

**ME, US AND THEM:  
REALITIES AND ILLUSIONS  
OF FILIPINA DOMESTIC  
WORKERS**

**A community research project  
by the Filipino Women's Council**

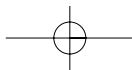
*Authors:  
Charito Basa  
and Rosalud Jing de la Rosa*

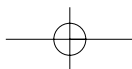
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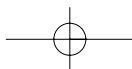
A community research project  
by the Filipino Women's Council

A Contribution to the EQUAL Project

**“The Image of Migrants in Italy through Media,  
Civil the Society and the Labour Market”**

Supported by the European Commission  
and the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies

Authors:  
Charito Basa and Rosalud Jing de la Rosa



## **Table of contents**

Acknowledgements  
Foreword from the Author  
A Word from Co-Author  
Background of Filipino Women's Council  
Background on Filipino Women's Migration

Introduction, Objectives and Methodology of the Research

### **Part one**

Findings of the Focus Group Discussions  
with the Filipino Women Domestic Workers  
Methodology and Realization of the Qualitative Research  
Report of Findings from Focus Group Discussions (Qualitative Data)

### **Part two**

Findings of the Small-Scale Exploratory Study  
Methodology and Realization of the Quantitative Research  
Report of Findings from Interviews with Italian Employers (Quantitative Data)

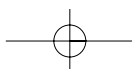
### **Part three**

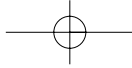
Conclusions and Recommendations  
First Case Analysis: Transnational Mother, Filipina domestic worker  
The Second Case: The Filipina Domestic Worker with Family in Rome: the reunified family  
Other Cases  
Common Issues  
Ten Recommendations

### **About the autors**

*Cover painting: Lina Llaguno Ciani, a detail of "What Now?", 1999, oil in canvas  
Photo: Roberto Cricchi*

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## Acknowledgements

This research project would not have been possible without the major contribution of the members of the Filipino Women's Council (FWC) who worked as researchers and interviewers - Marilou Berain, Flora Ventura, Marilou Antonio and Linda Balmes. They all worked over and beyond the limits of resources and with wholehearted commitment to the Filipino community. We also acknowledge the contributions of the other FWC members: Liza Magsino and Bibiana Banaag for supporting the conceptual process of the project, Annie Diaz and Judith Guinto-Agnoletto for their support during different phases of the project.

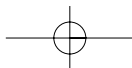
A very special thanks is due to all the Filipino women participants of the focus group discussions for the trust they have given us, for their enthusiastic participation and sincerity in sharing their stories and concerns. Their trust in the researchers and their candour have ensured that the outcome of this research is reliable as well as unique in the history of community research among migrant women in Italy.

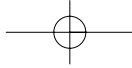
We are grateful for the technical support in the quantitative research part of the study on the responses of the Italian employers provided by our Italian friends, Raffaella Bagnara (sociologist), Barbara Codispoti (anthropologist) and Barbara Ferri (sociology student). Without their professional skills and solidarity, the results of the quantitative data would not have been comprehensive. We have benefited from their generous participation in balancing the analysis with their own perceptions of the realities of the Italian situation, as well as from their professional comments and suggestions during the development and preliminary data analysis stage, which helped us avoid bias in our findings. We would like to thank Ed de la Torre and Girlie Villariba of the Education for Life Foundation in the Philippines, and to Genevieve Vaughan for their advice and suggestions.

We are very grateful to Lina Llaguno-Ciani, a Filipina painter for giving us the permission to use her piece of art "What now?" for the cover of this book; and to her lovely daughter Maya Ciani for helping to supervise the design and layout of the book and in the translation of the Filipino and English texts into Italian.

Our recognition also goes to Marietta Gumabon-Lami and Stefano Lami, Katarina Kosak, Raffaella Bagnara, Roberto Agnoletto and Dario Tedesco for translating many pages of the book from English to Italian. We are most grateful to Laura Fedeli and Pippo Costella for their assistance in the translation and editing of the Italian version of this book. We thank Lee O'Hara, Marty Rivera, and Marilee Karl for their editing of the English text. One can only imagine the complexity of this three-language research project.

We would like to thank our loved ones, especially our husbands who supported us throughout the realization of this project—Massimo Cortellessa and Dario Tedesco; and Francesca Tedesco for allowing her mamma Jing to work with Charito during week-ends and late nights.

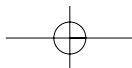
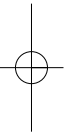
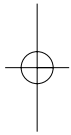


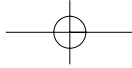


Most of all, we would like to thank you, our readers, for your time and attention to this work. We look forward to your full involvement in this participatory process where you will play an important role in promoting the understanding of diversities and the recognition of migrants' roles and contributions.

*Salamat po! Thank you! Grazie!*

*Charito Basa and Rosalud Jing de la Rosa  
Filipino Women's Council*





## Foreword

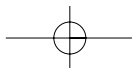
The initial stimulus for this work was an invitation by the Archivio di Immigrazione and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to the Filipino Women's Council (FWC) to be a partner in a project on "The Migrant's Image in Italy through Media, Civil Society and the Labour Market". FWC welcomed the invitation because it would enable us to realize our desire to bring forward the voices of the Filipino migrant women themselves, by conducting our own research on migration issues at the macro and micro-levels, using scientific and community participatory research methodology and approaches.

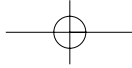
FWC provides volunteer services to the Filipino migrant community. We have helped many women in need. But we realize that we need to expand our work beyond immediate assistance. Our experience in advocacy, networking and partnership-building with local, national and international groups and institutions has made us reflect more deeply about our own lives and our own situation as women migrants. We have assessed our valuable services and contributions to both countries – Italy and the Philippines. We ask ourselves: What more can we do to help?

As far as I know from my history of 17 years doing this work in Italy, no community research has ever been done and many researchers have confirmed this fact. FWC felt that it was time to do something about what we already know, about immediate problems of women migrants, in particular, the Filipina domestic worker, whose image is quite apparent in Rome. For us here in Italy, what we need is to identify community strategies and immediate actions for empowering the Filipino women, whose self-esteem needs to be understood and whose decisions affect a wider set of issues. It is in this context that this applied and action research is a priority for FWC as thousands of Filipinos, mostly women, continue to emigrate from the Philippines to foreign lands. It should be noted from the outset that the economic and political situation in the Philippines is, and should be, the first target of intervention as regards Philippine migration, for short and long term solutions.

The members of the FWC have participated in or contributed to a number of studies conducted on Filipino women by universities and other institutions. Unfortunately, very few of them have come back to us; many have not even provided us with the findings of their studies. Therefore, the community has not benefited at all from this traditional research approach.

Two important studies done on Filipino migrant women in Rome are: "Servants of Globalization: women migration and domestic work" by Rachel Parrenas of the University of Berkley, California, U.S.A; and "The Social Cost of Migration and possibilities of " by Estrella Dizon-Anonuevo and Augustus Anonuevo of the Philippine-based NGO Atikha-Balikabayani. FWC provided support and information during their research activities. These authors sent us copies of their books and we had interacted since then on a continuous basis. These research studies inspired us to conduct our own complementary study in our own community in Rome.





Another important inspiration for us is a documentary film entitled the “Care Chain” produced by VPRO Television of the Netherlands, strongly motivated by the book, “Servants of Globalization: women migration and domestic work”. FWC translated this film into Italian, since much of the footage was done in Rome - and this is part of our contribution to the EQUAL project on “The Image of Migrants in Italy through media, civil society and the labour market”.

This research project is a collective effort, from conception to birth. The research team, made up of active members of the organization, contributed to different phases of the project. Prior to conducting interviews using both qualitative and quantitative methods, we held a series of internal brainstorming sessions on the issues to be considered, followed by training activities on research methodology, conducted by Rosalud Jing de la Rosa, an FWC member and professional trainer. The reflection process among community leaders and migrants who were involved in the project was stimulated by asking open-ended questions: “Why is the condition like this?”, “What could be done?” etc. The final formulation of questions was done with the community.

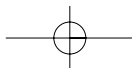
The lively participation of Filipino women who contributed to the Focus Group Discussions (FGD) was very inspiring. To reach target participants, we connected with some church-based groups and visited homes of the Filipino community in Rome. Often discussions went beyond the objectives of the discussion. Women talked about their own stories and concerns, transforming the research discussions into counselling and empowerment sessions.

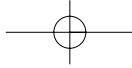
We recognize the need to strengthen links with Filipino researchers and community workers back in the Philippines. Initial meetings have already been held for partnership activities with some Philippine-based NGOs to design community interventions both in Italy and in the Philippines. We look forward to implementing these joint activities, which will use the findings of this study.

We had to overcome many difficulties to finish the project on time, but we at FWC have made a commitment to continue the work of addressing the serious needs of the community, and we have been encouraged to do so by collaborating with other migrant communities, Italian NGOs, governmental and inter-governmental institutions.

We are pleased to present the results of our collective effort. We hope that this publication will help Italians to understand better the conditions of the Filipinas and appreciate their role as domestic helpers. We also hope that Filipino readers will increase their appreciation of their role and contributions to the Filipino family as well as to Italian society, and that they will develop increased self-esteem and empowerment.

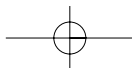
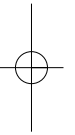
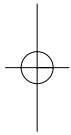
We look forward to gaining more experience in working at different levels, in partnership and in collaboration with others. As we continue to learn more, we will be able to take an active part in building a multicultural society, representing ourselves in discussions that contribute to policies that affect migrants, both in our country of origin as well as in our host country. The results and reflections we have gathered in this research are a valuable resource for our advocacy on policy reforms.



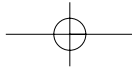


We are aware that we should not merely rely on others to decide for us. But how do we play our part well so that we can influence the decisions that affect us? Thanks to what we have learned, we know a bit more, and we can find ways to act more effectively.

*Charito Basa*







## A Word from the Co-author

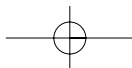
I am most delighted to be the co-author with Charito Basa of this historical research publication on Filipino women domestic workers in Rome. I met Charito more than ten years ago when we were the only two Filipinas representing NGOs negotiating with the United Nation's Preparatory Committee who met in New York for the momentous International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) which was later on held in Cairo in 1994. The outcome of the ICPD was the Platform of Action which included commitments to protect migrant rights. This outcome was also echoed subsequently at UN conferences such as the Copenhagen Social Development Conference and the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women, both of which were held in 1995.

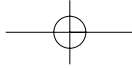
Ten years later, the progress of the governments' commitments made at these UN conferences is being reviewed and we hope that the outcome of our research, as described in this publication, will contribute to the review and will provide a picture of the reality of the current situation of women migrants, particularly women working as domestic helpers.

