



# M—the—W Migrant Watch

quarterly newsletter of the Philippine Migrants Rights Watch

Vol.7 No.1 • March 2008

www.pmrw.org

Manila, Philippines

## Show Concern to the Young Generation of Migrants

**T**housands of OFW family members flocked to various places nationwide to participate in the 22<sup>nd</sup> National Migrants Sunday (NMS) last February 10, organized and simultaneously celebrated in 17 dioceses: San Fernando-Pampanga, Lipa, Kalookan, Manila, Novaliches, Bayombong, Antipolo, Imus, San Fernando-La Union, Alaminos, Jaro, Maasin, Bacolod, Palo, Tagbilaran, Cebu and Davao. All these dioceses organized different forms of innovative celebration of NMS.

The Diocese of Imus hosted the main NMS celebration for this year. The Diocese of Imus was the fourth to host the NMS outside Manila. The selection was based on the Province of Cavite being fourth in rank with the most number of OFWs nationwide. Likewise, the Province ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> in ranking with the most cases of illegal recruitment.

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**Edwin Corros**  
*CBCP - ECFM*

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The diocesan hosting of the main NMS celebration, introduced in 2005, was started in the Archdiocese of Lipa. It was followed by the Archdiocese of San Fernando-Pampanga in 2006 and in 2007 by the Diocese of Antipolo. The diocesan hosting aimed to raise public consciousness within a particular diocese on the social costs of overseas migration and employment. This leads eventually to the development of a migrant's ministry at the diocesan level to provide pastoral care to migrants and their families. The celebration of NMS in the Philippines started on March 8, 1987.

The migrant families who took part in the different NMS events had shown solidarity among each other and echoed their commitment and support to the initiative of the Church in the migrant ministry.

In Cavite around 1,500 OFW family members came from various parishes and schools of the Diocese of Imus. They gathered at the Gymnasium of the Sisters of Mary's Girlstown in Silang - Cavite, where solidarity fellowship was held. One of the highlights of the celebration was the cultural performances of the migrant families. The performers impressed the crowd greatly as they presented different faces and voices of the OFW sector. Those who participated in the cultural show came from Saint Jerome Emiliani Institute in Bacoar, Cavite, and Jesus Good Shepherd School in



**Show Concern ...**

Imus, Cavite. The dioceses of Antipolo and Manila also presented their solidarity dances. A special intermission number was delivered by Warner Music Recording Artist Miguel Aguila.

ECMI Chairman Bishop Precioso Cantillas, SDB, and Imus Bishop Luis Antonio Tagle were the major personalities at the celebration. The two Bishops committed to work for a concerted effort in the migrant ministry particularly as they reflected on the NMS theme of "Show Concern to the Young Generation of Migrants."

The recently concluded NMS celebration in various dioceses had positive results, according to the Migrant Ministry Directors who coordinated the event in the different dioceses.

The success of the national celebration in the Diocese of Imus was largely due to the hardworking effort of the Migrants Ministry Core Group led by Rev. Fr. Leonardo Bagos.

CBCP-ECMI commends the 17 dioceses, which held NMS celebrations in 2008. They contributed to raise the awareness on the phenomenon of mi-



Bishop Precioso Cantillas, Chairman of the Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People of CBCP.

gration in the Philippines, a phenomenon that affects millions of Filipinos scattered in almost 200 countries and members of their families who remain in the Philippines.



Two moments of the cultural show at the Gymnasium of the Sisters of Mary's Girlstown in Silang - Cavite.

# the Migrant Watch

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## PMRW news - PMRW news - PMRW news

### Scalabrinians in the Philippines: 25 Years Journeying with Migrants

On 21 September 1982, Fr. Antonio Paganoni, Scalabrinian missionary, arrived in Manila and officially opened the Scalabrinian mission in the Philippines. Since the real beginning, two mission goals were identified: the establishment of a vocation base in the Archdiocese of Manila and the development of a pastoral engagement with the local Church in the pastoral care of Filipino migrants. Before the end of the same year, Frs. John Iacono and Luigi Sabbadin joined Fr. Paganoni, constituting the first Scalabrinian community in the Philippines.

In 2007-2008, the Scalabrinian missionaries celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their enthusiastic mission in the Philippines and in Asia. The family has grown since 1982 and many Filipino vocations have enriched the Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Charles - Scalabrinians. From the Philippines, the mission expanded to Taiwan, Indonesia, Japan and Vietnam, aiming at responding to the emerging challenges of modern migrations in and from Asia.

