United, Strong & Growing

International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF)

Annual Report 2019
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President’s Message

Myrtle Witbooi

The COVID-19 outbreak has been impacting lives across the globe for months—and domestic workers are on the frontlines, keeping families and communities healthy. Domestic workers are exposed to the virus as they shop for groceries for their employers. We clean contaminated surfaces. We care for elderly and sick people at high risk. We drive infected employers to the hospital. Yet our own health and safety are too often ignored, and our rights are violated.

It is outrageous that domestic workers in many countries do not have the right to paid sick leave—even in cases where we become infected at work after our employers have become sick. We are often excluded from laws protecting against workplace accidents and injuries. We are not provided with protective gear—either to protect against the virus or cleaning products containing harmful chemicals. There are domestic workers being dismissed without notice, or who have had their hours and pay drastically reduced. Others are experiencing a substantial increase in workload to ensure hygiene without overtime compensation. Migrant domestic workers, especially from Asian countries, are scapegoated.
Yet with precarious incomes and their own families to support, domestic workers are left without choice but to accept these risks while continuing to work. The health and safety of domestic workers must be protected as part of communal efforts to fight the virus. We call upon governments to take the following immediate steps:

**Paid sick leave and access to health care:**

When sick, domestic workers should stay at home with paid sick leave. This includes those who are in quarantine.

**Wage and hour protection:**

In the event of dismissal, domestic workers should be paid wages and compensation according to their contracts and the law. We should be paid overtime on the same grounds as all other workers.

**Safe and hazard-free workplaces:**

This includes provision of protective gear such as masks and gloves and training to use gear appropriately. Governments need to ensure that domestic workers have the same access to protective measures as any other workers.

**Information and anti-racism:**

Information on the pandemic needs to be disseminated widely in migrant communities. Preventive and protective information needs to be in languages that migrants understand. Any racist or anti-immigrant policies and behaviours have to stop.

IDWF is as an essential organization at this difficult time—because our work is based on the ideas, life experiences and leadership of domestic workers worldwide. The coronavirus pandemic is our common challenge, across borders. Only in solidarity will we succeed in fighting it.
General Secretary’s Message

Elizabeth Tang

This past year saw domestic workers world-wide coming together to advance their rights, despite enormous challenges. We are proud to report that affiliate membership increased significantly, with 36,000 new members in Asia, 2,898 in Africa and 9,659 in Latin America and the Caribbean. Our movement is growing—and with that growth there is increased strength, leadership and new ideas from our talented and motivated members. We are particularly inspired by the breakthroughs in organizing migrant domestic workers, detailed in this report.

IDWF is laser-focused on helping our grassroots leaders achieve their goals: we provided training on organizing and on combatting gender-based violence, conducted leadership and resilience seminars, represented domestic workers at local, national, regional and international forums, published manuals and research, and assisted with membership recruitment and organizing so that domestic workers can form strong organizations. IDWF and its affiliates are changing the status quo: please look at the list of policy victories later in this report to see how much we have accomplished across the globe in 2019.

We are also strengthening and expanding our alliances. The European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions (EFFAT) Congress adopted a resolution to include domestic workers in its status and agreed to form an IDWF-IUF-EFFAT working group to strengthen the collaboration for organizing domestic workers in Europe.

We are united in our belief that we can change our circumstances for the better. We are strong in our principles and our plans for the future. And we are growing our movement of domestic workers, fighting for our own rights and the rights of our sisters and brothers globally.
Context and the Need

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO):

- There are over **67 million** domestic workers globally
- **80%** of domestic workers are women
- Domestic work accounts for **7.5%** of women’s wage employment worldwide
- **17%** are migrants

Domestic workers provide essential services in the modern economy, enabling other men and women to participate in the external labour force while maintaining their home-lives. Our job duties often include care for children and increasingly, the elderly—as advances in medicine allow people to live longer, yet many no longer live in close proximity to their extended families. Domestic workers are a critical part of the “care economy,” which is recognized as a growing area of need and employment.

