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The Mobilization of Bolivian Domestic Workers

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Introduction

Bolivian domestic workers,² like domestic workers the world over, have historically suffered poorer working conditions and lower wages than other workers. In addition, most Bolivian domestic workers suffer discrimination because they are rural-to-urban migrants of indigenous origin.

Despite their subaltern position within society, the first example of domestic workers organizing to defend their rights dates back to the 1930s, when the Union of Cooks was created in La Paz. Decades later, a small group of domestic workers succeeded in creating their own unions in the 1980s, after the end of a military dictatorship. In 1993, they founded the National Federation of Bolivian Household Workers (Fenatrahob) (*Federación Nacional de Trabajadoras Asalariadas del Hogar de Bolivia*), which obtained the support of a growing group of NGOs, unions and other progressive social organizations. For 10 years, Fenatrahob and its allies addressed petitions to political

leaders, publicized press conferences, organized protests such as sit-ins and a signatures collection, and published a series of articles in mass media, among other forms of action. After a decade-long campaign, the 2450/2003 Law that Regulates Paid Household Work was approved in Parliament. This Law was a concession obtained by Bolivian social movements from Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada's government in a very specific context of strong social mobilizations against neoliberalism, which eventually obtained the resignation of the President.

Thirteen years after its approval, the Law has not been wholly implemented yet. Therefore, Fenatrahob and its allies have continued to mobilize during the government of president Evo Morales and his party, the Movement Towards Socialism (MAS, in Spanish) (2006-2017). This Organizational Brief analyzes the organizing strategies of the National Federation of Bolivian Household Workers

Tenemos derecho
a un seguro de salud al
período de enfermedad
y descanso pro
y post natal

Arts. 8 y 9
Ley 2450 de Regulación del
Trabajo Asalariado del Hogar
9 de abril de 2003

The Federación Nacional de Trabajadoras Asalariadas del Hogar de Bolivia was formed in 1993 and was instrumental in the passing of Law 2450/2003 which regulates domestic work. Photo: Fenatrahob

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² In Bolivia, the term *empleada doméstica* ("domestic employee" in Spanish) has a derogatory connotation, and organized domestic workers have struggled to be called *trabajadoras del hogar* ("household workers"). However, the terms "domestic work" and "domestic workers" are used in this brief because these are the most commonly accepted terms in the technical literature on this occupation.

METHODS

Information in this Policy Brief was derived from: semi-structured interviews, conducted with activists of the Bolivian social movement of domestic workers in La Paz in March/April 2016; an analysis of documents published by Fenatrahob and the Bolivian government; and literature on domestic work, domestic workers' rights and the Bolivian political context.

(Fenatrahob), focusing on its strategic alliances with three actors: other Bolivian unions, women's organizations, and the MAS left-leaning government. The brief focuses on two periods: 1993-2003 (the campaign that led to the approval of the 2450/2003 Law) and 2006-2017 (the activities of the movement during Morales' government). An introductory section looks at the main features of domestic work in Bolivia and another section explores the international dimension of the struggle of Bolivian domestic workers.

Domestic Work in Bolivia

Domestic work has traditionally been the most important form of women's employment in Latin America (Kuznesof 1989). Nowadays, 15.3 per cent of employed women in Latin America are domestic workers, according to data produced by the International Labour Organization (ILO) (Valenzuela and Sjoberg 2012: 59–60). In Bolivia, there are contradictory figures regarding domestic work—which is not surprising, as there is a general lack of data regarding this sector due to the high prevalence of informal work. The most trustworthy figures range between 137,000 (Peredo Beltrán 2015: 17) and 190,682 workers (Wanderley 2014: 15), a considerable figure for a country of 10 million people. Most Bolivian domestic workers are indigenous women of rural origin with a low educational level, as it will be explained in the following paragraphs.

Domestic work is, overwhelmingly, women's work in the whole of Latin America: on average, 95 per cent of domestic workers are women in Latin America (Valenzuela and Sjoberg 2012), a figure that reaches 97 per cent in Bolivia (André 2016). The social composition of Bolivian domestic workers presents a particularity in relation to other countries: various sources of data suggest that most of them are indigenous—which is not surprising, given that Bolivia is the only country in America where indigenous people constitute the majority of the population (Molina Barrios et al. 2005; Rivera Cusicanqui 2007).

