**Item 4 (d): Report for the Caribbean Region, 2009-2013**

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**1. Introduction**

The National Union of Domestic Employees (NUDE) of Trinidad and Tobago was one of the founding members of the IDWN. It all started when NUDE was invited to the first global conference for domestic workers’ organizations, organized by IRENE in the Netherlands in 2006. There, NUDE met other domestic workers’ trade unions, associations and NGOs, all advocating for better protection for domestic workers. One of the recommendations coming out of the Netherlands meeting was a call for an ILO Convention to protect the interest of domestic workers.

In 2008, NUDE participated in the first meeting in Geneva where the IDWN was formed. NUDE continued with the network by going for three consecutive years to the ILC in Geneva, firstly to train and observe its workings in 2009, when they were able also to get a domestic worker from Trinidad and Tobago to participate, and then to the two ILCs in 2010 and 2011 when the proposed Convention was discussed.

At the ILC in 2010, NUDE introduced the Jamaica Household Workers Association (JHWA) to the network and the relationship between the two organizations became close, working together for a Caribbean position within the network.

**2. Caribbean Regional Activities**

Activities at a Caribbean regional level for mobilizing domestic workers for the campaign for an ILO Convention got going in 2009, such as responding to the IDWN call for a ‘world mobilizing day’ on December 10.

Regional activities became much stronger after NUDE and JHWA met at the ILC in 2010. In October 2010, the two domestic workers’ organizations together attended a meeting of the Caribbean Congress of Labour (CCL) to bring the issue of domestic workers and the proposed ILO Convention to the unions’ attention. They called on CCL affiliated unions in each country to pick up the issue, to work with and involve domestic workers in the process. Unfortunately, this largely did not happen in this period. However, NUDE in Trinidad and Tobago, being a registered union, was able to take part in answering the ILO questionnaires. Also, domestic workers’ representatives from there and from Jamaica, were part of their Workers’ Delegations at the ILCs in 2010 and 2011.

After achieving the C189 in June 2011, NUDE and JHWA continued with their activities regionally to reach out to more domestic workers’ organizations, other
unions, supportive organizations, and the general public, using events such as the ITUC ‘12x12’ international campaign on December 12. Trades unions in Antigua and Barbados in particular became more active in these issues. So did several women’s associations, particularly in St. Lucia and Guyana.

Relationships with international bodies operating in the region have also become stronger. In September 2011, NUDE and JHWA participated at a conference ‘Domestic Workers at the interface of Migration and Development’, held in Kingston, Jamaica. It was hosted by the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), in collaboration with UN Women, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the Governments of Switzerland and Jamaica.

The Caribbean office of UN Women has proved of particular support, within individual countries such as Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, but at a regional level too, in the formation of the Caribbean Domestic Workers Network (CDWN).

13–14 November 2011: Launch of the Caribbean Domestic Workers Network (CDWN):

Domestic workers and their representative organizations from across the region, as well as the Caribbean Congress of Labour, were at the founding event, hosted by the Barbados Workers’ Union at its Labour College. A Steering Committee was formed, comprising representatives from the Antigua Trades and Labour Union, Barbados Workers’ Union, Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA, St. Lucia), Jamaica Household Workers’ Association, National Union of Domestic Employees (NUDE) and Transport Industrial Workers Union (Trinidad and Tobago), and Red Thread (Guyana). Vision and Mission Statements and a Plan of Action were drafted.

Since then, there have been more joint activities across the region, such as ‘Clotil Walcott Day’ on 7 September 2013. Then, domestic workers’ organizations and supporters in Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Guyana, St. Lucia, and Barbados, supported by the ITUC and the Global Fund for Women, held activities to celebrate the life of Clotil Walcott. She was a Trinidadian trade union activist who helped to found the NUDE union in the mid-1970s, and to win the Minimum Wages and Terms and Conditions of Service for Household Assistants Order in 1982, which includes rights to minimum wages, a 44-hour working week, overtime rates for public holidays, maternity leave, and vacation leave. She inspired other women across the region, and received many honours for her work, at home and internationally.

