

IDWF PHILIPPINE MAPPING FOR CAREWORK

Introduction

At the heart of every Filipino household is someone or several individuals who look after feeding a baby, taking care of small children's needs, nursing an ill elderly member of the family, or doing critical housework such as cooking, cleaning, and other similar activities. These care responsibilities are performed either unpaid by any member of the family usually by a woman, or by a paid carer or domestic worker.

Household carers could be poor relatives of wealthy families who are either paid intermittently or allowed to live in the house as "companions" but regularly do unpaid household work. Or they could be children of poor families who are willing to work for wealthy families in exchange for being sent to school, to pay off family debts, or earn some cash for their families.

In this context, poverty, migration, and domestic work are intertwined.¹ According to de Guzman (2014), the "yaya" (nanny) performs the most intimate care needs of children such as bathing, feeding, supervising school homework, and other matters that a primary caregiver or parent typically provides. It is not therefore surprising for these carers, local or migrant workers, to develop feelings of closeness to their employers' children, blurring sometimes the employee-employer relationship that results in a conundrum of personal feelings that in many cases is detrimental to the domestic worker as "negotiating for better wages" becomes difficult.

This internal migration propelled by poverty was also one of the reasons why wages for domestic workers² have been historically low, made worse by a culture that has yet to value fully household work as something critical to the functioning of individual families and society as a whole, hence to be accorded proper recognition. This situation, of course, is not unique to the Philippines and Asia.³

Nevertheless, this "affordability" of domestic work allowed people both in lower and upper-income classes to work and leave their household duties and join the workforce, helping the economic growth of the country.⁴

¹ Maria Rosario T. de Guzman. *Yaya: Philippine Domestic Care Workers, the Children They Care for, and the Children They Leave Behind* [University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2014]

² The Philippine government prefers using Household Service Workers (HSWs) in referring to Domestic Workers

³ Natalie Sedacca. *Domestic Workers, the 'Family Worker' Exemption from Minimum Wage, and Gendered Devaluation of Women's Work* [Industrial Law Journal, Volume 51, Issue 4, 2022].

⁴ Helle Buchhave, Nadia Belhaj Hassine Belghith. *Overcoming barriers to women's work in the Philippines* [World Bank, 2022]

Household work also remains largely invisible⁵—the nature of the work is inside private homes, insulated from labor laws and authorities; but, because of its potential means to escape poverty, long hours of work and low wages become acceptable.

Internal rural-urban labor migration

In 2018, the government conducted a survey on the pattern of movement of Filipinos, within or outside the country (internal and international migration).⁶ The survey found that 55 percent of Filipinos aged 15 and above have moved to or resided in areas other than their birthplaces, either within the country or overseas, for at least three months or more once since birth. Almost half (49%) were internal migrants, three percent moved to/from another country (international migrants), while four percent moved both within the country or overseas, and those that never moved from their places of birth were estimated to be 45 percent. Among the migrants, females are slightly more than the males, and more than half of the migrants were less than 30 years old.

The survey also revealed that recent migrants tend to be better educated, having reached college or tertiary level, and those that migrated overseas were even more educated than the internal migrants. Further, most of the internal migrants moved from rural areas to urban cities, with Metro Manila (the national capital region) being the top destination.

The findings above corroborate a separate study conducted seventeen years ago. According to Quisumbing and McNiven (2006),⁷ female internal migrants were at 53.1 percent, higher in number than their male counterparts' 37.8 percent. For moving into rural areas, the main reason for a male migrant is finding a new job followed by getting married, while finding a job is secondary, and marriage primary reason for a female migrant. Meanwhile, the main reason for both male and female migrants moving from rural to urban was job security and better schools.

The Philippine care work environment

Basic data

The Philippines has a relatively young population of 109 million. People aged 60 years old and above made up 8.5 percent, or 9.2 million individuals, of the household population according to

⁵ Nicole J. Sayres. *An Analysis of the Situation of Filipino Domestic Workers* (International Labor Organization, 2007)

⁶ Claire Dennis Mapa. *More than half of Filipinos 15 years and over have ever migrated* (2020-019). Philippine Statistics Authority [2020]

⁷ Agnes Quisumbing, Scott McNiven. *Migration and the Rural-Urban Continuum: Evidence from Bukidnon, Philippines* [Philippine Journal of Development, 2007].

a 2020 government survey. It is an increase from 7.5 percent (7.53 million) in 2015. About 55.5 percent of this age group are females while 44.5 percent are males.⁸

The same data stated that by age group, 30.7 percent were under 15 years of age (young dependents), while those in the working-age or economically-active population (15 to 64 years) are 63.9 percent and those in age groups 65 years and over are 5.4 percent.

Meanwhile, Filipino children ages 0 to 4 were estimated to be at 11 million.

According to the United Nation's Department of Education and Social Affairs (UNDESA) in its 2015 global population prospects,⁹ young societies are those with less than 10 percent of the population aged 60 and older while those with 10 to 19 percent of the same age bracket are considered aging societies. Those countries with 20 to 29 percent of the population age 60 and over are referred to as high-aging societies and those exceeding 30 percent are hyper-aging societies.

