



**Globalization
and the
Feminization
of Migration**

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The latest data on Philippine migration highlight a number of trends which can be linked, directly or indirectly, to what is already considered an inescapable given — the megatrend called globalization.

One trend is the increase in the number of Filipino migrants in absolute terms, which is consistent with the global phenomenon of "international labor circulation" in tandem with the accelerated pace in the internationalization of production and other economic activities. In fact, the Philippines is now considered "the world's largest labour exporters."

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(The Economist, 1996:7). There are six million Filipino migrants all over the world, categorized as "documented contract workers" (2.45 million), "emigrants" (1.76 million), and "the undocumented" (1.79 million). (Filipino Women Migrants—A Statistical Factbook, 1996:1). The last category highlights the vulnerability of a large group of migrants, because to be "undocumented" in a foreign land is to be without rights, to be open to persecution and abuse. Yet, they leave just the same, for reasons connected with the impact of globalization on the Philippines, Asia, and elsewhere in the world.

Another trend is the increasing feminization of migration, and the deployment of Filipino women migrants in vulnerable occupations mainly within the service sector as domestic helpers and entertainers. In 1993, 54.9 percent of deployed overseas contract workers (OCWs) were women. The percentage of females climbed up to 60 percent in 1994. (Filipino Women—Issues and Trends, 1995:31). More than half the women in recent years (1992 and 1993) were young (20-29 years old), unmarried, and college-educated. (Filipino Women Migrants, 1996:3-5). What this means is that the globalizing trend in the world labor market is built on many givens, including the gender division of labor, as indicated by the niches occupied by specific categories of migrating people.

In terms of destination, women comprised the bulk of migrants to Asia (Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Singapore) and some countries in the Middle East (UAE, Qatar and Bahrain). (Filipino Women—Issues and Trends, 1995: 31). Even in Europe and the Americas, there were fewer deployed women workers compared to other regions but they were still in the majority vis-a-vis men. Although concentrated in a number of countries, Filipino women migrants can now be found all over the world. (Medel-Anonuevo, 1996:4). These trends underscore the increasing mobility of "international labor circulants," seeking opportunity wherever they may find it, but still tending to congregate in certain areas where local and regional developments within the broader ambit of globalization favor their presence.

Remittances of migrant workers increased fourfold in the last decade, and are now estimated at \$4.7 billion. (The Economist, 1996:7). Just to give a concrete idea of how much is sent home by the women particularly, an entertainer remitted P17,266 every six months on the average in 1993; a domestic helper, P9,885. Minimum wages for domestic workers ranged from US\$150 to US\$1000 a month; that for an entertainer was US\$1,500 for six months. (Filipino Women Migrants, 1996:11-12). These figures underscore the "pull factors" associated with overseas migration, as labor moves from low-wage to high-wage countries within the region and all over the world in conjunction with the megatrend.

Globalization as a Complex Phenomenon

But what exactly is this megatrend called globalization?

It is a multi-faceted process which seems to be engulfing much of the world, the Philippines included, at an ever accelerating pace. Although its motive force is primarily economic, it also penetrates the realms of politics, culture, environment, and other areas of human concern. It needs to be understood, and understood well, if its impact on migrants, especially on women, is to be assessed and addressed.

In its narrow sense, globalization refers to the increasing internationalization of production towards a closer integration of the world economy and the eventual creation of a borderless one. This is "reflective of increasing economic liberalization and falling tariff barriers, modern communications, freer flow of capital and technology integrated financial markets and corporate strategies of multinational companies that operate on the premise of a homogeneous world market." (ILO, 1996:1). Globalization has accelerated on the crest of fast-paced technological changes which have transformed the world economy:

...The last two decades have witnessed a technological revolution in microelectronics, computer science, telecommunications and biotechnology which have had profound impact on the world production system. Global

information networks have made it possible for different processes in the production chain to be linked worldwide and thus cut down transaction costs. This has made possible increasing decentralization of operations and subcontracting across national borders leading to a considerable dispersion of the production process. The widespread access of information technology has also increased competitive pressures and forced competitors to innovate continuously to maintain or increase their share of the market. (ILO,1996:2).

