



Transient Workers Count Too
DIGNITY OVERDUE

NEWSLETTER

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FOR ALL

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Editorial

Injured Workers and Medical Ethics

For years, Singapore NGOs working with migrant workers have been encountering cases of injured workers on 'short MCs'. These were men whose employers sent them to private doctors who were paid by the employers. The doctors gave them a medical certificate for three days or less of sick leave, although in many cases, when the men went to a 'restructured' (government) hospital, they were given days, weeks, even months more.

Why did these doctors give short MCs? The motivation seems clear: first and foremost, to make the companies' accident records look good. Accidents requiring more than three days of sick leave must be notified to the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) and are recorded. Injuries and deaths to employees while they are working don't do a company's reputation any good, and may count against it in highly competitive tendering processes in the future.

Companies should clearly not seek out the services of private doctors willing to render this service to them: they should focus on educating workers on good safety practices and raising safety standards on site. Workers will still suffer injuries from time to time, and then the priority should be to ensure that they are given the treatment they need – it's the decent thing to do.

As to doctors, their duty is clear, without any ifs or buts: their first responsibility is always to their patients, whoever pays their bills. This means that doctors should assess their patients' need for treatment and recuperation without consideration for any other interests, and give appropriate treatment, advice and MCs.

Both the Humanitarian Organisation for Migration Economics and TWC2 have made specific complaints to the Singapore Medical Council (SMC) about this issue, but so far, those complaints have been rejected.

TWC2 undertook a short survey of injured workers at The Cuff Road Project food programme on Friday, 5th July. We found that 42 out of 150 workers interviewed had received less than four days' MC after being taken to a private clinic or hospital and were subsequently given longer on going to a restructured hospital – not just a few days more, but an average of **94** days leave in total for the same injury. This is a damning indictment of the sordid collusion between some companies and a few private doctors. *Sunday Times* correspondent, Radha Basu, wrote features on the issue on 7th July and 21st July. The *Sunday Times*' editorial on the issue on 13th July was headed 'Callous collusion must be stopped'.

Let's hope that happens. The MOM and Health Ministries sent a reminder to all doctors shortly before the reports appeared that they should give injured workers appropriate medical leave, and on July 11th, sent a message to company personnel dealing with workplace safety and health not to seek to influence doctors to give less sick leave than required. TWC2 can already see, from its latest cases, that further steps will need to be taken and that now is not the time to let the issue drop. Is it too much to ask that the SMC should do more, both for the sake of patients and for that of the standing of the profession it represents, deservedly held in high regard by the public?

Coming soon....

A TWC2 research team has undertaken a survey of workers coming to The Cuff Road Project to find out more about their housing conditions while they are waiting for their cases and claims to be settled. This systematic report, based on interviews with 163 Bangladeshi and Indian workers, will be published in September.

Heartbeat

Heartbeat is TWC2's monthly gathering for volunteers and people interested in volunteering.

The next session is due on Wednesday, 11th September. If you are interested in attending, please let the TWC2 office know.

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Events

July 21st/August 11th: Two graduation ceremonies were held by domestic worker networks recently.

On July 21st, the Filipino Family Network presented graduation certificates to women who had completed courses with it. There were 49 graduates altogether, but some had returned home or found jobs in Hongkong, so their certificates were mailed to them, while 32 received their certificates on the day. Mr Alan L Deniega, Minister and Consul General at the Philippines Embassy, came along and took part in the presentations. He said courses such as those organised by FFN would help to make migration an option, not a necessity for Filipinos in the future.



FFN graduates, with Minister and Consul General Mr Alan L Deniega.

The Indonesian Family Network's graduation ceremony was held at Kampong Ubi on August 11th. 42 domestic workers graduated from IFN's courses this year. The Indonesian ambassador to Singapore, HE Andri Hadi, attended the ceremony. Referring to courses now available in Singapore, he said, "I don't think our friends in the Middle East have this opportunity." The graduates all had their photos taken with the ambassador. During the afternoon, a group of Indonesian women singers performed.

IFN and FFN representatives attended each others' graduation ceremonies. The two networks have cooperated in arranging courses and sharing skills and resources.

TWC2 representatives were present on both occasions, and the society's president, Russell Heng, spoke briefly to the gatherings. The TWC2 participants were moved by the appreciation shown for TWC2's support for the FFN and IFN's educational programmes, as well as to individual TWC2 activists. Both organisations thanked TWC2 social worker, Raymond Ang, and IFN thanked TWC2 Treasurer, Noorashikin Abdul Rahman, for her long term support for its work. TWC2 has helped with providing space for classes and finding resources. Both groups will start a new series of classes in September: domestic workers who would like to find out more may do so via TWC2.

