

NINETEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)



'22 JUL 12 AIO :26

SENATE
S. B. No. ~~327~~

RECEIVED BY

Introduced by Senator SONNY ANGARA

AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR RURAL EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AND
APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the perennial concern of unemployment. When the pandemic shut down almost all sectors of the country's economy, the Philippine Statistics Authority registered 4.5 million jobless Filipinos or a record-high unemployment rate of 10.3 percent.¹ While unemployment eased to 5.8 percent or about 2.87 million individuals² in the March 2022 Labor Force Survey, this figure is still 0.5 percent higher than the pre-pandemic unemployment rate of 5.3 percent last January 2020.

It should be noted that the fight against COVID-19 is even more challenging in rural areas according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).³ For one, their vulnerability to the pandemic's negative effects is attributed to the communities' much less diversified economy with jobs and occupations that cannot be done remotely.⁴ Another is that these localities are usually distant from commercial hubs that serve as trading centers and health facilities that can adequately handle COVID-19 cases. And even before this public health crisis, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) reported that a third of all rural inhabitants are considered poor.⁵

¹ Philippine Statistics Authority, March 2021. *2020 Annual Preliminary Estimates of Labor Force Survey*.

² Philippine Statistics Authority, May 2022. *Labor Force Survey March 2022*.

³ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, April 2020. *Social protection and COVID-19 response in rural areas*.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). *Philippines*.

The combination of an imminent recession and the lack of significant economic growth in rural areas in previous years protract the shortage of employment opportunities for residents and contribute to more poverty incidence in these areas. The Rural Employment Assistance Program (REAP), which is a temporary work-for-aid initiative for qualified heads of family or unmarried adults including senior citizens, will not only help address the unemployment problem but will also spur agricultural and infrastructure development in the rural areas. More importantly, REAP provides valuable income that could help prop rural families amid the pandemic.

The Program shall provide temporary employment for qualified members of poor households in rural areas, as identified by the National Household Targeting System for Poverty Reduction (NHTS-PR) of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), who volunteers to do unskilled manual work for a minimum of forty-five (45) days but not more than ninety (90) days in every calendar year.

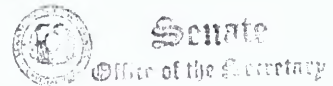
Projects and activities to be identified and undertaken under the REAP may include the following: (a) Development, rebuilding and rehabilitation of agri-based livelihood assets destroyed or lost due to natural disasters; (b) Rehabilitation or development of common service facilities which are being shared and used by poor families as production or consolidation centers such as post-harvest facilities and public markets; (c) Development or rehabilitation of farm-to-market roads and bridges necessary to bring the products of poor families to the market; (d) Disinfection of shared facilities and public spaces to minimize the risk of COVID-19 infection; and (e) Remote or online work projects to enable individuals to earn from the employment assistance through flexible means.

In light of the foregoing, the approval of this bill is earnestly sought.



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

1 **SECTION 1. Short Title.** – This Act shall be known as the "*Rural*
2 *Employment Assistance Program Act.*"

3 **SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy.** – It is a declared policy of the State to
4 promote a just and dynamic social order that will ensure the prosperity and
5 independence of the nation and free the people from poverty through policies that
6 provide adequate social services, promote full employment, a rising standard of
7 living, and an improved quality of life for all. Towards this end, the State shall
8 provide Filipinos with opportunities for just and sufficient means of livelihood. The
9 State shall likewise initiate meaningful employment assistance programs to qualified
10 individuals of poor, disadvantaged or displaced households in rural areas duly
11 identified by the appropriate national agencies.

12 **SEC. 3. Rural Employment Assistance Program.** – There is hereby
13 created a Rural Employment Assistance Program (REAP), which shall provide
14 temporary employment to every qualified individuals who are poor, disadvantaged or
15 displaced or seasonal workers who volunteer to work for a minimum of ten (10)
16 days, but not more than ninety (90) days in a calendar year wherein the minimum
17 and maximum period of engagement can cover a single activity or multiple activities
18 spread out over the course of a calendar year: *Provided,* That qualified individuals

1 may include sub-professionals and senior citizens as defined under Republic Act No.
2 9994 (Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2010).

3 Qualified individuals are not subject to the terms and conditions of regular
4 employment and as such, shall not be deemed to have employer-employee
5 relationship with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), or
6 any agency or institution who utilizes their services with respect to the program.

7 **SEC. 4. Definition of Terms.** – As used in this Act:

8 (a) *Displaced worker* refers to a worker in the formal and informal sectors who
9 became unemployed, underemployed, or have lost livelihood as a result of
10 closure of establishment, economic crisis, retrenchment, termination, natural
11 disaster or calamities;

12 (b) *Poor* refers to individuals and families whose income fall below the poverty
13 threshold as defined by the government and/or cannot afford in a sustained
14 manner to provide their minimum basic needs of food, health, education,
15 housing and other essential amenities of life, or those who have been
16 identified as poor by the National Household Targeting System for Poverty
17 Reduction (NHTS-PR);

18 (c) *Qualified individual* refers to willing and able Filipino citizens who are at least
19 fifteen (15) years of age. Provided, that individuals between the ages fifteen
20 (15) and eighteen (18) may only qualify by first obtaining consent from their
21 parent/s and/or legal guardian, and can only be employed in non-hazardous
22 work environments in accordance with the Labor Code;

23 (d) *Rural area* refers to any barangay with at least fifty percent (50%) land
24 devoted to agriculture, timberland, forest and/or pasture land as determined
25 by the Comprehensive Land Use Plan of the concerned local government unit
26 (LGU); and

27 (e) *Seasonal worker* refers to a worker who performs work or service that is only
28 for a specific period of time or season of the year.