Quantitative research on the ethnic composition of Bolivian domestic workers has reached contradictory results, depending on the different methods used to measure the percentage of indigenous people among the respondents and the scope of the research on the topic. On the one hand, according to CONLACTRAHO's (Confederación Latinoamericana y del Caribe de Trabajadoras del Hogar, in Spanish) research on the living conditions of La Paz domestic workers, 81 per cent were Aymara, an indigenous people in the region (CONLACTRAHO 2003: 35). By contrast, Wanderley's (2014) study includes ethnic data obtained in 2007 through the auto-identification method: 47 per cent of the domestic workers who were interviewed declared that they identified as indigenous (Wanderley 2014: 32).

Further, the analysis of the 2001 Census conducted by Molina Barrios et al. (2005: 42) reached the conclusion that 66 per cent of the Bolivian population is indigenous; the results of this study are generally accepted in Bolivia. Second, Fenatrahob's discourse and documents draw a clear link between domestic work and indigenous identity. Casimira Rodríguez (former Executive Secretary of Fenatrahob and former Minister of Justice for Bolivia) has stated that, "The household workers have struggled to gain their labour rights as women and as Indians" (Rodríguez Romero 2005: 6) and has pointed out the discrimination that Bolivian domestic workers suffer because of

"being of a different colour" (Rodríguez Romero 2006). The same assumption can be found in the document *Decolonization and Depatriarchalization* (Fenatrahob 2014), where Fenatrahob refers to the triple discrimination suffered by domestic workers (because of being women, domestic workers and indigenous).

Both in Bolivia and Latin America, most domestic workers come from the lowest social classes and have a lower level of formal education than the national average (CONLACTRAHO 2003; Valenzuela and Sjoberg 2012; Wanderley 2014). In Bolivia, nearly 50 per cent of domestic workers only completed primary education or did not complete any formal education at all, while 45 per cent of them completed secondary education (INE 2016: 2). Low levels of formal education among domestic workers are unsurprising, given that 9 out of 10 domestic workers began working when they were under 18, according to a survey conducted by Fenatrahob (André 2016).

Finally, there is a tight link between rural-urban migration and domestic work in Bolivia. Prima Ocsa, who was Executive Secretary of Fenatrahob in 2014-15, stated that 80 per cent of the 7,028 members of that organization were migrants from rural origin (Ocsa, n.d.). Indeed, Fenatrahob quotidian work seems to take into account the assumption that most domestic workers are migrants of rural origin, as shown by *El camino a la ciudad* ("The way to the city"), a comic book written and drawn by the domestic worker Rosa Druker (2014). The book, which is published on Fenatrahob's website, describes the typical path of emigration that leads indigenous girls and women from their villages to the cities where they work as domestic workers. The link between domestic work and rural-urban migration was also present in the discussions on the draft law on domestic workers' rights that took place in Bolivia in the 1990s (Fenatrahob/TAHIPAMU/Fundación Solón 1998).

Domestic Workers Organizing: from the Union of Cooks to the 2450 Law

The first organization of domestic workers in Bolivia was the Union of Cooks (*Sindicato de Culinarias*), which was created in 1935 to defend the rights of domestic cooks in La Paz. The analysis of the experience of the Union of Cooks is particularly important for the understanding of current domestic workers' struggles in Bolivia because the Union has been a source of inspiration for Fenatrahob, particularly since the publication of the book *Polleras³ libertarias: federación obrera femenina 1927-1965 (Liberating Polleras: History of the Feminine Workers' Federation 1927-1965)*, produced by the feminist organization *Taller de Historia y Participación de la Mujer* (Workshop for the History and Participation of the Woman) (TAHIPAMU) in 1989 (Dibbits et al. 1989). At the conference on the Union of Cooks held at the Cultural Spanish Centre of La Paz on April 1, 2016, Fenatrahob's Secretary of Relations Prima Ocsa stated that "[they had] inherited the cooks' struggle" (Ocsa 2016).⁴

