



Italy: Conference "Care Work, Food for Life," Acli Colf, June 2015

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PICTURES: RAFFAELLA MAIONI, EKATERINA PORRAS SIVOLOBOVA, CENTRE FOR INDEPENDENT SOCIAL RESEARCH

DEAR COLLEAGUES,

You are reading the 16th newsletter of the Research Network for Domestic Worker Rights, including information on the implementation process of the ILO Convention, campaigns, and news from the world of research.

1. INVITATION: NETWORK MEETING

A meeting of the Research Network for Domestic Worker Rights (RN-DWR) will take place at the 4th Conference of the Regulating for Decent Work Network, on Thursday, July 9th, 2015, 5.30pm, in Room X, R2, International Labour Office, Geneva (see invitation below). Interested non-members are welcome to join the meeting!

Topics on the agenda:

Identifying key areas of concern and activities for activist researchers in the field

Identifying common research interests amongst the participants

Plans for the future of the network (immediate and mid-term)

Contact: coordinator@domestic-work-research.org

2. UPDATES ON THE CONVENTION AND CAMPAIGN NEWS

Italy: Workshop promoted by Acli Colf in Milan on June 16, 2015

On Tuesday 16 June, on the occasion of the 4th anniversary of the adoption of the ILO's Domestic Workers Convention 189, a conference on domestic workers' rights was held at the EXPO in Milan. The conference was titled "Care work, food for life," in line with the overall topic of the EXPO. The event was organised by Acli Colf, an organisation promoting the labour rights and the cultural participation of domestic workers for the last 60 years, together with Caritas Internationalis and the literary contest *Lingua Madre*. During the conference the debate centred on everyday challenges for domestic and care workers in Italy and the need to enhance their labour rights and social protection. Another important issue was the acknowledgment of domestic work as a site of intercultural exchange, especially in everyday practices linked to the preparation and consumption of food (the EXPO's overall theme) in a healthy,

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culturally diverse, and environment-friendly manner. In this light, domestic and care workers should be seen a key actor in promoting a new type of 'home economics' inspired by sustainability and wellbeing.

The RN-DWR was present at this event, due to the participation of Sabrina Marchetti (reference person for Europe of RN-DWR) and given the fact that Raffaella Maioni, president of Acli Colf and main convenor of the event, is also a coordinator of our network.

Spain: Day for Cultural Protest

On March 29th, 2015, a Day for Cultural Protest was organized in Madrid (Spain), both to celebrate the International Day for Domestic Workers (March 30th) and ask for the ratification of the Convention 189. The gathering together took

place in the centre of the city with the aim to make it visible to the rest of the society. Different activities took place as reading a manifest, playing theatre pieces, and playing music. Previous to this activity, a day for political debate on the visibility of migrant women was organized, and among other issues the topic of the ratification of C189 was debated. Both activities were organized by Red the Mujeres Latinoamericanas y del Caribe en España (more information <http://redlatinas.blogspot.com.es/>).

IDWF campaign: Ratify the principles of the Domestic Workers Convention in your home

IDWF together with the ILO promotes the "My fair home" –campaign. Employer can commit to the principles of the Convention 189 online: <http://idwfd.org/myfairhome>

[org/myfairhome](http://idwfd.org/myfairhome)

The principles are:

I will ensure fair wages are paid to domestic workers in my home (at least the minimum wage) and that domestic workers in my home have reasonable work hours and time to rest.

I will negotiate the terms and conditions of employment with any domestic workers in my home, ensuring a mutual understanding through a written agreement.

I will ensure that domestic workers in my home have access to decent healthcare.

I will actively ensure a work environment that is free from abuse, harassment and violence.

I will ensure that domestic workers in my home enjoy decent living conditions and a safe, secure and private



Conference Participants “Domestic Workers in the Countries of Central Eastern Europe and Former Soviet Union”, Russia, April 2015

bedroom.

I will ensure that domestic workers in my home are able to spend their free time wherever and however they choose.

I pledge to uphold these rights in my home and community

India: Domestic Workers celebrate the International Domestic Workers' Day

Domestic Workers in the newly formed Telangana State celebrated the Fifth International Domestic Worker's Day by declaring themselves a much deserved holiday.

Hundreds of domestic workers under the banner of Domestic Workers Forum India (DWFI) and Gruhakarmika Union (Domestic Workers Union) celebrated the holiday with public meetings, rallies, round tables, and other programs.

Addressing the gathering in Hyderabad, Ms. K. Sajaya, well-known freelance journalist and film maker called on domestic workers to begin a movement against the negative portrayal of domestic workers in the media, especially in main stream cinema. Speaking of the mushrooming placement agencies who recruit domestic workers from remote villages, Mr. Navdeep, a LGBT rights activist, said domestic workers themselves should put up a united fight against exploitation. Ms. Sandhya of the Progressive Organization of Women (POW) called on domestic workers to be united and strong so that their just demands can be secured.

