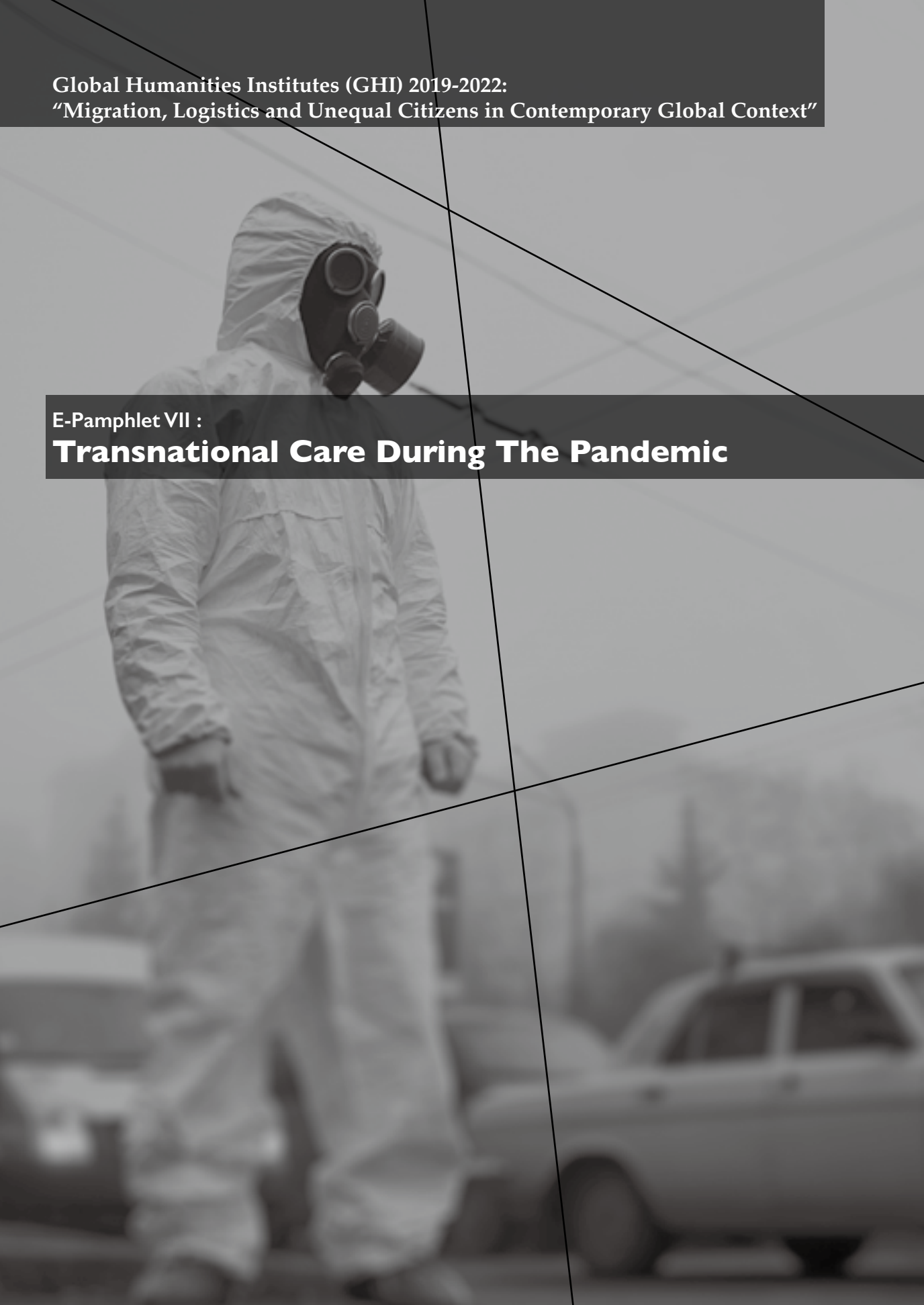


Global Humanities Institutes (GHI) 2019-2022:
"Migration, Logistics and Unequal Citizens in Contemporary Global Context"

E-Pamphlet VII :

Transnational Care During The Pandemic



INTRODUCTION

“Migration, Logistics and Unequal Citizens in Contemporary Global Context” is the Global Humanities Institutes (GHI) 2019-2022 supported by the Consortium of Humanities Centre and Institutes (CHCI) and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Rapidly increasing international migrations have radically changed the outlook of contemporary 21st century societies, producing cases of massive displaced and precarious lives, and bringing various impacts upon local communities. These emerging phenomena have attracted critical scholarship both in the humanities and social sciences in recent years.

