

# DOMESTIC WORKERS' LINK

publication of the Domestic Workers' Movement

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## Editorial

Women's Day (8<sup>th</sup> March) and International Labour Day (1<sup>st</sup> May) are dates commemorating women and workers' struggle for justice. While the protests of women against poor working conditions and less pay marked a special day for all women, the fight for decent work hours had the day set aside for all labour unions and workmen. All this took place during the post colonial era where rapid industrialization and economic expansion were reasons for the resistance.

But now let's turn the clock forward and look over a century later into our present times where globalisation and unequal economic boom are the contributors to poor work conditions for the masses in the unorganised sector. Similar situations ... however affecting only a section of people in society. The work scenarios are not too disappointing for the middle and elite classes; but unfortunately the unorganised workers are still struggling to achieve recognition. Women in domestic work— members of unorganised workers, are also included in this ordeal. The celebrations of these dates this year were well observed by movements, labour unions, social groups and NGOs comprising of unorganised workers; but not as a day for commemoration but a reminder to the administration of the country that justice needs to be served and rights upheld.

Domestic workers in Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra joined hands with the Unorganised Workers' Federation and collaboratively agitated against the injustice meted out to them. In one voice they demanded that dignified welfare and social security be provided to all workers of the sector. Domestic workers, now being a part of this larger group, do not feel isolated in their struggle. The solidarity of all unorganised workers will speak volumes and allow the government to take notice of the sheer numbers who contribute to the economy of the country and who also vote them into office.

This Women's Day, domestic workers celebrated their identity. In many states, domestic workers joined hands with the fraternity of other women from different stratas of society and vowed to stand against the patriarchal evils that still prevail. Being women, domestic workers are also victims of domestic violence, and discriminations and these coupled with the atrocities they face at work can be extremely daunting. However, working together in the Movement, domestic workers strive against injustice, trafficking, inhumanity and prejudices. All this carried out to bring about a dignity to the labour and to rid society of the last form of contemporary slavery.

So as we celebrate Women's Day and International Labour Day, we salute all domestic workers as women and workers, entitled to all rights, privileges and security deserving of every woman and working person. We call on society to acknowledge the humanity and labour of domestic workers; to know that they are workers who are also mothers, daughter, sisters and wives, toiling submissively at their dual responsibilities but rising above all struggles to attain dignity.

SANDRA VAZ



*I have only one request*

*I do not ask for money,  
although I have need of it*

*I do not ask for meat...*

*I have only one request*

*All I ask is that you remove  
the road block from my path.*

SONG OF AN AFRICAN WOMAN

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# International Labour Day at Patna

**On 4<sup>th</sup> May the Bihar Domestic Workers' Welfare Trust conducted a sports event to celebrate International Labour Day with all domestic workers**

The sun was out in all its glory spreading its radiance over the bright smiles of domestic workers. This was a very exciting day for the domestic workers as for many of them it was probably the first time in their life that they had participated in a sports programme. St. Joseph's School grounds was filled with the energy of 210 domestic workers, ranging from 16 to 55 years of age.

Sr. Maggie welcomed the domestic workers and the chief guest, Sr. Rosita SRA from Gaya. Domestic workers presented a melodious rendition of the welcome song accompanied by the mandar (a musical instrument). Ms Suchita Tirkey, a domestic worker, explained the importance of Labour Day and its special significance to women workers. She highlighted the work of the Movement in Bihar and how their struggles for justice have come a long way. It had not been easy for women workers and domestic workers to come out of their homes and confront various authorities and the government. Yet with determination, in Bihar, domestic workers have been included into the schedule of the Minimum Wages Act. Using verses from Tagore's poem, she expressed how God is truly present with the poor people who toil and labour.

On that encouraging note, the sports meet was opened. Ms. Susmita, another domestic worker, was the compere of the programme. The animators were given the responsibility of conducting games for their respective groups. The joy of participation and the eagerness to win were evident in the faces of the domestic workers.

The games played included: memory power game, tiling the elephant, breaking the pot, cock-fight, marble and spoon game, musical chairs, group dynamics game, needle and thread game, lighting the candles and bombing the city. The final event was a fancy dress competition in which they were told to prepare and dress up in characters of their choices. With simple props like fruits, vegetables, sack cloth, they presented themselves as politicians, beggars, models, etc.

Sr. Rosita addressed the domestic workers and explained the importance of savings especially to secure themselves when old and aged. She pointed out that although it is necessary to help fellow brothers and sisters, one should save for oneself. The day ended with the prize distribution ceremony followed by lunch. It was an exciting and enjoyable event for all domestic workers.

**SR. MAGGIE, BIHAR DOMESTIC WORKERS' WELFARE TRUST, PATNA**

*Ms. Suchita Tirkey using lines of Tagore expressed how God is with the worker*

Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads.

Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shuts?

Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee!

He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the path maker is breaking stones and domestic workers is struggling with children, old persons and looking after kitchen work making the employer happy.

He is with them in sun and shower, and his garment covered with dust.

Put off the holy mantle and even like him come down on the dusty soil! Come out of thy meditations and leave aside thy flowers and incense!

What harm is there if thy clothes become tattered and stained?

Meet him and stand by him in toil and sweat of the domestic worker or any labourer.

