

# RESPECT AND RIGHTS

Protection for  
domestic/household workers!



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This report is also available on the internet,  
there all the links to documents mentioned in the report are connected:  
[www.domesticworkerrights.org](http://www.domesticworkerrights.org)  
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# RESPECT AND RIGHTS

Protection for domestic/household workers!

¡Protección para Trabajadoras Domésticas/Trabajadoras del Hogar!

Protection des travailleuses domestiques/employées de maison!

Report of the international conference  
held in Amsterdam, 8-10 November 2006

+

Highlights of post conference developments

MOM? IF I AM SO PRECIOUS TO  
YOU, WHY DO YOU PAY SO LITTLE  
TO WOMAN WHO TAKES  
CARE OF ME?



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## **Preface**

This is the report of an action conference held on 8-10 November 2006 in Amsterdam, at the headquarters of the FNV trade union federation of the Netherlands. The participants were from a wide range of domestic/household workers' organisations, trade unions and support NGOs worldwide. They came up with a set of recommendations, which were then quickly acted on as part of the global effort to achieve better protection for domestic/household workers.

This conference report was soon made available on the Internet, in English, Spanish and French. It is a rich resource of information about the many initiatives being taken across the world for the rights of domestic/household workers.

Trade unions, the self-organisations of domestic workers and support NGOs are working together, with the IUF –one of the Global Union Federations– taking the lead at a global level. The network continues to be extended, and some new funding has been raised that will now really help us to make progress.

Domestic/household workers have to be recognised as workers/employees. They need to be covered by labour legislation in each and every country, like any other workers. There is no place for 'servitude' or discrimination in legislation. The vulnerability of migrant domestic/household workers needs extra attention, and domestic work undertaken by children should be included in the list of the 'worst forms of child labour'.

### **The first step is won!**

One way to realise this would be an ILO Convention related to domestic/household work. When we started planning the 2006 conference, such Convention seemed very far away, with a lot of work ahead. However, we said, *'Yes, it will take a lot of effort. Yes, all support is needed. But we know how to fight for our rights. We have already come a long way.'*

The Global Unions used their position in the ILO Governing Body and network members lobbied for support of their governments. On 19 March 2008, the Governing Body of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) agreed to include the item 'Decent Work for Domestic Workers' (Standard Setting) on the agenda of the 99th session (2010) of the International Labour Conference. This means that an ILO Convention on domestic/household workers' rights will come up for approval in 2011.

Domestic/household workers want to –and have the right to– speak for themselves. This means they have to be included in the workers' delegations to the International Labour Conferences of the ILO. At national levels, domestic/household workers' organisations and trade unions need to cooperate to make that happen.

Use this report to support your activities. If you want to translate it into a language you work in, please do so, but tell us, and please mention the source.

## **SUPPORT THE ACTION FOR AN ILO CONVENTION ON DOMESTIC/HOUSEHOLD WORK**

This report is based on the proceedings of the international conference:

**Protection for domestic workers!**  
**¡Protección para Trabajadoras Domésticas/Trabajadoras del Hogar!**  
**Protection des travailleuses domestiques/employées de maison!**

Held in Amsterdam, 8-10 November 2006  
at the headquarters of the FNV trade union federation of the Netherlands.

The conference was organised by:  
IRENE, International Restructuring Education Network Europe  
FNV Mondiaal, Netherlands  
CAW, Committee for Asian Women  
ADWN, Asian Domestic Workers' Network  
AMRC, Asia Monitor Resource Centre  
WIEGO, Women in the Informal Economy Globalising and Organising  
BLINN, Bonded Labour in the Netherlands Humanitas/Oxfam  
GLI, Global Labour Institute  
PICUM, Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants

With the support of the ITUC (International Trades Union Confederation), the IUF (International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations) and CONLACTRAHO (Confederación Latinoamericana y del Caribe de Trabajadoras del Hogar, the Latin American and Caribbean Confederation of Household Workers).

The 2006 conference in Amsterdam was only possible through the active assistance of all these organisations, especially the FNV who were excellent hosts, plus the many others who supported it financially.

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This report is dedicated to **Susi Apriyanti** of the **Tunas Mulia Domestic Workers' Union** in Jogjakarta, **Indonesia**, who sadly died in a motor accident in August 2007. We thank her for her dedication to building the organisation of domestic/household workers so that they can fight for their rights. For Susi's contribution to the international conference (see page 55).



## 'Domestic' or 'Household'?

The term 'domestic work' is associated with work we do in our own homes, to care for ourselves and our own family. Some argue that using this term for work that is done in other people's homes may be interfering with getting it recognised as 'work' and those who do it properly respected and paid.

In some languages too there can be a disrespectful inference between 'domestic' and 'domesticated'; the latter term refers to animals being trained to live in households and recalls the fact that household workers can sometimes be given terms of abuse such as 'cat' ('gato' in Spanish).

For these reasons, in some countries and particularly in Latin America, there has been a determined effort to drop the term 'domestic' and instead use 'household' ('hogar' in Spanish) for this kind of work.

*'When this work is done by family members it is usually not valued. So automatically when someone else is hired in to do it, it is still not valued. Employers pay us what they like; they think they are doing us a favour; it is not a 'real' employment relationship. But we must start recognising that household workers must earn a decent wage. We must make this distinction between paid and unpaid work in the home; and this is why we in CONLACTRAHO have decided to use the term 'household' rather than 'domestic' for that work which should be paid.'*

**Marcelina Bautista Bautista, General Secretary, Latin American regional network CONLACTRAHO**

In the short-term, it may be difficult to make a complete switch in terminology in countries where employment legislation –where it does refer to this kind of work– uses the term 'domestic'. However, conference participants largely accepted the idea of keeping 'domestic' for that which is done for love or duty, and considering a switch to the term 'household' for that which is done for a living.

In this report we are using both terms together.



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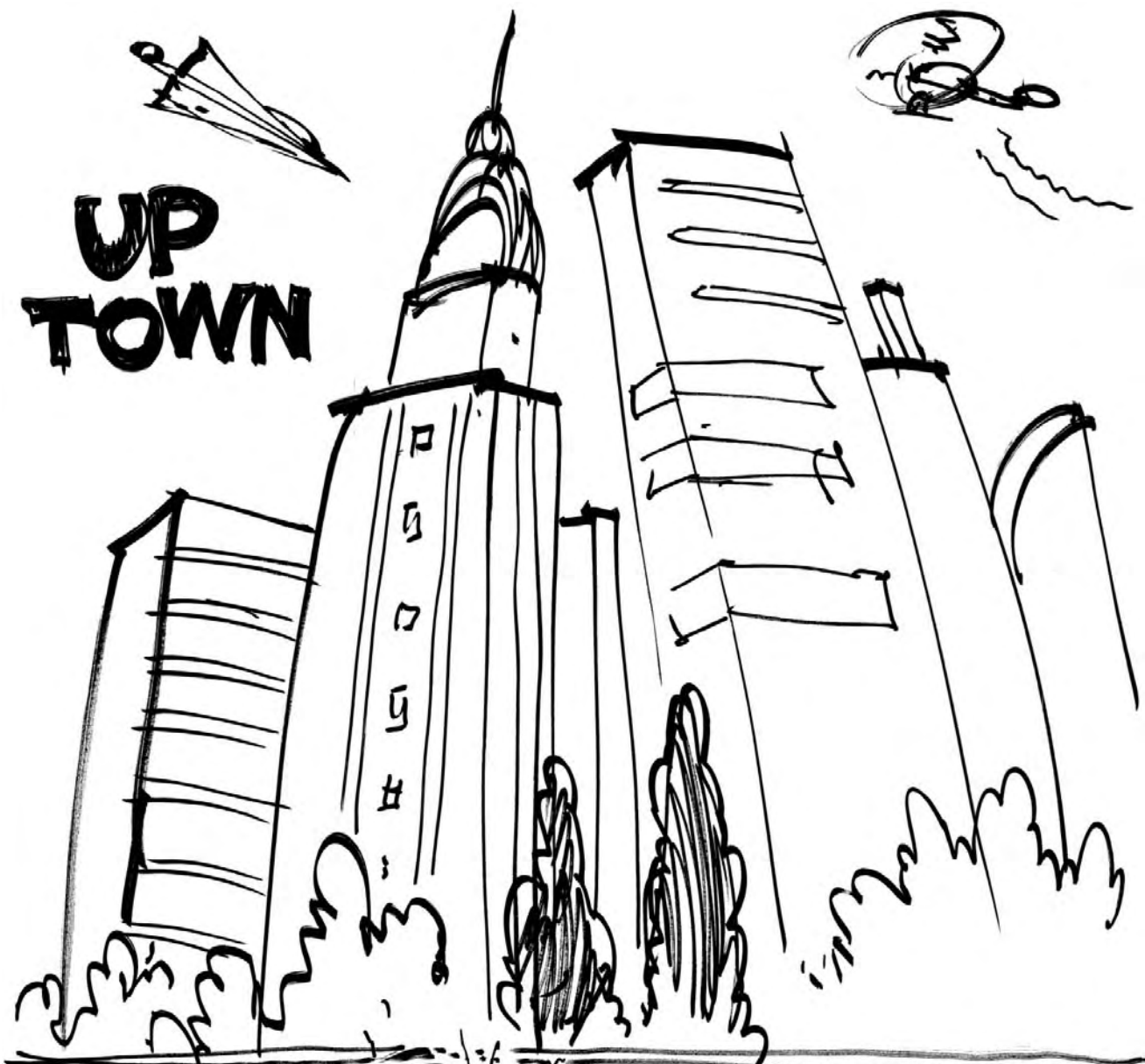
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**UP  
TOWN**



**DOWN  
TOWN**

# **PART I – Altogether**

## **1 Introduction**

### **Respect and rights and their voice heard!**

#### **This is what domestic/household workers want and need most.**

Domestic/household workers, the vast majority of whom are women, work hard so as to feed their families and, like any other worker, they want to earn a living wage and be included in protective labour legislation and social protection schemes. They want to work themselves out of poverty.

Yet their work is hardly valued, and poorly paid. This is because it is connected with the unpaid caring work of the ‘mother in the household’. Domestic/household work is rarely seen as ‘work’, just something that women, or too often children, do in the homes of others to ‘help out’.

So domestic/household workers are rarely defined as ‘workers’ and usually left out of protective employment legislation. This leaves them open to abuse by those who employ them.

They come from the poorer sections of society. Many are migrants within their own countries; many, many migrate to other countries. They are often viewed as ‘second-class citizens’, or even not as ‘citizens’ at all.

Women are generally at higher risk of poverty than men, according to the United Nations women’s organisation UNIFEM, and domestic workers are among the lowest income categories of all.

So, the ‘decent work’ strategy of the International Labour Organisation to reduce poverty can only be realised if it is combined with the promotion of gender equality. And domestic/household labour must be included in the concept of ‘work’.

Domestic/household work could be ‘decent’ work – if the workers who do it are paid and treated properly. The work itself is not ‘indecent’. What is indecent is the way that many, many domestic/household workers are treated around the world.

*‘Domestic workers’ employment situation is considered not to ‘fit’ the general framework of existing employment laws. This is because most work done by them is generally invisible, done in houses (not considered as workplaces) of private persons (not considered as employers). So, domestic workers are not normally considered as employees, their work is undervalued, and their working conditions remain, in essence, unregulated. In fact, some countries not only do not consider household helpers as workers and exclude them from protection under their national labour codes; they do not provide them with protection under any other national law. In some countries they are denied the right to organise in trade unions. This of course leaves them vulnerable to abuse.’*

**Gloria Moreno-Fontes Chammartin from the International Migration Programme (MIGRANT), ILO International Labour Organisation**

in ‘Out of the Shadows: Organising and protecting domestic workers in Europe: the role of trade unions’, ETUC conference report, November 2005 [www.etuc.org/a/2809](http://www.etuc.org/a/2809)

## Why this conference was organised

The first aim of the conference was to take stock of how domestic/household workers are organising themselves around the world, what actions they are taking to improve their situation, and who is supporting them to do so.

Domestic/household workers are joining and forming organisations all over the world, often supported by women's associations, religious groups, and other kinds of NGO support/advocacy bodies.

Within the trade union movement too attention is increasingly being paid to the need to organise and support unprotected, informal workers, including domestic/household workers.

Many of these organisations of different types are now collaborating in regional networks or federations, particularly in Asia and Latin America.

The conference provided an opportunity to see how these different initiatives might develop better links and common strategies, at global and national levels, so as to project a stronger voice for the rights of domestic/household workers. A new concerted international strategy might be possible, to include initiatives such as:

- a new ILO Convention for Domestic/Household Workers
- better recognition for domestic/household workers under national laws in more countries
- better work permit systems for migrant workers in receiving countries
- better protection for migrant workers in sending countries
- an end to child labour in domestic/household work.

This international conference in November 2006 followed on a European one in April 2005 called 'Out of the Shadows: Organising and protecting domestic workers in Europe: the role of trade unions', organised by the European Trades Union Confederation (ETUC), International Restructuring Education Network Europe (IRENE) and the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM). There the role of trade unions in organising and protecting domestic workers in Europe was fully discussed, and strategies outlined.



### **'Out of the Shadows:**

### **Organising and protecting domestic workers in Europe: the role of trade unions'**

Report of a conference organised by the ETUC, IRENE and PICUM, Brussels, 14-15 April 2005

English: [www.etuc.org/a/2809](http://www.etuc.org/a/2809)

French: [www.etuc.org/a/2810](http://www.etuc.org/a/2810)



After the success of the European conference in 2005, it was time to bring together an international one, with representatives of domestic/household workers' organisations and their supporters from across the globe. IRENE took the lead and built a steering committee for the 2006 conference.

The ability to work in English and Spanish made real exchange possible. It was very unfortunate that lack of funding meant there was no French translation at the conference. However, this report is being published in three languages: English, Spanish and French.

## Who was at the conference

The conference organisers originally planned for some 35 participants. Yet, as word spread, more and more wanted to be present, indicating how timely an initiative this was. In the end, some 60 participants attended, from almost every continent, while many others unfortunately had to be turned away. A lack of funding for French translation, for example, meant that representatives from Southern Europe and French-speaking West Africa could not attend.

Those present included representatives of:

- Domestic/household workers' trade unions and associations from the Basque Country/ Spain, Bolivia, Canada, Denmark, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Namibia, Netherlands, Peru, Philippines, South Africa, Trinidad & Tobago, USA;
- International networks of domestic/household workers' organisations in Asia and Latin America;
- Global Unions: the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF) and the Public Services International (PSI);
- International Labour Organisation (ILO);
- Support NGOs and coalitions for domestic/household workers' and migrant workers' rights based in Belgium, China, Ghana, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Netherlands, Peru, Philippines, Switzerland, Tanzania, UK;
- International organisations/networks active on forced labour, child labour, migrant labour, and workers in the informal economy;
- International aid/development agencies from Germany and the Netherlands;
- Academic researchers based in the Netherlands.

A full list of participants is given in Annex 1.

Among the participants were:

- 6 currently working as domestic/household workers
- 19 union members, of whom 8 are union leaders
- 10 mothers and 3 fathers
- 23 campaigning for better legislation for domestic/household workers
- 11 actively working to combat child labour
- 17 actively working on migration issues, whether within countries or across borders

In many such conferences it can be difficult to achieve 30 per cent women's representation. For this one, the tables were turned, with only 10 per cent male representation, indicating the extent to which domestic/household work is still seen as a 'women's issue' even within supportive organisations.

*'Domestic work is a "labour of love", mostly done by the women of the household; it is their duty to "care" for others. Not being able to fulfil all of this duty is usually held up as a shortcoming; they are somehow "inadequate"; the image is a negative one. This results in a negative attitude towards those who step in. They are just "helping out" – and so aren't highly rewarded.'*

**Anneke van Luijken, conference organiser, IRENE**

IS IT A BIRD?  
IS IT A PLANE?



NO:  
IT'S SUPER  
DOMESTIC  
WORKER!!



## 2 What domestic/household workers want:



**Recognition that domestic work is 'work' and that those who do it are 'workers' with the rights that all workers have including the right to be heard**



This is the demand of domestic/household workers around the world, voiced very clearly by those attending the international conference in Amsterdam in November 2006. They also detailed what this would entail:



**Recognition by governments and the rest of society of the economic and social contribution that domestic/household workers make;** their labour means that others can engage in productive work outside the home, creating huge value; without them, economies and societies as we know them could not exist.



**Respect for their dignity and skills,** for the fact that they often care for the most vulnerable members of society, the children, sick and elderly, increasing the well-being of all, instead of the contempt and abuse which they so often experience. More opportunities for skills training and recognition as 'professionals' would increase their mobility to other/better jobs.



**Enforcement of their right to 'decent work'** (as agreed by the governments, employers and workers in the International Labour Organisation): this means inclusion in labour laws, trade union rights and employment contracts to achieve good working conditions, and access to social benefits including pensions.



**Opportunities to speak for themselves and to have their voices heard:** they are tired of others claiming to speak on their behalf.



**Recognition and identity:** most domestic workers have little or no record of their employment; they want official registration systems which prove their work history; migrant workers want identity cards that assist their status in their host communities.



**Organisational skills training** to help domestic/household workers participate in unions or build their own organisations; training in negotiating, advocacy and campaigning, fund-raising and accounting; exchange programmes at national and regional level for domestic workers to develop their ideas for strategies.



**More political and material support from allies** in the trade unions, NGOs and advocacy groups, in a way that increases domestic/household workers' opportunities to speak for themselves and have their own voice heard.



**Better quality information about the size, scope and role of domestic/household work and the workers involved:** in most countries, because it is excluded from the definition of 'work', there is very little data about the who, what, where, and how of domestic/household labour; much more research and mapping is needed to provide the basis for well-informed campaigning.



**Better research and understanding** on how the combination of gender discrimination and neo-liberal globalisation is increasing migratory flows of women to work in the homes of others.

### 3 Suggestions for action

How can domestic/household workers gain the recognition and rights to which they are entitled but are currently denied? Participants at the conference came up with a set of basic steps.

It was agreed there is not a 'one size fits all' solution. Domestic/household work is done in a wide range of situations, from relatively good employment with mutually agreed terms and conditions, to the worst forms of slavery and trafficking. So it is a question rather of looking at all the ideas and strategies that do exist and as also shown by the conference participants in their detailed presentations and then assessing which are the priorities for any given situation.

The participants also agreed that actions at local, national, regional and global levels are not mutually exclusive, but should be taken forward simultaneously, cross-fertilising from each other.



#### **Support for domestic/household workers' organising**

A primary emphasis coming out of the conference was that domestic/household workers should be at the forefront of promoting their own rights rather than others tending to speak on their behalf.

*'We are tired of hearing others speak in our name.'*

**Marcolina de los Milagros Infante Ramirez, IPROFOTH, Peru**

*'Household workers are invisible and we have to use our imagination to help them organise.'*

**Marcelina Bautista Bautista, Secretary General, CONLACTRAHO, Latin America**

This means directing efforts first and foremost at supporting domestic/household workers to organise themselves, to know what rights they have, and get the opportunity to be heard.

- **Awareness-raising and assistance for domestic/household workers to organise**, through targeted organising activities within union structures or by supporting efforts at self-organisation.
- **Providing facilities for domestic/household workers' organisations** such as room space, printing, access to computers, and communications e.g. website space
- **Educational materials, workshops, etc.** that highlight the potential for organisation locally and the achievements elsewhere such as in Bolivia and Peru.
- **Organisational skills training** to improve the ability of domestic/household workers to organise themselves.

When domestic/household workers become organised it becomes much easier to find where child domestic/household workers are, providing much more opportunity to combat child labour.



#### **Greater cooperation between allies**

Greater cooperation between domestic/household workers' and/or migrant workers' associations, trade unions, and advocacy NGOs is needed. As the examples throughout this report show, it is happening in a number of countries, in all continents, but there is more to be done.



Trade unionists are becoming more aware of the role that domestic/household workers play to the benefit of the society and economy, as well as of the pressing needs these workers have if they are to achieve the conditions of ‘decent work’ to which they are entitled. However, there is clearly much more that can and should be done. Trade unions have a special role to play because of their formal status as ‘social partners’ in the ILO and in national contexts.

Trade unions can sometimes feel uneasy about the rise of workers’ associations which are independent. However, given that domestic/household workers have rarely been considered as ‘workers’ entitled to union membership, it is not surprising if they form their own associations.

*‘There are situations where it is very difficult for domestic workers to form or join trade unions. Where there is union-busting or political suppression, workers are scared and tend to form self-help associations or cooperatives rather than unions. We need to accept that informal workers cannot always join unions. But trade unions can still recognise and support them. We need to lobby more national trade unions so that they support national and international legal reforms. We need to engage them in a systematic and strategic way. If not, this conference will become like a history book.’*

**Lee Siew Hwa, Committee for Asian Women (CAW), Bangkok**

*‘We call ourselves a union but I don’t feel that joining another union would help us right now. The trade unions are too traditional, with white middle-aged men high in the hierarchy who just want to secure their own position. If we joined such a union, we would have to abide by its rules and there probably wouldn’t be much benefit.’*

**Erline Brown, Domestic Workers’ United, New York, USA**

*‘It is no secret that trade unions sometimes find it difficult to support domestic workers. But the FNV Mondiaal is now making it a priority, alongside our work on child labour, migrant workers, and those working in the informal economy.’*

**Peter Gortzak, Chairperson, FNV Mondiaal, Netherlands**

*‘It is true we had to change the opinions of the male leaders of our unions. When my union decided to organise community-based healthcare workers, among the lowest paid workers, many men members objected. However, the union leadership did make it a priority and we won better wages and a CBA. Now many of those who objected see us as an asset – because many of those recruited have become activists.’*

**Ann Chambers, activist, British Columbia Government and Service Employees’ Union (BCGSEU), Canada**

#### • **Formalising alliances between unions and domestic/household workers’ organisations**

Where domestic/household workers have set up their own organisations, trade unions can reach out and build solidarity. In the first instance, it can be simple help, such as providing meeting space and access to photocopying. As the collaboration and mutual respect grows, the relationship can be deepened and then formalised into an alliance or association; this may mean changing the union’s statutes. Domestic/household workers’ organisations in many countries are keen to establish such a relationship, retaining their self-organisation but benefiting from the strength and position of the trade union movement.



### **Public awareness-raising**

Much stronger efforts are needed to gain recognition for the role of domestic/household workers in underpinning economies and societies, and to raise the esteem in which they are held throughout society,

everywhere.

This implies stronger awareness campaigns targeted at the general public, including the members of our own organisations, as well as efforts to impress and educate government officials.

*‘There is much that we in the trade unions can do to raise awareness, not least among our own members. After all, many trade unionists are also employers of domestic workers. We should get across the argument that “what you ask from your employer, you should give to your employee”.’*

**Kamalam, Equality Director, International Trade Unions Confederation (ITUC)**

- **Public hearings for the rights of domestic/household workers**
- **National days for domestic/household workers:** In various countries and world regions there are special days each year to highlight domestic/household workers’ rights. In Latin America it is 30 March; in India it is 9 January, for example.



## **Pressure on governments**

- **For ratification of international conventions**

*‘Looking into which ILO Conventions your government has ratified is useful. Many have, for example, ratified conventions that are relevant to domestic workers’ rights, and this can be used to engage with them. A major difficulty, as we know, is that many governments do not include domestic/household work in their concept of ‘work’ and exclude the workers concerned from protective legislation. However, technically they cannot do this without prior consultation with the trade unions and employers; so again trade unions and social dialogue mechanisms have a key role to play.’*

**Simel Esim, Regional Gender Advisor, ILO Regional Office for the Arab States**

- **For domestic/household workers to be included in national labour legislation:** Achieving protection for domestic/household workers under national legislation can take many years, and in most countries this has yet to be achieved. Yet, in Bolivia and Peru, new laws have been won that give domestic/household workers recognition and rights as workers, providing examples for other countries to consider. Good legislation on the statute books is an essential part of the process.
- **For child domestic/household workers to be included in policies to combat child labour:** ILO Convention No.138 (Minimum Age) and ILO Convention No.182 (Worst Forms of Child Labour) are core Conventions to which all countries are bound; but in many countries domestic/household work done by children is not seen as hazardous nor one of the ‘worst forms’ of child labour, and so it is not taken seriously; for example, minimum age legislation does not apply or is lowered. This must change.
- **For the proper enforcement of good legislation where it exists:** Policy-makers are usually men, and they are often satisfied with the status quo, rarely concerned with how their own household is organised, as long as it is organised; getting them to see the significance of the domestic/household labour that supports them is an important element in achieving progress in legislation.

*‘Governments are not going to enforce the legislation for domestic/household workers. We have to organise to do it!’*

**Chris Bonner, WIEGO, Women in the Informal Economy Globalising and Organising**

- **Defending public services:** In those countries where care services have been in the public sector they are usually being privatised, weakening the working terms and conditions, and union organisation, for the workers concerned. Many care workers – whether local people or migrants - are being hired in through employment agencies which are poorly regulated.

*‘Care work is the responsibility of the State. Whether it is done by local or migrant workers, they contribute to the economy, and this must be recognised by the State.’* **Report-back from conference workshop**

*‘We need to be much more pro-active on the future of social services in our countries; many governments want to privatise but household services and care should be a collective responsibility.’*

**Kirsten Møller, International Advisor, 3F – United Federation of Danish Workers**

*‘We have to keep our care services in the public sector. One right-wing politician in Spain recently said that, if families cannot afford to pay their domestic worker a decent wage and we cannot create enough public services, then perhaps this work should be done by a network of volunteers. This would be a bad use of solidarity between people.’* **Javier Miró, Programme Coordinator, ISCOD-UGT, Spain**



## Reaching out to employers

- **Promoting employment contracts:** In a situation where legal protection does not exist or is very weak, promoting employment contracts between individual employers and domestic/household workers is vital.
- **Encouraging the formation of associations of responsible employers with whom to negotiate:** Since trade unionists and progressive politicians are also employers of domestic workers, their help could be enlisted to establish an employers’ association, if one does not already exist.



**Model Employment Contracts for Domestic/Household Work** can be found:

English: ‘Out of the Shadows: ETUC, Annex 1, [www.etuc.org/a/2809](http://www.etuc.org/a/2809)

and [www.domesticworkersunited.org](http://www.domesticworkersunited.org)

French: ‘Sortir de l’Ombre’, Annexe 1, [www.etuc.org/a/2810](http://www.etuc.org/a/2810)

Spanish: ‘Haz Valer Tus Derechos!’, [www.ath-ele.com](http://www.ath-ele.com) under your rights

CESIP, Peru, [www.cesip.org.pe/publicaciones.htm](http://www.cesip.org.pe/publicaciones.htm)



## Support for skills training and professional recognition of domestic/household workers

With domestic/household work so rarely recognised as ‘work’, promoting the training and professional recognition of domestic/household workers is a great boost to their status.

Raising workers’ skills and status also improves their bargaining position with employers.

What is more, training brings previously isolated workers together, and gives them an opportunity to organise themselves, either in their own organisations or by joining a trade union.

*‘The skills training that we have been promoting for domestic/household workers includes environmental conservation and recycling of household wastes. This helps raise their knowledge-base and also their status.’*

**Lita Anggraini, National Network for Domestic Workers Advocacy (Jaringan Nasional Advokasi Pekerja Rumah Tangga, JALA PRT), Indonesia**



HEY! HOW CAN I BE PROUD OF MYSELF // WHEN YOU SEE ME AS A VICTIM?



## Defending Migrant Domestic/Household Workers

- **Campaign for signing the UN Convention on Migrants**

On 18 December 1990, the United Nations adopted the '**International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families**'. So far, 34 States have signed the Convention, but none of them are receiving countries. This is clearly something that trade unions and migrant groups could campaign on together.

- **Lobbying sending governments to forge labour agreements with host governments**
- **Support for the regularisation of migrant work in host countries, by arguing for proper work permit schemes which include domestic/household work**

Because domestic/household work is not seen as 'work', it is often omitted from work permit systems; immigration authorities in many receiving countries allow domestic/household workers in under visas and permits which give them even fewer rights and lower status than other migrant workers. Poor work permit systems lead to more workers becoming 'undocumented'. So, pressing for domestic/household work to be included in work permit systems is an important area of activity.

*'Governments are aware of undocumented migrant workers. Without them, care services in Europe would collapse. But they are not taking responsibility for these migrants, who are actually given the huge responsibility of looking after homes, children, and parents, even those of government officials and politicians. The question is how to get these workers regularised and protected.'*

**Kamalam, Director of Equality, ITUC**

*'The key factor in advancing the protection of the rights of migrant domestic workers in Europe has been their self organisation in various countries, as well as the public campaign for regularisation launched by RESPECT, Europe-wide. Trade unions got involved in the campaign, particularly in the UK, Greece, and Italy, and have played a very positive role in pushing for regularisation.'*

**Fe Jusay, Commission for Filipino Migrant Workers, Netherlands**

Some unions provide migrant domestic/household workers with union IDcards, even those who are not directly union members. They do this out of solidarity because it helps to provide identity and regularisation of their status. One example is the Transport and General Workers' Union (T&G) in the UK (see 'Out of the Shadows', pages 42-43). It is also being discussed in the ABVAKABO FNV in the Netherlands, now that the union has opened its doors to undocumented migrants in the country (see page98).



