

MANAGING THE MOBILITY OF HEALTH WORKERS: THE PHILIPPINE EXPERIENCE

ABSTRACT

The Philippines is one of the largest labor-sending countries in the world. It has benefited significantly from the large foreign exchange remittances of its eight (8) million nationals working abroad, estimated at \$10.7 billion in 2005.

The increasing number of health professionals who work abroad in recent years poses new challenge to the Philippines. To meet this challenge, labor officials have utilized the country's three decades of experience in establishing internal, bilateral and multilateral mechanisms for migration to manage the mobility of health care workers.

At the internal level, the Philippines established the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), the Overseas Workers' Welfare Administration (OWWA), the Philippine Overseas Labor Offices (POLO) and the Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs (OUMWA) to facilitate orderly migration, protect and promote migrant workers' rights and welfare. To complement this mechanism, the Philippines has entered into agreements with other countries as well as with foreign employers and/or employers' associations.

The Philippines has also utilized its membership to international institutions (e.g. International Labor Organization, International Organization for Migration, Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and the Global Commission for International Migration) to sustain policy discussions and undertake appropriate actions on the various issues relating to international migration and the protection and promotion of migrant workers' rights.