



Diaspora engagement mapping

PHILIPPINES

Facts & figures

Terminology: The government refers to the diaspora as Pilipino sa Ibayong Dagat to refer to overseas Filipinos or people of Filipino ancestry living abroad. The term directly translates to overseas Filipinos. In addition, the term Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) is widely used, specifically referring to Filipino migrant workers employed abroad.⁴

Political rights



Dual citizenship¹



Right to vote in national elections for citizens residing abroad²



Remittances



Remittances as a share of GDP: **8.94%**
Remittances inflow (USD billion): **39,096**

Voting from abroad:

At embassies / consulates / online³



Data disclaimer

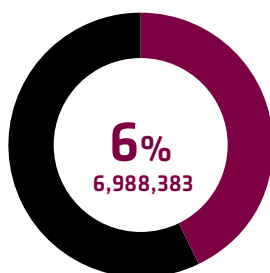
As diaspora definitions vary widely, we have chosen to use comparable data on emigration as a proxy. This does not include all who consider themselves diaspora and is not necessarily aligned with national definitions of diaspora. Emigration data comes from [UNDESA \(2024\)](#) and remittances from the [World Bank \(2023\)](#).

Emigration

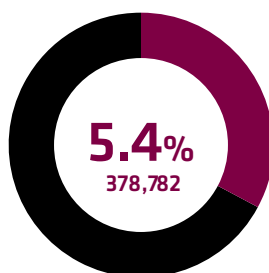
% of emigrants in total population



% of which in the EU



♂ 43%
♀ 57%



♂ 33%
♀ 67%

Top countries of destination



United States of America	2,263,697
Canada	835,779
Saudi Arabia	755,432
United Arab Emirates	528,527
Australia	356,833

1 https://cfo.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/Legal_Mandate/35.-R.A.-No.-9225_Making-the-Citizenship-of-Philippine-Citizens-Who-Acquire-Foreign-Citizenship-Permanent.pdf

2 https://cfo.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/Legal_Mandate/RA-9189-Overseas-Absentee-Voting-of-2003.pdf

3 https://info-ov.comelec.gov.ph/faqs#general_questions

4 <https://laborlaw.ph/overseas-filipino-workers-ofws/>

Overview of the policy and legislative framework



- 1974** ● **Presidential Decree No. 442** saw the creation of the Overseas Employment Development Board, now the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration). It set up a systematic programme for the overseas employment of Filipino workers and established a system to register and monitor emigrants leaving the Philippines.
- 1980** ● **Batas Pambansa Bilang 79** is an act creating the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO). The following year, this was followed by Executive Order No. 728 to retain the Commission on Filipinos overseas under the Office of the President as a critical agency, designating members of the commission and providing organisational guidelines for the secretariat of the commission.
- 1988** ● **Proclamation No. 276** declares December as the Month of Overseas Filipinos every year to honour their contribution to the development of the Philippines. This was followed by the Administrative Order No. 202 in 2007, which created an inter-agency committee for celebration of both the Month of Overseas Filipinos and International Migrants Day.
- 1995** ● **Republic Act No. 8042** established the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995, which instituted the policies of overseas employment and codified a higher standard of protection and promotion of the welfare of migrant workers, their families and other overseas Filipinos in distress. It was later amended by Republic Act No. 10022 in 2010, to further improve the standard of protection and promotion of the welfare of migrant workers and other overseas Filipinos in distress.
- 2003** ● **Republic Act No. 9189** provided for a system of overseas absentee voting of qualified citizens abroad. This allowed all citizens abroad above the age of 18 to vote in elections for the president, vice-president, senators and party-list representatives.
- 2016** ● **Administrative Order No. 2016-0007** sets up the National Policy on the Health of Migrants and Overseas Filipinos to handle issues and concerns related to the health of migrants and the allocation of the budget and funding for it.

