



FADWU No.1 NEWSLETTER

WHO ARE WE?

The Hong Kong Federation of Asian Domestic Workers Union (FADWU) comprises six unions joined by their fight for better rights for domestic workers in Hong Kong.



INDONESIAN MIGRANT WORKERS UNION (IMWU)

A weekly session at the lawn of the Victoria Park



THAI MIGRANT WORKERS UNION (TMWU)

Members marching alongside IMWU sisters.



OVERSEAS DOMESTIC WORKERS UNION -

HONG KONG (ODWU-HK)

Leaders rally outside Central Government Office



HONG KONG DOMESTIC WORKERS

GENERAL UNION (HKDWGU)

A happy meal after the May Day rally



FILIPINO DOMESTIC WORKERS

UNION (FDWU)

United in their union T-shirts.



UNION OF NEPALESE DOMESTIC

WORKERS IN HONG KONG (UNDW)

At their seventh convention.

THE ILO CONVENTION FOR DOMESTIC WORKERS

WHAT IS IT?

On June 16 this year, governments, employers and workers of the world adopted the First Convention with Recommendation on Decent Work for Domestic Workers at the International Labour Conference (ILC) - Convention 189 supplemented with a Recommendation - in Geneva, Switzerland.

What are ILO conventions? They are international labour laws, adopted by governments, employers and workers internationally.

Who are covered? All domestic workers within an employment relationship, including part-time and migrant domestic workers.



WORKERS' RIGHTS Domestic workers are workers and should enjoy all workers' rights and human rights fully. The Convention, first and foremost, recognizes the right of domestic workers to organize in unions and to engage in collective bargaining, allowing them to negotiate and improve their working conditions.

WORKING CONDITIONS - Equal treatment with all other workers is really the most important aspect of the Convention!

It is stipulated that domestic workers must receive equal treatment with other workers and thus have the right to

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

the same maximum number of hours, overtime hours, etc. as specified in the national legislation. The hours spent on stand-by are also recognized as working hours. Therefore governments should take measures to ensure domestic workers receive written contracts or collective agreements.

The Convention gives women the right to maternity leave and all domestic workers the right to one day off per week. It also establishes the right to minimum wage in countries where it exists. The issue of payment in kind is also covered. It must be in line with national standards, very limited and subject to very clear criteria. The Recommendation, for example, specifies that it should not cover the purchase and cleaning of uniforms.



SPECIFIC PROTECTION FOR MIGRANT DOMESTIC WORKERS:

Migrant domestic workers must sign a written contract, for example, covering their conditions of employment prior to their departure, and this contract will be applicable in the destination country. They will have the right to decide if they want to live in the workplace or not. In the case of live-in employment, the arrangement should respect privacy of the workers. The text also provides for the strict regulation of recruitment agencies as well as the obligation to put measures in place to avoid abuses. Agency fees, for example, can no longer be deducted from domestic workers' salaries. Labour inspectors also now have the right to enter private residences where the workers are employed.

CHILD LABOUR

The Convention refers to Conventions 138 (1) and 182 (2) of the ILO and stipulates that if children under 18 are employed as domestic workers (so long as they are above the age required by law to work), they must be given access to some form of education or training. The Recommendation places greater restrictions on child labour, prohibiting night work, for instance.

CONCLUSION

The Convention for Domestic Workers is the result of many years of hard fights by domestic workers through their organizations and trade unions throughout the world. The HKCTU and FADWU, together with other migrant workers organizations, have been fighting hard since 2008. It has been a process of many hours of speaking and listening inside rooms and also marching, shouting slogans and singing in the streets. We fought till we won.

CAMPAIGNING FOR THE ILO CONVENTION FOR DOMESTIC WORKERS

AT THE ILC

Bobo, Chairperson of FADWU

In 2010 and 2011, the union sent me to attend the ILO Convention for Domestic Workers meetings in Geneva, where I witnessed the intense debates among employers, governments and workers, each side seeking to protect its own interest. As labour representatives, we strived to perfect every item, every word and even every punctuation mark. This year marked the ILO's 100th meeting as well as the birth of the Convention for Domestic Workers, making it especially unforgettable. I am glad for the opportunity my union gave me and thankful for all your support.

Shiella Aquino, Secretary of FADWU

As a union leader or member, is it important to attend conferences regarding workers? Yes, as a union leader or member it is very important that we participate in the making of any laws that affect workers, especially domestic workers. As the secretary and one of the representatives of FADWU at the ILC, where the Convention for Domestic Workers was adopted, I found the experience very fruitful. As a union leader we MUST be a part of the process. We must have knowledge of the law.

MAY DAY



On May Day this year, i.e. International Labour Day, all unions under FADWU participated in the rally organized by HKCTU. Participants danced, sang, performed in dramas and gave speeches. The main demands submitted to the Hong Kong government included the adoption of the ILO Convention for Domestic Workers.



EMBASSY HOPPING

On June 5, 2011, FADWU organized the Embassy Hopping on an open top bus handing petition letters to the consulates of the unions' respective home countries. The demands included voting for the adoption of ILO convention on domestic workers and raising the minimum wage to HK\$4,000.