RETURN AND REINTEGRATION:
WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION AND
GENDER-RESPONSIVE
INTERVENTIONS

A PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This research was conducted as a form of evaluation of the gender sensitive response of Unlad Kabayan on returning migrant workers and members of their families. It seeks to define its best practices in order to replicate them and promote more vigorous and responsive programs among women migrant workers and members of their families.

The expertise and contributions of the Board of Trustees of Unlad Kabayan must also be acknowledged, in particularly the efforts of Ms. Caridad Sritaran and Ms. Yolanda Ealdama.

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Most importantly the editorial team would like to thank the many women and men who shared their stories and experiences in the hope of bringing light to the challenges and triumphs of Filipino women and bringing about a more gender-responsive reintegration programs and services of government and CSOs.

We deeply appreciate the support of UN Women Philippines that made this research possible.

Editorial Team

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVE

Unlad Kabayan Migrant Services Foundation has been working in migrant return and reintegration for over 15 years. During this time Unlad Kabayan has worked directly with many returnee migrants and their families from Mindanao. This report aims to assess and critique the gender responsiveness of the organization and the return and reintegration programs it offers within the region. The case of the Mindanao OFW is unique. With a large population of Muslims in Mindanao, OFWs, especially in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) both favor and are favored by employers in MENA. This meant that during the recent Arab Spring, OFWs from Mindanao, especially in the ARMM, their families and communities were particularly affected. As many migrants made hasty returns the need to provide effective return and reintegration programs was abundantly clear.

As part of Unlad Kabayan’s ongoing commitment to gender responsiveness, the organization completed this participatory action research in the hope of pinpointing good practices, gaps, lessons and emerging issues for gender responsive reintegration. In particular, it hopes to question what the specific needs and expectations of women migrants from Mindanao are and whether the programs of Unlad Kabayan are meeting these. By highlighting the organizations best practice it hopes to also draw attention to areas that need further development.

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

As a researcher, the analytical framework of Unlad Kabayan has been heavily guided by over 15 years of praxis in implementing the Migrant Savings for Alternative Investment (MSAI) model. Unlad Kabayan’s programs aim to assist individuals to transcend barriers that inhibit access to assets; barriers that may be structural, economic or cultural. During this research, Unlad Kabayan’s focus on ensuring the economic freedoms of migrants, in light of their gendered and cultural constructions, was complemented by the women’s empowerment framework of Longwe (1996). A desk review was completed, along with FGDs with migrant returnees, their families and the staff of Unlad Kabayan.

KEY FINDINGS

Migration is not a gender-neutral phenomenon as the position of female migrants is different from that of male migrants (legal migration channels, sectors into which they migrate, forms of abuse they suffer and the consequences thereof). Female migration should be studied from the perspective of gender inequality. It is vital that we acknowledge the impact of traditional female roles, a gendered labor market, the universal prevalence of gender-based violence and the worldwide feminization of poverty and labor migration. While migration presents new opportunities for women and may be a means for economic empowerment through wider participation, it may also place their human, social and cultural rights at risk.
The programs of Unlad Kabayan, in particular the MSAI illustrate best practice in gender responsive return and reintegration. This model evolved directly from the needs of the female clients it now works with and aims to address their specific needs as women migrants. As a model MSAI is radical as it is directly challenging the prescribed roles of women in the community. It provides opportunity for women to enter the public sphere and formal workforce, as entrepreneurs and investors, with power and control over their own assets. The Credit Savings and Insurance program of Unlad Kabayan is less transgressive in nature, though the practice of Unlad Kabayan shows preference to female clients and recognition of their differing needs. Unlad Kabayan’s mode of engaging international partners broadens the reach of their programs and enables migrants to participate at every stage in the migrant journey.

While the theoretical underpinnings of Unlad Kabayan show strong awareness of gender responsive practice, there is a need to find connections with this in the daily actions within the office. Concurrently, there is a need to connect practices within the office that show gender-sensitivity, to the theory behind them. Policy within the office is weak, as is the collection of data to inform gendered practice. There is a need to disseminate gender knowledge throughout the organization and across its partners.

The key findings of the research can be found in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOOD PRACTICES</th>
<th>RECOMMENDATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>POLICIES AND PROGRAMS ON RETURN AND REINTEGRATION</strong></td>
<td>Develop a routine and ongoing training program in gender awareness for staff across the organization and encourage cross-departmental brainstorming on gender best practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migrant Savings for Alternative Investments</td>
<td>Disaggregated data needs to be collected on a routine basis in order to enhance documentation, aid future advocacy and monitor program results. Data collected should include sex, age, civil status, sexuality and faith.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Women Migrant Savings Associations</td>
<td>Allocate a ‘gender champion’ within each area office of the organization whose responsibility is to ensure issues around gender are routinely addressed while finding opportunities to stimulate discussion and advocacy around gender norms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Migrant Women Entrepreneurs</td>
<td>Greater research needs to be carried out in relation to marriage migration. In particular the experiences of women, the impacts on the communities, and the social and cultural ramifications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CURRENT GENDER COMPETENCE IN RETURN AND REINTEGRATION</strong></td>
<td>Many men and women struggle with the changing gender roles that result from migration. Greater education, training and support, needs to be provided to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
mitigating the fall out affect on families.

The staff at Unlad Kabayan are not sufficiently engaged with gender discussions on a regular basis to remain abreast of the issues. It is vital that close collaboration with CSOs specialized in gender includes all Unlad staff not merely program staff. Greater effort needs to be made to utilize experts within the organization from its Board members and others who visit Unlad in providing training for staff.

Hope Workers Center
MSAI and Gender-Responsive Reintegration Champion

Unlad Kabayan needs to find a means to ensure ongoing information sharing about the gendered experiences of migrants with our partners overseas and vice versa.

International agencies need to make a greater effort to be grounded in the realities of CSOs if true partnerships are to be forged.

Gender policy at Unlad Kabayan is vital in ensuring we are working with partner organizations that share our values. It needs to be re-articulated reflective of the experiences over the years and the recent developments.

**SPECIFIC WORKSHOP FINDINGS**

1. Migration of Maranao Muslim women to the Middle East (mainly) was made possible by the presence of male family members in the respective destination countries. These male family members facilitated the employment of Maranao womenfolk and were seen as protectors.
2. Recruitment agencies owned by Maranao ensured the employment in skilled and professional jobs/positions such as nurses and teachers.
3. Maranao women, because of Maratabat, would not take elementary jobs overseas, such as domestic work.
4. Other migrant women, non-Maranao and other Muslim women were employed as domestic workers.
5. Women in professional and skilled job categories did not experience any contract violation nor abuse from employers. On the other hand, domestic workers experienced abuse: long working hours, verbal abuse.

