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## **“THE UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND GLOBAL COMPACT FOR MIGRATION: A PHILIPPINE OUTLOOK ON MIGRATION AND GENDER EQUALITY”**

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### **1. MIGRATION AS A UNIVERSAL AGENDA**

Migration is a “defining feature of our globalized world” (United Nations 2018, p. 2). It affects economic, political, and social development at all levels.

Migration refers to the movement of people across borders triggered by economic, social, political, or environmental factors. Migration could be a poverty reduction tool that benefits individuals, families, and communities alike (Foresti and Hagen-Zanker 2017, p. 2).

The United Nations, in an inclusive process, initiated the drafting of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (GCM) in 2017. The GCM is the “first, inter-governmentally negotiated agreement” that covers “all dimensions of international migration in a holistic and comprehensive manner” (International Organization for Migration 2018). The GCM provides twenty-three objectives for international cooperation to ensure safe and regular migration. It also recognizes that migration could work for all when it occurs in an informed, planned, well-managed way, and when there is cooperation among parties or stakeholders concerned.

The GCM is rooted in the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a plan of action that involves the key elements of people, prosperity, planet, peace, and partnership for the seventeen goals. Overall these two documents call for the implementation of “well-managed migration policies” at the national and international levels to lessen the costs and mobilize the benefits of migration to sustainable development.

With thirteen of the seventeen SDGs relevant to migration and mobility, addressing issues related to these two to achieve their specific targets will have significant impacts on the fulfillment of the other global goals in a broad sense, specifically through the following SDGs: Good Health and Well-being (goal 3), Quality Education (goal 4), Gender Equality (goal 5), Decent Work and Economic Growth (goal 8), Reduced Inequalities (goal 10), Sustainable Cities and Communities (goal 11), Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions (goal 16), and Global Partnership (goal 17).

Photo 1: Sustainable Development Goals



Source: United Nations, About Sustainable Development Goals, 2015

This paper shares the principles and goals of the SDGs and GCM whilst recognizing the unique features of Philippine migration. This document contains the following sections:

- Migration in the Philippine Context
- Pillars of Migration
- Strategic Direction

## 2. MIGRATION IN THE PHILIPPINE CONTEXT

The Philippines sends students, tourists, and all types of workers to the world’s most developed regions. The Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) estimated that there are 10.2 million Filipino migrants, including emigrants, overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), sea-based workers, and irregular migrants in over 200 countries and territories in 2013 (see table 1). Around 42 percent, or 4.31 million Filipinos, are found in the Americas/Trust Territories, followed by West Asia with 2.49 million (24 percent) and East and South Asia with 1.67 million (16 percent) (Commission on Filipinos Overseas 2013).

Table 1: Distribution of Overseas Filipinos, 2010 – 2013

Region	2010	2011	2012	2013
Africa	74,483	63,508	60,873	59,036
Asia, East & South	1,232,715	1,449,373	1,599,352	1,668,827
Asia, West	2,850,591	2,987,923	2,835,536	2,489,430
Europe	663,889	808,779	768,326	866,187
Americas/Trust Territories	3,883,356	4,326,059	4,396,352	4,313,476
Oceania	400,800	451,042	462,324	474,492
Sea-based Workers	347,150	369,104	366,865	367,166
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,452,984</b>	<b>10,455,788</b>	<b>10,489,628</b>	<b>10,238,614</b>

Source: Commission on Filipinos Overseas. Stock Estimate of Overseas Filipinos, 2013

For the past decades a culture of migration has emerged with millions of Filipinos keen to work abroad despite the risks they are likely to encounter. In Asia, the Philippines is the top supplier of labor migrants to over 100 countries.

The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) recorded that there were about 2.1 million overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) deployed in 2016 (table 2), with 97.5 percent of labor migrants having work contracts. In the same year the majority of these migrant workers (47 percent) came from the following regions: CALABARZON at 21 percent, followed by National Capital Region at 12.9 percent, and Central Luzon at 12.7 percent (Philippine Statistics Authority 2017a).

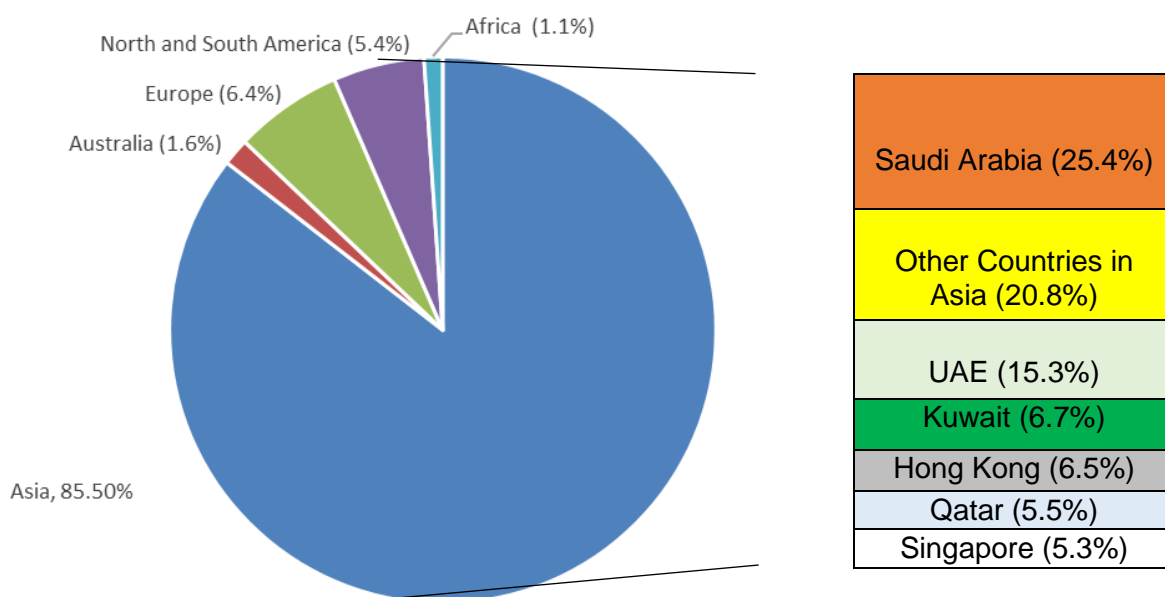
**Table 2: Deployment of OFWs, 2007 – 2016**

Year	Land-based		Sea-based	Total
	New Hires	Rehires		
2007	313,260	497,810	266,553	1,077,623
2010	341,966	781,710	347,150	1,470,826
2013	464,888	1,004,291	367,166	1,836,345
2016	582,816	1,086,695	442,820	2,112,331

Source of basic data: Philippine Overseas Employment Administration deployment statistics and annual reports.