Philippine care dependency ratio and the care work burden

In 2020, it was recorded that there were 28,503,757 housing units in the country.¹⁰ Of the total number of housing units, 25,191,610 were occupied by household/s. A total of 26,376,522 households were listed, which means there are 105 households in every 100 occupied housing units.

Assuming that each housing unit has only one care worker (many rich households employ more than 2 domestic workers) and compared that to 1.4 million domestic workers (Department of Labor, 2019), there are at least 23.7 million households with no care or domestic worker, hence the burden of care work is heavy on families, especially for women as they are more expected to perform the care and household works.

In 2020, the Philippines registered an overall dependency ratio of 57 percent,¹¹ meaning for every 100 working-age population, there were about 57 dependents of which 48 are young and 8 are old dependents. Meanwhile, the average dependency ratio for East Asia and the Pacific is 47.¹²

⁸ Claire Dennis Mapa. *Age and Sex Distribution in the Philippine Population: 2020 Census of Population and Housing* [2022-322] Philippine Statistics Authority [2022]

⁹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. *World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision, Key Findings and Advance Tables* [2015]

¹⁰ Philippine Statistics Authority. *Housing Characteristics in the Philippines: 2020 Census of Population and Housing* [2023]

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² World Bank. *Age dependency ratio: % of the working-age population*. Estimates on age distributions of United Nations Population Division's World Population Prospects: 2022 Revision]

Care infrastructure

The formal care work facilities in the Philippines, both private and publicly funded are small in number due to the prevailing culture of “family-oriented homecare.”

Although the latest government data (2020) estimates that senior citizens comprised only 8.5 percent of the country’s total population, based on the 2015 census, the country’s older population is expected to be doubled in number by 2035, and the Philippines will transition into an aging society barely a decade from now.¹³ The United Nation Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) is projecting that the number of older persons globally is expected to double in 2050, and more than triple by 2100, noting that 66 percent of the increase would be from Asia.¹⁴

But how prepared is the Philippines to care for its already sizeable number (9.2 million) of older persons?

Old age care

The Philippine geriatric care sector is currently served by 20 to 25 private nursing homes, with a combined capacity of 300 to 500 beds according to industry insiders. On the other hand, there are only 4 government-funded nursing homes (DSWD) in the country for the majority of elderly whose family could not afford the cost of private home cares.¹⁵

Private nursing homes charge their individual clients between P35,000 to P50,000 a month,¹⁶ a cost way beyond the P22,000 average monthly earning of a typical Filipino household of 5 persons.¹⁷ Existing state-funded nursing homes only cater to Filipino elderly abandoned by their usually poor families, mainly for lack of financial resources. A proposed law, Senate Bill No. 737, seeking to establish nursing homes for neglected and abandoned Filipino elderly in every city and municipality, is pending at the Philippine Congress.¹⁸

It is to be noted that the tradition of caring for the old by their respective families remains strongly ingrained. The burden and financial cost of caring for the elderly, including the cost related to age-related diseases, are shouldered by the hapless poor Filipino households.¹⁹

¹³ Shelly de la Vega, Juan Antonio Perez III, Lyra Gay Ellies Borja. *Coping with Rapid Population Ageing in Asia*. Philippine Health and Care Workforce in an Ageing World. [2021]

¹⁴ UN-Dept. of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. *World Population Ageing 2015 - Highlights* [2015]

¹⁵ Ann Ruth Dela Cruz. *More seniors are considering retirement in nursing homes*. BusinessMirror [2020]

¹⁶ Oliver Samson. *Health-care provider to build nursing homes outside Metropolitan Manila*. BusinessMirror [2015]

¹⁷ Philippine Statistics Authority. *Average Family Income in 2015 is Estimated at 22 Thousand Pesos Monthly* [2016]

¹⁸ Philippine Senate 18th Congress. *Homes for Abandoned Seniors Act of 2019* [2019]

¹⁹ Flaminiano C J, Puyat V A, Antonio V A, Uy J, Ulep V G. *Spatiotemporal Analysis of Health Service Coverage in the Philippines*, Philippine Institute for Development Studies [2022]

This “ingrained” culture of families caring for their older members is reinforced by no less than the country’s fundamental law. Article XV, section 4 of the 1987 Constitution states that the “family has the duty to care for its elderly members” and the state “may also do so through programs of social security.”²⁰

Care work has a strong bias against women. Women are the preferred provider of primary care, especially within the family. Wives are expected to provide care for their husbands, while daughters are expected to provide care for their parents.²¹

Pension for older persons in the Philippines is limited in coverage, as pension is tied-up to formal employment. The country’s private and public contributory pension programs, the Social Security System (SSS) for workers in the private sector, and the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) for government workers cover only a limited number of retirees. It is estimated that the “majority (75%) of economically dominant Filipino senior citizens were not covered by social security, particularly retirement plan.”²²

There are efforts nevertheless from the state to provide the infrastructure for caring for its older citizens whose needs could be complex for individual families to deal with. Republic Act 9994 or the Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2010 requires the government to “provide a comprehensive health care and rehabilitation system for disabled senior citizens to foster their capacity to attain a more meaningful and productive aging.” The law stipulates P500 a month for indigent or the most in-need of elderly Filipinos. According to the government research arm Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS), the government through the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) has provided social pensions to over 3.6 million senior citizens by 2020.²³ At present, around 4.1 million out of the total 12.2²⁴ million citizens are receiving P500 monthly pension. RA 11916 enacted in 2022 has increased the pension to P1,000.00²⁵ but the actual increase is expected in mid-2023. As of the writing of this report, the budget department has yet to release the allocation.