Even though the Union of Cooks represented an important experience of domestic workers' organization and mobilization, it did not have any direct policy outcome. A new General Labour Act was passed at the end of the 1930s but the demands of the Union of Cooks were not included in it (Peredo Beltrán 2015). Later, the 1942 General Labour Act established a discriminatory legal regime for the so-called "domestics", excluding them from the regulations applied to the rest of workers. While an eight-hour workday was established as the general rule,

³"Pollera" is the name of the traditional dress of the indigenous women from the Bolivian highlands. Women who wear pollera are usually known as *mujeres de pollera* ("pollera women") while women who wear Western clothes are called *mujeres de vestido* ("dress women").

⁴The author attended this conference and recorded these comments.

the timing was inverted for the domestic workers: they had the right to eight hours of rest per day—which implied the possibility of a 16-hour workday (1942 General Labour Act, article 39).

The Bolivian movement of domestic workers experienced a new rise in the 1980s, on the wake of the re-establishment of democracy after more than two decades of military dictatorships that had banned unions. Domestic workers' organizations were also created in other Latin American countries in the 1980s (Blofield 2013).

The first allies of organized domestic workers were left-wing sectors of the Catholic Church in countries such as Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Peru and Bolivia. At the beginning of the 1980s, a group of domestic workers began to gather on Sundays in a Catholic church of the neighbourhood of

Sopocachi, in La Paz, where they discussed and began to question their situation as domestic workers (Cabezas Fernández 2012; Goldsmith 2007). In their effort to organize, the domestic workers also received the support of Catholic nuns (López Ángel 2012). Domestic workers' unions were created in various neighbourhoods in La Paz and other Bolivian cities during the 1980s, and the unions from La Paz and Cochabamba met for the first time in 1985 (Fenatrahob/TAHIPAMU/Fundación Solón 1998).

The National Federation of Bolivian Household Workers (Fenatrahob) was founded on March 28, 1993, in the First National Congress of Household Workers that took place in Cochabamba. The unions of the following neighbourhoods and cities took part in the congress: Sopocachi, San Pedro, San Miguel (three neighbourhoods in La Paz), Tarija, Santa Cruz and Cochabamba (three of the biggest cities in Bolivia) (CONLACTRAHO 2003).



Fenatrahob has chosen the union organizational form (versus the association model) probably because it meshes with the strong tradition of collective organizing in Bolivia. Photo: Harriet Bell

The union organizational form that the movement of Bolivian domestic workers would choose seems to have been clear from the beginning, though the chosen form is not the only one taken by domestic workers' movements around the world. Ally (2005) has identified two major organizational models in domestic workers' activism: the union model and the association model. The union model attempts to "recover the traditional mobilizing identity of class, reconfigured to recognise the significance to the labour movement of gendered care work", while the association model "recognises and utilises transnationalism's reformulation of the calculus of race and gender, and has pursued a new politics of identity around migrancy" (Ally 2005).

Bolivian activists have chosen the union model, probably because it meshes with the strong tradition of collective organizing in that country, as suggested by Peredo Beltrán (2015). The power of collective organizations such as peasant and workers' unions during the twentieth century and also in current Bolivian politics has been underlined by authors such as Crabtree (2005), Webber (2011) and Stefanoni (2016), who has defined Bolivia as a "strongly corporatist" country.

In this context, it is not surprising that Fenatrahob chose to join the Bolivian Workers' Central (COB, in Spanish), the most important union of industrial and urban workers in the country. This choice shows the will of organized domestic workers to be wholly integrated within the Bolivian workers' movement, despite their frequent denunciations of the sexism of COB leaders (Casimira Rodríguez in Peredo Beltrán 2015; author's interview with Prima Ocsa⁵). Nowadays, 3 per cent of Bolivian domestic workers are unionized (Peredo Beltrán 2015: 73). Even though it seems a very low percentage, it is much higher than the global average of domestic workers' unionization, which is 1 per cent (ILO 2004).

