



# OFW NARRATIVES:

PERCEPTIONS AND CONTEXTS IN THE LABOR  
MIGRATION EXPERIENCES OF SELECTED OFWS

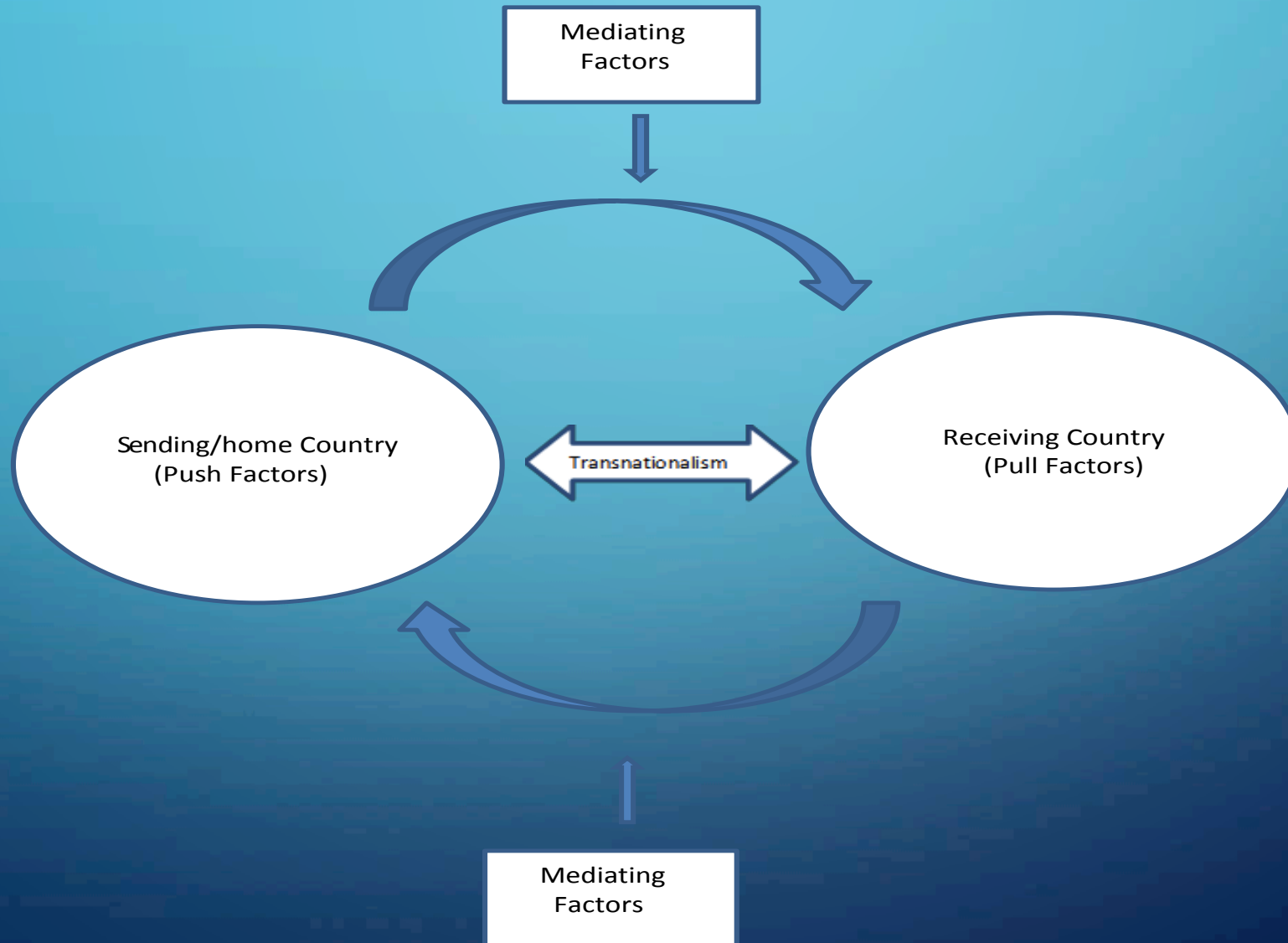
# LABOR MIGRATION

- Initially, viewed as a strategy to address the lack of employment opportunities in the country and reduce the number of unemployed.
- It is also seen as a response to global labor supply and demand forces.
- Government view of OFWs as heroes
- Contribution of OFW remittances make up roughly 10% of the GDP in 2014.

