

**Philippines' Submission of the Voluntary National Review**

For the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

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*Being primarily a country of origin, the Philippines is home to over 10 million overseas Filipinos and overseas Filipino workers, dubbed as OFWs. This diaspora of Filipino communities has prompted the country to ensure that Filipino migrants are safe and protected in all stages of migration.*

*Prior to the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), the Philippines has already put in place institutional efforts in response to the needs of its migrants. Policies, programs, and projects were crafted as the Philippines recognizes the tremendous contribution of our OFWs and Filipino migrants in the development of the country. With the adoption of GCM in 2018, the Philippines has seen a significant improvement in its services to migrants. Various migration-related services of the government, private sector, and civil society have been amplified, streamlined, and further developed to provide an all-encompassing approach throughout the migration process.*

*The GCM now serves as one of the main frameworks of the Philippines in its efforts for the protection of the rights of migrants and promotion of their welfare. It has proven to be a valuable framework, even in times of crisis, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic when thousands of migrants from all over the world are adversely affected. The Philippines remains steadfast in pursuing its commitments to the GCM for the rights and welfare of its migrants and for the improvement of migration governance in the country and internationally.*

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## 1. Ensuring that migration is voluntary, orderly, and regular

### GCM Objectives:

- 2 Minimize the adverse drivers and structural factors that compel people to leave their country of origin
- 5 Enhance availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration
- 6 Facilitate fair and ethical recruitment and safeguard conditions that ensure decent work
- 12 Strengthen certainty and predictability in migration procedures for appropriate screening, assessment and referral
- 18 Invest in skills development and facilitate mutual recognition of skills, qualifications and competencies

**a. Please highlight migration levels and trends, including drivers (if possible), and migrant experiences relevant to this cluster of objectives. The response could make reference to trends in migration; outcomes of migration; or migrant experiences.**

- **The Philippines' Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employment have been recovering from the impact of the pandemic – reducing structural factors that may compel people to leave.** Migration in the Philippines is largely driven by economic conditions or the need for higher paying jobs that are available overseas. Economic recovery and the increase in employment are seen as core drivers in reducing the structural factors to minimize adverse drivers of migration in the Philippines.

As the Philippines continues to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and is now reopening its local economy, domestic employment has been consistently rising. Its GDP posted a growth of 7.7 percent in the fourth quarter of 2021, resulting in 5.6 percent full-year growth in 2021.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, the Philippines recorded its lowest unemployment rate at 6.5 percent in November 2021<sup>2</sup> since the start of the pandemic in April 2020.

- **Annual deployment has not returned to pre-pandemic level and has been declining in the past two years.** Prior to the pandemic (2009-2019), the Philippines on average deploys 1,836,329 OFWs annually. Deployment was reduced to 549,841 in 2020, which is a 70.06 percent decline from the annual average, as a result of the contraction of the global economy, uncertainty, and mobility restrictions. In 2021, the number of OFWs deployed reached 742,796. While this is still half of the pre-pandemic average, this indicates signs of recovery and registers an increase of 35 percent compared to the prior year.

<sup>1</sup> Based on the National Accounts of the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA)

<sup>2</sup> Based on the Labor Force Survey of the PSA

Meanwhile, of those employed, 15 percent experienced involuntary work arrangements<sup>3</sup>, with majority reporting that someone else held their identification documents to keep them from leaving; some took up employment not according to the provisions of the work contract or agreed terms; and others experienced restricted communication with family and friends.<sup>4</sup>

**b. Please highlight the concrete policy, legal, and programmatic actions taken by your government to advance these objectives in recent years (in particular since the adoption of the GCM on 10 December 2018). Examples could include policy reforms undertaken, adoption of new laws, drafting of national-level implementation plans, entering into bilateral/regional agreements, signature/ratification of relevant conventions, and engagement in dialogue processes.**

- **The Philippines has been participating in international forums and negotiating with host countries in ensuring decent work for Filipino migrants and creating regular pathways for migration.** Since the consultation and negotiation phases of the GCM, the Philippines has been very vocal in its advocacy to abolish the *Khafala*<sup>5</sup> system existing mostly in the Middle East region. The following are the key developments in movement to abolish *Khafala* in the context of GCM:
  - On 13 August 2018, the Philippines and the Kingdom of Bahrain signed an agreement wherein both agreed to develop and formulate a standard contract to reflect both countries' efforts to lower recruitment costs, uphold fair and ethical recruitment policies as well as safeguard conditions that ensure decent work and protect migrant workers against exploitation and abuse. This happened almost a month after the final text of the GCM was adopted during the July and last plenary session of the GCM negotiations at the UN Headquarters in New York. This agreement was on top of the working arrangements with Bahrain for the Philippine support for its flexible visa program that allowed formerly undocumented or those in irregular status to secure work visa and attain regular status in Bahrain.
  - The government of Qatar has started introducing reforms to the *Khafala* system in September 2018. Qatar has introduced reforms to abolish exit visas for migrant workers by end of 2019. The Philippines, through the DFA, held a series of joint committee meetings with Qatar's Ministry of Labor Administrative Development, Labor and Social Affairs for the better protection of OFWs in Qatar. The Philippines also negotiated for the inclusion of the domestic workers sector in its policy of non-requirement of exit visa for departing migrant workers.
  - In March 2020, the Philippines has partnered with UAE to pilot test the Abu Dhabi Dialogue Comprehensive Information and Orientation Program focusing on domestic work and service

<sup>3</sup>Involuntary work arrangements are negative work conditions that are not result of the workers' own actions, and that workers neither expected nor acceded voluntarily. This is based on the 2018 National Migration Survey.

<sup>4</sup>National Migration Survey 2018. <https://psa.gov.ph/content/national-migration-survey>

<sup>5</sup>Under this system, a prospective migrant worker is sponsored by a *Khafeel* (usually the prospective employer) to enter the country and work through providing substantial amount of money (usually to pay for deployment cost charged by the recruitment agency). This allows the *Khafeels* to take advantage and view migrant workers as properties rather than as employees, leading to labor contract violations and abuses.

sectors. The Program will provide the migrant worker with information on their rights and responsibilities and psychologically prepare them on the changes they would encounter in working abroad.

- Prior to the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF), the Philippine Undersecretary for Migrant Workers' Affairs (UMWA) from the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) was elected as Chair in the first *Asia-Pacific Regional Review of the Implementation of the Global Compact for Migration* in March 2021. UMWA led the UN Member States and stakeholders in Asia Pacific in discussing human rights protection of migrants and the contribution they make in attaining sustainable development. At the sidelines of the Regional Review, DFA organized the virtual forum entitled "Labor Mobility and Human Rights: Examining Migrant Labor Governance in the Middle East in the Context of the GCM" together with Bahrain, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Regional Office in Asia Pacific, IOM Missions in the Philippines and Bahrain, and Migrant Forum in Asia.
- Building on the above side event, DFA prepared another virtual forum in April 2021 with the same topic and team, but now taking into account the labor migration reforms of Saudi Arabia. The forum was graced by the participation and support of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte and Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro L. Locsin, Jr.
- **Over the last three years, a number of bilateral arrangements were signed to ensure the protection and well-being of OFWs.** As of March 2022, the Philippines has signed 54 bilateral labor agreements (BLAs) and five regional/multilateral agreements. Of these, five countries (Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and UAE) have BLAs with the Philippines as well as specific agreements for the deployment and protection of domestic countries. Israel has specific agreements with the Philippines for the recruitment and deployment of caregivers and hotel workers through a government-to-government arrangement.

Seven countries have agreements for the deployment of workers through a government-to-government arrangement with the Philippines, as follows: China, Germany, Israel, Japan, Korea, Taiwan and Canada (Yukon). Deployments of workers to other countries with pre-existing BLAs are through private recruitment agencies (PRAs).

Meanwhile, regional and international multilateral agreements include those with the ASEAN, Europe, Canada, and the UN. Programmed BLAs for review and negotiations in 2020 include those with Morocco, Russia, Thailand, Seychelles, Micronesia, Suriname, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Trinidad and Tobago, Portugal, Canada, Taiwan, Solomon Islands, and Switzerland as well as Memorandums of Agreements (MOAs)/Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) on labor cooperation with Seychelles, Micronesia, and Turkey.

- **Mutual recognition of skills, qualifications, and competencies were pursued.** The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) Onsite Assessment Program provides free onsite assessment and certification in the host country of the OFW. This Program aims to empower OFWs by upgrading their skills from vulnerable jobs and providing better employment and income opportunities. The Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) signed a MOA with TESDA in May 2019 to collaborate in assisting OFWs and their families in availing services and benefits provided by TESDA. Mutual recognition of skills, qualifications, and competencies were put in place, especially in the tourism and logistics sectors which are among the sectors that were largely affected by the pandemic.

- **The Philippines is a signatory to seven ASEAN Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs).** Through the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), the Philippines has signed MRAs for nursing services, medical and dental practitioners, accountancy services, surveying, and architectural and engineering services. Complementary to these MRAs are the development of roadmaps for implementation for dental, medical, and nursing services and practice standards for dental services.

**c. What are the main gaps identified and challenges faced in addressing these objectives?** *These gaps and challenges may include challenges at national, regional and global levels; capacity challenges; data needs; financing and others.*

- **Challenges in safety and regularization of pathways remains.** At the global level, the main challenges are restriction in regularization pathways or avenues to convert status of migrants once they are in the host country. At the national level, the Philippines is grappling with the presence of illegal recruitment schemes and inadequate information sharing to facilitate assistance to OFs. On the latter, issues on funding, systems compatibility, and privacy concerns are some of the other challenges.
- **Vaccine-brand preference of receiving countries stalled the deployment of OFWs.** Many migrant-receiving countries require entrants to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Some of these countries also require that entrants be inoculated only by specific vaccine brands.

**d. Please share some of the results of these actions, effective solutions, best practices, and lessons learned by your Government in implementing these objectives.**

- **The government is working with host countries to expand avenues for regularization of qualified undocumented OFs.** The Philippines has partnered with Bahrain in the issuance of a “flexible visa,” a work and residency permit valid for two years and renewable indefinitely. This visa was first made available to low-skilled, skilled, and professional migrants and was later expanded to household service workers (HSWs). For HSWs, the passport application fees were waived and the requirements were liberalized to expedite issuance of Philippine passports to qualified beneficiaries. Financial assistance for the payment of the flexible visa until its first renewal was also provided to enable HSWs to save money from the first month of their regular work. Since its launch in 2018, Bahrain’s flexible visa program has regularized approximately 1,000 Filipino migrant workers, mostly HSWs in irregular status.

In Malaysia, around 14,200 undocumented Filipinos were provided with Philippine passports that paved way for their successful application for regular status through the Philippine Embassy Special Consular Missions which started in April 2019.

- **Inoculation of OFWs was prioritized.** Accommodations were given to comply with the vaccine-brand preference of migrant-receiving countries. Even when the vaccine supply in the country was low, OFWs were among the priority sectors that received the vaccine. During this period, OFWs were allowed to choose the preferred/required vaccine brand of their destination country.

## 2. Protecting migrants through rights-based border governance measures

### GCM Objectives:

- 4 Ensure that all migrants have proof of legal identity and adequate documentation
- 8 Save lives and establish coordinated international efforts on missing migrants
- 9 Strengthen the transnational response to smuggling of migrants
- 10 Prevent, combat and eradicate trafficking in persons in the context of international migration
- 11 Manage borders in an integrated, secure and coordinated manner
- 13 Use migration detention only as a measure of last resort and work towards alternatives
- 21 Cooperate in facilitating safe and dignified return and readmission, as well as sustainable reintegration

**a. Please highlight migration levels and trends, including drivers (if possible), and migrant experiences relevant to this cluster of objectives.** *The response could make reference to trends in migration; outcomes of migration; or migrant experiences.*

- **Travel restrictions and other precautionary measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 reduced the number of foreign nationals employed in the Philippines.** For 2021, a total of 70,197 Alien Employment Permits (AEPs)<sup>6</sup> were issued by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) with 62.08 percent or 43,578 AEPs issued to foreign nationals in the Philippine Offshore Gaming Operations-related establishments nationwide. Chinese nationals continue to dominate the AEP issuance in 2021, comprising 64.90 percent of the total AEPs issued. AEPs in the Philippines were also issued to Vietnamese (6.93%), Japanese (4.58%), Koreans (3.82%), Indonesian (3.45%), Malaysians (3.08%), Taiwanese (2.74%), Indians (2.63%), Myanmar (1.52%), and Thai (0.97%). The other nationalities account for 5.36 percent of the total AEP issuance for 2021. The decrease in the 2020 issuance is mainly due to the continuing and changing travel restrictions, safety and health measures, and the imposition of community quarantines. This resulted to temporary closure of some industries and businesses and hindered the permit application of their foreign national employees.

**b. Please highlight the concrete policy, legal, and programmatic actions taken by your government to advance these objectives in recent years (in particular since the adoption of the GCM on 10 December 2018).** *Examples could include policy reforms undertaken, adoption of new laws, drafting of national-level implementation plans, entering into bilateral/ regional agreements, signature/ ratification of relevant conventions, engagement in dialogue processes.*

<sup>6</sup>An AEP is one of the permits and with corresponding visas issued to foreign nationals seeking employment in the country after a determination of the non-availability of a person in the Philippines who is competent, able and willing at the time of application to perform the services for which the alien is desired.

- **For international immigrants to the Philippines, the government continues to ease registration processes for foreign nationals and improve legal migration processes.** On 01 May 2019, the DOLE, Department of Justice (DOJ), Bureau of Immigration (BI), and Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) issued Joint Guidelines on the Issuance of Work and Employment Permits to Foreign Nationals to clarify and harmonize existing regulations on the issuance of appropriate permits to all foreign nationals who intend to work, perform specific activities and/or render services in the Philippines whether in the context of an employment arrangement or otherwise.

Further, to harmonize the regulations and policy guidelines governing the issuance of the authorities, permits and visas to foreign nationals intending to work in the Philippines, the DOJ, DFA, DOLE, BIR, PRC, Department of Finance (DOF), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA) issued Joint Memorandum Circular on the Rules and Procedures Governing Foreign Nationals Intending to Work in the Philippines on 11 July 2019.

Additionally, the BI launched the text (SMS) messaging scheme for foreign nationals applying for their Alien Certificate of Registration Identity Card to facilitate easier delivery of the card. The BI also began stricter enforcement of the Alien Registration Act which requires all registered foreign nationals to report to immigration offices. Such procedures which allow greater access to legal migration will contribute to securing the safety of foreign nationals in the country.

The BI provided guidelines for the issuance of visas for foreign nationals who intend to come to the Philippines to engage in long-term employment (i.e., more than 6 months) and employment in connection with foreign-funded government projects such as those in transportation and infrastructure.

In 2021, DOLE issued Department Order (DO) No. 221, series of 2021 or the Revised Rules and Regulations for the Issuance of Employment Permits to Foreign Nationals. The DO aims to tighten the conduct of labor market test, reduce the number of illegal foreign workers, and regulate tax evasion among undocumented workers.

- **Anti-trafficking measures have been vigorously enforced and trafficked victims were provided appropriate assistance.** The MOU between the Philippines and the United Arab Emirates on Cooperation in Combating Human Trafficking was signed on 26 September 2019 at the sidelines of the 74<sup>th</sup> United Nations General Assembly in New York City. Being the first trafficking agreement between the Philippines and a gulf member state, the MOU serves as a framework for cooperation on trafficking issues as it is governed by the countries' commitments to the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol).

Further, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) formulated the Recovery and Rehabilitation Programs for Trafficked Persons (RRPTP) which is a holistic package of services involving local government units (LGUs) that cater to trafficking issues from prevention to rehabilitation. To further build capacity at the local level, virtual write shops were conducted on the development of e-Learning materials for the implementation of the RRPTP. Meanwhile, DSWD's Alternative Parental Care Program for Children in Need of Special Protection (CNSP), especially the undocumented minors, facilitates birth registration/report of birth of these

children. Moreover, the DSWD facilitates the return of undocumented minors by providing authorized escorts to prevent the minors from being victims of trafficking.

