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The Question of Well-informedness in the Pre-Departure Programs to the Overseas Filipino Workers bound for the “Middle East”: A Case of the United Arab Emirates

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要 旨

フィリピンは世界で有数の労働力送出国である。同国政府は、労働移動の促進と管理をすすめているが、渡航先で様々な困難に直面する労働者は後を絶たない。そのため、政府は、渡航先について情報を持たない出稼ぎ希望者に、「十分な知識を与える」ことで、自らを守ることができる労働者を育成しようと試みている。では、かれらにはどのような情報が提供されているのだろうか。また、かれらはどのような知識を欲しているのだろうか。本研究では、フィリピン人の海外労働者のなかでもっとも脆弱であるとみられている、「中東」で働く家事労働者を対象とした渡航前研修に焦点をあて、その歴史と展開、家事労働者自身による渡航前研修の評価、および渡航先の現状から、同国における渡航前研修の利点と限界性について探っていく。

キーワード

渡航前セミナー(PDOS)、「中東」、労働者保護、「十分な知識を持つこと」、家事労働者

Introduction

The Philippines has been one of the major labor-sending countries in the world. While the government has been promoting and managing labor migration, it has also been trying to protect its own people abroad. This has been a highly essential issue especially for the household service workers—otherwise known as domestic helpers—bound for the Middle Eastern countries, the most vulnerable and the largest occupational group among all the Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in “a difficult work environment.” One of the important approaches is making the innocent/ignorant applicants into “well-informed” workers, as represented by the logo campaigning for the Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar (PDOS), prepared by the Overseas Worker Welfare Administration (OWWA), saying “*sa PDOS ako’y informed worker* (With the PDOS, I become an informed worker)”.

How informed are the people? Prior to leaving for the destination, how did they imagine and why did they select the country of destination, and what did they expect from the programs? What kind of information is disseminated by the government institution and other related sectors to the prospective workers? Above all, what are the gaps between the contents of the programs and the recognition of the reality after their actual exposures to the country of destination? This study aims to shed light on the pre-departure programs done in the Philippines toward the household service workers bound for the Middle East, especially the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The UAE is selected as this country faces the most rapid increase in the number of workers, including household service workers, within the last decade. In so doing, the author tries to explore whether

pre-departure programs in the Philippines provide ways for the workers to conceive their overseas work and working situation, as well as tangible capability to solve problems, thereby seeking to clarify preeminence and challenges of these programs.

Here, the pre-departure program is a common designation for skill training and awareness programs provided by governmental agencies, civil groups and private institutions toward those planning to work abroad as contract workers. A special focus is put on the PDOS as it is the main component of the pre-departure programs managed by the Philippine government. The author also uses “Middle East” for the perspective of the ordinary Filipino citizens, and the Middle East for the recognition of the Philippine government. The “Middle East” mainly indicates Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait and Qatar—the major receiving countries of the OFWs with Muslim law. Because of this deviation, the image of the Filipinos toward the society of “Middle East” is usually reflected in those countries. On the other hand, the category used by the Philippine government covers fifteen countries: the Gulf Corporation Council (GCC) countries and Egypt, Libya, Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iran, among others.

The Philippines is known not only as a major labor-sending country but also as having an institutionalized system of well-informed policies compared to other countries, with “best practice” (Siddiqui, Rashid, and Zeitlyn 2008). It is one of the first countries to develop pre-departure programs, such as information campaigns, pre-departure skill training, and education. As early as mid-1980s, the overseas labor administration of the Philippines has been introduced, with the initiative of the international organizations, as a model case to other neighboring countries.¹

With the advisory of the International Organization of Migration (IOM), many of the labor-sending countries have started implementing similar programs to the prospective workers. As seen in Table 1, Bangladesh, for example, has no private media on information dissemination; pre-departure orientation trainings are mandatory. The two-hour briefing is comprised of dos and don'ts, country-specific information, rights, health etc. of relevance to outgoing migrants. For Sri Lanka, another major labor-sending country to the Middle East, it is managed by Sri Lankan Bureau of Foreign Employment. They provide a two-hour radio program once a week, film showing, community/village-based awareness programs, and thirteen-day mandatory pre-departure orientation training for household service workers, including a spouse- and family-involved orientation on the last day.

In the Philippines, on the other hand, there are radio programs intended for information campaign; mandatory PDOS with region- (and some country-) specific trainings for migrants by the government and/or government-accredited agencies; and information campaign by various nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) (Siddiqui, Rashid, and Zeitlyn 2008). In sum, compared with other labor-sending countries, public and private sectors in the Philippines are providing more information and educational opportunities toward its prospective workers.

¹ The International Labor Organization's “Asian and Pacific Project for Labor Administration (ARPLA) Inter-country Seminar for Training Labor Administration Officials in Overseas Employment Administration” held in the Philippines in 1986 is an example. In this seminar, officials from labor-sending countries like Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Thailand—together with personnel from Hong Kong, a labor-receiving country—discussed problems of managing labor migration. They achieved a consensus on the emphasis of the PDOS in managing overseas labor forces (ILO 1987).

These pre-departure programs, however, have been criticized for its defectiveness. Baggio and Taguinod (2004) claim a commercialization of these programs and exploitation of the workers within the system. Guevarra (2009) states functional problems of the PDOS. She argues that the PDOS has been used as an excuse for the government; by providing information to workers and making them into “responsible” individuals, the PDOS shifts the government’s responsibility of supporting them to the migrants themselves.

She also noted that the PDOS has become a medium to turn prospective applicants into “economically profitable” workers by providing them the employer’s needs and teaching them how to behave to have added-value to the laborer. This, as pointed by Parreñas (2003), resembles the situation in which workers are coerced to be “good Filipino domestic workers” in Hong Kong to win over a competitive labor market.

Observing the PDOS, Rodriguez (2010) puts it as a factor of the neoliberal Philippine “Labor Brokerage State.” These seminars have an educational façade to empower the workers belonging to the vulnerable category, thus daring them to embark on an adventure in the foreign countries. Though these are some faces of PDOS, it is still uncertain how the pre-departure programs in the Philippines was developed, what aspects need improvement, and what the attendees expect from the seminar itself. Thus, this paper aims to shed a fresh light on the preeminence and challenges of the preparation given by the government and/or agencies, so as to seek further progress within the system and some guidance to other labor-sending countries.

