

Filipino Workers in the Middle East: Social Profile and Policy Implications (1985) by John Smart, Virginia Teodosio, and Carol Jimenez

- Middle East Demand and Philippine Response (History)
 - The Middle East dominated OFW employment when it undertook enormous industrial and social welfare development programs
 - The Middle East had a small population that lacked technical skills, leading to a great demand in foreign labor
 - East Asian countries (including the Philippines) entered the Middle Eastern labor market after the entry of workers from neighboring Arab countries and then South Asian countries (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh)
 - Filipino workers rose due to interconnected socio-political and economic issues like:
 - Arab administrators wanting to diversify labor sources
 - Long term presence of American oil
 - Relatively low wages and high productivity of Filipino workers (+ their willingness to endure harsh work environments (culturally, geographically, and climatically))
 - Confidence that Filipino workers typically return home after completion of their contracts
 - This contrasts the Arab/Muslim workers who stay and create congestion, raise infrastructure costs, and cause an administrative headache
- Each Middle Eastern country has a different history in employing OFWs but the principal importer is Saudi Arabia
 - Here, the majority of OFWs work in construction for roads, mass housing, low- and high-rise buildings, industrial plants, hospitals, and telecommunication infrastructure
- OFW presence in the Middle East also comes as a result of working conditions in the Philippines
 - Declining real wages underpin the OFW desire to work abroad for international companies and foreign governments and receive overseas levels of pay
 - These low wages are paired with the labor surplus within the Philippine labor market (high rates of unemployment and under-employment) making the Middle East all the more attractive to OFWs
- This enthusiasm has led to a number of OFWs to being scammed by false recruiters
- The Philippine government sees these OFWs as a means of generating foreign currencies while also reducing domestic unemployment, a remedy for the local economic situation. Thus, they have been encouraging and facilitating such deployment
 - This was seen in the creation of the Overseas Employment Development Board, the Bureau of Employment Services, and the National Seamen

Board which were all consolidated into the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration in 1982

- Within the POEA, there is the Market Development and Placement Office, the Licensing and Regulation Office, and the Workers Assistance and Adjudication Office
- The Data Base
 - Institute of Labor and Manpower Studies (Research Arm of the Ministry of Labor and Employment) did a survey of 800 workers registered for overseas employment
 - Out of the 800 workers, 495 (61.9%) were destined for the Middle East which will serve as the basis for the estimates of the paper
- Who are the Middle East Workers (Profile)
 - Occupation

TABLE 3

Occupational Distribution of Middle East Workers
(1983)

Occupational Category	Number	Percentage
Professional/Technical	34,165	10.5
Administrative/Manager	1,586	0.5
Clerical	13,587	4.2
Sales	1,987	0.6
Service	39,429	12.2
Agriculture	1,508	0.5
Production/Construction/ Transport	231,152	71.5
Total	323,414	100.0

Source: POEA, *Report of Operations in 1983*, pg. 43.

- Gender

TABLE 4

Gender and Middle East Occupation

Gender	Occupation					
	Prof/ Tech	Admin/ Mgr.	Clerical	Prod/ Cons.	Trans- port	Service
Male	43.6	100.0	89.5	99.5	98.4	66.2
Female	56.4	0.0	10.5	0.5	1.6	33.8
Percentage	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Numbers	117	14	19	195	62	68

Source: ILMS, Survey

- The cultural attitude in the Middle East regarding female employment explain the lesser representation of women among Middle East OFWs

- Worker protection poses administrative problems especially for women since workers would be isolated and exposed to more opportunities for personal abuse and exploitation
- Age and Work Experience

TABLE 5

The Mean Age of Middle East Workers in Different Occupations

Mean Age	Occupation					
	Prof/Tech	Admin/Mgr	Clerical	Prod/Cons	Transport	Service
Years	30.7	38.0	32.2	36.5	35.8	32.0

Source: ILMS Survey

- The mean age of the sample is 34.2 years
- 86.9% of the sample had jobs in the Philippines prior to the Middle East, meaning that Middle East employment has theoretically freed up 456,430 jobs in the Philippines
- Civil Status
 - 70% of the sample is married (80.8% of men, 21.6% of women)
 - Regarding the family effects of worker absence, the general impression is that Filipino families seem to adjust relatively well to husband/father absence
 - This absence is seen as the primary disadvantage to Middle East employment
- Education

