

The Bethune House Migrant Women's Refuge Project Report 2016

SHELTER AND AID FOR WOMEN MIGRANTS IN CRISIS

For more than 30 years, Bethune House (BH) has offered support to these women, responding to their needs effectively through a variety of services.

One of these essential programs is the provision of food and accommodation. Many migrant workers who encounter legal difficulties in Hong Kong are unable to support themselves, as they cannot legally be employed while their cases are pending. Therefore, BH's provision of three meals a day as well as clothing, a bed, linen, and blankets enables these women to live with dignity while their cases are being settled.



In addition to this basic assistance, BH provides its residents with guidance and assistance on their cases. This aspect of BH's work is especially critical because many of the women have no knowledge of their civil rights or of the resources available to them in their pursuit of legal justice.

GET TOGETHER OF ALL BH CLIENTS *After swimming and sports event*

To respond to this need, BH educates its residents about these rights, as well as holding periodic issue-based forums to familiarize the women with current government policies and their implications.



To complement these services, BH strives to address other needs of the women migrants. For its residents, BH offers psycho-social and health services in order to provide a more holistic approach to crisis management. As a home for women, BH presents a social environment that enables the women to support each other and share experiences. The residents come from different countries and backgrounds, but BH welcomes each person and encourages social activities. More formal counseling is also available for women who have endured traumatic situations.

Bethune House has served as an active link between foreign domestic workers and the local community especially the students who were taken care of by foreign domestic workers. The students changed their attitudes toward their domestic helpers. They could be "agents of change" so that when they grow up, their values and perceptions towards foreign domestic helpers is more inclusive and caring.

With such a variety of critical programs, BH has assiduously pursued creative ways to secure funding for its many initiatives. The Coins for Bethune, a community initiative help raise awareness on the work of Bethune House while raising funds, and the Handicraft project, which involves the selling of handmade cross-stitched cards, bead bracelets and earrings made by BH residents, both generate sustainable income for BH, as well as enhancing the skills of the women concerned. Various events such as Charity auction, Charity Dinner, Food Drive and emergency appeals serve to augment BH's



budget, as well as contributions from BH’s support network and other charities in HK and overseas. Nevertheless, the ever-growing need of women migrants for the services that BH provides necessitates additional funding.

The funds that we raised from Kowloon Union Church partially support the charitable assistance to our clients in Jordan. For a refuge such as ours, rental payment is not mere administrative or operational expense but rather is vital and indispensable in program implementation. For how can we claim to be a shelter if we cannot provide the residents a roof over their heads? The shelter is in itself our social welfare program. With the support from Kowloon Union Church, Bethune House has increased its capacity to attend to the needs of the residents that contribute to their empowerment as well as in strengthening their capacity to cope with their cases and issues that affect their situations in HK.

B. PROJECT OUTCOMES

1. Accomplishments

a. **We are able to sustain our two shelters until now. More than 600 women in crisis situation have the courage to pursue their cases because they have an assured place to stay, food provisions, legal and medical assistance while in HK.**

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| Total Case intake 2016 = 601 | Indonesians= 291 | Filipinos= 304 | Others: 6 |
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Meal Sharing



Sleeping Quarters



Donation of New pillows

2. CASE HIGHLIGHTS

2.1 For 9 months, a Filipina endured sleeping in a doghouse like accommodation at the balcony of the employer’s flat located on the 5/F. She was exposed to all kinds of elements – eggs, empty bottles, hangers, etc falling from the upper floors. She filed a case against her employer after constructively terminating her employment contract. However, she lost her claims for wage in lieu of notice at the Minor Employment Adjudication Board because the Adjudicator ordered that her accommodation was



considered suitable with all the “amenities”- air conditioner, cabinet, mattress inside the doghouse like accommodation. Even with the conditions that she cannot stretch her arms sideways, cannot stand straight- she has to kneel down to enter the place. It was very wet during summer because of humidity and has to use a potty at night.

