



# History of the Domestic Workers' Global Movement

Photo source: Jennifer Fish, IDWF and WIEGO





In 1936 delegates at the International Labour Conference (ILC) chose to exclude domestic workers from the Holidays with Pay Convention (No. 52)—but said that domestic workers' issues should be addressed in the future ... perhaps through a specific Convention.

It took 75 years of intense local, national and international organizing to make that Convention a reality.

# 2006

The first international gathering of domestic workers' organizations, trade unions, ILO and support organizations took place in Amsterdam. "Respect and Rights: Protection for Domestic/Household Workers" was organized by the FNV (Federation of Dutch trade unions), the NGO IRENE and allies; WIEGO was part of the Steering Committee.

**Domestic workers decide to set up an interim working group that has the task of investigating the possibilities for greater international activity for the rights of domestic/household workers worldwide.**



Photo source: WIEGO



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# 2007

The International Union of Food and Allied Workers (IUF) offers its unconditional support and teams with WIEGO to mobilize resources and strengthen links between domestic worker organizations, trade unions and support organizations. This partnership will prove essential in the years ahead.

**To establish a sense of solidarity and a common identity among domestic workers globally, a broad communications strategy is employed.**



# 2008

The ILO Governing Body decides to place “Decent Work for Domestic Workers” as a standing setting item at the International Labour Conference for 2010 and 2011.

Consequently, domestic workers’ representatives met in Geneva to plan a campaign to achieve an ILO Convention to protect domestic workers’ rights.

**The IUF, with WIEGO support, secures funds from FNV Mondial and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands that will empower domestic workers and fuel their movement.**



Photo source: WIEGO



# 2009

To create a strong, united presence, the International Domestic Workers Network (IDWN) is launched at the International Labour Conference (ILC).

With WIEGO, IUF and GLI's guidance, the IDWN drafts a Constitution. It stipulates only membership-based organizations representing domestic workers have a vote.



Photo source: WIEGO



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## International Domestic Workers Network (IDWN)

- Latin America and the Caribbean: **Confederación Latinoamericana y del Caribe de Trabajadoras del Hogar (CONLACTRAHO)**
- Asia: **Asian Domestic Workers Network (ADWN)**
- USA: **National Domestic Workers' Alliance (NDWA)**
- South Africa: **South African Domestic Services and Allied Workers Union (SADSAWU)**
- Indonesia: **Jala-Prt**
- Peru: **Instituto de Promoción y Formación de Trabajadoras del Hogar (IPROFOTH)**
- Trinidad & Tobago: **National Union of Domestic Employees (NUDE)**



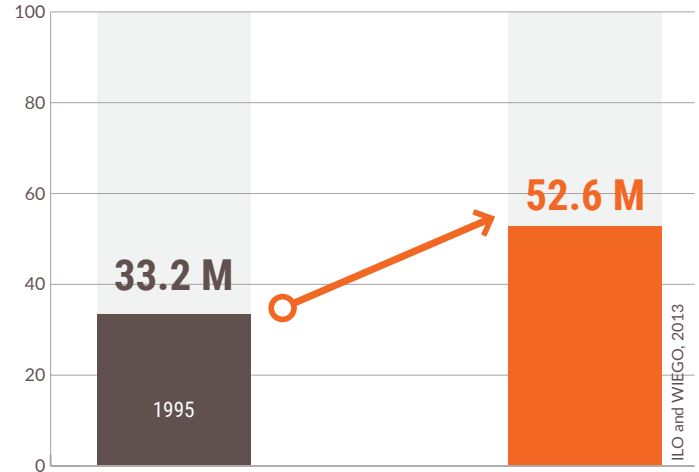
Advocacy materials outline why a Convention is needed. [\*The Campaign for a Domestic Workers' Convention\*](#)



# 2010



There are an estimated **52.6 million** domestic workers - 3.6% of global wage employment - in 2010.





# 2010

Domestic workers attend regional workshops in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. A **Platform of Demands** is built.

