



International Migration, Migrant Empowerment and Development Prospects: The Philippines

Maruja M.B. Asis
Scalabrini Migration Center-Philippines

Working paper. Not to be quoted or cited without permission.

The last quarter of the 20th century was a period of profound changes in East and Southeast Asia.¹ This sub-region in the vast Asian landscape witnessed rapid, uninterrupted economic growth, until the economic crisis of 1997, and bounced back thereafter. The economies of Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea, Malaysia and Thailand soared one after the other from the 1970s, propelled by export-led industries. On their road to development, these countries brought in workers from less developing countries in the region to work in sectors hit by labor shortage. Between the 1980s and 2003/2004, the more developed economies in the region adopted policies to import less-skilled migrant workers under temporary labor contract arrangements.² The only exception is Japan, which until now, subscribes to the policy of not accepting less skilled migrant workers, although migrant workers are present in the country. In like fashion, the source countries, which also started with the idea of temporary labor migration, are increasingly viewing labor migration as part of their development strategies. In the 1980s, there were just about a million Asian migrants working in East and Southeast countries (including long-term residents in Japan and Indonesians in Malaysia); in the 1990s, their numbers climbed to more than three million; and increasing further to between 5.3 million to 6.1 million in 2000 (Asis, 2005:19). More recent data and estimates suggest that there may be about 6.3 million legal migrant workers in the region, or 7.5 million if unauthorized migrant workers were included (Asis, 2005:19). About a third of international migrants in the region are women (cited in Asis, 2005:19).

Labor migration in the region has been overwhelmingly the movement of less skilled migrant workers. But from the 1990s, developed countries throughout the world realized that they were lacking in highly skilled human resources as well, and they turned to migration to address this critical shortage. Unlike less skilled workers, who are needed but not wanted, all destination countries in Asia welcome the highly skilled and professional migrants – the welcome extends to granting them family reunification and residence, which are strictly off-limits to less skilled migrants. In a region marked by enormous economic and demographic differentials, international migration will continue to play an important role in the redistribution of markedly unequal resources and opportunities. More so, with more than 30 years of labor migration, institutions and social networks have been established, which will keep migration going.

Lacking a tradition of immigration, international migration in Asia is discussed largely in economic terms, i.e., as the transfer of labor and skills. The contract labor system that developed in the region goes to great lengths in regulating the entry, residence and economic activity of migrants, resulting in the denial of basic rights to migrants. The lack of government-to-government discussion on migration, the participation of the migration industry as the middlemen between migrants and employers, and the fact that there is a vast pool of aspiring migrants render migrants vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. This paper brings in migrant empowerment as an essential component in promoting the development potentials of international migration. The links among these three – international migration, migrant empowerment and development potentials – are explored in this paper with specific reference to the Philippine experience.

The paper is divided into two major parts. The first part describes the main features of migration systems and recent trends in East and Southeast Asia. From the regional context, the second part shifts to the Philippines, the top supplier of all kinds of workers for the global labor market. This section includes a review

¹ The East Asian countries/areas considered here include: People's Republic of China, Hong Kong SAR, Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea. The Southeast Asian countries covered in this paper include: Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Malaysia, Brunei and Singapore. Unless specified otherwise, references to the Asian region or region in this paper pertain to this part of Asia.

² Singapore anticipated its need for migrant labor as far back as 1969 and set out a labor migration policy based on its needs. As such, it had the advantage of setting a policy in place prior to the arrival of migrants in its territory. Hong Kong was in a similar situation. The other destination countries developed a policy in response to the growing presence of migrant workers already in their territories.

of migration trends and patterns, the factors that initiated and sustained international migration, institutions and policies on international migration, and the future of migration in the Philippines.

The cost-benefit analysis of migration in a sending country like the Philippines centers on economic benefits vs. social costs. Remittances have long been regarded as the most identifiable and generally positive outcome of migration. But while remittances have economic benefits for migrants and their families, there are also concerns that they may breed dependence. There are also innumerable questions and concerns on non-economic aspects, such as, the protection of workers' rights (particularly the rights of women migrants), the social costs of migration (particularly the impact of migration on the left behind families, especially children), and questions about nationhood and national identity. The challenge of maximizing the development potentials of migration while minimizing its perceived social costs and other damaging impacts is a running theme in the migration discourse in the country.

Prospects of continuing and increasing migration, and the likely increase in highly skilled migration, are renewing discussions about the links between migration and development. On the positive side, the (re)discovery of remittances' contributions to the economies of sending countries – which are very substantial and more stable compared with flows of investments and development assistance – is an interesting turn in current discussion on international migration. The contributions of diaspora populations to their home countries also suggest a more positive outcome deriving from migration. On the other hand, if more and more people will migrate, and if more highly skilled people will be lured to the more developed economies, how can the country develop? In a society where people have become migration-savvy, what can the state do to curb migration, and will limiting migration really work? What can it do to encourage return migration, if not, to harness continuing interest and commitment of overseas Filipinos to contribute to the development of the home country?

MIGRATION SYSTEMS IN EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

Following World War II and their independence from colonial powers, newly independent Asian countries went about the task of nation-building. Between 1945 and 1970, international migration from the region was very selective and limited in scale. Internal migration, especially rural-to-urban migration, received much more attention during this period. The subject of international migration and the role it played in the history of many countries in the region was little discussed until the 1970s. Since then, Asians participated in different types of international migration: as permanent settlers, contract workers, refugees, brides, students, unauthorized migrants, or trafficked persons. This diversity is important to acknowledge because different types of migration imply different modes of inclusion of migrants in their home and destination countries, which in turn, have implications for migrant empowerment.

Permanent Migration

In terms of permanent migration, Asia is a source region of immigrants to the traditional countries of settlement: US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Prior to the 1970s, all four countries had policies that restricted the admission of non-Europeans. In the case of the United States, one notable exception was the Philippines, which was a US territory. Hence, Filipinos were admitted to the US as nationals (not citizens) until 1934, after which an annual quota of 50 immigrants from the Philippines was imposed.

Changes in the immigration policies of the countries of settlement resulted in the influx of Asians to these countries. The overhaul started with the United States in 1965, and the rest followed in the 1970s.

These reforms removed national origin (which privileged people Western European background) as a basis for admission and replaced it with family reunification, labor market needs and humanitarian considerations (in the case of refugee admissions). In all four countries of settlement, immigration from Asia increased and the region became the primary source of new immigrants. Specific Asian rank among the major origins of immigrants to countries of settlement (Table 1). The immigration reforms introduced a divide between the “old” (pre-1970s) and “new” (post-1970s) immigration – the latter included females (which improved the gender composition of Asian communities), they had more education, they were not confined to agriculture or service jobs, they could bring their families with them, they could settle and could become citizens of their adopted countries.

The refugee crisis following the political changes in Indochina in the 1970s was another significant factor in the increase of Asian immigration to receiving countries. More than three million people left Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia at the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, an episode marked by images of “boat people” in search of safer shores. Between 1975 and the end of the Comprehensive Plan of Action in 1997, about 2.5 million were resettled in other countries, with the US receiving over a million refugees; some 0.5 million returned home (Castles and Millers, 2003:172).

The winds of change also extended to the treatment of immigrants. The assimilation model of immigrant integration, which requires immigrants to conform to the standards of the dominant group or the majority, gave way to multiculturalism, which respects and values cultural diversity in a multiethnic society. This milieu was later reinforced by globalization processes, particularly the vast improvements in communications technology and transport, which facilitate contacts with the home country as well as with co-nationals in other parts of the world. The internet and cell phones are particularly revolutionary, enabling immediate and borderless connections with people around the globe. Compared with earlier cohorts of migrants, present-day “permanent migrants” have greater possibility to sustain their transnational links. Some states have adapted to this new reality by granting dual citizenship.

