



Region X Ranked Among the Least in the Philippine Labor Index Indicators: But Isn't Our Economy Strong?

Various questions have arisen upon the advocacy on Decent Work, 2006 Philippine Labor Index and dissemination of the results of the 2006 BLES Integrated Survey (BITS) and the 2006 Occupational Wages Survey (OWS) conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics last November 12, 2007 in Cagayan de oro City. Among the 6 component indicators of the Philippine Labor Index, only 4 have regional aggregations and/or complete sub-indicator data. Based on the said indicators, Northern Mindanao ranked least in the Freedom of Choice of Employment Index. Moreover, the region also ranked 4th and 5th from the least in terms of Productive Work Index and Equity in Work Index, respectively, among all the regions, including NCR, and ranked lower than most of the regions in Mindanao. Based on the aforementioned statistics, stakeholders have then started to ask:

Don't we have a strong and fast-growing economy? Don't we have the largest economy in the region? Doesn't a big and fast growing economy tantamount to better labor and wage situation(s)?

Northern Mindanao is indeed the largest economy among the Mindanao regions, as of 2006 Regional Accounts. Among others, the industry sector of the region has consistently remained to be the largest among the Mindanao regions in terms of gross value added, valued at constant 1985 prices. Moreover, the manufacturing subsector, which is the main contributor to the region's Industry sector, also ranked 1st in Mindanao. Furthermore, the region grew by 6.4% (at constant) from 2005-2006, which is the 3rd highest growth rate nationwide; safe to say, the economy is doing good. But what of labor and wages?

The region's minimum wages are at par with the other regions and its industry-agriculture hourly pay ratio of 1.84 is almost equal to the national average of 1.85. Moreover, among the Mindanao regions, region 10 has the 2nd highest average basic daily pay of PhP 220.42 in 2005 and PhP 223.16 in 2006, 2nd to the PhP236.78 and PhP 232.78 for the average basic daily pay for 2005 and 2006, respectively, of ARMM.

The Philippine Labor Index aims to monitor the progress made on the labor and employment goals of the country, and its indicators focused more on the concept of decent work, which tantamounts to welfare. The aforementioned statistics, however, show initial facts which may lead us to conclude that the size of an economy and its performance do not always result to the desired "welfare" we hope to achieve for our labor sector. The question(s) that should be asked should not be those aforementioned but, rather, ***who benefits most? Where is our region's wealth concentrated?***

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