Under the Home Care Support Services for Senior Citizens (HCSSC) run by the DSWD, the care for the sick, frail, bedridden senior citizens in their own homes is augmented through

²⁰ Philippine Official Gazette, the 1987 Constitution

²¹ Elma P. Laguna. “Caring for Older Persons” in *Ageing and Health in the Philippines*, ed. Grace T. Cruz, Christian Joy P. Cruz, and Yasuhiko Saito [2019]

²² Christian D. Mina and Faith Christian Q. Cacnio. *Are Filipino senior citizens financially protected? Evidence from Consumer Finance Survey*. Presentation at the 14th National Convention on Statistics [2019]

²³ Philippine Institute for Development Studies. *Providing dignity in aging*. Website article [2022]

²⁴ This estimate is bigger than the 9.2 million elderly based on 2020 national survey, but pending the next national survey in 2025, this report opted to use the 2020 data on official demographics provided in page 2 of this paper

²⁵ Passed during the Philippine 18th Congress, Third Regular Session [2021]

their family/kinship carers and homecare volunteers.²⁶ However, this program is relatively new, and its impact has yet to be assessed.²⁷

In terms of the implementation of the other components of RA 9994, the 20 percent discount on various services including eating in a restaurant, transportation, and buying medicines, except for groceries that allow only for a 5 percent discount, are being observed.²⁸ However, procedural processes and required transaction recordings proved a hassle to many senior citizens discouraging them from regularly accessing the discounts, while limited awareness levels among the elderly beneficiaries downplayed the law's intended benefits. Not to mention the poorest elderly Filipinos would seldom go to groceries for their purchase of basic needs. And while pharmacies and restaurants have benefitted from the VAT exemptions upon compliance with the law, taxicab and jeepney drivers for instance do not have concrete returned benefits, hence the limited compliance.²⁹

The Family Income and Expenditure Survey (FIES) of the PSA shows that among the estimated elderly population in 2015, about 13.2 percent were members of households classified as income poor, while 4.3 percent were classified as subsistence poor. Among the income group, about 5.5 percent and 6.7 percent were in the poorest and second income decile, respectively.³⁰ Because their own families belong to income and/or subsistence-poor households, these elderly Filipinos would be incapable of meeting their essential needs.

The increasing number of elderly Filipinos requires a greater need for general care and health-related needs. They often suffer from various health conditions, lack maintenance medications, and require frequent interactions with health care providers. In the 2018 Longitudinal Study of Ageing and Health in the Philippines (LSAHP), 57.3 percent of Filipino elderly were estimated to have experienced some or considerable difficulty in meeting basic expenses³¹ such as food, medicines, and other necessities.

The country's pension system is limited only to those who worked formally, in the private and government sectors, and those with financial capabilities. The huge informal sector is largely excluded, except for those with earnings enough to have set aside for future needs.

²⁶ Passed during the Philippine 14th Congress, Third Regular Session [2010]

²⁷ Department of Social Welfare and Development. *Guidelines on the home care support services for senior citizens* [Admin Order No. 4, 2010]

²⁸ Department of Trade and Industry. *Senior citizens and Persons with disabilities can avail of a 5% discount on purchases of...* [website news article, 2019]

²⁹ April Kyle A. Inabangan, Laurence L. Garcia, Ferdinand T. Abocejo- Evaluation of the Philippine Expanded Senior Citizens Act (RA 9994) on *Mandated Privileges for the Elderly* [2019]

³⁰ 12.5 percent and 15.5 percent were in the ninth and richest income decile, respectively

³¹ Christian Joy P. Cruz and Grace T. Cruz [2019]

For formally employed workers in the private sector, they are covered under the Social Security System (SSS) and Pag-IBIG.³² Certain amounts are deducted monthly from the workers' salaries and the counterpart contributions of the employers are added to these, depending on the rate of the salary. In recent years, the government has been urging other individuals for voluntary pension payments in the SSS in a bid to increase the state-run pension's contribution which has been suffering from lower funds.³³

Although the SSS and PAGIBIG encourage individuals in the informal sector (called self-employed) to make use of the government pension by contributing a certain amount and paying it monthly or quarterly, the number of those who are joining is minimal. Aside from the lack of faith in the state-managed pension scheme, many are engaged in extremely low-paying jobs that make them incapable of paying any amount of contribution.³⁴

For the poorest individuals, the government is distributing to some 4 million indigent elderly Filipinos P1,000 a month.³⁵ This measure offers some relief, but is palliative and does not sustainably and effectively address the basic needs of the elderly. As this amount is very limited, many of the older persons have to rely on intermittent sources of income that include money sent by their children within the country or relatives from abroad, or earnings from previous work or current livelihood. An alternative program for developing countries such as the Philippines with huge informal sector is urgently needed. This could take a program similar to Kenya's Mbao Pension Plan,³⁶ a voluntary individual savings program, amounting to a daily minimum of 20 Kenyan Shillings (US 0.142) regardless of age or amount of salary.

