

Migration, the market and society: Issues in Philippine labor flows to Japan*

Jorge V. Tigno

Instructor

Department of Political Science
College of Social Sciences and Philosophy
University of the Philippines

Introduction

It is difficult to isolate the migration of Filipino workers to Japan from the extensive Filipino migration throughout the rest of the world. Indeed, Filipino contract migration to Japan reflects the integrated character and nature of labor migration patterns worldwide.

The decision to migrate is typically understood as a reaction of an individual to his or her status in the labor market both in the country of origin and in the country of destination. This does not often apply in international contract labor migration where the individual's decision to move is triggered by factors beyond any one person's control. Indeed, as Lane (1992:24) observes:

The willingness of migrants to work overseas is a necessary but not sufficient condition for international migration... Labor exporting governments still enthusiastically support overseas contract work since it is a major source of foreign capital... Migration... is not only a personal decision but [is] also due to the failure of development policies to provide adequate living and employment structures.¹

*Based on a paper presented at the Ninth Yokohama 21st Century Forum: "International Symposium on Foreign Workers," sponsored by the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Yokohama City University, Japan (21-23 November 1992).

¹Barbara Lane, "Filipino Domestic Workers in Hongkong" in *Asian Migrant*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (January-March 1992), p. 24.

Particularly in the Philippines, it is generally agreed that the individual decision to migrate has been increasingly precluded by social and political structures, and institutions seemingly beyond the control of any particular individual or social group.

It is within this broad context, therefore, that this paper intends to 1) outline and examine the dynamics that lead to increased labor flows from the Philippines to Japan; 2) describe the conditions of labor migration to Japan; and 3) explore areas of concern for both Japanese and Filipino policymakers.

Three global patterns help situate Filipino migration in recent history. Labor migration has typically moved from the poor and labor-saturated economies of the South to the more prosperous North. The relationship between the Philippines and Japan illustrates this pattern.

In the case of Filipino workers in Japan, nominal increases in migrant earnings do not always compensate for the actual costs of recruitment and other deployment problems including those experienced on-site. Too often, the migrant experiences a net loss rather than long-term gain.

The pattern of migration from the Philippines to Japan reflects patterns in the international division of labor, which is determined by complex economic, geographical and sociopolitical factors including labor and immigration policies, geographical and perceived social distance, the level of dependence and interdependence, development and underdevelopment, and the corresponding economic policies in both the sending and receiving countries.

The growing, but not yet widespread, concern for migrant rights reflects a concerted effort on the part of Japanese society and other labor-importing countries to resolve problems of foreign workers. The efficacy of such an effort depends on whether the societies concerned address the relevant sociopolitical conditions.

In order to transform the current economic situation that encourages Philippine labor flows to Japan, both societies must reexamine key social and political values that perpetuate and intensify migration flow. This analysis has been guided by established assumptions about migration in general such as high unemployment, endemic poverty and lack of social and political order.

Some key features of
Philippine labor flows to Japan

Changing Philippine labor deployments

When labor migration began in the 1970s, Filipino workers initially went to the Gulf countries.

Since 1984, however, the rate of labor deployments to West Asia, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in particular, has been in erratic decline even as the actual number of such deployments has been increasing. This is seen in the decline in overall shares in the Gulf market relative to total processed and deployed workers (See Table 1). The share for West Asia dropped from 83.29 percent in 1983 to 79.21 percent in 1984, and to 69.3 percent in 1989 and even 65 percent by 1990. Around this time, though, there was a notable increase in the migration flow to Japan and other so-called alternative markets (e.g., Taiwan, South Korea and Singapore) within the Asian region. The Asian market share of total processed and deployed workers had steadily and significantly increased from only 1.29 percent in 1983 to 16.48 percent by 1984, and to almost 25 percent by 1989 and 1990.

Table 1: Processed and Deployed Landbased Workers by Major World Group as Percentage of Total (1983-1989, in Percent)

<u>Region</u>	<u>1983</u>	<u>1984</u>	<u>1985</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>1988</u>	<u>1989</u>
Africa	.61	.61	.49	.48	.40	.50	.50
Asia	1.29	16.48	19.40	23.41	22.54	24.05	24.26
Europe	1.22	1.26	.98	1.46	1.55	1.97	2.20
Americas	.83	1.16	1.08	2.49	1.77	2.05	2.80
Gulf	83.29	79.21	76.68	70.40	72.02	69.30	67.84
Others	12.76	1.28	1.87	1.76	1.72	2.13	2.40
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Sources: (1988) Labor Assistance Center Deployment Report as Processed by the Policies and Planning Branch, POEA (1983-1987) Statistical Compendium, POEA (1989) International Labor Organization as cited in Hiroshi Murashita, "Philippine Workers in Japan," a paper presented at a Roundtable Conference on Japanese Capital in the Philippines and Filipino Labor in Japan, sponsored by the UP. SOLAIR, AIT Hotel (25 July 1992).

