



# M—the—W Migrant Watch

quarterly newsletter of the Philippine Migrants Rights Watch

Vol.5 No.2 • June 2006

www.pmrw.org

Manila, Philippines

## ECMI Celebrates the 20<sup>th</sup> National Migrants' Sunday

**T**he Catholic Church, spearheaded by the Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People (ECMI) of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), celebrates National Migrants' Sunday (NMS) on the first Sunday of Lent, 2006 is the 20<sup>th</sup> NMS. NMS was born twenty years ago to drumbeat the awareness campaign of the Church's involvement with the issues and concerns of migrants. Back then, many were not familiar of the Church's programs and services to the migrant sector.



National Migrants' Sunday is the biggest activity that ECMI directs every year. For the first past eighteen years, the highlights of its celebration were held traditionally in Luneta Park in Manila. After many years of holding the yearly event in the Archdiocese of Manila, it was discovered that the programs and services of the Church through ECMI had not reached the consciousness of the local churches. Hence, the idea of bringing the NMS outside Manila was introduced.

Edwin Corros

*Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care  
of Migrants and Itinerant People*

In 2005, the highlight of the annual event was hosted by Lipa Archdiocese, after which a growing interest among Catholic members who have an OFW relative started supporting the many programs initiated in the parishes and schools.

This year, the Archdiocese of San Fernando in Pampanga hosted the 20<sup>th</sup> NMS through the help of the Commission on Family and Life. In the celebration held at the University of the Assumption in San Fernando, Pampanga, over 2,500 OFWs and their dependents attended the event. It began with a parade and procession from the cathedral, followed by cultural presentations participated in by students from various schools, and ended with the Eucharistic celebration. The local ordinary of Maasin, Bishop Precioso Cantillas, SDB, DD, and chairman of ECMI flew all the way from Southern Leyte to take part in this big event. He was the homilist at the mass presided by H.E. Archbishop Paciano Aniceto. There were personal testimonies provided by various sectors of the archdiocese including a message of support from the president of Philamlife Insurance Company, Mr. Jose Cuisia.

The celebration was also an occasion to gather donations for the victims of the recent landslide in Southern Leyte. Archbishop Aniceto was very happy to see a big crowd from his archdiocese.

The whole event was covered live by a Radio Maria, based in Tarlac. The broadcast could be heard not only in Tarlac and its neighboring provinces, but in some countries in Asia, including the Middle East.

Meanwhile in Batangas, the Commission for Migrants in Lipa Archdiocese celebrated NMS for two days with varied activities ranging from information dissemination on the social

**ECMI Celebrates..**

costs of migration to business opportunities for migrant returnees to medical, social, cultural and religious activities.

A modest celebration was held in other archdioceses like Manila, Cebu and Davao with a mass presided by Archbishop Rosales, Cardinal Vidal and Archbishop Capalla, respectively. The diocese of Bayombong in Nueva Vizcaya held a whole day festivity; Bishop Ramon Villena felt the support for his diocesan programs for migrants. There were other smaller celebrations held in various parishes in the country to commemorate NMS. A press conference was held last March 3 at the Media Office of the CBCP, where ECMI's Vice Chairperson, Bishop Gabby Reyes was present. He was joined by Archbishop Paciano Aniceto of San Fernando and his auxiliary bishop, Msgr. Bobbit Mallari and ECMI's executive secretary, Fr. Edwin Corros, CS.

