

Griffith Asia Pacific

Regional Outlook

TRANSNATIONAL FLIRTING:
A COMPROMISE PROMISE OF FEMINIST
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Griffith Asia Institute



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Transnational Filipinos in the UAE:
A Compromise of Interests

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The Philippine state is the second largest migration country in the Asia-Pacific region to migrate to destinations in the Middle East and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) after India. According to the Philippine authorities, the number of land-based Filipinos in the Emirates are 227,076 persons in 2015 compared to 46,076 land-based persons in 2005.¹ In 2005, the UAE was the third most popular destination for land-based Filipino labour after Saudi Arabia and Hong Kong. Filipinos flock to the UAE in growing numbers. The reasons behind the Filipino migration to the UAE might appear to be the same as other Gulf states such as higher salaries and networks, but how the Philippine authorities have worked to protect its citizens in the UAE since the 1990s illustrates how a migrants

1. The Philippine government and Overseas Filipino Workers in the United Arab Emirates

The Philippine government effort to protect its citizens working in the UAE is shaped by the government's apparent reliance on remittances and the UAE's reliance on transient foreign labour in legal terms of the jurisdiction.

In the UAE, 88.4 percent of the population are non

2. The Sponsorship for Work in UAE Law

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Every non-citizen working in the UAE needs to be sponsored or guaranteed financially for by an employer creating invisible bonds between the employee and the employer regulating immigration for work in and out of the state.

This system of sponsorship for work ~~is~~

security concerns. In addition, Asians were considered cheaper, easier to manage, easier to dismiss and more reliant than their Arab counterparts. Thirdly, Asians seem to accept their transient status leaving family at home. Finally, they were not Arabs and could not claim rights based on Arab solidarity. In regard to the Filipinos, they constitute the fourth largest group of Asians working in the UAE after Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. How the Philippine government learnt that the safety of their citizens had to be protected in the UAE under the sponsorship system in employ

3. Labour Export: From Promotion to Protection

Against the backdrop of economic hardship, President Ferdinand Marcos ~~1965~~ formalised the export of Filipino labour in ~~1974~~ as part of his strategy to create an export-oriented economy to please international lenders. He announced the labour Code of the Philippines, Presidential Decree No. 442 making sure that the state had monopoly on exporting labour (Articles 14 and 15)⁶. Also, the Code made remitting of foreign exchange earnings mandatory for Filipinos working abroad (Article 22). But, the authorities soon realized they were unable to manage the demand for work abroad and through the Presidential Decree No. 442 in 1978 it granted the private sector the right

Notes and References

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- 54 Mahdavi P. (2012) 'Informality and Its Discontents: Mapping Migrant Worker Trajectories into Dubai's Informal Economy' in Kamnitsas, *Migrant Labour in the Persian Gulf*, Hurstand Company, London.
- 55 United Nations Human Rights Council, Twentieth third session 21 January to 1 February 2013 'Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review United Arab Emirates' Universal Periodic Review (21 March 2013) UN Doc/A/HRC/23/13 (point 128:139) and UAE national report 2017: 16 (point 33).
- 56 United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, Concluding recommendations on the combined second and third periodic reports of the United Arab Emirates 24 November 2010 CEDAW/C/ARE/CO/2-3: Point 10.
- 57 "UAE employers detaining workers passports can be jailed and fined up to AED 20,000", *The National* January 6 2017.
- 58 Castles, S., Haas, H., and Millard, (2014), *The Age of Migration*, Palgrave Macmillan. 147.