

CHAPTER II

HOME AND THE ADVOCACY PARTNERS

In this second chapter, the writer elaborates the role of HOME and its partners in Singapore as well as Indonesia. This chapter also will explain how the role of each NGOs in taking action to advocate the Indonesian Foreign Domestic Workers in Singapore. As we all know, The Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics stands as an NGOs who has a concern towards the issues faced by migrant domestic workers in Singapore. Most of the client or victim assisted by HOME is Indonesian in which half of them are female domestic workers. Therefore, HOME stands to advocate the workers by using the term which called NGO advocacy whose has a motivation and desire for a better world for the disadvantages, in term of the rights and protection in which they cannot afford as they become a foreign domestic worker in Singapore. Thus, HOME emphasizes their role as local NGOs in Singapore and forms a close partnership with other NGOs to raise the people's awareness and emerge an activity called advocacy towards the issue of the Indonesian Foreign Domestic Workers in Singapore.

A. Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics.

The Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics (HOME) is a non-governmental organization and registered charity based in Singapore in which is dedicated to serving the needs of the migrant worker community in Singapore, especially for the female migrant workers. HOME was established in 2004 and has since provided services to thousands of migrant workers in need through its provision of shelters, legal assistance, training, and rehabilitative services. In fact,

roughly 60 per cent of those assisted by HOME are migrant domestic workers, and under half of them are Indonesian (Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics; Solidaritas Migrant Scalabrini; Yayasan Dunia Viva Wanita). Due to those fact, as non-governmental organization HOME stands to advocate the migrant worker's protection who work mostly as a domestic worker to get their protection and make them easily accessible towards their rights as a foreign domestic worker in Singapore.

1. The Establishment of HOME

HOME was founded by the CEO named Ms. Bridget Lew Tan as the former of the Archdiocesan Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerants People (ACMI) volunteer with the same concern in migrant worker issues. Lew began launch a new migrant center independently, known as the HOME in December 2004. Tan founded HOME and provided services and advocates on behalf of migrant workers using her own personal funds in December 2004 calculated \$60,000 from her own Central Provident Fund savings (Chuan, 2014). At the very first beginning of the HOME establishment, the organization provides temporary room and board, medical, legal, and financial assistance, and job skills training to migrant workers. In addition, HOME was established since its founding in emphasizing the focus in which engages in advocacy efforts for migrant workers and support victims of the sex trade and to combat human trafficking.

This organization was run by Tan as she began to work for HOME without receiving any payment or salaries until 2012. Due to Ms. Tan dedication towards the migrant workers in Singapore, HOME and the founder herself receive many

awards such as Asia Public Service Award in 2010 by Asia 21 Society, and also honorable mention in the Reader's Digest Asian of the Year award in 2010 (Tan, 2011). In addition, Ms. Tan was honorably mentioned by the US. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton during her speech in the release of the 2011 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report: "Our TIP (Trafficking in Persons) heroes today show us that individual action can lead to some astounding results. For example, in Singapore, Bridget Lew Tan has dedicated her life to protecting migrant workers."

On the other hand, Ms. Lew continues her good working relationship with the Ministry of Manpower in solving the individual cases and trying to influence MOM's policies by lobbying for changes in the system (Piper, 2005). In maximizing the role, HOME advocates the migrant domestic workers in Singapore through talks and media contact in order to raise awareness among the Singaporean public about the rights of migrant workers. HOME also conducted a close partnership with various partners as well as the NGOs from Singapore and Indonesia that have the same concern of the migrant domestic workers in Singapore. HOME also advocate for change by publishing reports, stories, position papers, writing letters to press, and even taking part in dialogue sessions with government agencies and other stakeholders on issues concerning migrant workers (Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics).

HOME also assist many things beside from advocacy and awareness, such as providing migrant service for the migrant domestic workers, particularly for women and also conducting research in order to receive more accurate data relating to the issue or things needed by the migrant domestic workers in Singapore. The

assistance of HOME through migrant service has seven aids available to the workers while they work in Singapore such as the Help Desks and Help Lines, Legal Aid, Shelter, Skills Training, Women's Health Centre and Programs, Dental Clinic, and Volunteer (HOME, 2013).

In conducting the advocacy process, HOME received and maximized its fund in developing the service of HOME and helping the foreign domestic workers that has several issues and problems they faced.

