



Transient Workers Count Too
DIGNITY OVERDUE

NEWSLETTER

WEEKLY
DAY OFF
FOR ALL

Volume 9

Number 2

March-April 2014

We've Served 500,000 Meals

Having served a half million meals to over 10,000 migrant men in distress, we've seen almost every kind of troubling situation. Some of the men in the project stay for over a year and eat every meal with us; others come only a few times. Some have undergone traumatic injuries; others have questionable back ailments. Some are cheerful and friendly; others remain anxious and inconsolable because of the ordeal they've experienced. We've dealt with it all.

We register an average of 181 new participants every month (150 Bangladeshi men and 31 Indian men). Between 500 and 600 individuals eat at The Cuff Road Program each month. In 2013, a total of 300 men came with complaints about salary deductions, kickbacks or illegal deployment, 1,754 men appeared with claims for work injury compensation, 79 had been jailed (and caned) for illegal overstaying, and 38 fit into none of these categories. We served an average of 2,030 meals each week last year to these South Asian men.

Now, more than six years after the project began in March 2008, the large majority of men at The Cuff Road Project (TCRP) are those with claims for injury compensation and they remain with the program the longest time. At any given time, an average of 77 men with our programme have been waiting more than one year for their medical treatment and compensation and about eight of these men have been waiting more than two years. This is much longer than an ordinary injury compensation case would take, but then, when the injuries are disputed by the employers, witnesses are repatriated and the worker is denied medical treatment, the case is bound to take longer. The regulations state that employers are required to provide housing and maintenance for the men while they're attending their medical appointments and waiting for compensation, but almost none of the men in The Cuff Road Project (TCRP) are being thus provided. The conflict that arises between the men and their employers over the injury claim puts them at odds with one another, with the employer working to deny that the injury resulted from a workplace accident and the man struggling to prove it.

Leaving the company dormitory creates both hardship and opportunities. The employer might refuse to pay for medical treatment and lodge a police report claiming the man has absconded, while staying away from the employer's accommodations the man is likely to be in the company of friends, able to access food and support provided by NGO's and religious groups and might make use of casual (though illegal) work.

The second largest group of men is those with salary complaints. These numbers have fallen drastically over the years, but persist in ways that some would identify as labour trafficking. These men typically agree to a certain monthly salary when first introduced to the job, receive notice of a lower salary and higher deductions on the approval form before leaving their country (the In-Principle Approval), and are then paid at an even lower rate.

(Continued on Page Two)

Heartbeat

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

The next sessions are due on Wednesday, 14th May and Wednesday, 11th June. If you'd like to come along, please let the TWC2 office know.

TWC2's Web Page...

Now has over 3,600 'likes' and it is no wonder that it is attracting more visitors. It regularly has new articles that illustrate in a vivid way the experiences that some migrant workers, at least have in Singapore. Plus there's research material and information on the society. The website can be found at: <http://twc2.org.sg>

In this issue...

- Page 2.....Events
- Page 4.....TWC2 Volunteers Appreciation Tea
- Page 5.....Out of Sight, Out of Mind?
- Page 5.....In Brief
- Page 6.....Burmese Domestic Workers in Singapore
- Page 8.....Rules and Realities

Events

February 22nd: A volunteer appreciation party was held by TWC2 (See article below).

February 25th: TWC2 took part in a closed door engagement session on the planned Trafficking in Persons (TIP) bill.

February 27th: Businesses Against Trafficking, a one-day conference organised by the Singapore Committee for UN Women and the Humanitarian Organisation for Migration Economics (HOME), took place at the INSEAD Asia campus.

March 8th: TWC2 had an information stand at 'All Fired Up', an International Women's Day event at Hong Lim Park organised by the Association of Women for Action and Research (AWARE). Our volunteers met many people who were interested in TWC2's work. Among the items on display were the set of T-shirts produced at the end of 2012, which were quite a stimulus to discussion on the status of domestic workers, the focus of our stand. TWC2 literature was distributed and \$180 was donated to the society. Our thanks go to the volunteers who helped out that day!

March 10th: TWC2 President Dr Russell Heng testified to the Committee of Inquiry on the Little India riot.

March 12th: 24 people came to 'Heartbeat', our monthly session for potential volunteers.