For both Charito and me, the ICPD became a turning point in our professional work. We went back to our two different paths taking with us those government commitments as tools in our work. Charito continued to stay in Rome and has become a stronger community leader and advocate for the rights of women migrants, while I moved to Africa to become the first reproductive health coordinator in refugee camps at the Great Lakes Region for the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). It is almost unimaginable for me that we are here today in Rome, ten years later, realizing the dream we had when we first met in New York: to bring out the voices of the Filipino women domestic workers in a much louder sense – the realization of this publication.

Indeed, our world has greatly changed since ten years ago. We now have to take into account the forces of globalization, the advancement of technology (particularly the use of internet and mobile phones for distant relationships), and the September 11 aftermath. As such, policymakers are finally debating the hidden issues of integration, and slowly developing new initiatives. Thanks to the progressive work of FWC here in Rome, the Babaylan - a Philippine Women's Network in Europe and other NGOs like Atikha-Balikabayani, Education for Life Foundation and many other migrant NGO networks back in the Philippines. Also working in defense of Filipino migrant women's rights are many international NGO's and UN institutions.

More recently, the discourse of migrant integration and re-integration has been receiving much greater interest from broader development agencies, NGOs and international institutions. FWC's niche is to collaborate and to partner with all these institutions on concrete measures and programmes aimed at migrants here in Italy and their own families back home. The challenge for these agencies that are interested in broadening their impact on achieving poverty alleviation in rural communities is to engage the grassroots organizations from the host countries as true partners in development projects. Our efforts in building the capacity of FWC in this research project have been one such great learning experience, that indeed capacity can be built within the structure of

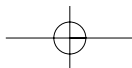


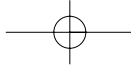


grassroots organizations here in Rome, but only as long as technical and financial resources are available. There is also so much to learn from advanced strategies and achievements, for example, among migrant communities in California, in creating opportunities for migrant remittances, savings and investments in rural areas. At the same time, we also believe that it is about time to come up with new ideas on how to tap the resources in a better way. By resources, we mean the human and social capital that exists within these migrant groups.

FWC is posing the responsibility to all of us, thus the title of this book *Me, Us and Them: realities and illusions of Filipina domestic workers - Io, Noi, e Loro: realtà e illusioni delle collaboratrici familiari filippine*. This responsibility should now go beyond institutional commitments and be more about looking inward at our own selves as the first people who should take such responsibility in the context of our own environment. The role of the Philippine government and the Italian government and Philippine Embassy here in Rome will be most crucial to the follow-up activities that we mention in this publication. Just like going back to the happy days of the 1960s, when the Philippines occupied the second place on the list of Tiger Countries, we can perhaps do something all together to move the Philippines back to the top level again.

*Rosalud Jing de la Rosa*





## Background of the Filipino Women's Council

The Filipino Women's Council (FWC) was established in May 1991 by committed Filipino migrant women who volunteer their time to provide support for the social and psychological needs of Filipino women in Rome.

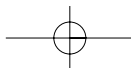
The demand for support included many forms of counselling—employer/employee relations, marriage conflicts, sexual exploitation and rape incidents, labour and other legal issues, etc. The experiences brought about a further sense of the need to learn more about and understand better the Italian legal, medical and social systems.

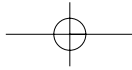
FWC's principal project was the opening, in October 1992, of a centre that provided shelter and counselling services to Filipino women who were victims of violence and exploitation. The shelter project also accommodated migrant women from other countries of origin through referrals from other migrant women's organizations in Rome. Unfortunately, it closed down after two years of operation due to lack of financial resources and inadequate technical competency of its staff members.

The need for the empowerment of Filipino women was evident. In 1993, FWC hosted the first empowerment training in Rome organized by Babaylan, a Philippine women's network in Europe, of which FWC is a founding member. This first training resulted in the design of a training manual on leadership and empowerment for Filipinas in Europe. Since then, empowerment and networking have become the priority actions of the organization. FWC has conducted training for empowerment and leadership in Rome, Siena and Turin for Filipino and other migrant women of different origins. This activity has also allowed the organization to venture into intercultural education activities in Italian schools. Some of its members have become intercultural mediators and are now working in various centres providing social services for Filipino migrant women in Rome.

FWC's active participation in lobbying and advocacy work both at the national level and the European levels, and at various global arenas and UN Conferences on Human Rights (1993), Population and Development (1994), the Social Summit (1995) and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995) have also contributed to the broadening of its experience.

Throughout all these years, the principal focus of lobby and advocacy actions has been on migrant and gender related issues, human rights, development education, intercultural issues, gender mainstreaming and the promotion of participation and networking by migrant organizations at the local, national, regional and international levels.





## Background on Filipino Women's Migration

It is estimated that there are about 8 million Filipino overseas workers in over 190 countries worldwide, approximately 10% of the Philippine population. The majority of Filipinos have migrated to labour importing countries in North America (US, Canada); in the Middle East (Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar and Libya); in Asia (Hong Kong, South Korea, Brunei, Singapore and Malaysia); and in Europe (Italy, United Kingdom, Spain, Greece, Germany, The Netherlands, France, Denmark, Sweden and Finland).

There have been an increasing number of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) over the years. In 1990, the number of registered OFWs were 417,301; in 2000 the number has doubled, rising to 992,397. According to the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), in 2002, at least 890,000 overseas OFWs left to fulfil foreign job contractual commitments or simply left to look for work abroad in various countries,. There are an estimated 700,000 Filipinos leaving yearly, and over 50% of these are women, and slightly higher in unmarried younger age groups.<sup>1</sup>

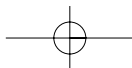
Filipinos started to arrive in Italy in 1977 when the Philippine government signed an agreement with its Italian counterpart that allowed Filipino migrants to work as domestic helpers in the country. Some were directly hired with proper working contracts approved by the Ministries of Labour of the two countries. In this period, it was also possible and easy to acquire a tourist visa to Italy. Subsequently, therefore, Filipinos arrived with tourist permits, stayed on, and also worked illegally as domestic helpers.

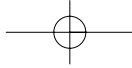
Italian missionaries in the Philippines also played an important role in facilitating the arrival of the first Filipino migrants to Italy. The social network for recruiting Filipino domestic helpers has advanced since then.

On the other hand, the continuous proliferation of illegal recruitment agencies in the Philippines and the Government's lack of political will to address the "human exportation" syndrome have continued. The policy of exportation of human resources has become a major source of dollar earnings for the Philippine economy. The Central Bank of the Philippines reveals that in 2002, over six billion dollars were officially remitted to the country (Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, 2002), practically keeping the country's economy afloat.

The Filipino migration is a result of the "push-pull" factors. The push factors (from the Philippines) are considered to be the following: the unjust economic relations between powerful and weak nations, the unequal system of exchange of commodities and capital, the colonial mentality of Filipinos to go abroad, the difficulty in recovering from the ever worsening economic crisis, the low salaries and scarcity of job opportunities for women, the low level and quality of education, resulting in an increase in the number of children and the increasing burden of responsibility on women to provide for basic needs and to ensure continued survival of their families, and the Government's

<sup>1</sup> Carmelita N. Erista (NSO Administrator) and Mercedita E. Tia, Amalia S. Sevilla, and Teodoro M. Orteza (Staff of Household Statistics Department). Paper presented to Statistical Research and Training Centre (SRTC) Annual Conference, Quezon City, October 2003.





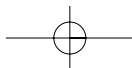
promotion of labour migration as a 'temporary' measure to ease domestic unemployment and foreign exchange pressures.

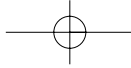
The pull factors include: the increase in demand for 'reproductive' work (household chores) in industrialized countries (many working women require home assistance and childcare) that opened up opportunities for migrant women to do these kinds of jobs; the Italian employers avail themselves of informal networks to establish contacts through friends and the first Filipinas migrants.

The colonial past brought about a distortion of the traditional status of Filipino women. Before the coming of the Spaniards, the status of women was equal to that of men. Women played very important roles in the life of the communities—they were healers, priestesses, judges and leaders. With the introduction of Christianity, a whole new set of standards was introduced, reshaping the traditional values of women and obliging them to assume submissive and obedient positions. The family, church and school institutions successfully influenced the image of the Filipina. The period of United States colonization inculcated a sense of western superiority. To migrate to the United States became a dream for many Filipinos. However, due to its strict policies, any other foreign country became second choice.

Today, Filipinos rank 13th in the population registers of migrant communities in Italy. Official records show a total of 74,030 legally residing Filipinos in December 31, 2003. Importantly the overwhelming number of these are women, approximately 64,4% (data of 2002), who are working in the service sector as domestic helpers, caretakers and baby-sitters in big cities such as Rome, Florence, Milan, Turin, Naples, Parma, Bologna and Messina.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Caritas Roma, *Dossier Statistico Immigrazione 2003*.





## **Introduction, Objectives and Methodology of the Research**

The idea of the research project originated from the community leaders of FWC as part of their desire to respond to the many urgent needs of Filipino women domestic workers in Rome. The experiences of FWC for the past 13 years in counselling and advocacy work made them realize that these women are faced with many complex social problems that lead to much sufferings. It was urgent for FWC, in its concern with the social and psychological effects of migration on the women domestic helpers in Italy and on the family left behind in the Philippines, to address the cultural, social and economic adjustment of Filipina migrant domestic workers. This research project is an historic activity in the field of migration research on the Filipino migrant community, as well as in the field of advocacy for policy changes regarding migration. It documents and analyzes the hidden issues that have an impact on the conditions of Filipino women domestic workers.

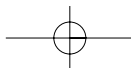
We hope that the findings of this research project will contribute to understanding the magnitude of the problem of the social and cultural assimilation of migrants and to the political discourse of the integration and reintegration of migrants. Most importantly, we hope that this study will make a significant contribution to the lives of Filipino migrant domestic workers, now and in the future.

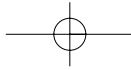
### **Objectives and Purposes of the Community Research Project**

The first goal of this community research project is to investigate the level of perception and understanding of Italians about the role and contribution of Filipino women domestic workers to Italian families and society. This study also aims to understand in depth how these women see their role in contributing to Italian families and the society at large. The study examines the dynamics of the relationships between the Italian employers and the domestic workers, in order would allow to understand the values and self-esteem of these women.

The second goal of the study is to understand why these women, especially those with families and children left behind arrived at such a decision. At the same time, the study also aims to understand the reasons why the Filipinas decided to stay with their employers in Italy. The purpose is to help us understand and identify the issues behind their decisions and the factors that trigger the Filipina domestic workers to make or change their decisions. At the same time, we wish to understand whether they recognize the impact of such separation on themselves and on their families. Furthermore, we try to understand and identify specific problems, and whether they are prepared to confront their situation and solve their problems, and how.

The third and final goal of the study is to develop strategies and solutions to address the problems identified during research. The purpose of this goal is to influence the formulation of fast track or accelerated appropriate community interventions, both for integration in Italy and re-integration back in the Philippines.





