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Bridging People: Shelters for Domestic Workers in Singapore and Indonesia

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Introduction

Millions of Asian women work as migrant (foreign) domestic workers, primarily in the Middle East, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, and Taiwan. It is estimated that there are at least two million migrant domestic workers (MDWs) in Asia; over 90% of these are women as at end 2006.

MDWs encounter a wide range of abuses during recruitment, employment, and return to their countries. The exclusion of domestic workers from labour laws facilitates blatant abuses and exploitation, and means domestic workers have little or no means of seeking redress. Women and girls employed in private households routinely encounter human rights violations in the workplace, ranging from excessively long working hours with little pay or rest, to sexual harassment and physical violence. Recruitment-related fees, deceptive recruitment practices, and discriminatory immigration policies further jeopardize migrant domestic workers' right to just and favourable working conditions.

Decades of sustained intervention and campaigns by migrant groups and advocates have contributed much to improving policies, practices, mechanisms—and hence the living and working conditions—of MDWs. The number and sophistication of migrants' groups have grown, including the emergence of strong MDW trade unions. There is also improved partnership between the migrant groups with the broader trade union and social movements.

About Singapore

Singapore is an island city nation with a geographical area of 704 sq. km and a population of 4.59 million people comprising 75% Chinese, 13.7% Malays, and 8.8% Indians. Singapore is

one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Almost all Malays are Muslim; other Singaporeans are Taoists, Buddhists, Confucianists, Christians, Hindus, or Sikhs.

Located in S.E. Asia it has a gross national income higher than Japan. Hence Singapore attracts many migrant workers to find employment opportunities. It was reported in November 2007 that out of a total population of 756,000 working foreigners in Singapore in 2006, 646,000 are work-permit holders who are engaged in unskilled and lowly skilled manual jobs in various sectors. The remaining 110,000 are Employment Pass and S Pass holders who have recognized skills or professional qualifications and earn a monthly salary that is equal or more than \$1,800.

Of these workers, there are some 180,000 women domestic workers from the Philippines, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, and Myanmar. The men foreign workers from Bangladesh, India, China, Thailand, Myanmar, Nepal and others are mainly working in the construction, marine, and industrial sectors of the economy

Immigration Policy

Migrant workers in Singapore have been closely associated with the country's economic development. After independence in 1965, immigration laws were modified in 1966 to reinforce Singapore's identity as a sovereign state. Between 1970 and 1980, the size of the non-resident population in Singapore doubled. The trend continued in the 1980s and 1990s. Foreigners constituted about 29% of Singapore's total labour force in 2000, which is the highest proportion of foreign workers in Asia. The most rapid increase occurred over the last decade; Singapore's non resident workforce increased 170%, from 248,000 in 1990 to 670,000 in 2006.

Since Singaporeans are reluctant to fill low-skilled jobs that pay low wages, Singapore turns to foreign workers to fill such positions. But because the government believes too much permanent, low-skilled migration is disruptive to society, its immigration policy since the 1970s ensures that unskilled and low-skilled migrants remain a transient workforce, subject to repatriation during periods of economic downturn. These workers are managed through a series of measures, including the work-permit system, the dependency ceiling (which regulates the proportion of foreign to local workers), and the foreign-worker levy.

Work-permit holders are not allowed to bring their spouses and children with them. They are only allowed to work for the employer and in the occupation as reflected in the work permit and therefore cannot gain access to the local labour market. The termination of employment also results in the immediate termination of the work permit, and the worker must leave Singapore within seven days. In addition, they may not marry Singaporeans or PRs, and they are subject to a

regular medical examination that includes a general physical check-up, a chest x-ray, and a test for HIV/AIDS. Female work-permit holders (meaning foreign domestic workers) who, through the medical-screening process, are found to be pregnant are subject to repatriation without exception.

Increasing Demand for Foreign Domestic Workers

The need to boost population numbers in Singapore has taken on greater urgency; fertility rates hit an all-time low of 1.24 children per woman in 2005 and continue to decline. In addition to encouraging citizens to bear more children and wooing overseas Singaporeans with incentives to return home, attracting foreigners who can contribute to Singapore to work, live, and permanently settle has become a top priority. Many Singaporeans believe the country depends too heavily on foreign talent. They also fear that competition for jobs, space, and limited resources will intensify to the detriment of citizens, and that foreigners will not integrate well or be loyal to their adopted country. Another set of migration issues that garners less political attention but is of equal importance: the human rights and welfare of unskilled foreign workers in Singapore, specifically domestic workers. Live-in domestic workers—mainly women from the Philippines, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka—currently number about 180,000, translating into about one domestic worker for every seven households. The demand in Singapore for foreign domestic workers is unlikely to abate in the near future.

