



























*months, tumakbo ako sa embassy, humingi ako ng tulong sa embassy, ngayon yun government doon nagsabi na kung sino yun walang visa pauwiin na, kaya nauwi ako, yun company hindi ako binigyan ng pambili ng ticket kaya nangutang ako doon para makauwi ako, may tumulong naman sa akin naglikom ng pambili ng ticket para makauwi ako... sumakay ako sa swift flight, tapos ngayon nandito na ako wala akong trabaho, pinauwi ko anak ko nag aaral sa Cebu, hindi sya nag aral ngayon, lahat kami walang trabaho. Yun anak ko pinapaluto-luto ko na lang ng pastil, binebenta namin, umaasa na lang kami sa pension ng nanay ko, magkano lang naman yun pension, maliit lang, yun na lang pambili ng bigas, basta makakain lang, ginagamit naming panggasto araw araw. “)*

- I was in Dubai during the onset of the pandemic in March. My contract was about to end, and I originally plan to stay to apply for a job in a company. I got paranoid because of what I see and hear in the social media, I was so stressed and finally decided to go home. I was able to save a little so when I arrived in the Philippines I plan to put up a small business but because of the pandemic I was not able to do it until I lost all my savings. Now I stay at home with my parents. I just accepted the situation and prayed for strength to overcome this difficult situation. I did not dare applied for a program given by POEA BARMM because they are selective and they are asking for so many requirements and the requirements keep on changing, so I realized I am not going to qualify anyway.

*(“Dumating yun pandemic nung March which is nasa Dubai pa ako, ang contract ko about to finish na, tapos ang original plan ko talaga mag stay para mag apply sa mga kumpanya, tapos nung dumating ang pandemic, medyo naparanoid ako kasi sa mga nakikita ko sa social media, tapos yun na stress na rin, napaisip, tapos that’s when I finally decided na umuwi na lang, kasi nga medyo naparanoid na rin ako, nung dumating na ako dito sa Pilipinas, siyempre medyo may ipon tayo gusto natin magnegosyo pero hindi ka naman makastart ng negosyo mo kasi nga yun yung kasagsagan ng pandemic which is everything is affected talaga, tapos ayon hanggang sa wala na naubos na yun ipon na pang business mo sana, tapos ngayon istambay pa rin, walang trabaho pero ok lang kasi nasa parents man din ako. Na stress tayo kasi hindi tayo makastart ng business. Ang ginawa ko acceptance, prayer, na sooner or later malampasan natin itong panemic tapos yun plano plano kung wala na itong pandemic ano na ang moves mo, mga plans mo. Ang POEA BARMM kasi selective din sila doon sa 20k assistance, marami silang requirements, criteria para makapasok, ako hindi na ako nagdare kasi alam ko hindi rin ako qualified kasi paiba-iba rin sila ng requirements mam eh.”)*

- I was in Saudi that time. My husband’s shop closed. I was compelled to send my whole salary to my family in the Philippines. My female employer is so unkind and jealous, she was not treating me well and so I decided to come home with unfinished contract. I only worked for 18 months but my contract was supposedly 24 months. My employer gave my 3 months salary to my agency and my agency spent that for my ticket going home. I spent my own money for my travel expenses. I was asked by the agency to sign a waiver and if I refuse I won’t be able to come home so I signed the document involuntarily just to be able to come home.

*(“Nasa Saudi pa ako, kaya yun pandemic na, yun naclose ang shop ng asawa ko, napilitan ako ipadala lahat ng sahod ko, hindi maganda ang amo kong*

*babae magtrato kasi selosa, pangit ang ugali ng amo kong babae kaya gusto ko mag uwi na lang. Unfinished contract (18 months lang ako), nagdecide ako umuwi na lang... un 3 months ko na sueldo binigay ng amo ko sa agency nung dinala ako ng amo ko doon, ginamit ng agency ko un sahod ko pambili ng ticket ko pauwi. Ako lahat ang gumastos sa pag-uwi ko. May pinapirma sila sa akin, kung hindi ako magpirma hindi po ako makauwi.”)*

