Migrant Women’s Human Rights in G-7 Countries

Organizing Strategies
The Family Violence Prevention Fund (FUND), founded in 1980, is a national, education, training, and policy organization dedicated to ending domestic violence. Since its inception, the FUND has been a leader in the development of innovative responses to domestic violence, developing pioneering prevention strategies and programs in the fields of public education, health care, justice, and child welfare. The FUND's mission is to create a society in which domestic violence is not accepted, tolerated or excused, by educating the public, initiating prevention strategies that emphasize community-based solutions, advocating for institutional changes to respond to domestic violence, creating public policy on domestic violence, and providing direct advocate services to victims, particularly those from marginalized groups. The FUND has established its Battered Immigrant Women's Rights Project to strengthen the legal, civil and human rights of immigrant women experiencing abuse in their homes.

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The Center for Women's Global Leadership at Douglass College seeks to develop an understanding of the ways in which gender affects the exercise of power and the conduct of public policy internationally. The Center's goals are to build international linkages among women in local leadership that enhance their effectiveness, expand their global consciousness and develop coordinated strategies for action; to promote visibility of women and feminist perspectives in public deliberation and policy-making globally; and to increase participation of women in national and international governing bodies and processes. The Center's activities are based on seeing women's leadership and transformative visions as crucial in every policy area from democratization and human rights, to global security and economic restructuring. Further, such global issues are interconnected and have both local and international dimensions. The creation of effective policy alternatives demands the full inclusion of gender perspectives and women in all decision-making processes and requires an understanding of how gender relates to race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation and culture.

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Front cover photo by Leni Marin:
A banner displayed at a Tokyo, Japan street demonstration to protest trafficking of women and bring into light the issue “comfort women” in April 1994.
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Malliha Dutt
Leni Marin
INTRODUCTION

Organizing efforts for migrant women's human rights have developed dramatically over the last decade as the number of women who migrate and get uprooted from their homes have increased significantly. Women in both the sending and receiving countries have found that only by forging links can they advance their struggle for improved living conditions; fair wages; and human rights.

This publication is another step toward increasing the understanding of the complex nature of issues affecting migrant women. It makes available the organizing strategies presented by migrant women at the NGO Forum of the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, 1995, at a panel discussion entitled “From Margin to Center: Migrant Women’s Human Rights in G-7 Countries.”

The panel discussion held in Beijing evolved out of a long-term effort to make the injustice and violation of the human rights of migrant women more visible. In the United States, the Family Violence Prevention Fund (FUND) and the Northern California Coalition for Immigrant Rights, formerly the Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights and Services (CIRRS), held a day long tribunal in San Francisco that brought together testimonies from migrant women detailing the human rights abuses they have experienced in the U.S. including violence against women at the border, sexual abuse from employers, inhuman conditions in refugee camps, domestic violence perpetrated by US-citizen spouses, and others. That tribunal was a build up towards the participation at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993.

At the Vienna Conference, the Center for Women’s Global Leadership coordinated an all day Global Tribunal on Violations of Women’s Human Rights which was followed by similar hearings and tribunals at subsequent UN world conferences. The series of tribunals and hearings highlighted the experiences of migrant and refugee women in relation to issues of violence, economic discrimination, political persecution and health. The FUND and CIRRS also presented a workshop in Vienna, entitled “Women on the Move,” which examined abuses against women during migration; gender-based persecution and political asylum and conditions for women in receiving countries. These initiatives enabled the organizers and participants to work together on common strategies and initiate networking on behalf of migrant women’s rights on an international level.

This working relationship was further developed through collaboration on a variety of workshops dealing with migrant women’s issues at the Fourth World Conference on Women in China during the NGO activities. Specifically, the FUND,
the Center for Women's Global Leadership and CIRRS jointly organized the workshop “From Margin to Center: Migrant Women's Human Rights.” The organizing experiences and strategies of the women who presented in China and those of other groups and individuals have been compiled in this book, Organizing Strategies.

Neither France nor Germany were represented at the workshop “From Margin to Center” at the Fourth World Conference on Women in China, nor does this publication contain contributions from those countries. We fully recognize that a great deal of work is being done by activists in France and Germany on behalf of migrant women. We hope that Organizing Strategies will be a step toward linking all the work within the Group of Seven countries (U.K., Canada, U.S.A., Germany, France, Italy and Japan).

Organizing Strategies is for all those engaged in social change work. The organizing efforts documented in this publication are meant to be used by migrant women to advance their own organizing, by human rights activists to incorporate a more holistic approach to their work, by women’s groups to understand the needs of migrant women, and by labor organizations to ensure that migrant women’s work is incorporated into their organizing. The international and intersectional nature of the book should build stronger and better bridges among all the constituencies who care about advancing justice at many different levels. These can include service delivery, public awareness, community-based organizing, public policy and legislative change.

At the same time that this report is published, a growing xenophobia and racism in the G-7 countries has led to a concurrent rise in immigrant bashing. Right-wing politics scapegoats migrant communities for existing economic problems and increase the vulnerability of migrant people to further exploitation and violence. Such policies are being resisted by migrant women living in the North who have begun to organize and assert their human rights.

Migrant women’s voices are being heard in a variety of forums, from agricultural areas to urban centers, from schools to government institutions. They are demanding enforcement of minimum wages and decent working conditions in agricultural work, apparel industries, domestic work and mechanized industries. They are insisting on access to education and decent schools for themselves and their children. They are calling for an end to domestic violence and gender-based oppression within their own communities. Migrant women can be found battling xenophobia and racism in all spheres of society; they are standing up to violence on the streets and to prejudice within the women’s movement.

Migrant women are also using a variety of strategies to demand their human rights.
rights. Community organizing brings together not just women but all members of a community in confronting the various forms of oppression they experience in the North. Advocacy efforts range from representing the interests of individuals in government agencies, to demanding benefits and insisting on more structural change. Public education and awareness raising are employed to teach migrants about their rights as well as to dispel the many myths that abound in their adopted societies. Public policy and legislative efforts are underway to ensure that government plans and laws are developed and implemented in a way that protect basic human rights. International mobilization and networking have been used to ensure that recent UN conferences understand that no assertion of women's rights as human rights can ignore the experiences of migrant women.

In bringing together the women who shared their experiences at the UN World Conference on Women in Beijing, the organizers of "From Margin to Center: Migrant Women's Human Rights" hoped to make more visible the pathbreaking work that is being done by migrant women around the world. These experiences are not only relevant to the lives of migrant women in the North but integral to the vision that informs the global women's movement. In confronting the growing polarization of the world into haves and have nots, in addressing the globalizing of the world economy which requires cheap exploitable female labor to survive, in stemming the tide of growing fundamentalism, migrant women have demonstrated time and again their strength, resilience and capacity for struggle.

We hope that Organizing Strategies will enable readers to understand that oppression is multi-dimensional and, therefore, struggle and resistance must be multi-dimensional as well. The experiences of the women whose voices are present in this publication should assist activists in crafting policies and programs that better reflect the needs and rights of migrant women.

The wisdom of migrant women runs through the pages of this report. It is our hope that this wisdom continues to inform the movement for social change. It is only by bringing the voices of all marginalized communities together that we can transform our world into one where the respect for human rights is the bedrock by which we live our lives.
Migrant Women play a specific, critical role in the global economy, as revealed by current economic transformations. Technological changes, the directions of capital flows and the increasing presence of transnational corporations all rely heavily on cheap female migrant labor to maintain their profit bases. For example, there has been a large shift from full-time jobs with benefits to contingent and temporary jobs. Exploitative working conditions with little or no benefits abound and migrant women provide the linchpin in the maintenance of these new structures.

Working conditions of a temporary and exploitative nature are not a new phenomenon for migrant women. What is particularly interesting to explore at this moment in history is the fact that what has been the reality for migrant women is now becoming the model of work for increasing numbers of women around the world. Governments experiencing economic restructuring, structural adjustment programs and the burdens of debt which are now affecting more and more women have always relied on migrant women to balance their payments. For example, women from the Philippines who have been working overseas as domestic workers, nurses, prostitutes and garment workers have provided a critical source of foreign exchange for their government.

The increase in the number of migrant women performing different kinds of work has been accompanied by an increase in anti-immigrant sentiment. Countries are increasing penalties for undocumented entry, tightening
borders and indulging in racist, anti-immigrant rhetoric. It is no accident that at the moment economies are becoming globalized and the free market is being celebrated as the only model of economic development, that racism and xenophobia are on the rise. The global economy demands unfettered mobility for capital flows and access to markets. However, profit maximization can only be realized if workers are not able to cross borders as easily and their condition is kept vulnerable enough to keep their wages low.

Unfortunately, for migrant women in G-7 countries, the common experience has been that the mainstream women's movement has not incorporated our issues into their agenda. While migrant women have created dynamic and important organizations to demand their human rights, their voices remain at the margins of public debate. The challenge we face is how to move the human rights of migrant women from margin to center. Many of us feel that we must not only organize separately and autonomously, but also have an impact on the mainstream, however one constructs it. Moving from margin to center is also about redefining the categories “center” and “margin.” Without such a redefinition we risk becoming a part of a social/political/economic construct that has created the human rights violations in the first place.

We can talk about margin and center at two levels. At one level, we need to explore how to make what we call the women's movement more inclusive and representative of the realities of all kinds of women. In that context, redefining the center would mean an identity of womanhood or a definition of woman that does not immediately have the connotation of referring only to a certain class or a certain race or particular category of “woman.” We could begin to use the term “woman” in a way that represents the realities of many different kinds of women so that we do not constantly have to keep qualifying the word “woman” by adding such words as “migrant” or “Asian” because we do not feel represented. No one qualifier can encompass the whole personhood of a woman because even a migrant woman can have many identities. Redefining the center in this context would bring the voices of migrant women into the definition of womanhood.
At the second level of moving from margin to center, we need to realize that our objective of changing the women's movement to address our concerns is really a step towards another goal: to change the conditions that have led to the oppression of migrant women in the first place. The redefinition of that center means taking on the question of what a national and international economy should look like. This redefinition is an enterprise that requires not just the voices of migrant women but the voices of many different communities of people. In order to make this redefinition process effective, one must begin by conceptualizing one's self as already being at the center.

This mainstreaming of migrant women's concerns can be assisted by using the human rights framework. Human rights concepts are an important tool in organizing around migrant women's rights, particularly in light of the increased use of migrant labor combined with the growing intensity of immigrant bashing, ethnocentrism and xenophobia. In mainstream society, when you voice a human rights concern, there is a resonance to what that claim means in the international arena. Human rights claims are based on the assumption that all of us—as human beings—are entitled to certain minimal standards of living that we as a society agree to abide by. By stating that the rights of migrant women are fundamental human rights in a world which subjects them to the worst jobs, the worst wages and the worst working conditions, one places migrant women into the definition of humanity.

If the lives of migrant women are viewed through this human rights framework, then the interconnectedness of different human experiences also become apparent. One can better understand the connections among women of color, women from the South, women from Eastern Europe and women from different parts of the world who move from economies that are more devastated to economies that are less devastated to do the work that others won't perform.

One must be careful in using the human rights framework, however. One cannot argue that women's rights are human rights unless all women are included in that analysis—otherwise we are simply replicating the same process that led to women being excluded from the human rights paradigm in the first place. Power differences and inequality exist among women and must be acknowledged. It is when women are viewed as a monolith that the concerns of communities like migrant women become marginalized.

The human rights movement and the migrant women's movement have not been completely separate efforts; however, they are not well integrated either. If migrant women do not speak and do not organize to advocate their rights, then they will remain marginalized or their concerns will be represented by voices that do not include them.

Migrant women in different parts of the world have come together fairly recently. For example, in the case of the US and Mexico or the Philippines and
Singapore, there are obvious geographic reasons for coming together to organize. However, this attempt to create a community of migrant women from G-7 countries is a relatively new effort. It is a historic effort because all of us who have been doing this work in our own countries have become more aware of the similarities of our experiences.

Many of us have also used the human rights framework because it provides a tool and a useful way to organize. We began this as a G-7 country effort because we saw that there is a certain relationship that exists among the receiving countries and the sending countries. The focus on G-7 countries had to do with the fact that the politics and the economies of these countries drive much of what is happening in the rest of the world. For example, the policies of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization are very much driven by the interests of G-7 countries, so that if we could take on those entities it would affect patterns in other parts of the world. However, other women have pointed out that what happens in the G-7 context can be applied to other parts of the world as well where similar socio-economic and political differences might exist. For example, movements of women do not only take place on a North-South basis but include Filipino women going to Kuwait, or Nepali women being trafficked to India. Perhaps we need to think in a more international context than simply the G-7 context. However, as an organizing strategy, the idea was to try to come together prior to the next G-7 meeting.

Our goal is to explore and share the strategies that we have individually and collectively developed and used to address our conditions, because we believe that those strategies are not just for the marginalized, for the exploited, for the vulnerable, but are in fact valuable lessons and models of organizing that women can share across the board.

As we look at our communities, which are facing increasing economic devastation and racism, as we look at the increase in the number of women who are migrants and refugees, we see that our role as women and the strategies that we are exploring are critical to move our issues beyond the margin, as examples of where we can move towards in the next millennium.
The National Action Committee for the Status of Women of Canada (NAC) celebrated its 20th anniversary three years ago. And three years ago after that celebration, the 400 groups that then made up NAC overwhelmingly elected a woman of color as its president. This was a very significant achievement, especially for me, as an immigrant in Canada and an activist who has worked with migrant domestic workers since 1979.

It took twenty years before the women of color—who had always been a small presence in the biggest women's organization in Canada—decided for the first time that our issues must be brought to the center of this organization. Therefore we had to take responsibility for leadership within the organization.

This was a very conscious move, not a spontaneous one. We decided, as a small woman of color caucus in NAC, that this was what we wanted to accomplish—to have one of us run for the leadership of this organization. It was the culmination of a lot of frustrations on the part of immigrant women, migrant women, and women of color to get the mainstream social movement, labor movement and women's movement to take up—centrally and seriously—the issues of the most marginalized women in Canada.

We learned some key lessons along the way.

First of all, in order for us to have the ability to vie for the leadership of a mainstream organization, it was essential for
The most important lesson that we are still learning is that it is not enough that women of color, immigrant, refugee women, marginalized women situate themselves in the leadership of mainstream organizations like NAC. We also need to change the organizational structures.

Moreover, we need to consciously make anti-racist organizational change. This is not very easy to do; we are going through this with much struggle and pain. Some of our experiences in the center of the mainstream women's organization have been quite surprising, sometimes shocking, and always very interesting. For example, struggling to get into the center of an organization's leadership is not enough. We need to be able to get into “the old girls' networks.” Because without our own expertise and that of women of color before us, we would still have the disadvantage of having to accept the expertise and advice of the “old girls’ network.” So we found that we needed more of us marginalized women, minority women, to go into the different areas of expertise of this organization.

We have also found that when women of color are in the leadership of such a mainstream organization as NAC, the backlash can be quick and instantaneous. One form of backlash takes place when the rest of the white women of Canada stop identifying with the issues taken up by this mainstream organization. So a slogan like “NAC does not speak for me,” which is a twist on the slogan “NAC speaks for me” has become a challenge to our current leadership.

I'm pleased to note that when we had our first woman of color president, there were only five of us out of twenty-six executives who were women of color, migrant and immigrant women. After the election last June, eleven out of 26 elected executives were women of color—an affirmation of what we have been doing within this mainstream organization. So nearly half of the leadership of this mainstream organization, NAC on the Status of Women, is comprised of women of color, immigrant women, aboriginal women and lesbians.

