



## SEASON'S GREETINGS!

**C**hristmas is a festive season for thanksgiving and an occasion for sharing our blessings. While there are many who are blessed with good employers, there are also those who are forced to leave their employment due to human rights and employment contract violations and are now temporarily accommodated in shelters awaiting outcome of their labor cases.

At this time of the year, we long for our families and friends back home. We wish that we are with them to express the spirit of Christmas through gift giving and listening to Christmas carols.

It is for this reason that every year, the Bethune House Migrant Women's Refuge, together with The Mission For Migrant Workers, makes it a point to organize Christmas and New Year's parties for its residents and those migrants who do not have a place to go. What ever our situation, whether we have resources, we ensure that Bethune House is open to those who needs to be with fellow migrants at this time of the year.

We invite you to join us on 24 and 31 December from 8:00PM – 12:30AM. We are very please to have you with us, have fun and enjoy the camaraderie.

We wish you all a blessed Christmas and a Peaceful 2009! 

*May the spirit of the seasons bring you love as we all strive and work for peace based on justice!*



## 2nd Consultation of Service Providers

The Second National Consultation of Service Providers was held on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 2008 at the Fanny Li Hall of St. John's Cathedral in Central. It set as a theme, "Enhance cooperation for better services and advocacy for migrants in Hong Kong." It was attended by 30 individuals representing service institutions, local support groups, grassroots organizations and observers.

It was practically an assessment of what has happened for the past two years after the first NCSP was held in November 2006.

The Consultation opened with a message from The Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui Archbishop Paul Kwong which was read by Fr. Dwight dela Torre.

The Dean of St. John's Cathedral, The Very Reverend Andrew Chan, gave the keynote address.

A panel of speakers capturing the two years' cooperative activities of the network of Service Providers and examples of individual institution's efforts for cooperative activities were presented. Ms. Cynthia Abdon Tellez of the MFMW gave a rundown of the accomplishments of the network in the areas of Capacity-Building and Networking for Better Service Provision, Enhancing Education Work, and Advocacy and Lobbying.

She narrated the coordination work that members of the network conducted stating the strengths and weaknesses of the network. Sr. Felicitas Nisperos, RGS, Directress of the Diocesan Pastoral Centre for Filipinos at the Catholic Centre and Ms. Elijah Fung, Manager of St. John's Cathedral's HIV Education Centre gave their distinct experiences in addressing the issues confronted in their ministry alongside migrant workers.

Ms. Eni Lestari, one of the Spokespersons of the Asian Migrants Coordinating Body, a grassroots alliance of migrants in Hong Kong, presented the current situation and trends on migration. The condition that migrants face and will face, she said, are the challenges that service providers have to respond to.


She expressed that the current global recession will bring problems for migrants especially to their wage and job security. She underscored the Two-Week Rule in Hong Kong as an aggravating condition for this problem.

As Chairperson of the International Migrants' Alliance, Ms. Lestari argued that the hardships for migrants will not only come from the HK government but also from governments of sending countries such as the Philippines and Indonesia who will also get hit by the economic crunch. Finally, she expounded on the Global Forum on Migration and Development as being the

newest tool that shall impact the trends of the policies on migrant workers and migration.

The presentation was followed by an open forum and eventually, participants broke into three workshop groups to further deepen the discussion and come up with a plan of actions.

A flowchart of the NCSPs clearly stating the kind of specific services provided by each was approved for dissemination especially for the newly arriving migrant workers such as in the New Arrivals Kit of the International Social Service at the airport. A common educational training to be pursued was agreed to be launched among service providers to level the understanding and strengthen the concerted efforts and create one voice in support of the ethnic minorities in Hong Kong.

Details of the resolutions will be detailed in the next meetings of the Coalition in early 2009. 

Migrant workers are victorious knowing that levy was suspended for 5 years. This is a closer step to the call for the total abolition of levy imposed to employers of foreign domestic helper.

The Asian Migrants' Coordinating Body (AMCB), the biggest grassroots alliance of migrant workers from the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Nepal and Sri Lanka convey their efforts to the migrant movement in Hong Kong who consistently struggle for Wage Increase, Services, Employment protection and workers Rights (WISER) in Hong Kong.