2.2 We rescued a domestic worker at 4:30 am. She was terminated after midnight. Her hair was cut by the employer. She was only allowed to take a bath twice a week, was only provided with left-over food. The employer said water is expensive, shampoo is expensive and haircut is expensive.

2.3 A Filipina was diagnosed with stage 4 colon cancer. She stayed in the shelter after her employment contract was terminated by her employer. She returned to the Philippines in February 2016 but after 9 months, she passed away in November 2016.



2.4 An Indonesian looked after 100 dogs and 50 puppies. She was beaten by the dogs several times but the employer refused to bring her to the doctor. The last time she was beaten, they had to bring her to the hospital. She had undergone eye operation and almost lost her eyesight.

2.5 A Filipina was beaten by her employer. She ran away, with blood all over her t-shirt. The management of the building assisted her to call the police. The employer was convicted and was fined HK\$3,000 in January 2016. She stayed in the shelter for 10 months starting from April 2015.

2.6 A Filipina was diagnosed with tuberculosis of the stomach that affected her brain. She was in coma for several months. Her only daughter and Aunt arrived in Hong Kong to visit her but after two months the client passed away on 21 May 2016.

b. We are able to contribute to the coping capacity and empowerment of the individual’s psycho-social welfare while awaiting for the resolution of their cases.



Birthday celebration



Swimming lesson

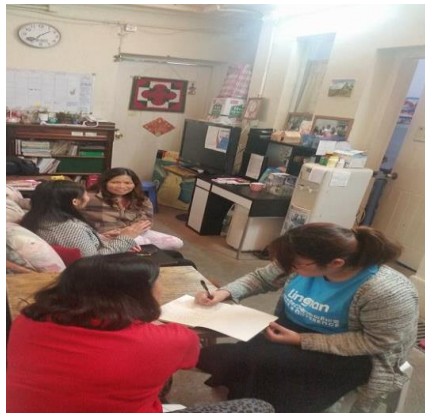


Health Program

c. We have provided a safe and supportive environment to these women to pursue justice, so they are able to raise their integrity and dignity as persons and as members of a caring community.



Case Briefing



Documentation



Case Support

d. More importantly is the need for them to be able to get back from their situations of frustrations and helplessness to acquiring hope to become survivors. Our therapeutic activities and life skills trainings hopefully have improve their employability and will help reduce incidences of contract termination in the future and better the quality of lives for both the migrant domestic worker and the households they serve. This approach of crisis prevention is crucial in the strategy of migrant empowerment.



HANDICRAFT MAKING



ENGLISH LESSON



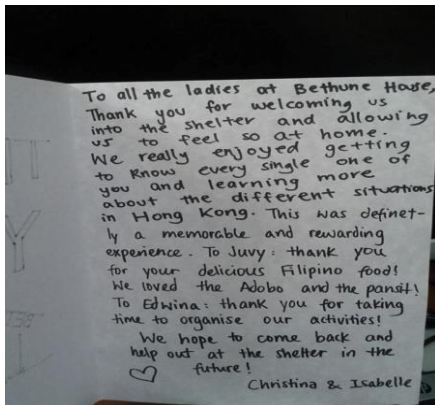
NUTRITION AND DIET

e. We have developed a pool of volunteers to assist in the facilitation of our work.



Sugar test and BP

Medical Outreachers



Court accompaniment

CIS students



Re-painting the shelter

Bank of America

f. Migrant organizations from the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand, churches, and individuals regularly donate food to the shelter. Feeding HK is a regular partner who donates food and toiletries once a month. They have also arranged bread collection from Pret a Manger and food boxes from GymBox. Jewish Community Center also donates cooked meat and sausages from time to time. St John's family donates the food that they collected during Harvest festival. We sell handicrafts, organized the Coins for Bethune and food drive, a fund raising projects to raise awareness on our work.



*Handicraft Sale
At Stanley Christmas Fete*



Coins for Bethune



Food Drive

g. There were media (prints and television) interviews, invitation to speak in secondary schools, churches and fund-raising events.

h. Visitors from Philippine and Thai Consulates, primary and secondary schools, University students, churches, migrant organizations, donors and supportive individuals.