TABLE 6
Occupation and Education Level Among Middle
East Workers

Education	Occupation					
	Prof/ Tech	Admin/ Mgr	Clerical	Prod/ Cons	Trans- port	Service
High School Incomplete	0.8	7.2	15.8	17.4	24.2	8.8
High School Graduate	2.6	21.4	0.0	43.1	43.6	39.7
Some College	4.3	21.4	36.8	19.5	24.2	33.8
College Graduate	91.5	50.0	42.1	11.3	3.2	16.2
Vocational Graduate	0.8	0.0	5.3	8.7	4.8	1.5
Percentage	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number	117	14	19	195	62	68

Source: ILMS Survey

- The OFW program provides an opportunity to attach talent to the Philippines on a more permanent basis rather than losing them to brain drain
- Philippine Residence

TABLE 7
Residential Mobility among Middle East Workers

Residence	Numbers	Percentage
National Capital Region residence since birth	143	29.3
Provincial residence since birth	149	30.5
Provincial/National Capital Region migrant	196	40.2
Total	488	100.0

Source: ILMS Survey

- However, these values do not distinguish people from the provinces who had moved to the NCR in search of work as part of the NCR so provincial origins may be underrepresented here
- Household Size and Number of Dependents
 - Majority of households (61.1%) have the OFW as the sole breadwinner
 - Among married workers, only 20.3% have a spouse who is earning an income
 - The mean of dependents is 4.4 persons (3.2 persons for single workers and 4.9 for married workers)

Labor Migration Patterns from Asian to GCC Countries: Trends, Patterns, and Policies (2013) by Nasra Shah

- Gulf Cooperation Council: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE
 - Undertaken ambitious development programs that expanded infrastructure, education, health, and housing, all of whose facilities were dependent on the labor of foreign workers
 - This dependence arises from the small local population as well as the variety of skills demanded by these projects
 - Except Saudi Arabia, the domestic populations of Gulf Countries were small in the early '70s with young dependent populations (small percentage that are of working age) due to high fertility
 - Asians now outnumber Arabs due to their lower cost, easier manageability, and the desire of the GCC to diversify their labor sources
- Trends in Labor Migration from Asia to GCC

Table 3 Total number of outflows to all countries of the world from six sending Asian countries, and percentage to GCC countries

Sending Country	Year	Total outflow to all countries (number)	Outflow to GCC (number)	%
Bangladesh ^a	2010	390,702	286,975	73.5
India ^b	2010	641,356	610,409	95.2
Indonesia ^c	2009	NA	331,023	NA
Pakistan ^d	2007	287,033	278,631	97.0
Philippines (Land based) ^e	2010	1,123,676	661,475	58.9
Sri Lanka ^f	2008	250,499	214,431	85.8

	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	KSA	UAE	Total
1990	5,804	5,007	7,453	7,138	169,886	17,189	212,477
1995	4,131	9,852	4,603	9,691	168,604	26,235	223,116
2000	5,498	21,490	4,739	8,679	184,724	43,045	268,175
2005	9,968	40,306	5,308	31,421	194,350	82,039	363,392
2006	11,736	47,917	7,071	45,795	223,459	99,212	435,190
2007	9,898	37,080	7,463	56,277	238,419	120,657	469,794
2008	13,079	38,903	-	84,342	275,933	193,810	606,067

2009	15,001	45,900	10,502	89,290	291,419	196,815	648,927
2010	15,434	53,010	10,955	87,813	293,049	201,214	661,475

- Characteristics of Temporary Labor Migrants

- Gender

- In the Philippines, the percentage of female migrants among new hires was consistently higher than males between 1992 and 2009
- But the female percentage fluctuates (was 69% in 2000 and decline to 52.8% in 2009)

- Skill Level

Philippines	2010	340,279	100.0	
Professional		41,835	12.3	GCC and others
Administration & managerial		1,439	0.4	
Clerical		10,706	3.1	
Sales		7,242	2.1	
Services		154,535	45.5	
Agricultural		1,122	0.3	
Production		120,647	35.5	
Others		2,753	0.8	

