

# FREE WORKERS

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## WHERE TFs LEARN FROM EACH OTHER

# Inter-TF Council gets going

**E**xcitement, anticipation and a little bit of edginess characterized the atmosphere inside the FFW Board Room awaiting the start of the first ever meeting of the FFW Inter-Trade Federation Council (ITFC) in late November 2003.

Almost an hour after it was scheduled to start, FFW Vice President for Luzon Bowie Maranan, tasked to preside over the first ITF Council minced not so many words when he finally declared the meeting into order. Formalities abound at the beginning of the meeting owing to the group's seeming nervousness. But after the ice was broken, everybody was back to his and her usual joking, witty and articulate let's-go-down-to-business self.

The first item on the agenda was a review of the FFW Governing Board action establishing the ITFC. And so, everyone was reminded that the ITFC shall be a venue for: conferencing, consultation, coordination and consolidation.

### The ITF Council shall be a venue for:

- a. **Conferencing** – Where TFs can share, compare experiences, activities, programs, needs and problems
- b. **Consultation** – Where TFs can consult each other on problems encountered and on matters that affect program implementation of the Federation
- c. **Coordination** – Where TFs may synchronize schedules of program implementation and other activities in coordination with project and program staff of the Federation and commonly monitor the same
- d. **Consolidation** – Where TFs can process and bring together their concerns and proposals as recommendations to the Governing Board for proper action

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*Meeting come to order  
The Inter-TF Council meets.*

The ITFC shall also provide guidance to the operation of the TF secretariat and the work of the TF Coordinator.

**Semi-autonomous**

The **FFW Constitution** under Art. 14 Sec. 57 defines Trade Federations as “simultaneously semi-autonomous organizations and administrative bodies of the Federation”

This provision was introduced when the Federation realized the need to come up with a formation within the FFW that would address the needs of unions in the same industry lines and the vision wherein

the assessment of the TFs themselves and the Board showed that it is not feasible yet. For now, the TF Coordinator, with the TF Chairs and Vice Chairs perform the role of joint secretariat, while each TF aspires to establish its own secretariat. Thus, the ITFC was seen as one of the improvements necessary to realize the PPOA mandate.

**Meetings**

The ITFC meets quarterly at the FFW Headquarters in Manila, with the role of Chair and Vice Chair of the Council rotating among the eight TF Chairs by quarter as well.

Heads have been asked to participate in the quarterly meetings of the ITFC. TF Heads from outside of Luzon are asked to be represented by TF Officers based in Luzon.

It was agreed that consensus-building shall be the guiding principle of the Inter-TF Council in making decisions and formulating plans and activities

**Other Tasks**

The ITFC agreed that TF Chairs should coordinate with FFW Regional Vice Presidents and be in constant communication with TF officers based in the Regions. It required each TF to prepare a report for the ITFC every meeting, regarding its affairs.

Each TF was asked by the FFW-CNV Workplan for a listing or directory of all its members that have been retrenched or displaced. Such listing was used for the planned service facility for displaced workers and their eventual organization. (see article on FEEDS and NEEDA)

They also committed to submit a listing/ directory of Union-based Cooperatives within their respective TFs for the program for Cooperatives.

In attendance were Bowie Maranan (VP for Luzon), Allan Lumbo (TF 1 Chair), Ludy Casaña (TF 2 Chair), Tony Bernardino (TF 2 Vice Chair) Pabs Honrales (TF 3 Vice Chair), Orly Marcos (TF 4 Chair), Fort Fortaleza (TF 5 Vice Chair) and Jomel General (TF 8 Vice Chair). Also in attendance were Reo Bicierro (TF Coordinator) and Julius Cainglet (FFW-CNV Workplan Team). **(JHC)**



**SAFETY FIRST**  
Occupational Safety and Health is one of the standardized committees the ITFC has agreed on. Photo taken at Interphil Lab during a visit of the FFW with CNV Internationaal Consultant Marius Steuhowe, fifth from left.

industry level bargaining shall be attained.

