

## 65,000 WORKERS IN CAVITE EXPORT PROCESSING ZONE LIVE IN DEPLORABLE HOUSING CONDITIONS

The deplorable housing conditions of workers affect the productivity and image of Cavite EPZ. The situation is an outright denial of the workers' right to decent housing.

1. Productivity of workers is affected by:

- ?? Lack of sleep;
- ?? Lack of facility & time for relaxation; &
- ?? Fatigue resulting from queuing & fetching water

As many as 46,000 women workers suffer from this situation everyday. These women are production workers – the backbone of Cavite EPZ. They work at the ecozone for an average of 12 hours a day. Because of this and their need to perform housework and childcare for 7 more hours each day, they: are likely to be late or absent from work; do not perform at their peak; and are prone to work accidents.

2. The image of Cavite EPZ is likely to be affected by the level of workers' welfare. Foreign buyers are now starting to look into the welfare of the workers as a condition for transactions. This is in view of global concern for the welfare of workers particularly in the third world where labor is cheap and often exploited.

Hence, a poor image of CEPZ may discourage potential buyers.

3. Industrial peace in Cavite EPZ is likely to be affected by workers' poor housing conditions. Labor groups are aware of the right to decent shelter and starting to bring this to the attention of concerned authorities and the media. Hence, compliance to the provisions of the Womens' Convention (CEDAW) and Women in Nation Building Act (RA7192), which uphold the rights of women workers to decent shelter, will help avoid potential conflicts that may adversely affect industrial peace in ecozone.



A typical rented dwelling unit of workers is characterized by:

- ?? inadequate lighting
- ?? poor ventilation
- ?? cramped condition
- ?? bed-sharing/shifting
- ?? poor sanitation
- ?? no piped water

### **We should act now – build a housing facility**

1) The National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW), in consultation with the Cavite EPZ workers, Housing and Urban Development Coordination Council (HUDCC), Philippine Exports Zone Authority (PEZA), and the local government of Cavite, shall identify a potential cooperating organization in Cavite to help co-manage the setting up of a housing facility that will address the workers' needs and peculiar situation. This should be done within 6 months. At the very least, the housing shall have a day care, adequate water supply, and proper ventilation and lighting. It may also have a multi-purpose area for training and other purposes.

2) The initial activities, e.g., physical planning and community consultations, shall be funded by the GAD Budget of PEZA and under the NCRFW-CIDA International Strengthening Project. Additional budget or funding may be sought from the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) National Committee or the ZONTA Philippines, INC.

3) The PEZA, in coordination with the workers, shall be responsible for the monitoring of the housing program and evaluates its potential for possible replication in other ecozones. In anticipation that the other ecozones may have distinct housing needs, a rapid assessment for each ecozone may be done taking into account the findings of the Cavite study. While these things can be done under the current policies, eventually, the PEZA law should be amended to institutionalize housing for ecozone workers funded under the national budget.

Source:

National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women, 2003. Consultation with Cavite EPZ workers.