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# ► Decent work for domestic workers through skills development

A Theory of Change





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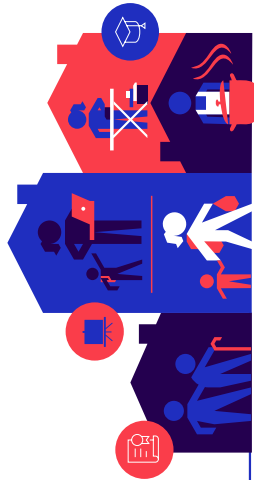
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► Domestic workers enjoy decent working conditions, aligned with their rights and commensurate with their skills, and have better career prospects.



## OUTCOMES



**1. Skills of domestic workers are recognized through effective, inclusive, quality and affordable skills development, recognition of prior learning and certification schemes that are adapted to the domestic workers realities (affordability, schedule, location, education level, migration status, etc.).**



**2. Domestic work is acknowledged as productive work and is remunerated in accordance with the domestic worker's skills and experience.**



**3. The rights of domestic workers are promoted and protected.**

## INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES



**1.1. National and regional skills development and recognition systems** for domestic workers for skilling, upskilling and RPL are in place and effective.



**1.2. Domestic workers have access to affordable and quality skills training and recognition services.**



**2.1 Employers see the value of domestic workers skills and are willing to pay a skills premium.**



**2.2 Salary scales of domestic workers are negotiated and fixed** in accordance with skills levels and experience, whether through tripartite or bipartite social dialogue.



**3.1. Domestic workers and their employers are engaged in social dialogue to improve domestic workers' working conditions.**



**3.2. Domestic workers have increased awareness of their rights and skills, self-efficacy, self-confidence, and the capacity to defend their rights.**



**3.3. Domestic workers are fully covered by labour laws and social security laws, and policies on the prevention of violence and harassment, as well as the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work in law and in practice.**



**3.4. Domestic workers are covered by a minimum wage, or collectively bargained, without discrimination.**

## OUTPUTS

**1.1.1. A domestic workers tripartite skills board** is established to help regulate training and certification of domestic workers skills (e.g. the Domestic Worker Skills Council).

**1.1.2. Skills needs**, including technical skills and core skills, are identified.

**1.1.3. A domestic worker skills standard** is developed and adopted by tripartite constituents, together with skills profiles and modules (including modules on rights awareness and negotiation – see also 3.2.).

**1.1.4. Recognition of prior learning (RPL)** is available for domestic workers.

**1.1.5. A training facility** is established by or in consultation with domestic worker organisations and organisations of employers of domestic workers, or existing training facilities implement domestic Work Curricula.

**1.1.6. Skills assessment, certification and quality assurance mechanisms** are in place.

**1.1.7. Tools for international recognition of skills and qualifications** (including mutual recognition schemes, RQFs, BQFs) are adopted in consultation with social partners.

**1.1.8. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms** are established through social dialogue to assess the effectiveness of the skills system for domestic workers.

**1.2.1. Barriers** for domestic workers to access skills trainings are identified.

**1.2.2. Awareness measures** to inform domestic workers of available skills training and recognition programmes are designed and implemented.

**1.2.3. Financial and non-financial mechanisms** to overcome barriers to accessing skills development and recognition programmes (e.g. access to childcare, scheduling, educational leave) are implemented.

**1.2.4. Career guidance and counselling services** are available and affordable to domestic workers.

**2.1.1. Public awareness campaigns** for employers designed on the basis of behavioural insights are implemented.

**2.1.2. National tripartite dialogues** are convened and adopted measures to increase employer willingness and capacity to pay.

**2.1.3. Employment services** and **service providers** are aware of their role in ensuring skills are recognized and adequately remunerated.

**3.1.1. The capacity of worker organizations** (including domestic workers' organizations) is strengthened.

**3.1.2. The capacity of employer organizations** (including organizations of employers of domestic workers) is strengthened.

**3.2.1. Domestic workers are connected through peer networks**, including through unions and training facilities.

**3.2.2. Domestic workers receive training on their rights**, on different forms of violence and harassment, negotiation skills, job search and interviewing skills.

**3.3.1. Relevant legislation** on the basis of International Labour Standards is adopted, ratified and implemented.

**3.3.2. Service providers** that place or employ domestic workers are regulated.

**3.3.3. Written contracts and social security registration** are promoted and enforced.

**3.3.4. Strong inspection systems** are put in place.

**3.3.5. Grievance mechanisms** are put in place.

**3.4.1. Minimum wage setting mechanisms** include domestic workers.

## ► Introduction

Domestic workers<sup>1</sup> – those providing direct and indirect care services in or for private households within an employment relationship or on an occupational basis – number 75.6 million workers over the age of 15 (ILO, 2021b) globally, and represent at least 25 per cent of care workers. Domestic workers perform vital tasks in the home which may be categorised as direct, personal and relational care activities, such as child and elder care, care for people with disabilities in a situation of dependency, or indirect care activities, such as cooking, cleaning, gardening, and tasks essential to the maintenance and management of the household (ILO, 2018). Each occupation has different skills requirements and levels of responsibility. Domestic workers are essential to facilitating the economic and social functioning of societies, and will continue to be, as care needs around the world are expected to grow in line with the increasing demand for child and elder care in all regions.

Despite the progress made following the adoption of the [Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 \(No. 189\)](#), which recognised domestic work as work deserving of rights and protections, domestic work continues to be dismissed as “unskilled” work that people, predominantly women, are naturally born knowing how to do (Anderson, 2016). This persistent narrative is used to justify underpayment and poor working conditions (ILO, 2023e). Domestic workers are also one of the groups most vulnerable to violence and harassment, exploitation, coercion, and forced labour. The fact that they frequently work in isolation, often belong to already marginalized groups, and have limited power within the employment relationship, exacerbates these issues. All stakeholders have a responsibility to ensure domestic workers are protected from violence and harassment in line with the [ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 \(No. 190\)](#) and its accompanying [Recommendation, 2019 \(No. 206\)](#).

In part because they work in homes, domestic worker skills, time and effort are not always recognised nor adequately remunerated. Indeed, around 81 per cent of domestic workers are informally employed, either due to exclusion from labour and social security laws, or due to gaps in legal implementation, and domestic workers earn just 56 per cent of the average weekly wages of other employees (ILO, 2021). This is compounded by the fact that domestic workers and their employers, whether households or service providers, are not always organized into representative associations of domestic workers, and employers of domestic workers, including employer and worker groups, and are not always included in social dialogue. As a result, domestic work remain undervalued, characterised by insufficient or inadequate labour and social protection, and low or non-payment of wages.

1 ILO Convention No. 189 defines domestic work as work performed in or for a household or households, within an employment relationship and on an occupational basis.



## ► Why we need a Theory of Change

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Skills training and recognition can act as an entry point to improve working conditions and increase wages for domestic workers, alongside rights-based approaches. In the last decade, there has been an increasing number of skills initiatives aiming to improve the working conditions and wages of domestic workers; however, few if any have been rigorously evaluated to assess their impact. When studies do exist they do not find consistent evidence that skills development necessarily leads to recognition nor decent work or to domestic workers being able to get skills premiums in the form of enhanced wages. Past initiatives have however generated lessons learnt, particularly on the accuracy of assumptions underlying many skills training programmes. Another critical gap is the hesitancy to integrate care work into technical and vocational education and training (TVET) systems where it does not yet exist, limiting the formal recognition and professionalisation of domestic worker skills.

