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Press Releases

In Dumaguete City, Mayor Sagarbarria signs MOA to build DOLE Sugar Workers Livelihood Training Centre

Negros Oriental – Less than six (6) months after Labor Secretary Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz inspected the site for the Negros Oriental Sugar Workers Livelihood Training Center Cum DOLE Provincial Field Office and ordered to fast track the preparations, DOLE Region 7 Director Atty. Ma. Gloria A. Tango informed Labor Secretary Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz that a Memorandum of Agreement with LGU-Dumaguete City, represented by Mayor Manuel Sagarbarria, was signed on 6 May 2012 at the Plaza Maria Suites, Dumaguete City for them to construct a 2-storey building called Sugar Workers Livelihood Training Center and DOLE Provincial Field Office.

Per agreement, Dumaguete City allows DOLE the right to use, a 400 square meters lot, within the compound of Dumaguete City High School, for 25 years and renewable for another 25 years.

Mayor Sagarbarria signed the MOA, in accordance with City Council Resolution No, 61, series of 2012, which authorized him to enter into an agreement with the Department of Labor and Employment, to construct the livelihood training center designed by the Dumaguete City – City Engineers Office.

The project cost reaches P6,000,000.00 for the building construction that comes from forfeited unclaimed cash bonus fund of sugar field workers in the five (5) milling districts in region 7, with 3 sugar districts located in Negros Oriental Province, that accumulated from past years.

In his welcome message, DOLE Negros Oriental Field Office Officer-In-Charge, Mr. Vivencio Lagahid said that this is the most awaited moment by all sugar industry stakeholders, since it will forge the commitment and aspirations in realizing the construction of the Sugar Workers Livelihood Training Center.

He said that this long overdue project is monumental that signals the start of our dream training center in the interest of serving all the stakeholders of the sugar industry in the entire province of Negros Oriental.

Sugar Amelioration Program (SAP) Focal Person, Sandra Delfin,

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walked everyone through the journey and presented the legal basis on its source of funding, with the presentation of Republic Act No. 6982 or the Sugar Amelioration Act of 1991.

“There were obstacles along the way, but we never stop working until this dream is realized, we know it can help a lot of people, especially the marginalized sugar workers in the entire province,” Sandra Delfin added.

After Dumaguete Mayor Manuel Sagarbarria received the plaque of appreciation; that recognizes his relentless role and support to the project, from the three (3) District Tripartite Councils in Negros Oriental, namely: Central Azucarera De Bais, Universal Robina Sugar Milling Corporation, and Herminio Teves and Company Incorporated, he revealed that the journey started when he agreed to assist DOLE on its quest of a lot for the construction of a training center for sugar workers.

He agreed because he is a sugar planter and he knows the plight of the sugar workers. Thus, if there is an opportunity to support the sugar industry, he will gladly help. Having admitted that the project faced various hurdles, he stuck to his belief that at the end of the day what matters most is the betterment of the sugar workers, planters and other stakeholders.

“So now, we are here in this memorable day, for us to start putting up a building for the sugar workers in Negros Oriental. This is a beautiful project for everyone and we should look at it in such a way that it can benefit the province, not just the City of Dumaguete, for what is important, at the end of the day, all of us will benefit, especially for the sugar workers to have better lives,” Mayor Sagarbarria elaborated.

In her response, Atty. Ma. Gloria A. Tango, DOLE Region 7 Regional Director, said that this is really a momentous occasion because from the simple discussion, on putting up a sugar training center, it becomes real with the signing today of the memorandum of agreement.

She said that this will already be a signal to our central office to bring down the money, based on the provisions of the agreement, and start the construction.

She admitted that the sugar industry is one of the oldest industries in the Philippines, and compared to other existing industries, it is the only one which has a clear program for stakeholders, as such, it is important to be aware that there are plenty of concerns in the sugar industry.

“If we remember the inaugural speech of President Benigno Aquino, he emphasized inclusive growth; that if there is growth or development, all stakeholders should be included and nobody will be left out. But in reality, there are still those who are left behind, especially the regular sugar workers that we have to help under the sugar amelioration program,” Director Tango emphasized.

The livelihood training center, she said, will bring sugar workers and their beneficiaries, to include the parents of child labourers

and help them augment their income so that their children will focus on their studies.

“Another thing is that we are also preparing our sugar workers for any eventuality that may happen and was it sometime that there was a crisis in the sugar industry, we want to tell the sugar workers that they have an alternative employment if ever the challenges occur. We envision that through the center, it can develop alternative use of sugarcane waste useful for Negros Oriental and foreign market. All of these can help make our sugar workers become productive workers, because if the sugar workers are productive, it will redound to the benefit of the sugar planters and local government, thus, if the capacity of the workers increase. It will also improve the local economy,” Director Tango clarified.

She thanked the city government of Dumaguete for being magnanimous in giving DOLE the right to use the lot where the center will be constructed, and for their generosity because they also agreed to construct the building.

She is hopeful that the next time the group will meet again, it will not be a mere ground breaking, but the imagination of the new center; these things will not happen without the support of all the partners since DOLE cannot do it alone, hence, it is convergence in action.

Negros Oriental Vice-Governor June Arnaiz Jr., in behalf of Congressman George Arnaiz, supported the project and look forward towards future partnership so that more livelihood projects will help sugar field workers.

Vice Governor Arnaiz thanked the City of Dumaguete City for providing the 400 square meter lot, for the government, sugar field workers and sugar landowners to cooperate and coordinate for the development of sugar industry in the province.

The City Council of Dumaguete, through Resolution No. 61, series of 2012, dated February 8, 2012, granted Honorable Mayor Manuel Sagarbarria the authority to enter into and sign a memorandum of agreement with the Department of Labor and Employment for the construction of Sugar Workers Livelihood Training Center and DOLE Office on the four hundred (400 sq. m. lot) situated at the compound of Dumaguete City High School, with DOLE allocating the amount of P6,000,000.00 from the Special Project Funds from Unclaimed Cash Bonus funds of sugar field workers.

Under the Sugar Amelioration Act of 1991, R.A. No. 6982, it aims to augment the income of sugar workers and finance socio-economic program to improve their livelihood and well-being,

Accordingly, an imposed lien at P10/picul that shall be borne by the sugar mills and planters shall be distributed as follows: 80% of the lien is distributed as cash bonus funds, while 20% is for

the socio-economic program fun.

If cash bonus fund are unclaimed, it shall be forfeited and shall form as fund intended for the socio-economic projects of the sugar workers such as livelihood projects and livelihood training center. (Efren O. Vito with additional reporting from Sandra Delfin - LEO III DOLE Negros Oriental SAP Focal Person)

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