

The voice of indonesian domestic helpers history essay



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Introduction

By the early 1990s, there were approximately 100, 000 Hong Kong Chinese households employing foreign domestic helpers. In 1995, the number had increased to 150, 000, including 130, 000 from the Philippines and another 20, 000 from Thailand, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Indian and Nepal (Asian Migrant Centre 1991).

As of March 31, 2009, Hong Kong has 257, 872 foreign domestic helpers, and 49% of them were from the Philippines (Immigration Department Annual Report 2008-2009). According to the Hong Kong Labor Department April 2009's figure, the number of Indonesian domestic helpers has increased to 125, 567 compared to 2002 with just 78, 100, and that makes Indonesian domestic helpers the second largest ethnic minority group in Hong Kong.

Despite the growing number of Indonesian domestic helpers in Hong Kong, a lot of employers are paying their Indonesian helpers with less than HK\$3560 per month, which is the minimum wage according to the Hong Kong law. A 2007 report sponsored by Oxfam-Hong Kong showed that 22 percent of Indonesian domestic helpers in Hong Kong were underpaid..

In this paper, I want to find out why Indonesian domestic helpers tend to be the “ easy target” for exploitation, especially when compared to Filipino domestic helpers. My comparisons are based on their education, English proficiency, cultural and religion differences. Also, I compared the support that they receive from their governments and unions in Hong Kong. In addition, I collected data and information from one Indonesian domestic helper and one Filipino domestic helper who are working in Hong Kong.

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For my conclusion, I have come up with a list of recommendations for the Hong Kong Government to help Indonesian domestic helpers to have a higher self-esteem and raise awareness of their rights in Hong Kong.

The interview

I invited my friend's Indonesian helper, Hemi, to have an interview with me. Hemi was so helpful that she brought her Filipino friend, Emmy, along. In the interview, they shared their stories and work experience in Hong Kong with me. Also, they provided me with information and data about their education, family, upbringing; their culture, religion, and their governments.

Background of my 2 female interviewees who are working in Hong Kong :

Name

Hemi

Emmy

Nationality

Indonesian

Filipino

Age

29

40

Home town

Surabaya, East of Java

Tondo, a district of Manila

Martial status

Divorced with two children

Single

Educational level

High school

Junior high

Language skill

First language :

Bahasa Indonesia

Foreign languages : Cantonese, Mandarin and English

First language :

Tagalog

Second language :

English

Religion

Muslim

Catholic

Family members

3 brothers and 1 sister

5 brothers 3 sisters

Number of years working in

Hong Kong

5 years

12 years

Previous employer

Hong Kong Chinese family

Hong Kong Chinese family

Present employer

Asian American family

American family

Hemi and Emmy met at a Taekwondo class about one year ago. Hemi is at her black-belt level whereas Emmy is just a beginner. I asked Hemi why she took up Taekwondo and she told me she wanted to be tough, and martial art could train her mind as well as her body. For Emmy, it is more for keeping fit and a place to hang out on Sundays. Hemi takes up martial art because she wants to build up a stronger character so no body could look down on her or take advantage of her while for Emmy, it is just for fun and keeping up with

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her appearance. With two people working in the same job, both working for an American family, taking up the same hobby, their personality and mentality are totally different.

Family background

Emmy's two sisters are working in Hong Kong too so they meet almost every Sunday for lunch or early dinner since they all have to go back to their employer's home (Hong Kong Immigration Department) by 9pm. Hemi, on the other hand, is working alone in Hong Kong. Hemi's younger sister worked as a domestic helper in Hong Kong six years ago and where she met her Spanish husband. They got married five years ago. They are now living and running a French restaurant in Bali, Indonesia.

I asked Hemi if her sister's love story in Hong Kong "inspired" her to come to Hong Kong and work, so she could find a husband and remarry. She laughed and had a blush on her face. She told me life was very tough back home because there were not enough jobs for everyone. Today, Indonesia has a population of 242, 968, 342 which makes it the fourth most populated country in the world (World Gazetteer). That was the reason her younger sister had to leave home and work overseas as a domestic helper. Hemi really loves her hometown, Surabaya, it is big and airy, has mountains everywhere but there is no job there. Hemi has two brothers working in Jakarta and one brother working in Bali. Hemi's family's main income relies on farming and her father only makes about HK\$1000 per month. In Indonesia, 55% of the total labor force is from the agricultural sector (U. S. Library of Congress). In 2004, the farm household income was less than HK\$650 per month (FAO). Hemi needs to make more income to sustain the <https://assignbuster.com/the-voice-of-indonesian-domestic-helpers-history-essay/>

family and the two children that she left behind for her mother to take care of since her divorce.