» Trends

As early as the 1970s, the government created dedicated structures and programmes to facilitate overseas employment for Filipinos. Since the 2001 Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo administration, the government has made it a major policy not only to facilitate, but also to encourage Filipinos to go abroad for work. For instance, the government invites recruiters to the country and actively seeks to match global labour needs with local talent.⁵ Since 2003, the government has sought to mobilise greater participation from Filipino communities for overseas voting due to the growing number of overseas Filipinos. It also hopes to encourage investments and contributions from Filipinos overseas to support the building of schools and other infrastructure. Many Filipino diaspora organisations maintain their links to their homeland through fundraising campaigns for relief and charity and by supporting small-scale development projects in the Philippines in sectors such as education and health. Remittances from the diaspora generally increase after natural disasters or financial crises to act as a safety net for households with family members abroad.⁶ For instance, remittances increased by \$600 million in the three months after Typhoon Haiyan in 2013.⁷ The current structure of the migration system encompasses the entire migration cycle from deployment to return and integration. The Philippines is also entering into more bilateral labour agreements with top destinations to provide better working conditions and skills initiatives for Overseas Filipino workers.⁸

5 <https://www.cbd.int/financial/charity/philippines-diaspora.pdf>

6 https://www.sheltercluster.org/sites/default/files/docs/annex_ii_diaspora_mapping_report_002.doc

7 <http://www.bsp.gov.ph/statistics/keystat/ofw.htm>

8 <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1205352>

In 2020, the government's sectors of interest include health and welfare, education, small-scale infrastructure and livelihoods.⁹

Skills transfer & return: As presented at the EUDiF Asia regional roundtable in February 2022, the Philippines has a varied portfolio of skills transfer programmes, reflecting both the skills and return-type diversity of its diaspora and national interests. The programmes range from the Build Better More Program (formerly Build Build Build) part of which finds technical skills for the construction sector from returnees, to the Balik Scientist Program (see Spotlight) which targets scientists and researchers in the diaspora, to the SPIMS Program (see NRCO in Spotlight) bringing back “low-skilled” workers to work within the Ministry of Education.



Achievements

Government Relations: The government has established a permanent dialogue with Filipino communities abroad. Since Proclamation no. 276 in 1988, which made December the ‘Month of Overseas Filipinos’, the relationship recognising the contributions of the diaspora, has continued to grow. In 1991, for instance, the Presidential Awards for Filipino Individuals and Organizations overseas were institutionalised, and 485 outstanding Filipino individuals and organizations overseas based in 52 countries have since been awarded for their contributions.

Protection of migrant workers: The Department for Migrant Workers has put in place a stricter set of rules for hiring land-based Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs). In an attempt to protect migrant workers’ rights and uphold their welfare, the DMW has created a list of 20 serious offenses, which once committed, will lead to the immediate cancellation of a recruitment agency’s license. These offenses include, among others, the deployment of minors or those below the minimum age requirement, negligence of OFWs experiencing abuse, acts of graft and corruption, placement of workers in jobs that are harmful to life, health, morality and dignity, and reprocessing workers for jobs that are non-existent or different from the actual work.¹⁰

Voting from abroad: The Commission on Elections (COMELEC) of the Philippines allowed the use of internet voting for the first time in the 2025 National Elections Overseas, taking place from 13 April to 12 May 2025. In allowing this practice, COMELEC cited Sections 23 and 28 of the 2013 Overseas Voting Act, which authorized the Commission to explore and determine other voting systems, including internet-based technology or such other latest technologies available.

Obstacles



- **Limited formal diaspora-government connection:** Many Filipino diaspora rely more on informal channels (church groups, family or friends) rather than formal channels (institutions, embassies) for news, visa information, jobs and remittances. As a result, many of them prioritise group events/activities over those organised by the government.¹¹
- **Skill mismatch:** While some of the diaspora may be considered as professionals when leaving the Philippines, in the country of residence many of them are relegated to lower-paying jobs or low-skilled jobs due to the lack of recognition of their credentials and the preference for those educated in the host countries.¹²

9 <https://cfo-linkapil.org.ph/index.php/accomplishments/>

10 DMW puts out new rules on hiring land-based OFWs, highlighting one-strike policy vs. recruiters

11 <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000153056>

12 <https://dirp4.pids.gov.ph/ris/dps/pidsdps1330.pdf>

SPOTLIGHT: effective practices

Explore 400+ practices by country, SDG or sector of engagement in the [interactive database!](#)



BaLinkBayan

NETWORKS & PARTNERSHIPS

BaLinkBayan connects Filipino individuals and communities to the Philippines through the Diaspora to Development programme of the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO). The programme focuses on diaspora investment and entrepreneurship, philanthropy, returning talent, educational links and medical mission coordination. The BaLinkBayan portal is also a one stop online portal for diaspora engagement for overseas Filipinos. It allows the diaspora to start a business, donate, volunteer and access government services online.