## Methodology of the Community Research Project

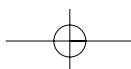
It is important to highlight the fact that this research project is a pilot study that was fully initiated by FWC and encouraged by members of the community itself. As this is the first hands-on experience by the FWC team (rather than by outside scholars) in conducting community research, it is important to note that the research project was intended to be practical and based on experience. The research study employed three social science research techniques:

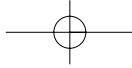
Firstly, trained interviewers conducted the Focus Group Discussions (FGD) in six neighbourhoods of Rome with six to ten participants who are all known to each other, making up a total of 42 participants. All participants are Filipina domestic workers, including the trained interviewers. This research methodology allowed us to nurture different perceptions and points of view in a non-threatening environment, enabling frank and open discussions among participants and interviewers. The results of this qualitative data, which derived from the focus group discussions and were analyzed through common threads of themes. This approach gave us insights into the attitudes and perceptions of the Filipina domestic workers themselves. The valuable insights and information obtained from the FGD, which would have been difficult or impossible to obtain using other research methods, will be a crucial step in preparing recommendations for future actions and shaping future policies and interventions.

Secondly, a small-scale exploratory study was conducted through open-ended interviews with 43 Italian employers who were selected to respond to general questions about their Filipina domestic worker. This study allowed us to examine the bivariate relationships (and to some extent multi-variate relationships) that determine the strengths of relationships such as how respondents are inclined to think about their domestic helpers. The results of the quantitative data, analyzed using a statistical package software system (SPSS), allowed us to discover simultaneous interactions of the items or variables determining whether what was observed were all appropriate for inclusion in the overall analysis. The analysis provided insights into the complexities of the different relationships and situations between the employer and the domestic helper. The results suggested ways in which these complexities could be further tapped in a more structured study later on using a much larger sample. The results of this small-scale exploratory study present a truly valuable contribution to social scientific research, paving the way in this ground-breaking community research work in understanding and addressing the complex issues of integration, empowerment and the sense of equality between employers and the domestic worker.

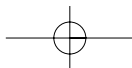
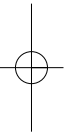
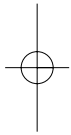
Thirdly, validation processes brought the results back to the community who participated in the research, including community researchers themselves, in order to validate the preliminary findings of the research. These validation processes allowed further reflections both from the community and the researcher in order to amplify the scope of the analysis of the research.

Since results and findings of this research are expected to be applied to future policies and intervention design, this can be considered an applied research. The validity of the data collected cannot be questioned as it offers a very important raw product harvested by the subjects themselves. External professional support enabled the use of some scientific approaches in the process of analysis.

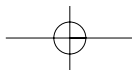
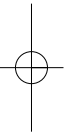
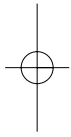
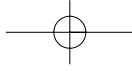


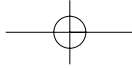


The optimum use and potential derived from the wealth of information that results from the combination of the above three research methodologies employed still needs to be pursued. The publication of this report is the first step in launching the dissemination of the outcome of this community research study that we hope will provoke discussions and debates.



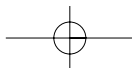
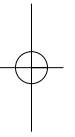
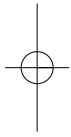


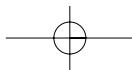
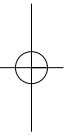
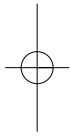
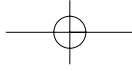


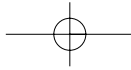


PART ONE

**Findings of the Focus Group Discussions  
with the Filipino Women Domestic Workers**







## Methodology and realisation of the research

Ten Filipinas, mostly community leaders and members of FWC, were recruited and trained to become community researchers. The criteria for selecting the community researchers was their commitment to supporting the research goals of FWC and their ability to relate to their own community in sharing and reflecting on the difficulties they face as migrant domestic workers.

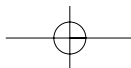
Several planning workshops and consultation processes were organized with the members of the research team, in order to finalize the project and agree on the design of the research, the training required to improve research skills, and the timeframe and deadlines. As a result, a training module was designed and a one-day *Planning and Training Workshop for Qualitative Research* session was conducted by a public health consultant on 24 September 2003 at the Casa *Internazionale delle Donne*. Community researchers were trained on the techniques of conducting focus group discussions (FGD). The planning session enabled community researchers to identify sites and locations for recruiting participants, logistics and finalization of the discussion guide.

The FGD discussion guide was originally written in English and then translated into the Filipino language. A one-page form for reporting on the profile of the FGD participants was also provided to the researchers to record the basic profile of the participants, without disclosing names.

The following criteria were used in recruiting the participants for the FGDs:

- *part-timers, living in Rome for less than two years (recent arrivals)*
- *live-in, living in Rome for less than two years (recent arrivals)*
- *part-timers, living in Rome for over two years*
- *live-in, living in Rome for over two years*

It was very difficult to adhere strictly to the original criteria for selecting the FGD participants. It was deemed more important to benefit from the presence of those participants who were readily available for the FGDs. Very few *live-in* participants were recruited because of their limited time during their day-off. It was also difficult to organize a cohesive group that abided by the agreed time and, at times, meetings were cancelled because of the competing demands with Sunday obligations - again Sunday being their only free day to meet their personal commitments, including their church obligations. It was also difficult to find sustained commitment among the research team, because of the competing demands of their own work. In the end, the continued commitment by the core research team proved their real personal commitments to the goals of the project, a test for sustained leadership roles. Despite all the difficulties faced, the community researchers felt it was a worthwhile experience, both because they developed new research skills and, more importantly, because they realized themselves that indeed solutions need to be sought so as to address the pressing needs of the Filipino women migrants.



### Report of findings from focus group discussions (qualitative data)

The following section describes the findings generated from the responses of women from six focus group discussions conducted in six church-based communities and groups in which 42 Filipino women domestic helpers (Colf) participated. The number of participants according to age groups was as follows:

Age	No. of participants	Percentage
20 - 25	3	7%
26 - 30	11	26%
31 - 35	10	24%
36 - 40	8	19%
41 - 45	3	7%
46 - 50	4	10%
51 - 55	1	2%
56 - 60	2	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>100%</b>

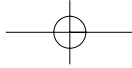
The levels of education of the participants include the following:

Level	No. of participants	Percentage
Elementary	0	-
High School	21	50%
University	16	38%
University (not graduate)	2	5%
Vocational	3	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>100%</b>

The number of women with children, include the following:

Number of children	Number of participants	Percentage
1 child	9*	22%
2 children	6*	14%
3 + children	13*	31%
without children	14	33%
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* of the 28 women with children, only nine of them have their children in Rome.



This section provides a record of the findings of the community research of FWC. In preparing this first report, we realized that there was not enough time for the research team to do a more in-depth analysis that could do justice to the issues raised by the participants. Therefore, we encourage readers to provide us with their comments and insights to enable us to utilize fully the wealth of information in the focus group discussion findings. We hope to be able to use the findings of this report as a reference for further studies, decisions and the design of community interventions.

The first part of the findings describes the responses of the participants regarding their own self-esteem issues. The findings are based on the responses regarding the knowledge of the Filipino domestic helpers about their employer's awareness of Philippine culture, politics and traditional practices. Responses to this question revealed the limitations of the domestic worker's situation, in particular their timid personalities and time constraints which make them uncomfortable when relating to their employers. They do not seem to have any influence because of the difficulties identified. The responses also revealed that these women workers are not a channel of information for reaching Italian employers in regard to future interventions.

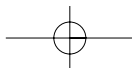
The second part of the findings describes the factors underlying the Filipina domestic workers' decisions to leave the Philippines and stay in Rome. There are two major factors affecting their decisions to leave the Philippines: (1) no options back home; and (2) an urgent need to help meet family obligations. The major factors for their decisions to stay with their employers and to stay in Rome are: the experience of being economically independent; family reunification in Italy; changing household dynamics, especially for women with children and aging women; and the rule of the heart (over the head).

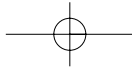
The third part of the study describes the current trends and thinking of the Filipino women, the points for reflection. In this section, we examine the diverse viewpoints and reflections expressed by the women, in particular those factors that make them change decisions. The researchers used the probing technique by asking the women whether they used their heart over head or head over heart in making decisions now.

## Self-esteem Issues

### 1. Perception regarding awareness and curiosity about the Philippines by Italian employers

When the participants were asked about their perception of their employers' awareness about the Philippines, they could not give an answer. There were very few responses that describe the degree of their perceived awareness. The question was intended to provide the researchers with some insights into how communication exchanges between the workers and their employers, if any, can be enhanced and can be considered as a channel of empowerment. Two factors emerged that help explain this lack of perception. One is that part-time workers, in particular, hardly have the chance to speak with their employers, except at the end of the day during the handover of their work. Another issue that resonated from the discussions is the fact that Filipina domestic workers are often timid. As one participant explained, "*I am not the type who tells stories all the time...*" This reflects the response of many of the participants.





Many responses indicated that there is a strong willingness among employers to learn more about the Filipino situation, particularly the economic and political situation of the Philippines. Participants said that their employers' interest usually stems from the news they see and hear about the Philippines on television and in newspapers. Since the majority provided this response, it is an indication that these women are not necessarily a source of awareness about the Philippines for their employers.

However, many participants moved the discussion from the awareness of their employers (where they don't have much to say) towards their employers' curiosity about the number of Filipinos they see in Italy doing menial jobs (versus professional work), which they see as a sign of desperation. This is perhaps the clearest indicator of the sense of awareness about the economic situation in the Philippines among Italian employers and the general public.

Many participants mentioned that their Italian employers are curious about Filipino traditional practices, in particular, strong religious practices, citing that they see many Filipino women going to church, especially on Sundays. The employers also expressed curiosity about the natural beauty of the country.

The majority of the participants described how their Italian employers are also curious about and appreciative of Filipino food. As one participant said, *"In my 18 years with them, instead of me adapting when it comes to food, the opposite happened. They like our food and even friends and visitors appreciate it."*

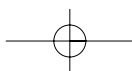
The curiosity of their employers about the Philippines reflects an openness trait, as characterized by the Filipina domestic helper, which can be an entry point for a supportive relationship between the employer and the worker.

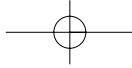
## **2. Trust and preference leading to supportive relationships**

Many of the Filipinas actually enjoy the trust and preferential treatment by their Italian employers. This can even extend to the family of the Filipina, especially in times of their distress. Many participants recounted that their employers have always had Filipino domestic workers or caregivers. Several participants (especially the "live-ins") described the kind of support they receive from their Italian employers, especially financial, in times of distress such death in the family, illness and important celebrations like weddings. They also feel they are being treated just like a member of the family. The following responses are representative of the many diverse responses we heard:

*"They hired my husband and my sister directly from the Philippines, and they accommodated my whole family in their house. They are concerned about us especially about my son, because I take care of their invalid son, so they are very concerned about my health. But my employers really owe me a lot. Often they say that it's better for them to get sick, as long as I am not... if I left them, it would be a real big problem for them."*

*"We tell stories to each other, watch TV together and when I have financial problems she lends me money and does not ask it back immediately. I pay them slowly. She considers me as daughter or a*





*sister. We eat together. She helps me with any problems I have. When our house in the Philippines was destroyed by the typhoon, she gave me money to rebuild it.”*

The trust and preference enjoyed by the Filipina domestic workers are further enhanced by the appreciation and understanding of Italian employers about the Filipinos’ upbringing and values regarding the importance of taking care of elders – the caregiver roles, and of financially supporting the whole family – the breadwinner roles.