Canada's Anti-Immigrant Policies

The Canadian government has attempted to introduce measures hostile to immigrants, refugees and migrant workers, including a hefty “head tax” or fee imposed on those applying for permanent residency or landed immigrant status. Just recently, there were reports that the Immigration Minister would...
propose changing from citizenship by place to citizenship by blood. This would deny automatic citizenship to children born to refugees or other non-immigrant migrants to Canada.

In the 1950s, Canada gave conditional landing to domestic workers coming from the Caribbean. That is, they were allowed to immigrate on condition that they served for one year as domestic workers or nannies. This policy was changed to a temporary work permit program, one that would ensure a permanent pool of domestic workers who could stay in Canada only for a limited period.

In 1979-80, domestic workers launched a one-year campaign against the temporary work permit program. They were successful in gaining permanent residency rights but only after two years on a work permit program. When the Canadian government tried to close this program, there was loud opposition. Instead, the Live-in Caregiver Program was installed in 1992. This restricted the number of domestic workers entering Canada, from 10,000 in 1990 to the present limit of 3,000. Now there is a guest worker program that is increasing the number of migrant workers up to 150,000 in 1993. There are no services provided nor organizing being done for these temporary workers.

As a result of the work following the conference in Beijing, INTERCEDE has launched a campaign and petition drive urging Canada to sign the 1990 UN Convention for the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. This international convention obliges UN member states to recognize and protect the fundamental rights of migrant workers and their families. Among its provisions, the convention protects migrant workers from cruel and inhuman treatment, from forced labor, slavery or servitude, and from threats and physical violence.

The Convention guarantees the right of migrant workers to organize into associations or unions, to be paid wages similar to those received by citizens of their host country, or to transfer their earnings to their home states. It provides the right of migrants and their families to receive medical care, education and other social services. Furthermore, the UN agreement protects migrant workers from arbitrary detention and assures them access to
their consular authorities in case they are arrested. For this Convention to be binding, 20 governments must sign and ratify it. Egypt, Morocco and the Philippines are the only countries that have signed and ratified while three others have signed.

Activists supporting migrant women workers march in Huairou.

WHAT DID MIGRANT WOMEN GET OUT OF BEIJING

The UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China brought at least 180 governments to the end of more than a year of negotiation over a document called the Platform of Action. The document lists 12 critical areas of women's lives where actions are required to advance their status so that women around the world can achieve equality, development and peace—the three slogans of the conference.

The first draft of the Platform for Action did not have a single reference to migrant or immigrant women nor to migrant women workers. But because of the presence, lobby work and persistence of migrant women's organizations and other NGO advocates, the Beijing document not only recognizes the existence of migrant women and migrant women workers, but directly includes their concerns in at least 22 paragraphs.

Clearly, there are serious and glaring omissions in the Platform. Most important, there is no admission that the feminization of poverty, that has led to the feminization of migration, is rooted and inherent in the present global economic system. There is no recognition that the increasing poverty of women in the South stems from structural adjustment programs imposed on their deeply indebted countries by international financial institutions.

Consequently, there is no accountability from financial institutions and transnational corporations, the principal architects and beneficiaries of a world market economy that puts profits first above people, and above women in particular. Migrant women's organizations that worked as a caucus in preparatory meetings before Beijing consistently called for signing, ratification and enforcement of the 1990 UN Convention for the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

In the Platform section on poverty, governments are committed to “ensuring the full realization of the human rights of all women migrants, including
migrant workers, and their protection against violence and exploitation.” Receiving countries particularly of the European Union tried but failed to distinguish documented from undocumented migrants in this provision.

However, this distinction is made where governments are asked to “introduce measures for the empowerment of documented women migrants, including women migrant workers, and facilitate the productive employment of documented migrant women through greater recognition of their skills, foreign education and credentials, and facilitate their full integration into the labor force.”

In the sections on violence against women, it is acknowledged that women migrants and women migrant workers are “also particularly vulnerable to violence.” Appropriate measures are recommended to ensure that “refugee and displaced women, migrant women and women migrant workers are made aware of their human rights and of the recourse mechanisms available to them.

The Platform invokes “special measures” to eliminate violence against specially vulnerable women such as women migrant workers, including “enforcing any existing legislation and developing, as appropriate, new legislation for women migrant workers in both sending and receiving countries.”

Lacking is a clearly stated commitment to protect the right of migrant women, immigrants, refugees and other displaced women, documented or undocumented, to work in a safe environment - free of slavery, indentured servitude, exploitation and sexual harassment. There is no reference to the right of migrant and refugee women to be reunited with their families.

In the section on the economy, we can be happy about the inclusion of the following paragraph 156: “Women migrant workers, including domestic workers, contribute to the economy of the sending country through their remittances and also to the economy of the receiving country through their participation in the labor force,” as well as the admission that “migrant female workers remain the least protected by labor and immigration laws.”

A demand that was articulated by more than 50 groups in the preparatory meeting in Vienna is not reflected. This demand sought to eliminate discrimination against women on the basis of their status in the country, in application of protective labor laws, social programs and gender equality.

If not for the collectivity of voices that sought to include the issues of migrant women workers at every step on the road to Beijing, we would not have accomplished one thing. The Platform for Action is only the beginning. Now we have to do the rest: monitor the implementation by our governments of the commitments they made in Beijing towards the attainment of equality for the world’s women.
Migrant women first started to arrive in Italy about 25 years ago. First came the Ethiopians and Eritreans; then the Cape Verdeans and Filipinas, followed by the Somalians. In the early 1980s, there was an upswing in the Italian economy, and the majority of these women found domestic work, which was normally done by poor Italian women from the southern part of the peninsula.

Women migrant workers constitute a significant part of the Italian population. As of December 1995, official records indicate that out of 922,706 migrant workers in Italy, 42 percent were women from the Philippines, Latin America, Cape Verde, Eritrea and other African countries. The women migrant workers are the unseen prop of much of Italy’s leisure lifestyle and face the challenge of racial discrimination added to those of gender and class.

The situation of the migrant women in Italy is not different from the situation of those who have migrated to other countries presented in this book. Although women’s migration to Italy is still an ongoing issue, I would like to present some of the progressive changes in our organizing efforts in the country.

In the beginning, there were only a few migrant organizations. They were mainly mixed gender and were generally headed by men. Until very recently, the women saw themselves under patriarchal control and absolute discrimination, so they started to organize separately. About six years ago, migrant women’s organizations were born.
The first attempt to gather women from different countries of origin in Rome started in 1990 with my tiny Filipino women's group. During a regional meeting of the Women in Development Europe (WIDE) in Rome, I suggested that the European women consider involving the migrant women in their activities. I was then made responsible to organize some migrant women to participate in the different workshops on 'networking.'

Slowly we got to know each other, in time to receive a delegation of Women of Color from the Americas who came on a study tour to contact migrant women's groups in different European countries. Also during that time, some migrant women's groups were already in touch with migrant networks at the regional level, such as the African and other black women's networks in Europe. In Italy, we managed to continue working on an informal basis until the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Conference held in Cairo in 1994.

We tried to work harder in anticipation of the World Social Summit on Development in Copenhagen by coming out with a political statement and recommendations to improve the relevant paragraphs of its Platform for Action. But the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing was the turning point for the migrant women in Italy. We pulled all our strengths together and came out from the shadows. Without strong support from the Italian women's movement, the government or private institutions, the migrant women's organizations in Rome contacted other organizations all over the country. We were able to reach out to a few, but women came from different regions of the country, from the north and the south.

On July 15, 1995, we met our first challenge to organize on a national level. In Rome, just a day before the national caucus meeting of Italian women planning to go to Beijing, the newly formed Migrant Women's Network in Italy—19 women leaders from different communities—came out with a political statement. We formally presented our concerns at the Italian women's national caucus meeting. We got little moral support, but started raising our own funds to travel to Beijing. Five migrant women finally arrived in China for the conference.

Our presence at the NGO Forum and during the official conference was very Indigenous Asian women at the NGO Forum call for peace, adequate food and pay, and an end to bride burnings.
Decree 943/95 passed on November 17, 1994 included immediate expulsion without due process; non-recognition of self-employment (as in the case of vendors, including prostitutes); non-guarantee of protection to women victims of trafficking; and many other harmful provisions.

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During that period, the parliamentarians belonging to the right block were then drafting a decree on migrants: to regularize the undocumented ones, but mainly to close Italy’s doors to poor migrants. In spite of much resistance from different non-governmental, anti-racist networks, the Italian women’s movement and a number of sympathetic politicians, the decree 943/95 on migrants was passed on November 17, 1994. Its most controversial points were declared unconstitutional and a serious violation of human rights, even by many Italian magistrates. It included immediate expulsion without due process; non-recognition of self-employment (as in the case of vendors, including prostitutes); non-guarantee of protection to women victims of trafficking who wanted to get out of prostitution and find other work; six months’ advanced payment of social contribution by employers for domestic helpers and other service workers; and many other harmful provisions. In other words, the decree was a disaster, except on the issue of access to health-care services, which is for ALL!

The Migrant Women’s Network, in one of the post-Beijing conferences in Bologna in November, suggested that the most urgent task for Italian women was the situation facing migrant women. They recommended a national forum of migrant and Italian women to discuss commonalities and to seek solutions to the problems of the migrants. The proposal was overwhelmingly accepted by all the participants and the Italian women in Turin volunteered to host the activity.

Preparations were quickly made to meet deadlines in fundraising, and March 22-24, 1996, the first national forum entitled MIGRANTE E NATIVE, CITTADINE DEL MONDO: vivere, convivere, costruire was held with over 500 women participants. There were 216 migrant women representing hundreds of migrant women’s organizations from 55 countries of origin.

We have also invited other migrant women and personalities from other European countries, including Belgium, the Netherlands, and the UK, to share with us their experiences, organizing and strategies. Women politicians from different cities and provinces in Italy participated, as well as a woman parliamentarian from the EC., and the President of the Italian Commission on Equality and Equal Opportunity Between Women and Men.

Six different working groups focused on issues of citizenship and social relations, health, maternity and sexuality; family, practical and institutional policies, work, economic independence and social roles, including trafficking and prostitution. Proposals on different issues were presented during the plenary session.

The strengthening of the Migrant...
Women's Network was most important for all the migrant women who attended. In a caucus meeting of the migrant women, participants were challenged by the founding members of the network to join and work together. To date, we have received more than 176 requests for membership by other migrant women's organizations and individuals. Governmental institutions also recognized the need to organize and work together, and publicly declared support. The Decree 943/95 lapsed, but there are institutions which are working to correct the scandalous parts, with the involvement of the Migrant Women's Network.

The challenge was partially won. What remains now is how we will organize further to ensure that migrant women's demands for equality and justice will be attained. With the last national elections giving the progressive block the right to govern the country for the first time in 50 years, the migrant and native women will hopefully have a good chance to work together.

ITALY'S NATIONAL DOMESTIC WORK CONTRACT

TRASLATED FROM SPANISH

BY PILAR SARAVIA
MIGRANT WOMEN’S NETWORK

In spite of the anti-migrant backlash in Italy, activists have successfully enacted the National Domestic Work Contract, which is currently in effect and has been instrumental in allowing 80 percent of migrant women to obtain their stay permits and naturalization rights. The Domestic Labor Law protects women with very advanced women protection laws.

The law defines the terms under which a worker is to be hired: the employer has to give the employee a letter or document which should stipulate the starting date of employment, duration of probation period, work hours, a day-and-a-half off every week (including Sunday), the initial wages agreed upon between the parties, and the arrangements made so the worker can store and use his/her possessions.

Students 16-19 years old can be employed on a “live-in” basis, for a maximum of 24 hours a week at minimum wage.

Domestic employees hired to assist elderly people, children and sick or disabled people during the night may only work between 9 p.m. to 8 a.m. These workers receive specific remuneration.

Working hours for live-in domestic workers shall be agreed upon by the employer and the employee; they may not exceed 10 non-consecutive hours.
per day. In addition, the worker enjoys 2 hours of daytime rest.

Maximum amount of working time per week is 55 hours for live-in workers; 48 hours for outside workers, divided in segments of 8 hours per day.

Overtime hours are agreed upon by both parties. Compensation for extra hours should be at least the regular salary per hour plus an additional 25 percent of the hourly rate; or 50 percent extra if the employee works between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.

Workers who do not live in the employer’s house may hold several jobs as long as they do not add up to more than 55 or less than 24 hours per week.

Compensation: Wages can be paid by the hour or on a monthly basis. Minimum wage per hour is 5,650 lire, monthly minimum wage is 670,000 lire plus food and lodging. These figures are updated every six months and increased by 4 percent every two years.

Holidays: 11 holidays a year.

Vacations: 25 work days off for each year employed.

Christmas bonus: Each year.

Illness and Work accidents: Workers have a right to take a few days off with full pay.

Maternity leave and family days: Protected through paid days off; maternity leave starts two months before and ends two months after delivery and the worker cannot be dismissed.

Unemployment: Worker gets compensation in case of lay-off.

**Strategies**

These strategies, proposed by most of the women’s associations, yield good results because they come from collective reflection and experience. Among the major problems confronted by the women’s strategies are the distrust of governments which prefer to support their NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) or those supported by the churches, political parties or syndicates. The women’s associations also encounter difficulties trying to reach a high population of women who live in isolation and have little contact with women’s organizations.

1. **INFORMATION** campaigns regarding the rights of domestic workers, laws that protect immigrants, and available social services.

2. **POLITICAL PRESSURE** to establish relationships with both national and regional governments in order to create housing centers; to exercise political pressure so migrant women can obtain public housing; and to create immigration policies that protect women.

3. **SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES**, including services for migrant workers’ school age children by creating daytime child care centers during summer vacations, organizing summer vacations for them using Government funding, establishing activities that help children value their cultural identities.

4. **INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS** about the civil rights of immigrants to health and participation in social issues.

5. **CONFERENCES** to exchange ideas about women’s daily lives from the point of view of both individuals and groups.

6. **NETWORKS** that nurture the creation of women’s networks based on their different interests.

7. **SERVICES** to provide support to women victims of violence, legal assistance around issues of worker’s rights and access to health services.
The trafficking of women to Japan is part of the global phenomenon that is dramatically increasing. It is highly organized. More than 100,000 Asian women are sent to Japan each year to work in the sex industry. Most trafficked women are from Thailand and the Philippines. When it is said that women are trafficked, it means not only for prostitution. The essence of trafficking is coerced labor, which spans several other forms besides prostitution, including "mail-order brides," domestic workers, sweat shop labor, hostesses, and night club entertainers.

In Japan, we speak of "trafficked women" rather than "migrant women" since immigration—that is, permanent settlement—has not been allowed in a significant way in Japanese history. As a result, "immigration" in Japan is very different from the US and Europe, and the number of migrant women are relatively few. However, many women are brought to Japan as "entertainers," trafficked women for prostitution, and more recently as foreign "wives."

Most of the opportunities available in Japan for women migrant workers from Asia center around exploiting women's sexuality. Women occupy the lowest rung of an enormous, lucrative industry that brings in trillions of yen a year. The women are often brought to Japan by trafficking gangs—crime syndicates—on false promises of well-paying jobs as kitchen workers or bar hostesses but are eventually forced to work as prostitutes or sex slaves.