Child care

The Philippines enacted the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Act in 2000, formalizing the ECCD system. Childcare services for children ages 0-4 are overseen by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). As early as 1977, a law³⁷ required each barangay³⁸ to have at least one childcare center.

³² Acronym for "Pagtutulungan sa Kinabukasan: Ikaw, Bangko, Industriya at Gobyerno" roughly translated as: mutual help for the future: You, Bank, Industry and the Government

³³ Social Security System online contribution calculator

³⁴ Sri Wening Handayani. *Pension Extension: Bringing Informal Workers into the Retirement Social Safety Net*. [Asian Development Bank, 2019]

³⁵ Wilnard Bacelonia. *Indigent senior citizens to receive 12K this year* [Philippine News Agency, 2023]

³⁶ International Social Security Association, website article

³⁷ Philippine Official Gazette, Presidential Decree 1567 [1978]

³⁸ Smallest basic political unit in the Philippines

However, more than three decades later in 2011, about 4,570 of the total 42,026 barangays did not have childcare centers.³⁹ While there were 51,797 childcare centers, a study by the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization found that only 20 percent of the intended children benefitted from center-based childcare services.⁴⁰

Also, according to a 2019 publication of the International Step by Step Association (ISSA), the country's children ages 0-6 is 17 million, and less than half of this number is enrolled either in childcare, kindergarten, or Grade 1.⁴¹ Sixth year is the latest age a Filipino child is expected to be enrolled in a formal education.

Workers in childcare centers

The Early Childhood Care and Development ECCD Council Governing Board defined the roles and qualifications for staff members in a daycare center. Included are the Child Development Teachers (CDTs) who are required to have finished a degree in early childhood or elementary education and Child Development Workers (CDWs) who are allowed to have finished any 4-year degree, and both should have similar wages which were supposed to be about P20,000 a month in 2018 according to the 2015 guidelines outlined by the ECCD.

But both the salaries for CDTs and CDWs have remained low. The CDTs in many instances are even given only an honorarium which can be as low as P1000.00 or a high P8,000.00 a month, depending on how financially capable the barangay where the center is located. Out of 79,451 workers in 2021, only 8,700 were tenured.⁴² A proposed law seeking to improve the salary and wages of workers in the childcare sector has been filed at the Philippines Congress although the main challenge is securing the funding for the implementation if the law is enacted.⁴³

Workers in social welfare agencies

There are 197 residential care facilities for children operated by 177 private agencies licensed by the DSWD (national government) which cater mainly to neglected and abused children with 30-40 beds capacity each. These facilities receive funding from international donors or the private sector.

³⁹ Early Childhood Workforce Initiative, Philippines Country Brief. *The Philippines: Combining Training with Job Security to Improve the Quality of Childcare Workforce* [2019]

⁴⁰ Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Center for Educational Innovation and Technology Education Policy Paper [2010]

⁴¹ Early Childhood Workforce Initiative, Philippines Country Brief. *The Philippines: Combining Training with Job Security to Improve the Quality of Childcare Workforce* (2019)

⁴² Gabriel Lalu. *House panel OKs proposals to create Magna Carta for child dev't workers*. [Philippine Daily Inquirer, May 3, 2023]

⁴³ Faith Argosino. *Expedited consolidation of bills on Magna Carta for daycare workers pushed*. [Philippine Daily Inquirer, February 28, 2023]

The DSWD itself operates 46 residential care facilities for children, 11 of which serve children aged 0-7 years, another 11 for children in conflict with the law, 15 for girl victims of sexual/physical abuse, with the rest catering to street children and victims of other forms of child abuse. These facilities on average have 50 beds, save for the National Centre for the Mentally Challenged which can accommodate up to 490 beds.⁴⁴

The Local Government Units on the other hand run 63 residential facilities for children, of which three are for drug-related; five for children in conflict with the law; three for abandoned, 19 for victims of sexual/physical abuse; and 23 for street children.

The salaries for workers in the privately-run welfare agencies are relatively higher as they follow the salary standard of international funding agencies or private sectors and most of these workers are usually licensed social workers or those in the medical fields. Those run by the DSWD and local government units would be lower, consistent with the rate in other government agencies.

