

## OFW News

### Housemaids to Supermaids Soon!!

*- Maria Theresa S. Samante, Aug 24, 2006*

President Gloria Arroyo said that the Philippines will soon be sending supermaids instead of maids in safer areas in the Middle East.

And what does it takes to be a supermaid?

The President said that the housemaids will be trained by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) to upgrade their knowledge and become supermaids.

According to the President, this new training program will help boost the morale of Filipino maids get higher pay.

Augusto Syjuco, head of TESDA, said that the "supermaids" program includes instruction in first aid, evacuations during dangerous situations and other skills to help maids to get higher pay.

"They are not just maids. They are really very well trained now. If there is someone injured among the family they work for ... how to get out of a fire in a high-rise building, all these are part of our upgrading program," he said.

But on the other hand, while still planning for the new training program, some government officials retort with criticism. The Philippine Embassy Labor Attaché to Bahrain Alejandro Santos also reacts with the Presidents plan to train housemaids to supermaids.

According to him, her plan looks good in paper but might find it hard to bring in reality. The President must first tackle ongoing problems in the country before going ahead with this new project.

The Labor Attaché cited illegal hiring of Filipino workers through direct hiring methods as one of the persistent problem.

"It involves Bahraini employers bringing Filipinos on tourist visas for a fee and leaving them to look for jobs once they get here," he said.

Another problem is contract substitution which is practice by some number of recruitment agencies. Workers will sign a contract in the Philippines and upon arrival in Bahrain they will be presented with a new contract - often stating lower salaries and even different jobs.

"I believe there will be discussions between the government and embassies abroad about this plan and I will voice out my concerns," he said.

While Senator Serge Osmeña said that the government could push with its plan provided it keeps a tight lip on the issue.

"Just do not announce to the world that we have this underwhelming policy that our main export will be maids, even if they are super maids," he said.

Other senators urged President Arroyo's administration to focus on promoting entrepreneurship so that Filipinos won't have to leave home.

They also said that government resources should be spent on creating a super economy rather than super-maids.

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