

I Care for You, Who Cares for Me? Transitional Services of Filipino Live-in Caregivers in Canada

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Abstract

Filipino women dominate the Live-in Caregiver Program in Canada since the 1990s. Although their entry is facilitated by a temporary work visa with stringent conditions under this program, there is an evident desire to move through the next immigration route as landed immigrants. The transition from temporary workers to permanent residents appears crucial especially in the lives of Filipino women who pave the way for the sponsorship, settlement, and integration of their families into Canadian society.

Based on fieldwork in southern Alberta, this paper examines the settlement services provided to newcomers in Canada and their significance in the lives of migrant Filipino women caregivers during their transition from temporary to permanent residents. It outlines the sources of support and services utilized by these women in Canada as well as those provided by the Philippine government during this period. As caregivers, Filipino women exercise a fundamental social function to children, the elderly, and the physically challenged constituent members of Canadian society yet the corresponding programs and services responsive to their needs are not fully addressed by the host society. Female Filipino migrant workers mainly sustain the economic fate of its cash-trapped country as the acclaimed “new heroes” with no effective system of securing their rights and welfare overseas.

Key words

Live-in Caregivers Program (LCP), Filipino women, migrant workers, Canada, transitional services

Introduction

Immigration policies structurally design the temporary admission and possible retention of foreign workers (Avery, 1995; Douglas & Roberts, 2003; Pendakur, 2000; Sharma, 2006). States exercise sovereign acts of

controlling and regulating persons eligible for entry into their territory and the ways in which the designated settlement agencies deal with them. Policy implementation and practices shape the resulting experience of settlement, of inclusion or exclusion, of foreign workers in host societies.

In Canada, the Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP) is a classic example of an immigration policy that is especially designed to allow temporary migrant workers to become permanent residents under certain conditions like completion of two years live-in work within three years. The type of the work specified by the LCP usually attracts female migrant workers, and since its inception in 1992, is predominantly participated in by Filipino women. A highly gendered immigration scheme like the LCP requires a careful examination of the services provided to and accessed by live-in caregivers in their transition from temporary status to permanent residents.

This paper examines the nature of settlement services provided to newcomers and its relevance in the lives of Filipino women working as live-in caregivers in Canada. Services loosely encompass any assistance provided to Filipino live-in caregivers from both sides of the migration spectrum – the sending and the receiving states, between Canada and the Philippines – in the interim period of becoming permanent residents in Canada. The discussion is divided in three sections. First, it outlines the participation of Filipino women in the LCP. Second, it presents the services provided to immigrants in Canada by settlement agencies and its relevance in the lives of Filipino women under the LCP and beyond. Third, a discussion on the services accorded to Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) like live-in caregivers in Canada by the Philippine government.

Data is based on fieldwork in southern Alberta involving thirty Filipino women participants of the LCP, four immigrant-serving organizations, and one Philippine consular official based in Calgary. A total of ten focus group discussions with Filipino women were conducted in Calgary, Cardston, High River, Lethbridge, and Picture Butte from September 2006 to January 2007 through the Filipino community networks. These focus groups are informal interactive sessions about a specific topic (Wilkinson, 2004) and, in this case, the experiences of Filipino live-in caregivers on their use of settlement services in Canada during their transition from temporary workers to permanent residents.

The study group of thirty Filipino caregivers represents two types of

immigration status: fifteen women were currently under the terms of the LCP or are temporary residents and the other fifteen were considered “graduates” of the LCP with permanent residency status. The ages range from 25 to 58 and participants came from different regions in the Philippines, the majority of which were from Luzon. Five Filipino women came directly from the Philippines while the rest came from another third country such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, Saudi Arabia, and Malaysia. Twenty-nine of them completed college education in the Philippines. More than half of the women were unmarried at the time of the focus group discussion. Using a feminist framework to give voice to women’s experiential knowledge (Letherby, 2003), the narratives of Filipino caregivers are presented in italics and form its own space as separate quotations in the discussion.

Personal interviews with representatives of immigrant-serving agencies in Brooks, Calgary, Medicine Hat, and Lethbridge were conducted during the same period. These representatives were designated by settlement agencies in response to a letter of request for participation in the research project. Calgary, the metropolis hub of southern Alberta, has one Filipino consular official serving in an honorary capacity; that is, not directly employed by the Philippine government.