- Skill level - Year - Number - % - Receiving Countries

Chapter Four: Filipino Migrant Workers in the Arab Gulf Countries in Towards a Global Human Rights Regime for Temporary Migrant Workers: Lessons from the Case of Filipino Workers in the United Arab Emirates (2015) by Regina Nockerts

A Brief History of Filipino Migration

- The fourth wave of Philippine migration is known with the state's dependence on OFWs as an economic strategy which began with Presidential Decree 442 of 1974
 - This presidential decree formalized the administration's labor export policy which:
 - Created three agencies to manage recruitment which would eventually be consolidated into the Philippines Overseas Employment Administration
 - Bureau of Employment Services
 - Overseas Employment Development Board
 - National Seamen Board
 - Banned foreign employers from hiring Filipinos directly, requiring the presence of intermediaries in the recruitment of OFWs
 - Required a percentage of OFW wages be remitted back to their family
- OFWs were framed into a nationalistic narrative and PD442 served as the new magna carta of labor and began to praise OFWs for their contributions to the country
 - This would be pushed further by future administrations especially under Cory Aquino (the first to call them modern-day heroes) and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo
- In the seven years of its operations, the Overseas Employment Development Board opened 52 new labor markets and signed bilateral agreements with multiple countries
- While this labor export strategy was meant as a short-term remedy to the economic ailments of the Marcos administration, it eventually was further leaned into amidst exploding national debt, economic contractions, and political unrest
- Despite being an educated, English-speaking labor-exporting country, the United States' Nationality Act had only allowed a cap of 20,000 OFWs into the country which was far from enough to responding to the economic needs of the Philippines which forced the government to look for opportunities elsewhere
 - At that point in time, the Arab Gulf states' labor market was emerging amidst the booming global oil prices and by 1982, 84% of Filipino migrant workers were deployed to the Middle East
 - The UAE's recent independence in 1971 saw its rapid development which called for infrastructure, housing, and general labor to staff the growing economy, but there also was a reluctance to depend too heavily on Arab migrants or any particular national group

The Post-Marcos Era: Labor Migration as a National Project

- With the economy in shambles, president Aquino also relied on labor exports to the point that in 1992, cash remittances amounted to \$2.2 billion which was double that of 1989
 - This then became the trend for succeeding presidents
- This labor export policy saw its first major challenge in 1995 with the case of the execution of Flor Contemplacion in Singapore which raised the question on how the government can and should protect the OFWs abroad
 - A similar case raised concerns with Sarah Balabagan in the UAE who had escaped the death penalty and highlighted the vulnerability of female domestic workers abroad
 - In response, the Ramos administration enacted RA 8042 also known as the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995
 - The Gancayco Commission sought to:
 - Reduce the deployment of OFWs to situations that were likely dangerous either due to the type of job or method of deployment
 - Strengthen the state's ability to support OFWs
 - Encourage the return of OFWs
 - With this act also came the shift in framing of the government's position from promoting it to now managing labor migration as the Act states that "the State does not promote overseas employment as a means to sustain economic growth and achieve national development"

Figure 2: Significant Elements of Republic Act No. 8042: Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995

