**Mapping of Domestic Worker Social and Solidarity Economy Organizations**

With a Focus and Analysis on New York City Cooperatives

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**ACRONYMS**

CFL Center for Life

CHCA Cooperative Home Care Associates

CSS Community Services Society

ILO International Labour Organization

ILO HQ International Labour Organization Headquarters

ILO SAP/FL Special Action Programme for Forced Labor at ILO

JWCU Japanese Worker’s Cooperative Union

NMIC Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation

OSF Open Society Foundation

SEIU Service Employees International Union

SSE Social and Solidarity Economy

WIEGO Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing

**FOREWARD**

The recent adoption of the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), has provided a great impetus toward the valuation, recognition and protection of the rights of domestic workers. It has also led to an increase in organizational activity amongst domestic workers and support organizations.

This is great progress towards the acceptance of domestic work as work and the recognition of domestic workers as proper or fully-fledge workers. However, a firm collective voice, a united organization led by domestic workers themselves is crucial. Without this, these workers will continue to be exploited and their work will continue to be undervalued.

Recent efforts focused on documenting organizing efforts among domestic workers through trade unions. We have less knowledge on other types of membership based organizations of domestic workers. This mapping initiative looks into social and solidarity economy organizations of domestic workers - in particular cooperatives and membership based associations - to shed light into this matter.

Evidence from cooperatives and other social and solidarity economy enterprises and organizations of domestic workers are starting to emerge from around the world. This mapping initiative aims to explore the nature, scope and activities of these organizations and the interfaces between them and other organizations.

This effort will not be confined to highlighting only the good practices emerging but also their constraints and needs. It will examine the themes and patterns emerging from these social and solidarity organizations to provide direction on future areas of action in addressing the needs and challenges faced by domestic worker cooperatives. A further step envisioned is to put together a global action program in supporting domestic workers’ cooperatives and other social and solidarity economy enterprises and organizations.

This effort should be understood as work in progress that will have follow up steps including in-depth interviews with domestic worker cooperatives, pilot initiatives for starting and strengthening domestic worker cooperatives.

**INTRODUCTION**

There are 52.6 million domestic workers worldwide and 83 percent of them are women. Close to one – third percent are excluded from national labor regulation and more than a third of women domestic workers have no maternity protection. [[1]](#footnote-1)

Additionally when excluded from labor laws or trade union laws, domestic workers cannot organize. They face challenges to organizing due to isolated workplaces where their workplaces are the homes of their employers and restrictions on their freedom of movement by their employers. As a result formal organizations of domestic workers are still relatively few.

Successful cases of domestic workers organizing through cooperatives are emerging around the world. The first known domestic workers’ cooperative was established in 1877 by butlers and cooks in Uruguay. Today they are found in many countries around the world providing collective voice and representation to their members. They are often established to provide services for their members including employment intermediation, education, housing and financial services

A growing number of cooperatives are being established to provide home care in countries with rapidly aging populations. Canada, Italy, Japan and the United States have a myriad of home care cooperatives where workers provide in-house care services to children, the elderly, people with chronic illness and disabilities. Cooperative enterprises, which provide cleaning services, are also flourishing often bringing together migrant domestic workers as members allowing them to negotiate for better wages and improved conditions of work.

Passing of new legislation for domestic workers is also contributing to the creation of domestic worker cooperatives. New laws in a number of Spain‘s autonomous regions have opened the way for the creation of cooperatives, like the Cooperativa Valenciana de Empleadas de Hogar del Levante.

Though many cooperatives have been able to provide better livelihoods and improved conditions of work for domestic workers, challenges abound. In addition to lack of legal recognition of domestic workers, access to capital, management and organizational structure, networks with other domestic worker groups are among the challenges faced by domestic worker cooperatives.

Clearly there is not one organizational model or strategy that serves all situations or overcome all problems. This exploratory paper provides examples of the different ways in which domestic workers are organizing and provide a basis for further sharing of ideas on ways domestic worker social and solidarity organizations work.

The mapping will provide a better understanding of the cooperatives and membership based associations of domestic workers and offer possible directions on future areas of action in addressing the needs and challenges faced by these organizations.

Case studies will demonstrate the diversity of domestic work. Domestic worker cooperatives are not solely worker cooperatives but can also take forms of financial cooperatives, consumer, housing and others.

This paper is divided into 3 sections:

1. Part I provides an introduction to domestic workers within the global context of the informal economy. It also takes a look at how domestic workers are using cooperatives and associations to improve their livelihoods and improve their terms and conditions of work.
2. Part II will provide case studies in the following three categories with the focus on US based cooperatives.
* Case Study A: Domestic Workers’ Cooperatives and Employment Intermediation
* Case Study B: The growth of home care cooperatives
* Case Study C: Domestic workers’ trade union and cooperative interface
1. Conclusions and Next Steps
2. Annex

**METHODOLOGY**

During the months of February – April 2013, the ILO Cooperative Unit embarked upon a global mapping initiative of domestic workers’ social and solidarity economy organizations. A survey was generated to inquire about the type, breadth, achievement and challenges of the domestic worker organization (see Annex 1 for the survey questionnaire). The project was then extended to focus on two different regions – one in the Arab States and one in New York City. This paper will focus on the latter region. In-depth interviews of NYC cooperatives were conducted from May-July 2013.

An introduction letter was prepared to describe the mapping initiative in further to help organizations understand the significance of the survey. The letter was also translated into Spanish for convenience for partner organizations (see Annex 2 for the letter).

A list of contacts was compiled and snowballing techniques were used to disseminate the survey via email. Messages were sent to ILO Cooperative Unit contacts at *Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO),* International Domestic Workers’ Alliance, ILO HQ departments (ACTRAV, TRAVAIL, MIGRANT, SAP/FL, GENDER), and ILO field offices (gender specialists, domestic workers, migration and forced labour project staff), to acquire leads for further investigation. Follow up communications were conducted upon receipt of responses to the survey when further clarifications were needed (see Annex 3 for contact list).

