# ILO Convention No. 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers:

# The Case for Ratification in Tanzania

**A Policy Brief by CHODAWU**




*CHODAWU members. Photo: CHODAWU*

## 01. Executive Summary

Domestic workers play a critical role in sustaining households and contributing to Tanzania's economy. However, many domestic workers continue to face low wages, long working hours, lack of written contracts, limited access to social protection and poor working conditions.

The Conservation, Hotels, Domestic, Social Services and Consultancy Workers Union (CHODAWU) conducted interviews, focus groups and consultations with 80 domestic workers and relevant stakeholders. The evidence shows that many domestic workers remain excluded from labour rights and social protection systems. They often face significant barriers to accessing digital social protection services, including limited awareness, low levels of digital literacy and high costs.

Ratification and implementation of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers would provide an important framework for strengthening legal protection of domestic workers' rights, promoting decent work and expanding access to social protection.

CHODAWU calls upon the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania to ratify ILO Convention No. 189 and strengthen measures to ensure that all domestic workers are protected and included in national development efforts.

## 02. The Problem

Despite the critical role that domestic workers play in society, they are among the most vulnerable workers in Tanzania. Most are employed informally and therefore remain outside the coverage of labour and social protection systems. They earn low wages, often below the statutory minimum wage, leaving them vulnerable to economic insecurity and poverty. Many lack written contracts and access to social protection, including health insurance, pensions and maternity benefits. Domestic workers face high levels of exploitation and abuse including gender-based violence and harassment. Limited digital access, low digital literacy and insufficient awareness of digital social protection further disadvantage domestic workers, as social protection systems are digitalized.

## 03. Evidence from Our Research

In March 2026, CHODAWU conducted interviews, focus group discussions and consultations involving 80 domestic workers, as well as employers, government representatives and social protection institutions.

THE RESEARCH FINDINGS SHOW THAT:

**87.5%**

of domestic workers interviewed did not have written employment contracts.

**95%**

of domestic workers interviewed were not registered with any social security scheme.

**35%**

of domestic workers interviewed earned less than the statutory minimum wage.

REGARDING ACCESS TO DIGITAL SOCIAL PROTECTION SERVICES, THE RESEARCH FOUND THAT:

**95%** of domestic workers interviewed had never received information on how to access social protection services through digital platforms.

- Most domestic workers lacked access to smartphones, data connectivity or the digital literacy skills needed to register for or access social protection online.

Despite these challenges, many domestic workers expressed a willingness to use digital platforms if training and support were provided.

One domestic worker from Dar es Salaam who participated in the research shared:

*"My name is Zanini Athumani. I am a domestic worker in Tanzania. I have worked as a domestic worker for 15 years, but I do not have a written employment contract, and I am not registered with any social security scheme. I first learned about health insurance and social security registration through online platforms during a social protection workshop conducted by CHODAWU. However, knowing that these schemes exist was not enough. I did not know how to use the online system or where to get help with registration. It was only through a fellow domestic worker, who works for a foreign employer, that I learned how the process could be accessed. She showed me her social security card and explained that her employer had assisted her with registration. This showed me that having social protection schemes in place is not enough if domestic workers do not have the information, support, and accessible systems they need to enrol. As domestic workers we need to be aware of social security schemes."*

This experience reflects the challenges faced by many domestic workers in Tanzania who lack written employment contracts, information and the skills needed to access digital social protection services.

These findings demonstrate the urgent need for stronger legal protections and access to social protection systems for domestic workers.

## 04. The case of ratification of ILO Convention No. 189

The ratification and effective implementation of ILO Convention No. 189 would provide a framework to:

- Recognize domestic workers as workers entitled to equal protection under labour laws.
- Ensure written contracts and clear terms and conditions of employment.
- Align Tanzania's legal framework with international labour standards and best practices.
- Promote fair wages and decent working conditions.
- Strengthen protection against abuse, violence and exploitation.
- Improve access to social protection and social security benefits.

- Protect migrant domestic workers.
- Advance gender equality and social justice.
- Contribute to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1 (No Poverty), 5 (Gender Equality), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

## 05. Recommendations for Stakeholders

**CHODAWU calls upon the Government of Tanzania to:**

- Ratify and implement ILO Convention No. 189 by 2027.
- Amend and strengthen existing labour legislation to fully protect domestic workers.
- Ensure domestic workers are fully covered under labour and social protection laws.
- Invest in and promote digital social protection.
- Provide digital literacy training for domestic workers.
- Strengthen labour inspection and enforcement mechanisms.
- Develop specific measures to protect migrant domestic workers from exploitation.
- Allocate adequate resources for awareness-raising campaigns on domestic workers' rights.
- Work with trade unions, employers and social protection institutions to promote decent work and social justice for domestic workers.
- Ensure the meaningful participation and representation of domestic workers and their organizations in the design, implementation and monitoring of laws, policies and social protection systems affecting them.

**CHODAWU calls upon social security and social protection institutions to:**

- Simplify registration procedures for domestic workers.
- Develop accessible, user-friendly mobile and digital registration platforms.
- Conduct outreach programmes targeting domestic workers.
- Improve awareness of available benefits and services.

## 06. Expected Impact of Ratification and Proposed Recommendations

Ratifying ILO Convention No. 189 will provide a clear framework for protecting domestic workers and ensuring their inclusion in national social protection systems. Together with the proposed recommendations, it is expected to contribute to:

- Effective access to social security through social protection entitlements.
- Increased access to and uptake of digital social protection services.
- Advances in formalization, financial inclusion and gender equality.
- Reduced poverty, vulnerability and exploitation among domestic workers.
- Greater social justice and economic growth.

# 07. Conclusion

Domestic workers make an essential contribution to Tanzania's society and economy. They deserve equal recognition, labour protection, access to social security and decent working conditions. Ratifying ILO Convention No. 189 and investing in inclusive digital social protection systems will help ensure that no domestic worker across the country is left behind.

CHODAWU urges the Government of Tanzania to take immediate steps towards ratifying ILO Convention No. 189 and strengthening protection for all domestic workers.

## About This Policy Brief

This policy brief was developed by CHODAWU based on research conducted with domestic workers and relevant stakeholders in Tanzania. It was produced as part of the DSP project, with support from IDWF and WIEGO.




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## ABOUT THE IDWF

The IDWF is a membership-based global organization of domestic and household workers. Since its inception as a network in 2006 and its official establishment as a federation in 2013, the IDWF has evolved into a key advocate for the rights of domestic workers globally. We believe domestic work is work, and all domestic workers deserve to enjoy the same rights as all other workers. As of July 2026, the IDWF is made up of 96 affiliates from 73 countries, serving a membership of 680,000 domestic/household workers' members (IDWF, 2026).

Visit www.idwfed.org

## ABOUT WIEGO

Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) is a global network supporting the movement of workers in informal employment, especially women and people living in poverty. We believe all workers should have equal economic opportunities, rights and protections. WIEGO works to expand research and statistics on the informal economy, promote change through policy advocacy, and build collective voice by supporting, strengthening and connecting organizations of workers in informal employment.

Visit www.wiego.org