Labor Migration; Skilled Migration

The oil crisis of 1973 started the migration of Asian workers to the oil-rich countries of the Middle East. With their petrodollars, the Gulf countries – Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates – recruited Asian workers on a two-year contract to carry out their infrastructure projects. South Korea, the Philippines and Thailand, along with South Asian countries – Bangladesh, India and Pakistan – sent their nationals, mostly men, to work on construction projects. When Indonesia and Sri Lanka entered the scene, they were just in time to catch the emerging demand for foreign domestic workers; henceforth, these two countries became the primary sources of domestic workers in the Gulf. The Philippines also obtained a significant share of the domestic work sector. The recruitment of foreign domestic workers contributed to the feminization of migration in the Gulf countries, as did the demand for various kinds of workers: health personnel, clerks, salesworkers, cleaners and other professional and service workers. Other countries in the Middle East – Lebanon, Jordan and Israel – also became labor importing countries. Although labor migration was designed to be temporary, the Gulf region continues to rely migrant workers to run its industries, businesses, services and households. All the Gulf countries are concerned about dependence on foreign workers, demographic imbalance in some countries, and rising unemployment. These factors prompted the Gulf countries to move towards nationalizing their work force. Among the labor sending countries, South Korea is the only one that has stopped sending its workers abroad.

In the 1980s, job opportunities in the newly industrialized countries of East and Southeast Asia compensated for the decline in employment prospects in the Middle East (in part because of the completion of the construction projects; in part because of the drop in oil prices in the 1980s). Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore,

South Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia and Thailand sought workers mostly from within the region, setting off high levels of cross-border flows and intraregional migration, both legal and unauthorized (Table 2).

Like the receiving countries in the Gulf region, those in East and Southeast Asia also adopted a no-settlement, temporary labor migration policy. To ensure that workers do not settle, this migration regime limits migrant workers' stay to two-year contracts;³ it does not allow workers to transfer sectors or employers; and it does not allow family reunification (some receiving countries do not allow marriage with locals; in the case of women migrants, those found pregnant are repatriated). Much like the experience of the Gulf countries, temporary labor migration has not stopped and has instead resulted in the formation and consolidation of migration systems (Figure 1):

- *East Asia migration system.* With the exception of China, East Asia is mostly a receiving region of workers from the rest of Asia. China also deploys its nationals for overseas work in line with government- or private company-contracts for construction projects. China is also the third largest source country of seafarers (Bernardi, 2006:3). In relation to China's huge population, the number of Chinese overseas workers represents a negligible proportion. The focus in China has been on internal migration which involves a floating population estimated to be between 80 million and 150 million. The more prominent issues about international migration from China are related to trafficking in human beings; more recently, the government's initiatives in promoting the return of overseas trained Chinese has received some attention.

Japan, Taiwan and South Korea are among the largest and attractive labor markets in Asia. Among the three, Taiwan was the first to formulate a labor migration policy in 1992; South Korea in 2003; while Japan insists on not admitting less skilled migrant workers. To manage labor migration, Taiwan limits the recruitment of workers to Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam and Mongolia and has a single-entry policy, i.e., migrants can work up to six years, and are not allowed to return thereafter. Japan and South Korea draw workers from Asia and beyond. Japan admitted less skilled workers through the trainee program; the admission of *Nikkeijin*, the descendants of former Japanese migrants to Latin America; allowing foreign students to work part-time; and the use of unauthorized migrants. Japan is the major receiving country of entertainers until 2004, when it implemented stricter entry requirements for entertainers as a means to curb the trafficking in women. Confronted with labor shortage in the 1990s, Korea followed Japan's lead and introduced the trainee system instead of putting in place a system for recruiting workers. The trainee system gave rise to many irregularities that resulted in trainees running away, thereby becoming unauthorized workers. In the process, Korea ended up with more unauthorized workers than legal ones. Finally, a law was passed in 2003 that introduced the Employment Permit System (EPS) in 2004 – EPS is a system of bringing in migrant workers to Korea and granting them the same rights as local workers (i.e., the rights to equality of wages, to form unions, collective bargaining, to strike, national pension).

- *Southeast Asia migration systems.* Southeast Asia includes sending countries (Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, Burma, Cambodia, and Laos), receiving countries (Singapore and Brunei), and countries that are both sending and receiving (Malaysia and Thailand). Singapore and Malaysia are the receiving countries in the Malay Peninsula (although Malaysia is a traditional source

³ Contracts may be renewed. In the case of Taiwan, migrant workers can renew their contracts but only up to a maximum of six years, after which cannot return for further employment.

country of workers for Singapore), Thailand is the hub in Mainland Southeast Asia, and Brunei and Sabah (East Malaysia) are the receiving destinations in the BIMPEAGA.⁴ Singapore and to some extent, Brunei, have managed to control unauthorized migration; in contrast, in Malaysia (including Sabah in East Malaysia) and Thailand, unauthorized migration is greater than legal migration. Unauthorized migration to Malaysia and Thailand is basically cross-border flows, dominated by nationals coming from contiguous countries – Indonesians in the case of West Malaysia; Filipinos in the case of Sabah (East Malaysia), Burmese (as well as Cambodians and Laotians) in the case of Thailand. Malaysia carried out repatriations in 2002 and 2004-2005; in addition, raids and crackdowns, documents checks are routinely implemented in its efforts to “get rid” of unauthorized migrants.⁵ In 2004, Thailand implemented a registration system aimed at regularizing the status of unauthorized migrants and to provide them better protection. Historical/ cultural links and shared borders override immigration restrictions in these neighboring countries; in many ways, the movements are cross-border flows. Also, demand-side factors cannot be discounted.

Of the sending countries in the region, the Philippines has the most comprehensive bureaucratic structure and legal mechanisms to facilitate the deployment of workers on the one hand, and to protect migrant workers’ rights on the other. Indonesia has adopted some of the policies and programs of the Philippines, but high levels of unauthorized migration and cases of abuse against migrants indicate a relatively weak regulatory system. Both the Philippines and Indonesia are two of three countries in Asia (the other one is Sri Lanka) where women comprise the majority of migrant workers legally deployed every year. Both countries have recently pegged a target of deploying one million workers annually. A new player in labor export, Vietnam aims to increase its labor deployment to more destinations in the near future. Migration from Burma, Cambodia and Laos is directed at Thailand; it is mostly unauthorized migration. As a sending country, most of Malaysia’s migrants are concentrated in Singapore. In the case of Thailand, it resumed its labor export policy after the economic crisis of 1997.

Although skilled migration is smaller in scale compared with the migration of less skilled workers, this is a component that will increase in the future. Receiving countries in the region hope to attract back their skilled nationals who are based abroad; in addition, they offer attractive packages to entice other nationals to boost their pool of needed skills and expertise. Sending countries in the region are also looking forward to sending more of their skilled and professional nationals abroad. Skilled migrants are not only less likely to encounter problems; their higher earnings also mean more remittances. The loss of skilled personnel, however, may have detrimental impacts on the development prospects of the sending countries.

While legal migration is relatively codified in the region, unauthorized migration is substantial and country variations are significant. Among the receiving countries, the problem is most serious for Malaysia, Thailand and South Korea, while it is relatively under control in Singapore, Brunei, Hong Kong, Japan and Taiwan. In the case of unauthorized migration in Southeast Asia, unauthorized cross-border flows between Indonesia and Malaysia, between Mindanao, Philippines and Sabah, Malaysia, and between Burma and Thailand are more regional migration for which the rules of international migration may not be applicable (Battistella and Asis, 2003). The concern with unauthorized migration, specifically, trafficking in persons, has served as an occasion to initiate regional discussions on migration. This has assumed more urgency in the

⁴ BIMPEAGA stands for Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines- East ASEAN Growth Area.

⁵ According to Hugo (2003:3 as cited in Asis, 2005:26), undocumented migration to Asia is the second largest after the undocumented flow from Mexico to the US.”

fight against terrorism. Unfortunately, the presumed link between unauthorized migration and terrorism has led to measures that strengthen border control, surveillance, crackdowns and similar measures. The need to address unauthorized migration is understandable, but framing the fight against unauthorized migration in relation to the fight against terrorism breeds a climate of mistrust and hostility against migrants. In framing migrants as potential terrorists, it is easy to disregard the rights of migrants, especially the rights of unauthorized migrants and trafficked persons.

