



(Left photo) WHD Representatives Ms. Agnes Ollinger and Ms. Sharazade Thompkins-Lewis brief the crowd on WHD matters. (Right photo) Deputy Consul General Ma. Theresa Dizon-De Vega, flanked on right, addresses the early morning crowd at the Philippine Center at the event.

19 March 2013 –Deputy Consul General Ma. Theresa Dizon-De Vega welcomed representatives from the Wage and Hour Division (WHD) for the first clinic on Wage and Hour and other relevant labor laws for the benefit of consular applicants and visitors of the Philippine Consulate General in New York on March 15.

The clinic involves an information drive and is a joint project of the Consulate and the WHD.

The clinic, the first scheduled for 2013, aims to inform Filipino nationals of workplace rights and labor/employment laws and was organized pursuant to an Arrangement Establishing an Understanding (AEU) signed last November 2012 between the Consulate and the WHD, the United States (US) Department of Labor and a mother agreement, signed in July 2012, between the Philippine Embassy in Washington DC and WHD Washington DC.

A simple ceremony opening the event was held at the Philippine Center Lobby where the Consulate welcomed the public and WHD representatives Ms. Shaharazade Thompkins-Lewis and Ms. Agnes Ollinger of WHD, New York.

Ms. Dizon-De Vega emphasized the importance of this event as a regular part of the Consulate's services envisioned to relay information on wage and hour and employment-related issues to our *kababayans*. She noted that many Filipinos in the US Northeast are unaware of their rights under US laws, particularly the Minimum Wage law, which is applied to all regardless of immigration status. She also assured that at this event and in similar other outreach missions/clinics by the Consulate, strict rules on privacy and confidentiality will be observed at all times.

On the part of WHD, Ms. Thompkins-Lewis conveyed that they are elated to be part of this process in bringing information to the Filipino community in the same manner that they brought the program to Latin American consulates. She stated that a WHD representative will be on hand to answer questions and, if necessary, gather and facilitate complaints from parties at the Consulate every second Friday of the month. Moreover, she addressed concerns by assuring that WHD is not part of US Immigration and that their role is to assist people not share information with US law enforcement agencies.

Clinics for FY2013 will be held on March 15, April 12, May 10, June 14, July 12 and August 9. The Consulate and WHD plan to hold a segment on WHD during Mobile outreach services to states within its jurisdiction.

The Consulate hopes that by having a program in place, in cooperation with the US Department of Labor, involving a sustained and systematic effort to educate Filipinos of their rights under US labor laws, human and labor trafficking of Filipino nationals in the US Northeast will be diminished if not eliminated. END



(Left photo) ATN Assistant Charlie Nabo points to a short audio-video presentation on Wage and Work Hours being played on the television set at the Philippine Center lobby. (Right photo) Consular applicants in the Lobby at the start of program on WHD last March 15. (Photo Credits : Mr. Michael Jay Tolentino and Charlie Nabo)