Despite the importance of our labour, the working conditions of domestic workers are very poor, and wages are low. In many countries, domestic workers even lack legal recognition as workers, and are therefore not entitled to labour protections afforded to virtually all other workers. For example, domestic workers are not protected by minimum wage laws in many countries. In those countries where decent laws are on the books, these laws are rarely enforced. The private, isolated nature of domestic work often makes violations invisible.
In the worst cases, domestic workers suffer extreme abuse: beatings, rape, starvation, imprisonment and death. Of the 25 million people in forced slavery worldwide, approximately 4 million are domestic workers.

The risks can be especially great for migrants—who often face language and cultural barriers, manipulation by employment agencies, lack of access to justice and more. Withholding of salaries—along with passports and visas—is not uncommon, leaving migrant domestic workers extremely vulnerable. Women who migrate for care work constitute the largest demographic segment of women who migrate for employment.

About IDWF

The International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF) is a global membership-based organization of domestic and household workers led by women—which means that our understanding of the context, needs and challenges is both personal and international. We were founded in October 2013 by forty-seven domestic workers’ member-based organizations who saw the need for a global federation to support, train, and help build a world-wide movement.

IDWF helps domestic and household workers build strong, democratic and sustainable workers’ organizations, and weaves new and existing organizations into our influential global federation.
We do this by:

- Supporting domestic workers to form new organizations through membership recruitment, organizing, and strengthening women’s leadership;
- Capacity-building and exchange of best practices among affiliates;
- Advocacy and awareness campaigns, on ratification of ILO Convention 189 and other legal improvements; and
- Leveraging the support of strategic partners, such as trade unions and labour rights organizations.

2019 was the fourth year in a 5-year strategic plan, and the activities outlined in this report reflect the objectives developed in that plan.
Accomplishments and Activities

By the end of 2019 IDWF had:

IDWF 72 affiliates

From 55 countries

Representing over 550,000 domestic workers worldwide

Welcome to our new affiliates!

Belgium: Centrale Générale FGTG (ACCG FGTG)
Cameroon: Association of Domestic Workers (ADW)
Colombia: Unión de Trabajadoras Afrocolombianas del Servicio Doméstico (UTRASD)
Dominican Republic: Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadora/es Domésticas (SINTRADOMES-CASC)
Panama: Sindicato Gremial de Trabajadoras y Trabajadores del Servicio Doméstico y Similares (SINGRETRADS)
Paraguay: Sindicato de Trabajadoras del Servicio Doméstico del Paraguay (SINTRADESPY)
International Campaigns

Ratification of C189

The IDWF and domestic worker organizations continued to prioritize ratification of the ILO Convention concerning decent work for domestic workers—known as C189.

C189 is a landmark convention that establishes the first global standards for domestic workers. It gives domestic workers the same basic rights as other workers, including weekly days off, limits to hours of work, minimum wages, paid overtime, social security, and clear terms and conditions of employment.

2019 saw two new ratifications:

- Madagascar (June 2019)
- Sweden (April 2019)

As of Dec 2019, 29 counties have ratified C189. Work is now being done to hold governments accountable for implementation.
Major Victory on Gender-Based Violence:

Adoption of C190

Gender-based violence is a major priority for IDWF and all its affiliates, and thus IDWF was heavily involved in the multi-year ILO process to create a new ILO Convention on Ending Violence and Harassment in the World of Work—known as C190. Our goal throughout the process was to ensure that the voices of domestic workers were heard loud and clear.

Our efforts, and that of so many labour rights, women’s rights and other organizations, paid off in June 2019, when The International Labour Conference voted to adopt C190. IDWF and its affiliates were an important presence at the conference, and we were so proud to hear our President, Myrtle Witbooi, speak to the assembly.

Of particular importance to domestic workers is the fact that “private spaces” are included as a workplace. Policies to protect workers have often excluded private homes, and thus have failed to protect domestic workers against gender-based violence and harassment.

