

Multi-Stakeholder Consultation on Policy Options for Domestic Work in the context of India's Care Economy

Organised by IHD and ILO

4th April 2016

Venue: Tamarind Hall, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi

Women domestic workers is one category of work that is growing with larger numbers of women taking up this activity of paid employment. The increasing demand for domestic workers with the rising middle classes in urban areas is noticeable over the last few decades. This is a labour market activity which is largely informal and its distinction as a work category stems from the personalized nature of the contract and work execution within employer households. Since the women domestic workers largely belong to the poorer, migrant households the power equation between the employers and employees disfavours the latter. The vulnerability of workers and their need for the income support can serve as a ripe circumstance for exploitation. The need for regulating and protecting domestic workers has been debated and the ILO Convention 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers is one of the first ever International Labour Standard adopted by International Labour Organisation in 2011.

The ILO sponsored a research study on the perspectives of employers of domestic workers in two metropolitan cities of Delhi and Mumbai which was undertaken by IHD Delhi along with CDRA, Mumbai. This is part of the work in freedom programme, a UK funded multi-stakeholder initiative to reduce vulnerability to forced labour with a special focus on domestic work. The growing demand for domestic workers among the middle and higher income households and their approach to such work and workers rights was examined through rigorous field surveys using quantitative and qualitative methods. Care work within the domestic spheres is largely the responsibility of women whether as members of the households or as hired hands for carrying out these essential daily tasks. Domestic workers among urban middle classes and better off sections have always served as critical contributors and help facilitate women of the household to contribute to the economy in some cases.

The low presence of state provisioning of care services and social protection measures, amidst the diminishing fiscal spaces for public health, education and other social benefits influence the demand for alternative cheaper avenues of private care provisioning. Privatisation, eroding capacity of State and traditional institutions to manage care work, extend social protection and the ability to respond to the demands of the changing demographics of population, increasing migration to urban centres, with specific patterns of class and/or caste relationships is the milieu within which there is a growing demand for cheap and flexible labour.

More women are supplying their labour for domestic work given the ease of entry into this sector. This helps match up with the rising demands among urban middle and high income households especially with the additional specificities of need for care for children and elderly which is not provided for by the State and hence shifts the employers dependence on privately accessed domestic services. With little or no protection of the workers' rights ensured by the legal and State provisions, women workers have to bargain and fight for their rights to the extent feasible. Some changes are observed over time with most part timers now trying to legitimately take the weekly offs for at least 2-3 days every month, for example. Workers are getting vocal about it also and specifying these as terms and conditions while negotiating the working conditions and verbal contracts of employment.

Processes of formalization are far from attaining in this sector, given the highly personalized nature of this segmented and gender segregated job market. A complex set of demand and supply factors together influence the work conditions, contract and remuneration. The need to recognize these domestic activities as work undertaken by these women workers and aim for reasonable wages and working conditions is gradually witnessed in pockets around the two metropolitan cities surveyed in this project. However, bulk of the employers do not view such work as employment, since it engages the women domestic for a short period of time and specific tasks which are completed within a brief

time span. With increasing demand for such tasks and more and more women entering the labour market for domestics, it may be assumed that there will be a gradual shift towards ensuring basic rights of these workers too. Some efforts in this direction are already visible.

The themes of the workshop focus upon these dimensions in three sessions post the inaugural session. The first session after the inaugural session presents the main findings of the research study which looks into the employers perspectives regarding domestic work, women workers, wage returns, hiring mechanisms, preferences, and so on encapsulating the demand side scenario. The first panel after this draws upon the supply side dimensions based on earlier studies in urban milieu. The second panel focusses on the policy considerations, bringing in the institutional and organizational efforts that have been going on. The final concluding session will bring together different stakeholders to highlight the learnings for the days discussions with a focus on central points for action, what needs to be done for ensuring dignity and decent work for women domestic workers.

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Time	Session
9:00- 9:15 A.M.	Registration and tea
9:15 A.M. – 10.30 A.M.	<u>Inaugural Session</u> Welcome and introduction to the workshop • <i>Mr. Igor Bosc, Chief Technical Adviser, Work in Freedom Programme, International Labour Organisation (ILO)</i> • <i>Dr. Alakh N Sharma, Director, Institute for Human Development (IHD)</i> • <i>Ms Sherin Khan, Officer Incharge, ILO DWT for SA and Country Office for India</i> Keynote Address • <i>Ms. Fish IP, Regional Coordinator, International Domestic Workers Federation</i> Inaugural Addresses • <i>Mr. Manish Gupta, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment</i> • <i>Mr. Manish Gupta, Joint Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs (TBC)</i> • <i>Mr. Rajesh Aggarwal, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Skills (TBC)</i>
10:30 A.M – 11.00 A.M	Tea/Coffee Break
11:00 A.M – 1:00 P.M	Presentation based on the research study findings - Domestic Workers: Work Conditions, Recruitment, and Employers Perspectives Prof. Preet Rustagi and team, IHD and Prof. Ritu Dewan and team, CDRA Chair: Ms. Rebecca Tavares, UNW Discussants: Dr. A. K. Shiva Kumar, UNICEF Ms. Reiko Tsushima, Senior Gender Specialist, ILO Dr. Sasi Kumar, VVGNI Questions and answers

1.00 PM – 2.00 PM

LUNCH

2.00 PM – 3.30 PM

Panel 1: About domestic workers

Chair: Dr. Rajindar Dhar, Additional Labour Commissioner, Department of Labour, Government of NCT of Delhi

Discussant and context settings: Ms Bandana Pattnaik, GAATW

- ***Identity and mobility of domestic workers***, Ms. Anisha Chugh, South Asia Women Development Fund
- ***Agency of women, migration and domestic work*** –Dr. Deepita Chakravarty, Chairperson, Centre for Women's Studies, Santiniketan
- ***Profiles of domestic workers in urban spaces*** – Dr. Surabhi Tandon Mehrotra
- ***Domestic worker and Domestic Workers: changing scenarios in recent times*** – Dr. Neetha N, CWDS
- ***Questions and answers***

3.30 PM – 3.45 PM

Tea/Coffee Break

3:45 P.M. – 4.30

Panel 2: Policy implications

Discussant and context settings: Prof. Kamala Sankaran

- ***Policies shaping the care economy*** –Prof. Jayati Ghosh, JNU
- ***Existing policies and initiatives for domestic work*** –Ms Suneetha Eluri, ILO
- ***Organising and Other Institutional initiatives*** - Ms. Nilanjana Sen Gupta
- ***Voice and organisation of domestic workers*** – Ms Amarjeet Kaur, National Secretary, All India Trade Union Congress
- ***Addressing discrimination of domestic workers*** – Ms. Ruth Manorama,
- ***Rights of domestic workers in skilling*** – Ms Bharti Birla, ILO
- ***Questions and answers***

4.30 PM – 5.30 PM

Panel 3: Summing Up and Concluding Session

Chair: Ms. Kiran Moghe, Vice President IAWS and All India Democratic Women's Association

Panelists:

Igor Bosc, Chief Technical Adviser, Work in Freedom Programme, International Labour Organisation (ILO)

Ms. Fish, Regional Coordinator, International Domestic Workers Federation

Ms Kiron Wadehra, Co-founder & Director - Koreth Consulting, Board Member, ACORD

Labour Commissioner/ Principal Secretary, Government of India/Delhi/Maharashtra

Preet Rustagi, IHD and **Ritu Dewan**, CDRA