Situation of care workers

The Philippines seems to be doing good in treating its domestic workers—it enacted a national law on domestic workers in September 2013 (Republic Act or RA 10361 or the Kasambahay⁴⁵ Law), formally recognizing domestic work as work, and is the only country in Asia and the Pacific so far (as of May 2023) to have ratified the 2011 Domestic Workers Convention.

However, the situation of care and domestic workers in the Philippines is far from ideal.

The Kasambahay Law,⁴⁶ defines a domestic worker as a person formally engaged in work such as general housework, *nursemaid*⁴⁷ (nanny) or “yaya”, cook, gardener, or laundry person, on a regular basis. The law prescribes a formal written contract between the employer and the kasambahay, and a minimum wage of P5,000 a month in the National Capital Region (Metro Manila), 8 hours of work a day, including a rest day at least once a week.

In comparison, the minimum wage for regular workers in Metro Manila is currently Php570 (USD 10.19) a day or Php 15,200 (USD 308) a month. The minimum wage for household workers (kasambahay) has only improved to Php 6,000 pesos a month since the enactment of the law,

⁴⁴ Department of Social Welfare and Development. *Residential and Non-Residential Facilities*, website article

⁴⁵ Kasambahay is an old Filipino term for house helper, and the word “kasama” refers to a companion while bahay means house

⁴⁶ RA 10361. Passed during the Philippine 15th Congress, Third Regular Session [2013]

⁴⁷ The actual legal text of the Kasambahay Law uses the term “nursemaid.” While considered as obsolete and even offensive, it was retained for reference.

though the live-in kasambahays are provided with free board and lodging. In terms of wages alone, the social bias against household work is unmistakable. Recently, labor groups were able to haggle with the government after campaigning for many years, a P40.00-a-day increase for regular minimum wage earners in Metro Manila.⁴⁸ The new wage increase order will take effect on 15 July 2023. The domestic workers have also started to ask for raise in their wages and they are being supported by labor unions.

In 2019, the Department of Labor and the Philippine Statistics Authority conducted a survey on the situation of kasambahays or domestic workers. These domestic workers are under formal work arrangements, or under an existing “employee-employer” relationship, hence different from “unpaid household workers.”⁴⁹

At the time of the survey, it was estimated that there are 1.4 million Filipinos working as kasambahays. Majority of the 1.4 million kasambahays (more than one million) work on live-out arrangements, while the remaining live in or stay at their employers’ houses.

About 4 percent or 4,500 are child domestic workers⁵⁰, and 0.4 percent are even younger being below 15 years old. Of the 1.4 million, only 2.5 percent, or 35,000 individuals, have written employment contracts, and 83 percent of the 1.4 million are not covered by any social security benefit. The survey also revealed that 36 percent of the live-in domestic workers work 7 days a week, without a rest day.

The survey also determined that the average monthly salary of domestic workers is P4,141, with the lowest P2,681 in BARMM (Muslim Mindanao) to P5,958 in Metro Manila. Also, only about 41 percent of domestic workers are aware of the existence of Kasambahay Law.

The situation of child development workers is even worse as mentioned above—as low as P1000.00 in the form of honorarium, while those working in more developed barangays receive P8,000.00 a month, a bit higher than what domestic workers normally receive. But even the P8,000.00 a month is low as it is only equivalent to US 143.00 dollars.

Filipino Migrant Domestic Workers

Based on a 2021 government survey, Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) who worked abroad during the period of April to September 2021 were estimated at 1.83 million⁵¹ and 96.4 percent

⁴⁸ Ferdinand Patinio. *Labor group: P40 wage hike in NCR 'small victory' for workers* [Philippine News Agency, June 30, 2023]

⁴⁹ DOLE-National Wages and Productivity Commission. *DOLE and PSA survey: 1.4 million kasambahays in the country, 72% on live-out arrangement*. DOLE website news release

⁵⁰ Below 18 years old

⁵¹ Claire Dennis Mapa. *2021 Overseas Filipino Workers (Final Results)*. Philippine Statistics Authority, [2020]

or 1.76 million of them have existing work contracts, and the remaining are OFWs who worked abroad without working visas or work permits such as tourists, visitors, students, and medical professionals who are visiting under different visa arrangements or are studying. Those holders of non-immigrant visas (tourist, business, or attending medical treatment) who were employed and working full-time in other countries comprised 3.6 percent.

Women comprised 60.2 percent or 1.10 million, while the remaining 39.8 percent or 0.73 million were males. About 24 percent of the female OFWs belonged to the age group 30 to 34 years, followed by 20.9 percent who were 35-39 years old. In contrast, males are older, with those 45 years and over comprising 29.1 percent while those in the age group 30 to 34 years were only 22.1 percent.

Four in every 10 (43.2 percent) OFWs were engaged in elementary occupations, followed by service and sales with 16.5 percent and plant and machine operators and assemblers with 13.6 percent.

Elementary occupations refer to work that is considered “simple and routine tasks which may require the use of hand-held tools and considerable physical effort.” In this category, general cleaning, basic maintenance works in houses, kitchens, hotels, offices, and similar works and places are included. Domestic workers belong to this category.

