



SCHEDA DI APPROFONDIMENTO N° 32

Japan, S Korea and Taiwan: Bracing for Settlement? 1 October 2007

Maruja M.B. Asis
Scalabrini Migration Center-Manila

A cura di Sisifo Italia - Ufficio Stampa MIM

Responsabile: Giuseppe Lanzi, 335.66.98.734 giuseppelanzi@scalabrini.net
Email: development@scalabrini.net WEB www.meetingloreto.it www.sisifoitalia.it
infoline: 071.7500256 – Fax 071.7501972

Japan, S Korea and Taiwan: Bracing for Settlement?

Emigrazione, Immigrazione, Sviluppo

10th Meeting Internazionale Migrazioni

1-3 October, Loreto, Italy

Maruja M.B. Asis-Scalabrini Migration Center

Introduction

- Asia is not a region of settlement
- Japan, S. Korea and Taiwan are interesting cases
 - Examples of countries in Asia that have gone through the migration transition
 - In varying degrees, they acknowledged the need to have policies on labor migration
 - International labor migration has led to other international migrations
 - Perceive their societies as “homogeneous”; they are now confronted with the specter of (some) settlement – international marriages are significant in Japan, Taiwan and Korea

Japan

- The first “success” story in the region; thereafter, other NICS followed
- Initially thought as a unique – did not have to import migrant workers
- Maintains a policy of no entry to less skilled migrants; although there are some discussions in Japan about the issue (demographic factors are key)
- Welcomes highly skilled and professional migrants
- Migrant workers were and are present in Japan:
 - Nikkeijin
 - Trainees
 - Foreign students (may engage in 20 hours of work)
 - Unauthorized migrants

Japan

- Recent changes and discussions:
 - Overhaul of policies on entertainer migration (2004)
 - Health worker migration (Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement)
 - A precursor of sorts of international marriages in the region –
 - International migration as a response to bride shortage in rural Japan
 - Became problematic because of the involvement of brokers
 - Entertainer migration paving the way for international marriages
 - Families created by international marriages, a pastoral concern of the local Church in Japan

Taiwan

- A success story in terms of turning brain drain into brain gain
- Experienced unauthorized migration in the 1980s; established policies in the 1990s to better regulate the influx of migrant workers
 - ASEAN countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Taiwan) – later included Vietnam
 - Quotas per industry/sector
 - Maximum ceiling for migrant workers' employment – this year, it increased the maximum years of employment to 9

Taiwan

- Taiwan has 339,000 foreign workers; in addition, some 300,000 foreign brides (mostly from Mainland China; also from Southeast Asian countries)
- Problem areas in labor migration to Taiwan
 - Excessive costs imposed by brokers
 - Running away from employers can render migrant workers unauthorized
- Much discussion on foreign brides and possibilities of multiculturalism
 - Different policies applied to Mainland brides vs. other brides

S. Korea

- Used to export labor to the Middle East in the 1970s
- Became a labor-importing country in the 1990s
- Adopted Japan's policies on labor migration
 - No entry of less skilled migrant workers
 - Trainee system to bring in "workers"
 - Also has entertainer migration
- The trainee system resulted in unauthorized migration; Korea had more unauthorized migrant workers than legal ones
- Intensive and sustained lobbying by civil society
- 2003 Employment Permit System; 1 Jan 2007, end of trainee system

S. Korea

- EPS was implemented in 2004
 - Some reduction in the share of unauthorized migrant workers
 - Migrant advocates criticize the treatment of unauthorized migrant workers under the EPS
- Active and vigorous civil society; also, Catholic-inspired organizations are active in advocacy and provision of service
- International marriages have been much discussed
 - Foreign brides and trafficking (brokers are involved)
 - Examples of responses to the issue of international marriages
 - Opening up discussions about the coming multiculturalism of Korean society

Some Reflections

- Japan's next move: can it really avoid bringing in less skilled migrant workers?
 - The phenomenon of international marriages was quite unexpected
 - International marriage is one of very few options to settle in these countries.
 - It raises interesting and challenging questions about the future of these societies.
 - Change is possible!
- 