

# Assessing the Situation of Women Working in the Calabarzon, Philippines

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One significant change that comes to fore with globalization, is the feminization of the workforce in certain industries, notably garment manufacturing and electronics assembly, regardless of the level of development of a country. Moreover, women's participation in the economy has also changed dramatically in both volume and composition. However, it is asserted that globalization has not ameliorated the economic condition of the world's women and their sheer numbers do not necessarily imply greater gender equality.

## WOMEN IN EXPORT PROCESSING ZONES (EPZS)

Data compiled from *Women in Global Factory* (Fuentes and Ehrenreich, 1981) illustrate that during the past 25 years, multinational corporations have relied on women around the world to keep labor costs down and profits up. This transnationalization of capital is characterized by low-skilled, labor-intensive jobs which are transferred from developed countries to newly industrializing ones. These industrializing or developing nations follow a path of increasing dependence upon foreign investors and markets and have dropped protective trade barriers to allow for "free flow" of capital and goods across national boundaries. One result of this policy is the conversion of free trade zones into havens for foreign investments or Export Processing Zones (EPZs).

ILO defines EPZs as "industrial zones with special incentives to attract foreign investment, in which imported materials undergo some degree of processing before being exported again." In some countries, EPZs are indistinguishable from organized, modern business complexes. But in many others they take the form of ring-fenced enclaves of industrial monoculture. No matter what form EPZs take,

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the free trade, foreign-investment and export-driven ethos of the modern economy transformed them into "vehicles of globalization."

The ILO report further states that as global competition for jobs and foreign investment intensifies, Export Processing Zones (EPZs) proliferate worldwide, growing from just a handful a few decades ago to over 850 today.

Most zones are located in North America (320) and Asia (225). But the number of EPZs is also rising in developing regions, such as the Caribbean (51), Central America (41) and the Middle East (39). These figures are likely to increase throughout the world. The Philippines, for example, presently has 35 EPZs operating but has approved plans for 83.

Filipino women have traditionally comprised and continue to make up the majority of the labor force in EPZs where foreign-owned factories are given by the Philippine Government a tax-free and union-free haven. In the Bataan Export Processing Zone, 77% of all workers are women. It is 65.2% in Baguio, 75% in Mactan, and 74% in Cavite. In the garments export industry where labor flexibilization arrangements such as subcontracting prevail, 85% of more than half a million Filipino workers are women (Phil Country Report for Women, cited in Piglas Diwa Vol. 6 No. 4 1998). The national data reflect the regional trend of women comprising 80 percent of workers in the export zones in South and South East Asia (G. Francisco, 2001 cited in *Women in the Global Economy*, ILO Kit, 1998).

The heavy concentration of women in industries operating inside EPZs is by no means an accident nor is it purely the workings of a 'neutral' market. Companies engaged in garments, shoes, electronics, microchip, computerized embroidery, and other light manufacturing that entail repetitive assembly line operation requiring good eyesight, dexterity, patience and docility prefer to hire young and unmarried women workers. A large proportion of these young women are 'raw recruits' or first-time factory workers who came to the economic zone straight from nearby as well as far lying rural areas where their impoverished families depended on agricultural work (Francisco, 2001).

Trade union organizations strongly criticize special economic zones, claiming they are characterized by low wages and abuse of workers. In an International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) report (cited in ILO 2001), export-processing zones are called concentration camps. According to the ICFTU, most of the region's proliferating EPZs have been deliberately created to prevent union organization as an incentive to investors. Foreign investors have been able to take advantage of the low pay and manual dexterity of workers. These industries have generated unprecedented employment opportunities for women. However, working conditions are frequently long, arduous and dangerous. Few of the women keep these low-paid jobs much beyond their twenties, because employers fire those who marry and start a family (ILO, 2001, cited from ICFTU: *The Global Market: Trade Unionism's Greatest Challenge*).

## THE CALABARZON

CALABARZON is the acronym of five provinces south and east of Metro Manila, namely: (1) Cavite; (2) Laguna; (3) Batangas; (4) Rizal; and (5) Quezon. These are among the growth centers selected as the major areas for industrialization in the Philippines. CALABARZON, aside from the merit of its proximity to Metro Manila, is considered the country's top investment region. According to Anon (1997; c.f. Peña, 1999), investments pumped into the region soared to a record high of P122.6 billion in 1997 from P22.6 billion in 1992. The area's annual growth rate posted an average of 250 percent from 1992 to 1997 with a total of P383 billion.

As of August 2000, the public and private economic zones located in CALABARZON and are registered with the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) have totaled 517 firms with an aggregate average employment of 177,933. Of the average total employment, 70% are women.

## METHODOLOGY

Given this background information, the growing interest to investigate more thoroughly the impact of globalization on women workers, has led this research to probe deeper into the situation of women working in the CALABARZON. This paper, therefore, aims to assess the situation of women working in the CALABARZON in terms of their: (1) recruitment and selection; (2) working conditions; (3) compensation; (4) development; (5) special working conditions; (6) health, dental, and occupational safety; (7) labor relations; (8) post employment; (9) the impact of globalization on their socio-economic life; and (10) the significant differences in their situation based on the characteristics of their company. This paper also determines the impact of globalization on the Filipino firms, and relates the overall issues/ problems of the situation of the working women in CALABARZON to APEC. At the end of the paper, policies, and courses of action are recommended to ensure the protection of basic labor rights of women workers, and at the same time, move towards global competitiveness of the women workforce by providing equal opportunity for women in all spheres of life.