Japanese women's initiatives against trafficking in women began in the 1970s.
During that period, Japan's economy grew, leading to a higher household income for many, and "sex tours" to Asian countries such as to Korea became popular with Japanese men. The Japanese women's movement in the 1970s protested against the sex tourism phenomenon.

Murata Noriko, in "The Trafficking of Women," says that Japanese men first went on sex tours to Taiwan, where, after fifty years of colonial rule, people still understood the Japanese language. In 1972, when flights between Taiwan and Japan were temporarily shut down as the result of normalization of Japan-China relations, South Korea became the new target. Kieseng (Korean girl) tours quickly became the rage among sex tours. Following the lead of Korean women who protested the use of economic power (yen) by Japanese men to dehumanize their sisters, Japanese women took action against the Kieseng tours. Despite these protest movements, sex tours by Japanese males expanded to the southeastern part of Asia, particularly the Philippines and Thailand. The anti-sex tourism movement also spread throughout Asia. Japanese politicians were confronted by protest actions when they visited affected countries, making Japanese men's "prostitute-buying tours" to East and Southeast Asia a subject of national and international scorn. (Murata Noriko, "The Trafficking of Women," The Women's Movement at a Crossroads, AMPO Japan-Asia Quarterly Review, Vol. 25, No. 4 and Vol. 26, No. 1, 1995)

While international criticism grew against Japanese men's sex tours, in the 1980s, the sex industry in Japan began to grow along with Japan's economic boom, which was contributed to greatly by the valuation of the yen. At that time, Japan saw a sudden influx of male and female migrant workers from such neighboring countries as the Philippines, South Korea, Thailand, Taiwan. Many women were recruited as "entertainers," sent by human trafficking gangs with connections to Japanese yakuza or organized crime syndicates. Human rights violations committed against these women, such as confinement, violence and forced prostitution, increased.

During the early 1980s sex tourism declined a bit, but still continues, especially to Southeast Asia. In 1994 four Japanese men published a controversial
book entitled “Tai Baishun Tokuhon”—literally Thailand Prostitution Handbook—describing in detail the places and prices at which they bought sex, the types of women they found, the conversations they had, the sex acts they performed, along with a map showing practically every place where sex can be bought. This spurred reaction against it by women’s groups working on sexual violence; they have been actively organizing against this book.

**Blatant Sex Trafficking**

Typically, women are recruited by brokers (usually through friends or co-workers associated with brokers). Foreign brokers, often Thai, Malaysian, Singapore, Chinese or Japanese, make travel arrangements including false passports usually for 3 to 5 women at a time. In such transactions, 3 million yen (approximately US $30,000) changes hands to traffic one woman. This money is not a loss for the buyer because his gang will force the women herself to repay it. So, when she arrives, she is already deeply in debt and usually kept under surveillance to prevent escape. Those who do try to resist or escape are often beaten.

**“Entertainers”**

Women who enter Japan with “entertainer” visas become part of another form of trafficking. The “entertainer” is frequently a guise for prostitution, and always a euphemism for treating women as sex objects even if they are not prostitutes. This includes working as bar hostesses to wait on groping drunk men, and performing risqué dance shows. Violence at work is not uncommon.

There are more than 70,000 authorized “entertainers” in Japan. They are under the tight control of promotion agencies, and it is rare for them to have contact with NGO support groups. Entertainer visas are issued for a six month period, and employers regularly withheld wages for this six month period, only paying the women when they are at Narita Airport, ready to leave Japan. This prevents entertainers from running away from their employers when they discover how miserable the conditions are. But in many cases they are deceived and not paid their wages.

The first sign of deception is when they must sign two different contracts. One is the official contract submitted to Philippine Overseas Employment Administration and the Japanese Embassy in the Philippines. It states that they must be paid a minimum of US $1500 per month. But entertainers are coerced to sign another unofficial contract in which salaries are as low as US $300-750, just enough to get by in costly Tokyo. These salaries are extremely low compared to those of Japanese hostesses.

In many cases entertainers are coerced into performing topless dances, and their long working hours include cleaning the pubs and other violations of Japan’s Labor Standards Law. However, since they have an “entertainer” visa, they are not legally classified as...
“workers” by the Labor Ministry. Hence they are excluded from existing worker benefits and protections. But, as noted, the organized crime gangs involved in this business violate the most basic laws by withholding wages, confiscating the women’s passports, assessing penalties, and forcing women into prostitution.

In addition to the abuse women suffer at the hands of their so-called employers, women must face the abuse of police in detention centers. The police criminalize the women workers who have overstayed their visas rather than focusing their efforts on the criminals, the brokers and agents. Immigration officials raid bars and make mass arrests. Women who are undocumented, that is, who overstay their visas, are held in detention centers.

In the past few years it has been revealed that immigration officials regularly use violence against detainees. Between 1993 and 1994, Japanese newspapers reported on 11 cases of violence against detained women workers. Women are often fondled and sometimes raped by officials. For example, on 1 November 1994 at the Tokyo Regional Immigration Control Bureau Detention Center, a Chinese woman, Tao Ya Pin was physically assaulted and wounded while undergoing criminal interrogation. This case made national headlines because she was photographed with a huge swollen bruise on her face where she had been hit. Not long after that, one young officer quit the agency and held a press conference in which he described the regular use of violence in the agency.

The judicial system also victimizes the victims. Among the most outstanding cases is that of three Thai women who were forced into prostitution. They came to hate their boss and decided the only way to escape was to kill her. The court essentially ignored their circumstances of confinement and forced prostitution and sentenced them to ten years in prison in a trial that took two and a half years to conclude. In the fourth public hearing, the judge had the audacity to ask the defendant, “Wasn’t it improper for you to murder someone, even though you were forced into prostitution? After all you were living rather in serene circumstances.”

Other similar murder cases have occurred with the same outcome. In
court, the ordeal of trafficking, confinement, violence, sexual abuse, and forced prostitution that brought the women to the point of committing murder were issues not addressed. The trials only dealt with facts pertinent to the incidents and thus the true criminals were not on trial, only the victims. These cases clearly indicated to Japanese women activists the limits and standards of criminal trials in Japan.

**Actions and Strategies**

Even though the problems faced by trafficked women have garnered public attention in the last decade, the dominant Japanese women's movement has not incorporated trafficked women's agenda into theirs, since it is still at a relatively early stage of development compared to the US and Europe. Women in Japan are struggling against existing male dominated culture in every level of society. However, there have been a few remarkable initiatives by Japanese women's groups that may set a precedent for other women's groups in the future. Following the example of strong women's movements against the sex tourism, there are more recent efforts relating “prostitution” and “mail order brides.”

**The Shelter Movement**

Several shelters in Tokyo and surrounding areas are active in helping migrant women seek refuge from their employers. These shelters also assist foreign wives seeking refuge from their Japanese husbands. Presently NGOs assist women by helping them escape from the pubs and syndicates. The NGOs help the trafficked women obtain the necessary documentation to return to their countries. Frequently it is necessary to also arrange for psychiatric rehabilitation.

With regard to entertainers, many NGOs play an important role in such services as providing shelter and retrieving wages. But preventative actions need to be taken, including the very difficult job of trying to organize workers associations. To do this, we must make the Ministry of Labor recognize entertainers as workers, not so-called “artists.” In short, the campaign to protect their labor rights needs to be strengthened.

To address violence against migrant workers in detention centers, the “Immigration Review Task Force” has been created and is composed of NGOs, journalists, and lawyers. A suit against the state is filed in each case. Because many vic-

Nigerian Joke Debo Akande at youth movement demonstration
To counter the importation of brides, women's human rights groups have formed to protest against the government-promoted marriages. But the current trend is that, where government intervention is withering away, private agencies are stepping in to replace them.

The phenomenon of the "mail-order-bride" also involves many problems. "Mail order brides" placed in rural areas may find themselves in slavery-like conditions, working like domestic servants and isolated from the outside world. Some are deceived into becoming brides, only to work as hostesses in night clubs. Gangsters or sex industry brokers have little difficulty because there are no legal checks on the marriage mediation businesses in Japan. In fact, local governments actively support international marriages. It is widely known that men in rural areas have a hard time finding wives because women have left for urban areas. Local governments see international marriages as the best way to solve this problem.

Numerous mediating agencies are headed by town mayors and these lay down qualifications for the type of women they are looking for. The vice-governor of Akita prefecture said he thought that importing Filipinas was good and stated that he "went to the Philippines last year and saw people living in poverty. If they can survive that, they can survive rural life in Japan. It would bring about an improvement of agrarian Japan where there has been much concern over "lack of brides." In fact, inter-cultural marriage with Japanese men has been actively promoted by the local governments, which are involved in arranging the "Omiai" (match making dates) in the Philippines for the men. When Japanese women began protesting against government's involvement, they withdrew from recruiting.

One of the shelters is Mizura, located in Yokohama, which started as women's alternative movement after Japan's "Women's Liberation Movement" in the late 1960s and the struggle in the 1980s for equal rights surrounding the Labor Standards Law and the protection of the rights of working women. The office serves women regardless of their nationality, and it is also registered as women's labor union. Currently, the NGO is taking on cases of human trafficking and forced prostitution of Thai women. Another shelter was opened up by women who are concerned about the trafficking of women from Asian countries. The shelter was established in the early 1990s when the trafficking of Thai women peaked. During the period of 32 months since it opened, more than 200 women from 7 countries stayed at the shelter, of whom 170 were Thai. The shelters respond to cases of trafficked women by coordinating with embassies, connecting with NGOs in the sending countries, and preparing for the clients' safe returns. There are several other shelters, but most are located around Tokyo-Yokohama, which is the metropolitan area of Japan.

"Mail-order brides"
Beginning in the 1990s, many women entered into Japan as "wives" headed to agrarian Japan where there has been much concern over "lack of brides." In fact, inter-cultural marriage with Japanese men has been actively promoted by the local governments, which are involved in arranging the "Omiai" (match making dates) in the Philippines for the men. When Japanese women began protesting against government's involvement, they withdrew from recruiting.

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breed." To counter the importation of brides, women’s human rights groups have formed to protest against the government-promoted marriages. But the current trend is that, where government intervention is withering away, private agencies are stepping in to replace them.

More recently, as international marriages have increased, the shelters have been encountering more domestic violence cases involving divorce, various issues arising around matters of residence, such as obtaining visas, establishing the nationality of children. Many clients seeking refuge in the women’s shelters are battered wives of Japanese men. The women may be Filipino, Colombian, Peruvian, Korean, or other nationalities, and they usually come to the shelters with children.

Meanwhile, Filipinas who return to the Philippines have encountered problems getting support or even recognition from the Japanese father for their "Japino" children. There are thousands of such children whose mothers are seeking recognition from the Japanese "parent," as well as financial recourse. In response to this problem, several women’s groups, in collaboration with lawyers groups, set up a special task force, which is currently working with Philippine NGOs.

Accordingly, many of the women’s shelters’ activities have changed in response to the needs of battered women—involving migrant women who are settling permanently in Japanese communities. This requires different sets of coordination and intervention, such as personal counseling (for children’s schooling, marriage problems, etc.), divorce procedures (legal assistance to obtain custody of children or father’s recognition of the child), job counseling (for single mothers).
LEGAL AND LEGISLATIVE WORK

Regarding brokers and agencies, several NGOs work closely with lawyers to prosecute pub owners and traffickers. NGOs and lawyers associations are actively seeking the revision of existing laws. With regard to international marriages, NGOs also need to push the Japanese government to set up a system of strict licensing and monitoring of marriage agencies to fully disclose the conditions and agreements, and establish agencies for women to contact when problems arise. Laws and policies should protect women against abusive relationships and rape in marriage should be included as a crime.

This report has focused on issues and strategies at the local level in Japan. But there remains much to be done at the global level that utilize various international legal human rights instruments (the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Convenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, among others.)
Southall Black Sisters is a migrant women’s organization. We created an autonomous migrant women’s organization because we felt that the other social movements organizations in Britain didn’t address the issues of migrant women. We found that the wider women’s movement and feminist movement was dominated by women from the majority community and they failed to take on issues of race. As black women and migrant women in Britain, we believe that racism is a major issue that needs to be addressed and we found that the feminist or women’s movement was failing to do that.

At the same time we found that the wider labor movement, the left, and the anti-racist movement in Britain were ignoring issues around gender which we found equally important to migrant women. So we felt that migrant women had a double disadvantage which was not being addressed by the wider social movements. As a result, migrant women were invisible within the social agendas of these organizations.

The idea was to set up our own autonomous organization to create a space for women to organize and think through their ideas, to lobby and to make those wider movements more accountable. The idea was to place migrant women’s issues onto the agenda, and to make sure that we were the leaders in establishing what those issues were. This was to ensure that our issues would be reflected within their agendas the way that...
Women of color are told to respect their culture, and to resolve problems such as abuse against women internally within the community. As a result, we find that the needs of women are not being addressed by the wider society.

We wanted them to be addressed instead of how these other movements thought that we wanted them to be addressed. We've had problems in trying to make other movements accountable and in trying to set an agenda within those different centers to move forward the needs of migrant women.

An important center for us to move or influence has been the migrant women's community itself. We established ourselves as a feminist organization within immigrant communities because we felt the immigrant organizations and the women's organizations tended to be very conservative and didn't address the issues; we also felt that they didn't have a very radical agenda or a feminist agenda on women. At the same time we found that many of the organizations that managed to get funding became depoliticized, providing services and ignoring the needs of women in terms of campaigning and publicly raising those issues.

For black women or migrant women's organizing, there is the whole question of racism. We often find that women themselves tend to prioritize issues of race over gender and create a hierarchy of oppression. A major argument in Britain, which is put forward by the Left, by the labor and anti-racist movements, says that we must centralized, that our central struggle is the anti-racist struggle and all other struggles of the minority communities are subsumed in that.

Therefore, women's struggles for liberation within those communities are not as important simply because minority communities are subject to racism, which, they contend, is the central struggle. They've argued that we as an organization must be silent on the violence against women within our own communities because they feel if we raise negative aspects about our own community, that will create a racist backlash. We've had to deal with their argument that we're undermining the anti-racist movement when we try to push forward the needs of migrant women.

This attack has come not just from the minority women's movement, but also from the general Left, from the anti-racists. Our response is that it is possible to actually wage many struggles at the same time. It is possible to take on the anti-racist struggle the same time as the struggle for women's liberation, or around class and sexuality and so forth. We cannot afford to give up and refuse to help other oppressed groups in our society. Women are not the only oppressed group, minorities are not the only oppressed groups. If we are fighting for human rights, it is important that we are not advocating human rights for just a few of us, but for all of us.

Similarly, another problem we've had to face as migrant women is a very liberal concept of multi-culturalism. This concept assumes that minority communities are homogenous, that they don't require outside interventions from other cultures, even the dominant cultures, to assist women or the vulnerable groups in those communities. Women of color are told to respect their culture, and to resolve problems such as abuse against women internally with-
in the community. Under this liberal view of multiculturalism, such practices as arranged marriages, which are not a part of the dominant culture or religious heritage, cannot be criticized by the dominant community. As a result, we find that the needs of women are not being addressed by the wider society—not by the Left, nor by the conservatives. Even those who want to help women may believe that they cannot intervene in minority communities because the community leaders do not want that intervention.

What they forget is that minority communities are not homogeneous. There are power divisions within, and there are those—such as women—in minority communities who have no power, and therefore their voices are not heard. The community leaders tend to be the most conservative, the most patriarchal, and their interest is not the interest of women. They do not want outside intervention to help women.

