Heroes and Heroines from the Homeland: Migration from a Philippine Perspective

Secretary Imelda M. Nicolas  
Chairperson  
Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO)  
Office of the President of the Philippines  
Philippines

A Holistic Picture of Philippine Migration

The Philippines occupies a special place in the world of migration and diaspora. It ranks as the third largest source of international migrants, after China and India. According to the World Bank (2010 Migration and Remittance Fact Book), it is the fourth largest remittance recipient in the world after India, China and Mexico. Filipinos can be found in over 200 countries around the globe in as many professions, types of work, lifestyles and situations as one can imagine.

However, the migration story of the Philippines goes beyond labor migration or sending out of workers to the world or receiving remittances that constitute 14 percent of our GDP at $18.5 Billion, as of 2010.

This paper would like to present a more holistic and nuanced view of Philippine migration, pointing out both the benefits and costs of international migration and how the new government under President Benigno S. Aquino III strives to maximize its benefits and minimize its costs.

*Presented at the 16th International Metropolis Conference, ‘Migration Futures: Perspectives on Global Changes,’ Azores Islands, 14 September 2011.*
In the President’s 16-point Social Contract with the Filipino People, which is premised on transformational leadership, his migration-related Point No. 10 is expressed thus:

“From a government that treats its people as an export commodity and a means to earn foreign exchange, disregarding the social cost to Filipino families...... to a government that creates jobs at home, so that working abroad will be a choice rather than a necessity, and when its citizens do choose to become Overseas Filipino Workers, their welfare and protection will still be the government’s priority.”

Those are the President’s marching orders and we at the Commission on Filipinos Overseas immediately re-crafted our Vision/Mission stressing that Migration and Development is our framework in strengthening and empowering overseas Filipinos’ communities everywhere.

In CFO, one of our mantras is the use of the Overseas Filipinos’ stock estimates which as of 2009 indicate there are more permanent migrants than temporary overseas Filipino workers (or what is more commonly known in our country as OFWs). As such, we at CFO prefer to use the more inclusive term overseas Filipinos (or OFs) to refer to all Filipinos living and working outside the Philippines including those belonging to the 2nd generation and 3rd generation – such is the profile of the Philippine diaspora.
As of the end of 2009, the number of Filipino emigrants (or Filipinos migrating on a permanent basis outside the Philippines) is placed at around four million or 47 percent while the number of temporary workers is estimated at 3.8 million or 45 percent. In addition to these ‘documented’ migrants, there are also undocumented or irregular migrants which number around 650 thousand or roughly 8% of the estimated total stocks.

I make a distinction between Overseas Filipinos or OFs, in general and permanent emigrants, and temporary migrant workers, in particular, in order to underscore the more nuanced nature of the Philippines’ international migration. More specifically, I think there is a need to correct the misimpression perpetuated in our local mass media that Philippine migration is only or mostly labor migration.

This distinction has implications in terms of the kind of interventions needed and gaps in these interventions for these varying segments of Overseas
Filipinos in the different stages of the migration cycle. This distinction has likewise to be considered in the type of multi-stakeholders’ engagements that would be effective and sustainable for each of the segment.

A good example of this is the reality of irregular migrants which asks for a different set of actions to lessen their number as they are the ones most vulnerable to abuse, violence and human trafficking.

But at the same we have to be mindful that in spite of their migration status, their human dignity must be maintained and their human rights protected.

The Philippine Development Plan of 2011-2016 which just came out and which I will refer again later is the Philippine government’s guide in formulating policies and implementing development program for the next six years, enabling the government, in partnership with the private sector and civil society, to work systematically to give the Filipino people a better chance of finally finding their way out of poverty, inequality and the poor state of human development.

In PDP’s last chapter under “Peace and Security”, it is stated that:

“In addition to territorial threats, the overseas diaspora of Filipinos entails a wider redefinition and understanding of threats to Filipino interests. In particular, the predicament of overseas Filipinos who come into conflict with the laws of other countries poses new
challenges to the country’s conduct of foreign relations, with potential repercussion on issues of sovereignty and territorial integrity.”

“A comprehensive response to these concerns involved initiatives to improve relations and forge cooperation with other nations to preserve and protect national security and interest, including the welfare of Filipinos living and working abroad.”

