

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

Five Years of Progress for Domestic Workers, But Much Still to be Done

Brussels, 16 June 2016 (ITUC OnLine): In the five years since the International Labour Organization adopted Convention 189 on Domestic Workers, governments in nearly 50 countries have updated their legislation to provide better employment protection for domestic workers, and 22 countries have already ratified the Convention. An estimated 15 million workers now have improved rights and protections at work, included the right to at least one day off per week, doubling or even tripling of the applicable minimum wage as well as access to social protection. Dozens of new unions for domestic workers have been formed since 2011, with a total membership of some 100,000.

Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary, said: “The success of the campaign for domestic workers’ rights so far has been founded on an effective combination of organising and mobilising with action to achieve legislative change and the setting of the new global standard at the ILO. There remains much to be done, but the power of domestic workers is here to stay.”

Madagascar, Senegal and Spain are expected to join the list of countries which have ratified the ILO Convention, with Oman planning to extend rights and protections. Similar steps are expected in Bahrain, a country not usually noted for respecting workers’ rights. Draft domestic workers’ laws have been developed in India and Indonesia, and alliances of domestic workers, their unions and other allies are pressing for adoption of these laws by 2018.

The ITUC’s 12 + 12 campaign and the International Domestic Workers’ Federation have been driving forces for the campaign internationally, with national coalitions pushing successfully for legal reform and the organisation of domestic workers.

“There are over 67 million domestic workers in the world, the vast majority of them women. More than 11 million are migrant workers. Outside the official figures, some 17 million children are believed to be trapped in domestic work, many in conditions of forced labour. Clearly there is a huge amount to do, but we are now working from solid foundations, with domestic workers themselves increasingly taking the lead. We call upon all governments to ratify ILO Convention 189, and to bring in the legal and other protections that these workers need and deserve,” said Burrow.

See the Domestic Workers’ page: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/domestic-workers-601>

For more information, see the ITUC/IDWF/ILO publication “Domestic Workers Unite: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/unite?lang=en>

The ITUC represents 180 million workers in 162 countries and territories and has 333 national affiliates.

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