**SPECIFIC WORKSHOP CONCLUSION**

- Culture and religion matter in strategies for gender-responsive reintegration.
ABBREVIATIONS

ARMM – Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao
ASEAN – Association of South East Asian Nations
BiPC – Bohol Investment Promotions Council
BSP – Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
CDA – Cooperatives Development Authority
CFMW – Commission for Filipino Migrant Workers
CSI – Credit, Savings and Insurance
CSO – Civil Society Organization
DA – Department of Agriculture
DBP – Development Bank of the Philippines
DFA – Department of Foreign Affairs
DOLE – Department of Labor and Employment
DOST – Department of Science and Technology
DTI – Department of Trade and Industry
ERCDF – Economic Resource Center for Overseas Filipinos
GOCC – Government Owned and Controlled Corporations
HWC – Hope Workers Centre
LBP – Land Bank of the Philippines
LGU – Local Government Unit
MENA – Middle East and North Africa
MSAI – Migrant Savings for Alternative Investment
NGO – Non-Government Organization
NRCD – National Reintegration Centre for Overseas Filipino Workers
OFW – Overseas Filipino Worker
OWWA – Overseas Workers Welfare Administration
PhilCORP – Philippine Comprehensive OFW Reintegration Program
POEA – Philippine Overseas Employment Administration
SEC – Securities and Exchange Commission
TBTK – Tigum Boholano Tibuk Kalibutan
TESDA – Technical Education and Skills Development Authority
TLRC – Technology and Livelihood Resource Centre
**DEFINITION OF TERMS**

**3D jobs** – are jobs in migrant destination countries that local workers will not take because they are “dirty, difficult and dangerous”. Coined in Japan as 3K – “Kikken, kitanai, kitsui”.

**Gender-sensitivity** - shall mean cognizance of the inequalities and inequities prevalent in society between women and men and a commitment to address issues with concern for the respective interests of the sexes.

**Gulf Cooperation Council** – is a regional body comprising of the countries Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates while Yemen has an observer status. (ILO)

**Kafala system** - is a sponsorship system that governs the life of migrant workers in the Mashreq region and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. It aims at meeting the demand for labor with migrant workers while at the same time ensuring that these workers are only temporary residents in the countries. It has become the legal basis for residency and employment of migrant workers. (ILO Azfar Khan and Hélène Harroff-Tavel, The Implications of the Sponsorship System: Challenges and Opportunities, International Labor Organization, June 2011)

**Kafeels** – are sponsors of migrant workers under the Kafala system, mostly the employers who determine their demand for labor and meet it directly or through intermediates such as private employment agencies. (Azfar Khan, ILO, 2011)

**Maratabat** – a time-honored tradition among Maranao Muslims which is generally translated as “pride” or in other instances can also mean “avoid being shamed”. It is best understood in actual experience and examples. “A man with lower economic means or lower social status will refrain from courting or marrying a woman with higher economic or social status because of maratabat.” Or. “Meranao women will not take domestic work or similar “menial” job such as salesgirl. Most salesgirls of Meranao business are from Christian settlers or other Muslim tribe.”


**Migrant workers** - refers to a person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a state of which he or she is not a legal resident. To be used interchangeably with overseas Filipino worker. [RA 8042, amended 10022]

**Overseas Filipinos** - refers to migrant workers and/or their dependents and other Filipino nationals abroad [who are in distress as mentioned in Sections 24 and 26 of this Act]

**PhilCORP** – Philippine Comprehensive OFW Reintegration Program, a GO-NGO partnership for reintegration.
BACKGROUND

Unlad Kabayan started in 1994 as a pilot project of the Asian Migration Centre, Hong Kong in order to assist the needs of migrant workers preparing for their return and reintegration into the Philippines. This led to the establishment of Unlad Kabayan Migrant Services Foundation in the Philippines as an independent NGO in 1996. Now in its 16th year of operation, Unlad Kabayan focuses on reducing the financial barriers that impede migrant return, as well as other barriers, such as psycho-social. The organization aims to "promote social entrepreneurship and social enterprises by mobilizing migrant workers, the marginalized in the community and their resources to build a sustainable local economy". Unlad Kabayan now operates three offices across the Philippines, one in Quezon City and two in Mindanao, and is working with partner organizations across Asia, Europe and MENA (Middle East and North Africa).

In Mindanao, Unlad Kabayan has over 15 years of experience and is currently working with 625 clients over 65% of which are women (Unlad Kabayan, 2012). The majority of these clients are Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), returned migrants, or, the families of OFWs. Two of Unlad Kabayan's programs within Mindanao are aimed specifically at meeting the return and reintegration needs of migrants, i.e. Enterprise Development and Business Incubation and the Credit Savings and Insurance program (CSI). From its experience working with migrants from Mindanao, the majority of whom are women, Unlad Kabayan has a unique insight into the gender and cultural needs of migrant return and reintegration in the region. Furthermore, the organization has not only a breadth of knowledge in addressing the needs of women OFWs, but also a responsibility and commitment to ensuring programs enact best practice in gender responsive return and reintegration.

As a result of this commitment, Unlad Kabayan, in collaboration with UN Women, conducted a gender assessment of their current return and reintegration programs in Mindanao in the hope of distilling good practices, and identifying gaps, lessons and emerging issues for gender responsive reintegration. This research forms part of a wider body of research and advocacy work being conducted by UN Women; Empowering Women Migrant Workers in Asia. During a round table discussion in August 2011, assessing the needs of Filipino workers affected by the Arab Spring uprising in MENA, UN Women noted a lack of sustainable gender-responsive targeted interventions from Civil Society Organization’s (CSOs) working in migrant return and reintegration. Moreover, it appeared that there may be a lack of gender analysis from some CSOs working in the field and a need for capacity development in formulating appropriate programs. It is hoped that this research will provide a learning opportunity not only for Unlad Kabayan, but also for all CSO's working with migrant returnees throughout the Philippines.

OBJECTIVES

This study seeks to explore the following questions:

1. In what ways are the current migrant return and reintegration policies, programs and services of Unlad Kabayan Migrant Services Foundation within Mindanao, gender sensitive and gender responsive?

2. What are the positive and negative outcomes of the Unlad Kabayan Migrant Services Foundation's migrant reintegration program in Mindanao? What are the specific needs and expectations of women migrants from Mindanao and are the programs of
Unlad Kabayan meeting these? How do these programs contribute to migrant women’s empowerment?

3. What aspects of Unlad Kabayan’s reintegration program in Mindanao have been a success and illustrate best practice? How can this program be enhanced in order to be more gender sensitive and gender responsive?

THE CONTEXT

Since the 1970’s large-scale labor migration has become a permanent fixture of the Philippine economy. During the period of martial law and ensuing financial crisis, skilled Filipinos were increasingly recruited by industrialized nations. In an attempt to regulate the industry, President Ferdinand Marcos, in 1974 introduced the Labor Code of the Philippines, effectively institutionalizing the export of labor as an economic strategy. By the time martial law was lifted in 1981, Philippine national debt stood at USD28.3 billion and labor emigration became to be viewed as the best means to alleviate this. Under President Corazon Aquino this was further institutionalized with the passing of the ‘Act Establishing the Overseas Workers Investment Fund to Provide Incentives to Overseas Workers, Reduce Foreign Debt Burden and for Other Purposes’. Furthermore, after more than 40 years of labor export a culture of emigration had been ingrained in the Filipino psyche. Migration is to many seen as a sign of success, a viable means to escape poverty, a source of adventure and a valued contribution to the Philippine nation.

The profile of the Filipino migrant worker has changed greatly over the past 40 years, from the predominantly male worker, employed in the construction or international maritime industry, to the female worker employed in domestic work and nursing. During the 1980s, economic growth in the newly industrializing countries in Asia (Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Japan) resulted in an increased demand for labor, allowing changes in state policies that both permitted and encouraged women of all ages to enter the formal work force. The movement of female nationals from unpaid ‘domestic’ work to paid work, created a massive shortage in roles traditionally deemed to be that of women. This saw a massive importation of foreign female laborers in gender specific employment, including domestic work, entertainment work and the sex industry. This meant that by the 1990’s the number of female OFWs had overtaken that of males (POEA, 2001).

