



the Migrant Watch

quarterly newsletter of the Philippine Migrants Rights Watch

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Manila, Philippines

PMRW MAINTAINS STANCE: WE DON'T NEED DOFMW

In his first State of the Nation Address in 2016, President Duterte revisited one of the promises he made during the campaign period: the creation of a department for overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) that “shall focus on and quickly respond to their [OFWs’] problems and concerns.” Soon after, five versions of the bill proposing for the creation of a single migration department-variously referred to as the Department of Overseas Filipino Workers, or the Department of Migration and Development - were filed in the House of Representatives and the Senate. In his second State of the Nation Address in 2017, the president did not forget OFWs: “We now talk about our overseas Filipinos. They are our heroes. They and their families have sacrificed much to the...for the country. We all know how a large part of our economic - economy comes from their remittances. That is why to ensure that their rights are protected, I ordered the increase of our assistance to the OFW from 400 million pesos to more than 1 billion.” In December 16, 2020, he certified as urgent the bill that creates what is now called the Department of Overseas Filipinos and Migrant Workers or DOFMW.

The Philippine Migrants Rights Watch (PMRW), a registered civil society network established in 1995 to encourage the recognition, protection and fulfillment of Filipino migrants’ rights, is heartened by President Duterte’s attention to concerns and interests of OFWs. Reviewing the different versions of the bill, PMRW came up with a position paper on September 9, 2016 indicating that the proposed single department will not necessarily be a better alternative to address the challenges of migration governance.

Various discussion and fora on the proposed department had been conducted in the past years. Despite some changes and updates here and there, the fundamental reservations of PMRW remain based on the following reasons:

1) Will the proposed department do better than the current system?

First and foremost, it is not clear what specific gaps in migration governance the new department will fill as well as gaps which cannot be solved under the current system. While the early versions of the bills do not touch the core functions of the two agencies the migrants mostly deal with (i.e. the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration or POEA and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration

or OWWA), parts of both entities are among those which will be transferred to the new department. A recent House version of the bill specifically mentions the abolition of the POEA, OWWA, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) and other attached agencies of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA). The reason for absorbing the different offices into one department is to reduce migrants’ time and efforts in going to different agencies. This notion of a one-stop shop does not warrant a new department. The One-Stop Shop Service Center, which was launched at the POEA in August 2016 and which has been established in all regional offices of the DOLE and POEA, are sufficient for this purpose.

Proponents of this single department argue that it will provide services and programs throughout the migration cycle- before migration, while migrants are overseas, and upon their return to the Philippines. The comprehensive approach to migration has been codified by RA 8042, is already in place, and is further strengthened by RA 10022. If there are gaps or inadequacies in the implementation of the law’s provisions, creating a new department is not the answer. Is the new department addressing real concerns of migration governance or is it simply creating new administrative positions?

The Philippines’ multi-agency governance framework has worked well in addressing the multi-faceted aspects of the migration phenomenon and the diverse composition of the overseas Filipino population. The Philippines has, in fact, been considered as a model for other origin countries. If this will be replaced, how has the single migration department actually worked in other countries?

2) How many laws will have to be revised and how much will be required to create the new department?

We wonder whether a study was done to look into the legal and budgetary requirements towards establishing the new department.

The country’s international labor migration framework was established based on several laws, notably, the Labor Code of the Philippines’ provisions on overseas employment, the Migrant Workers and Overseas

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Filipino Act (RA 8042), An Act Amending RA 8042 (RA 10022), POEA Rules and Regulations Governing the Recruitment and Employment of Land-based OFWs (2016), POEA Rules and Regulations Governing the Overseas Recruitment and Employment of Sea-based Workers (2016), and the 2016 Overseas Workers Welfare Administration Act (RA 10801), among others. Concerning emigrants or permanent settlers, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas was created by Batas Pambansa 79. These legal frameworks and other normative instruments required long and intensive discussions, debates, studies, consultations and negotiations. How long will it take for Congress to amend the necessary provisions affected by the creation of the new department? Will not the legislative agenda of Congress be hijacked by the massive requirements of the single department? Budget-wise, how much will the setting up of a new department cost? The streamlining of the Executive Branch has been identified among the legislative priority of the president – the creation of a new department runs counter to this goal.

3) Which department will be mainly responsible for protecting Filipinos overseas?

Most issues concerning the protection of overseas Filipinos occur while they are abroad. The one-country-team approach established by RA 8042 confers to the ambassador, and therefore to the DFA, the leadership in extending protection to overseas Filipinos.

According to the various bills, the proposed department will assume the responsibility of establishing and implementing the Philippines' migration policy. This will create ambiguities on who will be the lead agency in providing protection to Filipinos while they are overseas. How will the new department relate with the DFA, whose third pillar of Philippine foreign policy is [the] "protection of the rights and promotion of the welfare and interest of Filipinos overseas?" The experience of India is instructive. In 2004, India established the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) to take care of Indian nationals based overseas. In January 2016, MOIA was merged with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) because of the

M^{the}igrant Watch

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PMRW was registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (No. A200111136) on August 30, 2001.

realization that most of the work of MOIA was being done by the embassies (which also have competencies in providing protection to overseas Indians).

4) What is the main scope of the proposed department?

The different versions of the bill employ different titles: the Department of Migration and Development implies linking migration to development whereas the Department of Overseas Filipino Workers indicates a specific focus on OFWs (one version mentions OFWs and the families left behind). Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III views a department devoted to OFWs as further institutionalizing overseas employment, which is the very opposite of what this administration wants. Indeed, upon closer examination of the different versions of the bills, all of them actually focus on OFWs.

While OFWs are a significant part of the overseas Filipino population, the Filipino diaspora is a lot larger and more diverse. Which population is covered by the proposed department: overseas Filipinos of OFWs? The objectives and functions of the proposed department will vary considerably, depending on the definition of the scope or population covered by the proposed department.

5) If the main issue is streamlining and coordination, what is the best solution?

In consultations with government officials involved in the governance of migration, they highlighted the need for inter-agency coordination and communication in the implementation of programs and the delivery of services. One source of such difficulties could be the co-chairing functions mandated by law to different departments, an issue that can be easily solved by amending particular sections in existing laws. For migrants, what could be beneficial is access to one physical place where the different institutions issuing the require documents are present. In that regard, rather than a new department, which is a political/administrative entity, what is needed is a physical place hosting the various institutions. As mentioned earlier, the one-stop-service center responds to this need; online transactions are responding to this need as well.

As civil society organizations, we have been and will continue to be critical participants in the governance of Philippine migration, to help ensure that the best interest of the migrants is met. While the Philippines is considered a model of migration governance by the international community, there is room for improvement, particularly at the level of implementing the normative framework. Nonetheless, we are not convinced that a new department of migration is needed or that it will drastically solve current shortcomings. It is our impression that it might generate further difficulties. In view of the diversity of overseas Filipinos, it is also our conviction that the way forward in the governance of migration is not an encompassing one-size-fits-all migration bureaucracy. We call for a careful study of the gaps in migration governance and for more public discussions and consultations before rushing into the establishment of a single migration agency.