### **3. The crucial “sticking points” between employer and the Filipina domestic worker**

Even in most supportive relationships, there are of course crucial “sticking points” – both for the Filipina domestic worker and for employer. While only few participants mentioned really bad experiences with their employers, they based their perception on their feelings, such as:

- at times they felt that those concerns were only a “pretense” and not sincere; and
- at times they felt there was a sense of distrust and suspicion by employers.

In this case, they feel that the dominant behaviour of the employer is to exercise “power”. While their dominant behaviour is to protect their “security.” That “power” and “security” can be combined into one big issue: the *“permesso di soggiorno”* (the stay permit).

This very sensitive issue pointed to uncomfortable situations that were interpreted by some as an abuse of power which led to unfair labour practices. They identified two situations in this instance: 1) the no way out, and 2) a turning point for negotiations, two-way street.

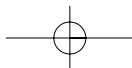
We examined crucial moments where some “friction” may arise between the employer and employee. One major obstacle is the lack of skills needed to speak the Italian language, whereas, tools for negotiations of the Italian labour law, learning the Italian language, and the use of a third party.

#### **The “no-way out” situation**

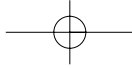
*“I work for 5 hours a day, there are lots of clothes to iron, I have to fetch the children from school... they have a lot of children... I can’t do everything in 5 hours! I can’t complain, it’s embarrassing... then, if they fire me, I won’t be able to renew my permesso di soggiorno. I’ll renew it first, then I’ll complain.”*

*“My employer doesn’t care. She has bad manners and has no regard for me. For instance, when I had an accident, she didn’t want to believe it and accused me of just going home to the Philippines until she saw me in hospital! I was hit by a car and I didn’t remember what else happened. She didn’t help me despite my two years work for her. Maybe I’m just good that’s why I still work for her, because she was the one who made it possible for me to get my permit to stay.”*

*My employer reminds me of what she has given me. Since I got my stay permit, she always tells me about it. She helps me, yes, but she chides me. My problem with the employer I work with in the afternoon is that they don’t make me work when they leave and deduct the days from my holidays.*







*It becomes a forced leave then! But when there's a public transportation strike, I walk to their house so that my days off are not deducted... they are cheating me."*

### **The two-way street negotiations**

*"I've been with them since 1983 and I think it's a two-way thing... they need me, I need them. It could be that we're using each other; I may be wrong... I can't say, because there are other Italians who are nice only when they're in front of you, once you turn your back, they will stab you on the back. But with my current employer, we're okay!"*

## **4. Tools for negotiation**

### ***The Rule of Labour Law***

The Rule of Labour Law is the best weapon used by the Filipina domestic workers to negotiate. It is quite obvious that the respect for labour law by Italians is the number one protection of the domestic workers. The National Labour law provides equal treatment to all the labour workers, whether Italian or foreign workers.

*"It seems that they are sincere in how they treat me. With my ex-employer in the Eur district, in 7 years of service, we fought only once, over a newspaper. I didn't answer back to all that she said to me. I said, "Signora, I'll leave now, I can't stand you anymore, after all the bad words you said." She threatened me that if I left without giving advanced notice, she would not pay me my benefits. I told her I'll report her to the labour union and have my salary benefits tallied up. It was because she said "Go away!", that I went! I didn't return anymore; then after a week she phoned me to give me the rest of my pay. That's why, for as long as they benefit from you, they love you so much—but when the right time comes you'll see their real attitude."*

### ***Language skills***

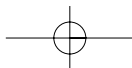
Many difficult situations and sticking points need to be understood better when we speak about the superior/subordinate or employer/employee relationship. Two familiar situations were identified when we deal with these relationships:

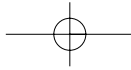
- Situation 1:       • The timid Filipina domestic worker accepts the situations for what it is.
- Situation 2:       • The Filipina domestic worker would rather reason but cannot because she cannot speak the Italian language.

The following responses helped us understand their situation:

### **Situation 1: Accept the situation for what it is**

*"I couldn't disagree, because if I disagreed, I knew what my employer would say. I didn't even try to reason with them as I know their character. I know it isn't good—they feel very superior when it comes to our work. My employer has no respect for me, I mean.. that's what's been happening."*





**Situation 2: The language barrier**

*“I was a “live-in” when I first arrived. When we went to their house by the sea, they brought their grandparents with them. They made me climb up with a pail to remove the sand from the rooftop, then I had to lower the pail down to the ground... I had to go down to throw the sand. It was too difficult for me, but I couldn’t complain because I didn’t speak Italian. I didn’t last long with that family, the work was too hard.”*

As opposed to above situation, other workers who can speak Italian use it as an empowering tool to reason and negotiate. Below is a typical response:

*“When I learned to speak Italian, I began to express myself and argue about things. It’s better when one speaks Italian.”*

**The use of a “third party” to negotiate**

One solution inferred from responses is the importance of the use of a third party for those who do not speak Italian. For example, one woman responded:

*“If you always say yes, they exploit you. We should not let them get used to having “yes” all the time. When I accompany someone for a job interview, I teach her that from the very beginning she shouldn’t always say YES and YES again! If you think it’s not proper, then speak out and explain why.”*

**Decision Making Issues**

**1. Reasons for the Filipina domestic workers’ decisions to leave their families in the Philippines**

We identified the following main reasons for their decisions to leave the Philippines:

- 1) There are no job options back home even though they have higher education;
- 2) There is an urgent need to help the family meet obligations, especially those sending children to school.

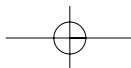
The responses related to these two reasons are as follows:

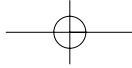
**No options back home**

*“I’m happy but a bit sad. I studied and finished my course, but I’m here to work as a domestic helper. Of course, when you are educated, you hope to make use of your studies. I’m happy, though, because I’m able to help my family, my brothers, sisters, nephews. I can buy them what they want. Yes, I have accepted that I’m a domestic helper.... There’s no choice left.”*

*“It’s not like that for me. I also finished my college studies and I still hope I’ll be able to find a suitable job here. If there’s a possibility, why not? At my work now, my employers are kind, so I’m quite happy, but something is missing.”*

*As has already been mentioned, it is very difficult to work as a domestic helper. Are we always going to be like this? I’m educated and I’m the only one supporting my family.”*





*“There’s nothing, there’s no choice.”*

*“Like Cris, I also studied, and I’ve ended up as a domestic helper. I’m kind of happy, though, because I’m able to help my parents. Sad, yes... because in the Philippines, I made use of what I studied, but because of slow progress back home, I was forced to work abroad. There are fewer opportunities in our country.”*

*“That’s one thing, but I can compare my situation here with when I was working in the Philippines.... Every time I talk to my friends, former classmates at college who are working in the Philippines, I feel I’m still lucky, nevertheless, because my salary is high. They also said they couldn’t even repay even 5 centavos to those who sent them to school... therefore, they also want to come and work here. So even though I do a lowly type of job here, when I talk to them I feel better.”*

*“No! I wasn’t able to make use of my education. It seemed like I just wasted time.”*

***An urgent need to help the family meet obligations***

*“I came to work here because my father was sick then, and because we needed money... my brother had no financial means to pay for medical care. When I was able to leave.... thank God my father recovered because of the money I sent to buy what he needed. I’d gone to another country before that, Lebanon. I was on the fifth floor and wasn’t allowed to go out for 3 years. I was only able to go out once accompanied by 4 soldiers to renew my documents. My employer was an ambassador and they were afraid, because, as you may remember, there was a war in the country at that time.”*

**2. Reasons for decisions to stay with employers in Rome**

The researchers investigated the reasons for the women’s decisions to stay with their employers in Rome. The reasons identified are: 1) the experience of being economically independent; 2) family reunification in Italy; 3) changing household dynamics; 4) Rule of the heart (heart over head)

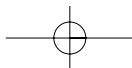
Below are typical responses explaining the reasons behind their decisions:

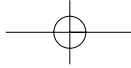
***Experience of being economically independent***

Economic independence is the main reason why Filipino women domestic workers continue working in Rome.

*“I didn’t really want to do this job; at first I felt regretful. I cried a lot because I wasn’t used to taking orders. I wanted to go home. Now I have got used to it and my life seems all right - I have my own money and my own life. I don’t ask for support from my mother, like when I was in the Philippines. I have a son living here with me. I’m not sorry anymore about my present situation.”*

*“When I went to Lebanon, I signed a two-year contract, but which was then changed to three years. They should have paid me 200 dollars per month, but they lowered it to 150 dollars! I dreamt of helping my family, that’s why I came to Italy.”*





### ***Family reunification***

What emerged during the focus group discussions is the fact that the women themselves were helped by the relatives who came to Italy to work as domestic helpers. The first Filipinas to arrive fully sustained the travel costs and found work for the new arrivals through their employers' networks. There are actually relationship chains that have been established over the past 25 years and the practice appears to persist.

The Filipina domestic worker with grown up children or other relatives mentioned that other younger relatives back home are beginning to seek rescue. The idea that their grown up children and relatives will take over their jobs and responsibilities is also emerging.

### ***The changing household dynamics***

There are several factors affecting the households. Particularly those with children are finding it more difficult to balance their work and family. They will begin to choose their workload. As domestic workers get older, their physical condition and health begins to affect their energy and ability to carry out hard work.

*"I was forced to leave my employer after I had my baby, my body became weak which made it difficult for me to take care of an old woman anymore."*

*"In my 10 years of work here, I was only able to pay what I had borrowed to come here...that's where all my earnings went. Then I got married, so I wasn't able to help my parents anymore."*

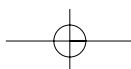
### ***Rule of the heart (heart over head)***

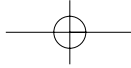
Most interesting discussions arose when participants were asked if they used their heart over head or head over heart when making decisions. Here, we were trying to find out if their decisions are based on rationale thinking or, as is commonly believed that decisions are based on persuasion and obligations imposed by culture. The majority of the decisions are from the latter.

