

DRAFT PAPER

The Power to Organise and Engage: The Use of ICT by Women
Migrant Domestic Workers' Organisations

Hong Kong and Taiwan

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I. Executive Summary:

Asia has more than 50 million migrant workers of which more than half are women who cook, clean and care for others as domestic workers. Hidden within employers' households, migrant domestic work is the most isolated and alienating form of work for women. One of the major obstructions to strengthening women domestic worker rights and labour conditions is the restrictions and legal barriers to collective organising. For most migrant domestic workers isolation is compounded by long hours and a general lack of regular days off, although the increasing popularity of communication technology is enabling them to still have a link with the outside world.

Almost all domestic workers from Indonesia and the Philippines working in Hong Kong and Taiwan have a mobile phone. This simple device could be the key for migrant domestic workers to have virtual solidarity to organise and protect themselves where labour laws are lacking.

The Power to Organise and Engage: The Use of ICT by Women Migrant Domestic Workers' Organisations examines the current use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) particularly mobile phones, by women migrant domestic workers and their organisations in both Hong Kong and Taiwan, and investigates the potential of this technology to enable migrant domestic workers to collectively organise and become politically engaged. The report is based on extensive research; field surveys with 228 women migrant domestic workers; surveys of migrant domestic worker informal groups and associations; forum discussions; and in-depth interviews with experienced local organisations.

II. Background:

A research gap exists on the subject of the use and effectiveness of Informational Communication Technology (ICT) by migrant organisations and in particular, by women migrant domestic workers and their organisations. Such research has the potential to highlight the importance of ICT to collective organisation and representation. The research can also lead to an understanding of how ICT can be used by migrant women domestic workers to be politically engaged as citizens of their own countries and as residents of the receiving countries. The research has the potential to inform migrant domestic workers organisations about the use of ICT to organise and engage migrant workers, and develop recommendations for governments.

The research has the potential to have impacts on gender, labour and development policies. As the study will focus exclusively on women migrant domestic workers, it will provide a key understanding of the potential of ICT as an effective tool to engage women in lobbying, campaigning and in initiating policy changes. By including training in and education on the use of ICT, more domestic workers will understand the importance of such technology and how they can connect with and participate in migrant worker organisations. Furthermore, policy in both sending and receiving countries may need to reflect this potential by protecting the use of mobile phones by domestic workers.

The ability of ICTs to mobilise workers, document abuse and publicise campaigns has undoubtedly already had an effect on some policies. In 2008, there was an intensive campaign by Indonesian domestic worker organisations that led to the withdrawal of the SE2258/2007 policy prohibiting domestic workers in Hong Kong to change employment agencies within the first two years of employment (PILAR and GAMMI, Feb 2008). This organisation was achieved mostly through the use of mobile phones and was publicised on the internet through blogs and sites such as YouTube. The use of ICT in that case decreased the isolation and allowed for the effective organisation and civil participation of domestic workers. Once documented and analysed, there is potential to use the example set by migrant domestic worker organisations in the selected countries of Hong Kong and Taiwan to initiate policy changes in other countries.

Asia has more than 50 million migrant workers of which more than half are women, a large number of them domestic workers. Domestic work is under paid with poor conditions as domestic workers are rarely included in national labour laws, and lack the legislative and collective protection other workers enjoy (UFDWR, 2010). One of the major barriers to strengthening women domestic worker rights and labour conditions is the restrictions and barriers in collective organising. Freedom of Association is recognised as a fundamental right, without which other rights cannot be realised. The ability to form and join trade unions is a civil and political right recognised in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is a major avenue for civic and political participation but one that is rarely available to domestic workers.

In the modern technological world, domestic workers are beginning to use ICTs to organise collectively. While isolated physically, ICT provides some opportunities to create virtual solidarity. These tools allow migrant domestic workers to lobby governments of both sending and receiving countries, document abuse and inform the public of rights violations across national borders. Mobile phones, in particular, are a key part of communication for domestic worker groups and associations.



Migrant domestic workers on Sunday in Victoria Park, Hong Kong

A. Introduction

1. Women migrant domestic workers and organising

The rights to organise, to collectively bargain, to form and join unions and to select representatives of one's own choosing are fundamental human rights, claimed by workers as long ago as 1948. These rights allow workers to realise other rights – decent work, health and safety, fair wages, fair working hours, fair conditions and to have a say over their working lives amongst others. However, domestic workers around the world are denied the most basic working rights including the right to organise.

APWLD, on behalf of the United for Foreign Domestic Worker Rights (UFDWR) coalition, conducted a review of laws in ten sending and receiving countries in Asia in 2010 and found

that, in summary,¹ only half of the countries studied protect domestic workers freedom of association and right to organise (UFDWR, 2010). Laws that prevent migrants from forming unions and from holding union positions discriminate against migrant domestic workers and violate Article 2 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which protects the rights of all individuals within the state territory, without discrimination.

The new Convention and Recommendation on Decent Work for Domestic Workers adopted in June 2011, protects the right to organise. Article 3 reminds members that ‘freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining’ is one of the fundamental principles of work and its states that members shall protect the right of domestic workers to establish and join organisation. The Recommendation gives further guidelines such as identifying and eliminating restrictions to establishing or joining organisations, as well as supporting and strengthening organisations. Many of the articles also mention that measures should be implemented in consultation with workers’ organisations.

Although the Convention is not yet in force,² the right to collective representation is currently embodied in international law, along with the right to freedom of association and to organise in the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention (Convention No. 87) and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention (Convention No. 98). The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and General Recommendation No. 26 on women migrant workers calls on states parties to seek the active involvement of women migrant workers in policy formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, this should and can most easily be done through forms of collective representation. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the UN International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, guarantee the right to freedom of association.

Domestic workers organisations are important in pushing for the inclusion of domestic work in national labour laws and to represent the voices of domestic workers at the government and policy making levels. Even if countries ratify the new Convention, and national laws recognise domestic work, the right to organise is still crucial. Organisations, associations and trade unions that represent the workers are necessary to ensure that the laws are implemented. They are crucial in educating domestic workers of their rights and following up on violations to ensure that the victims are supported, that cases are reported, and dealt with appropriately under the law. However, there are many difficulties in organising domestic workers because of the place and type of work they perform. ICTs may help in overcoming the isolation of domestic work in destination countries and assist in enabling migrant domestic workers to collectively organise and to be represented by organisations.

¹ The labour laws and right to collective representation of domestic workers in the ten Asian countries of Bangladesh, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and Thailand, were studied.

² Conventions do not enter into force as international law until one year after two member states have ratified the Convention. There are not yet any ratifications as of July 2011, although The Philippines and Uruguay have said they will ratify the convention soon.

2. Impediments to women migrant domestic workers organising

As domestic work is generally classified as informal work, this means that domestic workers are often excluded from national laws, policies and from being able to form or join unions. Domestic work employs mainly women, who are often from lower social economic backgrounds. This is partly the reason why domestic work is often not included in the law. Cleaning, cooking and caring are seen as women's work, which does not add to the productive economy. Stemming from an assumption that women's 'traditional' work is not a form of employment, women are placed outside of any labour protections by the refusal to recognise domestic work as work. Employers and agents are often free to arbitrarily determine the workers wages, hours and other work conditions. A recent report from Kathmandu stated that:

Domestic work is the only labor sector where we can find the women dominance all over the world... Domestic Worker reflects the social power structure of the society. The relationship between workers and employers is based on the social power structure...The employing community is found so called high class people and hold power status in society, while domestic workers are from rural, ethnic community and considered as powerless in the society (CWISH, 2010:24-5).

Domestic workers are often referred to as 'helpers' or as part of the family. Women from lower social economic backgrounds - and in places such as India, from lower classes - are paid to 'help' out in wealthier households. Young girl children in some countries, such as Indonesia, are often taken in by wealthier families, who may pay a wage or for the child to go to school - but at the least give her food and a roof over her head - in exchange for domestic duties (HRW, 2009: 37). The girls may be said to be part of the family rather than employees, but the girls are often exploited and abused. Girls and women domestic workers are often restricted to domestic work by their lack of opportunity for further education or skills building, and many will live for years away from their families in the country in order to continue to work.

In terms of international migration for domestic work, women from developing countries migrate to the wealthier countries, be it Canada, America, Japan, or Malaysia, for the chance to earn more money to care for their families. However, women migrating for work in wealthier countries can face isolation due to cultural and language barriers. They may also be treated as having a subordinate status, as women and as foreigners, and face discrimination on the basis of gender, race, class, caste, as well as nationality.

2.1 The unique nature of domestic work

The work is also carried out in the employers' house. This is the most important aspect of domestic work, which makes it unlike any other source of employment and can make it very

difficult to organise. It is the cause for most of the abuse the workers suffer and the other main reason as to why domestic work is not included under labour laws. There are other forms of work carried out in the private sphere of the household by plumbers, electricians etc, but these jobs are for a limited time and are contracted rather than employed directly - and only - by the members of the household. Furthermore, many migrant domestic workers are required to live-in, such as in Hong Kong and the Middle East. This means that they are under the control and scrutiny of their employers 24 hours a day, they are always on call, many have no privacy and are forced to share a bedroom or sleep in communal areas.

Live in domestic workers have a greater difficulty in forming social or support networks or being involved in collective action, if they are not allowed days off or to leave the house then their isolation can be almost absolute.³ The fact that almost every worker also has separate employers and workplaces also means that it is much more difficult to organise domestic workers than those who work together in factories under the same employer.

Domestic workers from overseas are also often viewed as being docile, naïve or sexually promiscuous and either way there is a common view that they should be kept in the household. There are comments in the literature that women from the country side or from developing countries such as Thailand or Indonesia are seen by employers as docile, obedient, simple, innocent or naïve (Cheng, 2004: 55; Cheng, 2003: 177, 181). Many domestic workers are also very young which adds to this perception. Household employers, especially the women, therefore take a maternal role and restrict the movements of domestic workers 'for their own good' or to protect them. This can be seen by the comment of an employer in Taiwan of a domestic worker only four years younger than herself; "Last time she said she wanted to go to visit a friend in Yi-Lan. I said no. I couldn't let her go out by herself. I am her custodian in Taiwan. If something happens, how can I face her parents?" (Lan, 2003B: 533) Many women put on the 'act' of being a domestic worker in front of their employers - of being docile - in order to keep their jobs and to maintain an employee/employer boundary.

On the flip side, domestic workers can also be seen as sexually promiscuous, dressing inappropriately, smoking, etc, this label is usually given to the more independent Filipino domestic workers (Cheng, 2003: 178). Employers may be concerned about what their workers will get up to while they are out of the house, especially as they are out late, therefore domestic workers may have a day off, but they still most often have an evening curfew (Lan, 2003B: 539).⁴ As mentioned above, in many countries domestic workers are sent home if discovered to be pregnant, again the household employer may restrict the workers movements to protect the worker, and their investment in hiring the worker.

Migrant domestic workers are often confined to the household due to the employer's fear of the worker making social connections, learning about their rights, or even 'running away'. In

³ There is antidotal evidence that some domestic workers are able to speak to each other from balconies or secretly use their mobile phones, as discussed later in the report.

⁴ For example, between seven and nine o'clock.

Taiwan in particular, the household employers paid a guarantee deposit, which they lost and they were unable to hire a new domestic worker until the 'missing' worker was found and deported (Cheng, 2003: 174). Migrant domestic workers in many countries are unable to change employers or recruitment agencies and if they approach the authorities they are either deported or sent back to their employers, therefore in order to escape abuse, and to seek payments or their documents they are forced to 'run away' to NGOs and church run shelters (See e.g. Kennelly, 2008). Those employers who restrict their workers movements and keep them locked inside the house indefinitely are more likely to cause the worker emotional and psychological stress, which in turn will cause the workers to want to escape when they have the chance.

There is also a widespread misconception that women domestic workers from overseas are unskilled and uneducated, therefore they need to be protected by paternalistic policies. Since they are being employed to for 'women's work', which was commonly done by housewives and mothers, such work is seen as not requiring special skill or knowledge. Cleaning work is also seen as a dirty or undesirable form of employment and therefore only those who had little choice or ability to do other forms of employment would do such work. This view leads to particular treatment, as one domestic worker commented; "when I first arrived, she told me not to touch the air conditioner, the phone, and other stuff in the house.... She is afraid that I would break them.... She looks at me like I am stupid and ignorant" (Cheng, 2004: 58).

However, studies have shown that many women from developing countries, such as the Philippines, have high levels of education and have previously worked as teachers, nurses, entrepreneurs and managers, some even have graduate degrees (Lan, 2003A: 147). When their work is undervalued, there is little work available and they know that they can make a lot more money overseas; the choice to migrate for domestic work is a sound economic decision, despite the undesirable nature of the job. In any case being able to manage a household and children or the elderly does require a multitude of skills, and such work can often be far more demanding than working in an office. Many employ domestic workers for their own household in their country of origin, who, in comparison, "are the women who possess less economic and cultural capital; they are neither sufficiently qualified nor can they afford the costs of seeking employment outside [their own countries]." (Lan, 2003A: 148)

Patriarchal structures and gender segregated labour markets have limited the choices, for migrant women in particular, to flexible deregulated or informal employment. Therefore, migrant women are crowded into a few relatively poorly paid, 'unskilled' occupations, such as domestic work. If wealthier countries opened up their labour markets then women from countries such as the Philippines may have more chance to occupy positions more suitable to their education and skill sets, and avoid the so called brain-drain or brain waste. Laws and policies, rather than enabling domestic workers to organise and be represented in their interests, are restricting and impeding the organisation of domestic workers and either taking a protectionist standpoint or excluding them completely from the labour laws.

3. Women migrant domestic workers in Taiwan and Hong Kong – Laws and Policies

As a major destination for domestic workers from Philippines and Indonesia, there were approximately 273,609 migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong in March 2010, and the number is still slowly growing (Communication and Public Affairs, 2010). In Taiwan at the end of 2010 there were 186,108 “nursing workers and housemaids”, from Indonesia, followed by Vietnam, Philippines and Thailand (Council of Labour Affairs, 2011). This number is increasing, as it was reported in April 2011 that there were 161,000 documented migrant workers from Indonesia alone, and most of them working as housemaids or as caregivers to the elderly (The Jakarta Post, 2011). Taiwan has a quota system for migrant workers and differentiates between domestic helpers and domestic caregivers, however often one person will do both roles. Hong Kong refers to its domestic workers as “foreign domestic helpers” (see e.g. The Government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Immigration Department, 2010). Abuse of domestic workers in Taiwan is not as well documented as in Hong Kong, but the demand for domestic workers in the country is also increasing.

In brief, both Hong Kong and Taiwan include migrant domestic workers into some of their labour laws, unlike most other countries in Asia (see e.g. UFDWR, 2010). However, this may not mean that the rights of domestic workers are protected; cases rarely go to court as migrants are unable to find new employment and continue to earn while their cases are being heard.

Hong Kong includes domestic workers under the Employment Ordinance, upon which the standard contract for hiring of migrant domestic workers is based. The ordinance applies to all employees, including migrant domestic workers, and covers a comprehensive range of employment protection and benefits for employees. Domestic workers, whether local or migrant, are therefore entitled under the law to similar rights and protection as those of other local employees. This includes a weekly rest day, paid sick days, maternity leave, twelve statutory holidays per year, annual leave, and payment cannot be offered in lieu. There are also regulations outlining termination and severance pay, as well as conditions for the employment of children over the age of 13, and the commission of recruitment agencies should not exceed 10% of the employees first month's wages.

For Taiwan, the inclusion of migrant domestic workers into the law is more complicated. Domestic workers were included under the Labour Standards Law in Taiwan briefly in April 1998, but the government dropped the inclusion due to the difficulty of determining working hours and remuneration for overtime (HRW, 2010A). The Labour Standards Law (2009.04.22 Modified) does not cover domestic workers, they are covered by the Employment Services Act 2009.05.13 (Amended), but it does not protect rights to the set minimum wage, set work hours, days off, holidays or leave. Under the Employment Service Act they are unable to freely change employers The Immigration Act 2003 only includes provisions on the entry, stay and exit of migrant workers. Migrant domestic workers in

Taiwan have one benefit over those in Hong Kong, they are not required to live-in (although most of them still do), but can live in alternative accommodation arranged by their employers.

Despite their inclusion in other laws migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong are not completely protected. They do not have limitation of working hours, meaning that domestic workers are effectively on call 24 hours a day. Furthermore, the Immigration departmental policy known as the “two week rule” requires that migrant domestic workers leave Hong Kong within two weeks of premature termination and then they must apply for a new contract in their place of origin before returning (APWLD, 2009: 19). A Household Service Act, drafted in 2003 by migrant NGOs, became a bill before the Taiwan Parliament in 2008, but has since stalled. It comprehensively includes provisions on residency, health, legal termination, work hours, leave, days-off and labour contracts and if passed the domestic workers in Taiwan would have similar protection as in Hong Kong.

3.1 Wages in Hong Kong and Taiwan

The low wages of migrant domestic workers is often justified by the fact that it is still higher than what they would get back in their country of origin. Household employers may also believe that taking in and employing a migrant from a ‘poor country’ is an act of charity and therefore they often do not pay more than a minimum wage; “employers often feel that domestics should not ask for more money, in that they already earn more in Taiwan and they should be grateful to the job opportunity” (Cheng, 2004: 57).

Of course it is true that a migrant domestic worker will earn more in wealthier countries, this is why they migrate away from their families. The unenforced monthly minimum wage of a migrant domestic worker in Taiwan is one of the higher rates at NT\$15,840 (approximately US\$507), the minimum wage for other forms of employment was recently raised again to NT\$17,880.00 in January 2011 (APMM, 2009; APMM, 2011).⁵ The minimum wage increase was not applied to migrant domestic workers as they have not been protected by the labour standards laws since briefly in 1998. Domestic work has therefore not been included in at least the last two minimum wage increases in Taiwan, but the amount is still “about three times the amount of a secretary’s wage or twice that of a teacher’s salary in the Philippines.” (Lan, 2003A: 137) The “minimum allowable wage” (MAW) for entering into a new contract with a migrant domestic worker in Hong Kong is \$3,580 per month (approximately US \$461), since 10th July 2008 (Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau, 2008).⁶ This was raised in June 2011 to \$3,740 (approximately US \$480), still lower than the \$3,860 MAW back in 1998 (Eval, 2011).⁷ However, workers often do not receive these wages.

