



Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing

“Yes, We Did It!”

How the World’s Domestic Workers Won Their International Rights and Recognition



Celia Mather



Acknowledgements

The author would like to express her grateful thanks to:

- All those who gave their time to be interviewed (please see the full list at the end of the booklet), plus Sofia Trevino of WIEGO for helping with Spanish-language interviews.
- All those who provided comments and guidance on the drafts, especially Karin Pape (WIEGO/IDWN), Chris Bonner (WIEGO), Barbro Budin (IUF), Dan Gallin (GLI), Elizabeth Tang (IDWN), Anneke van Luijken (formerly IRENE/IDWN), and Demetria Tsoutouras and Sofia Trevino (WIEGO).

At the same time, she would like to offer her sincere apologies to the many who could have contributed valuable information and insights had there been enough time for more consultation and interviews.

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Publication date: October 2013
ISBN number: 978-92-95095-71-7

Published by Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO)
A Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee – Company No. 6273538, Registered
Charity No. 1143510

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Cover photograph by: S. Trevino
Design by: Julian Luckham of Luckham Creative

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“It was very significant to be listened to at the United Nations when decisions were being made. That was an unforgettable experience. I realized every moment that, with my voice, I was speaking for all the workers in this sector.

All work has dignity. We must stop being servants, the lowly ones, those people who deserve nothing. Now, for the first time, we can speak on our own terms.”

Juana Flores, National Domestic Workers’ Alliance, USA

“Nothing for us without us”

Slogan used by SADSAWU, South Africa

“Getting from the ‘kitchen table’ to the international negotiating table does not come out of the blue. The organized domestic workers had a vehicle, the IDWN, to step onto the international stage... Domestic workers had not only the ambition but showed the capability to make history.”

Karin Pape, former Coordinator, International Domestic Workers’ Network (IDWN)



*Domestic Worker
representatives from
Africa, ILC 2011.*



Photo: WIEGO

*Domestic Worker
representatives from
Asia, ILC 2011.*



Photo: WIEGO

*Domestic Worker
representatives from
Latin America, ILC 2011.*



Photo: WIEGO

Introduction

On June 16, 2011, the world's domestic workers and their supporters achieved a major step forward in extending worker and human rights. On that day, representatives of governments, employers and trade unions, meeting at the annual International Labour Conference (ILC) in Geneva, Switzerland, voted for a new Convention to protect the world's domestic workers.

Domestic workers have been ignored, denigrated, and indeed abused throughout history. We still don't know precisely how many domestic workers in the world there are, but we do know there are tens of millions. The vast majority are women, but there are also many millions of child labourers doing this work. Now they are officially recognized as "workers", with the labour and other rights of all other workers. They have become visible and their massive contribution towards society and the economy at large is starting to be valued.

International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No.189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers (or C189 for short) and its accompanying Recommendation (R201) were a long time coming. But in less than a decade, a huge momentum was built, and then a surprising and overwhelming majority of governments agreed to these global instruments.

Within the next two years, no fewer than eight countries had formally ratified C189. This means that they have agreed to put what the Convention says into their national legislation. They are, in the order of ratification, Uruguay, Philippines, Mauritius, Nicaragua, Italy, Bolivia, Paraguay and South Africa. With that number of countries signing up, it meant that C189 officially came into force at a global level on September 5, 2013. What is more, this was reported to be one of the highest number of ratifications ever in such a short period.

Meanwhile, as this booklet was being written, more countries were very close to ratifying, including Colombia and Germany. Others were also reportedly actively moving towards ratifying including Australia, Belgium, Costa Rica, Denmark, Guyana, and Norway. Yet more, such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Finland, Malawi, Namibia, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States had been improving their laws to give more protection to domestic workers. The European Commission had been encouraging countries in the European Union to implement the ILO Convention, too.

So C189 is proving to be an engine of change that the world's domestic workers fought so hard for. Much has yet to be done, though, to make sure that many more governments ratify C189, and then that they all properly implement the laws that should protect domestic workers.



More than that, there needs to be a seismic shift by society in general to respect and value the vital contribution of these workers, not just as something that is “right” but that is actually healthy for everyone, which especially includes the millions who employ domestic workers – many of whom are also workers and indeed union members.

There is no doubt that achieving C189 was a major and historic step forward. So how was this achieved? Where did the seeds come from? Who planted and tended them? Who played a part, and what roles did they each play? What lessons can be learnt for others who wish to promote a global society based on equality, justice, respect and rights – for all? This is what we look at in this booklet. In particular, we focus on and celebrate the role of domestic workers themselves and that of their organizations as the fundamental players in making their own history.

“On 16 June 2011, our dream became a reality, and we are free – slaves no more, but workers. We cannot stop now. We won’t stop until this ILO Convention is carried out. So we have work to do and, yes, we will be united as never before. The voices of domestic workers cannot be silenced.”



Photo: WIEGO

Myrtle Witbooi, Chairperson, International Domestic Workers’ Network (IDWN)

“Domestic workers won one of the best fought and most justified victories ever on 16 June 2011 when C189 was adopted. The voices, experiences and visions of domestic workers themselves were finally heard and respected not only within the trade union movement but also by governments and many employers.”



Photo: WIEGO

Ron Oswald, General Secretary, IUF global union federation for food and allied workers

1. How the World's Domestic Workers Got Organized

It was not until 2006 that domestic workers' organizations from across the world met each other at their first ever global conference. Until then, domestic workers had built organizations in many countries, and in Latin America they had even formed a regional confederation. However, across other borders, especially across world regions, they knew little of each other. They certainly had not yet mobilized or organized themselves globally.

There were a number of initiatives along the way. For example, domestic workers' organizations from Latin America, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Philippines, along with campaigners for women's rights and "wages for housework", met at the United Nations 4th World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, China, in September 1995. There, they decided to build an International Network of Workers in Domestic Service (INWDS) and to start demanding that they be recognized as "workers", but this sadly didn't get off the ground. The global labour movement was still focused on "waged" workers and on formal employment relations, and there was no momentum to support the domestic workers' initiative. Actions to organize domestic workers remained largely at the local level.

In some countries, domestic workers were legally barred from forming or joining trade unions, even though this violated the fundamental international labour rights that supposedly apply to all workers. They were simply not accepted as "workers" or "employees". Instead, they were "maids", "servants" or, condescendingly, "helpers", so some had formed their own associations. Elsewhere, though, trade unions specifically of domestic workers, or trade unions with domestic workers as part of their membership, did exist – some of them even for decades.

There was a growing interest among other concerned citizens too. Often after being approached by domestic workers, in many countries they helped to set up support organizations, of many different types. Women's groups, religious groups, migrant workers' groups, human rights organizations and others had encouraged domestic workers to get together, providing them with the space to do so and with support and advocacy. Many of these organizations were very fragile, and some did not last for long.

However, overall there was a growing mobilization of domestic workers' organizations, becoming more visible and making their voices heard. It was this that was the essential ingredient to winning C189 and the rights for all domestic workers that it contains. The pages that follow give a snapshot of the domestic workers' organizations around the world at that time, whose determination won C189.



Latin America

In Latin America, domestic workers have been organizing for a long time and have achieved many successes. For example:

- **Chile:** Domestic workers' organizing goes back as far as the 1920s, and the trade union SINTRACAP (Sindicato Interempresas de Trabajadoras de Casas Particulares) was founded in 1957, with branches across the country.
- **Brazil:** In the city of Sao Paulo, a domestic worker called Laudaline de Campos Mello started organizing with her fellow domestic workers in 1936. In 1997, the National Federation of Domestic Workers (FENATRAD) was founded. It had 35 unions affiliated to it by 2009, some of which engage in formal collective bargaining at a state level.
- **Costa Rica:** The ASTRADOMES Association of Household Workers was set up in 1991, with a membership largely of migrant domestic workers from neighbouring countries in Central America. It has won legal changes, such as the right to a day off a week.
- **Bolivia:** Trade unions for household workers were banned until the 1980s, but by 2003, the National Federation of Household Workers of Bolivia FENATRAHOB was successful in getting the Bolivian Parliament to pass a Household Workers Law (*Act No.2450: Ley de Regulación del Trabajo Asalariado del Hogar*). In 2006, a former domestic workers' leader, Casimira Rodriguez, was appointed Minister of Justice.
- **Peru:** Household workers' groups across the country, supported by the NGO IPROFOTH, successfully won a Household Work Law in 2003 which gives domestic workers the right to an employment contract, maximum working hours, annual leave, and more.
- **Uruguay:** Domestic workers have had equal rights as other workers since 2006, and the Sindicato Unico de Trabajadoras Domésticas (SUTD, Sole Union of Domestic Workers) negotiates on the tripartite wage board, along with the Housewives League of Uruguay, which represents the employers.

Latin America was the first world region to set up a confederation of domestic workers' organizations, the Latin America and Caribbean Confederation of Household Workers **CONLACTRAHO** (Confederación Latinoamericana y del Caribe de Trabajadoras del Hogar). It was founded in March 1988 when 11 Latin American household / domestic workers' organizations got together in Bogota, Colombia. Since then it has always been led by former domestic workers. Today, it has affiliated domestic workers' organizations in 13 Spanish and Portuguese-speaking countries, plus one from Canada, though it does not cover English or French-speaking Caribbean countries. CONLACTRAHO's conference in April 2006 resolved to work for an ILO Convention, then being discussed in their region (see the "Montevideo Declaration", page 25).

English-speaking Caribbean

- **Trinidad and Tobago:** The National Union of Domestic Employees (NUDE) began life in 1974 and was officially registered in 1982. It remained relatively small in numbers but very visible and active nationally and internationally, for example in ILO regional meetings in the late 1990s.
- **Jamaica:** The Jamaica Household Workers' Association was founded in 1991 following training workshops sponsored by the Jamaican Bureau of Women's Affairs. By 2010, the JHWA had over 1,000 members, which had more than doubled two years later. On March 15, 2013, the Association became a formal trade union, the Jamaica Household Workers' Union (JHWU).

North America

- **USA:** At a federal level, domestic workers have been excluded from the National Labor Relations Act and civil rights laws because they are not defined as "employees". This barred them from joining a union or from formally bargaining collectively to improve their working conditions. Then, in 2000, domestic workers in New York – many from Caribbean, Latin American and Asian immigrant communities – were among the first in the country to set up a formal organization, Domestic Workers United (DWU). Within two years, they had successfully won a city law requiring any employment agencies that place domestic workers to inform both the workers and their employers of workers' rights. DWU kept up its campaigning and alliance-building, and in 2010 won the ground-breaking New York State Domestic Workers Bill. Meanwhile, in 2007, the DWU was part of founding a new network in the USA at a gathering of domestic workers in Atlanta, Georgia. The first Congress of the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) was held a year later, and by 2010, some 30 domestic workers' organizations from across the country were involved.
- **Canada:** Support organizations for domestic workers have existed in various provinces of Canada for many years, including the Caregivers Association of Quebec (AAFQ in French) since 1975 and the West Coast Domestic Workers Association in British Columbia since the late 1980s. Before privatization, careworkers were also organized in some public sector unions. In Quebec, the AAFQ has a collaboration agreement with the Service Employees' Union (UES in French). In some provinces, such as in Ontario, with its Employment Standards Act of 2000, and also in Quebec, domestic workers gained legal employment rights, though these are hard to assert in reality. Also, migrant domestic workers' work permits are tied to the one employer, leaving them very vulnerable. So, from the mid-2000s, migrant rights groups started working with the unions, such as Migrante with the United Steelworkers Union.



Africa

- **South Africa:** The South African Domestic Workers' Union (SADWU) was founded in 1985, at a time when the labour movement in South Africa was starting to mobilize to undermine and eventually overthrow the racist Apartheid regime. The role of black "maids" in supporting white families, and yet being treated with abuse by their "madams", was strongly felt in the fight for equal rights in the country. This led the new ANC Government to include domestic workers in employment legislation in 1995. Financial difficulties led SADWU to close in 1997. It was replaced by the South African Domestic, Service and Allied Workers' Union (SADSAWU) in 2000, under the leadership of Myrtle Witbooi, who later became the first Chairperson of the International Domestic Workers' Network (IDWN).
- **Tanzania:** Domestic work is one of the key sectors of the Conservation, Hotels, Domestic and Allied Workers' Union (CHODAWU) set up in 1995. Domestic workers are recognized in the union Constitution and represented in all structures, including the Executive Committee. From 1996, the ILO International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) supported a campaign against child domestic work in the country, and this really helped gain public awareness and significant legal protection for domestic workers (see page 24).
- **Kenya:** The KUDHEIHA union began organizing domestic workers in the 1980s, gaining over 11,000 members. But then it stalled, and membership dropped to almost nothing. In the mid 2000s it got going again, supported by international union bodies such as the IUF/IDWN (see page 16) and ACILS/Solidarity Center (US). KUDHEIHA was hugely successful. By 2011, it had 15,000 domestic workers as members, and had achieved many legal changes that give domestic workers there the right to organize in unions, coverage under minimum wage and occupational health and safety regulations.
- **Bénin:** SYNEHM and SEHM/BA in the north of the country were set up in the early 2000s and by 2009 had about 500 members. In 2009, domestic workers were recognized as workers in the country's labour code.
- **Guinea:** There was no union or domestic workers' organization until 2011, when the SYNTRAD domestic workers' union was formed and quickly grew to 1210 members.

When the IDWN Regional Coordinator Vicky Kanyoka researched domestic workers' organizations in Africa in 2009, she found nine. By 2011, this number had doubled to 18, as international and sub-regional activities and support started to have an effect on organizing on the ground.

Asia

- **India:** In the 1960s, a Belgian Catholic missionary, Sister Jeanne Devos, started working with domestic workers in the state of Tamil Nadu, and in 1985, she founded the National Domestic Workers' Movement (NDWM), based in Mumbai. It is an advocacy organization, working for and with domestic workers in some 23 states of India. The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), a trade union of over 1.3 million informal women workers, includes domestic workers as one of the sectors that it organizes.
- **Hong Kong:** The Asian Domestic Workers' Union (ADWU) was set up there on May 1, 1989 and became affiliated to the HKCTU union confederation. With organizers supported by the IUF, it gained 4,500 paid-up members and achieved improvements in wages and contracts for migrant domestic workers. However, it suffered from internal conflicts and dissolved nearly 10 years later, to be replaced by organizations of domestic workers based on nationality: Filipinas, Thais, Indonesians, Nepalese, and local Hong Kong workers. In 2010, the Federation of Asian Domestic Workers Union (FADWU) was established to bring these organizations together, and it now has 7 affiliated organizations from five nationalities, representing over 2,000 members.
- **Indonesia:** The Tunas Mulia Domestic Workers' Union was founded in 2003 in the city of Yogyakarta. Originally meeting as a study group in mosques, the domestic workers wanted to become a union so as to take up their rights as workers. With domestic work not recognized as "work" by the government, the union was not at first allowed to register but eventually did so. It has survived various ups and downs but has maintained an imaginative programme of activities, such as a skills training school and circulating a model employment contract. It was key in founding the Jala-PRT network of domestic workers' organizations in the country and is inspiring domestic workers in other cities such Semarang and Medan to form similar unions.
- **Nepal:** The Nepal Independent Domestic Workers Union (NIDWU) was set up in 2006, as part of the GEFONT union federation, after international support and encouragement from the ILO-IPEC programme on child labour (see page 24), the ADWN (see below), and others.

The **Asian Domestic Workers' Network (ADWN)** was established for the region in 2005, following a workshop the previous year in Hong Kong organized by the Committee for Asian Women (CAW), which involved local domestic workers' organizations from five Asian countries. Sub-regional workshops held in the Philippines (2005), Nepal (2006), and Indonesia (2007) helped the ADWN grow. Soon it had 11 member organizations from Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, Indonesia, Korea, and Hong Kong, five of which were self-organizations of domestic workers, and the others support organizations.



Europe

The first regional exchange of domestic workers' organizations took place when the European Trades Union Confederation (ETUC) hosted a conference in Brussels in April 2005. The ETUC Officer responsible, Catelene Passchier from the trade union movement in the Netherlands, had long been concerned at the lack of unions' attention to domestic workers' issues. She and Anneke van Luijken from the European-level NGO IRENE (Industrial Restructuring Education Network Europe, based in the Netherlands) had tried to get this discussed at a conference that they ran in 2003 on organizing in the informal economy, but they found too little interest. So they decided to keep at the idea, and to organize another conference specifically about domestic workers' rights.

Now working also with PICUM, which supports undocumented migrant workers in Europe, they used their networks to attract nearly 100 participants to the 2005 conference, from 19 countries of Western and Eastern Europe, and Scandinavia. They came from trade unions, migrant support groups, women's organizations, European and international bodies, anti-poverty groups such as Oxfam, plus academic researchers. It was the first time European organizations exchanged information from their own countries on how domestic work is organized, the nature of employment and social security legislation relating to domestic workers, and how the trade unions had been responding.

Revealed there were huge differences between European countries. Some household work related to care for the young, sick, disabled and elderly in Europe has in recent decades been organized within the public sector, under the official "Service Voucher" scheme in France and Belgium or the "Home Services" scheme in Denmark. Such workers are often organized within public sector workers' trade unions, though this varies greatly from country to country. However, much domestic and care work has always been organized through informal arrangements between households and workers. In addition, a lot of work that was within the public sector is now being outsourced to private companies through privatization. This means that most unions have only a weak presence. With the huge expansion of migrants into Europe to work in this sector, migrant-support organizations have become active, particularly in major cities.

Among governments and at the European Union level, the general picture in relation to domestic work issues was one of inaction or even deliberate exclusion. This was especially the case in relation to migrant domestic workers, causing many to suffer abuse and even to be in situations close to slavery. An officer from the International Migration Programme (MIGRANT) of the ILO, Gloria Moreno Fontes Chammartin, spoke also of the ILO's lack of concrete action, noting, "*Some say that these failures at national and international level may be because many decision-makers are themselves employers of domestic workers*".

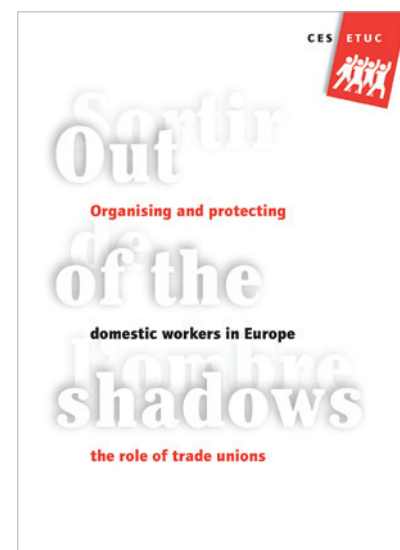
Catelene Passchier urged the unions present at the 2005 conference to get more involved, especially at the international level. *“At the ILO, we must... restart the debate on achieving a Domestic Work Convention and/or other instruments... to provide domestic workers worldwide with basic protection, an issue that was first raised back in the 1960s!”*, she said. So the conference set out some aims for the unions to:

- *“reiterate strongly that domestic workers are covered by the fundamental ILO Conventions*
- *work with the ICFTU (now the International Trade Unions Confederation, ITUC) to restart discussions for the ‘missing’ ILO Convention on domestic work, and*
- *encourage affiliated unions to develop, along with migrant workers’ groups, their lobbying capacity towards governments on this”.*

It might be said that disappointingly little developed at the European level as a result of this conference, either in terms of deepening exchanges between domestic workers’ organizations or at the policy level. However, it did act as a spur for more intensive planning for a global conference – one with action towards an ILO Convention specifically for the protection of domestic workers firmly on its agenda.