In the run-up to the conference, IDWF mobilized its affiliates to foster support for an ILO Convention, holding trainings, distributing social media and other communications tools and encouraging sharing among affiliates. In the years to come, IDWF and its affiliates will be active in promoting countries to ratify C190—and in implementing its important protections.
A Seat at the Table:

International Representation and Alliances

It is crucial for domestic workers to be present and heard in international fora on the issues that affect our lives—including women's rights, gender-based violence, labour rights, and migration, to name just a few.

IDWF provided representation for domestic workers at the following major international gatherings in 2019:

- Meeting of the ILO Policy Advisory Committee on Fair Migration, Beirut May 2019
- UN Women: Empowering Women Migrant Workers from South Asia: Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Gender-Responsive Employment and Recruitment, Bangkok April 2019
- 63rd UN Session of the Commission on Status of Women, New York March 2019
- 9th ADBI-OECD-ILO Roundtable on Labour Migration in Asia, Tokyo January 2019
Spotlight on Migrant Domestic Workers

IDWF recognizes the need to organize migrant domestic workers, who are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. We are happy to report several significant organizing achievements on this challenging issue:

Kuwait: The Sandigan Domestic Workers Association has increased by 250 new members.

Qatar: A migrant domestic workers core group was formed. The Kafala system is starting to be phased out, allowing migrant domestic workers to leave their employment without permission from their employers.

Lebanon: 4 migrant domestic workers groups have been activated with committed leaders.

Malaysia: The first Indonesian migrant domestic workers organization, PERTIM, was formed.

Taiwan: IDWF provided training to the Domestic and Careworkers Union of Taiwan.

Belgium: ACVCSC implemented an organizing campaign to recruit migrant domestic workers.

Italy: IDWF through FILCAMS collaborated with the ILO and DOMINA (an employment company) to disseminate information on rights of migrant domestic workers.

Uganda: HTS has established a platform for Ugandan migrant domestic workers in the Middle East, providing legal and other information.

South Africa: SADSAWU continues to organize migrants despite the anti-migrant sentiment in many communities.
National Campaign **Victories**

IDWF and its affiliates are involved in national campaigns to improve the daily lives of domestic workers. This year, we saw positive movement across the globe:

**Africa**

- In South Africa, the Pretoria High Court found that the exclusion of domestic workers in the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act (COIDA) is unconstitutional. The government is challenging the decision, and thus the fight continues. (SADSAWU)

**Asia**

- In Nepal, the new labour code includes domestic workers in minimum wage and social security provisions. (HUN)

- In the Philippines, there is an increase in minimum wages of domestic workers in Metro Manila from PhP3,500 to PhP5,000 per month. (UNITED)
Latin America and Caribbean

- In Argentina, domestic workers negotiated a national, 30% salary increase. This will have an impact on 1,150,000 domestic workers. (UPACP)

- In the Dominican Republic, domestic workers from multiple unions joined forces with an unprecedented level of coordination to advance legislative priorities, including a national minimum wage commission for domestic workers that includes representatives from the government, unions and business. (ATH, SINTRADOMES-CASC and UNFETRAH)

- Years of advocacy by domestic workers in Mexico garnered a major success: new legislation that grants domestic workers basic labor rights. The law specifies that domestic workers have the right to the same minimum benefits as any other worker, including a minimum wage, social security, health care and maternity leave. It bans domestic work for people under 15 and limits work hours for older teenagers. For live-in workers, it obligates nine consecutive hours of rest. The new legislation will benefit more than two million people — most of them impoverished women. (SINACTRAHO, RMEHAC)

- As part of the above victory in Mexico, the government began a pilot project to enroll domestic workers in the social security system, which provides access to medical care, medicine, disability and retirement benefits and social services such as daycare. Approximately 15,000 domestic workers had enrolled by the end of 2019. Mexican affiliates are working tirelessly to inform domestic workers of their new rights, sign them onto the pilot, and advocate for improvements to the scheme. (SINACTRAHO, RMEHAC)
In **Paraguay**, affiliates won a major national law reform that mandates that domestic workers be paid 100% of the minimum wage. Previously DW were allowed to be paid 60% of the minimum wage. (SINTRADI and SINTRADESPY)

