

United Nations
Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW)
in collaboration with UNICEF
Expert Group Meeting
Elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence
against the girl child
UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre
Florence, Italy, 25-28 September 2006

*From the kitchen to the classroom:
Call for political commitment and empowerment
to get girls out of child domestic labour and into school*

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* The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations

From the Kitchen to the Classroom: Call for Political Commitment and Empowerment to Get Girls Out of Child Domestic Labour and Into School

The Invisible Girl Child Labour

Child labour is on the decline worldwide. The 2006 International Labour Office's (ILO) Global Report on child labour cites an overall 11% decline, down from 246 million in 2000 to 218 million in 2004. Thanks to recent government efforts to eliminate hazardous child labour in many countries, the number of children in hazardous work fell sharply from 171 to 126 million (26%), with an even steeper drop (33%) in the 5-14 age group.¹

Comparing girls and boys, the ILO statistics show that young girls and boys aged 5-11 years are involved in child labour at roughly the same rates (51% girls and 49% boys) but six out of ten working children aged 12-17 years are boys. More boys also tend to work in hazardous conditions as they get older.²

If these statistics seem like good news for girls, education statistics say otherwise: of the 100 million children of primary-school age worldwide who are not enrolled in school, 55 million are girls.³ Fewer girls also make it to secondary school in most developing countries. Worldwide 66% of boys compared to 61% of girls are in secondary school. In sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia where girls most suffer from lack of access to education, the girls' secondary school enrolments are much lower—23% compared to boys' 29% in sub-Saharan Africa and 39% compared to boys' 51% in South Asia.⁴

Given that fewer girl children are in school, it seems that there is a gap in the child labour statistics with a proportion of girls unaccounted for. So, where are the missing girls? Unlike boys who tend to be found in work that is more visible to the public eye, girls carry out domestic work for their family or others, or are engaged in service types of work in the informal economy, or in the entertainment industries—sectors and occupations where the work is less visible and harder to identify and measure. Emerging statistics indicate that millions of school-age girls worldwide are working in **domestic service**, which is **among the most invisible of female-dominated occupations**. Considered an extension of female duties in their own homes, girls' domestic work is undervalued, often unpaid, and generally not counted as "work."

Refocusing the Lens on the Hidden Working Girl Children

Actions to combat child labour in the past 15 years have focused on the more visible forms in the industrial sector, where more boys are usually found.⁵ The initial focus on the more visible forms of child labour is understandable as they are easier to address than the less visible ones. Much has been done to commendable successes, with the reduction in number of child labourers in those areas being the testament to that fact. Now, however, is time to move on to the next and more challenging target, where attention and action are seriously needed and where working children, especially girls, are the most vulnerable and least protected.

The latest ILO estimates put most of the more than 200 million working children in the agricultural sector (69%) and services (22%), with only 9% in industry.⁶ Child labour in agriculture usually takes place in a family context⁷ among populations in extreme poverty in rural areas. Exploitative child labour in this sector is extremely hard to tackle. This paper, therefore, addresses the situation of invisible working girls engaged in domestic service for other families, an occupation in which a clear employer-employee relation exists.

Actions to address the exploitation of mostly girl children in domestic service have only just begun and need much more institutional and public support to tackle challenges in multiple fields: child labour, education, gender equality, child rights, fundamental human and workers' rights, and migrants' rights.

Girl Domestic Workers in the Spotlight

Vulnerability of child domestic workers was mentioned almost two decades ago. In 1989, the ILO stated: “youngsters working as household domestic servants may be the most vulnerable and exploited children of all, and the most difficult to protect.”⁸ Yet, the exploitation of child domestic workers remains largely unknown to the larger public and efforts mostly by non-governmental organizations to address their exploitation have encountered high sensitivity and resistance by communities, including parents and employers, and governments.

Domestic service (in third-party households) is the single largest employer of working girls worldwide. The ILO estimates that **more girl children under 16 are working in domestic service than any other category of work or child labour.**⁹ According to ILO- and UNICEF-commissioned studies conducted in early 2000s, staggering numbers of children work in domestic service *in other people's homes* in all developing regions of the world—for example, nearly 700,000 in Indonesia, nearly half a million in Brazil, 300,000 in Bangladesh, a quarter million or more in the Philippines, Haiti and Pakistan, and at least 100,000 in Kenya, Peru and Sri Lanka.¹⁰ In India, it is estimated that 20% of all children under 14 working outside the family are in domestic service.¹¹

These estimates are indicative only of the scale of the issue and likely under-represent the real situation. The actual numbers are difficult to determine due to the hidden nature of domestic service and the difficulties in reaching the children. It must also be noted that these estimates do not account for a huge number of children, mostly girls, engaged in domestic work in their own homes. From the existing data of child domestic workers in third-party households (nine in ten of whom are girls), a huge proportion are younger than 15.¹² These children enter domestic service at a very young age, most around 12-14 but some as young as 5-7 years old.