Balik Scientist Program

HUMAN CAPITAL; REINTEGRATION

The programme encourages Filipino scientists, technologists and experts to return to the Philippines and share their expertise for the country's scientific, agro-industrial and economic development. From 2007 to May 2019, the programme attracted 236 scientists for 348 projects. Most of them came from North America and Asia and a few from Europe, Australia and Africa.

National Reintegration Centre for Overseas Filipino Workers (NRCO)

RETURN & REINTEGRATION

NRCO was established in 2010 with the aim to support returning migrants' reintegration into society and their employment in the local labour market. The reintegration services and programmes in the Philippines fall under the Comprehensive OFW Reintegration Program (CORP), which serves as a guide for national and local government units, CSOs and development partners that provide reintegration services. In May 2018, the NRCO was transferred from the Department of Labor and Employment to the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA). An important NRCO initiative is the "Sa Pinas, Ikaw and Ma'am/Sir" project, which aims to re-train domestic workers on the skills required to obtain a Teacher 1 Position and find employment in their hometown.

Youth Leaders in the Diaspora

YOUTH; IDENTITY

The two-week cultural immersion programme began in 2019 for Filipino youth who were born abroad or migrated at a young age. Organised by the organisation Connecting Filipinos in Europe (ENFiD), it seeks to help participants understand their identity and move them towards a meaningful relationship with their extended family and/or the country.

Lingkod sa Kapwa Pilipino (LINKAPIL - Service to Fellow Filipinos)

INFRASTRUCTURE; SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

LINKAPIL is a programme initiated by the Commission on Filipino Overseas (CFO) in 1989 to systematically manage donations from Filipinos based overseas and direct them towards enhancing local development initiatives. It provides a means for the transfer of various forms of resources from overseas Filipinos to support small scale, high impact projects to address the country's needs. The programme was designed for overseas Filipinos to support projects in livelihood development, education, health related activities and small-scale infrastructure. Through the programme, the CFO acts as the intermediary between the overseas Filipinos and the local beneficiaries. Between 1990 and 2017, LINKAPIL has facilitated around Php3.3 billion (USD68.1 million) worth of assistance from overseas Filipinos and organisations, benefitting around 15.7 million Filipinos across the 81 provinces of the Philippines. The bulk of this assistance went into health and welfare, followed by education and small-scale infrastructure.

Overseas Filipinos Diaspora Remittances for Development (OFsReD)

OFsReD was a 2010 project jointly implemented by the CFO, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Western Union. The project successfully worked to mainstream migration and development in the Philippine Development Plan 2011-2016. A collective remittance fund was created to lend to migrant-owned enterprises in the province of Ilocos Norte. A website was also set up to document the initiatives and implementation of the project and to serve as a platform for future crowdfunding among the Ilocano Diaspora to contribute to the fund.

REMITTANCES

Knowledge transfer on environmental sustainability and climate adaptation from the Filipino diaspora 2022-2023

Under EUDiF's Diaspora Professionals 4 Development (DP4D) mechanism, the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development Staff and the Palawan State University worked with Filipino diaspora professionals from Germany and France to develop the capacities of the local community in the areas of education, climate finance and project management. The action aims to help advance the agenda for sustainable development in Palawan by equipping local stakeholders with the tools and skills to enhance their knowledge on solutions for environmental sustainability and climate adaptation.

GREEN AND SUSTAINABILITY
+ EDUCATION

The Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) Hospital and Diagnostic Center 2022 - ongoing

The OFW Hospital is a government healthcare facility dedicated exclusively to the returning OFW and their dependents, located in San Fernando, Pampanga. Since its opening, the hospital has provided care to over 146,000 patients and delivered more than 320,000 medical services. In December 2024, the hospital also announced the inauguration of the Bagong Filipinas Cancer Center, to enhance its capacity to provide cancer-specific treatment modalities. Construction of the centre is expected to be completed by November 2025.

