DOMESTIC WORKERS AND SOCIAL PROTECTION IN KATHMANDU, NEPAL

This fact sheet provides results from a survey completed in Kathmandu in 2019 with 70 domestic workers. Follow-up interviews were held with domestic worker leaders as the COVID-19 pandemic.

POLICY CONTEXT

In Nepal, the right to work and social security is a constitutional right. Domestic workers are included in the Labour Act (2017), they remain unprotected by the provisions of the Social Security Act (2017) due to lack of implementation.

RESPONSES TO COVID-19

The unexpected lockdowns that started in March 2020 left domestic workers unable to collect their salaries. The government distributed food rations and provided subsidies on basic utilities, but no compensation for lost income. Without proof of citizenship/voting card, or an employer recommendation, domestic workers struggled to access food rations provided by municipalities. Food packages were insufficient and only lasted 15-20 days. Domestic worker unions, HUN and GEFONT, undertook relief work.

LONGER-TERM RISKS TO INCOME SECURITY

NPR 13,450 (USD 116) / month
MINIMUM WAGE

- 21% work missed due to illness or accident
- 27% due to an injury/illness resulting from their work
- 30% missed work as a result
- 47% missed two or more weeks
- 69% received no payment for time off

The risk of sexual abuse and violence in the workplace is reported to be high amongst domestic workers. Rural migrants: Urban local government authorities are reluctant to register migrant domestic workers as responsibility then shifts to them for social provision.

Rural migrants:

- 13% reported missing work due to care responsibilities including maternity leave, child care and care for a sick person
- Violence in the workplace:
- Other risks:
- Occupational safety and health:
- Care responsibilities:
- 80% earn less than NPR3,000 (USD24)
- 77% estimate they need more than NPR10,000 (USD86) per month for their households to survive
Employers must pay domestic workers’ insurance in part or in full. COVID-19 insurance must be extended to domestic workers and employers must comply. Alternative jobs and protection for those who lost their jobs due to the pandemic must be provided.

Access to social protection
- Have access: 25%
- Do not have access: 40%
- Do not know: 34%

Access to health benefits
- Have access: 68%
- Do not have access: 7%
- Do not know: 24%

Access to paid maternity leave
- Have access: 24%
- Do not have access: 40%
- Do not know: 36%

Access to old age pension
- Have access: 60%
- Do not have access: 40%
- Do not know: 13%

Other benefits
- Have access: 7%
- Do not have access: 68%
- Do not know: 25%

Cost of healthcare access
- 61% visited a health care facility in the last 12 months
- 94% said the medication they required was available
- 88% went to a public hospital or clinic

RECOMMENDATIONS

Covid-19 specific recommendations
- Employers must pay domestic workers’ insurance in part or in full.
- COVID-19 insurance must be extended to domestic workers and employers must comply.
- Alternative jobs and protection for those who lost their jobs due to the pandemic must be provided.

General recommendations
- Short term
  - Register domestic workers with local authorities.

- Medium term
  - Establish a social protection fund for informal workers, including domestic workers, based on municipal registrations.

- Long term
  - Include domestic workers in formal social security. Guarantee the right to health.