



## **ILO-IDWF-ITUC Regional Workshop on Organising Domestic Workers: an exchange of knowledge and experience among practitioners**

**25-27 September 2015, Bangkok, Thailand**

### **I. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT**

The joint collaboration of the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF), International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) brought together various representatives of unions and domestic workers organisations across the region in a sharing workshop held in Bangkok, Thailand. Around 56 participants, most of them are domestic workers, union leaders and union organisers themselves, attended the meeting and shared their knowledge and experiences on organising domestic workers both in receiving and destination countries. They were joined the domestic workers leaders from South Africa and the United States.

It is not oblivious to organizers and domestic workers themselves that organising into a collective and creating a critical mass is a daunting task especially in countries of origin and destination where labour laws are flawed and that C189 has not been ratified. The legal impediments and practical challenges that obviously create insecurity among domestic workers have made organising difficult. These are:

- Domestic workers are frequently excluded from labour legislation, thus, they are sometimes not identified as workers in law; by default they are not able to exercise their right to organize and bargain collectively.
- Organising domestic workers require patience and innovation in terms of maximising the workers' limited time and resources so that a stable network is established.
- Fear of losing job or work/residency permits deters domestic workers from getting organised.
- Lack of awareness on rights as domestic workers.

With this backdrop, the workshop reflected on these challenges and generated discourse among the participants on how to move forward. The workshop served as a platform for exchanges on lessons learned, challenges, and best practices on organising as well as for building solidarity among unions and associations towards a national, bi-national and regional cooperation for campaigns and advocacy on decent work for migrant domestic workers.

### **II. WORKSHOP AGENDA AND TOPICS**

The workshop agenda provided opportunities for participants to share their knowledge and experience on the following topics: (Refer to Annex 1 for full Agenda and Program.)

1. Rights and protections of migrant domestic workers
  - Building/strengthening of strategic advocacy and campaign plans at national and regional level (including cooperation at a bi-national level)
  - Building/strengthening of strategic alliances between national centers and unions/associations of domestic workers
  - Assessing on a regular basis trends, developments concerning migrant domestic workers including the role of governments and employment agencies
2. Organising and building strong unions of (migrant) domestic workers
  - Showcasing good models of a) organising strategies and b) trade unions led by (migrant) domestic workers

- Extract key factors to build sustainable and strong unions and identify the role national centres and unions can play to build capacity among migrant domestic workers to build stronger unions
- Migrant domestic workers as leaders: methodologies on leadership building

### III. PARTICIPANTS AND ORGANIZERS

A total of 56 participants representing various trade unions and domestic workers organisations across 17 countries participated in the three-day workshop (Refer to Annex 2 for full list of participants with their contact details). Out of this 56, 45 are women while 11 are men. Forty-five participants were able to attend the whole duration of workshop while 11 participated in some of the sessions. There was one dedicated documenter for the meeting and four Thai interpreters that ensured that language was not an issue in the workshop. The large number of women representation in the workshop demonstrates the phenomenon of feminization of migration in the world especially in domestic work.

Representation of organisations and unions per country in the workshop are outlined below:

- Bangladesh: Ovivashi Karmi Unnayan Program (OKUP) National Domestic Women Workers Union (NDWWU)
- Cambodia: Cambodian Domestic Workers Network (CDWN)
- India: Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), National Domestic Workers' Movement (NDWM); Self Employed Women Association (SEWA), National Domestic Workers Federation (NDWF), and Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS)
- Indonesia: Konfederasi Serikat Buruh Sejahtera Indonesia (KSBSI, IMWU Nederland), Solidaritas Perempuan (SP/Women's Solidarity for Human Rights), Serikat Buruh Migran Indonesia (SBMI), and Confederation Indonesia Trade Union (KSPI)
- Hong Kong: Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Union (HKCTU) and Hong Kong Federation of Asian Domestic Workers Unions (FADWU)
- Nepal: Nepal Trade Union Congress (NTUC), All Nepal Federation of Trade Unions (ANTUF), and General Federation of Nepalese Trade Union (GEFONT)
- South Africa: South Africa Domestic Service and Allied Workers Union (SADSAWU)
- Somalia: Federation of Somali Trade Unions (FESTU)
- Singapore: Humanitarian Organisation for Migration Economics (HOME)
- Philippines: Federation of Free Workers (FFW), Alliance of Workers in the Informal Economy Sector (ALLWIES)
- Malaysia: SENTRO, UNIMAD-SENTRO
- Lebanon: Domestic Workers' Union of Lebanon
- USA: National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA)
- Thailand: Network of Domestic Workers in Thailand (NDWT), Foundation for Labour and Employment Promotion, and Homeworkers Network (HOMENET)

The workshop organising team was composed of:

- ITUC: Marieke Koning and ITUC-Asia Pacific Anna Lee Tuvera,
- ILO: Maria Elena Valenzuela, ILO Geneva/GAP-MDW Coordinator, Igor Bosc and Claire Hobden, ILO Geneva
- IDWF: Fish Ip, Asia Regional Coordinator and Elizabeth Tang, Secretary General
- HOMENET: Chonticha Tang

The meeting was supported by the ILO's Work in Freedom and Global Action Program on Migrant Domestic Workers and their Families (GAP-MDW).