The celebrations of the silver anniversary officially started on 21 September 2007, with a special Eucharistic Celebration presided over by the Superior Provincial, Fr. Paulo Prigol. On 4 November 2007, the feast of St. Charles Borromeo, the patron saint of the Scalabrinian Congregation, a special thanksgiving



Frs. Iacono, Paganoni and Sabbadin at the Mission House.

mass was officiated by the Rev. Gaudencio Card. Rosales, Archbishop of Manila. On 25 January 2008, an "Open House" day commemorated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the first Scalabrinian Mission House. To stress the importance of the silver anniversary, in April 2008 the Provincial Assembly of the St. Frances X. Cabrini Province was held in New Manila, Quezon City. The 6-day congress was enriched by a series of events which gathered together all the supporters, benefactors and friends of the Scalabrinian Congregation.

Other events will be organized in the following months, in the run up to the official conclusion of the silver anniversary in September 2008.

Fabio Baggio - SMC

### Updates on Overseas Absentee Voting from CMA

In the May 10, 2010 presidential/national elections, qualified overseas Filipinos will cast their vote for the president, vice president, 12 senators and 1 party list representative. The Overseas Absentee Voting period will run for 30 days.

On Monday, 21 April 2008, Center for Migrant Advocacy, together with Apostleship of the Sea-Manila, Scalabrinian Lay Association and other Migrant NGOs, attended the consultation convened by Comelec on the resumption of the continuing registration / certification of qualified overseas absentee voters for the May 10, 2010 presidential/national elections.

According to the latest timetable elaborated by Comelec, from November 3, 2008 to August 31, 2008 it will be possible to file applications for any of the following:

- a) Registration / certification as overseas absentee voter and to vote in absentia;
- b) Transfer of registration record - if one has moved to a new location, whether within the country or in another country, or back home to the Philippines;
- c) Reinstatement in the national registry of overseas absentee voters;

- d) Correction of wrong entries / misspelled names / change of name and registration / certification pending approval; and
- e) Reactivation of registration records.

Comelec will also set up OAV registration centers in Manila.

Regarding the campaign to repeal Section 5d of the Overseas Absentee Voting Law (RA9189), which requires Filipinos who are permanent residents and immigrants to execute an "affidavit of intent" to return and establish actual permanent, physical residence in the Philippines within 3 years after the approval of their *Overseas Absentee Voting Registration*, in the TV show "Talk Back" hosted by Tina Monzon-Palma, Congressman Teddy Boy Locsin, Chair of the House Committee on Suffrage and Electoral Reforms, stated that the questioned Section may be amended soon. It may be useful to recall that Congressman Locsin coauthored with Representative Antonio Cuenco an amendatory *Overseas Absentee Voting Bill*, by which the period of return to the Philippines should be extended from 3 years to 7 years. There is another amendatory Overseas Absentee Voting Bill filed by Representatives Risa Hontiveros, Rufus Rodriguez, Maria Isabel Beng Climaco and Rex Gatchalian that explicitly proposed to repeal the said discriminatory provision.

Ellene Sana - CMA

# PMRW Planning Meeting

William Becerra - SCPM

On the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> of March, members of PMRW convened at the Splash Mountain Resort in Laguna for its annual planning meeting. Aside from discussing the general direction of PMRW for the year 2008, the 2007 General Report was once again read and updated from its last presentation during PMRW's General Assembly held in Tapei, Taiwan on December 8, 2007.

## 2007 General Report

The presence of PMRW was felt through its advocacy and lobbying efforts. It was active in campaigning and lobbying on issues such as the overseas absentee voting (OAV) and the household service workers (HSW) policy reforms. PMRW was also present during the Bicameral Conference Committee meeting to finalize amendments to RA 8042, where sections 29 and 30 of RA 8042 as well as section 23 paragraph b.1, were repealed, affirming the importance of the regulatory functions of POEA.

A series of forums were organized by PMRW in 2007. A forum on illegal recruitment to celebrate the 12<sup>th</sup> anniversary of RA 8042's enactment into law was held in Lipa. A forum on Welfare and Protection of OFW was held in San Fernando, Pampanga in cooperation with the Pampanga Archdiocesan Migrants' Desk, while a forum on Illegal Recruitment and Lebanon OFW Returnees was held in Nueva Vizcaya. PMRW also organized an International Conference on Globalization and Human Rights of Migrants in Taipei, Taiwan in December 2007.

