

Indian domestic workers demand rights



Indian domestic workers protest in New Delhi on July 21 against atrocities they face in the workplace. (ucanews.com photos by Bijay Kumar Minj) employers," Nilima Tirkey, the forum secretary, told ucanews.com.

New Delhi:

Some 4,000 domestic workers in New Delhi went on strike Aug. 16 to demand that the federal government formulate a law to ensure fair wages and security for them.

The domestic workers, registered under the Domestic Workers' Forum of Chetnalaya, the social service wing of the Delhi Archdiocese, took to the streets to observe No Rights, No Work Day.

Chetnalaya has been calling people to observe the day for the past two years. They want justice for a community of workers who are exploited, harassed and underpaid.

"Domestic workers in India do not have any recognition of work, respect and are exploited at the hands of

The forum also used the day to highlight the issue of trafficking and the migration of girls and young women from tribal areas into cities looking for domestic work.

"Trafficking of girls is going on for domestic work and this happens because of the ignorance of people in remote villages," said Father Savari Raj, director of Chetnalaya. "Girls working as domestic workers in cities suffer from poverty and lack of education."

He said there has to be an informed migration where innocent girls can come to the cities for domestic work and remain in touch with their families, friends, village heads and neighbors so they are not lost and exploited.

Suman Klara, who was brought from the western Indian state of Chhattisgarh as a domestic worker by relatives, said she was 19 when she came to work to the national capital.

Now 32, Klara told ucanews.com that her initial experience as a domestic worker was not good as her employer tried to sexually molest her on several occasions.

"I somehow managed to escape and save myself but I did not know who to turn to and had nowhere to go as I was new to the city," she said.

Same for Anjali Dumdum, who migrated from eastern Indian state of Jharkhand at the age of 13.

"There are women who work for placement agencies and visit villages informing them that they can employ girls in big cities with good wages," said Dumdum. "I heard one such announcement and came to Delhi."

She said that the recruiting women left her at the placement agency and never met her again.

"The employers where I was sent for work used to give me only rice to eat and I was made to sleep in the balcony," Dumdum explained. "Also, I used to work very late at night. There was no end to the work."

According to data collected by Chetnalaya, 129 cases of exploitation of domestic workers were registered in

2015 in New Delhi including five cases where the worker died due to harsh conditions set by their employers, and one for of rape. There were 56 cases of forced labor and illegal confinement.

The International Labor Organization estimates that there are nearly 4 million domestic workers in India. Even though the Indian government supported ILO's 2011 convention, "Decent Work for Domestic Workers," it has not ratified it.

The convention requires each member country to fix a minimum wage for domestic workers, ensure their security and decent living conditions.

House maids in the national capital are young girls from tribal areas such as Jharkhand and Bihar. Many of them are Christians looking to better their lives with a city job and to support their impoverished families.

Source: [UCAN](#)