



# IT'S MORE FUN IN THE PHILIPPINES? THOUGHT EXPERIMENT: Guidance for Teachers & Leaders

The purpose of this exercise is to encourage young people to think about what it is like to be a teenage girl living in rural Philippines through something to which they can relate.

There is an accompanying worksheet and powerpoint presentation for this.

Should young people wish to help young women and girls like Maria, Angela and Yanna, there are accompanying fundraising resources.

This resource consists of three scenarios, each with slides. It works best in small groups of 6-8, so that everybody has the chance to share ideas. Depending upon the groups, each may benefit from a facilitator who can encourage the discussion and draw out ideas.

The questions help you to facilitate the discussion and help the young people to think more deeply about the situation. They may address these on their own and you should also have other questions to ask as they come up with their own ideas. After each part young people can report back to the classroom.

Through this resource young people will learn about:

- The Philippines
- The lives of people living in poverty
- The value of education
- The reality for young people with few opportunities

They will be able to reflect upon

- Their goals
- Their responsibilities
- Their family relationships

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# PART 1: GOING TO SCHOOL

(slide 1, worksheet 1)

“Maria lives in a remote area, where everything—her school, the shops, the groceries—are at least 40 miles from home. In her village, there is only one train and one bus that goes to your school. Both arrive once every hour, and are a mile away (by foot) from her house. Her father died when she was 3 and she lives with her mum and two sisters. Maria’s mum, Carmina, leaves the house at 4.30AM every day to work as a nanny and is not usually home until 9PM.

Due to Carmina’s work schedule Maria being the eldest child, has the responsibility for caring for her siblings. She has to make sure they wake up in the morning, prepare their breakfast, walk with them to the local school near to the train station, travel by train to her own school, dash home as soon as the school bell rings to pick up the children, prepare their dinner and make sure they do their homework. When this is done she has to study for your exams and complete her own homework. This is hard as when it is dark they only have one lightbulb in the kitchen.

Maria knows without passing her exams she will not have many job opportunities. You could be a nanny like your mum, or go and work in someone’s house as a maid. She needs to get good marks in her school exams to get a scholarship to the technical college so that she can get skills for a good job. This is proving to be difficult, especially as she has also been working part time at a local shop to earn extra cash to help Carmina to pay for the electricity bill.”

## PART 1 GROUP WORK

*The point here is for young people to try to place themselves into Maria’s shoes. They can see that in some ways their lives are similar, but in others ways they are different.*

1. What is similar about your life and Marias?	<i>Ideas for prompts from group facilitator:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>How does Maria have fun?</i></li><li>• <i>When do you have time to do your own homework?</i></li><li>• <i>Do you worry about the next stage in your life?</i></li><li>• <i>To spend time with your friends? N.B. No internet. Would Maria have a mobile? Would she have a signal? Credit?</i></li></ul>
2. What is different?	
3. Who do you have more sympathy for? Maria or Carmina? Why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Do they think that teenagers’ only purpose is to have fun? Do they have responsibilities themselves? What are they? Is this fair?</i></li><li>• <i>Do they think that adult’s only purpose is to care for their children? Are adults allowed to have fun? When they are adults will they want to be able to have fun?</i></li></ul>



4. What would happen if the mother can no longer work? What would you do? Who would provide for the family?	<i>N.B. there is no benefits system in the Phillipines, healthcare is not free, the hospital is far away, employers do not usually give sick pay.</i>
5. What would happen if you fell sick? Who would care for you? And for your siblings?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Would relatives be able to help?</i></li> <li>• <i>Neighbours?</i></li> </ul> <i>Can they relate this to their own experience?</i>
6. What would happen should there be a storm? How would you get to school? <i>N.B. In the Phillipines there are regularly severe storms and even Typhoons, with rain, strong winds and flooding.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What do they do themselves if it is very wet?</i></li> <li>• <i>Do they own a raincoat? An umbrella? Who paid for it?</i></li> <li>• <i>What can they do to dry themselves?</i></li> <li>• <i>Will they be able to wash and dry their clothes at home? Do they have spare clean clothes they can wear? (N.B. in the Phillipines this is very difficult when it is rainy as the drinking water gets contaminated in floods and it is too wet to dry clothes, even indoors)</i></li> </ul>