For more information

“Out of the Shadows: Organising and Protecting Domestic Workers in Europe. The role of trade unions”, report of the conference held in Brussels in April 2005, ETUC, November 2005: www.etuc.org/a/2026



For more information

Chris Bonner, **“Domestic Workers around the World: Organising for Empowerment”**, 2010: www.wiego.org/publications/domestic-workers-around-world-organising-empowerment

WIEGO maintains a database of informal workers’ organizations around the world (WORD), including domestic workers, at: <http://wiego.org/wiegodatabase>



Cross-Border Migrants

Recent decades have seen a new mass migration for work. Millions of women from the world's poorest communities are now travelling far from their families, sometimes to very distant countries, to work as domestic workers. There are very large flows, for example, from South and South-East Asia to the Middle East and Europe, and from South to North American countries.

Of particular concern are domestic workers brought into foreign countries by the diplomatic or other expatriate families who employ them. They are often on special visas/work permits that are tied to that family or diplomatic mission, and their employers often keep their passports even though this violates basic rights. These workers are even more vulnerable to abuse because, if they flee, they immediately become "undocumented", homeless, and legally not entitled to work elsewhere.

In the face of such abuse, in some countries it was migrant domestic workers who first organized themselves, usually without the support of trade unions, at least in the initial stages:

- **UK:** Migrant domestic workers in London began organizing in the 1980s. They were largely Filipinas, supported by Catholic priests and nuns and the Commission for Filipino Migrant Workers. Their activities gradually developed into a self-organization, leading to Justice for Domestic Workers (J4DW) today, which is supported by the trade union Unite and the Kalayaan advocacy centre. A video "**Actions of Justice 4 Domestic Workers, 2009-2012**" can be found at: www.ituc-csi.org/video-uk-actions-of-justice-4
- **Indonesia:** In recent decades, Indonesia has been exporting millions of women to work in households in Europe, the Middle East, or in other Asian countries such as Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore. The trade is organized through labour supply agencies that are very poorly regulated, leading to a lot of abuse, which has become a hot topic in the Indonesian press. As well as organizing a union in Hong Kong (see page 7), Indonesian migrant workers have set up a similar organization (IMWU NL) in the Netherlands, which has been operating since early 2011 and is supported by the FNV Bondgenoten trade union.
- **Asia:** In 2008, the Asia Migrant Domestic Workers' Alliance (ADWA) was formed for migrant domestic workers, with its secretariat based at the Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA) (see next page). Originally led by a coalition of NGOs and the Alliance of Progressive Labor (Philippines), its steering committee is now made up of representatives of domestic workers' organizations.

Many migrant support groups such as MFA and others including Respect in Europe, have long been including or focusing on domestic workers in their activities, responding to this vast increase in domestic workers in recent decades. These are not self-organizations of domestic workers, but networks that include and support them.

- **Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA):** www.mfasia.org
- **Migrante International:** www.migranteinternational.org
- **Respect Network Europe:** www.respectnetworkeu.org

Human/Labour Rights Supporters:

Other international human, labour and women's rights networks and bodies have also been very active in supporting domestic workers in recent years. At an international level, they include the following:

- **Human Rights Watch:** HRW started researching domestic workers' conditions in 2001, especially concerning child and migrant domestic workers, and they produced a report in 2006: "**Swept Under the Rug: Abuses against Domestic Workers Around the World**", with summary and recommendations also in Arabic, Indonesian, Spanish and French: www.hrw.org/reports/2006/07/27/swept-under-rug
- **Anti-Slavery International:** ASI focuses on domestic work in its fight against slavery and forced labour in the world. This included research in the Middle East and Gulf region in 2006: www.antislavery.org/includes/documents/cm_docs/2009/t/traffic_women_forced_labour_domestic_2006.pdf and the campaign "**Home Alone**" to end domestic slavery in the UK: www.antislavery.org/english/campaigns/home_alone/domestic_workers_visa_action.aspx
- **UN Women:** This body of the United Nations has started to respond particularly to the massive, worldwide demand for women migrant workers to do domestic work: www.unwomen.org
- **Committee for Asian Women:** The Asian Domestic Workers' Network (ADWN) (see page 7) was very much fostered and supported by CAW: <http://cawinfo.org>
- **Global Network:** As an international network of NGOs and unions, it helped foster activities particularly in Asia when unions there still knew little about domestic workers and their demands: www.theglobalnetwork.net

Meanwhile, of course, there are dozens of human rights organizations, women's groups, and so on in countries across the world, involved in exposing the exploitation of domestic workers, and supporting them with research and advocacy. Sadly, they are far too numerous to mention here.



First Ever Global Conference of Domestic Workers' Organizations

In November 2006, the first ever global conference of domestic workers' organizations took place. Called "Protection for Domestic Workers!", it was hosted in Amsterdam by the FNV trade union confederation of the Netherlands. The FNV plus IRENE and PICUM, who helped to organize the European conference a year and a half earlier (see page 8), sought out yet more organizations to help bring this one together. The Committee for Asian Women (CAW) had helped to found the Asian Domestic Workers' Network (ADWN) (see page 7). The Asia Monitor Resource Centre (AMRC), based in Hong Kong, was supporting developments there. Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) and the Global Labour Institute (GLI,) were including domestic workers in their activities on informal workers' organizing.

It took a lot of effort to piece together the necessary funding, though. Happily, the Fondation des Droits de l'Homme au Travail (Human Rights at Work Foundation) gave enough funding for Anneke van Luijken from IRENE to concentrate on conference organizing for a year. Eventually, conference funds were pieced together from about twenty different sources including the Catholic fund Cebemo, the FNV Mondiaal of the Netherlands, other European and Scandinavian trade unions, international development agencies such as Humanitas/Oxfam Novib, and labour support NGOs.

"It was also hard work convincing many unions to work on this", says Anneke. "They knew it was important, but said it was not really their 'issue' or 'priority'. They were 'not sure if they could send anyone', and so on." However, she knew that unions had to be involved or the conference would not have a strong enough outcome. What she did find was a lot of support from women in the international labour organizations, such as the Equalities Officer of the ITUC Kamalam and her counterpart in the IUF food workers' global union federation Barbro Budin. Anneke also found support in NGOs and networks, such as Chris Bonner from WIEGO and Lee Siew Hwa from the Committee for Asian Women and in different parts of the ILO such as Manuela Tomei, Gloria Moreno Fontes Chammartin and Simel Esim. For these women, focus on this issue was long overdue, and they added a lot of energy to the preparations.

In the end, the conference attracted some 60 participants from domestic workers' organizations across the world along with global unions, national unions, labour support networks, ILO staff, and academics.

The domestic workers' associations and unions at the conference came from regions all over the world: Latin America and the Caribbean (Bolivia, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Latin American confederation CONLACTRAHO); Africa (South Africa and Namibia); Asia (India, Hong Kong, and Indonesia); North America (Canada and USA); and Europe (Denmark, Spain, Switzerland, and the Netherlands). In fact, the conference organizers were surprised at how many domestic workers' unions and other such membership-based organizations around the world there were. This was the first time, for example, that the Latin American CONLACTRAHO, though already established for 18 years, had been at a conference in Europe or that many others present had ever heard of it. On the whole, conference organizers had expected to find NGOs and other support bodies, but what they actually found was that domestic workers were already organizing themselves.

Also at the conference were migrant workers' support networks from Asia and Europe, support organizations such as Anti Slavery International, and the ILO International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC). The presence of academics from the United Arab Emirates, Indonesia and Europe working in the Middle East, and an officer from the ILO Arab States Regional Office, meant that this region was included too.

Especially significant at the conference was the involvement of the global unions IUF and ITUC. They became key to future developments in building and sustaining an international network of domestic workers' organizations and in winning the support of trade unions in the campaign for the ILO Convention (see pages 33-37).

The conference gave the domestic workers' organizations and supporters a new opportunity to exchange information across the globe. They spoke about the situations in their own countries and regions: who domestic workers are (women/ children, migrants/ minority communities, etc.); the conditions under which they live and work (from slavery through to public sector work in multiple households); any legal provisions that had been won; and the nature of their organizations and how they had been built, who their supporters were, and so on.

Throughout, the domestic workers' leaders at the conference were vocal in their demands for respect for their contribution to the economy and society and for their entitlement to the rights enjoyed by other workers. It was clear how frustrated they were, faced with such ignorance and even hostility from society at large.

It was not only about exchanging information and viewpoints, however. Participants also began to get to know each other. They built solidarity and confidence that, working together, they just might achieve something significant.

The conference organizers made sure that the idea of an ILO Convention was on the agenda. Many of the participants knew little if anything about the ILO or its structures and processes. So Simel Esim, then a gender specialist based in the ILO Arab States Regional Office, summarized the ILO's approach so far to domestic workers' rights. She confirmed, *"although there is not yet a comprehensive agenda on*



'decent work for domestic workers', there are proposals circulating in the ILO to develop one. This would be supported by many ILO technical staff..." The news that there was already support and action in this international body gave hope and impetus to all.

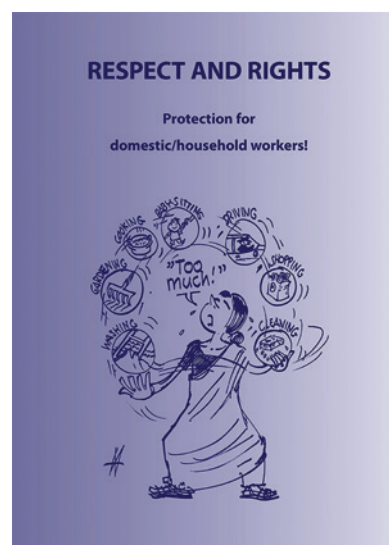
The conference agreed to a statement entitled "Decent Work for Domestic Workers!" (using the language of the ILO). Its recommendations included:

- to set up an Interim Working Group to explore the need and potential for an international network for the rights of domestic/household workers. Such a network should be led by domestic workers' representatives, not by support organizations;
- to explore, in collaboration with the global unions, the possibility for an ILO Convention on the rights of domestic/household workers, whether national or migrant workers; and
- to support the organization of domestic/household workers at all levels – local, national, regional and international.

The conference was also clear that these activities should be interlinked by using organizing for an ILO Convention as a tool to mobilize domestic workers wherever possible.

For more information

"Respect and Rights: Protection for domestic/household workers!", report of the conference held in Amsterdam in November 2006, IRENE/IUF, August 2008: www.idwn.info/sites/default/files/publications/ResRights.pdf



After the Global Conference – the Next Steps

Within weeks after the global conference, the next steps were already being taken. The main conference organizer, Anneke van Luijken, got together with the global unions IUF and ITUC. Veteran international trade union leader Dan Gallin of the Global Labour Institute (GLI) also played a strong role, helping to persuade other union leaders to provide the support needed. They might well need to find imaginative ways to do so, he argued, but this was the moment to seize. Also key to the development of the network and the fight for the Convention was the support of the global action-research-policy network Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO).

In the months that followed, funding from the Ford Foundation enabled Anneke to continue the work, at least for the time being until more resources could be found. So, she and others from the IUF and WIEGO worked together as an Interim Management Committee, preparing the ground for the new network to mobilize for an ILO Convention, as the conference had agreed.

IUF Provides a Home

Happily, the IUF agreed to take a lead, and the support that it gave from then on was crucial and ground-breaking within the international trade union movement. The food and allied workers' global union federation IUF (the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations) had long had a remit to represent domestic workers as one of its sectors. Many of its affiliated unions, particularly in Europe and in Africa, already represented domestic workers, and there was increasing concern especially among union women's committees across the world about the conditions of domestic workers, especially the migrant ones. In 1997, the IUF adopted a policy to pursue these issues more strongly.

The IUF is very strong on equality and has a good record in supporting unions across the world to organize marginalized workers such as migrant agricultural workers. But it had never had enough resources to do as much for domestic workers' organizing as it would like. Now, as an international domestic workers' network started to develop, the IUF was pleased to provide it with vital support.

The IUF respected the fact that domestic workers wanted an open network, rather than a formal membership-based organization so as to be as inclusive as possible. Global Union Federations (GUFs) like the IUF only accept formally established trade unions as their members. The IUF knew, though, that in many countries, domestic workers were not legally entitled to register trade unions. So it accepted that the new network would include many associations and support organizations that were not



unions. The IUF also understood and supported the fact that the representatives of domestic workers wanted to lead the network, not hand it over to others whether these others were in unions or in support NGOs.

As a result, the IUF developed a new model for a GUF. It provided an organizational base for an open network to develop as a semi-autonomous body within the IUF structure. This showed great flexibility and political understanding on the part of the IUF. Of course, from its perspective, the IUF needed to be clear that those in the new network would respect and work within the fundamental principles under which the IUF operates. This, however, did not prove to be any problem.

For the emerging network, it was enormously significant to have a global union federation as its home base. The IUF was able to promote the issue formally in the ILO. It gave the network organizational credibility, which helped with fundraising. The IUF also integrated domestic workers' leaders into its own global programmes and encouraged its affiliated unions to do so too. This gave political credibility, helping the emerging network to win support among trade unions across the world. The IUF's Equalities Officer Barbro Budin was the key link person, providing a lot of support to enable the network to get off the ground.

In Africa, just as this work was getting going, the IUF had a new Africa Regional Women's Project working with IUF affiliated unions in 15 countries across the continent as funded by Swedish unions. From the start, the Project embedded domestic workers' organizing into its activities. All unions were pressed to take action: to organize more domestic workers or, if this was not one of their sectors, at the very least to join in advocating on behalf of domestic workers' demands.

For example, in Kenya, the Project held a seminar in late 2008 to encourage the KUDHEIHA union to build its membership among domestic workers. The seminar was led by Vicky Kanyoka, then Chairperson of the IUF Africa Regional Women's Committee, and who shortly afterwards became the IDWN Africa Regional Coordinator (see page 40). With her on-going guidance, plus human and financial resources from the Project, from other IUF affiliated unions in Kenya, and from the Solidarity Center (USA), KUDHEIHA's membership among domestic workers grew from only a handful to some 10,000 two years later. By "*travelling together*", as Adwoa puts it, the Women's Project and the IDWN in Africa reached into 18 countries, helping to organize nearly 95,000 domestic workers.

The Project also alerted all the unions it was working with to the ILO questionnaires and reports (see page 28) that their governments would be receiving and to the need to influence their governments' replies. It held special seminars for unions on this, for example in Ghana. The Coordinator of the Women's Project, Adwoa Sakyi, is in no doubt that this was a key factor in getting so many African governments eventually to support the Convention (see page 63)

WIEGO: Multiple Forms of Support



WIEGO also played many roles along the way. As part of the Interim Management Committee, it helped to strategize, plan, and to provide practical support for the developing network. WIEGO was, for example, vital in finding funding for the network to grow, in particular from the MDG3 Fund of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Through its contacts among informal workers' organizations around the world, WIEGO was able to identify more groups of domestic workers and put them in touch with the developing international network. It also gave a lot of communications support.

WIEGO is also very strong on research to support advocacy, and its experts started gathering statistical and other data on domestic workers and the value of their work, which until then had been relatively ignored (see pages 42-44). Such information was publicized through the WIEGO website and elsewhere, helping to promote the issues and win more supporters.

Also interesting is how this activity strengthened collaboration between a formal trade union body and an international network working on the informal economy. The relationship deepened when WIEGO Europe Advisor, Karin Pape, was seconded by WIEGO to the IUF to become the IDWN Interim Coordinator (see page 39), and later when the IUF Equalities Officer, Barbro Budin, joined the Board of Directors of WIEGO. This successful joining of forces has gone on to provide a vibrant example for others in the global labour movement to follow.



Photo: WIEGO



Network's Interim Management Committee

For the next 18 months after the global conference, the Interim Management Committee got on with fostering the development of the network. Those involved were Anneke van Luijken (from IRENE, which unfortunately had to close for lack of funding at about that time), Barbro Budin from the IUF, and Chris Bonner and Karin Pape from WIEGO, with Dan Gallin of the Global Labour Institute (GLI) also continuing with his support and advice.

They maintained the contacts made so far among domestic workers' organizations, and searched for more through their contacts worldwide. They set up a new website www.domesticworkerrights.org (which later became www.idwn.info) and enabled translation, particularly between English, Spanish, and French to generate greater communication and information-sharing. They looked for funding for the network and for publishing the report of the global conference.

They also developed ideas for the structure of the network. They wanted to make sure it would be democratic, with representatives of domestic workers' organizations from all world regions having the decision-making powers, as demanded by the global conference. The key driving desire was to enable domestic workers to be truly at the heart of the process, to become much more visible and to voice their own demands – at national and international levels - and not just rely on the support of others to take this forward. The plan, as decided at the conference, was to form an Interim Working Group made up of domestic workers' leaders, who would be in the driving seat of building the new network. However, it took time to raise the necessary resources, and the first meeting of this Group could not take place until September 2008 (see page 29). So, in the meantime, the Interim Management Committee got on with the work.



Photo: WIEGO

ITUC: Another Key Partner



Another key partner to promote the ideas coming out of the conference was the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). The members of the ITUC are national union federations from countries across the world, and their support would be crucial, especially for the ILO process.

National union federations, most of which are affiliated to the ITUC, have official status at the ILO. They make up the ILO Workers' Group, one of the three partners in the ILO's "social dialogue", negotiating with the governments and employers (see page 23).

Also, the ITUC provides the Workers' Group's Secretariat in the ILO, and its work, liaising with officials in different parts of the ILO, providing advice to the network and so on, would prove invaluable. Without such support, it would have been impossible for the domestic workers' network, no matter how strong, to enter the formal "corridors of power" of the ILO and win a Convention for their rights.

The ITUC went on to alert and guide its affiliates worldwide to engage in the ILO process, especially towards their own governments (see pages 33-35), playing another key role in the eventual success. In October 2009, the ITUC made the domestic workers' campaign a priority for its World Women's Conference, attended by 450 delegates from over 100 countries. The following year, the ITUC produced a booklet and an Action Guide to encourage unions to "*work for and with domestic workers towards the ILC 2011 and beyond*", as ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow put it. This was crucial. As the months went on, more and more unions responded positively, including and supporting domestic workers' leaders in discussions about a Convention.

