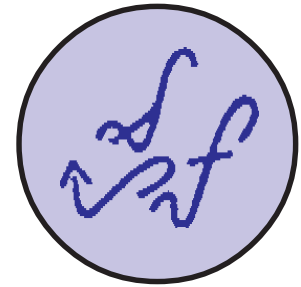


News Digest

October
2007



APMM

Monthly Newsletter of the Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants (APMM)

Overseas Filipino Workers: **Neglected Heroes, Modern Slaves**

AND THE LIST still goes on.

After Flor Contemplacion was hanged in Singapore in 1995, the issue of neglect of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in need of assistance has become one of the cornerstones of the advocacy for the rights and wellbeing of migrant workers.

Jocelyn Dunluan and Marilou Ranario are just two of the more recent publicly known cases of neglect of the Philippine government of OFWs in distress.

Jocelyn was a domestic worker in Canada who was found murdered in her employer's house in October 1, 2007. The appeal to the Philippine government of

Jocelyn's family and friends to ensure a proper investigation has so far remain unheeded. Even the request for assistance to repatriate Jocelyn's remains was denied and only through the generous support of the Filipino community in Toronto was her body finally returned home to the Philippines.

Meanwhile, Marilou Ranario, a domestic helper in Kuwait has been in prison for more than two years. She is being tried for the murder of her employer which shall merit the death penalty in Kuwait. According to Marilou, she was verbally and physically abused by her employer, was not given proper wage, was not provided with food, and on the night of

the murder, she reported that she was being sold by her employer to two men.

For the first three months of her imprisonment, she was not provided with a lawyer by the Philippines Embassy nor was she visited by embassy personnel. In the course of her incarceration, the Philippine Embassy has also failed to inform Marilou's family of the development of her case even if the family has kept on asking them about it.

This month, Marilou's appeal will be heard and by January next year, the final decision of the court on her case is expected to come out.

(Turn to p. 2)



Jocelyn Dunluan, Canada



Flor Contemplacion, Singapore



Marilou Ranario, Kuwait

Victims of Philippine government's neglect



Cynthia Abdon-Tellez of the Mission for Migrant Workers (MFMW) appealed for justice for Dulnuan. The action, conducted to hand in a letter of appeal to the PCG-HK, became more emotional when the PCG-HK closed their doors on the friends and family of Jocelyn.

(From p. 1)

In the experience of OFWs and institutions helping them when in distress, it takes a lot of push for the government to provide assistance to their nationals abroad who are in need.

Usually, when an OFW approaches Philippine posts abroad for assistance especially those that require financial help, they are usually told that funds are not available or are in the Philippines.

In the case of Jocelyn, for example, the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) did not provide for her repatriation because according to OWWA administrator Marianito Roque, Jocelyn was an undocumented worker.

However, according to the Magna Carta for OFWs approved in 1995 after the Contemplacion hanging, the Philippine government is responsible for the repatriation of abused OFWs irregardless of their status.

The cases of Jocelyn and Marilou also highlight some of the outstanding issues against the OWWA.

The OWWA was established to provide welfare assistance to OFWs. For a long time, OWWA has been besieged by scandals and controversies revolving around the misappropriation and mismanagement of its funds. Among the concerns raised by different groups on the OWWA are its involvement in failed or overpriced projects, unaudited disbursements of funds, and allocation of a very tiny part of its funds for onsite services. According to the United Filipinos in Hong Kong (UNIFIL-MIGRANTE-HK),

of the US\$25 that each OFW pays to OWWA, less than US\$2 go to direct and onsite services.

Criticisms on the handling of the OWWA funds have become more intense when the OWWA Board – dominated by government officials despite the fact that not a single cent of the fund comes from the government – approved the OWWA Omnibus Policies that further limit the scope

of OWWA services.

Overseas Filipinos have every reason to be indignant whenever one of them is denied help by the government.

For a long time, they have been dubbed as heroes. They are the ones perpetually saving the Philippine economy that is perennially on the brink of collapse due to very weak economic fundamentals.

In fact, the significance of OFWs for national survival can be seen through the constant stream of “innovations” that the Philippine government makes in its labor export program such as the recent POEA Guidelines for domestic workers.

Aside from their remittances, OFWs are charged by the government every step of the way in the whole migration process. For every first time OFW, the government collects around P10,000. If everyday, 3,000 Filipinos leave to work abroad, this is a whopping P30 million per day. This does not even count the taxes that the government collects for businesses related to migration such as recruitment agencies and finance companies.

When the government is in need, they turn to OFWs. However, whenever OFWs are in need, the government turns its back from OFWs.