Faulty assumptions can put at risk the successful design and implementation of such programmes. For example, most programmes assume that household employers would be willing to pay more for a “skilled” domestic worker; however, there is no clear indication that this is the case. For example, a survey in India found that while some employers of domestic workers do claim to value skills, in particular those performing specialized care work for children, the elderly, pre- or post-natal care or cooking, they do not factor in skills or experience when setting the wage. Moreover, specifically high-income households did not consider ‘skillfulness’ or ‘being a quick learner’ as important when hiring a domestic worker, underlining the assumption that they perceive this work to be ‘unskilled’ (ILO, 2022a). This results in many development programmes and domestic workers investing in skills training without any tangible return on that investment. It also means that many households hire domestic workers without the requisite skills for the work, and that even domestic workers who are skilled go unrecognized and are inadequately compensated.

Stand-alone skills training and professionalisation interventions do have the potential to improve worker awareness, employability, self-esteem and resilience, promote formalization, and contribute to advocacy for more rights, social protection, and greater recognition of domestic workers (ILO, 2023a). However, a holistic programmatic approach based on evidence rather than assumptions is necessary to ensure that skills interventions are adequately linked to decent work and improving working conditions for domestic workers. From an employer’s perspective, such an approach can contribute to longevity, retention, and consequently to higher productivity and a reduction in recruitment cost.

The present Theory of Change (ToC) aims to highlight the conditions needed to ensure skills training and recognition improve the working conditions and increase the wages of domestic workers, including in the context of national care policies. The Theory is based on a review of existing practices, including through a participatory, critical review of initiatives to date and their underlying assumptions, with a view to generating a coherent approach that takes into account the realities of the sector. The ToC was developed through exchanges with ILO colleagues across the field and headquarters with experience from past interventions, including through two knowledge-sharing webinars in May 2024. Through the two webinars, numerous assumptions underpinning previous efforts were identified (summarized in the next section), and thoughts shared on how to redesign future initiatives such as to either validate or correct those assumptions.

The ToC is conceived as a tool to support development practitioners designing or implementing skills development or recognition programmes that aim to ensure that domestic workers have access to decent work. It starts by outlining briefly some of the key assumptions identified. It then provides a narrative summary of the theory of change, explaining succinctly the details that must be taken into account to ensure a successful intervention strategy.

The ToC is also based on relevant ILO standards and instruments, such as the [Convention No. 189](#), which recognizes domestic work as deserving of decent working conditions, in law and in practice, no less favorable than those enjoyed by other workers. Its Article 11 explicitly notes that domestic workers should be covered by a minimum wage where it exists, without discrimination based on sex. With respect to skills, [Domestic Workers Recommendation, 2011 \(No. 201\)](#) highlights that Member States should, in consultation with constituents

and, 'where they exist, with organizations representative of domestic workers and those representative of employers of domestic workers', establish policies and programmes to 'encourage the continuing development of the competencies and qualifications of domestic workers ... to enhance their professional development and employment opportunities'. The [Conclusions on Decent Work and the Care Economy \(2024\)](#) that were adopted at the 112<sup>th</sup> Session (2024) of the International Labour Conference reiterated that domestic worker care work skills were not always fully recognized and valued accordingly and highlighted the importance of promoting skills recognition and certification to advance decent work in the care economy. The ToC also leverages the [ILO Strategy on Skills and Lifelong Learning 2030 \(2024\)](#) and other relevant standards such as [Recommendation on Human Resources Development, 2004 \(No. 195\)](#), in particular its clauses on training for decent work and social inclusion. Finally, it also sets itself in the framework of [Recommendation Concerning the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy, 2015 \(No. 204\)](#), which calls on Members to include access to education, lifelong learning and skills development within an integrated policy framework to facilitate the transition to the formal economy, which should be included in national development strategies or plans (Section III., paragraphs 10 and 11(h)).

The ToC provides a framework for a coherent programmatic approach to achieve decent work for domestic workers, thus contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG4, 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all', SDG5, 'Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls', and SDG8 'Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all'.

The Theory of Change should be tailored to each specific context, taking into account regional, national and local circumstances that shape domestic work.



- The present Theory of Change (ToC) aims to highlight the conditions needed to ensure skills training and recognition programmes lead to better working conditions and higher wages for domestic workers.



## ► Key assumptions

During exchanges with ILO colleagues across the field and Headquarters, the following main assumptions underpinning previous efforts were identified, along with evidence to inform future initiatives such as to either validate or correct those assumptions:

| Assumptions                                                                                                            | Evidence                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ► <b>Domestic work is unskilled work.</b>                                                                              | <p>► <b>Most domestic work is medium-skilled.</b> When mapped against the ISCO skills classification, the typical tasks of domestic workers belong either to skill level 1 or skill level 2. In a survey of domestic workers in South-East Asia, most domestic workers surveyed carried out at least some direct care work, thus placing them in the medium-skilled category of skill level 2 (ILO, 2023c).</p> <p>► <b>Domestic workers more often than not gain skills through experience rather than training.</b> As a result, skills interventions should seriously consider recognition of prior learning as a key means of facilitating access to certification.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| ► <b>Employers are willing to reward domestic worker experience and skills with higher remuneration.</b>               | <p>► <b>To date, there is no evidence that employers are willing to pay more for skilled domestic workers.</b> In South-East Asia, worker remuneration and working conditions didn't increase or improve with experience, except in Singapore, where there was a slightly higher salary. In India, skilling did not lead to higher wages; however, it did help workers get into more highly valued careers such as hospitality, and receiving a certificate increased their self-confidence. Other research in India also found that employers did not consider skills when setting wages (ILO, 2023a). Some employers do express interest in hiring more skilled domestic workers and providing higher wages and benefits, particularly for roles involving childcare and elder care; however, there is not yet evidence that they would indeed pay higher wages for those skills. Moreover, structural constraints—such as the lack of formal wage-setting mechanisms, standardized qualification frameworks, and clear career progression pathways—often prevent these preferences from translating into higher pay (ILO, 2016b).</p> |
| ► <b>There is a shared understanding of the definition of “skills” among domestic workers and household employers.</b> | <p>► Research has found that when household employers claim to value ‘skilled’ domestic workers, they are typically seeking a domestic worker who is subservient, compliant, of a similar ethnic origin or religion as that of the employer (ILO, 2022a). Employers of domestic workers also tend to conflate loyalty or trustworthiness with skills, or to value these more highly than skills. In addition, there are often misunderstandings regarding what constitutes technical skills versus core skills respectively amongst workers and especially employers<sup>2</sup>.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

## Assumptions

## Evidence

### ► Domestic workers want to improve their skills.

► **Some, but not all domestic workers see value in skills training.** A survey of migrant domestic workers found that, when asked if they were interested in improving their skills, domestic workers in Malaysia reported wanting to improve their customer skills for the current job, whereas domestic workers in Thailand said they did not want to improve their skills. In Lebanon, domestic workers were much more likely to observe a skills gap or mismatch than their employers, with 72 per cent of individual employers responding not finding any skills mismatch between the skills of their employees and the demands of the job<sup>3</sup>. In the same study, migrant domestic workers mentioned childcare, elderly care, and housekeeping related trainings as types of trainings they would like to attend to enhance their skills, based on the training needs they observed for themselves.

► Motivations to upskill can be numerous, yet if benefits are not directly tangible, domestic workers might not consider skilling as an option. One way to address this challenge is to ensure that training is linked to clear career progression opportunities, which can serve as a strong incentive. Career pathways can be developed, not only within qualification frameworks, but also in the form of career maps, providing workers with a tangible sense of how training can lead to better job opportunities. For instance, in Ghana, the Sector Skills Bodies created career paths for occupations in the Tourism and Hospitality sector, helping workers see a trajectory for advancement. Similar approaches could enhance domestic worker willingness to engage in skills training.