In toil and sweat, can we experience the true God, our God who struggled suffered toiled and died that we many live. In the same way our domestic workers toil day and night.

## Read the Signs of the Time

**The CBCI Commission of Labour in its May Day Message 2008 expresses how May Day this year is all the more crucial since the struggles and protests for a comprehensive social security for almost 423 million workers of the country have not yet yielded the desired result. Given below is an excerpt of the May Day Message.**

The India that we are in today is entirely different from the one in which we were in yesterday. The country is being driven by a number of significant factors such as rapid urbanization, sustained income growth, improvement in the infrastructure,

development of storage facilities, better access to information and development of transportation, etc. The country has made rapid strides in several areas during the last sixty years. We must proudly say that what we have achieved today is, no

doubt, the resultant outcome of the relentless hardwork of India's number one class scientists, engineers, journalists, soldiers, bureaucrats, politicians, doctors, judges, missionaries and visionaries, etc.

But we sometimes fail to remember the millions of workers in the unorganised sector, without whom we would not have achieved such progress. Today we may take the name of the elite class workers but easily forget the contribution of the workers in unorganised sector who were not heeded for long. This message is an effort to remember and help those workers so that they are duly recognised and approved in the main stream.

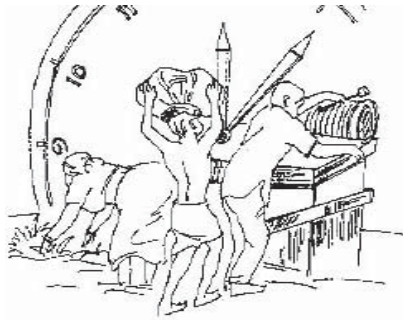
### Unequal Social Deal

Globalisation has now become the handiwork of the rich and the multinationals. It has resulted in new economic policies like privatisation, trade liberation, tax reforms, and de-regulation by removing restrictions, withdrawal of government from public distribution system, primary health and education, slashing subsidies of the poor etc. But the adverse effect of this economic prosperity which is based on evidence proved that, workers, who are equally partners in the development, are not partaking in this boom adequately. Presently 77% of the Indian population is still in the per capita of below Rs. 20/- per day. (NCEUS Report, August 2007). A whopping 350 million people are illiterate; 260 million are still below the poverty line; 150 million people lack access to drinking water; 750 million lack proper sanitation; 50 per cent of the children are below acceptable nutrition level and basic medicines are unavailable in 75 per cent of the village. Therefore poverty, hunger and lack of basic resources remain as major issues for the vast majority. This scenario is because the Indian workers in the casual and unorganised sector are denied their due share in the development and their acceptance as agents of developments.

India's old and outdated labor laws that fostered two castes of workers: the upper class who are in the organised sector having easier access and security of lifetime employment with all work benefits, and the lower class of the labour force who toils throughout, in the unorganised sector, falling outside the scale of any regulation with having no say and right in the employment. More than that, adequate concern for workers on the part of government officials who are entrusted with the responsibility of safeguarding the rights of workers is unfortunately lacking.

### Our Strategies Ahead

The Church of India is known to have rendered yeomen service in the field of education, healthcare and development. But the Church has to go a long way when it comes to the field of



the working class, especially those in the unorganised sector.

The Church takes up the role of a shepherd to the workers and motivates and guides them through methods of animation, advocacy, activism and mobilisation that lead to good leadership. It motivates and makes them to be their own leaders to stand for their rights and abide by their responsibilities as workers. Today workers

need the micro leaders who care all aspects of workers' life in small group. Therefore we call upon all Church personnel to be leaders for the causes of workers which would surely make a difference.

In an effort to empowering the workers, the Church in India encourages the initiatives of the labour movements, trade unions, and other various labour initiatives of the NGOs, SHGs and Centers through various methods of awareness, facilitation, education and counseling for workers. It gives guidance and support to all labour initiatives taken up by any organisations, engaged in working for the rights and welfare of the worker, on the basis of the social values..

The Catholic Church in India has been in liaison constantly with the government machinery to get in touch with the on-going various welfare schemes for the social and economic securities of the workers. This information from the departments gets transmitted to the workers through the regional and national set-up and coordinates all activities so that the workers are registered and enrolled in such welfare schemes to avail its benefits for their own social security and safety.

On this May Day 2008, let our lives be an imitation of St. Joseph, the Worker. Let all of us be proud of our work whatever we are called by the Lord to do as workers in the establishment of the Kingdom of God here on earth. Let all workers be considered and treated as part-takers in the creation activities of God so that the workers are dignified in their works and understand and be just to our co-workers, giving provisions for a decent and dignified, secure life so that each worker may be able to live up to his vocation as a worker. We read in the Book of Exodus, wherein it is written: "I heard the affliction and cry of the people and God is asking whom shall I send to them". Ch: 3, 7. Moses and prophets came for uplifting the people because God loves and cares His people and moreover is deeply concerned for them. We therefore must hear the call of the Lord, the Almighty, and work towards the well being of all, especially for those who toil day and night in the unorganised sector. I hope that the Lord may give courage and strength to all of us in this task.

