



# IDWN news

INTERNATIONAL DOMESTIC WORKERS' NETWORK

FEBRUARY 2012

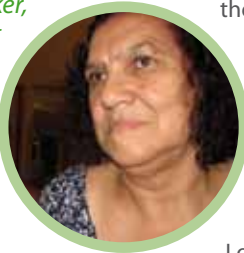
## A MESSAGE FROM MYRTLE WITBOOI, IDWN CHAIR



*Now we face the biggest challenge ever – to convince all governments to ratify ILO Convention 189, so that our historical achievement in winning it is truly fulfilled.*

*While watching a programme on slavery the other day, including the badly burned body of a domestic worker, all I could say was that the struggle has still only just begun.*

*But we can win. We are strong workers. We are a united workforce. And we won't rest until our task is done – the ratification of C189. May 2012 truly be the year of the domestic workers in the world, when we can say, yes, domestic work is decent work, and, yes, we are free."*



## IDWN PLANS

**On 9 -11 December 2011**, the IDWN Steering Committee met in Accra, Ghana, and developed our Action Plan for the next 3 years. This includes target countries for ratification, also beyond 2012. We will continue reaching out to new organisations as well as helping to strengthen existing network members. For those countries which do ratify, we will need to support members to monitor how well the new laws are actually implemented.

The SC agreed the IDWN should continue as a network for now but start moving towards a more formal structure as a federation of member organisations.

[www.domesticworkerrights.org](http://www.domesticworkerrights.org)  
Look out for our new website coming soon.

## BUILDING THE RATIFICATION CAMPAIGN

**After winning the international ILO Domestic Workers' Convention No.189 (C189) in June 2011, now we have to get it 'ratified' – that means put into employment law in each country.**

The good news is that 15 governments – Argentina, Belgium, Benin, Ghana, Honduras, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Malawi, Philippines, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uruguay and Zambia – have indicated they will do this soon. But we need to maintain the pressure on them and others too.

To keep the momentum up, the IDWN has helped to organise several very important regional conferences in the past few months, attended by domestic workers' organisations and supporters from dozens of countries and international bodies.

### **AFRICA: 28-29 NOVEMBER 2011, NAIROBI, KENYA**

The African conference brought together 25 participants, mostly leaders of domestic workers' trade unions, from 15 English, French and Portuguese-speaking countries. Happily, the number of domestic workers' unions in Africa has increased significantly in recent years.

At workshops facilitated by Chris Bonner from WIEGO, participants shared skills and experiences on organising domestic workers, including from South Africa, Benin and Hong Kong. Many had brought with them things like membership recruitment forms and record books, education materials, and photographs to show each other.

Together they developed plans for the C189 ratification campaign in their own countries. They also want to focus on the issues of HIV/Aids, social security and the minimum wage for domestic workers. They plan to mark 16 June as International Domestic Workers' Day.

### **ASIA: 24-26 OCTOBER 2011, MANILA, PHILIPPINES**

More than 140 participants from 104 organisations in over 20 countries took part in the Asia regional conference. They were brought together by the IDWN together with the International Trade Union Confederation – Asia Pacific region (ITUC-AP), Global Network-Asia, Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA) and the Global Network. The ILO gave financial and technical support. Those present adopted a Manifesto, committing their organisations to work together for the ratification of C189 in as many countries as possible.

Among the highlights was an address by the Secretary of Labour and Employment of the Philippines, Hon. Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz, who announced that her country is already en route to ratifying C189 in 2012.

### **CARIBBEAN: 13-14 NOVEMBER 2011, BARBADOS**

The new regional network of domestic workers' organisations in the Caribbean was launched at a meeting in Barbados in mid-November. Trade unions and women's organisations from Antigua, Barbados, Guyana, and Saint Lucia, joined the National Union of Domestic Employees (NUDE) of Trinidad and Tobago and the Jamaica Household Workers' Association (JHWA), the two organisations that have been taking the lead in the region, supported in particular by the Barbados Workers' Union, the ILO and UN Women. Also present was the IDWN Coordinator Elizabeth Tang.

The Caribbean Domestic Workers' Network (CDWN) now provides a focus to mobilise domestic workers across the region's islands, to strengthen their organisations, and to lobby for ratification C189, legal rights, better pay and access to social security. It also wants to develop professional standards for domestic workers. In Jamaica alone, there are some 60,000 domestic workers, though only 203 are officially registered.