### IV. WORKSHOP ORGANISATION, PROCESS AND CONTENT

#### Day 1

#### Opening Session

Maria Elena Valenzuela of ILO's GAP-MDW welcomed everyone by expressing her thanks to the participants especially the domestic workers who were able to make it to the workshop. She also mentioned about the EU's valuable support to the project.

The role of the ILO was highlighted in terms of supporting the struggle of domestic workers. Vote of thanks was expressed to Elizabeth Tang of IDWF for the opportunity that was given to ILO so that they can further demonstrate their work on domestic workers. Maria Elena gave a brief background on how the meeting will proceed. She said that the three-day meeting will allow everyone to discuss about what has been done, what was achieved so far, and what are the challenges in advancing and protecting the rights of domestic workers in the world. She also underscored that the meeting will enable that participants to develop an action plan for the migrant domestic workers (MDW) rights. She also introduced Igor Bosc and Claire Hobden as part of the ILO team attending the meeting and who has been with the MDWs rights for a long time.

She gave an introduction for each of the members of the panel before inviting them to speak.

### ***From Myanmar to Thailand: A Domestic Worker's Story***

*Kyan Par (Mrs. Champa), NDWT*

Mrs Champa's story of her long journey to and experience in Thailand reflects her personal hardships as well as her aspirations in life. She was only 17 years old when she first came to Thailand to work. She had to lie about her age by making herself old-looking. She was eager to earn money so she could provide for her family. She strived hard, switching from one job to another. She was not aware of her rights as a domestic worker. She worked for most of 23 years in Thailand without any NGO that she could go to. Later on she was able to muster some self-confidence to assert for a holiday from her employer. She was able to get it. From that day on, she started to learn to negotiate with her employer.

### ***Story of the Need to Organise***

*Myrtle Witbooi, IDWF President and SADSAWU General Secretary*

Myrtle Witbooi underscored the importance of solidarity and collective action to fight for the rights of the workers around the world. She also stressed that strong women are needed to carry on the fight. Organising the voices of domestic workers will enable them to collectively identify their demands and formulate a vision. She invited everyone to join her in singing the 'I am a Unionist' song.

### ***ITUC's Word of Thanks***

*Marieke Koning, ITUC Brussels*

Marieke Koning expressed her gratitude for allowing her to continue share her experiences as a trade unionist for 20 years. In her years working with the unions, she highlighted the indomitable spirit of domestic workers who have achieved a number of victories. She reminded the participants that there are still challenges ahead in terms of accessing rights as workers so it is crucial for domestic workers be informed of their rights. She thanked the organisers for supporting ITUC in the meeting and applauded the representation of affiliates of ITUC and IDWF. She closed her speech by keeping the morale of the participants up, saying that the workshop will enable them to identify the root-causes of the struggles so that a roadmap can be crafted to secure the protection of the rights of the migrant domestic workers.

### ***ILO's Word of Thanks***

*Igor Bosc, ILO*

Igor Bosc welcomed the participants and expressed his anticipation that the meeting will be learning opportunity for him especially in the work and efforts that have been happening in South Asia and the Middle East. He posed two questions to the participants: 'How do we prepare migrant workers better? What are the tools needed?'

## **Introduction of Participants and the Program**

This session was facilitated by Fish Ip of IDWF where participants were asked to introduce themselves according to their country grouping. The participants were able to briefly say something about their organisations and experiences in organising in their respective places of work or countries of origin.

## **Part 1. Rights and Protections of Migrant Domestic Workers**

This session on which was introduced by Elizabeth Tang and later on moderated by Anna Lee Tuvera of ITUC Asia-Pacific focused on the ‘**Trends and Developments on Migrant Domestic Workers**’ and the ‘**Global Care Chain**’ phenomenon. Important insights on migration and labour, particularly on domestic work, seen under the lens of globalisation were discussed by Maria Elena Valenzuela and Igor Bosc. Both presentations set the tone of the workshop in terms of the socio-economic and political underpinnings of labour, migration and domestic work. This part of the program was further unpacked thereafter by two panels which showcased some international and bi-national campaign models.

Maria Elena began her presentation on ‘Globalization, Migration and Care’ by ensuring to the participants that she will speak in understandable English so that she would make better connection and impact. In her presentation, she pointed out that under the current age of globalisation; there is an increasing number of women migrant domestic workers which reflected the socio-economic condition of both the sending and receiving countries. The increasing participation of women in the labour force creates a crisis of care scenario where the traditional reproductive role of women is being challenged. She also put this in context where reproductive labour performed by women domestic workers, whether in the countries of origin or in destination countries, is challenged by the effects of changes in demography, poverty (income and time), restrictive market policies, privatisation and deregulation issues. Despite the many accolades made by world economists on the free market model under the guise of globalisation, the current legal and political structures do not guarantee that the rights of the workers, particularly the women migrant domestic workers, are protected. (See Annex 3 for full presentation.)

