



Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session



HOUSE BILL NO. 9496

Introduced by Representatives Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez, Yedda Marie K. Romualdez, Andrew Julian K. Romualdez and Jude A. Acidre

AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A COMPREHENSIVE RURAL EMPLOYMENT
GUARANTEE PROGRAM, PROVIDING FOR RURAL PUBLIC
EMPLOYMENT, LIVELIHOOD SECURITY, CLIMATE-RESILIENT
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS
THEREFOR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Many rural communities in the Philippines continue to face persistent poverty, seasonal unemployment, underemployment, and economic vulnerability, particularly during agricultural lean seasons, natural disasters, and climate-related disruptions. Limited access to stable income opportunities often leaves rural households highly susceptible to hunger, indebtedness, and economic insecurity. Despite existing government programs, there remains a need for a more comprehensive and institutionalized employment guarantee mechanism that can provide immediate income support while creating productive community assets and strengthening local resilience.

This bill seeks to establish a Comprehensive Rural Employment Guarantee Program that will provide up to one hundred (100) days of paid public employment annually to eligible rural households willing to engage in labor-intensive community work. The measure aims to generate rural employment while supporting infrastructure development, environmental restoration, disaster resilience, food security, and climate adaptation initiatives.

The bill further promotes community-based implementation through local government units, ensures transparency and accountability in program management, and integrates skills development, financial inclusion, and social protection mechanisms to help beneficiaries transition toward sustainable livelihoods and long-term economic opportunities.

By creating a rights-based and inclusive rural employment framework, this measure seeks to reduce rural poverty, strengthen local economies, and promote more equitable and resilient development across the country.

In view of the foregoing, approval of this bill is earnestly requested.



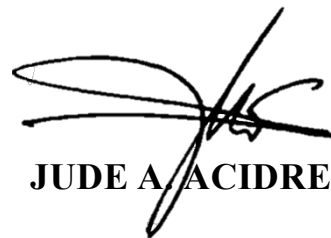
FERDINAND MARTIN G. ROMUALDEZ



YEDDA MARIE K. ROMUALDEZ



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

CHAPTER 1
GENERAL PROVISIONS

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “Comprehensive Rural Employment Guarantee Act.”

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – Pursuant to Article II, Section 9 and Article XIII of the 1987 Constitution, it is hereby declared the policy of the State to protect and promote the right to work, reduce rural poverty, generate productive employment, and ensure inclusive, sustainable, and climate-resilient rural development.

The State recognizes the need to provide employment opportunities and income support to vulnerable rural households, particularly during agricultural lean seasons, economic disruptions, natural calamities, and climate-related emergencies.

Toward this end, the State shall establish a labor-intensive rural employment guarantee program that creates durable community assets, strengthens local resilience, promotes ecological restoration and food security, and supports long-term rural economic development.

SEC. 3. *Objectives.* – This Act aims to:

- a) Guarantee access to at least one hundred (100) days of paid public employment annually to eligible rural households willing to engage in unskilled manual work;
- b) Generate productive and dignified employment opportunities in rural communities;
- c) Develop and rehabilitate rural infrastructure and community assets through labor-intensive public works programs;
- d) Provide temporary income security during agricultural off-seasons, economic downturns, disasters, and climate-related disruptions;
- e) Promote environmental restoration, climate adaptation, disaster resilience, and food security initiatives;
- f) Strengthen participatory and community-based local development planning;
- g) Facilitate transition of beneficiaries toward sustainable livelihoods, skills development, and long-term employment opportunities; and
- h) Promote financial inclusion and social protection for rural workers.

