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# Return Migrant Entrepreneurship and the Migration and Development Agenda: A Focus on Filipino and Indonesian Migrant Workers

Denise L. Spitzer

**Abstract.** *Major global economic institutions herald migration as key to poverty alleviation in the Global South as migrant workers are believed to be able to leverage financial and social remittances to create wealth in their homelands, and within diasporic communities, through entrepreneurial activities. Drawing from qualitative studies undertaken in the Philippines, Indonesia and Hong Kong, I explore how Filipino and Indonesian migrant workers are encouraged to assume both the mantle of entrepreneurship and ultimately the responsibility for any subsequent failures of these enterprises. I suggest that researchers have a role to play in laying bare the evidence for, and offering alternatives to, migrant entrepreneurship as a solution to global socio-economic inequalities.*

## Introduction

All Filipinos can be an entrepreneur at once...but not all of us can be a successful entrepreneur.

*Pami (Employee, National Reintegration Centre for Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), Philippines, Spitzer 2012).*

Entrepreneurship is a key ingredient of the neoliberal prescription recommended for ailing developing economies (Spitzer 2014; Wahba and Zenou 2012). Embedded in the migration and development paradigm championed by global institutions such as the World Bank, the OECD, and the International Monetary Fund (Delgado Wise, Covarrubias and Puente 2013; Glick Schiller and Faist 2009), entrepreneurial activities defined as business development

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and self-employment—presumed to be facilitated by the accumulation of financial and human capital acquired while working abroad—are meant to alleviate the seemingly intransigent problems of poverty in the global South (Spitzer 2014; Wahba and Zenou 2012). However, there is little empirical evidence that migration actually leads to economic growth and development — particularly as it relates to the success of return migrant entrepreneurship (Delgado Wise, Covarrubias and Puentes 2013; Naudé, Siegel, and Marchand 2015).

In this paper, I situate data from research with Filipino and Indonesian migrant workers within the developing body of literature on the topic to uncover how return migrant workers are encouraged to assume both the mantle of entrepreneurship and the potential failure thereof. By examining encounters with migrants' experiences with, and preparations for, entrepreneurship, I hope to illuminate the disparities between the assertions of the migration and development agenda and those experiences, and to contribute to the emerging research that is beginning to unsettle the macroeconomic level perspective that inform this dominant discourse.

I begin with a description of the sources of empirical data used in this paper and review the hegemonic paradigm of migration and development that currently informs government policies and discourses. Next, I offer an overview of our state of knowledge regarding return migrant entrepreneurship. Thereafter, I discuss the ways migrant workers in Indonesia and the Philippines are encouraged to take up entrepreneurial opportunities and recount their experiences, many of which have been disappointing. By situating these data within the current literature, I argue that the claims of the migration and development paradigm must be challenged by a robust research agenda that focuses on return migrants' experiences with entrepreneurship.

### **Sources of Empirical Data**

Empirical evidence offered in this article is drawn from two small-scale qualitative studies that were grounded in migrant experience and contextualized by the migration and development paradigm. The first focused on the impact of the global economic crisis on Filipino and Indonesian migrant workers, both women and men, and involved semi-structured interviews undertaken in the Philippines and Indonesia with 49 former migrant workers, 28 of whom—12 Filipinos and 16 Indonesians—had been involuntarily repatriated to their home country reportedly due to the effects of the 2008 global recession. In addition, I interviewed 21 temporary migrant workers employed in Hong Kong (18 from Indonesia and 3 from the Philippines), two family members of migrant workers, four non-governmental organization (NGO) leaders, three government representatives, and six recruitment agency personnel in the Philippines, and three family members, seven NGO representatives, two policymakers, and three recruitment agency personnel in Indonesia. The second project focused on pre-departure orientation seminars (PDOS) in the Philippines and included interviews with workers living in or destined for Canada who had undertaken the mandatory programs offered by the Philippines' Department of Labor and

Employment through the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) and the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA). For the purposes of this paper, I draw from our participant observation of PDOS in metro Manila. Both of these projects were undertaken in close collaboration with local community partners and in alliance with both community-based and institutional ethical practices and approvals.

