



RISING TOGETHER:

**“THE POWER OF DOMESTIC
WORKER VOICES TO IGNITE
CHANGE”**

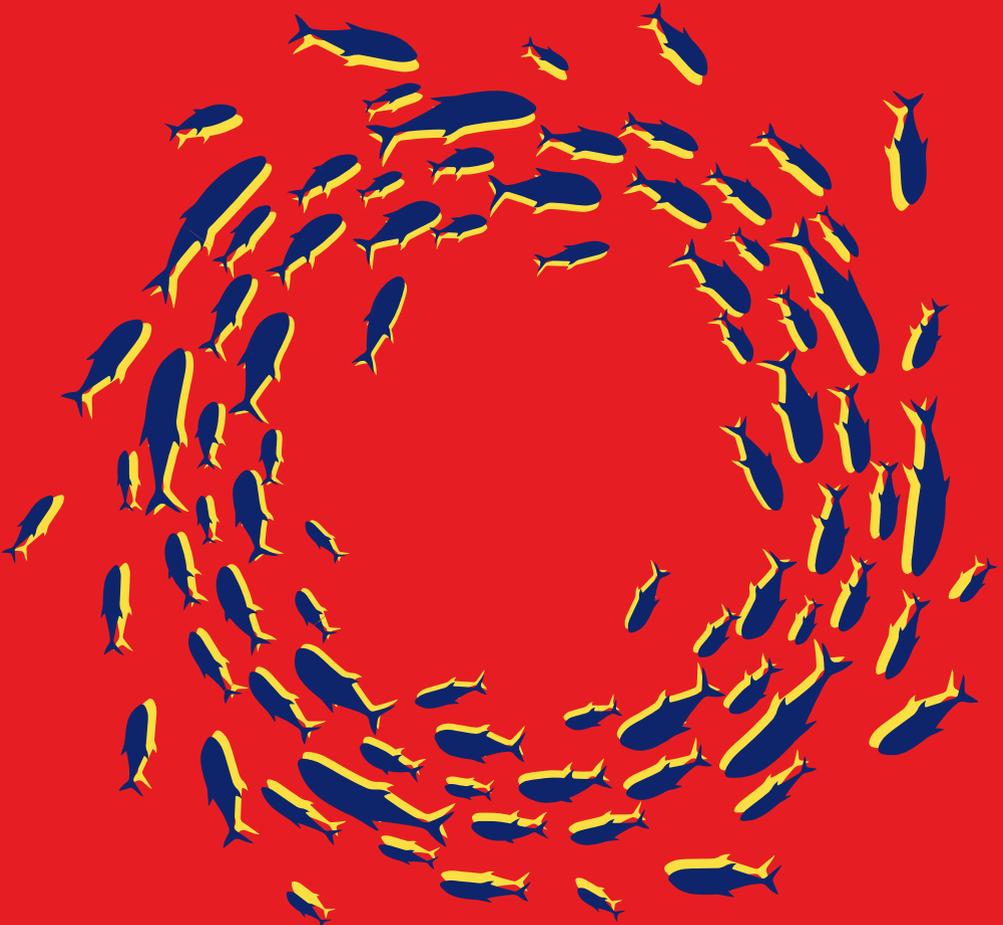


TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT IDWF **04**

IDWF AFFILIATES IN
MALAYSIA **06**

ORGANISING GOALS **07**

STRATEGIES **08**

ORGANISING TIMELINES **09**

ORGANISING DOMESTIC
WORKERS FROM THE
GROUND UP **10**

MILESTONES **13**

BEST PRACTICES **14**

LESSONS LEARNED **15**

TESTIMONIES **16**

WAYS FORWARD **18**



ABOUT IDWF

The International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF) is a membership-based global organisation of domestic and household workers. Its objective is to build a strong, democratic and united domestic/household workers global network to protect and advance domestic workers' rights everywhere.

The IDWF was established in 2013 by 56 domestic workers-membership based organisations who saw the need for a global federation to support, train, and help build a worldwide movement. IDWF members worked together and successfully got the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) ("C189") adopted in 2011. Currently, domestic workers in the IDWF family are determined to lead a global movement to gain voice and lend power to fight for the ratification of C189.

