



**Title >> Conditions of Work for Adult Female
Live-in Paid Domestic Workers in
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

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Date of Publication >> 2011

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Abstract

This short paper is drawn from research (MA thesis) I undertook in 2009, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MA in Development Studies at the Kimmage Development Studies Centre, Dublin. The paper reflects on the topic – conditions of work for adult female live-in paid domestic workers in Addis Ababa. The research attempted to explore, understand and analyse the conditions of work for this category of workers. Data was collected from seven adult female live-in paid domestic workers in Addis Ababa and the contents of relevant government regulations were also reviewed to support primary data.

Based on the research undertaken in Addis Ababa, this paper highlights exploitative conditions of work similar to other experiences documented worldwide. Specific to the research location the findings emphasised the very nature of the customary duty, i.e. 'general housework', given to live-in domestic workers as being at the centre of the exploitative conditions of work experienced by this category of workers. In addition, the research strongly suggested and this paper argues that the draft regulation that is being proposed in this area needs to be reviewed. This review needs to consider the real life experiences of live-in domestic workers in relation to: job descriptions; hours of work a day, meal intervals, leave periods (weekly, annual and maternal); freedom of movement; freedom of association; privacy; food and accommodation; and the assignment of responsible bodies and grievance procedures. Furthermore, this paper highlights the need for awareness raising for both employers and workers.



1. Introduction

1.1 The Context

Millions of workers throughout the world engage in domestic work services (Human Rights Watch 2006 and International Labour Organization Governing Body 2008). Women and girls constitute the majority of this group of workers, given the limited options available to them that are augmented by their lower levels of education and constrained opportunities. Domestic work is also associated with the traditional role given to women; even when they take-up work outside their home, it is still often within the societal ascribed roles of domestic work in another house (Anderson 2001). The majority of domestic workers are not only female but also migrants (Chew 2003). They migrate for waged housework, from poorer areas (their home) to more urbanized areas, within their countries or abroad.

In their study of migration and rural-urban linkages, Tadele et al. (2006) report a very high prevalence of seasonal and long-term rural-urban migration in Ethiopia. The main destinations are Addis Ababa and other major regional towns, which provide migrants with work opportunities such as: daily labour in the housing construction sector; loading and unloading of goods; urban vegetable growing; weaving; blacksmithing; lottery ticket selling; and begging. Domestic work services in private households are the primary work opportunities for female rural-urban migrants (ibid).

Although not to the extent as it had been with slaves many years ago, generally speaking, to hire a domestic worker or a number of them for different tasks is a common phenomenon in average middle and upper income households in contemporary Ethiopian society (Pankhurst 1968 and Tesfaye and Dereje 2007). In addition, there has always been the common practice of having another woman and/or teenage girls from poorer families to help in domestic work, in exchange for either cash or food and accommodation (Fente 2001). In this case, domestic workers are usually referred to as 'domestic servants' in the Ethiopian context.

Personal services workers (who work in the home of their private employers) are one of the categories of workers who are excluded from the principal source of labour law in Ethiopia, which is the Labour Proclamation No. 377/2003. However, at the time of data gathering for the research it was found that the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs was drafting regulations applicable to govern conditions of work that arise from contracts for personal services. This was introduced and presented in the research. The key elements of the draft regulations are critically reviewed here in light of respondents' experiences on their conditions of work.



2. Key Concepts

2.1 Domestic Work

There are two major theoretical approaches to discussions concerning domestic work (Anderson 2000). The first is concerned with women's unpaid work at home, while the second is about domestic labour. Unpaid housework is usually justified as 'natural' (arising out of 'love' and 'compassion') to women and girls who usually carry it out (Keklik 2006). Consequently, it is usually not recognized and accounted as 'real' or productive work. This non-recognition of housework has mainly contributed to domestic work remaining invisible; as it downgrades the social and economic contribution of domestic work (Anderson 2000).

In the case of domestic labour, middle and upper income women often find a replacement (mostly another woman or a girl) to take-up child care and other household duties, which could have otherwise traditionally fallen under their responsibility (Keklik 2006). This could either be 'paid' or 'unpaid' labour. 'Unpaid' labour is usually related to bringing in a distant relative or non-relative to live with and work for the family in exchange for food, clothing and sometimes basic education (ibid). On the other hand, 'paid' labour relates to paid employment such as cooks, nannies, house keepers, and cleaners within private households (ILO 1990 and Keklik 2006). In this case, they either live with the family or come only for work (each day or for certain days of the week as per their agreement).