Other Movements

The new prosperity of Asian countries has also increased self-funded students migrating to foreign countries to further their studies. Student migration may be a prelude to other migrations in the future. Some destination countries, such as Australia, are looking at foreign students who have acquired an education from their own institutions as possible skilled immigrants. The non-return of students to their home countries is a loss of skilled human resources.

There has been a rise in international marriages in the region, alongside the rise of other forms of mobility. Before the 1970s, Asia was a source of brides for western men. With the emergence of intraregional migration, international marriages not only increased but also modified the pairings: international marriages now involve women from less developing countries in Asia (also the source countries of migrant workers) and the more developed men from Japan, Taiwan, and Korea. Migration, thus, is also proving to be a solution to the shortage of brides in these countries. Although Japan, Taiwan and Korea have a view of their societies as “homogeneous,” the most dramatic increase in international marriages have occurred in these three East Asian countries and are challenging their societies to be multicultural. International marriages have contributed to female migration. They have stoked many concerns because of the probable links to trafficking (such as the trafficking of Vietnamese women as brides to Chinese farmers). The involvement of brokers, the use of marriage as a ploy to recruit women into the sex industry or forced labor, and the use of marriage to gain entry and/or residence in another country have raised concerns about the authenticity of these marriages and the safety of women.

Lastly, refugee movements did not end with the conclusion of the Indochinese refugee crisis. Other refugee migrations of varying duration and scale occurred in the region between the 1970s and the present – from Western Mindanao (Philippines) to Sabah (Malaysia), from Burma to Thailand and Bangladesh, from Cambodia to Thailand, from Vietnam to Cambodia (in the case of the Montagnards), from North Korea to China, and from Southern Thailand to Malaysia. For these groups, resettlement, especially to Western countries, was no longer a viable solution.

THE PHILIPPINES: A SUCCESS STORY?

A cursory look at the economic-demographic profile of the Philippines provides a partial explanation as to why international migration has become prominent in this part of the world (Table 3). With a population of 85 million in 2005, the Philippines has lagged behind the fall in growth rates among the middle-income countries in Asia. The country has a young population – with a median age of 21.4 years – which implies the challenge of generating jobs for the growing numbers of new entrants in an ever contracting labor market. Generating domestic employment is tough because the Philippines is not a favored destination of foreign investors, largely because of perceptions of political instability. It is also not poor enough to receive official development assistance. In this impasse, overseas employment presents an opportunity to generate jobs and to boost the country’s foreign reserves. With a relatively young and educated population, equipped with some facility in the English language, Filipinos embody the characteristics associated with migrants.

The continuing migration of Filipinos for more than three decades has ensconced migration as a national as well as family strategy for survival and mobility (Table 4). The scale, diversity and spread of international migration from the Philippines speak of a country and a people that have grown quite at home with mobility. As of December 2004, an estimated 8.1 million Filipinos were living and/or working in close to 200 countries or territories (Table 5). Overall, about a third of overseas Filipinos are in the US. The overseas Filipino population – comprising 3.2 million permanent migrants, 3.6 temporary migrants (the so-called overseas Filipino workers or OFWs) and 1.3 million unauthorized migrants – represents about 10 percent of the country's population. Compared with other Asian migrants, Filipino migrants consist of workers of various skills, equally involves women and men, and they are more widely dispersed throughout the world. As global workers, Filipinos have carved niches in domestic work, seafaring (25 percent of the world's seafarers are from the Philippines), and nursing (between 70 and 85 percent of Filipino nursing graduates work abroad). In addition, many more Filipinos who remain at home are thinking of going abroad. A nationwide survey of adult Filipinos conducted in 2005 revealed increasing numbers of Filipinos – 26 percent in July, 33 percent in October – agreeing with the statement, "If it were only possible, I would migrate to another country and live there." Even children also have plans to work abroad someday. In a nationwide survey of children in the ages 10-12 years old, 47 percent said they had plans of working abroad someday; the percentage is higher, 60 percent, among the children of migrants (ECMI/AOS-Manila, SMC and OWWA, 2004).

Migrants' remittances have contributed much to the economy, the reason why overseas Filipino workers have been hailed as the country's new heroes (*bagong bayani*). In 2005, remittances reached an all-time high of US\$10.5 billion dollars (Table 6). Since these are private transfers, families and households are the ones who directly benefit from remittances. Typical uses of remittances include the purchase of land, construction or renovation of houses, underwriting the education of family members, especially children, starting small businesses, the purchase of consumer durables, and savings. A large chunk of remittances from women migrants are spent on daily needs (Aasis, 2001). Findings from studies confirm that remittances translate into better material conditions for migrants' families. A recent nationwide survey among young children, 10-12 years old, found more children of migrants reporting home ownership and ownership of consumer durables compared to children of non-migrants (ECMI/AOS-Manila, SMC and OWWA, 2004). The impact of remittances beyond the family is less clear, although there are recent studies which suggest the development potentials of collective remittances and the contributions of overseas Filipinos (Opiniano, 2005; Maas, 2005; www.filipinodiasporagiving.com). At the least, the transfer of resources by overseas Filipinos to the homeland are contributing to local development.

International Migration in Filipino History

For most of the 20th century, i.e., until the 1970s, the United States was the primary destination of Filipinos who ventured in international migration. As a US territory, Filipinos were considered US nationals (not citizens), hence their migration to the US before World War II was internal migration.⁶ This "special relationship" facilitated the migration of Filipino workers to the US. The first batch of Filipino workers arrived in Hawaii on 20 December 1906.⁷ Many more Filipinos were recruited as agricultural workers in subsequent years.

⁶ The Philippines was ceded by Spain to the United States at the conclusion of the Spanish-American War. Under the Treaty of Paris, signed between Spain and the US on 10 December 1898, the US acquired the Philippines from Spain for US\$20 million.

⁷ 2006 marks the centennial of Filipino migration to Hawaii. The year-long commemoration was launched in December 2005 and will be capped by a conference to be held in Honolulu on 13-17 December 2006.

And from Hawaii, many later migrated to the Pacific West Coast and lived like birds of passage, following the rhythm of the agricultural calendar. In the summers, they went to work in the canneries of Alaska; on off-seasons, they worked as dishwashers and waiters and other odd jobs. Some 120,000-150,000 Filipinos arrived in the US between 1906 and 1934, with the majority based in Hawaii. There were workers who returned to the Philippines. Those who remained in the US built communities made up largely of bachelors, the so-called “manongs” (“manong” is a term in several Filipino languages that is used to refer to an older brother).

The experience of discrimination and brutal racism by Filipinos in the United States was a far cry from the “benevolent assimilation” that the US government sought to project in the Philippines. While Filipinos were exempted from entry restrictions on Asian immigration to the US, their inclusion in American society was severely restricted by policies such as anti-miscegenation laws, withholding of US citizenship, and restrictions on land ownership, that Asians struggled with. As workers, Filipinos toiled for low wages under punishing conditions. In this hostile environment, it is not surprising that Filipinos became part of labor movements to improve their working and living conditions.

Following the 1934 Tydings-McDuffie Act, which promised independence to the Philippines in ten years’ time, Philippine-born Filipinos were declared aliens, and were subjected to an immigration quota of 50 persons per year. The depression and later World War II temporarily halted Filipino immigration to the US. After the war, Hawaii resumed the recruitment of Filipino workers. Other Filipino arrivals to the US consisted of recruits for the US navy and war brides. Immigration reforms introduced in 1965 altered the nature and characteristics of Filipino migration. From labor migration, Filipino immigration to the US transformed into settler migration, with all the rights associated with such migration.

There was some labor migration from the Philippines to other destinations in the period following World War II, such as the men who went to work in Borneo’s lumber industry, the seafarers who plied the world’s oceans, the musicians who played in Asia’s major cities, the seamstresses who went to the Netherlands, chambermaids in the United Kingdom and nurses in Germany. The numbers then did not hint that migration would become huge and significant in the years to come.