As of April 2023, the IDWF has 88 affiliates from 68 countries, representing over 680,000 domestic/household workers members. Most are organised in trade unions and others in associations, networks and workers' cooperatives. Among them are 19 affiliates in 12 countries, with over 200,000 domestic workers in Asia.

In Malaysia, Asosasyon ng mga Makabayang Manggagawang Pilipino Overseas (AMMPO) joined IDWF in 2017 as the first IDWF affiliate. IDWF then started its organising work in Malaysia in 2018. With the support of the ILO Safe and Fair Program, "Increasing Opportunities for ASEAN Women Migrant Domestic Workers to Organize" from 2018 to 2023, IDWF intensified its organizing work. This began with the mapping of Indonesian migrant domestic workers groups and



consultations with NGOs, unions and community based migrant organizations from 2018 to 2019. In early-2019, IDWF started reaching out to Indonesian migrant domestic workers and groups and organised trainings for Indonesian migrant domestic workers. In December 2019, the Indonesian migrant domestic workers group formed PERTIM (known now as PERTIMIG). PERTIMIG became the second IDWF affiliate in Malaysia in 2021.

The successful organising of migrant domestic workers in Malaysia by AMMPO and PERTIMIG has led to an increased recognition of the power of migrant domestic workers' voices in discussions with governments and other stakeholders and in engaging mass media. The organising of migrant domestic workers is achieved through determined worker leadership, as well as the support of labour unions, NGOs and community organisations such as the Labor Education and Research Network (LEARN) and SENTRO Philippines, Institute of Education Development, Social, Religious and Cultural Studies (INFEST) Indonesia, Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC), Tenaganita, North South Initiative (NSI), Persatuan

Sahabat Wanita Selangor, Malaysian Bar Council, Migrant CARE Malaysia, Our Journey and Project Liber8. Malaysian alliances including the Ke-Arah 189 and the Labour Law Reform Coalition (LLRC) as well as Indonesian domestic workers and migrant community groups including Serantau, Republik Ngapak, Komunitas Prikietiew, Komunitas Katolik Indonesia (KKI), Komunitas Paramount, EUB-SIKL, Paguyuban Wonosobo, and many other individuals who offered advice and help in the organising of domestic workers.

With assistance from the ILO Safe and Fair program, IDWF expanded its organizational efforts in Singapore. This effort culminated in the establishment of Ikatan Persaudaraan Pekerja Migran Indonesia (IPPMI), a collective for Indonesian migrant domestic workers. Through its affiliations and partnerships, IDWF facilitated the progression of leadership and the sharing of knowledge among Asian migrant domestic workers across Asia, the Middle East, and the Gulf. This collaborative network includes organizations that engage with migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong, Macau, Malaysia, Taiwan, Thailand, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, and Lebanon.

IDWF AFFILIATES IN MALAYSIA

AMMPO

Asosasyon ng mga Makabayang Manggagawang Pilipino Overseas (AMMPO) was established in 2014 in Malaysia. The group was officially recognised by the Embassy of Philippines in Kuala Lumpur in 2016. AMMPO is a worker organisation that acts as a mutual support group in Malaysia. It provides counselling, shelter and capacity training for members. It also visits distress members and provide legal assistance for employment-related issues. As of December 2022, there were 350 AMMPO members. Members pay a fee of RM20 a month. AMMPO is affiliated with SENTRO (SENTRO ng mga NAGKAKAISA AT PROGRESIBONG MANGGAGAWA), one of the biggest labour centres in Philippines.



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PERTIMIG

PERTIMIG, Persatuan Pekerja Rumah Tangga Indonesia Migran, was established by Indonesian migrant domestic workers in Malaysia on 15 December 2019. PERTIMIG is an independent organisation fighting for the rights of migrant domestic workers. In carrying out organising work, PERTIMIG adheres to democratic principles. As of December 2022, there were 200 PERTIMIG members. Members pay a fee of RM10 a month. PERTIMIG's vision is to advocate for decent work and welfare for Indonesian migrant domestic workers and their families in Malaysia. PERTIMIG demands protection for domestic workers through the national laws and regulatory frameworks.



