



Economic and Employment Rights: Advancing Domestic Workers' Leadership

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*Image of domestic worker Martha Matlala working at the house of her employer.
Photo: Jonathan Torgovnik/Getty Images Reportage, 2015*

INTRODUCTION

The Securing Economic Rights for Informal Women Workers programme was granted to Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, under Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women (FLOW). This fund was in succession of the MDG3 Fund received by WIEGO for the Investing in Equality for Working Poor Women programme, which was successfully implemented from the year 2009 to 2011.

The Securing Economic Rights for Informal Women Workers programme had six project elements and twelve project partners. The first project element was Economic and Employment Rights: Advancing Domestic Workers' Leadership. The project was implemented from the year 2012 to 2015 with WIEGO's key project partners: the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF) and the International Union of Food and Allied Workers (IUF). This project leveraged WIEGO's Network previous work during the historic adoption of the International Labour Organization's Convention 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers and its accompanying Recommendation 201, adopted at the International Labour Conference (ILC) on 8 June 2011, with the following results:

1. A strong International Domestic Workers Network (IDWN¹) and strengthened associated networks and organizations;
2. A strong domestic worker movement – secured through increased organization, global campaigns, information sharing, and joint planning;
3. The enhanced economic empowerment of domestic workers;
4. The strong leadership of domestic workers' groups; and
5. Decent work for domestic workers through improved national policies and/or legislation; and/or the ratification of ILO Convention 189 (C189) in countries of activities (see Table 1).

This case study attempts to assess the overall impact of the project element: Economic and Employment Rights: Advancing Domestic Workers' Leadership including the achievements, outcomes and critical success factors. The case study is based on annual reports of the programme, interviews with stakeholders and prior research and data collection done by the IDWF and WIEGO.

GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

In 2012, WIEGO, the IDWN, and the IUF implemented the Economic and Employment Rights: Advancing Domestic Workers' Leadership project in fifteen countries in Asia (Cambodia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Nepal), Africa (Benin, Guinea, Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania), Latin America and the Caribbean (Brazil, Chile, Jamaica, Peru and Uruguay). The basis for choosing these countries was as follows:

1. The high number of domestic workers in the country, and/or,
2. A higher number of partners in the domestic workers network, and/or,
3. The low-to-middle income status of the countries and their inclusion in the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) list² of countries.

1 The International Domestic Workers Network (IDWN) became the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF) in 2013 at the organisation's first congress (described in more detail below).

2 OECD 2012: The DAC List of ODA Recipients: Factsheet January 2012. OECD. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/49483614.pdf> [accessed on 8 January 2016].

TABLE-1:

List of project countries, their domestic worker population, names of IDWF Affiliates and Network Partners, and the GNI per capita of those countries.

S.No.	Country	Number of Domestic Workers	DWF Affiliates and Network Partners	GNI per capita (\$) 2014 ³
1.	Cambodia	250,000	Cambodia Domestic Workers Network (CDWN)	1,020
2.	Hong Kong, China (SAR)	386,000	Hong Kong Federation of Asian Domestic Workers Unions (FADWU)	40,320
3.	India	4.2 million	Self-Employed Workers Association (SEWA)	1,570
4.	Indonesia	2.6 million	Jala PRT	3,630
5.	Nepal	162,302	Home Workers Trade Union of Nepal (HUN)	730
6.	Benin	No figures available	Syndicat des Employés d'hotel de Maison (SYNEHM)	890
7.	Guinea	70,000	Syndicat National des Employés de Maison (SYNEM)	470
8.	Kenya	1.8 million	Kenya Union of Domestic, Hotels, Educational Institutions, Hospitals and Allied Workers (KUDHEIHA)	1,290
9.	South Africa	1.2 million	South African Domestic Service and Allied Workers Union (SADSAWU)	6,800
10.	Tanzania	1.7 million	Conservation, Hotel, Domestic and Allied Workers Union (CHODAWU)	920
11.	Brazil	7.2 million	Federação Nacional das Trabalhadoras Domésticas (Fenatrad)	11,530
12.	Chile	337,437	Federación Nacional de Sindicatos de Trabajadoras de Casa Particular (FESINTRACAP)	14,910
13.	Jamaica	58,000	Jamaica Household Workers Union (JHWU)	5,150
14.	Peru	406,000	Centro de Capacitación para Trabajadores del Hogar (CCTH)	6,360
15.	Uruguay	110,000	Sindicato Único de Trabajadoras Domésticas	16,350

3 The World Bank 2015: Atlas method (current US\$). The World Bank. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP.CD> [accessed 20 January 2016].

WORKER OVERVIEW

C189 defines “domestic work” as “work performed in a household” (Article 1 (a)), and “domestic worker” as “any person engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship” (Article 1 (b)). Domestic workers perform a range of tasks including cooking; cleaning; laundry; general housework; looking after children, the elderly or persons with disabilities; maintaining the garden; providing security; and driving the family car. Accurate statistics regarding domestic workers are difficult to attain due to the informal status and nature of the employment. As per the International Labour Organization (ILO), there are approximately 52.6 million domestic workers across the world. The number of domestic workers grew by 20 million from the year 1995 to 2010 and accounted for 1.7 per cent of total global employment.⁴

Domestic work is a female-dominated sector: 83 per cent of domestic workers are women. The law and practice report prepared for the June 2010 International Labour Conference (ILO, 2010) notes that domestic work is “undervalued, underpaid, unprotected and poorly regulated”. It suggests that one of the reasons for this is that domestic work is similar to work that is traditionally performed by women without a wage, that the work “is not aimed at producing added value, but at providing care to millions of households”.⁵

As the table below shows (Table 2), the Asia and the Pacific region is home to the highest number of domestic workers, with 21.5 million workers employed in the sector. In recent years there has been an outward labour migration of women domestic workers to the Middle-East, Europe, and other Asian industrialized countries.

The domestic workforce in Latin America and the Caribbean grew rapidly from the year 1995 to 2010: from 10.4 million to 19.6 million. Of the total wage employment, 7.6 per cent are in domestic work, which is the highest ratio of any region. The sector provides employment to 18 million women in the region. There has been an increase in the migration of domestic workers from rural to urban centres and to neighbouring countries due to unemployment in the country of origin, income difference between countries, and economic crisis.

In Africa, data exists for only 20 of the 54 countries in the continent. In those 20 countries, there are approximately 5.2 million domestic workers, 3.8 million of which are women. Additionally, in many countries in West and East Africa, domestic workers may not be included in the labour force surveys as many of them are unpaid family members or are working for food or shelter. Also, there is a stigma attached to domestic work in these countries and therefore many don't report themselves as domestic workers.

4 ILO. 2013. *Domestic workers across the world: Global and regional statistics and the extent of legal protection*. Available at http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_173363.pdf [accessed 8 January 2016].

5 Budlender, Debbie, 2011: *Measuring the economic and social value of domestic work: Conceptual and methodological framework*, ILO. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/publication/wcms_159839.pdf [accessed April 10th, 2016].

TABLE-2:
Global and Regional Estimates of Domestic Workers
in 1995 to 2010

	Domestic Workers (1995)	Domestic Workers (2010)	As a Percentage of Total Employment
Developed Countries	3,245,000	3,555,000	0.8
Eastern Europe and the CIS	477,000	595,000	0.3
Asia and the Pacific	13,826,000	21,467,000	1.2
(Excluding China)	7,116,000	12,077,000	1.2
Latin America and the Caribbean	10,402,000	19,593,000	7.6
Africa	4,178,000	5,236,000	1.4
Middle East	1,101,000	2,107,000	5.6
TOTAL	33,229,000	52,553,000	1.7

Source: ILO estimates based on data from official sources.⁶

Domestic workers are a heterogeneous group and can be categorized by the employment arrangement they have or by the employment status provided by the employers.

1. **Employment Arrangement:** Domestic workers can have varied employment arrangements. They can be hired either directly by a household or by a third party agency; they can either work full-time for a single employer or part-time for multiple employers; some perform a single task for the employer or multiple tasks; they can either work as live-in or live-out domestic workers; some can be residents, while others are migrant workers.
2. **Employment Status:** The employers of domestic workers can be a household or a private enterprise. They can also be “third party” agencies or contractors, which can be public sector, private sector, or a not-for-profit organization arranging work contracts between domestic workers and their employers. Additionally, domestic workers can be self-employed or a member of a domestic workers' cooperative or trade union.

What remains constant in all of these cases is the low wages; lack of social security and protection; poor bargaining power; verbal, physical, and/or sexual abuse; poor working and living conditions (for live-in domestic workers); and invisibility of their work and isolation from other workers in the sector.

⁶ ILO. 2013. *Domestic workers across the world: Global and regional statistics and the extent of legal protection*. Available at http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_173363.pdf [accessed 8 January 2016].