Information gathered through the survey and interviews were complemented with materials available online.

**INTRODUCTION TO DOMESTIC WORKERS AND THE SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY**

1. **What is domestic work?**

The ILO Convention 189 defines “domestic work” as “work performed in or for a household or households” (Art. 1(a)). Domestic work may involve a range of tasks, including cooking, cleaning the house, washing and ironing the laundry, general housework, looking after children, the elderly or persons with disabilities, as well as maintaining the garden, guarding the house premises, and driving the family car. A “domestic worker” is defined in Convention No. 189 as “any person engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship.” [[2]](#footnote-2)

1. **What is the social and solidarity economy?**

Currently, there is no legal and statistical definition for the social and solidarity economy. However, the definition of the social and solidarity economy that was agreed by participants of the 2009 regional conference on ‘The Social Economy: Africa’s response to the Global Crisis’ states the following:

*“The social economy is a concept designating enterprises and organizations, in particular cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, associations, foundations and social enterprises, which have the specific feature of producing goods, services and knowledge while pursuing both economic and social aims and fostering solidarity.”*

1. **What are cooperatives?**

The ILO Recommendation 193 on Cooperative Promotion defines a “cooperative” as an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise. They adhere to seven core principles: [[3]](#footnote-3)

1. **Voluntary and open membership**

Cooperatives are voluntary and open to all persons regardless of gender, religion, race, or political affiliation.

1. **Democratic member control**

Every member of a cooperative has equal voting rights (one member, one vote) despite their share in the business. All members can actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions.

1. **Member economic participation**

All members actively contribute to the cooperative’s capital. All surpluses are used to benefitting the members or developing the cooperative enterprise.

1. **Autonomy and Independence**

Cooperatives are autonomous self-help organizations that are not affiliated with the government.  If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their cooperative autonomy.

1. **Education, training and information**

Cooperatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperatives. These trainings can help enhance skills for members either in management, computer, and public speaking or Basic English language for instance.

1. **Cooperation among cooperatives**

Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional, and international structures. Cooperatives can also work together across sectors.

1. **Concern for Community**

Since cooperatives are locally embedded organizations, they work for the sustainable development of their communities through policy and programs.

These principles were adopted by the International Co-operative Alliance in 1995. [[4]](#footnote-4)

This is the link to the ILO Recommendation 193 on Cooperatives: <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:12100:0::NO::P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312531>

1. **What is a worker cooperative and why is it a good option for domestic workers?**

A worker owned cooperative is a business that is owned and democratically controlled by the workers themselves. The main features of worker coops are that members are at the same time the employees; and that they are formed as a way to create employment for their members. Each cooperative member is a legal owner of the business, participates in collective management decision-making processes and receives income disbursements**. [[5]](#footnote-5)**

In the United States, a *registered* workers’ cooperative is legally defined as a *corporation*, with its own “corporate” identity, distinct from the individual members who make it up. But there are no national, uniform guidelines regulating how cooperatives register as corporations. Incorporation happens at the state level, and every state has its own guidelines.

Some states in the United States, mostly in the Northeast, have codes designed specifically for worker cooperatives, but most states require worker cooperatives to register under the state’s general business corporation codes, or under general coop codes that also apply to such things as consumer cooperatives. The complicated nature of these state-level in corporation codes is one reason that many worker coops choose not to organize as a *corporation*, but instead simply register as a *limited liability company*. Therefore, no two worker cooperatives are the same. [[6]](#footnote-6)

An interesting finding from the mapping shows that although domestic workers are not considered “employees” on account of their legal status in the United States, they are allowed to establish businesses.

Worker owned cooperatives are beneficial to domestic workers because:

* By joining together as a group of workers and leveraging their collective bargaining power, domestic workers are better able to negotiate improved working conditions and higher wages.
* Worker cooperatives can provide domestic workers opportunities for attaining new skills and knowledge, such as management skills.
* Cooperatives provide much needed services for their members which can range from financial and housing to education and consumer cooperatives.
* Provides opportunity for worker ownership and democratic self-governance
1. **What are some challenges in setting up and running domestic workers’ cooperatives? How can they be overcome?**

Running a business requires time and resources, which may be scarce for domestic worker women working long hours. However, although these women may have only limited years of education, many of them have been self-employed for years. With training in cooperative management skills, negotiation skills these women can quickly obtain the necessary skill sets. Domestic work requires a range of skills that is crucial to the well-being of the employer’s family. For this reason, domestic workers need skills in child psychology, first aid and more advanced medical care. [[7]](#footnote-7) Domestic workers can also benefit from one – on – one negotiation training. Even if workers are aware of their rights, due to the precarious nature of the work, domestic workers find it difficult to openly negotiate wages with employers.

Cooperatives are businesses and having the skills to run a business may be challenging. Cooperative workers may face some hurdles in the beginning but they will eventually become more financially stable as their membership and clientele grow. With good division of labor among the members, as well as support from outside organizations such as worker cooperative support institutions, nonprofit organizations or trade unions these challenges can be overcome. [[8]](#footnote-8)

However, large and successful cooperatives are possible. For example, in the United States, the Cooperative Home Care Associates, a worker-owned home care agency has over 1,000 members and generates more than $40 million in revenue – showing the size and impact of cooperatives. [[9]](#footnote-9)

**CASE STUDIES**

1. **Employment Intermediation**

In the United States, there has been a long history of worker owned and managed cooperatives. Cooperatives emerged in the 1980s as a response to the incoming flood of undocumented Central American refugees. [[10]](#footnote-10) Worker cooperatives are appealing for domestic workers because they provide them with an option to self-organize through direct democracy. Domestic workers face various challenges that hinder terms and conditions of decent work. Since domestic work is considered a part of the informal economy, workers lack compulsory overtime, social benefits, sick pay, and health insurance. [[11]](#footnote-11) Additionally, domestic work is inherently isolated and private in nature, making it difficult for workers to organize. Lack of legal protection, invisibility to the outside world and inaccessibility to labor inspectors makes domestic workers prone to abuse. Live-in workers are particularly vulnerable as they rely on their employers for a place to live.  [[12]](#footnote-12)

There are approximately one million domestic works in the United States and 95 percent of them are women. [[13]](#footnote-13) However, this number does not take into consideration the large population of undocumented immigrant domestic workers many of whom are from Mexico, Central America, Caribbean, South Asia and the Philippines.