DAWN & BRITISH EMBASSY MANILA CONDUCT PSYCHOSOCIAL & ECONOMIC SUPPORT WEBINARS TO MIGRANT WOMEN IN THE MIDST OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Webinar Series on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support for Migrant Women Returnees (MWR) and Those in Destination Countries in the Midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic

WEBINAR #1
Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) for Migrant Women Returnees (MWR) and Those in the Destination Countries
October 14, 2020 (Wed)
2-4pm (Manila) | 10am-12pm (Dubai) | 7-9am (London)

WEBINAR #2
Gender-Based Violence and Migrant Rights
October 19, 2020 (Sat)
2-4pm (Manila) | 10am-12pm (Dubai) | 7-9am (London)

WEBINAR #3
Stress Management and Coping Strategies for Resilience Building
October 21, 2020 (Wed)
2-4pm (Manila) | 10am-12pm (Dubai) | 7-9am (London)

WEBINAR #4
Parenting in the Light of COVID-19: Strengthening Family Relationships
October 24, 2020 (Sat)
2-4pm (Manila) | 10am-12pm (Dubai) | 7-9am (London)

Speakers:
Jerry J. Jurisprudencia, PhD, ROC, CICR, RPW (Speaker - Webinars 1, 3, 4)
Ma. Paz A. Manaligod, PhD, RPW (Speaker - Webinars 1, 3)
Prof. Aurora Javate-de Dios, President, DAWN BOT, Senior Project Dir., WAOI (Speaker - Webinar 2)
Socorro L. Reyes, PhD, Regional Gender & Governance Adviser, CLD (Speaker - Webinar 2)
Beatrix Aileen Sison, RPW, CICR, P (Speaker - Webinar 4)
Mr. Martin Norman, Second Secretary, Political, The British Embassy Manila (Opening Remarks)
Carmelita G. Nuqui, Executive Director, DAWN President, PMRW (Moderator)
Froilan Mait Jr., University of Cambridge, Man. Dir., Rights Corridor (Facilitator)

Mary Joy E. Barcelona, DAWN

The second was the Webinar on Gender-Based Violence and Migrant Rights on October 17, 2020. The third was the Webinar on Stress Management and Coping Strategies for Resilience Building on October 21, 2020. The fourth was the Webinar on Parenting in the Light of COVID-19: Strengthening Family Relationships on October 24, 2020.

The next four webinars were Training-Workshops on MHPSS, Psychological First Aid (PFA), Stress Management and Coping Strategies held on November 17, 2020; Webinar on Gender-Based Violence and Migrants Rights on November 19, 2020; Webinar on Basic Counselling Techniques, Empathy and Compassion Building on November 24, 2020; and Webinar on Strengthening Family Relationships, focusing on Psychological Elements and Dynamics on November 27, 2020.

The ninth webinar focused on Livelihood Support for OFWs held on December 9, 2020. Among the topics discussed were DTI's Business and Livelihood Assistance for OFWs as well as Enterprise Development: How to Start A Business; NRCO's Reintegration Programs for OFWs and Sharing of OFW Success Stories.

A total of 416 participants attended this series of webinars. Among them are MWW, MWR and members of their families. Other participants include representatives from DSWD, OWWA and POLO offices both locally and abroad.

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Poster of webinar series on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support for Migrant Women Returnees and Those in the Destination Countries conducted by DAWN and BEM.

The Development Action for Women Network (DAWN) in partnership with the British Embassy Manila (BEM) implemented the project “Multi-Stakeholders’ Coordination for Psychosocial and Economic Support for Migrant Returnees and Those in the Destination Countries in the Midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic.” These webinars were conducted from August 2020 to March 2021.

The project aims to promote the welfare of Migrant Women Workers (MWW), Migrant Women Returnees (MWR) and those in the destination countries and their families as follows: 1) To educate and enhance their level of awareness regarding mental health and psychosocial support amidst the COVID-19 pandemic; 2) To identify issues and challenges on the areas of mental health and psychosocial support; 3) To strengthen the capacity and skills of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Service (MHPSS) providers in dealing with MWR and their families; 4) To identify and recommend appropriate interventions and support mechanisms to address mental health and psychosocial support concerns of these women; 5) To capacitate MWW and MWR by providing technical training on project identification, feasibility studies, enterprise development and skills training; 6) To hold dialogues with key policymakers (such as the IACAT-DOJ, DOLE, POEA, OWWA, DFA, DSWD, DTI and DOST) and legislators to develop policies and programs for MWW, MWR and their families.

A series of 9 webinars on Zoom were conducted for this project that deals with a range of issues and concerns of MWW, MWR and their families. The first was the Webinar on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) for MWR and those in Destination Countries on October 14, 2020.

Part II: Training-Workshops on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services (MHPSS)

WEBINAR #2.1
Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS), Psychological First Aid (PFA), Stress Management, and Coping Strategies
November 17, 2020 (Thu)
2-4:30pm (Manila) | 10am-12:30pm (Dubai) | 7:30am (London)

WEBINAR #2.2
Gender-Based Violence and Migrant Rights
November 19, 2020 (Fri)
2-4:30pm (Manila) | 10am-12:30pm (Dubai) | 7:30am (London)

WEBINAR #2.3
Basic Counselling Techniques, Empathy, and Compassion Building
November 24, 2020 (Wed)
2-4:30pm (Manila) | 10am-12:30pm (Dubai) | 7:30am (London)

WEBINAR #2.4
Strengthening Family Relationships (Psychological Elements and Dynamics)
November 27, 2020 (Fri)
2-4:30pm (Manila) | 10am-12:30pm (Dubai) | 7:30am (London)

Speakers:
Jerry J. Jurisprudencia, PhD, ROC, CICR, RPW (Speaker - Webinars 2.1, 2.3, 2.4)
Ma. Paz A. Manaligod, PhD, RPW (Speaker - Webinars 2.1, 2.3, 2.4)
Prof. Aurora Javate-de Dios, President, DAWN BOT, Senior Project Dir., WAOI (Speaker - Webinar 2.2)
Jean Encinas - Eronico, PhD, Research Professor, UP Political Science Department (Speaker - Webinar 2.2)
Lance A. S. Welasco, CAPM/PMW (Facilitator)
Carmelita G. Nuqui, Executive Director, DAWN President, PMRW (Moderator)

Poster of Training-Workshops on Mental Health and Psychosocial Services. These were participated by social workers, welfare officers, frontliners and Filipino community leaders in the Philippines & overseas.

2020 MONTH OF OVERSEAS FILIPINOS CELEBRATION HIGHLIGHTS COVID-19 RELIEF ASSISTANCE FOR OFWS

The year 2020 may be the most challenging in decades, but even the global pandemic brought about by COVID-19 could not stop the Philippine annual tradition of celebrating the Month of Overseas Filipinos in December, coinciding with the joyous Christmas season.

