

More Filipinos are back to work but in bad jobs

Tuesday 10 January 2023, by [Partido Manggagawa](#) (Date first published: 7 January 2023).

In reaction to news that unemployment has dipped to just 4.2% in November 2022, Rene Magtubo, chair of the labor group Partido Manggagawa (PM) stated that “Indeed, more Filipinos are back to work but in bad jobs.” Magtubo insisted that “Quality as much as quantity of jobs is a concern using the International Labour Organization’s decent work framework as a lens.”

PM referred to the fact that while unemployment decreased from 4.5% in October, underemployment increased to 14.4% in November from 14.2% in October. Also, the average weekly hours worked of an employed person in November 2022 went down to 39.3, from 40.2 in October 2022 and from 39.6 in November 2021.

Magtubo explained that “Government is boasting of the return of employment figures to pre-pandemic levels. Unfortunately, there is no comparable data for November 2019. But by October 2022, unemployment was at 4.5%, exactly the same rate as in October 2019 before COVID-19 struck. But while the quantity of jobs may have returned, the quality of jobs worsened.”

According to PM, more people were working part-time instead of full-time. Underemployment—or the people wanting more hours of work—jumped from 13.0% in October 2019 or 5.62 million Filipinos to 14.2% in October 2022 or 6.67 million. This translates to more than a million Filipinos working as casual, contractual or informal in 2022 or a rise of 19% compared to pre-pandemic levels of underemployment.

“As part-time employees working as casual, contractual or informal, they would be suffering from lower remuneration, not enough benefits, less job security, lack of social security and unsafe working conditions. In other words, these employed but vulnerable workers in the post-pandemic context are still harmed by decent work deficits,” Magtubo expounded.

PM pointed out that a reflection of this phenomenon is the plight of delivery riders. “No doubt, there were more of them as essential workers during the pandemic. But an upsurge of protests among delivery riders express the decent work deficits of Filipinos working as independent contractors rather than as full-time regular employees. Almost all of these protests originated from grievances over steep declines in incomes as apps arbitrarily cut their ‘commissions’ while the cost of fuel rose continuously,” Magtubo argued. He pointed to the protest last week of Shopee riders and to last year’s mass actions of Grab riders in General Santos, Cebu and Pampanga, together with Grab cyclists in Metro Manila. Iloilo Grab riders also formed a union last November 2022.

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P81 have been shaved off the P570 minimum wage in NCR due to December inflation

The labor group Partido Manggagawa (PM) stated that P81 has been eroded from the P570 minimum wage in Metro Manila as a result of the continuous rise in prices. “We call for a new round of wage hikes to recover the lost purchasing power of workers not just in Metro Manila but in the whole country due to the surge in inflation. We call on Congress to legislate a P100 across-the-board salary increase for all workers as relief from the shock of rising prices,” declared Rene Magtubo, PM national chair and a city councilor of Marikina.

Inflation in December 2022 reached 8.1%, slightly higher than the 8.0% in November. The December inflation figure was the highest recorded since December 2008, which was in the context of the onset of the global financial crisis. Notably, inflation is higher in areas outside Metro Manila. The consumer price index for December 2022 in Metro Manila was 116.6 while areas outside it was 120.1 according to statistical tables released today by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA). PM’s demand for a wage hike is based on a computation by the group using the PSA data.

“The P570 minimum wage in NCR is actually just worth P489 by December 2022. P81 has been shaved off the real value of the minimum wage. Meaning, not only has the P33 minimum wage hike in June 2022 been effectively wiped out by runaway inflation, workers’ real wages have pushed back even further,” Magtubo explained.

He insisted that “Thus, we reiterate the call we made in May 2022—before the recent round of minimum wage hikes in June 2022 by different regional wage boards—for a P100 wage increase. This should be for all workers, not just those at the minimum salary level, since all have suffered from wage erosion.”

The group clarified that the wage hike demand is merely wage recovery. “We are not yet even talking of workers claiming a just share in the fruits of their labor. From 2001 to 2016, real wages stagnated but labor productivity increased by 50% and the GDP doubled,” Magtubo maintained.

“Of course, employers will again create horror scenarios of closures and bankruptcy against the workers’ demand for a wage hike. They will cry that they are suffering from the economic crisis even though they monopolized the gains of the decade and half-long business boom. Not only does the government owe workers due to unabated inflation but also employers are obligated to share the wealth created by the labor of the working class,” Magtubo expounded.

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<https://partidongmanggagawa2001.blogspot.com/2023/01/more-filipinos-are-back-to-work-but-in.html>