This study was based on two conceptual frameworks. One is on a theory of globalization and its impact on women and work which suggests that globalization significantly expands opportunities but does not remove barriers to advancement or ameliorate the predominance of low paying menial jobs held by women (Mears, 1995); and the other is on the theory of corporate social performance which underscores the social responsibility of the firms to protect human rights (Caroll, 1985).

Using descriptive, comparative, and evaluative research designs, a survey among 172 firms registered with PEZA operating in the economic zones in Cavite, Laguna, and Batangas was conducted. A total of 327 respondents, composed of 219 women workers and 108 management representatives, were interviewed or answered the questionnaire. Both

descriptive and non-parametric statistics (One-Way Anova and Chi-square Tests) were used to analyze the data.

### **SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF WOMEN WORKERS**

The CALABARZON women workers' ages range from 18 to 51 years with an average age of 24 years. Many of the 18 and 51 year workers are from Cavite and Laguna. However, most of those within the average age range (26 years) are from Batangas.

The birth order of the women workers vary. One-third (32%) are second-born, a little over one-fourth each (28% respectively) are middle children and first-born. The rest are last-born in their families. Most of the second-born are from Cavite and the middle-born are from Laguna.

A considerable number (84%) of the women workers in CALABARZON are Catholics. Only 29 (13%) are non-Catholics. These non-Catholic workers are members of either the Iglesia ni Cristo, the Evangelical Church, or Born-Again Christian groups.

A high proportion (56%) of the total number of women workers have completed high school, a good percentage (37%) earned a college degree, while 4% had reached elementary level.

Majority (64%) of the women workers are single. Almost one-third (31%) are married, while the remaining portion are separated (1%).

The single women workers have an average family size of six (6). There are those with less than three members while others have as many as more than 10 family members.

The 69 women who are married have one to five children, with an average of two. They also stated that their dependents range from one to five people with an average of three. Most of these women are happy to note that their spouses are working (83%) which enables them to meet the needs of their family.

Out of the 219 women workers, a large proportion (87%) are rank and file employees while 12% are supervisory personnel. As rank and file employees, their present position titles are: (1) production operator (37%), (2) production line worker (14%), (3) office staff/clerk/secretary (9%), packer (1%), (4) Production Quality Control inspector (8%), import-export staff (0.90%), (5) sewer (7%), (6) HR staff (6%), (7) technician (1%), (8) nurse (2%), (9) cashier (0.9%), and (10) solder/welder (0.9%). For supervisors, they are usually the export coordinator, head inspector, line leader, human resource trainer and shift leader. There are only 27 women workers who responded that they had a previous job before their present job. All of them asserted that they had the same position as they do now (production operators, clerks).

Majority (65%) of the women are already regular employees. More than one-fourth (29%) are contractuales/casuals, and a few (6%) are still on probationary status. Their length of service ranges from

one month to twenty years. Their average length of service with their company is two (2) years. About 53% have served their firm from one to five years, while 35% have worked with their enterprise for less than 1 year.

A big bulk of the women workers answered that "helping my family" (81%) and "having my own house and lot" (80%) are their foremost dreams and immediate concerns. This is followed by their aspiration of having a higher salary (75%); the desire to have their own car (68%); and to be promoted in their job (64%).

From a socio-psychological perspective, the achievement needs of these women workers are basically physiological or materialist in nature but geared towards helping one's family. This is rooted in the common desire of a typical Filipino to have a better life. Moreover, the aspirations of these women clearly show that priority is given to family and personal needs, while helping others like their fellow workers, fighting for women's rights and helping their community take the back seat.

### **ASSESSMENT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITION**

Majority (60%) of the women workers perceive that their present socio-economic condition is not difficult yet not better as compared to their conditions five years ago. More than a third (33%) consider their present condition better or much better, while 8% consider their conditions difficult.

### **RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION**

Recruitment and selection of employees involve acquiring the right quality and quantity of personnel needed for the positions in the company.

The women workers claimed that companies recruited them through different methods. Majority (51%) got employed as a walk-in applicant, while 17% were sourced through referrals by friends employed by the company. There were also those who got hired through referral by relatives working in the company (9%), through referral by friends who are not employed by the company (5%), and through referral by relatives who are not employed by the company (6%). The least used method through which women workers were recruited was through the college/ school placement office (.8% or 1).

The application process, as experienced by the women workers, is about one month. Within this average duration, they pass through a series of screenings such as initial interview (83%), filling-up of application form (83%), in-depth interviews (50%), IQ test (47%), practical skills tests (32%), psychological test (24%), and physical examination (66%).

When queried on how they would assess the level of difficulty they encountered in applying for a job in their company, a good portion (73%) averred that it was fairly difficulty going through the entire selection procedure. Only 4% found it very difficult and 0.5% (or 1) rated it to be very easy.

A number of women workers encountered problems and difficulties while they were applying for a job in the present firm. The top five (5) problems are: (1) long waiting time for interview and release of test results; (2) need to go to the company several times for interviews and other tests; (4) inaccessibility of company relative to their residence; (4) completion of pre-employment requirements; (6) high expenses related to application process; and (6) need to go through several interviews before being accepted.

