

# MIGRATION AND THE FAMILY: CHALLENGES AND DIRECTION

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## 1. Migration Today: A Situationer

### 1.1 Migration in the world

- Migration is a global phenomenon.
- Today there are about 125 million migrants and 20 million refugees.
- 30 years ago it was a “European” phenomenon.
- Migration is new in East and Southeast Asia.
- Migration has become a “South-North”/”developing-developed” countries’ issues.

### 1.2 Migration in Asia

East Asia is the most economically dynamic region in the world. This economic growth is generated by the export-oriented policies these countries have created; economies that have not only achieved full employment in their countries but also have led them to take measures to avoid importing labor. Some of these measures or strategies implemented are:

- Absorbing a larger share of women in the labor force;
- Increasing the use of technology in production;
- Automating manufacturing processes;
- Exporting labor;
- Investing abroad.

However, such strategies cannot respond to all the needs of a growing economy making the labor import unavoidable. However, in the Asian Tiger countries, migrants are allowed to enter on a *temporary status* only (usually two years contract).

In addition to that, these tigers attract migrants through the following models they have chosen (except for the Philippines):

- Singapore: - trade
- Hong Kong: - capital investment
- Taiwan and South Korea: - small industries
- Philippines: - big industries and monopolies
- Japan: -absorption of women in the labor force  
- robot technology  
- transfer of the industries/factories abroad

### 1.3 Migration in the Philippines

Migration at the Philippines started at the beginning of this century and the points of destination were USA, Guam and Hawaii. In 1906, 15 Ilocanos went to Hawaii to work in farms and others, in sugar cane plantations. By 1934, over 120,000 Filipinos (mostly from Ilocos and Visayan regions) had been contracted. Today the Filipinos rank as one of the top 5 migrant groups in the USA.

Migration of Filipinos to Europe started in the 70s when tens of thousands of Filipinos went to Europe as hotel workers, hospital workers, maids, nurses and lately as entertainers. Today, Italy is the main destination for Filipinos in Europe, followed by Spain, Greece, France, Germany and some other places. The phenomenon of “mail order bride” (MOB) has brought many Filipinas to Australia.

In 1975, there were only 1,522,000 Filipinos in the Middle East. From 1984 to 1993, the Middle East countries absorbed a total of 2,012,200 Filipinos contract workers. Today, more than 300,000 Filipino go to work in the Middle East every year.

While the Middle East continues to hire male workers, Asia emerged as the new market absorbing the female workers, especially those in the vulnerable areas: domestic helpers and entertainers or in the 3D jobs: dirty/dangerous/difficult.

For the “welfare and assistance” of the Overseas Contract Workers or OCWs, the government created the Welfare Fund / Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) in 1977 and the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) in 1982, as the “marketing unity.”

## 2. What are the main causes of contract labor migration from the Philippines?

There are five:

1. –the situation of poverty and underdevelopment
2. – the migration mentality which highlights the expected gain rather than the real gains;
3. – the decrease of employment in agriculture sector;
4. – political choice: migration is part of the economic development model and
5. –the demographic factor.

The local industry provides roughly half a million job opportunities every year. However, the new entrants to the labor force is roughly one million, which means that at least half a million every year either become unemployed or seek job opportunities abroad.

Last year the total number of OCWs stood at 719,602, including 172,220 seamen. Of this total, 55% were women. According to the Department of Foreign Affairs, today there are 6 million Filipinos in 149 countries all over the world and that by the year 2000 there will be around 8.5 million Filipino abroad.

### 3. The View from the Asian Workers Themselves – The Resolutions of the International Migrants' Alliances

Whereas, migrant workers regardless of race in and outside of Hong Kong suffer generally from the same exploitative, oppressive and abusive conditions.

Whereas, these conditions deny us our rights as workers and as women to those of us who belong to this gender. At the same time we are not protected by our own governments who only want to commodify us.

Whereas, we and our families suffer the brunt of neoliberal globalization policies that debase our condition in our host countries and makes worse the situation of our families in our home countries.

Whereas, under these conditions and based on our own experiences in Hong Kong, is a need to build the unity of migrant workers in many countries composed of different nationalities.