A large percentage of the workers wages are taken in fees and charges, especially in the first couple of months, and other additional expenses that they may not have been aware of before

⁵ Exchange rates checked on 29th Sept 2010.

⁶ Exchange rates checked on 29th Sept 2010.

⁷ Exchange rates checked on 2nd June 2011.

leaving to migrate. They may also not receive the minimum wage at all. In Hong Kong the labour laws state that recruitment agencies fee is limited to 10% of the first month's wage, however most domestic workers pay more. According to a survey carried out by APWLD in 2006, workers paid around 80% of their wage to recruitment agencies during the period of six to eight months and most of them still received below the minimum wage for the duration of their contracts (APWLD, 2009: 46-7). Other fees and expenses that migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong may incur include "departure from his/her place of origin and entry... medical examination fees, authentication fees by the relevant Consulate, visa fee, insurance fee, administration fee or other fees of similar nature imposed by the relevant government authorities." (The Government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Immigration Department, 2010) In Hong Kong if a migrant domestic worker pays these fees then the employer should fully reimburse the amount as stated in Clause 8 of the Standard Employment Contract (ID407); however that may not always happen.

In Taiwan, the placement fee to recruitment agencies should be covered by employers, but a study by Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants (APMM) in 2009 states that up to NT\$6,703 a month is deducted for 15 months from Indonesian domestic workers wages and Filipino domestic workers pay from NT\$65,000 – NT\$100,000 through salary deductions, unless they have been direct-hired (APMM, 2009: 21,24).⁸ On top of this amount domestic workers have to pay a monthly service fee to Taiwanese brokers; "1st year - NT 1,800/month, 2nd year - 1,700/month and 3rd year - 1,500/month" (APMM, 2009: 20).⁹ Finally, migrant domestic workers also have to pay health Insurance of NT\$236, Alien Residence Certificate at NT\$1,000 a year and health check-ups at NT\$8,000 for a three year period (APMM, 2009: 24). With all the fees etc, workers lose more than half their already low wages and if they lose their job before the fees are paid they end up in debt.

Above the fees workers pay, employers may also with-hold a percentage of the earnings and deposit it in a bank account which the worker can only access once they have finished their contract or returned to their country of origin. Forced savings of one-fifth to one-third of a worker's monthly wage, is a practice that is common in Taiwan and is sanctioned by the government (Cheng, 2003: 174; Lan, 2003B: 533). The low wages may also be justified by the fact that many migrant domestic workers live in and therefore their cost of living is lower. However, it is common for workers to be deprived of food, forced to eat leftovers or food that is not what they are used to at home (Lan, 2003B: 534; see also 531). They may therefore need to spend additional money on buying food at nearby places. Also, unlike other forms of employment, if a domestic worker accidentally breaks something, such as a plate or vase,

⁸ A MOU between Philippines and Taiwan allows direct hiring of domestic workers through the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA)

⁹ This is to cover: "Providing transportation services to and from the airport. Providing transportation and food whenever there is medical examination. Providing board and lodging in case the worker is allowed to transfer to another employer. Getting the Alien Residence Certificate (ARC) of the worker. On site orientation. Providing assistance to the worker in case he/she is to be terminated by the Employer. Providing assistance in terms of mediating between the worker and employer whenever there is friction between them based on the methods of settlement agreed upon by MECO-CLA. Providing assistance in filing information/documents/cases to the authorities concerned in Taiwan like the tax bureau, police, labor, bureau, etc. If it becomes necessary, to assist the worker in transacting business with the bank and of remitting money to his/her family."

they will have money deducted from their pay for the mistake (Kenelly, 2008: 57). In Hong Kong, “The Employment Ordinance, to which all the Helpers are subject, specifies an employer’s right to deduct money from a Helper’s wages for any broken or damaged item of up to HK\$300, but not more than one-quarter of the monthly wages in that pay period.”

4. Organising and citizenship in Taiwan and Hong Kong

4.1 Citizenship

Under the Employment Ordinance of Hong Kong, it is mandatory for migrant domestic workers to enter into a maximum two-year standard employment contract (ID 407) directly with the employers, not with the recruitment agency. After two years the worker needs to return home to apply for a new contract or to renew a contract with their employers. This policy restricts domestic workers from seven years of continuous residency and therefore from becoming permanent residents, these conditions do not apply to any other migrant workers.

There are no standard contracts in Taiwan, but workers often sign contracts with recruitment agencies at home or agreements with brokers and employers in Taiwan. Migrant domestic workers can work legally for a period of three years before they must return home to renew their contract or for a new contract, in total they can only work in Taiwan for nine years, although there have been discussions on extending this (APMM, 2009; see e.g. Chao, 2011). Low-skilled migrant workers are ineligible to become permanent residents or citizens under Taiwanese migration policy. Therefore, in both countries, if they want to stay or bring over their families they must marry a citizen of the state. Migrant domestic workers are unfairly discriminated against by the policy in Hong Kong, and Taiwan shows prejudice against lower-skilled migrant workers by not allowing them to stay permanently, and this affects not just their ability to organise, but their political involvement.

4.2 Organising and country policies

Hong Kong, as a special administrative region (SAR) of China, has ratified the Right to Organise and the Freedom of Association Convention, but not the UN Migrant Workers Convention. However, in Hong Kong all domestic workers, whether local, under 18 or migrant, have the right to organise under the Employment Ordinance. Also under the standard employment contract they cannot be terminated for trade union membership and activities. Due to this there are many associations and trade unions in Hong Kong that include domestic workers. Taiwan (ROC) is not a party to any of the three main conventions; the Right to Organise and the Freedom of Association Convention, or the UN Migrant Workers Convention. Migrant workers in Taiwan cannot be leaders of trade unions and so the difficulty of becoming a citizen hampers the ability of migrant domestic workers to organise,

furthermore, they are doubly disadvantaged as both local and migrant domestic workers are not permitted to form trade unions.

Under the Immigration Act, as amended on August 2008, documented migrants in Taiwan do have the right to assemble and to rally. Before the amendment, migrants were not entitled to those rights because the immigration act stated, “Aliens who are visiting or residing in the State may not engage in activities or employment that is different from the purposes of their visits or residence.” The Immigration Act was amended after years of protest by the Alliance for Human Rights Legislation for Immigrants and Migrants (AHRLIM). However, under Article 50 of the Employment Services Act, those who change employment can face deportation; therefore, employees and the police use this law to suppress the protesting of migrant workers (Tierney, 2008: 486). Unfortunately, trade unions in Taiwan also tend not to be supportive of migrant workers joining or participating, and with the financial crisis in 2008, they went as far as to mobilise against the importing and employment of migrant workers (AHRLIM, 2008). The labour unions contribute significantly to the migrants’ experiences of neglect and marginalisation because they have done little to support struggles for better wages and conditions and for opposing racist violence (Tierney, 2008: 483).

4.3 The ability to organise

That domestic workers in Hong Kong have Sundays off is a major advantage for the domestic workers resident in Hong Kong since it allows them to leave the place of employment – not



Field interviewer surveying a migrant domestic worker in the cramped office at the Bethune House shelter, Hong Kong

only to meet each other and socialise, but also to organise and to be organised. The right to

one day off a week “is crucial for organising work, because MDWs [migrant domestic workers] can then congregate on Sundays and avail themselves of opportunities to become... organised” (Hsia, 2009: 128). Women bond together informally in their regional and language groups (of which both Philippines and Indonesia has many) and they also form groups in the formal sense as associations, with funds, officers and activities. Although it is the Filipino groups who are the most organised in terms of their regular meetings on Sundays, the Indonesians have learned fast from the Filipinas and formed similar associations.

It is these smaller groups which interact with alliances, faith based groups, NGOs and larger Unions in Hong Kong. For the larger groups, it is easy to interact with associations who always meet on the same day and usually in the same place – mainly being Central park. Stalls are set up as an outreach and information source, and help is available through these volunteers and the local churches. The NGOs, unions and faith based groups help the workers with the legal and political aspects of their employment and organise safe houses for the workers who have left their place of employment. They connect the Filipino and Indonesian associations to the Hong Kong government and to their own governments, to legal services and other services that workers are unable to seek help from directly as they are not open on Sundays.

The network from language based groups to associations to larger groups and supporting organisations informs, enables and empowers migrant women domestic workers in Hong Kong. For example, in 2008 there was an intensive campaign by ATKI-HK, Indonesian Migrant Muslim Alliance (GAMMI) and United Indonesians Against Overcharging (PILAR) who held continuous picketing actions, of up to 5,000 protesters at its height, over six weeks outside the Consulate in Hong Kong (PILAR and GAMMI, 2008). These actions lead to the withdrawal of the policy that prohibited Indonesian Domestic Workers in Hong Kong to change employment agencies within the first two years of employment in Hong Kong (SE2258/2007).

In Taiwan, migrant workers are very limited in their ability to organise since they are not able to form their own unions, be officers of unions, and they are often not welcome in other unions. They also do not have a legally mandated day off. Filipino migrant domestic workers are protected by the Migrant Workers Overseas Filipinos Act 1995 and the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) which has standard contracts for migrant workers. The standard contract includes a weekly day off, however Filipinos are often made to sign side agreements with Taiwanese brokers in which they sign away this right (APMM, 2009: 24-5). According to a recent survey 66% of domestic workers in Taiwan had no days off, 22% had one day off a month and 12% had two or more days off a month (APMM, 2009: 48). Their days off are also not always on a Sunday as they are in Hong Kong. The lack of Sundays, or any day off increases their isolation and new strategies are needed in order to enable them to organise and for them to push for their rights. This is where ICT can be an important tool to organise migrant domestic workers.

There is a very real possibility of political organising in the migrant communities of both countries using ICT. As will shown in the following sections, ICT, in particular mobile

phones, are commonly used by the communities to interact with each other outside of Sundays and while they are within the employers households. They knowledge they bring to Taiwan and Kong Hong of mobile phone use, in particular of texting their families and friends, can be extended to interaction with other domestic workers and to domestic worker or migrant worker organisations.

4.4 Organisations

The Taiwan International Workers’ Association (TIWA) is an association in Taiwan, which was able to be registered as its members and officers are Taiwanese citizens. There are also unregistered associations and groups such as IPIT and ATKI-Taiwan for Indonesian workers; and KaSaPi (united we stand) and Migrante-International-Taiwan Chapter for Filipino migrant workers. Much of the organising is supported by TIWA, such as the Migrants’ Empowerment Network in Taiwan (MENT), an alliance of 13 groups aimed at getting a law passed for migrant domestic workers. There is also the Alliance for Human Rights Legislation for Immigrants and Migrants (AHRLIM) mentioned above, composed of several organizations advocating for migrant’s rights and grassroots migrant organisations. The other main advocates for domestic and other migrant workers are faith based groups. In December of 2009, a public rally was organised by MENT and Church-based organisations to draw attention to the situation of domestic workers (The International Catholic Migration Commission, 2009). The groups provide shelter and legal services for all migrant workers, but they do not have much coordination with advocates outside of Taiwan (Tsai, 2006: 1-31) and the groups need to include more domestic workers as members.

In Hong Kong, where domestic workers are able to freely organise, they have a lot more support from different levels, including unions, NGOs, grassroots organisations and alliances. Some of these include; Bethune House domestic helper shelter, Asian Migrants Coordinating Body, Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants (APMM), Asian Migrant Centre, Helpers for Domestic Helpers, Asian Domestic Workers Union (ADWU). For Indonesians there is The Hong Kong Coalition of Indonesian Migrants Workers Organisation (KOKTIHO), Indonesian Migrant Workers Union (IMWU), Indonesians Against Overcharging (PILAR) (an alliance of 23 Indonesian migrant’s organisations), Association of Indonesian Migrant Workers (ATKI – HK). For Filipinos there is the Abra-Tinguian Ilocano Society – Hong Kong (ATIS-HK), (Filippino), United Pangasinan – Hong Kong (UPHK); (Filipino), Association of Concerned Filipinos (ACFIL), United Filipinos in HK (UNIFIL) and the Filipino Migrant Workers’ Union (FMWU)

Table summary of the legal situation of migrant domestic workers in Taiwan and Hong Kong:

	Hong Kong	Taiwan
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Number of migrant domestic workers (approx.)	273,609	186,108
Included under national labour legislation	Yes	Some legislation
Basic rights of domestic workers protected under national labour legislation	Yes	No
Migrant domestic workers have labour rights	Yes	No
Right to form registered unions under national legislation	Yes	No
Day off protected under national legislation	Yes	No
Required to live-in	Yes	No, but required to live at accommodation provided by employers
Standard contract	Yes	No
Contract period	Two years	Three years, max total nine years
Minimum wage	Yes, HK\$3,740 as of June (approximately US \$480)	NT\$15,840 (approximately US\$507) but not enforced in Labour Standards Law

B. Objectives of the Study

An extensive study into the use and effectiveness of ICT by migrant domestic worker organisations has not yet been done. It has the potential to highlight the importance of ICT to collective organisation and representation. The research can also lead to an understanding of how ICT can be used by migrant women domestic workers to be politically engaged as citizens of their own countries and as residents of the receiving countries. The research has the potential to inform migrant domestic workers organisations about the use of ICT to organise and engage migrant workers, and develop recommendations for governments.

Two main objectives:

To identify the potential for ICT to organise, empower, and engage migrant workers in collective and political advocacy;

To develop recommendations for governments, and to inform unions and migrant worker organisations and associations on the use of ICT to enhance domestic worker civil participation and ability to organise.

III. Methodology:

In order to identify the potential for ICT - and mobile phones in particular - to organise, empower, and engage migrant domestic workers in collective and political advocacy, it is crucial to first understand the current use of ICT by domestic workers and their current level of organisation.

The project used both quantitative and qualitative methods and tools. For quantitative methods, there was both a short structured survey and a longer semi structured survey, while for qualitative methods there were discussions during both informal interviews and the consultative forums in Hong Kong and Taiwan, the literature review and some open questions in the longer survey. For secondary research, the literature review was carried out to find out previous study and findings that could further guide this project. The review was focused on the current use and potential of ICT for migrant workers in general, as well as specifically the Indonesian and Filipino women in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Not only was it determined that this is an area lacking in discussion and analysis, there was discovered to be much less information and literature on organising by migrant workers' organisations than expected.

The primary research of this project was carried out in the destination countries of Taiwan and Hong Kong. The focus was narrowed down to the two largest groups of migrant domestic workers in two similar countries with very different levels of labour law protections and ability to organise. The two countries of Hong Kong and Taiwan were also decided upon due to APWLD's existing relationships with organisations in both countries, namely Trans-Asia Sisters Association, Taiwan (TASAT) and Mission for Migrant Workers – Hong Kong (MFMW Foundation). There are large numbers of both Philippines and Indonesian women migrant domestic workers in both countries, and again there are differences between the two nationalities with the Filipinos tending to be more organised and connected than the Indonesians.

One of the co-researchers is located in Taiwan and both co-researchers have strong ties with groups in Hong Kong, however neither speak Bahasa Indonesian or Tagalog, the main languages of the Indonesian and Filipino women (although most Filipino speak English). Therefore, in both Taiwan and Hong Kong two field researchers were used to carry out the short and longer surveys with the migrant women domestic workers. The field researchers are fluent in spoken and written English in order to record the answers in English for the co-researchers to analyse, but also in each country one is fluent in spoken Bahasa Indonesia and the other in Tagalog. A preference was also given to use field researchers who are familiar with the issues of female labour migration and domestic work. In fact three of the four were migrant domestic workers at the time they did the surveys.

For this project it is also crucial to understand the ICT use and the current collective organisation of women migrant domestic workers by the organisations (these include – semi-structured associations, NGOs, faith based groups and registered unions), who work with

women migrant domestic workers. In order to be able to interview the organisations and to understand the work of these organisations, it was decided to hold consultative forums in Taiwan and Hong Kong with those organisations who work with women migrant domestic workers from Indonesia and Philippines. Host organisations in both Hong Kong and Taiwan organised the consultative forums and also identified and assisted the field researchers. The local host in Taiwan is the Trans-Asia Sisters Association, Taiwan (TASAT), formally established in 2003, it has the objective to help immigrant women break away from isolation and become an active participant in the society.¹⁰ In Hong Kong, the local host is the Mission for Migrant Workers (MFMW Foundation) which is a close partner of the implementing organisation, Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD). Established in 1981 it has a long history of helping migrants in distress.¹¹

The surveys for the workers and for the organisations were recorded in English. The questions were carefully based on the information that the research was aiming to gain, for example, if the worker owned a mobile phone and what they used it for, and also consisted of background questions for general information on the women migrant domestic workers. The surveys had detailed instructions for the field researchers including explanations of the questions and a visual image of a SIM card for clarity. After the field researchers had completed some of the sample, they discussed the data collection with the co-researcher and the data that had been recorded was checked before they continued surveying.

A. Data Collection

Each of the four field researchers was given a minimum sample size of 50 participants, including at least six longer surveys, and they were encouraged to do the longer surveys unless the participant had limited time. Each of the four field researchers surveyed more than the minimum sample. As women migrant domestic workers have very little time off, they are reluctant to spend that time doing a full interview. The short and longer surveys of women migrant domestic workers were primarily carried out in public, mostly on Sundays (especially in Hong Kong) and in areas where these women tend to gather. The local host organisation assisted in directing the researchers to these locations.

The short and longer surveys were also carried out in the offices of organisations working with migrant workers, embassies, shelters, refuges and other services. However, the field researcher was instructed to ensure that less than half the amount of the actual sample was carried out at these places to avoid an unrepresentative result, in fact it was less than a quarter of the sample. For the same reason field researchers were instructed to avoid surveying too many women in one 'circle of friends' or from one region or area in the country of origin. The field researcher was asked to establish whether the participant had time to complete the survey before starting, incomplete surveys were submitted, but did not count towards the minimum sample size. In order to limit the number of refusals, the field researchers were

¹⁰ For more information on TASAT see: <http://tasat-e.blogspot.com/2009/12/brief-history-of-transasia-sisters.html>

¹¹ For more information on MFMW see: http://www.migrants.net/_index.htm



The survey is explained by the field researcher to women migrant domestic workers at a Catholic shelter in Southern Taiwan.

encouraged to use a pseudonym or nick name for recording purpose rather than the workers real name, and workers were not asked sensitive questions; such as whether they were undocumented.