Beginnings of Philippine Migration

Filipinos have been leaving the country to live and work overseas for hundreds of years. Floro Mercene uncovers the peculiar 400-year history of the Filipino diaspora. Since the 16th century Filipinos have been seeking their place in the world initially as ‘Manila men’ working on the galleons in far-off places like the Americas and eventually as today’s OFWs working in the Middle East.

At the turn of the last century, Ilokano from the geographically harsh northern part of the country emigrated to Hawaii and the western seaboard of the US to try their luck working in the pineapple plantations and salmon canning factories. Many of them have since settled in these places and have developed deep roots in the community. The state of Hawaii’s two-term fifth governor in the 1990s, Benjamin Cayetano, is of Filipino descent.

Phenomenal Growth of Philippine Labor Migration
In terms of temporary labor out-flows, the number of OFWs leaving the country each year has reached staggering proportions over the last decade at least. In 2000 nearly 850 thousand Filipinos left the country to work abroad. Ten years later that number has nearly doubled to almost 1.5 million in annual deployments.

Indeed, since 2004 these annual labor deployments have not gone below the one million mark despite the global economic downturn of 2008-2009. Over the years, the top ten destinations for OFWs are Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Hongkong, United States, United Kingdom, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Canada.

**TOP 10 DESTINATION COUNTRY OF MIGRANT WORKERS (as of December, 2009)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REGION / COUNTRY</th>
<th>TEMPORARY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 SAUDI ARABIA</td>
<td>1,138,649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 UAE</td>
<td>576,002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 QATAR</td>
<td>258,365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 KUWAIT</td>
<td>145,242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 HONGKONG</td>
<td>140,042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 UNITED STATES</td>
<td>129,191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 UNITED KINGDOM</td>
<td>99,135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 MALAYSIA</td>
<td>89,875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 TAIWAN</td>
<td>83,070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 CANADA</td>
<td>79,758</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Feminization of Labor Migration

Deserving of great concern and attention is the feminization of labor migration. Since 1992, Filipino women migrant workers on NEW overseas contracts have almost consistently outnumbered male workers by a factor of three. Women OFWs constitute around 50% of the total with the majority of them in domestic work and entertainment. These are usually considered areas of employment with minimal protection, putting our women vulnerable to sexual exploitation, abuse and violence.

It has been said that women carry a triple burden once abroad: Women migrants experience three types of discrimination in many countries of destination – as nationals of a Third World country, as foreigners, and as women.
Studies have shown that:

“When male migration was the typical pattern in the 1970’s, families generally fared well because the women left behind assumed the responsibilities of the migration fathers. When women migration and men were the ones left behind, studies noted that fathers do not necessarily take on the care-giving roles of the migrant mothers;
instead these were passed on to other female family members. When mothers leave, families go through more adjustments. On the whole, even if migration has expanded women’s roles, it has not resulted in fundamental gender roles changes in the family.” (Migration and Development: Perspectives from the South and Parrenas, 2005)

**Social Costs and Benefits of Migration to the Families Left Behind**

The social costs of migration to the families and children left behind continue to challenge us. On one hand, the 2003 Children and Families Study in the Philippine “found that the children of migrants are doing well or are even better off than the children of non-migrants in school performance and health indicators. Children of migrants tend to attend private schools and they are more active in extra-curricular activities.” (Migration and Development: Perspectives from the South, 2010, edited by Castles and Wise).

On the other hand, other studies suggest that “children and adolescents left behind are at greater risk for drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, psychosocial dysfunction and criminal behavior…….The extended separation of families, including parental absence and increased household burdens, can have detrimental effects.” (taken from EU’s paper on “Improving the International Migration Management System of the Philippines”, 2010)

A Philippine Institute for Development Studies (Zosa and Orbeta) notes that “there is still no quantification of the social costs of migration”. Much of what is known about these costs are in the form of anecdotes and narratives. Some of these migration-induced problems include juvenile delinquency, self-
esteem issues, drug abuse, sexual promiscuity leading to early pregnancies, loneliness, marital problems, overdependence on migrant remittances, among many others.

**Economic Impact of Migration Especially in Terms of Remittances**

Which brings me to the other much discussed and researched issue: the economic impact of migration from the Philippines. As I mentioned earlier, the Philippines is a major migrant remittance-receiving area.

