



International  
Labour  
Organization

DOMESTIC WORKER STORIES  
CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL DOMESTIC WORKERS DAY  
16 June 2021  
#VALUING DOMESTIC WORK AS WORK

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**Livelihoods and Food Security Fund**

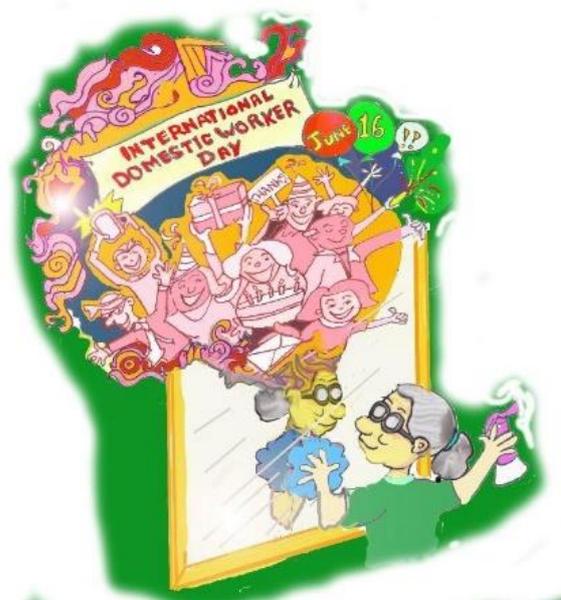


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## #Valuing Domestic Work as Work International Domestic Workers Day 2021

June 16<sup>th</sup> 2021 is the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of ILO's Domestic Work Convention (No. 189) at the International Labour Conference in Geneva. Every year in Myanmar, we celebrate this day to raise awareness about the valuable contribution domestic workers made to our society and economy and to promote the need to adopt improved legal and social protection for Myanmar domestic workers.

This year, we collected the stories of ten women domestic workers, in their own words, to showcase their lives and successes to empower and inspire fellow domestic workers, and to promote the recognition and professionalization of domestic workers' skills in Myanmar. We are sincerely thankful to all those domestic workers who shared their stories.



### Day Day Bright



Mingalaba! My name is Day Day Bright. I have been working as a domestic worker since I was 10 years old. I am now 42 years old. I would like to tell you about some of my experiences of working as a domestic worker. No one recognizes or thinks highly of our work, and we also feel disheartened. From dawn to dusk, I was busy with household tasks. I had no holidays on Saturday and Sunday. But I had a chance to go for a visit to my native town. In 2013, I worked for a foreign family in this work, I usually had a holiday on Sunday. While I was working for this family, one of my friends suggested me

to attend the training developed by Three Good Spoons and ILO. So, I applied. I learnt about Basic First Aid, how to cook or prepare healthy and nutritious foods, basic self-defence, basic English, cleaning in general and awareness about laws. We understood that the domestic work is supportive for house owners. After all, we came to know our value. In fact, we are human beings as well. I feel motivated and courageous. I have no feelings of being down-hearted any longer. Now it has been one year since I learnt about human rights. I now enjoy my rights that I should enjoy without having to claim them. That's why, I am deeply grateful to Three Good Spoons and ILO.

## Naw Nite Chuu Ngar



Mingalaba! My name is Naw Nite Chuu Ngar. I live in Ayeyarwady Region and I am now working as a domestic worker in Thanlyin Township, Yangon Region. I attended the training established by Three Good Spoons and ILO in August 2019. I have been working as a domestic worker for 1 year and 3 months since the end of February 2020. I have joined the training after my aunt told me about this training. I had an opportunity to learn about the daily life of domestic workers, how to cook healthy food, how to keep things clean and do cleaning systematically, about financial management as well as how to

communicate with other people. After the training, my life has changed a lot. I am now working with careful mind and am not lazy any more. Now, I know how to wash and cook hygienically. Moreover, I also know how to communicate with other people and how to spend money with discipline. My tips for domestic workers are that however difficult it is, try your best with honesty and innocent mind. I wish Three Good Spoons Training School which helps and guides domestic workers for the better life, to continue and exist for a long time. Thank you!