Whereas, like in Hong Kong there is a need for migrant workers to learn from each others lessons on organizing, education and advocacy which are vital for the advancement of the migrants movement.

Whereas, there is a need for us migrant workers to finally have a voice in the international level that will complement the efforts of our friends and advocates to advance our rights and wellbeing.

Whereas, it is the power of the grassroots migrant workers movements in all levels that is decisive in pushing for migrant's collective rights.

Resolved, therefore, that participants of the First Asian Migrant Summit in Hong Kong fully supports the formation of the International Migrant's Alliance to realize the dream of a grassroots-based international migrant workers movement.

Resolved further that participants of the First Asian Migrants Summit in Hong Kong will exert our outmost effort to join the General Assembly of the IMA and also encourage migrant workers from other countries to similarly join the cause.

Approved this 25<sup>th</sup> of November, 2007

4. The Viewpoint of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines, from the Pastoral Letter, Comfort my People, Comfort them.

“Many good things come from migration. There are success stories. Remittances from Filipinos abroad have sustained families, put children through school, and raised the standard of living of many, giving them more access to the material and spiritual goods needed for their fulfillment. Our Filipino migrant workers have also contributed much to our national development. Our Filipinos abroad remit annually to our country around \$4 billion. On the other hand, a considerable number of them are subjected to many evils, such as loss of life and human dignity, inhuman abuse and maltreatment, exploitation, moral degradation, broken families, loss of Faith, and other sufferings. Because so much harm often goes hand in hand with Filipino overseas employment, the State should not promote overseas employment as a means to sustain economic growth and achieve national development. We should not sacrifice higher values for economic gains. Overseas employment should be allowed only if protective measures are in place so that the dignity and human rights of the Filipino migrant workers be not compromised or violated.”

5. Impact of Migration on the Family

In his message for the World Migrant’s Day 1993-1994, Pope John Paul II said, “the phenomenon of migration involves a considerable part of humanity, forced for various reasons to leave their loved ones, homes and traditions in search for better future.” The Asians are part of this “considerable part of humanity” forced to leave. Yet its impact on the church and society (especially on the families) has been put on side in favor of its material benefits

The family is the heart and the center of the Asian experience. It is where faith, the Christian doctrine and the Gospel values are learned and lived. It is where love, justice, peace, fraternity and equality are experienced, nourished and cultivated. It is where the basic Christian catechesis passes from generation, like in the Old Testament: *“Do not forget these things which your very eyes have seen nor let them depart from your heart. But on the contrary teach them to your children and to your children’s children.”* (Dt. 4:9)

Migration breaks this center, this heart, this teaching and this experience. Migration breaks this harmony. It separates, splits, detaches and segregates the family. It creates a dysfunction in the normal course of family life. It generates a variety of new problems and challenges to the family, society and the church that demand a specific pastoral and social care.

**5.1 Parenting Problems**

| Overseas Contract Worker (OCWs)              | OCWs Families (their Families)                                 |
|--|--|
| - Low self-esteem and anxiety                | - aloneness and loneliness                                     |
| - Deep frustration                           | - the travails of solo parenting                               |
| - Separation from spouse, loneliness         | - poor financial management                                    |
| - Infidelity of spouse or one’s own fidelity | - marital difficulties and infidelity if not marital breakdown |
| - Relationship with spouse and children      | - Guilt  |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| - Guilt                                 | - Children's growth with absentee parent(s)-<br>the impact on the psychosocial, emotional, educational, moral and spiritual facets of their life |
| - Reemployment in the country or abroad |  |