The FFW Policy and Program of Action (PPOA) specifically under Chapter 3, “Internal Policy and Program: Strengthening, Consolidating and Expanding the FFW”, called for the improvement, reformation and strengthening of its structures and administration in order to ensure success of the implementation of programs and policies.

While the PPOA envisioned each TF to have its own secretariat,

Composing the ITFC are the TF Chairs and Vice Chairs; and the FFW VP and Deputy VP for Luzon.

The FFW VP for Luzon had a one-time tenure as ITFC Chair, presiding over the first ITFC meeting. However, he shall be tasked to regularly act as Chair when the Bi-Annual Meetings are held.

During Bi-Annual Meetings, TF Chairs and Vice Chairs based in the Visayas and Mindanao shall be asked to participate. Out of financial limitations, only Luzon-based TF

## WOMEN WORKERS MAKE IT WORK

# Women's coop establishes enterprise; gives jobs to members



**“Masaya... magaan sa kalooban kahit nag-overtime dahil sa AMIN ang kooperatiba!”**  
**(It's a happy feeling... We don't mind working overtime since the cooperative is OURS!)**

This was the tired but gleeful utterance of women workers belonging to the Textile and Garment Women Workers' Multi-purpose Cooperative, Inc. (TGWWMPCI), a cooperative established by women members of the FFW Ambassador Knitting Corporation (AKC)-Chapter. The TGWWMPCI received a grant from CNV Internationaal to jumpstart its operations.

Had there been jobs to do at the Ambassador Knitting Corporation, the same hard work and extra time would have been required of these employees. But working for one's self seems to lighten up the load altogether. It gives a different high. The sense of ownership makes all the difference.

### Pilot project

Operating a garment enterprise is a pilot project of FFW and CNV Internationaal for the Coop under the FFW-CNV Workplan.

Devastated by liberalization that has made textile and garment products from South Asia and China readily available and more accessible, the local textile and garment industry has been suffering a steady decline. With less orders at the factory, workers have been receiving less income, that is, if they do not lose their jobs sooner or later.

The AKC factory is situated within the industrial district of Novaliches, near the borders of Quezon City, Kalookan and Valenzuela. The surrounding area is an urban poor community, where most of the unionists and workers from other factories live.

### Starting out

As always, the baby steps are the hardest to make. At first, the unionist-beneficiaries did not know what to do. For one, they have been employees all their lives. Now, at the flick of a finger, they are

being asked to be entrepreneurs, to be at the management side of a business.

After choosing an area near AKC where they will operate, they renovated the same to suit their needs and requirements. Well, the house-for-rent which they converted into their production area was barely enough. To save on capital, they had to make do with a relatively cramped workspace, with several sewing machines and the piles of raw materials. [Next Page](#)



**WORK, WORK, WORK!** Coop members don't mind working overtime for an enterprise they collectively own.

The FFW Women’s Network (FWN) under the leadership of Ms Janet Dellaban, its president and and Ms Ludy Casaña, Chair of Trade Federation 2 (to which the AKC Union belongs) collaborated to help the TGWWMPCI in social preparation training. Needless to say, the participation of the beneficiaries themselves in this process helped them a lot.

**New managers**

One of the problems they encountered during start of operations is managerial by nature—scheduling of work shifts. They are new at administration, with the assigned manager, unwilling to assert what comes with the manager’s tag at times.

is not implemented. As enterprise managers though, they admit delaying the release of salaries sometimes is logical if the enterprise is to survive.

Overwhelmed by the new situation they are in, they inadvertently set aside their negotiating skills at the outset for bigger contracts. Adding to the pressure is the payment through post-dated checks and *no down payment* practice of some clients. “We are forced to give in, in the meantime since we are still trying to establish our market,” explains Jo.

This will change for the better as soon as they master the trade.

**That old union solidarity**

Faced with odds, unionist-coop members turn to solidarity to see them through. Beneficiaries pooled their resources—funds, equipments, even human, as they got full support from family members.