OFWs have every right to be indignant. Every OFW neglected by the Philippine government is a crime that cannot be taken lightly. As the list gets longer, the fight for genuine service and protection becomes even stronger.#

Hong Kong migrants launch Gloria Step Down Movement

AROUND 70 FILIPINO MIGRANTS' organizations in Hong Kong approved the formation of the Gloria Step Down Movement (GSM-HK) during the Leaders Kapihan that was held on October 28 this year at the Li Hall of the St. John's Cathedral in Hong Kong.

They joined other Filipinos at home and abroad in the urgent call for Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to step down in order to effectively face the issues of massive corruption and bribery hounding her government, gross human rights violations that have been condemned but remain unaddressed, abuse and exploitation of the overseas Filipino workers and economic deterioration that her administration has brought down to the nation.

Specifically, the OFWs drew attention on what they described as severe violation of their rights, welfare and livelihood as a result of the POEA guidelines and the OWWA Omnibus Policies. They cited the case of Jocelyn Dulnuan, the caregiver murdered in Canada, and the lack of legal protection for Marilou Ranario who is awaiting execution in a Kuwaiti prison.

HK OFWs also endorsed the ouster of Consul General Alejandrino Vicente who according to them has not implemented any concrete program for their benefit. Instead, he carried on the collection of the excessive fees and even instigated the shutting of both entrances to the consulate offices when the migrants staged consecutive protest actions to campaign for justice for Dulnuan and Ranario.#



Filipinos from HK to the US are again calling for GMA's removal for corruption, bribery and rights violations

STAND UP FOR YOUR RIGHTS

SINCE MAY 2007 UP to present, Mrs. Sol Esplago (Manang Sol) from Cagayan Valley, Philippines, has been anxious of what has happened to her 24-year old daughter, Crisolyn Esplago Sicam, who is working in Riyadh.

Worried over her daughter, Manang Sol turned to the Mission for Migrant Workers, Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants and UNIFIL-MIGRANTE HK in her quest to ascertain the real case status of Crisolyn.

She expressed her disappointment over the way the government treated her and the case of her daughter.

OFW mother seeks help for jailed daughter in Riyadh

“It is almost five months now since I last heard from Crisolyn. Since August up to this time, I have been placing overseas calls to Crisolyn’s employer in Riyadh, Ms. Sibbaluca of the agency that facilitated Crisolyn’s placement, DFA’s Ms. Mendoza in Manila, OWWA in Cagayan and to Mr. Lauzon of the Philippine Embassy in Riyadh. Nobody has given me a clear reason why Crisolyn was imprisoned and what is her case status. Instead they tell me different versions and charges against Crisolyn,” Manang Sol related to MFMW.

Among the responses that Manang Sol got were “Crisolyn was given to the Police due to the request of Crisolyn herself”, “run-away”, “immorality”, “police raided a

house where there were men inside and arrested Crisolyn there”, “prostitute (term used by Mr. Lauzon)”.

Manang Sol said, “I only wish to know what happened, why Crisolyn was arrested, to talk to Crisolyn, and to bring her home safe soon. And yet, Mr. Lauzon gave me cold treatment, hurting and disrespectful answers during my follow up calls to him last 24th and 30th of October.”

Crisolyn arrived in Riyadh on 01 June 2007, through the TRANSNATIONAL SERVICES, INC. to work for Mr. Khair Al-Deen Al Abassi, connected with the Saudi American Bank.#

APMM holds consultation with OFWs in Dubai

APMM, TOGETHER WITH its Hong Kong partner – the Mission for Migrant Workers (MFMW) held a consultation with Filipino workers in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE) to discuss the working and living conditions of OFWs there as well as the current issues affecting migrants in the Emirates.

The two-day consultation was held last 11 and 12 October 2007 and was attended by leaders and some members of the MIGRANTE Chapter in Dubai.

Highlights of the consultation included the formulation of a coordinated plan in launching advocacy campaigns for the protection and promotion of the rights and welfare of Filipino migrants, the on-going campaign against the continued extra-judicial killings and other human rights violations in the Philippines and series of education training on leadership, organizing and other skills developments trainings. It also included the continued monitoring and documentation on the “visit visa” scheme as well as the condition undocumented migrants of UAE. The participants also agreed to participate in the founding assembly of the International Migrant Alliance in May 2008.#

APMM co-organizes workshop on FDW rights during the 3rd ASEAN Civil Society Conference

IN CONSONANCE WITH the global campaign on domestic workers’ human rights specifically the recognition of Domestic Work as Work, APMM, together with other members of the United for Foreign Domestic Workers’ Rights, hold public forum and launched the ‘One paid day off a week’ campaign for foreign domestic workers.

