

International conference

MAXIMIZING THE GAINS AND MINIMIZING THE SOCIAL COSTS OF MIGRATION

Rome, April 15th, 2011

Province of Rome – Di Liegro Conference Hall

OPENING ADDRESS

Introduction – Paolo Dieci, President, CISP

Paolo Dieci greets and thanks all participants and commemorates the Italian NGO worker Vittorio Arrigoni, killed in Gaza, on April 15th, 2011.

He introduces the project as a joint initiative of Comitato Italiano per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli – CISP, the Filipino Women's Council - FWC and Atikha, partner in the Philippines.

He also thanks Ambassador Romeo Manalo and singles out the role of the Embassy of the Philippines that welcomed some project's activities to be implemented in its premises.

H.E. Romeo Manalo, Ambassador of the Republic of the Philippines in Italy

The Ambassador thanks those who have put their efforts in the project underlining that it is not just a research project but an initiative touching people's lives and it brings to a deeper understanding of the life of migrant workers and their families. Therefore, a speech for this occasion is not an exercise of eloquence but the expression of passion.

The reason of this gathering lies first and foremost in the fact that participants genuinely care about migrant workers' reality; secondly it represents the conclusion of a very significant project, although the process launched by the project does not end today. This conference is also about sharing: the presence of people of other nationalities as well as with participants coming all the way from the Philippines clearly show this will of sharing.

Filipino migration is important for the Philippines. One Filipino out of ten works abroad; the Philippines have a population of about 92 million and 9 million citizens are OFWs. In Italy, the Filipino community is the sixth biggest and counts about 120 thousands Filipinos. For everyone of them, at least five people in the Philippines benefit from their work.

The problem of migration is multidimensional and therefore requires a multidimensional approach. This is why there are many different stakeholders, that are: public institutions, financing institutions, charitable institutions, migrant workers associations, NGOs and, perhaps more importantly, the families and the individuals.

A few pictures can help in better visualize the condition of OFWs: a mother working in Italy taking care of Italian children; on the other hand there are her children in the Philippines, who grow up without maternal warmth.

An other aspect to be recalled is that very often the family members of OFWs stop working and they become very dependent from the remittances sent by their relatives in Europe; in particular, they abandon agriculture, the work in the fields, because they want to migrate themselves.

Taking care of migrants is a pillar of Philippines foreign policy: the Embassy as well as Philippine public institutions want to be stakeholders in this process and facilitate communication with institutions here in Italy to help them in rightfully understand the issue of migration. To this purpose, it is important that bilateral relations between Italy and the Philippines are not limited to high-level contacts but also include grassroots dynamics, in order to bring forward initiatives that really impact people's lives.

The hope is that the process launched with this project can continue with the support not only of migrant workers' associations but also of the Italian institutions.

Massimiliano Massimiliani, Councilor, Province of Rome

Councillor Massimiliani greets the participants on behalf of the Province of Rome and of its President Nicola Zingaretti, who reaffirms his support to the work of CISP and its partners as well as the commitment to finalise the Memorandum of understanding with the Province of Batangas. The councillor also greets the participants on behalf of Claudio Cecchini, the Province councillor for Social Policies as well as of the social policy commission chaired by Councillor Massimiliani himself. He thanks the Philippine authorities and the three project's partners CISP, FWC e Atikha. The Province of Rome is committed at being a "useful Province" and at promoting a new approach to the themes and issues related to migration. The title of the conference is particularly telling about what stakeholders should ask themselves to tackle these problems, especially in a period of Italian history like the present one.

Migration is a phenomenon that has always paralleled human history, and Italian citizens have been migrants themselves. Nowadays, it is urgent to define a new approach to this phenomenon to be able to see the potential and opportunities it offers instead of manipulating it for electoral purposes. Many studies have shown that migration has been crucial in the building of the Roman Empire while failure in properly regulating it has had a role in the Empire's decline.

Including migrants as individuals as well as their associations in the process of defining new policies is vital and to this aim the project *Maximizing the gains* is definitely a good practice. It is important to facilitate contacts among local institutions, territories and people to create networks and relations and, through these, define new policies to regulate the phenomenon of migration. Recently the Province of Rome has hosted a [conference on transnational welfare](#) that addressed precisely these themes.

