

# A Hope and A Future

By Ruchel Gagarin Oasan (歐善璐)

Why Taiwan? A question that others usually ask  
 After knowing that I will study abroad for my post grad  
 But my family and friends were so excited and glad  
 Because they know that Taiwan is not just a beautiful country but  
 even more than that

Why NYMU that is now National Yang Ming Chiao Tung  
 University?  
 A university in Taiwan that is known for medicine, sciences, and  
 technology  
 Another question that I usually hear because of their curiosity  
 And I just answer them with the reason that it offers IHP

Why International Health Program or IHP?  
 The question people asked after knowing my bachelor's  
 degree  
 My answer was that IHP is an opportunity  
 To learn things that we can do to improve the health of the  
 people in our country

**"All progress takes place outside the comfort zone."**  
 – Michael Bobak



▲ Cheers to a new year and praying for more  
 blessed and unforgettable good experiences.



My name is Ruchel Gagarin Oasan, from the Philippines. I am a Nutritionist-Dietitian and Teacher by profession. I am a lecturer in one of the Universities in my country. Currently, I'm in my second year of PhD in International Health Program (IHP). To study abroad is indeed challenging. I need to adjust with a lot of things. Though, it is not my first time to come to Taiwan. I always come here to visit my parents for they are overseas Filipino workers (OFW). However, this time I did not come as a tourist but as a student. Moreover, I am not staying here for just one to two weeks but three to four years, depending on how long I can finish my studies. Hence, the adjustment is quite different and maybe longer.

When I was processing my visa last year, it was the peak of the pandemic. At that time, COVID-19 cases in my country were uncontrollably increasing. Everybody is anxious and worried of what will happen next. Many places are in lock down, many flights are cancelled, and many offices are closed. I thought I could never come here to study. That's why I am grateful to God that I was

able to get a student visa, plane ticket, and travel to Taiwan despite of the situation and happening in the world caused by this pandemic. I am also thankful to International Health Program department and Office of International Affairs (OIA) for helping me with all the documents needed and processes that must be done before coming.

When I arrived here, to my surprise, it's the total opposite of the place where I came from. It seems that I'm in a far far away land, but Taiwan is just 2-hour flight from the Philippines. I told my family and friends that I am in one of the safest places in the world right now. So, every time I post a picture of me going to different parts of Taiwan, they always comment "*sana all*", meaning they hope that they can also experience the fun I am experiencing. I really applaud the Taiwan government in controlling the COVID-19 cases and I admire the people here in adhering to the guidelines and policy. Thus, I can say that Taiwanese are disciplined.



▲ Went to ice skating with people that I used to call classmates but now I can call friends.

▼ Women play soccer too! This picture was taken after our soccer training with the person I can consider closest to me here in Taiwan, my friend Liza.





One year has passed since I arrived in this beautiful country. I can still remember how I felt last year when I was at the airport waiting for my flight, mix of nervousness and excitement. This is my first time to go outside of my comfort zone for education. I have never imagined myself before going abroad to study. Though I was kind of scared and reluctant at first, I still tried because I really want to experience how to study in another country. Also, I want to meet other people, learn from them, and of course learn Chinese too.

Right now, I am living in a hectic pace, juggling with student life, work, and other responsibilities. I am still teaching online classes in my university in the Philippines. I need to prepare my lectures weekly at the same time doing my requirements. There are times that I am overwhelmed and got so stressed with so much things to do but I always remind myself of the reason why I am here, and that is to learn not only for myself but for my country as well. I really want to gain more knowledge and skills in terms of public health and research. So, when I go back to the Philippines, I can apply all of the things I learned to help my people and my country. So far, I'm learning

▼ My first long travel in this country. It was during the Chinese New Year. A well spent vacation with friends.



▲ Can't live without sports. A very fun and unforgettable experience with my IHP fambam and some students from other departments.



▲ Tried to grab every chance to travel. With my NYCU friends, I was able to visit the southern part of Taiwan during the summer break.





a lot of new things in my program. Thus, though sometimes I am stressed and my Chinese is still bad, I can still say that I am enjoying my student life in this University.

Though there are academic stuffs to do, I still do not forget to enjoy and engage myself to some extracurricular. Because of these activities, I found new friends (international and local students) that I can consider as family, met other Filipino students as well. I gained friends not only from my department but even from other programs. I participated in some sports activities in school such as badminton in which my partner (Phí Arnat) and I got the third place; volleyball where they awarded us as the best cheering group; and soccer in which the IHP team is the leading group but because of the level 3 restrictions in Taiwan at that time, we did not finish the competition. I even joined the soccer team, though I am not good in this sport because badminton is what I really play but I enjoy every training. I was able to meet some local undergraduate students that are kind and friendly. I had minor injuries because of these activities but I believe that physical activity such as sports is also important to have a balance lifestyle. It can also be a stress reliever.

I had hiking experiences too. Hiking is one of my favorite activities when I was in the Philippines. Every time I am stress with work and in life, I go for hiking. I conquered maybe more or less 20 mountains including the third highest peak in the Philippines. And I am happy that I can still do it here with my friends that love hiking too. We hiked Teapot, Jinmian, the mountain around university of course, and some mountains in Taipei and New Taipei. The Teapot hike was my favorite, my first time to hike with NYCU friends and we had unforgettable experience. When I came here, I do not know how to ride a bike but because I have active friends from our church, I tried my best to learn it so I can go with them and now I have my own bike that I use around Taipei.

Lastly, I was able to go to different places with my family and friends that I have never been before like Chiayi, Taichung, Tainan, Kaohsiung, Pingtung, and Alishan which is my favorite among all.

I know my life here in Taiwan as an international student will not be easy. I know that there will be more academic challenges to come, more problems to encounter, and stressful things to deal with. But I know also for sure that I am going to surpass it with the help of our professors, my academic/thesis adviser, friends/classmates, also, with the help of God and my family. No matter what, I am determined to finish my PhD in this country. For now, I am thankful to the people that surround me (IHP fambam, New Life Church Care group, NYCU Filipino pipz, NYCU friends, and my parents and sister living in Taiwan). Indeed, I am blessed to have them. They are my social support. I would like also to grab this opportunity to say "thank you" to the OIA, School of Medicine, and to the IHP department for the help and especially for the financial support they are extending. I don't know how will I survive without their assistance.

Before I end, I want to share one of my favorite verses in the Bible, " For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future. " — Jeremiah 29:11. This is my story so far that I can share and see you guys around the campus! ■



▲ Indeed, anywhere in the world, there are Filipinos. These are my Filipino friends in NYCU.