In New York City, domestic workers earn a mean annual wage of $15,160 and experience higher levels of poverty than workers in other occupations.[[14]](#footnote-14) The emergence of cooperatives that serve an employment intermediation role has become crucial in improving the livelihoods of domestic workers majority of whom are immigrant women. They provide workers with an alternative to private employment agencies; giving them access to a pool of jobs gathered through advertising without having to surrender a large percentage of their salaries to an intermediary. [[15]](#footnote-15)

1. **In-Depth Case Study of New York City Domestic Worker Cooperatives**

**i. Center for Family Life as Incubator for Sunset Park Cooperatives**

**Origin of Organization**

The Center for Family Life (CFL), a social service organization has been the incubator for many immigrant cooperatives in New York City. The Center for Family Life got involved with the cooperative movement when the organization started working with unemployed individuals coming into the Adult Employment program, one of the programs offered at the CFL. The cooperative model was the perfect synergy for people working both collectively and independently.

Si Se Puede! is a worker cooperative for housecleaning services. One of the key principles of Si Se Puede! is the fact that worker-owners receive 100 percent pay for their work—there are no job placement fees and no organizational middleman. Workers go to work for individual employers with assistance from the CFL employment coordinator, and receive 100 percent of their pay directly from them. There is no requirement for the workers to pay a fee to CFL, other than workers paying membership fees to the day laborer organizations who make up CFL.

**Main Activities**

Today, Si Se Puede workers receive more than $20 an hour for their work, and monthly income for the total cooperative reached between $50,000 and $60,000 a month in 2011. [[16]](#footnote-16) Like all coops, membership in Si Se Puede! requires active participation by all workers in the day-to-day management and marketing of the business. For example, members must attend regular organizational meetings, and must spend three hours a month marketing the coop. This might mean staffing a table at a street fair, marketing the coop at neighborhood meetings, or handing out Si Se Puede! literature door-to-door. [[17]](#footnote-17)

**Success Factors**

Vanessa Bransburg, the cooperative coordinator at Center for Family Life, assures that the enabling factors that make Si Se Puede and Beyond Care successful are their fit in the industry. The people have the skill sets and passion to match the needs in the neighborhood.

Additionally, having the co-op incubator as an integral part of the inner workings of CFL permits the CFL to refer the co-op members for any service that they may need, from family counseling to after-school programs to English classes. Since the limitation in English language has been a barrier for many of the women in attaining jobs in the past, CFL has provided workplace specific ESL classes for the cooperatives so that they are able to have successful interviews with their clients and communicate effectively on the job. Because they are able to deal with these issues separately, they can focus on their business.

A unique aspect of the Sunset Park co-op development model is the significant emphasis they place on group work. Bransburg says, “As a social worker who specializes in social group work, community organizing, and leadership development, I have worked with my team on developing a model that places value and prioritizes the coaching of effective communication, compassion, active listening, consensus decision-making, and skillful facilitation. We believe that these skills are fundamental for the sustainability of relationships and trust within a cooperative business.” During the initial 12-week training with each cooperative the sessions include the topics mentioned previously while co-facilitation at meetings is modeled by the CFL staff. Modeling is a characteristic of social group work that we utilize with each cooperative. We have observed that for the immigrant women in the cooperatives, modeling how to work in a professional manner within a group setting while using the skills that are taught in the initial training is a practical and effective way of using ourselves as their consultants.

Another aspect of the social group work method is the utilization of the group members to resolve conflicts that arise.  For instance, in one co-op meeting the members addressed a person's constant tardiness to the general meeting. The member had the opportunity to explain her reasons for being late.   The members responded by brainstorming ideas on how their fellow member could adjust her schedule to be able to arrive to meetings on time.  There is an emphasis on holding one another accountable and talking through issues to reach a resolution within the group and with the leadership committee. Valuing open discussion promotes transparency and reliance on the group process.

**ii. Northern Manhattan Improvement Center as Incubator for Ecomundo Cooperative**

Ecomundo Cleaning is a worker cooperative that provides eco-friendly cleaning services to homes, offices and businesses and creates stable employment with a living wage for its members. After completing ten training classes and meeting on a biweekly basis for seven months during 2011 and early 2012, the twenty-eight members of the coop launched their new business on April 23, 2012. Ecomundo Cleaning was helped started by the Northern Manhattan Improvement Center (NMIC). NMIC is a community based, nonprofit organization founded in 1979 that serves Washington Heights and Inwood, in upper Manhattan. Ecomundo has 25 members, a majority of them women with a few male members. They are all from Latin America – mainly Mexico and the Dominican Republic.

**Analysis of NYC Cooperatives**

New York City domestic worker cooperatives illustrate similar characteristics. Sunset Park, the South Bronx and Washington Heights are all predominantly immigrant neighborhoods where these cooperatives were founded. The South Bronx is one of the poorest districts in the nation where almost 38% live below the poverty line. [[18]](#footnote-18) Similarly Washington Heights and Sunset Park are composed of a similar demographic. The success of these cooperatives in their respective locations make evident that under marginalized conditions, people are open to alternative forms of employment whereas those who have earned a college degree typically find jobs through traditional means and have more options to choose from. Most immigrants who reside in these locations have not attended higher education or cannot speak English fluently, thus decreasing their options at other avenues of employment. Their lack of education and skills forces them to only obtain menial jobs. Additionally, since unemployment rates tend to be higher in these communities, people are always looking for ways to find jobs – making the cooperative option appealing.