The Memorandum of understanding focuses on aspects such as collaboration on higher education, definition of educational qualifications' equivalence, with particular attention on the younger generation of migrants, training for adults and recognition of their professional skills, collaboration on welfare policies in general. The conference's preparatory documents show that in the Batangas Province the children of migrant parents are 50%: it is necessary to provide them with the tools to cope with separation from parents and their condition of children and help them in planning their future and their identities on stable grounds.

It is also important to keep in mind that local authorities implementing migration policies have as reference a set of rights that have been defined by standing structures while the individuals who should enjoy those rights are more and more mobile and constantly move from a continent to another.

In other words, the priority is investing on the main value of migration, that is, real persons, their difficulties and sufferings, added value they bring, because multiculturalism and the mixture of ethnic groups are characteristics of strong societies.

In the light of today's changes, it is crucial to establish good practices based on the acknowledgement of a new transnational identity: the identity built on the State dimension is far from being a static fact even in the Italian context and the European Union is a good example of the constant redefinition of the concept. The widening of the transnational identity must not start from the people's geographical provenance but rather from their own intrinsic value as human beings, which in turn derives from what they do.

The Filipino community in Rome counts thirty thousand people, it is one of the oldest community of migrants and it did help the city to open up again after years of limited exchange with the outside world. It is an industrious community that is now suffering from the consequences of the crisis. Projects like *Maximizing the gains* provide an excellent starting point on the path, with the contribution also of the migrant associations that will bring to the reconstruction of a different, new Italy.

Dona Rosa de la Cruz, Filipino Women's Council (FWC), President

The President of the FWC thanks and greets all participants and lists the project's partners from within the community and Italian institutions in Italy who have made the implementation of the activities of the project possible. *Maximizing the gains* has, as its main objective both to help the Philippine community in Italy and to support development in the Philippines.

The institutions that made possible the project's implementation are the Filipino Women's Council

and Comitato Italiano per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli (CISP), together with the NGO Atikha that is the partner in the Philippines.

Other partners have been: the San Camillo Forlanini Hospital, Inas – Cisl in Rome, Turin, Cgil in Florence and Terni, the Centro Servizi per gli Immigrati (CSI) and the Casa Internazionale delle Donne in Rome that has provided an operational centre for the project.

Expression of gratitude also go to the City of Turin and the Province of Rome, that has hosted this event in its Conference hall, as well as to Embassies and Consulates that have allowed the project to touch several Italian cities (Rome, Milan, Florence and Reggio Calabria) and extend the project's network to areas that would have otherwise been out of reach.

The Philippine associations participating to the project's activities were the Filipino community in Terni and Bologna, the Confederation of Filipino communities of Tuscany, the Filipino Women association of Padua, Ugnayan Pinoy in Brescia, Filamici in Milan, the Filipino association in Turin, whose founder Minda Teves is attending the conference, and the Filipino associations of Biella and Naples.

In Rome, the participating hometown associations were, among others, Tamiwari, Mindorenos and Mabini, and Catangcas Campangan.

Other partners are Filipino Community and the Philippine Catholic association of Reggio Calabria, the Filipino Workers Association of Cosenza and the Philippine Community association of Messina. These associations have made possible the participation of their members to the financial literacy seminars and to the public meeting, dedicating their spare time to the project's activities and collaborating in providing information to the migrant workers' families and friends.

The institutional partners were the EC-UN Joint Migration and Development Initiative, the IOM, The UNDP, the UNFPA, the UNHCR e the ILO.

Paolo Dieci, President, CISP

As recalled by Dona Rosa de la Cruz, this project has to be contextualized in the wider EC-UN Joint Migration and Development Initiative, a programme having several objectives some of which have been included in the project.

Among them it is important to mention the creation of concrete links between migration and development: the first of these links obviously revolves around the use of remittances and how to utilize them for the country of origin's development. Other aspects are also relevant: for example it is necessary to set off the training and professional skills that migrants have acquired abroad for them to be able to take advantage of that knowledge once they return to their home country.

