



# PLATFORM OF DEMANDS

Violence and harassment against women and men in the world of work

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## We deserve more protection

“All human beings, irrespective of race, creed or sex, have the right to pursue both their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity”.

### **ILO Declaration of Philadelphia (1944), II a**

Domestic workers around the world deeply welcome the proposals for an ILO Standard against violence and harassment in the world of work. We welcome it not just for ourselves but for all workers, most especially those who are marginalised and therefore most at risk of abuse, intimidation and exploitation.

In 2011, the ILO passed a most significant milestone when it adopted Convention 189 and Recommendation 201 to promote decent work for domestic workers. This includes measures “to ensure that domestic workers enjoy effective protection against all forms of abuse, harassment and violence” (Article 5).

However C189, even alongside the myriad of other international Standards that exist, is not enough. Sadly, still today as throughout history, domestic workers are among the most vulnerable of all workers to violence and harassment.

Those of us who live isolated in the private households where we work often suffer gender-based violence including rape. Abuse, or just the threat of it, makes us work excessive hours, accept very low wages, and carry out dangerous tasks. Domestic work is one of the main areas of slavery in today’s world. Some are incarcerated, not allowed ever to leave the homes where they are employed. There are even still cases – recently in the Gulf States, Peru, South Africa, Malaysia and Hong Kong, for example – of domestic workers being the victims of torture and murder. So this issue is something that we feel very strongly about.

We are especially happy that many governments already agree that the new ILO Standard should be a Convention supported by a Recommendation. A Convention is needed to send a strong message to the world that such abuse must end.

However, to help protect domestic workers, the proposed Standard must contain certain provisions which might otherwise be overlooked or kept weak. This includes private households as a workplace, and private employment agencies as an employer. We are very pleased to see that the ILO Report V (2) ‘Ending Violence and Harassment in the World of Work’, 7 March 2018, agrees to both of these.

In this document we set out why domestic workers, our workplace, and clear definitions of who we need protecting from are among the issues that must be specifically included for this new Standard to be effective and bring about significant and lasting change for the better. Only then might domestic workers and indeed other marginalised workers be optimistic that we can provide our highly valuable services in the safe and secure conditions that we deserve and are entitled to.



*“Gender-based violence has been a silent killer of many domestic workers around the world, as we are scared to speak out, afraid of losing our jobs. We welcome this opportunity once again to lift our voices to stop this abuse.”*

**Myrtle Witbooi, President, IDWF**



## Why we need a Convention, not just a Recommendation

Violence and harassment in the workplace have gone on for far too long. They are of course damaging to the victims, whether physically or psychologically, but they have wider social impact too, on families and communities. They are also counterproductive to the economic contribution that workers make, whether we work in factories, farms, offices or family homes. And yet abuse, in many forms, continues to be widespread. The perpetrators are often not brought to justice.

There needs to be a clear signal to all - governments, employers and fellow workers - that abuse of whatever kind is destructive and unacceptable. A Recommendation alone will not send a strong enough message. It must be a Convention, supported by a Recommendation.

We are very pleased to learn from the ILO Report V (2) that at least 48 governments, from all continents, support the adoption of a Convention supported by a Recommendation, with a further 2 saying it should be just a Convention. We urge all other governments to agree to a Convention, supported by a Recommendation as necessary, in order to give this matter the urgent attention it requires.

Meanwhile according to the same report, there are still some employers who think that only a Recommendation is sufficient. This in our view ignores the damage that is done to their own interests when violence or harassment occurs in their workplaces, let alone fails to recognise the wider social, political and economic impacts of a violent, abusive environment.



*"... the failure of any nation to adopt humane conditions of labour is an obstacle in the way of other nations which desire to improve the conditions in their own countries."*

**Preamble to the ILO Constitution**

*"Preventing violence and harassment in the world of work is inextricably linked to ending discrimination, promoting equality and extending economic security."*

**Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), India**

*"... workplace violence affected workers' self-esteem and led to absenteeism, psychological trauma and depression for workers and their families."*

**Observer Expert for the Government of Nepal at the ILO Meeting of Experts, October 2016**

*"A Convention is justified given the power imbalance between employers and employees."*

**Zimbabwe Domestic and Allied Workers Union (ZDAWU)**



## What the new ILO Standard against violence and harassment in the workplace should include

There are a number of existing United Nations and ILO Declarations and Conventions which in some way confirm our right to be free from violence and harassment, whether as workers, migrants, children, women, and so on.