Defining Child Domestic Labour and Its Worst Forms

There is a clear distinction between children lending a “helping hand” at home, which is considered healthy child work and children working in domestic labour. Children can help around the house in a number of chores, such as cleaning, washing dishes, doing laundry, preparing meals, feeding livestock, gardening, and baby-sitting younger siblings. These activities, if done moderately and not interfering with schoolwork or hampering childhood development, are legitimate **child work** and should be encouraged as basic life skills learning that teaches children to share responsibilities. This is **NOT child domestic labour**.

Child domestic labour (CDL) in the ILO definition refers to “situations where children are engaged to perform domestic tasks *in the home of a third party or employer* [my italics] that are exploitative. Where such exploitation is extreme and includes trafficking, slavery or practices similar to slavery, work which by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out is hazardous and likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children, then this constitutes a *worst form of child domestic labour*, and it needs to be tackled as a matter of urgency.”¹³

A child working in domestic service is called a **child domestic worker (CDW)**, defined as: “any child younger than 18 who performs domestic chores in the household of people other than his or her parents, *regardless of the amount or kind of remuneration s/he receives* [my italics].”¹⁴ CDWs *under* the legal minimum working age in CDL are by definition child labourers, but not all CDWs are “child labourers.” For example, domestic service performed by CDWs *above* the legal minimum working age is acceptable if it complies with labour standards. However, labour standards usually do not apply to domestic service and if they do, are difficult to enforce and rarely complied with. CDWs above the legal minimum working age but under 18 are considered child labourers if they work under conditions that constitute a worst form of child labour.

Working conditions of CDWs range from supportive and benign to hazardous, slavery-like and gravest of human rights violations. A CDW is considered in a **worst form of child labour** when s/he falls into one or more of the following conditions:

sold or trafficked into domestic service	experiencing or at risk of physical abuse or other forms of violence
bonded, e.g., in debt or work without pay	exposed to grave safety or health hazards
working excessive hours, including at night	younger than the legal minimum age of employment. ¹⁵
in confinement or slavery-like conditions	
sexually abused or exploited	

Life Not Her Own: The Hard Truth of the Girl Child’s Life in Child Domestic Labour

Accounts about the plights of girl CDWs from many parts of the world in recent years have begun to be documented. The experiences of CDWs are not homogeneous. Some are treated well by their employers, but disturbing real-life cases of mistreatments, abuses and even torture are too many to ignore. Often strikingly similar accounts of excessive working hours and grave abuses, from verbal, emotional, physical and sexual abuses to forced confinement and denial of payment, food and healthcare, paint a horrific picture of a modern form of slavery that is lived and experienced by many young girls.

A girl in child domestic labour often lives a life that is not her own. Economic concerns of the family supercedes her rights and long-term welfare: she is usually the first to be sacrificed for the survival of the family, thanks to the traditional belief that girls are dispensable and an economic burden of the family. If not married off as a child bride, she is likely sent to work as a *petite bonne* or “child servant” in another’s house to support the family, her brothers’ school fees, or to pay off family debts. Her parents may actually believe that working as a child domestic will prepare her for marriage and that the work in another’s house will not be so different from that in theirs.¹⁶

At the employer’s house her life is completely under her employer’s control. She will work, eat, sleep and even dress in the way they see fit. Work begins before sunrise and continues until late in the night. Working up to 15 hours a day is the norm.¹⁷ If she gets any salary, it will likely be just US\$20 per month, often much less.¹⁸ The employer’s family treats her as if she were their property, not a child who has the same needs as their children’s, or a normal human being who needs time to rest from work. Somehow this does not occur to them. She is discouraged, if not forbidden, to go out to socialize or study. Even if she is allowed to go to school, on evenings or weekends, she is too tired to concentrate.

Subject to the whims of everyone else in the house, especially the main “mistress,” she routinely endures scolding, name-calling and insults. She is literally an emotional and physical punching bag of the household. On a bad day, which could be many, she may be slapped, kicked, punched, pushed, or having her hair pulled by adults and children in the household. When the violence escalates, she may be hit by any conveniently available object

like a broom stick. A sadistic member in the family may choose to “punish” her with burning cigarettes, a hot iron or other “creative” tools. She learns to stay away from the men in the family or the male relatives, but it often proves difficult. They may speak to her using lewd words or touch her in inappropriate ways. Or they may do something worse.¹⁹

Tougher for the Girl, Toughest for the Migrant and Ethnic Girl: Multiple Discrimination and Violence against the Girl Child in Child Domestic Labour

No doubt the extreme working hours and conditions, various forms of exploitation and abuse are very harmful to the CDWs. Bad nutrition and lack of proper care often stunt their physical development. Lack of normal childhood and working in isolation and in unsupportive environment also unsurprisingly impede their mental and social development. A combination of the inferior status attached to domestic work and low regard for children, particularly girls as second-class citizens, results in treatment of CDWs that is at best indifferent to their needs and safety and at worst abusive and destructive.

Physical injuries are common, especially among younger CDWs, who are too young to handle hazardous products and appliances. Injuries from cleaning fluids, hot water burns, fire hazards, ironing, are common. The isolation and powerlessness within the household renders girl CDWs especially vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse. Physical injuries resulting from assaults or tortures in some extreme cases lead to death. Sexual assaults and rape leave them with not only trauma and a sense of shame, but also possibilities of sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancy and forced abortion.

