



SUMMARY

On May 09, 2020, Rights Corridor's virtual webinar program (Live on Facebook), *RC Dialogues* featured the controversial **Philippine Universal Healthcare Act & PhilHealth** in the forum entitled, "The Philippine State and its Universal Healthcare Act: Voices of the Filipino Migrants in the Global Context." Through this virtual platform, Rights Corridor gave Filipinos from Europe, Asia, and the Gulf an opportunity to openly express their opinions, reactions, and recommendations on the new healthcare law implemented by PhilHealth, the government-owned insurance corporation. For this episode, *RC Dialogues* guests Noel Tolentino, Secretary-General of Migrante International Qatar Chapter and Rhoderick Ople, President of OFW Watch Italy.

The May 09 episode has garnered 4,300 views, 43 shares, 6,680 people reached and 2,905 engagements as of July 22.

The *RC Dialogues* episode was further followed by another virtual forum on May 15 (special edition), "Understanding Universal Healthcare Act & PhilHealth" by OFWs in the Gulf (Kuwait, UAE), with special guests, Dr. Shirley Domingo, PhilHealth VP of Corporate Communications and Dr. Chona Yap, PhilHealth Senior Manager, Overseas Filipino Programs. Other guests were Jason Bucton, President of FilCom Dubai and Ricky Laxa, journalist The Times Kuwait and GMA7 News Correspondent.

The May 15 episode has garnered 4,800 views, 103 shares, 10,554 people reached and 2,196 engagements as of July 22.

It is also worth mentioning that there were several individuals and group representatives, including Migrante International and OFW Watch Italy, who aired their opposition on Philhealth's implementing rules and regulations.

The two episodes were covered by the media in UAE (Gulf Today) and Kuwait (Times Kuwait).

Links to the articles: <https://www.gulftoday.ae/news/2020/05/18/filipinos-in-dubai-northern-emirates-strategise-to-boost-manila-connectivity?fbclid=IwAR250mQBqqlpT-4-g3sQUWzy5uLuRV7Un8bpzcERnA7k3cZv6UHbLgPOOGk>

<https://www.timeskuwait.com/news/philhealth-3-premium-contribution-remains-until-such-time-an-amendment-on-the-law-is-made/>

Following these two virtual forums, the Rights Corridor was able to collate the proposals below, which we brought up to the consultative virtual forum (private) hosted by PhilHealth on July 03, participated by about 80 non-government organizations of Filipino migrant workers and leaders of Filipino communities all over the world:

- Make membership and premium payments voluntary for Filipinos abroad as not all are interested in availing its services;
- Coverage should be international for Filipinos working and living abroad;
- Faster and more efficient processing of claims and reimbursements;

- Categorize premiums for OFWs (professionals (sub-category: high income, middle income and low income brackets), self-employed, domestic helpers,)
- Appoint a health attaché in every mission post to close the asymmetrical information gap
- Massive information drive for Filipino communities abroad in case of new program implementations, changes in policies and regulations, etc.
- Equalize the access of the OFWs and their families to social healthcare

CONCLUSION

Due to their massive campaign, the Filipino migrant workers got a reprieve from paying higher premiums for a state-mandated PhilHealth coverage, after President Rodrigo Duterte ordered Philippine Health Insurance Corp. (PhilHealth) not to compel them to make the contributions before they leave the country. However, the agency insists that the increase in membership rates over the next five years covers not just migrant workers but all direct members of PhilHealth and is stipulated in the universal health care (UHC) program.

Dr. Shirley Domingo and Dr. Chona Yap have promised to give Rights Corridor updates on this developing narrative, and have expressed interest in partnering with Rights Corridor through *RC Dialogues* to help promote their agency's future programs for Filipinos abroad.