The use of the term “simple and routine tasks” in referring to care-related works diminishes care work in general—as it implies that running households or taking care of children or old people are simple tasks.

Meanwhile, freed from the confines of low wages in their own country, Filipino migrant domestic workers were able to send regular remittances to families back home. Their remittances, along with the earning of the business process outsourcing (BPO)⁵² sector and export industry, provide the much-needed dollar reserve for the national coffer. For a net importer economy (including food), the Philippines has many things to be thankful to its migrant workers.⁵³

Collectively, the OFWs in September 2022 sent a whopping USD2.84 billion in remittances, a 3.8 percent increase from the year on prior.⁵⁴ Remittances from land-based workers reached USD2.25 billion while those from sea-based were valued at USD59 million.

⁵² Boo Chanco. *Credit OFWs, BPOs for Recovery*. Philippine Star, February 1, 2023

⁵³ Claire Dennis Mapa. *Highlights of the Philippine Export and Import Statistics April 2023* [Philippine Statistics Authority, 2023]

⁵⁴ Villanueva, Joann. OFW cash remittances up by 3.8% in September. [Philippine News Agency, June 30, 2023]

According to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, the bulk of the remittances in the first three quarters of 2022 came from the United States, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, and Qatar. Except for the US, these countries are known destinations of Filipino women migrant domestic workers (FMDWs).

However, before the FMDWs are able to leave the country and get their jobs abroad, they have to raise money through loans for recruitment fees. FMDWs also remain susceptible to physical and sexual abuse⁵⁵ and deaths.⁵⁶ And this is not to mention the social cost of migration:⁵⁷ children of the OFWs left behind and put under the care of relatives who have their own children to care of, and many cases of spouse infidelities that result in broken families.

Some new developments toward *professionalism* of the care work

On May 14, 2023, a Philippine senator filed a proposed law, Senate Bill 2261,⁵⁸ formally recognizing the role of caregivers, and the practice of caregiving as a “profession.” In the proposed law, caregiver refers to a paid employed person who “takes care or attends to the physical and psychological needs of an infant, child or dependent adult who is disabled or whose health is impaired by sickness or old age affecting their activities of daily living whether outside or within their home.”

It should be noted that some of the work of a caregiver under this proposed law is already being performed by domestic workers and even by unpaid caregivers (family members), such as “nursemaid” under the Kasambahay Law of 2013.

Unfortunately, the wage under this proposed law is only P7,000 a month, as low as what domestic workers are currently receiving. Also, a caregiver is required to attend formal training from a private or government-run training center, which could be a source of additional financial burden and bureaucratic difficulties for would-be trainees. The proposed law does not also consider the existence of unpaid caregivers who are usually family members, or how to at least assist the family members who are spending their time caring for their family members preventing them to pursue their economic potential.

Informal and unpaid care work

⁵⁵ Sandigan-Kuwait, Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women. *Expectations and Realities in Labour Migration: Experiences of FMDWs in a government-run shelter in Kuwait, A feminist participatory research* [2019]

⁵⁶ Ashley Westerman. *The death of another Filipino working overseas has shocked the Philippines* [National Public Radio-NPR, 2023]

⁵⁷ DOLE-Institute for Labor Studies. *Migration “Orphans”: On the Social Cost of Migration on Children Left Behind* [Vol. 1 No. 1, 2021]

⁵⁸ Introduced during the 16th Philippine Congress, First Regular Session [2014]

Since daily housework (and this can be in many forms) in a typical Filipino family is essentially care work, those that are tasked to do specific or various household responsibilities can be regarded as care workers and are performing critical work for the functioning of households.

But in the absence of employed care workers or domestic workers, the tasks are “expected” to be carried out by women members of households.

In 2021, the Philippines Statistics Authority (PSA) conducted a national survey, entitled: *Counting Care Matters: Approach to measuring unpaid care and domestic work in the time of covid-19 pandemic*.⁵⁹ In this study, care works refer to meal preparation, cleaning, preparing clothes, childcare, community care, and shopping. The survey showed that care work remains a “woman’s” work and the prevalence of unpaid caregivers.

Highlights of the findings include women spending on average 6.5 hours a day on care as a primary activity while men spend only 2.4 hours. Men on average have 5 hours of paid work in a day, while women only have 2.6 hours. Eighteen percent of the men respondents reported spending no time on care activity at all, although three in four men respondents believe that men should also do care work.

A third of the women respondents reported being injured or sustaining illness or harm while performing care work, which include backache, muscle or joint ache; headache, dizziness, stress, or irritability.

Some of the respondent men said that beating women (0.66 percent), yelling at women (0.08 percent), and shaming fellow men for doing housework (1.31 percent) is acceptable, while for women themselves beating them (0.39 percent), yelling at them (0.26 percent), and shaming men for doing housework (0.13 percent) is acceptable.

These care works being performed by women remain unpaid, usually unaccounted for, preventing them from earning for their labor.