- I also experienced the same thing. They spent my salary for my ticket but I did not go to an agency. My female employer is a Saudian while my male employer is a Qatari. My female employer used to go home to Saudi, and everytime she travels home she brings me with her and makes me clean 3 huge houses and at the same time take care of small children. I have additional work loads when in Saudi and I am not paid for these. I applied for an employment in Qatar and not in Saudi. When I refused to go with her to Saudi, she terminated me and so I went home but I also spent my own money. Will I still get back my salary?

*(“Excuse me mam, ganon din po yun nangyari sa akin mam pero hindi po nila ako diniaan sa agency, dito sa sahod ko po na every month magpipirma po kasi kami na mga kasambahay, that time na yun mam kasi nagtravel un amo ko sa Saudi, yung amo ko na babae Saudiyan, yung amo ko na lalaki Qatari. Yung amo kong babae tuwing mag uwi sa Saudi sinasama ako, ayaw kong sumama kasi dalawang beses na po syang umuuwi sa Saudi kasama ako, pagdating doon ang problema ko po doon pinapalinis ako ng tatlong bahay na hindi ko kaya tapos may bata pa po ako na inaalagaan, isa lang po ang sueldo ko, tatlong bahay ang nililinis ko kapag makauwi sa Saudi. So ito po yun tanong ko mam yun sahod ko na isang buwan pinambili nila ng ticket ko makukuha ko rin po ba yun? Hindi nila ako diniaan sa agency. Pinauwi po nila ako, tinerminate po nila ako kasi ang inaplayan ko po Qatar tapos dinadala ako sa Saudi pinapalinis ng 3 bahay 3 palapag, overworked po ako hindi ko kaya, ayaw ko na sumama sa Saudi kaya yun tinerminate po nila ako.”)*

- When the pandemic came I was in a Foreign recruitment Agency (FRA). I was locked down there. I wanted to go home but I was not allowed because of the pandemic. They were asking me to look for another job. I have no money to buy a ticket going home. They were forcing me to work, food was not sufficient, and we were made to clean the agency’s office as if we were their utility workers. We receive threats from the agency if we don’t obey them. I stayed in the agency for 8 months doing chores for them without pay. I wanted to go home because I do not want to work there anymore because I was traumatized when my first employer sent me to the police. The reason I was sent to the police was because one day I did not work anymore. I have no more strength to work, they were asking me to do too much work and I cannot take it anymore. Somebody texted me and took me to their house then to an agency where I stayed for 8 months and was put into forced labor. It was my husband who helped me and facilitated my coming home.

*(“Nung dumating ang pandemya nasa FRA (Foreign Recruitment Agency) po ako, dumating ako ng agency March nalockdown po ako doon, gusto kong umuwi pero hindi ako nakauwi, ayaw ako pauwiin, pinapahanap nila ako ng ibang trabaho, walang ibili ng ticket pinipilit nila ako magtrabaho, kulang ang pagkain, pinapalinis kami sa agency, tinatakot para magtrabaho (8months ).*

*Ayaw ko na magtrabho kasi natrauma ako doon sa ginawa sa akin ng unang amo ko pinapulid ako ng amo ko kasi isang araw hindi ako nagtrabaho kasi hindi ko na kaya overworked po kasi ako. Hindi ako nagtrabaho kaya pinapulid ako ng amo ko. May isang nagtext po sa akin sa police station tapos dinala ako sa bahay nila tapos dinala ako sa agency, 8 months po ako sa agency, tinatakot nila ako, pinipilit ako magtrabaho. Tinulungan ako ng asawa ko para makabili ako ng ticket pauwi.”)*

