

# The Philippines and Return Migration

*Rapid appraisal of the return and  
reintegration policies and service delivery*



International  
Labour  
Organization



Regional Office for Asia  
and the Pacific

**Economic and Social Empowerment of Migrants, Including Victims of Trafficking  
Returned from the European Union and Neighbouring Countries**



# **The Philippines and Return Migration**

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*Rapid appraisal of the return and reintegration  
policies and service delivery*

By Stella P. Go

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## **Acronyms**

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
MOU	Memoranda of Understanding
NGO	Non-Government Organization
OFWs	Overseas Filipino Workers
OUMWA	Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs
OWWA	Overseas Workers Welfare Administration
NRCO	National Reintegration Center for Overseas Filipino Workers
POEA	Philippine Overseas Employment Administration
TESDA	Technical Education and Skills Development Authority



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# Introduction

For more than 35 years, the Government of the Philippines has facilitated and benefited economically from the systematic deployment of Filipino workers overseas. In 2008, the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) reported that an estimated average of 3,386 Filipinos left the country daily for foreign employment. Despite the global financial crisis, a total of 1.2 million Filipinos went abroad in 2008, an increase of 14.7 per cent over the previous year. In 2009, the number further increased to 1.4 million.

In 2008, an estimated 8.2 million Filipinos were living permanently or working temporarily in 212 countries and territories in the world. Of them, nearly 48 per cent were permanent emigrants, 44 per cent were temporary overseas workers and 8 per cent were irregular migrants, largely in Malaysia and the United States (table 1). The majority of the Filipino emigrants were living in the United States (68 per cent), while the

bulk of the temporary migrants were working in the Middle East (nearly 50 per cent), particularly Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (table 1).

The Filipinos in Europe constituted only about 11 per cent of the overseas workers in 2008, located mostly in Italy and the United Kingdom. Of every ten Filipinos in Europe that year, six were temporary workers, three permanent emigrants and one was an irregular migrant. France had the largest number (39,000) and proportion (nearly 83 per cent) of irregular Filipino migrants in Europe, followed by Italy and the United Kingdom (table 1).

## Labour migration patterns

Although the Middle East remains the primary destination of land-based Filipino workers and Asia has become the second important work destination, since the mid-1980s, Europe has increasingly been an attractive alternative destination (figure 1).

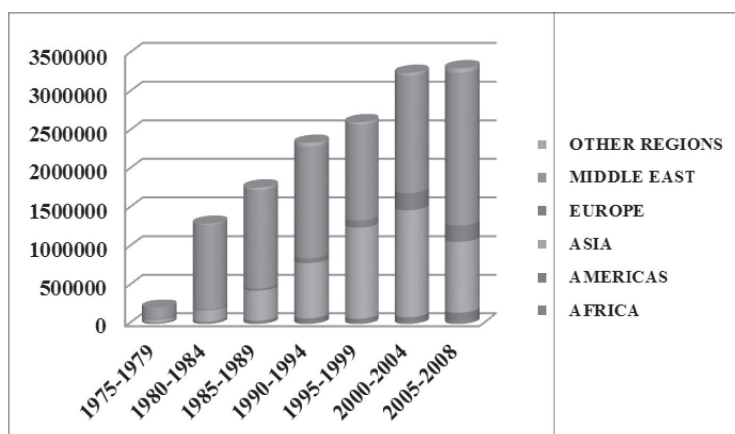
**Table 1: Filipinos working overseas, by emigrant and migrant status, 2008 estimates**

Region/Country	Permanent	Temporary	Irregular	Total	Permanent	Temporary	Irregular	Total
<b>WORLD TOTAL</b>	3 907	3 626 259	653 609	8 187 710	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<b>AFRICA</b>	842	44 303	8 265	54 554	0.1	1.2	1.3	0.7
<b>ASIA, East &amp; South-East</b>	1 986	581 330	256 622	1 085 049	6.3	16.0	39.3	13.3
BRUNEI	247 097	19 609	2 100	22 200	0.0	0.5	0.3	0.3
CHINA	491	20 677	4 500	25 537	0.0	0.6	0.7	0.3
HONG KONG, CHINA	360	125 810	6 000	155 317	0.6	3.5	0.9	1.9
JAPAN	23 507	60 020	30 700	231 930	3.6	1.7	4.7	2.8
KOREA, REPUBLIC OF	141 210	63 008	12 000	82 677	0.2	1.7	1.8	1.0
MACAU, CHINA	7 669	19 701	3 000	22 757	0.0	0.5	0.5	0.3
MALAYSIA	56	89 681	128 000	243 683	0.7	2.5	19.6	3.0
SINGAPORE	26 002	66 411	56 000	158 231	0.9	1.8	8.8	1.9
TAIWAN PROVINCE OF CHINA	35 820	83 070	2 885	94 055	0.2	2.3	0.4	1.1
OTHERS / UNSPECIFIED	8 100	33 343	11 437	48 662	0.1	0.9	1.7	0.6

Region/Country	Permanent	Temporary	Irregular	Total	Permanent	Temporary	Irregular	Total
<b>ASIA, West (Middle East)</b>	4 599	2 144 625	112 700	2 261 924	0.1	59.1	17.2	27.6
BAHRAIN	85	42 659	3 800	46 544	0.0	1.2	0.6	0.6
ISRAEL	1 001	31 000	7 000	39 001	0.0	0.9	1.1	0.5
JORDAN	108	16 500	8 150	24 758	0.0	0.5	1.2	0.3
KUWAIT	500	136 018	10 000	146 518	0.0	3.8	1.5	1.8
LEBANON	500	25 848	5 000	31 348	0.0	0.7	0.8	0.4
OMAN	100	34 292	9 000	43 392	0.0	0.9	1.4	0.5
QATAR	15	224 027	5 600	229 642	0.0	6.2	0.9	2.8
SAUDI ARABIA	351	1 072 458	20 000	1 092 809	0.0	29.6	3.1	13.3
UAE	713	541 668	32 000	574 379	0.0	14.9	4.9	7.0
OTHERS / UNSPECIFIED	1 226	20 157	12 150	33 533	0.0	0.6	1.9	0.4
<b>EUROPE</b>	294 987	299 468	98 624	693 079	7.5	8.3	15.1	8.5
UNITED KINGDOM	91 206	102 291	10 000	203 497	2.3	2.8	1.5	2.5
ITALY	27 003	77 087	13 000	117 090	0.7	2.1	2.0	1.4
GERMANY	44 619	8 075	2 100	54 794	1.1	0.2	0.3	0.7
SPAIN	32 435	14 190	4 055	50 680	0.8	0.4	0.6	0.6
FRANCE	7 179	991	39 000	47 170	0.2	0.0	6.0	0.6
GREECE	96	32 504	6 000	38 600	0.0	0.9	0.9	0.5
OTHERS	92 449	64 330	24 469	181 248	2.4	1.8	3.7	2.2
<b>AMERICAS / TRUST TERRITORIES</b>	3 101 941	250 595	166 163	3 518 699	79.4	6.9	25.4	43.0
CANADA	533 826	73 632	6 135	613 593	13.7	2.0	0.9	7.5
UNITED STATES	2 552 034	128 616	155 843	2 836 493	65.3	3.5	23.8	34.6
CNM	1 288	13 000	500	14 788	0.0	0.4	0.1	0.2
GUAM	12 675	9 532	500	22 707	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.3
OTHERS / UNSPECIFIED	2 118	25 815	3 185	31 118	0.1	0.7	0.5	0.4
<b>OCEANIA</b>	257 232	44 325	11 235	312 792	6.6	1.2	1.7	3.8
AUSTRALIA	233 943	23 926	7 975	265 844	6.0	0.7	1.2	3.2
NEW ZEALAND	22 440	2 640	120	25 200	0.6	0.1	0.0	0.3
PALAU	5	4 324	400	4 729	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1
PAPUA NEW GUINEA	771	9 380	2 640	12 791	0.0	0.3	0.4	0.2
OTHERS / UNSPECIFIED	73	4 055	100	4 228	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1
<b>SEA-BASED WORKERS</b>		261 614		261 614	0.0	7.2	0.0	3.2