**Key Achievements in the Caribbean:**

- The Caribbean Domestic Workers Network (CDWN) is established.
- Increased awareness amongst trade unions, employers and governments on the issue of Decent Work for Domestic Workers.
- Jamaica Household Workers Association is now a trade union, the Jamaica Household Workers Union.
- Guyana has ratified the ILO Convention 189.

However, there is still work to be done to persuade more unions in the region to take up and support domestic workers’ organizing and promotion of their rights.
3. Country Reports

- **Antigua:**
  In 2011, NUDE was invited by the Antigua Trades and Labour Union to speak to domestic workers in Antigua and Barbuda. The Antigua Union is now the Chair of CDWN Steering Committee meetings and, in May 2013, it officially formed a Domestic Workers’ Committee to promote the organizing of domestic workers in its country. On March 8 2013, the Union held an International Women’s Day event with a march for domestic workers, and they also attended a church service calling for ratification of C189.

- **Barbados:**
  The Barbados Workers Union, a member of the CDWN, took part in the regional Clotil Walcott Day on September 7 2013 by holding a Congress, with over 500 members present. There, a presentation was made on domestic workers’ organizing in the country. There is evidence of a domestic worker who had advocated for working conditions for domestic workers several decades ago, but her story is now largely forgotten. The BWU is now intending to establish a Committee especially to represent the interests of domestic workers in the union.

  Meanwhile, a ‘Decent Work for Domestic Workers’ project, organized by the Labour Ministry with the assistance of UN Women, is said to have found that, although domestic workers want their rights respected, many do not want to join unions. However, the Labour Minister, speaking at a conference of the Congress of Trade Unions and Staff Associations of Barbados on September 26 2013, promised the ratification of C189.

- **Guyana:**
  The women’s organization Red Thread, which supports domestic workers’ rights and organizing, is a member of the CDWN Steering Committee. On May 31 2013, they handed a petition with 3,069 signatures to the Minister of Labour in support of the call for the governments of Caricom (the Caribbean economic community) to ratify C189. The Minister, who said he was already aware of Red Thread statements on the issue in the press, assured them that the Government had already decided to ratify the Convention, and that his Ministry is committed to working with them to ensure that the rights of domestic workers are protected. On August 9 2013, Guyana became the first Caribbean country to ratify C189.

  Red Thread recently announced it intends to begin a self-help information and support service for domestic workers and other low-waged women workers, named Cora & Clotil after Red Thread founder member Cora Belle who was inspired by Clotil Walcott (see above).

- **Jamaica:**
  On March 15 2013, the Jamaica Household Workers’ Association (JHWA) took the historical step of transforming itself from an association into a trade union, the Jamaica Household Workers’ Union (JHWU). At a ceremony in the capital city Kingston to celebrate, the key address was given by the Prime Minister, Portia Simpson Miller. Another guest speaker was Myrtle Witbooi, the Chairperson of the IDWN.
In a two-year project to December 2013, the JHWU has been supported with technical assistance from the ILO and FES, and financial support from UN Women, for institutional strengthening and capacity building. This has led to significant increases in membership numbers and union structures. From just one Kingston-based chapter, the JHWU now has 11 chapters throughout Jamaica. There is training and awareness-raising for members on the roles and responsibilities of a trade union, on the rights of domestic workers and how to push the Government to ratify C189, with a worker-friendly book on C189 published. The JHWU also ran a Talent Show for domestic workers to show off their talents by creating skits, songs and poems about the C189.

On December 15 2012, over 200 domestic workers and supporters rallied in Kingston to demand ratification of C189. The Union has been working with the Ministry of Labor on a new Domestic Workers’ Act, as this would be quicker than amending existing labor law.

Through the ILO project, the JHWU has also had a focus on child domestic workers. It has gone around the Island to educate people about child labour and how to eliminate it. Out of that, they have developed a programme called ‘Grab a Child - Save the Nation’, where they work with children and parents in communities to identify child labour, especially child domestic workers.

Among its other activities, the JHWU has awareness-raising programmes on the elimination of gender inequality. The Union was recently invited by the Prime Minister’s office to join a Committee looking at violence against women, and onto another committee on health and reproductive rights, part of a United Nations Population Fund project.