- Gender-sensitive criteria for policies and programs;
- Free access to courts, judicial bodies, and legal assistance extended to Filipinos overseas;
- Political participation in the Philippine democratic process is extended to Filipinos overseas;
- Promotion of skilled migration as a means of protection for migrant workers:
 - “The State recognizes that the ultimate protection to all migrant workers is the possession of skills. Pursuant to this and as soon as practicable, the government shall deploy and/or allow the deployment only to skilled Filipino workers.”
- Prohibition of recruitment fees paid by migrant workers;
- Cooperation and partnership with non-governmental entities (AMMENDED in 2010 by RA 10022 to include recruitment agencies);
- Migrant workers may only be deployed to countries where their rights are protected by existing labor laws, multilateral legal instruments, bilateral agreement, or if the state is “taking positive, concrete measures to protect the rights of migrant workers,” (AMMENDED in 2010 by RA 10022 to remove the final category – quoted above – and require Embassies or Department of Foreign Affairs foreign posts to certify to the POEA whether labor conditions in each country meet Philippine requirements);
- The government of the Philippines may impose deployment bans when necessary;
- Defines “illegal recruitment” to include, among others things:
 - Charging excessive or inappropriate fees;
 - False information or misrepresentation;
 - Recruitment for jobs “harmful to public health or morality or to dignity of the Republic of the Philippines;”
 - Contract changes or substitution;
 - Passport withholding;
 - AMMENDED in 2010 by RA 10022:
 - Regulates conditions under which loans may be made to migrant workers for the purpose of funding allowable fees;
 - Restricts conditions under which recruiters may impose compulsory conditions on health examinations or training;
 - Forbids recruiters from “passing on” insurance fees to the worker;
- Makes the recruitment agency jointly liable with the employer for monetary claims including damages and unjust termination;
- Requires POEA to issue travel advisories and circulate information about labor and employment conditions, the human and workers’ rights standards of destination countries;
- Establishes funds for emergency repatriation, Migrant Workers Loan Guarantee Fund, and Legal Assistance Fund;
- Establishes a reintegration center for the reintegration of returning OFWs;
- Establishes a Resource Center for OFWs and Overseas Filipinos in every Embassy;
- Ensures shared government data on migration;
- Assigns roles in overseeing migration to the Dept. of Foreign Affairs, the Department of Labor and Employment, POEA, and OWWA; AMMENDED in 2010 by RA 10022 to include the Department of Health and Local Government Units;
- Reaffirms the country-team approach, established in 1993, at Philippine embassies;
- Deregulation or phase out of:
 - Recruitment activities: to become a matter between worker and employer;
 - POEA to drop regulatory functions.

This section REPEALED in 2007 by RA9422
- AMMENDED in 2010 by RA 10022 to establish:
 - Mandatory insurance coverage at no cost to the worker;
 - Congressional oversight committee

- President Arroyo's contribution to labor export has been the push to upgrade OFWs like that of the supermades where "As of 2006, all deployed domestic workers must be at least 23 years old, attend a country-specific language and culture course, and secure a certification on household work from a government-sponsored testing center
 - The emphasis on upgrading OFWs came with the logic that abuse disproportionately affects low-skill, low-income workers, so upgrading the capacities of OFWs should reduce such abuse
 - But the strategy had little impact on the skill level of workers sent abroad
 - Since 2001, the number of domestic workers sent abroad overwhelms the number of new nurses hired
- Effective regulation will have to rely on bilateral/multilateral cooperation between sending and receiving countries
 - But the primary challenge is that labor-sending countries have a weak bargaining position since they are dependent on the receiving country for their labor export's remittances and employment opportunities
 - Also, enforcement of the agreement is still entirely up to the receiving country rather than the sending country
 - In 2010, the Philippines had 15 bilateral agreements on labor/migration but it is unclear if they were binding or just guidelines
 - These agreements have not necessarily improved the abuse situations of abuse-prone destinations (e.g. Saudi Arabia and Jordan)

Miscellaneous Sources:

- [The Odyssey of the Filipino Migrant Workers to the Gulf Region](#) – I couldn't access this source but it is available physically
- [Labor migration and remittances in the GCC](#) – Talks about migration to Gulf countries in general and talks about the above points but less specific to the Philippines and generalizes it to South Asian countries
- [Labor Migration, Remittances and Household Income: A Comparison between Filipino and Filipina Overseas Workers](#) – Economic paper on the difference between male and female OFWs – relation to Middle East is just that men go there more than women but this paper may be helpful for other purposes
- [Formal and Informal Protection for Domestic Workers: A Case of Filipinas](#) – I couldn't access this source but I think it would also provide greater insight in the “issues they face” and it also tackles OFWs in the Gulf countries specifically
- [Survival Strategies and Migrant Communities in the Arab Gulf States: A Case of Filipino Workers in the UAE](#) – I couldn't access this but it is similar to the above source
- [The Rise of the Philippine Emigration State: Protecting Migrant Workers in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries](#) – I wasn't able to access this source but it seems to go in greater detail the state mechanisms created and used to protect and facilitate OFW migration as well as the history of these institutions