The OFW has become an icon of Filipino culture, revered as the modern day hero by both citizens and government. In 2006 it was estimated that 38.5 million of Filipinos were dependent on remittances, that is, about 43% of the population (CMA, 2006). This is only likely to have increased considering statistics released in 2010 indicate there are now more than 9.45 million OFWs working in over 200 different countries around the world (DOLE, 2010). According to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas remittances in 2011 topped USD20 Billion and over 15% of these remittances came from OFWs working in MENA.

The case of the Mindanao OFW is unique. OFWs from Mindanao, especially in the ARMM both favor and are favored by employers in MENA. According to the National Statistical Coordination Board (2012), of the 2.04 million OFWs that departed the Philippines in 2011, 16.4% were from Mindanao. Most significantly, 61% of OFWs from Mindanao were women (NSCB, 2012). This is likely to be due to the high number of positions in MENA seeking OFWs to fill traditionally female roles.

The circumstances that drove the demand for OFWs in MENA were slightly different to that of East Asia. In the 1970s the Gulf countries, awash with petrodollars, went into rapid
industrialization and resorted to importing labor from poorer countries in the Middle East for manpower. However, the volatile political situation in these countries and strong sympathies with the Palestinian struggle did not sit well with growing relations between the Gulf and the West. This led the Gulf to turn to “non-political” labor from the Indian sub-continent and eventually from East Asia, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines. The first wave of migrant importation from Asia was made up of unskilled and semi-skilled construction workers, while the second wave consisted of technical workers to man airports, ports, telecommunications, post offices and professionals for hospitals; mainly doctors and nurses. As prosperity increased, women became more educated and growing more liberal in outlook and practices, the demand for domestic workers also increased.

Filipino women came to be preferred in MENA because of their facility in English. Indeed having a Filipino maid became some kind of status and it is known that Moammar Khadafi and Saddam Hussein had a number of “Filipino maids”. Meanwhile in the Philippines, placement agencies for Middle East bound workers also increased as businesses owned and run by Muslims from Mindanao and Manila captured a niche in the market. This was facilitated further with Muslim officials in foreign service posted in the MENA regions. This paved the way for Maranao women working as nurses and hospital aides in Libya.

Consequently, Mindanao migrants and their families were particularly affected by the recent political turmoil in MENA. This led to an influx of returnees in 2011. While official data on the number of returnees is not available, a quick examination of remittance patterns indicates a dramatic change in migrant behavior during this time. The level of money remitted back to the Philippines dropped drastically in effected regions from 2011 to 2012 (e.g. Tunisia, -99.33%, Morocco -96.96%, Libya -86.96%, Yemen -98.55%) (BSP, 2012).

At the height of the Arab Spring, the Department of Foreign Affairs called for OFWs to return home. However, many opted to remain in the midst of violent clashes to tend to the injured. Many nurses from Libya claim they were promised double and triple wages if they were to continue to work during the conflict. As a major destination for Maranao Muslims, this conflict had a great impact on many migrants from Lanao del Sur, who consequently participated in this research.

While the economic benefits of migration have been well documented the impact of this growing trend on women, and in particular their capacity to return and reintegrate into their communities requires greater examination. This is all the more paramount in the context of global shifts, like the Arab Spring, that force migrants to make unplanned emergency returns. The role of the migrant as an agent of development has taken center stage, in both government policy, public discourse and NGO practice. Such a standpoint gives only a narrow view of the impacts of migration, on both individual migrants and the community at large. As one of the two key CSOs working in migrant return and reintegration within Mindanao it is all the more pertinent for programs conducted by Unlad Kabayan to meet the evolving needs and challenges of migrants within the region, and the unique issues faced by women.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

As a researcher, the analytical framework of Unlad Kabayan has been heavily guided by over 15 years of praxis in implementing MSAI. Unlad Kabayan’s programs aim to assist individuals to transcend barriers that inhibit access to assets; barriers that may be structural, economic or cultural. Unlad Kabayan aims to empower migrants to recognize their own capacity as
both savers and investors, creating a shift from passive economic player to active and role-conscious wealth producers. Structural change is also required to ensure access to economic markets. Unlad Kabayan maintains that for the migrant, returning home with capital is not enough, nor is returning with just a changed consciousness. Both are required to ensure an individual’s long term reintegration into the Philippines.

In Development of Freedom, Amartya Sen (1999) conceptualizes development as the removal of ‘unfreedoms’ with a focus on individual agency and public action. The lived realities of people and communities is at the forefront of such an approach; “culture matters to development because it is about the way people live and helps determine how the quality of their lives are improved” (Sen, 2004). The MSAI is a “migrant-centered” approach to reintegration that focuses on the removal of economic ‘unfreedoms’ to enable the empowerment of women and men. It is reliant upon collective social investment and organized migrant power in order to be sustainable, and as a result, is inherently collaborative in nature (Villalba, 2002). The approach pays particular attention to the role of culture and the social constructions of gender that impact upon a woman’s role in economic activities and the dynamics of wealth creation. The triple burden of women is pronounced in Mindanao, and women migrant workers must juggle their productive, reproductive and community roles. This is as much a social and cultural construction as it is a gendered one. The migrant-centered approach of MSAI allows the broader needs of migrants and their communities to be incorporated in addition to gendered needs.

During this research, Unlad Kabayan’s focus on ensuring the economic freedoms of migrants, in light of their gendered and cultural constructions, was complemented by the women’s empowerment framework of Longwe (1996). Longwe identifies 5 elements that are key to women’s empowerment and thus, these form the basis of her framework i.e. control, participation, conscientisation, access and welfare. These elements guided the methodology utilized in client focus groups and ensured a broad gendered understanding of the economic barriers in women migrant return and reintegration.

METHODOLOGY

The study is an action-oriented research, using a triangulation of quantitative data, qualitative data and a desk review. Primary data was collected through focused group discussions (FGD) in a two-day workshop, in addition to interviews with relevant stakeholders and government bodies in the region.

FGD informants were primarily women migrant workers, though FGDs also included household members of migrants and key informants from the local government unit (LGU). The area of study focused on returned women migrant workers in Mindanao, specifically women from Lanao del Sur including Marawi City, Lanao del Norte municipalities of Kauswagan and Kolambagan, including Iligan City, and Bukidnon in Region X and Surigao del Norte in the CARAGA region.

The FGD followed the initial results of the Participatory Gender Assessment. This method was utilized to ensure a deeper understanding of results, validate findings and explore other issues and concerns related to the study objectives. Tools utilized in running the FGD were guided by the UN Women Gender Analysis Toolkit and ILO Participatory Gender Audit Methodology (ILO, 2007). Full details of these tools can be found in Annex B.
ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

Unlad Kabayan Migrant Services Foundation Inc. is a non-government organization (NGO) based in the Philippines. Formed in 1996, we focus on migrant workers and social entrepreneurship in the Philippines. We pioneered the approach of directing migrants' savings into business and enterprise development in some of the poorest areas of the country. We arm migrants with the business knowledge, skills, and support they need to successfully reintegrate when they return to the Philippines. Our activities provide migrant workers with an alternative to migration.

