

## The Costs of Insecurity: Domestic Workers' Access to Social Protection and Services in Dhaka, Bangladesh



Members of the National Domestic Women Workers Union (NDWWU) at a 2017 meeting on ratifying the Convention on Decent Work for Domestic Workers. Photo courtesy of NDWWU.

### Key Points

- 1 Survey findings show that the majority of domestic workers earn a wage that is insufficient to cover their basic needs. Their pay is often irregular, and they work overtime without benefits. Violence in the workplace is pervasive and other issues of concern include lack of bargaining power and affordable housing.
- 2 Domestic workers are not included within the scope of labour law. While there is some technical recognition of their status as workers through the Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy (2015), this has no legal backing and limited implementation.
- 3 While the government is expanding social protection with means-tested safety net programmes, these cover only a few informal workers with very limited resources. Access to work-related social protection through the Labour Welfare Fund is limited and application procedures onerous. Access to health care is a serious concern for domestic workers, as is their need to rely heavily on family members to provide child care. The COVID-19 crisis has amplified these and other problems.
- 4 Organizing and action for social protection for domestic workers has been growing since 2000. Trade unions, which form part of a network aimed at ensuring the inclusion of domestic workers in policy-level change, have drawn on several strategies to extend social protection to domestic workers.
- 5 Domestic workers in Bangladesh carry the heavy cost of inadequate investment in the provision of social protection and services. Policy and practice recommendations for policy makers and scheme administrators, trade unions, and grassroots organizations and coalitions are made here to extend social protection to this vulnerable group of workers.

There are about 43.6 million women workers in Bangladesh. This reflects a significant rise in the female labour force participation rate, which rose from 23.9 per cent in 1999/00 to 36.3 per cent in 2016/17 (Raihan & Bidisha, 2018). Women are overwhelmingly concentrated in precarious and low-quality forms of employment, with over 90 per cent working in the informal economy (Raihan & Bidisha, 2018; Ghosh & Chopra, 2019). Domestic work is a form of informal employment in which women and girls predominate. There is, however, a lack of reliable and specific data on the size of this occupational grouping. In 2011, the Domestic Workers Rights Network (DWRN) estimated that there were approximately 2 million domestic workers in Bangladesh at the time; many of them young girls from poor households.

This brief aims to describe the conditions of domestic workers in Dhaka, Bangladesh, with a focus on their access to social protection and services. In particular, it highlights the costs that

domestic workers themselves carry when there is inadequate investment in the provision of social protection and services to these workers. The brief draws on two sources of research: a survey of 100 domestic workers in Dhaka, conducted through the National Domestic Women Workers Union (NDWWU), and qualitative interviews with union members, officials, policy makers and researchers working in the area of domestic-worker rights. Both sets of research were carried out prior to the COVID-19 crisis, although updates to the context and policy recommendations have been made to acknowledge the changed circumstances.

## Domestic Workers in Bangladesh

The following key features of domestic workers were identified in this study:

**Individual:** The majority (86 per cent) of the survey participants were aged 30



*Union members at a NDWWU-IDWF seminar on protecting the rights of Bangladeshi migrant domestic workers. Photo by Peng Choi.*

years and older. This suggests that the survey group may not be able to provide insights into the status and conditions of the work of a younger cohort of domestic workers, who may also be less likely to be unionized. Very low levels of education were apparent, with only one participant having completed secondary school and almost 50 per cent of the sample reporting no formal education at all. Only 9 per cent of the workers interviewed were from Dhaka itself, with the largest single group of workers originating in Barishal in south-central Bangladesh. Forty per cent of migrant workers had moved to Dhaka between 2006 and 2020, with another large group (30 per cent) having relocated in the 1990s.

**Household:** Most survey participants were married and living with a husband, while a further 20 per cent were married, but living apart from their spouses. In some cases, women domestic workers share a house to minimize rental costs. Almost 75 per cent of respondents reported having 3 or more dependants to support. Thirty-seven per cent were caring for at least one child under 6 years of age.

**Work arrangements:** The majority of domestic workers interviewed (48 per cent) were employed in live-out, multiple-employer work arrangements, while a further 42 per cent were employed in live-out, single-employer arrangements. Just over 7 per cent were live-in working for a single employer. Almost all (99 per cent) had found employment through a third party, with the majority (72 per cent) reporting the third party as being a relative or friend. Most workers (88 per cent) were working without a written contract, and 62 per cent reported working more than 50 hours per week.

