

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEMPORARY FILIPINO MIGRATION IN  
THAILAND

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ABSTRACT

The Asian region has witnessed a shift in the flow of people across boundaries, and the complexity in which it is occurring. The diverse profiles of migrants, the patterns of movement, and policies towards migration have been overwhelming. Labor and skills shortages in destination countries, growing labor surplus and the widening inequalities in origin countries have contributed to the migration trends in many countries in the region. Although Thailand, like many countries, has been managing migration through policies that provide legal opportunities for labor mobility and restrict irregular migration, the country has been experiencing an increasing trend. Moreover, for the last five years, Thailand has a growing stock of Filipino migrants, and that an increasing number of them are irregular.

This research is a pioneering work in Thailand. It adapted Drachmann's stages of migration process framework in analyzing the migration patterns and experiences of Filipino migrants in the country. It discusses the experiences of migrants, the actions taken and their passage from one stage to another by analyzing migration as a process; first, focusing on the various factors that facilitated the movement, the various resources employed in order to realize their expectations in migration, and then, shifting the analysis to the state of the migrant. This study used both quantitative and qualitative approaches and techniques, with a lot of data acquired from the survey of 354 Filipino migrants in various provinces and borders in Thailand, and from the perspectives of the surveyed migrants themselves through interviews, observations, and a survey of around 200 threads on online forums and blogs.

Findings from this research revealed new patterns of mobility, the characteristics of migrants and the different paths they took in order to move and remain in Thailand. Distance, perceived net benefits from migration, available resources, and socio-economic conditions prior to migration tend to propel migrants to migrate, as shown in both quantitative and qualitative data. Important life events were also seen to have propelled migrants to move as shown in the high concentration of migrants in particular age groups and educational level. Moreover, the availability of various forms of resources in all stages of the migration process has been significant in reducing barriers to opportunities and in realizing a migrant's prospects in migration; thus, sustaining and perpetuating the movement from the Philippines to Thailand.

KEY WORDS: MIGRATION PROCESS / TRANSITIONS / SEMI-REGULARITY  
POST-MIGRATION / MIGRATION SYSTEM