



Transient Workers Count Too  
DIGNITY OVERDUE

# NEWSLETTER

WEEKLY  
DAY OFF  
FOR ALL

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## Anti-Trafficking Bill Before Parliament

The Prevention of Human Trafficking Bill is now going through Parliament. It was introduced on 7<sup>th</sup> October. Though it is a Private Member's Bill, tabled by Christopher de Souza MP, it is likely to be passed into law, having the support of the Inter-Agency Taskforce on Trafficking in Persons and the sympathy of the government. This is a welcome move. It will represent a substantial step forward from the situation of only six years ago, when trafficking was treated at governmental level as a virtual non-issue as far as Singapore is concerned. There have been prosecutions of some of those involved in trafficking and initiatives directed at raising public awareness of the issue, as well as sensitizing the police to it.

When the question of legislation was first raised, TWC2 argued for an act that would bring together Singapore's legislation on trafficking into one instrument, rather than dealing with trafficking by making amendments to a variety of existing laws. We are pleased that this is the route being taken.

There is still scope for improvement. Although the bill's provisions allow for action against all forms of trafficking, there is still a tendency in it to focus attention on the trafficking of women into sexual exploitation. It is certainly necessary to deal with this, but we think that a comprehensive anti-trafficking policy requires that there should be no overlooking that men can also be victims of trafficking and need support, and that, probably in Singapore as in most of the rest of the world, most trafficked people are deployed into forms of labour exploitation other than sex work.

The bill as introduced into Parliament placed its emphasis on prevention of trafficking and prosecution of traffickers. It does have provisions for the protection of people who may have been trafficked, but we feel that these need to be stronger. For this reason, TWC2 has participated in the StopTraffickingSG campaign.

The campaign runs a website <http://stoptrafficking.sg.wordpress.com> that contains comments on the proposed legislation and articles on trafficking that illustrate why comprehensive, victim-centred legislation is needed. The campaign collected over 1000 signatures on a petition that was presented to Christopher de Souza on 7<sup>th</sup> October. It called for victims of trafficking to be given immunity from prosecution for breaches of immigration law and for them to be enabled to work in Singapore while their cases are under consideration. At a press conference held on 21<sup>st</sup> October, the campaign presented a critique of the bill as it stands. (See the summary on page 4)

TWC2 has worked against trafficking since 2006, helping individuals who were trafficked or faced being trafficked, proposing changes in the law concerning trafficking in which we consistently stressed a victim-centred approach, as well as doing public education through talks, interaction with the media and articles on our website. We hope to see the main proposals made by the StopTraffickingSG campaign incorporated into the Prevention of Trafficking Bill and for deeper cooperation between all concerned in countering trafficking and assisting those harmed by it.

## Renewal and Expansion

*In March 2015, TWC2 will hold its next annual general meeting. (AGM). This year, the whole Executive Committee will be up for election. Normally, some members stand again, while others stand down, so it is likely that we will need new candidates to be elected onto the committee.*

*We also need volunteers who can take overall responsibility for areas of our work such as coordinating work with domestic workers, and handling international contacts, mainly with other NGOs.*

*If you feel that you could contribute in any of these ways to TWC2's development, we'd like to hear from you.*

*Heartbeat is our monthly gathering for people interested in volunteering with the society. It is normally held on the second Wednesday of each month.*

*If you're interested in coming along, please register with TWC2's Administration Officer at [info@twc2.org.sg](mailto:info@twc2.org.sg)*

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## Events

**August 17<sup>th</sup>:** “Two Sundays ago, I had the opportunity to attend a wonderful Halal Bihalal gathering with the Indonesian Family Network in celebration of Eid al-Fitr. Because it was also Indonesian Independence Day, the festivities were especially joyful. Approximately fifty IFN ladies who had the day off gathered in the Botanical Gardens, and after Ummal led some introductions— “Selamat ulang tahun Indonesia!” Happy Birthday Indonesia—and prayers, the women shared stories of celebrating Independence Day in Singapore. We all greeted each other, with “Selamat Hari Raya!” and then, we began to share the food. There were so many delicious dishes—from nasi goreng and nasi lemak to rending daging and a stinky bean dish, not to mention a multitude of delicious--and spicy!--dishes I was unable to name. After the meal, we shared a few different kinds of kueh and a birthday cake for Atien. Then, as is traditional for Indonesian Independence day celebrations, we played games on the field in the Gardens. It was a wonderful privilege to attend the event, and I am thankful for all the IFN ladies’ hospitality.” *Nissa Mai*

