



Domestic Workers



Official statistics place the number of people employed in the domestic sector in India as 4.75 million, but this is considered a severe underestimation and the true numbers are believed between 20 million to 80 million workers.

-ILO Report



WHO IS A DOMESTIC WORKER

A domestic worker is defined as an individual who is engaged in household chores for a wage that they receive either in cash or kind, directly or through any organization.

It is an important source of employment and makes up to four to ten percent of the developing world's total workforce, a growing number with an estimate of 52.6 million workers across the world in 2010 alone. (ILO, 2013).



CHALLENGES

Domestic work takes place in an unconventional setup, i.e. the household which leads to a lack of strict labor laws and employment guidelines.

Working conditions are not regulated and the sector lacks social security along with no fixed wages or amenities.

Most of the workers are uneducated and are forced to work owing to the issues of migration, poverty, unemployment, familial conflicts, illiteracy, inequality, and other social evils.



HEALTH AND SAFETY 1.0

A vast majority of the live-in domestic help work a minimum of 15 hours a day, seven days a week. Whereas the part-time workers often work in 3-4 different houses for nearly 8-10 hours every day with little to no wages which leads to a range of health problems.

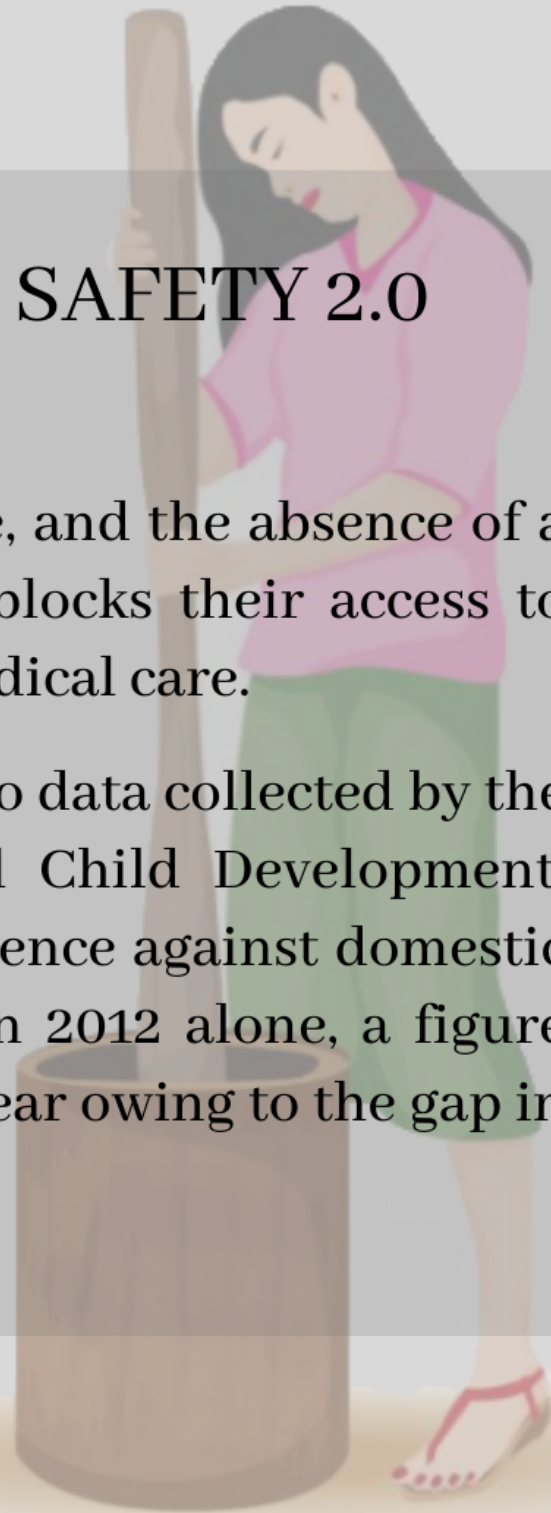
They are more prone to suffer from undernourishment and lack the luxury of the most basic rights like maternity and sick leaves.



HEALTH AND SAFETY 2.0

They are mostly illiterate, and the absence of a proper governing body blocks their access to insurance and proper medical care.

Furthermore, according to data collected by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, (2014), 3,564 cases of violence against domestic workers were reported in 2012 alone, a figure that is increasing every year owing to the gap in the labor protection laws.





COVID-19 IMPLICATIONS

The workers tend to be more vulnerable due to the uncertainty that encircles their jobs. This concern has only been aggravated by the pandemic.

Many workers were let go from their job as they were viewed as potential carriers of the virus which directly affected the workers' income-generating ability, forcing them to migrate back to their native places.

Additionally, they lack access to basic knowledge about the virus and clean protection gears which put them at a higher risk than the others.



WHAT CAN BE DONE

Regulating domestic work through legislation is critical along with the creation of a central body for the registration of these workers to increase accountability and visibility.

There should be provisions for ensuring minimum wage, healthcare facilities, and other employment benefits.

More training sessions can be conducted on labor rights, safe migration, and women's rights, etc to make the workers more aware.

