



Demystifying Care in Asia for Domestic Workers

Regional Fact Sheet:
Asia at a Glance

October 2025

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About the report: This report contains a regional overview across 12 countries and economies in Asia: Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Cambodia, Thailand, Philippines, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh. This regional overview carries out a Care Policy Mapping of these countries, to identify care laws and policies and infrastructure in these countries, the current care needs, who constitute care workers, and the care share being borne by these workers, and whether domestic workers are recognised and included in these laws and policies with reference to the ILO 5R framework on Care. The data captured within this report hopes to give a framework for advocacy on domestic workers and care workers' rights in the care economy.



About International Domestic Workers Federation

The International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF) is a membership-based global organisation of domestic workers. Its goal is to build a strong, democratic and united domestic workers global federation to protect and advance domestic workers' rights everywhere. As of December 2023, the IDWF is made up of 93 affiliates from 69 countries, representing a membership of over 669,000 domestic workers. Most are organized in trade unions and others in associations, networks and workers' cooperatives.'

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PREFACE

This regional report compiles research results, information and general trends which have emerged from the Care Policy Mapping exercise carried out across 12 countries in Asia by the IDWF. The purpose of this Care Policy Mapping is to supplement our advocacy efforts for domestic workers in the Care Economy in Asia. The research provides data and lived experiences which strengthen the IDWF's assertion that domestic workers are care workers. As per an ILO brief, domestic workers constitute 25% of all paid care workers. Domestic workers do all four kinds of care work – paid, unpaid, direct and indirect. Given this context, we wanted to document and undertake an analysis of existing care policies in Asia to see if domestic workers were included in them, keeping in mind the ILO 5R framework – recognise, reduce, redistribute unpaid care work, and reward and represent paid care work. We also wanted to determine the share of care work that was being undertaken by domestic workers across different countries and economies.

The report also describes the general trends that the research team has observed in the analysis of the mapping, supported by data from different countries/economies. We have included links to detailed country level mappings for each of the 12 countries/economies we studied. Furthermore, IDWF looks at the 5R framework and analyses which specific 5R aspects are made available to domestic workers, to enable their participation and contribution- and to respect their labour rights, women's rights and human rights across these 12 contexts. At the end, we have also included web links to the detailed country reports of each country/economy analysed and featured in this mapping.

IDWF is grateful for the financial support by Oxfam and WIEGO to conduct this mapping study, and by SAGE Fund to deliver the report, including layout design and translations. This report has been released in conjunction with 12 country level reports for the mentioned 12 countries of Asia.

The purpose of this Care Policy Mapping is to supplement our advocacy efforts for domestic workers in the Care Economy in Asia.

We thank the ILO TRIANGLE in ASEAN Programme for their financial support in conducting four national care consultations in Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand in April 2024. The annexes have been funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Government of Canada through Global Affairs Canada. The views expressed in this publication are the authors' alone and not necessarily the views of the Australian Government or the Government of Canada.

The IDWF would like to thank our researchers: Justine Lam, the lead research coordinator and author of this regional report; Country Researchers: Justine Lam for Hong Kong, Grace Huang for Taiwan, Peng Choi for South Korea, Wardah Hafidz for Indonesia, Francine Dieckmann for Thailand, Liva Sreedharan for Malaysia, Alladin Esteban Diega for the Philippines, Sokunnara Thlen for Cambodia, Kamya Singh for India, Rangraja Shyamali for Sri Lanka, Bina Devi Rai for Nepal, Md. Habibur Rahman for Bangladesh.

We would also like to thank Saleha Shah, Amna Khan and Myrah Nerine of Oxfam Asia who have been working closely with the IDWF in developing and revising the reports.

