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# Overview of Internal Migration in Philippines





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## Philippines Context

- The total population of the Philippines, as recorded by UNESCAP in 2016, stands at just over 103 million.
- The Philippines' annual population growth rate is 1.5% and its fertility rate 2.9, both in decline (UNESCAP 2016).
- Internal migrants in the Philippines constitute a significant population. Approximately 2.9 million Filipinos changed residence between 2005 and 2010. 50.4% were long distance movers (had changed province), 45.4 % were short distance movers (had changed city), and 4.2 % were international immigrants (Philippines Statistics Authority 2012). In 2017 there were just under 5.7 million Filipinos living abroad (UNDESA 2017), though the increase in the number of Filipinos living abroad from 2005-2010 was 1.1 million, slightly over just a third the volume of internal migrants in that period (Ogena 2015).
- The Philippines has undergone rapid urbanization which continues to this day. From 2000-2010 the urban population increased at an annual average of 3.3%, making it one of the fastest urbanizing countries in the Asia-Pacific. In the last 50 years the urban population has increased





by over 50 million, and in 2050 102 million people (over 65% of the total population) will reside in cities (World Bank 2017a). In 2010, 41.9 million of the Philippines' population of 92.3 million lived in urban areas (Philippines Statistics Authority 2013)<sup>1</sup>, cities accounted for over 70% of GDP, and the seven largest urban areas hosted 54% of formal jobs (World Bank 2017a).

- Urban poverty has remained persistent: in 2003 17.8% of the urban population lived at less than US\$ 3.10/day/PPP, and in 2012 this proportion remained high, at 17.4%. Nonetheless overall poverty in urban areas (13.2%) is significantly lower than in rural areas (39.4%). (World Bank 2017a).
- Rural and agricultural poverty has driven internal migrants to seek opportunities in urban areas (IOM 2013). Agriculture's share in total employment declined from 43% to 27.7% between 1991 and 2017 (World Bank 2018), and its contribution to the country's GDP dropped from 23.2% in 1990 to 13.9% in 2010 (IOM 2013) and 9% in 2017 (Philippines Statistics Authority 2017).
- The main destination for long-distance movers is Calabarzon, which absorbs 27.7% of them, followed by Metro Manila (19.7%) and Central Luzon (13%) (Philippines Statistics Authority 2012).
- The high volume of migrants to cities has strained housing, infrastructure, and basic services in major cities. As a result, informal settlements have proliferated: the number of informal settlers in the Philippines has increased from 4.1% of total urban population in 2003 to 5.4% in 2012, when 2.2 million lived in informal settlements, of which 1.3 million were in Metro Manila alone (World Bank 2017a).
- An archipelago of 7107 islands with high levels of climactic variation, the Philippines is one of the 12 countries in the world most vulnerable to disasters and the effects of climate change (Germanwatch 2017, UNICEF 2012). Natural calamities affected 109 million people between 1980 and 2009 and 60% of the Philippines' 1,500 municipalities and 120 cities are located along coastal shores. Many of them, like Metro Manila, include areas below sea level (UNICEF 2012). Such vulnerability hugely affects migration patterns in the country. In 2013, the Visayas region was devastated by typhoon Yolanda, displacing over 4 million (Norwegian Refugee Council 2013b). Similarly, in 2012 Typhoon Saola displaced 197,345 individuals in Northern Philippines, and Tropical Storm Washi displaced over 285,000 individuals in 2011 (Norwegian Refugee Council 2012; 2011).

<sup>1</sup> The 2010 Census asks "In what city/municipality did \_\_\_\_\_ reside on May 1, 2005?" (Philippines Statistics Authority 2010). It is therefore possible to measure internal migration based on whether a person's current residence is different to their residence five years earlier. As a result, no information is provided on migrants who may have moved between the reference year and date the census took place but returned to their original destination by the time the census was held. There is also no way of knowing if a migrant moved on multiple occasions with this definition.



- Violent conflict has also resulted in large-scale internal migration. For instance, the conflict in Mindanao has caused significant involuntary out-migration, primarily in the form of displaced Moros and Lumads peoples from conflict zones (Tigno 2006), with displaced Lumads in particular locked into a cycle of poverty (Norwegian Refugee Council 2013a). In 2013 around 327,000 people in Mindanao fled their homes, about a third of whom fled within Zamboanga Province, where clashes between government forces and the Moro National Liberation Front were especially intense (Norwegian Refugee Council 2013b). The precise extent of protracted displaced is not known, but data suggests that half of the 461,000 people displaced by conflict and disasters as of the end of 2014 had fled their homes more than a year before (Norwegian Refugee Council 2015).