The longer surveys of organisations who work with women migrant domestic workers were mainly carried out with members on Sundays, in the field, at their offices and after the consultative forums. It was the host organisations responsibility to ensure that local organisations working with Indonesian and Filipino domestic workers were invited and present at the forum and the field researchers also took part in directing the forum discussion.

B. Limitations of the survey

The most obvious limitation was that the field researchers were only able to survey those domestic workers who are currently in touch with a workers organisation or on their time off (therefore indicating that they have time off outside of the household) and are therefore already less isolated than many of the other migrant domestic workers in Taiwan or Hong Kong. This is a problem more in Taiwan where the workers do not have a legislated right to a day off. Trying to survey those workers who are isolated in employers' homes is, however, difficult. Locating, gaining permission from their employers and then being able to get honest answers out of domestic workers while in their employers' house, may have repercussions. A report on domestic workers in Kathmandu mentions that they interviewed some of the domestic workers in front of employers, and that their responses may have therefore been influenced by the employers' presence (CWISH, 2010: 21). Minu Thomas and Sun Sun Lim mention the problem when interviewing Indian migrant domestic workers in Singapore;

The Indian respondents were recruited through the researchers' personal contacts, including employers of maids. Hence, the Indian respondents were either interviewed at their employers' homes or at food courts nearby. Given the circumstances, the Indian respondents may have been less forthcoming during the interviews (Thomas, 2010: 4).

The field researchers were also instructed to avoid questioning too many in one circle of friends or at the embassies and shelters. They tried to survey participants at a variety of places and the location was recorded as part of the data collection. Although the field researchers spoke Bahasa Indonesia or Tagalog as well as English, not all workers from Indonesian and the Philippines have good spoken English, or the official language of their own country (especially if they came from small islands or more isolated regions) therefore they may not be questioned by the field researcher for that reason.

Detailed instructions were given to each of the field researchers on what is meant by verbal abuse for example, or where numbers could be estimated by the participant. Also, most questions were possible gave options to tick (either to tick one or all that apply) to try to ensure that problems in interpretation are limited, but many questions also had an 'other' option allowing the participant to specify their answer.

The survey will of course not be a full representation of the Indonesian and Filipino migrant domestic workers in Taiwan and Hong Kong due to the relatively small sample size compared to the estimated number of such workers in these countries. Due to the problems of interviewing migrant domestic workers, other such surveys also have small numbers, for example, '*Migrant workers' use of ICTs for interpersonal communication – The experience of female domestic workers in Singapore*' by Minu Thomas and Sun Sun Lim only consisted of twenty workers.

IV. The State of the Art on the Use of ICT

A. The current use of ICT and mobile phones by migrant workers and women migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong and Taiwan

There are currently no comprehensive studies on the number of women migrant domestic workers that use ICT in Hong Kong and Taiwan, however, the saturation of ICT in Asia in general is high. According to the e-readiness rankings of 2009, Hong Kong is ranked 8th and Taiwan 16th out of 70 countries, but the countries of origin for the migrant domestic workers rank much lower at 54th for Philippines and 65th for Indonesia (The Economist, 2009: 5). The rankings come from evaluating the technological, economic, political, social assets and information economies of each country to determine the countries ICT 'state of play'. What this means is that although there may be a high level of access to and use of ICT within the destination countries, the migrant domestic workers are coming from countries where they may not have had any exposure or access to the use of ICT at all. However, this ranking system is focused more on the economic penetration of ICT and does not rank the use of ICT by everyday users, nor the use of mobile phone by citizens generally.

The penetration of mobile phone technology tends to be higher than that of other forms of ICT. As one article discussing mobile phone use in developing countries states; "Mobiles are being adopted faster than even the most basic services, such as routine medical care and schools."(Kang, 2010) The e-readiness rankings also state that; "Today, more people have a mobile device than do not, and the distribution has spread mightily throughout the developing world—nearly one-half of all mobile subscribers are in Asia" (E-Readiness Rankings, 2009: 6).

To understand the use of mobile phones in Taiwan and Hong Kong by migrant domestic workers, we need to also look at the use of mobile phones in the workers country of origin. If the workers were users of mobile technology before their arrival in Taiwan and Hong Kong, then they are more likely to continue that use when they migrate. Despite the low e-readiness rankings, mobile phones are prevalent in the Philippines. Cecilia Uy-Tioco notes that back in 2005 "the two main mobile phone companies, Globe Telecom and Smart Communications, were serving a total of 32.8 million cell phone subscribers in a country of 89 million people—36 per cent of the population. This number is significant because 40 per cent of the country lives below the poverty line on less than a US\$1 a day" (Uy-Tioco, 2007: 256), five years later that number is up to an estimated 85% of the population or 80 million mobile phones in 2010 (TxtMANIA.com, 2010; Cruz, 2010; Hamlin, 2010).¹² The Philippines is now known as the 'text capital of the world', because they send and receive more SMS messages than any other country (Uy-Tioco, 2007: 256; Castells, 2004: 189; Pertierra, 2006: 108-110). There is

¹² Although it is noted that this may be because some people have two or more phones.

even an article on the practice of “transnational mothering” by Filipino migrant workers using their mobile phones and due to the “mobile mania” young users are known as generation Txt, rather than generation X (Uy-Tioco, 2007; Castells, 2004: 189).

Indonesian women may be less technologically savvy as the saturation levels for ICT in Indonesia was one of the lower rates in Asia, but, they are catching up in terms of mobile phone use. In 2005 there were 20-30 million mobile phone users in Indonesia (Barendregt, 2008: 163), in 2009 there were an estimated 144.65 million phone users, and a saturation rate of 56.8%, meaning that Indonesia has surpassed other Asian countries such as India (Digital Media Across Asia, 2009). This figure must be much higher again in 2011. As Bart Barendregt comments, “at the turn of the 21st century Indonesia is also a country that in the near future promises to be one of the fastest growing markets for the new and mobile media, not only within Asia, but worldwide.” (Barendregt, 2008: 160-1)

Those migrating overseas who are already familiar with mobile technology are therefore more than likely to continue this mobile phone and text usage to keep in touch with those back home. However, it is a little difficult to determine the usage of mobile phone of Indonesian and Filipino migrant workers in Taiwan and Hong Kong, let alone migrant *women domestic* workers. The number of mobile phone subscribers in 2010 in Taiwan stood at 24.6 million, or 107% saturation rate (International Telecommunications Society, 2010). In May 2010, the saturation rate of mobile phone in recorded by the government of Hong Kong was already 180.1%, with most people having more than one (Office of the Telecommunications Authority (OFTA) of the Hong Kong Special Administrative, 2010). The figures indicate that as the saturation is so high, it is probable that women have equal access and ownership of mobile phones in these countries. These figures may not however, reflect the number of mobile phone users among the migrant worker population, and especially among the women migrant domestic workers, of those countries.

To determine the current use of mobile phones by migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong and Taiwan, we can, however, look to literature that discusses the use by migrants in other comparative countries in Asia. There is a study by Ke Yang on the use of mobile phones by migrant workers in Beijing. The survey was of 178 Chinese internal migrant workers, and of these, 71.8% were male and employed in construction and as security guards, therefore the results may not reflect the mobile phone use of female (overseas) migrant domestic workers (Yang, 2008: 65). However the study made some interesting observations as to mobile use by workers, who although still Chinese, are in a very different environment from their rural origins. All of those surveyed use mobile phones and 158 of 178 owed their own mobile and regularly used it. In another article from 2007 on ICT use, it mentions two other Chinese cities with high internal migration rates; Shanghai had almost 100% mobile penetration rate and Guangdong was at 84.3% (Law, 2008: 43).

In the comparative country of Singapore - which like Hong Kong has a high number of migrant domestic workers - the saturation of mobile use is also very high, one article mentions that “the telecoms regularly sponsor beauty pageants for Filipina domestic workers,

festivals for various national groups such as Thai ‘Songkran’ (New Year) celebrations and similar events” (Thompson, 2009: 366). The use of mobile phones by domestic workers, in Singapore at least, are often integrated into their everyday lives with frequent text messages and calls (see e.g. Thompson, 2009: 371), this seems to also be true in Hong Kong at least, as one article states;

The mobile phone has become the ubiquitous accessory of Filipino domestic workers in Singapore and Hong Kong. In both cities, you can purchase handsets, SIM cards and pre-paid phone cards that allow you to communicate on Philippine networks. Malls crowded with Filipino workers on their days off resonate with the tones of incoming messages. They are texting each other, of course, but also texting ‘home’ (McKay, 2004: 14).

In Hong Kong and Taiwan, the Filipino have the advantage of often being able to speak and read English, and so this makes it easier for them to access the technology, follow the instructions etc, and the Indonesian often learn Cantonese and therefore talk to the shop keepers. Also, as mentioned above, there often seem to be vendors and street sellers of phones and phone credit that can speak the languages of main migrant groups. In destination countries migrant workers wanting to keep costs low become knowledgeable on the different providers and deals, as Thompson details;

In interviews on this topic with foreign workers, these complexities immediately became apparent. Not only did they often describe a great variety of different technologies (and combinations of technologies) but also clearly had a detailed knowledge of the various options available, their relative costs, quality and so on....(Thompson, 2009: 368)

Pei-Chia lan comments that migrant workers in Taiwan often have new small and reasonably expensive mobile phones as a kind of status symbol; “One Indonesian migrant explained that they had no choice but to follow this rule because of peer pressure: ‘All of us have small mobile phone. If you buy a big one, people will laugh at you:’”Is this a shoe? An alarm clock?” So you have to buy a small one”” (Lan, 2006: 180).

B. The impediments to accessing mobile technology for women migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong and Taiwan

1. Government and service providers:

In both Hong Kong, mobile phones, SIM cards and prepaid top-up are widely available. This is important because previously most mobile phones were locked to a particular provider and along with the SIM cards, could only be used on a contract with that service provider, like home or fixed line phones still are now. Migrants would therefore need to have a sponsor or guarantor in the destination country, this would have been an impediment to most domestic workers owning or using a mobile phone. Contracts can still be used, but the convenience of prepaid top-ups without paperwork or deposits means that a domestic worker can have as

many SIM cards with as many different providers as they wish and top them up with credit whenever they are able to. With the wide availability of prepaid unregistered mobile phones there does not seem to be any impediments on the use of mobile phone technology by the service providers.

In Taiwan, mobile phone are readily available and top up cards can be purchased at any 7-11, according to Pei-Chia Lan the Taiwan media is even calling the prepaid top up cards ‘foreign labourers’ cards’ (Lan, 2006: 178). However, getting a prepaid SIM card is more difficult. With an Alien Resident Certificate (ARC) card, a worker can go on a plan or get a prepaid SIM card, with out the ARC, two forms of photo identification is required and a form mostly in Chinese needs to be filled in. Migrant domestic workers whose employers hold on to their documentation or who are undocumented, have to resort to asking a friend with identification to purchase a SIM card for them. Although the prepaid SIM card has no monthly fees or bills, they are not anonymous in Taiwan, like in other countries, since their purchase is accompanied by paperwork. This also means that the government could potentially track messages and movements of key organisers and activist domestic workers.

In Singapore, the places where migrant domestic workers frequent on their days off, particularly on Sundays, are targets for the advertising by mobile phone providers. In the article by Eric C. Thompson the Golden Mile Complex, which is popular with Thais, is



A forum being held with migrant workers organisations and filipino women migrant domestic workers at the TASAT office in Taipei, Taiwan

described as being “draped with banners in English and Thai, promoting Starhub’s ‘Green’ SIM Card” (Thompson, 2009: 366). The SIM cards and top up cards or vouchers also have

instructions in the languages of the main migrant populations; Bengali, Chinese, Tamil, Indonesian, Burmese, Filipino, Sinhalese and Thai (Thompson, 2009: 367). In Hong Kong, mobile phone credit is readily available at 7-11 convenience stores and the stores in WorldWide Plaza, the commercial hub for migrant domestic workers especially from the Philippines (Koh, 2009: 32).

It is possible for the government to block mobile phone use and it is possible that they may do so - for example, on days when protests are advertised to occur - in order to disrupt plans and limit participation. Blocking has been known to occur in Burma (Myanmar), Belarus and recently Egypt during civilian protests. Although, in countries such as Taiwan and Hong Kong, the economic effects of blocking cell phone use in the city, even temporarily, may deter the governments from taking such action (Paulo, 2007: 74-5).

While access and use may not be a problem for most migrant workers, the cost of the mobile phone itself may be the highest impediment. The technology is expensive for migrant domestic workers, as Thompson notes, "On salaries that range from about 250 to 500 Singapore dollars per month for domestic workers and only slightly more for construction workers a handphone is often a foreign worker's most expensive budget item." (Thompson, 2009: 368) Estelle Maria Kennelly mentions that for migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong, "the monthly mobile fees and cost of calls, especially to the Philippines, can entangle them in more financial debt." (Kennelly, 2008: 126) However, cheap basic or reasonably good second-hand mobile phones retail for approximately US\$40-60. Although the migrant workers may also bring mobile phones from home or reconditioned second hand mobile phones maybe available on the streets for much cheaper.

The price of a local text message in 2008 in Taiwan was US \$0.08 and "Mobile Off-Network Call Price for 1-minute local call during non-peak hours 2008 in US \$ 0.16" while during peak hours is \$0.37 (MobileActive.org, 2010D). In Hong Kong, mobile phones are cheaper to use; "Mobile Off-Network Call Price for 1-minute local call during non-peak hours 2008 in US \$ 0.02" peak hours are the same and text messages are \$0.06 (Mobileactive.org, 2010A). Text messages sent home to Indonesia or the Philippines are more expensive, but many migrant workers tend to use phone cards or their SIM cards and special values or budget deals from home instead of their country of destination prepaid SIM cards.

2. Employers

A problematic impediment to migrant domestic workers ICT and mobile usage is the employers. The literature mentions mobile phones being taken away from workers, or of the workers hiding their phones and phone usage from their employers, For example, Thompson mentions that one of the great benefits of mobile phones is the ability to use the silent text messages to communicate and that domestic workers were able to keep and used their mobiles without their employer's knowledge (Thompson, 2009: 373). Ke Yang also notes that "mobile phones are small and easier to hide than TV sets or computers" (Yang, 2008:6

8). The blog “Maid in Singapore” and the article by Kennelly mention migrant domestic workers being fired because she had a mobile phone and the employer would not allow that. Another migrant domestic worker commented, “I am not allowed to use the phone or receive calls -- only emergency calls. My Employer says they might disturb the baby.” (Kennelly, 2008: 111, 126; MaidinSingapore, 2010)

Such restrictions are thought by the Filipinas to be another example of distrust by the employers implying that a Helper would spend her time on the phone rather than doing her work when the employer is out of the house. It could also be interpreted as the employer feeling a loss of control if the Helper can talk to others outside her, the employer’s, sphere of influence. Others said their employers did not want them to have friends, and viewed the inability to phone friends as a further loss of freedom (Kennelly, 2008: 126).

As mentioned in the earlier discussion of the misconception that migrant domestic workers are docile, naïve or are sexually promiscuous and either way should be kept in the house, migrant domestic workers are restricted in their movements. If they are unable to leave the house, then they may be unable to purchase a mobile phone and are also unable to add credit to their mobile phones, they could still call out using collect calls and possibly receive local calls, but they will be unable to text. Recruitment agencies have also been known to take mobile phones from domestic workers, saying that the employer will not like it if they have one (Thompson, 2009: 373).

C. The current use of mobile phones to collectively organise, inform and politically engage migrant workers

The importance of mobile phones for migrant workers is starting to be recognised around the world. Recently, a report mentioned that; “The authorities in Bahrain were making positive moves such as insisting sponsors provide their workers with mobile telephones.”(PICUM, 2010) The literature also mentions that governments should have policies on mobile phones and contracts should include the right to external communications, including the right of the worker to have a mobile phone (Thomas, 2010). The blog, ‘Maid in Singapore’ written by a former domestic worker, defends the right of migrant domestic workers to use their mobile phone during their free time (MaidinSingapore, 2010).

1. To collectively organise:

Most of the discussion around the use of mobile phones by migrant domestic workers is only in terms of control and resistance – the interplay between the employer and employee. The literature also focuses on the ability to use mobile phone to maintain connections with family in transnational connections (See e.g. Thomas, 2010). The literature, therefore, does not

discuss in detail the use or potential use of ICT to organise migrant domestic workers in a greater sense of communal organised resistance.

Again there are a few articles that discuss the organisations, unions and NGOs working with migrant domestic workers in Taiwan and Hong Kong (see e.g. Hsia, 2009; Sim, 2003: 478-510), but these focus on the organisations themselves and their formation, structures or activities, rather than the methods they use or could use to organise their members. For example, the article by Amy Sim on the three major migrant worker NGOs in Hong Kong only mentions the handing out information leaflets at the place where migrant domestic workers congregate on their days off (Sim, 2003: 448).

There are some literature and news articles focusing on migrant workers in other countries that discuss the usefulness of mobile phones. In Singapore, the newspaper comments on “mobile phone-armed Filipinas [who] have on hand the numbers of their embassies and helplines” (Thompson, 2009: 37). In Kuwait there is the reporting of a domestic worker from the Philippines sending a SMS help message to Migrante Middle-East, “On her short messages to me, she claimed that she is not given food and water and she has been locked up at her employer’s house at the roof top. No doubt she is being abused and maltreated.” (Lazaro, 2010)

The study by Ke Yang discusses the use of mobile phone to “develop and maintain jianghu relations” which he explains;

In Chinese, jianghu literally means “rivers and lakes,” thus connoting a wider world outside of one’s immediate circumstances. The concept of jianghu subculture is associated with the lower classes and itinerant wandering away from ones original home... For contemporary migrant workers, jianghu friendship is a kind of practical network (Yang, 2008: 69-70).

