

Fight for justice! A story of a transient worker; “Nobody takes care of me”

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Who are Transient workers?

Transient workers are people who migrate to other countries away from their hometown. Many come to Singapore to work as construction workers or domestic helpers. When they get their earnings, they send the money back to their family in their hometown to support their life.

Many of the workers come here to seek brighter future and the hope of earning a lot of money, but what they had awaited was something they have never expected.



Have you seen them around in Singapore before? This is the transient workers from other countries working on the constructions of roads and buildings.

Miah’s story

Justice did not exist in the life of transient workers. Miah was one of the transient workers in Singapore. He was forced to mend a pipe 2 meters above ground without a safety harness by the supervisor. As a result, he fell and hit his head and back very badly. His injury was so severe he could not move some of his body parts, however, the supervisor claimed “No need to go [to the hospital] ” when he asked for it.

Miah could not sleep at night from pain and anger. The next day, he asked again but he got refused. He decided to use his own money to go to Tan Tock Seng Hospital. When he came back, the employee angrily shouted at him; “Why you go hospital?”. The supervisor did not take care of him at all, even though he was the one who had caused Miah’s injury, so he had to spend most of his time on the bed, resting.

When he thought about his family at night, a dark heavy air of sadness and hopelessness started to push down on him. When he tried to sleep at night, he could feel something cold slide along his cheek and to his chin. It was his tears running down. Without realising, he was crying from frustration. It was not supposed to be like this. The feeling of anger pushed up through his throat. Anger because he could not do anything about it himself. He had no power over the employee. He said, “Nobody take care of me”.

What is the main barrier that the transient workers face?

There are many barriers for transient workers. One of the biggest barriers is the language barrier. Some employees take advantage of the language barrier and make them sign a contract in English and never explain to them. Since many workers who come to work as transient workers are poor, they did not get enough education when they were young and does not have much knowledge, so the employee can take advantage of these workers.

What is TWC2?

When Miah had the issue with the employee, TWC2 helped him solve the problem. TWC2 stands for Transient Workers Count Too, which is a non-profit organisation that helps Transient workers in various ways.



Transient workers getting food from the programme.

Cuff Road food programme

TWC2 give out free food to any of the Transient workers if they reach them via hotline on weekdays from 6:30 to 7 pm. This is very helpful for the workers because it is a quick access to food after they work hard all day on constructions.

Connecting them with the MOM

TWC2 is also a help center for the transient workers who have the issues with the employee or the working condition. Since the workers are poor in English, they have a volunteer who can speak Hindi to help convey the message to the Ministry of Manpower, where they can create a safe place for the transient workers to give their opinion.



MOM helps create a safe working place for all workers in Singapore.



Can't work if injured. TWC2 helping the workers so that he can go back to work as fast as he can.

Fundraising

TWC2 fund raise in order to create a better living condition for the transient workers. The money goes for caring for the workers when they are injured and cuff road project where they provide food. It also goes for the research and communication.

We need transient workers!

The transient workers do not have enough “power” over their supervisors and their company. They also face discrimination from the citizens of Singapore. I have been

making an observation of these workers since I started writing this article. I saw many cases where these workers are blamed for the road closures, the loud noises, and even taking up spaces on the road. I felt that people in Singapore do not have enough knowledge about these workers but if they did, they would be thanking the workers instead of discriminating them. So this is where I want you to change how you look at them. They probably built your houses and without them, Singapore would not have been this beautiful. The buildings you see every day were created by them and they are the people we need in order to live, so why should they be blamed for doing what is necessary?