



MAPID TRAINING PROGRAM - ITALY

UNDERSTANDING THE INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION- DEVELOPMENT NEXUS*

Fabio Baggio**

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** Fabio Baggio is Missionary of the Scalabrinian Congregation. He is Director of the Scalabrini Migration Center in Quezon City, Philippines, and editor of the magazine *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* (APMJ) and of the newsletter *Asian Migration News* (AMN). Currently he teaches at the Pontificia Universitas Urbaniana (Italy), la Universidad de Valencia (Spain) and the University of Manila (Philippines). He is Director of the MAPID Project.

III.1. *Understanding the International Migration-Development Nexus*¹

edited by Fabio Baggio

III.1.1 Introduction

At the beginning of the new millennium, the international community “suddenly” realized that hundreds of billions of US dollars are remitted every year to developing countries by their nationals working abroad. In recent years, migrants’ remittances have been found to account for a considerable share of the GNP of several countries of origin. Individual scholars and multidisciplinary research teams have been engaged in assessing the “development impact” of such a huge influx of capital to the national economy of the major sending countries. Policymakers have turned their attention to the migration-development nexus, aiming to boost the development potential of the economic contributions of their diaspora. The initial enthusiasm about the nexus has been tempered by the outcomes of many interdisciplinary studies, which considered indicators other than macroeconomic in keeping with the multidimensional nature of development. Moreover, some scholars highlighted the need to include in the discussion the evaluation of the “social costs” of international migration. The assessment of the development impact of international migration should always consider the complex equation between costs and benefits at the economic, political and social levels. The case of the Philippines, whose migration policy is often proposed as a model to other sending countries, presents a good example to carry out such a cost-benefit assessment.

III.1.2 Migration and development in the Philippines

As of December 2007, the Commission for Filipinos Overseas (CFO) estimated that 8,726,520 Filipino nationals were living overseas.² According to the official figures prepared by the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), during the year 2007, 1,073,402 Filipinos migrated abroad as regular migrant workers, showing a slight increase from the 1,062,567 deployed in 2006 (Antonio, 2008). In 2007, overseas Filipinos remitted through legal channels about US\$14.4 billion, which made up 9.2 percent of the total GNP (BSP, 2008).

The economic benefits of Filipino migrants’ remittances at both the macro and micro levels cannot be denied. At the macroeconomic level, the surge in remittances has been boosting the Philippine peso, easing the foreign debt burden and taming national

¹ From Baggio, Fabio, *The Migration-Development Disconnect in the Philippines*, in *Moving Out, Back and Up*, a cura di Asis Maruja M.B. e Baggio Fabio, Scalabrini Migration Center, Quezon City, 2008, pp. 109-126.

² See *Stock estimate of overseas Filipinos as of December 2007* at <http://www.cfo.gov.ph/Stock%202007.pdf>, accessed on 3 July 2008.

inflation. Although remittances play an important role in boosting the Philippine GNP, there is not much evidence to show that migrants' money transfers have significantly improved the domestic economy. At the microeconomic level, the families of Filipino migrants appear to benefit from foreign remittances. Also, considerable inflows of individual and collective remittances are sent by the Filipino diaspora to government agencies, NGOs and migrants' associations to contribute to social programs in the Philippines. Some of this diaspora giving has been already institutionalized by government agencies (e.g., the Commission for Filipinos Overseas) and the private sector (e.g., Ayala Foundation, Inc.). Among the benefits of migration are the contributions of collective migrants' investments to productive projects. In this specific field, Philippine NGOs are indubitably playing an essential role (e.g., *Unlad Kabayan* and *Atikha*). From the government side, in recent years the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration has assisted Filipino migrants and their family with the elaboration of specific reintegration programs. A recent study highlighted some hindrances affecting such initiatives (Agunias and Ruiz, 2007). Recent migration literature also note that "brain gain" (or "brain circulation") and the transfer of knowledge, technology and resources may have salutary effects on the development prospects of developing countries. The Philippines appears to have benefited from these processes thus far.