While not the primary focus of these studies, the theme of migrant entrepreneurship emerged continually throughout discussions with returned and overseas migrants, policymakers, and recruitment and training personnel in and from both countries. In the first study, respondents described their aspirations for and experiences with entrepreneurship both while overseas and upon their return home, policymakers promoted their visions of and supports for the same, while others reflected on the migrant workers' preparation for and success with such endeavors. In the second project, entrepreneurship appeared prominently in the curriculum offered in the pre-departure orientation sessions that all Filipino overseas workers are required to attend.

### **Setting the Stage**

Since the 1970s, the quest for increasingly cheaper production costs led to the expansion of global commodity production chains that took advantage of low-cost labor found throughout the Global South (Delgado Wise, Covarrubias and Puentes 2013; Spitzer and Piper 2014). Urban centers in the South had become the sites of massive rural to urban migration, as agriculture was increasingly concentrated in the hands of fewer people while outright land grabbing persisted to displace segments of the rural populace. Consequently, large reserve armies of labor continued to emerge in the cities and these soldiers of poverty have been readily deployed as migrant workers to other parts of the world (Spitzer and Piper 2014). Global institutions, such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Global Forum on Migration and Development, herald migration as a solution to economic under-development with migrant workers are often construed as agents of development whose labor can engender a 'triple win' for sending and receiving countries and workers' families (Piper 2009). Bakker (2015) illustrates how the migration as development discourse with its market-based solutions to global inequalities and under-development became hegemonic through shifts in data management and statistical information that ostensibly demonstrate ever-increasing flows of migrant remittances, and presumably ongoing economic benefit, to home countries. Perhaps unsurprisingly both tacit and explicit governmental labor export policies have promulgated the migration as development strategy and normalized out-migration as a 'rational choice' for individuals and households who are struggling financially and/or stalled in their upward mobility.

Concomitantly in countries hosting migrant workers, the flow of persons across borders is increasingly patrolled and stratified. As borders, policies, and procedures mark bodies as worthy of inclusion or exclusion based

on receiving countries' perceptions of skill, racialized status, and religious affiliation, so greater the likelihood that excluded bodies will be deployed temporarily and returned thereafter to their countries of origin after their contracts have expired. The encouragement of circular or return migration creates the possibility wherein abjection—or more explicitly ejection from their host country—is re-interpreted as the heroic return to one's native land. Returning migrants are thus welcomed to share in their social remittances—skills, knowledge, and strategies (presumably) garnered from working abroad—as well as their financial remittances such that their entrepreneurial know-how and resources will lift their homeland out of poverty and mitigate the loss of skilled labor (e.g. brain drain) (Glick Schiller and Faist 2009; Go 2012).

Two countries that have embraced this agenda, the Philippines and Indonesia, are the predominant suppliers of global migrant labour across the globe (Hugo 2005; Rodriguez 2010; Ruiz 2008). Heralded in both countries as national heroes (Kloppenborg and Peters 2012; Parreñas 2005), over eight million Filipinos and six million Indonesians have been deployed abroad as migrant workers (Anwar and Chan 2016; Ruiz 2008) with women most often employed as foreign domestic workers accounting for the vast majority of these numbers (Rahman and Fee 2012). In summary, migrant workers are overwhelmingly tasked with supplying remittances while abroad that governments hope (or assume) will be invested in economic activities and when returning home to stimulate economic growth through their entrepreneurial activities.