- I got sick for 7 days and was not able to work. My employer did not let me work and locked me in a room. I was not allowed to go out because they said that I have Covid -19 virus. They brought me to the doctor for check – up and the doctor’s advice was for me to rest. So they put me in one room and let me stay there. They fed me by putting my food in front of my room’s door. Since I don’t like the idea of receiving a pay without doing anything, at night when they are all asleep, I sneak out to clean the house and the comfort rooms a little. They noticed this and asked me thru texts who cleans, I said I do. I have no problem with my employers, they are very kind. It is my employer’s sibling that is my problem. She is cruel and unkind. She does not want to see me resting. She does not allow me to sit down and take a short rest. She always wanted to see me working. She keeps on giving orders. I cannot take her attitude anymore. I was able to come home because of my ailing sister. My sister in Saudi got very sick and went home. Her health condition became worse and requested that I should come home because we might not be able to see each other again. She pleaded and begged from my employer to let me go home so that I can be with her. I was surprised when my employers brought me to the airport and gave me my ticket and passport and sent me home.

*(“Nagkasakit po ako, 7 days hindi ako nakawork, hindi ako pinatrabaho ng amo ko, kinulong lang ako ng amo ko sa kwarto, binibigyan lang ako ng pagkain kasi sabi nila may covid daw ako, bawal ako lumabas, yun mga bata bawal ako lumapit. Pinacheck up nila ako sabi ng doctor wag daw ako patrabahuin, kinulong ako sa kwarto yun pagkain ko nilalagay lang nila sa may pintuan ng kwarto ko. Ang akin lang po kasi ayaw ko yun pinapasahod ako na wala akong ginagawa, kaya kapag tulog pa sila, maaga pa naglilinis na ako ng bahay ng CR. Nagtataka sila kung bakit malinis nay un mga CR, tinatawagan nila ako sa cellphone ko tinatanong nila ako kung bakit malinis na daw yun CR? Ang sabi ko- mam naglilinis po ako kasi kaya ko naman. Wala po akong problema sa amo ko kasi mabait naman yun mga amo ko, pero yun lang kapatid nya grabe makautos hindi ko makaya kasi mas sobra pa sya sa amo ko, parang sya ang amo ko, sobra sya hindi ka nya pinapaupo, kapag nakikita ka nya nakaupo tatawagin ka papatayuin at papatrabahuin, bawal ka mag upo, masungit sya yun kapatid nya. Ganito po mam kasi yun ate ko may sakit sya galling dito sa Saudi, umuwi sya kasi nagkasakit sya, tapos gusto ako pauwiin ng ate ko kahit 7 days lang kasi grabe na yun sakit ng ate ko baka hindi na daw kami magkita ulit, pinilit sya ng ate ko yun amo ko na pauwiin ako kahit 7 days lang. Yun time na pinilit sya ng ate ko na pauwiin na ako grabe na yun sakit ng ate ko nasa hospital na sya nag aagaw-buhay na. Hindi nila sinabi na may ticket na ako pauwi, binigay na lang nila sa akin nung nasa airport na ako, doon nila binigay yun ticket ko saka passport, tapos yun pera ko pinadala lang nila sa akin.”)*

- I was in Saudi when the pandemic came. I stayed 5 months with my first employer, and then I was sold to another employer. I don’t have an agency. I

had 3 employers because my second employer again sold me to another employer. With my 3<sup>rd</sup> employer I was cleaning two houses, my employer's house and her mother's. I was also tasked to wash the cars and do male jobs. Then my 3<sup>rd</sup> employer again wants to sell me to an agency but I did not agree. I called up OWWA and asked for help. I stayed at OWWA for 3 months. Life there was hard and food was scarce. Life was even harder at home. I pity my family for this hardship that we are suffering with.