2. The Role of HOME in assisting the Foreign Migrant Domestic

Workers Issue

As in NGO advocacy within the general term, advocacy means organized efforts to realize an incremental change in which means that this activity cover all activities of any pressure group within business or government or even civil society which is pushing for change in some scope (Holloway, 2003). Advocacy also means as an effort to help the victim in receiving their rights and providing what they need in which the government do not pay particular attention on it. Thus, Migrant Service is one of the assistances as one of the advocacy activity done by HOME that provided to the migrant domestic workers especially to the female workers. More specifically, migrant services divided into seven parts, which are:

- a. Help Desks and Help Lines, plays a role with many staff and volunteer to provide counseling and advisory activity to the workers in which HOME helped the worker who experienced injustice or even abuse. This service stands as a representative on behalf of the workers to communicate with the government authorities, such as the Ministry of

Manpower as the policy makers and also Police. The purpose of this service is to ensure that the existing laws are enforced to give more particular attention upon the dignity and rights of aggrieved workers is central to the work of the help desk (HOME, 2013).

- b. Legal Aid which provides the legal advice and litigation service to the HOME clients on specific issues related to the arrears, family law, criminal law, compensations and the enforcement of court orders (HOME, 2013).
- c. Shelter, is basically the main assistance of HOME, it gives the migrant workers free accommodation for women and victims of human trafficking. It is provided for those who experience abuse, exploitation, or have suffered injuries in their work in Singapore. In this service, the migrant workers may stay for as long as one month to one year, depending on how long the worker investigations may take place. Most of the clients who stay in the HOME Shelter come from Bangladesh, China, Congo, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Nigeria, Peru, the Philippines, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam. Not only providing a shelter, HOME Shelter also conducts activities such as performances, workshops, and outings to engage the residents during their staying with HOME (HOME, 2013).
- d. Skills Training, responding to the research that HOME conducted with some Indonesian female migrant domestic workers back then, there are still some problems faced by them such as their skills are not in line in

which that case caused the abuse by the employers. Therefore, HOME established Skills Training in order to provide training to all migrant domestic workers such as Sunday Classes for English Language, Mandarin Language Class, computer skills training (Internet using and Microsoft Office Applications), cooking, baking, care-giving, cosmetology, dressmaking, and also financial education. This service is aimed to create opportunities and increase the migrant domestic workers skills development (HOME, 2013).

- e. Women's Health Centre and Programs, this service was established to provide a place for education and sexual reproduction health related services. There are some activities included in this service such as a workshop of HIV and Sexual Health Education Workshops and call-in radio shows. The purpose is to encourage the migrant domestic workers to have a good understanding and concern about their health problem (HOME, 2013).
- f. Dental Clinic, this service provides a free treatment for those migrant workers who are jobless and still required to remain behind by the authorities waiting for claims and investigations (HOME, 2013).
- g. Volunteers, is becoming one of the most service in which conducted and participated by more than 200 domestic workers in serving the migrant domestic workers in Singapore. Their programs and services are available such as vocational skills training, sports, and recreation, HIV and AIDS Seminars, Hospital visitation and helpdesks for volunteering

information. The migrant volunteer services also produced *My Voice* and *Suaraku* as the newsletter relating the migrant domestic workers in Singapore (HOME, 2013).

In addition, in order to maximizing the role of HOME as the main actor of the advocacy activity, HOME works in close partnership with NGOs in Singapore such as TWC2 and AWARE, also with *Solidaritas Migran Scalabrini* (SMS) and *Yayasan Dunia Viva Wanita* (*Viva Wanita*) which are based in Batam, Riau Islands, Indonesia. HOME's works partners also have specific role and activity that will deliver each one of them as their main role in conducting advocacy activity towards the issue of Indonesian Female Migrant Domestic Workers in Singapore. In relating with the advocacy class activity, therefore HOME conducted partnerships with some groups that has the same concern towards the issue of migrant domestic workers in Singapore.

A. Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics Partners in Singapore

Advocacy activity has two subtypes in realizing the issue or case, there are case advocacy or also known as individual advocacy and class advocacy. The advocacy done by HOME and partners are included as the class advocacy. The class advocacy stands for conducting activities in the name of several classes or several people in order to refer to their protection and introducing their rights. The focus of class advocacy is to influence or make a change of the policy by revising, adding, and creating a change of the public policy and the regulation of the law. In this class advocacy, there are some involvements that requires a politic process in which have the purpose to influence the decisions made by the stakeholder or the government

authorities (Suharto, 2013). By then, the social workers who plays a role as the advocacy actors acts as the representatives of the organization, not as an individual-practitioners. Thus, class advocacy is done through coalition with some groups and organization which have the same concern and agenda that reciprocal with the purposes (Suharto, 2013).

