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President’s Message

Myrtle Witbooi

2020 will forever be associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and its devastating impact on lives across the globe—and we cannot forget that domestic workers have been—and remain—on the frontlines, whether or not they are officially categorized as “essential workers.”

Domestic workers are disproportionately susceptible to the economic and health consequences of the pandemic. Many are performing their jobs without Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) while directly caring for COVID-19 positive employers and cleaning contaminated surfaces. Some have had their hours cut or lost jobs with no notice. Others have had their workloads increase tremendously. Migrant domestic workers are experiencing an increase in racial discrimination and treated as vectors of the virus. Sexual harassment and assault—long a problem behind the closed doors of domestic work—increases in a time of isolation and lock-down. Yet in countries across the globe, governments and the general public fail to even see domestic work as work, and domestic workers lack labour protections that are considered routine in virtually all other professions.

With precarious incomes and their own families to support, domestic workers are left without choice but to accept risks to their own health 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:

- COVID-19 should be treated as an occupational hazard, with paid sick leave for domestic workers.
- Inclusion of domestic workers in occupational health and safety laws, regulations and protocols.
- Prioritization of domestic workers in vaccination plans: vaccines should be available, accessible and free.
- Ratification and implementation of ILO Convention C189, recognising that domestic workers are entitled to labour protections.
- Ratification and implementation of ILO Convention C190, the first international labour standard that sets a clear framework to end violence and harassment at work.
General Secretary’s Message

Elizabeth Tang

Adaptability, flexibility and patience are the words best used to describe this year for IDWF, our affiliates and the domestic workers who comprise our organization.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought enormous new challenges to our community. Recommended safety protocols were largely unavailable to domestic workers, who cannot work from their own homes—and even live-in domestic workers are expected to do shopping and errands, increasing exposure to this communicable disease. Social distancing is rarely an option. Many must travel using public transportation to their jobs, or live in small, often poorly-ventilated rooms, shared with other household staff.

Poverty-wages can necessitate choosing between a meal or a mask. For some members of our community, the impact of COVID-19 has been lethal. This report details our COVID-19 Solidarity Fund, an emergency fund created to respond to this crisis, at both the human and organizational levels.

Our core work of organizing, training and fighting for the rights of domestic workers worldwide had to continue despite the pandemic—the lives and livelihoods of millions of vulnerable people depend upon it. We created online training programs on organizing, membership growth, gender-based violence and many other topics, including new programs on the use of technology to help our affiliates ramp up their own tech know-how.

This past year saw domestic workers world-wide coming together to advance their rights, despite enormous challenges, reaffirming the need for coalition and community in a time of crisis. Membership grew in fifteen of IDWF’s African affiliates! We added our first two affiliates in the MENA region, in Kuwait and Jordon. In Malaysia, migrant domestic workers organized to fight for their rights. Our Latin American members scored major policy victories in Argentina, Chile, Peru and Mexico.

Our movement is growing—and with that growth there is increased strength, leadership and new ideas from our talented and motivated members.

IDWF exists to help domestic workers achieve their goals. 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 75 million domestic workers globally
- 75% of domestic workers are women
- 17% are migrants
- Domestic work accounts for over 8% of women’s wage employment worldwide

**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. A staggering eight out of every ten domestic workers are informally employed, which greatly contributes to the lack of effective labour and social protections. 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 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 Conventions 189 and 190 and other legal improvements; and
- Leveraging the support of strategic partners, such as trade unions and labour rights organizations.

2020 was the fifth year in a 5-year strategic plan, and the activities outlined in this report reflect the objectives developed in that plan. We also added new activities in direct response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
2020 Accomplishments and Activities

By the end of 2020 IDWF had:

- 78 affiliates
- From 61 countries
- Representing over 590,000 domestic workers worldwide

Welcome to our new affiliates!

**Botswana**: Botswana Domestic and Allied Workers Union (BODAU)

**United Kingdom**: The Voice of Domestic Workers (VODW)

**Taiwan**: Domestic Caretakers Union (DCU)

**Jordan**: Domestic Workers Solidarity Network in Jordan (DWSNJ)

**Kuwait**: Sandigan Kuwait Domestic Workers Association (SKDWA)
Solidarity Fund: Flexible Support in the Wake of COVID-19

COVID-19’s toll on domestic workers began on day one of the pandemic. As an organization dedicated to the rights of domestic workers through organizing, advocacy and training, we had to ask ourselves, how can IDWF best serve its community at this time? Are we equipped to help our members meet basic needs for food, shelter and medicine for thousands of vulnerable domestic workers? How can solidarity continue in a time of isolation?