### **An Overview of Return Migrant Entrepreneurship**

The enormity and potency of the claims of the migration and development agenda grounded in the representations of select macro-level data has been, until recently, relatively unchallenged by research that brings forward the experiences and voices of returned migrants and migrant households who are responsible for prosperity in their home countries, or by studies that illumine the outcomes of remittance flows. As Naudé, Siegel, and Marchand 2015 state: “Migrants are often expected to be super-entrepreneurs” (4); however, their recent analysis of the literature to date suggests that many return migrant entrepreneurial activities fail to have any broad or long-term impact on employment or wealth creation. Numerous studies have demonstrated that return migrant businesses are prone to failure (Petroziello and Robert 2010; Spitzer and Piper 2014). Moreover, remittances are most often used (and needed) for quotidian household expenses rather than invested in income-generating activities (Beets and Willekens 2009; Naudé, Siegel, and Marchand 2015). For example, McCormick and Wahba's (2004) study in Egypt found that about half of migrants returning to rural areas and 42% resettling in urban ones invested in familial housing, an additional 10% invested in some economic projects, while fully one-third returned home with no savings whatsoever. In the Dominican Republic, migrant workers who already owned businesses were those most likely to re-invest remittances in them; therefore, monies were less likely to engender the creation of novel enter-

prises (Naudé, Siegel, and Marchand 2015).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, not all return migrants are interested in becoming entrepreneurs (Naudé, Siegel, and Marchand 2015). An analysis of the occupational choices of return migrants from Bosnia, Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan reveals that entrepreneurship is a predominantly male activity while factors such as marital status, family size, length of migrant deployment, and savings all factor into decisions regarding self-employment, employer, or employee status (Lianos and Psieridis 2009). While more data are required from other parts of the world, given that the majority of migrant workers are women, these findings further challenge the migration and development paradigm.

Additional studies highlight the need for greater attention to not only gender, but socio-economic conditions, interpersonal issues, and local contexts as well. A study of migrant entrepreneurship in two Indonesian communities uncovered gender disparities in the roles and distribution of benefits from migrant entrepreneurship and further demonstrated the need for more nuanced inquiry that considered the role of local social relationships in the roll out of migrant enterprises (Anwar and Chan 2016). In China, returnees were more likely to engage in self-employment, however the embrace of entrepreneurship and self-employment was not due to the desire to leverage newfound skills, but because time away from home engendered the loss of social ties that were required to re-engage in local labor markets (Wahba and Zenou 2012). Moreover, as most businesses are family-operated with 60% run by a single individual, the accrual of benefits for the wider community was difficult to claim (Démurger and Xu 2011). Finally, a recent study conducted in the Philippines revealed that tensions between migrants and non-migrants generated obstacles for returnee reintegration as non-migrants regarded returnees as more materialistic and self-centered. Moreover, as family members utilized migrant remittances, the community failed to realize any of the reputed benefits of migration further entrenching hostilities between migrant and non-migrant households (Yu 2015). Indeed, some authors assert that migrant entrepreneurship reinforces socioeconomic inequality (Anwar and Chan 2016; Naudé, Siegel, and Marchand 2015).

While the claims of the proponents of the migration and development paradigm are broad, the disparate array and limited number of studies focused on the deployment of remittances in service of migrant entrepreneurship that have been published to date have begun to redress the enormous lacunae in our knowledge and understanding of return migrant entrepreneurship. Thus far the literature appears to indicate that return migrant entrepreneurship may not be the panacea to poverty as proposed by some global institutions. Moreover, more attention must be paid to gender, local context including social relations, and the expectations for, and lived experiences of, return migrant entrepreneurs themselves. To contribute to this body of work, I focus on the preparation of Filipino and Indonesian migrant workers for and their encounters with return migrant entrepreneurship.

