

# FLOW OF FILIPINO WOMEN MIGRANT DOMESTIC WORKERS WITHIN EAST ASIAN REGION

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## **Abstract**

*This paper is aimed to review the patterns of Filipino women migrant domestic worker's movement as first hires to the other countries within East Asia region. The paper is based on the data collected from the annual official records maintained by and taken from online data base of the Philippines Overseas Employment Administration. The major contribution of the paper is that with the help of data analysis it has established a typology of the four categories of the countries in East Asian region according to the number of Filipino women migrant domestic workers each of these countries received. The first category of country included Hong Kong as a country receiving more than tens of thousands of the women domestic workers from Philippines. Second category includes Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan, Brunei, and Japan as countries receiving few thousand to few hundreds of the women domestic workers from Philippines. Third category including South Korea, China, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia, North Korea, and East Timor as countries receiving less than hundred women domestic workers. Fourth category includes Myanmar and Laos as countries not receiving any women throughout the period as shown in official record. The overall trend of Filipino women migrant domestic workers migrating within East Asian region is declining.*

**Keywords:** *Filipinos, Women, Migration, Domestic workers, East Asian Countries.*

## **Introduction**

Migration is a sociological fact that is changing the demographic, social and political dynamics of the world very rapidly. In developing and underdeveloped economies people are finding it difficult with

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each and every passing day to find good employment and livings. The socio-political conditions are also forcing people out of several regions and countries. These poor countries with a lower level of socio-economic development also has a large number of youth facing such hardships there and searching for better socio-economic opportunities for themselves and their families.

On the other hand, the developed economies of the West and East Asia have achieved high level of socio-economic development leading to low fertility rates, high life expectancy and better social security. Still these countries are facing demographic changes of ageing and women's labor for participation, that are creating vacuum of young labor and those attending elders and children at home. This demographic change has caused a global demand of domestic workers and especially women to migrate in there and fill these vacuums in developed societies.

The dynamic and changes occurring in both the developed and developing economies are coordinating to create large streams of young women migrating from developing economies to the developed one to join the reproductive and domestic work sector for finding better economic livings for themselves and their families. The Philippines is a country from where a large number of young educated women moved to other better and developed economies in search of employment as domestic worker. This paper is an effort to track the patterns of Filipino women migrant domestic workers migrating to different countries within East Asian region.

## **Review of Literature**

Migration is defined as movement of individuals from a geographical location to another one on a relatively permanent basis (Bryjak & Soroka, 1997). This movement is usually done for social economic reasons (Tabassum, Tabassum & Afzal, 2013). Economic reasons may include better employment or livelihood (Tabassum, Tabassum &

Afzal, 2013). Adverse social and environmental conditions can also be a reason behind such movement of people across globe.

Asia is a region that holds a prominent position in global and regional migratory flows. It has both source and destination countries in this regard (Siddiqui, 2008). The two major migratory streams of female labour force are being observed in Asia: one is from South Asia and the South East Asia to the Gulf countries in Middle East, and the other one is from developing Asian economies to the more developed East Asian economies (Thimothy & Sasikumar, 2012).

The changing patterns of labor force participation of women have created a vacuum in the household wanting those who can perform the domestic work (Piper, 2005). Not much of the people are even ready to pay much for this less valued domestic work. In this situation , the cheap labor of migrant women is best suitable for this purpose (Erdogdu & Toksoz, 2013). The reproductive and domestic work is now becoming an established work sector at international level. This international demand of reproductive work done by migrant women has emerged as gendered division of reproductive labor at international level (Parrenas, 2001).

In this international division of reproductive labor certain countries of Asia are serving a major role as suppliers of migrant domestic workers to fill this gap of domestic work across the world. Majority of these women migrants are coming from the Philippines, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka (Piper, 2009; Siddiqui, 2008). From East Asian region, the Philippines, Indonesia, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar are major sending countries (Siddiqui, 2008).