ORGANIZATION

Domestic workers have been organizing themselves in their countries for many years. In the year 2006, FNV Netherlands and the NGO IRENE, along with the international steering group consisting of WIEGO, the IUF, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), the Global Labour Institute (GLI), Geneva and the ILO, brought together domestic worker leaders for the first ever international conference. One of the recommendations arising from the conference was the establishment of a working group to explore the formation of an international network of domestic workers.

In 2007-2009, the IUF took a lead role – with the support of WIEGO – in establishing a network of domestic workers and its interim Steering Committee. Together they developed an action plan and launched a campaign for the ILO Convention on domestic work. At the 2009 International Labour Conference (ILC), the International Domestic Workers Network (IDWN) was founded by the leaders of domestic workers organizations from across the world. They formed the first Steering Committee and decided that only trade unions and other membership-based organizations of domestic workers would have decision-making rights in the IDWN. A team of regional coordinators was appointed to implement activities, supported by a technical team comprised of representatives from WIEGO, the IUF, and the Global Labour Institute (GLI). The two key objectives of IDWN were (1) to mobilize domestic workers organizations and their allies across the world in order to win the ILO Convention to protect the rights of domestic workers and (2) to build the capacity of domestic workers' organizations.

Within two years, the IDWN had mobilized 70 domestic workers organizations in 35 countries. In 2011, the IDWN – along with the support of WIEGO, IUF, and ITUC – achieved its key objective when ILO Convention 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers, and its accompanying Recommendation 201, were agreed to by representatives of the world's governments, employers, and workers at the International Labour Conference of the ILO with an overwhelming majority.



Domestic worker representatives celebrate adoption of Convention 189 and R201 at ILO, June 2011.
Photo: S. Trevino

Following this success, the Steering Committee decided to evolve from a loose and informal network to a formal federation of domestic workers' organizations. On 26-28 October 2013, the Founding Congress was held in Montevideo, Uruguay, where the IDWN became the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF). The Founding Congress was attended by 180 domestic worker leaders representing 56 organizations and 40 countries. The Founding Congress passed the Constitution and the first five-year action plan.



Domestic workers representative at the congress in Montevideo establish the International Domestic Workers Federation in 2013.
Photo: J. Shenker

The membership of IDWF comprises local and national democratic, accountable membership-based organizations of domestic workers; national federations of domestic workers' organizations; and multi-sector membership-based organizations (where domestic workers form one sector). At this writing, the IDWF has 60 affiliate organizations from 48 countries, representing over 500,000 members. Most of the affiliates are trade unions and others are associations and workers' cooperatives of domestic workers. IDWF is a membership-based organization of domestic workers. It is the first worker federation to be led by women. The key objective of IDWF is to build a strong, democratic and united domestic workers' global organization in order to protect and advance domestic workers' rights in every country.

The IDWF organizational structure consists of the Congress, the Executive Committee, and the Secretariat. All members are elected domestic worker representatives. The Congress consists of the Affiliates' representatives and the Executive Committee. It meets once every five years and is the highest decision-making body of IDWF. The Executive Committee is composed of one representative from each of the six regions – namely, Africa, Asia/Pacific, Latin America, Caribbean, Europe, North America – and includes the elected Office Bearers – President, Vice-President, and General Secretary. The governance of IDWF is vested with the Executive Committee between the Congresses. The Executive Committee meets at least once every three months. The President, Vice-President, and the General Secretary are elected by the Congress for one term at a time, and can hold the office for a maximum of two terms if re-elected. The General Secretary is a full-time paid staff member who manages the IDWF and works closely with the Executive Committee.

Some of the key activities of the IDWF are:

1. Supporting the strengthening of IDWF affiliates, their struggles and campaigns, and promoting solidarity among affiliates and allies;
2. Assisting in organizing domestic workers, particularly where domestic workers are not organized;
3. Building the capacity of the IDWF affiliates through trainings, workshops, exchange visits, and increased communication between affiliates;
4. Organizing and/or supporting campaigns to ratify ILO Convention 189 and on other issues raised by domestic workers;
5. Documenting and disseminating advances in domestic workers' organizing, campaign victories, bargaining models, legal and social protections, and other activities of domestic workers organizations that contribute to improving the working and living conditions of domestic workers;
6. Representing domestic workers at regional and international forums;
7. Building alliances with trade unions and workers organizations in other sectors, particularly those with a focus on migrant workers, women, and informal workers.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Prior to implementation of the Securing Economic Rights for Informal Women Workers project, the IDWN (soon to become the IDWF) had achieved its key objective: the ILO's adoption of C189. Although the IDWN had a competent leadership, which lobbied for C189, they still needed to grow significantly and had to become a legitimate voice of domestic workers by democratic structures, in order to fight effectively for and ensure ratification at the country level. At this level there were multiple forms of domestic worker organizations, which were not necessarily membership-based. In fact, some domestic worker organizations or NGOs, worked primarily as placement agencies, and large, multi-sectoral unions were not providing space for a domestic workers' agenda. For many of these organizations, decent work contravened their own interests, such as placement agencies, where ensuring decent work may reduce their profit margins. In many multi-sectoral unions, union officials and elected leaders were often employers of domestic workers. Membership-based organizations of domestic workers in most countries lacked the financial resources and capacity to lobby for ratification of ILO C189 with their country governments.

The domestic workers themselves faced many common problems across countries, including low wages, lack of social security, long work hours, and no rest days or holidays. As they worked in private homes, the cases of abuse were many. The ITUC estimates that 2.4 million domestic workers in the Gulf are enslaved.⁷ While most cases of abuse went unreported across the world, the few that were reported were either not registered or lacked evidence to support the complaint. Many domestic workers commuted from rural areas or from the periphery of the city, which increased their expenses and the length of the workday. Live-in domestic workers were subject to an employer withholding of between 20 per cent to 40 per cent of their wages for boarding, and were expected to be available to work anytime during the day. There were no written work contracts explaining the rights and duties of the domestic workers. Migrant domestic workers were more vulnerable due to their immigration status and lack of a support system in a different country.

7 ITUC. 2014. *Facilitating Exploitation: A Review of Labour Laws for Migrant Domestic Workers in Gulf Cooperation Council Countries*. ITUC. Legal and Policy Brief. Available at https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/gcc_legal_and_policy_brief_domestic_workers_final_text_clean_282_29.pdf [accessed 10 February 2016].

LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

As mentioned above, on 16 June 2011 (which became International Domestic Workers Day), the ILC adopted C189 – the Domestic Workers Convention – and its accompanying Recommendation 201. Some of the salient features of C189 are:

- Freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining;
- Elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour, including child labour;
- Minimum wage coverage and remuneration without discrimination based on sex;
- Measures to ensure that domestic workers are informed of their terms and conditions of employment including normal hours of work, annual leave, and daily and weekly rest periods, provision of food and accommodation (if applicable), terms and conditions relating to the termination of employment, etc.;
- To recognize on-call time as working time;
- Weekly rest of at least 24 consecutive hours;
- Effective protection against all forms of abuse, harassment and violence; and
- Payment directly in cash at regular intervals at least once a month.

In some countries, laws and policies included domestic workers prior to the adoption of C189, laws and policies have included domestic workers since the 1960s. However, these laws and policies were few, insufficient, and inaccessible, keeping decent work for domestic workers out of reach.

Minimum Wages: In many countries domestic workers lack recognition as workers and hence make little or no wages. Minimum Wage Acts and Laws in most countries do not include domestic workers due to the difficulty in quantifying the nature of the job and the time taken to finish a task. However, a handful of countries have established minimum wages for domestic workers:

- The Uruguayan Government adopted a law regulating domestic work in the year 2006 including a wage raise and a set minimum wage.
- In South Africa, in the year 2003, Sectoral Determination 7 provided detailed information on minimum wages for domestic workers, its calculation by sector, and an annual increment.
- In Chile, domestic workers have been entitled to national minimum wage rates since 2011.
- Through the General Wages Order 2009, minimum wages differentiating between rural and urban areas were set for domestic workers in Kenya.
- In Tanzania, the Minimum Wage Act, which included domestic workers, was passed in the year 1962.

Social Security: Social security legislations in most countries don't include domestic workers, and where benefits were provided they were insufficient and inaccessible. However, there were a few notable exceptions. In 2004, Uruguay's Social Security Bank (BPS) launched a countrywide campaign to improve social security coverage for domestic workers. In South Africa, domestic workers were included in the Unemployment Insurance Contributions Act, 2002, and in the South African Social Security Agency Act, 2004. India passed the Unorganized Workers Social Security Act in 2008, which further led to the establishment of State Social Security Boards in twelve states in India, where informal economy workers (including domestic workers) could register and access schemes like healthcare, pension, scholarships for children, skills training, etc. Under this Act, Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY), health insurance was also extended to domestic workers. In Kenya, under the Employment Act 2007, domestic workers were entitled to the same terms and conditions of employment as other workers, such as three months of maternity leave and housing provision.

