

Migrant Issues in Switzerland

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SYNOPSIS

Switzerland has one of the most restrictive immigration laws in Europe. Yet Switzerland is very dependent upon its foreign work force. One quarter of the entire volume of work is carried out by gainfully employed foreign nationals. The philippine migrant community belong to one of the minority groups. Filipinas work in hospitals and nursing homes; as domestic workers in foreign embassies or in private households as undocumented employees. Many Filipinas married to Swiss citizens have acquired the Swiss citizenship and therefore not usually incorporated in philippine data. Nevertheless, the issues facing the Filipinas are not much different from the issues women of color experience. The paper delves on these issues, as well as the issues that the New Foreign Policy of Switzerland entail.

It has become a clichè to say that international migration, the movement of people across international boundaries, has considerable economic, social and cultural implications in both origin and destination countries. Countless of papers written on the subject and the ensuing discourse has occupied literature from geography to best sellers novels. Yet the issues are hardly taken off the „report“ level. The results of dozen of researches regarding migration have long been bound and has found their places on the shelves. UN reports that in 2005 international migrants numbered 191M, 3% of the total world population. Europe hosted 34% of all migrants. Nearly half of all migrants worldwide are women. In the developed countries, they are more numerous than male migrants.(UN , 2006). These figures hold global significance. The issues cannot be forestalled any longer. The impact of international migration is taking a toll in all aspects of society.

SWITZERLAND - A EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE

I was sitting by the Lake of Zürich, enjoying a warm Summer afternoon, some years ago. A frail Asian girl approached my bench and was about to walk by. I asked her if she was a Filipina and invited her to sit with me which she hesitatingly obliged. Through our conversation I found out she spoke my Cebuano language. She told me she was very hungry. She came to Switzerland 2 weeks before. Her Swiss husband told her to adapt to all swiss ways which included eating only swiss food. She said she couldn't feel

satisfied with potatoes alone, and that in the evenings they ate jogurt and cheese. I said I'd walk with her to the store and we would buy rice and a pack of chicken legs she can cook herself. I asked her to communicate her needs to her husband. She said she can't and she doesn't know how.

This story could be repeated a hundred fold all over the world. Migrant women arrive in foreign countries ill-prepared for what awaits them. They set foot on totally new environs, at the mercy of their recruiters, or relatives, leaving their fate to higher powers.

In this paper I will focus mainly on Filipina migrants in Switzerland. I feel I have an in-depth understanding and personal experience in reference to the living conditions and situation of these women. I worked in a Counseling Center for Foreign Women and as a psychologist in a private office. My clients were mostly migrant women.

I will deal with the issue of gender and ethnicity in a separate section.

SOME FACTS AND FIGURES: SWITZERLAND AND PHILIPPINES

TABLE 1

	SWITZERLAND	PHILIPPINES
Population	7'523'934 (WR 95)	89'468'677 (WR 3)
Population projection for 2050	5'800'000	127'000'000
Population growth rate	0.43%	1.8%
Birth rate	9.71/1'000	24.89/1'000
Death Rate	8.49/1'000	5.41/1'000
Migration rate	3.58/1'000	-1.49/1'000
Life Expectancy (total)	80.39 yrs	69.91 yrs.
▪ Men	77.58yrs	67.03 yrs
▪ Women	83.36yrs	72.92 yrs
Age distribution:		
▪ 0-14	16%	35.4%
▪ 15-64	68%	60%
▪ +65	15.4%	4%
Median Age	39.77 yrs	22.27yrs
Literacy	99%	95.9%
Religion:		
▪ Roman Catholic	44%	83%
▪ Protestant	37%	9%
▪ Muslim	4.5%	5%
▪ Others	2.5%	3%
Human Development Index	0.936 (WR 11)	0.753 (WR 83)

The data shown in Table 1 reveal some significant trends that will affect the Philippines and Switzerland in the future. One is definitely the downward trend of Switzerland's population growth. It is projected that in just forty years, Swiss population will decrease by ca.20%. Meanwhile, the Philippines' population will continue to climb. The social issues of unemployment and poverty will be more apparent. Migration will remain a glaring reality for both countries.

