



OUR SOCIAL MISSION

BY CARITAS SINGAPORE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Where migrant needs come first

ACMI runs programmes in these four areas. If you think you can help, call to offer your services or make a donation to this worthwhile cause.



Volunteers pack nutritious meals which will be delivered to foreign workers, including those who are temporarily unable to work.



Scores of women turn up to register for ACMI training programmes in everything from cooking to caregiving and English language.



At a baking class, women learn new skills to impress the families they work for, or start a business when they return home.

Soup Kitchen

Back in 2001, ACMI volunteers started feeding hungry foreigners. Saddled with debts on arrival, many newly-arrived construction workers had little money for food, and got by on little more than rice and gravy. ACMI's Soup Kitchen volunteers began preparing and delivering packed meals to workers at construction sites three days a week. Today, over 70 volunteers cook and deliver nutritious meals five days a week. Among the recipients are about 50 workers who are injured or unable to work and they receive both lunch and dinner. On Dec 22, ACMI will hold a Christmas lunch to treat about 80 of these workers.

Donate: The Soup Kitchen welcomes donations. Send a cheque payable to ACMI, to 2, Highland Road, Catholic Archdiocesan Education Centre, Singapore 549102.

Training Centre

Since 2001 over 3,000 foreign women have been trained at the ACMI Training Centre. Most are maids who spend part of their precious days off improving their skills, with their employers' blessings. Thanks to ACMI's dedicated group of volunteer trainers, the courses available include baking, cooking, caregiving, computer use, hairdressing, sewing, English language and how to start a small business. There are also life-skills talks on health and money-management, and fun activities. ACMI has tied up with the Salvation Army for those in the caregiving course to have practical training at a Salvation Army home. Some of the women hope to move on to become nursing aides. **Register:** ACMI is registering students for its 2010 courses at 11, Hillside Drive, off Upper Serangoon Road, on these dates: Dec 13, Jan 3 and Jan 10, from 10.30am to 3.30pm.

Befriending & Mediation

ACMI veteran Elizabeth Tan keeps the pictures of several infants in her mobile phone. They were all born to foreign maids who needed ACMI's help before returning home. For every baby, Elizabeth has a sad story of a woman tricked, abused or gullible. Pregnant maids are only one group of distressed people ACMI helps. There are also male workers with legal problems related to worksite accidents, those who are hospitalised and lonely who need visiting. There are also foreign women caught in disputes with their Singapore husbands when marriages sour. ACMI works with volunteers from the Catholic Lawyers Guild for those with legal problems.

Outreach

ACMI celebrates World Day of Migrants every year with a Mass celebrated by the Archbishop and priests representing the countries from which migrant workers come to Singapore. There are also various festivities involving song, dance and food. Together with Caritas Singapore, ACMI also organised the Dignity in the Home programme to encourage employers of foreign maids to reflect on the Catholic Social Teachings and build better relationships with their employees. More recently, ACMI has been reaching out to Vietnamese women married to Singapore men. They have been attending weekday English lessons, and hope to have training in beauty and wellness programmes too.



To be family to migrants

The Archdiocesan Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People (ACMI) was appointed by the Catholic Archbishop of Singapore in 1998 to reach out to the foreigners in our midst and provide them a sense of belonging and security. Over the years, ACMI has gained a reputation as a source of help and support to migrant workers, maids and the foreign spouses of Singaporeans.

Its team of volunteers provides a wide range of services which have changed over the years to match the needs of people seeking help. Today, ACMI provides food to construction workers, visits workers in hospital, trains maids in a variety of skills, counsels those in trouble, helps pregnant maids, and arranges legal aid and shelter for those who need it. ACMI is a member organisation of Caritas Singapore.

"When migrants in trouble come to ACMI, you see worry, fear and anxiety written on their face. What keeps me going is knowing that we can offer them help, comfort and solace. We empower them, help them be responsible for themselves, face up to difficult situations and journey with them. It's not easy, but someone once told me, 'If it is of God, it is not easy. If it's easy, it's not of God.'"

— Former chairperson Elizabeth Tan, 57, now one of ACMI's five fulltime staff. In her mobile phone she keeps pictures of babies born to foreign maids she has helped.

"I have been in Singapore for four years and my ma'am wanted me to speak English. My friend told me about this place. I did two English courses, and now I can speak better. My ma'am is happy, she said: 'Okay, good!'"

— ACMI graduate Indarti, 33, a maid from Surabaya, and mother of a 10-year-old boy.

"I am happy to teach, provided you want to learn. The women who come to ACMI really want to improve themselves. I've taught English to women from Indonesia, Myanmar and Sri Lanka who have had very little exposure to English. But they strive very hard, are very hardworking and have a strong desire to learn."

— ACMI volunteer English language teacher Anne Teo, 59, a mother of five children aged 16 to 29.

"We need more young people who are interested in migrant workers to come forward and help because ACMI needs leadership renewal. The needs keep changing. We will train you, and by interacting with the migrants we help, you can identify ways to help. ACMI needs permanent premises so we can grow our programmes. Our dream is that our courses will get accreditation so that our graduates can move on to better jobs."

— ACMI chairperson Connie Fong, 63, a business-woman and longtime volunteer helping migrant workers.

Who's Who at ACMI

Executive Council 2008-2010
Spiritual Director: Fr Angel Luciano CICM
Chairperson: Connie Fong
Vice Chairperson: Mark Goh
Secretary: Anne Lim

Assistant Secretary: Arlene Casimiro
Treasurer: Teresa Hoe
Assistant Treasurer: Rose Lee
Member: Joseph Cheong

Office Staff
Executive Director: Patrick Neo
Senior Executive Officers:
Elizabeth Tan, Agnes M. Ong
Executive Officers:
Francis Lim, Maria Heng

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