The mobile helps workers to connect to other people in their new environment, such as other migrant workers in the same situation as themselves. The author also explains how through these friendship links a worker was able to get a new job almost immediately. Using the mobile phone to connect to organisations and unions would be only one step beyond this common practice of mobile phone networking described. The author also discusses how “a mobile can be used to keep connected with jianghu friends, while at the same time maintaining a safe distance in these relationships” (Yang, 2008: 70). In the same way the mobile phone could allow connection to a organisation or union, while not drawing the attention of others, maintaining privacy and security from reprisals - for example from employers who may not want their worker to be involved in union activities.

In Singapore, Thompson noted that the Thai migrant construction workers were able to organise annual football tournaments over several month and with various teams primarily through mobile phones. He also noted that:

Handphones make coordination of events easier and residents of Singapore and members of these communities generally acknowledge that the sense and strength of those ethnonational communities of foreign workers in Singapore among whom handphone use is more prevalent

(Thais and Filipinas) is stronger than among those with relatively less access to handphones (Indonesians and Bangladeshis) (Thompson, 2009: 375).

2. Mobile activism for political engagement:

The use of mobile phones for activism is a relatively new development for campaigners to reach those who may otherwise be isolated. The sending out of text messages to spread a campaign is a technique becoming popular in Africa, there is even a book entitled 'SMS Uprising: Mobile Activism in Africa'. The social justice organisation Fahamu, for example, has a text alert service, which enabled users to sign up for free text alerts about the progress of the campaign and Fahamu is working to establish a network of organisations in Africa who are using mobile phone technologies for social justice (Fahamu, 2008). There was also a text message sign up to a petition to show support for the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, the service also allowed people to opt in to an text message update on the achievements of the campaign, "The campaign did not aim to get many text messages; its goal was to persuade 15 governments to ratify the Protocol, which it did successfully... by virtue of the "news value" of the initiative. It proved, as expected, a successful way of getting attention to the campaign." (Manji, 2004: 125-132)

In their country of origin, Filipinos are used to the idea of using mobile phones for advocacy and information campaigns. The first time that a mobile phone played a role in removing a president occurred in the Philippines in 2001, text messages were used not just to gather people for the demonstrations, but also to sign online petitions and to spread jokes about the president, so many text messages were sent that it overloaded the network (Castells, 2004: 199-200). A Filipino consumer advocacy group called TXTPower has been operating for many years and has been campaigning against, amongst other things, a proposed text tax and the proposed compulsory registration of all prepaid SIM cards, through information and advocacy campaigns (TXTPower, 2006). The biggest campaign of TXTPower is the "Hello Garci" ringtone political tool, part of the growing anti-Arroyo movement in the Philippines. It began after a wiretap between President Arroyo and an election official about rigging the 2004 elections and became a ringtone downloadable from the website and spread as a political protest used by an estimated one million Filipinos (Concepcion, 2006). The Filipino mobile phone activism spread to Hong Kong during the Anti-World Trade Organisation protests by a chapter of TXTPower (TXTPower, 2005).

There is little other than anecdotal evidence of mobile phones being used by migrant workers for mobile activism in other parts of Asia. For example, security concerns over the ability of migrants to use mobile phones to organise is believed to be one of the reasons the use of mobile phones by migrant workers is banned by decrees in Phang Nga, Ranong, Rayong and Surat Thani provinces of Thailand, where migrant workers are also restricted from gathering (HRW, 2010: 32). In Hong Kong, there was an intensive campaign by Indonesian domestic worker organisations that lead to the withdrawal of the SE2258/2007 policy prohibiting domestic workers to change employment agencies within the first two years of employment,

those involved mention the use of mobile phones to quickly spread the message and gather support.¹³

3. To inform or for assistance

Mobile phones are also beginning to be seen as useful for humanitarian aid agencies and NGOs to reach people who are isolated. A good example of this is the Aidlink service in the Middle East and East Africa, provided by Souktel, which enables humanitarian agencies to easily set up mailing lists and to send out text messages to people to inform them that aid is available or to conduct surveys. Currently 15,000 people are being reached by the 30 aid agencies which use the service (Mobileactive.org, 2009). There is also the FrontlineSMS free bulk email service for NGOs, current being used by over 400 members from the Orangutan Information Centre (YOSL-OIC) in Indonesia, OneWorld Health (India), to The International Organisation for Migration (IOM), which is using the service in Pakistan to support people to return to their homes after being displaced by conflict (FrontlineSMS, 2010B).

The use of mobile phone to extend health services to isolated women has also surged in the last few years, with women signing up to receive free text messages guiding them through their pregnancy in Ghana (Kang, 2010), the distribution of mobile phones and credit to midwives in rural Aceh Besar, Indonesia (Chib, A. et al., 2008), to the text message based counselling on HIV in South Africa (MobileActive.org, 2010B).

The Migrant Assistance Programme (MAP), which is a member of UFDWR, has had a lot of success with its radio station, which includes programmes such as the ‘Lovely domestic worker’ and ‘the voice of workers (domestic workers)’ programmes (MAP, 2010). MAP Radio is an independent community radio station run by various migrant and ethnic groups in Chiang Mai and Mae Sot, Thailand, it not only provides entertainment, but also relevant information and a voice for these groups. The station can be assessable for those domestic workers who are isolated in the homes, but have access to a radio or cell phone that can pick up the station. MAP radio is also available on smartphones and over the internet through their website, and in this way is listened to by Burmese in Malaysia and possibly other countries (MAP, 2011).

A more important use of mobile phones for this research is that of text message hotlines. There is one currently running in Haiti called Ayiti SMS SOS which can be used to report gender-based violence with just a text message (MobileActive.org, 2010C). Migrante international, which is a Filipino migrant worker organisation, had an emergency text programme for migrant workers. Migrante contacted its national branches when it is notified of crackdowns through the programme, “an Anti-crackdown task force was created when the Korean government declared a crackdown on OFWs with expired visas. OFWs in Korea and other countries were warned of possible mistreatment and informed about the help they could probably get from the Philippine Embassy.” (Mobiles-in-a-box, 2008)

¹³ From Interviews with migrant domestic worker groups, 2011.

Another example is the Centre for Migrant Advocacy (CMA) based in the Philippines, which has a SOS SMS system which runs 24 hours 7 days a week, unlike most other government run hotlines. Migrants working abroad access the system by sending a text starting with the letters SOS, a space and then the message and senders name to +63 9209 OFW SOS (+63 9209 639 767) (Pinoy-abroad.net, 2010). It uses a web based system and the Clickatell bulk SMS tool to forward messages to particular recipients. Originally, the hotline was set up when there were fears for the safety of Filipino workers in Saudi Arabia during the Iraq war, and the main users are still from Saudi Arabia. The messages are received in the Philippines and forwarded on to activate a network of nonprofits and government agencies to come to the workers' rescue, CMA follows up on each case "and logs details of each case, including response time and kind of intervention taken" (MobileActive.org, 2008). Examples of hotlines like this are important because organising migrant domestic workers is not just about the organisations and unions in Hong Kong being able to gather people for rallies and protests, but to also be able to communicate with, assist and document abuses of migrant domestic workers rights on an ongoing basis.

If CMA is able to operate such a helpline from Philippines with a network mostly in Saudi Arabia, then it is also possible for migrant workers organisations and unions to similarly operate a text helpline with a network in the destination countries of Hong Kong and in Taiwan. The networks could incorporate and build upon the current assistance in destination countries such as in Taiwan, for example, there is already a phone-in hotline set up last year by the Council of Labor Affairs (CLA) (Huang, 2010).

Banking in particular is an area where information from reliable sources such as organisations and unions could help migrant women domestic workers to safely remit their savings to family members. Mobile banking in particular is useful for domestic workers who may be restricted in leaving the employers household. For example, one of the largest mobile networks in the Philippines has a service allowing up to \$200 to sent home for much less than the usual bank fees; the recipient receives a text message and can get the money from licensed operators and shopping malls (Uy-Tioco, 2007: 263). The Philippines has two mobile banking services for migrant workers, but Indonesia is yet to have the technology up and running (UNIFEM, 2010: 31-2).

There are other uses of mobile phones that can be advantageous for migrant women domestic workers during their period of employment or the other stages of migration for work. Migrant workers could be informed of these services through text messages sent by organisations and unions that they are associated with. This would include not just information on protests or for assistance in case of rights violations, but also information on meetings, language or computer training courses, on new regulations and policies, on agencies to avoid, anything that many benefit women migrant domestic workers. The particular tools and systems that could be utilised by domestic worker organisations will be outlined in the last section. Mobile phone can also be used to inform others, including employers. Friends of Women Workers, an NGO based in Jordan, had a campaigning technique in 2008 which involved sending text

messages on the appropriate treatment of migrant workers to Jordanian mobile phone users (Morse, 2009).



Indonesian migrant domestic workers meeting in Victoria Park, Hong Kong

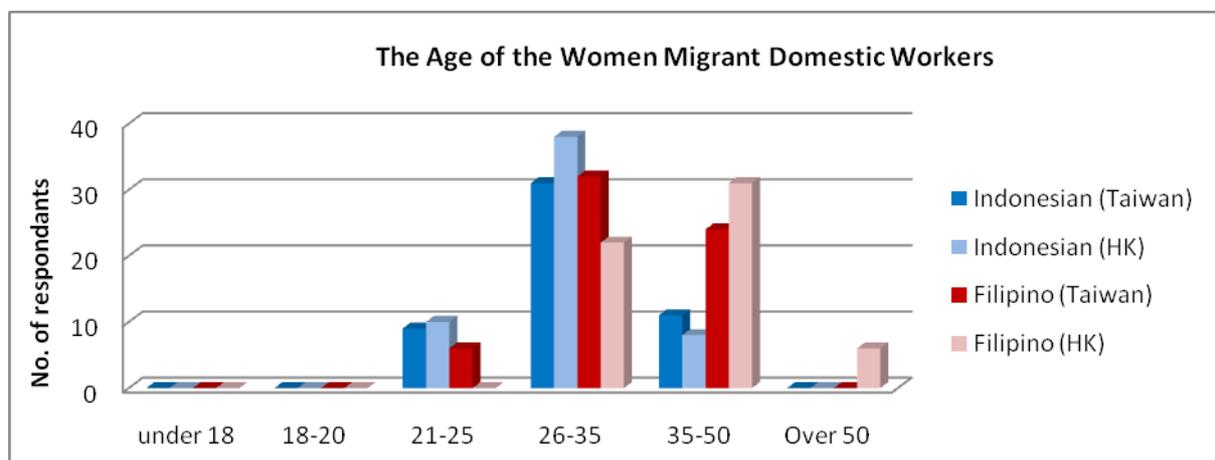
V. Survey Findings:

A. General background information on Indonesian and Filipino women domestic workers and their organisations in Hong Kong and Taiwan.

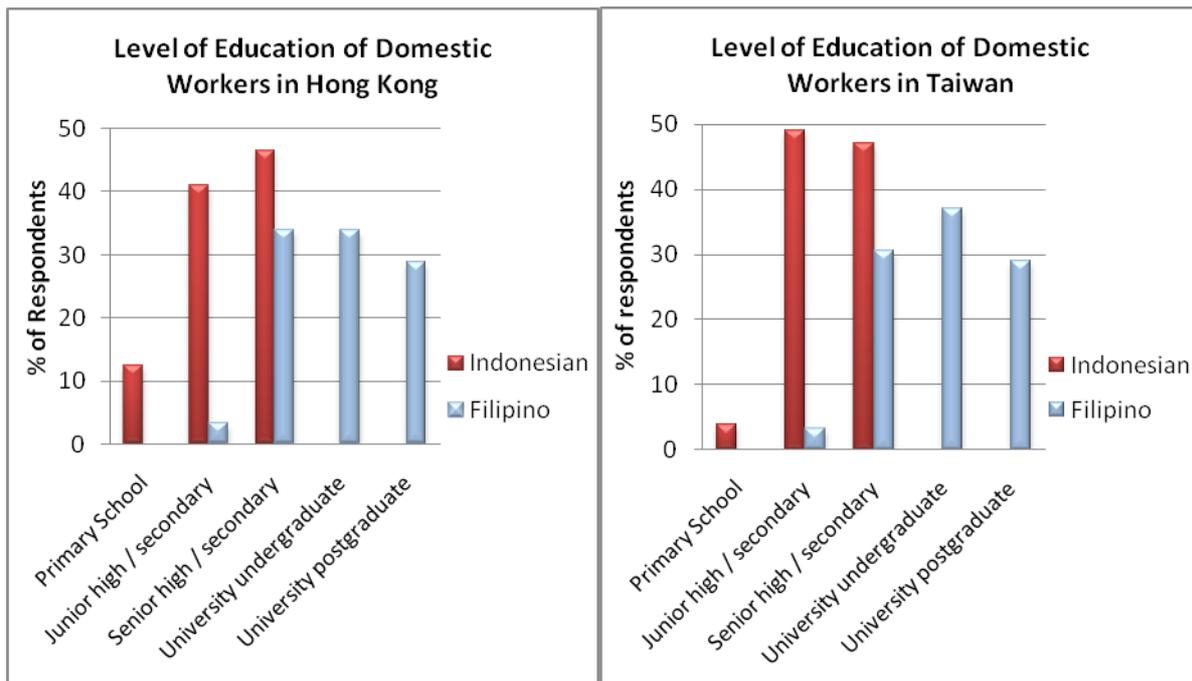
1. Indonesian and Filipino women domestic workers

There were 115 women migrant domestic workers from Philippines and Indonesia surveyed in Hong Kong and 113 In Taiwan. In Hong Kong, 84% of the Indonesian women and 90% of the Filipino women were currently employed as a domestic worker, compared to 75% and 90% in Taiwan. The higher number of unemployed Indonesia domestic workers surveyed was due to the fact that it was easier to survey those who had left employment and were in shelters, due to general lack of time off outside the household for Indonesia domestic workers in particular (as shown below). The average time the respondent had been in the country working was longer in Hong Kong with an average 4-6 years compared to 2-3 years in Taiwan.

In terms of the age and education level of the respondents, the Filipino women domestic workers were clearly older and had higher levels of education in both countries. In Hong Kong, the Filipino respondents were in the 35-50 age bracket rather than the 26-35 group, and in both countries none of the respondent were under 21 years of age. It would be interesting to compare this to countries such as Malaysia which is closer to both countries in terms of distance and culture, and therefore may attract more first time and younger workers.

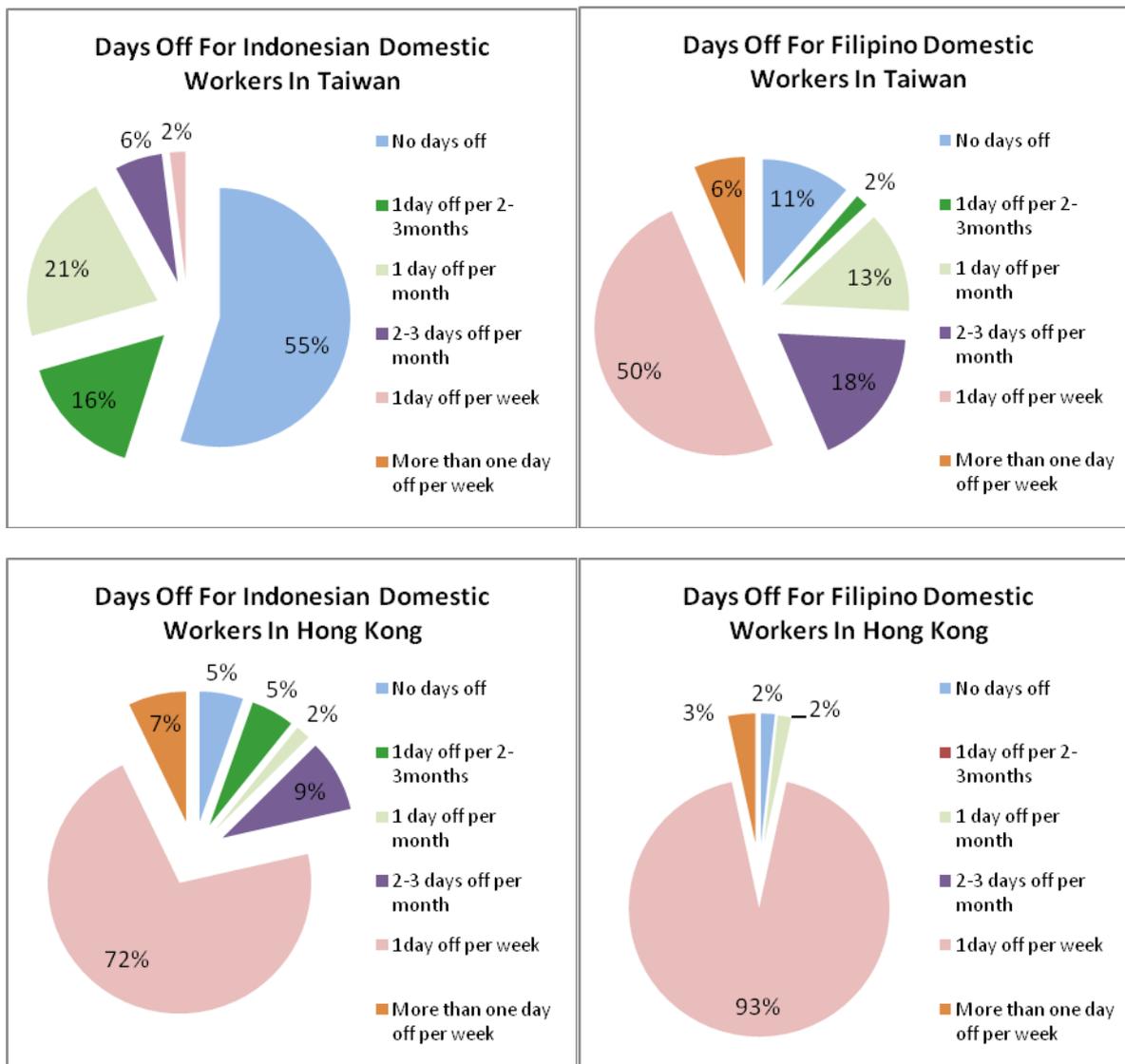


There was a large difference between the education level of workers from Indonesia and Philippines. The majority of the Filipino women are highly educated, with most having a degree and a surprising amount with postgraduate degrees, while the majority of Indonesian women had only secondary level education. Migration for domestic work is considered to be in the 'low-skilled' work category, therefore it is surprising that so many of the Filipino women domestic workers are so highly educated, especially since the education and unemployment levels in both countries are similar.