## Pre-departure information for migrant workers

Conference participants thought there could be far greater liaison between workers' organisations in sending and receiving countries, so as to provide migrant workers with pre-departure information on their rights in the country to which they are going.

Pre-departure training needs to go far beyond skills such as learning how to use a vacuum cleaner; cultural behaviour questions are vital, such as learning the right body language for the host culture to understand, as a defence against abuse.

*'Sometimes the body language is totally wrong. For example, young Asian women have learned never to say "No" in a direct way; they always smile and are polite. But this can be wrongly interpreted by an employer as accepting the situation.'*

**Erline Brown, Domestic Workers United, USA**

*'If a domestic worker is always smiling, the wife can think the worker is trying to seduce her husband, and this leads to a lot of trouble. Migrant workers need access to training about this.'*

**Rima Sabban, Arab Women Academic Network**

Domestic/household workers who have returned home should be encouraged to provide information and help with this training. They can give real insight into the situations that others will face.

The information should also cover such questions as labour rights and employment laws in the country concerned, the support organisations that exist including appropriate trade unions, access to healthcare, etc. Websites could be used better to circulate this information.

*'In Jordan, there is a law that employers cannot keep passports. However, it is barely observed. Despite awareness-raising through posters and advertisements, few employers or domestic workers seem to know about this law. We need to intervene more in pre-departure training, giving migrant domestic workers much more information about how to defend themselves, for example not to give their passports to their employers.'*

**Rima Sabban, Arab Women Academic Network**

*'Pre-departure information is provided to Filipino migrant workers by the Philippines Government. However, it is not really serving the needs of the workers because the task is contracted out to the banks and employment agencies. It does not give specific information for the different host countries. Also, it is only given out on the day before departure which is far too late, and there is no turning back. We need domestic workers to have more input into the quality and timing of the information.'*

**Connie Bragas-Regalado, Migrante International**

*'Estonians leaving to work in Finland can contact an Information Point especially set up in the Estonian capital city Tallinn for information on the employment rights they will have in Finland, and the unions in Finland that can help them. It was set up with help from the Finnish unions so that Estonians work under the same conditions as, and do not undercut, Finnish standards.'* ([netti.sak.fi/workinginfinland/en/index.html](http://netti.sak.fi/workinginfinland/en/index.html))

**Barbro Budin, Equality Officer, IUF**

*'We are an international cooperation wing of the UGT union federation in Spain, with programmes in countries like Ecuador, Colombia, Nicaragua, and Bulgaria. Many there want to migrate to find work in Spain, thinking that it will be a 'golden paradise', which it certainly is not. So we have helped set up offices in these countries to provide information on migrants' rights in Spain, plus the UGT (Equality Department) has advice centres for when they have arrived. So, this is not a new question for us, but there is so much more work to do. And it is going to become a bigger priority in the years to come.'*

**Javier Miró, Programme Coordinator, ISCOD-UGT, Spain**

Other examples of collaboration between unions include those in Ireland and Poland, and Nicaragua and Costa Rica. Though good developments, they are still piecemeal bilateral efforts between particular unions.



## Union membership that is recognised across borders

*'Going back as far as the 1920s, the IUF has had in its Statutes a reciprocity agreement; this means that if you are a member of an IUF affiliated union in one country and then migrate to another country, you can automatically become a member of an IUF affiliate in your new country. This is something that could be used much more to protect migrant workers.'*

**Barbro Budin, Equality Officer, IUF**

SURE, THEY GAVE ME  
MY RIGHTS BUT ALSO MY  
DISMISSAL...





### 18 December = International Migrants Day

As agreed by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2000.  
[www.december18.net](http://www.december18.net)

*‘Today we pay tribute to the millions of migrant workers who have left their home countries to find work and better opportunities elsewhere to support their families and communities. This movement largely reflects the failure of policies to generate enough decent jobs where people live. Too often migrant workers become trapped in the most difficult circumstances including situations of exploitation, discrimination, poor working conditions, lack of respect for their rights at work, and limited or no social protection ... The ILO remains committed to ensuring justice for migrant workers and making migration work for all.’*

**Juan Somavia, Director-General, ILO**

**Message on the occasion of International Migrants Day, 18 December 2006**

[www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/dgo/speeches/somavia/2006/migrantsday.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/dgo/speeches/somavia/2006/migrantsday.pdf)



### ‘Claim and Celebrate Women Migrants’ Human Rights through CEDAW’

A briefing paper on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and how to use it, giving examples such as the Indonesian Migrant Workers’ Union IMWU in Hong Kong.

By Jean D’Cunha, UNIFEM, 2005 – ISBN 1-932827-21-8

[www.unifem.org/resources/item\\_detail.php?ProductID=72](http://www.unifem.org/resources/item_detail.php?ProductID=72)

[www.unifem-eseasia.org/projects/migrant/mig\\_pub.htm](http://www.unifem-eseasia.org/projects/migrant/mig_pub.htm)

Text of convention: [www.un.org/womanwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm](http://www.un.org/womanwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm)



### Extracts from the Declaration of Philadelphia (1944), the Constitution of the ILO

- labour is not a commodity
- freedom of expression and of association are essential to sustained progress
- poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere
- all human beings, irrespective of race, creed or sex, have the right to pursue both their material wellbeing and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity

[www-ilo-mirror.cornell.edu/public/english/about/iloconst.htm#annex](http://www-ilo-mirror.cornell.edu/public/english/about/iloconst.htm#annex)







## Supporting Child Domestic/Household Workers

*'Child domestic workers usually work very long hours and carry heavy loads and are at risk of psychological, physical and sexual abuse from employers and their families – they also suffer from isolation and loneliness ... Child workers living in the homes of their employers are more likely to experience conditions consistent with the worst forms of child labour.'*

**'Child Domestic Labour and Trade Unions', ILO, 2006**

Despite the danger to children's health and growth, there is a 'blindness' to child domestic/household labour around the world. In most countries there is legislation governing the minimum age for employment; but, because domestic/household labour is not seen as 'work' or, at best, only 'light' tasks, so the minimum age laws are often not applied to it.

Plus there is a mythology that employers are doing some kind of charitable act in providing a roof for poverty-stricken children. It is true that poverty drives many rural families to send their children to work in other people's households. But it is not an act of charity to use and abuse the labour of a child who should be at home and at school.

Trade unions are also not used to organising child workers as members, or even helping them to organise themselves. Instead, it is religious or women's groups who tend to provide support. However, there is much more that can and should be done, according to the conference participants:

- **Encouraging opportunities for self-organisation of children and giving them support to do this**
- **Providing opportunities for child domestic/household workers to become union members or to associate with unions**
- **Finding out what child domestic/household workers want and helping to find solutions to the problems they identify**
- **Including psycho-social trauma as an important problem to be taken up**
- **Ensuring that domestic/household work is included in national policies to eliminate the worst forms of child labour**
- **Ensuring that domestic/household work is included in minimum age legislation**
- **Helping to provide sanctuary for the victims of the worst forms of child labour**
- **Helping to remove children under minimum legal working age from domestic/household labour**
- **Awareness-raising among union members not to employ children under the age of 15 years**
- **Helping to identify where children are working in private households, e.g. by consulting adult domestic/household workers and union members**



### **ILO – Labordoc**

contains references to a wide range of print and electronic publications, including journal articles, from countries around the world, on all aspects of work and sustainable livelihoods, and the work-related aspects of economic and social development and human rights.

**Labordoc** provides an ever increasing number of links to online publications available on the Internet.

<http://labordoc.ilo.org/>





## Combating child labour raises the profile of unions

*'In Tanzania, the IPEC programme to combat the worst forms of child labour has been collaborating with one of our affiliates CHODAWU (Conservation, Hotels, Domestic and Allied Workers' Union). In a comprehensive programme, they have been doing social mapping, education and income-generating activities among poor rural communities for whom sending children to work in urban areas has a long tradition. They have also been rescuing child domestic workers and giving them vocational training, as well as HIV-Aids treatment where needed. Several thousand children, the majority of them girls, have so far benefited. At the same time, these activities have raised the profile and the membership of the union.'*

**Barbro Budin, Equality Officer, International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF)**

Emerging good practices on child domestic labour in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia  
ILO/IPEC 2006, download via <http://labordoc.ilo.org/>





## **A New International Network for Domestic/Household Workers**

No international network specifically for the rights of domestic/household workers currently exists, and so there was considerable support at the conference for building one.

Participants agreed it should be a network open to all those who share the common aim of achieving **'Respect and Rights for Domestic/Household Workers'**, providing a platform for them to communicate and work together more effectively. It should not be a membership-based organisation.

There were concerns, of course, not to replicate existing networks such as the regional ones in Latin America and Asia, or those for specific categories such as migrant workers. The overarching aim of a new international network would be to add value to and strengthen the work already going on that promotes domestic/household workers' rights.

It was recognised that the Global Unions have a special role to play because of their formal status within the International Labour Organisation, and the actual and potential supportive activities of their affiliated unions around the world.

However, the collaboration must also include non-union self-organisations of domestic/household workers plus advocacy/support groups and networks. Otherwise any new initiatives would be weak.

A start-up process for the new network and set of initial tasks were agreed, as laid out in the final conference statement (see page 28). Participants thought areas of activity for the network in the near future could be:

- **Lobbying the ILO and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM)** to ensure that existing work on migration includes domestic/household workers (both documented and undocumented)
- **Greater exchange of information and strategies, for example through a new website dedicated to domestic/household workers' rights**
- **An urgent appeal mechanism for extreme cases of abuse and exploitation of domestic/household workers**
- **Support for further research into domestic/household work in the context of neo-liberal globalisation and gender discrimination**



## **An international Day for Domestic/Household Workers**

There has never yet been a day when organisations across the world unite to highlight the role, needs and rights of domestic/household workers. There was considerable support at the conference for organising such an international day, with activities encouraged simultaneously in all countries on a common theme. This would be a good way to generate much greater public awareness, particularly in the process, for example, of lobbying for an ILO Convention for the Rights of Domestic/Household Workers.

Such days for domestic/household workers do already exist in individual countries, and in the Latin American region as a whole, though their dates vary (In Latin America it is 30 March; in India it is 9 January). There is also the International Migrants Day on 18 December. There was concern to ensure that any such international day would not confuse or detract from these existing days.

While establishing an annual international Day is one possibility, another is to organise initially a single Global Day of Action. Such Days have been generated, for example, by the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) as a way of building solidarity among railway workers or road transport drivers across the world, lobbying on a common theme. For the ITF Railway Workers International Day of Action, 27 March 2006, see [www.itfglobal.org/campaigns/campaigns-1057.cfm](http://www.itfglobal.org/campaigns/campaigns-1057.cfm). Such a one-off day for domestic/household workers' rights could be strategically timed to raise maximum awareness and lobbying power. Then its potential for an annual day could be evaluated.



## **An international ILO Convention for Domestic/Household Workers**

While some participants doubted that the time and effort needed to achieve an ILO Convention would be worthwhile, others saw it as an opportunity for mobilising, campaigning, and promoting domestic/household workers' organisations. There seems to be groundwork already existing within the ILO to support such an effort.

*'Winning the ILO Convention on Home Work in 1996 is a model for achieving one for domestic/household workers. The lobbying effort needed can be used as a tool to organise and empower domestic workers.'*

**Lee Siew Hwa, Committee for Asian Women (CAW), Bangkok**

Again, it was repeated that domestic/household workers would need to be at the forefront in any such activity concerning their future, and this would include who can or should speak for them at the ILO.

*'Achieving the Home Work Convention involved a long collaboration between the Global Unions (including the IUF), WIEGO (Women in the Informal Economy Globalising and Organising), IRENE, the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) of India, and others. Originally, the idea came from SEWA to get a Convention on informal economy workers' rights. At that time the IUF wanted domestic workers included. However, we were all advised that it had to be slimmed down. To achieve a Domestic Workers' Convention now, we would need the same kind of coalition with long-term purpose.'*

**Barbro Budin, Equality Officer, IUF**

*'ILO Conventions take five to ten years to achieve. For domestic workers in hardship, this is a long process. International unions and the ILO need to cut down on their bureaucratic structures. I would like to see domestic workers directly represented on those boards, not via third parties. I don't believe in a long process; I want to know what we are going to do now.'*

**Alfred Angula, General Secretary, Namibia Domestic and Allied Workers' Union**



### **'The International Labour Organization: A handbook for minorities and indigenous peoples'**

This handbook, produced for those concerned with minority and indigenous peoples' rights, explains how the ILO works and how it can be used.

By Chandra Roy and Mike Kaye

Anti-Slavery International and Minority Rights Group International, 2002

ISBN 1 897693 39 7

[www.antislavery.org/homepage/resources/PDF/PDFun.htm#ILOhandbook](http://www.antislavery.org/homepage/resources/PDF/PDFun.htm#ILOhandbook)





## 4 Post conference developments

At the end of the conference on 10 November 2006, a statement was agreed by the organisations present to consolidate these suggestions. This was followed up by a working group of remaining participants the following day to discuss what the next steps might be.

Since the conference, developments have proceeded apace and are summarised on pages 30-33.



## Conference statement

### **Protection for domestic workers!**

### **¡Protección para Trabajadoras Domésticas/Trabajadoras del Hogar!**

### **Protection des travailleuses domestiques/employées de maison!**

International conference, held on 8-10 November 2006, at the headquarters of the FNV trade union federation, Amsterdam, Netherlands

This conference, attended by some 60 representatives of domestic/household workers' trade unions, associations and regional/international networks, Global Unions and national trade unions, and support NGOs, from around the world:

#### **Expresses our common outrage at:**

- The exploitation of many domestic/household workers across the globe, particularly of highly vulnerable migrant workers (many forced to be undocumented) as well as children who do this work;
- The lack of recognition of the contribution that domestic/household workers make, without which societies and economies could not function;
- The continuing failure to recognise domestic/household work as 'work' under employment legislation in many countries, so denying these workers the rights and respect they deserve.

#### **We therefore demand:**

## **Decent Work for Domestic Workers!**

#### **And recommend:**

The setting up of an interim working group which, over the coming year to end 2007, has the task of investigating the possibilities for greater international activity for the rights of domestic/household workers worldwide.

The interim working group will comprise members of the steering group which founded this conference, plus representatives of domestic/household workers' organisations from as many world regions as possible. It will, however, not itself claim to represent domestic/household workers.

Tasks of the interim working group are:

- (1) To explore the need and potential for an international network for the rights of domestic/household workers, being careful not to replicate but to add value to the international networks that already exist e.g. for migrant domestic workers' rights.

Such a network would be open to all organisations of whatever form –trade unions, associations, networks, support NGOs, etc.– who agree to work for the common aim of achieving the rights of and respect for all domestic/household workers.

The decision-making structures behind such a network should comprise a majority of representatives from domestic/household workers' self organisations.

(2) To explore, in collaboration with the Global Unions, the possibility for an ILO Convention on the rights of domestic/household workers, whether national or migrant workers.

(3) To support the organisation of domestic/household workers at all levels –local, national, regional and international– through:

- the greater involvement of trade unions at all levels in supporting domestic/household workers and their self-organisations;
- mapping and liaison with domestic/household workers' organisations and support groups worldwide so as to promote their visibility, capture the magnitude of the effort already being undertaken for domestic/household workers' rights, as well as encourage their involvement in a network;
- the exchange of information and strategies, for example through a new website dedicated to domestic/household workers' rights;
- the greater development of education/training programmes for domestic/household workers' groups/unions/associations/networks in strategising, organisation, accessing funding, accounting, etc.
- the potential for further funding for domestic/household workers' self-organisations;
- an urgent appeal mechanism for cases of extreme abuse and exploitation of domestic/household workers;
- further research into the role of domestic/household work including the vast migration of people to work as domestic workers as  
(a) an underpinning of neo-liberal globalisation and  
(b) a function of continuing gender discrimination in household work, so as to help promote the development of far stronger policies at international and national levels for the protection of domestic/household workers and their rights.



## The pilot year of the network

A month after the conference, on 19 December 2006, a meeting was held between the conference organiser, Anneke van Luijken of IRENE, and several of the Global Unions: the ITUC and the IUF who took part in the conference and the Union Network International (UNI) which is the Global Union Federation for workers in skills and services. The Global Union Public Services International (PSI), which participated in the conference, was not able to attend but indicated its interest. The conference and its outcomes, particularly the statement, provided the basis for the discussions.

The IUF is the Global Union Federation that has a remit to represent domestic/household workers, but it has never had the resources to promote this work. So, the IUF agreed to take a lead in developing the international programme of work for domestic/household workers' rights decided at the conference, though as a specific project which will have to raise its own resources. It was re-confirmed that the aim is not to build a membership-based organisation but an open network of those agreeing with the overall aims and objectives.

The Global Unions are particularly important for developing activities within the ILO, as they have full status as one of the tripartite members of the ILO, along with governments and employers. On 23 January 2007, a meeting was held in Geneva involving the IUF, ITUC, Anneke van Luijken and ILO officers from several departments: Gender, Migration, ACTRAV (the Workers Group), IPEC (Child Labour), and Declaration & Norms. The participation of five ILO departments indicates the level of support there is in the organisation for finding better ways to promote the rights of domestic/household workers.

The Workers' Group ACTRAV, in conjunction with the ITUC office in Geneva, can take a lead in preparing the ground for a new Convention, for example by making a report to the ILO Governing Body and raising awareness through activities at the International Labour Conference, held each June. On-going liaison between the various interested ILO departments should be fostered, for example through an 'Expert Meeting'. It was clearly restated that domestic/household workers' organisations must be represented in all such activities.

With the success of these two meetings, work has continued on developing a plan of action for the first year (a joint plan of the IUF & IRENE), including fund-raising, the publication of this report, development of a special website, and maintaining and developing communications with all interested groups.

As part of generating wider awareness, presentations have been made at a number of conferences and events, including:

- ITUC, international conference on migration, Brussels, December 2006
- Anti-Slavery International, International stakeholders' meeting on child domestic labour, London, February 2007
- IUF, international women's conference, Geneva, March 2007
- ILO International Labour Conference, Geneva, June 2007
- Global Community Forum On Migration, Development And Human Rights' a parallel meeting next to the UN governmental 'Global Forum on Migration and development', June 2007 Brussels. Human Rights Watch organised two afternoon workshops on domestic work.
- 'Illegal labour – llegal living? The trade union way of handling a complex situation', Berlin, October 2007, Ver.di conference
- ILO symposium on the InformalEconomy: Enabling Transition to Formalisation, Geneva, November 2007

The pilot year will also be used to develop democratic decision-making in the network, so that the plans for future years can be discussed and agreed with the involvement particularly of domestic/household workers' own organisations.





*'Domestic workers have become a political concern of the international trade unions and many national trade unions, which increases the possibility to cooperate with the organisations of domestic workers. When domestic workers want to represent themselves, they have to grow into the unions and grasp this moment of attention and support.'* **Anneke van Luijken, IRENE**



## 'The first step is won!

**The Governing Body of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) decided on 19 March 2008 to include the item 'Decent Work for Domestic Workers' (Standard setting) on the agenda of the 99th session (2010) of the International Labour Conference.**

The ITUC, together with the international trade union group Global Unions and the Workers' Group of the ILO Governing Body, had called on its affiliated organisations to urge the governments of the countries represented on the ILO Governing Body to support the proposal to draw up an international convention designed specifically to protect domestic workers.

'The ILO has long been arguing in favour of a specific legal instrument for this particularly vulnerable category of workers. This step towards the development of a new legal instrument should contribute to filling a huge gap in terms of promoting decent work for all,' said Sir Roy Trotman, Spokesperson of the Workers' Group of the ILO Governing Body.

Source: [www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article1933](http://www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article1933)



### The way forward

**66.** There is wide recognition that the situation of domestic workers which is currently a source of great concern everywhere will greatly benefit from the development and implementation of international standards that address human rights, fundamental workers' rights and general conditions of work. There is also recognition that a move towards that aim is long overdue and would help respond to, and even anticipate, the needs of ILO constituents. Early decision on an item to be placed on the agenda of the 2010 International Labour Conference for standard setting on decent work for domestic work will enable the Office to start preparatory work, based on the wealth of existing research material. It would also give the Office sufficient time to undertake a comprehensive review of current laws and practices concerning domestic work and background material for the debate. The Governing Body may also authorize the Office to organize a preparatory tripartite experts meeting in 2009 to examine the potential contents of international instruments. Preparatory work will also entail a series of tripartite consultations at regional and global levels.

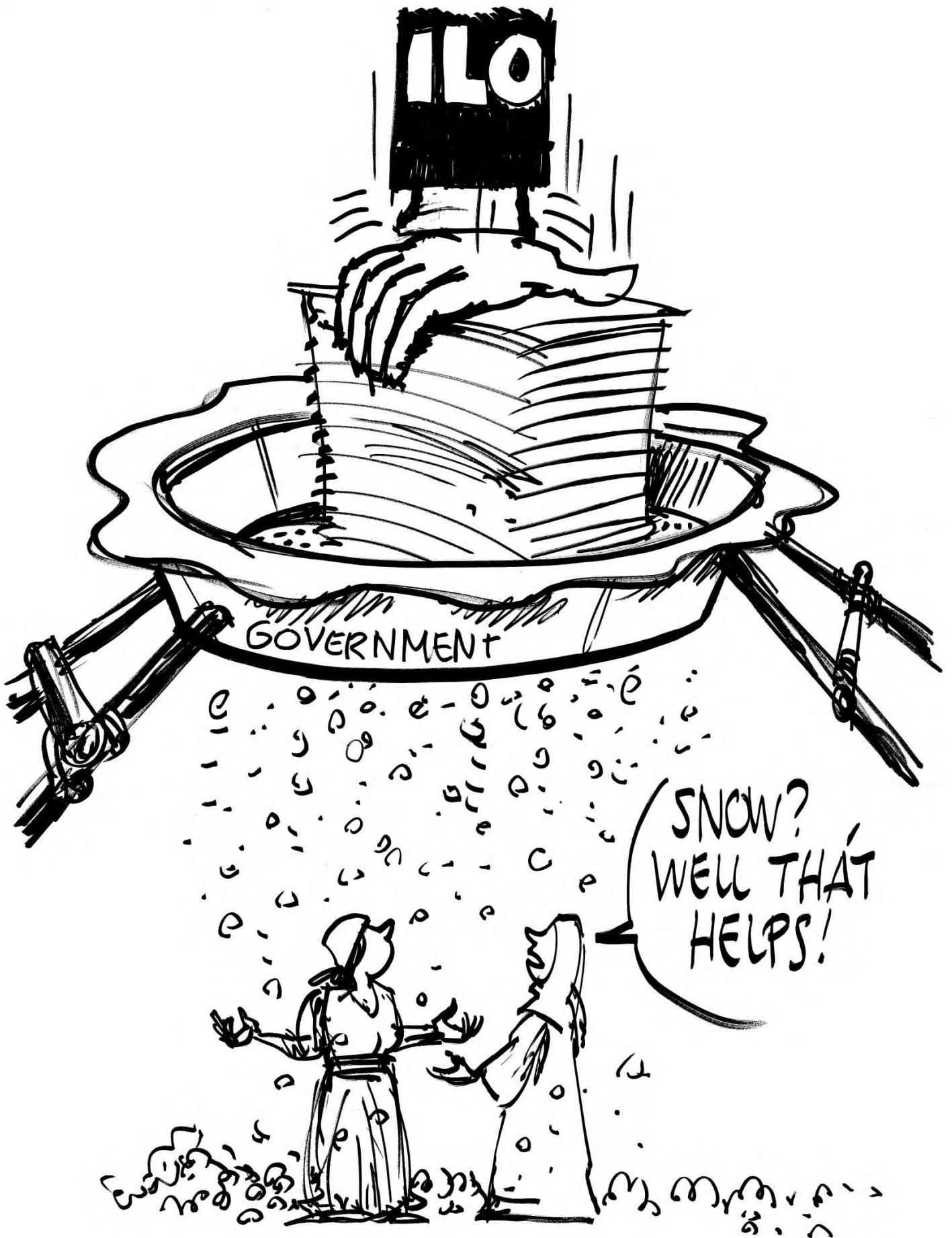
Source: final paragraph text discussed in 301st Session of the Governing Body, 6-20 March 2008

Or search via: [www.ilo.org/global/What\\_we\\_do/Officialmeetings/gb/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/What_we_do/Officialmeetings/gb/lang--en/index.htm)



*The strong position taken by Global Unions and the whole Workers Group of the ILO Governing Body in favour of an international standard will hopefully be heard and replicated by national unions. They will certainly meet resistance from governments who will claim that they cannot at present afford to include domestic workers in labour legislation and national social security systems; employers who will refute further regulations claiming that it will hamper employment; others who will assert that domestic workers are part of the past (as it was said about workers in the informal economy some years ago). So the unions need to be well prepared.'*

**Barbro Budin, Equality Officer, IUF** in: [www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article1895](http://www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article1895)



## 60 years later there is a new chance: Decent work for domestic workers

*'At its 31st Session (1948), the International Labour Conference adopted a resolution concerning the conditions of employment of domestic workers requesting the Governing Body "to consider the advisability of placing on the agenda of an early session of the Conference the question of the status and employment of domestic workers". A meeting of experts on the status and conditions of employment of domestic workers was held in July 1951 and, at the Second African Regional Conference of the International Labour Organization (Addis Ababa, 30 November to 11 December 1964), the Governing Body was invited, in a resolution, to undertake studies and research on the problems of domestic workers with a view to improvement of their living conditions.'*

Source: 300th Session of the Governing Body, 1-16 November 2007 – 2nd item on the agenda. [www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms\\_084886.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_084886.pdf)  
Under point 4 text on domestic work

Document for the 301st Session of the Governing Body, 6-20 March 2008:  
[www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms\\_090361.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_090361.pdf)  
Under point 5 text on domestic work



### Rules of the game : a brief introduction to international labour standards.

ILO, 2005. Guide on international labour standards and ILO standard setting.

Aimed at non-specialists, describes the essence of ILO Conventions and Recommendations  
[www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/2005/105B09\\_205\\_engl.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/2005/105B09_205_engl.pdf)

### Handbook of procedures relating to international labour Conventions and Recommendations.

ILO, 2006.

[www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/2006/106B09\\_44\\_engl.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/2006/106B09_44_engl.pdf)



### Website of the new international network

\* Mapping and liaison with domestic/household workers' organisations and support groups worldwide so as to promote **their visibility**, capture the magnitude of the effort already being undertaken for domestic/household workers' rights, as well as encourage their involvement in a network;

\* The exchange of information and strategies, through a new website dedicated to domestic/household workers' rights

**[www.domesticworkerrights.org](http://www.domesticworkerrights.org)**



## 5 ACTION AROUND THE WORLD

### Just how many domestic/household workers are there?

No-one has definitive data about domestic/household work in the world, often because it is not seen as 'work' and so labour force surveys tend not to include it. Here are some estimates that give a picture of how many people are doing this work in the homes of others. (sources annex 2)



#### Worldwide

- Some estimates say that one-third of the world's households have some form of 'hired-in support'.
- Domestic/household work is the world's largest occupation for young women.
- For children, it is the second largest occupation after agriculture; for girls under 16 years, it is the largest.



#### Asia

- The Asian Migrant Centre estimates that there are at least two million migrant domestic workers in Asia, over 90% of whom are women.
- The AMC also calculates that over 750,000 migrant domestic workers in Asia are undocumented.
- **The Philippines, Sri Lanka and Indonesia** are the source countries for most Asian migrant domestic/household workers. Women make up 60-80% of registered migrants from these countries, most of them domestic workers.
- **Indonesia:** Since 1998, some 400,000 Indonesians have migrated to other countries each year.



#### Middle East

- The countries of the **Persian Gulf** employ millions of **immigrant women** in domestic work. No fewer than one million immigrant women work in low-level occupations, including domestic work, in Saudi Arabia alone.



#### Latin America

- Domestic/household workers make up to 60 per cent of internal and cross-border migration in Latin America.
- Female immigrants from **Mexico** and other parts of Latin America make up most of the domestic workforce in the **US**.



#### Africa

- **South Africa:** about one million domestic/household workers, predominantly African and Coloured women, work as housekeepers, cooks and nannies. Domestic/household workers (including men gardeners) represent roughly 9% of all formal and informal employment in South Africa.



#### Europe

- **Spain:** domestic work is the largest single area of female employment.
- **France:** more than 50% of migrant women are employed in domestic work.
- **Italy:** some 600,000 people are registered as employed domestic/household workers, the great majority of whom are non-EU nationals. There are also many who are undocumented, not having a work permit, giving rise to an estimated total of 1.2 million workers in Italy providing domestic services to individuals.

# THE DEFINITION OF DOMESTIC WORK:



## What is domestic/household work?

Domestic/household work covers many different activities, situations and relationships, and so is not easy to categorise.

It includes many tasks such as cleaning, laundry and ironing; shopping, cooking and fetching water; caring for the sick, elderly and children; looking after pets; sweeping and garden-tidying.

It involves workers in many different types of employment relationship:

- In welfare societies, where care workers are employed by the State or organisations subsidised by the State, they often (though not always) benefit from proper employment contracts, union rights, and collective bargaining agreements.
- With privatisation of such services, however, has come the growth of private supply agencies and a deterioration in working terms and conditions and unionisation.
- In just a few countries there are collective bargaining agreements between trade unions and confederations of householders.
- Most domestic/household work around the world, however, is done through private arrangements between individuals, someone hired in or a family member, sometimes with a written contract but usually with none.
- Many live-in are on almost permanent call in that household; others live elsewhere and may work for several employers, perhaps spending only a few hours per week for each.