Hours of Work and Leave: Laws that regulate the hours of work for employees generally don't apply to domestic workers. Domestic workers, especially live-in domestic workers, work between 12 to 15 hours per day. While countries like Kenya and South Africa have managed to regulate the hours of work since 2003 and 2007 respectively through an Act, the Uruguayan Government passed a law in 2006, which included a premium for time served, and compensation for night work. South Africa and Uruguay were also early examples, where the law provided a weekly rest period of 24 hours to the domestic workers.

Written Employment Contracts: In the majority of cases, laws that bind employers to provide written employment contracts to formal workers don't apply to domestic workers or where they exist they are not enforced. Written contracts are made by placement agencies, who provide employment opportunities to domestic workers abroad, but these contracts are exploitative in many cases as they provide very few rights to domestic workers, if any, and in many cases in a language foreign to domestic workers.

Despite having laws and policies for domestic workers, the implementation has been a challenge. In countries where domestic workers have managed to access a few basic rights, like in the case of Uruguay and South Africa, this success can be attributed not to the existing laws and policies, but to the persistent negotiations done by domestic worker unions.

PARTICIPANT OF THE 1ST CONGRESS OF DOMESTIC WORKERS, URUGUAY, 2013:

SONU DANUWAR, NEPAL

Sonu Danuwar attended the Congress as one of the grassroots leaders and has since been elected General Secretary of the Home Workers Trade Union of Nepal (HUN). She said, *"I had been a part of delegates to ILC and ITUC in the past. But the Congress in Uruguay was different. In many events I have felt intimidated by others. But, the Congress was 'our' event. It was the first Congress for domestic workers. I remember the experience-sharing sessions where women domestic workers shared their experiences of exploitation. I felt a sense of solidarity when African countries narrated the deep-rooted issue of child labour that they faced just like us in Nepal. We discussed how this issue is not only because of poverty, but also due to a poor education system. I learned from leaders in Latin America on different ways of organizing and lobbying. We ended the Congress with joint planning for IDWF...and look where IDWF has reached today...we women domestic worker leaders have proved that we can successfully work towards getting our rights."*



Sonu Danuwar at the Founding Congress in Uruguay.
Photo: J. Shenker

ACHIEVEMENTS AND INTERVENTION DETAILS

INSTITUTION BUILDING

The first Congress for Domestic Workers was held on 26 to 28 October 2013 in Montevideo, Uruguay. The key objective of the Founding Congress was to bring domestic workers from across the world to form the International Domestic Workers Federation. The Congress was attended by 180 domestic workers' representatives from 56 organizations and over 40 countries. Over 90 per cent of participants were women. For many workers it was the first time they had travelled abroad to attend an event for themselves. The workers were joined by supporting organizations, such as WIEGO, ITUC, IUF, ILO, Global Labour Institute (GLI), Human Rights Watch, and the International Federation of Workers' Education Associations (IFWEA).

Uruguay was chosen for the location of the first congress due to its long history of organizing domestic workers and the support provided by the government to domestic workers. Uruguay is also the first country to have ratified C189. The Congress was held in the City Hall of Montevideo, where the event was opened by the city's Mayor, Ana Olivera, and closed by the country's, President José Mujica.

A draft Constitution for the IDWF was created, discussed and adopted, and representatives were nominated for the Executive Committee. In addition, the Action Plan for the next five years was adopted. For the first time, an international, democratic organization of domestic workers was formed – the only global federation led only by women.

On 3 June 2015, the IDWF received the Silver Rose Award for "Organizing International Solidarity" from SOLIDAR. The award honored the IDWF's achievement of building a strong, democratic, and united domestic workers' global organization to protect and advance domestic workers' rights.



Myrtle Witbooi demonstrating in Geneva, 2014.
Photo: J. Shenker

ABOUT THE IDWF:

MYRTLE WITBOOI, IDWF PRESIDENT

Myrtle Witbooi is the first President of IDWF. She was the Chair of IDWN and was elected unopposed. In her opening speech at the founding congress of IDWF, Myrtle said *"It took a lot of work to get to where we are today, and thank you to everyone who played a part. But there are still millions who are exploited. The new Federation will have a big task ahead. But, with the right leadership, we will take the world by storm We are slaves no more. We are workers, with the same rights as other workers. The impossible dream is becoming a reality. This is for you, about you. Make your voices heard today!"*

One meeting with Myrtle is enough to confirm that she is a born leader. She started her struggle as an invisible and voiceless domestic worker. In 1966, she was barred from further education. Due to lack of identity papers, she resorted to domestic work. Despite the lack of any training she took up multiple tasks, such as babysitting, cooking, cleaning, etc. She continued working for one household for twelve years without any paid leave. She understood what it meant to have no rights. But when a newspaper article in 1969 disparaged domestic workers for bad behaviour, she took up a pen and made her voice heard in a letter to the editor. She demanded to know, “*Why are we different? Why must we work like slaves?*” This spontaneous outburst changed her life forever. The journalist later came to meet Myrtle and, impressed with her, offered to help her organize a meeting for domestic workers to talk about their concerns. In her first meeting, Myrtle nervously addressed 250 domestic workers. Following this experience, Myrtle consistently worked for the rights of domestic workers and later went on to establish the South African Domestic Workers Union (SADWU) and subsequently, South African Domestic, Service and Allied Workers Union (SADSAWU).

Myrtle has spent forty-five years fighting for the rights of domestic workers in South Africa and globally. She was one of the key leaders who lobbied for C189 and the creation of a global organization of domestic workers – the IDWF. She said “*IDWF is the biggest thing to have happened to domestic workers in the world. It’s the first time vulnerable domestic workers have come together to talk about themselves. Women domestic workers drove the movement and built a democratic institution.*” She further adds “*One of IDWF’s key achievements is that we have reached out to many domestic workers in remote parts of the world and built their capacity, and voice. Now domestic workers speak for themselves, they say ‘no, enough is enough...we are workers and are here to free ourselves and demand for our rights’. Our success could be attributed to the partnerships and support that we received from many organizations like WIEGO, IUF, ILO, and ITUC. Funding from FLOW made it possible for us to carry out our activities. But there is a long way ahead for us. We still need more resources to ensure that C189 is ratified by all the countries and to have a positive impact on domestic workers we need to build strong domestic worker organizations... strong organizations where workers can speak for themselves. We need to create access to education for domestic workers and reach out to migrant domestic workers.*”

Myrtle recently received the Global Fairness Award presented by the Global Fairness Initiative. While receiving the award she said “*C189 should not be a piece of paper – so we formed the International Domestic Workers Federation – a voice for the voiceless, a home for all domestic workers. This award is in honor of all domestic workers who are still voiceless. I am accepting this award on behalf of those without a voice. Fairness Award must remind us the struggle is not over. We need to speak up. If I could do it in Apartheid, anyone can do it.*”

EXPANSION AND RECOGNITION OF THE IDWF

From 2012 to December 2015, the IDWF's membership in the project countries grew over six times: 224,109 new members joined IDWF during this time. Membership grew consistently in 13 of the project countries, where 18 domestic worker organizations affiliated with IDWF represent a total of 264,106 domestic workers. In two of the 15 countries of activities (Brazil and Uruguay), solidarity was built through project activities, and the IDWF expects to affiliate with domestic workers organizations in the future.

TABLE-3:
IDWF Membership data (2012–2015)

S.No.	Country	Membership			
		2012	2013	2014	2015
1	Hongkong	1,497	894	954	1,381
2	India	6,552	26,552	187,000	200,000
3	Indonesia	582	311	1,214	1,500
4	Nepal	1,500	2,000	3,000	3,087
5	Cambodia	106	301	450	632
6	Kenya	-	11,000	12,000	13,000
7	Tanzania	-	5,200	6,500	8,500
8	Benin	79	196	267	1,789
9	South Africa	29,000	33,000	34,000	35,000
10	Guinea	301	418	533	2,055
11	Jamaica	-	1,500	1,500	1,500
12	Chile	200	400	1,000	2,000
13	Peru	180	180	2,575	3,662
TOTAL		39,997	81,952	250,993	274,106