- **Programs, policies, and guidelines were developed to augment and improve the delivery of social welfare and protective care services for trafficked persons.** For 2021, there is an increase in the number of victim witness coordinators (from 5 in 2020 to 8 in 2021) who ensure the provision of immediate needs and assistance to trafficked victims during court proceedings. Also, the *Tahanan Ng Inyong Pag-asa* (TIP) Center of the Inter-Agency Council against Trafficking (IACAT) is now being utilized for emergency and urgent referrals to provide temporary shelter for processing of trafficked victims while waiting for their COVID-19 test results, particularly those who were rescued by law enforcement agencies during the conduct of anti-trafficking operations. In 2021, the TIP Center assisted 482 possible trafficked victims, 83 of whom are minors. All of them were given temporary accommodation, food and security (24 hours/day), including the required COVID-19 swab test. Upon the release of the negative swab results, the victims were referred to the DSWD Centers or any accredited shelters for rehabilitation and reintegration processes.
- **Anti-Trafficking Task Forces were established to accelerate prosecution and conviction of traffickers and introduce policy reforms.** Some of the policy reforms that were undertaken include the Revised Manual on Prosecution of Trafficking in Persons Cases which will be launched in time for the World Day Against Trafficking on 30 July 2022 and the on-going amendments to “Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2012” or RA 10364 in order to address the current gaps.
- **Local manuals to prevent and address trafficking in persons were developed.** The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), as the monitoring arm on matters on trafficking in persons and mandated to further strengthen LGU’s capacity to effectively delivery basic services to their constituents, has developed the following manuals:
  - **Roadshow Manual of Anti-Trafficking in Persons and Violence against Women and Children.** The roadshow manual serves as an awareness raising and capacity building tool. It includes a learning session that is designed to surface existing notions of sex and gender for purposes of disentangling the concepts and enabling participants to better understand underpinning conceptual dynamics of gender-based violence.
  - **Operationalization Manual on Local Committees against Trafficking-in-Persons and Violence against Women and Children (LCAT VAWC).** The operationalization manual will guide local communities in the establishment and operations of LCAT VAWC.
  - **Manual on Anti-Trafficking Ordinance.** The manual on ATIP ordinance will provide local legislators and advocates with the tools to develop ATIP ordinance suitable for their communities. The Manual was developed through an Online Consultative Validation Write Shop where a zero draft of the Manual was presented to participants composed of experts in the field of Anti-Trafficking in Persons from the different government agencies and private organizations.
- **Mechanisms to harmonize and streamline the repatriation and reintegration of overseas Filipinos were instituted.** The Inter-Agency Medical Repatriation Assistance Program (IMRAP) was established in 2017 through a Joint Memorandum Circular to harmonize existing processes and procedures of various government agencies in assisting OFs who need to be repatriated for further medical care and attention. The Department of Health-Migrant Health Unit (DOH-MHU) acts as the central coordinating body for all medical repatriation cases from different referring agencies and maintains the database for medical repatriation.



Recognizing reintegration as a key aspect of the sustainable return of OFWs, the Comprehensive OFW Reintegration Program (CORP), an OWWA-National Reintegration Center for OFWs (NRCO) flagship program, was initiated to strengthen and harmonize the reintegration programs and services provided by various stakeholders. Since its approval, OWWA has been working for its full roll out. The CORP seeks to incorporate gender-responsive reintegration preparedness, initiate reintegration pathways, and harmonize reintegration programs of all government agencies and organizations to ensure a comprehensive approach to reintegration for all OFWs and their families.

The Women Entrepreneurs Reintegrated and Economically Active at Home or Women REACH program by the NRCO, in partnership with Coca Cola Philippines, empowers female OFW returnees economically by providing an integrated intervention composed of reintegration preparedness, entrepreneurship training, access to start-up assistance, access to microfinance, and access to a pool of business coaches in starting up alternative livelihood within the country. As of 2019, the program has produced 84 women OFW graduates in Kuwait, 51 women OFW graduates in Region III and NCR, 80 accredited trainers, and 9,000 OFW graduates linked to the TESDA-Coke STAR Program.<sup>7</sup>

The NRCO continuously provide livelihood assistance for reintegration by maintaining other programs such as the Livelihood Development Assistance Program and the *Balik Pinay! Balik Hanapbuhay!* Program.

**c. What are the main gaps identified and challenges faced in addressing these objectives?** *These gaps and challenges may include challenges at national, regional and global levels; capacity challenges; data needs; financing and others.*

- **Capacity to assist trafficking victims proves to be inadequate.** The Philippines remained in Tier One in the US Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report. However, the availability and quality of protection and assistance services for trafficking victims, particularly specialized shelter care, mental health services, access to employment training and job placement, and services for male victims need improvement. Likewise, technology-enabled platforms for information dissemination on trafficking issues as well as the capacity of LGUs in anti-trafficking conventions also need enhancement.

Moreover, although the Philippines fully meets the minimum standard for the elimination of trafficking, it has to increase its capacity to investigate, prosecute, and convict complicit officials and labor traffickers, and support for specialized protection and assistance services for child victims of cyber-facilitated sex trafficking. Community reintegration services, including trauma-informed care, employment training, and job placement for survivors also need further development.

- **Fund for repatriation assistance was depleted.** One of the major challenges for the DFA was the depletion of its Assistance-to-Nationals (ATN) Fund worth PHP 1 billion (approximately USD

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<sup>7</sup>The Sari-Sari Store Training and Access to Resources or STAR Program was developed by the Coca-Cola Company and the TESDA to help women retailers overcome the barriers they face to business success by providing them access to business skills and life skills training; access to business resources and assets; and access to peer mentoring support.

20.6 million) due to the unprecedented number of Filipinos who needed to be repatriated and distressed OFs in need of assistance due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**d. Please share some of the results of these actions, effective solutions, best practices and lessons learned by your Government in implementing these objectives.**

- **Fund augmentation was pursued to accommodate more repatriation of migrants.** In response to the DFA's call for additional funds for repatriation, the *Bayanihan to Recover as One Act – Part II* allocated PHP 820 million (approximately USD 16.9 million) for the ATN Fund. The augmentation in ATN's budget is a proof that despite the country's meager resources, the Philippine government prioritizes the safety and protection of migrant workers and ensures that corresponding funds are allocated to assist millions of Filipinos abroad, especially those who have been affected by the pandemic. To sustain funding of programs for ATN, the newly created Department of Migrant Workers will have the AKSYON Fund to provide financial resources for the legal, medical, financial, needs of OFs.
- **A national hotline is available for the prevention of human trafficking.** The Commission on Filipino Overseas (CFO) continues to operate the 1343 Actionline – the national hotline against human trafficking where clients can either call, e-mail, or report via social media. The CFO have received and responded to calls and cases involving sexual exploitation of children, domestic violence, and stranded overseas Filipinos. In 2020, IACAT 1343 Actionline received 55 case reports involving 31 identified victims.
- **Institutional arrangements are put in place.** Under the Joint Memorandum Circular on Medical Repatriation spearheaded by the DOH, the Social Welfare Attaches at the Philippine Embassies assist in DOH repatriation and refer the case to local DSWD offices to locate and assist the families for the reintegration of the OFs. The Circular stipulates the institutional arrangement at any given phase of the process – from departure of medical repatriate up to the point of destination.
- **Justice was served for two Filipino trafficking victims in Bahrain.** In April 2020, the Philippines successfully prosecuted perpetrators of human trafficking in Bahrain committed in 2019. In particular, five Filipino women, two Filipino men, and a Bahraini policeman were found guilty and sentenced to seven years of jail in Bahrain. The said case highlights the international collaboration of the Philippines and the Kingdom of Bahrain in combating human trafficking and addressing crimes concerning migrants. Additionally, the case was pursued even without a Multilateral Legal Assistance Treaty between the Philippines and Bahrain, which is a first of its kind as the international cooperation in seeking justice for trafficking victims.
- **Reports of trafficked Filipino women in Syria were also received in 2020.** They were all undocumented workers who ran away from their employers and were eventually sheltered at the Philippine Embassy in Damascus. With the filing of trafficking cases involving Filipino women in Syria, the Philippine Embassy in Syria received an unprecedented win for the first human trafficking case filed before the Damascus Court, making it a landmark judicial victory awarded by a Syrian Court in favor of Filipinos. The Syrian traffickers incurred a penalty of 500 thousand Syrian pounds, the highest amount ever meted out by a Syrian Court. Thus far in 2021, the DFA brought home 110 trafficked Filipinos from Syria, who were then assisted in filing criminal complaints against the traffickers both in the Philippines and in Syria.

### 3. Supporting the integration of migrants and their contribution to development

#### GCM Objectives:

- 14 Enhance consular protection, assistance and cooperation throughout the migration cycle
- 15 Provide access to basic services for migrants
- 16 Empower migrants and societies to realize full inclusion and social cohesion
- 19 Create conditions for migrants and diasporas to fully contribute to sustainable development in all countries
- 20 Promote faster, safer, and cheaper transfer of remittances and foster financial inclusion of migrants
- 22 Establish mechanisms for the portability of social security entitlements and earned benefits

a. **Please highlight migration levels and trends, including drivers (if possible), and migrant experiences relevant to this cluster of objectives.** *The response could make reference to trends in migration; outcomes of migration; or migrant experiences.*

- **Remittances rebound as economies reopen.** At the height of the border closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, remittances dipped from a monthly average of USD 2.5 billion in 2019 to USD 2.045 billion in April 2020. Since June 2021, monthly remittances from OFs have already been exceeding pre-pandemic levels. In September 2021, the Philippines received USD 2.736 billion from OF remittances which already exceeded the receipt compared to the same period in 2020. This is against the backdrop of global economies rebounding, borders reopening, and stronger demand for health care workers and allied health professionals globally.
- **Costs of sending remittances to the Philippines, measured by percent of amount remitted, have steadily declined from 2019 to 2021.** In particular, the cost of sending USD 200 from the United States to the Philippines has dropped from 4.67 percent in the third quarter of 2019 to 4.18 percent in the third quarter of 2021.<sup>8</sup> Over the same period, a similar trend was observed for the cost of sending remittances of the same amount in local currency units from Singapore (2.72% in 2019 to 2.51% in 2021) and Middle East countries (3.88% in 2019 to 2.86% in 2021). The downward trend in remittance costs is attributed to the increasing efficiencies and market competition brought about by the digitalization of financial services accelerated by the pandemic and innovations in Fintech.
- **There is an increase in the number of returning Filipino scientists.** Due to the institutionalization of *Balik Scientist* Program through the passage of the Republic Act (RA) 11035 known as the *Balik Scientist Act* in June 2018, there has been an increase in the number of returning Filipino Scientists. The program offers enhanced benefits and incentives to

<sup>8</sup>The World Bank, Remittance Prices Worldwide. [https://remittanceprices.worldbank.org/en/corridor/United-States/Philippines?order=field\\_cc1\\_total\\_cost\\_percent\\_cal&sort=asc#tab-1](https://remittanceprices.worldbank.org/en/corridor/United-States/Philippines?order=field_cc1_total_cost_percent_cal&sort=asc#tab-1)

encourage experts abroad to come and/or return to the country and share their expertise. There are about 242 Balik Scientists engaged since 2016.

**b. Please highlight the concrete policy, legal, and programmatic actions taken by your government to advance these objectives in recent years (in particular since the adoption of the GCM on 10 December 2018). Examples could include policy reforms undertaken, adoption of new laws, drafting of national-level implementation plans, entering into bilateral/ regional agreements, signature/ ratification of relevant conventions, engagement in dialogue processes.**

- **Social Welfare Attaches are now being deployed in Philippine Foreign Service Posts.** The Social Welfare Attaché Act or RA 11299 was signed in 2019, amending RA 8042. The said law mandates the DSWD to deploy social welfare attaches (SWAtts) at Posts to address the needs of OFs in distress. Moreover, the DSWD started its compendium on the good practices done by the SWAtts at the different posts and compilation of success stories of OFWs and their families served.
- **Access to government services was made easier for OFWs.** Five additional One Stop Service Centers for OFWs (OSSCO) and 343 additional OFW Helpdesks launched between 2017 and 2019 have improved the coverage of government services. The use of online systems for processing and registration has made government transactions more convenient for OFWs. Additionally, government transactions that cater to OFWs are simplified through the full rollout of online transactions such as in Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA). This includes e-Registration of OFWs and Seafarers; *Balik Manggagawa* Online for returning migrant workers; POEA Online Processing System; and further developing Online Direct Hire; Online Continuing Agency Education Program (CAEP); and Online Licensing and Legal Assistance. The government also provides online platforms for psychosocial intervention and psychological first aid to bring together trained professionals to address the psychological needs of OFs.
- **Access to services by OFs were further localized.** The DILG issued Memorandum Circular No. 2020-075 entitled, “Establishment of DILG Overseas Filipino Workers’ Desk and Designation of DILG-OFW Desk Officer at the Region”. Province, Highly Urbanized City (HUC), and Independent Component City (ICC)” directed all Regional Directors and Bangsamoro Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao Minister of Local Government to establish their respective OFW Desks. This will ensure that government services will be delivered and be more accessible for OFWs to immediately coordinate with local chief executives concerned, ensure that LGUs provide all necessary assistance to OFWs, and monitor the health status of concerned OFWs.
- **Initiatives to engage OFs in the country’s development were reinforced.** The *Lingkod sa Kapwa Pilipino* (LINKAPIL) program of the CFO continues to serve as a channel for the migrant Filipino diaspora to provide assistance to Filipinos at home. It facilitates the transfer of various forms of assistance from Filipinos or other donors overseas to support projects in livelihood/micro-enterprise development, education, health and welfare related activities, small-scale infrastructure as well as technology and skills transfer. The CFO acts as the principal conduit between OFs and the local beneficiaries, providing a coordinative support network among government agencies involved in the processing of donations from abroad. This also enables the establishment of close linkages with non-government agencies and identified beneficiaries at the local level.

From 2016 to 2021, PHP 2781.892 million worth of financial and material donations through the LINKAPIL benefited 318,585 individuals from 177 selected provinces, cities, and municipalities in the Philippines. In 2021, the CFO facilitated PHP 5.80 million donations to the Philippines that benefitted 5,088 individuals from 25 provinces.

Diaspora engagement is continually being expanded through wider localization of the CFO's BaLinkBayan portal. The one-stop online portal re-engages OFs to development-oriented diaspora initiatives in the Philippines and provides businesses and investment opportunities that are linked to automated transactional processes at LGUs.

From 2016-2021, the BaLinkBayan online portal was adopted by 36 cities, municipalities, and provinces in the Philippines and sealed partnerships with 3 Filipino associations overseas. It has also launched 32 localized portals. The partnership with LGUs were complemented with website management trainings, data gathering workshops, turnover of ICT equipment, and marketing and promotional activities.

- **Financial inclusion, literacy, and security of OFWs are likewise enhanced.** In 2019, the Philippines' Central Bank or the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), together with OWWA and BDO Foundation, forged a partnership to improve the financial literacy of OFWs and their families. Dubbed as PiTaKa or "*Pinansyal na Talino at Kaalaman*" (translated as financial intelligence and knowledge), this program aims to equip OFWs with the ability to better manage their remittances, get out of debt, set aside savings or make prudent investments in preparation for a better life when they return home to the Philippines. The BSP is developing standard financial education modules which will be included in the mandatory orientations that OFWs and their families are required to attend.

The BSP has completed a financial education module for use in Pre-Departure Orientation Seminars (PDOS) and has presented it to more than 600 trainers from OWWA-accredited PDOS providers. In turn, the module is expected to reach over 2.3 million land-based and sea-based OFWs. Standard modules are also being developed for Post Arrival Orientation Seminars (PAOS) and General Orientations for OFW Families. Meanwhile, the full rollout of the PiTaKa campaign would mean an outreach of around 10 million Filipinos living and working abroad. This figure does not yet account for their families in the Philippines. Learning modules, which include opening a bank account, developing saving habits, preparing a financial plan, and learning investment options, among others, are already available in the BSP website.<sup>9</sup>

In addition, other economic and financial literacy programs catering to OFs and their families include information-sharing on existing government-managed schemes such as the Social Security System (SSS) provident fund program, Personal Equity Retirement Account,<sup>10</sup> and the recently launched digital services of the Overseas Filipino Bank (OFBank), among others.

