

# Combatting Racism Against Migrant Workers

By Maria Angela "May-an" C. Villalba  
Migrant Forum in Asia  
Quezon City, Philippines

## Roots of Racism, Discrimination and Xenophobia in Asia and the Pacific

Racism in Asia and the Pacific, as in other regions of the world, is ancient and has specific manifestations and meanings. Feelings of superiority based on racial or ethnic characteristics are certainly alive. The modern manifestations of racism in Asia may be easily discerned through varied attitudes displayed by apologists of Western colonialism who coined terms like "white man's burden" referring to colonised people. Or racism may be part of the rise of modern nationalism that sought to counter Western nationalism. But there are other factors involved. Religious beliefs, historical myths and epics, and culture as a whole in many instances combine so that one ethnic group excludes others and deprives them of their human rights.



www.asiapix.net

Apart from Australia and New Zealand which were colonised by Europeans and where Aboriginal people and Maori people became the object of Western racism, other forms of racism based on national and religious exclusivism can be found in most countries in Asia.

In Japan, the propagation of the myth of "Japan as one ethnic nation"<sup>1</sup> caused discrimination against

and along with patriarchy, serve as the cultural bases for racism and discrimination against foreigners, especially the weak and unprotected migrant workers now living in the industrialised countries of Asia.

### The Development of the Labour Export Market

Until the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, hiring of foreign contract workers was minimal in Asia and the

boom spread secondly to Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand and Malaysia.

The consecutive years where the NICs posted double-digit growth rates led shortly to shortages in their labour markets. Initially, Singapore and Hong Kong dealt with the crisis by maximising labour participation rates. At first this meant mainly that all the labour-depressed industries were encouraged to hire employable women, but soon enough this left a void that had to be filled by foreign domestic workers.

South Korea and Taiwan on the other hand directly hired foreign workers for manufacturing, fishing and construction, and later in the entertainment sector, hospital services, hotels and restaurants and the like.

The massive inflow of overseas workers into Japan and the newly industrialised countries did not prepare them to carefully consider the human rights aspect of their policy. Only through the action of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), other sections of civil society and the migrant workers themselves have host countries been made aware of the need to protect the latter's rights. But even so, progress has been slow.

As a matter of fact only two countries in Asia—the Philippines and Sri Lanka—have ratified the 1990 UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.

**In most of these countries, permanent or temporary residence is encouraged for foreigners whose skills and knowledge are deemed essential to their industrial, technological and educational competitiveness in the world. On the other hand, both Japan and Korea refuse to officially accept any "unskilled" workers from overseas.**

four minority groups: the indigenous Ainu, the Koreans, the Okinawans and the Buraku people.

In India, the Brahmin ideology of the Aryans categorised people into specific castes—the *Brahmin* (mouth of Brahma), *rajanya* (warriors), *Vaisha* (traders and agriculturists) and *sudra* (servants). Each caste served a social function. But there were those who belonged to none of the castes because they were perceived to be subhuman. Dravidian in origin, they were called "outcastes," "untouchables," *Harijans* or *Dalits*. They were cursed as subjects and had no rights.<sup>2</sup>

These religio-ethnic value systems and similar others are very much alive,

Pacific. Two significant international developments led to the growth of migration in the region. First was the oil boom of the mid-1970s, which led to massive investment in infrastructures by the Middle Eastern countries. For this they needed to bring in labourers, initially from their own region and later from Asia. The second development was the booming of the northeast Asian economies fuelled by the then vibrant export economy of Japan. Japanese labour had become expensive in the 1980s, forcing large and medium industries to relocate to south Korea, Taiwan and to some extent Hong Kong and Singapore. Thus, the phenomenon of the Asian tiger economies or the so-called Newly Industrialising Countries or Economies (NICs and NIEs). This

As local women join the active labour force, foreign women from poorer countries are imported to take over jobs designed to care for clients in the home, the children, differently abled and the aged. This they must do while entrusting the care of their own children to others in their home countries.

### Manifestations of Racism and Discrimination Against Migrant Workers

It was only in the last 12 to 13 years that migrant workers' problems and issues began to receive public attention. And it was only more recently that racism and other forms of discrimination have been seriously discussed.

