



## Grassroots migrants and refugees gather to challenge GFMD

Nearly 50 foreign delegates from countries in Europe, Asia Pacific, Middle East, Africa and the Americas, gathered in the 2nd International Assembly of Migrants and Refugees (IAMR2).

The IAMR2, jointly organized by the International Migrants Alliance (IMA), Migrante International, IBON International, Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants (APMM) and the Union of Working People (UWP – Greece), calls on greater unity of migrants and refugees around the world against the onslaught of the global financial crisis and the further deprivation of rights of migrants brought about by the neoliberal policies imposed on migration.

The IAMR2 was held and attended by grassroots migrants in contrast with the 3rd Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) sponsored by governments and supported by the OECD and World Bank.

The GFMD is a forum of governments outside of the United Nations framework to talk about migration. This is the third forum



since its introduction in 2007. It also holds every forum a day for Civil Society Dialogue (CSD) where the GFMD “meets” with civil society groups. Interestingly, the CSD is dominated by non-migrant organizations and not of grassroots migrants themselves.

Both IAMR2 and the GFMD were simultaneously held within the period of November 1-4, 2009 in Athens, Greece.

In their declaration, the IAMR2 rejected the GFMD as it “merely serves as a venue for governments

to make bargains and exchange quid pro quos in the service of their narrow and short-sighted interests at the expense of rights and welfare of migrants and refugees and their families”.

The IAMR2 denounced the connivance of sending and receiving governments in commodifying migrant workers by depressing their wage and benefits and “marketing them like low value commodities” resulting to depression of wage levels globally.



# Indonesian Migrant Workers Celebrated Idul Fitri 2009


Sunday, 11 October 2009. PILAR (United Indonesians Against Overcharging) and GAMMI (Indonesian Migrant Muslim Alliance) celebrated the Muslim New Year or "Gebyar Idul Fitri" in Central Lawn of Victoria Park, Causeway Bay.

According to Eni Lestari, Coordinator of PILAR, this is one of their annual activities since 2006. Beyond the celebration, it aimed to create and strengthen the unity among various organizations of Indonesian migrant workers which is growing in number. As reported by the Hong Kong Immigration Department, Indonesian migrant workers have reached 129,000 dramatically in September 2009 taking over Filipino migrant workers which previously was the biggest population of domestic

workers for many years in Hong Kong.

This year, the two alliances organized competitions like Booth Design with the theme "Our Dream House" using recyclable and cheap materials and Migrant Song competitions using original composition from issues and reality of life of being foreign domestic workers.

Speeches were given by different leaders of alliances who were asked to participate in the celebration. Edwina Santoyo of the Bethune House Migrant Women's Refuge was also in attendance.

It was concluded by a parade around Causeway Bay showcasing the Indonesian culture to everyone. 


## Bethune House Joins Charity Bazaar

It was an opportunity for Bethune House to participate in the charity bazaar sponsored by the Chinese International School on 15 November 2009 at its school grounds in Braemar Hill, Hong Kong.

Goods for sale by Bethune House were Christmas cards handcrafted by the residents themselves in addition to bracelets, necklaces and coffee beans from the Philippines.

Other charity institutions invited in the bazaar offered food, second-hand books and clothes.


The charity bazaar is an annual activity of the school to help charity groups and institutions in raising needed funds for their welfare programs.

It was also a time for the various charities to learn of each other's programs and activities. 

## Lawyers Hold Community Service at Bethune House

They are full time lawyers. They spend most of their time attending to legal cases inside their airconditioned office in Central district of HK. However, they provide pro-bono service to charities with their legal expertise. One day they visited Bethune House and offered to donate paints and do the re-painting themselves.

Eleven members of the Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer law firm arrived on 16 October ready to do the job together with some of the residents in the shelter.

According to Thai McDonalds of Freshfields, they appreciated the opportunity to help BH out with the painting. Bethune House on the other hand, would like to thank Freshfields for their contribution and the time they spent at the shelter. 

# HERSORY

## Putting a Face to the Case

### Stories of Suffering, Struggle and Success

# The Story of Suwarni

Suwarni, called by many as Nani, is a 25 year old woman from Central Java, Indonesia.

Her father is a farmer while her mother is a housewife. Being the eldest of three children, Nani feel responsible in helping her parents or at least the education of her youngest sister.

In August 2008, she got employed again to a family of three, the husband and wife and their three yearsold daughter. She was tasked to take care of two dogs as well as do general household chores like cooking, cleaning, laundry and baby sitting.

But from the first month of her pay day, she was only receiving salary in installment

and was always given late. This went on for eight months.