## Cho Mar Win

Mingalarba! My name is Cho Mar Win. According to my friend's suggestion, I have attended Three Good Spoons Training in August 2019. After the training, I had a job to work as a domestic worker and it was well paid. I felt down-hearted before attending this training. I had no self-confidence and also felt stigmatized. But I could change myself after the training. I have gained self-confidence more than before and feel that my skills have improved. Moreover, I came to know the terms and conditions related to domestic work. I can support my family now and feel so happy. So I would like to urge other women who are going to work as domestic workers to attend Three Good Spoons training. I am really grateful to ILO and LIFT Myanmar who are funding and supporting Three Good Spoons training. I would like to suggest that the supportive trainings like Three Good Spoons should always be in place for domestic workers. I would like Myanmar government to ratify Convention No. 189 for domestic workers.



## Chaw Su



Mingalaba! My name is Chaw Su. I am from Kayah State. Due to various situations, I moved to Yangon to work as a domestic worker for the last 4 years. I got to hear about Three Good Spoons training through my friend and was eager to attend the training. Then I applied and could attend the training in August 2019. I think this training is not only for domestic workers, but every woman should attend it. I realized that certificate of recognition for domestic worker is much more useful than just experience. All employers in all sectors want to see a certificate. So domestic work needs

certificate as well. One written word is much more important than one hundred verbal words. That's why I have attended this training. I have gained self-confidence after the training. Domestic work is recognized as a work because of the organizations that support and stand for domestic workers. Training includes theoretical and practical lessons including discussions through which we have gained self-confidence, knowledge and skills. Through this training, we came to know that both practice and theory are important. I am proud of this training and thankful for it.

I would like to suggest other domestic workers to attend domestic worker trainings like this one if they want to improve their self-confidence level and want their work to be recognized. I think some problems between house owners and domestic workers can be settled through attending this kind of training. Thank you!

## Yu War Hlaing

Mingalaba! I am Yu War Hlaing. I am a domestic worker. I have been working as a domestic worker for about 14 years. As per the suggestion of my former employer, I attended Three Good Spoons training in September, 2019. From this training, I learnt essential hygiene for domestic work, communication, domestic work related terms and conditions, healthy cooking, basic self-defence, basic English lesson, basic first aid, basic book-keeping, and could apply them in practice. After the training, I know how to use kitchen tools and prepare fruit, meat and fish hygienically.



Moreover, basic English lessons were given in the training and I could communicate smoothly with foreign employers in my workplace. Before, I thought domestic work was humiliating and was discouraged, but now with the knowledge and skills gained from the training and good experience gained from the workplace after the training, I have gained self-confidence, and as the saying goes, 'every work has dignity'.

I would like to suggest other domestic workers to attend Three Good Spoons training. I would like to suggest that trainings like Three Good Spoons for domestic workers should be established more broadly. Thank you!

### Naw Theint Theint Aung



My name is Naw Theint Theint Aung. I am from Bago Region. I am 29 years old now. When I was 13 years old, I came to Yangon and worked as a domestic worker for 10 years. In 2017, I went to Singapore and worked there for about one and a half years. Within this one and a half years, I was very exhausted and the main problem was sleep deprivation. In the daytime, I was usually busy with household chores and at the night time, I would usually babysit. I could not sleep if the baby didn't sleep. I would mostly wake up at 5 am to start working. As time

went by, I couldn't endure it and returned to Myanmar. Shortly after I arrived in Myanmar, I tried to attend some trainings to go to Japan for work. At that time, I met up with my old teacher, who told me about the training for domestic workers run by the Karen Baptist Convention supported by ILO. I was interested in this training and got an opportunity to participate online from 19 to 23 October 2020. I learnt lots of knowledge and necessary skills during 5 days of the training. I have gained not only motivation and self-confidence but also job opportunities. Finally, I got the certificate from the training. When I learn about ILO convention No. 189, decent work for domestic workers, I know my value and also know how to claim my rights. Moreover I feel glad that there are many supportive organizations which I can count on.

