

DOMESTIC WORKERS AT THE FRONT-LINES



Newsletter #36

August 7, 2020

We need your support now more than ever to continue the work we are doing!

Click [here](#) to listen to a message from us to all of you!



IN THE SPOTLIGHT!

IDWF affiliate ACV-CSC Food and Services Belgium is a multi-sectoral branch union bring together different workers including care and domestic workers. It has approximately 250,000 members- 50,000 of them are domestic workers. It is also one of the founding members of IDWF and continues to play an essential role; they offered to host the next IDWF Congress in 2023!

ACV-CSC has been able to accomplish several successes. It was able to achieve formalization of the domestic work sector in 2004 through a subsidized voucher system which now serves as the model for the rest of Europe. Domestic workers are covered by all labor laws and a collective agreement which is sector binding and guarantees a wage above the minimum wage (decent wage). So, domestic workers enjoy the same benefits as any other Belgium worker.

Another very important achievement is the first ever historical strike for domestic workers in Belgium that took place last year. On the occasion of the bi-annual wage negotiations, the employers' federation refused to raise the wages of domestic workers. This meant that all workers in Belgium were entitled to a wage increase except for domestic workers. So, for more than 7 months the domestic workers organized various actions and demonstrations including a large scale strike were 145,000 domestic workers participated. This resulted in them successfully obtaining a decent wage increase for all domestic workers in Belgium!

During COVID-19 ACV-CSC was able to support thousands of members and provide them with the necessary information to guarantee safety in the workplace. Also, ACV-CSC encouraged a work suspension with the maintenance of an allowance covering 70% of the guaranteed salary. When it was safe to return to work, they pushed employers to provide sufficient necessary equipment in order to respect the health and safety measures.

Today Belgium is one of the few countries that has ratified ILO Convention 189. They did so in June 2015 after continuous work and effort by ACV Food and Services and their allies.

ACV-CSC Food and Services believes in strong international organizing and so has been supporting IDWF affiliates in other countries particularly in Africa. Recently, it donated much needed 10,000 USD to the IDWF COVID-19 Solidarity Fund!

Click [here](#) to look at their Facebook page and [here](#) for their website.

On July 28, the IDWF's Latin American team (regional executive committee and staff) developed a training activity on Covid-19: Back-to-work Safety Protocol for Domestic Workers.

This event was a success! On Zoom, 100 domestic workers' leaders from regional unions/organizations affiliated and not-affiliated to IDWF participated in this activity (including representatives from the Ecuador, Bolivia and Honduras unions). On Facebook Live, the event was attended by people from the whole continent, including the USA, and even some attended from Spain! Also, the video posted on our Facebook page has gotten over 2K views so far!

The training materials and guidelines were provided by UPACP's school, our affiliated union from Argentina, led by Carmen Brítez (Argentina is the only country in the region that has developed a tripartite protocol). The Latin American team will continue holding these training activities until December, but will add the following components to the program: 1) Technical: How to develop a protocol along with other stakeholders and governments; 2) Political: How to negotiate with employers and how to advocate to governments for the adoption and implementation of safety protocols for the sector.

Watch the recording by clicking [here](#).

OUR POLICY BRIEF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DOMESTIC WORKERS UNDER COVID-19:

While contexts are diverse across the regions, the core demands of domestic workers movements are the same and resonate with one another. Aside the urgent alleviation of the COVID-19 induced hardships, they look into the deeper-seated injustices, to make sustainable change towards the alleviation of economic and gender inequalities of the sector.

Accomodation and Safe Housing



Allow the opening of shelters and introduce preventative health care services and medication within all these spaces.



Release domestic workers detention centers, make safe housing available for them to quarantine in.



Allocate alternative accommodation for DW under the "sleep-in" modality, including migrant workers, as they are locked out of their countries due to border closure.



Suspend rents and impose consequences on landlords who evict those unable to afford rent during the lockdown.

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