The CHCI-Mellon Global Humanities Institutes (GHI) on “Migration, Logistics and Unequal Citizens in Contemporary Global Context” invites applications from early career researchers and advanced graduate students from the interdisciplinary humanities and social science studies, including but not limited to literature, history, philosophy, film, audio-visual arts, performing arts, law, anthropology, sociology, journalism, social media, digital platform, and other forms of practitioners.

Through the analysis of documentaries, films, literature, interviews, archives, governmental policies, and cooperation with NGOs/CBOs and artist groups, this intensive program foregrounds the subjective experiences and perspectives of migrants, the violation of the migrants’ fundamental human rights, the citizen’s attitude against them, as well as the government malfunctioning in dealing with these migrants.

The issues of migration and unequal citizens highlight the logistical continuum of biopolitics and governmentality from the colonial to the post-colonial state, from the Cold War Era to the post-Cold War Era, as well as the operation of geo-political and geo-economic apparatus and zoning politics. Critical logistics can orient the inquiry by emphasizing how the governance of populations reaches beyond statistical measure to make new connections between life and work, technology and mobility, and politics and economy in and beyond any region. Logistics organises the movement of people and goods and asserts its logic across the entire circuit of production, distribution, and consumption. Logistics has also remade the domain of global space and territory, through the operation of zoning politics, such as corridors, digital networks, extraction enclaves, financial districts, and other areas of transfer and exchange. Examining the nexus of migration and logistics offers ways of rethinking the politics of human mobility and the question of unequal citizens that not only reach beyond the logic of integration and identity but also question the standard analysis of post-war area studies.

LINES OF RESEARCH

Conditions of Migration and Precarious Lives

Our GHI encourages researchers to study and analyse the reality of the forms of life of the international migrants, refugees, and stateless people in contemporary societies. We welcome analytic inquiries and theoretical engagements of cases of documentaries, films, literature, interviews, archives, governmental policies, NGOs/CBOs, and artist groups, in but not limited to Asia, on the following issues:

The experience and the emotions of migrant workers, refugees or stateless people in their working and living environments in the receiving societies;

The role of social identities such as gender, sexuality, religion, nationality, legal status in conditioning migrant workers' precarious lives;

How states manage labour migration imports and repatriation/deportation as part of the development projects of the state, requiring explicit legal exclusion from residency and citizenship and migrant labour exploitation in the context of different countries, including the national evolution of legal framework concerning this issue:

- The operations of the broker agency, the development of workforce agencies, regimes of brokerage that commodifies migrants into healthy bodies that are labour ready to be supplied abroad;
- The support system offered by trade unions, local NGOs/CBOs, shelters, migrant centres, or resettlement plans at host societies; alliance-making among different groups (e.g. different migrant groups from different countries, women's groups, labour unions, etc.) as well as the internal support system within the migrant communities;
- How the increase in the numbers, relative visibility, and designation as an abject foreigner of migrant workers has led to new forms of Asian racism and xenophobia;
- Ambiguities of migrant entrepreneurship: self-employment as a low-paid activity, forced self-employment ("quasi-self-employment"), and self-employment as an opportunity for professional advancement;
- International student mobility/unpaid labour and its regulation through visa regimes, market mechanisms, university rankings, and labour statuses;
- Transnational human trafficking of women and children for prostitution and forced marriage and labour.