Source: Commission on Filipinos Overseas

**Figure 1: Deployed overseas Filipino workers, 1975–2008**

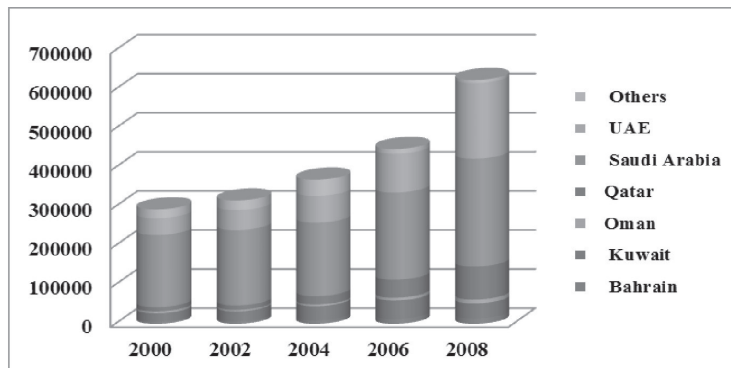


Source: Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, 1975–2008

From 2000 to 2008, the majority of workers deployed to the Middle East went to Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (figure 2), while the majority in Europe were in England, Ireland and Italy (figure 3).

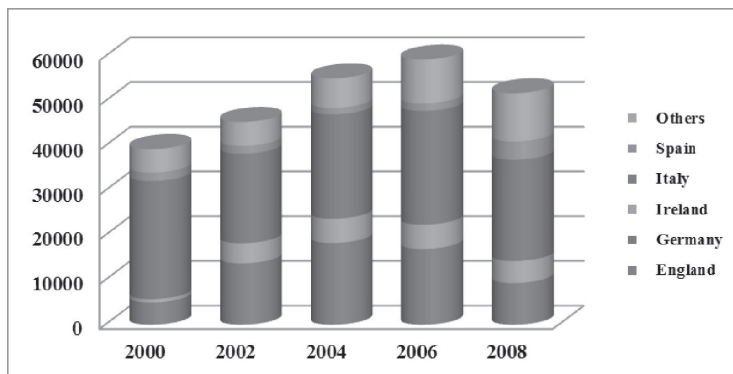
From 2000 to 2008, the overseas workers who worked in Eastern and southern Europe and its neighbouring countries were largely in Cyprus, Greece, Israel and Libya (figure 4).

**Figure 2: Deployed overseas Filipino workers in the Middle East, 2000–2008**



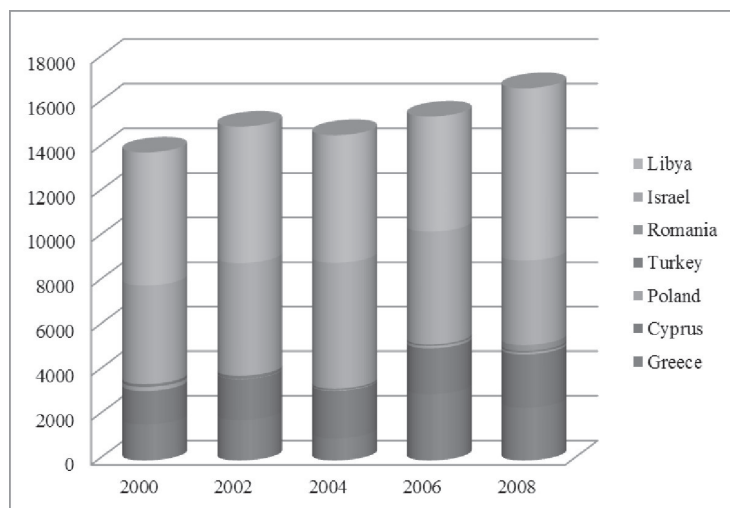
Source: Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, 1975–2008

**Figure 3: Deployed overseas Filipino workers in Europe, 2000–2008**



Source: Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, 1975–2008

**Figure 4: Deployed overseas Filipino workers to selected countries in Eastern and southern Europe and neighbouring countries, 2000–2008**



Source: Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, 1975–2008

### Philippine region of origin of workers in Europe

Based on membership data in the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, the largest proportion of overseas Filipino workers come from Southern Luzon (Region 4), followed by Ilocos (Region 1) in the northern part of the Philippines, Central Luzon (Region 3) and the National Capital Region (table 2). What is interesting is the inverse relationship between the regional poverty incidence and the number of workers in Europe. In other words, the lower the poverty incidence in the region of origin, the larger is the number of workers in Europe. One possible explanation is that going abroad entails certain costs that those in the poorer regions cannot afford. Moreover, because the more well-off regions have a larger share of Filipino workers, they presumably get a larger share of the remittances from Europe, thus contributing directly and/or indirectly to the economic development of that region. The study of Pernia (2007) showed that the more developed regions in the Philippines send more Filipino workers abroad than the less developed regions, resulting in greater shares of total remittances going to the more developed regions, thus contributing to greater regional disparities.

Because of the importance of the economic contribution that overseas migrants make to the Philippine economy through their remittances home, much of the Government's attention has focused on those workers abroad, who have been dubbed "modern day heroes" and, more recently, "overseas Filipino investors".

Although the Philippines has the most developed migration system in Asia, with policies and programmes designed to address the needs of migrating Filipinos from the pre-departure to the return stages, returning workers have been of less concern to the Government over the years. For the longest time, the Philippine reintegration services were the weakest component in the Government's overseas employment programme.

From a theoretical perspective, the return of migrants to their country of origin can benefit economic development in several ways (Ruhs, 2006): 1) Migrant workers may have acquired knowledge and skills that can be transferred and used productively upon their return. 2) Migrant workers can use their savings for productive investments, such as setting up businesses that could generate wider developmental impacts for their home community. 3) Migrant workers can help reverse some of the negative effects attendant to the

**Table 2: Region of origin of overseas Filipino workers in Europe, by regional poverty incidence, 2006**

REGION OF ORIGIN	% OF OFWS <sup>1</sup>	POVERTY INCIDENCE (%) <sup>2</sup>
Region 4 (Southern Luzon)	34.5	20.7
Region 1 (Ilocos)	15.1	32.7
Region 3 (Central Luzon)	13.8	20.7
NCR (Capital Region)	11.0	10.4
Region 6 (Western Visayas)	5.1	38.6
Region 2 (Cagayan Valley)	4.1	25.5
Cordillera Administrative Region	3.1	34.5
Region 7 (Central Visayas)	3.0	35.4
Region 10 (Northern Mindanao)	2.2	43.1
Region 5 (Bicol)	2.0	51.1
Region 11 (Southern Mindanao)	1.7	51.1
Region 12 (Central Mindanao)	1.2	40.8
Region 8 (Eastern Visayas)	1.1	48.5
Region 9 (Western Mindanao)	1.0	45.3
Region 13 (Caraga)	0.6	52.6
ARMM (Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao)	0.5	61.8

<sup>1</sup> OWWA Membership Processing Center

<sup>2</sup> National Statistical Coordination Board

emigration of skilled and highly skilled workers, such as doctors and nurses.

Nonetheless, several factors will likely affect the development potential of returning migrants, such as: 1) their motivation for returning; 2) the relevance of their acquired skills to the country's development priorities; 3) the legislative, economic and social conditions in the country of origin; and 4) the ways that government and informal networks help returnees reintegrate into society (De Souza, 2006).

Within the Philippines, there has not been much research attention direct to the process of return and reintegration as well as the service delivery mechanisms adopted by both government services and NGOs.

### **Objectives of the report**

This report reflects a rapid appraisal for taking stock of what is known about return migration to the Philippines in general and return migration from Europe and its neighbouring countries in particular. The report looks at the magnitude of return migration, the return migration experience of Filipino workers, their motivations for returning and the policies, programmes and legislative framework designed to reintegrate returning workers.