### ► Domestic workers will participate in training if they are available.

► **Domestic workers do not necessarily have the time and financial resources to participate in training.** Most domestic workers work long hours and have unpaid care responsibilities of their own. They may also be migrant workers or, in some cases, victims of forced labour. Domestic workers also typically earn very low wages, particularly when they are working informally<sup>4</sup>. To be successful, training programmes must be made accessible to domestic workers. For example, in Zimbabwe, a training for domestic workers took a flexible learning approach which included online training, podcasts, easy to use learning approaches that did not always require on-the-job training. This facilitated the extension of the training to Zimbabwean domestic workers out of the country. In Mexico, weekend classes, childcare, electronic devices for remote training, additional economic incentives, like scholarships, and easier access to certification processes to support professional growth or transition into other sectors also helped overcome access barriers (ILO, 2021c). Ensuring that paid leave is granted to access training – in line with the [Paid Educational Leave Convention, 1974 \(No. 140\)](#) – is one key responsibility to ensure domestic workers can access skills development.

<sup>3</sup> ILO, *Mapping Skills Related to Home-Based Care Services in Lebanon: Final Report* (Beirut: ILO, 2024).

<sup>4</sup> Globally, domestic workers, women and men, earn only 56.4 per cent of the average monthly wages of a non-domestic employee in formal employment (21 per cent in Africa and 50.4 per cent in Europe and Central Asia). (ILO, *Making Decent Work a Reality for Domestic Workers: Progress and Prospects Ten Years after the Adoption of the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189)* (Geneva: ILO, 2021), p. 154.)

## Assumptions

## Evidence

- ▶ **Discriminatory norms pose specific challenges to achieving decent work for domestic workers through skills training or recognition.**

- ▶ **Indeed, discrimination can significantly influence the outcomes of skills training and recognition programmes.** In Lebanon, nationality-based discrimination was observed between nationals and migrant communities. In India, **discrimination was an obstacle** for domestic workers to access skills training. When training programmes for domestic workers were carried out through partner training academies, trainees in other programmes refused to sit in the same classroom as domestic workers, so they had to change the timing of the training programmes for domestic workers as training academies were losing their clients. Discrimination also prevented collaboration with other workers unions. For example, in India, **healthcare workers did not want to associate with domestic workers** and attempts to bring the trade unions from both sectors together were unsuccessful.

- ▶ **A curriculum developed and accredited in line with the national TVET system in collaboration with a domestic worker organization, can automatically be used and delivered by the domestic worker union.**

- ▶ **Specific steps must be taken in order for a training programme or facility to be accredited within a national TVET system.** In Zimbabwe, four curricula for domestic workers were developed following the formal national procedures and were registered with the National Qualification Framework. However, **the Domestic Worker Training Centre closely involved in course development first required accreditation to formally deliver those curricula.** Only then could trainees receive formal qualifications for the skills acquired. A further challenge is the reluctance of many TVET systems to integrate domestic work into their curricula, often due to the prevailing perception that it is not 'real' or skilled work. This bias can slow down accreditation efforts, limit funding, and ultimately restrict domestic worker access to formal skills recognition. Overcoming this barrier requires strong advocacy, engagement with TVET authorities, and alignment with broader workforce development policies.

- ▶ **Domestic workers all require the same or similar skill sets.**

- ▶ Domestic workers engaged in indirect care-related occupations, performing i.e. household related tasks such as cooking or cleaning, require different skills to those employed in direct-care jobs. Among direct care activities, skills requirements are different for those who deal with children, with self-sufficient adults, with persons with disabilities and with older (not self-sufficient) persons. **Each occupation therefore requires different sets of skills, and curricula and training for domestic workers should cater to these nuances.**

## Assumptions

## Evidence

► **Engagement with the ILO's tripartite constituents would be sufficient to ensure that better skills lead to decent work.**

- ILO Convention No. 189 calls on Member States to consult with organizations of domestic workers and of employers of domestic workers, where they exist. While domestic workers unions exist in many countries, organizations representing household employers or service providers are few. As such, skills projects have had to seek out other means of understanding household needs. For example, in Zimbabwe, **employers of domestic workers do not belong to a formal employer organization**. The project therefore had to find other means of engaging with this group as a key stakeholder. In order to achieve this, the curricula development process consulted with employers' representatives, which - while not registered as formal members of employers' organizations - represented local associations of employers. They were brought together with domestic workers, industry representatives (hotel and catering), and care service providers. The Domestic Workers Association of Zimbabwe (DWAZ) also used informal networks to reach out to households and to facilitate the understanding of needs from employers and access to job opportunities for domestic workers.
- In India, the ILO, the government, the unions, including the domestic workers unions, and private recruitment and placement agencies played a lead role in establishing a Domestic Work Sector Skill Council (DWSSC). Unlike in other sectors, as there were no employer organizations to support the operation of the sector skills council, the ILO facilitated setting up of a consortium of rights-based and domestic workers organizations, private recruitment and placement agencies to establish the DWSSC.<sup>5</sup> To ensure domestic worker newly acquired skills were remunerated, the skills training provider assisted the domestic workers to get placed with higher wages and better working conditions and as per a contract which included basic terms and conditions of work and wage rates. Other domestic workers moved into other sectors to work in hotels, canteens, universities etc. The second approach to realize the skills premium was through the trade unions. With ILO support, these trade unions supported the creation of skilled worker cooperatives and collectives that trained domestic workers in elderly care, healthy cooking and soft skills training, as well as in collective bargaining, collective negotiation, and leadership. They also bargained for higher wages and better working conditions, and ensured domestic workers received a written contract.
- In 2021, Jamaica's Ministry of Labour and Social Security partnered with the ILO Decent Work Team for the Caribbean on a Transition to Formality Action Plan (TFAP) for Household Workers and Fisherfolks. The TFAP was followed by a multi-stakeholder consultative process that included the Jamaica Household Workers Union (JHWU), highlighting the government's commitment to social dialogue with the sector's key stakeholders, including workers and their organizations. The TFAP acknowledges skills development as key to improving collective bargaining and has contributed to advancing decent work for domestic workers (Black and Marsh, 2023). Jamaica is among the very few Caribbean countries to have ratified the ILO [Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 \(No. 189\)](#).

5 The central trade unions were involved in the process, but could not join the consortium as the consortium had to register as a private entity (not for profit) and so provided their support from outside.

## Assumptions

## Evidence

- ▶ **Simply being skilled would lead to better working conditions and formal employment for domestic workers.**

▶ **Just as skills are not necessarily rewarded with higher wages, they also do not automatically lead to formal employment contracts and improved working conditions.** Individual domestic workers, even with an increase in confidence, are usually not in a position to negotiate for higher wages or formal employment practices, such as registration to social security or written contracts. Insufficient, inadequate or ineffective labour and social protection and the lack of a workers' organization, such as a union or cooperative, exacerbate power imbalances in the domestic employment relationship. As such, to see improvements in working conditions or formal employment, domestic workers must be fully covered by labour and social security laws and those laws must be implemented effectively. Robust enforcement mechanisms, including proactive labour inspections and accessible grievance procedures, must also be in place to ensure compliance.

- ▶ **Training programmes that are backed by worker organizations have been found to increase the likelihood that domestic workers are hired with written contracts, and that they are declared and/or registered under social security.**

In Hong Kong, for example, the Domestic Workers General Union (DWGU) received government funding for a job training programme for local domestic workers, called the Confederation of Trade Unions Training Centre (CTUC). Once certified, workers gain access to the Centre's job referral programme and the Confederation negotiates their contract with employers. The average hourly wage of a domestic worker trained through the Centre was about two to three times higher than the statutory minimum wage, while post-natal caregivers placed through the Centre earned 100 per cent more than those placed by the government referral agency<sup>6</sup>. In Argentina, a trade union-run school that trains domestic workers ensured that contracts were signed between the worker and the employing household when they were recruited through the school's hiring centre<sup>7</sup>.