*"When you help someone, of course you think about it first. Like when my sisters had problems with their husbands, they helped them because they love them. Your mind is there because there's pity, so you need to help them. I support my nieces and nephews because they need it. If you love them, you can't refuse your help. But thinking about it isn't enough. When someone asks, I can't refuse. I don't get tired of helping, I'm happy if I'm able to make someone happy. Even if I don't give them everything, I always keep something for myself, of course."*

*"Same here. I often say, they shouldn't ask for help all the time, they should also consider that I work as a domestic helper here. Poor things, I really feel sorry for them."*

*"I use my head. When I think of helping, I first consider if what they ask will do them good. It's true that when one helps there's love involved. For me, even if they don't ask, I give, because if one helps, the return will be greater - that's what the church is teaches, isn't it? I want to be the one who helps, not the one who asks."*





*“If a sister asks, you can’t refuse. Then when she cries... What else can you do? They’re so poor! You forget about yourself. Really, it’s easy to earn money here!”*

### **The Current Trends for the Filipina Domestic Workers: points for reflection**

The purpose of this section is to show the different points of view and reflections expressed by the women when asked about the rationale behind their decision-making. The researchers probed whether these women used their “heart over their head” or their “head over their heart”. This expression is a typical way of saying for Filipinos. Below are some of the interesting answers that we included in this section on reflections.

#### ***Educating the family about hard earned money***

Participants, particularly those living in Rome between two to 20 years expressed their feelings on their respective situations regarding the behaviour of their relatives back home who do not give value to the hard earned money, spending such remittances on non-basic needs.

*“Often those are only whims. They don’t know how hard it is to earn money here.”*

*“They ripped me off, after all the help I gave them. This time I need to be smarter!”*

*“Both, heart and head, when I send money to my parents, I always tell them to spend it wisely because it’s not that easy to earn money here. I also use my brains so they’ll learn how to realize what it’s worth. I told them I help them even though I am not obliged to do it. It’s so difficult to raise parents now!”*

#### ***Gratitude - “utang na loob”***

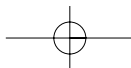
Although new reflections are evident, these women are responding to major exchange of favour and gratitude. One woman said:

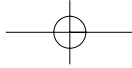
*“Of course, we think about it first. Maybe they’re only using it for rubbish! It’s so difficult to work here, right? My brother asked for money to raise hogs. I told him that maybe later he would ask more for the feed. I said he might become rich and I’ll be poor. I reminded him that I have a son, and no husband now! Then I said, I’ll give him some money just this once, then he’ll have to make do. He’s the one taking care of my son, that’s why I decided to help him.”*

#### ***Living like a family***

The ideal situation of living and reuniting with the family is certainly the ultimate goal for many women.

*“We were living with the family we worked for then. After my first child, my employer always invited guests for dinner. I had to serve the table and stay in the kitchen most of the time. I had no time for my son. I left him in the crib and threw in plenty of toys. Every time I passed by I saw him looking through the bars of the crib. He was 8 months old when we sent him to the Philippines. When*





*he was three-and-a-half years old, we decided to bring him back, also because I had given birth to another son. We left our employers and rented an apartment so we could live together.”*

*“Joan was born in the Philippines. I brought her here because I wanted her to come to Rome. I had been working for 12 years and had not brought over any of my children. I didn’t ask her to come earlier as she was studying. After the stories about the SARS epidemic, I asked her to come. I still have four children left in my country and I have two living here with me now. I’d also like the other two to come, if you could help me.”*

#### ***Bringing a child back to Italy or having children stay back home in the Philippines***

The women discussed their predicament as distant mothers, however, no alternatives were mentioned.

*“I was hospitalized when I was five months pregnant. It was quite a difficult pregnancy and the risk of abortion was very high. I was there for one month and decided to leave my work until I gave birth. Four doctors looked after me. I was not earning any money during all that time. My husband was the only one who was working. After two years, we sent our child to the Philippines as my husband and I were working all day long, and I couldn’t take care of him. My sister takes care of him – he’s 11 years old now. I wanted to bring him back so he could study here, but he doesn’t want to come. He only wants to come for a vacation. I don’t see him often. I have not seen him for three years. I only speak to him on the phone.”*

#### ***Letting their children continue their education in Italy and stay in Rome for good***

For some women, there is indeed a sense of fulfilment once their children are able to integrate themselves in Italy by going to school.

*“My husband and I were convinced that our family should stay here as long as it is possible. Our children are growing up and studying here. Maybe we’re lucky because our children are very good and get good marks. My eldest son received a school recognition for being intelligent. I don’t know, he said he wants to be an engineer. I hope we’ll stay here for good.”*

*“I hope our children don’t do the same work we’re doing here. I send them to school so they won’t become domestic helpers, they want to do office jobs.”*

#### ***Not giving up***

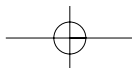
Women will continue on searching until they reach that ‘something’ they are looking, though they do not clearly know what it is they are looking for.

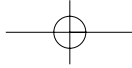
*“No, because I have no savings. Later on, I will find a job that pays more. I’ve gotten used to it. I’ve put my dreams on hold, but I won’t give up.”*

#### ***Living a better life***

Certainly, without options back home, migrating to earn money is the best solution for them.

*“I’ve realized that life is better in Italy than in the Philippines... I’m able to send my children to*





*school here... I'm able to help relatives, save a little bit and live a decent life here."*

***Money lost (being cheated while away) from business and how to sustain little investments back home***

Women seemed to experience a vicious circle of being cheated into thinking that doing the same thing repeatedly might solve their problem again.

*"My business in the Philippines went bankrupt. The reason why I came here is because I want to save and go back into business.*

*I've been here for almost 13 years now and I've never thought about how long I'll stay here. What I wanted when I first arrived, after a few more years, was to go home and open up a business but then it would've gone bankrupt and I'd be back here again. I've been on and off like that. I really wanted to get my business together. I was assembling jeepneys. The agents cheated me, they didn't give me the sales for five units! Then I opened up a grocery... but so far nothing's happened...my manager was my domestic helper. I want to set up another business."*

***Coping with day-to-day life***

The bottom line is women resort to prayers and Filipino friends in order to get by the tedious days.

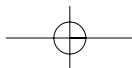
*"I learned to overcome my family problems through prayers and also with the help of my employer."*

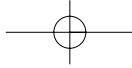
*"Prayers and bad experiences. I become stronger because of lessons from my bad experiences".*

*"With the help of my friends. We go out, watch movies, go to discos, sometimes we go bowling so that somehow we can escape from the daily routine".*

*"My organisation and religious church community, seems like they are my family".*

*"Prayers, yes. But it's up to us to work it out, God only has compassion!"*

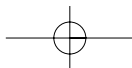




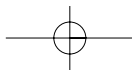
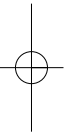
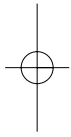
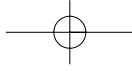
## PART TWO

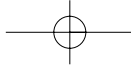
### **Findings of the Small-Scale Exploratory Research Interviews with Italian Employers**

*This section was made possible through the professional  
contribution and support of our Italian colleagues and friends  
Raffaella Bagnara, Barbara Codispoti and Barbara Ferri*









## Methodology and Realization of the Quantitative Research

The study investigated the degree of awareness of the employers regarding the personal history of the worker, the level of integration that the Filipino community in Rome has achieved, and the effects of this migration flow on Filipino society.

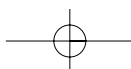
On 26 October 2002, a half day training workshop was held on how to carry out the quantitative research conducted by Filipina public health and anthropologist consultants to give an overview of social research methodology and techniques and, in particular, to provide training to researchers in conducting interviews. The research took place from November 2002 to July 2003 in Rome, a city which hosts the largest Filipino community in Italy and Europe. The interviewees were 43 Italian employers of Filipina domestic helpers, who agreed to answer a combination of “open-ended” and “closed-ended” questions on the condition of Filipina domestic workers in Italy and on the Filipino community in Rome specifically. Considering the small size of the sample, the research can be considered a small-scale pilot study which can serve to develop elements of analysis and indicators for further research.

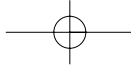
The interviews of Italian employers (not directly their own) were conducted by the Filipino domestic helpers, who, with no previous experience, were trained to conduct social research. This involved the risk of methodological gaps; but most importantly, this gave the research the added and innovative value and enhancing the role of the Filipino women by increasing their awareness of the perception that a part of the Italian society has on them. This situation was a significant element that was considered in the data analysis.

The questionnaire is divided into four sections: the first part contains general data concerning the interviewee; the second section includes questions regarding the interviewee’s experience as an employer of Filipina domestic workers; the third section refers to the interviewee’s knowledge that of the domestic helper and of the Filipino community in general; the last section is devoted to the study’s theme of integration and the questions refer to: the interviewees’ perception of the migration phenomenon of Filipino migrants in Italy; their living condition; the issue of migrants’ rights including family reunification; reflections on cultural similarities/differences; and finally, “solutions” to the problem of integration.

In the questionnaire, open questions are mainly used in the last section. The administration of the questionnaire took, on average, one hour to one-and-a-half hours. It is useful to keep in mind that language difficulties may have somewhat inhibited the discussion of the “open questions”.

Employers, on the whole, showed willingness to cooperate in answering the questions, even though their answers were often unclear and vague. The initial target sample of 100 interviewees was not reached, mainly because of the incompatibility of working time between interviewers and interviewees, or due to certain personal situations of the latter; however, it was not due to a prejudicial refusal. The fact that the questionnaire was administered by Filipina domestic workers was an element of curiosity/surprise for many respondents who saw this as a positive element of the study. The results obtained from the questionnaire were subsequently analyzed with the statistical package software system (SPSS).





## **Report of Findings from Interviews with Italian Employers (quantitative data)**

### **Filipina women and the role of domestic helper**

The interviewees are part of a large group of Italians who resort to outside help in the management of domestic life, giving them more opportunities for professional fulfilment and more time for other activities, outside the daily household chores.

We found that 93% of domestic helpers carry out mainly domestic chores, whereas the rest devote their time chiefly to assisting the elderly (4.7%) and taking care of children (7%). The domestic helpers, in the case of our sample, are thus mainly responsible for domestic help.

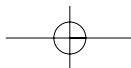
Throughout the sample, part-time collaboration predominates. In most cases this does not include living in the same house as the employing family. Employers belonging to the older group (over 65 years old) employ Filipina domestic helpers for a shorter time (for 88.1% from 1 to 4 years), whereas in the other two age groups (28-45, 46-65) of the sample, the working relationship with the domestic helper has sometimes extended beyond 12 years, in 18.8% and 11.1% of cases respectively.

Another significant data is that the younger age groups employ the domestic helpers for more hours per week, up to over 30 hours. The presence of a person in the house for such a long time could lead to hasty judgements about the type of relationship between the domestic helpers and their employers. However, the research showed that the degree of acquaintance, described in more detail in the next paragraph, is not necessarily linked to the amount of working hours per week.

### **Interpersonal relations with the domestic helpers**

The domestic helper enters the innermost part of family life, carries out chores once performed by housewives, and often takes care of children and old people. She would appear to belong fully to the dynamics of family life. However, this “intimate” relationship, according to the analysis of the data in this research, is more seeming than real: knowledge of the worker’s life-story is often superficial and limited to general information, such as the age, place of origin and marital status of the domestic helper. Even though 95.3% of the interviewees state that they know the details about the private life of their domestic helper, it is significant that only 25.6% of the interviewees know, for example, the number of their domestic helper’s children, only 34.9% know whether these children live in Rome, and only 48.8% are aware of whether the helper has a husband living in Rome.