SEC. 4. *Definition of Terms.* – For purposes of this Act, the following terms are hereby defined:

- a) “Unskilled Labor” refers to manual or physical work that does not require formal technical certification or specialized professional training;
- b) “Rural Area” refers to barangays or municipalities classified as rural by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) or other competent government authority;
- c) “Eligible Household” refers to a rural household with at least one able-bodied adult member aged eighteen (18) to sixty-five (65) years who is willing to participate in the program and duly registered with the concerned LGU;
- d) “Public Works” refers to labor-intensive community projects including but not limited to small-scale infrastructure, irrigation, watershed rehabilitation, reforestation, mangrove restoration, flood mitigation, coastal resource management, solid waste management, communal facilities, renewable energy projects, farm-to-market roads, and disaster risk reduction projects;
- e) “Labor-Intensive Project” refers to projects designed to maximize local employment generation through the use of manual labor while maintaining appropriate safety and quality standards;
- f) “Rural Employment Registry” refers to the official LGU-maintained database of registered beneficiaries and participating households under this Act; and
- g) “Emergency Employment Activation” refers to the temporary expansion and accelerated implementation of employment projects during states of calamity, public emergencies, severe economic disruptions, or climate-related events.

SEC. 5. *Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.* – The State shall establish a Rural Employment Guarantee Program which shall provide up to one hundred (100) days of wage employment annually per eligible rural household, subject to the following conditions:

- a) Participation shall be voluntary and nondiscriminatory;
- b) Workers shall receive wages not lower than the prevailing regional minimum wage and shall be entitled to applicable statutory benefits and occupational safety protections;
- c) Employment opportunities shall be demand-driven and accessible through registration with barangays or municipal LGUs;
- d) Priority shall be given to poor households, displaced workers, agrarian reform beneficiaries, indigenous peoples, solo parents, persons with disabilities who are fit to work, and communities vulnerable to climate and disaster risks;
- e) At least fifty percent (50%) of approved projects shall involve environmental restoration, climate adaptation, disaster mitigation, food security, ecological conservation, or green jobs initiatives;
- f) Equal opportunity for participation of women and marginalized sectors shall be ensured; and
- g) No fees shall be collected from beneficiaries for registration or participation in the program.

Eligible households not provided employment within a reasonable period, as may be determined by the implementing rules and regulations, may qualify for temporary assistance or priority employment scheduling, subject to available appropriations and guidelines established by the Rural Employment Guarantee Council (REGC).

SEC. 6. *Skills Development and Livelihood Transition.* – Beneficiaries under this Act may be referred to skills training, livelihood assistance, entrepreneurship development, and employment facilitation programs of the government.

The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, DOLE, Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), and other concerned agencies shall coordinate to provide:

- a) Skills training and certification programs;
- b) Livelihood starter kits and entrepreneurship support;
- c) Green jobs and climate-resilient livelihood training;
- d) Agricultural and fisheries livelihood assistance; and
- e) Employment facilitation and job matching services.

Priority shall be given to youth, women, displaced workers, and marginalized sectors.

SEC. 7. *Rural Employment Guarantee Council (REGC).* – There is hereby created a Rural Employment Guarantee Council (REGC) under the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), which shall serve as the primary coordinating and oversight body for the implementation of this Act.

The REGC shall be composed of representatives from the following agencies:

- a) DOLE, as Chairperson;
- b) Department of Agriculture (DA);
- c) Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH);
- d) Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR);
- e) Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD);
- f) Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG);

- g) National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA);
- h) Department of Budget and Management (DBM);
- i) Land Bank of the Philippines;
- j) Representatives from LGU leagues; and
- k) Representatives from accredited civil society organizations, labor groups, cooperatives, and rural sector organizations.

The REGC shall:

- a) Formulate national policies and implementation guidelines;
- b) Approve eligible projects and funding frameworks;
- c) Establish standards for wages, reporting, monitoring, and grievance redress;
- d) Ensure inter-agency coordination and program convergence;
- e) Maintain a centralized monitoring and reporting system;
- f) Promote digital payment systems and financial inclusion mechanisms; and
- g) Conduct periodic evaluation of program outcomes and impacts.

SEC. 8. *Emergency Employment Activation.* – During states of calamity, public health emergencies, armed conflict displacement, severe droughts, typhoons, or other major disruptions, the REGC may activate emergency employment measures under this Act.

Emergency projects may include:

- a) Debris clearing and rehabilitation;
- b) Emergency food production initiatives;
- c) Water system rehabilitation;
- d) Reforestation and environmental restoration;
- e) Community health and sanitation support activities; and

- f) Other emergency labor-intensive projects identified by LGUs and national agencies.

