

CHAMPSEA–Philippines Policy Briefs

Provinces in Motion, Families in Transition: Laguna and Bulacan

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Background

This report tells the story of international migration and the changes it has engendered in Laguna and Bulacan, the research sites of the Child Health and Migrant Parents in South-East Asia (CHAMPSEA) research project. The Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam were part of the first wave of CHAMPSEA (or CHAMPSEA I) in 2008. The research project sought to address persisting questions about the impact of parental migration on the health and well-being of the left-behind families, particularly children. At the time, although there were existing studies on how the absence of migrant parents affects the children left-behind in the origin countries, the findings tended to be inconclusive or conflicting. CHAMPSEA's research design sharpens the analysis by comparing the experiences of migrant and non-migrant families, unpacking the impact of parental migration by the gender of the migrant parent, the gender and age of the index child left-behind; and exploring the well-being and health impacts due to migration and other factors. For the Philippines and Indonesia, the families who were interviewed in 2008 were reinterviewed in 2016 and 2023, producing longitudinal data that can track changes and developments over time (see [Appendix for further details about CHAMPSEA](#)).

Laguna and Bulacan are among the major origin provinces of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs). When the first CHAMPSEA was conducted in 2008, they ranked among the top ten origin provinces of international labor migrants based on the membership data of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), which had information disaggregated by province and gender. Within these provinces, the research was carried out in

San Pablo City and Bay in Laguna, Malolos City (the provincial capital) and Calumpit in Bulacan. While working abroad has become a national trend, the phenomenon and its impacts may not be the same everywhere. The report highlights the local context where significant international labor migration has been going on for a long time. The migration story will begin with an overview of key developments in Laguna and Bulacan between 2008 and 2023. The narrative will continue to describe the provinces' current migration profile, the characteristics of migrant and non-migrant households and perceptions of the impact of international labor migration on the children and families.

The household survey conducted in 2023 is the main data source based on interviews of young adult households (whose respondents were either the responsible adults or the young adults who stood as responsible adults for their households) and data from the new sample of households with young children aged three to six years old (which are based on interviews with carers). The young adult households (or YA households) in 2023 are among those which had been part of the research since 2008. These households had young children in 2008 (3-5 years old); they were tracked and reinterviewed when the children reached middle childhood age in 2016 (11-13 years old); and when the children became young adults (17-21 years old) in 2023¹. In all, 317 YA households and 506 new YC households or a total of 823 households, were covered by CHAMPSEA III in 2023.

The lack of migration-related data at the local level was one of the fundamental challenges we encountered in CHAMPSEA I; we faced the same situation when we had to recruit new YC households in CHAMPSEA III. Some barangays would have information on which households

¹ Interviews were also conducted with the young adult but this dataset was not used in this report. Note that in CHAMPSEA I, households with children ages 9-11 years old were also sampled; they were tracked and reinterviewed in CHAMPSEA II, by which time the children had become young adults at 17-19 years old. These children and their households were no longer part of CHAMPSEA III.

have OFW members, but this was not sufficient because we needed more details, such as gender, marital status and current migration status, for the sampling of households. Thus, we had to start with a household enumeration to come up with a sampling frame to identify eligible households. Although national-level data indicate that women account for the majority of OFWs, the household enumeration did not yield many migrant mothers. As such, migrant fathers were the great majority among the migrant households in CHAMPSEA.

We employed descriptive statistics (primarily, measures of central tendency and dispersion, and the appropriate test statistic) for the data analysis. In comparing migrant and non-migrant households, we used the Chi-square test of independence for categorical variables and the t-test in comparing differences in means between migrant and non-migrant households. In CHAMPSEA III, we also conducted interviews with key informants or KIs (14 in Laguna, 17 in Bulacan) — these are resource persons from the local government offices, teachers, barangay officials and leaders, who are knowledgeable about the conditions and developments in their areas². Data from the community interviews provide insights and perspectives on the state of the communities and information on the economic, demographic, social profile and opportunities and challenges facing their locales.

Key trends and developments, 2008-2023

General observations

As mentioned earlier, Laguna and Bulacan were selected as the research sites because they are home to many OFWs, but other factors were also considered. International labor migration from both provinces started in the 1970s; both

provinces recorded significant numbers of male and female migrants, which would allow us to draw a sufficient number of households with migrant fathers and migrant mothers. Both provinces have similar levels of development, and both are Tagalog-speaking (hence, there was no need for translating the questionnaires, especially standardized scales, into other Philippine languages). These similarities are important because they control for contextual differences that may be due to variations in migration, development and ethnicity (as indicated by language).

The three waves of CHAMPSEA spanned 15 years. The physical changes of the landscape in all four research sites are striking. The growing level of urbanization is evident from the presence of more commercial and business establishments. In 2008, the commercial establishments were mostly local businesses; by 2023, the cities of San Pablo and Malolos host shopping malls, supermarket chains and fast-food chains; the municipalities of Bay and Calumpit have also welcomed popular food chains in their areas. Infrastructure development in terms of improved roads and government buildings, new hospitals and more subdivisions is notable too. These developments signal shifts in employment, away from farming and towards service and retail. They are also harbingers of modernity, suggesting new ways of consumption and leisure, among others.

