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**AN ASSESSMENT OF THE HEALTH HUMAN RESOURCE  
DEVELOPMENT PROVISIONS OF THE PHILIPPINE NURSING ACT  
OF 2002**

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of Master of Public Policy

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## ABSTRACT

Republic Act No. 9173, or the *Philippine Nursing Act of 2002* enunciates a bevy of incentives under its Health Human Resource Production, Utilization and Development provisions, intended to stem the rising tide of Filipino nurses leaving the country to work overseas. Under Sections 30 to 34 of the Nursing Act, these incentives include the following: (1) upgrading the minimum base salary of nurses from salary grade 10 to 15; (2) establishing a nurse specialty program in government hospitals to upgrade the nurses' skills whereby recipients of the program are required to work in government hospitals for two years; and (3) the provision of other benefits such as scholarship grants, free medical care, etc. These provisions are the government's policy response to mitigate the impact of nurses' migration and retain an adequate supply of skilled Filipino nurses in the country:

This research is a qualitative study that seeks to assess the health human resource development provisions and their implementation and aims to help improve them. This study examines the responsiveness of the provisions to the needs of nurses, and identifies the deficiencies of the provisions by looking into the working conditions of nurses in two Philippine government hospitals. It also examines the processes and the factors affecting the implementation of the provisions.

This study employed a combination of four data collection methods: (1) focus group interviews of nurses working in two Philippine government hospitals, (2) key informant interviews of officials of government agencies and private organizations tasked to implement the health human resource development provisions, (3) document analyses, and (4) researcher's field notes/journal. The researcher conducted five focus group interviews with a total of 15 nurse participants and 12 key informant interviews.

The nurses are working under conditions of low salaries and heavy workload, that is characterized by low nurse-to-patient ratios in the National and LGU Hospitals. The problems of inadequate nurse staffing, large number

of patients and inadequate supplies in the two government hospitals are identified as causes for the heavy workload of nurses. The nurses want a salary increase that is commensurate to their heavy workload, their professional qualifications and long years of service. For the nurses, a salary increase signifies the government's recognition of their dedication, hard work, and commitment to provide health care to Filipinos despite working under dire circumstances. The nurse specialty training program in areas such as oncology, nephrology, critical care, etc. has not been implemented because of the limited capacities of government hospitals to provide this kind of training and the lack of regulatory framework for the practice of nurse specialists in the Philippines. The other benefits have not been implemented as well.

The provisions of the Nursing Act are deficient because they do not address the causes of the heavy workload of nurses. To improve the work conditions of nurses, the Philippine government needs to prioritize to the long-neglected health sector by increasing the budgetary allocation in order to create more nurse positions in government hospitals, to provide adequate supplies and equipment for government hospitals and to improve the facilities for nurses.

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## ACRONYMS

DBM - Department of Budget and Management

DOH – Department of Health

DR – Delivery Room

ER – Emergency Room

EVP – Exchange Visitor Program

FGI - Focus Group Interview

GAA – General Appropriations Act

HHRDB – Health Human Resources Development Bureau

ICN – International Council of Nurses

ICU – Intensive Care Unit

ILO – International Labor Organization

IOM – International Organization for Migration

LGU – Local Government Unit

NLPGN – National League of Philippine Government Nurses

OB-Gyne – Obstetrics-Gynecology

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PNA – Philippine Nurses Association

POEA – Philippine Overseas Employment Agency

PRC – Professional Regulation Commission

RA – Republic Act

US – United States

UK – United Kingdom

WHO – World Health Organization