Glazer- Malbin (1976) and Schwartz (1983) cited in Anderson (2000) point out that it is tricky to describe domestic work with reference to only the tasks performed such as washing floors or cooking. According to Schwartz (1983 cited in Anderson 2000, p. 11), "rather than a series of tasks ... domestic work is better perceived as a series of processes, of tasks inextricably linked, often operating at the same time". Glazer-Malbin (1976 cited in Anderson 2000) elaborates that 'shopping' can also involve childminding or taking children to school on the way. Anderson (2000) sees domestic work as even more than a cumulative of processes, as it not only involves physical work but also involves mental and emotional work with a requirement for time and process management skills.

2.2 Power Dynamics within Domestic Labour

Domestic labour creates divisions among women with an obvious distinction between a female employer and her employee (domestic worker), who is usually poorer than her employers (Collinson 1990 cited in Fente 2001). Nevertheless, there also exists mutual dependence as employers depend on their employee for labour, while domestic workers depend on their employers for basic life necessities and to support their families.



Anderson (2000, p. 2) explains that

The paid domestic worker, even when she does the same tasks as the wife/daughter/mother, is differently constructed. The domestic worker, whether 'cleaner', 'nanny' or 'servant', is fulfilling a role, and crucial to that role is her reproduction of the female employer's status (mid-class, non-labourer, clean) in contrast to herself (worker, degraded, dirty) ... with particular reference to the caring function of domestic labour ... it is the worker's 'personhood', rather than her labour power, which the employer is attempting to buy, and ... the worker is thereby cast as unequal in the exchange.

The very nature of domestic work makes it more difficult to regulate (inspect and control) the conditions of work for domestic workers in the homes of their private household employers. In addition, domestic workers throughout the world face a range of forms of abuse (Human Rights Watch 2006). One of the main types of abuse domestic workers face is sexual harassment and assaults, mainly from male employers and other males in the house of their employers. In this case, Human Rights Watch (2006, p. 17) reports that "the continuum of sexual violence ranges from propositions, threats of rape, and groping, to repeated rape". However, it is also the case that such incidences are often endured by the domestic workers and they are highly underreported.

2.3 Domestic Workers and Labour Instruments – the Case for a Specific Regulation

Domestic labour is inherently different from other paid jobs (Anderson 2001). First, it involves caring for children, the elderly and the sick (added to routine housework), which makes it difficult to clearly separate labour services from emotional care. Second, paying for domestic workers gives private employers more power over the conditions of work. Accordingly, domestic labour is not only about transacting labour power but also involves one's own personal identity. Hence, "the relationship between worker and employer is not a straightforward contractual one, nor is the worker straightforwardly selling ... labour power" (ibid, p.30).

Anderson (2001) suggests the treatment of domestic work as 'just another job', and extending employment rights and a means of implementing these rights as a very effective means of protecting domestic workers from abuse. However, with mere inclusion under national labour laws it is highly likely that conditions of work would continue to go unregulated and workers would remain 'invisible' (Blackett 2000). This is primarily due to the specific nature of domestic workers' living and work place, which is usually the home of their individual employers. Hence, Blakett (2000) argues for the provision of a specific regulation that can identify problems that arise from domestic workers' living conditions. Moreover, Blakett emphasizes the need for this specific regulation to be complemented by 'powerful' and 'accessible' mechanisms to guarantee compliance.



3. Research Undertaken

The research I undertook was mainly based on information directly sought from adult female live-in paid domestic workers. It aimed to explore, understand and analyse the conditions of work for domestic workers in Ethiopia through the day to day working lives and experiences of seven adult female live-in paid domestic workers in Addis Ababa. To this effect, qualitative research was undertaken, as Corbin and Strauss (2008, p.12) note, “qualitative research allows researchers to get an inner experience of participants ... to discover rather than test variables”.

