

Press Release

8.5 Million Domestic Workers are looking for their Rights to be recognized

Islamabad: 16 June: 8.5 Million including women, girls and boys are engaged with domestic work in Pakistan. They are not recognized as labor according to labor Law's definition, therefore they are vulnerable to all kind of exploitation in the market. This sector contributes significant portion in the informal economy of the Pakistan. The Domestic workers convention is organized by Plan International, Pakistan and its partner Home Net with collaboration of the Domestic workers Union in Islamabad, to raise voice for the rights of domestic workers and bringing them under the umbrella of the labor regulations.

The First Convection of Domestic workers' is observing the third anniversary of ILO convention C189, which was adopted by the general assembly on 16 June 2011. Speaking on the occasion, President of the Domestic workers Union Ms Shagufta said that the DW Union is a symbol of unity for the rights of domestic workers in Islamabad. We have learned the meaning of organized workforce and collective action and as a result union is formed to raise our voice for our rights and we demand fair and equal wages." "After a long struggle we have realized that we are also workers and should be covered in Labour laws. The DWs Union has launched a campaign for equal and minimum wages and One day Paid leave." she concluded.

Speaking on the occasion Ms Iffat Jamil , Urban Program Unit Manager form Plan International, Pakistan talked about Plan's right based approach where people are capacitated to raise their voices for their rights and approach duty bearers for sustainable solutions.

Ume Laila Azhar- Executive Director HomeNet Pakistan briefed that the violence on women in Pakistan is increasing and with regard to the domestic workers it has increased since last few years. The domestic workers are a force of informal labour in Pakistan. The need of the time is that government should ratify ILO convention C 189 on domestic workers and make laws in line with the convention to protect domestic workers of Pakistan. Articles 25, 26, 27 of Pakistan Constitution emphasize equality, non- discrimination and safeguards against discriminations on the basis of sex and all other forms. The country has also committed itself to improve gender inequalities by ratifying UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) along with two ILO fundamental Conventions of Equal Remuneration and of Discrimination in Employment and Occupation.

The violation of women workers rights are primarily connected to the abrogation of labour laws in informal economy where most of women are working as "unpaid family helpers". The present situation demands major decisions on following lines from governments on priority basis to bring positive changes in the lives of the domestic workers.

The speakers said that the contribution of these workers goes largely unnoticed by society and they are also deprived of any legal and social protection.

The Ms Shahina from women worker union said that the workers and trade unionist of Pakistan condemn the violence inflicted on the domestic workers women and children and support the CSOs in taking forward the Ratification of ILO C 189. She said that we demand the ratification of C189 with immediate actions and extension of Sexual harassment act to the domestic workers.

Salman Ali and Khadajia, Legal experts gave their analysis on the domestic workers bill tabled in the senate. They proposed that the state should take responsibility for the social protection of the domestic workers. Ms Farkhanda from Aurat foundation said that the effort for the protection and regulation of domestic workers is applauded and commendable. The movement for the domestic workers visibility and bringing them under regulation will definitely be supported by the civil society organizations working for women rights. Ms Zahida from Pakistan workers federation ensured full support for the federation in educating the domestic workers union. Ms Shaqufta, President domestic workers union announced a campaign of domestic workers on minimum and equal wages and one day paid leave form work in a week .

The speakers collectively demanded data collection for situational analysis of domestic workers in Pakistan, ratification of ILO C189, registration of domestic workers, inclusion of domestic work as work category in the labour force survey, regulation of DWs under labour laws, access of social protection and minimum wages.

The declaration of the Convention demands:

1. Demand for fair and Minimum Wage
2. Demand for One day Paid leave for domestic workers
3. Government should ratify ILO convention C 189 on domestic workers
4. Protect domestic workers against violence
5. Demand for extending labor laws to domestic workers

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