A knowledge toolkit for working with domestic workers in India

A Martha Farrell Foundation
10th year anniversary publication

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Research : Piyush Poddar and Yash Chandan

Compilation, Editing and Design: Piyush Poddar

Conceptual Inputs and Content Review: Samiksha Jha

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Disclaimer:

The legal and policy resources included in this toolkit are intended for information, learning and advocacy purposes. Laws, policies, rules and judicial interpretations may change over time. Readers are encouraged to verify the latest legal position from authoritative sources before relying on any provision for legal advice or action.

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Abbreviation

Abbreviation	Full Form
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
C189	ILO Convention No. 189 – Domestic Workers Convention, 2011
C-190	ILO Convention No. 190 – Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
EPW	Economic & Political Weekly
IDR	Indian Development Review
IDWF	International Domestic Workers Federation
IIHS	Indian Institute for Human Settlements
ILO	International Labour Organization
LC	Local Committee
NCW	National Commission for Women
NDWM	National Domestic Workers Movement
NSSO	National Sample Survey Office
NUJS	National University of Juridical Sciences
OBC	Other Backward Classes
ORF	Observer Research Foundation
PIL	Public Interest Litigation
POSH	Prevention of Sexual Harassment
RTI	Right to Information
SEWA	Self-Employed Women's Association
WIEGO	Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing

Acknowledgement

This toolkit has been shaped by the knowledge, experiences, research, and advocacy of many individuals and organisations working to advance the rights of domestic workers in India.We gratefully acknowledge the contributions and resources of international organisations, trade unions, academic institutions, civil society organisations, media practitioners, domestic workers' movements, researchers, journalists, legal scholars, and advocates whose work has strengthened the understanding of domestic workers' rights and the need for a just and comprehensive legal framework.

We particularly acknowledge the valuable work and knowledge contributed by organisations and institutions including the International Labour Organization (ILO), WIEGO, the National Domestic Workers Movement (NDWM), the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF), and the Indian judiciary, as well as the many researchers, writers, journalists and practitioners whose work has informed this toolkit.
We also acknowledge the domestic workers' movements and worker-led organisations whose organising, lived experiences and persistent advocacy continue to shape the discourse on dignity, decent work, social protection and legal recognition for domestic workers.

This publication draws on the Martha Farrell Foundation's decade of engagement and practice on issues of gender, work, safety, dignity and workers' rights. We acknowledge the collective efforts of everyone who has contributed to this body of work and to the Foundation's continuing learning journey.
We are grateful to all those who have shared their research, insights, experiences and resources. Their contributions have helped make this toolkit a resource for researchers, writers, journalists, filmmakers, union organisers, civil society practitioners, advocates and others working towards strengthening the rights of domestic workers.

This toolkit is intended as a living resource. We recognise that knowledge and policy continue to evolve through new research, court judgements, campaigns, organising and advocacy. We therefore look forward to learning from and incorporating future contributions that can strengthen this knowledge base.

The Martha Farrell Foundation thanks everyone who has been part of this journey.
For contributions, suggestions or feedback, please write to us at info@marthafarrellfoundation.org.
Knowledge becomes more powerful when it is shared, questioned and put into collective action.

Context

This staggering variation in numbers is itself a finding. It tells us that the Indian state has never conducted a dedicated, comprehensive enumeration of domestic workers. They are not counted because they are not seen. They are not seen because their workplace is someone else's private home; a space that Indian law, Indian policy, and Indian society have long treated as beyond the reach of public regulation. The result is a workforce that is simultaneously indispensable to India's urban economy and invisible to its labour governance.

Domestic workers in India are overwhelmingly women. They are disproportionately from Dalit, Adivasi, and OBC communities. Most are migrants from Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Odisha, and the tribal belts of central India who have moved to cities because agricultural employment has collapsed and manufacturing has not absorbed them. They are economically poor, often first-generation urban residents, and carry the intersecting burdens of caste, gender, and class into every home they enter to work. Their work spans a vast range: cleaning, cooking, washing, ironing, childcare, eldercare, pet care, gardening, driving. Some work part-time across multiple households. Some work full-day shifts of eight to twelve hours. Some live in their employer's home available around the clock, with no clear boundary between work time and rest. A growing number now find work through app-based platforms like Pronto, Snabbit and Urban Company, which promise structure but introduce new vulnerabilities: algorithmic control, ratings-based penalties, and the legal ambiguity of being classified as "independent contractors" rather than employees.

India still does not have a dedicated national law specifically governing domestic work as a distinct category of employment. This leaves domestic workers dependent on a fragmented framework of labour, social-security and welfare provisions, many of which do not adequately address the specific nature of domestic work. This is not an oversight, it is a structural exclusion that has persisted for decades despite repeated legislative attempts. Domestic workers can be hired and fired at will. There is no mandatory contract, no notice period, no paid leave, no health insurance, no pension and other social security benefits as workers. The employer has no legally binding obligations.

