Republic of the Philippines
Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
Eighteenth Sangguniang Panlalawigan
PROVINCE OF TAWI-TAWI

Second Regular Session

S.P. ORDINANCE NO. 001-18, S. 2025

AN ORDINANCE INSTITUTIONALIZING THE OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS (OFW) HELP DESK IN THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT OF TAWI-TAWI, DEFINING ITS POWER AND FUNCTIONS

Authored by: HON. MELHAN J. MASDAL

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Philippines remains one of the countries with the largest population of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs). From April to September 2023, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) recorded an estimated 2.16 million Filipinos working.

Although official data on the exact number of OFWs originating from the Province of Tawi-Tawi is currently unavailable, anecdotal accounts and community reports, particularly from municipalities such as Simunul, suggest that nearly every household has at least one family member working overseas. This highlights a significant demographic trend that remains undocumented and unaddressed by existing local government systems.

Recognizing this gap in data and services, the Provincial Government of Tawi-Tawi sees the need to establish a Local Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) Help Desk. This dedicated mechanism shall be responsible for maintaining an updated record of OFWs from the province, monitoring their welfare, and coordinating with national agencies to ensure that the rights of Tawi-Tawian OFWs are protected, especially during instances of abuse, crisis, or legal entanglements abroad.

This initiative also provides a direct line of support for families left behind, giving them access to information, assistance, and interventions during emergencies or unforeseen difficulties faced by their relatives overseas.

The Provincial Government further affirms the immense contribution of OFWs to both the local and national economy. In recognition of their sacrifices, it is imperative to establish local mechanisms that provide responsive and accessible services to OFWs and their families.

The enactment of this ordinance reflects a firm commitment to inclusive governance, social protection, and migrant welfare, in line with national policies

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and the Bangsamoro Government's thrust to strengthen local capacities in public service delivery.

WHEREAS, the constitution affirms the duty of the government to afford full protection to labor, local and overseas, in recognition of their vital role in national development;

WHEREAS, Republic Act No. 10022, otherwise known as the *Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995* (as amended), and Republic Act No. 9208, otherwise known as the *Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003*, as amended, mandate local government units to undertake proactive and preventive measures to protect their constituents from illegal recruitment and trafficking in persons.

WHEREAS, the Province of Tawi-Tawi has number of undocumented and unmonitored constituents who are working abroad, many of whom are unable to access protection and support mechanisms due to the lack of formal registration or local coordination;

WHEREAS, the Provincial Government of Tawi–Tawi finds it indispensable to institutionalize an OFW Help Desk to serve as a localized mechanism to address the protection, welfare, and development needs of OFWs and their families, in accordance with applicable laws and policies;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED, by the Sangguniang Panlalawigan of Tawi – Tawi, in a session assembled:

SECTION 1. TITLE - This Ordinance shall be known as Tawi–Tawi OFW Help Desk Ordinance.

SECTION 2. DECLARATION OF POLICY. – It is hereby declared the policy of the Provincial Government of Tawi-Tawi to recognize the significant contribution of local Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) to both local and national development, and to ensure the protection and promotion of their rights and welfare.

To this end, the Provincial Government shall institutionalize a Tawi-Tawi OFW Help Desk as a permanent mechanism to serve as the central coordinating and assistance hub for OFWs and their families within the province. The Help Desk shall function as a liaison and referral unit, facilitating linkages with national government agencies mandated to address OFW-related concerns.

The Provincial Government further commits to supporting the effective reintegration and protection of OFWs by maintaining an updated and accurate database for planning, policy development, and targeted interventions. Through this initiative, the Province affirms its duty to promote responsive, inclusive, and participatory governance for all sectors, including its migrant workers.

SECTION 3. IMPLEMENTING OFFICE. – The Public and Employment Service Office (PESO) shall serve as the primary implementing office for the effective execution of the provisions of this Ordinance. The PESO Manager is hereby designated as the OFW Help Desk Focal Person, and shall act as the principal liaison for all OFW-related concerns within the province.

The PESO Manager shall be responsible for ensuring the efficient implementation, coordination, and monitoring of the programs, services, and interventions

mandated under this Ordinance, in collaboration with relevant national agencies and other stakeholders.