To this purpose, it is important to keep in mind that this project supports development not only in the country of origin but also in the receiving country. As a matter of fact, the receiving countries risk to underestimate the migrants' potential and relegate migrant workers to a limited number of professional activities while they often have skills that could be better used in different professional fields.

Other objectives are to build networks of permanent collaboration among associations, NGOs and local authorities and to derive from this kind of projects a number of indications to plan new policies at the national and international level.

PROJECT'S PRESENTATION

Charito Basa, FWC and Giodana Francia, CISP

[Charito Basa, FWC]

The origin of the project is linked to three research works carried out between 2001 and 2008. The first is a community action research done by the Filipino Women's Council (FWC) in consultation with some women leaders in Rome. The research depicted the situation and the image of the Filipinos in Italy and challenged the perception that Italian have of Filipinos, which is based on the oversimplified idea that "Filipinos are good workers and well-behaving people who never have or cause any problems to the hosting society".

The second one is the Gender, remittances and development research commissioned to the FWC by the United Nations' Institute for Training and Research for the Advancement of Women (UN-INSTRAW). It examined the flows, uses and development impact of remittances of Filipino migrants in Italy.

The third one was Atikha's and Balikabayani Foundation's research which covered Italy in most of its parts to highlight the costs of migration. Atikha also stimulated FWC's first research.

Some very relevant findings of the researches were:

- Financial concerns: migrants have no savings and many have failed in using the remittances to do investments and business. One of the reasons for this failure lays in the culture and pressure from the families back in the Philippines that drain most of the resources. Relatives back home constantly ask for economic resources and most of the times sending 350-400 Euro per month cannot cover all the needs of the family in the Philippines, which include illnesses, emergencies, but are also utilized for less serious purposes. The improper use of remittances has contributed to the creation of a culture of dependency in the Philippines;
- Psycho-social problem: living for such a long time away from the home country, and therefore away from the nuclear family has resulted to a lack of emotional ties with them; and most migrants have no preparation to cope with it especially when they return. Very often marriages break up and children grow without their parents;
- Integration of Filipino migrants in Italy: being integrated does not mean just being employed. Filipinos are not accessing the social services offered to them. The reasons are several: firstly, it is a problem of language; secondly, Filipinos give priority to their work engagements and do not give up working time to take care of their personal needs; thirdly, there is a gap in information.

[Giordana Francia, CISP]

The vision of the project describes a number of aspects to which a particular relevance has been attributed since the project – writing phase. The implementation of the project has then fully shown the importance of these aspects. They are:

- The actual partnership between a migrants' association (FWC) and two NGOs (one in Italy, CISP, and one in the Philippines, Atikha). The FWC has had a major role in implementing the project's activities, while CISP has given a crucial contribution in managing the contract with the EU and the UN and in providing the FWC with capacity building.
- Coordinated activities in Italy and in the Philippines: sensitization and training activities have been realized with migrants in Italy as well as with their families in the Philippines. The coordination also involved local authorities;
- Community work: the initiatives have been conducted with the direct and active participation of the local community by going to the communities' points of encounters and involving trade unions and health centres (*consultori*). The community has welcomed the sensitization initiatives, defining them real icebreakers with the Italian society.
- Strengthening of associations: associations are the main means through which the communities' objectives and needs are collected and voiced; they also interact with the local media, provide relevant information about the receiving country and set up assistance services for migrants. They are both migrants' and hometown associations, the second being more bound to the context of origin and committed to promoting development projects within the community back home.
- Training contents and methodology: Atikha conducted the training activities in the Philippines on the basis of actual experiences. The financial literacy module started from

the costs of migration and sensitized the community to the value of saving. Essential was also the training of trainers, that is the training of Filipino leaders, to enable them to become knowledge multipliers in their communities.

The project's general objective was *to strengthen the link between migration and development in the Philippines*. The strengthening of associations was a key point.

The specific objective was *to strengthen migrants in Italy as well as their families in the Philippines*. Sensitization for a more efficient use of remittances was a substantial aspect.