India's four Labour Codes: the Code on Wages, 2019; the Code on Social Security, 2020; the Industrial Relations Code, 2020; and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020 came into force on 21 November 2025. While the Codes consolidate and reform India's labour-law framework, their implications for domestic workers remain uneven.The Code on Social Security, 2020 explicitly includes workers employed by households, including domestic workers, within the definition of 'wage worker', while questions remain regarding the scope, implementation and accessibility of social-security protections in practice. The applicability of the other Labour Codes to domestic work remains unclear, leaving significant gaps in areas such as minimum-wage determination, workplace safety and employment conditions and effective labour protection.

The one law that does apply to domestic workers is the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (POSH Act), which defines “workplace” to include private households. Under this law, women domestic workers can file complaints of sexual harassment before the Local Committee (LC) constituted at the district level. But MFF’s own RTI-based research has documented that Local Committees across India are either non-existent, non-functional, or inaccessible to the women they are supposed to protect. The law exists, however the mechanism does not.

In 2011, the International Labour Organisation adopted Convention 189 (C189), the first international labour standard specifically dedicated to domestic workers. Although India voted in favour of its adoption, it has not ratified it. C189 requires signatory countries to ensure that domestic workers enjoy conditions not less favourable than other workers in respect of wages, working time, occupational safety, social security, and protection from violence and harassment. Fifteen years after voting for it, India remains among the countries that have chosen not to bind themselves to its provisions.

In January 2025, the Supreme Court of India, in Ajay Malik v. State of Uttarakhand, directed the Union Government to constitute an expert committee to examine whether a dedicated legal framework for domestic workers is necessary. The Court observed that domestic workers remain largely unprotected and face harassment and rampant abuse due to the legal vacuum which exists vis-à-vis their rights and protection. The expert committee, constituted by the Ministry of Labour and Employment pursuant to the Supreme Court’s directions, submitted its report in July 2025 and concluded that a separate law for domestic workers was not necessary.

This position has been challenged by labour rights organisations, researchers, domestic workers’ unions and civil society organisations, who argue that the existing framework does not adequately address the specific nature and vulnerabilities of domestic work. They have argued that the existing framework does not provide adequate and enforceable protection for domestic workers, that welfare mechanisms often remain weak or inaccessible in practice, and that the unique nature of domestic work performed inside private homes defined by intimate power relations between employer and worker and shaped by caste, gender and migration demands sui generis legislation that no existing framework adequately provides.

About the toolkit

This toolkit exists because the demand for a just legal framework for domestic workers must be built on evidence, on law, on research, and on the lived knowledge of domestic workers themselves. The resources assembled here from the ILO, from Indian courts, from researchers, from workers' movements, from MFF's own decade of practice are the raw material for that demand.

Every article, every study, every judgement, every video in this toolkit is a brick. The structure they are meant to build is a country where the woman who cleans your home has enforceable rights, a safe workplace, social security, a minimum wage, a contract, and the dignity that comes from being recognised as a worker not a servant, not "help," not an invisible presence in someone else's house, but a worker with rights. That structure does not yet exist.

This toolkit is one contribution to building it. Over the past several decades, civil society organisations, domestic workers' unions, researchers, and women's rights groups have generated a rich body of evidence, campaigns, legal analyses, and community knowledge on domestic workers' rights. However, these resources remain scattered across institutions, publications, and digital platforms, making them difficult to access, especially for grassroots organisations, students, practitioners, and emerging advocates.

This Knowledge Toolkit is part of the Martha Farrell Foundation's decade-long journey of working alongside women domestic workers to strengthen their rights, leadership, and access to justice. Over the past ten years, the Foundation has generated evidence, built community leadership through the Pehelkar Model (a community-led leadership framework developed through sustained engagement with women domestic workers in urban and peri-urban settlements), engaged with institutions, and advocated for stronger implementation of laws protecting women in the informal economy. Through this toolkit, MFF seeks to make knowledge on domestic workers more accessible and contribute to building informed dialogue at the community, state, and national levels. We believe that the demand for comprehensive national legislation for domestic workers must not emerge solely from parliamentary debate. It must be rooted in sustained conversations within communities, civil society organisations, workers' collectives, employers, researchers, and public institutions.

By encouraging evidence-based discussion and collective deliberation across these spaces, this toolkit aims to strengthen a broader social consensus that can meaningfully inform policy discourse and legislative reform for women domestic workers.

The toolkit can be used by civil society organisations, domestic workers' unions, researchers, students, development practitioners, government officials, employers, journalists, donors, and advocates to strengthen their understanding of domestic workers' rights and the broader issues affecting the sector.

Resources have been organised thematically to help readers easily navigate different aspects of domestic work, including legal and policy frameworks, labour rights, social security, migration, workplace safety, gender-based violence, leadership, and organising. Wherever possible, links to original publications have been provided to encourage further reading and engagement. This is intended to be a living resource. As new research, policies, legal developments, and practice-based knowledge emerge, the toolkit will continue to evolve.