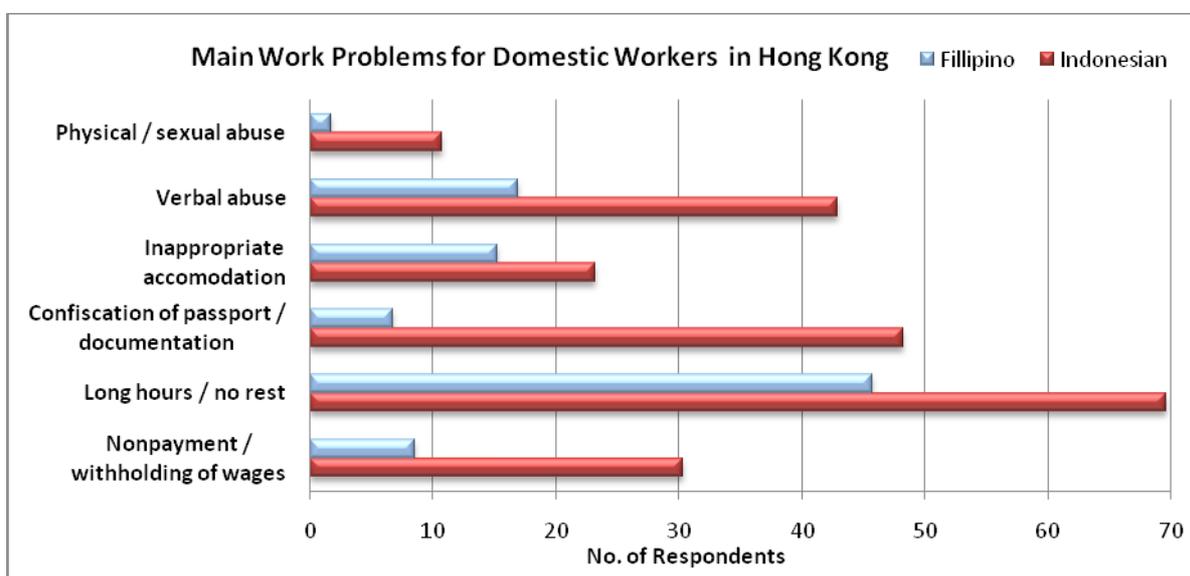
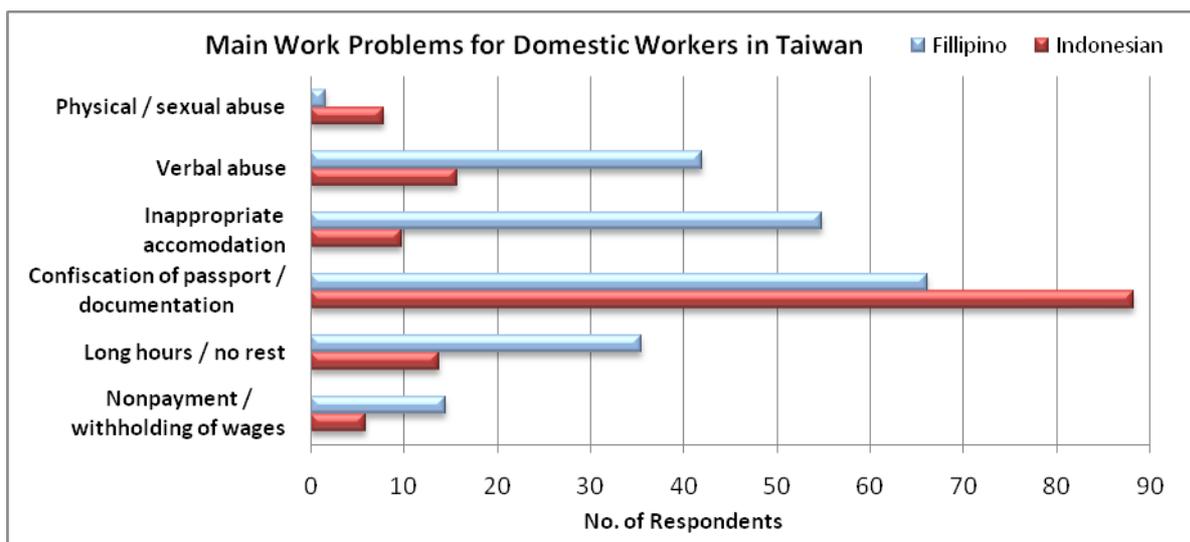
Of more interest to this project is the days off workers are able to enjoy. Hong Kong legislation and contracts protect the rights of workers to have one day off per week, the Philippines also includes this right in its standard contracts and MOUs with destination countries. The survey shows the difference that this makes between the two countries, with the Indonesian workers who enjoy one day of per week increasing from just 2% in Taiwan, to 72% in Hong Kong, plus the 7% who have more than one day off a week. It is very concerning that 92% of Indonesians surveyed in Taiwan at most have only one day off a month, with 55% reporting that they never have a day off. From surveys and conversation with the field researcher, these workers are able to escape for quick breaks to go down to the shops (where they were most commonly surveyed), but otherwise need to be constantly within the household to care for the elderly or incapacitated person for their employer.

Half of the Filipino workers surveyed are able to enjoy a day off per week in Taiwan, and 6% have more than one day off a week, compared to the 2% of Indonesians who get a weekly day off. However, in terms of hours worked, almost all domestic workers surveyed worked for more than nine hours a day, and 43% of the women surveyed work more than 14 hours a day. For public holidays in both countries there was little difference between Indonesian and Filipino workers with most in Hong Kong having public holidays off and most not having public holidays in Taiwan.



The policies of the Philippines government and the fact that Filipino women are more aware of their rights is possibly the reason behind why most of the Filipino women only work in one household, compared to half of Indonesian domestic workers in Hong Kong, who may also work in a business or other households. Also, in Taiwan, a little less than half of Filipino women work in only one household compared to only 21% of Indonesians. Most of the Filipino workers in both Hong Kong and Taiwan believe that they understand the local labour laws that apply to them, the Indonesians in Hong Kong also were in this category, but the Indonesians in Taiwan did not, most of them answered that they did not know the labour laws in Taiwan as no one had informed them.

For contracts in Hong Kong, there was no difference between Indonesian and Filipino workers, since contracts are part of the labour laws and are required, so more than 80% had copy of their contract and all surveyed understood some or all of that contract. In Taiwan, it is a very different story, although all of the Filipino workers understood some, or all, of their contract, half of Indonesian workers did not understanding their contract. All Filipino workers had contracts, but a third did not have a copy of their contract, while none of the Indonesians surveyed had a copy of their work contract.



In the survey the women were asked what their main problems were at work, they could choose more than one option when they had more than one main problem. Some respondents did not answer this question, either as they were content with their work situation or felt uncomfortable in giving an answer. The lack of responses for the Indonesian workers, in particular, to this question may have been due to their surroundings, many answered the survey while outside the 7-11 convenience store or on the street, which are not the best places to ask personal questions. They also in general were less aware of their rights.

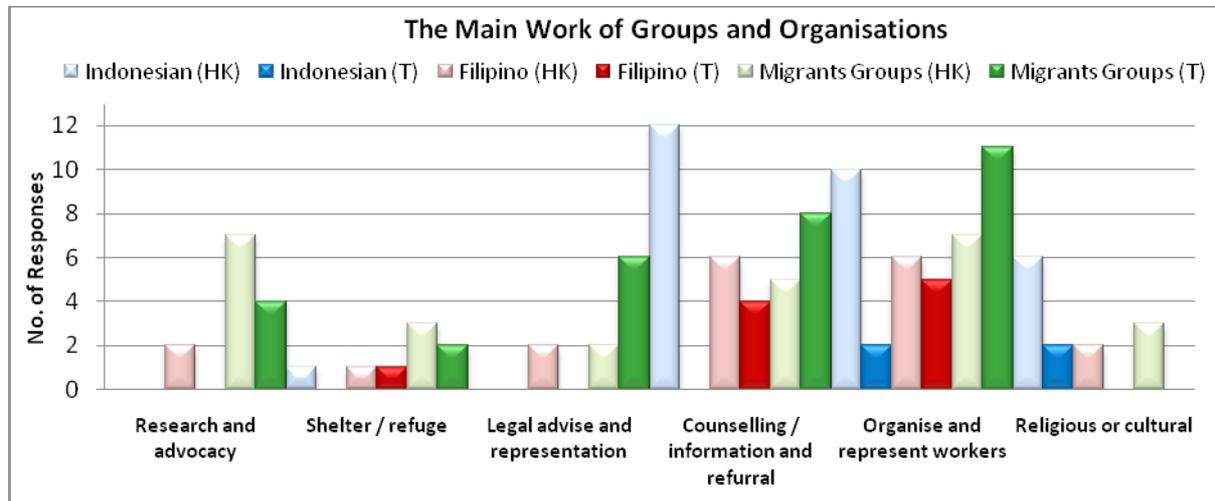
In Taiwan, the confiscation of documents is a bigger problem than in Hong Kong, although a surprising large amount of Indonesian workers still complained of this in Hong Kong. In Taiwan they need to present their documentation to the police and other officials if asked on the street, otherwise they can be suspected of being irregular migrants. However, it was widely reported that their documentation is taken from them so that they are unable to “run away”, as discussed in the introduction, the holding of documents is widespread and encouraged in Taiwan. Many of the participants at the forum of Filipino women domestic workers organisations, work as domestic workers and volunteer with the organisations and

when asked, most of them did not have their documentation, as it was being held by their employers.

The long hours and lack of rest was more of a complaint in Hong Kong, even though workers in Hong Kong generally have Sundays off. The high level of different forms of abuse in both countries is also a concern, with many of the workers saying that it is common to be screamed at and called names as well as being slapped or having household items being thrown at them.¹⁴

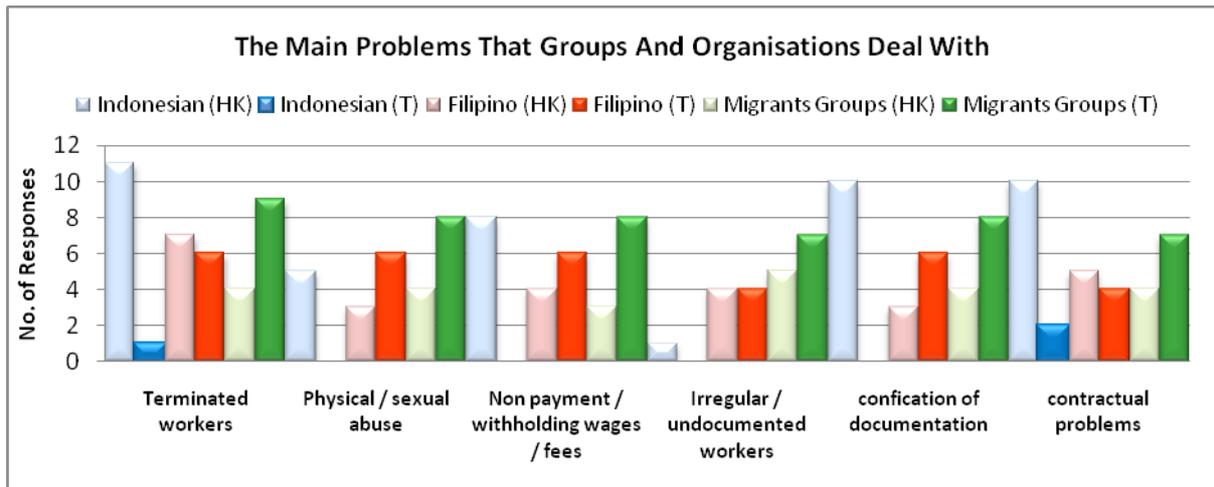
2. The groups and organisations

A wide range of groups and organisations were surveyed in both countries, including faith based, informal workers groups, formal organisation or associations, migrant NGOs, trade / labour unions in Hong Kong and alliances of migrant worker groups. Groups that worked with or consisted of solely or mainly Indonesian and Filipinos were surveyed, as well as other groups and NGOs who worked mainly with these nationalities, but considered themselves to be general migrant groups. Very few groups who work with or consist mainly of Indonesian domestic workers were surveyed in Taiwan, this was because of the small number of groups that exist there and because they expressed a reluctance to participate. Most of the groups surveyed are only based in that country, but eight regional or international organisations were also surveyed.

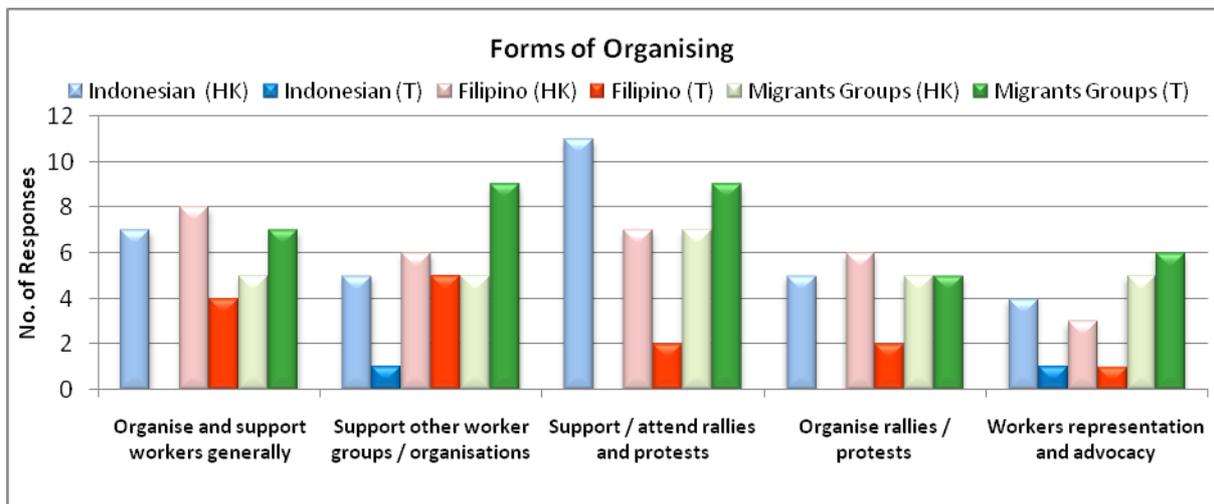


The work of these groups is varied as can be seen above, with most groups simply organising and representing workers. The groups also deal with a wide range of problems of migrant domestic workers, however many of the groups serve the function to inform and refer workers on to other services, such as the labour departments or embassies as can be seen above.

¹⁴ From discussions with the field researchers, during the consultative forums, and with domestic workers in the interviews, February and March 2011.

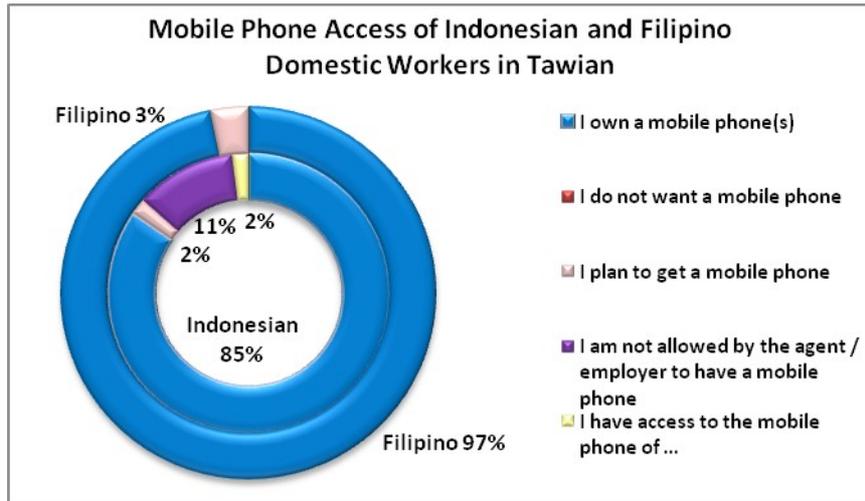


Of those organisations which organise workers, many will support and attend rallies and protests in Hong Kong and work together to support other workers groups and organisations, as well as organising workers themselves.

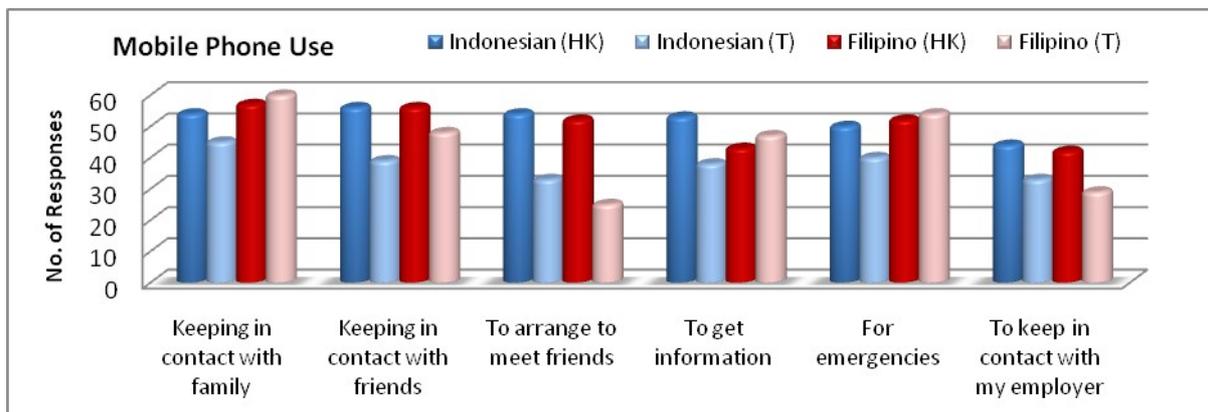
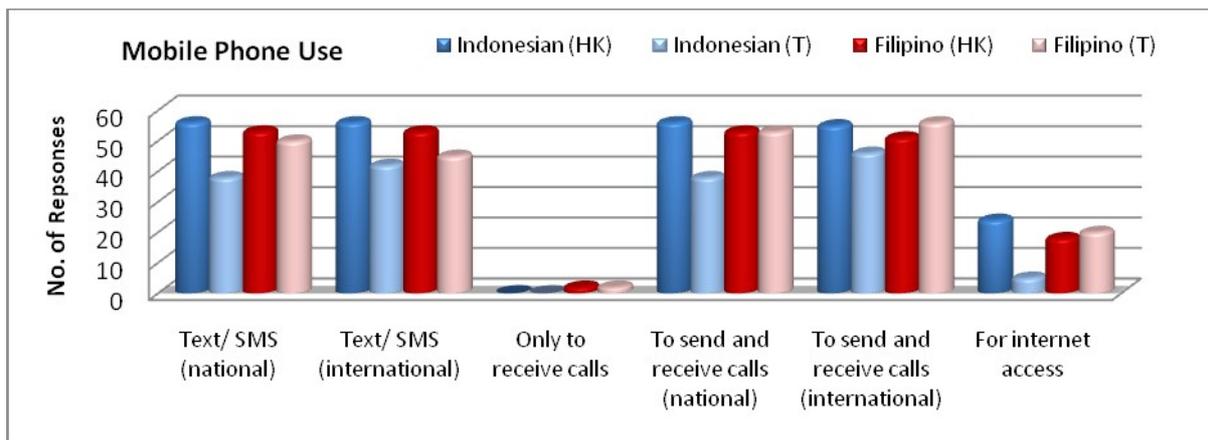


B. The access of Filipino and Indonesian women migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong and Taiwan currently to ICT and mobile phones, and impediments to that access

100% of both Indonesians and Filipinos surveyed in Hong Kong have at least one mobile phone and so there was no need to do a graph for that data. In Taiwan, all workers wanted to have a mobile phone, of the Filipino 3% were saving up to get a mobile phone or had recently lost their phone. Of the Indonesians; 2% were saving up to get one as they had been in the country only a few months, 2% used their friends and swapped in and out their SIM cards, and 11% were told by their agent or employee that they could not have a mobile phone and therefore did not have one, or it had been confiscated.