Studies from countries where boys are found in domestic service clearly indicate that girls generally fare worse than boys in this sector of child labour. Girls work much longer hours than boys but are paid less, many none at all. For instance, the number of girl CDWs working between 12-15 hours is much higher than boy CDWs in Cambodia, Indonesia, Mongolia, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam, while most boy CDWs in the same countries work eight hours or less. Girls earn less than boys in most of these countries and significantly less in some, for example, only half of what boys earn in Cambodia and Thailand.²⁰ Girls work longer hours than boys because they are expected to do non-specific “women’s” housework, whereas boys are given more specific “men’s” tasks outside the house such as collecting or chopping firewood, collecting water, washing cars, gardening or herding livestock.

Traditional tendencies to be more “protective” of girls cause girl CDWs to enjoy less freedom of movement. The long working hours and the employers’ negative attitude about girls’ education leave fewer girl CDWs able to combine work and school. For instance, in Nepal, where over half of CDWs are boys, 46% of boy CDWs attend school compared to only 16% of girl CDWs. In Pakistan, 51% of boy CDWs attend school, while only 30% of girl CDWs do.²¹ In most countries, most girl CDWs have no days off, while their male counterparts usually do.²² Considered already in a “suitable” and “safe” occupation, girls tend to stay in domestic service as they get older, whereas boys usually leave for other jobs.²³

Traditional hierarchies exacerbate the exploitation of girls from ethnic minority, indigenous, tribal and migrant communities—the groups most likely to be excluded from the educational systems and over-represented in domestic service. In cultures where racial, tribal or caste systems are entrenched, prevailing prejudices that some groups are “inferior” often preclude or exclude members of these groups from better employment, hence, locking many of them in low-status jobs like domestic service.²⁴ Traditional customs can also sanction exploitation. The practice of extended families “adopting” a child and then using the child as a domestic servant is prevalent in many regions, from Turkey to Africa to South Asia.

Trafficking of many young girls in West and Central Africa is recognized in many instances as an extension of the traditional custom of “placing” a child with extended family members.

Girls are the most vulnerable when they are cut off from their familiar social support systems. An increasing number of young women from poor countries are working as domestic workers in foreign countries. Media reports of severe abuses of foreign domestic workers, which in many cases lead to serious injuries, deaths or suicides, are frequent. While foreign migrant DWs are usually adults, a significant number may be adults only on paper. **Unchecked social discrimination against ethnic minorities and migrant workers, coupled with the absence of clear legal measures and effective law enforcement** to protect the rights of domestic workers, especially foreign migrant workers, allow bad employers and others to exploit and abuse these girls and women with little fear of retribution.²⁵

Responses to the Exploitation of CDWs and Some Good Practices

The question of conditions of employment in domestic service (of adult domestic workers) was first put forth in 1936 at the International Labour Conference (ILC). Thirty years later, the ILC passed a Resolution concerning the Conditions of Employment of Domestic Workers. Actions on CDWs did not start until 1995,²⁶ when the ILO International Programme to Eliminate Child Labour (ILO-IPEC), UNICEF and Anti-Slavery International (ASI) began work on research and advocacy through collaboration with local governments and NGOs. The collaboration has advanced the issues concerning CDWs to many discussion tables at the regional and sub-regional level and led to wider recognition among governments and social organizations of the potential dangers of child domestic labour.

Research and Advocacy: A number of country-specific rapid assessment surveys using methodologies developed by ILO-IPEC, UNICEF and NGOs have been conducted in many parts of the world. These studies, though having targeted samples, have shed lights on the situations of CDWs and their varied experiences in different countries and regions.

ASI and ILO have played a catalytic role in this area. The first ASI handbook on research, *Child Domestic Workers: A Handbook for Research and Action*, was published in 1997 with ILO-IPEC support, followed by the second handbook: *Child Domestic Workers: Finding a Voice, A Handbook on Advocacy* in 2002 and *Child Domestic Workers: A Handbook on Good Practice in Programme* in 2005.²⁷

Local NGOs have also campaigned for national legislative changes. In the Philippines, where policy advocacy is the most advanced, the Visayan Forum Foundation mobilized social partners to draft and submit the *magna carta* of domestic workers with special provisions for CDWs to parliament in 1999.²⁸ In Indonesia, JARAK has campaigned for a “Weekly Day of Rest” since 2002.

Mass media initiatives supported by UNICEF, ILO and NGOs such as use of “docu-drama,” TV and radio spots, and press advertising, as well as community-based cultural performance arts, have raised awareness and generated coverage of CDWs in many countries.²⁹ A multi-media education tool originating in South Asia, using a cartoon character to represent a CDW called “Meena,” has proved very popular among children in many countries and the Meena stories have been translated into 30 languages.³⁰

Human Rights Watch and Save the Children also began serious research on child and adult DWs in recent years. In July 2006 Human Rights Watch released a comprehensive report on abuses against domestic workers in 12 countries in Asia, the Middle East, Africa

and the United States. In August 2006 Save the Children released reports on abuses among CDWs in West Bengal, India.³¹

Legal and Institutional Frameworks at the international and regional levels: In 1999 the ILO adopted the Worst Form of Child Labour Convention No. 182 (C. 182). Using C. 182 as a framework, the ILO has stimulated social dialogue with government, employers' and workers' (tripartite) organizations and other social partners. The social dialogue has led to landmark agreements among tripartite and social partners in three regions, recognizing CDL as a potential worst form of child labour: the Bamako Declaration adopted by francophone African countries in March 2000, the Panamanian Inter-institutional Declaration against the Worst Forms of Child Domestic Labour in the Homes of Third Parties by eight countries in Central America and the Dominican Republic in April 2002, and the Framework for Follow-up Action to Combat CDL by 16 countries in the Asia-Pacific region in October 2002.³²

National Action: The declarations have provided frameworks for action at the country level.