TABLE-4:
IDWF affiliates in the project countries as of December 2015

S.No.	Country	Name of Affiliate
1	Hongkong	Hong Kong Federation of Asian Domestic Workers Unions (FADWU)
2	India	Self-Employed Workers Association (SEWA), National Domestic Workers Movement (NDWM), National Domestic Workers Federation (NDWF)
3	Indonesia	Jala PRT
4	Nepal	Home Workers Trade Union of Nepal (HUN)
5	Cambodia	Cambodia Domestic Workers Network (CDWN)
6	Kenya	Kenyan Union of Domestic, Hotels, Educational Institutions, Hospitals and Allied Workers (KUDHEIHA)
7	Tanzania	Conservation, Hotel, Domestic and Allied Workers Union (CHODAWU)
8	Benin	Syndicat des Employés d'hotel de Maison (SYNEHM)
9	South Africa	South African Domestic Service and Allied Workers Union (SADSAWU)
10	Guinea	Syndicat National des Employés de Maison (SYNEM)
11	Jamaica	Jamaica Household Workers Union (JHWU)
12	Chile	Federación Nacional de Sindicatos de Trabajadoras de Casa Particular (FESINTRACAP)
13	Peru	Centro de Capacitación para Trabajadores del Hogar (CCTH), Federación de Trabajadores y Trabajadoras del Hogar Remunerador del Peru (FENTRAHOGARP), Instituto de Promoción y Formación de Trabajadoras del Hogar (IPROFOTH), Sindicato de Trabajadoras y Trabajadores del Hogar de la Región Lima (SINTRAHOL)

Significant development was achieved in the African region, where a regional network was launched bringing together 18 domestic worker organizations with a cumulative membership of 107,272. The key objective of the African Domestic Workers' Network is to build a strong workers' network to achieve improved legislation and better working conditions for African domestic workers. The African Regional Coordinator of IDWF, Vicky Kanyoka provided a brief history and elaborated on the work of African Domestic Worker' Network (AFDWN): *"The first workshop of domestic workers in Africa was organized with technical support from WIEGO in the year 2010. It was attended by nine domestic worker organizations and was the first step towards bringing together the domestic worker organizations of Africa. This was the time when either the domestic worker organizations in Africa were dormant or a small and an invisible part of the multi-sector unions. Domestic workers were not organized, they were shy and publicly didn't demand for their rights as workers. Since the adoption of C189, the IDWF has worked in partnership with*

their affiliates to build their capacity. The launching of the African Domestic Workers Network on 16 June 2013 opened a new historical page for the domestic workers in the region. The network aimed to bring all domestic workers organizations together in order to strengthen the solidarity and unity of domestic workers trade unions representing domestic workers rights, and hence contribute to a strong International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF). The issues of domestic workers in Africa are the same, yet unique from other continents due to its history, political situation, and economy. We discuss specific issues affecting domestic workers and look for joint solutions. Membership of domestic workers has increased since we started the African Domestic Workers' Network. We have 18 affiliates with a membership of 107,272. Increase in membership has brought power to the domestic workers. Guinea has the youngest domestic worker organization, which was started by Asmaou Bah in 2009. It started small, but today they are meeting the Ministry of Labour and demanding them to ratify C189. Domestic worker leaders in Guinea called 15 media houses and articulated their demands. This is big for domestic workers who didn't see themselves as workers and thought they had no rights."



Launch of the African Domestic Worker's Network in Cape Town, South Africa 2013.
Photo: S. Trevino

The increase in IDWF's membership was a result of the organizing work of the IDWF leadership and staff, its affiliates and the engagement of ITUC and ILO with national unions to include domestic work in the agenda. IDWF supported the grassroots organization with trainings, exchange visits, and workshops, which provided a platform for organizations from within a country, as well as across countries, to network and share their experiences on increasing the membership on a sustained basis. During the 2012-15 period, a total of 3,279 domestic workers participated in trainings, workshops, and conferences organized by the IDWF.

With the passing of ILO C189, ITUC and ILO began to encourage national unions to include domestic workers in their unions or accommodate domestic workers in important dialogues. National Unions extended their support to small domestic worker organizations to increase and strengthen their membership. For example, in India the Central Trade Unions created a platform for smaller unions and associations of domestic workers and agreed to include issues of domestic workers demands in national agendas, which created visibility for the domestic worker agenda, encouraging more domestic workers to join unions and associations.

BENEFITS OF JOINING A UNION:

SAVITABEN HALDAR, SELF-EMPLOYED WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION (SEWA), INDIA

Savitaben Haldar has been a member of SEWA, Delhi, for over seven years and has attended many trainings and workshops organized by SEWA, Delhi. She is 35 years old and has been working as a domestic worker for over 17 years in Delhi. When asked about the benefits of being part of the union, she said *"Organizers from SEWA used to visit my locality every week and encouraged us to join SEWA. But, for over two years, I didn't. Then one day I saw my friends joining it and I joined too by paying a membership fee. They organized monthly meetings where we were made aware of our rights as domestic workers. I also attended leadership trainings. Earlier I used to never bargain with Madams (employers), nor ask for holidays. In fact, they used to deduct my salary even if I took one day off. I used to work every single day of the month, all through the year. Later, I took this leaflet provided by SEWA to Madams and read it for them. It mentioned my right as a worker, right to holidays, laws against harassment, etc. First she made a face, but later she started treating me better. I took Sundays off and asked for a 10% increase in salary...everything was approved. As an individual I was even scared to walk on the street. Now I am not even scared to bargain with my Madams."* She further adds that *"Delhi is a city where a lot of migrant workers come from Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Assam. I too have migrated from Jharkhand. We all live in the same slum and work in the same upper-class locality. But we never got together to bargain with the employers. Once we joined SEWA, we weren't from Bengal or Jharkhand, we were domestic workers who needed to support each other and fight for our rights. I am now not only a part of SEWA, which is a national union, but we also have an international federation of domestic workers. There are a lot of people like me across the world who are fighting the same battle. We are in it together."*

Increases in membership and increased activities of domestic workers organizations, created visibility for domestic workers on national and international forums. In Chile, the President of SINTRACAP, Ruth Olate, was invited by President Michelle Bachelet to be one of the observers from the trade unions to that country's on-going constitutional amendments. In Tanzania, four domestic workers together with the General Secretary of CHODAWU met the Parliament committee of Social welfare in Dodoma, where they gave their testimonies, presented the issues domestic workers face in Tanzania, and demanded the ratification of C189. The Ministers of Parliament committed to extending the discussion in the next session. In Indonesia and Cambodia, domestic workers were invited on radio and television programmes to discuss the issues faced by domestic workers and

the need for ratification of ILO C189. In India, in November 2014, 350 women domestic workers from various member organizations of the National Platform for Domestic Workers (NPDW) attended the Public Hearing on Domestic Workers. Twenty-five cases of domestic workers were documented and presented, out of which seven were presented to a jury.

Domestic workers represented themselves at various international forums. In 2012, a two-day meeting was held to review ITUC's 12 X 12 campaign,⁸ C189, past activities, and future plans. The meeting was attended by 80 participants, of which 12 were domestic workers. The IDWF team was also part of a delegation to the ILC discussion on the "Transition from the Informal to Formal Economy Recommendation" (which applies to all workers in the informal economy, including domestic workers).

The IDWF and its leadership were honoured with awards both nationally and internationally. These awards not only recognized the extraordinary work and achievements of the IDWF and its leadership, but also validated the work of the organization. In February 2013, the American Federation of Labour and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) gave the IDWF the 2013 George Meany-Lane Kirkland Human Rights Award. The Global Fairness Initiative honoured IDWF President Myrtle Witbooi with the 2015 Global Fairness Award (as mentioned above). This extraordinary recognition of Myrtle's lifetime achievement celebrated her years of organizing domestic workers in South Africa and around the world. On 3 June 2015, the IDWF received the Silver Rose Award for "Organizing International Solidarity" from SOLIDAR. The award honored the IDWF's achievements in building a strong, democratic, and united domestic workers' global organization to protect and advance domestic workers' rights. Furthermore, in March 2015, Ruth Olate and Luisa Cuevas from FESINTRACAP received municipal recognition as women leaders and for their work.

INCREASED VISIBILITY AND RESCUE WORK THROUGH COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Throughout the programme period, the IDWF has worked extensively towards creating multiple communication channels – such as the IDWF Web site, Facebook page, Twitter, Emails, e-newsletter, SMS, WhatsApp, Viber, leaflets, brochures, television, and radio – to increase the voice and visibility of domestic workers. These communication strategies were employed to:

1. Create awareness about the issues of domestic workers and the work of the IDWF and its affiliates and reach a wider audience, including policymakers, researchers, other organizations, and the general public;
2. Keep the affiliates of the federation connected about each other's activities, achievements, struggles, international events, policy changes and developments pertaining to domestic workers; and
3. Increase the understanding of IDWF about the plight of domestic workers in different parts of the world.

⁸ In December 2011, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) launched the 12 x 12 worldwide campaign to get 12 countries to ratify ILO Convention No. 189 by the end of 2012. ITUC has continued this campaign to get countries across the world to ratify C189.