However, as the tripartite Meeting of Experts concluded:

*"... these instruments do not define violence and harassment, do not provide guidance on how to address its various manifestations and do not cover all workers. They also lack an integrated approach that is essential to addressing violence and harassment in the world of work effectively."*

**ILO Meeting of Experts on Violence against Women and Men in the World of Work, October 2016, Appendix, point 33**

Here below, we set out what we believe the new ILO Statute should contain in order to develop that integrated approach and help protect the workers who are most vulnerable - including the 67 million across the world who are domestic workers, according to latest ILO figures.

### 3.1 Fundamental principles and rights at work

*"Violence and harassment in the world of work is a human rights violation and a threat to the dignity, health and security of individuals. It strikes at the heart of the efforts of the ILO to promote the right of all human beings to pursue both their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity. It is unacceptable and incompatible with decent work."*

**ILO Report V (2) on 'Ending Violence and Harassment in the World of Work' (2018)**



The proposed Standard should reiterate that violence and harassment in the workplace is a violation of our fundamental human rights, as set out in many ILO Conventions and United Nations Declarations. This should be set out clearly in a Convention, rather than just a Recommendation.



*"We are being forced to work more and harder every day, both mentally and physically."*  
**Domestic worker, member of the National Domestic Women Workers Union (NDWWU), Bangladesh**



## 3.2 A comprehensive definition of “worker”

A comprehensive definition is needed so as to protect as wide a range of workers as possible. Those who are marginalised are most vulnerable to violence and harassment, and so should be specifically mentioned including, for example, refugees and asylum-seekers.

Domestic workers are particularly vulnerable to harassment and violence in the workplace because:

- Working in individual households, we are usually isolated.
- Many of us are migrants from rural areas within our own countries, or across borders, living and working in distant countries, making us far from our own families and communities.
- Restrictive and discriminatory immigration rules often limit migrant domestic workers' rights and freedom of movement. If we flee abuse, we can often become 'undocumented', making us extremely vulnerable. Domestic workers employed by diplomats face a particularly high risk of abuse as those employers enjoy immunity.
- We are mostly women and so subject to all-too-common gender-based violence.
- We are often from communities that are the subject of on-going racial/ethnic, class, caste and/or religious discrimination.
- Historically we have been seen as mere 'helpers': our contribution to economic and social life under-valued or even utterly ignored; this means that, in many countries, the private home is not yet accepted as a 'workplace', we are still not covered by labour laws, occupational health and safety regulations, etc., and private households are not inspected, allowing abusive employers to go unpunished; nor do we have access to reporting/complaint mechanisms.

Often, these forms of discrimination intersect, and domestic workers become all-too-easy targets for employers to abuse, and get away with it.

Our vulnerability to violence, abuse and harassment was highlighted during the discussions leading up to the adoption of the Domestic Workers Convention C189 (2011). As a result, special clauses were included:

**“Each Member shall take measures to ensure that domestic workers enjoy effective protection against all forms of abuse, harassment and violence.”**

**C189, Article 5**

**“Every domestic worker has the right to a safe and healthy working environment.”**

**C189, Article 13**

These are followed up in the Domestic Workers Recommendation, 2011 (No. 201). Paragraph 7 recommends mechanisms to protect domestic workers from abuse, harassment and violence, such as creating accessible complaint mechanisms, ensuring that all complaints are appropriately investigated and prosecuted, and establishing programmes for the relocation and rehabilitation of domestic workers subjected to abuse, harassment and violence.

C189 And R201 have led to more awareness, and more governments are taking action. However, ongoing abuse and violence against domestic workers means that C189 and R201 are not sufficient, not even when all the other international Conventions and Declarations are also taken into account. We, like other workers, need a Standard which pushes more governments, employers, and trade unions to be more proactive in combating violence and harassment.



Domestic workers need to be specifically mentioned and included in the definition of 'workers' in the proposed Standard.

With the adoption of the C189, domestic workers finally became recognised as workers, with the basic rights of all other workers. Therefore we will implicitly be included in the proposed Standard. However, because of our on-going marginalisation in many countries and therefore extreme vulnerability, we believe domestic workers should be specifically mentioned in the proposed Standard.



