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**CALL FOR INPUT**

*Human Rights Council Resolution 54/6 On*

# **THE CENTRALITY OF CARE AND SUPPORT**

*From A Human Rights Perspective*

April 2024

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SUBMISSION**



International Domestic  
Workers Federation

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# 1. Domestic Workers and the Care Economy:

**Domestic Workers (DWs) work in or for a household on an occupational basis and play an integral role in care provision.** They provide services and goods that are socially necessary for the maintenance of households and the well-being of families, most often in the form of either direct (face-to-face personal care) or indirect (including tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and other work that ensures a healthy and safe living environment) care activities. Millions of such workers play a central role in supporting the care needs of households.

**The COVID-19 global pandemic highlighted the contribution of DWs contribute to the functioning of households and labor markets.** They played a crucial role in ensuring the health and safety of the families and households for which they work, from basic cleaning to personal care for children, the sick, and the elderly. The pandemic deepened pre-existing gendered inequalities, as the intermittent lockdowns aggravated the burden of care work and impacted deleteriously the domestic work sector, who were largely not considered essential workers. It exposed the fact that DWs remain among the most vulnerable groups of workers.


**Shifting demographic and social structures all over the world means there is an urgent need that requires adaptable and comprehensive care infrastructure to**

**meet diverse and changing care needs.** The need of care has been on the rise and the availability of unpaid work to meet household care needs has reduced and there is still a lack of quality public care services. Large unmet care needs and ageing populations are creating a care crisis. There is an increasing demand for domestic work (paid care) that should lead to a shift in how societies and economies treat DWs, recognizing them as workers and granting them the same rights and protections as any other worker (ILO, 2022, 2023b; Shah & Bhattacharya, 2024).

**Despite the relevant contribution DWs provide to the care economy (25% of global care workers are domestic workers. ILO, 2024), societies continue to place a low social and economic value on domestic work;** it is often considered unskilled and an extension of women's unpaid care work. Compared to most other wage workers, DWs tend to have lower wages, fewer benefits, and fewer legal or social protections. Very few DWs have labor contracts. They usually have no maternity leave, health care or pension provision (WIEGO, n.d.). Temporary migration policies and schemes lead to a structural suppression of DWs labor rights. The undervaluation and under-recognition of DWs must change to reflect their invaluable role in supporting households, economies, and societies and enable them to enjoy their human rights.

DWs should be recognized as care workers and included as care providers within national care policies, labor laws and social security systems. This can contribute

to ensuring a sufficient supply of DWs qualified to meet the care needs of the future, while ensuring decent work for DWs.



The undervaluation and under-recognition of DWs must change to reflect their invaluable role in supporting households, economies, and societies and enable them to enjoy their human rights.

## 2. Human rights and labor rights of DWs:

**Although none of the international human rights instruments or bodies of the United Nations (UN) is dedicated exclusively to domestic work, they all contain general non-discrimination provisions, as well as other work-related rights.** There is increasing awareness among these bodies of the vulnerability of DWs and the unique barriers to the full enjoyment of their basic human rights.

**Around the world, there are 75.6 million DWs aged 15 years and over (ILO, 2021d).** This sector is particularly important in developing regions: Asia is the first employer of DWs, followed by Latin America and the Caribbean and Africa. In the Asian-Pacific coun-

tries and Eastern Europe a large proportion of their female population leaves to take up domestic work abroad. Despite the global nature of domestic work, it has different characteristics in each national and regional context. DWs are a growing but mostly invisible workforce in Europe, and they are extremely vulnerable to gross exploitation. In Latin America, many DWs are Afro-descendants or indigenous people who often face multiple forms of discrimination. In Africa and the Caribbean domestic work has been impacted by colonialism and poverty, racial inequality, and patriarchal systems. The majority of DWs in the Arab States and Southeast Asia are migrants, many of them facing different for-

ms of hardship. In most Arab countries, despite coming as workers, migrant DWs (MDWs) are exempted from labor protections and locked into a system that has been likened to ‘modern day slavery’ through a sponsorship modality called Kafala (ReliefWeb, 2021).

