



Group of Twenty

Topic A: Addressing and Mitigation
of the Exploitation and Abuses of
Domestic Workers

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Introduction to the Committee

The Group of 20 (G20) is a platform in which the 20 most developed economies participate. It works to improve the economic development of the international community through summits, working groups, and special events (G20, 2021). Twenty members are part of the G20, representing 80% of all Gross Domestic Product (GDP) worldwide, 75% of all the international commercial exports, and 60% of the world's population. These members are Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union (EU).

The G20 was formed in 1999 to discuss financial stability, considering the ongoing global financial crisis (1997-1999). In response, Central Bank governors and Finance Ministers began holding meetings for the crisis to be solved. On the 14th and 15th of November 2009, the first G20 summit took place in response to a national financial crisis in the United States. Ever since, the nations gathered in the G20 annual summit, prepared during meetings several times each year.

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Introduction

Exploitation can be defined as the selfish advantage of taking someone individually or a group of people to profit or benefit in any way. This coercive action can be carried out in different ways, whether verbal, physical, environmental, or psychological (UNHCR, n.d.). In most cases, it is performed from a position of dominion, where whoever is it takes advantage of the position gap with someone of lesser influence. When discussing exploitation, it is necessary to talk about abuse and the propensity that those in a situation of exploitation have for any abuse. The verb to abuse is the improper use of a position of authority to do something wrong or immorally against someone or something else (Cambridge 2020).

In many cases, abuse can be connected with cruelty, disrespect, harm, force, and violence regularly or repeatedly. These are issues that domestic workers have to face continuously at work. This job involves hiring people in private households to perform house chores, such as cooking, gardening, caring for people, washing, ironing, and cleaning.

Domestic workers have faced several problems throughout history in their profession, the most frequent being domestic abuse. This is very common because jobs like these create a dominion gap where it is believed that there is a superior and an inferior person. Consequently, the superior person takes advantage of the supposedly inferior one. According to Oxford (2022), the following are some examples of abuse domestic workers face. Physical abuse includes bodily abuse like hitting, punching, pinching, choking, strangling, and burning. Then there is psychological abuse characterized by intentional acts or behaviors that produce devaluation, placing the victim in a climate of anguish that destroys their emotional balance. Other prominent types of abuse include sexual, forced workplace confinement, low payment or no payment at all, long

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working hours, and no rest days. Britannica (2017) points out that this problem is not recent, as it unfolds from several historical issues and events. Such as racism when this problem was emerging, domestic abuse began to occur too. This planted the seed for the modern problem of domestic abuse, not specifically to workers but to enslaved people.

This affects the international community since, in recent years, abuse numbers have increased alarmingly. According to studies by the International Labor Organization (ILO) (2016), more than 60 million domestic workers worldwide suffer or will suffer abuse. Some Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) (2010) studies show that in 2010, domestic work was the most prevalent type of employment in Latin America and the Caribbean, with 7.6% of the total jobs out there. The second place is occupied by the Middle East, where domestic work takes a 6.5% of prevalence as a chosen occupation. With these percentages, action on the matter has been taken by Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Brasil, Bulgaria, China, Czech Republic, Dinamarca, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Philippines, South Korea, and the United States of America.

Domestic workers have no control over their labor life since they are expected to work between 30-35 weekly hours, while an average workday goes from 22 to 26 weekly hours (WIEGO, 2018). These problems affect more women than men. To exemplify, around 80 percent of all domestic workers are women, tens of millions of women and girls worldwide are employed as domestic workers in private households, and an estimated 67 million people over 15 are domestic workers (UN-WOMAN, 2021).

Another primary sector affected by this problem is the immigrant sector. Menegatti(2016) states that migrant domestic workers stand globally at 11.5 million, representing 17.2% of all domestic workers, and 7.7% are estimated to

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be minors. Another main point is child labor. The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates that 7.4 million children under 15 work in domestic service, especially in developing nations (p.01).