**MOST REV. JOSHUA MAR IGNATHIOS,  
CHAIRMAN, CBCI LABOUR COMMISSION**

## Labour welfare boards to be shifted to revenue department in TN

# Unorganised Workers of Tamil Nadu demonstrate against Government Order

Tamil Nadu Domestic Workers' Movement along with the Unorganised Sector Workers' Federation organised a demonstration in front of Memorial Hall on 26<sup>th</sup> March. The demonstration was against the Government Order (GO) Ms 23 which stated the handing over of the functions of 14 Labour Welfare Boards to the Revenue Department. The demands included the comprehensive protection and livelihood rights for Unorganised Sector Workers.

Workers from the different sectors like construction, agriculture, fisheries, domestic work, tailoring, hand embroidery, street vending, basket weaving, etc, participated in the demonstration. The Tamil Nadu Domestic Workers' Movement along with Unorganised Workers Federation appealed to the Chief Minister that by handing over the Labour Welfare Boards under Tamil Nadu Manual Workers Act, as per the regressive GO Ms 23, would only lead to the denial of rights to unorganised workers and trade unions. They requested that this order should be withdrawn.

This GO was issued without consulting trade unions or discussing with welfare boards and the advisory committee of Tamil Nadu Manual Workers' Act. The government explained that the reason for the transfer was to prevent any one beneficiary from receiving benefits twice. However, this problem can be easily solved with transparency in the system and computerisation. By handing over the welfare board functions to Revenue Department which is already burdened with heavy work load and steeped in corruption will lead to newer problems and issues.

The Unorganised Sector workers constitute 93% of workforce and create 65% of the GDP. Women make up more than half the labourers and Dalits, Backward Classes, Tribals, Minorities, etc constitute the majority of them. In spite of 60 years of independent rule, the communities suffer caste atrocities, low wages, long hours of work, no job security, accidents, lack of medical assistance, homelessness, child labour, bonded labour, sexual harassment of women workers, unprotected state of migrant labour, etc. There are no work records or continuous relation between employers and workers. The workers related to land, water, forests have no rights over resources. Due to globalisation, mechanisation and displacements, the livelihood rights are badly affected. Unionisation of Unorganised Workers is difficult and getting protection is even more difficult.

The basic objective of the Tamil Nadu Manual Workers' Act is to relieve the workers from exploitation and bondage. But the regulation of employment and wages have not been implemented till now and only half-hearted schemes have been notified. Still, since these schemes have been implemented through trade unions who create awareness and assist in getting the various documents for realising the benefits, unionisation helps in resolving the other work related issues. The intention behind this GO seems to be to crush the growing trade unions and suppress the impact of Indian Trade Unions Act 1926.

Instead of building the infrastructure and staffing the welfare boards, through budgetary allocation and levy system and implementation at Taluk level Boards, the

State Government has resorted to a regressive step (of going back to colonial procedures) of delegating the functions to Revenue Department, which is detrimental to Unorganised Workers Trade Unions and Labour Administration.

At the state level, even though Sectoral Boards have been started, regulation of work and wage and E.S.I has not been implemented. There is a need for comprehensive social security legislation and district wise sectoral board for unorganised sector workers. Welfares should be given to the workers within one month of the appeal. Pension should be provided to workers after one year of registration as is being done in Kerala. Minimum wages should be ensured for all workers including those in domestic work, hand embroidery and manual loading.

We have demanded that both the central and state government allocate 3% of GDP and collect levy of 1% on all forms of production and distribution, to implement comprehensive social security including minimum wages, E.S.I medical facility, and rights over resources, sexual harassment complaint committee, and implementation through Tripartite Sectoral Boards. We have also demanded that bonded labor and child labor is abolished and comprehensive rehabilitation is provided to the victims.

**SR. M. JOSEPHINE AMALA VALARMATHI,  
TAMIL NADU DOMESTIC WORKERS' MOVEMENT**

### STOP PRESS

The efforts were not in vain. After the State Assembly in May, the government of Tamil Nadu has retracted the decision to hand over the welfare boards to the revenue department

## Maharashtra domestic workers demand social security and welfare

The Maharashtra Branch of National Domestic Workers' Movement organised a one-day demonstration in collaboration with the Unorganised Workers' Security Federation, demanding the government of Maharashtra to allocate provisions in the forthcoming budget for the social security and welfare of the domestic workers. More than 1500 domestic workers from Maharashtra participated in the demonstration which was held on 17<sup>th</sup> March at Azad Maidan.

Prior to this demonstration, the Movement had been lobbying with the members of legislative assembly such as Mr. Raju Shetty, Narsey Adam, Kapil Patil, Nithin Raut, Ramdas Kadam (Leader of Opposition) narrating the operations of the Movement: the process of empowering the workers and advocating with the government to pass legislation for them. The Movement requested the MLAs to raise the issue in the assembly and invited them to address the women on the event.

At the programme, many domestic workers voiced their issues and expressed their plights and trials: the humiliation they face in society as domestic workers, the atrocities done to them and the insensitivity of the government to protect their rights.

The hopeful part of the event was that the MLAs Mr. Raju Shetty, Vamanarau Chatup and Kapil Patil gave a listening ear to the workers and promised that they will bring our demands to the notice of the chief minister, speaker and the other members. Also a delegation of seven members was allowed to meet Mr. Sunil Deshmukh, Minister for Water Resources (Representative of Labor Minister) and submitted the memorandum. The Minister assured prompt action. The delegates asked for deadlines to fulfill the demands, failing which the next step would be to demand the government to speed the process.