- ▶ **Not all domestic workers have the knowledge and self-confidence to defend their rights.** To address this, domestic worker training must include modules on rights awareness, how to use dispute resolution and enforcement mechanisms<sup>8</sup>, and how to dialogue and negotiate for better working conditions with employers. For example, the Hong Kong Training Centre included modules on negotiation and labour rights. In Myanmar, a social enterprise and cooking school, "Three Good Spoons", developed a training course for domestic workers that includes capacity-building courses on labour rights, among other skills. Three quarters of the 2019 graduates found work as domestic workers with improved working and living conditions (ILO, 2021b). In Mexico City, the Program for the Development of Competencies of Domestic Workers (PRODECOPTH) includes modules on implementing [ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 \(No. 189\)](#) and applying protections under Mexico's Federal Labour Law and Social Security Law, not only educating workers on their legal entitlements but also strengthening their ability to advocate for themselves (ILO, 2021c).

6 ILO, Cooperatives and the World of Work: A Reference Guide (Geneva: ILO, 2015), p. 8.

7 ILO, Guía para la incorporación de las trabajadoras domésticas en programas de formación profesional (Montevideo: Cinterfor/ILO, 2023)

8 In countries where domestic workers are not covered by labour law, they can still take action on criminal matters.

## ► Objective of the Theory of Change

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The development objective of the Theory of Change is for **domestic workers to enjoy decent working conditions, aligned with their rights and commensurate with their skills, and to have better career prospects**. The ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) calls for decent work for all domestic workers, irrespective of skills or certification. To date, most domestic workers remain outside of the scope of labour and social security laws. It is thus essential that a skills training and recognition programmes be developed within the context of ensuring the effective protection and formalization of all domestic workers irrespective of their level of skills, as this ToC will demonstrate. Where domestic workers enjoy effective protection, skills training and certification programmes can serve to raise the level of working conditions, and particularly of wages, above minimum rights and protections afforded by the law, in addition to improving employability and quality of service. In making reference to ‘career prospects’, the objective takes into account that domestic workers may wish to improve their skills as domestic workers or may like to develop their skills to move into other careers, rather than assuming that domestic workers would prefer one or the other. The aim is to showcase that achieving decent work for domestic workers would be a win-win case for workers, employers, and governments alike.

To achieve this result, the three following outcomes would need to be reached:



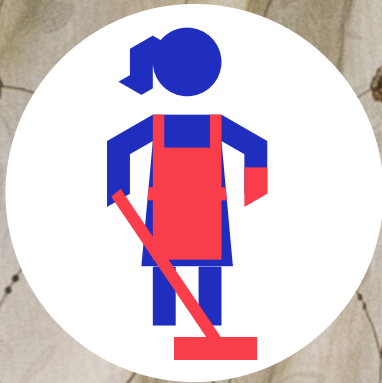
**I. Skills of domestic workers are recognized through effective, inclusive, quality and affordable skills development, recognition of prior learning and certification schemes that are adapted to domestic worker realities (affordability, schedule, location, education level, migration status, etc.).**

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**II. Domestic work is acknowledged as productive work and is remunerated in accordance with the domestic worker's skills and experience.**

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**III. The rights of domestic workers are promoted and protected.**



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► Domestic workers should enjoy decent working conditions, aligned with their rights and commensurate with their skills, and have better career prospects.

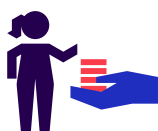
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These three outcomes would be achieved thanks to the realization of eight intermediate outcomes, resulting from a number of outputs, some of which are interconnected, as per the following:



**Outcome I: Skills of domestic workers are recognized through effective, inclusive, quality and affordable skills development, recognition of prior learning and certification schemes that are adapted to their realities (affordability, schedule, location, education level, migration status, etc.).** The skills development would be formulated to take into account not just training, but also prior learning. Domestic workers often learn on the job, sometimes over the course of decades. Recognition of prior learning can contribute to the recognition of those skills and provide access to certification. Recognition of Prior Learning, as much as skills training, must also be affordable to domestic workers and be adapted to the lack of time and availability of domestic workers.

For Outcome I to be achieved, two intermediate outcomes would need to be reached. First, national and regional skills development and recognition systems for skilling, upskilling and recognition of prior learning of domestic workers would need to be in place and effective (1.1). Second, domestic workers would need to have **access to affordable and quality** skills training and recognition services (1.2).



**Outcome II: Domestic work is acknowledged as productive work and is remunerated according to the domestic worker's skills and experience.** This outcome touches upon the fact that employers and social perceptions often undervalue domestic work. Under this outcome, employers would need to see the value of domestic worker skills and be willing to pay a skills premium (2.1). In addition, salary scales – above the minimum wage, whether statutory or collectively bargained – should be negotiated and fixed in accordance with skills levels and experience, whether through tripartite wage boards or through collective bargaining (2.2).



**Outcome III: The rights of domestic workers are promoted and protected.** This outcome recognizes that domestic workers on their own will not necessarily be able to ensure that their skills certification leads to better working conditions. For this to happen, domestic workers must enjoy adequate and effective protection by labour and social security laws, be represented by domestic worker unions, be able to negotiate for wages backed by minimum wage and salary scales (statutory or collectively bargained) that are commensurate with their skills, certification and experience. Domestic workers and employers must also be allowed to participate in social dialogue to design and implement skills training, recognition programmes and other decent work standards.

As such, in order to achieve Outcome III, the following intermediate outcomes would need to be reached. First, organizations representative of domestic workers and those representative of employers of domestic workers, where they exist, should be engaged in social dialogue improving domestic worker working conditions (3.1). Second, domestic workers should have increased awareness of their rights and skills, and the self-efficacy, self-confidence, and capacity to defend these (3.2). Third, domestic workers would need to be fully covered by labour and social security laws, by laws and regulations on the prevention and protection of violence and harassment, as well as by fundamental principles and rights at work, and these must be applied in practice (3.3). Although progress has been made, domestic workers in many countries are still excluded from labour and social security laws (ILO, 2021b). They also often face violence and harassment, including economic, psychological, physical, sexual, and verbal abuse, as well as denial of food. Less common but still alarming forms include bullying, coercion, privacy violations, and wage



withholding. These abuses are often systemic and normalized—many domestic workers describe them as ‘part of life’ (ILO, 2023e). The lack of complaint mechanisms, freedom of association, and discriminatory attitudes of employers based on ethnicity, nationality, or migration status further compound the risks. Preventing violence and harassment requires addressing its root causes, as emphasized in the [ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 \(No. 190\)](#). This includes tackling the risk factors, including psychosocial risks, related to violence and harassment, as well as addressing discrimination, abuse of power relations, and gender, cultural and social norms that support such unacceptable behaviour. This can be done through effective prevention measures, legal protections, accessible and safe reporting, dispute resolution mechanisms, and awareness-raising.

Fourth, domestic workers would need to be covered by a minimum wage, whether statutory or collectively bargained, and without discrimination – with proper enforcement mechanisms in place (3.4).

This ToC requires the involvement of multiple actors, including the workers themselves, their employers (households or service employers), and training and career guidance facilities to ensure decent work for domestic workers. Social dialogue mechanisms would have a key role to play throughout the different elements of the ToC. They should include tripartite constituents at national and regional levels, including domestic worker organizations and domestic worker employer organizations, where they exist, as well as the Ministry of Labour and other relevant government ministries, agencies and services (including inspection services and grievance mechanisms).



► Where domestic workers enjoy effective protection, skills training and certification programmes can serve to raise the level of working conditions, and particularly of wages, above minimum rights and protections afforded by the law, in addition to improving employability and quality of service.



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Domestic workers should be fully covered by labour and social security laws and by laws and regulations on the prevention and protection of violence and harassment.