## Legal exclusion:

DWs face high levels of discrimination by law: **36.1% of DWs are wholly excluded from national labor legislation** (particularly in the Arab States -94%- , in Asia and the Pacific -61.5%- and Africa -37%- ) By contrast, DWs in the Americas and in Europe and Central Asia are nearly all covered by most policy areas, and in most cases under conditions that are no less favorable than those provided for workers generally (ILO, 2021d, 2023b). Worldwide, 50.1% of DWs have no legal entitlement to **social security**. The situation is particularly challenging in the Arab States, where only 3.8% are covered by at least one branch of social, followed by Asia and the Pacific (27.9%). Almost half of DWs remain excluded from specific provisions limiting **normal weekly hours of work** (48.9 per cent). 71% of DWs in Asia and the Pacific face this situation; 66% in the Arab countries and 40% in Africa. Almost half (46%) are not legally entitled to a **minimum wage**: 80% in Arab States, 64% in Asia and Pacific, 41% in Africa. In some countries -such as Bangladesh, Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand- DWs and employing households

sometimes fall outside the scope of laws on freedom of association and collective bargaining owing to the definition of workers, workplaces or even employers. In some cases, MDWs are excluded from the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining (ILO, 2023a, 2023b)<sup>1</sup>.

## Excluded by practice:

**Beyond the legal exclusions, multiple barriers prevent the implementation of the law and its compliance.** Just a few DWs enjoy rights and protection in practice: 81.2% of DWs (61.4 million) remain in informal employment. The extension of effective coverage has lagged sig-

 Worldwide, 50.1% of DWs have no legal entitlement to social security.

nificantly behind that of legal coverage: 34% of DWs in **informal employment** are actually covered by existing labour and social security laws but are nonetheless still considered to be informally employed due to gaps in implementation. Additional barriers to accessing labour and social protection include administrative barriers; limited contributory capacities; lack of enforcement of and low compliance with labour

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<sup>1</sup> In Malaysia MDWs cannot form their own unions nor hold union office. They can only join trade unions formed by locals. In Thailand and Vietnam only nationals can form unions.

and social security laws; lack of information and awareness; and the limited voice representation of DWs (ILO 2021d, 2024).

**Beyond legal challenges, DWs face practical obstacles to their rights of voice and representation.** They are dispersed in individual households, with individual employment relationships, a challenge to forming collectives with common interests. DWs also have limited amounts of free time and often fear they might lose their jobs if they join a union (ILO 2015a). They also face challenges due to limited resources and capacity building. In some countries, the procedures required to be officially registered as a recognized union are often not suited to them. When there is no formal group of employers of DWs, it also becomes impossible to engage in collective bargaining (ILO, 2023b).

## **Skills not recognized:**

**Despite performing a huge range of skilled tasks around the home, domestic work is often dismissed as “unskilled” work that people, predominately women, are naturally born knowing how to do, a convenient narrative to justify underpayment and lack of decent working conditions.** Domestic work exists in a space between a service that was ‘traditionally’ unpaid and the booming care sector that – especially post-COVID - is considered essential. In this grey

area, the skills needed to perform domestic work, including providing care within the home, are often denied, and almost always undervalued. A study conducted by the ILO compared the tasks that DWs perform in homes against the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) and found that almost all DWs are operating at a medium skill level, far higher than ‘unskilled.’ (Phnom Penh Post, 2023)

## **Child domestic work:**

**7.1 million children aged 5 to 17 years are engaged in child labor in domestic work.** This includes 4.1 million children between the ages of 5 and 11 years, 1.1 million children between the ages of 12 and 14 years and 2.0 million children between the ages of 15 and 17 years. They are highly vulnerable to physical, sexual, psychological or other forms of abuse, harassment and violence (ILO, 2021d).