Following demands were put forward to the government:

- Domestic work should be brought under the Minimum Wages Act and minimum wages should be fixed for this profession.
- The government should constitute State Welfare Board to register and to provide Social Security Schemes to the domestic workers
- Provide identity Cards to the domestic workers;
- Provide social security schemes (old age pension scheme, medical benefit scheme, maternity benefit scheme, etc) for the domestic workers.
- Allocate provision in the budget for the social security and welfare of the domestic workers
- Organisations, Movements and Unions which are working for the rights of the domestic workers should be given representation in the welfare board;
- Government should have control over the Board;
- The ban on employment of children in domestic work should be effectively implemented

**SR. CHRISTIN MARY ICM**  
MAHARASTRA STATE CO-ORDINATOR

### Medical Camp at L.R. Nagar, Karnataka

On 28<sup>th</sup> March, the Karnataka Domestic Workers' Movement organised a medical camp for domestic workers and unorganised workers of L. R. Nagar and its surrounding areas. It was in collaboration with the Karnataka Labour Welfare Board and the doctors from Manipal Hospital. The programme began with a talk on health and the importance of hygiene in the family and its surroundings. Sr. Sylvia, member of the Snehadan HIV patients' centre, was the resource person. Following which,

doctors attended to the participants of the programme. The camp allowed for free blood diagnosis and distribution of free medicines. Nearly 175 domestic workers benefited from the camp and were pleased with the care given.

### Progress of Minimum Wage Act in TN

On 2<sup>nd</sup> April, at the Tamil Nadu government assembly, the finance minister agreed to form an advisory board for the fixing of the minimum wages for domestic workers.

**News  
in Brief**

# A tribute to domestic workers on Women's Day

On 8<sup>th</sup> March 1857, women from the clothing and textile factories staged a protest in New York City. They demonstrated against poor working conditions and low wages. Subsequently, women in other countries gained courage, confidence and strength and took up struggles against their oppressors in their respective countries. 8<sup>th</sup> March is celebrated as International Women's Day. It is a significant day for all working and toiling women in society.

NDWM encourages all domestic workers to participate in the common struggles of women towards the liberation and recognition of their rights in society. The International Women's Day signifies a day for domestic workers to recognise their contribution to society as women and as workers and to appreciate their inner stamina to withstand the challenges they go through in their dual responsibilities.

In many regions domestic workers of the movement organised events for the day. It was a platform to create an awareness of the fast-spreading interventions of the Movement.

In some regions, domestic workers participated in public functions that were held for the occasion organised by women's movements, NGO networks and church establishments. These programmes highlighted the situations of women and the need for development, and stressed upon the reservations for women in all spheres of life.



## MAHARASHTRA

Women's Day celebrations were held in the month of March in many regions of the state. The events highlighted the issues of women and displayed 'the power of women' and 'the atrocities on women' through skit, song and dance. Many regions also commemorated the birthday of Savitribai Phule, (10<sup>th</sup> March), a pioneer for the rights of women and who was instrumental in instituting open schools for women. Her dynamism to the cause of women commanded tremendous self-respect among all women in India especially the backward classes. At Kalyan, a Sankalp Padhyatra was organised where 800 women walked with lit lamps symbolising the dispelling of darkness personified in the domestic workers' low self-esteem in society. Together, domestic workers from different areas around Maharashtra vowed in one voice to fight for justice and their rights. The Maharashtra Domestic Workers' Movement provided updated information on the status of the Domestic Workers' Bill and the possibilities of the formation of the Domestic Workers Welfare Board.

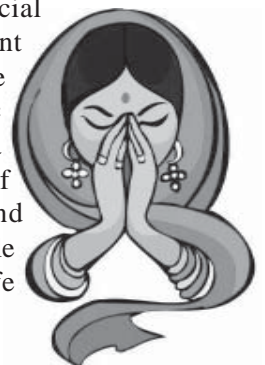
## KERALA

To mark International Women's Day, a programme was conducted at Ernakulam district on 7<sup>th</sup> March at St. Thomas More Church Hall Kacheripady, Palluruth. The programme comprised of a seminar on the organisation of unorganised labour for improvement of living status. It included a session on the importance of savings and the application of LIC policies and insurance schemes. The function was inaugurated by Rev. Dr. John Thattumkal, Cochin Bishop and KCBC Labour Commission Chairman. He appreciated the work of the Movement and the effort to organise domestic workers who are members of the unorganised labourers. Sr. Sally expressed how the Movement has grown and that domestic workers are taking on the leadership. With self-development, they have progressed in the use of their talents. 336 domestic workers participated in the programme.

After the cultural programme, a diabetic blood testing camp was conducted for all domestic workers present at the event.

## PATNA, BIHAR

The Domestic Workers of the Bihar Domestic Workers Welfare Trust joined with the Women Development Cooperation Bihar and Janata Dal U in the celebration of International Women's Day. Mr. Nitish Kumar, the Chief Minister of Bihar was the chief guest at the function. Many other dignitaries were present as well. Over 15,000 women from 25 districts of Bihar participated in the programme. Women groups staged different cultural items. The solidarity of women irrespective of class or caste was clearly evident on this day. The sheer numbers spoke of the tremendous strength that women have in playing a role in making a difference in society, fighting against discrimination and bringing about social equality. This event was a good exposure for the domestic workers who felt a strong sense of encouragement and motivation to be able to handle their life situations.