When asked about economic changes and prospects, the KIs from Malolos City were quick to mention the mega construction projects in the province of Bulacan: The North-South Commuter Railway Project (which spans Manila to Malolos, Malolos to Clark, Pampanga and Clark to Calamba, Laguna) and the New Manila International Airport (in the municipality of Bulakan). The new railway transit line from Manila to Malolos is expected to be

² In Laguna, the community interviews were conducted by the University of the Philippines Los Baños; those in Bulacan were conducted by Dr. Yanga's Colleges Inc.

operational in 2026 or early 2027 and Malolos to Clark in 2028 (Amojelar, 2025). These projects are expected to create jobs during the construction phase and more jobs upon their completion. Prior to the start of the airport project, it was announced that OFWs returning (during the COVID-19 pandemic) will be prioritized in the hiring of workers (Maño, 2020). These mega projects and the ongoing construction and opening of new businesses are attracting internal migrants to Malolos City. The City Government of Malolos passed City Ordinance No. 49-2022, An Ordinance Code of 1999 which provides fiscal incentives to micro-enterprises with capital of less than PHP 3 million and are pioneer enterprises, manufacturing raw materials and employing 100 percent bona fide residents of Malolos³.

The KIs in San Pablo City commented more on the post-pandemic rebound of small and medium-sized businesses while also noting that micro business owners can hardly make ends meet due to the rising cost of living. They also observed the lack of employment opportunities affecting residents, including those who finish tertiary education.

Although population size has increased since 2008 across all four sites, the KIs from population offices shared that population growth is showing signs of decline. However, teenage pregnancy is perceived to be on the rise. This is supported by data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), which reported a 6.6 percent increase in live births among girls aged 10 to 14 rose from 2,411 in 2019 to 3,343 in 2023 (Moaje, 2025). However, the 2021 Young Adolescents Fertility and Sexuality (YAFS) study and the 2022 National Demographic and Health Survey show that there has been a decline in teenage pregnancy in the Philippines. KIs in both provinces remarked on the influx of migrants to their areas and considered internal migration as a factor in population growth. Aside from

employment opportunities, flooding in nearby provinces is one of the drivers of internal migration to Bulacan (even as some areas of the province are also affected by flooding).

Disruptive weather conditions have been experienced by the communities. Flooding has been a serious problem in Malolos City, Calumpit and Bay for many years. In San Pablo City, the concerns were more about landslides, extreme heat and unpredictable weather conditions. Both Malolos City and Calumpit have experienced frequent and severe flooding, with water reaching hip-to-chest level. Calumpit has been constantly dealing with flooding because it is the catch basin of water coming from Pampanga and other parts of Bulacan; some villages in the municipality have been submerged in water for decades (Reyes-Etrope, 2023).

In both provinces, concerns were raised about the tendency of families, migrant and non-migrant alike, to resort to debt and bridge-financing services. Residents have easy access to informal lenders (such as 5-6 lenders, a Filipino term for a type of an informal lending scheme) and financial institutions such as cooperatives and credit unions. Recently, the proliferation of online lenders has made it easier and instantaneous to access financing. However, borrowers need to be aware of the risks associated with online loans, such as higher interest rates, predatory lending and privacy and security risks. There is the view that one reason OFW families fall into debt is to cover pre-departure costs.

International migration

International labor migration continues to be part of the livelihood strategies of families in the research sites. The KIs were one in saying that higher pay abroad and the lack of employment opportunities are the reasons fueling the overseas migration of their

³ See <https://bulacan.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/City-of-Malolos.pdf>

residents. Based on their observations, the Gulf countries (Saudi Arabia in particular) are still the major destinations of OFWs from their areas. Other destinations common to both provinces were Hong Kong, South Korea, Canada, Australia and Italy. OFWs in Laguna also went to Taiwan, while OFWs in Bulacan are present in Japan, Singapore, Poland and Libya. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the communities saw the return of OFWs, but many OFWs returned to work abroad again after the pandemic came under control. Some OFWs stayed to continue the small businesses they established during the pandemic. Similar findings were documented by a study of OFWs one to two years after their return to the Philippines during the pandemic (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2023).

The care of the left-behind children of OFWs is assumed by the remaining parent or other members of the family. In Laguna, KIs pointed out that overseas employment has improved the quality of life of OFW families, but they also remarked on the negative effects of parental migration on the psychological development of the left-behind children, families becoming dysfunctional, cases of sexual abuse and the negative impact on the education of the children. Some KIs also commented on how some OFW families' economic conditions have remained precarious despite receiving remittances, suggesting that remittances have not made a significant dent in meeting basic needs.