The IDWF would like to thank the domestic workers and the Domestic Workers Organisations who shared their inputs in the reports, listed below:

Domestic Caretakers Union, Taiwan (DCU), Taiwan;

Federation of Asian Domestic Workers (FADWU), Hong Kong;

National House Managers Cooperative (NHMC), South Korea;

Korean Domestic Workers Union (KDWU), South Korea;

Asosasyon ng mga Makabayang Manggagawang Pilipino Overseas (AMMPO), Malaysia;

Persatuan Pekerja Rumah Tangga Indonesian Migran (PERTIMIG), Malaysia;

Home Workers Trade Union of Nepal (HUN), Nepal;

United Domestic Workers of the Philippines (UNITED), Philippines;

Domestic Workers Union (DWU), Sri Lanka;

Protect Union, Sri Lanka; Network of Domestic Workers in Thailand (NDWT), Thailand;

National Domestic Women Workers Union (NDWWU), Bangladesh;

Independent Democratic Association of Informal Economy (IDEA), Cambodia;

Association of Domestic Workers (ADW), Cambodia;

National Domestic Workers Federation (NDWF), India;

Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), India;

Gharelu Kaamgar Sangathan, Gurgaon (GKS), India;

Gharelu Kamgar Panchayat Sangam (GKPS), India;

Jaringan Nasional Advokasi Pekerja Rumah Tangga (JALAPRT), Indonesia.



LABOUR DAY IN THAILAND, MAY 1, 2022

FOREWORD

“Recognising domestic work as care work is dignifying, and it respects domestic workers’ rights, their contribution and sacrifices to the society, not only politically, but also economically.”

Jec Sernande, migrant domestic worker and Executive Committee Member of Asia in IDWF

Domestic work is essential to the functioning of society. However, domestic work still continues to be a highly feminised sector, with 76.2% of domestic workers being women. Typically considered to be women’s work, domestic work is often undervalued, invisible and not considered “real work”. This has led to the systemic devaluation of domestic work as work, and consequently domestic workers across the world have little to no access to decent work and social protection.

Domestic workers across the world have been reaffirming that domestic work is ALSO care work. In a policy brief released by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), domestic workers consist of 25% of the total global care workforce. Domestic workers do all 4 kinds of care work: paid, unpaid, direct and indirect care work. And yet, domestic workers are not considered care workers and part of the care economy, even while they shoulder a major portion of the care share in different contexts across Asia and the globe.

This lack of inclusion of domestic workers has severe consequences for domestic workers labour and human rights: worldwide, domestic workers are excluded from national labour legislations and national care policy frameworks, and many of them have no legal entitlement to social security. Domestic work still remains among the 5 sectors accounting for the majority of total adult forced labour, and one of the main sectors where child labour is prevalent. As a consequence of multiple forms of discrimination, domestic workers face violence and harassment in the workplace - economic, psychological, physical and sexual abuse.

Recognise, reduce, redistribute unpaid care work

Reward and represent paid care work

Therefore, the domestic worker organisations and IDWF Asia felt that a thorough study and analysis of the care economy across Asia was necessary, to understand how the nature of care policies and how they are structured, whether domestic workers are present in those care policies and visions according to the ILO 5R framework: Recognise, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work, and reward and represent paid care work, and the total care share that is being borne by domestic workers.

Our demands as care workers are clear:

RECOGNISE domestic work as care work and recognise domestic workers' skills,

REDUCE the care share of domestic workers by giving them access to weekly day-offs, leaves including sick and annual leave,

REDISTRIBUTE care work between genders and between household and state, and recognise that Care is a public good and a Human Right,

REWARD domestic workers with minimum wage protection and access to social protection including maternity benefits, and

REPRESENT domestic workers in the care policy dialogues by ensuring domestic workers' rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining.

There are two reports produced for this purpose:

1. Booklet titled Regional Trends in Care Policy Mapping of 12 countries in Asia; and
2. Report titled Demystifying Care in Asia for Domestic Workers.

We hope that these reports give you a glimpse of the care economy structures in various countries/economies and how domestic workers continue to be an integral part of the structure, worker base and sustainability of the care economy across these contexts.