This year's theme for NMS is **"Migration, an occasion for evangelization,"** provides OFWs and their dependents the chance to become faithful witnesses of their faith, in the country and especially over-



seas. The 20<sup>th</sup> NMS attempts to remind every Filipino Catholic of the words of the late Holy Father John Paul II on his last visit to the country, ***"In the Lord's name, I encourage you to respond to the special grace of your vocation to carry the Gospel beyond the shores of this beautiful archipelago to the other peoples of this vast continent..."***

It is undeniable that many Filipinos from overseas have beautiful and wonderful stories and experiences of

evangelization while in other countries, particularly in places where the practice of the Christian faith is strictly forbidden. Despite such restrictions, our OFWs are reported to be very creative in expressing their faith and are very committed to witness the values of the Gospel. Evangelization, after all is not limited to preaching. On the other hand, there are also sad stories about Catholic migrants who had abandoned their faith amidst materialism or many difficulties that challenge them. Celebrating NMS challenges local church leaders on how to prepare our people before leaving the

country to have a strong faith foundation and to strengthen their Christian values. Migration, as an occasion for evangelization, provides the Philippine Church another look on how the hands of the Lord work in the ordinary events in the lives of Filipinos. National Migrants' Sunday also allows Filipinos to see how the Catholic Church renews once more her care and commitment to the issues and concerns of migrants and their families.

# the Migrant Watch

PMRW Secretariat: Scalabrini Migration Center (SMC)  
4, 13th St., New Manila, Quezon City, Philippines  
63-02-7243512 • 7214296 (fax) • migrantswatch@pmrw.org

**Editor**

Maria Celeste A. Marasigan (PMRW Secretariat)

**Editorial Board**

Carmelita G. Nuqui (DAWN), Fabio Baggio, cs (SMC), Maruja M. B. Asis (SMC)

**Writers**

M. Celeste A. Marasigan (PMRW Secretariat), Edwin Corros (CBCP-ECMI),  
Lisa Garcia (DAWN), Ellene Sana (CMA), Rhodora A. Abano (CMA),  
Savino Bernardi (AOS)



## FORUM ON MEDIA AND MIGRATION

*An innovative initiative undertaken by the Philippine Migrants Rights Watch (PMRW) on June 28, 2006 at the Bayview Park Hotel Manila*

**Maria Celeste Marasigan**  
PMRW Secretariat

For more than three decades now, Filipinos have gone overseas in search of better lives and opportunities. At present, there are about eight million Filipinos scattered all over the world. This number is expected to increase as more and more Filipinos see migration as an option to improve their quality of life.

The Philippine Migrants Rights Watch (PMRW) was organized to encourage the recognition, protection and fulfillment of Filipino migrants' rights, both in the Philippines and abroad during the entire migration process. It works with various sectors, such as the media, in order to advocate the issues of migrants.

The media is a significant sector in the society. They have the capacity to make the smallest voices be heard. Through media, migration can be seen as more than just an opportunity to improve the quality of life. Media can educate the people. It can be a medium to communicate the risks and realities of migration.

However, there are instances when media's interest on the issue seem to be lacking or some migrant cases tend to be sensationalized. To clear such view and to strengthen advocacy work with media, the PMRW organized a forum on June 28, 2006 at the Bayview Park Hotel, Manila with the theme "Media and Migration."

Mr. Jeremaiah Opiniano, President of the OFW Journalism Consortium and the first presenter, gave an overview of the tri-media coverage on migration. The coverage on the migration phenomenon, according to Mr. Opiniano, has evolved so fast. Media approach and outfits responded to the increasing number of OFWs. Various media outfits now have sections and programs dedicated to the OFWs. However, migration is still not openly talked about.

Mr. Cito Beltran, one of the top names in the local media industry, said that the reason why migration has taken a back seat and why the media is detached from the issues of migration is money. According to him, media covers migration issues because "it's

sensational, it's political, it's emotional and because viewers like them and viewers will give money." It is about economics, he said. Mr. Beltran also talked about the importance of connectivity by having a more personal relationship with the migrants and being there for them. He likewise encouraged the participants to be more active and to approach the media in a creative way.

The other presenters are representatives of various media outlets. Ms. Susan Andes of *Pilipinas Online: Bantay OCW with Susan K* shared the format of her radio and television programs and how each one provides various services to migrants. Ms. Veronica Uy of INQ7 discussed her experiences with covering migration

issues. "When sensational news arises," she said, "media pays attention to it to respond to the public's natural curiosity." Like Mr. Beltran, Ms. Uy acknowledged that media is foremost a business. The last speaker, Mr. Leo Santiago of *Buhay Marino*, focused his presentation on the work they do with Buhay Marino Media, Inc. He said that their programs aid not only seafarers but land-based workers as well.