In 2017 around 85.5 percent of all OFWs can be found in the Asian region. The top destination country for OFWs is Saudi Arabia, followed by the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Hong Kong, Qatar, and Singapore (Philippine Statistics Authority 2018).

**Figure 1. Distribution of OFWs by Place of Work, 2017**



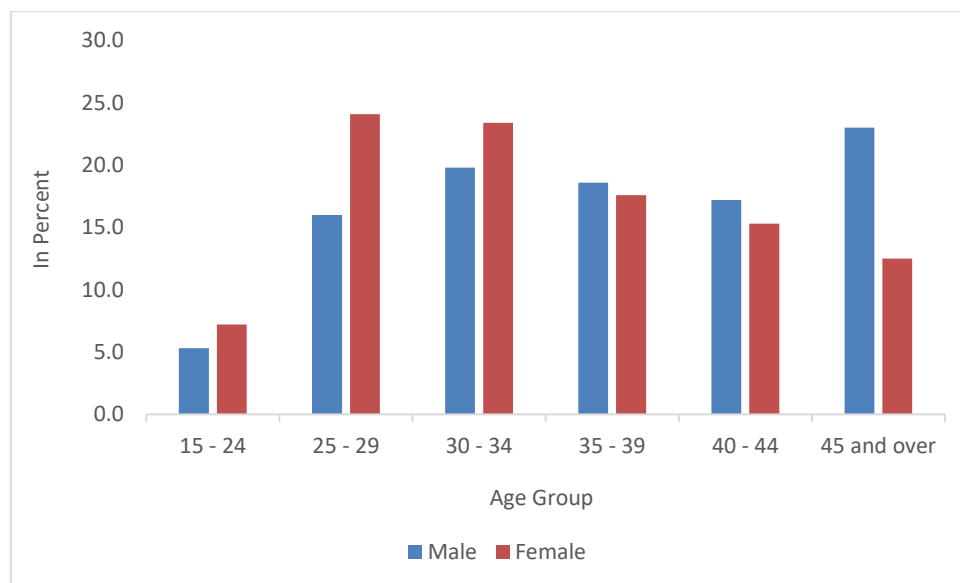
Note: Reference period is April to September 2017

Source: 2017 Survey on Overseas Filipinos in Philippine Statistics Authority, 2018

International migration is highly gendered. In Asia, the Philippines is the leading female migrant sending country, along with Indonesia (Reyes 2007, p. 1). The number of Filipino female migrants (53.7 percent) exceeds that of males (46.3 percent) (Philippine Statistics Authority 2018).

Filipino women go overseas to work in the service industry, mostly as nurses, nannies, entertainers, and domestic workers. There is also a high incidence of Filipino women entering countries like the United States, Australia, Canada, and Japan, among others, as “marriage migrants” (Bonifacio 2009).

**Figure 2. Distribution of OFWs by Age Group and Sex, 2017**



Note: Reference period is April to September 2017

Source: 2017 Survey on Overseas Filipinos in Philippine Statistics Authority, 2018a

During the same period in 2017, around 205.2 billion pesos were remitted by OFWs, which includes cash sent home, cash brought home, and remittances in kind. The majority of these remittances were sent through banks while others used agencies or local offices, door-to-door delivery, friends or co-workers, or other means (Philippine Statistics Authority 2018).

While in-migration to the Philippines is relatively low in proportion to out-migration, the country is now attracting more foreigners to visit, work, and even settle in the country. In 2017 there were an estimated 218,500 foreign nationals in the Philippines comprising mainly of Chinese, American, and Japanese (table 3) (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2017a).

**Table 3: Three Largest Immigrant Groups in the Philippines, 2010 – 2017**

Country of Origin	2010	2015	2017
1. China	35,400	36,000	37,100
2. USA	35,000	35,600	36,700
3. Japan	13,500	13,700	14,200

Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2017a.

The Philippines has long been considered a model for migration management. Legal and institutional frameworks are currently in place and are still evolving to facilitate migration, address common and emerging issues related to overseas Filipinos, and maximize the benefits of such migration flows. However, this “triple approach of deployment-protection-maximizing benefits” needs to be linked to development more explicitly (International Organization for Migration 2013, p. 109) in order to fully realize the potential of migration in sustainable development.

### 3. PILLARS OF MIGRATION

#### 3.1 Pillar 1: Promoting Decent Work for Filipino Migrants

Decent work is defined as “work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all” (International Labour Organization 2017, p. 4).

This decent work agenda resonates with SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) which sets to achieve “decent work for all” (8.5) and “protect labour rights and promote safe working environments for all workers including migrant workers, particularly women migrants” (8.8). This SDG principle is also reflected in the objectives of the GCM, specifically “to facilitate fair and ethical recruitment and safeguard conditions that ensure decent work” (United Nations 2018, p. 12).