The decline in Philippine labor deployment shares to the Gulf along with the increase in the share of the Asian labor market were caused in part by a) the saturation of the traditional Gulf market after numerous infrastructure contracts were terminated when the funds were depleted or when the projects were completed or near completion; b) the increasing attraction of the closer Asian market based on a perceived sense of social and geographical proximity and the unfavorable social climate of some Gulf countries (e.g., the general hostility toward Asian workers); and c) the persistence of unresolved political tensions and conflicts within the Gulf region that continue to threaten the lives of foreign workers there.

The problems for the more traditional markets of West Asia came to a head during the Gulf War of late 1990 to early 1991. Direct military intervention in the resolution of the border problems between Kuwait and Iraq caused a huge number of foreign workers in these areas to evacuate to safer territory such as Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Many Filipinos eventually ended up back in the Philippines, compelling Philippine labor officials to consider and develop safer alternative markets for Filipino migrant workers.

Filipino entrants to Japan

Even before the advent of the Gulf War, Japan had already become a dominant labor market for Filipino workers in the Asia-Pacific region. The Japanese labor market became an alternative when the demand for Filipino workers in the Gulf countries abated. The Philippines rank among the top five source countries of entrees to Japan. As indicated in Table 2, between 1987 to 1992, Filipino entrants to Japan increased consistently, from 85,267 in 1987 to 493,751 in 1992. Filipino entrants, however, are significantly smaller in number compared to other Asians, particularly those from South Korea and Taiwan.

Data on the age and gender of Filipino entrants suggest a strong bias for the young. Some 47,800 of the Filipinos that went to Japan in 1991 were 20-24 years old as indicated in Table 3 while an additional 30,173 belonged to the 25-29 age bracket. What is significant to note, however, is that these percentages are dominated by females in the 15-19 and 20-24 year age brackets, both of which have a female-to-male ratio of 10.01 and 10.18, respectively. Similar data for other countries indicated substantially less female-to-male ratios for the same age brackets

(e.g., 1.52 and 2.03 for South Korea; 3.27 and 3.82 for Taiwan; 0.58 and 0.50 for Malaysia; and 1.58 and 1.3 for Thailand).

Table 2: New Entrants to Japan By Country of Origin (Top Five Countries in Asia, 1987-1991)

<u>Country</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>% of total</u>	<u>1988</u>	<u>% of total</u>	<u>1989</u>	<u>% of total</u>
S.Korea	360159	16.66	515807	21.36	806065	27.00
Taiwan	360636	16.39	392723	16.27	501907	16.81
China	73030	3.38	112389	4.65	100144	3.35
Philippines	85267	3.95	86567	3.59	88296	2.96
Thailand	33719	1.56	41994	1.74	49117	1.65

<u>Country</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>% of total</u>	<u>1991</u>	<u>% of total</u>	<u>1992</u>	<u>% of total</u>
S.Korea	978984	27.94	1097601	28.47	3758616	25.19
Taiwan	610652	17.42	686076	17.79	2551994	17.10
China	117814	3.36	142150	3.69	545527	3.66
Philippines	108292	3.09	145329	3.25	493751	3.31
Thailand	69477	1.98	105666	2.74	299973	2.01

Source: Japanese Ministry of Justice as cited by Murashita, Table 3.

Diversification of deployment procedures

Concerning the occupations that Filipinos take abroad, there is an increasing selectivity of the migrant workforce on the basis of sex and age. While there have been less deployments coming from the production sector during 1983 to 1987, there was a steady increase in the deployment of service and entertainment sector workers as indicated in Table 4. Japan is a major destination for Filipino migrant labor, particularly entertainers. Generally, Filipinos who come to work in Japan are young, female and commonly associated with entertainment forms that are usually presumed to be illegal and sex-related.

Desperate economic needs compounded by the long and costly process of landing a job abroad convince Filipino migrants to tolerate even exploitative and inhuman working conditions. Notes sociologist David:

Dazzled by stories of fat earnings in Japan by returning Filipino entertainers, many families are, in fact, led to expect a quick

Table 3: New Entrants by Age Sex and Country of Origin (Selected Countries, 1991)

Country	0-4	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-49	50-59	60-Over	(Male) (Female) (F/MRatio)
S. Korea	20381 17111 0.84	7196 10964 1.52	28142 57176 2.02	81937 66210 0.81	105693 63672 0.60	92793 52532 0.57	127964 65733 0.51	89404 68718 0.77	79107 62866 0.79	
Taiwan	26376 23340 0.90	33669 11657 3.27	10253 39132 3.82	33092 55023 1.62	40828 49333 1.21	43344 48056 1.11	54689 56884 1.04	42399 50781 1.20	50706 45232 0.89	
Philippines	1711 2185 1.28	711 7114 10.01	4293 43690 10.18	4793 25380 5.30	3872 10047 2.59	3269 4197 1.28	4069 3709 0.91	1869 2106 1.13	1032 1292 1.24	
Thailand	2141 2097 0.98	1595 2527 1.58	7690 10020 1.30	11409 10639 0.93	10516 8022 0.76	9023 5527 0.61	10832 5515 0.51	3812 2149 0.56	1182 970 0.86	
Malaysia	1165 1033 0.89	2391 1385 0.58	11143 5604 0.50	12533 5350 0.43	9258 3508 0.38	7480 2402 0.32	8018 2584 0.32	2037 1083 0.53	549 496 0.90	