KIs across all sites mentioned government and nongovernment organizations (NGOs) that provide support and assistance to OFWs and their families, such as livelihood training programs, entrepreneurship training, financial literacy, values formation and financial assistance to families in need. The local government units provide support to migrants through the Public Employment Service Office (PESO), mostly by offering skills training

programs and organizing job fairs. In the absence of a dedicated Migrant Resource Center, PESOs usually handle migration-related concerns in their locales. Bulacan KIs mentioned the OFW Family Circles in Malolos. These are associations of OFW families formed under the aegis of OWWA which serve as support groups and as conduits for more effective delivery of programs and services. There are plans to form OFW Family Circles and OFW Children's Circles in Calumpit, San Pablo and Bay. In Bay, at least 13 NGOs and people's organizations are registered with the municipal government, of which six are women's organizations (Municipality of Bay, 2022). A migrant-focused NGO, Atikha Overseas Workers and Communities Initiatives, Inc., established in 1995, is based in San Pablo City. Atikha provides a range of economic and social services to OFWs and their families⁴.

COVID-19 pandemic

The KIs were skeptical of the effectiveness of online learning during the pandemic; they expressed concerns about the possible decline in reading, comprehension and critical thinking. In Bulacan, catch-up tutorials and barangay reading programs were offered to fill learning gaps. The pandemic led to a downturn in business and economic activity, resulting in loss of employment and precarity. All KIs mentioned the rise in the number of people with mental health issues, especially teenagers and including some left-behind children of OFWs. In Bulacan, KIs mentioned the training of nurses and school counselors to respond to the mental health concerns of adolescents. In Laguna, KIs mentioned the mental health programs and training in rural health units and schools to provide support to those dealing with anxiety and depression. To some extent, children and young Filipinos may have been reached by these school-based interventions.

⁴ See <https://atikha.ph/>

Findings from the household survey

Migrants and carers

Of the 823 households surveyed in 2023, 39.1 percent were migrant households and the remaining 60.9 percent were non-migrant households (see Table 1). Migrant households refer to households where one or both parents had been working overseas and had been away from their families continuously for at least six months before the date of interview (in the 2008 and 2016 CHAMPSEA) or one month (in the 2023 CHAMPSEA). On the other hand, a non-migrant household refers to households where both parents and children live together. Since all sampled households are two-parent families, migrant households are characterized by parental absence, which contrast with both parents present in non-migrant households.

As shown in Table 1, YC households have more parents currently working abroad compared to YA households. Among YC households, there is about an equal share of migrant and non-migrant households. This reflects the quota sampling of new YC households, which required 50 percent each of migrant and non-migrant households. In the case of YA households (which started as YC households in 2008), in 2023, 20.2 percent had a parent working abroad, while the majority, 79.8 percent, were non-migrant households. Upon

checking the parents' migration history between 2016 and 2023, 124 YA households (39 percent) were ever-migrants, i.e., where a parent or parents had at least one international migration episode during this period. Of the 124 ever-migrant households, 60 households (48 percent) have migrant parents who had returned home. The smaller share of mother migrants in the CHAMPSEA III sample (and in the earlier waves as well) departs from the national profile where women comprise the majority of OFWs. Among others, this difference may be traced to the eligibility requirements of the CHAMPSEA sample—married women with children in specific age groups—which limit the population of women migrants in the study.

Parental migration raises the question of who will care for the children. This was examined among YC households, but was no longer relevant for YA households. Table 2 shows that overall, women are the primary carers of young children—mothers (63 percent) and female relatives (25.1 percent, mostly grandmothers)—while father-carers accounted for 8.9 percent and other carers (i.e., male relatives, other relatives and non-kin) were at three percent. When it is the fathers who migrate for overseas employment, the children are left in the care of mothers (78.9 percent); when it is the mothers or both parents

Table 1. Household migration status, 2023.

	Migrant	Father migrant	Mother migrant	Both parents migrants	Non-migrant	Total
YA household	64	42	15	7	253	317
(Row %)	20.2	13.2	4.7	2.2	79.8	100.0
(Column %)	19.9	20.7	17.9	20.0	50.4	
YC household	258	161	69	28	248	506
(Row %)	51.0	31.8	13.6	5.5	49.0	100.0
(Column %)	80.1	79.3	82.1	80.0	49.5	
Total	322	203	84	35	501	823
(Row %)	39.1	24.7	10.2	4.2	60.9	100.0
(Column %)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

who migrate, carers are most likely to be female relatives (60.9 percent and 75 percent, respectively). The category “female relatives” includes grandmothers, aunts and sisters, but mostly, it involves grandmothers.

While father carers are not common, the migration of mothers sees fathers stepping in as carers—37.7 percent of fathers are carers compared with 7.7 percent of father carers in non-migrant households. Overall, grandmothers and other female relatives are the majority of carers in mother-migrant households (60.9 percent).

Aside from carers being mostly mothers and other women in the family, some carer characteristics vary by the migrant status of households. The median age of the carers of the sampled young children is 36 years old. However, the median age of carers in migrant households (40 years old) is higher than that in non-migrant households (33 years old). More than half (57 percent) of all carers have completed at least secondary education,

with college graduates accounting for 20 percent.