Filipino Women and the LCP

Since the 1980s the Philippines is consistently one of the top ten source countries for foreign domestic workers in Canada (Langevin & Belleau, 2000; Wong, 1984). The number of Filipinos granted with temporary work visas every year more than doubled in less than ten years, from 2,010 in 1995 to 5,672 in 2004 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada [CIC], 2004a). OFWs in Canada increased by 11.16 percent between 2003 and 2004 alone (Department of Labor and Employment [DOLE], 2005). In 2006, Philippines ranked fourth of the source countries for foreign workers with 8,529 or 7.6 percent (CIC, 2006). Of this number, the majority are women.

Filipino women comprise 88 percent of Filipinos with temporary work visas and 16.5 percent of the total number of female foreign workers in 2004, making the Philippines the number one source of female foreign workers in Canada (CIC, 2004a). It retained its top spot in 2006 with

6,704 arrivals or 17.8 percent of the total annual flow of female migrant workers (CIC, 2006). More than 90,000 Filipino women have been deployed to Canada from 1981 to 2004 through the Foreign Domestic Movement (FDM) program and its current version, the LCP (DOLE, 2005 Philippine Overseas and Employment Administration). Canada admitted the second largest deployment of 1811 Filipino live-in caregivers in the world next to Taiwan in 2003 (Mercurio, 2005).

A precursor of the FDM program in the 1980s, the LCP is a special immigration program designed in 1992 to augment the labour shortage for live-in care work (Bakan & Stasiulis, 1997; Macklin, 1994; Oxman-Martinez, Hanley, & Cheung, 2004). Labour shortage in this type of work correlates with the absence of a national child care policy as well as the reduction in institutionalized aged care (Benoit, 2000). The LCP and the neoliberal approach of Canadian governments to these basic, but waning, social services exacerbated the flow of Filipino women into the unregulated “house-bound” industry where the conditions of work in private homes are outside the purview of the government. Consisting almost 90 per cent of LCP participants (Pratt, 2002), Filipino women now construct the phenotype of live-in caregivers (McKay & Philippine Women Centre, 2002; Pratt, 1997).

The exodus of Filipino women as live-in caregivers in Canada is reflective of the labour-for-export development strategy of the Philippine government since the 1970s, resulting in the global phenomenon of eight million migrant Filipino workers in over 168 countries (Albuero & Abella, 2002; Teves, 2005; Velasco, 2002). In 2006, OFWs remitted \$12.8 billion to the country equivalent to over 10 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (Pernia, 2007). The labour export policy is an institutionalized development paradigm in the Philippines to keep its ailing economy afloat (Agunias & Ruiz, 2007; Largoza-Maza, 1995; Mellyn, 2003). Receiving states mostly require different aspects of service provision, from childcare, domestic work to hospital services, and Filipino women now comprise one of the largest mobile workers for international exchange in the global capitalist economy (Alegado & Finin, 2000; Bahramitash, 2005; San Juan, 2000; Tyner, 2000). For their contribution to the nation-state, migrant workers are acclaimed as *bagong bayani* (new heroes).

As the most important resource of its country, Filipino migrant workers, especially women, are faced with insurmountable challenges.

Studies have shown the magnitude of problems facing live-in caregivers, a euphemism for domestic workers, in Canada such as human rights violations (Santos, 2005), exploitative working conditions (Appelle, 2003; Bakan & Stasiulis, 1997; Grandea & Kerr, 1998; Philippine Women Centre, 1997) to include long working hours, non-payment of overtime, sexual harassment and abusive employers (Innes, 2005). Despite their vulnerable migration status and uncertain working conditions as live-in caregivers, the entry of Filipino women remains unabated.

The LCP is viewed as a means to achieve an end; an opportunity to chart a new life course for Filipino women and their families (Liboro-Pimentel, 2003; Macaraig, 2006). In various focus group sessions in south Alberta, Filipino live-in caregivers expressed that,

I do not want to work as a caregiver. I am an accounting graduate but my skills are not high enough to meet the points required for independent landed immigrant status. Through the LCP, I have no choice but to work as a caregiver and look for a bright future for me and my family.

