

Poaching is a crime.

Poaching people is even worse.

It is a heinous crime against humanity.

Stop the Poaching of  
Nurses and Doctors!

**SUPPORT ETHICAL  
RECRUITMENT  
NOW!!!**

Will YOU  
let THEM  
POACH  
Our  
PEOPLE?



PGEA

Public Services Labor Independent Confederation (PSLINK), Alliance of Filipino Workers (AFW), Confederation of Independent Unions in the Public Sector (CIU), Philippine Government Employees Association (PGEA)

\*\* Email [jill\\_of\\_pslink@yahoo.com](mailto:jill_of_pslink@yahoo.com) \*\*

# Who are THEM?

Severe shortages of staff and skills in the health systems of wealthy countries like US, Canada and UK have led to the aggressive recruitment of health workers from developing countries like ours.

**Governments and private employers of developed countries** which have to contend with their increasingly graying population have chosen to address their shortfalls by mass recruiting health care workers abroad instead of educating an adequate number of their own. **Private recruitment agencies** have cashed in on the increasing demand for health care workers regardless of the devastating impacts on the health systems of developing countries.

Further, our **own government** is also to blame as it has allowed and even encouraged the out-migration of health workers abroad since it depends heavily on the dollar remittances of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) to prop up the economy.

# Who are the PEOPLE?

Our country is being stripped of our skilled workers like **doctors and nurses**. The Philippines is now touted as the # 1 exporter of nurses in the world while it is second in exporting doctors. Because of the higher demand for nurses, many doctors are opting to take up nursing so that they could land a job abroad. An estimated 3500 doctors turned nurses have left the country since 2000 while around 4000 are currently enrolled in abbreviated nursing courses.

Since the nursing profession is comprised mostly of women, majority of those who are recruited abroad are **women**. Women bear the brunt of poverty and are forced to seek greener pastures in other countries. Many women health workers leave the

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workers. In the Philippines, the main push factors that force health workers to go abroad include inadequate pay, deplorable working conditions, poor health facilities and lack of opportunities and career development. Addressing these problems will greatly retain health workers in developing countries that sorely need their human resources for health.

The Department of Health in developing countries should establish a **comprehensive and effective human resources for health development plan** which will set, among other things, retention, compensation and reintegration measures. The plan should also set the procedures for **gathering complete data on the losses of health care workers** in order for developing countries to better strategize for the development and distribution of health professionals.

## PROPOSED LOCAL INITIATIVES

- 1.) Pressure Department of Health to support the proposals for a World Health Organization (WHO) Code of Practice in the international recruitment of health workers
- 2.) Raise awareness on the issues of migration in the health sector through education seminars, public forum or debates, campaign materials, signature campaigns, media releases etc.
- 3.) Collaborate with other organizations or networks to further strengthen credibility and lobbying capacity
- 4.) Monitor and document violations on migrant health workers rights
- 5.) Share with the government whatever research findings or data you may have that can support them in developing ethical recruitment policies or health human resource plan

# Ethical Recruitment Strategies

Instruments such as a **Code of Practice** should be established and implemented which will protect developing countries from aggressive recruitment of their health care workers

There should be **constant monitoring of adherence** to the Code of Practice or other such instruments that protect developing countries from unethical recruitment. Monitoring will ensure that compliance to the instruments is maintained.

Private employers and recruiters must **share the responsibility** in implementing ethical recruitment principles and policies.

Developed countries should **pay compensation to sending countries** for the loss of their health professionals. For instance, they can opt to pay for the cost of training of replacement personnel or invest in improving health care services or education of health professionals in the developing country.

**Information** on the realities of unabated migration of health care workers and the unethical mass recruitment of skilled doctors and nurses by developed countries should be properly **disseminated** to the people.

**Bilateral agreements** between countries should be encouraged.

Recruiters should be required to provide **complete and accurate information** to aspiring migrant health workers on the nature and requirements of the job, pay, work conditions, rights and obligations etc.

**Sustainable solutions** should be developed to address the fundamental reasons behind unabated migration of health

country because of inadequate pay, poor working conditions and lack of opportunities and yet, when they are finally accepted as a migrant worker, they have to struggle with gender and racial discrimination, low pay and highly stressful workloads. In addition, many do not get the recognition of their education and experience that they merit leaving them confined to work way below their capacity and level of training.

## How are **WE** affected?

Nearly 75% of Filipinos live in poverty. These people are forced to depend on health services provided by the government since they cannot afford private health care. However, the quality of public

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health services is depressing because the government has allocated a mere 1 % of the national budget to health. Filipinos continuously complain of lack of adequate health facilities and medical supplies in hospitals and health centers. Now they also have to contend with **lack of doctors and nurses**.

Even with the proliferation of nursing schools and the steady increase of people taking up nursing, there is a disturbing decline of health professionals in the country. Because of the aggressive recruitment from other countries without accompanying compensation for sending countries, the export-oriented stance of the Philippine government coupled with other internal problems like rising health care costs and a meager health budget, thousands of doctors and nurses are forced to leave the country. Thus, we bear the expenses of educating and training doctors and nurses but receive no compensation when developed countries recruit them. Thus, there is an alarming shortage of health care workers

in the country forcing hospitals to close down. Since 2000, 1,000 private hospitals have already closed down due to the exodus of health care workers abroad and at present, only 700 continue to operate which is 40 % of the total number of privately run hospitals five years ago.

If wealthy countries continue to actively source their health workers from our own pool of doctors and nurses while our government continues to lend a deaf ear against the devastating effects of unabated migration and unethical recruitment, not only will it be impossible for us to achieve the Millenium Development Goals in health, but we just might have to prepare ourselves for a **health care system collapse in the near future.**

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## What can be **done**?

While migration is a normal movement of people and should not be stopped since it gives people an alternative for better opportunities, **ethical recruitment policies** and **strategies** should be developed and implemented to promote a healthy system of migration in the health sector. These recruitment policies for health workers should be formulated in full consideration of the "declining number of health care workers in developing countries, worsening quality of public health services, increasing costs of health care and insufficient budget allocation for health."

# Ethical Recruitment

Is about...

- \* Promoting and upholding **everybody's right to accessible and affordable quality health services**
- \* Protecting and Promoting the rights of migrant health workers
- \* Upholding **transparency and fairness** in recruiting health workers
- \* **Cooperating** with other governments in tailoring international recruitment strategies to promote **mutual benefit** and avoid further damaging the health systems of developing countries
- \* Making migration a **choice**, not a **necessity**