Moreover, the Currency Exchange Facility (CEF) program of the BSP provides liquidity assistance to OFs displaced by emergencies/conflicts in other countries. To date, eight CEFs have been implemented, the latest of which is a multi-currency CEF (Iraqi Dinar, Iranian Rial and Lebanese Pound) which was prompted by the repatriation of OFs affected by the US-Iran conflict

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<sup>9</sup>Financial Literacy Learning Modules. <http://www.bsp.gov.ph/multimedia/flcvids.asp>

<sup>10</sup>Personal Equity Retirement Account. [http://www.bsp.gov.ph/downloads/primers/PERA\\_FAQs.pdf](http://www.bsp.gov.ph/downloads/primers/PERA_FAQs.pdf)

(including those in Iraq) and public protests in Lebanon which occurred in late 2019.<sup>11</sup>

- **The Social Security Act of 2018 (RA 11199).** The Social Security Act covers all Filipinos including migrant workers and mandates entry into social security agreements (SSAs) with destination countries. Since the adoption of the GCM in December 2018, the Philippines entered into SSAs with Sweden and Luxembourg. The Philippines currently has a total of 15 SSAs with various countries. These are Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Quebec, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and UK (including Northern Ireland). These SSAs include the salient features on the (1) Equality of Treatment, (2) Export of Benefits, (3) Totalization of Insurance Periods, and (4) Mutual Administrative Assistance, ensuring the protection of social security rights and allowing portability of social security for persons covered in the Agreements.<sup>12</sup> In line with Objective No. 22 (Establish mechanisms for the portability of social security entitlements and earned benefits) of the GCM, the Social Security System (SSS) is committed to pursue the establishment of bilateral SSAs as this is an explicit provision of the Social Security Act of 2018.

**c. What are the main gaps identified and challenges faced in addressing these objectives?** *These gaps and challenges may include challenges at national, regional, and global levels; capacity challenges; data needs; financing and others.*

- **Presence/coverage of embassies is a challenge in terms of providing access to basic services for OFs.** This is due to geographic location of embassies and limited number of personnel abroad brought by mutual reciprocity rules<sup>13</sup> which remain as major challenges in ensuring consular protection.
- **Welfare officers at posts are inadequate.** Challenges to providing assistance and access to basic services to migrants include inadequate number of welfare officers at Philippine Foreign Service Posts to address OFW issues (currently at 1:25,000 ratio of welfare officer to OFWs), inadequate number of personnel in OFW helpdesks, and lack of readiness, inadequate capacity, and inactive involvement of LGUs in providing reintegration programs to returning OFWs.
- **Rules in host countries lessen investment opportunities.** Strict anti-money laundering (AML) rules of foreign government, especially in Europe, restrict OFs in engaging in investment opportunities in the Philippines. Likewise, issues on applicable taxes related to transfer of policies hinder investments of OFs in the Philippines. In general, the general lack of pathways to financial inclusion hinders investment opportunities abroad for OFs.
- **Active membership of OFWs is needed to secure social security benefits.** While the coverage of social security benefits has been expanded, challenges remain in pursuing active membership of OFWs through their continuous payment of premium contributions once deployed abroad. The portability of social security and health benefits, which currently requires cooperation with host government, also remains a major challenge.

<sup>11</sup>The facility was open to returning OFs from 8 January 2020. However, the covering Circular will be published once the COVID-19 community quarantine in various parts of the country is lifted. The CEF will then be available for four months starting from the effectivity date of the said Circular.

<sup>12</sup>Social Security Agreements. <https://www.sss.gov.ph/sss/appmanager/pages.jsp?page=SocSecAgreement>

<sup>13</sup>Mutual reciprocity rules mean that the number of consular officials abroad should be equivalent to the number of their country's personnel in Philippines, however, they do not intend to increase their number of personnel.

**d. Please share some of the results of these actions, effective solutions, best practices and lessons learned by your Government in implementing these objectives.**

- **The government has taken several safeguards to ensure the proper assistance, coordination, and protection of migrants, particularly in their countries of destination.** These measures include the DFA's ATN services,<sup>14</sup> Crisis Management Committee, the Overseas Preparedness and Response Team (OPRT),<sup>15</sup> OFW Help Facebook page, and the OFW Desks, among others.

Started in September 2019, the OFW Help Facebook page has over 50,000 followers having a cumulative reach of over 1 million Facebook users in the past few months. The OFW Help Facebook page provides a one-on-one interaction with the next of kins (NOKs) or the migrant workers themselves through the Facebook Messenger app and garners an estimated average of 30 messages daily. It is the direct line of DFA to Filipino migrants, especially during the lockdown when OFs cannot go the Embassies or Consulates. The page is operated 24/7 by the DFA Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs (OUMWA) and caters to both regular and undocumented or irregular workers who are in distress and need an emergency response.

Moreover, DOLE International Labour Affairs Bureau (ILAB) established the 24/7 OFW Command Center and hotlines for OFs to seek help and assistance. OWWA 24/7 Operation Center and Hotline 1348 also serve as a call center and communication base during crises and emergencies to connect OFWs and their families. The DOLE Command Center was also established on 29 May 2020 which serves as a repository of data and information on the volume of OFWs being repatriated back to the Philippines.

- **Help desks were established in localities in the Philippines to broaden access to assistance to OFWs.** The DILG issued Memorandum Circular No. 2020-075 OFW Desk. With the assigned desk officers, the initiative ensures that government services will be delivered and be more accessible to OFWs.
- **Children of Filipino migrants are also accounted in the efforts of the Philippine government through the Philippine Schools Overseas (PSOs).** As part of its effort to provide quality assistance to OFs and their children, the Inter-Agency Committee on Philippine Schools Overseas (IACPSO) conducts an annual Conference of Philippine Schools Overseas. The conference is meant to promote and strengthen the implementation of the Philippine curriculum in PSOs, help ensure a continuing education among Filipino expatriate students and support the unification of the overseas Filipino families, and build the capacities of administrators, teachers, and non-teaching personnel of PSOs.

As of 2019, there are 41 PSOs operating in 10 countries (Bahrain, Timor Leste, Greece, Italy, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Libya, Oman, Qatar, and UAE) with an estimated 36,000 students enrolled from pre-elementary, elementary, and high school levels.

<sup>14</sup> These services include consular services, legal services, and special Assistance-to-Nationals concerns.

<sup>15</sup>The OPRT is the overall coordinating entity in the crisis management framework in the Philippines as mandated in Executive Order (E.O.) No. 34, s. 2011. DFA consolidates all contingency plans of Foreign Service Posts, which is updated preferably after six (6) months.



- **Financial inclusion of OFs also requires that their families are banked; a universal digital identity can facilitate financial inclusion of OFs' families.** Financial inclusion and governance can be improved through the National ID system. The National ID System will provide all Filipinos a digital identity which can facilitate financial inclusion by providing access to vital services that require a valid proof of identity, which many Filipinos lack. At the height of the global pandemic, the lack of a digital identity has delayed the distribution of assistance to many Filipinos. Should global shocks take place, services and assistance can easily be facilitated and delivered to OFs and their families through the distribution channels enabled by the PhilSys.

#### 4. Improving value-driven and evidence-based policymaking and public debate, and enhancing cooperation on migration

##### GCM Objectives:

- 1 Collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies
- 3 Provide accurate and timely information at all stages of migration
- 7 Address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration
- 17 Eliminate all forms of discrimination and promote evidence-based public discourse to shape perceptions of migration
- 23 Strengthen international cooperation and global partnerships for safe, orderly, and regular migration

##### a. Please highlight migration levels and trends, including drivers (if possible), and migrant experiences relevant to this cluster of objectives. *The response could make reference to trends in migration; outcomes of migration; or migrant experiences.*

- **The number of OFWs and their status are monitored by various agencies.** Administrative data on Filipino migrants are monitored by the DFA while surveys on Filipino migrants are conducted by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA). The CFO also collects and processes emigrant data which include statistical profiles of registered Filipino emigrants, spouses, and partners of foreign nationals, Exchange Visitor Program participants (US J-1 visa holders), au pairs as well as data on diaspora philanthropy. The POEA gathers OFWs' deployment data while the OWWA gathers data on OFW welfare concerns.

Based on the results of the 2019 Survey on Overseas Filipinos (SOF) coordinated by the PSA,<sup>16</sup> 2.2 million OFWs worked abroad between April and September 2019. The SOF further provides data disaggregated by sex, age, occupation, region of origin, and country of destination.

Information on money sent to the Philippines comes from various sources. The PSA's SOF provides remittances data from banks, money transfers, agency or local office, and the rest through door-to-door delivery, friends/co-workers, and other means. Meanwhile, the BSP

<sup>16</sup>The Survey on Overseas Filipinos (SOF) is a nationwide survey that seeks to gather information on Filipino citizens who left for abroad during the last five years. It is a rider survey to the October round of the Labor Force Survey every year. <https://psa.gov.ph/statistics/survey/labor-and-employment/survey-overseas-filipinos>



provides remittance data channeled through the banking system, disaggregated based on land or sea based worker. Additionally, BSP's quarterly consumer expectations survey provides data on the uses of remittances.

- **The percentage of undocumented migrants has been declining.** The DFA's 2020 midyear report recorded 10,327,490 overseas Filipinos, of which 59.14 percent are permanent migrants, 29.79 percent are temporary/document migrants, and 11.06 percent are undocumented/irregular migrants.<sup>17</sup> Likewise, as of June 2021, the DFA recorded 10,436,072 overseas Filipinos, of which 53.57 percent are documented/permanent migrants, 38.14 percent are documented/temporary migrants, and 8.49 percent are undocumented/irregular migrants.<sup>18</sup> Irregular or undocumented migrants dropped from 11.06 in 2020 to 8.49 percent in 2021 signifying a decrease in the number of irregular migrants by as much as 256,359.

**b. Please highlight the concrete policy, legal, and programmatic actions taken by your government to advance these objectives in recent years (in particular since the adoption of the GCM on 10 December 2018).** *Examples could include policy reforms undertaken, adoption of new laws, drafting of national-level implementation plans, entering into bilateral/ regional agreements, signature/ ratification of relevant conventions, engagement in dialogue processes.*

- **Establishment of the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW).** In December 2021, Republic Act 11641 also known as "An Act Creating the DMW" was signed into law to further protect the rights and promote the welfare of OFWs and their families. It aims to improve coordination among agencies concerned with OFWs thereby addressing the vulnerabilities and issues experienced by our migrant workers. It can serve as a single destination for OFWs in checking available overseas jobs, processing and issuance of overseas employment certificates, legal assistance for cases, repatriation, reintegration, and other necessary assistance. This will help the country in fulfilling the 23 objectives of the GCM. While the GCM is a non-binding framework, the GCM will now be legally enforced in the Philippines through this law. This is consistent with the country's pursuit of fair and ethical recruitment, decent work, labor mobility, and human rights for migrant workers. The said department is expected to operationalize by 2023.
- **National survey on migration.** The Philippines' first National Migration Survey (NMS) was conducted in 2018 to address the need for in-depth and baseline data on mobility of Filipinos, both international and internal. The PSA also publishes its Survey on Overseas Filipinos as a rider to the Labor Force Survey. Further, the Inter-Agency Committee on Migration Statistics (IACMS) under the PSA is in charge of harmonization efforts for Philippine migration statistics. Steps have been taken to develop a more comprehensive data on migration and harmonize different migration sources of relevant government agencies.
- **Handbook for OFWs.** Providing sufficient information on migration and development throughout the migration cycle was strengthened through the issuance of the Handbook for OFWs Act of 2018 (RA 11227). The Handbook serves as a reference for OFWs regarding their rights and responsibilities, government programs, conditions in host countries, costs and benefits of working overseas, and reintegration. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the POEA

<sup>17</sup> Based on DFA Report to Congress Mid-Year 2020

<sup>18</sup> Based on DFA Report to Congress December 2019

launched an updated version of the OFW handbook to include information on overseas employment health safety protocols and other healthy reminders for OFWs to prevent COVID-19. The said handbook will also be written in local languages, including local dialects that would be easily understood by OFWs.<sup>19</sup>

- **Seminars and information campaigns to reduce vulnerabilities.** To equip outgoing Filipino migrants with information to ensure their security and welfare, orientation seminars are conducted during the pre-departure and post-arrival stages of migration. The online and mobile PDOS are being implemented by OWWA and OWWA-accredited PDOS learning centers (for OFWs) and by the CFO (for emigrants) to make services more accessible to the public, especially those in areas that are historically considered as origin provinces of Filipino migrants and emigrants.
- **The government established various communication lines to facilitate assistance to OFs in need.** The DFA launched the OFW Help Facebook page; and DOLE-ILAB established the 24/7 OFW Command Center and hotlines for OFs to seek help and assistance. OWWA 24/7 Operation Center and Hotline 1348 serves as a call center and communication base during crises and emergencies to connect OFWs and their families.
- **Harmonizing of administrative data on OFs and returning migrants.** Since data on OFs is being collected by different government agencies, harmonization of the data on OFs is being proposed in the updating of the Philippine Statistical Development Program 2018-2023. This will include the improvement of administrative-based data collection forms related to migration that are currently in use by relevant agencies aimed at harmonizing administrative data on OFs and returning migrants.
- **The government engaged in various institutional fora aimed at strengthening cooperation and global partnerships related to international migration.** These include the Colombo Process,<sup>20</sup> Abu Dhabi dialogue,<sup>21</sup> Bali-process on trafficking in persons,<sup>22</sup> UNESCAP, and the ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labor,<sup>23</sup> among others. Similarly, the Philippines participated in the regional consultations organized by the Global Forum on International Migration and Development (GFMD) held last June 2020 with participation in the thematic areas of *Leveraging technology to empower migrants* and *Addressing gaps in migrant protection*.

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<sup>19</sup> [https://www.poea.gov.ph/news/2021/NR-POEA-launches-updated-OFW-Handbook-on-Migrant-Workers-Day%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.poea.gov.ph/news/2021/NR-POEA-launches-updated-OFW-Handbook-on-Migrant-Workers-Day%20(1).pdf)

<sup>20</sup>The Philippines is among the 12 Member States of the Regional Consultative Process on Overseas Employment and Contractual Labour for Countries of Origin in Asia, commonly known as Colombo Process, which aims to provide a forum for Asian labor-sending countries to share experiences, consult issues, optimize development benefits, and review and monitor implementations of its programs and projects.

<sup>21</sup>The Abu Dhabi Dialogue is an inter-regional forum on migration covering Asia and the Middle East regions, with 10 Member States that are countries of origin, including the Philippines, and 7 countries of destination. It aims to address the temporary mobility in Asia and to provide a base for understanding issues, practices, and policies on contractual labor for the region.

<sup>22</sup>Also an inter-regional forum on migration, the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime covers the regions of Europe, Asia, Americas, and Africa with a total of 45 Member States, including the Philippines.

<sup>23</sup>The ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labor (AFML) is a regional tripartite platform providing an avenue for exchange of discussions between various stakeholders of migration and of issues among migrant workers in South East Asia, in line with the implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers.

Further, the Philippines sponsors and facilitates the biennial UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolutions on Trafficking in Women and Girls which strongly urges governments to ensure coherence across laws and measures responding to migration, labor, and human trafficking to protect the human rights of migrant women and girls throughout the whole migration cycle, and to provide effective protection against trafficking. The Philippines also sponsors and co-facilitates with Indonesia the biennial UNGA resolution on Violence Against Women Migrant Workers which encourages States to address practical barriers, including language barriers, that women migrant workers may encounter in countries of destination, and provide them with adequate information about their rights, including rights to consular assistance, prior to their departure from their countries of origin. At the UN Human Rights Council, the Philippines is a lead sponsor of the previously annual but now triennial resolution on Trafficking in Persons, Particularly Women and Girls.

To keep the momentum of regional cooperation for the GCM implementation, the GCM Champion Countries in Asia Pacific, including the Philippines, are leading a series of consultations with the theme *Accelerating Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic*. It aims to produce outputs that can contribute in the first IMRF, which will gather all Member States in 2022 to review the international implementation of GCM. For the first part of the series, the governments of the Philippines and Thailand organized the consultation on promoting access to health services for migrants

**c. What are the main gaps identified and challenges faced in addressing these objectives?** *These gaps and challenges may include challenges at national, regional and global levels; capacity challenges; data needs; financing and others.*

- **There is lack of consistent data on the number of OFs.** Issues related to identifying the numbers of irregular migrants, as well as different framework utilized by monitoring agencies are the main challenges related to international migration data. The inconsistencies in gathering data on documented and undocumented migrants are due to the various laws and policies in host countries. Although in the Middle East, the number of undocumented workers/irregular migrants is verified since it provides entry visas as registration for work, in Western countries, several Filipinos enter through different kinds of visas and later on shift to a visa authorized for work increasing the possibility of incorrect determination.
- **Gaps in the conduct and content of orientation programs hinder the full realization of their objectives.** Limitations and restrictions in the conduct of PAOS in a number of host countries persist. While efforts are continuously being enhanced to protect and promote the well-being of OFs, particularly OFWs, differences in terms of politics, culture, ideologies as well as the physical distance between the Philippines and the host countries impede the wider, effective, and comprehensive provision of information, services, and protection.
- **Mechanisms to monitor welfare of foreign nationals in the country remain limited.** The extent by which the Philippines extends services to foreign nationals in the country and measures to monitor their welfare remain limited. Databases used for targeting program beneficiaries often exclude foreign nationals.
- **Information on access to reintegration services is piecemeal and programmatic.** Several government agencies have extended services to assist repatriated OFs. Existing databases

include a listing of government reintegration programs by different government agencies and the number of program beneficiaries per program. While this shows the willingness of many government actors to assist those in need, monitoring the extent by which reintegration services have been extended to those affected by the pandemic has become limited.