Logistics, Geo-economics, Zoning Politics, and Local Infrastructure Initiatives

Our GHI encourages research projects on politico-economic logistics and the logic of migration. We welcome analytic inquiries and theoretical engagements on the following issues:

- Whether and how the colonial past and the Cold War regime still leave their traces on the countries in and beyond Asia in the 21st century, such as the ASEAN regional policies of trade agreements and economic security control, the US-China trade war, and so on?
- How can we use critical thought on logistics to rethink issues of labour and migration particularly in the Asian region (or in what ways is migration increasingly functioning logistically)?
- How do foreign direct investment, labour, and migration in the Asian region link to logistical initiatives such as zoning, China's Belt and Road Initiative, etc.?
- How do global and local logistical initiatives impact directly or indirectly on local societies, such as governmental corruptions, public xenophobic reactions, extraction by dispossession, and so on?
- How is digitalisation transforming labour and mobility, including questions of virtual migration, platform labour, and the use of digital technologies for migration control and freedom of movement?
- How do logistics and migration in and beyond Asia reorganise relations of reproduction of labour power and society?
- The transformation of the land question, the military-industrial complex, and mobility regime.

Regarding the historical processes, ruptures and continuities in the organisation and practice of migration in and beyond Asia, do logistics offer a means of understanding historical migration, or is it specific to the present moment? How do layered histories of migration continue to shape present movements?

The nexus of logistics, displacement, and violence. The discourse of who is "native" and who is "migrant" is prevalent in many countries; at the extreme, this discourse can lead to communal fissures and even violence. Can a logistical approach help us productively think through ideas of "indigeneity/native" VS "migrants/foreigner" and unpack this socially constructed dichotomy?

Questions of Unequal Citizens

The upsurge of migrant workers, refugees, and human trafficking have changed the composition of the social space and worsen the inequality among the people who live and work in the same social space but do not share equal access to the cities nor exercise political subjectivities they spent in their daily life. While Giorgio Agamben's concept of the 'bare life' has been much cited in Refugee Studies in recent years, there has also been a call by scholars to focus on the agency and political life of the refugees grounded in their lived realities. Our GHI also wants to draw researchers' attention to the newly emerging forms of neo-racism, neo-slavery, and new colonialism. We welcome analytic inquiries and theoretical engagements on the following issues:

- How do new forms of exclusion through citizenship and residency rights facilitate in today's formation of uneven late capitalism?
- How do traditional colonialism and ongoing forms of new colonialism or internal colonialism shape citizenship regimes in diverse local contexts in Asia and beyond? How did the colonial histories, the process of the post-colonial independent nation through Citizenship Acts, and the current immigrant/migrant worker regulations co-figure the politics of inclusive exclusion and trigger the reality of unequal citizens in contemporary societies?
- How do we analyse the structural violence of the statist division between citizen and non-citizen, or differentiated citizens, that causes the violation of fundamental human rights against a particular population?
- How do we problematise the concept of the "illegal migrant workers"? How is the illegal social space of the precarious bodies produced legally by governmental sectors and other transnational agencies?
- How do we further understand the fear of the transient—the homeless, migrants, refugees? What is the nature of the local xenophobic reactions toward the migrant labour and refugees?
- How do theoretical and empirical investigations of citizenship influence understandings of migration in ways different to analytical approaches that stress other kinds of political subjectivity—e.g. social class, the lived experiences or agency of the refugees and stateless people?
- To what extent do patterns of migration in the Asian region disarticulate the figure of the citizen from the figure of the worker? What are new and emerging ways of theorising citizenship and migration that are relevant in

various contexts?

In what ways can we theorise the 'indentured' as a poetics of relation, for example, through Mauritian poet Khal Torabully's notion of the 'coolitude,' or Martinique philosopher Edouard Glissant's concept of opacity, or alliance-building against what Laura Ann Stoler characterises as the persisting imperial durabilities of our time?

What forms of agency and belonging do migrant possess despite legal exclusions, including political participation, economic belonging, trade unionism and migrant/refugee organisations? What forms of differentiated citizenship, exclusion, and belonging shape contemporary migration experiences e.g. indenture, statelessness, residential registration, denizenship, plural citizenships, war and violence?