- caregiver in Lethbridge

I believe this is the easy way for many of us. Okay, you can come to Canada if you have money, you're rich. If you belong to the lower status you cannot come to Canada. Then to be a caregiver is the true way to come here. This is your bridge.

- caregiver in Calgary

Working under the LCP translates into sending money back to the Philippines to construct or renovate houses, for education and medical expenses, for desired investment and ultimately working for the migration of their family members left in the Philippines. With unceasing economic woes and political instability in the Philippines, the LCP is an immigration policy that heeds on the aspirations of many families for a better future, sadly, outside of their own country. The temporary nature of most labour migration schemes in Singapore, Hong Kong and elsewhere made the LCP an attractive policy for Filipino women willing to venture in the cold North. Canada appears to offer the best potential of becoming a permanent resident and, eventually, a citizen (Barber,

2000; Buhler, 2006; McKay & Philippine Women Centre, 2002).

LCP creates a pool of labour gradually moving between two opposing streams of membership in the Canadian polity, from non-citizens to citizens (Stasiulis & Bakan, 2005). This movement of status necessarily requires a transitory phase fulfilled by the provision of services by different agents of the state and civil society. As productive contributors to the economies of host societies, states have the moral obligation to assist foreign resident workers to, according to Bell (2001, p. 26), “put on the road to citizenship.”

Temporary to Permanent Status: Canadian Service Galore?

Services form an integral aspect in the settlement and integration of newcomers to Canada (Omidvar & Richmond, 2003) and elsewhere. With its long history of immigration, the provision of services to newcomers in Canada by a corpus of government and non-government organizations is an essential program that aims to fully enhance the productive capacities of immigrants. In the 1970s, the immigrant service organizations based in different communities across Canada became designated frontline agencies to respond to the challenges of a growing multicultural society (Holder, 1998).

In Canadian practice, services provided to immigrants fall under settlement and integration services which “encompass activities that are specifically designed to facilitate the early economic and social integration of newcomers to Canada” (CIC, 2004b). Citizenship and Immigration Canada offers four main settlement programs, namely, the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP), Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC), Host Program, and the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) for refugees. Services may include the following:

orientation, reception, adult language training, settlement counseling, community bridging, referral to other services, labour market preparation, business activity preparation, temporary or one-time intervention to facilitate service adaptation in mainstream public services in light of newcomer settlement needs, immigrant sectoral supports and activities

which help to develop a more informed and welcoming environment for newcomers to Canada. (CIC, 2004b)

In most provinces and territories, except Manitoba, British Columbia and Quebec, the settlement programs are basically delivered by community organizations under the supervision of regional CIC branches (CIC, 2007).

The location and types of services offered by settlement organizations contribute to their effective utilization by immigrants. Truelove (2000) maps the geographical location of immigrant services in Toronto and notes that these agencies are highly concentrated near transportation routes. While social services to newcomers are quite established in census metropolitan centres and in medium-sized cities in Canada, studies indicate that barriers still exist for many immigrants to access these resources in their communities such as language, cultural insensitivity in the delivery of services, lack of information, and financial constraints (Guo, 2006). As a result, ethnic-based organizations mediate the service gap through provision of culturally-specific programs (Jenkins, 1988; Owusu, 2000).

Service providers also encounter a number of challenges which impact on their delivery of services to immigrants. Simich, Beiser, Stewart and Mwakarimba (2005) identified some of these concerns in Canadian practices to include the financial resources available at the disposal of immigrant settlement agencies, lack of policy and program coordination as well as limited service mandates. Community services for immigrants in Canada, according to Ng (1988, p. 89), often are conduit with how the state reproduce power relations, particularly in “how people relate to one another.” The types of services available to immigrants represent the positioning of this group of people into certain modes of activities; those outside of these set program structures, like temporary migrant workers or live-in caregivers, remain invisible agents of change in their migration experience.

