

Migrant domestic workers in Asia: the case of Singapore

University of Tokushima

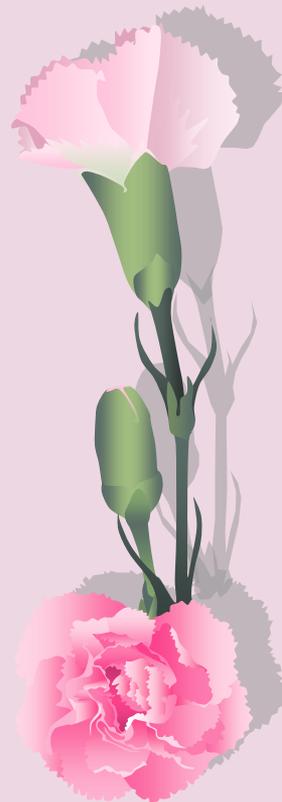
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Push/pull/mediating factors in labor migration



Push factors in sending countries

🌸 human export policy, high unemployment rate, instability of job, low level of salary, successful stories about migration, collective dreams regarding migration, idea of filial piety, individual life planning, domestic violence, political corruption, despotism, etc.



Successful story with bike



Pull factors in receiving country

- 🌸 higher wage created by economic growth
- 🌸 vacuum of care prompted by high level of female labor participation
- 🌸 government policy regarding migrant domestic workers
- 🌸 insufficient social welfare coupled with Asian familism, etc.



Mediating factors

- 🌸 rapid growth of employment agency business
- 🌸 informal network
- 🌸 language, etc.



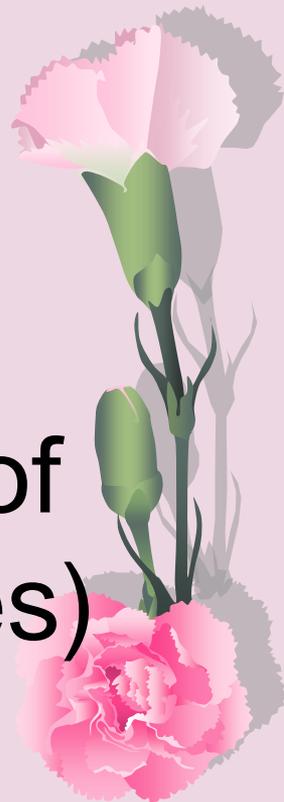
The origin of migrant domestic workers and development of its policy in Singapore

- labor shortage in late 1970's — policy of economically inactive women entering or re-entering the labor force



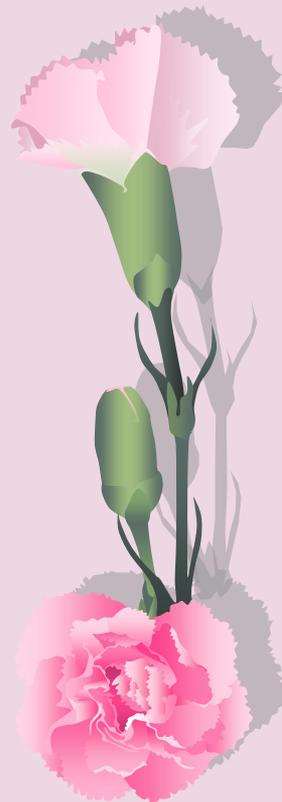
· Foreign Domestic Workers Scheme(1978)

- 1980's — introduction of regulatory measures (a two-year working contract, prohibiting marriage to a Singaporean, and mandating employers' payment of security bonds and monthly levies)