Similar examples have also been found in California as early as 1983. Amigos, the first Latina domestic worker cooperative in the Bay Area, was identical to Si Se Puede. Usually these workers found work through friends, churches, agencies, recommendations or newspapers but cooperatives then became the new addition to the list. Mujeres Unidas y Activas is another grassroots organization that runs a worker’s association called Manos Cariñas (Caring Hands), a hiring center where employers must agree to a certain set of employment practices before being allowed to hire a worker.

Cooperatives serving employment intermediation services are common in industrial countries that receive an influx of immigrants. When immigrant women arrive to their destination countries, although they may have had professional credentials in their home countries, these credentials are most often not transferrable. Such cooperatives may therefore be explored as a viable alternative to private employment agencies in other high-income countries where there is a large influx of migrant domestic workers.

A majority of service sector jobs in the United States require formal training, certification by a North American credentialing institution or presuppose and provide no training at all. [[19]](#footnote-19) There may be a misconception that domestic workers in general have limited levels of education. For instance many Central American domestic workers who immigrate to the U.S had formal professions before moving from their country of origin. In a cooperative of Latina domestic workers, one woman explains, “In El Salvador, I was a teacher, here I am a housekeeper.” Another woman follows, “In Nicaragua, I was a businesswoman, here I am a housekeeper.” [[20]](#footnote-20) Although they have the qualifications, many barriers deter them from obtaining a professional career. Although many of these women come to the U.S with skills, these skills do not match the markets they are placed in. The diversity of the human capital they bring to the labor market is matched and made irrelevant by the lack of diversity in the opportunities they find there. [[21]](#footnote-21) There is no way to use previous status to move up the ladder. For example, there is no way to advance from clerical worker executive without formal education. Unless one has the resources either in capital or family support to receive formal training, previous professional credentials are invalid.

This is the main reason immigrant women must turn to domestic work. However, cooperatives provide a solidarity and open space for these women to turn to for assistance. The New York State Department of Labor Feasibility Study attests to the power of cooperatives stating that “trained domestic workers within a cooperative could provide a more highly skilled pool of potential employees” (356).

1. **Provision of Home Care Services**

The aging population is a common phenomenon facing most industrial countries. Japan is experiencing the most serious problem of both a rapid aging population and a shrinking population. As seen in the graph below, the aging population is also evident in Canada and the United States. Closely linked to this demographic phenomenon is the fast growing model of home care cooperatives in these countries.



 Figure 1: Global Median Age [[22]](#footnote-22)

In the United States, one person in the baby boom generation turns 65 every 8 seconds. [[23]](#footnote-23) As the nation grows older, the need to provide home care services has increased. The National Domestic Workers Alliance, The Domestic Employers Association, Direct Care Alliance and other partners have been forming the foundation for a campaign to transform long-term care in the United States – a campaign known as *Caring Across Generations.*  This movement is shedding light on the matter that families need support and workers who provide this support need living wage jobs. Their campaign emphasizes that care is fundamental and everyone deserves access to it, including the people that provide it.

Cooperative Care, a worker-owned cooperative providing homecare services, is in Wautoma, Wisconsin. Responding to the aging population, Cooperative Care is bringing together domestic workers, who are most often low income women, and providing them with increased pay, workers compensation, paid holidays, 10 days paid vacation and health insurance. Workers are also offered to become certified nursing assistants, demonstrating how a cooperative can be a fundamental stepping-stone to career development.

Similar cooperative models are emerging in Canada as well. La Fédération des coopératives de services à domicile et de santé du Québec (FCSDSQ) and Care Connection are two home care cooperatives in Quebec. Workers in Care Connection perform housekeeping activities for the elderly whether its meal preparation, laundry, shopping, bathing or even pet care. Both organizations protect, defend and promote the interests and rights of each its members. Similar to Cooperative Care, they provide training, technical and professional support to workers.

In Japan, cooperatives provide nearly 4 percent of home care services. [[24]](#footnote-24) Care workers have formed worker and consumer cooperatives to provide home services to the elderly and those with disabilities. Japan Workers’ Cooperative Union (JWCU) represents and unites worker cooperatives throughout Japan. As much as 11 percent of workers in JWCU work in child care services and 30 percent work in providing for the elderly.[[25]](#footnote-25) These two areas made up the highest percentage of the business operation for JWCU. According to the member characteristics statistics, women make up 87.6 percent of the child care business and 27 percent of these women are in their 20s. Women continue to make up an overwhelming majority of care work. This reflects the changes in women’s position within the family, economy and community.

The increase in home care cooperatives is a sign that there is a need for better services for the elderly, which are not being provided by private or governmental institutions.