Then, through an agent, I applied for a job to work in Singapore with the certificate I have got from the online training for domestic workers. With self-confidence, I worked in Singapore. I have got SGD 570 per month and my daily life was OK. But in the contract, although it said I only have to take care of the elderly, in reality I have to prepare meals for the whole household. So the contract was not consistent. As I have completed 3 months of working, I have plans to meet with the agent and negotiate with the house owner. I know how to do these things because of the knowledge and skills I gained from the training. I am very grateful to KBC and ILO supporting for the training. I would like to suggest other domestic workers who are going overseas to learn their language and local knowledge, and consult with experienced persons.

## Nant Saung Hnin Wai

My Name is Nant Saung Hnin Wai. I am 15 years old. My native place is Ayeyarwady Region. Since I was 9 years old, I had to work as a domestic work due to my family's hardship. At first, my job tasks were babysitting and some household chores. I was paid 30,000 Kyats. After 3 months of working, I changed to work in another house with same household tasks as before. Then, I moved to another house where I had to sell betel nuts and things at their store shop, do household chores and fill petrol in their petrol station. After doing household chores early in the morning, I would sell betel nuts and things at the store shop, and at the night time I had to sell petrol. Sometimes, I had to go to the beauty saloon owned by the daughter of my employer and help her with errands. Due to tiredness and poor sleep, I made mistakes at work and was beaten up for my mistakes. My parents did not know this situation or



about my sufferings. As my parents are honest and trusting, they believe whatever they are told and believed that I was doing OK. But I wasn't so I ran away as I was too exhausted and couldn't bear it any longer. But my employer caught me. On the third time of trying to escape they sent me to a police station and then confined me in their home. The next time, I escaped and hid myself at my aunt's home. When one organization working for the protection of women and children heard about my plight and difficulties, they linked me up with the KBC, an organisation helping domestic workers.

With the help of KBC, I was given an allowance to help domestic workers during Covid-19, and I also gained knowledge related to Covid-19 disease as well as rights, working hours, rest hours of domestic workers. What's more I have gained self-esteem. So these things are very useful and valuable. Besides the allowance, I had an opportunity to attend the training on handicraft. My dream is to become a designer. I will try my best. Now I was told that my embroidery skills have improved. I am especially grateful to KBC and ILO for making my dream come true. The one thing I would like to request is that please develop the new law for child domestic workers like us.

## Naw Janette

My name is Naw Janette. I live in Ayeyarwady Region. I have been working as a domestic worker for about 5 years. The Women's Department of KBC came to our village and conducted awareness raising training for domestic workers. I attended this training as I was interested in it. From this training, I learnt about safe migration, dos and don'ts in the workplace and necessary knowledge for domestic workers and about the Convention No. 189, decent work for domestic workers. These topics and lessons were new to me but it's very useful and we had a chance to exchange our work experiences with each other. I was so delighted to attend this training. One day, one lady from a mission group came and asked me whether I am interested in sewing or not. I answered her, yes but I have no money to attend the training. Then, she explained me about 3-month sewing training conducted by the

Women's Department of KBC through Organizing Domestic Workers Project supported by ILO. After that, I submitted the form to apply for the training. Fortunately, I was selected as a trainee and one of 5 people to attend the course. I started the training on 4-11-2019 and finished successfully on 7-2-2020. The aim of the training is that domestic workers can earn family income through sewing skills to be able to live their own life. The training gave basic and advanced sewing skills. Due to the teachers' arrangement, I got a sewing machine and can earn 150,000 Kyats a month from my sewing work in my village.