The National Plans of Action of Cambodia, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Honduras were among the first to prioritize CDL as a form of child labour to prevent and eliminate.³³ Some governments have also begun some positive steps. India just amended its child labour law, adding a ban on CDL for children under 14 years, which comes into effect in October 2006. Morocco has proposed a bill to regulate CDL, stipulating clear working and sleeping hours, days off and holidays.³⁴

Since 1995, ILO-IPEC has launched CDL-specific action in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Arab States, with over 80 action programmes to date.³⁵ Several of these countries have prioritized CDL as a worst forms of child labour to be eliminated in ILO-IPEC Time-Bound Programmes.³⁶

Programme interventions range from capacity building on research, awareness raising, networking and social mobilization, advocacy and support towards legislative and policy changes, direct services to CDWs (e.g., withdrawal and rehabilitation of CDWs, education and vocational skills training, organization of support groups), social dialogue with CDWs' employers, and working with local authorities and trade unions to address CDL issues. Different countries may place a focus on different types of intervention, depending on the needs and stages of interventions.

Direct Action with CDWs, Out-reach, Direct Services and Empowerment: Among the pioneers working directly with CDWs is the Philippines' Visayan Forum (VF). It has been providing services to young DWs since 1996. Its multi-pronged approach in advocacy, direct services, social protection and empowerment became a model for others to follow. A good practice example of VF is its support of young domestic workers to organize themselves.

VF began reaching out to CDWs in public parks, malls and other places where CDWs gather and has found that organizing and empowering CDWs (along with adult DWs) increases the impact and sustainability of other aspects of the programme, e.g., crisis intervention, education and networking.³⁷ The gathering of informal groups of young DWs became a worker's group called SUMAPI ("to join") in 1995. Starting in Manila, now SUMAPI has over 5,000 members with core groups and chapters in a number of provinces and districts. CDWs attend brief workshops to process their experiences as CDWs, learn about their rights, participate in social activities and network with other CDWs. Among SUMAPI members, potential core group leaders and advocates are identified and given

training on leadership, team building, organizing, counseling and self-development. SUMAPI is actively involved in policy advocacy for CDWs in the Philippines.³⁸

Child participation is a key aspect of intervention being explored. Child-to-child communication to fight against CDL and to prevent school dropout has been done to a certain level of success in Cambodia, where students take part in school-based monitoring of CDL.

Creating a sense of ownership of a CDW project in the communities and securing commitment from local authorities have also proven an effective strategy, resulting in local ordinances to protect child and adult DWs in several localities in the Philippines and against trafficking in Indonesia.³⁹

Information Sharing and Cooperation: Regional cooperation has been strongest in Asia, where Child Workers in Asia (CWA) has extensively worked with Anti-Slavery International and ILO on experience sharing, research and advocacy initiatives. In 1997 CWA formed the Task Force on Child Domestic Work and has since been the driving force, together with ASI, in organizing a series of regional consultations and field exchange programmes among NGOs from Asia, Africa and Latin America.⁴⁰ Drawing from the sharing of experiences, in 2004 CWA dedicated an entire issue of its newsletter on CDWs, *Making the Invisible Visible: Advocacy for Child Domestic Workers*. In 2005, it jointly produced with the Task Force an advocacy training manual, *Raising One Voice: A Training Manual for Advocates on the Rights of Child Domestic Workers*.⁴¹

Continued Challenges in Action to Combat Child Domestic Labour

Despite advances, challenges remain in many areas of action. Key among them are:

Traditional customs sanctioning use of children, especially girls, as domestic servants remain strong in many cultures. The **root problem of gender inequalities** and imbalance in gender power relations in families has not been sufficiently addressed, continuing to push girls into domestic service. Girls' right to education is still not universally recognized. Parents still often believe that domestic service is a suitable occupation for girls and assume that the employers will act as substitute parents and provide a protective environment for their daughters, while in reality the employers neither treat their CDWs as part of the family nor recognize that the CDWs also have rights as children and as workers.

Public awareness continues to be limited as girl CDWs remain invisible in official statistics. Media campaigns done at the local levels have not generated a critical mass against CDL abuses.

Sex disaggregation and gender analysis of data need to be improved. Often data may be disaggregated at the collection stage but not subsequently analyzed or not presented in the sufficiently disaggregated form to allow for appropriate programming. Gender mainstreaming at the implementation level, when done, is often inconsistent, because many field staffers lack good understanding of gender and skills to conduct proper gender analysis. In many instances there is also unwillingness to integrate gender in the programme.