Other marginalised and highly vulnerable groups such as informal workers generally, refugees and asylum-seekers also need special attention in the proposed Standard.



*"Preventing violence and harassment in the world of work is inextricably linked to ending discrimination, promoting equality and extending economic security. Where grounds of discrimination intersect, such as gender and race or disability, the risk of violence and harassment is exacerbated."*

**National Domestic Women Workers Union (NDWWU), Bangladesh**

*"When my employer got a new boyfriend, he called me degrading names such as 'Black Bitch', 'Kaffir' and 'Thief', and he spat in my face. In 2008, he insulted me but just had to pay a fine of 500 Rands and say 'sorry'. In 2013, I took it further as he was also insulting our President Mandela and saying we are stupid and we stole the land of the white people. When I made the case against him, they asked me, 'Why now?' I said, 'I would like justice to prevail. I want other domestic workers to speak out, not to suffer in silence. In 1994 we gained our freedom: we are free and should be respected'.*

*It took two years to get justice but, with the help of my union SADSAWU and a very committed lawyer, I won my case. My employer's boyfriend went to jail for two years and I won an award of 50,000 Rands at the Equality Court. Although I have not yet received this money, I am satisfied that I have shown how strong we are as domestic workers. Today I am working in the union and each day I teach and educate domestic workers on their rights as workers. We also focus on using drama to educate on abuse."*

**Gloria Kente, South African Domestic and Allied Workers Union (SADSAWU)**



### 3.3 Clear definitions of “violence and harassment” in the world of work

Violence and harassment in the workplace take many forms, and are not yet clearly defined in ILO Standards. The ILO Meeting of Experts in October 2016 concluded that there is a need to provide a common understanding of what violence and harassment encompasses, as well as what is needed to address it.

#### Gender-based violence

We know that gender-based violence and harassment is rife around the world, including in the workplace. With the vast majority of domestic workers being women, this is a frequent issue which our organisations have to deal with: providing support and sanctuary for individual workers, asking for police/legal intervention, lobbying policy-makers, and so on. However, all too often the issue is ignored by governments, employers and even some trade unionists where gender discrimination is seen as ‘normal’ or ‘part of our culture’.



There must be specific and strong reference in the Convention against gender-based harassment and violence.



*“... whether gender-based violence takes place within, or outside, the workplace, it is a world of work issue”.*

**ILO Report V (1), ‘Ending Violence and Harassment in the World of Work’, 2017, (page 45)**

## The many forms of violence and harassment in the world of work, whether against women or men workers:

- **Physical:** This can range from slaps, punches and beating, to burning, scarring, and even attempted and actual murder. It can include sexual violence such as groping and rape. Working in isolation in the private homes of others, domestic workers are particularly vulnerable to such extreme forms of violence.
- **Psychological:** Intimidation, bullying, stalking, threats of violence and other verbal abuse, even as far as death threats, are all forms of psychological violence. So too are threats of instant dismissal: domestic workers are often told they are 'easy to replace'. Some live-in domestic workers have to endure a lack of privacy, for example not even being allowed to close the door of their room, another form of severe intimidation. Others are not allowed to use their phones, or leave the house unless accompanied.

It is very common that migrant domestic workers have their passports and work permits withheld by their employers. This means that, if they leave a household where they are being abused, they automatically become undocumented and therefore highly vulnerable on the streets. In many countries, domestic workers and supporters have had to set up special rescue operations, including safe houses for migrant domestic workers who have fled abuse but have nowhere else to go.

*The Overseas Domestic Worker Visa system in the UK ties the domestic worker to one specific employer. This means that a migrant domestic worker who flees violence or abuse has no right to work elsewhere and risks immediate deportation. This is similar to the 'kafala' (sponsorship) system for all migrant workers in the Arab States.*

*Domestic workers employed by diplomatic households in third countries are also in a situation of high risk. Diplomats tend to enjoy legal immunity in the country to which they are posted, meaning that their domestic workers have no resort to legal action against an abusive employer. There are many cases of diplomatic households withholding the passport/visa of their domestic worker.*

Such situations are strong contributors to modern-day slavery.