## Work-Related Risks to Income Security

In Bangladesh, domestic workers are not included within the scope of labour law. The Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006, explicitly excludes domestic workers. Since 2015 there has been technical recognition of their status as workers through the Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy (2015), which states that the government shall take the initiative to ensure the access of domestic workers to the Bangladesh Labour Welfare Foundation Fund. The fund established under the Bangladesh Labour Welfare Foundation Act, 2006, provides financial support to disabled and sick workers, a survivor benefit, a contribution to life insurance and education scholarships for children of eligible workers. However, this policy is without legal backing or implementation and domestic workers in fact have little income security or protection from risks. Their reality includes:

**Low remuneration:** In 2019, the minimum wage in Bangladesh's Readymade Garment Sector (RMG) was raised to BDT8,000 (USD94) per month. Comparatively, most domestic workers surveyed here (80 per cent) earned less than this amount, with a typical worker earning BDT5,000 per month for a 40-hour work week (USD59). These earnings are well below the Global Living Wage Coalition's living wage for urban Bangladesh, which is set at BDT16,000 (USD188), although the majority of workers interviewed felt that they required less than BDT16,000 to survive. Domestic workers also complained of having to work excessive hours with no overtime benefits, which is supported by a similar finding from an ILO (2019) survey which found that 68

per cent of live-out domestic workers did not receive overtime benefits (Ashraf & Azad, 2019).

**Irregular payment:** A study by the Bangladesh Institute for Labour Studies (BILS) in 2014 found that over 50 per cent of domestic workers did not receive their monthly wages on time. A further 29 per cent claimed that employers made irregular combined payments rather than monthly payments (Ahmed, 2014).

**Lack of leave provisions:** Weekly leave, leave for festivals and so on are almost non-existent in Bangladesh, which makes organizing and mobilization of workers even more difficult. In the ILO survey (2019), 87 per cent of live-out domestic workers reported that they did not receive any weekly leave (Ashraf & Azad, 2019) (see section on Access to Social Protection regarding maternity leave).

**Occupational safety and health:** Illness and injury picked up in the workplace are a concern for domestic workers as this can leave them without the ability to earn an income for significant periods. In this survey, it was found that the most frequent cause (70 per cent) of days of work missed was due to illness or an accident, followed by 10 per cent of workers who reported missing work because of care responsibilities. Seventy-two per cent of workers who had been seriously ill or injured during the past 12 months reported that they had derived their illness or injury from work. Seventy-eight per cent of these workers had had to miss work as a result of this injury or illness, with 34 per cent reporting that they had missed two or more weeks of work, and 60 per cent reporting that they had not been paid during their time off.

**Workplace violence:** The interviews revealed that violence by employers

against domestic workers - physical, verbal and sexual - was pervasive. Levels of domestic violence in the country have risen with the COVID-19 crisis and this is impacting on domestic workers. A growing concern in Bangladesh is the increasing number of cases of violence against migrant domestic workers working in Middle Eastern countries, especially Saudi Arabia.

**Lack of bargaining power:** Domestic workers have little bargaining power to improve their situation. For example, wages tend to be set by the neighbourhood, which limits the capacity of domestic workers to negotiate for better or more regular payment. While unionized workers report that collective organization has helped them to negotiate better pay, the vast majority of domestic workers in the country are not organized and do not have the necessary support to negotiate for improved working conditions.

**Lack of affordable housing:** 'In Dhaka, you'd be surprised to know that the big houses are often cheaper to afford than the ones in which the domestic workers stay, because the demand for the latter is higher. The landowners don't consider the sector of the workers and so often when the garment workers' wages go up for example, they increase the rent. The domestic workers face a loss because of this' (Interview, November 2019).

## Access to Social Protection and Social Services

The National Social Security Strategy was adopted in 2015 and is the instrument through which the government is expanding social protection with safety net programmes. Measures include allowances for the elderly, widows and people with disabilities, financial support

for people with serious diseases, and a maternity allowance and lactation support for poor working mothers. However, these social protection programmes cover only a small number of informal workers and their resources are extremely limited.