Then there is the wider women's movement and the feminist movement. We've had considerable support from that movement when we've taken up issues around gender, around violence against women. To give you an example, there are the cases of battered women who have been driven to kill their violent partners. We have very effectively created alliances with women from the majority communities in taking up these issues. We took up a case of an Asian woman who was in prison for life for killing her husband; there are a number of women from other communities who are also in prison. Through our alliance with them, we waged a very successful campaign to address the needs of these women, and to address the whole issue of domestic violence.

But while we have been able to make some effective alliances around violence against women, around gender issues, around questions of race, we still have problems with the feminist movement and the women's movement.

Unfortunately we have various immigration rules in our country which entrap women in violent marriages. So far the wider women's movement has not shown much sisterhood when it comes to taking up issues around immigration, for example, how women are trapped in violent relationships through immigration rules, and it's something that we're trying to build up. We're now building a
coalition – an all black women’s organization. White women are are welcome to join, but so far none has.

Although we’re at the early stages, we’re hoping to win support from the wider women’s movement. It is an interesting campaign because it forces both the anti-racist movement and the Left and the women’s movement to address issues of migrant women. It actually puts the issues of migrant women in center stage because it brings together the questions of race and gender. It will be interesting to see whether or not those movements actually meet that challenge.

At the same time that we are trying to put migrant women’s issues at center stage, there are many developments taking place which are setting back the gains that we have made as migrant women. The growth of religious fundamentalism, of conservatism and patriarchal forces both within and outside of our communities have had an impact on women. Women are under increasing pressure to return to more traditional roles and therefore we find that we’re forced into a position of having to defend the very gains that we have made. Now it’s important for us to win support from the wider labor movement in order to tackle these issues; unfortunately they are repeating the same arguments that they made around domestic violence—that we’re inviting a racist backlash by questioning fundamentalist religious oppression of women within minority communities.

The other worrying trend is that while the women’s movement is beginning to recognize the problems around religion in the majority community, it has failed to do so in the minority community. Often they argue that when migrant women speak for themselves, it is self-determination. For example, if there’s a conservative migrant woman who is making demands around setting up religious shelters, majority women end up believing that all migrant women want to go back into a traditional role—and that is acceptable to the feminist movement. They fail to support the feminists within those minority communities, and as a result, ignore their rights.

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**About Southall Black Sisters (SBS)**

SBS performs frontline services—mainly emergency and crisis intervention work related to domestic violence and relationship breakdown and the resulting problems of homelessness, immigration and welfare benefits. Our overstretched services are constantly at a breaking point because of the amount of cases we are called upon to do. This year we had 279 emergencies, constituting 75 per cent of our total work. It is difficult to find a balance between crisis intervention and ongoing support.
Our criminal law work has grown. We successfully helped a woman who was serving a life sentence for the murder of her child to appeal against her conviction. It was reduced to manslaughter on the grounds of diminished responsibility and she will now receive medical treatment.

We get a number of requests from solicitors to provide specialist reports on the circumstances of Asian women to enable courts to make informed judgments—for example, to help a woman obtain a residence order for her daughter.

SBS runs support groups to help young women develop a positive self-identity and overcome trauma and abuse through the sharing of experiences; its domestic violence support group remains very popular, as are "do-it-yourself" workshops on household maintenance. SBS conducted other workshops: in local schools on gender roles and Religion, Women and Society; on massage and aromatherapy and English language. We ran a summer project for children and held socials and outings for women to counter their isolation and depression, including a day trip to Littlehampton for 100 women.

**The Campaign to Abolish the Restrictive “One Year Immigration Rule”**

A major area of concern that has arisen as a result of our casework is the number of women who are trapped in violent marriages because of the immigration rules. SBS joined forces with Rights of Women and the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants to organise a conference on Women, Immigration and Family Law, which was attended by over 100 women. It became obvious that this issue needed urgent attention and research into the scale of the problem was initiated.

SBS has forged new alliances with a wide range of mainly black women's groups to abolish the restrictive "one year immigration rule," which is used mainly against women.

Every year, hundreds of black and migrant women in the UK face persecution by their families and by the state. They face violence, torture, rape and death threats from their husbands and families. The one year rule British immigration law means that people who...
The wider women's movement has not shown much sisterhood when it comes to taking up issues around immigration, for example, how women are trapped in violent relationships through immigration rules.

Women have come to the UK to join their spouse must remain within the marriage for at least one year before they can apply to stay permanently.

Women are therefore unable to leave a violent marriage within this period. They are also not entitled to receive basic welfare benefits, so even if they do leave a violent situation they may have no means of support. The state forces women in this situation to make a stark choice: domestic violence or deportation. Immigration laws effectively violate their right to live in security and free from violence or the threat of violence.

The Home Office keeps no statistics on how many women who have experienced violence are affected by the one year rule. Our independent research, based on information from law centres, women's organizations, shelters, solicitors and advice agencies shows that, in the period January 1994 to July 1995, 755 black and migrant women were threatened with deportation because of marriage breakdown. Five hundred-and-twelve of these women were fleeing domestic violence. Of this number, 68.4% are Asian, 13.3% are African, 7.1% are Caribbean, 7.3% are Latin American and 3.2% are white. Home Office statistics in 1994 only show that 14,920 women were granted settlement after marriage and 370 were refused under the one year rule (of these, 10 were refused on public funds grounds, 360 because of marriage breakdown).

Such immigration rules are used to keep out black people. Black women, especially those from new Commonwealth countries, are harshly affected by the one year rule. Many people coming to the UK for marriage come from countries of the Asian subcontinent. This is because of the legacy of colonialism and the past need for labour in the UK, and the continuing close contact between Asian communities with their countries of origin in choosing marriage partners.

Under the one year rule, an application to remain in the UK permanently depends on the support of the settled spouse. This places extra burdens on marriages as it gives more power to the settled spouse and so becomes a weapon of control. Women suffer most as they are less likely to have power and more likely to experience violence and other forms of abuse.

The government has recognized that domestic violence is a widespread problem. However, the scant resources and remedies available to abused women in our society are effectively denied to women with immigration problems. Many of these women cannot turn to any state agencies for support for fear that these agencies will inform the Home Office. This fear will intensify as the government forces more agencies and authorities to make immigration inquiries and take on the task of policing so-called 'illegal immigrants.'

Some immigrant women do leave their violent marriages. They are then forced to depend on charity or become vulnerable to economic and sexual exploitation. They often cannot even turn to women's refuges for shelter because refuges rely on housing benefit
and income support. These women are not entitled to receive either.

Many women and their children are terrified of returning to their countries of origin, where they may face discrimination and even persecution from their families, communities, and often the state, the police and the law. Poverty within their families, or traditional values and beliefs about marriage and divorce means that most women have nowhere to go. Some women faced with deportation consider or attempt suicide and other desperate measures.

Despite this situation, the Home Office usually refuses further permission to stay when a marriage breaks down. It ignores the reasons for the breakdown. If the Home Office later makes a decision to deport her, there is no meaningful right of appeal unless she has been here for more than seven years at the time of the deportation decision. Even at this final stage, only arguments on technical grounds can be made.

SBS believes that there are fundamental democratic principles and human rights issues at stake in the way in which the one year rule operates. Immigration law attacks the right of all people to have secure family life and to determine the kind of lifestyle they want to lead. This government has pledged its support to the 1993 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. Yet it continues to violate the human rights of black women in this country through the one year rule.

In addition to seeking the abolition of the one year rule, the campaign is also demanding that government recognize domestic violence in immigration law so that women will not be forced to remain in violent situations in order to stay in the UK; to abolish the “no recourse to public funds” rule to give women the right to claim state support when necessary; to recognize gender discrimination, such as experienced by divorced or separated women, as grounds for asylum; and to restore full rights of appeal at all stages in immigration and asylum cases, including the right to present domestic violence as a factor against deportation.
Each year, thousands of overseas migrant domestic workers, reflecting 21 different nationalities, come to work in the UK. To gain a visa, they must work for a specific, named employer; immigration rules strictly prohibit any employment—paid or unpaid—other than with the named employer. These employers are also from many different nationalities, 37 in all.

This is a system of “tied labor.” It can, and often does, lead to living and working in slave-like conditions. Employers often withhold passports, withhold wages, and disregard workers as human beings. It is common to hear such statements as “Even the dogs were treated better than me,” “They think because I’m poor they can treat me as they like,” “I’m just a slave to them” at the Kalayaan/Commission for Filipino Migrant Worker’s Centre, where many of the women come when they first escape from the household.

In 1979, Britain stopped granting work permits directly to persons entering the UK as domestic workers. However, in 1980 a Concession to the Immigration Rules allowed employers to bring their domestic workers into the country as “persons accompanying a named employer.” This means that they must work only for that specific employer, and under no circumstances can they
apply to work for someone else.

As a result of this point of entry system, domestic workers are not given an independent immigration status as workers, even though they are admitted into this country to work. It may be more correct to say they are simply part of the baggage of the employer. For instance, the employer very often holds their passport and, while under normal circumstances, it is a criminal offense to withhold someone's passport, in the UK it is allowed in the case of domestic workers. When questioned in the House of Commons, a government minister said, "It is possible the employer is keeping the passport for safe keeping." In one survey of 1000 domestic workers conducted by Kalayaan, 62.8% had their passports withheld by the employers, who still withheld the passports even after the women ended their employment.

At the same time, the working conditions upon entry to Britain frequently deteriorate because the families they are accompanying usually travel with reduced staff, but rarely adjust their demands. It continues to be a sad and painful fact that overseas domestic workers in the UK are so deprived of rights that they are in a situation of virtual slavery. These workers must endure abuses and exploitation far beyond their, and our, notions of contractual labour.

More than 4000 cases of overseas domestic workers have been helped since 1987 by Kalayaan and the Commission for Filipino Migrant Workers (CHMW). Of these more than 2000 cases have been documented in detail, showing that overseas domestic workers experience conditions of routine ill-treatment and extreme abuse, including: confiscation of passports; enforced change of contract, including the withholding of wages for long periods; 16-20 hour workdays, seven-day weeks and no holidays; sleeping accommodations in corridors or on the floor; frequent denial of food and malnourishment, with no access to medical and health services or compensation for injuries.

Overseas domestic workers are often kept in virtual or literal imprisonment in the home of their employer. They are frequently prohibited from engaging in normal social contacts, including talking to other staff or outsiders, and they are denied letters from their families.
In Britain, a migrant domestic workers who is brutalised by her employer cannot file a case against him while in his household but if she leaves the house she cannot work for anyone else and she does not have a right to stay in the country.

Physical abuse such as beatings, hair pullings and spitting are “normal.” Racist and degrading name-calling is common. Women regularly experience sexual harassment and abuse which includes actual, threatened, or attempted rape. (See table on page 33.)

When the workers decide to escape it is nearly always a desperate decision made only after sustained abuse. Often they, and the families they support back home, are in debt because of high agency fees paid to secure the original job. If the workers seek a new employer in the UK, they are liable to be deported, and if the employer has neglected to renew their visa—a common occurrence—they are classified as “ overstayers” and may be deported as soon as they leave that employer. Yet, because the majority of employers confiscate and hold the workers’ passports, many do not even know their current immigration status.

In most instances, workers arrive at the offices of CFMW and Kalayaan without passports or money, possessing only the clothes they are wearing. Many are in a state of trauma and need counseling and the support of their own communities, as well as legal advice. It is only slowly that they are able to recover from their experiences, severely hampered by the fact that they have to lead an “unauthorized” existence in the UK, still without worker’s rights, and under the constant threat of discovery and deportation. The alternative is to return home penniless and to expose their dependents to destitution.

**Legal Situation**

Up until 1980, Britain had a “work permit” system which allowed domestic workers into the country to work in the hotel and catering industry, in the National Health Service and in private households. They were admitted as workers in their own right, and, while certain conditions were attached to the permit, it was possible, with permission from the Department of Employment, to change employers within the same category of work. Provided the conditions were adhered to, after four years, residence was granted on request, along with the freedom to change employment.

While many migrant domestic workers continued to do domestic work, others set up their own businesses, and work as insurance agents, travel agents, in post office service and so on. However, when the government abolished the work permit system for domestic work in 1979 and introduced a Concession to allow rich British expatriots to bring their domestic workers with them, this effectively denied the women any rights as workers, including freedom of movement. Many were given “visitor” visas which stipulated that “employment paid or unpaid was strictly prohibited;” others were given visas for employment, but all had the name of their employer written into the visa. Beyond the household of that named individual, they had no right to stay in the UK.

One key problem for domestic workers from the point of view of Kalayaan is...
the title they are given. "Maid", "servant", "household help", "domestic helper"—all signify that domestic work in the household is not actually work. Employers sometimes talk of the domestic worker as "part of the family" and offer a "nice bedroom" in lieu of proper wages. Whereas most domestic workers are employed in private households, these migrant women and men are seeking to earn a living wage to support their own families. As one domestic worker from India said, "a nice room for me here in London doesn't pay my son's medicine."

In Britain, a migrant domestic worker who is brutalised by her employer cannot file a case against him while in his household, but if she leaves the house she cannot work for anyone else and she does not have a right to stay in the country while her case goes through the courts.

**About Kalayaan**

Since 1987, Kalayaan has been working to restore fundamental workers' rights to overseas domestic workers. By May 1991 the Home Office's only response to burgeoning reports of abuse was the introduction of measures such as an Information Leaflet and visa interviews for domestic workers in UK embassies abroad. These have had no discernible effect on the overall incidence of abuse, which continued unabated.

On December 4, 1994, the Home Office introduced more "new measures" incorporated in "contract" of employment to be signed by both employer and employee. It includes details such as a separate bedroom for the worker and suggested rates of pay while in the UK. While noting the new Home Office initiative, Kalayaan fails to see how a "contract" where the employee is not in a position to negotiate effective conditions is valid. These "contracts" are not monitored and even the government is not clear if they are binding in law. Once again the government has failed to

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**Survey Results Conducted by Kalayaan/CFMW**

These statistics are based on 1000 Overseas Domestic Workers who had left their employers and who were interviewed at Kalayaan/CFMW between January 1, 1992 and March 31, 1996. They represent 37 nationalities of Employers and 21 nationalities of Workers. The figures in the table show the percentage of workers who reported the experiences listed.

**Experience of 1,000 Workers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychological abuse (threats, name calling, constant shouting, insults)</td>
<td>87.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuse (hitting, shoving, spitting, kicking, beating etc by a member of the Household)</td>
<td>39.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual assault or rape (including actual, attempted, and threatened)</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No regular food (given leftovers, or otherwise denied food)</td>
<td>38.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not having a bedroom (forced to sleep in a hallway, kitchen, bathroom, or storeroom)</td>
<td>47.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not having a bed</td>
<td>56.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imprisonment (denied permission to leave household or allowed out only with chaperone)</td>
<td>39.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passport confiscated by employer (and not obtainable on departure from employment)</td>
<td>62.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not paid regularly</td>
<td>55.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid less than agreed in contract</td>
<td>56.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial of time off from duties</td>
<td>59.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average number of hours worked in a day</td>
<td>17.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly average salary</td>
<td>US$172.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(approx. 105 pounds)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
address the cause of the problem—lack of the workers' right to change their employer.

