



A Solidarity Among Migrants and the Local People

The MISSION'S FLAG DAY



The success of the Mission's Flag Day on 4th August 2007 was a result of the solidarity among migrants and the local people.

This was the 2nd time the Mission was given approval by the HK government to sell flags to raise funds for its programs and ministry among migrants and their families.

The funds raised from flag selling depend on the number of volunteers recruited and the generous financial support from gold flag donors.

It was very difficult in the beginning especially the enlistment of volunteers since the date fell on a school break. We were about to lose hope! But as the date became nearer, more and more people learned about it so the number of volunteers eventually increased.

Those who could not join on the actual Flag Day, helped us follow up prospective volunteers and donors on week days. Some help in the insertion of solicitation letters, brochures, posters and sticking mailing labels to envelopes. Several teams of migrants went around Central on Saturdays and

Sundays to encourage fellow migrants to enlist. Even employers allowed their domestic helpers to go out to support the flag selling.

As early as 7:30 AM, our volunteers were already in their designated areas around Central. It did not rain, thank God! Though it was scorchingly hot that day, it did not dampen the enthusiasm of the volunteers to sell flags.

Archbishop Paul Kwong, aside from accepting our invitation to be a Flag Day patron was also a gold flag donor. We received Gold Flag donations from the different church groups, the business community and individuals.

It eventually paid off! We raised more than \$250 thousand! The support of the Mission Board, the different migrant organizations, local churches, local non-government organizations, trade unions, residents of migrant shelters, some students and individuals made all these possible. Friends from the radio and print media were very supportive as well.

We are sincerely grateful for your steadfast support and solidarity!



The Legacy Still Lives On: **Never Again to Martial Law!**



PEOPLE POWER I. Amidst the blanket repression of the Marcos dictatorship, Filipino people braved military brute with mass actions that gathered and organized upto millions on the streets.


WHEREAS, the rebellion and armed action undertaken by these lawless elements of the communist and other armed aggrupations organized to overthrow the Republic of the Philippines by armed violence and force have assumed the magnitude of an actual state of war against our people and the Republic of the Philippines;

“NOW, THEREFORE, I, FERDINAND E. MARCOS, President of the Philippines, by virtue of the powers vested upon me by Article VII, Section 10, Paragraph (2) of the Constitution, do hereby place the entire Philippines as defined in Article I, Section 1 of the Constitution under martial law and, in my capacity as their commander-in-chief, do hereby command the armed forces of the Philippines, to maintain law and order throughout the Philippines, prevent or suppress all forms of lawless violence as well as any act of insurrection or rebellion and to enforce obedience to all the laws and decrees, orders and regulations promulgated by me personally or upon my direction. “

With the stroke of the presidential pen, Marcos ruled the Philippines by decrees, proclamations and general orders for 14 years — even after the supposed lifting of martial law on January 17, 1981 with Proclamation 2045 — until he was ousted by the most direct expression of the sovereign will of the Filipino people in 1986.

A whole generation grew up under a controlled press, knowing Marcos and his wife, Imelda, as the Father and Mother of the nation, and nothing else but “the good and the beautiful” of the Marcos conjugal dictatorship.

More than twenty years after the ouster of Marcos, his legacy that still lives on. We have a military that has not really returned to the barracks but is still highly involved in government and suspected of perpetrating the series of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances in the country. We have a government that is considered the most corrupt in Asia and just a few days ago former president was convicted of plunder – a law (RA 7080) passed by the Philippine Congress as a result of the Marcoses’ rapacity — and under which, we hope, the current president and her husband and their underlings will eventually be found guilty and punished.

The Filipino people according to some has a short memory. But we hope we will never forget the evils of Martial Law: what it has brought to our economy, to our politics and most of all to our national psyche— the nation’s soul. Never again to Martial Law. 



MARTIAL LAW. The picture above presents Ferdinand Marcos announcing the Philippines under Martial rule in September 21, 1972.

Migrants Unite in Summit: **LET'S ALL FIGHT Overcharging!**

THE Second Migrant Women's Summit held on the 26th of August 2007 had continued to take up the issue on Overcharging of Agency Fees in one of its five workshops.

Under the Workshop on POEA Guidelines, State Exaction and Overcharging, the workshop participants have reaffirmed the recommendations and resolutions of the First Migrant Women's Summit for:

> the strict enforcement of the law that covers collection of placement fees from applicants for overseas work setting the ceiling to the equivalent of one month's salary;


> the suspension and review of the Hands-on Conciliation Meetings that the Philippine Consulate General in Hong Kong enforces making unfair settlements between Migrant Workers and Recruitment Agencies; and,

> the facilitation and expedition of long

period of resolving agency cases back in the Philippines.