A mix of two types of non-probability sampling methods was used. The first was purposive sampling; whereby “the researcher purposively choose [respondents] ... who, in their opinion, are relevant” (Sarantakos 2005, p.164). In other words, I purposively selected respondents and informants according to their relevance. The second was snowball sampling; where the researcher first accesses a number of respondents and then uses these respondents to help accessing others. In this case, my research assistant, who used to work as a domestic worker in Addis Ababa, was able to contact a few domestic workers directly, who then led us to other domestic workers they knew.

Semi-structured interview was applied as a data collection method from primary respondents. With regard to inputs from other sources, it was initially planned to develop a topic guide and interview five key informants from five relevant organisations and institutions working with domestic workers. However, as the research progressed it became very challenging. At the initial contact most of the organisations approached did acknowledge that conditions of work for domestic workers in Ethiopia is an issue of concern; although at the same time they admitted they did not have anything tangible to say about their respective organisation’s involvement towards the same. Due to this reason interviews with key informants were not conducted. Nevertheless, the visit to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs provided the researcher with the draft regulation, which contributed to the analysis.

Except for one respondent (to whom a fictitious name – ‘Alem’ was jointly given) other interviewees were happy for me to use their first name in the research without mentioning their last name.



4. Summary of Findings and Analysis

4.1 Job Description and Workload

Throughout their years of engagement, as live-in paid domestic workers, the respondents never received any type of written or clearly specified job descriptions. Nevertheless, they reported a very strong tradition of using the term ‘general housework’ to refer to live-in paid domestic work. Alemtsehay, speaking about duties in her job, said, “all housework that is required in the house, for the day, is my responsibility”. Tadelech also used the term “general housework” to refer to her work.

The understanding of this term ‘general housework’, was subject to the specific context that applied in the home of their private employers (apart from the routines such as cleaning, food preparation, and washing). This meant that each respondent’s workload was dependent on whether their respective employers had other personal services workers – such as guards, gardeners, and nannies – or not. In addition, it was influenced by employers’ numbers and ages of children, and whether employers had extended family members living in their house or not. The amount and types of work required from workers were also dependent on employers’ lifestyle, and the strength of relationships their respective employers had with family, friends and neighbours.

Accordingly, the wide application of the term ‘general housework’ meant that the respondents had no basis to say ‘no’ or ask for extra payment for jobs, which they considered as outside their duties. Some, who said no to some tasks, had lost their jobs. From the interviews, fear of losing one’s job in such incidences was clearly observed. Dessie, referring to whether she had refused to do some work said “how can I?”. The openness of the meaning of ‘general housework’ also meant that the workers had no grounds to ask for a salary raise in case of additional workload (e.g., due to increases in family members).

The meaning of ‘general housework’ differed also according to the kind of lifestyle their respective employers wanted and could afford to have. For instance, Alem responded that “every Friday her sister comes with her child to spend the weekend ...I have to babysit her child. They also ask for preparation of a variety of foods ... even the types of foods they have read or heard about”. Alem also stated that her busy weekend would usually be followed by a lot of cleaning to do on Mondays. A few respondents were also involved in a range of tasks for their employers’ friends, neighbours, and relatives; from within their employers’ home or in person at their houses.

Finally, for most of the respondents one of their main duties within ‘general housework’ was that they were expected to ‘economically’ manage household food and other consumable supplies. This meant that, for instance, while cooking food they were not only thinking of getting it ready on time but also they had to think of managing the



supplies efficiently. Tadelech stated “I really have to be careful ... if she brings in supplies for a week; I should make it for that otherwise it will cause me trouble. The challenge is trying to keep the children’s choice and her expectations”.

4.2 Hours of Work

Hours of work normally include arrangements regarding key elements of contracts of employment such as normal hours of work, overtime work, payment for overtime work, night work, meal intervals, rest periods, and work on a Sunday and public holidays. In this regard, respondents reported three key issues. First, their contract of employment, which was usually oral, never included any type of agreements or negotiations regarding how many hours a day they were expected to work. Secondly, for them, hours of work meant only the amount of hours they spend on work; with no differentiation between normal hours of work and overtime work. Third, with their understanding of hours of work, respondents explained that their ‘hours of work’ were determined by the amount and type of housework required for each working day.

