

AUGUST 2024

WE DOMESTIC WORKERS

A ZINE BY **KALAYAAN'S** CAMPAIGNING GROUP



Kalayaan (est. 1987) is a charity which provides advice and support to migrant domestic workers and campaigns for the rights of migrant domestic workers in the UK.

We provide immigration advice and casework and are a First Responder to the National Referral Mechanism, the system for identifying survivors of trafficking and modern slavery.

We are a member of the Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group and Labour Exploitation Advisory Group.

We also provide English classes and run a community engagement programme.

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The members of our Campaigning Group all have different circumstances and immigration statuses. Many of us live under precarious circumstances. All photographs and words have been used with the individual's full consent and have been part of a collective editing process.

A * indicates where an individual's name has been anonymised and will be marked only in the first instance.

Photographs do not in most cases reflect the identities of the individuals' words they are next to for the same reason.

Kalayaan relies on generous donations of the public and our funders to continue the work we do. To donate, please visit www.kalayaan.org.uk/get-involved/donate or alternatively contact us on 020 7243 2942 or info@kalayaan.org.uk.



Dear Reader,

We are Kalayaan's Campaigning Group.
This Zine contains our work from March – June 2024.

Everyone has a story. These are ours.

We are here to help bring about change in this country for our community so that we can live freely and comfortably without fear. We are here to support people like us.

Our main aim is this: a fairer, more protective visa for migrant domestic workers.

We hope that our voices are heard and given attention.
We want to be recognised as workers and employees.

This Zine details our campaign goals, our thoughts about current conditions in the UK for migrant domestic workers and our personal experiences. It also celebrates important migrant domestic workers in history and their accomplishments as well as engaging with past campaigns through archive photography. It finishes with our creative work and a guide to key organisations supporting migrant domestic workers.

If you are a migrant domestic worker reading this, we hope our words give you hope and strength. You are not alone.

If you are a supporter, we hope this gives you courage to stand with us in the coming years and campaign for improved rights and protections for migrant domestic workers.

Thank you.



**WHAT
ARE WE
CAMPAIGNING
FOR?**

1

AN OVERSEAS DOMESTIC WORKER VISA THAT ADEQUATELY PROTECTS MIGRANT DOMESTIC WORKERS

THE BACKGROUND

Prior to 1998, migrant domestic workers were outside of UK immigration rules, meaning that they did not have any legal recourse from the moment they were separated from the employment of their sponsor.

After over a decade of campaigning, in 1998, an Overseas Domestic Worker visa was brought in which was 1-year long, allowed MDWs to change employer and could be renewed at the end of every year. This visa was internationally recognised as the best way of protecting MDWs, giving them time to seek access to justice, escape cycles of exploitation and change their situation.

In April 2012, this visa was scrapped and replaced with a 6-month, non-renewable

visa which did not allow MDWs to change employer. This was effectively a “tied visa”, meaning that MDWs faced becoming undocumented if they chose to leave their employment. The tied visa saw an increase in reported abuses from MDWs accessing Kalayaan services. Following outcry and pressure to change this restrictive visa regime, in April 2016, a concession was introduced, allowing MDWs to change employers within the 6-month, non-renewable term. In practice, this meant very little given that MDWs who left their initial employers would often only have a matter of weeks to find a new employer before becoming undocumented, leaving them vulnerable and open to further exploitation.

This is the Overseas Domestic Worker visa which is still in place now.

OUR CALL FOR CHANGE

We call for a domestic worker visa that is:

- 12 months' long;
- Renewable;
- Allows the domestic worker to change employer; and
- Leads to settlement
- Option for family reunification

This would give us agency as workers, allowing us to leave precarious employment and access our labour rights. It would also protect more migrant domestic workers across the spectrum of exploitation, not just those who meet a high legal bar as victims of trafficking and modern slavery. Finally, it would make more economic sense for the UK – we want to pay taxes and contribute to the British economy through formalised employment rather than be forced underground and/or locked out through no right to work.

For further information about our campaign for the visa, please read Kalayaan's recent policy report '12 Years of Modern Slavery'.

2

THE RIGHT TO WORK FOR ALL MIGRANT DOMESTIC WORKERS IN THE NATIONAL REFERRAL MECHANISM

THE BACKGROUND

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is the system for identifying and providing support to survivors of trafficking and modern slavery. Survivors are referred by select First Responder organisations and receive a first Reasonable Grounds (RG) decision based on initial evidence before going on to receive a final Conclusive Grounds (CG) decision after submissions of further evidence. Kalayaan statistics show that the wait time between an RG decision and CG decision is on average 2.5 years, in the worst cases rising to up to 5 years.

Migrant domestic workers who enter the NRM, typically on grounds of domestic servitude, are not automatically granted the right to work during this period. If a

+RG decision is made before their ODW visa expires then they retain the right to work as a domestic worker while their case is being decided; if not, they languish in the system on a minimal support allowance or risk working in underground, often exploitative employments.

This is not fair and is often completely arbitrary. Individuals who have been subject to high levels of control cannot choose when they are able to leave their employment and seek help. It punishes those who run out of time or who only become aware of support later on as well as those on waiting lists to receive support from First Responder organisations.

OUR CALL FOR CHANGE

Grant all potential victims of trafficking the right to work while their cases are being decided in the NRM, including migrant domestic workers.

This will ensure they are treated with dignity, given agency and independence and can become active participants in the UK economy. It will also add another layer of protection around the risks of being re-exploited as the pressures that lead to migrant domestic workers taking up unsafe employment in the first place do not suddenly evaporate once they enter the NRM.

BETTER MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF EMPLOYERS OF MIGRANT DOMESTIC WORKERS

THE BACKGROUND

There is very little accountability for employers who subject migrant domestic workers to conditions of modern slavery in the UK. Labour enforcement bodies are several and incoherent with action very rarely taken against employers. Labour inspectors cannot enter private households without permission from the owner or a warrant, meaning it is extremely rare for successful monitoring of these workplaces to occur.

In cases of domestic servitude, there is often a lack of physical evidence which makes it very rare for criminal convictions, or even charges, to be

made against an exploitative employer for human trafficking or modern slavery offences. These employers often don't face accountability for their actions and may continue to employ migrant domestic workers in the UK.

It is currently very difficult for workers to access justice: overseas employers can leave the country easily, prosecution thresholds may not be met, civil claims cannot be enforced, and the justice system is complex, protracted and time consuming, especially for workers who are unfamiliar with it and who cannot afford legal representation.

OUR CALL FOR CHANGE

We ask for the UK government to implement a Single Enforcement Body, as recommended by multiple actors in the anti-trafficking sector, to make it easier and more secure for workers to report breaches and access justice.

We call for stronger solutions to be devised to monitor working conditions in private households. For example, we ask that the UK government considers making it a requirement that employers applying for the ODW visa register their employees with HMRC in order to monitor payment of the National Minimum Wage.

We call for better monitoring and accountability on all fronts.

Dear MPs and Policymakers,

For over 12 years, Kalayaan (Justice for Migrant Domestic Workers) has been fighting for the reinstatement of the original overseas domestic worker visa, a system in place until April 2012. It wasn't perfect, but it enabled domestic workers to change employers, renew our visas and provide a pathway to citizenship.

Under the current visa regime for migrant domestic workers, after 6 months we become undocumented if we do not return overseas. Alternatively we can apply to a system designed for trafficked women, which sometimes applies but still denies us our basic rights to sustainable living.

Having migrated to provide for our families, years go by without being able to visit them for birthdays, Christmas, our children's graduation and even funerals. We are driven into the most exploitative and violent homes for work.

I would like you to meet with me and fellow migrant domestic workers who are your constituents on behalf of Kalayaan to discuss ways you can help and support us to end the abuse and exploitation of domestic workers like me.

You can also support and help Kalayaan's Campaigning Group.

Your support would make a real difference.

Sincerely yours,

Malaya*



Q&A

We got together to discuss and answer some important questions about the visa, our experiences as migrant domestic workers here, what we want the world to know about us and the change we want to help bring about.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE CURRENT OVERSEAS DOMESTIC WORKER VISA?

Bernila*: The current overseas domestic worker visa is only granted for a short time and it's not enough for us! We need more time because we want to work for our families.

Mae*, Luna*, Marikit*, Heyam* and Zofia*: It is difficult to get the current overseas domestic worker visa and the law is always changing. Before it was easier to get the domestic worker visa and extend it but not now.

NOEMI*:
The current overseas domestic worker visa is only granted for a very limited amount of time.

Sampaguita*: There is no way of renewing the current domestic worker visa.

Lucy*, Jaya*, Malaya* and Jhoanna: For now, they give us a chance to have a visa but it's limited and not renewable. It's not fair for us.

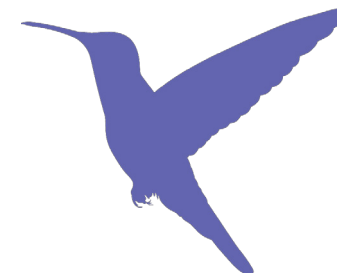
Tina*, Chandran and Indira: At present,

it is difficult to find work as a domestic worker abroad because it is difficult to get a ODW Visa.

