

# Research Network for Domestic Worker Rights

## Newsletter no.1

## August 2011



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## 1. Official Launch of the Research Network for Domestic Worker Rights<sup>1</sup>

The Research Network for Domestic Worker Rights was officially launched on June 12, 2011. In the past two years researchers and activists met to discuss ongoing research and the further development of the network. Particularly, we gladly welcomed several new members of the network from different parts of the world and different disciplines, especially strengthening the legal expertise. At the launch reception of the network at the ILO on June 12, 2011, we were amazed by the large number of people attending. We were

especially glad that so many members of the International Domestic Workers Network (IDWN) joined. Speakers included Claire Hobden, Helen Schwenken, and Rebeca Pabon from the Research Network for Domestic Worker Rights, Myrtle Witbooi, chair person of the IDWN and SADSAWU, Marieke Kramwinkel for ITUC, Frank Hoffer for ILO/ACTRAV and the Global Labor University.

More information on the Research Network for Domestic Worker Rights can be found on our [flyer](#).

## 2. Collaboration with the International Domestic Worker Network (IDWN)

On June 13, 2011, members of the Research Network for Domestic Worker Rights met with IDWN to further discuss issues raised in the meantime about cooperation and ethical research. We discussed that accountability of researchers to

domestic workers is essential for our cooperation. Furthermore, we thought about ways to enhance communication between the two networks and talked about potential future research.

<sup>1</sup> The research network has changed its name from Domestic Worker Research Network to Research Network for Domestic Worker Rights.

### 3. Research at the ILC

During the International Labour Conference (ILC), some issues came up in the negotiations on the Convention, where domestic workers and the vice-chair of the committee from the Workers' Group asked for information undergirding demands for workers' rights and for research on contentious issues in the negotiations. Under the guidance of Darcy du Toit from the University of the Western Cape, researchers from the Research Network for Domestic Worker

Rights collected information on labor inspections, working hours, and health and safety issues. The information, including global good practice examples, was then put together in three reports, which were used by the workers' representatives in the negotiations at the ILC.

Several researchers were present during the ILC to document the negotiation process and the efforts of domestic workers in the struggle for a Convention.

### 4. Tentative Workplan for 2011/12

On request by domestic workers and based on research conducted during the ILC and at other places on organizing of domestic workers, Research Network for Domestic Worker Rights members plan on writing about i.e.

- contentious issues at the ILC,
- mobilizing of domestic workers in different countries in a global perspective,
- the ILO story on domestic work, including organizing by IDWN.

The Research Network for Domestic Worker Rights also aims at developing a guide to ratification and

implementation of the Convention.

Future research, being currently suggested, concerns

- reviewing collective bargaining models worldwide,
- production of a brochure "Victory of Domestic Workers – How they did it,"
- diplomatic immunity,
- agencies and cooperation between sending and receiving countries.

If you are interested in working on one of these issues, please let us know ([dw-rn@icdd.uni-kassel.de](mailto:dw-rn@icdd.uni-kassel.de)).



## 5. Media Coverage of the ILC

### [Domestic helps get ILO recognition](#)

Daily Star (by Porimol Palma)  
17/06/11

International Labour Organization (ILO) yesterday adopted a new Convention that will enable domestic workers to enjoy rights and benefits available to other workers.

Terming it a historic event, ILO Director General Juan Somavia, said "We are moving the standard system of the ILO into the informal economy for the first time which is a major breakthrough".

### [India votes for equality for maids](#)

Times of India 17/06/11

India on Thursday voted along with other nations to back the adoption of a convention that will enable domestic workers to get benefits on par with other workers.

### [Domestic workers seek recognition](#)

Jamaica Observer (by Nadine Wilson) 16/06/11

"Domestic workers must be recognised as workers with rights and

protections," said Pryce, whose organisation currently has 1,500 members comprising household workers, practical nurses, security guards and wholesale workers in the island. "It has taken such a lot of work to get this far but I feel so positive now," she asserted.

### [ILO adopts rules for domestic workers](#)

Capital FM Kenya 16/06/11

The government, worker and employer delegates at the 100th annual Conference of the International Labour Organization (ILO) on Thursday adopted a historic set of international standards aimed at improving the working conditions of tens of millions of domestic workers worldwide.

### [Switzerland: A Step Forward for Domestic Workers](#)

New York Times (Associated Press)  
16/06/11

Millions of maids, nannies and cooks around the world moved a step closer to enjoying the same labor rights as other workers on Thursday after the International Labor Organization approved a



convention granting them greater protection from exploitation.

Thanks to Demetria Tsoutouras for these links.

## 6. Conference Announcement

“The Social Insurance System of Domestic Worker’s Injury Compensation,” Southwest University of Political Science and Law (SWUPL) in ChongQiong China, December, 2011.