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**Although other people are having difficulties earning an income during Covid-19, I can support my family with my income.**  
**Naw Janette**  
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Although other people are having difficulties earning an income during Covid-19, I can support my family with my income. For that, I feel so happy. I found that some domestic workers like me can save money but other domestic workers could not save money due to various difficulties. However, I would like to encourage domestic workers to save money as much as they can and run a small-scale business to get some income, and it would be supportive in this difficult time, I think.

**Naw Juliet Thein**

My name is Naw Juliet Thein. It has only been one year for me to work as a domestic worker. My native place is Yangon Region. Due to my family's difficulties, I went to Yangon City for work through a broker. The normal monthly wage for me was 100,000 Kyats. The household where I worked had 9 family members. I worked for their household doing chores and errands. It was so difficult for me to prepare different foods for them because they have many family members. At the night time, I had to babysit. After a period, I resigned from that job as I was tired and couldn't bear it any longer. When I resigned,



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**I would like to suggest that it would be helpful and supportive for domestic workers at the workplace if domestic work/service skills are acquired.**  
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it was at the same time as the Covid-19 pandemic and it was difficult for me to return to my village. Then, I asked for help from my friendly teacher to stay at her home for a while. After that, I heard the news from my friend that there would be an online training of domestic work/service for domestic workers which was arranged by KBC supported by ILO. My friend had also attended this training, in the first batch. So, I got in touch with the responsible persons to attend the training. After the training, I realized it was so useful for me and practicable at the workplace. The subject I like best and

my favourite is kitchen hygiene and healthy cooking. It is very helpful for me as the training provided me with theoretical and practical lessons including video clips via online. After the training, I have got a job. I get 150,000 Kyats per month as a monthly salary. It is very helpful for my family. Now I still have a job while the others are having difficulties finding jobs. I am OK and get along with house owners at my workplace because of knowledge and skills gained from the training. These are the benefits from the training. I would like to suggest that it would be helpful and supportive for domestic workers at the workplace if domestic work/service skills are acquired. That's why I would like to urge domestic workers to attend the training of domestic work.

### Cho Cho Nyunt



My name is Cho Cho Nyunt. I have been working as a domestic worker for about 32 years. I'm from Sagaing Region. I am now 58 years old. I am an asthmatic and suffer from asthma attacks. Due to my health problem, I have stopped working for a while. Shortly after taking a rest from my job, Covid-19 broke out and I had to face many difficulties. Because there was little money left from my savings as I had to use for medicine for my asthma. So I had difficulties in my basic needs. As I have no family members, no place to go, I asked Yangon Karen Baptist Women Association

(YKBWA) for help to find shelter during Covid-19. They allowed me to stay and looked after me. I was given some allowance from the social assistance to domestic workers during Covid-19. The allowance was provided through Organizing Domestic Workers and Covid 19 Response supported by ILO and KBC. In such hard times, I was very pleased. Because, it was helpful and supportive for my medical and food cost. I felt so disappointed that there was a political unrest during the second wave of Covid-19. This is a hard time to get a job and difficult to get food as well. Moreover, I felt insecure even in my ward or township. So I called on an old friend, who helped me with money, and food and mediation. I would like to encourage domestic workers not to be discouraged or down-hearted in this current situation due to joblessness and difficulties in basic needs, but to overcome them with courage.



## Livelihoods and Food Security Fund



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The ILO is implementing the Developing International and Internal Labour Migration Governance (DIILM) project (Feb 2016 – June 2021) supported by the Livelihoods and Food Security Fund (LIFT) to improve safety and benefits of labour migration.

This collection of domestic worker stories, in their own words, was put together to celebrate the 10th anniversary of adoption of the ILO's Domestic Work Convention (No. 189) on 16 June 2021. Improved legal protection for domestic workers including the extension of social security coverage and the professionalization of domestic workers' skills is a critical step towards making decent work a reality for Myanmar domestic workers. Here, ten women domestic workers share their challenges and successes through their personal stories.

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