

# MIGRANT WORKER LIVES MATTER

A half-day symposium at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

24 May 2024 | 2:00 – 6:15pm | Room N002

Hong Kong has around 340,000 migrant domestic workers (MDWs). With their contribution to Hong Kong's GDP estimated at 3.6%, they are doing valuable work for the city. Because of the increase in the number of elderly people needing care in the coming decades, the government forecasts an increase to 600,000 MDWs in 2047 to accommodate the higher demand for care work. In light of these growing numbers, it is important to consider how we can foster positive conditions for both MDWs and their employers.



Being a domestic worker in a foreign country away from your family for years on end is difficult. And being an employer of a domestic worker, who is a permanent guest in your home, is also challenging. Patience and tolerance are required from both workers and employers.

Migrant worker laws in Hong Kong are better than in many other places but the problem is that the law is not always being enforced. Some MDWs are still being paid below the minimum wage, many remain in debt to employment agencies long after assuming their position, some do not have suitable accommodation, and some are without access to their mobile phones or identity papers.

This half-day symposium will address some of the structural issues facing MDWs in Hong Kong. Three interrelated themes will be addressed through short talks from academics, policy makers, migrant worker NGOs, domestic workers, and their employers: (1) Domestic work as a caring profession; (2) Migrant worker health issues; and (3) Migrant domestic worker employer-employee relationships.

Important questions we aim to address include: How do we make Hong Kong a more inclusive society? How can we better embrace the diversity MDWs bring to the city? How can we better prepare employers and domestic workers for the close relationship they will need to develop? How do we ensure MDWs have access to healthcare? How can we help both workers and employers know more about MDWs' rights? How can we help develop more harmonious relationships between MDWs and employers?

**WHERE?** The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Room N002  
Main Campus, Hung Hom, Kowloon

**WHEN?** Friday 24 May 2024, 2:00 – 6:15pm

**WHO?** Everybody who is interested in migrant worker issues



*The event is free of charge.*

**REGISTER NOW**

<https://polyu.hk/tPYAe>



# Programme

**2:00pm: Welcome**  
(Prof. Eric Friginal, Head, Department of English and Communication, PolyU)

**2:05 – 2:15pm: Opening**  
(Prof. Hans Ladegaard, PolyU)

**2:15 – 3:15pm: Domestic work as a caring profession (Chair: Dr Margo Turnbull)**

1) Philippine/Indonesian migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong: Looking to the future (Speakers: Mr. George Mariano A. Soriano, Vice Consul, the Philippine Consulate General, and Ms. Rikhe Purnama Sari, Consul for Labour Affairs, the Indonesian Consulate General) (2:15 – 2:35pm)

2) (Over)charging migrant domestic workers: Is it inevitable? (Speaker: Ms. Vivian Gee, Fair Employment Agency) (2:35 – 2:55pm)

3) Benefits of employing migrant domestic workers that align with Hong Kong's strategic goals (Speaker: Dr Adam Cheung, Hong Kong Baptist University) (2:55 – 3:15pm)

**3:20 – 4:20pm: Migrant Worker Health Issues (Chair: Dr Jeffry Oktavianus)**

4) Protecting the health of migrant domestic workers through work-life balance (Speaker: Dr Michael Manio, Faculty of Health, University of Hong Kong) (3:20 - 3:40pm)

5) Handling mental health issues of migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong: The role of NGOs and community life (Speaker: Dr Flora Lau, Hong Kong Shue Yan University) (3:40 - 4:00pm)

6) Migrant domestic workers and pregnancy: How can this work? (Speakers: Ms. Catherine Gurtin and Ms. Carmen Lam, Pathfinders) (4:00 - 4:20pm)

**Coffee Break (40 min) (4:20 – 5:00pm)**

**5:00 – 6:00pm: MDW employer – employee relationships (Chair: Dr Anne Schluter)**

7) Are Hong Kong people bad employers? Evidence from social and news media (Dr Janet Ho and Dr Andrew Sewell, Lingnan University) (5:00 – 5:20pm)

8) The employee's perspective on developing positive relationships with Hong Kong employers (Speakers: Ms. Cecil Morales and Ms. Yayuk, MDWs) (5:20 – 5:40pm)

9) The employer's perspective on developing positive relationships with migrant domestic workers (Speaker: Dr Margo Turnbull, PolyU who will read testimonials from some Hong Kong employers) (5:40 – 6:00pm)

**6:00 – 6:15pm: Closing: Where do we go from here?**

**Ms. Cynthia Abdon-Tellez, Mission for Migrant Workers, Ms. Catherine Gurtin, Pathfinders, and Prof. Hans Ladegaard, PolyU**

The event is organized by the Department of English and Communication at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University in collaboration with Pathfinders and Mission for Migrant Workers.

**JOIN US!**

