



Maximizing the gains and minimizing the social cost of overseas migration in the Philippines

Project Final Document

Index of contents

- Introduction
- Project partners
- Why did we initiate this project?
- Results
- Lessons Learned and Recommendations
 - Lessons Learned from Italy**
 - The project partners perspective**
 - The beneficiaries perspective**
 - The partners and other stakeholders perspective**
 - Summary of Recommendations**

Introduction

The project “Maximizing the Gains and Minimizing the Social cost of Overseas Migration in the Philippines” was initiated by *Filipino Women's Council (FWC)*, *CISP-Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli* and *Atikha-Overseas Workers and Communities Initiatives Inc.*, to build the capacity of migrant Filipinos in Italy and their families in the Philippines to address both their economic and family issues brought about by migration. Their aim was to strengthen migrant organizations and socio-economic integration of Filipino workers in Italy while, at the same time, enhancing their contributions to development projects in their home country. Furthermore, the project aims to build the capacity of the local government, schools and other stakeholders in providing social and economic services for migrants and families left behind. The project was made possible through the support of the EC-UN Joint Migration and Development Initiative (EC-UN JMDI).

Over the course of eighteen months, in order to respond to the needs of Filipino migrants in Italy and their families in their mother country, FWC and CISP implemented innovative practices of raising awareness and training of community leaders on financial literacy. At the same time, the Filipino NGO Atikha has coordinated new or upscale activities on addressing migration issues and potential in the cities of Batangas and Laguna and in the provinces of Cavite, Tarlac and Pampanga in the Luzon Island.

The project, “Maximizing the Gains and Minimizing the Social cost of Overseas Migration in the Philippines” demonstrated that the nexus between migration and development could be achieved through the empowerment of migrants through information and training. The collaboration between CISP, FWC and Atikha has aimed at a synergy between non-profit organizations and institutions towards advocacy for change in policies involving migration, the raising of awareness of the Italian and Philippine government and civil society on issues of migrants and contribution of migration to development, and implement innovative interventions in the Philippines and in Italy. In so doing, the project has achieved several Best Practices.

Project partners

- *Atikha-Overseas Workers and Communities Initiative, Inc.* is a non-governmental organization in the Philippines founded in 1996 to provide socioeconomic services to Filipinos overseas as well as to their families left behind. Atikha addresses issues on the social costs of migration and the need to tap the development potential of migration. For more information: www.atikha.org
- *CISP - Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli*, is an Italian NGO founded in Rome in 1983. Cooperating with many local partners, CISP has implemented and carries out projects of humanitarian assistance, rehabilitation and development in more than 30 countries in Africa, Latin America, Middle East, Asia and Europe. In the EU, CISP carries out projects concerned with awareness raising and development education, vocational training, fight against racism and social exclusion, and migration and development concerns. For more information: www.sviluppodeipopoli.org
- *Filipino Women's Council (FWC)* is a Filipino migrant organization in Rome founded in 1991 that works on gender issues and the promotion of social integration of Filipino household service

workers through various forms of empowerment and training; information campaigns; socioeconomic counseling; intercultural mediation between Filipino community and Italian service institutions; research, advocacy and networking activities to help increase the participation and visibility of Filipino migrants. For more information: www.filipinowomenscouncil.org

Why did we initiate this project?

We initiated this project because of these important challenges as well as opportunities that we were confronted with as advocates who promote the welfare of the migrants and the families left behind:

- FWC as well as the UN INSTRAW, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), ATIKHA studies showed that the majority of Filipino migrants (70%) are unable to save for their long-term goal despite long years of hard work abroad.¹
- Migrants and the families left behind are suffering from family and social issues (dependency, communication gap, family break-up, early marriage of children, lack of valuation of education, consumerism, etc.) as a result of separation with both economic and social consequences for them.
- Filipino migrants in Italy have difficulty accessing services and are unable to utilize the social services provided by the Italian government. Consequently, Filipinos are somehow “invisible” to the Italian public sector. Their absence is misunderstood as a sign of independence and as a lack of problems, when in reality they should be being regarded as a “silent community suffering from within”.
- Psychosocial issues bear down on the migrants and the families left behind however, there are very minimal intervention of government and other stakeholders to address such issues.
- Migration has minimal impact on development of source communities. Migrant remittances have a lot of potential for development. However, national, local government and other stakeholders involved in migration do not coordinate their initiatives and no synchronized strategic planning on minimizing the cost and maximizing the gains of migration.
- Migration corridors exists between Europe and Region 4 and specifically in Laguna and Batangas, there are about 50,000 working in Italy, especially in the Province of Rome. This

