



This month we are celebrating International Women's Day. We salute all women who have given great contribution to society.


In many countries, the status of women is very low. Women in countries like the Philippines, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Thailand and India are often victims of abuses, discrimination and exploitation. Women are being deprived of what is due to them. Because of the lack of opportunities and jobs in these countries, many Asian women are forced to look for work overseas to earn and to give a decent living to their families.

According to the International Organization for Migration, in 2005, women comprise 49.6 per cent of the total number of migrant workers all over the world. In Hong Kong, 90% of migrants are women and work as domestic helpers.

The situation of women migrant workers in Hong Kong is not a pretty picture. Many cases of physical and sexual violence are reported to us and to other service-providers.

Women migrant workers also experience various forms of discrimination. The most controversial issue among Hong Kong migrant women is the New Conditions of Stay (NCS). This policy has long been criticized in local and international levels. Recently, the committee for the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) has declared the NCS as discriminatory. However, the Hong Kong government has yet to address this concern.

Migrant women in Hong Kong continue to cry against problems of wages, working and living conditions, job security and benefits, and health services. Additionally, women are also victimized by human trafficking, usually sex trafficking.

The empowerment of women migrant workers has a long way to go. But with more and more organizations and unions of migrant women standing up against the problems of forced migration, the hope gets brighter. With more and more victims transformed into women empowered, the celebration of International Women's Day becomes more meaningful. 

## Protest against POEA guidelines marks International Women's Day in action of Filipinos in HK

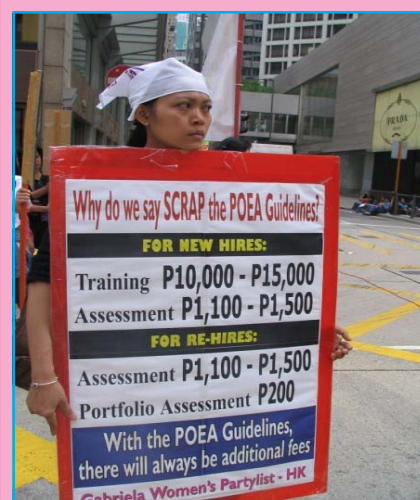
ABOUT A THOUSAND Filipino domestic helpers took to the streets to commemorate the International Women's Day with a protest against the POEA guidelines.

Organized by the Gabriela Women's Partylist Hong Kong Chapter, the campaign sought for the scrapping of the unjust policy which is actually a perfect ploy for extortion by the government and unscrupulous recruiters.

P10,000 to P15,000 TESDA training cost plus P200 portfolio assessment assure government of an income on top of the P18,000 that new household service workers need to pay before leaving for work abroad, according to Cynthia Abdon-Tellez, GWP-HK chairperson.

The workers challenged the Philippine government to issue a new set of guidelines for the US\$400 minimum wage as the scrapping of placement fee. These should not be packaged with the training and assessment that require additional charges from the applicants.

Certainly, the protest march was a fitting celebration of the historic International Women's Day when migrant women resist unjust policies and work for their empowerment, Tellez concluded. - APMM News Digest



## ATKI HOLDS 4<sup>th</sup> GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The Association of Indonesian Migrant Workers (ATKI) held its 4<sup>th</sup> General Assembly on 4 March 2007 in City University, Kowloon Tong.

Carrying the theme “Expand and Strengthen ATKI-HK! Build the Indonesian Migrant Movement in Hong Kong”, the assembly was attended by more than 110 members plus around 30 guests coming from Indonesian migrant organizations in Hong Kong and in Macau, local organizations, advocates and supporters of migrants.


The main speaker was Ade Ahmad from The Institute for National and Democratic Study (INDIES). He updated the migrants regarding the current condition of Indonesia and the impact of natural disasters and price hikes to poor people. He likewise emphasized the intensification of the Indonesian government to privatize and liberalize the goods and services in Indonesia. This condition leaves Indonesian people with no choice but to work overseas and, unfortunately, it is the government who facilitates this labor export.