Key informant interview⁶⁰

In the Philippines, the organizing work among the local domestic workers was pioneered by the Labor Education and Research Network (LEARN). It has helped the organizing efforts of domestic workers in selected areas in Metro Manila that paved the way for the organization and

⁵⁹ Oxfam. *The 2021 National Household Care Survey* [2022]

⁶⁰ Interview with Maia Montenegro, Secretary General of UNITED, a nationwide union of domestic workers in the Philippines, and Shiela Estrada, President of PIN@Y Careworkers International, a transnational union of Filipino Migrant Domestic Workers with members in Hong Kong, Macau, Malaysia, Jordan, and Kuwait [A. Diega, personal communications, July 3-10, 2023].

eventual registration of the UNITED Domestic Workers of the Philippines (UNITED) as a formal union of domestic workers. UNITED and LEARN are now partner organizations, with the latter helping by providing training needed by the union. UNITED has currently a total of 6,392 members nationwide, according to Maia Montenegro, the organization's General Secretary.

With guidance from LEARN, UNITED was registered with the Philippine Department of Labor (DOLE) in 2016 formally as an association or union of domestic workers with local chapters, able to negotiate, with help from local governments, with the employers in behalf/and with the domestic workers themselves. As per DOLE records, UNITED was the first union of domestic workers able to fulfill the requirements of a union: members and officers, area of coverage, and is officially registered at the Department of Labor.

This registration has given UNITED the opportunity to negotiate for better benefits. With the help of LEARN, UNITED has established a working relationship with the local government (LGU) of Quezon City. The partnership includes a tripartite meeting between UNITED, the Quezon City LGU, and homeowners' associations in the city known to have domestic workers. The effort, supported by the International Labor Organization-Manila started a few years ago and is showing positive initial results toward the eventual negotiation for better wages for the domestic workers. Montenegro hopes that their model of tripartite collective bargaining in Quezon City⁶¹ with a population bigger than that of Manila will be replicated in other areas. UNITED is also active in its alliance work with other workers' organizations and is an active member of SENTRO,⁶² a labor center.

Currently, the majority of the members of UNITED are from Metro Manila, but there are members from nearby provinces outside Manila and some from the Visayas. Before working as domestic workers, they were mostly housewives, while a small number worked as small store helpers. Most of their members are aged 50 and above, and the majority of them finished secondary school. The most common reasons for their deciding to work as domestic workers are: they wanted to change their "environment", working as in-house domestic workers implies free food and a place to stay and a sense of "safety" as they live in relatively larger houses, and the requirements for working by employers are simple.

According to Montenegro, many of their members regularly experience physical or verbal abuse from their employers, are overworked, and in constant longing to be with their loved ones. The children of their members are usually left to the care of their grandparents, while those children 15 years and older are expected to take care of themselves, with minimal supervision from relatives. The majority (more than fifty percent) of UNITED members are working as live-out domestic workers.

⁶¹ Apolinar Oblea. *Special Release on Women and Men, Quezon City* [Philippine Statistics Authority, 2023]

⁶² Sentro ng mga Nagkakaisa at progresibong Manggagawa-SENTRO, wordpress website

For Filipino Migrant Domestic Workers (FMDWs), the overwhelming reason for their working abroad remains economic.

However, despite the higher wages received by the FMDWs compared with their local counterparts, they are prone to abuse from their foreign employers, made worse by not having the support system of family and friends that they enjoy back home, according to Shiela Estrada, the president of PIN@Y Careworkers International (PIN@Y).

According to Estrada, many FMDWs were encouraged by their relatives or friends who themselves experienced working overseas to try working abroad, while others are using domestic work as a stepping stone to permanently migrate to more developed countries in Europe and North America.

PIN@Y held its founding congress in December 2022, in Manila, where it was registered. The transnational union of Filipino domestic workers has members in Hong Kong, Malaysia, Macau, and Singapore, and in the Middle East such as Kuwait and Jordan. UNITED itself is a member of PIN@Y. The FMDWs' union of Hong Kong (PLUdw-HK) which has been organized many years ago has more than 4,000 members, while Sandigan-Kuwait has close to 500 members. Ammpo-Malaysia has more than 300 members. Each of these unions, at varying degrees, can represent their FMDWs members in dialogue with Philippine and foreign governments in their countries of work, and have alliance works with various civil society organizations and international organizations.

Analysis and conclusion

The Philippine care work sector is mature—that is, the country has a considerable number of people aged 60 years and above that needs caring, and owing to the island-nation being a young society demographically, it has a huge number of children four years old and below, and children fourteen years and below.

Informal and unpaid care work remains prevalent in the Philippines and is still considered as a woman's work. There is explicit recognition from the government on this as articulated by the PSA survey in 2021. And there are efforts to improve the situation of women particularly to help them maintain their placement in the labour force such as the extended maternity leave which is now 105 days paid leave and can be extended for an unpaid one-month leave.⁶³ Paternity leave however is only 7 days,⁶⁴ denying the men the chance for a longer period of caring to their

⁶³ Philippine Commission on Women. Availment of the 105-Day Expanded Maternity Leave Under Republic Act 11210—FAQs

⁶⁴ RA 11210. Passed during the Philippine 17th Congress, Third Regular Session [2018]

newborn children. Many private companies, such as malls, have designated rooms for breastfeeding mothers. To feed their small children, or to express milk for later use.

