

Filipino women who have connected the world.

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1. Filipino women overseas under pandemic

In December 2020, news spread around the world that the world's first COVID-19 vaccination had been administered. While the news is full of images of elderly British lady saying, "I'm happy to have received the world's first vaccination," the person who conducted the vaccine for the first time in the world was a woman who has worked in the UK for 24 years, a nurse from the Philippines. She was one of the "essential workers" who suddenly started to be referred to during the pandemic, even in Japan. How much attention did the world pay to those migrant nurses?

2. Care work and essential work

Society became aware early on that in Europe, where the COVID-19 situation became more serious than in Japan, many of the so-called essential workers are immigrants or people with roots in other countries. People whose "ethnicity" as immigrants (or immigrant roots) and "gender" (as being women) overlap made up the majority of essential workers, such as those working at

grocery store counters, in nursing homes and doing domestic work in private homes. A sociologist Arlie Russel called the structure in which women from developing countries, including the Philippines, engage in care work in the more advanced countries through migrant labor, the "global care chain." Through the international movement of women, care chain is created between developing countries and developed countries, and the higher up the chain, the more abundant care they can receive. Japan, which has accepted Filipino entertainers (whose entry became more restricted in 2005 after being flagged as a "hotbed of human trafficking" by the U.S. Department of State), marriage migrants in rural areas, care workers, and recently, household service workers in National Strategic Special Zones, is also a society that has relied on the "care" of migrant women, especially Filipino women, in various ways.

3. Philippine overseas employment policy and overseas female workers

The Philippines has been implementing the overseas employment policy as a national policy since 1974 for 50 years and is a world-renowned country of sending workers overseas. It is said

that there are currently approximately 10 million people living overseas (= 10% of the total population) in approximately 218 countries, and remittances from these overseas Filipinos account for nearly 10% of GDP. It has been said that the Philippines' "biggest export item is people," and even after the pandemic, more than 2 million workers go abroad every year, nearly half of whom are women engaged in care work. Their work as domestic workers and care workers has always been a workplace where they are constantly exposed to danger and where wages and working conditions are difficult to protect. In the Philippines, which enacted the "Magna Carta of Migrant Workers" (Republic Act No. 8042) in 1995, the issue of protecting the rights of overseas workers has always been posed to the government by women working overseas. As a sending country, the Philippine government has tried various measures such as setting a minimum wage for domestic workers and granting skills qualifications for them, but the rights of women working overseas are still being violated constantly, and as many Filipino popular films have shown to this day, families continue to rely on their remittances and put pressure on mothers and daughters abroad.

4. BPO industry and Filipino women - Connecting the world in the Philippines.

Since the 2000s, the IT-BPO industry has become the pillar of the economy in the Philippines, second to overseas employment. Typical examples include college graduate women who workday and night in call centers of multinational companies in city centres. However, even the call center jobs, which are

popular as "English-speaking and well-paying jobs" with air-conditioned offices and the ability to work from home even during the pandemic, are actually not free from frequent night shifts and unstable working conditions. Once again, Filipino women play the role of connecting consumers and global businesses around the world through their English skills and a type of care work ('customer care'). Filipino women who teach at English schools in the Philippines for Korean and Japanese youth are also expected to play a similar role as care workers, while also "connect" the world.

Looking back, Filipino women have long been supporting the global economy behind the scenes. Since the 1970s, these women have been known as with "nimble fingers" who have worked in foreign factories for export. Women also have been consumed and exploited by foreign men in sex tourism. These women are connected to Filipino women currently working in call centers in Metro Manila and in elderly care facilities in Japan. These are women who have connected the global economy and the world throughout the ages.

5. Does the "connected" world respect Filipino women?

Based on the English proficiency and hospitality that were built up through the country's historical colonial rule by Spain and the United States, the discourse that Filipinos are "cheerful people" and "they have large families and are good at providing care" has been born. This has, ironically, created a global pattern in which Filipino women have taken on roles that could be described as global "subcontractors of care" for low wages. Is the world that has been

“connected” through the various types of care provided by these women rigorously evaluating the value of that “care labor”? Care and service occupations with low wages, long working hours with heavy duty are often seen as “women’s” jobs. It is also a low-paying, hard, and long-hour job that people are expected to do because they are foreigners. The pandemic has brought to light once again how “essential” the care work performed by migrant women is for society, and the question of how to think about the value of care work has become clear. This is an issue common to all parts of the world, including Japan.

Many of the Filipino women living in Japan are also mothers of young people with mixed roots. They are the ones who have nurtured young people who embody diversity and are active in various fields. Including the contributions of these mothers, do we respect the existence of women from the Philippines and immigrant women in general?



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Graduated from Hitotsubashi University, Faculty of Sociology in 1997, and withdrew with a degree in 2003 from the Graduate School of Sociology, Hitotsubashi University. Formerly Associate Professor at the Faculty of Education and Human Sciences, Yokohama National University. Specialises in international sociology, gender, and international migration. Focusing mainly on migration of people from the Philippines, she researched the organizational activities of women who go to work as domestic workers in Hong Kong, Singapore and other countries, and their relationships with their families of origin. She has since conducted identity research based on networks of Filipino migrants living in Europe and North America, children migrating across borders and the narratives of young people who have been called ‘double’ and ‘half’.

Since 2000, when she was studying in the Philippines, she has been involved in DAWN (Development Action for Women Network), which works to empower Japanese Filipino Children (JFC), migrant women and their children who have returned from Japan. She is a member of DAWN-Japan, which supports the Japan tour of the JFC’s theatre company Akebono and various DAWN activities from

the Japanese side. Since becoming a university teacher, she has been involved in exchange activities between Japanese students and JFC and has recently been researching the history and role of DAWN and other JFC and mothers' support organisations.

Her main publications include *Living on the Move: Filipino Migrant Women and Multiple Mobilities* (Yushindo Koubunsha, 2016), *Transnational Sociology* (Yuhikaku, co-edited 2015) and *Transnational Sociology of Domestic Work* (Jimbunshoin, co-authored 2020). Recent articles include "Thinking 'Home' from Mobility - To Overcome the Uniform 'Stay Home' Discourse" (Gendai Shiso, Vol. 48-10 Special Issue: Coronas and Living - From the field of countermeasures, Seidosha, 2020), "The role of support organisations in the movement of people between Japan and the Philippines: Focusing on the experiences of migrant women and JFC" (co-author, Bulletin of the Faculty of Letters, Ferris University, No. 55, 2020), "Unlearning Symbiosis - Towards the Practice of Diversity" (ed. Koichi Iwabuchi, *Dialogue with Diversity: What Diversity Promotion Makes Invisible*, Seikyusha 2021).

She is currently a member (chairperson) of the Yokohama City Council for the Promotion of Gender Equality and also a member of the Kawasaki City Council for the Promotion of a Multicultural Society.

Thank you for reading. Any comments and suggestions are welcome.

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