Modern Slavery in Singapore—Human Rights Watch Report

In a report released by Human Rights Watch in 2007, women migrant domestic workers in Singapore suffer abuses including physical and sexual violence, food deprivation, and confinement in the workplace. At least 147 migrant domestic workers in Singapore have died from workplace accidents or suicide since 1999, most by jumping or falling from residential buildings. Some domestic workers labour without pay for months to settle debts to employment agencies work long hours seven days a week, without a day off or are confined to their workplace.

The Singaporean government has instituted some encouraging reforms in the past two years. These include creating mandatory orientation programs for employers and domestic workers, prosecuting cases of unpaid wages and physical abuse, and introducing an accreditation program for employment agencies.

But key labour conditions, such as wages, hours of work, and salary deductions are left to employers and agencies, while domestic workers have little or no bargaining power. The authorities have excluded domestic workers from the country's main labour laws.

Intense competition among the more than six hundred employment agencies has led them to shift the cost of recruitment, transportation, training, and placement from employers to domestic workers. To pay for these charges, many domestic workers labour for 6–10 months with little or no pay. Some employment agencies fail to provide assistance in cases of employer abuse, sink domestic workers deeper into debt by overcharging those who transfer employers, and confiscate religious items, mobile phones, and other personal effects.

To control illegal immigration, the Singapore government imposes a security bond on each employer, who forfeits S\$5,000 (U.S.\$2,950) if their domestic worker runs away. Immigration regulations prohibit domestic workers from becoming pregnant. A pregnant domestic worker is immediately terminated and repatriated home with a ban on future entry for employment into Singapore. As a result, some domestic workers may resort to abortion to get rid of unwanted pregnancies or abandoning new born babies in garbage bins or public toilets.

These policies also become reasons for employers to tightly restrict domestic workers' movements to prevent them from running away or having boyfriends. For example, some employers prevent domestic workers from having weekly rest days, forbid them from talking to neighbours, and sometimes lock them in the workplace. Heavy debts and confinement at home mean that some domestic workers cannot escape serious workplace abuses. And some under such circumstances may attempt suicide as an option to escape the servitude conditions. Given their isolation in private homes, it is difficult to ascertain the exact proportion of migrant domestic workers who face abuse. The Indonesian embassy estimates that it receives fifty complaints per day, mostly from domestic workers. The Philippines embassy and the Sri Lanka High Commission estimate receiving forty to eighty complaints from domestic workers per month. It is probable that many abuses are likely never reported, especially if an employer repatriates a domestic worker before she has a chance to seek help.

Singapore's laws and regulations offer stronger protection than do those of neighbouring countries such as Malaysia. Singapore is still far behind Hong Kong, which includes domestic workers in its main labour laws, protecting their rights to a weekly rest day, a minimum wage, maternity leave, public holidays, and paid annual leave.

Response of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

In a direct response to the increasing reports of human rights violation against migrant workers, the Humanitarian Organisation for Migration Economics (H.O.M.E.) was registered as a society under the Societies Act on 6 September 2004. The following year, the society was

accepted as a member of NCSS and registered as a charity under the Charities Act of Singapore. Since 2005, H.O.M.E. has been granted Institute of Public Character (IPC) status.

H.O.M.E. is committed to the principle that migration of people benefits the global society with a focus on the effects of migration within the context of Singapore. The mission objectives of H.O.M.E. are:

- To develop research and education on the socio-economics of migration on Singapore and the countries of origin;
- To provide social integration services for emigrants and immigrants; and
- To provide humanitarian assistance for the effects of 'crisis' migration.

Programs and Services

H.O.M.E. works with government agencies, civic groups, corporations and other community partners to realize its vision and mission through the following programs and services:

Advocacy

- Legal assistance to workers who have experienced abuse and injustice and highlighting these cases to the authorities (Ministry of Manpower/Police/ Immigration).
- Public education on issues affecting migrant workers.
- Dialogue sessions with policy makers, such as the Ministry of Manpower and other authorities and stakeholders.

Welfare

- Shelter and food to destitute and abused female and male migrant workers.
- Free medical and dental treatment services.
- Recreational activities / enrichment workshops that build mental, psychological and spiritual well being.

Empowerment

- Vocational skills training, such as, IT, language courses and care giver's training;
- Human rights and paralegal workshops for migrant workers.