The Inter-Agency Committee on the Celebration of Month of Overseas Filipinos (IAC-MOF) co-chaired by the Philippine Migrants Rights Watch and the Commission on Filipino Overseas, successfully organized the First National Forum on Migration Webinar on December 18, 2020 (which is also the global observance of International Migrants Day) via Zoom and CFO Facebook Live.

It is the first time that such an event, usually held in big public gathering as a tribute to more than 10 million Filipino migrants, was held virtually because of the health protocols and restrictions needed to observe during this global health crisis.

The event was graced by Secretary Silvestre Bello III of the Department of Labor and Employment, CFO Secretary Francisco P. Acosta, CFO Undersecretary Astravel Pimentel-Naik and PMRW President Carmelita Nuqui, who gave recognition of all the sacrifices and valuable contributions of overseas Filipinos to Philippine development and nation-building. They led the discussion of the National Forum focused on the various reintegration services available for overseas Filipinos affected or displaced by the pandemic, and anchored on this year’s MOF theme *“Pagpupugay sa Migranteng Filipino tungo sa Pagbangon mula sa Pandemya.”*

In their respective messages, they’ve said how President Rodrigo Duterte have shown great concern especially to distressed overseas Filipinos and immediately provided additional funds for their repatriation back to the Philippines and assistance for their livelihood. Partnership among



the government, private sector and business, and civil society was also highlighted in assisting the affected migrants to developing and acquiring the vaccine against COVID-19.

The Forum was divided into two sessions. The first part gathered five resource speakers from the Philippine national government who discussed the repatriation assistance and reintegration services for the migrants affected by the pandemic.



(From left): DOLE Secretary Silvestre Bello III, PMRW President/ IAC-MOF Chair Carmelita Nuqui and CFO Secretary Francisco Acosta delivering their messages at the National Forum on Migration Webinar on December 18, 2020



INTER-AGENCY COMMITTEE ON THE MONTH OF OVERSEAS FILIPINOS (IAC-MOF)

NATIONAL FORUM ON MIGRATION 2020



Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the IAC-MOF conducted its First National Forum on Migration Webinar on December 18, 2020. This was simultaneously broadcasted via Zoom and CFO's Facebook page.

Asec. Enrico Fos of the Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs-Department of Foreign Affairs has been in the forefront in leading the COVID-19 response operations, particularly the mass repatriation of overseas Filipinos affected by the pandemic. He shared how the DFA mounted chartered flights, successfully bringing home since February more than 306,000 Filipinos from the COVID epicenter Huwan, China, Japan, Uzbekistan, Lebanon and different parts of the world.



4.

DFA REPATRIATION HIGHLIGHTS



Asec. Enrico Fos of DFA-OUMWA presenting their COVID-19 response to overseas Filipinos.

Labor Attache Roel Martin of the National Reintegration Center for OFWs-Overseas Workers Welfare Administration assured returning and repatriated OFWs that they could avail of the various reintegration programs of the government

under their “Collective Assistance and Restoration for Emergence” or C.A.R.E. Program. These include Psycho Social Services, OFW Enterprise Development and Loan Program, Balik-Pinas Balik-Hanapbuhay Program, Education and Livelihood Development Program, Tulong Pangkabuhayan para sa Pag-Unlad ng Samahang OFWs Program, Livelihood Development Assistance Program, Sa Pinas Ikaw ang Ma’am/Sir (SPIMS), Employment facilitation, and DOLE-OWWA AKAP for OFWs, among others.

Dr. Joel Buenaventura of the Migrant Health Unit of the Department of Health discussed their COVID-19 efforts and health services for migrants and overseas Filipino returnees. These include surveillance of COVID-19 cases, medical assistance and coordination of care thru the Inter-Agency Medical Repatriation Assistance Program for OFs and One Hospital Command Center, repatriation and management of returning OFS as well as human remains, and PhilHealth benefits for COVID-19 cases.

Asec. Ameenah Fajardo of the Department of Trade and Industry showcased their two latest offering for OFW returnees affected by the pandemic - the COVID-19 Assistance to Restart Enterprises or CARES Program, and Helping the Economy Recover thru OFW Enterprise Start-ups or HEROES Program. These loan facilities aim to help existing businesses recover during the pandemic, and assist OFWs rebuild their lives by providing them with opportunity to become entrepreneurs, respectively.

Ms. Elena Clemente of Social Security System shared insurance benefits available to members, highlighting the rise

2020 MOF...

in claim for unemployment benefits by those who lost their jobs because of the pandemic. She also shared their recent COVID-19 Relief Operations for OFWs that include refund of pension loan payments, moratorium on housing and short-term loan, and calamity loan assistance program.

Deputy Director General Aniceto “John” Bertiz III of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority discussed skills training and services for overseas Filipinos affected by the pandemic, focusing on their enterprise-based training programs implemented within firms/companies through apprenticeship or on-site/in-company training arrangements. They also offer various scholarship programs, which are primarily dedicated to the development of the youth’s capacity and competitiveness for employment and entrepreneurial undertaking.

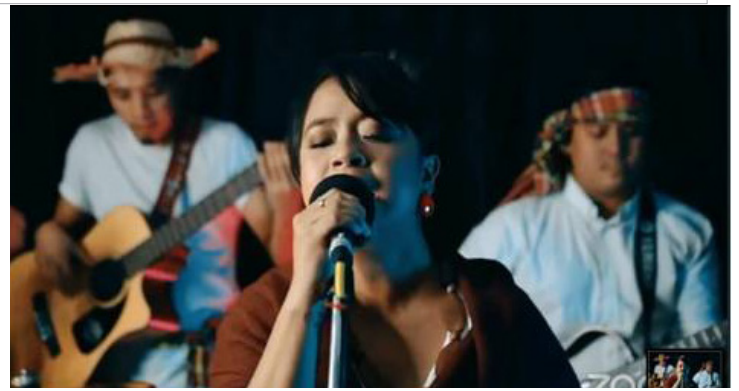
Session 2 of the Forum was devoted to sharing of migrant stories during this time of pandemic. Ms. Marifel Chavez, a former OFW from Dubai is a SPIMS beneficiary of OWWA-NRCO and is about to return to teaching profession in her hometown in Bukidnon. Ms. Anelyn Ortega, who was unable to return for work to Japan because of the pandemic, became a beneficiary of DTI’s HEROES Program, allowing her to invest in seaweed farming in her hometown in Surigao del Sur. Some OFWs and OFW returnees affected by the pandemic also gave thanks to President Duterte, for the financial assistance they have received thru the DOLE-AKAP Program.



Ms. Marifel Chavez, a former OFW in Dubai, sharing her story of how she is able to teach in her hometown in Bukidnon through NRCO’s SPIMS Program

During the open forum the following issues were raised - new procedures in getting of Philippine passport under the “new normal”, effect of the pandemic and decline of OF remittances to the Philippine economy, reintegration assistance specifically for human trafficking victims, and availability of government database on skilled OFWs.