After the forum, PMRW hopes that media and all other sectors of society will realize and live up to their responsibilities — to give focus to what is truly important and see migration as more than just remittances and sensational stories.



# New Stella Maris Center in Manila: Phase 1 Completed

By: Savino Bernardi, AOS

On June 8, the Apostleship of the Sea (AOS) in Manila saw the realization of a dream, which for 6 long years went through several disappointing turns and many struggles: how to get the money for a Stella Maris Center in this city where the cost of land and building are financially prohibitive.

No stone was left unturned as the Apostleship of the Sea went searching for a suitable and appropriate piece of land or a building. Letters were sent to heads of the Maritime Industry, politicians, the Mayor of Manila, and even to the President of the Philippines. All replied and agreed that indeed, the spectacle of so many thousands of seafarers gathering daily at the Luneta Park or roaming the streets of Manila demanded a radical solution: a place that would welcome them with dignity and comfort. After all, they are called the "Heroes of our Country!" A Stella Maris Center is the answer, as the seafarers are used to find similar Centers in all major ports of the world. However, the replies to the letters we sent did not go beyond the appreciation of the project.

Fr. Savino Bernardi, CS., Director and Chaplain of the AOS in Manila since 1996, was not discouraged. He believed in the cause and he trusted that in due time the Providence of God would provide. And it did!

In June 2005, the Archdiocese of Manila, through the inspired generosity of the Fr. Sanny De Claro, Parish Priest of Nuestra Señora de Guia, Ermita, offered a very suitable and ample space in a parish building along Mabini Street, for the pastoral assistance to seafarers. Immediately, plans were drawn and the renovation began in December. Finances were raised mostly through generous foreign donors, including relatives of Fr. Savino in Italy. Sad to say, "foreigners" believe more in assisting our seafarers than the locals themselves.

The first phase of the project is now a reality with the opening of dormitory facilities for seafarers: 90 bed-spaces and two rooms for couples. In place are a DVD/Cable TV, computers with internet, games, gym facilities, and free cooked rice for their evening meal and breakfast. A completely renovated roof-deck was turned into a most relaxing "garden terrace." This first phase of the Stella Maris project will be blessed by His Eminence Gaudencio B. Cardinal Rosales on July 30.

The second phase of the project includes the opening of another floor that will house the administration offices, consultation and counseling rooms, a community hall, a chapel and a much larger recreation area. Once completed, the Stella Maris Center will also provide computer courses and internet links with

willing Manning Agencies, as well as seminars and trainings for seafarers. With this, the dream of a Stella Maris Center, complete with services for seafarers, will soon be realized!

More finances will have to be raised to complete the project. Again, Fr. Savino believes that the Providence of God will not let us down. The project is worth all the sacrifices in order to provide our seafarers something they deserve and a place that they can be proud of.

The Stella Maris Center is located at the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of the Metrobank Building, 1149 Mabini Street, Ermita, Manila. They can be contacted through telephone numbers 525-9435 and 525-9437. Bert, Richard and Des are always around to welcome seafarers at the center.



# Issues and Problems in Filipino-Australian Marriages

By Rhodora A. Abano  
Center for Migrant Advocacy

On June 14, 2006, the Center for Migrant Advocacy (CMA) and the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) held a Round Table Discussion on Filipino Women in Intercultural Relationships that focused on the case of Filipino-Australian marriages.

The resource persons were Ms. Jennifer Gonzalez, CFO Deputy Executive Director; Ms. Peta Dunn, the Principal Immigration Officer of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs of the Australian Embassy in the Philippines; Dr. Nicky Saroca, a post-doctoral fellow at the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies of the Australian National University; and, Ms. Estrella Canonisado-Masigan, whose sister died in the hands of a violent Australian serial sponsor.