Figure 3. SDGs Related to Pillar 1



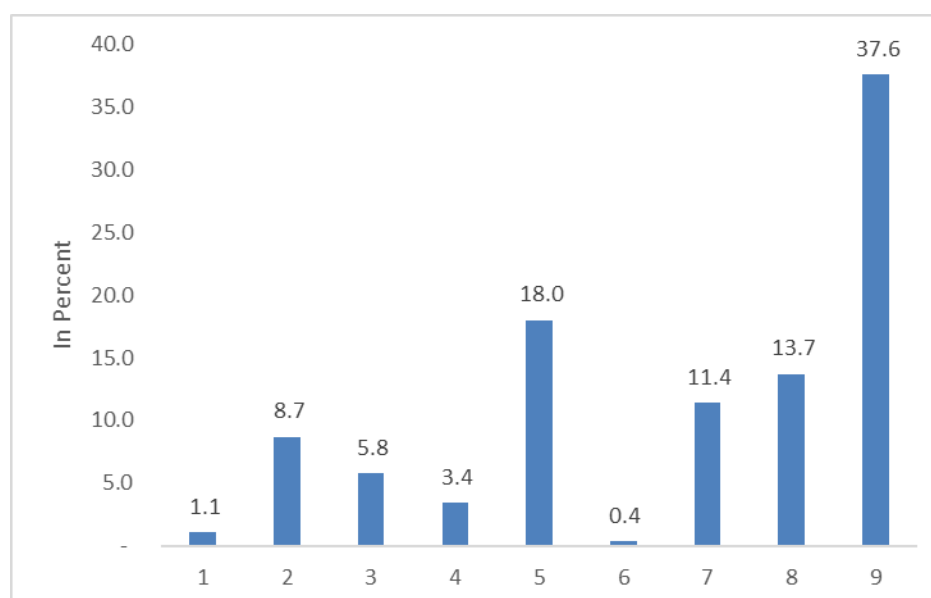
## A. Facts and Figures

In accordance with the 1987 Philippine Constitution the framework for decent work will include goals such as “just and dynamic social order; more equitable distribution of opportunities, income, and wealth, social justice in all phases of national development and protection and promotion of the rights and welfare of all Filipino workers, local and overseas.” Thus the government is mandated to ensure that overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) are protected and have equitable access to the fruits of national economic development.

Moreover, the Philippines also passed the Migrant Workers Act of 1995, or Republic Act 8042 (Official Gazette 1996) as amended by Republic Act 10022, that protects migrants and upholds their right to secure decent work. Therefore the state only allows the deployment of workers to countries where the rights of migrant workers are protected and guaranteed, either through existing labor and social laws, multilateral conventions, declarations, or resolutions relating to the protection of workers, or through a bilateral agreement or arrangement on the protection of the rights of OFWs (Official Gazette 2010).

In addition, the law states that only skilled Filipino workers shall be allowed to be deployed abroad. However, figure 4 below indicates that the biggest number of workers belongs to those with elementary occupations. Elementary occupations refer to those jobs which only require primary education and with relatively low salaries.

**Figure 4. Distribution of OFWs by Major Occupation Group, 2017**



1-Managers

2-Professionals

3-Technicians and associate professionals

4-Clerical support workers

5-Service and sales workers

6-Skilled agricultural forestry and fishery workers

7-Craft and related trades workers

8-Plant and machine operators and assemblers

9-Elementary occupations

Note: Reference period is April to September 2017

Source: 2017 Survey on Overseas Filipinos in Philippine Statistics Authority, 2018a

Moreover, Republic Act 8042 states that only licensed entities can recruit migrant workers; otherwise, it is considered illegal recruitment. However, among the top countries of destination of OFWs, two countries, Kuwait and Qatar, do not have an explicit provision stating that only licensed agencies of both countries can engage in recruitment and placement of migrant workers. These same countries do not have provisions explicitly stating the details in the hiring process and the documentation needed for recruitment agencies in order to hire workers.

Among the top country of destinations for OFWs, many of these countries have explicit provisions stating that there should be a written contract between the employer and the employee. Countries such as the UAE, Qatar, and Bahrain among others, explicitly state that these contracts must include the job position, conditions, and the rights of the migrant workers. However, while many of the destination countries require written contracts, provisions such as establishment of a minimum wage, protection and promotion of human rights, and ability of migrant workers to keep their belongings, among other provisions, are absent or not explicitly stated in these agreements.

## **B. Challenges in Promoting Decent Work for Filipino Migrants**

### **B.1. Discrepancy between Philippine Migration Policy Provisions and Bilateral Labour Agreements and Arrangements between the Philippines and Some Countries**

Other than the legal protections already cited above that Republic Act 8042, as amended by Republic Act 10022, guarantees, the law also says that the state shall ensure the rights of overseas Filipinos, whether documented or undocumented; that the state shall provide skills development and enhancement programs for migrant workers; and that the state shall recognize and cooperate with nongovernmental organizations, trade unions, workers associations, and other stakeholders that promote the protection of overseas workers. However, the provision of only deploying skilled labor abroad seems to be problematic. As there is no set time for when this is supposed to be implemented, those in elementary occupations, such as domestic workers, continue to be deployed. Based on figure 4 above, 35 percent of OFWs can be found in elementary occupations despite the law's provision saying that only skilled workers should be deployed.

### **B.2. On Recruitment**

The law prohibits recruitment of workers for deployment abroad by agencies not authorized by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE). However, illegal recruitment is also observed through the following:

- publication of false information regarding recruitment or employment;
- withholding of travel documents from applicants before departure by recruitment agencies;
- allowing a non-citizen to head a licensed recruitment agency; and
- imposing compulsory arrangements such as training etc. from specifically designated institutions only.

In 2014, 155 cases of illegal recruitment (121 women and 34 children) were reported to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) (International Labour Organization 2017). Moreover, twelve, or around 15 percent of the suspected cases of human trafficking reported to CFO in 2015, were cases of illegal recruitment (Commission on Filipinos Overseas 2017).

### **B.3. On Labor Migration Fees**

The government allows recruitment agencies to charge OFWs a placement fee equivalent to one month of their basic salary. However, there is discrepancy between what the law provides and the practice of charging excessive and varying fees to workers. Fifty-four recruitment agencies had their licenses cancelled because of excessive fees. The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) receives around 4,000 complaints each year regarding excessive migration fees (Dickinson 2016, p. 1).

### **B.4. On Pre-Departure and Pre-Orientation Seminars (PDOS and PEOS)**

People who are leaving for work, study, or permanent residency in another country are required to attend a pre-departure orientation seminar (PDOS). The PDOS aims to familiarize these migrants about travel regulations, immigration procedures, cultural differences, settlement concerns, employment and social security concerns, and the rights and obligations of Filipino migrants.

A pre-employment orientation seminar (PEOS), on the other hand, seeks to provide an overview of the life of labor migrants abroad and includes information on immigration procedures and migrant rights. Due to the high demand, these seminars have been contracted to privately-run accredited centers.

