



## Learning Guide

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### What do you need to know?

As of June 2018, there are **966,200** low wage migrant workers in Singapore. Low wage migrant workers make up more than **25% of the total workforce** in Singapore.

The **financial difficulties** of low wage migrant workers in Singapore are substantial. They make as little as **S\$540** per month and have a median income of **S\$1,230** per month depending on nationality and years of work experience. Prior to landing in Singapore, low wage migrant workers incur high recruitment fees and training fees that amount to S\$15,000. It will take a low wage migrant worker up to **28 months to repay their debt**.

### Why should you care?

#### Lack of access to legal protections

One barrier low wage migrant workers face is the reluctance to make a report to MOM, which may enable them to claim compensation for the salary or injury dispute as they fear employers' retaliation in the form of the termination of employment.<sup>1</sup> During the period in which their complaint is being investigated by MOM, are not allowed to seek alternative employment unless granted a Change of Employer option in cases of salary disputes (TWC2, 2018a).

However, a COE does not guarantee a successful job search and claims processes can take as long as four years. employers did not want to hire anyone with a history of complaining to MOM.<sup>2</sup> In such scenarios, **workers face difficulties in terms of supporting themselves and their family as well as repaying their recruitment fee debt**.

The claims process is a second barrier. During this process, MOM will arrange for mediation between the worker and the employer. This mediation process can be problematic if workers feel pressured to settle for a lower compensation, which may occur because they may be unable to seek any employment while the process is ongoing and because they have low negotiating power due to asymmetric knowledge about the legislation governing their employment.

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<sup>1</sup> Fillinger, T. et al. (2017). [Labour Protection for the Vulnerable](#).

<sup>2</sup> TWC2, Policy Briefs. [Free up labour mobility, do more to retain skills and experience](#).



### **Where is help available?**

The Ministry of Manpower has specific [rules and guidelines](#) for both employee and employer to comply with.

Healthserve helps reduce the financial burden of low wage migrant workers in Singapore through the provision of medical and dental services. Healthserve provides casework and legal support to migrant workers with work injury claims and legal, criminal or employment-related issues. HealthServe also offers social assistance programs to workers waiting for work injury compensation or resolution of the dispute that may last several months to more than a year.

### **How can you help?**

#### Be a Donor

HealthServe offers social assistance programs to workers waiting for work injury compensation or resolution of the dispute that may last several months to more than a year. During this period, these workers are not allowed to work and receive no income. Help healthserve to serve at [giving.sg](http://giving.sg)

#### Be a Volunteer

Healthserve provides frequent volunteering opportunities to volunteers. They require daily help from volunteers that have medical training in their [Medical and Dental Clinics](#). Healthserve builds community among migrant workers through regular outreach events. Volunteer for the cause at [giving.sg](http://giving.sg)

#### Be an Ambassador

Gaining knowledge and empathy about social and cultural backgrounds of low wage migrant workers can help them integrate better in our society. Help to spread awareness about migrant worker issues through [hosting screenings](#) with your friends, colleagues, and families. Be a 15 Shorts ambassador, visit [www.15shorts.com](http://www.15shorts.com)