



PAMBANSANG SAMAHAN NG MGA NARS NG PILIPINAS, INC.

(PHILIPPINE NURSES ASSOCIATION, INC.)
Member, INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF NURSES

1663 F.T. Benitez St.,
Malate, Manila 1004
Philippines

Telephone: (632) 400 4430 / (632) 521 0937 / (632) 536 1888
Telefax: (632) 525 1596
E-mail Address: philippinenursesassociation@yahoo.com.ph
Website: www.pna-ph.org

THE PHILIPPINE NURSES ASSOCIATION'S POSITION PAPER ON THE PLIGHT OF FILIPINO NURSES UNDER JPEPA IMPLEMENTATION August 23, 2010

Since the implementation of the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA) last May 2009, two batches of nurses have already gone to Japan. The said 138 nurses have undergone six months training to study Nihongo. All of them expressed the inadequacy of such language preparation for them to pass the Nihongo Nursing Board Examination. The only Filipina, Ms. Ever Lalin from Abra, who passed the examination in February 2010, had received the support of her employer (Red Cross International Hospital) who paid for her daily tutorial language training in a hospital setting beyond the six months language course. This only proves the long-standing position of the Philippine Nurses Association that adequate language training must be done first in the country prior to their deployment in Japan to avoid exploitation of our Filipino nurses.

The Philippine Nurses Association demands the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) in the country and the Government of Japan to review the provisions in JPEPA pertinent to hiring and deployment of Filipino nurses. PNA received complaints from some nurses who recently returned to the country that some benefits have not been complied with by their Japanese employers after the six-months language training. Working as "Nurse Assistants" entitles them to receive Y900 per hour but some are getting lower rate and their overtime and holiday pay not given. Our nurses are depressed to find out that their Japanese Nurse Assistant counterparts who are only high school graduates are receiving Y2,500 per hour.

Worst, there were some employers who have not facilitated decent housing accommodation for Filipino nurses after the language training. Thus, even their living conditions in Japan have been very miserable. Specifically, the Filipino nurses find themselves in extremely frustrating situations that leave them no choice but contemplate leaving Japan soon. In fact, since last year, there are already about 13 nurses from the two batches deployed in Japan, who have returned to the country.

	2009	2010	Total
Deployed	* 92	*46	138
Returnees	2	11	13

* Source: POEA 2010, compiled by IHPDS

JPEPA is a cheap labor trap for Filipino nurses and caregivers, requiring them to pass the Licensure examinations within three years with only six months of formal Basic Nihongo study and occasional group reviews. Considering that medical kanji is extremely difficult even to their Nihongo teachers in Japan, this highly restrictive condition reflects a serious barrier for Filipino nurses to be part of the local nursing workforce in Japan. Making them work on a temporary basis as nurse assistants simply reflects the fact they are treated as expendable cheap commodity.

The salary and benefits for Filipino nurses in Japan as written in their Contracts must be monitored and studied in the light of affording a decent living wage. With majority of the health workers receiving only a net pay of about 60,000 yen after deductions, they have to resort to extraordinary remedies just to meet all of their living expenses in Japan: house rent, electricity, gas supply, Internet connection, cellular phone bills, and transport expenses. This puts them on a starvation situation and makes them unable to send a substantial amount of money to their respective dependents in their homelands. Thus, the Japan International Corporation of Welfare Services (JICWELS) must ensure that they choose employers who can really afford to offer good wage packages when hiring Filipino health workers.

Given the above conditions, the Philippine Nurses Association strongly recommends the following:

1. Immediate review and amendment of the JPEPA provisions related to hiring of Filipino nurses and caregivers in Japan;
2. The Philippine government to facilitate free Japanese language training to qualified nurses in the Philippines prior to their employment in Japan;
3. POEA and JICWELS to investigate on the plight of Filipino nurses in Japan and ensure protection of their basic right to decent work conditions in Japan;
4. Employers of nurse returnees to immediately provide their unpaid benefits during their work with the said companies;
5. JICWELS to choose only employers who can afford to provide just wage and compensation benefits due for nurses in Japan; and
6. Involve Philippine Nurses Association in the orientation of Filipino nurses prior to their employment to Japan.



TERESITA IRIGO-BARCELO, PhD, RN
National President
Philippine Nurses Association