Live-in caregivers belong to a special class of migrant workers who are mandated to be part of settlement services and, according to the representative of Lethbridge Immigrant Services, are “eligible for all the services that any other newcomer in Canada including an entire suite of integrated service programming, information and orientation services on virtually any aspect of living within the community” (interview, September

25, 2006). However, she adds that, “some of the stuff we offer obviously would not apply to the live-in caregiver.” Participants of the LCP must meet the English language requirements and are, therefore, not eligible for language skills development.

While live-in caregivers are qualified to access services offered by SAAMIS in Medicine Hat, Filipino women have not utilized these services except mediating contact with the Filipino community in the area. According to the SAAMIS representative, “we get calls from employer saying, I have a live-in caregiver and she’s very lonely, and she’s looking for somebody from the Philippines” (interview, September 18, 2006). She further claims that this is “the only thing that has been accessed, when they look up for contact of that community.” The same pattern emerged in the small city of Brooks where Filipino caregivers rarely go to the immigrant centre mainly servicing African refugees.

In the metropolitan city of Calgary, the number of Filipinos who utilize the programs and services of the Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (CCIS), according to one of its program managers, is “fairly low” (interview, November 17, 2006). Filipino caregivers usually seek their services after the live-in work requirement is completed and they have attained permanent residency, but not during the transition phase. The low turn-out of Filipinos, in general, and live-in caregivers in particular, raises the issue of relevant programming and services at the time of the two-year live-in work period and prior to the attainment of permanent residency.

Furthermore, the access to settlement services is limited by the number of years after arrival in Canada and the type of clientele. According to the CCIS representative, “the rule for this is, we can serve people in their first two years in Canada and we have to keep the percentage of people who are non-permanent residents down” (interview, November 17, 2006). From this practice, the live-in caregiver who has spent the first two years of arrival in Canada under constraining work situations would not be able to qualify.

There are issues that particularly affect the Filipino caregiver population in Calgary. Aside from abuse, isolation and exploitation facing live-in caregivers, the CCIS representative observably points to “stress and mental health issues of prolonged separation from their families” (interview, November 17, 2006). He adds that “they work here two to three years, you’ve got to get permanent residency and file sponsorship,

and you see mothers separated from their children for five to seven years.” Parreñas (2001a, p. 361) emphatically addresses “mothering from a distance” which causes “helplessness, regret, and guilt for mothers and loneliness, vulnerability, and insecurity for children.” As Filipino live-in caregivers financially work out the process of filing for family sponsorship, the emotional aspect of waiting for reunification takes its toll for themselves and their families (Parreñas, 2007). A two-pronged isolation is experienced by Filipino live-in caregivers: isolation brought about by live-in situation and isolation from their own children or families (Oxman-Martinez, Hanley, & Cheung, 2004).

Who Cares for Me? Filipino Live-in Caregivers and Transitional Services

Instead of government-funded settlement agencies, Filipino caregivers seek the assistance of their friends or families, Filipino associations, faith-based communities, and, to some extent, the recruitment agencies in times of distress. These are considered informal sources in accessing services (Neufeld, Harrison, Stewart, Hughes, & Spitzer, 2001) and are outside the regulated scheme of programming. Personal agency is also an important aspect in seeking initial support from government authorities in Canada.

While most cities have settlement agencies, Filipino live-in caregivers in southern Alberta are widely spread in nearby small towns and hamlets with the vast prairie lands in between houses. Many of them were directly sent to these places upon arrival in Canada. To be able to venture out and explore the city limits depends on the generosity of their employers to give them a ride during their days off or somebody else. Filipino live-in caregivers claim that,

I don't even know that these organizations have services for us.

- caregiver in Cardston area

I am not aware that there are organizations supporting us.
Sad to say that there was no help that we receive from the
government or from any other organizations.

- caregivers in Lethbridge

I have not heard of any immigrant serving agencies providing assistance to live-in caregivers.

- caregiver in High River

These responses indicate that there is a lack of awareness among Filipino live-in caregivers about existing services provided by settlement agencies in their communities. The relative isolation from the community brought about by the nature of their work contributes to the non-utilization of services. For example, live-in caregivers are usually at work during regular hours from Monday to Friday which coincide with the business hours of many settlement agencies.

How could we go there (to the office)? ...our work is Monday to Friday and the same time that these offices are open we are at work... and we don't have the time to go there if they are close because it's our off, too.

