

## Exploring marriage migration

**Migration** is a worldwide phenomenon attributed to changes brought about by globalisation—the configuration of work and the homogenisation of culture. Most people travel to work, many settling for low paid and risky jobs, pushed by stagnant economic development and dire lack of opportunities at home. In the Philippines alone, an estimated 8 million Filipinos are abroad. Roughly fifty percent of them are overseas workers while the other half are migrants. But it's not Filipinos alone who are going abroad. Many foreign or overseas workers are now joined or have themselves become migrants, people who move to seek permanent settlement in countries other than their own for an infinite number of reasons as well as in an infinite number of ways. The World Bank estimates about 15% of the world's population now reside not in their countries of origin but elsewhere.

This phenomenon complicates the issue of migration in ways uninterrogated in the past. For one, marriage in migration is an aspect that has been little explored. The formation of families and consequently communities of “foreigners” in countries most often wealthier than the countries of their origins have produced identities, situations, and dilemmas that are destabilising, at the very least disturbing, for individual migrants, families, communities and governments linked by such journeys. The political and cultural responses to this phenomenon now appear to be exciting fields of concern to social movements, and in particular to feminists' movements worldwide. For increasingly these people are made up of women who are workers, more informal than formal, both at home, and in fields and factories.

This issue of Women In Action (WIA) devotes itself to initiating, if not joining in, a discourse on marriage and migration with a range of themes for interrogation. A quick overview of marriage migrants' situations points to the significance of democracy, specifically radical democracy, as the context for examining issues of citizenship, with a strong emphasis on feminist perspectives of citizenship, such as intimate citizenship. When families form, communities soon follow. This community building inevitably involves multiple cultures that has now been referred to as diasporas. This is not in any way a one process formation but more like an innumerable one, making women, their children, and families vulnerable to a host of human insecurities yet little known in current literature. Thus, human security in diasporas is an integral part of this issue's exposition.

The field of marriage and migration is wide. Perhaps, other WIA issues will continue to explore it. Civil society is currently engaged in policy advocacy and service provision to mitigate the dire situation of marriage migrants. Moreover, cultural politics perspectives appeal to the need for culturally nuanced responses, whether as researchers, advocates and service providers. Much work remains to be done and the year 2008 presents another welcome opportunity to stoke the fires, lighten paths to change, service and better lives.

### Maureen Pagaduan

Guest Editor  
ARENA fellow

## Where are the women in marriage migration?

**Marriage** is a persistent, ever-evolving subject for feminists. One of its variations, marriage migration, has been affected by neo-liberal policies via feminisation of poverty and has increased in magnitude in the last two decades in Asia. The situation of marriage migrants challenges us with its wide range of problems, issues, and discourses, given that migration is intertwined with practices of gender, race and class. Marriage migration also covers diverse discourses of citizenship. It requires the engagement of feminist critics vis-à-vis existing notions of liberal citizenship in which the nature of access to economic, social, civil and political rights are deeply gendered.

Marriage migration in Asia has received much attention recently, especially from destination countries. But the question of representation must be raised. Who is talking about whom and whose voices and stories are being heard? These crucial questions receive little attention. When we discuss marriage migration, priority should be given to listening to women's voices and contextualising women's specific experiences.

In this spirit, I express deep appreciation to Women In Action. It has worked hard to capture the dialogues of women in the last few decades. It has opened up spaces for us to explore many issues and challenges on marriage migration. They do this through diverse ways, from tapping writers and concerned researchers, to dialoguing with marriage migrants who have their own stories to tell. No simple measure or solution exists to the many problems we face, but this effort on the part of Women In Action helps us make an important step towards progress.

### Jiyoung LeeAn

Guest Editor  
ARENA Programme Officer

**Aiming** to further examine the current situation of marriage migration in Asia at the local, national, and regional levels, the Asian Regional Exchange for New Alternatives (ARENA), in collaboration with Korea Migrant Women Human Rights Centre, Isis International-Manila, and Kanlungan Centre Foundation, Inc., organised the *2007 Regional School on Marriage Migration in Asia: A Platform for Research and Action*. Held on November 10-13, 2007 in the Philippines, around 35 NGO activists, researchers, and marriage migrants service providers from six different Asian countries discussed issues related to marriage migration such as human (in)security, citizenship, and diaspora. This issue of WIA (Women in Action) features some of the papers presented during the said regional conference.

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OnTheCover

Ofentimes, with the goal of attaining a better life, Asian women engage in marriage migration within Asia. However many of these women experience social discrimination, as well as diverse forms of structural and direct violence based on their gender, race and class.

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