In 1975, there were 188 philippine citizens residing in Switzerland. In 2005, a total of 3547 Filipinos with philippine passports were registered in Switzerland.(BFM, Statistikdienst 2006). Filipinas married to Swiss citizens acquired automatic Swiss citizenship before 1992.

Residential status of migrants in Switzerland

C: Residence Permit

- Valid until revoked, no voting right, almost equal rights like swiss citizen
- *Migrants with 5 to 10 years residence (depending on their home country) in switzerland
- recognized refugees with more than five years of residence
- spouse of swiss citizen with residence of more than 5 years

B:temporary resident permit

- Valid for one year depending on (working) market regulations/contingents.
- Family reunification possible after one year
- recognized refugees in their first five years of stay
- humanitarian admission in the first ten years

A: seasonal approval:

- Valid mostly about nine months, no extentions and, no family reunification,
- no right to change living or working place / canton of switzerland liable
- limited to contingents for seasonal workers

L: short term stay

- only guaranteed with employment, limited contingents for students, apprentices, etc.
- no contingent limitation for artists (up to nine months)

F: Provisional admission:

- persons whom application for asylum was denied and their return was not possible.
- refugees of war who were admitted in groups
- tourists and guests with expired visa, but could not be deported

Visa:

- duration for three months, no work permit, financial coverage necessary
- guests and tourists from countries with visa obligation

Guests:

- Three month without work permit, not to exceed six months in a year, *guests and tourists from countries with visa obligation

"Asylumseekers"

- Work permit after 3 to 6 months possible Change of working, /living place only with permission

International official:

- working/residential rights according to conventions/contracts between Switzerland and foreign country
- international officials and their families
(From Bundesamt für Migration)

TYPES OF EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN MIGRANTS IN EUROPE

To deal with the issues of migration, one has to be prepared to talk about categories of migrants, their backgrounds, and type of work. The situation of migrants differ considerably, depending upon their stay permits. The situation of women migrants are different from those of the men migrants. The situation of second generation migrants are different from the first generation. So that we cannot talk of migrants as one whole package because we lose the essential issues. In the case of women migrants, gender issues are central to any discourse.

There are no clear-cut data cataloguing philippine migration to Switzerland. Some reports show that in the early 1970's, Filipina nurses were admitted to work. This continued until early 1990. In the 1980's cabaret dancers were given 10-month work permits as artists in the entertainment industry. Also at about this time, filipina wives of swiss citizens entered the country. Before 1992, women married to swiss citizens automatically received the swiss citizenship. In the 1990's many Filipinas came as tourists. Many stayed past their permits to stay and settled into irregular status, undocumented and ,invisible'.

THE SITUATION OF FILIPINA MIGRANTS IN SWITZERLAND

Over the years I made some studies through questionnaires and interviews with Filipinas, in my work and for case studies in conferences. A summary of these interviews are presented below. The basic facts mentioned below were personal experiences shared by the interviewees.

NURSES

The nurses in Switzerland have good-paying jobs. Usually their salaries are

sufficient so they do not have to do “moonlighting” jobs like their counterparts from other parts of the world. Although there are no existing data to support the claim that Filipina nurses are highly appreciated, it is however accepted that they have good training, are efficient and caring towards the patients.

Case study: Marissa, aged 24 when she came to Switzerland; was helped by a family friend to get a working permit. She worked in a Geriatric hospital. At first language was a problem. The hospital itself got a private teacher to teach German to their 2 Filipina nurses. After 7 years, Marissa was named assistant head nurse. Marissa visits home every year for 5 weeks. She has also built a house in her hometown.

Some basic facts of the nursing job, esp. working in geriatric wards:

- 1) work can be literally heavy - lifting and carrying big patients
- 2) discrimination at work, some Filipinas tend to concede to subordination, like asserting for days off
- 3) loneliness, some work alone in remote clinics and have little contact with other nationalities

WOMEN IN BINATIONAL MARRIAGES

Contrary to most assumptions that these marriages are problematic, a majority of these marriages do work. One in four marriages in Switzerland is binational. This amounts to more than 10'000 Swiss/foreign weddings every year. The divorce rate of these marriages is not higher than those between Swiss nationals. The divorce rate in Switzerland is 40%. (SFOIIE)