The number of migrant domestic workers in Singapore

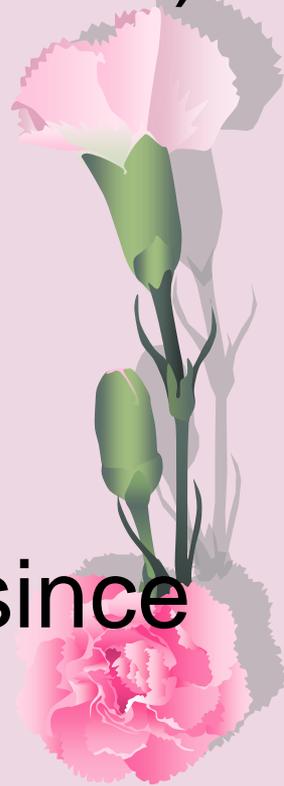
- 🌸 20,000 in 1987
- 🌸 40,000 in 1988
- 🌸 50,000 in 1989
- 🌸 over 100,000 in 1999
- 🌸 170,000 in 2007



Foreign workers policy in Singapore

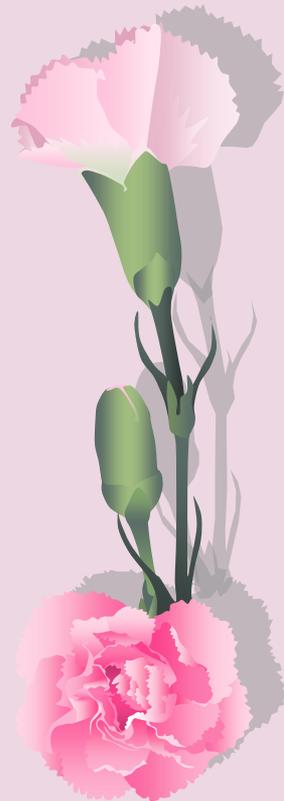
- ❁ dual-track* policy since the early 1970s
 1. employment pass (for professionals)
 2. work permit (for construction, manufacturing, and marine workers, migrant domestic workers, etc.)

* skilled workers (for skilled workers) since 2004



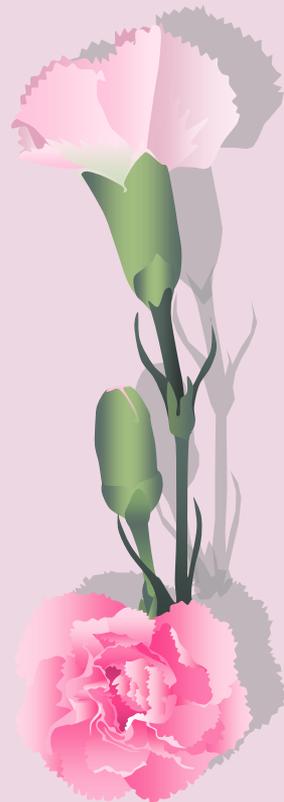
No quota system for migration domestic workers

- ❁ The government does not encourage Singaporeans to work as domestic helpers.



Asian type of familism with the help of migrant domestic workers, which is enforced by government

- 🌸 Aging population
- 🌸 Concern for low birth rate



 In August 2004, the monthly levy for foreign domestic workers was reduced from S\$345 to S\$250 for a Singaporean citizen with a child under 12 years of age or with an elderly person aged 65 and above.



Control on migrant domestic workers by Singapore Government

- ❁ 8 designated sending countries of domestic workers (majority are from the Philippine and Indonesia).
- ❁ 23 (previously 18) years of age and have a minimum of 8 years of formal education, with documented proof of that education.





A prospective migrant domestic worker is required to pass an entry test within three days of arrival in Singapore before she can be issued a work permit. (The test assesses knowledge of housekeeping, labor and safety regulations, and English language ability).



All migrant domestic workers are live-in under the legal responsibility of the employers.