Source: Japanese Ministry of Justice as cited by Murashita, Table 13

Table 4: Processed Philippine OCWs by Occupation (1976-1989)

Occupation	1976	1977	% inc	1978	% inc	1979	% inc	1980	% inc	1981	% inc	1982	% inc	1983	% inc	1984	% inc	1985	% inc	1986	% inc	1987	% inc	
Professional	2924	2650	-9.37	5238	97.66	9584	82.97	11966	24.85	12347	3.18													
Admin	82	210	156.10	311	48.10	1441	363.34	740	-48.65	1804	143.78													
Clerical	370	944	155.14	1516	60.59	2896	91.03	5385	85.95	2585	-52.00													
Services	3893	4576	17.54	7910	72.86	14089	78.12	23442	66.39	33109	41.24													
Laborers	7990	26086	226.48	29763	14.10	55678	87.07	101496	82.18	144970	42.92													
Entertainers	3872	2057	-46.88	6097	196.40	8380	37.44	12395	47.91	14333	15.64													
Sales	16	30	87.50	69	130.00	265	284.06	451	70.19	466	3.33													
Occupation	15010	21.57	39674	165.25	51403	29.11	57617	12.09	60753	5.44	112296	84.74												
Professional	1462	-18.96	1870	27.91	1222	-34.65	1202	-1.64	1317	9.57	1675	27.18												
Admin	8519	229.56	14189	66.56	151179	6.54	15141	0.16	15261	0.79	15929	4.38												
Clerical	43248	30.62	58151	34.46	77564	33.38	91381	17.81	117127	28.17	106654	-8.94												
Services	165899	14.44	249222	50.23	207888	-16.59	150074	-27.81	131294	-12.51	144541	10.09												
Laborers	13425	-6.34	13117	-2.29	13997	6.72	18342	31.03	26816	46.20	37888	41.29												
Entertainers	1395	199.36	2259	61.94	2295	1.59	2780	21.13	3562	28.13	4268	19.82												
Sales																								

Source: ILO, Asian Regional Program on International Migration, Statistical Report 1990 is cited by Scalabrini Migration Center (November 1992)

deliverance from their economic woes by the anticipated earnings of their daughters, sisters, wives or mothers. Such pressure from the family back home can be so compelling as to produce in the Filipino worker the kind of docility and submissiveness that Japanese employers have come to expect from migrant workers.²

Many of the Filipino workers were brought to Japan through Japanese sponsorship or through Filipino recruitment agents and brokers. Brokers charge prospective Filipino migrants fees exceeding the legal maximum of P5,000.00 or about US\$225.00. Brokers's rates range from US\$2,400 to US\$8,000 per recruit depending on the occupation desired and the risks involved.³ In most cases, the worker must pay back the recruitment cost upon employment in Japan. In the case of entertainment workers, some are "rented" out to Japanese clubs for a fee of US\$1,600 to US\$2,400 a month.⁴

Since 1986, an increasing number of Filipinos enter Japan both as foreign trainees and through family reunification arrangements and mechanisms as spouses or children of Japanese nationals. Marriages are commonly arranged by brokers and Filipino workers for the sole purpose of obtaining legal resident status in Japan. As indicated in Table 5, while South Koreans made up the largest number of entrants from 1987 to 1991, South Korean trainees and family reunification members make up only 14.01 and 14.59 percent of the total number between 1986 and 1990 (1987 to 1989 for family reunification members). Filipinos had the highest number of workers (31.99 percent) entering Japan as family members of Japanese nationals and 9.9 percent of the total number of trainee entrants during the same period.

Though Filipino entrants make up a small percentage of Asians in Japan, the most number of overstaying nationals in Japan are Filipinos (27,228 in 1991). Many of those who stay beyond the period allowed by their visa entered Japan either as entertainment workers or as temporary visitors (Table 6).

The number of overstaying Filipino nationals for 1991 represents roughly 21.7 percent of all new Filipino entrants for that year. Only 2.35 percent of overstaying nationals in Japan are South Korean; the other

²David, pp. 14-15.

³Yayori Matsui, "The History of the Sex Industry in Japan," a paper of the Asian Women's Association-Japan delivered at a conference on "The International Trafficking of Women," held in New York from 22-23 October 1988 and reprinted in *Kanlungan ng Migrante* (April-June 1991), p. 5.

⁴Matsui, p. 3.

nationals are from Thailand, 18 percent; China, 12.33 percent; and Taiwan 0.76 percent.

In spite of these figures, deportations of illegal Filipino workers have actually decreased to only 4,042 for 1990 from over 6,000 in 1986 as seen in Table 7. The number of deportations for other nationalities have actually increased within the same period (deportations of South Koreans increased from 119 in 1986 to over 5,500 by 1990). There were less than 350 rejections at the port of entry in 1991, down from over 1,000 in 1987 as seen in Table 8 while South Koreans rejected at the airport increased from 133 to 3,433 and Thais from 389 to 2,962.