Knowledge alone does not create change. It is through dialogue, collective reflection, and informed action that knowledge can become a catalyst for strengthening the rights, recognition, and dignity of women domestic workers. Readers are encouraged to use these resources to deepen learning, strengthen programmes, support evidence-based advocacy, and foster informed dialogue that advances the rights, dignity, and recognition of women domestic workers.

About Martha Farrell Foundation

The Martha Farrell Foundation (MFF) is a not-for-profit organisation established in 2016 to advance gender justice by preventing and addressing sexual and gender-based violence across workplaces, educational institutions and communities. Guided by the legacy of Dr. Martha Farrell, a pioneer in gender equality, participatory learning and women's leadership, the Foundation works with governments, corporations, academic institutions, civil society organisations and community-based groups to strengthen systems that enable safe, equitable and inclusive environments.Through its rights-based and participatory approach, MFF continues to work at the intersection of gender justice, institutional strengthening, and public policy, supporting organisations and communities in creating environments where safety, dignity, equality and inclusion are embedded in everyday practice.

Vision

MFF envisions a world in which all formal and informal learning and working spaces are safe and gender equitable.

Mission

To ensure that all individuals feel secure and valued in their working and learning environments through:

- Education: Co-design learning programs to inform, make aware and empower individuals and institutions on safety and gender equity
- Research: Develop new knowledge on gender equity and the prevention of gender-based violence in learning and working environments
- Advocacy: Influence diverse stakeholders to design and implement effective policies, institutional practices and laws

MFF is guided by its core belief of gender equity, and is committed to fostering a culture of diversity, equity, inclusion where every individual, regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, age, religion or background, feels valued, respected, and empowered to contribute their unique perspectives and talents.

About the MainBhi Programme

Martha Farrell Foundation (MFF) works at the intersection of gender justice, safe workplaces and grassroots women's leadership. The Foundation's approach recognises that sustainable change emerges when women move from being recipients of support to becoming leaders, negotiators and decision-makers within their own communities and workplaces.

MFF's Empowering women domestic workers programme (MainBhi) with women domestic workers is rooted in a long-term community engagement model that integrates social empowerment with economic strengthening. Rather than addressing violence only through awareness campaigns, the programme builds women's agency, collective power and livelihood resilience simultaneously.This programme is currently being implemented across 15 urban slum communities in Delhi and in the district of Panipat in Haryana, reaching women domestic workers living and working in high-migration, high-vulnerability urban settlements. The programme combines social empowerment with economic strengthening through a community-led leadership model known as the Pehelkar Model (community based leadership model). Rather than focusing only on awareness-raising, the programme builds women's agency, collective leadership, access to justice, institutional accountability, and livelihood resilience. Pehelkars (women community leaders) emerging from the communities themselves, support survivors, facilitate access to legal and welfare services, mentor other women, and engage with government institutions to strengthen accountability.

Over the last decade, the programme has evolved from generating evidence on workplace safety to building community leadership and influencing systems change through holding Government institutions accountable. Through participatory research, engagement with Local Committees, partnership with unions and CSOs, campaigns, policy advocacy, and leadership development, MFF has demonstrated that sustainable change requires strengthening individual agency, collective action, institutional responsiveness, and policy reform simultaneously.

Our Pathway to Change

01

Individual Transformation

Women domestic workers become aware of their rights, recognise violence and discrimination, build confidence, and develop the ability to seek support and negotiate for safer and more dignified working conditions.

02

Collective Leadership

Women organise through community meetings, support groups and become Pehelkars to address shared concerns, respond to violence, mentor one another and collectively advocate for their rights.

03

Institutional Accountability

Pehelkaars and women's collectives engage with employers, Local Committees, Police, One Stop Centres, Childline, Labour Department and other stakeholders to strengthen access to justice and improve institutional responsiveness.

04

Systems Change

Community evidence generated through advocacy, strengthens implementation of laws and policies, builds partnerships and contributes to creating an enabling environment for women domestic workers across the ecosystem.

Overview

This knowledge toolkit brings together a curated collection of resources to help readers understand, research, advocate for, and work with women domestic workers in India. Drawing on resources from the ILO, judiciary, researchers, unions, civil society organisations, and the Martha Farrell Foundation's own decade of work, the toolkit brings together evidence, legal resources, research, lived experiences and practice-based knowledge in one accessible resource.

The resources included in this toolkit were selected based on their relevance to domestic workers' rights, labour conditions, social protection, gender-based violence, workplace safety, migration, organising, leadership and legal protection. Preference was given to resources that provide evidence, legal analysis, lived experiences, practice-based learning or pathways for advocacy and action. The toolkit is organised into the following five sections:

- The Articles & Op-eds section brings together articles and opinion pieces published between 2014 and 2026, covering issues such as labour rights, legal protection, wages, sexual harassment, migration, social media, organising and the demand for a dedicated law for domestic workers.
- The research papers, reports & briefs section contains resources published between 2010 and 2026, providing empirical evidence and analysis on working conditions, wages, social security, migration, gender-based violence, climate change, organising and legal protection.
- The laws, policies & judgements section brings together key legal and policy instruments, including labour legislation, proposed legislation, judicial decisions and international labour standards relevant to domestic workers.
- The books section brings together academic, legal, feminist and practice-oriented publications examining domestic work, labour rights, migration, care work, gender and workplace safety.
- Finally, the videos & audio-visual resources section provides documentaries, educational videos and other audio-visual material that can support learning, training, reflection and advocacy on domestic workers' rights and experiences.