Filipino women are forming a major part of these women performing reproductive domestic labor across the world. A large part of Philippines population (i.e. 9% of the total population of the country) lives and works outside its territorial borders (IOM, 2005: 239). Fifty percent of these Filipino worker living outside its borders are women and two third of them are serving in domestic work sector (Parrenas,

2001).

Middle East is the region attracting largest number of these Filipino migrants. Following it is the East Asian region, where the Philippines is also located, as the second largest attraction to Filipino domestic workers. Tabassum and her fellows (2014) claimed that Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and Taiwan has remained the destination countries of the region for Filipino women migrant domestic workers during the year 2001 to 2009. They further claim Hong Kong as the most attractive destination for Filipino women migrant at global level as well as regional level (Tabassum, Tabassum, & Afzal, 2014).

It is not sufficient to discuss one or two most attractive destinations for Filipino women migrant domestic workers in East Asian region. There is need to study the region in a comprehensive manner for the patters of flow in which these women moved to other countries as well. Accordingly, this paper is aimed to review the patterns of Filipino women migrant domestic workers migration as first hires to different East Asian Countries.

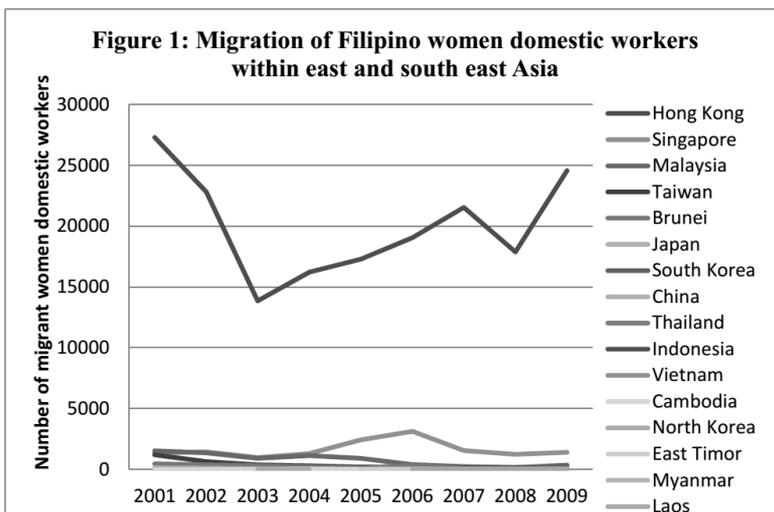
## **Method**

This paper aims to identify the patterns of Filipino women migrant domestic workers' movement to its neighboring countries throughout East Asian region. The paper is based on the data collected from the annual official records maintained by and taken from online data base of the Philippines Overseas Employment Administration (The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration 2013). The statistics taken from the source was statistically analyzed to identify the patterns of the women migrating to different countries in East Asia. On the basis of the data analysis, all the countries of East Asian region are dividided into four broader categories regarding the number of Filipino women domestic workers they received during the year 2001 to 2009. The data analyzed was presented in the forms of graphs for the easy

understanding of the reader.

### Migration of Filipino Women Domestic Workers in Far East & South East Asian Region

Middle East is the region to which largest number of Filipino women migrant domestic workers moved to join the service sector industry. Following the Middle East, East Asian region is ranks second as welcoming the largest number of Filipino women migrant domestic workers. The most important most important destinations for Filipino women labour migrant in East Asian region are Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan, Brunei, and Japan. While they also move to other countries of the region e.g. South Korea, China, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia, North Korea, and East Timor in less numbers. Figure 1 shows the number of Filipino women migrant hired for the first time during 2001 to 2009 for these different countries of the East Asian region.



Source: (The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration 2013).

