

Office of Sen. Manny Villar

Sagip-OFW Helpline

Ground Floor, Worldwide Corporate Center Bldg., Shaw Blvd., Mandaluyong City

☎09174226800 and 09175050639 • mannyvillar [_sagipofw@yahoo.com](mailto:sagipofw@yahoo.com)

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News Release

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Villar bats for restoration of DFA budget cuts in 2012; seeks augmentation teams to help Pinoys in Japan

Senator Manny Villar stressed the need to restore an estimated 46% budget cuts to the Department of Foreign Affairs in the formulation of its budget for 2012 and to allocate even more funds to hire additional personnel to assist overseas Filipino workers in Japan and the Middle East.

“The severe and unreasonable budget cuts in the DFA’s 2011 budget is taking its toll on timely and effective assistance to distressed OFWs around the world. We need to rectify it this early while the executive branch is formulating next year’s budget,” Senator Villar said in a press release.

Citing the urgent rescue and recovery efforts now underway in Japan, the Senate’s leading OFW advocate urged the Philippine government to send augmentation teams to assist the Philippine Embassy in providing assistance and comfort to an estimated 300,000 Filipinos in Japan.

"To raise the efficiency levels of the Philippine Embassy to help our OFWs, they would need more personnel and resources, or at the very least, sufficient funds to equip community volunteers with food, medicines, and other supplies to share with other OFWs," Villar explained.

Villar stressed that the augmentation teams must be equipped with satellite phones and with adequate resources to rent vehicles to bring food, medicines and blankets for earthquake victims including several Filipinos staying in temporary shelters.

“We received reports that there is an urgent need for food supplies, flashlights, and even thick blankets for our compatriots especially those living near the epicenter of the earthquake,” the senator added.

He noted that the sheer size of the Filipino community in Japan spread out in different prefectures requires an augmentation of funds, personnel and other resources that could only come from Manila.

The lack of resources and personnel to help OFWs in times of major emergencies is apparent particularly in the Middle East where protest actions had resulted in the outbreak of hostilities in several countries.

In Japan, Villar said he foresees a lengthy rehabilitation period and a period of great uncertainty as aftershocks and threats of more tsunamis loom continue to threaten Japan.

“We must be prepared for the long haul in both Japan and in certain countries in the Middle East and such preparations must be reflected in and supported by the right level of appropriations and manpower support,” Villar stressed.