These developments have led to the evolution of the New International Division of Labor (NIDL). Under this framework, the role of less developed countries is to supply the advanced industrial countries with cheap labor not only for the low-technology and labor-intensive industries they have been phasing out at home and relocating, through overseas investments, in the labor-surplus underdeveloped countries. This cheap labor also takes the form of "international labor circulants" (Standing,1985:34) needed by home industry and service sector lines offering low-paying, labor-intensive, dirty, hazardous, low-technology and generally unattractive jobs .The "international labor circulants" are not permanent migrant workers, but highly mobile ones who can work in one country for a few months or years, repatriate themselves, and then work again in the same country or some other country where labor is scarce and wages are high.

The number of international migrants has approached staggering levels in contemporary times, reaching at least 125 million at the latest count. (World Bank, 1995:65). The migratory flows, however, are not simply from the underdeveloped South and East to the industrialized North and West. A large number of migrants are also moving from South to South, underscoring economic differentiation which has seen some Southern states evolve into Newly Industrializing Countries (NICs) and others plodding behind as aspiring NICs, or worse, as basket cases. Regional divisions of labor have also emerged, "tethered in different ways to global structures, each one engaged in unequal transactions with world centres of production and finance and distinctive development possibilities." These "sub-global

hierarchies" have their own "poles of economic growth, managerial and technological centres, and security systems." (Mittelman, 1995:279). One example is the "flying geese" formation in the Asia-Pacific region. In this formation, Japan leads the pack followed by the "four little tigers" (South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong), and the emerging Newly Industrializing Countries (Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia). The Philippines, which is near the lower end of the geese formation, would get a preponderance of investments on labor-intensive, low-technology, and energy-consuming types of corporate undertakings.

International migration also needs to be looked at not in terms of unrestrained mobility for migrant workers that easy access to travel facilities seems to suggest, but more in terms of the restrictions they face which often render them vulnerable to abuse. Restrictive immigration policies and unrealistic quotas for regular workers in Japan, in the NICs, and in many countries in Europe, "have created a large gap for needed workforce in vital areas of the economy that clandestine migration and illegal trafficking continues to fill up." (de Dios, 1994:12). Migrants do not enjoy the same rights and privileges as workers in their host countries, which can be considered a form of discrimination and racism. They are not covered by labor laws and are constrained by many conditions and restrictions. The undocumented are most at risk because they are easy prey to unscrupulous employers, traffickers and other criminal elements.

International migration within the changing global and regional divisions of labor also needs to be looked at from a gender perspective, given the trend towards the feminization of migration at least in the Philippine case. The existing gender division of labor is crucial in explaining why women occupy low-skilled, low-paying, and low-status jobs in a segregated labor market. They are disadvantaged in relation not only to workers in their host countries but also to men in both the receiving and sending countries. For example, the increasing demand for Filipina domestic helpers in Singapore, Malaysia, and Hongkong, is a function of better employment opportunities for the women in these countries, given the high rates of economic growth. (Anonuevo, 1996:9). But still, reproductive work which involves taking

care of the home is considered a strictly feminine occupation, which has to be passed on to other women of lower station. It is the same story in the Philippine setting, where the domestic sphere is reserved mainly for women who are obliged to serve men and other family members in their capacities as wives, mothers, or daughters.

Globalization as a political process reduces the role of the nation state "through privatization and deregulation measures covering foreign exchange, financial and capital markets."(ILO,1996:1). Its ability to decide the direction of development through macro-economic policies is increasingly being eroded. For a lot of countries located in the South which experienced colonization, globalization worsens inequalities between nations. In the words of the South Commission:

A network of relationships has been built up among private entities — banks, investment houses, transnational companies—in the leading developed countries. This has served to strengthen the influence of decisions made by private bodies on world economic activity and to that extent to limit the effectiveness of governmental policy decisions. For the South, the result is even further marginalization and greater powerlessness. (South Commission, 1990:5).

