



# Filipino skilled migration to ASEAN: Searching for what neighbors have to offer



**Dr. Jean Encinas-Franco and Mr. Jeremaiah Opiniano**



# Contexts



- ASEAN integration
- Labor mobility and skills recognition
- The Philippines as a major source country of international migrants worldwide, across skills

- Benefits and potentials of Filipino skilled migration to Asean.
- Who are the Filipino workers in Asean?
- Asean countries' economic competitiveness vis-à-vis labor mobility.
- Receptiveness to skilled foreign labor.



**The paper**

# 1. Skilled Filipino labor in Asean

Table 1: Total newhire skilled Filipino workers to ASEAN countries for professionals covered by mutual recognition agreements)

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<i>Total</i>	1334	1688	765	431	815	1151	740	496	429	400	525	758	1105	1090	1496	2084	1742	1560	1318
Brunei	121	147	59	18	13	33	46	17	9	26	43	38	36	54	123	139	119	234	150
Cambodia	0	2	2	3	3	1	0	0	4	4	2	0	0	0	6	12	7	7	4
Indonesia	13	68	4	1	3	3	3	4	4	6	21	24	9	42	89	128	51	30	45
Laos	4	2	2								1	7	11	3	4	23	27	23	13
Malaysia	216	470	134	44	47	73	73	67	89	63	90	155	149	62	187	353	389	302	239
Myanmar	7		1	1					1	2					5	12	11	5	21
Singapore	897	895	547	343	746	1036	603	378	313	285	343	508	874	912	1053	1243	1004	857	751
Thailand	28	63	10	2	1	3	7	27	7	8	17	14	17	13	17	107	80	53	49
Vietnam	48	41	6	19	2	2	8	3	2	6	8	12	9	4	12	67	54	49	46

*Note: Tourism professionals are not included here because these workers are scattered across the major occupational groupings (not just "Professional, Technical and Other Related Workers")*

*Source: Philippine Overseas Employment Administration*

- Not many Filipino workers go to Asean countries

## 2. Filipino migrants to Asean

**Table 3: Stock estimates of overseas Filipinos, as of 2013**

	Permanent migrants	Temporary migrants	Irregular migrants	Total
<i>ASEAN countries</i>				
Brunei	17,658	14,907	200	32,765
Cambodia	43	2,349	1,345	3,737
Indonesia	321	12,154	90	12,565
Laos	2	1,312	0	1,314
Malaysia	26,007	319,123	448,450	793,580
Myanmar	29	561	0	590
Singapore	44,102	110,141	49,000	203,243
Thailand	1,580	11,644	3,000	16,224
Vietnam	0	5,285	1,300	6,585
<i>Comparisons</i>				
Canada	626,668	89,615	5,295	721,578
Japan	163,532	12,475	6,910	182,917
Saudi Arabia	264	948,038	80,500	1,028,802
United Arab Emirates	1,711	777,894	42,805	822,410
United States	3,135,293	129,383	271,000	3,535,676
United Kingdom	161,710	31,416	25,000	218,126
Hong Kong	13,251	182,843	5,000	201,094

- Because there are other destinations Filipino workers can go to

# 3. Intra-Asean migration

- Within Asean, ‘internal’ Southeast Asian migration flows are topped by those moving within landlocked states

**Table 3: Leading intra-ASEAN migration corridors**

Rank	Country corridor	Intra-Asean migrant stock	% of total intra-Asean migrant stock
1	Myanmar to Thailand	1,892,480	29
2	Indonesia to Malaysia	1,051,227	16
3	Malaysia to Singapore	1,044,994	16
4	Lao to Thailand	926,427	14
5	Cambodia to Thailand	750,109	12
6	Myanmar to Malaysia	247,768	4
7	Indonesia to Singapore	152,681	2
8	Singapore to Malaysia	78,092	1
9	Viet Nam to Cambodia	37,225	1
10	Thailand to Cambodia	31,472	-
12	Philippines to Malaysia	21,345	-
16	Philippines to Singapore	14,176	-
25	Philippines to Indonesia	3,517	-

