



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### FROM LOCAL TO TRANSNATIONAL: CONNECTING THE DOTS TO PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT IN THE PHILIPPINES

The fact that migrant remittances prop up the Philippine economy is old news for many. Having emerged relatively unscathed in the 2008 global financial crisis, economists were proven right that remittance flows tend to be resilient compared to other financial flows, cushioning the poor from economic shocks and even financing external gaps. Remittances are widely recognized in the Philippines as contributing to the country's development. But aside from remittance flows, the other contributions of international migration to development - as well as its less salutary outcomes - are less appreciated, particularly by local government units.

According to the Migrants' Associations and Philippine Institutions for Development (MAPID) Project, despite the significance of international migration since the 1970s, many local governments do not consider how international migration has affected their development prospects. Even provinces, cities or municipalities where many overseas Filipinos come from have not paid much attention to migration issues in their midst. The local governments which did implement good practices can provide examples which may be replicated by other communities. These are some of the insights from the MAPID Project which will be presented in a series of forums to be conducted this August: Manila (August 12), Cebu City (August 17), Davao City (August 19) and Naga City (August 24). Launched in 2008, the MAPID Project is a three-phase, three-country, three-year initiative which aims to enhance the understanding of the migration-development nexus and to build the partnership between Philippine government institutions and migrants' associations in Italy and Spain in promoting development in the Philippines. Spearheaded by the Scalabrini Migration Center, in cooperation with the Commission on Filipinos Overseas in the Philippines, Fondazione ISMU in Italy, and the University of Valencia in Spain, the MAPID conducted research in the three countries in 2008. Findings from the research contributed to the design of the training programs which were carried out in 2009. In the Philippines, the research and capacity building activities were focused on Philippine government institutions, while in Italy and Spain, the activities were directed at Filipino migrants and migrants' associations. The project is supported by the Aeneas Programme of the European Union [Aeneas Grant Contract No. MIGR/2007/130-548(11)].

The research, capacity building programs and engagement with national, regional and local policy makers, civil society organizations and Filipino migrants revealed gaps in policies, perspectives and partnerships that must be minded, according to Dr. Maruja Asis of the Scalabrini Migration Center. Migration policies in the Philippines are basically labor migration policies which are not linked to development policies. While the Philippines has successfully managed to break into the global labor market and to provide some safety nets for Filipino workers, there is not much evidence that this approach has contributed to real development. Thus, labor migration continues year in and year out and the country seems headed to become the training ground of workers for the world. If national development plans do not say much beyond deployment and protection issues, it does not come as a surprise that regional and local development plans hardly consider how migration realities may affect development prospects. According to her, the divide between stakeholders in the migration sector on the one hand, and those in the development sector must be bridged. Also, the disconnect between the national government and local governments concerning migration policies must be narrowed. Only a few local government units have an office or personnel tasked with migration-related concerns.

Highlighting local governments, MAPID findings suggest possibilities for cooperating with overseas Filipino communities. Migrants are not only concerned about their families. The research with Filipinos in Italy and Spain indicate that migrants continue to maintain active ties with their home communities. In fact, hometown associations are commonly formed by migrants. Although migrants' associations are put up mostly for social reasons, they also support development projects back home. This is further supported by examples of migrant giving documented by the MAPID research in the Philippines. Individually or collectively, migrants support relief and rehabilitation efforts, scholarship programs, health programs (including medical missions), equipment donations (e.g., hospital equipment, computer donations), small infrastructure and livelihood programs. Some of these examples – including successful migrants' investments and partnerships between overseas Filipinos and local institutions – are featured in the newly released book, *Transnational Bridges: Migration, Development and Solidarity in the Philippines*, co-published by the Scalabrini Migration Center and the Commission on Filipinos Overseas.

The policy options, perspectives and partnerships for mapping out how the country can benefit from international migration and mitigate adverse consequences will be presented and discussed with stakeholders from government, migrants, civil society, private sector, and international organizations during the forums. To move the country forward will require the collective efforts of Filipinos at home and abroad, backed by effective government institutions that will provide policies and mechanisms to make this happen.