

Reflections on Globalized Care Chains and Migrant Women Workers

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Abstract

An analysis of the international division of reproductive labor is incomplete without acknowledging the proliferation of state regulations in migrant-receiving countries, which result in restricting workers' ability to maintain their own families and to exercise their full range of labor rights. An overview of trends in nations fueling the need for domestic workers and caregivers includes the social conditions for migrants increasingly fill this niche. The transnational circuits of care migration are constructed by the commercial and legal processes used to recruit and transport domestic workers. These are highlighted by analyzing the policies in the USA and United Arab Emirates to demonstrate the restrictions countries place on migrants seeking employment and the limited labor protections offered migrant domestic workers. Two otherwise different countries have adopted similar entry requirements tying migrant domestic workers to employer sponsored jobs in their homes. However, the USA offers fewer visa options to domestic workers and recruitment systems differ. Vulnerabilities faced by migrant domestics receiving visas are linked to these immigration policies.

Keywords

migrant workers, carework, labor, gender

"I thought they would kill me. I had to escape. I wasn't given enough to eat. They had my wages, my passport, my phone," Kasthuri Munirathinam, a domestic worker from India who escaped imprisonment in Saudi Arabia, June 13, 2016. (O'Connell, 2016)

"The work wasn't what I expected it to be. It was totally different. I would wake up to start cooking, then cleaning, washing clothes, and then cooking again. No rest, there was just no rest... Because she kept yelling, I cried and asked to go back to agency, but madam said, 'I already bought you.'" Farah S, a 23-year-old Indonesian domestic worker, Dubai, December 7, 2013. (Human Rights, 2014: 1)

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These working conditions bear little resemblance to the politics of housework described in the gender analysis of the 1970s. Envisioning the ascribed status of women caring for families, their elderly parents or disabled children has changed over the last decades. The lofty notions of motherly love involved in care work disintegrates when this basic human activity moves from being women's unpaid labor as mothers, wives and daughters to the paid labor of migrant domestic workers. Unfortunately, the "rhetoric of love" has not entirely been displaced in the academic world, as exemplified in the phrase, "chain of love" to characterize globalized care work (Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2002). Politicians similarly draw on women's work as a "labor of love," and apply it to paid care work by using the adage "one of the family" to deny domestic workers employee rights. Classifying distinctions such as spiritual vs. menial labor (Roberts, 1997), nurturant vs. non-nurturant or relational and nonrelational (Duffy, 2011) capture components of the caring labor process that reproduces gender, race and class inequalities. However, the globalization of care work has drastically altered this human activity by taking women far from their own families to engage in care labor amplified by the social, economic and political inequalities between countries. Women from poorer countries leave their own families to care for privileged families in a richer country. The international division of care work labor reflects gender, class, race, ethnicity and national hierarchies (Onuki, 2011). The context of this international division of reproductive labor reinforces and creates new fault-lines of inequalities. While the opening quotes from Indian and Indonesian migrant domestics in the Middle East may represent the most serious human rights violations in the occupation, they are neither exceptional nor unique. Their stories, and similar ones, challenge social scientists to understand the social, economic and political structures that allow these realities to exist and to flourish.

In this article I analyze the international division of reproductive labor and the proliferation of state regulations in migrant-receiving countries that restrict workers' ability to maintain their own families and to exercise their full range of labor rights. I begin with an overview of trends in nations fueling the need for domestic workers and caregivers, and why migrants increasingly fill this niche. I then describe the transnational circuits of care migration. Next, I identify and discuss the various ways domestic workers are recruited and transported to work outside their countries. Recruitment and decisions women make about where to work occur in the context of restrictions countries place on migrants seeking employment and the limited labor protections offered migrant domestic workers. Case examples of immigration policies in the USA and United Arab Emirates (UAE) illustrate workers' limited labor rights. Two otherwise different countries have adopted similar entry requirements tying migrant domestic workers to employer sponsored jobs in their homes. However, the USA offers fewer visa options to domestic workers and recruitment systems differs. Vulnerabilities faced by migrant domestics receiving visas are linked to these immigration policies. After summarizing the typical conditions migrant domestic workers face, I end with a discussion on workers' organizations and gains.