*(“Nasa Saudi pa ako noon, 5 months sa original na amo tapos pinabili nya ako sa ibang amo, walang agency ako, 3 ang naging amo ko, kasi pinabili ulit ako ng second amo ko ... sa pangatlo kong amo dalawang bahay ang pinapalinis sa akin, buong bahay, bahay ng amo ko at bahay ng nanay nya, saka pinapalinis nya ako ng mga sasakyan, ang trabaho ko trabaho ng lalaki, tapos gusto ako ipabili ng pangatlo kong amo sa agency hindi ako pumayag...nagtawag ako sa OWWA humingi ng tulong... 3 months ako sa OWWA nag stay, mahirap kasi kulang sa pagkain, pag uwi ko hirap na hirap kami, naaawa ako sa pamilya ko, ang hirap ng buhay namin. “)*

- There are times I don't eat in one day. They don't treat me well. They deprived me of decent food. They feed me with their left-overs. I told them how can I work if I don't eat well. I asked them to bring me back to my agency if they can't feed me well. When I came home, my child was gone....nobody told me that he committed suicide, he hanged himself. Until now I really don't know how to survive. My employer deceived me. They took the salary they gave me. While I was waiting to be sent to my agency, they meddled with my luggage and took my little savings that I kept inside a small pack of sanitary napkin and replaced it with a small notebook to make it look like the money was still intact. They also took back the things they gave me. (*“hindi ako nakakakain sa isang araw, hindi maayos ang pagkain nila, ninanakaw ko lang ang pagkain ko, tubig lang isang araw, tira tira lang pagkain ang binibigay sa akin, sabi ko paano ako makatrabaho kung kulang ang pagkain ko, tira-tira ang pinapakain nila sa akin. Sabi ko kung hindi nyo ako pakainin ibalik nyo ako sa agency. pagdating ko wala na yun anak ko, namatay na, hindi ko alam na nagbigti pala un anak ko...hindi nila sinabi sa akin na ganito pala ang nangyari sa kanya...hanggang ngayon hindi ko talaga alam kung ano ang gagawin ko sa hirap ng buhay. Tapos yun amo ko gibigay nya ang sahod ko gipulitika pa ako, hinatid nya ako sa agency tapos sabi nya sarado daw yun agency gibalik naman nya ako sa bahay tapos sabi nya magbalik na lang daw kami mamaya, tapos tinanong ko yun anak ng amo ko kung magbalik kami sa agency sabi nya bukas na lang daw kay maglakad pa sya. Sabi ko kunin ko yun gamit ko sa kotse kay wala akong magamit nandoon sa bag lahat ng gamit ko. Tapos ang sabi nya sa akin wag na kay mag alis ka na rin man bukas, tapos ang ginawa pala nila yun mga gamit ko gihalungkat nila lahat tapos yun pera ko na tinago ko sa bag na tinago ko sa hindi ko pa nagamit na napkin kinuha pala nila pinalitan nila ng maliit na notebook, kinuha nila yun pera ko pati yun mga binigay nila sa akin na mga gamit. Hindi na bale yun mga gamit pero yun pera ko sana hindi na lang.”)*

### **The Surfacing of OFWs' Issues and Concerns**

The FGD gave the respondents an opportune time to also air out their grievances. Majority of them were able to express their emotions of fear, anxiety, anger and worry. Stories of being maltreated and other forms of injustices like forced labor, being underpaid or unpaid,



poor and inhumane living conditions and being sold to other employers show how their psychological well-being and mental health was affected. They were left on their own, no mental health and psychosocial support services were offered to them.

Moreover, a respondent told how she was illegally recruited but to her knowledge there seems to be no irregularities in the process since her parents gave their consent. She accounted that she was able to work abroad at age 15. Her recruiter took advantage of her family's vulnerability and enticed her to work abroad. She was manipulated and exploited by her recruiter. Her birth certificate was tampered. Her recruiter made it appear that she is already 23 years old, 8 years ahead of her true age. Desperate to help her family financially, she conceded to her recruiter's persuasion.

The FGD revealed that local recruitment agencies require OFW applicants to have a recruiter if not they cannot apply. This recruiter is not legally binded to the local recruitment agency because he/she functions independently, and is not an employee of the recruitment agency. When something happens to the OFW deployed by a particular local recruitment agency, the agency has no accountability to the OFW but the recruiter.