### **WORKING CONDITIONS**

Book Three, Title I of the Labor Code provides for the working conditions and rest periods of employees in all private establishments. It stipulates that normal hours of work of any employee shall not exceed 8 hours a day; regular meal time-off shall not be less than 60 minutes; night differential pay shall not be less than 10% of one's regular wage for each hour of work done from 10 P.M. to 6 A.M.; overtime pay shall be an additional pay equivalent to one's regular wage plus 25% thereof; rest period of not less than 24 consecutive hours after every six consecutive normal work days; right to holiday pay; and right to service incentive leave of five days with pay for those who have rendered at least one year of service.

**Work schedule.** A significant number (84%) of women workers revealed that during the week, they perform their jobs six (6) days a week (usually from Monday to Saturday). A little over one-tenth (14%) report for work for seven days, and the remaining 3% toil for four to five days. In entirety, the average number of working days per week is six days and the average number of working hours is 48 per week.

On a daily basis, the average number of actual working hours is 8. Many enjoy a one-hour (79%) lunch break (usually from 12:00 p.m-1:00 p.m) and a 15-minute (89%) snack break each in the morning (10:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m) and in the afternoon (3:00 p.m-3:15 p.m). However, the average lunch break given by firms is 54 minutes which is below the 60 minute regular meal time-off required by law. A firm, where women workers enjoy at least 60 minutes of regular meal time-off is typically engaged in both domestic and export business, owned by American or Malaysian, has breakeven income, and has been operating for 11 to 15 years. They perform their tasks from a minimum of seven hours to a maximum of 12 hours per day. As such, women's working schedule vary slightly depending on their work. However, the statistical test pinpoints that there are no meaningful variations in their work schedule when grouped by type of company characteristic.

**Night Shift Differential.** A huge segment (87%) of the workers state that their companies operate in the evening (10:00 p.m to 6:00 a.m), while the remaining 12% say that their companies do not. For firms operating in the evening, about 113 (60%) answer that they have been assigned to a night shift schedule and they are mostly production line workers, production operators, and QA and QC inspectors. Out of

this number, 98% confirm that they are given night differential pay of at least 10% as required by law, while 2 (2%) say otherwise.

The women workers who are given more than 10% of their regular wage for each hour of work performed at night are from large firms located in Batangas, are export-oriented, Japanese-owned, with high profit and has been operating from one to five years.

**Overtime Work.** A very large part (87%) of the women workers reply that they usually work beyond eight (8) working hours. Only 13% provide a negative response. Three hours is the average overtime duty hours during ordinary days. This ranges from one to as many as eight hours. This overtime on ordinary days, according to a considerable fraction (98%) of the women are paid at least 25% of their regular wage per hour and only a very small segment (2%) share the view that they are not compensated for the extra hours of work that they render since they have a supervisory position such as line or assembly leader.

Specifically, the average overtime pay received by women workers is 28.5% which is a little higher than the 25% required by law. Women workers who enjoy relatively higher overtime pay are employed in large firms which are found in Batangas, are export-oriented, Japanese-owned, have high profit, and have been operating for more than 15 years.

**Rest Days.** There are a number (34.3%) of women workers who aver that they are also required by their employers at times to work on their rest day because of the need to meet orders from customers, particularly those in the export business. The average pay received by women who work on their rest day is 33.6% of their regular wage. This compensation is a little higher than the 30% minimum requirement of the law. A few women workers who have been paid less than 30% on their rest day are employed by Filipino-Chinese and American or Malaysian firms. On the other hand, those workers who have been compensated higher for working on their rest day come from firms in Cavite that are export-oriented, Japanese-owned, have high profit, operating for 6-10 years, and large in size.

**Holidays.** A substantial percentage (64%) of the women articulate that their companies do not operate on holidays. On the other hand, a mere 36% remark that their firms is open on holidays. For those who work on holidays, their compensations vary depending on when it falls.

Regarding payment for work rendered during regular holidays, the average compensation paid is only 148% of their regular rate. This is way below the requirement of law that is twice the regular wage. The very few who have been paid twice their regular rate work in firms from Batangas that are domestic-oriented, Filipino and Japanese owned, and operating for more than 15 years.

On payment for work rendered by women during regular holidays that happen to fall on their scheduled rest day, the average premium received by these workers is only 166%. This amount is below what the law provides, which is equivalent to twice one's regular rate for working

on a regular holiday plus an additional compensation of at least 50% of one's regular wage since the holiday work falls on the workers' scheduled rest day.

On payment for work on special holidays, women workers get an average premium of 27.77% of their regular wage. This is just below the requirement of law that is at least 30%. The women workers who have received the least amount of special holiday pay are employed in firms in Cavite that are export-oriented, Filipino-Chinese, and with high profit. On the other hand, those who have enjoyed higher premium are connected with firms in Laguna, and which are domestic-oriented, Filipino-owned, have been operating for 6 to 10 years, and are large in size.