### **Methodology**

Data for this report were obtained from the following:

- review of relevant research literature;
- review and content analysis of relevant legislation and official documents and/or web postings from various government agencies, such as the Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs (OUMWA) within the Department of Foreign Affairs, the National Reintegration Center for Overseas Filipino Workers (NRCO), the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), the International Labor Affairs Bureau within the Department of Labor and Employment and the Commission of Filipinos Overseas;
- analysis of statistical data from the Philippine Overseas Welfare Administration and OWWA;
- interviews with officials of three government agencies (NRCO, OUMWA and OWWA) and the heads of three NGOs (Kanlungan Centre Foundation, Inc., the Batis Center for Women and the ATIKHA Overseas Workers and Communities Initiative, Inc.)<sup>1</sup>;

- interviews with overseas returnees (two from Romania, one from Lebanon, one from Israel and one who worked in both Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) and two focus group discussions with returnees from Europe. The OWWA and two NGOs, Kanlungan and ATIKHA, provided assistance in finding the returnees for the informant interviews. ATIKHA also assisted in locating participants for the focus group discussions, which were conducted in the municipality of Mabini, Batangas, in the Southern Tagalog region. Mabini has a long history of international labour migration abroad, dating back to the mid-1970s. Today, 15 per cent of its population work overseas; seven of every ten Filipino workers from Mabini work in Europe.

### **European immigration policy**

Since its Tampere Summit of 1999, the European Union and its member States have been gradually and continuously developing a common legal framework on immigration and asylum. In the Tampere Summit, European Union country representatives crafted an immigration policy statement, based on the recognition of the need to adopt a common, comprehensive framework for managing migration within Europe. The framework suggested specific laws to deal with legal and illegal immigration that would enforce governance with clear, transparent and fair rules (Hauessler, 1999). In terms of legal immigration, the European Union Council of Ministers gave third-country nationals the right to reside in Europe and also to be reunited with their families. Additionally, immigrants entering European Union countries legally were given the same rights as European citizens, which include the right to education and employment. The Tampere Summit also resulted in a set of measures to combat illegal immigration that includes acting against syndicates involved in human trafficking. These were reconfirmed by the Hague Programme of 2004.

In June 2008, the European Commission adopted a communication on A Common Immigration Policy for Europe: Principles, Actions and Tools that presents a vision of the European Union's future immigration strategy and is based on the principles of prosperity, solidarity and security. This was reinforced by the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum adopted by the European Council in October 2008. Despite the common policy, the needs and priorities of European Union member States are widely divergent, and each

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*1 ATIKHA is an NGO that provides economic and social services to overseas Filipinos and their families in the Philippines.*



State retains the right to decide who is to be admitted into their borders, how many are to be allowed entry and what forms of integration they are entitled to (Hagstrom, 2010).

Italy, which has the largest number of Filipino migrants in Europe, also has its own immigration policies. Italian legislation on immigration is embodied in the Bossi-Fini Law (July 2002, No. 189), which modified the 1998 Comprehensive Act on Immigration. Under this law, admission of foreign nationals into Italy for employment purposes is allowed when there is a specific labour demand that is based on an economic needs test or, in the case of self-employed individuals, when they can demonstrate sufficient resources and the necessary qualifications. There are two ways by which migrants can be legally admitted into Italy for economic purposes: the work permit (*il nulla osta al lavoro*) and the long-term residence card (*la carta di soggiorno*).

The Bossi-Fini Law of 2002 carried over from the 1998 immigration law the provision that allows foreigners who have residence permits of more than a year to apply for the admission of family members into Italy under the law related to family reunification and residency permits for family reasons. This can be done provided that the applicant has a home that conforms with the standards of public housing and an annual income equivalent to the minimum set by social services for the number of family members petitioned for reunification.

Over the years, however, large numbers of migrants in Italy have entered without a residence or work permit. Consequently, in-migration has become a priority in Italian foreign policy, with most of the attention focused against stopping irregular migration into the country. The Italian Government has responded to the influx of irregular migrants by enacting restrictive legislation; at the same time though, it has taken a lead in Europe in enacting regularization programmes for migrants. Italy's migration policy thus addresses two objectives: to allow the entry of foreign nationals into Italy to meet the demands of the domestic labour market and to prevent undocumented migration on the grounds of security and public order.

Although the legal immigrants to Italy constitute less than 5 per cent of the population, many amnesties and regularization programmes over the past ten years have not substantially reduced the population of undocumented migrants. Consequently, a highly controversial public security law was enacted in August

2009 by the Berlusconi government that criminalizes illegal migration and imposes a stiff penalty for its violation.

## **Magnitude of return and motivations for returning**

The possibility that large numbers of overseas workers would return to the Philippines became quite distinct in 2002 with the threat of the United States waging war in Iraq and the tightening of immigration policies in many destination countries, such as Israel, Italy and Malaysia. The deportation of thousands of undocumented Filipinos from Sabah, Malaysia, that year highlighted the importance of a truly responsive reintegration programme for returning workers. More recently, the global financial crisis of 2008 was yet another reminder of the importance of preparing for the return of workers. Considering that many workers have lived abroad for more than 20 years and are either approaching retirement or are no longer physically or psychologically fit to continue working abroad, returning home is becoming a more imminent option.

Like many other countries, the Philippines does not have a mechanism for systematically collecting data on returning migrants, be they skilled or unskilled workers, students or retirees. There is lack of data on the magnitude of return migration and the rate of re-migration, the characteristics of returnees and the circumstances under which they return. Because of the dearth of research on the topic and the lack of official data on the actual number of Filipinos who have returned to the country, very little is known about the phenomenon.

Nonetheless, a number of studies using data from surveys of the National Statistics Office, such as the Survey of Overseas Filipinos, yield interesting insights regarding return migration to the Philippines. Using the 1991 Survey of Overseas Filipinos and the 1988 National Demographic Survey, Rodriguez and Horton (1996) found that overseas Filipinos at that time generally returned sometime between three and six years after migrating and were significantly affected by the unemployment situation in the region of return. In fact, the higher the unemployment rate was in the region of return, the less likely the migrant worker was to return home. The researchers also found that a 1 per cent increase in unemployment decreased the probability of return by 12–20 per cent; immigrants with permanent residence visas also had lower rates of return.

Additionally, overseas workers appear less likely to return home when they experience positive exchange

rate shocks. In Yang's analysis (2006), on average, a 10 per cent improvement in the exchange rate reduced the 12-month migrant return rate by 1.4 percentage points.<sup>2</sup> Those who had been overseas for the shortest (less than two years) and longest periods (more than three years) were less likely to return when there were improvements in the exchange rate (Yang, 2003).<sup>3</sup>

Filipino workers tend to return to the country for the following reasons: involuntary return due to a crisis situation, such as war and forcible deportation; voluntary return due to the completion of a work contract or the achievement of the migrant's goals; and other factors compelling them to return, such as intolerable working conditions and family issues. In a survey of 100 women returned migrants nationwide, Asis (2001) found the following primary reasons for their return: end of the contract (38 per cent), family reasons, including family problems (32 per cent) and work-related problems (10 per cent). Only 6 per cent said that they returned because they had achieved their goals. Interestingly, 76 per cent of the women in the study wanted to work abroad again.

When interviewed for this appraisal, the individuals in both government agencies (NRCO, OUMWA and OWWA,) and NGOs (ATIKHA, Batis Center for Women and Kanlungan) echoed one another in saying that very few Filipino workers in Europe return to the Philippines. The family reunification provision in many European countries is one of the primary reasons cited. Those who return do so because they are sick, are too old to work or have established a business.

The interviewed informants did not consider human trafficking and labour exploitation as very big problems in Europe, particularly Western Europe, in contrast to the Middle East. For instance, among the many cases of distressed workers who the Batis Center for Women and Kanlungan have assisted, only a handful had worked in Europe. Among the recent cases from Europe involving labour exploitation were Filipino workers who had worked in Poland and Romania.

<sup>2</sup> Yang used the following National Statistics Office surveys: *Labor Force Survey* (July 1997 and October 1998), *Survey on Overseas Filipinos* (October 1997 and October 1998), *1997 Family Income and Expenditures Survey* (for January–June 1997) and the *1998 Annual Poverty Indicators Survey* (for April–September 1998).