In connection with Maria Elena’s presentation, Igor Bosc underscored that under the current scenario, the wages seem to have stagnated and flattening out in many of the middle income in industrial and urban context which pushed the development of many labour movements. He stressed that the issue of crisis of care, which is developing at a higher speed, should be well understood by looking at the push and pull factors of migration. By doing so, Igor maintained that trade unions will be able to organise themselves better in terms of building solidarity with domestic workers and expanding it beyond the usual network to undertake policy advocacy and campaigns for increased protection of rights and addressing the vulnerabilities of workers and their families.

The rich presentation of insights made by the two presenters garnered interesting questions and comments from the plenary which were responded not only by the speakers but the participant themselves as well. In summary, the points made during the open forum are:

- *Needs explanation on the contradicting data on migrant population:* There is a tool and special methodology that will calculate data on migrant domestic workers among domestic workers which will be issued in a month or so.
- *On reference on domestic workers as low-skilled or semi-skilled:* How domestic work is defined is based on the society’s value to work. It is important to push for the professionalisation of domestic work so that its value is duly accorded. The crisis of care should be discussed globally stressing on the role of the States so that issues of reproductive role and labour should be addressed.
- *On decent wage Asia floor wage:* Common wage will be difficult to determine as it will be based on the different contexts in Asia. Wage should also be discussed in terms of entitlements like maternity leave, among others. Trade unions should propose concrete policy solutions to address issues on wages, working conditions, rights protections. Unions who are employers as well should develop model agreements to recommend to unions.
- *On organising techniques and some examples on expanding migrants’ movement:* Issue of domestic work should be connected to other issue-based organisations like feminist movements, environmental movements, social justice movements so that we can face all the challenges of globalization together.

Taking off from the presentations in the morning, two examples of **global campaigns and lobby models** were showcased by ITUC’s Marieke Koning on the 12 by 12 campaign and IDWF’s Elizabeth Tang on the baseline survey on its affiliates around the world. This panel was moderated by Anna Lee Tuvera of ITUC-AP.

The 12 by 12 campaign demonstrated the need for a strong policy advocacy platform to build alliances with different stakeholders working for labour reforms and rights protection of workers to compel governments to ratify C189. So far, the campaign has managed to gain partnerships from national centres, unions and domestic workers and their families in 93 countries. On the other hand, Elizabeth’s presentation demonstrated the need to have baseline information on IDWF’s affiliates to better cater to the organising and capacity building programs designed for migrant domestic workers. The survey was able to collect data on the following: a) organising strategies, b) internal democracy, c) leadership building, d) financial systems and accountability mechanisms, e) support services for migrant DW, f) relationship with trade unions, and g) perceived value of joining IDWF. Based on this information, IDWF was able to use the data in terms of defining the strategic direction of the federation with its affiliates in 46 countries for the next five years.

During the open forum, the participants were able to raise their comments and questions on the following:

- *On data regarding organised employers (trade unionist) in the surveyed employers of the domestic workers:* Employer’s organising is more apparent in South Africa, Nigeria, Zambia, France, Italy regarding collective bargaining. My Fair Home campaign is a strategy to get the support of the employers for domestic workers’ protection of rights even without the ratification of C189. They play can compel governments to increase the protection of MDWs. Trade unionists can play an important role in encouraging the organisation of employers themselves (Zambia, Malaysia, and the Philippines) to support the advocacy on domestic workers rights.
- *On organising in the Middle East:* Indeed it is very hard to organise in ME considering the deprivation of basic rights of domestic workers there, but it is still possible if we look at the case of Judith in Lebanon. There is a need to pressure on governments and employers to support the plight of the domestic workers.
- *On reasons for keeping countries from ratifying C189:* There is an ILO global survey that will be released soon.
- *On China and the migration phenomenon:* China has the biggest number of internal migrant domestic workers

Elizabeth and Marieke closed the morning session by saying that there is a dedicated panel/groupwork on MDWs organising so comments and questions on this regard can be raised there as well. Marieke pointed out that in the case of C189 ratification advocacy, everyone should be strategic on China’s changing and promising position on C189.

The afternoon session was introduced by a memory exercise (An Asian Overview on Migrant Domestic Workers) facilitated by Leema Rose George of NDWM India. It was a fun and interactive quiz game of 12 questions where participants were able to refresh their memory about MDW statistics, push and pull factors of migration, migration demography, founding date of C189, among others. Winners were given for prizes the following day.

### **Panel 1. Showcasing Binational Cooperation to protect migrant domestic workers**

This panel on bilateral cooperation was moderated by Elizabeth Tang. Three speakers coming from Nepal, Somalia, and Malaysia shared their organising strategies especially in terms of how they overcome the challenges that come with it. A summary of the presentations made by Farah Lamaane of FESTU (Somalia), Bidur Karki of GEFONT (Nepal), and Luella Aaron Mirafuentes of SENTRO (Malaysia) are discussed below:

<b>FESTU Somalia</b>	<b>GEFONT Nepal</b>	<b>SENTRO Malaysia</b>
<b>Context</b>		
Thousands of Somalis risk their lives and resources to work in Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Qatar as domestic workers. Human trafficking in Africa is rampant. Workers face a range of challenges in terms of visa/work permit and pay	Domestic work is not recognized as work in a poor country like Nepal. Adults and children engage in domestic work and become vulnerable to harassment and human rights violations. Thirty percent of illegal workers are women. Despite being invisible, domestic workers are	Work contracts signed by Filipino domestic workers in the Philippines are not honoured in Malaysia. Domestic work is not recognized and is considered as domestic servitude in Malaysia.