Hiring a migrant domestic worker

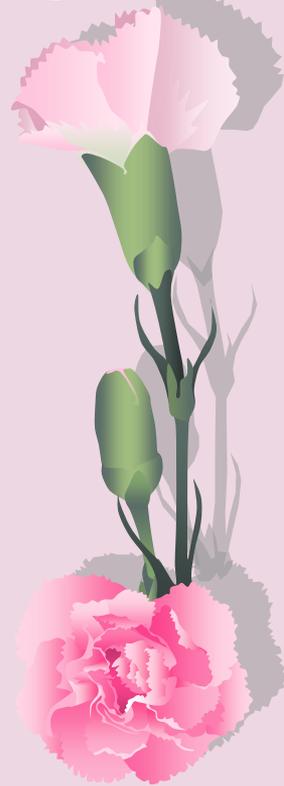
- ❁ To apply for work permit for a migrant domestic worker, a prospective employer is examined by ministry of manpower with a tax record, etc..
- ❁ Generally, a recruitment is done through agency — purportedly more than 600 employment agencies in Singapore



Two categories of migrant domestic workers*

- ❁ “CV maid” — women who are in their own countries.
- ❁ “transfer maid” — migrant domestic workers who are already in Singapore.

* wage differs from the countries of origins.



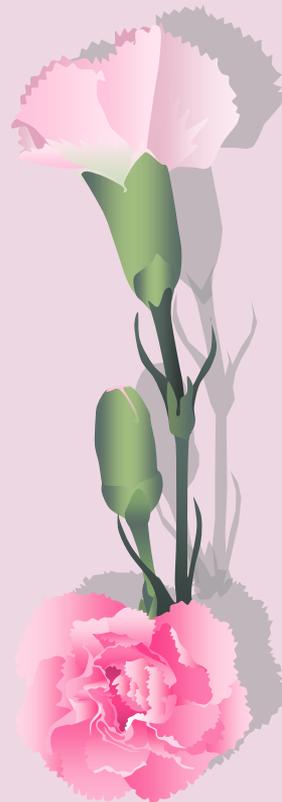
Becoming a migrant domestic worker

 Indonesia – through both a training center/employment agency in Indonesia, and employment agency in Singapore

 Philippine — through both an employment agency in the Philippine and that in Singapore, or only the latter



Becoming a domestic worker in case of Indonesians

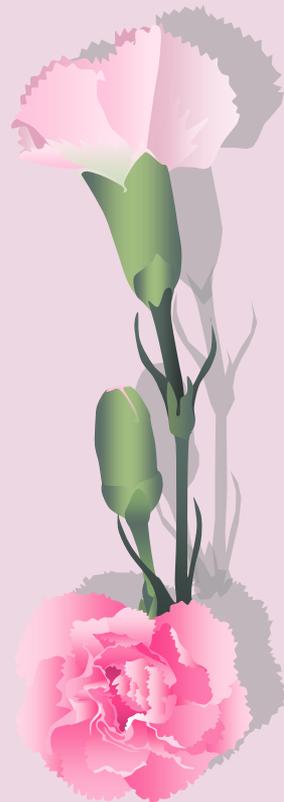


Sponsor

❁ Paid by the training center (employment agency) to recruit the candidates for migrant domestic workers

❁ Guideline for recruitment

- junior high school above
- good health
- no malformation
- 150 height above
- 21-35 age range



Training center

🌸 Physical checkup → fit, pending, unfit



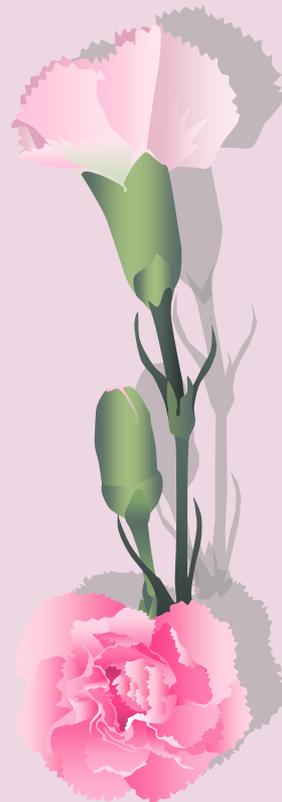
sent back to home by her sponsor

🌸 Inspection on her belongings

🌸 Training (language, general housework, care work, job interview)