From 1989-2005, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) provided counseling to 284,841 Filipino partners of foreign nationals, an average of 17,000-20,000 a year. Australian citizens account for the third largest group of Filipino partners in intercultural marriage, next to Americans and Japanese. CFO records at least 23,532 Filipino-Aussie couples. Women account for 89% of Filipinos going to Australia. According to Ms. Peta Dunn, the embassy receives some 1,500 visa applications year round, of which 400 are for fiancée visa. She said that most couples were introduced by common friends and relatives but there are also those introduced through the sex industry.

Ms. Gonzales mentioned that the most pressing concerns of the Filipina counselees as per CFO pre-counseling forms include adjustment to the environment, homesickness and marital adjustment. Prior to counseling, only 40% claimed sufficient knowledge of Australia while 45% had only limited knowledge. 15.6% admitted they had no knowledge at all.

Differing views and cultural values often lead to marital friction. While there are Filipino-Aussie children or "Filos" who are proud of their Filipino heritage and values growing up as Filos, others distance themselves from all things Filipino, especially when the Australian father denigrates their Filipino mother, her country and her culture. An aggravating factor is the negative stereotyping of Filipinas in the Australian media. The sensationalist and sexualized portrayal by the media of Filipinas as mail-order brides and prostitutes and as illegitimate wives bought by their Australian husbands created a negative perception of Filipina women.

Plans of Filipino women to work, send financial support to their family, and petition their family members, also pose a problem to the relationship.

Filipina partners plan to work in Australia, take on more than one job, to support not only the children they brought along but also those they left behind or their other family members. However, Filipinas' employment opportunities are limited by the non-recognition of their qualifications.



The Filipinas' need to support their children left behind or their families back in the Philippines exacerbates domestic violence, especially when they depend on their Australian partners for their immigrant status. This is one of the reasons why some Filipinas stay within violent relationships, in addition to their cultural values such as "hiya" or shame over being a victim, "takot" or fear of further violence. Some remain to discourage further negative stereotyping of Filipinas, but this endangers them, as well as other women and children. Ms. Masigan shared the story of her sister who was killed by her Australian husband. She laments the fact that after 15 years, justice has been denied to them.

Ms. Saroca recalled a research that found Filipinas to be almost six times more likely to be victims of homicide than Australian women, aside from aboriginal women. She noted however that domestic violence is very pervasive in Australia across ethnic groups.

In addition to these issues, there is now an emerging concern over the introduction of Filipinas to Australians through the internet.

Ms. Saroca gave several recommendations in relation to the issues and problems raised during the round-table discussion. These include the following: (1) The pre-migration orientation seminars should have Australian focus. (2) The stress on abuses should not obscure other good aspects of Australian life. (3) There may be mentoring for resettling Filipinas to effectively provide additional support and information about their rights. (4) The Australian government should fund CFO and counselors to visit Australia to gain a better understanding of what Australian life is like for Filipinas married to Australians. (5) Racism and sexism awareness training and cross-cultural communications training should be provided to all the stakeholders.

Ms. Dunn said the embassy could improve itself by addressing issues as they emerge. She added that the embassy's relationship with its clientele can be improved further, especially with regards to dealing with sensitive issues, being abreast of issues and being alert about existing and potential problems.

# From Watchlist to Tier 2 Classification

EDITORIAL

by Liza Garcia (DAWN)

On June 5, 2006, the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons of the United States Department of State released the 2006 Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP Report). After two years of being included in the watch list, the Philippines was upgraded to Tier 2 classification. Tier 2 means that the country does not fully comply with the minimum standards but is making significant efforts to bring itself into compliance. Among the reasons cited for the country's removal in the watch list are the government's initial progress in prosecuting human traffickers, and the sharp drop in the number of Japanese entertainer visas given to Philippine women in 2005 as compared to 2004.