After all the discussion, the National Commission for Culture and the Arts thru video formally launched the online photo exhibit of the Aninag Photo Essay Competition winners. The exhibit showcased artistic talents of overseas Filipinos from Europe and the Middle East who captured unique and moving snapshots of their daily lives while in pandemic.



Performance by Ms. Mary Grace Millaflora of Thailand, one of the winners of NCCA’s Quaranting Competition.

Afterwards, online participants were treated to a soulful musical performance by Mr. Joshua Russel Iringan and Mr. Mhelmafa Buenaflor of the PNU Chorale, and the OF winners of the NCCA Quaranting Competition - Mr. Gregorio Nolita from Brunei, Mr. Rosssderick Vargas from Turkey, and Music Mix, Mr. Jyle Sedillo, and Ms. Mary Grace Millaflora from Thailand.

Three lucky online participants also won P1,000 worth of G-Cash for participating in a surprised quiz show at the end of the program.

Prior this December 18 event, member agencies of IAC-MOF spearheaded several virtual activities for the migrants and their families as part of the MOF Celebration. These include “Turismo Para sa Lahat Webinar” by the Department of Tourism; “Online Ugnayan sa Japan, South Korea and Hawaii”, “Webinar on the Issues of Filipinos in Inter-Marriage”, “Online Community Education Program on Migration and Human Trafficking” and “Virtual YouLead Program” by CFO; “4th National Conference on Migrant Health Webinar Series” by the DOH and PMHN; “Business and Livelihood Presentation Webinar” by DTI; “Pista ng Pelikulang Pilipino (with migration-related films)” by the Film Development Council of the Philippines; “Inauguration of IACAT Center, Tahanan ng Iyong Pag-Asa”, “Manila International Dialogue on Human Trafficking”, and “Barangay IACAT Webinar” by the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking.

The IAC-MOF is a migrant-serving government and civil society partnership which for the past decade has been organizing MOF activities. It is composed of PMRW, CFO, DFA, DOLE, DOH, Department of Tourism, Department of the Interior and Local Government, DTI, Department of Social Welfare and Development, Presidential Communications Operations Office, NCCA, Film Development Council of the Philippines, OWWA-NRCO, Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, PhilHealth, Pag-IBIG, SSS, TESDA, Bureau of Immigration, Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines, League of Provinces of the Philippines, League of Cities of the Philippines, League of Municipalities of the Philippines, Philippine Migration Research Network, and Migrant Forum in Asia.

The National Forum was hosted and moderated by Usec. Pimentel-Naik and Mr. Lance Velasco of PMRW.

PMHN TACKLES HEALTH ISSUES OF MIGRANTS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

4th National Conference on Migrant Health
WEBINAR SERIES
Health of Migrants and Overseas Filipinos towards the Better Normal: Challenges, Learnings and Ways Forward

Repatriation and Reintegration of Overseas Filipinos in the Time of COVID-19: Current Government Policies, Programs, and Other Initiatives
November 18, 2020 | 1:00-4:00pm Manila (UTC +8)

Keynote speech
Dr. Francisco T. Duque III
Secretary of Health
Department of Health

Welcome Remarks:
Dr. Mario C. Villaverde
Undersecretary of Health
Health Policy and Systems Development Team

Special Message:
Ms. Carmelita Nuqui
Vice Chair
Philippine Migrant Health Network
President
Philippine Migrants Rights Watch

COVID-19 Surveillance Among Migrants and Overseas Filipinos
Dir. Maria Antonio Q. Soledad
Bureau of International Health Cooperation
Department of Health

COVID-19 Policies and Initiatives on Repatriation for Overseas Filipinos
Exec. Dir. Eric C. Arribas
Office of Migrant Welfare Affairs
Department of Foreign Affairs

Reintegration Services for Returning Overseas Filipinos during COVID-19
Admin. Hans Leo J. Candac
Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA)

4th National Conference on Migrant Health
WEBINAR SERIES
Health of Migrants and Overseas Filipinos towards the Better Normal: Challenges, Learnings and Ways Forward

Session 3: Health of Migrant Workers & Overseas Filipinos in the Better Normal: A Multisectoral Perspective
December 3, 2020 | 2:00-4:00pm Manila (UTC +8)

SPEAKER

COVID-19 Response: Towards a Better Normal
Dr. Maria Rosario S. Vergeire
OIC-Undersecretary of Health and Spokesperson
Department of Health

Moderated by

Mr. Ringo R. Sanoz
Philippine Health Resources
Co-Chairman

Ms. Carmelita G. Nuqui
Philippine Migrants Rights
Watch

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Magsaysay People Resources Corp.

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PMW International Manpower Services Inc.

Mr. Rex Mario Y. Varona
National Project Coordinator, Safe and Fair Programme
ILO Country Office for the Philippines

PMRW President & PMHN Steering Committee Vice Chair Carmelita Nuqui (second row, right) as one of the key speakers to give her Special Message at the first webinar of the 4th National Conference on Migrant Health (NCMH) last November 18, 2020.

Ms. Carmelita Nuqui (second row, right) as one of the moderators of the third webinar of the 4th NCMH last December 3, 2020. The webinar was on “Health of Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos in the Better Normal: a Multisectoral Perspective.”

The Philippine Migrant Health Network (PMHN) conducted a series of activities despite the pandemic. Instead of looking at the pandemic as an obstacle, the PMHN took this as an opportunity to discuss the various health issues migrants face at this time.

The PMHN’s major activity was the 4th National Conference on Migrant Health (NCMH). This biennial event was participated by experts involved in the field of migration and health which include government officials and policymakers, members of the academe, representatives from civil society organizations, international organizations, foreign service posts, migrants and their families. The NCMH was a 4-part webinar series with over 900 registered participants.

The first webinar was on “Repatriation of Overseas Filipinos in the Time of COVID-19: Current Government Policies, Programs and Other Initiatives” last November 18, 2020. Key speakers at the start of this webinar were DOH Secretary Francisco T. Duque III, Undersecretary Mario C. Villaverde of the DOH Health Policy and Systems Development Team and PMRW President & PMHN Vice Chair Carmelita G. Nuqui.

PMRW Secretary & CMA Executive Director Ellene A. Sana was one of the panel of reactors in this webinar.

The second webinar last November 26, 2020 was on “Migrant Voices: Experiences of Overseas Filipinos During the COVID-19 Pandemic.” Speakers for this webinar were a medical frontliner in the UK, a sea-based OFW returnee from Germany and a land-based OFW returnee from Oman.

The third webinar last December 3, 2020 tackled “Health of Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos in the Better Normal: A Multisectoral Approach.” PMRW President Mel Nuqui was one of the moderators for this webinar.

The final webinar last December 10, 2020 was “Ways Forward: Addressing Health and Migration Challenges in the Better Normal.” PMRW Treasurer and SMC Director Marla Asis was one of the panel of reactors.

The PMRW is the Vice Chair of the Steering Committee and member of the Policy, Advocacy and Research Technical Working Group of the PMHN.

