

### **Chapter 3**

## **ECONOMIC LIVELIHOOD OF THE DEAF IN THE PHILIPPINES**

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### **I. Reality: Status of the Deaf**

As Deaf enumerator who was tasked to do the survey on the situation on the life of our fellow Deaf, we are unanimous in concluding that there is no fair treatment for the Deaf who are still under the custody of their own family members even if they are already of legal age to be living independently.

The Deaf names that are listed in the in the census of the National Statistic Office and at the City Social Welfare are in a critical situation. Most of them whom we have visited are living in the slum area. The parents of these Deaf children did not consider letting them go to school, unlike their hearing children in which the parents allowed to go to school until secondary level. Most of the Deaf are illiterate. They don't know how to read or write, and they don't know even the simple signs. In our inquiry from the parents regarding the reasons why they did not allow their Deaf children to go to school, most of their answers is that there is scarcity in the financial resources to support the schooling of the deaf children. And then we asked them, why they gave preference to their hearing children over their Deaf children. Their answer was that they don't know where to send their Deaf children to school. This means that they are not aware of Special Education or SPED Centers in public schools. We also informed them that these SPED Centers offer free tuition. In our opinion, the reason why parents do not have equal treatment between their Deaf and hearing children is that they think education is not important to the Deaf and also their Deaf child is useless or they cannot get something out of their Deaf children. As a consequence, these Deaf children who as are unschooled just become "bum" (unemployed) or just stay at home and do the household chores.

The Deaf individuals that are not listed in the National Statistics Office are informal

settlers who just migrated to the city and they come from their towns and provinces outside of Manila. They courageously risked coming to the city despite the difficulties that they will have to encounter in order to survive.

For those deaf who have acquired some level of education whether they have completed secondary education or not, most of them have not decent or permanent jobs. Mostly their livelihood would include being garbage scavengers, vending, repairs of various electrical appliances, carpentry, laundry. Some are fortunate to have received some vocational short term courses like sewing (Dressmaking), manicure, barber, fixing broken umbrellas, and welding jobs. An estimated daily income of the Deaf is between P35.00 and P60.00. (approximately less than \$1.00 and \$1.50) Sometimes they don't earn any income at all.

It cannot be denied that the huge barrier in the improvement of the economic status of the Deaf is due to lack of education and also to scarcity of employment opportunities.

Some hindrances to the economic growth of the Deaf community are

- Lack of access to information and communication
- Lack of free livelihood training
- Hesitance to invest due to fear of failure
- Lack of knowledge in marketing
- Lack of capital
- Lack of knowledge in development, livelihood, entrepreneurship
- Non-prioritization of Deaf job applicants and workers

In cases where there are deaf individuals or organizations who wish to borrow capital from banks, the stringent and voluminous requirements needed by banks prevent Deaf people from borrowing much-needed funds. Microfinance institutions that help small enterprises and groups are but few.

According to the National Statistics Office report in 2000, the total number of Deaf individuals in the Philippines is 121,000. those no new data to date.

## **II. Employment, Education and Training**

The unemployment rate among the Deaf has reached a critical level. Our government does not have programs that encourage local and foreign capitalists to hire Deaf individuals. Employers prefer to hire those without disabilities.

Many Deaf individuals who have applied for positions in government were not accepted because they have not successfully passed the Civil Service Examinations. For casual, contractual and emergency positions, interested applicants should have passed the sub-professional examination which requires each applicant to have earned 72 units in tertiary education. This is another hindrance for Deaf individuals.

The Civil Service Examinations are written mainly in Filipino. This is discriminatory to the Deaf whose educational background is premised on English. Filipino is not used as the medium of instruction in Deaf schools; hence, the Deaf are not familiar with written Filipino.

Each year, many Deaf high school graduates are not able to enter tertiary educational institutions due to the lack of public universities that are accessible to the Deaf. This prevents Deaf people from complying with the 72-unit requirement for the Civil Service Sub-professional Examination. There are only three post secondary institutions that are dedicated to Deaf individuals:

- De la Salle – College of St. Benilde – Manila
- CAP College for the Deaf – Makati
- Manila Christian Computer Institute for the Deaf – Quezon City
- Laguna Christian College for the Deaf in far Cavinti, Laguna Province.

Because these institutions are based in Metro Manila or the National Capital Region,

Deaf students from far-flung places have to relocate to Metro Manila to be able to acquire post-secondary education. To compound the problem, they have to pay for their own sign language interpreters. As it is, many parents of Deaf children cannot afford to send their children to college. Poverty and lack of access to education prevent Deaf individuals from achieving economic stability and independence.