A further significant piece of data is that, among the different age groups analyzed, the youngest is the least well informed about the above mentioned data. For example, out of the already small 25% of interviewees who know the number of children, only 18.2% belong to the youngest group. Moreover, to the subsequent question: “Do you ask your domestic helper information about her family in the Philippines?”, a large 75% belonging to this group answered, “No” (see table below).



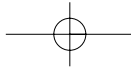


Table 1

<b>Do you ask your domestic helper information about her family in the Philippines?</b>			
Age	Yes	No	Total
From 28 to 45	28,6%	75,0%	37,2%
From 46 to 65	48,6%	12,5%	41,9%
Over 65	22,9%	12,5%	20,9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

The relevance of these data is that those issues that are most important to Filipina domestic helpers — the reasons that determined the difficult choice to migrate, which are a source of daily suffering for these women (for example, the separation from husband and children in their very young years) — are often ignored by employers, who are more concerned with more practical information related to the working relationship.

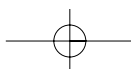
The question could be asked: would employers define their domestic helpers as “modern-day heroes” in the sense that they have made enormous sacrifices and dramatic choices in order to, take responsibility for maintaining their families, ensuring them a much better lifestyle as well as contributing significantly to the economy of their country?

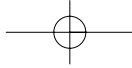
The presence of a Filipina domestic helper in the house represents an opportunity to understand the processes behind each single, personal case of migration — processes that are symptomatic of the division of labour on an international scale. However, this research highlights that, in the interpersonal interactions between domestic helper and employer, the latter finds it difficult to recognize anything more than the “good domestic helper” who solves the daily problems of family management, missing the opportunity to look beyond the domestic helper’s personal life-story in its entirety and beyond stereotypes.

This hypothesis is confirmed by the fact that, for example, a considerable number of interviewees belonging to the youngest age group state that they are interested in the phenomenon of Filipino migration, but get their information on these matters only from the mass media and the internet, and are not interested in direct dialogue and “personal” questions about the domestic helpers. This age group is actually the best informed about the presence of organizations that provide assistance to Filipino migrants (70% out of a total small percentage of 23.3% who state they are informed about such organizations). This result reveals a general “intellectual” interest among those in the younger age groups, but this does not correspond to a desire for real knowledge of the domestic helper or a will to deepen human relationships, beyond working interaction.

**The perception of the Filipino culture among the employers**

From the description of the interpersonal relations with the domestic helper, it can be inferred that that the employers perceive Filipino women only within their roles as domestic helpers. However,





within the relationship between domestic helper and employer, there is an emotional empathy which characterizes human relations, notwithstanding the superficial knowledge of the helper's private life and of the more complex and dramatic phenomenon of migration, of which the domestic helper is emblematic. An example of this is the fact that the interviewees acknowledged the importance of family reunification in the host country and indicate that this is a fundamental right of the domestic helper and that it helps her to live a more serene life.

However, when one goes from the interpersonal dimension to a more general level concerning the work experience as a meeting between different cultures, the image of the Filipino woman as domestic helper is the determinant image and is often a stereotype, which corresponds only very superficially to the real culture of origin of Filipina domestic helpers.

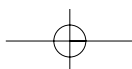
Enquiring about the employers' perception of the Filipino culture, the interviewees were asked to list possible cultural similarities and differences between them and their domestic helpers. The answers highlighted a surprising data: 72.1% of the sample stated that they could not find differences or could not point out what these were. Paradoxically, when they were asked to indicate the similarities between the two cultures, they replied in an equally remarkable way: 55.8 % of the sample recognized that there are similarities, while 44.2% could not indicate any.

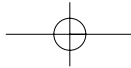
The answers given by those who pointed out similarities partly justify these apparently surprising data. The similarities pointed out are mostly a reflected image of those characteristics which are important for a good domestic helper. It is not by chance that the "shared values" between the two cultures, especially the common Roman Catholic origin, the competence in child-care, the sense of family, respect for the elderly, etc. seem to be stereotyped images of what one wants to grasp of a culture that is certainly much more complex than what emerges from these answers.

The employers cannot be totally blamed for their inability to establish a cultural encounter with their domestic helpers. The domestic helper may also wish to give an image of herself and of her culturally determined "qualities" that make her suitable for the job and therefore less at risk of losing her job and, as a consequence, her stay permit.

This would also explain the almost total absence of significant answers indicating cultural differences. Cultural differences can be potentially a source of conflict, especially in the context of human relations. At this point, it must be asked to what extent do the domestic helpers want these "differences" emerge and to what extent do the employers want to look at possible areas of conflict.

When the interviewees were asked if Filipino migrant workers have a positive role in Italian society, they responded once again with a list of sound virtues necessary for a domestic helper: attachment to their families, respect for the elderly, special capability in taking care of children, honesty, etc. All these characteristics could lead to the conclusion that Filipina domestic helpers have no possibility for a different future. We must then ask: Is it culture that creates domestic helpers or is it the role of the domestic helper that risks defining an entire culture?





**Domestic helpers as human beings, the sense of true integration**

Analyzing, understanding, building a true sense of integration is one of the greatest problems for social experts. There are manifold interpretations of this word. Integration is one of those “stratified” concepts in which a complicated intersection of historical, cultural, social factors, of accidental and structural elements, of psychological, anthropological and sociological factors determines its variables and interpretation. From the American “melting pot” to the French assimilation, to the chaotic situation of the eternal emergency of Italian amnesties, the “problem of integration of migrants” has always been dealt with through national policies which are not always well concealed. A particular meaning of what is meant by “integration” of migrants. Without going deeply into a difficult issue, which would require special instruments and close examination, it should be pointed out that integration, besides being an issue dealt with by politicians and social experts, is a human issue, a positive encounter of people with each other.

The relationship between employer and the domestic helper were analyzed above. The research also attempted to examine how this connection was conceptualized by the interviewees within the framework of the general issue of integration. In other words, do the interviewees believe that their domestic helpers are integrated or not? What kind of integration do they have in mind?

The section of the questionnaire devoted to the topic of integration ranges from the general issues of immigration in Italy to some possible social “effects”, such as mixed marriages, to the more specific theme of Filipino migration.

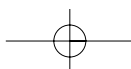
The presence of migrants in Italy was judged favourably by the majority of the interviewees (93%, table 2), but a general positive acceptance of migrants was almost always dependent on their presence as workers (table 3). Because the survey did not collect data on the educational status of the interviewees, it was not possible to correlate whether respondents who favour the presence of migrants are highly educated or not. The apparent openness to “migrants in Italy” is clearly conditioned by utilitarian and functional issues of the migrant as worker rather than as persons in their wholeness.

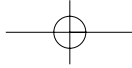
Table 2

<b>Are you in favour of the presence of immigrants in Italy?</b>	
	Percentage
Yes	93%
No	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 3

<b>Should the right to stay for migrants be subordinated to that of work?</b>		
	Number	Percentage
Yes	40	93%
No	3	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>100%</b>



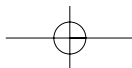


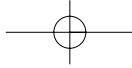
Even the positive judgement of the Filipino community, defined by an interviewee as “the best among the migrant communities”, completely changes when confronted by the hypothesis of an unemployed migrant who is no longer “economically useful”. The trust and esteem that employers express in regard to Filipino migrants turns into mistrust and cynical indifference when the migrant is faced with the drama of unemployment, twice as serious for a migrant, who runs the risks of being expelled by the host country. In this regard, the statement of an interviewee is quite eloquent: “They are welcome if they have a job, otherwise they start stealing”. The positive attitude towards the migrant is, in other words, subordinated to their utility for Italian society and their identification with specific working roles, especially “what the Italians don’t want to do”. This suggests that to the interviewees, integration is the result of an equation: migrant = work = integration in their perception.

The employers were asked in what way Filipino migrants can better integrate into Italian society. Only one interviewee out of 43 suggested as an integration strategy, by making known and appreciating Filipino culture in Italy through “cultural initiatives on the part of the Filipino authorities in Italy, fostering opportunities for encounter between the two cultures”. In all other cases, it seems that the interviewees forget that the processes of integration involve two parties: “I and the other”.

The most recurrent answers involve inviting Filipino migrants not to remain closed in their community, but to become “interested in the host country”, “to study Italian culture”, “to send their children to Italian school” and to improve their knowledge of the language.

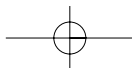
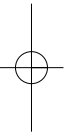
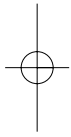
In many of the proposed strategies by the respondents, more effort is asked from the migrant to unilaterally integrate into the society, but focused mainly on the acquisition of the elements of “being Italian”. While it may be true, as the some employers pointed out, that Filipino migrants demonstrate a sort of laziness (and maybe shyness) in going out of the group they belong to and acquiring key elements to integrate better into Italian society. On the other hand, it is also true, as this research highlighted, that the interviewees do not recognize the need to organize cultural exchanges and do not show interest in meeting other people who are in anyway different from them.



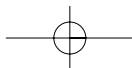
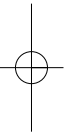
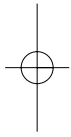
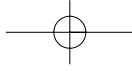


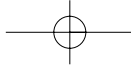
## PART THREE

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**







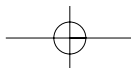


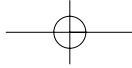
The findings of this research study show the complexity in addressing the issues relating particularly to Filipina domestic workers and the role they may wish to portray to Italian and Philippine societies. The research methodology employed by our organization, the Filipino Women's Council, proved to be a useful tool for many of us to reflect on appropriate strategies. The stages we went through from the conceptualization process through to the end of this research became a "space" for many of us to reflect on our situation. Are we trapped? Can we do something about it? What must be done now?

The many facets of the lives of a Filipina domestic worker need to be understood and examined. We need to understand the context in which a woman plays different roles - a domestic worker for an Italian family, a service worker for Italian society, a citizen of the Philippines, a driver of the Philippine economy, a family breadwinner, a distant mother, a distant wife.... If we combine all these roles you can imagine what this represents. The analysis of each domestic worker requires specific understanding of a range of issues.

Much of the current research somehow captures this multi-dimension and tends to underline the feminization of migration. One specific example is highlighted in the lives of *transnational families*, which are those households with core members of the family living in two nation states. In this case, the members of the family, some or all of its dependents, live in the Philippines while the mother works and resides in Italy. This is a clear example which shows the different roles that the mother plays. This *transnational family* phenomenon has been studied carefully, for example, by a Filipina researcher, Rhacel Parrenas, as well as other researchers like Pierrette Hondagneu Sotelo and Ernestine Avila. They call this practice of mothering from a distance "*transnational mothering*."

Below, we attempt to recapitulate the findings of our research through the "pathways" approach. These are the paths that a Filipina domestic worker will decide to choose given such scenarios. Behind each Filipina domestic worker, there is a "human face" which carries with it a personal life story.