March 19th: A TWC2 team took part in a dialogue with Christopher de Souza MP and members of the government's TIP Task Force at the Ministry of Communications and Information on the planned TIP bill.

March 23rd: TWC2's Annual General Meeting. A report on the work of the society in the previous year was presented and approved, as were the audited accounts of the society for 2013. As committee posts are only up for election next year, there were no changes to the Executive Committee, but two new honorary auditors were elected. The society was able to reflect upon another productive year.

March 26th: Dr Russell Heng spoke to a Singapore Management University class about migrant workers in Singapore's economy.

April 9th: 18 people attended the latest "Heartbeat" session.

April 18th: TWC2 submitted a 17-page document calling for practices of labour trafficking to be fully covered in the planned Prevention of Human Trafficking Bill. Our proposals covered not only workers employed in Singapore, but men who have been trafficked into exploitation on fishing boats that dock in Singapore. For a fuller report and in order to access the whole document, go to: <http://twc2.org.sg/2014/04/21/twc2-calls-for-comprehensive-bill-on-labour-trafficking/>

Join TWC2!

If you're receiving this newsletter, you are probably a member, but you may also be someone whose membership has lapsed in the last year or two. We urge you to renew your membership.

We'd also welcome new members. You can help by introducing others to TWC2 and inviting them to join.

It still only costs \$10 a year (\$2.00 for migrant workers), and that gives you regular information about the society's work, as well as assisting the society to reach out, through you, to a growing number of people.

You can (re)join by contacting the TWC2 office with your details and membership payment.

We've Served 500,000 Meals

(Continued from front page)

We have documented many such incidences, but have had limited success in ensuring the men receive what they were promised and are entitled to.

We've also welcomed more unusual cases such as the young man caught trespassing when visiting his girlfriend at her employer's house, the man accused of outrage of modesty and held for two years before the case was dropped for lack of evidence, the men who are promised work permits after they enter Singapore on a tourist pass, the men who are required to remain for investigation after being jailed and caned for overstaying, and the man who arrived after being locked in a container for 10 days with no food and water together with his friend who died en route. Every day we hear new stories, bizarre situations, and dreadful experiences. It's never boring.



Men registered at TCRP sign in before having their meals

TCRP accepts anyone who is not permitted to work, but is required to remain in Singapore for compensation or investigation. This exposes the flaw in the system that puts men in this difficult position of having to choose between remaining for what could be a lengthy period without support from employer or government. If the man has claimed injury compensation he may withdraw the claim to return home. If he is held for an MOM, police or immigration investigation, he must wait. All but those men with disabling injuries will try to return again to work.

It may seem ludicrous for men to try repeatedly to find a decent job having already failed and lost large amounts of money. The men put this down to their individual bad luck, but that's not quite the problem. The illegal recruitment practices that result in up-front payments, kickbacks for work permit renewals, forced savings schemes that make the money unrecoverable, the lack of a minimum salary, the non-binding nature of the In-Principle Approval, the employers' ability to repatriate workers without reason or notice, and the prohibition against finding another job without going through the placement process in the home country is bad policy rather than "Bad Luck".

The Cuff Road Projects puts us in a position to observe these things as the men come to us for food, advice, friendship, and other necessities. Our volunteers are on hand at every meal to listen and to watch for something that needs attention. The project also offers a window to researchers, the media, experts and supporters to interview or observe the unhealthy situation of men unable to work or support their families for extended periods of time. It allows us to counter the claims offered by the Ministry of Manpower that there are no abandoned workers in Singapore and that men are housed and maintained by their employers after their injury as required.

We're not pleased to say that we've served a half a million meals since this reflects badly on Singapore that so prides itself with doing things correctly and efficiently. But in serving these meals we've come to understand the complexities of the situation for male migrant workers and how the regulations and practices fail to provide and protect. We've also come to know and appreciate the men, as well as empathize with the sacrifices they're forced to make when working abroad. The impact that this meal project has had on those who give their time as volunteers and those who study the situation has influenced us all personally, and changed the perception of those who've read about the workers. The ideal long-term outcome of the Cuff Road Project would be to eliminate the necessity of the free meals provided by charity.

We 'celebrate' the half-million meal marker with the slogan "Hunger should be the least of a worker's problems".