**Leaves.** There are five (5) specific types of leaves with pay that firms extend to the women workers. These are sick leave, vacation leave, emergency leave, maternity leave, and birthday leave. Among those who mention the number of days of each type of leave, the range of response is as follows: (1) sick leave (10 to 15 days per year); (2) vacation leave (10 to 15 days per year); (3) emergency leave (1 to 60 days per year); (4) maternity leave (60 to 90 days); (5) birthday leave (1 day) for 9% of women workers.

It can be noted that all firms in the CALABARZON grant leave benefits way above the five days service incentive leaves required by law.

### **ASSESSMENT OF PRESENT WORKING CONDITIONS**

When asked to assess their present working conditions, more than two-thirds (70%) of the workers consider their working conditions Good ( $X=4.00-4.99$ ). Almost one-fourth (25%) claim that their work conditions are fair ( $X=2-2.99$ ), and three or 1% assess their work conditions as poor ( $X=3.00-3.99$ ) or very poor ( $X=1.00-1.99$ ). Only eight (8) or 4% assess their conditions to be very good ( $X=5$ ). Overall, the average rating is 3.76.

Forty-three women workers share some of the problems and difficulties related to their working conditions in the workplace. The most frequently cited is the lack of leaves because they have to report for work even during their rest day or holidays. Another is the lack of benefits and salary increases other than the mandated minimum wage increase. Overload of work or tiring work is also a problem that leads to over fatigue so that by the time the women are home, they are too tired to do other household chores or participate in community activities. The same number of women workers also point to the problem of work pressure. This pertains to rush jobs they have to do, or delays in production which they have to make-up for, or rejection of the materials that they have done which affects their performance rating.

The average number of workdays, working hours, overtime pay (except for location), night shift differential pay and regular holiday pay do not significantly differ according to location of company, nature of business, years of existence, level of profitability, type of owner, and



size of employment. However, for special holiday pay, significant differences appear when grouped by location, nature of business, type of owner and number of years of operation.

Obviously, there are still women workers in the Calabarzon area who do not enjoy what is at least mandated by law particularly as regards regular meal time-off, payment on holidays when required to work and the non-conductive work, situation that they are in. This means that some EPZs in Calabarzon have not fully performed their corporate social responsibility of ensuring the benefits women workers should enjoy as dictated by law.

## COMPENSATION

Compensation is the remuneration for the services rendered by the employees that are based on the principles of adequacy and equity. Remuneration is primarily composed of the base pay and fringe benefits that can be monetary or non-monetary. There are certain compensations like the minimum wage and benefits like those from the SSS, PAG-IBIG, and MEDICARE that are required by the law to be given to workers.

**Salary.** The women workers acknowledge that they receive a monthly salary ranging from PhP2,000 to PhP12,000 per month. Those workers paid on a daily basis claim that their salaries range from P120.00 to P461.00 per day. Their average monthly salary is PhP5,926.79, while their average daily pay is PhP229.75. This remuneration is given twice a month, as confirmed by almost all (96%), and only very few receive their salary daily and weekly, (3% and 1%) respectively. The women workers declare that they get their wages from the bank (77%) or from their company cashier unit (22%). Such payments are made either in the form of cash through ATM (76%), direct cash (22%), or in check (1%).

There are 35 women workers from 30 firms who claimed that they are given a daily salary ranging from PhP 120.00 to PhP 198.00. Only one woman worker has claimed receiving PhP 120.00 daily salary from a Korean firm. She is on probationary status. For the rest, daily salary ranges from PhP 145.00 to PhP 198.00. More than half of them (18), are employed on contractual basis and the number of days that they also report to work is usually less than five days making their monthly pay less than those who report on a regular basis. The ownership of firms that give less than the daily minimum wage is a mixture of Filipino, Chinese, Korean, Taiwanese and Japanese-owned.

A comparative analysis of the salary received by women workers reveals that women workers in Batangas receive the highest average monthly pay (PhP 5,921.10), followed by those working in Laguna (PhP 5,412.96), and Cavite (PhP 5,377.01). However, women workers in Cavite receive the highest average daily rate (PhP 234.52), followed by those employed in Laguna (PhP 224.81) and Batangas (PhP 205.04). The difference in the highest monthly and daily pay is explained by the use of varying factors representing number of days as multiplier (e.g. 391.5 days, 365 days, 314.6 days or 262.6 days).

Compensation based on daily salary rate does not differ significantly when women workers are classified based on the location of company, nature of business, level of profitability, years of existence and size of employment. No significant differences result when women workers are classified based on the type of owner of their companies. Japanese-owned companies give the highest average daily rate (PhP 225.49), while Koreans give the lowest average rate (PhP 192.44) that is below the minimum wage of PhP 200.

Generally, the data indicate that women workers receive basic wage that is above the minimum required in the CALABARZON area. There are, however, still a few companies in the CALABARZON that do not comply with the minimum wage law.

**Fringe Benefits.** Aside from the basic salary, companies also provide additional benefits to the women workers. These fringe benefits are given by the firms to attract and retain the best people and encourage commitment to the company. According to them, these benefits are in the form of uniform, transportation service, meal allowance, bonus, medical allowance, hospitalization, rice subsidy, housing loan, and car loan.

These are still minimal fringe benefits enjoyed by the workers aside from the SSS, Medicare, Pag-IBIG and ECC required by law. These may be called minimal when compared to the profits gained by the firms at the end of the year and compared to those given by firms of the same size and financial capability which are located in Metro Manila, as well as those firms owned by these multinationals in developed countries.