**A. In-Depth Case Study of Cooperatives Home Care Associates (CHCA) – South Bronx, New York**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Ethnicity** | **2008 – 2011** |
| *Latina* | 63% |
| *African American* | 27% |
| *Caribbean American* | 5% |
| *African* | 5% |

Cooperative Home Care Associates (CHCA) is the largest worker cooperative in the United States, employing 2,200 inner-city home care workers in the South Bronx and generating revenue upwards of $40 million. Founded by Rick Surpin and Peggy Powell

in 1985, the cooperative is now owned by 1,700 low-income immigrant women of color and licensed by the New York State Department of Health. Steve Dawson, who helped start CHCA, made clear in an interview that though these workers work in the homes of their clients, they are not referred to as domestic workers but rather as “aides” who perform health care needs for the elderly such as bathing, toileting, grooming and meal preparation in the homes of their clients. Nearly all the women who are members of the cooperative are African American or Latina. The typical entry-level trainee is a woman of color between the ages of 22 and 55. Most women are single, the mother or guardian of

young children, and dependent on public assistance before participating in the training and employment program. Math and reading skills of these women range between the fourth and eighth grade levels. Below are some tables that illustrate the composition of CHCA.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Place of Origin** | **2008 – 2011** |
| *Continental U.S.* | 42% |
| *Dominican Republic* | 34% |
| *Puerto Rico* | 6% |
| *Ecuador* | 3% |
| *Jamaica* | 2% |
| *Another Country* | 12% |

**Origin of Organization**

A nonprofit, Community Services Society (CSS), one of New York City’s largest nonprofit social service organizations helped found CHCA. CHCA was the initial cooperative started in the South Bronx. Home Care Associates is the first replication site started in Philadelphia in 1993, which now employs 70 aides. Cooperative Home Care of Boston is the second replication site, started in 1994, which now employs 60 aides. The Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute (PHI), is a nonprofit that stemmed out of the cooperatives. The Cooperative Health Care Network is the informal federation that links together the three for-profit cooperatives. All three home care cooperatives are subcontractors within their local health care markets. In many urban areas, a Medicare-certified home health agency – a visiting nurse association or a major hospital – will provide skilled nursing care and subcontract for paraprofessional services from an agency such as ours. The diagram below provides a clearer picture of the relationship between these organizations.



CHCA is an unique cooperative model in that it is not in the private pay market and also works in partnership with a union, Service Employees International Union (SEIU). In the early 2000s, SEIU local 1199 began an organizing drive in the cooperative.  While both the board and the workers were initially skeptical about the value of unionizing, it became clear over time that union affiliation could help the workers achieve policy changes in the industry at large.  In 2004 an agreement was negotiated.  Subsequently a joint Labor/Management Committee was formed as an additional path for workers to participate in the cooperative's governance.

**Success Factors**

Dawson explains that the success of CHCA stems from a dual model that integrates two distinct components: each of the enterprises includes both a profitable business and on site, employer based training program. The short-term classroom-training program leads to immediate placements in a permanent, unsubsidized job within the cooperative. Then, once the new employee is on the job, the respectful style of management, in service training, personal and vocational counseling, careful supervision, and career upgrading programs together all weave for her a supportive work community and learning environment.

The Cooperative Network model is a tested example of a “sectoral employment strategy”, one that “targets a particular occupation within an industry, and then intervenes by becoming a valued actor within that industry – for the primary purpose of assisting low-income people to obtain decent employment – eventually creating systemic change within that occupation’s regional labor market.” The Cooperative Network chose to reshape an industry that currently keeps large numbers of low-income women working, but poor.

Sectoral influence on an occupation can be achieved in two ways: by changing the public regulatory framework (through a “living wage” law that creates a wage floor for any occupation under public contract) or by changing private industry practice (through labor innovation on the part of one competitor that is so compelling it forces other businesses within that market to respond in kind)

By intervening inside the home care industry as an employer, the Cooperative Network model uses both tactics: within the regulatory framework, CHCA co-led a coalition of unions, consumer advocates, and service providers in securing labor reimbursement rate increases from the NYS legislature. And within industry practice, the superior quality of the cooperatives has convinced contractors in each of the three local markets to place higher expectations on the labor standards of their other subcontractors.

The 4-week intensive training helps trainees learn key clinical and interpersonal skills as they obtain dual Personal Care Assistant and Home Health Aide certifications. This training is twice the hours required by federal and state regulations and all graduates are guaranteed a job at CHCA with competitive wages, full-time hours, overtime paid based on hourly wage, competitive benefits, peer mentoring, leadership opportunities, and paths to career advancement. More than 1,125 CHCA staff are currently worker-owners, with access to: annual dividends in profitable years, free tax preparation assistance, and the right to participate in elections for CHCA’s Board.

1. **Cooperative and Trade Union Interface**
2. *Cooperatives/ Associations as a Prelude to a Trade Union*

There has been a long tradition of domestic workers starting in an associating then gaining recognition as a trade union where the legislation permits. [[26]](#footnote-26) Associations - another form of a social economy organization – are also active in protecting the rights of domestic workers. A good example of this case has emerged from Jamaica. Founded in 1991, the Jamaican Household Workers Association has over 1,600 members and works closely with employers, governments and trade unions to ensure that their workers are provided with fair wages and ethical employment practices. They have advocated to raise the national minimum wage from JMD 4070 to JMD 4500 per week (roughly USD 53). Their credibility has secured them space on the Minimum Wage Advisory Commission, illustrating their strong presence in the political arena. On March 18, 2013 the association shifted its status and formally registered as a trade union, paving the way for greater advocacy. In this case, the focus for Jamaican domestic workers has shifted from serving largely economic interests of their members to greater emphasis on advocating for the rights of domestic workers.

1. *Unions Providing Cooperative Services to their Members*

The Self Employed Workers Associations (SEWA) in India is a registered national trade union including an estimated 4.75 million domestic workers in 2004 – 05 in all of India. SEWA uses a twin strategy to provide their domestic worker members with both employment and advocacy opportunities. SEWA is registered as a trade union but its grassroots organizing strategy is based on the creation of over a hundred cooperatives, which are owned and run by its women members. There is great diversity in SEWA's cooperative societies: The largest within the SEWA family is the SEWA Bank while the largest numbers of members are found in Dairy Cooperatives. The Health Workers Co-operative, Child Care Co-operative, Home Care Cooperative, and Insurance Cooperative are unique service providers while the others, Construction Workers Cooperatives, Artisans Cooperative, Paper Pickers Cooperative, Cleaners Cooperative, Vegetable Traders and Vendors Cooperative, and Land Cooperatives ensure steady employment and income to their members. The President of the Federation puts it in perspective when she says; “the co-operatives without the trade union lose their progressive edge, while the trade unions without co-operatives run out of steam.” [[27]](#footnote-27) Examples of the success of these cooperatives are seen in SEWA’s Lok Swasthya Cooperative, a medical shop that sells quality generic medicines. The pharmaceutical market is one dominated by males so this female owned and controlled medical shop broke barriers and demonstrated the confidence and power of women. Another success can be seen through the cooperative for the women vegetable grower’s of Kheda. This is the first of its kind for vegetable growers in which women have started collective farming, another area that mostly male dominated.

