

# Office of Sen. Manny Villar

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**News Release**  
**27 October 2010**

## **Villar's dream: From kasambahays to hotel housekeepers, through skills training**

Senator Manny Villar and the Blas F. Ople Policy Center and Training Institute launched yesterday a vocational skills scholarship program for victims of human trafficking and illegal recruitment in cooperation with the Asian School of Hospitality Arts, a TESDA-accredited learning institution.

The program was launched at The Coffee Beanery in Quezon City where 20 trafficked and illegal recruitment victims were treated to a demonstration by a master barista while another trainor presented the school's curriculum on housekeeping. ASHA's president and CEO Badjie Guerrero-Trinidad welcomed the scholars and gave them a tour of the facilities.

Dubbed as the "Skills-Up" program, the program's objective is to equip trafficked and illegal recruitment victims with better skills to enable them to penetrate the local and even overseas job markets.

For its initial phase, the chosen scholars will be enrolled as students in a three-month course on hotel housekeeping and baristas at the Asian School of Hospitality Arts (ASHA), a sister company of the Center for Culinary Arts and The Coffee Beanery as well as the Cravings Group of Restaurants. The final one and a half months of training would be paid apprenticeships at selected restaurants and coffee shops run by the same company. Included among the scholars are trafficked victims from Dubai, Saudi Arabia and Malaysia as well as farmers from Nueva Ecija who were illegally recruited for fake jobs in Cyprus.

"From kasambahay to baristas, from trafficked victims to hotel employees – that is the kind of transformation we intend to bring about through skills training and development," Senator Villar said in his message during the launch as read by his daughter, Camille Villar.

The senator stressed that those who have filed cases against human trafficking syndicates and illegal recruiters deserve concrete forms of assistance from the government. "This modest but meaningful voc-tech scholarship program is our way of thanking and honoring these trafficked survivors for their courageous fight for justice against powerful and well-connected trafficking syndicates," Villar said, adding that this is also his way of continuing his advocacy to help overseas Filipino workers.

The Skills-Up program will soon be expanded to short hands-on courses on call center work and transcription services and shall soon be open to qualified dependents of OFWs.

"For now, we are focusing on trafficked and illegal recruitment victims because we want to help them recover from their ordeal and move on to better opportunities as skilled workers," Susan Ople, president of the Blas F. Ople Policy Center explained.

The Center said the 20 chosen scholars have pending cases against their illegal recruiters and members of the human trafficking syndicates.

"These are men and women who despite all odds, have not compromised with their recruiters despite bribes and intimidation. We are thankful to Senator Villar and the administrators of ASHA for putting together this special scholarship package that would enable our trafficked survivors to skill-up and be more competitive in the search for jobs and a brighter future," Ople said.

The Skills-Up is another program spearheaded by Villar to advance the welfare of the OFWs. Another prominent program is Sagip OFW, which has repatriated hundreds and helped provide assistance to thousands of OFWs in distress.

The Skills-Up Program includes values formation and counseling as part of the training package and scholars from the provinces are given free board and lodging. "We would like them to overcome their anguish, frustration and disappointment and start dreaming about the future again."

For more information about the Skills-Up Program, please call the Blas F. Ople Policy Center at 833-5337 or 833-9562.