With regards to its Strategic Communication campaign, PMRW continued updating throughout the year its website: [www.pmrw.org](http://www.pmrw.org), as well as published its quarterly newsletter where important migration-related issues are discussed and information is disseminated. One of the highlights of 2007 was the launching of the book entitled "*Migrants' Stories, Migrants' Voices*," a collection of migrants' real stories that many



migrants and would-be migrants could relate to.

PMRW remained active in the field of government-civil society collaboration and engagement. The Consultative Council on OFWs (CCOFW) discussed important issues such as RA 8042 amendments, OWWA welfare benefits, deployment of Filipino workers to Japan, Taiwan, Korea and Lebanon, OWWA Funds, OWWA claims before the implementation of the Omnibus Policies, PhilHealth Medicare funds transferred from OWWA, OWWA scholarship grants, DFA Assistance to Nationals and Legal Affairs Program reports,

the super maid program, update on OFWs in Kazakhstan and New Caledonia, and the ILO Maritime Convention, among others.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo issued Administrative Order No. 2 in October 2007, creating an Inter-Agency Committee for the Celebration of the Month of Overseas Filipinos and International Migrants Day in the Philippines with PMRW as Chair and Commission on Filipinos

were given a more regularized schedule so that more dialogues and updates by all those working for the welfare migrants can shed light into fairer paths of action for the well-being of all OFWs.

In August, PMRW will strengthen its energies and sharpen its skills in being the voice of millions of migrants with its annual capacity building. Themes like team building, leadership training and some other related activities are part of the agenda.

In October, the Global Forum on Migration and Development will take place in Manila, with PMRW as one of the sponsors. At present PMRW is promoting and disseminating information to all interested parties for equal participation.

Another plan is to expand PMRW's field beyond the borders of the Philippine archipelago. A preliminary concept note was presented to all members to consider the possibility of the creation of the Asian Migrants Rights Watch (AMRW). At present, this initiative is being studied and initial discussion will take place this September.

At the end of the planning meeting, a new set of officers were elected. Carmelita Nuqui was re-elected as president, Fr. Fabio Baggio as vice president, Ediza Pumarada as the new Secretary, and Fr. Edwin Corros as Treasurer.

We wish the new set of officers success and we hope and pray that the cause of many Filipino migrants will continue be heard through the hard work of PMRW.

Overseas (CFO) as Co-Chair. The celebration of International Migrants' Day was held on December 18, 2007 at the Coconut Palace in Pasay City. It was marked by a forum titled "Elevating Standards for the Protection and Welfare of Filipino Migrants."

## 2008 Programs

The agenda for the present year are as hectic as the previous year. In terms of advocacy, PMRW plans to launch a second volume of "*Migrants' Stories, Migrants' Voices*." It is expected to be ready by the second week of June.

The Consultative Council on OFWs (CCOFW) meetings

# Making a Difference for Women

EDITORIAL

by Lisa Garcia (DAWN)

This February and March, DAWN's Alternative Livelihood Coordinator, Mary Joy Barcelona, bested several other women and bag the Soroptomist International Metro Manila Northwest award for the category Making a Difference for Women. She placed second in the regional division.

Mary Joy has indeed made a difference, not just in her life, but in the lives of others. She and other women like her deserve our applause. They are an inspiration to other women.

Hers is the story of many of our migrant women who dreamt of a better future. Because she wanted to finish her studies, she tried her luck in Japan. She worked as an entertainer with high hopes of changing her life. Indeed, her life changed, but not the way she envisioned it to be. She was abused and exploited along the way. But rather than mope and be defeated by circumstances, she made a decision to turn around her life. Last December 2006, she graduated with a degree in B.S. Entrepreneurial Management.

Indeed, one need not be a multi-degree holder in order to touch other people's lives. One need not be a scion of a rich family to help others.

Among our women OFWs, there are many whose lives have touched us and made their marks in our society.



Many among our migrant workers are mothers who were forced by circumstances to leave their families behind to provide better education for their children. They sacrifice a lot by being far from their own families and working in a place where they are unfamiliar with the language and culture. In order to ensure a better future for their own children, they take care of other women's children instead.