There is also a proposed bill filed in 2022 and currently pending at the Philippine Congress seeking to provide 15-day family and medical leave for employees or their immediate family members who are suffering from a serious illness.⁶⁵ This is aside from the current statute of 15-day paid sick leave annually for the exclusive use of the workers themselves. Republic Act 11165⁶⁶ enacted in 2018 provides flexible work for workers in the private sector. However, the practice of flexible work is not yet widespread, although it has gained traction recently, especially after workers in call centers asserted their work-from-home arrangements which started at the height of Covid-19 in 2020.⁶⁷ In 2022, the government has started allowing workers in the public sector to avail of the flexible work,⁶⁸ which is 40-hours work in a week compressed in four days. Despite these, the reduction and redistribution of unpaid care work remains a major concern.

The reward for engaging in the care work also needs improvement, as the law on wage for domestic workers for instance is less than half of the minimum wage being given to other workers. The enactment of Kasambahay Law for domestic workers, and the proposed law on care workers, can be improved, to make care work more attractive both to women and men. The Filipino migrant domestic workers (FMDWs) on the other hand, are better off in terms of wages and benefits compared to their local counterparts. But in many cases, FMDWs suffer abuse at the hands of their foreign employers. It should be noted that the government has been trying to negotiate better packages for the FMDWs and OFWs in general, but more efforts are needed.

In terms of representation, the enactment of the Kasambahay Law for domestic workers in 2013 paved the way for minimum legal protection for care workers, which can be improved later. Both the local and migrant domestic workers are already organizing on their own, but representing themselves directly through collective bargaining is proving to be particularly challenging, as by the nature of their work, domestic workers are scattered individually or in very small groups under the roof of their employers' residences.

The wages for those carers who work in critical early childcare development do not fare well. Many of them receive only an "honorarium" of P800.00 to P1,000.00 a month for poorer areas, while those in richer urban municipalities receive P8,000 a month. And even the proposed law on care workers is not much of an improvement from the kasambahay law particularly in terms

⁶⁵ Senate Bill 303, introduced during the 18th Philippine Congress, First Regular Session [2022]

⁶⁶ RA 11165. Passed during the Philippine 17th Congress, Third Regular Session [2018]

⁶⁷ Cliff Venzon. Philippine call centers win battle to make remote work permanent [Nikkei Asia, 2022]

⁶⁸ Philippine Civil Service Commission. *Flexible work arrangements in the public sector may now be adopted anytime* [website article, 2022]

of wages which is only P7,000 a month. What is notable also in the proposed law on care workers is that it does not address the burden of unpaid caregivers who are left to shoulder the social and economic cost of caring for the older and very young members of the families, preventing them from the opportunities to join economic activities or denying them the chance to earn for themselves. The prevailing practice of leaving the caring work to women is also not being addressed by this proposed law.

The low wages of workers in the care work sector, whether domestic workers or in the medical field, is the main reason why many domestic and health workers are leaving the country to work overseas as migrant workers. If nothing is done to address the continued out-migration of care workers, the country will incur huge social losses⁶⁹ that will threaten the country's capacity to take care to its growing dependent population.

Nevertheless, these enacted and proposed laws provide impetus to further improve the situation of care workers. Many improvements can be done to the existing kasambahay law and to the proposed law on care workers and the proposed increase to the wages for workers in the early childhood development sector. The existence and continuing organizing activities of Filipino care workers locally and overseas and their interactions with the Philippines and governments of their countries of work, and alliance work with CSOs, trade unions, and international bodies like the ILO could improve further the situation of care workers.

Afterword

On August 4, 2023, Dr. Jonna Estudillo, a professor at the University of the Philippines School of Economics will be presenting the findings of her study titled: On Female Labor Force Participation (FLFP). The objective of the study is to explore the trends and identify the factors affecting female labor force participation globally, in Asia, and in the Philippines. The three main findings of her study are related to some points raised in this report on carework mapping in the Philippines. Dr. Estudillo found that first, the stage of economic development has a significant impact on the FLFP. Second, the decline in the number of children and the rise in women's education significantly increase FLFP in many countries. And finally, the FLFP remains low and has been declining since the mid-2010s in the Philippines, despite improving education and wage level for women. She proposes that the trend was further cemented by the covid-19 pandemic, and more importantly, by the prevailing Filipino cultural practice of having women stay at home and perform most of the carework. This trend has a direct bearing on the redistribution of carework within households and calls for more proactive government policies on addressing unpaid domestic work. It also necessitates a continuing and new vigor in organizing efforts among domestic workers.

⁶⁹ Institute of Health Policy and Development Studies (UP-Manila) and International Labour Organization. *Migration of health workers: Country case study Philippines*: [working paper, 2006]

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