Trends Fueling the Demand for Domestic Workers

An increasing demand for domestic workers is a response to the changing trends in women's employment that include a growing number of working mothers with small children and elderly parents, as well as the austerity measures and insufficient state-based programs addressing the needs of working parents and an aging population. Exceptions are countries that provide paid maternity leave, such as Sweden and Norway, which reduces the need for infant care. The extensive public support for elderly care in the Nordic countries also reduces the need for privately-contracted paid care workers. With more women in the labor force, including older women, kin care is no longer a solution for working parents in other countries. Parenting strategies incorporating time consuming

and labor-intensive and child-centered activities increase demands on working mothers (Hays, 1996; Nelson, 2010). As more women enter the labor force, there are fewer women willing to accept the lower wages and long hours of domestic workers and caretaking, which has increased the need for migrant labor. An example of a regional shift appeared in the job growth that resulted from the 1970s oil boom in the Middle East and Gulf region that led skilled professionals from Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Yemen to immigrate with their families. Many of the wives of these professionals then sought employment in the federal and local government sector when the oil prices dropped in the 1980s. Along with the increasing number of expatriate women, the need for domestic workers increased (Sabban, 2002). In some areas of the Middle East, the employment of live-in domestic workers became a status symbol of the household's class position (Anti-Slavery International, 2006).

Migration Flows: Transnational Circuits of Care

In the report, "Domestic workers across the world," the International Labour Office (ILO) (2013) estimated that 53 million women and men are employed as domestic workers. Over the last 15 years, there have been "an increase of more than 19 million" domestic workers. While women domestic workers (83%) outnumber men (17%), there are significant regional differences (ILO, 2013: 24). For instance, women make up 63% of workers in the Middle East, but the majority (92%) in Latin America and the Caribbean. Accurate accounts are difficult given the number of women and men laboring in the shadow economy, underage, or who may be engaged a wide range of household and caregiving tasks that blur occupational distinctions, such as cook, housekeeper, or nanny. Domestic workers comprise 1.7% of the total employment worldwide and about 3.6% of all wage employment. "Globally, one in every 13 female wage workers is a domestic worker (or 7.5 per cent), and the ratio is as high as one four in Latin America and the Caribbean (26.6 per cent) and almost one in three in the Middle East (32.8 per cent)" (ILO, 2013: 19–21). While not all these workers are leaving their countries to work, some are migrating from rural to urban areas; and in some cases, replacing the labor of women who themselves are migrating to work as domestics in wealthier countries. In many cases, domestic work draws from the poorest and least educated segment of the population. Countries with limited economic opportunities, such as the Philippines, are exceptions because the women migrating are better educated, have work experience and have English-speaking abilities (Parreñas, 2001). In other cases, women who migrate leave their country of origin to seek better paid opportunities. For example, educated Polish women engage in shuttle migration to German homes because of the differential wage scales between the two countries.

International migration is a significant feature of globalized care work today and reflects the increasing inequalities between countries as well as the growing reliance on women's remittances that scholars refer to as the "feminization of survival" (Sassen, 2000). Latin America and Caribbean domestic workers primarily migrate to North American countries, the USA and Canada, but a growing number travel longer distances to Europe (e.g., Ecuadoran and Colombian women migrate to Spain, Stasiulis and Bakan, 2003) and to Israel. Moroccan and Tunisian women migrate to France to work in private households (ILO, 2013). However, transnational circuits tend to operate within a regional orbit. For instance, Bolivian and Paraguayan women cross borders to Argentina, while Nicaraguan and Salvadoran women seek work in the neighboring country of Costa Rica and Peruvian women migrate to Chile (Blofield, 2012). Latin America and the Caribbean have experienced an increase of 9 million migrant domestic workers, with Mexico and Brazil seeing the largest growth between 1995 and 2010 (ILO, 2013). In Asia women move from Indonesia, Laos and Cambodia to Malaysia and Burma to Thailand (ILO, 2013; Panam, 2004). The Middle East is a common destination for women seeking domestic work: women domestic workers from Indonesia,