Table 5: Alien Entrants as Trainees and Family Members (Selected Countries, 1986-1990)

<u>Country</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>1988</u>	<u>1989</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
China	2848	2688	3840	3496	7624	20496(Trainees)	16.81
			558	556	670	1784(Family)	10.66
Thailand	950	2428	4708	4502	5075	17663(Trainees)	14.48
			152	213	273	638(Family)	3.81
S.Korea	2336	2800	3343	4125	4485	17089(Trainees)	14.01
			437	502	1503	2442(Family)	14.59
Philippines	968	1207	2464	3974	3460	12073(Trainees)	9.90
			915	2009	2430	5354(Family)	31.99
Malaysia	620	757	1329	2175	3564	8445(Trainees)	6.92
			16	25	35	76(Family)	0.45

Source: Japanese Ministry of Justice as cited by Murashita, Tables 9 and 10

The data imply that, perhaps, Filipinos are resorting to more diverse means of entry into Japan. For instance, there has been a shift from documented to undocumented status for a growing number of Filipino entrants. Many Filipinos working in Japan have violated the terms of their visas either by working without the proper permit or by simply overstaying. As many as half may have entered Japan under a different name. A high degree of flexibility contributes to the increase in the number of undocumented Filipinos in Japan although it is not the only reason behind the diversification of Filipino migration.

Because so many of them have undocumented or illegal status in Japan, Filipino workers tend to proliferate in informal, underground

Table 6: Overstaying Aliens by Country of Origin, Sex And by Status/Occupation (Selected Countries, 1991)

Country	Entertainers	Temporary Visitors	Students (College)	Pre-College Students	Trainees	Others	Total	%OfNew Entrants
Philippines	590	11542	11	439	91	232	12905(M)	
	2853	10179	19	487	14	771	14323(F)	
	3443	21721	30	926	105	1003	27228(T)	21.72
S.Korea	3	16812	25	185	31	851	17977(M)	17.04%OfTotal
	16	6403	50	76	3	1323	7871(F)	
	19	23215	145	261	34	2174	25848(T)	2.35
Thailand	3	6392	10	127	112	123	6767(M)	16.17%OfTotal
	3	12168	5	39	18	93	12326(F)	
	6	18560	15	166	130	216	19093(T)	18.07
China	1	1109	1052	9941	82	1651	13836(M)	11.95%OfTotal
	11	663	333	1397	19	1276	3699(F)	
	12	1772	1385	11338	101	2927	17535(T)	12.33
Taiwan	2	2174	9	5	4	162	2356(M)	10.97%OfTotal
	7	2682	4	5	1	186	2885(F)	
	9	4856	13	10	5	348	5241(T)	0.76
								3.28 %OfTotal

M - male; F - female; T - total

Source: Japanese Ministry of Justice as cited by Murashita, Table 13

Japanese or Filipino groups and organizations, exacerbating their already tenuous situation. It becomes difficult for the Japanese government to monitor the conditions of undocumented foreigners in Japan.

Table 7: Deportations of Illegal Workers (Selected Countries of Origin, 1986-1990)

<u>Country</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>%ofTotal</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>%ofTotal</u>	<u>1988</u>	<u>%ofTotal</u>
S.Korea	119	1.46	208	1.84	1033	7.22
Malaysia	ND	NA	18	0.16	279	1.95
Philippines	6297	77.44	8027	70.99	5386	37.63
Pakistan	196	2.41	905	8.00	2497	17.44
Thailand	990	12.18	1067	9.44	1388	9.70
GrandTotal	8131		11307	39.06	14314	26.59

<u>Country</u>	<u>1989</u>	<u>%ofTotal</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>%ofTotal</u>	<u>GrandTotal</u>
S.Korea	3129	18.84	5534	18.52	10023
Malaysia	1865	11.23	4465	14.94	6627
Philippines	3740	22.52	4042	13.53	27492
Pakistan	3170	19.09	3886	13.00	10654
Thailand	1144	6.89	1450	4.85	6039
GrandTotal	16608	16.03	29884	79.94	80244

Source: Japanese Ministry of Justice as cited by Murashita, Table 6

Japanese economy and society

While many concede that Japan is currently suffering from its worst recession yet,⁵ one cannot underestimate nor overemphasize the demands of Japan's labor market in relation to the entry of foreign workers. Contrary to some economic analyses, Japan still depends to a significant degree on foreign labor resources. The effective job-opening-to-applicant ratio in Japan averaged 1.25 by 1989 and has stayed above 1.4 since 1990. Numerous Japanese individuals have declared personal

⁵Associated Press, "It's Official: Japan is in a Recession" in *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (7 December 1992), p. 24.

bankruptcy even as many Japanese firms declare bankruptcy due to labor shortages.⁶

Table 8: Land Rejections by Japanese Immigration (Selected Countries, 1987-1991)

<u>Country</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>%ofTotal</u>	<u>1988</u>	<u>%ofTotal</u>	<u>1989</u>	<u>%ofTotal</u>
Thailand	389	9.37	996	8.97	793	7.60
Malaysia	40	0.96	394	3.55	2000	19.20
Korea	133	3.20	1070	9.63	3906	37.50
Taiwan	293	7.06	253	2.28	374	3.50
Philippines	1034	24.91	365	3.29	243	2.30
Pakistan	1355	32.64	4288	38.61	677	6.51
GrandTotal	4151		11107		1040	

