

Migrant rights group Home celebrates 20 years, International Migrants Day



Home president Ng Kok Hoe (centre, in blue) at the group's celebration on Dec 8. He says Home has offered help to over 40,000 migrant workers, equipped close to 20,000 with critical skills and provided temporary housing to more than 10,000. ST PHOTO: AZMI ATHIRI

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[Samuel Devaraj](#)

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SINGAPORE - The migrant worker rights group Humanitarian Organisation for Migration Economics (Home) on Dec 8 celebrated its 20th anniversary with song and dance performances that brought a party atmosphere to the United World College South East Asia Dover campus.

At the celebration, which also commemorated International Migrants Day that falls on Dec 18, a group of five domestic workers named Girls Supreme Force donned colourful matching jackets and danced to a medley of songs.

The group had won in the dancing category of a talent show organised by the non-governmental organisation.

A performance by another domestic worker, Ms Chamberly Budeng, the winner of the singing category, got the crowd clapping along and roaring in laughter after she told them that she practises performing while cooking.

At the Dec 8 celebration, which was attended by about 400 migrant workers from countries including Bangladesh, Indonesia and the Philippines, Home also gave out prizes for a volleyball competition and table tennis tournament it had held previously.

Speaking at the event, Home president Ng Kok Hoe said since the organisation was founded in 2004 by migrant worker activist Bridget Tan, it has offered assistance to over 40,000 migrant workers, equipped close to 20,000 with critical skills via its academy and provided temporary housing to more than 10,000 of such workers.

Dr Ng, senior research fellow at the NUS Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, paid tribute to migrant workers around the world for their contributions.

“We honour your strength and sacrifices, and we commit ourselves to keep working towards a society where migration is seen not as a problem, but as a powerful force for progress and solidarity,” he added.

Also at the event, Home social worker Jolovan Wham drew attention to its ongoing 24-hour rest day campaign, which asks for domestic workers to get a full day of rest on their day off.

Current rules stipulate that domestic workers are [entitled to one rest day a week](#) – they can opt to work on all but one of these days off per month, in exchange for compensation.

The one remaining day must be taken as a day off each month.

But Mr Wham told The Straits Times that many maids end up spending time preparing meals or cleaning that day. He said Home hopes to bring about legislative changes to make a full rest day mandatory through the campaign, which was launched in 2023.

The Government said previously that households here have different needs and prescribing a fixed number of hours of uninterrupted rest for maids on their days off will impose rigidity on them and their employers.

It instead recommends that the domestic helper and employer come to a mutual agreement on rest day arrangements.

Also on Dec 8, the Centre for Domestic Employees (CDE) inked an agreement with Silver Ribbon (Singapore), a non-profit organisation that works to combat mental health stigma, to strengthen mental health support for migrant domestic workers.

The new memorandum of understanding (MOU) will give domestic workers access to more well-being support, such as free counselling services and mental well-being workshops, and there will also be workshops for employers, said CDE and the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) in a press release.

CDE is an initiative of NTUC.

CDE and Silver Ribbon will also conduct a survey from now to March 2025, to better understand and address the needs of domestic workers.

The feedback collected will help shape more targeted programmes and services, ensuring they align with the workers' well-being needs, CDE and NTUC said.



The CDE inked an agreement with Silver Ribbon (Singapore) to strengthen mental health support for domestic workers at an International Migrants Day event on Dec 8. Minister of State for Manpower Gan Siow Huang (second from left) was guest of honour at the event. PHOTO: CENTRE FOR DOMESTIC EMPLOYEES

The MOU was signed as part of an International Migrants Day event held at Resorts World Sentosa that was attended by about 1,000 domestic workers.

Minister of State for Education and Manpower Gan Siow Huang said she was encouraged to learn that more community partners are coming forward to collaborate and provide greater support for workers, and that the new partnership complements the efforts of the Ministry of Manpower.

Ms Gan, who was guest of honour at the event, also thanked domestic workers for their contributions to households in Singapore, noting that about one in five households employs a maid.

“Many of you help to take care of families, including young children and the elderly, and also help with many of the household duties at home,” she said. “Without you, Singapore families will have a lot more to do for (themselves) and for those at home.”