HUGE GENDER GAP PERSISTS IN THE MARITIME INDUSTRY

Dr. Marla Asis, SMC

Chairman Mao’s famous slogan, “women hold up half the sky,” does not hold water when it comes to women’s low participation in the maritime industry.

Globally and in the Philippines, women comprise but 2 percent of seafarers, most of whom work on cruise ships. Why is the maritime sector, particularly the seafaring population, male-dominated up until this time? What are the barriers to women in this sector? What steps must be taken to break down these barriers?

It is against this background that the Scalabrini Migration Center and Stella Maris in the Philippines co-organized the webinar, Many Knots to Go: Filipino Women in the Maritime Sector, which was held on 24 March 2021, 2-4 PM. The resource persons included Dr. Iris Acejo, Research Associate at the Seafarers International Research Centre, Cardiff University; Director Nenita Atienza, Management Information System Service, Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA); Atty Iris Baguilat, President, Döhle Seafront Crewing (Manila), Inc.; Ms Merle Jimenez-San Pedro, President, Women in Maritime-Philippines and Women in Maritime-Asia; Captain Jasmin Costelo Labarda, the first woman in the offshore industry to work as Safety Officer, Senior Chief Officer, Senior DPO (Dynamic Positioning Operator) and Master; and Vice Admiral Eduardo Ma R Santos, AFP (ret.), President, Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP).

While many women work at shore-based jobs, as noted earlier, they are a tiny minority in the sea-going sector. Data from MARINA show that as of December 2018, 73,027 women seafarers out of around one million Filipino seafarers were issued with Seafarer’s Identification and Record Book.

In the 1990s, Filipino women started to join overseas Filipino workers in the sea-based sector with the opening of opportunities in the cruise ship industry. Merchant and offshore vessels remain unwelcoming to women.

Captain Labarda is one of the notable exceptions to enter and remain in this sector. She is a graduate of MAAP which, when it was established in 1998, opened its doors to women cadets.

In his presentation, Vice Admiral Santos shared that between 2003 and 2020, MAAP has produced 132 women graduates, which is about 3 percent of its 4,291 total graduates during the period. Currently, 51 out of 1,588 total enrollees in MAAP are women. The enrollment picture of women cadets in maritime schools for the whole country is not any different.

While several maritime schools started to admit women cadets in the 1990s, enrollment figures reveal that women comprise just about 2 percent of total enrollment.

Many Knots to Go: Filipino Women in the Maritime Industry
 March 24, 2021 | 2:00-4:00PM (Philippine Time)

Speakers

- Dr. Iris Acejo**
Seafarers International Research Centre
- Dir. Nenita S. Atienza**
Maritime Industry Authority
- Atty. Iris Baguilat**
Döhle Seafront Crewing, (Manila), Inc.
- Ms. Merle Jimenez-San Pedro**
Women in Maritime Philippines
- Captain Jasmin Labarda**
Trailblazer in the offshore industry
- VADM Eduardo Ma R Santos**
Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific

The women who make it to maritime schools face many challenges during their training.

After graduation, the next hurdle is finding employment. Despite their qualifications, the recruitment policies (and preferences) of shipping companies tend to favor men over women. Captain Labarda cited a case of a woman seafarer who sent out 300 applications.

For those who can secure employment, the ship is a forbidding workplace. Especially on merchant ships and offshore vessels, it is not unusual to be the lone woman on board.

Based on her research, Dr. Acejo noted the tendencies to downplay or “rub out” gender differences in maritime institutions, but gender relations present complications that need to be acknowledged and addressed. Among others, this means policies and practices that promote a safe and enabling environment for women.

RENDEZVOUS WITH POPE FRANCIS DURING THE PANDEMIC

Fr. Resty Ogsimer, CBCP-ECMI



Fr. Resty (second from left) with fellow Scalabrinian Fathers of the Philippines at St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican.

Year 2011 was the 20th anniversary of the Second Plenary Council (PCP II). It was after that celebration that the CBCP decided to launch a nine-year preparation dedicating each year to a particular theme: Year of Faith (Integral Faith Formation) for 2013, Year of the Laity in 2014, Year of the Poor in 2015, Year of the Eucharist and the Family in 2016, Year of the Parish as Communion of Communities in 2017, Year of the Clergy and Consecrated Persons in 2018, Year of the Youth in 2019, Year of Ecumenism, Interreligious Dialogue and Indigenous Peoples in 2020, and Year of Mission in 2021/ Missio Ad Gentes.

Missio Ad Gentes has a specific theme which is “Gifted to Give.” Both themes are geared towards missionary renewal in the Philippine Church. Gifted to give emphasizes our collective desire for missionary enthusiasm at home (ad intra). Notwithstanding the many trials, challenges and obstacles throughout the centuries but highlighting the bountiful graces and blessings we have all been gifted as a people of faith. “...freely you have received, freely give.” (Mt. 10:8b). The faith gratefully received and handed down to us through generations, compels us to share and spread the good news with others and to make the faith known to all. “Missio ad Gentes” highlights our mission outside our borders- mission to other nations and all peoples. To the millions of OFWs in diaspora, migration is not only for work and livelihood, it can also be an opportunity to become ambassadors of the faith and missionaries of the Gospel.

I conclude with the beautiful words of Pope Francis, extracts from his homily addressed to the OFWs in Rome and around the world: “You received the joy of the Gospel... and this joy is evident in your people... in your eyes, on your faces, in your songs and in your prayers. In the joy with which you bring your faith to other lands.”

In the context of a prolonged suffering and devastating global crisis brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, notwithstanding the risk, the cost, the anxiety and all the difficulties in compliance to all the travel quarantine protocols, after also listening to different voices especially opposing views that would discourage me from flying to Rome, with this as backdrop, I flew to Rome on the 11th of March 2021 for a single purpose: to attend a mass presided by Pope Francis. It sounds crazy and foolish. Well, not everyone can claim that they have attended a mass presided by Pope Francis at St. Peter's Basilica.

Fr. Ricky Gente, the Chaplain of the Filipino Community in Rome, who was also the brain and prime mover of the celebration and Most Rev. Ruperto Santos, Bishop of Balanga, the former ECMI-CBCP Chairperson currently sitting as Vice Chair of the Commission for Migrants, were the ones who convinced me to bravely plunge into the deep and become part of that historic moment on the 14th of March, 2021 that unofficially kicked-off the 500th Anniversary celebration of the arrival of Christianity in the Philippines.

I say unofficial because the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) designated the official start of 500 YOC on Easter Sunday, April 4, 2021.



Mass of Pope Francis for the 500th Anniversary of the arrival of Christianity in the Philippines.

RESOURCES FOR OFWS

Dr. Marla Asis, SMC

When the pandemic struck in the first quarter of 2020, the world was brought to a standstill. For the Philippines, the pandemic was doubly challenging as it tried to take care not only of Filipinos in the country, but also of the estimated 10 million Filipinos in different parts of the globe. Displacements, job losses, and repatriations of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) while grappling with the health and economic crisis were very overwhelming, especially during the first hard lockdown in the Philippines between March and June 2020.

