



MIGRANT DOMESTIC WORKERS IN FOCUS

*An ILO Newsletter:
First Edition*

DOMESTIC WORK AT THE HEART OF THE HIGH LEVEL DIALOGUE ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

A STRONG CALL FOR RATIFICATION OF C189

ISSUE 1

Welcome to our Newsletter!

Welcome to the first edition of our newsletter, **Migrant Domestic Workers in Focus**. This newsletter will place a special focus on ILO's involvement in the issue of migrant domestic work and inform you of upcoming and ongoing events, initiatives, and projects pertaining to this issue. The Labour Migration Branch of the ILO (MIGRANT) has been actively involved and will continue to work with governments, civil society, workers' and employers' organizations, and other national and global partners to promote decent work for migrant domestic workers worldwide. This newsletter will additionally serve as a communication tool for the recently launched Global Action Programme on Migrant Domestic Workers and provide further information and progress on this project.

This newsletter will be released periodically and distributed electronically through a mailing list. It will also be posted on the main ILO website. Interested readers may subscribe to the distribution list by using the following email: migrant@ilo.org

We hope you enjoy our first edition.

ILO Labour Migration Branch

At this year's High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development (HLD), there was an overall consensus on the need to address the increasing but often undervalued sector of domestic work. The HLD gathered more than 100 ministers, representatives of Member States, and civil societies who convened for the second time in history since 2006 to discuss matters on international migration and development.

Reference to the challenges faced by migrant domestic workers across the globe and their exposure to exploitation and abuse has been recurrent. Strong calls for immediate ratification of the ILO's Convention No. 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers came from some of the speakers at the two-day high level discussion.

Among them, the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called on all countries in his opening address "to ratify and effectively implement the relevant international legal instruments, including the ILO Convention on Domestic Workers." He additionally emphasized the need to improve public perceptions and dispel dangerous myths of migrants, including domestic workers, who have continued to contribute greatly to host societies.

Peter Sutherland, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for International Migration and Development, further noted that protections guaranteed by Convention

No. 189 are “so palpably and obviously correct” that “no developing or developed country could reject it.”

During her keynote speech, Cecilia Malmström, the European Commissioner for Home Affairs, called for the ratification of Convention No. 189 on Domestic Workers with great urgency. “The European Commission attaches great importance on the Domestic Workers Convention. Improving the working conditions in personal services is a key objective. Therefore, the Commission is urging EU Member States to ratify this instrument as soon as possible. Some EU Member States have already done so, but let me use this occasion to repeat our call and express my hope that all Member States will have ratified this Convention by 2015,” she stated.

As the ILO Governing Body was about to discuss the progresses in the implementation of the ILO strategy on domestic work - with migration as a specific area of focus where ILO can provide technical assistance - the High Level Dialogue highlighted the need for the ILO to continue playing a leading role in this area, particularly in collaboration with social partners and other relevant international and national actors.

ENSURING HUMAN RIGHTS AND MAKING DECENT WORK A REALITY: A SIDE EVENT TO THE HLD

The links among domestic work, the global mobility of workers, and female international labour migration are well-established. A growing demand for domestic services is one of the main triggers of the feminization of labour migration in the past two decades. Today, there are over 53 million domestic workers employed around the world with women accounting for 83 per cent of all domestic workers. Women also represent around half of the total number of migrants worldwide.

These trends are not expected to change with growing needs in the area of care. To raise awareness on the need to promote human and labour rights and decent work for migrant domestic workers, the ILO, in partnership with the Governments of Italy and the Philippines and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), organized a high level panel discussion on “Migrant Domestic Workers: Ensuring Human Rights and Making Decent Work a Reality” on the occasion of the 2nd High-level Dialogue on Migration and Development in New York on Thursday, 3 October 2013.

More than 100 participants attended the event to discuss the practical steps that countries can take - and are currently taking - towards better recognition of the value of domestic work, enhanced protection of migrant domestic workers, and priorities for future action.