<u>Country</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>%ofTotal</u>	<u>1991</u>	<u>%ofTotal</u>	<u>GrandTotal</u>
Thailand	2962	21.26	6738	24.83	11878
Malaysia	3408	24.46	4875	17.96	10717
Korea	3433	24.64	2280	8.40	10822
Taiwan	556	3.99	1402	5.17	2878
Philippines	325	2.33	407	1.50	2374
Pakistan	276	1.98	395	1.46	6991
GrandTotal	13934		27137		66733

SOURCE: Japanese Ministry of Justice as cited by Murashita, Table 5

Japanese society has changed significantly in demographic terms prompting the need for workers with particular skills. Workers aged 15-44 had declined from 50.8 percent in 1970 to 44 percent by 1990. The Japanese Labor Ministry anticipates that there will be a labor shortage of 5.2 million by 1995 and 9.1 million by 2010.⁷ Importing foreign workers is seen by many as a convenient solution to the undeniable shortage in the Japanese labor market.

At the moment, there are approximately 900,000 aliens living in Japan and around 700,000 of these are Koreans left over from Japanese

⁶"Japan Needs Foreign Labor," *Japan Times* (8 January 1991).

⁷As cited by Graziano Battistella, "Migration in 1991: Considerations From a Review of the Press" in *Asian Migrant* (January-March 1992), p. 6.

colonial rule.⁸ As the number of foreigners (both legal and undocumented ones) continues to increase, social tensions existing within Japanese society are further complicated. Foreigners in Japan thus, see a need for increased administrative attention to emigration and immigration policies.⁹

Japanese policy towards foreign workers and their attendant problems

Japanese officials are clearly reluctant to formally open their market to foreign labor, unskilled labor in particular. There are many explanations for this kind of reluctance:

... the derived social costs, when foreigners will ask to be reunited with their families and will eventually move to better jobs, creating additional demands for unskilled labor. Costs will also be originated by the necessity of providing language and skills training. Then the more general factor of social integration into Japanese society has to be evaluated.¹⁰

Japanese immigration policies are highly selective for certain types of workers. Unskilled workers are officially denied entry for employment purposes. The terms for the granting of legal resident status appear faulty. Even those born in Japan whose parents come from former colonies or are former citizens of Japan are treated no differently from other foreigners. Immigration policies, observes Kobayashi:

... 1) make it the duty of public officials to report illegal workers; 2) observe the principle that if illegal workers are caught they are not given reprieve or the chance to file for unpaid wages or accident compensation; 3) require that all foreigners carry their identification cards at all times; and 4) they contain procedures for deportation which are extremely formalized and mechanical...¹¹

⁸Toshimichi Furukawa, "The Legal System for Administration of Emigration and Immigration in Japan With a Focus on the Issue of 'Illegal Workers'," paper presented at the Roundtable Conference on Japanese Capital in the Philippines and Filipino Labor in Japan, sponsored by the Osaka University of Economics and Law and the UP School of Labor and Industrial Relations, AIT Hotel, 25 July 1992, p. 1.

⁹Furukawa, p. 1.

¹⁰Battistella, p. 6.

¹¹Yasuo Kobayashi, "Human Rights Issues Concerning Foreign Workers in Japan," p. 2.

Foreign working students and trainees may work for only a limited number of hours and have insufficient access to social benefits. Japanese policies concerning undocumented foreign workers neglect the vital issue of legalization of their status. Foreign workers are confined generally to dirty, dangerous and low-status occupations. Besides problems in occupation, the workplace and public policy, foreign workers in Japan encounter specific social problems, such as language barriers, lack of health care and other social benefits, and settlement and housing difficulties. Foreigners experience some degree of discrimination not only from government but from society as a whole.

Filipino workers in the entertainment, construction and production sectors, i.e., the unskilled and semi-skilled occupations, work extended hours, at a fraction of what Japanese nationals would earn for the same work. For example, most entertainment workers work for 10 hours a day, seven days a week. They live in cramped accommodations (eight to ten are usually housed in a 2.6 x 3.5 meter *tatami* or mat rooms. So-called "day workers" are almost always undocumented or overstaying Filipinos working in the construction industry. They live in "flophouses" or small rooms with a single bed which they rent for 2,000 yen (US\$ 17.00) per day or 60,000 yen (US\$ 500.00) for a month. Most of these Filipinos must tolerate inhuman working and living conditions despite the fact that many are professionals and college graduates in the Philippines.

This seeming inattention to immigration issues has become the hallmark of Japanese migrant labor policy. As sociologist Chung observes:

Ever increasing numbers of illegal foreign workers [are] trying to get into Japan despite its obstinate close[d] door policy with only a small exception of training systems for Asian workers and work permits for Japanese emigrants in Latin America. This implies that the labor market needs and absorbs foreign workers and that the government, with its unrealistically close[d] door policy, is not effectively controlling illegal workers... In fact, Japan gets the most benefit in this situation. Japanese small-scale companies can use foreign workers with low wages and poor labor conditions, before they [can] make technological advances. Foreign workers do not have any bargaining power because of their illegal status.¹²

¹²Chin Sung Chung, "Illegal Korean Workers in Japan," a paper presented at the Ninth Yokohama 21st Century Forum on Foreign Workers sponsored by the Yokohama City University, Japan (21-23 November 1992), p. 7.