Strategic Partners

Government Agencies

H.O.M.E. works in collaborative efforts with the Ministry of Manpower, the Singapore Police Force and the Immigration Checkpoint Authority in the protection of migrant victims of trafficking and exploitation. H.O.M.E. also works with foreign embassies in Singapore.

Non- Governmental Agencies

H.O.M.E. has worked in alliance with TWC2, UNIFEM (Singapore Chapter), NTUC and AWARE (Association of Women for Action & Research) on campaigns and research-based advocacy. H.O.M.E. is a member organisation of Migrant Forum in Asia and Caram Asia. Among the close partnership alliance in sending countries is Solidaritas Migran Scalabrini with shelters in Philippines, Manila and Indonesia, Batam serving victim migrant returnees from H.O.M.E.

Among the strategic responses is the critical work of shelters set up by H.O.M.E. for the Recovery, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of victims of exploitation and trafficking.

Shelter at Home

Since 2004, HOME has set up shelters at tremendous costs to provide displaced migrant workers and victims of human trafficking and labour exploitation a safe house for their recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration. As victims of human rights violation need a place upon an escape, shelters provided are transit centres where protection is provided for the prosecution witness.

During the time when investigations are in progress by the authorities, the clients are also provided rehabilitation and reintegration programmes and services which include: counselling; medical care; legal assistance; recreational activities; educational and vocational skills training; and assistance to find a job and small business projects.

In 2007 to 2008 a research survey was made with shelter residents by Professor Kayoko Ueno. According to the research survey, “many of the respondents resorted to coming to the shelter due to abuse from their employers or recruiting agencies (the latter was the case when the respondents were sent back by their employers or they left the employers’ household and were waiting for transfer). Abuse took form of physical, sexual, psychological, verbal abuse and neglect for the respondents. 56% alleged to have been subjected to verbal abuse in one form or another by their employers’ family members (including children). 18% experienced neglect by

employers such as not being given enough food or medicine, or any rest after a long day of work. Among 20% of the respondents who alleged to have been physically abused, there were accounts of extreme physical abuse such as having been hit with an object or spat on, forced to walk a long distance, splashed with cold water, pushed off the stairs, as well as cases of sexual abuse.

Likewise, problems arose between the respondent and the agencies. The majority of them experienced verbal abuse by the agents (23%), and there were cases of physical and sexual abuse by the agents as well. On physical abuse, one respondent was forced to stand for 80 minutes, and another was hit by her agent leaving a hand mark on her face. An overwhelming number of respondents felt that they had been abused by their agents in one way or another.

Most of the respondents, who had to work at a place other than their employers' home, were aware that it was in violation of laws of Singapore. Many continued to work at multiple places for the fear of the employers sending them home. Not insignificant number of the respondents had monetary issues with their employers concerning "late payment of salary" (26%) "no payment of salary" (20%), "withholding savings" (19%), "salary deductions as penalty" (15%), and "repatriation costs" (15%) which were supposed to be paid by their employers.

Also, they were asked questions relating to recurring problems with their employers' family members, which had previously been detected through pre-surveys. They replied to each question in a "yes/no" style. The majority had a problem with "overwork" (63%). The half of the respondents suffered from "insufficient sleep/rest" (50%) and "illegal deployment" (47%). Around one third of the respondents felt they were "not allowed to communicate with their family and friends" (39%) and "employer's threat to repatriate her" (32%). One fourth complained about "insufficient (amount of) food" (29%), and 'no attention to her health/medical problem" (26%).

About Indonesia

Indonesia with a population of approximately 237.5 million and an expanse of 17,500 islands is the world's fourth most populous nation. As a result of the lack of livelihood opportunities many of the poor villagers are compelled to leave the country to work overseas as migrant workers. Some one million women work as domestic workers mainly in the Middle East, Malaysia, Singapore, Hongkong, and Taiwan. Language, religion and cultural dissimilarities make it difficult for the young villagers to adapt to living conditions in urbanized communities. Human trafficking of women and children has also become an international concern in Indonesia.

Indonesia is primarily a source, but also a transit and destination country for human

trafficking. UNICEF estimates that 100,000 women and children are trafficked annually for commercial sexual exploitation in Indonesia and abroad, 30 percent of the female prostitutes in Indonesia are below 18, and 40,000–70,000 Indonesian children are victims of sexual exploitation. The East Java Children's Protection Agency estimates that at least 100,000 women and children are trafficked annually from, through, and to East Java.