The second guest speaker was Mr. Apo Leung from Asian Monitor Research Centre (AMRC) who shared the current situation of Hong Kong and the impact to migrant workers. He mentioned that the Hong Kong government does not fight and protect the welfare of workers in Hong Kong, but rather is just very ambitious to create Hong Kong as an investment spot.



The chairperson of ATKI, Eni Lestari presented the chairperson report and activities. Eni pointed that in the past 2 years ATKI learned a lot of different experiences in organizing and building the movement of Indonesian migrant workers in Hong Kong. The finance report was presented by the Treasurer, Sulasmi, which was followed by discussion of the general plan of action presented by ATKI's vice chairperson, Sri Utami. Utami pointed that aside from expansion as one of ATKI's strength in the past two years, consolidation and the increase of political awareness of members is now one of the major challenges that ATKI faces.

To entertain the participants, different progressive cultural presentations such as karaoke singing, community singing and guitar were interspersed in between the program.

The new officers elected are Eni Lestari as chairperson, Sri Utami as vice chairperson, Wiwin Warsiating as secretary, Karsiwen as deputy secretary and Romlah Rosidah as treasurer. 


## Asian migrants support local workers demand for minimum wage

In solidarity and as expression of support to the issue of local workers, the AMCB (Asian Migrants Coordinating Body) joined a demonstration of local organizations and trade unions calling for the legislation of the minimum wage of HK\$30 per hour for local workers.

Led by the Alliance on Minimum Wage, the alliance of local organizations, the rally was attended by more than 400 local and 100 migrants from the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand. The march started at Victoria Park then proceeded to march towards the Central Government Office.

In front of the CGO, a short program was organized presenting different speakers including representative from AMCB. The local unions and associations mentioned how many local workers suffer from low wages. Workers in Wellcome and Park n' Shop supermarkets and Mac Donald's receive only HK\$15 average per hour.

The AMCB representative emphasized that the migrant's presence that day was to support the campaign of local workers in calling the government to legislate minimum wage because migrants themselves are part of local workers.

Toward the end of the program, the Alliance handed a petition to a representative of the Hong Kong Government. 




## MFMW holds seminar on HIV/AIDS

Through the sponsorship of Mission Movers under the Mission for Filipino Migrant Workers (MFMW), a health seminar concerning HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) was successfully conducted on the 28<sup>th</sup> of January 2007, held at the Fanny Li hall of St. John's Cathedral.

At least 30 migrant workers attended, majority of who are women, from different migrant organizations in Hong Kong. The said seminar aimed to provide education such as knowledge of the disease, prevention, family impacts, and HIV-related services, programs and institutions where they can seek guidance and assistance.

The Director of the St. John's HIV Center Elijah Fung was the resource person for the two hour session.

This seminar is part of a series of forums and activities under the Pastoral Care and Social Welfare program of the MFMW. 

# It's Election time again!

Election fever is once again gripping the Philippines! I write this in Cagayan de Oro, Philippines under pressure of a deadline. As I recall:

\* On 1 March my wife and I took the earliest Philippine Airlines flight (5:10AM) from Manila to Cagayan de Oro City in Northern Mindanao. We purposely requested for the last seats because I know, once we reach CGY/CDO, the rear door is always opened for disembarkation. Our seat numbers were the first called to board and it was not until we have settled down that we recognized one passenger. I spotted Senator Joker Arroyo. When we disembarked in CDO, we came to know Senators Sotto and Oreta were also with us on the same flight. They were in their Mindanao campaign league. Later that day, Chavit Singson was reported to have given money to some participants as prize money in some variety show, an act prohibited by Philippine election law. The above-mentioned, are administration candidates.

\* Students from Philippine Normal University denounced the military for openly accusing some partylists of being communist fronts while the most economically depressed areas in Metro

Manila were saturated with heavily armed military officers and men, allegedly part of their civic-military relations. Later on after vigorous objections from the citizenry, they roamed the areas unarmed.

\* Bayan Muna Partylist candidate Satur Ocampo was arrested and detained for allegedly having been involved in multiple murder charges. Many believe they were fabricated and that Rep. Ocampo is a victim of abuse of power and political repression.