With warm regards



Sonia George



Jec Sernande

Executive Committee Members: IDWF

Countries examined in this Study:

Bangladesh, Cambodia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, the Philippines, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand

1

Growing Care Needs Across the Region



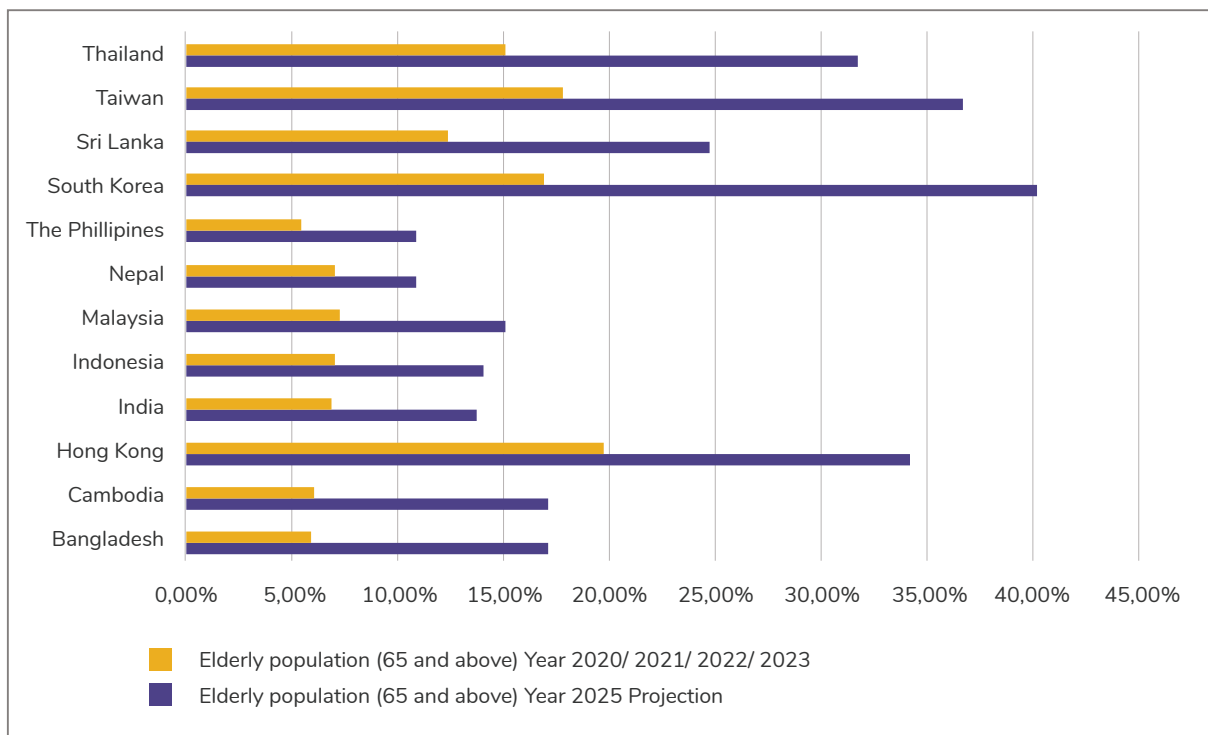
Low fertility rates and growing populations of elderly dependents mean it will be increasingly challenging for the working-age population to sustain informal care in the long term.

- Life expectancies are increasing, while birth rates are declining in all places examined.
- 7 out of 12 economies (Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, and Thailand) are already “ageing societies” or “aged societies”.
- Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Nepal, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka have relatively large populations of children, but dependency patterns are shifting to more elderly dependents.
- Elderly populations will double or nearly double in the next 12-30 years, across all places.
- Persons with disabilities represent a sizable proportion.