Just like Hemi, Emmy and her two sisters all need to work in Hong Kong as a domestic helper because there are not enough jobs with a decent salary back in their hometown, Tondo. The Philippines has a population of 60 million (World Gazetteer). Emmy said, “ Tondo is one of the district[s] in Manila but it’s also the poorest one.” In 2002-2003, the farm household income was around HK\$1400 per month (FAO).

Hemi got married at a tender age of 20, in which early marriage is very common in most developing countries (Singh and Samara, 1996). She told me she did not get married because of love, it was just a mistake — she was pregnant.

Then, I asked Emmy if she had a boyfriend in Hong Kong or back in the Philippines, and she told me she had learnt a good lesson from her two sisters who are working in Hong Kong. “ They are lazy and always fool around!” Emmy said. This is a very common family problem in the Philippines. With no employment at home, the men often feel lonely, low self-esteem and loss of power and dignity as their wives become the breadwinners. (Gamburd, 2002). But still, her sisters send money home every month, especially both of their eldest daughters are in college now. According to Trager, young and single women in the Philippines have a long history to work as maids and earn money to help their family. For Emmy’s two sisters and Hemi, it is really not easy to leave their family behind and work alone in Hong Kong (Buijs, 1993). Emmy said she would rather be

single or a lesbian than finding a man back in the Philippines. Based on my first ten minutes conversation with Emmy, I could feel her independence and she is in complete control of her life. Not to mention, her open and bold statement — rather being a lesbian than getting married.

Education background

Women in the Philippines are better educated than Indonesian women. The literacy rate of women in the Philippines was 93% in 1990, as compared to women in Indonesia at 81.4% in 1995 (UNESCO). The Philippines used to be a colony under the U. S. so its education system is based on the U. S. model. Children in the Philippines enter public school at age 4 or above, and elementary schooling is compulsory.

Most of the Filipino helpers have at least a high school (F. 5 to F. 7) to college education. Most of them used to be professionals, nurses, teachers, clerical workers before working in Hong Kong as domestic helpers.

Hemi told me for most of the Indonesia helpers, they only finished their elementary school (Primary 6) education and they would and could only work on their family's farm or work in overseas as domestic helpers afterwards. According to the Ministry of National Education of Indonesia, the Government announced its compulsory 9 years of basic education (Primary 6 to Form 3) in 1994. Hemi told me she was very lucky to be able to complete her high school education despite her family's low income. As Filipinos have a much higher education, it explains why they have a better understanding of the Hong Kong labor and immigration law, and higher awareness of their rights. As Francis Bacon (1561-1626) said, " Knowledge is power."

English proficiency

Emmy told me they started to learn English since grade 1 and English is a major subject. Filipinos speak and write American English because they were once colonized by America, and English has been their second language ever since. Unlike Emmy, Hemi only started to learn English in Indonesia in her high school years, and when she was under the domestic job training with the recruitment agency (which she also learned Mandarin and Cantonese throughout her 3-month job training). Indonesia declared their independence from the Dutch in November 1949, since then they replaced Dutch with English. In 1955, English became the first foreign language in Indonesia. In the Guidelines of the State Policy in 1993, the development of English was clearly stated in the policy. However, with a rather late development of the language, Filipinos' English proficiency is still much higher than most Indonesians.

This is one of the reasons Hong Kong employers prefer hiring Filipinos than Indonesians because a lot of the educated, overseas educated families with young children want their helper to be their children's private English tutor as well — teach them English vocabulary, help them with their English homework, read them English story books, and thus, enhance their English communication skills. For most expatriate families, they much prefer Filipinos because most of them do not speak a word of Cantonese, they must have someone who can communicate with them in English fluently (Wright, 2007). Emmy also said, “ In the Philippines, English is also the language of power. For people who can speak good English, they can have higher social position[s] and find well-paid jobs” (Kachru, 1986).

Professor Randy LaPolla also mentioned that prestige of a language generally derives from its economic value and the military power of its speakers. In this case, the Philippines and its people has the strong support from the U. S.