**d. Please share some of the results of these actions, effective solutions, best practices and lessons learned by your Government in implementing these objectives.**

- **A standardized framework on international migration data was institutionalized.** The PSA Board issued resolutions in 2017 approving and adopting the amended operational framework for counting OFs and the definition of migration for statistical purposes. Initial steps, including review of existing data and methodology, were taken by interagency bodies between 2018 and 2019 to harmonize data gathering. Furthermore, a key milestone in this area is the conduct of the first NMS in 2018 to address the need for in-depth and baseline data on the mobility of Filipinos, both internal and international.
- **Seminars and handbooks are provided for OFWs.** To equip outgoing Filipino migrants with information to ensure their security and welfare, orientation seminars are conducted during the pre-departure and post-arrival stages of migration. A handbook serves as a reference for OFWs regarding their rights and responsibilities, government programs, conditions in host countries, costs and benefits of working overseas, and reintegration.

**5. What steps has the Government taken to integrate the vision and cross-cutting and interdependent guiding principles of the Global Compact for Migration into its implementation? How was this accomplished?**

Guiding Principle	Principle has been integrated (yes or no?)	Explanation
People-centered	Yes	Migrants have always been the center of all our migration-related programs and policies. All these programs and policies are formulated and implemented for the safety and protection of Filipino migrants abroad and foreign nationals in the Philippines.
International cooperation	Yes	The Philippines actively participates in international fora and discussions such as the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), International Dialogue on Migration, Abu Dhabi Dialogue, Colombo Process, Bali Process, ASEAN, and other various bilateral and multilateral processes. Most importantly, the Philippines is a champion country of the GCM and a member of the Steering Group of the Multi-Partnership Trust Fund to Implement the GCM.
National sovereignty	Yes	The Philippines is respectful of the entry and exit regulations of host countries, as much as it upholds its own sovereignty.

Rule of law and due process	Yes	Various policies were enacted and currently implemented to cater to the needs of Filipino migrants. In such case when overseas Filipinos face injustice or have pending court cases, they undergo due process with the rights and privileges afforded to them. To provide legal assistance to OFs, the Philippine government hires lawyers to protect the due process rights of Filipino migrants.
Sustainable development	Yes	The Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022 (PDP) Chapter 21 being anchored on GCM commitments is also in line with the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals which aim to provide sustainable development for the Philippines.
Human rights	Yes	<p>The Philippine Constitution as well as the national and local policies are all anchored on human rights privileges. The Philippines is also a signatory to treaties and conventions upholding human rights.</p> <p>The Migrants' Rights Observatory was established to: provide a systematic rights-based reporting, monitoring and evaluation system on government compliance with laws, regulations, and conventions, among others; enable OFWs to report violations of or failure to protect their rights by State and non-State duty-bearers through Information Technology and Social Media; build the capacity of civil society organization partners and personnel of the Philippine Commission on Human Rights; and build partnerships with Southeast Asia National Human Rights Institution Forum (SEANF) and relevant National Human Rights Institutions in key host countries to monitor compliance with obligations of duty bearers for migrant workers' rights.</p>
Gender-responsive	Yes	<p>The Philippines has since implemented policies in promoting equal opportunities for everyone – regardless of sex and gender. For example, one of the objectives of the Comprehensive OFW Reintegration Program seeks to incorporate gender-responsive reintegration preparedness program in all phases of migration, involving both OFWs and their families left behind.</p> <p>In 2021, the Philippine Commission on Women in partnership with the UN Women conducted a series of technical consultation-meetings with different national government agencies and LGUs to discuss and collectively plan concrete steps towards the data harmonization process for Violence against Women Migrants.</p>

Child-sensitive	Yes	The Philippines has programs through the DSWD such as the Presidential Awards for Child-Friendly Municipalities and Cities (PACFCM) which institutionalized the various programs for children at the LGU level.
Whole-of-government approach	Yes	All public sector agencies of the Philippines government come hand-in-hand in ensuring protection of migrants. The PDP Chapter 21 emphasizes the government's streamlining of its services to migrants.
Whole-of-society approach	Yes	<p>Partners in the private sector and civil society join forces with the Philippine government to protect the rights and welfare of migrants. Their participation has contributed in the crafting of PDP Chapter 21.</p> <p>The National Anti-Poverty Commission, as a coordinating agency for the basic sector, provides platforms for the participation of Formal Labor and Migrant Workers Groups in promoting the needs of migrants through the provision of inputs for policy recommendations that strengthen their involvement and capacity in participating in governance mechanisms.</p> <p>Through the participation of migrant worker groups, the Joint Memorandum Circular strengthening the Migrant Help Desk in the LGUs to stop human trafficking and illegal recruitment, and for massive information dissemination to prevent these kinds of illegal migration practices was issued.</p>

## 6. How is the Global Compact for Migration contributing to realizing the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development? What has your Government done to integrate the implementation of the Global Compact objectives into SDG implementation?

- **International migration and development issues have been mainstreamed in the chapters of the Philippines' medium term development plan, the PDP 2017-2022.** The results of the consultations towards the formulation of the GCM National Implementation Plan served as inputs to the PDP Midterm Update, in which a separate chapter (Chapter 21) has been dedicated to address the needs of overseas Filipinos and international migrants in the Philippines (See Annex A).

The following migration-related SDGs are incorporated among the strategies in the PDP Chapter 21:

- Goal 3: Health – accessibility of healthcare (including for mental health), universal healthcare, and health insurance among OFs.
- Goal 5: Gender equality – incorporation of a gender-responsive reintegration preparedness program in all phases of migration, involving both OFWs and their families left behind
- Goal 8: Decent work – ethical recruitment and safe working conditions

- Goal 10: Reduce inequality – financial inclusion initiatives; employment and livelihood support for repatriated OFWs
- Goal 11: Sustainable Cities – inclusion of migration issues in Regional Development Plans (RDPs)
- Goal 16: Peaceful Societies – eliminating human trafficking
- Goal 17: Partnerships – GCM commitments; whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach

SDG target 10.C.1, “remittance costs as a proportion of the amount remitted,” is among the SDG indicators being monitored in the PDP Results Matrices.

**7. From the Government’s perspective, are there any objectives of the Global Compact for Migration that are of particular importance in the national context? Please name the objectives that the Government has prioritized and explain why.**

- The PDP Midterm Update Chapter 21, which is the embodiment of the Philippines’ national implementation of GCM, focuses on four key areas or “subsector outcomes” with regard to International Migration and Development (IMD):
  - (1) OFs’ rights protected and well-being improved;
  - (2) OFs’ participation in the country’s development and reintegration in the Philippine society facilitated;
  - (3) Engagement of OFs, their families, and other stakeholders in governance strengthened; and
  - (4) Rights protected and well-being improved for foreign nationals in the country.
- In line with these four key areas, the Government has prioritized the following GCM objectives as reflected in the PDP Midterm Update:
  - Objective 3: Enhancing the education of OFs and other stakeholders on IMD would prepare OFs in their migration.
  - Objective 6: Facilitating fair and ethical recruitment and safeguarding conditions that ensure decent work are being done through strengthening bilateral and regional ties.
  - Objective 7: Enhancing health insurance and social security for OFWs will help address the vulnerabilities of Filipino migrants.
  - Objective 12: Toward strengthening certainty and predictability in migration procedures, the Philippine government has continued to improve government services and make government transaction more convenient for OFWs. At the same time, the government seeks to ensure that foreign nationals in the country will be accorded the same basic rights we are seeking for Filipinos abroad.
  - Objective 14: The government aims to enhance consular protection and assistance by providing sufficient ATN services.
  - Objective 15: Facilitating effective service delivery to OFs will contribute to their improved welfare.
  - Objective 19: The Philippine government creates conditions for migrants and diaspora to fully contribute to sustainable development of the country by tapping the knowledge and other resource of OFs.



- Objective 20: Given that the OFs send annual remittances equivalent to about 10 percent of Philippine GDP, promoting faster, safer, and cheaper transfer of remittances can encourage more remittances.
- Objective 21: Ensuring the successful socioeconomic reintegration of OFs and their families can enable the government to harness the benefits of migration.
- Objective 22: Ensuring the portability of social insurance will ensure that these benefits can directly respond to the needs of OFs.
- Objective 23: International cooperation and global partnerships are highly significant to ensure that our OFs will be granted basic rights and welfare in their destination countries.

## 8. From the Government's perspective, how and to what extent have regional plans and strategies incorporated the objectives of the Global Compact for Migration? What are the main achievements, gaps and challenges to the existing regional approaches, strategies and implementation plans?

- **ASEAN Committee on Migrant Workers-Regional Cooperation.** As an ASEAN Member State, the Philippines is part of the ASEAN Committee on Migrant Workers-Regional Cooperation, following the implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers. With the adoption of GCM in 2018, the ASEAN is currently in the process of enhancing the effective implementation of the GCM under the ASEAN framework.
- **ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labor.** The Philippines is a member of the ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labor (AFML), a regional tripartite platform providing an avenue for exchange of discussions between various stakeholders of migration and issues among migrant workers in South East Asia. The forum focuses on the two objectives of the GCM, Objective 6: Facilitate fair and ethical recruitment and safeguard conditions that ensure decent work, and Objective 23: Strengthen international cooperation and global partnerships for safe, orderly and regular migration.
- **ASEAN Regional Plans.** As of date, ASEAN has at least 18 ongoing regional plans to improve welfare of citizens within ASEAN.<sup>24</sup>

## 9. What methodology was adopted for completing this voluntary GCM review; how was a whole-of-government approach applied through engaging various relevant ministries and other sectors of government; what mechanisms were used to engage civil society and other relevant stakeholders for a whole-of-society approach?

- **Whole-of-government approach.** In order to update the VNR GCM, a consultation meeting was conducted between members of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Social Development Committee Sub-Committee on International Migration and Development (SCIMD), the inter-government agency body in the Philippines responsible for the Philippines' migration governance. The SCIMD is composed of all government agencies with migration-related programs and policies in its portfolio. Inputs from member government agencies were then collected and consolidated to craft the responses to this updated report.

<sup>24</sup> See Annex B. List of some of the ongoing ASEAN Regional Plans.



- **Whole-of-society approach.** Multi-stakeholders' consultation was utilized in the crafting of the PDP Chapter 21 as well as the process of the PDP midterm updating. Every December, engagement of migration stakeholders is being commenced in line with the celebration of the Philippines' Migrant Month. These meetings accommodated the various programs and projects of all stakeholders in improving the migration governance in the country.

Even prior to the adoption of the GCM, the Philippines has already been implementing the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach. Relatedly, in line with the preparation of the VNR GCM for the upcoming IMRF in May 2022, the DFA and IOM conducted a virtual multi-stakeholders' consultation with non-government organizations to gather inputs on their migration-related efforts. Said inputs will form part of the updated Philippine report (See Annex C).

**10. Given the outbreak of COVID-19 which has affected all countries in the region, what challenges has the Government identified in implementation of the Global Compact for migration as part of the COVID-19 response, and what has the Government done to address the specific situation of migrants and their families?**

- **With the pandemic and the subsequent global recession, the unprecedented volume of OFs intending to return and those who have already returned have put pressure on the capacities of OF-serving agencies in providing assistance and reintegration programs.** Meanwhile, returning OFWs face bleak employment prospects in the country amidst social distancing measures and economic slowdown. Those who stayed abroad face increased vulnerabilities, aggravated by inadequate social protection.

Government programs to support OFs amidst the pandemic include financial, livelihood assistance and employment assistance, among others. More than 240,000 OFWs were given financial assistance through the DOLE-*Abot-Kamay and Pagtulong* (AKAP)<sup>25</sup>. Other assistance provided to OFWs includes food packs, accommodation, and travel assistance. To facilitate reintegration of returnees, the government also seeks to provide temporary employment (particularly in government agencies, health sector, and business processing outsourcing) or livelihood support. Through TESDA, reskilling/retooling programs for OFWs are being conducted to keep OFWs competitive whether in domestic or international labor markets.

- **DFA repatriation and other assistance to distressed OFs.** Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the DFA in coordination with its various Foreign Service Posts has been providing assistance to distressed OFs through financial and welfare assistance, temporary shelter, and eventual repatriation using its ATN Fund. Upon request, the Philippine diplomatic and consular posts abroad are granted Stand-by Funds to be used for the provision of emergency supplies, medicine, food, and accommodation to OFs affected by COVID-19.

DFA also provides assistance for the shipment of remains of OFs who died of COVID-19 (allowed as long as hermetically sealed and subject to cremation within 12 hours upon arrival in the

<sup>25</sup> Abot-Kamay ang Pagtulong directly translates to "help is within reach", while Akap directly translates to embrace.

Philippines). If the remains are cremated abroad, DFA processes assistance for the shipment of cremated remains.

In addition, Posts have been extending legal assistance related to salary claims for displaced OFWs in countries of destination whose contracts were terminated due to the pandemic. These workers were forced to return to the Philippines without receiving their wages, dues, and benefits, making them victims of wage theft.

As of 01 April 2022, the DFA facilitated the repatriation of a total of 459,570 OFs, composed of 353,590 land-based OFWs/OFs and 105,980 seafarers. Using the ATN Fund, the DFA has been mounting chartered flights as necessary in areas with no available flights in order to repatriate nationals, while for those with available commercial flights, the mounting of special commercial repatriation flights.

In addition, DFA conducts virtual meetings through OFW Help to discuss pressing issues and concerns in the various areas since the start of the pandemic. These weekly meetings are a way for the DFA to reach to Filipino migrants and to assure them of the assistance of the government.

- **The DOH monitors the COVID-19 status, assisted in repatriation, and provided medical assistance to returning OFs.** The DOH has done the following to address the challenges brought about by the pandemic to the migrants:
  - ***Surveillance of COVID-19 cases among Migrants and OFs.*** Surveillance and monitoring of migrants and OFs who tested positive for COVID-19 were done in the country in order to ensure that no migrants with confirmed cases of COVID-19 will be left behind. Reports submitted to the DOH along with the reports from the DFA, which collated the submissions of COVID-19 confirmed cases as reported by the Philippines' Foreign Service Posts across the world. Surveillance of COVID-19 cases was not only for OFs, but was also done among foreign nationals here in the Philippines. Whether Filipino or non-national, or any other migrant typology, the DOH has done monitoring and surveillance of COVID-19 cases. This surveillance and assistance of foreign nationals with COVID-19 in-country exemplifies the international commitments embodied in the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.
  - ***Repatriation and Management of Migrants and Returning OFs.*** Due to the surge of repatriation of migrants and OFs, various policies had been issued to ensure the necessary safety and protection of all arriving migrants and OFs. In the early beginning of the pandemic, the Philippine Government was quick to repatriate Filipino nationals at Wuhan, China, the initial epicenter of the pandemic. One of the challenges in the repatriation process was the travel restriction implemented worldwide due to mitigate the cross-border transmission. The DOH, DFA, along with other agencies, developed interim guidelines to ensure the swift and safe repatriation, specifically of the land-based overseas Filipinos. Further, one of the hard-hit sectors in this pandemic is the seafaring industry, particularly cruise ships. Certain outbreaks were noted early-on in the Diamond Princess and Grand Princess ships. Considering that the Philippines is a major source of seafarers working on cruise and merchant ships, comprising about one-fourth of the world's total, the Filipino seafarers were also safely repatriated. In order to ensure prompt, smooth and safe repatriations of the migrants and OFs, the Philippine Government continually developed policies on mass repatriation. These policies were then adopted by the Inter Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases. Further, coordinated systems were established for the returning migrants and OFs including the development of

repatriation databases and, lastly, the provision of facility quarantine upon arrival was provided by the Philippine Government in partnership with Licensed Manning Agencies with daily health monitoring and treatment at a higher level of facility, if needed.