Kalayaan's recommendations to the government are as follows:

1. Overseas domestic workers should have a status which recognizes that they are workers in their own right;

2. Overseas domestic workers should be allowed to change employers within the same category of employment;

3. Overseas domestic workers who pursue legal action against their former employers have the right to stay and to work for the duration of the court proceedings;

4. Overseas domestic workers who have already left their employers should not be categorized as "Overstayers" and should have their immigration status regularized.

These measures would both deter future abuse and redress some of the harms of our present abuse-ridden system.

ABOUT THE COMMISSION FOR FILIPINO MIGRANT WORKERS

The Commission for Filipino Migrant Workers (CFMW) has been working with the Filipino community in the United Kingdom (UK) for the last 17 years. It has been able to harness the potential and energy of individuals and organizations to build a strong institution and offer more effective services. CFMW has a thriving community centre where an average of 20-30 people drop in daily.

There are about 60,000 Filipinos living in the UK, the majority of them based in London. As an ethnic minority community, Filipinos face the many problems involved in accessing welfare and social services. CFMW continues to advocate for the rights and opportunities of Filipinos and promotes awareness through advice, information, and training.

CFMW has a crisis intervention programme that responds to emergency situations confronting Filipino women in particular. Many Filipino domestic workers leave their employers and come to the centre for help and legal assis-
There are also Filipinas who leave their husbands because of domestic violence. In most of these cases, the women will have a variety of needs; housing, or at least temporary accommodation or even refuge, legal advice, usually in immigration; counseling as many of them carry the strains of years of verbal and physical abuse; and health or medical attention.

Since many of the women cannot receive social services because of their immigration status, CFMW relies on its network of volunteers and supporters. This is made up of various people, some generous enough to open their homes or provide financial assistance, and others with expertise and qualifications to respond to the other pressing needs of the women.

Our approach is two pronged: one is to continue to lobby the various levels of government and social services to meet the needs of all ethnic minorities regardless of their immigration status. The other is to build and strengthen links within the community to reach those who can help their fellow Filipinos.

CFMW has helped establish and develop several Filipino organizations. It puts a high priority on empowerment and has an educational development and training programme that builds skills and capacity at an individual and organisational level. This provides participants with the skills and confidence to meet the needs of their own organisations, their peers and other groups they work with. Activities include assertiveness training, job hunting skills, team-building and leadership training project planning, a women's forum, health workshops, seminars on rights awareness, racism and sexism, and talks on Philippine development issues.

In the recent years, CFMW has focused on women and youth, who make up the majority of Filipinos in this country. It conducts a peer-counseling training project for young people and is also undertaking joint projects at schools with a significant population of Filipino students. It has just completed a two-year women's trainers' training course and continues to raise awareness of Filipino migrant women issues through workshops (now led by graduates of the two year course), talks and other means of presentation such as drama.

As Filipinos continue to migrate to this country and other parts of the world, abuse of their human and employment rights are on the increase. Ethnic minorities bear the brunt of budget cuts and the shrinking social services. CFMW campaigns and advocates for equality, protection, and safety of Filipino migrants and in this endeavor continues to strive to build the involvement and participation of the whole community and seek partnerships with others.
building a new house

by Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi
Akina Mama wa Afrika

They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change.

—"The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House"
Audre Lorde (1934-1993)

I hold a European Union passport. Sometimes when I am passing through immigration points, I am asked, “Where are you from?” I tell my interrogators to look at my passport, but they say, “Yes, we know you have a British passport, but where are you really from?” This is what I have to say to that:

Where are you from?
Please don’t ask me

where I am from
I am here
because you were here,
there, and everywhere.
So now I have a right
To be here,
there, and everywhere.
I do not need to remind people of the centuries of slavery, colonialism, arid imperialism which black people and other people of color all over the
world have suffered. However, contrary to what conservative elements would have us believe, slavery and colonialism are not echoes of some rather forgotten, remote past, constantly invoked by frustrated minority leaders looking for an excuse to get their "sponging," "lazy," "single parent," "jailbird," "violent" minority constituents off the hook. Slavery, colonialism, imperialism, and neocolonialism are still very much alive, so much so that almost the entire global South and vast communities of the North are impoverished and lack access to basic resources and amenities.

According to a United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development (UNPAARED) report published in 1991, by 1995 there would be 400 million Africans living in poverty, of whom 260 million would be women. Global economic restructuring has enabled international monetary institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to recolonize Africa through endless debt-servicing and the implementation of structural adjustment programs (SAPs), which have devastated entire political, economic, and social systems. SAPs have led to extensive cuts in services, unemployment, inflation, a sharp decline in standard of living, and a massive brain drain. Middle- and high-level managers, whom Africa needs badly for its recovery and development, seek a better working environment outside Africa.

The perennial conflicts and wars which have beleaguered Africa over the past few years have left the continent in a state of despair. The causes of this conflict are as complex as they are diverse. The factors are a combination of struggles over resources, power, ethnicity, democratization, and a host of other variables. Then there are the foreign interventions by the world's superpowers, who used Africa as a battleground for ideological supremacy during the cold war. All manner of tyrants and despots were propped up in a race for doctrinal territory and showered with sophisticated military hardware and billions of dollars in loans, which were promptly salted away in Swiss banks.

This history has now caught up with us. It is payback time, and we are all caught in the most vicious cycle of human suffering and deprivation imaginable. African nations cannot afford to pay back the debts, hence the structural adjustment programs. African people are now using the stockpile of weapons they acquired years ago to wage endless wars; hence they constitute 75 percent of the world's refugee population of 15 million. Due to the collapse of health-care systems, Africans cannot deal with the scourge of HIV/AIDS that has devastated parts of East, Central, and Southern Africa. All these complex issues are no coincidence. For every deficient system there is always a beneficiary. It is not surprising that due to the state of the African continent, there are a large number of African refugees,
exiles, students, and migrants in various parts of the West. The same applies to Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Asia. This has amounted to a recycling of slavery and colonization on an even greater global level than in earlier centuries. There are currently millions of women working as domestics, cleaners, and factory hands, or trafficked into the commercial sex industry. The survival of entire communities in their homelands is dependent on them. The very same economic adjustment policies that the North tries to apply to communities in the South have not worked in their own countries, and the convenient scapegoats are the ethnic minorities, the poor, the single mothers, and any other "undesirables" who are regarded as threatening to their way of life. It is important to clarify here that my definition of the North in this context is the predominantly white, male, upper-class leadership and big-business interests of the multinationals. There is no homogeneous North in the same way that there is no homogeneous South; African people are now holding their own corrupt, collaborating leaders accountable.

My organization, Akina Mama wa Afrika, was started in 1985 as a support group for African women living in Britain. At that time there was a need to provide space for African women who required a culturally familiar environment in which to share their problems and seek help. After years of providing welfare and front-line services, we decided that we had lived in the Master's House long enough. We wanted to tell the Master that the roof was leaking, the door needed changing, and the sewage stank. We believed that in order to effect change, we needed to have a direct investment in how structures were created. So we started showing up at policy meetings, and from the polite stares we received when we started doing this work, it was obviously not expected that we would one day want to tell the Master to his face that we wanted to speak for ourselves. We now know there is no other way.

Our work in Akina Mama wa Afrika is now centered on advocacy, policy, and international outreach in an effort to bring home the global and make it relevant to the lives of all the women in our communities, be they in Europe or in Africa. Our history has taught us that our struggles are interlinked and interdependent. In order to counterbalance the immense pressures of these broad but converging conservative global interests, women all over might have to consider the following:

- Women need a thorough understanding of the systems which dominate their lives and deprive them of their fundamental human rights, including economic rights and a respect for bodily integrity.
- Women need to reconsider how to negotiate with structures which use religion as political weapons of oppression.
- Women need to build up their capacity to act as agents of change. In the post-Beijing process the global
women's movement must devote attention to mobilizing resources to carry out plans of action and, at the same time, advocate for the resources being committed at the Beijing Conference.

- Racism, as well as other forms of discrimination, is still very predominant within the global women's movement. We must have the humility and integrity to come to terms with our own specific privileges wherever we are and assess how they impact on other women. Sisterhood might be global, but at the same time, sisters are not all the same, and they have different priorities.

- The feminist movement has been recognized as the most powerful social force in the world. It is therefore no surprise that the most powerful conservative elements--such as the Vatican, Islamic fundamentalists, Christian fundamentalists, pro-lifers, big-business economic interests, and other right-wing elements--will do all within their power to crush this movement that so threatens their powers and privileges. It is vital that women forge long-lasting alliances on the local, national, regional, and international levels.

A few months ago I sent a message to my 70-year-old grandmother in Nigeria. She is a widow and a farmer; she lives in a rural area, is nonliterate, and has never heard of China. I told her about the Beijing conference and what we were hoping to achieve. She got someone to write a reply, which I have translated from the Yoruba:

"I am happy that in my lifetime something will be done about the plight of women. In our time, we were brought up to believe that men were more important than women and we were just born to serve them till we die. I now know this is not true. There is nothing that is hard that does not eventually become soft. There is nothing inside a man's trousers that is more important than what is inside a woman's head. There is nothing that is impossible. May you go well and come back well, and may the spirit of our ancestors be with you."

My vision is a world in which women and men can forge new tools to build, not a Master's House, but a
Translated from Swahili, the name means 'solidarity among African women', signifying African sisterhood. Akina Mama wa Afrika was founded to create space for African women to organize autonomously, identify issues of concern to them.

**ABOUT AKINA MAMA WA AFRIKA**

Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMwA) is a pan-African, non-governmental development organization and registered UK charity, set up in 1985 by women from different parts of Africa, resident in the United Kingdom. Translated from Swahili, the name means 'solidarity among African women', signifying African sisterhood. Akina Mama wa Afrika was founded to create space for African women to organize autonomously, identify issues of concern to them.

AMwA aims to provide solidarity, support, awareness, and to build links with African women active in the areas of their development. African women's organizations need avenues to place their own issues on the agenda, and this is why we aim to strengthen links with women's groups in Africa and the North. We believe in networking as a vital developmental tool. AMwA has a full-time staff of five, an Executive Board of twelve, and an International Advisory Council of eight women in various parts of the world. Using advocacy, provision of information networking and training, AMwA has four program areas: Community Development; Human Rights; Education and Research; International Development. Our key projects include:

**AFRICAN REFUGEE WOMEN'S PROJECT**

Many African women now live in Britain as a result of on-going economic and political crises in Africa, e.g. Somalia, Liberia, Rwanda, Nigeria, to name a few. The majority arrive here as refugee and asylum seekers or migrants and are often single heads of households. In addition, recent major changes in British government policies with regard to refugees, benefits, legal aid and other issues has led to an unprecedented increase in our advocacy work with and on behalf of African refugee and asylum-seeking women and migrant women, particularly with legal assistance. AMwA programs for African refugee women in the UK include the following: provision of advice and information on asylum issues, refugee rights and welfare issues; information and support concerning education, employment and training; training of trainers in health promotion, particularly HIV prevention; provision of counseling; advocacy and policy work with government authorities on provision of health and community services for African women.

**LEGAL ADVICE CENTRE**

The Legal Advice Centre is one of the most frequented of our front-line services at AMwA. Possibly as a result of changes in government policy, there has been a dramatic increase in the demand for the services of our Legal Advice Centre. The Centre is run as a free legal advice clinic every Monday evening by our volunteer solicitors and barristers. Our Legal Advice Centre is
run with permission from the UK Bar Council.

**HIV Prevention Training**

AMwA has been concerned with the lack of a proper gender perspective in HIV/AIDS prevention and care services provided in the African community. Our response to this was to set up an HIV prevention training project targeting African women and healthcare professionals, with training courses that included: basic HIV awareness; African women and HIV; effective communication and negotiating safer sex; health advocacy and alternative media tools in health promotion.

**African Women Prisoners Project**

The findings of our African Women Prisoner’s Project point to the fact that the numbers of African women in UK prisons, particularly those on drug trafficking charges, is not declining. Our activities on this project are focused on linking up with partner organizations in Africa to run nationwide campaigns against drug trafficking. This will be a means of stemming the numbers of African women increasingly being incarcerated in UK/European jails. We will also continue giving support to women in prison through legal advice, counseling and representations to relevant authorities.

**Campaign Against Skin Bleaching**

Our poster and leaflet campaign against skin bleaching has been one of our success stories, thanks mainly to media interest in the issues it brings up. For a campaign that was initially aimed at black women, we have acquired a very diverse target group. Interestingly, we have received requests for information from white European women. Some other requests have also come from Thailand and various parts of Africa, especially South Africa. We learned that skin bleaching is also widespread in that part of the world. Such has been the interest in this campaign that we hope to re-launch it again with new posters and leaflets and more media coverage, in the very near future.

**African Food and Nutrition**

This particular project was instigated by the dearth of information and resources in the UK with regard to African food and nutrition, in spite of the fact that Africans are over-represented in coronary heart disease, stroke and diabetes statistics in England and Wales. AMwA has published a general guide to African food and nutrition giving brief information about African foods in all the food groups. This will form part of our future project on prevention of Coronary Heart Disease and stroke within the African community.

**Mental Health/Domestic Violence Project**

Mental distress and breakdown emerges from social, psychological and physical factors, and women’s mental health is deeply affected by the social, economic and political context in which they live.
in which they live. This is further compounded by oppression on the basis of race, culture, disability, sexual orientation, age and class. In light of the disturbing increase in the numbers of victims of domestic violence seeking our help, AMwA's Mental Health and Domestic Violence Project was set up. We have developed our counseling, and psychological support service for African women which is woman-centered. It aims to offer individual and group therapy for African women by African women informed by a view of women's psychology which places it within the appropriate social, economic, cultural and political context.

**Human Rights**

There are many and various concerns of African women who leave Africa to live in Europe as refugees, migrants, asylum seekers, students and partners. In addition, a generation of Africans who are of dual African-European nationality has also grown up in Europe, and they also experience various forms of discrimination. Examples of human rights abuses are draconian and discriminatory immigration laws, racial abuse, the fate of refugees and asylum seekers, trafficking in women, the plight of African women domestic workers, lack of employment rights, and adverse implications of multi-cultural policies. AMwA believes female genital mutilation, while deeply rooted in people's cultural, social and spiritual beliefs, is a fundamental abuse of women's human rights and has devastating effects on the girl-child. AMwA advocates for a combination of educational strategies for grassroots communities, income-generating schemes for women to raise their socio-economic status, and the political will to follow through with legislation and policies prohibiting FGM at all levels.

**The African Women in Europe Network**

AMwA received funding from the European Commission to publish a newsletter in four European languages. The newsletter, which will highlight activities of African women in Europe, is called 'Sisterlinks'. In October 1992, AMwA convened the first African Women in Europe conference in London. Participants came from France, Germany, The Netherlands, Italy, Scotland, Ireland, Switzerland, Africa and the United States. A resolution was passed stating that there needed to be a network of some sort for African Women in Europe. AMwA is coordinating the network, which operates on a loose basis, sharing information, and linking up at strategic European and international meetings. Around the same time, the Black, Migrant, Asylum and Refugee Women in Europe Network (BWEN) was being set up, and women have been able to use BWEN as a means of keeping in touch and building alliances with other ethnic minority women in Europe.
African Women's Leadership Institute

The African Women's Leadership Institute (AWLI) is a regional networking, information and training forum, which trains women aged 25-40 in critical thinking on gender issues, organizational and resource development and strategic planning. The AWLI has two main features. First, the AWLI will serve as a network of young African women (25-40) who provide professional support, advice and information, and share expertise among themselves. Second, the AWLI will convene an intensive three-week residential leadership training institute every year in a different African country. The ultimate goal of the AWLI is to encourage and train significant numbers of women for leadership positions that will ultimately promote a progressive African women's development agenda. The development of a feminist constituency among the next generation of African women leaders is essential to the future of the African women's movement.