A Project Management Committee composed of the FWN, TF 2, the FFW-CNV Workplan and representative/s of the Coop’s Board of Directors, monitors the enterprise and provides technical assistance or advice, when necessary.

Meetings, informal or held in business-like fashion and constant communication have helped the cooperative distinguish between prudent business decisions and highly risky moves.



*‘SEWING’ the SEEDS Coop members work double-time to meet the demands to their clients.*

**Sustainability**

The income, working conditions in the production area and overall occupational safety and health have room for improvement but these reflect the general situation of garment and textile workers.

The difference is these workers pride in their ownership of the enterprise so it is worth all their sacrifice and additional hours of work.

“It gives us a sense of fulfillment and accountability to manage and operate an enterprise,” Jo states.

While Jo and her colleagues used to master the art of trade union administration and tedious preparations for collective bargaining, now they have to be adept at “production flows”, “organizational and financial management”, “product research and development”, and “market expansion”.

How the world has really changed.

How determined these women are to rise to the challenge of globalization and survive. (JHC)

**The TGWWMPCI**

- Business:** Sewing subcontracting
- Address:** 992 Santiago St., Bagbaguin, Caloocan City
- Contact No.:** (63 2) 983.6098
- Date Organized:** 22 April 2002
- Date Registered:** 5 August 2002
- Reg. Certificate No.:** N-622-40-64
- Total Membership:** 19
- Share capital (as of 2004):** Php9,990.00
- Assets:** Sewing equipment through grant worth Php 171,500.00 and Php 27,000.00 counter part of members
- Service:** Employment through piece-rate sewing livelihood

“We lack funds,” says Jo Adversalo, TGWWMPCI Chair. As a fledgling business, they are often in a dilemma when it comes to paying wages. As unionists, they are the first to howl when something as basic as receiving salaries on time

## NEEDA LITTLE HELP?

# Meet the new refuge of displaced workers

**I**t has been said over and over again that globalization has devastated labor so much, displacement of workers is ever growing. The Philippines, of course is no exception, with security of tenure disappearing as fast as “loyalty”, a forgotten virtue in the globalized world.

Displacement has been a nagging problem that most of the time trade unions could hardly do anything about it.

Well, not anymore... At least not without a fighting stance. The FFW is at the threshold of consolidating its efforts to battle displacement by formally organizing the National Employment and Enterprise Development Association (NEEDA).

### Union of displaced workers

Some 50 displaced workers, who were members of FFW affiliated unions while they were in the formal work environment, came together in mid-May 2004 to form NEEDA. They will be joined by hundreds more who have sought the help of FEEDS for re-employment.

NEEDA hopes to be the refuge for the displaced—an organization that will help them get through the shock of being displaced, and guide them back to formal employment if they opt to, or to the road of entrepreneurship if they see the opportunity.

Driven by the spirit of solidarity, they vowed to co-own enterprises that will evolve out of the entrep and employment services as they pursue the groundbreaking initiative of FEEDS.

### The Need for NEEDA

NEEDA's main strategies address the need of displaced unionists for entrepreneurship development; employment counseling and matching; and skills training, equivalency, testing and certification.

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### Birth of FEEDS

For the longest time, the Federation has been trying to track down its displaced members to see how they are, how they managed their separation pay (for those who got a considerable sum from their former employers), and of course to know if they still need help.

There are thousands of them, but we have only managed to get in touch with a few, the help of Trade Federation Chairs notwithstanding. But we were able to come up with a list.

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**JOB OPENING**  
*Sec. Pat Sto. Tomas (cutting the ribbon) and ILO Manila Director Werner Blenk (holding ribbon) grace the FEEDS launching. Around them, from left, are: Ka Tony Bernardino, volunteer; Ka Ramon Jabar, FFW President; Ka Eph Guerrero, FFW-CNV Workplan Proj. Manager; and, Atty. Allan Montañó, FFW Vice President.*



**EDITORIAL**

In 1998, the Federation of Free Workers, made the historic decision to transform itself from a classical trade union movement to a “Trade Union Social Movement”. Through a convention the FFW Constitution was amended to include provisions that would govern the basic sectoral organizations that will be “embraced” by the FFW.