Indeed, three years after the passage of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003 there have been progress in the fight against trafficking. In 2005, there were seven (7) convictions that were handed out for offenses in violation of Republic Act 9208. The number of anti-trafficking cases filed before Philippine courts have also increased – from 12 in 2003, to 60 in 2004, to 114 in 2005.

The number of women entertainers going to Japan, who are believed to be victims of trafficking, was drastically cut in half. From 70,000 women entertainers who went to Japan in 2004, this number was reduced to 38,700 at the end of 2005. The reduction was a result of the

new immigration policy of Japan which took effect on March 15, 2005, providing stricter requirements to entertainers who wish to work in Japan.

Other measures undertaken by government included training programs for law enforcement and immigration officials on methods for dealing with victims, as well as training for prosecutors to help them pursue cases more effectively.

We should not discount the role and contribution of non-government organizations in the fight against trafficking in persons. They have relentlessly worked hard for the passage of the bill into law and for its proper implementation. Local NGOs continue to provide support and other services such as counseling, legal and paralegal assistance, temporary shelter, and re-integration programs to victims and survivors of trafficking.

The country, however, remains a "source, transit, and destination country for men and women and children trafficked for purposes of human exploitation and forced labor." This means that there is still so much to be done in order to fight this modern-day form of slavery. While the country has been stricken off from the watch list, this should not be a cause for complacency. The Philippines is not yet off the hook. We still have a long battle ahead of us in the fight against trafficking, both

within and outside the Philippine borders. There is still a lot to be done in terms of prevention, protection and prosecution.

Filipinos are still being trafficked, both within and outside the country's borders. Trafficking within the Philippines exists mostly from rural to urban areas. Most victims are women and children. While we do not have an accurate figure as to the actual number of trafficking cases, it is said that at least 50 women and children from the provinces fall victim to human trafficking every day, lured by promises of high paying jobs in the cities and abroad.

Trafficking in human beings is not confined to the sex industry. Children are trafficked to work in sweatshops as bonded labor and men work illegally in the 3-D jobs – dirty, difficult and dangerous.

Every year, Filipinos, mostly women and children are brought abroad under false pretenses and are forced to work as prostitutes, abused laborers or servants. And lest we forget, the sale of organs, which is quite rampant in some poor areas within the country, is also a form of trafficking.

It is not enough that we are aware of trafficking. We should act on this affront to the dignity and rights of women and children.

### *What is to be done?*

There is a need for central database that will record the available data and infor-

mation. This should be shared among the different government agencies and other concerned groups. Aside from statistics and numbers, information on studies and findings of research should be shared among stakeholders. These would serve as bases for further intervention.

In the area of prosecution, the number of cases filed should not remain as numbers. Cases should be resolved.

Recovery and reintegration programs are necessary in order to prevent re-victimization. It is not easy for a victim to move on with her life, especially if he/she does not have support and assistance. If there are no programs to answer the psychological, social and financial needs of the victims, they might still be lured to work abroad and again become victims.

Cooperation and collaboration between and among the stakeholders are important. If we cannot get our acts together, how can we stop trafficking? How can we expect to fight the organized syndicates that prey on the vulnerability of our young women and children?

The Philippines has made modest gains in the fight against trafficking in persons. We have to sustain these gains and further intensify efforts and programs, if our goal is to move to Tier 1.

# CMA-FES Workshop to Mainstream Labor Migration in Local Trade Unions

by **Ellene Sana**  
*Center for Migrant Advocacy (CMA)*

On May 9, 2006, the Center for Migrant Advocacy (CMA) and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) conducted a one day workshop on migrant workers' protection and the role of trade unions. The activity drew the participation of more than forty people from the ranks of local trade unions, migrant groups and advocates. We were lucky to have been joined by Filipino trade union and migrant advocates from Hong Kong, Ireland, Norway, South Korea, Switzerland and the USA.