Over the next few years, "Spotlight" interviews on the ITUC website helped to raise the profile of domestic workers' issues and their leaders. They included those from unions such as Titus Mlengeya of CHODAWU (Tanzania), Fatou Bintu Yaffa of CNTS (Senegal) and Albert Njeru of KUDHEIHA (Kenya), as well as leaders of domestic workers' organizations that are not unions, such as Marcelina Bautista of the CONLACTRAHO confederation in Latin America, and Priscilla Gonzalez of Domestic Workers United (USA). Other key players were interviewed too, such as Luc Demaret, the ILO ACTRAV official responsible for the domestic work portfolio (see page 30).

For more information

"**Union View: Domestic Work: Mobilising for an ILO Convention**", ITUC, June 2010: www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/VS_domestiques_EN.pdf

"**Action Guide: Decent Work, Decent Life for Domestic Workers**", ITUC, November 2010: www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/ITUC_dwd_AnglaisWEB.pdf



Indonesia: *“They gave us great support”*

“At first the trade union federations in Indonesia resisted accepting anyone from the domestic workers’ organizations into the official Indonesian Workers’ Delegation to the ILC, because none were affiliated to any of them. They didn’t really want to help.

But then the ITUC stepped in and asked them to, and they agreed, even though we were still not members. This was the first time they accepted us as ‘workers’.

By the time the 2010 ILC came, I was part of the official Indonesian Workers’ Delegation. I was very much supported by Fish (Ip Pui Yu) from the IDWN. She made drawings of the layout of the tripartite committee, and used them to discuss the process of the negotiations between the three parties - who, what and when. Once in Geneva, the unions also helped me understand the official process. They had much more experience.

Then the unions also started to help with our national demands to the DPR (parliament) too. ‘We’re behind you. Don’t be afraid’, they said. It gave us the confidence to speak up in the DPR, where we were frightened before. They gave us great support.”

Sayuti, Tunas Mulia domestic workers’ trade union, Jogjakarta, Indonesia

Building More Alliances

The young network not only needed to strengthen collaboration with the trade unions, but also to build other relationships. It needed to reach out to more domestic workers, particularly those with little or no connection to trade union organization. It wanted to develop the knowledge-base about domestic workers worldwide so as to generate pressure on governments, and it was also time to generate much more public awareness.

So contacts were strengthened with other labour support groups and networks, particularly those for migrant domestic workers, and these started to have joint activities. For example, the network, the Asian Migrant Domestic Workers' Alliance (ADWA), Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA), Respect Network (Europe), and the National Domestic Workers' Alliance (NDWA) in the USA issued a joint leaflet, called a "Global Call to Action". The leaflet explained what was happening and highlighted how annual international and national days – especially in 2010 and early 2011 – could be used to rally support and gain public attention. Such days included International Women's Day on March 8, May Day on May 1, Human Rights Day on December 10, and International Migrants Day on December 18. There were also events on national Women's Days and Domestic/Household Workers' Days where they already existed such as in Latin America.

There was some discussion about mirroring the "Global March Against Child Labour" of 1998-99, which was a very successful lobbying tool in winning ILO Convention No.182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999. For that Convention, marches and demonstrations were held across the world, coming together in a mass presence during the negotiations in Geneva in 1999. In the end, the idea of a Global March for domestic workers' rights as such did not happen, largely for lack of resources.

In the end, this wider network of the IDWN and allies succeeded in alerting domestic workers' organizations and supporters across the world. Mobilization and actions grew in country after country. More and more organizations and supporters got to learn about the ILO, what a Convention is, and how best to fight for it. Significant numbers of their representatives even made it to Geneva for the official discussions in 2010 and 2011 (see Section 4).



2. The ILO: At Last Things Start to Move

“It is true that as early as 1948, and then again in 1965, the ILO had already expressed its concerns about the poor working conditions and lack of rights faced by domestic workers. It is not that the ILO hasn’t done anything since then, but there has not been enough pressure for it to take any significant steps.

It was around 2005 that more and more women domestic workers began to realize the need to organize. Women domestic workers’ associations multiplied, particularly in Latin America and Europe and, as they began to feel the limitations on their forms of organization, they moved closer to the trade union movement. Furthermore, the discussions on migrant labour in 2004 and the discussions on the elimination of child labour also had an impact... It was the convergence of all these elements that triggered greater awareness.”

Luc Demaret, ILO ACTRAV official responsible for the domestic work portfolio

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is the body of the United Nations that deals with the protection and rights of workers across the world. The idea of including domestic/household workers in that protection was actually nothing new to the ILO. The issue was seemingly first raised there back in the 1930s. Very importantly, in 1948, the annual International Labour Conference (ILC) of the ILO said the *“time has now arrived for a full discussion on this important subject”* and asked the Governing Body to consider a Convention to protect domestic/household workers. Two years later, however, the Governing Body put the question to one side. Then in 1965, the ILC again *“expressed its concerns”* and said there was an *“urgent”* need to provide domestic workers with at least basic protection. Again, this was never properly followed up.

In fact, domestic workers were specifically excluded from some protections through so-called *“flexibility clauses”* in ILO Conventions, including those on occupational health and safety, maternity protection, minimum wage fixing, and medical care and sickness benefits. Even the Minimum Age Convention 1973 (No.138) – which is supposed to apply to all workers - gave governments the scope to exclude under-age domestic workers, putting children at great risk.

For the next 25 years, the little that the ILO did relating to domestic workers was largely research. In the 1970s, for example, there was a survey on working and employment conditions for domestic workers around the world.

About the ILO, the ILC, Conventions and Recommendations

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN) that promotes social justice and human rights relating to employment.

It is the only agency of the UN which is “tripartite” (made up of three parties). In the ILO, representatives not only of governments but also of employers and workers engage in “social dialogue”. All three parties are involved in all parts of the process, including the negotiations and decision-making. The ILO follows strict procedures and rules, and is very technical.

The ILO’s headquarters are in Geneva, Switzerland. In June each year, the ILO holds an International Labour Conference (ILC) there, where the three parties determine the policies of the ILO, and negotiate and adopt international Standards:

- **ILO Conventions** guarantee labour rights. Governments are invited to “ratify” each one, to put it into national legislation, and then report back to the ILO about how well they are implementing it.
- **ILO Recommendations** are guidelines to help governments shape their labour laws.

To get a new Convention and/or Recommendation, first the ILO Governing Body has to agree that this should go on the agenda. If it does, then the ILO Office, departments and legal experts draw up a report on existing law and practice on the question at hand (in this case, domestic work) in the 183 Member States of the United Nations/ILO. The ILO Office sends this to these Member States, along with a questionnaire asking for their opinions about what a possible Standard should contain. From the answers received, the ILO prepares a second report (the “Brown” report), which includes proposed contents for a Convention and/or Recommendation. These reports provide information and guidance for the first discussion at the ILC.

The results of those first ILC discussions are then turned into another report, which is sent out to the Member States (the “Blue” report), who are asked for their further feedback by a certain deadline. The replies are reviewed by the ILO Office, and a revised draft of the proposed Standard is distributed. All this is just in time for the final discussions at the next ILC, when a decision on the proposed Convention and/or Recommendation is to be made.



Starting to Fill the Gap

It was in the mid-late 1990s that activity in the ILO started to take off. It was not that a single, deliberate strategy was agreed on. Rather, in various Programmes and Regional Offices, ILO staff – particularly women and those concerned for the growing millions of informal workers hardly covered by the ILO – could see the gap that needed filling. Whether related to child labour, migrant labour, gender discrimination, or the fundamental right not to suffer exploitation, they knew that domestic workers needed attention.

A law student called Adelle Blackett, for example, got an internship with the ILO Labour Law and Labour Relations Programme and produced papers on the regulation of domestic work across the world. She concluded that better regulation *“has the potential to restore some respect and dignity to domestic work”*. She would go on to become a Professor at McGill University, Canada, and eventually one of the ILO’s senior technical advisors for the domestic workers’ Convention.

In 1998, the ILO Regional Office in the Caribbean organized a conference in Jamaica, in which domestic workers’ organizations such as the Latin American confederation CONLACTRAHO and the NUDE union in Trinidad and Tobago took part. The outcome was a strategy to improve the situation in the region, and a “reference handbook” was published. However, the need for an ILO Convention was seemingly not discussed at the conference.

From the mid-1990s, the ILO-IPEC programme against the worst forms of child labour focused on the issue of child domestic workers in a project involving trade unions in 15 countries. Its activities in Tanzania were an *“eye-opener”* for the unions to see just how many children were doing this work, according to Vicky Kanyoka from the CHODAWU union, who later became the IDWN Regional Coordinator for Africa. The focus on child labour led to significant legal improvements in Tanzania, with new laws recognizing domestic workers as workers and including them in legal minimum wages and social security coverage. When the ILO-IPEC global programme ended in a workshop in Geneva in February 2006, trade unions from the 15 countries issued a Declaration encouraging more unions to take up the issue of child domestic workers.

By the early 2000s, the ILO TRAVAIL Conditions of Work and Employment Programme was also working on the issue. In January 2003, it brought out a study analyzing the legal situation for domestic workers across the world.

Meanwhile, the Bureau for Gender Equality (GENDER) was also starting to make plans for more activity on *“decent work for domestic workers”*. At a meeting in 2006, for example, ILO gender specialists produced a ‘10 Year Agenda’ to promote the issue within the ILO.

At the same time, several ILO Programmes were responding to the huge growth in flows of migrant domestic workers around the world. Domestic work is a main location of trafficking and slavery in the world. The ILO Special Action Programme to Combat Forced Labour (SAP-FL) ran several projects aimed at better protection for migrant domestic workers, for example in 2006-2008 for those from Indonesia. The Gender Promotion Programme (GENPROM) included domestic workers in its Women and Migration project. Working with the ILO body on migration labour issues, MIGRANT, GENPROM carried out research in the Middle East, a region that now employs hundreds of thousands of domestic workers from Asian countries, many exploited by labour agencies as well as employers. Then, at the ILO's International Labour Conference (ILC) in 2004, a tripartite committee discussed "Towards a fair deal for migrant workers in the global economy" and included domestic workers in their discussions. Several times, the need for their special protection was mentioned, although this point was not included in the final conclusions.

A few months later, however, at a workshop for unions in Latin America on women migrant domestic workers, participants issued the Montevideo Declaration, which notably included the idea of getting a Convention specifically for domestic workers:

"6. To fight together with labour organizations in all our countries, to defend the implementation of ILO Conventions and to promote an International Convention to guarantee the rights of household workers."

So, by the mid 2000s, the need to protect domestic workers from abuse, including the idea of a Convention for their rights, was gaining momentum in many different Programmes, Departments and Regions of the ILO.

For more information

ILO, "The Employment and Conditions of Domestic Workers in Private Households: ILO Survey", International Labour Review, No. 102/4, 1970

Adelle Blackett, "Specific Regulation of Domestic Work: International labour standards and comparative law examples", ILO, 1996

Adelle Blackett, "Making Domestic Work Visible: The case for specific regulation", ILO, Labour Law and Labour Relations Programme, WP 2, 1998

José Maria Ramirez-Machado, "Domestic Work, Conditions of Work and Employment: A legal perspective", ILO TRAVAIL, Conditions of Work and Employment Series No. 7, January 2003: www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/publication/wcms_travail_pub_7.pdf

Asha d'Souza, "Moving towards Decent Work for Domestic Workers: an Overview of the ILO's Work", ILO Working Paper No.2, 2010: www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@gender/documents/publication/wcms_142905.pdf



Momentum Grows

When, in January 2007, Anneke van Luijken, the IUF and ITUC asked to meet with ILO officials in Geneva to develop concrete steps towards such a Convention, no fewer than five Departments sent representatives: ACTRAV (the Bureau for Workers Activities), MIGRANT, IPEC on child labour, GENDER for gender equality, and STANDARDS (responsible for overseeing the development and implementation of ILO Conventions and Recommendations). The fact that this meeting went ahead so quickly, and with such wide participation, confirmed the growing interest in the ILO to improve the situation for the world's domestic workers.

At that meeting, ACTRAV officials agreed to take a lead in stimulating the official processes in the ILO needed for a new Convention. As the body that supports the activities of the Workers in the ILO, the role of ACTRAV would prove to be another of the key elements of winning the Convention.

ACTRAV took on the task of preparing a report for the ILO Governing Body meeting later that year. It backed this preparation up with many activities in collaboration with the global unions to liaise with other Departments of the ILO and raise awareness among trade unions across the world. For example, within a couple of months after the January meeting, ACTRAV issued a special edition of "Labour Education" focusing on "Decent Work for Domestic Workers".

As well as those in ACTRAV, officers and staff members from elsewhere in the ILO – from TRAVAIL, IPEC and so on – as well as Anna Biondi of the ITUC office at the ILO were of great help. Anneke van Luijken tells of how they took time out from their official schedules to give her guidance on how the ILO works, new contacts to follow up, and so on. They also liaised among each other, with Manuela Tomei from TRAVAIL seeming to act as an "informal coordinator", according to Anneke. *"There was so much good will, it was remarkable. If they hadn't guided us through the system, it could not have happened within the timeframe."*

At an official level, the process was helped enormously by the fact that there was an unfilled gap in the ILO agenda for discussing new Conventions (called "Standard Setting"). Had the ILO been already preoccupied with other new Conventions at that time, achieving one for domestic workers would have taken much, much longer.

So, ACTRAV and the Workers Group of the ILO spotted the opportunity, and worked hard to get the topic put on the agenda of the 300th session of the ILO Governing Body of the ILO the following November. There, they won support for the idea of a new Standard from 10 governments. Four months later, when the Governing Body next met in March 2008, some governments still argued that “more information was needed”, trying to keep it to just a general discussion rather than official negotiations for a Standard. However, awareness-raising and lobbying by TRAVAIL in the intervening months meant that a majority of the 28 governments in the Governing Body now supported the idea. The Group of Latin American and the Caribbean Countries (GRULAC) voted as a group in favour, as did others such as South Africa, Germany, Sri Lanka, and Russia.

This led the Governing Body of the ILO to make a most important decision – that “Decent Work for Domestic Workers” would be included in the Standard Setting agenda of the 99th session of the International Labour Conference to be held in June 2010. The Governing Body now said, *“There is wide recognition that the situation of domestic workers which is currently a source of great concern everywhere will greatly benefit from the development and implementation of international standards that address human rights, fundamental workers’ rights and general conditions of work”*, notably adding that this was “long overdue”.

With that decision, the issue was now formally on the ILO agenda, and the official process started. All this was within just an eighteen month period after the international conference “Protection for Domestic Workers!”. As the conference organizers said, *“when we started planning the 2006 conference, such a Convention seemed very far away, with a lot of work ahead”*. Now it was on the immediate horizon, with just two years to go before the official discussions would start. What was significant this time was that domestic workers were getting organized, with the beginnings of a global network to make sure it really would happen.

For more information

ILO ACTRAV, “Decent Work for Domestic Workers”, Labour Education, March 4 2007: www.ilo.org/actrav/what/pubs/WCMS_111439/lang--en/index.htm



“Decent Work for Domestic Workers” Official ILO Reports

After the ILO Governing Body’s decision in March 2008, an ILO Working Group set legal and other experts to work on researching the legal situation for domestic workers around the world. Their first “Law and Practice” report, “Decent Work for Domestic Workers IV(1)”, was sent out to all Member States in April 2009. Along with it went the questionnaire, asking for more information from the Member States, with a deadline to reply of August 30 2009.

From the replies, the ILO produced a second report, “Decent Work for Domestic Workers IV(2)” in March 2010. This built in the Member States’ answers to the questionnaire and included the proposed contents for a Convention accompanied by a Recommendation. These reports provided information and guidance for the first discussions at the ILC in June 2010 (see page 62).

After those ILC discussions in June 2010, a third report, “Decent Work for Domestic Workers”, Report IV(1) (also known as the “Brown Report”) went out in August 2010. This set out the results of those negotiations: a draft of the proposed Convention and accompanying Recommendation, along with commentary from the ILO Office. Governments were asked for their further feedback by November 2010.

With the final discussions only months away, by March 2011, the ILO then sent out to the Member States two further reports. One (known as the “Blue Report”) examined the latest replies received. The other had revised drafts of the two instruments. These two reports would form the basis of the discussions at the 100th ILC in June 2011 when a decision on the proposed Convention would be made (see page 64).

All the way through the various stages of this official process, the ever-growing network of domestic workers’ organizations and their supporters worked hard to raise awareness and lobby their governments to get the best results that they could (see pages 33-37).

For more information

The official “Brown” and “Blue” reports of the ILO on “**Decent Work for Domestic Workers**” can be found at: www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/100thSession/on-the-agenda/decent-work-for-domestic-workers/lang-en/index.htm

3. Getting Ready for the Negotiations

With the discussion of an ILO Convention for domestic workers' rights now on the agenda for the 2010 and 2011 ILCs, there was even more urgency to move on with building and mobilizing the international network of domestic workers' organizations. As the 2006 conference had suggested, this should be a two-way process: to mobilize the domestic workers' organizations to win the ILO Convention for their own rights and, at the same time, to use the possibility of a Convention, something so globally significant, to help strengthen their organizations on the ground, raising their visibility and voice, and their confidence.

The first meeting of the Interim Working Group for the network was held in Geneva in September 2008. Those attending included some who had been at the global conference and wanted to stay involved: CONLACTRAHO (Latin America), IPROFOTH (Peru), NUDE (Trinidad and Tobago), ADWN (Asia), SADSAWU (South Africa), and DWU (USA). To them were added further organizations to increase the regional coverage: CHODAWU (Tanzania) for greater African involvement, NDWA (USA) for North American participation, and SEWA (India) as a significant organizer of domestic workers in that major Asian country and a member of both the IUF Executive and Women's Committees.

A key part of the Interim Working Group meeting focused on the nature of the network that the domestic workers' representatives wanted to build. The working group confirmed that it wanted the network to have a Steering Committee, not just an Advisory one, and that it should comprise only domestic workers' representatives. In this way, they would lead and direct the activities of the support organizations and individuals involved, including the IUF and WIEGO. They had a very clear understanding that they would need others to provide technical support, especially to engage in the ILO process, and they clearly identified them as such - as "technicians", or "las técnicas" in the CONLACTRAHO phrase. They were firm that only domestic workers' representatives would be the political drivers of the network. They no longer wanted others to speak on their behalf.