Evelyn: *Overseas domestic worker via ang mga Employer ang hindi sinusunod ang Karapatan ng isang mangagawa. Hindi binibigyan ng tamang pasahod ang employado.*

[The employers of overseas domestic workers do not comply with laws about the rights of an employee. The employee is not given a proper wage.]

Maria*: If you are recognised as a domestic worker who has been a victim of trafficking and modern slavery, then the maximum visa they can give is only 2 years. There is no approval after that to renew the visa.



WHAT IS IT LIKE BEING A DOMESTIC WORKER IN THE UK NOW?

Mae, Luna, Marikit, Heyam, Zofia: It is terrible, especially when you are looking for a job because most employers are looking for a work permit or BRP card, which you aren't given after your initial 6-month visa has expired, even if you are recognised as a potential victim of trafficking in the National Referral Mechanism and retain the Right to Work. Some employers don't want to accept it if someone is under the NRM, even if they have the right to work. They are afraid of having a penalty against them if they will accept us and they are not familiar with the NRM. Sometimes it is so difficult to explain our side. Some employers take advantage of us by not giving us holiday. Employers don't want to hassle themselves in applying for our income tax and national insurance to be correctly paid and deducted.

Himig*: As an overseas Filipino domestic worker in Hong Kong for more than 17 years who has returned back to the Philippines, I understand a lot of Filipinos have good reason to work abroad. One reason is family; we are sacrificing for the sake of our families. Living and working here in the UK as a domestic worker is not different to the other countries that I worked in where I would care, keep the house clean and take care of everything.

Mae, Luna, Marikit, Heyam, Zofia: The life of a domestic worker in the UK now is good because there are more charity

organisations like Kalayaan, Salvation Army, Waling Waling and more that work to protect the overseas domestic workers..

Sampaguita: Domestic workers want to work in the UK.

RUTH*:

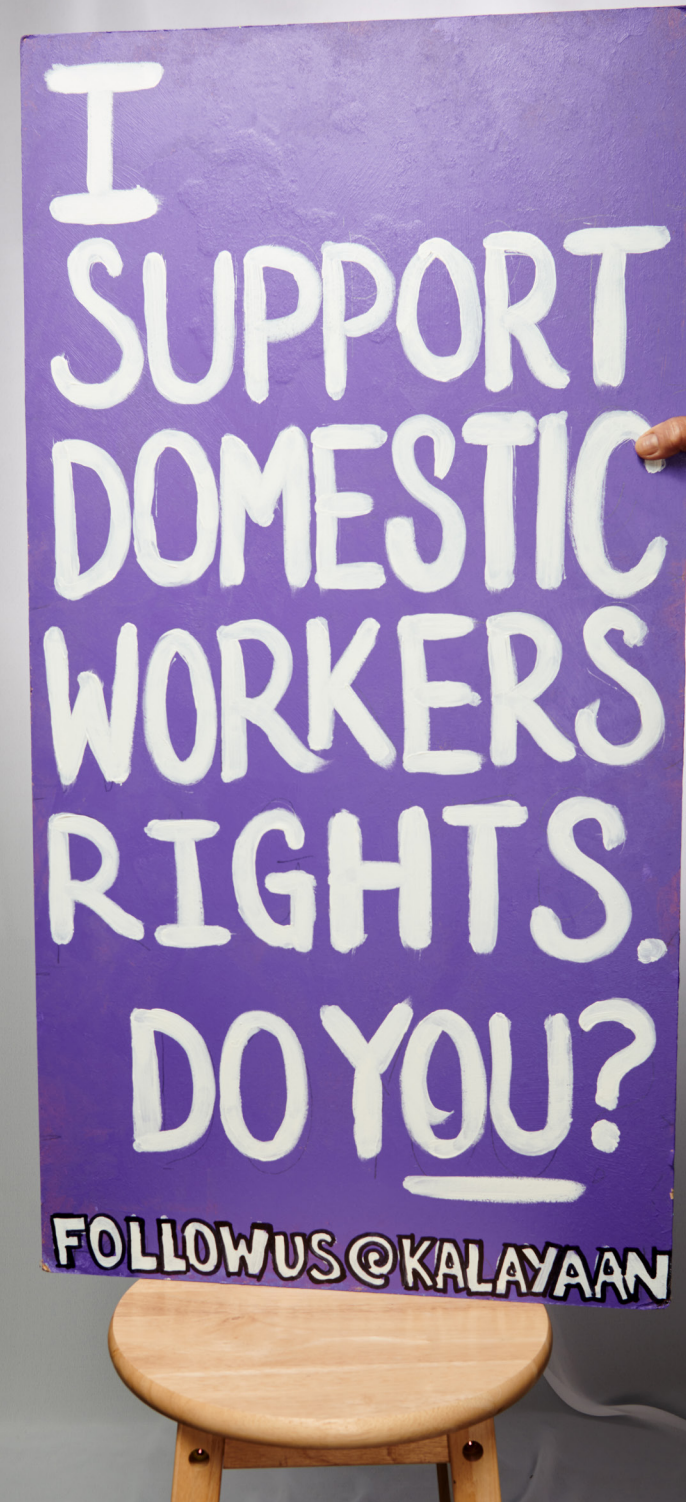
**I want to work as
a housemaid in the UK
and to be able to find
good employment.
As well as this, I want
to become more
confident and build
trust for myself.**

Evelyn: The recently proposed changes to the immigration rules made by the government pose a serious risk to the future of migrant workers here in the UK.

Noemi: For everyone who has a visa and can work legally here, it is beneficial to be a domestic worker in the UK, as they can benefit from what government has to offer.

Tina, Chandran, Indira: Now, I like working in the UK as a domestic worker, but getting a ODW Visa has been difficult.

Maria: We want to work in the UK.



WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE THE WORLD TO KNOW ABOUT DOMESTIC WORKERS?

Himig: I want the world to know that domestic work is the hardest job to do as an individual.

Maria: That domestic workers are working hard.

BERNILA:
I would like
the world to know
that being a domestic
worker is not easy.
It is not easy
to leave our own
family to work
in another country
where we are far
away from them.

Noemi: I would like the world to know that, for domestic workers, it is not really easy for us to be away from our families but we have to work as domestic workers because this is the only way we can get a good salary.

Sampaguita: That domestic workers work hard.

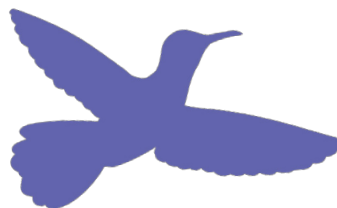
Mae, Luna, Marikit, Heyam and Zofia: We all know that domestic workers are the backbone of society – that is why we need

to have the assurance that we are working here legally to support ourselves and our families.

Jaya: We are all suffering trying to support ourselves and support our family. It is a very difficult life. It would be much better if we could renew our visa – it would give us freedom, and happiness...

Tina, Chandran and Indira: Sometimes we get good domestic work. Sometimes, we don't get good domestic work.

EVELYN:
Domestic work
is important to
the world as well.
We do hard work
and continue
empowering
our community
together.



WHAT CHANGES WOULD YOU LIKE POLICYMAKERS AND POLITICIANS TO MAKE?

Noemi: We would like to ask the policymakers not to be strict towards overseas domestic workers – to give us the chance to have a visa or renew the visa, and not only for a short time. If we had a working visa that we could renew every time our visa expired that would give us the freedom to access our rights as overseas workers.

Evelyn: Policy makers and politicians: give migrant workers the right to work. *Dahil kung may legal visa ang isang worker* [if a worker has a legal visa], we can contribute to our society.

SAMPAGUITA:
We hope that
the politicians who
win this election
look back to
the people,
especially to the
domestic workers.

Ruth: All the changes this year around asylum - it's all political. There have been so many difficult changes this year; for too many people, it is too difficult for them. We want to have a visa to continue to work

here and we need to focus on those who influence UK policy, including advisors and civil servants, and talk to the media.

Mae, Luna, Marikit, Heyam and Zofia:
To give us rights to have a visa, to make it easier for us to have a visa, and to hear our side and give us a chance.

Mae, Luna, Marikit, Heyam and Zofia:
We, the undocumented domestic workers, ask a favour to Parliament. We would like policymakers and politicians to give an amnesty to all undocumented domestic workers in the UK.

Maria: We hope the politicians who win this election help the people's rights and especially the domestic workers.

Tina, Chandran, Indira: We think our wages should be increased per hour and domestic workers should be guaranteed bank holidays off. Each week, domestic workers should be guaranteed 5 working days and 2 days off.

Himig: Actually, nowadays the policymakers and politicians have made it more difficult for us domestic workers in the UK. I want to make sure that all politicians are aware of our situation, give it consideration and prioritise our needs.

MIGRANT DOMESTIC WORKERS THROUGH HISTORY

Migrant domestic workers are often silenced, made invisible and told not to take up space. We continued our project by researching the lives of some key migrant domestic workers through history to celebrate their work and accomplishments and bring them to the attention of our readers. By doing so, we felt grounded in a sense of place and strengthened in hope: we have always been here.