Household composition

The household composition of migrant and non-migrant households shows some differences (see Table 3). For both YA and YC households, migrant households have fewer members in the household compared to non-migrant households. Also, for both YA and YC households, migrant households have fewer children and fewer adult members compared to non-migrant households, and this difference is statistically significant and that the data suggesting inter-generational living arrangements. In general, more migrant households have at least one grandparent co-residing with the family compared to non-migrant households. Moreover, between YA and YC households, there is a higher percentage of grandparents living in YC households (42.9 percent) than in YA

Table 2. Carers by migration status of YC households, 2023.

Carer	Migrant	Father migrant	Mother migrant	Both parents migrants	Non-migrant	Total
Mother	127	127	-	-	192	319
(Row %)	39.8	39.8	-	-	60.2	100.0
(Column %)	49.2	78.9	-	-	77.4	63.0
Father	26	-	26	-	19	45
(Row %)	57.8	-	57.8	-	42.2	100.0
(Column %)	10.1	-	37.7	-	7.7	8.9
Female Relative	93	30	42	21	34	127
(Row %)	73.2	23.6	33.1	16.5	26.8	100.0
(Column %)	36.0	18.6	60.9	75.0	13.7	25.1
Other	12	4	1	7	3	15
(Row %)	80.0	26.7	6.7	46.7	20.0	100.0
(Column %)	4.6	2.5	1.4	25.0	1.2	3.0
Total	258	161	69	28	248	506
(Row %)	51.0	31.8	13.6	5.5	49.0	100.0
(Column %)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Table 3. Household composition by current migration status, 2023.

	Current Migration Status		Total
	Migrant	Non-migrant	
Young Adults			
Mean household size ^{***}	3.8	5.1	4.8
Mean number of children [*]	2.3	2.7	2.6
Mean number of adults ^{***}	3.4	4.3	4.2
% with at least one grandparent in the household	21.9	13.4	15.1
Total	64	253	317
Young Children			
Mean household size ^{***}	4.8	5.5	5.1
Mean number of children [*]	2.3	2.5	2.4
Mean number of adults ^{***}	2.6	3.1	2.8
% with at least one grandparent in the household	52.7	32.7	42.9
Total	258	248	506

Notes:

(a) Percentage may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

(b) Independent variable without superscripts* show insignificant relationships / no difference in means

*p-value <0.05, *** p-value <0.001

households (15.1 percent). By migration status, more migrant households include at least one grandparent compared with non-migrant households for both YA and YC households. However, more YC households have co-residing grandparents compared with YA households (52.7 percent vs. 21.9 percent), which may suggest grandparents performing caregiving roles in households with young children.

Parents' employment characteristics

Parents' current employment shows high levels of engagement in economic activity for all households, with more than 90 percent reporting parents as currently employed⁵.

- For parents in YA households (n = 545), 97.8 percent are currently employed, and there

is very little difference in the employment rate of fathers and mothers in migrant and non-migrant households.

- For parents in YC households (n = 810), 93.3 percent are currently employed. For this group, more fathers are employed than mothers (97.4 percent vs. 87 percent). Between migrant and non-migrant households, almost all fathers are employed. The difference can be seen in the higher employment rate of migrant mothers (97.9 percent) compared to non-migrant mothers (78.7 percent)⁶.

Turning to the parents' occupations, the majority of parents in all households are concentrated in elementary occupations, arts and crafts, plant and machine and service work (see Table 4). Interesting differences emerge in the occupations of fathers and mothers. Fathers in

⁵ For the employment rate, the denominator is based on those who are in the labor force. Labor force includes the employed and unemployed individuals. Those not in the labor force consists of homemakers and retirees.

⁶ In addition to lower employment among non-migrant mothers, many of them are homemakers and are not in the labor force (37.2 percent of all mothers).

YA and YC households commonly hold manual occupations. Although mothers also engage in manual occupations, unlike fathers, a notable share of mothers hold managerial and technical occupations. When migration status is considered, fathers in both migrant and non-migrant households work at similar occupations. Almost three-fourths of migrant

mothers work in elementary and service occupations; the third ranked are professionals (12.1 percent) (see Table 5). Non-migrant mothers have more diverse occupations. Although they also work in elementary and service occupations, the share is smaller, and about a third are managers and technicians.

Table 4. Top three occupations of parents.

Fathers		Mothers	
YA (n = 309)		YA (n = 236)	
Plants and machines	20.5%	Elementary occupations	21.8%
Elementary occupations	18.1%	Managers and legislators	16.1%
Arts and crafts	18.1%	Service workers	10.1%
YC (n = 481)		YC (n = 275)	
Plants and machines	29.3%	Elementary occupations	37.1%
Elementary occupations	24.3%	Service workers	14.2%
Service workers	15.0%	Technicians and associates	12.2%

Table 5. Top three occupations of parents by migration status.