The conference is designed to explore the social insurance system of domestic worker’s injury compen-

sation of academic theories and the legal practice of your country or region. Proposals should include an abstract of approximately 300 words. These must be received by Sep 1, 2011 and should be sent by email to Dawu HU (hdwcd@yahoo.com.cn).

## 7. Call for Applications

### Global Labour University

#### **Master programs of the Global Labour University – an interesting program for domestic worker unionists**

The Global Labour University (GLU) invites trade unionists and labor activists to apply for specialized Masters programs on Social Economics and Development.

The GLU provides a unique opportunity to study and discuss the challenges of globalization together with a global group of fellow trade unionists. In recent years some domestic worker unionists gradu-

ated from the program.

The final deadline for applications for the Brazilian based program at the University of Campinas is August, 15th, 2011. Similar programs (with different deadlines) are run in India, South Africa and Germany.

The GLU awards a limited number of scholarships for participants. Applicants need to have the endorsement of a trade union to apply a scholarship.

More information: [www.global-labour-university.org](http://www.global-labour-university.org)

You can also contact Rebeca Pabon,

## Links

The Convention “Decent Work for Domestic Workers” can be found on-line at:

[http://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/100thSession/reports/provisional-records/WCMS\\_157836/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/100thSession/reports/provisional-records/WCMS_157836/lang--en/index.htm)

The Recommendation is available at:

[http://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/100thSession/reports/provisional-records/WCMS\\_157835/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/100thSession/reports/provisional-records/WCMS_157835/lang--en/index.htm)

IDWN’s website also informs about the Convention:

<http://www.domesticworkerrights.org/>

During the ILC, IDWN provided a blog on the negotiations:

<http://idwnilo.wordpress.com/>

The ILO provides further information on domestic work at:

<http://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/100thSession/on-the-agenda/decent-work-for-domestic-workers/lang--en/index.htm>

domestic worker organizer at FNV Bondgenoten ([R.Pabon@bg.fnv.nl](mailto:R.Pabon@bg.fnv.nl)), who graduated from the GLU.

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(Portuguese version)

A Universidade Global do Trabalho (Global Labour University - GLU) - UNICAMP, Brasil - convida sindicalistas e ativistas envolvidos com o movimento sindical e a se inscreverem no programa de mestrado em Economia Social e do Trabalho para a turma de 2012.

O prazo final para candidaturas para o programa brasileiro, mini-

strado pela Universidade Estadual de Campinas é 15 de Agosto de 2011.

Mais informações:

para candidatas trabalhadoras domesticas mais informações: Rebeca Pabon, FNV Bondgenoten - [R.Pabon@bg.fnv.nl](mailto:R.Pabon@bg.fnv.nl)

Para mais informações acesse o site da ANPEC  
<http://www.anpec.org.br/exame.htm>

<http://www.global-labour-university.org>

## 8. Publications

Schwenken, H. & Prügl, E. (2011, forthcoming). An ILO Convention for Domestic Workers: Contextualizing the Debate. In: International Feminist Journal of Politics, 13, 3, 438-443.

Roundtable Conversation of Domestic Workers' Activists about the ILO Convention, roundtable conducted by H. Schwenken and R. Pabon (2011, forthcoming). In: International Feminist Journal of Politics, 13, 3, 444-450.

Hobden, C. (2011, forthcoming): Reversing a History of Exclusion Through International Labour Law. In: International Feminist Journal of Politics, 13, 3, 451-456.

Ally, S. (2011, forthcoming): On Laws, Rights and Conventions. In: International Feminist Journal of Politics, 13, 3, 457-461.

Du Toit, D. (2011) Editorial: Domestic Workers' Convention: A breakthrough in Human Rights. Law, Democracy & Development.

[http://www.idd.org.za/images/stories/Ready\\_for\\_publication/editorial\\_2011-2.pdf](http://www.idd.org.za/images/stories/Ready_for_publication/editorial_2011-2.pdf)

Du Toit, D. (2011). Not 'work like any other': Towards a framework for the reformulation of domestic workers' rights. *Industrial Law Journal* 32(1).

Gordon, J. (2010), "People Are Not Bananas: How Immigration Differs from Trade," 104 *Northwestern Law Review* 1109.

## 9. Support Wanted

### Occupational Safety and Health (OSH)

During and after the negotiations on the Convention, at the ILC, a conversation between members of IDWN, WIEGO, and Research Network for Domestic Worker Rights developed on the topic of OSH. It became clear in this debate that more information is needed regarding Occupational Health and Safety. Fish Ip from IDWN for example mentioned the situation of part-time workers who in particular "are suffering severe repetitive strain injuries. But many types of repetitive strain are not recognized

Mundlak, G. & Shamir, H. (2011). Bringing Together or Drifting Apart? Targeting Domestic Work as "Work Like no Other" *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* 23(1).

