

**JUSTICE FOR "FLORENCE"
JUSTICE FOR THE NURSING PROFESSION!**

October 1, 2010

The Philippine Nurses' Association condemns in the strongest term the "gang-rape" of a young nurse on September 25, in South Upi, Maguindanao while she was serving as a "nurse-volunteer" under the government project N.A.R.S. *or Nurses Assigned to Rural Service.

The heinousness of the crime forsook all human dignity with the use of treachery and brute force in the attack of 22-year old nurse "Florence" (not her real name) by still unidentified felon/s who left the victim semi-paralyzed and still unable to talk weeks after the crime. Worse, they have virtually "killed" this young nurse's dream and aspiration that began when she took on the challenge to work as a "volunteer" in a remote, unfamiliar place away from home.

The crime is also a gross violation of the rights of the community folks who have been effectively deprived of the services rendered by the nurse-victim. And because of what befell "Florence," the other eight "nurse volunteers" either pulled out or were reportedly reassigned elsewhere causing a significant manpower loss for the only district hospital in the area.

The incident has a far chilling effect on community nurse-practitioners and for others considering this work option because the stakes have now become much costlier. On top of the low financial returns (that come as a "given") the problems of security and safety while in the "line of duty" are now the bigger threats.

While the case of "Florence" highlights the extreme danger nurses are exposed to, there are other insidious forms of injustice that assault nurses and other health care providers in the health setting. These are the perennial symptoms of what can be aptly described as the "chronic ill state" of the Philippine health system: low wages and poor work conditions, unemployment, limited or unfilled government plantilla, heavy workload, non-implementation of the Nursing Law and Magna Carta of Health Workers. All these unmet conditions that should make for a "Positive Practice Environment" contribute to a seeming low regard for the nursing service profession.

Justice for Florence. The authorities must fast-track the resolution of the case and the guilty party/ies be meted the full force of the law.

Protection for nurses and all health workers. The authorities must ensure the safety and protection of nurses and other health workers in whatever setting or workplace they may be. In so doing, the work rendered by health care providers gain value and the idea of service in the community especially in "difficult" posts extolled.

Justice for the Filipino people. Health as a right for every Filipino can only be realized if nurses and other health workers are able to

perform their sworn duty unimpeded and secured.. Sadly, the crime against "Florence" has cast a shadow of fear among community health workers that seriously compromised the delivery of primary health services in the grassroots.

**The N.A.R.S was initiated by the previous administration as a pump-priming project that saw the deployment of some 10,000 nurses in roughly 1,000 "poor" municipalities. Mostly new registered nurses with no experience, they rendered primary health services for a period of 6 months with P8,000 monthly stipend. ###*

**PNA: REVIEW JPEPA'S UNFAIR PROVISIONS ON
HIRING OF NURSES**

August 23, 2010

Since the implementation of the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA) in May 2009, two batches of nurses have already gone to Japan as nursing apprentices. These 138 nurses, highly skilled and experienced, were made to undergo six months training study of the Nihonggo language to increase their chances of passing the Japanese board exams. All, except one, found the language preparation as inadequate and insufficient to help them hurdle the country's licensure examinations executed in Nihonggo. The only Filipina who passed the examination in February 2010 had received ample support from her employer (Red Cross International Hospital) who paid for the language training fees beyond the six months course.

The PNA calls for a review of the provisions in JPEPA pertinent to hiring and deployment of Filipino nurses. This, in light of complaints by some nurses who have 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" entitled them to receive Y900 per hour but some are getting a lower rate and their overtime and holiday pay not given. Our nurses were depressed to find out that their Japanese Nurse Assistant counterparts who are only high school graduates are receiving Y2,500 per hour.

Worse, there were employers who did not facilitate decent housing accommodation for Filipino nurses after the language training. Some Filipino nurses found themselves in extremely frustrating situations that left them with little or no choice but contemplate leaving Japan soon. In fact, since last year, there were already about 13 nurses from the two batches deployed in Japan, who have returned to the country.

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 Nihonggo study and occasional group reviews. Considering that medical *kanji* is extremely difficult even for their Nihonggo teachers, 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 truth that they are treated as expendable cheap commodity.

Given the above conditions, the PNA recommends a review of the JPEPA to amend as necessary unfair provisions on hiring of Filipino nurses and caregivers for Japan. The plight of Filipino nurses in Japan must be investigated to ensure that they receive just wages and are given the benefits due them. There has to be a careful screening of potential employers as a way of protecting our nurses. Finally, the PNA must be involved in the holding of pre-departure and pre-deployment orientation of nurses bound for Japan. ###

**PNA SUPPORTS ACCESSIBLE, AFFORDABLE
UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE PROGRAM**

June 30, 2010

Health is a right enshrined in the constitution yet it remains to be inaccessible for many Filipinos and families whose average income is below poverty level. Seven out of 10 Filipinos cannot afford essential health care. Preventable and infectious diseases continue to be the leading causes of mortality and morbidity. Tuberculosis and malnutrition are still disturbing realities in communities. Even targets to reduce infant and child mortality and improve maternal health as part of our government's commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) appear difficult to attain in the next five years.