* ¹ UN-INSTRRAW, IFAD, and FWC (2008) *Gender, remittances and development: The case of Filipino migration in Italy*

* Charito Basa and Rosalud Jing de la Rosa (2004) *Me, Us and Them: reality and illusions of Filipino domestic workers*. FWC project in partnership with IOM-Rome under the EC EQUAL programme “The Image of Migrants in Italy through media, civil society and the labour market”

* ATIKHA and Balikabayani Foundation (2001) *Coming Home: Women, Migration and Reintegration*

provides an opportunity to work on both sides of the migration corridor since we believe interventions should involve both the migrants and their families as well.

- There is interest amongst local government of Region 4, local government of Province of Rome, banks, NGOs and cooperatives in providing services for migrants and their families.

Results

Overall, this project generally focused on the strengthening the nexus between migration and development through the empowerment of organizations in the Philippines and migrants' groups in Italy. This was done in order to enhance the positive impact of migration and minimize the social costs or negative effects of migration.

The project has the following objectives and achieved the following outputs:

Objective 1: Increased awareness of the Filipinos and other stakeholders on the issues of migration and development and migrant social and civil rights in Italy with the following outputs:

- 2,000 copies of the Guide for Filipino migrants in Italy printed and disseminated;
- 9 public meetings with members of the Filipino community in Italy with 368 participants were held in the cities of Rome, Florence, Terni and Turin. The meetings addressed themes such as gender issues in migration, remittances and nexus migration and development;
- 1 forum with local authorities, non-government organizations and migrant's organizations in the Province of Rome;
- 7 consultations and fora on Migration and Development Nexus with local authorities, NGOs, and other stakeholders were held in the Provinces of Laguna, Batangas and Cavite;
- An international conference bringing together all the actors who have been involved in the project, including local authorities and Home Town Associations, held in the Province of Rome.

Objective 2: Capacity building of Migrants organizations and HTAs on migrants rights and welfare issues, financial literacy, counseling, organizing and alliance building to deliver economic and social services to their members and to help create community development projects in partnership with different stakeholders and conducted the following outputs:

- 22 migrant leaders trained as trainers in conducting financial literacy in Italy from the cities of Rome, Padova, Milan, Torino, Brescia, Bologna, and Florence and 30 mentored;
- 2 capacity building activities on leadership, project formulation, rights and duties of migrants, health and reproductive rights in Italy involving 30 migrant leaders;
- 14 echo-seminars on Financial Literacy and Counseling were conducted by the trainees reaching out to 419 migrants;
- Consultation meetings with Hometown associations on partnership with local government in the Philippines on migration and development initiatives.

Objective 3: Build the capacities of Migrant families and NGOs, Local Government Units, schools, cooperatives, rural banks and other stakeholders involved in initiatives in addressing

the social cost of migration and in tapping the resources of migrants for the development of the OFWs, their families and communities by implementing the following outputs:

- 4 training of trainers on financial literacy for migrants and families given to 115 Local government unit staff, Department of Education teachers, NGOs, cooperatives and OFW family leaders in the Philippines from the provinces of Laguna, Batangas, Cavite, Tarlac, Nueva Ecija, Abra, La Union and Pampanga;
- 110 trainees monitored and mentored;
- 20 echo seminars conducted with 885 migrants and families reached in the Philippines;
- 2 (4-day) trainings on setting up OFW Center conducted to 50 participants from the municipalities of the provinces of Batangas, Laguna, Cavite, Tarlac, Nueva Ecija and Bicol;
- 4 MOAs signed and assisted in setting up 3 OFW centers in the province of Batangas and the municipality of Mabini and Cuenca in Batangas.
- 3 Development projects were set up: Coop Mart in Sta Rosa, Alaminos, Laguna; Ekolife Home stay Ecotour in San Pablo City and School-based Program in Mayantoc, Tarlac;
- 2 (5-day) training of teachers on setting up School Based Programme in Addressing the Social Cost of Migration attended by 69 teachers;
- 613 children joined the Batang Atikha Savers Club;
- Monitoring and Data Base on the participants of the financial literacy developed.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Lessons Learned from Italy