Figure 1. Distribution of migrant domestic workers, by sex and broad sub region, 2013 (percentages)

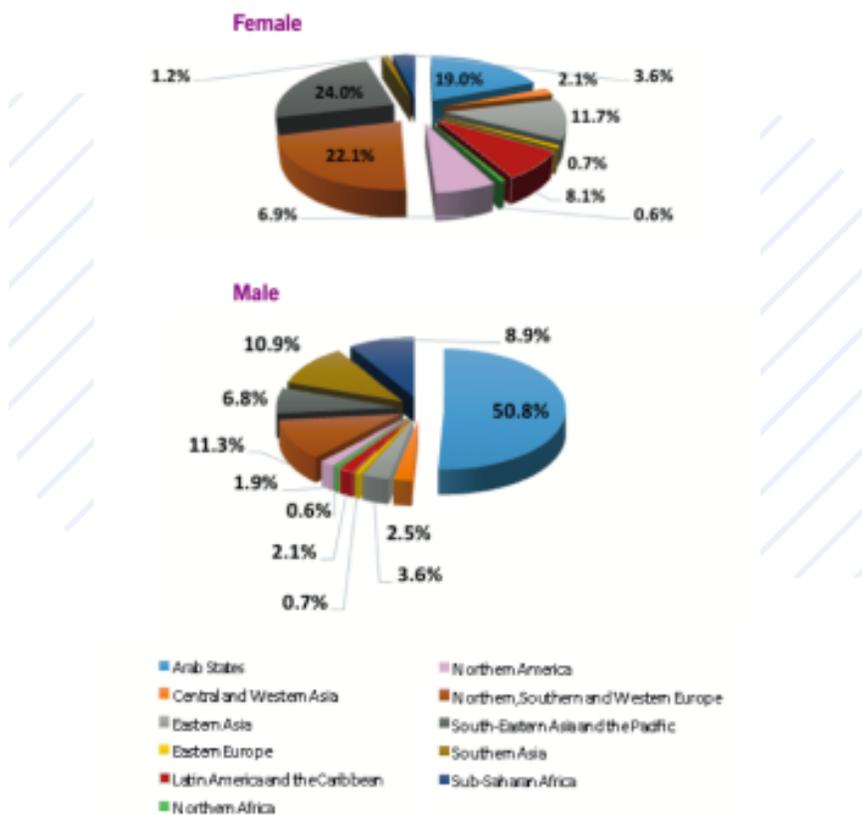


Figure 1. Distribution of migrant domestic workers by sex and broad sub-region, 2013 (percentages) (ILO, 2016)

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Historical Background

Slavery. It is well known that throughout history, there was a time when another could own a human being. In the past, a person was considered by law as property; the enslaved person was deprived of many rights and essential quality of life. Slavery had a racist inclination because the enslaved people were primarily people of color predominantly or popularly in America. It is well known that the first ship of 20 enslaved Africans arrived in America in 1619. However, slavery has been part of human history since the time of pharaohs in Egypt and maybe even before. This difference created inhumane human behavior towards those under the title of enslaved people. Nowadays, slavery is illegal and prominently frowned upon by the international community in all its forms. Nevertheless, that does not mean a trace of slavery has stayed with us in the form of exploitation and forceful work and is referred to as modern slavery (Shah and Adolphe, 2019).

Abolition of slavery. Haiti 1804. The Haitian Revolution began from 1791 to 1804. The Independence of Haiti was between the French and the enslaved; they freed themselves by forcing the colonial to abolish slavery. The establishment of an independent country was founded and governed by formerly enslaved people (Sautherland, 2007).

Spain abolishes slavery. The Spanish were known for their slave trade with Africa. Joseph Blanco and Isidoro de Antillón were anti-slave traders. They, therefore, worked together to show the irregularities in Spain's trading. Their work was initially written in 1803 but printed for the first time in 1811; it contained why Spain should ban trafficking and instead rely on the indigenous population of the colonies. However, unfortunately, the abolition of slavery did not happen in 1811, Spanish control was now in Cuba, and the slavery crisis did not end until the invasion of the island by the United States in 1898.

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Portugal 1819. Portugal claimed to abolish slavery in 1761 on mainland Portugal; nevertheless, it was not done for humanitarian reasons but because they were needed in Brazil. The total abolition came more than a century later, and the country maintains a posture where colonialism is not part of its history.

France 1848. In February 1794, the French empire decreed the abolition of slavery, making them the first empire of the Atlantic to do so. They exercised a system of official racial equality, though the first Napoleon had other plans; in 1802, the decree was revoked, and slavery began anew and persisted for another forty-six years. The Provisional Government that ruled France in 1848 made a final decision following the election of a National Assembly. On April 27, the commission composed a general and unconditional emancipation decree.