## **Forced Labor:**

**Domestic work is among the five sectors accounting for the majority of total adult forced labor, and one of the main sectors where children in forced labor are found** (ILO, Walk Free and IOM 2022). The share of migrants in the group of people in forced labor is much higher than the share of migrants in the overall labor force. Migrant DWs are more prone to forced labor<sup>2</sup>. Women in forced labor are

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<sup>2</sup> Per ILO methodology, forced labor is found when there are indicators both that the work is involuntary, and that the worker is under threat of menace of a penalty.

much more likely than their male counterparts to be in domestic work, and to be coerced through wage non-payment and abuse of vulnerability. Indicators of involuntariness include not being able to quit your job, having to stay in the job longer than agreed, and being made to work without overtime pay, among others (ILO, 2023a).

## **Violence at work:**

**The most common types of violence and harassment experienced by DWs in their workplaces include economic abuse, psychological abuse, physical and sexual abuse, verbal abuse and lack of access to appropriate food.** Other less frequent but alarming types of violence are bullying, coercion, violations of privacy and withholding of wages. Some DWs face multiple forms of violence: physical abuse, intimidation, threats, bullying, sexual assault, harassment, poor-quality food and a lack of privacy. Severe instances of violence, including murder, have been documented (IDWF 2019, 2020a, 2020b, 2023).

**66** Domestic work is among the five sectors accounting for the majority of total adult forced labor.

## **Multiple discrimination:**

**Certain categories of DWs face greater disadvantages.** Live-in DWs experience more isolation, less privacy and more limited mobility, work longer hours, and receive a larger share of payments in kind (such as meals and accommodation). Living conditions are frequently poor. They are also more vulnerable to physical/sexual abuse by employers compared to live-out DWs. Many DWs face multiple forms of discrimination due to their gender, race, ethnicity, class, and other individual characteristics that “**intersect**” with one another and overlap.

## **Migration:**

**Due to lack of economic opportunities and decent jobs many women from low-income countries migrate to high income countries for domestic work:** 80% of migrant DWs are deployed in high-income countries. In the Arab States, 83% of DWs are migrants. In North America, migrants are 71% of DWs and in Europe 55% (ILO, 2015b). Their overseas work allows migrant DWs to support their families, but the migration process often lacks basic conditions to ensure a safe migration and respect of migrant DWs human rights. Many of them face various hardships, such as deception by recruiters, long working hours with little rest, physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, underpayment or non-payment of wages, health problems,



and others. They face debt-bondage due to excessive employment agencies fees, restriction of movement, restriction to transfer employers (IDWF, 2020b). In some countries, migration policies act as a further barrier to DWs' access to labor rights and social protection, by stratifying access to certain protections to migrants depending on their migration pathway, or by excluding migrant workers – particularly those in an irregular status – from laws and policies. In most Arab countries, despite coming as workers, MDWs are exempted from labor protections and locked into a system that has been likened

to 'modern day slavery' through a sponsorship modality called Kafala. It grants employers almost total control over the lives of these workers and ensures a dependency by MDWs on their employers. In some cases, the working conditions and labor rights of MDWs are regulated not by national laws in the country of destination, but rather by bilateral agreements (BLAs) and memorandums of understanding (MOUs) between countries of origin and destination, which often results in discriminatory levels of protection.

### 3. Domestic Workers right to self-care:

**Significant decent work deficits in the areas of working time, wages and social security lead to poor health and prevent DWs from enjoying the right to self-care.** Globally, 37% of DWs have extremely long working hours (49 or more per week). In the Arab States 75%

work more than 49 hours (42% more than 60) and in Asia and the Pacific 50% of DWs have extremely long working hours. Worldwide, DWs earn 56.4% of the average monthly wage of other employees. The gender pay gap among DWs is high: women DWs earn 24% less

“Significant decent work deficits in the areas of working time, wages and social security lead to poor health and prevent DWs from enjoying the right to self-care.”

than their male counterparts. While women DWs earn just half of the average monthly wage of all other employees, male DWs earn 67.3% of the average monthly wage of other employees. In Africa, women DWs earn 25% the average

monthly wage of other employees. Because of this, DWs predominate among the poorest, a consequence of discrimination against women and gendered inequality.