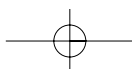
## First Case Analysis:

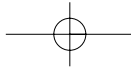
### Transnational Mother, Filipina Domestic Worker

In referring to the following diagram we would like to show the context in which we can analyse a single case of a transnational mother. The first path would be that as an individual: she values herself as a healthy woman in her productive age (usually between ages 20 and 40 years old), she has obtained at least high school education, her upbringing and values make her a “timid” woman but she knows that she is able to cope, adjust and take risks and initiatives, against all odds. The second path would be that as a family woman, she values her role as a mother (most likely of more than two children), and she realizes that the children are growing up and need a good education. Salaries back home are just not high enough to sustain the daily expenses of the family. At this point, there needs to be a person who will have to sacrifice to help meet the family needs, which brings her to the next (third) path where she becomes that person called the “modern-day” hero of the family. Or, perhaps, we could even say the “sacrificial lamb.” Her next path (fourth) is where she makes a judgement about her own environment - that there are no options for economic opportunities.

Once she moves along all of these four pathways and she also sees that there are opportunities that guarantee economic benefits and that there are “attraction” systems in the host country, such as friends and relations who will help her cope with loneliness, she will immediately move to the next path (fifth).

Lastly, we cannot ignore the factors which contribute to the “attraction” systems in the host country, such as the change of specific labour demand, especially for women migrants. These processes of transformation that are changing the household dynamics, including an opportunity for women to join the labour force and, therefore, someone else needs to take on the management of domestic household chores such as cleaning. This is the niche of the Filipina domestic worker.





## Pathways of a Transnational Mother

### Filipina domestic worker

#### 1. Her own self value

- productive age – 20 to 40 years old
- obtained at least high school education
- timid personality
- able to cope, adjust and take risks and initiatives



#### 2. Her own roles

- mother of > 2 children
- provider (breadwinner) to respond to urgent needs of the family (food, school fees, medicine)



#### 3. Her own as well as others' perception about her role

- the *hero*



#### 4. Economic situation in the Philippines (home)

- No job options back home



#### 5. "Attraction" systems in Italy (host country)

*Coping mechanisms in place (churches, social gatherings, friends)*

*Culture which creates domestic helpers*

*Work available for domestic helpers*



#### Forces of Globalization (for Western world)

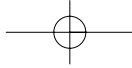
*Transformation, progress, modernization*

*Female emancipation, change in family management*

*Increased labour demand (especially for emancipated women)*



**The Good Filipina Domestic Helper**



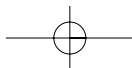
What is the impact of this pattern of pathways? It has completely altered the family structure and has led to role shifts. This abrupt change has brought about problems of holding the family together. The long separation of wives and husbands leads to serious estrangement between married couples. Studies have shown that this has not only created remittance-dependent husbands and families, but also entire communities.<sup>3</sup> This pattern has also led to changes in family and community values. Practically, the Filipina *transnational mother*, working as a domestic helper, has now become the main breadwinner of her family and consequently has created dependency among family members.

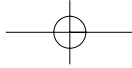
Our findings show that unless a woman is really in a bad situation that affects her own self, such as loss of job, loss of working permit, ill-health and old age, or involved in a distressed period with the family, such as the loss of a family member, she will continue to be a *transnational mother working as domestic helper*.

The proportion of transnational mothers in our focus group discussions was 70%: they are those women who have left their children back home. This is exactly the same proportion found in a research study done by Parrenas about Filipino Transnational Families - 70% of the women she interviewed in Rome were mothers and the majority of them had left their children back home.<sup>4</sup> Both studies were targeted at women and incidentally found a similar high proportion of transnational mothers. The numbers of transnational mothers are of interest to many researchers and no large-scale studies have been done so far. Recounting the experience of FWC's counselling support, the systematic collection of data is a major issue that must be addressed.

<sup>3</sup> Estrella Dizon-Anonuevo and Augustus T. Anonuevo, *Coming Home: Women migration and reintegration*, 2002.

<sup>4</sup> Parrenas, Rhacel Salazar, *Feminist Studies, Mothering from a Distance: Emotions, Gender, and Inter-generational Relations in Filipino Transnational Families*, 2001.





## **The Second Case: The Filipina Domestic Worker with Family in Rome – the reunified family**

The pathways exercise has been helpful to us when looking at each case of migration. We can use the same exercise to examine a second case: the life of a Filipina domestic worker with family in Rome. There are those mothers who have managed to keep their families intact in Italy and there are also those who have successfully petitioned for their children and husbands to join them – the *reunified* families.

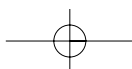
In Italy, the new policy on immigration has changed, transforming the migrant worker from a person with rights, to a simple “labour force”. The stay permit has become the work permit and its validity is connected to the work contract: in a market regulated by “limited contracts”, and the subsequent insecurity, it is always difficult for the migrant workers to have an “unlimited contract” that would allow them to stay in Italy on a longer term basis.

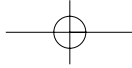
It is impossible to plan one’s life and that of the family. The right to family reunification is linked not only to income but also to the migrant workers’ length of stay and available decent housing for family members.

The situation is even more difficult for live-in domestic workers who rarely have the provisions from their employers to accommodate or provide housing for the family. Therefore they are forced to maintain their families in the country of origin.

A more complex scenario can arise especially when we deal with the implications of the prior separation of those reunited families. This also needs to be studied more in depth, in particular, the issue of managing the second generation’s integration in Italy. Those who arrived in Italy to join their parents as grown up children seem to be the most vulnerable and affected by changing family dynamics and estrangement. Our findings have shown that this is a growing problem for those *reunified* families, especially those with teenage kids who do not cope well with Italian education and peer pressure.

In our validation process with FGD groups, many mothers said that their children whom they left in the Philippines experience very serious problems when they are reunited with their families in Italy. Some parents who reunited with their children already in their adult years recounted that their teenage children below 18 years of age refused to study due to language difficulties, and therefore are already working as domestic helpers even at their young age.





## Other Cases

Our findings also show that there are two images of Filipino domestic workers. The first image is that of the women who are risk-takers, enterprising, able to cope and take initiatives, able to adjust to different situations, able to offer services that they themselves appreciate and that are appreciated by their employers. They are also able to realize their important roles and contributions to Italian families and to their own families. The second image is that of women who can never escape destitution, always have problems to solve, lack opportunity and who experience further problems, such as discrimination, labour exploitation, pressures due to family separation, etc. We could go on with a long list of different case scenarios for each Filipina domestic worker.

## Common Issues

The importance of examining the specificity of each Filipina domestic worker's personal life has been carefully covered in the above section. In this section, we will touch upon the common issues that run through the focus groups and validation exercise discussions.

### *Self-respect and self-esteem*

The findings of the research, as well as the validation process, did not come up with an agreed upon definition or measure for self-esteem. The notion of self-respect rather than self-esteem should perhaps be a concept that can be used explain that valuable and admirable quality of the women domestic workers. The validation process helped us to take this concept further in the context of the situation of the women domestic helpers.

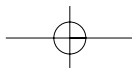
### *Economics – income*

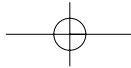
While the basis for migration is mainly about earning money, for a Filipina domestic worker who earns an average of Euro 600 for working eight hours a day, it has been estimated that 68% of the income is spent for family and personal expenses, while 24% goes to payment of debts. The remaining 8% which goes to savings can still be spent on emergency expenses.<sup>5</sup> The majority of the respondents obviously put income as the most important reason for their decisions both for coming to and staying in Italy. This monetary factor materialism/consumerism - very much instilled in the Filipino values (and which also holds true for others), is the biggest challenge for those working in this field of migration. This has been the prevailing recipe of lifestyle. We can infer from the responses of the Filipina domestic workers that money is necessary for basic needs, of course, but there is a suspicion that at times they feel that the money they send back to the Philippines is spent on things which are not necessities, such as nice clothes. Perhaps we should start to look at the values of other cultures that focus on achieving happiness even without material things.

### *Understanding the coping mechanisms – just the way we are*

Ironically, behind the faces of the Filipina domestic workers, no matter how difficult it is to live with their situation, there is that something special that puzzles many cultures. One wonders about their cheerfulness which somehow expresses some form of "happiness." You see them gather in parks in EUR, a dis-

5 Estrella Dizon-Anonuevo and Augustus T. Anonuevo, 2002, *Coming Home: Women migration and reintegration*.





trict in Rome, and in the underground of *Stazione Termini* and other parks on Sundays happily sharing with each other. A professor of Filipinology at the University of the Philippines in Manila, Felipe de Leon, has conducted a study that would explain that Filipinos consider themselves by far the happiest people in Asian and Western cultures. Some explain this phenomenon by the unique ethnic makeup of the Philippine culture - Malay roots (known to be warm and mystical) mixed with Catholicism and the festive spirits of the Spanish colonizers (1565-1898), and, of course, the mix of Americanism (1902-1946). Mr. de Leon, after a decade of research, has concluded that Filipino culture is extremely inclusive and open, as opposed to the individualistic culture of the West that puts emphasis on personal fulfilment. However, perhaps it is this mixed cultural background of Filipinos that explains why we have to make up and search for a sense of belonging to others.

We agree with Filipino researchers like Felipe de Leon that what this means in Filipino culture is best described by the notion of *kapwa*, a *Tagalog* word that translates into “*shared being*”. Put simply, it is their role as the ‘lifeline’ for their families at home that has earned the Overseas Foreign Workers (OFWs) their *Tagalog* nickname, *bayani* – the modern-day heroes. On the other hand, the notion of *bayanihan*, used to describe the traditional way of moving house in the Philippines where all villagers would get together and carry the hut to the new place, shows that shared effort as very fulfilling. These two notions – *kapwa and bayanihan* - are what bind Filipinos together as heroes. And the fact that they share all together – that *kapwa and bayanihan* - could be that “happiness” that we cannot define when we speak about the situation of Filipina domestic worker in Italy.

**Family Reunification**

Italy is home to 2,395,000 migrants at the beginning of 2003 (Data from *Dossier Statistico Immigrazione, Caritas Roma*), and among these, 74,030 were Filipinos. An important feature is the overwhelming number of women—approximately 64,4% (data of 2002) – the majority is working in the service sector as domestic helpers, caretakers and baby-sitters.