[Charito Basa]

The first expected result was awareness raising of Filipinos and other stakeholders on the issues of migration and development; the activities that brought to this result were:

- The reprinting of the Guide for Filipinos migrants in Italy, containing updated information on remittances, channels, Italian migratory laws and how to deal with them, institution providing free assistance to migrants in Rome, Milan and Florence;
- The organisation of nine public meetings that reached 260 Filipino participants.
- The March 16th, 2011 multi-stakeholder consultation meeting hosted by the Province of Rome that was attended by migrants' organisations from different countries of origin, NGOs, diplomatic representations, local and national governments; and
- Today's international conference and the promotion of development partnerships among stakeholders.

The second expected result was increasing awareness of migrants' associations on rights and responsibilities and on access to welfare services; the related activities were:

1. Two capacity building training courses, in Florence and in Rome, to which 30 community leaders took part;
2. Training of trainers on financial literacy with 22 participants conducted by Atikha;
3. 14 financial literacy seminars with 419 participants (exceeding the expected number of participants that was 250);
4. Help hometown associations in raising funds for their co-development projects in their communities of origin.

The total budget was 99.000 euro.

[Giordana Francia]

Recommendations have emerged from the March 16th consultation meeting, from the evaluation conducted within the working group and from meetings with focus groups that included the Home Town associations' representatives.

There are ten:

1. Take into consideration the social and cultural characteristics of the territories of origin and receiving areas as well as the migration flows' dynamics, so that the peculiarities emerge in the memorandum of understanding's elaboration phase;
2. Work under the assumption of the migrants' associations', NGOs' and civil society associations' essential role, as they are crucial in bridging the gaps among communities, institutions, and countries of origin, in creating collaboration networks and in providing information;
3. Analyse and strengthen the representativeness of migrants' associations: there are specific criteria through which Italian institutions evaluate how representative associations are. Therefore tools are needed to evaluate this representativeness as well as to strengthen it when already existing;

4. Define and establish transnational agreements for local development, and namely promote forms of actual collaboration among different stakeholders in order to allow a community development – oriented use of remittances, the setting up of basic services (health care and education) and the support of micro-enterprises.
5. Utilize the social research tools to define the project's benchmarks: research has proven essential to identify operational guidelines and entry points; in this project migrants have been actors, not just objects, of the research activities;
6. Ensure the monitoring and evaluation of the project's impact through pre-defined indicators, in order to allow a timely detection of actual changes deriving from the project's implementation;
7. Adapt the training activities to the needs actually perceived by migrants, investing on the second generation. The focus has to be not only on professional training but also on high-level education; already acquired skills have to clearly emerge and made usable;
8. Guarantee the continuity of launched initiatives: these recommendations are already a means to share a vision and make it a starting point of a process;
9. Enhance the role of embassies in their being a bridge among migrants, States of origins and receiving countries: in this project the role of the Embassy has been essential also in terms of moral and logistic support to migrants;
10. Create concrete tools to encourage a productive use of remittances, including the adoption of specific policies allowing a constant follow-up of returning migrants and the support of their entrepreneurial initiatives.

This project is also accomplishing the creation of a web site, whose domain is www.gainsandcostsofmigration.org. The web site will make possible our presence in the web which, in turn, will foster collaboration and exchange of views and will put at everyone's disposal the project's documents and material. The web site will be on line as of end of May 2011.

Estrella Mai Dizon Anonuevo, Director, Atikha

Given the limited amount of time, it is possible to share just a few key significant activities. The first was the training of trainers on financial literacy. What is unique in this activity was that it was brought forward on both sides of the migration corridor: we are training leaders here in Italy to make them able to reach out to their communities and we are training stakeholders in the Philippines – local government units, cooperatives, NGOs, rural banks – to reach the families left behind.

The training was composed by five-day intensive course that covered budgeting, goals setting, saving and investing, family issues draining resources, peer counseling and return demonstrations. For most of the migrants it was a reality check and for many of them it was shocking to tears when they realised that after twenty years working in Italy they haven't got enough savings to return to the Philippines. The goal setting was crucial in making them understand that sometimes they worked hard without really having clear what they want to achieve through their commitment to work and earn money.

Family issues is another important point: very often families have expectation to which the migrants cannot say "No" to and we had to teach them strategies to learn how to say reject their families' requests. For the Filipinos, "No" is a word in a foreign language: when we say "No" we say "Perhaps" or "Maybe".