Brazil 1888. In May 1888, Imperial Law number 3,353 was signed, this law only contained 18 words, but it is one of the most critical pieces of Brazilian history. The “Golden Law” abolished slavery in all its forms. This was a great event due to the prominent approach slavery had in the country of Brazil (The Brazilian Report, 2020).

Jim Crow Segregation. The roots of Jim Crow Laws began as early as 1865, named after a Black minstrel show character in the United States. It was a series of statutes that legalized racial segregation. These laws existed for about 100 years and denied them fundamental rights, such as the right to vote, hold jobs, education, and other opportunities. In addition, black Codes were strict and used to control Black citizens (National Domestic Workers Alliance, 2022).

Rise of domestic work. The rise of domestic work started ever since slavery

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was abolished in 1865 and was very predominant in the United States with the rise of Jim Crow Segregation. However, people of color were still viewed as inferior. Domestic workers are vulnerable because they work in private homes or isolated spaces. Their rise comes from wanting employment protections and that their work is the dignity of recognition (National Domestic Workers Alliance, 2022).

Unions and Labor Radicalism. From the 1910s to the 1940s, domestic worker unions started to form and grow. African American domestic workers mainly formed Unions in America. These domestic worker unions were very present and grew during World War 1. They started using tactics such as strikes, mass quitting, street protests, and more to demonstrate discontent and claim their rights as workers. All these protests and acts of uneasiness were to protest their exclusion from the federal labor legislation and all their rights as working people (National Domestic Workers Alliance, 2022).

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Current Relevance

The number of domestic workers is increasing and, at the same time, the abuse rates in this demographic. Domestic workers comprise a significant part of the global economy and workforce in the informal employment sector. As a result, they are among the most vulnerable groups of workers. This is also relevant because it is connected with various issues like racism; exploitation can partly be attributed to gaps in national labor and employment legislation and often reflects discrimination along the lines of sex, race, and socioeconomic status or background (Human Rights Watch, 2006).

Impact of COVID-19. Because this type of employment requires being at home and in constant touch with other people, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, this kind of job had only two pathways, some workers lost their job, or two stayed at work but got infected with the virus. Since the global pandemic began, domestic workers worldwide have reported multiple issues. Many have increased their workloads without additional pay (WIEGO, 2018). As mentioned before, workers are treated as inferiors, so now, with the pandemic, they are treated as if they were the main transmitters of the disease. Nevertheless, most domestic workers cannot stop working without losing the basic income they and their families need to survive (WIEGO, 2018).

Migrant domestic workers. Private migrant recruitment agencies' role in the migration process has significantly grown in the past decade. However, the lack of appropriate regulation and supervision has led to increasing reports of exploitation and abuses of migrant domestic workers globally. Abusive practices include deception regarding work conditions, charging unauthorized fees to workers, and retention of identity documents, perpetrated by unscrupulous recruitment agencies and informal intermediaries operating outside legal and regulatory frameworks (ILO, 2016). It is known that migrant

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domestic workers are most vulnerable because often they are not protected by the migrant laws or no laws at all; this facilitates the abuse in work because as they are not protected, they are quickly taken advantage of without any consequence.

Human trafficking. Many individuals in need of a job end up as domestic workers, especially girls and women. This may make them prone to being victims of human trafficking. Not only women but immigrants and children are vulnerable and being affected by this issue (ILO, 2016). Human trafficking includes all acts related to the recruitment, transport, transfer, sale, or purchase of human beings by force, fraud, deceit, or other coercive tactics to place them into conditions of forced labor or practices similar to slavery. The countries that still suffer the most from human trafficking are Asia, Malaysia, and Saudi Arabia (UNODC, 2022).

Child domestic workers and child exploitation. Where a child is involved, trafficking can be done without coercion, kidnapping, fraud, or deception. Child exploitation has been prohibited and discussed under the Trafficking Protocol and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (ILO, 2016). The International Labour Organization (ILO) considers a child to be trafficked or forced into domestic labor when they are “obliged to leave their... home village to go to the city to find work and who is recruited into domestic service where the conditions are exploitative” (ILO, 2016). Roughly 160 million children were subjected to child labor at the beginning of 2020, with 9 million additional for the COVID-19 pandemic.