HEALTH

Annex:

List of Actors

Explore the institutionalisation of diaspora engagement worldwide via the [typology of 430+ institutions](#)

Diaspora related institutions

- **At regional level**

International Organization for Migration 1975

IOM established its office in the Philippines in 1975. In 1988, the Philippines became an IOM Member State – among the first Member States in Asia, with Manila as one of the first regional IOM offices in late 1996.

International Labour Organization (ILO) 1948

The Philippines became a member of the ILO in 1948, two years after gaining its independence. In 1970, the ILO established an office in Manila. Through government, employers and workers partnership, the Philippines was the first country in Asia to participate in a pilot programme on decent work in 2002. The TRIANGLE in ASEAN programme is a part of the ILO's global efforts to promote fair migration. Through delivery of technical assistance and support to governments, social partners, civil society and regional bodies, TRIANGLE in ASEAN aims to create a set of policies, tools and services that enhance the contribution of labour migration to stable and inclusive growth and development. It involves six ASEAN countries, including Philippines, and is funded by Australia and Canada.¹³

ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour 2008

The ASEAN annual forum is an open platform for review, discussion and exchange of good practices and ideas between governments, workers' and employers' organisations, and civil society stakeholders on key issues facing migrant workers in South-East Asia. Participants develop recommendations to advance the implementation of the principles of the ASEAN Declaration on Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers.

- **National institutions**

- At ministerial level

Department of Foreign Affairs 1898

Guided by three pillars of Philippine foreign policy, namely national security, economic security and the protection of the rights and promotion of the welfare and interest of Filipinos overseas. The department oversees a number of offices, including the office of consular affairs and consular offices. The consular section, headed by the consul general and a labour attaché, has the most frequent contact with Filipino workers and migrants for passport and visa matters. They also liaise with local authorities when problems involving Filipinos arise. The attachés are sometimes assigned specialised work on labour, commercial, trade and agriculture as well.

¹³ https://www.ilo.org/asia/media-centre/news/WCMS_677752/lang--en/index.htm

Department of Labour and Employment 1933

The department aims to protect workers and promote their welfare. Replacing the Overseas Employment Development Board, under the Department of Labour and Employment, the [POEA](#) aims to facilitate the generation and preservation of decent jobs for Filipino migrant workers, to promote their protection and to advocate for their smooth return and reintegration into society.

- At sub-ministerial level

Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) 1980

Established through Batas Pambansa 79, the CFO is an agency of the government under the Office of the President. It is tasked to promote and uphold the interests, rights and welfare of overseas Filipinos and to strengthen their ties with the Philippines. It provides pre-departure orientation seminars to emigrants, promotes transfer of technology, material and financial contributions from overseas for development projects in communities across the Philippines, and provides Filipino youth overseas with opportunities to learn about Filipino history and culture. The CFO manages operations of all consulates and embassies outside the country in coordination with the Department of Foreign Affairs. The CFO aims to be the premier institution in promoting policies, programmes and projects with 'Migration and Development' as a framework to strengthen and empower Filipinos overseas. The CFO is also involved in several innovative initiatives, such as LINKAPIL, that serve to connect the overseas diaspora with local contacts.

Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) 1977

The OWWA is attached to the Department of Labour and Employment. It protects and promotes the welfare of Overseas Filipinos and their dependents. Formerly known as Welfare and Training Fund for Overseas Workers, OWWA is present in 31 overseas posts in 27 countries. It also has a presence in the seventeen regions of the Philippines.

The Department of Migrant Workers 2021

It is the executive department of the Philippine government tasked to protect the rights and promote the welfare of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs). The department was created through the Department of Migrant Workers Act or the Republic Act No. 11641. It now performs the functions of seven merged agencies, namely: the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA); the Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers' Affairs (OUMWA) of the DFA; the International Labor Affairs Bureau (ILAB) and all Philippine Overseas Labor Offices (POLO) under the Department of Labor and Employment; the National Maritime Polytechnic (NMP); the National Reintegration Center for OFWs (NRC) under the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, and the Office of the Social Welfare Attaché (OSWA) under the Department of Social Work and Development (DSWD). The seven migration agencies to be absorbed by the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) would remain under the control of their parent agencies for the next two years transition period.