**Health care:** Access to health care is a serious concern for domestic workers. Bangladesh has low per capita expenditure on public health and there is a shortage of health facilities, staff, medicines and equipment. Almost 90 per cent of the domestic workers surveyed in this study had visited a health-care facility in the previous 12 months, with 67 per cent of those visits related to their own health and a further 17 per cent related to the health of a child. The majority (38 per cent) had visited a public health facility, 23 per cent had been to a pharmacy, and 21 per cent to a private hospital.

Domestic workers also do not have access to financial risk protection

through a health insurance scheme. While access to basic health services through the public sector is theoretically free, patients often end up bearing the cost of medicines and tests (Islam & Biswas, 2014). In this survey, the costs of medication were significantly higher than the costs of a consultation – while workers had typically paid BDT100 (USD1.20) or more for a consultation, most had paid BDT500 (USD6) or more for medication.

Domestic workers also turn to the largely unregulated private sector (including pharmacies, NGO-backed clinics or village doctors) when they need urgent health care, due to unavailability or long waiting times in public facilities. This may expose them to unscrupulous practices – such as ordering unnecessary tests – which add to costs (Islam Interview, November 2019). Tests were cited as a major health-care cost, with 34 per cent of workers reporting that they had spent BDT4,000 (USD47) or more on tests during their last health-care visit.



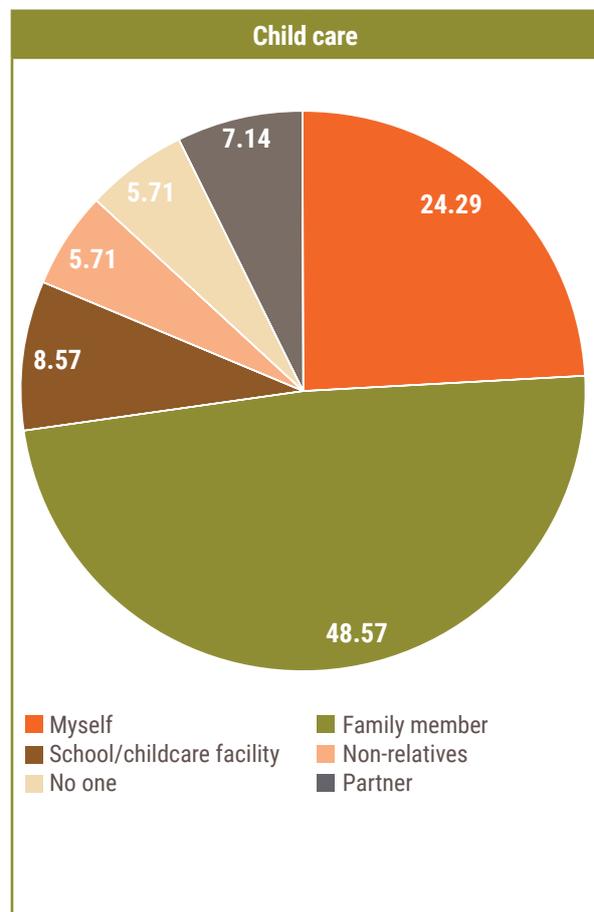
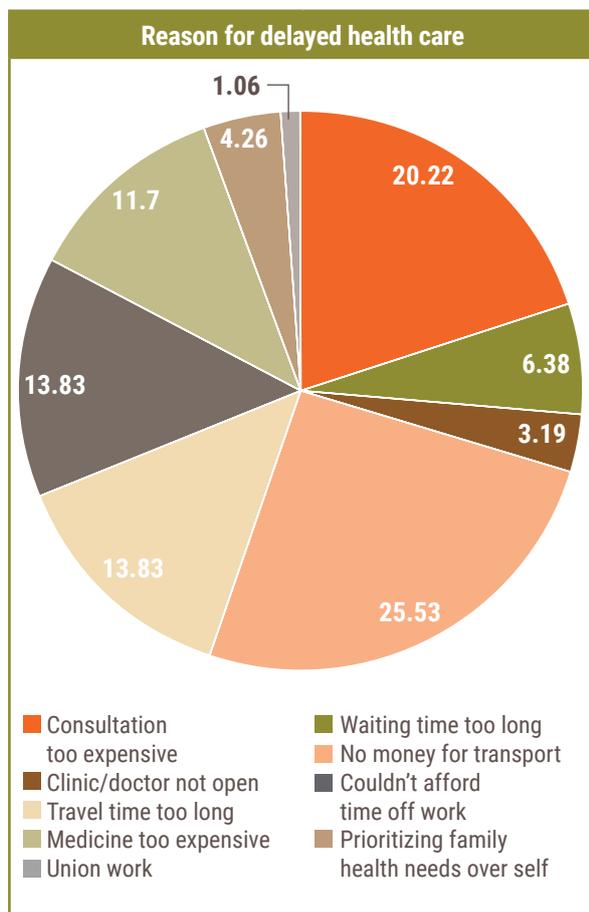
*A domestic workers training of trainers workshop in Dhaka in 2014, organized by the ILO, IDWF and NDWWU. Photo by Fish Ip/IDWF.*