However, the current PDOS is not sufficient in providing the assistance needed by OFWs leaving the country. In a 2015 news article by Rappler, then Alay Buhay Representative Weslie Gatchalian mentioned that the current PDOS curriculum needs to be revised because it had not been changed since 1983 (Bernal 2015). He wanted topics on terms of employment and deployment contracts, criminal laws and regulations of destination countries, mental and psychological issues, and basic language course of destination countries, among others, to be included in the proposed new PDOS (Bernal 2015).

In a similar article by GMA News, it was mentioned that the PDOS is insufficient in providing OFWs with knowledge of basic human rights, which makes them susceptible to abuses and “later render[s] them mentally unfit later to work” (Ubalde 2008).

### **3.2 Pillar 2: Protecting and Promoting the Rights and Welfare of Migrants**

Migrant rights are, in essence, human rights as defined by the UN Declaration of Human Rights. The following discussion is anchored on various international human rights agreements, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the GCM as adapted to the Philippine context.

These rights are reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically goal 2 - end hunger, achieve food security; goal 3.8 - achieve universal health coverage; goal 5 - achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; goal 8.8 - protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers; goal 10.7 - facilitate orderly, safe and regular migration; goal 16.2 - end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children; goal 16.1 - reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere; and goal 17.18 - “Enhance capacity-building support to developing countries to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by...migratory status” (United Nations 2015).



**Figure 5. SDGs Related to Pillar 2**



## A. Facts and Figures

Despite the country’s strong legislation and regulations to protect its migrant population, there is a large number of Filipino migrants that experiences distress overseas. Overseas Filipinos in distress refer to Filipinos abroad who have “medical or psycho-social problems requiring treatment, hospitalization, counseling; or problems like labor, immigration and other issues requiring legal representation” (Philippine Statistics Authority 2017b). In 2015 alone a total of 36,290 OFWs were assisted by the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) through the Assistance-to-Nationals Fund.

**Table 4. Assistance to Nationals Fund**

Year	Allotment in Philippine Peso	Disbursement	No. of Filipinos Assisted
2011	420,371,703.01	303,471,051.1	8,339
2012	480,800,651.91	105,617,806.44	6,359
2013	362,659,060.87	350,739,267.87	18,029
2014	461,919,793.00	439,438,824.22	20,697
2015	301,100,000.00	286,320,996.03	36,290 OFWs

Source: Department of Foreign Affairs n.d.

Furthermore, the DFA reports that there is a high number of Filipino women migrants in distress housed at the Filipino Workers' Resource Center (FWRC) or similar institutions. More female migrants are repatriated compared to males. Similarly, there are significantly more female than male cases reported, out of 129 individual cases (Center for Migrant Advocacy 2017).

**Table 5. Filipinos in Distress Sheltered or Repatriated, January - June 2013**

Country	Sheltered		Repatriated	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Bahrain	2	280	15	157
Kuwait (2012)	1	2,258	36	1,112
Oman		203	8	120
Qatar		1,188	116	833
Saudi Arabia	489	344	1,957	1,175
UAE	1	1,259	209	1,258

Source: Department of Foreign Affairs, Office of the Undersecretary of Migrant Workers' Affairs, Report to Congress, January to June 2013 in Battistella and Asis, 2017

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the country with the highest number of cases reported (Department of Foreign Affairs 2013). The top complaint had to do with delayed payment, non-payment, and underpayment of wages. It was followed by “overwork, maltreatment, contract substitution, stranded workers with no work, jailed, health problem, sexually abused/rape, money claims, repatriation of human remains, illegally discharged from work, illegal recruitment, [and] missing” (Center for Migrant Advocacy 2017).

Irregular migrants account for 11 percent of the total migrant stock as of 2013 (Commission on Filipinos Overseas 2013), making up about 1.16 million people. Irregular migration refers to “a situation in which an overseas Filipino is temporarily in another state or territory usually for employment and who is without a valid residence or work permit as required by receiving state, or whose residence or work permit has expired” (Philippine Statistics Authority 2017c). Colloquially, irregular migrants are referred to as “TNT” (*tago-nang-tago*) because they are “always in hiding” from the authorities due to the lack of documentation or the use of counterfeit documents.

## **B. Challenges on Protecting and Promoting the Rights and Welfare of Migrants**

Irregular migrants are placed in vulnerable situations because their status restrains them from exercising their rights, particularly regarding decent work. Irregular migration disproportionately affects women migrants (UN Women Philippines 2015), especially those in the service industry. While there are efforts to address their specific needs, irregular migration is largely a side effect of limited options for regular migration (United Nations n.d.).

Human trafficking is the recruitment and transportation of a person through force or fraud for the purposes of servitude or exploitation. Trafficked persons are the victims of transnational crime. Victims are often unaware that they are travelling illegally, and some are even tricked into becoming drug mules or forced into sexual or domestic servitude, with women and children from indigenous peoples (IP) groups being particularly vulnerable (U.S. Department of State 2017). Marriage migration and the *au pair* system renders Filipino women vulnerable to human trafficking (UN Women Philippines 2015).

The migration trend in the Philippines is highly gendered. According to Nicola Piper, “feminization of labor” is “linked to the issue of gender and the differences between male and female migrants’ experiences” (Piper, 2008, p. 1287). Such “feminization of labor” not only constitutes an increase in the number of women migrant workers (WMWs) but also acknowledges the significant changes in women’s roles from dependents to providers. Women “can be vulnerable to discrimination, exploitation and abuse in countries of destination because of their gender, their status as migrant workers, and their work which is often in a private setting.” (Javate-de Dios 2018). While women are not “inherently vulnerable,” they are placed in “vulnerable situations because of inadequacies in policies and lack of will in implementation” (UN Women 2018).

Below are some key identified issues and challenges faced by Filipinos in terms of human rights. This section places a distinction between civil-political rights and social rights. However, it is important to note that the two intersect, since “all human rights are indivisible and interdependent” (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner n.d.).