In the years that Akina Mama wa Afrika has been in existence, our vision has been to be a leading African women's non-governmental development organisation in Europe. We have been building our organisation and networks of African women based in the North for the empowerment of African women. In this way, we are developing an innovative and non-Eurocentric framework for analyzing the role of African women both in Africa, and as migrants in the North, and provide a base for the large amount of expertise and skill of women from Africa now living outside the continent. Over the years, our vision has broadened and we are now set to be a leading African women's NGO in Europe with strong links in Africa. By having a clear view of the kind of house we would like to build, we are well on the way to fulfilling our new vision.
In the United States today, women and children constitute approximately two-thirds of all legal immigrants. This is in sharp contrast to the years prior to 1930, when migrant men comprised between 60 to 70 percent of newly arrived immigrants. Then, women were discouraged from immigrating because the U.S. preferred and recruited male laborers only. One major reason is that single men without families were also easily deportable when their labor was no longer needed.

The rise in women immigrating independently today can be seen as a reflection of the changing labor needs of the U.S. As the U.S. has moved from an industrial economy to a service economy, low-paid, low-skilled jobs have been created for which immigrant women are explicitly recruited. Women also comprise a significant portion of undocumented immigrants and refugees who settle in the U.S. Many of them, particularly undocumented women from developing countries, are isolated in the U.S. and without sufficient knowledge of the language, culture and legal and social systems.

Immigrant women suffer a triple burden of discrimination based on their sex, race and immigration status. Increasing evidence indicates that there are large numbers of immigrant women trapped and isolated in violent relationships, afraid to turn to anyone for help. A survey conducted by the Immigrant Women’s Task Force of the Coalition for Immigrant

* The author wishes to acknowledge and thank Deanna Jang, J. D. and Leti Volpp, J. D. for their contributions to this article.
and Refugee Rights and Services (CIRRS) in northern California revealed that 34% of Latinas and 25% of Filipinas surveyed had experienced domestic violence either in their country of origin, in the U.S. or both.

Battered immigrant women face a complex and harsh reality. The following vignettes illustrate some of the issues confronting them:

* Carla, a Guatemalan woman, has lived for five years with her boyfriend, a legal permanent resident. When she asks him about getting married so that she can apply for her own legal residency, he beats her and accuses her of only wanting to be with him so she can get her immigration status recognized.

* Tai Lin, a Chinese woman, has difficulty finding support to escape her abusive husband. She lost her factory job because she has no work permit. The immigrant service agency she approached encourages her to stay with her husband and advised her to try her best to cope with her difficult situation. Moreover, because she only speaks Cantonese, the battered women’s shelter that she calls cannot communicate with her.

* Leticia, an undocumented Filipina woman, went to civil court and obtained a restraining order against her violent husband. When her husband comes to her house violating the restraining order, she calls the police. Her husband flees before the police arrive. The officer who responds makes a report and then asks her for her “green card.”

Such compelling stories as these prompted the Family Violence Prevention Fund (FUND) to create its Battered Immigrant Women’s Rights Project in 1990. The project has four main objectives:

1. Develop and advocate for effective national public policy and international instruments to improve the lives of battered immigrant women and their children;

2. Produce culturally and linguistically accessible resources and provide technical assistance to better respond to the specific issues faced by battered immigrant women;

3. Increase public awareness on the complex issues facing battered immigrant women and the barriers that they face because of language and culture, immigration law, etc.;

4. Organize networks and coalitions to strengthen and coordinate efforts to assert the rights of battered immigrant women on the local, regional, national and international levels.

The work of the project has been particularly challenging in the face of anti-immigrant sentiment and xenophobia fomented by the activities of right-wing politicians, organizations
Advocates for immigrant women's rights in the U.S. from left to right: Beckie Masaki of the Asian Women's Shelter, Helen Zia, Leti Volpp, and Deana Jang at the NGO activities in Huairou.

The results have been devastating for both legal and undocumented immigrants alike. The recently passed federal legislation on welfare and immigration reform denies public benefits to both legal and undocumented immigrants. For battered immigrant women, the implications are severe. Lacking the much-needed safety net for basic survival for herself and her children, the pressure to return to an abusive spouse is enormous. Her options are dangerously limited. If she gets disabled because of the abuse, disability assistance is no longer available to her.

Since 1989, advocates for the legal and civil rights of battered immigrant women have targeted the need for public policy reform in U.S. immigration laws to effectively respond to those who suffer domestic violence. Under the Immigration and Nationality Act, U.S. citizens and permanent residents can, but are not required to, file relative visa petitions so that their spouses can obtain legal permanent residency through the marriage and legally reside in the U.S. Citizen and resident spouses choose when and whether to file visa petitions and they can revoke those petitions at any time prior to the issuance of permanent residency to their spouse.

The power to keep a spouse in permanent risk of deportation provides batterers who are citizens and legal permanent residents with a coercive tool to keep abused immigrant women and family members in violent relationships. Many immigrant women live in extremely dangerous situations in fear for their lives because their batterer spouses threaten them and their children with deportation if they seek assistance from the police or report their abusive behavior. For example, if a woman tries to run away to a domestic violence shelter, the batterer spouse may go to the immigration authorities to withdraw his petition for her documentation and have her deported.
instead. In this way, he also escapes being prosecuted for criminal offenses related to the physical abuse of his wife.

**Networking and Collaboration**

Because of these alarming phenomena, the FUND has collaborated closely with other national immigrant rights, women's rights and domestic violence organizations, including AYUDA, Inc., National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild, NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund, among others, to educate policy makers on the immigration laws that fostered these situations. This type of collaboration was key in cementing a commitment from other groups to take up the interests of battered immigrant women. As a result, two laws were passed to provide relief to battered immigrant women:

1) **Immigration Marriage Fraud Amendment (IMFA):** Under previous immigration law, immigrant women who have been married to U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents for less than twenty-four months at the time of residency are granted only a "conditional residency" for two years. Within ninety days before this two year waiting period ends, the couple must file a joint application to have the condition removed, so they can obtain permanent residency status for the woman. Because of this policy, battered immigrant women were forced to endure the abuse and remain trapped in the relationship for two years to remove the condition on her papers so she can stay permanently.

   In 1990, a waiver to the IMFA was enacted, enabling a battered immigrant woman to obtain permanent legal status without going through the second joint application, thus removing the conditional status of her legal residency.

2) **Violence Against Women Act (VAWA):** Before this legislation was enacted, a battered immigrant woman had no recourse or option to remove herself from domestic violence when an abusive spouse who is a citizen or permanent resident withdraws or refuses to file a petition to sponsor his wife for legal status. But with the enactment of VAWA in 1994, battered immigrant women can now self-petition on their own behalf to become legal permanent residents without relying on their abusive spouses. She can also apply to become a permanent resident if her spouse had begun the process of applying for her residency papers and then later withdrew the petition, or if the petition is still pending. Battered immigrant women who self-petition may include their undocumented children in their application. Children who are abused by citizen or resident parents may also apply for this remedy. Finally, a woman who has not been abused herself can also self-petition to become a permanent resident if she is a parent of a battered child abused by the woman's citizen or permanent resident husband.

   These two laws are major victories in changing policy that endangers battered immigrant women and will make a
difference in saving women's lives. In pursuing these hard won policies, battered immigrant women's advocates learned valuable lessons in forging collaborative relationships with the mainstream women's movement.

In 1991 when there was little opportunity to change immigration law, it was a challenge to find the most viable vehicle that could change the immigration laws that foster domestic violence. Coincidentally, on a separate track, National Organization for Women Legal Defense and Education Fund (NOWLDEF) was spearheading the work to get policymakers to enact the Violence Against Women Act. This was a major federal bill that would provide substantial institutional response and resources to reduce violence against women in America, including more funds for domestic violence shelters, training of judges, community and advocate partnership with law enforcement, resources for better lighting in the parks for better security, etc.

The proposed bill also contained a significant provision that gives civil rights protection to those women who become victims of violence, such as in the case of rape and domestic violence. This vital provision was NOWLDEF's main commitment to VAWA. However, from a migrant women's perspective, this piece of legislation would be much more inclusive if it included a specific provision on the protection of battered immigrant women and children.

Therefore, the FUND and other members of the Policy Sub-Committee of the Immigrant Women's Task Force of CIRSS approached NOWLDEF to integrate such a provision.

This initiative established the collaboration to ensure that the passage of the VAWA would also contain both the civil rights protection and the battered immigrant women provision. At this point, the FUND, together with the other groups previously mentioned, formed the National Network on Behalf of Battered Immigrant Women. This informal network was able to facilitate more communication and discussion among immigrant rights, domestic violence and women's rights advocates on the intersection of immigration law and violence against women. This collaboration committed itself to ensuring that the provision to protect battered immigrant women become a part of VAWA.

Throughout the three years from the formation of the collaboration to the final passage of VAWA, there were constant position shifts among senators and representatives with regards the provision to protect battered immigrant women and the civil rights protection. However, even with the tireless work and dedication of advocates to incorporate these two provisions, the VAWA that was adopted by the House of Representatives contained the provision to protect battered immigrant women and children but not the civil rights protection. On the other hand, the VAWA Senate version contained the civil rights provision but not the immigrant women provision. Advocates had to strategize on how to get both key provisions into the final version to be voted on by Congress and signed into law by the President.
During this most crucial stage, the National Network on Behalf of Battered Immigrant Women and the NOWLDEF stood by their commitment to work collaboratively to ensure that both provisions were included in the final version. The stance that was taken was that if only one of the provisions made it to the final bill, the advocates would not give full support to VAWA. This commitment was critical in the negotiations among the Senate and House aides. In the end, both provisions made it to the final bill that was enacted into law.

However, to ensure the fragile civil, legal and human rights of battered immigrant women, especially in the face of xenophobia and anti-immigrant sentiments, the other organizing component must be more education and awareness among domestic violence advocates themselves, emergency shelter workers, legal advocates, immigration rights workers, women’s rights activists and other social service providers on the plight of battered immigrant women.

Without these education efforts, services will remain inaccessible to battered immigrant women and many immigrant women will be unaware of their legal rights and community resources available to them, assuring that battered immigrant women will remain fearful and isolated.

Networks and coalitions among domestic violence advocates, family law and immigration lawyers, and women’s rights activists from around the country can play a leadership role in identifying emerging issues and pursuing effective policy reform initiatives to improve the lives of battered immigrant women. Furthermore, these networks should collaborate to ensure the rights of battered immigrant women, not only on a local and national level, but equally on an international level.

Immigration is a global issue and migrant women increasingly make the majority of migrants. Activists must build and strengthen strategic linkages that are multi-national, multi-level, and that engage the movements for human rights, women’s rights, immigrant rights, and economic rights to substantially integrate the issues of battered immigrant women on their agenda. We must tackle this challenge if we are to succeed in ensuring the legal and human rights of battered immigrant women and children.
By Miriam Ching Louie
Women of Color Resource Center

* At the Hearing on Economic Justice and Women’s Human Rights at the 1995 UN World Social Summit in Copenhagen, former garment worker Chai Fen Lin tells of Asian immigrant seamstresses slaving ten to fourteen hours a day, six to seven days a week. Coming to Oakland, California from Guangdong Province in China, Chai Fen followed the flow of immigrant women into the sewing sweatshops, where she made only $1 an hour at piece rates. She now works as a housekeeper in a convalescent home by day and is a Membership Board volunteer with Asian Immigrant Women Advocates by night.

* In Beijing at roundtable discussions between women workers during the 1995 UN 4th World Conference on Women, Carmen Ibarra came from El Paso, Texas to report on the experiences of Mexican immigrant women. These migrant women get cheated out of their wages and jobs, says Ibarra. Meanwhile, the US Border Patrol erects military blockades to stop poor workers from coming in—but not jobs from going out, post-NAFTA. Originally from Chihuahua, Mexico, Carmen worked 23 hard years as a seamstress and came to La Mujer Obrera for help, then as a volunteer and subsequently full-time staff organizer.

It’s a long way from Oakland to Copenhagen, from El Paso to Beijing. But these two immigrant working women recross oceans and borders to connect with sister migrant and women workers’ groups organizing across the globe. Their organizations spring from what activists have labeled the “feminization of labor” and “feminization of migration,” trends fed by
globalization of the economy. The current model of economic development—with its emphasis on the market economy, production for export, unrestricted trade, privatization, tax incentives for the rich, cuts in social spending, and holding wages down—relies increasingly on the underpaid and unpaid labor of women. And the push for free movement of trade and capital, the destruction of agricultural based communities and the environment, violence, wars and regional conflicts have spurred women's migration across borders.

In receiving countries, corporations profit from the exploitation of migrant women in low-waged manufacturing and service industries; upper and middle class families benefit from the labor of migrant domestic workers; and criminal syndicates and many men gain from sex trafficking in women and girls. In the sending countries, corporations, governments, labor contractors and crime syndicates have grown dependent on migrant women workers' remittances, foreign exchange, licensing fees and extorted labor.

During the UN conferences on the environment, human rights, population and development, social problems and women, migrant and women workers' groups organized numerous exchanges of strategy and organizing methods. What follows are but two examples from the US of organizing methods used by Chai Fen's and Carmen's organizations: Asian Immigrant Women Advocates (AIWA) and La Mujer Obrera (The Woman Worker).

**Asian Immigrant Women Advocates**

Chai Fen Lin says AIWA helped her break the extreme isolation she felt as a new immigrant knowing no English, slaving in a sweatshop 10 hours a day before returning home exhausted to raise her kids. Launched in 1983, AIWA is a community-based group that organizes immigrant women working in the garment, electronics, hotel, restaurant, nursing home, janitorial and other low-waged industries in the San Francisco Bay Area and neighboring "Silicon Valley." AIWA used different methods and projects to build a base of trust, membership and leadership among local women workers. Currently AIWA pursues an organizing process with
three intersecting components: education and analysis, leadership development and skills building, and collective action for change.

**Popular Education for Transformation:** Like many of AIWA's members Chai Fen says, "I first came to AIWA to learn English and improve myself. AIWA's Workplace Literacy Classes teach us survival English and our rights in the US." Arranged on Sundays, seamstresses' only day off, or right after other workers get off their shifts, the classes use popular education methods to draw out and connect women's stories and experiences to an analysis of larger structures of oppression, and encourage them to visualize and express their rights and dreams. For example, before coming to AIWA, many women knew nothing about their right to the minimum wage. Now they demand to know why they're not getting it.

When workers expressed fear about coming to evening classes, teachers drew out discussion about why workers were afraid. Subsequent curriculum then covered the problems and causes of violence and sexual assault against women and what could be done for women to protect themselves. Curriculum drawn from an early Korean immigrant woman's life and to celebrate the birthday of civil rights leader Martin Luther King enabled new immigrants to both connect their experiences with the history of racism and labor exploitation that previous immigrants and racial minorities faced and how their struggles improved the lives of subsequent generations.

In 1995 AIWA started citizenship classes in response to escalating anti-immigrant attacks. Especially with passage of the punitive 1996 immigration and welfare reform legislation which restricts immigration and eliminates many federally funded services for even legal immigrants, the demand for the classes has grown. The preparation for the test covers US history, the Constitution and Bill of Rights, which provide opportunities for workers to analyze US expansionism and racialized labor exploitation and to learn what rights are guaranteed vs. accessible. Workers graduating from the Workplace Literacy and Citizenship classes have been recruited and trained to serve as teachers of classes for new groups of women.