insecurities, abuses and exploitation, and legal discrimination from employers.	considered as an important sector in the informal economy.	
<b>Course of Action</b>		
FESTU with the help of the Somali Embassies in Saudi Arabia and UAE formed two Migrant Workers Committees, one in Saudi Arabia and another in UAE. The committees serve as interlocutors between FESTU and victim workers. The committees collect information about the situation of migrant workers and relay information to their families. FESTU and the committees put pressure on Somali government to address any violations committed by perpetrators in UAE and Saudi.	GEFONT has been undertaking community organising focused on women and illegal migrant workers. It has an ongoing campaign on ‘Decent Work for Domestic Work’ locally and internationally. It has undertaken advocacy and awareness raising activities in Lebanon as well as pre-departure and post arrival trainings for domestic workers in Lebanon. Some of its future plans in expanding its work in Middle Eastern countries are the following: a) organise MDWs in Qatar, Lebanon, UAE, Malaysia (MTUC), Hong Kong and Korea; b) conduct activities against all kinds of abuses; c) effectively mobilise the GSG in UAE, Bahrain and Kuwait; d) contact building in Israel and Saudi.	SENTRO was able to conduct two meetings with MTUC and has now been working closely with them. UNIMAD is on its way to being registered as an affiliate with the Philippine Embassy in Malaysia. This way, SENTRO-UNIMAD will be able to collectively assert for the legal identity of domestic workers as workers in Malaysia. It has contacted CDWN Cambodia and GEFONT Nepal for campaign collaboration. Also there is an MOU between Malaysia and Bangladesh regarding workers to be sent to Malaysia.

The three presentations were able to spark further discussions between the participants and the panellists. The highlights of the Open Forum are presented below:

- *On migrant crisis in Europe:* Labour dimensions should be analysed to see how intermediaries and recruitment agencies are at play.
- *On examples of bilateral cooperation between governments.* SENTRO-UNIMAD work more with service organisations and not with governments. FESTU pursues the governments to coordinate with each other so that better working conditions are given to Somali domestic workers. There is another side of the coin where Malaysia and Bangladesh recently entered into an agreement to recruit 200,000 workers from Bangladesh despite the thousands of undocumented Bangladeshi workers who are already there in Malaysia. This has been seen as a money-making business for Bangladesh.
- *On level of organising and negating for domestic workers.* In Malaysia, SENTRO-UNIMAD was able to enter in an agreement with MTUC through its policy making processes. In Nepal, GEFONT continues its lobbying effort to recognise domestic work. Due to its advocacy, domestic workers were able to enjoy some holidays and the use of mobile phones at work.
- *On conditions of women.* There should be better linkages between receiving and sending countries, like Africa to ensure that women migrant domestic workers are protected from any forms of exploitation.
- *On awareness raising program for Somali youth at risk.* FESTU works with anti-trafficking NGOs who directly coordinate with the youth. FESTU meanwhile provides platforms in discussing migration risks.

## **Panel 2. Showcasing campaign and lobby models aimed at winning rights for MDWers in law and practice**

This panel was moderated by Marieke Koning. She briefly introduced what was being expected in the panel and invited the three presenters – Sonia of SEWA India, Erna Murniaty of SBMI Indonesia, and Leo Tang of HKCTU—to join her in the panel. The highlights of their presentations are discussed below.

<b>SEWA India</b>	<b>SBMI Indonesia</b>	<b>HKCTU Hong Kong</b>
<b>Organisational Profile</b>		
As a recognised trade union in based in Kerala, India, SEWA’s priority is organising local and		HKCTU has a domestic workers affiliate (FADWU) which is an affiliate of IDWF. FADWU



migrant domestic workers and building their skills for decent work and C189 ratification campaigns. It is an IDWF affiliate and serves as the national centre of informal workers in the country.		brings together several migrants unions and organizations and a local one. Its main objective is to improve the lives of migrants. It advocates for labour law reforms and implementation such as the ‘no placement fees’ in HK.
<b>Effective Campaign and Lobbying Strategies</b>		
Organising strategy involves house to house visits and working with families and communities in the district, bloc and national levels. SEWA also made use of the baseline survey they conducted to inform their organising activities. Community building of DWs, rights based awareness raising and production of educational materials about safe migration proved effective strategies in SEWA’s work. The involvement of DWs in the campaign contributed to their personal growth.	Rights education are done to be able to give them capacity on how they can they help themselves and others. Organising is done at the local level which includes migrant domestic workers. Local economy development program for migrant returnees is developed so that they have the option not to return abroad to work.	HKCTU plans for a more vigorous campaign against illegal agency fee collected in HK. HKCTU has the data to back up for legislative and government lobbying as well as links with migrant and labour movements, NGOs, and other TUs. Because of this rich connection with the migrant movements, it was able to organise social dialogues so that migrant and labour issues and concepts are mainstreamed from the national level down to the local contexts.

