

DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS

INTERCEDE for the Rights of Domestic Workers, Caregivers and Newcomers

April 2005

Toll Free 1-877-483-4554



SOME HIGHLIGHTS OF BEIJING+10

It has been ten years since the Beijing Platform for Action came out of the huge world conference on women held in China in 1995 - an important milestone in the international movement to emancipate women from their subordinate status in society.

The Beijing Platform for Action is a long list of commitments that member States of the United Nations agreed to implement so that women's lives everywhere would be free of inequality and oppression.

Where women suffered a disadvantage or continued discrimination, the Platform prescribed actions to be taken. It focused on the key aspects of women's lives and the institutions that needed changing: poverty, the economy, education, media, human rights, violence against women including trafficking, the girl-child, health, decision-making processes, mechanisms for advancement...

After ten years, how much progress has been achieved in these fields to make women's lives around the world better?

This is the question that was posed by a gathering of women at the United Nations headquarters in New York this past March. Called Beijing+10, the meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women heard a variety of assessments about the Platform.

"A lot of progress has been made but ...there's much more that needs to be done to put the Platform for Action into practice, especially in terms of alleviating poverty, improving health, creating opportunity for economic advancement and political leadership, and reducing human rights violations." This was the assessment made by Rachel Mayanja who is special adviser on gender issues to the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan.

Mr. Annan himself opened the conference by noting certain obstacles to women's progress such as the continuation of the lucrative trade and traffic in women and children, and the increasing menace of hiv/aids.

Canada's performance evaluated

At home, the Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA) described the post-Beijing era as a "Decade of Going Backwards" for Canadian women.

In a response of the same title to the United Nations Questionnaire on the implementation of the Platform for Action, FAFIA cited the erosion of income security benefits, social programs and services as pushing back the progress of Canadian women., Government changes made to employment insurance, social assistance and legal aid, among others, made it harder for women to improve their employment, take care of their children and escape violence, according to FAFIA.

Noting that immigrant and women of colour and more so, aboriginal women, experienced poverty and the effects of government cutbacks differently worse than other women, the FAFIA document criticizes the governments of Canada at all levels for not only weakening their commitment to the equality of women, but also pushing women's issues off their agenda.

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*All Domestic/Caregiver workers,
Newcomers and those on Temporary Work Permit
are welcome to attend*

INTERCEDE MEETING
Every First Sunday of the Month

(if holiday, meeting is on the second Sunday)

Apply for/renew your membership - \$10.

Sunday, April 3, 2005, 3-5 p.m.
At Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil St.
(one block south of College cor. Spadina)

Topic: Some Changes in the Live in Caregiver Program
By INTERCEDE Counsellors

See you there!

Filipinas connect globalization to poverty

Filipino participants in the Beijing+10 meeting underscored the deleterious \$7 Billion human trafficking "industry" as a source of violence against women while connecting the dots between globalization and worsening poverty in their country.

Two victims of trafficking for prostitution, Minda Pascual and Elisa Ebrele, shared their experiences of violence and described how the US-Philippine Visiting Forces Agreement has expanded the presence of American military personnel and how joint military exercises lead to an influx of traffickers, pimps and prostitutes wherever they are held.

Abigail Acuba, a research coordinator of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women – Asia Pacific, stressed the importance of acknowledging the impact of economic globalization policies as barriers to the empowerment of women in the South while Jean Enriquez, deputy executive director of the same organization, called for reaffirmation of the Beijing Declaration's principles on reproductive and sexual rights.

Multiple Oppression a reality

Meanwhile the Women's International Coalition for Economic Justice, WICEJ, together with other international women's groups held a workshop and passed a resolution seeking to advance our understanding of women's human rights by incorporating the concept of multiple oppressions of women and their intersectionality.

The resolution sought to make this as a critical addition which must be incorporated into the advocacy and policy of governments, agencies and civil society.

This advancement in understanding women's human rights was significantly stepped up at the 2001 World Conference on Racism when it was noted that multiple forms of discrimination impact women differently, and "can lead to a deterioration in their living conditions, poverty, violence and the limitation or denial of their human rights".

Women who face barriers created by the intersection of race, ethnicity, caste, class, gender, ability, age, national origin, citizenship status and sexual orientation, are among the poorest of the poor and the most sexually and economically exploited, according to the resolution.



CARIBBEAN CONNECTION BLACK SUPPORT GROUP

If you are a Caregiver or a domestic worker and are interested in attending a Caribbean Connection Meeting please call Bernice Small at (416) 483-4554 ext 22.

**Next Meeting: Saturday, April 9, 2005
INTERCEDE Office from 2:00-4:00 p.m.**

INTERCEDE TRIP TO MONTREAL & OTTAWA

May 20 - 22, 2005

Depart Toronto = May 20 - Friday mid-night (12:00 a.m.)
Arrive Montreal = May 21 - Saturday morning (07:00 a.m.)
Depart Montreal = May 21 - Saturday afternoon (06:00 p.m.)
Arrive Ottawa = May 21 - Saturday evening (08:00 p.m.)