Hemi told me with limited English vocabulary and poor spellings, it has caused her a lot of inconvenience, misunderstanding and mistakes at work (Jones, 2000). For example, her American employer cannot read what she writes sometimes, or she does not understand what her employer's written instruction, and she buys the wrong grocery or food ingredient because of her low proficiency of English.

Religion

Most of the Indonesians are Muslims. " The Koran is saying to humans, this is the final guidance from your Creator, for the specific purpose of worshipping him and creating a civil society where you can live in peace with one another," says Muslim scholar Imam Sulayman S. Nyang of Howard University in Washington, D. C. This was also what Hemi told me about her religion --- promoting peace.

Hemi said may be that is why a lot of Hong Kong Chinese employers shouted and yelled at the Indonesian helpers because but they seldom fight back or talk back. For Muslims, they are not allowed to eat pork. Hemi told me she lost some job interview opportunities because of her religion. Some Chinese families do not want to hire her because she does not eat pork (but they can touch or cook pork) and if the employer needs to buy extra or other food items, which means it will increase their daily household food expenses.

As Muslims, they have to do fasting which is a spiritual practice. There is one full month in every year in which it has to be strictly followed by Muslims all over the world. Fasting begins at dawn and ends with sunset. During this period, the Muslims are restricted from all food and drinks, and sexual activities.

Besides purifying their soul and mind, fasting also teaches Muslims about patience and humility. This can also explain the quiet, calm and obedient traits of most Indonesians women.

For most Filipinos, they are Catholics. They are not allowed to get a divorce but a separation only. Also, they are not allowed to use contraceptive measures because it is a sin (Bible – Genesis 38: 8-10) or have abortions. According to Pope Benedict XVI, the Holy Father of the Vatican, it is the responsibility as a Catholic to protect life at all stages of its development.

Emmy's sister got pregnant again two years ago when she returned to the Philippines for holiday — they have 3 children already. Emmy told me it was really not easy for her sister to leave her newborn and return to work in Hong Kong. This is also why Emmy does not want to get married and have children because she thinks it is really unfair and sad to leave them behind if she is still working in Hong Kong (Parrenas 2002).

A lot of Hong Kong Chinese employers think Indonesians are easier to train and manage because of their devotion to their religion. They live a simple life and they only need to pray five times a day at home, they do not need to go the Mosque on every Saturday or Sunday. A lot of Hong Kong employers see Sunday church to the Filipinos helpers as a gathering only — time for <https://assignbuster.com/the-voice-of-indonesian-domestic-helpers-history-essay/>

gossiping and exchanging “ tips and tricks” on how to “ handle” or “ counter act” their employers.

Unfair treatments in Hong Kong

As Hemi said about the Koran, the Muslim bible, is about peace and how to make peace. She said that is the reason Indonesian women are in general very soft-spoken and submissive because they always try to avoid arguments. But she said because of their nature and personality, they always being taken advantage by their Hong Kong Chinese employers. For example, the underpayment problem.

Underpayment : In Hong Kong, the current and official minimum wage for foreign domestic helpers is HK\$ \$3, 580 per month, which has been effective since 10 July 2008 (Hong Kong Immigration Department). However, a lot of Indonesian helpers were underpaid at illegal rates from HK\$1500 to HK\$2000 per month (AMC et al 2001).

A 2007 report sponsored by Oxfam-Hong Kong showed that 22 percent of Indonesian domestic helpers in Hong Kong were underpaid. The Hong Kong Labor Department handled 1786 pay and contract claims from foreign domestic helpers between January and October 2000, mostly from Indonesian helpers (South China Morning Post, 24 February 2000). Hemi told me when she first came to Hong Kong, the recruitment agency instructed her Chinese employer to deduct HK\$3000 from her salary each month as the placement fees, and paid the recruitment agency directly, so that only left her with less than HK\$500 a month.

Placement fee : Currently, the Hong Kong law sets the maximum placement fee that recruitment agencies may charge the foreign domestic helpers at 10% of their first month's salary only. However, for most Indonesians, they have to pay the agency HK\$3000 for seven months. A lot of agencies even offer under-the-table deals to employers so the Indonesian helpers will work for as little as half of the legal minimum wage (Earth Times, 9 November 2009). In contrast, no Filipino was overcharged by their recruitment agencies because the Philippine Government has successfully lobbied to allow direct hiring of Filipino domestic helpers for Hong Kong, without the involvement of an agency. Emmy said, " The Hong Kong Chinese employers won't dare to underpay us because we are the largest ethnic minority group in Hong Kong, and we've been in Hong Kong for a long time so the employer will not mess with us." I could feel the power from Emmy as she was speaking. She amazed me with her choice of English words and phrases, such as " won't dare to" and " will not mess with us". Again, it proves that when people master a language skill, it can empower them to a greater self.