How do migrants resist exclusionary citizenship regimes and enact new claims—locally and nationally, and transnationally?

New Forms of Knowledge Production

Our GHI encourages colleagues and students to conduct various forms of knowledge production to explore the issues of migration, logistics, and unequal citizens through academic papers, artistic works, and digital approaches, to bridge universities and societies, and to link scholars with migrant workers, refugee communities, trans-local NGOs/CBOs, artist groups, filmmakers and journalists. We will create occasions for trans-local advocates and artists groups working for migrants, refugees, and stateless communities to meet and exchange ideas on common concerns and share the tactics from different groups. We will create space to reflect on the various strategies and create new conversations. We hope to facilitate productive discussions and foster knowledge sharing across disciplines and modalities. Also, we will establish a shared transnational online resource documenting innovative approaches in addressing migrant and refugee issues. Some suggested area of focus, but not limited to, are as the following:

- Storytelling can be a powerful tool humanising "the other." What are the existing innovative projects working with migrants and refugees, using storytelling in different forms—such as theatre, poetry recitals, music festival, writing workshops, photography, and film making? What is the impact of these initiatives for the migrant communities and the audience/readers?
- Artists have pushed the envelope of artistic forms that paralleled their commitment to discussing the experiences of this global movement of people and the power dynamics engendered by this large-scale mobility. In what ways were modern and contemporary arts a vital avenue for new

forms of knowledge production to address issues of unequal citizens and cross-boundary imaginations?

- What are new institutional forms created by the interface of migration knowledge practices with formal gallery spaces and museums?
- What is the role of digitalisation in generating knowledge and strategies to address issues of migration and unequal citizenship?
- How are civil conversations and alliance building facilitated across communities? What are some new conversations and narratives that are being shaped in these processes?

Transnational Care During The Pandemic

These talks were parts of the webinar “Interventions from the South: Theoretical Perspectives and Pragmatic Issues of Migration, Logistics and Unequal Citizens in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic,” as an integral part of multiple events organised by the CHCI-Global Humanities Institute 2019-2022: Migration, Logistics and Unequal Citizens in Contemporary Global Context.

Migration has become a critical field of study for social scientists due to the harsh realities and rising inequality migrants are subject to. Asia, though hosting a substantial portion of the world’s migrants, provides the poorest protection and fewest policies for advancing migrants’ rights and livelihoods. The GHI presented an interdisciplinary platform where Asia-based migrant rights activists and NGOs talked about their research and professional observations of the complexities of migrant issues in the context of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

About NGOs

Migrant CARE was officially established on June 22, 2004 based on high concerns regarding issues faced by Indonesian migrant workers, especially migrant workers who work in informal sector such as domestic workers. The stream of Indonesian labour migration abroad is getting bigger and bigger every day. This is due to many factors, one of which is due to unresolved domestic labor issues. The ongoing crisis also spurs the acceleration of labour migration, placing migrant workers in the midst of various vulnerabilities in the vortex of industrial development and globalisation.

Domestic Caretakers Union Taoyuan (DCU)

aims to improve working rights of migrant domestic caretakers in Taiwan, with the below objectives:

- Improve working right of migrant domestic caretakers in Taiwan.
- Organize a network of migrant domestic caretakers to help each other.
- Empower migrant domestic workers to fight and speak as subject in Taiwan society.

Migrante International was founded in December 1996 after the death of Filipina domestic helper Flor Contemplacion who was hanged in Singapore for allegedly murdering another Filipina domestic worker in 1995.

Introduction to the Talks

Increasing precarity and vulnerability of migrant workers: Transnational care in the Pandemic Devastation

Lo Chun Yat, Timothy (SRCS, NYCU)

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic there has been severe impacts on our daily lives, jeopardizing what we called “normal life” and restructuring it into the problematic “new normal.” In previous discussion on relations between border politics and COVID-19, Professor Brett Neilson has critically pointed out that such easy use of terminologies in the media would create a political tendency to stricter border controls and exclusivism, if not revival of nationalism in the contemporary era of global crisis. Such observations have always been echoing with the reality faced in the countries in inter-Asian regions, where migrant workers, no matter domestic, industrial, or even maritime ones, are the manpower to be exported to other receiving countries like Taiwan, China, Malaysia and so on. In the panel on “Transnational care during the Pandemic,” the Centre has invited three representatives from various NGOs in Taiwan, Indonesia and the Philippines, to talk about the forced displacement and the precarious, vulnerable lives faced by the migrant workers.