The integration of Fenatrahob within the Bolivian workers' movements has been a key factor of its success in getting a law to protect domestic workers' rights. The process began in 1992, when the organized domestic workers presented to the Bolivian Parliament a draft law on domestic work (Cabezas Fernández 2012; Fenatrahob/TAHIPAMU/Fundación Solón 1998). Fenatrahob chose to focus on the elaboration of a new law instead of demanding the modification of the General Labour Act to include domestic workers within the regulations.

In 1997, an important event took place: the Committee to Promote the Law (Comité Impulsor, in Spanish), an alliance of organizations that supported Fenatrahob's draft law on domestic work, was created. The Committee was composed of the Solón Foundation (which had a key role in the creation of the Committee), the Bolivian Ombudsman, the NGO Centre of Research for Labour and Agrarian Development (CEDLA, in Spanish), the pro-choice organization Catholic Women for the Right to Decide, the Bolivian Section of Human Rights, Democracy and Development (DDHHDD), the feminist NGO Centre for the Information and the Development of the Woman (CIDEM), La Paz Foundation, the Women's Coordination (the national network of Bolivian women's organizations), the Association of Women for Equity and Equality (AMUPEI), the feminist NGO "Gregoria Apaza" Centre for the Promotion of the Woman, some groups of the Catholic Church, some evangelist churches, and a number of MPs such as Julieta Montaña (Cabezas Fernández 2012, p. 90; Peredo Beltrán 2015, p. 51). This Committee was critical to the passage in 2003 of the 2450/2003 Law that Regulates Paid Household Work, as will be explained below.

The creation of the Committee reinforced the campaign for the passing of a law to protect domestic workers' labour and human rights. A main draft was presented to the government and Parliament in 1998, after several meetings between Fenatrahob and the Director for Gender Issues (Fenatrahob/TAHIPAMU/Fundación Solón 1998, p.

10). The draft law was blocked in Parliament in 1999, which provoked a series of actions by Fenatrahob and its allies. Fenatrahob addressed petitions to MPs and political leaders, staged a highly-publicized press conference where it asked for a meeting with Bolivia's then-President, Hugo Bánzer, and organized protests such as sit-ins and a signatures collection. The Committee, meanwhile, published a series of articles in mass media, increasing the public outreach of the movement (Cabezas Fernández 2012; Fenatrahob/TAHIPAMU/Fundación Solón 1998). The alliance with NGOs and other non-union organizations did not make Fenatrahob neglect its partnership with COB, the main organization of the Bolivian workers' movements, which organized a march in support of the domestic workers' demands.

The 2450/2003 Law that Regulates Paid Household Work was finally approved in 2003, when the neoliberal government of president Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada was under heavy pressure from the vast social movement against privatizations and social cuts (Crabtree 2005; Webber 2011). Evo Morales led the left-indigenist party MAS, which had been the most important advocate of Fenatrahob's bill in Parliament (Blofield 2013). In the final debate on the draft, MAS Member of Parliament Alberto Aguilar explicitly recognized the protagonist role played by domestic workers in the promotion of the Law, calling them "sisters" (in Cabezas Fernández 2012: 97).

The 2450/2003 Law put Bolivian domestic workers in a situation of almost whole legal equality with the rest of workers. The only exception was that live-in domestic workers had a 10-hour working day (two hours longer than the general regime), which was justified by the need to "pay back" employers for giving shelter to the worker (Fenatrahob/TAHIPAMU/Fundación Solón 1998). The final approval of the Law likely had more to do with the

⁵ Author's interview with Prima Ocsa, former Executive Secretary and current Secretary of Relations, Fenatrahob, La Paz, April 1, 2016.

very particular political situation Bolivia was experiencing than with the decade-long campaign, according to Peredo Beltrán.⁶ However, the Law would probably never have been adopted without the campaign, led by Fenatrahob, as domestic workers' rights were almost wholly absent from the political agenda before the creation of the federation. Fenatrahob's leadership seems to have fostered a constructive relationship between all members of the Committee to Promote the Law.

