



ECMI's statement of support to DOLE's upgrade of policies covering the Filipino household workers to be deployed overseas

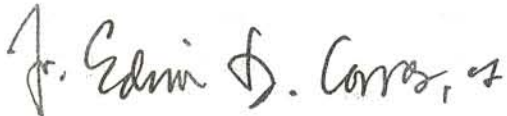
For over two decades now of sending our Filipino women overseas to work as household workers, their situation has never really improved. Many advocates for migrants in the Catholic Church had been appealing for the protection of their rights and promotion of their welfare as they are considered the most vulnerable workers considering their specific working environment. We recognized that while there were many attempts in the past to safeguard their situations, those systems however had always been abused by many exploitative recruiting agencies and several employers. We believed that the recently declared policy reforms covering the household workers will not necessarily resolve all the problems surrounding their deployment, nevertheless these would improve their worsening condition, such as the case of those OFWs working in Lebanon or somehow would lead the Philippines to graduate from sending household workers who are less skilled in protecting and preserving their rights. The reforms are not that all perfect but we wish to praise those parts that deserve commendation. The abuse to the system would most likely to happen again, but we could only hope that the new reforms would empower our women household workers from now on.

We commend the governing board of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) under your department for the resolutions made specifically affecting the following:

1. Age requirement of 25 years old. Having raised the minimum age requirement to 25 years old, our household workers to be deployed overseas would have better psycho-emotional and physical preparation for the work.
2. Minimum wage of US\$400. Having raised their minimum monthly salary to US\$400 is the most natural thing if employers would really like to hire skilled household workers as described by the new policy. There are countries that could well afford to hire household workers at US\$400. The Philippines should only allow countries willing to pay the set wage.
3. No Placement Fee Policy. The prohibition to collect placement fee from the household workers prior or during their employment has been what we were advocating for the longest time. We hope that this would apply as well to other OFWs. The employer should pay for the placement fee of their workers if that is necessary.
4. Pre-Qualification Certificate. The requirement of Pre-Qualification Certificate could thwart abuse and exploitation when implemented well. This could provide household workers a better view of what is in store for them.

We observed that while we could have good policy bills for our workers, the lack of monitoring work is where most of our workers fell victims from the exploitation of abusive employers and agents. We recommend to our government to strengthen the aspect of monitoring in the site and in the country. I think, the Filipino communities overseas and our network of pastoral workers and chaplains are most willing to be of help on this aspect of monitoring when our government officials would consistently show sincerity and dedication in their assistance to our distressed workers at the site.

On behalf of Bishop Precioso Cantillas, SDB, DD
Chairman, Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care
of Migrants and Itinerant People of CBCP



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