As Professor Randy LaPolla said, " Filipinos have a stronger sense of fairness because they have a western attitude and more of a liberal thinking."

Besides, most of the Filipino helpers will attend a Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar (PDOS) before coming to Hong Kong. However, for most Indonesians, they will just rely on their recruitment agency to give them the relevant legal information. As mentioned earlier, when ones have a higher education, they will be more aware of their rights.

Holidays / Rest days : According to the Hong Kong labor laws, foreign domestic helpers are entitled to have one 24-hour rest day within a 7-day period. However, a lot of Indonesia helpers are not able to enjoy their holidays because their employers require them to work at least a few hours before they can leave their employer's home.

Hemi told me that was the reason she left her previous Hong Kong Chinese employer. " Because they have a newborn baby, every Sunday I can only leave home after 12 o'clock. My boss know[s] I'm not happy, so she pay[s] me HK\$30 every Sunday, but it's enough. I want my holiday, go to my Taekwondo class, and go out with my friends." Hemi is one of the lucky ones already because at least her ex-boss was trying to compensate her instead of violating her rights completely.

Employers exercise their power : Hemi told me she was well aware of the situation. Hemi said, " Because [of] our religion, we Indonesian[s] are very quiet. We don't like argue [ing] with people. We don't like [to] complain. Sometimes, when my employer shout[s] at me, I just tell myself, " never mind". After two years, I'm not here any more." (The standard employer contract is two years, Hong Kong Immigration Department). Filipino helpers stay and work in Hong Kong on an average of 5 to 7 years whereas Indonesia helpers tend to stay 3 to 5 years only (Asian Development Bank). Hemi continued, " My ex-employer ask[s] me to clean her friend's home but I'm not supposed to clean other people[' s] home except my employer[' s]. This also displays the power and control from the employers (Constable, 1996).

“ Actually, I don’t mind but one time, I see [saw] my employer take [had taken] money from her friend but not share[ing] with me, I was a bit upset.” Hemi said. Even though Hemi was complaining about her ex-employer, she was still talking in rather calm voice and manner. “ Thanks to Emmy, I know and understand my right[s] and I can say no to my employer if it’s not on the contract.” (Hong Kong Immigration Department) Hemi said it in her consistent calm voice. Hemi admitted that she was too easy-going and ignorant when she first arrived to Hong Kong. Most Indonesian helpers working in Hong Kong are aged 21 to 42 years old whereas Filipino helpers are ranging from 23 to 53 (Ignacio and Mejia, 2008). This explains with maturity, the Filipinos helpers know where to ask questions and how to fight for their rights. According to the press interview with the President of Indonesian Migrant Workers’ Union, Ms Sartiwen Binti Sanbardi, she said a lot of Indonesia domestic workers are exploited because they don’t know the law. “ Yes, people always thought we Indonesians are stupid. Just because we don’t fight back, it doesn’t mean we are stupid!” Hemi said it in a rather frustrating voice this time.

The right of abode : Emmy laughed loudly, clapping her hands and nodding her head as Hemi was talking. Emmy said, “ That’s our difference.”. When Emmy said that, I think it has a lot do with her cultural background as the Philippines has been under the American influence all these years. They are not afraid to speak up and fight for their rights. Also, whenever it was Emmy’s turn to talk, she had quite a bit of body gestures and body movements. That also shows her confidence in herself and how expressive she is. Emmy continued, “ If it’s not my fault, I’ll fight back and stand firm.

I'm their helper, not their punching bag! I can find a job easily in Hong Kong or even in Canada. I have two cousins work[ing] there already." Emmy said, " Canada provide[s] much better social welfare than Hong Kong. I can get 10 Canadian dollars per hour, and only [work] 8 hours a day. I can also have my Saturday[s] and Sunday[s] off. That's about HK\$16, 000 per month."

(Armacost, 1995). According to the Immigration Department of Canada, after the foreign domestic helpers have worked in Canada for 3 years, they can apply to be a Canadian citizen. Then, after they have turned into a Canadian citizen, they can apply their sons, daughters, mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers to Canada as well. Emmy said, " How wonderful is that!"