In this case, HOME act as the social workers who initiate an advocacy activity and form a coalition with the other groups or NGOs. HOME developed strategic partnerships with other NGOs on the prevention and protection of the victims of human trafficking, labor, and sexual exploitation. In addition, HOME also emphasizing their role by working with other NGOs as to strengthen their purpose that refers to advocate for better policies and laws regulating the migration of migrant domestic workers (HOME, 2004). HOME create their partnership from both states, Singapore and Indonesia. There are some NGOs involves in the close partnership with HOME in advocate the migrant domestic workers issue in Singapore with the local NGOs from Singapore such as TWC2 and AWARE.

1. Transient Workers Count Too (TWC2)

Transient Workers Count Too (TWC2) is a non-profit organization registered under the Societies Act. Back in the history before the TWC2 formed, in December 2001, there was Indonesian domestic worker named *Muawanatul Chasanah* who died at the age of nineteen following month brutal assault by her employer, Mr Ng Hua Chye. Surprisingly, in *Chasanah*'s autopsy, 200 caning, scalding, punching, kicking, and burning injuries were found at the time of her death – where it was the accident, however known by the neighbor of the

employers, but tend to ignore and was not reported it to the police (Transient Workers Count Too, 2011).

a. The Establishment of Transient Workers Count Too (TWC2)

The Transient Workers Count Too (TWC2) is a non-profit organization that emerged in late 2002 as an ad-hoc group before registered it was under the Societies Act that was publicly launched on 9th March 2003 (Piper, Migrant Labor in Southeast Asia, 2005). Responding to the issues, the outrage and concern over the apathy of civil society in Singapore however provided impetus for the formation of this organization. The main stated objective of TWC2 was to promote respect for domestic workers through education and secure better treatment of domestic workers through legislation and any other means. The Transient Workers Count Too was formed with the aims to promote respect for domestic workers through education and secure better treatment of domestic workers through legislation. It consists of society activist, lawyers, lecturers, and students formed as to raise awareness of FDW issues through public education and advocacy for more structure support.

Since its establishment, TWC2 focused on three main topics, first reducing demand for FDW's. Second is providing standardized employment contracts and the third is improving the treatment of FDW's by their employers. By giving its focus on those three pillars, TWC2 has two main purposes: first to draw attention to the gendered division of labor within the home and finding alternative solutions to Singapore's reliance on the labor of domestic workers, and second address the abuse experienced by the Foreign Domestic Workers (Piper, 2005). Thus, HOME

think that TWC2 can be a good partner in advocating the workers with such problem.

b. The Role of Transient Workers Count Too (TWC2) in assisting the Female Migrant Domestic Workers Issue.

In emphasizing the role of TWC2 as an advocacy actor whom cooperate together with HOME, the Transient Workers Count Too had conducted public forums and private dialogues with key stakeholders in exploring possible initiatives which refers to the further safeguard or protection towards the interest of foreign domestic workers in Singapore (Piper, 2005). The Transient Workers Count Too activities are mostly focused on the research in collecting information, conducting dialogue with stakeholders, campaigning as to give the information, emphasizing community involvement, and they also contribute to the governance in which means to the government bodies; trade unions; embassies; and other NGOs, and lastly they also dedicate the organization by documentation. On the other hand, there were over 180,000 domestic workers in Singapore in 2008, and the largest numbers came from the Philippines and Indonesia (Transient Workers Count Too, 2008). In working with women employed as domestic workers, TWC2 has focused its attention on the problems they face in Singapore.

As one of their projects, TWC2 launched two major campaign in 2003 which was called the “Day Off Campaign”, a campaign that aimed at encouraging employers in Singapore to voluntarily give their domestic worker a day off. Since there are still no written regulations by the Employment Act to create an exact work hours during their work days, there are still many domestic workers experience

long-working hours. This campaign also conducted through website and other campaign activities such as talks, events, and news articles aims to convince large audiences of the importance of giving their domestic workers help their personal time off. Through this campaign, the TWC2 also want to deliver the importance of A Day Off for Migrant Workers, as follows:

1. It is a basic labor right. Domestic Workers, unlike all other employees, are not included in the Singapore Employment Act which guarantees one day off week by law (Han, 2016).
2. It will improve morale and productivity of the domestic workers and increase more energy for them, it can enhance the employer-employee working relationship by giving them a day off.
3. It gives the FDW's the opportunity not only to utilize their free time to learn new skills and increase their knowledge but also to be empowered as individuals.
4. It will also remind us as an individual to know that the migrant domestic workers are productive individual who make an extremely valuable contribution to Singaporean society and like all other workers, they should be accorded a day off as remembering their basic right as a labor.