## 4. Domestic Workers' right to care policies and services:

**As workers with family responsibilities, DWs should enjoy effective access to social protection benefits and measures.** However, they often do not have access to care rights and services for themselves and their families.

### Maternity protection:

**In law, a large proportion of women DWs are excluded from maternity leave provisions (46.5 per cent) and entitlements to maternity cash benefits (47.6 per cent), and even more are excluded in practice because of their informal status.** Only 13.4 per cent of DWs are covered by family benefits, the lowest rate of coverage among the nine benefits of social security

under contributory schemes (ILO, 2024). In the Arab States, 100% of DWs are not entitled to maternity leave and maternity cash benefits. 68% in Asia and the Pacific and 32% in Africa. In the Caribbean, less than 8% of DWs are entitled to maternity leave and benefits as employers do not contribute to the National Insurance Scheme for their DWs even though it is required by law.

**DWs also often lack access to childcare services.** This is the result of a global gap in the provision of a statutory right to childcare services, and even when this right is legally mandated, effective coverage is extremely limited, especially for the most vulnerable – a group to which many DWs belong (ILO, 2024).

## 5. Moving towards decent work for Domestic Workers:

**In 2011, the International Labour Organization (ILO) adopted the DWs Convention, 2011 (No. 189), the first international legal instrument devoted to domestic work.** Since then, the status of paid DWs

– their poor conditions and the discrimination they face in different parts of the world – has come to be seen as a 'global problem' whose governance is a challenge that exceeds national borders (Marchetti,



Civil society organizations have been campaigning for a Care manifesto, demanding that States resource care as a public good and a collective social responsibility, rather than a household’s “private” responsibility which mainly falls to women.

2018). In their “Buenos Aires Commitment” adopted in 2022, the Member States of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) agreed to “actively support the participation of ... organizations of paid DWs ... in the design, implementation and monitoring of care policies”.<sup>3</sup> In 2021, the NGO Forum of the African Commission passed a Special Resolution that addressed discrimination and domestic work in Africa and recommended that “all necessary steps” be taken to “remove references to servants and other derogatory language against DWs in laws, policies and regulations (Solidarity Center, 2023). In 2021, ASEAN leaders adopted a comprehensive framework on the Care Economy, recognizing that care work permeates various settings and formal and informal economies, and that paid care work includes public services, elder care, and domestic work (ASEAN, 2021). The EU does have policies and initiatives related to care, particularly within the framework of social policy, gender equality, and

employment. These policies aim to promote accessible, affordable, and high-quality care services, address work-life balance issues, and support caregivers, including informal caregivers. Civil society organizations have been campaigning for a Care manifesto, demanding that States resource care as a public good and a collective social responsibility, rather than a household’s “private” responsibility which mainly falls to women. In the United States, President Biden has issued several executive actions and policy priorities demonstrate a commitment to expanding access to healthcare, supporting caregivers, and addressing the challenges faced by individuals and families in accessing affordable care. In 2023, President Biden announced a comprehensive set of executive actions to improve care for hard-working families while supporting care workers and family caregivers. The [Executive Order on Increasing Access to High-Quality Care and Supporting Caregivers](#) (EO) includes more than 50 directives to nearly every cabinet-level

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<sup>3</sup> The Buenos Aires Commitment was adopted at the 15th session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, which was organized by the ECLAC, UN Women’s Regional Office for the Americas and the Caribbean, and the Government of Argentina, and was held in Buenos Aires on 7–11 November 2022.

agency to expand access to affordable, high-quality care, and provide support for care workers and family caregivers. At least 53 million Americans serve as family caregivers—including over 5 million caring for service members or veterans—and many face challenges due to lack of support, training, and opportunities for rest.

**As of March 2024, 36 countries have ratified ILO Convention 189:** 18 in Latin America and the Caribbean, 11 in Europe, 6 in Africa, 1 in Asia<sup>4</sup>. That so few countries have ratified the DWs' convention in most regions reflects how challenging it is to reform the sector.