Labour receiving countries faced the dilemma of remaining competitive in the market while reducing costs of production. On the one hand, the business sector cites the need to cut costs by hiring migrant workers. On the other hand, it recognises that labour importation is a highly charged political issue.<sup>3</sup> In Korea, the Korean Federation of Small and Medium Business (KSFB) determines how many workers are to be imported by factories, and when.<sup>4</sup>

In most of these countries, permanent or temporary residence is encouraged for foreigners whose skills and knowledge are deemed essential to their industrial, technological and educational competitiveness in the world. However, both Japan and Korea refuse to officially accept any "unskilled" workers from overseas. Except for the Nikkei-jen in Japan (migrant workers of Japanese descent mainly

coming from Peru and Brazil), "unskilled" migrants can only work in the two countries under the "trainee system" or as undocumented workers.<sup>5</sup>

Harsh working and living conditions are the norm. Many workers report being beaten by work supervisors. Moreover, migrants are engaged in low-end, low-technology industries that expose them to occupational accidents. They are forced to stay in their dormitories to restrict their movements.<sup>6</sup> These conditions force many workers to run away from the factories and become undocumented. In Japan, Malaysia and Taiwan, arrested migrant workers are brutalised in detention. The more well-known cases of physical abuse and violence committed by police and guards against undocumented migrants are reported in Japan and Malaysia.<sup>7</sup>

Malaysia and Thailand are net importers of migrant workers who provide cheap labour in the plantation and construction sectors where local people refuse to work because of low wages and harsh conditions. Migration is facilitated by *taikongs* (recruitment agencies) in Malaysia who are allowed to operate with less control. The illegal entry of migrant workers often leads to trafficking especially in women who

end up in sleazy clubs and entertainment houses. Many more die in the course of accidents in the high seas.

Restrictions are imposed on the migrant workers' right to organise and to join trade unions. While the modern constitutions of all Asian countries specify the freedom of assembly for all, many migrant workers are not allowed even to assemble except for sports and physical exercise (Saudi Arabia). Moreover, there is some hostility among members of trade unions against migrant workers whom they consider competitors for jobs and a factor for the lowering of local wages. In Japan, migrant workers are allowed to join community unions but these have limited bargaining power in the work place. Singapore prohibits them from organising or simply holding meetings in public places. In Hong Kong, which in many ways is the most liberal in Asia, migrant workers are allowed to organise and register their unions but since most of them are domestic helpers and have individual employers, their effectiveness as a bargaining unit is limited. They may however articulate their common demands to influence public policy relating to conditions of work.

Migrant workers are generally excluded from social and health services in receiving countries. As guest workers, holding a visa for less than one year or being undocumented, migrant workers are not eligible to join the National Health Insurance in Japan. Yet, it is urgent to provide social and health services to migrant workers since they are made to work in so-

called 3D (dirty, difficult and dangerous) jobs.<sup>8</sup> Recently, the mass media in Malaysia was full of the alarming news that migrants were infected with *Kala-azar* or “black fever,” a disease common in the Indian subcontinent. The Health Minister then proposed that all foreign workers be made to undergo medical tests at all entry points for HIV infection, hepatitis, tuberculosis, leprosy, sexually transmitted diseases and epilepsy.

#### **Discrimination against women**

Most migrant women work in gender specific jobs, i.e., those performed by women in traditional society. These include nursing, caring for children and the elderly, domestic work, sex services and entertainment. As local women join the active labour force, foreign women from poorer countries are imported to take over jobs designed to care for clients in the home, the children, differently abled and the aged. This they must do while entrusting the care of their own children to others in their home countries.

Foreign domestic helpers in Hong Kong were recently subjected to a five percent wage cut while other types of foreign workers were not.<sup>9</sup> In Australia, a foreign domestic worker is paid A\$5,000 per year while her local counterpart receives A\$15,000. A form of discrimination in Singapore is the law that bars migrant women from fraternising with or marrying local men. Designed to prevent them from staying more permanently, this law discriminates against migrant women and violates their reproductive rights.