- **Economic/financial:** In a survey of our affiliates in the Asia-Pacific Region, the IDWF found that economic and financial harassment ranked very high among the list of abuses that domestic workers face. Some employers withhold wages so as to keep the domestic worker under their control. Labour agents charging excessive fees for finding a job can put workers into such debt that they are in bonded labour until they can pay the debt off.
- **Cultural:** Domestic workers report that some employers do not allow them to eat food according to their culture, forcing them to choose: eat food which is inappropriate, or go hungry.



The proposed Standard must include legal prohibition of all forms of violence and harassment, and have a very broad, encompassing definition of what is meant by 'violence and harassment'.



While broadly setting out the types of violence and harassment that exist and must be legally addressed, the proposed Standard should have flexible enough wording to include new forms of abuse that might occur, for example through developments in social media.



## Domestic violence

*“Domestic violence and other forms of violence and harassment are relevant to the world of work when they impact the workplace.”*

**ILO Final Report: Meeting of Experts on Violence against Women and Men in the World of Work, October 2016, Appendix 1, paragraph 6**

*A study in Canada of over 8,400 workers showed that one in three had experienced domestic violence, and over 80% of those affected had said it impacted on their work.*

**Ibid, (page 16)**

Domestic violence is sadly rampant worldwide, and has far wider impacts than just the home where it takes place. Domestic workers are particularly aware of this - because domestic work is very often what victims of domestic violence turn to for a means of livelihood.

Employers are not responsible for domestic violence that takes place in the homes of their workers. However, as an Expert from the Government of South Africa said at the ILO Meeting of Experts in October 2016, employers do need to recognise the detrimental effect and cost implications of it to their own operations.

For many workers who have suffered domestic abuse at home, our workplace can be the only safe space for us, somewhere where we might receive psychological, social and/or legal support, or be granted sick leave, for example. A growing number of governments are now requiring employers to protect employee victims, and/or supporting employers to do so. These are all reasons why domestic violence should be included in discussions about the impact of violence on the workplace, and why all social partners should play a part in combating it.

Meanwhile, however, some workers suffer abuse both in our own homes and also in our workplace. Domestic workers in particular know this to be the case. Or, even where our employer is not abusive, the worker’s highly ‘subordinate’ position can make it very difficult/impossible for us to raise the issue and seek support.

These are all reasons why the impact of domestic violence on the workplace should be included in discussions on the proposed Standard, and why all social partners should be active in combating it.

Public awareness-raising programmes and proactive measures by governments, employers and trade unions are extremely important to build a society which is free from domestic violence. In Section 3.6, we set out the steps which can be taken.



*“We have many domestic workers telling us that they suffer abuse in their own homes, as well as at their employer’s. This affects their work, and we need the new Convention to address this too.”*

**Myrtle Witbooi, General Secretary, South African Domestic Service and Allied Workers Union (SADSAWU) and President of the IDWF**



The impact of domestic violence on the workplace should be included in the proposed Standard because of its negative impact on the world of work.

### 3.4 The “world of work”: what is included in “the workplace”?

*“The world of work is considered to cover not only the traditional physical workplace, but also commuting to and from work, work-related social events, public spaces including for informal workers such as street vendors, and the home, in particular for homeworkers, domestic workers and teleworkers.”*

#### **Conclusions of the ILO Meeting of Experts on Violence against Women and Men in the World of Work, October 2016**

It is now widely recognised that work takes place not only in what have been thought of as ‘typical’ workplaces such as factories, offices, farms, and so on, but also in ‘atypical’ ones.

For domestic workers, our workplace – where many of us suffer violence and harassment – is the private household, as is recognised by the ILO Experts above, as well as in C189. We are pleased to see that inclusion of the private home as a workplace is recommended in the ILO Report V (2) (page 47).



The private home must specifically be included as a ‘workplace’ in the proposed Standard.

Many domestic workers do not only work in our employer’s homes but also live there. All workers should be free from abuse not only when actually working but also when resting.



The proposed Standard should include workers’ right to be free from violence and harassment not only when working but also when resting while at the workplace.

IDWF members would also like to see public spaces included, as domestic workers can be and are abused while working in areas other than inside our employer’s home. It can, for example, be while accompanying the family on a trip somewhere, or while travelling under the control of an employment agency. Other workers can suffer abuse when commuting.



The proposed Standard should also recognise public spaces within the definition of the ‘workplace’.

Migrant workers are often temporarily housed by employment agencies, and violence and abuse is often used in such spaces as a means of control or punishment, for example if an abused domestic worker leaves a household where she was placed. Therefore, boarding houses and apartments run by employment agencies must be included in the definition of ‘workplace’.