TAIWAN: DOMESTIC AND BORDER RESTRICTIONS

While the Taiwanese communities have been proud of their COVID-19 control measures, the migrant workers overseas have suffered from both border and domestic restrictions, with their livelihood severely impacted.

Since mid February in 2020, Taiwanese government has been implementing strict control of entry policy with the reasons of COVID-19 prevention, deterring foreign people from getting into the national border of the state. This has caused a negative impact on the migrant workers (Filipinos especially as their country also issued a travel restriction against Taiwan), especially for those who were on vacation and temporarily outside Taiwan. Specifically, there is a policy that every time when the migrant workers take

their vacation home, they need to apply for a re-entry permit so as to continue working. Without which they could have lost their jobs and livelihood in unexpected conditions, as they could never meet the application deadline due to the border closure. Employment termination, flight cancellation, delayed or no payment due to failure on emigration during this period are frequent, and there is no institutional support from either their home state or the receiving state. Such a dire situation is not uncommon for those who have worked here before, not to mention those who, for the first time ever, would like to look for a living here in Taiwan. Employers even took the pandemic as an excuse to reject payment for their quarantine fee, or even cut the costs at the expense of their own salaries.

On the other hand, domestic control of Taiwan also posed great impacts on the lives of the domestic migrant workers who have been staying inside the state during the pandemic, especially the mandatory mask measures as well as the real name purchase policy (實名制購買) during the early and mid period when the COVID-19 broke out. Such a policy has deprived the healthcare supply from the undocumented workers, who were afraid of being casted out of the state due to their illegal status produced by the system. Such scarcity was also found in the provision of centralized quarantine beds by the government, posing difficulties for the re-entry of the migrant workers, and deprivation of wages as mentioned above. What was more severe was that the fear and “wartime against virus” (抗疫) promotion approach that creates a sense of exceptional temporality: the employers started to ground their domestic workers and the patients they took care at home for the sake of safety and healthcare, leading to increasingly vigorous conflicts. Some cases even involved violence and abusive acts like scratching and beating. There were also discrimination problems in Taiwan against migrant workers due to cases of infection. However, such cases were the result of employers’ mistreatment and refusal to provide dormitories with better hygienic conditions, whereas local society turned a blind eye and blamed the victims. Such xenophobia under the age of pandemic was, and has still been thriving until now in society and must be dealt with, for such problematic discourses would lead to more violent circulation, and hostility between migrant workers and local communities. While the patient groups are in desperate needs of migrant caretakers to solve the imbalanced demand and supply market, the Domestic Caretakers Union Taoyuan also calls for legislation to protect labor rights and a thorough review on the long-term care policy in Taiwan, in order to give both sides a better promise on livelihood.

THE PHILIPPINES: MIGRANT WORKERS ARE NOT CASH COWS

For most of the time, migrant workers are not only exploited by the receiving countries, but also the country of origin where the structural problem lies.

Joanna Concepcion, the chairperson of the Migrante International, has given a thorough sharing on the situation of the Filipino migrant workers.

According to Filipino government data, in 2019, more than 6,000 Filipino migrant workers leave the country everyday to work overseas, or about 2.3 million a year. And out of this 2.3 million, 400,000 are sea based migrants, while the rest are land based migrants. About 10-12% or 10 million to 12 million of the Filipino population are living and working outside the country. Such a significant number of migrant workers brings lucrative income of admittances to the government as national income. However, they did not receive protection and assistance they deserved during the pandemic period. According to Migrante International, displacement from their job position is the major problem they were facing in the period. Nearly 2 million Filipino workers, both land based and sea based, have lost their livelihood since the COVID-19 broke out, and there have been 100,000+ displaced migrant workers who still remain overseas. These so-called “standard migrant workers” have been waiting for repatriation and healthcare assistance from the Filipino government, which have been strongly criticised due to slow reaction and arrangement. Most of the financial aid in the receiving countries did not include migrant workers without citizenship, while the Filipino one-time assistance programme for overseas workers displaced by COVID-19 were too slow to help that their lives were in desperation due to lack of enough food, healthcare support, both physical and psychological, and so on.