**Legal reforms have been introduced in most of these countries, to ensure that DWs are granted the same rights as any wage worker:**

**In Latin America and the Caribbean, most countries that have ratified C189 have carried out regulatory reforms or created specific laws to move towards the elimination of discrimination in the regulations.** In Latin América this includes Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, México, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela. Other countries have made reforms to regulations or regulations considering the particularities of domestic work to ensure greater effective coverage (ILO, 2021a). In this region, all DWs enjoy legal

protection: in most countries DWs are covered by minimum wage, in half they are entitled to the same working hours and are covered by social security (at least one). In the English-speaking Caribbean, while only 4 countries have ratified C189, all countries but one<sup>5</sup> have a legal framework that recognizes domestic workers as workers, with the right to minimum wage, paid leave and other worker benefits generally. However, compliance is low and informality and exploitation of DWs persists.

**In Africa, most countries that have ratified C189 have a Labor Code that provides some protection for workers, however not specifically addressing the unique circumstances of DWs.** South Africa, on the contrary, has several laws and regulations aimed at protecting domestic workers and ensuring their rights. The “Domestic

 **As of March 2024, 36 countries have ratified ILO Convention 189: 18 in Latin America and the Caribbean, 11 in Europe, 6 in Africa, 1 in Asia.**

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<sup>4</sup> These countries are: Latin America and the Caribbean: Argentina, Antigua and Barbuda, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Granada, Guyana, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay; Africa: Guinea, Madagascar, Mauritius, Namibia, Sierra Leone, and South Africa; Europe: Germany, Belgium, Finland, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland; Asia: Philippines

<sup>5</sup> In Trinidad & Tobago, domestic workers are not defined as workers and are excluded from the remedies available to other workers under the laws governing industrial relations.

Workers Act” (Act No. 75 of 1977), was amended by the “Bargaining Council for the Domestic Worker Sectoral Determination” in 2002, one of the most extensive efforts to protect DWs, establishing national minimum wages amongst other legislative interventions and the right to organize into trade unions. The Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act (COIDA) in South Africa is aimed at providing compensation for employees who are injured, disabled, or contract diseases during the course of their employment. DWs were historically excluded from COIDA’s coverage until an amendment was made in 2021. The COIDA Amendment Act, 2021, expanded the definition of an “employee” under COIDA to include DWs.

**The Philippines is the only Asian country that has ratified C189 and has a Domestic Worker or Batas Kasambahay law (2013),** that includes protections around employment terms and conditions, such as rest period, Occupational Health and Safety (OSH), access to minimum wage and protection from unpaid wages and forced labor, social protection etc. Currently, advocacy is being carried out at the local government units or barangays, for the implementation of the said law through worker registration and setting up of worker registration desks, advocacy for minimum wages, etc.

**Collective agreements have been reached in several countries that have ratified Convention 189, such as France, Italy and Belgium, Uruguay, Argentina and the Mu-**

**nicipality of Sao Paulo in Brazil.**

**Some countries have (without ratification of ILO C189) introduced new laws, policies, or schemes to protect DWs and regulate the sector. They include:**

- **As of July 2021, ten Federal states in the US have passed bills of rights for DWs:** New York, Illinois, Oregon, California, Nevada, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Hawaii, New Mexico, and Virginia. In addition, the cities of Seattle and Philadelphia both passed their own bill of rights.
- **Indonesia** has enacted various laws and regulations to protect DWs, commonly referred to as “Pekerja Rumah Tangga” (PRT) or “Tenaga Kerja Wanita” (TKW). Some key legal protections include Law No. 13 of 2003 on Manpower (Undang-Undang Nomor 13 Tahun 2003 tentang Ketenagakerjaan): It provides the basic framework for employment rights and obligations in Indonesia. While it doesn’t specifically address DWs, it sets out general labor standards and protections that apply to all workers. Minister of Manpower Regulation No. 19 of 2012 (Peraturan Menteri Ketenagakerjaan Republik Indonesia Nomor 19 Tahun 2012): It specifically addresses the employment of DWs. It outlines various rights and obligations for both employers and DWs, including minimum wage, working hours, rest periods, annual leave, and social security. Law No. 39 of 2004 on Placement and Protection of Indonesian Over-

