



MFA Statement for International Migrants' Day, December 18 2011
Recognize and Protect Migrant Domestic Workers' Rights: Ratify ILO Convention 189!

Today, December 18th 2011, we mark International Migrants' Day. Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA) dedicates its actions and activities on this important day to the 53 million domestic workers worldwide, many of whom are *migrant* domestic workers, for their continual and significant contributions to our societies.

A Landmark Year for Migrant Domestic Workers

A new era for migrant domestic workers began on June 16th with the adoption of ILO Convention 189—the Domestic Workers Convention. This Convention recognizes domestic workers as *workers*, with rights that are equal to those of all other workers regardless of citizenship or legal status. This victory was the result of six decades of perseverance on the part of leaders from the domestic worker community, trade unionists, and civil society advocates.

The enhanced focus on domestic work at the international level leading up to and following C189 has led to new measures being adopted by both origin and destination countries to protect the rights and welfare of migrant domestic workers. In Asia, Lebanon, India, the Philippines and Taiwan have all introduced domestic work legislation; the governments of Indonesia and Cambodia have implemented deployment bans for domestic workers headed to Saudi Arabia and Malaysia, respectively; Indonesia and Malaysia have entered into a new bilateral agreement to govern domestic labour recruitment and deployment; and the Government of India has recently extended social protection mechanisms, including access to the national health insurance scheme, to local domestic workers. Similar initiatives can be seen in countries in other parts of the world as well.

While this flurry of activity in response to C189 may point to some positive national-level developments with respect to increased attention being paid to the challenges faced by domestic workers, these actions remain piecemeal and insufficient in providing the necessary protections to protect and uphold domestic worker rights. As advocates we have much more work to do in order to sensitize governments to the particular struggles of migrant domestic workers.

Domestic Work is Work!

Migrant Forum in Asia, in solidarity with domestic workers and all workers in the informal sector, call on governments to recall and follow through on their ethical and legal obligations to extend to both local and migrant domestic workers the same rights as are to be extended to all other workers, without discrimination on the basis of citizenship, gender, or legal status; in particular:

- The Right to Freedom of Association: States must create an enabling environment in which all domestic workers are free to exercise their right to associate, and to exercise their right to join and form unions.
- The Right to a Living Wage: States must guarantee that all migrant domestic workers are paid a living wage for their work, on par with that which is paid to local workers within their jurisdiction.
- The Right to a Weekly Day Off: All domestic workers must be guaranteed a full day of rest each week.
- The Right to Health: Access to basic healthcare and medical assistance must be provided to all domestic workers.
- The Right of Access to Justice: All domestic workers must be guaranteed access to adequate legal representation and redress mechanisms under the legal system of the state, regardless of their citizenship or legal status.

We fully support ITUC's call for an end to modern day slavery through its "12 by 12" Campaign, which calls for 12 ratifications of C189 by the end of 2012.

MFA calls on all governments to uphold the principle of decent work for all by ratifying Convention 189: Decent Work for Domestic Workers, and to fully implement its provisions within their national jurisdictions.

Domestic Work is Work! Domestic Work is Not Slavery! Domestic Workers are Workers!