culture of compliance among companies and their contractors and subcontractors,” she had said.

The latest “Big Brother” to enroll in the Kapatiran WISE-TAV program was San Miguel Yamamura Packaging Corporation’s (SMYPC) Manila Glass Plant and Manila Plastics Plant and their 14 sub-contractors or third-party service providers.

Prior to SMYPC’s sign-up with the program, the more recent enrollees are ABC Development Corporation or TV 5, Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corporation, Mega Masterlink Fabricator and Electrical Services Corporation, New Plastimate Manufacturing, Inc., DHL Global Forwarding, and Cofta Moulding Corporation.

In 2011, a total of 59 “Big Brother” and 601 “Small Brother” companies covering 140,507 workers enrolled in the program, a spectacular growth from only four “Big Brothers” and 59 “Small Brothers” covering 9,554 workers in 2010.

A NEW WAY OF LIFE. More ‘Big Brothers’ are enrolling their contractors and subcontractors dubbed ‘Small Brothers’ towards a strengthened culture of voluntary compliance with labor laws and occupational safety and health standards.
Labor and Employment Secretary Rosalinda D. Baldoz stood witness as two big subsidiaries of San Miguel Corporation, the Manila Plastics Plant and the Manila Glass Plant of San Miguel Yamamura Packaging Corporation (SMYPC), signed in as the newest “Big-Brother” under the Department of Labor and Employment’s “Big Brother, Small Brother”, or the Kapatiran Workers in Small Enterprises-Technical Assistance Visit (WISE-TAV) Program.

To effect the sign-up, Baldoz, together with key officials of SMYPC’s Manila Glass Plant and Manila Plastics Plant (MPP), inked a Memorandum of Understanding at the Bayleaf Hotel, Intramuros, Manila.

Signing the MOU were Eufemio S. Lazaro, Plant Manager, SMYPC-MGP, and Rolando Nole L. Sarrosa, Plant Manager, SMYPC-MPP; Undersecretary for Labor Standards Lourdes M. Trasmonte, DOLE-National Capital Region Director Atty. Alan M. Macaraya; and Bureau of Working Conditions Director Catherine Legados-Parado.

Secretary Baldoz, in her remarks at the event, cited the positive impact of the Kapatiran WISE-TAV Program on the competitiveness and growth of Philippine industries. She noted that San Miguel Corporation, as an early enrollee to the program, stands consistently as a model of labor standards compliance which benefits Filipino workers.

“What I know is that if it is the San Miguel Group of Companies which is mentioned, you refer to a model when it comes to compliance with labor laws and occupational safety and health standards which benefit its workers,” Baldoz said.

Baldoz thanked the two San Miguel subsidiaries for their decision to become “Big Brothers” to the “Small Brothers” and to uplift, mentor, and assist them to attain a culture of voluntary compliance with labor standards and occupational safety and health standards.

**DOLE welcomes San Miguel Yamamura Packaging Corporation as newest “Big Brother”**

She took the occasion to announce an intensified campaign for a graft- and corruption-free DOLE, challenging the SYMPC officials and the company’s third-party service providers to participate and to get involved in the anti-corruption initiative of the government.

“We have set up the machinery so that we can announce to the public that the DOLE is into a serious campaign for a corrupt and graft-free department, including all its attached agencies. And I thought that with all of you present here and with San Miguel Corporation, this is a legitimate venue for me to announce this campaign, so this is a time for a great challenge,” she said.
abor and Employment Secretary Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz urged the Philippine statistical community not just to count and measure but communicate what it is counting and measuring in a way that the Filipino people can understand, appreciate, and embrace as their own.

In her keynote address at the opening ceremony of the 23rd National Statistics Month celebration at the Century Park Hotel in Manila, which the DOLE hosted, Baldoz told her audience of officials and representatives of government agencies, government-owned and controlled corporations, state universities and colleges, local government units, and the private sector that statisticians tend to forget there are others in the marketplace of ideas and information who compete with government in explaining phenomena, such as unemployment, and thus the need to connect with those who are affected by statistical products.

“We do not just count and measure; we must communicate what we are counting and measuring in a way that their final users – the Filipino people – can understand and embrace as their own. In other words, we must use statistics not only to convey a clear message for our publics, but also to connect, develop, and sustain our relationship with them,” she added.

Baldoz observed that “we are losing our case every time we fail to connect to our publics through data and information that we derive and produce.”

“If we could not communicate successfully our understanding of our statistics and the manner by which we derive them to their final users and the general public, especially the women and men on the streets, we are actually consigning our data and information, however credible, relevant, and useful, to the dustbin of our technical world that only technical people like ourselves inhabit,” she further explained.