The above situation usually required each participant to start work before 6:00 am and continue to work until late at night; for around 16 hours a day on average. For some of the respondents, late night work was also experienced when children called-out at night and when family members came home late. In addition, there was no separation between work on weekdays and work on Sundays and public holidays. In fact, for most of the participants weekends and public holidays came with more work. Related to this, Alemtsehay stated that “it gets busier on weekends as they usually have visitors coming over and the children start to get ready for school – shoes, bags, and school uniforms – on a Sunday afternoon”. With similar experience, Dessie expressed that “I barely sleep throughout the week of a public holiday”.

These tasks and conditions were considered a natural duty under ‘general housework’; with no consideration for overtime payments or any other additional payments for night work, work on Sundays and public holidays, and any other extra work that was undertaken. Few of the respondents experienced any type of bonuses either in cash or in kind. For instance, Alem stated that “she never gave me any extra pay other than my monthly wage ... except one time she gave me two pairs of shoes for my baby girl, who lives with my mother”.

It was also a common experience among respondents that there was no time set or agreed as a meal interval or to take rest in between their work. It depended on the individual employer’s goodwill as to whether it was acceptable or not for workers to take rest in between work. A few of the respondents had positive experiences in this regard. For instance, Alemtsehay noted “she wouldn’t mind me taking rest in between work ...she would always say ‘the work will still be done by you anyway’”. However, it was unthinkable for others. Enat explained, “she will always find me something to do ... like washing the children’s



feet, or polishing and washing their shoes, or cleaning some of their playing staffs, or rearranging their wardrobe”. In such instances, rest in between work was possible only when the employers (mainly female) were not at home.

4.3 Wages, Accommodation and Food

At the time of interview, participants were getting monthly wages in a range of 100.00 to 250.00 ‘Birr’ (equivalent to 6 to 15 \$US) a month. A few of the respondents experienced employers who kept a monthly register for wage payments and other expenses (in case the worker was depositing her wages with employers), while most of them did not. Similarly, some experienced employers who paid their monthly wages consistently and on the exact payment date, while others did not. In addition, some of the respondents experienced deductions from and withholding and non-payment of their monthly wages by employers for ‘faults’, ranging from broken glasses to ‘mishandled’ food items. There were positive experiences for a few of them, for instance, Bekelech stated that “throughout my 20 years of working as a domestic worker in Addis Ababa ... I had never encountered employers that deducted my wages”. However, it was a very common experience among respondents that annual wage increases were rare.

With regard to accommodation, the kitchen or corridor floor was reported as the most common sleeping place (using a mattress). It was also a common experience among respondents that they ate after everyone in the house. A few of the respondents reported that they were asked/expected to eat leftovers from employers’ and their families’ plates. In addition, some of the respondents reported food type separations for domestic workers. Tadelech said: “my previous employer used to limit the amount of food I could get a day. She also used to ask me to cook a separate food type for myself and the guard ... the people I now work for do not bother me about food at all”.

4.4 Leave Periods

It was observed that live-in domestic workers in Addis Ababa have a customary once a month leave day, which is usually on a Sunday. However, the participants reported that leave periods were highly unregulated. Most of the respondents never experienced more than one type of leave period, except for one of the respondents (Alemtsehay) whose employer allowed Sunday afternoon off (once in two or three months) added to their agreed annual leave days. In addition, even if both parties had agreed to a certain type of leave, it was reported that employers had the final say regarding the dates they could have their leave, and the due dates or hours that the workers were expected to be back.

Domestic workers who did not have family members in Addis Ababa were not expected to claim monthly leave by their employers. It was also commonly reported that respondents were not allowed to spend the night on their day off away from their employers. In fact, it was



reported that they often left the house after they served breakfast and finished preparing lunch and cleaning, and were generally expected to be due back before 6:00 pm to start preparation for dinner. In this regard, Alem expressed her unhappiness, “I can not spend the night with my daughter”. It was also observed that weekly leave periods and public holidays were not considered by domestic workers. Alemtsehay expressed her feelings that she had never thought of weekly leave for domestic workers. But, she was also grateful towards her current employer; “in two or three months she allows me a Sunday afternoon off, after lunch is served, to go and visit one of my relatives in Addis Ababa”.