## PART 1.2: BEING INDEPENDENT

(slide 2, worksheet 2)

**Maria won a scholarship and has now graduated from school and has a good job. Once she has paid her living expenses she have £200 left over each month to spend. If you were Maria how would you spend it?**

- 1) Spend it. You deserve a treat.**
- 2) Save the money**
- 3) Find someone nicer to live. Now you can have parties!**

*Pick two girls (ideally the ones who most want to spend the money on themselves) to be Maria's little sister, Angela and Yana*

- *They should argue that they need help so that they can also go to a technical school and get a good job.*



## PART 2: WORKING FOR YOUR DREAMS

(If there is time) (slide 3, worksheet 3)

Maria could only afford to pay for one of her sisters, Angela, to go to the technical school as her mother got sick and she had to send money home so her sister Yana and mother could eat and pay their bills. Despite how hard she worked at school, Yana had to spend a lot of time looking after her mother when she got sick as her sisters had already left the village. Sometimes she did not have enough money to get to school if her sister had not sent enough home. Because of this she did not do very well in her exams and couldn't get a scholarship.

Yana finished secondary school two years ago and has been working as a nanny for a rich family in her village. She gets paid the minimum wage, £4 a day, and cannot find a better paying job so she has applied to work in Saudi Arabia. She will be looking after three children and living in their home. The family have been recommended by her cousin who also works there, but they only speak Arabic and have customs unfamiliar to you. As a wealthy family, the money they offer Yana is twice as much as you could get in a job as a nanny in her village, where there are limited opportunities, but until you get there she won't know what the family is like. The flight is very expensive and if she is going to save any money she will only be able to come home after 2 years, when the family will pay for her to return home. She hopes that working in Saudi Arabia will give her the chance to save up money so she can pay for her teacher training.

### PART 2 GROUP WORK

*The point here is to understand limited opportunities – people from rural Philippines, despite having worked hard often do not have access to a range of job chances. Best jobs are often overseas and are under difficult conditions (away from the family, in an unfamiliar context). Often they cannot pursue what they truly aim to achieve, due to the economic pressures they face.*

- *Would you pass up this opportunity for something better?*
- *Would you take any opportunity to make your own income?*

What are the benefits of staying?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stay close to friends</li><li>• Stay close to family</li><li>• It's what she knows</li><li>• Risk of moving to Saudi Arabia <i>family could be abusive, if it goes wrong she could get stuck there, they might steal her papers, is there a contract?</i></li></ul>
What are the benefits of leaving?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Opportunity</li><li>• Chance to earn money</li><li>• Only chance of earning money to go to train as a teacher</li></ul>
What would you choose?	



## PART 3: SCENARIO 3

(If there is time) (slide 4, worksheet 4)

Yana has now been in Saudi Arabia for a 6 years. She has been able to improve her Arabic and is are getting along well with her host family. She skyped her family one a week constant contact and sends them money to help care for their mother. She has saved enough to go to teacher training college but is now worried that she will be the oldest student. If she works for 6 more years she will be able to buy a house in the Philippines.

Her sisters, Angela and Maria, are both married and now have children. Yana has good friends in Saudi Arabia – on Sundays she is given the afternoon off and she meets other Filipino nannies for an icecream – but she knows that she will never have a family is she stays working as a nanny . What should she do?

### PART 3 GROUP WORK

Do you return home?

What would it be like to return?	-Will it be as she imagined it? Will it have changed? -Will her friends still be there? Will it be the same if her friends have all got families or moved away?
Would you find a job back there?	-Do we know if there will be more jobs? Or fewer jobs? -Will her having money allow her to set up a business? Does she know anything about setting up a business? Does she have any new skills from being in Saudi Arabia?
Would it be better to remain in Saudi Arabia to ensure you can provide for your family materially?	
What would happen to your own dreams and aspirations?	