Domestic/household work fundamentally involves power relationships. It is:

- Never free of a **gender** perspective: in all societies domestic/household work remains seen as ‘women’s work’; nowhere do men do an equal share of work in the home. It is when women get jobs outside the home that –rather than men of the household doing more of the caring work– other women (or children) are brought in to do it.
- Often holds a **race** or **ethnic** perspective: this is especially so for international migrant workers, whose labour is wanted but who are often met by racism or xenophobia; also within countries women from certain cultures or racial/ethnic groups are more likely to be employed by others from more powerful cultures or groups.
- Sometimes involves **age** as a key aspect: in many countries there are still thousands of children doing domestic work in private homes; on the other hand, there are also many older women whose only skills to sell in the labour market are domestic ones.
- Almost always concerns **poverty** and **class**: very few who are not poor leave their own homes to work in those of other people, who are usually more wealthy.

*‘Domestic/household workers are a big issue for trade unions, not only because of their large and growing numbers. It is also because they are among the most vulnerable of workers - and that is what we are here for. Plus they are crucial to the labour market policies of the future.’*

Annie van Wezel, FNV Mondiaal, Netherlands



### ‘Swept Under the Rug – Abuses against domestic workers around the world’

Human Rights Watch, 2006

On domestic work: [www.hrw.org/campaigns/women/2006/domestic\\_workers/](http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/women/2006/domestic_workers/)

Report: [www.hrw.org/reports/2006/wrdo706/](http://www.hrw.org/reports/2006/wrdo706/)

Photo/video: [www.hrw.org/campaigns/women/2006/domestic\\_workers/photos.htm#nolink](http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/women/2006/domestic_workers/photos.htm#nolink)

Summary in Spanish: [www.hrw.org/reports/2006/wrdo706/wrdo706summarysp.pdf](http://www.hrw.org/reports/2006/wrdo706/wrdo706summarysp.pdf)



## Who is organising for domestic/household workers' rights?

*'In fact, there is so much activity around the world for domestic/household workers' rights that it seems to me our warehouses are rich and full.'*

**Annie van Wezel, FNV Mondiaal, Netherlands**

**Domestic/household workers' self-organisations exist all around the world. Indeed, there seems to have been quite a growth in recent years. What is more, they are more outspoken and creative in getting better seen and heard.**

In welfare societies such as Canada, Western Europe and Scandinavia, 'care provision' has for the past half century been part of the public sector. There, most care workers who go into private homes to help look after the sick, elderly or children have been state employees and members of public sector trade unions. Despite privatisation and outsourcing, many still are in these unions – though the restructuring presents unions with many challenges to keep them organised and negotiate agreements with employers as in the past.

Such formal arrangements are not how most domestic/household work is done around the world, however. Even in welfare societies, household cleaning remains an unregulated arena: the 'cleaning lady' comes in, say, for half a day a week, by verbal agreement with the householder. And this is how most domestic/household work of all kinds is organised in most countries, not through the state but as a private arrangement between individual householders or private agencies and individual workers.

Despite all the difficulties they face, including their isolation from each other and their poverty, many domestic/household workers have nevertheless formed associations or trade unions to represent themselves and get their voice heard. In some countries, trade unions of domestic/household workers as such are technically 'illegal', but this does not stop them organising.

Meanwhile, for unions that are more used to factory- or office-based workers, organising the working poor in the 'informal' economy is still a low priority. Supporting those such as domestic/household workers can seem 'expensive', costing more in time and resources than they bring in. However, this is not a reason not to organise and there are very good examples of solidarity between domestic/household workers' organisations and trade unions in certain locations, to mutual benefit.

It is much harder for 'undocumented' migrant domestic/household workers to organise, of course, and there are literally millions of them around the world. Many are isolated, living under someone else's roof and far from home. Trade unions have found it difficult and not a priority to reach out to them and incorporate their interests. Even so, courageous individuals have got together and built associations of migrant domestic workers, often among those sharing a language or nationality. Of these, some have developed a close working relationship with a trade union, particularly where the union leadership has been open. Other migrant groups, by contrast, still work very much on their own, for many reasons.

Then there are the support groups for domestic/household workers set up by others concerned for their plight, sometimes by faith groups, for example. Some of these are small, local NGOs. Some are big international NGOs that focus on forced labour, or child labour, or migrant workers, and therefore relate to domestic/household work done by the most vulnerable people in these situations.

Meanwhile, there is a regional confederation in Latin America and a regional network in Asia, which combine elements of all these types of organisation.

The activities that all these organisations undertake for domestic/household workers' rights are also very

varied. A few, such as those in South Africa, Bolivia, Brazil and Peru, have formed recognised trade unions and have helped to win new protective legislation and/or far greater visibility in society at large, though they still have to work hard to get it implemented or for their issues to remain on the agenda. Others are still small awareness-raising and support groups. And there is much in-between.

In fact, no clear mapping of the organisations and their activities around the world for domestic/household workers' rights seems to have been done as yet. So the conference aimed to do some 'stock-taking' of what exists, and for those there – as well as those reading this report – to learn more about each other. This 'stock-taking' continues since the conference.





## Part II – Practical experiences



### Latin America and the Caribbean

#### **Already united: CONLACTRAHO** **Latin American and Caribbean Confederation of Household Workers**

Household workers' organisations throughout Latin America and the Caribbean are united in a regional federation called **CONLACTRAHO (Confederación Latinoamericana y del Caribe de Trabajadoras del Hogar, or the Latin American and Caribbean Confederation of Household Workers)**. It was established in March 1988 at the first ever meeting of Latin American household/domestic workers' organisations, held in Bogota, Colombia. Organisations from eleven countries were present. Today, member organisations come from thirteen countries of the region, as well as Canada and an organisation of migrant workers in Europe. Its headquarters are in Mexico City. For the first time at a conference in Europe, **Marcelina Bautista Bautista, CONLACTRAHO's Secretary General**, explains the work of her federation:

*'Household workers, who are almost all women, have great problems defending their rights; many do not know the legal situation; many are working in isolation, not allowed to join unions and discouraged from making contact with support NGOs. Many are migrants within their own countries or come from indigenous communities. On their free day, Sunday, they need to go for a walk or visit their families and children if they can; so they have little time to organise themselves.*

*Many employers do not treat household workers as 'workers' but as inferior members of the household. But we must make a distinction between work done by family members and work done by those who are hired in as waged workers, for whom workers' rights should be implicit.*

*In most Latin American countries there are laws which regulate this kind of work, but with fewer rights than for other workers, for example with regard to social insurance. It is as if domestic/household workers are not 'real' workers. We need new initiatives to make this work visible and properly respected. Also, most of the laws are discriminatory, with no gender perspective, and still permeating through them, not just culturally but even within the juridical norms themselves, are notions of servitude or bondage.*

*In Bolivia and Peru, laws specifically to protect household workers were passed in 2003 (Bolivia: Law No.2450, 9 April 2003; Peru: Law No.27986, 3 June 2003) after a long struggle by organisations in those countries. In Brazil a new law was accepted in 2006 (Law 11324). Yet it is very difficult to get these laws respected. We need the ILO to help promote respect for household work in each country.*

*CONLACTRAHO promotes collaboration with trade unions because household workers' groups cannot do it alone. Many do get support from unions in their country, in political training, help with lobbying for legal changes, etc. In fact, in Brazil and Chile the trade unions have a long history of defending household workers,*

going back to the 1920s. In Bolivia, by contrast unions for household workers were banned until the 1980s; now there are several unions for them there. In Peru, it was not illegal as such but there were legal problems and the big unions were fragile; so it is a big achievement that household workers there can even talk about founding a trade union. In Mexico, the big unions are in decline and it was difficult for household workers to form their own union; so in 2000 they founded the Centre for Support and Training of Household Workers (Centro de Apoyo y Capacitación para Empleadas del Hogar, (CACEH) in Mexico City.

Some of our organisations are also working across borders, for example collaborating with organisations in the Dominican Republic where many migrants come from. We have not yet started to work specifically on the issues of child labour but we are aware that we should.

Our Confederation holds its Congress every four years, most recently the Fifth Congress in Peru in May 2006. This elects the seven members of the Executive Board, including the General Secretary, the post I currently hold; the other members of the current Board are from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Peru, and Costa Rica. We work to strengthen household workers' organisations in each country and across the region, to increase the visibility of this work and to try to combat the exploitation, marginalisation and discrimination that many household workers face. We are very conscious of the social, cultural and economic diversities that exist in our region, causing many Indigenous, Mestiza and Black women to find work in other people's homes.

CONLACTRAHO members celebrate 30 March each year as an International Day for Household Workers, using it to raise awareness for the rights of and respect for the dignity of these workers. We also work to raise awareness in the international labour and women's organisations (ILO, UNIFEM and UNICEF). We publish a regular bulletin to keep everyone informed of developments.

It is not easy. We are not trained as professionals; many of us have worked in private homes for 15-20 years, since we were children, and so we have had few educational opportunities; we do not necessarily have the basic organising skills. However, we are convinced that we have to win back our rights and it is through our activities that we grow and learn how to organise and defend the rights of our members and friends. As a federation, CONLACTRAHO continues to promote the organisations of household/domestic workers and works towards building their capacities and skills.'

**A profile of Marcelina Bautista Bautista** (in Spanish) is at:

[www.indesol.gob.mx/docs/5\\_comunicacion/mujeres\\_14\\_MARCELINA.pdf](http://www.indesol.gob.mx/docs/5_comunicacion/mujeres_14_MARCELINA.pdf)

**For more information on CONLACTRAHO** (in Spanish) see:

[www.cinterfor.uy/public/spanish/region/ampro/cinterfor/public/sind\\_for/castillo/pdf/exp\\_sec.pdf](http://www.cinterfor.uy/public/spanish/region/ampro/cinterfor/public/sind_for/castillo/pdf/exp_sec.pdf)



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#### **Asociacion Grupo De Trabajo Redes, Peru.**

**La Casa de Panchita** is a meeting place for domestic workers of all ages.

With a wide range of supportive and educational activities. Produced several educational booklets. In English: [www.gruporedes.org/index.php?idioma=2](http://www.gruporedes.org/index.php?idioma=2)

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**Brazil and compliance with CEDAW –Shadow Report of Civil Society–** July 2007. The more recent victories .... were issued in Law No. 10208/2006 ... and Law No. 11324/2006 ... the guarantee of these rights ends up depending on the will of the employer. Given that in Brazil there are close to 6,658,627 domestic workers, of whom 6,206,202 are women, excluding access by this category to traditional workers rights means the undermining of the citizenship of women. (on page 29)

[www.agende.org.br/home/BRAZIL%20SHADOWREPORT%20CEDAW%20-13%20julho07.pdf](http://www.agende.org.br/home/BRAZIL%20SHADOWREPORT%20CEDAW%20-13%20julho07.pdf)

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## Montevideo Declaration

In December 2005, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) held a South American seminar on women migrant domestic workers in Montevideo, Uruguay. Trade Union representatives coming from Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Venezuela, Uruguay, met with South American household workers' organisations, consultants, trade union representatives from Spain, and ILO experts. At the end of the seminar, participants issued a statement.

**'We, Latin American and Spanish women workers, participants to the "Trade Union Seminar on Women Migrant Domestic Workers" agree:**

- 1 **To denounce** the political-economic, social and cultural neo-liberal model that exploits male and female household workers.
- 2 **To promote** the value of paid domestic work; change in our texts and dialogues the term 'domestic workers' into the more suitable and respectful term of 'household workers', which includes a collective recognition of their work.
- 3 **To recognise** that the demands of household workers, and migrants as well as the ending of child labour are fundamental tasks of the trade union movement
- 4 **To value** the contribution that household workers make to the development of our countries and to value the constant battle of their organisations throughout history for their just claims.
- 5 **To request** the ILO to support actions that guarantee full respect for the labour rights of household workers and migrants, to promote Equality and Non-Discrimination of Gender, Race, and Ethnic Groups, and the respect of the rights of indigenous people.
- 6 **To fight** together with labour organisations in all our countries, to defend the implementation of ILO Conventions and to promote an International Convention to guarantee the rights of household workers.
- 7 **To agree to work together to make sure that the demands of household workers are in the center of our trade union, social and political agendas, as well as in the center of the agendas of the Governments of our countries in order to guarantee equality of rights and better working conditions as well as better salaries for household workers.'**

Signed:- **Argentina:** CGT; CTA; CONLACTRAHO – SINPE CAF  
- **Brazil:** CONLACTRAHO / FENATRAD; FORÇA SINDICAL; CGT; CUT  
- **Bolivia:** FNC Obrera BOL; CONLACTRAHO  
- **Chile:** CUT; CONLACTRAHO  
- **Colombia:** CGT; CTC; CUT; CONLACTRAHO / UTRAHOGAR  
- **Ecuador:** CEOSL / FENACLE  
- **Paraguay:** CUT  
- **Peru:** CGT P  
- **Venezuela:** CTV  
- **Uruguay:** PIT CNT / SUTD; PIT CNT; Gender Department PIT CNT  
- **Spain:** CC.OO

See: [www.oitchile.cl/pdf/decmontevideo.pdf](http://www.oitchile.cl/pdf/decmontevideo.pdf)





### Union seminar for equal rights and decent work for domestic workers

Meeting in Asuncion, Paraguay, more than 40 representatives of union centres of Latin America and Spain discussed proposals and demands from the union movement for equal rights and better working conditions for migrant women who work as domestic servants. This was the second Union Seminar on the issue and was held from Nov. 5-9, 2007 and was called by the International Labour Organization.

[www.cioslorit.net/english/noticia1.asp?id=1091](http://www.cioslorit.net/english/noticia1.asp?id=1091)

Spanish: [www.cioslorit.net/espanol/noticia1.asp?id=1076](http://www.cioslorit.net/espanol/noticia1.asp?id=1076)

Read the Declaración de Asunción (spanish) (pdf)

[www.cioslorit.net/archivo\\_up/Declaraci%C3%B3ndeAsunci%C3%B3n.pdf](http://www.cioslorit.net/archivo_up/Declaraci%C3%B3ndeAsunci%C3%B3n.pdf)



**YOU'RE FIRED**



NO:  
I'M EDUCATED,  
BYE BYE !!



## **Bolivia: Household workers get legal protection**

In a population of nearly 9 million, Bolivia has about 132,000 household workers, of whom 99 per cent are women. Household workers' organisation began in the mid-1980s in the capital city La Paz, using Sundays, when many could get time off. Classes were run on topics such as literacy, cooking and sewing; it was also the day for demonstrations, with household workers claiming their rights, wearing their aprons and carrying brooms.

After many years of organising and lobbying, in 2003 FENATRAHOB (**Federación Nacional de Trabajadoras del Hogar de Bolivia, National Federation of Household Workers of Bolivia**) successfully got the Bolivian Parliament to pass the Household Workers Law. The law includes a minimum wage; a maximum of 10 hours a day working time for live-in workers and eight hours for live-out workers; Sundays and holidays off; 15 days holiday each year, and a bonus of one year's pay after five years of work. Moreover, the Government has declared 30 May as Household Workers' Day.

**Migueline Colque** of FENATRAHOB says:

*'You don't achieve progress from one day to the next, but over a long period of many years, with a lot of commitment from colleagues. The laws passed in 2003 are very important and many cities are now complying; there is a new officer within the Labour Department to support the new law, so they are taking us seriously. And we now are able to take cases of unjust dismissals to court.'*

*The laws are not yet fully implemented, though; we find that senior labour inspectors tend to support the employers. Also, most household workers still do not have health insurance, pensions or written contracts. However, we are anticipating help with getting health insurance. We have to get to every corner of every city; it is now the poorer people who are exploiting household workers the most, with the lowest pay. **Before we were vulnerable and invisible; but with the new law now people are aware of us.'***

Her FENATRAHOB colleague, **Basilía Catari Torres**, continues:

*'We are a grassroots organisation of household workers, formed when we women organised ourselves on the basis of our needs. We were not recognised as workers, and many were migrants from rural areas who did not know our rights. So we organised ourselves to achieve rights for household workers to agreed working hours, fair wages, free education, access to health and retirement schemes.'*

*As a way of attracting household workers, we hold training workshops to professionalise their cooking and sewing skills; the workers we have trained can then ask for higher pay and better working conditions. We also do training in handicrafts such as macramé, as this helps them to have an independent source of income. Plus we run workshops on rights, such as reproductive rights.'*

*We defend ourselves as a group, but also we help to make individuals strong so that they can defend themselves. We experience triple discrimination: as indigenous people, as migrants, and as women. They think we are 'stupid' but training helps to overcome this, and this includes training in the rural areas where many household workers come from.'*

*We are a women's organisation, organised by women household workers, and not managed by an NGO. They give us solidarity and we grew through their help, which we very much appreciate. But we manage ourselves. Our weak point is our financial situation; our resources are always very limited. However, everyone always does what she can, and it is this solidarity by many individuals which makes our organisation strong.'*

**[www.fenatrahob.org](http://www.fenatrahob.org)**



### **'De Chualluma He Venido' ('I came from Chualluma')**

The life story of Basilia Catari Torres  
Ayuda Obrera Suiza (AOS), La Paz, Bolivia, December 2000



### **Domestic worker becomes Minister of Justice in Bolivia**

Casimira Rodriguez Romero started her working life aged 13 years, when she was taken from her rural village in Bolivia to work in a private household in the city of Cochabamba. She remained in this work for 18 years. As she grew up, she became a founder and then Secretary General of the FENATRAHOB National Federation of Household Workers of Bolivia, where she worked hard for the legal reforms that have been achieved in her country. She was also Secretary General of the Latin American and Caribbean regional confederation CONLACTRAHO

In February 2006, Casimira Rodríguez was appointed as her country's Minister of Justice. She is also Bolivia's first Quechua Indian to serve as a government minister.

### **'Una Trayectoria Única' (A Unique Journey)**

A news story and short video (in Spanish) about the life of Casimira Rodríguez at:  
[news.bbc.co.uk/hi/spanish/specials/2006/trabajadoras\\_hogar/newsid\\_5019000/5019716.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/spanish/specials/2006/trabajadoras_hogar/newsid_5019000/5019716.stm)



### **Mexico**

#### **Centro de Apoyo y Capacitación para Empleadas del Hogar (CACEH), Mexico**

(Support and Capacity-Building Centre for Household Workers) Information leaflet in Spanish  
[www.indesol.gob.mx/docs/5\\_comunicacion/10\\_PracSoc2004.pdf](http://www.indesol.gob.mx/docs/5_comunicacion/10_PracSoc2004.pdf)

### **'Hay condiciones de esclavitud' (There are slave-like conditions)**

Interview with Emilio Álvarez Icaza, President of the Mexican Human Rights Commission  
In Spanish, with photographs  
[news.bbc.co.uk/hi/spanish/specials/2006/trabajadoras\\_hogar/newsid\\_5027000/5027812.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/spanish/specials/2006/trabajadoras_hogar/newsid_5027000/5027812.stm)

### **Paraguay**

#### **'Trabajo doméstico remunerado en Paraguay'**

'Paid domestic work in Paraguay'

Verónica Lopez, Lilian Soto and Hugo Valiente (219 pages, in Spanish)

OIT/IPEC 2005: Sudamérica, Proyecto 'Prevención y Eliminación del Trabajo Infantil Doméstico en Hogares de Terceros en Sudamérica',

[www.oit Chile.cl/pdf/publicaciones/igu/igu024.pdf](http://www.oit Chile.cl/pdf/publicaciones/igu/igu024.pdf)

from same writers:

#### **'Necesarias, Invisibles, Discriminadas: Las trabajadoras del servicio doméstico en el Paraguay'**

'Needed, Invisible, Discriminated Against: Domestic Service Workers in Paraguay'

ILO/IPEC and Centro de Documentación y Estudios (CDE), 2005, in Spanish (40 pages)

[bibliotecavirtual.clacso.org.ar/ar/libros/paraguay/cde/areamujer/trabajadoras.pdf](http://bibliotecavirtual.clacso.org.ar/ar/libros/paraguay/cde/areamujer/trabajadoras.pdf)

## Brazil

### '30 mil domésticas trabalham sem salário no Brasil'

'30 thousand domestic workers work without wages in Brazil'

In Portuguese, with photographs

[www.bbc.co.uk/portuguese/reporterbbc/story/2006/08/060811\\_domesticassemalarioebc.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/portuguese/reporterbbc/story/2006/08/060811_domesticassemalarioebc.shtml)

[www.bbc.co.uk/portuguese/reporterbbc/story/2006/08/060808\\_domesticospiorcategoriaebc.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/portuguese/reporterbbc/story/2006/08/060808_domesticospiorcategoriaebc.shtml)

[www.bbc.co.uk/portuguese/reporterbbc/story/2006/08/060809\\_domesticasinfantilrw.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/portuguese/reporterbbc/story/2006/08/060809_domesticasinfantilrw.shtml)

## Latin America

### 'International Women's Day 2006: More, but not always better jobs for women in Latin America'

[www.ilo.org/global/Themes/Working\\_Conditions/Wages/lang--en/WCMS\\_067504/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/Themes/Working_Conditions/Wages/lang--en/WCMS_067504/index.htm)

In English, Spanish and French



## Peru: Another success story

Out of a population of 28 million in Peru, there are thought to be nearly 500,000 working in households, of whom 200,000 are adolescents or children. In 2003, the same year as in Bolivia, the Peruvian Government passed new legislation for domestic/household workers, the Household Work Law No.27986. This recognises their work and gives them employment rights.

**Marcolina de los Milagros Infante Ramirez** comes from **I PROFOTH (Instituto para la Promoción y Formación de Trabajos en el Hogar-Institute for the Promotion and Formation of Workers in the Home)**, an NGO based in the capital city of Lima. She describes how this victory was won:

*'The Household Work Law passed in 2003 took many years of struggle, a lot of demonstrations, travelling around the country to win visibility for this work and gain support, and so on. At the time, so many women who demanded their rights were dismissed by their employers.*

*We worked as a network of household workers' organisations in ten regions. We visited night schools where household workers might be. We published articles to raise public awareness. We lobbied the Ministry for Women and the Ministry for Social Affairs for support; they said they had no budget, but they gave us resources such as places to hold our conferences.*

*Eventually we got the new law, and we are very proud of our achievement. It lays down that household workers have the right to a contract with their employer; this does not have to be written but can be verbal. The contract must include:*

- *wage levels; food and sleeping quarters cannot be considered as part of the pay;*
- *there must be proof of payment/work done so that the household worker later has proof of employment;*
- *maximum working hours of 8 hours per day;*
- *a weekly free day of 24 hours on Sunday plus public holidays; if more time is worked, there must be more pay;*
- *15 days' leave per year on at least half-pay*
- *a bonus for Christmas and Independence Day on 28 July.*

*The Government also now sets a minimum wage, recognises the right of household workers to register for social security, join a pension plan, and pursue further education. Now we are starting to work with employment agencies so that they know about these rights that they should comply with.*

**We are just starting to build a trade union of domestic/household workers.** *At night we go to the homes where household workers are working and invite them along; or we go out on the streets early in the morning*

when they are out buying bread. The union is very new and was only officially registered in October 2006. At first the Ministry said, 'Why do you want a union, when you are not organised in a workplace?' but we had to be strong and kept pushing them.

**We household workers must be actors in every situation. We may not be university educated, but we have gained a lot of education through our lives. Now we are working on strengthening the capacity of our union leaders.'**

**A further interview with Marcolina de los Milagros Infante Ramirez**

by Jan Bom for FNV Mondiaal (in Dutch only) can be found at:

[www.fnv.nl/helpjezelf/mondiaal/nieuws/marcolina\\_richt\\_vakbond\\_dienstmeisjes\\_peru\\_op.asp](http://www.fnv.nl/helpjezelf/mondiaal/nieuws/marcolina_richt_vakbond_dienstmeisjes_peru_op.asp)

Film 5 min. **I PROFOTH**, where Marcolina talks about the work of the organisation (as described above). Victoria Reyes, founder of I PROFOTH, talks about the need of a good law. Produced by FNV Mondiaal, by Astrid Kaag (January 2008). <http://unionrenewal.blogspot.com/2008/02/domestic-workers-in-peru.html>  
<http://nl.youtube.com/watch?v=XAxm7GM9no&feature=related>







### **Domestic worker: Half a worker**

Household Workers Law No. 27986 was passed in **Peru** in 2003 after a long struggle by domestic/household workers in the country. Despite this victory, and the protections that it gives them, discrimination and an under-valuation of household workers is embedded even within this new law.

Household workers in Peru can count on less favourable labour rights when compared to other workers:

- 1 Household workers' pay is determined by free agreement between two parties. That is to say, household workers do not have the right to a minimum living wage, unlike other workers. Despite this, their social security contributions for health insurance and pensions are calculated on the basis of them getting a living wage.
- 2 Compensation for length of service: For household workers it is calculated at 50% of their pay, whereas other workers get 100% of their pay.
- 3 Holidays: Household workers only have the right to 15 days' annual holiday, unlike the other workers who have the right to 30 days' holiday a year.
- 4 Work during days-off/holidays: When somebody works on a holiday she has the right to receive pay for the work done plus an additional payment of 100% daily wage. However, household workers receive pay for the work done plus an additional payment of only 50% of the daily wage.
- 5 Gratuities/allowances: on Independence Day and Christmas, household workers get an allowance of 50% of their monthly pay; other workers receive 100% of their monthly pay.

Source: [www.presenciacultural.com/blog/2007/01/27/casa-mazmorra-trabajadora-del-hogar/](http://www.presenciacultural.com/blog/2007/01/27/casa-mazmorra-trabajadora-del-hogar/)  
Plus **flimclip** on same page – about (hovel) housing conditions of domestic workers (in Spanish):  
**Casa mazmorra: Trabajadora del hogar**



### **'Haz Valer Tus Derechos!' – 'Defend Your Rights'**

Information for household workers, including on the Household Workers Law No. 27986 of 2003 and model employment contracts.

**CESIP (Centro de Estudios Sociales y Publicaciones)**, Lima, Peru

[www.cesip.org.pe/publicaciones/p69.htm](http://www.cesip.org.pe/publicaciones/p69.htm)

Law No 27986 [www.cajpe.org.pe/rij/bases/legisla/peru/27986.pdf](http://www.cajpe.org.pe/rij/bases/legisla/peru/27986.pdf)

### **Centro de Capacitación para Trabajadoras de Hogar (CCTH)**

Centre for Household Workers Capacity-building – [www.ccth.com.pe](http://www.ccth.com.pe)

'La Ley de las Trabajadoras del Hogar (Perú)' 'Household Workers Law (Peru)'

[www.ccth.com.pe/ley.html](http://www.ccth.com.pe/ley.html)

### **CGTP – Sindicato Nacional De Trabajadoras Del Hogar Del Perú (SINTRAHOGARP)**

**Plan Estratégico 2007-2012**

<http://syscgtgtp.org.pe/modules/Biblioteca/images/CGTP-MUJER/Planificacion%20estrategica%202007-2012%20SINTRAHOGARP.pdf>

### **‘La Sindicalización de las Trabajadoras del Hogar en el Perú: De la Necesidad a la Propuesta’**

(‘Trade union organisation of Peruvian Household Workers’)

Also includes information on laws in other Latin American countries.

CGTP (Confederación General de Trabajadores del Peru), 2006, in Spanish

[www.syscgtp.cgtp.org.pe/modules/Biblioteca/images/Publicaciones/Sindicacion\\_Trabajadoras\\_Hogar\\_2006.pdf](http://www.syscgtp.cgtp.org.pe/modules/Biblioteca/images/Publicaciones/Sindicacion_Trabajadoras_Hogar_2006.pdf)

### **‘Situación de la Trabajadora del Hogar en Perú’**

(‘The Situation of the Household Worker in Peru’)

La Red e Auto Organizaciones de Trabajadoras del Hogar del Peru, 2005, in Spanish.

