



POLICY BRIEF 1

IMPROVING MIGRANT SERVICES FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Executive Summary

Diverse migrant services are provided to Filipino migrant workers, mainly by the Philippine government and also by private business, non-government organizations and trade unions. A recent assessment study grouped these migrant services into four types: overseas information, personal financial security, social security and welfare, competency, skills enhancement as well as return and reintegration. These were found useful to Filipino migrant workers, increasing their awareness of their rights and responsibilities and that of the benefits and effects of foreign employment. However, these services are diverse, overlapping, uncoordinated and undifferentiated according to migrants' skills levels. This policy brief calls attention to the proposed interventions, including the organizing of a network among migrant service stakeholders to stimulate synergy in making policies and programmes responsive to migrant health professionals and workers.

Introduction

In managing Filipino worker migration, the Philippine government enacted laws and policies to promote and protect migrant workers' rights and welfare and ensure legal and ethical recruitment. Various migrant services have been provided by government agencies, private sector and non-government organizations, professional associations and trade unions.

The "Assessment of Existing Services for Skilled Migrant Workers: Philippines Project Site" (Lorenzo, et.al.2012), a study commissioned by the International Labour Organization and the European Union funded Decent Work Across Borders Project (ILO-DWAB), examined these migrant services and their providers. Based on the study results, this policy brief highlights the issues and gaps in migrant services, particularly health professionals and suggests the recommended interventions.

The evidence shows diverse migrant service programmes are overlapping, uncoordinated, mainly non-differentiated for skilled and non-skilled workers and could be enhanced. Consequently, a need to streamline and

coordinate current migrant services, update policies and programmes has been identified as well as the benefits to organize a coordination network among migrant service providers. Multi-stakeholder participants to the study proposed that a network be formed among migrant service providers to initiate and implement changes in policies and programmes and make these responsive to migrant health professionals.

Approach and Results

The assessment team of Lorenzo et.al (2012) conducted a review of related literature, interviewed key informants and organized focus group and round table discussions. Twenty-three (23) public and private stakeholder organizations, 50 key informants and 28 migrant health professionals and prospective migrants participated in the assessment. The migrant service providers included government agencies, non-government organizations, trade unions, recruitment agencies and professional organizations.

The policy brief draws from the evidence and recommendations of the study. It emphasizes the initiative for networking among migrant service

providers, as a way to generate synergy, facilitate coordination and collaborate in introducing necessary changes in migrant services.

Philippine Policies and Migrant Services

The Philippines is guided by the 1974 Labor Code (Presidential Decree No. 442) for the protection, employment and development of Filipino human resources. The 1995 Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act (Republic Act 8042) is considered a landmark legislation for the management of Filipino labour migration. The amendment in 2007 (Republic Act 9422) provided for mandatory insurance for migrants and in 2010 (Republic Act 10022) for the deployment only in countries that protect the rights of Filipino overseas workers. Changes in government policies and programmes have been influenced by the concern for migrant's training, development and employability and their rights, welfare and benefits as migrants. Cases of abuse of human rights and public reaction have further pressured the Philippine government to formulate policies and take action on the plight of migrant workers.

The key government agencies for the delivery of migrant services are the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) and the National Reintegration Center for Overseas Filipino Workers (NRCO). Also actively involved are the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO), and the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA). The Department of Health (DOH) has become a key player in ensuring that migrant health professionals receive services as they move for work abroad and upon return to the Philippines.

Besides government some of the agencies currently most involved in providing services for migrant health professionals include NGOs such as Ang Nars; Professional organizations such as the Philippine Nurses Association (PNA), Philippine Physical Therapy Association (PPTA), and Philippine Pharmacists Association (PPhA); recruitment agencies such as EDI Staffbuilders International inc., LBS Recruitment Solutions Corporation and Manpower Resources of Asia, Inc.; trade union organizations such as Public Services Labor

Independent Confederation (PSLink) and the Philippine Government Employees Association (PGEA).

Diverse migrant services may be grouped into subject areas: (1) overseas employment information, (2) personal financial security, (3) social security and welfare, (4) competency and skills enhancement and (5) return-reintegration. Either one or more service providers offered single or multiple service programmes.

Data showed that the Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar (PDOS) and Pre-Employment Orientation Seminars (PEOS) are conducted by most service providers, specifically by government agencies, as well as recruitment agencies, professional organizations and trade unions. At pre-departure, on site and upon return of migrants, government agencies conduct programmes on remittances education, social security and welfare, financial security and re-integration.

Gaps in Migrant Services

The assessment highlights gaps in migrant services provided by government, private business, non-government organizations and trade unions, as part of implementing Philippine labour laws and policies intended to promote and protect migrant workers' rights.