Over 70 per cent of workers had taken time off from work to access health care. Thirty-eight per cent of these workers had lost at least part of their income as a result of this health-care visit, while 35 per cent did not lose income as their employers paid them in full. The typical domestic worker in this survey reported weekly earnings of BDT1,250 (USD14.7). On their last health visit, the typical direct costs paid (consultation, medicine, tests) were BDT1,655 (USD19.5). This health visit therefore cost the equivalent of more than a week of earnings for a typical domestic worker. This is in addition to the indirect – or opportunity costs – of the visits, with the typical domestic worker spending 2.6 hours in accessing health care and foregoing BDT67 (USD0.80) – or 5 per cent of a typical weekly income – in lost earnings as a result.

In this context, it is not surprising that the majority (67 per cent) of workers

who had visited a health facility had to take out a loan to pay for their health-care needs, or those of a family member. Such loans, particularly if set at high interest rates, may result in workers falling into a poverty cycle and debt trap from which it is difficult to emerge. It is also unsurprising that 85 per cent of domestic workers interviewed reported delaying health care at some point, with 25 per cent of these reporting the reason for delay as not having enough money for transport, and a further 20 per cent noting the reason as overall expense.

**Maternity and child care:** The Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006, makes provision for 16 weeks of paid maternity leave. Domestic workers are explicitly excluded from these provisions, although the Domestic Workers Protection Policy also makes provision for 16 weeks of paid maternity leave. Focus groups conducted during this research suggested



that most domestic workers are given maternity leave without pay. The survey data revealed that only 11 per cent of workers had access to maternity leave, with 50 per cent having access to 16 weeks leave and 50 per cent receiving pay or a benefit from the state. But the fact remains that the vast majority of the workers interviewed did not have access to maternity leave or pay.

Domestic workers who participated in the survey were heavily reliant on family members to provide child care. Approximately 50 per cent of those with children reported leaving them with a family member. This confirms findings from the focus group research that suggested that women with young children tend to drop out of the labour market until one child – usually a girl – is able to take care of her younger siblings. A further 25 per cent of workers had taken children to work with them during the seven days prior to the survey.

**Pension:** Women domestic workers older than 62 are eligible for the non-contributory Old Age Allowance (OAA) if they fall below the means test. However, the means-test threshold is very low (annual income below BDT3,000 or USD37), which means that many domestic workers do not qualify (Dulal 2017). In this survey sample, only four workers had access to the OAA. Since there is no pension provision in Bangladesh, domestic workers usually rely on their personal savings in old age. However, there is no guarantee that even after a lifetime of work they will have such savings. Low earnings, shocks – such as health-care costs – and the fact that there is no guarantee of employment or an assured income through a formal contract, leaves many workers without savings.

**Other benefits:** Twenty-three per cent of domestic workers interviewed reported having access to a food-relief benefit, while 72 per cent reported having no access to any other form of benefit.

## COVID-19 and Social Protection Responses

*“I lost my job because of the COVID pandemic. I used to work in 3/4 houses, now I am working in only one house. My income has been decreased. But the monthly expenses including house rent, food expenses, medical expenses etc. are still the same as these were before the COVID pandemic. In this situation, it has become difficult for me to survive in Dhaka city with the family. Therefore, I will request the government to provide cash support to all distressed domestic workers like me.”*

- Mita Akhter Rehena, domestic worker, age 39, Malibagh, Dhaka

The COVID pandemic has had a devastating effect on the lives of Bangladeshi domestic workers at home and abroad. Many have lost their jobs and as a result have been unable to pay rent or buy food. Those with jobs abroad have been unable to return to work with the closure of borders. A large number have had to return to their home villages, as they face eviction by landlords. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Bangladesh has proposed a vertical extension (i.e. increasing the benefits) of its current social safety net programme. It has also proposed a temporary one-time horizontal extension of BDT2,500 to approximately 5 million vulnerable informal workers, including domestic workers, using mobile financial services (Gentilini et al., 2020). The government had planned to complete the roll out of

this support by July 31st 2020, but by the middle of September the NDWWU reported that none of its members had received a grant.