Many women have taken risks for the love of their families. Some were lucky enough to have achieved their goals, while there are those who were not as lucky. There are

those who, along the way, have found themselves victims of abuse and exploitation. We have heard many stories about Filipino women who have been duped by their recruiters, who were sold in brothels and made to work in prostitution dens.

As we commemorate International Women's Day and women's month, we remember the many women whose rights have been violated. And we continue to lobby for their causes. We continue to march to the streets and shout so that other people will listen and women's voices can be heard.

As we commemorate International Women's Day and

women's month, we also have cause to celebrate. There are many Filipino women among our midst, including many migrant women, who make us proud and inspire us to overcome our weaknesses and become better persons. But lest we forget, it is not only women who have to and can make a difference for other women. Men can also make a difference by being supportive to their wives, mothers, sisters and daughters, by respecting other women, by not violating the rights and dignity of women.

# PEOS: Empowering Young People to Make Informed Choices

by Dyz Pumarada - SLA

*"Understanding the Realities and Challenges of Migration, Empowering Young People to Make Choices"* is the theme of the Pre-Employment Orientation Seminar (PEOS) which is proactively being offered by the Scalabrinian Lay Association (SLA) to Colleges and Universities. SLA gives emphasis on the importance of giving relevant information to students who are considered to be potential migrants. In random checks usually carried out among PEOS participants, it is not surprising that many students are either thinking or planning to seek employment overseas after graduation. In fact, there were few who have already found employment abroad prior to graduation.

*"How much will it cost us to get a working visa? How do we know if the job offer overseas is true or not? Is it really necessary to pay the placement fees?"* These are some of the usual questions asked during the open forum. Such queries evidently give a hint on how relevant and essential these information are to students.



The modules developed by SLA also include the impact of migration to the country, to the worker, and especially to the family left behind. One student commented, *"I believe that my mother left us because she wants to provide us better education and better future."* In another occasion another student asked, *"How can we not think of working overseas when there is not much work waiting for us in the local industries?"*

True to our expectations, the seminar gave the students the opportunity to reflect, and eventually assess their realities either as potential migrants or as someone who belongs to a migrant family.

SLA considers the PEOS seminars it has conducted successful despite the difficulty in inserting it in the tight regular calendar of schools. Due acknowledgment goes to the schools who welcomed the PEOS for the period, namely: the Polytechnic University of the Philippines – Manila; Dela Salle College – Antipolo; University of Rizal – Binangonan; Manuel L Quezon University – Quiapo; Sta. Isabel College- Manila; and the Lyceum University in Intramuros. SLA commends the Deans and faculties of the respective colleges of these schools who organized and made the PEOS ac-

cessible to their college and graduating students.

The SLA has been receiving positive comments and commendations about this PEOS. We are encouraged and inspired by the interests the students have shown, as reflected by the questions they ask and their reactions. Indeed, we consider it a service to empower our young graduates whom we consider potential migrants by providing them with correct and relevant information which they can use to make informed and intelligent decisions when the proper time comes.

For request and schedule of PEOS seminar, please email: [scalabrini\\_jay@yahoo.com](mailto:scalabrini_jay@yahoo.com) or [dyp0413@gmail.com](mailto:dyp0413@gmail.com). You can also reach us at 09177891248 c/o Ms. Dyz Pumarada or at 5274142 c/o Ms. Mely Maraan.



# PMRW Nixes Proposed Hospital for OFWs

Edwin Corros - CBCP ECMI

The Philippine Migrants Rights Watch (PMRW), an organization composed of various civil society groups dedicated to the service of Filipino migrants and their families, is posing its objection against Senate Bill No. 421 of Senator Jinggoy Estrada. The said bill proposes the construction of a hospital in Manila for OFWs and members of their families.

The bill was filed to attend to the health needs of migrant workers. It is timely because it comes at a time when the value of the peso continues to rise against the dollar. Under the bill, health care is made available to migrant workers and their dependents who are regular contributors to the OWWA fund. But while the intent of the bill is laudable, its provisions raise several issues that should be ironed out and resolved.

First, the PMRW does not want a repeat of what transpired about five years ago when a huge amount of the OWWA funds was transferred to Philhealth to address the medical needs of the OFWs and their dependents. It will be recalled that such decision was implemented without consulting the OFWs. The establishment of such a hospital might, again, give all authority to OWWA to dispose the funds without consulting the OFW sector.