Domestic workers account for an estimated 67 million people over the age of 15, with women constituting 83 percent of those employed. The ILO estimates 11.5 million migrant domestic workers worldwide, accounting for 17.2% of all domestic workers and 7.7% of all migrant workers. In contrast, in 2013, nearly every fifth domestic worker worldwide was an international migrant. (ILO,

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2016). Moreover, about 74% of all migrant domestic workers are women, compared to 80% of national domestic workers.

The Domestic Workers Recommendation, 2011. The Domestic Workers Recommendation (2011) contains valuable guidance on a range of measures that may be taken to protect migrant domestic workers, such as hotlines, interpretation services, emergency housing, consular assistance, provision of information in their languages, and measures to ensure migrant ability to pursue criminal charges and to use legal and social services (ILO, 2011). This recommendation was a step in the right direction for domestic workers since this recommendation contains specific guidelines that not only guide and support domestic workers but also introduce and promotes the idea of legal protection or an improvement of federal labor protection for those who are domestic workers.

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International Actions

In Mexico, various laws protect workers. Labor guarantees in the Political Constitution of the United Mexican States in article 123. This document establishes 8 hours a day as the maximum working day, as well as age restrictions, rest days, minimum wage, non-discrimination by sex, ethnicity, or nationality when it comes to salary, the participation of workers in commissions, their rights to form unions, stoppages or strikes; among other points (Unidad General de Asuntos Jurídicos, 2008). The federal labor law establishes that “Labor standards tend to achieve a balance between the factors of production and social justice, as well as promote decent or worthy work in all labor relations.” (Congreso de Los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, 1970), equality between workers and bosses, provision of services to guarantee safety and labor welfare, and harassment or sexual abuse of workers is prohibited. The Federal Law of Workers in the Service of the State was explicitly made for workers of the dependencies of the Powers of the Union, of the Government of the Federal District (Congreso de Los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, 1963). The Social Security Law establishes that this service is public at the national level for assistance and access to health services or income guarantee for pregnant women, people with old age, disabilities, illness, and accidents, among others (Congreso de Los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, 1995). Lastly, we have the Law of the Institute of Security and Social Services for State Workers, which focuses on dependencies, entities, civil service workers, pensioners, and entitled family members (Congreso de Los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, 2007).

In Indonesia, a child is classified as such from the womb until 18. The Child Protection Act aims to ensure all Indonesian children's comprehensive development and well-being. It is the responsibility of parents or guardians to protect minors from violence or abuse, giving them a life full of happiness. In

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case of employment, adults and minors must work in separate areas, parents' permission must be obtained, and night work, pornography, gambling, distribution of narcotics, and alcoholic beverages are prohibited (International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children, 2017).

Around a sixth of the population residing in Singapore are migrants from various Asian countries such as China, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Bangladesh, and Myanmar. Migrant workers are vulnerable to social prejudice due to ethnicity or social class, language, and legal status. Some treatments they must ensure are jobs without pay, denial of health services by employers, low wages, extreme hours, and jobs that can put their health at risk.

Transient Workers Count Too, founded in 2003 in Singapore, is a non-profit organization that fights for the betterment of migrant workers through advocacy and direct services. Defense is responsible for the investigation and documentation of cases, dissemination through different media, social and parliamentary commitment to implement or change policies, and participation in international consultations. Direct services include free meals, social assistance, health services in case of injury or illness, court assistance, transportation, help with housing costs, and activities that promote mental and emotional health (Transient Workers Count Too, 2021).

Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics (HOME) is a charity founded in 2004 by Bridget Tan in Singapore. Its objective is to support those migrants who have suffered from exploitation or abuse:

1. The welfare area is in charge of having specialized help desks for those who seek assistance, providing social support and shelter for all workers in delicate situations, and offering quality medical care and legal support in the shelters.

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2. Moving on to the second area: empowerment, we see that this is in charge of vocational training programs or educational assistance.
3. The legal profession seeks to raise awareness of the situation of migrant workers through campaigns and education, as well as research projects on employment and working conditions in Singapore.

Since its foundation, this charity has provided (HOME, 2014):

“employment advice, legal aid, financial assistance, and medical services to approximately 2,000 workers every year. At the HOME Shelter, we house an average of 700 migrant domestic workers who are victims of abuse and exploitation. An additional 1,600 women, on average, attend our skills training courses every year.” (HOME, 2014)

The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) maintains decent working conditions for Filipino migrants. Some of the services it offers are financial management, management of quality systems, keeping a registry of workers, helping with the accreditation of employees, legal support for victims of illegal recruitment, and intensifying information campaigns (Owwa Member, 2022).

