

Press Release
Department of Labor and Employment
Bureau of Working Conditions
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KEEP EYE ON THE BALL: AN ESSENTIAL REMINDER FOR LABOR INSPECTOR

Effective Labor Inspectorate can be achieved through proper application of labor legislation. Labor Inspectors (LIs) who are tasked to examine how labor laws and standards are implemented in the workplaces. They guide employers and workers on how to properly apply labor laws in such matters as working hours, wages and benefits, child labor and occupational safety and health standards. Hence, they play an important role in ensuring that labor laws and standards are implemented properly and equally to all employers and workers.

Recognizing the importance of the Labor Inspectors' role in the Inspectorate System, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) continues to re-orient and professionalize LIs by providing them training and capacity building programs. As a matter of fact, Inspectors have undergone through intensive, training programs such as the (1) Basic Course on GLS, Productivity, and DOLE Programs and Services; (2) Basic Occupational Safety and Health; (3) Advanced Course for LLCOs on SEnA, Conciliation-Mediation, and Accident Investigation to name a few. The labor department does not cease there, it continuously gives training opportunities here and abroad for Inspectors to gain more knowledge and skills in performing their job well.

Seeing the need to strengthen the Philippine Labor Inspectorate and to further capacitate the Inspectors, the DOLE, with International Labour Organization (ILO) technical assistance, conducted another advanced training for Inspectors. Two (2) batches of Training for Labour Inspectors on Advancing Competencies on Core Labor Inspection Functions were conducted on 28 May-01 June 2018 at Hive Hotel, Quezon City and 18-22 June 2018 at Harolds Hotel, Cebu City for Luzon and VisMin regions, respectively.

The trainings were filled with significant and relevant discussions on various topics such as due process, jurisdiction, employer-employee relationship, work arrangement, four-fold test and economic reality test among others. Subject matter expert Atty. Benedicto Ernesto "Bobot" Bitonio, former undersecretary of the DOLE, explained and discussed every topic and shed light on various issues and gray areas raised by Inspectors. Structured learning exercise (SLE) was the method used to make Inspectors think critically, read, study and analyze cases and take substantial notes. Atty. Bitonio shared his insights and experiences and eventually provided significant inputs relating to labor inspection policies and operational procedures.

The workshop and group discussions about Labor Inspectors' duties and responsibilities showed that the Inspector tends to do multitasking since there are more non-core functions assigned to him than his core labor functions. Thus, they recommended to have their job description redefined so that they can focus more on their core functions and therefore deliver quality inspection. It is worth mentioning

that based on the group presentation on SLE, it showed that despite wearing many hats, Labor Inspectors agreed that their values and characters fuel their passion to serve and perform their job even when it is difficult to juggle their workload.

“Keep your eye on the ball” was Atty. Bitonio’s constant reminder to Inspectors. He emphasized that Inspector, during conduct of inspection may encounter a perfectly written service agreement and/or employment contract, padded payslips or people from the management who are doing things to circumvent the law. But an Inspector who knows his job really well and is cognizant of his role and purpose in conducting an inspection, should strategically find ways to gather significant information and secure necessary documents to come up with substantial findings.

Additionally, NCR Regional Director Ana C. Dione also told Labor inspectors to have the end in mind, even at first point of contact during conduct of inspection. She encouraged the Inspectors to visualize first how finding of violations should be resolved if these ripen into a full-blown case.

Overwhelmed with so much information and learnings, Labor Inspectors still managed to take substantial inputs and ideas which will be useful in their inspection.

“This is the best and most meaningful training that I have ever attended”, an Inspector said while listening to Atty. Bitonio’s explanation on jurisprudence.

Before leaving the training room, with smiles on their faces, some Inspectors commended and thanked the training team and organizers of ILO and the Bureau of Working Conditions (BWC). They mentioned that they had enjoyed the training and they learned much, which will be useful in their inspection work.

While it is true that Labor Inspectors’ tasks cannot be described as generally enjoyable or pleasant, their determination and dedication to uphold the rights of workers and employers and to fulfill their job efficiently cannot be deterred.

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