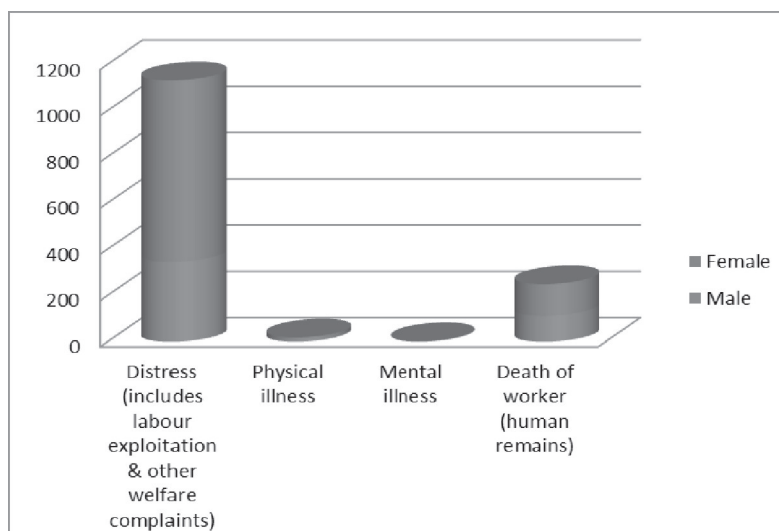
<sup>3</sup> Data used were the same as the above.

### Repatriated overseas Filipino workers

Data from the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration give a partial picture of the returnee situations and the reasons for their return. Between January 2005 and September 2009, a total of 1,399 workers were extended repatriation assistance by OWWA, which advanced the air tickets for their return flights to the Philippines (figure 5). Of them, 249 (nearly 18 per cent) were deceased workers whose remains were repatriated. Distress due to labour exploitation and other welfare issues was the primary reason for the return of an overwhelming majority of the workers. Seven of every ten distressed returnees were women. There is no way of knowing, however, whether they stayed permanently at home or went abroad again.

The OWWA data need to be interpreted carefully because they do not include workers who are not

**Figure 5: Repatriated Filipino workers, by reason for return, January 2005–**



Source: Overseas Workers Welfare Administration

registered members of OWWA<sup>4</sup> and who may have returned home on their own or under the Assistance to Nationals unit of the Department of Foreign Affairs. Although the number of distressed returnees assisted by OWWA over the past five years was very few, relative to the total number of workers deployed annually, the data does not give an accurate picture of the magnitude of the welfare issues, including labour exploitation

<sup>4</sup> Filipino workers who go migrate through the legal channels are required to become members of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration Fund.

and human trafficking, confronting workers abroad, and especially undocumented workers. The OWWA data also do not break down the sources of distress experienced by workers.

The Task Force Against Human Trafficking of the Commission on Filipinos Overseas has collated data since 2005 on reported incidents. Their data reveal that most of the cases reported were sexual exploitation, prostitution and debt bondage. A majority of the victims were women, and more cases of abuse occurred in Asia (32 per cent) and the Middle East (11 per cent) than anywhere else.

#### **Workers displaced by the global financial crisis**

Although the 2008 global financial crisis initially posed a threat to the job security of overseas workers, it proved to have minimal impact on labour migration from the Philippines.

The Department of Labour and Employment reported that a total of 6,957 workers from 327

companies were displaced from October 2008 to 30 September 2009 as a result of the global financial crisis (table 3). The bulk of the workers affected were in the electronics, metal works and semiconductor industries in Taiwan, China (4,428) and in the construction and service industries in the United Arab Emirates (1,357).

Only a small number of workers in Europe, who worked mostly in the service sector as domestic maids and caregivers, were displaced by the crisis. Of the total displaced, a majority (about 65 per cent) returned to the Philippines by end September 2009. How many of the returnees displaced by the crisis who have since left the country again cannot be determined.

Analysis of data on the 83 displaced returnees from Europe and its peripheral countries who sought and were provided services from the National Reintegration Center for Overseas Filipino Workers between 1 March and 6 October 2009 reveals that they were almost equally divided between males and

**Table 3: Number of displaced overseas Filipino workers and companies affected by the global financial crisis, by industry, country of employment and reasons for displacement, October 2008–30 September 2009**

Country of employment	Number of Companies affected	Number of OFWs displaced		Industry	Reason for displacement
		Total	Returned to Phil.		
	<b>256</b>	<b>5 160</b>	<b>4 427</b>		
<b>Asia</b>					
Taiwan Province of China	93	4 428	4 251	Electronic, metal work	Bankruptcy and Retrenchment
Republic of Korea	135	227	6	Electronics	Laid-off/decided to go home
Brunei	7	245	0	Semi-conductor	Restructuring
Macau, China <sup>2</sup>	15	195	126	Garments	Suspension of projects/cost cutting in operational cost
Malaysia	4	32	25	Construction, hotel	Retrenchment
Singapore <sup>3</sup>	1	19	19	Garments	Retrenchment
Japan	1	14	0	Metal works	Retrenchment
				Information technology	Retrenchment
<b>Oceania</b>	2	81	50		
Australia	2	81	50	Shipbuilding/construction	Redundancy

*1 Data based on reports of Philippine Overseas Labor officers*

*2 Forty hotel workers were promised to be rehired in the company's project in Singapore*

*3 Data based on recruitment agency report*

*OFW = overseas Filipino workers*

Source: Philippine Overseas Employment Administration



females (table 4). The majority of the male returnees were married, while the majority of the female returnees were single. Almost all were land-based workers who had been working abroad for only six months or less. A majority were production workers, such as sewers, machine operators and factory workers. The male

returnees had a much higher level of education, with slightly more than half having obtained a college degree, whereas half of the women returnees only had a high school education.

**Table 4: Socio-demographic profile of displaced Filipino workers from Europe and neighbouring countries assisted by the National Reintegration Center for Overseas Filipino Workers, March–6 October 2009**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Civil Status</b>						
Single	9	26	35	22.5	60.5	42
Married	24	15	39	60.0	34.9	47
None declared	7	2	9	17.5	4.7	11
<b>Type of overseas worker</b>						
Land-based	28	40	68	70.0	93.0	82
Seafarers	10	0	10	25.0	0.0	12
None declared	1	3	5	2.5	7.0	6
<b>Length of stay abroad</b>						
1-6 months	30	37	67	75.0	86.0	81
7-12 months	7	2	9	17.5	4.7	11
13-18 months	1	0	1	2.5	0.0	1
19-24 months	0	0	0	0.0	0.0	0
24 months or longer	0	1	1	0.0	2.3	1
None declared	2	3	5	5.0	7.0	6
<b>Occupation</b>						
Service workers <sup>1</sup>	11	4	15	27.5	9.3	18
Production workers <sup>2</sup>	20	35	55	50.0	81.4	66
Professional & technical workers <sup>3</sup>	3	0	3	7.5	0.0	4
Seafarers	4	0	4	10.0	0.0	5
None declared	3	3	6	7.5	7.0	7
<b>Education</b>						
High school	8	22	30	20.0	51.2	36
College undergraduate	3	7	10	7.5	16.3	12
Vocational	5	1	6	12.5	2.3	7
College graduate	21	9	30	52.5	20.9	36
None declared	3	4	7	7.5	9.3	8
<b>Total number of workers</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>83</b>			

*1 Service occupations include : carpenter, cook, janitor, messenger, bartender, huosekeeper, tile setter*

*2 Production occupation include : sewer, machine operator, production / factory workers, machine/computer operator*

*3 Professional & technical occupations include : engineer, technician*

Source: National Reintegration Center for Overseas Filipino Workers

Most of the displaced returnees from Europe (mostly women) in the data set came from the eastern part of the continent, particularly the Czech Republic, Poland and Romania (figure 6).