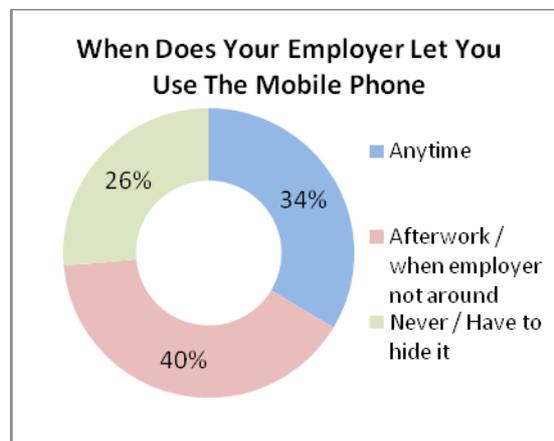
Of those who have a mobile phone or access to the mobile phones of others, all of the workers used their phones to call and to text / SMS except for two Filipinos in Taiwan and two in Hong Kong who only received calls.



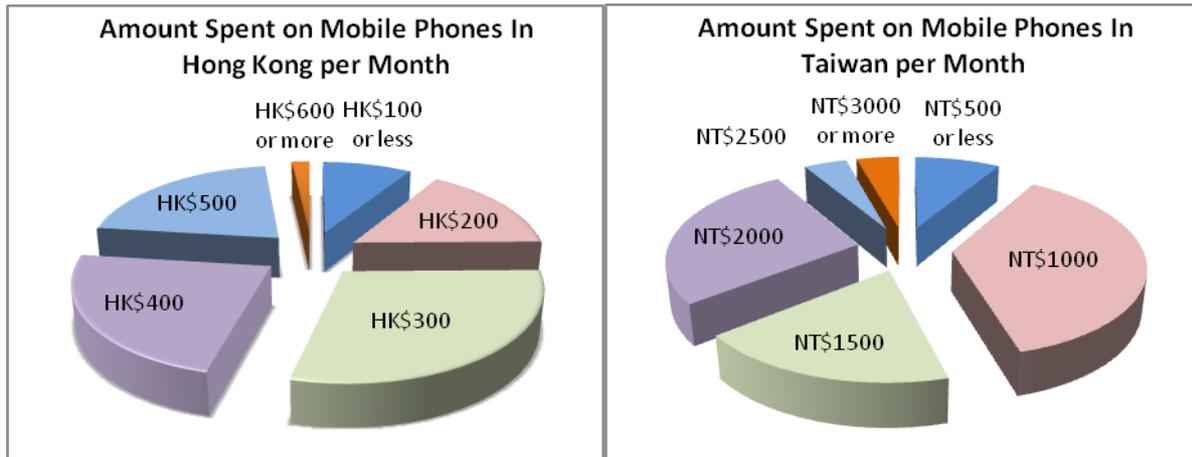
It is understandable that the number of workers in Taiwan that use the mobile phone to arrange to meet friends is lower than in Hong Kong, since they do not have a legislated day off in which to meet with their friends. It was also interesting to see the number of workers

who use their mobile phone to get information. The willingness to use their mobile phone credit not just to speak to loved ones, but also to get information show that these calls and text messages can be used to engage and educated domestic workers, and to more extent then they currently are.

What is surprising is the number of workers that use their mobile phone to keep in contact with their employers, or for their employers to keep in contact with them. This implies that these employers know that the workers have a mobile phone and have the contact number. Perhaps many of the households do not have a fixed line due to the cost and therefore use the mobile phone to contact the worker within the household as well as when they are out shopping or picking up the children. A domestic worker who cared for an elderly person for their employer commented that they were often in the hospital with the elderly person and therefore the employer contacted the domestic worker on the mobile phone, which was easier than calling the hospital.



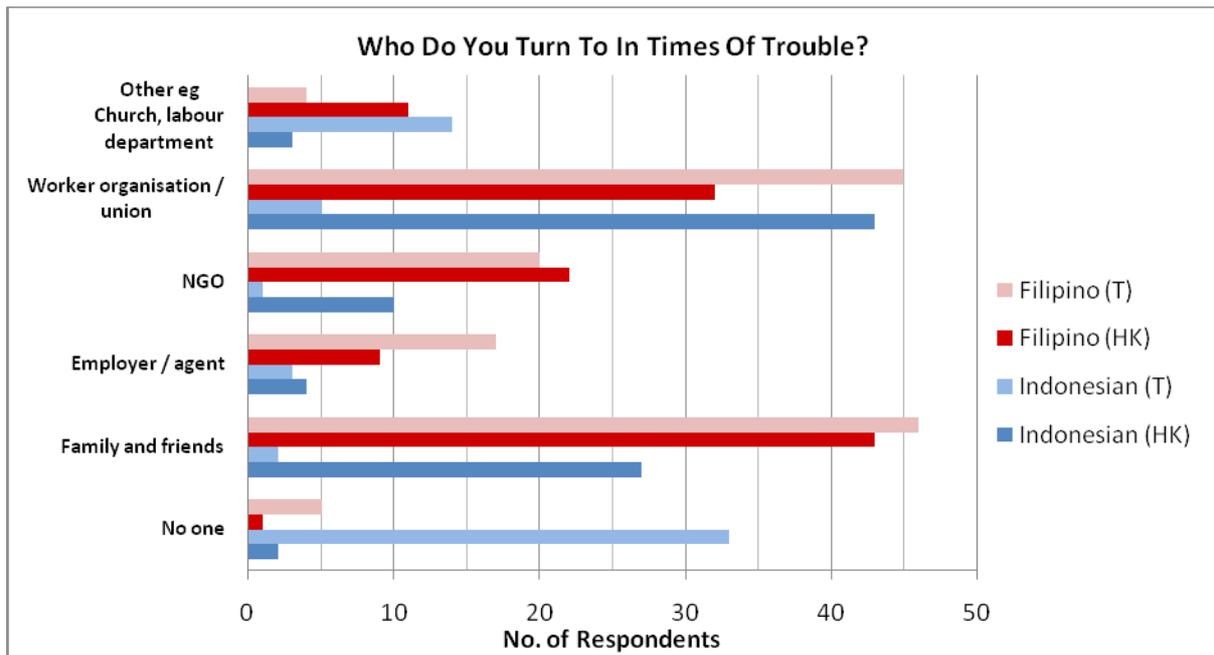
As the graph shows, for all the respondents, there is almost an even split between having free use of the phone, being able to use it outside of work or when the employer is not around, and hiding the use of the phone, for both Indonesian and Filipino workers. Some of the 40% that could only use their mobile phone after work or when the employer was not around, mentioned that they had young children or elderly persons to care for that required constant attention or that their employer had asked them not to use their mobile phones during work hours or unless they had finished their work. One Indonesian domestic worker in Hong Kong commented that she was allowed to use the mobile phone at any time because the employer wanted to be able to call her to check on the condition of their elderly parent.



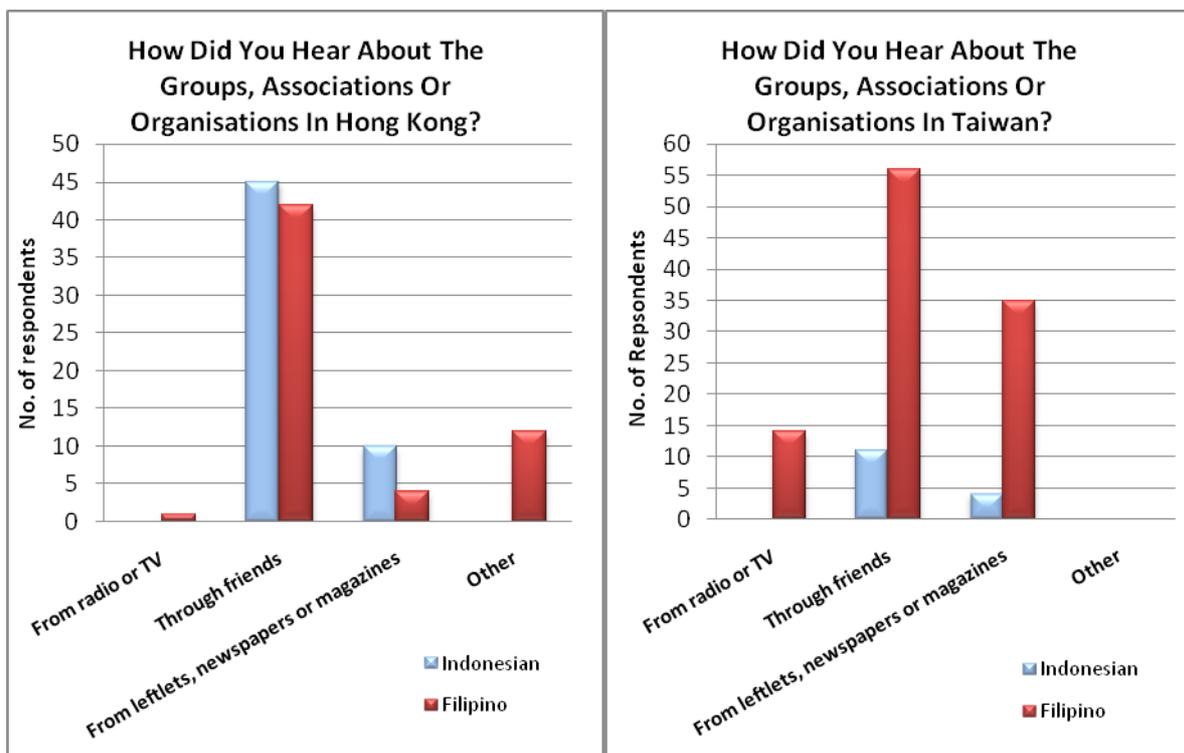
The amount that the workers spent on their mobile phones was high considering that per month the minimum wage (and the amount which most workers received) is HK\$3,580 or NT\$15,840. If a worker spent NT\$2,000 a month on their mobile phone in Taiwan this would amount to almost 13% of their monthly income and in Hong Kong, spending HK\$500 would amount to 14%.

C. The use of ICT and mobile phones by Filipino and Indonesian women migrant domestic workers and their organisations in Hong Kong and Taiwan formally or informally to organise and engage migrant domestic workers in individual or collective advocacy

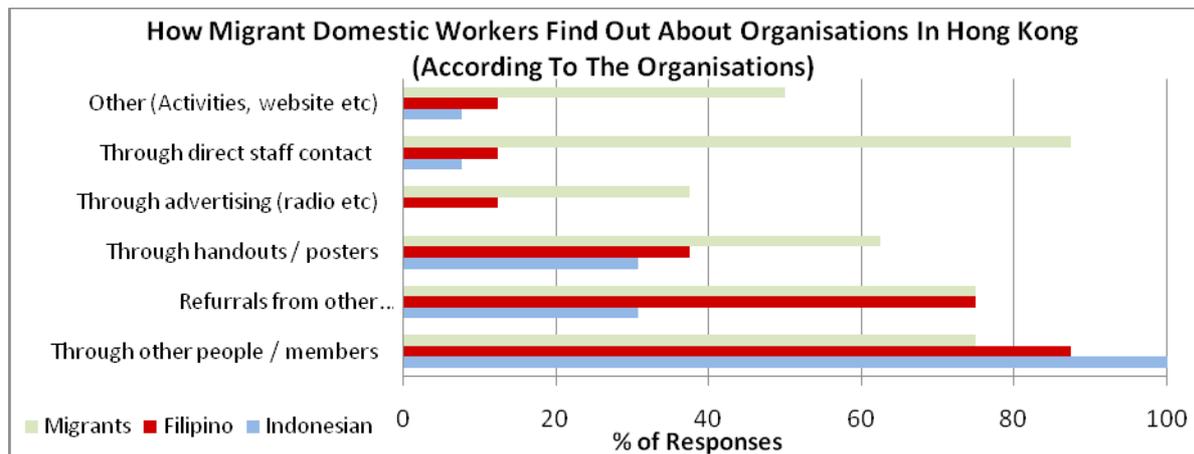
What is clearly a concern from the beginning of the survey is how few Indonesian women domestic workers in Taiwan contact anyone when they are in trouble. It may be understandable that they do not contact NGOs, workers organisations, etc, as they do not have a day off and they may not hear about these groups. However, they also do not even seem to reach out to their friends and family back home when they are experiencing problems. More often they contact the Council of Labor Affairs (CLA) in Taiwan though the ‘1955’ foreign workers’ hotline number, which is toll free and 24 hours. According to a recent article the hotline receives a total of about 14,000 calls each month from migrants in Taiwan (Huong, 2010).



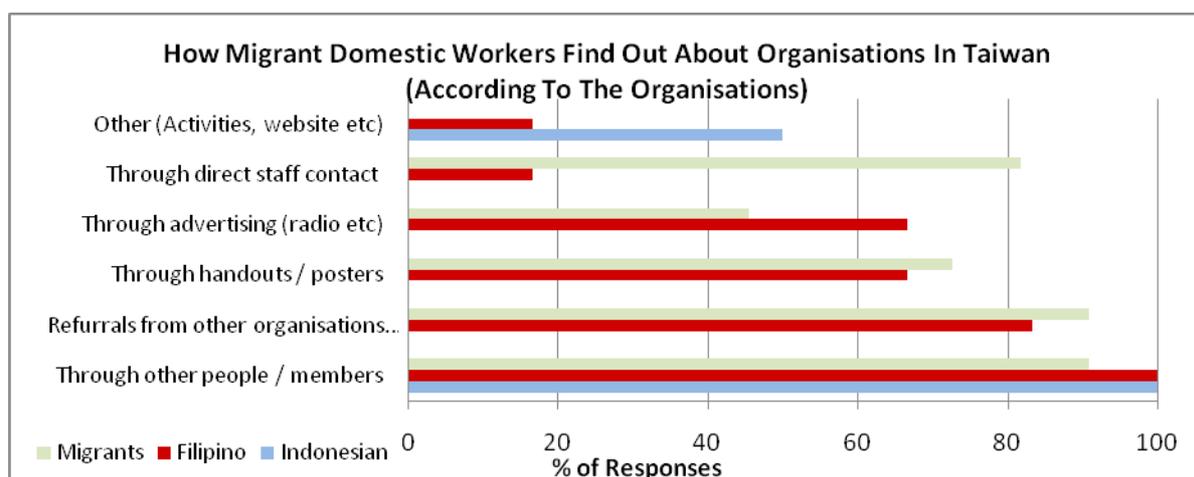
To contact groups for help or information, the workers have to know of the group’s existence and how to contact them, for example, since the CLA 1955 hotline number is easy to remember and is advertised, this is presumably why it receives so many calls. Overwhelmingly, domestic workers received information on groups and organisations in both countries through friends, or word of mouth (face to face or by phone). Leaflets, newspapers and magazines are how many of the isolated Filipino workers in Taiwan heard about the organisations which they belong to there.



According to the groups and organisations themselves, they also use word of mouth to get information about their group out to workers, as well as referrals from other groups or members. The number of groups and organisations that replied that the workers found out about them through direct staff contact was also surprisingly low for the Indonesian and Filipino groups, especially when most migrant groups responded to this and when in Hong Kong domestic workers congregate in particular places, making them easy to contact by walking around on a Sunday.



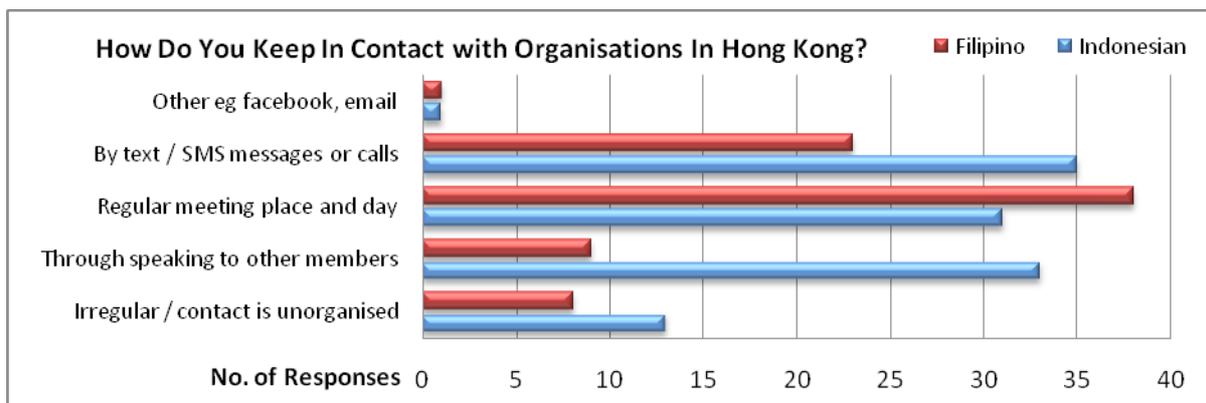
The face to face or through other people methods were also high in Taiwan with the migrant groups. However, migrant and Filipino groups in Taiwan do more advertising, whether by radio or handouts, due to the isolation of domestic worker there compared to Hong Kong, while the Indonesian groups rely on activities and word of mouth alone. The referrals to groups and organisations can come from the police, the labour departments, and in Taiwan, from the CLA 1955 hotline.



