

**Our Service Providers.**

Leaders of the migrant-serving institutions in Hong Kong addressed the whole conference about the situation, their programs and the challenges to empower migrant workers in the territory (right). Participants (below) attending the conference ranged from various religions, faiths and nationalities, from volunteers to migrants rights advocates.



*Service providers hold historic meeting*

# Responding towards Migrant Worker Empowerment



It was a historic gathering of reputable migrant-serving institutions, shelters, churches, organizations of migrant workers and local organizations supportive of migrant's concerns.

Thirty-four delegates from 19 institutions and churches in Hong Kong came together in the first ever National Conference of Service Providers for Migrant Workers in Hong Kong with the theme "Facing the Challenges of Service-Provision Towards the Empowerment of Migrant Workers" on November 6 and 7 at the Harold Smyth Room of St. John's Cathedral. The conference was organized by the Mission for Migrant Workers (MFMW).

The conference served as an opportunity for the participants to share with each other their work and services, discuss the major issues that make migrant workers vulnerable to potential crisis situation, identify the obstacles that limit service provision to migrant workers, and explore avenues for cooperation and coordination among service providers.

*Responding, go to page 2*



*The Most Reverend Peter Kwong Kit, DD, archbishop of the Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui, hosted the dinner gathering of all the conference participants (above) while migrant workers from the Asian Migrants Coordinating Body discussed about their situation and struggles (right).*



*Responding, from page 1*

Stalwarts of the Christian Church in Hong Kong – Archbishop Peter Kwong-Kit, Bishop-elect Paul Kwong and Most Rev. Andrew Chan, Dean of St. John's Cathedral graced the conference in different occasions and exhorted the participants to pursue the cause of service provision to those in need.

The participants affirmed the importance of providing and even expanding the assistance of various the NGOs to migrant workers, especially the foreign domestic workers. Despite the presence of a number of service providers, client intake is still very much on the rise.

This need even becomes more necessary if the policies of both the Hong Kong government and that of the sending countries that make migrant workers susceptible to abuses and exploitation are considered. In particular for the Hong Kong government are the New Conditions of Stay, the denial of right of abode for FDHs, and the policies on days off and working hours for FDHs. There is also an absence of

a policy to determine whether the termination of a contract is reasonable and just.

On the other hand, the major problems with the sending governments are the lack of services to its nationals as well as the lack of control over malpractices of recruitment agencies. In fact, there are even policies instituted in the home countries of FDHs that open the gates for the recruiters to overcharge migrant workers, to connive with unscrupulous employers and lending agencies to underpay FDHs, and to deny assistance to migrant workers.

The issues of security of employment in relation to the NCS or Two-Week Rule, overcharging of recruiters, underpayment and discrimination were reaffirmed by representatives of the Asian Migrants Coordinating Body (AMCB) who presented on the situation of migrant workers. Aside from these, the AMCB also raised the issue of the wage cut, the lack of transparency in the annual wage review, and the lack of assistance to women's health for migrant workers.


## Participants of the National Conference of Service Providers for Migrant Workers November 6-7, 2006

### Participating Institutions and Churches

Bethune House Migrant Women's Refuge  
 Caritas Asian Migrant Workers Social Service Project  
 Christian Action, Domestic Helpers and Migrant Workers' Programme  
 Church of the Holy Name  
 Diocesan Pastoral Center for Filipinos  
 Dompnet Dhuafa Association  
 Helpers for Domestic Helpers  
 HK Human Rights Monitor  
 HK Women Workers Association  
 International Baptist Church Filipino (HK)  
 Islamic Union of Hong Kong  
 ISS - HK, Migrant's Programme  
 Maryknoll Sisters  
 Mission for Migrant Workers  
 Revival Christian Church  
 SJC HIV Education Centre  
 St. Mathew the Apostle Parish  
 St. Peter and Paul Centre  
 The Chinese Rhenish Church, HK Synod  
 UNISON - HK

### Migrant Organizations

Asian Migrants Coordinating Body (AMCB)  
 Association of Indonesian Migrant Workers (ATKI)  
 United Filipinos in HK (UNIFIL-HK)  
 Thai Regional Alliance (TRA)

The historic conference ended with a Plan of Action that includes joint advocacy with the governments of Hong Kong and of migrant-sending countries on the main concerns identified. This will be launched on December 17 as part of the celebration of International Migrant's Day. Also part of the Plan of Action are rights education to more migrant workers, employers and the Hong Kong public, as well as joint efforts to further build the human and fiscal resources of the NGO participants that are mainly charitable institutes. 

OUR FAITH, *Father*  
OUR *Dwight dela Torre*  
STRUGGLE *IFI Chaplain*  
*MFMW*

# Gathering for a people's priest, gathering for justice



In an emotional celebration of the Holy Eucharist at 2PM on 12 November 2006, the congregation of nearly five hundred offered its praise and thanksgiving for the life and ministry of The Most Revd Alberto B. Ramento, DD, IXth Obispo Maximo/Supreme Bishop of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, at St. John's Cathedral, Hong Kong.