## **B.1. Challenges in Protecting and Promoting Migrants’ Social Rights**

### **On Healthcare**

- Non-portability of health insurance from the Philippines (Center for Migrant Advocacy 2015)
- Non-provision of mandatory medical insurance to re-hired and direct-hired OFWs
- Low national budget on public health services (Center for Migrant Advocacy 2015)
- Delayed transfer of HIV/AIDS infected OFWs (Center for Migrant Advocacy 2015)

### **On Standard of Living, Including Housing, Water and Sanitation, and Food**

- Stay-in migrant workers are often not allowed to cook their own food (e.g., household workers)
- Stay-in migrant workers are seldom allowed to move freely
- Limited space and inadequate facilities in overseas shelters for distressed OFWs

### **On Education**

- Lack of access to inclusive education, especially for children of migrants

### **On Social Security**

- Non-portability of social security (SSS, PhilHealth, PAG-IBIG, etc.)
- Non-inclusion of gender-responsive provisions in social security schemes
- Limited or no awareness of Filipino migrant workers on their rights and benefits (Center for Migrant Advocacy 2016)

### **On Work Conditions**

- Irregular migrants are more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation in the workplace
- Filipino women experience physical and sexual abuse quite rampantly in Saudi Arabia (Republic of the Philippines’ House of Representatives Committee on Overseas Workers Affairs, 2011)
- Filipina domestic workers in Saudi experience harsh labor conditions (e.g. maltreatment and verbal abuse, overwork, sexual harassment and rape, contract substitution, unpaid salary, etc.) (House of Representatives Committee on Overseas Workers Affairs 2011)
- Japanese-Filipino children (JFCs) work in dangerous and demeaning jobs in Japan (Center for Migrant Advocacy 2016)
- Filipino women and children from indigenous peoples (IPs) face greater vulnerability to forced labor such as sex trafficking and domestic servitude (U.S. Department of State 2017)
- Men working in the agricultural, fishing, and maritime industries are forced into labor and debt bondage (U.S. Department of State 2017)

- Filipino women nurses abroad experience institutionalized and racialized discrimination (UN Women Philippines 2015, p. 41)
- Female victims supposedly employed as “entertainers” but are forcibly subjected to sexual labor (Caparas and Leones 2003, p. 7).

## **B.2. Challenges in Protecting and Promoting Migrants’ Civil-Political Rights**

### **On Due Process and Access to Justice**

- Lack of efficient assistance from duty-bearers in destination countries in filing cases against contract violators (Ambito and Banzon 2011, p. 9)
- Lack of available legal mechanisms in host country to file money claims because of unpaid wages (Ambito and Banzon 2011, p. 9)

### **On Representation**

- Low registered-voter turnout because of failure to get permission from employers to get off work and vote (Gavilan 2016)

## **3.3. Pillar 3: Managing the Return and Reintegration of Migrants**

Pillar three recognizes that the return of migrants and their reintegration are shaped by their experiences in transit and destination countries, and reinforced by the political, institutional, and socio-economic conditions of their home countries.

Return migration is generally classified as planned or forced. Planned returnees are comprised of those with successful overseas employment (land-based and sea-based) or those who are returning for special or personal reasons. Forced returnees, meanwhile, are those displaced by wars and natural disasters, economic recession, work-place abuses, and crackdowns on migrants (Small Enterprises Research and Development Foundation and International Organization for Migration 2018). Reintegration involves the willingness and readiness of migrants to come home and stay temporarily or permanently. It also includes the preparedness of home countries to take in these migrants and the availability opportunities upon their return.

While Pillar 3 recognizes the overarching agenda of SDG 10.7 in “facilitating orderly, safe and regular migration,” managing return and reintegration of migrants also resonates with SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). This particular pillar aims to “promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation and encourage[s] the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises” (goal 8.3) to sufficiently prepare the country before and upon the arrival of returning migrants.

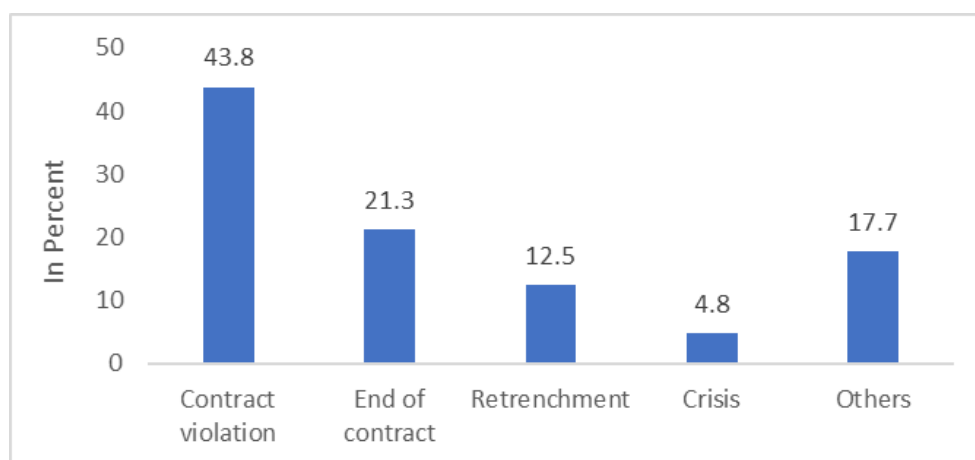
**Figure 6: SDGs related to Pillar 3**



## A. Facts and Figures

In the Philippines the National Reintegration Center for OFWs (NRCO) of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) recorded that around 61 percent of returning OFWs came back to the country due to contract violation (43.8 percent), retrenchment (12.5 percent), and crisis (4.8 percent) while the remaining 21.3 percent returned to the ending of their contracts (see figure 7) (International Labour Organization 2017, p. 117). Hence, the majority of the OFWs are unplanned returnees who need assistance before and upon their arrival.