India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Ethiopia migrate to the UAE (Human Rights Watch, 2014); Indonesian and Ethiopian women also migrate to Saudi Arabia and Sri Lankan women migrate to Lebanon (Jureidini and Moukarbel, 2004). Migration patterns from the Philippines include Hong Kong and the Gulf region, primarily Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the other United Arab Emirates (Vlieger, 2012). The Philippines, Sri Lanka and Indonesia are the major sending countries in Asia. These migration patterns resulted in an increase of approximately 8 million domestics in Asia and the Pacific.

Recruitment and Inequalities

Inequalities between sending and receiving countries are evident in the restriction of migrant workers' labor and citizenship rights (Sarvasy and Longo, 2004). Inequalities are the result, in part, of the receiving countries' immigration policies and labor regulations restricting who legally works in the country, establishing working conditions and the duration. Contracts, special visas and residency status required by receiving countries vary across the globe, and target different workers by gender, class, and nationality. Structural factors that enable the worst forms of abuse and exploitation of foreign workers include contracts or visas that bind the worker to their employer; the social isolation of live-in workers and minimal to non-existent access to legal means of seeking justice in the host country. Recruiters and other intermediaries may be the first encounter of abuse. Recruiters, labor contractors, and sub-contractors operating in sending countries, along with outsourcing entities in the receiving country are lucrative businesses charging fees and taking large deductions from future wages of the worker. Many of these businesses are not regulated and are known to engage in fraud and misrepresentation. Migrant workers may be victims of economic exploitation that include wage theft, unpaid overtime or agreed upon wages, deductions from paychecks for room and board. Intermediaries and employers have been implicated in cases of human trafficking of migrants as domestic workers. Even when the sending countries develop extensive programming and services to prepare their citizens to work as migrants, these have very little impact. Relying heavily on the remittances of women working outside the country as domestics, the Philippines has developed training, welfare and employment promotion agencies that outperform any other sending country. Yet, their efforts serve to promote the Philippines's labor exports rather than to protect these citizens working abroad as domestic workers (Rodriguez, 2010). In many cases, receiving countries' regulations do not create entry paths for migrants or the restrictions deprive migrants of a process to find a new employer without risking deportation. An overview of the USA and UAE demonstrates the ways receiving countries' laws and policies structure the conditions migrants face when they arrive to work as domestics.

Structural Factors in the USA and UAE

Unlike many countries that lack family policies assisting working parents or an aging population, the USA does not issue specific visas for domestic workers but rather covers them in a subset of visas designated for special cases and for certain populations. The USA offers visas to nannies or au pairs under the rubric of "educational and cultural exchange," which are predominately given to young (18–26-year-old) and middle-class European women. These J-1 visas require English language proficiency and regulate the health and safety of participants. Most workers entering with A-3 and G5 visas come from Asia and Africa. Care workers and domestics accompanying ambassadors, diplomats, consular officers, public ministers and their families are eligible for A-3 visas, which essentially links the employee to their employer and are paid through public funds of the foreign country. Similarly, the G-5 visas grant entry to workers sponsored as employees of

international organizations, such as the United Nations, the World Bank, or International Monetary Fund. The Philippines has the largest number of workers entering with A-3 and G5 visas. These visas tie the worker's immigration status to their employer and require that the worker return home at the termination of the work contract. Consequently, migrant workers do have some of the same state and federal employment and labor rights as citizen workers. In response to the reports on the treatment of workers that included human trafficking, Congress passed additional protections for these workers in reauthorizing the Trafficking and Victims Protection Act. The Human Rights Watch (2001) report, "Hidden in the Home: Abuse of Domestic Worker with Special Visas in the United States," found workers experienced assault and battery, limited freedom of movement, withheld passports, limiting the workers' rights to leave employers' premises and speak with strangers, and numerous health and safety issues in employers' homes. Given the diplomatic immunity that many of the employers have in the USA, foreign government officials have avoided oversight and recognition of workers who are vulnerable to abuse (Sukthankar, 2012). However, many migrants employed in private homes are women who either overstayed their visas unrelated to domestic work or entered the country without a visa or presenting false documents. These workers are vulnerable to exploitation when their undocumented status is used against them by their employers or risk deportation if stopped by the police. However, they are likely to work with more freedom of movement than domestic workers with A-3 or G5 visas.