The new administration, under President-elect Benigno "Noynoy" C. Aquino III, stirs hope that every Filipino will now have access to quality health care through a centerpiece program called "Universal Health Care (UHC)." The program carries with it the promise that no Filipino would ever die because of lack of essential medicines or inadequate health facilities. UHC promises all Filipinos access to basic health care through a socialized health program that will insure the general population.

The more than 600,000 contingent of professional nurses competent in primary health care shall be at the forefront to deliver quality health services. We believe nurses can very well contribute to the attainment of the goals of a health program that will genuinely promote and protect the people's health, especially the poor and vulnerable sectors of society.

The people's health is a crucial gauge of a socially responsible and responsive leadership. And with the newly-elect President's avowed pursuit of and commitment to people's health, we, representatives of various nursing organizations manifest our unity with this mission.

Note: This is a paid advertisement published in the Philippine Daily Inquirer on noted date shortly after the assumption to office by P-noy. ###



**NURSES DENOUNCE
ABDUCTION AND ILLEGAL DETENTION OF
43 HEALTH WORKERS,
DEMAND THEIR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

February 15, 2010

We, nurses from all over the country, join the collective outrage over the illegal detention of 43 health workers who were abducted early morning of February 6, 2010 by some 300 fully armed, combined elements of the 2nd Infantry Division of the Philippine Army and the Rizal Philippine National Police while holding a health skills training seminar in a private farmhouse in Morong, Rizal.

The organizers of the training activity, namely the Council for Health and Development and the Community Medicine Foundation, affirmed that those abducted were doctors, nurse, midwife and civilian health volunteers affiliated with health NGOs or representatives of people's organizations who gathered to learn, harness health knowledge and skills that they will use to serve poor communities and underserved sectors in far-flung areas.

This incident is disturbing to say the least, as it imperils people's initiatives and efforts to build their own capacities and capabilities to manage their health needs in the absence of adequate public service. For health professionals like us, who may be considering the option of serving in the countryside, this incident is terrifying. For it is not only material comfort that one will be giving up when one chooses the selfless path of service to the poor, but possibly one's life as well.

We call on the civilian authorities, specifically the Department of Health, to assert its civilian supremacy over the military by demanding for the unconditional release of the health workers whose rights were violated when they were arrested not in the act of doing a crime, but while pursuing their civic calling.

FREE the 43 Health Workers NOW! Uphold the People's Right to Health!###

visit: freethehealthworkers.blogspot.com

**PNA ASSERTS NURSES' ROLE in
"The Administration of Life-Saving Drugs and Medicines"**
July 6, 2010

Recognizing that the Filipino nurses are legally mandated by Republic Act 9173 to provide health care techniques and procedures, essential primary health care, comfort measures, health teachings, and **administration of written prescription for treatment therapies, oral, topical and parenteral medications**, the Philippine Nurses Association (PNA) asserts that the DOH Administrative Order No. 2010-0014 pertaining to the "Administration of Life-Saving Drugs and Medicines by Midwives" must submit to the precedence of the nurses' role in the reduction of maternal and neonatal morbidity and mortality.

The nurses in the country form the biggest critical manpower in the health sector with the sufficient preparation and training to respond to the primary and essential health needs of the communities, in partnership with the midwives and doctors. The potential of this health team to respond to health issues and conditions affecting communities is acknowledged especially in the promotion of maternal and child health and prevention of unnecessary deaths among these vulnerable sectors. The basic emergency obstetric and newborn care (BEmONC) protocol of UNICEF and DOH recognizes the valuable contributions of the health team composed of the doctor, the nurse and the midwife.

Generally, nurses in public health settings assume supervisory functions over midwives and barangay health workers who are at the frontline in health promotion and disease prevention programs.

In view of the above, the PNA petitions the Department of Health to review and amend Administrative Order No. 2010-0014 dated May 14, 2010 and instead designate nurses to assume the principal role of administering life-saving drugs and medicines especially in communities where women and children do not have access to emergency health care services. Nurses must also be made to undergo special training on emergency obstetric and newborn care, while ensuring the availability and accessibility of life-saving emergency drugs in primary health facilities. Plantilla positions for public health nurses must be filled up and if necessary, new plantilla positions be created in proportion to the needs of the growing population.###



PHILIPPINE NURSES ASSOCIATION, INC.
88th Foundation Anniversary
53rd Nurses' Week Celebration
2010 National Annual Convention
26-28 October 2010
Fiesta Pavilion, Manila Hotel

***"Delivering Quality,
Serving Communities:
The Challenge for Filipino Nurses
Leading Chronic Care"***

***"Justice for 'Florence'
Justice for the Nursing Profession
Justice for the Filipino People"***

*And other position statements on
issues and concerns that impact
nurses and the nursing practice.*

www.pna-ph.org