OVERVIEW OF CARE NEEDS IN NUMBERS

	Children below 15	Elderly population (aged 65 and above)	People with disabilities	Overall dependency ratio
Bangladesh	28.61% (2022)	5.89% (2022)	1.43% (2022)	52.64 (2022)
Cambodia	29.39% (2019)	6% (2022)	4.89% (2020)	53 (2022)
Hong Kong	10.89% (2021)	19.58% (2021)	7.1% (2020)	43.8 (2021)
India	25.7% (2021)	6.8% (2021)	2.21% (2021)	59.6 (2021)
Indonesia	25.62% (2020)	7% (2022)	9% (2019)	47 (2022)
Malaysia	23% (2022)	7.2% (2020)	No data	43 (2022)
Nepal	27.83% (2021)	6.93% (2021)	2.2% (2021)	53.28 (2021)
The Philippines	30.7% (2020)	5.4% (2020)	No data	57 (2020)
South Korea	11.8% (2021)	16.8% (2021)	5.1% (2021)	40.52 (2021)
Sri Lanka	25.27% (2023)	12.3% (2023)	8.7% (2012)	49.4 (2012)
Taiwan	12.12% (2022)	17.56% (2022)	No data	42.2 (2022)
Thailand	16.49% (2022)	15% (2022)	5.5% (2017)	43 (2021)

ELDERLY POPULATION BY PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION & PROJECTION OF THE SAME BY 2050



2

Care Policies and Care Infrastructure



Are there effective policies to shift care responsibilities away from predominantly women and households towards the government, community, employers, and men?

No, for the following reasons:

- Lack of policy drive to “bring care work into the public”, except in South Korea where care policies are driven by “socialisation of care”.
- Strong policy preference for family and home care in most countries / economies, underpinned by domestic laws and policies.
- State-provided / -funded and community-based care services are severely inadequate to meet the growing demand for care:
 - Limited coverage of public long-term care for older people and persons with disabilities
 - Lack of accessible and quality childcare services
- Care services in the private market are too expensive for most, or quality varies.
- Family-friendly welfare and employment policies are generally lacking, except for maternity protections that are available across all examined countries. Even where available, these policies tend to only benefit nationals employed in the formal sector and exclude workers in the informal sector and migrant workers, such as (migrant) domestic workers hired by individual households.
- As a result, the majority of low-income and middle-income families must rely on unpaid care provided by family members; otherwise, many can only afford care services in the informal sector, such as care work provided by domestic workers.

OVERVIEW OF FAMILY-FRIENDLY WELFARE AND EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

	Maternity leave and protections	Paid paternity leave	Wider parental leave	Workplace childcare (public policy)	Flexible Work Arrangement for workers with care responsibilities	Family care leave	Social security / cash benefits for unpaid family caregivers
Bangladesh	16-week paid maternity leave	✗	✗	Labour laws require organisations employing 25 or more women to set up daycare centres	✗	✗	✗
Cambodia	90-day paid maternity leave	✗	✗	Labour law requires employers to provide onsite daycare facilities/ financial support for childcare if employing a workforce of at least 100 women	✗	✓ (but the law does not specify duration or terms of payment required)	Cash transfer programme for poor families with specific care needs
Hong Kong	14-week paid maternity leave	5-day paid paternity leave	✗	✗	✗	✗	Living allowances for family caregivers
India	26-week paid maternity leave	✗	✗	Required in factories with more than 30 women workers	✗	✗	Financial aid to caregivers in certain states, e.g. Kerala
Indonesia	3-month paid maternity leave	2-day paternity leave for non-government employees	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Malaysia	98-day paid maternity leave	7-day paid paternity leave	✗	Tax incentive for private sector employers to provide onsite childcare	✓	✗	Housewives' Social Security Scheme & Retirement savings fund for women
Nepal	14-week paid maternity leave	15-day paid paternity leave	✗	✗	✗	1-day paid home leave for every 20 days of continuous work period (not mandatory)	✗
The Philippines	105-day paid maternity leave (can be extended for 1 month unpaid)	7-day paternity leave	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗



	Maternity leave and protections	Paid paternity leave	Wider parental leave	Workplace childcare (public policy)	Flexible Work Arrangement for workers with care responsibilities	Family care leave	Social security / cash benefits for unpaid family caregivers
South Korea	90-day paid maternity leave	10-day paid paternity leave	1 year, paid 80% of regular wage by unemployment insurance	✓	✓	Up to 10 days per year	Cash benefits for family caregivers
Sri Lanka	84-day paid maternity leave (but apply only formal workers in defined trades)	✗ (not available to private sector employees)	✗	✗	✗	✗	Allowances for low-income families of people with disabilities
Taiwan	8-week paid maternity leave	7-day paid paternity leave	Max. 2 years, 80% wages may be covered by labour insurance	✗	Only for parents of children below 3, no pay, eligibility subject to size of company	7 days max. a year, employer has no legal duty to pay	Allowances for family carers of elderly persons or people with disabilities
Thailand	98-day paid maternity leave	✗ (not available to non-government employees)	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗

3

People in Care



Working conditions are generally poor for all categories of care workers. Low wages and lack of employment-based social protections are common, which cause gaps in pension later in life and explain the generally high turnover rate in the care work sector.

