

BALIKABAYANIHAN CAMPAIGN

A. Introduction/Rationale

COVID-19, characterized as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO), and with an increasing number of countries experiencing clusters of cases or community transmission and with no available vaccine yet, countries around the world implemented an unprecedented shutdown on operations of almost all services to at least limit the number of and rate of transmission. With the shutdown, small to large industries all over the world were forced to reduced and/or permanently ceased operations.

A never seen before scale of returning overseas workers ensued, seeking the comfort and support of their home countries. The most affected are the domestic workers who are mostly women and other workers in Asia, Middle East and Europe whose employers have been affected by the economic impact of COVID-19. Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) who were repatriated as a consequence of the pandemic arrived by the thousands and there are still thousands who are going to come home in the next months because of the economic crisis. Most of those who came home are not prepared and do not have enough savings, psychosocial and technical preparation for reintegration. There are also several micro-enterprises owned by individual or group of OFWs who returned that have been affected by the pandemic. These OFWs need assistance so they will not revert back to poverty and mitigate other possible social issues like malnutrition, non-attendance to school, violence against women, among others.

While there are available grants and loan programs for the returning OFWs of government agencies like the DOLE-OWWA-NRCO, DA, DTI and DOST, among others, the returning OFWs need technical assistance and mentors for them to be able to access the said programs, start their chosen business enterprise, re-strategize their business and/or develop marketing strategies. Without enough technical support or continuous mentoring, they might not be able to sustain their business; might end up in debt; and, would be unable to reintegrate and would find ways to go back abroad.

OFWs have helped our economy stay afloat while most of the world were hardly hit in the past economic crises. OFW remittances provided the growth that matters most in the lives of the Filipinos as money transferred from all over the world accounts for at least 10 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Now that most OFWs and their families are also affected, this is high time for the country to give back.

Moved by the difficult situation that many OFWs are faced with during the pandemic, the Atikha, a civil society organization working with Overseas Filipinos and their families to maximize the gains of working abroad, signed-up with the '**Be A Volunteer**' Platform of

the Philippine National Volunteer Service Coordinating Agency (PNVSCA). Atikha in partnership with OWWA NRCO committed to spearhead a movement that will call for the support of all sectors of society to help address the situation of OFWs.

The Balikabayanihan Campaign is reliving the spirit of “Bayanihan” or volunteerism among Filipinos from all walks of life and creed to contribute in whatever they could to provide a helping hand to our Overseas Filipinos by providing them the necessary support they most need to reintegrate and succeed in their chosen investments and/or business endeavors.

The campaign calls on the volunteerism spirit of Filipinos to help the returning women and men OFWs who partly saved the country during past economic crises. It is also a call for partnership by the Overseas Filipino organizations with government agencies, local government units, development agencies, civil society organizations and the private sector to look into the plight of the OFWs by providing the needed resources – manpower and funds and/ or mobilizing their volunteer network to serve as mentors to the OFWs.

In consultation with the returning women and men OFWs and their families, among their top worries are how they would sustain their living. The interventions they desire includes job placement, skills and livelihood trainings, psychosocial services, among others. It is in this light that the focus of the campaign has been anchored.

B. Goal and Objectives

The overall goal of the campaign is to provide COVID-19 displaced and repatriated women and men OFWs with sustainable livelihood opportunities in the country.

Specifically the campaign shall pursue the following objectives:

1. To mobilize technical assistance from diaspora, migrants, civil society organizations, development agencies and private sector to help the returnees access capital, market, training and other consultancy services to start, scale up or re-strategize their business; and
2. Engage the support and participation of the National and Local Government in the Balikabayanihan by mapping and providing access to their services that can assist in the reintegration of repatriated women and men OFWs.

C. Implementation Mechanism

1. Principles in Implementing the Campaign

To ensure that the initiative contributes to the overall goal of reintegration, the following principles are adopted:

- **Integrated approach.** The initiative shall combine social and economic interventions in addressing the concerns of the OFWs. As such, partnerships with various sectors shall be pursued so that the OFWs will be referred to a mix of interventions.
- **Multi-stakeholder Consultation and Participation.** The campaign shall involve national and local government, OFW organizations, NGOs, faith based organizations, private sector and other migration stakeholders working on migration and development initiatives in all the stages of the campaign, i.e. understanding the context or situational analysis, planning, advocacy, execution, monitoring and evaluation.
- **Gender Responsive.** Mainstreams gender equality, gender sensitivity, need for shared responsibility in all information and training program among OFWs, families and migration stakeholders. To the extent possible, data shall be sex-disaggregated to allow gender analysis in all the phases of the campaign implementation.
- **Rights Based.** Protect the welfare of OFWs and empowers them and their families as partners in migration and development initiatives.
- **Development Oriented.** Interventions contribute to the sustainable development of the migrants, their families and communities. Reintegration program is linked with the development strategy of the provinces and regions where OFWs came from. It supports OFW owned cooperatives and social enterprises.

