

INFORM

A Ministry of Manpower (MOM) publication specially for foreign domestic workers in Singapore



FAST Forward: Ten Good Years and Growing Strong

On 6 December 2015, more than 6,000 Foreign Domestic Workers (FDWs) gathered together to celebrate the 6th FDW Day and the 10th anniversary of the Foreign Domestic Worker Association for Social Support (FAST).

Organised by FAST and graced by Minister of State for Manpower, Mr Sam Tan, the event was like a cultural festival and family reunion rolled into one. FDWs were seen mingling

happily with friends and their employers.

FAST has come a long way since its establishment in 2005. From organising training for FDWs, it has now secured the Institute of Public Character (or IPC) status. Over the years, FAST has offered and conducted subsidised training for about 66,000 FDWs. In addition, the organisation's befriender programme has seen 200

**Need help or advice?
CDE is here to help!**

The Centre for Domestic Employees (CDE) was set up on 24 January 2016 to provide services to FDWs who need assistance. The CDE provides advice to FDWs on employment-related issues and services such as mental health screening, mediation, legal clinics and emergency shelter for FDWs. The CDE also runs a 24-hour toll free helpline (1800-2255-233, or 1800 CALL CDE) for FDWs to call if they need help.

To find out more, you can visit or contact the Centre at:

ADDRESS:

185A Thomson Road (Level 2)
Goldhill Centre
Singapore 307629

Nearest MRT: Novena (Exit B, towards United Square)

OPERATING HOURS:

Tuesdays to Sundays, 10am to 6pm
Closed on Mondays and Public Holidays

24-HOUR HELPLINE

1800 CALL CDE (1800 2255 233)



Our FDW Winner

FDW Ranpati Dewage Siyanti Siromani Pushpika took top honours, clinching the FDW of the Year Award 2015. Pushpika's journey with her employer was one which went beyond the call of duty. She extended her heart and soul to caring for her employers' children — both of whom are afflicted with a rare medical condition — and persevered through the difficult times with them.

On receiving the award, she said, "I am very happy to get this award in Singapore's Jubilee year. I must thank my employer who is now like my family, the judges and everyone who supported me." Her advice for fellow FDWs: "If you do not know anything, ask your employer. Do not talk back to your employer. Treat them like your family."



Our FDW Employer Winner

The FDW Employer of the Year Award 2015 went to Madam Yap Sock Hoe, and her son Mr Ling Wei Hong was present to receive it on her behalf. Madam Yap went the extra mile for her FDW, Marny, by extending emotional and financial support. She offered Marny a loan to support her parents in the Philippines, in addition to providing financial assistance to Marny's nephews and nieces to see through their studies.

For Madam Yap and family, FDW Marny is like family. As her son Mr Ling Wei Hong shared, "There is a lot of mutual love and respect. She basically saw us grow from children to adults. She came a few weeks before my sister was born, so in fact I have known her longer than my sister."





► Ms Jennifer Pasinabo Doguiles, the winner for the solo singing category

The 6th FDW Day also featured a talentime contest which buzzed with energy and creativity. Participants proudly showcased their cultural performances, while others experimented with foreign cultural performances as well as contemporary dance. It was therefore not surprising that selecting a winner for each category was a challenge for the judges.

Despite the tough competition, it was FDW Jennifer Pasinabo Doguiles, who emerged tops for the solo singing category. She has been in Singapore for three years, and shares that there are a lot of things in Singapore to learn, and new FDWs should adopt an open mind and take the opportunity to learn while they are here. When quizzed on how she honed her singing skills, she said that she sings in the music ministry of her church, both in the Philippines and Singapore.



Juli's Story - My Employer, My Second Family

Ms Juli Astuti (Indonesian), 29 years old, came to Singapore in 2009 to work as a domestic helper. She takes care of the household and looks after her employer's two young children. Her employer treats Juli as part of the family, and the two children simply adore her. INFORM met up with Juli recently to hear about her experience working in Singapore and with her employer.

What was it like working in Singapore for the first time?

I felt homesick and kept thinking of my family. But I want a good life for my family back home, so I always tell myself I need to work hard.

I also felt scared at first. But Sir and Ma'am showed me a lot of concern and over time, I started opening up to them slowly, and I am very close to them now. I also share my problems with Sir and Ma'am, and they will listen to me and help me think of solutions. They are like my second family now.

How did you adapt to working and living in Singapore?

I take care of two young children, Theodore and Thaddea, though I have helped to look after them since they were born. My day revolves around them, and it helps me to overcome my homesickness. Looking after Theodore and Thaddea requires me to be fully alert as I want to make sure they are ok. When I first started, I had to learn and adjust but I had a lot of guidance from my Sir and Ma'am. They were very patient; whenever I was not sure, I would always ask them.

Importantly, I also keep in contact with my family every week, and knowing they are well and happy gives me a lot of motivation to work hard here to continue to provide for them.