Data and arguments used in this paper are based mainly on quantitative and qualitative researches in the Philippines as well as in the UAE from 2009 to 2011.² The author had conducted the following researches: distribution of a total of 230 questionnaires to PDOS attendees at the POEA and the OWWA in Manila, key informant interviews with individuals working at the POEA, the OWWA, and recruiting agencies in August 2009; observation of the PDOS and interviews with the PDOS-providing NGOs in September 2010; and interviews with the labor attaché in the POLO, expats, and several runaway Filipinas in a shelter in the UAE from February to March 2011.

I Contemporary Labor Migration from the Philippines to the Middle East

For the last forty years, overseas labor migration has been an integral part of the Philippine society, economy, and politics. It has become more conspicuous with more than one million deployments annually for the last five years. As of 2010, 9.5 million Filipinos—nearly 10 percent of the total population—are working and living in 217 countries and regions (CFO 2011). 1.47 million contract workers, whose term ends every six months to two years, leave the country to work abroad

As stated earlier, there is a high concentration of the destination for household workers in the Middle East. Figure 2 shows that the 6 among top 10 labor-receiving countries of household service workers as of 2010 were GCC countries, altogether recognized by Filipinos, as the “Middle East,” a region with political system, society, and culture relatively unfamiliar with those of the Philippines.

On the other hand, the Filipinos are regarded as “low-cost Americans” for their language ability in English, and recognized of their “top quality” performances (Dumia 2009, 59). Thus, with the number of the

² This paper is an output of a three-year project titled “Filipino Diasporas in an Open City” funded by Japan Society for the Promotion of Science from CY 2008 to 2010 (no.20401007).

household service workers accounting for 25 percent of all workers, the Philippines has gained an unfavorable reputation as “a country of DHs (domestic helpers)” (Gancayco 1996, 73).

The hard-earned dollars of the OFWs in the Middle East, often said as *Katas ng Saudi* (sweat in the Saudi), have been financially supporting the families left in the Philippines. Their economic contribution in the form of the remittances, together with other overseas Filipino immigrants in North America, is now consisting some 12 percent of the GDP in the Philippines. This amount places third in the world, after India and Mexico. Because of their sweat and sacrifice, the government in the early 1990s labeled the OFWs as *bagong bayani*, literally meaning the new national heroes in recognition of their economic contribution. Guevarra (2009, 33) explains that these moves were to “attempt to downplay the absence of any governmental protective mechanisms for the country’s overseas workers during this period.”

In fact, the protection of the rights and welfare of the OFWs, especially the household workers, became an essential issue for policymakers. By mid-1980s, the feminization of export labor occurred as the market increased the deployment of predominantly-female household service workers. It was during this time that cases of culture and crime, welfare, contract and payment, and health and death have increased (Gonzalez 1998). The height of it were the cases of two household workers Flor Contemplacion in 1995 and Sarah Balabagan in 1996, which resulted in an uproar in the Philippines and led politicians and ambassadors to exert themselves in tackling the prevention of their execution.³ Candidates of local and national election have to be mindful of the OFWs since 2003.⁴ National image is deeply related to the OFWs as well. Accordingly, managing overseas labor migration and protection of Filipinos abroad are considered to be very important lest it bring about social unrest in the country.

II Evolution of the Pre-Departure Programs

1) Brief History

The pre-departure programs related to the overseas workers were developed with events concerning these laborers. It was in the early 1970s when the opening of a channel to the human flow of Filipinos has begun as oil boom in the Gulf States entailed workers in the building of infrastructures especially for oil industries. In this stage, the need for manpower was so large that the workers were deployed at a fast schedule with little knowledge of their country of destination. Thus it was inevitable that they would face difficulties, which sometimes had aggravated to cases. These cases covered theft, illegal entry, violation of Muslim and host country’s law, maltreatment, substitution or inobservance of contract, unpaid/delayed salary, and various abuses.

Before long, with the request of the migrant workers and their family, religious organizations and migrant-concerned NGOs started providing prospective OFWs information on the labor contracts of and living conditions in their destination. This later became a prototype of the PDOS (Scalabrini Migration Center 1992). As early as 1974, the OEDB (Overseas Employment Development Board) took over the role and

³ See May (1997) and Guevarra (2006) for details.

⁴ In 2003, Republic Act No. 9189, the Overseas Absentee Voting Act, was passed.

provided information on the recruitment procedures and country of destination, among others, as free-for-all orientation seminars to the prospective workers. These orientation programs were developed to help prepare migrant workers for the life that awaits them overseas, and to disseminate the intension of the government. With the creation of the POEA (Philippine Overseas Employment Administration) in 1983, this information-education program was institutionalized as the PDOS, and became mandatory for all the departing labor migrants. Whether they are first-timers or “ex-abroaders” (those experienced working in other country), as long as they are newly hired, the applicants had to go through this procedure.

In the early years, the contents of the PDOS were merely six topics, which partook more of preventive measures so the migrant would avoid facing troubles in the countries of destination. These were: the codes of discipline and obligation of OFWs (family responsibilities, taxes, remittances, etc.); the terms and conditions of employment (contract); the jobsite or the vessel (for the sea-based); the host country’s social, religious, economic, legal, and political background; the government services to workers overseas; and travel tips.⁵ They vary by the region of the worker’s destination: North America, Europe, Middle East (and Africa), Southeast Asia, East Asia, and Taiwan (Scalabrini Migration Center 1992).

In due course, the contents of PDOS were gradually extended to 20 to 22 topics to meet the new realities of the overseas workers. The Gulf War in 1990 has added topics on the means of evacuation from the conflict-affected country and demand on compensation to salary and properties. When there was an alarming number of the OFWs’ imprisonment due to illegal behavior in Saudi Arabia, topics were added to obey strict Islamic code. In 1995, additional topics on gender sensitive issues and protection of welfare of the OFWs, such as the ways to prevent sexual assaults especially for female workers, were covered in the PDOS to comply with the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995. More topics on welfare issues were discussed. It was thought that the more information was given, the safer the migrants would become.