The sphere of domestic work, is “synonymous with vulnerability because it is hidden from the public eye,” said



Guy Ryder, Director-General of the ILO

ILO Director-General Guy Ryder at the side event. Mr. Ryder also said, “Domestic workers are neither servants nor members of the family.” For these reasons, Mr. Ryder mentioned that the ILO’s ground-breaking Domestic Workers Convention provides a critical platform to discuss why better protection is needed, particularly for female workers in both destination and countries of origin. While abuse is an undeniable reality for many domestic workers around the world, Mr. Ryder added that “there is nothing inevitable about abuse.”

Manuela Tomei, Director of the Conditions of Work and Equality Department of the ILO, moderated the discussion and referred in her remarks to the adoption of Convention No. 189 and its Recommendation, noting that ten countries to date have ratified the convention. Ms. Tomei also added that domestic work remains largely part of the informal economy and therefore vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

The Secretary of Labor for the Philippines, Rosalina Baldoz, provided a sending-country perspective, where women are working in different parts of the world, particularly in the Middle East. She said that the Philippines, the second country to ratify Convention No. 189 in August 2012, has brought together representatives from the government, employers, and civil society groups to ensure the effective implementation of the convention’s provisions.

The Central Director from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Luca Maestriperi, highlighted that migrants make a valuable contribution to societies around the world. Mr. Maestriperi drew attention to the gendered nature of domestic work, noting that 88 per cent of domestic migrant workers in his country are women. He emphasized the

important contribution of the female migrant workforce, especially in providing care services for a rapidly aging population in Italy.

Ivan Simonovic, OHCHR's Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, noted that migrant domestic workers were particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation by their employers since they lack access to rights and protections enjoyed by other categories of workers. "Migrants are not the instrument of development for others," stressed Mr. Simonovic. He called for a push in increased ratification of the Domestic Workers Convention, along with supportive national legislation and standardized contracts for employers and recruitment agencies.

Peter Sutherland, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for International Migration and Development, went on to explain that countries with strong labour laws are the ones which have made the greatest economic progresses. Mr. Sutherland noted that protections guaranteed by Convention No. 189 were "palpably and obviously correct", and praised the Philippines for their example in implementing the standards through legislative efforts.

Speaking on behalf of the U.S. Council for International Business (USCIB), Ronnie Goldberg, quoted that the business community is "searching for clear and consistent migration policies." Ms. Goldberg added that migration was a "positive phenomenon" which is "essential for development and growth." She highlighted the need to monitor recruiting agencies for domestic work, suggesting that ILO can play an important role in assisting governments to monitor international recruiters. A higher transparency of the international labour recruitment agencies would lead to higher financial gains for both migrants and their employers.

Marissa Begonia, Coordinator of Justice for Domestic Workers (Unite UK), and a domestic worker herself, gave a compelling personal account of the hardships, privation, and difficulties that migrants face and the importance of raising awareness and increasing protection for domestic workers through organizing.

Bandana Pattanaik, International Coordinator of the Global Alliance against Traffic in Women (GAATW), highlighted the undervaluation of domestic work as well as drew attention to issues of race, class, and gender which underpin the second class treatment of migrant domestic workers.

The timely discussion at the High Level Dialogue addressed a manifold of challenges pervasive in context of domestic work and highlighted the eminent role of Convention No. 189 in ending exploitation and placing migrant rights at the center of the development agenda.

LAUNCH OF THE GLOBAL ACTION PROGRAMME ON MIGRANT DOMESTIC WORKERS



**MIGRANT DOMESTIC
WORKERS IN ACTION**

The side event marked the launch of the Global Action Programme on Migrant Domestic Workers. This programme is supported by the EU and will be in partnership with OHCHR and UN Women, with ITUC and IDWN as associates.

This programme aims at promoting decent work for migrant domestic workers worldwide by conducting quantitative and qualitative research, raising awareness, and implementing capacity-building activities. It will focus on five main "migration corridors": Paraguay- Argentina, Indonesia-Malaysia, Nepal-United Arab Emirates, Zimbabwe-South Africa, and Ukraine-Poland.

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