What advice do you have for other FDWs working here?

Work hard and always think of why you came here to work in the first place. It can be stressful, and it can be lonely at times when you think of your family. But do not give up easily. You must be prepared to work hard, and you will be duly rewarded eventually.



► Juli with Theodore and Thaddea having fun at Westgate Shopping Mall

If you are working in Singapore for the first time, you may be going through what Juli had experienced. Like Juli, you can overcome these difficulties and make working in Singapore a positive experience by following these five tips!



If this is your first time working in a foreign country, it is normal to feel unfamiliar and uneasy. It takes time to adjust and adapt to a new environment, so it is important to adopt a **positive mindset** and the right **learning attitude**.



If you do not understand how to do certain chores, **ask your employer politely** and he/she will explain to you.



Communicate with your employer. Do not be afraid to ask questions or share your concerns.



Language barrier can be a common problem for FDWs. Make an effort to **learn basic English** or a language that your employer speaks. This will make it easier for you to communicate with your employer and understand his/her instructions.



Have a **balanced diet** and take good care of your **health**. If you are healthy, you are better able to handle your work and any challenges that you may face!



Spot Depression

Be alert to signs of depression and get help early.

Possible Causes of Depression



Money problems



Problems with family and employers



Difficulty in adapting to new environments or situations



Signs of Depression

Feeling helpless and hopeless



Loss of interest in daily activities and self-isolation



Having thoughts of harming yourself



Changes in appetite, weight or sleep patterns



Where can you get help?

If you feel depressed, do not keep to yourself or do anything to harm yourself. Talk to someone close to you. There are also various channels of help available for you –

MOM FDW Helpline
(1800-339-5505)

Centre for Domestic Employees (CDE)'s 24-hour Helpline
(1800-225-5233)

FAST's 24-hour FDW Helpline
(1800-339-4357)

SOS
(1800-221-4444)



Signs that your employer is delaying payment

- Ignoring you when you ask them for payment.
- Giving empty promises to make payment soon.
- Giving excuses for not paying on time.



What you should do

- If your employer has not paid your salary when it is due, you should remind him/her so that he/she can pay you as soon as possible.
- If your employer tells you that he/she is facing financial difficulties (e.g. he/she has no money to pay you), you should clarify with your employer.
- If your employer continues to fail to pay your salary, you should report to MOM immediately.



Do not be a Victim of Salary Non-payment

Your employer should pay your salary in full every month. Unfortunately, there are cases where FDWs, like Nina (not her real name), did not receive their salaries as their employers delayed payment. Read on as Nina shares with the INFORM team her distressing experience of not being paid her salary on time and how MOM assisted her.



Nina, 38, worked for her employer for 23 months but did not receive her salary for the last 13 months of her employment. Before the payment delays, Nina noticed that her employer would often give excuses and empty promises whenever she reminded her employer about her salary, usually one day before her payday. Nina felt troubled and upset over the continued delays.

Finally, at the advice of her employer's relative, she reported her situation to MOM, who investigated into the case and helped Nina to recover her salaries from the employer.

She had this advice to share with fellow FDWs, "Always ask for your salary from your employer when it is due. If your employer still fails to pay you, report your case to MOM."



FDW Letter

Julia from Bumar Indonesia

When I first came to Singapore in 2009, I had a difficult time adjusting. I was sad and cried quite often. It was my first time in a foreign country.

I am still here in Singapore, so now I learn how to speak, write and read English, and also learn many things from my employer.

Remember that if you want to be successful like me, you must be patient, work hard and don't find any boyfriend. If you get pregnant while working in Singapore, it can get you into trouble.

I know being an FDW is not easy. We miss our family but we need to work overseas to secure a better life for them.

All we need to do now is to be strong and never lose hope. This is the key to our Success in Life.

Thanks INFORM for giving us the opportunity to express OUR feelings.

*With Love,
Julia*



This is a gas safety message brought to you by Singapore Power.

Safety is our highest priority, and we believe it should be everyone's way of life.

► How to Identify a Gas Leak



Smell – The most common way of discovering a gas leak. Gas produces a strong and distinctive odour that smells similar to rotten eggs.



Sound – Hissing or whistling sound coming from gas appliances.



Sight – The sight of dead vegetation plants nearby might be a sign of gas leak.

► In Case of Gas Leak



- Shut off the gas meter control valve.
- Open all windows to ventilate the area.
- Move to a safe distance and inform your employer to call the gas hotline: 1800-752-1800.

► Safe Use of Piped Gas



- When cooking, do not leave the gas cooker unattended.
- Do not place flammable items near gas appliances.
- Ensure there is no smell of gas before lighting the gas appliances.



- **DO NOT** light a flame to detect for the source of leak.
- **DO NOT** turn on or off any switches or appliances.
- **DO NOT** make any phone call when you are near the gas leak.