The second main element of the agenda was a discussion on the role that the network should play, in particular with regard to the ILO process. It was decided that the network should:

- ✓ *“Act as a pressure group, as a watch-dog on the ILO and national governments.*
- ✓ *Facilitate communication between network members and the ILO/Global Unions, feeding to the network and back to the ILO/Global Unions.*
- ✓ *Share information between all members of the network on good practice in individual countries.*
- ✓ *As some network members can hardly survive, channel funds to them and/or help them to raise funds by assisting with funding contacts, letters of support, etc.*
- ✓ *Circulate solidarity statements for campaigns, including letters to governments.*
- ✓ *Support local, national, regional and international campaigns with resources, information, etc. so that they can carry out the campaigning.*
- ✓ *Support network members to participate in international meetings and events, including future meetings of this steering group.*
- ✓ *Build capacity within the network, giving more tools for us to do our daily work.”*

At the meeting, Luc Demaret from ILO ACTRAV spoke about the progress in the ILO so far and set out the timeline of the steps in the formal process. He made suggestions for how domestic workers’ organizations might best get involved. A key stage would be to get as good text of a draft Convention as possible included with the (revised) 2010 “Law and Practice Report” (see page 28). For this, domestic workers’ organizations and trade unions would need to make sure that the ILO office team overseeing the process received good quality information, within the right timeframe.

Anna Biondi of the ITUC Geneva office and Secretary to the Workers’ Group at the ILO, stressed the need to find out government and employers’ views and arguments, in particular to identify the supportive ones. She explained how important it would be to inform each other about these so as to build lobbying power. Such knowledge sharing should include negative or hostile positions too, and ideas for combating such arguments. As she rightly foretold, many might well argue for only a weaker Recommendation rather than a Convention. She encouraged domestic workers’ organizations to get in touch with the ILO programmes and offices in their own countries.

As mentioned (see page 23), the workings of the ILO are based on the concept of “dialogue” between “social partners” – i.e. workers negotiating with governments and employers as if in some kind of “equal” relationship. This is difficult enough for many workers to comprehend or accept. For domestic workers, this is even more obscure given how few governments or employers have historically accepted them as “workers”, let alone recognized their social and economic contribution. Some of the domestic workers present were skeptical about negotiating with hostile or ignorant governments and employers. *“How can a Convention be made by diplomats when we know what they do with their household workers?”*, asked Guillermina Castellanos from the National Domestic Workers’ Alliance (NDWA), USA.

Many domestic workers’ organizations would need help in identifying who in their own country was involved in the ILO process – who on behalf of the government, the employers, or the workers, as well as the government’s technical advisors, and if there was an ILO office there that might provide support.

Unions in each country would be essential partners because of their formal position within the ILO process. They would be needed to help domestic workers lobby their governments to respond positively at all stages of the ILO process. They would form the Workers’ Group for the negotiations at the ILCs in 2010 and 2011. Then, if a Convention was actually won, they would be needed to promote it afterwards, to see that it is “ratified” (i.e. included in national legislation) by their own government, and then properly implemented. A lesson from the Home Work Convention (ILO Convention No.177, 1996) was that, more than a decade after it had been agreed, only five countries had ratified it and the issue had gone quiet among unions. Those at this meeting shared their ideas about how to liaise with trade unions, especially in countries where domestic workers were still excluded from the right to form or become members of unions.

The meeting also discussed how to make sure that domestic workers’ leaders could be involved in the forthcoming ILCs in 2010 and 2011. Given their desire to speak for themselves, and the relative ignorance among some trade unions about domestic workers’ demands, too little would be achieved if the Workers Group comprised only trade union officials with little knowledge of the sector. Barbro Budin, Equalities Officer of the IUF, suggested a big effort to get domestic workers’ representatives into the national workers’ Delegations to the ILCs. Certainly they would need support to understand the very technical language and processes, but the unions should assist them with this.

For the majority of domestic workers’ organizations around the world, this would be new ground. How could awareness about all this be raised among them – encouraging them to get involved, to build their voice and visibility in the process, and with sufficient knowledge to be able to do so? Given their historic isolation and exclusion, even within the labour movement, this would be a big challenge, but an exciting one.



Domestic workers would need to rally other partners, too, among migrant support networks, organizations fighting slavery and abusive child labour, supportive women’s groups, religious groups, academic researchers, journalists, and so on. They would need all this support to help to gain wider public awareness for the reality of their lives to come truly “out of the shadows” and especially to put pressure on governments to respond favourably. Governments have the majority voting rights when a Convention comes to the final vote at an ILC. So persuading as many as possible to vote “yes” would be crucial.

The speed of the official process now underway meant that there were only short windows of opportunity in 2009-2011 to raise awareness among domestic workers, trade unions, and other supporters across the world about the need to get involved, influence their governments’ replies, and prepare domestic workers’ leaders for the ILCs ahead. However, to the vast majority of the world’s domestic workers, even those already involved in organizations, the ILO was a very “distant” body, little known and seemingly unreachable. The proposed International Domestic Workers’ Network was still very much in its infancy.

This was now the spur to action. The embryonic IDWN used the prospect of an international Convention as a rallying tool, to mobilize domestic workers and their organizations around the world. Following the September meeting, the first leaflet for the ILO campaign, “**Domestic/Household Workers: Demand Respect and Our Rights!**”, was produced by the end of 2008, in six languages. It explained about the new international network of domestic workers’ organizations, how it came about and its current form. It gave information on what the ILO and the ILC are, how they are structured, and who is involved. It outlined what Conventions and Recommendations are, and gave the timeline of the process towards the ILC in 2011 when the domestic workers’ Convention would come to the vote. It encouraged everyone to raise awareness and win support, especially among trade unions. It gave suggestions for making contact with governments, ILO Regional Offices, and even employers’ bodies, where possible.



Resources were still very tight, but, with support from the IUF, WIEGO and SEWA, more funding was now being found. Shortly after the September 2008 meeting, grants from the FNV Mondiaal (which had supported the 2006 conference) and the Belgian foodworkers’ union CSC (a long-standing IUF affiliate) came in, meaning that Anneke van Luijken was now the Project Coordinator for at least a further year.

The following year, more funds came in too, from the Dutch MDG3 Fund (via WIEGO), the Fondation des Droits de l'Homme au Travail, and small donations from other supportive foundations. This meant that by early 2009, three Regional Coordinators for Asia, Latin America and Africa could also be taken on to build the network on the ground (see page 40). Then, in June that year, the Interim Working Group could meet in Geneva, to establish the network formally, and, very importantly, get their first experience of being at an International Labour Conference (ILC) (see page 38).

Building Links with Unions

For the domestic workers, the support and involvement of the trade unions would be crucial. They have the formal role for workers in the ILO. In ILO processes, such as when compiling replies to questionnaires, governments are supposed to consult with the formally recognized trade unions as well as with employers. Unions are the ones who go to the ILCs each June in Geneva to represent workers in the negotiations.

Unions would be needed to help persuade governments to involve domestic workers' representatives in consultations about the proposed Convention. They could and should help domestic workers to get access to the meetings with government officials and to learn how to put their case forward and negotiate with them. They could and should provide training in what is the ILO, how it functions, what is a Convention, and so on. They could provide a lot of support and encouragement.

Plus, there was the strong political desire to have domestic workers' representatives directly taking part in the actual negotiations at the ILCs and even in the final historic vote for their rights. This would reinforce not just the idea but also the reality of domestic workers representing themselves and being respected for the role they can and do play. However, in the ILO system, only officially registered trade unions can comprise the Workers' Delegation for their country. So, for domestic workers' leaders to be given this position, the unions would need to include them in their Delegations.

At the same time, this would mean that the Workers' Delegations would be better informed about the reality of domestic work and the needs of domestic workers. Each country's Workers' Delegation to an ILC is made up of one Delegate and up to two Advisors for each item on the agenda (i.e. for each committee). They are usually senior union officials. They know well the technicalities and procedures of the ILO, but they may not be so familiar with the particular sector being discussed. This time, it would be crucial to get domestic workers in a position to give detailed advice as the discussions proceeded.

There were many efforts to persuade unions across the world to include a domestic workers' representative in their country's official Workers' Delegation. Never before had there been such an emphasis on the actual workers concerned being involved in ILC discussions, especially in an official capacity.



However, it was not going to be easy. Some unions were supportive in theory but nervous about stepping outside their usual patterns to bring an “outsider” into their Delegation, someone perhaps whose behaviour they couldn’t “control”. The IDWN had to circulate a note to reassure them.

Many other unions around the world were not yet particularly aware or supportive of domestic workers’ organizations or rights. Fish Ip Pui Yu, IDWN Regional Coordinator for Asia, says, *“I remember being at the 2009 ILC, and one union representative said, ‘When we speak about domestic workers’ needs, we should also talk about their employers’ needs’. I felt very frustrated. It was still so fresh and new for many unions. How would they come to understand?”*.

Also, not everywhere was it politically easy to build alliances between domestic workers’ organizations and the formal trade unions in all countries. There can be distrust from trade unions, which are (or should be) democratic member-based organizations, towards other organizations that they see as led by professionals or political cliques. Or, other types of workers’ associations or networks can find unions bureaucratic or not as democratic as they claim. So there can be a lot of mutual “finger-pointing”. But now there was a short timeline to follow. Delays were out of the question. Wherever possible, they had to put their differences to one side and find ways of working together.

So the ITUC and IUF – in consultation with the still-growing IDWN – got on with alerting the labour movement around the world, encouraging them to take the issue up. When the official questionnaire (see page 28) was being sent out in April 2009, the ITUC and IUF sent out circulars to their affiliated national unions worldwide, encouraging them to get involved and giving them ideas for how to reply. They drew attention to the coming deadlines for replies to the ILO. They gave technical information, and they gave advice on how to respond and how best to put pressure on the other parties – governments and employers – to respond properly too. Importantly, they urged the unions to make contact with domestic workers’ organizations and get them involved.

Meanwhile, the ILO also got on with alerting its three constituencies - unions, governments and employers - around the world. A special edition of the ILO magazine “World of Work” in April 2010 focused on domestic workers and the moves towards a new Standard. It included an article by Manuela Tomei, the Director of the ILO’s Conditions of Work and Employment Programme (TRAVAIL). ILO Offices and Programmes in various countries provided valuable support too, helping to put domestic workers’ organizations in contact with the trade unions, as well as with government departments and academic researchers who had information to share. In some places, the ILO provided training to help domestic workers get involved. They supported public awareness-raising through the media.

It was also, of course, essential that domestic workers' organizations that are not official unions, as well as their supporters in NGOs, knew what was happening and get involved. So the IDWN encouraged all in its network to be in contact with the unions, government and, where possible, employers to persuade them of the seriousness of the moment and, in many cases, help raise the level of their understanding about domestic workers and the need for positive change.

All this effort proved to be very successful. The ILO's request for information in 2009 (see previous page), received replies from 103 Member States, including 75 governments, said to be an unusually high number. What is more, domestic workers' organizations in many countries reported that they now had much better status and profile among the unions and government officials and sometimes employers too. They were at last being consulted about these issues of such importance to them, and they were being taken seriously.

For more information

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Claire Hobden, **"Winning Fair Labour Standards for Domestic Workers: Lessons Learned from the Campaign for a Domestic Worker Bill of Rights in New York State"**, ILO, GURN Discussion Paper No.14, 2010: www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---actrav/documents/publication/wcms_149488.pdf



USA

“The AFL-CIO union federation was inspired by our victories at a time of roll-back for working people, and immigrants in particular. They really helped keep us informed and we had regular meetings and phone calls. They made sure we were included in all tripartite meetings. Reviewing government documents was incredibly detailed, and union officers and others, such as the National Employment Law Project and the Institute for Policy Studies, took us through it all, section-by-section. We even did ‘homework’ between meetings, and we had our own consultation process within the NDWA to establish our own priorities. The AFL-CIO knew what it was like to participate in the ILC, and helped us understand the different players and the process.”

Our relationships with the unions remain strong to this day. We built good relationships with the Department of Labor too. One of the heads there, Carol Pier, had written about domestic workers when working at Human Rights Watch and she gave her staff the green light. The whole team from DoL were great. We were never able to build a good relationship with the US Employers representative, though.”

Jill Shenker, National Domestic Workers’ Alliance (NDWA), USA

“We had training in how to participate in the debates, how to study and recognize the most important points when reading a Convention... We also learned that we were applying pressure in the United Nations... We learned how to approach governments and get information and obtain their support. So that was very important training about how to convince people to support us. The international network was very good. I realize now how important Karin (Pape) was in showing us the whole process.”

Juana Flores, National Domestic Workers’ Alliance (NDWA), USA

South Africa

In South Africa, domestic workers have had the same basic rights as other workers since the fall of Apartheid in 1994. Here, the domestic workers' union SADSAWU benefitted from the fact that the Minister of Labour had been part of that struggle and was open to the unions. The COSATU union federation encouraged direct contact between the Department of Labour and SADSAWU, and backed up the domestic workers' demands. SADSAWU also encouraged lobbying by gender activists and labour-support NGOs. So SADSAWU was called in by the Government and asked for its responses to the ILO questionnaire and reports. "You do have to prove you know what you are talking about", commented SADSAWU General Secretary Myrtle Witbooi. Happily, the Social Law Project at the University of the Western Cape (see page 42) was able to help with their responses to the official documents.

Trinidad and Tobago

"We wrote a letter to the Minister of Labour and he called a meeting of all stakeholders. It was a good meeting. I was able to bring domestic workers with me, and they spoke. So the Government could hear the situation, and we got them to respond to the questionnaire. In fact, the unions said it was the first time that our Government responded to a questionnaire! At first the Government said it wouldn't accept a Convention, but leading up to 2011 the Government changed and a former trade union leader, Errol McLeod, became the Minister. He encouraged the Government to sign up and even influenced the employers to accept."

Ida le Blanc, NUDE, Trinidad and Tobago

Indonesia

In Indonesia, in early 2010, the ILO Project to Combat Forced Labour and Trafficking in Migrant Workers ran a short campaign bringing together the Jala-PRT domestic workers' network, trade union federations, NGOs and government Ministries to raise public awareness about the situation of domestic workers. They held meetings and organized local radio discussions.

A giant "napkin" was produced, made up of squares sewn by domestic workers in various cities. Jala-PRT later smuggled it into the Parliament to put more pressure on the politicians.

www.ilo.org/jakarta/whatwedo/eventsandmeetings/WCMS_122355/lang-en/index.htm



ILC 2009: Gaining First-Hand Experience

It was going to be very important to prepare the domestic workers' representatives for the reality of how the annual International Labour Conference in Geneva actually works. So, it was decided to take some representatives, largely from the Interim Working Group (see page 29) to the ILC in 2009. Representatives came from SADSAWU (South Africa), NUDE (Trinidad and Tobago), SINTTRAHOL (Peru), CHODAWU (Tanzania), NDWA (USA), CONLACTRAHO (Latin America and Caribbean), and ADWN (Asia).

There, they followed one particular standard-setting committee, the one on HIV-Aids, so as to experience its procedures and processes. In between the formal sessions, they had training by ILO officials and Karin Pape, WIEGO Europe Advisor and a specialist on the ILO, who would soon also take over as the IDWN Interim Coordinator. They discussed what they had learnt and what it would mean for their involvement in such a committee the following year. While there, they also took the opportunity to lobby their government and union representatives with the demand for domestic workers' representatives to be included in the national Delegations of 2010 and 2011.

"We were learning each day as we go. It was a bit scary. But Karin got us into things and explained what was happening, and we made it through. Then I thought 'Now we are ready to go to 2010!'"

Myrtle Witbooi, IDWN Chairperson, and SADSAWU, South Africa

"The support in 2009 was very important, a great idea even though a huge investment in resources. Key staff at the ILO made a big difference. People like Luc Demaret of ACTRAV and Manuela Tomei of TRAVAIL were very welcoming and open to us. I was very impressed by their commitment and knowledge. They really helped educate us on the process."

Jill Shenker, NDWA, USA

"The ILO and UN buildings were so grand. It was out of our imagination that we could go into such a structure and process. It is very complicated to understand, and when I went in 2009 I still felt it a 'paper tiger' – even if we got a Standard, if governments don't respond, what could we do? But, in learning about the process, I had a change of thinking: that negotiation involves different parties and at least gives us a platform. And our technical support people would help us. It would be a step-by-step process, cooperating over a period of time, not just a 2-3 day workshop."

Fish Ip Pui Yu, IDWN Regional Coordinator for Asia

“Being at the ILC in 2009 was a great experience. Another domestic worker, Gillian Atwell, came with me too. We really appreciated the information from ACTRAV on the processes in the ILO. We sat in the gallery to see how a tripartite committee works. It gave us a feeling of importance to be there, very powerful. We met others from around the world and shared our experiences too, which helped us get stronger, knowing that we are trying for the same goals. We heard about strategies that work in other countries. It built our confidence and spirit. When we came back home, we had meetings to inform domestic workers. They love to hear from another domestic worker like Gillian; it makes them want to become part of the struggle.”

Ida le Blanc, NUDE, Trinidad and Tobago

While at the ILC in 2009, the domestic workers’ leaders also took the opportunity to raise awareness, especially among more trade unionists, of the discussions that would start the following year. The group held its own side event and attended other ones, such as one hosted by the International Coordinating Committee (ICC) on Organizing in the Informal Economy. There, they alerted everyone to the process now underway for a domestic workers’ Convention, why it was needed, and the support that the domestic workers were asking of them, in their home countries and internationally.

IDWN is Launched

With the domestic workers’ representatives in Geneva for the ILC in 2009, this was also an opportunity to formally launch the International Domestic Workers’ Network (IDWN). There, a Steering Committee was formed, chaired by Myrtle Witbooi of SADSAWU (South Africa) and with representatives and Regional Coordinators of domestic workers’ organizations from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean as office bearers. (Unfortunately, Europe remained formally unrepresented in the IDWN at that time.) The roles of the office bearers and Coordinators were defined, and an action plan agreed on.

Shortly afterwards, in mid-2009, WIEGO Europe Advisor and German trade unionist Karin Pape became the Interim Coordinator for the network. Karin had attended ILCs for many years as part of the German Workers’ Delegation and acted as a WIEGO liaison person to the ILO. Her knowledge and experience of the ILO and how it functions would prove to be of immense benefit to the IDWN in this vital period running up to and during the ILCs in 2010 and 2011.

By now, the IDWN had also found the funding for three Regional Coordinators, one each for Africa, Asia and Latin America. They proved to be the “backbone” as Karin puts it, coordinating the activities of domestic workers’ organizations and their allies in those regions.



These Regional Coordinators had already started to pick up on existing contacts among domestic workers' organizations and to find new ones wherever possible. Over this period, they brought them together in regional and sub-regional workshops, and carried out other activities to build awareness of the growing mobilization and the forthcoming ILO process, encouraging as many as possible to get involved. They spent time gathering the domestic workers' concerns and demands that could be synthesized into the key demands the IDWN would focus on in the negotiations, as outlined in a "Platform of Demands" at the ILC in 2010 (see page 55). They gave advice on how to liaise with governments and trade unions so as to feed into the official ILO consultation process. They also suggested what being at an ILC would be like and urged the domestic workers' representatives to try to get there in an official capacity. Some who participated at these workshops did indeed go on to attend one or more ILCs (see page 46).