In order to provide a secondary level organizations structure to the cooperatives SEWA established the Gujarat State Women’s SEWA Cooperative Federation, a state level organization of 98 women co-operatives, in 1992. The Federation advocates for women’s increased bargaining power, capacity and ownership through cooperatives, thereby building their own collective businesses, which can stand firm in the market place and provide work and income to their members. SEWA’s joint strategy helps enhance income-earning opportunities and also enables its members to claim and exercise their rights in the economic, legal and social spheres.

1. *Cooperatives and Unions United Under One Platform*

In the United States, we have seen the trade union-cooperative interface dating back to the mid-1800s. [[28]](#footnote-28) The Knights of Labor was the first labor union to promote the development of worker owned cooperatives. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was a movement by some unions such as the United Steelworkers, towards employee ownership. However, this shift resulted in no change to the labor management dynamic or to the nature of the operational structure. As a result, many members started to view employee ownership in a negative light. They felt that cooperatives were another way to write concessions out of workers, or worse, to undercut the wages and benefits at their competitors. [[29]](#footnote-29)

In March 2012, the United Steelworkers and the largest worker coop system in the world, the Mondragon, formally announced a plan for collaboration. Mondragon will help USW leverage its power and membership into organizing industrial worker-owned cooperatives in the U.S. Unlike before, this is a major shift in USW’s perspective on worker cooperatives. Now, the current president of USW, Leo Gerard embraces the idea of worker ownership and is excited about the USW-Mondragon partnership.

Similar trends can be seen in other parts of the world as well such as South Korea. The South Korean Home Managers Cooperative is an example of a cooperative that once had little to do with the domestic workers trade unions but now stands on the same platform. As the main objective of domestic workers’ cooperatives is to provide services for their members, they may not immediately seem to have overlapping goals with traditional trade unions. However, it is not hard to bring cooperatives and trade unions together under a national platform advocating for rights of their members. Domestic workers in South Korea are not recognized as legal workers in the country. The cooperatives of domestic workers, along with the trade unions held two care workers’ rallies to advocate for social recognition, legal protection and adoption of the ILO’s convention for domestic workers.

The experience from Mozambique indicates that there might be competition amongst domestic worker organizations themselves.

There are three workers’ organizations that represent domestic workers in Maputo, Mozambique: the Associação de Empregados Domésticos de Moçambique (Mozambican Domestic Workers’ Association - AEDOMO), the Associação das Mulheres Empregadas Domésticas (Women’s Association of Domestic Workers - AMUEDO), and the Sindicato Nacional de Empregados Domésticos (National Union of Domestic Workers - SINED).

Although they have similar goals, strategies and membership profiles, collaboration among them has not yet materialized. In such cases while recognizing the need for autonomy, power and resources, the leaders of these different organizations may need to bring in the values of solidarity among cooperatives and membership based worker organizations as a priority. [[30]](#footnote-30)

Similar bridging efforts might be needed among domestic workers organizations elsewhere. Experiences with cooperatives or trade unions from the home country may influence the opinion of migrant domestic workers in the destination countries as noted by the Manos Cariñas Cooperative in the US.

**CONCLUSIONS**

After a three-month effort, we received 8 completed surveys – 5 from Asia (two from Japan, Indonesia and South Korea) and 3 from South America (Nicaragua, Dominican Republic and Guatemala). 39 domestic worker organizations were identified and information was included from their websites, articles, completed surveys and phone interviews. 37 organizations were identified in Latin American and the Caribbean but these still need further investigation.

The preliminary analysis of the findings from this mapping initiative identified some of the following conclusions:

*There is a positive correlation between legal recognition of domestic workers and the formation of cooperatives.* The ILO notes, “one of the most important findings in the review of law and practice is that domestic workers conditions do not improve unless there is concerted action to improve the legislative framework” (ILO 2009:94). Argentina and Spain have both had a growth in cooperative development with the passing of domestic worker legislations.

*There are diverse forms of domestic worker cooperatives*. Not all of them are worker cooperatives but many especially in Asia are cooperatives that provide financial services for migrant domestic workers. Examples of credit and savings cooperatives have emerged from Hong Kong and Indonesia. In Indonesia, a former migrant worker established Koperasi TKI Purna Citra Bumi Mandiri, a cooperative to help migrant workers and their families with services and financial products tailored to their needs. In South Africa, domestic workers have formed a cooperative known as *Rainbow Housing Cooperatives* to save collectively on a monthly basis towards housing and to lobby key stakeholders for resources and to improve living conditions.

Trade union and cooperative options can co-exist mutually reinforcing each other. In countries or contexts where it might prove to be difficult to organize domestic workers in trade unions on account of legal exclusion or other constraints including the difficulties of organizing workers who work in private homes with various employers, cooperatives and membership based associations may provide to be a viable interim alternative. As noted by Katie Joaquin, the lead organizer at Filipino Advocates for Justice, domestic worker cooperatives and associations could be established within unions. Joining with broader alliances could be advantageous for domestic workers in terms of resources, access to different constituencies and wider visibility.

The preliminary results of the mapping exercise provided some useful insights, which need to be further investigated to fully uncover the type of assistance they need in order gain visibility and recognition. With further cooperation amongst ILO HQ departments, NDWA, WIEGO and ILO Regional Offices, a future goal is to create a global action program to address the needs and challenges of domestic worker social and solidarity organizations.

