



2015



Organised By
GHANA TRADE UNION CONGRESS (TUC)

In Collaboration With
**INTERNATIONAL UNION OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL, HOTEL, RESTAURANT,
CATERING, TOBACCO AND ALLIED WORKERS' ASSOCIATION (IUF)**

JUNE 16, 2015
TUC HALL, ACCRA, GHANA

REPORT BY SIS. ADWOA SAKYI, IUF AFRICA REGIONAL WOMEN COORDINATOR

DOMESTIC WORKERS RESOLVE TO FORM STRONGER BOND OF UNITY

Domestic workers in Ghana have commemorated this year's International Domestic Workers Day (IDW) with a strong resolve to unite to fight for their rights as workers.

In that direction, they have also decided to use all possible campaign platforms to get government of Ghana to ratify ILO C189 on decent work for domestic workers.

The domestic workers contemplated during the commemoration whether it was because the nation did not regard their services provided as work that was why government was delaying in ratifying C189 which would give them the needed legal backing to stand for their rights.



Domestic workers expressing their views at the event

ILO Convention 189 was adopted on June 16 2011 and since then the day of adoption has been observed worldwide as IDW Day. The 2015 commemoration was organized by the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Association (IUF) and the Ghana Trade Union Congress (TUC).

Expressing their sentiments of pains and grievances at the 4th anniversary event in Accra on June 16, 2015 at the TUC Hall, the domestic workers said as government has not ratified the convention many employers continued to abuse their rights as workers. Some of these abuses and discrimination include denial of rest periods and holidays, no scheduled work times, verbal and physical violence, no social security and pensions, and lack of access to proper health care, among several others.

To make their numbers count in strength, the domestic workers have started grouping themselves under an umbrella body named Domestic Services Workers Union (DSWU). The formation of this body was facilitated by the IUF and the Ghana TUC.



Speaking at the commemoration, Bro. Eric Amoade-Boateng, Domestic Workers Organiser, Ghana TUC, said it was the fervent wish of TUC to have the domestic workers under one union that would be affiliated to the

TUC so that their grievance could be effectively addressed through the intervention of the TUC.

He added that Ghana TUC was ready to collaborate with organisations like IUF in the mobilization of domestic workers into a solid union, however, the efforts made by the domestic workers themselves would be crucial towards the success of any mobilization initiatives.

For her part, the IUF Africa Regional Women Coordinator, Sis. Adwoa Sakyi highlighted on the C189 and how it would assist the domestic workers in attaining their rights.



Sis. Adwoa

She noted that the convention, which consists of 27 articles, covered every aspect of domestic work ranging from the definition of a domestic worker through to the benefits and rights due a domestic worker.

Sister Adwoa stressed that the IUF was the international workers group that was spearheading the unification of domestic workers into unions the world over. Therefore having a domestic workers union in Ghana would be part of the international movement to ensure decent work for domestic workers as implying that the Ghana union would always have international voices to back them.

She cited the example of Kenya which started with 30 people but has now grown to 10,000 members with SSNIT recognition, so the same should and can happen in Ghana though family relationships was hampering organisation of domestic workers.



Sis. Rose

In another address, Sis. Rose Lameekor Kwei, Deputy Head, Organisation and Industrial Relations, Ghana TUC, spoke on efforts by the TUC to formalize some section of informal workers such as domestic workers.

She stated that formalization of domestic work would bring benefits of social security, collective bargaining, and formalized payment

systems such receiving salary through the banking system that would allow them to receive other financial benefits as well.

Sister Rose hinted that by formalization, employers of domestic workers would no longer take for granted the services provided by these workers and therefore called for unity among domestic workers to fight for their rights as they were being organised for progress not for in-fighting and backbiting, and urged them to get on board the campaign for the recognition of their services as work.

The chairman for the event, Bro. Richard Acheampong educated the domestic workers on available SSNIT pension schemes that they qualify for such as the third-tier scheme.



Bro. Richard



Sis. Esther

Sister Esther Kosi, General Secretary (interim), DSWU, congratulated IUF and the Ghana TUC for helping domestic workers to organize themselves.

She said the domestic workers are going to build on the momentum created to ensure that the successes chalked towards the organization of these workers into a union are not eroded.

In all, over 85 people attended the commemoration comprising over 65 domestic workers and other participants.

Open discussions

During discussions, domestic workers asked several questions which were responded to by the various presenters and members of the high table.



A female domestic worker (in background) asking a question

Some of the questions were:

- Where can we lodge complaints of abuse and victimisation including wrongful dismissals and denial of rights, among others?
- How can one secure contract of employment when an oral agreement has been acceded to with the employer?
- What does one do in the event of victimisation and wrong accusations leading to termination of employment?
- How can they tackle the huge monies taken from them by domestic employment agencies?
- Sometimes employers give routine tasks that were not originally covered during the initial employment. Are the employers right about these tasks?
- One of the DWs suggested that the sensitisation and awareness on ILO Convention 189 should be taken to the rural areas especially the aspects regarding violence and victimisation against DWs.

Responses to questions

The questions were responded to by members of the high table, mainly by Sis. Adwoa and Sis. Rose.

The respondents said all the issues and questions raised by the domestic workers call for the formation of the union to tackle all these problems. However, they can now report cases to the organisation department of Ghana TUC as well as to the interim leaders of DSWU.



Participants listening to responses from Sis. Adwoa

Article 15 of the convention 189 and Act 651 talks about employment agencies and that those agents are not to take the remuneration of domestic workers. Some of the charges by the agents are criminal as cash paid to these agents are sometimes unduly exploited to the extent of taking the first three months salaries of domestic workers for themselves.

They were assured that oral agreements can be changed when the convention was ratified in Ghana.

Other assigned works that are given by employers should be temporal else that assigned task should be paid for as work when it becomes permanent.

Registration of DSWU was commencement of the formalisation of domestic work in the country and that as union members should also be prepared to pay dues.

The domestic workers were advised to be circumspect in their work and not to abuse, sexually or violently, the children of their employers.



Group picture of participants at the event