

19 DEEP-SEA FISHING COMPANIES JOIN WAR AGAINST CHILD LABOUR

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Press Release

17 July 2008 (Manila, Philippines) - Nineteen deep-sea fishing companies of a major fishing group in the Philippines have become active partners in combating child labour in the fishing sector. According to Mr. Alonso L. Tan, President of the Inter-Island Deep-Sea Fishing Association (IDSFA), the 19 fishing company-members are legitimate deep-sea fishing operators. These companies use purse seine fishing gear and their policy is to not employ child labour. The IDSFA is a member of the Federation of Fishing Associations of the Philippines (FFAP).

The 19 fishing companies referred to by Mr. Tan are: Bonanza Fishing and Market Resources, Delmar Agri-Resources Inc., Frabelle Fishing Corporation, Jimenez Marine Corporation, Irma Fishing and Trading, Inc., L.V. Fishing Enterprise, Lynvil Enterprise Inc., Mar Fishing Inc., Maria Fe Fishing Corporation, Marlsan Fishing Corporation, Mercidar Fishing Corporation, McFish International Fishing Corporation, Neri D.R. Fishing Inc., Philman Gold Fishing Corporation, Poseidon Fishing, RAV Realty and Fishing Corporation, RBL Fishing Corporation, Royale Fishing Corporation and TPJ Fishing Corporation.

The purse seine method is locally known as “pangulong.” The Department of Agriculture, through the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), introduced this fishing method and considered it as “environmentally friendly”. Set from a boat or pair of boats around a school of fish, the purse seine is an encircling net that has a line at the bottom, which passes through rings attached to it. When the bottom of the net is reeled aboard the fishing boat (s), the purse line closes with the catch trapped inside the fish bag.

Child labour in deep-sea fishing drew widespread attention in the 1980s when media reports exposed the use of children in “muro-ami” fishing expeditions. “Muro-ami” or reef hunting is a system of drive-in net fishing. The work is extremely hazardous, with children diving without protective clothing or gear to pound corals with rocks or pipes and scare fish into a large waiting net. So, in December 1989, BFAR issued Fisheries Administrative Order 163, declaring a total ban on “muro-ami” fishing due to mounting public pressure that stemmed from such serious considerations as environmental damage and exploitation of child labour.

Recognizing that deep-sea fishing is a market-driven and market-based industry, any community intervention, policy formulation or advocacy-related pursuit should include fishing operators and associations as active collaborators. The declaration by IDSFA of its policy against the employment of child labour is a welcome development in the fight against the worst forms of child labour.

In 2002, after a series of consultations with program partners and stakeholders nationwide, the National Child Labor Committee (NCLC) included children in deep-sea fishing as a priority target group under the National Program Against Child Labor (NPACL). The NPACL seeks to eliminate child labour and transform the lives of child labourers, their families and communities toward their self-worth, empowerment and development.



Section 12-D (4-a) of Republic Act No. 9231 prohibits the engaging of a child in the worst forms of child labour. Enacted into law on 26 July 2004, R.A. No. 9231 provides for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour (WFCL) and affords stronger protection for the working child – a direct implementation of ILO Convention No. 182 (Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention of 1999), which provides special protection to children against child abuse, exploitation and discrimination.

Efforts toward eliminating child labour in deep-sea fishing are now being undertaken and sustained, which include covenant signing between local governments and fishing vessel operators and other stakeholders; increased monitoring and surveillance at departure areas; multi-sectoral involvement; and enforcement of laws against child labour.

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