As one of the 10 wealthiest nations in the world, the UAE employs 146,000 women migrant domestic workers under a visa system, known as the *Kafala* Sponsorship System. The process usually involves UAE's private recruitment agencies working with private recruitment agencies in the sending country to find workers for employers to sponsor. Some agencies in the sending countries charge the migrant worker fees. Employers review portfolios of workers that include their photo, information about work experience and skills, as well as other characteristics, such as their nationality, skin color, age, and religion. Like the US visa system, the *kafala* system ties women migrant workers to the employers. These workers become legally dependent upon their employers. As their sponsors, employers have the right to replace a domestic worker within the first couple of months without additional fees charged to them. They can also rescind their sponsorship at any time, which results in the worker's repatriation. Employers may spend between Dh10,000 to 15,000 (US\$2500 to \$4000) for entry permit fees, flights, medical tests and agency fees. If the worker runs away, the agency is under no obligation to return fees or replace the worker. Consequently, some employers feel they own the worker and some have restricted their movement to the employers' home. Workers do not have the right to seek a new employer even if the contract they signed in the sending country differs than the UAE Employment Agreement for Domestic Workers and Sponsors they must sign for a residence visa. Nor do they have the right to find another employer if contractual terms are ignored. Migrant women have reported wage theft by agencies promising payment. To assure the migrants' cooperation, agents frequently confiscate workers' passports and deliver them to employers despite legal prohibitions against the practice. Cell phones and other documents are sometimes confiscated.

In many cases, recruiting agencies and brokers require migrants to pay fees, which may involve borrowing money at high interest or taking out mortgages on relatives' property. Debt might also be accumulated in receiving countries. Recruitment agencies are known to exchange contracts for less lucrative terms, charge transfer fees and engage in physical and sexual assault. Debt burden is an important reason that migrant domestic workers may endure extreme abuse rather than seeking shelter in their embassy and requesting repatriation. The isolation of working in the employer's home, language and cultural differences and threats from recruitment agencies serve as further deterrence to seeking legal assistance for abuses. Seeking justice for abuses or obtaining unpaid wages is also deterred by the specter of immediate deportation because they lose their legal status when they leave their employer (Human Rights Watch, 2010).

In response to the numerous reports of abuse, the UAE has made some changes. In 2014, the UAE established the domestic worker's standard contract that includes one day off each week, eight hours of rest any 24-hour period. However, the contract does not limit work hours; there are no stipulations regarding overtime or workers' compensation. The contract does permit employers to deduct pay for damages. That same year, the Federal National Council passed a motion "to curb the increasing high recruitment agency fees for workers. It called for signing agreements with sending countries specifying the recruitment fees" (Human Rights Watch, 2014: 21–22). UAE specifically excludes migrant domestic workers employed in private residences from coverage in labor laws. The immigration department only adjudicates wage and contract issues related to the Employment Agreement for Domestic Workers and Sponsors. Furthermore, the UAE established a "market rate" based on migrant's nationality for employers to follow (Human Rights Watch, 2014).