## KARNATAKA

In collaboration with the Archdiocese of Bangalore and other NGOs, Women's Day was celebrated at the grounds of the Cathedral Church on 14<sup>th</sup> March. Around 300 domestic workers along with the animators of the Karnataka Domestic Workers' Movement participated in the rally and public function. In all, there were around 1500 women at the event. The Movement helped in the distribution of handbills and displayed posters for public awareness. The Archbishop Bernard Moras, Ms. Shalini Rajanish, Women and Child Development secretary and Ms. Dona Fernandez, Vimochana Director were the chief guests. The speeches were mainly on the situation of women, dowry systems, sex ratio inequality, gender discrimination and the female infanticide. It was an interactive day with lunch and fellowship.

**On the occasion of Women's Day, two State co-ordinators were felicitated for their contribution to justice for domestic workers**

## GOA

International Women's Day was celebrated all over Goa throughout the month of March. On the 13<sup>th</sup> March, at a function organised by the Goa Mahila Congress, Sr. Augusta, regional co-ordinator of the Goa Domestic Workers' Movement was felicitated for her contribution to the welfare of women belonging to the low profile group of society. The work of Sr. Augusta and 24 other women of the Aldona constituency were commended at the programme.

## ANDHRA PRADESH

On the occasion of International Women's Day, Sr. Lissy, the regional co-ordinator of the Andhra Pradesh Domestic Workers Welfare Trust, was conferred with the Ninth Sadguru Gnananada National Award 2008 for her meritorious work with the Movement of domestic workers at Andhra Pradesh. An article of her service to the Movement has been published in the *Religious India*, March-April 2008



## PM's address at the National Conference on 'Save the Girl Child'



Taking into account the discrimination against the girl child from the earliest stages of life through her childhood into adulthood, and in order to support that the girl children survive and reach their full potential, the first National

Conference on 'Save the Girl Child' as a social endeavour has been organised in Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi on Monday. Prime Minister in his inaugural address of the National Meeting on 'Save the Girl Child' called on the elective representatives to consider his responsible duty to be active participant in the national campaign for saving the girl child. Unfortunately, the societal discriminations against women commence in our very homes much before the girl child is born. But no government can tackle this grave problem alone. Although the government must be active in mobilising public opinion, it needs active support of civil societies involvement in the national campaign to save the girl child.

Some medical practitioners assisted by unscrupulous parents illegally involving in the corrupt practices of detecting sex of the pre-natal child and malpractices of female foeticide must be punished severely. As per the statistics of the child sex ratio, the data reveals that the growing economic prosperity and education levels have not led to a corresponding alleviation in this acute problem. The decline in girls belonging to 0-6 age group per 1000 boys from 962 in 1981 to 927 in the last census

has been indeed shocking. Unfortunately, what is most shocking that the evil practice of female foeticide has been recorded much higher in some richer states of the country comprising Punjab with only 798 girls, Haryana 819, Delhi 868 and Gujarat 883 girls per 1000 boys in the 2001 Census.

The year 2008 has been quite crucial for the girl child as the Government of India in this year has launched several schemes to restrict the malpractice of female foeticide and encouraging them for better upbringing of girl child and to educate her. A conditional cash transfer scheme 'Dhan Laxmi' has been launched this year to provide a set of staggered financial incentives to the families of the girl child on fulfilling specific conditionalities including birth registration, immunisation, school enrolment and delay marriage of the girl child till the age of 18 years. The Department of Post in India had also announced that Postal Life Insurance (PLI) was going to introduce Girl Child Insurance very soon.

The National Meeting on 'Save the Girl Child' had been organised by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare. The inaugural session was also addressed by Dr. Anbumani Ramadoss, Minister of Health & Family Welfare, Smt. Renuka Choudhury, Minister of State for Women & Child Development and Smt. Panabaka Lakshmi, Minister of State for Health & Family Welfare. The meeting was also attended by Health Ministers of various States and the stakeholders.

**NEW DELHI, MON, 28 APR 2008 NI WIRE**

## 4<sup>th</sup> State level meeting of NDWM Federation

The leaders of domestic workers in Kerala once again assembled for the 4th state-level meeting. Discussions were held on issues ranging from migration to health and unionisation.



4<sup>th</sup> State level meeting of NDWM Federation was held at AICUF Centre on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2008. 30 members participated in the programme. Leaders of the domestic workers groups began the session with a prayer song, following which Ms. Ajisha S. Kumar welcomed the guests and the participants. Mr. Alexander, district labour officer, inaugurated the meeting. In his inaugural address, he updated everyone on the present status of domestic workers under the labour rules. He spoke about unionisation, its benefits in the future and the need to increase welfare measures to domestic workers. He appraised the efforts of the National Domestic Workers' Movement in including domestic workers under the Artisan and Skilled Workers Welfare Fund. Thereafter, he welcomed queries and cleared the doubts of participants.