# RESEARCH DESIGN

- Multi-sited ethnography of OFW experiences
  - FGD with Hong Kong and Taiwan OFWs
  - In-depth interviews with OFWs in Hong Kong, Taiwan, OFWs in Singapore and Dubai who were in the Philippines at the time of the interview
  - Interviews with families of OFWs in the Philippines
  - Interviews with OFWs who have returned

# MODIFIED PUSH AND PULL FRAMEWORK:




# WHY LEAVE THE COUNTRY FOR WORK:

- Necessary action
  - Minimal pay that barely covers the basic needs of the family and education of their children as well as the health concerns of the family especially those who were in the service sector (tricycle driver, household helper)
  - Getting laid off from job

They wanted to provide their families with “maayos na buhay” (a proper life)



- Better alternative

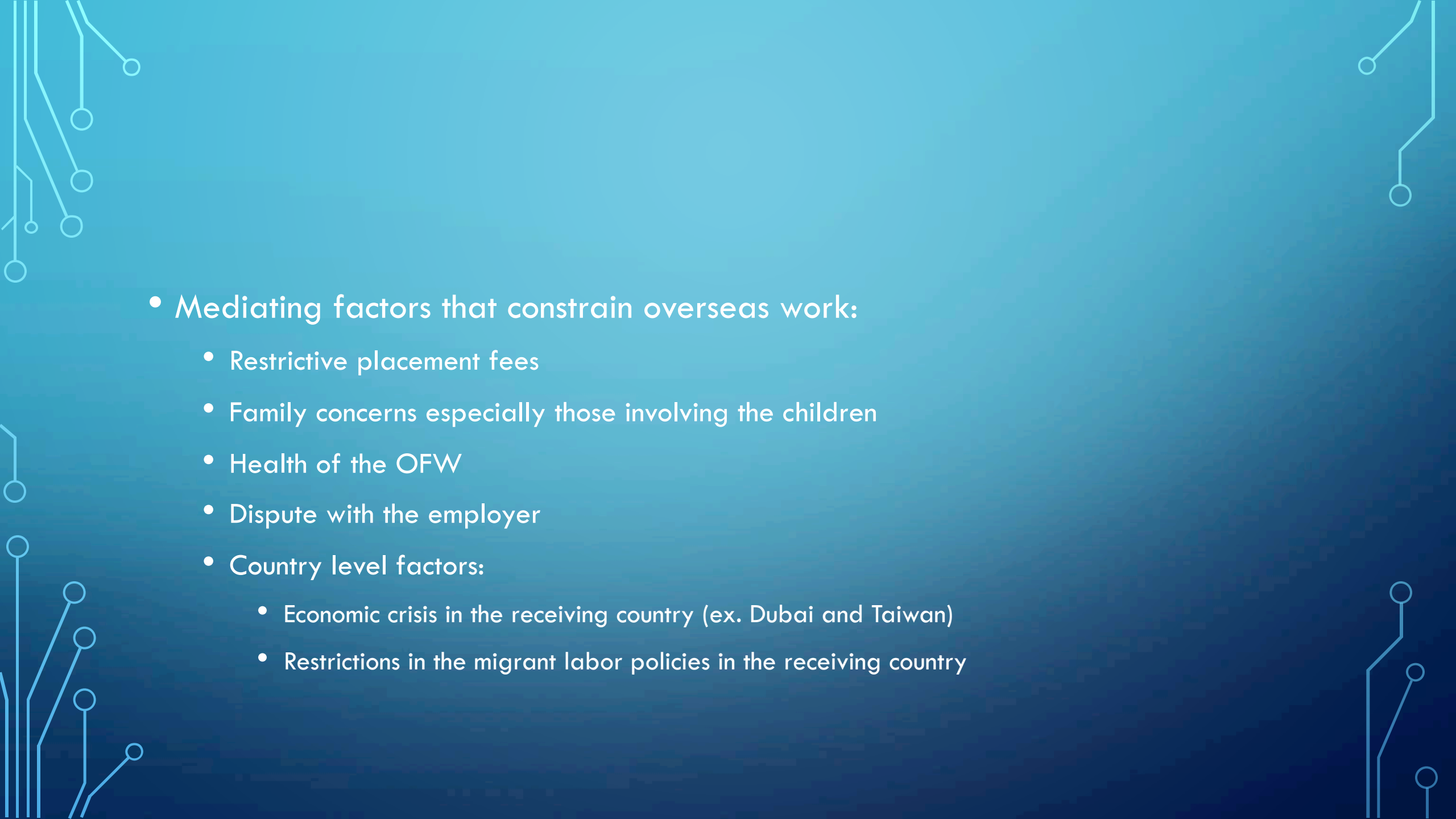
- Lower taxes – brain drain
  - Higher incomes – brain drain and brain waste, particularly for those with college degrees who enter the domestic work.
  - Perception that work abroad is better than work within the country
- 