Fathers			
Migrants (n=234)		Non-migrants (n=544)	
Plants and machines	31.2%	Elementary occupations	24.8%
Service workers	19.2%	Plants and machines	24.4%
Elementary occupations	16.75%	Arts and crafts	15.4%
Mothers			
Migrants (n=116)		Non-migrants (n=383)	
Elementary occupations	53.4%	Elementary occupations	28.5%
Service workers	19.0%	Managers and legislators	21.1%
Professional	3.1%	Technicians and associates	12.8%
		Service workers	12.8%

Where migrant parents work

Although OFWs are widely distributed throughout the world, they maintain a huge presence in some countries. The Gulf region continues to be the primary destination of OFWs, and within the region, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Qatar have the largest Filipino communities (Department of Migrant Workers [DMW], 2023; Philippine

Statistics Authority [PSA], 2024; PSA and University of the Philippines Population Institute [UPPI], 2019). This is mirrored in the sampled migrant households of CHAMPSEA III (see Figure 1). It must also be mentioned that 95 percent of migrant fathers and mothers signed a formal contract for their current overseas employment.

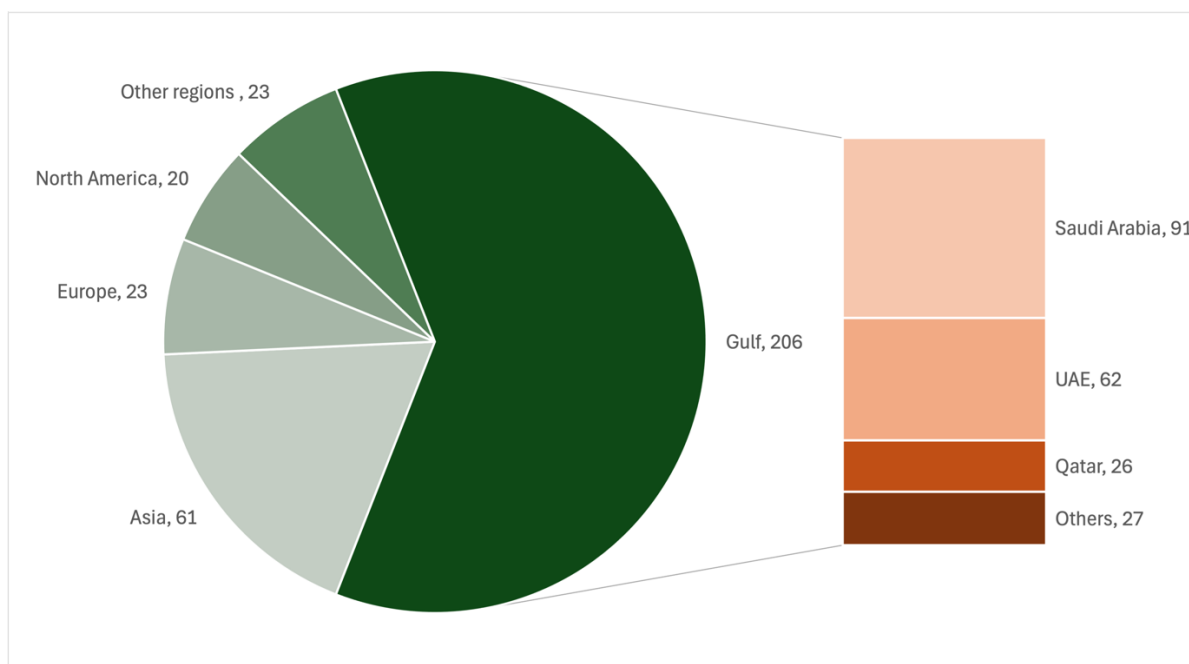


Figure 1. Regions of destination of migrant parents, 2023⁷.

Perceptions of parental migration

Participants in the study were asked about their perceptions of the impact of parental migration, which was unpacked into mothers' migration and fathers' migration, on the children and the family. These were asked as follows:

- Is it good or bad for children when their father or mother works abroad?
- Is it good or bad for families when the father or mother works abroad?

For respondents in YA households (which may include young adults who provided information about the households), perceptions about the impact of migration differ by the gender of migrant parents.

In 2016 (CHAMPSEA II), Figure 2 shows that the impact of mothers' migration on the children and the family was largely perceived as neither good nor bad (42.5 percent and 44.9 percent, respectively). In comparison, the share of respondents who considered maternal migration as having a very good and good impact on the children and the family was lower (37.7 percent and 35.4 percent, respectively). On the other hand, the impact of paternal migration on the children and family was largely perceived as good (64.8 percent and 64.3 percent, respectively). The percentage who considered parents' migration as bad for the children and the family was much higher for mother migrants than for father migrants. A shift towards a more positive assessment of mothers' migration can be seen in 2023 (CHAMPSEA III) when most respondents thought it was good (including very good) for the children and the family (see Figure 3).

⁷ Refers to land-based OFWs. There were 23 seafarers among migrant parents.

