

Written contribution on Day of General Discussion October 14, 2009 for Committee on Migrant Workers  
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I'm Minda Teves, a Filipino migrant domestic worker here in Turin for 23 years. I used to represent my community in the Regional consultancy of Piedmont since 2006 but unluckily I was not able to attend to a series of meetings organized by the Regional Consultancy lately since every time a notice will arrive in my mails, I can't possibly attend due to my work schedules. I am assisting a lady of 89 years old affected by dementia senile, and though a lot of debate/discussions were taken already whether to call us Collaboratrice Familiare ( COLF)-Badante-or Assistenti Familiare, the truth still emerge that we are persons considered to be workers in a lower level with no CLEARER norms/policy that guides us to the path we have to take. We, MDW are considered *A Face without a Voice or a Voice without a Face?*

Thanks to this committee, and I wonder if those participating or even in charge are really practicing the real work we are involved ( MDW ), in order to realized its goals. The said exchange of views should there be some who are really has the first hand experience as MDW.

Also, thanks to my newly found network (IOM & ATIKHA), I came across to this site and got interested to this topic about us Migrant Domestic Workers. Unfortunately, the deadline of the submission was last September 18, 2009 and I got into this only last week, so I am not sure if my contribution will still be counted or accepted but I'll just try.

I really would like to come to attend, so that I can contribute and be a part of this day but I can't for many reasons. ( work schedules-economic )

Since the committee is interested to received about best practice of MDW then allow me to share to you my long journey being a MDW here in Italy.

I hail from Mindanao Surigao del Sur, though gold treasures were found there in my own very place but i try to search for gold in another place, in another form. Mining & digging are ways to find gold and my being MDW, I found gold. A gold that vanishes every end of the month through consumerism and sometimes luxury.

I was the first to migrate in our large family of 15. That was 23 years ago straight to Turin Italy. I first migrated to the city of Manila after taking the board exam of Midwifery ( year 1976 ), a fresh graduate full of hopes and energy but not finding any job that can offer me a shelter and to pay back my family. We the Filipino children are the Pensions of our aging parents, so, those who find jobs will support the other member of the family. Even migrating to the bigger cities doesn't guarantee stable jobs so, I found out that by engaging in domestic works and finding foreigners to be your employer will give you brighter future and a promising hope to migrate, my choice to work with foreigners was a matter of survival in the city. With my education I was able to face other nationals then back in the Philippines already.

The first year of my existence in Turin Italy almost ended my life due to homesickness and the indifference of everything. I spent my days like *a bird in a cage with a head outside*, I busied myself in my work but my mind wanders back in the Philippines. No man is an island, so to say.

Because of my extraordinary performance, I was appreciated by the family friends of my employer and they have sympathized with my being alone, they helped me by hiring directly some of my relatives who are university graduates. It was not my aim to totally submit them to domestic works, but the diploma acquired in the Philippines are not recognized here so we have no choice except to work as domestic. I was able to pull out more than 40 person from the factory of unemployment in

the Philippines. The flow of my family migration started early of 1990's and the last person to join us was last 2008 nobody entered Italy illegally. Personal scouting for prospect employers discouraged illegal recruiters.

Being part of a numerous family has an advantage and disadvantage, I thought having relatives near you will bring me to no problem zone but in the contrary, since their arrival, my preoccupation increased. Unfortunately, I have recommended a niece of mine who is married and left a 3 month old child back home. Situations of a married person who go abroad are most likely to be demoralized, either they find lovers or in the worst case the cause of a disrupted marriage and so I thought of a brilliant idea to create an association for us to pursue common interest & goals. After the creation of ACFIL( Associazione Culturale Filipina del Piemonte1996). ACFIL became our venue to be together not just for family exclusively but to other friend who shared same interest as ours. ACFIL have suffered from birth pains but due to SOLIDARITY among the members we were able to identify problems of the community at large.