Rother, S. (2010). Comment: A historical step – the International Labour Conference (ILC) has decided to draft a binding convention on the rights of domestic workers, in: *Development + Cooperation* 51(7).

as occupational disease and are not covered by the labor laws. The information on Occupational safety and health of domestic workers (not home safety) is also very, very scarce. The established OSH institutes and findings are mostly on industrial work place. ... For repetitive strain injuries and work-related mental problem, how much they are recognized in international and national labor standards? Do we already have a list describing all these?" If you have access to data and studies on these issues, please contact Ip Fish [fiship@hotmail.com](mailto:fiship@hotmail.com).



## Diplomat Households

Janie Chang from American University conducts research on country policies regarding trafficking and exploitation of domestic workers by diplomats.

Therefore, she is looking for information on how different countries have attempted to address the problem of domestic worker exploi-

tation by diplomats. How many domestic workers managed to achieve accountability for the abuses, given the problem of diplomatic immunity? What measures have governments taken to sanction such abuses or to prevent them from recurring? If you have information on this topic, please contact Janie Chang [jchuang@wcl.american.edu](mailto:jchuang@wcl.american.edu).

## 10. Update: Convention – South Africa

Dary du Toit gives an update on ratification from South Africa:

On August 2, 2011 the Parliamentary Committee on Labour held a seminar about its legislative implications. A report of the meeting, including a presentation by Social Law Project, is now on the DWRP

website ([www.dwrp.org.za](http://www.dwrp.org.za)) – on the front page and under Resources. This should set the ratification process in motion and raises possibilities of new forms of participation. Watch the website for further updates!

## 11. Information on the Research Network for Domestic Worker Rights

### Mission

Around the world, domestic workers are organizing and lobbying to win rights, respect and recognition.

The mission of the Research Network for Domestic Worker Rights is to support these efforts by promoting domestic worker rights in the academic and activist communities, strengthening domestic

worker organizing efforts through organizing strategy and policy analysis, and meeting the research needs of domestic worker organizations through principled research, and broad publication and dissemination of results.

Our main partner in this mission is the International Domestic Workers' Network (IDWN).

### Contacts: Research Network for Domestic Worker Rights

**Contact to the interim coordinators:** Claire Hobden (ILO-ACTRAV), Rebeca Pabon (FNV Bondgenoten, The Netherlands), Helen Schwenken, and Lisa-Marie Heimeshoff (ICDD/University of Kassel): [dwrn@icdd.uni-kassel.de](mailto:dwrn@icdd.uni-kassel.de)

**Africa:** Dr Akua O. Britwum, Centre for Development Studies, University of Cape Coast, Ghana: [akupokua@gmail.com](mailto:akupokua@gmail.com)

**Asia:** to be designated

**Europe:** Prof Dr Helen Schwenken, International Center for Development and Decent Work, Germany: [hschwenken@uni-kassel.de](mailto:hschwenken@uni-kassel.de)

**Latin America:** Prof Dr Adriana Causa, Universidad de Buenos Aires, Argentina: [acausa@gmail.com](mailto:acausa@gmail.com) and Prof Dr Mary Rosaria Goldsmith Connelly, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Xochimilco, Mexico: [gcmr7503@correo.xoc.uam.mx](mailto:gcmr7503@correo.xoc.uam.mx)

**North America:** Prof Jennifer N. Fish PhD, Old Dominion University, United States: [jfish@odu.edu](mailto:jfish@odu.edu)

## Goals and Objectives

1. Create and disseminate a body of literature and knowledge on domestic work and the organizing strategies of domestic workers
2. Document, compare and assess the organizing strategies of domestic workers
3. Collaborate with domestic worker organizations in developing a research agenda and make research accessible to domestic workers and their organizations

## Principles

As a network that conducts research on domestic work in cooperation with domestic workers, the Research Network for Domestic Worker Rights aims to support their rights as well as gaining respect and recognition. We coordinate and conduct our research based on the following principles

1. Conducting meaningful, quality

research that meets the needs of domestic worker organizing efforts

2. Remaining accountable to domestic workers by consulting representatives of the International Domestic Workers' Network (IDWN) and domestic workers' organizations
3. Presenting, publishing and disseminating research results to promote domestic workers' activities and rights
4. Making research results accessible to domestic workers and their organizations
5. Conducting research in a principled way that respects and supports the empowerment of domestic workers
6. Building a community of like-minded researchers in the field
7. Cultivating trusting, communicative relationships with researchers and representatives of IDWN and domestic workers' organizations.

Thank you for your interest in the Research Network for Domestic Worker Rights!

Please let us know ([dw-rn@icdd.uni-kassel.de](mailto:dw-rn@icdd.uni-kassel.de)) if you want to present your research or announce events

etc. in the next newsletter of the Research Network for Domestic Worker Rights.

If you want to unsubscribe or have received this newsletter by mistake, please send us an email

([dw-rn@icdd.uni-kassel.de](mailto:dw-rn@icdd.uni-kassel.de)). Thanks!