- **Mediating Factors that facilitate overseas work:**
  - **Relatives that encourage overseas work that contribute to the cycle of labor migration**
    - OFW relatives encourage and facilitate overseas employment of other family members
    - Relatives and friends in the sending country encourage their relatives to work abroad

Associated with:

- Educational aspirations of children and other young family members of OFWs
- Return migration

- 
- Mediating factors that constrain overseas work:
    - Restrictive placement fees
    - Family concerns especially those involving the children
    - Health of the OFW
    - Dispute with the employer
    - Country level factors:
      - Economic crisis in the receiving country (ex. Dubai and Taiwan)
      - Restrictions in the migrant labor policies in the receiving country



## Mediating factors that constrain labor migration:

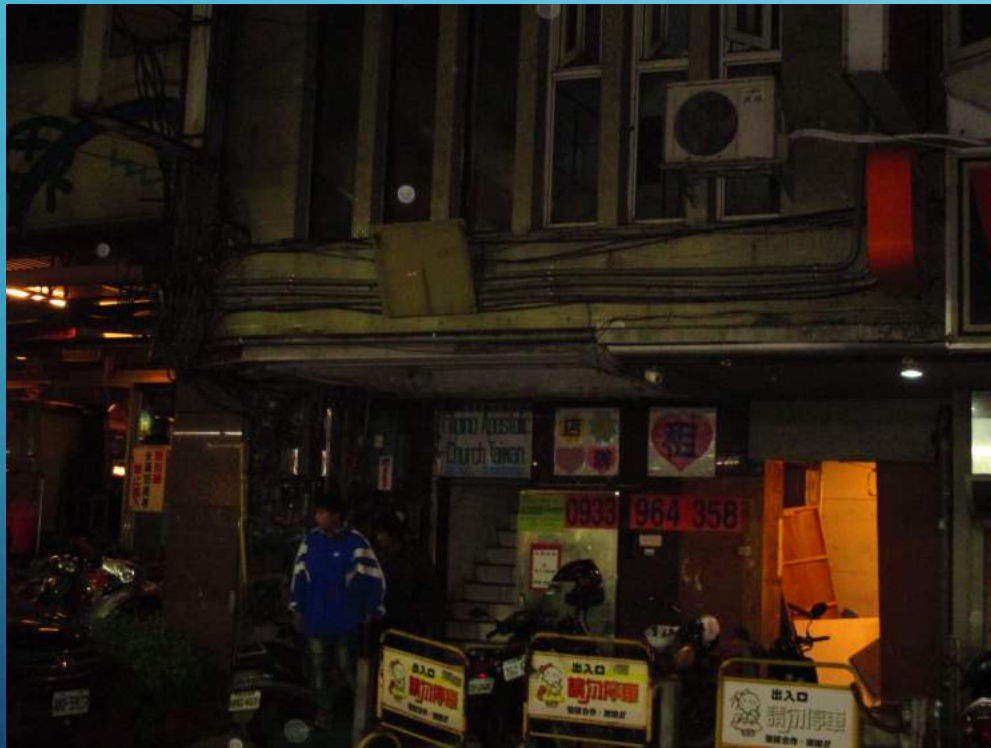
### Dilemmas experienced by the OFW:

- Concerns over the household's role as a socializing agent for the children.
- Insecurity in overseas employment.
- Sadness, homesickness and worries caused by separation from the family.

# STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME THE CONSTRAINING FACTORS:

- Requesting kin to move into the OFW household to help manage the household.
- Wife stops working.
- Bring remaining family members abroad with the OFW.
- Investing in small business
- Telepresence – especially for the mothers (ex. skype, viber, texting)
- Joining support groups composed of fellow OFWs
- Savings and investments
- Strategize to go around restrictive labor migration policies in the receiving country
- Securing loans to pay for the placement fees or getting into “pay later schemes” with recruitment agencies

# SUPPORT GROUPS IN TAIWAN AND HONG KONG



# REMITTANCE NARRATIVES




- Perceptions of the OFW of remittances
  - Love sent back home – “maayos na buhay”
  - Tendency is not to check on how the remittances were used by the recipient families
  - However, there is the expectation that these would be put to good use.