Since this mapping is still in its initial stages, the following are questions that need to be answered as we continue to build on the information we have on domestic workers and their social and solidarity economy organizations.

**QUESTIONS**

**Legal**

* Are these worker cooperatives registered in law?
* For countries in which cooperatives are not legal, what can other options are available for domestic workers?
* How open are the legislations for worker cooperatives?

**Organizational**

* Do hiring halls have cooperative elements? How does it work?

**Relational**

* What are the obstacles encountered when trade unions and cooperatives work together? How can they be overcome?
* What are employer attitudes toward domestic workers?
* Is there a difference in the type of women that perform childcare services versus home care for the elderly or people with disabilities?

**FUTURE AREAS TO EXPLORE AND NEXT STEPS**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Future Areas** | **Next Steps**  |
| Emergence of Financial Credit Unions for Migrant Domestic Workers  | Follow up with ILO Regional Offices in Asia  |
| Expanding employment intermediation to other regions  | Testing it with ILO projects in Jordan and Kuwait  |
| Formalization of domestic workers through cooperatives  | Further Investigation  |
| Immigrant domestic women in child care vs. elderly or people with disability care services | Further Investigation in the U.S Domestic Worker Movement  |

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**Annex 1: Mapping of Domestic Worker Social and Solidarity Economy** **Organizations: Survey Questions**

1. What is the name of your organization? Does the organization have a website or a suggested contact person? If so, please provide the name and contact information for this person.
2. In what country is this organization located?
3. Who are the founders of this organization? (Domestic workers, NGOs, Migrant Workers, etc.)
4. What is the purpose of this organization? (Improving livelihood, policy advocacy, employment intermediation, negotiation power, etc.)
5. What are the main services provided to its members? (Legal, financial, training, etc.)
6. Is this organization a part of a larger network/alliance/association/etc. or involved with other partners? If so, which ones?
7. What are the main achievements to date? (Increase in membership, passing of a legislation, expansion of services, improved working conditions, increased wages, etc.)
8. What are some of the challenges this organization has faced or is facing? (Legal constraints, financial limitations, member awareness, exclusion, etc.)
9. How can your organization be helped in order to improve its current situation?

**Annex 2: Introduction Letter**

Dear Friends,

**Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE)**

Refers to all economic activities carried out by organizations, primarily co-operatives, associations, foundations, mutual benefit associations, social enterprises, etc. Despite their diversity, SSE's are organized around mainly six principles: voluntary and open membership, autonomous management, democratic ownership and decision-making, the primacy of people and work over capital in the distribution of revenues, reinvestment of surplus into the organization and guided by solidarity and responsibility.

The ILO has recently taken on a mapping initiative on social and solidarity economy enterprises and organizations of domestic workers. While we may know about the organizing efforts of domestic workers through trade unions, we have less knowledge of the other types of membership based organizations of domestic workers. Evidence from singular cooperatives and other social and solidarity enterprises and organizations of domestic workers are starting to emerge from around the world. This mapping initiative aims to shed light into the nature, scope and activities of these organizations by compiling and analyzing them. In this effort, we hope to highlight not only the success stories of these organizations of domestic workers, but also their constraints and needs.

**How are we doing this?**

The ILO Cooperative Branch has begun conducting this study through an initial survey that is being sent out to various domestic worker organizations. The survey asks for the following information:

1. What is the name of your organization? Does the organization have a website or a suggested contact person? If so, please provide the name and contact information for this person.
2. In what country is this organization located?
3. Who are the founders of this organization? (Domestic workers, NGOs, Migrant Workers, etc.)
4. What is the purpose of this organization? (Improving livelihood, policy advocacy, employment intermediation, negotiation power, etc.)
5. What are the main services provided to its members? (Legal, financial, training, etc.)
6. Is this organization a part of a larger network/alliance/association/etc. or involved with other partners? If so, which ones?
7. What are the main achievements to date? (Increase in membership, passing of legislation, expansion of services, improved working conditions, increased wages, etc.)
8. What are some of the challenges this organization has faced or is facing? (Legal constraints, financial limitations, member awareness, exclusion, etc.)
9. How can your organization be helped in order to improve its current situation?

The completed surveys will then be compiled and analyzed for commonalities based on region, constraints, or needs. The experiences of these organizations will then be shared with the domestic worker network.

**How will this help?**

The analysis conducted based on the information gathered will:

* Help increase understanding on cooperatives and other social and solidarity economy enterprises and organizations of domestic workers, and
* Provide direction on future areas of action in addressing the needs and challenges faced by domestic worker cooperatives.

Through this survey, we hope to take an initial look into the organizations’ challenges and suggest ways in which these challenges can be overcome and outline the emerging good practices. A further step envisioned is to put together a global action program in supporting domestic workers’ cooperatives and other social and solidarity economy enterprises and organizations.

Thank you,

ILO Cooperative Branch

**(Spanish Translation)**

Queridas y queridos amigos,

**Economía Social y Soloidaria**

**(SSE por sus siglas en inglés)**

Se refiere a todas las actividades económicas llevadas a cabo por organizaciones, principalmente cooperativas, asociaciones, fundaciones, asociaciones mutuales, empresas sociales, etc A pesar de su diversidad, las SSE se organizan en torno a seis principios: adhesión voluntaria y abierta, gestión autónoma, democracia en la propiedad y la toma de decisiones, primacía de las personas y el trabajo sobre el capital en la distribución de los ingresos, la reinversión de los excedentes en la organización y guiada por la solidaridad y la responsabilidad.

La OIT ha adoptado recientemente una iniciativa de mapeo en las empresas de economía social y solidaria y las organizaciones de trabajadoras domésticas.

