

# Over 500 nurses to be deployed to towns beginning April 1

by EUGENE NUÑEZ  
Inquirer.net

LEGAZPI CITY, Philippines—Over 500 registered nurses in the Bicol region have been hired for a government program due to start on April 1, an official of the Department of Labor and Employment said.

DOLE-Bicol Regional Director Ernesto Bihis said on Tuesday, March 31, that nurses who have been unemployed for several years and whose family-members were displaced by the global economic crisis were given priority under the program, dubbed "Nurses Assigned to Rural Service" (NARS).

Bihis said that some P5.3 million has been allocated for the Bicol region to cover the salaries of the nurses.

"The hired nurses will serve for six months and will be paid a monthly salary of P8,000," he added.

President Gloria Macapagal-

Arroyo launched the program in February during the Multi-Sectoral Summit on Global Financial Crisis held in Malacañang to cushion effects of the crisis in the country through local job generation.

The program seeks to address the growing number of registered nurses in the country who remained unemployed since passing the nursing board examination and lacked the work experience to work abroad.

"It will be implemented in two batches with the first batch starting on April 1 while the second batch will be dispatched in October this year," added Bihis.

An average of five newly hired nurses would be deployed in every town in the identified 3rd and 6th class municipalities for a six-month duty.

Under the program, a total of 555 nurses were hired for Bicol to cover



six provinces with Camarines Sur having the biggest number of nurses at 170 covering 34 municipalities; Masbate with 105 nurses for all its 20 municipalities and one city; Sorsogon province with 80 nurses for its 14 towns and one city; Catanduanes with 45 nurses for nine

municipalities; and Albay with five nurses to serve the most depressed barangay (villages) in Legazpi City.

Bihis said DOLE would seek support from local government executives in the additional incentives to be given to the nurses assigned in their area. ■

# 5,000 public nurses...

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accommodation expenses, the government will hire licensed nurses from any of the 1,000 municipalities or nearby municipalities. Five nurses will be deployed in each town.

The Department of Labor and Employment (DoLE) said the nurses would have a job cut out for them:

- Initiate primary health, school nutrition and maternal health programs, and first line diagnosis.
- Inform the people about community water sanitation practices and conduct health surveillance.
- Immunize children and mothers.

### Roving nurses

They will also serve as roving nurses for rural schools.

In the hospital, they will do the rounds and attend to patients under the supervision of the chief nurse, according to Pineda.

"In the barangays, these so-called wellness warriors will diagnose the health condition of the people, provide vaccines say for TB (tuberculosis) and vitamins as necessary," she said.

They will not only fill the shortfall in medical workers in rural areas but also get to serve the people, particularly those with poor access to medical services, Pineda said.

### Training module

The training module, which covers both clinical and public health functions, was designed by the Department of Health, in coordination with the Professional Regulatory Commission's Board of Nurses.

While this is a government project, the Philippine Nurses Association and other groups are offering services to guide the nurses, according to Pineda.

"This gives them employment and at the same time, helps them gain experience for eventual employment in government and private hospitals," she said.

The training will be considered a substitute for the work experience requirement of hospitals and other health facilities in the country and abroad, and completion will entitle a nurse to a certificate, according to the labor department.

"We're hoping that after the training they will be absorbed by government hospitals," Pineda said.

### 500 in Bicol

In the Bicol region, the NARS program has hired more than 500 nurses.

Ernesto Bihis, DoLE regional director, said the nurses, who were unemployed for several years and have relatives who went jobless abroad, were given priority under the program.

Bihis said some P5.3 million had been allocated for Bicol under the program.

A total of 555 nurses will be assigned to cover its six provinces.

Camarines Sur will get the biggest number of nurses at 170 for 34 municipalities; Masbate, 105 nurses for all 20 municipalities and one city; Sorsogon, 80 nurses for 14 towns and one city; Catanduanes, 45 nurses for nine municipalities; and Albay, five nurses to serve the poorest barangays in Legazpi City.

The newly hired nurses will be deployed at an average of five per town in the third- (annual income: P30 million-P40 million) and sixth-class municipalities (below P60 million) for a six-month tour-of-duty.

Bihis said the second batch would be deployed in October. ■

# Tight Metro watch on upcoming Holy Week

by MARLON RAMOS  
Inquirer.net

MANILA—More than 3,000 policemen will keep a close watch on the metropolis during Holy Week, the outgoing chief of the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) said last March 31.

According to Director Leopoldo Bataoil, the policemen will be deployed in three eight-hour shifts to ensure round-the-clock security in Metro Manila.

In a statement, Bataoil, who will be replaced today by Manila Police District head, Chief Supt. Roberto Rosales, said he has ordered the five police district directors to step up their measures against criminality in anticipation of the huge number of Metro residents going home to their provinces next week.

"I have ordered my district directors and the operational support units of the NCRPO to review and update the security and traffic plans based on our experience and undertake the necessary preparations and coordination," he said.

Bataoil added that he directed all Metro police chiefs to put up assistance desks in churches known to be frequented by devotees.

At the same time, he reminded them to intensify their intelligence operations against Muslim extremists and communist rebels who, he said, might launch attacks during Holy Week.

"While we concentrate on public protection and assistance, we [should be] mindful that terrorist groups and communist insurgents may take advantage of the occasion," Bataoil said.

Aside from the 3,000 policemen, the NCRPO chief said members of Special Weapons and Tactics teams, village watchmen and other special police units will also be deployed to crowded areas like seaports, airports and bus terminals.

He also directed police stations to activate their special operations task forces and emergency response teams and to assign police motorcycle personnel to major thoroughfares to assist motorists. ■



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