Figure 1 clearly shows a wide difference in the proportion of the Filipino women migrant domestic workers moving to work in Hong

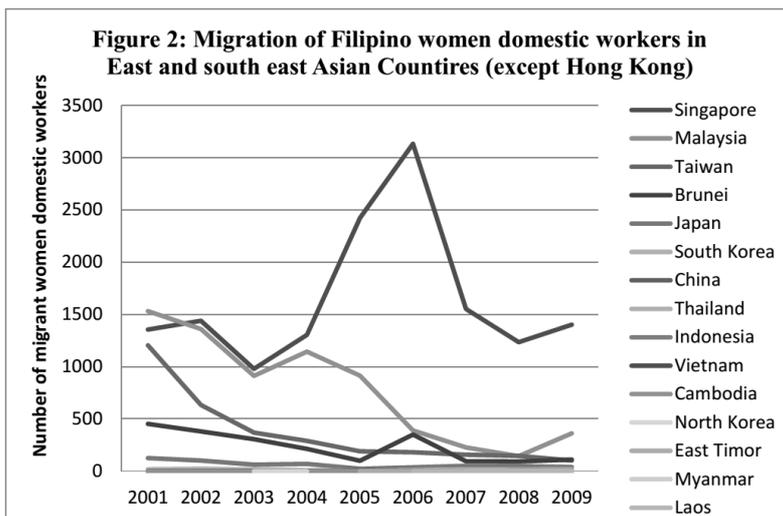
Kong as domestic workers as compared to any other country in the region. The graph presented in Figure 1 is showing that there is substantial difference in the number of Filipino women migrant domestic workers moving to Hong Kong as compared to a lesser number of their counterparts migrating to join domestic work in Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan, Brunei, and Japan. While it is difficult to show the larger difference in the number the women migrant domestic worker moving to Cambodia, North Korea, East Timore, as compared to the large number of their counterparts moving to Hong during the period studied in this paper.

**Table 1: Four Categories of Countries in East Asia Receiving Filipino Women Migrant Domestic Workers.**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Countries included</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> category</b>	This category includes the countries receiving tens of thousands of first hired migrant women domestic workers from Philippines	Hong Kong
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> category</b>	This category includes countries where the number of new hired Filipino women domestic workers during the year 2001 to 2009 ranges from few hundreds to few thousand	Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan, Brunei, and Japan
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> category</b>	This category includes the countries that have received few (average less than hundred) women migrant domestic workers from Philippines during the period studied	South Korea, China, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia, North Korea, and East Timor
<b>4<sup>th</sup> category</b>	This category included the countries that have not received any new hire Filipino women migrant domestic worker during the period studied here	Myanmar and Laos

On the basis of the data analysis presented in the graph above, it is visible that the East Asian countries can be classified into three main categories in respect of receiving new hired Filipino women migrant domestic workers. First category includes the countries that received tens of thousands of first hired migrant women domestic workers from Philippines during the years 2001 to 2009 (e.g. Hong Kong). The second category includes countries where the number of new hired Filipino women domestic workers during the year 2001 to 2009

ranges from few hundreds to few thousand (e.g. Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan, Brunei, and Japan). Third category includes the countries that have received few, average less than hundred, women migrant domestic workers from Philippines during the period studied (e.g. South Korea, China, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia, North Korea, and East Timor). While fourth category included the countries that have not received any new hire Filipino women migrant domestic worker during the period studied here (e.g. Myanmar and Laos).



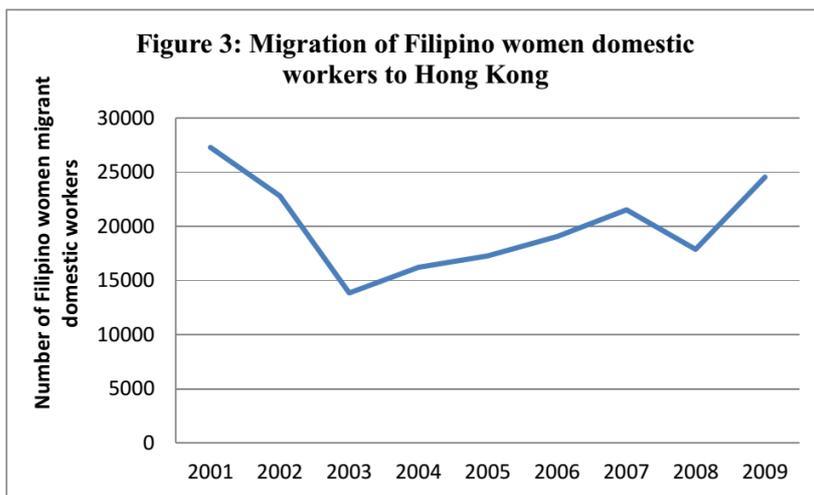
Source: (The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration 2013)