Based on the presentations made by the three country organisations, participants were able to raise some questions and comments to this panel. A range of questions were raised on the following: a) which labour laws are being implemented in the countries discussed in the panel; b) which lobbying techniques with local governments are effective; c) some tips on making organising easier; d) challenges and opportunities in organising in destination countries/places; and e) regarding the 10% upper ceiling for placement of the recruitment agencies. To summarise the responses made by the panellists to the questions raised and the discussions generated in this panel, Marieke concurred that: a) national and cross-national organising on the ratification of C189 is crucial to achieve the mission; b) research is a fundamental requirement for organising and good lobbying strategies; c) rights-based awareness raising is a powerful tool for collective bargaining and personal negotiation (e.g. living wages); d) networking with other groups and formations provides more muscle and content for domestic workers’ advocacy and campaigns.

### **The launching of the ‘My Fair Home’ campaign.**

This session was briefly introduced and moderated by Elizabeth Tang. **Ena** of ILO walked the participants through the campaign by discussing the **My Fair Home** campaign concept, its mechanics and action agenda. To summarise her presentation, the campaign was designed to create public awareness on and to shift public opinion toward supporting and the ratification of C189. It was also envisaged to engage and get the support of the employers so that a fair home/workplace is provided for domestic workers. In the campaign website, people, especially, the employers will be asked to commit into a six-point pledge based on the C189 principles. The campaign also serves as a platform for contact building and networking with concerned citizens, employers, domestic workers, and even government officials who can be engaged in future campaign and advocacy activities of IDWF, ILO and ITUC. Other details of the campaign can be found in their website at [www.idwfed/myfairhome](http://www.idwfed/myfairhome).

In connection with Anna’s presentation, Hester Stephens of SADSAWU shared her organisation’s successful launching of My Fair Home campaign on June 16 in South Africa through a house to house approach. Her employer was the first to sign the document in South Africa. It was a good platform to demonstrate SADSAWU’s steadfast commitment to improve the living conditions of domestic workers in Africa and in the world.

Arising from the presentation, the participants were able to suggest some actions that can be done to publicise the campaign at the national and international levels, specifically on the anniversary of IDWF and the Oct 17 World Day for Domestic Work, to name a few.

A solidarity dinner joined by the Domestic Workers in Thailand, including Burmese domestic workers, concluded the Day 1 program.

## Day 2

To formally open the Day 2 program, a summary of key findings of the two panels discussed in the Day 1 program was presented by Julius Cainglet of Federation of Free Workers (FFW) from the Philippines.

### Part 2. Organising and Building Strong Unions of Migrant Domestic Workers

#### Panel 3. Showcasing good models of a) organising strategies and b) trade unions led by (migrant) domestic workers

Claire Hobden of ILO opened the panel by giving a brief introduction of what was going to be discussed. She advised the participants to think about all the victories in their own countries and try to generate some questions for the panel discussions on organising. Four volunteers were able to share their questions on: a) the need to have critical analysis on policies and laws before strategising for organising; b) rights of undocumented workers; and c) ways to organise domestic workers in difficult conditions (e.g. women locked up). These questions were expected to be answered as the speakers share their experiences in organising. The panellists were Malee Sobroek and Kyan Par (Champa) of Network of Domestic Workers Thailand/HOMENET, Parichart Jaroenon of FADWU Hong Kong, Judith Gunay of DWU Lebanon, and, Jennifer Jullien and Allison Bernard of NDWA USA. Based from their rich experiences in organising, some in difficult situations like Lebanon and tight immigration policies in the USA, the discussions made is summarised below. The questions as well as the responses focused on organising strategies and union formation which were raised during the open forum were also captured in the table below.

Organising Strategies and Achievements	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collective identification of issues and problems</li> <li>• Information sharing among domestic workers</li> <li>• Awareness raising on DW laws and policies and human rights</li> <li>• Building good relationship with DWs and MDWs</li> <li>• Networking with existing organisations and unions: Consult and ask questions!</li> <li>• Develop collective bargaining skills</li> <li>• Register your organisation into a union</li> <li>• Organise regular meetings, formal and informal consultations, and other activities to engage members and potential members</li> <li>• Identify your key advocacy and policy demands (e.g. minimum wage and allowances, right to unionise, holidays, better work conditions, etc.)</li> <li>• Skills and capacity building (speaking, writing, negotiating, campaigning)</li> <li>• Media campaigning issues (minimum wage)</li> <li>• International connections: ILO, IDWF, ITUC</li> <li>• Policy advocacy (Bill of Rights for DWs)</li> <li>• Character and confidence building</li> <li>• Collect a justifiable membership fee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job competition between MDWs and DWs</li> <li>• Job insecurity (no employment contract)</li> <li>• Language barrier among domestic workers</li> <li>• Availability of time of domestic workers to get organised (long work hours/distance of workplace)</li> <li>• Conflicting/unclear immigration policies</li> <li>• Weak implementation of labour laws</li> <li>• Weak or lack of leadership</li> <li>• Funding constraints</li> <li>• Political sabotage – union vs DWs union</li> <li>• Membership expansion</li> <li>• Reaching out with undocumented workers and DWs in difficult situations (no holidays, locked up)</li> </ul>



Following this panel, Fish Ip of IDWF facilitated the group work on **Extracting key factors to build sustainable strong unions**. The participants were divided into five groups. It was suggested in the plenary that a mixed grouping is better than dividing participants according to destination and sending countries. Each group assigned one facilitator and one rapporteur to ensure that all were able to participate in the discussion and notes are kept organised for the group presentations after the group work. Groups were given an hour to discuss among themselves and were expected to produce a 3-5-minute presentation during the reporting back in the plenary.