To assess the total (not only economic) benefits generated by international migration in the Philippines the author refers to the Human Development Index (HDI) elaborated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other complementary indicators, such as the poverty incidence, the Gini ratio, and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. From the analysis of such indicators, it can be stated that after almost 40 years of massive labor migration, there is mixed to minimal evidence to indicate that international migration has contributed to development in the Philippines (Baggio, 2008).

As mentioned above, a fair assessment of the development impact of international migration should include the costs which are shouldered by the country, communities, families and individuals. Concerns over the costs of international migration have resulted in many studies on the topic. Three categories of costs should be considered: political, economic and social. At the political level, the excessive reliance on overseas remittances seems to have prevented the government from elaborating and enacting national plans towards self-sustainable development. Moreover, the "need" to sustain the massive deployment of migrant workers has frequently led the government to concede to the labor conditions imposed by the receiving countries, which are often characterized by discriminatory practices and violation of migrants' rights.

At the economic level, while remittances appears to produce positive effects at the national and the family level, the results at the local community level are not well-established. Overseas remittances are likely to contribute to a widening of the economic disparities across regions. In recent years, the government's reliance on migrants' remittances has progressively taken the appearance of a real economic dependence. While remittances enhance family incomes, the extent to which they represent a "net increase" has not been clearly assessed. The demands of the global labor market have caused the emergence of a well-organized migration industry. Recruitment agents, immigration consultants, brokers, fixers, trainers and other service providers make money on the migration dreams of millions of people.

At the social level, there are indications that Philippine society is paying a steep price for the massive exodus of its members. The general perception is that the extended separation of family members affects marital relationships and constitutes a threat to the stability of the family unit (Uy, 2007; Dignal, 2008), but no empirical evidences have

been produced about this. The exchange of parental/family roles represents a real challenge for left behind fathers because of the lack of skills and traditional bias. The establishment of a culture of migration in the Philippines has influenced the career/vocational orientations of young Filipinos, which are increasingly attuned to opportunities in the global labor market (Asis, 2006b).

III.1.3 The migration-development disconnect: challenges and recommendations

The social costs of migration must be weighed against benefits which, as had been suggested, are palpable at the macroeconomic and household levels. The economic benefits, however, seem to have been generated “spontaneously,” aided by some favorable historical contingencies. In other words, the benefits did not result from a policy framework aimed at making migration work for development. This impression came out of the roundtable discussions (RTDs) that the Scalabrini Migration Center conducted in 2007. As part of the preparation for the conference on international migration and development, eight RTDs were undertaken in eight different clusters (migration-related government agencies, human resource development government agencies, national development government agencies, local development agencies, migration-oriented NGOs, international organizations, foundations engaged in social responsibility and recruitment agencies). All the RTDs focused on assessing the migration-development nexus. The outputs revealed that there is more “disconnect” than nexus between migration and development, especially when it comes to national and local policies. During the RTDs, some Philippine government officials even questioned the existence of any link between international migration and development. Majority of participants to the RTDs recognized that migration policies and development policies are often drafted and implemented separately. Moreover, for some government agencies, the RTDs constituted the first gathering with partners from the other sector (migration or development) to discuss issues of common interest.

A further analysis of the migration-development disconnect in the Philippine politics and policies leads to the consideration of some key issues which may be identified as follows.

III.1.4 The political framework

The massive outflow of migrant workers from the Philippines started in the 1970s as temporary measure to respond to the problems posed by poverty and unemployment. The temporary measure has become relatively permanent in response to a continuing demand for workers in the global labor market, especially in the low skilled sectors. In the 1990s, the worrisome raise of abuses and exploitation victimizing migrant workers compelled the Philippine state to regulate the deployment of nationals through *ad hoc* legislation, monitoring mechanisms and prosecution of violators. An official position regarding the migration-development nexus was codified in the 1995 Republic Act 8042 Section 2 (c):

While recognizing the significant contribution of Filipino migrant workers to the national economy through their foreign exchange remittances, the State does not promote overseas employment as a means to sustain economic growth and achieve

national development. The existence of the overseas employment program rests solely on the assurance that the dignity and fundamental human rights and freedoms of the Filipino citizen shall not, at any time, be compromised or violated. The State, therefore, shall continuously create local employment opportunities and promote the equitable distribution of wealth and the benefits of development.