Today, the features of the PDOS have changed not only preventively, but also extensively and proactively. Aside from explaining duties and obligations to oneself, to family, to fellow OFWs, to country, and to employer, the PDOS also covers financial literacy, as witnessed in a seminar taken place in the POEA on August 14, 2009. With the involvement of a former state-owned bank, a remittance bank, and a telecommunication company, the attendees were advised to make their own bank accounts. They were told not to send all their earnings, but promoted more “wise” ways of using money, such as saving and investment to overcome susceptible failure of sending all earned money—a strategy embraced by the President Arroyo regime.

The subjunctions of the PDOS topic illustrate the stances and concern of the government at times. However, the distinctive features related to the PDOS in the Philippines are brought out by the engagement of various sectors.

2) The Actors involving Provision and Revision of the PDOS Topics

As required in the recruiting process, as many as 478,814 prospective OFWs have attended the PDOS at

5 The POEA Memorandum of Circular, No. 3, Series of 1983.

various institutions in 2010 (DOLE 2011).⁶ The providers of the PDOS vary according to the type of hiring and job category. While some are conducted by government agencies like the OWWA (Overseas Workers Welfare Administration) and the POEA (for government-placed and direct-hired contract workers, like engineers and nurses), most of them are conducted by institutions accredited by the OWWA. These are the agency/industry associations such as the PASEI (Philippine Association of Service Exporters, Inc.; for skilled workers of their member agencies), the recruitment agencies (for their own skilled workers),⁷ and the NGOs (for the household service workers).⁸ There, orientations are given to prospective workers that are suited for their job and destination.

The contents of PDOS topics have been revised every year by the interactions with various institutions and demands by different sectors (Figure 3). Some of the official channels are the advices and messages from the Philippine Overseas Labor and Offices (POLOs)⁹, the POEA, the Department of Foreign Affairs, and the Office of the Vice President. Information is provided by other private sectors (that supply materials such as brochures) to foster OFWs’ economic activities. Dialogues with the NGOs bring up rights and physical/psychological health issues; the media covers news as well as speaks for public sentiments on the OFWs. In this way, it is ensured that humane information is provided to overseas workers to prevent them from becoming mere commodities of labor.

III Contemporary Pre-Departure Programs to the Household Workers bound for the Middle East

At this point, special concern is given to household service workers, such as stay-in caregivers, nannies, baby-sitters, cooks, drivers, and other household related laborers, who are more prone to various types of abuses.

1) The Accumulation of the Pre-Departure Programs

With the competency to the global market as well as protection of the household service workers, the components of the pre-departure programs have been made more complex in the last three decades. This consists of the Pre-Employment Orientation Seminar (PEOS), the Technical and Educational Skills Developing Authority (TESDA), the PDOS, and the “Language and Culture Familiarization Program,” to equip the worker with information. The prospective workers are approved to leave the country when

6 In 2003, the POEA’s responsibilities regarding PDOS were transferred to the OWWA, so that the overseas workers would realize the benefit of their being member of the OWWA. Indeed, each prospective overseas worker has to pay USD 25 for the OWWA membership and PHP 900 for the health insurance. The OWWA members receive social benefits (e.g., burial benefit), education and training benefits (e.g., scholarship), social services (e.g., reintegration programs), workers assistances and on-site services (e.g., repatriation assistance).

7 The PDOS done by the recruitment agency itself is called “in-house PDOS.” However, there are always allegations that they would not explain the applicants the things that are disadvantageous to the agency, such as the rights of the OFWs and contents of the contracts.

8 See the website of OWWA (<http://www.owwa.gov.ph/wcmqs/pdos/>). There were 62 PDOS providing agencies accredited by the OWWA as of May 2010 (OWWA 2010).

9 Among the 34 POLO branches, 11 are located in Asia, 13 in the Middle East, 7 in Europe, and 3 in the Americas. As part of its protective mechanism, POLO is strict in their pre-qualification system to determine the employer’s fitness to hire domestic workers, including personal interview of the employer.

certifications from the latter three are acquired.

Since 1997, the POEA has been conducting the several-hour long PEOS in high schools and colleges in the region for those thinking or dreaming of working abroad. In the seminar, it lobbies on the potential OFWs to evaluate their own priorities in life, skills, and physical and mental readiness to work abroad. Using modules such as overview of migration, updates on the employment market, application process, actual conditions of laborers, rights of workers, existence of illegal recruitment, and health risks, the PEOS aims for the attendees to have second thoughts of working abroad, and suggests them to stay in the Philippines. The intention of the PEOS is to discourage Filipinos from working abroad.¹⁰ Nevertheless, with the one million OFWs deploying annually, the well-informedness seems to be a question of its effectiveness.

With the Reform Package of 2006, departing household service workers are required to complete a National Certificate for Household Workers issued by the TESDA. This is a training seminar covering household chores like cooking, washing clothes, ironing, and cleaning (living room, dining room, bedroom, toilet, and kitchen) by using electric appliances, provided by the TESDA itself or a TESDA-authorized training center.¹¹ The duration of training—ranging from fifty hours to more than two months—depends on the provider. Such training is required to maintain good relationship with the *madam*, the female employer. A good number of reported cases involve household service workers being reproached for the poor performances in household chores and the inept use of electronic appliances. This stems largely from the gap in living conditions of the employer and the worker—the expectation from the madam in proficiency and the experience of the household service workers who, in general, have grown up in the provinces.

The PDOS provided by the OWWA-accredited NGOs is supposed to be an eight-hour seminar; yet as far as the author has observed, it lasts only four hours. The participants of the PDOS are presented a comprehensive module with topics on contract familiarization (verification of the righteous contract so as not to be victimized, profile of the region of destination (culture and laws in depth), stages of the OFW's life (how to cope socially and financially with oneself and family), health and safety, airport procedures, and other government programs (who and what to do when facing abuses and contract inobservance).¹² The licensed trainers—college graduates who have worked or stayed in the region that the prospective workers are destined to—explain these topics with actual cases so the attendees will realize that these are not events isolated from their own lives. The trainers encourage them not to deprecate their job as mere household service workers; rather they are desired people of brilliance, cleanliness, hard work, trust, and English proficiency compared to other nationalities in the host country. In the end, the attendees are to bring out their reasons and goals for working abroad to make firm resolutions to “complete the two-year contract and come home” and to “improve their lives.”