Increasing concentration of power at the apex of the world trade and financial system without public accountability is accompanied by contradictory political trends. There is a tendency towards more democracy at least in the formal sense, as evidenced by the collapse of the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe, more openness despite continuing control in the remaining socialist states, and the emergence of many countries from long years of dictatorship. Militarization, however, is not yet a thing of the past, as competing countries have not ceased to arm themselves more heavily, and as weapons of mass destruction continue to exist, to be tested, and to proliferate. At the same time, the notion of a dynamic civil society interacting with if not opposing the state has captured the imagination of many groups of people. Social movements, old and new, are inventing and reinventing themselves, and are building global bridges in the name of peace,

ecology, feminism, and other causes through international fora as well as the the Internet and other elements of the information highway But not all movements have a progressive and constructive agenda. Some are driven by ethnocentrism and religious fundamentalism, which are themselves reactions to the erosion of the secular nation state.

Globalization has also penetrated the sphere of culture and ideology. Cultural influences from the North "are transmitted through the media —whose impact has been intensified by the spread of television, through the advertising of consumer products associated with affluent lifestyles, through education patterned on Northern models and through tourism." (South Commission,1990:6-7). The process of cultural homogenization is ongoing, with ever more sophisticated, computerized channels. This has certainly affected consumer tastes as seen in the large demand for products with world-class brand names, or at least their imitations. The consumerist mindset has been adopted most obviously by a lot of migrants who spend much of their money on the status symbols of the moment. The desire for more and more material goods is also a factor in the drive to work abroad. The colonial mentality still lingers in the minds of many women and makes them imagine life in the industrialized North as the best it can ever be. This is also responsible for their readiness to marry foreign men in the continuing bride trade. In the Philippine case, 91.3 percent of 94,926 Filipino who got engaged or married to foreigners in the period 1989-94 were women. They are found mostly in the United States (41.5 percent), Japan (31.5 percent) and Australia (9.6 percent). Despite the ban on the mail-order bride business imposed by Republic Act No. 6955 in 1990, about one to two thousand Filipinas still go through it to find foreign husbands. (Filipino Women Migrants,1996:20).

The effects on the environment of maldevelopment associated with globalization have been an increasing cause for international concern. One is global warming or the "greenhouse effect" of too much carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. This results from the burning of fossil fuels and the alarming rate of deforestation, which leaves less and less trees to absorb the gas. The progressive loss of forests has resulted in disastrous floods, erosion and siltation. Silt deposits in turn suffocate coral reefs, the habitat and food source of fish. World-

wide deforestation has also been accompanied by the disappearance of many species of plants and animals that could have been used to improve crop varieties, to make medicines and industrial chemicals. Another danger comes from the depletion of the ozone layer as a result of the release of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) into the air. Desertification in the millions of hectares per year is another alarming trend. Air pollutants kill plants and lakes, and cause acid rain. Increased use of chemical fertilizers ruins and acidifies the soil, decreases its productivity, and makes it more prone to erosion. Gaseous and solid wastes from industries have become a serious threat. Still another source of danger is nuclear waste, which up to now has not been safely disposed and is more often than not dumped into Southern territory.

Globalizing the Philippine Economy

The Philippine economy has been progressively globalized since the lifting of exchange controls in the mid-1960s, and the shift towards export orientation laid down under martial law in the 1970s. In exchange for new loans which are extended partly to cover old debts, multilateral institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and various consultative groups of creditor banks and countries (mainly the Group of Seven), have been able to influence governments like that of the Philippines to implement policies favorable to them. These policies are known collectively as structural adjustment programs. Implemented since the 1980s, they have deepened and broadened globalization through trade and investment liberalization, cutbacks on government spending and subsidies, deregulation or removal of government interventions and price controls, privatization, and efforts to increase foreign-exchange earnings, in particular through the further expansion of exports. These are accompanied by unpopular "stabilization" measures such as new taxes, higher public utility rates, wage freezes, and credit squeezes. The underlying principle of all these policies is for the debtor country to spend less and earn more (in foreign exchange) so that it can pay what it owes. The overall objective is to transform the economy into an outward-looking one, and to open it up more widely to foreign investments, products, and technology.