The key results of the Group Work discussions are summarised below.

Key Factors for a Sustainable Union	Roles of National Centres and Unions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outreaching to domestic workers, including migrants and undocumented workers</li> <li>• Sustained organising and membership expansion</li> <li>• Ownership and confidence building of members</li> <li>• Identifying the needs and issues of DWs and MDWs from countries of origin and destination countries</li> <li>• Plan locally but act globally</li> <li>• Identify short-term and long-term strategies</li> <li>• Capacity and skills building of members on labour laws, C189, human rights, negotiation, collective bargaining</li> <li>• Leadership building among DWs especially women</li> <li>• Financial sustainability/Resource mobilisation</li> <li>• Policy advocacy and campaigns (mass actions): C189, decent work, labour reforms, human rights</li> <li>• Democratic, transparent and accountable systems in the union are in place: infrastructure and structure development</li> <li>• Service delivery: counselling, case intervention, skills training</li> <li>• Providing linkage and referrals to other local and international unions and organisations</li> <li>• Build strong alliances with other unions and international organisations like IDWF, ITUC, ILO</li> <li>• Regular meetings, activities and special events are organised</li> <li>• Engaging in media/social media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing political and technical support and guidance in organising/consolidating DWs/members and negotiating with government and employers</li> <li>• Assistance in policy development regarding the crafting of union constitution and principles</li> <li>• Provide training and education to members</li> <li>• Support in mobilising members to participate in mass actions</li> <li>• Resource development mediation and counselling in terms of conflict</li> <li>• Providing support in media outreach, research and publication</li> <li>• Providing support in international relations in terms of linking/coordinating with INGOs, international unions/GUFs/TUSSOs, UN agencies, intergovernmental agencies like ASEAN, SAARC; networking and alliance building at the national level with human rights organisations and NGOs</li> <li>• Support in the lobby and advocacy programs for legislative agenda and policy changes on MDWs</li> <li>• Build linkages between destination and source countries – national centres; trade unions can be the links.</li> <li>• Act as a neutral and non-bias mediator between national centres and DWs organisations</li> </ul>

Panel 3 was considered a historic one as all members of the panel are domestic workers themselves. Facilitator Claire noted that the solution to the challenges can be overcome by the strength and commitment of the domestic workers who have demonstrated capacities and great potentials in realising the mission to improve the lives of domestic workers around the world. A sign-up sheet for additional information that will be provided by ILO was circulated so that participants can indicate their interest in receiving those.

**Setting the scene: Global policy framework to protect migrant domestic workers and case studies on winning rights and protections of MDWs.**

Built on the ideas presented in the morning, this session led by Maria Elena Valenzuela and Igor Bosc, both of ILO, discussed the policy frameworks that should be understood to protect rights of DWs and the policy entry points that can be identified and maximised for campaigns and advocacy on labour reforms, legislative agenda and the ratification of C189. Igor stressed that to be able to strategically organise both in sending and destination countries, one must understand the social, economic and political contexts; is able to identify entry points for mass actions; and is able to establish a strong force to effect policy change. As already mentioned in some of the discussions since Day 1, examples of entry points are policies on women empowerment, foreign employment, immigration laws, and access to justice. Maria Elena concurred with Igor's presentation adding that domestic workers need to organise for a purpose and create a collective identity so that plans and actions are made clear to promote and affect change on policies, laws and regulations on labour and domestic work. She further stressed that the political agenda should be owned by the members of the union and that this agenda is based on human rights. Lastly, Maria Elena highlighted that in organising, the paradigm shift on how women are undervalued at work should happen, allowing the emergence of empowered women as leaders. These qualities were demonstrated by the case study in SADSAWU where women domestic workers take charge in organising. Hester Stephens was able to share SADSAWU's achievements through their capacity building activities and services offered for domestic workers in South Africa.

This session sparked further discussion in the plenary as participants raised questions and comments regarding the important roles embassies and labour attaches play in cases of abuses to domestic workers (case of Filipinos in Malaysia). The role of trade unions and employers' representatives were also identified as crucial partners in undertaking advocacy on labour policy reforms and legislative agenda for the protection of domestic workers rights. One good example for this is the case of the Philippines. Regional and multilateral organisations such as SAARC, EU and ASEAN can also be instrumental in organising social dialogues and fora among domestic workers, employers and government officials. Specifically on issues on women abuse in domestic work, CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women) can be a good basis for negotiating. Lastly, the role of international organisations, trade unions and federations such as the ILO, IDWF and ITUC can help on building the capacities of domestic workers unions, specifically on organising.