We conduct research on behalf of academic institutions, international agencies, government and other non-government organizations, as well as for our own purposes. Previous studies have looked at the behavior of Filipinos towards remittances, human migration patterns, and migration legislation in overseas countries. Our research provides us with the facts we need to present a strong case to government, and helps us focus our efforts to areas most needed.
CHAPTER 1. POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES ON RETURN AND REINTEGRATION

OUR GENDER POLICY

At Unlad Kabayan our gender focus is on equity as a strategy towards gender equality and empowerment.

"Unlad Kabayan Migrant Services Foundation recognizes the marginalized position of women, in all spheres of life, whether in the economic as migrant or as local workers. This marginalization traces its roots in the culturally and traditionally determined roles of women within a male dominated society. A large majority of migrants are employed in elementary jobs – those classified as unskilled labor in domestic work, the entertainment industry and manufacturing industry, (especially those that require meticulous work e.g. garments and electronic industries). These types of employment are termed "the 3Ds" - dirty, difficult and dangerous.

"Unlad Kabayan will prioritize programs and services, in organizing savings groups and assistance in investment and enterprise building, that address the needs of these women.

"Unlad Kabayan will prioritize investing and developing enterprises among the poor and marginalized communities, giving preference to poor women in rural communities. This stems from an analysis that rural communities experience structural unemployment and low productivity. Women farmers have limited access to capital, technology and markets." (BOT Minutes, Operations Manual)

Since the drafting of our gender policy Unlad Kabayan's work in urban disaster relief has grown. In this work Unlad Kabayan focuses on urban poor women and severely affected urban poor households in Metro Manila and other urban and urbanizing areas within the Philippines.

EXISTING PROGRAMMES ON RETURN AND REINTEGRATION

Within Mindanao Unlad Kabayan is operating two programs that are aimed at facilitating the return and reintegration of migrants into the community. Specifically, the Migrants Savings for Alternative Investments Program (MSAI) and the Credit, Savings and Insurance Program (CSI).

Unlad Kabayan is a response to the need of migrant workers to prepare for their return at the most opportune time and to build income-generating activities at home. Migrant Savings and Alternative Investments (MSAI) was conceived as a strategy mobilizing migrants and their resources to build enterprises, create their own jobs and others in the community and encourage local development. From one savings group of female domestic workers in Hong Kong many more were organized and soon it became crucial for Unlad Kabayan to build and develop investment opportunities in the Philippines and serve the needs of migrant entrepreneurs. Thus Unlad Kabayan Migrant Services Foundation was established in the Philippines in 1996.

The Asian Migrant Centre was organized in 1989. In its early years AMC focused on legal assistance and crisis intervention to distressed domestic workers. Many clients have gone through abuse (physical, sexual, verbal), case litigation or faced serious family problems at home but going home was not option for them. The main reason is because there are no
jobs to come home to and they have not saved enough to build a business as originally planned. Unlad Kabayan was formed out of the need to create a mechanism where migrants could work abroad in the short-term, but create long-term opportunities in their hometowns so that they would not have to migrate for lack of work or money. Of particular concern were the domestic workers and entertainers in Hong Kong whose job security was threatened by the 1997 turnover of Hong Kong to China and the Asian financial crisis. The initial operational strategies were a collective effort between Unlad Kabayan and migrant savings groups. It is significant to note that the programs of Unlad Kabayan, and in particular MSAI, evolved directly from the needs of the female clients they now work with and aim to address their specific needs as women migrants.

The MSAI program mobilizes savings and investments to improve the capital deficient economies visible in local communities. It promotes and popularizes the value and mechanics of social entrepreneurship as a socio-economic basis for development. Investment opportunities and enterprise development services are offered to individuals in need regardless of sex, gender, age, race, religion, ethnic origin, political opinion or association. The MSAI program recognizes and supports the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men. This does not imply that women and men become the same, but that the program takes into consideration the different needs and priorities of both groups. Unlad Kabayan’s bias for women stems from the fact that women are the more vulnerable sector, with migrant women engaged in 3D jobs and poor women being marginalized. In the MSAI processes, the organization is sensitive to, and responds to the issues and needs of women for gender equity and empowerment. To compensate for social disadvantages, equitable treatment means different treatment to ensure women experience equivalent opportunities, rights and benefits.

An examination of sex disaggregated data on the MSAI program highlights the programs success in catering to women. Women are both more prominent as investors, and enterprises supported employ a greater number of women.

**TABLE 1: Sex Disaggregated Data of some key MSAI projects-enterprises**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project / Enterprise</th>
<th>Investors</th>
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<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOCSHEI</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burieko</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRC</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit Program</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAMDev</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Foods &amp; Noodles</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Processing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBHK School Supplies Store</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the FGD it became clear that the MSAI model is highly suited to both the strengths and needs of female migrants, especially Maranao women. During the discussion Maranao participants shared that in their culture, women are the “wallet” of the family. Husbands submit their salary to the women and budgeting is the task of women. Certainly it is characteristic that many female OFWs are competent savers. Furthermore, many felt that the enterprising nature of women was enhanced when they left the country to work. It is
the role of Unlad Kabayan to empower these women to realize that not only can they save, but they can also invest. In doing so MSAI provides a means for migrant women to utilize their self identified strength as savers to be active investors and entrepreneurs.

Furthermore on an analytical level, the MSAI program can be viewed to be directly challenging the roles of women in society. Moser identifies strategic needs as the needs “women identify because of their subordinate position to men in society” and are a result of varying contexts (Moser 1993). This is opposed to practical needs, which are needs that arise as a result of women’s existing roles. As a model MSAI is radical as it is directly challenging the prescribed roles of women in the community. It provides opportunity for women to enter the public sphere and formal workforce, as entrepreneurs and investors, with power and control over their own assets. Consequently the strategic needs of women are met providing them with greater control over their lives, whilst also addressing their day-to-day practical needs to feed and care for their family.

The empowerment of migrant women and their increased capacity to view themselves as such, was evident through the FGD. While examining community values, participants noted the following characteristics:

- Migrant women returnees are more enterprising. Women are more successful than men in being an entrepreneur. Women are more aggressive, determined, hardworking and patient.
- Migrant women are thrifty. It may have been developed from their role as family treasurer. Women have acquired skills in financial management.
- Migrant women have strong personalities
- Migrant women are independent
- Migrant men experience a sense of hopelessness and insecurity as their construct of masculinity is challenged by women’s changing roles.

This suggests that MSAI and the work of Unlad Kabayan is playing a positive role in women’s empowerment, addressing all 5 objectives of the Longwe framework. Migrant women gain greater access to finances, control over their own livelihoods, participate in a traditionally male-dominated economic sphere, and meet their own welfare needs, while becoming conscious of their own capabilities as economic actors.

ABOUT THE CREDIT PROGRAM

The credit program is designed as an enabling facility for the poor and marginalized, who are more often women, to access financial resources and become social entrepreneurs in their own right. It is also a financial support to supplement the capital of OFWs, their families and organizations, and returned migrant workers with insufficient savings to start or expand their business. Unlad extends credit assistance as: start-up capital for small livelihood endeavors; expansion of ongoing enterprises; purchase of business/farm equipment and materials; land retrieval; and marketing capital. The credit products include: Sagip Kabuhayan (Save Livelihood); Tulong Kababalhan (Support for Women); and Kabuhayan Pangkahalalan (Entrepreneurs Support).