- **Medical Assistance and Coordination of Care for Migrants and OFs.** The surge of return of migrants and OFs to the Philippines posed a significant challenge to their repatriation, quarantine, and reintegration. Active collaboration and consultation were done with the national government agencies, non-governmental organizations and private sector, including licensed manning agencies. Medical repatriation assistance was continually provided during the COVID-19 pandemic through the Philippine Government's IMRAP for migrants and OFs. Pre-arrival coordination for medical treatment and issuance of exemption certificates to mandatory facility quarantine were done to expedite much needed medical assistance immediately upon arrival of returning migrants and OFs. Mental health services are also readily available through teleconsultation by the National Center for Mental Health. Moreover, to streamline the referral system and optimize the use of medical care services at a national level for a unified COVID-19 response, the One Hospital Command Center (OHCC) was established as the Interim National Referral System. The OHCC and the Migrant Health Unit have been actively collaborating to facilitate the coordination between the health facilities and health care provider networks for the efficient referral of patients, including returning migrants and OFs with COVID-19 cases requiring medical care.
- **DILG assisted in facilitating the return of migrant workers.** The DILG together with DOH and Department of Tourism has issued a Joint Administrative Order No. 2020-001 dated 03 April 2020 entitled "Guidelines on the Operation of Accommodation Establishments as Quarantine Facilities for OFWs under Republic Act No. 11469" for the purposes of implementing the authority of the President to direct the operation or take over privately-owned establishments to serve as quarantine areas. Furthermore, DILG issued an advisory dated 31 March 2021 relative to the Local Quarantine Protocols for OFWs and Returning Overseas Filipino (ROFs) which hereby enjoined all local government executives in all local government levels to review their local protocols for OFWs and ROFs who are allowed by the aforementioned National Task Force issuance to travel to the Philippines, and ensure the completion of the 14-day quarantine period upon arrival in their locality to ensure the safety of OFWs.
- **DSWD Psychosocial and Financial Assistance.** The DSWD provided online counseling and provision of Mental Health Psychosocial Support Services (MHPSS) to ROFs. The DSWD Team as member of the One Stop Shop (OSS) at the Airport has deployed Social Workers/staff to welcome the ROFs and attend to their queries especially through the Help Desk put up for the purpose. The social workers/staffs also provide assistance through telephone and emails.

DSWD field offices provide Assistance to Individuals/Families in Crisis Situation (AICS) which include financial, food and non-food items as well as Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP). Further, OWWA's BALIK PROBINSYA Program, in coordination with DSWD, facilitates the return of OFWs in their home province.

- **The CFO assisted returning OFs through counselling, provision of allowance, and coordination services for mental health and psychosocial support services.** To ensure the welfare of Filipino marriage migrants, the CFO continuously implements the Guidance and Counseling Program for the Spouses of Fiancé/Partners of Foreign Nationals through online or virtual tele-counseling. Through this virtual method, the CFO Counselors are able to

continuously address Filipino marriage migrants' concerns. The CFO has provided necessary assistance to the affected US Exchange Visitor Program Participants, Au Pairs and Permanent Migrants. In 2020, the CFO has assisted a total of 593 OFs (non-OFWs). On top of the PHP 10.213 million (CFO's contributions for measures to address the COVID-19 pandemic), the CFO also disbursed a total of PHP 10.036 million for the accommodations and meal allowance of repatriated Exchange Visitors Program participants (J1) and Au Pairs when they were stranded in Manila. The CFO has also coordinated with various concerned government agencies for their psychological and medical needs and for the conduct of the RT-PCR test for said clients.

- **Philippine Green Lanes for Seafarers.** Cognizant that seafarers are essential workers even in times of pandemic and other public emergencies, the Philippines established the Green Lane Policy for Seafarers through a Joint Circular of various Philippine Government agencies to facilitate the speedy and safe travel of seafarers, including their safe and swift disembarkation, and crew change during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Joint Circular outlines the minimum standards and procedures which shall be observed by all seafarers, shipping companies (ship operators and ship owners), licensed manning agencies, airlines, and all other similar entities involved in the process of facilitating travel for the purpose of ship crew changes and repatriation. As a member state of the International Maritime Organization and International Labor Organization, the Philippines is also enjoined to implement the protocols of both organizations, including the IMO-ICAO1-ILO Joint Statement, and Information Note on Maritime Labour Issues and COVID-19.
- **The BI issued guidelines to promote the acceptance and facilitation of foreign workers, migrants as well as their families amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.** The guidelines include allowing re-entry of foreign nationals with permanent residence visas in the Philippines and relaxing some entry requirements that may be difficult to acquire given the pandemic.
- **Laws passed in response to COVID-19.** In light of the pandemic, two laws were immediately passed by the Philippine Congress to respond to COVID-19, namely the *Bayanihan* to Heal as One Act (RA 11469) and the *Bayanihan* to Recover as One Act (RA 11494), which enabled migrant-serving agencies to immediately address OFs' needs. The Filipino word *Bayanihan* means communal work and refers to the national cooperation of all Filipino citizens in healing and recovering from the effects brought by the pandemic.
- **"No touch, no contact" solutions.** Government agencies with migrant-related services has implemented a "no touch, no contact" policy in providing their services to Filipino migrants. As such, OWWA systems facilitate entry and deployment of OFWs with this policy as part of strategies to prevent COVID-19 transmission. DFA utilizes the OFW Help Facebook Help in reaching to distress OFs requiring assistance. POEA also uses its various online portals in regulating overseas employment during the pandemic. The Overseas Filipino-CFO Online Registration System was developed in March 2020 in lieu of the mandatory physical registration of Filipino emigrants, spouses and partners of foreign nationals, au pairs and J1 visa holders.
- **Vaccination of migration in-country and outbound OFs was ensured.** Cognizant of the significant impact to the Philippines' economic recovery as well as inherent risks involved in travel during a pandemic, outbound overseas Filipino workers are prioritized and classified in the same category as frontline healthcare workers in the National COVID-19 vaccination program. It is significant to mention as well that guidelines for the inclusion in the

vaccination program for other migrants, such as the foreign nationals in the Philippines, including refugees, asylum seekers and stateless persons, were fully implemented.

- **Assistance to foreign nationals in the Philippines.** Foreign nationals including refugees, stateless and asylum-seekers were accounted in the public health services during the pandemic. An omnibus health guidelines was issued in October 2020, which also account for foreign nationals. The DSWD has accommodated a few foreigners at the DSWD Residential Centers including refugees and asylum seekers. While at the Center, foreign nationals are assisted to look for jobs based on their skills; for those without skills, they are encouraged to join in skills training that the Center conducts together with other residents of the Center. Moreover, the DFA facilitated the repatriation of stranded foreign nationals (10,756 as of 19 October 2021) in the Philippines to their home country through repatriation sweeper flights organized by the DOT, Department of Transportation, DFA, and DILG.

PART VII

**PROTECTING  
THE RIGHTS,  
PROMOTING  
THE WELFARE,  
AND EXPANDING  
OPPORTUNITIES  
FOR OVERSEAS  
FILIPINOS**



# 21

## Protecting the Rights, Promoting the Welfare, and Expanding Opportunities for Overseas Filipinos

# 21

## Protecting the Rights, Promoting the Welfare, and Expanding Opportunities for Overseas Filipinos







# Protecting the Rights, Promoting the Welfare, and Expanding Opportunities for Overseas Filipinos

International migration has been a significant aspect in the economic and social dynamics of the Philippines over the last four decades. In recent years, about two million Filipinos leave every year to temporarily work overseas, mainly in the Middle East and Asia. Another 80-90 thousand choose to permanently transfer to another country, mainly to the USA and Canada. Filipinos overseas send annual remittances equivalent to about 10 percent of the Philippine Gross Domestic Product (GDP).<sup>1</sup>

With the outbreak of COVID-19, governments across the world have imposed lockdowns, disrupting economic activities and employment, including that of migrants. The pursuit of a healthy and resilient Philippines should consider the particular challenges faced by overseas Filipinos (OFs) in order to protect their rights, promote their welfare, and sustain their contribution to the country's development. The government will continuously support and assist repatriated and displaced OFs and seek to address the increased vulnerability of those who remain abroad. For those who have decided to return to the Philippines permanently, their successful socioeconomic reintegration will be prioritized. Financial inclusion initiatives for OFs and their families will also be strengthened.

## Assessment and Challenges

**Assessment:** The first half of the Plan period has seen significant developments in international migration and development. An internationally-agreed framework for comprehensive international cooperation on migration was established; access to government services was made easier for

overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) through the additional One-Stop Service Centers for OFWs (OSSCO) and OFW Helpdesks; onsite training and competency assessments were conducted; measures to enhance the security and safety of OFs were introduced; government initiatives

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank, *Migration and Remittances*, September 26, 2019.

enabling safe, efficient, and reliable fund transfers have contributed to the decline in remittance cost; and financial inclusion initiatives have channeled more remittances into savings and investment.

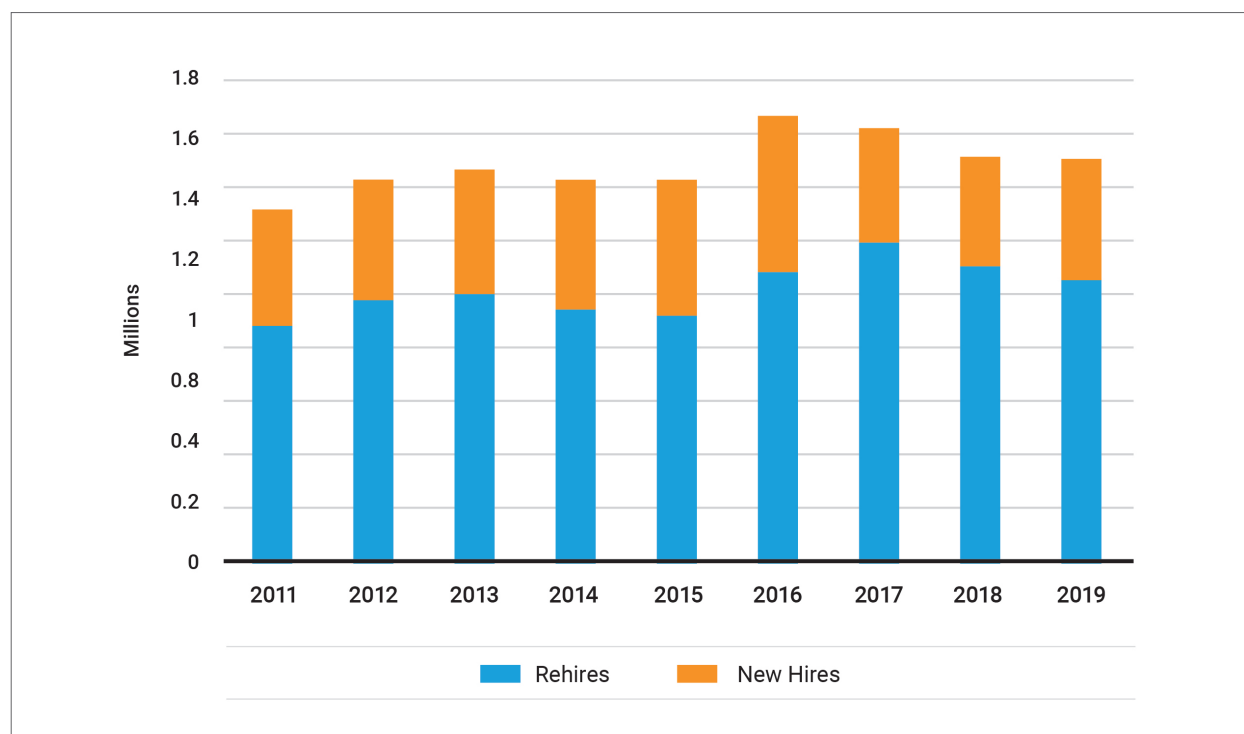
The Universal Healthcare Act, Social Welfare Attaché Act, Handbook for OFWs Act, and the Social Security Act of 2018 were enacted to enhance the social protection afforded to OFWs. The first National Migration Survey was also conducted in 2018 to address the need for baseline data on the international mobility of Filipinos.

However, the pandemic has displaced migrant workers, including OFWs. As of early August 2020, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) has received close to 600,000 applications for cash assistance from onsite and repatriated OFWs. Almost 230,000 returning overseas Filipinos (ROFs) have arrived, of which over 120,000 had been repatriated by the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA). In addition, there are almost 9,800 confirmed COVID-19 cases (and more than 700 deaths) among OFWs based

on DFA data. Among the ROFs, 4,904 were confirmed COVID-19 cases, among whom five have passed away.

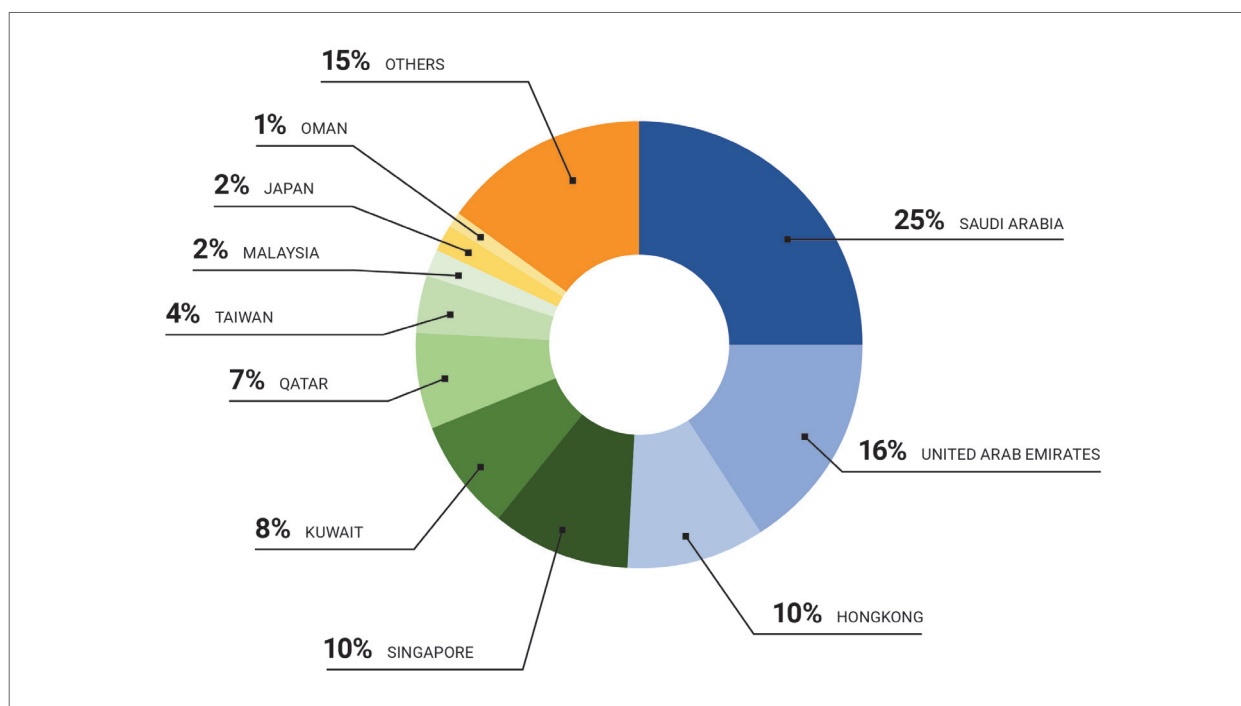
**Challenges:** With the pandemic and the subsequent global recession, the unprecedented volume of OFs intending to return and those who have already returned will put pressure on the capacities of OF-serving agencies in providing assistance and reintegration programs. Returning OFWs will face a weak labor market in the country amidst social distancing measures and an economic slowdown. Meanwhile, those who will choose to continue to stay abroad face increased vulnerabilities as the pandemic transforms economies, resulting in shifts in labor demand, aggravated by inadequate social protection. Demand for workers in the healthcare sector and manufacturing of essential goods is expected to remain strong, while it may decline in other sectors such as tourism and retail. Furthermore, the impact of lower remittances will be felt by many Filipino households.

