

Press Release on the PSA Special Release on Working Children Situation for 2023

## **PSA Reports Fewer Children in Child Labor; DOLE Vows Continued Action**

The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) reaffirms its commitment to end all forms of child labor in the country.

According to the Special Release on Working Children Situation published by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) on 20 November 2024, there were 1.09 million working children 5 to 17 years old in 2023, 678 thousand of whom were engaged in child labor. This was significantly lower than the reported working children 5 to 17 years old engaged in child labor in 2021 and 2022 of 935 thousand and 828 thousand, respectively. The release also tagged the agriculture sector as the industry group with the highest incidence of child labor.

“The DOLE warmly welcomes and is inspired by the results of the survey which is a strong indication that we are seeing positive results in our efforts and programs undertaken, with the collaboration and assistance of the other departments of government and private sector members of the National Council Against Child Labor (NCACL), chaired by the DOLE, to address and resolve the problem of child labor. We will continue to intensify and strengthen our intervention and delivery of assistance to further minimize and hopefully eliminate child labor in the country and reduce the number of working children,” said Labor Secretary Bienvenido E. Laguesma.

The NCACL, with members from the workers, employers, and non-government organizations, and through its regional counterparts Regional Councils Against Child Labor, spearheads the implementation of the Philippine Program Against Child Labor Strategic Framework and Action Plan 2023-2028 with a vision of a child labor-free Philippines.

The vision of a child-labor free Philippines is anchored in the Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028, ASEAN Roadmap on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour by 2025 and the Target 8.7 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to take immediate and effective measures to end child labor by 2025.

Secretary Laguesma added that as its contribution to the program, the DOLE has been implementing the Child Labor Prevention and Elimination Program that employs multi-layered strategies to prevent children from engaging in child labor and remove children from child labor. Acknowledging poverty as a main driver of child labor in the country, the Department’s flagship program to combat poverty, DILEEP, is included as a direct service to the families of child laborers to remove the children from child labor.

For 2023 to 2024, the DOLE has prioritized the monitoring of status of child laborers profiled in 2022 to track their status and fast track the delivery of interventions to facilitate their removal from child labor. For 2023 to September 2024, the DOLE has monitored 327,194 child laborers wherein 272,821 were assisted through DOLE programs and by other agencies/organizations. Of this number, 235,740 were further referred for assistance, 99,675 were provided with various services, and 188,238 were validated as removed from child labor. Services provided to these child laborers and their families include educational assistance, medical assistance, legal assistance, counselling, birth registration, feeding program, as well as provision of school supplies, hygiene kit, and food packs through Project Angel Tree. The families of these child laborers were also provided with various services such as livelihood assistance and emergency employment through the DOLE Integrated Livelihood and Emergency Employment Program, job placement/employment facilitation, skills training, financial assistance, medical assistance, housing assistance, and inclusion to DSWD's Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program.

The Department has also been strengthening advocacy activities that provides knowledge and awareness on child labor such as the publicly-accessible Batang Malaya Child Labor Knowledge Sharing System website <https://batangmalaya.ph> with reporting child labor incidence feature, issuance of policies related to child labor, enforcement of anti-child labor laws including prioritization of establishments employing children for inspection and Sagip Batang Manggagawa inter-agency quick action mechanism for cases requiring the immediate removal of child laborers from establishments, capacity-building for duty-bearers, and provision of services that caters child laborers and their families including the national service caravans that provides direct services from DOLE and partner agencies and organizations.

To ensure the continuing promotion of rights and welfare of children, the DOLE pledge to remain true to the fight against child labor and steadfast with the commitment to implement a holistic and multi-stakeholder approach to eradicate child labor in the country towards the realization of the rights of every child to be a Batang Malaya – *malayang maglaro, makapag-aral, maging ligtas at malusog, malaya mula sa mapang-abusong trabaho, at malayang maging bata.*