- caregiver in Lethbridge

The programs and services available to immigrants and newcomers in Canada are not considered relevant to the needs of live-in caregivers based on a number of factors. First, participants of LCP must demonstrate proficiency of the English language prior to arriving in Canada. Building language skills is, consequently, the banner program of many settlement agencies. Second, programs and services construct a type of immigrant who has bare knowledge to navigate the Canadian system and does not necessarily reflect the particular needs of live-in caregivers. In Medicine Hat, for example, settlement workers assist newcomers to their appointments in the community, providing interpretation and other facilitative services. Third, the high number of refugees supported by settlement agencies shapes the perception among Filipino live-in caregivers about their services.

Foremost needs of the Filipino live-in caregivers include shelter in case of termination of employment, accessible information services for job-related enquiries, protection of their rights and welfare, medical services, and recognition of professional qualification obtained overseas. These concerns were directed to non-settlement agencies, relying on the social and cultural capital of families, friends, and ethnic associations.

Families and Friends

Friends refer to other Filipino live-in caregivers whom they met in public places like shopping malls, parks, schools, and churches; or, another Filipino whose name and contact information is provided to them while in the Philippines or in another country as well as those they meet during social gatherings of the Filipino associations. The extended kinship network of the Filipinos (Church & Katigbak, 2000), to include blood relatives or fictive relations, suggests a person in Canada with whom they would be able to get in contact for assistance. They share that,

I have a sister here. She told me everything.

My family. Most of them know the process of being an immigrant. They help us.

My friend gave me information about immigration rules and I often stay with them during weekends. They happened to be a friend of my husband in the Philippines.

The Filipino residents whom we meet here also helped us.

- caregivers in Calgary

I just ask my friends about anything. They came before me and I followed their ways. Oh, this is it.

- caregiver in High River

The informal social network of friends and family seems to be the “common way” in which immigrant women connect with services available in the community (Neufeld et al., 2001, p. 13). Filipino live-in caregivers resort to the informal sources of getting the needed information about living in Canada similar to their conventional practices in the Philippines. The *palakasan* (contest of force or power) (Sison, 2006, p. 4) system prevalent in Philippine political processes also manifest in seeking assistance directly to family members, fictive and associational relations employed in agencies to gain favourable treatment instead of following certain protocols. While not of the same context in their own

country, the informal network of friends and relatives form the core group in adjusting to a new life upon migration to Canada, seemingly replacing government-designated settlement services.

Filipino live-in caregivers in need of immediate housing and financial support brought about by sudden termination of contracts or waiting for the issuance of another work permit primarily resort to their small circle of friends in the community for assistance. Work permits are issued for each contracted employer and commencing work with another violates the terms of the LCP. Processing time for a new work permit takes about three months and during this critical phase, the caregiver transfers from one house to another. The following narrative reflects the utter desperation of live-in caregivers in seeking immediate shelter and support from the government and in the community.

The employer said, pack your things. You're terminated. But before I drive you to Calgary airport, clean the house first. It's difficult to contact HRSDC. So I called up my friend (another live-in caregiver) to come to the house and help me.

- caregiver in Lethbridge

Filipinos adhere to the fundamental personality trait or value called *kapwa* (fellow being) which defines their social relationship (Marcelino, 1990). This appears to be most visible among Filipinos in diaspora who extend goodwill or *pakikipagkapwa* (Aquino, 2004) to other Filipinos in dire need of assistance. Filipino collectivist orientation shapes the creation of a new set of alliances and network system based on shared experience of migration.

Filipino Associations

As a growing immigrant community in Canada, Filipino associations are found in major cities and localities and are loosely organized according to region, religion, dialect, business and sports interest, to name a few (Silva, 2006). In Calgary, the Filipino 2004 Telephone Guide listed thirty eight Filipino associations alone. There is only one Filipino association in the medium-sized city of Lethbridge and area.

I know of a Filipino lady here whose employer died after five

months. The children of her employer want to deport her and the Filipino society helped raise money to get her papers done.