The Importance of the 1970s

The Philippines’ entry into global migration in the 1970s was quite unexpected. Just the decade before, it was regarded as a rising star in Asia, poised to join the league of more developed countries in the coming years. The country’s democratic foundation and economic momentum were shaken by the imposition of martial law in 1972 by then President Ferdinand Marcos in order to create the “New Society.” The martial law regime, from 1972 to 1981, was a defining period in Philippine history. Crony capitalism, i.e., the undue advantage enjoyed by his cronies and supporters, and corruption at all levels, destroyed the presumption of a level playing field. The divide between the rich and poor widened and the once-promising economy started its downward spiral. It must also be recalled that the 1970s was the start of economic restructuring; the debt service payments imposed by the IMF and the World Bank exacted a punishing toll on the lives of ordinary Filipinos. Domestically, political and economic factors created conditions that pushed people out; externally, immigration reforms and the demand for workers in the more developed economies enhanced the possibility of international migration. Permanent migration and labor migration took off since then.

From the 1970s, large numbers of Filipinos were admitted as immigrants either as family members or as needed workers/professionals in the traditional countries of settlement. In the US, Canada and Australia, the Philippines emerged among the top 10 countries of origin of new immigrants. In the 1970s, these “typical” emigrants were joined by political figures opposed to Marcos who went into exile. An unknown number of middle-class Filipinos, anxious about their future in the country, also joined the exiles to secure better pros-

pects abroad. These flights were mostly to the United States. A reprise of exile migration (and the flight of the middle class) occurred following the assassination of Benigno Aquino, Jr. on 21 August 1983, himself a short-term exile in the United States. Those who left the country during these critical periods were somehow seen as jumping ship (Vergara, 1996; Aguilar, 1999), a view that contrasted sharply with the celebration of the overseas contract workers (OCWs) as the new heroes.

The martial law period also had a hand in triggering refugee migration from Mindanao. Calls for the secession of Mindanao, the region where the Muslim population is concentrated, escalated after the killing of Muslim draftees who refused to attack Sandakan, Sabah (Malaysia) on 18 March 1968.⁸ The Marcos government responded to demands for self-governance by sending more troops to quell the Mindanao conflict. The confrontation between the Moro National Liberation Front or MNLF (led by Nur Misuari) and government forces in 1974 resulted in the burning of Jolo, the capital of Sulu province and the MNLF's stronghold. The incident resulted in massive displacement; thousands sought refuge in Sabah (Asis, 2005; Abubakar, 1999). Although Malaysia is not a signatory to the UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, it acknowledged those who fled to Sabah as refugees. The welcome changed by the late 1970s, when Sabah became more cautious of refugee arrivals, suspecting later arrivals as economic refugees. Sabah has since implemented more punitive measures to check unauthorized migration from the Philippines, including regular deportations (Asis, 2005). Meanwhile, a peace agreement between the government and the MNLF was signed in 1996, resulting in the establishment of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). The establishment of ARMM (which consists of five provinces: Basilan, Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Sulu and Taw-Tawi) did not bring about lasting peace in Mindanao. Clashes between government troops and Muslim groups (including the extremist group, Abu Sayyaf) continue and have resulted not only in massive internal displacement but also protracted displacement – some communities have been caught up in displacements for as long as 35 years (see Canuday, 2006).

Finally, it was also during the time of martial law when the Philippines launched its overseas employment program. The Labor Code of the Philippines (Presidential Decree or PD 442) was promulgated in 1974, and among others, it provided for the creation of the Overseas Employment Development Board and the National Seamen Board “to promote the overseas employment of Filipinos and to secure for them the best possible terms and conditions of employment” (Abella, 1978:24). This prospect was inspired by Korea's experience in securing lucrative job contracts in infrastructure projects, which not only exported its workers, but also Korean know-how, Korean-made construction materials and Korean shipping. Thus, OEDB and NSB were also envisioned to develop along the same lines, i.e., to find jobs for Filipinos abroad and to promote Filipino products and know-how as well (Abella, 1978:29-30). As detailed below, the program succeeded in finding jobs for Filipinos abroad, but was less successful in meeting the other hoped-for outcomes.

Labor Migration

The rise of the Philippines as the world's primary source of workers did not happen by chance. The state had a major hand in the development of the program, as evidenced by the process of institutionalizing the program. Over the years, however, other stakeholders – migrant-oriented NGOs, the migration industry, and migrants' associations – played a role in shaping migration-related policies, approaches and discourses.

Between the 1970s and the present, the trends and patterns of labor migration have changed significantly, mostly in the direction of expansion and diversity.

⁸ The Jabidhah massacre, as this episode came to be known, continues to be commemorated by the Muslim population. The massacre represents human rights violations against the Bangsamoro people, which is one of the reasons for their continuing demand for self-governance.

- In the 1970s, it was predominantly male migration, and the destinations were mostly the Gulf countries.⁹
- By the 1980s, the labor demand in the Middle East changed (in part because of the completion of infrastructure projects) and declined (on account of the drop in oil prices in the early 1980s). With a ready pool of skilled workers, the Philippines was able to meet the new demand for human resources in the Gulf – doctors, nurses, health/medical personnel, salesworkers, clerks, domestic workers and others.

At this time, the newly industrializing countries in East and Southeast Asia were approaching full employment and were experiencing labor shortages in some sectors – plantation/agriculture, manufacturing, construction – as well as care workers in families and households. Labor migration in Asia, thus, proceeded along gendered lines, with male migration responding to labor shortages in 3-D sectors, while female migration specifically responds to the shortage of care or reproductive workers. These new destinations contributed to the feminization of labor migration from the Philippines, fueled by the demand for domestic workers in Hong Kong, Malaysia (at least, West Malaysia), Singapore, and later, Taiwan, and by the need for entertainers in Japan. Women are the majority of Filipino migrants in these areas – in Hong Kong, for example, more than 90 percent of Filipino migrants are women. Domestic work also provides employment opportunities for Filipino women in the Middle East countries, in North America, and in Spain, Italy, Greece and France in Europe.

The participation of women in international migration was met with much concern because of their concentration in domestic work and entertainment, which are unprotected sectors. The departure of women also generated fears about the how the families left behind will manage, especially the care of children. Reports of abuses against domestic workers and entertainers, however, have not curbed female migration.

- The 1990s intensified the feminization of labor migration from the Philippines. By 1992, women outnumbered men among the new hires deployed for the year, and the trend has been irreversible since. Increasing demand for domestic workers boosted female migration. Taiwan and South Korea emerged as new destinations for Filipino workers. Both countries offered women migrants the possibility to work in manufacturing. Israel was another new destination, where the labor market is mainly for caregivers. In the latter part of the 1990s, nurse migration resurfaced as a growth area, of which the UK emerged as a major destination. Aside from nurses, ICT workers and teachers were also part of the highly skilled and professional migrants who left the country.
- In the new millennium, the demand for domestic workers and nurses continue. Entertainer migration registered a notable decline in 2005, following the introduction of more stringent requirements by Japan in 2004. South Korea is becoming a new destination for entertainers, although the scale of entertainer migration there is smaller compared to Japan.

⁹ In the 1970s, Filipino women started migrating to Hong Kong, Italy, Spain and Greece where they found employment as domestic workers. This migration was less visible because it was spontaneous in contrast to the state-managed migration to the Middle East (Asis, 2005).

The upward trend in international migration, both for the less skilled and the highly skilled, is expected to continue in the foreseeable future. Nurses will be an important part of skilled migration for more years to come in view of the enormous demand for health care workers as more developed countries confront their “demographic winter.” The key challenge for the Philippines is how to keep overseas employment as an option without turning it into the main employment-generation strategy for the country and for Filipino families, and without getting stuck into the role of labor supplier with all the vulnerabilities that such a position implies.