The UAE exemplifies the difficulty that sending countries have in protecting its citizens working abroad. Several countries have attempted various strategies to improve working and living conditions of their citizens employed in the UAE. The Philippines and Sri Lanka have restricted travel to work as domestics if UAE employers and recruitment agencies do not agree on salaries and working conditions. To assure compliance once they arrive in UAE, their embassies have verified workers' contracts. In response, the UAE has demanded an end to this attempted oversight. Another strategy has been to change a refundable deposit, which is returned if employers pay the minimum wage. For instance, India's minimum is Dh1,000 (\$300) a month and requires that employers provide a cell phone for the domestic. Once their embassy verifies that the salary is being paid, the deposit is returned. Between 1997 and 2008, the Philippines decreased the number of domestic workers and increased professionals and semi-skilled workers because the latter are less likely to be abused. In alliance with Filipino migrant organizations, *Migrante International* in the UAE has provided legal assistance, temporary shelter, counseling and other services (Malit and Youha, 2013). However, poorer countries, such as Nepal and Ethiopia, lack the resources to maintain shelters. Countries with low ratings on the UAE's "market rate," such as Ethiopia, have stopped their citizens from migrating there. Some countries have established bilateral agreements; these include Malaysia and Indonesia, Sri Lanka and the UAE. The reality is that sending countries have little power outside prohibiting their citizens to use certain recruitment agencies or sponsors (Human Rights Watch, 2014).

The case of US visas and UAE's *kafala* system highlight the vulnerability that migrant women endure as domestic workers. In addition to their migration status, these workers also face other obstacles specifically related to the differential treatment of domestic work and workers in labor law. Both countries have excluded or provided less coverage to domestic workers. Reasons for these exceptions are frequently related to the workers' race, gender and citizenship status. In the USA, domestic work has historically been the work of women with few other employment options. European immigrant women left the occupation when factory jobs became available. African American women and Mexican American also left when employment in the formal economy became available. Presently, the occupation is dominated by immigrant women of color, including undocumented women. Domestic workers were excluded from the most important federal legislation protecting workers, the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), which was passed in 1938. They are not covered by the National Labor Relations Act or the Federal Occupational Safety and Health Act. If their employer does not employ more than 15 domestic workers they are not covered by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 or the Disabilities Act. They are also excluded for "[t]he Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) that requires employers to allow eligible workers to take up to twelve weeks of unpaid job-protected leave each year" (Smith, 2012: 186). Excluded from federal legislation, labor activists along with domestic workers are involved in a state by state campaign to pass a Domestic Worker Bill of Rights. As

of 2016, the National Domestic Worker Alliance and affiliates have successfully passed legislation in New York, Illinois, Connecticut, Oregon, Massachusetts, California, and Hawaii. Georgia's Supreme Court decision to uphold minimum wage for home care workers is also an important milestone. However, legislation is only as strong as the enforcement behind it and much of the fight for these rights will continue to fall on workers and labor organizations and advocates.

In the UAE domestic workers were under the Ministry of Interior, while all other foreign-born workers fall under the Ministry of Labor. In 2010, the minister of labor "issued a decree allowing workers with contracts expiring after January 2011 to look for work elsewhere after they had served out their contracts" (Malit and Youha, 2013). This had an immediate impact in increasing wages. However, domestic workers were excluded from the decree. Human Rights observers are closely watching the consequences of the Council of Ministers moving the oversight of the recruitment and employment of domestic workers from the Ministry of Interior to Human Resources and Emiratization Ministry, which previously was the Labor Ministry. While there is expressed interest in extending labor rights to domestic workers, the ministry's interpretation of the "particularities of domestic employment" remains unknown.

General Characteristics of Receiving Countries' Regulation of Domestic Work

Considered unskilled women's labor, and primarily done by migrant women of color, domestic work is devalued. Domestic work and care work are broad categories and without formal agreements between both employee and employer, the tasks may spread to tasks not normally considered part of household work or caregiving:

Domestic work is a vague notion, especially when trying to define the work itself. It is generally accepted that it comprises a range of tasks and services connected to the daily functioning of the household. However, legally speaking, for countries that regulate domestic work, there are several different definitions, which may or may not include the provisions of certain services linked to a person (such as caring for children, the ill and the elderly), to pets or any other services (such as gardeners, drivers, butlers, agricultural work, etc.). (OSCE, 2010: 13)

When these workers are perceived as caring for families their labor is often treated as non-work. The consequences are longer work days, fewer rest periods or meal breaks, and in-kind payments such as food and clothing instead of wages. Added concerns are aspects of "living-in" that frequently is not considered and the standards addressing adequate food and accommodation are too often left to the worker to negotiate with the employer. Too often, government officials leave employers and workers the option of negotiating working conditions without recognizing the uneven bargaining power (Human Rights Watch, 2010).

