

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 3313



Introduced by REP. CAMILLE A. VILLAR

AN ACT
CREATING THE DEPARTMENT OF MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT,
DEFINING ITS POWERS AND FUNCTIONS, APPROPRIATING FUNDS
THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The presence of Filipinos in other countries is certainly not minuscule. As of December 2013, the Commission on Filipino Overseas estimated that there are around 10.2 million¹ Filipinos overseas, mostly as migrant workers; and their numbers are constantly growing. The latest statistics show that around 2 million Filipinos² leave the country every year to work abroad, carrying their auspicious hopes and dreams to amply provide for their families and secure a brighter future. Rather than remain in the country eking out a living and earning a measly income, many choose to live away from their loved ones and endure tough working conditions for higher wages and salaries.

The contribution of the Filipinos working overseas to the Philippine economy is likewise not minuscule. The Filipino migrant workers have been consistent dollar earners for the country. Their remittances are considered a significant contributor to the country's gross domestic product, and their role in keeping the economy buoyant is well acknowledged. Based on the *Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas* (BSP) figures, the cash remittances in 2018 sent via the formal banking networks by overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) amounted to \$ 28.94 billion, while their personal remittances or

¹ <http://www.cfo.gov.ph/images/stories/pdf/StockEstimate2013.pdf>

² Philippine Statistics Authority, 2018 Survey on Overseas Filipinos

those fund transfers that were not captured by the banking sector for the same year amounted to \$ 32.21 billion.³

In keeping with the constitutional guarantee of giving full protection to labor, local and overseas alike⁴, the government has established the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) in order to protect and enforce the welfare and rights of our Filipino migrant workers. However, despite the presence of the POEA and OWWA, even taking into account the assistance provided by the Department of Foreign Affairs, quite a number of our Filipino overseas still see that they are being neglected by government. There are reports of numerous complaints and resentment towards government harbored by overseas Filipino workers apparently brought about by the perceived government's delayed and inadequate support and assistance while they are facing difficult predicaments abroad.

Considering the foregoing, I submit that it is timely and appropriate to create a government agency in the executive Department, aptly called the Department of Migration and Development, which shall have the exclusive function of essentially protecting the welfare and enforcing the rights of our Filipinos overseas. Hence, this measure will transfer POEA and OWWA as attached agencies, and other related agencies that deals with OFW affairs, to the newly created Department thereby empowering this Department to adequately support and give assistance to our Filipinos overseas.

Henceforth, I recommend the immediate approval of this bill.

Camille A. Villar
CAMILLE A. VILLAR
Representative
Lone District, Las Piñas City

³ <http://www.bsp.gov.ph/statistics/keystat/ofw.htm>

⁴ Section 3, Article XIII, 1987 Philippine Constitution

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AN ACT

**CREATING THE DEPARTMENT OF MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT,
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THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in
Congress assembled:*

1 Section 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “Department of
2 Migration and Development Act of 2019.”

3 Sec. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – The State shall, as a primordial economic
4 policy, promote full local employment and decent work for all Filipinos within the
5 national borders. However, for Filipinos living and working overseas, every effort
6 must be undertaken to ensure their safety, secure their rights, and promote their
7 general welfare and development. In the same light, it is also the duty of the State to
8 look after, secure and broaden socio-economic opportunities for families left behind.

9 Sec. 3. *Creation of a Department of Migration and Development.* – There is
10 hereby created a Department of Migration and Development, hereinafter referred to
11 as the Department, which shall, among others, recommend and implement the
12 government’s policies, plans and programs for the promotion of protection, safety,
13 development, support, of and for Filipinos overseas and their families left behind.

14 Sec. 4. *Mandate.* – The Department shall be the primary policy, planning,
15 coordinating, implementing, and administrative entity of the executive branch of the
16 government that will plan, develop, and manage the national migration and
17 development agenda that is supportive and complimentary to national efforts to
18 create, sustain, and strengthen local employment and decent work within the
19 country’s borders.