In the new millennium, the persistence of the problems posed by poverty and unemployment, together with an increased national economy's dependency on foreign remittance led to the implicit adoption of overseas employment as development strategy by the Philippine government. The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration set an annual target of one million deployments and is actively engaged in "marketing" Filipino migrant workers in the global labor market. Nonetheless, according to the outputs of the RTDs, no further political reflection has been undertaken to enhance the development impact of international migration beyond the benefits of remittances. On the contrary, it seems that the excessive reliance on remittances "... has kept the government from pursuing real policy reforms (including no population policy) that would have improved the performance of the domestic economy and reduced the need for overseas employment" (Pernia, 2006:18). The historical examples of sending countries that have developed up to the point of becoming receiving countries (e.g. South Korea and Taiwan) show that international migration has not been a major driver of their economic and social growth (Asis, 2006a). While migration did contribute to decreasing social pressure, easing overpopulation problems and contributing to the national and household economies, the major development driving forces in such countries were the implementation of sound economic and social policies and the hard work of those who remained in the home country. Even in a hyper globalized labor market, efforts to increase the annual deployment of overseas contract workers cannot substitute for a long-term plan to reduce unemployment through the generation of domestic jobs. It would be politically naive to believe in a national development coming from overseas like the "deus ex machina" of the ancient Roman tragedies. It would be highly hazardous to entrust to receiving countries the solution of domestic unemployment and underemployment problems, knowing that the receiving countries have their own national interests to protect. Unless the government sets about implementing needed reforms, the next generations of Filipinos will be compelled to be faithful and diligent servants of the global labor market.

III.1.5 Enhancing the benefits of international migration

The results of the RTDs and an analysis of national and local policies reveal that the Philippine state has taken a rather passive attitude towards the development impact of international migration. The public acknowledgment of the contribution of Filipinos overseas to the development of their home country has been expressed in different forms. They are commended as the *bagong bayani* (new heroes) of the Philippines. Special awards have been created to honor outstanding nationals working overseas or members of families left behind. Nonetheless, an overall assessment of the benefits produced by international migration in the Philippines at the different levels is overdue. The official reports issued by migration-related agencies seem to be more concerned in praising the government's performance than in presenting the reality and highlighting the problems and gaps. The initiatives promoted by different stakeholders in preparation for the 2008 Global Forum on Migration and Development have put on the spot the glaring disconnect between migration policies and development policies. State-initiated

endeavors aiming at enhancing the benefits of international migration have often proven to be ineffective or inadequate. The concern regarding the migration-development nexus is rarely present at the level of local government units (LGUs).

Relevant gaps highlighted by more general assessments on the migration phenomenon in the Philippines have considerable repercussions on the migration-development nexus. Despite the highly structured deployment process, the collection and/or encoding of migration data is still insufficient. The shaping of policies aiming at enhancing the benefits of international migration should start from solid grounds provided by scientific studies undertaken by independent institutions. Such policies should envision long-term development plans where remittances, migrant giving, migrants' investment and knowledge exchange are properly considered and fostered in order to make them work towards sustainable development.

While nobody can question the positive effect of remittances at the macro and micro economic, programs to maximize the benefits of remittances to the larger community should be elaborated. Policymakers should always keep in mind that remittances are privately earned and managed money. Therefore, all programs should deal with migrants and their families as real partners, to whom decisional spaces are to be granted. To better contribute to this political exercise, the overseas workers and their families should be properly informed through financial literacy programs and *ad hoc* capacity building seminars. They should be introduced to more productive uses of remittances, strategies of savings and sound possibilities of investment. The successful initiatives of some NGOs stressed the importance of building partnerships with long-standing Philippine cooperatives and securing cheap credit facilities. The role of LGUs would entail identifying the real possibilities of investment at the local level, organizing the training programs for migrants and their families, facilitating the link with existing cooperatives and assisting the development of new enterprises. In this regard, policymakers should also elaborate entrepreneur-friendly incentive schemes, such as lowering taxes for small and medium enterprises, especially in their first few years of operation. The benefits of international migration are yet to be felt at the community level:

In sum, we find that remittances have yet to be translated to value-added activities and investments which are more foundational sources of development and growth. Hence the expected multiplier effects even from consumer activities remain slow and unable to reach areas that need them the most (Ang, 2007:13).