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ORGANISING GOALS

In pursuit of decent work for domestic workers in Malaysia, IDWF and its affiliates in the country are committed to the following goals:

EMPOWERMENT

Empower migrant domestic workers by developing their leadership and capacity through organising, strategic campaign development and impactful advocacy initiatives

CREATION

Create platforms for regional and international gatherings to elevate the visibility of migrant domestic workers and forge connections between their demands and existing international conventions that safeguard migrant rights

EXPANSION

Expand membership base by actively organising and engaging new members while prioritising the retention and support of existing members of affiliate organisations

“I AM NOT JUST COOKING AND CLEANING.

I AM THE REASON MY EMPLOYER CAN GO TO WORK IN PEACE AND LEAVE THE CHILDREN AT HOME.

MY WORK HAS VALUE. I WANT OTHER DOMESTIC WORKERS TO KNOW THAT THEIR WORK HAS VALUE TOO”

PERTIMING MEMBER

STRATEGIES

In 2018, IDWF conducted an assessment on the need for organising women migrant domestic workers in Malaysia. Given the decent work deficits experienced by domestic workers and the systemic discrimination against their labour rights, organising and empowering domestic workers became a key priority. These strategies were employed:

Establish an Indonesian Migrant Domestic Workers Association to unite and empower domestic workers from Indonesia

Improve technological capacities among affiliates to leverage digital tools and platforms for enhanced communication and advocacy

Enhance the leadership and capabilities of domestic worker associations in Malaysia and Singapore through targeted trainings and coordination meetings

Strengthen partnerships with trade unions and civil society organisations in Malaysia and the countries of origin to promote mutual support and solidarity

Advocate for increased representation of migrant domestic workers in social dialogue processes, ensuring their voices are unified and heard effectively

Offer comprehensive services, including case management support, to migrant domestic workers, addressing their needs and challenges proactively



ORGANISING TIMELINE

**20
14**

The Asosasyon ng mga Makabayang Manggagawang Pilipino Overseas (AMMPO) was established in 2014 in Malaysia. The group was officially recognised by the Embassy of Philippines in Kuala Lumpur in 2016 and became the first domestic workers association in Malaysia.

**NOV
20
18**

From November 2018 to November 2019, IDWF conducted a mapping and a needs assessment of Indonesian migrant domestic workers. Consultations were conducted with several Indonesian communities such as Serantau, Ngapak, Komunitas Katolik Indonesia, Komunitas Prikitiew, Taman Paramount, EUB-SIKL, Pawon and Komunitas Shah Alam. IDWF also conducted outreach and capacity building on organizing, gender and inequality, women leadership and trade unionism in this period.

**DEC
20
19**

After consistent engagements discussing the importance of establishing a domestic workers union, domestic workers decided to form Persatuan Pekerja Rumah Tangga Migran (PERTIM) on 15 December 2019. 15 domestic workers committed to the cause and joined as members. PERTIM later evolved to become PERTIMIG.

**MAR
20
21**

In March 2021, Ikatan Persaudaraan Pekerja Migran Indonesia (IPPMI) was established in Singapore.

**JUN
20
21**

Effective from 1 June 2021, domestic workers are covered by the national social protection scheme, the Employment Injury Scheme under SOCSO in Malaysia. Registration of domestic workers under the scheme is compulsory.

**JUN
20
21**

PERTIMIG held its first Online Founding Congress amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Conducted virtually, PERTIMIG elected its own leaders and adopted a constitution through a democratic process during the Congress.

**MAR
20
22**

Malaysia's Employment Act 1955 replaced the term "domestic servant" with "domestic employee".

**SEP
20
22**

PERTIMIG produced the film *Rasa dan Asa*, which premiered at the Freedom Film Fest on 11 September 2022. The film documents the lives of domestic workers, working and living during the lockdowns that characterised the COVID-19 pandemic in Malaysia. *Rasa dan Asa* celebrates domestic workers' solidarity and persistence to advocate for their rights. The film was shot entirely on mobile phones by domestic workers. 25 screenings of the film had been held.

ORGANISING DOMESTIC WORKERS - FROM THE GROUND UP

Members of domestic worker associations gather for weekly or monthly meetings and participate in various activities. These activities are designed to develop the political consciousness of their migration experiences and to empower domestic workers with the language to speak about their rights and represent themselves.