A significant proportion of domestic work and care work is marginalized and excluded from labor protections. In 2013, the International Labor Organization reported that only 10% of all domestic workers are covered by the same laws as other workers, and almost 30% are excluded from labor laws. Jordan extended their labor laws to cover domestic workers in 2008 (Human Rights Watch, 2010). Another challenge to the struggle for a fair day's work for a fair day's pay is the widely held attitude that there are incomparable characteristics uniquely distinct in the gendered nature of the work done in the employer's household. This argument is consistently used to justify excluding these workers, government officials are unwilling to investigate violations. Violating the privacy of employers is a strongly held belief across receiving countries.

Like other countries, the US Department of Labor has consistently claimed that the actual time that live-in domestic and care workers engage in work cannot be accurately assessed. However, as legal scholar Peggy Smith points out, live-in work situations in domestic service is not that unique and have not been a problem in other occupations. The list includes “firefighters, resident managers of storage facilities, assistant deputy probation officers, a damtender, residential care assistants, maintenance monitors of power generating plant, apartment reside site managers, house parents of boys’ facility, a garage watchman, telephone operators, and part caretakers” (Smith, 2012: 180–181). In the case of Saudi Arabia’s Shura Council, their justification for excluding domestic workers from rest periods between 10 pm and 5am because the mandate ““contradicted”” the needs and traditions of Saudi families” (Human Rights Watch, 2010: 15). Another example is Singapore’s government that maintained, “it is not practical to regulate specific aspects of domestic work i.e., hours of work, work on a rest day, and on public holidays. It would also be difficult to enforce the terms of the Employment act for domestic worker as: [they] work in a home environment; and [the] habits of households vary” (Human Rights Watch, 2010: 15)

Immigration regulations of receiving countries vary and restrict time limits, type of employment, regulations governing workers’ family life and frequently stipulate level of training and education. Hong Kong, for example, gives migrant domestic workers two weeks to find a new employer if they are fired or quit. This two-week rule leaves workers with little opportunity to address discrimination and abuse they suffered, and pressures them to stay in abusive situations or sign new contracts in desperation to halt deportation. Employment for migrant care workers in Israel and Taiwan is limited to elderly care. Receiving countries’ legal systems regulating migration offer domestic workers few if any opportunities to bring their children or family members with them as they work abroad. In many cases, children are prohibited from visiting their parents. Separation from children and family members is largely determined by the visa requirements of the receiving country that stipulate the specific number of years they must be employed before returning home. In the case of undocumented workers, leaving the jobs to visit family may result in an inability to return to work. However, a few countries do have temporary visa programs that include domestic care workers applying for permanent residence after a certain number of years. Canada, for instance, is a highly sought out destiny for migrants desiring to resettle because there is a path to permanent residency that allows workers’ dependent children and spouses to become permanent residents. Migrant domestic workers with aspiration for resettlement seek to work in countries with opportunities for residency. Plans may include uniting family members, accumulating money to start a business and escaping the lack of economic opportunity in their home countries.

Organizing Migrant Domestic Workers

Local and regional organizing among domestic workers has been going on for decades. But in the last 10 years, their struggle for labor rights has received international recognition. Along with trade unions and NGOs, domestic workers from more than 90 countries campaigned for a Domestic Workers Convention. In June 2011, the 100th Session of the Labour Conference adopted the Convention on Domestic Workers (C189). The Convention acknowledged the “significant contribution of domestic workers to the global economy” and the work is “undervalued and invisible, and is manly carried out by women and girls, many of whom are migrants or members of disadvantaged communities.” The International Labour Organization asserted their fundamental rights, alongside other workers, are:

- The rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining,
- The elimination of all forms of forced labour,

- The effective abolition of child labour, and
- The elimination of discrimination in respect to employment and occupation.