Case study of Sarah, from Panay Island, who knew her husband from the pen-pal magazine many years ago. Sarah was quite isolated since the family lived in a

village on the hills. She would have to walk down the hill for 30 minutes to get to the next bus stop. Her husband did not encourage her to learn to drive. She also did not

assert herself. Raising up three children kept her busy. She said it also gave her direction in life. Sara suffers from depression which she alleviates

by singing. She talks fondly of her children who seem faring well in their studies and finishing their skills training.

some basic facts:

- 1) isolation and loneliness, limited contact outside the home
- 2) maltreatment at home, very subordinate role at home
- 3) psychological violence is common
- 4) unfulfilled lives; conflict in raising children
- 5) financial dependence lowers their self-esteem

I made a survey of the problems facing these Filipinas married to Swiss men,

using a problem checklist. There were 63 respondents who had an average stay in Switzerland of 8 years. Results showed that personal problems related to loneliness and homesickness were checked highest; followed by the need for self development, such as needing to develop hobbies and feeling more confident; the third ranked were health problems and the fourth, the need to communicate with the husband.

The results were readily demonstrated in my counseling sessions. The personal problems resulted largely from a string of problems. The concern for the family back home made them homesick and depressed. This can take a toll on physical health. The need to send financial assistance to the family and their financial dependence on their husbands created a strong conflict. There is a deep wish to be more assertive, to be more autonomous. For some who have lived longer than 10 years, a strong need for personality development surfaced. This included the ability to communicate and express themselves. Most of the respondents admitted they lacked self-confidence. Some of my clients related that their self-confidence diminished more when the husband repeatedly put them down. They became more unsure of themselves and assertion came in forms of aggression. This has negative effects on the family atmosphere. The marriage is seriously threatened.

TABLE 2

INTERVIEW RESPONSES OF FILIPINA NURSES AND SWISS FILIPINA WIVES

Nurses	Binational marriage
<p>1)Description of working conditions in Switzerland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - stressful, punctuality is a must - motivating because of good compensation - working in nursing homes is less stressful than hospitals - good working conditions - Filipinas know a lot about nursing care, - here we feel confident <p>2)Problems encountered at work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - -language barrier - -cold Winter days, getting up to start early is difficult - -cultural differences with other nurses - -sometimes jealousy from other employees upon knowing we have good education* - -some old people show racist attitudes - -stressful work, have to work fast <p>3) Suggestions to improve working conditions :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - -nurses in the Phil. should be trained to work independently - learn the language , even before departure - keep informed and learn new trends in nursing - be ready to take on responsibility <p>4)Message for others coming to work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - first and foremost learn to speak German - must learn to work fast, even to work for 2 persons - be aware to change lifestyle, encounter new culture - prepare oneself for life away from family, may cause depression - -develop optimism, not to let negative experiences put one down - it is hard working here, - keep your identity 	<p>1)Description of living conditions in Switzerland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - beautiful and clean country - good esp. when one is integrated - hard, always busy - a bit boring, but one gets used to it there is a lot of adjustment to do - -"joy and pain", but take the challenge - usually difficult at the start: many new ways, like language, culture, and different mentality <p>2) Problems encountered living here</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - learning the German language is not easy - working in our field or line of work is difficult, so we take menial jobs - different way of doing housework - social life is limited here, loneliness is common, - in-laws intervene too much - stereotype views of Asians elicit slurs that is hurting - children have difficulties in school - some racist remarks affect our well-being - feelings of homesickness or nostalgia <p>3) Suggestions to improve the situation of Filipina wives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - be integrated, learn the language ASAP - build your own group of friends, aside from husband - find a support group, keep social contacts - find a job to be financially independent - keep a positive attitude - join an organization - seek to improve yourself by attending courses - be tough and stand by your rights as a wife <p>4) Message for other Filipinas coming to marry and live here</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - attend an orientation seminar about the host country - be prepared to leave your family; and feel homesickness - learn the language and the culture before coming - know the future husband as much as possible - keep an open mind, be willing to learn new ways - have addresses and information of phil. organizations - seek support , do not isolate yourself - be informed of your rights

A questionnaire asking for information and personal opinion regarding living conditions, problems at work or at home, and suggestions or advice for other Filipinas was given to Filipina nurses and wives of Swiss men. Table 2 summarizes the responses of 12 nurses and 8 Filipina wives and mothers.