### **Creating the Migrant Entrepreneur**

In the context of neoliberalism, individual workers are presumed to strategize to maximize their economic gains and to choose to emigrate temporarily or permanently (regardless of documented status) such that migration is construed an individual choice rather than a form of forced migration necessitated by economic misery. However, preparing a migrant worker for the preferred neoliberal performance of an individual venturing out on one's own involves manifold actors and interests that operate at multiple levels over an extended period of time (Geiger and Pécoud 2013; Rodriguez and Schwenken 2013). In both the Philippines and Indonesia, migrant workers are charged with supporting both their natal and the national families with the foreign currencies and the human capital they have acquired (Parreñas 2005). In addition, both governmental and non-governmental for-profit institutions and organizations—including myriad recruitment agencies and training institutions—have emerged to form a migrant recruitment complex that helps co-produce and reinforce migrant identities and dominant discourses, and that facilitates the flow of migrants (Rodriguez 2010; Rudycky 2004; Wee and Sim 2004).

Furthermore, pre-departure orientation programs play a key role in shaping migrant identities, behaviors, and expectations (Spitzer et al. 2015; Rodriguez and Schwenken 2013; Rudycky 2004). In the Philippines, pre-departure programs (PDOS) provided through government agencies or select industry and agency partners under the auspices of the OWWA are mandatory for all outbound migrant workers or emigrants over the age of 12 (Anchustegui 2010; Spitzer 2015). PDOS participants are encouraged to be obedient, and to save their money to send to their families, specifically for investment purposes (Spitzer 2015). In sessions we observed, a select private company made sales pitches to departing migrant workers to invest their funds. One instructor made repeated reference to the profits that could be garnered from participating in multi-level marketing schemes, highlighting the gifts she received when she achieved particular sales goals, and eventually solicited participants to join in her company. These observations echo Anchustegui's (2010) evaluation of PDOS programs who went on to note that: "The administration of PDOS handled by some sectors has been commercialized because of the presence of companies offering remittance facilitation, social security products, books and real estate" (26). While it is difficult to determine how broadly the attitude is shared given the absence of ongoing large-scale evaluation, Anchustegui (2010) also found that PDOS instructors viewed the program as a means to help migrant workers and emigrants comply with government regulations rather than as an opportunity to convey important content and were, therefore, apt to invite 'resource people' to sell products in their sessions to reduce their own need to contribute to instruction time.

While the Philippine government pre-departure programs are delivered through both public and private organizations with curriculum that although standardized is often not followed (Anchustegui 2010), outbound Indonesian

migrant workers are provided an orientation to overseas work and inculcated with the values of entrepreneurship through more recruitment agency training programs and a limited number of government initiatives targeting migrant households. In Indonesia, local agents solicit labor recruits at the village level, embedding them in intra- and transnational networks that link prospective workers to agencies and training centers who broker their labor to foreign agencies and employers thereby enrolling them in a relationship of debt and patronage (Kloppenburg and Peters 2012; Rudycky 2004; Wee and Sim 2004). Recruiters traveling through rural regions are most apt to offer these opportunities to young women. Ayu, a self-described “middle man” in a recruitment agency and a former foreign domestic worker in Saudi Arabia, remarked that if one’s documents were in order, it was a matter of days to deliver a new recruit from her village to a training center where she would stay for several months before being transferred to an overseas employer. Often located in the vicinity of Metro Jakarta, the training centers that we visited and those we learned about from informants are spaces of liminality where women are compelled to turn over their mobile phones and their documents including titles to fixed and mobile property owned by family members. The former serves to isolate them from family and friends, ostensibly to reduce distraction from their studies, which include foreign language, the use of ‘modern’ appliances, and servility as their comportment is constantly monitored and evaluated against a subservient ideal. The retention of documents ensures that they not only have the appropriate papers for emigration, but also ties their families’ assets to their willingness to sign sub-standard employment contracts as familial property can be seized if they fail to agree to lower wages or different terms than originally promised.