Remittance inflows clearly outrank investment flows and even official development assistance (ODA). In 2009, the country was able to attract no less than US$ 1.9 billion in foreign direct investments (FDI) and in 2007, the Philippines received around US$ 634 million ODA.

In 2010 alone, however, the country received no less than US$ 18.7 billion in inward remittances. In fact, each year since 2006, the Philippines receives anywhere from US$ 12 billion to as much as US$ 19 billion in remittances through formal channels according to our country’s central bank (the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas or BSP).

These remittance figures include only those earnings sent through formal channels. Remittances sent through the so-called informal and ‘padala’ or personal channels are estimated to be up to twenty percent of official channels.
At the same time, they are remittances sent primarily by permanent Filipino emigrants who have settled in the Americas (not a few of whom even have dual citizenship). Economists are puzzled by the fact that our remittances inflows and outflow of people are hardly affected by the financial crises happening all over the world. This is one of those reasons, aside from the fact that “international migration from the Philippines has become larger, more diverse in terms of the composition of migrants….It has encompassed the whole country and Filipino migrants are widely distributed throughout the world.” (Brick by Brick: Building Cooperation between the Philippines and Migrants’ Associations in Italy and Spain, 2010, edited by Fabio Baggio).

Again, our media tend to call these OFW remittances but the more precise terms would be remittances from Overseas Filipinos or OFs.

**TOP 10 DESTINATION COUNTRY OF PERMANENT MIGRANTS**
*(as of December 2009)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REGION / COUNTRY</th>
<th>PERMANENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 UNITED STATES</td>
<td>2,592,632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 CANADA</td>
<td>553,793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>285,977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 JAPAN</td>
<td>146,488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 UNITED KINGDOM</td>
<td>91,852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 GERMANY</td>
<td>45,137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 SINGAPORE</td>
<td>42,770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 SPAIN</td>
<td>33,405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 ITALY</td>
<td>29,736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 MALAYSIA</td>
<td>26,002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TOP TEN SOURCE COUNTRIES OF OFs REMITTANCES
(As of December 2010, in million US dollars)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>7.825</td>
<td>7.323</td>
<td>7.862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>1.308</td>
<td>1.900</td>
<td>2.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>1.387</td>
<td>1.470</td>
<td>1.544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>0.776</td>
<td>0.859</td>
<td>0.888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>0.575</td>
<td>0.773</td>
<td>0.882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>0.621</td>
<td>0.644</td>
<td>0.775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>0.523</td>
<td>0.649</td>
<td>0.734</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>0.678</td>
<td>0.521</td>
<td>0.550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>0.304</td>
<td>0.433</td>
<td>0.448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>0.185</td>
<td>0.352</td>
<td>0.372</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ANNUAL REMITTANCES OF OFs
(As of December 2010, in hundred US dollars)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Remittances (2003-2010) in 000 US$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>7,376,458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>8,550,371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>10,689,005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>12,761,308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>14,449,928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>16,426,854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>17,348,052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>18,629,940</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These OFs have become our lifeline. Their remittances are what keep the economy of the country afloat in the midst of the global economic crisis. In not a few cases, poverty levels have been significantly reduced in areas where out-migration levels are substantial.
The book “Migration and Development: Perspectives from the South” describes both the positive and negative economic impact of remittances at the level of families and household:

“Since remittances are private transfers, families and household are the one who directly benefit from them. Typical use of remittances include the purchase of land, construction or renovation of houses, underwriting the education of family members especially children, starting small businesses, the purchase of consumer durables and savings. Findings from studies confirm that remittances translate into better material conditions for migrants’ families…… However, the impact of remittances between migrant and non-migrant households is less clear. There are in fact, concerns about growing inequality between migrant and non-migrant households, and apprehensions about materialism, conspicuous consumption, careless use of remittances and families becoming dependent on remittances.”

This problem about remittances was elaborated on, among other things, by a project study called Migrants’ Associations and Philippine Institutions for Development (or MAPID), spearheaded by the Scalabrinii Migration Center. The study showed that left-behind family members are seen to develop a high degree of dependence on their remittance allocation to the point that (a) they no longer see the need to be gainfully employed (even if jobs are locally available) or (b) they also imbibe the same goal of going abroad to work (SMC 2009).
Moreover, the inequitable distribution of remittances across households in the community can intensify the income disparity among households and regions in the Philippines.