The JHWU is involved in training domestic workers through its ‘Skills for Life’ program, and is starting a school, the Jamaica Household Workers Training Institute. It has been consulted by the national vocational training institute HEART Trust/NTA on the revision of its syllabus.

The JHWU also runs a telephone helpline for domestic workers, and is in the process of setting up a foundation to assist needy domestic workers. It is in dialog with several credit unions with the aim of setting one up for domestic workers, to help them gain access to death benefits, a pension, and regular savings.

The JHWU has also been collaborating with the Jamaica Employers Federation to hold training events for employers of domestic workers across the island, on the theme ‘Decent Work for Domestic Workers – the Employers’ Focus’. The JHWU believes in constructive relationship with employers and has a seat in the tripartite Minimum Wages Commission.

The JHWU has been asked by several organizations elsewhere, including the Penn State University (USA), to share some of its best practices on organizing and mobilizing of domestic workers. The Antigua Minister of Labour has also asked the JHWU to help build a domestic workers’ organization there.

- **Trinidad and Tobago:**

  From October 2010 to June 2012, capacity building for NUDE was supported with technical assistance by the ILO, and financial support from UN Women. The program consisted of training for NUDE’s Executive in grievance handling, negotiating,
organizing and recruiting, the history of the union movement, and communications. Under the project, a lot of information leaflets were distributed to the public and NUDE members on the rights of domestic workers and C189.

After the adoption of C189, NUDE worked two terms representing the National Trade Union Centre on the ILO 144 Committee. This Committee is pivotal in trying to get the Government to ratify C189. In April 2013, NUDE received correspondence from the Minister confirming the Committee was reviewing C189 in order to make recommendations to the Ministry concerning ratification or other legal changes. NUDE also worked with the Minimum Wages Board to recommend to the Minister of Labour Small and Micro Enterprise Development amendments to the Minimum Wages Household Assistants Order (1982).

In September 2012, the government Labour Inspectorate Unit launched a Domestic Workers Registry, with the aim of ensuring that employers comply with their legal obligations. Information has been distributed about domestic workers’ rights to wages, terms and conditions of work such as sick leave, vacation leave, maternity leave, paid public holidays, and overtime pay (household workers now enjoy a 40-hour working week). The Registry is also going to provide personal development training for domestic workers. Meanwhile, the Labour Inspectorate is going to help to ensure that National Insurance contributions are paid, and labour Inspectors will refer breaches to the National Insurance Board. Despite this progress, domestic workers in Trinidad and Tobago still do not have all the same rights as other workers. For example, when they are fired, they are not able to seek recourse.

To improve the capacity of NUDE itself, members have been receiving training in industrial relations and grievance handling through the Ministry’s advocates program. In the run-up to more outreach activities to mobilize and recruit more domestic workers, NUDE has recently done a mapping exercise identifying where groups of domestic workers are found, and so where information can best be distributed.

Plus NUDE has formed a cooperative of domestic workers, currently in the process of registration. It will provide housekeeping services in private homes, enabling its members to pool their skills and receive training so that they offer a high standard to employers, and at the same time create employment opportunities for the workers with good labor, environmental and safety standards through contract negotiations and collective bargaining.

4. Future Plans for the CDWN

The CDWN Steering Committee has the following priorities:

- To secure the effective participation, voice and influence of domestic workers in the development and implementation of labour market and migration policies.
- To promote the ratification of ILO Convention 189 in at least 6 countries of the region by 2015.
- To promote the establishment of the administrative requirements to give effect to the right of domestic workers to free movement in CARICOM.
- To protect and raise awareness about the rights of domestic workers.
- To provide a forum for domestic workers to establish and maintain wage, labour, environmental and safety standards throughout the Caribbean region.
• To contribute to the elimination of gender inequality through sensitization and awareness-raising programmes.

One of the challenges facing the region is the increasing flows of migrant domestic workers. This is proving particularly difficult for organizing where there are language differences. In English-speaking Trinidad and Tobago, for example, they are seeing a new wave of Spanish-speaking migrants from countries such as Venezuela and the Dominican Republic.