## 5.2 Impact on the Children

- What does the 2003 Children and Families Study reveal about the impact of international labor migration on the young children and families left behind? On the question of parental absence, based on the survey, the study finds that parental absence creates displacements, disruptions and changes in caregiving arrangements. The departure of one or two parents leaves an emotional mark on the young children left behind – the children long for the presence of the migrant parent (s), especially when the mothers are away. But the study also suggests that the children attended to by the family – mostly the mothers when it is the fathers who migrate, other female relatives and/or the fathers when it is the women who leave, and other female relatives and the extended family when both parents are out. Despite the emotional displacement, the children of migrants are not disadvantaged vis-à-vis the children of non-migrants in many dimensions of well-being. Thus, when the family is stable, it can withstand the separation imposed by migration.
- In terms of socio-economic variables, the children of migrants are markedly better off compared to the children of non-migrants. Aside, from objective indicators of SES, such as home ownership and ownership of durable goods, the children of migrants also perceive their families as doing well as far as economic status is concerned. This economic advantage appears to provide the children of migrants with other advantages. More OFW children are enrolled in private schools. The study has also documented that OFW children are more likely to participate in extracurricular activities, such as camping field trip, school programs and so forth. Their exposure to these programs not only broadens their learning, which may have contributed to their overall academic performance. Unlike the 1996 study (Battistella and Conaco, 1998, 1996) which found that OFW children fared less in academic performance relative to non-OFW children, the present study found the opposite. At least during the elementary years, various school/academic indicators point to OFW children belonging to higher sections, earning higher grades and receiving school awards. However, consistent with the 1996 study, the children of migrant mothers tend to lag somewhat behind compared to the other children. It is also possible that the better economic status of migrant families has contributed to the better health outcomes observed among OFW children.
- The cradle of extended family system provides the children of migrants with care and socialization which are not that different from what the children of non-migrants receive. Children, both from OFW and non-OFW families alike, are given chores at home, which forms

- part of their responsibility training. The values transmitted to children – basically an emphasis on traits and characteristics to promote smooth interpersonal relationship – are similar in both migrant and non-migrant families. Children in both groups also receive spiritual formation in their families. Interestingly, the present study finds higher church/mosque attendance and praying among the children of migrants than non-OFW children.
- Due to the migration of one or both parents, children in OFW families experience a reconfiguration of gender roles in the family as well as different ways of maintaining family relationship. The departure of mothers and both parents has clearly rearranged caregiving and provider roles. Thus, in migrant families, the distribution of gender roles is different from the traditional stay-at-home mothers and “working” fathers or the emerging dual-earner families. The changing roles of mothers, fathers and the extended family (particularly, other female relatives) are evident in migrant families. Family relationships remain close, but in migrant families, these are maintained not by presence but by constant communication. Particularly in the FDGs, it was apparent that the access to instant communication has helped bring family members together despite the distance.
  - In terms of physical health and socio-psychological measures, the children of OFWs are as well adjusted or they even fare better compared to non-OFW children. Among OFW children, however, the children of migrant mothers do not do as well (although the differences are not always marked).
  - Thus, data from the survey indicate that in general terms, the children of OFWs in two-parent families are managing well. The challenge is the future. For now, the children are fine. However, the FDGs with the adolescents indicate trouble spots ahead since they have to deal with issues other than family and school. The challenge, thus, is how families and other institutions can shepherd and support children as they tread the transition into adolescence.
  - It should be mentioned that when we consider the data from FDGs with left-behind caregivers and adolescents, we also get a different picture: the lingering emotional costs of the separation of family members. For the most part, families (according to left-behind caregivers and adolescents in the FDGs) manage their problems within the family and through prayers. There is reluctance to seek out other agencies or institutions when it comes to non-economic problems – concerns about trust and confidentiality were mentioned. When FDG participants were asked about programs OFW families need, the usual answer was “livelihood” and “income-generating programs”. The FDGs with the community development workers and NGO/Church personnel highlighted the difficulties experienced in drawing the participation of OFW families (particularly husbands) and in sustaining their participation in programs that cater more to social-psychological concerns.
  - The children’s responses indicate that overseas migration will continue. This early, the children are already entertaining thoughts of migrating and working abroad, and their career plans are very much shaped by what would be marketable abroad. This has implications not just for the family but for the country as a whole.
- “Migration in the eyes of the Filipino Children”  
 A joint research project by Episcopal Commission for the Central Care of Migrants; Scalabrini Migration Center and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration.

**6. Five Social Principles on Migration.** In preparation for its National Migration Week, the United States Catholic Bishops enunciated five principles on migration that emerge from the Church's social teaching ([www.nccbuss.org](http://www.nccbuss.org)) these items are applicable worldwide; they concretize the Church's mission with migrants. For each principle there is a brief statement of the guideline, followed by a short explanation of its meaning and applicability.