The last stage of the Italy-based activities of the project involved a series of evaluation process from the point of view of the beneficiaries, and the stakeholders, i.e., local and national authorities, Italian and migrants' organizations. The evaluation was organized in three separate events, namely: an evaluation meeting between FWC and CISP; a focus group discussion with some beneficiaries of the Italy based activities; and a consultation meeting with key partners and stakeholders based in Italy.

The Project Partners Perspective

CISP and FWC identified Best Practices that could be replicated in the future.

1. The development of **concrete partnership** among the proponents of the project. This allowed partners from very different levels – in this case a migrant' organization and two NGOs (one in Italy and one in the Philippines) to positively work together. For example, CISP offered capacity building support in the coordination and administration of the activities to the Filipino Women's Council, whose role was crucial to this project. As a result, the project achieved the first genuine partnership between the Filipino community in Italy and representatives of Italian institutions.
2. The importance of the activities implemented on both sides of the migration corridors (destination and origin countries). Similar activities happened in Italy and the Philippines like financial literacy training coordinated but with different target groups: migrants' organizations in Italy, while families of migrants in the Philippines. Moreover, in both countries the local and

national authorities were involved.

3. Another strong side of the project was the **strengthening of migrants' organizations**, starting from FWC (as partner of the project) to the Filipino migrant groups involved in the project's activities; with leaders of different groups directly involved and mobilized and activities tailored to their needs and priorities. Moreover they had the opportunity to get to know relevant figures of the Italian public sector, such as representatives from trade unions and public health systems.

4. Finally, the project confirmed the importance for training activities to be designed on the basis of the **concrete needs and preferences** of their target groups, which were previously identified. The recommendations of the studies conducted by FWC and Atikha in the past years served as starting point for the inclusion of the training activities for this project.

The Beneficiaries Perspective

1. The importance of a learning method which started from the **concrete experience** of the participants, especially tailored on what were known to be the specific features of the Filipino community in Italy. The participants seemed to have smoothly assimilated the contents of the teaching modules, allowing them to apply these lessons to their everyday life. In fact, the people who took part in the focus group agreed on how easy it was to create new habits and integrate them into their family life concerning the management of family expenses and saving. Some decided to start saving and investment with the biggest agricultural cooperative in the Philippines. They acknowledged the usefulness of approaching individual problems by putting them in connection with the wider framework of the social costs of migration.

2. Those who attended the “training of trainers” course emphasized the empowerment impact by learning how **to listen and advise** their fellow Filipinos who are in difficult situations, and especially to **teach** them how to change their behaviors, by providing proper tools on how to continue to conduct financial literacy seminars continuously. They found this to be an important step for the enhancement of migrants' leadership skills within their groups and in strengthening links with others within the community.

3. Lectures offered by representatives from the Italian public sector were seen as an important chance to learn one's rights and responsibilities as migrant workers in Italy. The **concrete opportunity** to meet people from trade unions and health services has been acknowledged as a fundamental step towards a better inclusion of the Filipino community by making them feel “closer” to Italian institutions. After these meetings, some of the participants have in fact started to turn to public offices and social services, thus breaking the invisibility that seems to characterize the Filipino community in Italy.

