

# DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS

**INTERCEDE** for the Rights of Domestic Workers, Caregivers and Newcomers

March 2005

Toll Free 1-877-483-4554



## **STOP THE TRAFFICKING OF WOMEN TO JAPAN!**

We have been reading and hearing about the issue of trafficking in women in the past few years, and have observed how various countries, including Canada, have raised concerns about it both at the national and international levels.

We have learned of the various ways and means by which women are “trafficked” into slavery, prostitution, and yes, domestic labour abroad.

At the moment, for example, Canada is a top destination for so-called mail-order brides, which is a veritable form of trafficking in women.

The issue became again a focus of attention recently when Japan announced it would stop accepting Filipino women who are recruited as “performing artists”, yet soon find themselves involved in Japan’s sex industry as “hostesses”, “dohan” or dates or even prostitutes.

Immediate pressure was brought by recruiters as well as entertainers and their organization, and even by the Philippine government itself aimed at changing the new Japanese policy or at least delaying its implementation through a moratorium of several years.

This spurred an intensive lobbying initiated by a coalition of anti-trafficking and migrant workers’ organization against any form of moratorium and continuance of sending Filipinos as “entertainers” to Japan.

The coalition issued a statement on January 26 excerpts of which we are reprinting below:

### **Uphold the dignity and integrity of the Filipino artist and stop the trafficking of women to Japan!**

We are NGOs working with and alongside women entertainers who have worked in Japan and who have seen the realities of “entertainment work” in Japan up close. Informed by years of research and advocacy on the issue both in the Philippines and Japan, we propose to take a more critical view of the issue towards amore holistic and objective perspective. We are aware that the short term impact of the policy changes in Japan will negatively affect women and their families. Strategically, however, these policy changes will strengthen the professionalization of the entertainment industry and weed out the undesirable and exploitative aspects of the business.

Historically, this is not the first time that the issue of trafficking has been raised. As early as the 1980’s NGOs in the Philippines and Japan have been reporting increasing cases of trafficking of Filipinas, Thais and East European and Latin American women in Japan. For some years now, many studies have documented the sexual exploitation and illegal labour practices in entertainment establishments where Filipino entertainers are deployed. This is an opportune time to reexamine the entertainment deployment policy to Japan given that Japan itself, after a thorough and thoughtful study, has admitted the prevalence of human trafficking within the context of the entertainment industry.

From a decade of decrease deployment of Filipina entertainers in the 1990s, the number of deployed entertainers to Japan began to show a significant increase in the year 2001. This increase occurred alongside the adoption of measures by the Philippine government which effectively deregulated the overseas entertainment sector through DOLE Department Order No. 10 and the lowering of the minimum age requirement to 18. Under a deregulated policy environment, the deployment of entertainers flourished with Philippine government data registering a recorded number of Filipina entertainers deployed to Japan in 2003. In recent years, charges of corruption also hounded Philippine government officials and the (formal and informal) overseas entertainment industry involved in the testing, certification and deployment of Filipina entertainers.

*Cont. next page*

### **REMINDER:**

**INTERCEDE  
FREE Income Tax Clinic**

Sunday, March 20, 2005,  
1:00—5:00 p.m.

INTERCEDE’s Office,  
234 Eglinton Ave. E, Ste. 405

*Note: INTERCEDE has no meeting on March 6, 2005 instead*

**INTERCEDE Celebrates  
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY 2005**

**Saturday, March 5, 2005**

11:00 AM : Rally at OISE Auditorium,  
252 Bloor St., West (Get off at St. George Subway)  
1:00 PM: March

***Please join us. Look for INTERCEDE Banner and contingent.  
See you there!***

While we understand that many of our women who go to Japan as entertainers do so mainly to work and earn for their families back home, the type of work that they are compelled to do makes them extremely vulnerable to sexual abuse and harassment, prostitution and labour exploitation.

While some entertainers do end up performing in decent entertainment establishment, most end up doing G.R.O. or hostessing work in clubs, bars, café and other night spots in Japan despite their intensive skills training as singers or dancers in the Philippines. This observation had been articulated by Philippine and Japanese NGOs and even by POEA and DOLE officials and later, though belatedly by Japanese officials. Entertainers are often valued not so much because of their singing or dancing skills for which they were trained for, but on how many customers they can manage to lure into the club every night. Sitting with customers, serving them drinks, wearing sexy clothes, and sometimes performing sexy or nude dances become part of the "work" that is imposed by club owners.

Other illegal practices such as flying booking (transfer from one club to another), and cleaning the club were also made part of the entertainers' job though they were not actually specified in their work contracts. It is customary to take away the passports of entertainers to prevent them from running away. Contrary to the specification in their contracts entertainers normally receive just ¼ of their legally mandated salary which they can only get after six months of working. Withholding their salaries also one way of taking control of these women who then must rely on commissions and tips from customers just so they can send money to their families every month.

