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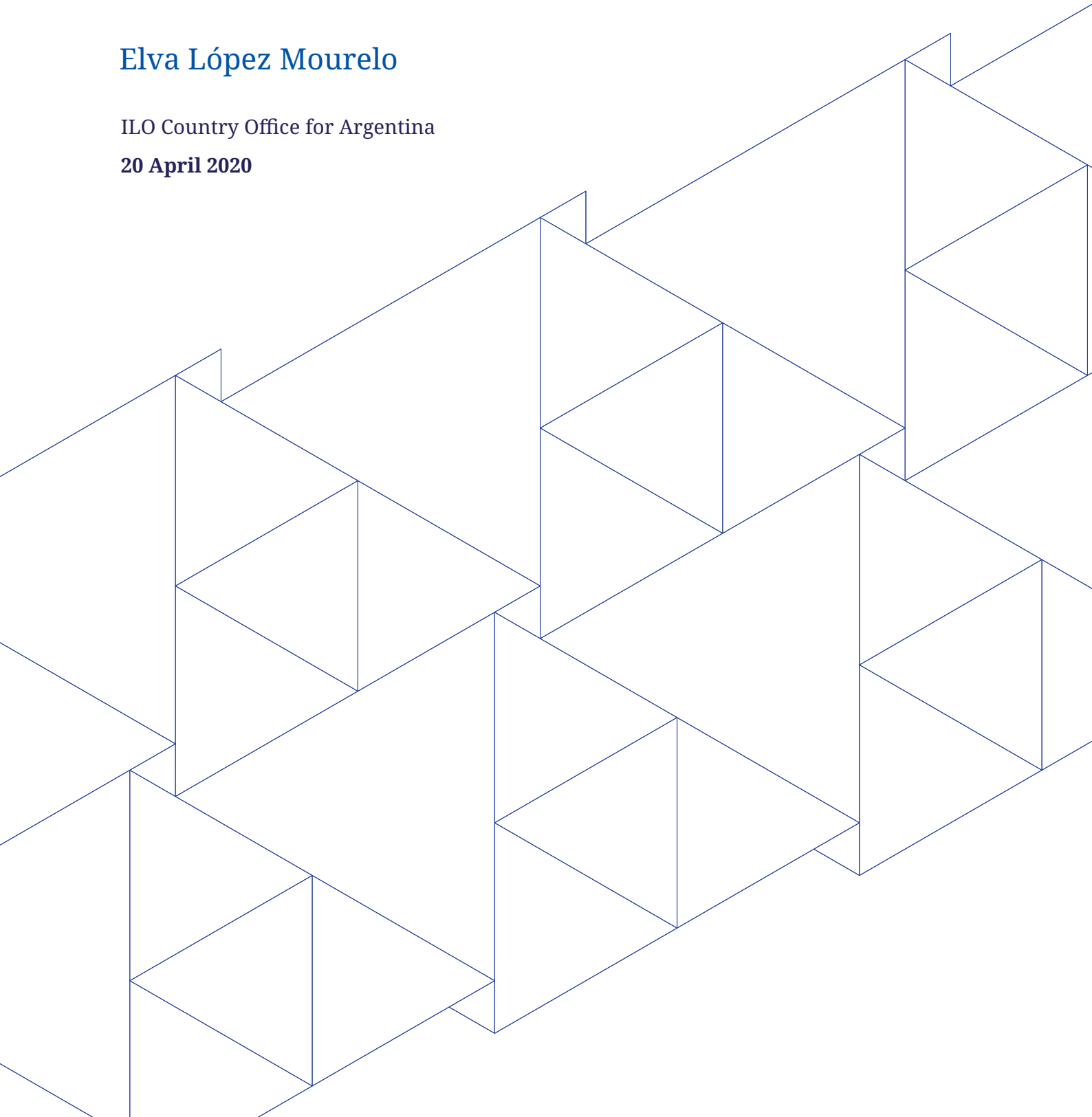
TECHNICAL REPORT

# ► COVID-19 and domestic work in Argentina

Elva López Mourelo

ILO Country Office for Argentina

20 April 2020





## Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a major impact on the Argentinian labour market. The sector of domestic workers is one of the most affected by this crisis due to the socio-demographic profile and the conditions under which these workers perform their tasks.

There are over 1,300,000 domestic workers in Argentina, 3 out of 4 of which work in the informal economy. A large percentage of these workers take care of households with large families, including the presence of children and adolescents. This, in addition to their low wages and a lack of access to labour rights, even further increases their vulnerability to this crisis, during which their income has been partially or completely reduced due to the mandatory confinement measures.

While the majority of these workers perform general domestic tasks (washing, cleaning, etc.), one out of every four provides caregiving tasks, an activity declared by the government to be essential. This means an overload of tasks for such workers, given that in many households the demand for these services has increased because of the closure of schools and care centres. Moreover, there is the added risk of exposure to infection, and some of these workers could even be caring for people with coronavirus without knowing it.

In the case of non live-in workers, they frequently work for more than one employer, consequently increasing the risk of infection due to having to commute from one household to another, generally using public transport. Moreover, they depend on the health protection measures adopted by more than one employer. For those who work under the live-in mode, the mandatory confinement measures can affect their right to weekly time off.