Sagip Kabuhayan is aimed at providing micro-credit to sustain and develop the various livelihood activities of the poorest of the poor in target communities; e.g. backyard livestock production, marginal crop production; petty trading. With limited assets, the capacity of
poor to save and/or access financial capital is absolutely nil. Moreover, Sagip Kabuhayan clients are enabled to access other resources (e.g. technical training, seeds) to allow them to increase their income-generating activities in scale and quality.

Tulong Kababaihan targets poor women in communities to start income-generating activities and/or expand and improve their micro-enterprises. A special credit facility for Tulong Kababaihan was built in 2007 with social investments from undocumented migrant workers from the Netherlands.

Kabuhayan Pangkalahan is primarily used as supplementary capital for bigger and ongoing business concerns of migrant workers and entrepreneurs. Efforts are made through seminars and support programs to promote social entrepreneurship among the clients.

Gender sensitive services in CSI have been most apparent in the selection of clients. In Lanao and Davao, there is clear preference for women, elderly and rural poor. It is only recently that urban poor have been targeted in CSI services. On cursory note criteria for credit provision may work against women if judged according to the viability of the business and business plan, capacity to pay and in particular, collaterals. However good moral standing in the community is often a characteristic of women and less among men. Many subjective criteria favor women, in that women are more conscientious in repayments, attend training seminars more regularly and show conscientiousness in their learning processes. Davao has more gender-sensitive services particularly because most of the women are from peri-urban communities and reach out to Muslim women engaged in micro-enterprises. Many of these Muslim women are returned migrants from the Middle East who worked as domestic workers and caregivers. They belong to the Kalagan Muslim tribe.

While the model of MSAI, the practices of CSI and feedback from participants indicates good practice in gender sensitivity, there are a number of areas the programs of Unlad Kabayan could develop further in gender competence. Primarily, interviews with staff indicated that sex disaggregated data was not routinely collected across the activities of the organization. Nor was data disaggregated according to the civil status, sexuality, faith and age of participants. As it is clear across the board that women are the primary beneficiaries of the work of the organization, from a simplistic understanding of gender, such data collection may be perceived as unnecessary. However it is vital to recognize that there is not simply one construct of femininity or masculinity and as a result, the needs of women and men migrants may differ enormously. Furthermore such information may enhance Unlad Kabayan’s understanding of their client base. How does the migrant experience differ between female/male youth and female/male adults? What are the specific needs of LGBTI migrants? How do the needs and experiences of Muslim and Christian migrants differ? Most importantly, how does this impact on a migrant’s reintegration into the Philippines. Certainly from a practical level, the organization and staff have a strong understanding of these issues, however strengthened documentation may assist future advocacy endeavors.

The FGD with the staff of Unlad Kabayan indicated a general lack of understanding of terminology and ideas around gender. Confusion remained around the difference between sex and gender, sexuality and gender identity, and the social constructions of masculinity and femininity. As a result staff may be inadvertently reinforcing gender stereotypes that limit their understanding of the vast variety of experiences of men and women. This is not to suggest staff did not understand the ways in which the realities of the migrant experience differed, but rather they struggled to connect this with theoretical terms. While the concept of ‘gender mainstreaming’ was well understood, the need, and indeed possibilities, to bring
this into one’s day-to-day work was unclear to most staff. Staff members that worked directly with programs such as MSAI were more likely to be familiar with these concepts than those working in the Credit Program. While this is expected considering their education backgrounds are from differing disciplines, Unlad Kabayan has a responsibility to ensure all staff are providing the best practice in gender sensitive service.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop a routine and ongoing training program in gender awareness for staff across the organization and encourage cross-departmental brainstorming on gender best practice.

- Disaggregated data needs to be collected on a routine basis in order to enhance documentation, aid future advocacy and monitor program results. Data collected should include sex, age, civil status, sexuality and faith.

- Allocate a ‘gender champion’ within the organization whose responsibility is to ensure issues around gender are routinely addressed while finding opportunities to stimulate discussion and advocacy around gender norms.

- Encourage office participation in activities around International Women’s Day and the anniversary of CEDAW to provide a means for staff to remain engaged with ideas around gender.

GOOD PRACTICES

- From a gender perspective, the MSAI is an outstanding migrant return and reintegration model that has grown from the needs and drive of migrant women. It acts to empower women to become active economic agents and gives them greater control over their own livelihood. It enables women and men to have the financial control to choose to return to the Philippines.

- The enterprise development component of MSAI as a reintegration strategy ensures that after the incubation stage, the enterprise will be capable of operating independently. With these structures, enterprises can make financial transactions like securing loans or venture capital from banks. (Examples of Matin-ao Rice Center, DOCHSEI, BUNEKO).

- MSAI has been replicated in other countries and by many organizations in the Philippines, thus creating more opportunities for more migrants.

- Training migrant workers as MSAI trainers. Migrant workers are seen to be effective trainers as their fellow migrants relate to them easily.
Developing Women Entrepreneurs in Reintegration

The municipality of Sanchez Mira in Cagayan, has at least 7 schools including a state university. But it does not have a school supplies store to serve them. This was a discovery made by the community business scan completed by family members of the Bagong Bayani sa Hong Kong (BBHK) assisted by Unlad Kabayan. BBHK is a savings association of domestic workers from the various towns in Cagayan province. BBHK agreed to start a business that Maritess, a BBHK member will manage upon her return home. Her eldest child, a girl will soon be attending school and needed her care as her parents were growing old. Her husband, a soldier, died in a landmine explosion two years ago and she was not able to attend the funeral because her employers insisted that she finish her contract before coming home.

BBHK School Supplies and Bookstore was opened in 1998 in a rented space in the town center. Its clientele included students, schools and offices including the municipal government. Maritess came home and ran the business and employed two more workers. Since then, every time a BBHK member comes home she would work at the business for a year or two, gather experience and eventually open a new business in her hometown. In 2005, Zaida Caballisan, from nearby Ballesteros and the BBHK president returned home and took over the management of the Store. With the expansion of the Store, Zaida was able to buy land nearby and now the BBHK School Supplies and Bookstore had its own building.
CHAPTER 2. CURRENT GENDER COMPETENCE IN RETURN AND REINTEGRATION

CURRENT DEBATES ON GENDER AND MIGRATION AND RETURN AND REINTEGRATION THAT HAVE MEANINGFUL IMPACT TO UNLAD KABAYAN AND THE COMMUNITY

Unlad Kabayan makes a conscious effort to stay both involved and informed of debates and issues around migration, in particular gender. This is a significant part of the advocacy aspect of any CSO. As an organization working directly with migrant women, these debates naturally surface through the lived experiences of the people we work with. Distilling these experiences and bringing them to wider political discussions is a vital part of our advocacy.

The board of Unlad Kabayan plays a pivotal role in ensuring the organization is acting according to best practice in gender issues. The current Chair of Unlad Kabayan, Ms. Caridad Sri Tharan, is the Gender and Migration Specialist at Miriam College. Our treasurer, Ms. Yolanda Ealdama, is a Faculty member of the College of Social Work & Community Development at University of the Philippines, and also comes with enormous expertise in migration and gender issues. Furthermore by staying engaged with organizations working around migration and women’s rights we strive to encourage lifelong learning amongst our staff.

By their very nature, gender issues, appear in all the work of Unlad Kabayan. Below we will discuss three issues that are particularly pertinent to our current work and clients: the triple burden and feminization of migration and the triple burden, remittances in development, and marriage migration. This is followed by a short description of training/workshops, networks/partners and theoretical guiding texts of Unlad Kabayan.