Almost all of the respondents mention the need to learn the language, in their case, German. They consider this the first step to getting around. Some have experienced isolation and advise newcomers to socialize. Almost all rate homesickness as a big hurdle to traverse. It appears that many were aware that cultural differences do exist, that living in Switzerland is definitely different as living in the Philippines. On the whole, the respondents shared a positive attitude to their lives in Switzerland.

Domestic workers documented and undocumented

There are no working permits issued for domestic work in private households.

The domestic workers in foreign embassies possess a 'legitimation card' which allows them to stay for one year. The permit is renewable as long as the embassy certifies their employment. The situation of domestic workers in embassies has preoccupied NGOs for years. The so-called „diplomatic immunity“ enjoyed by these foreign personnel has been rampantly abused. Yet, getting facts and documentation as to the plight of these workers behind embassy gates is an impossibility. A film „Breaking the Silence“ (Hefti/Bucher, 1997) portrays four Filipina domestic workers in Switzerland. The film underscores the human rights violations experienced by these women. The other group of domestic workers in Switzerland are undocumented. They work illegally in private households. They are more likely to be exploited, work long hours and live in anonymity.

Case study: Maria, a 40 yr. old mother from Bohol, was a primary school teacher before immigrating. She came as a tourist and stayed; and has been in Geneva for 9 years, worked in many households. Her first job as an undocumented worker was in a villa along the Lake of Geneva. She said the work was manageable, although she had to work from 6am to 12midnight - doing everything, including massaging the „Madame“. What was hard was the verbal ill treatment, the psychological violence of being called „dumb“ and being constantly humiliated. However, she is still staying because she has 4 children going to college.

Basic facts

- 1) undocumented workers are practically non-existent; no rights, no benefits as workers
- 2) maltreatment and exploitation is common
- 3) loneliness and homesickness; cannot visit families at all
- 4) a worst situation to be in - considered „illegal“ in a country, constant fear of deportation

Women from the entertainment industry

The number of women legally hired under this category have decreased considerably through the years. In the early 1980's, these women were usually recruited as cabaret dancers. In Switzerland, they received a temporary working permit for 10 months. Many worked under the facade of go-go dancers but were actually working as prostitutes. A big percentage were victims of trafficking.

Case study: case of Aurora, a folk dancer from Mindanao, ended up as victim of women trafficking . She was recruited for folk dancing and found herself imprisoned in a bordell. It took Aurora 7 years to escape her nightmare.

Some basic facts as workers in the entertainment industry:

- 1). many times these women are victims of illegal recruitment
- 2) Filipinas are ill prepared for this job since alcohol consumption is a must
- 3). oftentimes these women are forced into prostitution
- 4). they resort to flight mechanisms like drug addictions

Migrant Issues

The Issue of Integration

Switzerland in comparison with other European countries has the highest proportion of foreign residents. Foreigners with diverse cultural backgrounds living in Switzerland currently make up 20.1 percent of the total population. This one-fifth of the total population live, are called, and treated as foreigners. Until recently, their integration to society was not an issue. Most of the foreigners living in Switzerland have only received integration help from their immediate contacts, like the Swiss spouse, working colleagues, cultural activities and by trial and error. The new Law on Foreign Nationals regulates the admission and residence of non-European nationals. It also laid down the principles and objectives of integration of foreign nationals, one of which is equal opportunity. This presents a big challenge to Swiss society. Equal opportunity is not possible when discrimination and inferior outlook rule the subconscious minds of the Swiss. Equal opportunity in all levels means

easy access to housing, jobs, remunerations, educational and learning opportunities.

For the present, this remains a wishful thinking. In my opinion, I believe the social integration of the foreigners has to take place first - that is, they are accepted in society and can freely move around not continually being labeled foreign or foreigner. Until then, equal opportunity has to wait.

In my informal discourse with Filipinos and Swiss in reference to social integration, I asked some Filipinos why they did not have Swiss social friends (going to movies, do things together), other than work colleagues. Many mentioned the issue of language. Although a few spoke the Swiss dialect,

they felt the cultural gap in communication. The Filipinos like to inject jokes, or word play in their communication. They cannot do this speaking German. They feel inhibited, therefore they are not themselves. And because of time restraints (being free only on weekends) they prefer to interact with fellow Filipinos and have a good time. Some also said, they did not know what to talk about. They pointed out the fact that most of the time they have to make the first move to get acquainted with a Swiss; much more do most of the talking.