Interestingly, children were perceived to benefit more from their mothers' migration than from the family. That about a fifth (19.7 percent in 2016 and 22.7 percent in 2023) of mothers' migration is bad (and very bad) for the family may suggest anxieties about adjustments that the different family members have to make in

the absence of mothers (including concerns about marriage). As regards the impact of fathers' migration, the views are not only favorable but also stable between 2016 and 2023.

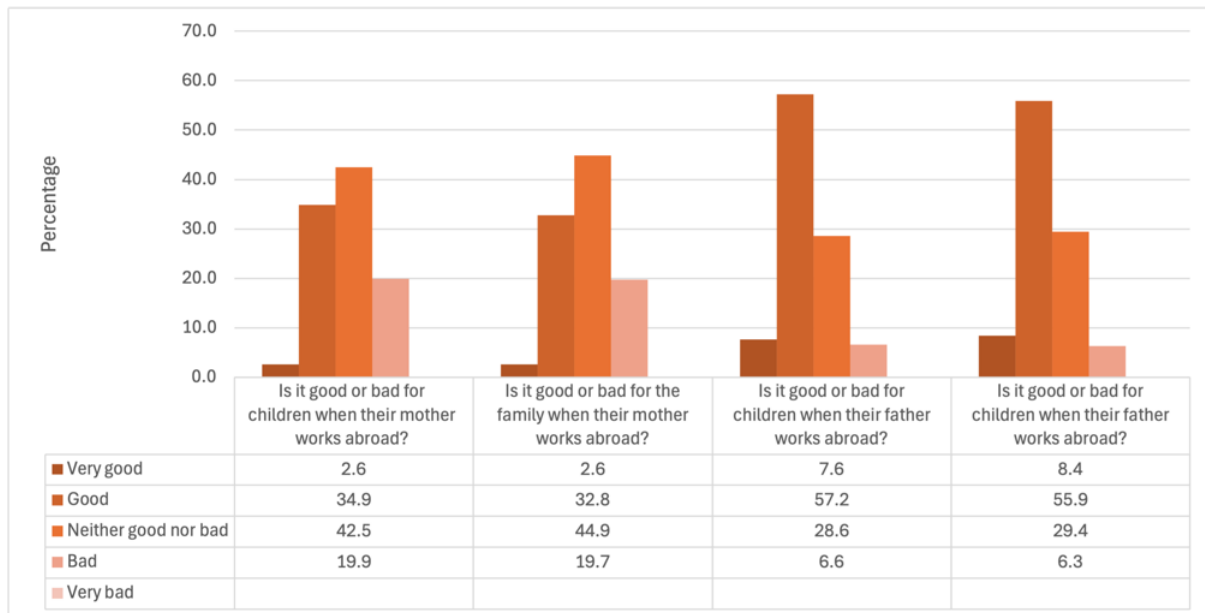


Figure 2. YA households' perceptions of parental migration, 2016.

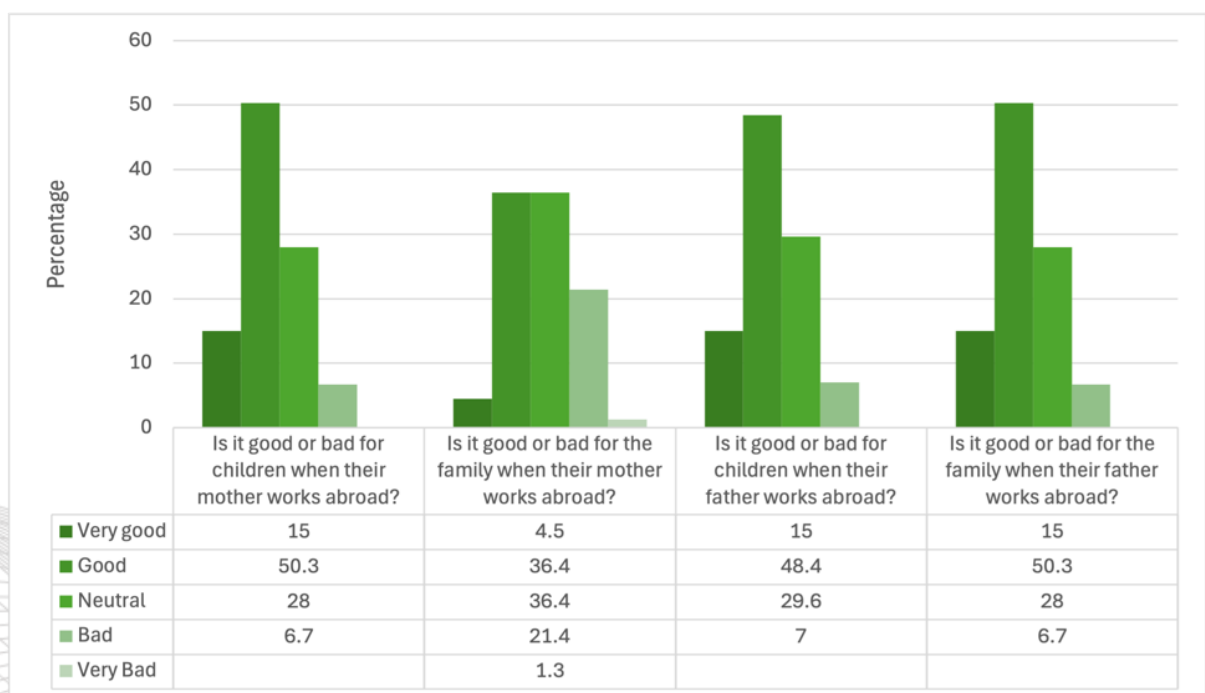


Figure 3. YA households' perception of parental migration, 2023.