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## Achieving intermediate outcomes: outputs and indicative activities

### Achieving intermediate outcomes leading to Outcome I



#### Outcome I

- ▶ IF public authorities and the tripartite constituents see the value of recognizing and developing the skills of domestic workers;
- ▶ IF financial and non-financial barriers to domestic workers' access to affordable and quality skills training and recognition services are removed;
- ▶ IF domestic workers are aware of and see value in the available skills training for both technical and core skills, and recognition services;
- ▶ IF tripartite constituents take ownership of the design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of skills development and recognition systems for domestic workers;
- ▶ IF adequate facilities are made available for domestic workers trainings, and
- ▶ IF certification schemes are implemented for all domestic workers

#### THEN

the skills of domestic workers may be recognized through effective, inclusive, quality and affordable skills development, with recognition of prior learning and certification schemes being adapted to their realities (Outcome I).

### Challenges

First, there is a lack of domestic worker skilling, upskilling and recognition of prior learning programmes and processes, and where they exist, they are not always integrated into national and regional skills development and recognition systems. For example, in the case of Zimbabwe, while a training programme developed through a domestic worker association was successful in upskilling domestic workers, there were still challenges to fully embed it in the national skills accreditation system. Indeed, ILO practitioners highlighted the fragmentation of the skills system, cumbersome procedures for the domestic worker training centre to obtain government accreditation, and lack of financial sustainability and affordability as challenges to the formal recognition and accreditation of domestic workers' skills.



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### **The skills training availability ambiguity**

- ▶ A concern was raised during discussions in preparation for this ToC regarding the potential unintended consequences of skills training in the domestic work sector. Specifically, some stakeholders worried that the introduction of training and certification requirements could disadvantage those domestic workers who have acquired skills through experience but lack formal credentials. A representative from International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF) in Malaysia noted that the availability of skills training might lead to employers dismissing existing competencies, insisting instead on formal certification. To avoid this, skills training should be voluntary, and not a requirement to obtain a job.

While governments have the prerogative to regulate the sector—including the possibility of requiring registration or certification as a condition for employment—it is unclear if any country has actually implemented such a measure. In any case, enforcement in the domestic work sector presents significant challenges. To address concerns about access to training, a key policy response should be the provision of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) mechanisms. These should be accessible, affordable, and independent of employer consent, ensuring that domestic workers can have their skills – however acquired – formally recognized without unnecessary barriers.

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With respect to accessing skills training and recognition schemes (intermediate outcome 1.2), ILO practitioners noted that domestic workers face significant barriers, including low wages (earning 56.4 per cent of other employees' wages globally), migration-related issues, like language barriers and legal restrictions, and time poverty and lack of availability linked to their unpaid care responsibilities, rigid or conversely unpredictable schedules, and long working hours (37 per cent globally exceed 48 hours weekly, a figure that reaches 50 per cent in Asia and the Pacific and seven per cent in Arab States (ILO, 2021b)). Such characteristics limit the capacity of domestic workers to pay for or attend trainings. Migrant domestic workers frequently acquire new skills while working abroad, but these are often not recognized in destination or home countries for a lack of recognition of prior learning schemes. (ILO, 2016a).

Discrimination may also prevent the implementation of skills training for domestic workers (see example in the evidence section in the table above). The intersectional discrimination faced by domestic workers, in particular migrant domestic workers, is a pervasive issue that can be present within households, but also in training institutions and unions. In addition, there is often limited political willingness to prioritize skills training for domestic workers within national skilling agendas. While tripartite discussions have acknowledged the need for recognition and skills development, challenges remain in translating these discussions into concrete policies and funding commitments. The ILO found that gender alone did not explain the pay gap between domestic workers and other employees, suggesting that multiple layers of discrimination contribute to the undervaluation of their skills (ILO, 2021b).

### **What is needed to achieve the outcome?**

Experience shows that the challenges can be overcome by including specific outputs into skills training or recognition programme designs.

To ensure that national and regional skills development and recognition systems for domestic workers for skilling, upskilling and recognition of prior learning are in place and effective (intermediate outcome 1.1.), eight outputs would need to be implemented. First, a domestic work tripartite skills board could be established to help design, implement and regulate training and certification of domestic worker skills (1.1.1). Tripartite constituent involvement would help ensure the sustainability of the skills system and ensure that the content and design of the training is adapted to the sector. In Peru for example, a working group was created as a space for the various social actors to engage in dialogue, with a view to promote compliance for the rights of domestic workers, develop skills profiles and curricula. Progress made in the development of the skills training programme is then presented to the national skills authorities. Second, skills needs, including technical and core skills needs, would have to be identified (1.1.2) in consultation with domestic worker organizations and domestic worker employers organizations, where they exist. Through collective bargaining, or through a tripartite wage board, organizations representative of domestic workers and those representative of domestic worker employers could negotiate agreements that cover issues related to domestic worker skills, training, and development. This could be conducted through a skills mapping exercise, including the perspectives of domestic workers, service providers, households, and other key stakeholders. On the basis of the mapping, domestic work occupational standards, together with training curricula including technical skills and core skills (i.e. transversal skills), would need to be developed and adopted by tripartite constituents (1.1.3), providing a framework for the recognition of domestic worker skills. ChileValora features an occupational profile for domestic workers with potential for certification. They also developed six other occupational profiles in the field of care, including through the establishment of the respective Sectoral Skills Bodies, with representation from employers, the public sector and workers. Training plans and training-to-work paths were established aligned with occupational profiles and their qualification levels – therefore also offering career prospects to domestic workers (ILO, 2024).

One of the assumptions often made is that, once trained, domestic workers would automatically have the capacity to request higher pay, commensurate with their training, or other improvements in their working conditions;

however, in most cases, imbalances in the domestic employment relationship, the strong discrimination faced by most domestic workers, and conditions of informality weaken the individual bargaining power of domestic workers. As such, in order to be effective, domestic worker training programmes must include components on rights awareness and on how to dialogue and negotiate with employers, with the objective of building their self-confidence and self-efficacy (1.1.3) (see also intermediate outcome 3.2). In Zimbabwe, the Domestic Workers Association of Zimbabwe offers training to domestic workers that includes psychosocial support to empower domestic workers and ensure they have access to decent work (ILO, 2021a). In Uruguay, a programme for dependency care workers features training modules on the rights, duties and obligations of carers and employers (ILO, 2024). These types of training can help domestic workers get clear on their rights and on the responsibilities that their employers have for them, and encourage them to advocate for themselves. In Peru, as part of a training programme for domestic workers, a 12-hour module on self-care is being developed that focuses on two learning activities: i) contractual forms, rights and duties for domestic workers, and ii) self-care in the activities performed by domestic workers.

Equally important to training domestic workers is recognizing their existing skills. Indeed, in the historic absence of skills training programmes, domestic workers have by and large acquired their skills on the job. As such, a programme to promote decent work through skills should also include mechanisms to RPL (1.1.4). Just as for the skills training offerings, RPL mechanisms should be accessible and affordable, such as in Bolivia, where the Ministry of Education offers services for recognition of prior learning through their Plurinational System for Skills Certification. Currently, Bolivia features 91 standards for the certification and skills recognition of workers with work experience who need an official certificate to validate their skills. There is one standard specific to salaried domestic workers, which covers aspects related to assistance and care for family members (ILO, 2024).