12th August: The Asia Research Institute at the National University of Singapore is an academic institution, but with 'Here Today and Tomorrow', it reached out to a broad audience. On a Monday evening, over 200 people gathered an event held at NTUC Centre. They included students, school students, NGO activists and trade unionists, as well as academics.

The evening began with the showing of the short film, 'Reading Across Worlds' (see article on page nine).

Professor Brenda Yeoh chaired the event, and the main speaker for the evening was Dr Maruja M. B. Asis, of the Scalabrini Migration Center (Philippines). Dr Maruja said that the International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates that there are some 53 million domestic workers worldwide. The overwhelming majority (83 per cent) are women. 41 per cent of domestic workers are in the Asia-Pacific region. She indicated that, out of all the destination countries and regions in the area, Hongkong had the most favourable conditions for domestic workers, with higher salaries than elsewhere, a minimum wage, weekly days off and maternity leave (for workers who have been employed for at least 40 weeks).

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Events *(Continued from Page Three)*

Dr Maruja said that private recruitment agencies are one of the primary factors influencing domestic workers' position. Workers are burdened with high placement charges. Agencies are frequently responsible for opposing the giving of days off, at least during the early employment period, confiscating workers' cellphones, prescribing how workers dress and cutting their hair.

Dr Maruja said that a bright spot on the horizon is the formation of migrant workers' trade unions – the best examples are in Hongkong. Worldwide, there was synergy between unions and migrant workers in securing the passage of ILO Convention 189, on domestic workers. She spoke about the significance of the convention, which she said has now been ratified by 11 countries.

Two commentators also spoke. Dr Noorashikin Abdul Rahman, TWC2's Treasurer, talked about the current position of domestic workers in Singapore and some of the changes there have been in their status over recent years. She said that the introduction of a mandatory day off for domestic workers had not made much difference, citing a December 2012 survey showing that 70 per cent of employers of new domestic workers did not intend to give them days off. This showed the need not only for legislation for change, but also for changing mindsets.

Anthony Chen, Director of the Cannes Film Festival award-winning film, 'Ilo Ilo', spoke briefly about his film and then related how the domestic worker of his childhood was found in the Philippines. He visited her, without publicity. It was heartbreaking to hear what had happened to his 'Auntie Terry'. He remembered her as a stylish woman with a good taste in music. She bought and sent home lots of domestic hardware, but he found her living in the poorest house in her village – a one room dwelling shared with her chickens. She wore one of his mother's old dresses, given to her 15 years earlier. When offered help, all she asked for was a young pig, so that she could go on breeding pigs for sale. He never knew why she left his family, but now he's discovered that it was because she hoped to find a husband while still young enough to have children. Unfortunately, she had an early menopause and was not able to fulfill her wishes. She told him that if she'd known this might happen, she'd have left earlier.

The evening was rounded off with a question and answer session.

Free Showing of Ilo Ilo for Workers and Volunteers

Ilo Ilo was released in Singapore at the end of August. Before that, there were four showings: the official launch, followed by one arranged by TWC2, another showing organized through FAST (Foreign Domestic Worker Association for Skills Training), and one by the Singapore Film Society. The following report is adapted from TWC2's website, where the full report, with more photographs, can be found at: <http://twc2.org.sg/2013/08/26/movie-treat-ilo-ilo/> The film has received praise from a number of quarters for the quality of its dialogue and good acting, as well as an approach that shows everyone as human beings with qualities and flaws, not in simple terms of good and bad.

Happy voices in Bahasa Indonesia and Tagalog filled the lobby of Golden Village Tiong Bahru cinemas on Sunday, 25 Aug 2013, as members of the TWC2 family came together for a screening of *Ilo Ilo*. This first feature film by Singapore director Anthony Chen won the Camera d'Or at Cannes earlier this year in May. It stars well-known Filipina actress Angeli Bayani as Teresa, a domestic worker, Yeo Yann Yann and Chen Tian Wen as the mother and father in the home, and first-time actor Koh Jia Ler as their son.

As in many families in Singapore, the parents are busy with work and the boy is largely left to his own devices, often getting into trouble in school. They hire a domestic worker, which changes the family dynamics at once. The boy resists having her around. She herself is unwittingly caught up in a few family secrets. Meanwhile, her own family presses her to send more money home.