Source: *Mendoza and Sugiyarto for the Migration Policy Institute (2015)*

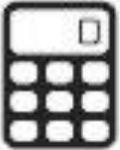
# 4. ASEAN skilled labor mobility

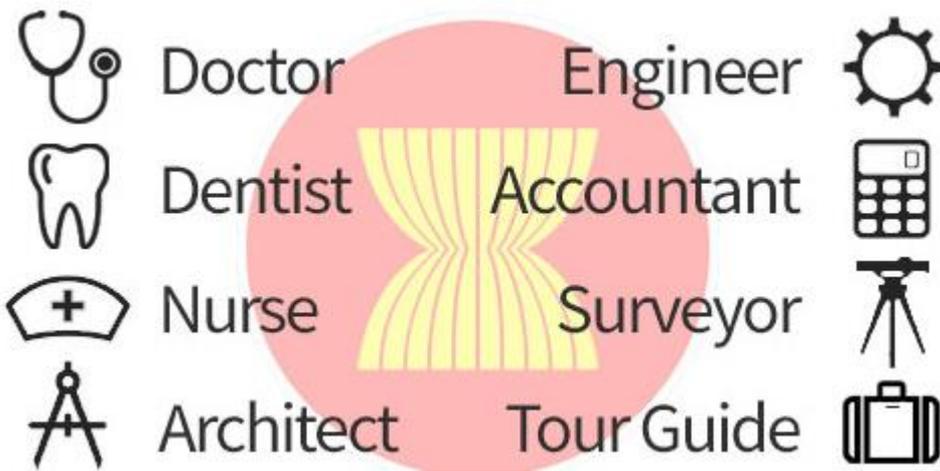


# 4. ASEAN skilled labor mobility

## ASEAN Mutual Recognition Agreements

As of March 2015, existing MRAs enable professionals to work in other ASEAN countries in the 8 following professions:

2008		Doctor	Engineer		2005
2008		Dentist	Accountant		2009
2006		Nurse	Surveyor		2005
2007		Architect	Tour Guide		2012



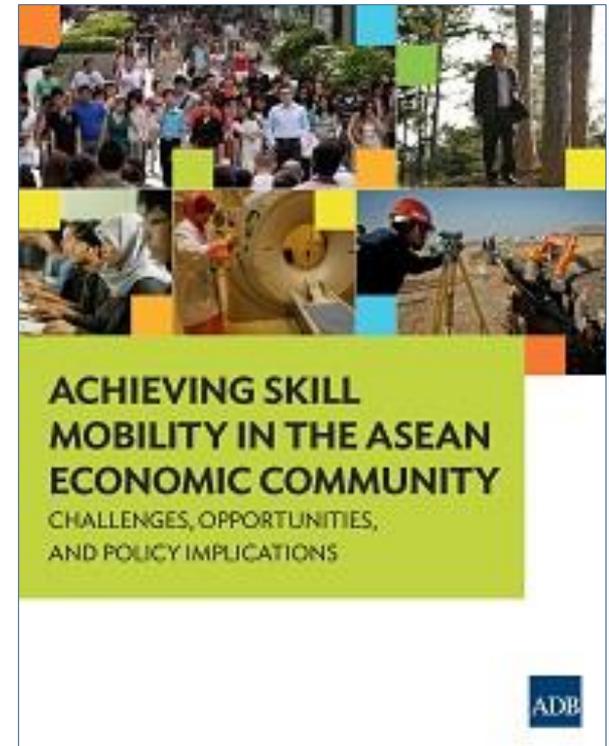
- ONLY 1.5 percent of the total ASEAN workforce



# 4. ASEAN skilled labor mobility

Three challenges for intra-Asean skilled migration to prosper (Asian Development Bank, 2015)

- The complexity of countries' qualifications recognition processes;
- National-level barriers within Asean countries for foreign workers in relation to skilled worker quotas and visas; and
- Limited interest due to perceived cultural, language and socio-economic differences.



**PROGRESS**

- MRAs in six occupations; two MRA Frameworks
  - AQRF completed; Development of NQFs
- ASEAN-wide joint coordinating committees created: ATPMC, ACPECC, AJCCM, AJCCN, AJCCD, AAC
  - Registers of licensed professionals created: AAR, ACPER

- AMNP and ACIA signed 2012
- National admissions programs to facilitate entry of high-skilled workers implemented at some level

**CHALLENGES**

- Low-skilled workers and intracorporate transferees dominate intra-ASEAN labor movement
- Lack of information on employment regulations
- Complex and opaque requirements for employment visas, passes, and permits
  - “Economic need” tests requirements
  - Limited political will at national level

- Full implementation of MRAs and AQRF
  - Expansion of MRAs to other occupations
  - Alignment of NQFs with AQRF
- Low public support for MRAs
- Limited involvement of private sector
  - No agreed concrete indicators of success

**OPPORTUNITIES**

- Expansion of MRAs to key industries
- Capacity building for stakeholders
- Tailored compensatory measures
- One-stop “recognition” shops in key cities
- Common ASEAN Web platform

**PROGRESS**

- Creation of the AUN
- Student exchange schemes
- Creation of ASEAN Centers of Excellence

