

BEYOND REMITTANCES

Measuring the Development Contribution of Returning
and Returned Overseas Filipino Workers

Through the National Inventory of Returning and Returned
OFWs of the Philippines (NIROP)



OFW DEVELOPMENT JOURNEY

**Make visible what migration
builds — in workers, families
and communities.**

Loreto B. Soriano • Founding Chairman, Migration and Development Policy Center (MDPC)

Philippine Statistical Association, Inc. Annual Conference • 2026

We see the money. Do we see the development?

2.19 million

estimated OFWs in 2024

57.2%

women

₱262.20 B

SOF remittances
(reference period)

US\$34.49 B

BSP cash remittances, 2024

But these figures cannot by themselves tell us:

- What skills were gained?
- What productive assets were built?
- How did the family advance?
- What happened after return?

**Remittances are essential —
but they cannot describe the
whole development trajectory.**

Hundreds of OFWs were in one room. But what did we know about what they had become?

FIRST OFW GLOBAL SUMMIT • JUNE 2026

I stood near the front before the program began and looked across a hall filled with OFWs, families, government officials and advocates.

Could we readily see their...

- Overseas occupations
- Positions and ranks reached
- Skills and competencies acquired
- Years and patterns of migration
- Return status and future plans

**The OFWs were visible as people.
Their accumulated migration journeys were largely invisible as connected data.**

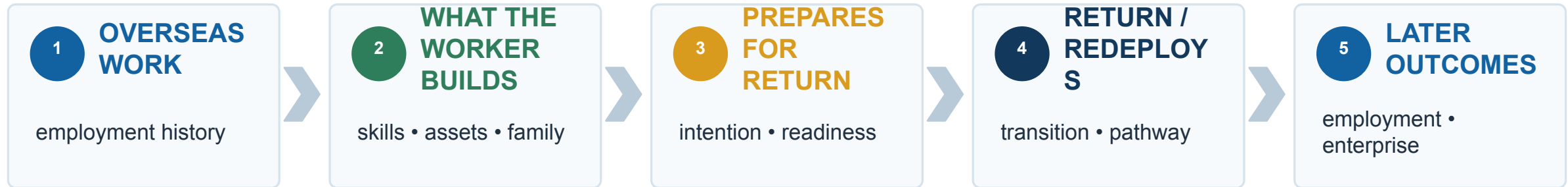
An OFW comes from somewhere. Can that community see what migration is building?



What we do not make visible, we cannot adequately include in development planning.

NIROP can connect the OFW development journey to the communities from which migration begins and to which many workers return.

The missing statistical link

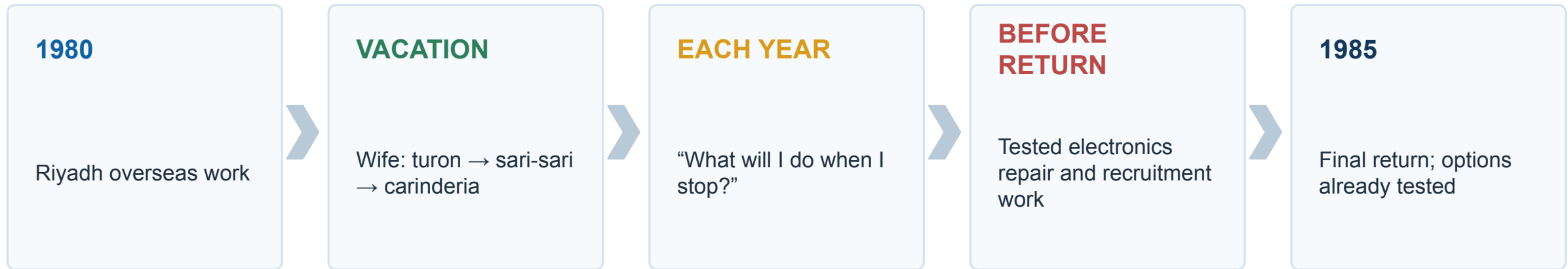


Existing information is valuable — but often collected for different purposes, at different moments, in different systems.

NIROP asks whether a minimum longitudinal record can connect these moments without replacing the systems that already exist.

THE GAP IS CONTINUITY — NOT THE ABSENCE OF GOVERNMENT DATA.