Set as the 1997 Asian financial crisis breaks, it isn't long before the father loses his job. Just when the boy has finally taken to Teresa, the family's finances deteriorate and hard choices have to be made. . . .

Thanks to generous donations from the Lee Foundation and others, TWC2 was able to arrange this screening in advance of the commercial season of *Ilo Ilo*. We booked a hall with about 360 seats at Golden Village, Tiong Bahru, choosing a Sunday, when many domestic workers would have a day off. A complex logistical exercise then followed, with tickets distributed through TWC2's partner organisations, the Indonesian Family Network (IFN) and Filipino Family Network (FFN). In the lead-up to the event, TWC2 treasurer Noorashikin also led outreach activities at places where domestic workers often congregate to distribute information leaflets, complete with free tickets.

Meanwhile, Terence Kek, who volunteers on the 'Discover Singapore' project, was tasked to distribute tickets to male workers on special passes. Without jobs or money, they have very few entertainment options. This was a chance to provide one for them.

Altogether, about 80 percent of the tickets were used to benefit workers, mostly domestic workers. Volunteers, who deserve to be appreciated, and representatives of partner organisations took up the balance of the seats.

Leaders of IFN chose to make final issuance of tickets on the day itself, but there was no space, except the floor . . .



TWC2 also included a voucher redeemable for popcorn and coke for every ticket issued to IFN, FFN and the male workers. Many workers arrived early, and it was fortunate they did, for they had to queue up to get their drink and snack.

At key moments through the film, there were murmurs of recognition. The audience easily identified with the awkward situations or difficulties that the character Teresa faced in adjusting to a new job. "It's really like that," said Nina (name changed) on exit. "I also had difficult time with the children when I first came."

Interestingly, the domestic workers were quick to pick up signals from the body language of the mother and father characters, signals that those of us who aren't domestic workers missed. At a few points, there were chuckles of familiar knowledge from among the domestic workers in the hall, but the volunteers had no clue what they were responding to.

Besides being relevant to their experiences — "I hope the film can be shown in Philippines," suggested a member of the audience — the film was also highly enjoyable. "So funny," said her friend.

It seemed well worth the effort to have an outing like this.

No Access to Maternity Leave

A glimpse into a gap in human rights faced by foreign domestic workers

Have you ever given any thought to an individual's access to maternity leave? Before I started researching on the issue in order to write this article, I hadn't.

Maternity leave is known to play a large role in ensuring the physical and mental health of mothers and their children and in strengthening family bonds. For these reasons, it had always seemed obvious to me that in Singapore, when a woman got pregnant, she would have access to maternity leave.

What I didn't realise was that what I saw as a right for females is, shockingly, something to which foreign domestic workers (*nearly all of whom are women*) still have no access in Singapore.

The human rights issue

How exactly does the lack of access to maternity leave for foreign domestic workers equate to a lack of human rights protection? To start considering this issue, it is imperative to begin by exploring some of Singapore's existing legislation about maternity leave. As almost all Singaporean women have a recognized right to maternity leave (although they may be faced with obstacles while trying to obtain it) I will only be covering legislation that affects foreign workers.

Women covered under the **Employment Act** who have fewer than two living children (*excluding the newborn*) and who have been working for an employer for more than three months are eligible for 12 weeks of maternity leave.

Out of the 12 weeks, the employer will have to pay for the first eight weeks of leave. However, for leave extending beyond the initial eight weeks, payment from the employer is voluntary and will not be reimbursed by the Government.¹

The **Employment Act** covers every employee (regardless of nationality) who is under a contract of service with an employer, **except**:

- a. Any person employed in a managerial or executive position;
- b. Any seaman;
- c. **Any domestic worker**; and
- d. Any person

employed by a Statutory Board or the Government²

As a foreign employee, foreign domestic workers are included in the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act (Chapter 91A)³. This act governs the issuing of work permits and spells out some of the workers' conditions. However, provisions for maternity leave are not included in this act.

It is important to note that the **Employment Act** does not set out to exclude only *foreign* domestic workers. However, as local domestic workers are few these days and are likely to be covered under the Child Development Co-Savings Act⁴, it is basically the 209,600⁵ foreign domestic worker permit holders who find themselves excluded from entitlement to any form of maternity leave.