Moreover, in 2006, the Language and Culture Familiarization Program came in as part of the Reform Package, and the OWWA offered a three-day (twenty-four hours) program to the prospective workers. In

10 Interview to a POEA employee (August 2009).

11 Procedures and Guidelines in applying for HSW NC II, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (http://www.tesda.gov.ph/program.aspx?page_id=48).

12 It is interesting to note that in some NGOs run by Filipino Muslims, some verses of the Qur'an were chanted to begin the seminar, followed by that of Christianity. This was one of the ways to familiarize applicants to the Muslim culture.

this program, the first two days are spent for learning the language useful for household chores, and the last day is spared for stress management and cultural familiarization.¹³ For workers bound for the Middle East, basic Arabic suitable for the household work is taught by Muslim Filipino trainers who graduated from college in the Middle Eastern countries, such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia. For the stress management, ways of coping with loneliness, labor condition without holiday, and sexual harassment are discussed interactively. The attendees are also taught to cope with a difficult work environment in the Middle East for the household service workers in the session of cultural familiarization. There the ex-abroaders become resource persons to share their experiences.¹⁴

The components of the pre-departure programs have been extensive and multi-tiered and seem to be giving enough information to the applicants to be “well-informed.” What are the responses of the attendees? What can further be done?

2) Responses of the Attendees

The survey was conducted on August 29, 2009 at the OWWA building in Manila for the household workers destined to the Middle East. It was undertaken just after they have completed the familiarization program. All of the participants had already attended PDOS provided by respective NGOs and agencies. There were 212 respondents, with 206 female and 6 male. Among the respondents, 32 are Muslims and the rest are Christians. As regards their experience of working abroad, 61 people had experienced, whereas 112 people had not worked abroad, and non-applicable answer was 39.

Their motivations of working in these countries vary from positive perspectives such as “can earn money,” “my family/relative is/was working there,” to passive notions like “only place for me to work” and “agency’s allotment” (Table 5).¹⁵ These answers can be categorized into three: economic-, family-, and individual-oriented. Among the top ten reasons, four of them were economic-oriented. This means that workers pay little attention to where they go and what culture and laws that the country of destination have; they were eager to be deployed right away, thus risking possibilities of careful consideration on what to learn in the PDOS.

13 For the Middle East class, the contents of the program include language (1. Arabic Script; 2. Arabic numerals; 3. Vocabulary; 4. Sentence construction; 5. Personal/ interrogative pronouns; 6. Greetings of expression; 7. Expression of thanks and apologies; 8. Expression of time/day/week/month/year; 9. Parts of the house; 10. Home appliances and kitchen utensils; 11. Household chores; 12. Foods [vegetable, meat, fruits, fish] and condiments; 13. Cooking and cleaning terms; 14. Beverages and drinks; 15. Measurements and colors; 16. Parts of the body; 17. Family members and relatives; 18. Common illnesses; 19. Caring for the sick and children; and 20. Phone conversation / How to make emergency calls) and culture (1. Geography; 2. Islam in the Middle East; 3. Arab cuisine; 4. Culture, values, traditions; 5. Holidays and ways of celebration; 6. General culture inside the home; 7. Dress codes; 8. Standards of social behavior; 9. Respect for the elderly; 10. Dining manners).

14 In 2009, this four-day program was renamed the Comprehensive Pre-Departure Education Program .

15 Agencies usually receive job orders for workers through the POEA. The Philippine Embassy or the POLO attests the job order. Yet, there is a malpractice that some agencies “reprocess” job orders for work abroad. A “Repro” job order refers to non-existent work, work different from the actual work abroad, or work with a different employer. For example, a worker’s job is indicated as “waiter,” but in reality his work is “cleaner.” Applicants who seek for “fast deployment” sometimes become willing victims of these means. See also Batistella and Asis (2011).

The images toward the country of destination vary: “conservative,” “strict country,” “can save money,” “open city” (those leaving for Kuwait and Dubai, UAE), “different culture, although we believe in the same religion” (Muslim respondent), “do not know because I have never been there,” and “should be careful, though it’s a good country”. These voices support the analysis of the motivation above that the culture and societies of destination do not matter very much to them, rather they assume their country of destination as a mere place to earn money (Table 6).

Their comments on the seminar contain both positive and negative aspects: “enough.” “like the stress management,” “able to learn the value of saving,” “glad to know the dos and don’ts”. “not enough (especially on language learning, it was only skimming the surface)”, “PDOS provided by NGO was much better.” Indeed, a respondent told the author that the PDOS she attended was provided by a Muslim lecturer who was formally a household service worker in the Middle East and had eventually set up a law firm. The lecturer eloquently shared her experiences of saving income and pursuing the study, and most of all, keeping up the will to achieve her goal. It seems that she has come out well in portraying herself as a model of a successful OFW.

The answers to “What would you want to learn more in the PDOS?” vary covering crucial information such as: “our legal rights as migrant/domestic workers,” “system to work abroad,” “what to do in case of emergencies,” “strategies to save money,” “ways to avoid harassment” and even “salary.” It is surprising that there were no big differences between the first-timers and ex-abroads in their evaluation of the PDOS. This indicates that many of the workers did not build knowledge from the information provided to them, nor learn through experiences.

IV Evaluation from Filipinos in the United Arab Emirates

In this part, special attention is set on the UAE for three reasons: a notable increase in the number of the UAE-bound OFWs since 2003; a report by a human rights-concerned NGO condemning the UAE as one of the two countries where the most atrocious cases of violence against Filipino migrants originate; and the OWWA’s intention of having country-specific PDOS,¹⁶ leading to necessity for special care for the OFWs.

1) Image and the Actual Condition in the UAE

In the earlier part of this paper, the author mentioned that the “Middle East” meant Saudi Arabia, the UAE and some other GCC countries that have “difficult working conditions.” However, Dubai, as represented by a Filipino film titled *Dubai* (screened in 2004 by a Filipino TV production), has been portrayed as an “open country/city,” where not so much as the United State and Europe, the Filipinos are enjoying relatively affluent urban lives, not the restricted ones. There are malls and churches; alcohol drinking, gatherings, relationships, and moderate attires are allowed for the expatriates under certain conditions; and opportunities for wealth and success seem to lie there.