SAPs favor transnational creditors in particular and transnational business in general in a number of ways. Deregulation and import liberalization leave domestic markets wide open for penetration and inundation by foreign products at the expense of locally produced ones. These go on while protection to local industry and agriculture is reduced through the phaseout of tariff protection, credit and other subsidies on one hand, and the fuller application of the brunt of taxation on local producers, on the other. Privatization drives government out of the scene, leaving the field to global concerns which are in the best position to take over even the most lucrative public corporations. Devaluation and wage freezes make domestic labor even cheaper than before, and render transnational exports more competitive in the global market.

But SAPs have always been unkind to women, who suffer most from the cutbacks in social services, and the high prices of basic commodities and public utilities. They are forced to make do with meager salaries as teachers, nurses, and other public sector employees. They are laid off when government corporations are privatized, or when local companies shut down due to stiff foreign competition. They are shunted to the informal sector, where they lack social protection and are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse by employers and orderers in search of the cheapest labor for maximum competitiveness in the local and more importantly, in the global market. Because of structural unemployment and underemployment that can be attributed to SAPs, as well as the low remuneration from jobs within the country, more and more women are migrating in search of foreign exchange to sustain their families. Many have fallen victim to prostitution and trafficking controlled by an increasingly transnationalized sex industry.

SAPs proceeding to the debt have harmed not only women but also the environment. Debtor countries like the Philippines have been forced to overuse their resource base and export their minerals, logs, and other forms of natural wealth to earn precious dollars for debt repayment. This has had negative consequences especially for women who are dependent on natural resources for their families' food, energy, water, and health needs.

The changes being instituted under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)-World Trade Organization (WTO) are essentially a continuation of the SAPs, and constitute a higher stage of globalization through an all out opening up of the economy. These mean more import liberalization (allowing the entry of agricultural products such as rice, corn, vegetables, livestock, and poultry to the detriment of local producers), and more export orientation (emphasizing asparagus, cutflowers, etc. at the expense of the people's food security as more land is devoted to producing things they cannot eat). These mean more insecurity for those employed in industries such as garments which are expected to lose in the global marketplace, given cheaper items from neighboring countries such as China and Vietnam, where the cost of labor is only one-third the Philippine level. These mean easier entry of foreign investors, and even of foreign workers with the liberalization of trade-related services such as banking, insurance, advertising, mass media, tourism, data processing, and accountancy. These also mean more thorough control by the North of advanced knowledge and technology through the guaranteeing of intellectual property rights.

Globalization and Migration: Tying Up the Push and Pull Factors

Although the foregoing discussions have already touched in some ways on the connections between globalization and migration, it is best to elaborate further on the "supply-side push forces" and the "demand-side pull factors" and how these interrelate in the light of international trends.

What are pushing Filipinos, particularly women, out of the country?

Clearly, the globalization of the Philippine economy pursued in the last two and a half decades under the aegis of the IMF, World Bank and other foreign financial and economic interests has failed to sustain the agro-industrial development of the country and meet the basic needs of the people, forcing many of them to seek greener pastures abroad.

The total external debt was estimated at \$40.8 billion in the first quarter of 1996, while domestic debt was reckoned at P633 billion. In the period 1988 to 1995, the national government allotted \$12.7 billion for foreign debt service and P550 billion (\$22 billion) for domestic payments. (Freedom from Debt Coalition, 6th National Congress papers, April, 1996). Ironically, the people shoulder much of the debt burden through the dollars they remit from overseas employment, into which they have been forced by debt-connected structural unemployment and underemployment. These remittances, sent through the formal banking system, amounted to US \$4.7 billion in 1995. But the real figure could easily reach \$6 billion if dollars sent home through other means are considered in the estimate. (The Economist, 1996:7). Actual debt service from 1986-91 averaged 52.8 percent of the national budget. Today, about a third of the budget is allocated for this, severely constraining government's ability to provide for economic development, basic utilities, social services, and structural reforms, much less to win the war against poverty which the Ramos administration declared as its priority as soon as it assumed power