Articles and Op-eds

This section brings together articles and opinion pieces published between 2014 and 2026, featuring perspectives from Indian and international publishers, research institutions, civil society organisations and labour-rights organisations. The collection includes contributions from publications such as BBC, The Indian Express, The Print, The Wire, The Hindu, Scroll, Indian Development Review (IDR), ActionAid India and ORF, as well as resources from the International Labour Organization (ILO) and other organisations working on domestic workers' rights globally. Together these articles cover a wide range of issues, including labour rights and wages, legal recognition, social protection, sexual harassment and workplace safety, migration, gender and care work, organising, changing forms of domestic work, and the continuing demand for stronger legal protection. The section also includes perspectives from authors and researchers who examine domestic work through labour, feminist, legal and human-rights frameworks, alongside experiences and voices from worker-led organisations and civil society.

S.No.	Title	Published By	Description	Link
1.	Are Mumbai's domestic workers overpaid? Mini Mathur and Kirti Kulhari divide the internet	The Print	Covers the public debate sparked by comments from celebrities on the wages of domestic workers in Mumbai. Uses the controversy as a lens to examine public attitudes towards domestic work.	View resource
2.	Domestic Workers	NDWM	A resource page from the National Domestic Workers Movement providing an overview of the domestic workers' movement in India.	View resource
3.	Empowering domestic workers in urban India	Observer Research Foundation	An expert analysis exploring pathways to empowerment for domestic workers in urban India through organising, digital inclusion, access to social security, and policy reform.	View resource

S.No.	Title	Published by	Description	Link
4.	Fifteen Years of Advancing Decent Work for Domestic Workers in India	ILO	A retrospective by the International Labour Organization on fifteen years of efforts to advance decent work for domestic workers in India since the adoption of ILO Convention 189 in 2011.	View resource
5.	How India's 'invisible' domestic workers are now ruling social media	The Indian Express	Profiles domestic workers like Sapna Jamadar, Bhagyashree, and others who have gained significant social media followings through content created with or about their work.	View resource
6.	India needs a law to protect domestic workers' rights	The Indian Express	A direct argument for comprehensive national legislation for domestic workers in India. Outlines the inadequacy of the current patchwork of state-level welfare boards, minimum wage notifications, and the Code on Social Security.	View resource
7.	India: domestic workers	Anti Slavery	Provides an overview of Anti-Slavery International's past work on domestic workers in India, focusing on conditions that amount to forced and bonded labour particularly for migrant women and trafficked children.	View resource

S.No.	Title	Published by	Description	Link
8.	Recognizing the Invisible: The Legal Landscape of Domestic Workers in India and the Road Ahead	ActionAid India	Maps the current legal landscape for domestic workers in India. The laws that exist, the protections that are missing, and the policy gaps that leave domestic workers outside the formal labour framework.	View resource
9.	Reversing domestic workers' rights: Stories of backlash and resilience in Delhi	Institute of Development Studies	Documents the backlash faced by domestic workers in Delhi who assert their rights from employer retaliation and dismissal to social ostracism within their communities.	View resource
10.	Supreme Court's Retreat on Domestic Workers: A Betrayal of Its Own Article 23 Jurisprudence	The Wire	A legal analysis of the Supreme Court's January 2026 decision in Penn Thozhilalargal Sangam, where the Court disposed of a petition seeking minimum wage protections for domestic workers, while leaving the issue for consideration by governments and urging States to address workers' grievances.	View resource
11.	The making and unmaking of domestic workers in India: A conundrum of Data, Law and Policy	Doing Sociology	A sociological analysis of how the Indian State simultaneously creates and erases domestic workers as a political category.	View resource

S.No.	Title	Published by	Description	Link
12.	Workplace? Home? Why ensuring domestic workers' rights has proved so challenging	The Indian Express	An opinion piece exploring the fundamental conceptual challenge at the heart of domestic workers' rights. Examines how this blurring of private and public space has been used to justify the exclusion of domestic workers from labour protections, workplace safety laws, and inspection regimes.	View resource
13.	Women Domestic Workers fight sexual harassment	IDR	Examines the specific challenges women domestic workers face in accessing justice under the POSH Act, 2013 including the inaccessibility of Local Committees, the absence of awareness, and the power imbalance inherent in working inside an employer's home.	View resource
14.	Why India needs a separate law for domestic workers even though the Centre is opposed to it	Scroll	Responds to the Expert Committee's 2025 recommendation that a separate law for domestic workers is not needed. Argues that existing laws are structurally inadequate and that domestic workers require a sui generis legislation.	View resource
15.	When labour reform doesn't translate to labour rights	The Indian Express	An opinion piece arguing that India's new Labour Codes, while presented as modernisation, structurally exclude domestic workers.	View resource