What caused this dramatic transformation for the FFW?

It had become evident that the traditional responses of trade federations to the problems faced by workers brought about by globalization were not enough. It had become clear that problems encountered in the plant level are related to problems faced by society in general. Therefore, the workers, as vanguards in the creation of the nation’s wealth should link up with other sectors and create a common front.

What has been done so far? Perhaps, it is too early to tell. Suffice it is to say that the FFW is on the right track to fulfill its vision. This issue of the Free Workers is a way of sharing the fruits of the FFW’s labor towards this end.

In January 2001, the FFW accepted the FFW Women’s Network as a sectoral organization of the women’s sector. Its chairperson was given a seat in the Governing Board. This marked the beginning of the realization of such transformation. The FWN was tasked to create gender awareness and apply gender equity related principles in the programs and services of the Federation. The FFW started relating with farmers in Nueva Vizcaya, Batangas and Davao. In August, 2003, the Sectoral Federation of Farmers and Fisherfolks was organized composed of 10 farmers groups coordinated by an ad hoc Convenors Group. Reaching out to the Displaced Workers, the various Trade Federations created the FFW Employment and Enterprise Development Services (FEEDS). Its beneficiaries organized themselves into the National Employment and Enterprise Development Association. It’s youth arm, the Young Free Workers is being revived with the YO! Child and other programs. A Sectoral Federation of Cooperatives and Workers Enterprises have been initiated.

Its forays to the electoral arena through the party-list system and voters’ education activities are efforts to bring a labor -based multi-sectoral agenda to the grassroots. The legislative and policy reforms advocacy program of the FFW has brought the concerns of the social sectors into the halls of Congress, tripartite bodies and other policy-making bodies. Social partnerships, which are results of social dialogue, have led to benefits not only for workers but for the basic sectors as well.

Transforming the FFW into a genuine Trade Union Social Movement is not expected to be accomplished overnight. Thus, let the challenge expressed in the FFW song “Awit ng Malayang Manggawa” be our clarion call for deeper commitment and wider involvement:



*‘Kaya’t tayo’y dapat magpatuloy, Ang lakas natin ay dadaloy  
Sa planta at pabrika, nayon at pamayanan, Ang unyon ay gawing kilusan’*

(Ephraim V. Guerrero)

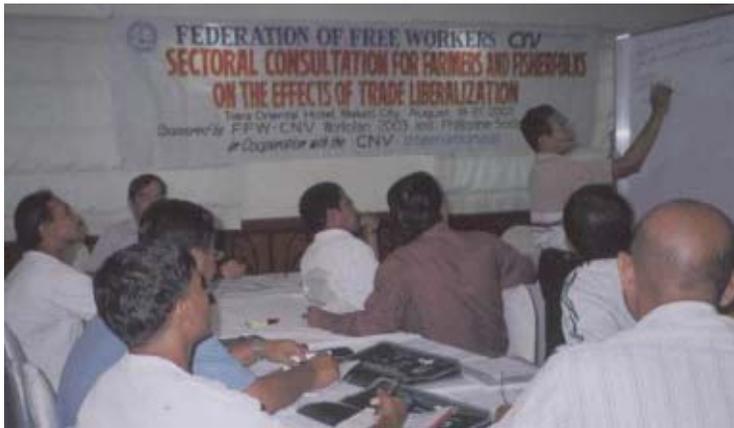
**How far  
have  
we gone  
as a  
Trade  
Union  
Social  
Movement**

**FFW  
GET  
IN TO  
WITH  
THAT ARE**

## SECTORAL FEDERATION OF FARMERS

# TUSM as the rural-urban link

**G**etting closer to realizing its vision to be a full-fledged trade union-social movement, FFW took a giant step by convening a sectoral consultation for farmers and fisherfolks on the “Effects of Trade Liberalization” paving the way for the creation of the Sectoral Federation of Farmers.