Still in association with TWC2, there were several facts about the foreign domestic workers in Singapore. Approximately 40% of Singapore's 222,500 domestic workers do not have a weekly day off, despite the fact that the came into effect in January 2013 which made it mandatory. In fact, one in five households in Singapore today employ a domestic worker, primarily those with children or elderly

parents. A problem then arises when employers do not give their domestic workers time to take a rest a day in each week or informally 'buy out' their legally required day week or promising them payment in-lieu. As the majority of the Singapore's domestic workers come from the Philippines, Indonesia, and Myanmar, it is then most of them are working endlessly with no breaks for personal time or rest in which often leads to homesickness and mental health problems such as depression.

Thus, the TWC2, as an organization which stands to uphold the dignity and respect of the migrant domestic workers emerge the "Day Off Campaign" as it is included in close partnerships with HOME. As a result of their purpose is by giving them a day off and conduct the campaign, TWC2 seek to convince employers to give domestic workers day off. In addition, TWC2 also create a campaign, called the "White Ribbon Campaign" in which since 2004 the "White Ribbon Campaign has been spearheaded by the Association of Women for Action and Research (AWARE). White Ribbon Campaign is a campaign that is considered as a global movement against gender violence. It is basically a global movement conducted by males to end male violence against women and girls. The TWC2 invited the public to think critically about the employment of foreign domestic workers in Singapore.

Aside from that, the TWC2 has continuously to actively engage government officials, migrant workers, employment agencies, partner organizations, and the general public. TWC2 has sine grow into reliable help agency for migrant workers who encounter problems with their employers, stands as a source information for employers and the public, a center for generating action-oriented research and a

credible advocate for a more enlightened regulatory framework (Transient Workers Count Too, 2011).

2. Association of Women for Action and Research (AWARE)

AWARE is another NGO in Singapore which cooperated with HOME and TWC2 in advocating the issues and rights about foreign domestic workers in Singapore. AWARE is Singapore's leading gender equality advocacy group in which it believes that it is the rights of women and men to be informed and responsible choices about their lives and to have equal opportunities. AWARE is contributed in stands for removing gender-based barriers. The barriers that means is apply both women and men, but due to the fact that the way human society has evolved, it is women who are more likely to come up against these barriers. Thus, AWARE works to identify and eliminate as possible towards the barriers through research and advocacy, education and training, as well as training and support training.

a. The Establishment of AWARE

In late 1984, a group of women who had participated in the seminar of "Women's Choices, Women's Lives" decided and thought that they need to do something more than just make or listen to speeches about the current situation of women who works in Singapore. As it is going through some discussion, they felt that they need a women's group in which able to campaign for gender equality in a coherent and consistent great way with its based on understanding the issues through research. Thus, AWARE was formed and it was officially emerged into being on 25th November 1985. By the establishment of AWARE, a vision and

mission then appeared and a value was added as the main purposes of the emerging association called AWARE.

AWARE Vision is to promote a society which has true gender equality – where men and women are valued individuals free to make informed and responsible choices about their own lives. Meanwhile, the mission of AWARE is to remove all gender-based barriers to allow individuals in Singapore develop their potential to the fullest and realize their personal visions and hope of lives. In realizing the vision and mission, AWARE has three main points in creating it, such as conducting research and advocacy, education and training, and support services. In addition, AWARE also adding three main values in correlation with their vision and mission. The first value is embracing diversity and promoting understanding as to accept the diversity. Second value is respecting individual and the choice they made in life as well as to support them when it is needed. The third value is creating a believe that woman should have freedom of choice over her reproductive and other privacy right in their lives. Thus, the establishment of AWARE, this association has already a strategic plan guides towards their work in purposed to respond their goals in which to the society that respects the human rights of all.

b. The Role of AWARE in assisting the Female Migrant Domestic

Workers Issue

Since the establishment of AWARE in 1985, AWARE has carried out research into numerous issues affecting women, including workplace sexual harassment which usually experienced by the foreign domestic workers in Singapore, poverty of older women and Singapore's compliance in standards with

UN anti-gender discrimination. AWARE also provides a feminist perspective in the national dialogue in which it has effectively advocate against laws, public policies, and mindsets that discriminates women. As a result, AWARE has contributed towards the strengthening of law which dealing with domestic violence (AWARE, 2016).