### **ADEQUACY OF SALARY AND BENEFITS**

On a scale of 1 (Very Inadequate) to 5 (More than Adequate), women workers are asked to rate the extent of adequacy of the salary and benefits they receive to sustain their family needs. More than half (63%) estimated it to be average, about a fifth (17%) opine that it is adequate, and some (19%) rate it as inadequate. Only one (0.5%) asserts that it is more than adequate and another one (.5%) believes that it is very inadequate.

### **DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

Development covers the aspects of training and promotion, which among others, aims to enable employees to better fit the job and the organization. Training involves the acquisition and enhancement of knowledge, attitudes, and skills, and habits of workers necessary to perform one's job. Training also contributes in increasing productivity, heightening morale, and increasing overall job satisfaction.

Promotion, on the other hand, is the vertical or upward movement of an employee in recognition of one's meritorious performance and possession of competency required for the job. This is one of the concrete manifestations of individual employee's growth as he or she continues his or her career in the company.

**Training.** There are 195 or 89% of the women workers who claim that they are given training opportunities by their firm. This training comes in the form of apprenticeship (62%), on-the-job training (58%), in-house seminars (46%), and outside seminars (18%). The in-house and outside seminars are mostly related to the technical aspects of their jobs in order to develop their skills and improve future performance necessary to become globally competitive.

When asked to assess their establishment's training programs, the bulk (46% and 44%) of women workers reveal that these are fair and good, respectively. Only a handful (8%) of these workers consider the training programs to be very good. There are only two women (.97%) who perceive the training programs to be poor.

On the assessment of training program, significant differences result when women workers are classified based on location of company and type of owner. Women workers from Laguna give a higher rating ( $X=3.64$ ), followed by those from Cavite ( $X=3.58$ ), and Batangas ( $X=3.13$ ). By type of owner, there are significant differences ( $F=8.3930, p=0.0043$ ) between the assessment of training programs of workers from Filipino-owned firms ( $X=3.27$ ), and foreign-owned firms ( $X=3.62$ ). Among foreign-owned firms, those from companies owned by American, Malaysian and Singaporean as well as Chinese give the highest rating ( $X=3.83$  and  $X=3.92$  respectively) and the lowest was given by women workers in Filipino-owned ( $X=3.26$ ), and Filipino-Chinese owned ( $X= 3.33$ ) companies.

**Promotion.** Since the women workers started working in their enterprise, the majority (64%) have been promoted once, a little over one-fifth (21%) have been promoted twice, more than one-tenth (12%) have been promoted thrice, and only one (2%) has been promoted seven times. These promotions are more on one step higher within the same level of rank and file, rather than moving up to managerial level.

These women say that it took them about one month to four (4) years or an average of two (2) years before they were promoted. A considerable number (67%) attest that their promotion has been based on merit as reflected in their performance evaluation. A good percentage (29%) of women workers aver that it is based both on merit and seniority, and only 4% attribute their promotion to seniority.

The current system of personnel promotion adopted by their company is assessed to be satisfactory by a majority (56%), a parcel (36%) graded it good, a few (5%) thought it to be fair; a minute proportion (2%) believe it to be very good, and one (0.5%) worker asserts that it is poor. Overall, the average rating given by the women is  $X = 3.6$ , which is satisfactory.

## **SPECIAL WORKING CONDITIONS**

Book Three, Title III, Chapter 1 of the Labor Code provides for working conditions for special groups of employees, particularly employment of women. These are related to night work prohibition, facilities for women, maternity leave benefits, family planning services,

discrimination prohibition, stipulation against marriage, and protection from sexual harassment.

**Family Planning Services.** Given the nature of their work in their firm, women are supposed to be provided with facilities and equipment to make their working conditions more conducive. The identified provisions extended to the women are: (1) separate toilets for women (54%); (2) seats proper for women (42%); (3) dressing room for women (22%), and nursery in the workplace (0.5%).

A considerable number (77%) of the women stress that their establishments do not provide for family planning services. These family planning services are done through information in seminars (24%), medical check-up of doctor in their clinic (14%), and giving of contraceptives (5%).

Findings reveal that there is a low level of implementation on the provision of facilities and family planning services for the women workers in CALABARZON. This means that the firms do not properly address the safety and health concerns of women workers. This also demonstrates the lack of corporate social responsiveness of the CALABARZON firms for the protection of women's health and safety.

**Discrimination Practices and Sexual Harassment.** The law provides that women should not be discriminated against at work. In the case of these women workers in CALABARZON, majority (95%) respond that they are not discriminated at work, while a very small fraction (5%) remark that there is discrimination. Their claim that there is no discrimination is supported by fact, as stated by most women (99%) that they are still allowed to work after they got married. Most of them (99%) also reported that there is no incident of sexual harassment in their companies. For a few (11 women) who have experienced discrimination, the specific cases are related to education, civil status, gender, age and economic status.

**Health, Dental Care and Occupational Safety.** The Labor Code also stipulates the provision of health, dental care and occupational safety measures for women in the workplace depending on the number of employees, the physical size of the workplace, and the nature of the business. These provisions should be implemented to prevent absenteeism, accidents, occupational diseases, injuries, and stress among women employees.