- seas Workers (Undang-Undang Nomor 39 Tahun 2004 tentang Penempatan dan Perlindungan Tenaga Kerja Indonesia di Luar Negeri): It regulates the placement and protection of Indonesian migrant workers, including DWs. It aims to safeguard the rights and welfare of Indonesian workers employed overseas.
- **Malaysia** included in 2021 all DWs, including migrant DWs in SOCSO, the national social security scheme for informal workers.
  - **Nepal** includes DWs under the Labour Act 2017 (2074)
  - **South Korea:** The “Act on the Improvement of Employment of DWs” effective in July 2022 covers DWs directly hired by intermediaries (not the individually hired).
  - **Barbados** introduced the Employment Rights Act (2012), which provides general protections for workers, including DWs, regarding employment conditions, termination, and other employment-related matters.
  - **United Arab Emirates (UAE)** has implemented the DWs Law (Federal Law No. 10 of 2017), which provides legal protections for DWs, including provisions on employment contracts, working hours, rest periods, wages, and dispute resolution mechanisms.
  - **Kuwait** has enacted the Domestic Labor Law (Law No. 68 of 2015), which governs the employment relationship between DWs and employers. This law covers various aspects, including recruitment procedures, working conditions, wages, and dispute resolution mechanisms.
  - **Tunisia** has enacted Law No. 2021-37, concerning domestic work, which includes Formalization of Employment, Minimum Working Conditions, Wages and Social Security, Protection Against Abuse and Exploitation. However, the law is still not implemented and doesn't cover the MDWs.
  - **Morocco:** Law No. 19-12, effective from October 2018, sets the minimum age for domestic work



Despite these legal advances, challenges remain in fully implementing the law, and in raising awareness among DWs and employers about their rights and obligations.



at 18, establishing rights to rest, and outlining contracts and minimum wages.

- **In Kenya**, the Employment Act, 2007 sets out the minimum standards and conditions of employment for all workers, including DWs. Some of the provisions of the Employment Act are relevant to DWs (employment contracts, minimum wage, working hours and rest periods, termination of employment procedures). The Employment (DWs) Regulations, 2015 provide additional protec-

tions for DWs, such as registration, regulations on working conditions, rest periods, grievance procedures. The National Policy on Domestic Work, 2020 outlines strategies for promoting decent work for DWs, improving their working conditions, and enhancing their social and economic rights.

**Despite these legal advances, challenges remain in fully implementing the law, and in raising awareness among DWs and employers about their rights and obligations.**

## 6. Voice and representation

**The founding of the IDWF in Montevideo in 2013 (IDWF, 2022) revealed the global expansion of the DWs' movement**, built upon new connections between existing national and regional organizations composed (exclusively) of DWs. The IDWF represents more than half a million DWs through 88 affiliates in 68 countries around the world. IDWF is the result of DWs' long-term mobilization for their rights.

**DWs have a long tradition of organizing unions and collective action.** In Chile they formed their first at the onset of the 20th century, in Brazil in the 1930s, Uruguay in the 1950s, and South Africa in the 1960s. In Latin America, there is a long-established regional organization, [Confederación Latinoamericana y del Caribe de Trabajadoras del Hogar](#) (Latin American and Caribbean Confederation

of Domestic Workers) founded in 1988 with member organizations in 13 countries. The Africa DWs Network (ADWN) was launched in Cape Town, South Africa on 16 June 2013. DW representatives from 17 organizations, representing a total membership of 95,572

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workers across 28 African countries, came together to endorse the new network.

**Collective agreements have been reached in some countries**, such as France, Italy and Belgium, Uruguay, Argentina and the Municipality of Sao Paulo in Brazil.