This is the first project ever to capacitate migrants to be the trainers of themselves, instead of relying on financial consultants to achieve financial literacy. Despite the fact that many of the trained persons had not previous knowledge about how to save and why after the course they even exceeded expectations.

Another activity is the school-based programme. In some communities, like Mabini, Batangas, 50 to 80% of the students are children of migrants. In community like this the role of school is very significant as children refer more to their teachers than to their parents or caretakers. Therefore we decided to develop a school-based program on how school can respond to the children of overseas Filipinos' problems. We developed a five-day teachers training program that included

discussion of migration realities and explained living and working conditions of the migrants which are often unknown in the Philippines.

The communication gap is another big issue. Our studies show that often a five-year separation is enough to make the communication gap irreversible, so we had to address the issue of the quality of communication between migrants and family members left behind.

The value of education was discussed, too, as many children started thinking that they do not need to finish college studies if they are to migrate and become domestic helpers.

Saving consciousness was also discussed, as many children do not give value to the hard-earned resources they receive from parents abroad. Leadership and young entrepreneurship were other themes addressed by the program.

Gender sensitivity was also dealt with, as the phenomenon of feminization of migration from the Philippines is an important issue. Most of the migrants are female, which means that husband back home have to take on the nurturing role in the families. But often the husbands fail in doing that and the burden of the housework is on the shoulders of daughters even if they are very young. In this situation, children sometimes start losing faith in their future to the point of stating that they want to end their lives. To tackle this problem, techniques were taught whose aim was to make them able to recognise these emotional condition to be able to report it to adults and take care of it in a timely manner.

Once trained, the teachers started different activities including role playing which allowed the children to become aware of the above mentioned themes.

One of the outcome of the program is that after the saving consciousness issue was addressed youth savings clubs were created: children learn how to save and a thousand children taking part in the initiative have already saved about two million pesos.

Another activity is capacity building in setting up migrants centers. This is a five-day training in which different stakeholders were trained – local government units and NGOs – on how to set up programs and services for migrants in their areas. Migration is a crosscutting issue, therefore strategies to cope with it have to be coordinated by a multi-stakeholder coordinating council.

Another activity is mobilizing philanthropy and investments for local economic development. Atikha partners with successful agri-based cooperatives (like Soro-Soro Ibaba, which is the largest agri-based cooperative in the Philippines). Trust is key to mobilise resources, and partnering with successful partners is necessary to acquire credibility. We are very satisfied with these partnerships: we are currently receiving a lot of investments from migrants in Italy and also from people living in areas of the country different from Batangas.

Migrants support a lot of events in their hometown like *fiestas* and celebrations, but the aim of this project is convincing them to support more constructive initiatives; through the Memorandum of understanding, it will be possible for associations in Italy to support activities like the school-based program or any other of our initiative they hold as relevant.

The budget was 100.000 Euro for twenty months with which we did more activities than expected.

The recommendations are the following:

- We have to identify migration corridors and prioritize comprehensive interventions of top ten labour receiving countries and top twenty labour sending provinces. There are eight millions Filipinos abroad, 1.5 millions of them in Saudi Arabia and 800 thousands in the United Arab Emirates: these are among the most significant corridors and a Migration and Development Summit should be organised to involve receiving countries and sending provinces in discussing migration issues;
- We urge more preventive intervention at local and national level and the strengthening of pre-departure services, as this would prevent families' and government's resources to be drained to respond to crisis situations and help migrants, including migrating children, to cope with the cultural shock and challenges coming from the new environment;
- We need to support plans for reintegration of returning migrants;
- We have to institutionalise programmes and services for migrants in the local government and the schools;

- We have to promote and upscale projects in Italy and the Philippines aimed at maximizing the gains and minimizing the social costs of migration in the Philippines.

LESSON LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Mainstreaming migration and development in local policies

Maynard Melo, Provincial Planning Office, Batangas

The Batangas Province is located 82 km from Manila in the southern part of Luzon, it has a population of 2.4 million and an area of 316 thousand hectares.

