

TWENTIETH CONGRESS OF THE
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
Second Regular Session

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)
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Senate
Office of the Secretary

26 AUG 25 P 4 :09

SENATE

S.B. No. 2423

RECEIVED BY: 

Prepared and submitted by the Committees on Migrant Workers and Finance with
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AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A COMPREHENSIVE, INTEGRATED, AND SUSTAINABLE
REINTEGRATION PROGRAM FOR OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines
in Congress assembled:*

1 Section 1. *Title.* — This Act shall be known as the "Bagong Balikbayan Act."

2 Sec. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* — The State recognizes the invaluable contributions
3 of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) to national development and is committed to
4 upholding their fundamental rights, including the right to equal opportunity, decent
5 living, dignity, and participation in decision-making processes affecting their lives and
6 well-being. Further, it is the declared policy of the State to:

7 (a) Implement a comprehensive, integrated, and sustainable integration
8 program for returning OFWs, addressing economic, social, psychosocial,
9 gender-responsive, and cultural dimensions, regardless of their
10 documentation status;

11 (b) Ensure such reintegration programs are customized to the needs and skills
12 of OFWs and mainstreamed throughout the migration cycle and promote:

13 (1) Access to local employment, entrepreneurship, agriculture, fisheries,
14 aquaculture, and other livelihood opportunities;

15 (2) Development of financial literacy programs; and

16 (3) Attainment of economic self-sufficiency, social stability, and psychosocial
17 well-being for returning OFWs and their families.

- 1 (c) Foster conditions where migration is a matter of choice rather than
2 necessity; and
- 3 (d) Collaborate with relevant public and private stakeholders in the design,
4 implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of reintegration programs and
5 assistance.

6 *Sec. 3. Definition of Terms.* — As used in this Act, the following terms are defined
7 as follows:

- 8 (a) *Full-cycle Reintegration Program* - refers to interventions starting with the
9 pre-departure stage, on-site support during employment, and assistance
10 upon return;
- 11 (b) *Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW)* - refers to a Filipino who is to be engaged,
12 is engaged, or has been engaged in remunerated activity in a country of
13 which they are not an immigrant, citizen, or permanent resident or is not
14 awaiting naturalization, recognition, or admission, whether land-based or
15 sea-based regardless of status; excluding a Filipino engaged under a
16 government-recognized exchange visitor program for cultural and
17 educational purposes;
- 18 (c) *Reintegration* - refers to a holistic process by which an overseas Filipino or
19 overseas Filipino worker, on his/her own or with the assistance of the
20 government and other duty bearers (private sector, development NGOs or
21 organizations), returns to the Philippines permanently, in a comfortable and
22 productive state, through a series of preparations or interventions geared
23 towards his/her specific needs, goals, interests, capacities and potentials.
- 24 (d) *Reintegration Programs* – refers to a measure or set of measures intended
25 for mainstreaming and sustainable return of OFWs into Philippine society,
26 including, but not limited to, livelihood projects, wellness programs, financial
27 literacy programs and other similar projects; Provided, That reintegration
28 programs shall be based on the specific needs and skills of the returning
29 OFWs and shall be anchored on a national reintegration framework defining
30 the fundamental principles, vision and direction, strategies and characteristics
31 of an effective gender-responsive and sustainable reintegration;

1 (e) *Undocumented OFW* - refers to an OFW whose employment documents have
2 not been processed through the Department of Migrant Workers and who
3 does not have the right visa for entry as worker in the host country, or whose
4 documents are incomplete or invalid.

5 Sec. 4. *Applicability.* – This Act shall apply to all returnee-OFWs, irrespective of
6 their typology and status, including:

7 (a) Land-based and sea-based OFWs;

8 (b) Documented or undocumented OFWs;

9 (c) OFWs who have been voluntarily or mandatorily repatriated, regardless of
10 the grounds for such repatriation;

11 (d) OFWs returning to the country due to distressing circumstances in the
12 host country, such as war or conflict, economic instability, abuse or exploitation,
13 pandemics, natural disasters and diplomatic fallout.

14 This Act shall also extend to OFWs who require targeted assistance, including senior
15 or solo-parent OFWs. Furthermore, the families of returnee-OFWs shall also be
16 covered and benefited by the provisions of this Act, subject to and as may be further
17 detailed within the implementing rules and regulations promulgated hereto.

18 Sec. 5. *Institutional Framework for Recognition.*

19 (a) Lead Agency. The DMW shall, in coordination with the OWWA and the
20 National Reintegration Center for OFWS (NRCO), serve as the primary
21 agency responsible for the implementation of the full-cycle reintegration
22 program.