The Domestic Workers Bill of Rights took effect in 2010. This document establishes the bases for employers. The people who are protected by this law are the following: housekeepers, nannies, houseworkers, elder care providers, and workers of halftime. The new labor protections establish that workers must have at least one day of weekly rest, three days off annually with pay, pay the minimum wage with a working day of 8 hours, and pay for extra work either on rest days or after 44 hours of work. In addition, employers must give disability benefits to those workers who work more than 40 hours per week. Regardless of age, origin, race, or religion, workers must be treated with dignity,

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employers are prohibited from demanding sexual labor, and a work environment of well-being must be favored (A Better Balance, 2011).

Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing is a network in charge of connecting organizations, giving support, and empowering workers who live in a situation of poverty. The objective is to help them so that their voice is heard in creating public policies that affect their working lives. Furthermore, it sponsors research for the improvement of employment and the informal economy to increase the prominence of this sector, in addition to the promotion of inclusive measures in policies and standards for validation as informal activities that contribute to the general economy. All this is achieved by the network that brings together organizations of working people, development professionals, and professionals in research and statistics (WIEGO, 2022).

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UN Actions

Since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 in Paris, France, protecting human rights has been a critical priority for the United Nations (United Nations, 2022). That is why in 1993, the General Assembly created the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The creation of this office was inspired by the World Conference on Human Rights that was as well in the year of 1993. The World Conference of Human rights was the first conference focused on promoting and protecting human rights after the Cold War and was a significant milestone for how the United Nations started to care about human rights (Britannica, 2016).

Other organs or organizations created by the United Nations have taken action to solve this problem. For example, organizations such as the International Labor Organization (ILO) were founded in 1919 as a part of the Treaty of Versailles after the first World War. Nevertheless, it was not until 1946 that ILO went global and became a United Nations specialized agency (International Labour Organizations, 2019).

The primary mission of the International Labour Organization is to provide fundamental rights and dignified life to all workers around the world and promote fundamental human and labor rights. They have acted to protect domestic workers and their labor rights (International Labor Organization, 2019). Actions such as the C189: Domestic Workers Convention of 2011. This convention was relevant and essential because of the labor standards for domestic workers. This paper evolved and inspired many more conventions and actions to protect domestic workers and inspired protective measures during the COVID-19 pandemic (International Labour Organization, 2013).

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The International Labour Organization recognizes the work that 67 million people do every day in domestic work and how they can be treated unfairly or inhumanly, from insults to sexual abuse. In addition to recognition, it supports this sector in the fight for their rights, prevents forced labor, and is recognized by law as workers to ensure access to proper treatment (International Labor Law, 2018). However, according to data from Human Rights Watch, "They often work 14 to 18 hours a day, seven days a week, for wages far below the minimum wage" (2020). The first international treaty which laid the foundation for domestic workers was signed in 2011. Since then, over 30 countries have ratified the Domestic Workers Convention No. 189 and the Forced Labor Protocol (International Labor Organization, 2013).

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Points to Discuss

1. Context

- a. Exploring the exclusion of domestic workers from labor laws
 - i. Strategies to mitigate
 1. Unpaid wages
 2. Wage exploitation
 3. Minimum wage
 - ii. Working hours international establishment recommendation
 1. Rest days
 2. Long hours
 3. Huge workloads
 - iii. Effects of living conditions
 1. Inadequate living conditions consequences
 2. Forced confinement in the workplace
 - iv. Importance of health
 1. Health care access
 2. Maternity leave
- b. Discussing the abuses faced by domestic workers
 - i. Sexual
 - ii. Psychological
 - iii. Physical
 - iv. Food deprivation
 - v. Forced labor
 1. Child Labor
 - vi. Human Trafficking

2. Development

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- a. Aiding worker protection and encouraging the inclusion of domestic workers
- b. Ensuring the aid into the protection of migrant domestic workers
- c. Mitigating abuse towards domestic workers
- d. Diminishing and eliminating forced labor and child labor
- e. International partnership to mitigate the exploitation and abuses of domestic workers



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