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**Global**

**Kay McArdle &  
Lenlen Mesina**

## Migrant matters

**Kay McArdle and Lenlen Mesina on how they are assisting foreign helpers**



**Kay McArdle on Day 4 of IF16. (Photo: Jeff Topping/Assignment Asia)**

The Chairman's Trust, CLSA's charitable foundation, supports two non-profit organisations working with migrant communities in Hong Kong: PathFinders and Enrich, two organisations that are helping families every day.

According to the UN, one in every seven people on this planet is a migrant. Put simply, more than one billion people are on the move, more than at any time in the history of mankind. At a summit earlier this month, the UN General Assembly aimed 'to address the large numbers of refugees and migrants, with the aim of bringing countries together behind a more humane and coordinated approach'.

Listening to our guest speakers on Day 4 of our Investors' Forum, sadly there is much work to be done.

In 2007, PathFinders' co-founders discovered four babies and their migrant mothers living in extreme poverty and danger in Hong Kong. No one would help them, so PathFinders was born.

Pathfinders is a wholly charity-funded organisation that serves pregnant, migrant women in distress and their Hong Kong-born children. Most of these women are current or former foreign domestic workers.

Kay McArdle, CEO of PathFinders, explained that, despite legal protections, these women are still too often fired unlawfully when pregnant. Once fired, they become homeless and penniless. Destitute, they and their babies are among the most vulnerable and deprived people in Hong Kong.

Pathfinders' central ethos is simply stated. Every child born deserves a fair start in life. So far, Pathfinders has helped more than 3,750 lives including 1,240 newborns and toddlers of whom, had it not been for Pathfinders, been at significant risk of abuse and/or trafficking.

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Sadly, Pathfinders' caseload is seeing exponential growth, with its 2016 caseload up a further 20% alone. So far this year, the organisation has helped over 500 babies, children and women and expects to assist 900 over the year.

The type of cases Pathfinders helps include the child who has been abused, those neglected and living in a brothel left to roam the streets alone; or a newborn baby who is left abandoned in a hospital.

#### **So what can Pathfinders do?**

Pathfinders provides humanitarian support (food, shelter, clothing), social and welfare services, as well as access to healthcare, legal support and identity documentation.

It operates eight key programmes. In the initial stages, the work involves ensuring the mother and child's protection, shelter and access to healthcare. After this, it helps with education and community outreach. Longer term, Pathfinders provides real access to justice for the family and ultimately, if required, re-integration into their home country. Sadly, despite all the invaluable work, the organisation is struggling to cope with the workload - our help is required now.

[Click here to visit the Pathfinders website](#)



**Lenlen Mesina on Day 4 of IF16. (Photo: Jeff Topping/Assignment Asia)**

Working with the same community, Lenlen Mesina, executive director of Enrich, outlined how her charitable organisation provides financial and empowerment education programmes to migrant domestic workers.

There are 330,000 migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong today, 50% are Filipina, 47% Indonesian. That is about 10% of the working population working for one in eight households. More than 30% of these workers have children and stay in Hong Kong for an average 12 years. They come to forge

a better life for their families to “save for their future”. On average, these workers send 50-60% of their salary home and support four family members who back home rely entirely on this money.

The problem is that these migrant workers often take on an average of HK \$15,000 debt to register for recruitment. More than 90% have some debt, often to unscrupulous loan agencies. Often they face medical emergencies with limited or no savings. The result is that only 6% return to their homes having saved enough money. Around half have no idea when they will return home. Those that do return, often plan to migrate again (77%) - the cycle of poverty continues.

Enrich’s mission is to break this cycle, to empower these migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong to transform their lives through financial education and personal-development programmes. Its practical workshops teach Filipino and Indonesian migrant domestic workers how to save, budget and plan for their future. It is working.

After attending Enrich workshops, 58% of participants were able to pay off some or all of their debt. Some 64% reduce their spending and, importantly, more than 70% felt confident about managing their debts. While progress has been made, much work needs to be done.

Migration has become one of the greatest challenges to society. How we ultimately treat migrants is how we as humanity will be judged in years to come.

[Click here to visit the Enrich website](#)

[Click here to listen to Kay McArdle and Lenlen Mesina at IF16 .](#)

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