**Figure 7. Number of Returning OFWs per reason**

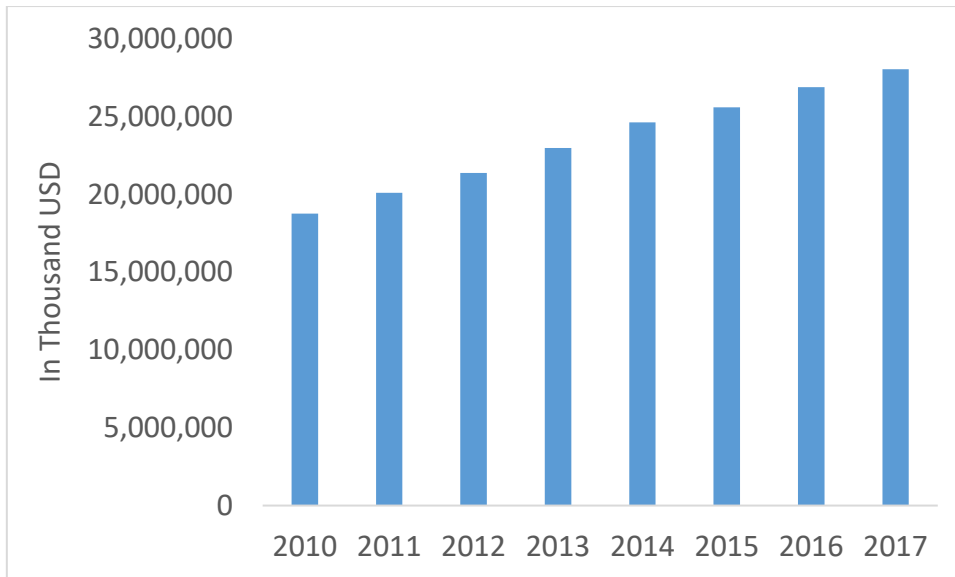


Note: Covers the period from January 2016

Source: International Labour Organization 2017, p. 117

In 2017 the World Bank reported that the Philippines ranked as the third highest remittance-recipient country, next to India and China. Specifically the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) recorded a steady increase in the remittance flow (see figure 8 below) since 2010.

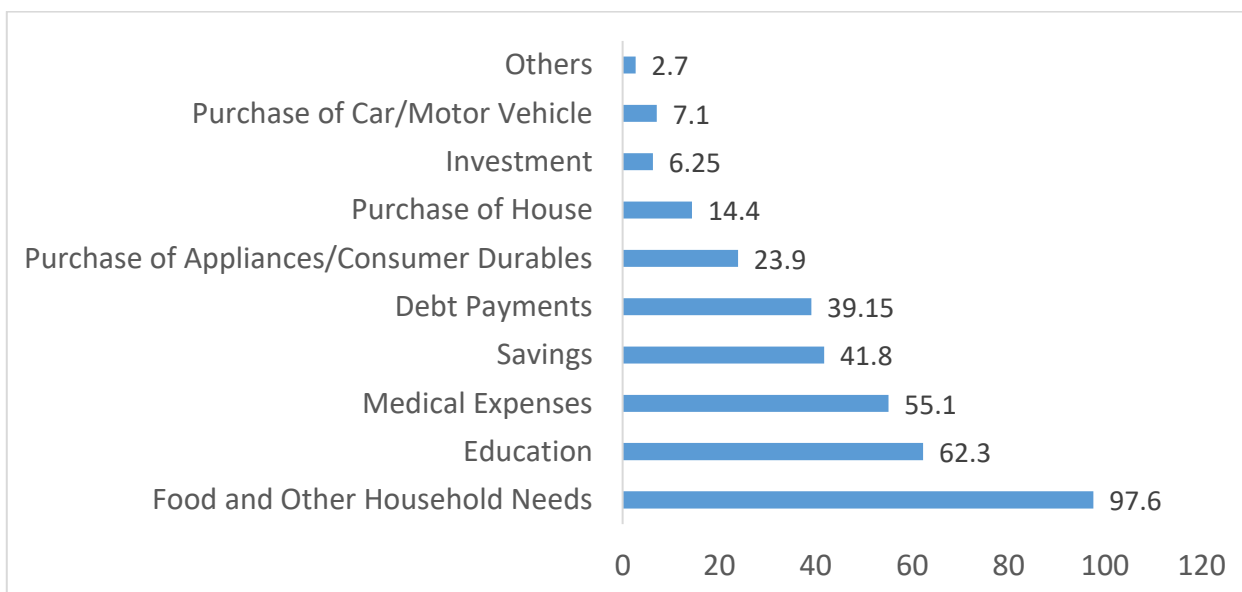
**Figure 8. Cash Remittances to the Philippines, 2010 to 2017**



Source: Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas 2018

Remittances constitute 10 percent of the country’s gross domestic product (GDP) while foreign direct investments contribute only around 3 percent (World Bank 2018). Hence, remittances are now an emerging source of external development finance and also regarded as “the most tangible link between migration and development” (Asian Development Bank, World Bank 2018, p. 54).

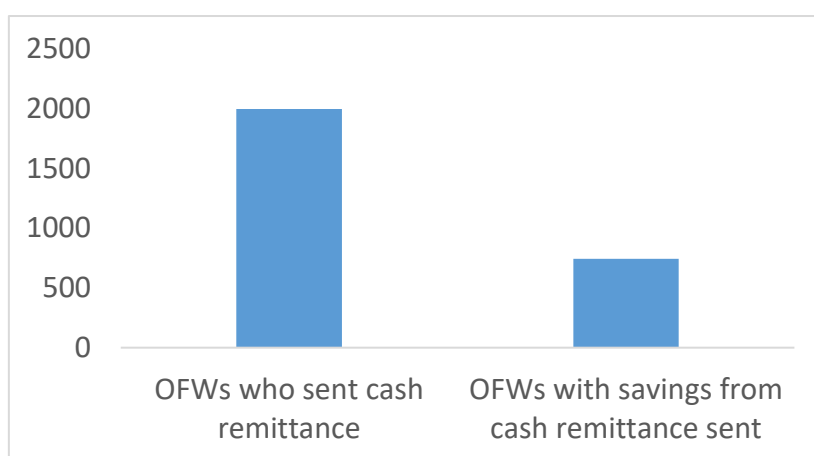
**Figure 9. Expenditures of OFW Households, in percent**



Remittances help to diversify the income sources of households, and are a source of savings and capital for entrepreneurship or investment. The BSP survey in 2017 found that OFW households allot the remittances they received to food and other household expenditures (97.6 percent), education (62.3 percent), medical expenses (55.1 percent), savings (41.8 percent) and debt payments (39.15 percent). These findings also support the claim that remittances are linked with increased investments in basic services such as education and health. These services are recognized to have “high social return in most circumstances” (Asian Development Bank, World Bank 2018, p. 54).