An International Labor Organization (ILO) specialist on workers activities also joined the activity. From government, the Department of Labor and Employment

(DOLE), the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) as well as the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and Overseas Workers Affairs also sent representatives who also shared their programs, services and activities on labor migration.

The whole day workshop formed part of CMA's local advocacy to mainstream labor migration in local trade union work. It was also a first in terms of bringing together the various stakeholders for purposes of putting the agenda of labor migration in local trade unions.

The program started with a 2005 migrant situationer presented by Irynn Abano of CMA. She cited basic facts and figures on labor migration,



*New FES resident representative Mr. Mirko Herberg welcomed the participants to the workshop.*

saying that the total number of deployed migrants almost met the government's annual deployment target of 1 million. She also reported on the benefits as well as the

social costs and other perils of labor migration. She ended with a brief presentation of some of the activities and initiatives of Filipino migrants to address their situation.

The forum then proceeded with a workshop on the current responses of participating groups on migrant issues and concerns.

For part two, the participants identified some key areas for possible joint activities between migrant NGOs and advocates and the trade unions. The workshop ended with renewed fervor to continue the dialogue among migrant NGOs, advocates, trade unions and other stakeholders.<sup>1</sup>



*Fidel Taguinod, Chairperson, League of Filipino Nurses, Irish Nurses Organization shared their activities in their organization.*

<sup>1</sup> *The proceedings of the workshop are available at [www.pinoy-abroad.net](http://www.pinoy-abroad.net)*

# The Scalabrini Migration Center (SMC)

The Scalabrini Migration Center (SMC) is part of the Federation of Centers for Migration Studies (FCMS) "G.B. Scalabrini," an organization inspired by G.B. Scalabrini's concern and vision for migration. An advocate of his time, G.B. Scalabrini drew attention to the cultural, social, and spiritual dimensions of migration and advocated for policies to promote the welfare of migrants. The vision and mission of the Centers are examined periodically to be truly relevant and responsive to present and emerging realities.

SMC was established in the Philippines in 1987 to address the challenges posed by greater and more diverse forms of mobility evident in Asia since the 1970s. In addition to unprecedented internal migration set off by development processes, permanent migration outflows developed in response to changes in the policies of countries of immigration. Labor migration programs adopted by developing countries triggered more labor outflows to meet the demand for unskilled and semi-skilled workers in construction, manufacturing and the service sectors in the more developed economies. Highly skilled professionals have also found new opportunities in Asia and beyond.

In its approach to migration, SMC is committed to the following goals:

- to encourage the interdisciplinary study of migration in Asia;
- to contribute to the development of informed policies that will ensure respect for the rights and dignity of migrants;
- to promote greater solidarity with migrants and with institutions and individuals working for migrants' welfare.

#### RESEARCH

SMC's research activities are in line with its goal to contribute to informed policy-making and advocacy.

#### DOCUMENTATION AND RESOURCE COLLECTION

The Center maintains a specialized library of books, periodicals, documents and news clippings, an important resource for research, advocacy and policymaking.

#### PUBLICATIONS

In 1992, SMC started the *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* (APMJ), the first peer reviewed journal devoted to migration issues in the Asia-Pacific. SMC also



publishes books, monographs and occasional papers on special topics in Asian migration.

#### SMC ONLINE

SMC's other information services are available online. Please visit the SMC website at [www.smc.org.ph](http://www.smc.org.ph).

#### CONFERENCES

Conferences, workshops and seminars provide opportunities to discuss migration issues, draw action plans and policies, and facilitate and strengthen networking.

#### NETWORKING

SMC has fostered cooperative links with academic institutions and NGOs locally and internationally.

## the **Migrant Watch**

PMRW Secretariat: *Scalabrini Migration Center (SMC)*

No. 4, 13th St., New Manila, Quezon City, Philippines

Tel. (63-2) 7243512 • Fax (63-2) 7214296

[www.pmrw.org](http://www.pmrw.org) • [migrantswatch@pmrw.org](mailto:migrantswatch@pmrw.org)

