

10 December 2018

POLO-Bahrain Holds Workers' Rights Forum

In celebration of the 85th Anniversary of DOLE and OFW Family Day, the Philippine Embassy and the Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO) in Bahrain hosted the Forum on Workers' Rights entitled "Usapang Karapatan sa Paggawa Para sa Mga Manggagawang Pilipino sa Bahrain" on December 07, 2018 at the Philippine Embassy grounds.

Labor Attaché Vicente M. Cabe, in his Welcome Remarks, stressed to the 113 attendees, comprised of both skilled and Household Service workers, the numerous initiatives of the Philippine Government to ensure the utmost protection and well-being of OFWs. He added that the objectives of the forum are to widely disseminate the various services and programs of the government agencies intended for OFWs and their families and to heighten awareness of their rights and obligations as workers in Bahrain and the legal remedies and helplines available for labor-related issues and concerns. With this information, their capacities are strengthened and thereby lessen their vulnerabilities to abuse and exploitation.



Consul-General Maria Paz Cortes, in her inspirational message, stressed that the Philippine Embassy is always ready to assist OFWs especially in times of dire need



AS Arlene V. Marasigan discussed the basic labor rights of both skilled workers and Household Service Workers

On the other hand, Consul-General and Chargé d' Affaires Maria Paz Cortes, in her Inspirational Message, shared that the Government of the Philippines is aiming to be part of the Global Compact of Nations which draws international cooperation in combatting illegal recruitment and human trafficking.

Also in the said event, Arlene Marasigan, Administrative Staff of POLO, exhaustively discussed the rights of migrant workers in Bahrain which included the minimum labor standards covering wages, leaves, medical, personal life and repatriation insurances, work hours and overtime pay, among others, while Redina C. Manlapaz, Welfare Officer,

shared the numerous types of labor-related complaints that are often reported to OWWA like non-

payment of salary & other legal entitlements, contract substitution, illegal dismissal and the legal remedies available to workers when faced with any of these types of cases.

On the various Philippine Government agencies' programs and services for OFWs, Lorna Bacolong, Administrative Staff, shared POLO Bahrain's frontline services and programs which include the verification of recruitment documents, job orders and employment contracts to ensure proper documentation and compliance to rules and regulations including minimum labor standards prescribed by POEA; assistance to vacationing OFWs in securing the Balik-Manggagawa- Overseas Employment Certificate (BM-OEC) online; and, support to the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Resource Center (MWOFRFC) which, aside from accommodating distressed OFWs who are awaiting resolution of their cases and eventual repatriation, is a hub of various resources that all OFWs can choose to access.



AS Lorna Bacolong led the discussion of the various frontline services and programs of POLO-Bahrain



Welfare Officer, Redina C. Manlapaz, in sharing the programs and services of OWWA, zeroed in on the Welfare assistance, Reintegration programs and E-Card of the agency

Consul General and Charge d' Affaires Maria Paz Cortez and the ATN Team, on the other hand, elaborated on the Assistance to Nationals (ATN) and consular services and Flexi-Permit assistance of the Philippine Embassy. On consular concerns, Filipinos are assisted in securing and renewing their Philippine passports and the registration of births, deaths and marriages of Filipinos. ATN services cover repatriation of Filipinos (illegal/overstaying, detainees after serving sentence, medical evacuation and shipment of remains), police concerns (assistance in filing complaints, rescue and transfer of custody) and legal assistance (claims for benefits, jail and hospital visits, legal assistance in case prosecution, tracking the whereabouts of missing nationals) and maintaining a 24/7 hotline to respond to inquiries and distress calls.

Next, Welfare Officer Redina Manlapaz of OWWA, in discussing OWWA's programs, zeroed in on welfare management and reintegration program packages which prepares OFWs and their families for their eventual return and reintegration back to their families and communities through trainings on Financial Literacy and Entrepreneurship Development and Management.

Further, Mr. Edre G. Bayno of the Social Security System focused his presentation on the importance of being a member of SSS and making continuous contributions to the agency as workers get to enjoy short-term benefits related to disability, sickness and maternity and long-term benefits related to retirement and death, while Ms. Alistair P.S.A. Sicat of Pag-Ibig introduced participants to the importance of saving and investing in Pag-Ibig where money put in yields high return, is tax-free and is used as guarantee in accessing calamity and housing loans with the agency.



Labor Attaché Vicente M. Cabe responded to issues raised by workers during the Open Forum

The Open Forum was facilitated by Labor Attaché Vicente M. Cabe and responded to questions related to non-payment of correct salaries, refusal of employers to grant release to workers after completion of contract, and issues related to Flexi-Permit holders being offloaded at the NAIA terminal.

In wrapping up the Forum, Labor Attaché Cabe especially thanked the Foreign Placement Agencies who are pivotal partners in mobilizing

participants to POLO-organized fora and in ensuring the protection and well-being of OFWs in Bahrain while urging the participants to educate themselves of their rights and obligations and to not hesitate to seek the assistance of the Philippine Embassy at the first sign of trouble.

###LABacolong



ATN Team of the Philippine Embassy discussed the various Assistance to Nationals (ATN) available to OFWs and their families



Edre Bayno, SSS Representative, shared the many benefits of being an SSS member



Alistair PS Sicat, Pag-Ibig Representative, also urged participants to put in investments as these are secured, with high yield and tax-free



POLO-OWWA Bahrain Team including the attached agencies, SSS and Pag-Ibig celebrated DOLE's 85th Anniversary with the wards housed at the MWOFCR

Prepared by:

LORNA A. BACOLONG
Administrative Staff

Approved by:

VICENTE M. CABE
Labor Attaché