How many of our key figures did you know about before?

OUR THOUGHTS ON THE AYAHS AND AMAHS OF AYAH'S HOME

In the days of the British Empire, thousands of nannies from India, China, Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Malaysia and Indonesia travelled to London to look after the children of the families they



were employed by. Many nannies were abandoned here and made destitute.

In Hackney, an Ayah's Home existed which housed up to 200 nannies a year.

The Home was commemorated by a blue plaque after Farhanah Mamoojee campaigned for it to be recognised within a history of caregivers in Britain.

Source: Ayahs' Home: Remembering the forgotten Indian nannies of London - BBC News

Image: © Historic England/The English Heritage Trust

Tina: Looking at a photo of one of the Ayahs, *ham kahte hain ki ham is mahila se sehmat hain* [We say that we agree with this woman]. She worked a lot like me for not very much money. I wish I could

meet her now. Those people also came to the UK and had to face government rules like us. Now it's a bit better but not so much better. If I could meet them, I would say I was sorry about their situation and would salute them for their work.

I think these women were important. *Bahut taqlif taya* [it was very difficult]...

Jaya: I think it would be good if we had a blue plaque outside Kalayaan to celebrate us!

Himig: Most of these women came from different Asian countries as domestic helpers. They are significant to our situation nowadays as domestic helpers in the UK – I speak as a woman living and working as a domestic worker in the UK. Our stories and journeys as domestic workers are very much connected to these women and their untold stories. I will be honouring the Ayahs' Home by remembering and they will not be forgotten. Not everyone was so lucky to receive shelter, food and support. It was a challenging situation as there was little information and knowledge available for migrant domestic workers.

If I could speak to these women, I would say congratulations for the work you have done. Because of you many women all over the world have great hope to fight the great fight for our families and future generations.

OUR THOUGHTS ON JOSEPHINE WONG

Josephine Wong is a Filipina migrant domestic worker who took her employer, an international diplomat, to the Employment Tribunal for breaches of employment law including unpaid wages. Ms. Wong's employer argued that he should be protected from facing the law because of diplomatic immunity, however this was challenged by Ms. Wong's side and the case ultimately ended up in the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court's judgement held that Ms. Wong was subject to conditions of modern slavery, classed as a commercial activity which is excluded from diplomatic immunity.

Josephine Wong won her case and set a landmark precedent for migrant domestic workers who are survivors of modern slavery and trafficking to seek justice against diplomatic employers in future. Kalayaan provided evidence and representations to the Supreme Court in support of Ms. Wong's case and helped to change the law around diplomatic immunity in trafficking cases.

Source: Press release: Loss of diplomatic immunity for traffickers of domestic workers | Kalayaan

Thata Ladion*: As domestic workers around the world, we need to stand up for who we are. We are not only domestic workers; we also deserve to be treated without discrimination. We need also to fight for our rights as humans and as workers. We need to stand up for what we think. We can give encouragement to

some domestic workers to fight their own fight, especially when it comes to modern slavery and trafficking cases. In my case also I had a similar situation where I reached the Tribunal to fight my case. I have now been granted what I am fighting for as a domestic worker in the UK.

Nimali*: I think Josephine Wong is a fighter woman. She fought for her right to win her case as a domestic worker.

Asma*: She is trying herself to fight for her rights at work and, because of her, employers are now more alert to what their obligations are towards their employees.

Je*: She gives to us inspiration – as a domestic worker, she is a very brave woman.

Evelyn*: What Ms. Wong did was impressive. She is the bravest woman to fight for her rights against her employer who was trying to claim diplomatic immunity but she still won the case.

OUR THOUGHTS ON DOROTHY LEE BOLDEN

Dorothy Lee Bolden was an African American domestic worker who campaigned for domestic workers' rights in the United States from the 1960s onwards. She began by organising on public transport, taking

Image: © National Domestic Workers Union (U.S.) Records, Southern Labor Archives. Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University

Ruth: In my own thoughts, Dorothy is a fighting woman to have survived all of the difficult circumstances in her life.

Himig: Dorothy Lee Bolden is the bravest woman who stood up for the truth, freedom, hope and the mission to have our voice to speak and not to be afraid.

Mae: I think she was an independent woman.



buses across Atlanta and speaking to the women she found travelling home there.

From this she formed a union: the National Domestic Workers Union of America. The NDWU was an education and advocacy group that supported up to 10,000 domestic workers. It taught its members how to negotiate with employers and avail themselves of workplace protections.

Dorothy also helped increase democratic participation amongst domestic workers and became so influential that 3 American presidents consulted her.

Source: Overlooked No More: Dorothy Bolden, Who Started a Movement for Domestic Workers - The New York Times (nytimes.com)

As for her story, most domestic workers have also experienced what she had experienced in her life. The main point of her story is that all domestic workers must be strong and patient although sometimes they are treated like slaves. Even though employers say we are members of their family there is a gap between the employer and the employee. Dorothy had very strong initiative to build a group for all domestic workers to become members of a union.

SPOTLIGHT ON RODELIA PEDRO VILLAR BY MARIKIT, LUNA AND BERNILA

RODELIA PEDRO VILLAR is a 42-year-old domestic helper who comes from Western Visayas in the Philippines and lived in Hong Kong for more than 17 years. She said she wanted to work her network and knowledge to support fellow domestic workers in Hong Kong and care for them through “thick and thin”. In 2017, she founded Domestic Workers’ Corner and started using the group as a platform for communicating with and providing different forms of support to the Domestic Worker Community.



Source: Domestic helper who comes to the rescue of colleagues nominated for Spirit of Hong Kong Awards | South China Morning Post (scmp.com)

OUR THOUGHTS ON THE 10-YEAR-LONG CAMPAIGNERS

Between the late 1980s and 1998, members of Kalayaan, Waling Waling and other organisations campaigned for migrant domestic workers to be recognised under UK law.

Prior to 1998, migrant domestic workers were brought to the UK with their employers as visitors, unable to avail themselves of legal protections as workers and entirely dependent on their employers.

In 1998, after a “10-Year Long Campaign” involving media work to change public opinion and

extensive lobbying, the Labour government introduced an Overseas Domestic Worker visa which was 1-year long and renewable, allowing migrant domestic workers to



be protected under UK employment law and have the agency to leave abusive and unscrupulous employers. The 1998 visa has been internationally recognised as providing the best protections for migrant domestic workers.

It was rescinded in April 2012. For the last 12 years, Kalayaan and other organisations have continued in the footsteps of the 10-Year-Long Campaigners, calling for the reinstatement of a protective and fairer visa for MDWs. We hold out hope that we will be the 12-Year Campaigners...

Source: Kalayaan archive

Flor*: The women campaigning for the 1998 visa had the same experiences as us. We escaped because of physical, emotional and spiritual abuse. As long as there are people who are supporting us and fighting for us, at the end of the day there is still hope to give back the stolen rights to domestic workers.

The government should recognise also that we, domestic workers, are also workers. We are the backbone of society. We multitask and become nannies, doctors, elderly care givers and do all round household tasks. From long years of fighting until now, we are seeking for our rights to renew our visa so that we also contribute by paying taxes to support the government.

Indira, Zofia and Chandran: I think the campaigners in the 1980s were very good. Many Filipinas came here and supported each other.

Now the 6-month visa makes it very difficult. So many people are here in London without visas and without independence.

It is the same idea as today. I think they made a change because they won the visa you could renew. Now we can't renew our visas.

There is hope. Why? Because every leader and government changes and the rules can change.

It shows we should campaign to change the rules for migrant domestic workers and win back the stolen rights we had won before.





TELLING OUR STORIES

Our voices, our words. After a storytelling workshop, we sat down to write about whatever held meaning for us. Most of us wrote about our lives, perhaps because as Evelyn says, we hope it “helps and gives inspiration to others especially those who have experienced the same situation... Even in the most awful circumstances, there is Hope. Speak out and let your voice be heard.”

We wrote our own stories and each other’s stories, asking each other questions and working together. We hope that reading about our experiences brings about awareness.

But most of all, we hope that it brings about change.

EVELYN

WRITTEN BY EVELYN

I, Evelyn, am a mother of two children from a native coastal area in the Philippines where many people depend on farming and fishing for their livelihood.

I hope my story helps and gives inspiration to others especially those who have experienced the same situation as me. This is a story I shared with a popular magazine publication; I just added some situations that I didn't tell during interviews and these are my own words.

After marriage a new chapter of life began but it hasn't been easy. Things were very tough at the time and our family lived hand to mouth. We were forced to borrow money from friends.

When my son started "kinder" school, this added to our financial pressures. I decided to work abroad. I had first moved to United

Arab Emirates (UAE) on a two-year contract as a Housekeeper, sending money to my children back home.

I arrived in UAE in May 2007. I went to the agency's main office and my employer came to collect me.

I soon discovered that things were terrible. I was working for a family who lived in a huge house with six children.

I had a horrible experience in that employer's house. I was treated very badly: the children would shout at me and throw things at me.

My madam was so demanding, demanding that I do one thing and then the other before I even had a chance to finish the first. My male employer was very strict, pointing his finger at things, finding dust on



a surface and telling me off for not cleaning well.