In this scenario, the Scalabrini Migration Center, with funding support from the University of Hong Kong's Knowledge Exchange Initiative, and with the cooperation of the Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, launched the four-part Migration Outlook Webinars for four Fridays in July 2020.

The four webinars focused on the following topics: the concerns of the children of OFWs, the concerns of couples

THERE'S STILL TOMORROW

TIPS FOR OFW KIDS



The pandemic has brought many changes which requires adapting to the "new normal." What will tomorrow look like? What can I do to calm my fears? How can I take care of myself and those around me?

Although life is different, life goes on. Here are some suggestions for you:

➔ **When you feel stressed, take several deep breaths.**

➔ **Talk to your parents.**

- Tell them simple things about yourself, like your favorite things. Ask them what they were like when they were your age.
- Tell them how you feel about what is going on.
- If your OFW parent is back from abroad, tell him/her how you feel.
- If your OFW parent is abroad, call or send a message. Ask how he/she is.
- Your parents may be unable to express their love for you or in the way you would want them to. Just the same, tell them you love them.



➔ **The new mode of learning will require adjustments.**

- You will be mostly on your own in online learning. If you run into some difficulties, do not be shy to ask questions or to consult with your teacher.
- Keep in touch with your classmates through a call, or message.



➔ **Make time for study, chores, play and rest.**

- List down the things you will study for each day and put a check mark when you finish a task.
- Help with housework, such as cleaning your own room, washing the dishes, or helping care for a younger sibling. This could also be bonding time for you and your family.
- All work and no play can make you Take a break.
- At the end of the day, think of at least one thing you are thankful for.



➔ **Due to financial difficulties, some of you may have to stop schooling for now.**

- It is all right to feel sad about this. This change is difficult for your parents too. Know that this will be temporary.
- Try to explore other ways of learning. There are many learning opportunities online – you can learn a new craft, or perhaps you can try backyard gardening, or you can learn more about something that is close to your heart.
- Check out free online training programs, such as those offered by the Technical Education Skills Development Authority (TESDA) – <https://www.tesda.gov.ph>.



➔ **When life becomes too overwhelming, you are not alone. Seek help.**

- Pray.
- Talk to someone you trust: your parents, your sibling, a friend, or your teacher.
- Talk to a counselor.




Handling ng UGAT Foundation, Inc.

Our Online Crisis Lines

Facebook Messenger
m.me/contactUGATSandaLine

Google Hangouts
contactUGATSandaLine@gmail.com

Skype
contactUGATSandaLine@gmail.com

1 PM - 2 AM Philippines
9 AM - 10 PM UAE, Oman
8 AM - 9 PM KSA, Jordan, Lebanon, Bahrain, Qatar
7 AM - 8 PM Egypt, Italy, Spain, France, Germany
1 AM - 2 PM USA Eastern Standard Time
10 PM - 11 AM USA Pacific Standard Time

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The pandemic may have turned our lives upside down. There's still tomorrow.



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and OFW families, the need to address the economic challenges of repatriated OFWs, and to introduce prospects in the agriculture sector.

Each webinar featured the sharing of life experiences shared by OFWs and their families, insights from relevant research, and insights from practice.

Based on the webinars, the project produced four infographics to share tips and practical information to support OFWs and their families: 1) suggestions to support the psycho-social well-being of the children of OFWs; 2) suggestions to support the psycho-social well-being of OFW families; 3) information on employment, business, and training support to OFWs;

and 4) information on capital and training support to OFWs who wish to consider possibilities in the agricultural sector. I

In these difficult times, may these resources bring a glimmer of hope. *Padayon!* (Carry on!)

The recordings of the webinars and the Filipino version of the infographics are available at the Facebook page of SMC: <https://www.facebook.com/scalabrinimigrationcenter> Please feel free to translate the infographics into other Filipino languages.

Featured: Two (2) of the four (4) infographics produced based on the webinars (support the psycho-social well-being of children of OFWs and OFW families.)

- Talk about your family dreams.
 - Name your dreams for the family and plan how the family will achieve them. For example, one family dream can be the permanent return of the OFW parent: what year would this be, how can this become a reality, and what must each member do so that the family can be together?
 - Make sure to include the children in the planning. Ask them what their dreams are for the family and how they can help achieve these dreams.

➔ Share responsibilities in the family.

- Each member contributes to housework.
- Discuss how the family can save. Focus on long-term aspirations instead of short-term pleasures.
- If it is possible, start a simple business while at home, look for jobs online, and plant vegetables if there is a garden.
- Be responsible for each other's health. Remember the basics: wash hands, wear a face mask when going out, maintain physical distancing.

IF YOU NEED HELP, SEEK SUPPORT.

- ➔ You are not alone; help is available.
- ➔ For **health-related support**, contact your barangay health center or nearest hospital.
- ➔ For **spiritual support**, contact your church.
- ➔ For **emotional support**:
 - Get in touch with family members and friends.
 - Contact your children's teachers or guidance counselor if your children show signs of distress.
 - Talk to a counselor. For example, UGAT SandaLine offers free psychosocial support to all Filipinos, including OFWs and their families.


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m.me/contactUGATSandaLine

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8 AM - 9 PM KSA, Jordan, Lebanon, Bahrain, Qatar
7 AM - 8 PM Egypt, Italy, Spain, France, Germany
1 AM - 2 PM USA Eastern Standard Time
10 PM - 11 AM USA Pacific Standard Time

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All shall be well.



FAMILY LIFE IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

HAPPY SPOUSE, HAPPY HOUSE

➔ Nurture your marital relationship.

- For couples where the OFW partner is back home, adjust your usual routine so you can spend time together.
- Remember the reasons why you love your partner. Reminisce the good times you had together, especially memories like your wedding day.
- Thank your partner for the gift of his/her person.

➔ Talk things out.

- Learn to name emotions so you can express them properly and tell your partner how you really feel.
- Refrain from listening to rumors or gossips; talk things out with each other instead.

PARENTING THROUGH EXAMPLE

➔ Teach children love by reminding them you love them.

- Remember when they were born, when you first saw them, when you first held them in your arms. Name those emotions and share these feelings with your children. Assure them of your love.

➔ Teach children gratitude by thanking them.

- Thank your children for their love.
- Thank your children for understanding your family situation.
- Thank your children for their efforts in studying and helping at home.

FAMILY UNITY SPARKS HOPE

➔ Create memories with each other.

- Even while in quarantine, celebrate birthdays and other events through simple ways.
- Nurture shared times, such as having meals together or watching television together.
- Pray together: the family that prays together, stays together.
- Take family pictures or videos.

➔ Talk to each other.

- Talk to each other with no distractions; set aside cellphones and other gadgets.
- Share experiences, feelings, problems and positive experiences. For example, the OFW parent can share stories about living abroad, and the children can share who their friends are. If the family has to tighten the belt during this time, discuss this with everyone.
- Express love to each other. Show appreciation for the gift of each one to the family.