Instead of a sermon, a short video presentation was made. The video showed the late bishop's activities as well as the protest march staged by the faithful of the IFI, the different sectoral organizations in which the bishop was involved and people whose lives has been touched by the late bishop.

Outside the Cathedral were pictures of the other victims of extrajudicial killings in the Philippines and the call to stop the killings.

The 40<sup>th</sup> day after the death of a person is very important in Philippine tradition. It corresponds to the number of days the risen Christ spent on earth before His ascension.

Bishop Ramento, as he was fondly called, was stabbed to death in the early hours of 3<sup>rd</sup> October in his simple convent.

There was blood on the bed and blood splatters on the right and left side of the bed. There was a pool of blood at the foot of the bed. A bloody hand print on the right door jam and a trail of blood from the room to the stairs. There were was another bloody hand print (but slipping) on the door jam leading to the stairs, and blood on the first three steps. On the bishop's blanket was a blood stain consistent of a knife being wiped. He had no wounds on his hands nor in the abdominal area.

From all indications the bishop was stabbed twice on the chest, one penetrating the sternum and piercing the heart, while sleeping but was able to stagger towards the stairs, most probably trying to escape his assailant or cry for help but before he could go down, was yanked

*Gathering, go to page 4*

**Gathering for Bishop Ramento.** People gave flowers during the service to Bishop Ramento commemorating the 40th day of his death (upper right). Around 500 people, many of whom are members of the Philippine Independent Church in Hong Kong, attended the mass (below).





*The PIC Choir led the people into singing during the service.*

*Gathering, from page 3*

back to the living room and there was stabbed three more times, twice at the back and one below the left armpit.

The ferocity of the attack and the audacity of wiping the knife belie “robbery with simple homicide.”


At the time of his death, he was the Bishop of Tarlac, a hotbed in Philippine politics. In his Diocese is the Hacienda Luisita home to thousands of peasants and farm workers. In November 2004 the strike at the Hacienda involving 6,000 workers and their families was violently dispersed by the military killing seven workers and wounding a more than a hundred. Bp. Ramento was an ardent supporter of the strikers. They would meet in his dilapidated cathedral to plan their actions. He would bring them rice when they would run out of supplies.

On 13 March 2005 one of his priests, Fr. William Tadena, another ardent supporter of the striking workers was shot to death by suspected elements of the military or by persons with links with the military. After he began receiving death threats (2005) the Bishop warned his family, “I know they are going to kill me next. But never will I abandon my duty to God and my ministry to the people.”

During his term as Obispo Maximo, he helped facilitate the release of prisoners of war (POW); and was an Independent Observer in the Peace Talks (Oslo) between the National Democratic Front and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines. Bishop Ramento up until his death was also serving as Chairman of the Supreme Council of Bishops (PIC); Member, Executive Commission (PIC);

co-chairman of the Ecumenical Bishops Forum (EBF); Convenor, Pilgrims for Peace; Initiator, Peace for Life; Co-Chairperson, Philippine Peace Centre; Founding Convenor, Movement of Concerned Citizens for Civil Liberties (MCCCL); Member of the Presidium, Citizens Congress for Truth & Accountability; Chairperson of the Executive Board of the Workers’ Assistance Center, Inc. (Cavite) All these organizations have consistently questioned the legitimacy of the Arroyo presidency, condemned the spate of extra judicial killings in the Philippines, opposed her proposed charter change and had called her to step down. At his speech on 12 June 2006 in front of a massive multi sectoral crowd, he reiterated these calls. And despite his busy schedule, he and Mrs Ramento ran a feeding program for the street children of Tarlac City.

Bishop Ramento was himself a victim of extra judicial killing. The victims were church people & workers; human rights advocates; lawyers and judges; journalists and doctors; peasant leaders and farm workers; union leaders and laborers; fisherfolks and student leaders. As of October 2006, there are 764 victims of extra judicial killings, 175 of whom were killed in 2005 alone – 1 every 2 days. Extra judicial killings are not meant to silence the victims alone.

Extra judicial killings are designed to terrorize and immobilize the opposition. The killing of Bp. Ramento has changed the equation. The message it sent was, no one is safe anymore. 

*Follow, from page 5*

I would like to conclude this address by telling you a short story. It was told of an ancient rabbi who asked his students how they could tell when night had ended and day break was on its way back.

One student said, “Could it be when you see an animal in the distance and can tell whether it is a sheep or a dog? No, the rabbi answered.


Another student asked, “Could it be when you look at a tree in the distance and can tell whether it is a fig tree or a peach tree? No, the rabbi answered.

“Well then,” the students demanded, “tell us when is it?”

The rabbi said, “It is when you look on the face of any man or woman and see that she or he is your brother or sister. Because if you cannot do that, then no matter what time it is, it is still night.”

I believe this is the mission of our Church and of other institutions concerned which is to help Hong Kong people look on the faces of

any migrant workers and see that they are their brothers or sisters. They are no longer aliens and strangers. Until then we are still in the night.