I felt terrible, full of emotions. I would cry a lot. I could not speak to my family because I was not allowed to have a mobile phone.

After two weeks I asked them if I could go back to the agency. My male employer was so upset he shouted at me so that I was terrified. But he did then telephone the agency, hiding the telephone from me after having an initial conversation in Arabic which I didn't understand.

I spoke to the secretary of the agency who could speak Tagalog. She explained to me that I had to stay where I was for two months. She said this was because of the two months' salary deduction. I didn't understand why I had to stay two months, since before I had left the Philippines I had paid the agency a fee of 15,000 pesos. This woman showed no sympathy at all.

During the remaining two months, I continued to work in these awful circumstances. I could not speak to my family.

I was paid nothing at all as I understood that my salary for the first two months had gone to the agency.

I was not allowed to eat until the family had eaten and there was sometimes almost nothing left, save for what was stuck to the pot; I was not permitted to cook for myself; I worked from 6 am until 1 o'clock in morning during a normal working day, except during Ramadan. I slept at 3 am. My room was a storage room with barely any space for me to sleep.

At the end of two months, I said I had to go back to the agency.

I said I thought I would die if I didn't.

They were very angry with me but took me to the agency. When they arrived, my employer spoke to the manager in Arabic so I didn't understand. The manager looked at me, asking me in English why I wouldn't stay with my employers. When I tried to explain, he shouted at me, saying: "Don't talk".

I cried and said I wanted to go home, and the manager then spoke to his secretary, pointing and telling her to put me in a room next door. She took me to the small room and locked the door after me. There were other domestic workers there, all very upset- an Ethiopian woman, Nepali and Indonesian.

I was terrified and didn't know what to do. Later the secretary took me to see the manager, who asked me a few questions, with the secretary translating into Tagalog.

I explained how I had been treated, but it felt as though he didn't believe me. He said that if I wanted to go home, I had to pay 80,000 pesos to cover the expenses

and ticket (my salary in my contract, which I had not yet received, was 1,500 dirhams, roughly 20,000 pesos at the exchange rate). I was really shocked and said I didn't have anything like this money, how could I get hold of it? He answered saying that I had to stop complaining, that he would find me a new employer and that when I was chosen by a new employer, I would have to stay with them until the end of my contract or the next time I complained he would send me to a farm and I would have look after animals in the desert.

I stayed in this room for about two weeks. We slept on the floor.

There was a toilet and shower. We were given plain bread to eat, and we could make ourselves tea, but there was nothing else to eat and the door to the main office was locked. At the weekend the whole building was locked and it was just us in the building.

After two weeks I found a new employer. My life with my second employer was no different to the first employer. They would shout and be rude to me and were unappreciative of the work I had done for them. The Madam was always angry, shouting and slamming the door and, during mealtimes she would throw the food I had cooked at the wall, which I was expected to clear up immediately. When we went to visit her sister's house she would say things to embarrass me,

shouting at me and insulting me in front of the other family members, calling me "stupid", "cow", "crazy" and other bad things.

I did not dare complain because of what the manager at the agency had said. I kept myself strong for the sake of my kids, and waited until my contract had finished.

Before my contract expired - two years from when I had started working - the super typhoon Ondoy devastated the Philippines. This destroyed the crop as well as my family's bamboo house, so we had to have it re-built it completely. I told my female employer that I wanted to renew my employment with another two-year contract. Even though it would be very difficult to continue working with them, I needed to earn all the money I could. I was given no time off during this period. I did not have any friends I could see in the UAE.

Later in 2014, the family went to the UK. One of the girls had been ill and they wanted to get medical treatment there. After that, I stayed and worked at my female employer's sister's house with my female employer and her two boys, who I looked after. I was told in May 2015 that I was to come over to the UK with the two sons because the girl had been diagnosed with leukaemia and needed treatment, requiring us to stay in the UK.

I had never been to the UK before. I did not know anything about working or living in the UK, although I had learnt some English at school. I did not know whether it would be better or worse to live in the UK. I didn't know about the laws here. I was told little

about coming to the UK but understood I would have to remain in the UK until the child's treatment had finished.

On 4th of July 2015, I travelled to the UK with my female employer's sister and the two boys. After arrival, my conditions of employment were even worse in the UK than in the UAE. My job here in the UK was even more difficult as my employer had a new baby and I had to look after the other four children as well. I would go to bed at 2 am, wake up at 6 am and I worked 7 days a week. I was not allowed to take any breaks if I was sick at all.

I was rarely allowed out, even with the employer: I think I went out about 2 times in the 6 months I worked for her in the UK. The first time, I went to Westfield with my female employer and her children in a taxi, and the second time my male employer took me to have photographs taken in a shop. I heard him telling the person at the counter that the picture was for a visa. This made me even more distressed because I knew if I had another visa that meant I would stay longer in the four corners of the house. I had been held like a prisoner in the closed windows of the London flat for 6 months. I had never experienced riding public transport like the London Bus and tube. I didn't see sunlight or inhale fresh air outside. When I looked outside the window, I saw a dog cross the road which was then picked up and carried lovingly by its owner. I felt sorry for myself and my tears didn't stop falling, as I thought, that dog was treated better than I was.

I was so exhausted that all of this made me think of trying to escape. I had to find a

way out.

I contacted a friend from the Philippines whom I knew was living in the UK as we had become friends on Facebook. I used Facebook on my secret mobile phone to exchange messages to ask for help. I told her that I felt I could not continue working for my employer and felt I was going to die. She agreed to meet me at a McDonald's that I had seen when my male employer took me for photographs because it was opposite the photography shop.

I left secretly early one morning when my employer and the children were all asleep. There was a concierge in the hallway. I was afraid that he might stop me. As I got to the door and couldn't immediately see how to open it for the first time by myself, I panicked, but in fact, I managed to open the door and he didn't do anything to stop me leaving, he just watched. I had with me only a small shopping bag for my personal things.

After meeting with my friend at McDonald's, straight away we took a train to go to the Kalayaan office, a British charity for migrant domestic workers. Kalayaan explained to me that I was likely a victim of modern slavery.

Modern slavery is a crime in the UK, punishable by law.

But I chose not to press charges against my employers, afraid and overwhelmed by the

police process. I was in a state of shock and vulnerable at that time.

A Kalayaan case worker helped me with everything, providing me with a good solicitor and I began the process of entering the government's National Referral Mechanism.

I was not allowed to work at that time. I moved to a safe house in Wales and was given £35 a week to live on via the Salvation Army. My solicitor helped me to successfully bring an asylum claim. I was finally able to re-start my life in the UK and brought my family here in 2019.

For a long time it did not occur to me to seek to escape; all I knew was that I had to keep providing for my family. However, as time went by I felt that I could not survive the ongoing abuse and exploitation. I became mentally and physically exhausted from the long hours, sleep deprivation and

abusive treatment and in January started to believe that I could not survive the exhaustion. I felt that I was dying.

I thought of my children and how they were dependent on me, and the thought that I might not survive the exhaustion moved me to seek to escape.

Life is ok now - I am working and my husband is working too. My family is together, my 2 children, now adults, were able to go to university. My son is taking an IT course but he wants to shift to a police course and my daughter is undertaking a paediatric nursing course. Despite all of the hardship and suffering I went through, I need people to know that anyone in the same situation shouldn't hesitate to ask for help. Even in the most awful circumstances, there is Hope. Speak out and let your voice be heard.



MARIKIT

WRITTEN BY MARIKIT

Marikit is from the Philippines and worked as a domestic worker in the United Arab Emirates. She travelled abroad to work in 2015 to help her family and support her husband.

In the United Arab Emirates, Marikit started working from Monday to Sunday. She began work at 5am and finished at midnight. She worked all around the house: babysitting, cleaning, ironing etc.

She had no day off. Her salary was very little and she was not allowed to use her mobile phone.

She used the mobile phone of her employer if she had to make a call to her family. There was not enough food to eat.

Her employer was very fussy; she was always angry and shouted if she saw even a small amount of dust on the surfaces. Her employers were verbally abusive. Marikit found working for them tough.

Although Marikit found it tough she stayed with them because she wanted to work to support her family. She feared that if she changed employer she might find someone worse.

In 2022, Marikit was brought to the UK by her employer who was holidaying there. She was told that she would be looking after the child. They stayed in a rental house. She worked the same roles: a nanny, a cook, a cleaner etc. She had to work for 7 days a week, without a day off and with just a short break when she would eat her food. Marikit was not paid while in the UK.

Marikit ran away from her employer after they told her off and got upset with her. Her employer shouted at her and told Marikit that they did not bring her to the UK to relax. Marikit ran away while she was alone in the flat. She was scared and nervous because she didn't have any friends in the UK.

While Marikit was walking in the street, she was crying. One Filipina lady helped her and brought her to her rented room and gave her food and clothes. The lady advised her to go to Kalayaan. She told Marikit that Kalayaan is the organisation helping domestic workers. Marikit was very thankful that Kalayaan helped her with her problems.

RUTH

WRITTEN BY RUTH

Ako po si Ruth, galing ng UAE as domestic helper, 15 years. Na dinala ng employer, wala akong balak umalis pero napilitan ako, dahil sa pang aabuso niya.

