

Voices from the Field

How a Filipino undergraduate became an overseas domestic worker

In 1993, Luzviminda made the difficult decision to leave her family, her job and her life in the Philippines and migrate to Italy. At the time she was 32-years-old. While her husband and her two sons still live together in the Philippines, Luzviminda lives alone in Rome.

Born in 1961 in Cabaroan, a poor province in the Ilocos Region, Luzviminda decided to migrate to Italy in order to improve the living conditions and provide more opportunities for her family. It was a difficult decision to make, as she said during an interview with UN-INSTRAW: “When I was in the Philippines, my earnings then were not enough to make ends meet. My husband owns a fishpond. My salary was not enough. My husband and I jointly took the final decision”.



© Charito Basa, 2007

As she later explained, in the ten years before leaving the Philippines, she graduated from university and shortly thereafter found work as a teacher and a hairdresser. But still her family was not able to cover all of their expenses.

One day she heard that her husband's cousin, a school teacher who had migrated to Italy, was able, after only a few years, to buy a house in the Philippines. Luzviminda's sister also went abroad and, after only two years of working, was also able to buy a house. With these two experiences in mind, Luzviminda considered that working abroad could be a solution to her family's financial problems.

“My goal in coming to Italy was to be able to raise funds to buy properties back home. My husband and I pawned our land for €2,500 to our godmother from Hawaii to be able to pay for the travel”.

Luzviminda now works as a maid in Rome, and she occasionally works as an interpreter for €35 per hour. “I also do hairdressing on Sundays. I am the one who sends the capital for the family farm. I send a minimum of €900 and up to €1.500.”

The remittances that Luzviminda sends back to the Philippines help not only her husband and two children, a daughter of 14 and a son of 18, but also her two sisters and her brother. Altogether, 6 people live on the income that Luzviminda provides, and as she revealed to UN-INSTRAW, she is proud to work hard and not spend money during her time off.

“The biggest part of my remittances goes to education. My son is a computer engineer, while my daughter is attending high school.” Moreover, additional money is used for the maintenance of the land, the farm and the fishpond.

There are 52,918 Filipino women like Luzviminda in Italy. Most of them are domestic workers or basic caregivers. According to the 2006 World Bank Report on Migration and Remittances, Filipino workers in Italy remit an estimated annual amount of US\$440 million.

The money remitted by these determined women creates opportunities for their sons and daughters that they themselves never had.

There are 89,668 Filipinos like Luzviminda in Italy. 52,918 are women and 36,750 are men. Most of them are domestic workers or basic caregivers. Italy is the 4th largest source of remittances to the Philippines, behind the United States, Saudi Arabia and Canada.

This interview was conducted as a part of a UN-INSTRAW (United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women) research project, carried out with support from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Filipino Women's Council (FWC).

Read the Study "[Gender, Remittances and Local Rural Development: The case of Filipino migration to Italy](#)".