- At local level

Inter-Agency Committee (IAC) 2007

The IAC is chaired by the President of the Philippine Migrants Rights Watch, an umbrella organisation of 12 migrant civil society organizations working for the recognition, protection, and fulfilment of the rights of Filipino migrants in the Philippines and abroad. The CFO co-chairs the committee and the IAC is composed of members and partners from the national government agencies, private sector and NGOs.

Diaspora organisations in Europe

Babaylan Europe 1992 Europe

- ☑ Development activities
- ☑ Integration activities

The first meeting in Barcelona in 1992 was a response to the need for Filipinos living and working in Europe to link together and forge unity to improve their situation, and address specific issues affecting women. The network is now Europe-wide and aims to promote women empowerment through full participation in development. It promotes an education programme to tackle issues affecting women in Europe and the Philippines, to establish links of support with women's groups of other nationalities in Europe and the Philippines and to project their voices through effective lobbying at all policy-making levels in the Philippines government.

The group is present in Austria, Denmark, France, Germany (Philippine Women's Forum), Greece (Diwata), Italy, the Netherlands (Diwang Pilipina/Diwa), Spain (Amistad de Mujeres Filipinas), Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

Commission for Filipino Migrant Workers (CFMW) 1979 Netherlands

- ☑ Integration activities

A support and service institution that provides programmes and services in response to the needs of the overseas Filipino migrant community in Europe. It works in partnership with Filipino migrant organisations in Europe and aims to develop migrant empowerment through self-organisation, education and campaigns for migrant rights and welfare. CFMW undertakes joint programmes with partner organisations in Rome, Greece and Barcelona.

European Network of Filipino Diaspora (ENFiD) 2012 Europe

- ☑ Development activities

ENFiD was formed in 2012 in the UK, Netherlands, Italy, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Norway and a few other European countries. A relief drive called ENFiD Bayanihan para sa Biktima ni Pablo was also set up for the victims of Typhoon Pablo in Philippines. In the following years, the network expanded to Malta, Iceland, Romania and Ireland, which also began mobilising cultural and relief projects. It has held events to keep the Filipino culture alive amongst Filipinos abroad and organised projects to help victims of typhoons in Philippines. In 2017, Young ENFiD was launched for youth of Filipino-European origin.

European Network of Filipino Diaspora UK

- ☑ Development activities
- ☑ Integration activities

The European Network of Filipino Diaspora United Kingdom (ENFiD UK) is one of the country members of ENFiD, which is an active international networking association that seeks to cultivate a sense of shared nationhood and cooperation among Overseas Filipinos in Europe. ENFiD UK envisions a vibrant and empowered Filipino Diaspora operating globally and locally, whose talent, contribution and potential are recognised and rewarded in Europe and the Philippines, cognisant of the future generation of Filipino descent.

Read more about diaspora organisations in "[Starting guide: What is a diaspora organisation](#)"



Filipino LGBT Europe Netherlands

- ☑ **Development activities**
- ☑ **Integration activities**

A shelter/support group for Filipino LGBTs living in Europe, advocating for equality and empowerment, acceptance and social change for LGBTs in the Philippines. They aim to maintain an inclusive environment for LGBT Filipinos in Europe and support education and increase HIV awareness in the Philippines. They also promote and campaign for equality and legal recognition of LGBT marriage in the Philippines.

Filipino Women's Association UK 1988 UK

- ☑ **Development activities**
- ☑ **Integration activities**

The association aims to raise funds to support youth from vulnerable families in the Philippines through an Education and Development Programme. It also seeks to support women in the UK and in the Philippines through education and personal development. Additionally, it provides support during calamities or unexpected events back in the Philippines.

Filipino Women's Council

- ☑ **Integration activities**

Filipino Women's Council (FWC) is a non-profit organisation founded in Rome in 1991. Bringing together Filipinos, Italians, and other international supporters, FWC aims to develop Filipinos as empowered migrant workers in Italy, who understand their rights as women and men, as people of colour, as workers and migrants, and who will pursue the realisation of these rights.