The Batangas Filipino Worldwide Centre (FWC) was established in 2009 after consultation with different stakeholders; strategic planning involving different agencies working for the welfare of OFW in Batangas was also conducted.

The household survey showed that there are more than 60,000 Batangueños OFWs in the world of which fifteen thousands live in Italy. The Batangas governor Vilma Santos Recto starred as a OFW in a film, *Anak*, and she was deeply moved by that experience. This is part of the reason why the establishment of the OFW Centre became one of her priorities in order to provide OFWs and families services related to migration. In the Philippines only two provincial governments are engaged in establishing centres for migrants workers.

The Centre is now located in the Provincial capital, in the premises of the Provincial Planning and Development office and the personnel is composed of former OFWs or their spouses.

Before the establishment of the Centre many different organisations worked for the migrant workers' welfare and support; these organisations obtained the Provincial government recognition and, as they shared goal and vision, they decided to integrate. Currently there is an unified organisation working as one to avoid overlap and duplication. The OFW Centre is managed by the council of the heads of those organisations; it provides measures to enhance psycho-social and financial resiliency, stability and productivity of Batanguenos migrant workers and shares vision, values and responsibilities.

The Governor prioritised programs and services, which include: information hub, psycho-social services, research networking and advocacy, and capacity building.

Since the Centre commenced its activities in January 2010 it assisted 18 OFWs providing referral services. Moreover, it offered to 400 repatriates from Madagascar psycho-social intervention and malaria assistance in coordination with the health services. (Those 400 hundred Filipinos, most of which Batangueños, were repatriated from Madagascar after an alleged outbreak of malaria, but the real problem was poor working conditions and unfair labour practices).

To date, 500 repatriates from Madagascar and one hundred repatriates from Libya attended the business plan orientation seminar for the release of livelihood loan assistance in coordination with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) as well as pre-assessment for the issues related to the national certificate.

The Centre allowed repatriates from Libya to receive financial assistance from OWWA by facilitating the related procedures and made sure that they met the requirements instead of leaving them alone in interacting with OWWA.

The priorities of Batangas migrants' centre are:

- Economic services, education and training: providing financial literacy seminars to assist the OFWs families in managing remittances and addressing families negatively affected by re-integration; implementing programmes that enhance livelihood skills of the migrants and their families and providing linkage to other agencies regarding livelihood investment and employment opportunities;
- Migration and development initiative: linking with organisations of OFWs and Hometown associations based abroad to partner with the Centre; commitment to establish migration desk by 2013 in all municipalities; tracking outbound OFWs through Community based monitoring system (CBMS);

- Strengthening of pre-departure services: a letter was sent to OWWA to ask for accreditation of the Batangas OFWs centre to be the service provider in the Province. Families will be included in the pre-departure services for them to be aware of the conditions of the contract
- Legislative actions: currently the second reading of the ordinance institutionalising the Migrant Centre is ongoing; one of the goals is to include a certification by the Centre in the pre-departure requirements which will allow to track down outbound Batangueños.

The hope is that, through these projects and programmes and the coming sisterhood relationship and partnership with the Province of Rome, the OFWs will improve their conditions and the hosting country will be more aware of the difficulties not only of the OFWs but also of the families left behind.

[Message from governor Vilma Recto (video)]

The governor thanks all participants for sharing time, efforts and resources for organizing this vital affair and acknowledges the hardships, conflicts and sacrifices that migrant workers have to go through to support their families.

Migration has a social cost and it is relieving to know that with this project something will be done to address these concerns with achievable results.

The conference is a perfect opportunity to understand the realities of migration and to devise effective and sustainable solutions with a particular attention for OFWs and their families and communities left behind.

The hope is to identify good practices to be adopted and replicated to minimize the social costs of migration and enhance the economic opportunities deriving from it.

Great satisfaction comes from the perspective of strengthening the partnership of the Provincial administration of Batangas through one Batangas OFWs Centre and Batangueño communities in Italy together with other partner NGOs.

The Governor wrote to President Zingaretti accepting his invitation and the hope is to schedule the meeting in Italy for the last quarter of this year].