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STORIES OF SURVIVAL: WOMEN MIGRANT WORKERS AS AGENTS OF THEIR OWN CHANGE

Amberdawn Manaois, CMA

In an era marked by feminized migration, increasing numbers of women continue to aspire or choose to leave the Philippines to live and work abroad. However, overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), a vast majority of whom are women in elementary occupations such as domestic work and the like, are also susceptible to violence and violations at the hands of erring employers, recruiters, and other figures in the migration cycle.

Long-standing issues faced by OFWs including incidents of gender-based violence, trafficking, and illegal recruitment have likewise been further aggravated by circumstances amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Stories on such atrocities committed against OFWs, especially women migrant workers (WMWs), seem to have perpetuated the belief that the face of a distressed OFW is that of a woman most likely in domestic work. While data and statistics may make this out to be true, the personal narratives of WMWs need not always be tinged with anguish and despair.

At the outset, many WMWs are former housewives who may be confined to their homes in rural barangays, caring for their families and tending to the household doing unpaid care work.

Some are young women who want nothing more than to ease even just a bit of financial burden of their parents, while others are women who may be facing oppressive domestic situations at home or within their respective communities.

The decision to leave their homes, their families left behind and to embark on their own migratory pursuits is oftentimes a courageous decision born out of love and more notably a personal resolve to seek greener pastures for their families and themselves. From the narrow confine of the family and the household, they go out beyond their communities and face a whole new world of opportunities and challenges; and from “*housewife lang*” or “*walang trabaho*”, they become breadwinners—if not the sole breadwinners of their families.

The same courage rings true as WMWs confront harrowing experiences in their sojourns too. In a CMA webinar last December 2020, three former WMW survivors of gender-based violence shared what they did to assert themselves and overcome their respective ordeals. From being former WMWs in vulnerable job sectors and victims of economic, physical, sexual, and/or emotional violence, these women dauntlessly endeavored to file cases against their perpetrators. They fought nail and tooth to survive and move forward; not resigning themselves to their circumstances. Today, the true triumph of their efforts is seen in how these former victims are now empowered women survivors and advocates in their own right.

From these stories of personal courage and triumph, such narratives of WMWs—including the three aforementioned survivors—also speak of solidarity. From unionizing and organizing as exemplified by the Progressive Labor Union of Domestic Workers in Hong Kong (PLUDWHK), the *Asosasyon ng mga Makabayang Manggagawang Pilipino Overseas* _____ **page 15**



OFW Family Circle in Nueva Ecija distributing relief packs to members of their respective communities

STELLA MARIS-MANILA & SCALABRINI CENTER ONE YEAR OF LOCKDOWN-QUARANTINE

Stella Maris-Manila



The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the coronavirus pandemic on March 11, 2020. The Stella Maris and the Scalabrini Centers were locked down on Friday, March 13, 2020. The Philippines was placed under Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) on March 16, 2020. On June 1, the ECQ status was downgraded to General Community Quarantine (GCQ) and then to Modified General Community Quarantine (MGCQ) until, at least, March 31, 2021.

In response to the challenges posed by this unprecedented crisis, the Centers have focused on the following:

Seafarers

1. Securing free meals and accommodation to 120 seafarers and 5 staff. This was initially for 60 days but was extended to 120 days, thanks to local and international sponsors like the ITF-Seafarers' Trust, the TK Foundation and the Scalabrinians.

2. Distributing food, basic personal needs and toiletries to stranded seafarers in Metro Manila, particularly in 36 dormitories, in partnership with Caritas-Manila. The total number of recipients were 1,266 seafarers, plus 59 staff.

Seafarers' Families and Individuals

In partnership with ISWAN, Caritas-Manila, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Manila, Scalabrinians and Stella Maris GB and Manila, we assisted seafarers' families and individuals, mostly from Luzon and some from the Visayas and Mindanao, by providing US\$50 gift vouchers to purchase their groceries and medicines. There were a total of 3,065 beneficiaries.

MV Gulf Livestock 1

MV Gulf Livestock 1 was a cargo ship sailing from Napier, New Zealand to Jingtang, China. On September 2, 2020, it sank in the Sea of Japan near the island of Amami Ōshima after experiencing engine problems amid the raging typhoon Maysak.



Crew of MV Gulf Livestock 1

The ship was carrying around 6,000 livestock and 43 crew members: 39 Filipinos, 2 Australians and 2 New Zealanders. As of today, 40 of the Filipino crew are still missing, 2 survived and 1 passed on.



As soon as the incident was reported by one of the family members of the crew, Stella Maris-Manila provided the following services: 1. Communication and dialogue with the families, 2. Invitation to pray and personal health nurturing, 3. Paralegal assistance, 4. Psychological and emotional healing through professional counselors, 5. Financial assistance of PHP30,000 per family by the Dicastery for Promoting Human Integral Development of the Holy See, and 6. Visit to families and survivors.

Individual small grants to seafarers and families

Stella Maris-Manila facilitated a number of small grants to families and individual seafarers. These were made possible through the financial support of Stella Maris-UK and the Seafarers Emergency Fund with the purpose of helping shoulder food, health, and education-related expenses

Lobbying and Advocacy

In addition to the direct assistance in Metro Manila, Stella Maris and Scalabrini joined a group of Licensed Manning Agencies, the Maritime Lawyers Association of the Philippines, and the Associated Marine Officers' and Seamen's Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP-ITF), in lobbying for expanded cash aid to seafarers and their families.

In February, Stella Maris-Manila and Scalabrini joined the Association of Licensed Manning Agencies (with more than 50 members) and AMOSUP and sent a letter to the President highlighting the importance of prioritizing Filipino seafarers in the national vaccination program

On February 10, 2021, Stella Maris-Manila was invited as resource person during the House hearing on these two important topics:

1. The ratification of ILO Convention 188
2. The vaccination / immunization of OFWs

Stella Maris-Manila and Scalabrini recently joined the more than 700 organizations in signing the so-called Neptune Declaration that outlines the main actions that need to be taken to resolve the crew change crisis.

DAWN AND BEM...



Poster of webinar on Livelihood Support for OFWs conducted last December 9, 2020.

There were also representatives from CSOs and migrant communities based overseas such as in Italy, the United States of America, Singapore, and Cyprus.

Because of this initiative, several meetings were conducted with key policymakers to discuss on the following concerns of MWW and MWR: reintegration strategies, expanding local job opportunities and better access to services.

This also opened venues for regional and foreign offices of OWWA and DSWD to conduct follow-up workshops on the promotion of mental health among migrants and their frontliners.

Returning workers became more aware of the programs and services provided for their reintegration which they are currently availing, while others are interested to start their own skills training workshops with DAWN and engage in their respective alternative livelihood opportunities.

STELLA MARIS...