## Migrants' Characteristics

- Evidence suggests female migration is very significant in the Philippines, especially in rural-urban movement. In rural Mindanao, females constitute 56.3% of the out-migrant population (Quisumbing and McNiven 2006)<sup>2</sup>.
- Data from the 2000 Population and Housing Census indicate that 52% of working-age migrants are aged 20-39. (Perez 2015).
- 46% of migrants are single or unmarried, and 24% of migrants have at least graduated from high school (ibid.).
- Different types of migrants are attracted to rural areas, *poblaciones*<sup>3</sup>, and urban areas. The latter two attract the better-schooled, in part because young people migrate for education or to seek better employment prospects. Migrants to rural areas move primarily for farming and marriage (Quisumbing and McNiven 2006).
- Having contacts in the destination area is an important factor for migrants. First-time movers rely on family and friends for financial support when looking for work in their new destination and often live with relatives in the destination area, whereas subsequent moves are generally self-financed. Migrants also end up living with their own offspring and spouses on subsequent moves (ibid.).

<sup>2</sup> This paper relied on data from the Bukidnon Panel Study, which follows up 448 families in rural Mindanao who were first interviewed in 1984-85 by the International Food Policy Research Institute and the Research Institute for Mindanao Culture, Xavier University. It should not be taken to be representative of internal migrants in the Philippines as a whole. The study interviewed the original respondents and a sample of their offspring, both those who have remained in the same area and those who have moved to a different location. Parents (original respondents) and children who formed separate households in the same locality were interviewed in 2003; offspring that migrated to other rural and urban areas were interviewed in 2004.

<sup>3</sup> *Poblaciones* are the central business and administrative districts of larger municipalities.





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- In Mindanao, migrants' reasons for moving differ by destination and by gender. Most male first-time migrants to rural areas migrate to start a new job (21%), or to get married (18%), while female first-time migrants primarily move to rural areas for marriage (35%), or to start a new job (23%). On the other hand, first-time migrants to poblaciones and urban areas, both male and female, move either to start a new job or to access better schooling. For the most recent move (compared to the first move) more males (53%) to rural areas migrate for economic reasons than for life-cycle or family reasons, while most female migrants to rural areas migrate for family reasons, with marriage accounting for 54% of female migrants. But for migrants to poblaciones and urban areas, both male and female migrants primarily move for economic reasons, with the next most important reason for moving being schooling for females and marriage for males (ibid.).
- Migrants' occupations vary substantially based on whether or not there are male or female and if they are moving for the first time.
  - Men tend to work in farming, crafts and trades, manual labour and transportation in both their first and most recent moves.
  - In contrast, women who have moved more than once tend to work in housework or childcare, and are less likely to work in manual labour or transportation. This suggests that women who work in the latter occupations when they first move switch occupations on their subsequent move(s) (ibid.).
- Females are more likely to move to urban areas if they have more siblings. A possible explanation for this is that siblings who have already migrated provide pre-existing support networks for younger sisters in families (ibid.).
- The predominance of women among rural-urban migrants can be explained by their relative lack of education and skills (particularly in relation to agriculture). They are motivated to move to cities to seek opportunities as a result (UN Habitat 2016).
- Women also migrate to escape abuse within marriage and to avoid the pressure that comes with marrying early, and young people tend to see life in urban areas as exciting. Many migrants to Manila use it as a stopgap measure and intend to organise a further international migration from there. They use their time in Manila to accumulate funds, make administrative arrangements for overseas travel, and gain work experience (Anderson et al. 2017).
- Climate change affects agricultural migration. Temperature rises and typhoons negatively affect rice yields, and cause greater outmigration from agriculturally dependent provinces that have large rural populations. Males, the better-educated, and younger individuals are especially sensitive to the migratory effects of climate change (Bohra-Mishra et al. 2016).



## Working and Living Conditions in the New Setting

- At least 75% of migrants find jobs in their areas of destination (Perez 2015).
- The predominance of female migration in the Philippines indicates that women have a degree of economic freedom, but their concentration in gendered work suggests a paucity of diverse employment options (UNICEF Philippines and Scalabrini Migration Center 2013).
- The majority of female migrants end up in domestic work in the cities (UNICEF Philippines 2013) or work as street vendors and in factories associated with the textile industries (Anderson et al. 2017). They are more likely than male migrants to work as professional or managerial staff in urban areas, and in poblaciones they are more likely to work in sales occupations (Quisumbing and McNiven 2006).
- The majority of male migrants in urban areas work in jobs that offer low salaries such as crafts and trades, farming and manual or transportation work (ibid.).
- Migrant domestic workers are particularly vulnerable. They work long hours and are the lowest paid workers in the country. 33% work 9-10 hours per day and 20 % work 11 hours or more. In 2010, the average daily pay received by domestic workers was approximately US\$2.60 (ILO 2011). Although efforts have been made to formalise domestic work through the introduction of Domestic Workers Act 2013, this law is very poorly implemented. For the most part, domestic workers are not registered and labour inspectors are also unable to enter private homes (Anderson et al. 2017).
- Data from trafficking shelters has emphasised the vulnerability of young, especially female, migrants to being victims of trafficking (ibid.).
- The Philippine's slum population as a percentage of its urban population is 38.3%<sup>4</sup> (UN Data 2014), though data is not available on what proportion of the slum population is comprised of internal migrants. Informal settlers lack access to basic infrastructure and services, secure land tenure,