Debbie Fordyce

TWC2 Volunteers Appreciation Tea

Bonding volunteers through discussions and delicious treats

The inaugural TWC2 Volunteers Appreciation Tea was held on the 22nd of February at Butter Studios at Jalan Besar.*

Volunteers were invited to spend the afternoon meeting while finding out more about the work of various other projects under the TWC2 umbrella.

As TWC2 works on several different projects simultaneously, it is common for volunteers not to have interacted with each other before. Many volunteers may also not know the full details of the other programmes being run.

The afternoon started out with the attendees getting to know each other better over a delectable spread of finger food and desserts provided by Butter Studios. Once everyone's stomachs were filled, it was time for the presentations to begin.

These ranged from introductions and updates of various initiatives to personal sharings of individual volunteers.

Terence Kek from Discover Singapore started the ball rolling. To introduce the initiative, which organizes excursions for destitute workers to help give them the chance to explore Singapore and to get some much needed recreation, Terence showcased a video presentation of the various locations the group has visited as well as the activities that had taken place during these outings. It was really great to see all the happy smiles of both workers and volunteers as they spent a leisurely day out together.

Two people also gave brief talks about their personal experiences as TWC2 volunteers.

Caren Mayola, who is a volunteer with both Discover Singapore and The Cuff Road Project (TCRP) shared her experiences about being a foreigner employed in Singapore and how this spurred her on to contribute her time to TWC2.

TCRP volunteer Nicolette Stewart also shared with the group what motivated her to become a TWC2 volunteer and how volunteering has changed her perspective on many things.

Volunteers were also updated on two research projects that were underway at the time.

Dr Sallie Yea took to the floor to share developments on her latest research paper on trafficking in Singapore. Irna Nurlina, who is part of a research team doing research on the actual availability of the mandatory off day for foreign domestic workers, shared the progress of the research and some of the difficulties the team faced.



Volunteers listen to a presentation

Vilma and Ummairoh, from the Filipino Family Network (FFN) and Indonesian Family Network (IFN) respectively, updated the volunteers on the upcoming programmes FFN and IFN had planned and also thanked TWC2 for its continuous support.

Once all the speakers were done with their presentations, Karno, one of TWC2's social workers showcased an encapsulating photo-montage of the different groups of TWC2 volunteers in action.

To round off the afternoon, TWC2 President Dr Russell Heng spoke a few words. He thanked volunteers for all the time and work put in to support TWC2 and also announced some exciting news about the developments in the TWC2 volunteer programme; The appointment of an overall Volunteer Coordinator. The role is to be undertaken by Sarah Norwood, who would be in charge of providing more structure and management to TWC2 volunteers.

It was a very enjoyable afternoon. Not only were volunteers able to find out more information about projects they may be interested in helping with, but they were also given the chance to interact with like-minded individuals who are dedicated to helping out TWC2.

While I may not be able to speak for everyone, I found the experience to be very invigorating and I look forward to the next session.

**TWC2 has held events at The Cuff Road Project that included volunteer appreciation, and other activities to which volunteers were invited as guests to show appreciation, but this was our first event solely planned to express thanks to volunteers.*

Out of Sight, Out of Mind?

'Clubhouse for foreign domestic workers to open next month', read the headline on the article in 'Today' (Olivia Siong, March 10th 2014). This initiative, helping to fill a gap in provision for domestic workers seemed good: for just \$4 a year, they would have access to classes and to facilities that will include a library and computer lab. The clubhouse will be at 10, Raeburn Park.

Yet there was a sting in the tail, in the form of the spirit in which the clubhouse is being launched. The initiative is to be run by the Foreign Domestic Worker Association for Social Support and Training (FAST). The association's president, Seah Seng Choon, said:

"You notice currently the foreign domestic workers congregate in various places of interest. Like Lucky Plaza, Gardens by the Bay, the Botanic Gardens, and sometimes even in the residential areas. We want them to go to a place where they can be among themselves, where they will not be disturbing the owners of the building or residents of the area."

So while this is a 'clubhouse for foreign domestic workers', it's primary purpose seems to be to get them out of the way of Singaporeans.

Migrant workers on work permits make up one in three of Singapore's workforce and number around one million men and women. Like other workers, they should not only have their due pay, and be treated decently at work, but also have time off when they can relax and enjoy themselves.

This has sometimes led to complaints from Singaporeans: some justified, some not.

It does not seem just to complain about migrant workers having boyfriends or girlfriends, for example: for any adult, this should be their own business, not that of their employers or of the host society.

