

Philippines: Have Degree, Will Gravel

>>Frontline World. Stories from a small planet.

>>Lady: I am now inviting you to raise your right hand with conviction and repeat after me. Hereby solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the Philippines, the duties and obligations...

>>Barnaby Lo: By the end of this year, 100,000 nursing graduates will have taken the licensure exam in the Philippines. It is by far the largest group vying to become full-fledged registered nurses.

>>Lady: ... so help me God. Congratulations.

[Applause.]

>>Barnaby Lo: But in the remote islands of the Philippines, there's a nursing shortage. Allan Salazar is the only nurse of Sarangani Island, where he serves 20,000 people. To reach the island from the mainland, Allan must travel eight hours in a cargo boat that runs solely three times a week.

Upon arrival, he then heads to the hospital to see patients waiting for him. There is no doctor.

>>Allan Salazar (as captioned): People in the community call me "Doctor." Maybe it's because I'm the only one they see rendering service in the hospital.

>>Barnaby Lo: Allan is assisted by a few midwives, but the hospital doesn't have much working equipment.

>>Allan Salazar (as captioned): We try to manage the best we can. If it's beyond our capabilities, we refer patients to a hospital in Gen. Santos City.

>>Barnaby Lo: Albert Tareba's (ph) wife had complications after giving birth to their baby. She needed a doctor.

>>Albert Tareba (as captioned): Her her body became sore, but we thought it was normal because she was already in her ninth month of pregnancy. When she gave birth, everything was fine. Then she suddenly fainted.

>>Barnaby Lo: They live high up in the mountain and there's practically no road leading to the hospital, but Albert decided to bring her there.

>> Allan Salazar (as captioned): She was admitted to the hospital at around 8:30 p.m. She was unconscious at fist, then she went into a seizure. Her blood pressure was high. We had to give her first aid treatment.

>>Albert Tareba (as captioned): They said they couldn't do anything to help us. They told us to bring her to Gen. Santos City because they weren't capable.

>>Barnaby Lo: Albert's family didn't have the money to hire a private boat. He earns below minimum wage as a coconut farmer and supports his whole family, including his mother and siblings.

>>Albert Tareba (as captioned): I couldn't do anything even if it was hard for me to see her suffering because there was no doctor. I tried to borrow some money, but nobody could lend me any. So now she's gone.

>>Barnaby Lo: Soon Albert and the rest of Sarangani will have to suffer another blow. Allan is leaving to join his wife in London, where she's a nurse.

>>Allan Salazar (as captioned): We need to provide a better future for our family. For 22 long years, I've sacrificed in the name of service. Records show that I have served the people well.

>>Barnaby Lo: Allan will join an average of more than 12,000 Filipino nurses who leave the country every year. Manila's university belt is the country's educational hub, where the best and brightest emerge. There are close to 500 nursing schools throughout the country, 300 of them were built

in the last three years. Review centers have mushroomed everywhere; they have become a profitable business ever since the U.S. and other developed countries opened the doors to nurses.

Dr. Jaime Galvez-Tan is a former health secretary who follows the trend in the migration of Filipino health professionals.

>>Dr. Jaime Galvez-Tan: It's no longer brain drain, but it's now brain hemorrhage.

>>Barnaby Lo: In his television and radio programs, he encourages Filipino nurses to say.

>>Dr. Jaime Galvez-Tan (as captioned): That is just means that we have the natural resource. I think it's safe to say that we produce the best nurses in the world. They are so in demand. So, we have to take care of them. Let's not make them want to leave the country. Filipinos also deserve to be taken care of by their own nurses.

>>Dr. Jaime Galvez-Tan: The number one reason is, of course, just the attraction of salaries and privileges and working conditions, in the sense that a nurse here in the Philippines would get 150 U.S. dollars a month. A nurse in the U.S. will get \$4,000 a month. Why?

>>Barnaby Lo: But in the past few years, this opportunity to live the American dream is not only luring nurses. Dr. Alfredo Calingin is the head of the local health department in a town called Senator Ninoy Aquino in the Province of Sultan Kudarat.

Dr. Calingin graduated from medical school in 1969. He worked in a mission hospital for a few years, then went to Western Samoa as a U.N. volunteer, and for the last 18 years he's served the people of Senator Ninoy Aquino.

>>Dr. Alfredo Calingin: This is the first national award given to the Rural Health Unit of Senator Ninoy Aquino for our outstanding innovation practices in the area of population and public health.

>>Barnaby Lo: But in the last three years, Dr. Calingin would leave the town every Friday and go to Tagum City where he studied nursing.

>>Dr. Alfredo Calingin: I got my diploma today and this complete my study being a nurse in Arriesgado College Foundation.

>>Barnaby Lo: Dr. Calingin is now one of the 9,000 doctors turned nurses, or what they call M.D.-R.N.'s. And in the last five years, 5,000 of them have left.

Elmer Jacinto is a Filipino doctor who is working as a nurse in a hospital in Manhattan.

Dr. Elmer Jacinto: I believe becoming a nurse or becoming a doctor is immaterial now when you have some bills to pay, when you have to get a decent living.

>>Barnaby Lo: Elmer shares a New York City apartment in Queens with three other Filipino nurses.

Dr. Elmer Jacinto: I did my part in coming here and I get to buy the things that I need because I have worked, and all of this blessing and achievements are God's grace.

>>Barnaby Lo: Every month, Elmer sends a portion of his salary to his family.

Dr. Elmer Jacinto: Now I have the luxury of saving my money for the future. I have the chance now to open a bank account and save for myself and give some part of it to my parents and to my brother.

>>Barnaby Lo: The money Elmer and millions of other overseas Filipino workers send home sustains the Filipino economy. In 2006, it sent nearly \$13 billion.

>>Dr. Jaime Galvez-Tan: It is official government policy that we export human resources. And in fact our present president, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, says they are now heroes of the country because they have saved our economy from collapsing.

>>Barnaby Lo: As doctors and nurses leave the Philippines in droves, it is the poor who suffer. Close to 120 hospitals have closed in rural

areas in recent years. The next hospital to close will be the one where Allan worked on Sarangani Island.

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KATHRYN BENTLEY
Hardeman Realtime, Inc.
813.404.2488, www.gaylhardeman.com