### **Action plan: Rights and Protections of migrant domestic workers**

This part of the program moderated by Marieke served as an introduction to the planning sessions that were done by the participants at the national, bi-national, regional levels. To be able to provide platforms for cooperation and consolidation of campaigns and policy advocacy globally, Anna Lee Tuvera and Fish Ip presented their current actions and plans in ITUC and IDWF in the region respectively. The presentations made were also meant to inspire and challenge the work that the domestic workers are doing. The plans made by ITUC and IDWF (See Annex 4 and 5) can serve as a platform for the participants to be considered in their respective planning sessions. In summary, ITUC and IDWF, building on the power of collective action, hoped to: a) expand membership of DWs to 200,000 in five years (IDWF); build awareness and provide education; b) intensify campaigns and lobbying efforts on C189 ratification, labour policy reforms, and rights protection for DWs; c) provide support for domestic workers; d) engage in research for evidence-based advocacy; e) build stronger networks and alliances with unions, DWs organisations and other NGOs; f) build leadership especially among women; and g) engage in multi-media advocacy and campaigns (esp. social media).

In the group work that followed participants were asked to join a group on sending countries or one in three groups on destination countries. The four groups were instructed to discuss among themselves their plans based on the following guidelines:

- Identify goals for 2016/ 2017 and list the actions/ steps to be taken and indicate the role and responsibilities of the different stakeholders.
- Building/ strengthening an alliance and how to engage allies in the campaign and lobbying activities.

Groups were expected to document the discussion and share four (4) key points of the action plan made in the reporting back session on Day 3.

### **Day 3**

Elizabeth Tang opened the session by inviting Nadia Afrin of OKUP (Bangladesh) to give a welcome exercise. The flow of the program for the last day of the meeting was explained. A recap of Day 2 was given by Sariasih

of HOME Singapore and was followed by the group reporting for the planning group work done the previous day. The four points presented by each group in the plenary produced a summary of issues in destination and source countries as outlined below:

- The compelling need to ratify C189 and the implementation of legal reforms so that domestic workers will be able to allow to unionise;
- Issue on the MDWs law requiring the DWs to have binding/tied-up relationship with their employers;
- Issue on the role of agencies regarding placement fees in the migration process;
- The need to organise and reach out to domestic workers;
- Alliance building between destination and source countries is necessary for stronger campaigns and policy advocacy;
- Negotiation with governments about status of MDWs in destination countries; and
- The need to engage in research on MDWs in destination and source countries (e.g. role of agencies, placement fees, employment contracts). (Refer to Annex 6 for full group report documentation.)

The plenary reporting of groups invited comments from ITUC saying that all the action points presented were rich and clear but should be structured into a coherent plan. It was also pointed out that to be able to sustain the plans, information sharing among each other is crucial. It was also agreed that research and documentation (of DW abuses and exploitation) should play a key part in the action plan so that an evidence-based campaigns and advocacy (e.g. on placement fees, employment agencies, DWs abuses) can be pursued further. Meanwhile, Shigeru Wada of the ILO thanked and congratulated the groups for producing good plans, showing lots of initiatives on the ground. ILO Bangkok office offered to give further assistance to unions and DW organisations should they need help on data and statistics on migration/workers and in explaining complex issues pertaining to labour and migration.

### **Part 3. Finalising and adoption of the national and regional action plan**

Following this discussion, the last and most important group work on national planning was introduced by Elizabeth. Participants were encouraged to change their mind-set from “I can do” to “I will do”. They were also urged to be more specific in their organising targets. National groups were given one hour to discuss their plans and were expected to present the result of the discussions in the plenary. Key points presented by the countries will be included in the summarised version of Workshop Action Plan.<sup>1</sup> (Refer to Annex for details of the national plans.)

#### **Film screening of the OHCHR domestic workers documentary: “I Am Not Here”**

The documentary film, ‘I am not here’, which was released by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in September 2015 exposes the harsh reality of living as an undocumented migrant, domestic worker through the true stories of three courageous women. It represents the different stories of struggles of migrant domestic workers in the world. Jennifer’s (NDWA USA) story is a reflection of perseverance and triumph while the story of Fan as a MDW in Switzerland is a demonstration of great sacrifice for her family. On the other hand, the story of the Bangladeshi girl working in Malaysia demonstrates great pain and suffering from abusive employers. The film can be accessed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v1GY6ItQVaM>. Because of the powerful message created by the film, a commitment was made by the workshop participants to support the plight of and give justice to the Bangladeshi girl. It was suggested that her case be taken up by the UN or in the international court. ITUC responded that this case will be definitely supported by planning to create a global campaign for this to attract international support. The case of Jennifer, meanwhile, prompted a further discussion on her transition as a undocumented to a documented domestic worker.

Carolina Hernandez of OHCHR and Christina Macgillivray, the lead researcher and one of the co-producers of the film, were able to grace the film screening during the workshop. Carolina stressed that the film was envisaged to give voice for the undocumented workers and to build solidarity among MDWs. Responding to the clamour for international support for the Bangladeshi girl, Carolina shared that the OHCHR is committed

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<sup>1</sup> Since the results of the national planning exercise generated points that are similar to the highlights presented in plenary discussions and the two previous group work, details of the per country plans will not be presented in this document. An annexure is provided here so that participants can refer to them when required. A summarised version of both regional and national plans is presented in the Workshop Action Plan duly adopted by the participants at the end of the meeting.

to ensure her surgery and to reopen her which will involve the UN Special Rapporteur on migrant workers and their families.