I can understand why Emmy felt so strongly about this because she has been working in Hong Kong for twelve years, but still, she can NEVER apply for a Hong Kong residency because of her work identity — she can only be a domestic helper (Hong Kong Immigration Department) in Hong Kong despite her other clerical and customer servicing skills.

Unfair treatments by the Indonesian Government

Hemi told me this December, she will go back to Indonesia for good because she has bought and built a nice big house back home last year. However, she is really annoyed the way her homeland had treated her.

In the past few years, whenever she went home through the Jakarta Airport, there was a special queue for " Domestic Helpers" and she felt like she was being labeled and discriminated. It made her feel very ashamed and embarrassed to be a domestic helper overseas despite the significant amount of money she has " contributed to" the government over the years.

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On average, Indonesians send more than HK\$2300 per month back to Indonesia (Asian Development Bank, 2006). She told me the experience at the Jakarta Airport really gave her low self-esteem as she felt like she is an outsider and she is not welcome to come home.

To avoid this kind of humiliation, Hemi has decided to take a direct flight from Hong Kong to Surabaya this December even though the air ticket is a little bit more expensive. On top of this kind of discrimination and humiliation, Hemi told me whenever they have to make remittances from Hong Kong to Indonesia through a money exchange, she has to pay HK\$30 for each transaction. Also, when she landed to the Jakarta Airport, there would be people “greeting” her by telling her she could not take a public transport, but a “special coach” prepared by the government, which of course, she has to pay for the bus ride home. Hemi told me the Indonesian government will try every possible way to squeeze money out of its own people, unlike Hong Kong. The Indonesian government should not rely heavily on remittances the overseas domestic helpers send back. Instead, it should work aggressively to improve and increase employment opportunities in their own soil.

Hemi recalled “living nightmare” at the training center back in Indonesia — it was harsh and inhumane. All the girls were not allowed to go home for three months. At night, they slept on floor (no beds) and they had absolutely no privacy. Hemi said, “I feel like I am a fish lying on the floor in the market.” She said some girls could not handle it and ran away. For those “run-away maids”, they need to pay the training centre around HK\$1000 as

compensation for their meals and accommodation. Emmy told me that was never happened and would never happen to them in the Philippines.

Support from the Philippines Government to Filipino domestic helpers

According to the POEA (the Philippines Overseas Employment Administration) 2002, Philippines is the world's largest exporter of labor, with about 4.2 to 6.4 million women are working abroad as domestic helpers and entertainers.

To protect its nationals working abroad, the Philippines Government has implemented the following policies and measures:

In 2001, the Government successfully lobbied to allow direct hiring of domestic helpers to Hong Kong, without the involvement of a recruitment agency, hence, no more agency fees, which is one of the greatest costs to Filipino domestic helpers.

In October 2006, the Philippines Overseas Employment Administration set a standardized minimum salary to all Filipino domestic helpers working overseas. From a minimum wage of US\$200 to US\$400.

The minimum age requirement for working overseas is 25.

Employment agencies must sign and stamp contracts with the embassy for every Filipino domestic worker brought in.

The Filipino domestic helpers to-be must attend a Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar (PDOS) before coming to Hong Kong.

In 2009, the Government imposed a ban on sending more workers to Jordan unless the Middle Eastern countries passed regulations to protect Filipino citizens. It is obvious that once their nationals reported to them about such abuses, their Government would take immediate action and protect their rights and safety.

Sources : MFMW (Mission for Migrant Workers)

Unions / Support groups

In Hong Kong, Indonesian domestic helpers can seek professional help and legal advice regarding their rights and benefits from two unions — the Indonesian Migrant Workers Union (IMWU) and Coalition of Indonesian Migrant Workers' Organisations (KOTKIHO, Koalisi Organisasi Tenaga Kerja Indonesia Hong Kong). For the Filipino helpers, they have the United Filipinos in Hong Kong (UNIFIL) which it was established in 1984. It has 60000 members which is the largest union in Hong Kong for Filipino domestic helpers. It provides paralegal training, study groups, media liaison and educational seminars on rights. They also provide safe temporary shelter for those in need (UNIFIL website). Besides UNIFIL, there are also Filipino Domestic Helpers General Union-HK, and Mission for Migrant Workers (MFMW).