In Africa, for example, the IDWN Regional Coordinator Vicky Kanyoka (formerly of the CHODAWU union in Tanzania) had managed to make contact with nine domestic workers' organizations by 2009 (a figure that had doubled by 2011). She held sub-regional meetings with them in East Africa in 2009, and in West Africa and Southern Africa in 2010. She then helped them to build contact with the unions in their own countries and to present their demands to them. Where needed, she sent letters to union federations to introduce the domestic workers' organizations to them. She also contacted the regional trade union councils SATUCC (Southern Africa) and EATUC (East Africa) to ask them to support by lobbying the regional intergovernmental forums SADC and EAC.

It was key that domestic workers' organizations could get into a position to influence their governments. So Vicky circulated model lobbying letters. She paid visits to government officials in several African countries and sent emails to Ministers of Labour and Members of Parliament in other ones. In the end, domestic workers' organizations across the continent in countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and South Africa, became involved in tripartite consultations to discuss their countries' responses to the ILO questionnaires (see page 28).

As the 2010 and 2011 ILCs drew near, Vicky also helped persuade the unions to incorporate domestic workers' leaders into the official Workers' Delegations with some success. They included, for example, Evaline Mulo from the KUDHEIHA union in Kenya, East Africa (see page 70), and Raimi Fatou from the SYNEM union in Bénin, West Africa.

Meanwhile in Asia, the IDWN Regional Coordinator there, Fish Ip Pui Yu, did similar work, stimulating interest and support among domestic workers' organizations, unions, allies and governments. She succeeded in helping Sonu Danuwar from NIDWU in Nepal (see page 60) to become an official advisor to her country's Delegation in 2011. However, she had no success in any other Asian country. Some unions there said that it was too difficult to get their government to agree. Others simply failed to reply.

In Latin America, Marcelina Bautista, who was both the IDWN Regional Coordinator and General Secretary of the regional organization CONLACTRAHO (see page 4), also worked hard within her region. Many governments there signaled they were supportive. However, many of the trade unions, although generally supportive, refused to include domestic workers in their Delegations. But there were exceptions. The CUT union federation in Brazil mandated a huge delegation of domestic workers to attend the ILCs. A lack of funds meant that they had to sleep in the basement of the IUF office in Geneva, but they were very happy that they could take part in the negotiations.

Providing support to get more media profile in domestic workers' own countries was another area of work for the IDWN. In Asia, IDWN Regional Coordinator Fish Ip Pui Yu helped the domestic workers to develop contacts with journalists to get them access to radio and TV. She says, *"For many who had until now been deeply invisible to society, such things as making contact with journalists and knowing how to win their interest were new activities. There are cultural differences too. Some are much less willing to put themselves forward, and needed support to become more assertive. So I took photos, introduced them to people, and so on"*.

It is also true that some domestic workers' leaders needed guidance to move away from simply talking about the abuse they face and the lack of justice to winning interest and support based on the real possibilities for constructive change.

With the right kind of approach, journalists and radio/TV producers proved ready to take an interest. In the UK in August 2010, for example, Justice for Domestic Workers (J4DW) was featured in a well-known TV documentary series "Dispatches" programme called "Britain's Secret Slaves," which highlighted the particularly abusive situation of migrant domestic workers working in the homes of diplomats in London. (www.channel4.com/programmes/dispatches/episode-guide/series-69/episode-1) In some countries, such as Tanzania, access to radio proved particularly useful as many domestic workers have the radio on while working.

At an international level, though, building links with each other was never going to be easy for the domestic workers, given all the language differences and the limited resources. WIEGO did a lot to help with translation and interpretation between English and Spanish. Barbro Budin at the IUF helped with her contacts in French-speaking West Africa. In many Asian countries, however, none of the European languages are familiar, even less so to domestic workers. East Asian domestic workers found it particularly difficult. High quality, professional interpretation is vital, says Fish Ip Pui Yu. *"If not, it is not proper respect for them. If they don't get what's going on, it is hard for them to go back and for other domestic workers to get connected into the international work."* Even then, professional interpreters *"do not necessarily know how to translate what domestic workers are saying, especially about cultural aspects"*.



Fish tells of how, to overcome such language barriers in her region, she used pictures to help her and some leaders get to know each other. At the same time, there were young leaders like Sonu Danuwar from NIDWU in Nepal and Sayuti from Tunas Mulia in Indonesia who took it upon themselves to learn English so that they could communicate with each other – and, very importantly, so that they could speak for themselves to the world.

Through similar activities also in Europe, the IDWN supported and encouraged domestic workers' organizations around the world to increase their own membership and activism, and to make links with each other across borders. It also helped strengthen contact between them and international organizations such as the FES (Germany) and Solidarity Center (USA) which could help with material support to develop their activities.

Gathering the Data

Data and information about domestic work was growing, but this too needed to be built on. The IDWN and supporters knew they needed to make the sector and its massive economic and social contribution much more visible, especially if they were to persuade the deniers and doubters of the need for a Convention. WIEGO and the IUF already had experience of such denial when the ILO Home Work Convention (C177) was being negotiated in 1995-96. Employers tried to argue that home-based workers were not a significant group and so an international standard was not necessary.

Various ILO Programmes and Offices around the world (see pages 24-25) had been producing reports and factsheets on different aspects of the sector, such as on child or migrant domestic workers, or on domestic workers in particular locations, such as in Indonesia and Ghana. So had international NGOs like Human Rights Watch. There were also academic researchers who had been working with domestic workers' organizations in various parts of the world. They included Dr. Yuniyanti Chuzaifah at the University of Leiden (Netherlands) and others in the Arab Women Academic Network, who were studying the situation of migrant domestic workers in the Middle East. Dr. Mary Goldsmith Connolly from the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana in Mexico had been working for many years in Latin American countries. Professor Bridget Anderson at Compas at Oxford University was collaborating with migrant domestic workers in the UK. Meanwhile, in South Africa, Professor D'Arcy Du Toit and Dr. Fairuz Mullagee at the Domestic Workers Research Project of the University of the Western Cape, and Professor Jennifer Fish from Old Dominion University, USA, were working with the SADSAWU union.

However, a bigger, more global picture was needed, as well as much stronger information to combat the arguments that some governments and employers were likely to use. WIEGO was particularly well positioned to help because of its network of academic researchers already working on the informal economy, especially on women workers. So WIEGO set about fostering a stronger knowledge-base about domestic work and publicizing research reports through its website to add to what the ILO and others were doing.

Proving just how many people were working in this sector was one important task. Around the world, most governments had never collected any data on the numbers of domestic workers, let alone their economic contribution to figures such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Some of those hostile to a Convention might actually use the argument that it would not apply to many people and so was not important enough to pursue.

In early 2009, WIEGO produced a factsheet bringing together the known data about domestic workers around the world. This showed that there was little yet known about the real numbers of people doing this work, but it raised awareness about the organizations they were building and their demands. The next year, timed for the first ILC discussions in 2010, the IDWN asked researchers at the University of Kassel in Germany to produce a summary of the global data known so far, and WIEGO did one specifically on the sector in Latin America. The following year, the ILO TRAVAIL also produced a statistical survey. Now, no-one could deny that millions of people, mostly women, were working as domestic workers in the private homes of others across the world.

Meanwhile, there were other topics that would probably be very hotly debated. One was the regulation of working time in private households. In 2010, the ILO TRAVAIL office published a study on this, and included a model law for policy-makers to consider. In May 2011, just in time for the final discussions, ILO TRAVAIL brought out briefings on other issues too such as pay, and measuring the social and economic contribution of the domestic work sector.

Another problem area was likely to be Occupational Health and Safety. WIEGO was looking at the issue of OHS for informal workers, and included domestic workers in some research it commissioned on two countries: Brazil and Tanzania. This revealed the kinds of risks that domestic workers face in their work, but also showed that most domestic workers were not yet aware of any legal rights and had little contact with the authorities on the matter. However, this was due to poor official attitudes and resources rather than legal or practical impossibilities. Legal rights and an inspection system for domestic work already existed in some countries such as Sweden and Uruguay, as well as for small farms which are similarly work-and-living spaces.



These kinds of activities meant that domestic workers' organizations around the world and their network, the IDWN, were developing their links even more with supportive academic researchers. These researchers would prove to be of immense help even during the very negotiations, providing valuable information to use against negative voices (see page 58).

For more information

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Manuela Tomei, Director of ILO TRAVAIL, issued a short video in May 2011, just before the final ILC negotiations for the Decent Work for Domestic Workers Convention, explaining how adopting such a new instrument would help the world's domestic workers: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gP9i2YxMwWc>

Jamaica

“The ILO documents went to the Jamaican Bureau of Women’s Affairs, and they consulted us, but we didn’t know much about the ILO. We were not educated on these things then.

Ida in Trinidad and I used to correspond but we had lost touch. She wrote to our Bureau of Women’s Affairs and I saw her letter, and wrote back to her. She sent us information about the IDWN and about the ILC, and said, ‘You need to be involved. There’s no money for funding, but try to find a way to come’. So I looked at websites about the ILO and the IDWN, to inform myself and our members. I also wrote to Karin at the IDWN, and she sent me a package of information.

In 2010, I wrote to our Minister of Labour, and said it was imperative to have a domestic workers’ representative in the Delegation. They agreed, and I became an advisor to the Jamaican Workers’ Delegation. We were already liaising with the trade unions, and there was no problem. We also had sessions with the employers, so that they would buy in to a Convention with no denial.

When I got to the ILC in 2010, though, it all felt new. I didn’t get any other preparation from anyone. But I wasn’t blind. I had gone on-line and read about the different types of sessions and committees. And the Employers’ Representative from Jamaica was very helpful. She helped me to get the bus pass in Geneva, and to register for the conference. She told me about the importance of getting the official briefing each morning, to find out when and where the meetings would be.

I have to thank everyone, the IDWN, IUF, WIEGO, ITUC, ILO, FES, UN Women, the Government of Jamaica, the Employers’ Representative. They held our hands, and I lift my hat to them. I am also thanking the people of Jamaica who got behind us. When we are on radio and in the newspapers, they now write and call in, asking ‘Why are they taking so much time to ratify?’.”

Shirley Pryce, Jamaica Household Workers’ Association (JHWA), Jamaica

See page 57 for more from Shirley about what it was like to make a speech in the UN Grand Plenary hall and to vote for the Convention.



4. Being There – and Winning!

By June 2010, it was time for the negotiations over the proposed Convention and Recommendation for “Decent Work for Domestic Workers” to start. As the domestic workers’ representatives gathered in Geneva, there was much excitement and nervous anticipation.

Getting them there had required so much work and preparation. As well as all the awareness-raising, building alliances, and so on, there were many practical obstacles that had to be overcome. Obviously, one was the financial support to enable as many domestic workers’ representatives to be there as possible. Again, organizations like the FES (Germany) and IUF affiliated unions helped as did the Solidarity Center (US), the Canadian Labour Congress, and others.

Another obstacle was that many domestic workers’ representatives did not yet have passports, and each worker also needed a visa to Switzerland. So they had to travel to the passport offices and Swiss Embassy in their capital city, and many needed support to get through this process. In a big country, just getting a passport and visa could mean taking four days out from work. Some Swiss Embassies even questioned why a cook or a domestic worker needed to go to Geneva and had to be persuaded to give them a visa.

Then there were also the three weeks needed to be in Geneva for the International Labour Conference (ILC). Some workers had to negotiate very carefully with their employers. In some cases, at the last moment employers refused to let them travel abroad at all. However, other employers agreed they could take their annual leave and/or unpaid leave for this. So, happily in 2010 and 2011 several dozen domestic workers did make it there, from across the world to take part in this historic process.

Despite whatever preparation they had had at home, actually being part of long discussions of a legal, technical nature was new for many. In the formal proceedings of the ILC, there are many rules that are not at all easy to grasp. They also run to a complicated agenda of meetings each day for two weeks. It can be a very daunting experience for a newcomer. Some domestic workers’ representatives had been able to get to the 2009 ILC to prepare (see page 38). But in 2010 and 2011, each time there were more workers for whom this would be a new experience. So, the IDWN started each year with a two-day pre-meeting, hosted at the IUF Building in Geneva. There, the domestic workers’ representatives and members of their technical support group gathered to get to know each other, to discuss their various roles, and get briefings about what was about to take place.

“People working within the ILO helped us to understand technical terms such as ‘tripartite’, and they explained the voting process. They also advised us on how to conduct ourselves during the discussions, especially to keep silent, which was difficult for us... Here in the United States, we do not hesitate to express our views... The value of the workshops was in learning how to listen and speak at the international level. We learned to recognize the different points of view and to understand the context of different countries. They were very important in helping us to negotiate successfully.”

Guillemina Castellanos, National Domestic Workers’ Alliance, USA

The IDWN handed out an overall agenda of the two weeks ahead, maps showing the different buildings of the United Nations complex in Geneva, bus timetables, information on how to register, and so on. Those who had been before gave tips about the complicated agenda of meetings. Everyone should, for example, pick up a copy of the Daily Bulletin that the ILO issues each morning so as to know exactly when and where each meeting that day would be. They must know where they may or may not sit, depending on whether they had official “Delegate” status or were just “Observers”. They must keep to time and – for those in the official Delegations – remain present throughout the discussions, just in case a vote is called. Discussed there too were the public demonstrations in Geneva that the IDWN was planning in collaboration with the local Swiss unions, the side meetings being hosted by supportive organizations (see page 61), and who would represent the IDWN at each of them.

It was essential to help everyone to keep track of the complicated process as it unfolded and to continue to feel involved. The Workers’ Group met at 9 a.m. each morning to review the current situation in the negotiations, but there was a lot of technical information to absorb in only one hour. So, at 8 a.m. every day over the two weeks, the IDWN started with its own meeting where the domestic workers’ representatives and technical support staff could share their updates and do their best to clarify any questions. They also identified where there were opportunities to make speeches and who would do them. Ideas and suggestions from these IDWN meetings were then passed on by the domestic workers’ representatives to their own Delegations and to the Spokesperson of the Workers’ Group (see page 51), and back again.

This process helped everyone to develop a shared understanding of the current situation and the best strategy, and it kept the domestic workers and their demands closely involved in the negotiations. These meetings also attracted domestic workers who had come with their own Delegation but were not yet closely involved in the IDWN.



Also, the IDWN arranged for many of the domestic workers' representatives and technical support staff to stay in the same self-catering accommodation just across the border in France. There, they shared rooms, shopping and cooking. They socialized and got to know each other better, liaised over transport arrangements, and so on. Some evenings, they gathered to share songs and poems (see page 49). They also exchanged ideas and information about the technical processes of the day. This all helped to provide mutual support and build friendships, solidarity and confidence for this process, which was so extraordinary for them, and for the future of the network.



Photo: WIEGO

Guille's poem

Guillermina Castellanos of the National Alliance of Domestic Workers (NDWA), USA, composed this poem while at the ILC in June 2011.

*We are here again with pride and dignity
Negotiating a Convention for all the nations
Yes, this year, 2011, we are going to succeed
Let's go, let's go, ILO, with great happiness.*

*Working as three parties we are going to succeed
We understand the Convention is necessary
To change the situation for women and children
We are working with Halimah and her delegation.*

*We will achieve the Convention and the Recommendation
Yes, we will have the Convention and the Recommendation
With our sub, sub, sub-amendments, we have the solution
Come on workers, let us spread the news.*

*Provide decent work is the recommendation
Working together, we will change the situation
Hurray for the Convention and the Recommendation
Viva, Viva the Convention and the Recommendation*

*Our women and children will overcome this situation
Let's go tell the governments to take action
And make sure they vote for ratification
We've got to organize to change the situation*

*Come on, come on ILO
We can't let go
We cannot stop our struggle
Let's go together to organize the workers.*



“Proud ‘T-badge’ Holders”

The IDWN’s effort to get domestic workers’ leaders into the official Workers’ Delegations to the ILCs (see page 33) was overwhelmingly successful.

In 2010, some 11 domestic workers’ leaders were “proud ‘T-badge’ holders”, in the words of the then IDWN Coordinator Karin Pape. “T-badge” refers to the “T” for “Trade Union Delegate”. Employer and government representatives had similar badges (“E” for “Employer” and “G” for “Government”). The T-badges meant that the worker leaders had official status to play a full role and were entitled to sit in the main “floor” of the proceedings alongside the other Workers’ Delegates from their country. This was now truly giving domestic workers the respect and recognition that they deserve.

When it came to the second discussion in 2011, there were even more – now some 20 – domestic workers’ representatives in the official Workers’ Delegations. Some even had the mandate from their Delegation to be the one to press the button when it came to the final vote – to vote for their Convention.

Other domestic workers’ representatives were included in the Delegations of the IUF and ITUC Global Unions. Under the rules of the ILC, this meant that they could take part in the official proceedings, including sessions of the Workers’ Group, though without voting rights.

On top of this, there were many more domestic workers’ representatives at the ILCs, brought there by support organizations such as WIEGO, Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA), Human Rights Watch, and Anti-Slavery International. They and their supporters from the NGOs, campaigns, and universities filled the Observers’ Gallery to one side of the room. There, they kept a close and constant eye on the proceedings, hour after hour, day after day, over the two weeks of the Tripartite Committee.



Photo: WIEGO

ILO Director-General Juan Somavia, responding positively to a request by WIEGO International Coordinator Dr. Marty Chen, invited the IDWN to meet him during the ILC on June 6, 2010. He said how impressed he was by the number of domestic workers’ representatives present. The full story can be found at <http://idwnilo.wordpress.com/2010/06/06/meeting-with-juan-somavia-director-general-of-the-ilo/>

How Negotiation Happens

When a new Standard is being negotiated, this is done in a Tripartite Committee. There, the representatives of the three parties – Governments, Employers and Workers, each seated in separate areas of the room – discuss and debate. These parties have to decide what form the new Standard is to take: whether it is to be a Convention (which is legally binding on governments) and/or Recommendation (which is guidance for governments). Once they reach that decision, the text is then argued over word-by-word, phrase-by-phrase, clause-by-clause, with sub and sub-sub amendments proposed and then rejected or accepted, sometimes via a vote. These Committees meet for 2-3 hours each morning and afternoon over some eight days, and even in the evening when the pressure of time is building.

It was important to make sure that all the domestic workers with voting rights were present throughout all the sessions of the Tripartite Committee, no matter how long the sessions may take. Otherwise, any hostile parties in the Governments or Employers, if they saw fewer workers' representatives present, might seize the opportunity to call for a vote. Voting runs to a very complicated pattern, with "weighting" between the three parties to reflect actual attendance at the session.

In a Tripartite Committee, all representatives from Governments are entitled to speak from the floor. But only the Spokesperson of the Employers' Group, on the one hand, and the Spokesperson of the Workers' Group, on the other, can speak for their respective groups.

So, in the Tripartite Committee discussing the Domestic Workers Convention, all points on behalf of the Workers' Delegates had to be made by the Spokesperson of the Workers' Group. For both ILCs, this was Ms. Halimah Yacob from Singapore. She proved to be a most experienced and resourceful negotiator, both knowledgeable about the situation of domestic workers and sympathetic to their need for radical improvement in respect for their rights as workers.