The transformation of Indonesian and Filipina women into migrant workers requires preparation and training through what Rudycky (2004) terms the ‘technologies of servitude.’ Tapping into widely circulating gender and class ideologies, training programs succeed in reproducing obedient subjects who are inculcated with gendered and cultural discourses of self-abnegation and sacrifice for the good of both their natal and national family. The consequences of the lack of employment opportunities, barriers to further education, land expropriation, and the fallout from the global recession that resulted in escalating prices and downward pressure on wages, are borne by women migrant workers in particular who are responsible for the survival of the family, and ultimately the Indonesian and Filipino economies. This discourse, however, competes with prominent gender ideologies that locate women’s role in the private sphere of the family. In the Philippines, gender roles are enshrined in the Constitution where women are regarded as the “light of the home” bringing warmth and radiance to the family (Parreñas 2005). And while not as officially entrenched, these gender scripts are not unfamiliar in Indonesia as well (Silvey 2007). Indeed transnational families disrupt both the imagined household and its attendant gendered divisions of labor as women are accused of forfeiting their roles as mothers, daugh-

ters and wives to seek economic gain. As “suspect” migrants, women can in part recover their status by materializing their care for the family in the form of remittances. For some migrant workers, tensions persisted between their own dreams and the desire and expectation to do what is best for their family. Nuur, an Indonesian foreign domestic worker in Hong Kong was not alone in expressing this sentiment:

I'm quite angry, quite mad because I almost forget to go to the university ... I am thinking if I earn money it's more important. So to help the parents, to help the brother and just help the family out. (Spitzer 2013).

Influenced by the dominant circulating discourses that construct migrant workers as heroes and reinforced by government programs in both countries that engage migrant workers' households in learning about financial management and investment, families too learn to see their junior female family members as sources of income to complete household projects, contribute to household coffers, or pay for school fees for other siblings. Some women working in Hong Kong who wanted to return at the end of their contracts were simply told by their families: “Don't.” This response is so common that it caused more than one NGO representative I met in Indonesia to claim: “They [families] treat their daughters like ATM machines.” (Spitzer 2012) While working overseas, Indonesian and Filipino migrant workers are not exempt from pressure to invest in entrepreneurial activities in their home country (Weekley 2006) or to supplement their wages through various business schemes including multi-level marketing of sometimes, dubious products to networks of co-ethnic migrant workers.

### **Returned Migrant Entrepreneurship**

Migrant workers who return to their home countries are encouraged to leverage their savings and take up entrepreneurial activities in aid of their families and communities. The Philippines, under the auspices of the National Reintegration Centre for OFWs (NRCO), offers seminars to migrating workers and their families that further entrench these activities (Spitzer and Piper 2014). Returning migrant workers may avail themselves of NRCO programs that include grants of 10,000 pesos, additional government loans, and livelihood training. Eligibility for loans and livelihood programs is predicated on the approval of a business plan by one of the major Philippine banks and secured with collateral (Go 2012; Spitzer and Piper 2014). Returned Filipino migrant worker, Ricky, decried the expectations placed on returned migrants to undertake entrepreneurship:

Say we want to start our own business, a small store. “OK, just provide us a feasibility study. How many sari-sari stores do you have in your Barangay? How many people? What is their job?” Just imag-

*Spitzer: Return Migrant Entrepreneurship*

ine, they are factory workers for 10 years, or five years, three years. And, they are asking them to make a feasibility study? For Christ's sake!! They are not a business major! (Spitzer 2011).

Moreover, livelihood-training projects are limited in scope and highly gendered; for instance, women are apt to be offered courses in lipstick production and pedicures while men are invited to learn how to process sausages or establish cart-racing tracks (Spitzer and Piper 2014).

As alluded to earlier, families, too, are targeted by government policies to encourage entrepreneurial activities with migrant household members and the remittances they received. A representative from the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) remarked that:

We're trying to develop a tracking system of the OFWs, so that we can in partnership with the local government authorities and the churches and the NGOs, we can reach the families and guide them on financial discipline, frugality, and entrepreneurship. (Spitzer 2012).