Dayalun(?) ako'y pinapahiya at sinasaktan, di pinapakain, anggan, dumating ang punto na kinukulang ako. Sabi niya crazy ako at laging binabato ng hanger at pyrex. Tinatapon mga pagkain niluluto ko, diko alam kung bakit. Walang sariling kwarto at higaan, di pinapakain kahit isang itlog, walang tawagan ng c.p. (cell phone). Linuluha, emotionally, mentally, physically. Anggan ngayon di pa rin maka-recover, pero dito lang Kalayaan tumutulong sa akin. Nag iisip kung paano makapagwork kung may worth(?) parin ako.

Ang nangyari sa akin nuon, madami dumating pagsubok, buhat malait.

I am Ruth, having come from UAE as a domestic helper for 15 years. I was brought along with my employer. I had no plans to leave but I was forced because of their abuse.

I was being humiliated, hurt, and not fed, until it got to a point when I was confined. My employer pulled my hair if the food was not prepared. They said I was crazy, and would always hit me with a hanger and Pyrex. They would throw the food I cooked, I'm unsure why. I didn't have my own room or bed, not even given an egg to eat, and no calling on my cell phone. I weep, emotionally, mentally, physically. Until now I have not recovered, but Kalayaan is here to help me. I think about how I can continue working and whether I still have any self-worth.

Anggan ngayon, nagtrabaho at nangarap, pa sawing palad, di ko naranasan naging masaya at walang freedom.

Anggan, laging wala ako tiwala sarili ko, dahil sa pang aabuso ng isang amo. Inalis ako sa sarili ko, lagi ako sinasabihan sira ulo, walang alam, at mawala na ako. Lalo na, pag lumalabas ako, di ako makapag isa, lagi takot, nini nervous at nahihilo. Anggang, pabalik-balik yung nakaraan ko sa buhay. Lalo na sa family, sunod-sunod nawawala. Diko alam paano ako makarecover, lalo na sa pinanggalingan ko. Lagi ako litong-lito parin. Tapos nakalipat ako, medyo kabado parin. Hilo ko di ko mawari at di parin mapalagay pero pinipilit ko magbago, at mabago buhay ko, at makayanan ko lahat. Kung isasalaysay ko lahat, madami, buti napunta ako sa uk, para maging malaya at maging confident / more strong, pero sana dinadasal ko maging okay lahat. Nararamdaman minsan, naiiyak, lalo na kung takot. Tulad ngayon, sa pagsakay ko ng train, naulit nanaman ang takot ko. Wala ako confidence and trust myself. Ang dumating yung kasama ko nakampante ang loob ko at masaya ako na papunta Kalayaan.

What has happened to me before - a lot of evil challenges arrived. Until now I worked and dreamed, but unfortunately, I have never experienced being happy and I have no freedom. Until now, I often do not have trust in myself because of abuse from my employer. I was taken away from myself, often being told that I was crazy, ignorant, and told to go away. On top of that, whenever I go out, I cannot be at peace as I am always fearful, nervous, and I get dizzy. At times like this, my past often comes back to me. Especially concerning my family, who passed away, one after another. I didn't know how I could recover, back to how I used to be. I am always confused; even after I moved, I am still a little nervous. I'm confused, I can't figure it out and I'm still uneasy, but I'm trying very hard to change, and change my life, so as to handle everything. If I tell you everything, it's a lot - it's good that I went to the UK, to be free and confident and strong. I just hope and pray that everything will be okay. Sometimes I feel it, I cry, especially when I'm afraid. Just like today, when I got on the train, my fear came back again. I don't have confidence and trust in myself. When my companion came, I was relieved and I was happy to go to Kalayaan.





HEYAM

WRITTEN BY HEYAM

Ako taga Basilan Province, Mindanao (Philippines).

Andito ako sa UK, mag 7 years na ngayon 10 September, 2024.

Pag gising ko sa umaga nagdasal at tumawag sa anak ko at pamilya ko kasi sobrang miss na miss ko na sila lalo na yung anak.

Ang nangyari sakin umalis sa amo yung nagdala sa'kin dito kase sobrang istrikto sakin halos hindi ako pinapakain. Mabuti na lang may naawa at nagbigay 15 pounds sakin at naka punta ako sa Kalayaan.

Masaya ako kasi may part time na ako para may epadala doon sa anak ko at pamilya ko.

Ramadan, ako din nag fasting sa araw at saka kumain gabi na, noon umpisa 6:30, ako kumain tapos; kumain ulit 11:30, saka ako matulog. Kasi minsan sa umaga may part time ako, para may pambili ng damit ko susuotin at, ipadala doon sa anak ko at pamilya ko kase, kailangan nila ang tulong ko, ako lang ang inaasahan nila lahat.

I am from Basilan Province, Mindanao (Philippines).

I have been here in the UK for 7 years this coming September.

When I wake up in the morning, I pray and call my child and family because I miss them very much, especially my child.

What had happened to me was that I left my employer, the one who had brought me here to the UK because they were very strict to me and were hardly feeding me any food. Thank goodness someone took pity on me and gave me £15, which helped me go to Kalayaan.

I'm happy that I have a part-time job now, and have money to remit and send to my child and family.

During Ramadan, I fasted during the day and only ate at night. I would start eating from 6:30pm until 11:30pm before sleeping, because at times my part time is in the morning. I work so I have money to buy clothes to wear, and send to my child and family. They need my help, as I am the only one everyone relies on.





BERNILA

WRITTEN BY BERNILA

I'm Bernila, I came from Philippines and I have been here 5 years in the UK. I have 5 children in the Philippines and I am a single mother. I call them every day, so that I know if they are doing well.

I came to the UK in April 2019 with my employers from Saudi Arabia. They were not good to me and my salary was very little. I didn't have a day off and was working long hours.

At the end of that first month working here, I ran away from them. I was so nervous at that time until my friend collected me from the train station. She is a Filipina who has been working here for 15 years already. I met her when I was throwing out the garbage outside the house of my employer and she asked me if my employer was good. I said no and she told me to run away from them.

The next day before my employer came back to their place, I ran away. I stayed with my friend in her accommodation and she fed me every day. She went out to work as a cleaner and I went with her. I helped her to clean or do some work and she gave me some money every week so I could buy personal items.

This was until we met a Filipina lady on the bus who told me to go to Kalayaan because they could help me with my situation. It turned out to be true – with their help I received my first decision from the Home Office and I hope they will give me a visa some day so that I can go home to see my family and then can come back to the UK to work for my children. I'm so thankful to Kalayaan.



A CONVERSATION: CHANDRAN & MARIA

Maria: Where are you from?

Chandran: I am from India. I have been here for 24 years and I had no visa for 20 years. I did not tell the Home Office I was working. I spent £7000 on a lawyer and I went to the High Court. When I was in the court I became unwell as I have diabetes. Even the judge stopped talking because he saw I was unwell and told me to rest and have some food.

What about you?

Maria: I am from the Philippines. Every 3 months we would come from Abu Dhabi to England. I had been coming to England since 2017. I ran away from my employer in 2019 because they didn't treat me like a human; they treated me like an animal. I tried to stay because I needed that work but I wanted to escape because my salary

was only little.

What is your situation here?

Chandran: I applied for a 2.5-year visa after 20 years here. I had to prove every year I had been here. Now I have to apply for another visa. It is very difficult to become a British citizen. You need to be able to write in English, study... It is very difficult. Now I am 62. It is very hard for me. There are many people in the same situation. I want to be able to stay in this country without having to pass a difficult exam. I feel that this is my mother country now.

Maria: Before in the Philippines, I struggled too much because my husband was not too good. If I talk about my children, I cry. Before I wanted to kill myself but my daughter kept me alive. I

had to go to Abu Dhabi to earn money for her. I worked there for 4 years and I wasn't treated well. I get stressed when I hear the news about Rwanda – even though it has been explained now that it doesn't apply to me. I just want to work in this country.

Chandran: My life is only here. I have good friends but sometimes I feel alone. Everybody needs money from us and asks all the time. I made money for 24 years so that my sister could buy a house. But my own life is not secure. Who will look after me? My own family do not support me. On the outside I am happy, I am laughing but inside I am crying. I have had so much pain in my life. Now I need to send money for my sister's disabled child. Every month I send money for food and the hospital bills.

Maria. You have a good heart. God knows.

Chandran: It is difficult living a different life away from where you are from.

Maria: I want to stay here and work here. I work part time, sometimes I send money. I cannot bring my children here. I want my child to go to school because she didn't finish her schooling. I haven't had the Right to Work in the National Referral Mechanism – I want only the chance to stay here and work. I am old.

Chandran: You are not old! You are 55 – I am 62. Plenty of people are getting married again after the age of 55!



FLOR

WRITTEN BY LUCY

Flor was working as a domestic worker in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Her life was not easy because she worked all around and helped look after her employer's three children. She didn't have time to eat and the food was leftovers from her employer's meals. She was not allowed to cook her own food. She had lack of sleep as well and no day off.