Moreover, they face immediate deportation if they are confirmed to be pregnant. Here and in Malaysia migrant women are compelled to undergo a pregnancy test every six months.

Foreign migrant entertainers suffer additional discrimination. As holders of six-month visas, they are considered “guest” workers and therefore ineligible for health services and other protection under the Labor Standard Law. The increase in the number of women migrants has resulted in a growing number of marriages and relationships with local men. Stigmatised as “having been picked up from night clubs,” foreign wives are often rejected by Japanese families. In cases of divorce, a foreign mother is particularly vulnerable to losing parental rights over her child.<sup>10</sup>

Of the 1.7 million Sri Lankans who work in the Middle East, about 70 percent are women. Around 700,000 do domestic work while the rest are in factories and a few in hospitals. Most of them are subjected to abuse and sexual harassment by employers and the employers’ families. Wages are unpaid or delayed. High-caste Indians invoke caste-based practices to justify the oppression of country women working in their homes: it is all part of *karma*.<sup>11</sup> However, if the worker continues to insist on her rights, employers resort to threatening their families at home, who are, “in any case, heavily indebted to us (employers).”

#### **Discrimination against children**

Children of migrant working moth-



A Japanese-Filipino child—Children of mixed parentage suffer from discrimination in Japan.

ers, of mixed parentage (from mixed marriages and rapes) was something that was never considered by host and sending governments when they embarked on large-scale trade in human labour. After only 15 to 20 years, there has emerged a serious consequence and a compelling reality that governments and societies must reckon with. This is the increase in the number of children of mixed marriages.<sup>12</sup>

In Japan, 1,000 children under four years of age and without nationality were registered officially. Such children are not allowed by law to enter any school. Many local education councils find themselves in a dilemma when a child of mixed parentage is enrolled because they are required to report this to the immigration office. Government policy allows children to be temporarily admitted while waiting for deportation. Undocumented mothers are unwilling



Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong

to send their children to school for fear that they will be discovered and deported.

Children of *Nikkei-jen* suffer from bullying in school. The case of a Brazilian-Japanese boy who was murdered by joy riders has been reported in the newspapers. Another boy, constantly bullied and teased by classmates for being half-Japanese, had to quit school. Children of mixed parentage who do enrol find it hard to learn the Japanese language, causing them anxiety and stress. Children of non-nationals who were in need of language education in 1996 numbered 11,000. The number of children

abandoned by the Japanese father or the non-Japanese parents in Japan is on the increase.<sup>13</sup>

Children and mothers are stigmatised both in Japan and in the home countries. With most children being born before marriage, there should be legal recognition and/or paternity claim by the Japanese father to enable the child to gain Japanese nationality and to be eligible for social services. Migrant women cannot take Japanese nationality. Children experience discrimination as early as when they are entered in the *koseki* or Japanese family registry. If the marriage ends in

divorce and no paternity claim is made, mother and child face deportation.<sup>14</sup>

The condition of migrant women in the Middle East is another web of discrimination based on gender, culture and ethnicity. Under *Shari'ah* law, a woman who gets pregnant outside of marriage is guilty of adultery, the penalty for which is death for Muslims and for non-Muslims, a jail term, public lashing and deportation. Even if the man marries her after she conceives, the woman is still punished by lashing. The child is rejected by the family of both parents and ostracised by society. The mother has committed a crime and a

■ **Even in death, migrant workers suffer from the ultimate discrimination. The country that made use of their labour often cannot find a priest or someone who will administer the last rites for the dead. Many workers who are killed in factories due to accidents are simply cremated because there are no facilities for long-term storage of the bodies.**

sin and should not ask for financial support from the father. Take the case of Kartini, an Indonesian domestic worker, a single mother with children of her own back home. Raped and impregnated by her employer, she was sentenced to death by stoning.

Al Fatijah, a Moro-based NGO in the Philippines, reports more than 50 cases of children with Arab fathers in Mindanao.<sup>15</sup> Even in the home country, they are ostracised and kept away from school and community because of the shame they bring to the family. Addressing the need for socio-psychological support to mothers and their children, particularly in East and West Java is a difficult task for NGOs since many of the families would rather keep their situation away from public scrutiny.