### **Telling MDWs Stories: Training on Accessing Domestic Workers Communication Network and Other Social Media Tools**

A special hands-on training on effective campaign communication through the use of multi-media and social media tools was facilitated by Fish of IDWF. The training was able to assess the capacity of participants in terms of skills in social media campaigning through various networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, WeChat, and the more traditional way, the website. It was found out in the training that all of the participants regularly use Facebook and the website for information sharing, campaigns, and organising. Some of the issues that were raised in the training pertain to: a) security issues in social media, b) user friendly mobile applications or social networking sites, and c) attractive ways of organising through Facebook.

Julius Cainglet (FFW) and Leo Tang (HKCTU) provided useful tips on how to maximise the social media for campaigning and organising. Some of the tips mentioned in the training are the following:

- Have a clear picture of the message that we want to convey;
- Use some quotes of a prominent person or from an event talking about a specific issue;
- Use Facebook community page for organising which is aimed for external use and Group Page for internal use (members);
- Provide new and interesting information (statistics, data that is readable and understandable);
- When posting photos about a campaign or a petition, caption and deadline should be clear;
- Make use of a popular event to talk about a certain issue (e.g. World Cup finals);
- Use of memes depicting an image and a message in an interesting way; and
- Take advantage of celebrities – ex. CNN Philippines or CNN itself (e.g. interview on child labour).

In addition to this, Fish walked the participants through the IDWF website to reintroduce its content and to encourage them to participate in its online petition and campaigns. Fish also gave some tips of how to easily navigate the IDWF website. Two post graduate students, **Hem and Malaka**, from the Chulalongkorn University MAIDS (MA in International Development Studies) program volunteered to assist the participants during the hands-on training. Participants were able to successfully sign up in IDWF’s various online petition on migrant domestic workers issues being undertaken by its affiliates. To test the knowledge of the participants on the website use, Fish engaged them in a quiz. (Refer to Annex \_\_\_ for the IDWF Communication training guide)

### **Adoption of the Action Plans**

Marieke, Elizabeth, Igor, and Maria Elena tried to summarise the rich details of the regional and national plans discussed by the participants in the workshops. The Workshop Action Plans is presented below.

<b>Main types of capacities</b>	<b>Types of activities</b>	<b>Issues</b>
<i>Strategic advocacy campaigning</i>	Ratification of C189, my fair home and other social media and internet based campaigns, Stop GBV at work Convention, forced labour protocol, recognition of MDW unions, lobbying and advocacy for policy change (campaigns), mass mobilisation, capacity for advocacy for policy change, events days, documenting cases of abuse, advocate for returnee integration services	Legal frameworks including the right to organize, MOUs, implementation, campaign on wages, immigration laws, social security law, recruitment agencies and brokers, tripartite processes and representation
<i>Building assertiveness of MDWs</i>	In labour migration situations (awareness) Enhance self-respect among domestic workers to recognize their own value and rights	Awareness on safe migration, awareness in destination and origin, capacities to defend own rights

<i>Alliance building: for research, networking</i>	Gathering data and analysis, partnerships with researchers Cooperation between destination and source organisations National and regional alliances with other unions, civil groups, media	Research and mapping, Support services from other organisations
<i>Organisational capacity</i>	Increasing membership and strengthening women leadership Organising domestic workers, their families and MDW returnees Data base management	Base-building, skills in organising, information exchange among stakeholders
<i>Service provision</i>	Education and training services, case handling, contact and membership card, referral to entitlements (social security assistance), or other labour protections	Irregular workers, referral to legal counselling

Comments raised in the plenary were noted and some crucial points were integrated in the draft action plan. The plenary adopted the action plan. Refer to Annex 6 and Annex 7 for the detailed Regional and National Plans presented by groups, respectively.

### **Closing Remarks and Comments on the Workshop**

The organisers thanked everyone for its valuable contribution and commitment made during the workshop. Elizabeth particularly thanked HOMENET led by Chonticha Tang for graciously hosting the three-day meeting.

Parting words of gratitude and encouragement were expressed by the participants during the closing session. Some were able to evaluate the workshop content, design and conduct. Some of these are captured in the quotes below:

“I appreciated the workshop on regional action planning for sending and destination countries. That is very clear to me.”

“I am very happy. I am not supposed to be here but I made it. I learned so many things especially on the domestic workers union. This experience will be helpful for me especially in terms of organising in Lebanon.”

“This workshop is well planned. Everything is perfect. This is a very nice group. I felt at home. It makes you feel that you can carry on every day.”

“I am more confident to lead my own union. Happy to see you all here.”

“I learned that there are others who can help me. Looking at everyone gives me strength and courage.”

“We will take this plan to our home to implement the actions identified there.”

“It is my first time to fly alone. For three days, I feel very interested in everything that I have learned. When I come back to Cambodia and Malaysia, I will use this passion to work for the domestic workers.”

Erna – thanks to ITUC, IDWF, ILO. Programme made me more passionate (gave spirit); learned a lot; keep in touch; how to find the right way to overcome the struggles of the domestic workers. How we can struggle together.”

“This is an important and historic meeting, a significant combination of ITUC-ILO-IDWF.” #