

Activity Report

Partner Organization	Institute of Social Studies Trust, New Delhi
Title of activity	Co-ordination of 2 day workshop on 'Strategising for Domestic Workers at the Political and the Social Level' from 19 th -20 th March, 2013 held at Monotel Hotel, Kolkata
Type of activity (Workshop / Seminar / Training)	Workshop
Date of activity	19 th -20 th of March, 2013
Context of Activity please write down as exemplified	<p>a) political / social / economic</p> <p>The context of the workshop on domestic workers pertains to all three domains of the political, social and economic. The social aspects of domestic work, which also formed a focus of the workshop, concern the status of domestic work as well as of domestic workers. The social aspects are inclusive of the gender, caste and class dimensions of domestic work and the wider context of the community in which domestic workers live. The economic aspects of domestic work range from the issues pertaining to visibilising and counting domestic work in the national economy, determining the basis of the rates at which domestic workers should be paid (piece work, number of hours worked), the conditions of work (including pay, holidays, sick leave, maternity leave and pay, etc.). This aspect is such an integral aspect of mobilization for domestic workers groups, and it featured in the workshop as well.</p> <p>In relation to the political dimension of domestic work, which was also a focus of the workshop, the obligations of the state in relation to social protection measures for domestic workers, inclusive labour legislation and policy, as well as modes of engaging with various levels of the state (community mobilization, unionization, sangatans) form an integral part. The three domains of the political, social and the economic are of course inter-linked and inform each other. It is not sufficient for instance if there is a change in minimum wage legislation (which impacts both the economic and political domains) if there is no attendant change in the meanings and value of domestic work at the social and cultural level.</p>

	<p>b) National / regional</p> <p>The context of the activity is at the local as well as the national level, as the partners that attended the workshop came from different parts of the country- Rajasthan, Gujarat, Delhi, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, and brought with them varying local/state level perspectives, with the view to share experiences, as well as to understand the state of domestic work at a wider national level.</p>					
<p>Organized in collaboration with</p> <p>(Please tick one and mention Name/Contact/Address)</p>	<p>a. NGO b. Government c. Institution d. College e. Other (specify)</p> <p>a. Research NGO</p>					
<p>Programme</p>	<p>Please attach the updated programme with correct timings, order of sessions, present resource persons/panelists etc.</p> <p>Updated programme attached</p>					
<p>Invited Resource Persons</p> <p>List here and integrate all the resource persons in the programme</p>	<p>a) Shraddha Chigateri, ISST b) c) d) e)</p>					
<p>Papers / presentations</p>	<p>Please attach to report any papers or presentations that might have been presented</p> <p>List of papers/presentations attached</p>					
<p>Participants' profile</p>	Number of Participants (excl. staff and resource persons)	No. of Men/ Women		Age Group (if relevant, not for study / FGDs / features / more than 100 participants)		
	Total	M	W	< 30 %	<60 %	> 60 %
		4	21			

	Were they first timers?	Most of them had already met at a previous workshop last year.
	Were they vocal?	All of the groups present at the workshop shared their work at the workshop, which meant that most participants either presented their work or facilitated the sharing of somebody else's work. Apart from these two modes of participation, the participants also joined in the discussions in each session- so definitely, most participants were vocal.
	Do they look for further inputs?	The participants came into the workshop as people immersed in the field, which meant that they came with their own areas of experience and expertise. Since the groups present at the workshop work on different areas of domestic work and with different strategies of intervention (viz., mobilization and collectivization, through unions or sangatans, dispute resolution, working in the wider domestic workers' community, conducting training, working as placement agencies, etc.), the workshop was a space where they could learn from each other and share their own experiences. So, yes, they did look for further inputs in some areas. In others, the group had much to learn from them.
	Are they likely to be multipliers (immediately or in the future)?	The effect of the workshop was for groups to learn from each other's strategic interventions. SAATH, which is a placement agency, is now keen on setting up a co-operative of domestic workers, as they see it as important to learn from the collectivization efforts of the other groups. ISST is interested in learning from MKS the processes of unionization. So, yes, there are likely to be multipliers in terms of the strategies that the groups employ to expand or deepen their

		engagement with domestic work.
	In case of mixed groups: How vocal were the women participants? Give examples.	The group was composed largely of women, and nearly all of them were vocal (see above). The examples are located in the schedule and agenda of the workshop- someone from every group presented their work in at least one session of the workshop
Descriptive part of the Report The descriptive part of the report should capture all discussions during the activity	What was the main aim/objective of the programme?	The main objective of the workshop was to bring groups working on domestic workers together to strategise at the social and the political level, with a particular focus on social protection, collectivization, and changing the meanings of domestic work.
	Please elaborate on the discussions during the activity	One of the key aspects of the discussions in the workshop was a recognition amongst the group that it was insufficient to work at only the social or the political level, and that domestic worker groups needed to intervene at both levels. So, while it was important to strategise at the political level to gain for instance, better social protection for domestic workers through collectivization strategies, it was equally important to intervene at the social level to change the dominant meanings of domestic work. Each of the group discussed their strategies of intervention at either or both of these levels. In relation to social protection, Anchita Ghatak of Parichiti (which works with domestic workers in Kolkata) located the importance of social protection for domestic workers in the contexts of their retirement, child care, pregnancy, illness, etc. Moumita Chakrabarti from Parichiti located the work that they are doing in mobilizing women they work with to inform them about their rights under the State Assisted Scheme of Provident Fund for Unorganised Workers (SASPFUW).