Domestic workers who have continued to work have faced significantly increased workloads, as well as health risks, with little protection. Live-in domestic workers have had to work longer hours as employers' family members have stayed home and, in some cases, become ill. Often the necessary care work is done without access to personal protective equipment (PPE). Live-in workers have faced restrictions on their movement and been barred from leaving their employers' homes to see their families. Workers with multiple employers have been prevented from working in multiple homes, with little or no financial compensation from employers. While the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE) initiated measures to ensure the security and safety of

factory workers, the same consideration was not extended to domestic workers.

Access to health care has also been a problem for these workers. In response to the pandemic, the government expanded hospital facilities by increasing the number of beds available and establishing new infrastructure. Included in this was the provision of free COVID-19 tests. However, the tests are no longer free, even in government hospitals, making it more difficult for domestic workers to access the tests.

## Organizing and Action for Social Protection

*“Previously, we used to be restricted from joining any such union from our families. My husband used to beat me... but now he realizes that he cannot do this to me because I have become much more aware of my rights. If we'd get late while returning home from attending union meetings, we had to hear so many*



NDWWU members on the rally of Human Rights Day, Dec 10. Photo by Peng Choi.

*unpleasant words from our neighbours, as if we had done something filthy. Now since this is advertised on television, now they understand what this is about, now they don't say much, also because we are so many of us."*

– Focus group discussion with domestic worker leaders and members, November 2019

Under current labour law, domestic workers lack the right to unionize. Nevertheless, in 2000 the *Jatiyo Garhosto Naari Sromik Union* or National Domestic Women Workers Union (NDWWU) was founded. Since then, the NDWWU has established itself as the largest membership-based unregistered trade union of live-out domestic workers in Bangladesh. It claims to have close to 20,000 members. Largely concentrated in Dhaka, the union has spread to other cities such as Sylhet and Chattogram. It is affiliated to the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF) (Islam Interview, November 2019).

The NDWWU has worked hard to garner support from various trade unions and policy makers and has worked particularly closely with the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS). Together, they formed the Domestic Workers Rights Network (DWRN) in 2006, with BILS acting as the network's secretariat. The DWRN is made up of members of various trade unions, worker groups, civil society organizations, lawyers and human rights activists. Its goal is to assist in the mobilization of domestic workers and ensure their inclusion in policy-level change affecting their working and living conditions. To advance the cause of extending social protection to domestic workers in Bangladesh, the NDWWU, with its allies, has drawn on several strategies that are described below.

**Alliance-building strategies:** As suggested above, the NDWWU has used alliances across the worker movement, and with research institutes, legal experts and policy makers, as a key strategy in furthering its agenda. The existence of the DWRN is one outcome of the extensive networking that has been carried out. The union has also worked to build alliances with female Members of Parliament (MPs), as well as female former ministers. There are 50 reserved seats for women MPs in Bangladesh's parliament, and these women can be extremely influential and effective actors in demanding rights for domestic workers. Indeed, it was a female MP who first raised the demand for a policy on domestic workers in parliament. Some women MPs are directly involved with the DWRN and regularly attend meetings on domestic-worker issues, as well as rallies and protests to express their solidarity.

**Legal strategies:** Bangladesh is yet to ratify a slew of ILO conventions that would compel the national government to ensure the social protection of domestic workers and other informal workers. The NDWWU has been active in advocating for the government to ratify and implement these conventions, which include the Convention on Decent Work for Domestic Workers, 2011 (No. 189) and the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102). With a focus on national-level law, the DWRN has prepared a set of legal recommendations for the amendment of the Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006, to allow for the inclusion of domestic workers and continues to push for these amendments. A major victory for domestic workers in Bangladesh was the DWRN-led process to draw up a draft Code of Conduct on the employment of domestic workers, which was submitted to the Ministry

of Labour and Employment Ministry in 2008. This was eventually converted into the Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy of 2015.