For respondents in the YC households, we also find a gender divide in their views about parental migration (see Figure 4). Positive views on the impact on children (29.9 percent) were overshadowed by the combined share of those who held neutral and negative (bad and very) perceptions. Unlike the respondents in YA households, those from YC households held more positive perceptions of mothers' migration for the family, compared to the impact on the children. Fathers' migration was viewed positively for the children and the family— there was not much difference in the perceived positive impact on the children (50.6 percent) and the family (55.8 percent).

Those who thought that fathers' migration was bad for the children (8.5 percent) and the family (4.2 percent) were clearly in the minority. This stands in stark contrast to perceptions of maternal migration, whose negative impact on the children was higher (35.3 percent) than for the family (23.9 percent).

Considering the concerns about the family impacts of parental migration (which were also expressed by the KIs), it is interesting to note that almost all respondents did not know of organizations that can provide support to the left-behind families, and almost all said that they had not received support from any organization to help them with childcare.

Discussion and conclusion

As of CHAMPSEA III, Laguna and Bulacan continue to be provinces in motion and there are no signs of overseas employment slowing down. For the most part, the observations about household profiles, migration profiles and caregiving patterns are similar to those noted in CHAMPSEA I (Asis & Ruiz-Marave, 2011).

The migration characteristics of the two provinces follow the national pattern—up until now, the Gulf region is where most OFWs are concentrated, and most OFWs work at elementary occupations. The singular notable departure is the larger share of male OFWs in the CHAMPSEA sample compared to the national profile. Comparisons of the household profiles of migrant and non-migrant households reveal some differences between these two groups. Migrant households have fewer members; a smaller number of children and fewer adult members compared to non-migrant households. Migrant households are also more likely to have grandparents as co-residents than non-migrant households.

Caregiving patterns also display differences between migrant and non-migrant households. Overall, child care rests with mothers and female family members (of whom grandmothers are important). The most

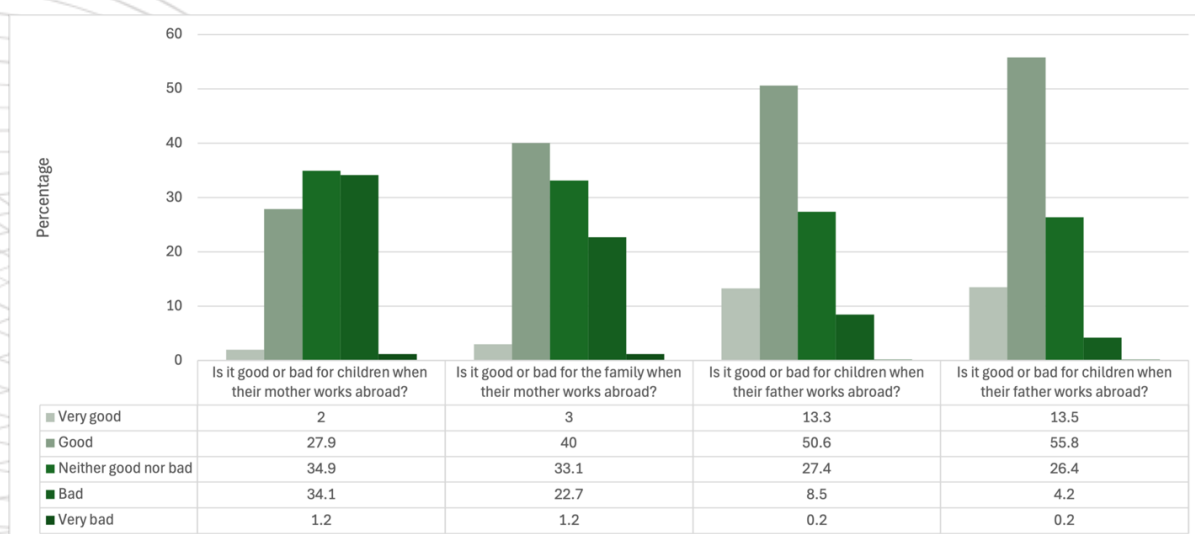


Figure 4. YC households' perception of parental migration, 2023.

observable change happens when mothers migrate—other female relatives (mostly grandmothers) are the primary, and seconded by fathers. Parental migration may unsettle traditional or familiar caregiving arrangements, but these some reconfigurations, family members step in to provide childcare. Fathers as carers are more notable when mothers migrate, while by comparison, fathers in non-migrant households are less involved with childcare. Perceptions about parental migration reflect lesser concerns about the migration of fathers compared to the migration of mothers, although there is a shift towards more favorable views about maternal migration in 2023. Nonetheless, the lingering anxieties about parental migration suggest the need for policies and actions that would make it possible for families not to be torn apart and to be able to build a good life in the Philippines. The continuing trend of many OFWs working at elementary occupations abroad is another signal that we need to work at unpacking what it entails to make migration an option rather than a necessity.