\* The old Commission on Elections (COMELEC) building was razed to the ground. The old COMELEC building housed the documents pertaining to a number of election protests.

\* On the issue of the American Congress conducting an investigation of the continuing extra-judicial killings in the Philippines, administration senatorial candidate Prospero Pichay accuses the US of interference.

\* HK-based PERC, in a survey conducted among expatriate businesspersons in South East Asia, has identified the Philippines as the most corrupt nation in the region. Mrs. Arroyo of course downplayed the result saying it was using




old data. Meanwhile, in the latest Social Weather Station survey, more Metro Manilans (53%) are dissatisfied with how Mrs. Arroyo is running the country.

I talked with fish vendors, taxi, jeepney and tricycle drivers informally. I asked them about the coming elections. Some are keeping their options open. Many said, they will pick from the brightest and the best from all parties. But many more are cynical: "They are all the same." "They are just good during campaign periods." "I wouldn't waste my time voting for anyone of them." One was willing to sell his vote to the highest bidder.

Such are their reactions. A sad testimony to the feelings of the people.

But hope still rests with progressive candidates. If electoral fraud doesn't rule, they and the people stand a good chance of promoting politics of change.

Pray and work for a clean and honest elections!

Pray and work for the greater good of the country! 


## ALLIANCE OF INDIGENOUS MIGRANT WORKERS HOLD LITERARY/MUSICAL SHOW

Rhymes & Rhythms, a literary/musical show for a cause, organized by the CORALL (Cordillera Alliance) was held at Chater Road, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of February 2007.

Its purpose was to raise funds for conducting a medical relief mission in some indigent communities in the Cordillera region, at the same time showcasing the talents of its members.

Various organizations under and outside the alliance enthusiastically performed their presentations through singing, dancing, acting, and delivering poems entertaining the more than 300 audience.

Throughout the day, the campaign for the total scrapping of the POEA pre-qualification, campaign against the resumption of Lafayette Mining Co. in favor of the communities in Rapu-rapu Bohol, stopping the political killings in the Philippines, and the campaign for Gabriela Women's Party List in the coming election have been continuously promoted.

The program ended with all the performers singing "BEBSAT", a song derived from the Mountain Province, extolling the importance of unifying every Cordilleran for the protection of their land and culture. The whole day event was indeed successful. 



## The Story of Marivic

Being a migrant is not new for Marivic. She had worked in Singapore in 1997 and decided to go home in 1999 to get married. Life is not easy for Marivic after surviving her marriage as a battered wife for three years. She was five months pregnant when she decided to leave her abusive husband and go back to her parents in Abra.


Having two toddlers to feed, Marivic went to Manila and worked as a housemaid for five months but her income is not enough for them to survive.

She then decided to apply for work here in Hong Kong through her second cousin who runs a recruitment agency. Just like other migrants, she paid a huge amount of money for placement fee to enable her to acquire a work visa in Hong Kong. After one week in her work, Marivic's contract was terminated by the employer and all her money and passport were taken by the cousin who promised to find her another employer. Confident that her relative is going to help her, she followed her cousin's advice and was taken to China to wait for her visa as she was hired by another employer.

After her visa was released, she came back to Hong Kong to start work for her new employer. Her cousin took her passport and used it to secure a loan for \$15,000.00 as payment for her expenses and her placement fee. After a month, her employer terminated her contract because of the loan and telephone calls from the people whom her cousin borrowed money from. When the employer compensated her, all her money was taken by her cousin again.

Her cousin then advised Marivic to overstay. Her cousin promised that she can help her find work. One time she was taken to this flat where her cousin arranged her to work but when she arrived the guy started kissing and harassing her. She then ran away and went to China because of fear that she was being sold by her cousin.

Marivic filed a case against her cousin. She was asked by other people why she has to file claims against her cousin instead of just talking it over since they are relatives. She replied "*Pera ang tingin sa akin at hindi tao*" (I am seen as money, not as a person)

She said life must go on as long as there's a reason to live for - her family. Marivic vows to stand up against the exploitation done to her. 



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**MIGRANT FOCUS**

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