According to Baldoz, labor and employment statistics, or for that matter, all government statistics, “must be owned by the people whose welfare and interests are the reasons why we are doing researches and generating statistics in the first place.”

This is the second time since the declaration of the yearly celebration of statistics month that the DOLE is co-chairing the event with the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB). The first was in 1992 when the theme of the celebration was “Statistics in Support of People Empowerment.”

This year’s celebration of the NSM has for a theme, ‘Monitoring Decent Work Through Statistics: Pathway to Inclusive Growth.’

“I believe this theme is relevant--and will catch the imagination of the nation--because today the administration of President Benigno S. Aquino III is mainstreaming decent work in its national development efforts to achieve and sustain inclusive growth,” Baldoz said.

The National Statistics Month is celebrated annually pursuant to Presidential Proclamation No. 647 to promote, enhance, and instil nationwide awareness and appreciation of the importance of statistics to various sectors of society, and to elicit cooperation and support of the general public in upgrading the quality and standards of statistics in the country.

As in past celebrations, the opening ceremony of the NSM has always been an occasion for the host to unveil new statistical systems or initiatives that could contribute to the continuing development and progress of statistics.

This year, the DOLE’s Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics (BLES) presented the Decent Work Statistics-Philippines, or DeWS-Phil, an interactive database of the country’s decent work statistical indicators. “The BLES was able to complete the statistical data series from 1995 to 2010 under the Monitoring and Assessing Progress on Decent Work (MAP) project of the European Union (EU) and the International Labor Organization (ILO). We developed the database using the PC-Axis family software of Statistics Sweden which we had acquired under a memorandum of agreement with the National Statistical and Coordination Board (NSCB),” Director Teresa Peralta of the BLES said.

Peralta said the DeWS-Phil is a one-stop shop portal for statistics on decent work.

Lodged in the BLES website, www.bles.dole.gov.ph, the DeWS-Phil aims not only to raise awareness among policymakers, researchers, workers, and employers, but also to facilitate a more effective monitoring and assessment method for areas of improvement on decent work in the country.

ILO Country Director Lawrence Jeff Johnson also presented the Philippine Decent Work Country Profile, a statistical product that can help policymakers and development practitioners better evaluate progress toward decent work and inform national planning and policymaking. The profile notes the country’s progress in the last 15 years based on the internationally-recognized 11 elements of decent work. It also identifies the remaining challenges and gaps that need to be addressed, vis-à-vis national policies formulated and programs implemented.
In Sagada, Baldoz says LGU support crucial to success of program for child labor-free Philippines

Labor and Employment Secretary Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz visited Barangay Aguid in Sagada, Mt. Province, bringing with her the government’s message of hope to 120 children from five barangays identified to be at-risk of becoming child laborers and to their parents, and saying that support of local government units is crucial to the success of the government’s efforts to make the Philippines child-labor free.

“Education is the best antidote to a life of poverty and hazardous child work,” said Baldoz to Barangay Aguid residents who came in full force to see and hear the first Secretary of Labor and Employment to have visited this mountain barangay, seven kilometers north of Sagada town proper.

“We must work together to stop child labor because it is a menace that saps the future strength of the nation, and the only way to make our country child labor-free, to ensure the success of our fight against child labor is through the support of local government units,” Baldoz explained.

Accompanied by Regional Director Henry John Jalbuena of the DOLE Cordillera Administrative Region, Allison Belagan representing Cong. Maximo Dalog, and Sagada Mayor Eduardo Latawan Jr., Baldoz joined the principal, Lucia Ticag, teachers, and the pupils and parents of Aguid Elementary School in an early morning ceremony to publicly announce the approval by the Sagada Sangguniang Bayan of a municipal ordinance, the Sagada Municipal Code for Children, which establishes a comprehensive support system for child survival, development, protection and participation in Sagada.

Sagada local government officials also attended the ceremony, highlighted by the presentation to Secretary Baldoz by the barangay captains of Aguid, Banga-an, Fidelisan, Tanulong, Madonog, and Pide of their respective memorandum of agreement with the DOLE-CAR on the DOLE’s child labor-free barangay campaign (CLFBC) and anti-illegal recruitment and trafficking in persons (AIR-TIP) drive.

Sagada, one of Mt. Province’s 10 towns, is a 5th class municipality. It is largely an agricultural town, with a high yield of temperate vegetables and citrus fruits like lemon and oranges, as well as high-value crops like coffee. It is also a tourist destination, known for its spectacular natural beauty.

As a typical agricultural community, Sagada households utilize all able-bodied family members, including children, as unpaid labor in various farm work. Lately, the discovery of mineral deposits in the town ignited a boom in small-scale, “pocket” mining, evident in some of Sagada’s barangays, including the six barangays that the DOLE has set its focus on making child labor-free.