S.No.	Title	Published by	Description	Link
16.	Why Domestic Workers, in a Unique Labour Market, Need Their Own Labor Law	Behenbox	Analyses why domestic work constitutes a unique labour market that cannot be adequately governed by existing industrial or unorganised sector legislation.	View resource
17.	You can hire house help in 15 minutes in India. But is the system fair?	BBC	Examines the rise of app-based platforms like Urban Company and Pronto that promise on-demand domestic help in Indian cities and higher earnings and structure for some workers, while introducing new pressures like algorithmic control, ratings-based penalties, and unpredictable incomes.	View resource

Research Papers, Reports, and Briefs

This section brings together research papers, reports and policy briefs covering domestic work in India and internationally. The collection includes contributions from the ILO, WIEGO, academic and research institutions, civil society organisations, and the Martha Farrell Foundation, bringing together both national and global perspectives on domestic work.The resources examine a wide range of issues, including working conditions, decent work, wages, social security, migration, gender-based violence, employer practices, organising, climate change, care work and legal protection. The section includes large-scale empirical studies, systematic literature reviews, policy briefs, campaign reports and research emerging from the experiences of domestic workers and their organisations.

Together, these resources provide an evidence base for understanding both the structural challenges faced by domestic workers and the possibilities for improving their rights, protection and working conditions, while bringing together Indian and international research and practice

S.No.	Title	Published by	Description	Link
1.	C189 Domestic Workers Convention	ILO	The full text of ILO Convention 189, adopted in 2011, the first international labour standard specifically dedicated to domestic workers.	View resource
2.	Centering Reward and Representation for Domestic Workers in the Care Economy	ILO	An ILO brief examining the economic contribution of domestic workers within the broader care economy.	View resource
3.	Common facts and myths about Domestic Work	ILO	An ILO resource challenging common myths about domestic work	View resource

S.No.	Title	Published by	Description	Link
4.	COVID-19 Crisis and the Informal Economy: Informal Workers in Delhi, India	WIEGO	A study examining the impact of COVID-19 on informal workers in Delhi, including domestic workers.	View resource
5.	Deficits in decent work: Employer perspectives and practices on the quality of employment in domestic work in urban India	ILO	Part two of a three-part ILO-IIHS study based on a survey of 3,067 employer households in Bengaluru and Chennai, this report examines the quality of employment provided to domestic workers, focusing on recruitment, wages, job security, working conditions, leave, social security, and labour rights.	View resource
6.	Domestic Workers Across the World: Global and Regional Statistics and the Extent of Legal Protection	ILO	The definitive ILO statistical report on domestic workers globally. Provides data on the number of domestic workers by region, their demographic profile, the extent of legal coverage they receive, and the gaps between international labour standards and national legal frameworks.	View resource

S.No.	Title	Published by	Description	Link
7.	Domestic Workers Around the World: Organising for Empowerment	WIEGO	A global overview of how domestic workers have organised themselves through unions, cooperatives, associations, and movements across different countries.	View resource
8.	Domestic Workers During the COVID-19 Crisis: Pathways of Impact, Recovery and Resilience in Six Cities (2023)	WIEGO	A multi-city study examining how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted domestic workers across six cities globally.	View resource
9.	Domestic Workers Go Global: The Birth of the International Domestic Workers Federation	New Labor Forum	An academic article chronicling the formation of the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF)	View resource

S.No.	Title	Published by	Description	Link
10.	Domestic Workers In India: An invisible workforce	Social and Political Research Foundation	A policy brief mapping the scale and conditions of domestic work in India. Synthesises available data on the size of the workforce, the legal vacuum they operate in, the absence of social security, and the structural reasons for their vulnerabilities.	View resource
11.	Domestic workers of the world unite	International Domestic Workers' Federation (IDWF)	A publication from the IDWF documenting the global movement of domestic workers, its origins, growth, key victories, and the transnational solidarity networks that connect domestic workers' organisations across continents.	View resource
12.	Domestic Workers Trade Deep-Dive: How Domestic Workers are Navigating the COVID-19 Crisis	SEWA Bharat	A study documenting how domestic workers navigated the COVID-19 crisis, the immediate impact, the medium-term consequences and the coping strategies workers adopted.	View resource

S.No.	Title	Published by	Description	Link
13.	Domestic Workers' Laws and Legal Issues in India (2014)	WIEGO	A legal mapping of all laws, policies, and judicial pronouncements relevant to domestic workers in India as of 2014.	View resource
14.	Employer Practices and Perceptions on Paid Domestic Work: Recruitment,Employment Relationships and Social Protection (2023)	ILO	Part three of a three-part ILO-IIHS study based on personal interviews with 403 households in Bengaluru and Chennai. Examines the beliefs, motivations, and perceptions of employers towards recruitment, working conditions, and social protection for domestic workers.	View resource
15.	Employment Status and Working Conditions: A Situational Analysis of Female Domestic Workers in India	Madras Institute of Development Studies	An empirical study analysing the employment status and working conditions of female domestic workers across India, covering wages, hours, leave, contract terms, social security access, and employer practices.	View resource