¹⁶ This was posted in the website of the OWWA (<http://www.owwa.gov.ph/wcmqs/about/>) in July 2011, but as of August 2011, no UAE-specific PDOS is conducted.

These might be partially true to professionals and skilled workers. The household service workers, who usually have no or little day-offs, can hardly be part of that community. They are, by large, staying in the house/compound of the employer, with limited actual interactions with their fellow countrymen. The “open country/city” reflects the social sphere for the expatriates, who comprise majority of the population, but allotted to the temporarily-compartmentalized surface of a multi-layered society in the country. Without this in mind, the Filipino workers would have to face the difficulties after their deployment.

2) Evaluation from the Filipinos in the UAE

The experiences of OFWs vary. In order to know the efficacies and challenges of the pre-departure programs, comments from the overseas Filipinos were collected during the author’s research from February to March 2011.

The labor attaché in the POLO-Abu Dhabi Office pointed out that the majority of the problems arise from the household service workers and their ill-preparedness. Some of them sought for assistance from the POLO office, but they failed to bring any copy of processing documents and passport, and they do not know the full name of the employer and the home addresses. Others—not knowing that their contract was “repro,” or finding out that the contract was substituted upon arrival—did not seek help from the POLO for fear that they will be brought back to the Philippines until the things has become aggravated. They should have gone to the recruitment agency and asked for proper reprocessing. The labor attaché said that these were included in the topics of the PDOS, and the trainers must have told them what to do to protect themselves. It was probable that the workers did not simply wanted to go home without a fruit, or else, they expected they can wriggle out of it likewise in the Philippines.

Moreover, fast deployment and casual try of the Filipinos often lead to easy relations with the others. Some became in good terms with other expats, ending up pregnant without legal procedures. In time of seeking help, the man would be nowhere to be found in the country. Some receive money and get pregnant in the end, only to be deported. Sex education is needed in the PDOS, and not just avoiding sexual harassment.

Problems and maladjustment may be attributed to poor linguistic skills. Regarding Arabic language, a post-arrival language classes was held in POLO-Abu Dhabi for the newcomers in the past years (for those who are allowed to go out at their will), but it has been terminated at the time of interview. Although many employers can speak English, literacy in Arabic would make the OFW’s life more convenient. It seems advisable that the moment an applicant starts going through the processing procedure of the recruitment, he/she should start learning the language in depth, together with the knowledge of the society and behavior of the people. This is one of the responses to the survey done by the author in 2009 that the applicants wanted longer and proper language training at the pre-departure programs. Linguistic ability can be a resource not only as an OFW, but also as a job candidate.

As for the OFW’s point of view, some runaway maids temporarily staying at the shelter of the POLO-Abu Dhabi offices also shared their experiences.¹⁷ The reasons behind taking refuge are diversified as follows: suffered overloaded work with no day-off and salary delay for nine months; arrived here as cook but

¹⁷ Some have stayed in detention before moving to the shelter, and others face cases filed by the employer.

was additionally ordered to take care of the elderly and small children; was almost raped by the male relative of the employer; was verbally and physically abused by the madam; unable to adjust to the staple food of the African employer whom she just met after arrival; and was threatened to shoulder the processing fee paid by the employer when she asked to have the employer changed at the agency.

In the PDOS, the workers were taught what to do or where to seek help when they face troubles: first, talk to the employer; if not solved, ask friends; if no changes, consult agency; and for the last, seek assistance from the Philippine embassy/consulate (including the POLO and the OWWA) and local police. Yet, from these voices, some other consolidation of the system is deemed necessary to narrow the differences between the seminar and reality (i.e.-culture), to provide actual contact information of these legal/ governmental institutions and social associations, to disclose some information of the employer, to make arrangements that the employee can change the employer in a certain period of time without financial burden, and above all, to implement the pre-hiring orientation seminar for the employer to learn about the background of the workers and their rights.

Recently, Filcom, a group comprised of Filipino community leaders in Dubai and the northern emirates came up with fifty-page safety awareness book with tips for the newly arrived countrymen, while emphasizing the importance of attending the PDOS.¹⁸ The brochures include dos and don'ts for the daily life of the Filipinos in the UAE and were distributed during the Philippine Independence Day celebration in June 2011. This shows the insufficiency in the structure of the current pre-departure programs and effectiveness of the cooperation between the expats and the Philippine governmental institutions in the UAE to protect the compatriots.

Conclusion

In this paper, the author has introduced the evolving policies and institutions for the protection of the OFWs by the Philippine government, and evaluated the contents of the pre-departure programs, especially the PDOS. Overall, the study showed the preeminence of the programs as being able to provide various information before leaving abroad, such as advice on stress management, values education for gender awareness, and the importance of saving. The accumulative procedures and multi-structured system, in terms of differentiation by the deploying region and by the major occupation, are aimed at giving more detailed assistance to the workers, as well as enriching them with skills and information.

However, there are limitations as well. It can be pointed out from both attendees' and providers' side. For the attendees' issue, the problem relates to prospective OFWs' ill-preparation or lack of imagination of themselves being involved in these problems. For the providers' sides, one might question whether their information is true enough, as they could not discourage the outbound OFWs to make the last minute withdraw. Another problem is the lack of information about the specific receiving country. Many of the Middle East countries share similarities, but they also differ in politics, law system, society, and culture.

18 See "Guide to Safe Living: Dos and Don'ts in the UAE," *Gulf News* May 19, 2011 (<http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/uae/general/guide-to-safe-living-dos-and-don-ts-in-the-uae-1.809786>).

They cannot be taken monolithically. The best thing is to know the real living and working condition of the respective country and cities by the same occupational category as the living conditions and life styles between the different job strata in their destinations vary. Conversely, it is deemed desirable to share household workers’ experiences with other institutions and organizations of the major labor-sending powers like India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia to seek solutions for the common issues in the host countries.

Considering the entry status of the Filipinos in other country, especially the case of the UAE, the undocumented workers—most likely the visit visa holders—enter the country without attending the PDOS, which results in their presence not being acknowledged by the Philippine embassy. This creates larger problems to the workers themselves. What is preferable is to go through an orientation along with the registration at the embassy as an OFW once hired. Hence two things are recommended for the improvement of the situation. First, it is necessary for the PDOS to be more country- and profession specific and be held in cooperation with the migrant-concerned NGOs. Second, there needs to be an implementation of post-arrival programs in the host countries to follow-up hastiness of the OFWs including visit-visa entries.