29 **SEC. 5. Qualifications for Availment of Employment Assistance.** – The
30 Local Social Welfare and Development Officers (LSWDOs), in close coordination with
31 other government agencies concerned, as well as the identified rural communities,
32 may conduct a preliminary joint assessment of all poor, disadvantaged or displaced

1 individuals, including seasonal workers who signify interest in undertaking work in
2 order to determine eligibility in availing of the employment assistance program. The
3 assessment shall also take into consideration the inherent knowledge, skills,
4 capacities, and capabilities of potential qualified participants so as to properly
5 determine the type and nature of projects that are most suited to them and their
6 respective communities.

7 The DSWD shall facilitate basic knowledge and skills orientation, including
8 briefings on minimum public health standards and protocols in relation to the
9 COVID-19 pandemic, and capacity-building trainings and seminars as deemed
10 necessary towards project development for qualified participants. The LGUs and
11 program partners concerned may make available for use any tools and equipment
12 necessary for project development to the qualified individuals.

13 **SEC. 6. *Types of Works and Activities under the Program.* –**

14 Employment activities for this purpose shall be designed to mobilize eligible
15 individuals, families, and communities to finish a project within a given time period.
16 These projects may include, but are not limited to the following:

- 17 (a) Development, rebuilding or rehabilitation of agri-based livelihood assets
18 damaged, destroyed, or lost due to natural disasters, such as desilting of
19 irrigation canals, development of paddy dikes, and rehabilitation of water
20 impounding dams;
- 21 (b) Development or rehabilitation of common service facilities, which are being
22 shared and used by poor families as production or consolidation centers like
23 post-harvest facilities, public markets, display centers, and fish ports;
- 24 (c) Development or rehabilitation of physical assets to open up access to areas
25 necessary to transport rural products, such as construction of farm-to-market
26 roads and bridges;
- 27 (d) Protection of natural and productive assets through mitigation and disaster
28 risk reduction measures, such as mangrove planting and rehabilitation, tree
29 planting, seedling preparation, re-forestation and similar activities;
- 30 (e) Social community projects such as repair, maintenance, or improvement of
31 common public facilities and infrastructure such as schools and health
32 centers, debris clearing, declogging of canals, debris segregation and

1 materials recovery, stockpiling and clearing, disinfection and sanitation of
2 shared facilities and public spaces; and

- 3 (f) Remote or online work projects such as digitization of records and collation of
4 inquiries submitted to government agencies: *Provided*, That the DSWD, in
5 coordination with the program partner, shall provide the tools and equipment
6 necessary for remote or online work projects.

7 The DSWD shall provide an updated list of projects that may be undertaken
8 as well as the projects not covered under this Act. This list shall be readily made
9 available to potentially qualified individuals who have expressed their desire to
10 participate in the REAP.

11 **SEC. 7. Rate of Assistance.** – Every position qualified under this Program
12 shall be entitled to receive compensation for each day of work at the prevailing
13 minimum wage set by the Regional Tripartite Wages and Productivity Board
14 (RTWPB) concerned. LGUs may also provide for additional allowances to the
15 beneficiaries in order to cover for other expenses such as transportation and food.

16 **SEC. 8. Micro-insurance Benefits.** – Qualified individuals are granted the
17 option to access micro-insurance as a form of social security in the event of
18 accidental death or dismemberment, medical reimbursement, and bereavement
19 assistance at a socialized cost by mandating the DSWD to provide liaison services
20 necessary to enable qualified individuals access to these social serviced. LGUs may
21 also provide additional allowance to participants to cover insurance costs.

22 **SEC. 9. Appropriations.** – The Secretary of Social Welfare and
23 Development shall include in the DSWD’s programs the implementation of this Act,
24 the initial funding of which shall be charged against the current year’s appropriations
25 of the DSWD. Thereafter, the amount of necessary for its continued implementation
26 shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

27 In addition, the DSWD may accept donations, contributions or grants from
28 foreign and local persons, institutions and governments, among others, for the
29 implementation of the Program.

30 **SEC. 10. Implementing Rules and Regulations.** – Within ninety (90)
31 days after the approval of this Act, the Secretary of the DSWD shall issue the
32 necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

1 **SEC. 11. *Separability Clause.*** – If any portion or provision of this Act is
2 subsequently declared invalid or unconstitutional, other provisions hereof which are
3 not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

4 **SEC. 12. *Repealing Clause.*** – All other laws, acts, presidential decrees,
5 executive orders, presidential proclamations, issuances, rules and regulations, or
6 parts thereof which are contrary to or inconsistent with any of the provisions of this
7 Act are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

8 **SEC. 13. *Effectivity.*** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
9 publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,