- caregiver in Calgary

Filipino community associations, like other ethnic organizations in Canada, significantly contribute to the integration of immigrants through the provision of “culturally sensitive services and support systems” (Chekki, 2006, p. 2). The Filipino associations in Calgary and Lethbridge, however, do not offer formalized services to live-in caregivers. Most are venues for social events from which other Filipinos establish new friendship and recreate those that they left behind in the Philippines.

Recruitment Agencies

The recruitment agencies in southern Alberta provided some form of assistance in finding another employer in cases where the first employment arrangement fails due to death, termination, abuse, or other circumstances. In some cases, the agencies responsible for bringing the Filipino live-in caregivers from Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, and parts of the Middle East arranged for a second employer if the contracted first employment did not materialize upon arrival in Canada.

Those who came here through the agencies are sort of protected because you can approach them for whatever problems you have. But not all. It depends with the agency.

- caregiver in Calgary

However, these agencies do not provide any form of assistance for problems encountered in the course of their employment for the next two years. Still, Filipino live-in caregivers rely on the social network of friends and relatives to help them out in times of need.

Like for instance my agency, they told me they will follow up. When I arrived, they will call once a week. But after a month, they called me once.

- caregiver in Calgary

I live with another Filipina. Her employment was terminated after three weeks of working as live-in caregiver. According to the agency that brought her in Lethbridge, it's not their responsibility to provide housing. Her employer is Chinese and wants her to be sent to the airport like what they do in Hong Kong. So she called us. We met in the church before.

-caregiver in Lethbridge

Employment agencies specializing on recruiting live-in caregivers exact exorbitant placement fees that are often undeclared or made secret among its Filipino clients to circumvent the Fair Trading Act in Alberta. In many cases, it is alleged that recruitment agencies in host countries like Hong Kong or Taiwan demand fees that links them to employment agencies in Canada. More often than not, the advices and course of action suggested by these employment agencies for problems encountered in the privatized workplace are not in the interest of the caregiver. For example, caregivers are advised to endure the harassment committed by their employers for two years or risk deportation. Withholding assistance to seek another employer is an effective measure to quell complaints among live-in caregivers.

Faith-based Communities

Majority of Filipinos in Canada are Catholics (Fay, 2005). Among this group the church is a symbol of continuity of cultural habits like going to Sunday mass. The church becomes the venue to meet a *kababayan* (Filipino compatriot) in a foreign land; a meeting ground of connecting with other Filipinos seemingly displaced by migration.

El Shaddai¹ sort of adopted us. The members of this religious group, sometimes the big shot, will find ways to accommodate us, sometimes assisting us in looking for another employer because of abuse. El Shaddai really gives you attention in times of difficulty, especially if you are a member.

- caregiver in Calgary

¹ El Shaddai is a mass-based religious movement led by Brother Mike Velarde and forms the core of popular Catholicism in the Philippines. See Wiegele (2004).

In the community of the Couples for Christ² we try to help family adjust to the new environment by being there for them like chauffeuring, sharing or giving of household appliances.

- caregiver in Lethbridge

My local parish helped me a lot. They are very kind to me.

- caregiver in Picture Butte

Shared religious beliefs facilitate the initial step in making connections in the church premises with other Filipinos in Canada. Roman Catholic churches become centres of social interaction among Filipino immigrants, and religion, in the words of Uslaner (2002, p. 239), is “source of much civic engagement.” In places where there is no Catholic church, some Filipino women residing in rural communities disclosed that they recognize the Christian cross as a welcoming symbol to meet other Canadians. The church is also another public space, aside from shopping malls and libraries, open during their weekend days off.

Religion is inextricably linked with migration in the lives of Filipino live-in caregivers in southern Alberta. In fact, going to church gives them a sense of belonging and cultural familiarity of similar institutions found in the Philippines.

I need to go to church once a week. If I don't there is something missing.

- caregiver in Lethbridge

Filipino spirituality forms a significant aspect in coping with uncertainties of life in Canada. Shimabukuro, Daniels and D'Andrea (1999) examine the ways in which spiritual beliefs and traditions impact on the psychological development of people from ethnic communities. In the case of Filipino live-in caregivers, spiritual expressions like attending mass find a strong connection with the cultural and the familiar.