In terms of **legislative policy reform**, many countries are still reluctant to recognize CDL as a form of child labour in national legislation, as a result CDWs are not covered by minimum age for employment law. In the few cases where CDL is regulated, enforcement is weak or not practiced as inspection mechanisms for CDL in private residences are not

available. In addition, over 30 of 178 ILO member countries still have not ratified the ILO Minimum Age Convention No. 138.⁴²

Demands for domestic workers will continue to rise given worsening economic inequalities within and among nations. In countries like the Philippines, Indonesia and Sri Lanka, where adult domestic workers migrate to richer countries in large numbers, younger girls will fill the vacancies at home. Girls from poorer countries will migrate or be trafficked to richer countries and many will end up in domestic service.

Emphasis on quantitative indicators and short-term outputs leaves fewer resources for qualitative actions that may require long-term involvement and are not easily measurable in the short term. Resources are often not made available to support grassroots activities, in particular **empowerment** of girl CDWs through self-organization, which is a critical intervention. Comprehensive and quality psycho-social services to rescued CDWs suffering trauma from rape and severe abuses are also lacking in many countries.

Despite official policy adoption of gender mainstreaming strategy to address gender gaps in most countries, **political will is lacking** to translate policies into action and to build capacity of organizations in the public and private sectors as well as individual citizens to actively provide equal treatments and opportunities to girls and boys, women and men.

What Needs to Be Done?

Given the magnitude of the problem, action on child domestic labour must be carried out in a broad, multi-pronged approach. Following are recommendations for concrete action:

The **international community** needs to provide financial and institutional support to initiate a comprehensive global public campaign to raise awareness and change attitude about CDWs within an overall explicit framework for gender equality promotion. Persuasion and pressure must be applied to individual countries to recognize CDL as child labour and one of its worst forms and to carry out necessary legislative and policy reforms.

National governments must take a more proactive role to ensure universal primary education and protection of workers' rights of CDWs' above the minimum working age. Accessibility and quality of the education must be given priority and comprehensive and coherent measures must be put in place to address the exploitation of girls and boys in domestic service, and to accelerate action towards the elimination of discrimination and violence against them:

Aggressively enforce free compulsory education up to the minimum working age and ensure that the education is accessible, relevant and of high quality. Provide incentives to poor parents to keep children in school such as lunch programme, and eliminate or reduce associated costs such as textbooks and uniforms. Improve physical access to schools, giving special consideration to cultural constraints for girls, and increase quality of teachers and education.

Identify CDL as child labour and a potentially worst form to be eliminated in national laws.

Set up the minimum working age for domestic work if there is not yet one.

Explicitly prohibit employment of children under the national minimum working age in domestic service and the employment of children under 18 in hazardous conditions.

Revise relevant laws to ensure the same equal rights and protection of domestic workers as enjoyed by workers in other sectors, including minimum wage, hours of work, days off, holidays, social security and other benefits.

Mainstream gender and social equality promotion and prevention of abuses such as child and forced labour, and violence against women and migrant and indigenous people into regular education and training curricula. Provide life skills training in addition to academic and vocational education to children from at-risk groups with specific attention for girls through formal and non-formal streams.

Mainstream CDL in the national poverty reduction strategy. Include the measurement of CDL in national censuses and labour surveys, and/or set up a national database of CDWs as a first step.

Promote youth employment by providing skills development viable in the new economy.

Professionalize and upgrade standards of domestic work, making it a viable and decent work for youths above the minimum working age, for example, providing certified training for professional domestic skills in cooking, nutrition education, safe use of household products and appliances, smart grocery shopping, baby and elderly care. Also include fundamental child, women's, workers' and migrants' rights training in the curriculum.

Support empowerment activities at the grassroots level, such as educating families in communities as part of prevention and self-organization of young domestic workers as part of direct action.

Regulate recruitment procedures and mechanisms of domestic service employment for those of legal age for employment, put in place effective monitoring and inspection systems of CDL, investigate any complaints of abuses or violations, and seriously punish the perpetrators.

For **organizations working with CDWs**, data management, continued advocacy, empowerment, direct services, and capacity building are the main tasks.⁴³

Step up data collection and a reliable information management system of CDWs at all levels of operation. Sex disaggregation and other variables such as age, nationality, ethnicity, place of origin, must be properly collected, analyzed and presented in the way that allows effective situational analyses, needs assessments and programming.

Review and keep up to date on legislations, policies and practices that relate to CDWs and keep up with sharing of information with other organizations on new initiatives and good interventions.

Create the ground-swell and political will with public awareness-raising campaign using real-life stories of CDWs in mass media channels appropriate for the target audience. Mobilize political and social alliances to pressure the government for necessary legislative and policy reforms.

Expand out-reach to CDWs as well as their employers. Facilitate the employee-employer relationships, while promoting respect for child, human and workers' rights

irrespective of where the children and workers come from. Promote the use of model employment contracts for domestic workers above the minimum working age.