In addition, recruitment agencies do not shoulder airfare of returning overseas Filipinos (ROFs), instead they used the latter's salary to pay for the ticket going back to the Philippines. Once deployed, the OFW cannot receive her first 2 months salary because it goes to the recruiter, and another 3 months salary goes to the foreign recruitment agency. A migrant domestic worker's first 5 long months of hardship and sacrifices is unpaid, this is the cost imposed upon her/him by the recruiter as a means of repaying the financial support provided for her/him by the recruiter in facilitating her/his deployment.

### **LGUs Assistance to OFW Returnees**

FGD question number 5 is asking about where the respondents sought help and what forms of assistance were given to them. The respondents identified the following agencies where they sought help: the Philippine embassy; Department Of Labor and Employment (DOLE) / Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA); Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA); Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO); and KAAGAPAY OFW Resource and Services Center – a non-government organization located in Cotabato City. They received the following services from the aforementioned agencies: welfare assistance, Abot Kamay ang Pagtulong (AKAP) cash assistance, transportation service, “*ayuda*” (relief goods). KAAGAPAY provides legal assistance to OFWs like salary claims.

For FGD question number 6, the respondents claim that the actions taken by LGUs to assist OFW returnees were limited to provision of transportation services, access to medical assistance such as swab tests and isolation centers. In terms of specific intervention programs specifically designed for OFWs and their families, there is none.

### **Profile of the Second Group of FGD Respondents**

The second group of FGD respondents consist of 6 representatives of OFW Families. They are all female. Two are residents of barangay Mother Poblacion; 2 from Bagua 2; 1 from Bulalao and another 1 from R.S. Buan. The respondents' relationships to the OFW include a husband, daughter, and mother. Three OFWs are in Saudi Arabia, 1 in Dubai, 1 in Qatar and 1 in London. One of the respondents' spouse has been working in Saudi Arabia for almost 20 years now. A daughter in London has been staying there for 16 years, another spouse in Qatar for 11 years, 2 daughters in Saudi Arabia for 6 years and 1 year respectively, and a mother in Dubai for 4 years.

Interestingly, the OFW families who joined the second FGD session have the same responses as the first group of FGD respondents for question numbers 1 to 3. They all agreed that their LGUs have no specific programs and services designed for OFWs and their families.

Thus, the discussion proceeded to FGD question number 4 which is all about their quarantine experiences.

### **OFW Families' Quarantine Experiences**

OFW families shared similar quarantine experiences where they stayed at home and were locked down. They experienced scarcity of food supply and financial problems. They cannot go out, have no means or sources of income. During the onset of the pandemic, remittances from their OFW loved ones were affected, cut and rarely sent. Some said they received remittances only every other two months. This made life even harder for them.

Realizing that relief goods from LGUs are not enough, they looked for other ways to make life easier for them. There were those who harvested bananas and sold it. Somebody disclosed that they inconspicuously go out at night to go to their relative's place and pick some vegetables then sell it to their neighbors. One of them sewed masks and sold them too. Another one engaged in selling native delicacies like "*bibingka*". She buys NFA rice from her neighbors who do not like to eat NFA rice and makes it "*kakanin*" (a Filipino native delicacy made of rice) and sells it back to her neighbors (very resourceful indeed). One recounted that she spent the remittances sent by her husband buying rice and other goods to make their food supply last for 3 months lock down. Furthermore, she bought firewoods and sold them to augment her daily income. She also sells snacks and some refreshments like "halo-halo" within their neighborhood. She was able to save her husband's previous remittances and was grateful for it because it helped suffice for their daily needs.

### **LGUs' Assistance to OFW Families**

The respondents narrated that the only form of assistance provided by their LGUs were cash assistance and relief goods or "*ayuda*." The programs and services offered were for all the residents regardless of whether one is an OFW family, Returning Overseas Filipino (ROF) or not. However, the respondents whined that OFW families were not included in the distribution of relief goods and other supplies because they were being supported by a family member who happened to be an OFW. This was part of the former guidelines, but later they were also able to receive relief goods from their LGUs as the guidelines were modified.