Figure 2 shows a clearer picture of the patterns of first hire Filipino women migrant domestic workers' movement toward the different East Asian countries except Hong Kong. It more clearly highlight the number of women moving to the countries that fall in the later three categories as mentioned above. The patterns of Filipino women migrant domestic workers moving to all the countries falling these different categories is discussed in detail in the following sections.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Category Country: Migration of Filipino Women Domestic Workers to Hong Kong

Tabassum and her fellows (2014) while studying in detail the patterns of Filipino women migrant domestic workers to Hong Kong claimed that the place is the most attractive destination for these women workers around the world in general and within East Asia in particular. They claim that Hong Kong receives the largest number of these women domestic workers as compared to any other country. The data analysis presented in Figure 1 and Figure 3 also confirms that Hong Kong is the country that attracts the largest number of Filipino women domestic workers in East Asian region. It is the only country that falls in the first category of the countries as prescribed above for better understanding. The first category of the countries as defined

Still Hong Kong appears to receive the largest number of Filipino women migrant domestic workers as compared to any other country around the world. It also absorbs most of the Filipino women migrating to the countries in East Asian region as domestic workers.



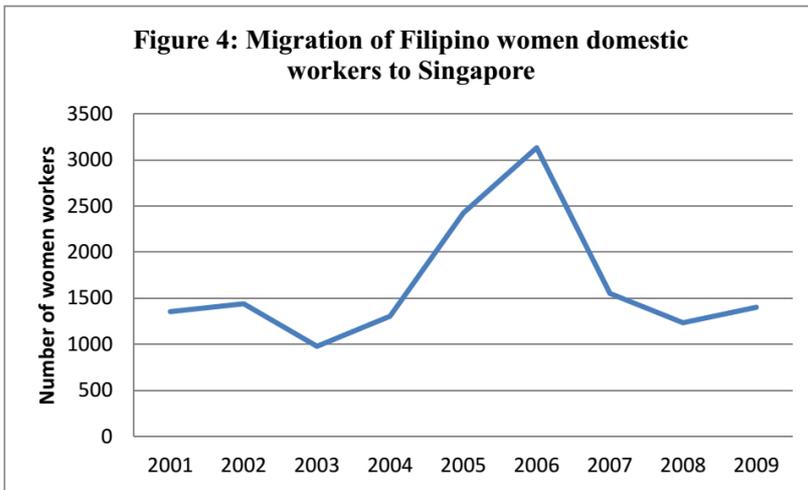
Source: (The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration 2013)

In East Asian region, Hong Kong appears to be the one country attracting most of the Filipino women migrant domestic workers. During the period from 2001 to 2009 total 180567 Filipino women migrated to join domestic work in Hong Kong.

The year wise data analysis of number of Filipino women migrant domestic workers shows that the number of women migrating to Hong Kong as domestic workers remain high throughout the period from 2001 to 2009. The highest number of Filipino women domestic workers migrated to Hong Kong during 2001 (i.e. 27,303 women). Since then the overall number of the women worker moving to this destination is found declining. But due to receiving the highest number of tens of thousands women migrant domestic workers from Philippines Hong Kong is considered the only country included in First category as mentioned above.