1 Sec. 5. *Powers and Functions.* – The Department shall have the following
2 powers and responsibilities which shall be exercised by its offices:

3 1) Formulate and recommend national policies and guidelines and
4 conduct in-depth studies on all policy areas and options that will ensure protection of
5 Filipino migrants and address perennial issues they face abroad, in consultation with
6 the relevant stakeholders;

7 2) Assess, review, harmonize and coordinate all overseas Filipino
8 worker-related local policies and procedures and international agreements to ensure
9 overall consistency and implementation of the national policies;

10 3) Promote, advance and implement general and specific government
11 objectives regarding migrant Filipinos or OFW activities, programs, welfare and
12 interests;

13 4) Build a strong and harmonious partnership with foreign countries and
14 the private sectors to formulate strategies and implement the same;

15 5) Represent and negotiate for Philippine interest on matters pertaining to
16 overseas Filipino affairs in international bodies;

17 6) Develop, implement and improve coordination with other countries with
18 the presence of overseas Filipinos and monitor foreign developments to ensure
19 humane and the most reasonable and working conditions for the OFWs and create a
20 proactive approach in providing assistance to them especially in times of war and
21 civil unrest, whether potential or apparent;

22 7) Promote knowledge, information and resource sharing, and develop a
23 database to assist overseas Filipinos anywhere in the world;

24 8) Coordinate and support the generation of resources or funds for use of
25 overseas Filipinos;

26 9) Conduct symposia, consultations and seminars on effective programs
27 relating to overseas Filipinos;

28 10) Assist and provide technical expertise in the troubleshooting of
29 overseas Filipinos in distress and tap the services of personnel, foreign and local,
30 with expertise to help in the repatriation of overseas Filipinos, if needed;

31 11) Promote, develop and monitor the continuing education, training and
32 qualification, availability and deployment of OFWs and coordinate with concerned
33 agencies in the training of overseas Filipinos to improve their competitiveness
34 globally;

1 12) Coordinate with concerned government agencies in the training and
2 support of Filipinos who have worked abroad and are returning to the country;

3 13) Ensure that there are existing and effective reintegration programs for
4 returning OFWs;

5 14) Regulate and guide the business activities relative to the deployment
6 of Filipino workers and other related activities;

7 15) Promulgate rules and regulations for the implementation of its
8 guidelines and policies and related laws;

9 16) Administer, accept, hold and utilize property, both personal and real,
10 subject to limitations by existing laws, for the purpose of assisting of expediting the
11 work of the Department; and

12 17) To perform such other functions, as may be needed to achieve the
13 objectives provided under this Act.

14 Sec. 6. *Composition.* – The Department shall be headed by a Secretary. The
15 Department proper shall be composed of the Office of the Secretary, the Offices of
16 the Undersecretaries and the Assistant Secretaries.

17 Sec. 7. *Secretary of Migration and Development.* – The Secretary shall be
18 appointed by the President, subject to confirmation by the Commission on
19 Appointments.

20 The Secretary shall have the following functions:

21 a) Provide executive direction and supervision over the entire operations
22 of the Department and its attached agencies;

23 b) Establish policies and standards for the effective, efficient and
24 streamlined operations of the Department, in accordance with the
25 programs, services and priority agenda of the national government;

26 c) Review and approve request for financial and manpower resources of
27 all operating offices of the Department;

28 d) Designate and appoint officers and employees of the Department,
29 excluding the Undersecretaries, Assistant Secretaries and Directors, in
30 accordance with the Civil Service laws, rules and regulations;

31 e) Collaborate with other government agencies and public and private
32 interest groups, including all industry associations and civil society
33 groups, and migrants workers' desks all over the country as well as

- 1 Filipino community groups abroad on Department policies, programs
2 and initiatives;
- 3 f) Undertake regular consultations and joint planning sessions with the
4 heads of pertinent government agencies on matters relevant to the
5 welfare and development of migrants and their families;
- 6 g) Extend advice to the President on the promulgation of executive and
7 administrative orders and regulatory and legislative proposals on
8 matters pertaining to Filipino migrants;
- 9 h) Coordinate and oversee all policies and programs relevant to
10 migration and development ;
- 11 i) Formulate such rules and regulations and exercise such other powers
12 as may be required to implement the objectives of this Act; and,
- 13 j) Perform such other tasks as may be provided by law or assigned by
14 the President from time to time.

