

Returning to one's home country is often a last option, an action taken only when conditions are completely untenable or when deportation is inevitable. When exploited migrants decide to go back, or are forced to return, they usually come home empty-handed. Many are also heavily indebted, facing family and social difficulties including social stigma, physically and psychologically affected and generally lacking access to employment opportunities.

Due to the weak transnational coordination many returnees never receive pre-return and post-return assistance and face great difficulties once back home, in particular in terms of decent livelihood opportunities. When reintegration services are available they are often unknown to individual returnees or tend to cover only those who have come back through official channels. Successful reintegration in their countries of origin is therefore seriously undermined and, as a consequence, many choose to re-emigrate, exposing themselves to renewed risks of exploitation and trafficking.

Based on the findings of previous research, three problems have been identified within the field of return and reintegration, which also go some way to explaining the high number of victims who decline assistance. These relate to the availability and accessibility of support services to returnees and to the capacity of different actors to provide those services in a coordinated way:

- 1) The need for increased access to decent livelihood upon return;
- 2) The need to support return with dignity, since social stigma is a chronic obstacle to successful reintegration
- 3) The need for close coordination and knowledge-sharing among service providers in the EU, neighbouring countries and Asia.

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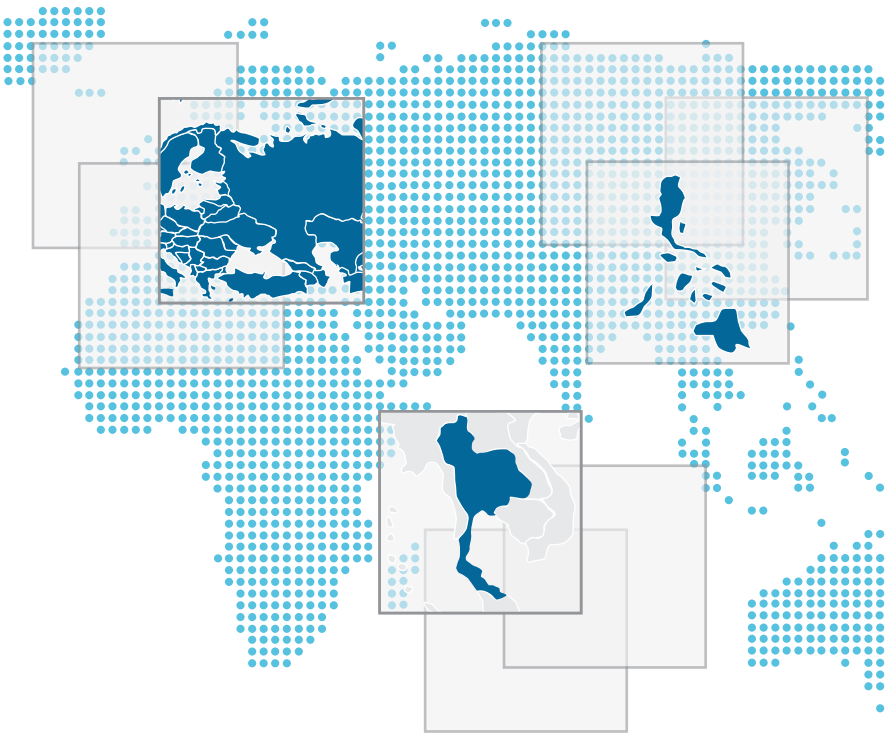
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DECENT WORK

A better world starts here.



Going back – Moving on:

Economic and Social Empowerment of
Migrants including Victims of Trafficking
Returned from the EU and
Neighbouring Countries

2009-2011

From Southeast Asia to Europe and Back: Risky Journeys

It may come as a surprise to some – but there are presently one million Filipino and Thai migrant workers living in Europe. Most make the journey in search of higher wages and the increased prospects of sending money back home to help out family members. Many Filipina and Thai women are attracted to Europe by the increasing labour demand in the service sector – especially in care and domestic work.