On 21 January 2009 she insisted that she must get her salary but to no avail. She was promised by her employer but until March of 2009 she was not given her salary.

She felt pressured that she could not assure her sister about the money she can send for her sister's tuition and daily allowance in going to school. She was torn between terminating her contract or continuing to be patient with her employer. Terminating her contract would mean that she will have to go to the ordeal of stating all the facts and details of the situation and she does not know

how long it takes to finish everything and if it will be in her favor. She will also need to look for an employer and yet she was not so sure if the Immigration will consider her application for change of employment. Nani decided to terminate.

With the help of Bethune House and the Mission For Migrant Workers Ltd., Suwarni filed a claim of non-payment of wages at the Labour Department in May. The total sum of her monetary claim amounted to HK\$14,760.00. The court decided that Suwarni should be paid by her former employer in installment basis within six months but on the first month she did not receive any payment. She went to

the Labour Department to inform them and was advised to file an ex gratia payment under the insolvency fund. She applied for legal aid assistance at the Legal Aid Department and is now waiting for the result.

The Immigration Policy of Two Week Rule for foreign domestic workers in Hong Kong required Suwarni to prove that she was a victim of the irresponsibility of her employer before she could be allowed to process a new employment contract. She submitted her application for the new employment contract to the Immigration. After two interviews, she was told that she could get her working visa next week. 

OUR FAITH,  
OUR  
STRUGGLE



# Isabelo de los Reyes, Sr: Patriot and Father of Philippine Movement

Isabelo de los Reyes was born on 7 July 1864. He was sent to a grammar school run by the Augustinian friars in Vigan for his elementary education. At 16, he earned his BA from the Collegio de San Juan de Letran and earned his law degree from University of Sto. Tomas in 1886 at the age of 22 – three years short of the minimum requirement to practice law.

The acerbic pen of Isabelo did not bode well with the Spanish authorities in the Philippines both civil and religious. He was critical of the huge haciendas of the religious orders. He demanded agrarian reform. He was branded a filibustero (traitor).

Isabelo was implicated with the 1896 revolution. In January 1887-- a few days after Rizal's execution -- Guardias Civil entered his house in the middle of the night without warrant. He was arrested --- at his dying wife's bedside --- without court

order. He was imprisoned without due process, held incommunicado in solitary confinement without benefit of counsel and detained for five months at the Bilibid Prison in Muntinlupa. While in prison, his sick wife died. He was not permitted to attend his wife's burial nor was he allowed to see his children.

He was deported to Spain in leg irons, and held prisoner another five months in the notorious Montjuich prison in Barcelona – all without trial or conviction of any crime. He was a victim of other men's torture, for it was Malacañang's policy to torture prisoners until they signed dictated confessions implicating other persons. Isabelo had been falsely implicated by the forced confession of a 60-year old Filipino priest beaten into submission in the Vigan Seminary.

At the conclusion of the Pact of Biak-na-Bato on December 14-15, 1897, Isabelo was released.

He was given a job as Consejero del Ministerio de Ultramar (Counselor of the Ministry of Colonies) in Madrid. By that time the Spanish-American war was raging in the West Indies and eventually in the Philippines. He was with the Ministerio until 1901.

Isabelo left Madrid for the Philippines in October 1901. Among the books he carried with him was one by Marx, most probably the first copy ever brought to the Philippines. Manila Times, considered the mouthpiece of American business interest in the Philippines, denounced him as a dangerous agitator and anarchist. His planned publication of a newspaper, *El Defensor de Filipinas* and the establishment of a political party, Partido Nacionalista, were both expectedly prohibited by the Americans.

On 2 February 1902 the Democratic Union of Lithographers, Printers, Bookbinders and other Workers – soon shortened

by the press to Union Obrera Democratica, was organized with Isabelo as President. This was the first labour union in the Philippines. Union membership swept Manila and its neighboring towns like wildfire.

Hundreds of UOD unionistas joined the American Independence Day Parade on 4 July 1902 at the Luneta. The UOD had floats carrying the pictures of Washington and Rizal. Union members marching under their own sections, carried placards with slogans like, "Liberty and Justice", "Respect for Individual Rights", "Universal Suffrage" "No Slavery", and "Pay the worker well and he'll work his whole life for you." This was a bold, calculated and necessary move. It was an assertion of the workers' loyalty to the American regime, yet reminded America that Filipinos still aspired for freedom -- despite the fact that on 4 November 1901, The Philippine Commission, passed the Anti-Sedition



Law which prescribed long prison terms for anyone advocating independence from America through whatever means.