Policies and Institutional Developments

It is no coincidence that the world’s major source country of workers and immigrants also happens to have an extensive bureaucracy and legal and institutional instruments governing the international migration of its people. The Philippines is also probably unmatched in the region in terms of acknowledging the significance of the Filipino diaspora in the nation’s life. Presidential state visits to countries with sizable Filipino populations typically include the promotion of the welfare of overseas Filipinos with the host government and the president touching base with Filipino expatriates. An editorial on the recent visit (7-10 May 2006) of President Macapagal-Arroyo to Saudi Arabia, home to about a million OFWs, comments on the import of the visit and what it reveals about the grim side of Filipino migration:¹⁰

[...] She got to meet and greet Filipino workers, and following her home was the first batch among hundreds of Filipinos languishing in Saudi jails.¹¹ On that score alone, her trip was worth it, and deserves the nation’s appreciation. Still, the President’s efforts placed a spotlight on the tragic side of the overseas Filipino worker (OFW) experience. And the question is what sort of follow up will there be [...]

Many public events are dedicated to commemorate the diaspora. These include: the first Sunday of Lent is National Migrants Sunday (a special day designated by the Catholic Church in the Philippines to remember in prayer migrants and their families; this was introduced in 1987), June 7 is Migrant Workers Day (a government-inspired commemoration of the signing of the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipino Act in 1995); Seafarers Sunday (held in the last Sunday of September), spearheaded by the Apostleship of the Sea-Manila, pays tribute to seafarers; this commemoration is spearheaded by the Apostleship of the Sea-Manila); December is the month of overseas Filipinos (as provided by Proclamation 276, signed by President Corazon Aquino on 21 June 1988), and December 18 is International Migrants Day (an initiative of migrant NGOs, which started in the Philippines in 1997 and which was later adopted by the United Nations). These commemorations usually include bestowing awards on individual Filipinos and organizations for exemplary contributions to fellow Filipinos and/or to the country.

In terms of legislation, the Philippines’ concern and interest with the Filipino diaspora has translated into the passage of laws and ratifications of international instruments. The laws may be classified into those that promote the protection of Filipino nationals, and those which expand the political rights and inclusion of overseas-based Filipinos.

- The Philippines is the first sending country in Asia to come up with a law, the Migrant Workers and

¹⁰ “A Politician’s Gift,” Editorial, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 12 May 2006, accessed on 13 May 2006.

¹¹ Pres. Arroyo was able to secure the pardon of some 500 OFWs in jail.

Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995 (Republic Act or RA 8042), for the specific purpose of protecting the overseas migrant population at all stages of migration.¹² Following are some key provisions aimed at protecting migrants from pre-departure to their return to the Philippines:

- limiting the deployment of workers to countries that ensure protection, and banning deployment if necessary;
 - imposing stiff penalties for illegal recruiters, including legal recruiters committing irregular practices;¹³
 - free legal assistance and witness protection program for victims of illegal recruitment;
 - providing support and assistance to overseas Filipino, whether legal or in an unauthorized situation;
 - establishing the protection of Filipino migrant workers and the promotion of their welfare as the priority concern of the Secretary of Foreign Affairs and the Philippines Foreign Service Posts
 - establishing the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Resource Centers in countries where there are many Filipinos
 - creating the Office of the Undersecretary of Migrant Workers Affairs and the Legal Assistance Fund
 - institution of advisory/information, repatriation and reintegration services.
- The Philippines is one of the few countries in the region that has a law, the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003, which establishes policies and institutional mechanisms to provide support to trafficked persons.
 - The Philippines is one of 34 countries worldwide (as of October 2005) that has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, and the Trafficking Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children.
 - In addition to extending and strengthening the protection of the overseas Filipino population, the government went a step further by granting overseas Filipinos the right to vote. The Absentee Voting Act of 2003 (RA 9189)¹⁴ grants qualified overseas Filipinos to vote in the national elections (president, vice-president, senators and party-list representative). Some 364,000 overseas-based Filipinos registered, of whom 65 percent (233,092) cast their votes in the May 2004 elections. Interestingly, Filipinos based in the Middle East and Africa and Asia-Pacific, i.e., overwhelmingly migrant workers, accounted for 86 percent of all registered overseas Filipinos; the Filipinos in the Americas made up 4 percent of the total registered. More than half (54 percent) of the election boards were comprised of members of Filipino communities abroad.¹⁵

¹² The title of RA 8042 is “An act to institute the policies of overseas employment and establish a higher standard of protection and promotion of the welfare of migrant workers, their families and overseas Filipinos in distress, and for other purposes.” It was signed into law on 7 June 1995, just months after the execution of Flor Contemplacion in Singapore in March 1995. Contemplacion was a domestic worker for the death of her Singaporean ward and another Filipina, Delia Maga.

¹³ This provision is being challenged by the recruitment agencies. Also, the recruitment agencies are pushing for the deregulation of labor migration, which will make overseas employment a matter between the worker and employer. Both amendments are being opposed by the NGO sector.

¹⁴ The title of the law is “An act providing for a system of overseas absentee voting by qualified citizens of the Philippines abroad, appropriating funds therefore and for other purposes.” It was signed into law on 13 February 2003, after more than a decade of lobbying.

¹⁵ Data on registered and actual voters are from www.dfa.gov.ph/news/pr/pr2006/budget/2005/oavdual.pdf, accessed on 30 April 2006.

- Another step to extend the state to overseas-based Filipinos was the enactment of the Philippine Citizenship and Retention Act of 2003 (RA 9225),¹⁶ which grants Filipinos who have acquired another citizenship the right to reacquire or retain their Filipino citizenship. As of December 2005, some 14,600 applications for dual citizenship have been approved, of which 37.1 percent were from the Americas (including Guam).¹⁷ This law suggests that as far as the state is concerned, emigrants are no less of a Filipino as those who stayed.

Although there are existing laws, policies and programs, enforcement and implementation are another matter. Thus, there is much room for improvement, especially when it comes to reintegration programs. The next section describes the key government agencies engaged with permanent migrants and the OFWs, the two major groups of the diaspora.

Permanent Migrants

The Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) is the government agency tasked to promote the interests and well-being of Filipino emigrants and permanent residents abroad (see www.cfo.gov.ph). CFO was established in 1980 by virtue of Batas Pambansa 79. It took on the functions of the Office of Emigrant Affairs, which was set up in 1978 to provide services specifically to emigrants; in addition, CFO was also tasked to formulate recommendations to promote the welfare and interests of Filipinos overseas. CFO used to be under the Department of Foreign Affairs; it was transferred under the Office of the President in 2004.

Among its services to emigrants is a range of orientation and educational programs. Since 1981, departing emigrants register with CFO (which is an input to the data base on emigrants) and attend a pre-departure orientation seminar to prepare them for settlement abroad. Young Filipino emigrants in the ages 13-19 attend peer counseling. A guidance and counseling program was specifically designed for women migrating abroad as fiancées or as spouses of foreign nationals; the program does not only tackle general issues concerning settlement in a new country but also the realities and challenges of cross-cultural marriages.¹⁸

CFO's current programs and services include initiatives aimed at nurturing the ties between emigrants and the Philippines. Under the cluster, Filipino Education and Heritage are programs such as the Lakbay Aral ("Travel Study") and Lakbayan, which are tours to the Philippines intended to promote an appreciation of Filipino culture and history, particularly younger generations of Filipinos; the teaching of Filipino language; and the establishment and management of Philippine Schools Overseas.¹⁹ CFO also actively promotes the sharing of resources by overseas Filipinos – transfer of knowledge, technology, and capital – to support development projects in the country. Towards this end, LINKAPIL Program (Lingkod sa Kapwa Pilipino – Service to Fellow Filipinos), also known as Link for Philippine Development, was developed in 1989 to serve as a mechanism for tapping the potentials of Filipinos based abroad as partners for development-related projects in health, education, livelihood projects, small infrastructure projects in the Philippines. As partners, overseas Filipinos contribute by way of financial contributions, donations, or grants and subsidies (www.cfo.gov.ph/linkapil.htm). CFO serves to link potential donors and projects that need support, facilitates the transfer of support,

¹⁶ The title is "An act making the citizenship of Philippine citizens who acquired foreign citizenship permanent, amending for the purpose Commonwealth Act No. 53, as amended and for other purposes." It was signed into law on 29 August 2003.