### **Participation in institutional spaces for dialogue and implementation:**

The Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy includes a directive for the setting up of multi-stakeholder “monitoring cells” to monitor the implementation of the policy, including its social protection provisions, at different levels of the state (central, district, *upazila*<sup>1</sup> and city levels). The NDWWU is invited to sit on these cells as a worker representative, which provides an important institutionalized space for worker voice. To date, however, only the central monitoring cell has been established, and this has rarely met (Ahmed Interview, November 2019). Part of the problem is that there are frequent changes of staff in the Ministry of Labour and Employment, which coordinated the cells, and a lack of coordination between

the various ministries involved (Ahmed and Islam Interviews, November 2019).

**Bridging the gap between the state and workers:** The NDWWU has attempted to play a bridging role between domestic workers and the state. The Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy directs the Ministry of Labour and Employment to make maternity, sickness and school benefits available to domestic workers from the Bangladesh Workers Welfare Foundation Fund. However, the applications to the fund are onerous and not well suited to non-standard employment relationships. The NDWWU has helped some members gain access to this fund, although success has been limited. The union has also worked to support domestic workers in accessing various relief and social protection measures from Women’s Councillors at the local ward level and from the various poverty-relief-focused social protection programmes run by the Ministry of Social Welfare.

<sup>1</sup> *Upazila* are a component of Bangladesh’s administrative system, and refer to district sub-units.



Domestic workers at a training of trainers workshop in Dhaka in 2014, organized by the ILO, IDWF and NDWWU. Photo by Fish Ip/IDWF.

**Awareness raising:** The DWRN in particular works on raising awareness of domestic workers' rights and support programmes and benefits to which domestic workers may have access. This awareness-raising work is aimed at domestic workers themselves, through DWRN-facilitated area-based groups which meet on a monthly basis. There is also a focus on changing public perceptions through media campaigns focusing on the important role of domestic workers in society and their need for adequate labour and social protections.

## Recommendations for Policy and Practice

While strides have been made in developing social protection systems in Bangladesh, it is clear from the research presented in this brief that much work remains to be done. This section provides recommendations for policy makers, trade unions and organizations of domestic workers to further the extension of social protection to this vulnerable group of workers. These recommendations include consideration of the COVID-19 crisis and its impact on domestic workers.

Recommendations for policy makers and scheme administrators:

- Ensure the inclusion of domestic workers in the Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006, so that the Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy, 2015 has legal backing.
- In the short term, formulate a scheme to provide cash assistance to domestic workers impacted by the COVID-19 crisis through the Labour Welfare Foundation Fund. In the longer term, the conditions for applying for financial support from this fund should be relaxed for domestic workers and the benefit amounts should be increased.
- Include domestic workers in existing national social protection programmes operating under the Ministry of Social Welfare, as mandated by the Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy. Domestic workers are a vulnerable group of workers who are not able to participate in contributory social protection systems unless they are almost wholly subsidized by their employers. As employers are unlikely to agree to this, domestic workers should be integrated as a special category into the non-contributory social protection systems. The Government of Bangladesh has shown that this is possible and necessary through its horizontal extension of emergency cash grants to urban informal workers.
- Introduce a universal pension scheme nationally for all informal workers, including domestic workers.
- In this context, additional financing for the extension of non-contributory social protection should be explored, for example, through the use of the National Zakat Fund.
- A Comprehensive Recovery Plan should be prepared by the central monitoring cell working under the Ministry of Labour and Employment for implementation of the Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy, with the involvement of organizations working on domestic workers' rights and welfare issues. In this recovery plan, specific measures to ensure the financial security of domestic workers, job placement, housing, health care, education of children and other needs must be included.

- Ensure that the decentralized monitoring cells at national and local levels are functional. District and *upazila* level cells will decentralize consultation, potentially allowing for greater grassroots participation in the implementation of the Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy.
- Support migrant Bangladeshi domestic workers in the following ways:
  - Negotiate with destination countries to ensure re-employment of domestic workers who have lost their jobs.
  - Take the initiative to create pressure on destination countries through the UN and other organizations to take responsibility for ensuring social protection, re-employment and rehabilitation of migrant domestic workers. Organizations such as the International Labour Organization and the International Organization for Migration should play a more proactive role in protecting these workers.
  - Provide financial assistance to returning migrant domestic workers through the Expatriate Welfare Board under the Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment.
- Emphasis must be placed by the government on halting domestic violence. Law enforcement agencies must play a more proactive role and the government must increase capacity to investigate violence.
- Finally, there is a clear need for greater public investment in health care in Bangladesh. At 2.27 per cent of GDP in 2017, health expenditure

in Bangladesh is among the lowest in the South Asian region (World Bank, 2020). Access to health care is a human right, but as the research presented here has shown, poor access to health care also has significant negative economic impacts on poorer workers. Particularly in the context of COVID-19, health-care services must be seen as one aspect of a system of income protection and support for livelihood recovery, and not as wasteful public expenditure.