**CHALLENGES**

- Lack of incentives to move within the region due to large disparities in per capita income, differences in religion, language, education, and social-protection systems and limited concept of “ASEANness”
  - Preference among skilled professionals to move outside of ASEAN

**OPPORTUNITIES**

- Investment in education systems using intra-ASEAN standards
- Introduction of temporary-to-permanent, circular migration worker programs
- Development of professional and social networks across ASEAN

- Creation of the ASEAN Business Club

**OPPORTUNITIES**

- Encourage more circular flows among professionals for temporary employment opportunities
- Systematic sharing of mobility data

**CHALLENGES**

- Limited involvement of private sector in the process of developing MRAs and visa facilitation programs
- Difficulty in obtaining buy-in of professional associations to support the work of MRAs and accept foreign-trained professionals.

**Four components of achieving skilled mobility within ASEAN**

1  
*Portable qualifications*

2  
*Increased access to the skilled labor market*

3  
*Adequate supply of skilled professionals*

4  
*Strong demand for skilled professionals*



# 5. Asean economic competitiveness

**Table 6: Rankings of ASEAN countries in competitiveness and talent-related indices (presentation of indicators related to human capital)**

ASEAN country	World Economic Forum									INSEAD Business School				
	Global Competitiveness Index (140 countries)				Global Human Capital Index (130 countries)					Global Talent Competitiveness Index (103 countries)				
	2015-16 overall rank	Sub-category: Labor Market Efficiency	Sub-criterion: Flexibility of labor	Sub-criterion: Efficient use of talent	2016 overall rank, all age groups	Rank, 25-54 years age group	Sub-criterion (25-54 y/o): Labor force participation	Sub-criterion (25-54 y/o): High-skilled employment share	Sub-criterion (25-54 y/o): Ease of finding skills	2015-16 overall rank	Sub-criterion: Ease of hiring	Sub-criterion: Ease of redundancy	Sub-criterion: Brain gain	Sub-criterion: Relationship of pay to productivity
Cambodia	90	38	68	35	100	96	19	111	111	96	48	55	44	33
Indonesia	37	115	131	80	72	73	100	101	43	90	94	97	22	25
Laos	83	44	115	18	109	107	no data	no data	no data	-	-	-	-	-
Malaysia	18	19	11	37	42	30	87	55	2	30	1	33	10	1
Myanmar	131	73	77	70	106	105	7	108	112	-	-	-	-	-
Philippines	47	82	87	79	49	49	103	58	36	56	48	55	59	22
Singapore	2	2	1	5	13	6	50	2	20	2	1	1	2	3
Thailand	32	67	110	43	48	46	32	92	69	69	66	1	31	40
Vietnam	56	52	85	42	68	70	8	100	85	82	42	55	53	18

Sources: Global Talent Competitiveness Index 2015-16 (INSEAD), Global Competitiveness Index 2015-16 and Global Human Capital Index 2016 (World Economic Forum)

# 6. Asean countries' receptiveness?

- 2,469,173 international migrants
- Categories of foreigners; expatriates [*pegawai dagang*], foreign skilled workers [*pekerja asing*], unskilled and semi-skilled workers, foreign students, foreigners under the Malaysia My Second Home program (Kanapathy, 2008)
- 3.4 million skilled workers overall (a fourth of country's workforce). But Malaysia has a skills shortage! (lifted ban on hiring foreign workers in manufacturing, construction, furniture making and plantation sectors [The Daily Samakal, 2016])
- Targets (Eleventh Malaysia Plan, 2015): 5.3 million skilled workers, or 35 percent of total employed workforce



# 6. Asean countries' receptiveness?

- International labor migration to be handled by a single authority under the Ministry of Human Resources
- Malaysia's qualifications framework, suiting it to Asean's: TechVoc has eight levels to jive with levels of university-schooled workers.
- MAS' critical occupations list (COL): electrical and electronics, oil and gas, information and communication technology and global business services, telecommunications and multimedia, and financial services and accounting





# TalentCorp's Malaysia My Second Home program

- Targets Malaysian citizens abroad and expatriate talents



2011-15:  
 3,900 RP-T  
 applications  
 OKd. BUT  
 ONLY 6.71  
 percent  
 come from  
 Asean  
 countries



# 7. Asean countries' receptiveness?

- 3.44 million employed workers, of which 2.103 million are locals and some 1.404 million foreigners By occupational group, covering all workers by nationality, Singapore has 290.7 thousand professionals and 483.4 thousand associate professionals as of 2014 (Department of Statistics Singapore, 2015)