The proposed Standard should include temporary accommodation run by employment agencies for migrant workers within the definition of the ‘workplace’.



### 3.5 Who are the “employers” responsible for violence?

In domestic work, the perpetrators of violence harassment and intimidation are often the direct employers: the head of the household where we work, whether male or female.



The proposed Standard needs specifically to include household heads in the definition of ‘employers’.

However, it is not only they who abuse domestic workers. It can, for example, also be a relative of the employer – a husband or wife, or another family member – or a friend, or even another domestic worker in the household.



The proposed Standard must ensure that domestic workers are protected from violence and harassment no matter who the perpetrator is, including family members and friends of the employer, or other domestic workers in the household. The employer should be made responsible for ensuring the security and safety of the worker.

Meanwhile, many domestic workers are employed via intermediaries. Some are private employment agencies which, while officially legitimate, can harass the domestic workers they place, for example through the fees they charge, paying below minimum wages, or threats of not finding a placement. There are also rogue labour agents/brokers whose excessive fees to provide a job can, for example, subject the worker to bonded labour. Migrant workers, including of course the millions of migrant women domestic workers in today’s world, are particularly at risk of violence and harassment. Domestic workers are among those most subjected to trafficking and smuggling across borders by criminal gangs posing as labour agents.

Such abuse is recognised by and included in C189, for example requiring governments to:

- “(b) *ensure that adequate machinery and procedures exist for the investigation of complaints, alleged abuses and fraudulent practices concerning the activities of private employment agencies in relation to domestic workers;*
- (c) *adopt all necessary and appropriate measures... to provide adequate protection for and prevent abuses of domestic workers recruited or placed in its territory by private employment agencies. These shall include laws or regulations that specify the respective obligations of the private employment agency and the household towards the domestic worker and provide for penalties, including prohibition of those private employment agencies that engage in fraudulent practices and abuses...*”

**C189, Article 15**

Also, ILO Convention Private Employment Agencies C181 (1997) applies to all private employment agencies and “all workers”, and specifically places duties on each government to prevent the abuse of migrant workers recruited or placed in its territory, with laws and penalties against abusive agencies (Article 8). More recently, this has been followed up by, for example, the General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment adopted by the ILO Meeting of Experts on Fair Recruitment, September 2016.

Therefore, it is consistent as well as imperative to include private employment agencies in the proposed ILO Standard.

We are very pleased that the ILO Report V (2) (page 29) proposes that the definition of ‘employer’ should be “*any person or entity that engages workers either directly or indirectly*”.



The proposed Standard should clearly include third parties and intermediaries such as private employment agencies and labour brokers as potential perpetrators of violence and harassment.



*“My employers in Tripoli didn’t follow the contract, and so I told them that I wanted to quit. They took me to an agency in Zarif. At the agency they asked me ‘Why are you here?’, and started hitting me... I stayed at the agency for 3 weeks... They didn’t give me food, just one ‘manousheh’ (bread). It was like a prison. I didn’t even know what time it was... They hit me again and again, and told me that I will go back to my employer and do whatever they tell me to do.”*

**Domestic worker from Madagascar, working in Lebanon**



*“Our research clearly demonstrates that significant numbers of agencies are systematically charging Filipino migrant domestic workers fees well in excess of the legal maximum. Yet despite this, very few are ever charged and prosecuted in the Philippines or Hong Kong.”*

**Shiella Estrada, Chair, Progressive Labour Union of Domestic Workers - Hong Kong (PLUDW-HK)**

**Report and film ‘Between a Rock and a Hard Place’, 2016**

<http://idwfed.org/en/resources/between-a-rock-and-a-hard-place>



## 3.6 A comprehensive prevention strategy

### ● Revision of national policies and laws to implement the proposed Standard

Since the adoption of C189, we have seen great progress in respect for the rights and protection of domestic workers, with 25 ratifications of the Convention plus labour law reforms in an ever increasing number of countries. More of us have joined trade unions and are benefiting from Collective Bargaining Agreements.

