

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

about Programme Initiatives



Spotlight Initiative



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1. What is the Safe and Fair Programme?

Safe and Fair: Realizing women migrant workers' rights and opportunities in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region is part of the Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls, a global, multi-year initiative of the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN). Safe and Fair is implemented through a partnership between the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) in collaboration with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The overall goal of the programme is to ensure that labour migration is safe and fair for all women in the ASEAN region.

The Safe and Fair Programme is implemented in ten ASEAN countries including the Philippines, and mainstreams three cross-cutting themes: women's voice and agency, rights-based approaches, and broad engagement of stakeholders. The Safe and Fair Programme in the Philippines focuses on women Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), both land and sea-based, at all stages of migration (pre-departure, transit, onsite, return). The programme is conducted at the national and local levels in the Philippines, as well as in the countries of destination in ASEAN, and in selected migration corridors in East Asia and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The Safe and Fair Programme in the Philippines is supervised and guided by the National Project Advisory Committee (NPAC). This is a tripartite-plus (multi-stakeholder) body that is chaired by Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), and with the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) as the Vice-Chair.

2. Why overseason Filipino workers?

Women make up almost half of migrant workers in the ASEAN region. In the Philippines, females comprised 53.7% or 1.26 million of the total OFWs in 2017. Most women migrant workers in the ASEAN region work in the informal, lower skilled, or lower paid job categories, including agriculture, manufacturing, services, retail and sales, food and restaurants, domestic work, and entertainment. Among Filipinas, almost 60% were domestic workers, helpers, or hotel and office cleaners. Twenty percent of women OFWs worked in the service and sales industries, while 9% were working professionals. Less than one percent (0.9%) held managerial positions abroad.

Women migrant workers transform societies and economies through labor and economic and cultural contributions. They contribute economically through remittances, socially through bringing diversity and new social contacts, greater leadership and agency, and through skills transfer in the case of semi-skilled and skilled workers. In 2017, remittances from West Asia, where 57% of women OFWs were, increased by 3.4% and contributed greatly to the \$28 billion remittances sent by OFWs in that year.

However, access to fewer resources – such as skills, benefits, and pay – mean fewer options for women workers to access decent work. Irregular migrants and migrant domestic workers are at particular risk of violence, forced labor, and trafficking due to their status and isolated nature of work in domestic work.

Violence against women (VAW) can affect labour migration experiences and outcomes – both in driving women into precarious migration pathways (e.g., in escaping from

intimate partner violence), and as part of the actual experience of migration and labor.

Women migrants are more at risk than their male counterparts to sexual, economic, and other forms of violence and abuse from intermediaries and employers, as well as from partners and others due to inherent inequalities in communities, workplaces, and migration pathways.

3. What is the Babaeng Biya(hero) Campaign?

In the past 50 years at least, more and more Filipinos and Filipinas have been making the difficult decision to leave their families and work abroad. Now estimated at more than 10 million in over 200 countries, Filipino migrant workers contributed more than \$ 32 billion in remittances in 2018 alone; their annual remittances constituted 10.5% of the country's gross domestic product in the past 20 years, as they provided for the basic household needs, food, housing, education, and medical services for their loved ones. For their hard work, overseas Filipino workers have been called "bagong bayani" (new heroes).

An increasing number of women OFWs have sought jobs abroad as domestic workers, factory workers, nurses, caregivers, teachers, sales and services workers especially in the last two decades. While we may see Overseas Filipina Workers as heroes, we seldom really know their stories — their experiences, challenges, aspirations, struggles; and how we, in turn, can truly recognize, understand, and share their journey with them.

Babaeng (Biya)hero (Woman Voyager and Hero) is a play on the term biyahe, meaning journey, and hero, which migrant workers

are often regarded as. The entire migrant experience is taken as a journey, with the Filipina OFW as the main protagonist – or hero – in her own story. The Babaeng Biya(hero) Campaign recognizes women migrant workers' inherent right and capacity to promote their voice, choice, and agency. Launched on 25 November 2019 during the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, the Babaeng BiyaHero, public awareness campaign aims to support the Babaeng BiyaHero's call to end violence against women migrant workers and achieve a safe and fair migration experience particularly for women.

4. The Babaeng Biya(hero) Logo



The Babaeng Biya(hero) campaign logo features the geotag which signifies locating one's self in a particular area while on-the-go — a convenience

that is accessible with mobile technology, but also a feature that could help women in precarious situations. The geotag symbolizes how, with a reliable support system in place, the woman migrant worker will be able to navigate or find her way through any circumstances. The inclusion of the woman symbol in the logo represents the woman migrant worker's agency and empowerment in claiming/reclaiming justice and freedom from violence throughout her journey.

5. How does the Babaeng Biya(hero) campaign support Women OFWs?

The Babaeng (Biya)hero Campaign seeks to increase awareness on the rights and migration concerns involving women OFWs. Through its media programme, networks, educational platforms, and helpdesk, it aims to make Filipina

OFWs familiar with available services and ways to access these services, and to empower Filipina OFWs by strengthening support from government, non-government institutions and civil society, as well as from their families back home. The Campaign's goal is to educate and enable the general public to be more vigilant on the safety and protection of women OFWs. The campaign supports women OFWs through:

- Disseminating relevant and valid information through its various social media platforms (Babaeng Biya(hero) Facebook, Instagram, Twitter), and its website, babaengbiyahero.info;
- Referring OFW concerns to relevant government/non-government agencies through the messaging component of its Babaeng Biya(hero) Facebook page and messenger groups, and through the built-in reporting component within the Babaeng Biya(hero) website;
- Opening spaces for discussion and interaction for women OFWs and relevant government/non-government agencies to foster rapport and a healthy exchange of ideas for the improvement of services and support. This has been carried out through roundtable discussions on coordinated quality services, and online through the Babaeng Biya(hero) Facebook Live series;
- Providing psychosocial support through the Safe and Fair Psychosocial Task Force and the Babaeng Biya(hero) hotline; and
- Establishing on-ground support through the May I Help You? corner kiosk.

6. What is the “May I Help You?” Corner?

As part of the Safe and Fair Philippines: Babaeng Biya(hero) Campaign, a helpdesk/ booth for Filipina OFWs will be installed in Philippine international airports. The May I Help You? corner aims to help Filipina OFWs prepare for their journey by providing basic information on the countries of destination, as well as important contact details or hotlines on various aspects of migrant labor. The corner could also

refer returning migrant workers to professionals or service providers, if needed. The following are the features of the May I Help You? Corner:

- **Information** — In the campaign to eliminate violence against women, specifically migrant workers, the May I Help You? corner shall serve as a resource or information center for Filipina OFWs. The May I Help You? corner will disseminate postcards containing reminders on what migrant workers need to prepare before departure (e.g., copies of all their documents), and calling cards for issues relating to travel, contracts, any problems abroad, recruitment, complaints, counseling, and emergencies.
- **Advocacy** — The May I Help You? corner is just one of the safe spaces that Filipina OFWs can turn to in their journey. The booth links the Filipina to a platform where she can raise her issues/ feedback by linking with the service providers and concerned agencies.
- **Support** — The set of information and services provided in the May I Help You? corner aims to provide support to Filipina OFWs. The services include legal and police assistance, medical assistance, psychosocial support and counseling, rescue support, repatriation, etc. The Filipina OFWs can reach out to the relevant agencies and organizations who will be able to provide services and render support wherever the Filipina OFWs may be.

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