Beyond the work modality, they all run the risk of losing their jobs due to the fact that their employers cannot pay them for their wages as a consequence of the crisis. In addition, there is a high level of informality in the sector, which means, for example, that the majority of these workers do not have access to unemployment insurance during the time when they can't work or have access to sick leave. Moreover, the majority of non-registered workers do not have health insurance, which would provide them with access to a quality health service if they became ill, nor do they have coverage for occupational illness should they contract the virus at their workplace.

The lack of access to information by workers in this sector leaves them even more exposed to a situation of vulnerability. On the one hand, a high percentage

are unaware of their rights, and very few are affiliated with a union. On the other hand, many do not have sufficient information about the measures they must take during the pandemic to protect themselves while they provide caregiving tasks, for example. Furthermore, in the current health crisis domestic workers have to handle harmful or toxic chemical substances in their thorough cleaning tasks, which could jeopardize their health if they do not have the necessary preventive measures and protective equipment available for using such substances.

Argentina established income support measures to reduce the impact of the crisis during the health emergency. These measures include all domestic workers, regardless of the activity they perform or their labour registration status. These measures include the extraordinary supplement of the Universal Child Allowance and the Emergency Family Income. Domestic worker unions of the country have conducted campaigns to raise awareness about the risks faced by these workers during the pandemic, in addition to information campaigns about worker rights with respect to the COVID-19 crisis.

While these actions are positive, the high lack of registration that still exists in the sector means that domestic workers are exposed to greater vulnerability in the current context. In this regard, implementing measures for their transition from informality to formality will be essential, thereby protecting their health and guaranteeing their employment stability and economic security in crisis situations such as the current one.

*COVID-19 and domestic work in Argentina.*

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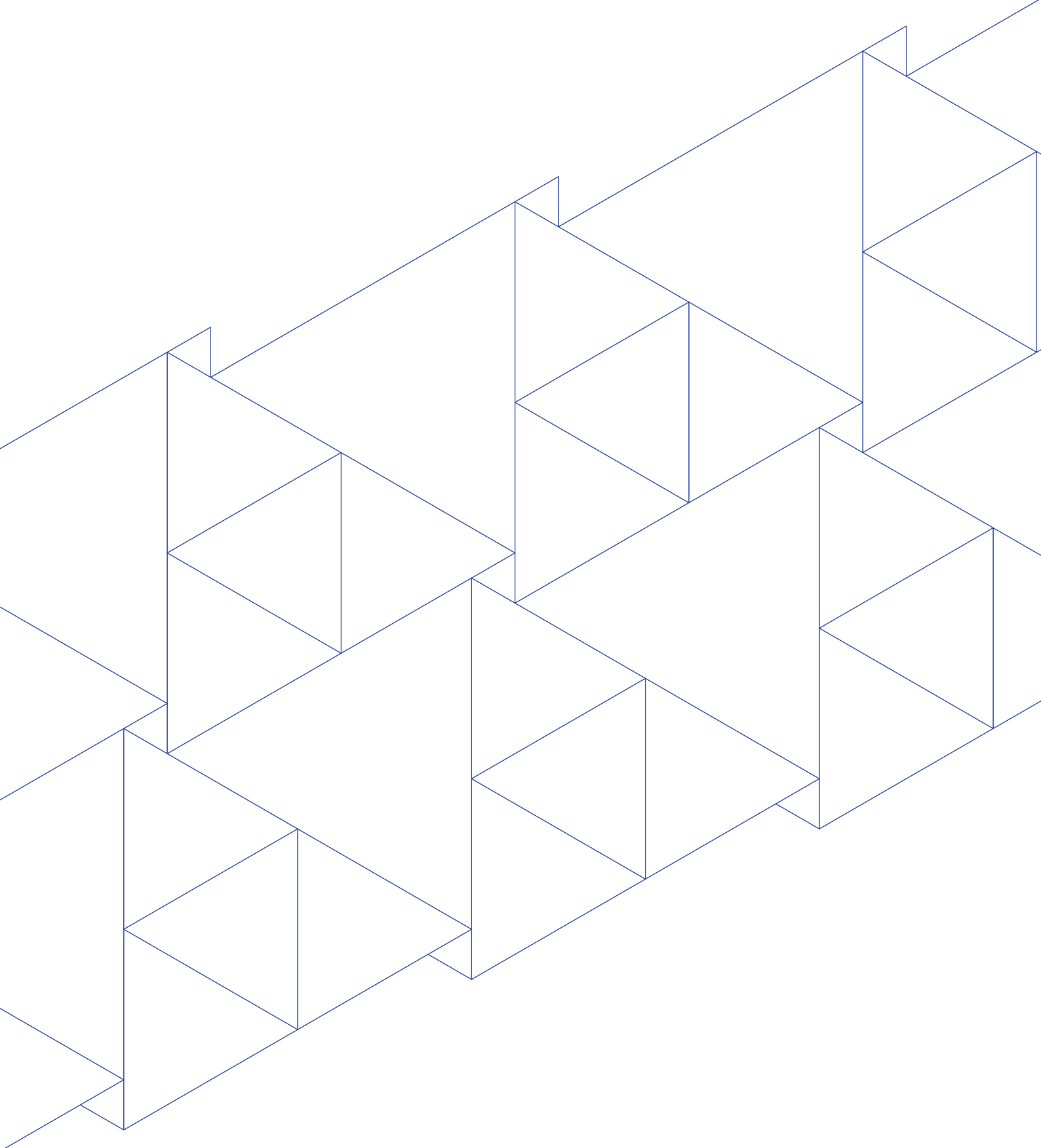
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