Sr. Sally moderated the session on sharing of leaders. Leaders from Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Ernakulam and Thrissur shared their experiences and highlighted their contributions in strengthening the organisation. Many of the leaders helped in increasing the memberships of domestic workers to the Movement. They assisted the animators to form new groups and to conduct group meetings. Prizes were distributed to the leaders who brought in more than 50 new

members and those who formed new groups after the last meeting of the Federation.

Fr. Eugene Pereira conducted the session on migrant workers issues. He described the problems of migration encountered by families, society, individuals, children, and senior citizens and accordingly elicited responses from the leaders. Sr. Sally Michael indicated how many domestic workers are cheated by agencies: some are not paid, or given proper food, shelter, clothing, etc. Trafficking and forced prostitution have posed to be the serious outcome of migration. To this end, Sr. Sally cautioned the participants on the need to ensure safety while going abroad to seek jobs.

Dr. C. Lawrence took an awareness session on occupational health and spoke about three topics: dust, contact and mosquito bites. He indicated that since domestic workers are directly involved with dust, the possibility of bronchial diseases is high. He suggested the use of masks while doing jobs in dust-prone areas and informed about the treatment facilities available at chest disease hospitals.

On the topic of contact, Dr. Lawrence spoke about how rashes, itching and ulcers are some of the problems that arise through contact of clothes and soaps. He suggested the use of gloves to prevent diseases of contact.

Diseases caused due to mosquito bites: dengue, chikungunya, malaria, elephantiasis, etc were also discussed. Dr. Lawrence suggested the application of mustard oil over body to avoid mosquito bites.

Later Mr. Yesudas took a class about unionisation and federation. He presented the bye-laws prepared for registering the union and discussed about the memberships and formalities for the formation of union. The group decided to name the union as Kerala Garhika Thozhilali Union (KGTU).

Animator Mrs. Alice Antony conducted a session on Leadership with games and demonstrations. She highlighted the qualities and responsibilities of a leader and how to handle different situations in groups. Mrs. Daisy Mathew spoke about the importance of personality development, the main source towards achieving dignity.

Before closing the Meet, the leaders shared their past situations, problems, present benefits and future expectations. They especially remarked about the attitudinal change of employers. They stressed that there has been clearly visible improvements in working conditions. The leaders ended by saying that they were proud to be called Domestic Workers.

**SR. SALLY MICHAEL, STATE CO-ORDINATOR,  
KERALA DOMESTIC WORKERS' MOVEMENT**

## The mandate of the 2nd Asian Domestic Workers' Alliance

**Global alliances assemble to deliberate upon advocacy priorities necessary to change the perceptions of domestic work and regard it as real work**

Migrant Forum of Asia (MFA), together with the Asian Migrant Centre (AMC), Coalition for Migrants Rights (CMR) and the Humanitarian Organisation for Migration Economics (HOME) in cooperation with the Serikat Buruh Migrant Indonesia (SBMI) organised the Second Asian Domestic Workers Assembly (ADWA) from 1-4 May 2008 in Jakarta, Indonesia.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> ADWA was a follow up to the first Asian Migrant Domestic Workers Assembly held in Manila Philippines, on 16-17 June 2007. The 2007 assembly in Manila paved the way for the creation of the Asian Domestic Workers Alliance (ADWA), a joint Asian regional platform to promote the rights, welfare and empowerment of migrant

domestic workers (MDWs). This 2<sup>nd</sup> Assembly aims to collectively discuss and finalise the formation of the ADWA Steering Committee; to finalise and adopt a Strategic Action Plan of ADWA; also to analyse gains/successes, gaps/needs, challenges, opportunities and difficulties and or obstacles to organising work, advocacy and empowerment of migrant domestic workers (MDWs).

MFA recognises the important role of women and their work within the larger framework of migration and development. The 2<sup>nd</sup> ADWA brought together key domestic workers and migrants group across Asia to discuss and strategise on advocacy priorities. This process was particularly important, as domestic work is currently not



recognised as real work in many countries around the world. This coordinated effort on self-representation will join up to a larger process during the Global Forum on Migration & Development (GFMD) in Manila Philippines in October 2008.

The 'Regional Campaign on the Recognition and Protection of Domestic Work as Work' was launched on 1 May 2008 and the statement for International Labour Day 2008 and brought out at the conference.

## Domestic Work is Work! Respect the Rights, Status and Dignity of Domestic Workers

**excerpts of the statement for International Labour Day 2008, brought out at the 2<sup>nd</sup> ADWA**

Today we celebrate the 118<sup>th</sup> International Labour Day. We honour the more than 100 years of struggle and victories of the working class all over the world, which advanced the rights, status and dignity of workers. 'Workers' rights are human rights' is now a well-established, universal principle embodied in the core instruments of the United Nations, the International Labour Organisation, and in national laws.

There are still major gaps in terms of protection of the rights and dignity of workers. There are also specific sectors of the working population that still are not properly recognised and protected as workers. The migrant domestic workers (MDWs) is one such sector. There are currently an estimated 2 million MDWs in Asia, working mostly in the Gulf States,

Malaysia, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand and Taiwan. Over 90% of these are women, and a significant number (at least 40%) are undocumented. [AMC estimate, 2006]

The recognition and protection of MDWs as workers is crucial because we need to challenge the gender stereotypes (that domestic work is women's work) and patriarchal perspectives (that domestic workers are servants) that are reinforced through the systematic and global 'deployment' of MDWs.

