



INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune At Home Abroad
THE GLOBAL EDITION OF THE NEW YORK TIMES

[iht.com](#) Business Culture Sports Opinion
 AMERICAS EUROPE ASIA/PACIFIC AFRICA/MIDDLE EAST | TECH/MEDIA STYLE HEALTH
 TRAVEL PROPERTIES BLOGS DISCUSSIONS SPECIAL REPORTS AUDIONEWS

Morning home delivery - save up to 65%

 SEARCH [Advanced Search](#)



When Yvonne McNulty, an Australian, moved with her family to Singapore, where she has a choice of three different kinds of work permits, all designed to encourage her and her family to stay and contribute to the country's economy as long as they wish. (Tim Chong/Reuters)

Finally, two incomes during the years abroad

By [Gretchen Lang](#)

Published: May 30, 2008

BERLIN: When Yvonne McNulty, an Australian, moved to Chicago in 2000 for her husband's job, her visa made it clear she was forbidden to work. Frustrated and bored at home, McNulty tried everything she could to keep busy without actually making any money.

Eight years later, her horizons have widened considerably. In Singapore, the family's latest posting, she has a choice of three different kinds of work permits, all designed to encourage her and her family to stay and contribute to the country's economy as long as they wish.

For years, work permits have been the primary hurdle for expatriate spouses who wanted to work abroad. That seems to be changing. Legal barriers to working abroad are falling around the world, international human resource experts say.

France last year was the latest government to allow family members of multinational employees and skilled workers to take a job without obtaining a separate permit. Other countries - the Netherlands, Hong Kong, Argentina, Singapore and the United States - have also loosened restrictions.

Labor experts said that governments eager to attract skilled workers and businesses trying to deal with dual-career couples are lining up behind the drive to get permits for spouses.

Today in At Home Abroad

[Finally, two incomes during the years abroad](#)

"The spouse is now seen as a good-value expat. They have their own skills too," said Alain Verstandig, managing director of Net Expat, a support services company in Brussels. "By opening doors to them, you let an international population in."

- E-Mail Article
- Listen to Article
- Printer-Friendly
- 3-Column Format
- Translate
- Share Article
- Text Size - +

Video

[See all videos »](#)



Final farewell to Yves Saint-Laurent
 Suzy Menkes on the fashion world's last homage to the iconic designer.



Most E-Mailed

24 Hours | 7 Days | 30 Days

1. Supercomputer sets record
2. Albinos in Tanzania face deadly threat
3. Roger Cohen: The good American and Monsieur Obama
4. Nature gave inventor a blueprint, but not overnight success
5. All of Europe getting a whiff of Naples garbage problem
6. The long road to a Clinton exit
7. Pressure from oil prices spreads
8. Al Qaeda threat has analysts split into 2 opposing camps
9. 7 die in Tokyo stabbing rampage
10. West's business elite swarm to Russia's honey pot

iht.com/culture

Berlin, playground of expatriates
In France, it's time to get into the pool

Finding jobs for the spouses of expatriate workers has become something of a hot topic recently in international human resources circles. As more women enter the work force, more couples are refusing assignments abroad because a spouse's job cannot be transferred overseas.

If the couple does move, spousal dissatisfaction is still the No.1 reason for assignment failure, according to several surveys.

Companies are now much more concerned about dual-career issues. Today, about 80 percent of multinational companies have a plan in place to support spouses, according to a survey by ORC Worldwide, a human resources consulting firm in Britain. Fifteen years ago, the figure was 10 percent.

Relaxing regulations against partners working abroad is a "triple win" situation for individuals, companies and countries wishing to attract foreign investment, said Kathleen van der Wilk-Carlton, the chairwoman of the Permits Foundation, a nonprofit lobbying group that lists 50 multinational companies as sponsors.

Working through business and government contacts, the foundation tries to persuade governments that, far from taking jobs from locals, allowing family members to work encourages skilled workers to settle in the country and also bring their own skills to the table.

"In order to attract highly skilled workers, you have to give their families the option to work," Van der Wilk-Carlton said.

Although the group finds that there is still much to be done in Africa and Asia, and even in parts of the European Union, it has scored some successes at opening up the work permit market.

Thanks to its efforts, Hong Kong, the United States, the Netherlands and France have joined the list of countries that have loosened their policies in this area, along with Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Sweden.