Finally, while it is good from a macro-economic standpoint to have migrant families spend their remittance allotments on conspicuous consumption (e.g., the purchase of electronics, building or repairing the house, etc.), these expenditures have yet to be significant from a sustainable and strategic development standpoint and from an over-all poverty alleviation perspective.

The book “How International Migration Can Support Development: a Challenge for the Philippines” has this to say about the use of remittances for developmental purposes:

“Recent pioneering studies inquiring into the development potentials of migration suggest that collective remittances by overseas Filipinos are contributing to local development (see for example, Baggio and Asis, 2006; Powers, 2006; Ateneo Centers for Social Policy 2005; Opiniano, 2005, Mass, 2005; www.filipinodiasporagiving.com).…… Overseas Filipinos have banded into some 4,000 to 12,000 organizations (Bagasao, 2005, as cited in Powers, 2006).…..Most migrant associations have been formed for purposes other than to promote or support development efforts in the home country. Nevertheless, they are open to the idea of contributing to development goals….Aside from
the government-led programme to link overseas Filipinos donations with the development needs of the communities in the Philippines, the initiatives of several NGOs – e.g. mobilizing migrant’s savings programs to support enterprises in migrants communities or in preparing migrants for their return (see www.unladkabayan.org, www.atikha.org, among others) – and the participation of the private sector (see Asis 2004) – are worth looking into.”

Brain Drain Situation of Philippine Migration

It is undeniable that the exodus of Filipinos out of the country has resulted in loses that can have long-term development implications. The brain drain problem is real. There exists an array of studies on the extent of this problem obtaining in the Philippines. A 2009 Philippine Institute of Development Studies (PIDS) paper notes that migrant workers experience deskilling due to the fact that their educational background does not match their overseas jobs. Indeed, they are overqualified for these jobs.

“Fifty-three percent of employed Filipino emigrants have tertiary education… [b]ut only 14.5 percent are managers and professionals, with 26.6 percent working as technicians and clerks. The bulk of 60 percent are operators defined as service workers, agricultural workers, crafts workers, plant operators and sales.” (Zosa and Orbeta 2009, 4)
A peculiar aspect of migration from the Philippines is the fact that most of the women migrants who work abroad have mid-level to high educational and occupational backgrounds and experiences but they tend to accept jobs that do not require their acquired skills. Not a few are college degree holders in education, nursing, and accountancy. Yet the jobs they accept are the ones that require little or no skills and are labor intensive such as domestic work or factory work.

In a news report made early this month, our Commission on Higher Education (CHED) identified what it considers to be five ‘oversubscribed’ tertiary education courses in which a significant number of graduates are unable to find jobs in both the domestic and international markets. These are education, nursing, business administration, information technology, and hotel and restaurant management. (Jaymalin 2011)

Managing Migration and Development
The Philippine government subscribes to an operational framework similar to the perspectives of other international organizations like the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in looking at the critical importance of managing migration. While migration has both positive and negative impacts, its benefits need to be harnessed for sustainable development purposes.

Managing migration can be a powerful force for economic growth and innovation in destination countries, and poverty reduction and development in poorer origin countries, as well as provide important human freedom and human development outcomes for migrants and their families. (IOM 2010, 4)

The Philippines has learned much from its migration experience. Conscious of the significance of its migrant /diaspora population, the country on a multi-stakeholder approach, is now deliberately and actively seeking out not only to tap into the economic resources of Filipinos overseas but has also increasingly attempted to find ways to incorporate them in its national, social, cultural, economic and political discourse and development processes.

It is in this context that the CFO is spearheading a “First Global Summit of Filipinos in the Diaspora.” The summit has for its theme: ‘Diaspora to Development (D2D)’ and will be held from 27 to 29 September, 2011 in Manila and will bring together some 500 participants from at least 30 countries.
The summit aims to launch the Diaspora to Development program which lays down a comprehensive menu of engagements for OFs to become development partners, not only with the government but also with civil society and private sector. These engagements range from arts and culture exchange to science and technology transfer, from diaspora philanthropy to diaspora investment, from global legal assistance to advocacy, from medical missions coordination to tourism initiatives, from doing business in the Philippines to return and reintegration.