Meanwhile, another difficult situation is created when wives and mothers leave to work abroad. Although most societies in sending countries have extended families, left-behind children who live in urban areas often do not get the care they deserve from the spouse or the extended family. They may become juvenile delinquents and turn to drug abuse. A

sense of being better off, loneliness and lack of parental guidance lead many of them into antisocial behaviour.

Women migrants also tell of their daughters being raped and abused by relatives, neighbours and friends. Many Sri Lankan mothers working as domestics in the Middle East decide to return home when their girl-children reach the age of puberty in order to be physically present and provide protection against sexual molestation.<sup>16</sup>

Lastly, even in death, migrant workers suffer from the ultimate discrimination. The country that made use of their labour often cannot find a priest or someone who will administer the last rites for the dead. Many workers who are killed in factories due to accidents are simply cremated because there are no facilities for long-term storage of the bodies. Communicating to the relatives of the deceased through government channels is painfully slow. Thus, some priests and pastors report about the unusual role of performing "some rites" for Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims and other non-Christians.

#### **Actions by NGOs and Civil Society**

The rapid economic growth of

countries in Asia has brought cultural changes to them as well. The presence of foreigners has also been a shock. However, a growing number of people in host societies are trying to cope with the changes. This has brought many opportunities for positive change in their attitudes and perspectives, apart from providing solidarity to the strangers in their midst.

#### **Churches**

By many accounts, it was the Catholic and Protestant churches that started responding to the needs of migrant workers in the Asia and the Pacific. In the early 1970s, churches were the natural congregation places of Filipino domestic helpers in Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia. Then they became shelters for migrant workers in distress in Hong Kong and Singapore. This developed into more collaboration between churches. Joint activities of churches were organised in the mid-1980s to respond to the issues on a regional basis.

From Sunday masses and services to pastoral counseling, providing refuge came next, then language classes. In many host countries local churches offer medical, dental and other health services to undocumented workers. They also provide burial services and other types of assistance.

Joint studies and joint actions proceeded apace. Some level of cooperation and coordination has taken place between churches, through the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) and through Joint

Committees of Councils of Churches of receiving and sending countries.

More and more church workers and congregations have been involved in joint mass actions, lobby work and advocacy campaigns.

### **Non-government organisations**

Towards the 1980s, support NGOs were being established in receiving and sending countries—Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, Singapore and Malaysia. Their initial work was to assist migrant workers in distress (unpaid salaries, denial of holiday leaves, sexual harassment). Many NGOs today run a package of programmes and services: case management, counseling, paralegal assistance and shelter for women.

Where policy reform and changes are required to redress grievances and to institute preventive measures, NGOs often take the lead. They are joined by sectors of civil society, e.g. human rights groups, women's organisations, medical professionals and lawyers groups. The latter are very active in policy advocacy and legislative reforms. Some NGOs now specialise according to clientele or service. Following is a list of some of the groups that address migrant women's issues:

### **PHILIPPINES**

**Kanlungan Center** provides mainly case management and crisis intervention. It conducts gender sensitivity education and training as integral to case management and

paralegal assistance. The centre maintains a shelter for those women with severe socio-psychological problems.

**KAKAMMPI** assists left-behind families. It runs preschool nurseries in three communities in Manila, and provides socio-psychological support to families and makes referrals to appropriate government agencies for financial and educational support to children.

**Maligaya House and Development Action for Women Network (DAWN)** are NGOs involved in tracing Japanese fathers for the recognition, support and nationality status of their children. Maligaya House currently handles more than 400 cases of children in the Philippines who have been abandoned by their fathers while DAWN has handled 120 cases in the last two years. This year, a musical play will be presented by the children for the third time in five prefectures in Japan. Last year, four children were able to meet their fathers through the play.

**Unlad Kabayan** is a programme that started in 1994. It prepares migrant workers to organise their return and re-integration by mobilising their savings for productive investments in their communities. They are thus able to create jobs for themselves and others.