Strengthen the education and empowerment components of the programming through training and awareness raising on gender equality, child rights, fundamental human and workers' rights, and representation of domestic workers among institutional partners and communities. Make use of available resources in this area (in addition to resources specific to CDL mentioned above, a set training materials recently published by the ILO is appropriate for this purpose: *Empowerment for Children, Youth and Families: 3-R Trainers' Kit on Rights, Responsibilities and Representation*⁴⁴).

Promote and strengthen the participation of young DWs through support groups or self-organization, and encourage linking DW organizations with the local trade unions.

Ensure that project staff understand the principles of gender mainstreaming. Provide necessary training and practical tools to staff members to integrate gender equality in programming.⁴⁵

Promote and support community-based monitoring of CDL. Encourage and mobilize local partners such as schools, community organizations, families and youth to participate, and link community-based efforts to local official enforcement and monitoring systems.

Promote organization among domestic workers and provide a supportive environment for them, as well as necessary direct services. The primary objectives are to immediately rescue and rehabilitate victims of violence and reintegrate them into society and withdraw CDWs below the minimum working age from CDL and reintegrate them in the formal school system.

Link concrete administrative and managerial guidelines to implement girl-friendly education programme, promote gender equality in school curriculum and school mechanisms, and address special needs of girls and boys.

Link action to combat exploitation of CDWs with income generation schemes for the families, vocational skills training and employment promotion for youth. Provide professional skills training to CDWs above the minimum working age, who wish to continue working in domestic service.

Build capacity of staff or seek external expertise in providing professional psycho-social counseling for girls (and boys) suffering trauma from abuses and violence. Establish prevention and redress mechanisms such as toll-free hotlines and free legal services.

Finally, response measures must take into account the specific gender needs of girls and boys in domestic service.

Conclusions: Political Commitment and Empowerment Are Key

Girls in domestic service are the largest group of the most vulnerable girl children in critical need of protection. Domestic service is the **last stranglehold of girl children excluded from the school systems**. Elimination of discrimination and violence against girls in child domestic labour cannot be realized unless the root causes of gender inequalities are addressed and legal and institutional measures are put in place to allow for more effective protection of girls and provision of equal opportunities and treatment to all.

Gender inequalities entrenched in the beliefs and cultural practices must be tackled with active efforts to educate the girls, their families, their employers and their immediate community. The public at large must be sensitized about the injustice of using children in exploitative employment and campaigns for attitude change at all levels are necessary to turn the ignorance and indifference into action. For girls and women who have internalized their subservient roles as the poor, uneducated, female members of the underprivileged groups in society, **education and empowerment are the most potent forces** for their self-protection and against exploitation, abuses and violations of their rights and humanity.

Grassroots action is necessary but not sufficient in addressing the issue of this magnitude. Family- and community-based solutions can only go so far. **Commitment at the highest political level and serious policy implementation beyond lip service** are required. Governments must make it a policy priority to keep all girls and boys in school until they are at least old enough to work and ensure that all children's right to education is recognized and becomes a social norm. On the other hand, governments must ensure that working children above the legal minimum working age are accorded their rights as children and as workers, and any violations of their rights will not be tolerated and seriously punished.

All of this will require extensive **capacity building** of policy makers and programme implementers in the public and private spheres, employers and parents in communities and most importantly child and adult domestic workers themselves. Many of the interventions mentioned above are not new but well-tested. They can be carried out if the public and political will exists to avoid the use of any under-age children in domestic service and provide basic human respect, decent work and incomes to adult domestic workers.

Organizations can make more efforts to assist child and adult domestic workers in developing **representative membership-based organizations** to build their capacities and advocate for the interests of their members.



Notes

¹ ILO, *The End of Child Labour: Within Reach*, Geneva, 2006, pp. 6-8.

² *Ibid.*

³ UNESCO, *Education for All: Literacy for Life*, Paris, 2005, p. 1.

⁴ UNICEF, *Childhood Under Threat: The State of the World's Children 2005*, Table 5: Education (1998-2002 figures).

⁵ The classifications of child labour that are still currently used by the ILO reflect this bias towards more visible sectors. Using the International Standard Industrial Classifications of All Economic Activities, Revisions 2 (1968) and 3 (1989) the ILO puts child workers in three main categories: agriculture (hunting, forestry and fishing), industry (mining and quarrying, manufacturing, construction and public utilities), and services (wholesale and retail trade, restaurants and hotels, transport, storage and communications, business-related services, and personal, community and social services). ILO, *The End of Child Labour*, p. 7.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Children working in agriculture usually work alongside their parents on the family or others' farms. The children's work is largely invisible in national data as it is usually absorbed in the "piece work" or "quota systems" based on family work unit, in which only those above the minimum working age are registered as "workers."

⁸ Quoted by J. Blagbrough in *Child Domestic Work in Indonesia, A Preliminary Situation Analysis*, Anti-Slavery International, London, 1995, p. 14, from ILO, *Still So Far to Go: Child Workers in the World Today*, 1989, cited in ILO, *Helping Hands or Shackled Lives: Understanding Child Domestic Labour and Responses to It*, Geneva, 2004, p. 6.

⁹ ILO, *Helping Hands or Shackled Lives*, p. 14.

¹⁰ The Visayan Forum of the Philippines gives higher estimates of one million in the Philippines and 1.2 million in Bangladesh. See "Profile of CDWs in Asia," http://www.visayanforum.org/article.php?mode_id=31.

