

Serve the People Association (SPA), Taiwan

Established in 2008, SPA is an independent NGO committed to improving the working environment of migrant workers in Taiwan. The organisation initially offered support to local workers in labour disputes before expanding its focus to include migrant workers facing poor working and living conditions and frequent occupational accidents. SPA now runs shelters for migrant workers from the Philippines, Indonesia, and Vietnam that provide temporary accommodation, legal advice, medical assistance, emergency resettlement, and support obtaining legal wages and compensation. Over the past six years, SPA has assisted more than 1,000 displaced migrant workers in Taiwan.

What are the main issues facing the workers you support in Taiwan?

Forced labor conditions among most of the migrant workers in Taiwan. The placement fee collected by the agencies in both the home country and in Taiwan make migrant workers especially vulnerable to debt bondage, with high risks of forced labor and human trafficking. The laws and regulations are very discriminatory which makes the migrant workers more abused.

The second is unionisation of the migrant workers. Only organised workers can dictate their own destiny and push the government to change the laws and regulations. We established a few unions with migrant workers, but it's still baby steps. We need to build more and stronger unions.

We talk to Lennon Ying-Da Wang, director of policies on migrant workers and Electronics Watch trustee, about how they support migrant workers in Taiwan's electronics industry.

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 桃園市群眾服務協會
Serve the People Association



Lennon Ying-Da Wang, SPA's director of policies on migrant workers

Tell us about a workers' rights achievement you are most proud of.

We organised several unions with migrant workers, including a trade union for domestic workers, a trade union for factory workers, and two company unions, including Askey Labor Union (ALU), and Asus Group Labor Union (AGLU), the first company union organised by migrant workers. We helped the ALU to form, won the strike vote and won most of the union's demands. We didn't proceed the strike because we got a settlement after Taiwan's Ministry of Labor intervened.



Migrant workers at one of the shelters operated by SPA

What are the biggest challenges in your monitoring work right now?

It is not so easy always to find workers from a certain company, but it is even harder to get credible strong evidence from them, especially without a longer trust relation with the migrant workers.

What are SPA's goals for the next 2-5 years?

Firstly, to facilitate fair recruitment and fair rights for all migrant workers, which includes lots of campaign, advocacy, research, organising and alliance work. We want to strengthen the supply chain monitoring so we can really push the brands to lead their suppliers to make meaningful and positive changes. And we also want to strengthen migrant workers' unions.

How does the partnership with Electronics Watch support your work?

It is useful in the way we can have more lever to the suppliers, although the impact usually doesn't come right away.

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What changes would you like to see for workers' rights, in Taiwan or internationally?

All migrant workers should be treated the same, or at least almost the same, as local workers and can bargain for better working and living condition with unions, and no one need to pay money to buy their jobs.