The PSA also reported that among millions of OFWs who sent remittances from April to September 2017, around 37 percent were able to save. Furthermore, around 66 percent, or seven out of ten OFWs, were able to save less than 25 percent of cash remittances sent regardless of the amount (see figure 10) (Philippine Statistics Authority 2018).

**Figure 10. Number of OFWs Who Had Savings from Cash Remittances Sent, in thousands**



Source: 2017 Survey on Overseas Filipinos in Philippine Statistics Authority, 2018a

Given the BSP and PSA data, we can say that OFWs and their families were both able to save from cash remittances sent. Facilitating the mechanisms to turn these savings into productive activities is the next challenge on migration and development.

In a roundtable discussion organized by UP-CIFAL Philippines in March 2018, it was pointed out that migration policies and initiatives are, most of time, disconnected from the existing development agenda; migration and development are viewed as separate, unrelated issues. While there are initiatives at the national, sub-national, and local government levels through the Migrant Resource Centers or OFW Help Desks to mainstream migration into development planning, facilitate migrants’ full participation in the local economy, and ensure smooth reintegration into society, there are still a lot of things to be done in this endeavor (University of the Philippines – International Training Center for Authorities and Leaders [CIFAL] 2018).

The Philippine Development Plan and the creation of the National Economic and Development Authority’s Subcommittee on International Migration and Development hope to address the “lack of reference to migration in development policies, and conversely, the lack of consideration of development in migration policies [as well as] lack of coordination between migration agencies and development agencies” (International Organization for Migration, 2013, p. 109). However, we have yet to see how implementation of the plan explicitly ties migration benefits to sustainable development through inter-agency and intra-agency cooperation.

## **B. Challenges on Managing the Return and Reintegration of Migrants**

### **B.1. Managing Migrant Return**

One of the twenty-three objectives of the GCM specifically sets the commitments of states to “cooperate in facilitating safe and dignified return and readmission, as well as sustainable reintegration” (United Nations 2018). However, there are multiple challenges in managing migrant return especially during political conflict or crisis in countries of destination.

One of those challenges is the capacity of duty-bearers to provide immediate and responsive humanitarian assistance on-site, such as legal and psychological counselling, followed by the reintegration services (economic, social) offered in home countries. The content of such services should also be gender-responsive, child-sensitive, and needs-based.

The slow-paced processing of repatriation papers should also be addressed as there are a lot of migrant workers stranded in resource centers or shelters in destination countries. There is also a need to strengthen the capacity of such duty-bearers in migrant crisis management, especially in processing the dignified return of distressed migrants such as negotiating with host, transit, and home countries and other stakeholders, such as the civil society organizations and private sector.

### **B.2. Lack of profile on return migrants**

One of the challenges in managing return migration is the lack of data on migrant returnees, including their profiles. Returning migrants who seek reintegration assistance from the NRCO and OWWA are counted; otherwise, they are not. As there is no existing administrative tool that requires returnees to register, profiling of their needs, capacities, and potentials upon their eventual return would be very challenging in drafting responsive reintegration programs.

### **B.3. The need for diverse reintegration pathways**

While there are existing reintegration programs offered by national government agencies such as OWWA and NRCO, there is a need for a more collaborative effort among national agencies for an integrated and long-term national development outlook on migration. Such outlook on migration needs to be cascaded and mainstreamed into regional and local development plans to encourage full participation from all stakeholders, including the private sector, overseas Filipinos, and their associations.

There is also lack of appropriate and sufficient government investments in key sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and emerging industries, which would encourage migrants to invest and contribute to long term development and, eventually, return to the country.

A lot of the reintegration programs consist of livelihood training designed to enable return migrants to establish businesses. Agencies should recognize, however, that not all returnees have the entrepreneurial skills needed to thrive. It is necessary to consider the capabilities, potentials, and existing resources and networks of migrants in crafting responsive and sustainable reintegration interventions (Small Enterprises Research and Development Foundation, 2018). There is also a need to diversify reintegration programs to include productive options other than the default livelihood training packages and involve other stakeholders.



### 3.4. Pillar 4: In-Migration to the Philippines

Pillar four highlights GCM’s vision and guiding principle on the common understanding that “migration connects societies within and across all regions, making us all countries of origin, transit and destination” (United Nations 2018).

Managing in-migration to the Philippines resonates with SDGs 10 (Reduce Inequalities), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). Specifically, goal 10.7 aims to “facilitate safe, orderly, regular and responsible migration;” goal 8.2 aims to “achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labour-intensive sectors;” goal 8.5 promotes “full and productive employment and decent work for all;” goal 16.1 aims to “reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere;” and goal 17.8 promotes data monitoring and accountability, especially in disaggregating data based on migratory status.

Figure 11: SDGs related to Pillar 4



#### A. Facts and Figures

In-migration is relatively low in proportion to out-migration in the Philippines. As of 2017 the number of international migrants stood at 219,000, which is only 0.2 percent of the total population (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2017b). This trend is largely unchanged since the 90s as table 6 shows.

**Table 6. Number of International Migrants Residing in the Philippines**

	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2017
Total Number of Migrants (in thousand)	154.1	207.3	318.1	257.5	208.6	211.9	218.5
% of the Total Population	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2

Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2017a.

Although the number of foreign nationals residing in the country is relatively small, foreign presence is much felt in the major cities of the country due to the increasing number of businesses, i.e., stores, offices, transient houses, and restaurants, catering to this market. The existence of these establishments is largely due to the continuous international tourist arrivals which reached more than 6.6 million in 2017 (Department of Foreign Affairs 2018a).

**Table 7. Largest Foreign Groups in the Philippines**

Foreign Group	Total No. of Arrivals (2017)	Visitor Receipt (June 2017)
1. Korean	1,607,821	PHP 8.75 billion
2. Chinese	968, 447	PHP 5.25 billion
3. American	957, 813	Php 2.62 billion

Source: Department of Tourism n.d.