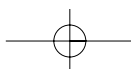
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ITALY – Filipino residents according to their stay permit as of 31.12.2002

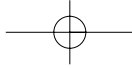
For Employment	93.3%	
For study	0.5%	
Religious	5.5%	
Others	0.7%	
<b>Total</b>		<b>65.257</b>

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According to the 2003 *Dossier Statistico Immigrazione* of Caritas Roma, the proportion of family reunification among the Filipino community is rather lower than the average, calculated at only 13.7% in 2001. This matches with the higher proportion of transnational mothers from our sample which we described earlier. In fact, no one from among the Filipina women interviewed had requested family reunification. Most family members who came after them were either hired directly from the Philippines, or came in illegally and were only legalized by the amnesty laws passed







through the years. This could be attributed to the mere fact that it is very difficult to invite family members here to Italy due to its restrictive and bureaucratic policies: an entry visa is not easy to obtain; housing is not guaranteed for family members; there are strict requirements for proving the number of working hours (while the majority of the Filipinas have low numbers of working hours declared by employers); for presenting petition documents etc. Or simply, perhaps the kind of work migrant women do, especially in the case of live-in workers, does not allow them to provide enough for a family to be together.

A perplexity remains - some respondents mentioned that they had no plans of staying in Italy for so long and that this was their main reason for not bringing their families with them. However, this point was negated by the response of the majority of the respondents who said that they have not achieved their plans because of circumstances that arose in the midst of everything. In other words, their objectives and plans prior to their departure have changed over time – which is the obvious reason why they are still here. These changes are mostly due to new needs and demands from the family back home for additional support, new expenses, the sickness of aging parents, etc.

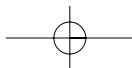
A conjecture is that most of the recent arrivals left the Philippines without proper contracts established by employers. Therefore, many of them did not have legal documents (stay permits) when they arrived. However, once they manage to organize their legal documents, it is only the first step for legal status in this country. The time it takes to find an employer who will agree to support the petition of the family in order to secure permanent or longer term legal status in the country can be a long haul.

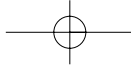
### ***Integration***

The major barrier for integration to all migrants is the lack of knowledge of language. This important issue is a responsibility that has been given to the Filipina domestic helper. However, unless options and access are made easily available to the migrant, it will be difficult to overcome this obstacle.

The findings of this study bring a new challenge to those who might wish to take on the other part of the responsibility – the employers. As has been provocatively asserted from the findings of the small-scale exploratory study (in interviews with the Italians), the situation represents the paradox upon which the process of female emancipation - of equal opportunities for women in Western societies - is carried out with a new form of exploitation of women coming mainly from developing countries.

This study encourages the need to formulate different strategies that are honest, peaceful and just for both the employer and the domestic worker. The forces of globalization are pushing Filipino migrant women further into the dilemmas for which there are no “ready-made” answers. The problems are not only economic, social and legal—but also intercultural. We need to understand better the similarities and differences between the two cultures and go beyond just looking at the reflected image of a good domestic helper. It is not by chance that there are “shared values” between the two cultures—especially the common Roman Catholic origin, the competence in child care, the





sense of family, the respect for the elderly, etc.—which seem to be stereotype images of what one wants to grasp of a culture which is surely much more complex than what emerged from the answers of this study.

FWC both supports integration of the women domestic workers in Italy as well as re-integration in the Philippines. Our findings show that there needs to be a common understanding about what we mean by integration and, of course, reintegration. Once a Filipina domestic worker loses her job, can she still be qualified to be integrated into Italian society? How? Once a Filipina domestic worker decides to go back home, what are the mechanisms set in place for her to reintegrate in her family and community?

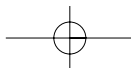
It is a serious question of responsibility for all of us – the other and *Me, Us and Them: realities and illusions of the Filipina domestic workers*. We need new thinking for quick solutions that should be developed by our own Government and the host country that will help improve the situation. We have prepared a list of our proposed strategies and recommendations, many of which were provided by the participating community members which we hope will be the basis of our future collaboration and partnerships both with Italian and Philippine authorities and institutions.

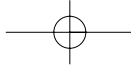
***We need to reflect on our own self esteem (or self respect)  
and we need to reflect on old ways of thinking in the modern  
world. Plans will change and decisions will be altered.***

***There is a sense of altruism for each individual;  
this is especially true for the Filipina domestic helper  
to whom this study was dedicated.***

***She feels she needs to continue to share and to rescue.  
The modern-day hero syndrome, we imagine, will continue.***

***Charito Basa and Rosalud Jing de la Rosa***

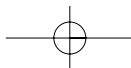


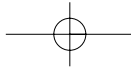


## TEN RECOMMENDATIONS

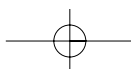
### Identified Problems and Needs, Proposed strategies and Partners

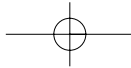
IDENTIFIED PROBLEMS AND NEEDS	PROPOSED STRATEGIES	PARTNERS
1. Italian language skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- facilitate referrals to language schools</li> <li>- increase number of available language schools catering to migrants with convenient schedules</li> <li>- mass promotion, advertisement and campaign</li> <li>- organize lessons at community levels</li> <li>- provide incentives for learners to make language lessons more attractive</li> <li>- use of Filipino migrant organizations to organize and advertise lessons</li> </ul>	Filipino migrant organizations and church-based groups, Italian language institutions, Philippine Embassy, Italian social service organizations
2. Legal advice and referrals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- provide paralegal training to migrant organizations and civic organizations</li> <li>- develop a comprehensive booklet with all available information of laws, legal rights and available help centres for advice</li> <li>- establish help desk centres in key locations where migrants meet</li> <li>- disseminate information through Filipino radio and television programmes</li> <li>- develop partnerships and linkages with other community groups, trade unions, etc. for referral services</li> <li>- strengthen the capacity of migrant organizations as service providers of information to communities</li> </ul>	Labour Unions and other Italian institutions, Filipino migrants organizations, Philippine Embassy



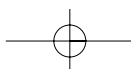


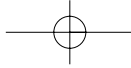
IDENTIFIED PROBLEMS AND NEEDS	PROPOSED STRATEGIES	PARTNERS
3. Skills building training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- develop skills building training programmes like cooking, bar tending, pizza making, business management, franchising, etc.</li> <li>- facilitate access to credit facilities</li> </ul>	<p>Italian businesses and institutions, Filipino migrant associations, Philippine-based organizations, Philippine Embassy, <i>Fondazione Risorse Donna</i>, Municipality of Rome, Province of Rome, Region of Lazio</p>
4. Culture and political awareness exchanges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- develop and promote fora and discussions about the economic and political situation of the Philippines</li> <li>- strengthen the capacity of migrant organizations as service providers of information to communities</li> <li>- promote participation of Filipino community in various intercultural activities at the local and national level</li> </ul>	<p>Italian academics and key opinion leaders, Filipino key opinion leaders and community leaders, Philippine Embassy, other migrant organizations in Italy, Italian solidarity NGOs</p>
5. Capacity building of migrant's organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- strengthen the capacity of migrant organizations conducting empowerment training such as FWC to expand and re-design the current training modules to include Italian culture and politics, importance of language skills, empowerment and self projection, juxtaposing the two cultures looking at differences</li> <li>- exchange of experiences and strengthen networking activities with other migrant organizations at the national, European and international levels</li> <li>- access financial support for migrant-related activities</li> </ul>	<p>Migrant organizations, Philippine-based NGOs, international institutions, US-based migrant organizations, Europe-based migrant organizations, Philippine Embassy, Municipality of Rome, Province of Roma, Region of Lazio</p>



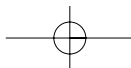
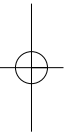
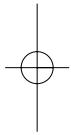


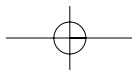
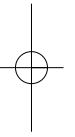
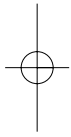
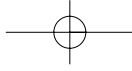
IDENTIFIED PROBLEMS AND NEEDS	PROPOSED STRATEGIES	PARTNERS
6. Awareness of women -specific problems and values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- adapt the Training Module of Values, Moral Recovery Programme from the Philippines</li> <li>- organize women specific training programmes</li> </ul>	Migrant organizations, Moral Recovery Program in the Philippines, Education for Life Foundation
7. Family counselling and peer support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- strengthen the capacity of migrant organizations to provide counselling and peer support through trainer's training</li> </ul>	Migrant organizations, Professional counsellors, Philippine-based NGOs, Philippine Embassy
8. Exchanges and learning from community empowerment and development programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- establish partnerships with migrant associations on hometown associations activities, i.e., remittance savings and investments programmes for communities</li> <li>- establish partnerships with Filipino organizations back in the Philippines</li> </ul>	Migrant organizations, US-based migrant organizations, Philippine-based NGOs, international institutions
9. Leadership and professional skills training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- conduct leadership training/training of trainers of migrant community leaders to develop integration and re-integration programmes</li> <li>- tap or mobilize the professional expertise of Filipinos (expatriates) working with international organizations, civil society organizations and private sectors in Italy to provide support to organizing efforts of Filipino migrant organizations</li> </ul>	Church-based Filipino groups and Filipino migrant organizations, Philippine Embassy, International Organization for Migration, professional leadership trainers both in Italy and in the Philippines, Philippine-based NGOs working on reintegration, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (bilateral agency), Office of Worker's Welfare Agency (OWWA)

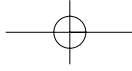




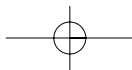
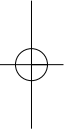
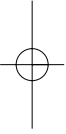
<b>IDENTIFIED PROBLEMS AND NEEDS</b>	<b>PROPOSED STRATEGIES</b>	<b>PARTNERS</b>
10. Linkage on re-integration programmes back in the Philippines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- develop “twinning programmes” that addresses options and opportunities for returning migrants</li> <li>- establish partnerships and linkages with institutions working on programmes for migrant communities and their hometowns, and broader development programmes</li> </ul>	Migrant organizations based in Italy, Migrant organizations based in Europe and US, International



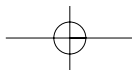
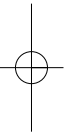
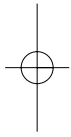
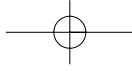


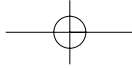


## About the Authors









**Charito Basa Cavaliere della Repubblica**, is the moving spirit and Chairperson of the Filipino Women's Council, a migrant organisation in Rome that aims to educate Filipino women migrants about their rights. She is a Filipina leading activist for many national and international campaigns, including debt relief of poor countries in Italy and a courageous lobbyist and advocate in international and national arenas for migrant and women's rights. She also holds key positions in the executive boards of other migrant organisations, European migrant network and an active member of Italian women's associations and movements. She has worked with international NGOs and does consultancy work other Italian development and cooperation NGOs—all in between her voluntary work for women and migrants. Charito has been serving the migrant communities for 18 years now. She is one of the very few non-Italians to receive the national recognition Ordine "Al Merito della Repubblica Italiana" conferred by Italian President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi as Cavaliere della Repubblica in 2002.

**Rosalud Jing de la Rosa** is a public health and development specialist. She is a Filipina migrant in Rome and volunteer consultant of Filipino Women's Council supporting the research and training needs of the organization. She is an active advocate of policy reforms, women as agents of change, innovative approaches, collective efforts and protection of individual rights. She is currently working as consultant with Rome-based United Nations agencies. She holds a masters degree in international public health in developing countries from Columbia University in New York and has worked with the UN system and development NGOs for the past 21 years.