WEEKLY & MONTHLY GATHERINGS

Members of the domestic workers association convene weekly to engage in a range of activities, including classes and trainings. These gatherings help to build supportive relationships and camaraderie and develop mutual support among domestic workers.



EXPANDING COLLECTIVE VOICE

Between 2020-2023, there are over 500 domestic workers organised into AMMPO and PERTIMIG in Malaysia and IPPMI in Singapore. AMMPO and PERTIMIG leaders amplified their voices through over 20 mainstream media reports and lobbied high-level agencies, government ministers, members of parliament, ambassadors and journalists at national and regional levels to promote decent work for domestic workers and protection of their rights.



UNITY IN ADVERSITY

During the COVID-19 pandemic, domestic workers rose to the occasion, taking proactive measures to support those affected by income and food insecurity. Domestic worker leaders started a helpline, gathered data on affected individuals and organised a food donation drive. Food packages were complemented by information on domestic workers' rights at work.



DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP

Domestic workers elect their own leaders through a transparent and democratic election. The constitution mandates that the election must be conducted every three years. This democratic process gives association members a voice and confidence in the leadership's dedication to advancing their rights and foster a united voice in the pursuit of fair treatment and improved working conditions.



ENHANCING DOMESTIC WORKERS LEADERSHIP

Training programs for domestic workers cover a range of topics, including rights at work, international law, public speaking, negotiation, women's leadership, unionism and gender equality. They empower domestic workers to run and lead their associations, advocate for themselves, navigate complex legal frameworks, and actively contribute to promoting gender equality and women's leadership in their workplaces and beyond.

BUILDING ALLIANCES



AMMPO and PERTIMIG are part of the wider labour movement with trade unions and civil society organisations in Malaysia. By joining forces, domestic workers can amplify their advocacy efforts, share resources and expertise, and collectively work towards the common goal of securing decent work for all workers. In Malaysia, AMMPO and PERTIMIG are members of the Labour Law Reform Coalition that advocate for labour law reforms, including the recognition of domestic workers as workers in Malaysia's Employment Act 1955 and the ratification of C189 and C190.

RAISING AWARENESS



Domestic workers take the lead in raising public awareness about their rights. By educating the public about their rights and the challenges they face, domestic workers aim to garner empathy and solidarity from the public. This collective awareness helps to build a supportive environment for advocacy for improved rights and fair treatment of domestic workers.

CELEBRATING PROGRESS



International Labour Day, International Domestic Workers Day and the International Migrants Day celebrations are powerful reminders of the collective strength built through solidarity and the ongoing fight for decent work. Domestic workers join others in the labour movement to recognise the progress made in unionising domestic workers.

MILESTONES

Between 2020 and 2023, domestic workers in Malaysia and Singapore actively organised themselves. The organising of domestic workers paved the way for the formation of new associations and the emergence of new women leaders within the domestic worker community. By mid-2023, there were over 500 domestic workers in Malaysia and Singapore organised into associations. But, organising is not only about numbers, it is about amplifying the voices of domestic workers.

2 new migrant domestic worker associations established in Malaysia (PERTIMIG) and Singapore (IPPMI) in 2021



IPPMI saw a **10X** expansion in membership, growing from 4 to 40 domestic workers from 2020 to 2023



50 women migrant domestic worker association leaders trained to engage in social dialogue with governments and civil society



550 migrant domestic workers empowered through trainings on leadership, gender equality, rights at work and public speaking. This enabled domestic workers to run their own associations



From 2020 - 2023 PERTIMIG and AMMPO received over 100 complaints from domestic workers, of which over 60% involved cases of unpaid wages. With support from NGOs, trade unions and embassies, both organisations regained over MYR 500,000 in unpaid wages



Produced the film 'Rasa dan Asa' on the experiences of domestic workers during the COVID-19 pandemic and held 25 screenings, reaching over 1000 people



Successfully lobbied for the inclusion of migrant domestic workers in national social protection schemes under SOCSO in Malaysia



550 domestic workers organised into associations. PERTIMIG's membership grew from 15 in 2020 to 200 in 2023. AMMPO's membership grew 40% to 350 members in the same period



In September 2022, migrant domestic workers launched the 'One Day Off' public campaign, the first led by domestic workers in Malaysia