The women workers state that first aid treatment is available (62%), medical and dental services are also given (61%), that they are covered by employee compensation and company insurance (29%), that occupational health and safety programs like fire and earthquake drills are conducted (22%) that health programs like stress management and wellness tips are given (17%), and that adult education is from time-to-time held (4%).

## LABOR RELATIONS

Labor relations focus on the concerns of unionization, discipline, grievance, and decision-making process in the firms. The imple-

mentation of programs related to these concerns will maintain good work environment and make employees efficient and productive in their work.

**Unionization.** The labor relations policy of the government aims to promote free trade unionism as an instrument for the enhancement of democracy and the promotion of social justice and development. However, only 15 or 7% of the firms in the CALABARZON are unionized. These unions are mostly found in export-oriented, Japanese-owned firms located in Cavite, with large employment size, which have been in existence for an average of 9.5 years, and has had average profit last year.

Out of the 15 unionized firms, 11 had a strike that lasted for from two (2) days to 10 days. In one case, the company temporarily closed and in some other cases, the strike was declared illegal.

In the 15 unionized firms, only 11 or 5% of the women workers interviewed confirm that they are members of the union. They have been members of their union for an average of four (4) years.

As members, they participate in the union in many ways. They (1) attend meetings regularly; (2) read the union bulletin regularly; (3) join in the concerted activities of the union; (4) give suggestions/ comments about the CBA; (5) talk to union officers; (6) attend union socials and other fellowship activities; (7) participate during election of officers; (8) visit the union office regularly; (9) attend seminars and educational activities; (10) take part in membership welfare program; (11) be part of union political activities; and (12) join the union cooperative.

Seven (7) women say that their existing Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) has special provision(s) for women workers such as maternity leave, no discrimination for promotion, and family planning services.

The limited number of unions shows that EPZs are haven for non-unionized firms to attract foreign investors. Unions are discouraged in an indirect manner. The strategy of the firms is to make use of the Labor-Management Committees (LMCs) to prevent unionization. The difficulty in organizing unions is also very prevalent because of the restrictions and tight security in entering the CALABARZON area. Furthermore, when a firm becomes unionized, and a strike happens, the firm will usually close or the government will declare the strike illegal. The government's labor relations policy to promote free trade union as an investment for the promotion of social justice and development is not really enjoyed by the women workers in this area.

**Discipline.** Disciplinary measures aim to prevent unwanted behavior and enforce obedience and order in the workplace.

The findings disclose that a big bulk (77%) of the women (26 workers) who have been disciplined were given oral reprimand and a small proportion (15%) were suspended. The women were subjected to disciplinary action due to their (1) absenteeism (54%); (2) tardiness (54%); (3) sleeping on the job (23%); (4) fighting with co-workers; (5) insubordination (12%); (6) leaving the place of work (4%);

(7) horseplay (4%); and (7) negligence (4%). The minimal discipline cases experienced by the companies validate the other previous research findings that women are preferred because of their attitude, patience, and good work values.

**Grievance Machinery.** The grievance machinery provides a venue by which an aggrieved worker can channel her complaint against management.

A large proportion (69%) of the women workers report that their grievance is coursed through the Personnel Department, a few do it through their Labor-Management Committee (6%), and only 1% or three (3) course it through their union.

**Decision-Making Process.** Employee participation can be promoted by giving workers an opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process affecting their rights, duties, and welfare in the firm. When asked specifically to assess the decision-making process in the labor-management relation matters in their enterprise, a good number (47%) rate it to be poor; a reasonable percentage (45%) say it is fair; some (5%) grade it good; and only 2% rate it to be very poor.

The low rating is explained by the observations of a few women who say that: (1) there is a problem with the selection of labor-management committee officers; (2) there is "palakasan" system; (3) committee makes uncompromising decisions; (4) management is not always available to meet; (5) decision-making is too long; and (5) management does not pay attention to the needs of employees.

## **ASSESSMENT OF LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS**

The over-all average rating given by women workers to labor-management relations is Fair ( $X=3.50$ ).

When the assessment of women workers on labor-management relations is further analyzed based on companies' characteristics, it shows that there are no significant differences when women workers' scores are classified by location of company, nature of business, number of years of existence and size of employment.

When classified by type of owner, statistical test results identify significant variations in the assessment of labor management relations. Women workers in Filipino-Chinese-owned companies give the lowest rating ( $X=2.83$ ) while the highest rating is given by women workers from Chinese, American, Malaysian and Singaporean owned companies ( $X=3.75$  and  $X=3.74$ , respectively).

Some (14) women workers identify a number of problems they encounter in their labor-management relations. The most frequently cited difficulty is that management does not pay attention to employee needs. It is also reported that employees get intimidated when they bring up topics related to salary and benefits.

The labor relations situation of the women workers in the CALABARZON seems to be wanting as far as union dynamism and participation of workers in decision and policy-making processes affect-

ing their rights, duties, and welfare are concerned. The number of strikes that occurred shows that industrial peace is not fully present. When there is no union or the union is weak, management can continue ignoring their needs; neither would the workers be assertive to bring up the issue of salaries and benefits. This is also a reflection of the low level of political consciousness and lack of leadership skills of the women workers. They have not fully grasped the negative effects of globalization at the firm and the social-political-economic issues confronting them at the national level.