FEMINISATION OF MIGRATION AND THE TRIPLE BURDEN

In discussing the feminization of migration we don’t infer only to the increased presence of women in transnational labor movements. Certainly in the past 25 years such a rise has been apparent, particularly in the Philippines. However, also apparent is the marked rise of demand for labor in fields traditionally seen as ‘women’s work’ i.e. domestic work, health care, manufacturing/textile industry, entertainment industry and the sex industry. While these are remunerated and often well remunerated work, it does not change the traditional roles of women; roles that migrant women from poor countries perform enabling women in host countries to pursue education and take up professional careers. Increasingly Filipino women are becoming the breadwinners of families, though paradoxically, while they take up low skilled ‘women’s work’. This pattern has particular implications for societal gender roles and the lives of women, men and their families.

Many Filipino women find themselves working overseas for years, even decades. They leave home and the care of their children to others while taking care of others’ homes and children to financially support their own families. During her absence, the migrant’s responsibilities and commitment to her family and community does not diminish. The triple burden of women that sees them juggling reproductive labor, productive labor and community labor continues, though transnationally. In research undertaken by Unlad Kabayan (2012b) in Davao “Remittance Behavior of Migrants” we found among Muslim and non-Muslim women, their reproductive role is the same. The anguish, sense of loss, guilt and despair women feel when leaving their children is universal. Providing women with the opportunity to return home at the earliest time is a central goal of MSAI.
"My children would be upset and become very quiet every time I leave for Saudi. And my feet weighed like a ton of cement just thinking of boarding the next plane to Saudi. They would tell me how different it is to have mother at home. And how about my children in Saudi? How did I feel about leaving some children and coming to be with another set of them? I was torn between my two sets of children in Saudi and in Philippines." – Migrant Worker, Mariam

"Women come home because it is the women who are expected to take care of elderly parents or to care and guide wayward children. When I was with my children, they did quite well in school. But when I left my son just shifted from one course to another and finally left school without completing any course." – Migrant Worker, Sumaya

Puring had to return from Singapore upon learning that her daughter who was in school was pregnant by the driver of their passenger jeepney. She invested her savings in a passenger jeepney that her husband drove in the morning. In the evening a second driver would run the jeepney after taking the daughter home from school. – Migrant Worker, Puring from Barangay Payatas

While women struggle to juggle the expectations and responsibilities of them as women, their identities and knowledge of themselves is also altered. Indeed many find life abroad brings them greater freedoms and opportunities. Concurrently, men have great difficulty adapting to being the carer, they often find financial dependency emasculating and are unable to fulfill their new responsibilities. As a result the absence of a mother often means that sisters, aunts and grandmothers must take over the management of the household as husbands fail to adapt.

REMITTANCES IN DEVELOPMENT

As an organization working in and around migrant savings and investments Unlad Kabayan finds itself in a contested field. The role of migrant remittances in development is indeed a controversial topic, and one that Unlad Kabayan must engage with every day. In recent years it has become apparent that the total value of remittances sent to the Philippines, far outweigh weights that of international aid funding [Eversole, 2008]. Not only do remittances boost the macro-level economy, they often go directly to the poorest and most vulnerable communities. As a result outward labor migration is increasingly framed as a development solution. Many are concerned that this simply becomes a means for government to avoid responsibility for poverty alleviation and development. Is ‘national development’ a fair burden to place on the migrant? Do the social costs of migration outweigh the economic gains? Can the financial resources be harnessed in a way that does not encumber the migrant nor endorse emigration as a means of national development? Does a growing economy even equate to meaningful improvements in living standards for the majority? Some see the model of MSAI as impractical, does the migrant even have the capacity to save, or are we simply milking the poor?
This debate provides a healthy reminder to Unlad Kabayan to ensure that activities and programs of the organization remain ‘migrant-centered’. Our primary client is the migrant and our goal is to provide migrants with alternative options to migration. In this way it is vital that remittances remain private money and that the decision to invest is a personal choice made by the migrant. Through the MSAI program the migrant retains autonomy over his or her own finances, while Unlad Kabayan ensures a positive financial outcome. We firmly believe that the perception of migrants as incapable of taking action to alter their realities deserves challenging. It is as vital for both migrants and the wider public, to recognize that they do actually have the capacity to save and invest, and in doing so, create greater choices for themselves. This increased awareness is a vital part of the work of Unlad Kabayan, as it empowers migrants to become economic actors with control over their own livelihood. Such a change in consciousness is all the more vital for women migrants. Further more it is vital to maintain that central issue at hand, is migration, and remittances are but one outcome of the global movement of people.

**Marriage Migration**

Cross border marriage is hardly a new phenomenon. Nor is the commodification of brides, or the selection of a mate on their ability to improve familial financial security. In fact throughout history, marriage has far more often been a financial transaction than a romantic one. However, the increasing scale of Filipino marriage migration, the heavily gendered nature of this and the power relations involved, have vital consequences to the experiences of many Filipina migrants. Currently, 90% of Filipino nationals married to non-Filipinos are women (Lauser, 2008). Furthermore, the Philippines is the leading nation in bride exports (Davin, 2007). This is part of a wider global pattern that sees women from less developed countries marrying men from developed countries. While Korea and Japan are the top receiving countries for Filipina brides many women also migrate to Europe, the United States and Australia. Although this global trend has been increasing for some time, it has taken a marked increase with the rise of the Internet.

Marriage migration is often understood within the context of global markets. It may be viewed as an outcome of North-South power relations where wealthy men exchange their financial capital for the sexual capital of poor women. The gender stereotypes that operate behind this market are of particular importance. While western men are attracted to the notion of a Filipina bride as a “traditional” woman, many women enter the market looking for a ‘modern’ man. The perception of Filipinas as “good” carers, domesticated and submissive women conflates this. Conflicting visions of the relationship contribute to an increased occurrence of domestic violence within this cohort.

The experiences of Filipino marriage migrants are vast and complex. The stereotype of the Filipino ‘mail-order’ bride does not accurately represent the diversity of experiences and it is an integral role of the advocacy work at Unlad Kabayan to transgress this. While many women find themselves in relationships as carers of older men, many raise happy children and build strong relationships with their partners and Filipino family. Marrying a foreigner may be seen to provide a certain social status in the Philippines, but in the receiving country it is often viewed with certain condescension. Both the women and men involved choose to enter into these relationships for a myriad of reasons and their agency in doing so cannot be dismissed. Many of the women investors in MSAI program are Filipinas married to foreign nationals and the life stories of these women differ enormously. As an advocate around the rights of migrants, Unlad Kabayan needs to find a means to provide a fair representation of
women’s experiences while also ensuring support to women who are made vulnerable by this global trend.

The conditional visas that accompany migration by marriage, often place Filipina women in precarious positions. In many countries women may be unable to work or receive social services until a number of years after the marriage. This renders them financially dependent on their partner and unable to leave if the marriage does not work. It is also vital to recognize that women do not only marry to migrate, many women migrate to marry, with an idealized notion of what a foreign man may provide them. They may also enter into a marriage hastily in order to ensure their visa status.

Increasingly, Unlad Kabayan and our partners working in this field are noting a geographical pattern to marriage migration. This is in part a result of women introducing their family, friends or neighbors, to acquaintances of their partners after migration. However there is an increasing occurrence of mass weddings, with sometimes 50 to 100 couples, often between Koreans and Filipinas. These may be coordinated by certain para-churches or agencies. Anecdotal data suggests some of these women may end up in poorly paid factory labor once they migrate. The experiences of these women, the impact of the sending community and social, cultural and economic ramifications require further investigation.