23 (b) Role of the NRCO. The NRCO shall function as the central coordination
24 mechanism to: (1) enhance participation of all stakeholders to achieve
25 transformative, effective, and efficient delivery of services to returnee-OFWs
26 and their families; and (2) Ensure the harmonized and synergized
27 implementation of the full-cycle national reintegration policy and program.

28 The NRCO shall design and institutionalize reintegration frameworks,
29 strategies, and standards that address the economic, social and
30 psychological aspects of return, and shall lead the coordination of relevant
31 government agencies, local government units, and partners from the private
32 sector and civil society. Together with the OWWA, it shall implement

1 reintegration programs and services in accordance with established plans,
2 policies, and guidelines. It shall maintain a centralized reintegration
3 database, undertake policy and program research, and ensure that all
4 reintegration initiatives are coherent, evidence-based, and aligned with
5 national migration and development properties.

- 6 (c) Role of MWOs and OWWA Overseas Welfare Offices (OWOS). The MWOs
7 together with the OWOS located abroad shall be strengthened to enable
8 them to provide reintegration counseling and support services directly to
9 OFWs onsite, including undocumented workers.

10 Sec. 6. *Initiation of Reintegration Process.* —The reintegration process for
11 concerned OFWs shall be initiated by the relevant Migrant Workers Offices (MWOs),
12 as far as practicable, six (6) months before the intended return of the OFW to the
13 Philippines. This process shall commence by providing access to four (4) paths for
14 reintegration, namely:

- 15 (a) Education, upskilling/retooling/micro-credentialing (Kaalaman);
16 (b) Psychosocial and social support services (Kalinga);
17 (c) Entrepreneurship (Negosyo); and
18 (d) Employment (Hanapbuhay).

19 Sec. 7. *Returnee-OFWs Management Information System (ROMIS) and*
20 *Reintegration Management System (RMS).*

- 21 (a) The DMW shall maintain the existing Returnee-OFWs Management
22 Information System (ROMIS) and Reintegration Management System
23 (RMS), which serve as the primary information network and database
24 containing information on the educational attainment, skills levels, and
25 experience of all returning OFWs. The ROMIS shall function as a referral
26 system to the private sector and government institutions to facilitate job
27 matching, possible hiring, and/or skills upgrading.
- 28 (b) Within the ROMIS framework, the DMW shall finalize the development and
29 operationalization of the RMS. The RMS shall be an online system and
30 platform designed to streamline the reintegration process for returnee-
31 OFWs. It shall provide access to a range of services, including financial
32 literacy programs, livelihood training, and access to funding opportunities.

(c) Both the ROMIS and RMS shall facilitate effective connections with government and private sector partners to ensure a smooth transition for returnee-OFWs back into local employment or entrepreneurship. Subject to applicable data privacy laws, the DMW shall establish clear and effective data-sharing mechanisms, including the execution of data-sharing agreements with concerned agencies, to facilitate access to relevant data and ensure proactive and coordinated service delivery, and non-duplicable interventions. The RMS shall further aim to provide efficient support for the holistic needs of returnee-OFWs and their families, thereby seeking to empower them to reintegrate successfully and continue contributing to national development.

Sec. 8. *Pre-Return and Reintegration Orientation Seminar (PRROS)*. — There shall be a PRROS to be offered by MWOs worldwide, similar in intent to pre-employment, pre-departure, and post-arrival orientation seminars, but concentrating on essential information for a returning OFW seeking to be reintegrated back into the Philippine economy and society. For this purpose, MWOs shall be tasked to develop and implement onsite reintegration preparedness programs and activities for OFWs during their employment, intended to prepare them for their eventual permanent return, whether voluntary or involuntary, to Philippine society. Further, a Reintegration Officer shall be designated in every MWO abroad who shall be primary responsible for the delivery of reintegration services.

Sec. 9. *Components of Reintegration Services*. — Reintegration services shall include the following components provided at relevant stages of the migration cycle:

(a) Pre-Departure:

1. Mandatory pre-departure orientation seminars covering available reintegration services;
2. Financial literacy training focused on management of earnings and future planning; and
3. Family counseling on coping mechanisms for separation and eventual reunification.

(b) On-Site Support:

1. Provision of accessible support services through MWOs for OFWs in distress, including undocumented workers;
2. Opportunities for skills development and training designed to enhance employability upon return; and
3. Establishment of mechanisms for addressing exploitation and abuse, ensuring access to legal and psychosocial support.