In this age of globalization, the Philippine government has been sending its people as laborers, and has created a situation where more than one-tenth of its population is residing around the world. Such expansion of the Philippine society beyond the national boundaries has changed the consciousness of the Filipinos and has brought about easy overseas labor migrations. The easiness is especially relevant to the household service workers, which calls for little processing requirements. They assume the job as something everyone can do, and leave the country in a hasty attempt by saying, “*mag-DH na lang ako* (I’ll just work as a domestic helper).” Formally, abundant information is provided through the pre-departure programs, but these are not fully digested by the workers to be “well-informed.” The household service workers are the people who have to go into the deeper layers of the host society. It calls for more risks and determination on how they want to understand the workplace where they will spend the next two years of contract. “Well-informedness” is achieved only after the worker is able to utilize the information as their knowledge, with the will to understand the society of the host country. It may be said that whether or not the workers can maximize their efforts of overseas experience rests on the their well-informedness and the extensive institutional, legal, and social supports that surround them.

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Table 1: Comparison of Information Campaign and Pre-Departure Programs among Three Major Sending Countries of Household Service Workers (2008-2009)

	Bangladesh	Sri Lanka	Indonesia	Philippines
Major countries of Destination	Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Malaysia	Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan, Lebanon, and UAE	Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, Gulf and Middle East countries.	Hong Kong, Kuwait, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Italy, Cyprus, Singapore, Oman, and Bahrain
Information campaign for safe labour migration	[Government] Put regular ads in newspapers warning the dangers of using unlicensed recruiters; website [Private Sector] Information campaign by Bangladesh Association of International Recruitment Agencies (BAIRA) [NGO] Awareness campaigns in the field	[Government] 2-hour radio programme every Sundays; film showing on national TV channel; drama, talk show, discussion, overseas awareness raising programme in community and village; website [NGO] Provision of information to overseas worker applicants (mostly highlights negative consequences)	[Government] Regional information dissemination via “Labour Migrant Expo” by BNP2TKI [NGO] Radio discussion programmes; theater performance; quarterly bulletin; website	[Government] TV and radio programmes; newspaper; PEOS in community and schools; leaflet and posters tied up with private sectors; website [Private Sector] Broadcasting TV programmes for country of OFW destinations; posting safe and right way for labour migration on overseas job magazine [NGO] PEOS, Radio programme (together with the gov’t), website, leaflet
Institution for overseas employment (est. year)	Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment (2001); Bureau of Manpower Employment Labour (BMET, under above ministry; 1976)	Sri Lankan Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE; 1985)	Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration (DTKT; 1978), National Authority for the Protection and Placement of Indonesian Migrant Workers (BNP2TKI; 2006)	Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA; 1982), Overseas Worker Welfare Administration (OWWA; 1987),
Actor for providing pre-departure programmes	BMET; BAIRA, NGOs	SLBFE; private recruitment agencies	Private recruitment agencies (PJKTI: Perusahaan Jasa Tenaga Kerja Indonesia); BNP2TKI	POEA, OWWA, private recruitment agency associations; training agencies; NGO
Attendance form	Mandatory (for group visa holder; individual visa holder and the direct hire are excepted; for women, started since 2003 ¹)	Mandatory (esp. women, since 1996)	Mandatory	Mandatory (for new hires, since 1983)
Time span	Skill training (1 month) and 2-hour orientation briefing	13days (bound for ME) or 22days (other countries), plus 18days of literacy skill training	Skill training (2 weeks to 1 year); 20-hours briefing	Skilled training (3weeks, by TESDA or TESDA accredited agencies); plus 6-hour orientation (education); plus 14 to 24-hour Culture and language familiarization Seminar (esp. household service worker)
Fee	Without charges	Without charges	With charges	With charges for TESDA, and NGO-PDOS; others without charges if you are member of OWWA

Contents	Dos and don'ts, country specific information, rights, healthcare, others	Skill Education on household management, language and general learning (1 to 12 th day); seminar together with spouse and family (13 th day)	Briefing (situation and cultures of country of destination, risks of overseas labour, language skill, rights and duties as Indonesian migrant workers); skill training (skills of household work— language, cooking, how to use household electronic appliances)	Country or regional specific information on climate, law, culture, people; obligation and rights of OFWs; language skill training; stress-management
Other NGO Roles	Conduct educational skill programmes for women	Seek solution to the problems of returnees (NGOs are barred out from advising and monitoring pre-departure information seminars)		Conduct PDOS; Advice on the contents of PDOS;
Roles for international organizations (ILO, IOM)	Aid funding and development of text materials; conduct workshop on migrant worker's rights; publish country- specific information leaflet (labour circumstances, law, important addresses, health- related topics, and remittance means); collaborate publish booklet for AIDS awareness; Provide training manual for PDOS trainers	Invite resource persons, financial aid for training and module development , provide leaflets for country-specific information and on human trafficking	Conduct campaigns to educate and to raise awareness of migrant workers;	Conduct impact evaluation on policy for migrant workers; advice for improvement of PDOS; develop videos for PDOS and PEOS

Source: IOM (2005, 2010), Siddiqui, Rashid, and Zeitlyn (2008), and CARAM-Asia (2011)

Note 1: In Bangladesh, there was a ban for female household workers from 1981 to 1987 and in 1997.