**September 20<sup>th</sup>:** Debbie Fordyce and Christine Pelly gave a talk at the Peace Day event at United World College (UWCSEA). The students, 17 and 18 years old, organized a full-day conference on discrimination, looking at gender, ethnic and class discrimination. Debbie talked about the widespread negative attitudes towards low wage work permit holders (one student survey showed that the most common words that come to mind when thinking of construction workers is “*dirty, poor, dangerous, and hamsup (creepy/horny)*”). This is contrasted by the high regard that construction workers generally have about Singaporeans, seeing them as honest, polite, kind, and law-abiding. Debbie explained that construction workers are largely unaware of the prejudice against them, and are more concerned about working safely, keeping the job and being paid fairly by their employers, than about condescending attitudes from the general public.

Christine followed the talk with an activity asking the students to break into groups and give a brief summary from two opposing points of view concerning salary payments, public responsibility towards workers and the role of the government in regulating low wage workers. Most students were unfamiliar with TWC2’s work and the issues relating to transient workers, often hidden from view in the 3D jobs. This was the first time many of the students had considered the sacrifice and costs to this large group of men working in Singapore’s Construction and Marine sectors.

Many students expressed keen interest and thanks for being introduced to this topic.

**October 9<sup>th</sup>:** TWC2 held a day school in Little India for Japan-based NGO, Peace Boat. The participants came from various Asian countries, including the Philippines, Burma, Sri Lanka, India and Japan. Debbie Fordyce and John Gee spoke about what makes people become migrant workers, the hopes that they have and the general conditions for migrant workers in Singapore. The participants were very interested in what two Bangladeshi workers who have suffered injuries had to say about their own experiences and their families back home. After the talks and question and answer session, Debbie took the group on a walking tour of the area, pointing to locations that are significant in the lives of migrant workers.

**October 21<sup>st</sup>:** A StopTraffickingSG press conference was held at the offices of AWARE. Jolovan Wham, from the Humanitarian Organisation for Migration Economics (HOME) presented a critique of the draft anti-trafficking bill, and there were three short video presentations. Representatives of the organisations taking part in the campaign spoke at a question and answer session. Besides Jolovan, they were Vanessa Ho (Project X), Vivienne Wee (Association of Women for Action and Research (AWARE)), Pia Bruce (Singapore Committee for UN Women), Braema Mathi (Maruah), Peck Hoon Tam (StopTraffickingSG’s campaign manager) and John Gee, for TWC2.

**September-October:** TWC2 researchers cooperated in a pan-Asian initiative on recruitment practices and workers experience of them. This involved asking 110 workers to complete a rather lengthy questionnaire. We divided the survey into three segments: one third of the questionnaires were filled in by Filipino domestic workers, one third by Indonesian domestic workers and one third by Bangladeshi male workers, mostly in the construction and shipyard sectors. The initiative was launched by Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA) and the aim is to build up a picture of recruitment practices across Asia and to make recommendations for reforms.

TWC2 has also contributed to the online discussion on the MFA project. In our experience, most migrant workers are misled by recruiters about the pay and conditions of employment they can expect in their destination countries. We want more transparency in the recruitment process, and guarantees that whatever workers are promised in the recruitment process is what they receive when they start work. This should be the case even when they are persuaded to sign an employment contract agreeing to inferior terms on arrival: workers who have accumulated debts are too vulnerable to pressure and threats of repatriation for their agreement to be considered voluntary.

One evening when two researchers went to “Bangladesh Square” to interview workers, they were interrupted during only the second interview by a group of eight workers who wanted help because they had not been paid for three months. The survey had to wait while we noted down the details the workers gave and arranged for them to see TWC2 social worker, Karno, the following morning. Nine workers then came to the TWC2 office. Karno assisted them in presenting their case to the Ministry of Manpower. They gained restitution of the money owed and eight men who wished to seek work with other employers were allowed to do so.