Therefore, the Filipinos' ability to circumvent immigration policies is not the only reason for increasing numbers of undocumented workers. Much of the blame also lies on Japanese policy decisions and implementation.

Fortunately, there are non-governmental initiatives that address many of the difficulties of undocumented Filipino workers as well as discriminatory Japanese immigration and labor policies. In Japan, there are 20 or so major NGOs and NGO networks serving most of the areas that are highly populated by foreign workers. Most of these non-governmental initiatives are undertaken by church-related and church-based groups which offer counseling, legal assistance and emergency refuge. Such forms of intervention emphasize the protection of migrant workers' rights.

Socioeconomic gains and costs

Of losers and winners

Despite the distinct problems facing undocumented foreign workers in Japan, Filipinos continue to seek employment in the country that has the highest GNP per capita throughout Asia. Filipino day workers in Japan normally earn from 8,000 to 15,000 yen (US\$67.00 to US\$125.00) a day. Each month they stand to earn some US\$1,700.00 to US\$2,000.00 – a huge sum compared to the US\$250.00 average monthly salary in the Philippines. Workers in the entertainment sector can earn a substantial income as well, depending on how many times they have come to work in Japan; first timers earn US\$350.00 a month; second timers, US\$500.00; and third timers, US\$700.00. Such wage increases are attractive to Filipinos even when these amount to only a fraction of official wage rates. The average monthly wage in Japan rose from US\$1,255.55 in 1985 to US\$2,127.26 in 1990.¹⁵

Between 1978 and 1991, Filipinos in Japan managed to remit some US\$257.5 million as seen in Table 9. Filipinos in Japan made the third largest remittance during this period after Filipinos in the United States and Saudi Arabia, two traditional markets for Philippine labor.

If such is the effect on foreigners wanting to work in Japan, what does the receiving country get in return? A study done on the undocumented alien workforce in Taiwan concludes that "the impact of guest workers

¹⁵Chung, p. 1.

Table 9: Top Ten Countries in Terms of Remittances (In Thousand US Dollars, 1978-1991)

Country/ Sector	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
USA	31274	31359	25037	42939	70764	192902	20395
Landbased	9191	6654	8706	23712	52997	165461	17290
Seabased	22083	24705	16331	19227	17767	27441	31649
KSA	12026	359	17666	22725	35061	108456	144565
Landbased	11986	7005	17316	21429	33906	106765	140093
Seabased	40	354	350	1296	1155	1691	447
Japan	3874	1902	5723	7718	12750	15996	25019
Landbased	1952	294	3387	4907	7582	11535	20566
Seabased	1922	1608	2336	2811	5168	4461	4453
UK	3510	3319	5799	7752	6938	20257	38512
Landbased	133	112	108	95	738	14657	31331
Seabased	3377	3207	5691	7657	6195	5600	7181
Hongkong	838	752	1447	8147	10065	7977	6007
Landbased	87	28	71	136	341	2150	1909
Seabased	751	724	1376	8011	9722	5827	4098
W.Germany	442	592	1424	759	7794	14378	7438
Landbased	72	145	129	110	3812	12290	6311
Seabased	370	447	1295	649	3982	2088	1127
Singapore	751	1187	787	1915	4120	4918	3117
Landbased	105	301	449	869	1508	3510	1694
Seabased	466	886	338	1046	2612	1408	1423
Kuwait	766	293	223	667	1878	2044	1304
Landbased	620	285	215	620	1707	2027	1300
Seabased	146	8	8	47	171	17	4
Greece	294	306	758	3945	3943	2639	2202
Landbased	3	0	4	13	34	151	403
Seabased	291	306	754	3932	3909	2486	1799
Netherlands	165	458	227	577	4305	7693	4552
Landbased	32	1	0	1	3674	7638	3566
Seabased	133	457	227	576	631	55	996
Total	53760	47507	59091	97144	157611	377260	436634
TOTAL**	290850	364740	421300	545870	810480	944450	658890
Landbased	208840	264570	299720	383650	642340	660080	472530
Seabased	82010	100170	121580	162220	168140	284370	186310

Table 9, cont.