S.No.	Title	Published by	Description	Link
16.	ILO Recommendation 201	ILO	The supplementary recommendation accompanying Convention 189, providing detailed non-binding guidance on implementing the Convention's provisions.	View resource
17.	In the Shadow of the State: Recruitment and Migration of South Indian Women as Domestic Workers to the Middle East	ILO	An ILO study examining the recruitment and migration pathways of South Indian women who travel to the Middle East for domestic work.	View resource
18.	India: Decent Work for Domestic Workers (Campaign Report)	ILO	An ILO campaign report documenting advocacy and awareness efforts to promote decent work for domestic workers in India.	View resource
19.	India's Domestic Workers: Key Issues Remain Swept Aside	The Hindu Centre for Politics and Public Policy	A policy brief examining the structural invisibility and systemic exclusion of India's domestic workers from legal protections and state regulation.	View resource

S.No.	Title	Published by	Description	Link
20.	Indispensable yet unprotected: Working conditions of Indian domestic workers at home and abroad	ILO	A comprehensive ILO study documenting the working conditions of Indian domestic workers both within India and among those who migrate to the Middle East and other countries for domestic work.	View resource
21.	Labour Law Reforms and Women's Work in India: Assessing the New Labour Codes from a Gender LenS	Institute of Social Sciences Trust	An analysis of India's four new Labour Codes from a gender perspective. Assesses whether the Codes advance or undermine women's labour rights with particular attention to domestic workers.	View resource
22.	Legislating for Domestic 'Care' Workers in India – An Alternative Understanding	NUJS Law Review	An academic article proposing an alternative framework for legislating domestic work in India, one grounded in the concept of care rather than industrial labour.	View resource
23.	Making Decent Work a Reality for Domestic Workers: Progress and Prospects Ten Years after the Adoption of the C189	ILO	An ILO review marking ten years since the adoption of Convention 189. Assesses global progress on how many countries have ratified, what legal changes have followed, where implementation has succeeded or stalled and maps the remaining gaps in making decent work a reality for the world's estimated 75.6 million domestic workers.	View resource

S.No.	Title	Published by	Description	Link
24.	#MeToo and Women Domestic Workers	Martha Farrell Foundation	Explores the absence of domestic workers from India's #MeToo movement despite being among the most vulnerable to sexual harassment at the workplace. Examines why the movement, largely driven by women in corporate and media spaces, failed to reach domestic workers.	View resource
25.	Minimum wage setting practices in domestic work: an inter-state analysis	ILO	An inter-state analysis of minimum wages in India	View resource
26.	NSSO 68th Round Employment-Unemployment Survey (2011–12)	National Sample Survey Organisation	The NSSO's large-scale national survey dataset on employment and unemployment in India, which provides one of the few quantitative baselines for estimating the number of domestic workers in the country.	View resource
27.	Persisting servitude and gradual shifts towards recognition and dignity of labour: A study of employers of domestic workers in Delhi and Mumbai	ILO	An ILO study examining the attitudes and practices of employers of domestic workers in Delhi and Mumbai.	View resource

S.No.	Title	Published by	Description	Link
28.	Recommendations for strengthening the implementation of POSH Act for Women Domestic Workers	Martha Farrell Foundation	A policy brief presenting concrete recommendations for making the POSH Act more accessible and effective for women domestic workers.	View resource
29.	Reproducing a household: Recognizing and assessing paid and unpaid domestic work in urban India	ILO	Part one of a three-part ILO-IIHS study based on a survey of 9,636 households in Bengaluru and Chennai, it analyses how domestic work is organised within households and the role of paid domestic workers in reducing women's unpaid care burden.	View resource
30.	Review of International Experience on Protecting Rights of Domestic Workers in Selected Countries	ILO	A second, more recent ILO comparative review examining legal and policy approaches to protecting domestic workers' rights across selected countries.	View resource
31.	“Slaves No More”: Making Global Labor Standards for Domestic Workers	Feminist Studies (Project Muse)	An academic article examining the global campaign that led to the adoption of ILO Convention 189 in 2011.	View resource

S.No.	Title	Published by	Description	Link
32.	Status of Domestic Workers in India: A Tale of Two Cities	Gujarat Institute of Development Research	A comparative study examining the status of domestic workers in two Indian cities, analysing differences in wages, working conditions, employer practices, and access to welfare schemes.	View resource
33.	The Specificity of Domestic Work Requires a Sui Generis Legislation	EPW Engage	An academic argument makes the case that domestic work is fundamentally different from other forms of labour and therefore requires its own dedicated legislation.	View resource
34.	Toolkit on ILO Convention 189	WIEGO and IDWF	A toolkit on the effective use of ILO C189 in member and non-member countries	View resource
35.	Unseen and unprotected: A study on impacts of climate change on women domestic workers and their children in Delhi	Martha Farrell Foundation	A study examining the intersection of climate change and domestic work and how extreme heat, flooding, water scarcity, and air pollution disproportionately affect women domestic workers and their children in Delhi.	View resource