Among the countries which now address violence against domestic workers in their laws are:

- **Brazil:** Domestic workers can terminate their contract if the employer physically abuses them or commits any form of domestic violence against any other person in the household under Brazilian Complementary Law No. 150 of 2015 on domestic workers. Brazil also has guidance on violence and harassment specifically towards domestic workers.
- **Indonesia:** Live-in domestic workers are considered as members of the household for which they work and are, as such, protected against physical, psychological, sexual and economic domestic violence under the Act of the Republic of Indonesia No. 23 of 2004 regarding the Elimination of Violence in the Household.
- **Netherlands:** Regulation on Domestic Workers of 2007.
- **Peru:** Supreme Decree No. 010-2003-MIMDES of 2003 concerning the Regulation of the Prevention and Punishment of Sexual Harassment Act No. 27942.
- **Philippines:** Domestic Workers Act No. 10361 of 2012.

#### **ILO Report V (1), Paragraphs 270 and 271**

However, there are still governments which are resisting ratifying C189, and excluding us from the legal coverage of labour law regimes. This was found to be the case in no fewer than 20 of the 80 countries studied for the ILO Report V (1). Or elsewhere our rights are less than other workers.

So, for domestic workers, an essential part of the strategy to combat violence and harassment in the workplace is for every country to ratify and implement C189, ensuring that we are included in the definition of 'worker' in labour laws and regulations. Added to this, implementation of a strong Convention and Recommendation on violence and harassment in the world of work will give us far more protection.

We, as well as other vulnerable workers, must be specifically included in laws and policies on migration, gender equality, and occupational health and safety. These laws and policies must also be upgraded to ensure they combat violence and harassment in the workplace.

In the process of revising policies and laws, governments and trade unions should consult with domestic workers' organisations, as well as the organisations of other marginalised workers who are at most risk.



*"The employer (of a domestic worker) has a responsibility to anticipate accidents before they happen and, if they do happen, to repair the situation and indemnify the worker. This is established under Uruguayan law and also C121 (ILO Convention on Employment Injury Benefits)."*

**Walter Migliónico, Health and Safety Officer of the PIT-CNT union federation, Uruguay**

## ● Enforcement and monitoring mechanisms

Even where domestic workers do have protection under law, this is often not backed up by sufficient measures to implement it. For example, the lack of access by labour inspectors to the private home as a workplace is one of the main contributing factors to violence and abuse against us. This is recognised in C189 (Article 17).

There are countries where enforcement and monitoring mechanisms do exist which help to provide protection, for example:

- **Italy** has established preventative measures and does ensure that workers have protection from violence, according to the ILO Meeting of Experts Report, October 2016.
- **Uruguay** has rights to inspection of private homes where health and safety problems are reported.

Domestic workers' organisations and other trade union bodies should be consulted in developing these mechanisms, particularly labour inspection of the private home, drawing on existing good practice.

## ● Complaint and reporting mechanisms

Such systems, which should include access to legal assistance, are very much needed and should be widely advertised, such as via social media. They must adequately protect victims, witnesses, and 'whistleblowers' who make complaints/reports, and they must be accessible and affordable. 24-hour hot-lines are particularly important for live-in domestic workers to report cases of abuse.

## ● Access to legal recourse

In countries where domestic workers are still not recognised under law as 'workers', or in situations where a migrant domestic worker becomes 'undocumented', an abused worker may well have no right to take a case to court. This is a significant gap which must be filled in the Convention.

## ● Sanctions and penalties for perpetrators

As is included in C189 Article 17, perpetrators should receive appropriate and effective sanctions and penalties - disciplinary or criminal - proportional to the level of violence or harassment they have committed.

## ● Dispute resolution mechanisms

There are positive mediation practices where, for example, a household employer and their worker can be brought together in a safe location and assisted to discuss and find solutions to a situation of abuse. Practices which are based on a restorative process are more likely to reduce the likelihood of ongoing or future violence or harassment. Such mechanisms should be developed with the involvement of independent and representative trade unions, including domestic workers' organisations, and/or their support organisations.



## ● Remedies and support for victims

Recognising the physical and mental health consequences of violence and harassment at work, all workers - including undocumented migrant workers - should have access to both healthcare and also counseling. For live-in domestic workers fleeing abuse, there should be access to shelters/safe houses. Organisations already providing such support also themselves need more official recognition and support. Domestic workers should also be included in workers' compensation insurance schemes.