¹⁷ Data on applications for dual citizenship are from www.dfa.gov.ph/news/pr/pr2006/budget/2005/oavdual.pdf, accessed on 30 April 2006.

¹⁸ The implementation of this program has been transferred to an NGO, with CFO serving to monitor the program.

¹⁹ As of January 2006, there were 39 Philippine Schools established in various countries where there are large concentrations of Filipino workers. These schools provide education to Filipino children based on the standards of the Department of Education (Dep-Ed). Following Dep-Ed's curriculum, the children attending these schools can be easily reintegrated in the Philippine educational system upon their return to the country (www.cfo.gov.ph/philschools.html).

and monitors how the donations have been used. To facilitate the matching of donations with the needs of communities in the Philippines, CFO came up with Philippine Sectoral Development and Needs Profiling System (PhilNeed). It contains information on the needs identified in the different localities in the Philippines, how to make donations, and a listing of government schools, schools and NGOs accredited by the Department of Social Welfare and Development, which need support (www.cfo.gov.ph/philneed.htm).

Among its new projects, CFO is involved in lobbying the US government for the following causes: equity rights for Filipino veterans who served in World War II, permanent residency to some 30,000-52,000 Amerasian children (children fathered by American soldiers),²⁰ the portability of Medicare benefits (in support of Filipinos in the US who wish to retire in the Philippines), and inclusion of the Philippines as a testing center for the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN).²¹

Overseas Filipino Workers

Several government agencies are involved in the labor migration program: the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA). OWWA and POEA are attached agencies of the Labor Department. The main tasks and functions of these agencies are summarized below:

- POEA was created in 1982 “to promote and monitor the overseas employment of Filipino workers.” Its functions were expanded and defined with the reorganization in 1987 and the passage of the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995. POEA evolved out of two separate units under the Ministry of Labor and Employment, the Overseas Employment Development Board (which handled land-based workers) and the National Seamen Board (which dealt with seafarers). POEA is the agency which deals with licensing and regulation of recruitment and placement agencies, handles adjudications related to recruitment violations, and processes the documents, contracts and work permits of departing Filipino workers. POEA is also responsible for finding markets for Filipino workers and the placement of workers in government-to-government hiring.
- OWWA evolved out of the WelfareFund, which was established in 1977. OWWA takes care of the welfare of OFWs and the families left behind. It is responsible for the Overseas Filipinos Resource Centers which are established in countries where there are large populations of overseas Filipinos. OWWA fields welfare officers to major destination countries to assist OFWs with welfare-related problems and provides assistance in repatriating workers. Recently, OWWA took over the workers’ education program of POEA, which includes managing and implementing the pre-departure orientation seminars for departing workers. OWWA is the main agency responsible for reintegration programs.
- Aside from its involvement with the program through POEA and OWWA, DOLE fields labor

²⁰ In 1982, the US Congress passes Public Law 97-359, which gave preferential treatment to Amerasians born in Korea, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand. Amerasians born in the Philippines were not included.

²¹ The Philippine Nurses Association of America, Inc. sought the support of the government to lobby for the Philippines to be included as a testing center for NCLEX. Presently, Filipino job applicants have to travel to another country to take the examination. The lobbying for this issue is based on two considerations: majority of NCLEX takers are from the Philippines, and to lighten the costs of taking the examination on Filipino nurses.

attaches to Philippine missions abroad; 34 Philippine Overseas Labor Offices (POLOs) are present in various regions. POLOs provide assistance on employment-related matters and undertakes labor market studies in their areas of jurisdiction.

- The DFA represents the face of the government to overseas Filipinos. The migration of Filipino workers has substantially redefined the mission of DFA. As stated in the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipino Act of 1995, “The protection of the Filipino migrant workers and the promotion of their welfare, in particular, and the protection of the dignity and fundamental rights and freedoms of the Filipinos abroad, in general, shall be the high priority concerns of the Secretary of Foreign Affairs and the Philippine Foreign Service Posts” (Sec. 72).

To carry out this mandate, the Migrant Workers Act also provides for the establishment of the country-team approach in Philippine missions (Sec.28), “Under the country-team approach, all officers, representatives and personnel of the Philippine government posted abroad regardless of their mother agencies shall, on a per country basis, act as one country-team with a mission under the leadership of the ambassador ...” A specific office under the DFA, the Office of the Undersecretary of Migrant Workers Affairs (OUMWA) provides legal and repatriation assistance to overseas Filipinos in distress.

The state started out with a market orientation to labor migration, i.e., to promote the overseas employment of Filipino workers to solve domestic problems. As labor migration expanded, reports of abuses against workers multiplied – illegal recruitment, exorbitant placement fees, contract substitution, delay or nonpayment of wages, inhumane working and living conditions. As the labor market increasingly became a buyers’ market, and with the participation of women in labor migration, it became clear that the state had to address the welfare dimensions of labor migration. The advocacy and conscientization work staged by migrant-oriented NGOs played an important role in raising the issue of workers’ protection and holding the state accountable for the welfare of its people. Early on in the program, rampant reports of illegal recruitment and irregular practices prompted the state to prohibit the participation of recruitment agencies. However, because of the huge demand for workers in the Middle East, the state had no choice but to turn to the private sector. As a solution, recruitment agencies were allowed to engage in recruitment and job placement, but with the state playing a regulatory role (Asis, 1992).

As labor migration expanded, the need for labor protection increasingly took on an important part of state policies, although the NGO sector’s view is that the state should be doing more for its nationals abroad. The enactment of the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995 (RA 8042) is important for what it signified rather than for what it attempted to achieve. Prior to RA 8042, there were policies and programs to promote the protection of Filipino workers, including the initiatives of migrant-oriented NGOs and Church-based organizations in the Philippines and in countries of destination. The passage of this law was fast-tracked in response to the national outrage in the wake of the Contemplacion tragedy (see footnote 12). Many Filipinos believed she was innocent and faulted the Philippine government for not doing enough to protect her and OFWs in general. A decade later, in July 2004, the Philippines had to deal with a similar situation when a truck driver, Angelo dela Cruz, was taken hostage in Iraq. The kidnappers demanded the pull out of the Philippine contingent or death to Angelo dela Cruz. The sentiment in the Philippines was to save the life of Angelo dela Cruz. The US position was no concession to the kidnappers. In the end, President Arroyo decided to pull out the Philippine troops – to the disfavor of the US. As she explained:

Why was Angelo de la Cruz saved? Because I stuck to my oath. Since I first became president in 2001, my declared foreign policy has been to protect the vital interests of the nation, including our eight million overseas Filipinos. And I cannot apologize for being a protector of my people. The difference of a few weeks, for a pullout already decided on, could not justify sacrifice of a human

life. Sacrificing Angelo de la Cruz would have been a pointless provocation; it would put the lives of a million and a half Filipinos in the Middle East at risk, by making them part of the war.²²

Although RA 8042 has some fundamental limitations and conflicting provisions,²³ it establishes the protection of the Filipino migrant worker as a foremost priority. As Sec. 2(a) states, “In the pursuit of an independent foreign policy and while considering national sovereignty, territorial integrity, national interest and the right to self-determination paramount in its relations with other states, the State shall, at all times, uphold the dignity of its citizens whether in [the] country or overseas, in general, and Filipino migrant workers, in particular.” RA 8042 also provides in Sec 2(c) that 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 anytime, be compromised or violated.” In line with this protection thrust, the law provides that “As soon as practicable, the government shall deploy and/or allow the deployment only to skilled Filipino workers” [Sec 2(g)]. An important provision is the extension of legal assistance to overseas Filipinos and migrant workers, both documented *and* undocumented [Sec 2(e)].