She arrived in the UK in 2022 and met a friend within the Voice of Domestic Workers. They helped her to escape from her employer and referred her to Kalayaan. There she met a caseworker who helped her until she got her positive reasonable grounds decision. Now she has a full-time job and a written agreement of employment particulars.

LUCY

WRITTEN BY FLOR

Lucy worked in Dubai from 2008-2017 as a domestic worker. Her life as a domestic worker has not been easy, full of challenges and struggles. She tried to face all of the obstacles for her family who needed financial support from the salary she got from her employer. She was forced to work from early morning until after everyone else had gone to bed. She was working all around and there was no day off. She couldn't complain and worked until she was sick and lacked sleep and food. Even though all of this happened to her, she kept fighting because she thought of her responsibility to her family, especially to her mother who suffers from diabetes and a tumour in her eyes.

She arrived in the UK in 2017 under her employer's sponsorship. She was happy to arrive in the UK but her employer's treatment of her became worse. She was not eating on time and she slept in the children's room. Every time she made a mistake, she was scolded, even in the public area and her boss would slap her in

front of a lot of people.

In short, her life became worse since she arrived in the UK. That's the time she was emotional, hopeless, stressed and suffered from anxiety attacks. At this time, she decided to escape from her cruel employer.

One day, when she was walking in the street, she met a Filipina woman. She shared her life story with that woman who brought her to Kalayaan. Kalayaan helped her from the beginning to the end until she got a positive Conclusive Grounds decision in the NRM and a 2-year domestic worker visa. Now she is happy. Through the help of Kalayaan she became safe and comfortable living in the UK. She is looking forward to a good future and hopes the government will give her a visa. She is thankful to all the staff at Kalayaan who have supported her from the beginning to the end. She says, "Thank you is not enough to them. God bless everyone."





TINA

WRITTEN BY DEVYANI

My name is Tina. I am from Chhattisgarh, India.

I came to the UK in 2011 with a family. They were working in Singapore and got transferred to the UK. I lived with them for 5 years. They got transferred to Dubai but since I was over 50, I chose to stay here so that I could earn more money.

The current family I work for are not that good as there is no fixed timetable for my work. For example, I was having a shower when I heard frantic knocking and my madam said "Put down your towel and come out to serve guests." Then they came back at 12am with loud music, so I couldn't sleep properly. I wish for rest. I am not able to find a new job because I am over 60. So, I want to apply for a British passport so I can stay here and find a new job. I want my wages to be increased.

JAYA

WRITTEN BY THATA LADION

Maam Jaya is from India. She was a domestic worker in Dubai for 17 years. She came to the UK with her employer and she has been in the UK for 3 years now. Jaya would very much like to work in the UK but the bad thing is that she can't find a job because of her status. Sometimes some of her friends give her part time jobs but not all of the time.

Her past employer in Dubai never gave her any presents or gifts. All they did was abuse her, especially the children she worked for.

JAYA

WRITTEN BY JAYA

I'm very thankful I know Kalayaan and they give me everything I need and all the support I have to survive in my daily life. Until now I am hoping that the government give me a chance to work when the time comes so I have a chance to change employer and find another job.

I'm hoping always until now that the government gives to me and everybody a chance to stay in the UK and give us a visa for a good future. Not only for me but especially for my family who needs my help.

My life since I've been here in the UK until now is very difficult, especially thinking of my family and loved ones in my country.

ZOFIA

WRITTEN BY LUNA

Zofia is from Philippines. She has been working as a domestic worker in the UK for 17 years. She arrived in the UK as a domestic worker in 2007 with her employer. Her employer abused her; her salary was delayed and they held her passport. She left them because of how they treated her.

After leaving her employer, she met a Filipina who pitied her when she told her about her situation. Then she came to Kalayaan and Kalayaan helped her to access a GP and gave her the strength not to be afraid.

Some day everything will be alright.

NOEMI

WRITTEN BY ZOFIA

Noemi arrived in the UK in 2021 with her employer. Her employer abused her and did not give her enough food. *Nalilipa san din siya ng gutom* [She was also starving to death]. She said that sometimes when she took food from the fridge, her employer would look for it. She escaped from her employer because of that. She came to Kalayaan in 2022. Kalayaan helped her access a GP and helped talk to her about her experience with her employer. For now, she is not allowed to work but she receives financial support from Hestia.

NOEMI

WRITTEN BY ROSA

Noemi is 45 years old and she is from Bohol, Philippines. She has been working in this country for 2 years and 2 months. The experience she faced was that she worked in a huge house where she was given many things to do. If she didn't finish all of the tasks within the exact time, she would have to stay longer until it was finished, so she needed to work quickly to get it all done. She was very happy when her employer told her that her work is amazing and she does an excellent job.

She understands that you need a valid Overseas Domestic Worker visa to do domestic work here. She feels worried and scared.

She has financial support and mental health support, a GP, community and a church. She said she needs to campaign and attend organisations. She acknowledges that domestic work is work and asks for the government to instate a domestic worker visa that can be renewed.



GRACE

WRITTEN BY GRACE

I am from India. I have lived in the UK for 14 years. I travel by bus and tube. I like my job but my work is very hard. My job is domestic worker.

SAMPAGUITA

WRITTEN BY SAMPAGUITA

I am a domestic worker who came from Bahrain to London. The first time I heard that my employer would bring me to work in London, I was very happy and thought it was very nice. But after a month here suddenly my employer's attitude towards me changed and it became a very miserable situation in my life. I thought, why am I living for this employer? I was crying, thinking everything is not good. I had somebody to help me, to comfort me and one lady helped to connect me to Kalayaan so I could communicate my situation. Kalayaan was able to give me advice.

“ ”

**Right now,
I am so happy
to have freedom
in myself and
I am thankful.
I hope to find
a new job and
a good employer**

Sampaguita

DIWATA

WRITTEN BY DIWATA

My time in the UK has been good so far. I arrived here on 23 July 2022, with my employer and her one daughter. We lived in a hotel.

It was difficult to stay with them because my employer and her daughter always hurt me and they always shouted at me, ordering me to do things and never giving me enough food. When my employer gave me an allowance to buy food, she would always ask for the change and question why I had used up all my given allowance.

I escaped from my employer when she went to the theatre and called my friends to pick me up from the station. They brought me to their house. Now, I'm so happy to be here in the UK because my friend helped to bring me to Kalayaan where I was given a caseworker. She helped to interview me about my life, myself and she helped me until I was able to receive my papers to allow me to stay in the UK. Now I have the Right to Work here.

LUNA

WRITTEN BY LUNA

I love my family. But because I am poor I need to sacrifice myself just to give them happiness. I worry about my future and what it will bring. But still I am strong and have faith. I hope my life will turn into a better life... I am hoping and praying to Almighty God that he will provide... Sometimes I ask myself, how can I be





successful? I am always reminded of that question day by day.

Thank you for those people who help me when I am down... but there is one person whom I always treasure and that is my mother who is always by my side. My family is what inspires me to be ambitious. Thank you also to the people who are willing to help me. I will always look forward to my life being a successful one.

PRIYA

WRITTEN BY PRIYA

मेरा नाम एस.एस. है।
मैं भारत के झारखंड से हूँ।
मैं 2016 के अगस्त से काम कर रही हूँ।
मैं घर का काम करती हूँ और बहुत खुश हूँ।
मैं सात दिन काम करती हूँ, आराम का समय नहीं मिलता है।
मैं घरेलू काम करती हूँ।
मेरा वेतन कम है और मेरा वेतन बढ़ना चाहिए।
मुझे छुट्टी का पैसा, टिकट का पैसा और बैंक हॉलिडे भी मिलना चाहिए।

My name is Priya.
I am from Jharkhand, India.
I have been working since August 2016.
I do housework, and I am very happy.
I work seven days a week; I don't get any rest time.
I do domestic work.
My salary is low, and it should be increased.
I should get holiday pay, ticket money, and bank holidays.

KARISHMA

WRITTEN BY KARISHMA

मेरा नाम ए.एल. है।
मैं भारत देश की रहने वाली हूँ।
मैं 24 साल से घरेलू काम कर रही हूँ।
यह मेरे लिए बहुत अच्छा रहा है और मैं यहाँ पर रहकर अपनी परिवार की मदद करती हूँ।
मेरा परिवार यहाँ रहता है, इसलिए मैं यहाँ खुश रहती हूँ।
मेरी इच्छा है कि सबके लिए उचित वेतन मिलना चाहिए।
यह मेरी प्रार्थना है कि सबके लिए उचित वेतन और वीजा मिलना चाहिए।

My name is Karishma. I am from India.
I have been doing domestic work for 24 years. It has been very good for me, and I help my family by working here.
My family lives here, so I am happy here.
I wish that everyone would get a fair salary.
It is my prayer that everyone gets a fair salary and a visa.

MARY

WRITTEN BY MARY

मैं दिल्ली, भारत से हूँ। मैं 16 वर्षों से घरों में घरेलू सहायिका (डोमेस्टिक वर्कर) के रूप में काम कर रही हूँ। पहले मैं जापान में काम करती थी। मैं चाहती हूँ कि सभी विदेशी घरेलू कामगारों को अच्छा वेतन मिले और वे अपनी लंच ब्रेक और छुट्टियों को लागू कर सकें। स्वतंत्रता के बिना जीवन नहीं है।

I am from Delhi, India. I have been working as a domestic helper in houses for 16 years, previously in Japan. I would like all overseas domestic workers to get a good salary and be able to enforce their lunch breaks and time off. There is no life without freedom.