Policymakers should enact *ad hoc* policies addressing the enhancement of multiplier effects, so that the poorest households, which generally do not directly benefit from overseas remittances, can indirectly benefit from migration.

The Filipino diaspora has found ways to contribute to the development of the Philippines. Such contribution ranges from individual/collective donations for specific projects to tangible solidarity in case of natural disasters, from financial assistance to the construction of public infrastructure to micro-investment in community-based initiatives. LGUs, NGOs and private foundations play a role in channelling these contributions to the local communities. In 2003, the Overseas Absentee Voting Act (or Republic Act 9189) was enacted, granting the right to vote to eligible Filipino migrants. In the same year, through the Citizenship Retention and Re-acquisition Act (or Republic Act 9225) Filipinos residing abroad were granted the possibility of dual citizenship. Both acts are expected to increase the bond with the Filipino diaspora all over the world and boost its engagement with the development of the home country. So far, the results of the two laws have been minimal. Only a small percentage of potential overseas voters participated in the last two national elections. The offer of dual citizenship facilities has

not produced a real change in the behaviour of Filipinos abroad in terms of increased applications to reacquire Filipino citizenship and interest in their homecountry. The state has to take a more proactive stance in engaging with the Filipino diaspora to enhance the impact of their spontaneous contributions. As a first step, Philippine institutions must demonstrate readiness, transparency and sound governance to build an enabling environment. In fact, the perception gathered from a study of Filipinos in Italy reveals that OFWs are not inclined to partner the Philippine government in its initiatives towards the development of their home country (Baggio and Asis, 2008). Re-establishing a relationship of trust with the diaspora should be a priority for national and local governments. Fostering and expanding successful initiatives like LINKAPIL³ may represent a second important step. The third step may be the financial participation of Philippine institutions in the implementation of migrants' sponsored projects, according to schemes inspired by the famous Mexican "3x1 program." But, in the short run, policymakers should acknowledge, document and support (including financially) the best practices initiated by non-government stakeholders. In the past, some sending countries (e.g., Italy, Greece and China) have been quite successful in engaging their diaspora in the establishment of new overseas markets for traditional products and promotion of tourism in their home country. Given the opportunities produced by globalization, the Philippine government should look into the possibility of replicating such good practices. This should be part of the responsibilities of Filipino diplomats, and as such, they should receive training in this area.

In the last decades the Philippine government struggled to facilitate the economic reintegration of Filipino migrants. The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) developed *ad hoc* frameworks and special programs, which did not last long because of their dependency on political contingencies. A significant step forward was taken in March 2007, when DOLE set up the "National Reintegration Center for OFWs" (NRCO). According to its mandate, the center is supposed to offer different reintegration services to OFWs and their families and facilitate the link with other service providers in the same field. As of June 2008, the center has been providing different kinds of assistance to 5,654 inquiring clients, but only 188 Filipino migrants actually visited the NRCO offices looking for services and advice on reintegration matters. Moreover, most of the assistance given to such clients was in terms of referral to services and programs run by NGOs and the private sector (DOLE, 2008). The government has also produced good efforts to encourage the return of Filipino immigrants, who might be able to invest significant capitals in the Philippines. Nonetheless, the results are quite minimal. In this regard, the laudable initiatives undertaken by the Philippine Retirement Authority have been proven not very effective. The return and reintegration of Filipino migrants should be one of the main focuses of the policymaking aimed at enhancing the development impact of international migration. Due consideration should be paid to the huge "capital" constituted by the different skills acquired by Filipino migrants during their overseas working experiences. State-sponsored incentives (including financial) to return should be envisioned as a real investment as part of a long term development strategy. Migrant families and communities – who should be provided with proper information and training – should be always considered as important stakeholders.