The current procedures and manner of implementation are discouraging migrant workers to pursue cases against Recruitment Agencies. Thus, the demand to create Special Courts that will attend to the cases being filed by migrants stands.

While there already are no direct significant changes such as prosecuting erring agencies in such cases, certain significant connections were even noted in relation with the POEA Guidelines that says "No Agency Fees." This, early on, was part of the whole deceitful package of "The New POEA Guidelines of November 2006". As experiences of migrant workers who have arrived Hong Kong in the past few months show, the Training Fees, Assessment Fees, Language Proficiency Fees and related fees add up to the horrendous rate that placement agencies collect from migrant applicants.

The 450 individuals who were representatives of the 110 organizations that participated in this Second Summit held at the University of Hong Kong in Pokfulam vowed to continue their vigilance in protesting against unjust state exactions, a part of the many calls, and plans the different workshop groups came up with, and to work towards realization of their just goals. 



MIGRANTS UNITE!
More than 450 individuals from various organizations attended the Second Filipino Women Migrant Workers Summit in Hong Kong University on August 26.

Service providers join hands vs. overcharging

SEVERAL service providers initiated a meeting to initially discuss and plan on how they should proceed in dealing with the issue of overcharging and malpractices of recruitment agencies in HK, which is one of the resolutions in the National Conference of Service Providers held in November 2006.

The delegates have already identified in the conference several activities such as data gathering on overcharging and malpractices of recruitment agencies (2005-2006), distribute list to migrant workers, call for a boycott of these recruitment agencies and blacklisting.

The Mission together with Sr. Aida Casambre, RGS (Diocesan Pastoral Center for Filipinos), Adrielle Panares (International Social Service-HK), Holly Allan (Helpers for Domestic Helpers) and

Eman Villanueva (United Filipinos in HK) shared their experiences with the officials of the Philippine Consulate General during hands-on conciliation meetings between representatives of recruitment agencies and the victims of overcharging.

Even with the implementation of the POEA guidelines, recruitment agencies still charge exorbitant fees. An applicant pays P30,000 pesos in cash before they leave, the remaining balance is paid in 4 installments in HK through financing agencies.

One of the major points raised was the new "modus operandi" where in the guise of no placement fee, recruitment agencies charge between 70 – 80T pesos for "training fee".

Sr. Aida presented the first three (3)

recruitment agencies with most numbers of overcharging cases and malpractices. Technic Agency remains the number one unscrupulous recruitment agency in HK based on the DPCF, Mission, HDH and ISS-HK statistics.

Several resolutions were initially decided: to gather cases filed by victims against overcharging; to publish a handout on the Do's and Don't when dealing with recruitment agencies during hands-on conciliation meetings and to organize a dialogue with the Philippine Consulate official and recruitment agencies.

The group of service providers has strengthened their resolve to deal with the problems of overcharging and malpractices and they encourage migrant organizations to join as well to create greater impact.



The Story of Robelita

RECENTLY a Filipina domestic worker was found guilty of theft for keeping a photo of her employer. Another Filipina was jailed as a result of the employer's accusation that she took a twenty dollar bill. We also read in the news papers that some employers are ganging up to protect the interest of employers against abusive helpers. Are the domestic helpers the culprits? or the victims?

Our story for this month is about Robelita. Her story will show that the domestic helpers with their live in status are more prone to abuses and maltreatment and sometimes framed up by their employers just to get away from paying their maids of their one-month salary or sometimes, to avoid paying long service.

Robelita applied for domestic work in Hong Kong through an agency. She was hired by a local pastor. She had to serve a couple and their two daughters. In her contract, it was only stated that she specifically had to do household work. But when she arrived it was not just household work that was expected of her. She was to look after the wife of her employer who is half paralyzed.

Everyday she had to assist her female employer in performing her personal needs- like going to the bathroom, changing her clothes, massaging her legs and applying ointment to her

employer's rushes. She said she can bear all the hard work but not how she was being treated by her female employer. She was slapped in the face, scratched and sometimes kicked by her employer. It happened at least four times but she was afraid to complain because of fear of losing her job. She said she spent a lot to come here and she had not finish paying the loan for her agency fee so she had to endure her unbearable situation.

"She said she can bear all the hard work but not how she was being treated by her female employer. [The abuses] happened at least four times but she was afraid to complain because of fear of losing her job."

On 30th April 2007 while applying cream to her employer, she was slapped in the face, kicked in the thigh and punched several times in the arm that caused bruises. She shouted for help but her male employer just watched and didn't do anything to stop the attack. Then she was asked by the employer to get out of the house. Once outside, she called the police and reported the incident. On 14th August the employer was found guilty and was fined for \$3000.

In the court it was mentioned that her work was really hard compared to other domestic workers because she has to take care of someone needing special medical attention and she did not have the knowledge or skills in this field.