Nilo Villanueva, Mayor, Mabini, Batangas

Mr. Villanueva acknowledges the key role of OFWs in his political career: in 2007 polls only 3 Barangay chief executives out of 34 favoured his candidacy and his election was eventually made possible by OFWs, who were his campaigners.

The development currently visible in Batangas is due to the Italian government and employers that gave opportunities to Mabini's constituents; the deep link with Italy deserved to Mabini the fame of being the "Italian village" of the Philippines.

Mabini has a population of 42.000, ten thousands of which are OFWs. 70% of them live and work in Europe and 70% of those living in Europe are in Italy. The Mabini Overseas Migration Centre, shared with Atikha, was one of the first to be established.

Most problems that migrants have to face are culture-based; one of the biggest is over-dependency from the remittances being sent especially from OFWs from Italy.

Previous experience shows that migration or overseas employment is not a permanent and stable solution: before the 1980s the main destination for Mabini's migrants was Middle East, but destination areas can easily change in time. Currently Italy has taken the lead as receiving country but migration dynamic are difficult to foresee.

Moreover, migration also brings costs and difficulties: on one hand, currency circulating in Mabini is mainly in dollars or Euro and the standard of living is one of the highest in the Philippines. On the other hand, the cost of living is high and one of the causes is precisely the overspending of the families left behind in the Philippines. The financial literacy programs conducted by Atikha are important to address this problem; it must be a two-way process involving both the families left behind and the OFWs in Italy, and migrants should be the first movers of this process. A good starting point could be a OFWs mobilisation supporting the effort to unify the more than ten agencies regulating migration and employment in the Philippines into one department, which would

significantly simplify migration services.

Another initiative currently being studied is aimed at allowing the migrants to obtain documents directly in Mabini through decentralised services instead of being forced to travel to Manila.

As for OFWs in Italy, it is very important that they register as organisations and obtain legal status in order to be able to apply for Italian social services; a further step will be to integrate Filipino organisations in Italy and the Philippines to work for the progress of their country with one voice and one vision.

Institutional policies on migration and development: the Ecuadorian experience

José Galvez, [SENAMI – Secretaría Nacional del Migrante](#), Ecuador

The Ecuador government is the first and probably the only government to have created a Ministry to assist his migrant workers abroad as well as the migrants returning to their country.

The National Secretariat for migrants (Secretaría Nacional del Migrante – SENAMI) has opened offices in Milan, Rome and Genoa, where the Ecuadorian presence is stronger. It was created by the current government led by President Rafael Correa and it is the effect of a democratisation process that has affected the whole Latin America region, allowing the democratic participation of all citizens including migrant workers.

This participative dynamic also brought to a new Ecuadorian Constitution, a document that collects all the best of the world's Constitutions, including the Italian one, and enriches them with new rights and values. Among these, it is important to mention the right to water, which is currently debated in Italy as well, and the right to free human mobility, that is the right to migrate to other countries and to receive foreign guests from abroad.

From 2011 to present, the Ecuadorian community in Italy has increased from 1.400 to 90 thousands members; three thousands of them are entrepreneurs on a total of three hundred thousand foreign entrepreneurs in Italy.

SENAMI implements a programme named “Welcome home” (*Bienvenidos a casa*) offering to migrants the chance of a planned return to their home country. After having spent years working abroad, the returning migrants have to face conditions and realities which are very different from those they knew when they left. To face this new situation they need assistance in the relations with public authorities, as well as support and training to start successful income- and employment-generating activities.

The Ecuadorian government has invested 3.5 million dollars in two and a half years to ensure a sustainable return to these migrants: the programme uses public calls as a tool through which returning migrants can submit project proposals and ideas for income-generating activities and investment. The government supports these initiatives with free grants (not to be returned by those who receive them). So far, the Ecuadorian migrants' counterpart has been 7.5 million dollars, with the creation of 3.500 new jobs and 10 million dollars of income.