Available from: [redth276@hotmail.com](mailto:redth276@hotmail.com)



## **Trinidad and Tobago: ‘Crumpled up and thrown in the bin’**

***‘For the purpose of this Act persons employed in domestic work and paid by the householder are not regarded as workers.’*** (Trinidad and Tobago, Industrial Relations Act, 1972)

*‘This is still our struggle in Trinidad and Tobago’,* comments **Ida le Blanc**, General Secretary of the **National Union of Domestic Employees (NUDE)** of **Trinidad & Tobago**, two islands in the Caribbean. NUDE was set up in 1982 to represent the 12,000-plus domestic/household workers there. Ten years later, the union also opened its doors to include other low-waged workers who are not protected such as casual/temporary workers. All the union’s leaders are women. Ida continues:

*‘Not being regarded as “workers” under our legislation, our domestic workers still have no recourse for wrongful dismissal, or can be fired at the whim of their employer; they are also excluded from the Occupational Health and Safety Act.*

*We do have a Household Assistants Act and this says that there should be a written contract of employment, 14 days’ annual leave, maternity leave under the Maternity Protection Act and other provisions. However, there is virtually no implementation and it is a big problem for our union.*

*As for the National Insurance Scheme, it is mandatory for employers to register every worker; but in the case of a domestic worker, she must register herself. In a recent case taken up by our union, a domestic worker had asked her employer to get in touch with the NIS registration board to register her; she had given her employer all the details but the employer just crumpled them up and threw them in the bin, and then dismissed her. She went to the Ministry of Labour, who sent her to our union.*

*The Minimum Wage Act is a victory for us. Here we got the government to change the relevant court for domestic workers from the civil court to the industrial court so that we could have union representation. We achieved this after we held several workshops throughout Trinidad and Tobago. The Minister of Labour officially opened one, and heard the voice of over a hundred domestic workers. We used the media and newspapers to spread the word.*

*Many workers do not use this mechanism, though, and I understand why; when we pursue the matter at the Ministry of Labour to get moving, we make enemies; if you take a case to court, you wait about two years for the bureaucratic wheels to turn. It means that many workers do not have confidence in the law. Workers feel they are not sufficiently compensated by the Judges at the Court, and no stiff penalties are ordered against the employers.*



## 'Equal Rights for Domestic Workers' Campaign

On 13 January 2007, NUDE launched a campaign to get equal rights for domestic/household workers in Trinidad and Tobago. They wrote to the Minister of Labour asking for the Industrial Relations Act to be amended to include domestic workers. This was already recommended a decade earlier by an ILO workshop to Improve the Status, Terms and Conditions of Work of Domestic Workers in the Caribbean in 1997, and then by the country's Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women in 2002. The NUDE letter was accompanied by a petition.  
e-mail: domestic@tsstt.net.tt



## Asia

### Asian Domestic Workers' Network

The **Asian Domestic Workers' Network** was established in 2004, following a workshop in Hong Kong the previous year organised by the **Committee for Asian Women**. The workshop identified the need for a network to provide mutual support for domestic workers' organisations across the region.

ADWN currently has eleven member organisations, from Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Indonesia and Hong Kong. Five are self-organisations (trade unions) of adult domestic/household workers, which become regular members of the network; they have voting rights and elect the Executive Board. A further six are NGO support organisations, which are associate members; they are involved in programme planning and implementation. At present, CAW hosts the secretariat of the ADWN.

Ip Pui Yu (commonly known as 'Fish') was one of the ADWN representatives attending the conference. She first gives an indication of the huge scale of domestic work in Asia, and then describes the efforts under way to organise these workers locally and through the network:

***'The numbers involved in domestic work in Asia are very big:***

- *Employment in private households accounts for about one-third of all female employment in Asia.*
- *About 1.5 million Asian women work as migrant domestic workers in other countries;*
- *Statistics for internal migrant domestic workers (women and children) migrating from rural or poorer areas to cities scarcely exist, however;*
- *In the Philippines, there are estimated to be over 600,000 local domestic workers;*
- *Figures from one province alone of Indonesia, Yogyakarta (Central Java), indicate 40,000 local domestic workers and 40,000 working in Hong Kong;*
- *In Hong Kong, nearly one-third of all families employ a domestic worker: one in ten employs a migrant domestic worker, while more than two in ten employ a local domestic worker.*

*Domestic work has existed for centuries in Asia, when girls were sold by poor families to rich ones, put to work as “slaves”, “maids” or “servants” or described as a quasi member of the family so as to deny their rights. Today, such feudal and patriarchal values continue to shape the way the work is valued, i.e. it is “work of no value done by women of low caste, ethnic group or race”.*

*As a result, in many countries the definition of ‘domestic work’ is vague - domestic workers are said to be there to make a person in their own home more ‘comfortable’; so there is little recognition for these workers as “workers”; little or no protection in labour law or social security; little or no respect for collective bargaining rights. This provides a rationalisation for abuse; some household workers receive no payment for their work at all, only “shelter” and food; there is no opportunity for training to upgrade skills; no health insurance; no retirement protection. For others the abuse can be more extreme forms of mental, physical or sexual assault. Isolation from society and lack of personal life add to the stress.*

*We have to look at why domestic work is growing. It is directly related to wider economic and political developments. During the Suharto military regime in Indonesia, for example, farmers were told to plant certain crops, the prices fell, farmers became poor, and daughters had to find work. Elsewhere, policy prescriptions from the World Trade Organisation (WTO) are causing a collapse in the rural economy and increasing urbanisation. Capital flight, factory closures and privatisation lead to lay-offs, and the women who become unemployed resort to domestic work for a living. Urban women absorbed into the labour force need help with household work, and this demand is met by impoverished rural women who have few other options.*



*Many organisations of domestic workers have started up in Asian countries in recent years. Some, for example in Japan and South Korea, are in the form of associations or co-operatives. In Hong Kong and Indonesia there are registered trade unions of domestic workers; however, in most countries, this is legally difficult or impossible. Meanwhile, those who are migrants are joining migrant workers’ self-organisations or support NGOs, for example in Xian in China. Others are supported by women’s organisations, or religious institutions, or sympathisers such as teachers.*

*These organisations undertake a range of organising and mobilising strategies. Some emphasise the self-organisation of domestic/household workers in independent groups, to speak for themselves to raise public awareness and lobby for legal changes. Others are advocacy groups on behalf of domestic/household workers. Some provide support such as a help-line, or a rest house, or free health aid or legal aid. Some help women find work in households with decent employers.*

*Getting in touch with individual domestic/household workers is always difficult and groups try various methods: from personal networking via friends, relatives, or community/religious leaders; to door-to-door surveying and home visits; and going to markets, parks and other public places where domestic workers might be. Some groups try to attract with recreational activities. Others try building rapport with employers. ADWN's main mission is to support the self-organisation of domestic workers, to assist them to strengthen themselves. We do this through training, study tours and exchange programmes where they can share their organising and legal reform strategies. However, we also want to work closely with others involved in supporting domestic workers such as the child and migrant workers.*

*We play an advocacy role, lobbying for policies and programmes, at international as well as local levels, that will bring about greater value for the work of domestic workers, give them access to social services and promote their rights as workers. We are particularly interested in the idea of a new ILO Convention to extend "decent work" to domestic/household workers.*

*We also try to secure media coverage, to encourage more social partners to rally to the cause of domestic workers. We do need to make this invisible sector of work more visible in society at large. Our vision is for a society that affirms domestic work as decent and dignified.'*

**For more on ADWN, see:** [www.cawinfo.org/Article312.html](http://www.cawinfo.org/Article312.html) and [www.cawinfo.org/Category8-All.html](http://www.cawinfo.org/Category8-All.html)



**'New Initiatives in Organising Strategies in the Informal Economy: A case study of domestic workers' organising'**

By Sujata Gothoskar - Committee for Asian Women, Bangkok, July 2005  
[www.cawinfo.org/Article205.html](http://www.cawinfo.org/Article205.html)

**'Reclaiming Dignity: Struggles of local domestic workers in Asia'**

Report of the workshop held in Hong Kong, October 2004 involving domestic workers' organisations from five Asian countries: Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, South Korea, and the Philippines.

Edited by Sarah Eunkyung Chee, Deepa Bharathi and Lee Siew Hwa

Committee for Asian Women, Bangkok, 2004 - [www.cawinfo.org/Article145.html](http://www.cawinfo.org/Article145.html)

**'Women Domestic Workers'**

By Ranjana Athavale, Vijay Kanhere and Sujata Gothoskar

plus 'Report of Asian Domestic Workers' Network Study Tour' - [www.cawinfo.org/Article207.html](http://www.cawinfo.org/Article207.html) - [www.cawinfo.org/Article207.html](http://www.cawinfo.org/Article207.html)

In 'Asian Women Workers', Committee for Asian Women, Vol.25, No.1, January 2006

**'Dreamseekers: Indonesian women as domestic workers in Asia'**

By Dewi Anggraeni

Equinox Publishing and ILO, 2006



## Indonesian migrants organise in Hong Kong

The **Indonesian Migrant Workers' Union (IMWU)** in **Hong Kong** was founded in 1999, out of a self-help group set up six years earlier, called the Indonesia Group Hong Kong. The IMWU is an affiliate of the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU) and through the HKCTU has been developing common positions and relationships with the international confederation ITUC since 2003. **Sartiwen Binti Sanbardi** says they wanted to become a trade union so they could be officially recognised and so have a more political agenda of promoting labour rights. She continues:

*'Our current membership is over 2,300 Indonesian domestic workers in Hong Kong. They are very poor. Some have to pay high deductions out of their salaries to an agency for the job, leaving them with virtually no income for a long time.*

*If they leave their job, or when their contract ends, they have to leave Hong Kong within two weeks, according to law. This makes many become undocumented, and they end up working in bars or in the sex industry. Other migrants can eventually become residents of Hong Kong after seven years, but not domestic workers. This is discrimination. So we took the 'Two Weeks Rule', as it is known, to the United Nations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and they are now bringing pressure on the Hong Kong Government to abolish it.*



*Even though many domestic workers send big revenues home, the Indonesian Government has not been supportive. So we have been very active in lobbying, with some success. In 2003, we argued strongly against a government policy that sought to make it compulsory for migrants to return home to renew their contract and re-pay agency fees. Eventually the Government succumbed and reversed the policy.*

*Then in 2004, we conducted a mass education campaign to put pressure on the Indonesian Government to reduce the exorbitant agency fees being charged to migrants coming to Hong Kong. We succeeded in signing a three-way Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Labour, the union, and the largest employment agency, the PJTKI, securing a lower fee. Implementation has been difficult, but the process has forced the Government and agencies to recognise the role of our union. In August 2006, we again won a victory when stopped the Jakarta Labour and Transmigration Department from requiring all Indonesian migrants working overseas to re-register with the local Labour Department when back home on leave.*

*Meanwhile, over the past three years we have organised many training programmes for our members in Hong Kong on topics such as organisational management, bookkeeping, computer skills and the internet, English and Cantonese, traditional dance, plus trade unionism, migrant human rights, leadership and team-building, and advocacy. This has helped our members to express their problems through filing complaints, and to participate in campaigns and protests. We also have a small shelter for Indonesian workers who are taking their cases to the Hong Kong Labour Department.*

*To help raise awareness, we take part in the annual May Day activities with the HKCTU and hold activities on the Indonesian national Kartini Women's Day – which brings more Indonesian domestic workers to seek help. We have also produced a video called "2.5 Billion for the State", referring to the remittances migrant domestic workers send back to our home country. We have shown this to other migrant support groups, as well as to the Indonesian and Hong Kong Governments.*

*As well as our union in Hong Kong, there are Indonesian migrant workers' organisations in Korea, Taiwan and Singapore. We belong to the Migrant Forum in Asia, and coordinate with many others at regional and international level to strengthen the campaign for migrants' human rights.*

*One weakness is that it is hard to collect fees from our members. For now, we have to depend on funding agencies and support from NGOs. We are strong because these NGOs and the HKCTU are helping us, for example with administration. But we understand this is a problem for our sustainability.'*

#### **A further interview of Sartiwen Binti Sanbardi**

By Sam Grumiau for the ITUC (in English, Spanish and French)

can be found at: [www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article472](http://www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article472)



#### **'2.5 Billion for the State'**

A film by the Indonesian Migrant Workers' Union, Hong Kong, 2002

In English and Bahasa Indonesia. 53 Minutes.

Contact: [imwu@asian-migrants.org](mailto:imwu@asian-migrants.org)

#### **'Underpayment: Research on Indonesian Domestic Workers in Hong Kong'**

Asian Migrant Centre, the Indonesian Migrant Workers Union (IMWU), and the Hong Kong Coalition of Indonesian Migrants Workers' Organisations (KOTKIHO)

[www.asian-migrants.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=4&Itemid=101](http://www.asian-migrants.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=4&Itemid=101)

**More information on the IMWU**, including photographs,  
can be found at: [www.asian-migrants.org](http://www.asian-migrants.org)



## Hong Kong: 'Heart of Love, Care and Justice'

The **Hong Kong Domestic Workers' General Union** was formed in mid-2001. Its symbol and slogan represent the 'heart of love, care and justice'.

The union's membership comprises local domestic workers hired to clean homes and care for children, the aged and newborn infants. Most are employed on a casual basis, with irregular hours or only short-term contracts. Nearly all are women, and they meet weekly or monthly in local areas of Hong Kong.

The union's Executive Committee members are all women, Ip Pui Yu (Fish) is on of them. It is affiliated to the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU), and collaborates with other migrant domestic workers' groups and unions in Hong Kong, such as the Indonesian Migrant Workers' Union.

[www.hkctu.org.hk](http://www.hkctu.org.hk)



### **Victory in Collective Action Against Anti Migrant Policy in Hong Kong**

February 2008. Around 1,500 Indonesian migrant workers gathered outside the Indonesian Consulate-General to demand the retraction of policy number SE 2258. Some workers went on hungerstrike.

This policy required all Indonesian migrant workers to get permission from both their agency and the Consulate before they could change their employment agency leading to the continued extortion of migrant workers through the 7 months wage deduction.

Coming out from the dialogue, this was the first ever in history that the Consul General was willing to meet the migrants during the mass demonstration and then personally announced the new policy to replace the SE 2258 policy.

There are several important points that were announced publicly in front of the mobilized migrant workers and hunger strikers, as follow:

- 1 The employment agency has to provide 'a guarantee letter' to the Consul General stating that they will not charge more than 10% of the migrants' first month salary as a payment for processing the contract renewal of Indonesian migrants in Hong Kong.
- 2 For those migrants who want to change their employment agency to process their contract renewal it will not be necessary to report to the Consulate.
- 3 When changing their employment agency for contract renewal, it is not necessary anymore to get an endorsement letter from the old employment agency.

'That this victory, which they just gained last Sunday, will become their spirit to continue the long struggle ahead to fight for the justice and equality for all migrants' workers.'

Hong Kong Coalition of Indonesian Migrant Workers Organization (KOTKIHO) and the Indonesian Migrants Workers Union (IMWU). IMWU and KOTKIHO are member of Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA), member of Coalition for Migrants Rights (CMR), and also member of the Asian Domestic Workers Alliance (ADWA).

Association of Indonesian Migrant Workers in Hong Kong (ATKI-HK), member of Asian Migrants Co-ordinating Body (AMCB) in Hong Kong (alliance of migrants organizations from Indonesia, Filipina, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Thailand), the United Indonesians Against Overcharging (PILAR - alliance of 22 organizations of Indonesian migrants in HK), Indonesian Migrants Muslim Alliance (GAMMI - alliance of 14 Indonesian organizations) and Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women (GAATW).



*'The fact that we are able to mobilize thousands of Indonesian migrants to protest this campaign is a victory already and to show how empowered they are.'*



**TIWA –Taiwan International Workers’ Association**– aims to promote cooperation between migrant and local workers, to improve the working conditions and social environment for migrant workers in Taiwan, and to increase workers’ rights and benefits.

TIWA runs the House Of Migrants Empowerment-H.O.M.E. and cooperate with TIMWA-Taiwan Indonesian Migrant Workers’ Association and KaSaPi-Kapulungan ng Samahang Pilipino.

On their web information about the National Migrants Rally 2007 ‘I WANT MY DAY OFF!’

Have produced a **film** about migrant domestic/care workers in hospitals, hired by the relatives, taking care of very old people in the Taipai Jen Ai Hospital ‘**Hospital Wing 8 East**’.

[www.tiwa.org.tw](http://www.tiwa.org.tw)



## **China: Growing unmet demand for household services**

The massive growth of the Chinese economy under neo-liberalism is not good news for all of this country’s huge population, particularly the women. Vast numbers are unemployed, especially women laid off from former State-owned enterprises and those in the rural areas. The Chinese Government sees expanding household services as a key area to solve this problem.

Meanwhile, there is huge demand for such services in the rapidly-growing urban areas. The intensity of work for those in employment is increasing, taking time away from that needed to run one’s own household. Official figures indicate there are some 7 million people engaged in domestic services in the country’s 32 mega-cities and 43 major cities.

Yet household work is still seen as ‘disgraceful’ and ‘face-losing’, a job only taken by poorly-educated rural migrants and non-locals. Wages are low compared to the cost of living, and working hours are very long and without a fixed schedule. Having one’s own social life is very difficult. So there is a big shortage of women willing to do this work. Figures for the demand for these workers range from 14 to 22 million.

Shanghai is the only city in China providing social insurance for domestic workers in the city (both local and migrant), though it is a voluntary scheme into which employers contribute. The key problem is that labour law in China continues to exclude domestic workers from its protection.

Legal experts and labour/women’s groups are calling for legislation on the household sector to be on the agendas of the 2007 National People’s Congress and the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference session. The Beijing Cultural Development Centre for Rural Women has drafted proposed regulations for the household service sector in Beijing. However, there is also disagreement among organisations about what kind of legislation should be promoted.

Edited extracts from: ‘**Domestic Work and Rights in China**’

By May Wong ‘Asia Labor Update’, No.59, April-June 2006, Asia Monitor Resource Centre, Hong Kong  
[www.amrc.org.hk](http://www.amrc.org.hk) search on ‘domestic work’



## New initiatives in Beijing

**The Beijing Migrant Women Workers' Club** is one of the activities of the Beijing Cultural Development Centre for Rural Women, an NGO aimed at promoting rural women's development. The Club, established in 1996, provides a cultural meeting place for migrant rural women who have come to find work in Beijing. It is run by the migrant women themselves, and their activities include literacy classes, encouragement for rural women to engage in politics, and suicide prevention training.

In 2003, concerned at the lack of access for domestic workers to medical or social insurance, the Club began organising activities to improve their legal situation, as well as their access to vocational training. They have drafted a set of regulations to protect domestic workers which they are trying to get taken up by the Beijing authorities. In 2004, they tried to set up a domestic workers' union but faced great difficulties. Trade unions in the country are 'top-down' hierarchies and, with domestic workers having the lowest social status of all, it was questioned why domestic workers would want or need a union. It is also against the law in China for an NGO to help found a union; it is up to employers to help workers do this, which the Women's Club believes is a conflict of interest. There is, however, a domestic workers' union in the city of Xian. It is affiliated to the All China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) as all such organisations have to be.

[www.nongjianv.org/web/english/aboutus/club.html](http://www.nongjianv.org/web/english/aboutus/club.html)



**The ILO office in Jakarta** has produced several useful publications on domestic workers' rights in Asia, and Indonesia in particular, in English and Bahasa Indonesia, including:

**'Domestic Workers in Southeast Asia - A Decent Work Priority'**

**'Overview of Key Issues Related to Domestic Workers in Southeast Asia'**

**'The Regulation of Domestic Workers in Indonesia: Current laws, international standards and best practice'** ILO, Jakarta, June 2006

See the full list at: [www.ilo.org/public/english/region/asro/jakarta/publ/domesticworkers.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/asro/jakarta/publ/domesticworkers.htm)

**'Help Wanted: Abuses against female domestic workers in Indonesia and Malaysia'**

Human Rights Watch: [www.hrw.org/reports/2004/indonesia0704/](http://www.hrw.org/reports/2004/indonesia0704/)

**Maid to Order – Ending Abuses Against Migrant Domestic Workers in Singapore**

Human Rights Watch: [www.hrw.org/reports/2005/singapore1205/](http://www.hrw.org/reports/2005/singapore1205/)

**Always on Call – Abuse and Exploitation of Child Domestic Workers in Indonesia**

Human Rights Watch: [www.hrw.org/reports/2005/indonesia0605/](http://www.hrw.org/reports/2005/indonesia0605/)

**'Indonesia, Malaysia: Overhaul Labor Agreement on Domestic Workers:**

**Proposed Malaysian migrants bill would violate basic freedoms'**

Human Rights Watch: [www.hrw.org/english/docs/2007/02/20/indone15370.htm](http://www.hrw.org/english/docs/2007/02/20/indone15370.htm)

**'Costly Dream'**

An interactive photo essay on Indonesian migrant domestic workers, particularly in Singapore.

With spoken commentary in English.

[inmotion.magnumphotos.com/essays/costlydream.aspx](http://inmotion.magnumphotos.com/essays/costlydream.aspx)

**'Indonesia: Exploitation and Abuse: The plight of women domestic workers'**

Amnesty International, February 2007

English: [web.amnesty.org/library/index/engasa210012007](http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engasa210012007)



## **Indonesia: 'We are now being taken seriously'**

The **'Tunas Mulia' Domestic Workers' Union** was founded in 2003 in the city of Yogyakarta in Central Java, Indonesia. Originally meeting as a study group in mosques, the domestic workers felt the need to become a union so as to take up the issues of their rights as workers. The union has been running very imaginative campaigns, targeting employers to sign work contracts, successfully convincing the Local Government to recognise them, and getting the National Government to start work on a new Bill for legal and social protection of domestic/household workers.

Those helping the union have included the **Tjoet Njak Dien Women's Forum** (Rumpun Tjoet Njak Dien, named after a famous Acehnese woman who fought against colonialism) and the **National Network for Domestic Workers Advocacy** (Jaringan Nasional Advokasi Pekerja Rumah Tangga) which is a network of 26 member organisations around the country. **Susi Apriyanti** from Tunas Mulia explained the work of their union. Sadly, Susi died in a motor accident in August 2007.

*'Our union has about 300 members at present. The national government does not recognise us officially as a union; technically it cannot, because domestic work is not recognised as "work". However, we have made progress with several Ministries, and even more so at regional and local level, and we are now being taken seriously.'*

*At the provincial level in Yogyakarta, we persuaded the Provincial Governor to issue a decree in 2003 which requires the municipalities and the four regencies in the province to issue regulations on domestic workers. We are expecting these to be passed in 2007.*

*Meanwhile, we have also managed to introduce work contracts between individual employers and workers, to be signed by both. We target employers through, for example, publicity in women's magazines. We also campaign through drama and our newsletter. We explain how contracts benefit both the worker and employer in a win:win situation. We find that many employers do not want to look like abusers. We appeal to their sense of humanity.*

*We also have a school giving skills training to domestic workers. The Ministry of Education was impressed by our curriculum and provides some funds. The training is so far limited to skills and it would be good to expand it to training in how to deal with bad situations, including those experienced by migrant domestic workers working abroad. We think that there should be training for employers too.*

*Employers can come to our school to find the worker they need. In return, they must follow a binding agreement on working terms and conditions. In households where there is an employment contract, the union checks every three months that it is being implemented. Either the union visits the individual households to check, or the workers come to the union. We also distribute a questionnaire to our members every three months, to get updated information on their working conditions. The worker can join in our monthly meetings, where they can express their problems if they want to. We also reach out through drama and radio programmes.*

*Tunas Mulia members are very active, organising their own meetings and activities without "knowledgeable staff" to help. In the Yogyakarta area they have set up 8-9 "Operatas" or village groups, to get domestic workers together and to liaise with local leaders, to get support and understanding.*

*We have been working like this since 2003 and it seems to be going well. The members feel secure, and the local government even took our contracts as a model. Even on a national level, we have made progress through our lobbying with the Ministries of Labour, Welfare, and Education. There is greater recognition now for how many people are involved in this industry and that they should have some protection. To get this far we have had to campaign non-stop.'*

**more information: [serikatprt@yahoo.com](mailto:serikatprt@yahoo.com) (secretariat of the organisation)**



## Organising In The Informal Economy: Resource Books For Organisers

text in Draft for Review – September, 2007

This series of organiser resource books on Organising in the Informal Economy forms part of the programme of the International Coordinating Committee on Organising in the Informal Economy (ICC). It is a response to requests from unions and worker organisations for practical ideas on how to go about organising in the informal economy.

- 1 Recruiting Informal Workers Into Democratic Worker Organisations
- 2 Building And Maintaining A Democratic Organisation Of Informal Workers
- 3 Handling The Day-To-Day Problems Of Informal Workers
- 4 The Practice Of Collective Negotiation For Informal Workers
- 5 Handling Disputes Between Informal Workers And Those In Power
- 6 Collective Action For Informal Workers

Written by Chris Bonner (WIEGO), with the assistance of Pat Horn (StreetNet International), Crystal Dicks (IFWEA). [www.streetnet.org.za](http://www.streetnet.org.za)  
Available also in Spanish and French via: [stnet@iafrica.com](mailto:stnet@iafrica.com)



## India: Domestic Workers' Movements

The **National Domestic Workers Movement** in India, based in Mumbai, brings together organisations in 23 states of India. It is part of the Catholic Church of India and works for and with domestic workers and children in domestic work. **Anjali Shukla**, Project Coordinator for the NDWM, gives an overview of the situation in India and the work of the NDWM:

*'Up to now, domestic workers are not recognised as workers under Indian labour legislation, and therefore have no rights or benefits. In 1995 and again in 1999 a Bill was tabled but was then set aside and not passed.*

*In just two out of 28 Indian states, there are provisions for a minimum wage, a weekly day off, or overtime pay for these workers. Just three states have approached us and other domestic workers' organisations to set up social insurance schemes.*

*There have been some encouraging developments recently, however. After a lot of lobbying, domestic work has been included in the schedule to a new Bill to regulate the 'unorganised sectors'; this is still awaiting approval. Also child domestic labour has been declared 'hazardous' and is now banned throughout India.*

*We see our movement not as a trade union but as a mediator between employers and workers. We introduce people looking for jobs to private households in need of workers. The workers pay a fee and get our support, which includes some minimum working conditions.'*

See also: [www.ndwm.org](http://www.ndwm.org)

To download: 'DOMESTIC WORKERS' LINK' Quarterly Newsletter NDWM

More: [www.deshkalindia.com/unorganised-labour.htm#working](http://www.deshkalindia.com/unorganised-labour.htm#working)

**Geeta Menon** of the **Karnataka Domestic Workers' Union** and **Stree Jagruthi Samithi, India**, adds:

*'There is no central approach to domestic workers in India. Each state does the minimum that it can. In Karnataka and Kerala, for example, there are minimum wage notifications but the levels are too low for an adequate or 'living' wage. We have done research and made representations in Karnataka, which is our state, criticising their methods of calculation and proposing a better and fairer wage system.*

*But when we go to the Labour Commissioner, their appetite to do anything is low. This is 'not a sector to be looked at', they say, throwing up their hands. 'Enforcement is impossible as there are no inspectors'. Our reply is 'Why can't we help be that inspectorate? We could use the unemployed youth, for example'. We are trying to build databases of employers and employees so that we can help enforce whatever regulations exist.*

*In our union, we felt that, unless domestic workers are given a legal identity as workers, their work and relentless toil will go unrecognised. Society must go beyond the gendered notion of housework, lift this work from patriarchal definitions, and look at its economic value, changing the attitude of looking at these women as servants or slaves, and start perceiving them as workers.*

*The organising of domestic workers starts with their own understanding, moving away from the notion of individual workplaces to that of collective strength. This is a continuous process of education, meetings, dialogue and confrontation, done by the union collective, using the media and other communication methods. So they become members, recognise the value of their work, and negotiate with government for recognition and regularisation. We have also been using the strategy of placement of workers so that there is space for drawing up formal agreements between employer and employee and there is responsibility on both sides. Another aspect is to assess the possibility of educating the employers.*

*Of late, we are working with the idea of including domestic workers in the Labour Welfare Board, as well as the Minimum Wage Advisory Board, so to suggest changes in the wage structure.'*



See also '**Minimum Wages: A boon for the domestic workers in Karnataka**'

Labour File, 2 June 2005 [www.labourfile.org/newsMore.aspx?Nid=23](http://www.labourfile.org/newsMore.aspx?Nid=23)

**Domestic Workers and Demand for Living Wages** [www.thesouthasian.org/archives/2006/domestic\\_workers\\_and\\_demand\\_fo.html](http://www.thesouthasian.org/archives/2006/domestic_workers_and_demand_fo.html) (plus click on paper on living wages)

**Employed by All Recognised by None -The Status of Domestic Workers in India**  
<http://uin.org.uk/content/view/270/66/>



## **North-East India: 'It was an eye-opener'**

To **Sister Teresa Joseph**, a nun with the Catholic Church, domestic workers remain the least protected and most exploited workforce in India. Sister Teresa is a Regional Coordinator of the **North Eastern Regional Domestic Workers' Movement (NERDWM)** in India.

Her involvement with domestic workers' support came about through her activities with Childline, a 24-hour emergency helpline for children in distress in her region. The region is prone to a lot of ethnic violence and movement of people for their own safety. It is also increasingly the target of traffickers, who are luring young people, especially girls, to work as prostitutes and domestic workers in urban areas and even further away.

*'Childline was an eye-opener for me', says Sister Teresa. 'The physical, sexual, emotional and verbal abuses meted out on young domestic workers inspired me to launch a separate wing for them. So the Domestic Workers' Association (DWA) was launched in Shillong in June 2003, and then we joined with other congregations in our region under the NERDWM.*

*We organise a lot of activities aimed at giving visibility to the children in domestic work. We also provide sponsorship so they can go to school, and 45 children benefited from this in 2005-2006.*

*From our concern for the children, we have broadened out also to adult domestic workers. NERDWM's activities centre around awareness-building and information sessions aimed at empowering domestic workers to act for themselves. We register domestic workers so as to help protect and prove their identity; help them obtain BPL (Below Poverty Line) and ID cards, which are particularly important for migrants between the states of India. There is a crisis intervention system, legal aid and medical assistance, adult literacy training (180 women in 2005-2006) and skills training. NERDWM also tries to find better employment opportunities for individuals. There are also cultural celebrations for the different ethnic groups in the region.*

*As well as recognition of domestic workers as "workers", it is our vision to see all domestic workers treated with respect and recognition for their contribution to the economy.'*

### **A further interview with Anjali Shukla and Teresa Joseph**

by **Sam Grumiau** for the ITUC, in English, French and Spanish,  
can be found at: [www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article987](http://www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article987)



### **SEWA - Self-Employed Women's Association**

SEWA is a MEMBER BASED organisation of poor working women, having membership of almost 700 thousand members across seven states in India. It is now a national trade union in India.