Indonesian women and children are trafficked for sexual and labour exploitation in Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Taiwan, Japan, Hong Kong, and the Middle East. A significant number of Indonesian women voluntarily migrate to work as domestic servants but are later coerced into abusive conditions. Some Indonesian women are recruited by false promises of employment and are later coerced into prostitution or forced labour. Ethnic Chinese women and teenage girls in the West Kalimantan district are recruited as mail-order brides for men in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore.

Indonesia passed a comprehensive anti-trafficking bill in April 2007. The bill criminalizes debt bondage, labour exploitation, sexual exploitation, and transnational and internal trafficking. Penalties range from three to 15 years of imprisonment. The bill also contains provisions to prosecute corporate entities and government officials involved in trafficking. Penalties under the Child Protection Act for child trafficking are three to 15 years of imprisonment.

About Batam, Indonesia

Batam is an island and city in Riau Islands Province of Indonesia, known for its free trade zone area as part of the Sijori Growth Triangle, is located 20 km (12.5 miles) off Singapore's south coast. The 715 km² (276 miles²) island has a population of 791,605 (2008). The official language on the island is Indonesian, but due to the sizeable Chinese population, Chinese languages including Teochew, Hokkien and Mandarin are also spoken. Beginning in the 1970s, the island underwent a major transformation from a largely forested area into a major harbour and industrial zone. The population grew from a few thousand in the 1960s into hundreds of thousands. The island's economy benefits from being close to Singapore, and, with lower labour costs and special government incentives, is the site of many factories operated by Singaporean companies. Shipbuilding and electronics manufacturing are major industries on the island; there are also several resorts and tourist destinations on the island. Under a framework signed in June 2006, Batam, along with parts of neighbouring Bintan and Karimun, are a part of a Special Economic Zone with Singapore; this zone eliminates tariffs and value-added taxes for goods shipped between Batam and Singapore.

Why Are Indonesian Women Going Overseas to Work—Hopes and Dreams?

Women villagers from many areas in Indonesia have great expectations of improving their social and economic status by working as women migrant workers. They go abroad for the sake of a better life. In fact, sometimes, they can pursue jobs, commonly as domestic workers with families, make some money, and thus significantly contribute to the process of development. They reduce the number of jobless in their home countries. They pay the government fees during their dealing with migration documents. They send money to improve the social and economical status of their families. Meanwhile, they also contribute to the process of development of the receiving countries. They are responsible for many forms of domestic work, thus freeing the members of the employers' families to conduct their formal work in public spheres.

Hence the main reason for their migration is to financially sustain their families because there are limited jobs in their villages and the pay is very low. Lack of employment opportunities and conditions of poverty are the root causes of migration to other countries to seek better jobs to improve their life conditions and be better off. The continued enthusiasm of women to seek domestic-worker jobs overseas is due to the undervaluation of housework in Indonesia itself and the abuse which comes with it. There is no recognition or respect for such work in Indonesia. The women work for very low pay and are not entitled to exercise their rights.

Women migrant workers come from rural areas where people encounter much hardship in looking for a work. Village areas in Indonesia are recognized as producers of agricultural goods. These women come from poor families. The men are usually jobless or landless farmers and cannot fulfil their families' basic needs. They do not want to see their children grow up without education or skill as they did. They had the responsibility of sustaining their parents' families as well as their own families. They could not let their brothers' dropout of school from lack of financial support. They have limited education and most of them are illiterate. They only finished primary school and some even dropout of primary school because they have financial problems. Meanwhile, their parents prefer their sons to finish their higher education. This condition is one of the main push factors that lead to the 3 Ds (dirty, dangerous, and demanding) work situation and often provokes violence and discrimination against the women, especially during the preparation to fulfil emigration documents.

Bridging People—Cross Border Strategy Response

In 2006, Bridget Lew, Founder President of H.O.M.E. recognized the need to work with

cross border NGOs on the protection of migrant returnees. As there was a lack of partners across the border in Batam Island, Indonesia—the “dumping ground” for MDW returnees, the decision was made to initiate to organized victim survivors and to set up a shelter at Batam Island, Indonesia to care for the migrant returnee. Hence, the registration of an NGO in Indonesia—Solidaritas Migran Scalabrini (SMS).

Headed by a migrant returnee a survivor of labour exploitation and abuse, Rahayu Gabrelle, left her village in central Java for Batam Island to set up SMS, a grass root organization of women migrant domestic workers on 9th May 2007 with the vision “Making the World a Welcome Home for Human Mobility.” The mission objectives are as follows.