But not all of these migrants have work permits. As many as 15 per cent of Filipinos in Europe (male and female), are in an irregular status – however the majority of them are women – leaving them vulnerable to both labour and sexual exploitation. Even if most of them enter European countries with regular visas, they often end up in an irregular employment status and thus become exposed to these exploitative conditions. Given their occupational profile and the irregularity of their status, some experience the worst forms of labour exploitation and become victims of human trafficking. When the abuse becomes too much to bear, some migrants will run away from their abusers and seek refuge in their embassies or in women's shelters. However, it's not unusual for cases such as these to go unreported to the competent authorities for fear of being deported or of retaliation by recruiters or traffickers. Further aggravating the situation is that existing assistance at destination is often unavailable or unknown to undocumented migrants, especially when they do not speak the local language and/or have been living and working in isolation (for example in cases of live-in domestic work or in-home care giving).



Our objectives and strategies

As part of an overall Asia Regional Labour Migration Programme, the International Labour Organization (ILO) is implementing this EU-funded project, targeting Thai and Filipino migrants returning home from EU and neighbouring countries. The project’s overall objective is to contribute to the reduction of labour and sexual exploitation of migrants including victims of trafficking by assisting them in their return to their home countries and voluntary reintegration to communities of their choice to avoid the risks of encountering the same problems again in the future. To reach this aim the project adopts a two-pronged strategy aimed at supporting service providers to deliver better and more coherent and comprehensive direct assistance in both Europe and in Thailand & the Philippines. It includes strengthening a coordination and referral mechanism between relevant actors in countries of origin and destination. The project is engaging and mobilizing stakeholders in Europe and in the two countries of origin, namely the labour and migration authorities, employers, trade unions, NGOs & migrant organizations and the Thai and Filipino communities themselves through social dialogue and networking in-country and cross-border.

1. Improved knowledge base on return and reintegration between Asia and Europe

2. Improved coordination and referral mechanism between destination and origin countries

Key Results

3. Provided or referred return migrants to appropriate services prior to return and upon immediate return

4. Provided long-term and sustainable socio-economic reintegration support in countries of origin

Indeed, the project emphasises the need to strengthen transnational cooperation between countries of origin and destination so as to provide more and better services to migrant workers who have experienced exploitation. Too often neglected in current return and reintegration programmes, one aim is to improve service providers’ capacity in the area of encouraging or helping to provide economic empowerment. Successful reintegration programmes cannot be limited to the assistance provided immediately upon return but should be expanded to cover longer term support, including career counselling, market oriented skills training and employment promotion activities at community level.

Ultimately, successful return is intimately linked to efforts to promote sustainable alternatives to migration in the communities of origin, such as supporting entrepreneurship development and access to credit and saving schemes.

Outputs Per Key Result

KR 1: Knowledge base

- Baseline on return and reintegration practices and key trends
- Directory of service providers
- Info/campaign materials for migrants
- Website for sharing of information

KR 2: Coordination

- Inter-regional referral system and guidelines (through the meetings of expert and of service providers)
- Systematic and on-line connections
- Training manual and training courses
- Mobilization of workers & employers groups

KR 3: Pre-return & after return services

- Initial counseling and other services at destination
- Repatriation assistance
- Referral services
- Intake & family/community support
- ‘Start-up’ and financial grants
- Peer support services
- Legal assistance

KR 4: Long-term social & economic support

- Career counseling & occupational guidance
- Life skills
- Technical and vocational training for sustainable livelihood
- Seed money
- Job placement services
- Information on safe, legal re-migration
- Family reorientation

Our partner organisations:

- The project is implemented in coordination and partnership with a variety of relevant organisations in Europe, Thailand and the Philippines. These include, among others:
 - **In Thailand:** The National Operation Centre for the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking – NOCHT and the Bureau of Anti Trafficking in Women and Children (BATWC) of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security; Department of Consular Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Department of Employment of Ministry of Labour; the Foundation of Women (FFW), the Thai Labour Campaign (TLC), the Employers’ Confederation Of Thailand (ECOT), UNAIP and other relevant international organisations.
 - **In the Philippines:** The Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs (OUMWA) of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA); Philippine Overseas Labour Office (POLO); Kanlungan Centre Foundation, Inc and Batis Center for Women.
 - **In Europe** a network of counterpart organisations has been identified and mobilised as part of the project activities. These include the Thai and Filipino Embassies, IGOs such as La Strada Czech and Poland, International Organization for Migration (IOM), NGOs such as Thai Women Network and Diaspora organisations who provide services to migrants and victims of trafficking.

Our target groups and beneficiaries

- Key service providers at origin and destination
- 1,000 return migrants who have experienced labour and sexual exploitation including victims of trafficking from the EU and the neighbouring countries