Representing the APMM, Dolores Balladares, one of the board members and Chairperson of UNIFIL-HK, shared the lessons and experiences of domestic workers in Hong Kong during the forum that was held on November 4, 2007, the last day of the 3rd ASEAN + Civil Society Conference at the Peninsula Excelsior Hotel in Singapore.#

APMM participates in the International Anglican Family Network Consultation

APMM PRESENTED A paper on globalization and migration at the Asian consultation on Globalization and its Impact on the Family organized by the IAFN hosted by the Anglican Church in Korea from 19 to 25 October. Representatives of the Anglican communities and regional NGO’s from Burma, Thailand, Japan, Philippines, Singapore, Hong Kong, Scotland, UK and Korea attended the consultation.

The consultation discussed thematic issues on migrant workers, bride trades and violence against children and family. Participants visited Shalom House, a migrant centre established by the Anglican Church in Korea and participated in the demonstration in front of the Japanese Embassy to demand justice and compensation for the “comfort women”.

The consultation also came up with a recommendation to organize an international network on migrant workers.

The consultation was held as a follow-up to the African Consultation organized by the IAFN in Kenya in 2003.#



The Asian Consultation of IAFN provided the APMM an opportunity to further expand its networks

APMM attends APRN Confab on Natural Resources

APMM PARTICIPATED IN Asia Pacific Research Network's (APRN) conference on Peoples Sovereignty on Natural Resources in Bangkok, Thailand from October 23-25. The theme of the conference was People and Planet Over Profits.

Eighty five foreign delegates participated in the activity. More from Thailand including from peoples organizations also took part. The APMM is an active member of APRN and is head of its Labor Stream.

The next APRN conference is to be held in India and the Labor Stream will also have its meeting there.#

Undocumented Migrant Workers Tortured in Taiwan

THE OCTOBER 16 ALLEGED torture of two female Vietnamese undocumented migrant workers in a Central Taiwan detention center is the first publicly reported incident of its kind in the island.

A police officer allegedly forced the Vietnamese to stand under an airconditioner which was set at 16 degrees centigrade without warm clothing for four hours. The National Immigration Agency (NIA) however never revealed these details but only stated that two females complained of maltreatment and that this was being investigated.

APMM hopes that no whitewash occurs. Earlier Filipinos assisting undocumented migrants reported to APMM that three Filipinas were alleged beaten up by the police in June 23 in Taipei County. This was done to them allegedly because they refused to point out where they stayed.

The NIA denied this incident and instead asked APMM's local friends to produce the passport numbers of the alleged victims.

There is an ongoing crackdown on undocumented migrants at the moment. The NIA was given a quota of 10,000 arrests for this year and the detention centers have become overcrowded. #

Zilan's supporters appeal anew for family unification

AN APPEAL TO halt the separation of a 6-year old child from her parents is renewed by the Help Zilan and the Taskin-Beltran Family Support Network. Spearheaded by the Center for Japanese-Filipino Families (CJFF), it aims to solicit support signatures for submission to Japan's Justice Ministry before 18 November 2007.

Earlier on 23 March 2007, Japan's court decision dismissed the lawsuit filed by the family. It claimed that even if Zilan and her mother are separated from the father, this will give no serious impact on the child's physical or emotional state as long as she lives with her mother.

Forum tackles post- handover women's movement in HK

LOCAL AND WOMEN migrant workers' group, university scholars and students, researchers, social workers, activists, and some government officials spent a day in a forum co-organised by the Association for the Advancement of Feminism and the Hong Kong City University on 29 October 2007.

Discussions were focused on common issues they face after the handover affecting the women's movement in Hong Kong such as the feminization of poverty, violence against women, backlash from conservatism in the society; and inside-outside policy intervention.

A common action plan was drawn such as addressing poverty, withdrawn government services, and the redevelopment of public space, retirement benefit, and the call for a legislated minimum wage for workers including the migrant workers.

The sharing of women migrant workers of their struggle as part of the HK society were done by the United Filipinos in HK (UNIFIL), the Asosiasi Tenaga Kerja di Indonesia (ATKI), Mission for Migrant Workers (MFMW) and the Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants (APMM). #

The appeal to the Justice Ministry is for the recognition of Zilan's rights as guaranteed by the UN Convention on the Rights of Child; Respect the rights of the Kurds and other refugees; and to Grant special permit residency to the Taskin-Beltran family.

In January 2004, a compulsory deportation order was prevented when migrant organizations and service providers in Japan and worldwide poured protest and appeal letters to the Japanese government.

Advocates are seeking worldwide support for the petition.#

Training on Internet Community Radio Broadcasting

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