IDWF and its affiliates had to act quickly, because our members are vulnerable, live pay check to pay check and were at great risk of contracting COVID-19. We sprang into action to help meet basic needs of domestic workers, especially those who were sick or who had been summarily dismissed. As the days became weeks, it became clear that IDWF had to assist its affiliates to continue their ongoing work in an unprecedented climate. Support for technology, including laptops, Wi-Fi plans and technology training were needed so that affiliates could continue to communicate, train and even grow their membership.

With the help of donors and allies, IDWF raised and allocated over USD 1 million to meet these needs, and to respond to new issues as they came up. We thank ACVCSC Service Union, AVINA Foundation, and Bread for the World, Collective Future Fund, Foundation for a Just Society, ILO – Safe and Fair, KOMMUNAL, Mondiaal FNV, Novo Foundation Fund of the Tides Foundation, Olof Palme International Center, Open Society Foundation, Open Society Foundation for Southern Africa (OSISA) and United Domestic Workers of America (UDWA) for their flexibility and support. We also thank Helene Harroff Atrafi, Nelien Hapspels, Nan Napier, Winnie Ng and other generous individual donors.

“Because of your donation, we are able to support more than 200 families and pay rent…we have no words. Thank you so much, for supporting us, being there for us and advising us.”

Banchi Yimmer, Egna Legna, Lebanon
These funds enabled IDWF to:

- Provide food and personal protective equipment for approximately 20,000 domestic workers
- Maintain the operations of our affiliates, including helping them communicate with their members digitally
- Conduct advocacy for inclusion of domestic workers in government relief programs

We gave small grants, typically USD 5,000 to USD 10,000, to 71 affiliates and several domestic workers organizations in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe, Latin America and MENA. These grants were a lifeline for domestic workers. In most cases, the grants were the only emergency monies they received to cope with pandemic challenges.

“In the name of all the domestic workers, I want to thank IDWF for the humanitarian support. It has helped to relieve the hunger of domestic workers in the Dominican Republic. My eternal gratitude for lending a friendly hand in these hard times.”

Victoria Garcia, ATH, Dominican Republic
“Domestic workers are among those worst hit by the consequences of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. More domestic workers than other employees have lost their jobs or are seeing a dramatic reduction in working hours and correspondingly lower wages.”

ILO, Making Decent Work A Reality for Domestic Workers

“The challenges we face as migrant domestic workers had already existed long before the COVID-19 crisis in terms of social protection and security. We helped each other has much as we could, and it is a lot tougher nowadays. But with this—our resilience as human beings with a passion to help others—no crisis should hamper our humanitarian campaign. Thank you IDWF and its partners for the support and inspiration for us to continue advocating for domestic workers’ rights. We are one in this together.”

Marni, Bayanihan Domestic Workers, Qatar
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.

2020 saw two new ratifications:

- Mexico (July 2020), and
- Namibia (December 2020)

As of December 31, 2020, 31 counties have ratified C189. Work is now being done to hold governments accountable for implementation.
Ratification 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.

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. IDWF and its affiliates are now active in promoting countries to ratify C190—and in implementing its important protections.

2020 saw the first three ratifications:
- Fiji (June 2020)
- Uruguay (June 2020)
- Namibia (December 2020)
Spotlight on Gender-Based Violence

Sexual and gender-based violence is a worldwide epidemic, preying on the most vulnerable in countries and communities, big cities and small towns in every corner of the globe.

Violence, harassment and assault are all too common in the lives of domestic workers. We are mostly women and girls, as well as men and boys, who come from disadvantaged population groups, who do invisible work outside of the public eye. Some of us are migrants, living far from our home countries without the support system of family and friends. Abuse, or just the threat of it, makes us work excessive hours, accept no or very low wages, and carry out dangerous tasks. Domestic work is an occupation where slavery abounds even in our modern world. Some of us are sequestered, not allowed to leave the homes where we are employed, and subjected to horrific abuse.

The challenges are huge, as comprehensive laws and enabling mechanisms do not exist in the vast majority of countries.

