

DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS

monthly newsletter of the Toronto Organization for Domestic Workers

January 1991

INTERCEDE links up with International Women and Health Movement, Philippine Advocacy Organizations for Migrant Women

In a presentation made at one of two special focus workshops on Women and Migration during the sixth International Women and Health Meeting (IWHM), INTERCEDE Coordinator, Fely Villasin, posed a challenge to the international women's movement to struggle for migrant women workers' and domestic workers' rights within their nation's borders.

That struggle involves a serious effort to uplift the value of women's work and to create economic alternatives that would spur development and employment in economically-depressed countries in order to put a stop to the "trade in maids" and end exploitative migration policies.

The Meeting took place for the first time in an Asian country, Manila, Philippines, from November 3 to 9 and assembled 354 women delegates from 64 countries.

Among the resolutions passed on the last day of the Meeting was one sponsored by INTERCEDE that asked the assembled delegates to focus attention on the health, in general, and mental health, in particular, of migrant women workers, most of whom are domestic workers from the

Philippines, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and other economically-depressed countries of the world. The resolution called for advocacy and support for equal protection of the rights of migrant women workers. It also encouraged coordination among women concerned with migration in the countries of source and destination of women workers.

Among the women Fely met at the Meeting were Japanese women actively working with migrant women entertainers and mail-order brides; a Malaysian woman active in the issue of the "maid trade"; Australian women working with immigrant women factory workers and mail-order brides; Bangladeshi women concerned with domestic workers exported from their country to the Middle East, etc.

In the weeks that followed, Fely met with Filipino women advocates and organizations, both government and non-government (GO-NGO), to exchange information and views and present the work of INTERCEDE on behalf of domestic workers.

Among the organizations she met with was

INTERCEDE monthly meeting will be on Sunday, January 6, 1991, from 3 to 5 p.m. at the Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil Street (near corner Spadina).

We will hold workshops on "Domestic Workers' Needs" and come up with recommendations for improving access to services from Government and non-government institutions including INTERCEDE.

Members who want to renew their membership for 1991 must come at 2 p.m.

All INTERCEDE members are reminded that they must renew their membership for 1991 otherwise their membership is terminated as of December 31, 1990.

CLASP Legal Clinic services will be available.

DIWATA, the broadest coalition of women's groups, networks, and alliances. She also met with Kanlungan, Kaibigan, and Kakampipi, affiliated organizations that advocate for and render services to migrants workers and their families and have extensive networks abroad.

Fely had a chance to attend three Pre-Departure Orientation Seminars in which domestic workers spent a full day of preparation for their work destinations abroad. According to her, "these PDO seminars, while well-intentioned and generally necessary, can't do more than just prepare prospective domestic workers for the worst and exhort them to "grin and bear" a fate they have been forced to choose."

"No day passed without a story in the media about abuses suffered by domestic workers in foreign countries," Fely said. "They range from indignities such as being spat upon to horrific stories of repeated physical beatings and rape. Stories that, by the way, are not unfamiliar to INTERCEDE's Service Unit."

And yet, hundreds of thousands of women leave the Philippines each year and spend their family's lifetime savings or mortgage their property or incur up to a year's wage equivalent in loans just to become a domestic worker abroad and earn a monthly wage of as low as US\$130.

In 1989 alone, out of more than half a million migrant workers processed by the Philippine government, 187,000 were categorized as domestic workers. Most of these women went through recruitment agencies, licensed or

unlicensed, that are notorious for charging excessive and unlawful fees. In that year, Canada admitted 10,185 foreign domestic workers, 5,592 were from the Philippines.

In a 32-page report of her trip submitted to INTERCEDE's Board of Directors, Fely raises some questions and perspectives that organizations like INTERCEDE must consider as an advocate for women's equality and workers' rights in Canada:

"The exploitation of migrant workers, and in particular of domestic workers, is an international phenomenon that is justified and perpetrated because of national exigencies within the protective boundaries of nations. Therefore, this world-wide exploitation must be fought and resolved on an international scale by women and workers, unimpeded politically and ideologically by national frontiers."

She adds: "It is clear that our work at INTERCEDE must be informed by the larger issues, the inequality among nations and the exploitation of the so-called Third World not just in terms of their "natural resources" but more significantly of their human resources....we must contribute our bit to alleviating the world-wide plight of women leaving home and family to cross continents and serve in other women's homes." That contribution includes the responsibility to situate the struggle of migrant domestic workers within the women's and workers' movements in Canada, to strengthen women's networks internationally, exchange information and initiate coordinated campaigns.

We wish to thank the Employment and Immigration Canada (Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program); Secretary of State (Multiculturalism and Women's Program); Ontario Ministry of Citizenship; Ontario Women's Directorate; the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto (Community and Social Services); and the City of Toronto for their continuing support.

RENEWAL SUBSCRIPTION:

NEW SUBSCRIPTION: **CHANGE OF ADDRESS:**

MAIL TO: INTERCEDE, 489 College St., Suite 402, Toronto, Ontario M6G 1A5

Please send DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS to:

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YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

Intercede Members:	FREE	Non-member Domestic	\$ 5.00
Non-Profit Organizations	FREE	Others	\$10.00

What Choices do you Have in Upgrading Courses?

Upgrading is one of the criteria that Immigration looks at in assessing you for landed status.

Nora Angeles Richardson is volunteering her services to assist domestic workers in deciding what career changes they can make and what upgrading courses to take.

Domestic workers on Open Permit can also get assistance in job search and resume preparation from Nora.