³ In 1989 the Commission on Filipinos Overseas, introduced a program titled LINKAPIL, an acronym for "Lingkod sa Kapwa Pilipino" (Service to Fellow Filipinos), which aims to tap and match the donations of Filipino migrants to fund livelihood, education, health/welfare, infrastructure, technology and skills transfer projects

III.1.6 Reducing the costs of international migration

The annual deployment of hundreds of thousands of Filipinos entails a series of political, economic and social costs. A state strategy aimed at enhancing the development impact of international migration should not neglect the importance of reducing the costs of migration.

To address the risks of international migration, in 1995 the Philippine Congress promulgated the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act (or Republic Act 8042). The provisions of this act include regulating the recruitment and deployment of Filipino contract workers, aiming at protecting their rights and curbing any illegal recruitment practiced. To prevent trafficking in person, prosecute violators and protect victims, in 2003 the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act (or Republic Act 9208) was approved. The Philippines signed and ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All the Migrant Workers and Members of their Families. Different government agencies have been tasked to enact the provisions of the existing legal framework. The Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) was created in 1977 to develop welfare programs for Filipino migrant workers and their families. The Commission on Filipinos Overseas was established in 1980 to assist emigrants and nurture ties with overseas Filipino communities. POEA was established in 1982 to manage the overseas employment program and to carry out the state's regulatory function to protect the rights of migrant workers. The Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs (OUMWA) was created in 1995 to provide legal assistance to Filipino migrants. As mandated by Republic Act 9208, the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT), composed of representatives from government agencies and nongovernmental organizations, was created to ensure prevention, protection and prosecution in human trafficking matters. To prepare migrants and to provide them with information about working and living abroad, departing migrants are required to attend the Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar (PDOS). This is supplemented by the optional Pre-Employment Orientation Seminars (PEOS), which targets aspiring migrants. Despite all these efforts, cases of abuses and exploitation are rampant. Reports of migrant advocates in countries of destination reveal that OFWs' labor contracts are substituted upon arrival with less advantageous ones (Baggio, 2007). Every year, thousands of Filipinos are deployed through unauthorized migration channels. Filipina domestic workers are often exposed to inhuman labor conditions and sexual harassment by their foreign employers. Many OFWs are trafficked:

A significant number of Filipino men and women who migrate abroad for work are subjected to conditions of involuntary servitude in Bahrain, Canada, Cyprus, Hong Kong, Cote d'Ivoire, Japan, Kuwait, Malaysia, Palau, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates (TIP 2008:208).

Providing a good legal framework and establishing different state agencies devoted to migrants' protection and welfare is not enough. The well-known problems of implementation and enforcement in the Philippines inexorably affect also international migration. Responding to different institutions, the programs and activities of the mandated government agencies often overlap. The coordination among the latter should be improved in order to achieve effective protection of Filipino migrants. One feasible solution can be the establishment of a Department for Overseas Filipinos with the mandate to direct all the different agencies and programs addressing Filipino international migrants. In any case, there is a clear need to provide government agencies

with adequate and trained personnel; the deployment of consuls, labor attaches and other diplomatic staff should be based on the size and distribution of the Filipino diaspora. PDOS and PEOS should be assessed and re-formatted according to the real needs of migrants and aspiring migrants.

To regulate the deployment and protect the rights of Filipino workers overseas, as of October 2008 the Philippines has signed 45 bilateral agreements or memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with 40 countries of destination. This is indeed a remarkable diplomatic achievement that should be commended, especially considering the constraints driven by national sovereignty matters. Nonetheless, a critical assessment of such agreements and memoranda reveal that they generally fall short of assuring some basic individual rights and freedoms asserted by the Philippine constitution and other national laws (e.g., the right to change employer, the right to collective bargaining, the freedom to exercise and enjoy one's religious profession and worship, the freedom to undertake or not an HIV test, etc.). The whole Philippine diplomatic strategy concerning bilateral agreements and MOUs should be revisited with no concession to the "number vs. rights" argument advanced by Ruhs and Martin (2006). In the negotiation with the receiving countries more "bargaining power" may be attained if other sending countries are directly involved in the process. Moreover, in such negotiation elements of cooperation for development, based on the principles of reciprocity and ethical recruitment, should be introduced.