**CFO’s Ten-Point Goals**

The CFO, likewise, is committed to undertake a framework that incorporates migration with development. This framework is embodied in its Ten-Point Goals which are:

1. To advocate for coherent, coordinated and clear development policies to be mainstreamed in the policy-making process of government.

2. To support and strengthen a favorable rights-based policy environment for overseas Filipinos.
3. To develop and implement, in coordination with and with the support of other government agencies, a streamlined and facilitative entry and directional process for “development assistance” in the form of resources, knowledge, skills and technology from Filipinos overseas.

4. To provide mechanisms for various stakeholders to coordinate, forge partnerships, upscale and leverage diaspora funds (e.g. remittances and savings) and investments, in order to make these funds more effective tools for the country’s development and economic growth.

5. To assist in the integration of migrating Filipinos in their host countries by educating them on the realities of international migration.

6. To assist in the productive and seamless re-integration of returning overseas Filipinos and their families in the country.

7. To ensure that Filipinos overseas remain rooted in their Filipino culture.

8. To promote the leading role of CFO on the formulation of policies and in addressing key issues on migration and development.

9. To improve and enhance CFO’s institutional capabilities for lobbying and advocacy for policy-setting, formulation and reform.
10. To provide accurate, timely and comprehensive data on international migration of Filipinos through linkages with government agencies and other stakeholders essential for policy formulation and protection of overseas Filipinos.

**Most Current Challenges**

The on-going political turmoil that has created a wave of democratization in countries in the MENA region that employ a significant number of OFWs such as Egypt, Syria, and Libya can be an area of concern for the Philippines in its attempt to ensure their safety and safe passage out of the areas of conflict.

There is a need to establish cooperative arrangements and mechanisms not only with established intergovernmental agencies such as the IOM but also with the newly established governments in these countries for the security of the migrant and diaspora communities and minorities.

The Philippines would like to make sure that that these areas continue to be accommodating, tolerant, and open to our migrants. As such, the Philippines would like to see to it that all the governments formed in the region would abide by established international conventions governing the rights of migrants as human beings. Moreover, these governments must also uphold their commitment to democratic and accountable institutions and processes.
Related to the point just mentioned above, is the growing sense of ‘fear of the foreigner’ felt in many European countries. There is a need to combat the wave of xenophobia and fear of ‘the other’ that is sweeping many parts of the world today. This fear of migrants stems from a lack of appreciation and respect for the rights of minorities and which in turn creates a sense of ‘moral panic’ (as Malaysian sociologist Diana Wong would put it) in the face of increasing multiculturalism (Wong 2005).

As noted in the 2010 IOM report, irregular migration is not only increasing but also becoming more complex. Irregular migration from the Philippines continues to pose a serious challenge to the country’s governmental institutions and resources. There is certainly a need to reduce the human costs of irregular migration.

Like the UN, the Philippines government acknowledges the fact that migration is not a zero-sum game (UN 2006, 8). Its international commitments attest to this. The Philippines continues to look forward to high level dialogues between the governments of both sending and receiving areas to promote better and more extensive cooperative relations intended to maximize the development benefits of international migration and reduce its adverse effects.

The Philippines government adheres to the principle of a rights-based approach to the situation of migrants and the institutionalization of humane and orderly migration. Protecting and promoting migrants’ rights and welfare is and has always been a key pillar of the country’s foreign policy.
Our long-term goal, as I mentioned earlier, is to make migration a matter of choice and not of necessity. Local job generation is the primary task of this government.

We also hold the view that the issues associated with migrants and migration cannot be solved by stringent policy measures. Rather it is by establishing effective partnerships with stakeholders especially civil society organizations who have been in the forefront of this issue and the migrants themselves, that these problems can be addressed and the positive effects of international migration can be felt.

Migration cannot be managed unilaterally and only from the national level. Our local government units must begin to appreciate their migrants’ population and engage them as their development partners for the good of their communities, towns, provinces and regions. Although some of our local leaders have started to tap the resources of the Filipino diaspora for local development, they are still few and far between and have not reached a critical mass to be significant.

