

Report of the National Coordination committee of the National Platform for Domestic Workers held at Chetnalaya on 7th July, 2014

Present at the meeting were:

Delhi Gharelu Kamghar Sangathan (DGKS) – Anita

Unorganised Sector Workers Union, Tamil Nadu – Geetha

National Domestic Workers Movement (NDWM)– Leeza

National Domestic Workers Forum (NDWF)– Br.Varghese

Domestic Workers Forum (DWF)– Delhi – Shalini and co

Nirmala Niketan/Nirman – Subhash

Gharelu Kamghar Sangathan (GKS) - Annanya

SEWA- Kerala Nalini, SEWA Delhi – Latha and co

The meeting commenced with introductions and Nalini giving a brief summary of the last two years process for the new participants. The minutes of the last meeting were also circulated.

As other national coordinators were not present, Nalini called them. Sister Celia had not seen the emails but she was supportive of continuing the process. Medha's phone did not respond. Sr. Lizzy had informed her inability to attend on the 7th but would be there on the 8th. Fr. Chetan had deputed Leesa.

There was a general feeling that the positions of the new government on labour have not yet been put forth, and so there is no way to know what line has to be taken by the Platform. It was nevertheless decided that much mobilization has to take place at the state levels so that petitions that had earlier been submitted in Delhi would be re submitted and that we should write directly to the Prime minister as well for the start.

It has been decided that the state meetings should take place before October - or as early as possible. It was decided that the state Conveners would take responsibility for these meetings and that as many state unions including the main stream unions should participate. The agenda should include

- Update on what the state has been able to do in relation to recognition and rights for domestic workers
- Discussion on the main contents of the comprehensive legislation. The old draft will have additional points related to interstate migrant workers and ESI facility. The document should be translated in local language so that all can understand – copy of this will be sent to you again.

- The participant organisations should sign a covering letter to the Prime Minister – copy of which will be sent to you.
- States should also decide on what action they would take ahead at the state level and explain what will happen in Delhi in November (see below)

The following states have decided to hold meetings and the people responsible for coordinating are:

NCR – Anita-with other NCR group members,

Bengal – Anannya,

Orissa – Br. Varghese,

Bihar- Nalini and NDWM,

MP – Nalini and NDWM,

Jarkhand – Fr. Chetan,

Tamil Nadu – Geetha and Clara,

Karnataka – Sr. Ida and Sr. Celia,

Telegana and AP – Sr. Lissy and Br. Varghese,

Kerala – Sonia and Nalini,

Maharashtra – Sr. Reena, Medha and Sr. Christy (this will include Mumbai, Pune and Nagpur)

Geetha will try to get a meeting organized through NDWM in Goa and another in Pondicherry, and Subash will try in UP and Rajasthan

It was then decided to hold a national event that would focus the issue of domestic workers. A Public Hearing was planned.

This would be held between Nov.7-12, 2014

It would focus on the need for a legislation by exposing the issues of the domestic workers. Efforts will be made to get the National Women's Commission to host it. This will have to be confirmed by August 30th failing which an alternative plan would be followed – group financed. While the Public Hearing will have a national character, those who depose would speak hindi. Each state will have to send 2 written cases – the format of which will be sent to you. These cases will have to be written in English as affidavits_ on green paper, signed by the victim and attested by a lawyer. (Geetha will send a model affidavit around). 8 of these victims will present their cases in person – depose- at the Public hearing on the following issues:

Police harassment and required to register in the police station – DGKS

Over time and not allowed to use toilets / no leave (2 cases)– SEWA-Delhi

Dismissed without notice/wages etc – DKS

Exploited by the Placement agency – Nirman

Falsely accused – NDWM-Delhi

Child labour, rape, murder – by a family member – DKS

Physical harassment – Nirmala Niketan

The victims who will depose will be prepared by their respective organisations.

The (30 odd) affidavits should be sent to Chetnalaya by October 15th. Chetnalaya will prepare the docket for the Jury who should receive it by 20th October. Chetnalaya will follow up with the people responsible.

Besides this there will be organization disposition so that the issues are highlighted.

The Jury will consist of members of the NCW, SC and ST Commissions, possibly the Law Commission Chairman, journalist Sainath, and either Usha Ramachandran or Kamla Sankaran.

Anita will continue to coordinate the Delhi process but she will keep the national conveners in the loop – also sending them all the emails and reports of local meetings

It was decided that members of the Delhi coordination group would find out prices and availability of halls within the coming week and then decide what to fix by July 15th. They would then work out a budget and send it to all the national Conveners. A decision would then be made of contributions to the common kitty. This will be done on email by the end of July. The Delhi group will meet as and when required.

Around Sept 20 and October 20 there will be a conference call with the national coordinators to firm up the decisions.

It was decided that all non NCR states would participate in the Public Hearing – with at least 10 representatives. Kerala-SEWA will have only 3, but SEWA MP and Bihar will send 10 each.

The Delhi groups will mobilize the larger local group depending on the size of the hall. It was felt that a hall with a maximum of 500-700 people would be the best.

It was decided that the expenses would be shared depending on the budget on the basis of state contributions...for instance, depending on the number of states in which a national organisation worked.

It was also felt that a small group of participants (national and state convenors) would have to remain in Delhi for an extra day or two to do the follow up work and future planning.

It was also decided that we would ask the ILO to convene a meeting with the central trade unions on pushing for comprehensive legislation. After the meeting a small group did meet Ms. Bharti at the ILO. She stated that the ACTRAV was working with the central trade unions and platforms have been created in various states to push for issues of the informal workers. She said that mention was not being made of the National Policy for domestic workers but efforts were being made through these platforms to introduce elements of the policy like registration of workers, minimum wages etc. they were also trying to see whether some working models could be developed in certain areas so that these could be show cased. Nevertheless she felt that it was still a distant dream to have more concrete response both from the trade unions and the government.

Nalini Nayak

7.7.2014