## Return migration policies and programmes

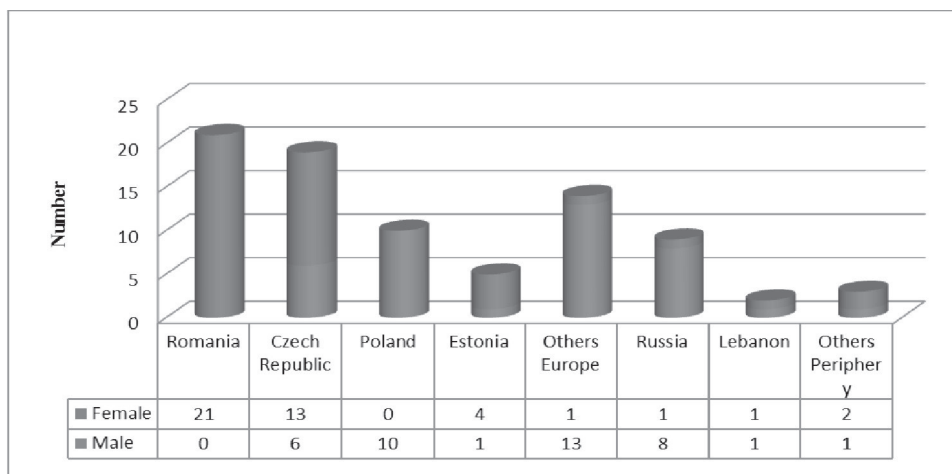
Republic Act 8042, or the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995, is the overarching legislation that governs overseas Filipinos in general and overseas Filipino workers in particular. With this law, the Government made supporting returning migrants part of its policy priorities. Thus the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration provides social services for the welfare and protection of its overseas worker members and their families. Part of its task is the reintegration of returning workers; it offers various services designed to make the reintegration process easier for returnees.

The reintegration programme has two major components: psychosocial needs and economic needs. The psychosocial component includes the organizing of Family Circles (consisting of overseas workers' family members and returnees) and such services as family counselling and stress debriefing.

The economic component includes preparation programmes for livelihood projects or community-based income-generating projects, skills training and credit lending. Currently, the OWWA has two loan programmes: the Livelihood Development Programme for Overseas Filipino Workers and the Overseas Filipino Workers Groceria Project. The Livelihood Programme is a joint undertaking between OWWA and the National Livelihood Support Fund, designed to improve workers' access to entrepreneurial development opportunities and to provide credit to overseas workers, their families and overseas worker organizations. In 2006, some 198 livelihood projects were approved, totalling 34,102 million pesos provided in loans.

The previous OWWA economic reintegration loan programme was called the Expanded Livelihood Development Programme and provided credit of up to 50,000 pesos to returning migrants. In 1996, an evaluation of the programme found that 5,466 projects were funded for a total of 152 million pesos, benefiting

**Figure 6: Displaced Filipino workers from Europe and neighbouring countries, by country and sex, March–October 2009**



Source: Raw data from National Reintegration Center for Overseas Filipino Workers, 2009

6,609 individuals and generating jobs for more than 12,000 workers. The projects were in services (42 per cent), trading (38 per cent), agribusiness (12 per cent) and manufacturing (8 per cent). The loan ceiling of 50,000 pesos, however, was found to be inadequate in the evaluation. As well, the repayment of the loans was unsatisfactory, even though the ceiling for non-performing loans was set at 30 per cent. The evaluators concluded that the credit programme for reintegration was a losing financial undertaking and should be left to banks and other financial institutions. Whether or not the projects were sustainable was not determined.

Despite this conclusion, the OWWA continued its loan programme. It has increased its loan ceiling to 200,000 pesos for individual borrowers and 100,000 pesos for group borrowers but now requires a 100 per cent collateral coverage in the form of real estate property, chattel, motor vehicles, machines and equipment that are no older than three years.

The Groceria Project works to improve the socio-economic situation of overseas workers and their families by providing livelihood and self-employment opportunities through the establishment of cooperative grocery stores nationwide. It is an interest-free loan assistance package extended in the form of merchandise goods worth 50,000 pesos per qualified Family Circle or overseas worker organization. At the end of 2008, the OWWA reported that a total of 496 grocery stores had been set up. The loan has a two-year maturity, and the beneficiaries must provide equity in the form of a lot or building for the grocery store, store construction or renovation costs and other pre-operating expenses.

Reintegration preparedness activities, such as skills training classes and business forums, are also arranged for workers at their foreign worksite. A total of 219 skills training classes were conducted abroad in 2006. The business forums inform workers of business and investment opportunities open to them back in the Philippines. For instance, in Al-Khobar and Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in 2006 there was a forum on aquaculture investment opportunities. In 2008, the OWWA reported that 1,797 skills and livelihood training sessions that included entrepreneurship training and financial literacy were conducted for workers overseas and Family Circle members in the regional welfare offices within the Philippines.

The OWWA also provides repatriation assistance to distressed workers. Under its one-country team approach, its welfare offices in the 38 foreign service posts around the world are mandated to provide shelter, board, medicine and counselling services to all Filipino workers in need, whether they are OWWA members or not. Although the organization facilitates the repatriation of workers, by law it can pay for the cost of the return ticket only for its members. For non-members, the Assistance to Nationals unit of the Department of Foreign Affairs shoulders the travel costs. From January 2005 to September 2009, the OWWA advanced air tickets to 1,150 distressed overseas workers and facilitated the return of the remains of the 249 deceased workers.

The OWWA repatriation services begin at the overseas worksite and continue through entry into the country and return to each worker's home. Upon arrival in the Philippines, airport assistance is extended and, where necessary, temporary accommodation, medical and rehabilitation services as well as domestic transportation are provided to the workers, whether they are registered members of OWWA or not.

Awards are given to outstanding entrepreneurs. A Model OFW Family of the Year Award is also given to the family that exemplifies the best in terms of managing the impact of overseas employment in family life and optimizes the gains from labour migration through enterprise development and the generation of employment opportunities for others.

The Social Security System also established the OFW Flexi-Fund, a provident fund that provides a retirement protection scheme for overseas workers.

In February 2007, Department Order 79-07 was signed, establishing the National Reintegration Center for Overseas Filipino Workers as a "one-stop centre"

for all reintegration services for workers, their families and communities. It is also a "service networking hub" that coordinates and facilitates the delivery of services by all participating service providers. The NRCO and the OWWA work closely together to manage the reintegration programme, which follows the overseas employment cycle, from pre-departure, on site in the host country and return (Manzala, 2009). It works under the premise that planning for eventual reintegration should begin even before a worker leaves the Philippines.

During the pre-departure phase, the reintegration programme guides each worker and their family in setting a common goal to be achieved while the worker is abroad. It also guides them in defining the role of each family member in mitigating the negative effects of separation, establishing a support system and optimizing the migrants' earnings.

While in the host country, overseas workers are provided access to programmes that will help them adjust to life in that country and to prepare for their eventual return to the Philippines. The families that are left behind are given opportunities to acquire skills on financial management as well as livelihood and business development.

Upon a worker's return, the reintegration programme encourages productive and sustainable economic activities that emphasize wealth creation and help stimulate economic activities in the worker's community. The programme also promotes skills and technology transfer to local industries as well as the right climate for investments and business development.

The national centre has three programme components: personal reintegration, economic reintegration and community reintegration. For personal reintegration, the centre offers programmes designed to assist with workers' personal adjustment to life with their family and in the "old" community.

Within the economic reintegration component, the centre works with financial and other institutions, including NGOs (such as ATIKHA), to develop entrepreneurial opportunities or investment portfolios for workers and their families that will lead to socio-economic well-being. As a complementary activity, it has tapped existing and potential service providers for developing faster, safer and price-competitive remittance schemes that encourage more migrant workers to remit their earnings to the Philippines using formal channels.

In the first half of 2009, the centre set up counselling services on re-entry planning and

preparation, business counselling as well as skills and entrepreneurial training to overseas workers in the host country through the Philippine Overseas Labor Offices. Within the Philippines, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority offers skills training and retooling for returnees and their dependants in its regional and provincial offices.

In the community reintegration component, which is a new policy thrust, programmes are to be designed to encourage workers to contribute to the development of their communities by sharing their skills, expertise and savings and thus convert the “brain drain” into “brain gain”. Projects are only in the developing pipeline currently, but the reintegration centre will encourage workers’ participation in brain-gain initiatives and link worker assistance to local government units and communities.

To date, the reintegration services of the national centre have focused primarily on its economic reintegration component. It consists of four services: counselling on re-entry options; skills training, retooling and upgrading; wage employment; and livelihood, economic and social enterprise development. In addition to working with several government agencies (such as the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA)), the national centre has partnered with banks and NGOs to deliver services.