On the one hand, Fenatrahob has overcome the resistance of unions to the integration of domestic workers within them—a sexist behaviour by union leaders that has been identified by Ally in other countries (Ally 2005). On the other hand, Fenatrahob has avoided the risk of being “construct[ed] as victims and recipients of good will” (Ally 2005: p. 198) as a consequence of the help it received from NGOs that are not composed by domestic workers. Neither the literature on the Bolivian movement nor the empirical analysis conducted in preparing this paper suggested that constituting the Committee for the Promotion of the Law implied any loss of autonomy for Fenatrahob. As Peredo Beltrán (2015) has highlighted, Fenatrahob has succeeded in simultaneously building three kinds of alliances: gender-based alliances with women's organizations, class-based alliances with COB, and an ethnicity-based alliance with MAS party. However, the relationship between Fenatrahob and MAS (Morales' government) has become more and more conflictual; this is explained in the following section.

Domestic Workers' Mobilizations under Evo Morales' Government (2006-2017)

As previously stated, MAS was the main Parliamentary support of Fenatrahob during the process of the draft 2450/2003 Law on domestic workers' rights. In addition, one of the first decisions of president Evo Morales was the appointment of Casimira Rodríguez, former executive secretary of Fenatrahob, as Minister of Justice. The appointment was received with enthusiasm by domestic workers, and Fenatrahob stated that it had created a more favourable environment for the demands of the movement (Fenatrahob 2007a). However, Rodríguez

only lasted one year as minister, and the only policy on domestic workers' rights that she succeeded in passing was the official recognition of a National Day of Household Workers (March 30), which was established through a Supreme Decree issued by President Morales in 2006.

Even though recognition of the National Day of Household Workers was a positive measure for the movement, the arrival of MAS to state power did not result in other immediate legal changes. There was no immediate implementation of the 2450/2003 Law.

The *Equity and Justice* bulletin published by Fenatrahob in July 2007 contains the first explicit acknowledgment that the approval of the 2450/2003 Law did not automatically improve the situation of domestic workers (Fenatrahob 2007b). In fact, it indicates that the struggle to win the Law was only the beginning, noting: “A new period of



In 2010, Fenatrahob began advocating for the inclusion of the rights of domestic workers in the General Labour Act.
Photo: Harriet Bell

⁶ Author's interview with Elizabeth Peredo Beltrán, researcher of and activist in the social movement of domestic workers. Interview through Skype, June 2, 2017.

work is beginning, which may be much harder than the previous one”.

After MAS and Morales came to power, Fenatrahob’s activities—as detailed in the *Equity and Justice* bulletin—show that domestic workers continued mobilizing for their rights, but they chose mostly non-confrontational means of action. Analysis of the *Equity and Justice* bulletins suggests that educative fairs have constituted the main form of mobilization of Fenatrahob in subsequent years. This kind of activity is oriented towards the sensitization of the public rather than putting pressure on the government to obtain the effective implementation of the 2450/2003 Law. The choice of this non-confrontational strategy in relation to Morales’ government might be based on two elements. First, high hopes were raised by the arrival of MAS and Evo Morales to state power, as they seemed to be deeply engaged in the defense of domestic workers’ rights. Second, the social movement of domestic workers has a structural weakness due to these workers’ isolation, dispersion, lack of free time and low economic and educational resources; thus they cannot put pressure on the government in the same way that other working-class sectors can.

Fenatrahob and its affiliates therefore chose to use the National Day of Household Workers, and other public commemorations, to mobilize for change. Since the 1990s, the domestic workers’ movement in Bolivia had used March 30 as a day of mobilization and reaffirmation of their identity. The 2006 Supreme Decree gave legitimacy to this annual effort, which has grown since. Annual demonstrations, educative fairs and other street events, held on March 30 every year, allow Fenatrahob to attract more intense media attention to their demands annually, as shown by the peak of news on domestic workers’ rights around that date (Abi y Correo del Sur 2016; ANF 2017; Bustillos Zamorano 2014; Zapana 2015). March 30th is also a day off for domestic workers, but most employers do not respect it.