However, what AWARE has done in their role in maximizing their capacity to advocates some issues has connection and strong relations in responding to the issue of foreign domestic worker protection in Singapore. Thus, from the capabilities and experiences that AWARE has accomplished back then, HOME emerges a partnership with AWARE in advocating the issue by changing the law or give recommendation to the policy makers regarding the policy.

AWARE conducted researches and advocacies as their main roles as an association. AWARE also has maximized their researches and publications by publishing articles, journals, and reports in almost every year in purpose to provide information. Besides that, as one of their advocacy step is emerging campaigns called “We Can! Singapore” and “S.H.OUT!” which means Sexual Harassment Out. Their campaign is indirectly succeeded in raise the people’s awareness towards the relating problem experienced by the domestic workers in Singapore in which they become one of the victims of the main issues. As a result, AWARE also provide a counter plan or recommendation for the government in order give more particular attention towards their policies regarding the foreign domestic workers’ issues. Thus, through this campaign and action, AWARE has contributed to advocate the issues of female domestic workers in Singapore.

B. Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics Partners in Indonesia

In accordance with the meaning of NGOs advocacy in the subtypes of class advocacy, HOME also has emerged partnership to make a coalition and cooperation with the local NGOs based in Indonesia. HOME conducted partnership with SMS which still under the same leadership of Ms. Bridget Lew Tan as a sister organization which the concerns is to provide shelter for the trafficking or sex exploitation of Indonesian domestic workers in Singapore. Nowadays, SMS has been changed to *Viva Wanita* with the same vision and mission which are to set up a shelter to combat human trafficking and labor exploitation Indonesian domestic workers from Singapore and also Malaysia. SMS was established when the *Viva Wanita* has not yet emerge, by then *Viva Wanita* is already emerge, then they combine and work together as *Viva Wanita*.

1. The Establishment of Yayasan Dunia Viva Wanita

Yayasan Dunia Viva Wanita, is a non-profit foundation which established in 2011 and dedicated to support the grass root projects including shelter services, women's empowerment, youth training, HIV prevention and research. *Viva Wanita* and SMS jointly provide shelter, reintegration and rehabilitative programs and services to migrant domestic workers which just return or being repatriated from Singapore.

Before it was named as *Viva Wanita*, this organization is a former organization called *Solidaritas Migran Scalabrini* (SMS) which stands as a sister organization of HOME. *Viva Wanita* was emerged on 19th January 2011 with the

aims to protect women and children from human trafficking and labor exploitation which the office is located in Batam, Indonesia. Batam is an island of the Riau Islands which takes 45 minutes ride riding a ferry from Singapore and has become a point of transit and destination for Indonesian domestic workers from Singapore which may lead and cause the trafficking. The main purpose of the foundation establishment is to provide a shelter for the victims of human trafficking and those who repatriate from Singapore as an Indonesian foreign domestic worker.

2. The Role of *Viva Wanita* in assisting the Indonesian Domestic Workers in Singapore

Since its establishment, *Viva Wanita* has a vision and mission concerning and focusing on empower women at the grassroots in order to take responsibility for the betterment of their lives. As in addition, the mission of *Viva Wanita* focuses on three main points. First, educate as the basic foundation of human development. Second, empower the women in entrepreneurial skills and other skills that may become one of their capacity building skills for the women. Third, engage which means engaging with the communities to achieve its mission as to build better lives for all.

In maximizing their role in advocating the issue of Indonesian domestic workers, *Viva Wanita* provides shelter housing assistance for migrant women and children in which most of them are the victims of human trafficking and labor exploitation. The main purpose of this foundation is to provide a shelter for those who need especially for the women and children in which most of them are being repatriated or being the victim of human trafficking. In addition from different

focus, *Viva Wanita* has worked together with HOME in creating draft reports and conducting research to provide more accurate information about the Indonesian foreign domestic workers in Singapore or those who are in *Viva Wanita* shelter as need a place to rescue themselves. (Humanitarian Organization for Migrations Economic., 2012). Along with HOME, *Viva Wanita* also conducts several recommendations for the government of Indonesia especially, to ratify some convention in which related with the Indonesian foreign domestic workers in Singapore. Most of the conventions have its relations with the domestic worker's rights and protection that need to be implemented by the government from both states.