To implement skills training or recognition of prior learning, training facilities should consult with or be established by domestic worker organizations and, where they exist, domestic worker employer organizations (1.1.5). In Hong Kong SAR (China), Argentina and India, training offered or backed by worker-led organizations, including unions and cooperatives, is particularly effective at promoting decent work for domestic workers by negotiating their contracts with employers at the point of hire. Reviewing and updating existing training and qualifications is also a key step. In Jamaica, for example, existing training is now expanded and targets domestic care workers in Trinidad and Tobago, domestic worker training is now offered as part of the tourism and hospitality sector

Then, skills assessment, certification and quality assurance mechanisms and follow-up surveys of graduates (tracer studies) would need to be in place (1.1.6), to ensure the institutional quality control of domestic worker skills certification. In Costa Rica, the National Institute of Apprenticeship (INA) is a public institution that delivers education, training, and certification of individuals or entities and is crucial to the Quality Assurance System of the Care and Dependency Care Support System of the 2021-2031 National Care Policy. INA has overhauled its training programmes to align with the requirements of the National Policy, with the National Qualifications Framework and with the new competency-based curriculum model – all with the guidance, input and supervision of other organizations from the education sector, civil society and care service providers (ILO, 2024).

Skills training programmes targeting migrant domestic workers must take additional measures starting with the adoption of tools for international recognition of skills and qualifications in consultation with social partners (1.1.7). These tools could include mutual recognition schemes, bilateral labour migration agreements (BMLAs) or “soft law” such as Regional Model Competency Standards. Otherwise, the lack of certification limits upward mobility, leading to “deskilling” in countries of employment and a “care drain” in migrant workers’ countries of origin (ILO, 2016a). In Europe, some countries such as France have strong recognition of prior learning systems that recognize the skills of domestic workers and give them formal qualifications, which are then mapped against the European Qualification Framework (EQF), thus making them comparable within the EU.

Finally, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be established through social dialogue to assess the effectiveness of the skills system for domestic workers (1.1.8).

Once national and regional skills systems for domestic worker training and RPL are in place and effective, it is essential that domestic workers have effective access to skills training and recognition services (Intermediate outcome 1.2). For this to happen, four outputs that target the specific barriers mentioned in the previous

section, including affordability, will need to be achieved. First, barriers of domestic workers to access skills training, such those that can be addressed in the design and implementation of the initiative, should be identified (1.2.1). These barriers could be addressed through surveys or focus group discussions with domestic workers or through social dialogue, for example through a tripartite skills board. Awareness measures to inform domestic workers of available skills training and recognition programmes should be designed and implemented (1.2.2), and to ensure the programmes are affordable and accessible, financial and non-financial mechanisms to overcome barriers to access them should be implemented (1.2.3). These could include, among other measures, access to childcare, scheduling in accordance with the availability of domestic workers, allowance for paid educational leave (in line with the ILO [Paid Educational Leave Convention, 1974 \(No. 140\)](#)), and employer-financed trainings, including through bipartite arrangements. In France, for example, 'assistantes maternelles' have a right to continuous professional training which is financed through contributions from household employers as per a sectoral agreement<sup>9</sup>. And finally, career guidance and counselling services should be available and affordable to domestic workers (1.2.4). In this way, the career prospects of domestic workers could be strengthened, offering them the possibility of earning higher wages and/or pivoting careers should they choose. Building technical and core skills and advancing RPL are key to this endeavour.

### Possible activities

- ▶ Conduct a study to identify barriers for domestic workers to skills training.
- ▶ Conduct a mapping of current and future skills and care needs.
- ▶ Provide technical assistance to constituents in the design of skills standards.
- ▶ Provide technical assistance to constituents in the development of domestic work training programmes including core skills, basic digital skills, and know your rights components.
- ▶ Facilitate social dialogue around possible tools for international recognition of skills and qualifications of domestic workers.
- ▶ Support the establishment of a training facility for domestic workers.
- ▶ Implement financial and non-financial mechanisms to allow domestic workers access to skills development and recognition programmes (access to childcare, scheduling, financing, legal provisions and language assistance for migrant domestic workers, among others, including through bipartite arrangements).
- ▶ Implement awareness measures to inform domestic workers of available skills training and recognition programmes.
- ▶ Convene tripartite constituents to discuss and establish a skills board.
- ▶ Ratify the Paid Educational Leave Convention, 1974 (No. 140) and ensure that domestic workers are covered.

9 Nouvelles règles sur les départs en formation 2024 - iperia.eu Available at : <https://www.iperia.eu/fr/actualites/nouvelles-regles-sur-les-departs-en-formation-2024> (accessed 29 June 2025)

## Achieving Intermediate Outcomes leading to Outcome II



### Outcome II

- ▶ IF the attitudes and behaviour of employers regarding domestic workers change to consider them as workers that are entitled to a fair pay and decent working conditions;
- ▶ IF employers of domestic workers engage with domestic worker organizations;
- ▶ IF measures are adopted by national tripartite dialogue to increase employer willingness and capacity to pay a decent wage to domestic workers;
- ▶ IF employers are aware of the incentives put in place by the government and see the value in their uptake;
- ▶ IF employment services play their role in ensuring that the skills of domestic workers are recognized and adequately remunerated;
- ▶ IF employers trust government institutions to deliver on the incentives put in place, and
- ▶ IF employers see the benefits of contributing to the social protection system and abiding by their obligations

### THEN

Domestic work can be acknowledged as productive work and remunerated in accordance with skills and experience.

## Challenges

Some of the challenges to achieving outcome II relate to the fact that employers of domestic workers, whether households or service providers, often do not see domestic workers as workers, nor the value of domestic workers' skills. Indeed, surveys of household employers of domestic workers have shown that they typically conflate personal characteristics of the domestic worker with skills. Instead of looking for domestic workers with years of experience caring for children, for example, they may focus on other characteristics such as perceived obedience, age, appearance, ethnicity or religion. For example, a survey on employer practices and perceptions on paid domestic work in India found that employers treated domestic workers differently based on their class, gender and class identity, and that

they sought out workers that were ‘quiet, non-demanding or non-argumentative’ and showed ‘attributes such as deference, obedience and submission’ (ILO, 2023a). A study of employers of migrant domestic workers in Lebanon also highlighted that employers did not place a high priority on cleaning or caregiving skills but emphasized that the most important criterion they search for in a migrant domestic worker is ‘trustworthiness’ (ILO, 2016b).

Moreover, contrary to most assumptions, even when a domestic worker’s skills are certified, employers are typically not willing to pay them more than they already do for their work or reward them with better working conditions. For example, a study of employers’ perspectives in India showed that they had a deep undervaluing of the labour and skill involved in domestic work, indicating that without external pressure, there are unlikely to be changes in employment conditions for domestic worker (ILO, 2023a). In other cases, household employers might need skilled domestic workers, but do not have the capacity to pay a salary commensurate with their skills, or make contributions to their social security schemes. Even when they see domestic workers as bona fide workers, they may not be aware of how to ensure that their domestic worker has access to the benefits linked to their status as an employee such as social security registration.

Finally, employment services and service providers that place domestic workers, including migrant domestic workers, may not pay much attention to ensuring their skills are recognized and adequately remunerated.

### **What is needed to achieve the outcome?**

To ensure that employers see the value of domestic worker skills and are willing to pay a skills premium (Intermediate Outcome 2.1) and to ensure that salary scales are negotiated and fixed for domestic workers in accordance with their skill levels and experience, either through collective bargaining or through tripartite wage boards (Intermediate Outcome 2.2), the following four outputs will need to be achieved. First, public awareness campaigns for employers should be designed and implemented on the basis of behavioural insights (2.1.1). Second, whether due to willingness to pay or capacity to pay, household employers may need incentives or subsidies to support their access to skilled domestic work. To this end, national tripartite dialogues should develop and adopt measures to increase employer willingness and capacity to pay, through financial and non-financial incentives (2.1.2.) Financial incentives for household employers could include subsidies or tax breaks that help household employers afford domestic work, while non-financial incentives could include certificates or other forms of recognition for responsible employment. For example, in Italy the bipartite entity responsible for domestic worker training is called ‘EBINCOLF’ and is funded through a levy system with contributions by employers and workers. At the end of 2019, it proposed a national qualifications standard for domestic work that was approved by the National Standards Organization and is in line with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). A collective agreement is currently under negotiation that would include a higher pay scale for trained workers following testing and certification of prior learning.