On the other hand, when some areas become very crowded with migrant workers on their days off or there is rowdy or anti-social behaviour that disturbs other people, then complaints seem to be better-founded.

In both cases, the measure by which workers' behaviour ought to be judged is that of how locals would judge the behaviour of fellow nationals in similar circumstances: there should be no double standards.

John Gee

In Brief

You Can't Make It Up....

The MOM put out a press release on 11th April headed, "Eight Employers and Two Employment Agents Charged for Falsely Declaring 41 Foreign Employees' Salaries". Two employees of an agency were accused of supplying false salary information in the work pass application forms of 21 foreign workers employed by franchisees of 7-Eleven. Their agency's name was Ethics Career Solution Pte Ltd.

Burmese Domestic Workers in Singapore

Are we rushing to meet the demand for foreign domestic help at the expense of our fellow human beings?

At the end of March this year, the Straits Times reported that Myanmar has formally announced regulations in regards to the employment of Burmese domestic workers¹.

The regulations that will affect Burmese domestic workers employed in Singapore are:

1. The workers are to receive a minimum monthly wage of S\$450
2. Domestic workers must be given at least one day off a month
3. Recruitment fees must not exceed four months of their salary

It is said that these regulations have since been communicated to agents in Singapore. In fact, some of these regulations overlap with laws being overseen by the Ministry of Manpower. However, as we've seen before, mandating the rules and enforcing them are often two separate issues.

In 2013, Singapore was the first country officially allowed by the Myanmar Government to employ its citizens as foreign domestic workers: the thousands of women who arrived earlier to become domestic workers did so without the government's official consent. Hong Kong has since been allowed to recruit Burmese domestic workers and the first batch of 19 Burmese domestic helpers arrived in Hong Kong in February this year².

The demand for Burmese domestic workers seems to be on the rise in Singapore. While this writer was not able to find official figures, research from statements given by agencies to the press suggest that the number of Burmese domestic workers working in Singapore have risen steadily over the years. One possible reason for this is the increased cost of hiring Filipino and Indonesian domestic workers³.

One reason for this increased cost is the Philippines Government's insistence that placement fees be borne by the employer instead of the domestic worker.

The average monthly salary for Burmese domestic workers is also estimated to be lower than those of their Indonesian and Filipino counterparts.

Online sentiment expressed on web portals such as Kiasu Parent, The Asian Parent (SG) and Singapore Motherhood that focus on topics faced by households in Singapore, including the hiring of domestic help, suggest that some Singaporeans hire Burmese domestic workers due to the stereotype that they are more docile and easier to control. These opinions are often followed by comments on how domestic workers of other nationalities demand off days, use their mobile phones and go out with their friends - all things that in reality should be the right of the domestic worker.

This raises a frightening vision of how Burmese domestic helpers are being treated by employers and the amount of rights protection they receive in Singapore.

Against this background, it is perhaps not surprising that it was reported in April 2013, that there were a growing number of stories of Burmese domestic helpers running away from employers⁴. Another article, published in June 2013⁵, mentions that within the first half of 2013, 51 Burmese domestic workers sought help from Humanitarian Organisation for Migration Economics (HOME). In comparison, HOME provided shelter to 64 women in 2012 and 29 in 2011. These numbers not only reflect the increasing number of Burmese domestic helpers working in Singapore but also show that these women are finding it hard to cope.

Many domestic workers felt the strain of receiving little to no pay for up to eight months as they struggle to pay agent and placement fees. These fees can be accumulated on both the Burmese and Singaporean agencies' ends and often occur when agencies want to earn more profit or try to provide domestic workers at a 'lower cost' to employers.

Burmese domestic workers sometimes also find it hard to adjust to life in Singapore and the language barrier often adds to their stress and unhappiness.

Information on where and to whom Burmese domestic workers can reach out in times of need seems to be hard to come by. Considering factors such as the differences in language and the fact that Burmese domestic workers have just begun seeking employment in Singapore, this is not surprising, although rather worrying.

To make things even more challenging, without being allowed off days, having no access to mobile phones and with the significantly lower number of Burmese domestic workers employed in Singapore (as compared to Filipino and Indonesian), it is less likely that these workers will be able to reach out for help or be given the chance to interact with peers who may be able to disseminate useful information.