In November 2019, C189 entered into force in **Peru**. IDWF affiliates successfully negotiated with the Ministry of Labour a technical document that defines the path and priorities for implementation. They also influenced the Congressional Women’s Commission to approve an introductory bill that will guarantee the rights of about 1 million domestic workers. (CCTH, IPROFOTH, FENTRAHOGARP and SINTTRAHOL)

In **Jamaica** in December, the Parliament began a consultation process to review the “The Sexual Harassment Act, 2019” covering all workers including domestic workers. The Jamaica Household Workers Union sent a submission upon invitation. (JHWU)

“They told us, 'You've never been to school, why are you here trying to change the laws?' We would say it's not our fault we work 12 hours a day—how are we supposed to go to school? We are doing this for our sons and daughters and our grandchildren. We had to learn how to defend ourselves. We suffered some really ugly fights.”

**Librada Maciel, SINTRADI, Paraguay**
**Middle East & North Africa**

- The government of Qatar has agreed to abolish exit visas for domestic workers, replacing the exit visa with a 72-hour notice requirement. Under the former system, domestic workers had to get permission from their employers in order to depart the country. While this is an important first step, much more must be done to ensure those in abusive or unscrupulous households have a means to escape. (IDWF)

**North America**

- In the USA, domestic workers won the first-ever right to portable paid time off in the country, as part of NDWA’s 11th Domestic Workers Bill of Rights in Philadelphia. In addition to securing labor rights for the city’s 16,000 domestic workers, the bill represents an opportunity to scale the portable benefits platform Alia, as domestic workers seek to make it the compliance mechanism for the new law. (NDWA)
Publications and Research

Publications

Five Years a Federation - The IDWF Second Congress 2018, Written by Professor Jennifer N. Fish.


Gender-Based Violence in Paid Domestic Work in Latin America and the Caribbean: Experiences, Voices, Actions and Recommendations of Workers’ Organizations to Eliminate It


A Job at Any Cost: Experiences of African Women Migrant Domestic Workers in the Middle East; published jointly with GAATW.


Domestic Workers and C189: Power and Skill to Make it Real – Training Manual developed at the Africa Regional Workshop, Tanzania.

Available in English, Kiswahili, French, Portuguese and Amharic


Podcasts

Live podcast - Gender-based violence (GBV) and domestic workers and IDWF participation on ILC 2019 negotiations.

English:


Español:

https://soundcloud.com/informaleconomypodcastsp/05b-trabajadoras-del-hogar-y-violencia-en-el-trabajo
Education and Training

IDWF and its affiliates are involved in national campaigns to improve the daily lives of domestic workers.

This year, we saw positive movement across the globe:

**Africa**

- Negotiation skills to improve working conditions and ratification of C189, Tanzania, April
- Regional workshop on roles and responsibilities of union leadership, Dakar-Senegal, September
- Leadership training facilitated the formation of the first-ever domestic workers union in Madagascar, April & November
- Leadership training for affiliates in Francophone Africa, Togo, November

**Middle East**

- New 8-module course on organizing and planning to strengthen member-based organizations, Sandigan Domestic Workers Association, Kuwait
- Mapping and training with 4 migrant domestic workers groups, Lebanon, April – October.
- The first child care training course was piloted with the Sri Lanka Women Society and Caritas in Lebanon, June – October.
**Latin America and Caribbean**

- Leadership for Unity, reNewal and Amplification (LUNA), See “Education and Training Spotlight” on next page
- C189 Reporting Mechanisms: Capacity Building Workshop (by ACTRAV/ILO/Conlactraho and IDWF), Buenos Aires, August
- Continental Forum on Migration and Domestic Work collaboration with OSF/Solidarity Centre/Avina/NDWA, Buenos Aires, August

- Latin American Regional Forum, Social Security for Domestic Workers, collaboration with WIEGO and Monte de Piedad, Mexico City, November
- Fundraising, Strategic Planning and Communication, Costa Rica and Dominican Republic, November
- Gender Based Violence and ILC 2019, regional advocacy strategy workshop, Ecuador, February