Check in at:

Carleton University – Ottawa
Canada's Capital University,
261 Stormont House,

Depart Ottawa = May 22 - Sunday afternoon
Arrive Toronto = May 22 - Sunday evening (10:00 p.m.)

SEATS LIMITED, RESERVE NOW!

Please call Genie for further information at
416-483-4554 ext. 21

THANKS, ACFA, FOR TAX CLINIC

INTERCEDE members, Board and staff would like to thank the group of Filipino Accountants from the Association of Filipino-Canadian Accountants (AFCA) who rendered their free services to do tax clinic at INTERCEDE office on March 20, 2005.

There were 62 members of INTERCEDE who had their income tax returns done from 12:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. It was a successful tax clinic like every year in the past. But this time our numbers increased by 1.5% from the previous year with a total of 70 individuals served.

Once again, we salute AFCA's unending support to INTERCEDE. More power to your association and we will see you again next taxation season.

ADDED REQUIREMENT FOR LIVE-IN CAREGIVERS

There is a newly-added mandatory requirement when one applies for Permanent Residence under the LCP.

One must show proof of two years of authorized full-time employment as a live-in caregiver by providing one of the following documents covering the period:

- ☞ Statement of earnings showing hours worked, gross income and deductions made by the employer, or
- ☞ Record of wages and deductions sent to Canada Revenue Agency (CRA); or
- ☞ Record of employment for all previous employers.

You should ask your employer to give you a statement of earnings from the very first payday that you receive your salary in order to avoid any hassle when it's time for you to apply for permanent residence.

For more information, call INTERCEDE at
416-483-4554 and ask for a counselor.

COCO'S CORNER:

Many caregivers report feeling frustrated and confused after calling the CIC Call Centre. They say they only receive basic information when enquiring about dates, requirements, or status of their immigration applications. Some people expect the CIC Call Centre to provide advice or suggestions, however you should be aware of the following:

- ☞ Call Centre agents are not Immigration Officers or Counsellors. Agents will only provide basic information.
- ☞ Canada Immigration officers or counsellors usually communicate with you through letters, or may telephone you to discuss the status of applications or requests sent to the Vegreville office, or at the local Processing Centres (such as in Mississauga, Etobicoke or in Scarborough).
- ☞ It is important that you ask for the name of the officer and the name of their office. This will help you address any additional correspondence to their attention.
- ☞ Keep a record of your contact with Immigration for future reference.

INTERCEDE counsellors are often asked if we are lawyers or have worked as Immigration Consultants. The answer to both is, "no". Counsellors have varying levels of education but rely principally on their experience and training to be able to do their jobs and assist clients. We have received training provided by Immigration, the Ministry of Labour, community legal agencies and especially by the Ontario Coalition of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI). This latter organizes a series of training workshops lasting three days every year in a conducive setting like Geneva Park. Counsellors have also attended workshops provided by other community agencies on issues such as anti-racism, housing, health, accreditation, safety, and women's issues.

INTERCEDE has been providing information, assistance, and advocating for the rights of caregivers, domestic workers and newcomers for the past twenty years. We continue to learn from our day-to-day work with those we serve. We'd like to thank those who have given testimonials of our service, some of which have been published in past newsletters. We appreciate your support!

Relying on friends, relatives, other caregivers, or employment agencies for information or advice about the Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP) requirements can sometimes cause problems such as jeopardizing one's immigration status, delays in Employment Validations or Employment Authorizations, or being unable to complete the required 24-months of live-in work within three years under the LCP.

- ☞ Please do not rely only on the advice of your employment agency, consultant, friends, other caregivers, or family members. They probably have good intentions but may not have all the current information regarding LCP Requirements.
- ☞ We suggest you get a second opinion from other sources. You can contact Immigration, HRSD, the Ministry of Labour, a legal aide clinic, or call INTERCEDE and speak to one of our counsellors.
- ☞ We also encourage you to attend INTERCEDE's monthly meetings or educational workshops for information and support.

Stress is toxic and will end up making you physically ill. So please consider the following:

- ☞ As the old saying goes, "Your body is your gold mine and your health is your wealth."
- ☞ Take time to re-charge physically and mentally by giving yourself a treat, doing something relaxing such as watching movies or reading, attending a party, seeing friends, or joining a community group like INTERCEDE for a day-trip.
- ☞ If you feel alone or isolated, make contact and get support. This can help you take good care of yourself.

Q and A

Q - I am waiting for the approval of my landed immigrant status. My aunt is aware that I have some savings from working in another country apart from what I saved from working as caregiver in Canada. She is encouraging me to partner with her to buy a house. I am hesitant because she has a lot of credit card debts and owes money from other people. Is there a way I can protect myself from being stuck with paying for the house by myself, in case she can't meet her financial responsibilities?