**Figure 21.1 Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) Deployment, Land-based, 2011-2019**



Source: Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA)

Figure 21.2 OFW Deployment by Destination Country, 2019



Source: POEA

## Targets

Table 21.1 Updated Plan Targets to Protect the Rights, Promote the Welfare, and Expand Opportunities for Overseas Filipinos to Contribute to the Country's Development

INDICATOR	BASELINE VALUE (YEAR)	TARGETS			
		2020	2021	2022	END OF PLAN
Sector Outcome: Protect the rights, promote the welfare, and expand opportunities for overseas Filipinos to contribute to the country's development					
Percent of documented OFs to total OFs increased	92.3 (2019)	Increasing <sup>h</sup>	Increasing <sup>h</sup>	Increasing <sup>h</sup>	Increasing <sup>h</sup>
Philippine ranking on the US index on trafficking in persons maintained*	Tier 1 (2019)	Tier 1	Tier 1	Tier 1	Tier 1
Percent share of active to total members of Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) increased (%)**	28.9 (2016)	25.0	25.0	25.0	25.0
Voter turnout increased (%)*	31.3 (2016)	N/A	N/A	40.0	40.0

INDICATOR	BASELINE VALUE (YEAR)	TARGETS			
		2020	2021	2022	END OF PLAN
International remittance costs as a proportion of the amount remitted reduced (%)	4.7 (2016)	<4.0	<3.5	<3.0	<3.0
Percent of returnees successfully engaged in an income generating activity <sup>''</sup>	103.2 (2019)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Notes: <sup>\*</sup> new indicator; <sup>''</sup> revised indicator; <sup>h</sup> –increasing from previous year; tbc – to be confirmed

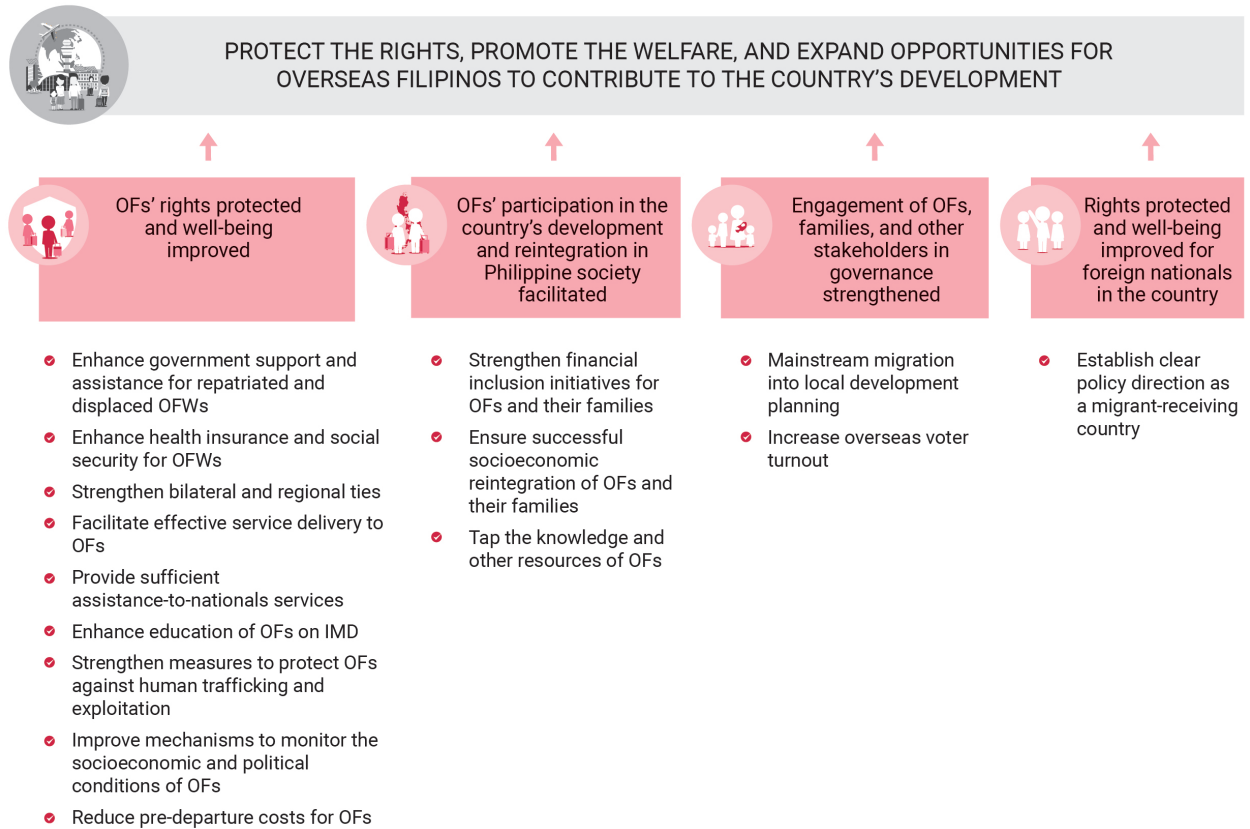
## Strategic Framework

During the formulation of the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2017-2022, international migration and development (IMD) issues were mainstreamed in nine out of the 15 main chapters. These are the chapters dealing with governance, justice, culture, industry and services, human capital development, reducing vulnerabilities, science and technology, financial inclusion, and security and safety. This reflects the crosscutting nature of migration and the need for a whole-of-government approach.

For this updated PDP, this chapter has been added to ensure greater coherence and comprehensiveness in discussing issues, relevant indicators, and strategies in relation to migration and development, towards a healthy and resilient Philippines. In line with this, new indicators to better monitor the government's progress on improving migration governance and harnessing the full benefits of migration towards sustainable development have been identified.

The framework used in 2017 focused on protecting the rights and improving the well-being of OFs, whether here or abroad, strengthening their engagement in governance, and facilitating their participation in the country's development and reintegration. For this update, the framework has been enhanced in line with the new normal and the commitments under the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (GCM). Thus, the enhanced framework seeks to cover all dimensions of migration, as well as both OFs and foreign nationals in the Philippines.

**Figure 21.3 Updated Plan Targets to Protect the Rights, Promote the Welfare, and Expand Opportunities for Overseas Filipinos to Contribute to the Country's Development**



## Strategies

In line with the enhanced framework on migration, the following strategies have been expanded to ensure that the Chapter's objectives will be pursued accordingly.

### Protecting OFs' rights and improving their well-being

**Enhance government support and assistance for repatriated and displaced OFWs.** With the unprecedented volume of repatriates and displaced migrant workers, the government must ensure that all affected OFs, especially OFWs, are provided adequate assistance to overcome the crisis.

The absorptive capacity of OF-serving agencies will be improved by streamlining agencies' operations and enhancing their workforce utilization to cater to OFs' needs better.

Moreover, the government will explore hiring repatriated OFs as healthcare workers, contact tracers, personnel for the Build, Build, Build (BBB) projects, the Philippine Identification System (PhilSys), and Community-Based Monitoring System (CBMS), among others. Along with these initiatives, the government will intensify the retooling and skills upgrading programs for displaced and repatriated OFWs (especially for telecommuting and e-commerce-friendly jobs) to keep them competitive whether in the domestic or international labor markets.

Concurrently, the government will facilitate the movement of OFWs, especially essential workers needed by the global economy, without compromising the needs of the local economy. The government will also explore options to support the recovery of the recruitment industry.

**Enhance health insurance and social security for OFWs.** Given the unprecedented volume of migrants needing assistance due to the pandemic, the operating funds of migrant-serving agencies will be augmented to facilitate welfare and health-related (including mental health) programs and emergency response at posts.

Information campaigns on the importance and benefits of health insurance and social security for OFWs and their families will be intensified. Among others, such information shall be incorporated into orientation seminars across all stages of migration. With the urgent need for convenient and contactless transactions, e-payment services for the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) and the Social Security System (SSS) will be continuously enhanced and expanded. Payment schemes for PhilHealth premiums for departing OFWs will be enhanced to enable more flexible payment terms.

**Strengthen bilateral and regional ties.** Negotiation of bilateral labor agreements (BLAs) with migrant-receiving countries will be intensified, especially with those practicing the *Kafala* system. BLAs with stringent welfare and protection provisions, social security agreements, and emergency response protocols will be pursued, while the inclusion of health insurance in BLAs and in the standard employment contract will be explored. BLAs will give particular attention to vulnerable groups, such as household service workers (*see Chapter 10*). Programmed bilateral labor agreements for review in 2020 include those with Morocco, Russia, Thailand, Seychelles, Micronesia, Suriname, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Trinidad and

Tobago, Portugal, Canada, Taiwan, Solomon Islands, and Switzerland, as well as a Memoranda of Agreement/Understanding on labor cooperation with Seychelles, Micronesia, and Turkey. The joint conduct of post-arrival orientation seminar (PAOS) will be explored in bilateral labor negotiations. Further, the government will continue its negotiations to create pathways to regularization for qualified but undocumented OFs.

The Social Security Act of 2018 (Republic Act [RA] 11199) also mandates the negotiation of BLAs with host countries which do not cover OFWs under their social security schemes, particularly for pension entitlement. In line with RA 11199, the requirement for foreign employers of land-based OFWs to pay SSS contributions, similar to foreign principals of sea-based OFWs, and portability of social security entitlements and earned benefits will be included in the bilateral labor agreements and their implementing administrative arrangements.

**Facilitate effective service delivery to OFs.** Deploying mobile government representative offices overseas will improve the provision of basic services to OFs. To help empower the OFs onsite, scholarships, training assistance, and competency assessments shall be provided. The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority's (TESDA) Onsite Assessment program and the Professional Regulation Commission's (PRC) Special Professional Licensure Examinations will be expanded. Moreover, government transactions that cater to OFs will be simplified. This includes the full roll out of online transactions at the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA)<sup>2</sup>. Further, the government will provide online platforms for psychosocial intervention and psychological first aid to bring together trained professionals to address the psychological needs of OFs. As an organized and well-defined database on international migration would help facilitate effective service delivery, expediting the operationalization of the international migration statistics framework is necessary. To ensure

<sup>2</sup> This includes e-Registration of OFWs and Seafarers; *Balik Manggagawa* (BM) Online; POEA Online Processing System and further developing Online Direct Hire; Online Continuing Agency Education Program (CAEP); and Online Licensing and Legal Assistance.

comparability, the data collection, processing, and methodologies of migrant-serving agencies will be aligned with the framework. This will also contribute to the operationalization of the Shared Government Information System on Migration. An integrated inter-agency referral and case tracking system will also be introduced (*see Chapter 5*).

**Provide sufficient assistance-to-nationals (ATNs) services.** Additional plantilla positions and Foreign Service Posts (FSPs), especially in high-risk countries and in countries with high levels of undocumented OFs, will be prioritized. In addition, agencies' capacity to provide assistance to undocumented Filipino migrants who wish to be repatriated will be strengthened. Proper documentation before the deployment of OFWs will strengthen protection and lessen the risk of OFWs becoming undocumented (*see Chapter 18*).

Enhance the capability of migrant-serving agencies and consular officers on crisis preparedness and contingency planning. All Philippine FSPs will be enjoined to regularly update their respective contingency plans. The One-Country Team Approach, where overseas representatives of various government agencies act together under the leadership of the Head of Post, will be strictly observed. The Overseas Preparedness Response Team (OPRT) will ensure that coordination with relevant agencies is sustained and rapid response and relief measures are implemented efficiently (*see Chapter 18*).

**Enhance education of OFs on IMD.** The pre-employment, pre-departure, and post-arrival orientation seminars will be improved in terms of conduct and content. Enriching the orientation seminar modules to include cultural diversity, benefits and costs of migration, economic and financial literacy, and overseas voting and reintegration would better prepare OFs throughout the migration cycle. Pre-migration orientation seminars that include not only the prospective migrants but also the families left behind will also be implemented. Content will be standardized across agencies conducting the orientation

seminars. Further, local governments will be integrated as service providers in the conduct of pre-migration education training.

Exploring other modes of dissemination will also help enhance information delivery. The online presence of existing programs such as the *BaLinkBayan* may be expanded to reach a larger audience (*see Chapters 5 and 15*). The conduct of mobile Pre-departure Orientation Seminars (PDOS) in more areas as well as the expansion of the Community Education Program and Peer Counseling Program of the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) would help prospective emigrants make informed decisions on working or settling abroad. The Handbook for OFWs (RA 11227) will be completed and regularly distributed to serve as an important reference for migrants. Further, embassies will continue to strengthen regular engagement of Filipinos abroad by institutionalizing cultural initiatives (*see Chapter 7*).

**Strengthen measures to protect OFs against human trafficking and exploitation.** Trafficking and illegal recruitment schemes will be abated with effective use of technology-enabled platforms for information dissemination. There is also a need to capacitate more local government units (LGUs) to invest in anti-trafficking interventions. This includes seminars for duty bearers and stakeholders at the grassroots level on how, when, and where to report violations and other related laws. The Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking's (IACAT) referral and feedback system among duty bearers and stakeholders will be improved. Service directories will be regularly updated and effective referral pathways for essential services (including healthcare, policing and justice services, psychosocial support, reporting and complaints mechanisms, and other necessary support) will be made available and accessible to all OFs. Moreover, coordination among local and international law enforcement agencies will be strengthened. The government will continue to explore ways to cooperate with other countries on combatting trafficking in persons (*see Chapter 18*).



### **Improve mechanisms to monitor the socioeconomic and political conditions of OFs.**

Existing mechanisms to monitor the conditions of OFs, such as ATN Mappings and connections with Filipino communities will be complemented by mechanisms to facilitate regular gatherings to enable embassies to check the status of OFs, particularly OFWs, on a regular basis (*see Chapters 5 and 18*). The OPRT will also conduct threat and environmental scanning regularly.

**Reduce pre-departure costs for OFs.** Technology-enabled platforms such as online payment systems will be enhanced to address the issue of requiring payments in bulk. The burden of paying for placement and training fees will be removed from the OFW in observance of the “employer pays principle” in the recruitment process. To ensure that OFWs are not charged more than the regulations allow, recruitment agencies will be strictly monitored.

## **Facilitating OFs' participation in the country's development and reintegration in Philippine society**

**Strengthen financial inclusion initiatives for OFs and their families.** Faster, safer, and cheaper transfer of remittances will be promoted by advocating the use of technology-based banking such as internet banking and mobile payment applications. To complement the reduction in costs, access to information on financial services must be enhanced through a multi-agency effort to create a centralized portal related to various financial transactions. In addition, economic and financial literacy programs catering specifically to OFs and their families, will continue to be expanded while highlighting financial planning and management. This will include the *Pinansyal na Talino at Kaalaman (PiTaKa)* Program of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) and the OWWA, information on existing government-managed

schemes, such as the SSS provident fund program, and the recently-launched digital services of the Overseas Filipino Bank among others. Furthermore, access to financial products and services will be supported by the full operationalization of the *PhilSys* which will address issues on lack of identity documents for opening bank accounts and verifying financial transactions.

**Ensure successful socioeconomic reintegration of OFs and their families.** The government will facilitate the smooth reintegration of Filipino migrants into Philippine society. The Comprehensive OFW Reintegration Program will be implemented fully and continuously to realize its objectives: (a) incorporation of a gender-responsive reintegration preparedness program in all phases of migration, involving both OFWs and their families left behind; (b) initiation of reintegration pathways for different OFW segments, particularly domestic workers, less-skilled workers, sea-based workers, and professionals; and (c) convergence of initiatives and harmonization of reintegration programs and services of all government agencies and organizations to ensure a comprehensive approach to reintegration.

The budget for the loan guarantee fund of the OWWA for the Enterprise Development and Loan Program (EDLP), which is administered by the agency in partnership with the Land Bank of the Philippines (LANDBANK) and the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP), will be increased. All financial and livelihood assistance initiatives, including grants and loans, will be promoted to reach a greater number of returning Filipinos. For those seeking local employment, the government will strengthen employment facilitation services through proactive job matching, competency assessment, and certification. The convergence of the DOLE's enhanced National Skills Registration Program, the National Reintegration Center for OFWs, and OFW Skills Registry will facilitate matching of employers and employees based on the former's needs and the latter's background and skills.

### **Tap the knowledge and other resources of OFs.**

Mechanisms through which overseas-based experts are able to share their knowledge and specializations with the academe, industry, and government will be strengthened. Likewise, institutional linkages will be fostered through Filipino professionals and experts abroad to induce more collaborations in research and development and capacity-building activities. The potential of OF remittances will be effectively harnessed and channeled into productive investments, through localization of the *BaLinkBayan* Portal and replication of the Overseas Filipino Remittances for Development<sup>3</sup> (OFReD) project.

## **Strengthening engagement of OFs, families, and other stakeholders in governance**

**Mainstream migration into local development planning.** The government will facilitate the inclusion of programs/projects for repatriated OFWs in the Rehabilitation and Recovery Plans of LGUs. Committees, subcommittees, or councils on IMD will be created in key regions to provide a proper venue to discuss migration issues at the local level. It is necessary to include migrant representatives in these committees to ensure that migrants' concerns are addressed and to harness their full potential in contributing to local development.

**Increase overseas voter turnout.** More strategic locations of overseas registration centers abroad will be explored. Massive information campaigns, especially through social media, to encourage OFs to register and vote will be also pursued.