The consultation organized by the FFW-CNV Workplan was held as one of the activities held in conjunction with the FFW Policy Conference on the Effects of Liberalization sponsored by the Philippine Social Institute.

Farmer participants lashed at the ill preparation of government for the consequences of the World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference in Cancun, Mexico,

which would have decided on further liberalizing agriculture.

### Addressing Farmers' needs

During the consultation farmers and fisherfolks groups identified the common needs that may be met if they federate. These are the need to establish the tie-up of farmers and workers (organizing, networking), market access, production technology, credit, education and training, infrastructure development and legislative and policy advocacy.

The highlight of the consultation was the signing of the “Declaration of Unity, Purpose, and Commitment

for Concerted Action,” which sums up the consultation and all but formalizes the creation of the federation.

Among its commitments as stipulated in the Declaration is to engage government in social dialogue and initiate specific projects for the economic benefit of its members, while helping them improve their capabilities.

FFW is now awaiting the resolution from the respective organizations' board of directors signifying the intent to affiliate with the Federation so orientation seminars may be conducted.

The group plans to expand through orientation session and consultations on the effects of globalization to farmers and fisherfolks.

An adhoc coordinating team, composed of all the participants is now in place. Its principal task is to fully realize the sectoral federation of farmers and fisherfolks, and seek formal recognition from the Governing Board. (see coordinating team members on page 11)

## Meet the new refuge of displaced workers

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NEEDA derives its mandate from the FFW Policy and Program of Action and capitalizes on the gains of the recent experience of the FFW Employment and Entrepreneurship Development Service (FEEDS). FEEDS is a



service facility for displaced workers, which the FFW established through the FFW-CNV Workplan.

The Workplan originally tried to reach out to 2,000 of its members who were displaced, but the task proved to be too daunting. Through FEEDS and later on NEEDA, some 500 personal data sheets have already been collected by May, representing the total number of displaced contacted by FFW.

Rico Gonzales, former President of the Interphil Lab Employees Union-FFW, was elected President of NEEDA.

### ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

*Rico Gonzales, former ILEU-FFW President was elected NEEDA President..*

## Entrepreneurship Development

Entrepreneurship Development Program (EDP) for all types of members wishing to engage in micro, small and medium scale entrepreneurial activities. Where unions in the traditional sense does not apply to groups and sectors being organized, the EDP shall be implemented with preference for community based and/or trade/craft based socio-economic ventures. The EDP shall include training, micro-financing, development and access of markets and provide for appropriate technology.

### Employment Counseling & Matching

For all types of workers needing this services in both formal and informals sectors of the economy, the ECMS shall be established. The program shall include networking with public and private facilities as well as setting up own facility

### Equivalency, Skills Training, Testing & Certification

The STETC program shall include individual profiling of members, their employable friends, relatives and family, organizing them to access existing equivalency programs for basic, secondary, post secondary and tertiary training levels and competency-based testing and certification

## Birth of FEEDS

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Formally launched on March 13, FEEDS has accomplished in its very short existence the following:

### Employment Counseling & Job Matching

- Gathered 500 personal data sheets of displaced
- After Job Matching, referrals were made to 4 companies
- 21 hired out of 39 actual referrals; 3 regularized
- Equivalency & Testing in the works
- MOA with BBC-COLE, TESDA and DepEd
- Overseas placement services a possibility

### Entrep Dev't

- Consultation conducted, which yielded the ff:
- Combined capitalization = Php6,060,000 {20,000 to 2,000,000}
- 26 entres generate 104 jobs [3 to 4/ entrep]
- 80% registered
- Combined 146 years of experience [most: 10 years]
- Common problem: capital, fund source for production, technical advice, marketing
- Led to the organization of the FFW Entrepreneurs Guild, now a part of NEEDA

## Entreps Guild Worker-entreps come together

Active and former FFW members and some non-members who are operating small enterprises decided to form a chamber of entrepreneurs. Calling themselves the FFW Entrepreneurs Guild, the group has planned to pool their resources in the future to address one of their main concerns: lack of capitalization.