2. Implementation Process

- a. The campaign shall come in two phases. The first phase focuses on volunteer engagement. This includes the mapping and mobilizing private sector resources and organizing volunteer mentors to support the campaign.
- b. The second phase, on the other hand, deals with converging the volunteer and private sector efforts with the government regular programs to ensure complementation of efforts and sustainability. It shall seek the support of government agencies that have programs supporting OFWs or are able to mobilize other government instrumentalities to support the initiative, such as, but not limited to the following: Department of Labor and Employment and its attached

agencies, namely, Overseas Workers Welfare Administration -National Reintegration Center for OFWs (OWWA-NRCO), Department of Science and Technology (DOST), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Trade and Industry and its attached agency, the Cooperative Development Authority, National Economic and Development Authority, Department of Social Welfare and Development, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO), among others.

The private and government sector complementation for this initiative is crucial given the possible multifarious negative effect of the pandemic.

- c. To ensure the sustainability of efforts, an advisory group or steering committee shall be organized. The members of the advisory group shall come from selected private sector organizations (business or not for profit) who have signed-up to the campaign and government organizations who expressed support to the initiative. A composite secretariat composed of PNVSCA, OWWA-NRCO, Atikha shall provide technical and administrative support to the advisory or steering committee. A partnership agreement will be entered into by the members of the steering committee as well as with the cooperating organizations to ensure that the members deliver their commitments.
- d. The initiative shall be implemented using existing government inter-agency structures such as the Sub-Committees on International Migration under the Regional Development Councils (RDCs) and other similar structures at the local government units and in coordination with local NGOs and private sector organizations, Overseas Filipino organizations, among others. If the provincial committees of migration and development have not been organized, it is suggested that committees under the Provincial Development Councils may be designated to take the lead in implementing the campaign at the sub-regional level who shall also oversee the implementation and monitoring of the program in the grassroots-level.

3. Mechanics of the Campaign

The following are some general mechanics of the campaign:

- a. Gender sensitive tri-media campaign will be launched to inform prospective volunteer mentors and partners and repatriated OFWs and OFW owned group enterprises to participate in the program. PNVSCA shall spearhead the call for the voluntary support of Private Business Sector Groups, Civil Society Organizations, Development Agencies and private sector as mentors, trainers and advisers or resource providers.
- b. An on-line registration of participating volunteer mentors and partner organization as well as repatriated OFWS and OFW owned group enterprises shall be launched. The

registration link is at www.balikabayanihan.org. To address the digital divide, a mechanism for enrollment not using the internet shall be devised.

- c. Atikha and OWWA-NRCO will provide orientation to mentors and repatriated OFWs on the mechanics of the engagement of the Balikabayanihan mentors and repatriated OFWs.
- d. PNVSCA shall facilitate the matching of the volunteer mentors/service providers with the repatriated OFWs who enrolled with Balikabayanihan.
- e. Partner government agencies and local government agencies may help in the campaign as coordinators, service providers, mentors, financial literacy and business advisers.
- f. A support system shall also be organized:
 - Adopt a returnee.** Returnee can be in need of financial, technical and counseling services and if one adopts a returnee this person will link the returnee to needed services required until they are able to set up their own livelihood or job etc.
 - Adopt an OFW owned cooperative or social enterprise.** Individual or Organizations can adopt a group or a cooperative to help re-strategize, link to market, technical assistance or capital.
 - Other services.** A volunteer mentor or partner can choose not to adopt a repatriated OFW or organization but can provide other services to large number of repatriated OFWs such as training, counseling, financial assistance, scholarships, provision of equipment or raw materials or other services.
- g. Services of Balikabayanihan partner organizations will be posted in the Balikabayanihan website where the OFWs could enroll and avail of their services.

4. Program Beneficiaries

Who can enroll as beneficiary in the Balikabayanihan Campaign?

- a. Repatriated OFWs and their families interested in setting up Business/ scaling up or re-strategizing business
- b. OFW returnees and their families interested in re-strategizing business
- c. OFW organizations interested in starting, re-strategizing or scaling up business
- d. OFW needing reskilling and job facilitation

5. Volunteers and Partners

Who can participate as Volunteer Mentor or Partner?

- a. Any individual interested to adopt a repatriated OFWs and provide any form of assistance can participate in the volunteer Mentor Program;
- b. Any organization who can provide any of the following:
 - a. Financial Literacy, Skills and Entrepreneurship Training
 - b. Business Mentoring
 - c. Psychosocial Counseling
 - d. Financial Services
 - e. Mobilize Mentors
 - f. Link to business opportunities, supply chain and market
 - g. Equipment and Raw materials
 - h. Administrative and Other services

6. Advocacy

A communication and advocacy plan shall be developed to ensure strategic and sustained promotion of the call to partnership. The ComPlan shall include, among others the following:

1. Enlisting the participation of the Philippine Information Agency (PIA) and other government media outfits
2. Involving the Major Tri-Media Networks during the Program launch
3. Engaging different stakeholders to support the economic and psychosocial needs of the repatriated OFWs

D. Monitoring and Evaluation

The PNVSCA shall take the lead in monitoring the implementation of the campaign and regularly report the monitoring result to the Steering Committee/Advisory Group and initiate the conduct of problem solving sessions with the partners, whenever necessary.

In collaboration with other partners, the PNVSCA shall initiate the conduct of an evaluation of the initiative by a third party to identify lessons learned to guide the development of interventions that will make use of volunteerism as a strategy for reintegration.

For more information about the Balikabayanihan Campaign, contact:

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