## IN THIS NEWSLETTER

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# IDWN members organising around the world



**Below are some of the actions by network members to promote ratification of C189 and other rights, and to strengthen their organisations.**

**To find out more and what's coming up, contact the IDWN Regional Coordinators or visit:  
[www.domesticworkerrights.org](http://www.domesticworkerrights.org)**

## AFRICA

A few years ago, the IDWN knew of only 9 domestic workers' organisations in Africa. Now we are working with unions in 15 countries in East, Southern and West Africa, with three more likely soon, including in North Africa.

**Tanzania:** On 13 December, the union for domestic workers in Tanzania, CHODAWU, held an event for the ratification of C189, officiated by the Minister of Labour and Employment, Hon. Gaudensia Kabaka. She confirmed the Tanzanian Government recognises domestic workers as workers and they expect to ratify C189 soon. The Ministry has translated C189 into Swahili so it can be widely understood, and is planning education on it for all labour officers and MPs. The Inspectorate will soon start inspecting domestic workplaces. The Employers' Association has announced its support.

**South Africa:** On 18 December, domestic workers stood in front of South Africa's Parliament in Cape Town to launch the '12 by 12' campaign. They wore campaign aprons and carried placards to challenge their Government to speed up its actions. SADSAWU is aiming to get plenty of media exposure to keep the pressure on.

**Guinea:** On 15 December, after returning home from the IDWN regional conference in Kenya, Asmaou Bah Doukouré, Secretary General of the SYNTRAD domestic workers' union, held a press conference in Conakry. She explained C189 to the media, and appealed to her Government to be among the first 12 countries to ratify it.

**Benin:** On 31 December 2011 in the city of Parakou, 60 people came together from the SYNEHM and SEHM/BA unions that operate in different regions of the country. Brother Raimi Fataou of SYNEHM explained about the C189 and the IDWN. Together they drew up plans for their ratification efforts, including information in all languages used in the country, meetings with government officials, and media coverage. On 17 January, SYNEHM was invited to the Labour Ministry where they heard that C189 is being submitted to the Council of Ministers to start the ratification process.

**Ghana:** While there in early December, the IDWN Steering Committee met with the Minister of Employment and Social Welfare, Hon. E.T. Mensah. Soon after C189 was adopted, his Government set up a Task Force and his officials are preparing a memorandum for Parliament to call for ratification. An IDWN press conference, hosted by the Ghana Trades Union Congress, gained good TV and media coverage in the country.

**Kenya:** Domestic workers rallied in large numbers in two cities, Nairobi and Mombasa, on 18 December to launch the '12 by 12' campaign. Their government has indicated it will soon ratify C189. The KUDHEIHA union has published a book 'Organising Domestic Workers in Kenya: a Success Story and a Call to Action', written by domestic workers, with support from WIEGO and IDWN.

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## ASIA



**Indonesia:** A draft Bill on domestic workers has been dropped several times from the national legislative programme. For several days and nights in mid-December, hundreds of domestic workers and supporters from the major unions were mobilised by the Jala-PRT network to demonstrate and 'clean' outside Parliament and the Labour Ministry. They want the Bill brought back in, and C189 to be ratified. In Indonesia, there are over 10 million domestic workers, and they account for most of Indonesia's 6 million migrant workers.

**India:** Domestic workers and supporters held a press conference in the Indian capital New Delhi on 18 December, and got good media coverage for the '12 by 12' campaign. India is considering a new national policy for domestic workers, including access to social security, and a helpline to report sexual violence. It is stressing regulation of placement agencies for workers' going abroad. Nalini Nayak, General Secretary of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in Kerala state, welcomed the positive aspects, and the short timeline of 13 months to bring in the reforms. But she said that they still want full ratification of C189, and at a similarly speedy pace. Leaders of the major union federations Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS) and INTUC told the press they will help lobby for ratification.



**Taiwan:** On 18 December, in the capital city Taipei, hundreds of local and migrant workers brought banners and paper robots to demand a paid day off. For 8 years, MENT (Taiwan Migrant Workers' Alliance) has been fighting for a Domestic Service Act. But recently the Taiwan Government drafted a Bill where domestic workers' paid days off are still negotiable. There are about 86,000 migrant domestic workers in Taiwan, and only one in ten of them get a paid day off.