During the 2012-15 period the IDWF published 22 e-newsletters and disseminated them to 10,000 subscribed members through Emails, Facebook, and Twitter. The IDWF website (<http://idwfed.org>), was regularly maintained in English, French, and Spanish with updated news, activities, resources, discussions, information on affiliates, and campaigns. Posting of news, in particular those from the IDWF affiliates, was done on a daily basis. The site used a document management system where affiliates could also share information and communicate internally with the 10,000 subscribers. The web developer also maintained Facebook pages, Twitter, and social media campaigns.

From 2012 to 2015, 254 domestic workers received social media training that included the use of computers, phones, internet, using email and social media for campaigns, and how to use the IDWF Communication Network.

The IDWF's communication channels were extensively used for awareness creation and advocacy tools. As per an internal survey conducted by IDWF, communication with the affiliates and dissemination rates for news and information increased by 78 per cent and the IDWF member database increased by 600 per cent. 67 per cent of affiliates in 15 countries reported using campaign materials developed by IDWF. At the same time, there were cases where distressed domestic workers got in touch with the IDWF on their Facebook page and communication networks and were rescued due to followed interventions at various levels. One such case was of Iscah, who managed to escape from Saudi Arabia, where her employers physically and sexually abused her and treated her like a slave.

RESCUE WORK USING THE IDWF COMMUNICATION CHANNEL, ISCAH, KENYA

Iscah, a 23 year-old Kenyan domestic worker approached the Cheruto Agency (a recruitment company) to work abroad. They sent her to Saudi Arabia in September 2014. On arrival, through a local agent, she was sent to work in a house. They refused to pay her and threatened to kill her, so she ran away from the house and reported her situation to the local police. The police helped her recover her wages, but then returned her to the same employer. Things got worse from there. Iscah recalls that *"My boss took me to this house. They locked me in a room for five days without food, without water but with a bathroom. I was drinking bathroom water. I was menstruating, and the men would insult me. They would point a gun at my head, telling me I had to go back to work."*

Iscah was further sold to another couple for USD 4,000. Iscah narrates her ordeal: *"I didn't agree, but I had no option. They seized my mobile phone and the wife used to threaten me with*



Iscah Acheng, back home and free again in Kenya campaigns for other migrant domestic workers trapped in Saudi Arabia.

Photo: Naomi Samantha/Equal Times

iron hooks, with a knife. She wanted me to work more and more. I would wake up at 6:00 a.m. and then I would work for almost 18 to 20 hours a day. Seven days a week, no rest. When I asked when I would be paid, she said it would cost me my life."

On one such instance when Iscah was almost stabbed by a kitchen knife by her employer, the five year-old child of the employer saw the struggle and reported it to her grandmother. The grandmother helped Iscah get her phone back and provided her with internet access. Iscah communicated with her mother, who encouraged her to be hopeful. While looking for help online, Iscah came across the IDWF Facebook page. Iscah says *"It (IDWF) was fighting for the rights of domestic workers. I saw a picture of an Indian lady; her arms were chopped off by her boss. I commented it was inhuman, not acceptable. I decided to share my story. I didn't expect to get any help because I had lost hope."* Iscah uploaded a video of herself with the name Ellen, to protect her identity. On the Facebook page, Elizabeth Tang, General Secretary of IDWF asked Iscah where she was. Elizabeth connected Iscah with Marieke Koning, a policy advisor at the ITUC in Brussels. ITUC-Africa wrote a letter to Kenya's labour minister requesting immediate repatriation, listing alleged abuses including beatings, death threats, sexual harassment, captivity, non-payment, and starvation. Marieke kept in touch with Iscah.

Finally, in November 2015, the pressure seemed to work. Iscah recalls that *"the grandfather told me to put on that black long dress. I was afraid because I thought maybe they'd seen the video. I took my phone and got into the car. The person who took me was an 18-year-old boy from another family. My boss was not in the city at that time. The woman went for a walk."* Iscah was dropped off at a government labour office and was given a phone to speak with a Saudi Labour Ministry official. *"He told me he got the information from Marieke, who wrote him a letter. He told me I was safe."* After 14 months of inhuman treatment, Iscah managed to return to her family in Kenya. While Iscah was waiting for her repatriation to Kenya in a detention centre, she saw other women in protective custody. She said *"the ladies told me they were there for months. Some even have kids. Ladies had been raped, got pregnant. They are still there. Some are affected psychologically, so they are being treated as they wait for help to come back home."*

Back in Kenya, Iscah – who aspired to become a journalist – says she'll look for work in a hotel as a waitress and continue her activism. She said, *"I am planning to assist my other sisters who are back there in detention. I want to communicate to the Kenyan Government to see how to help them to come back home. I'm just hearing them talking about it, but I don't see them rushing to help."*

LEGAL RIGHTS AND PROTECTION FOR DOMESTIC WORKERS

Ratification of C189 or any positive change in laws and policies for domestic workers can be attributed to many stakeholders, including the domestic worker organizations, who have worked tirelessly for years to establish decent work for domestic workers. IDWF's role in ensuring legal rights and protection for domestic workers across the 15 project countries was to build the capacity of its affiliates through leadership and advocacy trainings, create alliances between domestic worker organizations, and, with the support of organizations like the ILO, IUF, ITUC, and WIEGO, conduct global campaigns, create communication materials in different languages, and increase the visibility of the affiliates' work through different communication channels (as mentioned above).

During the project period, over 800 domestic workers participated in 23 dialogues and negotiation meetings with the country governments in Benin, Cambodia, Chile, Guinea, India, Jamaica, Peru, South Africa, and Tanzania. Forty public events were held by 5,621 domestic workers, creating awareness about C189 and domestic worker rights in all the countries where the project was implemented. Regional meetings were conducted to enhance skills on networking, negotiating, and advocacy, and to increase knowledge regarding labour rights. Two-hundred-fifty-two domestic workers from 15 countries attended these regional meetings and later reported their increased capacity in addressing domestic worker issues at both the national and global levels. The IDWF created different awareness materials, like video clips, leaflets, t-shirts, posters, handbooks, etc., which were translated into 19 languages and distributed widely. In an internal survey carried out with the IDWF affiliates, 67 per cent of affiliates in 15 countries reported using awareness materials created by IDWF.

Given below is a list of positive steps taken towards ensuring decent work for domestic workers in the respective countries.

Uruguay: Uruguay was the first country to have ratified ILO C189 on 16 June 2012. In 2013, the Tripartite Group working on the Domestic Work Sector at the Wages Council of Uruguay – namely the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, the Union of Domestic Workers (SUTD), and the employers' association Liga de Amas de Casa (LACCU) – signed a new collective agreement which raised domestic workers' minimum wage and set adjustment rates according to three salary bands.

South Africa: Since the ILO's adoption of C189 in June 2011, SADSAWU had been lobbying the South African Government for its ratification. Even though C189 wasn't ratified, efforts were made to improve the working conditions of domestic workers. In December 2012, SADSAWU successfully lobbied for an increase in minimum wages from ZAR 1,746 (USD 119) per month to ZAR 1,877 (USD 128) per month, to be increased on an annual basis. In 2013, SADSAWU was able to negotiate for free housing for domestic workers. In March 2013, twelve SADSAWU leaders gathered outside the gates of Parliament for an all-night vigil to voice their demand for ratification of C189. Finally, in June 2013, South Africa ratified ILO C189. SADSAWU, along with Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), launched the "My Fair Home" campaign in South Africa, where 350 employers signed a pledge to uphold the rights of domestic workers in their homes and communities.

Chile: FESINTRACAP continuously pressured the national government to ratify C189. In 2013, FESINTRACAP organized two public events supported by the IDWF in Santiago de Chile, demanding ratification of C189 and decent working conditions for domestic workers. These events were attended by 300 domestic workers and covered by two television interviews, two radio programmes and a press conference. In September 2014, a policy dialogue was conducted between domestic worker leaders and members of congress. Two main issues were discussed: the ratification of C189 and the Domestic Workers' Bill. The Minister of Labour highlighted the advocacy work and contributions of domestic workers' organizations, like FESINTRACAP, *Sindicato Único de Trabajadoras de la Casa Particular (SINDUTCAP)*, and *Asociación Nacional de Empleadas de Casa Particular (ANECAP)*. By the end of the meeting, the Bill was passed with a majority vote. This Bill incorporated requirements such as written contracts, a maximum 45 hour work week (instead of 75 hours or more, which had been the norm), and rest periods on Saturdays and Sundays. This Bill was followed by the ratification of C189 on 10 June 2015.



IDWF representatives with the Minister of Labour at the Congress in Chile after the passing of Bill 20.786 in 2014.
Photo: S. Trevino

India: The Indian Government has yet to ratify C189. From 2012-2015, NDWM, SEWA, and other domestic worker organizations, lobbied for ratification of C189, as well as interim legislations to ensure decent work for domestic workers in India. The IDWF affiliates in India achieved the following:

- Created platforms for domestic workers to discuss national legislation;
- Initiated a rally of over 500 domestic worker members and a post card campaign pressuring the government to ratify C189;
- Organized public hearings on the affidavits filed by domestic workers in four states in India;
- Initiated exchange visits between domestic workers of different states.