Coalitions such as **AMEND, SILAW (Association of Sea-based and Land-based Workers), NOVA (No to Violence Against Women)** and the **Philippine Migrant Rights Watch** have been working together for the

amendment of Republic Act 8042, better known as the Magna Carta for Migrant Workers. The implementation of the labour deregulation provision has been temporarily suspended as a result of NGO and people's organisation (PO) intervention.

### **INDONESIA**

There are more than 60 migrant support NGOs all over the Indonesian archipelago, aside from others based in some receiving countries. The **Center for Indonesian Migrant Women** conducts case management and advocacy.

**Pusat Pengembangan Swadaya Wanita (PPSW)** assists Indonesian women who have been abused in the Middle East. Through its efforts in community education, children with Arab fathers are now being accepted by the community. The families no longer hide the children but now encourage them to get regular education. PPSW runs programmes especially designed for the children.

The Learning Garden for children of migrant workers was conducted in Lombok-Mataram by the NGO, **Terminal 29**. It is conducted for children with problems and done after formal school sessions.

**Lembaga Bantuan Hukum (Legal Aid Institute)** gives free legal assistance especially in cases of abuse committed by recruitment agencies against women migrants. Courageous media reporters played a key role in ex-



www.asiapix.net

An undocumented worker in a Japanese bar

posing these abuses especially during the repressive regime.

Recently the Indonesian Migrant Workers in Hong Kong organised their own union, with which the Indonesian Consulate General now conducts regular dialogues. Similar moves have been initiated by Indonesian migrants in other countries.

### MALAYSIA

**Tenaganita** has been fighting for the rights of migrant workers under severely restrictive laws in Malaysia. Its 1995 fact-finding report revealed that more than 300 migrant workers of various nationalities were being held in seven detention camps in Malaysia and suffering severe physical abuse, malnutrition and disease. Many detainees were being held without charge. The Malaysian government has admitted to 42 deaths in one camp alone. A preg-

nant Bangladeshi woman was among those detained.

As a result of the report, Irene Fernandez, the director of Tenaganita, was charged with violating the press law. The case is still under litigation.

Local integrated bars and lawyers groups are most active in Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines. They provide free legal aid and represent migrants in court for free. They have been especially helpful acting as watchdogs during court cases. They have lent legal and other types of support to Fernandez.

### JAPAN

The **National Network in Solidarity with Migrant Workers (NNSMW)** is composed of 90 groups (NGOs, shelters, churches, trade unions, lawyers, women, doctors, teachers, social re-

searchers). These provide varied services especially to migrant women and undocumented migrant workers. The NNSMW continuously wages struggles to widen the legal and labour rights of migrant workers and to educate Japanese society.

Another type of engagement is that of **Minatomachi Foreign Migrant Workers' Mutual Aid Scheme for Health (MF-MASH)** initiated by the staff of the Minatomachi Medical Center in Kanagawa Prefecture. Specifically intended to serve migrants who are unable to join the public health insurance scheme, it allows members to receive treatment at 30 percent of the actual cost.

MF-MASH and **SHARE (Services for Health in Asian and African Regions)** work together to provide free medical consultation and counseling for foreign workers. The staff of public hos-



pitals in Kanagawa Prefecture, some eight years ago, took the lead in refusing to follow a government policy not to admit nonmembers of the public health insurance scheme. Today, public hospitals generally uphold the right of anyone to receive medical treatment, and many refuse to report undocumented workers as required by the authorities. Medical NGOs in Japan recently convened the Nationwide Meeting on Guaranteed Medical Care to All Foreigners, and resolved to lobby for the coverage of all migrants by the National Insurance Law and Life Protection Law.

Many migrant workers including undocumented workers have been organised into community unions, e.g. Zentoitsu, who are able to negotiate with individual enterprises. They have successfully pursued money claims and reinstatement of dismissed migrant workers.

More women's associations in Japan are active in fighting for the rights of migrant women.

