

Indonesian migrant workers are victims of unscrupulous recruitment agencies and debt bondage

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According to HK government statistics, there are about 300,000 migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong and more than 140,000 of that are Indonesian domestic workers. They came from far-flung areas without knowledge of the existing policies that HK government has for the foreign domestic workers particularly policies governing recruitment agencies.

Immoral and illegal placement fees

Recruitment agencies in Indonesia and its counterpart in Hong Kong with the blessing of the Indonesian government charge more than HK\$21,000.00 from every Indonesian migrant worker bound to Hong Kong. An Indonesian migrant worker is forced to agree to pay such huge amount to recruitment agencies by signing a loan payable to its counterpart in Hong Kong.

It is immoral and illegal for every IDW to pay HK\$21,000 as placement or recruitment fees for it contradicts the existing policies governing the recruitment of foreign domestic workers in Hong Kong. The law clearly states that *"a foreign domestic worker should only pay 10% of his/ her first month's wages to the recruitment agency after he/she has been successfully placed."*

Indonesian domestic workers bound to Hong Kong are already indebted before they start working in Hong Kong. The HK\$21,000 agency fees paid by every IDW to a recruitment agency means the latter will only receive \$1,010 for 7 months. Worse, their family at the home country who rely from their remittances will have to endure hunger and poverty.

IDWs are made silent in the face of insurmountable human rights violations

Indonesian domestic workers in Hong Kong are presently held hostage by the recruitment agency who capitalize on the fear of joblessness to extort the biggest profit they can get.

The present condition besetting IDWs in Hong Kong increases their vulnerability to abuse, exploitation and other forms of human rights violations inside their employers' house. These are the reasons why Kartika and Erwiana were forced to endure such inhumane treatment and torture at the hands of their employers because of fear of losing their jobs and potential income for their family.

Moreover, Indonesian recruitment agencies and their counterparts in Hong Kong provide guarantee (treated like commodities under warranty) to employers by subjecting IDWs to a probationary period for several months. If the employers are not satisfied with their work performance they will easily be replaced by another IDW free of charge.

The Challenge to HK government

Can you imagine the pressure an Indonesian migrant worker faces once her employer terminates her employment contract? How many beatings should they endure to pay their debts so that after 6 to 7 months they can finally send money to their families?

With this condition, we are submitting the following proposals to the Hong Kong government:

1. Strictly implement the 10% maximum commission by an employment agency in HK
2. Investigate and punish HK based recruitment agencies who connive with their counterpart recruitment agencies in Indonesia to overcharge IDWs
3. Allow Direct Hiring as an option to employers and foreign domestic workers to minimize debt bondage.
4. Abolish mandatory live-in policy and make live-out arrangement an option for both employer and FDW