Obviously, continuing poverty is one big factor pushing Filipino women out. According to the **Philippine Plan for Gender-Responsive Development 1995-2025**, "the underlying motivation is poverty alleviation" on the part of Filipinas who emigrate as overseas contract workers or as fiancées and wives. In 1991, 55 percent of the population were officially classified as poor. Later, this estimate decreased to 41 percent, mainly because the government eliminated expenditures on recreation, personal care, cigarettes and spirits from the basket of goods used in measuring the minimum family requirements and in establishing the poverty line. Contrary data, however were released by the Social Weather Station (SWS) which used the self-rated approach in estimating poverty. Respondents who said they were not poor went down from an already low 19 percent in 1992 to a dismal nine percent in 1994. (Ofreneo, 1995:14).

Despite the growth in GNP in 1993-94, unemployment and underemployment rates remained pegged at 9.3-9.5 percent, and 21.4-21.7 percent, respectively, compared to 9.8 percent and 20.5 percent in 1992. (Ofreneo, 1995:12). This means that jobs did not grow com-

mensurately, perhaps because investments were being channeled to speculative activities and enclave undertakings. Huge numbers of unemployed and underemployed can only mean that a large chunk of the population remain poor and comprise an abundant supply of potential migrants. Deployment of overseas contract workers has therefore served as a primary employment strategy for government, and the export of labor, which started as a "temporary measure" during the Marcos administration, has not only become a permanent one but also the country's leading export industry. Migration for employment has been increasingly supervised, monitored, or coordinated by the state: "passports have to be secured, contracts have to be authenticated and approved by the corresponding government agencies, the proper documents have to be presented to customs and immigration officials for travel clearance as well as duties and tax exemptions, etc." (Tigno, 1990).

Poverty can also be inferred from the continuing expansion of the informal sector or the underground economy which according to a 1992 unpublished study of the DOLE, accounted for 51 percent of the employed labor force in 1991. This indicates that the unemployed, underemployed, minimum wage earners and the harassed middle class have sought "informal" ways and means of augmenting limited or falling incomes. Majority of those in this unprotected and unregulated sector are women — home-based workers, vendors, micro-entrepreneurs, seasonal farm labor, domestic helpers, laundrywomen, beauticians, etc.

The general weakness of the economy can be seen in the increasing number of workers, most of them women, who are casually employed. Subcontracting of jobs to small shops and homebased workers (estimated to number between six to seven million) is now an established pattern in industries making garments, toys, shoes, leatherware, and furniture, especially those oriented to the export market. With no overhead costs, no workers' benefits or social security contributions, foreign principals at the top of the subcontracting ladder rake in huge profits. The degree of exploitation is indicated in the fact that a village woman who sews and embroiders a baby dress

is paid the equivalent of 20 US cents while the same baby dress is sold abroad for 15 US dollars.

Women's participation in the labor force, although increasing from 33 percent in 1973 to 47 percent in 1994, was still way below the 80 percent recorded for men. (Filipino Women — Issues and Trends, 1995:22). This means that more than half were still not considered economically active. This half is too large to ignore just because they are classified as housewives who are by NSO definition "non-working". Thus, when women in the labor force are actually counted, they comprise only 37 percent of the total. And when employment and underemployment are considered, women are still generally at a disadvantage compared to men. These can only mean that more women than men in the labor force are in need of jobs at any point in time; and if the housewives are considered as part of the labor force and not existing outside of it, the ranks of the unemployed within the labor force will surely swell.

Gender segregation still exists in the labor market, with women filling up occupations which are generally less valued and therefore less paid. They are still considered secondary and supplemental earners which justifies their getting a fraction of what the primary and male breadwinners receive. Women's earnings comprised 40 percent of men's earnings in 1988, and 47 percent in 1992. (Filipino Women — Issues and Trends, 1995:29). The wage gap is more pronounced in top executive and managerial positions, as well as in agriculture, production-related work, and services.