May I wish you a successful and fruitful conference with good outcome which can benefit our fellow workers and tell them the night has ended and the day break is on its way. 



Rt. Rev Paul Kwong, provincial secretary general of the Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui

# Follow [Jesus'] example to serve others

I just want to tell you how honoured and privileged I am to be here this morning to speak to you. The theme of your conference is “Facing Challenges of Service Provision towards the Empowerment of the Migrant Workers”. I would like to speak about this theme briefly from the perspective of the Bible. This is an attempt to explore the ways in which the Bible teaches us that the empowerment of migrant workers is important. Why do we need to respect migrant workers? How do we Christians help increase the awareness of the community of Hong Kong towards the empowerment of migrant workers? Would this be one of the items of the Church’s missional agenda here in Hong Kong?

We often hear in the Old Testament that the people of God always honour the sojourners. I believe migrant workers are sojourners in a strictest sense because they leave their home countries and work and live in strange lands. They are lonely, marginalized, deprived and unsettled. There are two reasons why the sojourners are honoured by the people of God. Firstly, it is because God honours sojourners Himself. Secondly, God commanded the people of God to love strangers because they were once the sojourners themselves. “He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. Love the sojourner therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.” (Deut.10:18-19).

The psalmist teaches us that the sojourners are the people that God cares about. “The Lord watches over the sojourners.”(146:9) The psalmist also points out that all of us are strangers on earth: “For I am thy passing guest, a sojourner, like all my fathers.” (39:12).

Our Lord Jesus Christ himself was a sojourner too as he was born and died “outside the city gate”. He spent his entire ministry on the road,

and had nowhere to lay his head. But he cared about the poor, the outcast, the sick, the marginalized and the deprived in the community. He taught us to follow his example to serve others in particular those in need but not to be served.

One theologian Gordon Mursell says, “For Christians, it is only through the sheer graciousness of God in Christ, redeeming us and making us God’s children, that we can see ourselves and one another as strangers no longer: “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God.” (Eph.2:19, as quoted from *Praying in Exile*)

*Follow, go to page 4*

**Keynote address of the Rt. Rev Paul Kwong to the participants of the National Conference of Service Providers for Migrant Workers**

**Inspiration.** Rt. Rev. Paul Kwong addressed the participants of the conference with an engaging keynote. Dean Andrew Chan of the St. John’s Cathedral looked on.



*Fulfilling the vow to serve migrant  
workers in Hong Kong*


# Maryknoll Mission in Asia with Migrants held in HK

Fifteen Maryknoll Fathers and Sister, together with their Lay leaders in Asia and the Pacific called Maryknoll Mission in Asia with Migrants (MMAM) met from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> of November at Maryknoll Stanley in Hong Kong. They have discussed migration and globalization, the importance of knowing the rights of migrant workers and the spirituality that can be shared as they journey with the migrants. Ms. Cynthia Ca Abdon-Tellez, Director of the Mission for Migrant Workers, Mr. Jack Clancey, a solicitor and the Chairperson of Asian Human Rights Council in Hong Kong and Sr. Hilda Buhay of the Benedictine Order from St. Scholastica's College provided the inputs.

Areas represented were Japan, Taiwan, Korea, Hong Kong, and the Philippines. Common trends in migration, condition

and situation of migrants and their countries of origin were identified after a brief sharing of each country situation. Issues of particular importance were grouped together to determine what needs to be addressed and points that might be included in a statement to circulate in the Maryknoll world.

A statement of concern signed by the participants to stop extra-judicial killings in the Philippines will be proposed to the Global ministry office of the Maryknoll in the US.

Fr. Joy Tajonera, the Coordinator, and Sr. Marilu Limgenco and Fr. Tom Danaher, the team who prepared for this meeting were succeeded through an election by Fr. Regis Ging as coordinator based in Japan, and a team to plan for the next gathering. 

**The Mission For Migrant Workers (Hong Kong) Society, Limited**  
St. John's Cathedral, 4 Garden Road,  
Central, Hong Kong SAR  
CHINA

---



---



---



---



**MIGRANT FOCUS**

Migrant Focus is a monthly publication of The Mission For Migrant Workers in Hong Kong (Hong Kong) Society, Limited

Editorial Team

Cynthia Ca. Abdon-Tellez,  
Norman Uy Carnay, Jun  
Tellez, Fr. Dwight dela  
Torre

Contributors

Edwina Antonio-Santoyo,  
Vicky Cabantac, Rey Asis

Address

St. John's Cathedral,  
4 Garden Road,  
Central, Hong Kong SAR

Tel No. (852) 25228264

Fax No. (852) 25262894

E-mail

mission@migrants.net

Webpage

<http://www.migrants.net>

*Articles and/or graphics in  
this issue may be  
reproduced without  
permission provided full  
credit is given  
to the Mission for Migrant  
Workers (MFMW).*

Your support will be most appreciated. You can issue cheques paid to:  
The Mission for Filipino  
Migrants Workers (HK)  
Society (Donation of HK\$100  
or more is tax deductible.)