[In addition,] the Philippine government, who is supposed to protect them from labour contract violations, initiated the reduction of the entertainer's salaries from Y200,000 monthly income with free food and accommodation, to Y100,000 excluding allowances. This is a clear case of diminution of benefits which have negatively affected Filipina entertainers.

The issue of trafficking has been around for many years but it is only in the last decade, that the issue received high visibility and action on the part of the international community. As a result of persistent NGO advocacy from women's groups and migrant groups, the trafficking of women and children especially for sexual exploitation all over the world is now universally condemned and criminalized. The Philippines itself has actively promoted an anti-trafficking of women and girls resolution in the UN (Commission on the Status of Women, Human Rights Committee, and the General Assembly) as a policy agenda since 1994. It also actively supported the adoption of the UN Optional Protocol on Trafficking in person Especially Women and Children. In 2003, the Philippines passed the historic anti-trafficking law in the Philippines after years of advocacy by women's groups. It has since been hailed as one of the most comprehensive and progressive laws by other countries.

Trafficking of women and children in Japan has almost always been associated with the entertainment/sex industries which are heavily controlled by syndicates like the Yakuza. The studies show a pattern of sexual and labour exploitation without recourse to legal remedies from the Japanese government which previously had no legal standards on trafficking cases. Various methods and degrees of coercion and control are employed to compel women even with legal papers, to give in to the sexual advances of customers even in legally operating bars and entertainment establishments. In the worst of cases, women are virtually imprisoned, enslaved and subjected to the most horrendous violations (case files of BATIS, DAWN and CATW-AP)

From mid-1995 to the present, important initiatives have been taken by the international community against trafficking. The European community passed their own policy measures against Trafficking. The US, Thailand and the Philippines passed their anti-trafficking laws. South Asia passed the SAARC Convention, while the ASEAN has finalized its declaration against trafficking. Over the last ten years, when many countries and regions have taken action on trafficking, Japan found itself being criticized for not doing enough to address trafficking in its own territory.

It is in this light that Japan has taken serious steps to systematically address the issue of trafficking. In the last two years Japan has conferred with NGOs and other government agencies including those in the Philippines on their plan to institute stronger measures against trafficking. An Interagency Coordination Mechanism on trafficking in Persons was created in April 2004 in Japan. Subsequently, in Sept. 2004, official missions were dispatched to the Philippines, Thailand and Colombia to consult and inform the governments of the action plan to be implemented by Japan.

Though these actions came a bit too late, we affirm that these are steps in the right direction.

In the Philippines, several consultative dialogues on the problems and issues of OPAs have been taking place between government, NGOs and civil society since 2001 reiterating cases of abuse and trafficking. Some of these discussions in fact have yielded very important recommendations that would have complemented Japan's initiatives. However, it seems that the Philippine government itself had not seriously taken steps to prepare for a contingency plan in the event of possible policy changes from Japan.

#### Moving Forward: Some recommendations

##### For the Philippine government:

1. Strengthen the professionalization of the entertainment industry.
2. The Philippine government must prepare and implement a concrete and realistic contingency plan to retrain and provide decent and gainful local employment for women who will be dislocated by the new immigration policy of Japan.
3. Implement the Anti-Trafficking Law of the Philippines 2003 (RA 9208).  
Address the issue of Filipino-Japanese children, as a consequence of the massive deployment of Filipina entertainers to Japan.

##### For the Japanese Government:

1. In the implementation of their new immigration policy, Japan must provide protection, resources and services to trafficked women.

2. Japan must strictly monitor the operation of their entertainment establishments with a view to eliminating the illegal, abusive and exploitative practices that have been documented by various studies.
3. Ensure that Filipino artists are employed in decent and dignified entertainment establishments.
4. Japan needs to address the demand side of trafficking, particularly the male demand for sexual services that creates the conditions for trafficking;
5. Japan should immediately ratify the UN Optional Protocol on Trafficking in Person Especially Women and Children;
6. Japan must take measure to prevent the use of fake marriages arrangements as a means to enter Japan.
7. Japan must address the issue of Filipino-Japanese children.

The issues of trafficking and sexual exploitation that are attendant to the mass marketing of Filipina as "entertainers" have long been a festering issue. While the monetary rewards cannot be denied, we must not lose sight of the other consequences of this type of migration. It is time to take stock of the impacts and consequences of the deployment of entertainers to Japan holistically and realistically – the denigration of the integrity of genuine Filipino artists, the sexual exploitation and abuse of our women, a culture of dependency and generations of abandoned Japanese Filipino children.

Let us take this opportunity to once again affirm the dignity of our women and the integrity of the Filipino artist!