WE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN HERE

Our work reflects on those who have come before us, particularly the 10-Year-Long Campaigners from Kalayaan, Waling Waling and other groups who fought for migrant domestic workers to be recognised and protected under UK laws in the 1980s and '90s.

In this section our members produce their own dedication to photographs from the Kalayaan archive that “speak to them” – either through commentary or by holding a visual conversation with those who came before them in side-by-side shots. The black and white stills of migrant domestic workers on pgs. 57-9 were taken by photographer Pia Tryde in the 1990s, some of which were accompanied by letters speaking of fears of immigration enforcement, the financial pressures of providing for family back home and hope for a better future. Despite the changes in the 30 years since, from being outside of the law to living within a restrictive visa regime, these fears and hope still chime with migrant domestic workers in 2024.

These original campaigners won the rights for migrant domestic workers that were subsequently reversed in April 2012. Reflecting on how easily rights can be won and lost surely brings about a sense of despair but the 10-Year-Long Campaigners offer a blueprint and hope for the future: that collective action and change can and does prevail.



(Left) Rita Emmanuel, migrant domestic worker and member of Waling Waling stands at Kalayaan's door looking out (1990s) [taken by journalist, unnamed]; (right) member of Kalayaan's Campaigning Group (2024), at the same door



Member of Kalayaan's Campaigning Group (2024) holds image of early Waling Waling member, Rita Emmanuel.



The lady in this photo looks like she was thinking about fighting for her rights as a migrant domestic worker in the UK. Our goal is to bring good publicity, motivation and vision about the issues affecting migrant domestic workers here.

SAMPAGUITA



I like this photo because it reminds me of freedom. Always I am afraid that someone will shout at me.

This woman is looking outside of the door like me. She looks like she is dreaming... Maybe she is thinking too much, like me, and is looking to God. Maybe she is thinking about whether anyone will help her.

I am learning slowly to be confident leaving the house. I travelled for the first time by myself last week to get

to an employability course where I am working with flowers.

I thank god that there is Kalayaan and Strength and Stem to help me here. I am becoming more confident.

I don't want to close the door. If I close that door, it is dark.

I want to be confident, stronger, not afraid of anyone. I want to come back to my freedom. And I want to have a working visa.

RUTH



Sama samang umaban paka sa lahat. Na sana pakinggan kami ng governu. Kaming mga domestic workers. Pakinggan ang aming mga hilingat sigaw.

It's like everyone is fighting. I hope the government will listen to us. We are domestic workers. Listen to our screams.

MARIA

A member of Kalayaan's Campaigning Group (2024) holds a photo of Low Wage London by Larry Herman; Meeting of Domestic Workers; Transport House, London (2008)





Members of Kalayaan's Campaigning Group (2024) sit alongside Pia Tryde's 1990s exhibition of Waling Waling members.



Members of Kalayaan's Campaigning Group (2024) sit alongside Pia Tryde's 1990s exhibition of Waling Waling members.





Members of Kalayaan's Campaigning Group (2024) sit alongside Pia Tryde's 1990s exhibition of Waling Waling members.

CREATIVE BRIEF

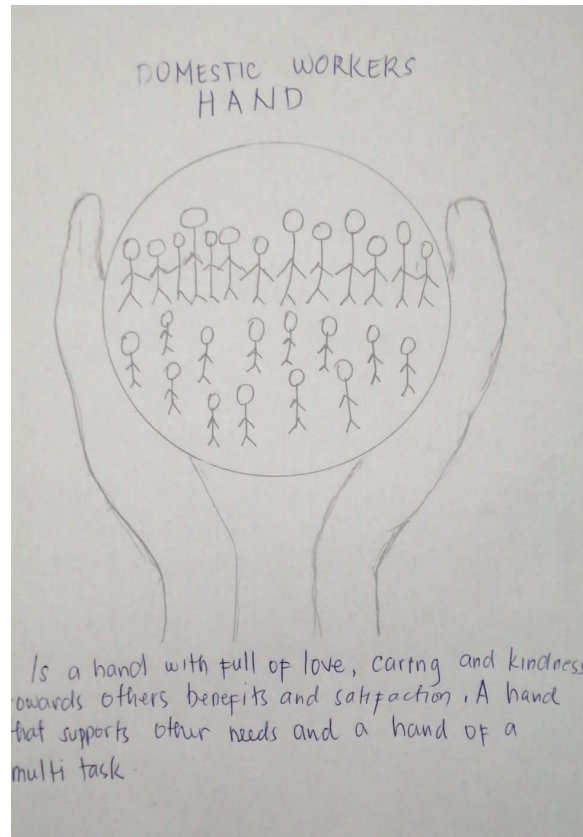
We finished the project by submitting freestyle drawings, photos and pieces of writing that say something about our daily lives or share something with our readers. As domestic workers, making art or experimenting can often seem like a luxury but we urge you to find time to do something that brings you joy. Here we made the space to create.



"Flowers are a simple beauty of nature that bring our everyday feelings to life. They give us admiration and attract our hearts with passion. They encourage us to continue with life, no matter how hard it is.

We will surely bloom the next day."

by Flor



Drawing by Flor

Sa Pilipinas, may isang babaeng nagngangalang Niki na nagkaroon ng matinding pagsubok sa kanyang buhay. Si Niki ay isang mapagmahal na asawa at ina ng tatlong anak. Sa unang tingin, tila masayang pamilya sila. Ngunit ang likas na kaligayahan na inaasahan sa isang pamilya ay nawala sa kanilang tahanan dahil sa pagiging abusado ng kanyang asawa. Sa kabila ng kanyang pagsisikap na panatilihin maayos ang pagsasama, patuloy pa rin siyang sinasaktan at nilalapastangan.

Sa bawat pagsubok na dumating sa kanyang buhay, nagkaroon si Niki ng lakas ng loob na talikuran ang mapanakit na sitwasyon. Sa kabila ng kahirapan at takot, nagdesisyon siyang magsumbong at humingi ng tulong sa kanyang pamilya at mga kaibigan.

Sa tulong ng suporta mula sa mga taong malapit sa kanya, si Niki ay nakalabas sa mapanakit na relasyon. Nagkaroon siya ng bagong simula, kung saan ang pagmamahal, respeto, at kaligayahan ay naging pangunahing bahagi ng kanyang buhay.

Ang kwento ni Niki ay nagpapakita ng lakas ng loob at determinasyon sa kabila ng mga pagsubok sa buhay. Ipinakita niya na kahit gaano kahirap ang sitwasyon, mayroong palaging paraan upang makalaya at mahanap ang tunay na kaligayahan at pagmamahal.

In the Philippines, there was a woman named Niki who was faced with a challenging trial in her life. Niki is a loving wife and mother of three children. At first glance, they seem like a happy family.

But the happiness naturally expected in a family disappeared from their home because of her husband's abusiveness. Despite her efforts to keep the marriage healthy, she is still being hurt and insulted.

With every trial that came in her life, Niki had the courage to turn away from all painful situations. Despite the hardship and fear, she decided to report and ask for help from her family and friends.

With the help and support from people close to her, Niki was able to get out of her abusive relationship. She had a new beginning, wherein love, respect, and happiness became the priorities of her life.

Niki's story shows determination and strength in oneself amidst life's trials. She shows that no matter how difficult the situation, there is always a way to break free and find true happiness and love.

'New Beginnings' by Maria

RUTH'S VEGETABLE PANSIT RECIPE



Ingredients

Olive oil
Onion
Garlic
Celery
Carrot
Beans
Chicharo
(sugar snap peas)
Red bell pepper
Soy sauce
Oyster sauce
Black pepper
Pansit noodles
Onion leaves
Lime

Fry some onion and garlic in olive oil until brown.

Chop your celery, carrots and pepper into small pieces. Chop your broccoli into florets.

Then add to the pan along with chicharo (sugar snap peas) and beans.

Cook your vegetables until they still have a bit of bite (not mushy).

Add oyster sauce and

soy sauce to taste and mix. Season with black pepper.

While cooking the vegetables, soak your dry pansit noodles in warm water with salt for 5 minutes. Then drain in a sieve.

Put the drained noodles in with the vegetables and mix until all cooked.

Garnish with chunks of lime and onion leaves.



"Every time I go to Strength and Stem to arrange flowers, I'm so excited because there are people around me and talking with me. One of them taught me how to arrange flowers. She made a demo and I followed her. She respects and trusts me which helps me to have confidence in myself. If I smell flowers it makes me happy, feel love and smile.

I want a dog also, if it's walking with me I'm so very happy. I like to give it a bath, brush its hair and feed it. I enjoy dogs!"