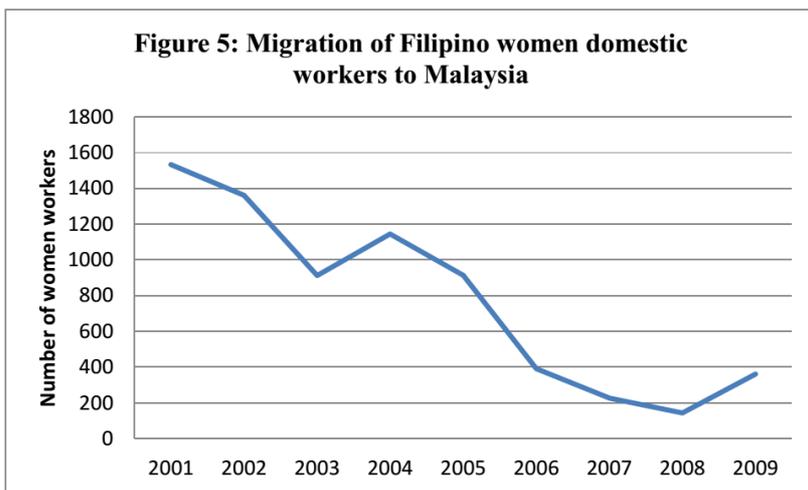
### **Migration of Filipino Women Domestic Workers to 2nd Category of Countries**

The second category countries include Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan, Brunei, and Japan. All These countries received only few thousands to few hundreds of new hires Filipino Women Migrant Domestic Workers. Singapore received new hires of these women ranging from 1000 to 3000. After the year 2006 Singapore is also witnessing an overall declining trend in receiving these women workers from Philippines.



Source: (The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration 2013)

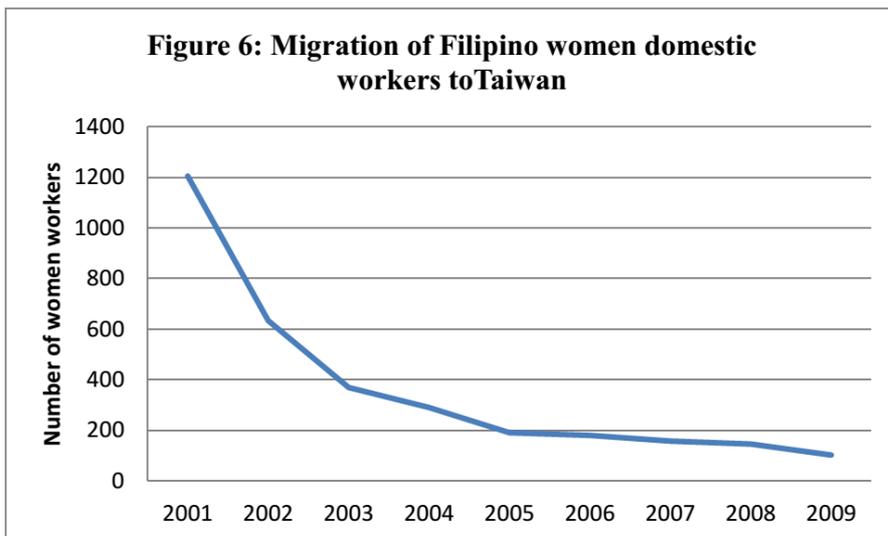
It is observed that 7.11% (14831 out of 208543) of the total Filipino women migrant domestic workers moving to 16 East Asian countries only moved to Singapore during the period studies here. While at the same time it is observed that only 3.352% (6991 out of 208543) of total Filipino women migrant domestic workers moved to 16 East Asian countries moved to Malaysia during the same period.



Source: (The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration 2013)

