



# Domestic Work is Work!

## *Migrant Organizations, Institutions Hold Consultation Forum on Campaign*

A consultation forum on the campaign for Domestic Work as Labor was conducted by the Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants (APMM) together with the International Migrants Alliance, Asian Migrants Coordinating Body and the Mission For Migrant Workers (Hong Kong).

Held last Sunday, June 13, in Central, Hong Kong, more than 200 participants from various grassroots migrant workers organizations, institutions and the academe attended the forum that tackled the current conditions of foreign domestic workers in Hong Kong, the big issues that confront them in the region, the developments within the International Labour Conference, and the challenge to push further the campaign to recognize Domestic Work as Labor.

Eni Lestari, chairperson of the International Migrants Alliance, gave an overview on the ongoing campaign and relayed how important it is in advancing the demands of foreign domestic workers (FDWs), particularly those in Hong Kong. She likewise facilitated the whole program.

Various member organizations of the Asian Migrants Coordinating Body provided an input on the current situation and issues faced by their members, many of whom were FDWs. Some of the issues raised were underpayment, overcharging by their respective sending government institutions and recruitment agencies, ban on direct hiring, contract violations, abuses and violations committed by their employers, and the HK government's standing policy banning Nepalese workers in Hong Kong.





*Pictures in front (from top) More than 200 participants attended the forum conducted both by APMM and AMCB. Ramon Bultron of APMM, Eni Lestari of the IMA and Mai from the Thai Regional Alliance.*

*(Above, from left to right) Sol Pillas of UNIFIL-MIGRANTE-HK, Sanath from ASL-HK, Sheren from ATKI-HK, Eman Villanueva of FMWU-HK and Sabina from ONWU.*

The groups who presented were the Asosiasi Tenaga Kerja Indonesia – Hong Kong (ATKI or Association of Indonesian Migrant Workers in Hong Kong), United Filipinos in Hong Kong (UNIFIL-MIGRANTE-HK), Association of Sri Lankans (ASL-HK), Thai Regional Alliance – Hong Kong (TRA-HK), and Overseas Nepalese Workers Union (ONWU).

Eman Villanueva of the Filipino Migrant Workers Union Hong Kong then discussed the current campaign to include FDWs in the statutory minimum wage (SMW) legislation in Hong Kong. The HK Legislative Council is currently deliberating a bill to put in place a statutory minimum wage for all workers in Hong Kong. Apparently, they have excluded the FDWs for a myriad of reasons (i.e. it is hard to compute their wages since they work more than eight hours, employers will not hire them anymore once their salaries increase, etc.)

Villanueva stated that it is important for FDWs to assert their right to be included in this piece of legislation as part of the continuous pushing for the recognition of domestic work as labor.

Ramon Bultron, APMM's director, provided an insight on the current happenings in the recent International Labour Conference which discussed the said campaign. According to Bultron, it was the steadfast struggle and assertion of the FDWs in Hong Kong and other countries that pushed governments and

the International Labor Organization to tackle the issue of domestic work as work. He encouraged the various groups present in the forum to drumbeat the campaign and get involved in the various activities and program that shall make the campaign a success.

To wit, Lestari laid down a plan of action that the AMCB is recommending. The plan of action included the proposed plans from the United for Foreign Domestic Workers' Rights (UFDWR), a broad coalition of regional and national organizations and institutions, as well as those of the AMCB's. Participation in various international conferences, conducting several assemblies and mass actions, promotion of the Saya Migran comics and the engagement with institutions like the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) were suggested and approved.

Truly, the forum was a success with the various groups understanding further the need to push the campaign and work together in making it a victory for the benefit of all domestic workers.