## TWC2 Plans Big Fundraiser and IMD 2014 Event

2014 is the tenth anniversary of TWC2 becoming a society. We want to hold an activity for International Migrants Day in December. We need to raise money for the society to operate. So we've brought all these aims together in Lunch with Heart, to be held on 7<sup>th</sup> December.

It is to be held at Kebabs and Curries, a restaurant on top of the Mustafa Centre in Little India. Tickets are being sold at \$80 each. Our hope is that many members and old friends will buy tickets and come themselves, or buy tickets that they then donate for migrant workers to take up. Last year's 'Lunch with Heart' was a big success. We hope that this one will be too.

If you want to buy tickets or support the event in any other way, please contact the TWC2 office and let us know.



# Lunch with Heart

also celebrating International Migrants' Day (IMD)

Treat a migrant worker to a nice meal at our 2014 annual benefit lunch.

Sunday, 7 December, 11 a.m.-3 p.m.  
@ Kebabs n Curries

**Your Money Helps:**

- ◊ Our Little India soup kitchen which provides free daily meals to destitute foreign workers
- ◊ Medical help / emergency shelter for injured workers
- ◊ A toll-free help line

**Tickets - \$80 each:**

- ◊ Buy extra tickets and donate them back to treat workers to a nice lunch.
- ◊ If you can't be there let us have your ticket for use by a foreign worker

**To book tickets:**

- ◊ Make cheque out to "Transient Workers Count Too"

**Food & Fun:**

- ◊ 10-course buffet : Indian cosmopolitan dishes
- ◊ Lucky draw, games, and showtime!

**Venue:** Kebabs n Curries  
Level 7, Mustafa Centre,  
171 Syed Alwi Road

**For enquiries:**  
Please email [info@twc2.org.sg](mailto:info@twc2.org.sg) or call Christine Scully at 62477001, weekdays 9:30 am to 6:30 pm.

**Mail to:** 5001 Beach Road, 09-86 Golden Mile Complex, Singapore 199588

**TWC2's Website:** Our website goes from strength to strength. Articles and reports continue to be posted regularly, not only expressing TWC2's views but giving a voice to many of the workers the society assists. Since the previous issue of this newsletter came out, the number of "Likes" on it has passed 4,000 to reach, as of 23rd October, 4,131. One of the latest articles posted is: <http://twc2.org.sg/2014/10/20/worker-with-infectious-disease-had-treatment-aborted/>

It tells of a worker found to need treatment for tuberculosis whose employer hurried to send him home rather than pay for him to stay on and receive treatment. In normal circumstances, this behaviour would have seemed bad, but after all the news there has been about Ebola and the need to isolate and treat those with potentially infectious conditions, wouldn't it be thought that certain lessons would have been learned by now?

# Prevention of Human Trafficking Bill Recommendations

## StopTraffickingSG Campaign recommendations

About the campaign: The StopTraffickingSg campaign is a joint initiative of AWARE, HOME, MARUAH, Project X, the Singapore Committee for UN Women, and TWC2. The campaign advocates for the inclusion of victims' rights in the proposed bill for prevention of trafficking to be debated in Parliament in November 2014.

### Executive Summary

StopTraffickingSG would like to applaud MP Christopher de Souza's initiative in tabling a Bill against Human Trafficking. While the Bill covers many aspects, it is not comprehensive. In particular, the protection and assistance offered to victims by this Bill are not adequate. StopTraffickingSG believes that, to provide a strong basis for countering trafficking in Singapore, it is important to adopt a comprehensive Act.

Several of the organisations in the StopTraffickingSG campaign offer direct services to trafficked persons. It is this practical experience which informs these recommendations.

The table of recommendations lists the Clauses in the Bill, highlighting the inadequate provisions for the protection of victims of trafficking, prosecution of traffickers, and partnership with different organisations and agencies.

Taken as a whole, these are our main concerns:

**Victims:** First of all, clearer processes are needed to properly identify victims so that non-trafficked migrant workers are not inadvertently caught up in state responses to victims, and that state agents fail to recognise trafficked victims.

Secondly, the Bill should explicitly prohibit the detention of trafficked victims, as some existing shelters for trafficked victims are known to restrict victims' freedom of movement.