Social Media Engagement

Recognizing the importance of social media, we joined a number of other local and international organizations in advocating for the frontliners of the sea in various issues. We were engaged in the following social media accounts: FB accounts of Stella-Maris Manila and SCPM Scalabrini; FB and Twitter accounts of ITF-SF and TK Foundation. We also participated in a number of local and international webinars, including the IMO webinar held on June 26, 2020.

Surveys

With the purpose of trying to better understand the situation and challenges dictated by the pandemic, Stella Maris-Manila and Scalabrini run quick surveys on the following topics: plans of seafarers whose deployment were stalled due to lockdown, current rank of seafarers, date of last contract, type of marine vessel seafarers last boarded and current situation of employment.

If you wish to receive the full results of the surveys, you may e-mail us at aos_mla@yahoo.com

CHALLENGES FOR STELLA MARIS-MANILA / SCALABRINI

What is next?

Many nations are making an extra effort to bring seafarers home. This is the proper and correct approach in times of crisis. The reality is that crew change is taking place in a very slow pace and cruise ship workers will have no job on board until the situation improves. In the meantime, are seafarers empowered with skills to engage in a business, thus providing for themselves and for their families? Government authorities should look into it carefully, as in the near future, there is no light at the end of the tunnel.

Ship / Hospital Visits and Pre-Departure Orientation Seminars

They are pillars in the service to seafarers and their families; all are suspended until further notice.

Centers and Charitable Organizations

The crisis has created an unprecedented job loss among seafarers. The survival of our centers depends on the presence of seafarers. Will Stella Maris and Scalabrini centers and its services be sustained? Centers catering to cruise ship workers will have more difficulties than those catering to seafarers in merchant vessels. Therefore, we appeal to all charitable organizations to keep on supporting the welfare service providers.

The signs of the times

The storm created by the pandemic will be around for a long time. Stella Maris / Scalabrini services and ministry need to be renewed.

The priority remains to be the seafarers and their families, but the wisdom is to read the signs of the times and deliver services to face the challenges brought by the pandemic.

CONCLUSION: "You are not forgotten"

Here's a quotation from Pope Francis in a video recently released by the Vatican "Your work as maritime personnel and fishermen has thus become even more important since it is providing our greater human family food and other primary needs."

Stella Maris / Scalabrini Centers are committed to not only acknowledging that seafarers are key workers, but to make sure that our Centers are a home away from home. And again: many thanks to all supporters and sponsors!

STORIES OF SURVIVAL...

(AMMPO) in Malaysia, and the OFW Family Circles (OFCs) in various areas and communities in the Philippines for returned OFWs and their families, to individual WMWs embarking on their own community-based initiatives such as relief assistance and information dissemination efforts to better respond to the needs of the migrant sector, these empowered active and former WMWs strive to reach out to WMWs who may have endured similar hardships in their migratory pursuits.

As we commemorate the occasion of International Women's Day, let us take the chance to affirm the need to change the narrative of WMWs. Socially expected to carry the multiple burden of caring and rearing their children while attending to domestic chores, many WMWs likewise juggle having multiple responsibilities despite working abroad.

Lack of decent job opportunities in the Philippines continue to push our women to migrate abroad and push them out again and again in cyclical migration—even if they want to return for good. Insufficiency and inaccessibility of government assistance whether onsite or back in the Philippines, restrictive policies on-site, and inefficiency of coordinating

and sustaining support to WMWs, especially those in distress remain significant challenges in effectively assisting and, in turn, empowering WMWs. Efforts to change the narrative of WMWs to one that values and recognizes the work they do, the enormous contributions they have on socioeconomic development in the Philippines and abroad, and one that puts primacy on their strength, resilience, and agency can thus only be done hand in hand with concrete action from relevant stakeholders especially our primary duty-bearers.



Camarines Sur OFW Family Circle president handing over relief assistance to repatriated OFWs

HUGE GENDER GAP...

There are certainly many knots to go and to promote gender diversity in the maritime sector.

Admission policies in maritime schools, scholarship opportunities, apprenticeship programs, hiring policies by shipping companies and crewing agencies, employment and workplace policies, and mindsets need to change.

In 1988, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) initiated the Women in Maritime Program to promote training and employment opportunities for women in the maritime industry.

The formation of Women in Maritime regional networks is part of these broad strategies. Director Atienza of MARINA said that the agency fully supports gender and development in the maritime industry.

In November 2020, MARINA and Women in Marime-Asia signed a memorandum of understanding to collaborate in supporting women's role in the development of the Philippines' maritime industry. These multi-level actions are steps towards realizing Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals – “achieve gender equality and empower women and girls.”

Barring women from the maritime industry means excluding half of humanity from a sector that could benefit from the contributions that women can make.

Someday soon, hopefully girls can imagine and dream that they too can sail the seas and be brilliant seafarers!

(A recording of the webinar is available at: <https://www.facebook.com/scalabrinimigrationcenter>)

RENDEZVOUS...

He also humored us by referring to our OFWs as “smugglers of the faith” because, he said, “wherever they go to work, they sow the faith,” and he regards their “discreet and hardworking presence” as “a testimony of faith...through humble, hidden, courageous and persevering presence.”

During the mass of Pope Francis for the 500th Anniversary of the arrival of Christianity in the Philippines, there were 9 priests who concelebrated with Pope Francis and Cardinals Luis Antonio Tagle and Angelo De Donatis. They were Fr. Leonir Chiarello- Superior General of the Scalabrinians; Fr. Ricky Gente, Chaplain to the Filipinos in Rome; Fr. Greg Gaston, Rector of Collegio Filipino and Coordinator

of the Filipino Chaplains in Italy; Msgr. Pierpaolo Felicolo, Director, Office for Migrants of the Vicariate of Rome; Fr. Bonifacio Sarte Lopez VI, Parish Priest of Parrocchia Santi Protomartiri Romani; Fr. Edwin Balagapo, Official, Congregation of the Evangelization of Peoples; Fr. John Limchua, Papal Chaplain; Fr. Aris Miranda, Head- Social Action of Santa Pudeziana and yours truly, representing the CBCP.

It was an honor and a privilege to be part of such a momentous celebration highlighting the important role of the OFWs and the Filipino diaspora in the work of evangelization in the Church.

IN MEMORIAM: JIGGER S. LATOZA



The Philippine Migrants Rights Watch (PMRW), pays tribute to one of our longtime member and fellow advocate of migrants rights, Mr. Jigger S. Latoza. Jigger passed away last May 20, 2021.

Jigger was the representative of the Center for Research and Publications of the University of San Agustin in Iloilo, PMRW's associate member.

He supported many of PMRW's programs both locally and overseas. He was instrumental in promoting PMRW's advocacies for migrants especially in the Visayas region.

Thank you for your support Jigger. You will be missed.



Jigger participating at a rally calling for day off for domestic workers in Taipei, Taiwan during PMRW's conference on Globalization and Human Rights of Migrants on December 9, 2007.



Jigger facilitating one of the discussions during PMRW's Forum on Social Security Protection of Overseas Filipinos on March 27, 2012 at the Bayleaf Hotel in Intramuros, Manila.

the Migrant Watch

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