Of course, both Filipino and Indonesian domestic helpers can also seek help from their own consulate and the Hong Kong Labor and Employment Department. As you can see, there are more unions and support groups in Hong Kong for Filipino domestic helpers than for Indonesian helpers.

However, as the number of Indonesian helpers has raised to 125, 567, there

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is a real need to have a third or fourth union and more support groups to educate the Indonesian helpers about their rights and help them to solve any work-related disputes.

Hemi told me she would like to see their unions to have more power and authority like UNIFIL — holding public rallies and demonstrations, and demanding action from their Consulate, fights for better rights for the Indonesian helpers in Hong Kong. On top of that, the Filipino domestic helpers in Hong Kong have very well-established and organized labor unions in Hong Kong. Whenever they think they are being mistreated or violated of rights, they will either go to the Philippines Consulate or their labor unions. Unlike Filipino helpers, most Indonesian helpers will go straight to their recruitment agency for help only.

Human rights in Hong Kong

Emmy likes Hong Kong because in general, it is a very fair city. Emmy said, “The people and the government are very “clean”, not corrupted.”

Hemi seconded and said, “The Hong Kong government is so CLEAN and they don’t squeeze money from the people. Unlike our government, they will try every single way to take money out of your pocket.” Hemi said.

Hemi told me she enjoyed her rights as a woman in Hong Kong the most. She told me back home, women did not have a say. As a woman in Indonesia, one must follow the man / men behind physically. When the men talk, women are not supposed to give opinions, talk back or object to what the men said — they can only follow what the men say or follow the

instructions accordingly even if they disagree. However, in Hong Kong, they
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can express themselves freely. The Hong Kong Women's Commission conducted a survey in 2009 and interviewed 1530 people aged 15 or above, 58.9% was very satisfied and satisfied with the overall situation of gender equality in Hong Kong. Only 12.1% was very dissatisfied and dissatisfied. They can walk in front of a man or anybody. They can talk loudly if they like to or want to. They do not have to agree everything other people say. They can have their own opinions.

Adopted in 1990, the UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families (CMW) entered force in 2003. It is the first legally binding international instrument to incorporate a full range of human rights, which include civil rights, political rights, economic, social and cultural rights, for all migrant workers. The Convention was ratified by the Philippines in 1995, but neither Indonesia nor Hong Kong has yet sign on. (Ignacio and Mejia, 2008)

My recommendations for the Hong Kong government

Salary :

Imprisonment terms for those who violate the law of paying the minimum wage. On 9 June 2010, the Hong Kong Government had a press release on its website stating an employer is in jail for three months because he had been underpaid his Indonesian domestic helper since 2007 and the outstanding wages was about HK\$25,000.

It was the first case ever that a jail sentence was imposed on an employer (The Labor Department).

Working condition :

They must have their own bed, not sleeping on the floor or in the kitchen or anywhere that is not suitable for sleeping or resting.

They should be allowed to live outside of the employer's home, and have the employers paid for their room and board if their living condition does not give them any privacy

They must have 8 hours of sleep every day.

Residence / Citizenship :

For those who have been working in Hong Kong continuously for seven years or more, they should entitle for a residency in Hong Kong despite their nature of work or identity.

According to The Basic Law of Hong Kong (the constitutional document for Hong Kong, SAR, China), the right of abode is granted to people to have entered Hong Kong with valid travel documents, resided in Hong Kong for a continuous period of not less than seven years and taken Hong Kong to be their place of permanent residence.

Countries such as the U. S., Canada (The Live-in Caregiver Program) and Australia have more liberal immigration laws, permitting work, residency and family reunion. But in Hong Kong, because of the legislative restrictions under the Immigration Ordinance, they are never qualified for a right of abode.

Holidays :

They must have one holiday or one day of rest per week. The holiday or day of rest must be agreed by both employee and the employer.

They are entitled to all statutory holidays, just like every other workers in Hong Kong. Heavy penalty of fine should be imposed on employers who fail to give or make up any of the statutory holidays.

Employment contract :

Any job duties or job descriptions which are not written in the employment contract, they should have the right to reject.

Employers can alter job duties, but they must have their domestic helpers' written consent.

Law :

The “ 14-day rule” was implemented in April 1987 under the Immigration Ordinance. Foreign domestic helpers only have 14 days to find new domestic job upon completion or termination of the two-year contract. If they fail to find a new employer within 14 days, they must return to their home country immediately or they will face a maximum penalty of HK\$50, 000 and imprisonment fo