Thirdly, the Bill should expand general protection granted to trafficked victims and witnesses, in particular strengthening protection for witnesses who may face intimidation and retaliation in Singapore and their home countries, expand court protections beyond those granted to sexually exploited victims, address particular protections that may be required by child victims, and strengthen mechanisms for the provision of information to victims about their cases.

Fourthly, victims require assistance as well as protection. Necessary forms of assistance include accommodation, medical care, confidential counselling, work opportunities, information, and translation and interpretation. Such services should be extended to trafficked victims' dependants where appropriate. StopTraffickingSG would additionally like to query the role of the Director of Social Welfare in providing these services (where provided for in the Bill), given that her legal mandate currently extends only to persons under the age of 16.

Lastly, further clarifications are needed as to victims' immigration status while their cases are being processed. Currently, trafficking victims are granted a Special Pass. However, there is a lot of discretion and uncertainty as to in which cases such passes are extended. Moreover, there is little provision for victims' relocation and repatriation. Finally, it is suggested that victims be allowed to experience a period of recovery and reflection before having to decide if they do want to embark on the lengthy and strenuous process of pursuing their case through the criminal justice system.

**Policing:** StopTraffickingSG is concerned about the huge extension of discretionary powers to police and non-police enforcement officers. According to this Bill, police and non-police enforcement officers are able to arrest and forcibly gain entry to premises without warrant, and are to be armed with batons and accoutrements "as are necessary". This may result in the secondary traumatising of vulnerable victims of trafficking. StopTraffickingSG believes that Part 3 of the proposed Bill should be deleted altogether as the current provisions under the Criminal Procedures Code would suffice.

**Definitions:** Several key concepts in this Bill are not defined. For example, there is no definition of forced labour or deception in Part 1 of the Bill, although they are central to a thorough understanding of trafficking in persons.

## Work for Trafficked People

*Following the StopTraffickingSG press conference on October 21<sup>st</sup>, a number of media outlets published comments by the anti-trafficking bill's proposer, Christopher de Souza MP, one of which was on the campaign's call for trafficked people to be allowed to work while their cases are being settled. John Gee, who spoke for TWC2 at the press conference, wrote the following response to CNA's online article:*

As a participant in the StopTraffickingSG campaign, I hope that you'll let me respond to Mr Christopher de Souza's comment on the whether a right to work should form part of the anti-human trafficking bill that he is moving.

Mr de Souza says, "The people with whom I have spoken - ladies who unfortunately would come under the ambit of sexual trafficking - they did not want to work. That is one of the reasons why not putting in a one-size-fits-all right for everybody is useful."

From this statement, it seems that we are talking past each other. No-one involved in the StopTraffickingSG campaign would want a woman who has been trafficked into sexual exploitation to be returned to similar conditions. If what she wants is simply to return home, she should be enabled to do that as soon as possible.

However, in its proposals, the StopTraffickingSG campaign is thinking of the whole range of people who have been trafficked into some form of labour exploitation. For all of them, the primary incentive for going to work abroad, which was exploited to the full by their traffickers, was the desire to earn money to support their families and themselves. They have seen little or nothing of the money they were promised when they agreed to leave their homes. If, when they have the chance to free themselves, they are not given the opportunity to work and earn, not only will they be unable to make good some of the losses they suffered, but they will be discouraged from remaining in Singapore while their own cases are settled. Not only would this mean that an injustice to them could go unpunished, but that those who inflicted it might remain at liberty to repeat their offence.

In short, whether out of a sense of justice for a victim of trafficking or considerations of punishing and preventing trafficking in the future, it would seem very advisable to seek to provide work for the victims of trafficking while they await settlement of their cases. Should anyone who has been trafficked into sexual exploitation wish to find other work, then she should be assisted to do so.

## Making a Case for Mobile Phones

*How an electronic gadget made me realise just how much work still has to be done in raising awareness and changing mindsets about migrant worker issues in Singapore*

The mobile phone: for many of us, this one electronic device has become so entrenched in our daily lives that we fail to notice how dependent on it we are.

The next time you get on a bus or MRT, take a look around. How many people are on their phones? Think about what you find yourself doing when you have some free time or when you are waiting for someone. My guess is many of you would reach for your phones. It is amazing how a singular gadget has the ability to help us keep in contact with loved ones, keep updated on world happenings and catch up on work, amongst other things.