Bro. Varghese Theckanath s.g., the founder Convenor of Domestic Workers Forum India who initiated unionization of domestic workers in 15 towns, spelt out the demands of domestic workers,

calling for the implementation of minimum wages and the constitution of Domestic Workers Welfare Board in every state. He regretted that India which has the largest number of domestic workers in the world has not still ratified the ILO Convention 189 to protect domestic workers. He called on the Government of India to ratify the Convention without any further delay.

At the end of June, domestic workers submitted a demand for comprehensive legislation for domestic workers to the government. jointly organised by the State Women's Commission and the National Platform for Comprehensive Legislation for Domestic Workers.

Zambia to develop a training guide for domestic workers

The domestic workers sector in Zambia has recently witnessed the merger of its two domestic workers unions in a bid to strengthen capacity for effective member representation. Erstwhile, it was revealed that among the main obstacles to effective organizing facing the unions was lack of adequate capac-

ity in leadership, organization, and recruitment. As part of efforts to ensure the new union transitions effectively, a training guide for domestic workers organizers and street stewards is being developed with support from the ILO. Preceding development of the training guide, a training needs assessment is being conducted to appraise the training needs of the domestic workers in relation to leadership, recruitment, and organizing, which findings will inform content for the training guide. The key objective of the training guide is to assist the domestic workers in employing a learning strategy as opposed to a training strategy which limits the members' ability to wholly own and implement the knowledge and skills acquired from such an exercise. This will in turn assist create sustainable impact for the domestic workers, which is the overarching goal.

ILO Convention 189

In the past months, Belgium, Chile, and the Dominican Republic have ratified ILO Convention 189.

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Kuwait: Focus group discussion with employers of domestic workers



Ireland: Au-pair and childcare

In Ireland, the Migrant Rights Centre Irlend (MRCI) launched a new paper 'Childcare in the Domestic Work Sector – Who's minding the Children?' new analysis of childcare in the hidden domestic work sector documenting new trends in exploitation of migrant women working in family homes. It notes the growing informality of the sector which in the absence of government policy has created an informal sector with made up of au pairs and undocumented worker – two vulnerable groups who experience barriers in accessing their rights. To inform au pairs of their rights under Irish law, MRCI produced a bookmark translated into Spanish and Portuguese. Since January we have had 35 new cases of au pair exploitation in MRCI. Childcare in the Domestic Work Sector – Who's minding the Children? <http://www.mrci.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Childcare-Paper-20152.pdf>

WIEGO: Celebrating International Domestic Workers' Day with Myrtle Witbooi

Myrtle Witbooi discusses in this video the importance of ILO Convention 189 in commemoration of the adoption of the Convention. <http://wiego.org/blog/celebrating-international-domestic-workers-day-myrtle-witbooi-pioneering-activist-movement>

3. RESEARCH **3.1 RESEARCH QUESTION**

Research on demand for child and elderly care and informalization by Marieke Koning

Marieke Koning is looking for information and exchange regarding the parallel between (increased) demand for child and elderly care provided by domestic workers and the informalisation or formalisation of care/ domestic work. Estimates of the EU state that due to ageing societies and women in

search for care/ domestic workers to access paid work – an increased demand for domestic workers is expected in the next decades. However, this can create tensions between care provided through quality public services (e.g. child/ aged care) and by domestic workers: for instance when governments cut budgets for professional care/ public services leading to a loss of jobs - which are relatively better paid and regulated - and an increased demand for domestic workers. Or in the case of employers in need of care but who are using loop holes in legislation leading to the hiring of (migrant) domestic workers as au pairs (and paying very poor wages, bypassing labour legislation, etc).

Please contact: Marieke Koning, marieke.koning@ituc-csi.org

3.2 RESEARCH NEWS

ILO: Latest changes in law and policy

On its website, the ILO provides an interactive map that shows the latest changes in law and policy concerning the protection of domestic workers across the world. http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/domestic-workers/WCMS_313678/lang--en/index.htm

Kuwait: Employers' Perspective towards Domestic Workers

In April 2015, Project 189, an organization working to promote the rights of domestic workers in the Middle East, together with the support of the ILO and the Kuwait Society for Human Rights organized a three-day focus group discussion (FGD) with employers of domestic workers in Kuwait, aiming at exploring general attitudes and perceptions of employers towards domestic workers, including a better understanding of actual working practices and the

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employment relationship between the employer and the domestic worker (see picture).

The research conducted through the FGDs revealed that the attitudes of employers towards domestic workers were often conflicting. For example, it was often expressed that domestic workers are “human too”, conversely, practices such as withholding their passport, working long hours, not giving a day off or preventing them to go out was the norm and even justified. Furthermore, the research indicated that a majority of these attitudes and practices are deep-rooted in the society, becoming unquestionable or overlooked. To improve the living and working conditions of domestic workers in Kuwait it will require efforts to include domestic workers into labour law, abolish and reform the kafala system, maintain strict

regulation of employment agencies, and awareness efforts to address societal practices that reinforce power and control over domestic workers.