The MAPID study mentioned earlier found that “International migration is missing in regional and local development plans.” (SMC 2009)

Integration of Migration in the National Development Planning Level
The Philippines under the administration of President Benigno S. Aquino III has taken steps to make sure that migration is incorporated into development planning at the national level.

This is why CFO has taken on this ‘crusade’ together with our development planning institution called NEDA (National Economic Development Authority) to integrate migration into our national development framework.

As a result, we have managed to get at least 60 migration-related provisions (in seven out of nine chapters) in the 2011-2016 Philippine Development Plan (PDP) covering such diverse issues as remittances, financial literacy for OFs, OFs appreciating our Philippine culture and heritage, the use of OFs human capital, and ways to reverse the brain drain and turn it into brain gain, strengthening the campaign against human trafficking and many more. Some highlights of these provisions are as follows:

**Chapter 1: In Pursuit of Inclusive Growth**

Relations with foreign nations shall be actively cultivated to support sovereignty, regional peace and security, and economic cooperation based on equitable and mutual benefit. Paramount consideration shall be paid to *the ensuring the welfare and protection of the millions of Filipinos working overseas.*
In economic terms, the country’s external payments and international credit position have not been healthier in decades; thanks to overseas remittances, surpluses on current account have been run consistently since 2003.....

Chapter 2: Macro-economic Policy

This partly reflects the difficulty of gaining employment in the formal labor market and implies a high incidence of informal sector work. In addition, the 43.2 percent “educated unemployed” out of the total unemployed labor force is also very high, a symptom of the labor mismatch in the country and a factor contributing to the growing deployment of Filipino workers overseas, averaging about 1.1 million per year.

Policymakers will need to focus on leveraging remittances as a tool for economic development. While remittances are private transfers, the government can ensure that the policy environment is conducive to the use of remittances for investment in well-considered financial products, in productive activities such as entrepreneurial undertaking as well as in better housing, education, and healthcare for remitters and their beneficiaries. Improving the financial education of the overseas Filipino community and implementing measures to further promote the flow of remittances through the financial system would help catalyze the developmental role of remittances.
Chapter 3: Competitive Industry

By addressing the country’s problem of low competitiveness, this Plan aims to promote higher growth in per capita GDP and boost employment. The focus shall be to enable the industry and services sectors to contribute to massive job generation, provide opportunities for Filipinos to rise above poverty, and ultimately offer a meaningful choice for Filipinos to pursue gainful employment here or abroad.

Government shall promote sustainable livelihood and micro enterprise development, harnessing the Overseas Filipinos (OFs) community as a source of capital.

A more aggressive campaign to tap OFs sources of capital shall be pursued…..DTI and DOLE shall review and strengthen existing programs and consider ways to maximize the brain gain derived by OFs from foreign deployment. The DFA, DOLE, DOF, CFO and the BSP shall conduct financial literary campaign overseas to educate and orient OFs regarding their investment and remittance options ….”

Chapter 6: Financial System

Likewise, there is a wide variety in the purpose of their loan application: consumption smoothing, financing for educational needs and funds for
migration purposes such as placement fees, document processing fees. Hence, these warrant the introduction of financial products specifically designed for this group of borrowers.

A Collective Investment Schemes Law (CISL) to broaden investor participation in the securities market, including participation by Overseas Filipinos.

Chapter 7: Good Governance and Rule of Law

Women continue to be burdened by the debilitating impact of poverty and the lingering economic crisis and out-migration among women remains high with many in service and domestic occupations. The challenge remains for government to ensure that statutory mandates relating to gender and development concerns are observed and implemented by all concerned sectors.

Improve capacities of prosecutors and law enforcers particularly NBI agents in the investigation and prosecution of special cases involving economic or white collar crimes such as money laundering, tax evasion, smuggling, human trafficking, violations of intellectual property rights and anti-trust laws, illegal drugs and even cases involving extralegal killings and other human rights violations as well as violation of environmental laws.
Chapter 8: Social Development

Although there have been attempts by PhilHealth to cover the poor and the unemployed, as well as workers in the informal sector and those working overseas, universal membership has yet to be achieved.

Social security and protection of OWFs are growing concerns given the limited coverage of the SSS, PHI, and Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA).