(c) Upon Return:

1. Provision of personalized reintegration counseling and case management to develop tailored reintegration plans;
2. Delivery of economic reintegration assistance, including facilitation of job placement, entrepreneurship training, and access to financing;
3. Facilitation of social reintegration support, covering access to housing, documentation, education, healthcare, and social protection schemes;
4. Provision of psychosocial support services addressing mental health concerns and challenges from migration; and
5. Grant of special attention to the needs of vulnerable OFWs, particularly victims of trafficking, persons with disabilities, and those with specific medical or psychosocial needs.

Sec. 10. *Access to Employment Opportunities and Qualification Recognition.* —

(a) Job Fairs. The Department of Migrant Workers (DMW), together with the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) shall, in coordination with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), Department of Education (DepEd), Department of Health (DOH), Civil Service Commission (CSC), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Public Employment Services Office, and in consultation with concerned business chambers and groups in the private sector, private enterprises recognized for ensuring security of tenure, humane conditions of work, and a living wage, and relevant Local Government Units (LGUs), plan and conduct regular series of job fairs in strategic sites and LGUs where there are significant presence of returnee-OFWs.

1 These job fairs shall facilitate employment opportunities in: (1) the private
2 sector; (2) the national or local government, including their agencies,
3 bureaus, offices, instrumentalities, and government-owned and/or
4 controlled corporations (GOCCs), subject to existing qualification standards
5 and other requirements prescribed under applicable Civil Service laws; and
6 (3) academic and non-academic positions in public schools, and state
7 colleges and universities. Such job fairs shall take into consideration the
8 specific skills, credentials, eligibilities, and experience acquired by OFWs
9 from working overseas.

10 (b) Expanded Employment Facilitation. The DMW and other concerned
11 government agencies shall expand the employment facilitation offering for
12 OFWs in the public, private, and development sectors based on progressive
13 eligibility or qualification criteria, in partnership with the relevant national
14 government agencies, the Private Sector Advisory Council, industry or
15 professional associations, and other stakeholders.

16 (c) Civil Service Eligibility. Subject to the mandatory requirement of undergoing
17 prescribed Civil Service examinations, the CSC shall formulate guidelines to
18 grant appropriate civil service eligibility to non-civil service qualified OFWs,
19 taking into consideration the grant of OFW preference rating, based on
20 education, training, length of service and work performance they acquired
21 while living or working overseas; and

22 (d) Skills and Academic Recognition. The Technical Education and Skills
23 Development Authority (TESDA) and the CHED shall provide the necessary
24 rules and regulations to grant pertinent national certification or appropriate
25 degree diploma(s), respectively, recognizing the education, training, and
26 experience OFWs acquire while living or working overseas.

27 *Sec. 11. Business-Oriented Capacity-Building Training.*

28 (a) Provision of Training. The DOLE shall, in coordination with the DTI and the
29 DA, provide Business-Oriented Capacity-Building Training for OFWs who are
30 seeking to set up their businesses.

31 (b) Training Focus Areas. The training shall focus on the following key areas:
32 (1) business conceptualization and conduct of feasibility studies; (2)

1 registration and all other administrative matters related to creating one's
2 own business; (3) safe and sustainable business financing, incorporating
3 the DMW's Financial Awareness Seminar-Small Business Management
4 Training (FAS-SMBT), which promotes financial awareness and provides
5 training for the development and management of small businesses; (4)
6 business promotion, advertising, and marketing; and (5) service or product
7 delivery.

8 (c) Enhancement of FAS-SBMT and Collaboration. The DMW's FAS-SBMT shall
9 strengthen program coordination and shall expand its offerings. Pursuant
10 thereto, the DMW shall collaborate with concerned national government
11 agencies and stakeholders to provide co-opportunities for entrepreneurship
12 development, incubation, marketing, and mentoring.

13 (d) DA Agricultural Credit Policy Council Support (ACPC). The DA's ACPC shall
14 offer capacity-building support alongside its credit programs. The DA and
15 its ACPC shall provide services specifically designed for those engaged in
16 the agri-fishery sector. This support shall be made available to returnee-
17 OFWs applying for ACPC's loan programs to assist them in acquiring the
18 necessary skills and improving their business management.

19 (e) Small Business Corporation (SB Corp). The SB Corp., a government-owned
20 and controlled corporation operating under the DTI, shall support
21 reintegration efforts by providing capacity-building programs and access to
22 credit facilities.