It is an organisation of poor, self-employed women workers. SEWA also organises domestic workers. SEWA will be actively involved in building the convention on domestic work, using its experiences on building the ILO convention on homework.

[www.sewa.org](http://www.sewa.org)





**'To Make the Invisibles, Visible'** A booklet on the activities of the North Eastern Regional Domestic Workers' Movement (NERDWM), based in Shillong, India, from its foundation in 2003 to 2006.

**'Invisible Hands'** A film produced by NERDWM and the Meghalay Domestic Workers' Movement, in collaboration with splitENDS, a group of young filmmakers, Shillong, India, 2005 (34 minutes).

Contact: teresamsmh@yahoo.com

The film shows some young workers talking about how they took up domestic/household work when a lack of money forced them to stop school. It is a story of long working days, little rest and low pay. One girl migrated from her village, so as to help her family. The middle (wo)men said they would arrange work in Dehli, but then cheated everybody. Her wages were not sent back to the parents. Her situation was very bad, but she could not return home. The parents were told that she did not want to. So the family sold their property to start searching for her, and it took them a long time to find her. The result was that her brothers also had to leave school. The domestic/household workers in Shillong formed a group to support each other, and rescue others, particularly young girls. They are very aware of the need to organise themselves.



## Africa

### South Africa: 'Why is domestic work always last on the agenda?'

**Hester Stephens** has been a domestic worker in South Africa since she was 15 years old. She is also President of her union, the **South African Domestic Services and Allied Workers' Union (SADSAWU)**. SADSAWU was formed in 2000 and is part of the COSATU union federation. It has up to 30,000 members on the books, of whom 25,000 are paying members and 5,000 are active.

*'Before SADSAWU we had SADWU, the South African Domestic Workers' Union. SADWU was one of the first unions in COSATU when it was founded in 1985. But domestic workers only earn starvation wages and it was difficult to finance SADWU; so it was disbanded in 1997-98. It was the saddest time in my life; I wondered what would happen to the workers. COSATU wanted to find us a home in another union but failed; it was frustrating how little support we got, even from other women workers.'*

*So I started organising again; I got a phone and I used my own room, even though it annoyed my employer to have other workers visiting the house. Then five of us got an office in Community House in Salt River (Cape Town); the caretaker gave us some chairs, and the South African Communist Party gave us a desk. A couple from Canada gave us 700 rands which we used to pay the rent. Then COSATU gave us an office and equipment. We re-launched in Durban in 2000, with 25,000 members.'*

In South Africa, we do have laws governing the employment of domestic workers. This was achieved after the first democratic elections in 1994, recognising the part that domestic workers played in getting the country to democracy. The Labour Relations Act was extended to include us, giving us some protections against unfair dismissals, for example. There is also a minimum wage through the Wages Act of 2000. We are unhappy with the low levels set, though; it makes it very hard to pay for your children's school fees, transport or clothes; it also means the banks won't give you a loan if you need one.

Then in 2003, domestic workers became entitled to join the Unemployment Insurance Fund ; you have to be registered by your employer, and then both employer and worker pay contributions. About 600,000 domestic workers are now contributing to the Fund, but many others have not yet registered.

No matter how good the laws, if they are not implemented you are in the hands of the bosses. So there is still work we must do for the one million domestic workers in my country. The revised Workmen's Compensation Act, due to be passed in April 2007, still needs to include domestic workers. Plus we are going to launch a campaign to get the government more involved in regulating the employment agencies.

Domestic workers are also tired of waiting for houses. We don't qualify for government subsidies to buy a house because you have to earn at least 3000 rands a month and we usually get below 1000 rands. But we do have 1000 workers in a savings scheme, and in 2007 we will meet with the Minister for Housing.



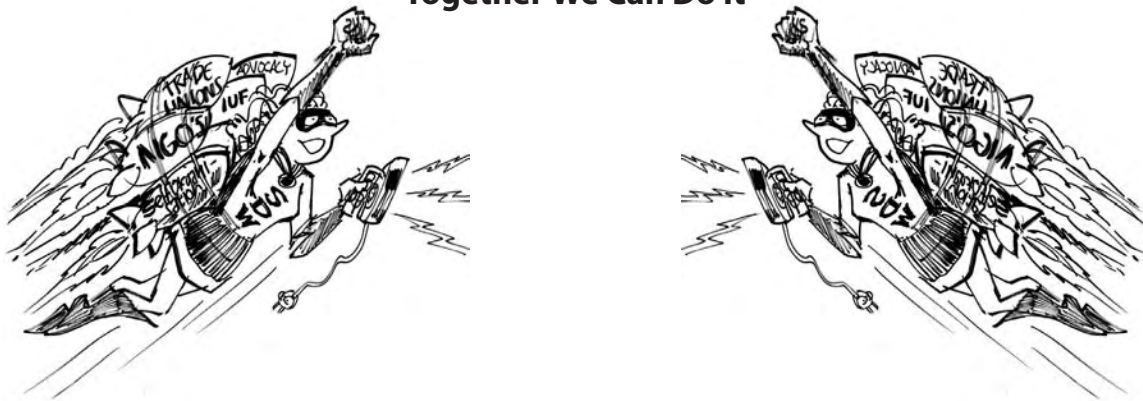


Many domestic workers who become HIV-positive are being dismissed and end up on the street. So we work in clinics to try to educate workers; we produced a booklet and a video for those who can't read or write. Meanwhile we are investigating the possibility of a loyalty card at supermarkets and chemists, and a funeral policy; many workers die in the backyard and their employers don't want to pay for their funeral.

It has been announced that the Old Mutual insurance company and the trade unions are going to establish a joint investment scheme for workers. We say that domestic workers must be included. We are part of the new democracy of South Africa. We were part of the liberation movement and we must be part of the discussions for the future. We ask the unions, "Why is domestic work always last on the agenda?" We don't want our children to live as we did.

We still need to educate the young workers how to speak up for themselves, to go to meetings and training, to grow as women. We can help them learn how to speak to their employers, to say "Mrs. D", let me make us a cup of tea and we can sit down to discuss some issues' or to put a note on the fridge to tell her it is time for a wage rise. If it wasn't for their domestic worker they wouldn't be where they are today, running their factory or their business. I speak so much because my heart is full of them oppressing us. But I feel proud as long as I earn my money in an honest and decent way.'

**'Together We Can Do It'**



**'Women won't be free until domestic workers are free'**

A further interview of Hester Stephens  
 By Sam Grumiau for the ITUC (in English, Spanish and French)  
 can be found at: [www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article1483&lang=en](http://www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article1483&lang=en)



**'Labour Pains for the Nation'**

SADSAWU members who were part of the old South African Domestic Workers Union (SADWU), some already active during the Apartheid era, have written up their life stories, with help from the Human Rights Commission in Cape Town.

via Myrtle Witbooi, General Secretary SADSAWU: [myrtle.cosatu@webmail.co.za](mailto:myrtle.cosatu@webmail.co.za)

**'Migration and Domestic Work in South Africa: Worlds of work, health and mobility in**

**Johannesburg'** Southern African Migration Project (SAMP), 2005

[www.queensu.ca/samp/sampresources/samppublications/policyseries/Acrobat40.pdf](http://www.queensu.ca/samp/sampresources/samppublications/policyseries/Acrobat40.pdf)



## **Namibia: 'No-one wanted us except the farmworkers'**

Apart from the difficulties of reaching out to workers isolated in individual households, it is very hard to provide services for domestic workers when they can afford such low union dues. In 2003, the **Namibia Domestic and Allied Workers' Union (NDAWU)** had to cease operations because of low finances. **Alfred Angula**, NDAWU's General Secretary, says that only the farmworkers understood and now the two unions are merging:

*'We have similar history to South Africa but in Namibia the laws still do not apply to domestic workers. There is an idea that "You are a servant of the master and you do not deserve protection." Or employers say, "You are a family member; I am looking after you. No, you don't need education." Domestic workers say, "We have seen little of the fruits of independence.'*

*Prior to national liberation, unions for domestic workers were not allowed. Only after independence from South Africa in 1990 could we set up the Namibia Domestic and Allied Workers' Union (NDAWU), at that time with 4,500 members.*

*But even after independence it has proven difficult to get laws for domestic workers. The legislators themselves employ these workers; they look after their own interests and delay improving the laws or getting them implemented. It is also very difficult to get access to an individual in someone else's home. So we reach out to them in other places such as salons and kindergartens.*

*However, their low wages mean they can make only small financial contributions to build the union. We collect membership fees of one per cent of their monthly wage, which often amounts to only N\$3, equivalent to US\$0.50. In 2003, due to lack of funds, the NDAWU had to cease operations.*

*We raised these problems in the national federation, asking if another union would take domestic workers under its umbrella. No-one wanted us except the farmworkers, who said they understood. So both domestic workers and farmworkers are now under the same administration, of which I am the General Secretary, and the formal merger of the two unions is due at the next Congress.*

*It is our dream to have the work valued. Domestic workers are doing the work that others cannot or will not do, but it is not respected. To me, it is not a question of where you come from –whether you are a migrant or whatever– it is about the contribution of each individual. Globalisation is not only about the movement of goods; today there is a huge movement of people; it is a question of how we value people. We need a strong political will to change the minds of politicians.'*



## Middle East

### Hard reality – hardly any support

The oil-producing states of the Middle East have a long tradition of bringing in domestic workers from other countries. Now that they have become super-rich through booming oil prices, this labour market has seen a massive growth. Today the numbers of women migrating from poor communities in Asia and Africa to work as domestic workers in the Middle East are truly staggering, literally millions.

Despite the value they bring to their host societies, these women workers are isolated and highly vulnerable. The comparative lack of democratic ‘civil society’ organisation in the region means there are virtually no trade unions or labour support NGOs to help provide an organising infrastructure for these workers. The only support comes from a few philanthropic individuals and groups, including some mosques that have, for example, refuges for workers fleeing abuse.

One evening of the conference, participants watched a film about Sri Lankan women working in households in the Lebanon, and heard from several academic and ILO researchers about their findings in the region.

### ‘Servants of Globalisation’ in the Gulf States

Some estimate that migrant domestic workers in Gulf States now add up to 2.5-3.5 million individuals, or some 10 per cent of the entire population, according to **Rima Sabban of the Arab Women Academic Network**, based in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). However, many migrant domestic workers have become undocumented, making accurate statistics impossible. These ‘servants of globalisation’, as Rima calls them, come from poor communities in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam and Ethiopia, amongst others. Rima provides an overview of the situation in the region:

*‘These are very traditional tribal and male-dominated societies that were colonialised and then experienced a sudden boom in revenues from oil. Along with the huge economic growth came social changes in the family. Nuclear families are replacing extended families, meaning that wives – who still have many children and labour-intensive households – call less on family members for support and more on hired domestic/household workers from other countries. Meanwhile, other aspects of power relationships within the family have not changed. When you bring dependent, vulnerable workers into this situation, there are bound to be problems.’*

*Working conditions for domestic workers are largely the same throughout the six States of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC): Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. They are denied status of ‘workers’ under labour laws. Instead, they tend to enter through the “servants” system, officially under two-year contracts. This system allows them no days off; most daily working hours are from 6.30 am to 10.30 pm*

with 1-2 hours break; they remain under the sponsorship of their 'kafil' (boss) who retains their passport; and they are responsible for their own ticket home if they abscond.

A new contract is being introduced in 2007, but it only applies to workers coming from the Philippines and Indonesia.

Across the region, more and more expatriate professional workers are also employing migrant domestic workers. In response, the UAE has introduced an annual payment of US\$1300 from each expatriate who employs a domestic worker. However, this has served to encourage a hidden economy of domestic workers coming in under sponsorship by an UAE national and then absconding to work for better pay from an expatriate.

There is also a serious problem of women arriving as domestic workers, or believing that this is what they have been recruited for, and then finding themselves working as prostitutes. Among those they service are the large numbers of men migrants who have entered the Gulf States to work on the construction sites and who live in labour camps. We know this through the stories of women who have run away; however, there has been little research done as yet.

There is within the culture of Islam a notion of treating servants well, and there are many cases of this



happening. However, young Arab women are becoming more assertive, and this has an impact on how they treat their domestic workers.

*There is a lot of emotion in the way that the matter is discussed in the region. On the one hand, domestic workers are often blamed for crimes rather than seen as victims; or they are alleged to mistreat children, etc. On the other hand, employers are accused of not being able to care for their own children and relying too much on domestic workers. The media produce sensational reports of abuse, trafficking, absconding, and deception. However, rarely do they include the voice of domestic workers themselves; there is a general policy of silencing them by denying them the right to organise or gather in public.*

*There has been little development of civil society in the region. Women's organisations tend to be headed by royal or other high status women, and as yet are not addressing migrant women's rights; the only exception is Bahrain.*

*Until recently, the only Gulf States with human rights activists have been Bahrain and Kuwait. However, international pressure has led the General Secretary of the Gulf Cooperation Council to announce that from 2006 each Gulf state will issue an annual human rights report, with contributions from NGOs. Considering that 5-10 per cent of domestic workers in these countries complain of serious verbal or physical abuse, it is to be hoped that they will have a presence in these reports.*

*There are also a few concerned journalists, and some philanthropic organisations, with whom we work. Plus some religious leaders (ulamas) are building alliances in Indonesia to generate solidarity, although it is not clear whether this will lead to effective solutions for such large-scale problems.'*



#### **'As If I Am Not Human' Abuses against Asian Domestic Workers in Saudi Arabia**

With key recommendations to the government of Saudi Arabia and key recommendations to the governments of migrants' countries of origin (including Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Philippines, and Nepal) Report July 2008 (also in French, Spanish, Arabic and 5 other languages).

<http://hrw.org/reports/2008/saudi Arabia0708/>

#### **Exported and Exposed – Abuses against Sri Lankan Domestic Workers in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait Lebanon, and the United Arab Emirates**

Report November 2007 (Also in Sinhala, Tamil and Arabic)

[www.hrw.org/english/docs/2007/11/13/slanka17328.htm](http://www.hrw.org/english/docs/2007/11/13/slanka17328.htm)

Spanish: [www.hrw.org/spanish/docs/2007/11/13/slanka17346.htm](http://www.hrw.org/spanish/docs/2007/11/13/slanka17346.htm)



*'In the Middle East, there are several thousand migrant domestic workers imprisoned, 800 of whom are women and 50 children. Two women, one in Saudi Arabia and one in Kuwait, are on death row, convicted of killing their employers. Extreme abuse by employers is rife.*

*So we and the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) have been running a postcard campaign "End the Violence Now!" specifically against violence against migrant women in Saudi Arabia. People are encouraged to sign the postcards and send them to their country's ambassador in SA. We are also setting up a centre in the country, hoping for funding from the European Union and United Nations Development Programme.'*

**Connie Bragas-Regalado, Migrante International** (more on page 95)





### **‘Gender and Migration in Arab States: the case of domestic workers’**

Edited by Simel Esim and Monica Smith

ILO, Regional Office for Arab States, June 2004, in English and Arabic

English: [www.ilo.org/dyn/gender/docs/RES/477/F2008148367/Gender%20-%20Migration%20in%20Arab%20States%20PDF%20File%20Revis.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/gender/docs/RES/477/F2008148367/Gender%20-%20Migration%20in%20Arab%20States%20PDF%20File%20Revis.pdf)

Arabic: [www.ilo.org/dyn/gender/docs/RES/477/F2008148367/Gender%20-%20Migration%20in%20Arab%20States%20PDF%20File%20Fil.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/gender/docs/RES/477/F2008148367/Gender%20-%20Migration%20in%20Arab%20States%20PDF%20File%20Fil.pdf)

Arabic: [www.ilo.org/dyn/gender/docs/RES/477/F2008148367/Gender%20-%20Migration%20in%20Arab%20States%20PDF%20File%20Fil.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/gender/docs/RES/477/F2008148367/Gender%20-%20Migration%20in%20Arab%20States%20PDF%20File%20Fil.pdf)

### **‘Workshop on Awareness Raising on Women Domestic Migrant Workers in Lebanon’**

By Simel Esim

ILO, Regional Office for Arab States, Beirut, 28-30 November 2005

English: [www.ilo.org/dyn/gender/docs/RES/451/F799002463/Workshop%20Report%20on%20Women%20Domestic%20Migrant%20Workers.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/gender/docs/RES/451/F799002463/Workshop%20Report%20on%20Women%20Domestic%20Migrant%20Workers.pdf)

[www.ilo.org/dyn/gender/docs/RES/451/F1302386141/Lebanon%20Workshop%20Report%20Arabic.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/gender/docs/RES/451/F1302386141/Lebanon%20Workshop%20Report%20Arabic.pdf)  
(in Arabic).

### **‘Migrant Women in the United Arab Emirates: The case of female domestic workers’**

By Rima Sabban

ILO, January 2003

[www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/gems/download/swmuae.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/gems/download/swmuae.pdf)

### **‘Migrant Women Domestic Workers in Lebanon’**

Dr. Ray Jureidini, ILO Regional Office for Arab States, 2001

[www.ilo.org/public/english/region/arpro/beirut/infoservices/report/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/arpro/beirut/infoservices/report/index.htm)

### **‘Trafficking in Women, Forced Labour and Domestic Work in the context of the Middle East and Gulf region’**

Anti-Slavery International, working paper, 2006

[www.antislavery.org/homepage/resources/PDF/traffic%20women%20forced%20labour%20domestic%202006.pdf](http://www.antislavery.org/homepage/resources/PDF/traffic%20women%20forced%20labour%20domestic%202006.pdf)

### **‘Bad Dreams – Exploitation and Abuse of Migrant Workers in Saudi Arabia’**

Human Rights Watch, July 2004 (also in Arabic)

[www.hrw.org/mideast/saudi/labor/](http://www.hrw.org/mideast/saudi/labor/)

### **‘Migrant Women Domestic Workers in Bahrain’**

Dr. Sabika al-Najjar, ILO Regional Office for Arab States, 2001

[www.ilo.org/public/english/region/arpro/beirut/infoservices/report/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/arpro/beirut/infoservices/report/index.htm)

### **Bahrain Centre for Human Rights**

Includes information on the Migrant Workers’ Protection Society (MWPS) in the country.

[www.bahrainrights.org/migrantworkers](http://www.bahrainrights.org/migrantworkers)

### **Domestic migrant workers from Indonesia – filmcip –**

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=S303FuPy1sU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S303FuPy1sU)



## Indonesian women in Saudi Arabia

Yuniyanti Chuzaifah is a Research Fellow at the **International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM)** at the **University of Leiden** in the **Netherlands**. The Institute currently has a research programme called 'Migrant Domestic Workers in the Middle East: Becoming Visible in the Public Sphere?' From Indonesia herself, Yuniyanti is investigating the situation of Indonesian women migrant domestic workers in Saudi Arabia.

*'According to Saudi Government figures, there are about 600,000 foreign domestic/household workers registered as working in the country. By contrast, media reports suggest there are as many as three million foreign women doing this work there, indicating a very high number of undocumented workers.'*

*It is thought that the majority are brought in under cover of the "haj" pilgrimage to the holy sites. The pilgrimage is not only an ideal for all Muslims; it also leads to higher status. So, many Indonesian women are highly motivated to do so. Labour agents use this as a cover to bring women into Saudi Arabia, who then become undocumented domestic workers. And if they run away from an abusive employer, they are vulnerable to becoming involved in the illegal sex trade.*

*There is very high demand for domestic workers in Saudi Arabia. As well as the high economic growth, there are cultural factors in the way that domestic labour is organised. It is a male-dominated society, where women are married very young, are expected to bear a child each year, and must organise all the domestic work.*

*For Indonesian domestic workers in Saudi Arabia, there can be dangerous misinterpretations of cultural differences. For example, Indonesian women are taught to smile as a way of showing humility. Yet this can be misinterpreted by women employers as trying to attract their husbands, with severe repercussions.*

*In Saudi Arabia, it is illegal to have sexual relations outside marriage. There is little punishment for the men, but foreign woman who get pregnant are often sent home before their pregnancy becomes revealed. However, in Indonesia there can be no birth certificate without a marriage certificate. **This means that any child born to unmarried Indonesian women migrant worker cannot be registered in his or her home country.** Meanwhile, any child born to an Indonesian woman in Saudi Arabia has no legal status there either.'*

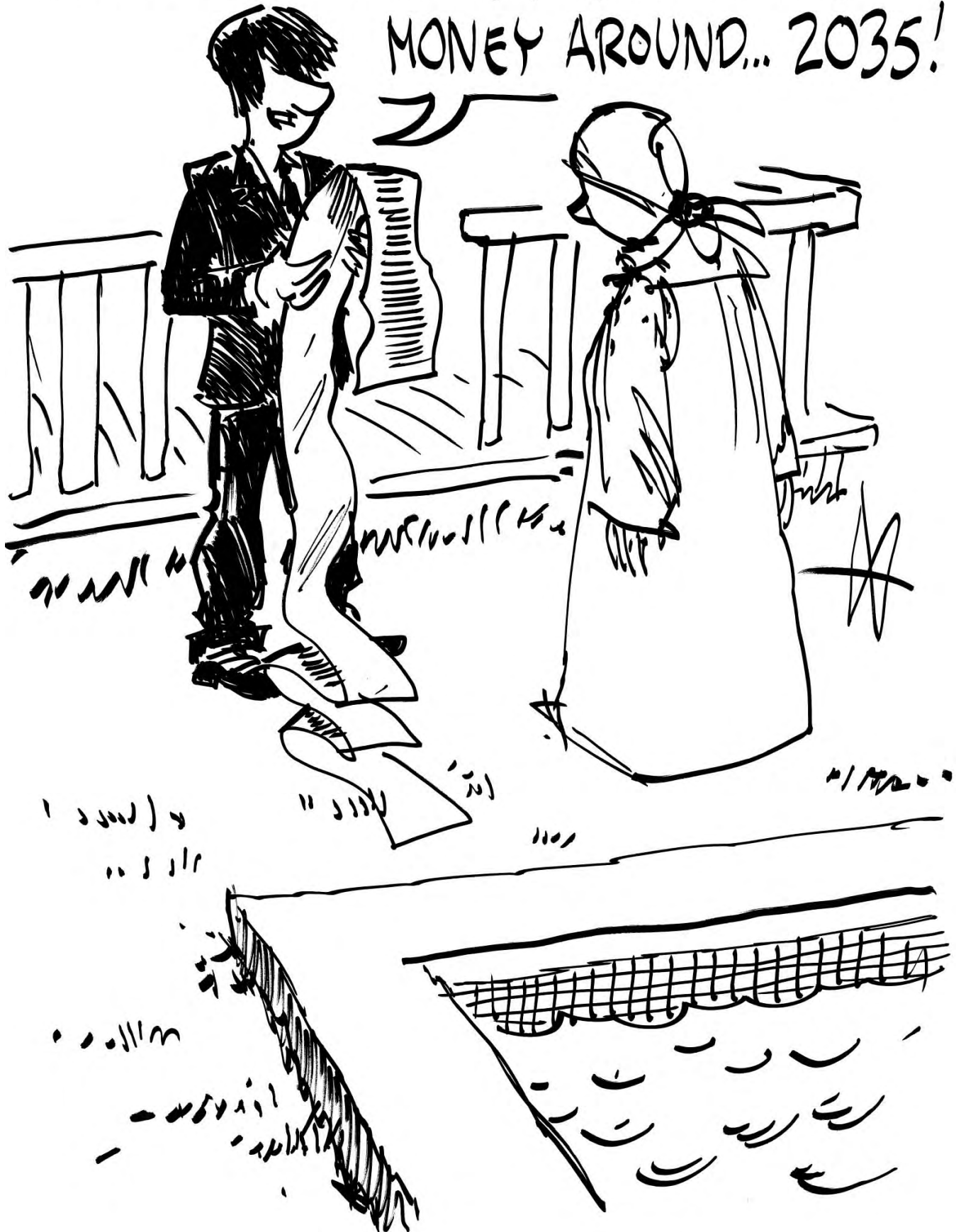
**Rima Sabban, Arab Women Academic Network**, added: *'The system for deportation of women migrant workers from Saudi Arabia is relatively good. They get a ticket home, along with accommodation and food while waiting. Some mosques house domestic workers who have run away; and Islamic law is used to punish employers; for example, there are cases of huge fines or imprisonment for rape, etc. Saudi Arabia is conscious of its international image, and they are getting harder on bad employers.'*

*'In the Lebanon, research indicates that three-quarters of the violence comes from the women employers, shouting or locking their worker in. It seems that many domestic workers are dying by jumping over the balcony to escape. It is thought that many domestic workers were killed in the recent Israeli bombing of Beirut.'*

**Simel Esim, Regional Gender Advisor, ILO Regional Office for the Arab States** continues:

*'In the Lebanon, the ILO Office engaged the Government on the Private Employment Agencies Convention (No.181 1997) so as to better regulate the agencies that bring in domestic/household workers. At first they resisted, but we did training and opened their eyes. Even though they have not yet ratified this Convention, they have agreed to start monitoring.'*

WELCOME, ONCE YOU HAVE PAID ALL THE  
ITEMS ON THIS LIST, YOU CAN MAKE  
MONEY AROUND... 2035!







### Films ‘Maid in Lebanon I’ and ‘Maid in Lebanon II: Voices from Home’

These films portray the story of the thousands of Asian women who become domestic/household workers in the Lebanon. Some have their dreams fulfilled. For many others the experience is one of exploitation and even extreme violence from their employers. The second film poses questions and suggests answers in workers’ rights.

Production of ILO Regional Office for Arab States, by Carol Mansour 2005, 2008.

[www.ilo.org/global/About\\_the\\_ILO/Media\\_and\\_public\\_information/Feature\\_stories/lang--en/WCMS\\_069056/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/About_the_ILO/Media_and_public_information/Feature_stories/lang--en/WCMS_069056/index.htm)

#### Watch these films:

**Maid in Lebanon I** – [www.youtube.com/watch?v=3rY91LCyY4s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3rY91LCyY4s)

**Maid in Lebanon II: Voices from Home** – [www.youtube.com/watch?v=94rO242G6dY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=94rO242G6dY)



### Putting ‘decent work’ at the centre of migration policies

18 December 2007 – International Migrants Day : New report + New video

[www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article1686](http://www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article1686)

New 20-page report on the violations of migrant workers’ rights in the Middle East region, with interviews and articles focusing on Jordan, where the textile union is providing practical help to Asian migrants. document: [www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/V\\_S\\_Jordanie\\_EN.pdf](http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/V_S_Jordanie_EN.pdf)  
film: [www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article1687&lang=en](http://www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article1687&lang=en)

*‘The unions have been putting pressure on the governments of the departure and host countries to integrate this rights-based approach to migrant workers at national level, in both bilateral and regional agreements, and to harmonise their work at international level. The international trade union movement has been pointing to the existing ILO and UN legal instruments whilst calling for a new Convention specifically aimed at protecting domestic workers. This particularly vulnerable group includes many migrant workers throughout the world, who are too frequently exploited.’*



## Yemen: Little public discussion

Yemen is the poorest country on the Arabian peninsular. Yet here too there are a lot of migrant domestic workers. According to **Marina de Regt**, an anthropologist at the **University of Amsterdam** specialising in gender, labour and development, the demand is linked to the oil boom of the 1970s. At that time, many Yemenis migrated to other Arab countries and became richer, forming a new urbanised middle-class. Today, having a domestic worker is a status symbol, even for Yemeni families who cannot easily afford one.

Marina has been doing academic research on migrant domestic workers in Yemen since 2003, largely in the cities of Sana’a and Hodeidah. She has also been in Ethiopia and Indonesia which, along with Somalia, are the main countries sending domestic workers to the Yemen.

*‘Alongside the development of an urbanised middle class, there has been a breakdown of the extended family in Yemen. This has generated a greater demand for domestic workers. However, it is still a small percentage of Yemeni families who have a domestic worker, unlike in the other Arab countries.*

*It is quite hard to do research on the situation of domestic workers in Yemen. Many employers do not see the relevance and do not want to be interviewed. Domestic workers themselves are sceptical that research can help them. They face all the usual problems associated with migrant domestic labour; many arrive on “tourist” visas, and so are not properly documented for the work they are doing and are highly vulnerable to abuse.*

*In any case, as in many other countries, domestic workers do not fall under Yemeni labour law. There is little official recognition of their work or awareness of their situation, for example in the Ministry of Labour. There is virtually no public awareness-raising, nor discussion in the media.*

*A lot of development aid is going into Yemen, but it has no relation to the presence or problems of the international migrant domestic workers. This is so even though many of the women are Somali refugees fleeing war in their own land. Foreign embassies in Yemen tend not to want to help, for fear of upsetting their relationships with the host country. Only the Indonesian Embassy has a refuge for its nationals fleeing abuse.*

*We have established a support group of just ten people who are interested in this issue. They meet monthly but all are volunteers, and do not have professional skills or experience. It is still a small project, dependent on project funding. We are looking at the possibilities of opening a centre for women and to engage in more work at a policy level.'*

Marina de Regt is planning to make a short documentary film in 2007 about Ethiopian women working as domestic workers in Yemen, many of whom are supplied through agencies.



**Film: 'Young and Invisible: African Domestic Workers in Yemen'**

Produced December 2007, by Arda Nederveen from 'Visuele Producties'.