As part of its Enterprise Development Program, the FFW, with the help of CNV Internationaal, held a consultation among the worker-entrepreneurs on March 12-13, at the Hotel Kimberly in Manila, where participants decided to associate.

### Ever growing opportunity

Going into entrepreneurship is one of the opportunities most of the displaced workers are getting convinced to jump in. While seen as an income generating option for the displaced workers, it is recognized as having a big effect to the economy of the nation. Statistics show that 90% of enterprises registered with the Department of Trade and Industry are small and medium enterprises.

For the past several years, the FFW through its various departments had been conducting entrepreneurship seminars and consultations. Among the major gains that had been achieved

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## OSH Advocates organized

In a meeting held last year, participants to the Basic Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Seminar formed a group to advocate for greater OSH awareness and better safety and health practices at the plant level.

Named the FFW OSH Advocates, the group shall plan activities and harmonize these with the FFW-CNV Workplan initiatives on OSH.

For a start, the FFW OSH Advocates has conducted meetings to monitor the progress of the Re-entry Plans they individually formulated for their respective work places. These were drafted during the Basic OSH Seminar jointly conducted by the FFW and the OSH Center at the latter's training facilities in Quezon City.

Among the tasks of the individual members is to gain management support for the proposed OSH-related programs or activities

### FFW OSH Advocates Officers

<b>Chairperson:</b>	Mr. Lester Dennis T. Dumas - InterPhil Laboratories
<b>Vice-Chair:</b>	Mr. Bernabe L. Casaclang - Columbia Wire & Cable Corp.
<b>Secretary:</b>	Ms Carina C. Alonsagay - Vishay (Phils) Inc.
<b>Board Members:</b>	Mr. Rick R. Baslan - InterPhil Laboratories
	Mr. Pedro C. Abas Jr. - Centennial Plastic Corporation
	Mr. Nasario B. Saga - Dowell Packaging.
	Mr. Rizalde C. Medina - Universal Mould Design Corp.
	Ms Laudicia Casaña - Penn Philippines
	Mr. Evelio Regaspe - PSI - FFW
	Mr. Edward A. Agustin - InterPhil Laboratories

### NEEDA-FFW Officers

<b>President:</b>	Mr. Rico Gonzales
<b>Vice-President:</b>	Mr. Benny Carpio
<b>Sec.-Gen.:</b>	Ms Iday Gonzaga
<b>Dep. Sec. Gen.:</b>	Mr. Don Vael
<b>Secretary:</b>	Ms Sheila Leodones
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Mr. Mario Estebat
<b>Auditor:</b>	Mr. Tony Bernardino
<b>Board Members:</b>	Mr. Greg Egasan, Ms Edna Padre, Mr. Nonoy Malong

### FFW Entrepreneurs Guild Officers

<b>Chairperson:</b>	Mr. Romy Borja, former member, Meralco Foundation Employees Association
<b>Vice Chair:</b>	Mr. Donald Geocaniga,
<b>Secretary:</b>	Ms Imelda Garcia (former member, Adamson and Adamson Workers Union)
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Ms Amy Del Valle, Nagkakaisang Pamayanan Informal Workers Association
<b>Members:</b>	Ms Vilma Joson, Masiglang Kababaihan ng Nueva Ecija
	Mr. Mario Estebat, President, Zapote Market Vendors Cooperative
	Mr. Petronilo Vael (former President, Adamson and Adamson Workers Union)

**Worker-entreprs...**

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were: the approval of the Enterprise Development Design framework and policies, commitments from partner agencies, and the establishment of enterprises by FFW members and former members.

Participants to these consultations had expressed the need for these entrepreneurs to come together and organize themselves as a group for solidarity and concerted action.