Worse still, many of our migrant workers are also excluded from qualifying for the program because they were neither unemployed nor under no-work-no-pay policy, or simply working in countries that are not in priority list provided by the Filipino government, which has reduced the financial assistance coverage to only migrant workers into 29 countries. Many of the migrant workers even had nothing more to eat. Many have resorted to scraping in for food from garbage bins, where vegetables have been disposed of by nearby supermarkets. Undocumented migrant workers faced worse situation ad they were at risk of deportation, detention and arrest, if they ever tried to look for help or apply assistance plans. Others have gone through the situation with the merciful support of the Filipino communities in the host countries who donated food to the Filipino migrant workers from time to time. Dire condition is not only faced by the workers overseas, but also their lower class families in the Philippines, as their sent-away members were unable to send money back to support the expenses and needs during the economic slide due to the pandemic.

The Filipino government’s handling of the repatriation program for the migrant workers is also under heavy criticisms due to slow red tape procedures and inadequate management, delaying her overseas citizens

from coming home. Reaching out to the consulates and embassies overseas that have been dismissive, unresponsive or slow response to the pleas for help and assistance, the Filipino migrant workers have been facing difficulty accessing government services because of inefficient hotline services and often unreachable. The closure or limited operations of certain Filipino embassies or consulates overseas has also affected the migrant workers in displacement and distress. Even if they experienced labor or gender based violence, like cases of stranded sea workers on fishing vessels, they were not able to get immediate assistance and support from the Filipino government. Even if some of the repatriated workers were able to land in the Philippines, they needed to put their faith in luck for inadequate quarantine facilities, with poor, crowded environments and little substantial healthcare services and attention. Migrante International calls for demands to the Filipino government to address the urgent needs of Filipino migrant workers, by conducting comprehensive plans on immediate repatriation, health and financial aids and services, and in long term, to implement a moratorium on the mandatory collection of government fees.

INDONESIAN WORKERS OVERSEAS: EXPLOITATION DURING PANDEMIC

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the migrant workers suffered from double risks, not only infection but also unemployment and vulnerable livelihood in the host countries. What Anis Hidayah, the director of Migrant Care Indonesia, shared with us echoes such devastation for cases in Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Hong Kong and more.

Although the International Labor Organisation (ILO) and the United Nations (UN) have been striving their best to put forth labour protection recommendations in the age of pandemic, local precarity still persisted as the employers of the member states were not really bound to tangible restrictions or deterrents for labour mistreatment and exploitation. That, of course, was further encouraged by the indifferent attitude of the governments in the host countries. Such a situation was especially deteriorating in the age of pandemic when the Indonesian government focused on containing the infection in the country instead of freeing a hand to help the migrant workers who suffered from severe exploitation and inhuman conditions. Even in the famous Singapore court case of Parti Liyani, an Indonesian domestic worker who was accused of stealing and later found innocent, she only sought help from the local NGOs which provided a pro bono lawyer, instead of getting any assistance from the Indonesian Embassy or even governmental support. It would be hard to imagine how tough the situation could have been if the NGOs were not able to give a helping hand and leave the migrant worker in desperation in the Singaporean court. Double deprivation from a stable

livelihood was witnessed here, when the identity as an Indonesian citizen could not help with emergency, and the exacerbating unfair treatments towards the migrant workers in many places in the world have become a “new normal” in the age of pandemic.

