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<th>Labor migration in Asia : bane or boon</th>
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<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Tan, Michael.</td>
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Paper No. 22
Labor Migration in Asia: Bane or Boon

Michael Tan
Philippine Daily Inquirer
Philippines
1 • Labor Migration in Asia: Bane or Boon (The Philippines)
   Michael L. Tan, PhD
   (Presentation based on "A Matter of Time", Report prepared for NEDA on HIV and development)

2 • Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs): Overview
   • Estimates range from 4 to 6.5 million
   • Deployed in all countries, but mainly Middle East, Hong Kong, Singapore
   • Includes about 250,000 seafarers

3 • Overseas Filipino Workers: Overview (cont’d)
   • Main push factor: wages. Minimum daily wage in the Philippines: US$4 to $6 or about US$100 to $150 a month. Hong Kong domestic worker gets $475 a month. Seafarers get minimum of $385 a month and can go as high as $3000.

4 • Contributions to National Economy
   • Official remittances from OFWs reached $6.7 billion in 1999, equivalent to 8.6% of GNP. Could be as high as 12% of GNP if we include unofficial remittances.

5 • OFWs and HIV/AIDS
   • OFWs currently account for 22 percent of all reported HIV cases in the country, which is disproportionate considering that OFWs account for only about 16 percent of the adult population.

6 • OFWs and HIV/AIDS
   • Former overseas-deployed seafarers account for about 11 percent of all reported HIV cases, which is even more disproportionate since they account for only 1 percent of the adult population.

7 • OFWs and HIV/AIDS
   • Risk exists. In California alone, as of March 1998, there were 700 reported cases of Filipinos with AIDS, more than the number reported for the entire Philippines.

8 • Impact of infections among OFWs
   • Macro impact is negligible. We estimate that even if 1% of all OFWs were infected, GNP would drop by only 0.12%.

9 • Impact of infections, cont’d
   • Even with small numbers of infections, impact is great for health care system. Cost of antiretrovirals is P360,000 per year which means that treating 100 OFWs alone would cost P36 million, larger than the AIDS unit’s current budget of P15 million.

10 • Impact of infection, cont’d
• Impact is greatest on households. One HIV positive seafarer we interviewed earned P20,000 a month at the time of infection. Now he earns P6,000 a month. Total opportunity cost: P168,000 a year.

11 Impact of infection, cont’d
• A seafarer who remains uninfected could have total household income of P6.2 M over 10 years. If diagnosed in year 2 and grounded, and develops AIDS in year 8, household income is reduced to 1.7 M or a loss of P4.5 M, an amount that could have meant a modest home, plus enough for 2 children’s private school education.

12 What shapes susceptibility?
• Quote from Mar, an infected seafarer:
  • Even if you’re aware...you think, “I won’t get that”. Especially if you’re drunk. Even if you have condoms, you won’t use them...Sometimes you do, and she doesn’t have HIV. But what if you don’t and she has...”

13 What shapes susceptibility?
• High awareness but low levels of accurate knowledge about HIV and STDs, and even health issues in general. (PDOS briefing too short, and not appropriate to OFWs’ other concerns.)
  • Denial — “It won’t happen to me.”
  • Work and life conditions: isolation, loneliness --> Risk-taking.

14 What shapes susceptibility?
• Machismo among male OFWs. Pressures for binyag, for patronizing sex workers.
  • Lack of autonomy, negotiating skills for women.

15 Media’s response
• Sensationalism. (Recent article in PDI says 230 OFWs infected in one year, 1998. A few years back several papers carried reports of entire ship crews being infected)
  • Stigmatizing. First sex workers, now OFWs.

16 Media’s response
• Use of fear tactics. Could lead to despondency, or OFWs going underground.
  • Where there is some HIV education, this is often too medicalized. No references to social context of vulnerability, e.g., addressing machismo issues or life as an OFW, coping with stress. Or addressing problems like use of bolitas.

17 Alternative responses
• Local media: moving away from sensationalism and stigmatizing approach. Perhaps POEA’s advisories can include HIV information. Human interest angles, including stories from those infected, without becoming moralizing.
### Table 1

**Ranking of Hierarchy of Objectives of All Groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Policy Makers</th>
<th>Reference Group</th>
<th>Workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orderliness</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair &amp; Efficient</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Jobs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy Remittance</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
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### Table 2

**Ranking of Effectiveness of Objectives of All Groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Policy Makers</th>
<th>Reference Group</th>
<th>Workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fair &amp; Efficient</td>
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<tr>
<td>Easy Remittance</td>
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### Table 3

**Rating of Effectiveness of Objectives of All Groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Computed Score</th>
<th>Policy Makers</th>
<th>Reference Group</th>
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<tr>
<td>Good Jobs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Easy Remittance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Score</td>
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**No. of Respondents:**
- Policy Makers: 10
- Reference Group: 10
- Workers: 150
Regional Consultation on Media & Labor Migration
August 21-23, 2000
Manila, Philippines

DAY THREE
23 August 200
Working Group Sessions