In June, domestic workers voice their demands at the ILC during a standard-setting discussion on Decent Work for Domestic Workers. To amplify domestic workers' voices, WIEGO's team supports the delegation with media training, translation and help in creating their formal speeches.

The tri-partite Committee on Domestic Workers rejects an Employers' amendment proposing only a Recommendation and calls instead for a Convention supplemented by a Recommendation.

IDWN mounts a comprehensive campaign to

- mobilize and organize domestic workers
- work with the trade union movement
- lobby governments and employers, build alliances with NGOs, researchers and other allies.



# 2011

The campaign to secure a Convention continues at national, regional and international levels.

- Researchers provide statistical and other data to support domestic workers.
- IDWN produces *Myths and Realities about Domestic Workers* and other advocacy materials in advance of ILC.

**Domestic worker representatives and allies come to the ILC in June determined to get the Convention they came for...**



Photo source: WIEGO



# June 16, 2011

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Governments, employers and workers vote overwhelmingly (83%) to adopt a Convention (C189) and accompanying Recommendation (R201) on Decent Work for Domestic Workers!

The Convention recognizes the “significant contribution of domestic workers to the global economy.”

## The VOTE in C189:



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## Accompanying Recommendation



Photo source: WIEGO

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# 2012

**C189 comes into force when Uruguay becomes the first country to ratify it exactly one year after its adoption. Mauritius and Philippines also ratify C189.**

WIEGO secures more funds from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Netherlands to implement Economic and Employment Rights: Advancing Domestic Workers' Leadership in 15 countries. Through the project, IDWN, IUF and WIEGO train leaders and build capacity in national and regional organizations.



Photo source: IDWF, WSFM March to Mendiola, 2012



# 2012

IDWN is preparing to launch a global federation – and growing! By the end of 2012, membership tops 123,000 domestic workers represented by 22 organizations.



# 123K

**DOMESTIC WORKERS**



# 22

**ORGANIZATIONS**

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# 2013

**Bolivia, Ecuador, Germany, Guyana, Italy, Nicaragua, Paraguay and South Africa ratify C189.**

IDWN is awarded the George Meany-Lane Kirkland Human Rights Award by the AFL-CIO:

“In recognition of the ground-breaking efforts of domestic workers worldwide to organize for greater awareness of and respect for their work, their historic success in the adoption of the ILO convention and their commitment to support, expand and build the global labour movement”.

In October, IDWN holds its Founding Congress in Montevideo, Uruguay.

IDWN members vote to become the International Domestic Workers’ Federation (IDWF), a global union run by women.



Photo source: WIEGO



# 2013

**95 domestic worker representatives from 17 African countries—representing 95,572 members**—come together in South Africa at a conference hosted by the South African Domestic Service and Allied Workers' Union (SADSAWU). They form the African Domestic Workers Network (AfDWN).

This act of solidarity happens just as a diplomatic bag containing documents for South Africa's ratification of C189 goes to Geneva for official lodging at the International Labour Organization.



Photo source: WIEGO



**95**  
**DOMESTIC WORKER**  
**REPRESENTATIVES**



**17**  
**AFRICAN**  
**COUNTRIES**

**95,572**  
**MEMBERS**



# 2014

The IDWF receives the **Jaap Kruithof Award in Belgium**, a prize granted to a person or organization that challenges the social order and makes changes through action.

**C189 is ratified in Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ireland and Switzerland.**



Photo source: WIEGO



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# 2015

The number of domestic workers continues to increase worldwide – to 67 million (ILO estimate). Women account for 80%.

IDWF wins the **Silver Rose Award 2015** by SOLIDAR for its success on Organizing International Solidarity as membership swells to 330,000 domestic workers across 44 countries.

**C189 is ratified in Belgium, Chile, Dominican Republic, Finland, Panama and Portugal.**



Photo source: WIEGO



# 2016

IDWF launches its “My Fair Home” campaign (with support from ILO). It encourages employers to pledge to uphold the standards of C189 and protect and promote the rights of domestic workers in their homes and communities.

IDWF membership crosses the half-million-member mark! Members are represented by 60 affiliates in 48 countries.