SECTION 4. FUNCTIONS OF THE OFW HELP DESK AND FOCAL PERSON. – The OFW Help Desk, through the Focal Person, shall perform the following functions:

1. **Support and Assistance** – Provide immediate assistance to OFWs and their families in accessing services and support from relevant government agencies, such as the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW), the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the Ministry of Social Services and Development (MSSD), the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), and the Ministry of Labor and Employment (MOLE-BARMM).

2. **Referral and Coordination** – Facilitate the referral of cases requiring specialized intervention to appropriate national government agencies, embassies, or consulates, and coordinate with these entities for the effective resolution of OFW-related concerns.

3. **Legal Assistance Referrals** – Assist OFWs in accessing legal aid or advisory services for issues involving employment contracts, labor disputes, or other legal matters arising from their overseas engagement.

4. **Crisis Intervention, Repatriation Assistance, and Financial Aid** – Provide crisis response support, including facilitation of repatriation, by coordinating with relevant agencies such as the DFA, DMW, OWWA, DSWD/MSSD, DOLE/MOLE, and Philippine embassies. The OFW Help Desk, in coordination with the Office of the Provincial Governor and the Provincial Treasurer's Office, may extend financial assistance to distressed local OFWs or their immediate families. Such assistance shall be based on the assessment of the Focal Person and shall be subject to availability of funds and the submission of complete supporting documentation, as prescribed by the PESO.

5. **Information and Public Awareness** – Organize and implement public awareness campaigns and information sessions for OFWs and their families on topics including rights and responsibilities, available services, health and safety, and grievance mechanisms.

6. **Documentation and Reporting** – Develop and maintain a comprehensive and regularly updated database and case management system for OFWs originating from the province. This system shall facilitate accurate tracking, reporting, and confidentiality of OFW cases, and shall include a registry of OFWs and their families for efficient service delivery and planning.

7. **Policy Recommendatory Unit** – Recommend policy, measures, and program interventions to the Office of the Provincial Governor or the Sangguniang Panlalawigan for the continued protection and advancement of the rights and welfare of the local OFWs.

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SECTION 5. MUNICIPAL-LEVEL SUPPORT. – Each municipal government shall designate a focal person who shall be responsible for assisting in the registration of OFWs and gathering necessary data in coordination with the barangay officials.

The municipal focal person shall collect and submit the following information, and any other relevant documents or information, to the OFW Help Desk:

a. Full name of the OFW
b. Contact information (phone number, email address, social media account)
c. Country of deployment
d. Name and contact details of the deploying recruitment agency
e. A copy of the employment contract

SECTION 6. FUNDING. – The funds necessary for the implementation of this Ordinance shall be sourced from the General Fund, subject to existing Commission on Audit (COA) auditing rules and regulation.

SECTION 7. SEPARABILITY CLAUSE. – If any part or provision of this Ordinance shall be declared unconstitutional or invalid, other parts and provisions hereof which are not affected shall continue to be in full force and effect.

SECTION 8. EFFECTIVITY CLAUSE. – This Ordinance shall take effect immediately after its publication through posting in three conspicuous places within the provincial government office.

ADOPTED this 5th day of August 2025 (*11 Safar 1447 AH*), Bongao, Tawi-Tawi, Philippines.

Concurred:

HON. MELHAN J. MASDAL
Member

HON. MICHAIL K. AHAJA
Member

HON. ARRON FHADZ C. AHAMAD
Member

HON. RODEL R. AKIP
Member

HON. EDZFAR S. LADJAHALI
Member

HON. MARK RENIL T. SAMSUYA
Member

HON. ALFILRADA M. LADJABASSAL MONEL
Member

HON. JONEL I. MOHAMMAD
Member

HON. HASANAL A. JEOFFREY A. SALI
Ex-Officio Member, ABC President

HON. ERSHAD T. ABDURAHMAN
Member

Certified Correct:

ATTY. DAYANG-DAYANG KHADIJA J. BAGUINDA-DAMBONG
Secretary to the Sangguniang Panlalawigan

Attested By:

HON. AL SYED A. SALI
Presiding Officer
Vice-Governor

Approved:

HON. YSHMAEL I. SALI
Provincial Governor