In the few where they do, there continues to be a lack of public awareness and institutional support for effective implementation due to gender and many other biases against domestic workers. To prevent harassment and violence from happening and to seek justice for the victims, IDWF and its affiliates work on multiple levels: information and communication, networking and organizing, garnering support from public institutions and civil society and pressing for adequate financing.

Our goal is to help our members become the leaders so desperately needed to combat gender-based violence among domestic workers.

Training is key to our efforts, and virtually every one of our member organizations have participated in the learning opportunities offered by IDWF in recent years, including dozens of on-line convenings and courses in 2020, offered in multiple languages. Our materials include how to recognize violence, how to report it, and how to advocate for the legal and policy changes needed to make a difference over the long term—including ratification of C190, as well as campaigns for national laws. We often use a “train the trainers” model so that those who have learned become teachers with the tools to pass their knowledge to others.
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 2020:

- UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Chile, January 2020
- The Qatari Administrative Department of the Labour and Social Affairs/ILO/Global Union Federations (ADLSA/ILO/GUFs) bi-annual meetings, April & October 2020
- International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) Global Union Federations (GUF), Asia-Pacific Meeting on impact of COVID-19 on workers, April 2020
- ITUC/GUF: Gender Equal New Normal Webinars, May & June 2020
- ILO Migration Advisory Group (Middle East) meetings, June & November 2020
- Open Society Foundation Essential Workers Campaign, weekly meetings since August 2020.
- Care Economy webinar, Organization of American States, September 2020
- Central American Parliament webinar, “Post-COVID recovery activation plan from a gender equality perspective”, September 2020
- GUF - Global Day of Action: “Invest in Care, Now!”, October 2020
- European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions General Assembly on Domestic Work, December 2020
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:

- In **Argentina**, UPACP made a historic agreement with the Ministry of Women and SACRA, an employers’ association, “for working conditions with equality and without violence and harassment.” The agreement covers 5 areas: women’s leadership and diversity in unions; work without harassment and violence; relationship between care policies and work-family co-responsibility; reduction of labour gaps; and particular sectors such as migrant, rural and indigenous populations. UPACP also won a major victory with the inclusion of domestic workers into the pension benefits scheme.

- In **Chile**, FESINTRACAP won unemployment insurance for domestic workers—a rarity in the region and across the globe.

- In August of 2020, The Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations worked with Parliament of **Ghana** to pass the Labor (Domestic Workers’) Regulations, in order to ensure full labor protection for domestic workers. The regulations require there to be a written contract of employment between the employer and domestic worker which will specify the conditions of their labor. This requirement was established to provide a comprehensive regulatory framework to protect domestic workers from abuse. (DSWU)

- **Mexico’s** pilot program giving domestic workers access to social security and healthcare benefits is now permanent. Many of the recommendations and suggestions of SINACTRAHO and allies were included in the final version of the program.

- In **Peru**, 1 million domestic workers garnered a major victory with passage of comprehensive legislation requiring a written employment contract, minimum wage applied to domestic workers, an 8-hour day or 48-hour week with voluntary paid overtime, 30 paid holidays after one year of work, the right to join a union and to engage in collective bargaining, and other rights. (CCTH, IPROFOTH, FENTRAHOGARP and SINTTTRAHOL)

- On 19 November 2020, in its landmark decision in Mahlangu and Another v Minister of Labour and Others, the **South African** Constitutional Court confirmed COIDA was unconstitutional to the extent that it excluded domestic workers in private households from the definition of “employee” and denied them compensation in the event that they contracted diseases or suffered disablement, injuries or death in the course of their employment. Implementing legislation has followed this important decision. (SADSAWU)
Publications and Research

Publications

The Impacts of COVID-19 on Domestic Workers and Policy Responses


Recommendations Table:


Gender-Based Violence and Harassment Against Domestic Workers: Case Stories from Asia


Across Borders and Movements: Migrant Domestic Workers' Resistance


Following the Money: The Kafala System and Chain of Domestic Workers Migration


Understanding Care

Available in English, French and Spanish

https://idwfed.org/en/resources/understanding-care

Corona is not the virus, Kafala is!

