

Activities Report of
Asociación de Trabajadoras de Hogar (ATH) in Bilbao
by Claire Hobden

Dear Steering Committee of the International Domestic Worker Network,

At the end of November, at the request of Asociación de Trabajadoras de Hogar (ATH) and with your approval, I went to Bilbao to meet with the organizers at ATH and to do a presentation about the ILO Process and the activities of the IDWN at a conference on domestic work organized by ATH. Here is a brief report on my activities while in Bilbao.

ATH –

is an association that was founded in 1986, by domestic workers, that seeks legislative change for domestic workers. Since 1991, they also provide free legal advice to educate domestic workers about their rights. They also produce materials for domestic workers, for example small cards with the minimum wage and other rights that they have. It appears that they are also an explicitly feminist association. It is not a membership organization however.

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Conference Program/Highlights/Activities –

The conference they held was mostly about rights and the laws that apply to domestic workers. Each day consisted of three presentations:

- 1) the role and lack of accountability of domestic worker placement agencies;
- 2) my presentation on the conditions of domestic workers globally, the ILO process of passing a convention, and the organizing work of domestic workers globally and towards the ILC;
- 3) news and information about an immigration policy that had just passed in Spain.

The same program was presented on both days. The first day was directed towards NGO representatives and professionals that are concerned with the rights of domestic workers. The second day was directed towards domestic workers. I found the many people attended the conference; I believe about 70 people attended on each day, the majority of which were domestic workers.

The main questions I received regarded the often unsupportive relationship that domestic worker associations have with unions. If unions are not responsive or

supportive, how do we suggest they build these relationships? And how else do we suggest they build power towards the ILC?

While in Bilbao, I was also asked to speak with two journalists, one radio, and one newspaper. I do not have a record of the radio interview, but they just requested a 2 minute basic explanation of the need for an ILO Convention and what domestic workers were doing to get one. The interview with the newspaper journalist was published just a few days ago, and here is the link to the article in Spanish: <http://www.gara.net/paperezkoa/20091213/171918/es/Ademas/de/leyes/el/sector/necesita/que/se/valore/a/las/trabajadoras/del/hogar»/>

General Impressions and Highlights –

The women of ATH were extremely warm, welcoming, and very committed to the rights of domestic workers, and judging by the turn out, they provide much demanded support for domestic workers.

In discussions with the organizers, we found out that the data on Spain's laws that apply to domestic workers that were included in the ILO's Law and Practice report is inaccurate. I suggested they submit their corrections directly to the ILO.

They will soon be participating in a conference about elderly care, where they wanted to highlight the role of impact on elderly caregivers as primary companions to the sick and dying.

Follow-up –

ATH is interested in submitted corrected information to the ILO about existing laws that protect domestic workers. How should they do this?

Email key contact (Isabel) to complete the membership application form, with the understanding that they are not a membership organization.

Anything else?

Please feel free to ask me any clarifying questions you might have.

Best,
Claire