Domestic Workers Rights Network- DWRN & Construction workers: An experience of Bangladesh

Dr. Wajedul Islam Khan
Joint Secretary General, Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies - BILS & General Secretary, Bangladesh Trade Union Center

Naimul Ahsan Jewel
General Secretary, Jatiyo Sramik Jote Bangladesh.
## Informal Workers in Bangladesh

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Labour Force (Aged 15 to above)</td>
<td>60.7 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed population</td>
<td>58.1 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed in informal sector (87.4% of the total employed population)</td>
<td>50.8 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio between formal and informal sector (in percent)</td>
<td>12.6:87.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Presently there are growing tendency of informalization of the formal sector works through master role, contact service etc.
The survey findings show a large number of employment persons in the formal sectors with a low level of education. By age group, 91.7 percent of the youths aged 15-29 engaged in the informal employment, and it is 84.1 percent of the adults aged 30-64 in the informal employment.

The contribution of informal sector employment in urban areas was 75.1 per cent, and in rural areas, it was 92.2 percent. In rural areas, 94.8 per cent of the females are in informal sector employment whereas it was 78.2 percent in urban areas. At the national level, only 9.7 percent females engaged in informal sector employment and it was 13.7 percent for the male counterparts.
Govt. initiatives to the informal sector workers

- Financial support to the workers from Bangladesh Sramik Kallyan Foundation Fund (Bangladesh Labour Welfare Foundation Fund under the Ministry of Labour & Employment);
- Group Insurance Scheme for the Construction workers & Motor Mechanics;
- Strengthening of Labour Welfare Centers.
Informal Sector & Domestic Workers

- 0.9 Million Household Aid in Bangladesh (Ref: Labour Force Survey 2013).
- A major portion of women informal workers are engaged with domestic works.
Domestic Workers in Bangladesh: Situation & legal protection

- Most of the domestic workers are female, mostly child and young in age. Their income is not included in Gross Domestic Product;
- Domestic workers are excluded from the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006;
- Domestic Servant registration ordinance-1961 is negative to labour rights protection;
- In December 2015 the govt. introduced “Domestic Workers Protection & Welfare Policy 2015”.
Torture on Domestic workers from 2001 to 2010 and up to 2015
(Ref: BILS survey)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Dead</th>
<th>Wounded</th>
<th>Sexually Harassed &amp; Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total**: 798
Domestic Workers' Rights Network - DWRN:

BILS conducted a study focused on the domestic workers' rights in 2005. BILS disseminated the study among the trade unions, human rights organisations, and NGOs. This led to the formation of the Domestic Workers' Rights Network (DWRN) in December 2006. The DWRN is comprised of 32 organisations, including Trade Unions, leading Human Rights and Civil Society organisations.

Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS) works as the secretariat of the Network.
DWRN major Advocacy issues

- Advocacy on Demanding inclusion of Domestic Workers in the Labour Act-2006 through necessary amendment.
- Approval of Domestic Workers Protection & Welfare Policy until inclusion of DW in the Labour Law.
- Ratification of ILO Convention 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers.
DWRN Actions

- Conducting Research, Study and organising Seminar, Roundtable, Press Conference etc.
- Organising domestic workers through NTUCs and other member organisations;
- Awareness raising, Media campaign and Publications;
- Liaison and linkages with national & international organisations;
- Protest against torture on domestic workers;
- Advocacy with govt.
Immediate protest against killing and torture
TU Group Meeting of Domestic Workers
নয়ান নে দিবস ২০১৫
গৃহশ্রমিকদের অধিকার সুরক্ষায় আইন চাই

শ্রম আইনে অন্তর্ভূক্ত চাই
শাসনিক বিধিসেবা পীরাংকী চাই
বিদ্যমান ও পরিবর্তন ব্যাপ্ত চাই
হত্যা ও নির্যাতন দৃষ্টান্তমূলক শান্তি চাই

নামা মাজীরা, নিমিতি কর্মচারি, চিকিৎসা ও বিশ্বাস চাই

হরমী সুরক্ষা ও কল্যাণ নীতি - ২০১৪
পুলিল নিয়ন্ত্রিত চাই

গৃহশ্রমকে জরিমানা রূপে চিহ্নিত করব।
'গৃহকর্মী সুরক্ষা ও কল্যাণ নীতি ২০১৫' গ্রহণ করব।
'গৃহশ্রমকের জন্য লোগন কাজ' সংগঠন এই কার্যকলাপ (ঐ নং ১৮৯) গ্রহণ করব।
গৃহশ্রমে হত্যা, নির্যাতন, হারানী বদে নৈতিক দৃষ্টিকোণে শান্তি প্রদান করব।
গৃহশ্রমদের নির্দেশনা তুলে রাখা ও প্রকৃত অবস্থা যাচাই করতে নিবেদন ও পরিবর্তন কার্যকর চান।
DWRN Initiatives for Policy

- Network submitted memorandum to the ministry of labour and employment to account domestic worker in the national labor law.
- Network drafted a Code of Conduct on domestic workers and submitted to the MoLE.
- Ministry Decided to formulate a policy and invited network to contribute in drafting the Domestic workers’ Protection and Welfare policy 2010.
- Network organised series of meeting, workshop, seminar, rally, human chain, letter campaign on raising demand for approval of the policy.
DWRN Initiatives for Policy

- Sharing the draft with domestic workers, Trade Union, HR & Workers Rights Organisations to collect recommendations;
- Incorporating the recommendations in the proposal;
- Printing the draft and wide circulation among the activists and media.
In January 09, 2008 DWRN submitted Memorandum to the Secretary of the Ministry of Labour & Employment
Basis of the Policy:

- The Constitution of Bangladesh
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- ILO Convention no. 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers
- ILO Decent Work Program
Domestic Workers’ Protection & Welfare Policy 2015: Major points & directions

- Domestic work will be recognized as a profession.
- The Ministry of Labour & Employment will coordinate implementation of the policy.
- Verbal or Written contract should be made for appointing domestic worker.
- Minimum age of domestic workers will be 14 for doing light works; those above 18 years will be eligible for heavy works. Education & health facilities should be provided to the child domestic workers.
- Domestic workers must entitle to a healthy and safe space for sleeping, they must have the scope for prayers according to their religion.
Domestic Workers’ Protection & Welfare Policy 2015: Major points & directions

- Female domestic workers will get 4 months of maternity leave.
- Employer must ensure a full-time domestic workers' salaries and other allowances. Any clothing or other forms of support have to be excluded from the salary arrangement.
- Employer has to distribute work hours ensuring proper rest, sleep, entertainment and leaves.
Domestic Workers’ Protection & Welfare Policy 2015: Major points & directions

- Employer will have to pay for all necessary treatments.
- The employer will be under the obligation to compensate for any accidents, including treatment expenses.
- Employers are strictly prohibited for making physical or mental torture to the domestic workers.
- One month notice should be given for job termination.
Domestic Workers’ Protection & Welfare Policy 2015:
Major points & directions

Govt. responsibilities:

- Record keeping on appointment of domestic workers.
- Regular inspection and develop monitoring mechanism by involving non govt. orgs. & civil society members for protecting rights of domestic workers.
- Government will introduce a 'helpline' for the domestic workers while there will be also an awareness campaign.
- Free legal aid to the victim domestic workers.
Scope of Trade Union participation in the policy implementation

- Participation in the National Monitoring Committee.
- Participation in the local Inspection Team as a Member.
- Preparing report of the incidents of torture against domestic workers and sending it to the Govt. Monitoring Cell or concerned local administration.
- Legal support to the victim domestic workers.
- Arrangement of Arbitration to solve problems arises between employers and workers.
Hon'able Minister for Labour and Employment assured about approval of Code of Conduct on January 20, 2010
Members of Parliament expressed their solidarity to the demands of domestic workers on December 10, 2009.
Advocacy on ILO Convention 189

- Press conference demanding ratification of ILO Convention 189 and enact law in light of ILC 189 on July 25, 2011
Parliamentarian Mr. Rashed Khan Menon MP supported the demand of ratification of the ILO Convention 189 on International Domestic Workers Day on June 16, 2012.
On December 27, 2015 DWRN representatives with the State Minister of the Ministry of Labour & Employment in the discussion meeting on implementation of the Policy
Advocacy on ratification of ILO Convention 189

- Sharing the contents of the Convention 189 with the National Trade Union Federations and the groups of the domestic workers in 10 different places in Dhaka city;
- Sharing with Human Rights organizations of Domestic Workers Rights Network;
- Facilitating media reporting both print & electronic;
- Orientation to the civil society members through publication of booklet on ILO Convention 189 & ILO Recommendation 201 in Bengali and publicity through Poster, Leaflet and Flyers.
- Popularise the demands of ratification through press conference, human chain, rally etc.
Demands in Media

14 domestic helps tortured to death in four months
Say human rights activists

Staff Correspondent

A total of 14 domestic helps, mostly children, were tortured to death while eight were severely tortured by their employers in the last four months in the country, said human rights activists yesterday.

Speaking at a press conference at Jatiya Press Club in the city, leaders of Network for Establishing the Rights of the Domestic Workers said employers often escape punishment due to absence of a stern law to protect rights of domestic helps.

“The network demanded the government to formulate a law to protect rights of domestic helps and prevent oppression on them.”

The labour ministry last year finalised “Domestic Worker Protection and Welfare Policy 2010” following continuous pressure from the network. But the government is yet to issue any written order to make the policy effective, they said.

Quoting a record of Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS), they said a total of 797 incidents of oppression on domestic helps took place in the last ten years, of which 398 victims died due to severe torture.

More than 20 lakh people are working as domestic helps in the country, 80 percent of which are women and children, they said.

Though Child Rights Act 1974 prohibits appointing children as domestic helps or at any factory and termed it as a punishable offense, reality is different. So it is a must to make the policy effective, they added.

They said the government must play a pivotal role in formulating a document on “Decent work for domestic workers” at International Labour Organization convention.

Their other demands include ensuring security, education, training, wage and fixed working hours for domestic helps and initiating social security and rationing system for them. They also called to punish employers who torture and kill domestic helps and provide legal support from the government to victims.

The conference participants later formed a human chain in front of Jatiya Press Club to realise the demands.

Dr. Wazedul Islam Khan, coordinator of Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad; Shihin Akhter, president of Karmajibi Nari; Mohammad Zaful Hassan, joint secretary general of BILS; and Sultan Uddin Ahsanmud, the network coordinator, also spoke.
Challenges

- Workers themselves are not aware about their rights and duties because of their extreme poverty and illiteracy.
- Organize the unorganized Domestic workers.
- The govt. did not included domestic worker in the labour law during the last amendment in 2013.
- ‘Domestic Work’ is not recognized as hazardous work.
ILO initiatives for Construction workers

Recently ILO Dhaka office has undertaken a pilot project on “Piloting issuance of Identity card to Construction workers” with the support of the Ministry of Labour & Employment, Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies- BILS and National Trade Union Centers.
Future plan for Construction sector:

- Increasing coverage of group insurance for construction workers will take place as a vital campaign.

- Ensuring Identity card for construction workers is another major component for campaign. Union will provide necessary support to the ILO project on this event.

- Strengthening organizing program to bring more construction workers in the union will be continued and union will undertake series of program on this issue.
Thanks