The passage of Republic Act 9225, or the Dual Citizenship Retention and Reacquisition Act of 2003, also promotes the return of overseas Filipinos. Through this law, Filipinos who re-acquire their citizenship can acquire land and other property and engage in business; previously, Filipinos who took another citizenship had to relinquish their Filipino citizenship and thus were not entitled to own land in the Philippines.

#### **Government response to overseas workers displaced by the global financial crisis**

In anticipation of the possible fallout from the global financial crisis, the Philippine Government took proactive measures to cushion adverse impacts. It turned to many of the reintegration services already in place and added ad hoc measures designed to specifically address the immediate needs of workers who might be displaced (table 4). As the following explains, that included global employment mapping, livelihood loans, training and scholarships, business and investment counselling, legal assistance and referral to agencies for redeployment or local employment.

**Global employment mapping:** In December 2008, the president signed Administrative Order 247 as a government countermeasure against massive job losses. The order required the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration to draw a global employment map to identify “code green” countries that were aggressively recruiting foreign workers.

**Livelihood support fund:** The president also signed in December 2008, Administrative Order 248 on the Filipino Expatriate Livelihood Support Fund, which instructed the Department of Labor and Employment to set aside 250 million pesos from the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration Fund for livelihood support. As of October 2009, OWWA reported that 3,012 displaced overseas workers had availed of the fund, amounting to requests for 149.3 million pesos, with 408 pending applications amounting to 20.4 million pesos (table 5).

**Provincial help desks:** Administrative Order 247 also directed the POEA and OWWA to establish provincial help desks to match the skills of retrenched or aspiring overseas workers with available jobs in the country and abroad. As of October 2009, 2,438 displaced overseas workers had received job placement assistance: 1,911 for overseas jobs and 527 for local employment (table 5).

**Inter-agency airport assistance centre:** The Overseas Worker Assistance Centre at the airport did, and continues, to provide information on redeployment, retraining or livelihood assistance options to displaced overseas workers.

Advanced reintegration teams in host countries: Advanced reintegration teams were sent to Taiwan (China) and Dubai to assist overseas Filipino workers who had lost their job or were expected to lose their job. They were provided repatriation assistance if they wanted to return to the Philippines or job placement assistance if they wanted to continue working abroad. The team included representatives from NRCO, OWWA and TESDA. The Overseas Workers Welfare Administration agency took care of the repatriation assistance and job placement abroad services. The Reintegration Centre provided livelihood assistance so that workers wanting to come home could go directly to accredited partners upon their return for help and opportunities. The TESDA provided training certification in the host countries.

**Legal assistance:** As of August 2009, 1,127 displaced overseas workers had sought refunds for plane tickets and placement fees and legal assistance for other issues. Of them, 852 cases were settled, amounting to



15.7 million pesos, while the rest remain in conciliation proceedings (POEA, 2009).

**Referrals to agencies for redeployment:** As of August 2009, the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration had referred 2,646 overseas workers to various agencies for redeployment. Fifty-three workers returned to the same employer in Taiwan, China, while five were awaiting their visas (POEA, 2009).

**Training and scholarships:** As of October 2009, the TESDA had provided skills training assistance to 2,157 overseas workers, while OWWA provided training on information technology through its Microsoft-Tulay (Bridging) programme and scholarships through its Skills for Employment Scholarship Programme (table 5).

**Table 5: Number of economically displaced Filipino workers from Europe assisted by the OWWA, as of September 2009**

		Indicator	Number
<b>A.</b>	<b>Phase 1</b>		
	1	Displaced OFWs provided pre-qualification orientation/counseling	10 070
	2	Displaced OFWs referred for assistance	
	a	Training assistance (Technical Education & Skills Development Authority	2 157
	b	Training assistance (Technical Education & Skills Development Authority	2 438
		Overseas	1 911
		Local	527
	c	Legal assistance (Philippine Overseas Employment Administration)	173
	d	Livelihood/certificate of eligibility issued	2 490
		Referred to Accredited Cooperating Partner (ACP) <sup>1</sup>	1 838
		Certificate of completion issued	2 952
<b>B</b>	<b>Phase 2</b>		
	1	Displaced OFWs endorsed to Phase 2 <sup>2</sup>	3 420
	2	Displaced OFWs who availed of the Filipino Expatriate Financial Livelihood Fund Support Fund (FELSF)	3 012
			149.3 million pesos
	3	Application in pipeline	408
		Amount	20.4 million pesos
<b>C</b>	<b>Regular programmes</b>		
	1	Skill for Employment Scholarship Program (SESP)	309
	2	OWWA-Microsoft Tulay Program <sup>3</sup>	319
<b>D</b>	<b>Repatriation assistance</b>		
	1	Displaced OFWs provided assistance	143
	a	Airline ticket	102
		Amount involved <sup>4</sup>	620 000 pesos
	b	Domestic fare (public transport e.g. bus, boat, ferry etc.)	41
		Amount involved <sup>5</sup>	12 000 pesos
	1	Microfinance of 10 000 pesos per worker.	
	2	Includes those with existing business or non ACP covered displaced workers needing additional capital.	
	3	Amount not determined since this is an OWWA continuing literacy training offered in all regional offices.	
	4	Advances made by OWWA for refund of private recruitment and placement agencies.	
	5	Domestic tickets/amounts are provided to displaced OFWs who have no local fare.	

Source: Overseas Workers Welfare Administration

## **Role of civil society**

NGOs, church groups and associations of migrant workers, both in the Philippines and abroad, also have provided assistance and worked to protect the welfare and rights of migrant workers. The Government has tapped their services in many instances. In host countries and in the Philippines, welfare cases are referred to NGOs for all types of help. Church groups provide spiritual guidance and counselling, while NGOs provide other forms of assistance, such as shelter when necessary. NGOs, such as ATIKHA, have provided financial and literacy training to returned workers and their families.

The associations of Filipino migrant workers abroad have also been helpful to the Government in terms of finding jobs for workers. Their assistance becomes invaluable especially in countries where the Philippines has no foreign post or embassy. However, the arrangement between the Government and church groups, NGOs and migrant associations abroad are largely informal.

## **Experiences of returnees**

Finding returnees from Europe and its neighbouring countries was a challenge for the rapid appraisal, considering that very few Filipino workers, especially from Europe, return to the country. With the assistance of OWWA and the NGOs ATIKHA and Kanlungan, a total of 15 returnees willing to be interviewed were found. Interviews were conducted with six of them, and two focus group discussions were conducted with the others (one group had five participants and the other had four).

### **Profile of returnees**

Almost all of the returnees in the focus group discussions and informant interviews were female (12 of 15), married (9 of 15) and generally middle-aged (table 6). Most of them had worked as domestic helpers or caregivers abroad. Most had worked in Italy (9 of 14); two had worked in Romania and the other three had returned from Israel, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia (though she also worked in United Arab Emirates). Most of them (8 of 14) had returned within the past five years; four had returned in the 1990s and three in the 19980s.

The returnees from Italy were the oldest, with an average age of 59 years (the youngest was 50 years old while the oldest was 77 years). Most of the returnees from Italy worked abroad for ten years or more prior to their return. Three of the returnees from other countries came home after working for only one month or less,

while two others returned after one or two years of working overseas.

### **Reasons for return and plans for working abroad**

What was evident in the focus group discussions and the informant interviews was the fact that the return to the Philippines was not a choice freely made by almost all of the workers. They were forced to return for various reasons, such as labour exploitation, physical abuse, deportation, personal illness or family-related matters (such as illness or death in the family). All were in agreement that had circumstances not made it necessary for them to return, they would have wanted to continue working abroad.

Even those who returned due to grave illness expressed the desire to go overseas again if it were at all possible. One 65-year-old woman, an unmarried worker forced to return due to cancer after 18 years in Italy, went back to her employer in Rome when she felt better. Unfortunately, she had to return again because her health condition made it difficult for her to meet the physical demands of her job as a domestic helper. Despite this, she said that if she had a choice, she still wanted to go back to Italy. This sentiment was likewise expressed by another single female worker who had worked in Italy for 22 years but was forced to return in 2007 after undergoing surgery for a brain aneurysm. At the time of the focus group discussion, she said that she was working on the necessary papers to enable her return to Italy.