## SEPARATION

Based on the responses, the number one reason (100%) for termination is serious misconduct or willful disobedience by the employee of the lawful orders of employer or his representatives in connection with work. The second top ranking reason (32%) is absence without leave (AWOL). The third ranking reason (29%) is fraud or willful breach by the employee of the trust reposed in him by his employer or duly authorized representative.

**Retrenchment and Security of Tenure.** There were 133 (60%) of the workers who said that their companies have gone through retrenchment. The justifications forwarded are: (1) economic crisis; (2) company cost cutting; (3) low profits of firm; and (4) possible closure of the company. A big bulk (82%) of the workers confirm that they have security of tenure in their company, particularly the regular employees.

**Retirement.** Philippine law dictates that an employee may be retired from the company upon reaching the age of 60.

The overall prevailing retirement age in the women workers' firms is 60 years. There are no significant differences in the retirement age of workers when their companies are grouped based on their characteristics. However, there are firms located in Batangas that ask their employees to retire at age 55. This is also true for the Chinese-owned firms.

Since all of women workers are still far from retirement, they have never really thought of the benefits due them when they retire. The issue that will most probably confront these workers will be early retirement since their firms are recruiting more younger women every year.

**Problems and Difficulties of Women Related to Separation.** Twenty-four (24) women share their ideas about the difficulties encountered by those who are separated. They particularly note the difficulty of finding a new job if one gets terminated and the long wait for the release of separation pay due to the processing of papers required before payment is given.

The most common reasons why women workers are separated from work are termination and retrenchment. Workers are terminated based on just cause, while their retrenchment is due to work redundancy and or cost-saving scheme. It seems that retrenchment is a

common feature of firms intending to gain more competitive advantage in a globalizing economy. Most firms realign their resources and refocus their management philosophy toward leaner but multi-skilled and more flexible human resources.

### **IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION ON THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL LIVES OF WOMEN WORKERS**

Only 57 (26%) out of 219 women workers opine that their economic and social lives have been affected by globalization, while 162 (74%) believe that it has no effect on their lives at all. Their perceptions differ significantly when they are grouped by location, type of owner and level of profitability. Women workers who state that their socio-economic conditions have been affected by globalization mostly come from Cavite and are working in a domestic-oriented company. These women workers are mostly from Filipino-Chinese firms and companies that operated at low profit last year and have been in existence for more than 15 years. These companies have medium-size employment.

Among the negative effects, the more frequently given explanations are related to:

- (1) **Conditions of work**, like the need to do overtime work frequently in order to do rush orders and meet deadline for company requirements, or casualization/ contractualization of workers, or difficulty in finding a regular job.
- (2) **Salary**, like difficulty to have salary increases, or low salary, or salary is inadequate to meet needs of the family and cope with changes in technology (e.g. buy cell phone and computer);
- (3) **Company's condition**, like dropping sales/profit due to stiff competition which lead to stricter policies implemented to produce quality products just to be able to face stiff foreign competition;
- (4) **Information technology**, which forces them to adapt new tools such as internet, cell phone and media networks which not everybody can avail of but they are still part of the economy; and
- (5) **Financial difficulties**, which hinder them from buying all their family needs due to increasing prices.

On the other hand, the only positive effect that women perceive about globalization is related to conditions of work. They mention that (1) jobs become easier with the availability of modern equipment like computers and other high-speed/technology machines; and (2) many people are given opportunities for employment because of free trade that enables many firms to operate in the Philippines.



1. **Recruitment and selection.** Globalization has opened up more opportunities for woman and increased preference for women workers in the CALABARZON because of their attitude, patience, dexterity, and quickness to learn. There are more women employed than men in CALABARZON areas.
2. **Working Conditions.** Women workers are not encouraged to avail of maternity leave as much as possible, which means women should avoid getting pregnant. In this regard, family planning services are beginning to be more emphasized. Over-time work is also very common due to customer demands, especially in those firms whose products are for exports.
3. **Compensation.** Because of the higher dollar exchange rate and the increasing prices of raw materials, there are no salary increases and wage given is at the barest minimum allowed by law. This is done to keep the price of the product competitive in the world market. There is more attempt to properly observe the labor laws and wage scales to maintain productive workers, and since the DOLE is now strictly monitoring the conditions of women workers in the company and the firms' compliance with the labor laws.
4. **Development.** Women workers are given the opportunity to grow in the company despite their lack of higher education. The companies have invested more in training of workers for them to be efficient, to improve their productivity, and help their firm become competitive. The training and retraining of workers are focused more on the technical aspect of the jobs to introduce workers to modern machines and high technology equipment and to ensure zero defects of their products. Women workers are given the opportunity to learn more technical jobs mostly done by men.
5. **Employment.** Most of the companies undergo retrenchment and/or transfer of employees since there is greater use of machines and high technology process resulting to lesser manpower but more efficiency for the company. There is more labor flexibility; that means more contractual and casuals are hired than making employees regular or permanent. The refocusing of human resources to leaner and multi-skilled workers has become a management philosophy to gain competitive advantage.
6. **Labor Relations.** All international laws affecting women's rights are followed. Women are encouraged to play major roles in the company since they tend to be more competitive. Unions are indirectly discouraged.