Women who cannot find remunerative work are often driven to sell their sexual services. Most of these women are young and come from depressed rural areas where jobs are scarce, or are former agricultural, factory or domestic workers in desperate need of more cash. According to a recent study, prostitution in the Philippines is now a full-blown industry, which may be employing directly between 300,000 to about half a million "hospitality" women, not to mention the male and child prostitutes as well as "entertainers" working abroad. Although the sex industry has a large predominantly male local clientele cutting across classes, its growth must also be linked to the increasing em-

phasis on tourism as part of the overall maldevelopment strategy designed to earn ever more dollars for the country. Consequently, Philippine tourism became part of a global industry "a multi-billion dollar network of airlines, hotel chains, credit card companies, advertising agencies, travel agencies, restaurant and entertainment chains [which] serve the consumer societies of North America, Western Europe, Japan and Australasia." (Shoemith, 1980). The multinational hold became quite evident in the management of local hotels by transnational hotel chains, as well as the connection of these hotels with international airlines and travel agencies. With the advent of the "package-deal" sex tours, the integration went further down, as bars and clubs to which tourists are taken, many of which also have foreign capital, get their share of a thriving global business built on the sale of women's sexual services.

It may be recalled in this connection that migration of Filipino women entertainers to Japan grew by leaps and bounds after massive protests staged by religious and women's groups had stopped the sex tours which had allowed hordes of Japanese men to have sex while on tour. Today, Japanese men do not need to go to Manila to enjoy the sexual services of Filipino women. "Cultural entertainers" (meaning hostesses, bar and massage girls and strip tease dancers) from the Philippines are already in Japan to provide entertainment plus. Filipino "mail-order brides" are performing the same functions, plus domestic service, for Japanese farmers in the farflung countryside.

But aside from the economic and political factors behind migration, the cultural and ideological dimensions of the problem cannot be discounted. Already discussed earlier are the materialistic and consumerist tendencies stemming from the aggressive global marketing of brand-name products, which also happen to be what migrants bring home or what their families buy in duty-free shops. Addiction or attraction to such goods can drive migrants to continue exporting themselves and non-migrants to try and find work abroad. Colonial mentality is also quite evident especially in the mail-order bride phenomenon, as mentioned before. Gender ideology is a decisive element, especially when it comes to family-oriented reasons cited by dutiful

mothers and daughters who leave the country. These cultural and ideological factors acquire added significance in the light of findings that "overseas migrants are largely drawn from the richer regions, and then within these, not from the poorer sections of the population." (ILO/UNDP, 1996:35). Thus, it may not really be stark and grinding poverty which pushes them out of the country but more a desire for greater material advancement.

As regards the "demand-side pull factors" used to explain migration in the light of globalization, certain trends may be highlighted using the case of Japan.

Japan has achieved a steady and sustained success in restructuring its economy towards industries which are capital-, knowledge-, and skills-intensive. It has relocated many of its labor-intensive and low-technology industries to less developed, low-wage countries, mainly in the Asian region. It has also set up production facilities in North America and Europe to skirt trade barriers and to have direct access to the huge markets in these continents.

With the growing sophistication of her industry and with a very low rate of unemployment, Japan has been experiencing labor shortages in certain industry and service sector lines, specifically those employing low technology and intensive forms of labor utilization. Because of such developments, Japan, which has a highly protected labor market, has been forced, gradually and grudgingly to admit more and more foreign workers needed to occupy the labor-intensive and 3-D (demanding, dirty, and dangerous) jobs which cannot be transferred overseas, including those in the domestic entertainment industry and the construction industry. Such workers are attracted by the relatively high wage levels enhanced by the appreciation of the yen vis-a-vis other currencies in recent years. The presence of syndicates, brokers, promoters, operators, and fixers, best exemplified by the Yakuza, who facilitate labor recruitment, is likewise considered a pull factor. Japan's relative geographical proximity also makes it a more convenient destination.