The projects of ACFIL:

1. Organizing a Sunday mass in Tagalog (Supported solely by Pinoys) of which after 11 years of function, the priest took over and created a Centro Filipino ONLUS. Outside ACFIL.
2. Ang Tambuli: a monthly news letter written in tagalong for the benefit of those pinoys who scarcely understand Italian language and English for the benefit of those who prefers English language, featuring issues concerning migration and other related news from the Philippines and activities inside and out of the community ( Financed by the Province of Turin)
3. Pilipino lesson to those pinoys born here who doesn't speak or know tagalong aging from 6-12. ( two years project funded by Municipality of Turin)
4. Italian lesson to adult to prepare them for work ( funded by the commission 8 of the municipality of Turin )
5. *I and the importance of a Family* ( a narrative writing contest) targeted the children who were born here and were petitioned in the adult stage ( it was to air out the difficulties encountered by those children while away from their parents ) ( Funded by the community and private person)
6. *Design your future* ( a joint project of acfil & rotary club 45° parallel ) to select Fil.youth who wish to pursue their studies and from there the Phil-Panel selected deserving students to become scholars. ( The scholarship grant started last 2007 and will end up by 2012. ( so far we have 2 university student at Politecnico di Torino and 5 high school students )
7. *Banco Alimentare*: ( once a month ACFIL received goods from Banco Alimentare) to be distributed to the most needy Filipinos especially those that are sick and jobless.
8. *Gardening*: For 3 years already ACFIL is renting a piece of land from the municipality of Turin to plant tropical vegetables from the Philippines. It is to introduced also to those children born in Italy the different types of vegetables in the Philippines and to give space for those with green thumbs.
9. Drum & Lyre corp ( it is a project funded by the Municipality of Turin ) to involve children from 5-17 years old
10. Dance Troupe ( showcasing the folkdances of the Philippines ) an instrument to diffuse the history of the Philippines from pre-spanish era up to the present.
11. *Giovani Filippini verso la Società 11*( the second year funded by the Compagnia di San Paolo ) Filipino youth as a target. ( civic activities and youth empowerment ) were included. It is to prepare them for a sound integration.
12. Participation to “ *Curarsi di chi Cura* “ ( Curing the one who Cures ) organized by ALMA MATER , to provide techniques on how to stay with a patient with patience and how to utilize a free day from work combating stress and possible depression.

13. Acting as a mediators to newly arrived Filippino students and to the parents who doesn't speak Italian fluently.
14. Peer educators ( collaboration to Il Nostro Pianeta ) preparing old Filipino students to be the Peer educators to newly arrive students
15. Attending TOT & FIN-LIT ( Training of Trainors & Financial Literacy seminar ) in Rome
16. Attending MAPID Seminars in Milan
17. and other activities that will enhance our knowledge to be of help to all migrants who seek help especially to Filipinos.

In order to develop and be able to enhance the services of ACFIL on behalf of the Filipino community, we are in need of an Authority

1. " Re-opening of the Honory Consulate office in Turin" for us to do an inter-relation with the Italian Gov't. Most of the Filipino Migrants Domestic Workers are live-in and will have to free from work for the updating of the documents in MILAN and since the Migrants center can be found in Turin then there was a time that a Filipino was caught (undocumented) and was held in the center ( via Bruneleschi ), the right authority ( consulate) came for rescue after weeks.
2. An information window ( to guide and give information to the Migrant Domestic Workers for free association to work unions for protection in their workfields.

I felt responsible for the security of my family, my co Filipinos and other multiethnic groups and to the society at large, that is why I never ceased to enriched my knowledge to the issues concerning migration for me to be able to instil what I have acquired and transmit to the second generation for the creation of a better future.

The MDW are one way to see the immediate action in protecting the environment empowering them through awareness program such as recycling and differentiating organic, plastic, glass and non organic materials since we are the person responsible in the household.

But of course, there should be a process to this and a long one to develop further the history of migration.