Information via: [marina.deregt@gmail.nl](mailto:marina.deregt@gmail.nl) and [ardanederveen@chello.nl](mailto:ardanederveen@chello.nl)

**'Mapping Study on Women Domestic Workers in Yemen'**

By Marina de Regt, ILO, April 2006

[www2.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/2006/106B09\\_159\\_engl.pdf](http://www2.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/2006/106B09_159_engl.pdf)

**'Ethiopian women increasingly trafficked to Yemen'**

Marina de Regt

'Forced Migration Review', Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford, Issue 25, May 2006

[www.fmreview.org/FMRpdfs/FMR25/FMR2521.pdf](http://www.fmreview.org/FMRpdfs/FMR25/FMR2521.pdf)



**Council of Europe:**

**Domestic slavery, Doc. 9136, 25 June 2001**

[assembly.coe.int/Documents/WorkingDocs/doco1/EDOC9136.htm](http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/WorkingDocs/doco1/EDOC9136.htm)

**Resolution 1509 (2006) Human rights of irregular migrants**

[assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/tao6/ERES1509.htm](http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/tao6/ERES1509.htm)

**Recommendation 1755 (2006) Human rights of irregular migrants**

[assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/tao6/EREC1755.htm](http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/tao6/EREC1755.htm)





## Europe

### Europe: Still in the shadows

This international conference followed a previous one in Brussels on 14-15 April 2005 on trade union responses to domestic work in Europe, co-organised by the European Trades Union Confederation (ETUC), IRENE and PICUM. The aims of that conference were to increase awareness among European trade unions of the needs of millions of relatively invisible household workers across the continent.

Europe is experiencing a growth in household services as more women enter into the labour market and people live longer. Next to national (migrant) workers, there are increasing numbers of women migrating into European countries to do this work, many of whom are undocumented and vulnerable despite the service they render.

Over two days in April 2005, about a hundred representatives of unions, domestic/household workers' organisations, migrant workers' support groups and labour support NGOs exchanged information and ideas about how better to protect the millions of household/domestic workers of Europe. **Kirsten Møller**, International Advisor to 3F – Fagligt Fælles Forbunds (United Federation of Danish Workers) gives a report from the European conference:

*'We found that the situation in European countries varies a great deal, and there are very different strategies in response. But of course there are also similarities. This is invisible work and it is not the usual group of workers that unions deal with. Yet we cannot accept that millions of workers in our societies are exploited – that they have no, or very unclear, rights. We need to provide household services in a much more sustainable way for all. Many politicians in Europe recognise the need for this, but sadly this is all too often limited to a discussion among women in the Women's Committees of organisations such as trade unions or the European Parliament.'*

**Better household services are a precondition for the European Union policy of bringing at least 60 per cent of all women into the labour market by 2010** – as more women go out to work, more families need help with the care of children and the elderly, etc. Better provision of household services is also a way of helping to cope with unemployment, especially among the unskilled, the young and the migrant workers.

However, at the conference it became clear that government policies and the role of the social partners (business and labour) are very different from country to country. Systems of care provision involving the public and private sectors vary a lot; so do taxation/fiscal policies relating to household services; and family policies affecting women's access to the labour market. Politicians take different paths, leading to very different welfare societies, where unions have different roles.

In Nordic (Scandinavian) countries, the caring of the sick, the children and the elderly is done largely through the public sector and most of the workers are organised in trade unions, benefiting from collective bargaining

agreements. Cleaning is primarily done by the private sector, sometimes by formal and sometimes by informal arrangements; it is here that there is an unknown number of unprotected migrant workers.

In France and Spain, by contrast, the household services sector is largely regulated by law rather than by collective bargaining, but the laws and policies vary widely. In the UK, as in the Netherlands, meanwhile, privatisation means that many care services are now contracted out by the state to private agencies to supply the workers that go into people's homes; this has undermined union negotiated terms and conditions, and implementation of the legal provisions that exist.

We looked at who the employers are with whom unions can negotiate. With the thousands of private individuals, it is very difficult, but it is certainly possible with private agencies as well as the state. We also recognised that diplomats and politicians are especially heavy users of household workers – directly benefiting from this labour. So are many international trade unionists; **trade unions could do much more to raise awareness among their own members about proper terms and conditions for those they employ in their homes.**

Without doubt, domestic/household and home service work is – with the increasing need and wealth in Europe – a growing labour market, and the workers in it should become part of the mainstream of union work. The trade unions have responded to the EU Green Paper on Economic Migration, pointing out the lack of gender awareness in it. Now there is a Green Paper on Labour Law on its way, and we need to make sure the challenges of 'a-typical' work such as household work are included.

**We need to restart the debate on domestic work in the European Parliament as well as in the ILO – whether there should be a new Convention or better implementation of elements in existing Conventions.**

We need to be much more pro-active and professional on the future of social services in our countries. Many governments want to keep household services as a "private" matter while at the same time wanting women to take up more jobs in the formal labour market. We would all be better off if the provision of household services, the caring of the elderly, the sick and children, was defined as a collective responsibility and recognised as a profession. Then we could offer proper and regulated jobs for the many unemployed migrant women and men in Europe. The conference in 2005 highlighted some innovative methods such as voucher schemes, homeservice schemes, or reduced taxation for those who employ household workers on regular basis in their own homes.

Work permit systems to manage the flow of migrant workers vary a lot between countries – affecting how many become "undocumented". In most countries, domestic/household work is not officially recognised as part of the labour market; therefore no data are kept on it and any demand for it is not officially recognised. So it is not included the work permit system. The numbers of undocumented migrant domestic/household workers in Europe can only be estimated but, from the work done by unions in Great Britain, Belgium, Italy, France and Spain, we are talking about millions of workers.

Trade unions in Europe can also do much more to develop new ways of working with migrant workers' organisations. We heard from a number about what they already do but all can do more, starting from making room space and facilities available for meetings, to better access to information and training. Some unions are providing union cards, which has been shown to be a very valuable form of identity especially for undocumented workers, though it can raise difficult legal questions. Other unions build close cooperation with migrant workers' organisations and offer training and other activities to empower migrant workers though a better knowledge of their rights.'

Detailed case studies on organising domestic workers in European countries can be found in:  
**'Out of the Shadows: Organising and protecting domestic workers in Europe: the role of trade unions'**  
Report of a conference organised by the European Trades Union Confederation (ETUC), IRENE and PICUM, Brussels, 14-15 April 2005 (English: [www.etuc.org/a/2809](http://www.etuc.org/a/2809), French: [www.etuc.org/a/2810](http://www.etuc.org/a/2810))

## The right to say 'Yes' all the time

The European conference 'Out of the Shadows' heard from 'Raquel', a trained accountant from the Philippines who is now a domestic worker in Belgium. There she has joined her mother, who has been an undocumented worker in Belgium for fifteen years, supporting her children at home, especially their education.

Raquel's mother had made a list of her rights:

- Right to say 'yes' all the time
- Right to be cheerful always
- Right to be dismissed at any time

Her 'no rights' list is longer:

- No right to get sick
- No right to be without money
- No right to be without work
- No right to have papers
- No right to question the employer
- No right to be sad or have a long face
- No right to be tired.



The full story in 'Out of the Shadows' report page 32-33  
For more on migrant workers in Europe, see pages 93-100.

## Netherlands: 'Domestic Work: Decent Work?'

The CNV National Federation of Christian Trade Unions in the Netherlands has recently developed a new programme for the protection of domestic/household workers. **Lieke Ruijschoot**, from the CNV's International Department, explains what their activities entail:

*It is unclear how many domestic workers there are in the Netherlands, but according to a 2003 survey there are 1.2 million households making use of domestic services. A substantial part of these services, mainly those for elderly people, is carried out within the subsidised care system. This is formal work where the employees are employed by care institutions, are registered, pay taxes, take part in a social security system, and have access to collective bargaining.*

*However, most domestic work in the Netherlands takes place informally. You can imagine how it goes: someone looking for or offering domestic services simply puts up a note in the local supermarket, and the employer and worker just find each other. Or else family members or neighbours are employed by verbal agreement; there is no institution as employer, no taxes, no social security. For these people, the advantages of the formal economy do not apply. Moreover, a growing number are (undocumented) migrants, who are especially vulnerable.*



*Domestic workers in the Netherlands technically can have the status of a regular worker if they work for more than two days per week for the same employer. And, even when the work is informally arranged, they have certain minimal rights: to earn a minimum wage, to receive paid leave for holidays, sickness, when pregnant and in emergencies, to have occupational health and safety, to receive a contract in writing on request, and to receive one month's notice before termination of the work. Domestic work is, however, explicitly excluded from the Unemployment Act.*

*Workers could in theory claim all these rights through their employment contract. However, informal workers hardly ever have a written contract. Also there is a profound lack of information on these rights for employees and also, importantly, for employers. Third, temporary workers, which domestic workers often are, have fewer rights than those with a long-term contract. Fourth, undocumented migrant domestic workers have special difficulties in claiming their rights; formal work is not even an option for them. And lastly, informal workers are difficult for trade unions to represent and fight for under the Dutch system because certain formal structures, like a representative institution for the employers, do not exist.*

*In 2006 the CNV decided that domestic workers, as a vulnerable group of employees, deserve more attention from trade unions, despite the difficulties. The CNV international department, CNV Internationaal, is launching a campaign in 2007, and a report on domestic workers and their labour problems worldwide and in the Netherlands has been produced. This has led to various activities and plans, both nationally and internationally.*

*First of all, the union concerned with workers in the cleaning industry, the CNV Bedrijvenbond, has announced that it is open to independent domestic workers. They are still discussing the practical details: what the union can offer them, how much the membership fee will be, how to handle the administration of undocumented workers and, last but not least, how to reach these workers. One proposal is to appeal to current union members as employers of domestic workers.*

*Secondly, the CNV policy department has been lobbying against a new regulation that allows domestic workers to work for three days a week for the same employer without social protection.*

*Third, we are launching a campaign in 2007 to create awareness about the rights of domestic workers (world-wide and especially in Sri Lanka), most probably targeting possible employers and young working women. We have also sent all our partners around the world information on our findings, encouraging them to start new projects protecting domestic workers in their countries with our support.*

*Also we are looking into the possibilities of lobbying the Dutch Government to ratify the ILO and UN Conventions on the rights of migrant workers. We are unsure why this has not yet been done and we feel that to do so would convey a good message at home and abroad.'*



[www.cnvinternationaal.nl/ons-werk/schoon-werk-campagne](http://www.cnvinternationaal.nl/ons-werk/schoon-werk-campagne) and [www.schoonwerk.nl](http://www.schoonwerk.nl)  
(in Dutch only)

**'Domestic Work: Decent Work? Protecting the Labour Rights of Domestic Workers'**

CNV, Netherlands, 2006 – In Dutch: [www.jouwvakbond.nl/foto/domesticwork.pdf](http://www.jouwvakbond.nl/foto/domesticwork.pdf)

English, Spanish, French write to: [internationaal@cnv.nl](mailto:internationaal@cnv.nl)





### Netherlands: Results of a survey

In September 2005, the FNV trade union federation of the Netherlands published the results of a survey on domestic/household work in the country. The data come from responses by 76 employers and 163 domestic workers, and the information from the two groups largely corresponds.

On average, a domestic/household worker in the Netherlands works 11.5 hours a week for 2.3 employers. The average hourly payment is € 8.90, which is about equivalent to the legal minimum wage. However, actual earnings vary from well below the minimum wage to € 15.– an hour.

48% of employers said they are well informed about the regulations. One in four gives a Christmas bonus, but only one in five pays their domestic worker during holidays and even fewer offer sick pay.

Domestic workers should pay income tax, and 60% say that they do report their income to the tax authorities. However, most employers do not believe this. 66% of employers and 61% of domestic workers think it alright if income for domestic/household work is not reported to the tax system.

Half of employers in the survey think that domestic workers should be treated equally to any other worker. The other half thinks that, if there is equal treatment, domestic work would become too expensive. However, the vast majority (86%) of employers agrees with the proposition, 'If I could deduct from my taxes the costs of personal household services, then I would pay more per hour so that domestic workers would have the same rights and duties as any other employee'.



### 'Domestic Slavery' versus 'Workers Rights': Political mobilizations of migrant domestic workers in the European Union

Helen Schwenken, Centre for Comparative Immigration Studies (CCIS), University of California, 2005  
[www.ccis-ucsd.org/publications/wrkg116.pdf](http://www.ccis-ucsd.org/publications/wrkg116.pdf)

### 'Devil is in the Detail: Some Lessons to be drawn from the UK Government's recent regularisation of migrant domestic workers'

Dr. Bridget Anderson, Department of Sociology, University of Warwick, UK, (no date)  
[www.picum.org/DOCUMENTATION/Regularisation/REGULARISATION%20OF%20MIGRANT%20DOMESTIC%20WORKERS.pdf](http://www.picum.org/DOCUMENTATION/Regularisation/REGULARISATION%20OF%20MIGRANT%20DOMESTIC%20WORKERS.pdf)

### Information for domestic workers working for diplomats

Berlin: [www.ban-ying.de/pageeng/start.htm](http://www.ban-ying.de/pageeng/start.htm) under publications

### Campaign King Baudouin Foundation on 'International household workers in Belgium'

[www.kbs-frb.be/otheractivity.aspx?id=193924&LangType=2060](http://www.kbs-frb.be/otheractivity.aspx?id=193924&LangType=2060) (In French and Dutch)

With 2 publications in English and Spanish

### Working as a homehelp at the private residence of a diplomat

[www.kbs-frb.be/publication.aspx?id=178252&LangType=1033](http://www.kbs-frb.be/publication.aspx?id=178252&LangType=1033)

### Working as a homehelp for a family in Belgium

<http://www.kbs-frb.be/publication.aspx?id=178254&LangType=1033>







**Film** (in German) **Haushalthilfe – arbeiten in fremden alltag** – (domestic help – working in an alien everyday life) showing 7 domestic workers, some migrant workers, looking at their labour and living conditions [www.haus-halt-hilfe.de/trailer.php](http://www.haus-halt-hilfe.de/trailer.php)

**Film** (in Dutch and English) **The houses of Hristina** is a documentary about a Bulgarian woman who works as a cleaner in Amsterdam. To deal with her invisible life, she starts photographing the houses she cleans. In this film documentary director Suzanne Raes portrays one of the many often undocumented and anonymous people we allow into the most intimate places of our lives. Who are those people cleaning or painting our houses, caring for our children? Do we really want to know? The houses of Hristina is a production of IDTV Docs and the Humanist Broadcasting Foundation. Info: [www.art2stay.nl/documentaire](http://www.art2stay.nl/documentaire) You can see the film at: [player.omroep.nl/?afID=6353954](http://player.omroep.nl/?afID=6353954)



### **Basque Country (Spain): ‘Sweep in your own interests’**

The **Asociación Trabajadoras Hogar** (Household Workers’ Association) of the Basque country in Spain was formed in 1986, the year after a ‘Royal Decree’ governing domestic/household workers’ working terms and conditions was announced.

The 1985 Decree provides discriminatory protection for domestic/household workers. The standards it contains are lower than for other workers. For example, it allows employers of household workers to avoid the maximum working hours that apply to other workers. Minimum wage levels are lower, and the maximum level of compulsory deductions for accommodation and food allowed are far higher, 45% as compared with 30%. There is a special social security regime applying to domestic/household workers – sick leave is paid only after 29 days; there is no access to unemployment benefit, and inferior pension rights. Nor is there any recognition of workplace accidents. Oral employment contracts are permitted, and labour inspectors have no rights to inspect private households.

One of the roles of the Association has been to lobby for change in the laws (see below). Meanwhile, on the ground, the Association provides free legal assistance plus advice to domestic/household workers on labour rights and social security. Its website contains information on the legal situation and court verdicts which have been positive for domestic workers. There is a model employment contract, and information on salary levels, indicating what a domestic/household worker should expect to earn.

[www.ath-ele.com](http://www.ath-ele.com)



**‘Barre a Tu Favor: Guía de Derechos de las Trabajadoras de Hogar’**  
(‘Sweep in Your Own Interests: Guide to the rights of household workers’)  
Asociación Trabajadoras Hogar, Asamblea de Mujeres de Bizkaia-BEA, Spain  
In Basque and Spanish. [ath-ele@hotmail.com](mailto:ath-ele@hotmail.com)

**‘Domestic Work Examined’ A survey of domestic/household work in Spain**  
European Industrial Relations Observatory, May 2002, in English  
[www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2002/05/feature/es0205206f.htm](http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2002/05/feature/es0205206f.htm)  
Text in spanish: download [ESO205206FES.DOC](#)





## New Social Security Rights in Spain

In May 2007, the Spanish Minister for Social Security announced a change in the laws. Now an estimated half of the domestic/household workers working in Spain –those working to help care for dependents– will be included in the general social security scheme rather than the discriminatory provisions of the 1985 Royal Decree.

In Spanish: [www.economista.es/empresas-finanzas/noticias/221746/08/07/Ley-Dependencia-haramitad-trabajadores-Regimen-Hogar-pasen-al-General.htm](http://www.economista.es/empresas-finanzas/noticias/221746/08/07/Ley-Dependencia-haramitad-trabajadores-Regimen-Hogar-pasen-al-General.htm)



## North America

### New York, USA: 'We have a dream'

**Domestic Workers' United** was founded in 2000 in New York, USA, by a partnership of various domestic workers' organisations and the Women Workers' Project of the CAAAV Organizing Asian Communities in the city. **Erline Brown** has been a DWU member since its founding, and is in both its Steering Committee and Organizing Team which develops the membership base. Erline was originally from Barbados, and then lived in the UK before moving to New York. Here she describes DWU organising efforts in the city:

*I was very excited when I first heard about the DWU. As a domestic worker since ever I could remember, I have always seen people who are abused; if they don't get paid, this is abuse; a friend who protected her employer's child from falling down stairs got injured but was dismissed – and that employer worked as a doctor! More abuse. So when I heard about the DWU, I had to get involved.*

*We do what we call "base-building". Whenever you see another domestic worker, you approach her. You recognise the look: haggard and tired. She may deny she is a domestic worker, because there is a big stigma attached to the job; there's no respect; "It is all she can do", people say.*

*Or they say, "It's such a bad job, why don't you leave it?" It sounds reasonable, but it is not the reality. Another friend was repeatedly raped by her employer; so why didn't she leave? Well, he had guns and he told her, "You say anything and I will shoot you and bury you in the garden." So she stayed; until eventually she came to us. We got her compensation, though it wasn't enough.*

*In New York, domestic workers are excluded from labour laws and protection. You take care of their loved ones and most valuable possessions but you are not worthy of respect. We are mainly women of colour, and there are many migrant women too, from countries like India and Tibet.*

We are campaigning for a New York State-wide Bill of Rights for domestic workers, to include a living wage, notice and severance pay, paid holidays and vacations, protection from discrimination and unjust firing, and healthcare. We want domestic workers recognized as employees, and protected from trafficking. So we went to the New York State legislature at Albany but **they told us to form a union. We had to tell them about the laws they wrote – about how, legally, they excluded us from the right to organise!**

Diplomats employ domestic workers but have diplomatic immunity from prosecution. So we have been protesting outside embassies and flooding their fax machines. We don't mind making a nuisance of ourselves. In a case involving a high-ranking Argentinean lawyer who demanded extraordinary hours to care for his twins, we made his life hell.

The DataCenter, based in Oakland, California, has also been helping us with research and analysis to back up our organizing and campaigns. Their survey involved 547 workers, and they did interviews with employers. The results have been published in our new booklet "**Home is Where the Work Is**". We are also working on a new video "**Work and Respect**", as a tool for community education.

Once a year we run a 4-week Nanny's Course that gives skills training in infant/child care, with a certificate to present at job interviews, as well as workshops in organising skills and basic rights. Plus we have leadership and organising training programmes to develop more worker-leaders.'

**'We have a dream that one day all work will be valued equally.'**

[www.domesticworkersunited.org](http://www.domesticworkersunited.org)



#### **'Home is Where the Work Is: Inside New York's Domestic Work Industry'**

*'New York City is a leading force in the global economy, but it couldn't be without the 200,000 domestic workers who sustain the city's families and homes.'*

**Report:** Domestic Workers United and DataCenter, New York, July 2006

[www.domesticworkersunited.org/homeiswheretheworkis.pdf](http://www.domesticworkersunited.org/homeiswheretheworkis.pdf)

Ai-Jen Poo, an organizer with Domestic Workers United, estimates that there are 200,000 domestic workers in New York City, and about 600,000 in the greater metropolitan area. Despite the popular image, white nannies are in the minority, she says. Most nannies come from countries in Asia, Latin America and the English-speaking Caribbean, some illegally, though it is hard to get an exact figure.

#### **'Work and Respect' – film excerpt**

4-minute excerpt of a film made by Domestic Workers United and Third World Newsreel can be found at: [www.domesticworkersunited.org/media.php?show=18](http://www.domesticworkersunited.org/media.php?show=18)

#### **NY Domestic Workers Bill of Rights**

In 2003, DWU members celebrated a victory in City Council with the passage of city legislation protecting the rights and dignity of domestic workers placed by employment agencies, and a resolution calling on all domestic employers to follow the guidelines in DWU's standard contract. Soon after, members of DWU held a convention to discuss the establishment of fair labor standards for domestic workers in NY. The convention resulted in the drafting of NY State legislation, The Domestic Workers Bill of Rights.

**DWU Organizing Packet** (also in Spanish)

[www.domesticworkersunited.org/campaigns.php?lang=en](http://www.domesticworkersunited.org/campaigns.php?lang=en)

**Domestic Workers United** is one of the organisations in a National Domestic Workers Alliance, an initiative taken in July 2007. From 5-8 of June 2008, this new national alliance of domestic workers organizations will hold the first-ever National Domestic Workers Congress to support the New York State Domestic Workers Bill of Rights and to build a national movement of domestic workers.

[www.domesticworkersunited.org/shownews/14](http://www.domesticworkersunited.org/shownews/14)

[www.mujiresunidas.net/english/newsevents.html](http://www.mujiresunidas.net/english/newsevents.html)

**Maid in America** – film and background information

[www.pbs.org/independentlens/maidinamerica/film.html](http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/maidinamerica/film.html)

Trailer of film 'Las Nannies' [www.pbs.org/americanfamily/realidades.html#](http://www.pbs.org/americanfamily/realidades.html#)

**Hidden in the home: Abuse of Domestic Workers with Special Visas in the United States**

Human Rights Watch: [www.hrw.org/reports/2001/usadom/](http://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/usadom/)



**Behind Closed Doors**, a report analysing the household work industry in California.

**Research Finds Household Workers Earn Poverty Wages, Lack Access to Basic Health Care**

Household workers work in private homes performing in-home child, patient, and elder care, housework, and cooking. The release of **Behind Closed Doors**, a report analysing the household work industry in California, shows workers are primarily female immigrants. While supporting their employers' homes and families, findings show household workers work in substandard and often exploitative conditions, earn poverty wages too low to support their own families, and lack access to basic health care. A participatory research project conducted by members of **Mujeres Unidas y Activas** and **Day Labor Program Women's Collective of La Raza Centro Legal** and the **DataCenter**.

[www.datacenter.org/reports/behindcloseddoors.pdf](http://www.datacenter.org/reports/behindcloseddoors.pdf)

[www.mujiresunidas.net/english/videomua.html](http://www.mujiresunidas.net/english/videomua.html)



## Canada: 'Getting the word out'

**Ann Chambers** arrived in Canada twenty years ago as a migrant from Scotland, to work as a nanny. Today her union, the **British Columbia Government and Service Employees' Union (BCGSEU)**, has an outreach programme for migrant workers in healthcare, in collaboration with the **Public Services International (PSI)**, the Global Union Federation for workers in the public sector. Ann explains how privatisation of public care services has led to the increasing employment of migrant workers under worse working conditions:

*'In British Columbia, Canada, the provincial government has been privatising the public sector healthcare services, and through this gaining from cheap labour. Employers have been laying off workers and then contracting out to companies who bring in overseas workers at well below our negotiated rates. Many come from the Philippines, Hong Kong and China to work as nannies and in healthcare.'*

*The migrant workers come in through a federal government programme which gives them two-year visas and after this they can apply for "landed status" and permanent residence. But, even so, they are not recognised and respected for the contribution they make. They work in lower paid jobs than they were trained for in their home countries, and they are not allowed to receive training in Canada to boost their chances of promotion. This is despite the fact that we have a shortage of nurses and doctors! So we are fighting the government to let them work and receive training.'*

*We are getting the word out to migrant workers through a small leaflet which looks like a passport – it is called "A Passport to Worker and Union Rights in Canada". We want them to know that the law in Canada gives them the right to join a union, without interference from their employer, and that employers are required under law to negotiate with the unions.'*

*Yes, there will be some opposition to organising domestic/household workers, but it is up to us to convince the sceptics. We need to go back to our leaders and get them to put in on the agenda, to bring pressure on the ILO, to move and not just sit and wait. We need to educate our members about the realities, by telling them about the personal stories such as those I will take back from this conference.'*

[www.bcfed.com](http://www.bcfed.com)



### 'Borderless'

A documentary film about undocumented workers in Canada including Angela, a second-generation Caribbean domestic worker. Comes with a study guide.

Directed by Min Sook Lee, Kairos, Canada, 2006, 25 minutes

[www.kairoscanada.org/e/media/press/maBorderlesso60502.asp](http://www.kairoscanada.org/e/media/press/maBorderlesso60502.asp)





## Global Unions

### ITUC: 'Women's committees are good allies'

The **International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)** (formed as a result of a merger between the ICFTU and WCL in November 2006) is a confederation of national federations from 155 countries and territories. It works closely also with the eleven sector-based Global Union Federations (GUFs). **Kamalam is Equality Director of the ITUC.** Here, she gives an overview of the situation at global level regarding domestic/household workers:

*'The ILO Conventions should apply to all workers but many national governments have not ratified them. And, if many formal workers do not benefit from them, we know how much worse it is for domestic/household workers.'*

*Paramount is the right to freedom of association agreed by the International Labour Organisation (Conventions Nos. 87 and 98). All workers have this right. But many are excluded in reality, especially domestic/household workers. Even if not yet organised, domestic workers have the right to be represented, and it is a responsibility of the trade unions to ensure that labour legislation in their country includes domestic/household workers, including migrant ones. Then the unions should make it their work to ensure the legislation is implemented.*

*When it comes to the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (adopted in 1998) –which covers freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining; the elimination of forced and compulsory labour; the abolition of child labour; and the elimination of discrimination in the workplace– countries have to report every two years on their implementation. Unions are consulted on this, and so this is an ILO mechanism that can be used.*

*It is true this is a gender issue. Many trade unions which are male-led prefer to focus on industrial workforces. It is our own struggle to look at work in a different way, and to win union leaders over to understanding issues from a gender perspective. It has been a long discussion, for example, to persuade many that the "informal" part of the economy is not a "sector" but integrated into the "formal" economy; it is just production and services done in a different sphere. We still have much to do on our part but unions are moving, as indeed are "informal economy" organisations.*

*Where domestic workers are organised into trade unions or their own organisations, they benefit much more. We appreciate your difficulties at national level, but unions' Women's Committees are good allies. Many are happy to form alliances, to build a bridge rather than pursue old mutual hostilities which have existed between unions and NGOs. Women's Committees are probably key to taking domestic workers' issues up more strongly in the ILO.*

*For example, the ILO has a complaints mechanism, where trade unions participate. We can use this, but only if we get complaints. The ITUC has asked the Women's Committees of our affiliated unions for more complaints. Non-union organisations could be collaborating with these national-level Women's Committees to file such complaints about the treatment of domestic/household workers. The ILO has no enforcement mechanisms (except in extreme cases such as forced labour in Burma) but governments have been known to be embarrassed into change.*

*For workers, the most powerful body in the ILO is the Workers' Group in the Governing Body; the Workers' Group holds 14 seats, equal to the number for the Employers' Group (Governments have 28 seats). By the time you include the titular and substitute unions for those 14 seats, some 30 national union federations sit on the ILO Governing Body, where they are very influential. It is important to identify who they are and use this influence.*

*Another route is through the Global Union Federations (GUFs), such as the IUF and the PSI. Their affiliates are national unions with members in particular sectors. When domestic workers' associations and support NGOs build collaboration with unions, then they have a channel to the GUFs and can use this to influence them to make this a priority item.*

*As for the ITUC's current activities on domestic/household work, we are addressing it through the question of international migration, which is a key focus for the ITUC. In December 2006, we are holding a workshop on international migration, focusing on various sectors including domestic/household work.*

*As well as international migrants, there are huge numbers of internal migrants in such countries as China and India, to replace women who go into other employment. It is related to gender inequality in society, but it comes about through globalisation. Companies relocate and hire women workers; then other women workers have to do the work in their homes. The rise of household work relates to the demand for more women in the formal labour market and the long hours of work they have to do there.*

*In combating the worst forms of globalisation, alliances show the way forward. Meetings like this are important, where we can make friends. Working together, the possibilities are much better for getting domestic/household work recognised and the workers respected and protected. But we need your help, because the unions have many priorities.'*

**[www.ituc-csi.org](http://www.ituc-csi.org)**

**[www.global-unions.org](http://www.global-unions.org)**



### **Global trade union body calls for International Convention to protect Domestic Workers**

Brussels, 31 October 2007 (ITUC Online): The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) has asked trade unions world-wide to seek governmental support for an International treaty to protect domestic workers. The question of a possible International Standard for the tens of millions domestic workers in the world will be discussed next month at the Governing Body of the Tripartite International Labour Organization.

