

Online Public Discussion and Book Launch

Repression and Resilience: Public Health Measures During COVID-19 and Their Impacts on Migrant Workers' Rights in East and Southeast Asian Destinations

Thursday, December 17, 2020
2PM-4PM Western Indonesia Time

Will COVID-19 pandemic bring transformation towards an inclusive governance of migrant workers regardless of their status?

The pandemic has emphasised on border controls, as countries use travel bans and restrictions to protect their own population from the virus entering into their borders. It can be mandated by each country's constitution, allowing them to focus on protecting and serving their own citizens, however at a time of crisis, it may gear up the use of politics based on sectarian populism or nationalism.

Migrant workers globally have become one of the most vulnerable and disproportionately affected groups from the socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, and who are faced with the greatest risk of coronavirus infection. Temporary, low-wage and/or undocumented migrants have limited or no access to healthcare, information, daily necessities and personal protective equipment (PPE), poorer occupational safety and health, lack of physical distancing in employer-provided housing and lack of firewalls and fears of arrests and detention, therefore their rights to health is unfulfilled. This is despite the fact that migrant workers play an especially crucial role in the fight against COVID-19, such as in care and frontline settings. The discrimination that migrant workers faces has been exacerbated by the pandemic. Migrant workers are also suffering the economic ramifications due to the pandemic's effect on the global economy.

Joined by scholars and experts of civil society organisations working on the frontline to address the challenges faced by migrant workers, this study aims to 1) assess the impact of pre-existing migration policies and COVID-19 public health measures, often based on strong national interests, on migrant workers, 2) explore how vulnerabilities translate to real-life experiences of migrant workers, and 3) how state and non-state actors, including businesses and civil society, are dealing with challenges faced by migrant workers. This research is also aimed at amplifying voices of those who are affected and bringing them to the multi-stakeholders at the national and regional levels.

This research is part of an initiative of civil society actors in both East and Southeast Asia to work collaboratively to address issues faced by an increasing number of migrants moving cross-regionally.

Objective(s):

- To share findings on policies and public health measures set out by the governments of destinations in East and Southeast Asia during the COVID-19 pandemic and their impacts on migrant workers. In particular, this study looks at 7 destinations: Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand
- To discuss the current situations faced by migrant workers in their destinations during the COVID-19 pandemic

- To come up with policy recommendation in improving towards an inclusive migration governance in both regions

Program

Time	Agenda
14.00-14.25	<p>Welcoming remarks</p> <p>Daniel Awigra, Deputy Director of Human Rights Working Group</p> <p>Itsu Adachi, Executive Director of Asian Programs, the Sasakawa Peace Foundation (SPF)</p> <p>Keynote: Eni Lestari, Chairperson IMA</p> <p>MC: Ariela Naomi Ifa, Verteran National Development University of Jakarta</p>
14.25-15.10	<p>“Policies Towards Migrant Workers and Their Experiences during COVID-19 in East and Southeast Asia”</p> <p>Mariko Hayashi, Research Coordinator, Director of Southeast and East Asia Center (SEEAC)</p> <p>Lennon Ying-Dah Wong, Director, Service Center and Shelter for Migrant Workers, Serve the People Association, Taoyuan (SPA)</p> <p>Andika Wahab, National University of Malaysia</p> <p>Moderator: Adeline Tinessia, Australia National University</p>
15.10-15.50	<p>Commentaries and Open Discussion</p> <p>Umar Hadi, Indonesian Ambassador to South Korea</p> <p>Shamini Darshni Kaliemuthu, Executive Director of Forum-ASIA</p> <p>Facilitator: Rafendi Djamin, Senior Advisor, Human Rights Working Group</p>
15.50-16.00	<p>Closing</p> <p>Muhammad Hafiz, Director HRWG</p>