In addition, tourism has positively impacted the Philippine economy, with tourist expenditures contributing 9.2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) and contributing a 13.1 percent share in employment (Philippine Statistics Authority 2018b). Among tourists, South Koreans are the largest group and top-spenders (see table 7).

The number of foreign students in the Philippines has been increasing since 2014. In 2017 there were 18, 713 foreign nationals with Special Study Permits for primary and secondary education, short courses, non-degree studies, exchange studies, and minor undergraduate studies, while 14,848 migrants were given conversion and extension visas for undergraduate and postgraduate studies (see table 8) (Bureau of Immigration 2018).

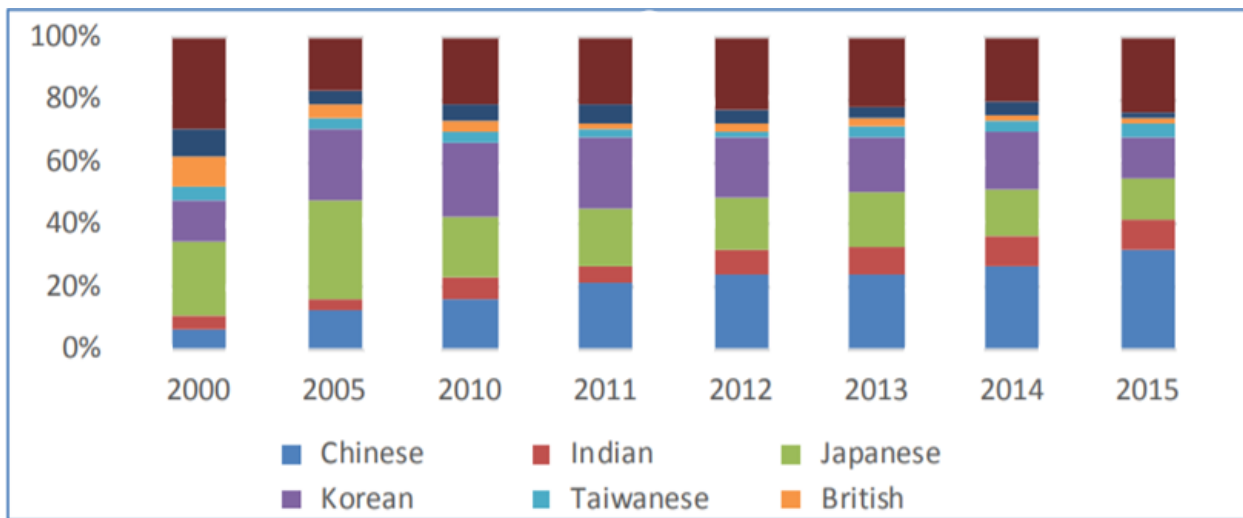
**Table 7: Foreign Students in the Philippines**

Visa/Permit	2014	2015	2016	2017
Special Study Permit (For Primary and Secondary education, short courses, Non-degree, Exchange students, Minor undergraduate students)	6,258	12,644	17,747	18,713
9(f) Conversion and Extension (For Undergraduate and Postgraduate Courses)	3,005	16,400	12,946	14,848

Source: Bureau of Immigration 2018.

The country also continues to host migrant workers in various sectors. The Bureau of Labor Employment of DOLE reported in 2015 that Chinese nationals comprise the bulk of foreign nationals with Alien Employment Permits, followed by Japanese, Koreans, and Indians (see figure 12).

**Figure 12. Alien Employment Permits by Nationality**



Source: DOLE-Bureau of Local Employment as cited in International Labour Organization 2017

Around 3.6 percent, or 15,072, of marriages in the Philippines involved foreign nationals. The top five intermarriages were between Filipino brides and American grooms, followed by Japanese, Australian, British and Korean. On the other hand, Filipino grooms commonly married Australian brides, followed by Chinese, Canadian, American, and Japanese (see table 8) (Philippine Statistics Authority 2018c).

**Table 8. Top 5 Intermarriages in the Philippines**

Rank	Filipino grooms	Filipino brides
1	Australian	American
2	Chinese	Japanese
3	Canadian	Australian
4	American	British
5	Japanese	Korean

Source: Philippine Statistics Authority, Civil Registration Service, Vital Statistics Division (PSA, CRS, VSD) in Philippine Statistics Authority 2018c.

Foreign nationals are viewed as ambassadors of their respective cultures and countries, bringing with them skills, aptitudes, and cultural influences that can positively impact the Philippines. Pillar 4, therefore, emphasizes that hosting foreign nationals should align with the principle of promoting cultural ambassadorship and respect for diversity and multiculturalism while protecting national interests and welfare.

## **B. Challenges in Managing In-Migration to the Philippines**

### **B.1. Inaccessibility and Lack of Harmonized Data on In-migration**

Most of the available information on foreign migrants in the country are collected at the national level and are produced by various government offices such as the:

- (a) Bureau of Immigration - visas granted to foreign nationals (non-immigrant, immigrant visa, special immigrant visa, special non-immigrant visa)
- (b) Board of Investments - special investor's resident visas
- (c) Philippine Retirement Authority - special resident retirement visas
- (d) Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) - alien employment permits
- (e) Department of Tourism - tourist arrivals
- (f) Philippine Statistics Authority - households with foreign members, marriage with foreigners

Some of these data are available online, but most data have to be requested from concerned agencies, which take weeks for processing. The key challenges that must be addressed through local and international partnership and collaboration are the harmonization of these data and the regular updating of such information.

### **B.2. Security Issues of International Migrants**

The safety of international migrants is put at risk by increasing crime rates and the threat of terrorism. The Philippine National Police, Bureau of Immigration, and foreign embassies are the main agencies that look after migrants' security. In addition, local governments should also look after migrants' welfare in the communities where they live.

### **B.3. Difficulties in Doing Business in the Philippines**

- Complex bureaucratic processes in starting a business in the Philippines

### **B.4. Increase in Irregular In-migration to the Philippines**

- Possibility of a significant number of illegal foreign nationals considering that there are only 115,000 Alien Employment Permits (AEPs) (Philippine Information Agency 2018)

## 4. STRATEGIC DIRECTION