Second, the proposal is the construction of a 50-bed hospital to be located in Manila. PMRW thinks that the hospital location is too localized for a limited need when in actual fact most of OFWs and their families do not come from Manila. Calabarzon is the largest area where OFWs come from. Such hospital construction will be against the interest of other migrant beneficiaries who live outside Metro Manila.

Will undocumented OFWs also have access to the hospital? What about the ex-OFWs? As former OWWA contributors, can they also avail of the health care services as proposed in the bill?

Another issue is the timing of putting up such a hospital. As elections are fast approaching, the construction of a hospital for OFWs might be used as a platform for political propaganda for the 2010 elections.

The issue of who will constitute the board of the OFW hospital should also be discussed. Will it be the same representatives in the OWWA and POEA Boards? PMRW wants assurance that the representatives coming from the OFW sector will actually be representing the interests of the OFWs.

PMRW believes that the money intended for the hospital building could be used instead for upgrading services to OFWs and their families in all hospitals accredited by Philhealth. This

is a much better alternative than investing it into a hospital where management of such project may not necessarily translate into good service as we observe in many government hospitals around the country.

Most of all, there should be thorough consultation with OFWs and their families first prior to the passage of this bill.

## SENATE BILL No. 421

*(Excerpts)*

SEC 3. Creation of Special Hospital. - To carry out the above policy, a migrant workers' hospital to be named as the Migrant Workers Hospital is hereby created under the supervision and control of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA).

SEC 4. Objectives. - To ensure the availability, accessibility and affordability of quality health care, Migrant Workers Hospital shall:

- a) Provide for a comprehensive / total health care services to all migrant workers who are OWWA contributors and their legal dependents;
- b) Complement the existing package of services under the Medical Care Program so as to include preventive, promotive, diagnostic, curative and rehabilitative programs; [...]

SEC 5. Administration. - Upon effectivity of this Act, the Migrant Workers Hospital shall be administered by a Board of Directors consisting of:

- a) The Secretary of the Department of Labor and Employment as Ex-Officio Chairman;
- b) The Administrator of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration as Ex-Officio Vice Chairman;
- c) The Secretary of the Department of Health as Ex-Officio Member;
- d) The Secretary of the Department of Social Welfare and Development as Ex-Officio Member;
- e) The Administrator of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration as Ex-Officio Member;
- f) 9 Two (2) representatives from OFWs Sector (one from land-based and another from sea-based) as Members.

The two representatives from the OFWs Sector shall be appointed by the President of the Republic of the Philippines from a list of nominees prepared by the Ex-Officio Chairman to serve for a term of three (3) years without reappointment. [...]

SEC 7. Appropriation. - The amount necessary for the establishment and initial operation of the Migrant Workers Hospital shall be taken from the National Treasury not otherwise appropriated. Subsequently, its appropriation shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act. [...]

# Preparing Future Seafarers

## *The contribution of the Apostleship of the Sea*

For more than 14 years, the Apostleship of the Sea has been conducting seminars in maritime colleges with a full-day schedule of inputs relevant to the future profession and life at sea of their maritime students. Topics have been added or modified through the years, with the inclusion of several short-feature films, to make the day more formative and attractive. However, the content of the seminar remains an intensive day of information and formation for the students in nautical schools. The topics touch upon the services for seafarers offered by the Stella Maris Centers of the Apostleship of the Sea and other Seamen's Centers world-wide; Christian values and character formation presentation to prepare them for the difficult life at sea; family relations and responsibilities; and, education on drugs, alcohol and AIDS prevention. On the legal side of their profession, a major lengthy session presents and explains their employment contract in relation to Philippine laws and international ILO conventions and recommendations. This is facilitated by a lawyer, an ILO spokesperson, and personnel from POEA and OWWA. The day is considered a veritable mine of information to prepare them for their future life at sea.



At present, the program is being given in more than 35 maritime colleges each year in Manila, Cebu, and Davao, as well as in several colleges in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao, reaching an audience of several thousands of future seafarers, most of them in their last year of academic studies.

The Program was conceived and has been conducted exclusively by the Apostleship of the Sea all these years free of charge to the schools. Though the cost is considerable to the Apostleship of the

Sea which has to shoulder transport, meals and accommodation expenses for the team, we have continued the program over these years because we believe in the importance of the topics given to the students. In fact, these topics are not part of their school curriculum. The Team conducting these seminars must be commended for their generous, persevering and competent contribution throughout these years.

# the Migrant Watch

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