- (1) *Persons have the right to find opportunities in their homeland.* All persons have the right to find in their own countries the economic, political, and social opportunities to live in dignity and achieve a full life through the use of their God-given gifts. In this context, work that provides a just living wage is a basic human need.
- (2) *Persons have the right to migrate to support themselves and their families.* The Church recognizes the all goods of the earth belong to all people. When persons cannot find employment in their country of origin to support themselves and their families, they have a right to find work elsewhere in order to survive. Sovereign nations should provide ways to accommodate this right.
- (3) *Sovereign nations have the right to control their borders.* The Church recognizes the rights of sovereign nations to control their territories but rejects such control when it is exerted merely for the purpose of acquiring additional wealth. More powerful economic nations, which have the ability to protect and feed their residents, have a stronger obligation to accommodate migration flows.
- (4) *Refugees and asylum seekers should be afforded protection.* Those who flee wars and persecution should be protected by the global community. This requires, at minimum, that migrants have a right to claim refugee status without incarceration and to have their claims fully considered by a competent authority.
- (5) *The human dignity and human rights of undocumented migrants should be respected.* Regardless of their legal status, migrants, like all persons, possess inherent human dignity that should be respected. Often they are subject to punitive laws and harsh treatment from enforcement officers from both receiving and transit countries. Government policies that respect the basic human rights of the undocumented are necessary.

## 7. A Pastoral Intervention: The Filipino Chaplaincy in France

### 7.1 The "Sending Church"

- 7.1.1 Organization of the local Churches where the migrants are coming from
- 7.1.2 Orientation on the role of migrants as "missionaries" of the Church, "envoys" of the Government, "lifeline of the country's economy" and contemporary heroes"

7.1.3 Orientation on the nature of work, lifestyle that awaits abroad, how to cope with cultural changes, relationships among Filipinos and, most important of all, how to cope with separation from home, the feeling of aloneness/loneliness

7.1.4 Orientation of the families left behind regarding: single spouse system/lifestyle

- : priority/fidelity in marriage
- : solo parenting
- : value formation of children
- : financial management
- : how to handle in-law problems
- : alternative business/livelihood
- : advocacies

7.1.5 Setting up any of the following

- Parish/Diocesan Pastoral Center on Migration
- Parish/Diocesan Ministry on Migration
- Parish/Diocesan Office for Pastoral Services to Migrants

7.2 The “Receiving Church”

7.2.1 Information, knowledge and orientation regarding the place of work’s location, culture and politics, religion and lifestyle and the situation/set up of the local Church and its program/ministry for migrants.

7.2.2 Various programs are provided by local Churches that receive the migrants and their families. Many churches have become haven of migrants in a state of stress and distress.

7.2.3 A case study: the establishment of the Filipino Catholic Chaplaincy in France

- Prayer meeting: the Living Water Community, the seedbed of the Chaplaincy
- the service room visit of the Sto. Nino and BECs
- expansion of regular liturgical celebrations (Sunday masses/feast day of Saint/service room blessing/funeral/thanksgiving masses, etc.)
- training and formation of lay ministers



- development of advocacies for the protection and welfare of workers' rights (both abroad/at home)
- regularization and validation of marriages
- setting up units of CFM in Paris, France
- Reinforcement of marriages (making marriage work for those married in Church!) and regularization of families; pastoral care of children towards their INTEGRATION into the main culture, the thrust of the pastoral center of migrants
- care for the sick in the hospitals and in prison
- Reaching out to the local Churches (Philippines) and to other migrant centers (abroad)

## 8. Challenges to the CFM

8.1 Advocacy to set up pastoral centers for migrants and families to tackle issues/problems of migrants both in their homeland and work place abroad.

8.2 Set up pastoral programs/support groups with special focus on:

- solo parenting
- absentee spouse (fidelity/second family)
- "children without fathers"

8.3 Integration of migrant concerns into the Diocesan/Parish Pastoral vision and mission

- BECs as support group
- Promotion of the solo parents' support session
- Alternative livelihood programs both for families of migrants and returning/retiring migrant workers into the Parish or diocesan Social Services Development Ministry.

8.4 Establishment of a special CFM Evangelization program on Migrants' families

