

Recruitment agencies and employers connive in underpaying migrant domestic workers

**Submission of the Liga Pekerja Migran Indonesia (LIPMI)
to the LEGCO Panel on Manpower
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There are about 140,000 Indonesian domestic workers living in Hong Kong. Most of them come from poverty stricken areas of Indonesia and did not gain formal schooling or high educational background. They speak Cantonese fluently but the skill is a product of arduous and expensive recruitment process.

What the law requires?

Hong Kong government last year approved a minimum allowable wage (MAW) for foreign domestic at HK \$4,010 per month. Still, many FDWs remain underpaid.

It is a clear violation of the existing laws and policies governing foreign domestic workers here in Hong Kong and yet it is happening in front of the very eyes of the Hong Kong government through the connivance of the recruitment agencies and employers.

During the recruitment process of Indonesian domestic workers bound for Hong Kong, many Indonesian recruitment agencies and their counterparts in Hong Kong do not divulge to the Indonesian applicants the actual salary of foreign domestic workers in Hong Kong as approved by the HK government. They force would be IDWs to accept a salary which is way below the approved salary for FDWs.

What the IDWs receive?

This set-up is purposely done by many Indonesian recruitment agencies and their counterparts in Hong Kong to convince employers to hire IDWs with lower salary compared to their counterparts from the Philippines, Thailand, Nepal, etc.

Recruitment agencies in connivance with employers deceive Indonesian domestic workers about the actual salary of foreign domestic workers as stated in the minimum allowable wage for FDWs. Worse, they create this situation for IDWs to accept its offer by comparing such lower salary to the rate in Indonesia. The victims know nothing about HK policies and unwittingly become victims of such machination.

Additionally, the victims of underpayment are held 'hostage' because of fear of losing their job and source of financial support for their family.

We never discount the possibility that there are IDWs who are aware that they are being underpaid by their employer as advised by their recruitment agencies. Many of them think

that receiving lower salary is much better than losing their job and receiving nothing in the long run.

Our challenge to HK government

Thus, many IDWs remain silent in the face of abuse, exploitation, maltreatment and other forms of human rights violations. The labor export policy of Indonesia and other sending countries mold migrant domestic workers to be submissive, long-sufferers and frightened to fight for their rights because it is tantamount to losing their jobs.

With the kind of situation that many IDWs are in, we in LIPMI recommend to the HK government the following actions:

1. Strictly implement the minimum allowable wage (MAW) for FDWs in Hong Kong.
2. Make a thorough review on FDWs inclusion in the statutory minimum allowable wage for workers in Hong Kong.
3. Allow' direct hiring of FDWs
4. Investigate and punish recruitment agencies and employers who connive in giving IDWs and other MDWs salaries below the HK government standards