

ILO-EEC Return and Reintegration Project

Going Back — Moving On: Economic and Social Empowerment of Migrants including Victims of Trafficking Returned from the EU and its Neighbouring Countries



International
Labour
Organization

The Challenge



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In search of higher wages, many workers end up working overseas. Europe is often considered an answer to workers' goal of earning lucrative pay for them to send enough money back home.

There are one million Filipino and Thai migrant workers currently living in Europe. Many Filipino and Thai women are attracted to work in Europe primarily because of the high demand in the services sector, giving them opportunities to work as domestic workers or caregivers.

However, some of these workers—most of whom are women—do not have the necessary documentation and/or end up in irregular status. This makes them more vulnerable to labour exploitation, and even sexual abuse. Some seek help from embassies or refuge shelters while others are unable to seek assistance or are hesitant for fear of being deported.

For these migrants, going back to their home countries is often their last option. Once they have decided or are forced to go home, they become indebted or empty-handed. Back home, they usually face more difficulties. Aside from financial problems, they may also suffer from physical and psychosocial trauma because of their unfavorable experiences in their struggle to find a decent job.

The Response

The International Labour Organization European Economic Community (ILO-EEC) Project serves as the response of the ILO to the plight of Thai and Filipino migrants.

The Project focuses in improving the capacities of countries of origin and destination, while enhancing the coordination and referrals between them. The Project also supports service providers for them to give better assistance to returning migrants. Further, the Project aims to improve the access of returnees to support services.

Returning migrants are given the opportunity to be integrated in their communities as they gain new skills or improve their present capacities. Livelihood and skills upgrades are also offered, aside from psychosocial interventions.

This highlights the ILO's support to the goal of the Philippine government to achieve sustainable, inclusive and greener growth, while reducing poverty through decent and productive work. Through this Project, migrant workers can be saved from abuse and exploitation. The Project also aims as a response to human trafficking.

The Project involves stakeholders in Europe, the Philippines, and Thailand, using social dialogue as well as in-country and cross-border networking.

Key Statistics

- The Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) estimates that 954,000 Filipinos live in Europe 285,000 are permanent residents, 556,000 are temporary, and 113,000 are undocumented/irregular migrants (2010).
- According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Thailand, there are between 200,000 and 300,000 Thai migrants in Europe, most of whom are irregular workers (2008).

Objectives

The Project's main objective is to help reduce labour and sexual abuse of migrants, including victims of trafficking. This can be done by helping them in their return to the Philippines and Thailand, and voluntary reintegration into their chosen communities to avoid risks of facing the same problems again.

Specifically, the Project aims to:

- improve the existing referral mechanism of returned migrants between their destination and home countries;
- enrich the knowledge base regarding return and reintegration between Asia and Europe;
- refer returning migrants to the right services upon their return; and
- assist in giving sustainable socio-economic reintegration support with the migrants' home countries.

Relevant ILO Conventions and Recommendations

- Migration for Employment Convention, 1949 (No. 97)
- Migrant Workers Convention, 1975 (No. 143)

Achievements

- Training and livelihood and skills upgrading provided to returning migrants for them to have more options on their career path.
- Returned migrants received psychosocial, medical, legal, and other services as well as financial grants to start a business or livelihood.
- The coordination between and among relevant national government agencies, local government units (LGUs), and non-government organizations has been improved through multi-stakeholder partnership.
- Training of national and local service providers on migration and trafficking including case management for victims and survivors.
- Community awareness and safe migration campaigns conducted in vulnerable communities.
- Migration and Development integrated in local governance and development planning, i.e. adoption of a five-year La Union Migration and Development Strategic Plan.
- Studies on return and reintegration of Filipino migrants from the EU and neighbouring countries completed.



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Components

Donor: European Union

Start Date: February 2009

End Date: May 2012

Budget: US\$2.5 million (combined allocation for the Philippines and Thailand)

Partners:

Philippines: Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs-DFA, Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO), Kanlungan Center Foundation, Inc. and Batis Center for Women

Thailand: National Operation Centre for the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking, Bureau of Anti-Trafficking in Women and Children of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, Department of Consular Affairs of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Department of Employment of Ministry Labour; Foundation of Women, Thai Labour Campaign, Employers' Confederation of Thailand, UNAIP, and other relevant International Organizations

Europe: Thai and Filipino Embassies, La Strada Czech and Poland, International Organization for Migration, Thai Women Network, and Diaspora Organizations

Project Sites: Philippines and Thailand