The right to maternity leave is tied to the reproductive rights of women. Reproductive rights as defined by The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) includes the right to reproductive health, equality and equity for men and women, sexual and reproductive security and **reproductive decision-making**.

Reproductive decision-making includes voluntary choice in marriage, family formation and the determination of the number, timing and spacing of one's children. Also included in the right to reproductive decision-making is the right to have access to the information and means needed to exercise these voluntary choices.⁶

As it stands now, foreign domestic workers must go for mandatory medical examinations. Besides screening for HIV and infectious diseases, pregnancy tests are also conducted. Workers who fail these tests are not allowed to remain in Singapore⁷.

This means that when a foreign domestic worker finds out that she is pregnant, she will be forced to make the difficult decision of whether to keep the baby or her job.

The fear of being sent home and no longer being able to earn a stable income is likely to play a large role in the decision these women eventually make. The lack of other options often makes terminating the pregnancy seem like the 'lesser of two evils' to many a worker.

If these women were allowed access to maternity leave, they would not have to worry about losing their jobs and would also be allowed the freedom to start families as and when they deemed fit.

Considering that female foreign workers employed in other fields are entitled to maternity leave, this is not a decision that discriminates based on the origin of the employee. One then has to wonder why domestic workers were excluded from the act to begin with.

The reason given for not including domestic workers in the Employment Act is one of practicality. *"Given that FDWs work in a home environment and domestic arrangements vary in different households, it is not practical to regulate specific aspects of domestic work as prescribed under the Employment Act, including hours of work, rest day and work on public holidays"*, Mrs Yu-Foo Yee Shoon, Minister of State at the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports, told a UN committee in 2009⁸

With countries like Hongkong, South Africa, Brazil and Argentina including domestic workers in maternity leave entitlements, it is curious to see that Singapore regards this as too complex an issue to undertake.

If I could venture a guess at another reason why domestic workers are not included in the Employment Act, it would be because these women are victims of their own competence.

Foreign domestic workers often play roles in maintaining a household that are considered indispensable. These women are depended on to keep the house clean, ensure meals are cooked and to look after children. Some foreign domestic workers also take on the responsibility of being the primary caretaker of elderly or disabled family members.

I spoke to some of my peers whose families used to or currently employ foreign domestic workers. Many of them shared the view that their foreign domestic workers are part of the family and credit them as individuals who played an integral role in bringing them up.

With all the effort foreign domestic workers put into keeping their employers' households running, it is sad to think that the lack of protection for their rights heavily influences them to put off their own plans for marriage or family formation.

Many foreign domestic workers leave their home countries at what is considered the socially accepted age to marry. A census done by the National Statistics Office of the Philippines showed that the median marrying age for Filipino women is 25.3⁹. While I could not locate official marriage data from Indonesia online, Quandl (*an online data indexing resource*) has stated that the average age of first marriage for Indonesia females is 22.3¹⁰

While there are no official numbers for the average age of foreign domestic workers working in Singapore, many come over to seek work as soon as they hit the legal age of 23 years old.

With no option for maternity leave, many married foreign domestic workers put off having children until they return home for good. Single foreign domestic workers may also put off marriage as they know that they would not be able to start a family while being employed in Singapore.

Personal and economic reasons cause some foreign domestic workers to constantly push back their plans to return home and they eventually end up being regarded as too old to get married. Some women may also find that their ability to get pregnant has been affected due to their age or other health issues and have to give up their plans to start their own families.

Filipino Family Network (FFN) member Rhemy spoke to two of her friends, Davy and Tess, about this issue. Both are currently employed as domestic workers and have been working in Singapore for several years.

Tess supports the idea of maternity leave for foreign domestic workers and believes that every mother should have the right to maternity leave as it will allow mother and baby to forge a greater connection and experience each other's company.

Davy mentions that being disallowed to get pregnant while on contract and having no access to maternity leave definitely affects many women's plans to start families. She also adds that the lack of these provisions influences domestic helpers who have come to Singapore at a young age and end up staying here to work for extended periods of time to submit to the idea that they will end up as 'old maids' – a term is disliked by the workers themselves.

Davy sums up the situation rather aptly by saying, *"No choice. Get pregnant, you lose your job, which one do you want?"*

Obviously this group of women should not be penalized for doing their jobs well or for staying with their employers for long periods of time, but with families depending so heavily on foreign domestic workers, how would it then be practical for them to take months off work? I explore this in the next section.

