

July 2011 Issue

Domestic workers are not 'helpers'; we are not 'maids'; and we are not servants. Certainly none of us should be slaves. We are 'workers'.

We have to have a Convention - and strong follow-up into national legislation across the world - for only this has the potential to promote real change for the better.

— *Myths & Realities About Domestic Workers (IDWN)*



Domestic Workers at the 100th session of the ILC

Photo by WIEGO Staff

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WIEGO

MBO Newsletter



A Newsletter for Membership-Based Organizations of Informal Workers

DOMESTIC WORKERS WIN HISTORIC CONVENTION!!!

In June, the tripartite negotiations on an international standard (Convention and Recommendation) for domestic workers resumed at the 100th session of the International Labour Conference (ILC) in Geneva. On June 16th, 2011 the Convention was adopted with an overwhelming majority vote! Domestic workers worldwide participated in this historic event, one that provides an opportunity for domestic workers to finally gain international recognition as workers whose contribution to society and the economy is essential, and who are entitled to rights, protections and decent work like any other workers.

The International Domestic Workers' Network (IDWN), based in the IUF and supported by WIEGO, has been at the forefront of the struggle for an ILO Convention. Since its formation, the IDWN and its constituent organizations have campaigned tirelessly: mobilizing and organizing domestic workers; working with the trade union movement; lobbying governments and employers; building alliances with NGOs, researchers and supportive groups to ensure that the final vote at the ILC will bring victory — a strong Convention on Domestic Work supplemented by a Resolution that includes the demands of domestic workers.

- See the 'Platform of Demands' prepared for the first round of negotiations in 2010: <http://wiego.org/sites/wiego.org/files/resources/files/IDWN-Plataforma-de-Reivindicacion-Espanol.pdf> (Spanish)
<http://www.idwn.info/sites/default/files/>

Resources & Updates for Membership Based Organizations

RESOURCE: The WORD (WIEGO Organization and Representation Database) is available to all at www.wiegodatabase.org. Here you will find names and contact information for MBOs who organize workers in the informal economy. Be sure to keep your own information up to date. If you have not created a profile, please do! If you have any questions please let us know.

UPDATES: Many MBOs have been participating in important work recently including KKKPKP, highlighted on the next page. To the right are links to news articles about the important work being done by two additional MBOs.

[Platform%20of%20Demands_HR_ENGLISH_26052010.pdf](http://www.idwn.info/sites/default/files/Platform%20of%20Demands_HR_ENGLISH_26052010.pdf)
(English)

- Read a new leaflet rebutting arguments against adopting a convention, **Myths and Realities about Domestic Workers. What THEY say and what WE say:** <http://es.domesticworkerrights.org/sites/es.domesticworkerrights.org/files/Myths%20Spanish%20HR.pdf> (Spanish)
http://www.idwn.info/sites/default/files/8Myths_0.pdf (English)
<http://fr.domesticworkerrights.org/sites/fr.domesticworkerrights.org/files/Myths%20French%20HR%20%282%29.pdf> (French)

As was the case in 2010, there was a strong delegation of domestic worker representatives at the ILC so that domestic workers were able to speak for themselves. Some were included in their official country trade union delegations or in the International Trade Union Confederation delegation, whilst others were there with IDWN under the auspices of the IUF. They had—and still have—the support of researchers and NGOs. WIEGO provided logistical, media and translation support. For more up-to-date information see www.idwn.info or www.domesticworkerrights.org. Updated news and information are available at the IDWN blog <http://idwnilo.wordpress.com/>.

- Home Based Women Workers Federation (HBWWF) in Pakistan organized its first convention, along with HomeNet Pakistan and HomeNet South Asia. See <http://www.dawn.com/2011/04/28/oppression-of-women-workers.html>
- NASVI in India continues to work for a central law for street vendors. See <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-newdelhi/article2072775.ece>



Members of KKP KP (above),
Portacabins for sorting waste
(below)

Photos by KKP KP members



Food for Thought

Some interesting questions were raised at the March 2011 MBO Workshop. What do you think?

How do we ensure participation of & leadership by women? Should we have quotas?

"There is no single way of organizing (in the informal economy); there are many ways of organizing to achieve one goal."

-MBO Workshop participant

MBO Spotlight: Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat

Many of you are familiar with KKP KP, an amazing union of waste pickers that advocates for rights and better working conditions in India. This union of waste pickers has implemented a creative initiative for pairs of waste pickers to go door-to-door to collect waste and recyclables which have been separated by the householders or institutions. In this way, they do not need to go to waste sites. In one municipality, some are

given vehicles to drive when doing this work; in the other they use bicycles or hand carts. This program, SWACH, has been agreed to and funded by two municipalities, with additional support from the Inclusive Cities Project. It is expected to expand to more areas within the municipalities. KKP KP is also urging the two cities to build portacabins for waste pickers to work in while segregating waste. The portacabins also store recyclables at

night so the recyclables will not get wet if it rains and provide a secure place to store items until there are enough to warrant making the long trip to a scrap shop to sell them. KKP KP also started a credit society for members. The society has an interesting project giving out loans to KKP KP members. Women do not have to go to money lenders, who charge very high interest rates, but instead can take a low interest loan from their own un-

Learning from Each Other: WIEGO MBO Workshop

Organizing in the Informal Economy: Building and Strengthening Membership-Based Organizations

In March 2011 WIEGO coordinated an international workshop on organizing in the informal economy in Bangkok, with HomeNet Thailand providing local support. The main objective of the workshop was to bring together Membership-Based Organizations to share organizing experiences and strategies from different sectors, countries and levels. Fifty participants came mainly from four sectors: domestic workers, waste pickers, street and market vendors and home-based workers. They came from 24 countries from Asia, Africa, Latin America, Caribbean, Europe and North America, requiring the use of nine languages. A majority of par-

ticipants were women. A welcome dinner, where we learned about Thailand, Thai dancing and HomeNet Thailand, our host organization, set the scene. In the workshop we first looked back at the history of organizing in the informal economy. We went on to build an overview of organizational forms and levels, organizing issues, challenges and successes in the different sectors. The next focus was on base organizations where we looked at questions of democracy, leadership and women's role in leadership, independence and sustainability. Turning to the networks, after presentations from StreetNet International and the Brazilian *Catadores* Movement (MNCR), everyone had an opportunity to ask questions and to share solutions and ideas about building national and international networks. During the workshop we took a break

from the "classroom" and visited informal workers at their place of work, or, in the case of domestic workers, at the workshop venue. We hope to follow up on the workshop by encouraging more regular exchange of information across the different sectors; producing a publication that can be used as an organizing resource; and organizing activities to address in more depth some of the issues identified at the workshop. See the Preliminary Report at http://wiego.org/sites/wiego.org/files/reports/files/MBO_prelim_workshop_report_English.pdf (English), http://wiego.org/sites/wiego.org/files/reports/files/MBO_prelim_workshop_report_Espanol.pdf (Spanish), and/or http://wiego.org/sites/wiego.org/files/reports/files/MBO_prelim_workshop_report_Francais.pdf (French).

WIEGO has launched a new website!

Please visit at www.wiego.org.

If you have any comments, please email webmaster@wiego.org.