The respondents also expressed that they do not seek help from LGUs instead they usually seek help from their relatives like their sisters, cousins or uncles and aunts.

## **FINDINGS**

This section presents the findings of the study which include the OFWs' Issues and Concerns; Migrant Domestic Workers' Needs; Impact of Covid-19 to Migrant Domestic Workers from BARMM; and LGUs Issues and Concerns.

### **OFWs' Issues and Concerns**

According to the Push and Pull Theory of Migration, there are factors that cause people to migrate. Factors that repel them to leave the country of origin and factors attract them to the country of destination. Those that repel them to get out of the country of origin are the push factors. These include the adverse economic condition in the country, lack of employment opportunities or unemployment, non-availability of enough livelihood opportunities, poverty, rapid population growth that surpasses available resources, and many other unfavorable circumstances that force them to find better living conditions and employment opportunities outside the country. Factors that magnet them to migrate to other countries are more job opportunities and better living conditions; easy availability of land for settling and agriculture, political and/or religious freedom, superior education and welfare systems, better transportation and communication facilities, better healthcare system and stress-free environment and security.

This is the case in the Philippines where many Filipinos especially in economically deprived areas leave the country for greener pasture. We saw the many struggles of Filipinos since 1970s when the culture of migration in the Philippines was just starting. The institutionalization of migration in the Philippines during the Marcos regime was seen as an instrument to uplift the country's economic condition however, this was an overestimation since the country has never rose from the economic burden that has a long time ago suffered by a majority of poor Filipinos. This supports Asis' findings in 2006. Many leave the country hoping to find good fortune somewhere else around the globe. Ironically, after having spent half of their youthful lives working for foreign employers not many Filipinos enjoyed good fortune instead they suffered the cruelty of living in a slave-like condition brought about by the kafala system. Many Filipinos fell into the trap of deception.

### ***Illegal Recruitment and Human Trafficking***

The influx of migration exacerbates the problem of illegal recruitment and human trafficking. The system of recruitment favors the proliferation of illegal recruiters. It appears after all that illegal recruiters function as fixers under the guise of legal recruiters. They are like wolves in sheeps' clothing deceiving susceptible young individuals especially girls with the promise of good life. These illegal recruiters penetrate impoverished communities and take advantage of the poor people's vulnerability. They stage a hero-like image ready to rescue victims from desperation and poverty. Bringing with them promises of glory, making young people be dazzled with wealth and abundance, recruiters succeed and earn a living at the expense of their recruits.

Moreover, the kafala system has aggravated the sufferings of migrant domestic workers. The kafala system is inherently abusive and adheres to modern slavery. A respondent was sold to another employer more than once, and she was treated like a property for sale. The kafala system gives space for employers to become abusive and so is human trafficking to continue to flourish. For as long as there are no reforms in the kafala system, human trafficking will not cease.

### ***Lack of Programs and Services for OFWs and their Families***

The findings of this study further show that there are gaps in the programs and services of LGUs. There seems to be no programs and services are designed for OFWs and their families. The needs of this group of population are less appreciated. Looking at what OFWs and their families go through, one cannot deny that somehow these people are not getting enough social protection and psychosocial support. Many have suffered injustices and abuses from their foreign employers and yet no intervention programs were created for them. Programs were limited to cash assistance. The lack of psychosocial programs and mental health and psychosocial support services for migrant workers lead to mental health problems like post traumatic disorders and depression.

### **Migrant Domestic Workers' Needs**

#### ***Need for social protection***

Migrant workers contribute important part in the country's economy and yet they are the ones deprived of social protection. This has been a perennial problem. We have seen and heard so many tragic stories about migrant domestic workers being abused physically, verbally, economically and psychologically. It is imperative to create better and stronger social protection systems for them. The Philippine government together with social partners and other stakeholders should see the importance of including migrant workers in national social protection responses, parallel with the equality of treatment and non-discrimination principles preserved in international human rights.