Amongst all, domestic workers and community-based volunteers enjoy the least employment rights, as they belong to the informal sector.

a Care workers employed in the formal sector

- Employed under public care schemes or by private institutions to provide care.
- Generally enjoy full rights under local labour laws and are entitled to minimum wage protections and employment-related social security coverage.
- Commonly face low pay, long hours and poor working conditions, nonetheless.

b Community-based workers and volunteers providing long-term care or childcare

- Often receive only a small honorarium as low as 1,000 baht per month in Thailand and PHP1,000 in child development daycare centres the Philippines, or nothing in Bangladesh's hospitals and clinics.
- Frequently a much larger population compared to care workers in the formal sector, e.g. in India and Thailand.
- Generally have little recognition, with negligible efforts made by governments to recognize the value of community of care work.



c Domestic workers in the informal sector: local, children, and migrants

- Workers in this sector are mostly women. The demographics otherwise depend on social context and labour migration policies.
- **Local domestic workers:** It is difficult to estimate the size of the workforce. There are proportionally larger populations in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand; smaller numbers in Hong Kong, Malaysia, South Korea, and Taiwan. Internal migration is commonplace in Cambodia, India, and Sri Lanka, with significant proportions from rural areas or minority ethnic groups.
- **Child domestic workers:** Significant numbers in Bangladesh (420,000 in number), Nepal (12% below 16), and Indonesia (25% are children).
- **Migrant domestic workers:**
 - o There is a much larger migrant worker population compared to local domestic workers in Hong Kong (339,451 in 2021), Malaysia (over 90,000; 93.6% of all domestic workers in 2022) and Taiwan (221,500 in 2023).
 - **Reason: Labour migration policies** allow for hiring migrant domestic workers from other countries with:
 - a **wages lower than local minimum wages;** and
 - b **strict immigration controls** that prevent migrant domestic workers from changing employment except in exceptional circumstances
 - Offering low-income and middle-income families a much cheaper option of home-based care.
 - o Numerous undocumented migrant domestic workers in Malaysia and Thailand. The exact figure cannot be determined.
 - o Much smaller population of migrant domestic workers in South Korea, likely due to its more developed public care system.

4

Situation of Domestic Workers



Common issues relating to labour protection and social security (or the lack thereof) for domestic workers in the region:

a Exclusion from national labour laws and denial of full labour rights

Lack of recognition of domestic work as real work:

- **Exclusion** from national labour laws in Bangladesh, Malaysia, South Korea (unless hired by institutions), Taiwan (unless hired by institutions), and Thailand
- **Denial** of full labour rights due to exclusion from crucial provisions (such as minimum wage and standard working hours) in labour laws in Cambodia, Hong Kong, Nepal, and Sri Lanka

b Laws and policies dedicated to domestic workers' protection lack binding power or reinforce the undervaluation of domestic work

Lack of recognition and reward for the value of domestic care work:

- **Bangladesh:** Domestic Workers Protections and Welfare Policy 2015 has no legal effect, and extends limited rights to domestic workers.
- **Cambodia:** Prakas No. 235 on Working Conditions for Domestic Workers extends only limited protections to domestic workers, providing no minimum wage protection or limits on working hours.
- **India:** Certain states, such as Kerala, recognise domestic workers in its minimum wage legislation but set a lower minimum wage than the standard for other sectors.