		<p>Sarita from ISST, which mobilizes domestic workers in East Delhi, talked of ISST's experiences with the Rashtriya Swasthya Bhima Yojana (RSBY), which for the most part has been a failure in their communities. Although ISST had mobilized women domestic workers to register with the scheme, when it came to actually claiming the benefits of the scheme, the participating hospitals did not pull through. In this context, YUVA, which works with domestic workers in Mumbai- shared their experiences, where in fact women domestic workers were taking the benefit of the scheme. Similarly with DMSC, which works with domestic workers and for a longer while with sex workers in Kolkata, about 1000 women had benefitted from RSBY. In Rajasthan, which is where MKS works with domestic workers, the MKS was organizing to get a domestic worker union card to be the basis of claiming the scheme.</p> <p>Anchita Ghatak rounded up the salient points of the discussion on social protection with the following observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If domestic workers are organized, it is easier to get certain demands fulfilled• There was a consistent issue in all the presentations about the issue of identity and how to establish identity, particularly the issue of documentation, in order to access benefits• Benefits tie a person to a place of residence, but with vulnerable communities such as domestic workers, place of residence shifts because of evictions, migration• Further, on the issue of
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		<p>establishing identity, accessing officials to get requisite signatures was a problem</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The ways in which the threshold for receiving benefits are computed is also problematic, particularly for instance the BPL card- the state sets the levels unrealistically low. Similarly, RSBY limits the no of recipients of benefits in one family to 5, which means that families have to choose the persons to be included in the scheme. <p>The next session of the workshop was on unionization. Baby Naskar, Protima Mondal and Paramita Chowdhury from DMSC presented the work that they have been doing on unionizing domestic workers in the Dumdum area of Kolkata. In 2010, DMSC first started organizing workers in this area, and by 2011, domestic workers conducted their first election, electing 7 members. Simultaneously the union has been trying to get registered. Although 3 hearings have taken place, and all documentation has been received by the concerned authority, till now, there has been no official communication with regard to the registration of the trade union. The work of the union continues however, particularly on dispute resolution and a second line of leadership is being nurtured, and DISHA (the union) has plans for scaling up in other areas of Dumdum. The work of DMSC is being expanded to other regions of Kolkata as well. There has also been an attempt to network with other labour groups and movements, such as the New Trade Union Initiative, and groups working with hawkers, mid day meal workers, ASHA workers.</p>
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		<p>a wider joint front, through alliances/linkages with other unorganized sector workers groups. The DMSC experience has been to join forces with other unorganized workers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We have to pay attention also to how we may interest domestic workers in collectivization, maybe through media level advocacy <p>Renuka from CWDR also shared her experiences of unionization in Chennai. She gave a historical account of her work and that of CWDR in domestic work. One of the milestones that she noted was that in 2005, a trade union by the name of Manushi was registered. CWDR works in 100 slums in Chennai and each one is part of the trade union. The union has 6000 members. In 2007, a separate welfare board was initiated for domestic workers in Tamil Nadu. 2800 workers have enrolled in this welfare board. CWDR is also involved in skills up gradation training, and it also functions as a placement agency (in short, it dons several hats, unlike most of the other organizations present who work either as placement agencies or as in the arena of mobilization, collectivization).</p> <p>Chandana Das and Madhu Bilmore on behalf of YUVA also shared the work that YUVA has been doing since 1984. YUVA has focused on a rights based, integrated community development approach. It does policy advocacy, action research, provides training to domestic workers to increase market value, does capacity building, conducts awareness programmes on wider issues such as health, etc.</p> <p>In 2004, the Kastakari Khargamgar Sangathan was formed with the efforts of two domestic workers. It now works in 9</p>
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		<p>districts of Maharashtra, with a well defined embedded structure of committees in each city based on function- the organizing committee, health committee, conflict resolution committee, financial committee and oversight committee. Each committee has 10 leaders. Currently, 25000 domestic workers select 425 group leaders in cities, of which 150 form part of the organization core team, of which 11 form the executive committee.</p> <p>There are however several challenges in the collectivization work that the unions do- starting with the difficulty of organizing workers, choosing leaders and providing training, to the challenge of solidarity, particularly in relation to wages, work security, how these can be dealt with, as well as to convince domestic workers of the benefits of the unions. Another major challenge for the work of the unions is the lack of financial support. The Union has innovated a fund based on the collection and sale of waste materials from the members, which allows for what YUVA conceives of as a sustainable and self-sufficient model.</p> <p>In 2008, in Maharashtra, the Domestic Workers Welfare Board was set up. This board consists of 22 members, 11 representing the interests of employers and 11 representing the interests of domestic workers. Around this point, there was a lot of discussion about how the members of the board were selected, both to represent domestic workers as well as employers. Although there are two people on the board who have a background in representing domestic workers, the process of their selection was still done through nomination rather than election. This again led to a discussion of the role of these welfare</p>
