

DOMESTIC WORKERS AT THE FRONT-LINES



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IDWF has been working together across its different regions. The community groups and affiliates in the Middle East and some African countries have been collaborating to support each other.

The latest example is with a sit-in in front of the Kenyan consulate in Lebanon organized by a group of Kenyan domestic workers. IDWF affiliate in Kenya, KUDHEIHA, mobilized efforts to contact the Kenyan government. They wrote a letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and contacted the labor commissioner asking them to take action.



Click [here](#) to watch a video from in front of the Kenyan consulate in Lebanon.

The Domestic Workers Union (DWU) in Sri Lanka has been organizing during the COVID-19 crisis. In May, it established a Food Bank Program that ran for two months. The Union creatively made use of a spacious parking lot to put up a tent, banners, campaign posters, and informative leaflets on domestic violence and precautions against COVID-19. The food bank provided 400 domestic workers who had lost income with essential food items for themselves and their families. Furthermore, this initiative contributed to the longer-term strategy of building the union's membership base and advocacy efforts.

DWU leaders have worked hard to lobby with employers of domestic worker members who had lost their jobs and to negotiate with them to re-hire these workers. Although they have had several success stories, unfortunately this remains a challenge they face. Also, DWU members liaised with the Rotary Club to organize a paid advertisement; an awareness-raising notice was printed at the back of events' tickets. This message has reached 400 Rotary Club members.



Through these organizing efforts, 51 workers were newly recruited as members of DWU and 15 members have acquired leadership skills. DWU continues to visit new areas and to reach out to domestic workers and inform them about the union, its role and function, and how workers can become part of the movement.

Mexico: Marilú Padua chosen by the UN as a human rights defender



María de la Luz Padua, Collegiate Secretary General of SINACTRAHO, has been chosen by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights as one of the regional leaders who stand out for their defense of human rights. The “Voices of defenders” campaign seeks, through press releases, videos, posters and guidebooks, to guide governments towards the provision of Human Rights-based responses to counter the COVID-19 pandemic.

For this initiative, the UN has chosen Latin American leaders from different sectors to tell the world what they are currently doing and why human rights should be at the heart of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Marilú Padua's voice contributes to strengthening the mission of guaranteeing the labor rights of domestic workers, whose work must be valued as an essential part of the country's development, especially in times of crisis.

OUR POLICY BRIEF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DOMESTIC WORKERS UNDER COVID-19:

While contexts are diverse across the regions, the core demands of domestic workers movements are the same and resonate with one another. Aside the urgent alleviation of the COVID-19 induced hardships, they look into the deeper-seated injustices, to make sustainable change towards the alleviation of economic and gender inequalities of the sector.

Income Security



Enforce the payment of full salaries to formal and informal DWs. Provide additional compensations to caregivers who continue working during the lockdown.



Prohibit forced leaves, dismissal and suspension of DWs during the lockdown.



Place additional protective measures for women domestic workers who are pregnant and risk the termination of their contracts.



In case the rightful impossibility of continuation of payment of salaries by employers, governments to:

- facilitate DWs' access to short-time-work regimes equally to other workers in countries where such measure is applicable,
- guarantee DWs' access to unemployment allowances, paired with additional income (i) provided by employers where appropriate, or (ii) from other basic income grants, existing or created in response to COVID-19.



Create emergency funds specific for DWs, formal and informal, to assist them with temporary wage support and relief packages.

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