Implement mandatory SSS coverage for land-based OFWs and include SSS enrolment as prerequisite in the issuance of the Overseas Employment Certificate.

Strengthen measures against human trafficking and provide support for its victims.

Strengthen safety nets for OFWs. Institute dialogues and forge agreement to further strengthen cooperation with labor-receiving countries towards mutual protection and benefits for the OFWs.

Campaign for other countries to ratify international conventions, treaties, standards and protocols that are relevant to the protection and promotion of the rights and well-being of Overseas Filipinos.
Institute dialogues and forge agreements to further strengthen cooperation with labor-receiving countries towards mutual protection and benefits for the OFWs.

... making the education system responsive to the needs of the global community, while minimizing brain drain, encouraging brain gain and protecting the Filipino family from the social costs of migration; and

Encouraging Filipinos overseas to remain rooted in their culture through an appreciation of Filipino languages, culture and heritage.

Chapter 9: Peace and Security

Pursue friendly and peaceful bilateral and multilateral relations with other nations and international agencies to promote cooperative projects in the political, economic and military fields, as well as assuring the security and welfare of Filipinos working and living abroad.

Enhancement of border security through the strict enforcement of the Philippine immigration laws and upgrading of surveillance and detection capacity to thwart the entry of foreign terrorists and other lawless elements as well as human trafficking and smuggling of anti-social goods and weapons of mass destruction.
Better and Harmonized Migration-Related Data Generation Systems

In view of the increasing complexity of migration from the Philippines, there is a need to formulate better data-generation systems. Our law, Migrant Workers and Other Filipinos Act of 1995 (amended in 2010) stipulates on the establishment of a streamlined migration information system (or more commonly known as Shared Government Information System on Migration or SGISM). Up to now, however, that integrated information system has yet to be established.

There is a need to consolidate and harmonize data on Philippine migration to the extent that they are able to provide useful inputs to make policies more coherent and effective. In addition international migration data must be integrated into the government’s social and economic development policy, planning and programming at all levels (national, regional and local). (EU’s “Improving the International Migration Management System of the Philippines” 2010)

Thus, we welcome the project of the European Union with several migration-related government agencies including CFO, for the harmonization of migration-related data, which will start its implementation by 2012.

(Note: please view the complete set of the migration-related excerpts from the PDP in our website: www.cfo.gov.ph)
Need for Coherent and Comprehensive Migration Strategy

Again, because of the complexity and the longevity of Philippine migration, our attention has been called again and again to the need “for a coherent and comprehensive migration strategy ……since….policies and measures affecting migrants are decided by a number of different government agencies in isolation, leading to policy incoherence and incongruity…..” (EU’s “Improving the International Migration Management System of the Philippines” 2010). We are aware of this and all I could say is that it is a work in progress.

Heroes and Heroines from the Homeland

Finally, I would like to reiterate that the Filipino diaspora has become a source of strength of our economy and society. They are heroes and heroines in the true sense of the word. In exchange for their heroism and sacrifices, their achievements and skills gained, their contributions and experiences, multiple stakeholders including the Philippines government are doing their best to engage them in many fronts and to sustain these engagements.

But whether it is temporary, permanent or undocumented, migration from a Philippine perspective can be seen as a ‘ritual passage and reconstitution of self’ in relation to the nation. (Aguilar 1999)

Let me end this presentation by paraphrasing a part of a dialogue in one of Bertolt Brecht's plays as a way to reiterate my key point throughout this paper.
In that dialogue, Galileo Galilei is said to have lamented: ‘Unhappy is the land that needs a hero’. I say now that the Philippines is fortunate because we have so many heroes and heroines.
Sources

Aguilar, Filomeno (1999) ‘Ritual Passage and the Reconstruction of Selfhood in International Labour Migration’, in Sojourn, Volume 14, Number 1, pp. 98 – 139

Baggio, Fabio (2010) “Brick by Brick: Building Cooperation Between the Philippines and Migrants Associations in Italy and Spain’, SMC

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Overseas Filipinos’ Remittances http://www.bsp.gov.ph/statistics/keystat/ofw.htm online data accessed on 13 September 2010


the Other Side of Globalization, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, pp. 69-100

World Bank 2010 Migration and Remittance Factbook 2010, WB