

## Session 2.2: Legal Status and Welfare Services for Domestic and Household Workers: Recognizing Domestic Workers' Rights and Protection Needs

*Sponsors: International Labour Organization (ILO)*

*Schedule: 25 September/ 3:15-5:15pm/ Boracay Function Room*

### **Session Abstract**

Conservative estimates put the number of domestic workers at above 100 million, and in many parts of the world domestic work constitute the most important source of salaried labour for women with low educational levels. However, as ILO research documents, in most countries domestic workers, whether migrants or working in their own locality, are excluded from coverage by labour legislation, making domestic workers one of the world's largest, yet unprotected, segments of the labour force.

As a result of this discrimination, domestic workers suffer very disadvantageous working conditions, i.e. pay below "a living wage" level, excessive work hours, few or no days off, inadequate social protection and no skills recognition. Because of the lack of labour protection and because of the vulnerable situation when living in the employer's household, cases of physical and sexual violence against domestic workers by the employer and his/ her family are common, as are other means of abuse, such as withholding wages and ID, according to reports by the ILO, UNIFEM and human rights organizations.

In recent decades international female migration has grown exponentially, but the job opportunities have mainly been in a limited number of sectors in domestic work and entertainment, with domestic work accounting for the main source of work for many key sending countries. For destination countries, this group of migrant workers contributes significantly towards national development through enabling the availability of the local labour force to the national labour market, and they substitute expenses for care facilities for the employer, as well as investment by host countries into public care facilities.

Millions of domestic workers, predominantly a female workforce, are denied the protection of decent work while they contribute to improving employment prospects and living standards of other categories of workers. This unfair treatment has repeatedly been drawn attention to by the International Labour Conferences (ILC), citing abuses of basic labour and other human rights, ranging from excessive hours of work, low wages and inadequate social protection to sexual harassment, physical assaults and other forms of violence. Conservative estimates put the number of domestic workers at above 100 million, making them one of the largest, yet unprotected, segments of the labour force.

### **Session Objectives**

1. Raise awareness of and document exploitation and abuse suffered by migrant domestic workers;
2. Highlight good practices from various parts of the world in addressing discrimination against migrant domestic workers;
3. Present coherent recommendations and a feasible international action plan to address the decent work deficit of domestic workers; and
4. Strengthen international and national multi-stakeholder resolve to ensure full recognition of domestic workers' labour rights and decent work entitlements and to eliminate discrimination, exploitation and abuse against migrant domestic workers.