[www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article1544&lang=en](http://www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article1544&lang=en)



BEING MY WIFE NOW, YOU JUST  
HAVE THE SAME JOB WITHOUT A

SALARY!





## **IUF: Representing domestic/household workers**

**The International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF)** is the Global Union Federation for workers along the whole food chain, and that includes domestic/household workers. Its affiliated national unions come from 124 countries, representing some 10 million workers. The IUF collaborated with many organisations in achieving the ILO Home Work Convention in 1996 and at that time tried to get domestic workers included. Here the **IUF Equality Officer Barbro Budin** speaks of the pressure needed inside unions to get the issues more actively taken up.

*'We have passed a resolution in the IUF that domestic work should be given much more focus. However, we still lack resources for these activities and need to lobby for them within our organisation.*

*I believe that this is a gender issue. It is nearly always the Women's Committees in the unions who say that domestic workers should get more attention and have their status regulated. We do find a lack of interest from many male colleagues. In the 1990s, many men referred to homeworking as a "women's issue", as indeed they did with child labour. Some said that informal work "should not exist" and it would be a "waste of energy regulating it"; others seemed to think that informal work is somehow "disappearing". We have yet to convince many that domestic workers are "workers". Yet there are examples where activities to help organise domestic workers have actually strengthened unions, as in the case of CHODAWU in Tanzania, working with the ILO/IPEC programme. (See page 24).*

*It is an enormous task to monitor the implementation of ILO Conventions, but it can be done. We need ILO assistance to train more labour inspectors who know about the problems that domestic/household workers face; they could be roving health and safety inspectors who are trade unionists who have received appropriate training and have rights to inspect.*

*We –the ILO, unions, workers' groups and support NGOs– also need to collaborate together better. The IUF is already doing this, for example working with the Flora Tristan Centre in Peru to help organise undocumented women migrant rural workers. When it comes to organising, I see a lot of similarities between the agricultural and domestic sectors.*

*For example, the IUF has a Charter of Rights for Migrant Workers in Agriculture, and something like this could be useful for highlighting domestic/household workers' rights too. It includes their right to a job description, training (higher status leads to greater bargaining power for higher wages), freedom of association and collective bargaining (which are fundamental rights for all), maternity protection, healthy and safe working conditions, and freedom from child labour, physical harassment, violence, inhumane treatment or deportation.'*

**[www.iuf.org](http://www.iuf.org) and [www.iuf.org/women/](http://www.iuf.org/women/)**

The IUF Charter of Rights for Migrant Workers in Agriculture can be found at:

[www.iuf.org/cgi-bin/dbman/db.cgi?db=default&ww=1&uid=default&ID=927&view\\_records=1&en=1](http://www.iuf.org/cgi-bin/dbman/db.cgi?db=default&ww=1&uid=default&ID=927&view_records=1&en=1)

**Additional interview with Barbro Budin (IUF-Equality Officer)**

**New ILO Convention for domestic workers: 'an urgent need'**

By Natacha David – To be found at: [www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article1895](http://www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article1895)

**As a result of this conference, the IUF agreed to take responsibility for establishing an international project 'Respect and Rights for Domestic Workers!', to build an open network for all those interested in furthering the rights of domestic/household workers, and to work towards an ILO Convention for the rights of domestic/household workers. For this, additional funding would be sought. The issues then were raised at the International Labour Conference of the ILO in Geneva in June 2007.**



**'All For One = One For All:  
A Gender Equality Guide for trade unionists in the Agriculture, Food, Hotel and Catering  
Sectors'**

IUF, June 2007  
Via: [iuf@iuf.org](mailto:iuf@iuf.org)



**'Les Travailleurs Domestiques'**

A short film about domestic/household work around the world, including child labour. Includes an interview with Barbro Budin, Equality Officer of the IUF Global Union Federation explaining why an ILO Convention for domestic/household workers' rights is needed.

Dialogue in French. 6 minutes. (later also available in English)  
Made by ILO ACTRAV for the International Labour Conference, Geneva, 2007  
[www.pourlemploi.com/video/domestiques/./domestiques.html](http://www.pourlemploi.com/video/domestiques/./domestiques.html)



## **PSI: Representing public sector care workers**

The Public Services International (PSI) is the Global Union Federation for workers in the public sector, which includes all kinds of care services including those done in private homes. **Ann Chambers, an activist of the British Columbia Government and Service Employees' Union (BCGSEU)**, outlines PSI support for domestic/household workers involved in care work:

*'The focus of the PSI is on care workers employed in the public sector, i.e. in the formal economy. This includes care workers who go into private homes, to help look after the elderly, the sick, children, and so on.'*

*However, the PSI knows that in many countries privatisation is being accompanied by outsourcing to agencies to provide the care workers; and, with that, collective bargaining between unions and employers is becoming much more difficult and working terms and conditions are deteriorating; in some cases this is to such an extent that care workers are being pushed into the informal economy, for example when undocumented migrant workers are employed by agencies to provide care assistance in private homes.'*

To help healthcare workers make the right choice when faced with the decision of migrating for employment, the PSI has produced a 'Pre-Decision and Information Kit'. Produced with the help of organisations in 16 sending and receiving countries, it contains practical information on the cost of living, legal and employment rights, and union contacts in the main destination countries. It also provides general information on the issues on migration in the health sector and the role of public sector trade unions.

The kit is part of the PSI 'Migration and Women Health Workers Project'. This has been involving public sector trade unions in providing information and assistance to migrant healthcare workers. The aim is to protect the migrant workers' rights and make sure that they continue to be part of the trade union movement even as they migrate.

[www.world-psi.org/migration](http://www.world-psi.org/migration)



### **Migration and Women Health Workers: Pre-Decision and Information Kit'**

Public Services International, 2007

The kit contains brochures on basic questions and union contacts, posters, a postcard, and specific information relating to migration into the US, Canada, and Netherlands, and from the Philippines.

[www.world-psi.org/TemplateEn.cfm?Section=Women\\_Health\\_Workers&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=14494=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm](http://www.world-psi.org/TemplateEn.cfm?Section=Women_Health_Workers&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=14494=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm)

### **'Who Cares? Women Health Workers in the Global Labour Market'**

Public Services International, 2005

[www.world-psi.org/Content/ContentGroups/English7/Publications1/Who\\_Cares.pdf](http://www.world-psi.org/Content/ContentGroups/English7/Publications1/Who_Cares.pdf)

### **'Women and International Migrations in the Health Sector'**

Public Services International, June 2004

[www.world-psi.org/Content/ContentGroups/English7/Publications1/Women\\_and\\_International\\_Migration\\_in\\_the\\_Health\\_Sector.pdf](http://www.world-psi.org/Content/ContentGroups/English7/Publications1/Women_and_International_Migration_in_the_Health_Sector.pdf)



### **ILO Resources on Migrant Labour**

#### **ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration: non-binding principles and guidelines for a rights-based approach to labour migration**, adopted by the Tripartite Meeting of Expert on the ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration, Geneva, 31 October-2 November 2005

[www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/2006/106B09\\_105\\_engl.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/2006/106B09_105_engl.pdf)

#### **'Preventing Discrimination, Exploitation and Abuse of Women Migrant Workers'**

An Information Guide of 6 Booklets, ILO, 2003

Also: **'Series on Women and Migration'**: 10 Working papers covering United Arab Emirates, Sri Lanka, Italy, Japan, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Philippines, Costa Rica, Bolivia and Ethiopia

[www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/gems/advocacy/protect.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/gems/advocacy/protect.htm)

#### **'Handbook on Establishing Effective Labour Migration Policies in Countries of Origin and Destination'** (also in Russian and Arabic)

ILO/IOM/OSCE, 2006 [www.osce.org/item/19187.html](http://www.osce.org/item/19187.html)





## ILO: Proposals for a comprehensive agenda

Proposals for a comprehensive agenda – Decent Work for Domestic Workers!

Simel Esim is a gender specialist based in the Arab States Regional Office of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in Beirut, Lebanon, and she has been working on domestic/household workers' rights in the region. Here she gives an overview of domestic/household work in the context of the ILO's strategy to promote 'decent work' and gender equality, and in the fight against poverty and towards a globalisation that is fair.

*'Domestic/household work is approached from various directions by a number of ILO programmes: those on the informal economy, labour migration, child labour, forced labour, and the care economy. However, as yet there is no comprehensive framework in the ILO for this sector, unlike some others.'*

*'The definition of a domestic worker, which the ILO uses to this day, comes from 1951 –half a century ago– and perhaps needs reviewing; certainly some of its terminology seems outmoded in today's world.'*





## The ILO's legal definition of a domestic worker:

*'[a] wage-earner working in a [private] household, under whatever method and period of remuneration, who maybe employed by one or several employers who receive no pecuniary gain from this work.'*

A domestic worker (household helper or domestic aid) includes any person employed in or about a private residence either wholly or partly in any of the following capacities – cook, house servant, waiter, butler, nurse, baby sitter, personal servant, bar attendant, footman, chauffeur, groom, gardener, launderer or watch keeper.

### The status and conditions of employment of domestic workers

International Labour Organisation, Meeting of Experts, Geneva, 2-6 July 1951,  
Report, Document MDW/8, paragraph 3



Simel continues:

*'In 1965, the ILO did pass a Resolution on the Conditions of Employment of Domestic Workers. This urged members states to introduce 'protective measures' and training for domestic workers, wherever practicable, in accordance with international labour standards. A survey was done and further research towards an international instrument on domestic workers' employment was considered. However, there was never enough international support for a Convention to protect domestic workers' rights, and the resolution remained just that. As we know, few governments paid much attention.*

*Three decades passed, and then the ILO commissioned another report, 'Making Domestic Work Visible: the case for specific regulation' by Adelle Blackett (ILO, 1998). A few years later, this was followed by a larger research project, 'Domestic work, Conditions of Work and Employment: A legal perspective' by José Maria Ramirez-Machado ILO, 2003). However, despite the reports' recommendations, there is still no specific regulation – though there is, as mentioned above, work done through various wings of the ILO.*

*When considering whether to try to get a new Convention on the rights of domestic workers, it might be worthwhile looking at how the "Convention concerning home work: convention 177" (1996) was achieved. This is work that also takes place in the home, outside the formal labour market. Yet, in this case, the work is for the "outside" world, linked to formal production and trade. One is not battling that notion commonly held about domestic work – that it is "non-productive".'*

## 'DW for DW !'

### Decent Work for Domestic Workers!

*The trade unions have a special position in the ILO, being one of the three social partners, and so they will be key to any developments towards a new Convention. The ILO has held a number of regional workshops with trade unions about domestic work, in the Caribbean in 1997, in Asia in 1999, and in South America in 2005.*

*Of course there are already ILO Conventions which should directly apply to domestic/household workers, including:*

- *All the fundamental ILO Conventions in the ILO declaration on fundamental principles and rights at work (1998) apply to all workers*
- *ILO Conventions on migrant labour for the millions who are migrants*
- *ILO Conventions on gender equality for the majority of domestic/household workers who are women*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Conventions*
- *Maternity Protection Convention (No.183, 2000)*
- *Private Employment Agencies Convention (No.181, 1997) for those employed through agencies.*

*The ILO's Special Action Programme to Combat Forced Labour (SAP-FL) has the task of promoting the fundamental ILO Convention on the Abolition of Forced Labour (No.105, 1957) In recent years, it has held activities in West Africa, Brazil, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and the Russian Federation, China and Nepal.  
www.ilo.org/global/Themes/Forced\_Labour/lang--en/index.htm*

*In Asia, a two-year programme 'Mobilising Action for the Protection of Domestic Workers from Forced Labour and Trafficking' up to April 2006 specifically addressed domestic workers in Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia and Hong Kong. A briefing on this programme is at:  
www.ilo.org/dyn/declaris/DECLARATIONWEB.PROJECTDETAILS?var\_Language=EN&va\_ID=261*

*Then there is research being undertaken by the ILO in specific countries related to domestic/household work: Bahrain, Lebanon, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Ethiopia, and Costa Rica. Plus a cross-country analysis from a legal perspective was published in 2003. There are some very useful publications coming out of the ILO, particularly to help combat abuse of women migrant workers. (Use: <http://labordoc.ilo.org>)*

*So there are a lot of initiatives being taken in the ILO in terms of research, publications, training and consultation, rather than in developing a binding instrument such as a new Convention. And these initiatives are taken within one programme or another of the ILO, or as a collaboration between several programmes. Although there is not yet a comprehensive agenda on 'decent work for domestic workers', there are proposals circulating in the ILO to develop one. This would be supported by many ILO technical staff as it would enable us to do more research and develop more institutional capacity-building as well as policy advocacy and public awareness-raising.'*

**[www.ilo.org/public/english/region/arpro/beirut/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/arpro/beirut/index.htm)**

See also:

- **ILO-MIGRANT** [www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/migrant/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/migrant/index.htm)
- **ILO-IPEC programme on eliminating the worst forms of child labour**, including child domestic work. [www.ilo.org/ipecc/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/ipecc/lang--en/index.htm) .
- **All ILO Conventions**, their text and list of which countries have ratified them, can be found at the ILOLEX database: [www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/index.htm)



**'Domestic Work, Conditions of Work and Employment: A legal perspective'**

By Jose Maria Ramirez-Machado, ILO, Geneva, 2003

[www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/condtrav/publ/7cwe.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/condtrav/publ/7cwe.htm)

**'Making Domestic Work Visible: The case for specific regulation'**

by Adelle Blackett, ILO, Geneva, 1998

[www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/ifpdial/publ/infocus/domestic/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/ifpdial/publ/infocus/domestic/index.htm)



## Migrant domestic/household workers



### Serve a family for the family back home

As the conference participants showed, particularly those from Asia, the Middle East and Europe, the huge demand for domestic/household services pulls millions of women from poor communities to leave their own families and travel far in search of an income. The scale of this movement of women is probably unprecedented, and rising.

These women migrant workers are highly vulnerable. In some sending countries, there are official schemes managing the outflow but the protection they provide for individuals is inadequate. Meanwhile, in the receiving countries, immigration systems such as work permit schemes rarely cover these workers because domestic/household work is hardly ever included as 'work'. Then there are the private labour supply agencies which are often poorly regulated; sometimes the fees they charge the workers turn into a kind of debt bondage or slavery.

All this means that migrant women domestic/household workers are especially dependent on their employers, not just for an income but for their accommodation – and their permit to be in that country. If they face abuse, they must make a choice: put up with it or run away and become 'undocumented'.

However, migrant domestic/household workers and their allies are getting organised.



### Debt bondage, forced labour and domestic/household labour

Labour agents often charge workers an 'up-front' fee – to find a job placement, or for transport costs to the new workplace (which cross-border migrants often have to pay), or for accommodation, etc. Such fees can then act as a debt which ties the worker to the job or the agent; they become 'bonded'. They cannot leave until the debt is repaid. Sometimes they are threatened with violence against themselves or their family if the debt is not paid back. It is a modern form of slavery.

*'No one shall be held in slavery or servitude;  
slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.'*

*Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

*10 December 1948, Article 4*

Unhappily, many migrant domestic/household workers find themselves in this slave-like situation. The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) has a new Action Programme on Forced Labour  
See: [www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article1383&lang=en](http://www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article1383&lang=en)  
**See also:** [www.ilo.org/global/About\\_the\\_ILO/Media\\_and\\_public\\_information/Press\\_releases/lang--en/WCMS\\_075504/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/About_the_ILO/Media_and_public_information/Press_releases/lang--en/WCMS_075504/index.htm)  
For more resources on debt bondage, trafficking and forced labour, see Annex 2.



**‘Domestic Work is Work! Women’s Work is Work! : Building an Asian Migrant Domestic Workers’ Regional Alliance and Strategic Action Agenda’**

Asian Migrant Domestic Workers’ Assembly, June 2007  
[www.mfasia.org/mfaResources/ADWA%20Statement%20of%20Unity.pdf](http://www.mfasia.org/mfaResources/ADWA%20Statement%20of%20Unity.pdf)  
Assembly May 2008 statement:  
[www.mfasia.org/mfaStatements/2nd%20ADWA%20statement.pdf](http://www.mfasia.org/mfaStatements/2nd%20ADWA%20statement.pdf)

**Foreign Domestic Workers Campaign Toolkit** – Caram Asia 2002  
[www.caramasia.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=537&Itemid=343](http://www.caramasia.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=537&Itemid=343)



**‘I would like to go home and mourn’**

*‘Eight months ago, my son was stabbed to death in the Philippines. I would like to go home and mourn together with my family. But I have no choice but to stay because I know that if I go home I cannot come back, and there is no job for me back home. The pain that I have until now is a violation of my right to be united with my family in their time of grief.’*

‘Lorie’ is from **TRUSTED Migrants**, a migrant domestic workers’ organisation in the Netherlands. She has been working in private households since 1987, first in Singapore, then Hong Kong, and now in Europe. She continues:

*‘It is always said that work in private households is important, but it is not adequately recognised as proper work or as a category for immigration. Therefore migrants working in private households are denied their basic rights and are frequently forced to become undocumented and vulnerable to abuse of our human rights.’*

TRUSTED Migrants has members from Nigeria, Ghana, Surinam, Ivory Coast, Indonesia and the Philippines. They have organised themselves so as to share work and shelter, and to learn from each other’s experiences as a way of empowering themselves. They are campaigning for their work to be recognised with respect, and with proper immigration status, because they are fully aware of how important they are to families in the Netherlands.

One important tool for building their own capacities and for raising awareness in others is the Forum Theatre in which the migrant workers participate. It was a performance of this which so impressed Edith Snoeij, the President of the ABVAKABO FNV public sector workers’ union, to get her organisation to open up to migrant domestic workers.



### **Forum Theatre: 'Acting Together'**

Migrant Workers in the Netherlands enact scenes from their lives, directed by Claire Fossey, followed by discussion with the audience. An initiative of the Commission for Filipino Migrant Workers (CMFW), TRUSTED Migrants, and RESPECT Netherlands.

[www.cfmw.org](http://www.cfmw.org)

### **'MDWs Visible and Making a Difference'**

Research report on Migrant Domestic Workers (MDWs) in the Netherlands

Commission for Filipino Migrant Workers (CFMW), December 2005

[www.cfmw.org/files/CFMW%20MDW\\_Research%20Report%20-2005.doc](http://www.cfmw.org/files/CFMW%20MDW_Research%20Report%20-2005.doc)



**RESPECT**, a Europe-wide network of migrant domestic workers' organizations, trade unions, NGOs and supporters, campaigns for the rights of all those working in the private household, both men and women, whether live-in or live-out, regardless of immigration status.

More information: [www.cfmw.org](http://www.cfmw.org)

Another prominent member of RESPECT is Kalayaan, which campaigns for the rights of Migrant Domestic Workers as workers in the UK.

### **'Migration Must Work for Workers Too'**

Campaign against the British Government's proposed changes to immigration law and practice for migrant domestic workers. Kalayaan, London, April 2007

[www.kalayaan.org.uk](http://www.kalayaan.org.uk)



## **Migrante International**

Some 8-10 million Filipinos work overseas. This is about 10 per cent of the country's population, and they contribute US\$ 10.3 billion a year (2005) to their home country's economy, providing the highest form of export revenue earnings. Yet they receive inadequate protection from their own Government.

Of these migrants leaving the Philippines, almost 30 per cent are domestic/household workers, and a further 13 per cent are care-givers and nursing aides. Their top countries of destination are Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar, Jordan, Brunei, Hong Kong and the United Kingdom.

**Migrante International** is a global alliance of Filipino migrant organisations, mostly composed of domestic workers and care-givers, in 23 countries. Established in December 1996 and with headquarters in Quezon City in the Philippines, MI's main objective is to protect and promote the rights and welfare of Filipino migrant workers, particularly domestic/household workers.

**Concepcion (Connie) Bragas-Regalado** is Migrante International's Chairperson. She has worked as a migrant domestic worker in both Singapore and Hong Kong. Before that she was a senior social worker with the Philippines Government Department of Social Welfare and Development for seven years.

MOM? IF I AM SO PRECIOUS TO YOU, WHY DO YOU PAY SO LITTLE TO WOMAN WHO TAKES CARE OF ME?



*In 1995, amidst public outrage against the unjust hanging of the Filipina domestic worker Flor Contemplacion in Singapore, then President Fidel V. Ramos signed the Republic Act 8042, said to be a “Magna Carta for Overseas Filipinos”. The Philippines Government has two agencies attached to the Department of Labor and Employment: the Philippines Overseas Employment Agency (POEA) in charge of regulating the deployment of migrants, and the Overseas Workers’ Welfare Administration (OWWA) mandated to provide them with welfare services.*

*However, Sections 29 and 30 of the Act make labour conditions subject to the contract between the employer and employee; and there are no agreements about labour standards reached between the Philippines Government and host governments. This effectively absolves our Government of any responsibility. So it exports millions of people to places where no protections exist. Yet it is happy to collect from them legal and processing fees plus a welfare fund contribution, and to use the vast sums they send back to help prop up the ailing economy. In 2005, the amount going through formal banking channels reached US\$ 10.3 billion, and even this excludes the unknown “informal” remittances.*

*Those migrant workers going through the POEA should be on two-year contracts, with payment standards. But when they arrive in their host country, they often have to sign a different contract. If they run away, they become undocumented because their employers keep their papers. Others do not go through the POEA but on “tourist” or “trainee” visas through an employment agency. The price of a job overseas can reach US\$ 400 which many migrant workers have to borrow and pay back later; this means it is hard to leave your job until you have paid off your debt to the agency. It is a kind of bonded labour. Those who do want to go home but have become undocumented sometimes have to do something to make themselves deported.*

*The first emphasis of Migrante International is to support the organisations of migrant domestic workers overseas, as well as their families, their children, and former domestic workers. In the Middle East, it is illegal to organise and so our groups have to operate underground. We have ten groups in countries such as Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Qatar; and we are currently working in Kuwait and Lebanon.*

*We also engage in a lot of campaigning, advocacy and lobbying at home. We are now trying to get our voice heard better in the national Congress, and I stood as a national candidate. We participate actively in the hearings of the parliamentary committee for migrant affairs in the House of Congress and Senate, which we were instrumental in getting set up.*

*We encourage alliance-building with other migrant organisations, trade unions, women’s associations and human rights groups. It is one of our main tasks to help domestic workers of other nationalities to organise themselves.*

*In our international solidarity we are working towards the formation of an International Migrant Alliance, whose founding congress is to be. Internationally, we believe there should be:*

- *A campaign for the ratification of the **International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families** (United Nations Assembly Resolution 45/158, New York, 18 December 1990). Not one receiving country has ratified this Convention yet.*
- *More lobbying of sending governments to forge labour agreements with host governments.*
- *Discussions about the prospects for a new ILO Convention on Domestic Work.*

*In the long term, we need better economies that create more jobs so that working overseas becomes an option, not something that is forced on the poor.’*

**<http://migranteinternational.wordpress.com>**



**International Migrants Alliance, a global alliance of im/migrants, refugees and displaced people:**

<http://pinas.net/ima/>

**Joint Statement of Domestic Workers on the Occasion of the Global Forum on Migration and Development** – [www.apmigrants.org/statements/DW-statement-brussels-layout.pdf](http://www.apmigrants.org/statements/DW-statement-brussels-layout.pdf)

To find out which countries have signed the **UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families**.

See: [www.unhchr.ch/html/menu2/6/cmw/ratifications.htm](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu2/6/cmw/ratifications.htm)

See: [www.december18.net](http://www.december18.net)



*'From the sending countries, people often see migrant workers as victims of a terrible fate. In the receiving countries, there is another negative image, that of 'foreigners having a bad influence on our children'. But to look at migrants only as victims does them a disservice. They do have choices and many are making their own lives better, as well as making a strong contribution to the world around them.'*

**Rima Sabban, Arab Women Academic Network**

**'Globalization Comes Home: Protecting Migrant Domestic Workers' Rights'**

Nisha Varia, Human Rights Watch, 2007

[www.hrw.org/wr2k7/essays/globalization/](http://www.hrw.org/wr2k7/essays/globalization/)

## **Netherlands: A union opens its doors**

The ABVAKABO FNV is the second largest trade union in the Netherlands, with over 355,000 members, working in a wide range of public services including healthcare and welfare institutions. In June 2006, the union opened its doors to migrant domestic/household workers and in just a few months 250 have joined.


**Meinert van den Berg**, trade union officer of ABVAKABO FNV, outlines these new initiatives:

*'In February 2006, our union's President Edith Snoeij was invited to meet with migrant domestic workers and watch their Forum Theatre. She was very impressed by their strength to bear all the difficulties they encounter in their working and daily life. She also felt embarrassed that such working conditions still exist in Dutch society today. She became determined to put the situation of migrant domestic workers high on the agenda of our union. Whether documented or not, all workers have the right to join a trade union, and since then things have moved very swiftly.*

*We welcomed the first migrant domestic workers as members in June 2006, and we have been discussing with them how the union can benefit them, and what they can do to empower themselves. We have discussed what our intentions and ambitions are. As a trade union with no previous experience with migrant domestic workers, we had to be careful not to raise false expectations. After every inspiring meeting, some more decided to become members.*

*Initially, we had to overcome many practical issues: which address the undocumented workers would use, and how payments of union dues would be done by workers with no bank accounts. They seemed like hassles, but in fact they were easy to overcome. More difficult, but also more challenging, is how to find answers to the problems that migrant domestic workers face.*

LISTEN LI HAN. I CANNOT  
 HELP IT THAT THIS FNV -  
 ABVA-KABO MEETING IS DE-  
 LAYED!! JUST MAKE DINNER,  
 MIND THE KIDS AND  
 CLEAN  
 THE  
 HOUSE  
 WILL  
 YOU!



On the one hand, there are all the issues related to the status of being undocumented. Then there are those related to the fact that household work in the Netherlands is not regulated; most household work is done in the informal economy, whether by documented or undocumented workers. The problems that arise are not easy to separate; but to a worker it doesn't matter whether the problems stem from being undocumented or in an unregulated sector – solutions need to be found.

At least the first step has been taken. We as a trade union have recognised undocumented migrant domestic workers as members. And in a joint effort we will try to find the solutions, in getting changes to Dutch labour law, in greater recognition for the rights of undocumented workers, or by pressing our government to regularise household work. In the meantime, we are giving them use of facilities such as space to meet and access to email/fax.

*We cannot offer immediate solutions; we have no experience with this particular group. What we do know is our strength as a union, and we will join forces with undocumented migrant workers to get the best result. There is still a long road ahead, and that is also what we aim for: a long-term relationship.*

*I would like to repeat that, in the eyes of the ABVAKABO FNV, workers are workers. Nobody gains from unregulated work by undocumented workers; everybody will gain from regulated work by documented workers, from people who live among us and deliver a professional and high-quality service, with rights and respect. I know I will have to explain a lot to our members; there will be questions when our union becomes known for defending workers who are undocumented. I will explain that members should not want to live next door to exploited people because the next in line will be themselves. We cannot gain respect for our own work in an unregulated environment. In any case, respect does not only apply to people who originate in our country. Thanks to their own initiatives, the self-organisation of migrant workers means we can be allies in defending their interests. Our ambition is to gain recognition of the status as 'workers' for domestic workers in general and for migrant domestic workers in particular. We will do that in cooperation with the national and international confederations of trade unions, but first of all in cooperation with domestic workers themselves.'*

**Brochure: Your rights as domestic worker in a private household (also in Dutch)**

[www.abvakabofnv.nl/docs/bijlagen/200807/Your\\_rights\\_as\\_domestic\\_worker\\_in\\_a\\_private\\_household.pdf](http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/docs/bijlagen/200807/Your_rights_as_domestic_worker_in_a_private_household.pdf)

[www.abvakabofnv.nl/docs/bijlagen/200807/Model\\_Labor\\_Contract\\_for\\_Domestic\\_Services.pdf](http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/docs/bijlagen/200807/Model_Labor_Contract_for_Domestic_Services.pdf)



The **United Migrant Domestic Workers in the Netherlands (UMDW NL)** was formed by Filipino migrant domestic workers in Amsterdam in June 2006. It is collaborating with the ABVAKABO FNV to encourage migrant domestic workers in the Netherlands to join the trade union and campaign together for regularisation of their status.

See also: 'A Step in the Right Direction'

'Migrants' magazine, MinistryHouse Publications, Netherlands, No.1, 2006.



## Belgium: Where the 'undocumented' have rights

Undocumented migrant workers have rights in Belgium, as the country's labour laws technically apply to all who work. These rights cover such issues as minimum wages, working hours, and workplace health and safety. Those who employ people 'illegally' risk a hefty fine.

However, there are many barriers to exercising these rights. Many undocumented workers accept poor working conditions rather than have no work at all; or they fear their employer or the Belgian authorities too much to complain. And so employers ignore labour laws and do not get prosecuted.

The Organisatie voor Clandestiene Arbeidsmigranten (OR.C.A.) (Organisation for Undocumented Migrant Workers) is campaigning to change this situation, by providing information to migrant workers and being involved in discussions on labour migration. OR.C.A. works with trade unions, policy-makers, labour inspectors, community organisations and NGOs in the country.