The assumptions of RA 8042 of better economic prospects which will reduce emigration pressures did not come to pass. Just two years later, with the onset of the economic crisis in Asia, the state had to ask migrant workers to hold on to their jobs because of bleaker prospects at home. Deployment levels after the crisis continued to increase, and large numbers of less skilled workers – contrary to the intent of the law – continued to leave for overseas employment. In calls to amend problematic provisions of RA 8042, there are some sectors that are calling for amending the provision that labor migration is not part of the state’s development strategy. The target to send a million workers every year (ca. 2001) is an unprecedented policy and a clear departure from Sec 2 (c) of RA 8042. This target is also mentioned in the Medium Term Development Plan (2006-2010). In the annual reports of the POEA for the years 2001-2004, the following statements of Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas seem to suggest that labor migration is no longer just a temporary measure:

I think you have to redefine just exactly what are in business for. We used to be primarily concerned with welfare. I think in most of the countries of the world, while welfare continues to be a vital concern, the standard for taking care of the well-being of our compatriots have significantly improved. *What we probably need now is a greater focus on marketing* [italics added] and how to ensure that the deployment of our workers can be done faster, better, and at the least cost to them. We probably also ought to set the ground rules for being able to meet market demands very quickly (Annual Report, POEA, 2001:1).

Last January 9, 2002, during the Corporate Planning of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, I hurled a challenge to POEA to re-examine the overseas employment program in the light of changes that are happening in the world and to redefine just what exactly it is in business for. I also emphasize greater focus on marketing and how to ensure that the deployment of our workers can be done faster, better and at the least cost to them (Annual Report, POEA, 2002:1).

²² Excerpted from President Arroyo’s State of the Nation Address, <http://www.op.gov.ph/speeches.asp?iid=568&iyear=2004&imonth=7>, accessed on 8 August 2004. Two other Filipinos were abducted after Angelo dela Cruz. Angelito Nayan, a Filipino diplomat who volunteered to help in the conduct of the elections in Afghanistan was abducted in Kabul on 28 October; Roberto Tarongoy, an accountant, was kidnapped in Iraq on 1 November. As of this writing, both Nayan and Tarongoy have been released.

²³ For details on conflicting provisions, see Battistella (1998) and PMRW (2003).

Far-reaching implications have been drawn from the frank and objective assessment of the role of overseas workers in the global economic order. An immediate offshoot of this assessment is the radical shift in the perspective of policy makers who used to regards labor migration as a temporary solution to the low employment rate in the domestic labor market, but who now recognize that remittances “*help alleviate poverty, spur investment and cushion the impact of worldwide recession when private capital dries up*” [sic] (Annual Report, POEA, 2003:1).

As labor migration remains a dominant fixture in the global economic landscape, we need to constantly review our policies and procedures to make them attuned to the rapid changes in the international environment. Indeed, if we have to keep our position as the *world’s top supplier of quality labor* [sic] and ensure our hold on both the traditional and emerging countries of destination for Filipino workers, we need to maintain a strong and health partnership with the private sector, as well as with other government agencies involved in the employment of Filipinos overseas (POEA, 2004:1)

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION, MIGRANT EMPOWERMENT AND DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS

One of the conclusions that came out of the report of the 2005 Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM) is that the development benefits of migration have yet to be fully harnessed. The Philippines is a good example of a country with extensive migration experience which needs “to forge this linkage between migration and development” (GCIM, 2005:24). It is a success story in terms of becoming the primary source of workers and skills for the world’s labor market. The Philippines can also be adjudged successful in developing good practices to promote migrant empowerment – and the fact that Filipino migrant workers tend to be better protected than other Asian migrants also deserves some mention. As to whether these successes also translate to better development prospects is less evident, or the outcomes are mixed.

The momentum for more migration is certainly great and the Philippines may be “typecast” into filling the role of producer of workers for the world. Going abroad has been woven into the life plans of ordinary Filipinos. Even young children are interested to work abroad, and are inclined to choose courses that would prepare them for the global labor market (ECMI/AOS-Manila, SMC and OWWA, 2004). Young adults are also on the lookout for job prospects abroad, regardless of their family’s migration background (Asis, 2006b).

The nursing example illustrates the thorny issue of respecting personal decisions and dealing with social impacts. The renewed demand for nurses is finding its way into the choices individuals and families make about education. Nursing programs have proliferated in response to increased demand. An interesting development is the phenomenon of “second courses,” i.e., those who have completed a university education who are taking up nursing as a second course to increase their chances of working abroad. The case of doctors enrolling in nursing programs highlights the lengths that people will go through to be able to work abroad.

If left unchecked, these trends may result in the Philippines having an oversupply of nurses, who may end up unemployed. The glut in the number of maritime graduates is one sad example: the POEA has registered about 550,000 seafarers, but at least 300,000 are waiting for the opportunity to land a job (Bernardi, 2005:4). Another possible consequence is that the proliferation of nursing programs may result in sub-standard training, resulting in half-baked graduates who may not be able to pass the licensure examination. The more successful ones get to leave, but when they do, their personal decisions can have repercussions on the larger society. In the case of nurses’ migration, there have been reports of provincial hospitals or rural clinics closing down or on the verge of a shut-down because of the departure of nurses. The large numbers of nurses leaving the country has revived discussions on how to stem this migration, including imposing compulsory service. At the same time, the government is also lobbying with the US to include the Philippines as a testing center for NCLEX.

Similar discussions have also cropped up in relation to pilots and airline mechanics who are being pirated by foreign airlines (Flores, 2006). On the one hand, there are calls to impose a moratorium on the departure of these skilled professionals, but on the other hand, there is also the recognition of the right of individuals to seek jobs abroad. A short-term solution that the Department of Labor and Employment came up with is to require departing workers to inform their employers six months ahead instead of one month. This will delay the departure of prospective migrants for some time, but they will eventually leave.

It is clear that the Philippines will have to go beyond a labor deployment orientation in its approach to international migration. Trends in labor and skilled migration have to be considered in relation to a national human resources development plan, and appropriate actions must be developed to address present and future needs. Career or vocational guidance in high schools needs to be strengthened to help young people make choices about careers and life plans. Scholarship programs or subsidies may be offered to students taking up courses or training that are in short supply. Corollary to this is the monitoring of academic and training institutions to ensure that they do provide quality education.

The state will also need to explore prospects for cooperating on development projects in engaging with receiving countries that draw on workers and skilled personnel from the Philippines.

In relation to its diaspora population, the Philippines should continue and build on the good practices it has initiated in the area of migrant protection. Cooperation with migrant-oriented NGOs, faith-based organizations, and migrants' associations must be sought and strengthened. More studies are needed on how migrants' associations are formed (or disbanded), their transnational links to the home country, how they can be partners in development, and how the state and its institutions can play a more positive role in the transfer of contributions from overseas Filipinos to the country. The Philippines can also benefit in learning how other sending countries engage with their diaspora to bring about development in the home country – Mexico's *tres por uno* model of cooperation with migrant and government counterparts, Taiwan's success in reversing the brain drain, and other examples may offer some insights on possibilities and fresh approaches.

REFERENCES

- Abella, Manolo
 1995 "Asian Labour Migration: Past, Present and future," *ASEAN Economic Bulletin*, 12(2): 125-138.
 1978 "Labor Administration and Development in the Philippines," *Philippine Labor Review*, 3(2):21-50.
 Abubakar, Carmen
 1999 "MNLH Hijrah: 1974-1996," *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 8(1-2):209-221.
 Aguilar, Filomeno Jr.
 2000 "Nationhood and Transborder Labor Migrations: The Late Twentieth Century from a Late Nineteenth Century Perspective," *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 9(2):171-198.
 Asis, Maruja
 2006 "The Philippines' Culture of Migration," Migration Information Source, www.migrationinformation.org/Resources/philippines.cfm, accessed 10 April 2006.
 2005a "Recent Trends in International Migration in Asia and the Pacific," *Asia-Pacific Population Journal*, 20(3):15-38.
 2005b "Caring for the World: Filipino Domestic Workers Gone Global." In *Asian Women as Transnational Domestic Workers*. Edited by Shirlena Huang, Brenda S.A. Yeoh and Noor Abdul Rahman. Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Academic.
 2005c "The Filipinos in Sabah: Unauthorised, Unwanted and Unprotected." In *Migration and Health in Asia*. Edited by Santosh Jatrana, Mika Toyota and Brenda S.A. Yeoh. London and New York: Routledge.