### KOREA

The **Joint Committee for Migrants in Korea (JCMK)**, a network of 36 counselling centres and NGOs, began organising migrant workers in Korea along nationality lines in the 1990s. It made representations to government authorities for their legitimate grievances. JCMK members staged hunger strikes and protests and submitted proposals that led to government's granting undocumented

workers compensation and other protection under the Labour Standard Law. At present, the **Association of Foreign Workers for Human Rights** based in Pusan is fighting a test case in court for retirement pay claim for trainees. The Association works closely with Kanlungan Center, in the Philippines, in protecting the plaintiff's family from harassment by the recruitment agency who filed a counter-charge against them.

JCMK now sits as a member in a committee established by the Korean government that is charged with protection of migrant workers' rights. Other lobby issues of JCMK include the legalisation of undocumented workers and abolition of the trainee system.

### THAILAND

New policies and regulations were adopted after a concerted campaign and dialogue with government officials by the **Friends of Women Workers in Asia (FOWIA)** and the **Friends of Thai** in Hong Kong in the early 1990s. As a result, the Thai government has sent Labour Attaches to its missions in countries with a significant number of Thai workers, e.g. Hong Kong and Japan. Moreover, it has set up a women's centre for Thai domestic helpers who have been prematurely terminated by employers.

### AUSTRALIA

In Australia, foreign women, particularly women of colour, are becoming a target of racism. Commu-

nity education and actions are responding to this. Vetting of serial sponsorship is now in place to prevent the abuse of mail-order brides.

Australian NGOs and churches are seeking to build a more inclusive culture by getting involved in issues of racism. They are pushing for laws that seek to give equal rights to migrants, and try to educate the community to recognise the need for pluralistic interaction.

More and more restaurants are being opened that respect *halal* practices. Campaigns are being waged to allow foreign doctors to practice in Australia.

### REGIONAL-LEVEL ACTIONS

The **Asian Migrant Centre** is a regional NGO based in Hong Kong that started in 1989. It launched pioneering efforts to regionalise the issue of migration and increase responses to migrant workers' problems in various Asian countries. Through internship programmes AMC has facilitated the training of personnel to do migrant support work in Thailand, India, Indonesia, Nepal. It has taken the lead in analysing the dynamics of migration in the region, initiated organising work, and published the *Asian Migrant Yearbook*. Most ambitiously, it launched the strategic response of re-integration. This entails the building of savings associations among migrant workers in the host countries, the placement of their savings in investment packages in their villages and the

management of their enterprises to provide alternative investment and alternative jobs at home.

**Migrant Forum in Asia** is a network of migrant organisations, NGOs, churches, trade unions and other support institutions in the region. It is mainly a regional advocacy group that conducts studies and campaigns to address issues regionally.

### Conclusion

Racism and discrimination and other forms of exclusivism in Asia and the Pacific are endemic, the unwelcome fruit of efforts by Asian countries to build dynamic economies able to compete with those in Europe and North America. Easily, the main victims of excessive "nationalism" are the vulnerable migrant workers from the poorer countries. Having no economic power and no political role in society, and having no means to assert themselves, migrant workers, especially women, easily become the main objects of exploitation and oppression.

On the other hand, migrant workers are the embodiment of unequal economic and social relations. As such their struggles are a constant cutting edge in the development of inclusive behaviour in xenophobic Asia. Thanks to these struggles. Multiculturalism is growing in many Asian and Pacific societies.

The movement for the recognition of migrant workers' rights is gaining support. Eventually, even the states must come to recognise these rights by rati-

fying the United Nations Convention for the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.

Education to combat racism is best done by highlighting the lives of individual migrant workers. They are both easy objects of racism as well as objects of concern. Education of people against racism should be included in courses in the formal educational curriculum of schools. Respect for human dignity and rights must begin with children as the foundation for building a society where children and adults alike can live in freedom and dignity. In both host and sending countries, new values and practices should be promoted that uphold the dignity and respect of every human person, with no one being inherently superior or inferior to others.

Priority must be given to the economic development of poor countries that are the main sources of migrants. Official and non-government aid should aim to build economically, socially and ecologically sustainable societies in these countries, not only reducing the pressure for out-migration but making overseas labour migration as just one of the options.