There are groups that do all they can to extend help to Burmese workers. They include the Myanmar Club, which aims to promote the welfare, education and advancement of all Myanmar nationals, residents and visitors residing in Singapore. Their services include providing help to Burmese foreign workers fighting against unjust treatment.

I spoke briefly to Bianca Skold, a student from Myanmar whose father is an active member in the Myanmar Club and she shared that her father feels that in recent years, there has definitely been an increase in the number of Burmese domestic workers seeking assistance from the organisation.

While the Myanmar Karuna Association focuses mainly on the provision of free or subsidized funeral services for Myanmar nationals, they too have mentioned on their website that they will do what they can to stand firm for Burmese foreign workers who have issues with their employers.

Non-government organisations like HOME and TWC2 also run outreach programmes and have assisted Burmese domestic workers in distress.

Karno, one of TWC2's social workers says that in one recent case he handled, it was a Singaporean employer who contacted TWC2 to enquire about getting assistance for a Burmese domestic worker who was not under her employment.

Domestic workers may also seek help from their agents. While some agents treat them fairly, others may put their own vested interests first and might propose solutions that are not to the worker's benefit. We should not tar all agencies with the same brush, though. Agencies themselves have referred Burmese domestic workers to TWC2 to seek recourse from errant employers.

Some may look at these problems and feel that it is the responsibility of the Myanmar Government to protect its own citizens.

However, as the country that depends on these foreign domestic workers to help run households, it is only right that Singapore and its citizens should be doing all we can to ensure that the proper channels and frameworks are in place to help these workers receive the support they need.

What absolutely should not be allowed to happen is for employers to make use of this situation to exploit this group of domestic workers. The unfair treatment of workers - regardless of their nationality and scope of work - will always result in a lose-lose situation for both employer and employee.

With Cambodia launching a pilot programme to decide if it will allow Cambodians to be employed as domestic workers in Singapore, it seems that Singapore will continue to tap into our neighboring countries to help meet our demand for foreign domestic workers.

As we continuously move forward to recruit foreign domestic workers from new regions, there are some serious questions we need to start asking ourselves.

Is it fair that we, as a country, continue to look to other countries to support our need for foreign domestic workers when we can't provide them proper and accessible channels of help and support?

Are we putting our needs ahead of treating fellow human beings with fairness and respect?

Is the decision to hire a certain group of domestic workers merely because of the lower cost involved helping to perpetuate exploitation?

What can be done to ensure that foreign domestic workers on our shores are being adequately protected?

These questions may seem harsh and implementing solutions to deal with these challenges will certainly be an uphill battle. However, it is never acceptable to skirt issues just because they are challenging and it is even more intolerable to turn a blind eye when lives are being affected.

Nicolette Stewart

Additional research on The Myanmar Club and Myanmar Karuna Association provided by Bianca Skold and her father. More information on the The Myanmar Club and the Myanmar Karuna Association can be found on their respective Facebook pages:

The Myanmar Club: <https://www.facebook.com/myanmarclub>

Myanmar Karuna Association: <https://www.facebook.com/MyanmarKarunaAssociation>

Sources

1: <http://www.asianewsnet.net/New-rules-in-Spore-for-hiring-Myanmar-maids-58375.html>

2: <http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1433980/pictures-first-domestic-workers-myanmar-arrive-hong-kong-amid>

3: <http://news.asiaone.com/print/News/Latest%2BNews/Singapore/Story/A1Story20130629-433378.html>

4: <http://www.straitstimes.com/breaking-news/singapore/story/more-maids-myanmar-running-away-20130407>

5: <http://www.straitstimes.com/the-big-story/asia-report/myanmar/story/myanmar-maids-finding-it-hard-singapore-20130616>

6: <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2013/nov/11/maid-singapore-cambodia-domestic-workers>

Rules and Realities

Shortly after TWC2 President, Dr Russell Heng, testified before the Committee of Inquiry (COI) into the Little India riots, Kevin Teoh, Divisional Director of the Ministry of Manpower (MOM)' Foreign Manpower Management Division, spoke to the committee. As reported in the media, many of his comments seemed to be a response to statements made by Dr Heng. A response seems to be called for.