² The Couples for Christ is a gospel-based Filipino Catholic charismatic lay movement in the Philippines since 1981 and has grown into a worldwide ministry in more than 100 countries.

Personal Agency

While the Filipino caregivers in this study primarily sought the support of friends and families during their transition from temporary workers to permanent residents including problems they encountered under the LCP, more than half of these women reported that they relied on the information provided to them at their port of entry in Canada. Those who arrived in Vancouver and Toronto received a package of materials about settlement in Canada with a list of government agencies and contact telephone numbers for different kinds of services (e.g., health, taxation).

When I arrived I know lots of government agencies here in Canada... There is a website and telephone number, and toll free, which you can call... I was given a booklet from the immigration when I received my visa(in Canada)... There is a list of government agency at the back of the booklet.

- caregiver in Cardston

All over Canada there is a toll free number. Every time I call the immigration and CIC. I just call and talked to the agent. That's all.

- caregiver in Lethbridge

The SAAMIS representative remarks that, “we ship our brochure to Vancouver airport” for people going to Alberta (interview, September 18, 2006). Some participants in the study claimed that these materials are not regularly handed out in other airports in Canada. Those with information packages about settlement services share the information to other live-in caregivers they come in contact with. Others rely on the information gathered from different government websites through accessing internet stations in public libraries.

Knowledge appears to be different in practice. A number of the Filipino caregivers expressed their disappointment with the delayed responses from government toll free numbers, of waiting for more than five minutes figuring out the selections provided by an automated voice instead of a person. Desperation made them rely on their friends and associates in the community to appease their concerns. Those with no

family relations to contact with have to seek their own social groups to provide solutions to their problems, especially in dealing with abusive employers or finding themselves with no employer while under the tenancy of the LCP. There is a prevailing belief that government agencies cannot provide immediate assistance for shelter and income support in the case of terminated employment.

The Role of the Philippine Government

Filipino live-in caregivers contracted to work in Canada under the LCP are, obviously, Filipino citizens. By extension of this citizenship, the Philippine government has responsibility to ensure their protection and welfare in host societies. In response to the execution of Flor Contemplacion, a domestic worker in Singapore, and other celebrated cases of murder, abuse and exploitation, the “Magna Carta” or The Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act (Republic Act 8042) became law in 1995 (Agunias & Ruiz, 2007). It stipulates that the deployment of OFWs is contingent upon the guarantees of their rights in receiving countries, to which:

- a. It has existing labour and social laws protecting the rights of migrant workers;
- b. It is a signatory to multilateral conventions, declarations or resolutions relating to the protection of migrant workers;
- c. It has concluded a bilateral agreement or arrangement with the government protecting the rights of overseas Filipino workers; and
- d. It is taking positive, concrete measures to protect the rights of migrant workers. (Republic Act No. 8042. Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995)

Under this legislative regime, what are the services provided by the Philippine government to Filipino caregivers before departure, during the tenancy of the contract, and reunification with sponsored families after attaining permanent residency status in Canada?

In the Philippines, a compulsory Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar (PDOS) for OFWs ensure that all deployed have understanding of the

culture, living and work conditions of destination countries, including Canada (Rodriguez, 2005; Department of Foreign Affairs, 2004). As of February 2006, the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) supervises the PDOS conducted by “303 land and sea-based agencies, 14 non-government organizations, five industry associations and three private organizations” (VB’s OFW Connect.com News, 2006). PDOS is mandatory to all Filipinos departing from the Philippines who are oriented on the following topics: “travel regulations, immigration procedures, cultural differences, settlement concerns, employment and social security concerns, rights and obligations of Filipino migrants.” (Commission on Filipinos Overseas [CFO]a).

I paid 5,000 plus pesos to PDOS training in the Philippines.

The work permit is \$150 Canadian dollars, medical fee is 3000 pesos, and then more than 8,000 pesos to PDOS.

- caregivers in Lethbridge

Attendance at PDOS or the Peer Counseling Program are required to those leaving the Philippines permanently including those sponsored children and spouses of Filipino live-in caregivers in Canada albeit exceptions apply to elderly and young children below 12 years old. The Peer Counseling program is designed for 13 to 19 years old to “facilitate their adjustment to a new environment” (CFOa). These compulsory fee-for-services aim to “prepare emigrants for settlement overseas” (CFOb). As of June 1, 2007, emigrants must register with the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFOa) which conducts these programs inclusive of the exacted fee of 400 pesos (Philippine Consulate General Vancouver).