**The founding of a global federation of DWs is a sign of the growing strength of the movement**, and a key moment to assess progress for workers long excluded from basic labor protections. The IDWF has played a vital role

in building the capacity of fledgling organizations of DWs around the world. This has included the founding of new unions of DWs in several countries.

**Still, in some countries, they are not allowed to organize or join trade unions<sup>6</sup>**. Even where they have the legal right to organize, it is not easy because they are isolated and vulnerable. The nature of the worker-employer relationship and the lack of a counterpart (employer's organization) makes it difficult to negotiate collective bargaining agreements with their employers.

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<sup>6</sup> In Thailand, DWs do not have the legal right to form or join a union, engage in collective bargaining, or participate in a strike. In 2018, the Ministry of Labor issued a regulation allowing DWs to form a "group" or "association" for the purpose of promoting their interests and protecting their rights. While these groups are not recognized as unions and do not have the right to engage in collective bargaining or strike, they serve as a platform for organizing and advocating for the rights of DWs. Several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and labor advocacy groups provide support and advocacy for domestic worker rights. In most Arab countries (particularly Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)) DWs, particularly migrant workers, face challenges in organizing or joining trade unions due to restrictive labor laws and sponsorship systems. They face legal and practical barriers to organizing or joining trade unions. The kafala sponsorship system places significant control over DWs in the hands of their employers, making it difficult for them to assert their rights or engage in collective action.



## 7. Final Reflections

- **Domestic work is care work and it plays a crucial role in life reproduction and life sustenance** therefore setting the pre-conditions and bases for national economies and societies to function.
- **Care must be seen as a human right**, the right to self-care, the right to receive and provide care must be done in conditions that uphold decent working conditions so that providers and recipients of care can fully realize this right.
- **Domestic work has been gaining social recognition and legal protection over the decades** thanks to the struggle for rights and recognition of domestic workers around the world since the early 20th century.
- **Still, today domestic workers are not fully recognized nor granted protections** in equality of conditions compared with workers in other occupations.
- **The regions and countries that have been able to advance and secure labour rights and social protections are those where freedom of association is permitted in law and in practice.** Institutionalized social dialogue spaces among workers, employers and government are key to advancing rights and protections.
- **On behalf of the 75.6 million domestic workers around the globe, the IDWF gives thanks to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights** for the opportunity to offer information, facts and reflections to assist the Office in the hopes that the OHCHR will contribute in the development of standards of this matter.
- **We trust in the important work that the OHCHR can do to further develop this line** and remain willing to engage and provide more inputs in this matter.

“Domestic work is care work and it plays a crucial role in life reproduction and life sustenance therefore setting the pre-conditions and bases for national economies and societies to function.

## 8. Abbreviations

<b>ADWN</b>	Africa Domestic Workers Network
<b>ASEAN</b>	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
<b>BLA</b>	Bilateral Agreements
<b>COIDA</b>	Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act
<b>CONLACTRAHO</b>	Confederación Latinoamericana y del Caribe de Trabajadoras del Hogar (the Latin American and Caribbean Confederation of Domestic Workers)
<b>DW</b>	Domestic Workers
<b>ECLAC</b>	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
<b>EFFAT</b>	European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions
<b>EO</b>	Executive Order
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-based Violence
<b>GCC</b>	Gulf Cooperation Council
<b>IDWF</b>	International Domestic Workers Federation

<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>ISCO</b>	International Standard Classification of Occupations
<b>MDW</b>	Migrant Domestic Workers
<b>MOUs</b>	Memorandums of Understanding
<b>NGO</b>	Non-government Organization
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>OSH</b>	Occupational Health and Safety
<b>PRT</b>	Pekerja Rumah Tangga
<b>SOCSCO</b>	Social Security Organisation
<b>TKW</b>	Tenaga Kerja Wanita
<b>UAE</b>	United Arab Emirates
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>WIEGO</b>	Women in Informal Employment Organizing and Globalizing

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# **THE CENTRALITY OF CARE AND SUPPORT**

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International Domestic Workers Federation  
April 2024 / Maria Elena Valenzuela

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