TRAINING CONDUCTED ON GENDER EQUALITY

Gender has been a difficult concept to grasp and to translate, literally, into local language among the staff of Unlad Kabayan whether it be in Tagalog or Bisaya, more so in Maranao language. The recent training in gender sensitivity and gender audit revealed a wealth of practical experiences in gender empowerment. Key findings included:

- Male staff demonstrated greater linguistic understanding of gender than female staff
- Female staff were more gender-sensitive in practice, as demonstrated through their experiences in beneficiary selection and counseling in livelihood options
- Two (1 male and 1 female) had biases on LGBT
- Understanding of the gender policy was more in practice than in the theoretical formulation
- Importantly, everyone showed interest in further discussion on gender, especially the differences between women and men in their physical and socio-emotional characteristics

However, gender was still understood very much as a dichotomy. The concept of multiple masculinities and femininities and the limitations of the gender binary were not yet grasped. Furthermore the application of gender sensitive practice was limited in scope. Focus amongst staff was on gender and policy appraisal, disaggregated data, a quantitative demonstration of female participation and clear gender objectives. The ability to question prescribed gender roles was limited as was a commitment to transgress these. See Annex B for full summary.

CONSULTING FIRMS AND INDIVIDUALS ENGAGED FOR GENDER PROGRAMMES

Unlad Kabayan has been working with the Women’s Legal Bureau on issues around Women and Migration for some time. Recently we have been working with ASEAN in formulating the proposed Human Rights Declaration. Our focus has been in ensuring women and migrant rights are well represented. We have an ongoing relationship with UN Women,
previously UNIFEM. Gender experts that have worked with Unlad Kabayan include Nicola Piper (Swansea University), Kathy Gibson (Australian National University) Caridad Sri Tharan (Miriam College) Yolanda Ealdama (University of the Philippines), Masami Ochi (Ochanimaruz University), Amanda Cahill (Australian National University).

In 2000, a research on Good Practices in the Protection of Migrant Women in Vulnerable Jobs was commissioned by the International Labor Office in Geneva. The research report was published by the ILO Gender Programme.

**PUBLICATIONS UTILIZED AS REFERENCES FOR DESIGNING GENDER PROGRAMMES**

Some of the more important publications used as references for gender programmes are as follows:

- *New Perspectives on Gender and Migration: Rights, Entitlements and Livelihoods* – by Nicola Piper
- *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace* – by Vandana Shiva
- The writings and research of Caridad Sri Tharan
- *Can the Subaltern Speak?* - by G.C. Spivak
- *Gender planning and development: theory, practice, and training* – by Caroline Moser
- *Rethinking Gender Matters in Development* in Poverty and development into the 21st century – by Ruth Pearson
- *“Who Is the Other?: A Postmodern Feminist Critique of Women and Development Theory and Practice”* by Jane Parpart

From the United Nations and UN Agencies:
1. The UN and ILO conventions and human rights instruments
2. International Labor Organization (ILO)
   a) GENPROM Working Paper No. 8, Series on Women and Migration, PHILIPPINES: GOOD PRACTICES FOR THE PROTECTION OF FILIPINO WOMEN MIGRANT WORKERS IN VULNERABLE JOBS by Maria Angela “Mayan” C. Villalba
   b) Preventing Discrimination, Exploitation and Abuse of Women Migrant Workers: An Information Guide
3. International Organization for Migration (IOM)

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Greater research needs to be carried out in relation to marriage migration. In particular the experiences of women, the impacts on the communities, and the social and cultural ramifications.

- Many men and women struggle with the changing gender roles that result from migration. Greater education, training and support needs to be provided to mitigate the fall out affect on families.

- The staff is not sufficiently engaged with gender discussions to remain abreast of the issues. Collaboration with CSOs specializing in gender could encourage staff growth. It is vital that such collaboration incorporates all Unlad staff not merely program staff. Greater effort needs to be made to utilize experts from among the Board and researchers who visit Unlad to provide training or initiate discussions with staff.
CHAPTER 3. PARTNERSHIPS AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION MANAGEMENT IN RETURN AND REINTEGRATION

CURRENT PARTNERSHIPS ON GENDER AND RETURN AND REINTEGRATION PROGRAMMES

To ensure the sustainability of the MSAI Program, Unlad Kabayan forges partnerships with like-minded and gender-responsive organizations. A crucial factor in implementing a successful MSAI program is partnership. Partners play an important role in sustaining the program and complementing the work in host and sending countries. These partners can be non-government organizations, migrant associations, faith-based organizations among others. In Asia, Unlad has partners in Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan and Singapore.

In Hong Kong, Unlad’s partners are both NGOs: Enrich and the Asian Migrant Centre. We work with women migrant domestic workers. In Taiwan, the partners are both faith-based organizations: the Hope Workers Center and the Hsinchu Migrants and Immigrants Service Center. Most of the migrants we work with are factory workers (women and men) and some domestic workers (women). In Europe, Unlad has partnered with the Commission for Filipino Migrant Workers (CFMW). In the Netherlands, Unlad and CFMW work with undocumented migrants working as part-time cleaners. The Dutch government has implemented a scheme to give an option to undocumented migrants to voluntarily return home, providing free tickets and a small amount to be used as start-up capital for a business back home. The Dutch NGO Maatwerk bij Terugkeer manages this program in conjunction with Unlad Kabayan. Some of the migrants were referred by CFMW. In the United Kingdom, the profile of the migrants we work with is generally nurses/hospital workers and some part-time cleaners. In Greece, CFMW and Unlad are working with a group of women migrants called DIWATA (faery), some of the members are wives of Greek nationals, some are part-time cleaners. In Switzerland, some of the migrants we work with are documented and are considered “professionals” while some are undocumented working as part-time cleaners.

The process of productive reintegration must start while the migrant woman is still in the host country providing support services to women to plan their return home. Champions in the host country are crucial to a successful reintegration. Home country partner’s interest in migrant reintegration is closely tied up with the many benefits that accrue to migrant women and what they can potentially bring home; remittances and investments, the potential for local job creation and development of the local economy. However, the host country partner’s interest is, for the most part, the interest of migrants and migrant women.

TECHNICAL COOPERATION PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES IMPLEMENTED WITH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

Unlad Kabayan was part of the European Commission – United Nations Project that funded Joint Migration and Development Initiatives. The project “Enhancing Migrants Capacities as Partners in Development” focused on mobilization of migrant remittances for development. Through the project more migrant women came forward as investors and entrepreneurs, especially coming from Europe. Out of the IMDI experience, the MSAI toolkits and were further enriched and new editions of “Savings & Investing” as well as stories of migrant entrepreneurs were documented and published. Toolkits act as excellent means to increase the reach of the organization and give women migrants themselves greater control over the programs.
RECOMMENDATIONS

- Unfied Kabayan need to find a means to ensure ongoing information sharing about the gendered experiences of migrants with our partners overseas.

- International agencies need to make a greater effort to be grounded in the realities of CSOs if true and effective partnerships are to be forged.

- Gender policy at Unfied Kabayan must reflect the rich experience and shared with partner organizations to ensure that we share core values and reflected in our practice.