A - When you and your aunt apply for a mortgage, the financial institution will do a credit history check on the both of you. If your aunt has a bad credit record, the bank or financial institution will probably not approve your mortgage loan. However, even if your aunt is approved, you may want to seriously consider whether she will make a good investment partner and co-owner of a house.

Q - I missed a promotion in my workplace because my SIN starts with number "9". I worked under the LCP and applied for my permanent residence in December 2003. Do I need to wait for the release of my landed status before I could apply for a new Social Insurance Number?

A - Yes, you can only apply for a new SIN as soon as you receive approval of your permanent residence application and are issued the temporary document that indicates that you have applied for the Permanent Residence Card.

You are not alone in this kind of situation, missing the opportunity for promotion due to delayed approval and issuance of your landed status. You may want to call or send a letter to the Immigration processing centre and request to expedite your papers or you can come to INTERCEDE and one of the counsellors will help you follow-up.

Q - I received my permanent residence eight months ago, after which I applied for work at a nursing home, hospital, daycare centre, and public library. I stated in my resume that I was a caregiver for the elderly as well as children for over two years. I also stated that I am a graduate in Food and Nutrition, and I have taken caregiver courses and upgraded my first aid skills. I am very frustrated that I have not found employment up to now and that my caregiving work is not being given consideration. Why are over four years of caregiving skills in Canada not considered work experience?

A - This is frustrating not only to you but also to newcomers and other immigrants who face difficulties in finding a job. We suggest you participate in a Job Search Program that will assist your resume preparation, prepare you for job interviews and assist your networking. You can call and register for INTERCEDE Job Search Workshop by calling Des Balce at (416) 483-4554 ext. 30.



Success Story Feature



Fernanda "Deng" Munoz
Data Quality Representative, Lifeline Canada

Never can anyone in the Philippines imagine that migrating to Canada would be like landing on another planet! When I came here, I realized that my good English skills back home were not really as good as I thought. This made communicating quite a scary experience for me at first. Even my extensive work experience in an international company and my good education were disregarded. Looking for a well-earning and decent job - which was my primary goal in immigrating here - did not bring immediate rewards and I found myself working at a very physically demanding job in a factory, where I met similarly disheartened immigrants from different countries. I was barely able to make ends meet because I was not getting enough work.

With a much-reduced confidence, I joined INTERCEDE's Job Search Workshop after two months of fruitlessly looking for employment. Des Balce, the facilitator, handed our small group, the "keys" to looking for a job in Canada - composing a resume, looking at the hidden job market, handling interviews, and sharing invaluable tips which all serious job hunters should know. Past JSW participants who shared their emotion-filled success stories, greatly uplifted our downtrodden spirits and deflated egos - making us realize that with great determination, there is hope for us in Canada after all.

Over a month after the workshop, I landed a job as Data Quality Representative at Lifeline Systems Canada, a leading personal response center, of which I am proud to become part. With this job, I feel that I have finally reached a door at the end of a long, cold and uncertain corridor. I feel too that this door is going to lead me to other greater opportunities.

My deepest thanks and more power to INTERCEDE for making my transition a very smooth and enriching one.



FREE JOB SEARCH WORKSHOP
FOR CAREGIVERS & NEWCOMERS

WHEN: SUNDAY
April 3, 10, 17 & 24, 2005
May 1, 8, 15 & 29, 2005
June 5, 12, 19 & 26, 2005
July 10, 17, 24 & 31, 2005

TIME : 10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
WHERE: INTERCEDE
234 Eglinton Ave E., Suite 405
Toronto, On, M4P 1K5

Please call (416)483-4554 ext. 30 or 21 to sign up.
Seating is limited.
Funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada

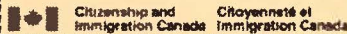
INTERCEDE

Address: 234 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 405
Toronto Ontario
M4P 1K5

Regular Hours: Mon-Fri 9 am - 4 p.m.
Telephone: (416) 483-4554
Fax: (416) 483-9781
Toll-Free: 1-877-483-4554
E-mail: info@intercedetoronto.org

INTERCEDE STAFF:
Fely Villasin - Part - Time Executive Director
Jo Alcampo - Interim Administrative Co-ordinator
Des Balce - JSW Facilitator
Columbia Diaz - Settlement Counsellor & Program Manager
Anita Fortuno - Settlement Counsellor
Bernice Small - Settlement Counsellor
Genie Policarpio - Intake & Administrative Assistant

We wish to thank: Citizenship and Immigration Canada - ISAP Program and Job Search Program; Ontario Status of Women; the Municipality of Toronto CSGP, Maytree Foundation and Trillium Foundation grant programs, for their financial support..



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