Videos and Podcasts

Global Workshop on CARE for IDWF Affiliates 2020 Oct 25:
   English: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d1Ch905VX2g

IDWF Invest in Care Campaign trailer:
   English: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PGgkItRVmC4

Lebanon: What you need to know about the Standard Unified Contract:
   English: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oK_DQS8oia4
   Spanish: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gf_raOliI8
   French: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KbryLilCns

Envisioning Together an Economy That Values its Informal Sector:
   English: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0OIm_zcxWU0
   Spanish: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ywx4zdNUVjQ

How Our Labor Makes All Other Work Possible:
   English: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7i1ywUtCMdo
   French: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3HmneGAdOmA

The Importance of the Informal Economy Workers:
   English: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rJgKkK9J9N4
   Spanish: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oiO2jwm1WI
   French: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=139_Fq_M8LM
   Swahili: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDMcIgQnaVQ
   Simplified Chinese: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ycbFq0pdceE
   Traditional Chinese: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vnlp4pJEtk

International Domestic Workers Day Webinar:
   English: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YMZjAiR9Dis
   Spanish: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0rTZsqUM_ZQ
   French: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILnf3ZmDhCY
   Portuguese: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UXZN9d9a6Eg
   Hindi: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KL8BJojs_0

“Domestic Work in Italy”: A Good Practice and a Good Model:
   English: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vq8frLpkUU

Let’s Campaign for the Ratification of C190!
   English: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z7FpnyB6oec
   Spanish: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tURcW48RTDQ
   French: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rePEHqwv930
COVID-19: Domestic Workers and Employers Fight Together

- English: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-uAd9pHB2o0
- Thai: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZkFZ7wBUSXs
- Cantonese: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7SNVvK3jxZQ
- Bahasa Indonesian: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O9aMqNG6gVw
- Nepali: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4kBqEW0sSk

Message from Carmen Britez, IDWF Vice President, for Labour Day

- Spanish: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IR5EuYEutXA

Mekdan - When Will I Look Back at Now: Story of an Ethiopian Domestic Worker in Lebanon

- English: https://youtu.be/NlklxHRO0BY

Domestic Workers Day – Affiliate’s Videos

- Middle East and North Africa:
  - English: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jrl7lgyUk50

- Latin America (1):
  - Spanish/English: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6krNa_IKKKg

- Latin America (2):
  - Spanish/English: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Ajf20--nek

- Europe:
  - English: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liqhVCUztpw

- Caribbean:
  - English: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PLTdBacVcZk

- Africa:
  - English: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T838SPeOBxg

- Asia:
  - English: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l24LKj2v3ik
Challenges

Our work presents many challenges—both external and internal:

- Isolated and invisible nature of work in private homes
- Dependence on employers 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
- Deterioration of working condition due to COVID-19 pandemic
Financial Report (Consolidated)
January 2020 – December 2020

**Income**

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**Expenditure**

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<td>Global programs</td>
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<td>Fundraising and communication</td>
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<td>Coordination and management</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>2,242,924</td>
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<td>Surplus</td>
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**Note:**
The currency used is USD.

* refers to International Domestic Workers Federation Limited registered in Hong Kong. Exchange rate USD 1 = HKD 7.80

^ refers to International Domestic Workers Federation registered in Swiss. Exchange rate USD 1 = CHF 0.88

For details on the consolidated financial statements, please refer to www.idwfed.org
Our Funders and Partners


Partnerships with the Anti-Racism Movement (ARM), Association of Women in Development (AWID), BWI, Center for Women’s Global Leadership, EFFAT, Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW), GUFs, ILO, ITUC, IUF, Migrant Forum Asia, Migrant-Rights.org, Solidarity Center, UN Women, WIEGO, and many more enhance our resources and enable IDWF to grow stronger.
Our Affiliations

The IDWF is 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

Office Bearers

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

Executive Members – Titular

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

Executive Members – Alternate

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

Africa

Regional Coordinator: Vicky Kanyoka

Asia

Regional Coordinator – Asia Pacific: Fish Ip

Europe

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

Latin America

Regional Coordinator: Adriana Paz Ramirez

Middle East and North Africa

Regional Coordinator: Lara Nuwayhid (since April 2020)
## Photo credits

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<th>Page</th>
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<td>National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA)</td>
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<td>p.6</td>
<td>Conservation, Hotels, Domestic, Social Services and Consultancy Workers Union (CHODAWU)</td>
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<td>Sindicato de Trabajadoras del Servicio Doméstico del Paraguay (SINTRADESPY)</td>
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<td>p.12</td>
<td>Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores y Trabajadoras del Hogar (SINACTRAHO)</td>
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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.

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