6 Elderly populations will double or nearly double in the next 12–30 years across all places.

- **Indonesia:** The Minister of Labour of Republic of Indonesia No. 2 of 2015 on the Protection of Domestic Workers does not stipulate working hours, overtime compensation, sickness protections, health insurance, or a public pension scheme.
- **The Philippines:** The Republic Act 10361, or Kasambahay Law, enacted in September 2013, formally recognizes domestic work as work, but provides a much lower minimum wage than for regular workers.
- **Thailand:** The Ministerial Regulation Nr. 14 extends limited labour rights to domestic workers.

c Lack of regulation on minimum work conditions and scope of work

No reduction of workload and working hours, with a general lack of labour inspections and occupational safety-related legal protections.

- Many domestic workers do not have written employment contracts, especially in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Nepal, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka, resulting in greater vulnerability to overworking and denial of overtime compensation.
- There is a general lack of regulation on minimum work conditions, such as standard working hours and legal standards for employer-provided accommodation.
- Heavy workloads result in long working hours and the denial of rest days across the region.

d Lower pay than other workers: No equal pay for equal work

Lack of reward for the value of domestic work. Key findings include:

- **Indonesia:** Generally the salary of domestic workers is only 20–30% of the regional minimum wage.
- **Bangladesh:** A study found that 85% of domestic workers earn less than Tk5,000 monthly and are living below the poverty line.
- **Cambodia:** 60% of domestic workers earn less than USD50 per month, which is less than one-fourth of the minimum wage for garment workers.
- **The Philippines:** the average monthly salary of domestic workers is PHP4,141, which is way below the PHP15,200 minimum wage for regular workers in Metro Manila.

e Lack of social security protections

- Social security protections, such as pension schemes, unemployment protections and workplace injury insurance, are generally tied to formal employment and may require some form of contribution by the worker.
- Low-wage workers in the informal sector, such as domestic workers, are largely excluded from coverage, or may not have the financial capability to make contributions.

f Little or no recognition of domestic workers' accumulation of skills and experience

- No wage system or structure recognises domestic workers' accumulation of skills and experience in any of the economies examined.
- Sole exception: Taiwan, where migrant domestic caretakers who have worked in Taiwan for over 6 years can be recognised as “intermediate skilled domestic caretakers”, which comes with a higher minimum wage. But qualification depends on registration by the employer.

g Lack of representation in the care agenda

- Domestic workers' rights to freedom of association, collective bargaining, and collective action are largely restricted.
- **Bangladesh and Thailand:** Domestic workers have no legal right to form and participate in trade unions, or engage in collective bargaining.



In The Philippines the average monthly salary of domestic workers is **PHP4,141**, which is way below the **PHP15,200** minimum wage for regular workers in Metro Manila.



- There is a lack of meaningful engagement of domestic workers' associations or trade unions in care-related policy dialogues, compounded by language barriers for migrant domestic workers.
- There is some success in collective bargaining by domestic workers unions in the Philippines.



LINKS TO COUNTRY REPORTS:

Bangladesh:

<https://idwfed.org/publications/care-policy-mapping-in-bangladesh/>

Cambodia:

<https://idwfed.org/publications/research-reports/care-policy-mapping-in-cambodia/>

Hong Kong:

<https://idwfed.org/publications/care-policy-mapping-in-hong-kong/>

India:

<https://idwfed.org/publications/care-policy-mapping-in-india/>

Indonesia:

<https://idwfed.org/publications/care-policy-mapping-in-indonesia/>

Malaysia:

<https://idwfed.org/publications/research-reports/care-policy-mapping-in-malaysia/>

Nepal:

<https://idwfed.org/publications/research-reports/care-policy-mapping-in-nepal/>

Philippines:

<https://idwfed.org/publications/care-policy-mapping-in-philippine/>

South Korea:

<https://idwfed.org/publications/care-policy-mapping-in-south-korea/>

Sri Lanka:

<https://idwfed.org/publications/care-policy-mapping-in-sri-lanka/>

Taiwan:

<https://idwfed.org/publications/care-policy-mapping-in-taiwan/>

Thailand:

<https://idwfed.org/publications/care-policy-mapping-in-thailand/>