Filipino caregivers are provided the basic information on the living and working conditions in countries of destination. PDOS appears to be general in perspective, although a few private agencies offer country-specific programs, and focus on the behavioural attributes of Filipino workers particularly “disciplining Filipinas” (Rodriguez, 2005, p. 20) in foreign countries.

During the tenancy of overseas deployment, Filipino migrant workers in Canada and elsewhere are primarily under the protective mantle of the

OWWA through its “backbone” services, the repatriation program and workers protection (Agunias & Ruiz, 2007, p. 14). An on-site legal assistance to OFWs became available in 2006. No office is, however, based in North America. The international offices are mainly located in Asia and the Middle East with a few based in Europe (OWWA). Locations of these on-site offices are found in temporary labour-receiving states in these regions. Canada is, in contrast, a traditional immigrant-receiving country for Filipinos.

The extension of services to live-in caregivers in Canada is dependent on their official registration with appropriate Philippine agencies. In the murder of Jocelyn Dulnuan in a Mississauga mansion on October 1, 2007, the Philippine consulate in Toronto refused to repatriate her remains because she was an “unregistered worker” who came to Canada from Hong Kong (Diaz, 2007). The same happened to Elenita Pailanan who died after an emergency operation in Ontario in July 2007 (Makilan, 2007). This action demonstrates the vulnerability of many Filipino live-in caregivers who entered Canada through a third country like Singapore or Taiwan who were unable to register their secondary migration to Canada after leaving the Philippines. Even those registered find themselves in quandary over what services to expect from the Philippine government. Wickramasekera (2002, p. 28) notes that labour sending countries “can do little in helping its workers in foreign countries.” For OFWs, the Philippine government is ineffective in defending the rights of its citizens’ overseas (Parreñas, 2001b).

By far the main services provided to live-in caregivers in Canada verges on administration of passports and facilitation of other bureaucratic requirements for Filipino citizens. In an interview with the Honorary Consul General in Calgary on November 17, 2006, live-in caregivers are assisted in “facilitating them to submit documents” including the authentication of these documents. However, according to the Honorary Consul General, the office assisted cases of live-in caregivers who violated the terms of the LCP and were eventually deported. Because the Philippine government lacks the financial resources to hire lawyers to defend live-in caregivers with brushes of the law in south Alberta, the Calgary Consul General simply recommends a lawyer. At the time of the interview, the consular office in Calgary was coordinated by a private firm owned by the Honorary Consul General whose staff provides administrative services to Filipinos on appointment basis only.

Conclusion

Migration is an interlocking phenomenon; it facilitates the movement of people from different countries to settle in certain localities dictated by work. The LCP is a federally-enacted policy that has become “mainstreamed” in Canadian society as the source of cheap careworkers for children, the physically challenged, and the elderly. As the program responds to labour shortage in the area of live-in work, it also is, expectedly, allied with appropriate transitional services that would enable those under the LCP to attain landed status. However, standard settlement and integration programs provided by immigrant serving agencies mostly concerned with English language proficiency and community referrals are deemed irrelevant in the lives of Filipino live-in caregivers in Canada.

Under exploitative conditions and uncertain work arrangements, the LCP creates a number of “what ifs” situations like the sudden termination of employment, making the live-in caregiver homeless for sometime; in looking for a new employer or waiting for the issuance of a new work permit. Friends and families, if they have one, are the main source of support for these hapless women in need of assistance. Other sources of services come from the Filipino associations, recruitment agencies, and faith communities. Many rely on their own knowledge and understanding to negotiate their way through a myriad of government agencies; most of the time, to no avail in the experiences of live-in caregivers in south Alberta. On the other hand, the Philippine government, with its vast overseas working citizens, is unable to protect their citizens’ rights in western democratic countries like Canada. As such, Filipino women extend carework to both sides of the migration spectrum, Canada and the Philippines, yet their particular needs are not fully addressed.

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