**Leadership & Skills Development:** Chai Fen and other garment, electronics, hotel, nursing home workers now plan and implement many of AIWA's projects. The four Project Committees—Outreach, Education, Events and Fundraising—conduct outreach, provide bilingual services, participate in developing curriculum and teaching Workplace Literacy classes, organize educational field trips and events for women and their families, run Leadership Development training sessions, help write grant proposals, and raise donations for AIWA's work. The Membership Board also assists workers who come to AIWA to get help in resolving problems with their bosses. The women have also begun to write and help produce editions of the workers'
newsletter in Chinese and Korean.

**Collective Action for Accountability:** Popular education, enfranchisement, leadership development and skills building goes hand in hand with women workers asserting their rights against oppressive industry, societal and family structures. AIWA encourages workers to organize and act collectively for social change. These actions take place at big and small levels, from the unprecedented act of circulating petitions inside garment sweatshops against anti-immigrant bills, to writing letters to a convalescent care home that was abusing workers and patients, to pressuring electronics plants to provide first aid kits, better ventilation, change the work process to reduce repetitive stress injuries, and pay some work related medical expenses. AIWA runs a Garment Workers Organizing Project and an Environmental Health and Safety Project for electronics assemblers.

After three and a half years of organizing the Garment Workers Justice Campaign, workers set an historic precedent by winning corporate responsibility. The case first arose when 12 women were left holding bad checks when the sweatshop where they worked closed down after garment manufacturer Jessica McClintock ended business relations with the contractor. In March 1996 McClintock and AIWA reached a settlement which included an education fund for garment workers about their rights; a scholarship fund for garment workers and their children; and a bilingual hotline for workers to report any violations of their rights in shops contracted with McClintock. Additionally, the workers received an undisclosed cash amount. Both sides agreed to make efforts to improve conditions within the garment industry. Through the course of the campaign, the women focused a spotlight on manufacturer and retailer responsibility for rampant sweatshop abuses. They served as role models of immigrant women workers who dared to stand up for their rights and overcome intimidation, blacklisting and denial of their free speech rights. Workers and AIWA also initiated broader campaign support committees in cities across the US, thus creating an infrastructure of support for future organizing. AIWA is now going to other manufacturers asking them to also “do the right thing” and show corporate responsibility by signing a similar agreement.

AIWA is trying to bring the three elements of its organizing process into closer intersection. Chai Fen says, “To change a problem that has built up for over a century is not easy. Let us stand up and speak up before it is too late. We want corporations to show responsibility and compassion for the workers who made them rich, whether or not those workers are directly employed by the company, or indirectly employed through subcontractors. We want protection for the workers and the environment in trade agreements. We want the government and the politicians to stop blaming and attacking immigrant workers and their families.”
When owners tried to close down and move, seamstresses organized by La Mujer Obrera chained themselves to their sewing machines until they were dragged away by police. The women then staged a hunger strike.

attacking immigrant workers and their families.”

**La Mujer Obrera**

Worker organizer Carmen Ibarra says that La Mujer Obrera is planning a big celebration for its 15th anniversary. Founded in 1981, La Mujer Obrera/Centro del Obrero Frontarizo is an independent workers’ center based in working class Mexican immigrant community in El Paso, Texas. Carmen explains that over 70 percent of El Paso’s residents are of Mexican descent; many do not speak English, did not finish school in Mexico because they had to start working at an early age and have not had time to go to school in the US because of job and family responsibilities. The economy of El Paso is based on manufacturing sales, a large military intelligence center and base, and services, most of which are strongly linked to Mexico. In fact, Texas was part of Mexico until it was forcibly annexed in 1848. Carmen says that since the passage of NAFTA in 1993, “The situation has become even more grave. We are explaining and calling on workers to fight for their rights under NAFTA.”

La Mujer Obrera has reorganized its work accordingly. Carmen explains, “We started out organizing workers in the garment industry, as the biggest employment sector. But as garment workers and the economic crisis moved into other industries, we also moved with them. We are dedicated to defending and fighting for our community’s rights to jobs, education, health, nutrition, housing, peace, democracy and justice through a comprehensive education, community organizing, and development strategy.”

**La Escuela Popular:** A food bank for both employed and unemployed garment workers was one of the first projects La Mujer Obrera initiated to both meet the immediate needs of workers and begin organizing. At educational workshops conducted by former garment workers, workers first learned about their rights. After the workshops, the women went to the food bank where they got free bread and bought tortillas and milk at a big discount. La Mujer Obrera no longer runs the food bank but continues La Escuela Popular where workers learn and teach each other about organizing and their civil, labor and human rights while studying English and citizenship.

**Community Organizing for Accountability:** La Mujer Obrera has helped women garment workers cheat out of their back wages to win over $200,000. Sweatshops often open for short periods of time to fill a contract from a big manufacturer, but then close down when the work was done, reopening under a different name with a different contract, leaving workers unpaid. Thousands of garment workers were owed back wages. La Mujer Obrera pressured local, state and federal officials to take responsibility, organizing workers to deliver testimony at grand jury investigations on sweatshop abuses. When
workers at Diana’s Fashions were being cheated out of the back wages and owners tried to close down and move to another location, seamstresses organized by La Mujer Obrera chained themselves to their sewing machines until they were dragged away by police. The women then staged a hunger strike.

Although the workers are still owed $84,000 in back wages, they succeeded in raising public awareness and getting a state law enacted that establishes criminal penalties, including imprisonment, for non-payment of wages. La Mujer Obrera has gotten more rigorous investigations of workplace violations and expanded services to immigrant workers by enforcement agencies. The group also helped initiate the Texas Rural Legal Aid’s Garment Industry Project to provide legal support to immigrant workers’ organizing, and pushed the city to invest $367,000 into expanding childcare services and economic opportunities for low-income women workers.

Taking on NAFTA: La Mujer has increasingly turned its attention to stopping the erosion of workers’ jobs and rights in the face of NAFTA. Dozens of factories have closed and thousands of jobs in the retail, garment, electronic, and service industries have been lost in pursuit of cheaper wages and lessened regulation. Although some of the runaway companies have been in El Paso for up to 30 years, a growing portion of those “making a run for the border” are multinational corporations relatively new to El Paso, such as Johnson & Johnson, Alcoa-Fujikura, Seimans, Hasbro, and Swift-Eckrich.

La Mujer Obrera blew the whistle, exposing the fact that nearly all of these companies had also developed facilities in Mexico during their stay in El Paso, and “appeared to be using El Paso as a trampoline for establishing operations in Mexico and Latin America.” Furthermore, based on the fact that nearly 40 manufacturing companies in El Paso, employing almost 30,000 workers, also have plants in Mexico, La Mujer Obrera projects that an additional 6,000 jobs could soon be lost. Most of the displaced workers are Spanish-speaking Mexicans and Chicanos (US-born people of Mexican descent) who were earning around minimum wage and are now searching for work in a depressed job market.
"Since we went to Beijing, the situation of immigrant workers has gotten worse and worse. The US wants us to go back to Mexico, yet they are exploiting people terribly down there too. But we are going to stay in the struggle."

La Mujer Obrera finds that NAFTA implementation has been buttressed by stronger national border control and hardening of anti-immigrant policies. El Paso is one of the country's busiest entry ports. The city is also the site of two major US Border Patrol initiatives to "seal off" the border, including Operation Blockade where Border Patrol agents were stationed 24 hours a day for nearly 20 miles along the border, and a 1.3 mile long 10-foot high wall along the border. Low-income Mexican and Chicano workers, regardless of their immigration status, have been increasingly subjected to harassment, interrogation and illegal confiscation of their documents and belongings.

La Mujer Obrera organized workers to protest Border Patrol actions and testify before two state legislative bodies on NAFTA's impact; representatives met with officials with the US Department of Labor and developed and distributed a series of flyers and newsletters locally and nationally. In a joint effort with the Sociology Department of the University of Texas at El Paso, a team of workers from La Mujer Obrera conducted a survey about the living and working conditions of women working in large, medium and small factories. The survey documented exploitation of the women, the need for enforcement of labor laws, development of retraining programs, and assistance for women who have given their lives to enrich industries.

La Mujer Obrera is demanding a $25 million vocational impact fund to support workers in the border areas, which will assist in finding or creating new jobs for these workers. This project would: activate an Emergency Team to establish an adequate program of assistance and training that does not discriminate against low-income Mexicano/Chicano workers; establish a bilingual vocational training center that serves as a "one-stop" orientation, service and training center for displaced workers and those facing layoffs; develop a family-based Cultural Plaza as a means of creating long-term economic opportunities for Mexicano/Chicano workers while sustaining culture. Additionally, La Mujer Obrera has called for suspension of NAFTA's provisions that enable manufacturing companies to easily leave until a comprehensive program for replacing jobs and adequate training is established. The group has filed a formal complaint with the US Department of Justice on racial discrimination and violation of civil rights of low-income Chicano/Mexicano workers in El Paso and along the US-Mexico border. And Cecilia Rodriguez, one of La Mujer Obrera's founders, now heads the National Commission for Democracy in Mexico, which organizes in support of the Zapatistas, indigenous and other poor communities hurt by NAFTA and similar policies on the other side of the border.

Both La Mujer Obrera and AIWA, along with sister organizations like Chinese Staff and Workers Association, Korean Immigrant Workers Advocates, Centro de Trabajadores Latinos and others, joined forces to establish the National Workers' Center Consortium as a national independent voice for the many immigrant and racial minority
workers unprotected by trade unions. Women workers from La Mujer Obrera and AIWA have also participated in a number of workers' exchanges organized at national, regional and international levels, often with the support of church networks and progressive funders.

Carmen concludes, "In the year since we went to Beijing, the situation of immigrant workers has gotten worse and worse. The US wants us to go back to Mexico, yet they are exploiting people terribly down there too. But we are going to stay in the struggle. We want to make a change that will finally be in the workers' favor. We think workers have to be treated with respect. We need jobs. We need to sustain our families. We are here to struggle until the final moment that we win."

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GLOBAL TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN:
SOME ISSUES AND STRATEGIES

BY LIN-LAP CHEW
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TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN
(STV)

In the last three years, parallel to the activities in relation to the big U.N. World Conferences — on Human Rights (Vienna), Population (Cairo) and Women (Beijing) — NGOs have been working actively to put on the agenda trafficking in women as a manifestation of violence against women, which constitutes a violation of human rights. This has been successful in that trafficking is specifically mentioned in all the resulting Declarations and plans of action. For example, the “Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action,” adopted by the World Human Rights Conference in June 1993 (Paragraph I/18) states:

“Gender-based violence and all forms of sexual harassment and exploitation, including those resulting from cultural prejudice and international trafficking are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person, and must be eliminated. This can be achieved by legal measures and through national action and international cooperation in such fields as economic and social development, education, safe maternity and health care and social support.”

The inclusion of gender violence (including trafficking in women) in the human rights agenda is a political victory. It implies the recognition that keeping women in a subordinate position is a politically construed reality, which is
maintained by patriarchal interests, ideologies and institutions, and therefore can be dismantled. Strategically, nation states can now be held accountable for their efforts to suppress gender violence.

However, most existing national and international legislation and bureaucratic measures addressing this issue only deal with trafficking for prostitution, and only when there has been transport of persons across borders. The millions of migrant women workers everywhere in the world, who are extremely vulnerable to material, physical, psychological and sexual exploitation, have absolutely no recourse to laws which protect their rights.

INTERNATIONAL STRATEGIES AND A GLOBAL NETWORK

Foundation against Trafficking in Women (STV) is a founding member of the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW), which was launched in Chiangmai, Thailand in October 1994, where 75 women activists, social workers, researchers, policy-makers, jurists and civil servants, coming from 22 countries and representing some 40 organizations, recounted experiences of women trafficked within southern regions, as well as to western/northern countries.

One sad but unanimous conclusion was that there seems to be an explosion of trafficking; that trafficking routes criss-cross each other faster than we can document them; that the demands of the “consumers” are getting more and more cruel and degrading, while the trafficking networks are becoming more organized and violent in their business. Furthermore, the workshop also concluded that national governments play a significant role in exacerbating the situation by:

a. promoting “migrant labor export” without stringent laws and supervision to protect the rights and welfare of the workers;

b. neglecting to secure the rights and protection of particularly women

Demonstration held in Tokyo in 1994 to expose the issue of “comfort women.”
migrants in their respective states, thus rendering them dependent on ‘third parties’ and middle-men;

c. denying women migrants opportunities to work in the formal regulated sectors by upholding repressive immigration and migrant labor laws.

Member organizations of the Global Alliance in different countries are engaged in victim support work, running crisis centers, education and information work in prevention projects, advocacy for women migrant workers’ rights and for better legislation and policies. Because of the transnational scope of the problem, one of the priorities of the Global Alliance is to facilitate exchange of information and practical experiences with each other and cooperation where needed and possible.

UN INSTRUMENTS TO COMBAT TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN

The most explicit in this series of international instruments is the Convention on the Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, dating from 1949. As the only convention dealing explicitly with trafficking, it has proven to be ineffective for the simple fact that we are seeing today a dramatic increase instead of decrease of the problem it is meant to address. It is also no longer adequate to address the contemporary situation, since it does not define trafficking in persons, but equates trafficking implicitly to prostitution.

Various existing international legal human rights instruments offer points of reference and should be examined further and if necessary improved and strengthened. The most relevant ones are article 6 and 19 of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and relevant International Labor Organization (ILO) Conventions (those concerning migrant workers’ rights, forced labor, freedom of association).

The problem with most of these international instruments is that they do not have strong monitoring mechanisms or the ability to receive individual or group complaints against violations. While some work has been done to review and improve some of the above mentioned conventions and to make practical applications to contemporary situations, the 1949 Convention has remained unchanged.

Two positive recent developments on the level of UN instruments is the adoption of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in December 1994, and the appointment of a Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women in April 1994, in whose mandate “forced prostitution and trafficking” is included as one of the issues to investigate.

DEFINING THE PROBLEM

In the process of research for the report,
it became clear that a fundamental problem in responding to the issue of trafficking in women is the lack of a precise and unambiguous definition. The traditional concept of trafficking focuses only on prostitution and addresses mainly the 'procurement' aspect, based on concern for 'innocent' girls who should be protected against being lured into brothels, but largely ignoring the abuses and the slavery-like conditions inside the brothels. Moreover, the traditional concept does not address the contemporary forms of trafficking, such as the traffic in women through commercial marriage bureaus and the trade in domestic workers. Recent international documents also fail to offer a clear definition of trafficking in women. Some are even quite confusing, e.g., mixing up trafficking and illegal migration or smuggling of persons, or simply equating trafficking with prostitution. Even the 1949 U.N. Convention on Trafficking in Women fails to define the two most central terms of 'trafficking in women' and 'forced prostitution'.

The following working definitions were developed by the Global Alliance to cover abusive working and living conditions and abusive brokerage practices occurring in both public and domestic spheres:

"Trafficking in Women": All acts involved in the recruitment and/or transportation of a woman within and across national borders for work or services by means of violence or threat of violence, abuse of authority or dominant position, debt-bondage, deception or other forms of coercion.

"Forced Labor and Slavery-like Practices": The extraction of work or services from any woman or the appropriation of the legal identity and/or physical person of any woman by means of violence or threat of violence, abuse of authority or dominant position, debt-bondage, deception or other forms of coercion.

