Associated Labor Unions-Building and Wood Workers International-Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (ALU-BWI-TUCP)

Ban Asbestos Philippines Campaign:
On Course But Facing Rough Sailing

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ALU-BWI-TUCP asbestos campaign in the Philippines objective is:
To responsibly ban and phase out asbestos in Philippine soil

ALU-BWI-TUCP campaign is engaged in four areas of concern:

1. Development of National Programmes For Elimination of Asbestos-Related Diseases (NPEAD)

2. Crafting and lobbying for approval into law a national bill that bans the importation, manufacture, processing, use or distribution of asbestos-containing materials & products

3. Making sure Philippine government position in Rotterdam Convention improves

4. Educating general public, civil societies, non-government organizations on the danger of asbestos & catalyze their support to keep the gains

ALU-BWI-TUCP campaign is engaged in:

The National Programmes for Elimination of Asbestos-Related Diseases (NPEAD)

- A consensus policy document template designed to define the magnitude of asbestos problems and give government political will to act on these

- Designed by World Health Organization (WHO) & International Labor Organization (ILO) which require multi-party & inter agency participation

- Started in the Philippines via ALU-BWI-TUCP letter to former President Arroyo on August 2009

The National Programmes for Elimination of Asbestos-Related Diseases (NPEAD)

The 1st NPEAD meeting was held on September 16, 2009 participated by the following stakeholders:


- Lung Center of the Philippines, Philippine Cancer Society, ALU-BWI-TUCP, asbestos disposal service provider, asbestos lobby group
Active & critical engagement and collaboration with government agencies and with all other stakeholders in completing NPEAD

1. Established important data needed to create a partial picture of asbestos problems in the Philippines
   - Import of 4,000 to 6,000 metric tons of raw asbestos & more than 10,000 metric tons of ACMs every year
   - 82 recorded companies manufacturers of these imports
   - These companies employ 10,000 to 15,000 workers
   - There are 1.3 million workers exposed to asbestos dust every day

2. Motivate government’s waning enthusiasm in completing NPEAD process through:
   - Manifestoes
   - Call to action statements
   - Correspondence
   - News & media releases

   ALU-BWI-TUCP re-crafted ban asbestos bill and re-introduced by TUCP Party-List Rep. Raymond Democrito Mendoza on 6 July 2010
   - Bill is pending in the second of 3 readings
   - Counterpart bill in Senate (Upper House) is also pending

   Absolute ban takes effect 3 years after approval
   - 1-year exemption on materials without alternatives
   - 3-year exemption on materials used for national defense
   - Safe demolition/removal of buildings with asbestos
   - Public education and safety campaign
   - Registry of exposed workers

   In 2008 Rotterdam Convention COP, Philippine actively supported Canada in exclusion of chrysotile asbestos in the listing for the sake of US$660 Million chrysotile industry & 15,000 workers involve
   - In 2011 COP, the TWG agreed to vote for inclusion but DNA level Philippines kept quiet
   - This is because of active intimidation of chrysotile industry players and government agencies’ disparate position on asbestos
ALU-BWI-TUCP utilizes the same active critical engagement and collaboration with government agencies and with all other stakeholders with Emphasis on inclusion in PIC List does not ban

Influence and improved Philippine government’s position from active supporter of Canada in 2008 to passive one in 2011 Rotterdam Convention

Community outreach approach helped:

- Community awareness gives the campaign urgency
- Community action gives the campaign exponential power

Facebook- Like us "Ban Asbestos Philippines"
- Third party tri-media (TV, Print, radio) press releases, radio & TV interviews
- On-line petition- online signature campaign to hasten approval of ban asbestos bill-- http://tinyurl.com/ban-asbestos
- Networking with NGOs, civil societies, other sectors
- Website (on-going development)—www.alu.org.ph
- Schools outreach (on-going development)– lecture & solicit signatures of high schoolers to petition ban bills

Wire gauzes used in high schools and colleges chemistry and biology laboratories being used now and for the past decades contained Chrysotile asbestos. Because of this discovery, the campaign is developing a short-term communication plan and use this issue for lobby and to target media people, civil societies, and more allies.
Asbestos wire gauze and how it is sold…

Community outreach policy resulted to:
- Community reaction and expression of support
- Community reacts and asks for help after awareness

Community reacts by asking for more information

Some issues raised by community for ALU-BWI-TUCP assistance
Vigilance over demolition of Manila Thermal Power Plant

Workers lack of protective gear
Improper containment of asbestos

Perceived needs & challenges in NPEAD
- Government agencies waning enthusiasm
  - Absence of funding support, revolving door
  - Dead-end after 10 meetings
  - No available data beyond what was shared
- Stonewalling of Chrysotile industry players
  - Refuse to give data
  - Refuse to cooperate
- Lack of funding and expertise to conduct national survey
  - Critical & strategic data as fuel for NPEAD
Circuitous legislative procedure
Though Philippine Congress (Lower House) recently tagged bill as among priority, still lacks the needed data to make it priority among priorities
The needed counterpart bill in Senate (Upper House) is not in priority

Because of government’s revolving door, previous officer-in-charge can be changed easily
Government environment position sitting as DNA is open-ended progressive ban
Active presence of Chrysotile industry players
Next round of TWG consultation for the 2013 COP

Insufficient funds & equipment for IEC materials, to sustain human face for propaganda
Manpower, staff to maintain & improve gains; cover more ground

Perceived needs & challenges in ban asbestos bill

Perceived needs & challenges on Philippine position in Rotterdam Convention’s PIC List

Perceived needs & challenges in community outreach

Concluding Note
The ALU-TUCP-BWI Ban Asbestos Philippines campaign is on course but it is challenged by the perceived needs and Challenges. It is confronted by Philippine government’s benign enforcement of a Chemical Control Order for Asbestos, weak enforcement of monitoring of asbestos entry at Philippine seaport and airport customs.

This is compounded by a pervasive inter-generational ignorance about asbestos and its risks and danger—gaps and weak points where Philippine asbestos lobby group exists and continues to thrive.

Thank you!