The May 2008 *Equity and Justice* bulletin published by Fenatrahob details the mobilizations that took place on March 30: Fenatrahob celebrated “exhibitions, meetings, fairs and parties” throughout the country. The celebration of activities in the regional capital cities was a novelty, insofar as the March 30 demonstrations had usually been limited to La Paz in the past (Fenatrahob 2008). On March 29, 2009, the executive committee of Fenatrahob and the leaders of local unions organized “the first informative fair for the promotion of decent work in all the regional capital cities of the country”; almost 300 domestic workers affiliated to Fenatrahob took part in the fairs (Fenatrahob 2009b). The fair had two aims: inviting domestic workers to join the unions and sensitize the public about the need to improve domestic workers’ living and working conditions (Fenatrahob 2009a). Also in 2009, Fenatrahob took part in the parades that commemorated the 184th anniversary of the foundation of the Bolivian Republic, and educative fairs took place all over the country on Mothers’ Day. More educative fairs took place in the following years in several cities of Bolivia (Fenatrahob 2010, 2011).

Fenatrahob has, however, undertaken more direct advocacy. The activity of Fenatrahob during the 2006-2009 period also focused on the constitutional process that was taking place in Bolivia at that time, which finished with the approval of the new Political Constitution of the State in 2009. In fact, several domestic workers ran to be elected to the Constituent Assembly, though none were successful (Fenatrahob 2006). However, the demands of domestic workers were brought into the constitutional debate through Women Present in History (MPH, in Spanish), a coalition of women’s organizations that pushed the Constituent Assembly to include women’s rights. The main reference to domestic workers in the new Constitution is found in Article 338, which recognizes the economic importance of domestic work.

In 2010, Fenatrahob began advocating for the inclusion of the rights of domestic workers in the General Labour

Act (Wanderley 2014). In two of its information bulletins, Fenatrahob reported that it had succeeded in introducing domestic workers’ labour rights in the draft General Labour Act (Fenatrahob 2011; 2010). In principle, this would introduce an eight-hour work day for all domestic workers and reinforce the legal consideration of domestic work as a job as all others. However, the draft new General Labour Act could still undergo modifications before receiving final approval in Parliament, which had not occurred at the time this Brief was written.

The International Dimension of the Struggle of Bolivian Domestic Workers

The struggle for domestic workers’ rights in Latin America has had a continental character at least since the foundation of the Confederation of Latin American and Caribbean Household Workers (CONLACTRAHO) in 1988. The Bolivian social movement of domestic workers shares with their Latin American counterparts the fact that it experienced a renewal in the 1980s, in the wake of the end of military dictatorships in several countries in the region (Blofield 2013). Soon after Fenatrahob was formed in 1993, it joined CONLACTRAHO.

The analysis of the *Equity and Justice* bulletins published by Fenatrahob and Bolivian norms related to domestic workers’ rights suggests that CONLACTRAHO is an important actor for Fenatrahob. First of all, the September 2006 *Equity and Justice* bulletin (Fenatrahob 2006) reports that Casimira Rodríguez was Secretary General of CONLACTRAHO at the time of her appointment as Bolivia’s Minister of Justice. She was replaced in CONLACTRAHO by the Mexican domestic worker Marcelina Bautista. However, the Bolivian worker Martha Santos became Secretary of Organization and Relations for CON-

LACTRAHO, an appointment that showed the importance of the Bolivian domestic workers' movement among its counterparts, at least at that time.

In addition, the importance of CONLACTRAHO for the struggle of Bolivian domestic workers was explicitly recognized by Fenatrahob in the March 2011 *Equity and Justice* bulletin (Fenatrahob 2011), in the following terms: "This struggle [of Bolivian household workers] would not be possible without CONLACTRAHO [...] The Confederation works to strengthen the organizations of the sector [of household work], to raise at the local, regional and continental level the [public's] conscience about our situation [of] marginalisation, social discrimination and job exploitation".