It can be noted that the effects of globalization on the Filipino firms in the CALABARZON areas are similar to the experience of other APEC-member countries. Such effects are evident in the hiring of more women, longer working hours, low wages, minimal benefits, and an attempt to comply with labor laws. More technical trainings are also given to adapt to new technologies; there is more labor flexibilization, and efforts are exerted to discourage unionization.

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

The findings show that globalization has made a significant change in the volume and composition of the participation of women in the economy. In particular, it has resulted in the feminization of the workforce in the export processing zones, notably in the semiconductor/electronics and garment industries. Although women workers are given preference by the CALABARZON employers because of their attitude, moral values, patience, and dexterity, they still have to apply and compete for jobs which are usually low-waged and low skilled (e.g. production operator, assembly worker, encoder).

Similar to other women workers in EPZs around the world, Filipino women workers work long hours per day and even on their rest days or holidays to meet the demands of the customers of their firms, particularly in the global market. The use of high technology equipment and processes has also changed the nature of their job and the level of skills expected of them to perform the job. Women workers, therefore, have to acquire the new skills through the technical training given to them. There is even no mention of behavioral or human relations skills training to prepare them for managerial positions in their companies.

The women's socio-economic and political life has also been altered because of the long hours of work during the day and during the week and the pressure from work. Although they receive compensation for overtime work, not to mention the minimal fringe benefits they get which adds to their family income, this has considerably reduced their time for personal concerns like pursuing their studies, enjoying longer rest periods, fulfilling family obligations like rearing of children, and participating in union or community activities. This means less time or no time allotted to be concerned with women issues and to fight for women's rights in this society.

Finally, women workers' conditions have not differed significantly over the past five years whether they are Filipino-owned or not, and whether they are export-or domestic-oriented. This means that globalization has not fully improved their working conditions nor expanded their opportunities, nor ameliorated the predominance of their low paying and menial jobs.

Therefore, the issue of protection of the rights and welfare of women workers in the workplace must be a priority concern of APEC. As a body, it must require its member countries like the Philippines to observe labor standards at the same time that it encourages foreign in-

vestments; as well as develop and implement structural adjustment programmes that incorporate specific provisions intended to protect women's rights and health and well-being, and promote the harmony of the family, as well as community relations.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The impact of globalization clearly has important consequences for gender and equality-related policies and initiatives throughout the world (ILO, 1999). Its implication is that trade unions and women's groups must be quicker on their feet. They must be vigilant regarding problems brought about by the emerging globalization that might spread contagiously throughout the Philippines and other developing countries. Women must reap the benefits of globalization more instead of suffer from its ill effects.

In this regard, trade union and women's groups must implement the following:

1. Complement legislative initiatives with programmes leading to equal access and empowerment in the fields of education, skills development, and employment in order to increase women's negotiating power and to facilitate the sharing of work and family responsibilities.
2. Refocus the education and training on gender issues/needs by:
  - 2.1 popularizing the anti-sexual harassment code and how to use it;
  - 2.2 providing support and backup for women in leadership positions;
  - 2.3 empowering women trade unionists with practical organizational skills;
  - 2.4 supporting and deepening a gender agenda for the workplace and for collective bargaining; and
  - 2.5 campaigning extensively for parental rights and childcare.
3. Lobby for structural adjustment programs that will protect women's rights, health and well being, and promote the harmony of the family, as well as community relations.
4. Lobby actively for the ratification and implementation of international labor standards and national legislations that will promote equal employment opportunities and protection for women.
5. Adopt and support a set of core values in the areas of human rights, labour standards, and environmental practices. Firms could individually, and collectively, through business associations,

develop and implement this set of core values as their expression of corporate social responsibility, thereby contributing to social stability and sustain the new global economic system.

The positive impact of globalization can also be felt if at the APEC level, policymakers in the different countries will do the following:

1. *Promote better education and technical training for women.* Efforts must be exerted to improve the quality of education by giving emphasis to basic knowledge and technical skills needed by the industries to fill better paying jobs. Corollarily, technical training can either be provided to more women workers by TESDA, CHED and other private organizations which can supplement technical training not offered in schools but needed by industry.
2. *Improve the domestic environment for productive long-term investment and accelerate the pace of social progress* (M. Camdessus, 1997). This can be done by focusing on the following four important areas of reform:
  - 2.1 Ensuring the rule of law and make the judicial system independent and professional, and accessible to all.
  - 2.2 Dismantling monopolies and work energetically to establish simpler, more transparent regulatory systems that are equitably enforced, provide equal access to markets, and thus, promote equality of economic opportunity.
  - 2.3 Increasing transparency more generally. Transparency contributes to a more responsible use of public resources for the public good, reduces the opportunities for corruption, and facilitates the tripartite dialogue.
  - 2.4 Improving the quality of public expenditure. This means reducing outlays for unproductive purposes, such as military build-ups and large projects that only benefit a few, to make room in the national budget for spending on health, education, vocational training, and basic infrastructure; ensuring that essential public services are provided at reasonable cost, that they reach the intended beneficiaries, and that access to these services is equitable.
3. *Review and revise the objectives for setting up EPZs.* Although EPZs are part of the means to enable globalization to create more work and increase competition, firms in these economic

zones must be socially responsible by implementing the laws that afford protection to all workers, particularly women.

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