



## Labour: Domestic Work is Legitimate Work

*Title*

Can anybody do domestic work?

*Target Audience*

Foreign domestic workers, employers of foreign domestic workers, government officials, young people, teachers, and members of civil society organisations

*Objectives*

1. To establish domestic work as worthwhile.
2. To increase awareness of domestic work and advocate that such work be considered legitimate work.

*Materials*

1. Paper (amount needed should coincide with number of participants)
2. Pens
3. Flip chart or white board
4. Permanent markers

*Time Needed*

Minimum of one hour to maximum of two hours

*Activity*

1. Ask each participant to write down three tasks they do every day at work.
2. Ask each participant to read out one task from their list.
3. Record each participant's response up on a flip-chart.
4. Ask the participants if there are any other tasks they would like add to the list.  
Write those up too.
5. Go through each of these tasks, and ask:  
Who taught you how to do this task?  
Can anybody do this task? Does this task require skill?
6. Ask each participant what they do from the time they wake up until they go to bed?
7. Draw a clock and mark down each activity they do corresponding with the time they do it.
8. After listing each activity on the clock. Ask them:
  - What can you observe about your work?
  - What are regular working hours?
  - Do you think you are overworked or underworked?
  - Are you compensated for overtime?

Present the following statistics:

- Women make up 51% of the world's population
- According to UN Statistics, women do 67% of the world's work,
- Women only earn 10% of the world's income
- Women own less than 1% of the world's assets.
- Women's work is invisible—both in the home and in the field; most of their work is not even counted in the Gross National Product (GNP); their work is usually undervalued

**NOTE:** Trainers may wish to add more recent statistics as necessary.

### *Summary*

The triple burden of work for women:

- Women carry the burden of “family/household work”
- Women are usually expected to take care of family needs, while at the same time expected to contribute to family income. Some women are even expected to get a job away from their families and send the money they earn back home to provide for their children, siblings or ageing parents.
- Women are also expected to establish community ties.

Traditional “women's work” is invisible, undervalued and underpaid.

In the past women's work in the home was taken for granted. Those who shaped the economic development of most countries assumed that the work of women came free. Low wages were paid to male workers and miners, taking for granted the fact that wives and/or daughter(s) would be in the background putting food on the table and bearing and raising children. Similarly, industrialists exploited land, forests, air, rivers and the ocean in an unending pursuit of personal property.

### *Discussion*

**Ask a participant to relate her role in the family.**

- For centuries women have been spinning invisible threads of love, relationships and communication between different members of the family and weaving webs of trust and cooperation between different groups in the community.

**Ask a participant who has a child to describe her feelings as a mother.**

- Women do not have enough time to pay attention to children, look after the sick and elderly, and prepare for the celebrations of human life—birth, death, and marriage. Surely, life is more than just giving birth, feeding and nurturing children; life is also comprised of cultural and spiritual events that bind families and communities together. Women's efforts to ensure the continuity of life cannot be ignored indefinitely.

**Ask a participant to list the family members who benefit from the money she sends back home. Is the amount of money enough to support her family? What does she do to augment this amount?**

- Poverty exacerbates women's burden of work. Everyone should recognise how essential the work women do is to the quality of human life. We must find proper ways of paying for these essential "non productive" forms of work.

## *Conclusion*

### **Action planning to reduce the overload of work**

The aim of the final exercise is to get women to start talking about things they could do together.

#### **Procedure:**

1. Ask the participants to form groups of no more than five or six people—groups should be comprised of women from the same geographic area. It is important that each group have means to stay in touch after the workshop.
2. Ask the small groups to discuss the following questions:
  - What makes women's lives difficult?
  - Of the things that make women's lives difficult, what is one thing we could do together to reduce the overload of work on women?
  - What other resources would help us do this?
  - Where can we find these resources?

The solutions offered will vary according to local circumstances/situations of the foreign domestic workers.

3. Ask participants to come back and form one large group. Share some of the ideas proposed in the small group discussions—note that there is no need to elaborate on the specific details of each group's plan.