Project 189, in order to change the attitudes and perceptions towards domestic workers in Kuwait will begin a new project this summer called “Camera Obscura: Changing perspectives through art,” aiming at changing perceptions, cultivate empathy and promote social inclusion whilst empowering domestic workers through art and space.

To continue working on the protection and promotion of the rights of domestic workers in the Middle East, Project 189 is looking for partners working in the same topic and based in the Philippines to begin projects in partnership. If there are any interests please contact us at the information below.

Website: www.project-189.org

E-mail: contactp189@gmail.com

Newspaper article on the FGDs: http://www.timeskuwait.com/Times_KSHR-hosts-ILO-in-3-Day-Focus-Group-Discussion

Newspaper article/interview on the FGDs:

<http://www.arabtimesonline.com/domestics-not-protected-under-labour-law/>

4. CONFERENCES

Conference Report: “Domestic Workers in the Countries of Central Eastern Europe and Former Soviet Union: Postsocialist Migrations and Inequalities,” St. Petersburg, April 2015

Several members of the RN-DWR took part in the international conference, “Domestic Workers in the Countries of Central Eastern Europe and Former

Research Network for Domestic Worker Rights [RN-DWR]



Invitation

Meeting of the Research Network for Domestic Worker Rights (RN-DWR)

Thursday, July 9th, 2015

5.30pm

Room X, R2, International Labour Office, Geneva

The **Research Network for Domestic Worker Rights**, an international and interdisciplinary network of researchers, trade unionists, and activists conducting research on paid domestic work, invites to a network meeting at the 4th Conference of the Regulating for Decent Work Network.

Interested non-members are welcome to join the meeting!

Topics on the agenda:

- Identifying key areas of concern and activities for activist researchers in the field
- Identifying common research interests amongst the participants
- Plans for the future of the network (immediate and mid-term)

For more information about the RN-DWR: https://www.sozialwissenschaften.uni-osnabrueck.de/fileadmin/Fachgebiete/Migration_Gesellschaft/Publikationen/RN-DWR_engl.pdf

International coordinators:

Helen Schwenken & Lisa-Marie Heimeshoff, IMIS, University of Osnabrück

Claire Hobden, ILO

Raffaella Maioni, Acli Colf, Italy

Contact: coordinator@domestic-work-research.org



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Soviet Union: Postsocialist Migrations and Inequalities," that took place at the end of April in St. Petersburg, and that was organized by the Centre for Independent Social Research (CISR) (see picture). Researchers from mostly postsocialist countries discussed the labor rights situation of domestic workers, the gender dimension of domestic work in postsocialist economies related to domestic work, as well as the ability of domestic workers to organize in the region. Among the topics being discussed were also the restructuring of the welfare state in the postsocialist economies and the rise in demand for domestic workers, especially in the field of childcare, and the role of migrants filling the increasing demand for domestic care.

5. PUBLICATIONS

Boris, Eileen & Klein, Jennifer (2015): *Caring for America: Home Health Workers in the Shadow of the Welfare State*. Oxford University Press (Paperback edition).

Boris, Eileen; Jokela, Merita; Undén, Megan (2015). *Enforcement Strategies for Empowerment: Models for the California Domestic Worker Bill of Rights*. <http://www.irlu.ucla.edu/publications/documents/EnforcementforEmpowermentReport.pdf>

Hoerder, Dirk; van Nederveen Meerkerk, Elsie, & Neunsinger, Silke (2015, eds.) *Towards a Global History of Domestic and Caregiving Workers*. Brill.

Humblet, Martine & Hult, Lisa (2015). *The right to rest for domestic workers – Setting a floor*. ILO. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/generic-document/wcms_364744.pdf

Medici, Gabriela Naemi (2015). *Migrantinnen als Pflegehilfen in Schweizer Privathaushalten Menschenrechtliche Vorgaben und staatliche Handlungspflichten*. Zürich: Schulthess Verlag (in German). <http://www.schulthess.com/verlag/detail/ISBN-9783725573264/Medici-Gabriela/Migrantinnen-als->

Pflegehilfen-in-Schweizer-Privathaushalten

This book looks at the questions how the state takes into account fundamental and human rights, when regulation care work in private households carried out by migrants and whether Switzerland follows its obligations in this respect. It outlines the current legal situation of migrant care workers and shows that the exclusion of private households from the labor law violates the non-discrimination rule in constitutional and international law.

Tolstokorova A. *Mary Poppins Comes Back: The Revival of Paid Domestic Work in the Informal Labour Market in Ukraine*. *Südosteuropa*, issue on "Informal Labour" / Guest Eds. Jürgen Jerger, Michael Knogler, vol. 62, No. 4, 2014, pp. 479-499.

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