### 'Undocumented Workers: A Guide to Rights'

OR.C.A., Brussels, English: [www.orcasite.be/index.php?id=55](http://www.orcasite.be/index.php?id=55)

Also in French, Spanish, Portuguese and Flemish.

### Campaign King Baudouin Foundation on 'International household workers in Belgium'

[www.kbs-frb.be/otheractivity.aspx?id=193924&LangType=2060](http://www.kbs-frb.be/otheractivity.aspx?id=193924&LangType=2060) (In French and Dutch)

With 5 publications in French and Dutch

## Switzerland: Here too the 'undocumented' organise

In Switzerland too, undocumented migrant workers have formed the **Mouvement Suisse des Sans-Papiers** (Swiss Movement for the Undocumented). This comprises local groups in various cities, such as the **Colectivo de Trabajadores Sin Status Legal** (Collective of Workers Without Legal Status) in Geneva.

[www.sans-papiers.ch](http://www.sans-papiers.ch) and [www.ctssl-geneve.org](http://www.ctssl-geneve.org)

For more on trade union support for undocumented migrant workers in Geneva, see 'Out of the Shadows' ETUC report, pages 36-37.

And see: [www.sit-syndicat.ch/Info/Brochures/BI-SIT/BI-2004-93%20-%20sans%20papiers.pdf](http://www.sit-syndicat.ch/Info/Brochures/BI-SIT/BI-2004-93%20-%20sans%20papiers.pdf)



## Child Domestic Workers

### A risk to their health and future

*'Many children work in Latin America, and so it is hard to prohibit it. There are orphans who need to work because the State cannot provide for them; if we banned the work, the State would have to step in.'*

**Basilía Catari, FENATRAHOB Bolivia**

According to ILO research, the numbers of child domestic workers worldwide run into double figure millions at least, and they are mostly girls of 10-14 years. While, there is some evidence that fewer are being employed at a very young age, perhaps as a result of greater public awareness, very few go to school once they start working. It is almost always extreme poverty in their own families that pushes them into this work.

Since 1956, the United Nations has considered child domestic labour a modern form of slavery which should not be tolerated (UN 'Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery', 1956). In its worst forms, it certainly can be.

However, there is more agreement these days that calling all child domestic labour 'slavery' and demanding its immediate end is not necessarily the best way to protect the children concerned. The ILO and advocacy bodies such as Anti-Slavery International are concentrating rather on eliminating the worst forms of child labour.

### Anti-Slavery International: 'We Consult Child Workers'

**Anti-Slavery International** has been intensively working on child domestic labour for over a decade. Founded in the UK in 1839, this is the world's oldest international human rights organisation. **Jonathon Blagbrough**, Coordinator of Anti-Slavery International's Forced Labour Programme, says that their programme of work has been strengthened by finding out what the children concerned want:

*'A child domestic worker is separated from his or her own family, dependent on the employer, often isolated and confined, denied education and vulnerable to abuse. The child usually feels under great obligation to his/her parents to earn money and not run away. However, simply considering all child domestic work as slavery is not particularly useful for improving the lives of the children involved.'*

*Anti-Slavery International is an advocacy body and, in order to understand how best to do our work, we consult child domestic workers. In 2004, along with our local partners, we talked with more than 450 current and former child domestic workers in nine countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. They overwhelmingly told us that they want more opportunities for training so that they can move on from domestic work. They want*

help with dealing with abusive employers but also said it is more effective to enlist the cooperation of relatively good employers than to demonise and alienate all. This is not to accept abusive behaviour, but to acknowledge that many employers do believe that they are helping the child whom they employ.

We believe that child domestic workers are important agents for change and we must encourage opportunities for their self-organisation and self-help. This already exists in some countries, for example India, the Philippines, and Togo. **There is, however, often a gap between when a child can work and when s/he can join a union.** NGOs and unions can assist child domestic workers above the minimum working age by helping them to meet, support one another, and form groups which enable them to advocate for their own protection.

At an international level, Anti-Slavery International works with the ITUC trade union confederation and the ILO on forced labour and child labour issues, for example to lodge complaints against individual governments. We provide a bridge between the ILO and NGOs active in the field and, and we believe it is an important role we can play.

More important for the real protection of child domestic workers, however, are legal and policy changes at national level. We work with local partners to get child domestic workers included in legislation. For example, in the Philippines we continue to press local legislators to finalise and pass the *Batas Kasambahay* (Domestic Workers Bill) through lobbying of key officials and several mass letter-writing campaigns.

National and international labour standards relate to physical and environmental situations. However, for many children in domestic work, psycho-social trauma is a far more serious problem. One study in Kenya revealed significant evidence of psychological problems, including phobias, depression and withdrawal. So, in our efforts to end the worst forms of exploitation, we need to deal with this, and yet there are virtually no mechanisms to do so.'



### Anti-Slavery International handbooks on child domestic labour

Three handbooks pull together local good practice from many countries:

- **Child Domestic Workers: A handbook for research and action** (1997)
- **Child Domestic Workers: Finding a voice (A handbook on advocacy)** (2001)
- **Child Domestic Workers: A handbook on good practice in programme interventions** (2005)

Available in English, French and Spanish versions from Anti-Slavery International's website: [www.anti-slavery.org](http://www.anti-slavery.org)

#### 'Child Domestic Workers Speak Out'

Anti-Slavery Society Submission to the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, United Nations Commission on Human Rights, 30th Session, Geneva 6-10 June 2005

[www.antislavery.org/archive/submission/submission2005-childdomestics.htm](http://www.antislavery.org/archive/submission/submission2005-childdomestics.htm)



'As from 10 October 2006, the employment of children as domestic workers has been included as "hazardous" work and is now banned throughout India. There has been a big advertising campaign, with a film aired on several TV channels, aimed at employers. We have not experienced a big response so far, though a few employers did call our offices. Successful implementation of these new pieces of legislation remains to be seen.'

**Anjali Shukla, National Domestic Workers Movement, India**

[www.ndwm.org/functions-activities/children-dw.asp](http://www.ndwm.org/functions-activities/children-dw.asp)



CHILD LABOUR IS  
PROHIBITED IN THIS  
STATE!

NOT IF  
YOU ARE  
FAMILY!

AND  
FROM NOW  
ON, I SEE  
YOU AS MY  
DAUGHTER  
...



## Tanzania: Driven by poverty

In Tanzania, there are many children doing domestic work in other people's homes. Most are girls, from as young as 8-9 years old, even though the legal minimum working age is 14 years. Driven by poverty, parents in rural areas allow their children to be taken to the towns and cities, believing that they will earn a wage and have a better life there.

In the city of Mwanza, the **Kivulini Women's Rights Organisation** focuses on combating domestic violence. Kivulini means 'In the Shade'. Since 2004, the organisation has been working specifically on helping child domestic/household workers, in collaboration with Anti-Slavery International. Florence **Rugemalira Rweyemamu** explains how Kivulini approaches this work:

*'People think that those working in rich families will be well paid, but it can be dangerous. While boys tend to work outdoors, girls work indoors, and it is children in closed areas who are the most vulnerable. They are dependent on their employer, and have little communication with their families. In our four years working on this issue, we have found a lot of physical, sexual, emotional and economic violence of child domestic workers. By 'economic' violence, we mean depriving them of education, refusing to pay them wages, and denying them control over what they do earn.'*

*We started our work in 2004 with interviews of 60 child domestic workers in the cities of Mwanza and the capital Dar es Salaam. We found that girls outnumber boys by a ratio of 4:1. Two-thirds were forced into this work by family poverty. 43 per cent work 16-19 hours a day, and 42 per cent work 12-15 hours. While they get food, clothing, shelter and access to health services, they are paid less than US\$15 per month, half of them only US\$5-8. The majority pass this money to a relative who depends on it. Three-quarters would choose not to do this work if they had the choice, and most would not want this for their own children. Over 80 per cent showed high interest in getting education like vocational training, while the rest would like basic education in how to read and write.*

*Under Tanzanian labour law, domestic workers do have legal status as "workers". However, there is no minimum wage and, in practice, domestic work is "casual" or "private" where the worker works at the favour of the employer; there is no contract, either written or verbal; **you do what you are given, and you do it as a matter of survival.***

*When a worker is abused, the police see it as a "private" matter. This is especially the case when the work is done for distant family members, aunts or cousins, etc. We are trying to convince the police that abuse of a domestic worker is a criminal offence. However, those who are responsible for enforcing laws are themselves often the employers of domestic workers!*

*Our programme involves crisis intervention, providing legal aid; awareness-raising among child domestic workers on their rights and assistance to help them organise themselves; actions aimed at improving the relationship between child domestic workers and their employers in order to solve problems amicably; working with other organisations to reintegrate child domestic workers back into their own families; and sensitisation of parents, teachers, children, youth groups and local government and religious leaders to keep children in school.*

*We work from the community-level upwards, especially involving elected street leaders who are part of local government in our country. We are seeing an increased number of cases of abuse reported to them for action. We also work with trade unions, civil society organisations, the Social Welfare Department, religious leaders, local militia, and employers of domestic workers.*

*We are currently in consultations to encourage the formation of an association of responsible employers with whom we can work. There is an employers' "Code of Conduct" approved by the Tanzanian Ministry of Labour in 2001 but it is only voluntary. Some organisations have their own standards. So there is no unified approach at present.'*

[www.kivulini.org](http://www.kivulini.org)

## **ILO/IPEC: Eliminating the worst forms of child labour**

*'The ILO estimates that more girl-children under 16 are in domestic service than in any other category of work ... Almost without exception, children who are in domestic labour are victims of exploitation, often of several different kinds.'*

In: **'Helping hands or shackled lives? Understanding child domestic labour and responses to it'** (ILO)

Children are supposed to be protected from exploitation by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as ILO Conventions. The ILO is particularly concerned to eliminate the worst forms of child labour and has a special programme for this, the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC). IPEC has activities in about nearly 25 countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, working with governments, employers, trade unions, NGOs and teachers' groups to combat the worst forms of child exploitation, including domestic labour. **Maria José Chamorro, Senior Technical Officer of the IPEC**, explains how IPEC works on child domestic labour:

*IPEC takes its lead from two important ILO Conventions on child labour:*

- **Minimum Age Convention** (No. 138, 1973): *this lays down a general minimum age for employment of 15 years; children in developing countries can start at 14 years, though only after finishing school; light work is allowed between 12-14 years – so, where domestic work is considered 'light', children are allowed to start at 12; 'hazardous' work can only start from age 18 years; unfortunately, some countries have specifically excluded domestic work when ratifying this Convention;*

- **Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention** (No. 182, 1999): *all governments are obliged to eliminate as a matter of priority the worst forms of child labour – those involving bonded labour or slavery, sexual exploitation, armed conflict, or hazardous activities; how hazardous activities are defined is a matter for governments in collaboration with unions, and so it is important to ensure that domestic work is included in this agenda (e.g. use of cleaning chemicals, fire hazards when cooking, and girls sleeping in the homes of their employers who are most vulnerable to exploitation).*

[www.ilo.org/global/About\\_the\\_ILO/Media\\_and\\_public\\_information/Press\\_releases/lang--en/WCMS\\_007917/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/About_the_ILO/Media_and_public_information/Press_releases/lang--en/WCMS_007917/index.htm)

*So, those that IPEC targets in its programmes around the world are:*

- *Victims of the worst forms of child labour: to remove them from exploitation immediately and provide them with safe conditions;*
- *Children under the minimum working age: to remove them from exploitation as soon as possible and reintegrate them with their families and education programmes;*
- *Children above the minimum working age but below 18 years: to get them protected against working under hazardous conditions.*

IPEC's programme for the next few years will focus on child labour (boys and girls) in agriculture and in domestic work. This was the outcome of an ILO 'Interregional Workshop on Child Domestic Labour and Trade Unions', held in Geneva, on 1-3 February 2006, chaired by Sir Roy Trotman, Chairman of the Workers' Group of the ILO Governing Body. Those taking part were trade unionists representing domestic workers, teachers' unions, and national and regional trade union federations. They examined the role of workers' organizations in combating child domestic labour, and a Trade Union Resource Manual on Child Domestic Labour is currently being produced.

**Among the strategies that workers' organizations (particularly trade unions) can undertake are:**

- Examining the exclusions (explicit and implicit) in minimum age legislation, and ensure that domestic workers are included in all appropriate legislation;
- Getting involved in the consultation process over what is "hazardous" child labour; this has been the subject of campaigns in Paraguay, Uruguay, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Cambodia and Costa Rica, for example;
- Monitoring the enforcement of the laws on light work, hazardous work, etc.; many unions could play a stronger role, for example through their members;
- Promoting youth employment and press for education and training opportunities for all young workers;
- Enlisting young domestic workers as members; after all, according to fundamental ILO Conventions each person with the right to work has the right to affiliate to a union;
- Doing more awareness-raising among union members not to employ domestic workers below the age of 15 years;
- Consulting with adult domestic workers about where the child workers are; for IPEC activities in the field this has been a very important source of information.'

IPEC: [www.ilo.org/ipec/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/ipec/lang--en/index.htm)

[www.ilo.org/ipec/areas/Childdomesticlabour/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/ipec/areas/Childdomesticlabour/lang--en/index.htm)



**ILO/IPEC Resources on Child Domestic Labour**

ILO/IPEC Overview of key documents:

[www.ilo.org/ipec/areas/Childdomesticlabour/Keydocuments/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/ipec/areas/Childdomesticlabour/Keydocuments/lang--en/index.htm)

ILO/IPEC have produced numerous publications – search their web.

**'ILO/IPEC Workshop on child domestic labour and trade unions'**

ILO, Geneva, 2006.

Report of the interregional consultation of trade unions active in the field of child domestic labour, organised in Geneva in February 2006. The objective of the workshop was to examine the role of workers' organizations in the elimination and prevention of child domestic labour.

English: [www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/2006/106B09\\_318\\_engl.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/2006/106B09_318_engl.pdf) (also in French and Spanish)

**'Child Domestic Labour Information Resources: A guide to IPEC child domestic labour publications and other materials'.** (Also for publications in other languages)

ILO/IPEC, 1/2007 –English– ISBN 9789221197638

Find document via Google, type in title or ISBN number.

**'Helping Hands or Shackled Lives? Understanding child domestic labour and responses to it'**

ILO/IPEC, 2004

In English, Spanish and French

[www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/2004/104B09\\_138\\_engl.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/2004/104B09_138_engl.pdf)

### **'Good Practices and Lessons Learned'**

ILO/IPEC documents on child and adolescent domestic work  
in English, Spanish and French

[www.ilo.org/ipecc/areas/Childdomesticlabour/Goodpracticesandlesonslearned/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/ipecc/areas/Childdomesticlabour/Goodpracticesandlesonslearned/lang--en/index.htm)

### **'Peores Formas de Trabajo Infantil: Sistema de Registro e Intervención.**

**Manual de Capacitación.** ('Worst forms of child labour: System of registration and research. Manual for capacity building'). ILO 2007. [www.oitchile.cl/pdf/IPEC1.pdf](http://www.oitchile.cl/pdf/IPEC1.pdf) (in Spanish)

Part of: Project Web Weaving against exploitation of boys, girls and adults.

More information (in Spanish): [www.oitchile.cl/proyecto%20redes.php](http://www.oitchile.cl/proyecto%20redes.php)

### **'Steps toward determining hazardous child labour – toolkit'**

CD-Rom, ILO, October 2006

In English, French and Spanish

[www.ilo.org/ipeccinfo/product/viewProduct.do?productId=5544](http://www.ilo.org/ipeccinfo/product/viewProduct.do?productId=5544)

### **Gender equality and child labour : a participatory tool for facilitators**

ILO 2005: [www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/2005/105B09\\_47\\_engl.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/2005/105B09_47_engl.pdf)

### **Good practices and lessons learned on child and adolescent domestic labour in Central America and the Dominican Republic: a gender perspective**

[www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/2005/105B09\\_493\\_engl.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/2005/105B09_493_engl.pdf)

### **'ILO-IPEC and the Girl Child Domestic Worker'**

ILO/SEAPAT, OnLine Gender Learning & Information Module, Unit 2 (1998)

[www.ilo.org/public/english/region/asro/mdtmanila/training/unit2/ipeccgdw.htm#title](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/asro/mdtmanila/training/unit2/ipeccgdw.htm#title)



### **More Resources on Child Domestic Labour**

#### **'Bottom of the Ladder- Exploitation and Abuse of Girl Domestic Workers in Guinea'**

Human Rights Watch, 2007

[www.hrw.org/reports/2007/guinea0607/](http://www.hrw.org/reports/2007/guinea0607/)

In French: [www.hrw.org/french/reports/2007/guinea0607/guinea0607frtext.pdf](http://www.hrw.org/french/reports/2007/guinea0607/guinea0607frtext.pdf)

Human Rights Watch on child labour in general:

[www.hrw.org/children/labor.htm](http://www.hrw.org/children/labor.htm)

#### **Inside the Home, Outside the Law – Abuse of Child Domestic Workers in Morocco**

[www.hrw.org/reports/2005/morocco1205/](http://www.hrw.org/reports/2005/morocco1205/)

#### **Morocco: 'Hidden' Child Workers Face Abuse**

Girls Working as Domestics Denied Basic Rights

Human Rights Watch 2005 In Spanish, French and Arabic

[www.hrw.org/english/docs/2005/12/21/morocc12278.htm](http://www.hrw.org/english/docs/2005/12/21/morocc12278.htm)

#### **'No Rest: Abuses Against Child Domestic Workers in El Salvador'**

Human Rights Watch, 2004 (also in Spanish)

[www.hrw.org/reports/2004/elsalvador0104/](http://www.hrw.org/reports/2004/elsalvador0104/)

**On Violence against Child Domestic Workers**

Human Rights Watch

[www.hrw.org/english/docs/2007/02/20/global15343.htm](http://www.hrw.org/english/docs/2007/02/20/global15343.htm)

**Task Force on Child Domestic Workers**

Child Workers in Asia, a network of organisations working on child labour in 11 Asian countries.

[www.cwa.tnet.co.th/Network/tf\\_domestic.html](http://www.cwa.tnet.co.th/Network/tf_domestic.html)

**Manual: Raising One Voice: A Training Manual for Advocates on the Rights of Child Domestic Workers.** Feb. 2006.

[www.cwa.tnet.co.th/Downloads/CWA\\_RaisingOneVoice.pdf](http://www.cwa.tnet.co.th/Downloads/CWA_RaisingOneVoice.pdf)

**Legislative Reform On Child Domestic Labour: A Gender Analysis**

Rangita De Silva-De-Alwis

UNIFEM: January 2007 –Legislative Reform Initiative– Paper Series

[www.wcwonline.org/pdf/asia2007conf/Legislative%20Reform%20on%20Child%20Domestic%20Labour%20-%20A%20Gender%20Analysis.pdf](http://www.wcwonline.org/pdf/asia2007conf/Legislative%20Reform%20on%20Child%20Domestic%20Labour%20-%20A%20Gender%20Analysis.pdf)

**‘Trade Unions and Child Labour: Challenges for the 21st Century’**

By Rachel Kurian, Institute of Social Studies, The Hague

FNV Mondiaal, 2005

Available via: [iz@vc.fnv.nl](mailto:iz@vc.fnv.nl)



## Annex 1 – Conference Participants List

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www.gruporedes.org/index.php?idioma=2

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## Annex 2 – More Resources

Publications and websites on domestic/household work around the world are given throughout this report. Here are some additional useful sources.



**ILO – Labordoc** contains references to a wide range of print and electronic publications, including journal articles, from countries around the world, on all aspects of work and sustainable livelihoods, and the work-related aspects of economic and social development and human rights. Labordoc provides an ever increasing number of links to online publications available on the Internet. <http://labordoc.ilo.org/>



### • Women and migration

#### **‘A Passage to Hope: Women and International Migration’**

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), 2006

Languages: English, Spanish, French, Arabic, Russian

[www.unfpa.org/publications/detail.cfm?ID=311&filterListType=](http://www.unfpa.org/publications/detail.cfm?ID=311&filterListType=)

**‘Domestic Workers Far from Home’**, United Nations Population Fund

[www.unfpa.org/swp/2006/moving\\_young\\_eng/stories/stories\\_Noraida.html](http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2006/moving_young_eng/stories/stories_Noraida.html)

#### **‘Empowering Woman Migrant Workers in Asia: Briefing Kit’**

UNIFEM East and Southeast Asia, (no date)

[www.unifem-eseasia.org/projects/migrant/Briefing%20kit%20files.htm](http://www.unifem-eseasia.org/projects/migrant/Briefing%20kit%20files.htm)

#### **UNIFEM resources on migrant women workers**

[www.unifem.org/gender\\_issues/women\\_poverty\\_economics/women\\_migrant\\_workers.php](http://www.unifem.org/gender_issues/women_poverty_economics/women_migrant_workers.php)

Good Practices To Protect Women Migrant Workers-file

[www.unifem-eseasia.org/projects/migrant/mig\\_pub.htm](http://www.unifem-eseasia.org/projects/migrant/mig_pub.htm)

#### **‘Feminized Migration in East and Southeast Asia: Policies, Actions and Empowerment’**

Nicola Piper and Keiko Yamanaka, UNRISD, 2005

[www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/\(httpPublications\)/06C975DEC6217D4EC12571390029829A?OpenDocument](http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/(httpPublications)/06C975DEC6217D4EC12571390029829A?OpenDocument)

#### **Towards a fair deal for migrant workers in the global economy**

ILO 2005 (also in French and Spanish)

[www.ilo.org/global/Themes/Labour\\_migration/lang--en/docName--KD00096/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/Themes/Labour_migration/lang--en/docName--KD00096/index.htm)

#### **‘All For One = One For All:**

**A Gender Equality Guide for trade unionists in the Agriculture, Food, Hotel and Catering Sectors’**

IUF, June 2007 Via: [iuf@iuf.org](mailto:iuf@iuf.org)

#### **‘Undocumented Migrants Have Rights! An Overview of the International Human Rights Framework.**

PICUM, March 2007

[www.picum.org/HOMEPAGE/Undocumented%20Migrants%20Have%20vRights!.pdf](http://www.picum.org/HOMEPAGE/Undocumented%20Migrants%20Have%20vRights!.pdf)

**‘Ten Ways to Protect Undocumented Migrant Workers’**. PICUM, October 2005

Download via [www.picum.org](http://www.picum.org) see under ‘publications’ (website also in French and Spanish)

## • **Trafficking and Forced Labour**

**HumanTrafficking.org** – A web resource for combating human trafficking  
[www.humantrafficking.org](http://www.humantrafficking.org)

**Bonded labour in South Asia** - [www.bondedlabour.org](http://www.bondedlabour.org)

### **ITUC Forced Labour Page**

[www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?rubrique156](http://www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?rubrique156)

### **Special Action Programme to combat Forced Labour (SAP-FL) – ILO**

Includes forced domestic work.

[www.ilo.org/sapfl/AboutSAPFL/lang--es/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/sapfl/AboutSAPFL/lang--es/index.htm)

### **ILO – Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work**

[www.ilo.org/dyn/declaris/DeclarationWeb.IndexPage](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/declaris/DeclarationWeb.IndexPage)

### **A global alliance against forced labour : global report under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work : report of the Director-General**

ILO 2005 (in Spanish, French and 5 other languages (via [labordoc.ilo.org](http://labordoc.ilo.org)))

[www.ilo.org/dyn/declaris/DECLARATIONWEB.DOWNLOAD\\_BLOB?Var\\_DocumentID=5059](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/declaris/DECLARATIONWEB.DOWNLOAD_BLOB?Var_DocumentID=5059)

### **‘Training Materials for a Global Alliance Against Forced Labour’**

Pilot version, ILO, 2006

[www.bondedlabour.org/web/Display.asp?SubCat\\_id=21&ID=38](http://www.bondedlabour.org/web/Display.asp?SubCat_id=21&ID=38)

### **‘Human Trafficking and Forced Labour Exploitation: Guidance for legislation and law enforcement’**

ILO, 2005

[www.ilo.org/dyn/DECLARATIONWEB.DOWNLOAD\\_BLOB?Var\\_DocumentID=5296](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/DECLARATIONWEB.DOWNLOAD_BLOB?Var_DocumentID=5296)

Training materials, ILO, 2005

[opentraining.unesco-ci.org/cgi-bin/page.cgi?g=Detailed%2F940.html;d=1](http://opentraining.unesco-ci.org/cgi-bin/page.cgi?g=Detailed%2F940.html;d=1)

### **Trafficking for forced labour : how to monitor the recruitment of migrant workers: training manual.**

Author: Linden, Mariska N.J. van der. ILO, 2006

[www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_norm/---declaration/documents/instructionalmaterial/wcms\\_081894.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/instructionalmaterial/wcms_081894.pdf)

### **Anti-Slavery International: Contemporary Forms of Slavery**

2006. Six booklets on Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay

[www.antislavery.org/homepage/resources/PDF/PDFlatinamerica.htm](http://www.antislavery.org/homepage/resources/PDF/PDFlatinamerica.htm)

Forced Labour: [www.antislavery.org/homepage/resources/forcedlabour.pdf](http://www.antislavery.org/homepage/resources/forcedlabour.pdf)

## • **Informal Economy**

### **‘Progress of the World’s Women 2005’ Women, Work and Poverty**

UNIFEM, 2005

[www.unifem.org/attachments/products/PoWW2005\\_eng.pdf](http://www.unifem.org/attachments/products/PoWW2005_eng.pdf)

**‘Tools for Advocacy: Social protection for informal workers’**

Frankie Lund and Jillian Nicholson, WIEGO and Homenet Thailand, 2006  
[www.wiego.org/publications/Tools\\_For\\_Advocacy.pdf](http://www.wiego.org/publications/Tools_For_Advocacy.pdf)

**Resource guide on the informal economy**

English: [www.oit.org/public/english/support/lib/resource/subject/informal.htm](http://www.oit.org/public/english/support/lib/resource/subject/informal.htm)  
Spanish: [www.oit.org/public/spanish/support/lib/resource/subject/informal.htm](http://www.oit.org/public/spanish/support/lib/resource/subject/informal.htm)  
French: [www.oit.org/public/french/support/lib/resource/subject/informal.htm](http://www.oit.org/public/french/support/lib/resource/subject/informal.htm)

**Informal Economy Resource Database – ILO**

This database contains over 500 ILO entries directly or indirectly related to the informal economy and decent work. The database is searchable by country, keyword, ILO author unit and date.  
[www.ilo.org/dyn/dwresources/iebrowse.home](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/dwresources/iebrowse.home)

**‘Decent Work and the Informal Economy’**

International Labour Conference, ILO, 2002, reports and resolutions  
[www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/infeco/ilc2002.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/infeco/ilc2002.htm)

**Women, gender and the informal economy : an assessment of ILO research and suggested ways forward.**

ILO, 2008  
[www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms\\_091605.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_091605.pdf)

**StreetNet International alliance of street vendors**

On web information on: strategies for organising, informal economy, documents.  
Also in French and Spanish. [www.streetnet.org.za](http://www.streetnet.org.za)

**Manual: ‘Ten Trade Union Actions to Strengthen the Status of Workers in the Informal Economy’**

World Confederation of Labour, 2005  
[www.cmt-wcl.org/cmt/ewcm.nsf/0/2e1580062c589391c1256eb300535f09/\\$file/wva-infecon-en.pdf?openelement](http://www.cmt-wcl.org/cmt/ewcm.nsf/0/2e1580062c589391c1256eb300535f09/$file/wva-infecon-en.pdf?openelement)  
Plus a WCL campaign ‘medicine box’ of remedies for social protection in the informal economy  
[www.cmt-wcl.org/cmt/ewcm.nsf/\\_/D74E3073898DB199C12570B90054313A?OpenDocument](http://www.cmt-wcl.org/cmt/ewcm.nsf/_/D74E3073898DB199C12570B90054313A?OpenDocument)

**‘Trabajo Informal y Sindicalismo en América Latina y el Caribe: Buenas prácticas formativas y organizativas’**

(Informal work and trade unionism in Latin America and the Caribbean: Good Practice)  
CINTERFOR/ILO, Montevideo, 2005, in Spanish  
[www-ilo-mirror.cornell.edu/public/spanish/region/ampro/cinterfor/publ/sind\\_for/castillo/index.htm](http://www-ilo-mirror.cornell.edu/public/spanish/region/ampro/cinterfor/publ/sind_for/castillo/index.htm)  
Sources by page 34: Just how many domestic/household workers are there?

Sources by page 34: Just how many domestic/household workers are there?

International Labour Organisation

'Domestic Workers Far from Home', United Nations Population Fund

[www.unfpa.org/swp/2006/moving\\_young\\_eng/stories/stories\\_Noraida.html](http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2006/moving_young_eng/stories/stories_Noraida.html)

European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, [www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2007/02/articles/ito702079i.html](http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2007/02/articles/ito702079i.html)

'Have Minimum Wages Benefited South Africa's Domestic Service Workers?' by Tom Hertz, 2004.



*'Getting respect and rights means recognition for the economic value of this work'*  
Geeta Menon, Karnataka Domestic Workers' Union, Bangalore, India



## What domestic/household workers want:

Recognition that domestic work is 'work'  
and that those who do it are 'workers'  
with the rights that all workers have  
including the right to be heard

IS IT A BIRD?  
IS IT A PLANE?



NO:  
IT'S SUPER  
DOMESTIC  
WORKER!!