The UOD's participation in that 4th of July parade had such an impact that the following day, non-union workers of El Oriente, a cigarette factory, walked out demanding higher wages. 700 were laid off. Other factories so threatened responded with lockouts. The Philippine Tobacco Company discharged 1,000 workers. The Tabacalera Company which began in 1880 as a Royal Grant and from which Hacienda Luisita in Tarlac was formed, 2,500. Germinal, 1,000; Insular, 700. The strikes and lock-outs continued that by the end of the month, 100,00 workers were either on strike or locked-out.

While the workers struggled for better wages and better working conditions, de los Reyes and others, were also very much involved in the struggle for the rights and dignity of the Filipino clergy – a commitment began in Spain. After all means for redress have been exhausted to rectify the injustices committed against the Filipino clergy, de los Reyes,

at a meeting of the Union Obrera Democratica at the Centro del Bellas Artes, in Azcarraga Street, Manila, finally declared on 3rd August 1902, a church independent from Rome: the Iglesia Filipina Independiente or the Philippine Independent Church more popularly known as the Aglipayan Church – after its first Supreme Bishop, Gregorio Aglipay.


Isabelo de los Reyes, Sr. was arrested on 16th August 1902 and charged with criminal offence against the peace and dignity of the state. The prosecution failed to present evidence of threats and so changed its charge to labor conspiracy! He acted as his own counsel and asked for delay to produce witnesses. His request was denied. His argument that the demand for 10% wage increase was not abusive was also rejected. He was convicted on 29 August and was sentenced to four months imprisonment under Article 543 of the Spanish Penal Code.

The American press in the Philippines gloated over his arrest and imprisonment. The Union and the strikes were seen as results of de los Reyes' misguided and sinister

handiwork. The Manila American called the Union Obrera Democratica "Katipunan in disguise!" The Manila Freedom claimed the strikes were supported by insurrectos out to destroy American and foreign interests. The Manila Times, called the Union's members "misguided by the will-o-the-wisp notions of Isabelo de los Reyes."

De los Reyes resigned from the Union Obrera Democratica on 3 September and was replaced by Dr. Dominador Gomez. His last presidential act was to have the books of the Union audited before turning over the reigns to the new union president. The Union Obrera Democratica was finally dissolved on 29 May 1903.

He entered politics and ran and served as a councilor of Manila from 1912-1919. In 1922 he ran for and won a seat at the Philippine senate as an independent candidate. He served until 1928.

Upon his retirement from politics he devoted his time with the Iglesia Filipina Independiente. He suffered a stroke and became bedridden until his death on 10 October 1938. 

# Macau Labour Secretary to meet MMRN

## MACAU CORNER

Macau's Labour Affairs Bureau Director Shuen Ka Hung agreed to meet representatives of the Macau Migrants Rights Network (MMRN) on November 19 to discuss the latter's concern on the recently approved Migrants Bill. He is the first Macau official to willingly discuss the matter with the migrant workers on the said issue.

The MMRN is composed of migrant organizations

and their advocates of different nationalities. It is a loose network that upholds the rights and welfare of migrant workers in Macau. The MFMW and the Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants are members of the network.

Recently, it led a campaign against the anti-migrant provisions in the Migrants Bill. The Bill has been published in the Official Gazette on October 27 and will take effect six months after. There are still anti-migrant provisions in the said Bill.

MMRN will take the issue up with the Labour Affairs Director, in particular: to request clarification on just cause if a migrant employee wishes to terminate his/



Members of the Macau Migrants Rights Network (MMRN) during the candle-light vigil last September to signify their protest against the proposed anti-migrant bills.

her contract; to include regulations on the conduct of placement agencies; and to lobby to exempt at least employers of domestic workers from the levy; among others.

In related developments, Migrante Macau had a

meeting on November 8 to assess the campaign against the Bill. At the same time, the Association of Indonesian Migrant Workers in Macau (ATKI-Macau) held a forum on the same subject on November 22. Both are members of MMRN. 

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The conference also condemned the "racist and anti-migrant" policies of the European Union namely the EU Return Directive that seeks to "manage" migration. This policy is targeting to criminalize and deport some 12 million undocumented migrants in the EU countries.


Through the nine workshops simultaneously held during the IAMR2,

participants discussed a wide array of issues that concerned migrants and refugees: from the concrete impacts of the crisis to the women question, from racism and xenophobia to the concrete issues of the undocumented, exploring the processes within the UN system and the actual gains from developing movements of migrants and refugees. Resolutions were drafted, deliberated and approved during the plenary.