The Practical Implications

For families that largely depend on their domestic helpers to complete household chores, it would not be too difficult to hire a part time helper to deal with the housework while the foreign domestic helper is on maternity leave.

Admittedly, the issue gets trickier if the foreign domestic helper takes on the responsibility of caring for children, elderly or disabled individuals.

Vacancies at childcare centres are often filled up way before the start of the year and it would be nothing short of a miracle to find a centre that would be willing to take on a child for a short period of time.

The situation is similar with facilities that cater to elderly or disabled care. Training facilities, daycares and shelters for the elderly and disabled all have long waiting lists and are struggling to cope with the demand for their services.

A report published by the Straits Times in August 2013, states that operators of facilities for disabled individuals are already reporting waiting lists of two years and are only expecting the problem to get worse¹¹. With such long waiting lists and high demand for their services, it is unlikely that these facilities will have the ability to cope with short-term enrolments.

Improvements most definitely must be made to our current social service infrastructure in order to allow foreign domestic workers access to maternity leave.

One option that could be considered to help families deal with foreign domestic workers going on maternity leave would be to enable them to hire a temporary live-in domestic helper for the period of time the expectant mother is on leave.

As it stands now, foreign domestic workers often sign two-year contracts and are bound to a single family. If foreign domestic worker agencies and the Government were able to work together to create a system where a certain number of foreign domestic workers are not necessarily bound to a single family but instead work for agencies specializing in temporary hires, these agencies would then be able to provide them as short term replacements for domestic helpers going on maternity leave.

Employers may argue that effort must be put into training the temporary domestic helper however; this may seem hard, but the temporary workers would normally be quick adaptors and learners or otherwise they would not have their jobs.

Just as companies are tasked with looking for a suitable temporary replacement when an employee goes on maternity leave, a similar concept would apply to making arrangements for a foreign domestic worker going on maternity leave.

Other concerns will also come up.

One would be the matter of citizenship. If foreign domestic workers were allowed to stay in Singapore to take their maternity leave, would their children then be automatic Singapore citizens?

The Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA) has a strict policy on who is eligible to apply to be a Singapore citizen and citizenship solely by reason of birth in Singapore is not listed as a possibility on the ICA website.¹² Thus, fears of foreign domestic workers having children for the sake of acquiring Singapore citizenship or giving it to their children do not seem justified.

It is also a common misconception that pregnant domestic workers will cause their employers to lose their \$5000 security bond. MOM states clearly that this is not the case¹³

Households might also worry about having to pay the foreign domestic worker's levy while she is on maternity leave. However, since the levy can be waived while a foreign domestic worker is on home leave¹⁴, the same solution would easily be applied to maternity leave.

This is definitely not an easy issue to tackle and there are a host of practical questions that the Government, employers and domestic workers will have to tackle together.

Nonetheless, it is time we opened the doors to discussion. In a modern society like ours, it is just not acceptable that the human rights of this group of women are overlooked simply because it is a complex and multi layered issue.

Nicolette Stewart

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Safety Issues for Supply Workers and 'Illegal' Workers

Employers complain that workers are careless and don't take proper precautions, don't bother with the PPE (personal protective equipment) and don't know how to use the equipment. From the workers, especially those who work as supply workers, we hear another story.

Small construction companies tend to hire their full quota of foreign workers even if their own company has no work for them because they're permitted to supply them to work for other companies. Supply workers may be hired for the day or for the duration of the job, but they often don't know from one day to the next where they will be working, or the nature of the job they'll be expected to perform. It could be painting, hacking, grinding, lifting or stacking, not usually work requiring specialization. The men may have to travel far to the job site decreasing time for eating and sleeping, may be given spoiled or useless protective gear, and may not be allowed sufficient time to learn to use equipment properly.

Their main employer wants to benefit from supplying them by charging more for them and taking a cut, while the sub-contractor makes sure that he gets his money's worth by having them work at least as long as his own workers. Supply workers are pushed longer and harder, given less time off for toilet breaks, lunchtime, and rest. Supply workers are a class below the regular workers and are ordered to do the most difficult and undesirable jobs.

Being new to the workplace and unfamiliar with the regular workers, they receive less support and assistance from the others. Regular workers are glad to take a rest while the supply workers do the heavy or dangerous work. Any complaint against the supply workers will reach the main employer, which puts them in a vulnerable position: the main employer may be inclined to send the man back rather than deploy him to another job.