**Some plans**

Aside from additional capitalization for production and purchase of raw materials, the Entreprs Guild also plans to provide technical assistance like preparation of feasibility studies. As an organization, they wish to learn from one another by sharing best practices including how to run a business with maximum productivity and efficiency.

An exciting proposition is the establishment of a revolving fund through the contribution of members, which would be a source of loan assistance to members.

Utilizing FFW’s reach in networking and linkaging, the Guild also hopes it could tap government, private and international institutions or agencies for access to services of said organizations, such as grants, socialized loans and training.

The Guild would also be a means for advocacy of policy reforms that would benefit unionists who have ventured in entrepreneurship.

**FFW MOBILIZATION COMMITTEE**

**Warm bodies on-the-go!**

**A**fter exhausting the grievance machinery to no avail, the union is forced to stage a strike! Power rates go up! Oil prices suddenly skyrocket! Water rates are raised! Further liberalization is threatening farmers and workers! Top government officials are involved in graft and corruption!

In all cases mentioned above, swift and decisive action is needed. And in all instances, one’s strength needs to be shown.

Should we then call on superheroes to handle the job?

Not advisable. Besides, we need to wake up from slumber and forget about false hopes we get from fictional characters. Concrete action is required. Who do we call then?

The FFW Mobilization Committee (FFW MobCom).

**FFW MobCom**

The FFW MobCom, originally referred to as the “Strike Force”, is a newly constituted Committee that would be on-call when occasions that need swift action arises. In addition, it will be instrumental in helping FFW’s advocacy and lobbying work and the accompanying mobilization activities gain mass support.

The FFW MobCom got together and learned of its special tasks during the FFW-CNV Workplan-sponsored “Skills Training on Advocacy, Campaigns and Mobilization Seminar” held at the Imperial Palace Suites, in Quezon City on March 29-31.

**More tasks**

After knowing what was expected of them, the MobCom further elaborated on its responsibilities. These include,

**Mobilization Committee**

- TF1:** Mr. Mario Vistal
- TF2:** Mr. Tony Bernardino, Mr. Jomer Dela Cruz
- TF3:** Ms Precy Villacorta
- TF4:** Mr. Daniel Valencia, Mr. Rod Serquiña
- TF5:** Mr. Nixon Yucte, Mr. Cesar Saga
- TF6:** Ms Linda Bucsit, Mr. Albert Pedregosa
- TF7:** Mr. Yesmir Conde, Mr. Roger Baclig
- TF8:** Mr. Danny De Guzman, Mr. Jomel General, Ms Liza Vitales
- FWN:** Ms Delia Khusin, Ms Virginia Natolla, Ms Juliet Paras
- Visayas:** Mr. Allen Aquino, Mr. Bimboy Lasola
- Mindanao:** Ms Karen Delgado, Mr. Benhur Jayson, Mr. Pat Herbabuena

planning and conceptualization of actions as well as supervision and monitoring of the same.

## Focus on platforms, not personalities

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removed 'security of tenure' from their vocabulary," said Ka Ramon during the forum.

National Movement for Free Elections Chairman Jose Concepcion was also hand to discuss what the electorate should look for in a candidate.

### No mudslinging, no debate

Under the unique format of the Workers' Presidentiables Forum, each candidate was given an hour to present their platform of government and engage the workers in an open forum.

FFW says it wants to prevent mudslinging among the candidates so it has decided not to let them *debate*. Thus, each candidate's hour with labor was theirs *alone*.

### Lawmakers' time

A month after the Workers' Presidentiables Forum, a follow-up

"Workers' Senatoriables Forum" was conducted at Hotel Kimberly, Manila.

Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, Sec. Heherson Alvarez, Ms Pilar Pilapil and a representative of Ms Amina Rasul took time out to discuss labor issues with FFW members.

After the engaging discussion with the FFW, Sen. Biazon committed to make the Federation his consultant for labor if he gets elected.

