



Decent work, decent life
for domestic workers



Domestic workers are mainly women, children, migrants, or indigenous people.

Their work is undervalued, underpaid, invisible, not recognised, and not respected. These are the main reasons why in many countries domestic workers are excluded from labour legislation and social protection schemes. Many are denied the right, either in law or in practice, to form or join a trade union. As a result, mistreatment, violence, and physical and sexual abuse often go unpunished.

Domestic workers are among the most exploited categories of workers who :

- work excessive hours for wages below standard ;
- often live under the same roof as their boss in unhealthy conditions ;
- are exposed to all kinds of abuse ;
- have very limited or no option to take a day off ;
- encounter difficulties to contact the outside world, family and friends.

Trade unions must break the silence.

Through their actions, locally and globally, as well as at the EU level, trade unions can help secure decent work for domestic workers. By joining a union, domestic workers can get out of the shadow, stand up and unite to demand decent living and working conditions.

An international Convention to protect the rights of domestic workers is urgently needed.

The International Labour Conference of June 2011 will be crucial to ensure that the rights of domestic workers are internationally protected. The tripartite negotiations must deliver strong ILO instruments that will make a real difference to the living and working conditions of all domestic workers around the world.

➤ Make sure your government votes in favour of a Convention supplemented by a Recommendation at the next International Labour Conference of June 2011!!



What do we want?



National legislations that recognise labour rights for domestic workers :

Labour laws excluding domestic workers from their scope must be amended. Existing legislation related to domestic work needs to be properly enforced. Everywhere in the world, domestic workers must enjoy their fundamental right to form and join a trade union. They must have access to labour courts and effective remedies when their rights are violated. Some countries like South Africa, Costa Rica and Uruguay have taken significant steps to extend labour laws and regulations to domestic workers paving the way for the formalisation of their work situation.



A European framework protecting domestic workers' rights should be established :

Domestic workers are often excluded from health and safety EU Directives as well as from the scope of the Maternity Protection Directive 92/85. This must change.



A fair remuneration for domestic work :

As it is seen as unqualified work that “any woman can do”, domestic work is undervalued and underpaid. Domestic workers, like any other wage earner, have the right to a minimum wage and to a fair bargaining process through which they can claim a decent living wage.



Entitlement to social protection including maternity protection for domestic workers :

Domestic workers must have access to national social protection schemes. As the great majority of them are young women, maternity protection is a must. ILO Convention 183 must be ratified and implemented to provide adequate protection.



Decent working and living conditions for domestic workers :

Working hours need to be regulated and laws and regulation need to be enforced. Domestic workers, like any other worker, should have the right to paid annual leave, weekly days off and compensation for overtime.



Children must go to school :

Programmes and policies are needed to stop child domestic work and ensure that children can go to school. As a bottom line, ILO Conventions on child labour (No 138 and No 182) need to be fully respected.



More domestic workers members of our organisations :

Domestic workers need trade unions and trade unions need them. Domestic workers can benefit from trade unions' influence, support and experience, and trade unions will be stronger when more and more domestic workers join their ranks.



Trade unions and organisations of domestic workers working closely together :

The struggle of domestic workers is our struggle. Fighting together makes us stronger to achieve our common goal : a world with social justice and decent work for all.



ITUC International Trade Union Confederation
 5 Bld Roi Albert II, bte 1, 1210 Brussels, Belgium
 Tel. + 32 2 224 02 11, Fax +32 2 201 58 15
 e-mail: info@ituc-csi.org, www.ituc-csi.org