<sup>4</sup> The disparity between the percentage provided by UN Data (38.3% in 2014) and the World Bank Philippines Urbanization Review (5.4% in 2012) is likely due to the differences in the definition of "slum"; UN Data estimates that over 17 million Filipinos live in slums, compared to the 2.2 million identified by the World Bank. The World Bank uses data from the 2012 Family and Income Expenditure Survey (FIES), in which the criteria for when a person resides in a slum are tightly defined: a person resides in a slum if they live in a household where consent of the land-owner has not been obtained or in makeshift housing. It is highly likely that UN Data uses a broader definition of slum which is similar to those adopted by UN-Habitat or the Housing and Urban Development Co-ordinating Council (HUDCC). The latter defines slums as *buildings or areas* that are deteriorated, hazardous, unsanitary or lacking in standard conveniences, or the squalid, crowded or unsanitary *conditions* under which people live, irrespective of the physical state of the building or area (Ragragio 2003). The UN-Habitat definition is similarly broad: an informal settlement or slum includes any household that cannot provide *any one* of the following characteristics: (1) Durable housing of a permanent nature that protects against extreme climate conditions; (2) Sufficient living space (no more than three people sharing the same room); (3) Easy access to safe water in sufficient amounts at an affordable price; (4) Access to adequate sanitation in the form of a private or public toilet shared by a reasonable number of people; and (5) Security of tenure that prevents forced evictions (UN-Habitat 2013). The divergence in definitions of "slum" used has been noted as an obstacle to research on slum populations: see HUDCC (2014).





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protection from natural disasters, and have limited access to capital, stable employment and livelihood opportunities. There are also vulnerable to natural disasters: over 104,000 informal settler families in Metro Manila live in danger areas exposed to recurrent flooding (World Bank 2017b).

- 35% of Baguio's indigenous population have stable jobs or sources of income and have settled permanently in the city. However, 65% of these migrants suffer from extreme poverty caused by under-employment and joblessness. Many poor indigenous migrants in Baguio City retain houses in their original village and head home to do agricultural work during the planting and harvesting season (Cacho and Carling 2002).
- Internal migration can generate social tensions. It is not uncommon for a split to emerge between longer-time residents and new migrants in urban centres, resulting in the generation of an "us" versus "them" mentality. Deterioration in law and order, overcrowded facilities, and competition for customers is often blamed on "other", new sub-groups in the city (World Bank 2017a).

## The Impact of Internal Migration on Those Who Stay Behind

- Migrants to urban areas remit more than migrants to rural areas or children who stay in the same *barangay* (Quisumbing and McNiven 2010).
- Internal remittances are largely sent via money transfer operators. 69% of Filipinos do not have bank accounts, and for adults in the poorest 40% of households, this figure rises to 82%. Transfers are rarely sent through financial institutions (World Bank Group 2015).
- Remittances have had a significant positive impact on internal migrant-sending households' expenditures, especially in the areas of clothing, footwear, and education. Households receiving remittances also are able to accumulate consumer durables and non-land assets (Quisumbing and McNiven 2010).
- Among poorer households, internal remittances generate more welfare than international remittances (Ang, Sugiyarto and Jha 2009). However, not all internal migrants attain better jobs after migrating and can afford to send remittances to their families.
- The outflow of the young labour force and the best-educated individuals from rural areas poses challenges to rural agricultural productivity. The fact that most remittances are invested in non-land assets strongly suggests that migration forces a transition out of agriculture (Quisumbing and McNiven 2010).



- Although research has been carried out on children who stay behind within the scope of international migration in the Philippines<sup>5</sup> there is little information for children whose parents have moved internally. However, it has been noted that in the Philippines many women and girls marry and have children at a young age. This pushes them to migrate to earn money (Anderson et al. 2017).

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<sup>5</sup> See for example UNICEF (2008). *Migration and Filipino Children Left-Behind: A Literature Review*. [online] Available at: [https://www.unicef.org/philippines/Synthesis\\_StudyJuly2008.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/philippines/Synthesis_StudyJuly2008.pdf)





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