(slide 5)

- END -



# FACTSHEET: THE RURAL EXPERIENCE IN THE PHILIPPINES

- In the Philippines, around 55% of the population live in rural areas, almost 40% of this population are reported to live in poverty.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, poverty is frequently said to be a predominantly rural phenomenon.<sup>2</sup>
- Most employment and educational opportunities are concentrated in urban areas, with poor transport available for those in rural areas to access these facilities. Consequently, in general, illiteracy, unemployment and the incidence of poverty are characteristic of rural life in the Philippines.<sup>3</sup>
- The most common forms of jobs available in rural Philippines are those within the agricultural sector. Most depend on farming and fishing for livelihoods. These forms of employment are often unpaid or underpaid, and offer no job security or insurance.<sup>4</sup>
- Without a reliable and sufficient source of income, many families are forced to push their children to take on employment in the farm or otherwise to compensate. Indeed, it is common for parents from the lowest socio-economic background, to remove their children from school and put them into work in order to provide the families necessities.<sup>5</sup>
- Putting children into employment at a young age out of economic necessity reduces their likeliness to finish school and find a job. Many drop out to focus solely on helping provide for their families. Many others continue schooling but are unable to attain the grades sufficient to find a reliable job due to the time and effort they put into external work.<sup>6</sup>
- More recently, however, due to the lack of adequate job opportunities and high unemployment levels in the Philippines, it has become common for families to have members working overseas in order to increase the household income and the family's standard of living<sup>7</sup>. Many of these jobs are in the category of 'unskilled jobs', requiring little experience or education, and are therefore highly accessible to many Filipinos. In fact, more than three thousand Filipino workers leave the country every day as overseas Filipino workers (OFW)<sup>8</sup>. In total, it is estimated that OFWs make up about 11% of the Philippine population or around 11 million

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<sup>1</sup>Trading Economics, 'Philippines – Rural Population', [website], 2015, <https://tradingeconomics.com/philippines/rural-population-percent-of-total-population-wb-data.html> (accessed 19 June 2017)

<sup>2</sup>SWTP, 'Poverty in the Philippines: Urban and Rural Poverty', [website], 2012 <http://www.focusonpoverty.org/poverty-in-the-philippines-urban-and-rural-poverty/> (accessed 19 June 2017)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> International Labour Organization, *Key Indicators of the Labour Market*, Geneva, International Labour Organisation, 2011

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<sup>5</sup> Tuason, T., 'The Poor in the Philippines: Some Insights from Psychological Research', *Psychology and Developing Societies*, vol. 22, no. 2, pp. 299–330

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Reyes, M. 'Migration and Filipino Children Left-Behind: A Literature Review', [website], 2–7, [https://www.unicef.org/philippines/Synthesis\\_StudyJuly12008.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/philippines/Synthesis_StudyJuly12008.pdf) (accessed on April 30 2017)



people<sup>9</sup>. OFWs are dispersed worldwide, with Saudi Arabia being the largest single destination, followed by Hong Kong<sup>10</sup>.

- Working overseas is beneficial as, on average, migrants' that work overseas are able to earn four to five times more than their home earnings<sup>11</sup>. With this money, they are able to provide their families with quality health care, good schooling, and secure shelter<sup>12</sup>. Thus, OFW offers the opportunity for various households receiving money from abroad to use these resources to make improve the material quality of lives of families.<sup>13</sup>
- However, it is also accompanied by various social costs. Emotional strain is one key consequence. Often they are overwhelmed by feelings of "helplessness: they are trapped in the painful contradiction of feeling the distance from their families and having to depend on the material benefits of their separation."<sup>14</sup> They also tend to experience a sense of loss for taking a job they do not want, but rather felt compelled to take.

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<sup>9</sup> Tuason, T., 'The Poor in the Philippines: Some Insights from Psychological Research', *Psychology and Developing Societies*, vol. 22, no. 2, pp. 299–330

<sup>10</sup> see other graph

<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.205.6017&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Bryant, J., 'Children Of International Migrants In Indonesia, Thailand, And The Philippines: A Review Of Evidence And Policies', Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2005

<sup>12</sup> Zosa, V., & Orbeta, A, 'The Social and Economic Impact of Philippine International Labour Migration And Remittances', Makati City, Philippine Institute for Development Studies, 2009

<sup>13</sup> Reyes, M. 'Migration and Filipino Children Left-Behind: A Literature Review', [website], 2–7, [https://www.unicef.org/philippines/Synthesis\\_StudyJuly12008.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/philippines/Synthesis_StudyJuly12008.pdf) (accessed on April 30 2017)

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.