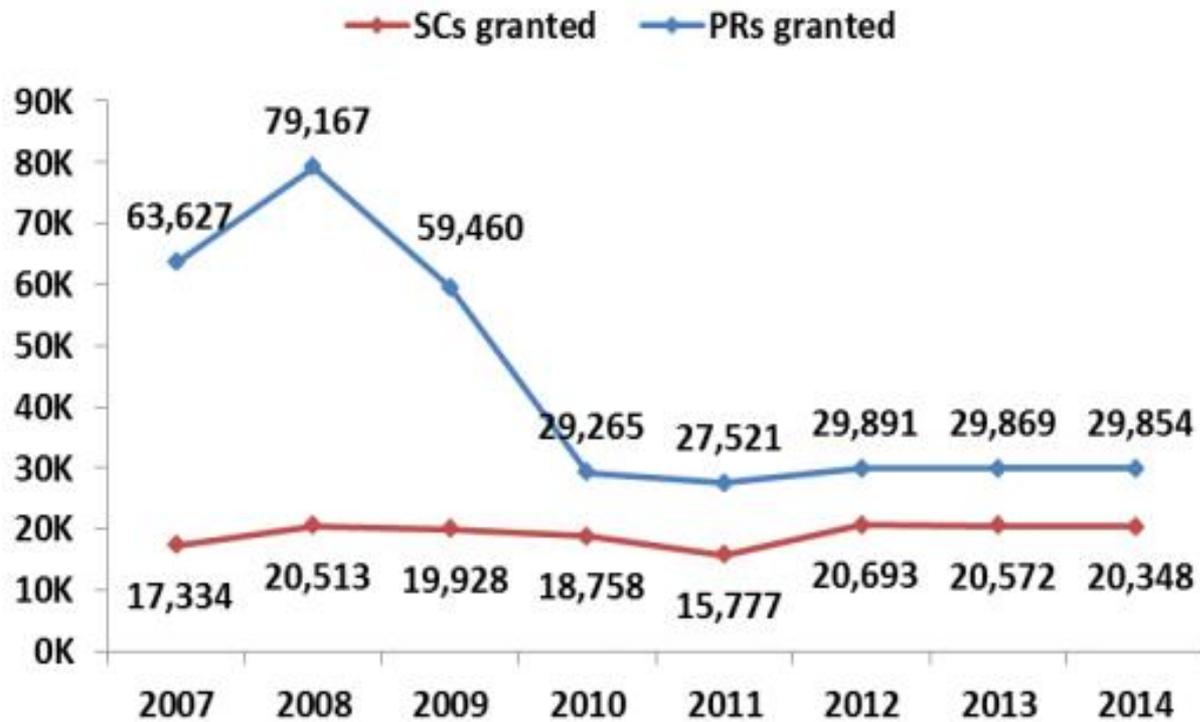
**Table 7: Foreign Workforce in Singapore**

Pass Type	Dec 2012	Dec 2013	Dec 2014	Dec 2015	June 2016
Employment Pass (EP)	173,800	175,100	178,900	187,900	189,600
S Pass	142,400	160,900	170,100	178,600	179,400
Work Permit (Total)	942,800	974,400	991,300	997,100	1,009,300
- Work Permit (Foreign Domestic Worker)	209,600	214,500	222,500	231,500	237,100
- Work Permit (Construction)	293,300	318,900	322,700	326,000	326,700
Other Work Passes <sup>2</sup>	9,300	11,300	15,400	23,600	26,300
<b>Total Foreign Workforce</b>	<b>1,268,300</b>	<b>1,321,600</b>	<b>1,355,700</b>	<b>1,387,300</b>	<b>1,404,700</b>
<b>Total Foreign Workforce (excluding Foreign Domestic Workers)</b>	<b>1,058,700</b>	<b>1,107,100</b>	<b>1,133,200</b>	<b>1,155,800</b>	<b>1,167,600</b>
<b>Total Foreign Workforce (excluding Foreign Domestic Workers &amp; Construction)</b>	<b>731,300</b>	<b>748,100</b>	<b>764,500</b>	<b>780,300</b>	<b>790,800</b>

# 9. Asean countries' receptiveness?

Number of SCs and PRs Granted Stable in Last 5 Years

Chart 11: Number of SCs and PRs granted



Source: Immigration & Checkpoints Authority



- Permanent residents: about 527,000 (June 2015)
- 8,868 only are non-citizen spouses married to Singaporeans