I asked the same question to a few Swiss acquaintances who did not have close friendship with foreign nationals. A few really pondered on the question. It seems one has to separate groups by age especially. The younger generation are sociable and may very well mingle with other nationalities easily. As the age go up the ladder, the typically introverted Swiss takes over. Due to work stress, many Swiss prefer to retreat from crowds. Socializing is not a priority. A friend or two fill up the social address, and they choose it that way. These friends may or may not have foreign backgrounds - most often not.

In my opinion, migrants need role models. Unfortunately, those who would qualify to be role models might be branded as elite, therefore, not grassroots. So, instead of viewing the success stories of their countrymen as a motivation, migrants resort to denial and reject their own potential. Nevertheless, these relatively successful migrants are also most likely to be socially and politically well integrated. This image is good for the Filipino psyche. It is predominantly observed that Filipinos are gregarious. They like to mingle. Once they overcome their insecurity in some situations, they have a vast potential to be a participant. We need to tap that promise. To be integrated is to make their lives freer, likewise less strained and inhibited.

I raise this issue, because as I have said, integration is one of the biggest challenges of the Swiss migration policy makers. In 2003, the federal budget for integration projects was 12.5M swiss francs. With this amount, one can say, they mean business.

The issue of undocumented migrants (Sans Papiers)

In the Admission system:of the new Law of Foreign Nationals, the only people from non european states who will be admitted to Switzerland to a limited extent are qualified workers and their families. With this new law, Switzerland holds the most restrictive alien admission criteria in Europe. This can mean two things. One is the increase of undocumented foreigners, and the other is the increase of brain drain from developing countries. Both scenarios are not favorable to the Philippines and philippine migrants.

With the doors of Switzerland practically closed to people from the South, the possibility of migrants to enter illegally and thus work illegally is

stronger. There is an estimated 150'000 *Sans Papiers* ; about 10'000 are Filipinos and Filipinas in Switzerland. A good bulk of this group reside in Canton Geneva. As undocumented workers, they have no rights. Some Swiss NGO's took this issue earnestly and formed a special organization for *Sans Papiers*. The group aims to sensitize the swiss populace to the existence of these „invisible“ migrants. They rally for human rights, amnesty, services and awareness for the *Sans Papiers*. They take individual cases to migration authorities. From 2001-2004, the *Sans Papiers Committee* obtained work permits for 19 undocumented migrants. They also opened an Information Center for *Sans Papiers*. Yet, there are thousands of them out there. The majority do not have the confidence to approach any of these NGO's for assistance. The fear of deportation is too strong.

The situation of Filipino and Filipina *Sans Papiers* are just as precarious as the others. The light-heartedness and the gregariousness of the Filipinas come to their advantage. They take things with a stride. They also are quite good at networking. Information about available housework even for a few hours are readily shared.

They also have formed their support systems. They have learned to survive. An active organization in Geneva, Kakammpi, a philippine NGO, has taken significant steps towards working for the *Sans Papiers* cause of Filipinas and Filipinos. They work closely with swiss NGO's for the regularization of these clandestine migrants.

The debate going around parliaments and governments is the issue of „black workers“ - untaxed employment of undocumented migrants. Once again, foreigners are given the bulk of the blame. In fact, in Switzerland, an estimated 300'000 workers are illegally employed; 100'000 or 1/3 of this number are foreigners. It means 2/3rd of these black workers are actually Swiss citizens who are not paying their own federal taxes, their social and health insurance. And they are the ones who claim these social benefits when in trouble. It was estimated in 2001 that the economic strain of illegal employment had cost Switzerland CHF37 Billion. (Economiesuisse,2003)

The issue of gender and ethnicity

There is so much talk about feminization of migration. The discourse emphasizes largely on statistics - that more and more women are immigrating. How about their well-being? The mental health of women migrants has to be considered closely. Many left their nuclear families in home countries. The migrant woman has wagered all her resources for the family. It is very important that she remains both physically and mentally balanced.