23 (f) Mentorship facilitation. The training provided under this Section shall serve
24 as a means by which returnee-OFWs are assisted in finding and connecting
25 with mentors in the business sector, particularly those established in the
26 industry the returnee-OFW intends to enter.

27 (g) Prioritization. Prioritization for participation in the training and related
28 support under this Section shall be given to those returnee-OFWs with no
29 background in putting together and running or operating their own
30 businesses, particularly those intending to establish a sole proprietorship
31 and having no seasoned business partners.

32 *Sec. 12. Dedicated Financing and Loan Programs.*

- 1 (a) Development and Provision. The DMW and the OWWA shall, in coordination
2 with the Department of Finance (DOF), the Department of Budget and
3 Management (DBM, the DA, particularly its Agribusiness and Marketing
4 Assistance Services (AMAS), and ACPC, Government Financial Institutions
5 (GFIs) and qualified private financial institutions, develop and provide
6 dedicated financing or loan programs.
- 7 (b) Purpose and Terms. These programs shall facilitate the establishment,
8 operation, sustainability, or expansion of enterprises and livelihood projects,
9 including micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), owned by
10 returnee-OFWs, under minimal and affordable terms and conditions.
- 11 (c) Eligibility and Support. (1) The dedicated programs under this section shall
12 primarily cater to returnee-OFWs with no existing enterprise or livelihood
13 project. (2) Returnee-OFWs with an existing enterprise that is dismally
14 performing shall also be eligible: Provided, That the DMW, OWWA, DOF,
15 DBM, DA (through AMAS and ACPC), and GFIs shall provide financial and
16 other support, including technical guidance, necessary to revitalize the
17 undertaking. (3) Returnee-OFWs with existing enterprises deemed robust
18 may be referred to the standing programs of the DTI for appropriate
19 assistance.

20 Sec. 13. *Social Assistance Measures.* — The DMW shall, together with the
21 OWWA, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), and the DA,
22 shall include returnee-OFWs as beneficiaries in their respective social protection and
23 other relevant programs.

24 (a) The DMW and the OWWA, through their regional offices, shall encourage
25 community engagements for returnee-OFWs and their families.

26 (b) All reintegration programs and services, including social assistance
27 measures under this Act, shall be guided by the principles mandated
28 under Section 17 of Republic Act no. 11641, otherwise known as the
29 "Department of Migrant Workers Act," ensuring a multi-dimensional
30 reintegration program that effectively addresses the economic, social,
31 psychosocial, and cultural aspects of reintegration.

1 (c) The implementing rules and regulations of this Act shall contain detailed
2 and specific provisions on social assistance and protection to ensure that
3 more OFWs are included in the various social protection programs
4 offered by the government, the private sector, and non-government
5 organizations (NGOs).

6 Sec. 14. *Program for Qualified OFWs to Teach in the Academe.* — The DMW
7 shall, in coordination with the DEPED, CHED and TESDA, provide a program to invite
8 qualified and highly-skilled OFWs to teach in public schools, colleges, and universities
9 recognized by the DEPED and CHED and/or in training centers accredited by the
10 TESDA.

11 Sec. 15. *Protection of Undocumented OFWs.* — No undocumented OFW shall be
12 denied reintegration services due to their status. Mechanisms shall be established for
13 the regularization of undocumented OFW's status upon return to facilitate access to
14 services and benefits. Information dissemination campaign shall inform
15 undocumented OFWs of their rights and available reintegration support. A dedicated
16 hotline and online platform shall be established for confidential assistance to
17 undocumented OFWs.

18 Sec. 16. *Psychological Support and Counseling.* — The DMW shall, together
19 with OWWA and the DOH, facilitate psychosocial support and reintegration counselling
20 for returnee-OFWs and their families. Priority shall be given to distressed OFWs,
21 including their families, with their respective cases to be managed under a separate
22 and specialized intervention framework to ensure timely, targeted, and appropriate
23 support and intervention.

24 Sec. 17. *Monitoring and Evaluation.* — The DMW shall develop a monitoring and
25 evaluation framework to assess the reintegration program's effectiveness and conduct
26 regular impact assessments to ensure program responsiveness to OFW's evolving
27 needs.

28 Sec. 18. *Right to Participate.* — Former OFWs who are to be reintegrated into
29 the Philippine domestic economy shall, as much as practicable, participate in policy
30 and decision-making processes affecting their rights and benefits under existing laws
31 and under the provisions of this Act.