¹¹ The official estimate puts the number of working children in India at 11.2 million, <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/asro/newdelhi/ipecc/responses/index.htm>. Other numbers cited by NGOs and media are higher, ranging from 12.6 to 16.4 million. Geeta Pandey, "India bans child domestic labour," *BBC News*, 1 August 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/south_asia/5235614.stm. In addition, Child Rights Information Network (CRIN) cites 46 million Indian children as being unaccounted for—neither enrolled in school nor officially working. "India: Ban on child labour in residences and the hospitality sector," <http://www.crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=9629>.

¹² For example, in Morocco 66,000-88,000 CDWs are between 7-15, 70% of whom are under 12. In Kathmandu, Nepal, alone there are 62,000 CDWs under 14. In Haiti, of a quarter million CDWs 10% are under 10. In India, 20% of children under 14 working outside the family are CDWs, and in Venezuela, 60% of all working girls aged 10-14 are CDWs. ILO, *Helping Hands or Shackled Lives*, p. 15.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁴ ILO, *Child Domestic Labour in South East and East Asia: Emerging Good Practices to Combat It*, ILO-IPEC, Bangkok, 2005, p. x.

¹⁵ These are also characteristics of forced labour and thereby unacceptable conditions for adult workers as well. See more detailed definitions of child domestic labour and its worst form in Chapter 1: Understanding child domestic labour in ILO, *Helping Hands or Shackled Lives*, pp. 5-16, and Part 1 in ILO, *Child Domestic Labour in South East and East Asia*, pp. 7-34.

¹⁶ ILO, *Child Domestic Labour in South East and East Asia*, p. 18.

¹⁷ In several countries, including Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Panama, the Philippines, Malaysia, the majority work around 15 hours a day or longer. See summaries of studies in three regions in ILO, *Helping Hands or Shackled Lives*, pp. 42, 58, 76. Human Rights Watch reports Indonesian girl CDWs working an average of 16 hours a day in Malaysia, in "Child domestics: The world's invisible workers, a Human Rights Watch backgrounder," 10 June 2004, http://hrw.org/english/docs/2004/06/10/africa8789_txt.htm. An ILO-Bangkok report on CDWs in South East and East Asia indicates that CDWs work between 9-14 hours a day, with a large proportion working over 14 hours. ILO, *Child Domestic Labour in South East and East Asia*, Table 6, p. 30.

¹⁸ Remuneration for CDWs varies from country to country. In poorer countries, especially in the rural areas, the monthly salary is usually lower than US\$20, for example, the lowest pay reported by some CDWs is US\$9 in rural Mongolia and Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam. In Cambodia, Indonesia and the Philippines the salaries range between US\$10-16. In the capital city of Mongolia, Ulanbaatar, the salary is at least US\$30, while in Bangkok, Thailand, the range is between US\$46-115. In all cases the pay is less than the legal minimum wage of that country. ILO, *Child Domestic Labour in South East and East Asia*, p. 32. A UNICEF report indicates CDWs earning an equivalent of US\$3 in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and US\$4 in Rwanda. In some countries, many CDWs do not get paid at all and are paid in kind, such as in Bangladesh, Kenya, Haiti and Paraguay. UNICEF, "Child Domestic Work," *Innocenti Digest*, No. 5, Florence, 1999. A Save the Children study reports 78% of more than

50,000 CDWs in West Bengal receive just Rs 500 (US\$10). Save the Children, *Abuse among Child Domestic Workers: A Research Study in West Bengal*, 2006, http://www.crin.org/docs/save_uk_cl_ind.pdf.

¹⁹ A newly released study by Save the Children on CDWs in West Bengal reveals high levels of emotional, physical and sexual abuse among 50,000 CDWs in Calcutta: 68% faced physical abuse with 46.6% facing severe abuses leading to injuries; 32.2% had their private parts touched with 20% forced to have sexual intercourse; 50% did not get any leave in a year and 37% never saw their families; 27% of the CDWs' parents admitted knowing their children were abused and 32% of parents did not even know where their daughters were working. Save the Children, *Abuse among Child Domestic Workers*.

²⁰ ILO, *Child Domestic Labour in South East and East Asia*, pp. 30-32. Studies in South Africa and Turkey also indicate girl CDWs working longer hours than their male counterparts. ILO, *Helping Hands or Shackled Lives*.

²¹ ILO, *Helping Hands or Shackled Lives*, p. 49.

²² Only 30% of girls versus 61% of boys have a weekly day off in Cambodia and 37% versus 58% in Thailand. ILO, *Child Domestic Labour in South East and East Asia*, pp. 30-31.

²³ Found to be the case in Cambodia and Costa Rica.

²⁴ In Brazil, 69% of CDWs reported in 1998 were black and 31% white. In South Africa, Indian children of Asian origin are seen to be particularly "suited" to domestic work: they make up 29% of the total CDWs in the country while their ethnic group represents only 10% of the population. ILO, *Helping Hands or Shackled Lives*, p. 25. There may even be preference for ethnic child or adult DWs primarily because they are cheaper labour, and thought to be "more industrious" or "suitable" for the job. In Thailand where many ethnic hill tribe young women from the northern region of the country and Myanmar come to find work as maids, ethnic Karen girls are often viewed by potential Thai employers as "industrious."

