

THEORY OF CHANGE IN ACTION

Domestic workers organizing, building power and creating lasting change

International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF)



IDWF's *From Union Strengthening to Theory and to Practice: A Theory of Change to Achieve Decent Work for Domestic Workers in the Era of Care* is grounded in the experience of domestic workers themselves: when domestic workers organize, develop leadership, build collective power and act together, they can influence the decisions, institutions and narratives that shape their lives.

Across the world, domestic workers and their organizations are showing what this looks like in practice.

**These are some of
their stories.**



ORGANIZING & BUILDING POWER

KENYA

Organizing: A Lifeline for Migrant Domestic Workers in Kenya



“My life has changed since I realized that I could help change the lives of my Kenyan sisters. I am not a victim: I am a leader, able to support women in vulnerable situations, just as I once was.”



Mwanakombo Mwaita
Kenya Union of Domestic,
Hotels, Educational
Institutions and Hospital
Workers (KUDHEIHA)



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COLOMBIA

The Afro-Colombian Leader Who Brought Domestic Workers' Struggles and Collective Power to the World's Most Popular Streaming Platform

"There are thousands of domestic workers around the world who have felt touched by my life story—who call me and tell me, 'Your story is mine, and it gave me my humanity back; it woke me up, because I've lived through the very same things.' To them I say: face life with 'capricho' (tenacity). Put every negative thing you've lived through into an imaginary little box, add 'capricho', and turn it into strength—into love, resilience, and determination so you can reach your goals. We are brave women who build power and drive change. Put plenty of 'capricho' into everything you do, and you'll see that together we're going to make it."



María Roa

*Unión de Trabajadoras
Afrocolombianas del Servicio
Doméstico (UTRASD)*



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MALAYSIA

From the Margins to the Center of Policy Change



“It was truly inspiring to spend time with a group of migrant domestic workers here in Malaysia. They shared powerful stories about their experiences, the challenges they face, and how organizing with support of the IDWF has given them greater confidence and a stronger voice.”



Gilbert Houngbo
Director-General of the International
Labour Organization



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COLLECTIVE POWER CHANGES LAWS & POLICIES

THAILAND

Domestic Workers Secure Access to Social Protection



“Now we have a major challenge ahead: making sure employers comply with the law and workers understand their rights under Section 33. Our next step will be to push the Thai government to ratify ILO Conventions 189 and 183. This is something we will continue campaigning for together.”



Kanyapha Prasopsuk
Network of Domestic Workers
in Thailand (NDWT)



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BRAZIL

Brazil Enacts Groundbreaking Law to Protect Domestic Workers from Modern Slavery



“This law is historic because, for the first time, public authorities and employers are required to protect and support domestic workers who are victims of slave labor. It puts an end to simply rescuing workers and leaving it at that. This is a form of historical reparation.”



Valdirene Boaventura
Federação Nacional das Trabalhadoras Domésticas (FENATRAD)

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INDONESIA

The Domestic Workers Bill Passes After 22 Years of Struggle

“The legal recognition of protection for domestic workers is leading Indonesia toward a more civilized and humane society. We have always believed that this law would be enacted, despite the difficulties we have faced. But those difficulties are what kept us steadfast and always fighting for change, building a new framework to protect domestic workers, the majority of whom are women who have long supported the national economy but have faced discrimination and violence. We appreciate the leadership of the Legislation Body (Baleg), the leadership of the Working Committee (Panja), and the government for recognizing the struggle of domestic workers.”

Lita Anggraini
*Jaringan Nasional
Advokasi Pekerja Rumah
Tangga (JALA PRT)*



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GUATEMALA

Historic Breakthrough!



“What’s happening in Guatemala is historic. In Latin America, only three countries have not ratified ILO Convention 189: Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. But thanks to the decisive leadership of President Bernardo Arévalo and Labor Minister Miriam Roquel, we’ve taken a historic step toward the implementation of the Convention even before its ratification. For the first time in the country, there will be discussions around rights, wages, contracts, social security, and labor inspections. This means that domestic workers—most of whom are Indigenous women—will no longer be invisible. They will have rights, like any other worker.”



Ruth Díaz,
IDWF Executive Committee member
representing Latin America

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WORKERS INFLUENCING DECISIONS

COLOMBIA

How Did Domestic Workers Secure Collective Bargaining in Colombia?



“This unprecedented achievement reflects the organized work we’ve been carrying out for years. We’ve walked a long path of advocacy, making the most of every space for political participation to raise our voices, to present our demands with solid arguments. In the past, domestic workers were ignored, but now we have a government that listens to us and takes action. This is glorious.”



Claribed Palacios
*Unión de Trabajadoras Afrocolombianas
del Servicio Doméstico (UTRASD)*

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ZIMBABWE

Collective Bargaining Becomes a Reality for Domestic Workers in Zimbabwe

“The successful implementation of social dialogue and collective bargaining in the domestic work sector demonstrates that organized efforts can lead to meaningful change. Collective bargaining empowers workers by giving them a voice in negotiations, ensuring their interests are represented. This is particularly important for marginalized groups like domestic workers, who have historically been excluded from labor protections. This achievement not only will improve domestic workers’ individual circumstances but will also strengthen communities. When workers are treated fairly and have access to social protections, they can contribute more effectively to their families and local economies, fostering resilience and stability.”

Toindepi Dhure
Zimbabwe Domestic and Allied Workers Union (ZDAWU)



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JAMAICA

A Seat at the United Nations Table

“As a grassroots domestic worker leader and a long-time advocate for gender equality and women’s empowerment, being on this board is a privilege, as it will ensure that the voices and concerns of domestic workers and grassroots women are heard and addressed in urban planning and policy-making processes.”



Shirley Pryce
Jamaica Household Workers Union (JHWU)

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HONG KONG

Evidence-Based Advocacy Brings New Gains for Migrant Domestic Workers in Hong Kong

“Many of our Nepali sisters do not know English or Chinese. They have no confidence because they don’t know their rights. There is no agency or training for us either,”



Sarah Pun
Union of Nepalese Domestic Workers in Hong Kong (UNDW)

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THE STORY CONTINUES

This is our Theory of Change in action.

Different countries. Different struggles. Different paths to change.

Yet across these stories, a common pattern emerges: **domestic workers organize, develop leadership and collective power, build alliances, make their voices heard and influence the systems that shape their lives.**

These victories belong to domestic workers and their organizations. Together, they demonstrate what becomes possible when domestic workers have the power to lead change.



**Explore IDWF's
Theory of Change**

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International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF)

@IDWFED



IDWFED.ORG



IDWF is a global federation of domestic and household workers and their representative organizations. As of July 2026, IDWF brings together 96 affiliates representing 680,000 domestic workers in 73 countries.

Led by domestic workers themselves, IDWF builds collective power to advance labor rights, social justice and gender equality through organizing, leadership development, collective bargaining, advocacy and international solidarity.