**Jamaica ratifies C189.**



**500k**  
DOMESTIC WORKERS



**60**  
AFFILIATES



**48**  
COUNTRIES



# 2017

IDWF and its leadership pick up more national and international awards, including the South Korean-based Bishop Tji Haksoon Justice & Peace Foundation, which recognized domestic workers worldwide with the Justice & Peace Award and the Belgian Sister Jeanne Devos Award from the ACV-CSC Service Union.

IDWF membership leaps to over 480,000 domestic workers in 53 countries.

**Guinea ratifies C189.**



Photo source: WIEGO



# 2018

**IDWF convenes its Second Congress from 16 to 19 November in Cape Town, South Africa.**

At the ILC in June, violence and harassment in the world of work is on the agenda. The IDWF delegation makes an impact talking about the abuse domestic workers face on the job. They join other informal workers to demand an international Convention that serves all workers.

The 2nd Congress of the IDWF convenes in South Africa to celebrate the achievements of the first five years—and prepare for the struggles still ahead.

**Brazil, Peru and Grenada ratify C189.**



Photo source: WIEGO



# 2018

## Your Toolkit on ILO Convention 189 – The Domestic Workers' Convention

The Law Programme and Organization and Representation Programme at WIEGO also partnered with IDWF to develop a Domestic Workers' Legal Toolkit. The Toolkit contains an organizers' manual that provides key information on the ILO Domestic Workers' Convention (C189) and its accompanying Recommendation (R201).

**Scan me!**

Download the  
toolkit here!





# 2019

## Madagascar and Sweden ratify C189.

In November, the European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions (EFFAT) makes domestic work one of its sectors of focus and begins organizing to improve working conditions for the 2.6 million domestic workers in the EU.



Photo source: WIEGO





# 2019

In 2019, the ILC Convention No. 190 on **Eliminating Violence and Harassment in the World of Work** was adopted at the International Labour Convention, establishing “the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment” as a labour right that can be drawn on to protect workers around the globe. This was a significant victory for workers in informal employment—especially women—whose organizations worked hard to ensure that the convention (known as C190) would protect particularly vulnerable workers, including in private spaces such as homes.

**Domestic workers’ delegates again become a force during negotiations at the ILC and are leading regional campaigns.**



Photo source: WIEGO

# 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic sweeps the globe—and domestic workers face dire circumstances. Some are cast out with no earnings. Others must work without protective equipment.

To help, IDWF advocates strenuously and establishes a Solidarity Fund to support its affiliate organizations. The fund gives lifesaving support to domestic workers—food, water, masks and gloves, disinfectant, and other essential items.

**In August, a devastating explosion in Beirut left migrant domestic workers in the streets with no way home. IDWF again fundraises to provide shelter, transportation and medical support.**

**C189 is ratified in Mexico and Namibia.**



Photo source: WIEGO



# 2021

IDWF continues to fight for domestic workers and joins allies in the global movement to ensure domestic workers are an essential part of the world's pandemic recovery.

In June, domestic workers around the world celebrate the 10th anniversary of the adoption of C189 at the ILC—and re-energize to demand more national ratifications and fair treatment globally.

**C189 is ratified in Antigua and Barbuda, Malta, Norway and Sierra Leone.**



Photo source: WIEGO



# 2021

In commemoration of the C189 10th anniversary, WIEGO and IDWF published **Ten Years Since Winning C189: Domestic Workers Become an Unstoppable Movement** by Celia Mather and Georgia Montague-Nelson.

This new booklet looks at the progress made since the adoption of ILO Convention 189 10 years ago.

**Scan me!**

Download the  
document here!





***“C189 is ours. It was not won for us. We won it, and we have to guard it and use it.”***

**– Myrtle Witbooi,**  
President of the International Domestic Workers Federation.

# 2022

Membership in the IDWF continues to grow. IDWF now represents over 616,000 domestic workers in 84 affiliates across 65 countries.



**616K**  
DOMESTIC WORKERS



**84**  
AFFILIATES



**65**  
COUNTRIES



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# IDWF Affiliates





# 2022

Globally, there are almost **76 million** domestic workers, and 76 per cent of them are women.