**Signatories:**

Development Action for Women Network (DAWN), BAITIS Center for Women, BAITIS – AWARE, Center for Migrants Advocacy (CMA), Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines-Episcopal Commission on the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itenerant People (CBCP-ECMI), Coalition Against Trafficking in Women Asia Pacific (CATW-AP), Kanlungan Center Foundation, Inc., Philippine Migrants' Rights Watch (PMRW), Scalabrini Migration Center, Third World Movement Against the Exploitation of Women, WomenLead.



**INTERCEDE's next monthly meeting**

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

**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, March 12, 2005  
INTERCEDE Office from 2:00-4:00 p.m.**

**IMPRESSIVE CELEBRATION**

On Sunday, February 6, 2005 Cecil Community centre was packed with caregivers, from the Carribean, Africa, the Philip-pines, and other nationalities for the celebration of Black History month. It was afternoon to remember not only for the food, music, or speeches from the guest speakers Mr. Warrick Russel, an Immigration Counsellor, representative from Jamaican-Canadian Association and Ms. Marilyn Olademeiji, a Board member of INTERCEDE, coordinator at the Toronto Rape Crisis, and a teacher at George Brown College. Both speakers talked about the significance and need for a celebration for Black History and quoted the words of Martin Luther King from his " I Have a Dream" speech.

The emcee for the afternoon activities was Karen Billings. The audience was treated with a special song and poem from Dovi Rocherter, Keisha Toby & Yche. One of the most senior members of INTERCEDE staff express how was gratifying it was to see members of the INTECEDE community commemorate Black History month in such a significant way.

We thank Bernice Small, INTERCEDE counsellor, for organizing the event with support from the Carribean Connection, INTERCEDE's Black Support Group, staff, Board members, and volunteers.



**FREE Income Tax Clinic**

Sunday, March 20, 2005, 1:00—5:00 p.m.  
INTERCEDE's Office, 234 Eglinton Ave. E, Ste. 405

*This is a volunteer offering of the  
Association of Filipino – Canadian Accountants (AFCA)*

**Please bring these supporting documents:**

1. Income Tax Return Form
2. T-4 Slips from employer
3. All T-Slips received from other sources:
  - ◆ T2202/A – Tuition and Education Amount
  - ◆ T5 – Investment Income
4. Receipts
  - ◆ RRSP
  - ◆ Rent
  - ◆ Donations
  - ◆ Medical Expenses
  - ◆ Tuition Fees
  - ◆ Union Dues /Interest Expense on Student Loan
5. Information required:
  - ◆ Marital Status
  - ◆ SIN of taxpayer (and spouse, if here)
  - ◆ Date of birth
  - ◆ Name of dependents, including parents living with tax payer
  - ◆ Income of spouse
6. 2003 Notice of Assessment from Revenue Canada, or taxpayer 2003 Income Tax Return.

**Please call Genie At 416-483-4554 ext. 21 for reservation.**



SUCCESS STORY FEATURES



Ren Balunsit, Technical Assistant Robetech Institute
Personal Support Worker (PSW), Baycrest Retirement Home

I left Kalinga Apayao to come to Canada to work for an elderly under the Live-In-Caregiver Program. I was a midwife then, full of hope that I can, work in the health and wellness sector, as soon as I'm done with my 24-month requirement of the LCP.

I'm so happy to have shared with JSW participants how I worked my way to land two jobs I now feel good about, through networking. I started first to juggle two volunteer opportunities at Baycrest Retirement Home and Robetech Health Institute, where I was eventually absorbed as part time staff. I now teach part time, as Technical Assistant, helping students on how to operate diagnostic equipment at Robetech. And as part time PSW at Baycrest.

This is why I'm so passionate in sharing that accessing the hidden job market is really a networking game. Other than the fact that volunteering refreshes our skills put at the back burner while completing the 24 month contract, this strategy makes us visible to prospective employers.

Also, it is worth mentioning that updating our computer skills, taking ESL (English as Second Language) courses and workshops like JSW that will help in adjusting to a new work culture after working in a household setting as caregiver.

To me, it is very important that I got myself PSW-certified. It was my ticket to get myself back on track in the health and wellness sector.

I should say, it was worth while to have braved the bitter cold Saturday and Sunday mornings of January 2003 to come to Job Search Workshop of INTERCEDE. That was where I learned how to plan my employment search and my life here in my new home country.



FREE JOB SEARCH WORKSHOP
FOR CAREGIVERS & NEWCOMERS

WHEN: SUNDAY
March 6, 13, 20 & 27, 2005
April 3, 10, 17 & 24, 2005
May 1, 8, 15 & 29, 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

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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

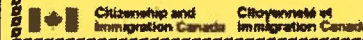
Columbia Diaz - Settlement Counsellor & Program Manager

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 and Trillium Foundations grant programs, for their financial support..



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