My own OFW journey made the gap visible



What would conventional migration statistics have recorded — and what parts of this preparation would have disappeared?

N = 1. This case helps identify variables worth testing; it does not establish general effects.

One proposition changes when measurement should begin

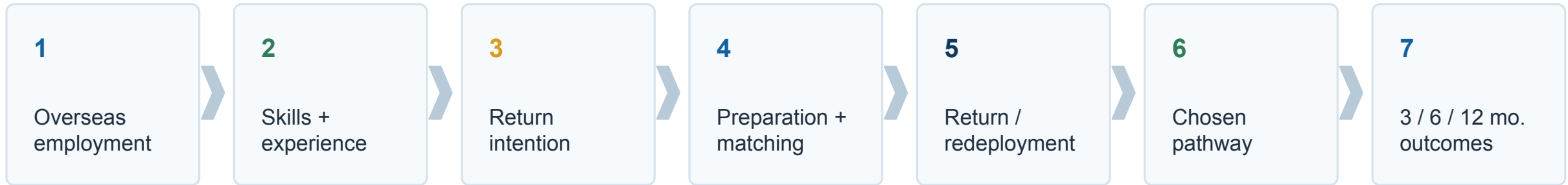
**“If reintegration begins before return,
statistical observation should also begin before
return.”**

This is a testable proposition — not an assumed result.

Does earlier, worker-centered observation produce a more complete and policy-useful picture of reintegration?



NIROP follows the journey — it does not replace existing systems



Worker-centered • Consent-based • Minimum necessary data • Correctable • Purpose-limited

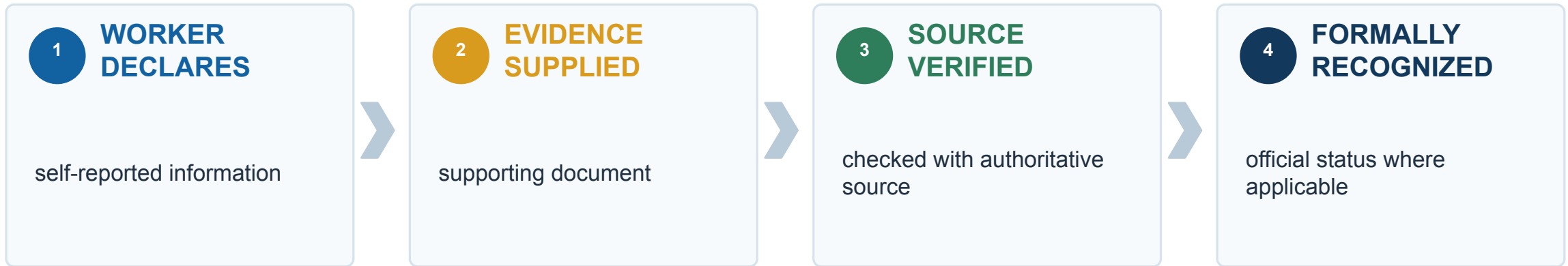
PSA surveys remain representative statistics. DMW, OWWA and other systems retain their legal and operational functions. NIROP adds lifecycle continuity.

NIROP does not have to become one giant database



Keep authoritative evidence where it belongs whenever feasible. NIROP holds the minimum record and a controlled reference to the source.

Self-reported does not mean verified



For every important variable, preserve provenance:

Who supplied it? • How was it verified? • When was it last confirmed?

This lets statisticians distinguish worker-declared information from administrative or formally recognized facts.

What should NIROP measure?

HUMAN CAPITAL

skills • qualifications • licenses • progression

FAMILY / INTERGENERATIONAL

education • housing • productive household assets

PRODUCTIVE / FINANCIAL

assets • enterprise preparation • categories

RETURN READINESS

intended horizon • location • pathway • gaps

PROFESSIONAL / SOCIAL

networks • managerial experience • exposure

POST-TRANSITION

skills match • retention • enterprise survival • learning

Candidate measurement domains — not nationally estimated “stocks of capital” and not one composite reintegration score.