International migration often requires a considerable initial "investment" to shoulder the different expenses entailed in the process: documentation, local transportation, placement fees, airfares, etc.. Despite the well designed deployment regulation system, there are evident "leakages" (queue-jumping offers, blacklisting, "fixers," fake certifications, etc.) whose expensive costs are always charged to the applicants. In order to meet pre-departure costs, aspiring migrants often incur loans from relatives or banks; the debt burden force migrants to bear difficult working and living conditions. For those working in other countries in East and Southeast Asia, it is not very clear if a 2 or 3-year labor migration experience is really beneficial in economic terms. Philippine policymakers should elaborate strategies that should reduce the economic costs of overseas labor migration. A further decentralization of the documentation process would surely help. Expanding what is already mandated for the seafaring and domestic sectors, a no-placement fee should be imposed for all applicants. Through ad hoc programs and budget allocation, POEA should tighten the control of the recruitment agencies' performance.

The contract worker system compels family members to bear extended separation that is likely to negatively affect marital and parental relationships. Recent studies (ECMI/AOS-Manila, SMC and OWWA, 2004; Arellano-Carandang, Sison and Carandang, 2007) show that families left behind tend to struggle more when mothers migrate. The same studies stressed the essential role of extended families in helping children cope with parental absence. However, left-behind members appear to be pervaded by feelings of sadness. With more than one generation involved in international migration, it may be opportune to question the sustainability of the care of the elderly, which is traditionally entrusted to family members. Policymakers should actively engage in the promotion of comprehensive and empirically-based assessments of the impacts of international migration on families and communities in the Philippines. The data gathered should help in the drafting and implementation of policies and programs addressing the real and potential negative consequences of the phenomenon in the Philippine society.

While economists have different assessments of the development impact of remittances on poverty alleviation at the household and community levels, they generally agree on the fact that the inflow of migrants' money has contributed to the increase of income inequality and regional disparity (Pernia, 2006; Ang, 2007). Such "economic" cost of international migration, if not properly addressed through *ad hoc* policies, may seriously jeopardize the achievements of the Philippine government towards poverty alleviation as part of the its Millennium Development Goals. As mentioned above, all initiatives directed at fostering the multiplier effects of remittances to benefit non-migrant households will contribute to narrowing the income gaps. Policymakers should also enact programs and mechanisms by which the beneficial impact of remittances would also reach the communities less involved in international migration, which are generally the poorest. A focused channeling of migrants' donations and investments may be a good strategy. Nonetheless, it will not work if suitable infrastructures and investment-friendly policies are not put in place.

The massive deployment of workers necessarily results in the depletion of the Philippine "human capital." The costly preparation of OFWs is shouldered locally and they leave the country in their most productive ages. An empirically-based assessment of the positive return of such an investment through remittances has yet to be undertaken. Most of OFWs are deployed to take up low-skill jobs, for which they are normally over-qualified and, consequently, the salaries do not correspond to their qualifications. The "brain drain" in the Philippines has taken the shape of a real exodus of professionals (nurses, doctors, aviation mechanics, etc.), which has already led the experts in the different sectors to launch alarming calls for proper action. In this light, the Philippine government's intention to increase the deployment of more highly skilled and professional migrants should be reconsidered. To transform the brain drain into brain gain or brain circulation is not an easy task, as the experience of other countries of origin has shown (de Haas, 2008). Policymakers should pay more attention to the needs of the domestic labor market and promote programs and incentives to convince highly skilled and professional Filipinos to stay. The overseas higher salary's attraction can be tempered by the generous offer of fringe benefits and housing in the home country.

Involvement of all the stakeholders

All the policy recommendations listed above would sound like utopia if their implementation remains solely in the hands of the Philippine government. On one part, the efforts of the executive branch should be strongly supported by suitable legislation promulgated by the Philippine Congress and effective prosecution enacted by the judicial machinery. On the other part, the state should be able to proactively involve all the non-government stakeholders in the process. And the first actors to be engaged are Filipino migrants and their families. Their consultation and inclusion in strategic planning and program implementation is a must. Given the actual migration-development disconnect, the Philippine state should decide to invest more financial and human resources in linking with its diaspora. The offer of more and better services in the diplomatic posts may help overseas Filipinos to overcome a widely perceived distrust towards the Philippine government. The state agencies devoted to OFWs and immigrants should increase the effective participation of migrants and members of their families in their respective boards of trustees. The selection of their representatives in such boards should follow a real democratic procedure. Moreover, global consultations of Filipino overseas on relevant issues should be promoted through the use of modern technology (mobile phones and Internet).

