

Reflection on migration

It is ubiquitous for Filipino families to have at least one relative who immigrated abroad or even to a different city here in the Philippines. I cannot count on both my hands the number of relatives I know who live in a foreign country since they are simply that many. The data also agree with this idea; in 2018, over 40% of Filipinos were lifetime immigrants, most of whom were inter-regional migration. Most even say that our primary export here in the Philippines is human labor. We beg to ask the question of why immigration is so prevalent in the Philippines, and at the same time, look into the societal problems that push this phenomenon forward.

The reason why many Filipinos migrate is primarily for work. Their desire to seek “greener pastures” is rooted in the thought that they could find a better life in the place that they are moving into. I agree with this reasoning, especially as we look at the difference of opportunity in the Philippines compared to other countries. Sadly, many professionals in the Philippines are severely underpaid compared to their counterparts in other countries. Take, for example, the profession of accountants. Their average salary here in the Philippines is about PHP 300,000 a year, while in the United States, it is about \$79,000 or almost 4 million Pesos once converted. While we do consider the fact that there is a lower cost of living here in the Philippines, a salary of PHP 300,000 is still insufficient to support a family and live a decent life. Apart from this, there is better access to healthcare and insurance in other countries than in the Philippines. In European countries specifically, their free healthcare makes it more appealing for immigrants to move there.

The same idea applies to local migration. In bigger cities like Manila and Cebu, we find international companies and valuable corporate offices that provide better pay and compensation for their workers. At the same time, these are hard to find in rural areas. Moving to bigger cities means that they have a better chance of landing a job that pays more and, in time, a better life. This is why we often see urban areas crowded, not just here in the Philippines but also in other countries. This has become a problem to cities like this because resources such as housing slowly deplete as the population increases. It also becomes hard to move around from one area to another due to traffic or overcrowding in public transportation.

Knowing the effects of migration to overpopulated cities, what can we do about it? I think that spreading out the different opportunities and even important establishments is the best action. One idea that I particularly like is the Clark Airport. Similar to countries like Japan and South Korea, their airports are not located in the densest cities but rather in the outskirts. But even if they are located in these areas, it is still easy to access them because of the public transportation. Hopefully, in the Philippines, we get to see this idea come to life.

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