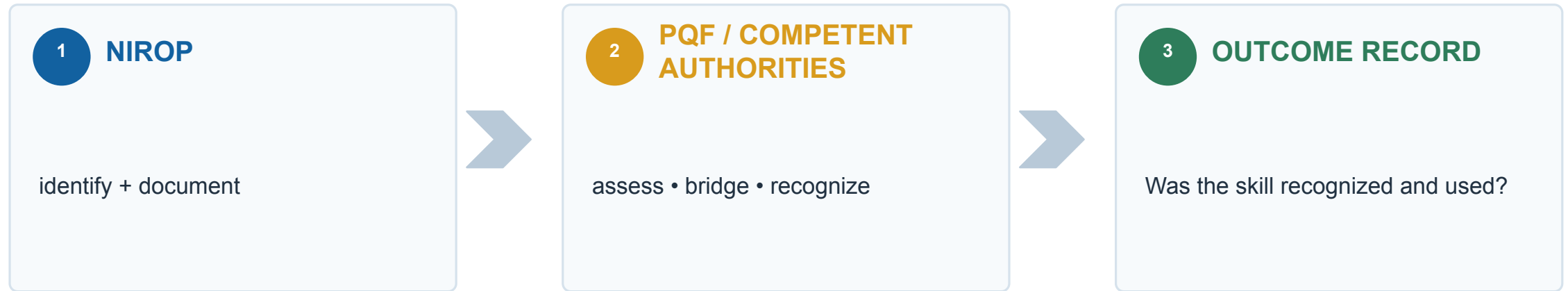
Count the pathway, not only the activity



The same principle applies to enterprise, training and skills recognition:

define the chain • measure attrition • follow the result

Skills acquired abroad should not disappear at the border



IMPORTANT BOUNDARY: NIROP DOES NOT AWARD QUALIFICATIONS.

It can surface overseas-acquired competencies early, refer the worker to the proper authority, and record what happened afterward.

A pilot should try to prove — or disprove — NIROP

COVERAGE

Who is reached?

BURDEN

Is it reasonable for workers?

LINKAGE

Can records connect accurately?

ATTRITION

Who disappears over time?

USEFULNESS

Does it improve services / analysis?

OUTCOMES

Do we see more of the trajectory?

Keep a variable only if its analytical or service value justifies the collection burden and privacy risk.

What NIROP can add to Philippine migration statistics

Return as an event



Return as a trajectory

Worker profile



Worker + pathway + outcome

Service counts



Outcome chains

Skills listed



Skills recognized and used

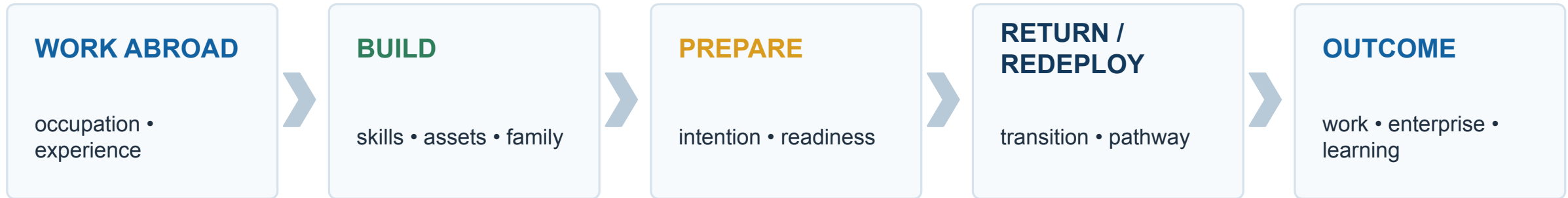
Separate observations



A minimum longitudinal record

Not more data for its own sake — better continuity for questions we cannot answer well today.

What did the OFW and family build — and what happened to it?



NIROP makes visible what the OFW journey builds — before return, through transition, and after return.

Reintegration begins before return. Measurement should begin there too.

Thank you. Loreto B. Soriano | MDPC

Technical questions — short answers

1 Is NIROP another giant database?

No. A federated lifecycle architecture can keep a minimum structured record plus verification status, provenance and secure references.

2 Will worker updates be treated as facts?

No. Tag worker-declared, evidence supplied, source-verified and formally recognized states.

3 Will NIROP be too costly at national scale?

Cost depends on architecture, data handling, security, system links and operations — not record count alone.

4 Does federated mean cloud?

No. Federation is a data architecture, not a hosting decision.