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Appendix

About CHAMPSEA

As in other parts of the world, in Southeast Asia, many parents leave their families to work abroad in the hopes of providing a better, brighter future for their children. However, parental absence has fueled concerns about children growing up without one or both parents, casting doubts on the hoped-for benefits from working abroad.

The Child Health and Migrant Parents in South-East Asia (CHAMPSEA) research project was launched to examine the impact of parental migration on the health and well-being of the children remaining in the origin communities. Since destination countries in Asia do not allow migrant workers in less skilled occupations to bring their families with them, migrants and their families are separated, with the latter being left behind in the origin countries. CHAMPSEA collected data in four origin countries—Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Thailand—to provide a comparative perspective on how the absence of parents due to migration affect the children who remain at home. The longitudinal and mixed methods design and the comparison between migrant and non-migrant households add to the unique and strong features of the project. For the baseline survey, the children of interest to CHAMPSEA (referred to as the index child per household) were young children in the formative years (3-5 years old) and children in middle childhood (9-11 years old), an age group that is under-researched compared to young children and adolescents. These children and their families were tracked, revisited and reinterviewed in two further rounds of data collection in Indonesia and the Philippines.

The first wave or baseline survey, CHAMPSEA I, was conducted in 2008, covering circa 1,000 households in each country, followed by qualitative interviews with a small number of households in 2009. In 2016, CHAMPSEA II tracked and reinterviewed 756 households in the Philippines, supplemented by qualitative interviews with selected households in 2017. CHAMPSEA III was carried out in 2023, reinterviewing the tracked households and drawing a new sample of 506 households with young children. Combining the tracked households from the previous surveys and the new sample, 1,506 unique households were enrolled in CHAMPSEA in the Philippines. For each Wave, 2 to 3 face-to-face interviews were conducted in each sampled household involving a responsible adult (a person who is knowledgeable about household matters), a carer (someone who was identified as the main carer of 3-5 years old and 9-11 years old children), the index child aged 9-11 years old or the young adult (the index child aged approximately 17-21 years old) at the time of the follow-up survey. An overview of how the children were followed up at different points in time and the respondents per sampled household are outlined in [Table 1](#).

Table 1. Research participants in CHAMPSEA I, II and III.

Age of index child (at first interview)	2008 CHAMPSEA I	2016 CHAMPSEA II	2023 CHAMPSEA III
3-5 years old	3-5 years old (2 interviews: Responsible adult; Carer)	11-13 years old (3 interviews: Responsible adult, Carer, Index child)	17-21 years old (2 interviews: Responsible adult; Young adult)
9-11 years old	9-11 years old (3 interviews: Responsible adult; Carer; Index child)	17-19 years old (2 interviews: Responsible adult; Young adult)	-
3-6 years old (new sample)	-	-	3-6 years old (2 interviews: Responsible adult; Carer)

In the Philippines, CHAMPSEA was implemented in two high out-migration provinces in Luzon, Laguna (San Pablo City and Bay) and Bulacan (Malolos City and Calumpit). As in the other countries, the project adopted a flexible quota sampling design to ensure a sufficient number of migrant households with key features. The sample is not nationally representative. The sampling considered two-parent households, the migration status of the household, the gender of the migrant parent and the gender and age of the index child (3-5 years old and 9-11 years old in the first survey). The project defined an international or transnational migrant household as one where the father, mother or both parents have been working abroad continuously for at least six months prior to the survey, while a usual resident or non-migrant household means both parents and the index child were living together continuously for at least six months prior to the survey. In the recruitment of a fresh sample of households with young children in CHAMPSEA III, the Philippines adopted the same adjustments that were made in Indonesia: the six months of continuously working abroad to define international migration was reduced to one month, and the age range of young children was extended to 3-6 years old from 3-5 years old.

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For a list of journal articles, reports and multi-media knowledge products from CHAMPSEA, see <https://ari.nus.edu.sg/champseapublications/>

Filipinos have gone global in the search for employment opportunities and higher incomes for more than five decades. The family is the reason why migrants leave the comforts of home, the site of migration decision-making, the direct beneficiary of the benefits of migration, and the all-around safety net of its members throughout their individual and family life stages. The Child Health and Migrant Parents in South-East Asia (CHAMPSEA) research project inquires into the impact of transnational labor migration on the families and children left-behind in origin communities while fathers, mothers or both parents work abroad. Conducted in the Philippines and Indonesia in three waves—in 2008, 2016 and 2023—findings from the CHAMPSEA project provide insights on the family as it strives to meet the economic, social, care and emotional needs of its members amid the changing geography of family life.

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