The PDOS and PEOS are the most visible services provided by government and other agencies. Respondents perceived them to be generally helpful for migrant workers; however, issues with regard to their implementation abound. Relevance concerns in terms of the timing of the orientation seminar and content were raised. As this service is offered by many service providers, PDOS was also perceived to overlap with PEOS and the service remains uncoordinated. Additional information in terms of workers' rights in destination countries was also weak.

As a major gap, current migrant services are not adapted to the levels of migrants' skills. These do not provide adequate content on the rights of migrant health professionals—doctors, nurses, pharmacists, occupational and physical therapists,

in the cycle of migration from pre-employment to arrival and stay in destination countries and for return to the Philippines.

Language training, professional and competency training are minimally offered, although stakeholders considered these helpful to Filipino migrants when in their destination countries. Programmes for social protection, particularly PhilHealth and Pag-ibig need improvement and increased visibility to be better appreciated. Re-integration services are still not quite developed and visible.

Monitoring and evaluation of migrant services have been neglected. Consequently, services have not been rationalized and gaps have not been identified and addressed.

Conclusions

Philippine laws and policies have evolved to emphasize the rights of migrant workers, establish migrant services and foster collaboration among government and other sectoral organizations.

Various migrant services overlap and lack coordination among the service providers. Generally designed for any type of migrants' groups, the services do not specifically cater to the particular needs of skilled migrant health professionals. These remain to be evaluated in terms of quality, outcomes and impact.

Implications and Recommendations

A systematic and transparent participatory review of mandates from laws and policies would provide a starting point to determine the responsibilities and priorities of government and other stakeholders in the provision of services to migrants.

Migrant health professionals' needs are rarely differentiated from other types of migrants' groups. The volume of skilled Filipino migrant health professionals would justify the strengthening of services at various stages of the migration process—from pre-employment, pre-departure, post-arrival on-site and upon return and re-integration.

The assessment suggests:

1. Review policies and mandates to clarify organizational focus and priorities for migration services.
2. Streamline services among service providers, particularly among overseas labour offices and home offices.
3. Delineate services for skilled and non-skilled migrant workers, specifically for migrant health professionals.
 - a) Update the Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar and the Pre-Employment Orientation Seminar.
 - b) Provide Post-Arrival Orientation Seminar (PAOS) in destination countries.
 - c) Improve the reach and visibility of Re-integration Seminars.
4. Review the practice of charging of placement fees.
5. Improve the sharing of data, information and feedback among stakeholders.
6. Develop automated migration services and records keeping.
7. Improve linkages and collaboration among services.
8. Monitor and evaluate migrant service programmes and providers periodically
9. Initiate the process of organizing the network among migrant service providers and identifying a lead organization to stimulate synergy for migration services.

Respondents to the assessment proposed the creation of a migration service providers' network to facilitate coordination and collaboration among them and stimulate synergy for policy and programme continuous improvements. Sub-networks could be organized along themes of services: overseas employment information services, personal financial security services; social security and welfare services and skills enhancement, reintegration; and others, such as certification, recruitment and absentee voting. (See Figure 1.)

About the Decent Work Across Borders project

In 2011, the European Union awarded the International Labour Organization (ILO) funds to implement a three-year project on the issue of circular migration. The ILO Decent Work Across Borders project: A Pilot project for Migrant Health Professionals and Skilled Workers sought to better understand schemes in line with circular migration of health professionals. Through this project, the ILO sought to facilitate an approach to migration that benefits the migrant workers, the source and destination countries within a rights-based framework for labour migration governance. The project focused its activities on three Asian countries concerned with the outflows of health professionals and skilled workers for foreign employment, namely the Philippines, India and to a lesser degree, Viet Nam.

http://www.ilo.org/manila/info/public/pr/WCMS_173607/lang--en/index.htm

This policy brief calls on the different agencies with migration related mandates to consider the discussed interventions to improve migrant services, which are instrumental in making migrant workers aware of their rights and the benefits to be gained from foreign employment. Ethical migration occurs when migrant workers, their home country and the destination countries mutually benefits. Migrant health professionals need quality services to help them avoid the pitfalls of negative and harmful experiences, and instead gain as much of the benefits from migration. In circular migration, migrant workers return services to their home country, which makes reintegration programmes important.

Lorenzo, Fely Marilyn, Royson Mercado, TJ Robinson Moncatar. 2012. *Assessment of Existing Services for Skilled Migrant Workers in the Philippines*. Manila: International Labour Organization - DWAB. 130 pages

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Decent Work
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