- Perceptions of the recipient of the remittances

- Love and trust in them




- Conflicting narratives

- Some sense of entitlement on how to dispose of the remittances because they are the ones left behind to manage the household
  - Extremely careful with handling the remittances because they see these as the product of the sacrifices of the OFW. May result in reluctance to use these for investment purposes that they do not have the know how for.
- 
- 
- 



- How much is sent




- Varied greatly – 30 percent to more than 100 percent

- More than 100 percent is a result of borrowing from other OFWs during times of need when the salaries would not be able to cover the amount needed or in emergency situations that arise before the pay day.
  - Examples: calamities, tuition period, health crisis in the family, birthdays, fiestas and Christmas and other holidays
- 
- 
- 



- How much is sent home

- Those who do not send their entire salaries use the remaining amount for the following:

- Spare cash for emergency needs at home
      - Their own necessities abroad
      - Money they bring home when they go on vacation or in between contracts, so as not to be dependent on their families
    - Important not to send all the income home
- 
- 
- 



- Remittance sending schedules

- Regular monthly

- Irregular – when needed

- Not the sole income earner, family not dependent on the remittances for their daily expenses





# HOW REMITTANCES WERE SENT:


- Remittance centers – formal and informal
- Banks – recipients need to have a bank account
- Trusted friends

# HOW REMITTANCES WERE SENT:





- How remittances were used:

- Basic needs – food, clothing and shelter (construction and renovation)
  - Education of the children
  - Health needs
  - Savings – minimal
  - Investments
    - Micro enterprise – piggery, small hardware store, capital for personal selling business ventures (Avon, Natasha and other consumer goods)
    - Land (agricultural, residential)
- 

- 
- How remittances were used:
    - Some community building efforts (Reported by not engaged in by the informants)
      - Post calamity contributions
      - Church contributions
      - Fiestas

# SOME IDEAS ON THE LABOR MIGRATION-DEVELOPMENT NEXUS:

- There are some potentials that may reach fruition in the long run:
  - Improved standard of living of some OFWs and their families while for some, it has remained the same – Uneven development
  - Human resources – education of their children and other relatives
  - Education sector – Rise of schools, training centers for the development of skills that cater to the overseas labor market. Hopefully, the local labor requirements are not neglected.
  - Construction sector – house construction and renovation particularly for OFW communities but sustainability can be questioned
  - Financial sector – banking institutions and remittance centers
  - Telecommunications sector
  - The OFW market is a market of Filipino goods abroad
  - Consumption behavior spurs development in the manufacturing and sale of consumer products in the country. May be evident in the OFW lounges and programs in malls – VIPinoy in Ayala Malls and OFW Pamilya Centers in Robinson's Malls

# TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY IN HONG KONG:



# FILIPINO FOOD PRODUCTS IN HONG KONG AND TAIWAN



# SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS




- Leaving the country for work was spurred by the OFWs desire to provide for their families a “maayos na buhay”
- Reasons for leaving are mainly economic in nature but mediated by facilitating or constraining factors within the socio-cultural milieu of the OFW. The mediating factors are equally important compared with the push and pull factors in shaping the OFW experience and should also be taken into consideration in policy formulation.
- OFW experience is an ambivalent one with success stories on one hand and sad stories on the other. While the standard of living of some OFWs have improved, others claimed that their lives have remained the same.



- Labor migration is cyclic rather than linear with OFWs going back abroad. Family members of OFWs are encouraged to take overseas work as well. Positive perceptions of labor migration contribute to its circular nature.
- Most of the informants see overseas work as a career move rather than a stop gap measure.
- The household adjusts to OFW life.



## • Remittances

- Sent in the context of love for the family members
  - Seldom monitored or checked by the OFW
  - Mostly utilized for non-productive purposes like addressing basic needs.
  - While recipients rely on remittances for their daily expenses some also engaged in some micro entrepreneurial activities.
  - However, massive investment in business ventures might be too much to expect from the OFWs and their families in general. Not all have the inclination for business. Perhaps, other investment portfolios can be presented to them.
- 
- 
- 

The image features a blue gradient background with white circuit-like lines in the corners. These lines consist of straight paths that branch out and terminate in small circles, resembling a stylized PCB or network diagram. The lines are positioned in the top-left, top-right, bottom-left, and bottom-right corners, framing the central text.

THANK YOU!