In formulating these definitions the Global Alliance went back to two international agreements: the League of Nations Slavery Convention of 1926 and the Supplementary Convention of 1956, which condemn all slavery-like practices, including debt-bondage and forced marriage and the ILO Forced
One of the “dangers” of calling attention to these forms of human rights violations of women is that states are inclined to take repressive measures when they decide to do something about the situation. Labor Convention no. 295. These conventions have broad international acceptance and clearly describe the situations at hand.

The crucial element in both definitions is coercion, which can take various forms, including but not limited to: violence or threat of violence: including deprivation of freedom (of movement, of personal choice); deception: with regard to working conditions or the nature of the work to be done; abuse of authority or by those in a dominant position: this can range from confiscation of personal documents to place another person in a dependent position, abusing one’s dominant social position, abusing one’s natural parental authority or abusing the vulnerable position of persons without legal status.

In addition, “work or services” includes all domestic, sexual, reproductive or other services rendered under the above-mentioned conditions of coercion, regardless of whether these services are recognized as work, whether they take place under a work contract or whether they take place under a marriage contract. Also, “appropriation of the legal identity and/or physical person” refers to the concept of partial or total ownership as used in the Slavery Conventions, but the word “appropriation” is used to denote the act of claiming ownership of a person, acting as if one owns the person. “Appropriation of the legal identity” can range from confiscating one’s identity papers or supplying a woman with a false identity to the loss of one’s legal personality under the marriage contract.

The basic principle underlying both definitions is the human right of all women to have control over her own life and body. This includes the right of adult women working in prostitution to make personal choices regarding their lives and bodies.

Current strategies
In most countries of the world “trafficking”, “forced labor” and “slavery” are recognized as crimes and punishable by law. Internationally, trafficking in women is acknowledged as a violation of the human rights of women. Numerous organizations and networks in all sectors of social concern and activity are beginning to address this issue, and the numbers of advocates of the rights of migrant women are slowly but surely growing in the last decade.

Moreover, one of the “dangers” of calling attention to these forms of human rights violations of women is that states are inclined to take repressive measures when they decide to do something about the situation. Governments in countries of destination, for example, enact more restrictive immigration laws, place bans on migrant women in the prostitution sector and impose stricter conditions regulating marriages between their male citizens and foreign women, in order to prevent “fake marriages.” Governments in countries of origin on the other hand, impose more stringent controls on young women leaving the country on suspicion of migration for prostitution, and bans on women working overseas.
in unprotected (unregulated) sectors, like domestic work, when there are reports of abuse in these circumstances.

Upon analysis of state approaches, one sees that women victims of trafficking for the purpose of marriage, domestic work or prostitution, but most explicitly and unabashedly for prostitution, are classified as "immoral persons" committing "immoral acts" for "immoral earnings" or as "criminals," "illegal immigrants," "public vagrants," "illegal workers" or persons "violated" by "immoral," albeit freely contracted, labor.

International conventions may reinforce those classifications of women in their religious references to "immorality," economic references to "profit" and total disregard for the volition of women (i.e. by criminalizing prostitution "with or without consent"). The problem targeted by governments is, in fact, not acts committed against women but acts committed by women and/or acts committed by third parties who facilitate the migration and employment of women, most frequently in the female-designated sectors that comprise women's main or only work options. As a result, the woman and the labor of the woman becomes the object of state control and reprimand.

This is the situation whether or not the law formally criminalizes or regulates third parties; evidence overwhelmingly demonstrates that arrest, fining, detention, expulsion and other punishments are levied against women workers/migrants far more than against their exploiters or violators. The only states which have shown some solicitude to victims of trafficking are states which use the women as witnesses for combating (organized) crime. The Netherlands and Belgium, in particular, will grant temporary staying permits to women on the condition that they file charges against their trafficker; unfortunately, the women are usually expelled after criminal proceedings without protection against reprisals.

Women's organizing efforts are leading to a growing awareness of the harmful effect on women of national policies. Recently, international organizations have begun to take issue with the state policies. As an alternative, these organizations have begun to propose or implement alternative strategies against trafficking and forced labor/slavery-like practices, sometimes aimed at helping women protect themselves against repressive state practices.

The most, perhaps only, strategies with concrete and unqualified benefit for women have been non-governmental. NGOs around the world focus upon women's actual needs, due rights, daily resistance to abuse and political struggle for justice. Their energies have been developed in three main areas:

1. Organizing support services for the women, including counseling, safe shelter, medical and psychological attention, legal aid.

2. Lobbying with institutions and governments to urge recognition of trafficking and forced labor/slavery-like practices in a way that respects
women's rights, including the right to control their own bodies, exercise freedom of movement, work with just compensation, organize and join trade unions, enter into binding contracts and press charges against violators regardless of their status as wife, maid or prostitute.

3. Long-term advocacy work is mostly focused upon strengthening migrant worker's rights, also in the entertainment sector and particularly in prostitution.

Some NGOs have cooperatively initiated return programs for those women who choose to go back to their countries of origin. Because governments are likely to favor such initiatives, often without regard for the wishes of the women concerned, those programs must be well-monitored and evaluated to insure respect for women's self-determination.

On a fundamental level, NGOs define the root causes of coercive brokerage and working conditions as inequality in wealth world-wide and as sexist enactments of colonial and racist power relations. They acknowledge migration as a strategy of women to escape poverty and to escape traditional gender obligations and constraints.

Advocates of trafficked women have realized the necessity of legitimizing the voice of the women concerned. In this light, NGOs are beginning to mobilize greater support for self-organization among domestic workers, prostitutes and wives. They are inviting those women as full partners into the process of designing and implementing strategies against violence, deceit, coercion, debt-bondage and other abuses as defined in gender-neutral guidelines.

Women of dominant cultures in G-7 countries can express solidarity for these efforts by facilitating self-organization and expression of domestic workers, prostitutes and immigrant wives, in material and other aspects; by promoting consciousness of and militancy against the forces which maintain and strengthen the colonialist, sexist and racist power relations.

Trafficking in women was one of the priority issues at the NGO Forum in Huairou and was addressed by a number of NGOs and international institutions. The Platform for Action contains a number of paragraphs on trafficking in women which open the perspective of a more pro-rights approach if governments are to take them seriously in designing national measures.

The most important ones are paragraph 230(o) in the Human Rights Section (I),

"Strengthen the implementation of all relevant human rights instruments, in order to combat and eliminate, including through international cooperation, organized and other forms of trafficking in women and girls, including for the purposes of sexual exploitation, pornography, prostitution and sex tourism, and provide legal and social services to the victims. This should include provisions for international cooperation to prosecute and punish those responsible for organized exploitation of women."
and 131 (d) (Strategic Objective D.3):

"Allocate resources to provide comprehensive programs designed to heal and rehabilitate into society victims of trafficking including through job training, legal assistance and confidential health care and take measures to cooperate with non-governmental organizations to provide for the social, medical and psychological care of the victims of trafficking."

The positive elements in these paragraphs are that states are called upon to use human rights instruments, which give a better guarantee that measures based on these principles will be more respectful of the rights of the women concerned. There is an implicit recognition that there are other manifestations of trafficking in women than that in the sex industry, through the use of the word "including for the purposes of...". The call for international cooperation, with other governments and with NGOs is imperative for both prevention and advocacy work. Needless to say the allocation of resources is essential, and "comprehensive programs...including job training..." opens exciting possibilities to really be able to develop alternatives for the victims of trafficking.
Appendix

Network Building: A Preliminary List of Migrant Women’s Contacts

Canada

Committee for Domestic Workers’ and Caregivers’ Rights
789 East 14th Avenue
Vancouver, B.C. V5T 2N3
Tel: (604) 874-0649
Fax: (604) 874-0649

Domestic Worker’s Association of Saskatchewan, Regina Chapter
2248 Lorne St.
Regina, Saskatchewan S4P 2M7
Tel: (306) 359-6514
Fax: (306) 522-9959

Montreal Household Workers Association
1857 De Maisonneuve W.
Office 318
Montreal, Quebec H3H 1J9
Tel: (514) 937-6873

Toronto Organization for Domestic Workers’ Rights (INTERCEDE)
234 Eglinton Avenue East, s-205
Toronto, Ontario M4P 1K5
Tel: (416) 483-4554
Fax: (416) 483-9781
ASIA

**ASIAN DOMESTIC WORKERS UNION (ADWU)**
5/F, Flat B, Yen Yin Mansion
7-10 Ferry St., Yau Ma Tei, Kwotoon
Hong Kong
Tel: (852) 2359-4965, 2359-4743
Fax: (852) 2359-4881

**Catholic Commission on Migration - Women's Desk**
232/9 Naret Road, Bangrak
Bangkok 10500
Thailand
Tel: (66-2) 233-3073
Fax: (66-2) 233-3073

**Help Asian Women's Shelter**
2-23-5 Hyakunin-cho
Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 169
Japan
Tel: (81-3) 3368-8855
Fax: (81-3) 3368-9791

**House For Women "Saalaa"**
P.O. Box 13
Aoba Post Office, Yokohama 225
Japan
Tel: (81-45) 901-3527
Fax: (81-45) 902-4045

**Kanlungan Center Foundation**
77 K-10th corner K-J Sts., Kamias
Quezon City
Philippines
Tel: (63-2) 921-7849, 928-2384
Fax: (63-2) 921-7849
KnL@Emile.com.ph

ITALY

**Alay Sa Kababaihang Pilipino**
Via Palombini,
30 - 00100 Roma
Italy
Tel: (39-6) 6638496

**Alma Mater**
Via Mombasiglio
108 - Torino
Italy
Tel: (39-11) 353067

**Associazione Candelaria**
Via Bontonto
98 - 00100 Roma
Italy
Tel: (39-6) 2012923

**Associazione Donne Brasiliane**
Via Silveri
11 - 00100 Roma
Italy
Tel: (39-6) 6795565

**Associazione Donne Capo Verdiene**
Via Leonina
80 - 00100 Roma
Italy
Tel: (39-6) 4873851

**Associazione Donne Immigrate Africane**
Via Arcione
114 - 00100 Roma
Italy
Tel: (39-6) 6794125
**DONNE STRANIERE INSIEME**  
Via Caetani  
8 - 00100 Roma  
Italy  
Tel: (39-6) 6795565

**FILIPINO WOMEN'S COUNCIL**  
Via Ceprano  
9 - 00172 Roma  
Italy  
Tel: (39-6) 2423512

**LIBERE INSIEME**  
Via Emilio Morosini  
18 - 00100 Roma  
Italy  
Tel: (39-6) 5897501

**MIGRANT WOMEN'S NETWORK IN ITALY**  
c/o ONDA, Casa delle Donne Internazionale  
Via della Lungara  
19-00100 Roma  
Italy  
Tel: (39-6) 2423512

**RETE DI DONNE IMMIGRATE DI BARI**  
Via Sabaudia  
8 - Bari  
Italy  
Tel: (39-80) 5720783

**VOCI DI DONNA**  
Via dei Neri  
7 - Firenze  
Italy  
Tel: (39-55) 215601

**UNITED STATES**

**ASIAN IMMIGRANT WOMEN'S ADVOCATES**  
310 8th Street, Suite 301  
Oakland, CA 94607  
Tel: (510) 268-0192  
Fax: (510) 268-0194

**ASIAN WOMEN'S SHELTER**  
3543 18th St. Box 19  
San Francisco, CA 94110  
Tel: (415) 751-7110  
Fax: (415) 751-0806

**AYUDA, INC.**  
1736 Columbia Rd., NW  
Washington, D.C. 20008  
Tel: (202) 387-0434  
Fax: (202) 387-0324

**FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION FUND**  
383 Rhode Island St. Suite 304  
San Francisco, CA 94103-5133  
Tel: (415) 252-8900  
Fax: (415) 252-8991

**LA MUJER OBERERA**  
c/o Centro Obrero, Inc.  
P.O. Box 3975  
El Paso, TX 79923  
Tel: (915) 533-9710  
Fax: (915) 544-3730

**MANAVI**  
P.O. Box 613  
Bloomfield, NJ 07003  
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<td>San Francisco, CA 94103</td>
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<th><strong>NATIONAL IMMIGRATION PROJECT OF THE NATIONAL LAWYERS GUILD</strong></th>
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<td>14 Beacon St., Suite 602</td>
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<td>Boston, MA 02108</td>
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<td>Tel: (617) 227-9727</td>
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<th><strong>SAKHI FOR SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN</strong></th>
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<td>P.O Box 20208, Greeley Square Station</td>
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<tr>
<td>New York, New York 10001-0006</td>
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<td>Tel: (212) 714-9153</td>
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<td>London's Women Center</td>
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<td>Wesley House, 4 Wild Court</td>
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<td>England</td>
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<th><strong>COMMISSION FOR FILIPINO MIGRANT WORKERS</strong></th>
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<td>Tel: (44-181)5719595</td>
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Center for Women's Global Leadership Publications

New publications from the Center for Women's Global Leadership include Migrant Women's Human Rights in G-7 Countries: Organizing Strategies and Local Action, Global Change: Learning About the Human Rights of Women and Girls. Co-published with UNIFEM, Local Action: Global Change is the first comprehensive training manual that includes the whole spectrum of women's human rights in an "interactive" format (Available Fall 1997). In addition, the Center has numerous publications available in the following areas:

FROM VIENNA TO BEIJING. This series focuses on Tribunals, hearings, and other activities coordinated by the Global Center at the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), World Summit on Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995); International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994); and the UN World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993) (video also available).

PAMPHLET SERIES: These publications comprise a series of working papers on Women and Human Rights. They seek to promote international discussion of critical conceptual and strategic questions regarding women's human rights and the development of human rights agenda that incorporates women's perspectives and experiences.

WOMEN'S GLOBAL LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE REPORTS: These books present the voices and perspectives of women around the world who came together to discuss women's leadership in areas of women's human rights at each of the Women's Global Leadership Institutes.

For a complete list of publications, please contact the Center for Women’s Global Leadership.
Select publications also available in Spanish and French.

Family Violence Prevention Fund Publications

Domestic Violence in Immigrant and Refugee Communities: Asserting the Rights of Battered Women

This manual includes major chapters on immigration relief for women and children suffering abuse, including the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) provision on self-petitioning; public benefits and new welfare restrictions on battered immigrant women and children; an overview of domestic violence in immigrant and refugee communities; listings of immigration/refugee resources and domestic violence services nationwide. A comprehensive resource, it will assist advocates in providing greater and more accessible services to battered immigrant women (1997; 300 pages).

Women on the Move: Proceedings of the Workshop on Human Rights Abuses Against Immigrant and Refugee Women

Presented at the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna, Austria, 18 June 1993. This beautifully bound publication includes discussions of abuses against women during migration; gender-based persecution and political asylum; including the Canada Immigration and Refugee Board Guidelines on women refugee claimants fearing gender-related persecution.

Working with Battered Immigrant Women: A Handbook to Make Services Accessible

This handbook focuses on how advocates can improve their response to battered women and children. It covers legal options including civil and criminal remedies and suggestions on how to establish linguistically and culturally appropriate services.

For a catalog of all the Family Violence Prevention Fund's publications and public awareness products, please call (415) 252-8089 or e-mail us at fund@fvpf.org. Select publications also available in Spanish.
Migrant Women’s Human Rights in G-7 Countries

Organizing Strategies

Family Violence Prevention Fund and Center for Women’s Global Leadership