S.No.	Title	Published by	Description	Link
36.	Violence and Harassment in the world of work (C-190)	ILO	The full text of ILO Convention 190, adopted in 2019. Covers all workers including domestic workers, and addresses gender-based violence and harassment specifically.	View resource
37.	Who Safeguards a Woman's Right to a Safe Workplace? A Study of Local Committees Across India Using RTI Data	Martha Farrell Foundation	An RTI-based national study examining the functioning of Local Committees under the POSH Act across India.	View resource
38.	Work without security : An analysis of women domestic workers' conditions, struggles, and aspirations	Martha Farrell Foundation	A qualitative study based on focus group discussions with women domestic workers, capturing their lived experiences of working without contracts, social security, or legal protection.	View resource

Books

This section brings together a curated collection of books and edited volumes that explore domestic work through academic, legal, feminist and lived-experience perspectives. The collection includes publications by Indian and international authors and publishers, covering themes such as paid domestic work, labour rights, migration, care work, gender, social protection and the struggles of domestic workers for recognition and dignity.

Together, these books provide deeper conceptual and contextual perspectives that complement the shorter articles and research reports in the toolkit, helping readers engage with the history, structures, lived realities and broader debates surrounding domestic work in India and globally.

S.No.	Title	Published by	Description	Link
1.	Engendering the Workplace	Uppal Publishing House	The first Indian book ever published on sexual harassment at the workplace, authored by renowned feminist practitioner and civil society leader Dr. Martha Farrell.	View resource
2.	Global Domestic Workers: Intersectional Inequalities and Struggles For Rights	Bristol University Press	Authored by Sabrina Marchetti, Alessandra Garofalo, Francesca Vianello the book presents a comparative study that explores the conditions of domestic workers globally and the campaigns they are waging.	View resource
3.	Maid in India: Stories of Inequality and Opportunity Inside Our Homes	Aleph Book Company	A narrative and investigative account by Tripti Lahiri documenting the lives, stories, and systemic challenges faced by domestic workers in urban India.	View resource

S.No.	Title	Published by	Description	Link
4.	Migration, Gender and Care Economy	Routledge	Authored by S. Irudaya Rajan & N. Neetha, this book analyzes women's role and experiences in migration and its interlinkages with the care economy as nurses, paid domestic workers, and unpaid carers.	View resource
5.	Prevention of Sexual Harassment at the Workplace	Hachette India	Authored by Martha Farrell Foundation, the book provides a definitive guide to understanding everything about the POSH Act, 2013.	View resource
6.	Protecting the Rights of Women Migrant Domestic Workers: Structural Violence and Competing Interests in the Philippines and Sri Lanka	Routledge	Authored by Sophie Henderson, this book is a comparative study of women migrant domestic workers in the Philippines and Sri Lanka, examining how structural violence operates across borders.	View resource
7.	Recognition of the Rights of Domestic Workers in India: Challenges and the Way Forward	Springer Nature Link	Authored by Upasana Mahanta & Indranath Gupta the book examines the structural and legal barriers to recognizing domestic workers as rights-bearing workers within India's labour law framework.	View resource

S.No.	Title	Published by	Description	Link
8.	Working at Others' Homes: The Specifics and Challenges of Paid Domestic Work	Tulika Books	Authored by Neetha N., this book is a comprehensive collection of 14 essays examining the specificities and challenges of paid domestic work in India.	View resource

Audio-visual resources

This section brings together documentaries, educational videos and other audio-visual resources that provide accessible ways of learning about domestic workers, their working conditions, rights and struggles. The collection includes resources from the ILO and other organisations, covering themes such as decent work, legal rights and protection, child labour, exploitation, migration and the lived experiences of domestic workers.

The section is particularly useful for developing comparative perspective, training, community discussions, workshops, awareness-building and advocacy, offering visual and narrative approaches that can complement the academic and research-based resources included elsewhere in the toolkit.

S.No.	Title	Description	Link
1.	कार्यस्थल पर महिलाओं का यौन उत्पीड़न अधिनियम, 2013: Part 1 (POSH Act for women domestic workers)	An animated explainer in Hindi on the POSH Act covering key provisions, definitions, and worker rights under the Act. Part 1 of a two-part series by MFF, designed for grassroots accessibility.	View resource
2.	कार्यस्थल पर महिलाओं का यौन उत्पीड़न अधिनियम, 2013: Part 2 (POSH Act for women domestic workers)	Continuation of MFF's animated Hindi explainer on the POSH Act.	View resource
3.	Domestic Workers' Rights (Hindi)	An educational video in Hindi providing grassroots-accessible information on domestic workers' rights, legal entitlements, and pathways to accessing justice and support services.	View resource

