

Research Summary

International migration has been increasing both in absolute numbers and percentages. The United Nations estimates that, as of mid-year 2010, 214 million or 3.1% of the total world population are international migrants. Roughly 105 million or 49% of the total stock of international migrants are women. Mainly this means that more people and more women are mobile today than at any point of history. Many studies have pointed out that diversities in patterns and streams of migration across the globe are caused by interrelated political, social, cultural and environmental factors. While ‘feminization of migration’ at a global scale may be debatable, observations in some regions in Asia have been clearly proving this phenomenon. East Asia in particular experienced a significant increase of female migrants from 49% in 1990 to 55% in mid-2010. But beyond the numbers, scholars have argued that migration today in this region is gendered, characterized by global social, political, cultural, and economic orders that impose ‘feminized’ expectations on migrants. One of these gendered streams is marriage migration.

This research project builds on the literature on marriage migration in the East and Southeast Asian Regions, particularly between the Philippines and Japan. While migration from the Philippines to Japan and marriages between Filipino women and Japanese men is not an entirely new phenomenon, recent developments at international and regional levels brought complex issues and problems that must be addressed. The aim of this study is to critically examine existing frameworks and paradigms on migration and development, particularly looking into laws and policies of Japan and the Philippines and the different interventions initiated by the government and civil society organization on citizenship, human security, multiculturalism and marriage migration. Using Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology, the study conducted a 10-day fieldwork participated by 9 women marriage migrants based in Nagoya, Japan as well as a scanning of literature for secondary data. Several representatives from non-government organizations were also interviewed as well as some members of the academe. Using a feminist perspective, the study highlights the stories of these nine women marriage migrants and then from them draws thematic narratives on intimate relationships, agency, identity, and diversity. These themes give concrete accounts on how Filipinas married to Japanese men and living in Japan experience and respond to economic, political and cultural issues of them being “women”, “foreigners” and “wives/ mothers”. The study explores how women craft new gendered and sexualized subjectivities and their implications to (in)security and practice of citizenship. The study also emphasizes that there is no monolithic picture capturing all of these narratives but that women marriage migrants have diverse and heterogeneous experiences. Though the privileged viewpoint of the study is women’s individual and collective agency, it does not discount continuing victimization of women. While it continues to push for protection of women against trafficking, abuse, and discrimination, the study recognizes that stories of resistance, victories and empowerment of women abound and must be built upon for women’s empowerment. Policies and laws both of Japan and the Philippines were also scanned, highlighting their implications to the protection and promotion of the rights of women marriage migrants. Basing from these narratives and available literature, the study provides policy recommendations both for the government and the civil society not only in terms of immigration or residency status but also in terms of access to social security and social welfare services

Publication of the Results of Research Project:

Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)

Tentatively, the proponent plans to present the paper to a small conference to be held in Quezon City, Philippines during the first quarter of 2011. The Sumitomo Foundation will be informed of the full details of this conference once it is finalized.

Thesis (Name of Journal and its Date, Title and Author of Thesis, etc.)

Book (Publisher and Date of the Book, Title and Author of the Book, etc.)

The proponent is looking for opportunities and sources for publication.