With a mobile phone penetration rate of 156%<sup>1</sup>, it is safe to say that Singaporeans view their mobile phones as an essential part of their daily lives. So why exactly are we discussing mobile phones in the TWC2 newsletter?

To put in perspective how truly asinine the common practice of employers and employment agencies restricting the ownership and/or use of mobile phones really is.

If one were to run a Google search on the keywords "maids and mobile phones" you would be shocked to see some of the results that appear. Most of them are blog and forum posts about why employers feel it is justified to disallow domestic workers to own and use mobile phones or how only errant migrant workers demand to have access to mobile phones so they can get up to no good.

It is appalling.

To many people not involved with migrant worker issues, the right of access to a mobile phone may seem like a trivial matter, especially when compared to other issues such as abuse and unfair working conditions. On the surface, some commonly used explanations like "I don't want her to be distracted" or "I'm afraid that if she has a phone, she will waste all her money talking to her family and friends" may seem practical. However, all an individual really has to do is to take a couple of minutes to stop and think about the obvious double standard that is being applied.

First things first, in a professional workplace, employees are given the benefit of the doubt that they will perform their responsibilities without giving in to distractions. It seems very narrow minded to assume that all migrant workers are not going to be able to do the same.

If someone's manager told them that starting from today, mobile phones are no longer allowed to be brought into work, I'm pretty sure an uproar would ensue and that employees would be quick to defend why they needed their phones. The following reasons are likely to come up: To communicate with family, in case of emergencies, to keep up with news and work..

Which leads me to my next point.

Communication with loved ones. Migrant workers have to deal with having taken the difficult step of leaving their home country behind to work in a foreign country that they know close to nothing about. They are often lonely and will come face to face with unfamiliar situations. It is only natural that these workers would like to be able to turn to their loved ones for support and guidance. Their friends and family provide these men and women with an irreplaceable support system that helps to keep up the workers' morale.

With today's smartphone capabilities, migrant workers can also keep up with social media updates from their family and friends and it definitely helps ease a bit of the homesickness many workers feel.

While it is true that this means that some workers may spend all their time on the phone and some may even forego sleep or work commitments to chat with friends, again, this all this depends on the individual. It is not acceptable to pigeonhole all migrant workers as being unable to differentiate when is a good time to have phone conversations.

Some employers say that by allowing them to use only the payphones located in public spaces, they have more control over when the calls are being made as they can track when the domestic worker leaves the house. There really shouldn't be a need for such regulation. These migrant workers aren't school children, they are grown ups who have the capacity to decide what is appropriate and they should be treated as such.

Of course, there is also the issue of emergencies. Without access to a phone, it would be extremely difficult for a migrant worker to contact anyone in the event of an emergency. Lack of access to a phone also exposes migrant workers to the unnecessary risk of not being able to reach out for help in times of crisis.

At the crux of the matter, it is shameful that many Singaporean employers and employment agencies still think that merely because they are the 'paymaster' that they have the right to impose such rules on migrant workers. Rules that they themselves would find oppressive.

It is also shameful that these groups of people refuse to see that each migrant worker is an individual and instead prefers to hold on to stereotypes.

**Nicolette Stewart**

1: <http://www.ida.gov.sg/Infocomm-Landscape/Facts-and-Figures/Telecommunications#1>

*Mobile phone ownership levels are high among migrant workers, but partly because of the high rate of turnover among them, the mobile phone market among them is not as saturated as that among Singaporeans. That's why mobile phone company booths are a regular sight in places where large numbers of migrant workers congregate, whether for a community activity (such as a performance by a visiting singer) or in a gathering place like Little India.*

## Domestic Workers and Mobile 'Phone Use

TWC2 hears of domestic workers whose employers confiscate their mobile 'phones when they arrive at their homes. This happens particularly in households where the employers don't give their workers any days off. It is often excused as "stopping her from wasting time" and "preventing her from falling into bad company". In fact, in most cases, it seems that the aim is to impose isolation on the worker in order to control her 24 hours a day, seven days a week; in particular, she is denied the possibility of asking for help or seeking information about her rights, which is something every worker should be able to do.