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		<p>boards as well as how we may democratize the functioning of these boards.</p> <p>What is useful about the board is that domestic workers are issued with an ID card from the board that allows for them to access schemes of the government such as the Janashree Yojana and RSBY, but again, there is no holistic social security provided by the board.</p> <p>The second day started with a discussion facilitated by Keren Nazareth of Saath Charitable Trust an organization based in Ahmedabad which conducts trainings for skill up gradation of domestic workers and functions as a placement agency, acting as a conduit between domestic workers and their employers. The theme of the session was on the social context of domestic work and how to strategise to change the meanings of domestic work. Keren posed the question to the participants of how we may change the perception of domestic work and of domestic workers. She talked of Saath's own work with domestic workers- Saath provides training for domestic workers who are then helped by Saath to be placed as 'home managers'. Some home managers have since started a franchise system to run their own business, handling 40 other women on a commission basis and/or salary basis. The group discussed the issue of nomenclature, and how important that was in changing the status of domestic workers with some asking whether there was power in the changed designation (home manager), which was a name which Keren emphasized was chosen by the women. The question was about whether the changes in meaning were also commensurate with a change in</p>
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		<p>power. Dr Jana shared for instance the use of the term 'hygiene manager' in Japan. Further on the question of whether there was a 'management' component in domestic work, Dr Jana's assessment was that every job had an element of management, and if this aspect could be highlighted to reduce stigma, then it was useful. However, this change in designation would not be useful in isolation, for instance without collectivization.</p> <p>Keren also located all the current models that are employed in working with domestic workers- unions, training institutes, training and placement agencies, placement agencies, contracting agencies and co-operatives.</p> <p>YUVA shared their experiences of trainings they conduct, which are not only on domestic work and up gradation of skills in the sector, but also trainings on other sectors, such as the banking sector. There was also a discussion of co-operatives and the distinction from self help groups (with the former being a self-banking system, which is guided by RBI rules and regulations)</p> <p>The discussion was followed by a small groups exercise, where the participants were divided into groups and asked to brainstorm about the strategies they would employ to change the meanings of domestic work at the level of the self, family, community and mainstream. This group exercise generated a lot of interesting debates, with each group coming out with interesting strategies, including for instance at the level of the mainstream- having a strong and active national forum on domestic workers to deal with the policy implications of the draft national policy as well as the Bill on domestic workers. At the level of the</p>
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		<p>community, there were other interesting strategies, for instance, developing a community committee to address issues of civic amenities such as transport and safety, which were also concerns that domestic workers and their families faced. At the level of the family, the strategies ranged from the suggestion that family members should also be involved in the trade unions to strategizing to prevent child marriage, to the importance of the provision of crèches and day care for domestic workers' children. At the level of the self, strategies ranged from increasing self respect and dignity and bargaining power to linkages with banking to facilitating certain life skills development. All of these strategies however, would not, as Dr Jana pointed out, be fruitful without a recognition that implementing these strategies was only possible with adequate support systems in terms of infrastructure and personnel. Further, where basic information on domestic workers was not available, it was important also to conduct research on domestic workers.</p> <p>Amita Joshi of ISST then made a presentation on how to strategise in relation to domestic workers by arguing that first and foremost we had to change the understanding of domestic work as unproductive work. She argued that domestic work is crucial (therefore it cannot be unproductive), and that because domestic work is invisible, does not mean that it is unproductive.</p> <p>After lunch, the participants were divided into two groups for field visits that were arranged for the participants by our local partners, DMSC and Parichiti to understand the local context of domestic work in Kolkata.</p>
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	Any other point to be reported	No
Outcome (Result) The result should reflect whether or not the activity has contributed in achieving aims/objectives. The result can be simply more knowledge, a new network, a list of recommendations etc.	What is the result/outcome of the activity?	The outcome of the activity is an increased interest from the participants in the varying strategies that the different participant groups employ in working with domestic workers. For instance, ISST is planning a trip to Jaipur to learn more about MKS strategies of mobilizing and collectivizing women. Saath is interested in setting up a co-operative of domestic workers based on a recognition of collectivization in working with domestic workers.
	Are you satisfied with it?	Yes
Outcome (impact)	What is the <i>impact</i> of the activity, that is, processes that happened <i>after</i> the programme? You have addressed a social, political or economic problem with your activity.	The further outcomes of the workshop can be discerned only in the long term. The workshop has initiated the discussions of the group forming a loose network to strategise at the policy level on domestic work. The extent to which this takes off will be dependent on many factors, but the seed of the idea was planted at the workshop.
	What changed after it was conducted? Give examples, quantitative as well as qualitative.	
Any other comment (Please feel free to give feedback on any other aspect of the activity which you feel is	We thoroughly enjoyed working with FES as our partners in this workshop. Their contributions to the agenda, to the logistics were invaluable, and we look forward to future collaborations.	

important)	
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