Today, ADWA and its partners are jointly launching the 'Regional Campaign on the Recognition and Protection of Domestic Work as Work.' The central aim of this campaign is to advocate for the "recognition of domestic work as

work", and the "respect and advancement of the rights, status and dignity of migrant domestic workers." The key areas of advocacy are: (1) the adoption of valid, fair and standard employment contract for MDWs (based on decent work principles including wages, rest days, working hours, and living and working conditions); (2) the recognition and protection of MDWs under national policies/laws, and the removal of policies that discriminate or marginalises MDWs; (3) the adoption of migration regimes that recognise MDWs as legal workers and provide safe and transparent migration channels for them; and (4) the adoption of international instruments that universally recognise and define minimum standards on the rights and status of MDWs.

## Worker 'tricked into going to Iraq'

Darmianti binti Jaba Saleh only realised where she was when she pulled out the pile of money she had been given. Written across the top of the notes were the words 'Bank of Iraq.' Darmianti was having her medical check-up prior to being placed as a domestic worker in the Kurdish north of Iraq. The only problem was that she had not been told she was going to Iraq at all. When she left her home in Indonesia, the agent sending her had told she was headed for Kurdistan—a safe place on the border with Iraq. Somewhere she could find a good job and make good money, much better than the money she had made a few years ago in Jordan.

But instead, Darmianti was flown to the Middle East, put in a taxi and driven five hours down to Arbil in northern Iraq. When she found out where she was, she said, she felt completely deceived. "I wanted to go home that day," she said. "I was very afraid, especially when we heard the booming sounds outside. We'd all be crying in our rooms." Darmianti said that dozens of Indonesians had been sent to Iraq as migrant workers by the same agency. One of them told Darmianti she had seen her employer shot in the head by a stray bullet as they walked along the street. And living conditions were terrible. "Sometimes we didn't have water or food," she said.

"Sometimes we would steal in order to get food. I felt like crying all the time."

Darmianti said the agency she worked for refused her permission to leave Iraq unless she paid US\$2,500 (£1,250). But after three months in Arbil, she escaped with the help of an international aid organisation and has now brought her former agent to court in Jakarta. It is the first time Indonesia has tried anyone on a charge of sending migrant workers to Iraq unwittingly. But Nur Harsono, from the organisation Migrant Care in Jakarta, says that he has regularly presented the police with dossiers of similar cases and that there needs to be a change of attitude among officials here. The problem, he says, is that migrant workers are often leased out to other agencies in different parts of the world, and obtain visas to third countries while out of Indonesia. And that means the government is not keeping track of where Indonesian migrants are being sent, and by whom. "The government usually has a reactive response," he said. "They know about these things after there are victims and that's what we think should be changed. It's happened before that women who have visas to work in Dubai, or Abu Dhabi, then transfer to Iraq. And the government continues to do nothing."

By LUCY WILLIAMSON, BBC NEWS, JAKARTA, 16<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2008

## 'We are willing to listen to children'

Political parties in Karnataka proclaim their commitment of a Child-friendly state

Young representatives of over 500 marginalised children who drafted their recommendations for the Election Manifestoes made their submission to the key functionaries and chairpersons of the Election Manifesto Drafting Committees of political parties of Karnataka at a public meeting in Bangalore on April 4th. The key question children posed was '*What will you do for Children's Participation and Children's Rights?*' Here are some of the encouraging responses to the children's recommendations:

"Our party will ensure the setting up of Children's Panchayats (Makkala Panchayats) in the entire State so that children can raise their issues and get them addressed. Even if we do not come into power, we will advocate for this in the Assembly."

*Mr. P.G. R. Sindhya, \* National General Secretary, B.S. P*

"Even in this age, I don't have the kind of courage shown by children here - we note the confident manner in which they have participated here in this big meeting. They have worked for over a month and brought up their issues. We express our respect and our congratulations to them.

*Dr. V. S. Acharya, Chairman, Manifesto Committee, BJP,*

*Mr. S. Suresh Kumar, spokesperson and General Secretary, Mr. Ramachandrappa, BJP*

"There are a large number of working children and children in bondage. We will release them. Education is very important for children. We will ensure that all children will have access to education."

*Mr. Abdul Azeem, Chairman, Manifesto Committee, JDS, Mr. C. Narayanaswamy, Working President and Former MP, Janatha Dal*

Over 520 children, including representatives of working children, children from migrant communities, school going children, specially able children and elected members of the Makkala Panchayats (Children's Councils) in the three regions of Karnataka have carried out discussions among themselves for the past two months to arrive at the key commitments they demand from all the political parties. They are continuing this discussion with more children for another week.

ICYO INDIA , 9<sup>TH</sup> APRIL, 2008



## HRW slams Saudi ruling over abused Indonesian maid

A rights group has voiced outrage at a Saudi court for failing to punish the employers of an Indonesian housemaid who abused her so much she had to have her toes and fingers amputated. New York-based Human Rights Watch (HRW) called for an appeals court to “impose stiff penalties on the employers, including imprisonment, and payment of significant financial compensation” to the woman, Nour Miyati. HRW said that Miyati, who was awarded just 670 dollars in compensation by a Riyadh court, told the organisation her “employers beat her daily and that she had to work long hours without rest or pay. “They withheld her passport, knocked out a tooth and caused damage to one of her eyes. The abuse escalated after she tried to escape; her employers locked her in the workplace and denied her adequate food.”