Sagada has an estimated 644 working children, 491 of them in hazardous labor, out of 3,567 children population aged 5-17 years old, as shown in the NSO’s 2011 Survey on Child Labor.

Thus far, the DOLE Cordillera Administrative Region has profiled 120 children at-risk of becoming child laborers in six of Sagada’s 19 barangays. Sixty of these 120 children were observed to have been engaged in “pocket” mining and the rest were into gardening/farming.

The regional office has already converged its program with other government agencies in an effort to move the DOLE’s child labor-free barangay campaign fast forward. The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, an attached agency of the DOLE, is cooperating with the Sagada LGU to provide skills and livelihood training to parents of child laborers.

During her visit to Brgy. Aguid, Baldoz distributed school supplies to the identified 120 children at-risk of becoming child laborers under Project Angel Tree and P1.52 million in livelihood assistance to the parents of the 120 children.

The assistance, course through the municipal government for distribution to the parents in the six barangays, were intended for the parents’ livelihood, such as meat processing, soya production, peanut production, coffee processing, souvenir shop operation, and linapit-making under the DOLE’s Kabuhayan Para sa mga Magulang at Batang Manggagawa (KASAMA) administered by the Bureau of Workers with Special Concerns.

She also awarded checks totaling P600,412.50 to the Mabisal, Insigidan, Tibonga-en, Sadsad Organization and the Association of Southern Sagada Episcopalians for their cassava processing and organic vegetable and strawberry production. The assistance will benefit 190 Sagadans.

SCHOOL SUPPLIES FOR FORMER CHILD LABORERS. Labor and Employment Secretary Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz (2nd from left), DOLE Undersecretary Lourdes M. Trasmonte, Sagada Mayor Eduardo Latawan, and Mountain Province Vice Governor Bonifacio Lacwasan lead in the distribution of school supplies to 120 children from five Sagada, Mt. Province barangays identified to be at-risk of becoming child laborers during the Secretary’s visit to Brgy. Aguid in Sagada town to drum up public support for the DOLE’s Child Labor-Free Barangay Campaign.
The recurring power shortage in Zamboanga Sibugay has been an inevitable menace for the rubber industry, one of the major economic lifeblood in the region. More than the daily work interruption, the sporadic power supply gravely affected the silent majority of the rubber milling workers who are under the “no work no pay” scheme.

As such, workers employed at the Philippine Pioneer Rubber Products Corporation (PPRPC) and Southern Peninsula Rubber Enterprise (SPR) in the municipalities of Naga and Malangas in Zamboanga Sibugay, have no other choice but to adjust their working hours and go home during scheduled brown-outs.

Addressing the fiscal impact of the power crisis to the affected Zamboangeño workers, the Department of Labor and Employment Regional Office No. 9 provided a ‘daylight’ intervention through the DOLE Kabuhayan Starter Kit Project.

In his report to Labor and Employment Secretary Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz, DOLE RO 9 Director Sisinio Cano said 38 workers from PPRPC and SPR were given starter kits amounting to a total of P217,128 during the awarding held at the Sibugay Plaza Hotel on 03 October 2012.

“Each beneficiary has received raw materials, tools, and jigs that they could use to start-up their intended livelihood to augment their daily income. This is our way of helping them become productive through self-employment to cushion the financial impact brought about by the intermittent power in the rubber industry,” Cano said.

Various livelihood starter kits were awarded to the rubber miller workers ranging from carpentry kits; raw materials and supplies for small carinderia and snack vending; and tools and jigs for barber services, cosmetology, and massage therapy.

Ipil Mayor Eldwin Alibutdan and Industrial Tripartite Council for Rubber Co-Chairman Hector Igot expressed their gratitude to the immediate action of the DOLE for saving not only the time lost for the workers, but also for providing viable solutions to support the rubber industry.

Both extended their assistance to the two rubber milling companies in developing and monitoring the livelihood projects of the worker-beneficiaries.

The 38 Zamboangeño workers thanked the DOLE for the opportunity which shed light to their bleak situation. For Cita Banaysiso, the starter kit for a small carinderia received by his husband, Jose, signified the answer to her day-to-day prayer.

“Due to the brown-outs, I’m not sure if my husband can still sustain our family’s daily needs. Now that we have an alternative livelihood from the DOLE, I’m relieved of the burden of having to lend money just to sustain our living,” Cita shared.

SMILES OF HOPE. The 38 workers from the Philippine Pioneer Rubber Products Corporation and Southern Peninsula Rubber Enterprise share smiles after they received their Kabuhayan Starter Kits – their jumpstart to increased income and productivity in the midst of the power supply crisis affecting the rubber industry.