Some of the positive legal changes carried out by the Indian government during this period included setting minimum wages in seven states and including domestic workers in the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013. The National Policy for Domestic Workers is also being readied through the partnership between the Labour Ministry and the unions. It contains salient features like increased minimum wages, weekly rest days, social security coverage, and mandatory leave.

Brazil: Despite a large population of domestic workers and a government which strongly supported C189 in the ILO negotiations, Brazil has not ratified C189. This is due to a comprehensive and complicated change of legislation, including the constitution, which would be necessary in order to be able to ratify C189. The National Federation of Domestic Workers (FENTRAD) organized three workshops in 2012-2013 where domestic workers discussed how to achieve legal reforms. FENTRAD also actively campaigned for ratification of C189 with other domestic worker organizations from Uruguay, Chile, and Peru. Following a long struggle and negotiations with the government in March 2013, a constitutional amendment was passed unanimously in the Brazilian Senate, which established 16 new rights for domestic workers, including the right to overtime pay, a maximum eight hour work day, and a 44 hour work week. This law provides domestic workers with workers' rights equal to those in other sectors. However, in June 2015, another law was passed to regulate constitutional amendment 72, which reduced the rights of domestic workers. The two main issues raised by domestic workers were 1) the exclusion of "daily independent workers" from the definition of domestic workers, and 2) the prescheduling of inspections, which protects employers and does not serve to promote fundamental rights for victims of practices such as child labour, slave labour, abuse, and torture. Domestic workers' organizations in Brazil, like FENATRAD, *Central Única dos Trabalhadores* (CUT), and *Unión General de Trabajadores* (UGT), came together in their demand to revoke the new law. The IDWF joined hands with ITUC to send a letter in support of domestic worker organizations in Brazil to President Dilma Rousseff to veto the Senate Bill regulating Constitution Amendment 72.

Tanzania: Since the ILO's adoption of C189 in 2011, the IDWF has been working closely with its affiliate CHODAWU to advocate for the ratification of C189 in Tanzania. In a 2012 IDWF workshop, gaps in the existing labour laws were identified. These gaps were presented to the Tripartite Committee of domestic workers, employer representatives, and government through the Ministry of Labour and Employment. The presentation was also supported by the participation of other activist stakeholders such as the ILO, FES, and WIEGO. This initial presentation led to the launch of the Tripartite Action Plan in February 2014, which was a step towards ratifying C189. The launch was officiated by the then Minister of Labour, the Hon. Gaudencia Kabaka. A list of recommendations was also provided to the Labour, Economic and Social Council (LESCO) responsible for the ratification of C189. In 2013, the government increased the minimum wage for domestic workers by 55 per cent. In 2015, four domestic workers with the General Secretary of CHODAWU met the Parliament Committee of Social Welfare, provided their testimonies, and urged the MPs to ratify C189. The MPs committed to further discussions. Meanwhile, a report on the process towards ratification of C189 in Tanzania was developed by the IDWF.

Peru: In 2013, major domestic workers organizations, like SINTRAHOL, FENTRAHOGARP, and IPROFOTH, jointly lobbied for the ratification of C189. They organized a lively march through the streets of Lima, followed by a rally outside the Congress building. Subsequent to the demonstration, a group of five representatives of domestic workers organizations were invited to speak at a Congress session on the need for ratification. In October 2015, a delegation from the domestic workers union went to the Congress of Peru. Dr. Rosa Mavila – one of the legislators – agreed to take the initiative on amendments to the Domestic Workers' Law (Law 27986), which didn't meet the decent work conditions laid out by ILO C189.

Indonesia: In 2012, the IDWN and WIEGO supported the formation of the KAPPRT (a domestic workers' action committee), which brought together Jala PRT (a domestic workers union) and three main trade union centres, with the shared goals of ratification of C189 and the passing of the Domestic Workers' Bill. Despite SMS campaigns, rallies, and a hunger strike, the Domestic Workers' Bill was not passed. A regulation by the Minister of Manpower and Transmigration (No.2) was issued in January 2015 which mentioned the right of domestic workers to information, wages, adequate rest, holidays, and "good treatment", though these rights for domestic workers were far below international labour standards set out by C189.

Nepal: In 2014, Swatantrata Abhiyan and HUN conducted a seminar with 22 Parliamentarians on Nepal's Law on Domestic Work and C189. In the seminar, Parliamentary members of the International Relation and Labour Committee, and the Women and Child Committee and Subcommittee, made a public commitment to revise the definition and registration process of domestic work and workers in the proposed civil code bill 2071 (currently pending in Parliament). In 2015, domestic worker leaders and policymakers held a meeting to address the issues domestic workers face post-earthquake. The same issues were further released to the media, including a radio channel.

Kenya: A 2012 ruling of Kenya's High Court placed domestic workers under the national Employment Law, where verbal contracts have the potential to confer rights that are enforceable. The judge also ruled that domestic workers were to be included in national minimum wage legislation and other provisions of employment law. Due to this court ruling and added pressure from KUDHEIHA, the minimum wage for domestic workers was increased by 14 per cent in 2013. In the same year, the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) made it mandatory for employers to register domestic workers and contribute monthly payments to NSSF to cover workers' healthcare and pensions.

Cambodia: During the project period, CDWN, along with other domestic worker organizations, consistently lobbied the government through meetings, rallies, campaigns, and petitions. Finally, in 2015, the Government of Cambodia accepted inputs from CDWN and adopted a road map towards ratification of C189. Regarding migrant domestic workers, two Memorandums of Understanding were signed between the Governments of Cambodia and Malaysia, which included CDWN recommendations such as rest periods, holidays, the right to hold a passport, the right to join associations and trade unions, the right to communicate with family at home, and the right to a standard labour contract, etc.

Guinea: In 2012, The *Syndicat travailleurs domestiques* (SYNTRAD), was invited by the President of Guinea – Ms Rabiadou Serah Diallo – to conduct a two-day workshop in the Parliament buildings. The workshop was attended by 35 domestic workers along with the Minister of Labour, who indicated willingness to ratify C189. In 2013, 45 domestic workers participated in the meeting with two representatives from the government, two from the trade union confederation, and three Parliamentarians who provided their testimonies and demanded labour laws for domestic workers. In 2015, the Executive committee of SYNEM (IDWF Affiliate) went to meet the Minister of Labour to urge him to ratify C189 and made a statement on national television. Even though C189 wasn't ratified during the project period, the government was compelled to increase domestic workers' minimum wage.

Benin: In 2013, Raimi Fataou, General Secretary of SYNEHM, met with the President of Parliament as well as the General Director of Labour (GDL) in two separate meetings. The GDL reported that copies of C189 had already been circulated among members of Parliament. He then invited SYNEHM to take part in a government study of C189. The Government of Benin has shown a positive response towards ratification of C189.

Jamaica: The Government of Jamaica also seemed to hold a positive view on the ratification of C189. In 2012, on International Domestic Workers Day, the Prime Minister issued a statement in support of domestic workers. In 2013, IDWF leaders Myrtle Witbooi and Ida Le Blanc, General Secretary of the National Union of Domestic Employees of Trinidad and Tobago, along with the President of the Jamaica Household Workers Ida Le Blanc, General Secretary of the National Union of Domestic Employees of Trinidad and Tobago, Shirley Pryce, met the Prime Minister and the Minister of Labour to discuss ratification of C189. Prime Minister Simpson-Miller expressed support for ratification, while the Minister of Labour said that the Government was reviewing labour legislation against the articles of the Convention and aimed to ratify it in the near future.

Hong Kong: Hong Kong has a considerable population of migrant domestic workers coming from other Asian countries, so the majority of advocacy activities were focused on these international workers. In 2014, on International Migrants Day, a rally of 50 members of FADWU, along with members of other domestic workers organizations, visited the Consulates of Nepal, Thailand and the Philippines, and the Hong Kong Central Government Office to present the following demands:

- Ratify C189;
- Enforce monitoring of migrant domestic worker employment agencies;
- Abolish mandatory live-in requirement for migrant domestic workers; and
- Abolish the “2-week rule” and remove discriminatory policies and laws.

In 2015, on International Domestic Workers Day, FADWU organized a celebratory rally launching the “My Fair Home” campaign to raise awareness about the lives of domestic workers in Hong Kong and to provide dignity for domestic workers.