#### ***Need for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Services***

Migrant workers suffered so much. They have been bombarded with lots of trauma, but no mental health and psychosocial support services are afforded for them. The pandemic has greatly affected them especially in terms of their mental well-being. During the early onset of the pandemic in the Philippines, majority of the respondents recounted that they have experienced moderate to severe anxiety, moderate to severe depression and other psychological effect. These traumatic experiences when left unchecked will lead to lowered self-esteem and hopelessness. The need for MHPSS services must be addressed by the LGUs.

#### ***Need for Empowerment***

Being subjected to inhumane treatment and poor living conditions, migrant domestic workers suffer brokenness and develop feelings of hopelessness. As a consequence, they manifest an attitude of helplessness, unworthiness and the lack of confidence which eventually lead them to embrace temporary migration as a way of life despite its self-degrading nature. They were made to believe that they were left with no other choice but to work abroad as the only way to free themselves from poverty and hardships.

There is a need for migrant domestic workers to change their outlook in life. They need opportunities for personal, social and economic development.

#### ***Need for Financial Security and Economic Stability***

The primary reason why Filipinos work abroad is poverty and the lack of employment opportunities in the Philippines. To entice returning overseas Filipinos (ROFs) to stay home for good, the need for financial security and economic stability must be addressed. Migrant domestic workers must have opportunities for decent work where they can earn enough to sustain a good life. One way to help migrant domestic workers achieve financial security and economic stability is thru a financial literacy program.

### **Impact of Covid – 19 to Migrant Domestic Workers from BARMM**

The International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF) spelled out the impact of Covid-19 to migrant domestic workers (MDWs). Similarly, MDWs from BARMM have experienced what IDWF reported:

- Due to physical distancing domestic workers were confined and an increase in excessive load of work and forced labor became inevitable. Foreign employers had the opportunity to push domestic workers to forced labor under the lockdown as the workplace is a “private” household. The respondents reported being asked to work for long hours and to do tasks more than they can carry for a day’s work.
- MDWs were left jobless as their contracts are terminated because of suspected or feared and non-confirmed infection.
- MDWs who asked to be repatriated, found themselves jobless and locked within the host country staying in Foreign Recruitment Agencies (FRAs) and embassies under unfavorable living conditions. While staying in a FRA, some of the respondents were threatened and forced to work.
- MDWs were stuck with their employers and prevented from going home, passports confiscated and they were denied of their earnings.
- Employers took advantage of MDWs to rob them of their earned wages or force them to work in unsafe conditions, often under threat of deportation.
- The Covid-19 has also greatly impacted MDWs’ psychosocial and mental well-being. The respondents claim to have been depressed and severely anxious.

### **CONCLUSION**

The study found that the most urgent needs of migrant domestic workers are social protection, mental health and psychosocial support services, empowerment, and financial security and economic stability. Aside from experiencing financial crisis and social injustices, MDWs were mostly impacted by Covid-19 in terms of their psychosocial and mental well-being. LGUs implement mandated regular programs but no specific programs and services are designed for OFWs and their families. However, there are government efforts to help promote the welfare and protect the rights of Migrant Domestic Workers.

### **Recommendations**

The following are the recommendations of Migrant Domestic Workers:

1. Develop a livelihood program that can help build MDWs' self-reliance
2. Come up with youth development programs for OFWs' children left-behind
3. Scholarship grants and educational programs where criteria or qualification is not selective but inclusive of all
4. Establishment of OFW Help Desk for each LGU/barangay
5. Offer long-term employment programs
6. Create temporary or gap jobs for OFWs waiting to be deployed
7. Design and implement capability-building and entrepreneurship programs
8. Financial Literacy and recovery/intervention programs
9. Institutionalize Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Services for OFWs
10. Offer psychosocial development programs for OFWs

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