The [El Cucayo](#) Programme (kitchwa word) has allowed the Ecuadorian administration to connect with the Ecuadorian migrants' associations in Italy and facilitate the network building among them. A SENAMI survey has identified 73 associations of Ecuadorian migrants, 65% of which are located in Lombardy. The Ecuadorian government wants to support their empowerment and make them information and integration tools in the dialogue with public institutions. As a matter of fact, there is a real need of organisations that can be the interface with Italian institutions; therefore it is vital to strengthen them in order to capacitate them to play this role and open up to collaboration opportunities with the migrants' associations of the two hundred nationalities that are present in Italy. The process of integration will then lead to a migrants' role, which will be more and more effective and eventually to the right to vote in national polls. With the second and third generation, migrants will probably be able to fully participate in the political life of Italy as ruling class members. Ecuador has lost 20% of its workforce to migration: this is a huge loss not only for Ecuador, that has supported these citizens' education without benefiting from this investment, but also for the receiving countries that often have no mechanisms to ensure the definition of educational qualifications' equivalence and do not take advantage of the migrants' skills and value.

The Ecuadorian citizens' remittances amount to 3.000 million dollars, being the second economic

resource after oil exploitation. Among its projects, SENAMI is planning to institute a Migrants' Bank to allow Ecuadorian citizens to overcome the difficulties they share with other migrants in accessing credit with the Italian Banks. This Bank, for which the Ecuadorian government has already invested 10 million dollars, will provide the Ecuadorians with the economic resources they need to buy a house or start income-generating activities in Italy.

As for the initiative presented in this conference, the hope is that it can be the occasion to identify collaboration opportunities and facilitate the cultural exchange and dialogue between the Ecuadorian and Philippine communities as well as with all other migrants' associations in Italy.

PERSPECTIVES

Honorlito Solis, Lemery Hometown Association

The Lemery Hometown Association expresses gratitude to CISP, FWP, Atikha and the Province of Rome for this initiative, which is a concrete example of the growing global concern for migrant workers and a recognition of the "living heroes", the OFWs. Gratitude is also expressed to the OFWs families and employers.

Lemery has 8.070 migrants all around the world, most of them in Italy and the local government has set up the OFWs Desk and tracking OFWs.

Migration is the immediate solution and it is beneficial to the families back home, but it also brings what could be called a "separation anxiety" along with several more difficulties. The hope is that this project helps developing a closer tie with the government and minimize the costs of migration.

Elisabeth Morpe, Administrator, Municipality of Rosario

The local government unit is guided by mayor Felipe Marquez; the programs for OFWs and Migrant are implemented by the Municipal development Coordinator and the Department of Social Welfare.

Since August 2010 the administration organised seminars on financial literacy and entrepreneurship and set up services for families of migrant workers. The aim is to help the OFWs' families to better manage the hard-earned money sent by relatives; some of them already have economic activities that are also being monitored.

In December 2010 seminars for local government unit employees having relatives working abroad have been conducted. A memorandum of agreement was signed between local government unit and OWWA and it is expected to enhance migrant workers' closer coordination with the Provincial government of Batangas.

With a migrants desk already in place, the commitment is to set up a Centre for migrants as well. Rosario also has a diaspora philanthropy project for retiring migrants and senior citizens.

The Rosario administration is confident that with the help of Atikha, the support of the Provincial government and the cooperation of the migrants' families, it will be possible to achieve a better community for migrants.

Ryan Asinas, Lemery Hometown Association

Ryan introduces himself as a migrant worker who has been living in Italy for fifteen years. He is representing the school-based project that aims at providing the young people in Lemery with the support they need to continue their education. Investing of young people is crucial, as they represent the future of the migrants' communities.

Quoting Mother Teresa, he states that the people closer to us are those from whom we should start if we really want to help the others.

Amado Abe, Mabini Hometown Association

Honored to be given the chance to speak at this conference, he defines the event a crucial opportunity. The Municipality of Mabini has been a major player for this project, which helped

migrants and their families in clearly seeing the duality of migration in terms of both financial stability and social costs. The hope is that this awareness will be a starting point and that the project's stakeholders will collaborate in facing this reality.

Darlito Bueno, Mayantoc Hometown Association

Mayantoc is a third class town in the province of Tarlac that was involved in the project and welcomed all Atikha initiatives. One of the results was a memorandum of agreement to be signed after the conference.

Charito Basa reads the content of the memorandum of understanding

[text]

Signature of the memorandum