Country/ Sector	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991*	Total
USA 229594	306790	334636	323717	472281	797840	767311	3830402	
Landbased	185344	245042	268495	217998	341336	587072	563891	2848208
Seabased	44250	61748	66141	105719	130945	210768	203420	982194
KSA 314164	271466	335547	131058	98855	86604	71177	1656729	
Landbased	312058	269316	335243	129850	97934	86295	71055	1640251
Seabased	2106	2150	304	1208	921	309	122	1640251
JAPAN	13783	18101	16701	19916	43486	39461	33159	257589
Landbased	7844	10234	11168	14328	25298	25066	16745	160906
Seabased	5939	7867	5533	5588	18188	14395	16414	96683
UK 11704	8096	13139	10397	20161	43575	15321	208475	
Landbased	5367	4650	8206	7965	18324	35274	8160	135120
Seabased	6337	3446	4933	2432	1837	8301	7161	73355
HONGKONG	9485	8600	12202	6969	12731	20151	15954	121323
Landbased	3440	3419	6733	3748	10249	16986	9938	59235
Seabased	6045	5181	5469	3221	2482	3165	6016	62088
W.GERMANY	6021	6349	7699	6321	8673	22201	34634	124725
Landbased	2915	1967	4741	1955	3359	5611	9540	52957
Seabased	3106	4382	2958	4366	5314	16590	25094	71768
SINGAPORE	9619	3349	8525	4113	14489	11899	7879	81488
Landbased	5678	5514	2347	1556	12927	10365	4729	51552
Seabased	3941	2835	6178	2537	1562	1534	3150	29936
KUWAIT	5791	3692	4324	1077	27453	16212	25	65749
Landbased	5760	3599	4061	1053	27453	16196	25	64921
Seabased	31	93	263	24	0	16	0	628
GREECE	6617	13894	19954	5777	1746	2058	2597	66730
Landbased	146	238	1252	1332	1666	2031	2597	9870
Seabased	6471	13656	18702	4445	80	27	0	56858
NETHERLANDS	1838	3782	5481	2880	3990	6259	5013	47260
Landbased	1660	344	833	860	828	762	407	20606
Seabased	228	3438	4648	2020	3162	5497	4606	26654
Total	608666	649119	758208	512225	703865	1046260	953070	646070
TOTAL**	687200	680440	791910	856810	973020	1181075	1011896	10218931
Landbased	597890	571730	671430	683310	755190	893402	737596	7842328
Seabased	89310	108710	120480	173500	217830	287673	274300	2376603

*January-September only.

**Includes all other countries.

Source: POEA Planning Branch as generated from Central Bank data.

on native [that is, receiving country] employment is modest, while the impact on national well-being, capital formation and technological upgrading is positive and significant."¹⁴ Native employment is affected only modestly because foreign workers are usually confined to the low-skilled and labor-intensive industrial sectors – areas shunned by nationals. The situation in Japan offers no strong contra-distinctions to the Taiwanese example except perhaps that more undocumented Filipino workers are involved.

Moreover, in spite of their relatively large earnings, a disparity still exists between the educational attainment of Filipino migrants, their occupations abroad and the level of job satisfaction. Numerous surveys done on the effects of contractual labor migration on migrant attitudes have implied that, except for some exceptional cases, Filipinos are generally satisfied with their work experience even though the training and education they received in the Philippines do not correspond with the work they do overseas.¹⁵

The geographical and cultural proximity of Japan attracts many Filipino workers. Historically-rooted cultural affinities, established networks, and brokered assistance are other motivating factors to Filipinos considering migration. These serve to lessen the harsh impact of the migration experience because such factors are not so influential in migration flows to regions outside of Asia including the Gulf countries.

Considering all the costs involved in migrating, i.e., from recruitment to actual work on site, foreign workers, particularly those in the entertainment sector, stand to lose more in the process of migration than if they had simply stayed in the Philippines. Those employed in the construction and industrial sectors make some gains in Japan though not approximate to national labor standards.

¹⁴Ching-hsi Chang, "An Economic Analysis of Guest Workers in Taiwan," a paper presented at the *Workshop on Labor Flows to Taiwan* (6-8 June 1991), sponsored by the Institute of Economics, Academia Sinica, The Asia Foundation and the Council of Labor Affairs, Taipei.

¹⁵Studies undertaken include those by the Institute for Labor and Manpower Studies, *Working Abroad* (Manila: DOLE, 1985); Carolyn French, "Filipina Domestic Workers in Hongkong: A Preliminary Survey," Occasional Papers No. 11, Center for Hongkong Studies (Hongkong: The Chinese University, 1986); Patricia Licuanan, "Socio-Economic Impact of Domestic Helper Migration: Individual, Family, Community, Country," Paper presented at the Regional Policy Dialogue on *Foreign Domestic Workers, International Migration, Employment and National Policies*, Asian and Pacific Development Center, Kuala Lumpur (10-14 August 1992); Shirkat Gah, "Female Labor and Migration Study; Pakistan," unpublished manuscript in association with the Asian and Pacific Development Center, Kuala Lumpur, 1990-1992.

However, while Filipino workers in Japan might feel satisfied with their current salaries they are not necessarily content. There is still a need to factor in the costs of recruitment, the anxieties of being separated from family and friends and of living in the low-status position of an undocumented migrant.

Changing gender roles

A closer examination of Japan's labor shortage and the characteristics of Filipino migrant labor reveals some interesting patterns. For instance, the unemployment rate for Japan may increase within the next five years but this will not substantially affect the entry of increasing number of workers from the Philippines. The labor demand in certain sectors such as the entertainment industry will not likely be affected. Foreign workers are not able to fill the gaps in some economic sectors that are faced with unemployment and underemployment problems. This holds true especially for small and medium-scale industries that cannot maintain the pace of technological innovations and developments in Japan. Given the choice between investing overseas and hiring foreign workers, the most likely and economically feasible choice for these types of firms is to hire foreigners.