Photo: J. Fish



The Spokesperson of the Workers' Group has a group (a "Bureau", in the ILO term) advising her. This is made up of representatives of the ILO Workers' support office ACTRAV, the ITUC, and a few from country-based Workers' Delegations from different world regions. The Bureau advising Halimah Yacob in these discussions included Pia Stalpaert from the CSC union in Belgium and Myrtle Witbooi, the Chairperson of the IDWN, from SADSAWU in South Africa, and a member of her country's Workers' Delegation. They were able to pass to her information and thoughts on strategy coming out of the IDWN meetings, and vice versa. In this way, a picture was built up of how positions were shifting, where the obstacles still lay, and so on.

"This was a wonderful experience for me. Each night after the meetings, the Workers' Group leader Halimah Yacob would ask me, Pia, and others, 'Do you think that's the right thing?' Or, while we were sitting there in the Committee, she would pass notes back to us. She wouldn't do anything without us. Marieke (from the ITUC) was also excellent. I would then also report back to the workers at the IDWN meetings each morning" (see page 47).

**Myrtle Witbooi, IDWN Chairperson and General Secretary of
SADSAWU, South Africa**

Before the Tripartite Committee meets, each party has its own Group meeting to discuss its strategy. So, each morning, the domestic workers and technical staff would hurry from the IDWN meeting straight to the meeting of the Workers' Group on Domestic Workers to hear Halimah Yacob and her advisors outline the current situation and strategy and give their input. Then they would go into the Tripartite Committee to follow the negotiations. The same pattern was repeated in the afternoon. It was hard work, but in this way, everyone shared the fullest understanding of how the negotiations were developing. Some days, there were also full Workers' Group meetings to attend to hear about progress in negotiations on other topics going on at the same time.

Watching, Keeping Track...

As the first negotiations got underway in 2010, those in the Observers Gallery expressed their enthusiasm or disappointment at things said during the discussions with claps and cheers or sighs and groans. This caused the Chair of the Committee to issue a warning that this was against official procedure. So they continued to watch in silence but still making their presence felt. And between sessions, as the Delegates were leaving for meal breaks or at the end of the day, they broke out into singing and clapping and cheering. Sharing songs also gave them spirit and motivation to keep going through the long, formal sessions.

*"My mother was a kitchen girl. My father was a garden boy.
That's why I'm a unionist, a unionist, a unionist."*

Song from South Africa

The IDWN encouraged all the domestic workers' representatives present to keep track of what their own Government's representative was saying during the sessions, and then speak with them afterwards in the corridors and cafeteria. There, they took up points and added information. They urged supportive Governments to speak up so that their position would go on the official record, and they challenged the obstructive ones.

"I didn't have enough time to read all the documents. But I could note who said what in the negotiations and follow them at lunch time, and challenge them with all the knowledge that I have of what is a domestic worker's life."

Marissa Begonia, Justice for Domestic Workers (J4DW), UK,
and member of the UK Workers' Delegation at the ILC in 2011



Photo: WIEGO



Hand in Hand: For Fair Domestic Employment

Sitting alongside the domestic workers in the Observers' Gallery in 2011 was an employer, Betsey McGee from the USA. She is a volunteer with Hand in Hand, a network of domestic employers, their families, and like-minded allies working together for fair and feasible employment of domestic workers.

Hand in Hand was founded in New York, USA, to promote better support for those needing services in their homes, and for those providing them. It collaborates with many domestic workers' groups across the USA, including the National Domestic Workers' Alliance (NDWA), as well as faith groups, feminist groups, groups of elderly people, those with disabilities, and so on. They all believe that caregivers and the families who hire them have a shared interest in a relationship that is mutually beneficial. As Betsey says, *"experience has taught us that the best way to have peace of mind when leaving our loved ones in someone else's care is to ensure that the caregivers are satisfied with their working conditions and arrangements - and that we are too"*.

During the ILC discussions, Betsey wished that someone could ask everyone there to stand up if they employ a domestic worker. For many, this must be how they could work outside their homes, and indeed be in Geneva. But the structure of the debate did not allow them to speak about their personal stake in the issues at hand.

Across the world, domestic employers who want to do the "right thing" are not yet coming together enough to work with domestic workers' groups and to find the good practices and promote them more widely. *"Even those employers who are sympathetic don't easily speak out about it. We need to think more about how we can get their thoughts better exchanged and publicized"*, comments Fish Ip Pui Yu, IDWN Regional Coordinator for Asia.

But Hand in Hand is one of those showing that this is a good idea with a lot of potential. Happily, Betsey agreed to speak at a side event in Geneva organized by the IDWN and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) on social protection for domestic workers, showing that there are progressive employers taking action, speaking up, and encouraging others.

<http://domesticemployers.org>

The IDWN and allies also made the workers' presence felt by distributing printed information. In 2010, there was the IDWN "Platform of Demands" (see page 40) and statistical research (see page 43) to impress the Delegates with the significance of the sector. At the following ILC in 2011, the IDWN produced another publication "Myths and Realities about Domestic Workers: What THEY say and what WE say". This identified the key arguments that had been used by hostile parties at the ILC in 2010 and gave the domestic workers' responses to these arguments, which Celia Mather had gathered through interviews and a workshop with domestic workers in South Africa in March 2011.

Alongside these IDWN and WIEGO documents were leaflets and publications from the domestic workers' own organizations and their supporters from across the world. There were also ITUC briefing notes, which set out domestic workers' demands but in more formal ILO language. In this way, representatives from the three parties at the ILCs were given information and arguments in a range of styles. This made it much more difficult for them to ignore or refute any of them.

The documents also helped raise an awareness of the strength and presence of domestic workers' organizations now mobilized and coordinating themselves in the international network, not just in the negotiating room itself. The "Platform" listed no fewer than 105 domestic workers' organizations and unions in 44 countries that the IDWN had identified by 2010.

Never before in ILC discussions had there been such a presence and involvement of the actual workers concerned. This intentionally put pressure on all those with formal responsibilities in the proceedings – in the Governments', Employers' and Workers' Groups – to "do the right thing".

For more information

IDWN, "Platform of Demands", June 2010

IDWN, "Domestic Workers Worldwide: Summary of available statistical data and estimates", June 2010

IDWN, "Myth and Realities about Domestic Workers: What THEY say and what WE say", June 2011

IDWN publications are found at: www.idwn.info/publications



Making Official Speeches

Official Delegates to the ILCs have the right to speak on behalf of their country's Delegation in ILC plenary sessions from the podium in the Grand Plenary Hall of the United Nations. Such speeches become part of the official record of the ILC, there for always. Delegates can hand over this right to make a speech to someone else from their Delegation and happily some did agree to this, making way for a domestic worker leader who was their Advisor. Also, there were opportunities for those from accredited (formally registered) NGOs to speak in the tripartite committee.

Getting domestic workers' leaders in a position to speak was taking their "visibility" to the highest possible level. The IDWN seized every opportunity it could for this to happen. There was also strategic coordination within the network about who would speak and when in order to include different countries and regions and a wide range of subjects.

In 2010, Guillermina Castellanos Mendoza of the NDWA (USA) and part of the IUF Delegation made an Opening Submission in the Tripartite Committee. Guillermina has been a domestic worker since the age of five years. She says, *"as domestic workers, we suffer many abuses... The speech I made at the ILC was my most painful experience as a human being. But it also gave me great strength as a woman and an organizer"*. Vicky Kanyoka from Tanzania (IDWN Africa Coordinator and part of the IUF Delegation) refuted arguments that only "rich" countries could afford protection for domestic workers by proudly outlining the laws and good practices in her own country.

The following year, Ida le Blanc from the National Union of Domestic Employees (NUDE) in Trinidad and Tobago took to the podium to challenge the idea that domestic workers should be "on call" 24 hours a day for the health and safety of their employers while some were still arguing it was impossible to consider Health and Safety laws covering the workers. Evaline Mulo from KUDHEIHA in Kenya took this theme further, explaining that in her country, domestic workers are included in employment laws, and there is already a system of labour inspection in private homes. The IDWN Regional Coordinator for Asia, Fish Ip Pui Yu, stressed the need for legal protection to include migrant workers too. For example, Indonesia is a country that sends millions of Indonesian women migrant domestic workers to far away countries. Sulistri, from the Workers' Delegation of Indonesia, emphasized how the employment agencies that recruit and place migrant domestic workers need proper regulation if abuse and exploitation is to be curbed.



Photo: WIEGO

Towards the end of the 2011 discussions, Shirley Pryce of the Jamaican Household Workers Association and part of her country's Workers' Delegation, gave a summary and thanks on behalf of domestic workers worldwide. She says, *"I felt such pride, sitting there, waiting to go up to the podium, with all the flags of the world around me. Afterwards I sent the pictures home to our members, and I heard that one broke down in tears. A domestic worker speaking at the UN – it doesn't happen! We were just so happy to be recognized"*.

All was not smooth, however. Marcelina Bautista, the General Secretary of the Latin American regional confederation of household workers' organizations CONLACTRAHO, was sponsored by a union in her country, Mexico, to attend the ILCs. She recalls that in 2010 her Government representatives insisted on revising her speech and, when it came to 2011, her Delegation did not give her the right to make one at all. (The same year, Marcelina was awarded an "International Human Rights Award" by the German labour NGO Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES).)

On the day before the final vote in 2011, the Tripartite Committee's report was presented to the plenary meeting. There, selected Delegates from Governments, Employers and Workers could sum up their arguments. Malin Ackholt on behalf of the Swedish Workers' Delegation (and a member of the IUF Executive Committee) reminded everyone of benefits that decent employment would bring also to employers and their families. Myrtle Witbooi, of the South African Workers' Delegation and Chairperson of the IDWN, gave a final reminder of the abuses domestic workers would continue to face if there was no legislation to protect them. She expressed the IDWN's appreciation for all the hard work of supporters that had brought them to this historic moment. Finally, Maria del Carmen Cruz, on behalf of the Workers' Delegation of Costa Rica, spoke of the good practices that already exist around the world that doubtful governments could draw on. These practices were the product of constructive social dialogue - like the proposed Convention and Recommendation soon to be voted on.



For more information

Some of the speeches by domestic workers' representatives at the ILCs in 2010 and 2011 can be found at the IDWN blog of those events, at: www.idwnilo.wordpress.com

Or they can be found in the official Provisional Records of the Sitzings of the 99th and 100th ILC Sessions at: www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/lang--en/index.htm

Technical Support

During both ILCs, the IDWN also made sure that there were technical support people there to assist the domestic workers' representatives in whichever way they needed. Everyone in the IDWN was clear that these technical people were there to support the domestic workers, to facilitate them rather than take over their role.

Speech-writing is one example. *"The domestic workers would be asked what they wanted to say and what they thought was important at this stage. The writer – Celia Mather - would then, jointly with each worker, find the 'right' language and help to structure the speeches"*, explains IDWN Coordinator Karin Pape. In many cases, there was a strict time limit of five minutes for the speech. So, the worker would go through a trial reading with Celia to make sure the deadline could be met, and so avoid the embarrassment of the Chairperson's gavel hammering down as the worker spoke. The speech was then typed up and handed in to the ILC office in time for it to go into the official record.

A network of academics also gave invaluable support to the negotiations. Some were sitting in the Observers Gallery, others communicating by email. The IDWN liaised between them and the Spokesperson of the Workers' Group, Halimah Jacob, who very much appreciated the unexpected help. Her strategy was to argue each point carefully, with good quality information, so as to convince as many as possible rather than just to react with a simple "yes" or "no". As the negotiations proceeded, she identified topics that were proving tricky, such as Occupational Health and Safety law and practice, labour inspections, and working hours, and the researchers were set on the task of providing evidence to support her arguments. Often there were just 24 hours of turnaround time. *"We would rush off to do the research and provide answers to sway the debate back the other way"*, says D'Arcy Du Toit, a professor of law from South Africa who led the team. *"The first year it was not so easy, but the second year we were working in a more structured way, with Fairuz Mullagee, Helen Schwenken, and Jennifer Fish also there, and Lisa-Marie Heimeshoff at Kassel University in Germany behind the scenes. It was fast-moving and tricky, but on certain points I'm happy we produced relevant information and arguments."* The researchers also took the opportunity of the ILC in 2011 to launch their new Research Network for Domestic Workers' Rights (see page 80).

Members of the technical support group also took notes during the discussions, helping to inform the IDWN Coordinator and the daily IDWN meetings about important developments. By June 14, 2011, just after the detailed discussions had ended, the IDWN was able to issue its own briefing on the proposed Convention and Recommendation. Plus, to make sure that all domestic workers present could continue to follow the complicated proceedings, staff from WIEGO, the NDWA and IDWN assisted with translations and interpretation between English, Spanish and Chinese.

In an effort to keep IDWN network members and supporters around the world informed as the discussions went on, Professor Jennifer Fish from the USA took the initiative to set up a blog, where she put speeches, photos and video shots.

Then, to make the wider world aware of what was happening and add to the pressure on the ILC negotiations in 2011, WIEGO hired the press consultant Isabel Garcia-Gill and sent their Communications Manager to Geneva to assist. Using her international contacts and liaising with others in the network and support team there, as well as with the ILO Press Office, Isabel helped generate media awareness. One of her achievements was a front-page headline and centre-page spread in the Geneva newspaper “Le Temps”.

“La Longue Marche vers la Dignité”, by Isabel Garcia-Gill, Le Temps, Geneva, 11 June 2011: www.letemps.ch/Page/Uuid/9f014bd4-93a1-11e0-a123-2e43139ff26e



The IDWN sent out a press release on the day of the final vote. As it turned out, though, the success of winning the Convention made domestic workers the focus of media attention. As they gathered outside the room where the ILO was holding its own press conference, all cameras turned to them singing in victory (see page 69). Journalists interviewed leaders such as Evaline Mulo from KUDHEIHA in Kenya and many others.



The story was picked up by the world's major media outlets, including the Associated Press, BBC, AFP, ABC News, and the Economist, and many more at the national level. In the days and weeks that followed, the WIEGO team helped by keeping track of media coverage across the world in various languages, circulating the links to the IDWN network and putting them on the WIEGO website: <http://wiego.org/news-events>



Photo: WIEGO

On the Streets of Geneva

In both 2010 and 2011, the IDWN also took to the streets in Geneva to help raise public awareness.

In 2010, the IDWN and local Swiss unions met up in the city centre. There, Sonu Danuwar, President of the Nepal Independent Domestic Workers' Union (NIDWU), President of the Asian Domestic Workers Network (ADWN) and Vice Chair of the IDWN, spoke to the crowd that gathered, including about her own experiences as a domestic worker. She spoke in English, which she had only recently learned. Two days later, the IDWN held another open-air gathering, this time at the "Broken Chair" outside the United Nations Buildings in Geneva.

In 2011, the IDWN again gathered on the streets of Geneva, joining the local union UNIA in celebration of the 20th anniversary of a women's strike in Switzerland for equal pay. A giant "apron" from Hong Kong was unfurled for all to see. Some 3,500 domestic workers had put their handprints and names on squares, which had then been sewn together. Held up in the narrow streets of central Geneva, it made an impressive sight.



Photo: WIEGO

There were also side events hosted by supportive organizations, at which IDWN representatives were invited to speak. These events helped to raise the profile of the issues among those attending the ILCs on other issues. In 2010, for example, a number of Catholic organizations including the German Commission for Justice and Peace/ Kolping International, International Catholic Center of Geneva (CCIG), Caritas Internationalis, the International Catholic Migration Commission, and Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA) held a seminar on the role that religious organizations can play in raising awareness among their congregations, which include many employers of domestic workers. The following year, the MFA had a meeting on undocumented migrant workers, including domestic workers. Also, the IDWN hosted a briefing for unions and supporters to help everyone understand the IDWN: what it is and why it is important to unify domestic workers globally. It also organized a day workshop to share strategies on organizing domestic workers.



Photo: WIEGO



Yes, We Did It!

How the World's Domestic Workers Won Their International Rights and Recognition

The Official Negotiations, 2010

When they first saw the draft text circulated by the ILO in early 2010 after the official consultation process (see page 28), the IDWN and supporters were pleased. They knew that there would be a lot of negotiation over details. They accepted they might not win everything they wanted. However, the draft drawn up by the ILO experts largely reflected their demands. There was clearly a lot of support for an international instrument for their basic rights. But would there be enough actually to win a Convention and not just a Recommendation?

As the Tripartite Committee started to negotiate on June 2, 2010, it soon became clear how fierce the debates would be. The first argument was about whether the instrument would be a Convention, giving governments legal obligations, supported by a Recommendation – which is what the IDWN was hoping for – or just a Recommendation, only giving governments guidance. The domestic workers and supporters were not surprised to hear the Employers’ Group and a number of Governments argue strongly that a Recommendation, not a Convention, should be the end result. They wanted to avoid the legal obligations of a Convention. However, at the very beginning, a clear majority voted that it should be a Convention and not just a Recommendation. The first battle was won!

It was a huge success. That evening, the IDWN gathered at a restaurant in Geneva to celebrate. Along with the smiles and hugs shared almost in disbelief, emotions rose to the surface as individual leaders told their stories of abuse and the long, hard struggle that had led to this moment.

Then followed the detailed discussions on the draft text. Every word was argued over, sometimes with complicated debates about meaning and implications. Sometimes there was position-taking by one party or another, who were ready to give way on something in order to win something else. It was often in very formal legalistic language. The text was up on the screen above the top table (in English, French and Spanish). There everyone could see the amendments being discussed, sometimes with sub-amendments or even sub-sub-amendments! Everything was simultaneously being translated into the eight official ILC languages (English, French, Spanish, German, Russian, Arabic, Japanese and Chinese) by the interpreters in their booths high above.

In the 2010 discussions, the Employers’ Group was obstructive. The Workers’ Group was aware that the Employers’ Group was split, with individual Employer Delegates much more sympathetic. However, their Spokesperson, Kamran Rahman from Bangladesh, kept on representing the views of those who were against a binding legal instrument. As the discussions progressed, though, it seemed that his negative approach might be annoying some Governments and perhaps actually helping to sway them into a more positive position.

Some Governments, too, continued to be very vocal in their opposition to a Convention for domestic workers. They and the Employers' Spokesperson used many arguments in their attempt to limit the outcome to just a Recommendation. They referred a lot to the need to be "*pragmatic*" and to "*take into account the specific nature of domestic work*" as if that meant that employment regulation was far too difficult for this sector. Of course, the private household is a different type of workplace from an office, a factory or a farm. But these arguments stressed "*the right to privacy that each household has*", as if that meant that the employers' privacy was more important than protecting workers from abuse. At the same time, they seemed not even to consider that domestic workers should also have the right to privacy.

