

Protection for domestic workers!! ¡Protección para trabajadoras domésticas!

International conference, held on 8-10 November 2006, at the headquarters of the FNV trade union federation, Amsterdam, Netherlands

The ICFTU/ITUC supports the organisation of this seminar.

This conference, attended by some 60 representatives of domestic/household workers' trade unions, associations and regional/international networks, Global Unions and national trade unions, and support NGOs, from around the world:

Expresses our common outrage at:

- ⇒ The exploitation of many domestic/household workers across the globe, particularly of highly vulnerable migrant workers (many forced to be undocumented) as well as children who do this work;
- ⇒ The lack of recognition of the contribution that domestic/household workers make, without which societies and economies could not function;
- ⇒ The continuing failure to recognise domestic/household work as "work" under employment legislation in many countries, so denying these workers the rights and respect they deserve.

We therefore demand:

Decent Work for Domestic Workers!

And recommend:

The setting up of an interim working group which, over the coming year to end 2007, has the task of investigating the possibilities for greater international activity for the rights of domestic/household workers worldwide.

The interim working group will comprise members of the steering group which founded this conference, plus representatives of domestic/household workers' organisations from as many world regions as possible. It will, however, not itself claim to represent domestic/household workers.

Tasks of the interim working group are:

- (1) To explore the need and potential for an international network for the rights of domestic/household workers, being careful not to replicate but to add value to the international networks that already exist e.g. for migrant domestic workers' rights.

Such a network would be open to all organisations of whatever form – trade unions, associations, networks, support NGOs, etc. – who agree to work for the common aim of achieving the rights of and respect for all domestic/household workers.

The decision-making structures behind such a network should comprise a majority of representatives from domestic/household workers' self organisations.

- (2) To explore, in collaboration with the Global Unions, the possibility for an ILO Convention on the rights of domestic/household workers, whether national or migrant workers.

(3) To support the organisation of domestic/household workers at all levels – local, national, regional and international – through:

- the greater involvement of trade unions at all levels in supporting domestic/household workers and their self-organisations;
- mapping and liaison with domestic/household workers' organisations and support groups worldwide so as to promote their visibility, capture the magnitude of the effort already being undertaken for domestic/household workers' rights, as well as encourage their involvement in a network;
- the exchange of information and strategies, for example through a new website dedicated to domestic/household workers' rights;
- the greater development of education/training programmes for domestic/household workers' groups/unions/associations/networks in strategising, organisation, accessing funding, accounting, etc.
- the potential for further funding for domestic/household workers' self-organisations;
- an urgent appeal mechanism for cases of extreme abuse and exploitation of domestic/household workers;
- further research into the role of domestic/household work including the vast migration of people to work as domestic workers as (a) an underpinning of neo-liberal globalisation and (b) a function of continuing gender discrimination in household work, so as to help promote the development of far stronger policies at international and national levels for the protection of domestic/household workers and their rights.

Further information:

The conference was organised by IRENE (International Restructuring Education Network Europe), FNV Mondiaal (Netherlands), the Committee for Asian Women (CAW) and the Asian Domestic Workers' Network, and WIEGO (Women in the Informal Economy Globalising and Organising).

The proceedings of the conference, including a full list of participants, will be published in a report due out in March 2007.

For further information, please contact the conference organisers, via:

Anneke van Luijken
IRENE (International Restructuring Education Network Europe)
Stationsstraat 39, 5038 EC Tilburg, Netherlands
Tel: +31.13.5351523
Fax: +31.13.5442578
Email: AvLuijken@irene-network.nl
Web: www.irene-network.nl