**Thailand:** On 8-9 October, 100 domestic workers gathered in Bangkok at the first national conference of domestic workers in Thailand, organised by HomeNet Thailand and the ILO. They are on their way to forming the Do It Domestic Workers' Union.

**Hong Kong:** On 30 September, the High Court ruled that an immigration regulation barring migrant domestic workers from the right to abode is unconstitutional. Yet migrant domestic workers continue to face serious discrimination and hostility. On 18 December, the Federation of Asian Domestic Workers Unions (FADWU) launched the '12 by 12' campaign. Dressed as angels in aprons, members demanded recognition and rights, calling out "We CARE for Hong Kong!"

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## MIDDLE EAST

**Palestine:** The IDWN Asia Regional Coordinator Ip Pui Yu spoke to 150 participants at a conference on the rights of Palestinian working women in Ramallah on 29-30 November, organised by MUSAWA and Relief International. She shared with them the organising experiences of domestic workers and the campaign for C189.



**Turkey:** The IMECE Women's Union held a street signature campaign in Istanbul on 4 December, demanding recognition for domestic workers as workers in labour laws and access to social security. Reaction from the public was very good - many crossed the street to sign.

## EUROPE

The European Parliament, based in Brussels, is a key focus. In May 2011, MEPs voted in favour of the proposed Convention and are now coming under pressure to ratify C189. On 5 October, IDWN Chair Myrtle Witbooi attended a Day of Action there, organised by the Solidar network and timed just before the World Day for Decent Work.

On 19 December, hundreds of domestic workers cleaned the steps and polished the railings in front of the European Parliament buildings, to launch the '12 by 12' campaign. They were joined by speakers from the ITUC, European TUC, and the host Belgian unions, as well as IDWN European Regional Coordinator Karin Pape (see photo on page 4).

**Netherlands:** Domestic workers and cleaners in the FNV Bondgenoten union went on strike in January for a better Collective Agreement. Among their demands are more reasonable working hours. Also, only domestic workers who work for agencies are now covered by the Agreement, and they want it extended to private employers. This would be a step towards being recognised as 'workers' under Dutch law, rather than 'freelancers' as they are now. The Dutch Government voted for C189 but immediately said it will not ratify it. IDWN video messages of support to the strikers are at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=LKy-AJZG18](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LKy-AJZG18)

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## NORTH AMERICA

**USA:** In an historic moment on 15 December, Our Thelma from the Filipino Workers Center in Los Angeles stood by President Obama when he announced new proposed regulations to end the exclusion of millions of home care workers from minimum wage and overtime protections. During February 2012, the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) is mobilising to get these proposals agreed.

They welcome letters of support: [www.domesticworkers.org/urgent-call-to-action-comment-on-new-proposed-regulations-by-february-27](http://www.domesticworkers.org/urgent-call-to-action-comment-on-new-proposed-regulations-by-february-27)

Following the success of the Hollywood movie 'The Help' set in the 1950s, the NDWA has made its own movie featuring some of today's real-life domestic workers: <http://on.fb.me/bethehelp>

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## LATIN AMERICA



**Dominican Republic:** The '12 by 12' campaign was launched there on 19 December, supported by Regional Coordinator Marcelina Bautista.

**Peru:** The Flora Tristan Centre in Lima, which focuses on women's issues, has produced a leaflet on C189 and is doing training to raise more awareness.

[www.flora.org.pe](http://www.flora.org.pe)

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## CARIBBEAN

**Jamaica:** The Jamaica Household Workers' Association (JHWA) has won the support of the University and Allied Workers' Union to ask the Jamaica Confederation of Trade Unions to lobby all Caribbean heads of governments for ratification of C189. Meanwhile, 19 domestic workers have been trained by the ILO Caribbean Office to raise awareness about decent work and child labour. JHWA membership continues to rise.