Among the reasons the returnees cited for wanting to go back were the health benefits provided by the State and the desire to escape from the pressures and problems of their family.

Only three workers freely chose to return to the country for good. Two of them were married who said that prior to leaving they had made the decision that they would only work abroad for two years because they did not want to be away from their children for too long. Because their goal was clear to them, they worked hard, saved and returned to the Philippines, according to their plan. Although the third worker, a female chemical engineer who worked as a caregiver in Israel, had no negative experience while working abroad, she decided to go home permanently when her contract ended after two years.

### **Assistance received prior to and upon return**

The workers from Italy who had left the country in the 1980s and 1990s and had been away

**Table 6: Profile of returnee respondents in interviews and focus group discussion for rapid appraisal**

No. of workers	Age	Sex	Marital status	Length of overseas employment	Country of work	Occupation	Reason for return	Assistance received for returning and upon return
1	36	Female	Single	26 days (22 April 2009–17 May 2009)	Romania	Sewer	Labour exploitation	Repatriation assistance (airfare) from OWWA Skills training, employment and 50,000 pesos for small business from OWWA
1	45	Female	Single	5.5 months (29 April 2009–14 October 14 2009)	Romania	Sewer	Labour exploitation	Repatriation assistance (airfare) from OWWA Skills training, employment and 50,000 pesos for small business from OWWA
1	42	Female	Married	13 months (16 January 2006–14 February 2007)	Saudi Arabia and UAE	Domestic helper	Labour exploitation	Skills training from Kanlungan, 13,000 pesos from International Labour Organization for small business enterprise
2	Mean age: 50	1 Male 1 Female	Married	3 years (1981–1984)	Germany	Domestic helpers	Deportation due to irregular status	None (used personal money for air ticket and received no assistance from the Philippine embassy)
1	29	Female	Married	20 days (28 April 2009–17 May 2009)	Lebanon	Domestic helper	Physical abuse	Cousin paid for air ticket Kanlungan provided for medical treatment and psychological counselling
8	Mean age: 59	6 Females 2 Males	5 Married 3 Single	16 years (1989–2005) 17 years (1990–2007) 2 years (1987–1989) 18 years (1991–2009) 22 years (1985–2007) 13 years (1980–1993) 10 years (1985–1995) 8 years (1989–1997)	Italy	Domestic helpers/caregivers	Illness (4) Family matters (2) Achieved goal (2)	None (used personal money for air ticket and received no assistance from government agency or NGO upon return)
1	44	Female	Single	2 years (1992–1994)	Israel	Caregiver	End of contract and desire to return for good	None (used personal money for air ticket and received no assistance from government agency or NGO upon return)

more than ten years, received no assistance from either the Government or NGOs prior to leaving Italy or upon returning to the Philippines. This was due to a lack of information about the programmes and services available.

Those who left the country in recent years and returned to the Philippines due to difficult circumstances, such as exploitation or abuse, received repatriation assistance, skills training and financial assistance.

### **Source of income**

Most of the returnees currently have a source of income (11 of 15) (table 7); they are mostly self-employed entrepreneurs who manage a small business enterprise, such as a restaurant or lease apartments. One success story is a couple who returned after working in Italy for two years, built a big house, sent their children to good schools and put together several businesses, including a construction company, a real estate business and a hollow blocks factory. The two workers who worked in Lebanon were employed by OWWA upon their return (as staff members) and were given capital to set up a small business of their own.

### **Current concerns of returnees**

As table 8 shows, the concerns among the returnees that surfaced in the focus group discussions were diverse, from economic concerns – particularly finding employment or a source of livelihood or capital to either start or expand a small business – to concerns about the cost of medical care and other health needs.

Among the psychosocial issues that emerged, the fear of being alone and the lack of companionship were concerns of the single, ageing female returnees. Among the married returnees, the well-being of their children was articulated, especially that their children are able to complete their education. For many of the overseas workers, going abroad again remained a continuing aspiration. Even those with a serious illness still longed to leave, not only for economic motivation but also for psychosocial reasons: After more than ten years abroad, they had adapted to the foreign way of life, and for some, working abroad represents an escape from the pressures and problems of the family at home.

### **Bilateral agreements and arrangements**

Bilateral approaches in the form of agreements or other arrangements can be a valuable tool for advancing the interests of two countries and addressing a range of pressing issues in the area of international migration, such as the protection of the welfare and rights of

**Table 7: Current source of income for 15 returnee respondents in interviews and focus group discussions**

Current source of income	Number
Employed by OWWA	2
Self-employed	
· Small business enterprise (restaurant, apartment, dry goods store)	6
· Large business enterprise (real estate, construction, hollow blocks factory)	2
Remittances from abroad	2
Unemployed	3
<b>Total returnees: 15</b>	

**Table 8: Current concerns of the 14 returnees in the rapid appraisal interviews and focus group discussions**

<b>Economic</b>
Capital to start or expand small business
Cost of medical care and other health needs
Finding employment or a source of livelihood
<b>Psychosocial</b>
Fear of being alone and lack of companionship (for single workers)
Children's well-being
Returning abroad
<b>Legal</b>
Legal case filed against worker by agency for non-payment of loan

temporary workers, the management and control of irregular migrants, the return of migrants and even the management of remittances.

Bilateral agreements have traditionally been used to manage migration flows between countries. These are formal, legally binding treaties relating to cooperation in various aspects of labour migration. They can take the form of bilateral labour agreements, bilateral maritime agreements, bilateral social security agreements or anti-trafficking agreements. Bilateral economic agreements, although not primarily labour agreements, could also include a migration component, as in the case of the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement. In this treaty, conditions for the entry of Filipino nurses and caregivers to Japan in the initial two years were specified, including a quota of 1,000 individuals. Similarly, the Republic of the Philippines-European



Union Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, which is currently under negotiation, also contains migration-related provisions.

Alternative bilateral arrangements in the form of memoranda of understanding (MOUs), which are not legally binding on countries, have likewise been used. The effectiveness of these bilateral mechanisms depends on how well they are implemented and enforced by the contracting countries. At its most informal, bilateral agreements can take the form of statements or assurances of mutual cooperation in labour migration.

Negotiating formal bilateral labour agreements, including MOUs, maritime agreements and social security agreements, for the protection and welfare of workers is a difficult undertaking. Among the most common arguments raised by receiving countries for their reluctance – if not outright refusal – to enter into any formal agreement is that foreign workers are subject to the same laws and regulations as nationals; consequently, they do not need any special attention. Additionally, because the terms of employment are negotiated by the workers and private employers or agencies as a private sector business, government intervention is not necessary.

In the Asian region, the Philippines has been the most successful among the labour-sending countries in its attempts to negotiate these agreements (Go, 2006). However, the number of bilateral labour and social security agreements that the Philippines has successfully entered into over the past 35 years attests to the difficulty of such an undertaking. As of September 2009, the Philippines had successfully forged 44 bilateral labour agreements with 22 countries on employment, welfare and general labour cooperation, 12 social security agreements with 10 countries and 44 agreements on the recognition of seafarers' certificates since the overseas employment programme began in 1974.

The bilateral labour agreements between the Philippines and other countries can be classified into two broad categories: 1) the labour recruitment and special hiring agreements and 2) the labour, employment and human resource development agreements.

The labour recruitment agreements focus on the terms and conditions concerning the employment and mobilizing of Filipino workers or the exchange of trainees. The bilateral agreements with Norway, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Korea, Spain, Switzerland, Taiwan (China) and the United Kingdom are largely

recruitment agreements. The agreements with Norway, Spain and the United Kingdom specify the terms and conditions regulating the recruitment of Filipino health professionals, while the agreement with Sweden specifies the terms and conditions for the exchange of Filipino professionals and technical trainees. The agreement with Papua New Guinea details the terms and conditions for the employment of Filipino workers under a non-citizen employment contract. The MOU between the Philippines and Taiwan, China implements a special hiring facility that allows Taiwanese employers to directly hire Filipino workers without the intervention of employment agencies. This special hiring facility provides Taiwanese employers an alternative option to the hiring of workers through agencies. The agreement also includes the commitment of both parties to advance the interests not only of the employers but also of the Filipino workers.