Table 2: Job Categories of Top-Four Middle East Countries being Host Country of the Household Service Workers (2010)

	Kuwait			United Arab Emirates			Saudi Arabia			Qatar						
	Male	Female	Total	% to Total	Male	Female	Total	% to Total	Male	Female	Total	% to Total				
Administrative and Managerial Workers	14	11	25	0.1	84	109	193	0.4	170	58	228	0.2	48	23	71	0.2
Agricultural Animal Husbandry and Forestry Workers, Fishermen and Hunters	16	1	17	0.1	40	45	85	0.2	571	5	576	0.5	10	0	10	less than 0.1
Clerical and Related Workers	290	459	749	2.8	1,138	2,748	3,886	8.4	1,966	637	2,603	2.2	890	846	1,736	4.8
Production and Related Workers Transport Equipment	1,117	703	1,820	6.7	6,190	2,858	9,048	19.5	47,889	6,349	54,238	46.0	15,076	607	15,683	43.1
Professional and Related Workers	234	468	702	1.6	2,177	1,112	3,289	7.1	13,322	10,246	23,568	20.0	2,815	478	3,293	9.1
Sales Workers	146	269	415	1.5	1,328	2,048	3,376	7.3	1,493	245	1,738	1.5	421	375	796	2.2
Service Workers	1,124	22,244	23,368	86.2	3,201	23,385	26,586	57.2	8,221	26,859	35,080	29.7	2,700	12,096	14,796	40.7
(Domestic Helpers and Related Household Workers)	(141)	(21,413)	(21,554)	(79.5)	(83)	(13,101)	(13,384)	(28.9)	(344)	(11,238)	(11,582)	(9.7)	(51)	(9,886)	(9,937)	(27.0)
Total	2,941	24,155	27,096	100.0	14,409	32,370	46,779	100.0	74,806	44,469	119,275	100.0	22,350	14,444	36,794	100.0

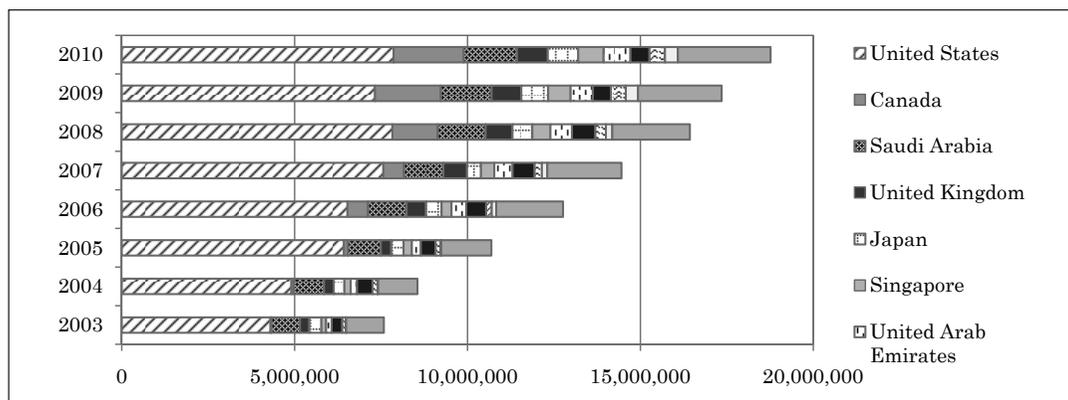
Source: POEA(2011b)

Table 3: Number of Deployed Landbased OFWs by Top Occupation Category, New hires (2010-2012)

World Region	2010	2011	2012
All Occupational Category	341,966	437,720	458,575
1. Household Service Workers	96,583	142,689	155,831
2. Nurses Professional	12,082	17,236	15,655
3. Waiters, Bartenders and Related Workers	8,789	12,238	14,892
4. Caregivers and Caretakers	9,293	10,101	10,575
5. Wiremen and Electrical Workers	8,606	9,826	10,493
6. Plumbers and Pipe Fitters	8,407	9,177	9,987
7. Welders and Flame-Cutters	5,059	8,026	9,675
8. Laborers/Helpers General	7,833	7,010	9,128
9. Charworkers, Cleaners and Related Workers	12,133	6,847	8,213
10. Cooks and Related Workers	4,399	5,287	6,344
Other Occupational Categories	168,782	209,283	207,800

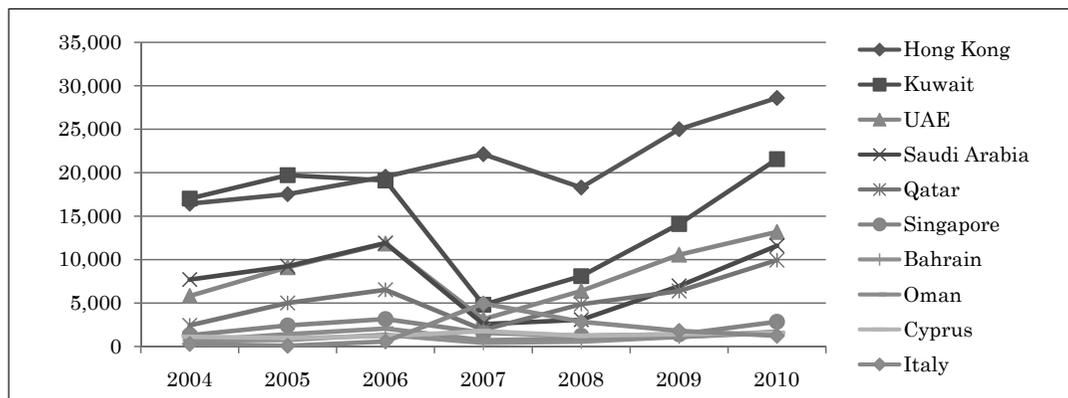
Source: POEA (2013)

Figure 1: Remittances of Overseas Filipinos by Top Ten Country-Source, 2003-2010 (In Thousand US Dollars)



Source: POEA (2010)

Figure 2: Number of Deployed Household Service Workers by Top Ten Destinations, New hires: 2004-2010



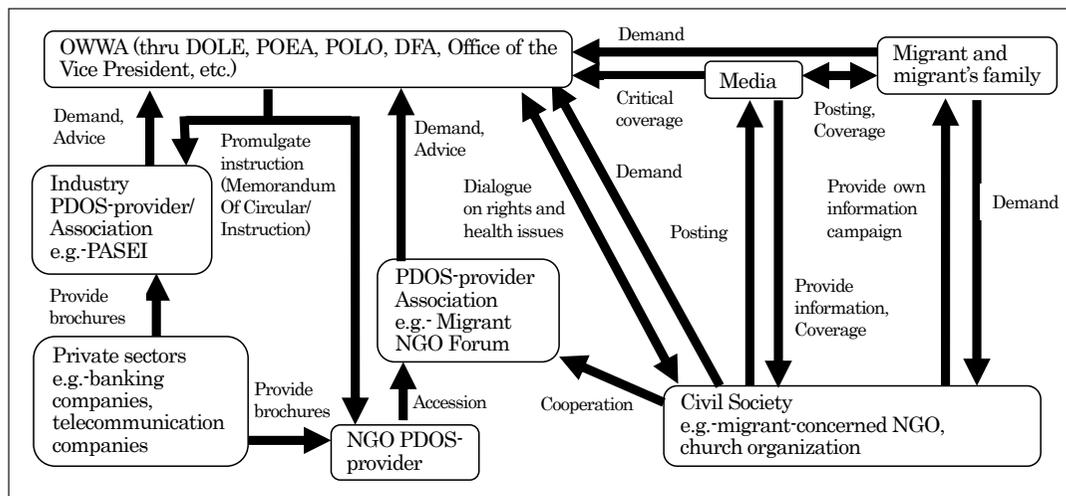
Source: POEA (2011a)

