



# Founding Congress: Launch of Domestic Workers Union in Lebanon

## Beirut, Lebanon, 25 January 2015



The Founding Congress of Domestic Workers Union in Lebanon took place on 25 January 2015 in Beirut with participation of 300 domestic and migrant domestic workers. The union is affiliated to the National Federation of Workers' and Employees' Unions in Lebanon (FENASOL).

FENASOL's Domestic Workers' Union is the first union in Lebanon and in the region that represents the interests of migrant domestic workers. This initiative sets an important precedence in a region, where migrant domestic workers are subject to the Kafala (sponsorship) system, which restricts their freedoms and makes it difficult for them to leave abusive employers. Workers testify about their limited fundamental rights and freedoms, as well as the challenges they face as migrant workers. The Congress launched the union and voted on the unions' by-laws.

The Global Action Programme on Migrant Domestic Workers and Their Families (GAP-MDW) assisted the Founding Committee in drafting the bylaws of the trade union and provided consultation on developing unions' documents. With a support of the GAP-MDW a consultant was hired in order to provide the necessary legal and organizational support. The bylaws were translated to 7 main languages of MDWs in Lebanon and a two day workshop was held in December in order to discuss the draft bylaws with the domestic workers leaders, FENASOL leadership, labour activists and consultants. The bylaws were then validated with the members of the Founding Committee at four consecutive workshops, outreaching 120 MDWs.