Ethnic migrants including specifically women of color have a lot of cultural baggage brought in from home. This undermines their capacity to integrate in the host country. The lives of ethnic women need to be examined from a racial minority and feminist perspective, one that recognizes both racism

and sexism exist and are extremely oppressive to women of color. The other problem is that these women may have actually already internalized this oppression. It will take a slow process to release them from this debilitating feeling. But no one has the time to do this, the migrant woman included. So, she goes on with her life, working hard . Her only goal is to be healthy enough to continue remitting money to the family.

I bring this issue to core because social workers and psychotherapists dealing with ethnic women in Europe should be aware that cultural competence ought to be one of their qualifications. The common practice emphasizes mainstream services that ignores the perspective and context experienced by migrant women. The presumption is that migrant women ought to be „acculturated“ or less-ethnic, and she would be alright. A shift in goals from mainstreaming services to multicultural perspectives for a culturally diverse population is necessary. I lobby for cultural sensitivity for personnel dealing with foreigners. It is of utmost importance that mental health workers especially psychotherapists be culturally competent.

To cite an example: A Filipina(Juana) mother and wife of a Swiss was referred to me by a social worker. The couple had divorced and the Filipina was denied custody of the children. She became depressed. She missed her children very much. She told me she was subjected to psychological assessment. Luckily, she had a copy of the report with her. I was aghast to read that the diagnosis was schizophrenia (!). It is brutal, because definitely she is not schizophrenic. I thought, how easily they throw this label around. Juana told me, the psychological interview lasted for about 3 hours. I asked her if she did anything else other than sitting and answering the questions. She said, she was feeling so low, and thought she'd do something to elicit pity from the psychologist. So she bawled out loud and cried that she fell to the floor. And to make it more dramatic, she crept under the table. The poor girl felt so helpless, she used whatever means was available to her to save herself. On the contrary, western views of temperamental outbursts are pathological. For people from the South, this can be a daily thing and not unusual. Juana did not have any chance. She said she was alone in court during the divorce proceedings. The husband brought his „witnesses“: his mother and neighbors who testified that that she was crazy and that she shouted a lot.

Cultural competence does not only entail reading about a country. It requires a system that values diversity as well as the capacity for cultural self-assessment. To function effectively in cross-cultural situations, an awareness of the dynamics inherent in the interaction of cultures is important. Cultural knowledge should be institutionalized and adaptations to diversity should be developed. (Cross et al,1989) Perhaps such blatant mistake with Juana could have been prevented.

The issue of brain drain and brain waste

Brain drain is a serious issue. The Philippines' most qualified workers by the thousands would be the nurses. In 2002 alone, 12'000 filipina nurses left the country. Local philippine hospitals are suffering from shortage of qualified nursing personnel. On the other end of the spectrum is the issue of brain waste. Thousands of migrant Filipinos work in menial jobs not commensurate to their professional diplomas in the Philippines. It is commonplace to hear of former primary school teachers who work as domestic help abroad. That many Filipinas are university graduates is not unknown to receiving countries. Stories have made their rounds that government officials or prominent people in host countries advertise openly their search for Filipina nannies.

The care-drain has spread its wings from nursing care to care-givers, nannies, Au Pairs and domestic workers. Graduate medical doctors in the Philippines have shifted to the nursing profession to be able to go to the USA. The Philippines is losing its professional elite. The government is looking the other way. In 2004, remittances from Filipinos and Filipinas working overseas that flowed to philippine economy amounted to \$8.5 billion.

What is really behind *brain drain, brain gain and brain waste* is the international financial flow that transpires between origin and destination countries. In 2002, remittance receipts of developing countries amounted to \$79 billion. This figure exceeded total official development aid of \$51 billion. (Yang & Martinez 2005).

Economists and migration researches are now studying closely the effect of remittance flows on poverty and inequality in migrants' home areas. The direct financial gain of families of migrants in the home country superimposes the squalid picture that brain drain portrays.