Table 4: Development of Pre-Departure Programmes Related to Household Service Workers

Year	Events/Laws/Institutions	Related Topics to Pre-Departure Programs
1973	Starting major labor migration	NGO gives labor related information (law, society, contract) to OFW applicants
1974	Labor Code of 1974 formalize the labor migration program Institutionalization of labor migration; establishment of the Overseas Employment Development Board (OEDB), the National Seamen Board (NSB), and the Bureau of Employment Services (BES).	OEDB provides information on destination country to those who want to know
1977	Establishment of the predecessor or OWWA	
1978	Amendment of the Labor Code, allowing private recruitment agencies to engage in recruiting industry, including training and seminars	
1983	Establishment of POEA	Compulsory Attending of PDOS to all OFW (managed by POEA) Initial PDOS had 6 topics
1987	Establishment of OWWA (renamed)	
1990	Gulf War	Adding topics to PDOS (repatriation from the conflict affected country, and compensation to salary and properties)
1991		Adding value formation to the topics of PDOS Adding topics on AIDS
1992	Rapid increase of the cases that OFWs being imprisoned due to illegal behavior in KSA	Adding topics to PDOS to obey strict Islamic code Adding PDOS the Code of Discipline
1995	Flor Contemplacion Incident The Migrant Workers Act and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995 (Republic Act 8042, implemented in 1996) Establishment of POLO	Adding topics to PDOS on gender sensitive criteria, and protection of welfare of the OFWs
1996	Sarah Balabagan Incident	
2001	Iraqi War	Adding topics to PDOS
2003		Transferring the management of PDOS to OWWA
2006	The Household Service Workers Reform Package (Philippine government's demand for 400 US dollars to the salary of all the household service workers, no-placement fee to household service workers bound for all the states)	Skill training and issuance of certificate by TESDA Start seminar especially for household workers, provided by OWWA (obligatory, in addition to PDOS) Adding topics to PDOS on sub-contract
2009		Implementation of CPDEP (Comprehensive Pre-Departure Education Program) As of 2009, topics of PDOS have increased to 20-22.
2010	Republic Act 10022, requiring the POEA to only deploy workers in countries that protect the rights of OFWs	
2011	COWA(Committee on Overseas Workers) ask for the improvement of PDOS bound for KSA (esp. clarifying merits and demerits of working in KSA)	

Source: Scalabrini Migration Center (1992), Baggio and Taguinod (2004), Kashim (2006), CARAM-Asia (2011) and interviews by the author

Figure 3: Diagram of Related Actors in PDOS Module/ Topic Revision (As of 2009)



Source: Interviews by the author

Abbreviations: OWWA(Overseas Workers Welfare Agency), DOLE (Department of Labor Employment), POLO (Philippine Overseas Labor Office), DFA (Department of the Foreign Affairs)

Table 5: Top 10 Reasons for Worker’s to Choose the Country of Destination (Household Service Workers)

Reason	Number of Respondents
1. Low/no placement fee, little processing expenses	25
2. Fast deployment	15
3. Family/relative in the country of destination	14
4. Open city/country	11
5. Can save money	7
6. Big salary	7
7. Agency’s allotment	6
8. No other choice	5
9. Just want to go	5
10. Try my luck/talent	5
N/A, others	112

Source: Survey done by the author in 2009

Table 6: Profile of the Respondents to PDOS

	HSW bound for the Middle East	Professionals/NameHires bound for the Middle East
Number (by sex)	212 (Male 6, Female 206)	17 (Male 10, Female 7)
Experience of working abroad	Yes (61), No (112), N/A (39)	Yes (8), No (6), N/A (3)
Destination for this time	KSA(28%), Kuwait(25%), UAE(18%), Qatar(13%), Bahrain(3%), Oman(3%), Other(1%), n/a(9%)	UAE(53%), KSA(18%), Kuwait(11%), Qatar(11%), Bahrain(6%)
Reason for Choosing the country (Top 10)	Low/no placement fee, little processing expenses (25), Fast deployment (15), Family/relatives in the country of destination (14), "Open city/country" (11), Can save money (7), Big salary (7), Agency's allotment (6), No other choice (5), Just want to go (5), Try my luck (5)	"Open city/country" (5), Good salary (5), Ministry of the Health's allotment (3), Branch of Company (1), Islamic (1), N/A (2)
Image toward the country's destination	"conservative," "strict country," "can save money," "open city" (those leaving for Kuwait and Dubai, UAE), "don't know because I've never been there," "should be careful, though it's a good country."	"good," "beautiful highly developed, dynamic oil dollars financing development and business," "good open country/ city," "strict/desert-like," "I think I would be safe, strict, discipline," and "Islamic religion having a strict rules"
Evaluation of the seminar/s	[positive] "enough", "like the 'stress management", "able to learn the value of saving", "glad to know do's and don'ts" [negative] "not enough (especially on language learning, it was only skimming the surface)", "PDOs provided by NGO was much better"	[positive] "learning on how to handle the problems in other country", "to know what to do when learning the country's rule, regulation of the country you are going", "more information about going to international airport and plane", "regulation; how to go other country", "open minded about the other country", "the process of my documents", "do's and don'ts before and after abroad", "airport procedures"
What to be informed more in the seminars	"our legal rights as migrant workers/ domestic workers", "system to work abroad", "what to do in case of emergencies", "strategies to save money", "ways to avoid harassment", "salary."	"terms and condition in my contract", "bringing medicine". "culture (Arab) and some common language for daily use, manners (do's and don'ts)", "liberty", "do's and don'ts before and after abroad"

Source: Survey by the author in 2009