## ● Special training of public and private officials/staff

Labour/occupational health and safety (OHS) inspectors, police officers, judges and other court professionals, as well as human resources personnel, managers and supervisors in private enterprises, must receive training in how to recognise and deal effectively with violence and harassment, particularly that which is gender-based, and including in private households.

## ● Internal policies and procedures

All actors - governments, employers and trade unions - need to be proactive in finding ways to improve their policies and implementation, so that their commitment to combat violence and harassment in the workplace is on-going, not just one-off or occasional activities.

This means ensuring that actions against violence and harassment are included not only in their work on laws, policies, Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs), and so on, but also in their internal policies - and then ensuring that these policies are upheld.

For domestic workers, this also means including us in union activities such as education and OHS Committees.

## ● Awareness-raising campaigns among the general public

There is a great need for widespread public campaigning everywhere against violence and harassment, whether in the workplace or the home, and particularly against gender-based violence. For domestic workers, this is particularly important because our employers are the general public.

## ● Education programmes among workers

Many trade unions around the world are already active in educating their members on questions of violence and harassment in the workplace. However, more needs to be done, and especially to focus on gender-based violence, and to include marginalised workers who are at most risk such as domestic workers. Radio and social media have, for example, proved very useful techniques for reaching live-in domestic workers who are otherwise isolated.

## ● Engagement with ethical employers

There is an increasing number of initiatives around the world to encourage ethical recruitment and fair employment, particularly so as to combat modern slavery, including of domestic workers.

For example, since 2014, the ILO has been running a Fair Recruitment Initiative in collaboration with many partners such as the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), and the International Employers' Organisation (IEO) to encourage fair recruitment practices globally. In December 2016 it published 'General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment' and is running various projects. In Hong Kong, for example, the Fair Employment Agency is a pilot programme related to domestic workers in collaboration with HelperChoice.

Meanwhile, the ILO is also supporting the IDWF campaign 'My Fair Home' which promotes decent employment practices among those who employ domestic workers. It includes specific reference to combating violence and harassment.



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

**One of the 'My Fair Home' Pledges: [www.idwfed.org/myfairhome](http://www.idwfed.org/myfairhome)**

In a few countries there are associations of private household employers who aim to encourage and operate on fair employment practices. For example, in the USA there is Hand in Hand, a domestic employers' network which in 2015 joined with the National Domestic Workers Alliance to launch the Fair Care pledge "to strengthen the family and caregiver community".

There are also private employment agencies which promote themselves as fair employers, such as the Fair Hiring Initiative (Philippines) and Housekeeping Co. (Emirates).

Where such initiatives are proved genuine in their policies and practice, they should be prioritised in negotiations and actions to combat violence and harassment in the world of work.



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## ABOUT THE IDWF

The **International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF)** is a membership-based global organisation of domestic and household workers.

As of March 2018, the IDWF has 67 affiliates from 54 countries, representing over 600,000 domestic/household workers' members. Most are organised in trade unions, while others are in associations, networks and workers' cooperatives.

A domestic or household worker is any person engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship. We believe domestic work is work and all domestic and household workers deserve to enjoy the same rights as all other workers.

We were formally established in October 2013, out of the International Domestic Workers Network (IDWN). It was the activism and drive of the IDWN, supported by many others, which led to us win the ILO Domestic Workers Convention C189 in 2011, finally acknowledging that domestic/household workers everywhere have and are entitled to rights and respect. Since then we have continued to support them to strengthen their organisations, alliances and voice to fight for these rights to be upheld, by providing training, advice, research, advocacy, and more.

We are building a strong, democratic and united domestic/household workers' global organisation to protect and advance domestic workers' rights everywhere.



*"They wouldn't let me call my family or go outside.  
They said, 'If you want to work here, you do what we tell you to do.'"*

**Domestic worker from Madagascar, working in Lebanon**

*"We are beaten up, accused of theft, raped.  
We complain – even to the police - but we don't get help because we can't pay."*

**Domestic worker, member of the National Domestic Women Workers Union (NDWWU), Bangladesh**

*"My employer would physically and sexually abuse me.  
If I resisted, he would stop my wages."*

**Migrant domestic worker employed in the UK**

**Justice for Domestic Workers (J4DW): <https://www.thevoiceofdomesticworkers.com/videos>**

# PLATFORM OF DEMANDS

Violence and harassment against women and men in the world of work

**International Labour Conference, 107<sup>th</sup> Session**

Geneva  
May – June 2018