

---

# Migrant Bride Seminars in the Philippines: The Role of the Sending State in Cross-Border Marriages

Jean Encinas-Franco\*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of the Philippines, Diliman (UP) – Diliman, Quezon City Philippines, Philippines

## Abstract (in French and/or English)

The Philippines is one of the world's top sources of migrant brides since the 1970s and 1980s. While the literature on 'mail-order brides' and later on, cross-border marriages, has dealt with this phenomenon, the focus is on lived experiences of migrants and their narratives of agency and disempowerment in host countries. There is scant attention on the sending state, particularly on how it controls and regulates its migrant brides. This treatment is consistent with migration literature that often treats sending states as having little agency in the politics of migration. However, such a view constructs the state as neutral arbiters of migrant bride flows, which is not the case for the Philippines which has built an elaborate bureaucracy dealing with the process of bride export. This paper critically examines the manner in which the Philippines deals with the process of sending Filipino brides abroad. Because of issues of trafficking, fraudulent marriages, and domestic violence, the Philippines, as a 'model' in migration management, has initiated pre-departure orientation seminars, counseling, and laws protecting migrant brides. Drawing on policy analysis, participant observations, and interviews, this paper finds that these processes reify women's femininity and their role as "maternal citizens" (see Kim 2013) in host societies. While on the one hand, these seminars seek to 'protect' migrant brides, findings suggest that it uncritically accepts host societies' gender ideology and assimilationist projects, in a bid to downplay state-sponsored migration. The paper hopes to contribute to a fuller understanding of the role of the sending state in facilitating cross-border marriages and the ways that these gendered processes affect women.

**Keywords:** migrant brides, Philippine labor export, sending state

---

\*Speaker