

**Migrant Forum in Asia Statement**  
**International Domestic Workers Day**  
16 June 2015



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Today, June 16th, we stand in solidarity with domestic workers worldwide in celebration of International Domestic Workers Day. On this day in 2011, ILO Convention 189 was adopted enshrining in international law important human and labour rights standards for all domestic workers, including migrant domestic workers. This recognition of their rights marked a major victory for domestic workers everywhere. While on this day we commemorate that victory and affirm that domestic workers are workers, we acknowledge that there is still considerable work to be done to ensure that those rights are realized.

**Domestic Work is Work. Domestic Workers are Workers.**

To date, only 20 governments have ratified ILO C189. This ratification rate does not reflect the encouraging and progressive statements made by governments when the Convention was first adopted. While these 19 governments have signalled their commitment to protecting and upholding the rights of all domestic workers in their countries, too many others have yet to take this basic step towards acknowledging *domestic work as work* and *domestic workers as workers*—a reality that the international community has clearly accepted and recognized.

- CEDAW General Comment No. 26 on women migrant workers (2005) clearly calls upon states to ensure that domestic workers “are protected by labour laws, including wage and hour regulations, health and safety codes and holiday and vacation leave regulations.”
- In General Comment No. 1 on Migrant Domestic Workers (2011), the Committee on Migrant Workers states that domestic workers are workers, and are protected under the Migrant Workers’ Convention as would be any other migrant worker. “Any distinction made to exclude migrant domestic workers from protection would constitute a prima facie violation of the Convention.”
- In ILO C189, the ILO requires that “Each Member shall, in relation to domestic workers, take the measures set out in this Convention to respect, promote and realize the fundamental principles and rights at work...”
- At this year’s 104<sup>th</sup> Session of the International Labour Conference, the social partners concluded their second discussion on transitioning from the informal to the formal economy. In this discussion, they again affirmed that domestic workers are rendered one of the most vulnerable groups of workers by serious decent work deficits in the informal economy. States must therefore pay special attention to ensuring that their basic labour rights are protected and promoted.

The above international standards and guidelines clearly reflect the principle of non-discrimination and the need to bring domestic workers under the protection of national labour laws, but these principles have not been translated on the ground. In many countries, domestic workers continue to struggle for recognition of their rights and often are subject to inhumane treatment. Many are still denied the protection of national labour laws. The lack of labour protections creates acute situations of vulnerability for domestic workers, and migrant domestic workers are all the more at risk on account of employer-tied visa regimes, abuses in the labour recruitment system, and the live-in nature of their work.

Every day we hear horrible stories and see video documentation of domestic workers being abused physically and psychologically by the members of the households they work with. Too many domestic workers continue to endure long working hours, no weekly rest day, and non-payment or irregular payment of wages, among other rights violations. Many are also subjected to document confiscation and restrictions on their movement and right to organize.

For domestic workers to realize their rights, governments must make a strong political commitment to not only ratify ILO C189, but to implement its provisions into their national labour legislation. They must enforce rules that provide crucial human and labour rights protections to *all* domestic workers, including migrant domestic workers. For too long, domestic workers have had their rights denied — Today is the time for governments to take concrete steps to right this wrong. Ensure that domestic workers receive daily and weekly rest days, that they are paid on time, that they are free to organize and form trade unions, that their passports and documents are not confiscated, and, above all, that they are treated with dignity and respect.

### **A Call to Action: Let's join #OurHands for domestic worker rights!**

Around the world, domestic workers are organizing and calling for their rights. Today alone, thousands of organized domestic workers will attend rallies and programs in their communities, and countless others will express their solidarity through social media.

Today, Migrant Forum in Asia in partnership with Christian Aid launches the #OurHands social media campaign — an international campaign for domestic worker rights. Forty organizations that provide essential services to domestic workers, and migrant domestic workers, have signed on in support of the campaign to date. Over the next 6 months, these organizations will use their social media platforms to engage with domestic workers online, providing crucial know-your-rights information for their followers. Domestic workers are encouraged to share these resources with their friends, families, and colleagues. Through the campaign, domestic workers in different countries are already engaging with one another, articulating their solidarity and power in words and images. ([www.dwrights.org](http://www.dwrights.org) ~ [@dw\\_rights](https://twitter.com/dw_rights) ~ [Facebook.com/domesticworkerrights](https://www.facebook.com/domesticworkerrights))

Join us and help us spread the word! Today, we invite you to change your profile picture to the #OurHands campaign logo and post or tweet your message of solidarity @dw\_rights using any of the following hashtags: #OurHands, #OurHandsCampaign, #DWRights, #June16, #DWDay

### **Our Calls to Governments**

*Ratify C189 without delay!*

Governments must ratify C189 and immediately move towards its effective implementation by incorporating its provisions in domestic legislation. Governments must demonstrate a strong political commitment to end existing policies and practices that continue to perpetuate abuse and exploitation of all domestic workers.

*Ratify the Protocol on Forced Labour*

Governments must demonstrate their commitment to eradicating forced labour in all its forms. Ratifying the Protocol on Forced Labour and supporting its swift entry into force would send a strong signal of their commitment to end forced labour for all workers.

*Ratify the International Convention on the Protection of All Migrant Workers & Members of their Families*

Governments must “Step It Up,” taking the long overdue step to demonstrate their commitment to guaranteeing the rights of all migrant workers. The Migrant Workers’ Convention, now in its 25<sup>th</sup> year, is more relevant than ever, as we see migrant workers, and migrant domestic workers, worldwide struggling to have their rights respected and their voices heard. We urge all stakeholders to support the Step It Up campaign for ratification ([www.cmw25.org](http://www.cmw25.org)).

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