While the Convention did not specifically focus on migrant women employed as domestics, like the trade unions and affiliates advocating for domestic workers rights, there was recognition that labor migration needed to be addressed. “These range from holding Members responsible for taking measures to ensure that domestic workers are entitled to keep their travel and identity documents in their possession to establishing standards to prevent abuse by employment or placement agencies” (Blackett, 2014: 251).

The inclusion of migrant women employed as domestic workers was a continued theme and concern when the International Domestic Workers’ Network (IDWN) met in Montevideo, Uruguay in 2013 to establish a global federation. Approximately 180 domestic workers’ representatives and 56 organizations representing over 40 countries participated in the Founding Congress. Many elected officials from Asia, Africa, Latin and South America were migrant workers. Domestic workers’ leaders that were undocumented and unable to travel to the Congress were acknowledged. Throughout the Congress, speakers acknowledged that as migrants, women, people of color, and the poor, domestic workers are social excluded. The panel session on “Organizing Migrant Workers” discussed strategies for changing unions to address migrant issues and ways to recruit and integrate migrants into union organizations. They identified the struggle for equal rights between all migrants and the goal to fight for residence permits. In drafting the IDWF constitution, delegates articulated strong commitment to migrant workers. Key activities outlined for 2014–2015 included supporting organizing among migrant domestic workers in India, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Thailand, Zimbabwe and Argentina. Campaigns included the fight “against excessive recruitment fees for Indonesian migrant workers” and obtaining “legal reform to protect immigrant domestic in the Arabic and GCC countries” (IDWF, 2014: 41).

Local organizing is significant in networking with national and international domestic worker’s networks, particularly with IDWF and ILO. The type of organizing in the form of trade unions or community based organizations is largely determined by the legal framework and practical barriers migrant workers face in the receiving countries. When collective bargaining is legal, domestic workers have formed trade unions; otherwise, they limit organizing to cooperatives, workers’ centers, churches or cultural clubs to create a political space. Neighborhood organizing may take place across balconies, arranging to take the trash out at the same time (to make time to talk) or finding other opportunities to exchange information about negotiating leave or time off. Unions have also adopted a service-oriented approach to recruit members by provide social and legal services (ILO, 2016a). IDWF collaborates with the ILO’s *Global Action Programme on Migrant Domestic Workers and their Families*, which began by researching and organizing in Paraguay-Argentina, Indonesia-Malaysia, Nepal-UAE, Zimbabwe-South Africa, and Ukraine-Poland (ILO, 2013). While success is a slow process, their efforts have resulted in “a binational agreement promoting decent work for Paraguayan domestic workers in Argentina” (ILO, 2016b: 98). Support for migrant workers from a wide range of national trade unions in receiving countries has also been achieved in South Africa and the Ukraine. Activists working with migrant domestic workers in Asia and the Middle-East have developed training programs to train human rights advocates to assist in promoting and implementing ILO policies in their home country. “The Asian Inter-Parliamentary Caucus on Labor Migration was formalized in 2011 in Phnom Pehn, Cambodia . . . to foster collaboration and encourage a proactive role for parliamentarians in advancing the rights and welfare of migrant workers across Asia” (ILO, 2016b: 102). The transnational network of lawyers, *Lawyers Beyond Borders*, also emerged in 2011 to assist migrant workers in Asia. These are just a few of the many initiatives aimed at improving the living and working conditions of migrant domestic workers.

Labor organizing within and across borders has promising potential but the challenges of institutionalizing fair and just employment contracts and collective bargaining between sending and receiving countries will unequal power requires on-going political mobilization. Globalized care chains call for regulation of recruitment agencies in both sending and receiving countries, expanding protection laws to cover migrant domestic workers, standardizing working conditions, pay and benefits, and an increasing respect for decent work and pay for domestic workers. As the elderly population increases in richer countries, the demand for migrant domestic and care workers will continue. Working conditions need to be standardized and receive the same labor rights and benefits that receiving countries provide their citizens. These workers should not be expected to give up their family life, but provided paths to permanent residence and the option to reunite family members.

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