The Partners and other Stakeholders Perspective

1. The need of a change of mentality among Filipinos in Italy has been pointed out explicitly by representative the Philippine Embassy; this project was therefore seen as the first step towards such a wider socio-cultural change;

2. The importance of not deducing the issue of integration to merely economic, i.e., that Filipinos are employed. The case of Filipinos showed that communities with the high employment rates still face exclusion from the social and cultural life in the host country. This isolation has serious repercussions in the way Filipinos are stereotyped (e.g., as domestic workers), which consequently

creates a lack of social mobility for first and second-generation of migrants;

3. The need to foster the issue of right to citizenship for migrants in Italy;

4. The recognition of migrants' organizations not only as intermediaries to reach individual migrants, but also as sources of innovative vision in formulating strategies towards social inclusion. The important role of migrant organizations could be enhanced through their recognition as organizations that are responsible for development and cooperation at the Italian and transnational levels;

5. The importance of fostering the **accountability of local authorities** in relation to issues of migration and development. It is necessary that they find new ways to establish collaborative partnership with migrants' organizations, with their communities of origin and, finally, with existing networks of institutions including at the international level.

Summary of Recommendations

These recommendations have been formulated following a joint evaluation of the activities carried out by the partners of the project and the results of the forums carried out in the Philippines and in Italy. They are addressed to the project stakeholders, local and national authorities of destination and origin countries, civil society organizations and experts and they aim to identify further steps to take into the field of migration and development.

1. Active Involvement of Migrants, Migrant Families, Migrant Organizations and NGOs

One of the most effective interventions we developed in the project was the **training of migrant leaders in Italy** in conducting seminars on financial literacy and addressing family issues that drain migrants' resources. We realized that even if the trained leaders were not financial experts, they were more effective because they were able to conduct the financial literacy at the level that could be understood by their fellow migrants. They were also more effective because they were aware of the needs, capacities and limitations of the target audience. Furthermore, the trust and confidence was easy to establish, which rendered the flow of the seminars very smooth. The modules that were developed addressed not only financial issues but also family issues.

This intervention was also effective because the **financial literacy seminars were also conducted targeting the families in the Philippines** to enjoin their active participation in combating dependency and directing remittances towards more productive initiatives. To reach them in their numbers, various stakeholders from the local government units, department of education, NGOs, cooperatives, rural banks and other organizations working with migrant families were given training on how to conduct financial literacy.

Since the intervention of the project has been research-based we realized that **migrants and migrant organizations, migrant families, migrant NGOs** should not only be the subject of research and data gathering but should **be involved in the research from planning to analysis and formulation of recommendation**. The learning experience from the researches conducted remained with them long after the research institutions are done

and gone. They are the ones active in advocacy works for the implementation of recommendations since their lives are the ones greatly affected by migration. Migrants' associations have a crucial role for integration of migrants in the destination countries and for development of their origin country.

- **National and local authorities should strengthen the role, capacity to deliver services to the their community and representativeness of the migrants' organizations, civil society and NGOs as bridges between communities, institutions and countries of origin and destination;**
- **National and local authorities should promote initiatives to upgrade the labour skills and capacities of migrants through qualified training and support for migrants, including migrant entrepreneurship and financial literacy;**
- **The Philippine government should extend its support also to include the local government in conducting not only road shows on financial literacy but training of trainers of various stakeholders specially from the top 10 destination countries and top 10 province of origin of the overseas Filipinos to be able to reach out to more migrants and families;**
- **Labour Attaches and Welfare Officers should undergo financial literacy and addressing family issues training of trainers before they are deployed outside of the Philippines to become active advocates and trainers on the issue;**
- **Business institutions involved in financial literacy should partner with NGOs to provide information not only on savings and investment vehicles but to assist the migrants and families in addressing issues that drain migrants' resources.**

2. Capacity building of stakeholders from country of origin and destination in having a migration and development perspective

Increase in understanding of migration and development among stakeholders involved in migration and development, both at the country of origin and destination is necessary if we want to enjoin their active participation. National government agencies, local government and embassies' active involvement are critical in the implementation of migration and development initiatives. There should be an ongoing fora and consultation meetings on migration and development with local, regional and national government agencies, embassies, consulates in the advocacy in integrating migration in development in their planning and in creating concrete social and economic programmes. Consequently, various stakeholders should become more involved in the design of relevant actions and services.