## **Protecting the rights and improving the well-being of foreign nationals in the country**

**Establish clear policy direction as a migrant-receiving country.** The swift passage of amendments to the Philippine Immigration Act of 1940, to enhance the control and regulation of the entry of foreign citizens into the Philippines is a crucial step towards improving immigration policy and management. While work permit issuance by different agencies was harmonized through Joint Memorandum Circular No. 001, s. 2019, the government will look into the eventual transition to a single provider of all work permits for foreign nationals. Moreover, in accordance with the GCM, the security and safety of foreign nationals in the Philippines will be ensured by providing them with basic services, protecting them against discrimination, and upholding due process of law in cases of litigation. Foremost, the government will uphold international treaties on the rights of migrants and guarantee that foreign nationals in the Philippines are not denied basic services on the basis of their status as migrants. The legal framework for the protection of asylum seekers, refugees, and stateless persons, including children, will be developed, including institutionalization of their access to social services.

<sup>3</sup> The OF-RED project was launched by the United Nations Development Programme and the Western Union Foundation and implemented by the CFO.

# Legislative Agenda

For the rest of the Plan period, the following legislative agenda will be pursued:

*Table 21.2 Legislative Agenda to Protect the Rights, Promote the Welfare, and Expand Opportunities for Overseas Filipinos to Contribute to the Country’s Development*

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA	RATIONALE
<b>Subsector Outcome 1: OFs' rights protected and well-being improved</b>	
Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers	This will provide the legislative framework on the implementation of the standards set by international conventions and agreements, such as the Maritime Labor Convention 2006 on the working and living conditions and occupational safety and health, among others, for seafarers.
<b>Subsector Outcome 4: Rights protected and well-being improved for foreign nationals in the country</b>	
Amendments to the Philippine Immigration Act of 1940	The proposed amendments aim to strengthen legal and institutional framework, border control at ports of entry, and regulation and registration of foreign nationals within the country.
Amendment to Articles 40, 41, and 42 of Presidential Decree No. 442 or the Labor Code of the Philippines	This will enhance the country's labor market test, taking into account best practices in other countries.

## ANNEX B

### List of some of the ongoing ASEAN Regional Plans

1. Plan of Action to Strengthen the Implementation of the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (2018-2022)  
<https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/PLAN-OF-ACTION-TO-STRENGTHEN-THE-IMPLEMENTATION-OF-THE-TREATY-ON-THE-SOUTHEAST-ASIA-NUCLEAR-WEAPON-FREE-ZONE-2018-2022.pdf>
2. ASEAN Plan of Action to Prevent and Counter the Rise of Radicalization and Violent Extremism (2018-2025)  
<https://asean.org/storage/2012/05/Adopted-ASEAN-PoA-to-Prevent-and-Counter-PCVE.pdf>
3. 11th AMMTC on ASEAN Comprehensive Plan of Action on Counter Terrorism, 20th September 2017  
<https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/ACPoA-on-CT-Adopted-by-11th-AMMTC.pdf>
4. 7th AMMTC ASEAN Comprehensive Plan of Action on Counter Terrorism, 17th November 2009  
<https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/ACPoA-on-CT.pdf>
5. ASEAN Plan of Action Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children  
<https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/APA-FINAL.pdf>
6. ASEAN Plan of Action in Combating Transnational Crime (2016-2025), 20th September 2017  
[https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/ASEAN-Plan-of-Action-in-Combating-TC\\_Adopted-by-11th-AMMTC-on-20Sept17.pdf](https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/ASEAN-Plan-of-Action-in-Combating-TC_Adopted-by-11th-AMMTC-on-20Sept17.pdf)
7. ASEAN Plan of Action to Combat Transnational Crime  
<https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/ASEAN-Plan-of-Action-to-Combat-Transnational-Crime.pdf>
8. The ASEAN Work Plan on Securing Communities Against Illicit Drugs 2016-2025, Singapore, 20 October 2016  
[https://asean.org/?static\\_post=asean-work-plan-securing-communities-illicit-drugs-2016-2025](https://asean.org/?static_post=asean-work-plan-securing-communities-illicit-drugs-2016-2025)
9. Strategic Action Plans (SAPs) for ASEAN Financial Integration 2016 – 2025  
<https://asean.org/storage/2012/05/SAP-for-Financial-Integration-2025-For-publication.pdf>
10. ASEAN Competition Action Plan (ACAP) 2016-2025  
<https://asean.org/storage/2012/05/ACAP-Website-23-December-2016.pdf>
11. ASEAN Strategic Action Plan for Consumer Protection (ASAPCP) 2025  
<https://asean.org/storage/2012/05/ASAPCP-UPLOADING-11Nov16-Final.pdf>
12. ASEAN Intellectual Property Rights Plan 2016-2025  
<https://asean.org/asean-economic-community/sectoral-bodies-under-the-purview-of-aem/intellectual-property/>
13. ASEAN Strategic Action Plan for SME Development (SAPSMED 2016-2025)  
<https://asean.org/storage/2012/05/3-SAP-SMED-Final.pdf>
14. ASEAN Digital Integration Framework Action Plan (DIFAP) 2019-2025  
[https://asean.org/storage/2018/02/AECC18-ASEAN-DIFAP\\_Endorsed.pdf](https://asean.org/storage/2018/02/AECC18-ASEAN-DIFAP_Endorsed.pdf)
15. ASEAN Strategic Plan for Culture and Arts 2016-2025  
<https://asean.org/storage/2016/10/19.-October-2016-ASEAN-Strategic-Plan-for-Culture-and-Arts-2016-2025.pdf>
16. ASEAN Strategic Plan for Information and Media 2016-2025  
<https://asean.org/storage/2016/09/14.-May-2016-ASEAN-Strategic-Plan-for-Information-and-Media-2016-20251.pdf>
17. Regional Framework and Action Plan to Implement the ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection (2015)  
<https://asean.org/asean-socio-cultural/asean-ministerial-meeting-on-social-welfare-and-development-ammswd/>
18. ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence Against Children (2015)  
<https://asean.org/asean-socio-cultural/asean-ministerial-meeting-on-social-welfare-and-development-ammswd/>



**United Nations  
Network on Migration**  
*Working Better Together*



### Civil society organizations' Initiatives and contributions to the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration (GCM)

Non-government Migration Stakeholder	Initiatives	Contribution to the GCM Implementation
Associated Marine Officers' and Seamen's Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Our main union programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>family medical and dental plan or FMDP, which we extend to our members and dependents through our AMOSUP seamen's hospitals in Manila, Cebu, Iloilo, Davao, and Bacolod (2022)</li> <li>basic needs, through our sailor's home, SLOP chest and Seamen's village</li> <li>education and training, through the maritime academy of Asia and the Pacific and our AMOSUP training centers</li> <li>welfare and legal services, through our legal affairs office and welfare funds</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Objective 8, 15, 18, 22
Atikha Overseas Workers and Communities Initiative, Inc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Atikha is implementing a gender-responsive reintegration program in partnership with the Committee on Migration and Development (CMD) led by NEDA 4A and co-chaired by Atikha. The CMD 4a organized the Technical Working Group Reintegration (TWG Reintegration) which led the implementation of several initiatives related to reintegration. One of the projects during the time of pandemic was the setting up of the Balikabayanihan Program which is a multi-stakeholder partnership involving the national government and local government, Atikha, state universities and colleges and private sector - AIM Alumni Association. It conducted several trainings namely, Balikabayanihan Start and Improve your Business Training, Balikabayanihan Micro-business training and Reintegration Planning for repatriated OFWs and families. These trainings were already conducted by Atikha. We offered to coordinate the conduct of the training in November 2020 and was mainstreamed as a regular program for 2022 by the CMD 4a and SUCs and local government to assist repatriated OFWs. Atikha acts as the coordinator of this</li> </ul>	Objectives 15, 18, 21

	<p>initiative. After the training, the participants are linked to the different loans and grants program of DTI -HEROES program; DA ANYO program, DOST - IFWD program and OWWA Enterprise Development Loan Program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Atikha also was tapped by UN WOMEN in implementing an Economic Empowerment of Returned Migrant Women from Cambodia, Myanmar and Lao PDR conducting training of trainers among migration stakeholders in reintegration planning and in Start and Improve Your Business Training for migrant returnees. We also mentored the migration stakeholders who conducted training to repatriated migrant women especially those who came home during the time of pandemic. Gender equality and shared responsibility was mainstreamed in all the training program conducted by Atikha.</li> <li>• Atikha received a grant of PHP 8M from Grameen Foundation and in partnership with Ekolife OFW Cooperative providing livelihood grant of PHP 10,000. The grantees also were linked to skills training with TESDA and also provided with training on starting small business. 800 OFWs and families benefited from this project.</li> <li>• Atikha implemented a Counter trafficking in Person (CTIP) in partnership with Partnership for Development Assistance of the Philippines (PDAP) and supported by USAID. There is a problem of increase in cases of trafficking because the OFWs are desperate for overseas employment due to unemployment caused by the pandemic. Target beneficiaries are migration stakeholders in CALABARZON and the prospective OFWs and families. It aims to provide information to 2,000 prospective migrants and repatriated migrants. It aims to train 150 migration stakeholders in conducting training on pre-migration orientation seminar and counter trafficking.</li> </ul> <p>The initiative involves the Committee on Migration and Development Region 4A chaired by NEDA and co-chaired by Atikha. The initiative involved the conduct of training of trainers on Pre-Migration Orientation involving selected municipalities and barangay in the 5 provinces of CALABARZON. The initiative trained public employment service officers (PESO) who are mandated to conduct training to prospective migrants and families. They were required to conduct training at the barangay and municipal levels.</p>	<p>Objectives 15, 18, 21, 23</p> <p>Objectives 15, 18, 21</p> <p>Objectives 3, 10</p>
Ateneo de Davao University - Ateneo Migration Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research projects on trafficking in persons, OSAEC, etc.</li> <li>• Involvement in regional stakeholders in addressing migration issues. Internationally, we are collaborating with the UNHCR in its ACWC cooperative project.</li> </ul>	<p>Objective 10</p> <p>Objectives 7, 23</p>
Blas F. Ople Policy Center and Training Institute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Ople Center pushed for the definition of ethical recruitment in the law creating a department of migrant workers. It also called on the POEA to create a technical working group to advance this objective.</li> </ul>	<p>Objective 6</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Ople Center and the IOM Philippines partnered with IACAT for the development of the Integrated Case Management System to track cases of TIP involving OFWs.</li> <li>• Victims of trafficking from Syria were assisted by the Ople Center and were provided reintegration assistance. The Ople Center partnered with San Miguel Corporation and other members of the private sector to provide them with livelihood opportunities towards economic recovery, while pursuing legal action.</li> <li>• The Ople Center reviews trafficking in persons act and make the law more effective in combatting trafficking in OFWs and contributes to actual response and coordination on the ground and with partners.</li> <li>• The Ople Center also supports IACAT to acquire adequate funding to enact its activities and works on joint case management, including the prosecution of trafficking cases and popularizing action line 1343 and information dissemination campaigns.</li> </ul>	<p>Objectives 1, 8, 10</p> <p>Objectives 10, 21</p> <p>Objective 10</p> <p>Objectives 7, 10</p>
<p><b>Bridging Recruitment to Reintegration in Migration Governance</b></p> <p>Joint Programme of the International Labour Organization (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)</p> <p>Funded by the Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mapping of existing data collection and data management practices throughout the labour migration cycle including recruitment, employment, return, and reintegration) of key government agencies DFA, OWWA, POEA, ILAB/POLO and identification of any gaps and challenges; Enhancement of migration data systems</li> <li>• Development and adoption by OWWA of the National Action Plan on Sustainable and Gender-responsive Return and Reintegration; Development of Monitoring &amp; Evaluation Framework and tools for the National Action Plans; Development of Philippine Reintegration Handbook and corresponding training; Development of Reintegration Case Management System</li> <li>• Designing Migration for Women design thinking workshop for 50 personnel of Philippine migration governance agencies in March 2022 to help these agencies strengthen the gender-responsiveness of their migration policies and programmes, in line with gender-responsiveness being an overarching principle of the Global Compact for Migration</li> <li>• Gender Assessment Report on migration data collection practices by Philippine migration governance agencies and actors</li> <li>• A series of workshops and roll out learning modules on data ethics in migration data collection, use, storage, and dissemination</li> <li>• Conduct of a pilot project on migrant worker returnee reintegration entitled Reintegrating Women through IT Reskilling and Education (ReWIREd) to equip 50 migrants and migrant returnees with IT skills that can be used for freelance remote work</li> <li>• Promoting access to information on available services for OFWs and their families - the BRIDGE and Safe and Fair Programme, in consultation with tripartite plus constituents, are co-developing the OFW Reintegration Advisor and Referral Pathways</li> </ul>	<p>Objective 1</p> <p>Objective 21</p> <p>Objective 7</p> <p>Objectives 1, 7</p> <p>Objectives 1, 7</p> <p>Objectives 7, 18, 21</p> <p>Objectives 7, 21</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Reintegration Framework is being drafted that will help provide strategic framework for developing and implementing policies, programmes and services, and action plans on reintegration, anchored on principles towards facilitating effective and sustainable reintegration</li> <li>• Migrant Resource Center and OFW helpdesks are being provided technical assistance on labour migration governance, gender-responsive service delivery, establishing data collection mechanisms in partnership with local government unit/s</li> <li>• Collaborating the Sub-Committee on International Migration and Development (SCIMD)—the national structure ensuring policy coherence on migration—in implementing migration initiatives in regional/local level to help ensure alignment with national priorities/needs</li> <li>• Ongoing on the impact of labour migration on educational outcomes of children; results would inform policy and programme recommendations on recruitment and reintegration to be endorsed to relevant government agencies</li> <li>• Code of Conduct Monitoring tool will be developed, and pilot tested with a pilot recruitment association with elements of grievance redress mechanisms</li> <li>• BRIDGE and Safe and Fair Programmes collaborate with the Department of Labour and Employment on conducting stakeholders' consultation to gather inputs for the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of the Department of Migrant Workers Act</li> </ul>	<p>Objective 21</p> <p>Objectives 1, 7</p> <p>Objective 7</p> <p>Objectives 6, 21</p> <p>Objective 6</p>
Center for Migrant Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Onboarding of community-based migrant organizations and local government units (LGU) on the GCM process (<a href="#">2017, 2018</a>)</li> <li>• Post-GCM adoption <a href="#">consultation with CSOs</a> with Migrant Forum in Asia (<a href="#">2019</a>) to revisit the document and for inputs to the National Action Plan. As a result, several LGU partners and OFW groups participated in the regional review process in March 2021</li> <li>• Participation in the Asia-Pacific Regional Review of the GCM implementation (<a href="#">2021</a>) – from drafting to adoption, to monitoring of progress of implementation and onboarding of relevant stakeholders</li> <li>• Conduct of migration-related research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <a href="#">On skills matching</a></li> <li>○ On reintegration (context-based – Bicol (2021), Negros Occidental (2022))</li> <li>○ On <a href="#">performance of POLOs in the time of COVID-19</a></li> <li>○ On <a href="#">BLAs on domestic workers</a> (2021)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Facilitation of reintegration and livelihood programs for OFCs in Lupao, Palayan City and Laur in partnership with PhilRice (March 2022)</li> </ul>	<p>Objectives 2, 18</p> <p>Objective 21</p> <p>Objectives 14, 15</p> <p>Objectives 14, 15</p> <p>Objective 21</p> <p>Objective 21</p>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitation of webinars on gender-responsive reintegration programs under whole-of-government approach, onboarding other agencies like TESDA, DA, DTI, DOST, SSS, DSWD, etc. for Negros Occidental OFC federation and provincial government MRC and Tabaco City LGU and MRC</li> <li>• Participation in the National Employment Recovery Strategy (NERS) process</li> <li>• In partnership with ILO under Safe and Fair Programme, development of modules on pre-departure, onsite, return/post migration and transit stages of migration; Conduct of training programmes using the modules for OFCs, LGUs in 2021; Development of PAOS module for migrant domestic workers bound for Qatar</li> <li>• Development of module for training programme on safe, fair, and ethical recruitment intended for OFCs and LGUs nationwide; Conduct of training (<a href="#">2021</a>); Facilitation of a multistakeholder consultation and issued a manifesto in this regard</li> <li>• Conduct of a multistakeholder consultation on social protection for migrants (January 2022); Monitoring access of migrants to social security programs in Countries of Destinations (CODs), including SSAs</li> </ul>	<p>Objective 2,18 Objective 3</p> <p>Objective 6</p> <p>Objective 22</p>
Development Action for Women Network (DAWN)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DAWN provides a holistic approach in the reintegration of distressed women migrant returnees, especially victims of gender-based violence and human trafficking. Among our programs are provision of psychosocial assistance and alternative livelihood opportunities.</li> </ul>	Objectives 10, 15, 16, 21, 22
International Organization for Migration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct of migration-related research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ COVID-19 Socio-economic Impact Assessment on Returned Overseas Filipino Workers (<a href="#">2021</a>)</li> <li>○ Philippines: Direct Hiring of Overseas Filipino Workers - Policy Research and Development of a Risk Assessment and Due Diligence Guidelines (<a href="#">2021</a>)</li> <li>○ Seeking Justice: Developing Improved OFW Feedback and Complaints Mechanism</li> <li>○ Mainstreaming Ethical Recruitment of OFWs to GCC States: A research study on recruitment policies and processes from the Philippines to the Gulf Cooperation Council countries (with sub-reports on the domestic work and hospitality sectors) (2022)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Aligning Lenses Toward Ethical Recruitment (ALTER) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Development and adoption by DOLE of the National Action Plan on Fair and Ethical Recruitment</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Objectives 1, 3</p> <p>Objective 1, 6</p> <p>Objectives 1, 10</p> <p>Objectives 1, 6</p> <p>Objective 6</p> <p>Objective 6</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Capacity-building training on fair and ethical recruitment, IRIS and Montreal Recommendations with government, civil society organizations and private recruitment agencies</li> <li>○ Improving grievance and feedback mechanisms with Blas Ople Center through the development of the CARLA chatbot (to be utilized by DOJ-IACAT)</li> <li>● Enhancing the Protection of Migrant Workers Impacted by COVID-19 (CREST) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Supporting Civil Society's Response to COVID-19 by providing direct assistance and reintegration services to returned OFWs and their families</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Improving Migrant and Community Preparation and Awareness to Counter Trafficking (IMPACT) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Capacity-building of anti-TiP stakeholders in BARMM and strengthening data sharing mechanisms to support anti-TiP data collection, analysis, and reporting</li> <li>○ Creation of context sensitive PDOS materials for prospective migrants in BARMM that are most at risk of TiP</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Objective 10</p> <p>Objective 15, 21</p> <p>Objectives 7, 10</p>
Kanlungan Center Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Kanlungan Center Foundation, Inc. (KCFI) is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that allies with international migrant workers in campaigns and advocating policies for a rights-based approach to labour migration. We are committed to justice for migrants thus legally defend the rights and liberties of Filipino migrants who experience illegal recruitment and/or human trafficking. All support and assistance provided to migrant workers and their families is grounded in strengthening their power, voice, and action on their issues.</li> </ul>	Objective 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 17, 21, 23
Philippine Migrants Rights Watch (PMRW)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● PMRW is a civil society network that encourages the recognition, protection, and fulfilment of Filipino migrants' rights, both in the Philippines and abroad and during the entire migration process. Among our work includes education campaigns, lobby work and conduct of dialogue with stakeholders and policymakers.</li> </ul>	Objectives 1, 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23
OFW Council of Leaders (OCL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● OCL has been an implementing arm and contributes to the government efforts in helping victims of trafficking.</li> </ul>	Objective 10
UN High Commissioner for Refugees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <a href="#">Desk Review Report</a> on populations at risk of statelessness with specific focus on children in migratory settings particularly in the Middle East. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Desk Review Report provides information on undocumented Filipinos including children of Philippine descent. Data on undocumented children who may be at risk of statelessness can be found in Annex A (around 9,000 children from 2018 to 2020). It further provides recommendations to address their risk of statelessness.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Objective 4</p> <p>Objectives 6, 7</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Desk Review Report examined frameworks of Middle Eastern countries with regard to the protection of OFWs and the issues they and their children face.</li> <li>○ The Desk Review provides information on the conditions of unregistered children (some of which may be girls) who were born out of wedlock to Filipino women who may also be a survivor of rape. It also looks into some efforts of the Philippines with regard to the challenges faced by these women. For instance, in Kuwait, the Embassy assist undocumented pregnant women, while in Saudi Arabia, the Embassy used advisories to inform mothers with undocumented children to avail themselves of the repatriation program of the Philippines.</li> <li>● <a href="#">Sama Bajau Profiling Report</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Project aimed to strengthen measures to address the risk of statelessness among Sama Bajaus by registering their births. Initiated in 2019, the Project has led to the birth registration of 1,442 Sama Bajaus.</li> <li>○ For Zamboanga City, the Project is led by the Philippine Government through the Department of Justice - Refugees and Stateless Persons Protection Unit (DOJ-RSPPU) at the national level and the City Government of Zamboanga at the local level. It also involved the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) Region IX through its Zamboanga Office. UNHCR and UNICEF also extended technical support in line with its UNHCR - UNICEF Joint Strategy for Addressing Childhood Statelessness. The endeavor is aligned with Action Point 5 of the Government's National Action Plan to End Statelessness (Ensure birth registration for the prevention of statelessness).</li> </ul> </li> <li>● The National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) of Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines entered into a <b>Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on statelessness issues in Sabah</b>. The MOU aims to strengthen partnership among the 3 entities to improve the situation for stateless persons and persons at risk of statelessness in Sabah from a human rights perspective. Part of the work of the NHRIs is to conduct joint research, coordinate with relevant agencies and utilize relevant processes such as the GCM to raise the issue of statelessness.</li> </ul>	<p>Objective 14</p> <p>Objective 4</p> <p>Objective 4</p>
United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● UN Women has an on-going collaboration with the Philippine Commission on Women who serves as secretariat of the Interagency Council on Violence against Women and their Children. In this collaboration, UN Women organized the series of training-workshops with key government agencies and stakeholders involved in information systems and processing. The collection of reporting and monitoring forms that cover administrative data on violence against women and migration is on-going.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The approved Cebu City Ordinance Providing for Coordinated Quality Services for Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) was named after the capacity-building initiative of UN Women Safe and Fair Programme. The ordinance, approved last 31 August 2021, institutionalizing, and establishing helpdesk for overseas Filipino workers that would facilitate coordination and referral services for migration and VAW actors at the local level highlighting issue of GBV against women migrant workers.</li> <li>A total of 1,606 users, where 1,128 are women have participated in various activities of UN Women Safe and Fair Programme organized by UN Women partners. These partner organizations are community-based and women-led networks active in preventing violence against women and trafficking; namely: Babaeng Biyahero Psychosocial Support Team, Center for Migrant Advocacy, Women's Legal and Human Rights Bureau, Institute for Politics and Governance, Batis Center for Women and Development Action for Women Network (DAWN). UN Women provided technical and financial support to these partner organizations who organized activities for the benefit of women migrant workers.</li> </ul>	
Unlad Kabayan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Our organization is working on strategies and specific actions to make reintegration meaningful, productive, and enduring. It addresses both issues of reintegration and root causes by contributing to creation of local jobs and decent wages. Having opportunities to decent local jobs, migration becomes an option and reintegration an attractive alternative to working overseas and remain with family. Some publications on these concerns are in our website: <a href="http://www.unladkabayan.org">www.unladkabayan.org</a> Working with left behind families and marginalized women/communities and education/information about the pros and cons of migration is an approach in our work.</li> </ul>	Objectives 2, 7, 19, 20, 21, 22
UP CIFAL Philippines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UP-CIFAL Philippines hosted a webinar on the return and reintegration of Filipina Student Migrants in the Sciences. The webinar aimed to explore the return and reintegration of student migrants in the Philippines and their contributions towards Sustainable Development. The stakeholders included Filipino students aspiring to work in the field of science, Filipino student migrants themselves, and the various agencies and institutions that facilitate their movement and return.</li> </ul> <p>What was shared was the various programs from the DOST-SEI in facilitating knowledge gain of Overseas Filipinos and entry into the workforce once returning, and the various efforts of these scientists in contributing to sustainable development. The challenges in their return were the barriers in the workplace e.g., bureaucracy and that there were</p>	Objectives 4, 19, 21