Once they know about the organisation or groups 64% of Indonesians and 68% of Filipino workers use call or text messages to keep in contact with these groups, associations, organisations or the unions in Hong Kong. 66% of Filipino workers in Taiwan also use calls or text messages from their mobile phones, however, only 4% of Indonesians keep in contact

through mobile phone as very few Indonesians in Taiwan are members of any groups, associations or organisations (see ‘who do you contact in times of trouble’ above).

In both Hong Kong and Taiwan, some groups have advertised phone numbers or hotlines, these are advertised to enable domestic workers to contact the groups and organisations. More than 70% of the migrants groups tended to have advertised phone numbers, while the smaller Indonesian and Filipino groups just give out the contact number of members as they may not have an office or people to staff a phone line. In Taiwan, five of the migrants groups and one of the Filipino groups has an advertised phone number or hotline which can receive text messages, while in Hong Kong four of the Filipino groups and two of the migrant groups could receive text messages on their advertised phone number.



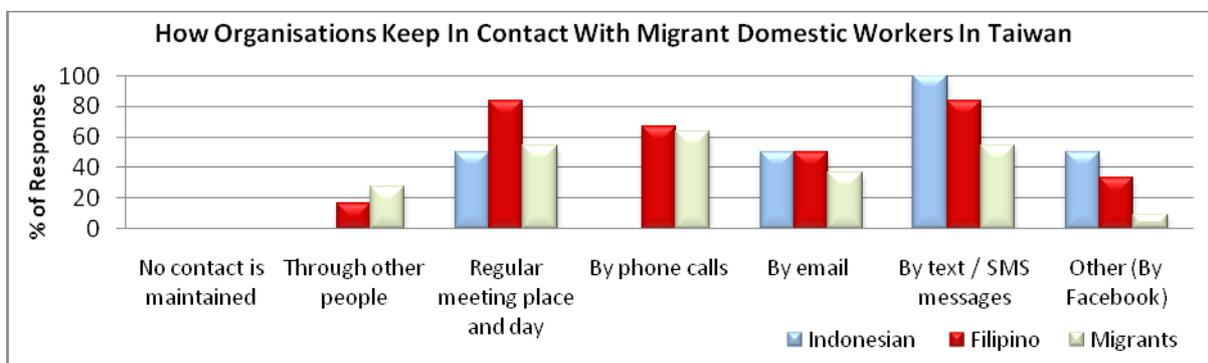
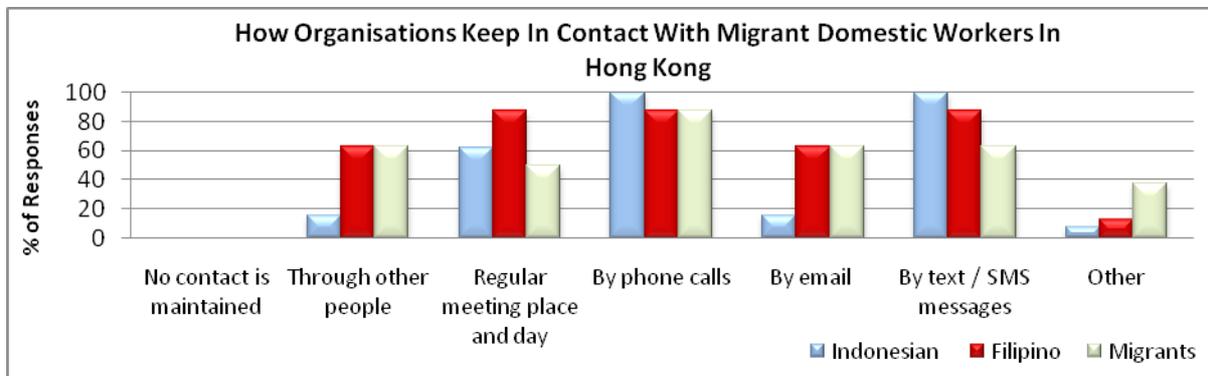
It was unsurprising that the main form of contact for domestic workers in Taiwan is the mobile phone due to their isolation in households. Also the main form of contact being regular meeting place and days was unsurprising for Filipinos in Hong Kong, since they have a weekly day off, but Indonesians in Hong Kong and Taiwan rely both on other members and their mobile phone.

Discussion in the forums, with the field researchers and with other domestic workers indicated that many of the Indonesian domestic workers in both countries use Facebook to contact groups, and the numbers of friends these groups have on Facebook itself also show this.¹⁵ In fact, during the forum with Indonesian women in Taiwan, Facebook was mentioned

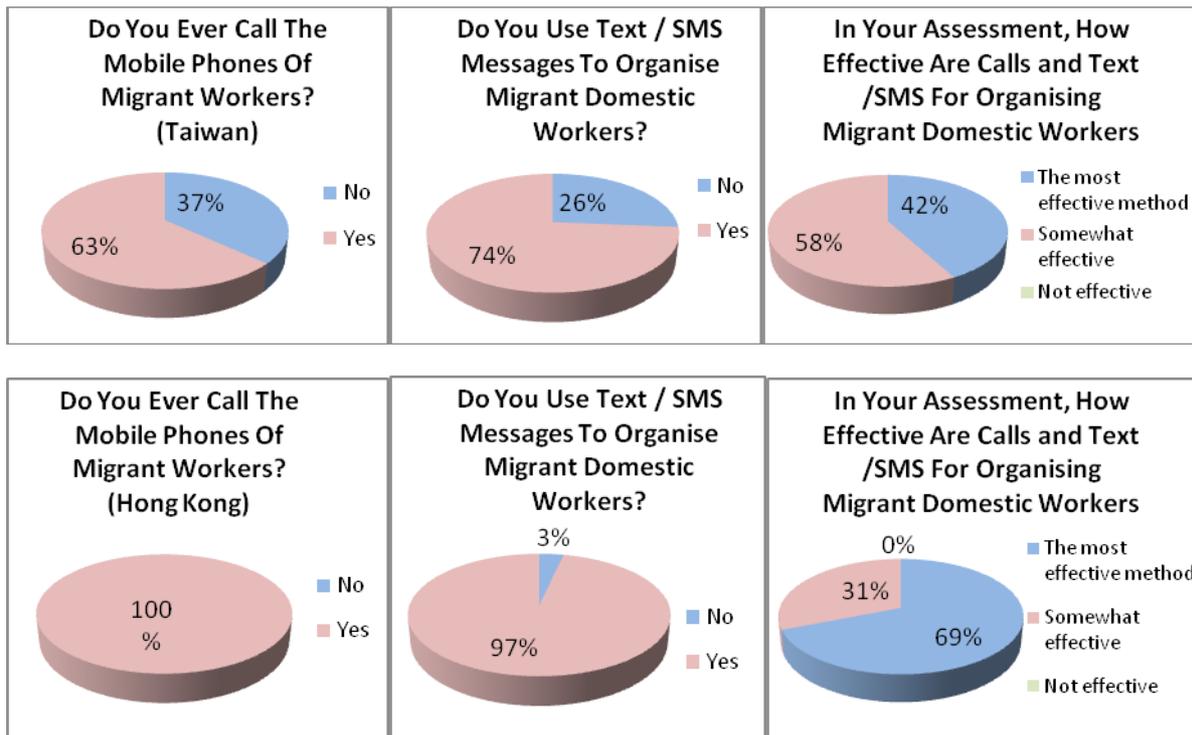
¹⁵ For example, the ‘Indonesian Solidarity’ Facebook page has 2,402 friends, PEREMPUAN MAHARDHIKA has 3,799 friends, Asosiasi Tenaga Kerja Indonesia di Hong Kong (ATKI-HK) has 237 ‘likes’.

as the top option. However, the survey did not reflect this as it was not one of the options given when the survey was formulated. The number of respondents who ticked “other” may have been larger had the survey used Facebook or email as examples, like in the graph above, however the survey only had “please specify” and so a few of the respondents added Facebook and email in this box.

The number of domestic workers who use their phones to keep in contact with groups of all kinds is high, the groups themselves also use mobile phone technology to keep in contact. The number of groups and organisations that use email seems to be higher than expected since very few of the domestic workers said that they used email, access would also be thought to be a problem as few had internet on their phone and employers may not let them use the household internet connection and computer.



Again the surveys for groups and organisations did not mention Facebook, but some did specify under the ‘other’ category that they used this method to keep in contact with worker; therefore, this graph reflects the use of Facebook by Indonesian groups in Taiwan. The Indonesian groups also rely on text messages rather than direct phone calls, this may be because of the problem of speaking on the phone to domestic workers in household, while a text message they can answer quietly and when they have the time. This is also why in the graphs below 37% of the groups in Taiwan do not use calls to the mobile phone of workers to organise, while all of the groups in Hong Kong do.



Most groups in both countries also use text messages to organise domestic workers, although less in Taiwan at 74% than in Hong Kong at 97%. This is also reflected in the answer to the question on the effectiveness of call and text messages for organising domestic workers, the majority of groups in Hong Kong rated it the most effective method, the other 31% thought that meetings at regular place on Sundays was more effective and also cheaper. In Taiwan, calls and text messages were not seen to be the most effective method as 58% thought that other methods such as regular meetings were more effective even though they are difficult to organise, given the few days off that workers in Taiwan have. Calls and text messages can be used to set up these meeting and to inform workers of what happened at the meeting if they are unable to attend.

The Indonesian groups surveyed in Taiwan also mentioned that trainings, workshops and education was more effective. As the collective organising movement in Taiwan is almost non-existent compared to Hong Kong, it makes sense that the domestic workers movement needs to be built up by educating the workers on their rights and how they can organise in a way to advocate for their rights. After having workshops and training the groups can contact those who participated to continue to engage them in the collective organising. However, a point that needs to be made is that the workers need to hear about the trainings and workshops, when they are isolated, making them aware of these opportunities can be difficult. By advertising a contact number in places like the 7-11 convenience stores for example, the workers can ring the groups and then the groups can text and call the workers to inform them about upcoming workshops etc. In short, the use of calls and text messages are the most effective organising method when they are used in conjunction with and to support other organising methods such as meeting, and to assist in arranging forms of organising such as protests. Mobile phones can not replace important forms of organising that require the direct participation of the worker.

The perception from the Taiwan groups was that using call and text messages was expensive given that they have very limited budget. When asked what 'system' they used to text message domestic workers, all of the groups and organisations said that they used a purpose bought prepaid or contract SIM card, they wrote the message and then sent out the message to workers. The field researchers were informed in the instructions that

The 'system' used to text / SMS migrant domestic workers can include sending individual text / SMS messages to workers, sending messages to a list of workers, a mailing list system or service set up on a mobile phone or on-line (please ask for the name and details of the service), the system or service may include a opt-in service where workers send a message to a number and then their mobile number is included into the mailing list (ask for the name and details of the service). You may need to ask them to clarify in some detail, please use extra space as necessary.

From the responses and discussion with groups, no one mentioned the use of systems, such as Clickatell or Frontline SMS, which will be discussed in the next section.

VI. Discussion and Analysis:

A. How can ICT be further developed to overcome the impediments of its use by women migrant domestic workers and their organisations?

It became clear from the survey, forums and general discussion that the main impediments to the use of ICT and mobile phones in particular, are that of the employers and the agents.¹⁶ It was also clear through follow up questions with the field researchers that this was more of a problem outside of the main city area of Taipei, those surveyed from the southern end of Taiwan being far more likely to be told by the agent that they are not allowed to have cell phones. It was also clear from the discussion with the field researchers and with some domestic workers themselves, that in answering the survey, they may say that they can use the mobile phone at anytime, but when questioned further they in fact hid their mobile phone use or used their phone when their employers where not at home, and did not know if they could freely use their phones or not. They hid their phone use as a precaution, so that their phones where not taken away from them.

75% of domestic workers in Hong Kong and 55% of workers in Taiwan said that they use their mobile phone to keep in contact with their employers, this was most often when they are outside of the household taking the children to school or getting groceries, or for employers to keep in contact with those domestic workers caring for their elderly parents. In these cases, the employers know of the workers mobile phone use and use it to their advantage to keep a track of the worker. Many of those that said they use the phone to keep in contact with their employer also said that personal use of the phone was only allowed by the worker after work hours, which may not leave them much time especially when 43% of the women surveyed work more than 14 hours a day. Complaints were made that when they care for young children or elderly people requiring constant care, they do not have sufficient breaks or privacy to use their mobile phones.¹⁷ Ensuring that a weekly day off, maximum hours and the ability to live out are included in the law and standard contracts is an important part of giving workers the space to organise.

For the organisations the main impediments are space and cost. In Taiwan very few of the organisations have office space. For example, IPIT – Indonesia and KASAPI (a Filipino group) share an address, phone number and email address with TIWA (Taiwan International Workers Association), other group use churches, mosques or parks to meet for a few hours on a Sunday.

The organisations in Hong Kong also have a problem with space, although they have regular Sundays off and regular meeting places, mainly of those places are in the park. At a United Indonesians Against Overcharging (*PILAR*) meeting plastic sheets where laid out on the

¹⁶ Information from the surveys and consultative forums.

¹⁷ From Interviews and informal discussion with domestic workers in Hong Kong and Taiwan.

concrete walkway a little away from the noisy large groups in the park and the meeting was held sitting on the ground. As one of the organisers of another group said, “if it rains we have no where to go, we stay at our employers house.” Complaints are made by citizens of the migrant domestic workers that fill up and block the covered walkways between shops and malls in Central Hong Kong. Organisations need a space in which to organise, meet, and hold events, especially on a Sunday, and the space provided by churches, mosques and the small offices of NGOs is not enough.

Impediments also may arise as the use of text message systems to organise domestic workers becomes more common. Some of the organisations in the forums raised concerns about doing policy briefs for governments that mention the use of mobile phones to organise, saying that negative policies could also be the result of attention on migrant workers mobile phone use.

爭取看護人權 移工主動出擊



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白宜君



【記者白宜君台北報導】「再忍耐一下就好。」第2次來台，印尼籍的伊蕊（化名）告訴大家，當她打電話去勞工局投訴，接電話的人是這樣說的。

伊蕊的表姐在東部當家庭看護照顧阿嬤，阿嬤去世後，老闆卻仍使喚表姐繼續作家務、種田、顧飯店，整日不眠不休地工作。勞工局回應敷衍了事，伊蕊淡淡地說：「後來，我表姐就逃了。」

周日下午，世新大學社會發展研究所教授夏曉鵬約訪了近20位印尼籍移工，大部份是家庭看護工，討論在台的處境與困擾。夏曉鵬指出，雖然家庭幫傭來自不同地方、在不同地區或不同國度工作，但其實碰到的問題都是大同小異。這一份調查將會用在「外籍家庭幫傭人權聯合會」（United For Foreign Domestic Workers' Rights, UFDWR）向聯合國提出國際支援與協助的倡議行動中。

The forum with Indonesian migrant domestic workers in Taipei, Taiwan, makes it into the news.

B. How can the use of mobile phones and other ICT be further developed for women migrant domestic worker organisations in Hong Kong and Taiwan to collectively organise , to inform and to politically engage women migrant domestic workers

It became clear through the survey, forum and general discussion with members of organisations that the use of ICT could be enhanced. As the results of the survey showed, 100% of domestic workers in Hong Kong and 82% in Taiwan have a mobile phone, and most of them use it to get information and to contact groups and organisations. However, less groups and organisations use the mobile phone to call or text message domestic workers in Taiwan than in Hong Kong, with though the workers in Taiwan are often more isolated within the households. In Hong Kong 69% and 42% of groups and organisations in Taiwan, thought that calls and text messages were the most effective method for organising domestic workers, however none cited any tools or systems for sending those messages.

Sharing regular news, updates and alerts, whether about latest government policies or health and safety tips, can inform, educate and keep domestic workers engaged as a part of your group or organisation. By using text message subscriber services these messages can go out to all those who have signed up for the service. Messages can also be spread concerning upcoming meetings and the agenda, and then the decisions made at those meetings, to keep workers who are unable to attend informed.

Text messages are also idea for organising events, protests and rallies. Messages can be sent asking for people to participate, to inform members of the time and place, and also to alert participants of last minute changes due to weather or changes in route. Viral campaigning is when a campaign message is spread from person to person like a virus; such messages can make a big impact, unite more domestic workers and enlarge your group or organisation. Domestic workers can participate in the campaign by forwarding the message, replying with their support, or sending reports of abuse as evidence for the campaign. Domestic workers can also sign petitions by, for example, simply replying to a message sent with the word 'petition' and their name, if a data collection system is used, such as with FrontlineSMS, then it will pick up on that keyword and can even send an automated response. Text message surveys can gather feedback and can help groups and organisations to represent their members better and understand their needs or issues.

Cameras, video or voice recording on mobile phones can also be useful for advocacy. Domestic workers can record instances of abuse as documented evidence for campaigns targeted at the wider public or governments. Text messages and photos and videos sent through Bluetooth or MMS (multimedia messaging) can also enable domestic workers to contribute directly to organisations' research or media such as newsletters and websites. When photos and video can be uploaded and shared during an event or protest then this will encourage other domestic workers to join in. Sending photos or videos of members of your organisations can also personalise contact with isolated domestic workers.

Coming out of the results of the survey it was clear that organisations and groups need more information on the cheap systems and tools to use when sending out messages to members.