- **EU should continue to provide the forum for migration and development advocacy to the various stakeholders. There should be information and education especially pertaining to the welfare of migrant workers and in promoting productive use of remittances;**

- **It should also enjoin the EU entities in the countries of origin including the donor agencies and especially the embassies in migration and development discourses.** Majority of embassies still see migration from the perspective of security and not migration and development. There are very few embassies that have migration and development initiatives and policies. Therefore the role of Embassies in linking migrant communities, countries of origin and destination should be enhanced. **Migrant organizations and NGOs should be tapped to lead this initiative;**
- **The links between the development assistance of EU and member countries with migration and development initiatives should be explored;**
- **All National Government Agencies working on migration should have awareness on the nexus between migration and development. This issue should not be relegated to National Economic Development Authority (NEDA);**
- **The Commission on Filipinos Overseas should review its mandate and strengthen its role in coordinating the various government agencies involved in migration. In partnership with National Economic Development Authority, Department of Labor and Employment and Department of Foreign Affairs, create a multi-stakeholder coordinating council on migration and development at the national level and in areas with high concentration of migrants.**

3. Establishing Migration corridors and Twinning Approaches

One of the strengths of the JMDI initiative is the twin approach where the stakeholders from county of destination and country, province or city of origin are both involved in the intervention. This approach would have significant impact if migration corridors were involved in initiative. In our project – Rome, Italy and Batangas, Philippines were identified as significant migration corridors since about 40,000 Filipino migrants from Batangas are working in Italy. Partnerships are forged between migrant organizations, NGOs and also local government units on both sides of the corridor. A Letter of Intent (LOI) between the Province of Batangas and Province of Rome is currently being finalized. The initiatives being discussed are from study mission to explore further cooperation, to social and economic programmes both in Rome and in Batangas.

- **EU and Philippines should help identify migration corridors and assist in forging multi-stakeholder migration and development partnerships. Such partnerships should craft social and economic programs from pre-departure, on-site to return phase. It should also assist in developing sustainable migration and development initiatives that would create jobs in the Philippines.**

4. Establishing Migrants/ Migration Resource Centers and Mainstreaming Interventions in Local Government

Mainstreaming of intervention in the local governments is a strategy in ensuring that migration would contribute to the long-term development of destination and origin

countries. One concrete intervention towards this is the setting up of Migrants /Migration Resource Centers, which address both economic and social service by the Local Government, Migrant Organizations/NGOs in areas with high concentration of migrants. We were able to help set this up and there are more local government units interested to set up such services. However, this requires capacity building for the local government and other stakeholders in setting up and implementing programs and services for migrants and families left behind.

- **EU and the Philippine government should support capacity building for local government and other stakeholders from both sides of the corridor.**

5. School based program in addressing the social cost of migration- second generation migrants and the children left behind

The children of migrants – both those left behind and the second generation migrants in destination countries are one of the most vulnerable groups that suffer from the social cost of migration. Aware that the schools play a significant role in the lives of the children, we have developed a school-based program in addressing the social cost of migration. In the Philippines a teachers' training programme was designed and currently being implemented by partner schools to create a special programme for the children of migrants. Atikha is also working with the Department of Education in the Philippines and developed teaching materials to integrate migration issues in the curriculum. These interventions are effective in reaching the children left behind who are prospective second generation migrants. In Italy, a school based programme is being designed to create a special programme on the duality of migration, the social cost of migration for the Italian and second generation migrant students in order to contribute to a better understanding of the migration and development impacts and to promote the integration of the latter.

- **Migration and development issues such as brain drain, migration realities, social cost of migration, trafficking and safe migration should integrate the schools and within the education system. Children should have a balance view of migration both the benefits and the cost of migration;**
- **Pre-departure orientation seminars should also be provided to children in migration. Schools in destination countries should also be sensitized on the issue of children of migrants and develop programmes to address relevant concerns.**

6. Sustaining, Replicating and Up-scaling Good Practices

The EC-UN JMDI has provided a venue for developing quite a number of good practices. However, the funding for these projects is limited to 18 months. Although with such limited resources, the partner organizations have been able to leverage their resources and achieved much – their initiatives need to be sustained, replicated and up-scaled. Otherwise the resources poured towards these initiatives will not be maximized and end results would not be achieved.

- **EU and the Philippine government and other International agencies should consider these good practices and develop a mechanism for sustaining, replicating, up-scaling and mainstreaming the various good practices so that more migrants, families and communities can benefit from their experiences.**