Some opposed to a Convention seemed obsessed by a problem of defining and regulating hours of work when, in their minds, domestic workers are needed to be on "standby" / on call most of the time. One government representative questioned how working hours can be set when a domestic care giver is needed to be available if an elderly person falls out of bed in the middle of the night. This infuriated one domestic workers' leader who said afterwards, "*of course we would be ready to help in such a situation, even when off duty. It denies our humanity to suggest otherwise. It should have no impact on our working hours being regulated. We have to have time off from work*". In fact, standby / on call work had been already regarded as "working time" in a very early ILO Convention on Hours of Work (Commerce and Offices) (C30 of 1930), as well as in C172 of 1991 on Working Conditions in Hotels and Restaurants. But the Employers and some Governments continued to resist. Perhaps they were now trying to create a precedent not to have standby accepted as working time.

Often too, Employers and some Governments tried to insert words such as "*as defined by national laws and practice*". Sometimes, this is necessary. However, if the text contained it too often, this would allow governments to respond as they wanted to rather than having to respect an international standard.

But, from the start, the domestic workers' representatives were delighted to see that other Governments were much more positive. Especially supportive were those from Australia, Brazil, South Africa and Namibia (both speaking on behalf of the African group of countries), and the USA. Throughout the proceedings, their representatives spoke up with positive approaches, trying to find solutions and offering examples of good practice. What is more, they liaised with each other. This was "*critical in helping to solve some of the knottier problems that arose*", says Bob Shepard, who represented the US Government in the negotiations.

Their positive approach clearly had an impact on other Governments. Sometimes in the United Nations, Governments act together in their regional blocs. Now, from time to time in these negotiations too, the voice of the 54 African Governments was represented by Virgil Seafield from the Government of South Africa, and supportive Latin American Government representatives spoke up on behalf of the GRULAC group of 33 Latin American and Caribbean countries. Gradually their constructive approach started to shift the doubters among other Governments.



The Workers' Spokesperson, Halimah Yacob, did a fine job too, voicing many arguments and concrete examples to combat the negative ones. She drew on the positive approach to legislation and good practice already existing in certain countries. "Domestic work" is not too difficult to define legally, as some countries already had done this in their laws, she said. Greater regulation would not lead to job loss, as there was no evidence of this in countries with legal protection for domestic workers such as South Africa. Better wages for domestic workers would not only help to reduce poverty, but domestic workers' greater spending power could help to stimulate economic growth. Contrary to the arguments of some employers, domestic workers do face multiple health and safety risks, and legal protection is possible. Imaginative forms of labour inspection in private homes already existed in Uruguay and Sweden. Plus, in ILO Convention No.129 of 1969 on the agricultural sector, labour inspection applies to the worker's or employer's home and includes protections against abusing privacy.

The debate over every word of the text went on over 10 days in 17 sessions of the Tripartite Committee, with many amendments proposed and sometimes put to the vote.

Happily, the main decision of these ILC discussions in 2010 was for a Convention accompanied by a Recommendation, not just a Recommendation. At the next ILC in 2011, when the negotiations over the text would continue, that basic decision would be accepted as the starting point.

The Official Negotiations, 2011

At the ILC in 2011, the two weeks of negotiation, beginning on June 1, were to confirm the previous year's decision for a Convention and an accompanying Recommendation and then to negotiate what these would actually say. The opponents would continue to argue for as weak an instrument as possible. Their argument was that a weak instrument would make it easier for more countries to adopt and put into practice. This was not good enough, though, as domestic workers would continue to have lesser rights than other workers. So, the Workers' Group continued to negotiate with determination.

This time, the Employers' Group played a far more constructive role. It had a different Spokesperson, Paul Mackay from New Zealand, and on the first morning, the domestic workers and their supporters were so happy to hear him say that the Employers' Group would accept the previous year's vote for a Convention and that he would negotiate with "*pragmatism and realism*". This signaled a far more constructive approach to the negotiations.

“In 2011, with the knowledge that a Convention was preferred by a majority, the Employers’ Group took a pragmatic view and focused on ensuring that the eventual Convention would be practical, useful and capable of adoption by a majority of countries... Employers by definition have to adapt to changing circumstances, otherwise they do not remain in business for long... That meant participating constructively and meaningfully in the approach preferred by the majority rather than sitting outside the conversation and having little or no impact. The Employers’ Group focus was mainly on ensuring that regulation and protection were sensible in the circumstances and did not unfairly impinge upon the rights of householders to conduct their family affairs.”

Paul Mackay, Spokesperson for the Employers’ Group in the tripartite discussions “Decent Work for Domestic Workers”, ILC, June 2011

Still, the negotiations were tough. Opponents tried many times to shift parts of the text out of the draft Convention, where it would require governments to implement, and into the Recommendation, where it would just give them guidance.

Some Governments tried to exclude protection for domestic workers who are recruited and placed by labour agencies, saying that it would clash with the Convention on Private Agencies Employment (No.181) agreed in 1997. However, domestic workers employed through poorly regulated agencies, particularly migrant workers, are some of those most vulnerable to abuse. After some difficult negotiation, text was included to say that the Convention covers these workers too, that governments must ensure they are protected and provide mechanisms to investigate complaints, alleged abuses and fraudulent practices by private employment agencies that place domestic workers.

Other tricky points continued to be those of hours of work, “standby”, and occupational health and safety discussed the previous year (see pages 63-64) as well as access for domestic workers to social security. However, huge progress was made. “Standby” time was included as working time, and domestic workers have the same rights as other workers to a safe and healthy working environment and to social security, including maternity protection.

The text of the Convention does say that, in these areas, *“the specific characteristics of domestic work”* can be taken into account. Sometimes, too, it says that the measures a government takes *“may be applied progressively”* – that is to say, no-one is expecting them to be fulfilled 100% immediately. However, yet more negotiation led to a further phrase being added: that any such step-by-step process has to be done *“in consultation with the most representative organizations of employers and workers and, where they exist, with organizations representative of domestic workers and those representative of employers of domestic workers”*. So a government cannot just go at its own speed, but has to work together with employers, unions and domestic workers’ organizations. In fact, this is very significant. It is the first time that an ILO Convention specifically mentions the need for consultation with the particular workers concerned.



The final text was the product of long, careful and arduous negotiation. As the IDWN recorded in the Briefing it produced at the end of the 2011 discussions (see page 75), *“the vote for this Convention on Decent Work for Domestic Workers comes after two full weeks of detailed negotiations between the three partners, in 17 sessions of the tripartite committee, sometimes late into the night. Official delegations of governments, employers and workers debated over the proposed text of the Convention and its accompanying Recommendation, paragraph-by paragraph, word-by-word. There were 263 amendments to the text put forward, not counting the sub- and sub-sub- amendments!”*

Despite all this effort to reach a reasonable text for the Convention that would protect domestic workers from abuse, give them the same basic rights as other workers, and also be workable, there were still some Governments adamant in rejecting it and trying to the last to persuade others to do the same. The UK Government, for example, claimed that by not agreeing to a Convention it was taking a more “honourable” position. They said that many other Governments likely to vote for it were doing so in bad faith as they had no intention of actually ratifying it. On the very last day before the vote, Luc Demaret from ILO ACTRAV gave the IDWN the briefing “Ten Good Reasons to Ratify” for it to use in its final attempts to persuade whomsoever it could.

But how would the final vote go? Even experienced ILO officials were unable to say whether they thought the necessary two-thirds majority would be achieved.

For more information

A video clip of Myrtle Witbooi, Chairperson of the IDWN, thanking everyone for their role, particularly Halimah Yacob, Spokesperson of the Workers’ Group in the committee discussions, is here: www.youtube.com/watch?feature=endscreen&v=73Rzstx3pX0&NR=1

“It was a very difficult two years of discussion, as we were ambitious and wanted to discuss two instruments at the same time i.e. a Convention and a Recommendation. In the first year, there was tremendous opposition from the Employers’ Group and the pressure was simply immense. But, in the second year, I was happy that good sense and goodwill prevailed, and the negotiations were tough but certainly less acrimonious.”

**Halimah Yacob, Spokesperson of the Workers’ Group in the tripartite discussions
“Decent Work for Domestic Workers”**

The Historic Vote

By June 16, 2011, all the negotiations were over and it was time for the final vote on the proposed Convention and accompanying Recommendation for Decent Work for Domestic Workers. That this was the 100th session of the ILC made it even more significant historically.

Such voting takes place not in the Tripartite Committee where the negotiations are held but in the Grand Plenary Hall of the United Nations. All the official representatives of Governments, Employers and Workers vote. They are seated down on the main floor of the Hall, with the ILO Director-General presiding at the top table. High above them all is the Observers Gallery, this time packed with domestic workers' representatives and supporters, all in nervous anticipation. For everyone present, it was an experience never to be forgotten. This was even more so for the domestic workers in the official Delegations, especially those with the right to vote.

"I was the one who was authorized to vote... It was very important for me, because I never imagined that I would be representing all the domestic workers in the United States."

Juana Flores, National Domestic Workers' Alliance (NDWA), USA

"It was so awesome that I, a domestic worker, could make that input. I had been so abused, and to press that button and make that change, I was very emotional, very proud."

Shirley Pryce, Jamaica Household Workers' Association (now Union), Jamaica

After the votes had been cast, the domestic workers' representatives and supporters could hardly bear to wait for the result. The entire Grand Plenary Hall fell into a hush.

When the vote was finally announced, it was a very emotional moment after such an intensive effort for so long. The domestic workers' representatives and supporters were stunned by the result. It was a huge victory.

C189: 396 in favour, 16 against, 63 abstained



Amid much clapping and cheering, there were many tears and hugs. Down on the floor of the Grand Plenary Hall, most of those in the country Delegations – from all three parties – joined in the spontaneous applause. Then they turned their heads upwards as a banner, smuggled in by domestic workers, was unfurled in the Observers Gallery high above. It read “C189 – Congratulations! Now comes the domestic work for governments: RATIFY – IMPLEMENT!”

Security guards arrived and everyone expected them to take the IDWN banner away. But then, to the amazement of everyone, they laid it out in front of the entrance to the Grand Plenary Hall. There, the domestic workers gathered round, singing for the cameras. As they did so, the result of the vote for the accompanying Recommendation came through, again in their favour

R201: 434 in favour, 8 against, 42 abstained



Photo: WIEGO

To the domestic workers' delight, the ILO Director-General Juan Somavia left the hall and came to congratulate them.



Photo: WIEGO

"I believe that future delegates will proudly look back and say: it was at the 100th ILC where the roots of a new era of social justice started to emerge, where the dignity of domestic workers was upheld..."

Juan Somavia, Director-General of the ILO, in his closing speech to the 100th ILC, June 16, 2011. Video of the speech is at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=LVA23jFNpY

"I feel like a baby is born, that I give birth to. Today, 16 June, is an emotional moment, that freedom is at last come for domestic workers around the world."

Hester Stephens, SADSAWU, South Africa, in "C189: Conventional Wisdom"

"This is an historic moment. It is what society owed to us... for all the injustices that were committed during decades."

Ernestina Ochoa, IPROFOTH, Peru, in "C189: Conventional Wisdom"

"C189: Conventional Wisdom", a film by Jennifer Fish and Sisi Sojourner Productions, 2012, with video shots and photographs taken at the ILCs of 2010 and 2011, including interviews of domestic workers' leaders, extracts from speeches, street demonstrations, the moment of the final vote, and the celebrations.

Short version of 7 minutes: www.youtube.com/watch?v=z6YhxN1af8w

Full version of 21 minutes: <http://wiego.org/resources/video-c189-conventional-wisdom>



As the news spread across the world, domestic workers' and employers' organizations in New York took to the streets to express their delight: www.youtube.com/watch?v=2PrpLXA0g0Y.

"The vote marked the beginning of social justice for domestic workers internationally. When it was announced that the Convention had passed, I joined a big group of domestic workers at the conference and started singing in jubilation as we danced to celebrate the moment. I have never felt so happy in my life. The Convention is the best thing to have happened to domestic workers in the world. It will change our lives."

Evaline Mulo, KUDHEIHA, Kenya, from an interview "The Beginning of Social Justice for Domestic Workers Internationally", Solidarity Center, US, 2011: www.solidaritycenter.org/content.asp?contentid=1257

IDWN, "Evaline Mulo Brings Kenya Experience to the Discussions", 2011: <http://idwnilo.wordpress.com/2011/06/07/evelyn-mulo-brings-kenyan-experience-to-the-discussions>

KUDHEIHA, "Organising Domestic Workers in Kenya: A success story and a call to action", 2012: www.solidaritycenter.org/Files/kenya_kudheiha_dwguide2012.pdf

"We got it because we worked for it. We gathered our strength, and urged others to get involved. No-one else gave it to us. It is the result of our own efforts.

Now we have it, but there is still much to do – to get the laws improved, and put into practice. But we made history. Now it is time for our (Indonesian) Government to learn from others – where they already have work contracts, working hours, pay, and so on. Don't take us for 'stupid'. Now it is time for the Government to learn!"

Sayuti, Tunas Mulia Domestic Workers' Trade Union, Jogjakarta, Indonesia

"I suppose that, at the end of the day, everyone recognized that basic human decency dictates that we must have an international standard to protect our weakest workers – women who could be our own mothers, wives, daughters, friends or neighbours.

The accolades go to the champions of the domestic workers who worked tirelessly to support me and our work, not just at the time of the two year ILO conferences, but even when they were back in their own countries. I must say that we planned, strategized, organized and presented our case really well! Well done, sisters! We dreamt the impossible and achieved the unimaginable!"

Halimah Yacob, Spokesperson of the Workers' Group in the tripartite discussions "Decent Work for Domestic Workers"

“Winning C189 ... was a real victory for everyone involved. Such progress was possible only because of the involvement of all parties, and the central role of domestic workers themselves. It was extraordinary to see how unions took it to their hearts, and how they let domestic workers take the lead... Then, when C189 was won, there was a sense that this was a victory for all.”

Diana Holland, Chair of the Women’s Committee of the ITUC, and Assistant General Secretary for Equalities of Unite the Union, UK, in IDWN Newsletter, February 2012

ITUC Spotlight interview with Marieke Koning, ITUC Equality Officer and Member of the Bureau advising the Workers’ Spokesperson, June 16 2011:
www.ituc-csi.org/spotlight-interview-with-marieke?lang=en

“This instrument established very clearly that domestic workers are workers, and that they are entitled to minimum legal protection on an equal footing with all other categories of workers.”

Manuela Tomei, Director, ILO TRAVAIL

“A little step for the ILO. A big step for humanity.”

Luc Demaret, ILO ACTRAV, in “C189: Conventional Wisdom”

“UN Women will work closely with the ILO, other UN agencies, governments and all relevant stakeholders to support the implementation of labour and social protections for domestic workers. This is not only the right thing to do. This is a matter of social justice and dignity. This is a long-awaited recognition for the extraordinary work done by 52.6 million women and men domestic workers worldwide. They simply deserve it.”

Michelle Bachelet, Secretary General, UN Women: www.unwomen.org/2011/06/address-by-michelle-bachelet-on-the-occasion-of-the-adoption-of-the-ilo-convention-and-recommendation-on-domestic-workers/



“We believe that this is a major step in the recognition of the rights of domestic workers: decent work for domestic workers, and human rights for domestic workers. We are thrilled, and we hope that Brazil will be one of the first countries to ratify the Convention.”

Escorel de Moraes, Representative of the Government of Brazil
Interviewed in “Domestic Workers International Labour Standard Adopted”, ILOTV:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xslely3foQQ

“Australia has been very proud to have been part of the development of this historic Convention and Recommendation for Domestic Workers – we pay tribute to every one of the 100 million domestic workers across the world, including those who have attended these proceedings, we recognize domestic workers for the professional workers that they are, and we commend them for having the courage to stand up and seek this recognition as legitimate workers, often against all odds.”

Louise McDonough, Representative of the Government of Australia
<http://idwnilo.wordpress.com/2011/06>

“All workers, irrespective of origin or role, are entitled to fair treatment as measured against basic standards established on a global basis. In my view, there is neither place nor justification for discrimination against or abuse of any worker whatever they do for a living.”

Paul Mackay, Spokesperson for the Employers’ Group in the tripartite discussions
“Decent Work for Domestic Workers”. ILC, June 2011

“The experience was very positive and enriching, I feel I have learned so much, and I am very grateful for having had the chance to participate... For the first time in my life, I realized that it was possible to have a binding agreement between government, employers and workers. We worked really hard, on each article... However, the experience was very satisfying when the Convention and Recommendation were adopted. It is such a victory! Now domestic workers around the world have the same basic labour rights as those available to other workers.”

**Maria del Carmen Cruz, ASTRADOMES, Costa Rica, and now
Secretary General of CONLACTRAHO.**

**From her statement to thank the Pact NGO for supporting her to attend the 2011 ILC:
www.pactworld.org/cs/latin_america/el_salvador/pact_supports_ilo_convention_to_include_domestic_workers**

“This was our school.

In 2009, we went to the ILC to see what the governments and workers were saying, and how the tripartite spaces worked. They brought us Luc and other people from the ILO, who clarified our doubts. They explained about the Conventions, the processes, how to set yourself and even when to speak. We learned in practice when to talk and when to remain silent.

The Network always worked so that we would participate in key spaces. I went to Jakarta (Indonesia) to talk about domestic workers, and to Hungary to talk with employers and representatives of European Governments. This was the best way to train ourselves and commit ourselves. Our Network colleagues made it clear that we were speaking in our own name and they gave us all the tools to do so.

This was really enriching. As you acquire more learning, more experience, you have less fear in advocating. This learning empowered me to gain this knowledge, argue in other spaces, and know how to listen and how to demand.

I would like to thank all the people who were behind us, who got together and supported us in being there, who made us feel good, who allowed us to have the confidence to talk when we had to, and be where we had to be. If you tell me to go again, I would go, because now I consider myself an ‘expert’ (laughs). We made a lot of friends and it was a very valuable process.”

Marcelina Bautista, former General Secretary, CONLACTRAHO, Latin America



Summary of What C189 and R201 Contain

The **Convention (C189)** starts by recognizing the “*significant contribution of domestic workers to the global economy*” and that this work is “*undervalued and invisible, and is mainly carried out by women and girls, many of whom are migrants or members of disadvantaged communities*”.

It affirms that domestic workers’ have the same fundamental rights at work that all workers have:

- the rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining
- the elimination of all forms of forced labour
- the effective abolition of child labour; and
- the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

Governments have the duty to take measures to make sure that domestic workers enjoy these fundamental rights.