Many men claim that the accident rate is higher among supply workers. The work is harder, the boss more demanding, the job less familiar, the co-workers unsupportive, and the worker less able to voice his concerns.

One Indian worker was supplied to work at a private condominium development. He was given a grinding machine to cut tiles for an outdoor area. He began by using two hands to steady the machine, but after several hours placed his left hand on the ground to steady himself on the ground and the right hand to hold the machine. He lost control and almost severed his left hand. (pictures withheld in deference to the squeamish) This case was disputed as a workplace injury because of allegations that the injury was self-inflicted.

If the supply worker is injured, additional problems result from squabbles over which employer must bear the medical fees and the compensation. Both the main-contractor and the sub-contractor try to push this responsibility to the other. Even when MOM is clear that the amounts must be paid, the dispute over who must pay can result in a lengthy delay before the worker can return home with his compensation.

All these issues concerning safety apply in greater degree to illegal workers. This includes all manner of workers: men on a visit pass, men whose visit pass has expired, men who purchased counterfeit work permits, and men on ICA or MOM special pass. These men are not allowed to engage in any kind of work. But they are nonetheless sought after by employers because the cost to the employer is less. Illegal workers and may be underpaid, denied their salary, or forced to pay a large part of their wages to the agent who secured the job for them. (Yes, the agents supply men for illegal work just as they do for legal work, and charge excessively for these jobs too.) Accidents for these men can be even more devastating for the worker because of the repercussions to the employer for hiring illegal workers.

We have anecdotal stories, many of them horrifying, about illegal workers being removed from the worksite and dumped and left for dead, repatriated without medical treatment, or left with injuries untreated in spite of the doctor's insistence that treatment is urgent. The ones we come to know about are those who do receive medical attention, thought not necessarily paid for by the employer. These men are not covered by insurance and are not entitled to compensation.

In order to complete a job in the fastest time at the lowest cost, employers resort to cheap manpower as the foreign worker levies and quotas continue to push up costs. Cost-cutting is possible by paying very low salaries, by deducting money from the workers for various reasons, by pushing men to work longer hours, by saving on protective equipment and training, by hiring illegal workers, and by treating workers as disposable commodities. Accidents that result in injury and permanent incapacity are devastating for men who rely on their bodies and their strength to support their families both in Singapore and when they return to their home country. Accidents can be reduced by increasing the pay of legal workers so that fewer are tempted by illegal work, and by better monitoring the use of supply workers.

Debbie Fordyce

New Domestic Workers Campaign in the USA

The National Domestic Workers Alliance, a US group, says on its website:

“Several of our member organizations...have reported that workers in their groups have experienced severe exploitation and human trafficking in the course of their employment as domestic workers, and indicated the need for a dedicated campaign to highlight this issue.”

In response, the NDWA has launched a campaign called “Beyond Survival”. Its aim is to support domestic workers who have undergone labour trafficking in playing a part in changing public policy to give better protection and support to those who may face the threat of trafficking in the future.

Founded in 2007, NDWA has over 10,000 members. Its website is at: <http://www.domesticworkers.org/beyondsurvival>

Reading Across Worlds

Ristanti Ningrum worked as a domestic worker in Singapore for ten years. She helped take care of Charlie, her employer’s young son, who enjoyed reading books with her. Rista thought that it would be a good thing if the children of her home village had the opportunity to read a lot of books too, so, as her time in Singapore drew towards a close, she set about collecting books to start a children’s library in Desa Bader. Some people back home were doubtful of the value of her project and thought that she could use her time and money better, but her father (now deceased) set aside a space in the family home for a library, and Joko, her husband was very supportive. He helped with decorating and outfitting the library. When the children came in and saw it, they were delighted.

This story was captured on the short film, ‘Reading Across Worlds’, which was shown at “Here Today and Tomorrow” (see opposite). The film was made by Bernice Wong and Ny Yiqin, with support from Grace Baey.

Some TWC2 members will remember Rista from her time volunteering with the society and later, when she was president of the Indonesian Family Network. TWC2’s Immediate Past President, John Gee, says: “Rista went to the International Labour Conference in Geneva in 2011. The NGOs there were invited to select one speaker to address the representatives of governments, businesses and trade unions from around the world, and we chose Rista. She stood up in front of that assembly and spoke clearly and well in favour of C189, the Domestic Workers Convention.”

TWC2 wishes Rista well with the library and her new life back home.



Rista (left) at the ILC in 2011, with former TWC2 president John Gee and an Indonesian NGO representative