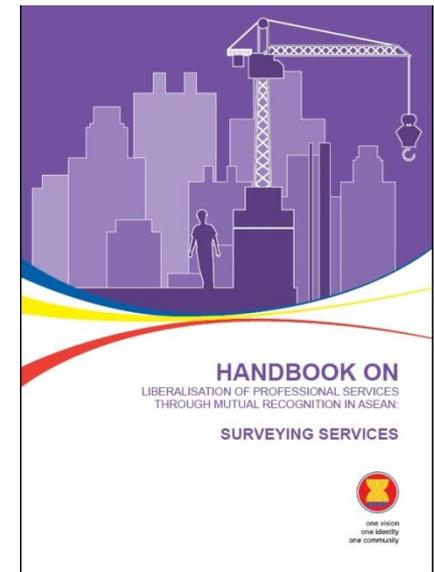
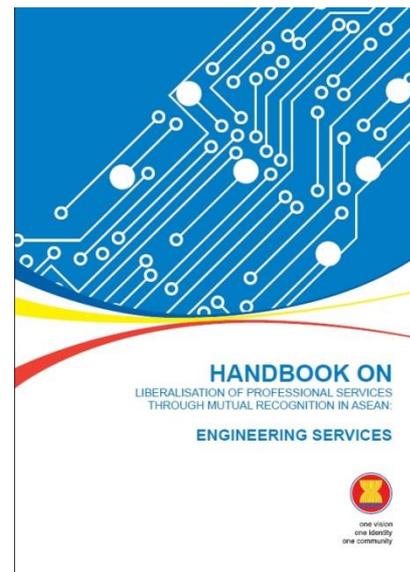
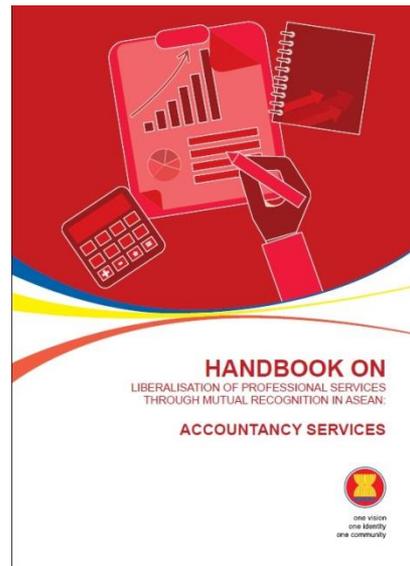
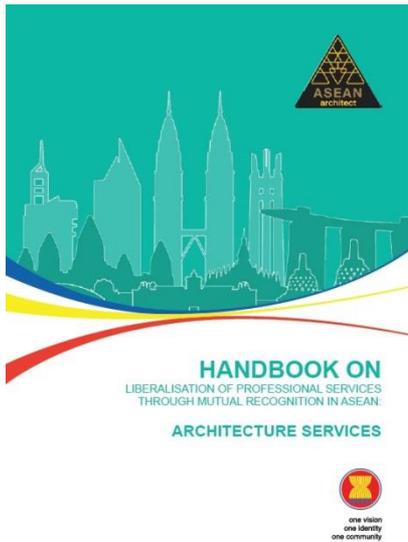
# 9. Asean countries' receptiveness?

- Previously, Singapore liberalized its immigration policies so that skilled immigrants gain permanent residency. Singapore even implemented previously programs to ease the costs of hiring skilled workers, and to employ foreigners who graduated from Singaporean skills.
- But “liberalization” had received resistance from the Singaporean public giving rising number of foreigners and the impact of the 2008 global financial crisis on Singapore. So some new rules were made.



# 10. Conclusions

- Asean countries as stepping stones for Filipino skilled workers to go outside of Asean
- How host countries treat and welcome foreigners and foreign workers matters (not just through immigration policies but through workplace arrangements)



# 10. Conclusions

- ADB's four components (2015) of a prosperous intra-Asean skilled labor mobility--portable qualifications, increased access to the skilled labor market, adequate supply of skilled professionals and strong demand for skilled professionals— can have a *fifth component: international migration policies and their implementation*. These migration policies impact on the four earlier components.
- Intra-ASEAN skilled migration becomes a government commitment in the spirit of regional solidarity. But workers' movements outside of ASEAN, or from ASEAN to outside of ASEAN, are their individual decisions.
- **Take-away question: How is Thailand open to foreign skilled labor, in particular, and foreign labor, in general?**



**cifal**  
Manila

## THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

- **Dr. Jean Encinas-Franco** (Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science)  
→ [jeanfranco825@yahoo.com](mailto:jeanfranco825@yahoo.com)
- **Mr. Jeremaiah Opiniano** (Assistant Professor and Coordinator [Journalism], Department of Communication and Media Studies; Executive Director, Institute for Migration and Development Issues)  
→ [ofw\\_philanthropy@yahoo.com](mailto:ofw_philanthropy@yahoo.com)