Meanwhile, the IAMR2 successfully concluded its 4-day conference with a 5,000-strong protest march from the Syntagma Square near the Greek Parliament building to the place where the GFMD was being held. The IAMR2 marchers however failed to reach the GFMD site as a 1,000-strong army of antiriot police in full battle gears blocked them.

Finally, the participants vowed to continue to

fight for the rights and welfare of migrants and refugees amidst the global financial crisis.

They committed themselves to further strengthen their solidarity, advance the rights of women migrants, to fight against the criminalization of undocumented migrants, and to protest the neoliberal policies of the GFMD as they pledged to attend the third IAMR next year in Mexico. 

At the YMCA in Tsim Sha Tsui, from November 2nd-6th, 2009 the Office of the United Nations Anglican Observer held the first Consultation on Human-Trafficking in Hong Kong, to address the growing epidemic that is silently terrorizing hundreds of thousands of women and children across the globe everyday.

Around 40 people were invited to the conference, ranging from trafficking experts, to clergy, to young adult women delegates who had previously attended meetings of the annual U.N. Commission on the Status of Women in New York. Delegates to the consultation included Anglicans from 12 provinces – Korea, Japan, Philippines, England, Canada, USA, Mexico, Kenya, North India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Hong Kong.

The delegates delivered country reports utilizing research in the U.S. State Department’s TIP (Trafficking in Persons) reports and other sources. According to the June 2009 TIP report, the U.N.’s International Labor Organization “estimates that there are at least 12.3 million adults and children in forced labor, bonded labor, and commercial sexual servitude at any given time. Of these victims, at least 1.39 million are victims of commercial sexual servitude, both transnational and within countries, and 56 percent of all forced labor victims are women and girls.”

The insatiable demand for



# United Nations Anglican Observer Human Trafficking Conference

*Maegan Collier*

sex with children is not something that can be easily digested, yet it is increasing with magnitude daily. The human-trafficking industry is a multi-billion dollar trade with numbers steadily rising and no decline in sight. In varying degrees and circumstances, men, women and children all over the world are victims of what has become a modern day slave trade. As one of the fastest growing

criminal activities in the world, trafficking in persons results in serious breaches of human rights and dignity of human beings.

During the conference there were three international trafficking experts including Mark Capaldi, deputy director of ECPAT International, based in Thailand (ECPAT stands for End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and

Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes), Ohnmar Ei Ei Chaw, the national project coordinator of the U.N. Inter-Agency Project (UNIAP) on Human Trafficking in Myanmar, and Amalee Rae McCoy of Bangkok, the UNICEF regional child protection consultant for East Asia and the Pacific.

In between the  
*Trafficking, go to p. 8*

# MICHAELMAS FAIR 2009!


The Mission for Migrant Workers Ltd. participated in the Annual Michaelmas Fair sponsored by St. John's Cathedral. The Michaelmas Fair has been put on every year since 1946 for local charities.

The Fair offers fun and games, entertainment, gifts and shopping for adult and children alike.

The Fair provided all sorts including traditional 'White Elephant' picks, second hand books, theatre and costume jewellery, flowers and plants, handicrafts, home produce, bric-a-

brac, CDs records and magazines, face painting, crazy hair which the Mission and its volunteers usually managed. There were hot and cold foods, wine, beer and coffee and lots of games for children with good prizes.

Entertainment was provided by different students and schools and groups by way of playing musical instruments and dancing.

One of the highlights of the fair was the raffle draw with lots of very expensive prizes. Congratulations to all the winners! 




**On the evening of the 24th of December, the Bethune House invites everyone who would like to celebrate the spirit of Christmas with the residents. If you would like to bring gifts, please call 25371333 or 27213119.**

*Trafficking, from p. 7*

presentations given by these experts, were heart-breaking personal stories told by people working through churches, and best practices in response to trafficking. Edwina Antonio, Executive Director of the Bethune House Migrant Women's Refuge, gave a presentation on the services that are provided to domestic helpers in distress in Hong Kong.

As an intern, I was asked to give a presentation including personal stories from victims who have encountered abuses and who became residents at the Bethune House. The purpose for this five-day conference was to create

awareness of the escalating issue and to form strategies on how to go forward and combat this global crisis by working together with NGO's, faith-based organizations, the United Nations, and government agencies.

As the conference came to a close, an exhausted but hopeful group of people joined together in a farewell service and said good-bye to each other with promises of future consultations, and an assurance that this is not an end but only the beginning of what will be a battle we must undertake together for the rights and safety of the countless victims of this monstrous crime of human-trafficking. 



## MIGRANT FOCUS

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