Esta iniciativa se debe a que, aunque tenemos bastante información sobre los esfuerzos de organización de las trabajadoras domésticas en Sindicatos, sin embargo esa información es más escasa cuando se trata otros tipos de asociaciones en las que se organizan las trabajadoras domésticas. En todas partes del mundo empiezan a surgir iniciativas novedosas como coopertivas y otras formas de empresas de la economía social y organizaciones de trabajadores doméstica.

Precisamente este mapeo pretende arrojar luz sobre la naturaleza de estas organizaciones, el alcance que tienen y las actividades que desarrollan, a través de la compilación y análisis de información sobre ellas. En este esfuerzo, esperamos poner de relieve no sólo las historias de éxito de estas organizaciones de las trabajadoras domésticas, sino también sus limitaciones y necesidades.

**¿Cómo hacemos esto?**

La Subdivisión de Cooperativas de la OIT ha comenzado a realizar este estudio a través de una encuesta inicial que se está enviando a varias organizaciones de trabajadoras domésticas. La encuesta pide la siguiente información:

1. ¿Cuál es el nombre de su organización? ¿La organización tiene un sitio web o una persona de contacto sugerido? Si es así, por favor proporcione el nombre y la información de contacto de este usuario.
2. ¿En qué país se encuentra esta organización?
3. ¿Quiénes son las fundadoras de esta organización? (Trabajadoras domésticas, las ONG, las trabajadoras migrantes, etc)
4. ¿Cuál es el propósito de esta organización? (Mejora de los medios de vida, la promoción de políticas, la intermediación laboral, poder de negociación, etc)
5. ¿Cuáles son los principales servicios que presta a sus miembros? (Legal, formación financiera, etc)
6. ¿Esta organización forma parte de una red más grande / alianza / asociación / etc. o que participan con otros socios? Si es así, ¿cuáles?
7. ¿Cuáles son los principales logros hasta la fecha? (Aumento del número de miembros, aprobación de nueva legislación, expansión de los servicios, mejora de las condiciones de trabajo, aumento de salarios, etc)
8. ¿Cuáles son algunos de los retos que esta organización ha enfrentado o enfrenta? (Restricciones legales, limitaciones financieras, sensibilidad de los miembros, exclusión, etc)
9. ¿Cómo se puede ayudar a su organización para mejorar su situación actual?

Las encuestas completadas luego serán compiladas y analizadas por grupos que tengan elementos comunes (misma región, restricciones o necesidades similares). Las experiencias de estas organizaciones se compartirán con la red de trabajadoras domésticas.

**¿Qué aporte se espera de esta iniciativa?**

El análisis llevado a cabo sobre la base de la información recopilada:

* Ayudará a aumentar el conocimiento sobre las cooperativas y otras empresas de la economía social y solidaria y las organizaciones de las trabajadoras domésticas, y
* Brindará orientación sobre futuras áreas de acción para hacer frente a las necesidades y desafíos que enfrentan las cooperativas de trabajadoras domésticas.

A través de este estudio, esperamos poder tener una mirada inicial a los retos de las organizaciones y sugerir la forma en que estos desafíos pueden ser superados y describir las buenas prácticas emergentes. El siguiente paso sería el diseño de un programa de acción global para apoyar a las cooperativas de trabajadoras domésticas y otras empresas de la economía social y solidaria y otras organizaciones.

Gracias,

Subdivisión de Cooperativas de la OIT

**Annex 3: Key Contacts**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Key Contacts  | **Organization Affiliated With** |
|  Maria José Chamorro | ILO Regional Office  |
| Elizabeth Tang | IDWN  |
| Karin Pipe | WIEGO |
| Chris Bonner  | WIEGO |
| Nelien Haspels |   |
| Maria Gallotti | ILO HQ |
| Laura Addati | ILO HQ |
| Amelita King-Dejardin | ILO HQ |
| Claire Hobden | ILO HQ |
| Martin Oelz | ILO HQ |
| Jill Shenker | NDWA  |
| Yumi Nabeshima | ILO Japan  |
| Marie-José Tayah | ILO Lebanon/HQ |
| Shirley Pryce  | President of Jamaican Household Workers Association |
| Hazel Corcoran | Executive Director, CWCF Canada |
| Pozzan, Emanuela | ILO Lebanon  |
| Clarence Lee  | President of Asian Migrant Credit Union  |
| Valenzuela, María Elena |  ILO HQ |
| Frantz, Elizabeth |  OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATION  |
| Steven Dawson | Cooperative Home Care Associates |
| Vanessa Bransburg | Cooperative Coordinator for Center for Family Life  |
| Melissa Hoover | Federation of U.S Worker Cooperatives |
| Jennifer Welles | Cooperative Coordinator for Northern Manhattan Improvement Center |
|  |  |

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2. <http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/publication/wcms_170438.pdf>  [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/ent/coop/africa/download/rec193.pdf>  [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <http://usa2012.coop/about-co-ops/7-cooperative-principles> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Hayashi, 520 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Immigrant Worker Owned Cooperatives: A User’s Manual, 8 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. <http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---actrav/documents/publication/wcms_181344.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Hayashi, 522 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. <http://www.american.coop/content/brief-history-cooperative-home-care-associates> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Salzinger [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
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12. http://column.global-labour-university.org/2013/03/a-site-of-struggle-organised-labour-and.html#more [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Seattle journal for social justice, 492 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Seattle Journal for Social Justice [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Salzinger [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Immigrant Worker Owned Cooperatives: User Manual [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/south-bronx-poorest-district-nation-u-s-census-bureau-finds-38-live-poverty-line-article-1.438344> [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Salzinger, 141 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Salzinger, 139 [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Salzinger, 142 [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. CIA World Factbook, 2009 [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. <http://www.caringacrossgenerations.org/about/background> [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Kurimoto [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. <http://english.roukyou.gr.jp/members.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
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28. Cooper et al. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
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