The Convention also says that Governments shall set a minimum employment age for domestic workers that is not lower than that for other workers. They will take measures to ensure that domestic workers enjoy effective protection against all forms of abuse, harassment and violence. Other measures that Governments should take include (not a complete list) ensuring that domestic workers:

- enjoy fair terms of employment, as well as decent living conditions that respect their privacy;
- are informed of terms and conditions of employment, preferably through written contracts;
- are free to reach agreement with their employer on whether or not to reside in the household;
- do not have to remain in the household during their daily or weekly rest, or annual leave;
- have the same normal hours of work, overtime compensation, periods of rest, and annual leave as other workers;
- get weekly rest of at least 24 consecutive hours;
- are covered by minimum wage legislation;
- have the right to a safe and healthy working environment;
- have access to social provisions, including maternity;
- are protected against abuse by private employment agencies who recruit or place domestic workers, including migrant domestic workers; this includes not allowing agencies to take fees out of workers’ pay; and
- have effective access to the courts, labour tribunals or other dispute resolution mechanisms.

Many of the provisions mention the “*specific characteristics of domestic work*”. Some say that the measures can be applied “*progressively*”. It is true that in many countries new approaches may need to be developed for domestic workers to enjoy all of their employment rights. But we need to keep up the pressure so that such words are not used so as to hamper progress.

The accompanying **Recommendation (R201)** reads like an “implementation plan” for the Convention. It gives governments a lot of detailed guidance relating to the employment of domestic workers. It includes ensuring decent living conditions for live-in domestic workers, promoting model employment contracts, providing information to migrant domestic workers, setting up “hotlines” in languages spoken by migrant workers, promoting occupational health and safety training for domestic workers, and much more.

Taken from the IDWN Briefing, “**About the proposed new International Convention for Domestic Workers’ Rights**”, Geneva, June 14 2011: <http://idwnilo.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/idwn-briefing-on-proposed-convention-for-domestic-workers-140611.pdf>

For more information

ILO Travail, “**Convention No.189 – Questions and Answers**”, August 10 2011, available in English, Spanish, Filipino, French, Indonesian and Portuguese: www.ilo.org/travail/whatwedo/publications/WCMS_161104/lang-en/index.htm

“I remember that my mother used to say that she was a ‘servant’ and I asked why she called herself that. If anyone went out with a servant it was a bad thing. This humiliation lasted for decades and, unfortunately, still persists.

So I was filled with a feeling of pride in being listened to at the ILO. Our work is of great value, and has been for centuries. People could not do their work without our help. We are as necessary as any other worker.”

Juana Flores, National Domestic Workers’ Alliance (NDWA), USA



5. Now that Domestic Workers Have their Convention

June 16: International Domestic Workers' Day

The anniversary of the vote for C189 has now become an international day to celebrate achievements and keep up the pressure for real change for all domestic workers.

IDWN video for the first anniversary in 2012 is at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWsKUTuWLdk and reports of activities around the world on that day at: www.idwn.info/news/celebration-and-action-around-globe-international-domestic-workers-day-16-june-2012

Since the huge success of winning C189 and R201, the emphasis has been on spreading the news about them and encouraging domestic workers and their supporters to mobilize for ratification. The contents of C189 must now be put into law in as many countries as possible.

Already during the ILC, the IDWN started planning for a campaign for ratification of C189 and its implementation. Already, it was making plans to strengthen the network. Very quickly, the IDWN started to implement these plans, and joined forces with the global trade union movement.

The ITUC Global Union, in collaboration with the IDWN, other Global Unions, and migrant and human rights groups, soon launched a campaign called "12 x 12". The aim was to get 12 countries to ratify C189 by 2012, within the first year after the Convention was adopted. It was an ambitious target, but the campaign rapidly took off, showing the strength and vitality of domestic workers' organizations that now exist. The IDWN spread the news to its network through its website, newsletters and videos, particularly to encourage those domestic workers' organizations that had not yet got involved. They and their union supporters mobilized in no fewer than 92 countries to put pressure on their governments.



"If you can let us into your house, why not into the law?"

Slogan used by domestic workers at the launch of the "12 x 12" campaign:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=2H9fIK_lyU0

At the time of writing, eight countries have ratified C189, and several more are reported to be close to doing so. A dozen or more have or are in the process of improving their employment and social security laws to give more protection to domestic workers (see page 1).

WIEGO interactive map showing countries that have ratified C189: <http://wiego.org/wee/domestic-workers-leadership>

C189 is already showing that it is what the domestic workers and their supporters fought for – an instrument of change.

Next, the emphasis will have to be on the proper implementation of those new and revised laws – and not just for the moment but for the long-term. For this to happen, more domestic workers’ organizations need to be built and strengthened.

In recognition of its success in mobilizing domestic workers to win the ILO Convention, the IDWN was awarded the “**George Meany-Lane Kirkland Human Rights Award**” by the US union federation AFL-CIO in 2013.

The IDWN

The IDWN, still very much supported by the IUF and WIEGO, has continued with its dual-track strategy: awareness-raising about this massive achievement at the international level as a means to help domestic workers’ organizing on the ground. Every success serves to encourage more domestic workers to do the same elsewhere. Since 2011, new domestic workers’ organizations have been founded in Egypt, Cameroon, Cambodia, and Thailand, for example. For the IDWN, this is the only way of ensuring long-term respect for domestic workers’ rights.

“I get invited to many countries on behalf of the IDWN, and I find many workers don’t know about our Convention. I hear them saying ‘We want our rights!’. So I share with them how we can win.”

Myrtle Witbooi, IDWN Chairperson

In this way, the IDWN intends to make sure that the success of achieving C189 will not fade into obscurity. The vote for it will not become an empty gesture. Instead, it will continue to inspire more and more domestic workers to mobilize for their rights and respect.



In August 2011, Karin Pape stepped down as Interim Coordinator of the Network, and was replaced by Elizabeth Tang, an experienced trade union leader and organizer of domestic workers in Hong Kong. Through her activities, as well those of the Regional Coordinators and the Steering Committee, plus regular E-newsletters and an active website, the IDWN keeps domestic workers informed about the gains around the world, which can give them more hope and impetus to organize locally.

The IDWN itself is moving from being a network to a membership-based organization, with a founding Conference in Uruguay from October 26-28, 2013. This is so that the organization has a democratic structure, accountable to its member organizations.

The IUF

The IUF continues to provide vital underpinning to the IDWN with its resources and experience. It also continues to promote domestic workers' organizing and advocacy through its own global projects and among its affiliated unions worldwide. In Indonesia, for example, the IUF Asia-Pacific Region is supporting the Tunas Mulia trade union to build its organization through community-based groups and to strengthen its operations through more fee-paying members.

The IUF is also promoting ratification of Convention 189 and progressive changes to national laws, along with proper implementation of them. One example is including the occupational health and safety aspects of C189 in an OHS project that the IUF has been running in seven countries in French-speaking West Africa.

Happily, the IUF Congress in May 2012 confirmed that this support for domestic workers' organizing should continue. Some domestic workers' trade unions have long been affiliated to the IUF (see page 15). Now more are being actively encouraged to do so. This will give them collectively an official status as a sector within the global union's structure. It also means dual membership of domestic workers' organizations to both IDWN and the IUF. The National Union of Domestic Employees (NUDE) in Trinidad and Tobago, SYNEMAG in Burkina Faso, and SNTDGM-CNTS in Senegal were the first to do so.

WIEGO

WIEGO is also continuing its support for domestic workers' organizing. It regularly circulates a log of latest news coverage from around the world. On its website, WIEGO highlights the successes and the challenges domestic workers continue to face: <http://wiego.org/informal-economy/domestic-workers-%E2%80%93-progress-and-ongoing-struggle> In its "Workers Lives" series in October 2012, WIEGO focused on domestic workers and their union SINED in Mozambique: <http://wiego.org/publications/domestic-workers-organizing-patience-industry>

In its training materials to assist organizing, WIEGO includes domestic workers as one of its key sectors. One such publication is "**The Only School We Have: Learning from Organizing Experiences across the Informal Economy**", by Chris Bonner and Dave Spooner, 2012: <http://wiego.org/resources/only-school-we-have-learning-organizing-experiences-across-informal-economy>

In 2012, WIEGO was successful in obtaining more funds from the Dutch Government (from the FLOW fund) for a new global project "Securing Economic Rights for Informal Women Workers", with the IDWN as one of the partner organizations. This project supports the strengthening of domestic workers' organizations. So, for example, it is contributing to the Founding Congress of the IDWN in October 2013 (see page 78). In Africa, WIEGO is providing technical support to the African Domestic Workers Network, launched on June 16, 2013, the second anniversary of winning C189, at a conference in South Africa attended by 95 domestic worker representatives from 17 African countries. Meanwhile, in Europe, Karin Pape, is coordinating activities to encourage unions in 15 European countries to organize more domestic workers, to join or work with the IDWN, and to get their governments to ratify C189 and bring in national legislative changes.



Photo: WIEGO



Yes, We Did It!

How the World's Domestic Workers Won Their International Rights and Recognition

Human Rights Watch

Human Rights Watch continues to be very active, particularly focusing on legal protection for the world's 15.5 million child domestic workers as well as migrants. On June 12, 2013, World Day Against Child Labour, for example, it liaised with the ILO-IPEC programme (see page 24) on events in 60 countries: www.hrw.org/topic/womens-rights/domestic-workers

Anti-Slavery International

Anti-Slavery International has a programme on combatting child labour in domestic work running in six countries: Peru, Costa Rica, Tanzania, Togo, India and Philippines: www.antislavery.org

UN Women

UN Women is, as its Secretary General Michelle Bachelet said it would (see page 72), supporting greater awareness about C189, particularly concerning migrant domestic workers. It has been running workshops in certain countries/ regions, inviting domestic workers' leaders as speakers to events, and with the ITUC co-produced a briefing kit, including case studies from domestic workers, trade union leaders, employers and governments in Bolivia, New York, Philippines and South Africa.

UN Women and ITUC, "Domestic Workers Count Too: Implementing Protections for Domestic Workers", March 2013: www.ituc-csi.org/ituc-and-un-women-join-forces-to

Research Network for Domestic Workers' Rights (RN-DWR)

RN-DWR, launched at the ILC in 2011 (see page 58), now involves some 100 researchers or "activist scholars", as many see themselves, from around the world. It encourages collaboration and ever deeper knowledge about the sector by publicizing research projects, campaigns and publications through its quarterly newsletter. The RN-DWR knows that domestic workers have often felt used by researchers who "take" information from them but then hardly report back. It aims to "create sustainable and trustworthy links between committed researchers and organized domestic workers", according to Professor Helen Schwenken of Kassel University, Germany. It currently has a participatory research project, in collaboration with domestic workers' organizations in South Africa and the Netherlands, aimed at developing domestic workers' own ability to do research: <http://domestic-work-research.org>

The ILO

ILO Departments and Offices have produced briefings about C189 and R201 and are giving technical advice for those who are revising their country's laws to give domestic workers better protection. They have been collecting better data about the size and nature of the domestic work sector around the world and in particular countries. They also continue to support with awareness-raising materials and training manuals to encourage more domestic workers to organize themselves. Most of their publications are in several languages.

ILO, Domestic Workers Topic Page: www.ilo.org/global/topics/domestic-workers/lang-en/index.htm

ILO, "Convention 189: Questions and Answers", a short factsheet, August 2011: www.ilo.org/travail/whatwedo/publications/WCMS_161104/lang-en/index.htm

ILO, "Convention 189 & Recommendation 201 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers", November 2011: www.ilo.org/travail/whatwedo/publications/WCMS_168266/lang-en/index.htm

ILO, "Convention 189 & Recommendation 201 at a Glance", December 2011: www.ilo.org/travail/whatwedo/publications/WCMS_170438/lang-en/index.htm

ILO, "Effective Protection for Domestic Workers: A Guide to Designing Labour Laws", ILO, May 2012: www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_173365/lang-en/index.htm

ILO ACTRAV, "Achieving Decent Work for Domestic Workers: An organizer's manual to promote ILO Convention No.189 and build domestic workers' power", 2012: www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/2012/112B09_75_engl.pdf

Elsa Ramos-Carbone, "Decent Work for Domestic Workers in Asia and the Pacific: Manual for trainers", ILO, June 2012: www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/asia/ro-bangkok/sro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_184194.pdf

ILO, "Domestic Workers across the World: Global and regional statistics and the extent of legal protection", January 2013: www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/dgreports/dcomm/publ/documents/publication/wcms_173363.pdf



6. Key Lessons for Other Workers

Here, domestic workers' leaders and other supporters in the IDWN and unions talk about the lessons they would like to pass on to other workers and their organizations as a result of their experiences of mobilizing for C189.

- ✓ **There is no alternative: workers, including domestic workers, must organize themselves**

"We need to organize like we never have before."

Myrtle Witbooi, Chairperson, IDWN, and General Secretary, SADSAWU, South Africa

For workers to have their labour rights respected, they have to organize.

Domestic workers have shown that even the most marginalized, isolated workers can do this.

- ✓ **Encouraging participation by the workers themselves wherever possible**

Workers can and should be given the opportunity to voice their own demands and have their experiences heard. This encourages others to understand their situation better and helps build support for the cause.

Such practical experience is also the best way for workers to learn how to organize. Some workers may need support and training for this. But this capacity-building can and should be not just for the moment or for that individual, but for the wider workers' organization.

The democratic organization of workers is the only way to ensure long-term success.

- ✓ **Success is best achieved by each playing a constructive role, without any one trying to dominate or claim all the credit.**

“In our case, all domestic workers were on the same page. Sometimes there are organizations that want all the recognition. That must not be a priority. The essential thing is that there is one, concerted voice... This has to be the spirit.”

Juana Flores, National Domestic Workers’ Alliance (NDWA), USA

So much can be achieved by a committed team, where each brings their own strengths but where everyone plans and strategizes together, shares information and feedback, etc. This also means finding leaders who can voice the demands clearly and inspire others to advance the cause, but who also know how to build and indeed themselves work within the team.

- ✓ **Unions can and should find imaginative ways of including informal workers within their structures and activities**

This mobilization for domestic workers’ rights has shown that new models of union organization to include informal workers are not only possible but can be mutually beneficial. The informal workers gain support, visibility, and access to formal corridors of power. Meanwhile, unions can benefit from the energy, enthusiasm and commitment of new groups of workers, especially at a time of cut-backs and defeats.

“Winning C189... was a real victory for everyone involved. Such progress was possible only because of the involvement of all parties, and the central role of domestic workers themselves. It was extraordinary to see how unions took it to their heart, and how they let the domestic workers take the lead... We should learn from this experience all that we can, and encourage all affiliated unions to organize domestic workers. This will not only support the domestic workers but strengthen the whole union movement, at home and internationally.”

Diana Holland, Chair of the Women’s Committee, ITUC, and Assistant General Secretary for Equalities of the Unite Union, UK.

In fact, the success of the mobilization for C189 is now being used by many in the global labour movement as an example of what can be achieved when informal workers become well organized and join together with formal workers and their unions.



✓ **Forming alliances and working together**

As well as building alliances within the trade unions, there are many other labour movement organizations - associations, NGOs and networks of many kinds – plus women’s groups, human rights, faith groups, etc., as well as labour professionals, academic researchers, journalists, and so on who may be ready and willing to join in and contribute. It is also possible to find allies among good governments and even fair-minded employers.

“What serves us the most is making networks, uniting forces, and trying not to duplicate the same efforts, to unite in one cause, and plan with the same target in mind.”

Maria del Carmen Cruz, Secretary General, CONLACTRAHO, Latin America

“I believe that unity, alliance, and team work are essential. The best example is the International Network and the work it did to get a Convention. In the IDWN, all the work was done together, where everyone – from the translators, to the facilitators, and those who gave us advice and taught us – worked together. Alliance and unity are the basic requisites to achieve benefits for all. In the ILCs, we put the personal to one side and concentrated our efforts on winning the Convention. The struggle must be collective.”

Marcelina Bautista, former General Secretary, CONLACTRAHO, Latin America, and IDWN Regional Coordinator

✓ **Including as many as possible in international collaboration, through more imaginative use of cross-language communications.**

We need to be thinking more imaginatively about how to communicate outside the “common” languages such as English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Russian and Chinese. This can be done, for example, by using and developing more translation technology, visuals, etc.

- ✓ **Learning how to negotiate, how to prepare and make one's arguments clearly, to win the most supporters**

"Negotiating procedures take time. One needs to be knowledgeable on the issues, and patient too."

Vicky Kanyoka, IDWN Regional Coordinator for Africa

The first step is to be well prepared by identifying your key arguments, and with good quality information to back them up. It means knowing who potentially you may persuade, and who your adversaries are likely to be and their key arguments. It is important to learn how to put across your arguments without unnecessarily alienating others, and to know when it is possible to concede a point but when to hold firm.

"We have to be assertive about what we want, but also patient and try not to antagonize. Employers of domestic workers are mostly just the general public. That is unlike other workers who work for companies who, if they antagonize their employers, get public support. Build arguments and stories. Try to get people into 'your shoes'..."

Fish Ip Pui Yu, IDWN Regional Coordinator for Asia

- ✓ **Being active at an official international level can strengthen one's recognition and relationships at home, particularly with government officials.**

"International organization makes us stronger even at home. Being at the ILCs, our Minister saw that we are recognized internationally, and this helped to get them to realize that we are a stakeholder and have to be involved. They know we are well-informed from our international links. When we speak, they have some kind of respect."

Ida le Blanc, NUDE, Trinidad and Tobago



For More Information

Chris Bonner, Barbro Budin, and Karin Pape, “**ILO Convention on decent work for domestic workers: from promise to reality?**”, International Union Rights, Volume 18, Issue 3, 2011

Laura Alfery, “**Occupational Health and Safety: Domestic Workers**”, WIEGO, December 2011: http://wiego.org/sites/wiego.org/files/resources/files/OHS_DW_Eng_2012.pdf

Chris Bonner and Karin Pape, “**Campaign for an International Convention on Decent Work for Domestic Workers**”, Annex II WIEGO Case Study in M. Chen, C. Bonner, M. Chetty, L. Fernandez, K. Pape, F. Parra, A. Singh, and C. Skinner, Urban Informal Workers: Representative Voice & Economic Rights, in World Development Report, World Bank, 2013: http://wiego.org/sites/wiego.org/files/publications/files/WDR2013_Urban_Informal_Workers.pdf

Karin Pape, “**ILO Convention C189 – A good start for the protection of domestic workers**”, Progress in Development Studies (PiDS), 2013 forthcoming.

Many sources of information are given throughout this booklet. Many others exist, including more recent ones and those from other organizations and countries – far too many to include here. Many can be found via these websites:

WIEGO Domestic Workers Topic Pages:

<http://wiego.org/informal-economy/occupational-groups/domestic-workers>

<http://wiego.org/wee/voice-domestic-workers>

<http://wiego.org/related/publications/52/16%2B15/27>

ILO Domestic Workers Topic Page:

www.ilo.org/global/topics/domestic-workers/lang--en/index.htm

IDWN: www.idwn.info/publications

RN-DWR: <http://domestic-work-research.org>

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The following people very kindly contributed to this booklet by interview and/or consultation in person, by telephone or by email.

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Myrtle Witbooi	IDWN Chairperson + SADSAWU	South Africa
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Adwoa Sakyi	IUF African Regional Women's Project Coordinator	Ghana
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