Factoring in the Social Dimensions of International Labor Migration: The Philippine experience

Fabio Baggio
Scalabrini Migration Center
Social costs of migration: still a new topic in the research and policy agenda

Social costs (plural): different aspects to be considered

Quite “expensive” in the case of the contract worker system

Two main levels: family and society
First level: family

**Transnational families**

- No family reunification: divided families, sometimes “multi-divided”
- Recent studies reveal vulnerability of “transnational families” because of:
  - Absence of one or both parents: important role of “extended families” in the Philippines
  - Exchange of parental/family roles and difficulties, especially for fathers left behind
  - Other more contingent factors: household economy, “machismo” and gendered roles
First level: family

Broken/double families

**Hypothesis:** separations in migrant families are caused by traumatic migration experience:

- Lack of scientific studies on the topic (mostly negative data coming from ONGs’ experience)
- The opposite hypothesis is also viable

Many cases of second family abroad:

- Frequently with a fellow national
- To compensate loneliness and sacrifices
- Economic problems

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- Economic problems

Economic problems
First level: family

Children of migrants

- Scarce scientific research outputs: mostly negative data from ONGs’ experience
- SMC’s 1996 study: only in Batangas, limited respondents, recent migration:
  - School problems (attention and performance)
  - Negative effects in children’s psycho-physic health
First level: family

- SMC’s study in 2003: nation-wide survey, 1446 respondents, different migration stages:
  - Filipino extended families help to cope with the new situation (parental absence)
  - Children of migrants generally perform better in education and health
  - Children of migrants cooperate less in the household works and possess more mobile phones
  - Children of absent mother are more affected by migration
  - Interesting data from FGDs: adolescents, elder brothers and sisters, care-givers
  - Long terms effects difficult to assess

45th Annual Meeting
Recent studies in China: worrisome situation of “abandoned children” of migrant parents (internal migration and urbanization)
First level: family

- Dependence from remittances
  - Financial planning depending on remittance:
    - lack of participation in the family sustenance
  - Migration as "family investment" or investment of the extended families: debts, moral commitment and "vicious" migration circle
  - Recent data: extended dependence because of extended responsibilities (care of children left behind)
Second Level: Society

Progressive impoverishment of the societies of origin

- Huge state’s investment in public education and social assistance, but loss of human resources in productive age

Threats to sustainable development:

- Migrants are entrepreneur and creative (best human resources)
- Brain drain (scholars, doctors, students, etc.)
- Exodus of professionals (e.g. health professionals)
Migration mentality or culture of migration

New generations: migration as the only possibility to achieve professional and personal success

2006 Survey: 3 out of 5 Filipinos given a change would migrate overseas

2003 SMC study: almost 50% of respondents have already entertained thoughts to work overseas sometime
Second Level: Society

Threat to a sound vocational orientation for the youth:
- Decision on professional career strongly conditioned by overseas labor market (e.g. seafarers, nurses and caregivers)
- School and courses “ad hoc” (e.g. nursing schools)
- Little importance to personal skills and inclinations
- Little concern for what the country would offer or need in the long term
Second Level: Society

- Convenient "deployment" policy of the country of origin

  Promotion of massive migration as development strategy:
  - Lack of engagement at the local/domestic level
  - Lack of long-term programs on human resources
  - Numbers vs. rights and justified concessions
Second Level: Society

- Vicious migration circles and lack of effective and attractive programs for reintegration of returnees
- Migrant communities as “milking cows” for assistance, donation for emergencies
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