### FFW unofficial choice

In separate mock elections held from March to April, Bro. Eddie topped the voting twice, while President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo topped the polls once; so did Sen. Raul Roco.

Sen. Biazon and Sec. Richard Gordon topped the

senatorial mock polls on separate occasions. Joining them in the Magic 12 were former Sec. Alvarez, Ms Rasul, Ms Pilapil, Atty. Pia Cayetano, Mayor Alfredo Lim, Sec. Mar Roxas, Sen. Nene Pimentel, Atty. Perfecto Yasay, Actor Ramon Revilla and Sen. Robert Barbers.

Some 600 local union leaders, including some from Iloilo, Davao and Cagayan de Oro attended both fora.

### Sectoral Federation of Farmers & Fisherfolks Coordinating Committee

**Chair:** Mr. Felicisimo Joson

**Vice Chair:** Mr. Pepito Jose Cerillo

**Secretary:** Mr. Monico Delgado

**Treasurer:** Ms Lanie Castro

#### Regional Coordinators:

• *East Visayas* - Mr. Paul Redang

• *West Visayas* - Antonio Sembran

• *Central Luzon* - Monico Delgado

• *Southern Tagalog* - Calixto Sotomayor

• *Cagayan Valley* - Eugene Ramirez

Another fundamental task is coordination, especially between the regions and the national office when it comes to advocacy, mobilization and campaigns. TF and BSO MobCom members were then expected to coordinate with their local unions and organizations at the ground.

Statements and press releases will be expected from the national office, with the regions aligning their statements and releases with the former. However, regions are not prevented from initiating activities especially if their actions are in response to pressing local issues and concerns.

### Why a MobCom?

Several conditions led to this decision. First, the Federation recognized the need to practice solidarity in action. This means that local unions of the Federation which decide to go on strike, after exhausting all possible non-confrontational remedies, deserve no less than the full support of

the entire membership. In this case, the Mobilization Committee will be depended upon to send warm bodies and generate moral support for striking workers.

Second, important national issues have cropped up and it seems the views of the FFW have not been heard of by the public.

Some ask where the FFW has gone. In situations like these, the Mobilization Committee will lead in conducting mobilizations and related activities when important labor, economic, social and political issues arise.

Third, despite mobilizing a great number unionists and sectoral organizations in joint labor mobilizations, the FFW seems unable to get the (media) projection it deserves, perhaps because it lacks media skills to attract public attention.

Thus, the decision to form a the "Mobilization Committee". The idea was first floated during a Local Presidents Meeting in Luzon in March 2002. All Trade Federations were asked to submit 20 names each from their respective memberships, for the committee.

The Governing Board formally endorsed its creation during a Meeting in Tagaytay in May 2002. (JHC)



MobCom TRAINING

**WORKERS SYMPOSIUM SERIES**

# Focus on platforms, not personalities

**W**hile it would have been easy, not to mention financially rewarding for the Federation to jump on the political bandwagon and formally be part of the election machinery of contending parties, FFW chose to concentrate on giving political education to its members.

In the run up to the May Elections, the Federation chose to establish benchmarks that parties and candidates must meet for them to be considered by the FFW membership for the elections.

**Ask the candidates themselves**  
As a significant bonus, FFW members had the opportunity to use these guidelines for choosing candidates, primarily how they plan to give decent jobs to Filipinos,1 by asking the candidates themselves.

With the “Workers’ Presidentiables Forum”, labor and the public had a glance at the presidentiables’

employment program. Candidates Sen. Raul Roco and Evangelist Bro. Eddie Villanueva made themselves available for the forum held on March 30, at the Occupational Safety and Health Center in Quezon City.

Other important issues discussed by the Presidentiables were labor-only contracting, wages and workers’ rights. Both candidates expressed opposition to labor-only contracting with Sen. Roco emphasizing on the importance of people over institutions and Bro. Eddie stressing the right of workers.

“We don’t want demeaning jobs and non-remunerative wages. We want ‘decent work’. Employers have

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**Free Workers**

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