	<p>limited opportunities for them when they returned. They as student migrants desired to return and to contribute however faced with difficulties and struggles.</p> <p>We propose a wider outlook on reintegration which encompasses the broader dispersals of Filipinos towards Sustainable Development. This can be done in alignment to the GCM and the SDGs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity-building course: "<b>SDGs for Transformational Business</b>". It aims to integrate the SDGs in various Philippine business corporations and business plans. This contributes to the GCM in terms of inclusion of migrants in skills development and in social inclusion.</li> <li>• Flagship Programme: <b>Professional Course on Global Migration (PCGM)</b> The course offers a comprehensive and pragmatic approach to addressing the challenges of migration governance and strengthening its relation to the UN SDGs and the GCM. The course links human mobility to human rights, international laws, gender, and the diverse impacts of migration on social, economic, and cultural dimensions. It shows how migration issues and processes are addressed by states, civil society, private sector, and by migrants themselves. The professional course is intended for migration practitioners and advocates. The PCGM has had four offerings with learners mainly from Philippine national government agencies. Since its first offering in 2019, the PCGM has 78 graduates from DFA, DOH, OWWA, POEA, DOLE, Quezon City PESO, government agencies, the private sector, and international organizations.</li> </ul> <p>The Centre also conducts research on various migration issues such as on the prevalence of forced and bonded labor among OFWs, recruitment in labor migration from the Philippines to the GCC, and Korean and Chinese inward migration to the Philippines.</p> <p>The Centre also conducts dialogues through roundtable discussions, consultations, webinars, and conferences on the cross-cutting issues of migration and related issues like the environment, gender dimensions, among others.</p>	<p>Objectives 16, 18, 19, 20</p> <p>Objectives 1, 2, 6, 23</p>
Women's Legal and Human Rights Bureau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration with Marikina LGU to look into their forms to include migration context in their data gathering, aiming to address the lack of data on the nexus of VAW relating to migration context especially that of women. The draft protocol and ordinance that we drafted for two municipalities that we are working will pave way to ensure gender responsive response to address cases of gender-based violence in the context of migration.</li> </ul>	<p>Objective 1</p> <p>Objective 7</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of a gender-sensitive referral system at the local level through the <a href="#">conduct of Write-Shop</a> on developing Protocols on VAW and Migration. This write-shop aims to empower and maximize the role of Marikina LGU so that they may be able to respond to the distinct needs of women migrant workers in their locality.</li> </ul>	
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## What are the main gaps and challenges to existing national approaches, strategies, and implementation plans on migration?

### General challenges:

- Our take off in the realization of the 23 objectives of the GCM is the fact that these objectives are interrelated to one another and therefore, Member States and relevant stakeholders must address the objectives holistically and comprehensively. This is the clear value added of having a GCM as the first ever multilateral framework on migration governance.
- The pandemic has affected the implementation of MOUs, particularly those relevant to statelessness and refugees. In view of the sensitivities surrounding the area, engagement with human rights institutions is a good avenue to address statelessness in Sabah. However, it is recommended that the MOU be implemented.

### Objective 10:

- Investigation and prosecution: many cases occur in different jurisdictions and involves different government systems
- Combatting trafficking also requires reintegration efforts: Most TIP cases require support for re-integration and after-care assistance.
- There is a need for an extensive adoption of database relating to counter-trafficking which is available to all relevant government agencies

## What are some best practices, innovative approaches and recommendations which can help the Philippines progress further the aims and ambitions of the GCM?

### Recommendations:

- **On the GCM process**
  - Ensure that process is transparent, consultative, and inclusive of relevant stakeholders including our OFCs and LGUs (OFW Help Desk/ MRCS/ PESOs) and OFW groups overseas too
  - Maximize the benefits of online technology for broader reach.
- **Objective 1:** Undertake additional research to better understand what has led to improvements for the rights and conditions of OFWs, including those who may have fallen into an undocumented status in Gulf countries.

- Conduct investigating missions similar to the one organized by the Committee on Overseas Workers' Affairs (for reference, please see [Report](#))
  - Facilitate periodic opportunities for sharing of information and experiences among Social Welfare Attaches to compare practices and share strategies and lessons learned
  - Map civil society and migrant and diaspora organizations who may be able to provide more information about this population (initiatives, gaps and challenges, data). Also relevant to **Objective 19: Diaspora Engagement**
- **Address Objectives 2 and 21 alongside each other.** This will provide a more holistic strategy that can contribute immensely to making migration an informed free choice and not one out of compulsion. Objective 2 roots out structural gaps and adverse drivers to make our communities resilient also to disasters and adverse impacts of climate change that push people to migrate out of compulsion. The Philippine Government has failed to address this in the last 4 decades or so; Objective 21 is the scenario post-migration. This can factor in preparedness of migrants for their eventual return to the Philippines, acquired skills, assets and investments of migrants which can facilitate effective sustainable reintegration.
    - Implement the whole of government and whole of society approaches to achieve GCM Objectives 2 and 21 including "Balik Probinsya" for sustainable green reintegration and livelihood programs for a more coherent response to reintegration
    - Invest on skills upgrading and social protection
    - Give full play to DTI, DA, DOST, DSWD, etc. to incentivize migrants to organize themselves into collections/ associations/ OFCs and also assist them to meet accreditation/ registration requirements to facilitate access to programs and services of various government agencies
- **Improving birth registration among Sama Bajaus through Objective 4:**
    - Pursuing horizontal and vertical advocacy initiatives
    - Strengthening frameworks, programs, and interventions through Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS)-related laws that would provide capacity building at the barangay level and implementation of the Barangay Civil Registration Systems (BCRS)
    - Mainstreaming information campaigns (ensure the meaningful and effective participation of Sama Bajaus)
    - Implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on statelessness issues in Sabah between the National Human Rights Institutions of Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines
- **Continuing the momentum towards meeting GCM Objective 6.** We are already making headways here.
    - We should complement efforts with ratification of ILO Convention 181.
    - Strengthening partnerships with LGUs and community-based migrant organizations is important because it is at the communities that migrants are at and therefore scammers and traffickers, and illegal recruiters prey on the communities.
    - Support as well the operations of OFW help desk/ migrant resource centers.
    - Progress in addressing GCM objectives 2 & 21 by government actors (POEA à DMW) can impact on efforts to achieve Objective 6.
    - Ratification of the Philippine government of ILO Fishers Convention 109 that protects seafarers and Filipino fishers from modern day slavery and abandonment



- Increase government budget for legal and national assistance for distressed OFWs
- **Continuous efforts in providing access to basic services for migrants (Objective 15).** We hope that the Philippines will consistently take a lead role in mobilizing a collective response to migrant issues vis-a-vis access and/or provision of basic social services, regardless of status and occupations, especially in Countries of Destinations (CODs). The platforms of ASEAN, Abu Dhabi Dialogue and Colombo Process should be relevant to this endeavor. With the GCM being supported by CODs as well, we should be able to maximize the opportunity to take them to task as well. Shared responsibility at the very least; migrants are not public charge and do not drain the resources of CODs; instead, they are agents of change and contribute immensely to development. Towards this end, again, **Objective 17 can help change perception of migrants in CODs.**
- **Strengthen reintegration programs (Objective 21)**
  - Provide platforms for cooperation to match reintegration beneficiaries to private sectors and non-government organizations
  - Discuss reintegration even before Filipino migrants leave for overseas. Involve migrant's family members and community in the reintegration planning and financial management and literacy programs
- **Advocate strongly for the inclusion of migrant workers in social protection and society security programs of CODs (Objective 22).** Access and enjoyment of social protection, social security are basic human rights, and migrants are denied this. Our efforts to extend unilateral social security system and other social protection measures are commendable but again, it is more than overdue to invoke the GCM objectives and advocate strongly for inclusion of migrant workers in social protection and social security programs of CODs and then ensure portability of such which may entail law reforms and/or administrative reforms. The minimum is ensuring compliance of employers on social protection provisions in the contract and ensuring that end-of-service benefits/ gratuities are afforded to migrants; even as we recognize efforts of CODs in the GCC to extend more social protection and safety nets to migrants in the form of private insurance enrolment at no cost to the workers.
  - The Philippines is model for CIOP, a trailblazer in promoting social dialogue and representation of migrants in consultative bodies (e.g., OLTCC, NTIPC) and in extending unilateral social security/ social protection. It is the turn of CODs to do their share. Let us use the GCM to compel CODs to do their share.
- **Ensure BLAs and SSAs are living documents (Objective 23).** We lead in forging BLAs and SSAs. Make sure the BLAs and SSAs are living documents that will enhance protection for our OFWs. Step up the initiative and aim for minilaterals/ subregional and regional instruments, for example for domestic workers.