Robelita now waits for the result of her application for common law damages at the Legal Aid Department.

APWLD holds task force, women leaders in Asia Pacific discuss labor and migration

The MFMW is a member of the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development or APWLD, in its Task Force on Labour and Migration. MFMW's Director, Cynthia Ca Abdon-Tellez is currently the Convenor of the Task Force together with Avelina Rokoduru of Fiji as Co-convenor. Other members who attended come from Indonesia, Thailand, Korea, Mongolia, India, The Philippines and Bangladesh. Apart from the Programme Officer, Ms. Nalini Singh, the APWLD Regional Coordinator, Ms. Lynnsay Francis attended the meeting and provided a portion of the training on UN Mechanisms.

The Task Force (TF) meets once a year and sets plans and decisions. This year's meeting was held in Chennai, India, where members were given an initial training on the ILO and UN Mechanisms. The processes learned can be utilized in support of the organizing activities of APWLD member organizations which are directly in contact with grassroots local and migrant workers.

One of the regional campaigns that the TF is involved in is the "Campaign to Recognize Domestic Work as WORK". It is an offshoot of the Colombo Summit on Domestic Workers in 2003. This strategic campaign has three levels to tackle three issues, namely:

- One Paid Day-off a Week
- Right to Health
- Right to Redress

This campaign will be launched in cooperation with five other regional organizations under the allied banner of United for Migrant Domestic Workers' Rights. The launching will be held in Singapore in early November 2007.

Mission attends training on data documentation for advocacy

Dolores Dayao

The training on data documentation for advocacy was held on 1st October 2007, at the office of the TransAsia Sisters Association in Taipei (TASAT), Taiwan. The training was attended by the members of TASAT, Migrante Taiwan and International delegates who attended the International Conference on Border Control and Empowerment of Immigrant Brides. The international delegates came from from Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Philippines, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam.

The training was one of the resolutions that was agreed at the first conference on Immigrant Brides held in 2005 in Taipei, Taiwan.

The objectives of the training were:

- Generally, to develop pool of documentors among foreign brides from different countries to document cases of abuse and discrimination to support the researches, advocacy work and campaigns geared towards the protection of the rights of migrants women and immigrant brides.

- Specifically, to identify focus areas for data documentation, recognize the basic concepts of data documentation, identify possible advocacy products and services out of the data documentation and identify possible coordination and cooperation in documentation work.

The training was organized by

the Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants and the TransAsia Sisters Association.

Ibon Foundation, Inc., a prestigious data information centre based in the Philippines provided the training workshop to 28 participants.

It was an introduction to a majority of the participants who were new to such tasks, hoping more such training workshops is held to popularize the issue and encourage interest from different communities.

Despite the time limit, the participants were strongly motivated to use the knowledge they have acquired, by beginning to apply what they have learned among the cases they encounter.



THANK YOU!

The Mission for Migrant Workers (HK) Society thanks all of you who have made the Mission Flag Day a success.

Your contribution, the energy you spent, the time you gave made it worthwhile.

We all know that all this is for a greater cause.

Thank you for being a Mission Flag Day Volunteer!



HARVEST FESTIVAL

Sharing the bounty of the earth with others in need

EVERY year, the Anglican Church in HK celebrates Harvest festival in October. The harvest gifts collected are donated to charity organizations that are less privileged and worthy of support.

On 7th October, St. John's Cathedral and its daughter churches- the St. Stephen's chapel and Discovery Bay Church have chosen Bethune House Migrant Women's Refuge as their beneficiary. Bags of rice, cooking oil, coffee, sugar, milk, assorted canned goods, biscuits, baking mixes and seasonings were offered by the members of the congregation in front of the



HARVEST FESTIVAL. Our director Cynthia joins Rev. Sharon Constable in Discovery Bay Church to celebrate the harvest festival.

Edwina Antonio, the Executive Director of the shelter, speak about the work of the Shelter at the St. Stephens Chapel. Together with Maria Mellanie Pacia who shared her dreadful experience with her Chinese employer.

Sol Pillas, a former resident of Bethune House and now a volunteer at the Mission for Migrant Workers talked about her case and the cases of those who have been recently accommodated in the shelter.

According to Rev. Sharon, a

member of her congregation in Discovery Bay was moved by the plight of Sol and the other residents of Bethune House.

As Fr. Will Newman has said, "We give thanks to God for all the good things we enjoy, and for all that is good in creation. We remember those who don't get a fair share of the harvest, and we come to share something of what we have with others in need."

This is the very essence of the Harvest Festival.

Bethune House is grateful to St. John's Cathedral, St. Stephen's Chapel and the Discovery Bay Church for being good stewards of God's grace so as to provide some kind of relief to those in need.

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MIGRANT FOCUS

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