## Domestic Workers in the World: A Statistical Profile

By Florence Bonnet, Françoise Carré, Joann Vanek

This new Statistical Brief, prepared jointly by WIEGO and the ILO, used data from 155 countries and territories to examine domestic work worldwide. Most domestic workers are informal (87 percent of men and 79 per cent of women) and do not benefit from social security paid by their employer on their behalf, and/or sick leave or paid annual leave. The brief examines many factors, including the types of work, earnings, the hours worked and education levels, among other factors.



Scan me!

Download the  
document here!



## **WIEGO Publications**

### **Domestic Workers Sector (2018-22)**

#### **WIEGO Policy Briefs**

WIEGO and IDWF. 2021. Domestic Workers and Social Protection in Nagaland. Policy Brief (Social Protection) No. 27 (English)

WIEGO and IDWF. 2021. Domestic Workers and Social Protection in Kerala State. Policy Brief (Social Protection) No. 26 (English)

WIEGO and IDWF. 2021. Domestic Workers and Social Protection in Bihar State. Policy Brief (Social Protection) No. 25 (English)

WIEGO and IDWF. 2021. Domestic Workers and Social Protection in Madhya Pradesh. Policy Brief (Social Protection) No. 24 (English)

WIEGO and IDWF. 2021. Domestic Workers and Social Protection in Tamil Nadu. Policy Brief (Social Protection) No. 23 (English)

WIEGO, IDWF, SEWA. 2020. Domestic Workers, Risk & Social Protection in Delhi National Capital Region. Policy Brief (Social Protection) No. 21 (English)

WIEGO and IDWF. 2020. Domestic Workers, Risk and Social Protection in Nepal. Policy Brief (Social Protection) No. 20 (English)

WIEGO and IDWF. 2020. The Costs of Insecurity: Domestic Workers' Access to Social Protection and Services in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Policy Brief (Social Protection) No. 19 (English, Bengali)

Castaño, Pablo. 2018. Laws, Legitimacy and Ongoing Struggle: Lessons from Bolivian Policies on Domestic Workers' Rights. WIEGO Policy Brief (Urban Policies) No. 17 (English)

#### **Organizing Briefs**

Castaño, Pablo. 2018. The Mobilization of Bolivian Domestic Workers. WIEGO Organizing Brief No. 10 (English)

#### **Statistical Briefs**

Florence Bonnet, Françoise Carré and Joann Vanek. Domestic Workers in the World: A Statistical Profile. WIEGO Statistical Brief No. 32 (English, French, Spanish)

José de Jesús Luján Salazar and Joann Vanek. 2022. Informal Workers in Chile: A Statistical Profile. WIEGO Statistical Brief No. 30 (English, Spanish)

José de Jesús Luján Salazar & Joann Vanek. 2020. Informal Workers in Mexico: A Statistical Snapshot. WIEGO Statistical Brief No. 22 (English, Spanish)

#### **Resource Documents**

Pamhidzai H. Bamu-Chipunza. 2018. Promoting Decent Work for Domestic Workers: Lessons From Five Countries. WIEGO Resource Document No. 8 (English)

WIEGO. 2021. Community Paralegals as a Tool to Foster Domestic Workers' Legal Empowerment and Access to Justice (English, French)

Natalia Torres. 2020. *Historia del movimiento de las personas trabajadoras del hogar en México: CACEH, el Sindicato y acontecimientos recientes. Documento de Consulta de WIEGO No. 16 (Spanish)*

Read more, and download WIEGO publications:  
<https://www.wiego.org/publications-resources>





About WIEGO Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) is a global network focused on empowering the working poor, especially women, in the informal economy to secure their livelihoods. We believe all workers should have equal economic opportunities, rights, protection and voice. WIEGO promotes change by improving statistics and expanding knowledge on the informal economy, building networks and capacity among informal worker organizations and, jointly with the networks and organizations, influencing local, national and international policies.

Visit [www.wiego.org](http://www.wiego.org)

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