Today we must constantly remind ourselves that NGOs are NGOs. With our financial and personnel limitations, we can only do so much: piloting, limited reach, etc. Our hearts are big but our pockets are very small! In the final analysis, it is up to governments to translate NGO initiatives into legislative and administrative measures,

and to muster the political will for these to be implemented. ♪

*Maria Angela 'May-an' Villalba is the Executive Director of Unlad-Kabayan, an NGO that works for the reintegration of overseas Filipinos both in host and home countries. She was the previous Executive Director of Asian Migrants Centre based in Hongkong and a consultant for race and minority concerns of Christian Conference of Asia, Urban Rural Missionaries.*

*This article served as a background paper to the Asia-Pacific Seminar of Experts on Migrants and Trafficking in Persons with Particular Reference to Women and Children in preparation for the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance and is being published here with permission from the author.*

### References:

- Asian Migrant Yearbook 1998.* Asian Migrant Centre, Hong Kong, 1999.
- Kim Dong-hoon, *International Human Rights Standards and Minorities.* Kyoto, Japan, 1994.
- "Living and Working with Migrants in Asia, A Report of the Conference on Migrant Labor Issues." Asian Migrant Centre, Hong Kong, 1994.
- "Migrant Women Prepare for Beijing, A Report of the Women's Conference in Preparation for the FWCW." Migrant Forum in Asia, 1995.
- "The Fourth East Asian Women's Forum," reports by Makishita Noriko and Inaba Nanako, 1999.
- Report on the "Third National Forum in Solidarity with Migrant Workers," Tokyo, 1999.

### Interviews:

- Alcid, Mary Lou. Kanlungan Center, Quezon City, Philippines, 2000.
- Kim Hyun Suk, Teresa. Galilea Migrant Counseling Center, Joint Committee of Migrants in Korea, Seoul, Korea, 2000.
- Natan, Carla June. Center for Indonesian Migrant Workers, Jakarta, Indonesia, 2000.
- Nuqui, Carmelita. Development Assistance for

Women Network, Quezon City, Philippines, 2000.  
 Ogasawara, Kimiko. National Network in Solidarity with Migrant Workers, Tokyo, Japan, 2000.  
 Padrones, Fe. Maligaya House, Quezon City, Philippines, 2000.  
 Varona, Rex. Asian Migrant Centre, Hong Kong, 2000.  
 Sri Lankan women in urban poor communities in Ratmalana and Colombo, Sri Lanka, 1995.  
 Counselling cases of Indonesian, Indian and Thai domestic workers in Hong Kong, 1990-1995.

End notes:

<sup>1</sup> See Prof. Nakajima Tomoko, "A Multi-Cultural Society and Minority Issues," a presentation at the Second International Consultation on Minority Issues and Mission Strategies held in October 1994 in Kyoto, Japan and published by the Christian Conference of Asia, Urban Rural Mission, Hong Kong, 1995.

<sup>2</sup> See Felix Sugirtharaj's presentation in the Second International Consultation on Minority Issues and Mission Strategies, Kyoto, Japan. CCA-URM. Hong Kong.

<sup>3</sup> The Economic Council, advisory to the Prime Minister, set up a meeting to discuss the government's 10-year economic plan. The newly elected chairperson of Japan Federation of Employers' Association, Mr. Okuda, President of Toyota Motors Corp., stressed the need to import foreign workers to supplement labour shortages in Japan as birth rates are declining.

<sup>4</sup> Trainee system—trainees used to be recruited from company affiliates based in labour exporting countries. This practice has been modified and trainees are recruited through placement agencies. Majority work just like regular workers, performing routine work that can hardly be considered as training, e.g. rolling and packing shushi. Trainees receive between US\$300-600 monthly allowance while regular but undocumented workers are paid US\$800 to 1,500. Trainee visa is from six months to a year. Because of the short contract, many are unable to recoup expenses in recruitment and other fees and are therefore forced to remain as undocumented workers at the end of the contract. Provided there is no outcry from the public, these undocumented workers are tolerated. Otherwise, the states conduct periodic crackdowns on undocumented worker enclaves.