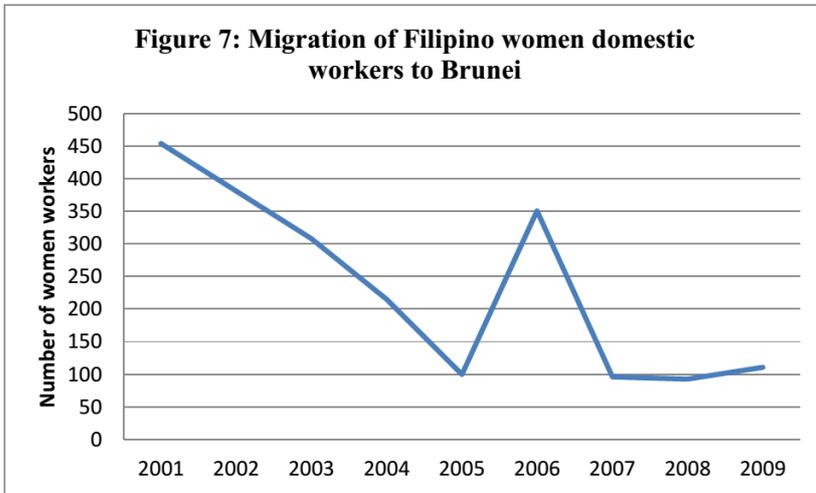
Malaysia as part of second category received less than 1600 of these women each year. The number of the women domestic workers migrating to Malaysia range between around 1500 to less than 200. The overall trend of Malaysia in respect of receiving Filipino women migrant domestic workers is declining.

Taiwan is also showing the same situation. It is observed that 1.57% (6991 out of 208543) of the total Filipino migrant domestic workers moving to 16 East Asian countries moved to Taiwan. The number of these women Taiwan received each year ranged between 1200 to less than one hundred. The overall trend in receiving of Filipino women workers in Taiwan is also declining.



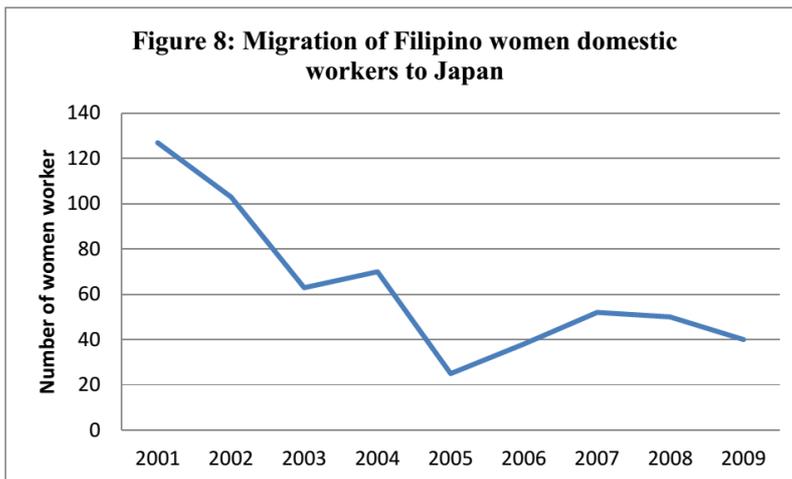
Source: (The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration 2013)

Only 1% (2109 out of 208543) of the total Filipino women domestic workers moving to 16 East Asian countries migrated to Brunei during this period. The number of women moved to Brunei each year ranged from 450 to one hundred. The overall trend in the case of Brunei is also of declining number of the migrant women domestic workers.



Source: (The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration 2013)

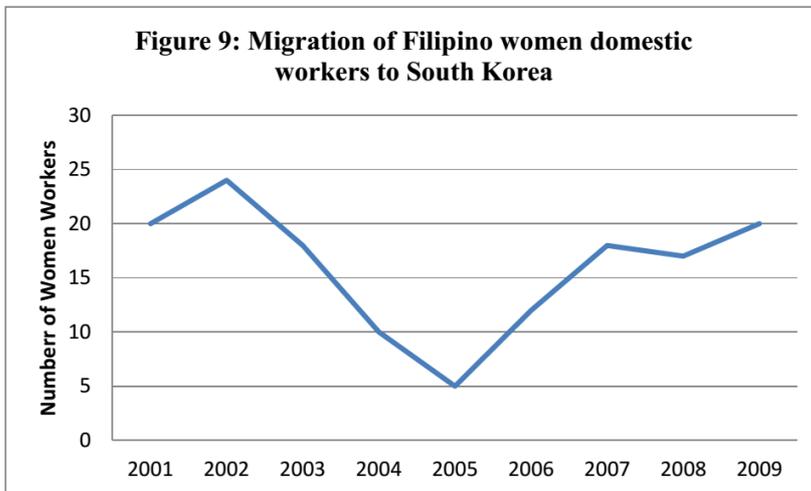
Japan is standing at the lowest edge of second category countries. Only (0.272%) 568 Filipino women domestic workers moved to Japan during the year 2001 to 2009. The number of the women moving to Japan ranged from 130 to only 20. The overall trend is also declining in this stream of migration to Japan.