The assistance of international organizations (IOs) with expertise and recognized authority in the field of international migration has been useful to the Philippines. Such

cooperation should be fostered further. The collaboration with regional bodies (e.g., the Association of Southeast Asian Nations), United Nations agencies (e.g., the International Labour Organization) and international organizations (e.g., the International Organization for Migration), owing to their essential role as mediators among nation-states, would be instrumental to promote co-responsibility, transnational solidarity, and sustainable development for both the sending and receiving countries. Thanks to their global experience, IOs may aid the Philippine state in its dialogue with the different stakeholders within the Philippines towards a deeper understanding of international migration and more effective responses. IOs can also provide extra resources to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and offer capacity-building opportunities.

In the Philippines, the private sector (recruitment agencies, banks, money transfer companies, communications firms, insurance companies, airlines and real estate agencies) generates huge profits from international migration. The Philippine government should request them to cooperate by practising corporate social responsibility - e.g., by sponsoring programs that enhance the benefits and reduce the costs of international migration. No effective regulation of the deployment process will be possible without the active collaboration of the Filipino migration industry. Through incentives, the government should engage recruiters to promote the welfare of migrants and their families, to adhere to ethical standard of recruitment and to extend assistance to their recruits in the receiving countries.

Best practices undertaken by both government and non-government organizations are not duly documented. To avoid the temptation of partisan interpretation of research, the Philippine government should entrust the work to independent scholars from the local and international academe, allocating the necessary funds. There are many research gaps concerning migration-related issues. The partnership with the academe may be fostered through the establishment of a national “think-tank” involving universities and specialized centers of studies.

Non government-organizations (NGOs) have been in solidarity with Filipino migrants over the years. In many cases, they have compensated for the evident gaps in services and the protection of migrants’ rights of the Philippine government. In response to a specific request from NGOs, in 2002, then Labor Secretary, Patricia Sto. Tomas constituted the Consultative Council for OFWs (CCOFW), a permanent advisory body composed of concerned government agencies, non-government organizations and other civil society groups. CCOFW is supposed to serve as a regular feedback mechanism on current public policies, programs and services affecting overseas Filipinos. For the past six years, the CCOFW has been experiencing some hardships and NGOs repeatedly complained about their insufficient involvement in the decision-making process regarding policies and programs concerning overseas Filipino workers. The Philippine government’s engagement in dialoguing with civil society groups should be more collaborative. The consultation of the main stakeholders namely, Filipino migrants and their families, may result quite faster, cheaper and easier for the government if migrant-oriented NGOs are actively involved. The will of the state to cooperate with civil society groups should manifest in budgetary allocation to support the actions and services provided by NGOs. With the exception of the international seafaring sector, the Philippine unions have not showed much interest for OFW concerns. With their links in the countries of destination, unions can play a critical role in supporting the concerns of OFWs.

III.1.7 Conclusion

The assessment of the migration-development nexus in the Philippines does not depict an unqualified positive scenario. However, the development potential of international migration appears clearly at the different levels. There is an evident disconnect between national and local policies on migration and national and local policies on development. Therefore, it is deemed necessary to revise such policies on the basis of empirical studies and interdisciplinary assessments. This process should always seek the inclusion and cooperation of all the stakeholders: policymakers, migrants and their families, international organizations, private sector, academe, NGOs and unions. As a general rule, to ignite the development potentials of international migration it is necessary to undertake a double action: enhance the benefits and minimize the costs. There are many recommendations and concrete suggestions that policymakers can pick up to pursue this two-fold approach. Two concrete initiatives may help in this effort: the constitution of a “national council for migration and development” with the participation of representatives of all the stakeholders, and the identification of communities/areas in the different Philippine provinces which represent a conducive environment for the development of pilot projects.

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