15 Sec. 8. *Undersecretaries.* - The Secretary shall be assisted by three (3)
16 undersecretaries, who shall be appointed by the President upon the
17 recommendation of the Secretary. Provided, that one (1) of the undersecretaries
18 shall be a career officer with at least ten (10) years of experience from the ranks of
19 government labor-oriented agencies. The undersecretaries shall aid the Secretary
20 in the performance of his/her operational duties and shall perform such other
21 functions as may be directed by the Secretary.

22 Sec. 9. *Assistant Secretaries.* – The Secretary shall be assisted by three (3)
23 assistant secretaries who shall be appointed by the President upon the
24 recommendation of the Secretary. Provided, that priority shall be given to career
25 officers.

26 Sec. 10. *Qualifications.* – No person shall be appointed Secretary,
27 Undersecretary, or Assistant Secretary of the Department unless he or she is a
28 citizen and resident of the Philippines, of good moral character, of proven integrity
29 and with at least ten (10) years of competence and expertise in the field of migration
30 and development.

31 Sec. 11. *Regional Offices.* – The Department may establish, operate, and
32 maintain a regional office in the different administrative regions of the country as the
33 need arises. Each regional office shall be headed by a Regional Director, who may
34 be assisted by one (1) Assistant Regional Director. The Regional Director and
35 Assistant Regional Director shall be appointed by the President. The regional

1 offices shall have, within their respective administrative regions, the following
2 functions:

- 3 a) Implement laws, policies, plans, programs, projects, rules and
4 regulations of the Department;
- 5 b) Provide efficient and effective service to program beneficiaries and all
6 stakeholders;
- 7 c) Coordinate with regional offices of other departments, offices, and
8 agencies;
- 9 d) Coordinate with the LGUs; and
- 10 e) Perform such other functions as may be provided by law or assigned by
11 the Secretary.

12 Sec. 12. *Attached Agencies.* – The following agencies shall be attached to
13 the Department for policy and program coordination, and shall continue to function in
14 accordance with the charters, laws or orders creating them, unless inconsistent with
15 the substance and spirit of this Act:

- 16 1) Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA); and
- 17 2) Overseas Workers' Welfare Administration (OWWA)

18 Sec. 13. *Transfer of Bureaus, Offices and Agencies.* – The following
19 bureaus, offices and agencies are hereby transferred from their respective
20 departments (as shown in parenthesis) to the Department.

- 21 a) International Labor Affairs Bureau (ILAB), including all Philippine
22 Overseas Labor Offices, with direct supervision over Labor Attaches and
23 Welfare Officers and the Filipino Workers Resource Centers
- 24 b) Overseas Absentee Voting Secretariat (Department of Foreign Affairs)
- 25 c) Commission on Filipinos Overseas (Office of the President)
- 26 d) National Reintegration Center for OFWs (OWWA)
- 27 e) Repatriation Unit (POEA)/ Repatriation Assistance Division (OWWA)
- 28 f) Conciliation Unit (POEA)
- 29 g) Anti-Illegal Recruitment Branch (POEA)
- 30 h) Workers Education Division (POEA)

- 1 i) PDOS unit (OWWA)
- 2 j) Government Placement Branch (POEA)
- 3 k) Adjudication Office (POEA)
- 4 l) Overseas Operations Coordination Service – 24/7 hotline (OWWA)
- 5 m) Social Service Office (Department of Social Welfare and Development)
- 6 n) Pertinent offices of MARINA in relation to the training, certification, and
7 setting and monitoring of standards concerning international seafarers
8 (Department of Transportation and Communications)

9 The laws and rules on government reorganization as provided for in Republic
10 Act No. 6656, otherwise known as the Reorganization Law, shall govern the
11 reorganization process of the Department.

12 The Department may create sectoral, industry, and/or geographic task forces,
13 technical working groups, advisory bodies or committees in furtherance of its
14 mandate and objectives. Private sector representatives may be designated
15 members of such working groups in addition to representatives drawn from local and
16 national government agencies, as the need arises.