Foreigners are immediately confined to sectors scorned by Japanese nationals, such as construction and sometimes even factory work. Foreigners interpret this as a sign that the Japanese labor market will continue to be receptive to migrant workers in spite of its ambivalent policies and the global recession. Japan, therefore, plays a pivotal role given the context of labor migration as a development strategy.

Transformations in gender roles at both the domestic and global levels affect the economic structure and thus merit attention. For example, more and more Hongkong-Chinese women are realizing that they can earn more working outside the home in offices and factories so they hire foreigners to care for their children and the household. There is, in effect, a process of "gender liberation" for Chinese women when they can hire Filipina domestic workers to do their household tasks. For lack of sufficient data, however, it is difficult to make the same conclusions regarding Japanese households since many Filipinas work in the entertainment sector. What is important to recognize at this point is that Japan's leisure and entertainment infrastructure still depends on migrant workers.

Summary and conclusions

The current phenomenon of international labor migration produces a flow of migrant labor from the poorer countries of the South to the richer ones in the North. In the Philippine case, wage differentials, cultural affinities, geographical proximity and a reliable (albeit, illegitimate) recruitment mechanism also help perpetuate and intensify the labor flow to Japan.

While Japan attempts to increase its technological expertise by emphasizing technology-intensive and sunrise industries, the demand for Filipino labor has not waned. Some firms have been unable to make the immediate shift from labor to technology-intensive inputs. Japanese society also depends on an entertainment infrastructure that uses foreign workers.

Japan's ambivalent migration policies have led to the development of a marginalized and undocumented workforce. This workforce is typically confined to economic sectors that have proven to be unpopular, unsafe and low paying compared to jobs dominated by Japanese nationals. This is the main feature of the division of labor as far as international labor migration is concerned.

The challenge for policy-makers is great. The Philippine government must strengthen the economy's capacity to reabsorb the many skilled and de-skilled workers from abroad. The reintegration of workers in the entertainment and construction sectors must be examined in terms of establishing long-term response parameters to labor export. Likewise, the Japanese government must a) provide the necessary infrastructure support to both government and non-governmental initiatives and interventions in the problems of foreign workers; b) formulate more precise labor and immigration policies to monitor and reduce undocumented migration and labor recruitment through legalization programs, for instance and finally, c) initiate discussions addressing foreigner and gender issues in Japanese society, a matter which involves not only how the Japanese treat foreigners and foreign women but their own women as well.

References

Associated Press

- 1992 "It's Official: Japan is in a Recession" in *Philippine Daily Inquirer*.
7 December.

Battistella, Graziano

- 1992 "Migration in 1991: Considerations From a Review of the Press"
in *Asian Migrant*. January-March.

Chin Sung Chung

- 1992 "Illegal Korean Workers in Japan." Paper presented at the Ninth
Yokohama 21st Century Forum on Foreign Workers sponsored
by the Yokohama City University, Japan. 21-23 November.

Ching-hsi Chang

- 1991 "An Economic Analysis of Guest Workers in Taiwan." Paper
presented at the Workshop on Labor Flows to Taiwan, sponsored
by the Institute of Economics, Academia Sinica, The Asia
Foundation and the Council of Labor Affairs, Taipei. 6-8 June.

French, Carolyn

- 1986 "Filipina Domestic Workers in Hongkong: A Preliminary
Survey," Occasional Papers No. 11, Center for Hongkong
Studies. Hongkong: The Chinese University.

Furukawa, Toshimichi

- 1992 "The Legal System for Administration of Emigration and
Immigration in Japan With a Focus on the Issue of 'Illegal
Workers'." Paper presented at the Roundtable Conference on
Japanese Capital in the Philippines and Filipino Labor in Japan,
sponsored by the Osaka University of Economics and Law and the
UP School of Labor and Industrial Relations, AIT Hotel. 25 July.

Gah, Shirkat

- 1992 "Female Labor and Migration Study: Pakistan," unpublished
manuscript in association with the Asian and Pacific Development
Center, Kuala Lumpur. 1990-1992.

Institute for Labor and Manpower Studies

1985 *Working Abroad*. Manila: DOLE.

Kobayashi, Yasuo

"Human Rights Issues Concerning Foreign Workers in Japan."

Lane, Barbara

1992 "Filipino Domestic Workers in Hongkong" in *Asian Migrant*, Vol. 5, No. 1. January-March.

Licuanan, Patricia

1992 "Socio-Economic Impact of Domestic Helper Migration: Individual, Family, Community, Country." Paper presented at the Regional Policy Dialogue on *Foreign Domestic Workers, International Migration, Employment and National Policies*, Asian and Pacific Development Center, Kuala Lumpur. 10-14 August.

Matsui, Yayori

1991 "The History of the Sex Industry in Japan." Paper of the Asian Women's Association-Japan delivered at a conference on "The International Trafficking of Women," held in New York from 22-23 October 1988 and reprinted in *Kanlungan ng Migrante*. April-June.

1991 "Japan Needs Foreign Labor" in *Japan Times*. 8 January.