The tight relationship between CONLACTRAHO and Fenatrahob led to at least two positive outcomes. First, in 2003 the Confederation carried out a deep analysis of the working and living conditions of domestic workers in La Paz, which remains one of the main sources of empirical data on this topic (CONLACTRAHO 2003). Second, the 28655/2006 Supreme Decree that officially established the National Day of Household Workers in Bolivia explicitly states that the decision to officially recognize this came in response to the demand expressed by both CONLACTRAHO and Fenatrahob.

The international dimension of the struggle of Bolivian domestic workers is not limited to the Latin American level. In 2006, representatives of Fenatrahob participated in the first worldwide conference of domestic workers' organizations, which took place in Amsterdam. The conference was supported by international organizations such as Asia Monitor Resource Centre (AMRC), the Global Labour Institute (GLI) and Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) (Mather 2013).

That meeting set the stage for the global campaign to achieve an international Convention on the rights of domestic workers, which became one of the main priorities of domestic workers' organizations worldwide (Mather 2013). The Bolivian domestic workers' movement was deeply involved in this campaign, and Fenatrahob took part in the latter half of negotiations that led to the passing of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention on Decent Work for Domestic Workers (C189) in Geneva in 2011. Afterwards, Fenatrahob campaigned for the ratification of C189 by the Bolivian state, which was achieved in 2012.⁷ Ever since, the Bolivian social movement of domestic workers has used the Convention as a source of legitimacy for its demands (Peredo Beltrán 2015).

Conclusion

Bolivian domestic workers have succeeded in organizing and creating unions, despite a long colonial history of being discriminated against and the many structural difficulties they face: isolation, lack of free time and lack of economic resources. Inspired by the 1930s Union of Cooks, in 1993 they founded the National Federation of Bolivian Household Workers (Fenatrahob), and campaigned for 10 years for the passing of a law to protect the rights of domestic workers. The establishment of alliances with feminist NGOs, the Bolivian workers' movement and MAS left-wing and indigenous party was instrumental in achieving the approval of the 2450/2003 Law that Regulates Paid Household Work. This occurred in a very specific political context characterized by strong anti-neoliberal mobilizations throughout Bolivia, which forced president Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada's government to approve the Law in 2003.

The arrival of MAS to state power in 2005 did not result in the immediate implementation of the 2450/2003 Law. Therefore, domestic workers kept mobilizing for their rights, but they chose mostly non-confrontational means

of action, such as educative fairs. At the same time, the activism of Bolivian domestic workers became growingly internationalized from 2006, when Fenatrahob participated in the first worldwide conference of domestic workers' organizations. Later on, Fenatrahob took part in the negotiations that led to the passing of the ILO Convention on Decent Work for Domestic Workers (C189) in Geneva in 2011, and succeeded in getting the Convention ratified by the Bolivian state one year later. C189 has since become a major source of legitimacy for the demands of the Bolivian movement of domestic workers.

The establishment of alliances with various kinds of actors, sustained campaigning and a favourable political context explain the success of Fenatrahob in obtaining the approval of the 2450/2003 Law. The arrival of Evo Morales to the presidency of Bolivia raised high hopes among domestic workers, and Fenatrahob shifted to a less confrontational kind of campaigning that involved, primarily, public education initiatives. As it is explained in the Policy Brief "Laws, Legitimacy and Ongoing Struggle: Lessons from Bolivian Policies on Domestic Workers' Rights", Fenatrahob has obtained several important symbolic policies but very limited substantive ones. Therefore, the mobilization of Bolivian domestic workers may become more and more confrontational in the years ahead.

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⁷ While the Bolivian government approved ratification of C189 in 2012, the Convention did not enter into force until April 15, 2013, according to the ILO web page (http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEX_PUB:11300:0::NO::P11300_INSTRUMENT_ID:2551460).

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WIEGO ORGANIZING BRIEFS contain information on organizing strategies and practices in the informal economy. This series aims to support organizing efforts and disseminate better practices.

ABOUT WIEGO: Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing is a global research-policy-action network that seeks to improve the status of the working poor, especially women, in the informal economy. WIEGO draws its membership from membership-based organizations of informal workers, researchers and statisticians working on the informal economy and practitioners from development agencies (intergovernmental, governmental, non-governmental) working on related issues. For more information see www.wiego.org.