In some of those countries, spouses of "knowledge" workers or highly skilled migrants do not even need to apply for work permits as long as they are legal residents.

That is good news for families in which the trailing spouse would like to work, but it remains to be seen if the legal improvements will result in more spouses in overseas workplaces. Surveys show that, for a variety of reasons, the gap between the number of spouses who work at home and those who work abroad is actually widening.

The most recent survey from GMAC Global Relocation Services showed that while 59 percent of partners of expatriate workers were employed in their home countries, only 8 percent were employed during the assignment abroad, the lowest number since the question was included in the survey in 2000.

Siobhan Cummins, of ORC Worldwide, pointed out that some spouses on short-term assignments chose not to work. They used their time abroad to study, start a family or spend more time with their children, for instance.

"When people go abroad they get a chance not to work," Cummins said. With one big compensation package in the family, she added, many spouses regard an overseas assignment as an opportunity to miss out on "all that pressure."

Those who do want to work may find opportunities in the international community, including other multinational corporations or international organizations or agencies.

But even with a work permit, finding work in the local job market still presents challenges, the most obvious of which is often the language. It may take an expat years to learn a local language to a level where he or she can compete for jobs in the local market, career counselors point out.

1 | 2 [Next Page](#)

» [Save up to 72% on morning home delivery of the IHT](#)

[Home](#) > [At Home Abroad](#)

[Back to top](#)



Contemporary art boom brings opportunities, and challenges, for insurers

More from Culture:

[Graffiti finds its place in contemporary art](#)
[Younger Chinese artists struggle to excite buyers](#)
[Contemporary art's](#)

Ads by Google

Expatriate Tax Services

CPA firm specializing in expatriate tax services for Americans abroad
www.expattcpa.com

High Interest Savings

UK Expat Living Abroad? Get 6.40% With Our Online Savings Accounts!
www.BBI.co.uk/OffshoreSavings

Learn English At WSI

Flexible Schedule And Guaranteed Results. Call For Free Class Now!
www.WSI.com.sg/Tel_62362760

Expat Retirement

We Advise > 40,000 Expats Globally On Investment Advice! Register Now.
OffshoreInvestmentGuide.com

[IHT.com Home](#) »

Latest News



Ruth Fremson/The New York Times

Gates separate India's good life and the servants' slums

Gated communities have emerged in India, giving its growing upper-middle-class giving Western amenities, along with maids and chauffeurs who live in nearby slums.

More Headlines

- [Asian gains seen in terror fight](#)
- [Campaign may leave blot on Clinton legacy](#)
- [All of Europe getting a whiff of Naples garbage problem](#)

In Opinion: [Roger Cohen: The good American and Monsieur Obama](#)



Search



Subscriptions
Sign Up | Manage

- News:** [Americas](#) | [Europe](#) | [Asia - Pacific](#) | [Africa & Middle East](#) | [Technology & Media](#) | [Health & Science](#) | [Sports](#)
- Features:** [Culture](#) | [Fashion & Style](#) | [Travel](#) | [At Home Abroad](#) | [Blogs](#) | [Reader Discussions](#) | [Weather](#)
- Business:** [Business with Reuters](#) | [World Markets](#) | [Currencies](#) | [Commodities](#) | [Portfolios](#) | [Your Money](#) | [Funds Insite](#)
- Opinion:** [Opinion Home](#) | [Send a letter to the editor](#) | [Newspaper Masthead](#)
- Classifieds:** [Classifieds Home](#) | [Properties](#) | [Education Center](#)
- Company Info:** [About the IHT](#) | [Advertise in the IHT](#) | [IHT Events](#) | [Press Office](#)
- Newspaper:** [Today's Page One in Europe](#) | [Today's Page One in Asia](#) | [Publishing Partnerships](#)
- Other Formats:** [IHT Mobile](#) | [RSS](#) | [AudioNews](#) | [PDA & Smartphones](#) | [Netvibes](#) | [IHT Electronic Edition](#) | [E-Mail Alerts](#) | [Twitter](#)
- More:** [Daily Article Index](#) | [Hyper Sudoku](#) | [IHT Developer Blog](#) | [In Our Pages](#)

[Contact Us](#) | [Site Index](#) | [Archives](#) | [Terms of Use](#) | [Contributor Policy](#) | [Privacy & Cookies](#)

Copyright © 2008 the International Herald Tribune All rights reserved