GOOD PRACTICES

**Partnership-Cooperation**

**Hope Workers Center**

Hope Workers Center was established in early 1990, in Chungli City in Taiwan. It operates programs and services to migrants in distress, oftentimes women in distress. Many women experienced abuse at the hands of employers, whether those of domestic workers or factory workers. Among factory workers, women are the most exploited. They receive wages lower than men and are compelled to work graveyard shifts. Many women are in factories that produce computer chips and watches. After two years of doing this work, women quickly suffer from deteriorating eyesight and poor health. This called the attention of Hope Workers Center who believes that women should benefit both in the short-term period of migration and long-term, to post-migration. They also believe that any loss or trade-off should be more of the short-term, while still in the destination country.

However, work-related deteriorating health conditions amongst migrants sent alarm signals to HWC. Fr. Peter O’Neill and Sister Beth. Even at the onset of MSAI, HWC made it clear that it has been looking into viable options for dignified and productive return of migrants working in Taiwan. HWC on its part had done its own analysis of migration and saw the reality of the temporary nature of migrant work, at least, for individual migrants. They saw many who went home unprepared because of pre-terminated contracts or due to emergencies at home. In its analysis, HWC saw an increasing investment from Taiwan to mainland China. And with competition from all over the globe, there is a strong possibility for Taiwan to lose some of its competitiveness, especially in labor cost that could lead to drastic reduction in labor importation. Either way, migrants tend to be on the losing end.

Since 1999, HWC embraced the framework and practice of MSAI reintegration strategy. It actively promoted the strategy during masses at the Catholic Church in Chungli City, Taiwan. Chungli is considered the equivalent of “Silicon Valley” in Taiwan where electronic factories abound. Thousands of women workers are caught up in the factory and dormitory, work and sleep routine.

But a newly married young woman, Marissa from Mindanao escaped this routine. When she was told she had to go home for failing the vision test. But her family has incurred a lot of debt using her migrant status as some form of “collateral”. She left the factory and took another job as an undocumented worker. She also had a “boyfriend” as a kind of protection from arrest and to assuage loneliness. In less than a year she had to be rushed to the hospital because of bleeding having had an abortion by herself, and sought help from the HWC. When Marissa recovered, she continued to work undocumented and joined the savings group and attended the training sessions at the HWC.
In the analysis of global migration, HWC saw the potential slow down which materialized in 2007-2008 when plant closures and job losses were high and many migrants had to return home. This situation continues to drive the energy and commitment of HWC in MSAL.
CHAPTER 4. ACCOUNTABILITIES IN GENDER RESPONSIVE RETURN AND REINTEGRATION

Established in 2007, the National Reintegration Center for OFWs is mandated to implement programs and services that will facilitate the productive and sustainable personal, economic and community reintegration of OFWs and their families to the Philippine society. It was further institutionalized in 2010 with the enactment of R.A. 10022 and the decree of its Implementing Rules and Regulations.

There are four services and one program specific to women migrant returnees that the NRCO offers to migrants and families: Counseling (legal, business and psycho-social); Training and Capability-building; Wage Employment Facilitation; Entrepreneurial/Micro-Enterprise Development Assistance and the Balik Pinay! Balik Hanapbuhay! The beneficiaries of these services are OFW returnees, returning OFWs, repatriated distressed OFW and migrant families.

But most migrants and their families expressed their disappointments over the program and recounted their experiences when they were not able to avail of the services for “budget” reasons. The NRCO doesn’t have enough infrastructure (financial and manpower) to support the needs of its supposed beneficiaries.

In 2011, the government launched another reintegration program, a collaborative effort of the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP), Land Bank and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA). It aims to support OFWs who are actively seeking opportunities to start, or strengthen existing business ventures, while facilitating their access to financial literacy and enterprise development support. It will facilitate opportunities for entrepreneurial OFWs to pursue enterprise/business ventures and make available credit and supporting enterprise development services. The criteria of eligible borrowers, requirements for loan application, loan maturity, loan repayment, etc. were also discussed.

The program is anchored on four thematic areas;

- Remittance for Development: The program aims to harness the potentials of remittances to catalyze the creation of local businesses in the communities of origin of OFWs, and in rural undeveloped areas;
- Enterprise Development: The program aims to facilitate wealth creation by supporting high-potential start-up and profitable existing small and medium enterprises owned and/or operated by OFWs and their families;
- Jobs Creation: The program aims to catalyze local economic development by encouraging OFW investments in highly profitable, labor intensive and environmentally-responsible investments;
- Poverty Reduction: The program aims to contribute in efforts to reduce poverty through entrepreneurial activities.

WHAT ARE THE LGUs ACCOUNTABILITIES TO THE RETURNING MIGRANT?

The Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995 (RA 8042 as amended by RA 10022) mandates Local Government Units (LGUs) to establish OFW help desk or kiosk in their localities. This provision was more in the context of the government’s drive against illegal recruitment. The Help Desks, according to RA 10022, shall be linked to the database of all
concerned government agencies, particularly the Philippine Overseas Employment Agencies (POEA) for its updated lists of overseas job orders and licensed recruitment agencies in good standing. According to the POEA, 50 OFW Desks in local government units have been set up primarily in the area of information on overseas jobs and prevention of trafficking.

Over the years, more LGUs have been pro-active in implementing OFW programs and went beyond the usual information dissemination service. Six OFW Help Desks have been established recently by the local government units of Muntinlupa, Navotas, Malabon, Quezon City, Marikina, and Makati. The OFW Help Desks were set up in partnership with OWWA with the aim of “giving OFWs and their families better access to government services and programs.” (www.owwa.gov.ph)

The Quezon City government created a reintegration section for its constituent OFWs. Under City Ordinance SP.2125, the reintegration section will develop and support programs and projects for livelihood, entrepreneurship, savings, investments and financial literacy for returning Filipino migrant workers and their families in coordination with relevant stakeholders, service providers, and international organizations. It will also coordinate with appropriate stakeholders, service providers, and relevant international organizations for the promotion, development, and the full utilization of OFW returnees and their potential. The reintegration section will also develop capacity-building programs for returning OFWs and their families, implementers, service providers, and stakeholders. It shall also conduct research for policy recommendation and program development.

The Makati City government also established the Makati City Overseas Filipino Workers Welfare Program in May 2011 through the City Ordinance No. 2011-021. The program was created at the height of the Arab spring wherein thousands of OFWs were repatriated. To Repatriated OFWs and their families residing in Makati, including 27 OFWs from then war-torn Libya, have received financial assistance from the local government.

LGUs in Mindanao into OFW Help Desks and OFW Desks Plus are on the increase:

- In 2003, Iligan City passed a city ordinance that would provide loans for placement fees to potential migrant workers and to encourage them to save while paying the loan after deployment. The Committee on Cooperatives was tasked to implement the ordinance.
- In the municipality of Opol, Misamis Oriental, an LGU initiated deployment of workers and trainees to Japan through a local government agreement with host country. The LGU through its MWCD continue to monitor the conditions of deployed workers;
- Kolambagan Municipal government in Lanao del Norte initiated a survey and helped Unlad Kabayan in organizing the “Migrant Workers and Families Multi-Purpose Cooperative in Kolambagan” led by wives of the seafarers.
- OFW Desks, particularly in Davao offer PEOS (Pre-Employment Orientation Seminars) in schools and communities.

The same, however, could not be said in the ARMM. LGU services are limited to posted announcements of job orders overseas. This was confirmed in interviews with local offices of the City Social Welfare and Development as well as PSOS in Marawi and Lanao del Sur provincial government.