- Provide post-departure human rights based education for women migrant workers.
- Provide social and advocacy services for women and children victims of human trafficking.
- Provide reintegration programs for returnee women migrant workers with the hope to develop livelihood projects for their families.

In the same year 2007, a shelter for victims of human trafficking and labour exploitation was made operational in Batam Island, Indonesia. The shelter became a strategic transit point for migrant returnees from Singapore and Malaysia.

Beneficiaries

The beneficiaries are women migrant workers, who have been potential victims or, and victims of human trafficking. There are some 350,000 Indonesian women migrant domestic workers working in Singapore and Malaysia. Some of these women are victims of the violation of their human dignity and worker rights from the time of their departure from Indonesia. Women who are victims of sex trafficking are compelled to provide sex services to pay back debts to traffickers.

All shelter clients are being provided guidance counselling on health, human rights, educational and employment opportunities and livelihood development projects. Since the operation of the shelter on 15 February 2007, two hundred women have sought refuge at the shelter and assisted in response to their needs.

SMS at Shelter

Project SOLAAR

Besides just providing temporary housing for migrant returnees, the SMS Batam shelter has embarked on Project Solaar (Save our Little Angels at Risks). Why Project SOLAAR? Simply because babies of unwanted pregnancies especially from migrant women workers, sex workers and sexually abused women are vulnerable victims in the baby smuggling and baby trafficking trade. According to reports, the lucrative baby trade appears on the increase in several places in Indonesia especially the Riau Islands close to demand sources in Singapore and Malaysia. Of cases reported in 2005, 25% came from the Riau Islands (Source: ICMC/Solidarity Centre, 2006).

Consider the case of Rosa a young Indonesian domestic worker who became pregnant. She has chosen not to abort the baby despite the abandonment by the ‘father’ an Indian migrant worker. Socially stigmatised, legally banned from Singapore, Rosa a single mother in a conservative Muslim country would find it hard not to give up her baby for adoption, legal or illegal. Most would choose abortion and for some abandonment of their newborns. Newborn babies have been found alive in garbage bins and toilets.

In essence, Project SOLAAR is dedicated to the protection of mothers and babies from smugglers and traffickers in the baby trade. The programmes and services are as follows.

- Provide a safe haven where migrant women workers with unwanted pregnancies are allowed to have their babies delivered and the rights of the child protected from the risks of human trafficking.
- Provide an early childhood development program to meet the needs of infants and young children in their critical years of growth.
- Provide a socio-economic survivor program for the single mothers of babies at risk so that they would regain their dignity as members of their communities.
- Provide safe sex and reproductive health education for migrant women workers, who are highly vulnerable to the risks of HIV AIDS, STDs, sexual abuse, and unwanted pregnancies.

One Stop Crisis Centre

The One Stop Crisis Centre (OSCC) is another strategic response with a multidisciplinary approach to crisis calls from victims of trafficking. The partnership strategy is formed with the

Police, the Department of Social Welfare, the Women and Children's Hospital, YMKK and SMS (shelter provider). In this partnership, the parties are engaged to provide services to clients as a one stop centre, where the client could avail of counselling from YMKK, medical treatment from the Women and Children Hospital, shelter housing from SMS and governmental services from the Department of Social Welfare.

As a partner in the OSCC, SMS provides shelter support and care not only for migrant returnees from Singapore, but also from Malaysia and other internal migrants on the island. HOME in Singapore has also benefitted from the OSCC services.

Pawiyah, an Indonesian domestic worker in Singapore was suffering an unknown ailment when her belly was swelling up. Her employer and her agent decided to deport her in that uncertain condition. HOME in Singapore sheltered her and arranged for her to avail of the cross border OSCC services. SMS Batam shelter received Pawiyah and gave her access to the services of OSCC. Pawiyah availed of the medical services of the Women and Children's hospital and was successfully operated. After which, she spent her recovery period at the SMS Batam shelter and was provided a livelihood skills development programme at YMKK.

Club SMS

In 2008, the cross border strategic partnership developed a reintegration project for migrant returnees from Singapore. Victims of human trafficking and labour exploitation are vulnerable until they are empowered to have access to other livelihood opportunities. Hence Club SMS was set up to provide social enterprises for migrant returnees.

In May 2008, a cafe was opened in Batu Aji, a housing locality for factory workers. Migrant returnees from Singapore were provided the opportunity to manage and operate the cafe. The returns from the cafe were distributed to those who worked in the cafe.