Many families of Deaf individuals opt not to send their Deaf family members to school because they believe it will be futile or useless. There is also a wrong concept of poverty which becomes a hindrance in the education of Deaf people.

The government has established the National Vocational Rehabilitation Center in Metro Manila and Cebu City to provide free training for the Deaf, Blind and those with mobility impairments. Courses offered include computer literacy, cosmetology, hairdressing, massage, sewing, food processing, and electronics. Even after completing these courses, Deaf individuals are still unable to find employment. Those who have attempted to establish home-based businesses lack seed capital. Many Deaf people in provinces are unschooled and serve as helpers in their family farm or business. There are some who receive meagre income by working as jeep barkers, pedicab drivers, vendors and umbrella repairers.

The Philippines is active in economic and labor relations with different countries which results to good opportunities to Filipino workers to be employed globally. As of the present, there are three million Overseas Filipino Workers around the world, and through their remittances they are indeed a strong force that bolsters the country's economic growth. Thus, they are hailed as *Bagong Bayani* < The New Heroes>. These feats are the same feats that the Deaf aspires, to be given the equal opportunity to work overseas, irregardless of their disability; their skills are no less than the skills of a regular hearing worker especially in blue collar job.

The government and the private sectors are in full support in giving opportunities to our people through Job Fairs. The sad thing behind all these opportunities is; there are no employments available for the Deaf people. The concentration of the numbers of job

openings is in Call Centers as well as jobs that requires a college diploma or at least a 2<sup>nd</sup> year college attainment.

### **III. Government programs**

The scarce effort of the government in uplifting the plight of the Deaf, places the later to a disadvantage position, this betrays the ideals of a progressive life that Deaf also deserves.

From the experience recounted by old-timer Deaf workers in Central Mail Exchange Center of Philippine Postal Corporation job opportunities abound the Deaf in the government during the administration of the late President Ferdinand Marcos. They are subjected to regularization despite of their civil service ineligibility.

The government has not fully implemented the provisions stated in the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons (Republic Act No. 7277).

#### **Title Two – Rights and Privileges of Disabled Persons**

##### **Chapter 1**

Section 5. Equal Opportunity for Employment – No disabled person shall be denied access to opportunities for suitable employment. A qualified disabled employee shall be subject to the same terms and conditions of employment and the same compensation, privileges, fringe benefits, incentives or allowances as a qualified able-bodied person.

Five percent (5%) of all casual, emergency and contractual positions in the Department of Social Service and Development, Health, Education, Culture and Sports and other government agencies, offices or corporations engaged in social development shall be reserved for disabled persons.

The Philippine government has several programs geared towards development, one of which is administered through the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC). The National Anti-Poverty Commission is composed of different sectors including the disability sector. Each NAPC sector receives 1% of the government funds or 1 million pesos to support development-related projects and activities for its beneficiaries. The Deaf community does not benefit from this program. The problem stems from the Deaf representation in NAPC meetings. There is an existing NAPC policy that each disability group will be represented by one leader. However, the groups of those with visual impairment and mobility impairment are often represented by more than one leader in meetings, while Deaf representation is limited to just one leader. This may be due to the lack of Deaf leaders and the Deaf community's lack of access to information that contribute to slow growth.

#### **IV. Contribution of the Philippine Federation of the Deaf**

The Philippine Federation of the Deaf has 15 active member organizations namely:

1. La Trinidad Association of the Deaf
2. La Union Association of the Deaf
3. Deaf Association of Iloilo
4. Deaf Association of Bacolod
5. Cebu Association of the Deaf
6. Hearing and Deaf Society – Cebu City
7. Leyte Christian Organization of the Deaf
8. Deaf Association of Misamis Oriental
9. Zamboanga City Federation of the Deaf
10. Tri People Deaf Association of Cotabato
11. Filipino Deaf Visual Arts Group
12. Filipino Deaf Women's Health and Crisis Center
13. Support and Empower Abused Deaf Children
14. Metrowide Organization of the Deaf
15. Dumaguete Association of the Deaf

The PFD provides training in establishing and managing self-help organizations and organizational development to each of its member organizations. The training begins with the awareness that Deaf people can serve as resource persons. Oftentimes, this is the first time that the Deaf individuals encounter fellow Deaf trainers. This empowers them and enables them to understand that all people are equal.