🌸 Hair cut, self introduction video

🌸 Processing a passport

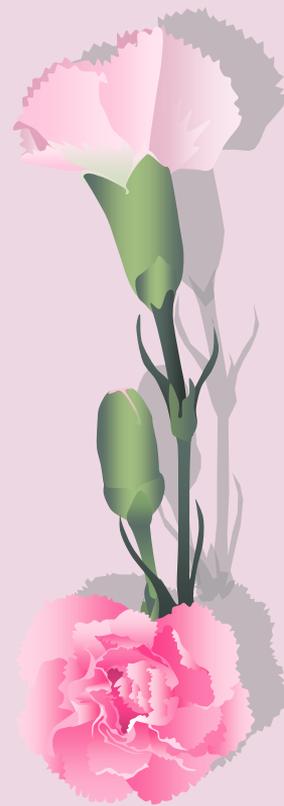


English textbook used in training center

4. Pergi Jumpa Saudara : Excuse me miss I want to go up stair.
5. Pergi Jumpa Sponsor : Excuse me miss I want to meet my family.
6. Pergi Jumpa Suami : Excuse me miss I want to meet my husband.
7. Pergi buat paspor : Excuse me miss I want to make passport.
8. Pergi mau minum : Excuse me miss I want to drink because I'm thirsty.
9. Pergi membeli di kantin : Excuse me miss I want to go kantin to buy something.
10. Pindah ke ruang ABC : Excuse me miss I want to sleep and study in here because I'm shooting finish already.
11. Mau pindah ke depan : Excuse me miss I want to go in front because I have employer already.
12. Sesampainya di miss darsini : Excuse me miss I want to study and sleep in here because I have employer already.
13. Kalau habis piket : Excuse me miss today I'm finish my duties
14. Kalau di suruh panggil kawan waktu piket : Excuse me miss I want to call my friend. (thank you miss, friend)
15. Kalau habis dipanggil dari kantor : Excuse me miss Just now I come back from office and I want to study again.
16. Kalau selesai di besuk : Excuse me miss just now I come back from meet my family and I want to study again.

BAHASA INGGRIS		CARA MEMBACA	BAHASA INDONESIA
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 (seventin) 18 19 20 21 30 40 50 100 200 1000 2000 10.000 20.000 1.000 .000	SI DI TI BI I F JI Heich Ai Je Ke L m n o PI Kiu Ar S Ti vu Debel Yu X wal Zi WAN THU Tri fo foif Sik Seven Tit Nain Ten Eleven Thuvelet Thertin Fortin Fiftin Sixtin sifstin Naintin Twentit Twentit wan Thertit Fortit Fiftit Man handred Thu hundred Wan thausen Thu thausen Ten thausen handred Thausen Wan millen	A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 30 40 50 100 200 1000 2000 10.000 20.000 1.000.000
GOOD MORNING SIR Good afternoon, Mum Good evening, Miss Good night Boy Good Bye, Girl How are you, Sir I'm Find, Thanks Tan Okey, Sir I am Not okey, sum What is your name How old are you? I am 24 yers old I am sick, Sir Ready /Not ready Naughty /Good Have you cook porridge Please, Take a glass of orange juice May be /Probefli Just only /Just now Some Time /Always Sir /Mum Mister /Misses /Miss Pather /Mother Uncle /Auntie Friend /Enemy Rice cooker Gas cooker Washing machine Ironing	GOOD MORNING SIR Good afternoon, Mum Good evening, Miss Good night Boy Good Bye, Girl How are you, Sir I'm Find, Thanks Tan Okey, Sir I am Not okey, sum What is your name How old are you? I am 24 yers old I am sick, Sir Ready /Not ready Naughty /Good Have you cook porridge Please, Take a glass of orange juice May be /Probefli Just only /Just now Some Time /Always Sir /Mum Mister /Misses /Miss Pather /Mother Uncle /Auntie Friend /Enemy Rice cooker Gas cooker Washing machine Ironing	Guud mooning, se Selamat pagi, Tuan Gud Afternoon, Mem Selamat siang, Nyonya Gud Evening, Miss Selamat sore, Nona Gud Naigh Boi Selamat malam, Anak-anak Gud Bai, Gel Selamat tinggal anak-anak Hao Ar Yu, SE Selamat malam, Bapak/Buaya Ai em Fain, Thengstana baik-baik saja Ai Em okei So saya baik-baik aja Ai Em Not Okei mes kawat cehat Wot is yor neim hapn bama mu? Hao ol ar yu? berapa umurmu? Ai em thuenti-for yers old Saya berumur 24 th Ai em sik, se saya sakit ban. Saya sakit Tuan? Redi /not redi Siap /Tidak siap Nauti / Gud Nalut / baik? Nakal /Tidak nakal Hef yu kuh porridz Sudahkah masak Bubur? Plis teik e glass of bing jeruk Tolong ambilkan se oranges jus gelas jus jeruk Mel bi /Probefli mungkin /barang Mungkin /barangkali Jss onli / jss naobnorsaja Baru saja / belum Kadang-kadang /selalu Sam -tain / olwes Tuan / nyonya Se / Men Tuan /Nyonya /Nona Fade /Made Ayah /Ibu Ankel /Anti Paman /dibi Pren /Enemi Kawan, Teman /Musuh Rais kuke Tempat masak nasi Ges kuke Kompor gas masak Wosing me in Mesin cuci Ai -yening Menggosok Ai -yen Gosokan	