Third, employment services and service providers should be made aware of their role in ensuring domestic worker skills are recognized and adequately remunerated, and that they are employed formally (2.1.3.). Through regulation (see 3.3.3), written contracts and social security registration should be promoted and enforced, in line with applicable labour and social security laws. Finally, national level dialogues should be held to discuss salary scales for domestic workers that would align with their skills levels and experience (2.2.1), leading to the formulation of collective agreements. If adequately implemented and enforced such as to ensure compliance, salary scales commensurate with skills levels could lead to an increased number of domestic workers being remunerated accordingly. This would incentivise other domestic workers to seek out skills training and RPL, confirming that upskilling and certification would raise their salaries.



### Possible activities

- ▶ Conduct a behaviourally informed survey of employers of domestic workers and, taking the results into account, design a campaign to shift perception and promote the recognition of domestic worker skills.
- ▶ Convene the tripartite constituents to develop and adopt measures to increase employer willingness and capacity to pay a decent wage to their domestic worker(s).

### Indicators for progress monitoring

- ▶ Number of set salary scales for domestic workers
- ▶ Average wages received by domestic workers
- ▶ Number of employers that perceive domestic workers as bona fide workers
- ▶ Number of measures adopted to increase employer willingness and capacity to pay a decent wage

## Achieving intermediate outcomes leading to Outcome III



### Outcome III

- ▶ IF domestic workers are connected to each other through skills training and/or unions;

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- ▶ IF domestic workers have acquired knowledge of their rights and skills levels;

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- ▶ IF domestic workers have gained the awareness, self-efficacy and self-confidence to negotiate with their employers individually and as a group;

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- ▶ IF governments have the willingness and capacity to develop, ratify and implement the relevant international labour standards, and to ensure their enforcement, including through strong inspection systems and grievance mechanisms;

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- ▶ IF domestic workers will be fully covered by labour and social security laws, and by laws and regulations on the prevention and elimination of violence and harassment, and

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- ▶ IF the capacity-building of worker and employer organizations leads to engagement in effective social dialogue, tying domestic worker skills and their working conditions

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### THEN

the rights of domestic workers can be promoted and protected.

## Challenges

While the achievement of Outcome I would see the emergence of skills training and recognition programmes to which domestic workers have effective access, given the absence of institutions such as labour and social security laws, minimum wages and trade unions, domestic workers would still not have sufficient bargaining power to ensure their skills translate to higher wages and better working conditions. To redress this power relationship imbalance, a number of challenges need to be addressed.

First, the absence of domestic worker or employers of domestic worker organizations, whether households or service providers, poses challenges to social dialogue, an essential tool for the achievement of decent work. The nature of domestic work, which takes place in individual households, makes it difficult for workers and employers to organize. Although there are now domestic worker organizations in many countries, there are rarely organizations of domestic worker employers.

Second, skills training and recognition initiatives for domestic workers have little chance of realizing decent work in the sector in the absence of a legal framework that covers domestic workers to the same extent as other workers. To date, 81 per cent of domestic workers work informally, 66 per cent due to gaps in labour and social protection, and 34 per cent due to gaps in implementation. In some countries, domestic workers are excluded or not fully covered by labour and social security laws, in law and in practice, including fundamental principles and rights at work. Domestic workers in the informal economy are particularly vulnerable to violence and harassment, and abuse from their individual employers and their family members, as well as from service providers that place and/or employ them, and their skills are also less likely to be recognized and remunerated accordingly. Indeed, one of the key assumptions of skills training or recognition is that it will result in higher wages for domestic workers; however, the mechanisms through which this improvement in wages would take place are not always present in the domestic work sector. For example, 22.2 per cent of domestic workers are not covered by minimum wages, whether statutory or collectively bargained, which contributes to domestic workers earning just 56.4 per cent of the average monthly wages of other employees. Moreover, very few minimum wage requirements covering domestic workers include salary scales to reflect the skills they acquired by experience or through training (although some exist in Argentina, Switzerland and Uruguay). In addition, there may not be any grievance mechanisms, and it may be challenging for inspection systems to reach the informal economy or to enter individual households to check on domestic workers' working conditions.

These and other factors mean that domestic workers often have low self-efficacy or self-confidence in their ability to negotiate with employers for better working conditions. This can be even more true for those facing intersectional discrimination such as migrant domestic workers. The low bargaining power of domestic workers can be compounded by their lack of awareness regarding their skill level as well as the isolated nature of the work which hinders network-building and collective empowerment. In addition, domestic workers and their employers (whether households or service providers) may not be fully aware of their rights and responsibilities.

## **What is needed to achieve the outcome?**

For skills training and recognition to contribute to decent work, other decent work institutions must also be in place. On the basis of those institutions, domestic workers should also have sufficient individual bargaining power to see that their wages are commensurate with their skills, whether acquired through experience or through training.

Domestic workers and their employers should be able to engage in social dialogue to improve domestic workers' working conditions (intermediate outcome 3.1). To achieve this, the capacity of worker organizations (including domestic workers' organizations) (3.1.1) and employer organizations (including organizations of employers of domestic workers) to engage in meaningful social dialogue should be strengthened (3.1.2). Employers need to be trained in matters related to the rights of domestic workers, including on how to prevent violence and harassment and uphold fundamental principles and rights at work.

Through social dialogue, minimum wage salary scales that recognize domestic worker skills could be developed and agreed upon.

At the same time, for domestic workers to engage in effective negotiations with their employers, it is essential for them to acquire increased awareness, self-efficacy and self-confidence about their skills and rights, and the capacity to defend these (Intermediate outcome 3.2.). This could be achieved by building their collective sense of empowerment through peer networks (3.2.1). These peer networks could be built through unions, and would be particularly relevant for migrant domestic workers who might be at risk of even further isolation. In Myanmar, the alumni network of the skilling centre and social enterprise 'Three Good Spoons' formed the country's first domestic worker association and matched the workers they had trained with their network of 1700 employers. The centre thus played a key role in empowering domestic workers to negotiate their

working conditions individually with their employer and in turning skills training to decent work. In addition, it is key for skills training programmes to include modules on rights awareness, information on different forms of violence and harassment, how to access dispute resolution and enforcement mechanisms, and how to dialogue and negotiate with employers, including how to search and interview for jobs (3.2.2. – see also [ILO, 2021b](#)). Specific training on violence and harassment could include support in helping domestic workers identify cases they might face, and empower them with de-escalation tools, gathering evidence, and access to reporting mechanisms.

For domestic workers to have their rights promoted and protected, they also need to be fully covered by labour and social security laws, by laws, policies and regulations on the prevention and elimination of violence and harassment, as well as fundamental principles and rights at work, in law and in practice (Intermediate outcome 3.3.). To this end, the following outputs would need to be achieved: First, legislation in line with relevant international labour standards, such as Conventions Nos. 88, 181, 189 y 190 (alongside Recommendation No. 206) should be developed and implemented (3.3.1.). Second, service providers that place or employ domestic workers should be regulated (3.3.2). The ILO's [Employment Service Convention, 1948 \(No. 88\)](#) and [Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 \(No. 181\)](#)<sup>10</sup> could provide relevant frameworks in this regard. The importance of robust regulations becomes even more evident in the context of digital platforms, which have been on the rise in the domestic work sector in recent years ([ILO, 2021b](#)). Regulations must address discriminatory practices, ensure fair contracts, and bridge gaps in the recognition of workers' rights to advance equity. Finally, written contracts and social security registration should be promoted and enforced (3.3.3.), and strong inspection systems should be put in place (3.3.4.) along with grievance mechanisms (3.3.5). This would support the transition of domestic workers out of the informal sector into the formal sector, where they would be more likely to enjoy decent working conditions.