Why Shelter Services in Singapore and Indonesia?

The costs of providing shelters in Singapore and Indonesia are tremendous. In Singapore, HOME has to allocate two third of its operational costs to the maintenance and upkeep of shelters. SMS in Batam Island, Indonesia incurs the same challenge. Over the last five years, HOME has sheltered close to 100 residents a month or some 6000 men and women migrant workers. SMS has to date sheltered more than 200 in the last 2 years of operation.

Shelter services are critically needed as safe houses for displaced persons who are destitute and homeless in a host country. Where a migrant is abused or exploited the need for a shelter is as

critical as the need of an injured person for a hospital. In a research study conducted by Professor Kayoko Ueno of the University of Tokushima, she summarised from her findings.

Many of the respondents resorted to coming to the shelter due to abuse from their employers or recruiting agencies (the latter was the case when the respondents were sent back by their employers or they left the employers' household and were waiting for transfer). Abuse took form of physical, sexual, psychological, verbal abuse and neglect for the respondents. 56% alleged to have been subjected to verbal abuse in one form or another by their employers' family members (including children). 18% experienced neglect by employers such as not being given enough food or medicine, or any rest after a long day of work. Among 20% of the respondents who alleged to have been physically abused, there were accounts of extreme physical abuse such as having been hit with an object or spat on, forced to walk a long distance, splashed with cold water, pushed off the stairs, as well as cases of sexual abuse.

Likewise, problems arose between the respondent and the agencies. The majority of them experienced verbal abuse by the agents (23%), and there were cases of physical and sexual abuse by the agents as well. On physical abuse, one respondent was forced to stand for 80 minutes, and another was hit by her agent leaving a hand mark on her face. An overwhelming number of respondents felt that they had been abused by their agents in one way or another.

In Batam Island, Indonesia, the 'dumping ground' for migrant returnees from Singapore and Malaysia, shelter services provide a safe house from recruitment agencies and traffickers. Some migrant returnees are 'dumped' home penniless and without the means of transportation back to their distant villages. A shelter in Batam Island therefore serves as a transit home for such migrant returnees. A cross border shelter also provides a migrant returnee an option to explore new livelihood opportunities as those provided by SMS in Batam Island, Indonesia.

Tasiyem, a 21 year old victim of labour exploitation is an orphan when her parent passed away when she was only 6 year old. Tasiyem is now sheltered in HOME Singapore till the conclusion of her case. She is presently acquiring computer and office skills with the hope that she could return to Batam Island, Indonesia and be employed instead of returning to her distant village where she has no family and no opportunity for employment.

Shelter Programs and Services

Even as NGOs are dependent mostly on public donations and financially strapped, HOME in Singapore and SMS, Batam Indonesia are dedicated to providing shelter services that address the rehabilitation, recovery and reintegration needs of victims of human trafficking and labour exploitation. Among the many programs and services offered to beneficiaries, the following are provided in partnership with government and other civic organizations and communities.

Education: HOME & SMS provide life skills, business and vocational training.

Economic Opportunities: To avoid re-trafficking, victims need the skills to earn an adequate income. HOME and SMS provide re-employment services and livelihood projects at destination.

Psycho-Social Support: Victims of trafficking commonly experience severe physical and psychological trauma as a result of the violence, rape, threats, addiction, and other means traffickers use to control their victims. Psycho-social support and counselling, therapeutic programmes and activities are provided to help victims of trafficking free themselves from the anxiety and depression, and start rebuilding their self confidence.

Reintegration: The reintegration of trafficking victims often is a difficult, complex, and long-term process. It is different for each victim, and it involves not only the victim but also the environment and culture within which the reintegration is to take place. The cross border strategy is vital to the reintegration of migrant returnees. HOME and SMS demonstrates to victims a commitment to providing support in the reintegration process.

Conclusion

Hence, shelters in both Singapore and Batam Island, Indonesia, play a strategic role in the combat against human trafficking and labour exploitation. They provide refuge for victims where they could be assisted with legal, medical and social services. They develop strong linkages with government and non-government agencies that can provide medical, psycho-social, legal, and vocational services for the recovery, rehabilitation, and reintegration of victims of abuses. The presence of shelters in Singapore and Batam also provides victims from H.O.M.E. to avail of

educational and economic opportunities and psycho-social and medical care across the border in SMS Batam, Indonesia. This ‘bridging of people’ and nations is a model strategy in the global combat against human trafficking and labour exploitation.

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