<sup>5</sup> Dualism in the treatment of migrants is exemplified by this report from the Japan Times, "Illegal Aliens Who Built Nagano Games Facing Sweep" 8 February 1998, from *Asian Migrant Yearbook*,

1998: "Desperate for construction workers, subcontractors of the construction companies building the Olympic site hurriedly hired undocumented workers. Upon completion of the project, however, undocumented workers were pursued and arrested. The Nagano Prefecture police arrested or deported 397 foreigners, conducting 13 raids on homes and other locations. Between 70 to 80 percent of the arrested foreigners were women, according to Toshio Gomyo. According to Monica Nagamura of Shinshu Network for Foreigners' Human Rights, the women also contributed indirectly by entertaining officials and staff involved in the event."

<sup>6</sup> Migrant support NGOs are swamped with cases of industrial accidents. A Filipina in south Korea locked inside the factory and unable to escape, suffered third degree burns when the factory burned down.

<sup>7</sup> Detention centres for migrant workers are built conveniently near the airport. A press release issued by Amnesty International last month expressed concern over the reported serious abuses in the interrogation and deportation of people who are denied entry to Japan. Those denied entry are sent to the Landing Prevention Facility (LPF) at the Narita International Airport. In Malaysia, there are at least seven detention camps for migrant workers. Many of the detainees were arbitrarily arrested and remain without any charge. A Bangladeshi woman was found pregnant inside the camp.

<sup>8</sup> Japanese coined the word 3K jobs (Kikei, Kitsui, Kitanai) roughly translated as dirty, difficult and dangerous.

<sup>9</sup> Foreign domestic workers in Hong Kong are not allowed to change jobs while changing employers is severely restricted. Change of employers is subject to the "two week rule." Moreover, domestic workers are singled out among other migrants in Hong Kong as ineligible for "resident status" after seven years continuous stay.

<sup>10</sup> According to the report "Migrant Women in Japan—for Further Advocacy, Makishita and Inaba show how foreign mothers almost cannot establish parental right over her child. "When a husband requests to have parental authority, the mediation committee will examine and compare the parents' economic situation. If the mother is on welfare, there is no possibility for her to be awarded parental right. If she is working, usually in the sex industry, she will be considered unfit parent."

<sup>11</sup> According to the Indian women, there is a constant fear of going against the caste prescribed behaviour.

<sup>12</sup> The 1999 report of the House for Emergency Love and Peace (HELP), a shelter for migrant women, showed a changing trend in the type of problems of women migrants. When it was first established 12 years ago, 100 percent of women in the shelter were Filipina survivors of trafficking. However, in 1998, only 17 percent were cases of trafficked women, mostly Thais. 44 percent cases of women survivors of domestic violence while 31 percent were homeless women and 8 percent required hospitalization. In a shelter in Tokyo, in 1999, of 120 users, 51 were (Filipino, Thai and Korean) children.

<sup>13</sup> Most of the reported cases of abandoned children of foreign mothers were of women who worked in the entertainment industry. They met their husbands or partners in the clubs. This situation is fuelled by the many insecurities of migrant women. They are oftentimes pressured by club owners to go for a *dohan*, to go out with the men. Others develop a regular relationship with a particular customer and end up getting pregnant. Some women prefer to have regular customers for their own health rather than be forced to have sex with many men. Some other women are rape victims who conceive a child as a result.

Cases of abandonment arise when the mother's visa expires and must return home pregnant with a promise from the father to pursue her spouse's visa. But the process takes a long time and is expensive. Many children lose their Japanese nationality due to delays in the registration process. The men grow tired of waiting or meet other women in the clubs. Consequently, they abandon their original spouse and children.

Many applications for spouse visa in Philippines are denied without any explanation.

<sup>14</sup> Factors that contribute to break-up of marriages: low regard for relationship as superficial since the women were formerly entertainers; women do backbreaking work taking care of the home, farm and the elderly in husband's family; culture-value difference, Japanese men prohibit the wives from sending money to their families in home country, so women insist to continue working in the clubs.

<sup>15</sup> To reduce the shame on the family, the women are encouraged to marry, usually to their own relatives who are willing to adopt the children, reports Al-Fatijah.

<sup>16</sup> This is from interviews conducted with returned migrant women living in the slums in Ratmalana and Colombo in 1995.