Filipino informants who availed themselves of government sponsored entrepreneurial training programs shared similar experiences. Most felt that their businesses were under resourced from the onset, and that they lacked both affordable access to the required inputs and to the avenues through which they could bring their products to market. As Aleck, a former migrant worker, stated:

Actually the reintegration program was first established, introduced to migrant workers as early as 1990s. This was failure program of the government because you will teach the worker how to make sausage or marinate the chicken, how to fry the chicken, how to make a lipstick or whatever. If this government will not help the workers for business, meaning, if you will not give the worker the capital, how can she start a business? Okay, let's say you have given the worker a small capital to start a business. But you did not give him or her a market and the source of where to buy the materials cheaper than the market. So, there is no use. (Spitzer 2011).

Furthermore, individuals from the same area were often trained together; resultant, they were left competing for customers as they tried to establish the same kind of enterprise in the same vicinity (Spitzer 2014). A full-scale evaluation of these programs has yet to be completed; however, a survey conducted by the Balikabayani Foundation revealed that only 30 percent of enterprises started by migrant workers remained solvent (Weekley 2006). As they struggled to launch businesses with insufficient capital, limited supplies, and constrained sales opportunities, returned migrant workers also confronted the need to re-pay debts to family members and/or money lenders who may

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have funded their prior overseas sojourn while continuing to provide financial support as previously offered through overseas remittances. Concomitantly, the demands to re-pay government loans on those failed enterprises created tremendous stress amongst some returned migrant workers. As Serena shared:

The OWWA lent us 50,000 pesos so that, we can start a business . . . but it was not successful. Now the government calling me, asking me to pay back... But I don't have the money. I don't know how to pay them. I am also scared about that . . . Now I am thinking they will put me to jail because I cannot pay the money or what. (Spitzer 2011).

Indonesian government officials whom I interviewed spoke about their desires to continue to emulate the Filipino monitoring and reintegration programs. Since 2010, the government has initiated entrepreneurship training programs in 11 provinces, which, like those in the Philippines, focus on gendered activities such as sewing and baking, and which engage major banking institutions to teach financial literacy to trainees (Anwar and Chen 2016). As one government representative, Nurul, informed us the Indonesian government is eager to teach families how to deploy remittances: “We don't give the seed money to them . . . they already have money. We told (sic) them how to utilize this money.”

Like their Filipino counterparts, Indonesian informants also spoke of their desires to save money to establish businesses upon their return only to have those hopes dashed as wages were unpaid or massive salary deductions left them with virtually nothing. Tina's story resonates with many others. She worked in Qatar where her abusive employer withheld her salary and returned to Indonesia without savings. She said:

I'm willing to do business, but I don't have start-up money. When I think about working overseas, I imagine what happened to me in Qatar and I don't want to go. I am still crying about it. (Spitzer 2013).

One of the only informants we interviewed who returned home with what was viewed as significant savings, Suneeta had refrained from sending remittances while she worked in Singapore for 18 months and came back to Indonesia with 25 million rupiah. The funds were sufficient only to start a modest business, but the desire to be with her family was too powerful to resist. She remarked:

I am now an entrepreneur lending out clothes, household appliances, etc. The money isn't great, but I'm at home with my boys. (Spitzer 2013).

On the other hand, Beni, a young man who resides in the same community said:

### *Spitzer: Return Migrant Entrepreneurship*

I am now an entrepreneur with the small amount of money I started with, and I would be willing to go abroad again, particularly Korea if I could get the money. Even though I have come back, nothing much has changed economically . . . I want to open the business [but] my dreams are in the sky. (Spitzer 2013).

While some informants from both countries were pleased to be at home amongst family and familiar environs, those who engaged in entrepreneurship upon their return experienced either all out failure or carried out activities that were barely income-generating (e.g. renting clothing). Like Beni, their dreams remained “in the sky.”