The labour, employment and human resource agreements with Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Qatar and the Commonwealth of Northern Marianas Islands contain the following essential features:

- Promoting and strengthening areas of cooperation for labour, employment and human resource development;
- Exchanging information on relevant research, technical expertise and other matters that would enhance employment promotion and labour administration in the Philippines and the labour-receiving country;
- Strengthening the welfare and protection of the rights of Filipino workers in accordance with the labour laws of the receiving country;
- Establishing a joint committee composed of members from both the Philippines and the receiving country to do a periodic review of the agreement and its implementation.

Since 1974, most of the efforts of the Philippine Government have been directed towards pursuing bilateral labour agreements with labour-receiving countries. In 2003, the Government signed a bilateral labour agreement with another labour-sending country, Indonesia. This agreement was significant because it was the first successful attempt by the Philippines to try to consolidate efforts with other labour-sending countries in the region towards promoting the welfare of migrant workers and protecting their rights. The agreement contains the following priorities for joint initiatives and cooperation:

- Promoting and protecting the welfare and rights of migrant workers of both countries
- Training and certifying migrant workers
- Providing legal aid for the protection of the rights of migrant workers.

The joint initiatives and cooperation entail the exchange of information, materials and experience and the exchange of experts and staff. They also include the development of collaborative training, joint research and development and joint efforts to promote and protect (including legal assistance) the welfare and rights of workers.

A Steering Committee, composed of senior officials from both countries, was to be established that would meet at least once a year to review the MOU and to coordinate programmes. Joint working groups were also to be established in receiving countries through the respective embassies or labour offices of the Philippines and Indonesia to promote and protect the welfare and rights of their migrant workers. These joint working groups were to meet regularly and were to pursue programmes in the host countries in close coordination with the Steering Committee.

Unfortunately, the Steering Committee and the joint working groups were never established, and the bilateral agreement has not been formally implemented. However, the Philippines and Indonesia have formed an informal alliance and have taken the same position in matters affecting the welfare of migrant workers, as in the case of the drafting of the ASEAN Instrument on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers.

To date, only the MOU between the Philippines and the Government of British Columbia in Canada has a specific provision on enhancing the reintegration of returning workers.

In the area of social security, the Philippines has forged ten bilateral agreements, seven of them with countries in Europe (Austria, Belgium, France, Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom). The salient features of the treaties offer:

- **Mutual assistance between the Philippines and the other country regarding social security** – Covered members or beneficiaries may file their claims with the designated liaison agencies of the Philippines or the other country, which will extend assistance to facilitate the processing of claims.
- **Equality of treatment** – A Filipino covered by social security, including his/her dependants and

survivors, is eligible to benefits under the same conditions as the nationals of the other country.

- **Export of social security benefits** – A Filipino can continue to receive his/her benefits wherever he/she decides to reside in the Philippines, in the other country or even a third country.
- **Totalization of social security benefits** – Creditable membership periods in both the host country and the Philippines (excluding overlaps) can be added to determine qualification for benefits.
- **Shared payment of benefits** – Both the host country and the Philippines will pay a fraction of the benefit due from their respective systems, in proportion to the actual contributions or creditable periods.

The Philippines has been negotiating for bilateral maritime agreements to protect the interests of the Filipino shipping industry in general and Filipino seafarers in particular. The Government's efforts at negotiating have resulted in the signing of bilateral maritime transport and merchant shipping agreements with eight countries.

The Philippines has been more successful in forging bilateral agreements on the recognition of Filipino seafarers' certificates under Regulation 1/10 of the 1978 International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, as amended in 1995. The Convention establishes the minimum standards for the training and performance of seafarers deployed in vessels engaged in both overseas and domestic shipping. The amended Convention, which took effect in February 2002, requires a bilateral agreement between seamen-sending and seamen-accepting countries for the recognition of seamen's certificates of competencies. Seafarers of countries not in the International Maritime Organization's White List and not covered by bilateral agreements cannot be hired to work on board ocean-going vessels. Since 2000, the Philippines has signed bilateral agreements on the recognition of seafarers' certificates with 44 countries. In Europe, the Philippines has agreements with Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Georgia, Greece, Ireland, Isle of Man, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and Ukraine.

## Conclusions and recommendations

For countries of origin, like the Philippines, a sudden influx of large numbers of returning migrants poses significant challenges to the country's ability to

absorb the returnees and to adequately provide for all their reintegration needs, ranging from the personal to the economic. The previous experience of the Philippines with the Gulf War, the 1997/1998 Asian financial crisis and other crisis situations has sensitized the Government to the need for a comprehensive approach to managing migration that incorporates a sustainable reintegration programme for promoting the well-being not only of the migrant workers and their families but also of their communities of origin and covers all phases of the migration process, from pre-departure, in host countries and upon return.

However, another equally important challenge is to identify returnees and potential returnees in non-crisis situations so that they can be prepared for eventual return and reintegration and the appropriate services can be extended to them. This rapid appraisal has revealed the following:

1. Much more needs to be known and understood about the return migration phenomenon in the Philippines.
2. There is a dearth of information on the magnitude of return, the characteristics of returnees and the typologies of return.
3. Filipino workers return from Europe only when circumstances leave them with little or no choice, such as serious health problems, family problems, deportation or serious cases of exploitation and abuse.
4. Filipino workers who return from overseas want to go abroad again to work for both economic and non-economic reasons.
5. Filipino workers in Europe who returned to the Philippines after being abroad for a long period of time were unaware of the reintegration services available to them in the host country and upon return.
6. Economic as well as psychosocial reintegration are important services needed by all types of returnees.
7. Single female returnees have special reintegration needs that should be addressed.

The following recommendations are thus suggested:

### **1. Documentation and research: Data needs**

- a. Systematically collect data on returned migrants within relevant government agencies to determine the magnitude of returning workers and identify the characteristics of returnees.
- b. Initiate research within academic and other institutions that will shed better light on the nuances and complexities of return and reintegration, including

the typologies of return, so that more appropriate interventions and programmes can be developed.

- c. Develop a database that contains information on overseas Filipino associations and relevant NGOs regarding the types of services and programmes that they provide to overseas workers in the host countries, prior to return and upon return to the Philippines.
- d. Evaluate the Government's reintegration programme to assess its effectiveness, including the sustainability of the loan programmes designed to improve the economic conditions of returnees and their families.

### **2. Return and reintegration services**

- a. Provide economic and psychosocial services, which are needed by all types of returnees; health and legal services may also be needed by others, especially victims of labor exploitation, trafficking and other forms of abuse.
- b. Provide a flexible package of services for overseas Filipinos wanting to either return to the Philippines or to stay in the country of destination that are designed to fit the individual needs of migrants so that the services will be truly empowering for them.

### **3. Harnessing local government units – what is good for the returnee and family is good for local government**

- a. Tap local government units as partners, together with NGOs and other national government agencies, for providing reintegration services to their constituents.
- b. Provide capacity-building programmes for local government officials so that they better understand the migration phenomenon, the link between migration and development and the role that they can play in the reintegration process.
4. Harnessing NGOs, church groups and migrant associations
  - a. Rely upon NGOs, church groups and migrant associations in countries where there is no embassy or consulate to provide the necessary return or reintegration services to migrants.
5. Bilateral agreements and arrangements
  - a. Include return and reintegration provisions within bilateral agreements and arrangements that the Government forges with countries of destination.
  - b. Include integration provisions within bilateral agreements and arrangements for overseas workers who choose to stay in the country of destination.

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## The Philippines and Return Migration

*Rapid appraisal of the return and  
reintegration policies and service delivery*

This report reflects a rapid appraisal for taking stock of what is known about return migration to the Philippines, in general; and return migration from Europe and its neighbouring countries, in particular. It looks at the magnitude of return migration, the return migration experience of Filipino workers, their motivations for returning, and the policies, programmes and legislative framework designed to reintegrate returning workers.



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