**Trinidad and Tobago:** The National Union of Domestic Employees (NUDE) has a new website, including an on-line petition for the ratification of C189: [www.tntunprotectedworkersunion.com](http://www.tntunprotectedworkersunion.com)

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## HISTORIC C189 VOTE ON YOUTUBE

To see a video of the moment when C189 was adopted by the ILO in Geneva on 16 June 2011, taken by US Government representative Shailor, go to : [www.youtube.com/watch?v=KaTpHu7LVkE&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KaTpHu7LVkE&feature=related)

## GLOBAL UNIONS PLEDGE ON-GOING SUPPORT

*"Domestic workers won one of the best fought and most justified victories ever on 16 June 2011 when C189 was adopted. The voices, experiences and visions of domestic workers themselves were finally heard and respected, not only within the trade union movement but also by governments and many employers.*

*The momentum built up within the IDWN to take part in the ILO process leading to the Convention was impressive and inspiring. Domestic workers raised awareness and mobilised worldwide support in a way that could be a lesson for many.*

*Domestic workers know that the victory is not complete until C189 is translated into national legal instruments and collective agreements. Even then, they know they face a permanent struggle for rights and standards. So now, perhaps an even harder fight must be fought.*

*Uncompromising support from the whole trade union movement is crucial. We are confident that unions around the world will actively support the struggle of domestic workers for equal rights with other workers.*

*We are very proud that the IUF has been able to support domestic workers' organisations in this, and we are strongly committed to further support as they seek to reinforce their organisations and realise their objectives. This could include even stronger institutional ties, if they so wish."*



**Ron Oswald** is the General Secretary of the IUF, the global union for food and allied workers worldwide. Without the IUF's support for the IDWN, we could never have won the ILO Convention on Decent Work for Domestic Workers No.189. Now, IUF unions around the world have been re-stating their on-going support.



The IUF Asia/Pacific regional conference invited IDWN Coordinator Elizabeth Tang, as well as Sayuti and Nur, domestic workers from the Tunas Mulia Domestic Workers' Union, and Lita Anggraini of the Jala PRT network in Indonesia to speak at its conference in Bali in October 2011. A resolution passed calls on all affiliated unions to work with the IDWN and be pro-active in the campaign to ratify and implement C189 in the next 5 years.

The IUF Latin America and African conferences have pledged similar support, as have IUF Caribbean Regional Secretary, Clifton Grant (Jamaica), and President, Seepaul Narine (Guyana).

## "UNIONS TOOK IT TO THEIR HEART"

*"Winning C189 last year was a real victory for everyone involved. Such progress was possible only because of the involvement of all parties, and the central role of domestic workers themselves. It was extraordinary to see how unions took it to their hearts, and how they let domestic workers take the lead. All the campaigning and conferences and so on by the IDWN, the IUF and others made a huge difference to the ITUC. Then, when C189 was won, there was a sense that this was a victory for all.*



*Now is the time for ratification and action. With the '12 by 12' campaign, it is very important to keep the alliances we created active, at national and international levels. In each country, we need also to look at what rights already apply to domestic workers, and what needs to be improved, including how the laws are implemented.*

*We should learn from this experience all that we can, and encourage all affiliated unions to organise domestic workers. This will not only support the domestic workers but strengthen the whole union movement, at home and internationally."*

**Diana Holland** is Chair of the Women's Committee of the ITUC, the global trade union confederation that also played a key role in mobilising unions to win C189. At home in the UK, Diana is Assistant General Secretary for Equalities of the Unite union. There she has helped build a strong relationship between organised migrant domestic workers, their supporters, and the unions.

**THESE ARE EXTRACTS FROM A LONGER INTERVIEW, SEE: [www.domesticworkerrights.org](http://www.domesticworkerrights.org)**



## '12 BY 12'

The ITUC, in partnership with the IDWN, IUF, PSI, ETUC, Human Rights Watch, Solidar, World Solidarity, Migrant Forum Asia and others, is campaigning to get the first 12 countries to ratify C189 in 2012.

To launch this campaign, on 18 and 19 December 2011 domestic workers' organisations and ITUC affiliated unions across the world held public actions – from the Philippines, to Senegal, Kenya, Dominican Republic, Sri Lanka, Jordan, Columbia, and more, including many IDWN members (see more inside).

[www.ituc-csi.org/domestic-workers-campaign-12-by-12.html](http://www.ituc-csi.org/domestic-workers-campaign-12-by-12.html)

[www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=739448849#!/groups/231305920281513/](http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=739448849#!/groups/231305920281513/)

## ABOUT THE IDWN

The International Domestic Workers Network (IDWN) is made up of domestic workers' organisations, including trade unions, around the world. Our Steering Committee comprises representatives from domestic workers' organisations, and we are provided with an organisational base by the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF). We are also supported by Women in Informal Employment Globalising and Organising (WIEGO).

[www.domesticworkerrights.org](http://www.domesticworkerrights.org) – look out for our new website coming soon.