17 An inter-agency coordinating Council on Migration and Development, shall be
18 composed of the secretaries of the following departments:

- 19 1) The Department of Migration and Development;
- 20 2) The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA);
- 21 3) The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE);
- 22 4) The Department of Justice (DOJ);
- 23 5) The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD); and
- 24 6) The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG)

25 Death row cases involving blood money, terrorism, drug-trafficking, human
26 trafficking as well as large-scale illegal recruitment cases involving Filipino workers,
27 and urgent cases involving overseas or their families left behind that require
28 humanitarian assistance shall fall under the purview of this Inter-Agency
29 Coordinating Council with appropriate recommendations for the consideration of the
30 Office of the President.

31 Sec. 14. *Establishment of One-Stop Migrant Assistance Centers.* – The
32 Department, in partnership with other government agencies, shall establish One-
33 Stop Migrant Assistance Centers in all major capital towns and cities nationwide to
34 ensure prompt, efficient, vital and relevant services to migrant Filipinos and their

1 families to include passport and authentication services, acquisition of government
2 clearances and permits, validation of overseas job offers, reintegration services and
3 all pertinent seminars and workshops for all stakeholders.

4 *Sec. 15. Separation and Retirement from Service.* – Employees separated
5 from the service as a result of this reorganization shall, within ninety (90) days
6 therefrom, receive the retirement benefits to which they may be entitled under
7 existing laws, rules, and regulations.

8 *Sec. 16. Structure and Staffing Pattern.* – The Department shall determine
9 its organizational structure and create new divisions or units as it may deem
10 necessary, and shall appoint officers and employees of the Department in
11 accordance with the Civil Service law, rules, and regulations.

12 *Sec. 17. Special Assistance Revolving Fund.* - A Special Assistance
13 Revolving Fund for Filipino Migrants, including both documented and
14 undocumented, in the amount of One Billion Pesos (PHP 1,000,000,000.00) is
15 hereby created. Hereinafter referred to as the Special Assistance Fund for Filipino
16 Migrants, the fund shall be utilized for the following purposes:

- 17 a) Emergency repatriation;
- 18 b) Medical expenses, hospitalization, and purchase of medicines for
19 repatriated migrants with dreaded or severe diseases;
- 20 c) Immigration penalties for overstaying, indigent and ailing overseas
21 Filipino workers, as well as victims of human trafficking and illegal
22 recruitment;
- 23 d) Legal assistance for labor cases involving ten or more Filipino workers;
- 24 e) Payment of blood money, when recommended by the Department, in
25 consultation with the DOJ and DFA;
- 26 f) Humanitarian assistance to families left behind, particularly in times of
27 calamity;
- 28 g) Basic necessities of OFWs in embassy shelters or for those under
29 detention;
- 30 h) Scholarships for children of Filipinos overseas who are victims of
31 injustice involving modern slavery, human rights violations, and political
32 as well as economic upheavals.
- 33 i) Maintenance and operational expenses including capital outlay for the
34 establishment of One-Stop Migrant Processing and Assistance Centers
35 in all regions including the central office of the Department.

1 Sec. 18. *Appropriations*. – The appropriations of bureaus, agencies, and
2 offices identified in Section 13 of this Act shall be transferred to the Department.
3 Provided, that the amount needed for the initial implementation of this Act shall be
4 taken from the current fiscal year's appropriation of the transferred agencies.
5 Thereafter, the amount needed for the operation and maintenance of the
6 Department including the Special Assistance Revolving Fund shall be included in the
7 General Appropriations Act.

8 The proceeds from the Documentary Stamp Tax (DST) accruing from dollar
9 remittances of overseas Filipinos, as determined by Congress, shall be used to
10 ensure the efficient and effective operations of OFW One-Stop Assistance Centers
11 throughout the country.

12 Sec. 19. *Separability Clause*. – If any portion or provision of this Act is
13 declared unconstitutional or invalid, the remainder of this Act or any provisions
14 hereof not affected thereby shall continue to be in force and effect.

15 Sec. 20. *Repealing Clause*. – Any law, presidential decree or issuance,
16 executive order, letter of instruction, rule or regulation inconsistent or contrary to the
17 provisions of this Act is hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

18 Sec. 21. *Effectivity*. –This Act shall take effect after fifteen (15) days following
19 its complete publication in the Official Gazette or a newspaper of general circulation.

20 Approved,