²⁵ See Human Rights Watch, *Swept Under the Rug: Abuses against Domestic Workers around the World*, Vol. 18, No. 7 (C), July 2006, <http://hrw.org/reports/2006/wrd0706>.

²⁶ "ILO Agenda on Decent Work for Domestic Workers: Rights, Productive Jobs, Social Protection and Representation in Domestic Service (2006-2015)," in draft form, by ILO field gender specialists, 11 July 2006.

²⁷ All three publications are available for download at:

<http://www.antislavery.org/homepage/resources/PDF/PDFchildlabour.htm#CDWinterventions>.

²⁸ Due to political uncertainties, the draft bill is currently still in the Senate. Visayan Forum, "Latest update on the Batas Kasambahay Bill," http://www.visayanforum.org/article.php?mode_id=43.

²⁹ The "docu-drama" initiative, supported by UNICEF, has been implemented in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka and replicated in Nepal. In Costa Rica, ILO-Defence for Children International collaboration supports radio spots in 80 radio stations. Similar initiatives have been replicated in Panama, Guatemala, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic. ILO, *Helping Hands or Shackled Lives*, p. 104. Setting up a community radio in a target village has also proved a successful initiative in Indonesia. ILO, *Child Domestic Labour in South East and East Asia*, pp. 107-110.

³⁰ ILO, *Helping Hands or Shackled Lives*, p. 104.

³¹ Human Rights Watch, *Swept Under the Rug*; and Save the Children, *Abuse among Child Domestic Workers*.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 84-89.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

³⁴ Geeta Pandey, "India bans child domestic labour"; Kaoutar Tbatou, "Domestic work, a soon-to-come law to regulate child labour in Morocco," *Morocco Times*, 21 July 2006, <http://www.moroccotimes.com>.

³⁵ ILO-IPEC supported projects include: Global Programme to Combat Child Domestic Labour in Indonesia and the Philippines, Combating Exploitation of Child Domestic Workers in Africa and Asia (covering Uganda, Zambia, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka), Preventing and Eliminating Exploitative Child Domestic Work Through Education and Training in South-East and East Asia (covering Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam), and the same project in South Asia (covering Pakistan and Sri Lanka), and Eliminate Domestic Child Labour (covering Brazil, Colombia, Paraguay, and Peru).

³⁶ These countries are Cambodia, Philippines, Mongolia, Nepal, and Tanzania. ILO, *Combating Child Labour in Asia and the Pacific: Progress and Challenges*, Bangkok, 2005, p. 28., and ILO, *Child Domestic Labour in South East and East Asia*, p. 42.

³⁷ ILO, *Helping Hands or Shackled Lives*, pp. 94-95.

³⁸ Visayan Forum, "Making the invisible visible," http://www.visayanforum.org/article.php?mode_id=34.

³⁹ ILO, *Child Domestic Labour in South East and East Asia*.

⁴⁰ CWA has brought together over 70 groups/organizations working on the CDL issues from 14 countries in South and South-East Asia. The Task Force on Child Domestic Work (TFCDW) involves 17 CWA partners with Visayan Forum being the convenor. The main activities of TFCDW include facilitating cooperation among NGOs and collaboration with regional and international initiatives, capacity building of the members/partners, promoting child participation, strengthening legislative policy and general public advocacy, and research. Field exchange programmes first took place in Bangladesh in 1997 with Shoishab as the host, then in 2002 and 2005 in the Philippines with Visayan Forum as the host. The latest field exchange programme (for South Asia) took

place in June 2006 in Chennai, India with Arundhaya and the National Domestic Workers Movement as the hosts. For more information on CWA and TFCDW see: http://www.cwa.tnet.co.th/Network/tf_domestic.html.

⁴¹ These publications are available on CWA's website which contains an extensive list of materials on CDWs, http://www.cwa.tnet.co.th/References/ref_domestic.html.

⁴² ILO, *The End of Child Labour*, p. 16. As of the end of August 2006, there are 147 countries having ratified the ILO Convention No. 138, up from 116 in April 2002.

⁴³ Some recommendations are based on "ILO Agenda on Decent Work for Domestic Workers."

⁴⁴ Busakorn Suriyasarn, Rosalinda Terhorst and Nelien Haspels, *Empowerment for Children, Youth and Families: 3-R Trainers' Kit on Rights, Responsibilities and Representation*, ILO, Bangkok, 2006. Available for download at: <http://www.ilo.org/asia/library/pub4d.htm>.

⁴⁵ See two ILO publications: Nelien Haspels and Busakorn Suriyasarn, *Promotion of Gender Equality in Action against Child Labour and Trafficking: A Practical Guide for Organization*, ILO, Bangkok, 2003. Available for download in English, French, Chinese, Indonesian, Khmer, Lao, Thai and Vietnamese at:

<http://www.ilo.org/asia/library/pub4a.htm>, and ILO, *Good Practices: Gender Mainstreaming in Actions against Child Labour*, Geneva, 2003.