Suspending the levy that has been a burden to both employers and FDWs is one way to ease the situation that migrant workers are experiencing and the condition that they are going to face when the global financial crisis intensifies next year.

We were victorious, because Hong Kong government was forced to abandon its 2 years suspension of the levy and made a counter proposal to the Legislative Council for a five year suspension in order to get the support of the majority of the legislators.

Hong Kong government knows by then that migrant workers, employers and many legislators were resolute to call for the abolition of the levy. It was threatened to the overwhelming support that migrant workers acquire from the legislators, specifically when Legislator Regina Ip pass a motion to LEGCO to abolish the levy.

Since 2003, migrant workers have been struggling for the abolition of the levy. And our call remains the same until the HK government recognized that the levy is unnecessary and burden to migrant workers and employers.

Since then migrants never stop to press our other demands to the Hong Kong government, especially now that we are facing the great impact of global financial crisis.

As we anticipate the blow of the global financial meltdown which could be one of the worst crises to hit Hong Kong, we in the AMCB asserts the rights of workers, both migrant and local, for



greater job protection, wage increase or better yet the legislation of the minimum wage for all workers.

Migrants will vow to continue to fight to advance our interests as ethnic minorities in Hong Kong. 🇭🻜

## The Cecilians Singers “Christmas by the Sea” Concert – in support of Bethune House

The Cecilian Singers “Christmas by the Sea” is a benefit concert in support of the Bethune House Migrant Women’s Refuge. It was held on 11<sup>th</sup> December, 2008 at 8 pm at the St. John’s Cathedral, Garden Road, Central, Hong Kong.

The Cathedral was jampacked with people who were there not just to listen to the music but to support a worthwhile cause as well as to be with friends in sharing the spirit of Christmas.

The repertoire was a combination of international and non-traditional Christmas carols. According to Carrie Greve, the conductor of the Cecilians singers, “ the choice of music was mainly because we are in HK where there is no snow and yet here in this place by the sea (the South China Sea) the spirit of Christmas is alive and well — in the people, the decorations and of course, the music.”

Edwina Antonio, the Executive Director of Bethune House was invited together with the residents and volunteers to speak about the shelter, and the services it provides to its residents. She also took the opportunity to thank the Cecilians Singers and the good hearted people of Hong Kong for its continued support.

After the concert mince pies and mulled wine were happily bshared by everyone at the Li Hall. 🇭🻜



## HK Migrants Celebrate Their Day thru Protest

With high spirits and strong demands, they marched.

This best described the December 14 mass action led by the Asian Migrants Coordinating Body as they celebrated the International Migrants Day.

Originally slated on December 18, the AMCB commemorated the event on December 14, a Sunday, when most of the migrant workers had their day off and could attend the mass demonstration.

More than 800 Indonesians, Filipinos, Sri Lankans, Thais and Nepalese turned up during the march from Causeway Bay to the HK Central Government Offices as they called for the protection of their wages and job security during the economic crunch.

The AMCB demanded the HK government to create measures to shield local and migrant workers from the impact of the global financial crisis. They likewise demanded for more protection and not be the targets of wage cuts and other repressive policies.

The group vowed to launch more actions to send the message more effectively across while continuing to link up with other migrants, local workers and solidarity friends in Hong Kong.

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

## St. Stephen's Xmas Fete

Every first Saturday of December, St. Stephen's Chapel in Stanley holds its Christmas fete at the St. Stephen's College playground. This annual event raises funds for selected charities, like Crossroads Hong Kong, Rainbow Project, Bethune House Migrant Women's Refuge and a leprosy project in China.

Participating charities sell their wares and all proceeds go to the fete. The fete's highlight is the arrival of Santa Claus by a helicopter. From the Landing Zone, Santa was met by a convertible and driven to his booth where children lined up for a photo session with him. The first time Santa arrived by helicopter, years ago, the chopper landed at the middle of the playground blowing away a number of booths.

Other events were the Dog Show by the HK Police K-9 Unit, the Chinese acrobats and juggling tricks.

The fete was blessed with a very mild and slightly cool weather. St. Stephen's Chapel is a daughter church of St. John's Cathedral.



**MIGRANT FOCUS**

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