**Asia**

- IDWF Asia regional conference on campaigning against gender-based violence, Bangkok, Thailand, April
- Exchange visit, bringing leaders from Cambodia, Malaysia and the Philippines to learn from Jala PRT Indonesia on their membership recruitment method, Jakarta, Indonesia, September
Leadership for Unity, reNewal and Amplification (LUNA)

IDWF affiliates are eager for opportunities to develop their skills and resilience. To meet this need, we organized a major new training initiative, Leadership for Unity, reNewal and Amplification (LUNA). Originally created by the U.S.-based National Domestic Workers Alliance, the program was a collaboration of IDWF, the Confederation of Latin American and Caribbean Domestic Workers (CONLACTRAHO), Generative Somatics, the Solidarity Center and donors like FES, ILO, Care International and Open Society Foundations.

40 domestic workers from 17 countries throughout Latin America and the Caribbean took part in LUNA, a one-year program comprised of three multi-day workshops bolstered by ongoing mentoring. The LUNA program involves political education, training in organizing strategies and building new models of leadership. It also applies somatics, a holistic therapy that recognizes the intricate connection between mind and body. By taking part in exercises and discussions, participants learned techniques especially valuable for domestic workers and others who endure abuse, sexual harassment, racism, homophobia and other types of societal violence and exclusion.

The training recognizes that for many, the only approach to leadership we have seen is a traditional, male-dominated, hierarchical structure. Domestic worker leaders need to create models that don't reproduce the same models of power they have seen as poor women, as domestic workers, and as members of traditionally excluded ethnic populations. LUNA also serves to connect domestic worker leaders across the regions, and they now engage each other in support for their projects.

IDWF plans to hold LUNA every two years.

“As a trans woman, it was so important to be in such a space with so many leaders across Latin America, to be able to center ourselves in our own bodies and presence, to be able to draw on our own resilience and to be able to draw on the resilience of our compañeros,” Francia Blanco, FETRADOMOV, Nicaragua
Challenges

Our work presents many challenges—both external and internal:

- Isolated and invisible nature of work in private homes
- Dependence on employer for housing, food and immigration status
- Fear of assault and harassment
- Domestic work is often excluded from labour laws
- Long work hours, no rest or free time or holidays
- Hostility from authorities

External Challenge: Hostility to Labour Rights

Increased hostility to labour rights has an enormous impact on domestic workers. This is a global phenomenon, but Brazil provides an instructive example. In his first two months in power, President Bolsonaro dissolved the Ministry of Labour along with 700 workers’ committees. Throughout 2019, Brazil enacted significant rollbacks of workers’ rights and benefits, as well as protections for indigenous and black women who make up the majority of the domestic worker workforce. There is an increased informality rate in the labour market, which escalates the precariousness of domestic workers. 44% of domestic workers are now categorized as daily labourers, which gives them “self-employed status”, and a growing number are being registered as Individual Micro-Entrepreneurs (MEI).

Importantly, these categories leave domestic workers out of long-fought protections for domestic workers (a 2013 Constitutional Amendment and 2015 implementing legislation), which establish that domestic workers have the same rights and benefits as all other workers. The hostility to labour rights has also delayed and undermined implementation of C189, which passed in Brazil in 2018.
Internal Challenge: Financial Sustainability

The concept of financial sustainability—for the domestic workers’ rights movement, for individual affiliates, and for IDWF itself—involves recognizing several important factors. Our struggle is long-term. It is global. It is fuelled by marginalized people with little financial means, and it directly confronts power structures with enormous resources. It is intersectional, overlapping with sexism, racism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination and violence. It is happening at a time when labour rights tools like collective bargaining are declining.

All of these factors play a part in the finances of IDWF and its affiliates—finances that are too small and too precarious. We must overcome these challenges so that our resources match the importance of our work, and the millions of domestic workers whose livelihoods and health are at stake. Fall 2019 marked an important first step in that process, when we embarked on a multi-year sustainability program, including the hiring of new staff dedicated to sustainability. We are already analysing our affiliates’ finances and capacity, planning workshops and trainings, and soliciting feedback. We are planning cross-fertilization of innovative methods for income generation. We will convene funders, allies and domestic workers, knowing that the solution to the problem is solidarity and innovation.
Financial Report
January - December 2019

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Deficit: $79,954

Deficit reflects specific cross-year projects to be reimbursed in Year 2020.