Source: (The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration 2013)

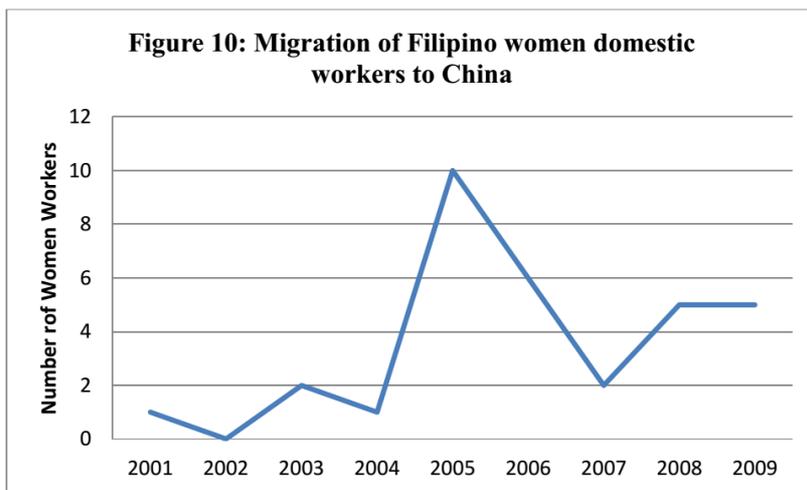
### Migration of Filipino Women Domestic Workers to Third & Fourth Categories of Countries

It is observed that only a marginal number of Filipino women migrated as domestic workers to other countries like South Korea, China, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia, North Korea, East Timor. All these countries are included into third category of countries as mentioned above. South Korea Received less than 25 of these women each year. The number of women received ranged from 24 to 5. Only 144 Filipino women domestic workers migrated to work in South Korea. It is only 0.069% of total Filipino women migrant domestic workers moving to East Asian Countries.



Source: (The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration 2013)

Similarly, only few women Filipino migrant domestic workers migrate to China. From 2001 to 2009, only 32 women that is (0.015%) of the total Filipino women domestic workers moving to East Asian countries migrated as domestic workers to China.



Source: (The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration 2013)

The other countries of the region either received a very marginal number of Filipino women domestic workers. Such as during the years from 2001 to 2009 Thailand received only 8 Filipino women domestic workers, Indonesia received 5, Vietnam received 4, Cambodia received 3, North Korea and East Timor received 1 each.

The Fourth category of the countries only included Myanmar and Laos, as no Filipino women moved was found to move to these countries a domestic workers in the official records of the years studied here.

## Conclusion

This paper aimed to review the patterns of Filipino women migrant domestic workers migration as new hires to different countries of East Asia. The paper is based on the statistics taken from official records of the Philippines Overseas Employment Administration. The data analysis shows that there are four categories of the countries according to the number of the women migrant these countries received from Philippines as domestic workers. The first category includes only one country that is Hong Kong. Hong Kong receives

more than tens of thousands of the women domestic workers from Philippines during the year 2001 to 2009. Second category includes Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan, Brunei, and Japan. These countries have received few thousand to few hundreds of the women domestic workers from Philippines. Third category includes a relatively large number of countries. In this category, South Korea, China, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia, North Korea, and East Timor as countries receiving less than hundred women domestic workers each year. Fourth category includes only two countries that are Myanmar and Laos. These two countries did not receive any Filipino women migrant domestic worker throughout the period studies as shown in official records. The overall trend of Filipino women migrant domestic workers migrating within East Asian region is declining.

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