Hidayah also showed some sorrowful pictures of the Indonesian migrant workers' lives during the lockdown in Malaysia. Without access to proper food and closure of restaurants and grocery stores, in addition to their loss of jobs and wages, they have been left with no choice but to hunt down wild animals in order not to starve. Very limited assistance could they get from the governments, both Indonesian and Malaysian, for going through such tough times. Also, secret deportation has become more severe in the border between Malaysia and Indonesia due to decreasing demand of migrant workers during the economic landslide because of the COVID-19. Such a forced migration made them have the urgent need to survive without income and daily supplies. The vulnerability and sufferings were unprecedented indeed. For those who still got a job, they were not luckier either. Data showed that in host countries or regions like Hong Kong, Singapore and many more, the Indonesian migrant workers were forced to increase their working hours, holidays being cut off and no substitutes for extra working days. They were also subjected to gender-based violence and threatening of layoffs or salary retention. Such problems brought by the poor working condition further worsened with the policies of mobilisation restrictions, leading to increasingly severe psychological issues like depression. An online survey done by the Human Rights Working Group mentioned that 95% of Indonesian migrant workers in Hong Kong and Singapore, although still working and earning a salary, suffered from the problems above mentioned.

Changing the Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection's Road Map during COVID 19

Anis Hidayah (Director, Migrant Care, Indonesia)

The COVID-19 crisis creates an unprecedented impact on the global economy, business and workers, including those 9 million Indonesian Migrant Workers abroad, according to the World Bank data. COVID-19 has brought negative impacts to Indonesian migrant workers. According to the National Agency of Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers (BP2MI), there are 88,700 Indonesian migrant workers who failed to be placed abroad; 146,937 Indonesian migrant workers experienced termination of employment; 26,084 seafarers were repatriated. In addition to that, there are 1,542 Indonesian migrant workers around the world who tested positive for COVID-19. In total 263,263 Indonesian migrant workers got directly affected by the pandemic. Indonesian migrant workers who still work in Malaysia, which implemented lockdown, experience this negative impact. Health services are limited to be accessed, while they have to face cut of wages, limited access to logistical assistance, starving, deportation, work termination, gender-based violence and violence against women.

Indonesian domestic migrant workers face the most vulnerabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic: lockdown policies and restrictions on the space for movement in destination countries, make migrant domestic workers more vulnerable. Working hours are getting longer, there are no days off, there are no incentives to substitute for holidays, work is getting tougher, vulnerable to gender-based violence, increased physical burden and stress; not willing to report health conditions out of fear of being arrested by the security forces due to working without proper documentation; extra work without being given incentives to starvation; and layoffs, unpaid salaries, unable to send money to the family.

Listen to a podcast of Anis Hidayah's talk here.

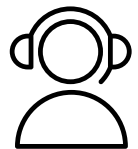


Transnational Care During the Pandemic

Grace Huang Tzi-Hua (Secretary-General, Domestic Caretakers Union Taoyuan (DCU), Taiwan)

In this presentation, Domestic Caretakers Union Taoyuan (DCU) will talk about problems that foreign caregiver workers in Taiwan faced while the government imposed epidemic prevention measures. We found that some employers disallowed re-entry to foreign caregiver workers while other employers prohibited foreign caregiver workers and their care receivers to leave the house. Besides, foreign caregiver workers felt stressed out by the burden of long-term care under the global pandemic. At the same time, we will also share how the pandemic created a labour shortage, which created a bargaining chip for caregiver workers to negotiate better working conditions with their employers.

Listen to a podcast of Grace Huang Tzi-Hua's talk [here](#).



Workers Rights and Medical Treatment

Joanna Concepcion (Chairperson, Migrante International, Philippines)

More than 400,000 Filipino migrant workers have been repatriated back to the Philippines, losing their livelihood due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Thousands more remain stranded, suffering from hunger and lack of medical attention in their host countries and at shore awaiting repatriation assistance from the Philippine and host governments. The presentation will focus on the experiences and challenges faced by Filipino Migrant Workers, both land-based and sea-based in their assertion for rights, dignity, protection and justice in the context of a global pandemic.

Listen to a podcast of Joanna Concepcion's talk here.



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