The currency used is USD. Exchange rate USD 1 = HKD 7.85.
For details on the consolidated financial statements, please refer to www.idwfed.org
Our Funders and Partners


Our financial outlook improved in 2019 with an increased number of funders, several of which have expressed intentions to support our growth while we explore additional sources of funding. Approximately 95% of our affiliates paid their affiliation fee to be a part of our joint federation.

Partnerships with the ILO, IUF, ITUC, GUFs, WIEGO, FES, UN Women, Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women, Migrant Forum Asia, Solidarity Center, Center for Women’s Global Leadership and many more enhance our resources and enable IDWF to grow stronger.
Our **Affiliations**

The IDWF is also affiliated to two other global organizations:

**International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF):**

http://www.iuf.org

**Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO):**

http://www.wiego.org
Who We Are

Officers
President: Myrtle Witbooi, SADSAWU, South Africa
Vice President: Carmen Britez, UPACP, Argentina
General Secretary: Elizabeth Tang, IDWF Secretariat, Hong Kong

Executive Committee Members
Novelita Valdez Palisoc, UNITED, Philippines
Shirley Pryce, JHWU, Jamaica
Grace Papa, CSC A&S, Belgium
Andrea del Carmen Morales Perez, FETRADOMOV, Nicaragua
Gilda Victoria Blanco Franzua, NDWA, USA

Alternative Committee Members
Asmaou Bah, SYNEM-GUINEE, Guinea
Gyanu Maya Kshastri, HUN, Nepal
Norma Nelson, ATLU, Antigua & Barbuda
Wendy Paula Galarza Quinonez, FILCAMS CGIL, Italy
Doug Moore, UDWA, USA
Secretariat

General Secretary: Elizabeth Tang
Financial Accounting Manager: Anthony Tsui (since May 2020)
Project Manager: Daphne Ip
Accounting Officer: Ivan Wong
Administrative Officer: Phyllis Law
Communication Officer: Yee Ting Ma
Strategic Program Coordinator: Roula Seghaier (since April 2020)

Africa
Regional Coordinator: Vicky Kanyoka
Program Officer: Deograsia Vuluwa

Asia
Regional Coordinator: Fish Ip
Program Officer: Niken Wulan
Field Organizer: Bariyah
Training Officer: Erlinda Binti Joseph (Lindu) (part-time, until February 2020)

Europe
Regional Coordinator: Karin Pape (part-time, seconded from WIEGO)

Latin America
Regional Coordinator: Adriana Paz Ramirez
Program Officer: Fernanda Valenti
Program Officer: Louisa Acciari (part-time)
Network Facilitator: Sofia Trevino (part-time, seconded from WIEGO)

Middle East and North Africa
Regional Coordinator: May Abi Samra (until April 2020)
Lara Nuwayhid (since April 2020)
Program Officer: Rana El Serbaji
Photo credits

page 7  Solidarity Center/Kate Holt
page 11  Daniel Carlstedt
page 14  The Sandigan Kuwait Domestic Workers Association and Sandigan Kuwait
page 14  ACV CSC
page 14  FILCAMS CGIL
page 15  South African Domestic Service and Allied Workers Union (SADSAWU)
page 16 & 17 Sindicato de Trabajadoras Domésticas y Afines de Itapúa (SINTRADI) and Sindicato de Trabajadoras del Servicio Domestico del Paraguay (SINTRADESPY)
page 18  National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA)
page 19  Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO)
page 24  Federação Nacional das Trabalhadoras Domésticas (Fenatrad)
page 27  Margaux
The International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF) is a membership-based, global organization of domestic workers.

We aim to unite domestic workers to fight for our rights, overcome exploitation and abuse, and secure dignity, justice and security.

idwfed.org