The REGC may authorize accelerated project approval and emergency fund utilization procedures during such periods.

SEC. 9. *Responsibilities of Local Government Units.* – LGUs shall serve as the primary implementing units of the Program and shall:

- a) Conduct beneficiary registration and maintain a Rural Employment Registry;
- b) Identify, propose, implement, and supervise labor-intensive community projects;
- c) Ensure timely payment of wages through secure and transparent payment systems, including digital payment mechanisms whenever practicable;
- d) Ensure occupational safety, gender-sensitive workplace standards, and accessible grievance mechanisms;
- e) Conduct community consultations in project identification and prioritization;
- f) Develop maintenance plans for assets and infrastructure created under the Program; and
- g) Submit periodic accomplishment and financial reports to the REGC.

Barangays may establish Community Employment Committees composed of barangay officials, civil society representatives, beneficiaries, women's groups, indigenous peoples representatives, and community stakeholders.

Implementation within ancestral domains shall be undertaken in coordination with indigenous cultural communities and consistent with existing laws and regulations.

SEC. 10. *Social Protection and Financial Inclusion.* – The government shall promote the integration of beneficiaries into social protection and financial inclusion systems, including access to:

- a) PhilHealth coverage;
- b) Social Security System (SSS) programs;
- c) Employees' Compensation and insurance programs;
- d) Basic banking and digital financial services; and
- e) Financial literacy and savings programs.

SEC. 11. *Transparency, Monitoring, and Accountability.* – The REGC shall establish an open-access digital transparency and monitoring platform containing information on:

- a) Approved projects and funding allocations;
- b) Number of workers employed and wages paid;
- c) Project status and outputs;
- d) Participating LGUs; and
- e) Audit findings and implementation reports.

The Commission on Audit (COA) shall conduct periodic audits of funds and projects implemented under this Act.

Independent impact assessments shall likewise be conducted periodically to evaluate poverty reduction outcomes, employment generation, infrastructure

quality, gender inclusivity, environmental sustainability, and local economic impacts.

Congress shall conduct a comprehensive review of the effectiveness of this Act every five (5) years from its effectivity.

SEC. 12. *Grievance Redress and Protection Against Political Interference.* –

Every participating LGU shall establish accessible grievance redress mechanisms to address complaints involving delayed wages, unsafe working conditions, discrimination, corruption, or implementation irregularities.

No beneficiary shall be selected, excluded, favored, or discriminated against on the basis of political affiliation, religion, ethnicity, gender, or similar grounds.

Any form of political coercion, electioneering, or partisan use of the Program is strictly prohibited.

SEC. 13. *Penalties.* – Any public official, employee, contractor, or entity found guilty of misappropriating funds, falsifying employment records, engaging in ghost employment schemes, demanding illegal fees, or committing fraudulent acts under this Act shall, in addition to administrative liabilities, be subject to:

- a) Criminal prosecution under applicable laws, including Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act;
- b) Perpetual disqualification from public office or participation in government-funded programs; and
- c) Restitution of misused or illegally obtained funds.

SEC. 14. *Funding and Appropriations.* – The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current appropriations of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and other participating agencies. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for the continued implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

Local Government Units (LGUs) may provide counterpart funding, equipment, facilities, technical personnel support, or in-kind contributions for projects under the Program.

SEC. 15. *Annual Report to Congress.* – The REGC shall submit an annual report to Congress and the Office of the President containing:

- a) Employment statistics and beneficiary data;
- b) Types and status of projects implemented;
- c) Fund utilization and audit findings;
- d) Poverty reduction and economic impact assessments;
- e) Climate resilience and environmental outcomes; and
- f) Recommendations for policy improvements.

SEC. 16. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DOLE, in coordination with the REGC member agencies, LGUs, labor organizations, civil society groups, and rural sector representatives, shall promulgate the implementing rules and regulations necessary for the effective implementation of this Act.

SEC. 17. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision or part of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the remaining provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 18. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules, and regulations inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 19. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,