RUTH

Ako po ay sumulat upang pormal na humiling ng amnestiya upang ako'y mapayagang manatili at magtrabaho dito sa London. Ako po si Zofia at mula noong 2007 ako ay naninirahan at nagtatrabaho bilang domestic helper dito sa lungsod. Sa nakalipas na 17 taon ako ay nagtrabaho ng walang legal na katayuan at labis kong pinagsisihan ang sitwasyong ito. Ako ay lumipat sa London upang suportahan ang aking pamilya sa Pilipinas kung saan ako pangunahing tagapagtaguyod. Angkita ko po dito ay napakahalaga para sa kapakanan at kaligtasan ng aking pamilya, na umaasa sa akin para sa kanilang pangangailangan. Ang aking trabaho bilang domestic helper ang naging lifeline ko at nakatulong upang matugunan ko ang mga pangunahing pangangailangan ng aking pamilya kasma na ang pagkain, tirahan, edukasyon, at pangangalaga ng pangkalusugan. Nauunawaan ko po ang bigat ng aking sitwasyon at ang kahalagahan. Kahalagahan ng pagsunod sa mga batas ng bansa - ako po ay taimtim na humihingi ng inyong habag at pag unawa sa pagbibigay sa akin ng amnestiya. Ako po ay handang ayusin ang aking katayuan at positibong magambag sa komunidad dito sa London. Handa po akong sumunod sa anumang mga kinakailangan o kondisyon na maaaring kailangan upang maisaayos ang aking pananatili. Ako po ay handang magbigay ng anumang sumusuportang ebidensya o dokumentasyon upang suportahan ang aking kahilingan. Mangyari isaalang alang po ninyo ang apela ng pabor dahil ito po ay magbibigay daan sa akin upang patuloy na suportahan ang aking pamilya at mamuhay nang walang takot. Taos puso po aking humihingi ng paumanhin sa anumang abala na maaaring dulot ng aking mga aksyon at umaasa para sa isang positibong resolusyon sa aking sitwasyon. Maraming salamat po sa inyong oras at konsiderasyon. God bless you.

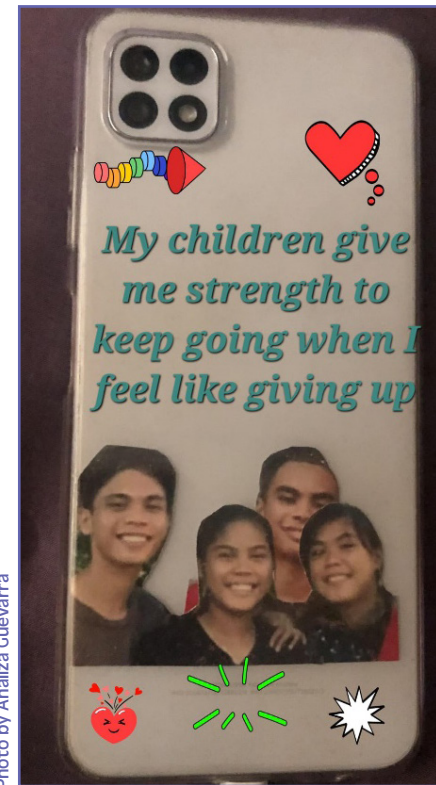
by Zofia

I am writing to formally request amnesty so that I can be allowed to stay and work here in London. I am Zofia, and since 2007 I have been living and working as a domestic helper here in the city. For the past 17 years, I have been working here without a legal status and I have deeply regretted being in this situation. I moved to London to support my family in the Philippines, as I am the breadwinner. I recognise that being here is very important for the welfare and safety of my family, who depend on me for their needs. My work as a domestic helper has become my lifeline and helped me meet the basic needs of my family, including food, shelter, education, and health care. I understand the weight and importance of my situation.

In the importance of following the laws of this country, I am earnestly asking for your compassion and understanding in granting me amnesty. I am ready to restore my status and contribute positively to the community here in London. I am willing to comply with any requirements or conditions that may be necessary to rectify my stay. I am prepared to provide any supporting evidence or documentation to support my request.

Please consider the appeal favourably as it will allow me to continue to support my family for them to live without anxieties. I sincerely apologise for any inconvenience my actions may have caused and hope for a positive resolution to my situation. Thank you very much for your time and consideration. God bless you.

by Zofia



“ ”

Equal Rights for all! Including domestic workers. Let's safeguard the rights of immigrants, ensuring they can live and work with dignity and respect.

Time to reinstate the rights of Migrant Domestic Workers!

MALAYA



The Dog

Once upon a time, I saw a woman walking with a Dog. The woman took the lead off from around the dog's neck. The dog was so lovely, so friendly to all people young and old. In a way of walking, the dog saw another woman walking ahead alone and it seemed like she was very sad.

The dog has a sense of humour. The dog ran behind her, then came to the front of her and looked to the woman. The woman stopped walking and hugged the dog. The dog knew that the woman was so sad walking along the way. The owner and dog then walked ahead of the woman, the dog always looking, watching the woman as they went. The owner said, "Hurry up, we're going to go home."

by Mae



May 2024 punta ako sa Italian Garden ksama q yong mga clase at doon kmi kumain mg slo maganda pki ramdam at masaya

In May 2024, I went to the Italian Gardens at Hyde Park with my English classmates and we had a nice meal there. It felt good and we were happy.

by Sampaguita and Heyam

HOW TO GET SUPPORT

Kalayaan

Kalayaan is a charity which provides advice and support to migrant domestic workers and campaigns for the rights of migrant domestic workers in the UK.

We provide initial immigration advice and casework and are a First Responder to the National Referral Mechanism, meaning we assess, refer and support migrant domestic workers who are potential survivors of modern slavery.

We also provide English classes and community engagement support, including information workshops for migrant domestic workers and a service-user Campaigning Group.

You can self-refer to Kalayaan by contacting us on the details below.

Telephone: +44 (0)20 7243 2942 (please leave a voicemail with your name and contact details if the line is busy)

Email: info@kalayaan.org.uk

Website: www.kalayaan.org.uk

Twitter: @kalayaan

The Voice of Domestic Workers

The Voice of Domestic Workers are a support network and campaign organisation for migrant domestic workers.

They provide educational and community activities for their members including English, computer and media classes. They also provide support networks for migrant domestic workers who are isolated and destitute upon leaving their employers, giving them a safety net and community.

Email: coordinator@thevoiceofdomesticworkers.com

Website: www.thevoiceofdomesticworkers.com

Twitter: @thevoiceofdws

Kanlungan

Kanlungan is an umbrella organisation containing different organisations supporting Filipino, East and South-East Asian migrants in the United Kingdom. Kanlungan provides events and advice around migrant worker rights and welfare and a regular legal clinic with Seraphus.

Phone: 020 3983 1871

Email: info@kanlungan.co.uk

Website: www.kanlungan.org.uk

Twitter: @kanlunganuk

Filipino Domestic Workers' Association (FDWA)

FDWA is a community support hub for migrant domestic workers which advocates for the rights and well-being of migrant domestic workers. FDWA is a member of Kanlungan.

Phone: 07539185071

Email: info@fdwa.org

Website: www.fdwa.org

Work Rights Centre

The Work Rights Centre provides employment law and immigration advice to migrant workers in the UK. Their advice is free, confidential and available in a range of languages. They have a clinic in London and Manchester.

Phone: 0300 4000 100 (Monday - Thursday, 10:00 - 16:00)

Email: contact@workrightscentre.org

Website: www.workrightscentre.org

Twitter: @WORCRights

Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI)

JCWI is an independent national charity fighting for justice in immigration, asylum and nationality law in the UK. JCWI provides a helpline for migrants who are in the UK without status and need legal advice.

Helpline (free and confidential): 0800 160 1004 (Mon, Tues and Thurs 10am-1pm)

Email: info@jcwi.org.uk

Website: www.Wjcwi.org.uk

Twitter: @jcwi_uk

IF YOU THINK YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW MIGHT BE A SURVIVOR OF MODERN SLAVERY:

FOR MIGRANT DOMESTIC WORKERS:

Kalayaan: 020 7243 2942 or info@kalayaan.org.uk

OTHER FIRST RESPONDERS:

Salvation Army (24 hr, free and confidential helpline): 0800 808 3733

Unseen Modern Slavery helpline (24 hr, free and confidential helpline): 08000 121 700

Migrant Help: 01304 203977 / **Out of Hours:** 07766 668781

Medaille Trust: 0800 06 999 16

FOR WALES:

BAWSO (24 hr, free and confidential helpline): 0800 7318 147



THANKS

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By **Pia Tryde** and **Larry Herman**

Kalayaan relies on generous donations of the public and our funders to continue the work we do. To donate, please visit www.kalayaan.org.uk/get-involved/donate or alternatively contact us on 020 7243 2942 or info@kalayaan.org.uk.



THOUGHTS ON THE PRESENT HOPES OF THE FUTURE

"Empower, Respect, Advocate
Domestic Workers Are Workers
Not slaves"

Right to settlement

Recognize the Domestic Workers

Give back the stolen rights
for the domestic workers

Right to
renew visa

Migrant worker are
the backbone of
the society

6 months is not
enough to change
employer

We want equal rights
Because human rights
is migrant rights.

Improved quality of MSVCC
Support for server people
in NRM