Such isolation is stressful and, in other contexts, has been recognized as capable of doing harm to an individual's mental health.

Some workers have described their mobile 'phones to us as "lifelines". Being able to talk with a friend or a family member helps them to cope with their work. Knowing that a family member can reach them in an emergency, or just to chat when they are missing a daughter, wife or mother puts their minds at ease.

A worker's 'phone should never be taken away. Taking another person's property is called theft, whether it is a wallet or a mobile 'phone.

An employer who hires a domestic worker buys her work, not her private life. It is up to her to manage that and decide who she socializes with. It's necessary to get away from the widespread habit of treating domestic workers as though they are little children who are incapable of managing their own lives in a responsible way. It's true that some may make bad choices, but other people in other occupations do too: there's no excuse for singling out domestic workers. Ironically, many of those who seize their domestic workers' phones have children who have their own mobile phones and make great use of them. Their children are trusted, but their adult workers are not.

Any concern about a worker spending time talking rather than working is best dealt with by either agreeing a reasonable range of tasks for a domestic worker to do in a day, and saying that, providing she does that, it doesn't matter when and for how long she speaks on her 'phone, or by agreeing that there are times when the worker should solely deal with her work and others when she may speak on her 'phone if she wishes.

Finally, it should be recognized that a domestic worker who has her own 'phone is responsible for paying her bills for it herself and this avoids argument about access to any family landline 'phone and the bills for its use, which is to an employer's advantage.

## Review: Risky Business in the Construction Industry

*The fatality rate in the construction sector is triple the overall workplace injury fatality rate: in 2013, the workplace injury fatality rate was 2.1 per 100,000 employed persons; in the construction sector, it was 7.0 per 100,000 employed persons. \**

Longer-term TWC2 members may recall the coverage given to the problem of workplace safety in the construction industry in recent years in the newsletter, our weekly bulletin *"On the Move"* and on our website. TWC2 made a short submission on the amendment of the Workplace Safety and Health Act when it was last amended, in 2011. The great majority of our first-hand information came from Bangladeshi and Indian men who came to our food programme, The Cuff Road Project. Now HealthServe, another local NGO working for the rights and wellbeing of migrant workers, has published a report based on interviews with Chinese workers.

The report notes how, although it is recognized that there is a high rate of accidents in the construction industry, what is hardly recognized is that this is a sector where the great majority of workers – and of those who have accidents – are migrant workers. Efforts to prevent accidents frequently concentrate on workers and their safety consciousness, as if they are primarily responsible for what happens to them.

On the contrary, as *"Risky Business"* shows, there are conditions that are beyond workers' control that put their lives and limbs at risk, as indicated by the 20 Chinese workers with whom the report's author, Stephanie Chok spoke. They pointed to:

*Excessive workloads and unreasonable productivity targets;*

*Cost-cutting measures that result in severe time pressures and the reduction of materials and resources (leading to hazards such as unstable scaffolding, or platforms with wide gaps);*

*Fatigue from long working hours and a lack of rest days;*

*External conditions such as Singapore's weather.*

The companies' ultimate priority is to maximize profits. As one worker says: *"The company does not care if we live or die, as long as we help them earn a lot of money."*

Long working hours are normal. One worker had undertaken a series of 24-hour shifts before he had an accident. The report notes that work patterns *"of 10-13 hour work days, seven days a week, are common among Chinese construction workers."* In TWC2's experience, they are common among Bangladeshi and Indian workers too. Chok cites a statement by academic researcher Margaret Chan, who looked into conditions in China, that fatigue is *"the number one accident risk factor for construction workers."*

It might be thought that safety inspections would be one effective means of ensuring that standards are maintained, but this is not the case. One worker known as Cai, interviewed by Chok, says that, in almost eight years working in Singapore, he'd never observed a surprise inspection. Every time inspectors came, his employers had advance notice and cleared up in anticipation. Another worker known as Gui said that the main contractor always knew when inspectors were coming and notified the sub-contractors, who would stop work on the higher floors of a building, where the worst violations normally took place.

*"Sometimes", says Gui, "before MOM safety officers arrive, we are told to go and drink tea! So, by the time they arrive, we are drinking tea and they cannot find anything."*

The report provides an overall survey of the safety problem rather than by making a series of proposals for raising safety standards, and discusses the role of managers, supervisors and others, as well as the absolute prioritization of profit, in the woeful prevailing conditions.