Another crucial component for Outcome III is that domestic workers should receive minimum wages (Intermediate Outcome 3.4). In order to achieve this, minimum wage setting mechanisms should include domestic workers (3.4.1).

## Possible activities

- ▶ Where they are present, build the capacity of existing worker organizations, including domestic workers' associations, and of employer organizations, including household employers, regarding the rights of domestic workers.
- ▶ Support constituents, including organizations of domestic workers and of employers of domestic workers, where they exist, in adopting a minimum wage and salary scale reflecting skills acquired through experience or training.
- ▶ Conduct a legal gap analysis of relevant labour and social security legislation to assess coverage of domestic workers in the legal system.
- ▶ Conduct a survey of domestic workers' working conditions to assess their coverage in practice by relevant labour and social security legislation.

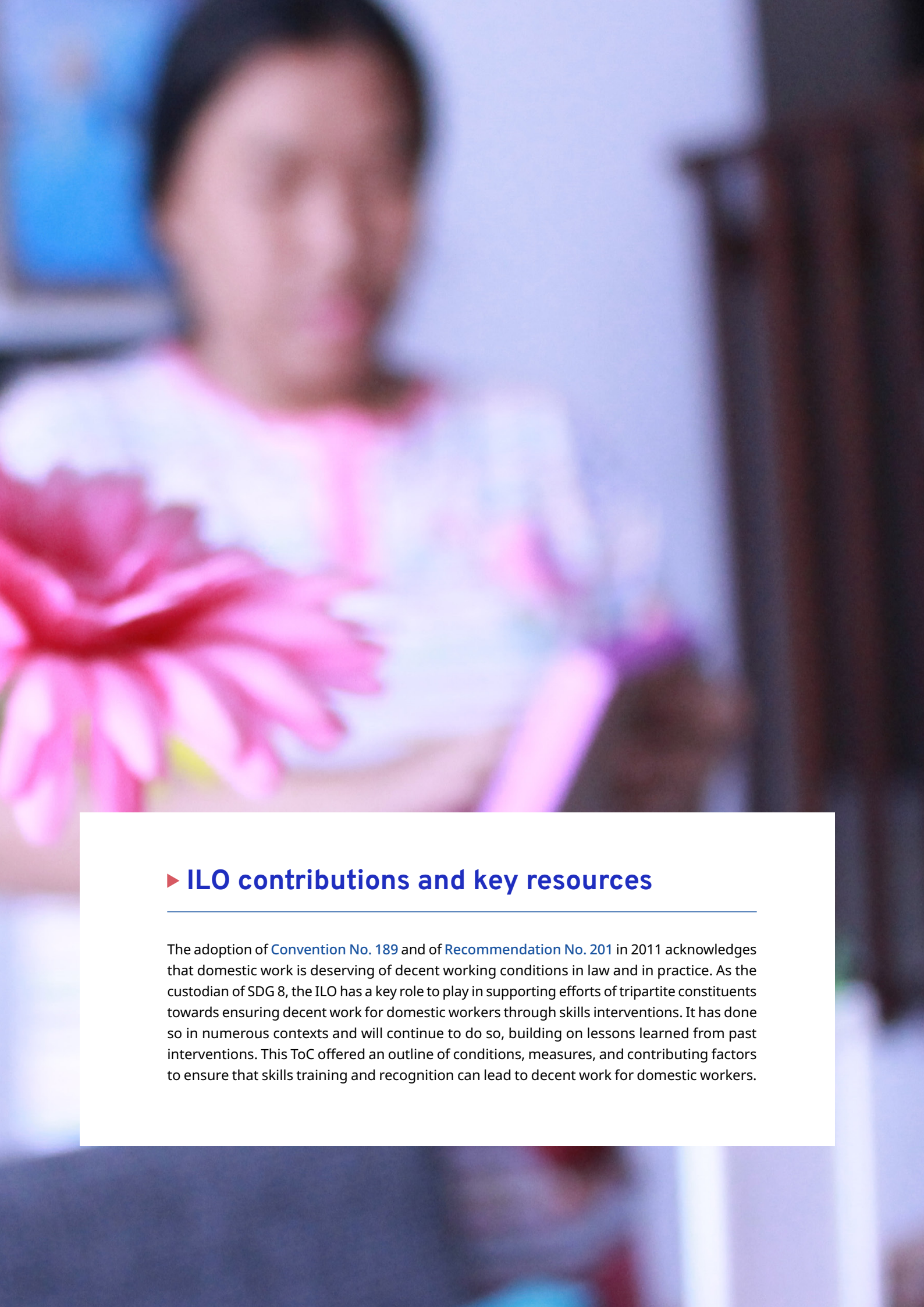
10 See Articles 3 and 8, i.e.



- ▶ Raise awareness of the role of training facilities in supporting the building of domestic worker networks.
- ▶ Train inspection services on the specificities of domestic work labour inspections.
- ▶ Promote the development of new international labour standards related to domestic work and skills.
- ▶ Encourage member states to ratify and implement international labour standards, including but not limited to Conventions nos. 88, 181, 189 and 190 that improve rights enforcement, access to skills development, and the working conditions of domestic workers.

### Indicators for progress monitoring

- ▶ Number of international labour standards, including fundamental principles and rights at work, ratified
- ▶ Number of cases reported by inspection services
- ▶ Percentage of domestic workers with a written contract
- ▶ Percentage of domestic workers covered by labour laws
- ▶ Percentage of domestic workers covered by social security
- ▶ Percentage of domestic workers covered by laws and regulations on the prevention and elimination of violence and harassment
- ▶ Percentage of domestic workers registered to and contributing to social security
- ▶ Level of awareness of domestic workers and their employers on their rights and obligations
- ▶ Number of social dialogue meetings convened with a focus on improving the working conditions of domestic workers
- ▶ Number of grievances settled
- ▶ Collective agreements in place
- ▶ Countries within which minimum wages apply to domestic workers
- ▶ Actual wages of domestic workers
- ▶ Actual hours of work of domestic workers



## ► ILO contributions and key resources

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The adoption of [Convention No. 189](#) and of [Recommendation No. 201](#) in 2011 acknowledges that domestic work is deserving of decent working conditions in law and in practice. As the custodian of SDG 8, the ILO has a key role to play in supporting efforts of tripartite constituents towards ensuring decent work for domestic workers through skills interventions. It has done so in numerous contexts and will continue to do so, building on lessons learned from past interventions. This ToC offered an outline of conditions, measures, and contributing factors to ensure that skills training and recognition can lead to decent work for domestic workers.

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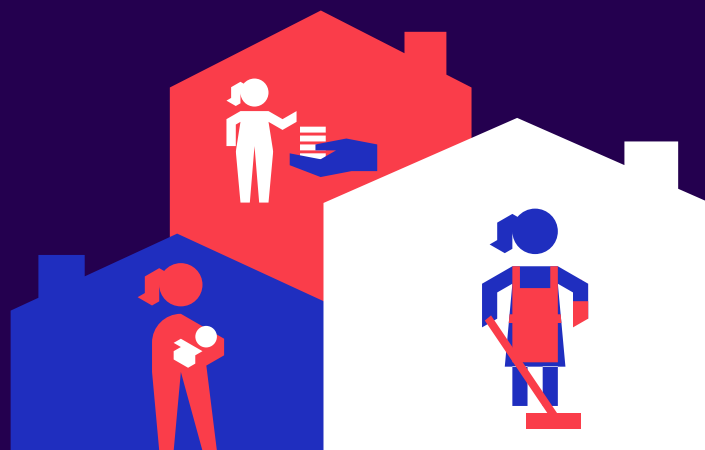
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