Training center



Working at employer's house

- ❁ All types of household work (cleaning, washing (ironing), cooking, gardening, painting, taking care of children or other family members with physical or mental impairment, looking after school homework, sewing, etc.
- ❁ During a debt period of 4-11 months, there may be no day off.
- ❁ In some cases, no day off for two years.





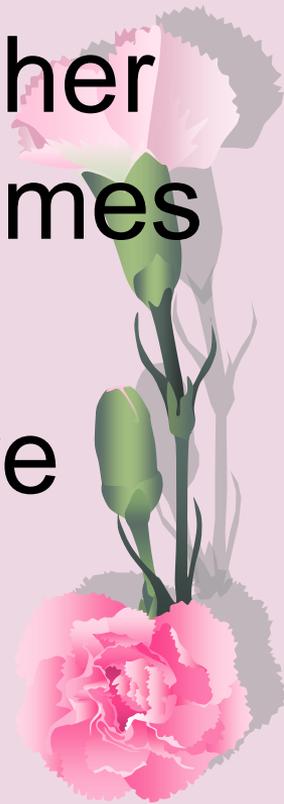
The plight of migrant domestic workers

 “Free exchange plan” practiced by employment agencies



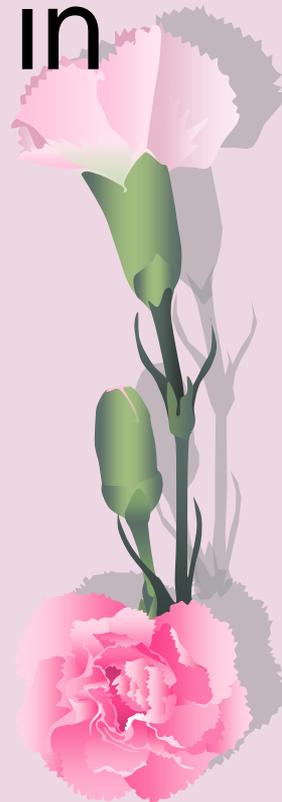
Singapore Immigration Act

Employer's security bond (S\$5,000) to be forfeited and the migrant domestic worker is repatriated at once if she works in a location other than the employer's house, becomes pregnant, disturbs the order of society, or overstays in Singapore without proper authorization.



Two years' working experience in Singapore: a portal for what?

- 🌸 Gaining an economic power in the family back home
- 🌸 Trap of migration
- 🌸 Forming informal network



Occupational trajectories abroad

Shuttle type

- Singapore repeater

Asian regional type (typically for Indonesians)

- (Malaysia or Middle east) → Singapore → Hong Kong/Taiwan

West Type (for Filipinas)

Singapore as a stepping stone to Canada



THANK YOU