Comments and recommendations

As often said, migration is a global phenomenon, and a global problem as well. The problem does not lie with the migrants themselves. The problem lies with the host countries. People migrate because there is a demand for their services. The first wave of Filipino workers were brought to Hawaii to work in the plantations. Today, dozens of western countries cannot survive without their foreign workers. They simply do not have the worker capacity from their own citizens. In Switzerland, without immigrants, care, kitchen, cleaning and maintenance work would be unthinkable; one quarter of the entire volume of work is carried out by gainfully employed foreign nationals - this amounts to more than two thousand million hours a year (IMES). Although these services are far from invisible, they are hardly appreciated. There is a lot of talk about foreigners as criminals, foreigners abusing the system, ghettos, or overpopulation of aliens. The contributions to society are rarely recognized. The foreigners are poorly integrated into Swiss

society. A change of attitude and perception has to take place in the minds of the Swiss, only then can integration have a chance.

Although globalization may have shifted the picture of migration the past few years,

the issues remain glaring if not scandalous. Trafficking in human beings have taken colossal proportions. Every day we hear of hundreds of Africans traversing the Gibraltar Strait; or of eastern european girls kidnapped for prostitution. Meanwhile governments continue to be preoccupied in curtailing the entrance of immigrants. The migration policies of many european countries are as restrictive as ever. Since migrants are getting in every way possible anyway, the result is the presence of undocumented aliens in many countries. This is a big challenge in every country.

These people may not have working permits, but they are working, earning their daily bread and sending remittances to home country. The host governments are more concerned of their economic deficit in terms of uncollected tax revenues. They forget that these are people with faces and lives to live behind these untaxed toil. Yet opening their doors is not an option. Western europe is a fortress.

Possible approaches to migrant problems should be taken at two levels :one is the individual and personal level. Every migrant person is unique. Their means of coping with the challenges of migration vary depending upon their family backgrounds, educational level, and social exposures. The would-be-migrant should have all the possible orientation in reference to living abroad, information about their destination countries, especially addresses that could become handy in cases of difficulty.

Their own families should be counseled about the realities of migration. They should be made to understand their role as support systems. It would be an added preparation if prior to departure, the would-be-migrant attend self-assertiveness training seminars and other empowerment courses to help them in their journey to autonomy. This I consider one of the prime services the philippine government should render to their „new heroes“. A big proportion of those leaving the country to work do not have the slightest inkling of life outside the Philippines. It is therefore, the duty of philippine officials to prepare them for this new venture. At least we owe it to them. They are making huge sacrifices. To rub home the point - it should be reiterated that the remittances sent by Filipinos and Filipinas back to philippine economy amounted to \$8.5B in 2004. NGO's in the Philippines and abroad have asked the philippine government to use these funds to create jobs and for infrastructures that can assist returning overseas workers for reintegration. The OFWs have also the right to know where this money goes.

The second approach should take place in the political level. Governments should ratify and implement the *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers* . There should be consciousness raising for officials about migration. The Philippines should resolutely work on

acquiring bilateral agreements in destination countries. Philippine embassies abroad should be more active in following up the situation of OFW's, especially the domestic workers who live in remote areas in total isolation and at the mercy of their employers.

In Switzerland, the situation of Filipinas in a binational household needs more systematic research. We require a research agenda that focuses on the family process that develops as these women enter into a binational and bicultural relationship. We need to follow their emotional, social and personal development.

There is also a dearth of data as to the behavior and development of children in these intercultural marriages. In as much as a good number of women enter foreign countries as „marriage migrants“, an earnest study into their lives is called for.

My concerns are the plight and condition of these Filipinas and Filipinos in foreign soil. A big majority are simply not prepared for this unknown. Oftentimes, they remain exploited and abused because they do not know or do not have the means to free themselves. The bondage is debilitating and could affect their emotional states considerably. We owe it to these people to prepare them and their families for this trip, a trip that could make or break them.

For the migrant's part, it is important that the message given to them is self-responsibility. As adult people who decided to leave familiar grounds, they should take control of their lives once they reach their destination countries. They should learn to make firm decisions and be able to judge their situations. They should be able to take necessary steps if and when their security is threatened

The profile of a Filipina migrant in Switzerland is multi-faceted. She is a wife and mother who juggles her identity between seriousness in her swiss household and the gaiety and spontaneity she expresses among her Filipina circle. She can also be a nurse who makes her elderly patients feel they are cared by their own daughters, and more. She can also be a domestic worker in one of the foreign embassies who is efficient at all levels - cook, a buddy to the children, a confidant to the Lady of the house, and a loyal housekeeper to the Ambassador. I doff my hat to the Filipina migrants. They are one of a kind .

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