

Report on

Migration and the 'Asian Family' in a Globalising World

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Organised by The Asian MetaCentre for Population and Sustainable Analysis

in conjunction with Family Studies Research Programme
National University of Singapore

Commission on Gender and Geography
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The workshop was organised by the Asian MetaCentre for Population and Sustainable Development Analysis in conjunction with the University's Family Studies Research Programme and the International Geographical Union's Commission on Gender and Geography. Bringing together about 70 participants from a diverse range of countries, it aimed to explore the mutually constitutive effects of "migration" and "family" in the Asian context, and to understand these dynamics in the context of globalisation and regional integration. The papers were organised into seven sessions examining various inter-related aspects of migration and the Asian family, linked by the theme of transnationalism.

Among the topics highlighted were the individual and national (re)negotiation of identities demanded by cross-cultural international migration, and the increasing feminisation of transnational migration, focusing on the outmigration of Filipino women to take up employment as domestic workers. Another group of papers argued that the portrayal of Asian migrant women as 'victims' in the academic literature ignores their agency and the fact that migration may empower women. Several papers, focusing on labour migration, demonstrated that women international migrants tend to suffer more than men from deskilling following their moves, due to reasons embedded within gendered socio-political and patriarchal structures in both the origins and destinations.

The concluding session provided an overview of the major themes and questions raised by the papers. Among the insights were the recognition of an obvious divide between the understandings of qualitative and quantitative analyses, and that of the challenge and value of the interdisciplinary nature of the workshop. Several possibilities for research were identified. These

include the under-representation of the voices of men, and the role of the state in the production of transnational families. The spatiality of the migration process was also emphasised, with the recognition that greater insights could be gained from exploiting the synergy between qualitative and quantitative approaches through careful mixed-method research designs. In all, the workshop provided a stimulating forum and hopefully a catalyst to future research on migration and the 'Asian family' in a globalising world.