Filippiinit-seura ry (Finnish-Philippine Society) 1988 Finland

- ☑ **Integration activities**

Established to promote friendship between the people of Finland and the Philippines, the association disseminates information on the social, political and cultural conditions in the Philippines through publications and public events.

Finnish-Philippine Association (FPA) 1988 Finland

- ☑ **Integration activities**

FPA aims to promote social interaction between the members, assist Filipinos in the Finnish way of life and showcase Filipino traditions and cultures to the Finnish people.

Philippine Centre 1985 UK

- ☑ **Integration activities**

Endeavours to provide a programme of activities that will encourage Filipinos to develop a greater sense of community and mutual support. It also aims to provide opportunities, facilities and services to foster a continuing interest and appreciation of Filipino values and tradition, culture and social norms.

The Filipino Nursing Diaspora (FiND) Network 2019

The FiND is the first and only international organisation of Filipino nurses, initially registered in Australia and now present in 17 countries worldwide. The network aims to connect Filipino nurses around the world and has launched an online platform to gather resources, information and opportunities tailored to Filipino nurses' unique needs and aspirations.

Phil-UK 2000 UK

☑ Integration activities

Phil-UK is a community information website for first and second generation Filipinos living in the UK. It aims to unite the British-Filipino community through its network of members.

Lëtzebuergesch-Philippinesch Aktioun fir den Development (LPAD) 2006 Luxembourg

☑ Development activities

☑ Integration activities

LPAD supports the microfinance, cooperative and micro-enterprise development sector in the Philippines by mobilising investments from Luxembourg. The non-profit, non-stock solidarity association was founded by 10 Filipinos and Europeans in Luxembourg. It works on promoting entrepreneurship in the Philippines and within the Filipino community in Luxembourg. It also provides technical training on preparation, management and evaluation of projects to Filipinos in Europe, Europeans and other migrants who are keen on promoting development. LPAD has also organised fund-raising activities for the victims of natural disasters in the Philippines.

The Filipino Association of Denmark 1970 Denmark

☑ Integration activities

The Filipino Association of Denmark is the oldest Filipino association in Scandinavia. They organise various cultural activities, including the annual Barrio Fiesta, basketball tournaments for the youth, and Christmas parties for the Filipino community.

Finnish-Philippine Society 1988 Finland

☑ Development activities

Promotes relations between Finland and the Philippines and provides an avenue for Filipinos to contribute to the development of the Philippines. The organisation disseminates information about the social, political and cultural conditions of the Philippines through publications and public events.

The Filipino-American Association of the Kaiserslautern Military Community 2007 Germany

☑ Integration activities

It aims to promote awareness of Filipino culture and society, as well as provide educational and charity assistance to members. Membership in the organisation is open to all active duty, retired, active reserve and civilian personnel assigned to the Kaiserslautern military community in Germany.

Association LuViMin e.V., 2014 Germany**☑ Development activities**

Founded in the aftermath of typhoon Yolanda or Haiyan, which caused great destruction in the Philippines. They worked to provide humanitarian assistance and mobilise donations, but still continue to provide support at present to help typhoon victims return to normality.

Philippines–Luxembourg Society (PLS) Luxembourg 1986**☑ Development activities**

It has the aim of helping underprivileged people in the Philippines, primarily through the education of disadvantaged children, the reconstruction of schools and sanitary facilities, and the provision of humanitarian aid during natural catastrophes.

Samahan ng mga Pilipino Luxembourg Asbl (“Samahan-Lux”) Luxembourg 1997**☑ Development activities**

It aims to facilitate the mobilisation of financial assistance to people in need in the Philippines by providing interest-free micro-finance loans. They also provide humanitarian assistance during calamities, gather donations for non-profit associations in the Philippines, promote Filipino art and culture, coordinate with the Philippine embassy in Luxembourg, and stay connected with other Filipino associations in the Philippines and in Europe.

Bayanihan Foundation The Netherlands**☑ Integration activities**

It is an organisation of Filipino women that helps with the integration, participation, emancipation and empowerment of Filipinas in the Netherlands. They provide psycho-social, cultural and legal support, conduct trainings, and carry out advocacy work for the benefit of Filipina workers.

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