S.No.	Title	Description	u
4.	Domestic Workers – Work Conditions, Recruitment and Employers' Perspectives	An ILO research-based video examining multiple dimensions of domestic work including working conditions, recruitment practices, employment relations, and employer perspectives and responsibilities.	View resource
5.	How does paid and unpaid domestic work get quantified in Indian households?	An educational video analyzing how both paid domestic work and unpaid household labour are measured, valued, and understood within the Indian economic and social context.	View resource
6.	India's Unequal Domestic Workers | Dignity of Labour is not Recognised in this Unorganised Sector	A video documentary examining the inequality and lack of dignity afforded to domestic workers in India's unorganised sector, analyzing structural barriers to recognition and decent work.	View resource
7.	ILO Resources	A curated collection of ILO-produced videos covering multiple aspects of decent work for domestic workers, child labour in domestic service, and international labour standards and advocacy.	View resource
8.	Protection for Domestic Work	A WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing) produced a video advocating for protections and rights for domestic workers, including organizing strategies and policy recommendations.	View resource

S.No.	Title	Description	Link
9.	Rights and Protection of Domestic Workers in India	An educational video produced by the ILO outlining the rights, protections, and legal frameworks available to domestic workers in India under national and international law.	View resource
10.	Why India's millions of domestic workers have no legal protections?	A documentary-style video examining why India's estimated millions of domestic workers remain excluded from legal protections despite their essential role in urban economies and households.	View resource
11.	What led to hundreds of domestic workers' agitation in Delhi? Kritika Pant reports	A news video by journalist Kritika Pant documenting and analyzing a major domestic worker protest in Delhi, exploring the issues, demands, and systemic grievances that mobilized workers collectively.	View resource
12.	Why Does the ILO Domestic Workers Convention Matter?	An ILO-produced explainer video outlining the significance, provisions, and impact of ILO Convention 189 on Domestic Workers and why its adoption and ratification matter for worker protection globally.	View resource
13.	YAYA: Sacrifice of Domestic Workers Documentary	A powerful documentary examining the lives and sacrifices of domestic workers in the Philippines , documenting their labour conditions, emotional toll, and struggles for dignity and recognition across households and borders.	View resource

Laws, Policies & Judgements

This section brings together key laws, policies, draft legislation, government documents and judicial judgements relevant to the rights, protection and working conditions of domestic workers in India. The collection includes national legal frameworks, proposed legislation, Supreme Court judgements, international labour standards and policy instruments, providing readers with a foundation for understanding the legal and institutional landscape governing domestic work.

The resources cover important areas including labour rights, minimum wages, social security, workplace safety, sexual harassment, violence and access to justice, as well as efforts to develop dedicated legal protection for domestic workers. The section also includes ILO Convention 189, the first international labour standard specifically dedicated to domestic workers. Together, these laws, policies and judgements help readers understand what legal protections currently exist, where gaps remain, and how courts, governments and international institutions have shaped the evolving discourse on domestic workers' rights in India.

S.No.	Title	Description	Link
1.	Domestic Workers (Registration, Social Security and Welfare) Bill, 2008 (NCW draft)	A draft bill prepared by the National Commission for Women proposing mandatory registration of domestic workers and employers, minimum wage protections, and welfare board mechanisms.	View resource
2.	e-SHRAM Portal	A national portal launched by the Ministry of Labour and Employment in 2021 for registration of unorganised workers including domestic workers, linking their data to Aadhaar.	View resource
3.	Expert Committee Report constituted by the Ministry of Labour and Employment	The report of the expert committee constituted in pursuance of the Supreme Court's 2025 order, examining the need for a comprehensive legislative framework for domestic workers.	View resource

S.No.	Title	Description	Link
4.	Supreme Court order directing constitution of a committee for examining the need to draft legislation for domestic workers	The landmark January 2025 Supreme Court order in Ajay Malik v. State of Uttarakhand directing the Union Government to constitute an expert committee to examine whether a sector-specific law for domestic workers is necessary.	View resource
5.	Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act and Rules, 2013	The central legislation protecting women from sexual harassment at all workplaces in India, including private households — making it directly applicable to domestic workers.	View resource
6.	The Code on Social Security, 2020	One of four Labour Codes consolidating India's existing social security laws, covering provisions for unorganised workers including domestic workers.	View resource
7.	The Maharashtra Domestic Workers Welfare Board Act, 2008	One of the few state-level legislations specifically for domestic workers, establishing a welfare board in Maharashtra with provisions for registration, identity cards, and welfare benefits.	View resource
8.	Vishaka & Ors. v. State of Rajasthan & Ors.	The landmark Supreme Court judgement that laid the foundation for workplace sexual harassment law in India, establishing the Vishaka Guidelines.	View resource

10 years of advancing gender justice

Martha Farrell Foundation

42, Tughlakabad Institutional Area, New Delhi – 110062
Email: info@marthafarrellfoundation.org
Website: www.marthafarrellfoundation.org