

GoodElectronics is a global network on human rights and sustainable production in the electronics industry. In this bi-monthly special newsletter edition “on the spot” the work of one member of the GoodElectronics network is highlighted. With this we aim to gain more insight in the working strategies of especially local, grassroots organisations that are working towards social and sustainable improvements in the electronics industry. If you have any further questions or wish to receive more information on the organisation, you can send an email to info@godelectronics.org

WAC - Workers' Assistance Center Supports electronics workers in The Philippines

History

In response to an initial research study that found a growing number of workers at the Cavite Export Processing Zone (CEPZ) are denied their basic welfare and right to organize, the Workers' Assistance Center, Inc. (WAC) was conceived in May 1994 and launched in November 30, 1995. It was founded by Rev. Fr. Jose P. Dizon, as a socio-pastoral program of the Most Holy Rosary Parish in Rosario, Cavite. In 1997, after two years of existence, WAC transformed itself into a non-government organization to suit the growing need of the workers to organize themselves into workers' organizations and unions. The Center started with three full-time staff members and has expanded to twelve. It holds extension offices at Manggahan, General Trias and Bauan, Batangas. To date, WAC has assisted over 10,000 workers.

Assistance

The center provides assistance and support to the workers in the export processing zones or free trade zones in the provinces Cavite and Batangas, south of Manila. The main focus is organizing workers by assisting the existing organizations and unions. But WAC also works on campaigning, alliance-building, labor education and training, research, documentation, publication and legal assistance.

Mission

Help initiate the formation of workers organizations and unions in the economic zones and in the whole province of Cavite by providing assistance in the development of their capability to strive for and attain their just and democratic interests. Advocate for the promotion of the workers' rights and welfare and solicit support for their cause.

The organization provides free legal assistance to workers who need help in filing complaints and cases against their



employers. WAC's Cecile Tuico explains:

"Illegal dismissals, non-payment of minimum wages and social security system benefits, forced overtime, and other violations of labor standards are

some of the problems they encounter. However, the workers are obliged to pay the legally-mandated 10 percent attorney's fee once a worker wins the case. In addition, the workers are also provided with education and training on their rights and how to fight for them. This way, the next time they encounter a problem in their factories, they know what to do. WAC requires the workers-beneficiaries of the legal assistance program to pay back WAC by organizing their co-workers in their own factories or communities. The workers who are equipped with knowledge on their rights can then assist their co-workers when they encounter similar problems in their companies."

Vision

A society valuing the dignity of men and women, protecting the environment, respecting human rights, and enjoying equality and total human development.



Aside from the free legal assistance program, WAC also provides the workers and unions they assist: labor and gender education and seminars; a research, documentation, information, and publication program; and a program for international solidarity campaigns. These are very important programs that supplement and complement their organizing work.

Strategy

Assist workers initiatives in organizing themselves into genuine workers organizations and unions that will forward their demand and issues. Provide appropriate education and training to workers that will raise their consciousness and improve their knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Provide a venue for the participation of the middle class sectors in workers' issues and struggles.

The workers

The majority of the 400,000 workers they work with were employed in garment and electronics companies. Most of them are young migrant women from different provinces in the country. Therefore, the provision of gender education is very relevant.

Since its formation, WAC had been able to form several unions and workers organizations in the electronics industry. The majority of

the electronics companies have a small number of workers ranging from 100 to 400 employees. Most of the companies are Korean-owned (Young Shin Philippines, manufacturing transformers and PCB's; Ultimate Electronics, manufacturing wireless/cordless phones and two-way radios; P&P Electronics) and some are Japanese-owned (Tokumi Electronics Phils. Inc., manufacturing headphones, earphones and speakers for Sony; Sanno Philippines Manufacturing Corp., an electro-plating company and manufacturer of oscillators and high precision lasers).



'Better off'

Regarding to Tuico, organizing workers in the electronics companies is rather difficult. "Aside from the policy of the electronics companies to shun workers organizations and unions in their companies, the workers themselves do not feel the need to organize themselves because they often feel that they were 'better off' than the workers in other industries such as garment and apparel industries." But WAC firmly believes that the electronics industry workers are being exploited and that their line of work is the most hazardous of all they deal with. The chemicals being used in the production and manufacture of electronics products make the work very dangerous.

In order to help and organize the workers in the electronics industry WAC uses a lot of strategies. One of the strategies is calling for a consultation and organizing a forum among the workers to discuss their condition. WAC also shares the findings of their research they have done over the years. "These are just first steps in organizing the workers in the electronics sector," says Cecile, "we have to keep building a personal and friendly relationship with the workers to be able to organize them."

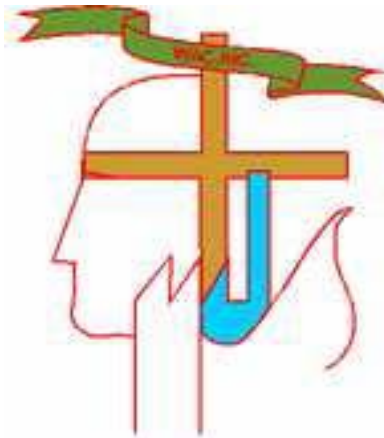
Goals

Create workers' organizations and unions in Cavite that are capable of striving for and attaining their just and democratic interests. Support organizations and individuals to promote and support the workers' rights and welfare and their struggle for the attainment of their democratic aspirations.





Article: [WAC receives Justice & Peace award](#)



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