One disturbing aspect of the report is its discussion of the impact of policies aimed at reducing demand for migrant labour. Key tools for this are the raising of the levy on migrant workers in the construction sector and curbs on recruitment of workers. This worsens the problem of employers setting unreasonable targets for workers and increasing workloads, as the employers have an incentive to try to get more work out of a smaller pool of workers. It leads to workers trying to cut corners to save time and energy, which inevitably has consequences for their safety.

*"Risky Business"* stresses that, *"Singapore's workplace health and safety framework needs to be expanded to include workers' voices."* In its conclusions, it re-iterates the need for the empowerment of workers as vital to creating a safer working environment for them.

*"Risky Business"* ought to be read by anyone who wonders why the accident rate in Singapore's construction industry is as high as it is, and by everyone who wants something to be done to reduce it.

**John Gee**

The full *"Risky Business"* report can be found on the HealthServe website: <http://www.healthserve.org.sg>

*\*All quotations from the report are in italics*

### Bangladeshi Worker Numbers

A Bangladeshi NGO, the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) at the University of Dhaka, in its report, "Labour Migration from Bangladesh 2013: Achievements and Challenges", says that, after Oman,

"Singapore was the second highest migrant receiving country for Bangladesh in 2013. This year a total of 60,057 workers migrated to this country which was 14.76% of total number of workers who went abroad."

Since RMMRU had no record of the number of workers who returned home during that time, it could not be established by how much the number of workers in any country increased or, indeed, whether it had actually fallen.

The report notes a growth in the numbers of Bangladeshi women going to work abroad since 2006, when a ban on unskilled and semi-skilled women leaving Bangladesh to work was lifted. A total of 56,400 left in 2013, with the Middle East being the main destination, although the report notes that some went to Hongkong as domestic workers. Despite the growth in labour migration, RMMRU reported a fall in the total value of remittances last year.

### Abused Domestic Workers

In a 9<sup>th</sup> October article, "New York Times" writer Kim Barker introduces photographs of abused domestic workers taken by Steve McCurry, with the workers' agreement. McCurry is a veteran photo-journalist, perhaps best known for his "Afghan girl" picture of 1985. For this series, he visited a shelter in Hongkong and visited returned workers in the Philippines, Indonesia and Nepal. In some instances, the women would clearly also answer the description of being trafficked – Beth, a Filipina sold by her sister to a family in Manila when she was 10 years old, and Indra, recruited to be a domestic worker in Kuwait and subsequently forced to work in a brothel.

The article, with links to seven photos, can be found here:

[http://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/10/09/behind-closed-doors-abuse-of-domestic-workers/?\\_php=true&\\_type=blogs&\\_r=0](http://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/10/09/behind-closed-doors-abuse-of-domestic-workers/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0)

LOG ONTO OUR WEBSITE [www.twc2.org.sg](http://www.twc2.org.sg) AND JOIN OUR FACEBOOK PAGE FOR UP-TO-DATE NEWS, EVENTS AND FEATURES, AND DEVELOPMENTS IN THE COMMUNITY OF MIGRANT WORKER ADVOCATES.

TO HELP ENSURE TWC2 CONTINUES ITS WORK TO RAISE AWARENESS AND IMPROVE CONDITIONS FOR MIGRANT WORKERS, PLEASE CONSIDER SUPPORTING OUR WORK THROUGH A DONATION. YOU COULD SEND A CHEQUE, DO A BANK TRANSFER (details below), or LOG ON TO THE WEBSITE and donate through the fundraising portals [sggives.org](http://sggives.org) or [give.sg](http://give.sg).

Account name: Transient Workers Count Too  
Bank: DBS, 6 Shenton Way, DBS Bldg, Singapore 068809  
Type: Current Account  
Number: 006-900625-0  
Bank code: 7171  
Swift Code: DBSSSGSG

If paying in US\$ from overseas, provide details of DBS agent bank as follows: *Pay to Bank of New York Mellon, New York (SWIFT address: IRVTUS3N) FED ABA: 021000018. For account of: DBS Bank Ltd, Singapore (SWIFT address: DBSSSGSG)*

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