ADVOCACY FOR DECENT WORK:

HESTER STEPHENS, PRESIDENT, SADSAWU

Hester Stevens is the President of SADSAWU and has been a domestic worker for over fifty years. She said that things have changed for domestic workers from the time she started working as a domestic worker. She narrates her personal story: *"I started working as a domestic worker at the age of 14 years. I studied till class five and then had to start working to support my parents. This was the time of Apartheid and as a black, poor South African, domestic worker was one of the very few work options that I had. I was a live-in domestic worker and worked all day and into the night. At the age of 19 years I became pregnant and my boyfriend deserted me. I was let off from work as I was pregnant. I went to live with my parents in a rural area. But, due to poverty, I had to soon return to Cape Town in search of work, as now I had one more mouth to feed. I left my young baby with my parents. The baby was still on breast milk and I had to leave. I used to cry everyday in Cape Town remembering my son. When I returned home after a year, my son couldn't recognize me. I took my son to Cape Town for further studies only when he was 15 years old. And my employer asked me to leave the house premises as families weren't allowed. At that time we were completely dependent on the whim of the employer. They dictated our salaries, hours of work, where we could live, what we could eat..."*

She recalls on how she started her journey as a trade unionist: *"I became a member of a union in the year 1984. Till then I didn't know that we as domestic workers even had any rights. From a dues-paying member, I soon started attending regular meetings, became a leader and from 1993-96 became the elected Vice President of the Union."* She added, *"we have worked tirelessly over the years for decent work conditions for domestic workers. We have sent countless letters to the government, stood outside Parliament, lobbied with different Ministries and ultimately the South African Government ratified C189. But we have many more things to do. We have minimum wages for domestic workers, which is revised every year. But, not all domestic workers are aware or receive the minimum wages. SADSAWU conducts awareness meetings and trainings for domestic workers, where they are informed about minimum wages and their right to demand for it. We also have negotiation meetings with the employers, if the worker wants us to intervene. But the government has not yet put a penalty on the employers in case they fail to pay minimum wages. And that is what we are lobbying for."*

In her concluding statement, she said that *"things have definitely changed. I didn't want my sisters to go through what I went through. Domestic workers have rights, laws...but now we need to ensure that these laws are implemented and workers receive decent working conditions."*



Hester Stephens during a demonstration with huge apron in Geneva, 2011.

Photo: D. Tsoutouras

INCREASE IN INCOME

Domestic workers in many countries reported increased income. One of the key reasons for this increase was the establishment of minimum wages. Domestic workers from the following countries reported income increases due to this factor:

1. **India:** Due to the continuous lobbying efforts of the unions, and the willingness of the State Governments, the minimum wage for domestic workers was fixed in seven states in India: in Bihar at INR 4,635 (USD 69) per month, Kerala at INR 8,610 (USD 129) per month, Odisha at INR 6,000 (USD 90) per month, Andhra Pradesh at INR 6,324 (USD 95) per month, Maharashtra at INR 8,000 (USD 120) per month, Tamil Nadu at INR 6,150 (USD 92) per month, and Rajasthan at INR 5,642 (USD 85) per month.
2. **South Africa:** Since the year 2003, the minimum wage for domestic workers was set at ZAR 800 (USD 55) per month. In 2012, SADSAWU successfully lobbied for an increase in wages for domestic workers to ZAR 1,500 (USD 103) per month. They also managed to get this increase on an annual basis. The wages for domestic workers increased in 2013 to ZAR 1,925 (USD 132) per month, in 2014 to ZAR 2,067 (USD 142) per month and in 2015 to ZAR 2,230 (USD 153) per month. From 2012 to 2015, there was an increase of almost 48 per cent.
3. **Tanzania:** The Tanzanian government ratified ILO C182 (Worst Forms of Child Labour) in the year 2004. Once ratified, the Government created a Minimum Wage Board for Domestic Workers. Despite having a Board, the minimum wage was not specified. After consistent persuasion from domestic worker organizations like CHODAWU, the Tanzanian Government increased the minimum wage by 55 per cent in the year 2013. This was implemented only in the year 2014, when live-in domestic workers were paid TZS 40,000 (USD 25) per month and live-out domestic workers were paid TZS 80,000 (USD 50) per month.
4. **Kenya:** With a court ruling and added pressure from KUDHEIHA, the minimum wage for domestic workers was increased on an annual basis from the year 2012 onwards. Before the project period, the minimum wage for domestic workers was KES 6,743 (USD 66) per month. The minimum wage increased to KES 8,579 (USD 85) per month and KES 9,780 (USD 96) per month in the year 2012 and 2013 respectively. In 2015, the minimum wage was further increased by 12 per cent, making it KES 10,954 (USD 108) per month. From 2012 to 2015, the minimum wage increased by 62 per cent.
5. **Uruguay:** In 2013, the Tripartite Group working on the Domestic Work Sector at the Wages Council of Uruguay – namely the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, the Union of Domestic Workers (SUTD), and the employers' association Liga de Amas de Casa (LACCU) – signed a new collective agreement which raised domestic workers' minimum wage to UYU 12,277 (USD 396) per month.
6. **Chile:** Due to the continuous lobbying work of FESINTRACAP, in December 2014, Chile's President Michelle Bachelet introduced new legislation, which included fair remuneration. As a result, the minimum wages were set at CLP 250,000 (USD 377) per month.
7. **Brazil:** In March 2013, a constitutional amendment was passed unanimously in the Brazilian Senate which established 16 new rights for domestic workers, including minimum wages which were increased from BRL 678 (USD 195) per month to BRL 724 (USD 208) per month.

Establishment of a minimum wage or an increase in minimum wage benefited the workers. Hester Stephens, President of SADSAWU explained that *“minimum wages in South Africa increased on an annual basis. Domestic workers who benefited from it are the ones who are aware of the minimum wages and the ones who can negotiate with their employers. SADSAWU's role is to create awareness and build the capacity of their members to negotiate. The government is yet to set a penalty clause for the employers if they fail to pay the minimum wages”*. Nalini Nayak, Secretary of SEWA Kerala, had a similar point to add: *“Minimum wages for domestic workers is not publicized. It is the Labour Department and domestic worker union's job to publicize minimum wages for domestic workers. Wherever domestic workers are organized into unions they have managed to negotiate for wages above the prescribed minimum wages.”*

STRENGTHENED WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AMONG DOMESTIC WORKER ORGANIZATIONS

One of the key objectives of the programme was to strengthen women's leadership in the domestic worker organizations. The IDWF conducted and supported its affiliates with trainings, workshops, and conferences focused on global dialogues pertaining to domestic workers. It also facilitated exchanges of ideas among domestic worker organizations (and between different countries) and the creation of platforms where domestic workers – especially women – could voice their issues and find joint solutions. Furthermore, the IDWF facilitated the development of skills such as management and planning, communications, and leadership building.

Over the project period, 45 workshops, conferences, and seminars were conducted to train 2,218 domestic workers. The majority of participants were women domestic workers and the topics of training (which were tailored to the expressed needs of each affiliate) included organizational development, management, policy and advocacy, organizing, gender awareness, and labour rights. Four regional workshops were held in Jamaica, Chile, Indonesia, and Hong Kong with 60 domestic worker participants. These workshops were organized to facilitate the creation of strategies regarding global ratification of C189 and to create access to labour rights and social security for domestic workers. In 2015, a strategic planning workshop was held in Hong Kong, resulting in a five-year Strategic Plan for the IDWF for the period of 2016-2020.

All of these trainings, workshops, and conferences built the capacity of leaders of domestic worker organizations, as well as created a new cadre of leadership.

Lita Anggraini is the Founder and National Coordinator of Jala PRT, Indonesia. Domestic workers from Jala PRT (and Lita herself) have attended trainings and workshops organized by IDWF. Lita reports that *“The most useful trainings conducted by IDWF was on organizing and unionizing. Every country has different political and social conditions and we are equipped to lobby with our government. What we need to learn is the different methods of organizing domestic workers. I found the organizing methods of US and India very useful. We have tried to borrow some ideas from these trainings. What I would suggest to IDWF is to have more indepth trainings on organizing, where we can visit the field and see for ourselves how members are organized.”*

NEED FOR EMPOWERING AND LEADERSHIP BUILDING:

MARCELINA BAUTISTA, IDWF REGIONAL COORDINATOR FOR LATIN AMERICA

Marcelina Bautista is the IDWF Regional Coordinator for Latin America. She started working as a domestic worker at the age of 14 in Mexico City, and over the ensuing years founded a Support and Training Centre for Domestic Workers (CACEH). In 2014, Marcelina went on to achieve the Mexican National Award for Equality and No Discrimination, recognizing her work with domestic workers. When questioned about the impact of domestic worker laws and policy on domestic workers, she answered *“Well, realistically, achievement of legislation is one thing and its impact on the ground is other. How to make sure laws are implemented? Domestic worker organizations need to share information, and need to empower domestic workers. Many countries have achieved positive laws for domestic workers, but the domestic worker organizations are not equipped to make use of it. Empowering domestic workers and building leadership is of vital importance. Domestic worker needs to have tools to defend her rights. That is the most important thing in enforcing laws. At IDWF there is a focus to strengthen the domestic worker organization and build leadership. Over the years many new leaders have joined the movement and have become spokesperson for domestic workers in their countries. They speak on radio and television about the issues of domestic workers.”*



Marcelina Bautista visits Bolivia in 2015.