#### Recommendations for trade unions:

- Trade unions can play an important role in supporting domestic workers. Trade unions in Bangladesh are represented in the national Tripartite Consultative Council and could use this space to advocate for greater expenditure on social protection.
- Global trade union federations have an important role to play in working with international institutions, such as the ILO, to place pressure on the Government of Bangladesh to ratify key international legal instruments, such as Conventions 189 and 102.

#### Recommendations for grassroots organizations and coalitions:

- There is an urgent need to raise awareness among domestic workers and their employers about the contents of the Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy. This requires sustained awareness raising, communication and education. While the NDWWU and DWRN are working hard to perform this role, real change will only be possible when a broader alliance of organizations working at the grassroots level are performing the same role. Alliances at

- the grassroots level – complementing those already formed at the policy level – around domestic workers need to be more strongly forged.
- Workers' rights organizations need to advocate collectively for the ratification of the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) and the Convention on Decent Work for the Domestic Workers, 2011 (No. 189) by the government.
  - Grassroots organizations should leverage the media to increase public support for the extension of social protection to domestic workers. In the past, the media has played a significant role in establishing the demands of marginalized people and can be used to do the same for domestic workers.

\* This brief was compiled by Laura Alfers and draws on qualitative research conducted by Anwesha Ghosh at the Institute of Social Studies Trust with contributions from Advocate Nazrul Islam (former Advocacy Officer of the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies – BILS) who was assigned Domestic Workers Rights Network (DWRN) activities. It also draws on survey data produced by the National Domestic Women Workers Union (NDWWU) in collaboration with the DWRN, IDWF and WIEGO, which was analyzed by Siviwe Mhlana and Michael Rogan.



Members of the Domestic Workers Rights Network at the start of a month-long campaign around social protection for domestic workers in 2017. Photo by Nazrul Islam/DWRN.

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## Interviews

1. Md. Mujibul Haque MP – Ex-State Minister for Labour and Employment, Government of Bangladesh.
2. Shamsur Nahar Begum MP – Member of Parliament, Government of Bangladesh.
3. Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmmed – Former Coordinator, DWRN and former Executive Director, BILS.
4. Abul Hossain – Senior trade unionist (ITUC) and Advisor to the NDWWU.
5. Nazma Yesmin – Director, Research and Development, BILS.
6. Ataur Rahman – Journalist, BSS.
7. Adv. Nazrul Islam – Former Advocacy Coordinator for DWRN, BILS.
8. Focus Group Discussion with women domestic worker leaders and members of NDWWU.



*Domestic workers in Dhaka at a training workshop organized by the ILO, IDWF and NDWWU in 2014. Photo by Fish Ip/IDWF.*

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## ABOUT IDWF

The International Domestic Workers Federation is a members-based global federation of domestic workers. It consists of 76 affiliates in 59 countries representing over 560,000 domestic workers worldwide. Its objective is to protect and advance domestic/household workers' rights everywhere through building a strong, democratic and united global organization. It is affiliated to WIEGO and IUF. Visit [www.idwfed.org](http://www.idwfed.org)

## ABOUT NDWWU

The National Domestic Women Workers Union (NDWWU) in Bangladesh is an affiliate member of the International Domestic Workers Federation. It was established in 2000 and is the largest membership-based organization of domestic workers in Bangladesh. It operates extensively in the capital, Dhaka, and has expanded its organizing activities in Gazipur and in divisions including Chattogram, Sylhet, Rajshahi and Barishal. It has about 20,000 members across the country. NDWWU's major functions are to organize domestic workers, provide them with training, raise awareness about their rights, conduct advocacy campaigns and lobby government to establish the rights of domestic workers and ensure their legal recognition. It is an active member of the Domestic Workers Rights Network (DWRN) in Bangladesh. NDWWU is also a member of the central monitoring cell formed by the Ministry of Labour and Employment to ensure implementation of the Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy, 2015.