

The Philanthropy of the Filipino Diaspora

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Research Background and Objectives

Despite the research by scholars on the plight of Filipino workers abroad, little has been written about their 'reversal of fortunes'. The overall image that emerges from literature is negative: OFWs (overseas Filipino workers) are abused, marginalized and ill equipped to contribute anything beyond what they send as remittances to families back home.

This study uncovers the unfamiliar and surprising phenomenon, of 'diaspora philanthropy.' Over the years, individual Filipinos as well as regional, social, religious, and civic migrant associations have been raising funds to underwrite small infrastructure projects and other humanitarian causes in the country. This study narrates the abundance of stories, evidences and changed lives through the philanthropic efforts of Filipinos abroad.

The following methodologies are identified as most viable in shedding light to this research project. On the aspect of identifying and narrating the abundance of stories, multiple case studies of diaspora organizations will be conducted. Adopting the anthropological practice of participant observation, the proponent will undertake in-depth field work in Philippine communities where the Filipino diaspora are carrying out these philanthropic endeavors. Semi structured, open-ended intensive interviews with members of diaspora organizations, partners and beneficiaries are also intended.

Journalizing, primary and secondary document reviews or analysis will likewise be part of data gathering. Through constant comparative and critical analysis of the data, a basic social process to explain the phenomenon should emerge to unlock this research puzzle.

Overall, the methodology will entail a mixture of qualitative to encompass the stories and narratives, as they are uncovered in the field and quantitative to ascertain the breadth and depth of Filipino diaspora philanthropy.

Findings

For this fieldwork, follow up interviews of program beneficiaries and stakeholders were conducted in a number of case areas around the Philippines. Diaspora philanthropy is manifested in a number of ways.

1. Business for the Community

In Digos, Davao City, located in Southern Philippines, a multi-purpose cooperative is engaged in partnership with the members of the diaspora and their family. "Entrep-skwela" are workshops on entrepreneurial skills taught to both migrant worker and family member. The best business plans are given start-up capital as assistance. A follow-up interview was conducted with the persons in charge.

2. Local Government and the Diaspora

Maribojoc, Bohol is a small municipality in Central Philippines. Through the initiative of its local government, the members of the diaspora in the community were organized and harnessed to actively contribute to various development activities. The projects of each group range from organic farming and livestock raising to small-scale herbal medicine production.

3. People's Organization

KOOL-NE is a people's organization based in Nueva Ecija, at the Northern part of Philippines. They have a cooperative that encourages organic farming among members. They ventured on marketing their products to the diaspora by encouraging investment to finance a whole cycle of

organic farming. A visit to their cooperative store and interview with program proponent was conducted.