In the case of the NICs of the Asian region, the restructuring of their economies towards higher technology and increased productivity has opened up employment opportunities for local women, leading to the transfer of their domestic burden to migrant women from the Philippines. Some of these countries are also experiencing labor shortages in certain industries which are filled up by a clandestine pool of workers. (De Dios,1994:8).

In Europe, an estimated 85 percent or 400,000 of the 500,000 Filipino migrants are women. In Italy, Spain, Greece and other countries within the continent, even school teachers settle for jobs as chambermaids and hospital cleaners, doing chores often shunned by European workers. There are some 55,000 domestic helpers in Spain, not only because of the relatively higher pay (US \$750-900 a month), but also because of the 300-year colonial relationship the Philippines had with the country. (Anonuevo,1996:12).

Colonial ties also figure in the influx of Filipino nurses into the United States. But the more important reason perhaps is the high monthly salary ranging from US2000-3000 (Anonuevo,1996:11).

But there are factors that go beyond relations between two countries. Trafficking in women for prostitution or for clandestine work as domestics involves an intricate web which stretches across borders and continents. Cases of Filipinas being victimized have been reported not only in Europe but also in Malaysia, Hong Kong, Macao, and Nigeria. (De Dios,1994:7). Marketing of Filipino women as commodities has become more sophisticated, invading even the Internet which is extremely difficult to regulate.

Some Policy Implications

The migration of Filipino women will remain a trend for the next few years, given the complex interaction of push and pull factors in the context of globalization. It will stop only when the Philippine economy has been sufficiently reorganized to serve the needs of its people first, specifically the need for remunerative employment, which can only be fulfilled by solid institutional reforms and accelerated but

sustainable agro-industrial development. In this light, an outright ban would only be counter-productive, hurting the very people it purports to protect. (ILO/UNDP,1996:35). Domestic helpers and entertainers would still leave the country, but this time on an underground basis. Those who exploit and abuse them would no longer be constrained by the thought that their victims could seek official protection. And migrants prevented from leaving would most likely find themselves without decent jobs, given the high rates of unemployment, underemployment, and informalization of the labor market.

Meanwhile, protection of migrants, especially women in vulnerable occupations, is an urgent necessity, but can the state be relied upon to do this, given the weakening of its powers in the light of globalization? Certainly, the Philippine government should improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its pre-departure, on-site, and post-employment programs and services for overseas workers, which, needless to say, should be gender-responsive and culture-sensitive. But then it has to face budgetary limitations connected with SAPs and stabilization programs. Nevertheless, it cannot follow the path of least resistance by heeding the call for SAP-like progressive deregulation, as indicated in the DOLE White Paper of 1995. Instead, it can explore "a strategy of selective interventions" as recommended by the ILO/UNDP, which includes stopping migration to countries with bad records, organizing OCW communities abroad, making the most of remittances, "anticipating external labour demand patterns," and of course, over the long term, "structural reforms and macro-economic reorientation." (ILO/UNDP,1996:36-45).

But there are migration issues and concerns which go beyond the pale of individual nation states. For example,trafficking in women has become an "issue without borders," which "can no longer be solved through piecemeal solutions by a few concerned governments." (De Dios,1994:14).Restrictive immigration policies and unrealistic quotas for regular workers imposed by receiving countries have to be addressed internationally, especially since they lead to the persecution and abuse of illegal or undocumented migrants. Internationally recognized labor and human rights standards, as contained in the UN Migrant Workers' Convention, need to be adhered to by all countries accepting migrant labor, but this is far from the case.

Unfortunately, governments generally respond only to pressures from below, specifically on issues related to workers' rights, violence against women, and the social protection of migrants both as workers and as women. This is where civil society, through non-governmental and people's organizations, can play a crucial role both nationally and internationally, proving that globalization has an underside which embodies both resistance and critical engagement in the interest of the most vulnerable sections of humanity

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