This INTERCEDE service is **free** and available **by appointment** on Saturday mornings, from 10 am to 12 noon.

Call 324-8751 now for an appointment!

WARNING

This Will Be Your Last Issue Of Our Newsletter If...

1. You are a **MEMBER** but did not renew your membership for 1991.
 - Renew your membership by attending the next monthly meeting and filling a renewal form and paying a fee of \$5.
2. You are a **NON-MEMBER** recipient but did not renew your subscription for 1991.
 - Renew your subscription for January to December 1991 by sending us the form on the left

PLUS \$5 if you are a domestic worker

OR \$10 if you are not a domestic worker nor a non-profit organization.

3. You are a **NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION** but did not renew your subscription for 1991.
 - Renew your subscription for January to December 1991 by sending us the form on the left. No remittance is expected but donations are welcome.

We would love to continue sending the Domestic Cross-Cultural News to you but we need to hear from you and update our mailing list. It will save us money if our newsletter is going to the people who want to get them at their correct address. So, please take the time to fill the form on the left and send to us. Thank you.

Have a Problem that you want to Talk to Someone About?

Domestic workers work in isolation and unlike women who work in a factory or in an office setting, they don't have much chance to interact with fellow workers.

This is why INTERCEDE organizes activities that bring domestic workers together such as the monthly educational meetings, facilitators workshops and social events. This is why we have the Service Unit where counsellors are on hand to assist them with their individual needs in the area of immigration, labour, human rights, etc.

Now, INTERCEDE is attempting, with the help of professional counsellors, to address the need of some domestic workers to talk about their personal emotional situations and to be able to find support in resolving their personal and emotional problems.

If you need to talk to someone about something that is bothering you personally, if you need emotional support, call and book an appointment now at 324-8751.

COCO'S CALENDAR

Karen Serwonka and I have been traveling to...

London, Ottawa, and Peterborough meeting domestic workers and discussing with them their needs and concerns. We greatly appreciate the help of Mark Priest and the London Cross-Cultural Learners Centre; of the Ottawa Multicultural Homemakers Association and in particular, Elma Reyes, and Laura Agcambot; of Lynda McKerr of the Peterborough New Canadian Centre, and of our own director now resident of Peterborough, Sedef Arat-Koc.

In Toronto, we also met with Caribbean domestic workers and with Spanish-speaking domestic workers to discuss their needs. Many thanks to Sayonara Mairena from the Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples for her help.

It was quite a Christmas Party ...

having the pleasure to meet and listen to Ontario's Minister Responsible for Women's Issues, Anne Swarbrick. We feel confident that Ms. Swarbrick will make sure Premier Bob Rae does not neglect the concerns of domestic workers in Ontario.

The X'Mas committee was a bundle of dynamo, organizing the program consisting of games, dance contest and exchanging gifts. I must mention Iya Garcia, Helen Usana, Marianne Montehermoso, Eva Juan, Imelda Lacaden, Salome Andrada, Rosalina Parale, Jessica Mateo and Zenaida Reyes.

Special mention deserved by active domestic workers from Thailand for their charming program contribution. Carol Peters and Enid Singh who emceed and led the afternoon's activities, to one and all, you did a great job!

**HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL,
LET'S HOPE FOR THE BEST IN '91!**
by Columbia Tarape Diaz

Are You A Newly-arrived Domestic Worker?

On February 17, INTERCEDE will hold a one-day orientation for newcomers to the Foreign Domestic Movement (FDM) program. This orientation consists of discussions about the requirements a domestic worker must follow under this program, about her rights as a worker in Canada, and other topics relevant to a newcomer in this country.

The orientation meeting will start promptly at 10 a.m. and end at 4 p.m. of Sunday, February 17, 1991 and will be open only to domestic workers in the FDM program. The site of this meeting will be announced later.

If you or a friend want to join this orientation meeting, call 324-8751 to register or come to the next monthly educational meeting and register there.

CARD OF THANKS

***To all who supported INTERCEDE
in one way or another during the
past year, THANK YOU and we will
continue to count on you in the
coming year!***

Do You Want To Help Intercede Members Complete Their Tax Returns?

Individuals, community groups and organizations are encouraged to participate in a training program sponsored by Revenue Canada, Taxation that will teach how to complete tax returns for newcomers in Canada.

It helps if you are already familiar with completing your own tax return, however, no previous experience is necessary, just your desire to help others.

Volunteers are shown how to complete returns and what changes there are to the 1991 forms. They are expected to be able to help others after going through the training.

Acting as a tax volunteer is both easy and rewarding. Contact the Public Affairs officer of your local District Taxation office if you want to participate in a training program for tax volunteers:

Scarborough District Office 973-4163
Toronto District Office 973-9415
North York District Office 973-5437
Mississauga District Office 566-6168

INTERCEDE President At Human Rights Confab

Mary Jarrell, President of INTERCEDE, attended a conference on "Human Rights and Canadian Solidarity" in Ottawa last Dec. 9-10 sponsored by the Sec. of State, Multiculturalism & Citizenship. There it was stressed that the rights of domestic workers should be no different from those of any other Canadian worker.

While Judy Rebick, President of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, emphasized the importance of human rights for women in Canada, Glenda Simms, President of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, told Conference participants about INTERCEDE's report and recommendations to the Minister of Employment and Immigration to improve the current Foreign Domestic Movement program.

"INTERCEDE must continue to lobby in the New Year for its proposed changes to the FDM," Mary said, "this is a valuable contribution to the progress of human rights in this country."

INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT

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