HRW said Miyati was eventually treated at a Riyadh hospital in March 2005 for “gangrene, malnourishment and other injuries” and that delays in

treatment resulted in her losing her toes and fingers. Initially, all charges against Miyati’s male employer were dropped, HRW said, while the female employer confessed to the abuse and was sentenced to 35 lashes. However, it said that on Monday a Riyadh judge handed down a second verdict, “ignoring compelling physical evidence and finding the female employer not guilty of abuse.” “This outrageous ruling sends a dangerous message to Saudi employers that they can beat domestic workers with impunity, and that victims have little hope of justice,” said Nisha Varia, a senior researcher at HRW. “Instead of instilling confidence among migrant workers that they can seek redress through the Saudi justice system, this decision shows that even a case involving egregious abuse, ample evidence, and intense public scrutiny has not been given fair treatment.”

The rights group estimates that there are around 1.5 million domestic workers

from Indonesia, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and other countries in the conservative Muslim kingdom. It says workers are routinely underpaid, overworked, confined to the workplace or subjected to verbal, physical and sexual abuse. And those who complain often face countercharges, such as theft, adultery or fornication in cases of rape, or witchcraft. In what it called a “perversion of justice,” HRW said Miyati was convicted in 2005 of falsely accusing her employers and sentenced to 79 lashes. That ruling was overturned in 2006.

“Nour Miyati showed her faith in the system and courageously decided to continue with her case despite the long wait and counter-accusations,” it said. “The meagre compensation of 2,500 riyals is a slap in the face... showing that a foreign domestic worker’s life and limb is not valued on the equal basis of a Saudi.”

DUBAI (AFP) MAY 22<sup>ND</sup> 2008

## No human trafficking in UAE, say police

There is no organised human trafficking in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), say Dubai Police, according to media reports. Major General Khamis Matar Al Mazina, deputy commander general of Dubai Police, said, “No UAE national has been involved in any kind of human trafficking case till date, which proves that our country is free from such illegal practice”.

He made the statement during a presentation on the country’s anti-human trafficking law at the Dubai Police Officers Club on Wednesday. Al Mazina insisted that the police must be on the alert to make sure the Arab federation is secure against “phenomena that are alien to our society.”

In 2006, the UAE put in place a federal law on combating human trafficking. The law stipulates imprisonment and fines for individuals or organisations involved in the crime. According to the law, corporate bodies will be liable to a fine ranging between 100,000 (\$27,000) and one million (\$270,000) UAE dirham if their representatives, managers, or agents are convicted in a human trafficking crime

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, THURSDAY, APRIL 10, 2008 (DUBAI)

### New Members of the Movement

Mr. Jacob K. Varghese has been appointed as Auditor in the National office.

We would like to extend our gratitude to Mr. Loy D’Souza who had served us for many years in the same office. We wish him all the very best.

### Prayers and Blessings

Congratulations to Sr. Maggie Fernandes, ICM, State Co-ordinator of Bihar Domestic Workers’ Welfare Trust, on her silver jubilee with the ICM sisters. May God continue to shower His choicest blessings on her and her service to the movement. An article of her service with the Movement has been published in the Religious India, written by Sr. Pooja CJ.

Our prayers are with Sr. T. Christin Mary, Sr. A. Metilda and Sr. A.R. Rejula, ICM Sisters, who gave their Final Vows on the 24<sup>th</sup> May 2008.

Sr. Christin Mary is the state co-ordinator of the Maharashtra Domestic Workers’ Movement and Sr. Metilda is District Co-ordinator of Ernakulam, Kerala and Sr. Rejula had served with the movement in Patna.

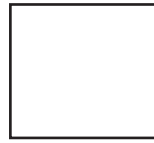
# Mother's Day Special

When God set the world in place,  
 when He hung the stars up in space,  
 when He made the land and the sea,  
 then He made you and me.  
 He sat back and saw all that was good,  
 He saw things to be as they should.  
 Just one more blessing He had in store;  
 He created a mother, but whatever for?  
 He knew a mother would have a special place  
 to shine His reflection on her child's face.  
 A mother will walk the extra mile  
 just to see her children smile.  
 She'll work her fingers to the bone  
 to make a house into a home.  
 A mother is there to teach and guide,  
 a mother will stay right by your side.  
 She'll be there through your pain and strife,  
 she'll stay constant in your life.  
 A mother will lend a helping hand  
 until you have the strength to stand.  
 She'll pick you up when you are down,  
 when you need a friend she'll stick around.  
 A mother is one who listens well,  
 will keep her word; will never tell.  
 A mother never pokes or pries  
 but stands quietly by your side,  
 giving you the strength you  
 need,  
 encouraging you to  
 succeed.  
 A mother is one who can  
 be strong  
 when you need someone  
 to lean on.



SOURCE:

[WWW.MOTHERSDAYCELEBRATION.COM](http://WWW.MOTHERSDAYCELEBRATION.COM)



BOOK - POST

To,

For Correspondence : The Editor, DOMESTIC WORKERS' OFFICE 104, St. Mary's Apts A, Nesbit Rd., Mazgaon, Mumbai - 400 010.

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