Successfully advocated for removal of the term "domestic servant" in Malaysia's Employment Act 1955. Domestic workers are now referred to as "domestic employee"



BEST PRACTICES

Trainings and mentoring are key to developing leadership of domestic workers

Establishing an organisation led by domestic workers and for domestic workers empowers workers to represent themselves through collective action and initiatives

Domestic workers speak for themselves, make decisions and run their organisations. Technical assistance and guidance are provided by IDWF when necessary

Domestic worker organisations **make decisions collectively**, utilising a consultative approach to ensure inclusivity and active participation in the decision-making process



LESSONS LEARNED

Organising is a journey of solidarity, kinship, unity and impact. It allows domestic workers to take ownership of their migration experiences, crafting their narratives and destinies on their terms. This is the wisdom, amassed as domestic workers in Malaysia blazed the trail:

Speak your truth: Speak in the language you are most comfortable with if you want to get your message across!

Be an adaptive leader: As a leader, one has to be able to adapt to various situations. At times, this includes putting the needs of others before your own.

Build confidence: Building self-confidence empowers domestic workers to assert their rights and communicate their needs to employers effectively.

Practice patience and empathy: When advocating for workers' rights, it is crucial to be patient and engage in meaningful conversations, understanding that some domestic workers may be hesitant to believe in their entitlement to rights due to their lived experiences.

Sustainable membership engagement: Sometimes, members are active because they need something. After obtaining the services, they may not attend activities or pay their monthly dues. A worker cannot be forced into being or remaining a member. Expand the pool of engaged members to ensure the organisation's sustainability.

Be a responsible leader: Leaders must be mindful of their conduct both in person and on social media, understanding the impact it may have on their credibility and the organisation's image.



TESTIMONIES

BINTI, PERTIMIG VICE CHAIRPERSON

"I have a thirst. A little bit of water makes me want more. The more I hear about issues that domestic workers face, the more I want to listen and speak to them. PERTIMIG gives me the space to have these conversations. I know my rights because of PERTIMIG and I know that I can help others understand and claim their rights through PERTIMIG. We have helped over 100 domestic workers obtain RM500,000 in unpaid wages."



ULI RINI, PERTIMIG CHAIRPERSON

"Having a domestic workers organisation is important because we have the same experiences. So, why not create a space for us to advance together? Who will voice our concerns if not ourselves? An organisation gives us visibility and the strength to speak out and get what is ours. It is also a space for us to counsel one another. Organising makes us handle situations quicker because we have a space to consult on solutions"



NOVIA ARLUMA, IPPMI MEMBER

“After establishing IPPMI, we are more aware of the importance of community support, to listen and to learn from each other. IPPMI gave us space to share our feelings, experiences and our struggles as migrant domestic workers. At first, it was very difficult for us meet each other, but we keep trying and trying. Through some training, we built our own capacity, our level of confidence so we were able to negotiate with employers for our rights. We knew where to go if we face problems in the workplace.”



DONNA, AMMPO CHAIRPERSON

“I was overworked when I first came. But learning about the Malaysian law and my rights as a domestic worker here empowered me to share my concerns with my employer. I was able to draw my employers to the terms of my standard contract and asked for less hours of work. My employers were impressed and agreed to it.”



LIEZL, AMMPO ORGANISER

“Organising builds unity. It creates a bigger impact when we are trying to fight for our rights. Without a strong voice behind you, governments will not listen to your complaints. Organising gives us a second family here. A space to come together to speak, to socialise, to look for joint solutions to issues. It is important to have a community here and organising gives us that.”





WAYS FORWARD

We are only at the beginning of our journey in organising and securing decent work for domestic workers. Moving forward, domestic workers in Malaysia will strive to achieve the following goals:

- Increase engagement with ministers and policy makers to accelerate policy change for protecting domestic workers' rights
- Enhance the visibility of the "One Day Off" public campaign. Every domestic worker is entitled to one paid day off a week
- Explore opportunities for registering a domestic workers trade union
- Continue membership expansion and empowerment of association members

“

NO ONE CAN FIGHT FOR YOUR RIGHTS BUT YOU!

UNDERSTAND THAT YOU ARE POWERFUL AND ABLE TO MAKE DECISIONS AND LEAD.

AMMPO MEMBER

”

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