### **Conclusion**

Major global economic institutions herald migration as key to poverty alleviation in the Global South as migrant workers are believed to be able to leverage financial and social remittances to create wealth in their homelands, and within diasporic communities, through entrepreneurial activities. Dominant discourse further entrenches these assertions as migrant workers in Indonesia and the Philippines are touted as saviours of both national and household economies through the delivery of foreign currency to local and national coffers. Private and public sector participants engaged in the preparation and deployment of migrant workers further promulgate the migrant as entrepreneur construct while some governmental agencies focus on involving migrant families in entrepreneurial activities.

Gender ideologies are further deployed to facilitate the continued cash flow of remittances. Generally speaking, men as breadwinners are meant to contribute to their households while women, who generally remit a larger proportion of their salaries (Rahman and Fee 2009), can refute potentially denigrating discourses that construe migrant women workers as promiscuous and eager to relinquish their roles as wives, mothers, and daughters by dutifully remitting monies to their families back home.

Government and private sector actors in the Philippines and Indonesia have taken up the task of selling entrepreneurship to migrant workers and their families through a host of pre-departure and reintegration programs for returning migrants that further reinforce gendered divisions of labour. Interviewees generally expressed dissatisfaction with attempts to inveigle them in investment schemes and with the quality of information and training they received to establish businesses. Moreover, migrant entrepreneurs faced tremendous pressure to continue to support family members who had been recipients of remittances while they were overseas and some contended with demands for loan re-payments (Spitzer 2014); needless to say, these needs take precedence over government loan re-payments or further investment in one's business. The social remittances they garnered abroad also failed to translate into a remunerative reward. For example, an Indonesian woman who worked as domestic worker in Taiwan may have learned Chinese, but that might not

be a relevant skill in her rural community. And one obvious question that remains unspoken by migration and development proponents: what if returned migrant workers have no interest in entrepreneurship?

What does the economic promise of entrepreneurship mean for returned migrants who like Tina came home empty-handed and for others whose forays into the marketplace have been for naught? The low rate of success of migrant businesses reported by my informants reflects the studies of migrant entrepreneurship in various countries around the world. Notably, where some migrant businesses appear to have flourished as reported amongst select household enterprises in China (Démurger and Xu 2011), remittance reinvestment in businesses in the Dominican Republic (Naudé, Siegel, and Marchand 2015) and community economic initiatives in Indonesia (Anwar and Chan 2016), the benefits have been primarily limited to individuals and their immediate families.

Importantly, both state and private interests blame migrant entrepreneurs for the failure of their enterprises rather than reflecting on the persistent structural inequities that not only underpin the promulgation of the migration as development strategy, but which benefit the limited number of global winners under neoliberal globalization. As Pami, the government official, acknowledges at the opening of this paper, not everyone can be a successful entrepreneur, yet despite the preliminary evidence that migrant entrepreneurship is not the engine of economic growth promised by proponents of the migration and development agenda—individual migrants—not the macroeconomic lens that may distort the benefits of remittances (Bakker 2015) nor the historical antecedents of global economic inequalities rooted in colonialism nor the present day impact of neoliberal globalization are blamed for these failures. Neoliberalism constructs individuals as enterprising, self-directed beings focused on maximizing economic well-being (Ong 2006). This perspective erases the structural issues that have generated and sustained economic disparities through under-development and exploitation and that continue to constrain economic mobility at home and abroad through the demands of structural adjustments, the increase in precarious labour, and the maintenance of social hierarchies that circumscribe roles, activities, and decision-making pathways, allowing policymakers to assert that migrant workers are responsible for failing to deliver on the promise of migrant entrepreneurship (Delgado Wise, Covarrubias and Puentes 2013; Geiger and Pécoud 2013; Glick Schiller and Faist 2009). Researchers have an important role to play in developing an evidence base that critically examines the claims of global economic institutions that can be employed by policymakers, migrant organizations, academics and others to support and/or challenge with greater credibility the migration as development paradigm by bringing forward migrant workers' experiences with entrepreneurship and by more closely following and nuancing the deployment of remittances in return migrant entrepreneurship to ascertain their roles in families, communities, and nations.

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