Photo: Courtesy of Centro de Apoyo y Capacitación para Empleadas del Hogar (CACEH)

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS, CHALLENGES, AND LESSONS LEARNED

The Economic and Employment Rights: Advancing Domestic Workers' Leadership project element was successfully implemented, meeting all of its five key outcomes. To understand the success factors, challenges, and lessons learned, interviews were conducted with IDWF's leaders and coordinators: Myrtle Witbooi (President, IDWF), Elizabeth Tang (General Secretary, IDWF), Vicky Kanyoka (Africa Coordinator, IDWF), Ip Pui Yu, Fish (Asia Coordinator, IDWF), Marcelina Baustista (Latin America Coordinator, IDWF), and Sofia Trevino (Project Support Manager, WIEGO and IDWF Facilitator for Latin America). The key points listed below are a summary of the outcomes of those interviews.

Critical Success Factors

1. **Domestic Workers First:** IDWF is a federation of membership-based and member-led organizations of domestic workers where domestic workers make all the decisions and represent themselves. This includes the leadership and staff of IDWF, who come from trade union backgrounds. As domestic worker leaders build strategies and action plans, the ownership of these decisions is high and therefore the implementation of plans is efficient and effective on the ground.
2. **The IDWF's Global Footprint:** At this writing, the IDWF is a global federation of 57 domestic workers organizations representing 350,000 domestic workers from 46 countries (19 countries in Africa, 9 countries in Asia and the Pacific, 12 countries in Latin America and Caribbean, 5 countries in Europe and 1 country in North America). Due to the presence of IDWF affiliates in these countries, IDWF can represent domestic workers' issues and can implement activities across continents.
3. **The Domestic Worker Agenda Prioritized by ILO and ITUC:** Due to the ILO's adoption of C189 and the ITUC 12 X 12 Campaign, the domestic workers' agenda has been highlighted. The ILO, ITUC, and other organizations have increased funding for lobbying and ratification of ILO C189. Also, both ILO and ITUC have encouraged the national unions to include the domestic workers' agenda in their efforts, or to provide a supportive platform for domestic workers in their respective countries. Due to this, the IDWF and its affiliates have received funding to carry out advocacy and capacity building activities, as well as support from National Unions for their advocacy activities.
4. **Support from the IUF and WIEGO:** Both the IUF and WIEGO were instrumental in the formation of the IDWN and then the IDWF. They contributed to planning and fundraising activities and strengthened networking with other global unions and federations. WIEGO further supported the IDWF activities by facilitating the strategic planning process and by supporting the establishment of an improved communications plan and social media strategy and facilitated many workshops and events with domestic workers organizations.

Challenges and Their Root Cause

Despite the many achievements of the IDWF, there is a long road ahead to meet their objectives. There have been many challenges that still persist and will have to be dealt with by the organization in its coming years of work.

- 1. Impact of Ratification of C189 or improved Labour Reform on Domestic Workers:** Despite the positive changes in the laws and policies discussed above, the situation for domestic workers remains unequal to other wage earners in many countries. Changes to the law or to policies is a big step when it legally provides rights to domestic workers and, in the case of violation, when the employers could be punished and/or penalized. However, the law can't create a change in attitude when it comes to the labour inspector who takes complaints at his/her own discretion or an employer who continues to abuse a domestic worker with impunity. With the change in law, there has to be a simultaneous change in the people's attitude. A domestic worker must be viewed as a "worker earning wages in exchange for a service provided", and not as a "maid" or a "family member" or "help".
- 2. Additional Challenges for Migrant Domestic Workers:** Migrant domestic workers have even fewer rights than the domestic workers residing in the countries of their origin. Domestic workers migrate to a more developed country in search of better wages which they can use to educate their children, send money back for their families to their countries of origin, to study further, repay debts, etc. They generally get jobs through placement agencies. They migrate to a country where they don't have a support system, don't know the laws or their rights as domestic workers, and work in houses where they don't know the language. All of these factors make them vulnerable to abuse. There have been many instances where the passports of domestic workers have been taken away. They have been made to work 20 hours a day all through the week but yet are not paid for the services provided. Some have even been caged, abused, raped, and treated like slaves including in developed countries. Many unions also don't include migrants as their members due to regulatory issues, and national governments have not made accommodated migrant domestic workers through labour or human rights laws – in either sending or receiving countries. Migrant domestic workers' issues require separate focus, strategies, and programmes.
- 3. Layers of Discrimination for Domestic Workers:** There are layers of discrimination based on class, caste, race, ethnicity, and gender, which further make the issues of domestic workers more complex and distinct. Generally, domestic work falls to those who don't have other options. They face social and economic discrimination. For example, in India, many menial jobs – including domestic work – are done by workers from the "lower caste". In many states in India, toilets, even in private urban homes, are cleaned by the "untouchables" who belong to the lowest strata of the lower caste. Domestic workers belonging to lower castes are given food in different (generally old and broken) vessels and are not allowed to use washrooms in the houses of their employers. In many countries, like Chile, domestic workers require identity cards and uniforms to enter their employer's upmarket neighbourhoods and are not encouraged to walk outside the house. In countries like South Africa, domestic workers are presumed to be "black", or "coloured" (mixed race), and in many cases they will earn less than their "white" counterparts. And then there is discrimination based on gender. Better paid jobs in domestic work, like that of a security guard or a driver, are given to men as women are not "strong" or "skilled" enough for these jobs. These are deep-rooted issues; overcoming them will take years of sensitization.

LESSONS LEARNED

1. **Advocacy is an Organizing tool:** Organizing is the basis for any activity of membership-based organizations and a prerequisite for advocacy. In the IDWF's work, advocacy became a key organizing tool: domestic workers would get together to pressure their governments to implement C189. This key advocacy goal united domestic workers across the world. Furthermore, over the course of carrying out these advocacy campaigns, membership to workers groups increased, many dormant domestic worker organizations found new energy, and national, regional, and global networks of domestic workers were built.
2. **Need for Strategic Partnerships with Multiple Stakeholders:** Despite the single-minded focus and dedicated work of domestic workers, the IDWF wouldn't have achieved what it has in the past few years without the support of its partnerships. WIEGO has championed the IDWF at every stage – from institution building to supporting activities with both its financial as well as human resources. The IUF and GLI provided strategic vision and partnerships to IDWF as well as dedicated human resources. Human rights NGOs helped domestic workers in places where their rights were severely compromised, such as in the cases of abuse. ITUC and the ILO provided platforms for domestic workers to voice their issues, encouraged national unions to support domestic worker organizations, as well as encouraging national governments to adopt laws and policies in support of the rights of domestic workers to decent work.

CONCLUSION

WIEGO's Securing Economic Rights for Informal Women Workers Programme (2012-2015) was a successor to its Promoting Women's Economic Empowerment Programme (2009-2011). Both of these programmes were funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands to improve the position of women and girls in developing countries. The funding provided by MDG3 (2008-11) was instrumental in starting the domestic workers' movement and in the adoption of C189 by the ILC. Subsequently, the FLOW fund (2012-15) enabled the key achievements of this project-institution building: inception of the first women-led global domestic workers federation, expansion and recognition of IDWF, increase in IDWF's membership by over six times its original size, achievement of legal rights and protection for domestic workers in 15 countries, and increase in income due to securing minimum wages and strengthened women's leadership among domestic worker organizations.

The IDWF's strategic plan for the year 2016-2020 includes increasing the membership of IDWF, building the capacity of its affiliates, ratifying C189 in target countries, conducting campaigns and research studies, addressing the issues of migrant domestic workers, promoting gender equality and trade union rights in every country, and making governments accountable. IDWF will continue its activities as per its strategic plan and the demands of its affiliates. IDWF has achieved a minimum level of financial sustainability and capacity for fundraising. It will require increased funding to manage the growth achieved in the past seven years.

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About WIEGO: Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing is a global research-policy-action network that seeks to improve the status of the working poor, especially women, in the informal economy. WIEGO builds alliances with, and draws its membership from, three constituencies: membership-based organizations of informal workers, researchers and statisticians working on the informal economy, and professionals from development agencies interested in the informal economy. WIEGO pursues its objectives by helping to build and strengthen networks of informal worker organizations; undertaking policy analysis, statistical research and data analysis on the informal economy; providing policy advice and convening policy dialogues on the informal economy; and documenting and disseminating good practice in support of the informal workforce. For more information visit: www.wiego.org.



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

Securing Economic Rights for Informal Women Workers was supported by Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women (FLOW), Government of the Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.