- 2004 "Unwrapping the *Balikbayan Box*: Overseas Filipinos and the Homeland." Paper presented at the International Conference on State-Diaspora Relations, Mexico City, October 2004.
- 2001 "The Return Migration of Filipino Women Migrants: Home But Not for Good?" In *Female Labour Migration in South-East Asia*. Edited by Christina Wille and Basia Passl. Bangkok: Asian Research Centre for Migration, Chulalongkorn University.
- Battistella, Graziano
1995 "Philippine Overseas Labour: From Export to Management," *ASEAN Economic Bulletin*, 12(2): 257-274.
- Bernardi, Savino
2006 "The Pastoral Care of Seafarers." In *Exodus Series: A Resource Guide for the Migrant Ministry in Asia*. Edited by Fabio Baggio. Quezon City: Scalabrini Migration Center.
- Canuday, Jewel
2006 "The Power of the Displaced," *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 15(1): 115-136.
- Castles, Stephen and Mark Miller
2003 *The Age of Migration*. 3rd Edition. New York and London: The Guilford Press.
- Commission on Filipinos Overseas
2002 *Handbook for Filipinos Overseas*. Manila: Commission on Filipinos Overseas.
- Episcopal Commission on Migrants and Itinerant People/Apostleship of the Sea-Manila, Scalabrini Migration Center and Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (ECMI/AOS-Manila, SMC and OWWA)
2004 *Hearts Apart: Migration in the Eyes of Filipino Children*, www.smc.org/ph/heartsapart.html.
- Flores, Alena Mae S.
2006 "Pilots' Exodus Endangering RP Aviation Industry?," *Manila Standard Today*, 22 March 2006, www.manilastandardonline.com/?page=business02_mar22_2006, accessed on 28 April 2006.
- Hugo, Graeme
2003 "Migration and Development: A Perspective from Asia." No. 14, IOM Research Series. Geneva: International Organization for Migration.
- Philippine Migrants Rights Watch (PMRW)
2003 *The Rights of Filipino Migrants*. Manila: Philippine Migrants Rights Watch.
- Philippine Overseas Employment Administration
n.d. *Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995 (Republic Act No. 8042 and Its Implementing Rules and Regulations)*. Mandaluyong City: Philippine Overseas Employment Administration.

TABLE 1
Top 10 Countries of Origin of Immigrants to Australia, Canada and the United States

	Australia, 2002		Canada, 2000		United States, 2003
1	United Kingdom	1	China (exc. Taiwan)	1	Mexico
2	New Zealand	2	India	2	India
3	China (exc. Taiwan)	3	Pakistan	3	Philippines
4	India	4	Philippines	4	China (exc. Taiwan)
5	South Africa	5	South Korea	5	El Salvador
6	Philippines	6	Sri Lanak	6	Dominican Republic
7	Indonesia	7	United States	7	Vietnam
8	Iraq	8	Iran	8	Colombia
9	Sudan	9	Yugoslavia	9	Guatemala
10	Malaysia	10	United Kingdom	10	Russia

TABLE 2
Stock of Foreign Workers in Receiving Countries in East and Southeast Asia, Most Recent Year

Country	Legal [Year]	Unauthorized [Year]	Total	Source(s)
Southeast Asia				
Brunei	150000	na	150000	Asian Migration News,
	[2004]		[2004]	30/09/04
Malaysia	1470000	400000	1870000	cited in Bloomberg, 2005;
		(other ests: 300,000;		Asian Migration News,
		500,000)		15/04/05; 31/03/05
Singapore	621000	na	612000	cited in Orozco (2005)
Thailand	1269074	400000	1669074	Asian Migration News,
	[2004]	[2004]	[2004]	15/05/05
		800000		Country statement of
East Asia				Thailand (2005)
Hong Kong	340000	na	340000	cited in Orozco (2005)
Japan	1973747	219428	2193175	2004 figure is cited in
	[2004]	[2003]	[2003/2004]	Migration News, n.d.
				Ministry of Justice cited
				in Iguchi (2005)
	870000		1089428	Estimate by Iguchi (2005)
	[2003]		[2003]	
South Korea	179000	199000	378000	Migration News (2005)
	[April 2005]	[April 2005]	[April 2005]	
Taiwan	312664	16000	328664	
	[Nov 2004]	[Nov 2004]	[Nov 2004]	
TOTAL	6315485	1234428	7549913	
	5211738	1634428	6846166	

Notes: For Japan, the legal figure refers to the registered foreign population; the shaded figure is based on Iguchi's (2005) of estimate of foreign worrkers; the unauthorized figures refer to overstayers. For Taiwan, the unauthorized migrants refer to absconders. The shaded figures represent alternative estimates.

TABLE 3
Overseas Filipino Population

A. Stock of Overseas Filipino Population, Dec 2004					
	Region/Country	Permanent	Temporary	Irregular	Total
	World Total	3,187,386	3,599,257	1,296,972	8,083,815
	Americas/Trust Terr.	2,689,722	292,892	549,725	3,632,339
	United States	2,272,933	101,249	350,000	2,723,182
	Asia, West	2,312	1,449,031	112,750	1,564,093
	Saudi Arabia	243	976,134	18,000	994,377
	Asia, East & South	91,901	1,005,609	443,343	
	Japan	83,303	238,522	31,428	353,253
	Europe	174,387	506,997	143,035	824,419
	Italy	4,934	85,527	48,000	138,461
	Oceania	228,946	57,357	36,978	317,281
	Australia	211,664	930	2,900	215,494
	Africa	318	58,369	17,141	75,828
	Seabased Workers		229,002		229,002
B. Top Ten Destinations of Land-based OFWs					
(Deployment, 2005)					
Rank					
1	Saudi Arabia	193,991			
2	Hong Kong	94,553			
3	United Arab Emirates	81,707			
4	Taiwan	46,714			
5	Japan	42,486			
6	Kuwait	40,248			
7	Qatar	31,418			
8	Singapore	27,599			
9	Italy	21,261			
10	United Kingdom	16,799			
	Total, Landbased	733,970			

TABLE 4
Annual Deployment of Filipino Workers, 1975-2004*

Year	Land-based	Sea-based	Total
1975	12501	23534	36035
1976	19221	28614	47835
1977	36676	33699	70375
1978	50961	37280	88241
1979	92519	44818	137337
1980	157394	57196	214590
1981	210936	55307	266243
1982	250115	64169	314284
1983	380263	53594	434207
1984	300378	50604	350982
1985	320494	52290	372784
1986	323517	54697	378214
1987	382229	67042	449271
1988	385117	85913	471030
1989	355346	103280	458626
1990	334883	111212	446095
1991	489260	125759	615019
1992	549655	136806	686461
1993	550872	145758	696030
1994	564031	154376	718407
1995	488173	165401	653574
1996	484653	175469	660122
1997	559227	188469	747696
1998	638343	193300	831643
1999	640331	196689	837020
2000	662648	198324	841628
2001	662648	204951	867599
2002	682315	209593	891908
2003	651938	216031	867969
2004	704586	229002	933588
2005	733,970	247,707	981677

*Figures for 1975 to 1983 refer to number of contracts processed; figures for 1984 to 2004 refer to number of workers deployed abroad. Sources: Table 5 (Battistella, 1995:265) for figures from 1975 to 1983; www.poea.gov.ph/doc/DeployedOFWsByDestination1998.2003.xls for figures from 1983 to 2003; and [www.poea.gov.ph/AR2004 AnnualReports/ar2004.pdf](http://www.poea.gov.ph/AR2004%20AnnualReports/ar2004.pdf) for 2004 data. Internet sources were accessed on 12 September 2005.