According to a 'Straits Times' report (Lim Yan Liang, "MOM: Workers told of rights even before coming here", 19th March 2014), Mr Teoh " testified that he was surprised that rights group Transient Workers Count Too (TWC2) had testified it was feeding some 350 "abandoned workers" at its soup kitchen daily, given that the Employment Act clearly placed the responsibilities of housing and feeding work permit holders on their employers."

Sad to say, it is a fact that TWC2 is feeding large numbers of workers daily – a minimum of 200, and often many more, and our volunteers can testify as much. Mr Teoh would be welcome to come down any day and see for himself.

We know that, as Mr Teoh said, under Singapore law, employers have the responsibility to house and feed work permit holders while cases are being settled, but we know equally well that many employers seek to evade that responsibility. We also know that many workers who come to us for help say that they fear to stay in company-provided accommodation out of fear of intimidation or of attempts to throw them out of Singapore.

Mr Teoh said that "when an employer is unable or unwilling to fulfil its obligation, the ministry would step in to house the worker and provide food - sometimes in partnership with help groups such as the Migrant Workers' Centre - while a complaint is

investigated.”

Well, this may well happen in some cases, but we see hundreds of cases each year in which it doesn't. In many, the MOM's understanding would seem to be that those workers who have themselves decided not to stay in company accommodation have voluntarily made themselves shelterless, and so neither the employer nor MOM has a responsibility to house them. And it is a little mysterious why should the MOM should turn to the Migrant Workers' Centre to cooperate in housing and feeding them rather than TWC2, which, short of resources itself, has actually been doing this work for six years now.

Mr Teoh testified that the process of educating migrant workers on how to assert their rights under Singapore law began even before they arrived: “with employers required to put in writing the wages, deductions and other terms in an employment letter to the worker in his native language.

Guidelines on worker obligations and rights are also issued to overseas training centres.”

In our experience, the transmission of information on the rights of workers during their training period seems to be patchy still, though it is certainly an improvement that some effort is being made in this direction. As to the information provided on wages, deductions and other terms that an employer is obliged by law to provide to foreign workers in their own languages, the introduction of this measure was a positive step forward, but its impact has been undermined by the ability of some employers to get away with ignoring the terms originally provided to workers. TWC2 has encountered numerous cases of workers who were provided concrete information about terms of employment, as stipulated, that their employers then proceeded to disregard after the workers' arrival in Singapore, perhaps believing that the workers would not dare to seek enforcement of the stated terms for fear of being sent home by their employer. We have also encountered cases, which we raised directly with MOM, in which employers coerced workers into signing their agreement to inferior terms after they arrived in Singapore; in these, so far, the MOM has judged the revised terms to be valid and the workers' consent to have been willingly given, despite the known disparity in power between an employer and a newly employed, debt-burdened worker.

Mr Teoh said that he did not believe that workers were forcibly repatriated. Among the South Asian workers we assist, we have often heard fearful remarks about those the men commonly call “gangsters” – employees of repatriation companies who come looking for men at their employers' instruction in order to seize them and expel them. Why would there be this pervasive fear if there is no basis for it? TWC2 has repeatedly encountered cases where only a last minute intervention by the society has prevented an employer or a repatriation company from taking a worker or group of workers to the airport and expelling them. Regrettably, there have also been cases where we were not able to intervene in time to stop the workers from being expelled.

Mr Teo said that workers who were being forced to leave against their wishes could talk to officials at the point of departure “if they had ongoing employment-related complaints that were being investigated by MOM.” That would enable them to stay in Singapore.

Again, we know that this is the law, and it is exactly what we advise workers who fear deportation when they make a complaint to do. But we also know that some workers are still unaware that they can do this, while others are so afraid and confused at the moment of their expulsion that they don't raise an objection to officials in time.

There's a thread that runs through Mr Teo's own testimony that does point to a recurring problem with MOM's approach to migrant worker issues. This is to point to rules and procedures that exist, as if in themselves they resolve the problems they are meant to take on. But reality is more complicated; there are serious deficiencies in the implementation of many of these provisions, and on occasion, this can be attributed to a failure to empathise with and appreciate the realities of migrant workers' lives, including the challenges of coping with an unfamiliar social and legal environment and the real sense of disempowerment in a foreign country.

In short, we feel that TWC2 can stand by Dr Heng's testimony with confidence, and we would be happy to substantiate each point that he made, as well as to continue to carry on a constructive dialogue with MOM to achieve a more effective response to the problems migrant workers face.