32 Sec. 19. *Application of Anti-Age Discrimination Law.* —

1 (a) Compliance Obligation. In the extension of services to former OFWs and in
2 all matters concerning their local or domestic employment, all government
3 agencies, GOCCs, and all private corporations, partnerships, sole
4 proprietorships, including NGOs and other kinds of private organizations,
5 shall strictly observe and follow all provisions of R.A. 10911, otherwise
6 known as the "Anti-Age Discrimination in Employment Act."

7 (b) Monitoring and Coordination. The DMW and the DOLE shall constantly
8 coordinate to monitor the plight and situation of all former OFWs employed
9 in local or domestic jobs to ensure full compliance with the aforementioned
10 law.

11 *Sec. 20. Gender-Responsive Reintegration Services* – The DMW, in coordination
12 with OWWA, DSWD, the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) and relevant
13 government agencies and private stakeholders, shall ensure that all reintegration
14 programs and services under this Act are gender-responsive. For this purpose, the
15 following shall be undertaken:

16 (a) Gender-Sensitive Assessment. All returnee-OFWs shall undergo a needs
17 assessment that considers sex, gender, identity, caregiving status, age and
18 other intersectional factors to design appropriate reintegration plans;

19 (b) Tailored Support. Special attention shall be given to the reintegration of
20 women, solo parents, victims of trafficking, persons with disabilities and
21 other vulnerable groups to ensure equal access to economic, psychosocial
22 and social protection services;

23 (c) Capacity Building. All agencies and service providers implementing
24 reintegration programs shall undergo regular gender sensitivity and
25 orientation consistent with R.A. No. 9710, otherwise known as the "Magna
26 Carta of Women" and the Gender and Development (GAD) Framework;

27 (d) Sex-Disaggregated Data. The ROMIS and RMS shall collect and maintain
28 sex-disaggregated and gender-responsive data to inform policy, program
29 design, monitoring and evaluation;

30 (e) Monitoring and Reporting. The DMW shall include in its annual report to
31 Congress, under Section 17 of this Act, the status and outcomes of gender-

responsive reintegration programs, including measurable indicators on women's economic empowerment.

Sec. 21. *National Reintegration Network (NRN)*. — The NRN shall be established through formal partnership agreements with relevant government and private partner agencies. It shall serve to strengthen and institutionalize collaborative efforts aimed at ensuring the effective delivery of reintegration programs and services. The NRN shall facilitate convenient and seamless access to such services through the creation of both Physical and Online One-Stop-Shops, wherein all relevant programs and services are integrated and made available on a unified platform. All government agencies and instrumentalities offering services to OFWs shall form part of the NRN.

Sec. 22. *Creating/Upgrading Offices and Personnel*. — The DMW and other concerned government agencies, in close coordination with the Civil Service Commission, and upon consultation with and approval of the DBM, shall create or upgrade the necessary offices and hire appropriate personnel to ensure the effective implementation of this Act.

Sec. 23. *Non-Diminution of Benefits*. — All rights, privileges, and benefits previously enjoyed by returnee or reintegrated OFWs before the effectivity of this Act, including those set forth in Republic Act No. 8042, otherwise known as the "Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipino Act of 1995", as amended, Republic Act No. 10801 or the "Overseas Workers Welfare Administration Act," and other relevant laws and issuances, including pertinent Supreme Court decisions, shall continue to be recognized and shall not be diminished.

Sec. 24. *Implementing Rules and Regulations*. — The DMW shall, together with the OWWA and the National Reintegration Center for OFWs (NCRO), promulgate the necessary implementing rules and regulations within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act.

The promulgation shall be made in coordination with the key government agencies mentioned in this Act, and in consultation with concerned GOCCs, especially those giving grants, extending loans, and providing technical assistance to MSMEs, and other relevant stakeholders in the private sector and NGOS.

Sec. 25. *Appropriations*. — The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current year's appropriations of the

1 departments and agencies concerned. Thereafter, such amount shall be included in
2 the annual General Appropriations Act.

3 Sec. 26. *Separability Clause.* — If any provision of this Act is declared
4 unconstitutional, the remainder thereof not otherwise affected shall remain in full force
5 and effect.

6 Sec. 27. *Repealing Clause.* — All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and
7 regulations and other issuances or parts thereof which are inconsistent with this Act
8 are hereby repealed, modified or amended accordingly.

9 Sec. 28. *Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following the
10 completion of its publication either in the Official Gazette or in newspaper of general
11 circulation.

Approved,