Most would write up the message and then send it out to multiple contacts using a low cost prepaid SIM card, which is used for that purpose. They stated that cost was an impediment to sending out information or organising domestic workers by sending messages, time must also be a factor as it would take a while to send out messages to members a few at a time. As a result of this project APWLD is producing a guide to disseminate information on mobile phone tools and systems, see the conclusion and recommendations for further details.

1. Text tools and systems¹⁸

There are various bulk text mobile services available which can be used for informing, campaigning or organising, most of these services require initial payment and costs for each message sent out as well. Tools and systems for sending and receiving messages can be used by those groups and organisations with only a mobile phone, but most will also require a computer and an internet connection.

Firstly, there are SMS hubs, such as Frontline SMS and SMS Server Tool 3. These are systems which allow you to send and receive large numbers of text messages without needing to be connected to the internet once the tool is downloaded. Hubs are good for groups and organisations without an office or their own internet connection. FrontlineSMS, for example, is “an open source software that turns a laptop and a mobile phone into a central communications hub” (FrontlineSMS, 2010A), you need a mobile phone or GSM modem that can connect via Serial, USB or Bluetooth to a computer, then you simply install the programme on the computer and send messages to individuals or large groups, and receive messages back through the program (Frontline SMS, 2010A). Those using the service pay their local operator per SMS as usual, and those texting the service would also pay the standard charge, however, those using the service can also pay to get a national toll free or international calling number from providers. Then there are also examples of web-based group messaging systems such as Clickatell and BulkSMS, which require internet connection and a credit card, but are cheaper and quicker for sending large numbers of messages.

C. How can the use of other ICT be further developed for women migrant domestic worker organisations in Hong Kong and Taiwan to collectively organise , to inform and to politically engage women migrant domestic workers

1. Collaborative hotline and database

A next step in the use of text messages to organise workers is for a collaborative text hotline managed through an internet based system. Although several groups in both countries indicated that they have a hotline or advertised phone number, only twelve were able to

¹⁸ The information in this subsection can also be found in APWLD’s, *Mobilise: Action and Organising with Mobile Phones: A Guide for Domestic Workers Organisations* (2011).

receive text messages. Other groups said that they receive referrals from the hotlines, such as the one run by The Council of Labor Affairs in Taiwan. This and other hotlines were criticised by domestic workers for being intimidating to ring and for lacking native speakers from their countries of origin. A text message hotline, like that of the SOS SMS system discussed earlier in the report, would work better as a combined effort within a city or country. The benefits of the text message hotline is not just that it is cheaper and easier for domestic workers to send a text rather than to ring up, there can also be follow up messages sent to the worker if they choose to opt in to the service. Also the hotline can act as a centralised database with the contact numbers for migrant domestic workers, which could be managed through some of the web based systems mentioned in APWLD's *Mobilise* guide. Changes in policies or emergency information can be quickly sent out to all workers.

All new workers should be able to register their mobile number with their embassy or consulate and given the choice to opt in to this service prior to or upon arrival. The larger unions, NGOs and other groups can fund for office space and staff or rotating volunteers who can read and write in the main languages of the migrant population. In Taiwan, a text message hotline can be an extension of the increasingly busy hotline run by the Council of Labor Affairs (Huang, 2010). The staff would be able to answer questions and give information, as well as direct the messenger to the various NGO's, shelters, workers organisations and other groups, or the police when necessary. To further monitor the system, a message can be sent out with a basic survey asking if they found the service useful and asking them to opt in to a service which sends out relevant information in their language. When a protest or rally is organised on an issue affecting domestic or migrant workers in general, the combined system will be able to send out the details before the date, this means a potentially large numbers of workers could be mobilised. A single countrywide database and hotline service like this would take a large and coordinated effort, however, groups and organisations can begin to build up their own databases in the meantime and begin to familiarise domestic workers with text message services.

2. Mobile Phone Applications

The survey showed that only 5% of the migrant domestic workers surveyed have applications on their cell phones, although, as they become cheaper, it is likely that the number of 'smart-phones' will increase. There is therefore potential to create applications to enable the organising of migrant domestic workers. One idea is a social networking mapping service where migrant domestic workers can sign up with a profile and find other migrant domestic workers living in their employers households nearby, although for privacy and safety the map should only show the generalised location. An application could also be built mapping some of the information that will be on the new UFDWR website or for the alerts being generated from the reporting on the website.

The problem at this stage is mainly the cost of developing such applications, which is outside the budget of most NGOs and migrant worker organisations. However, it is not impossible that a developer may design such an application on a not-for-profit basis.

3. Limits of mobile technology and ICT

The most obvious limitation is that a group or organisation can not contact a domestic worker unless they have their number, and vice versa. Many of the individual volunteers have numbers in their phones and these numbers need to be collected into a usable database. Domestic workers also need to be able to voluntarily opt in, which requires them to know of the group or organisation and their number, but advertising requires some time and money. On Sundays it is worth spending time recruiting some women to help spread the number to friends and other domestic workers in groups in parks, walkways and other areas domestic workers frequent. Advertising will also be more difficult in countries where workers do not have a weekly day off, such as Taiwan, and this is why it is important to advertise in places such as the arrivals in the airport, bus and train stations, 11-7 convenience stores, as well as to cooperate with churches, mosques, embassies and consulates. The advertisements also need to be in the different languages and they need to stand out in order to get attention.

The other problem may be that mobile numbers change, especially in countries where prepaid SIM cards are in use. People change their numbers often, and may have several phones and/or several SIM cards that they switch around to take advantage of special call rates on different networks. Any database will need to be updated regularly to remain useful, and high bounce-back rates should be expected. Costs of using ICT will also be a large factor for many of the smaller groups and organisations who are without a funding source; the APWLD guide recommends that groups are clear about the full costs involved before setting up systems. Checking how much it will cost per message sent or received, as well as for the initial set up is important.

D. What notions of citizenship and of the private / public divide have women migrant domestic workers and their organisations challenged, how can ICT be used to continue to challenge these notions?

Migrant workers, even though they are not citizens of the state, do contribute to and can even be argued to be essential to the infrastructure of many countries, and they are therefore also entitled to certain rights under the laws of that country. Woman migrant domestic workers free up their employers, particularly women, to enter the workforce, especially in countries where the state does not have the social services to care for children and elderly. Domestic workers are recruited from overseas to fulfil this gap and do such work that other citizens are

disinclined to perform; to care, clean and cook. As women, as non citizens and as they are working in a profession seen as low-skilled and undervalued, they can be excluded from or even disadvantaged in the laws and policies of the state.

There is bureaucracy and limits set in place so that domestic workers have to regularly renew their work visas and are unable to stay in the country for long enough to apply to become citizens and stay in the country. This effectively keeps them as temporary migrants whose fate and life is affected by government policies, but they are unable to have a say in those policies. They are also hidden from the public sphere and from the minds of citizens behind the closed doors of the employers household, their documentation is held, they are restricted in their free time and from days off work to further isolate them. They are unique in that they are hired as individual and lone employees and their workplace is in their employers' private sphere of the household, making organising with other workers more difficult. Migrant domestic workers' rights are often suppressed by both the policies and laws of the state and by the attitudes and treatment by their employers.

Women migrant domestic workers particularly those from the Philippines, continue challenge this suppression in Hong Kong. Having some of their basic rights contained in their contracts and upheld in the law, having Sundays off in particular, enables them to be seen and to occupy public spaces in parks, walkways and the central city area. Having these basic rights protected enables them a space to push for further rights, it gives them space to challenge the attitudes and treatment by their employers. The 'Sunday communities' in Hong Kong enable migrant domestic workers to have a public sphere to freely discuss their concerns and problems, but it also gives them a private sphere, the only place that they can be themselves (since the normally private sphere of the home where they live is also commonly their workplace inhabited by their employer).

In Hong Kong, there are many groups, associations, NGOs and even unions which amplify the voices of the migrant domestic workers, they hold protests and rallies so that their plight can not be ignored by the citizens of Hong Kong. These groups and organisations represent migrant domestic workers and continue to push against detrimental policies and for further rights for migrant workers and in this way migrant domestic workers are able to engage with the state as non-citizens. ICT is important to continue and strengthen the movement in Hong Kong. Systems and tools can be utilised for efficiency and faster mobilisation. Centralising a database within the movement or even within a group or organisation would enable information to go out quickly to all those who need it and for the organisation to receive feedback, which is then forwarded to the right people.

In Taiwan however, migrant workers, and women migrant domestic workers in particular continue to be routinely excluded from both the public sphere and from engagement with the state. Without protection of their rights and without Sundays off, organising is difficult at best. This is where ICT can bridge the gap between the isolated workers and the groups and organisations which can represent their interests to the state. Just as migrant domestic workers currently find ways to contact their friends and family regularly by calls and text

messages for support and for information, domestic workers can also interact as members of groups and organisations. Similar to how mobile technology has enabled interpersonal communications and relationships for women outside of households in countries of strict gender segregation and male domination, it also enables domestic workers to contact other workers isolated in households and those who are striving to represent migrant workers.

Even if a domestic worker does not have days off and rarely leaves the employers' household, she can potentially stay informed on the movement, be aware of policy changes, get regular news, add her name to petitions, and keep others updated on her situation, all through text messages on her mobile phone. Although physical participation in any form of organising, whether it is a protest or a meeting, is the ideal situation, where the worker is unable to engage in this way, connection through the mobile phone is the next best option. While the movement is weak in Taiwan, and particularly outside of Taipei, ICT is crucial to beginning to strengthen the bonds, establish trust, build awareness and increase the numbers of domestic workers engaged as members of groups and organisations.

As the 'Sunday community' as a public sphere does not exist in Taiwan as it does in Hong Kong, more connection and awareness needs to be built up within the migrant domestic workers so that they believe that they have the 'right to be rights-claimants', even as non citizens of the state (Shaheed, 2011: 140). In the early stages of a movement ICT is crucial to establish those connections and to open up a public sphere for migrant domestic workers and even in Hong Kong ICT is important in maintaining and continuing the movement. Unlike other marginalised and isolated minorities, most women migrant domestic workers in both Hong Kong and Taiwan already have an important activist tool; that of a mobile phone, and this tool should be utilised in everyway possible.

VII. Overall Conclusions and Recommendations:

A. Informing organisations on the potential of ICT use

From the beginning of this project it was an objective that the study would not just result in a report, but also result in the feeding back of information to women migrant domestic workers and their organisations. As the use of ICT is not formalised within the structures of most migrant workers organisations, and due to the lack of knowledge of tools and systems, this feeding back needed to start with an easy to use *Mobilise* guide, mentioned earlier in this report.

Disseminating a simple guide will give organisations and groups the information they need to be able to organise more effectively by mobile phone. The guide can also be useful to organise local domestic workers and migrant workers doing other forms of isolated work. The guide will be a short booklet outlining some basics of organising and campaigning, and the different tools and systems that can be used for mobile phone organising; including the low cost, open software options such as FrontlineSMS. Simple tools and systems such as those described in the guide could easily be set up and put to various uses by organisations working with migrant domestic workers. The guide also gives brief information on special short numbers, budgeting and security, and other ICTs such as blogs, websites, Facebook and Twitter. It also outlines the importance of strategising, advertising and publicity. The guide utilises the cartoons of Asian women migrant domestic workers from the popular UFDWR publication, *Saya Migran* (UFDWR, 2009),¹⁹ to enhance its visibility and appeal.

The guide will be launched at the Asia Pacific Feminist Forum hosted by APWLD in December 2011, during a workshop on organising using ICT facilitated by UFDWR members. It will also be distributed to organisations in Hong Kong and Taiwan, however the information will be useful for any migrant worker organisations and maybe distributed to other countries depending on initial feedback on the material and future budget.

As a result of this project APWLD is also trialling other methods to organise and engage migrant domestic workers. In particular, APWLD as co-secretariat of the United for Foreign Domestic Workers Rights (UFDWR) coalition has developed a new website. The new website will not only contain information on UFDWR and its campaign, but it will also hopefully be a useful tool for migrant domestic workers and their organisations and groups. The website uses Ushihidi mapping tools which in the first instance will give migrant domestic workers basic information such as where the Indonesian consulate is in Hong Kong and its contact details (telephone and email). It will also map out where migrant domestic workers can meet and the location and details of NGO's, shelters, and other migrant worker organisations that domestic workers can go to for help. Reports can also be made as to upcoming events, rallies and protests; these reports can be made by anyone and can also be verified or removed by the website author. Once groups begin to use this feature, domestic

¹⁹ *Saya Migran* is a booklet with cartoons that outlines some of the basic rights of migrant domestic workers and is available in several languages.

workers will be able to go to the website and sign up for alerts, so when a protest or event is happening in their area they will be automatically notified. The website is also linked to the current UFDWR blog and to the 'Ufdwr Campaign' Facebook page to ensure that it takes advantage of the different social media available.

The potential is for the website to become an organising and communication hub for domestic workers, once it is up and running technology can be added so that domestic workers can text in reports and receive alerts on their mobile phone. The potential downfall of such a system is that because it is open for the public to post reports, the reports can be monitored by the government of the country of destination and they can therefore monitor the activity of migrant domestic workers and perhaps use the alerts of upcoming protests to have a police presence and shut them down. Although in many countries the local government and police are notified or asked for permission before protests or street rallies occur.

There is a lot more research that could be done on organising and ICT use at the more practical level, engaging more with particular organisations. For example, a project could be undertaken with a particular migrant domestic worker groups in setting up some of the ICT tools and systems, once they are put to use, the researchers could study their effectiveness and the best methods for increasing the database of domestic workers' contact numbers. This could be set up as part of a campaign to collectively organise domestic workers towards urging the government to ratify the new Convention and Recommendation on Domestic Work, and therefore perhaps receive funding from the ILO or some other supportive organisation.

UFDWR and APWLD have also been looking for funding to assist local organisations in organising domestic workers. The campaign would involve running a workshop on organising at the local level with women from domestic worker organisations and an outreach kit would be distributed to participants. The kit would consist of locally relevant information on rights, sample contracts, complaints mechanisms and a campaigning guide, as well as the new ICT guide. After the workshop, participants would use the kit to set up stalls which would attract domestic workers with the chance to use a mobile phone or be given phone credit to call home. The stalls would be set up in areas that domestic workers frequent and would be used to provide domestic workers an opportunity to contact advocates, to distribute information on the organisation and on organising in general. It was also give organisations a chance to record the mobile phone numbers of domestic workers, so that they can be included into the organisations' database for alerts on future events and Government policy changes.

B. Recommendations for Governments

1. General policy recommendations

To begin with, Taiwan needs to change and pass the Household Service Act; it was drafted in 2003 and will need to be updated to be inline with the new ILO Convention and Recommendation on Decent Work. Or alternatively, the Labour Standards Law should be

amended to include migrant domestic workers directly, as some groups have been campaigning for. Taiwan should also include migrant domestic workers in all basic labour laws and protections, and draft a standard contract and/or uphold standard contracts from countries of origin; this will go a long way to begin to protect domestic workers rights. Domestic workers in Taiwan should have a weekly day off, leave and annual holidays, without their wages being deducted for the time off, this will enable them to have time to effectively organise and join groups like their counterparts in Hong Kong.

Workers in Hong Kong should be able to have the choice to live out, as is also required by the new Convention, with either the employer or worker finding suitable accommodation, this will allow them to have privacy and so that they are not effectively on call 24, 7. Also in Hong Kong, the two week rule should be repealed, and workers should be able to seek employment during legal proceedings in both countries, this will increase the number of domestic workers who will bring cases against their employer and recruitment agency. Taiwan and Hong Kong need a review of the legal proceedings concerning employers and recruitment agencies and action should be taken to ensure that more cases go through mediation or the courts to ensure that the laws are being enforced. Hong Kong should enforce the policy of limiting the recruitment agency fees to 10% of the first month's wage and Taiwan should enforce the policy that the employers pay all the placement fees. Also, migrant domestic workers should be able to continue to renew contracts with employers and apply for citizenship the same as any skilled migrant worker; this will immensely benefit their ability to organise.

Pre-departure training is also important, the Hong Kong and Taiwanese governments should ensure that all migrant domestic workers know the rights and the labour law before they arrive. Countries of origin should also want to protect their workers, saving costs on shelter, repatriation and lightening the burden of embassies and consulates overseas. Pre-departure training should also include information on how to legally organise within the context of the country of destination and give information on who to contact when they face difficulties. While few member states have ratified the Convention on Migrant Workers and the Domestic Workers Convention is still very new, countries of origin need to protect their workers by insisting on minimum standards contained in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), and they need to keep up diplomatic pressure to ensure those standards are upheld.

2. Organising and ICT recommendations for Governments

Taiwan should ensure that all workers have the right to organise and can join or form unions without any policy or legal intervention. Like in Hong Kong, the standard employment contract should contain a clause that states the worker can not be terminated for trade union membership and activities. Also in Taiwan, migrant workers should be encouraged to join existing unions and space should be made available to enable them to meet and organise.

Governments of both countries should refrain from policies that could affect the freedom of migrant workers to use mobile phones, for example the registration of prepaid SIM cards in Taiwan. The need of barrier-free access to communication devices can be argued as necessary in particular for workers' right to association and to organise in Taiwan due, to the isolation of migrant domestic workers. Therefore, the Taiwanese government should remove all barriers around workers' access to and use of information and communication technologies. SIM cards should be easily available for purchase at convenience stores without procedures for purchase that through discriminatory laws, rules and practices, compromise the privacy and communication rights of migrant domestic workers.

The labour law and standard contract for domestic workers in Hong Kong, and when they bring one in for Taiwan, should include domestic workers right to communication devices, including owning a mobile phone and being able to freely use that mobile phone during rest times and days off. Standard contracts should also include information such as the physical address of the employers' house and phone numbers of both the employee and employer. The labour law and work contracts should also include the right to breaks and days off outside of the household without the employer or members of their family, to enable workers the privacy to use their mobile phone and the freedom to associate and organise.



Filipino migrant domestic workers' organizations with a show of mobile phones during a forum in Hong Kong, organized by MFMW Foundation.

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Annexure

1) APWLD policy brief - *Women Migrant Domestic Workers and the Freedom to Communicate in Taiwan.*

2) APWLD publication - *Mobilise: Action and Organising with Mobile Phones: A Guide for Domestic Workers Organisations.*