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## Overseas Filipinos in Demand Philippines Booming Again (By Richard Mills)

Most immigrants dream of some day returning to their home country and Filipinos are no different. What is special about the Filipino situation is that there are so many who have left over the years.

Most Filipinos leave for economic reasons and many say they would return when there are realistic career opportunities available. So the question is this: Is the economy and government still messed-up or are things getting good enough to consider returning?

Rebecca Bustamante is one person who has already made the trip back. She returned to Philippines from Canada 6 years ago. She now runs one of south-east Asia's dominant recruitment organizations focusing solely on senior management positions for multinational companies.

According to Rebecca, "We are seeing a lot of demand for Filipinos with international professional experience these days. For most of the past 10 years, there was large scale emigration of middle managers. Now that the economy is growing so strongly, we don't have enough people for middle and senior management positions."

Ms. Bustamante's com-pany, Chaire Associates, is having difficulty finding qualified people. She is concerned about the future growth of the country unless something can be done.

She explains the extent of the situation, "The BPO sector alone is creating 10,000 new jobs per month right now. There are lots of good entry level people but we have run out of experienced managers. I am worried because young Filipinos won't get their jobs unless they have managers to manage them. The situation is spreading to other growing industries. How can the country grow without experienced leaders?"

Why return to a place I already left?

There are various reasons people give to return to Philippines beyond the usual ones like being close to your family and it's less expensive to live.

We asked Ms. Bustamante what people tell her. "Most overseas Filipinos are average

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people in their new country. With international experience, they automatically become part of the elite of Philippines and career options can be greatly enhanced. If you are used to managing 3 people in the US, you will manage about 30 in Philippines. That's the value of international experience. We call it the rule-of-ten."

The big improvement for Rebecca was in lifestyle. She says, "I don't miss doing my own cooking and cleaning. I have a lot more time for my family in Philippines and am not so stressed like I was in Canada. I also have more control over schools and activities for my children."

Beyond this, many Filipino returnees are motivated by a strong feeling of wanting to make a contribution to their country. Rebecca says, "We Filipinos want to do something to help build the next generation so the country can reach the potential that has been promised for so long. Most people express this desire and I am certainly one of these."

The grass isn't always greener.

Of course, there are risks in leaving your chosen land to return to a country that is perceived to have a lot of problems. About this Rebecca says, "Philippines is improving but it still has a way to go. Working with multinational companies is better until you really understand Filipino companies. Security and healthcare are also concerns. Don't come here if you have personal issues about these."

As for starting a business, Ms. Bustamante is surprisingly anxious, "Don't start your own business until you have worked here for a while. I was just lucky with my business but most people who start their own business lose money. So, be careful."

Like any country, there is a never a perfect time to return but now might be a better time than has existed in a while.

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