4.5 Privacy

Each respondent had been experiencing invasions of privacy (to various degrees) from their employers. Employers also had a great degree of control over their workers’ personal affairs. In this regard, it was reported by respondents that their employers would normally get furious to find out that their live-in domestic workers were involved in any sexual relationships. Employers were reported to not allow workers to contact or make any friends (especially male) and would check up on their workers even on their time-off. This was also reported to the extent that some employers were only allowing days off or leave periods if workers disclosed where they intended to go. Employers also had power over their taking of phone calls; only allowing a limited incoming call from parents and/or brother or sisters. Bekelech explains that

On a New Year and Easter, after 4:00 pm she allows me to go to my brother’s and spend the night there. But it can not be elsewhere,. The moment I reach his house the phone rings ... she calls to check at what time I got there and if I actually got there.

For some respondents, the level of interference in their personal affairs went to the extent of interfering with the type of clothes respondents could buy and/or wear. In response to my probing as to why her employer was reacting this way, Enat expressed her opinion that “they [employers] fear that I might start making male friends ... and they don’t want that”.

4.6 Violence

Respondents reported incidences of verbal abuse, physical violence, and sexual harassment (including verbal insults of a sexual harassment nature, and violence in the form of rape). Verbal abuse in the form of nagging, demeaning, and belittling was reported to be common. In addition, respondents reported the common use of Amharic words such as ‘gered’ (a word that is customarily used to refer to a ‘servant’) by employers and/or their families to remind them about their status in the family/house of their employers. It was also observed that most of the respondents found it challenging or emotional to discuss such issues. Moreover, a few of them viewed it as natural to their work situation and seemed to accept it. Meseret remarked “I work for and live in other people’s house ... what do you expect?”



Regarding rape, Tadelech recited her experience; “when I first came to Addis I was hired by two bachelors ... one of them raped me while the other was away for work”. She also stated that she left the house without saying anything. “I got another job and waited for three months to get a HIV test. I was grateful to be free of the virus [HIV]”. This confirms a report by Human Rights Watch (2006) that such incidences are endured by the domestic workers and are highly underreported. Tadelech expressed that because of her bad experience she decided not to take a job in any bachelor’s house. However, taking a job in a married household did not assure safety for some of the respondents. In this regard, Bekelech told me that “if there are grown up male family members I have to always be conscious”. She explained that the strategy she used was to avoid any communication with them.

4.7 Relationship with Employers

Relationship with employers as a theme for this research was quite complicated. Firstly, employment relations involve a range of elements that could further fall under two broad categories. The first category refers to the key elements of employment relations such as hours of work, wages, leave, payments due to dismissal, workers’ health and safety and any other similar matters; while the second category involves personal relations established between employees and employers (including their family members). However, it is difficult to mark the line between the two, in the case of domestic workers in Addis Ababa, as both arise from the same contract for personal services. The findings also revealed that, in this case, both influenced each other without necessarily determining the goodness or badness of the other. Secondly, what can be labelled as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ employment relations can really be subjective in a sense that what’s good for one might not be good enough for the other.

For most respondents in this research work relations were characterised by employers exercising greater control over the key elements; as discussed above in relation to the findings for the other themes. In relation to personal relationships, for most of the respondents it was a mix of ‘kindness’ and over-demands, and interferences in the personal lives of workers. This can be best explained by Alem’s experience that her employer would give her a pair of shoes to take to her daughter, while she never allowed Alem to spend a night with her child on her day off. However, a few participants reported experiences of respect and treatment with dignity from women of the house, although it did not guarantee a similar situation from employers’ children and other family members in the house.

Most of the respondents reported that they barely had any communication/relations with males in the house. This can be related to the tradition, in Ethiopia, that it is usually women who are responsible for housework, either doing it by themselves or through arrangement for paid or unpaid help. It was also related to the threat of violence that many of the workers felt in their work environments.



4.8 Termination of Employment Contracts

It was observed that contracts for personal services, which were usually orally made, did not include any agreement regarding the duration of the contract. This meant that either or both parties could practically terminate the contract at any time. In addition, their contracts never included important elements of termination of employment such as severance and compensation payments or certificate of services. In this regard, this research discovered that all of the respondents understood it as normal (and also even felt that only the lucky ones get it) for personal service contracts to end with payments of only wages to the date of employment. In addition, it was difficult for most of them to comprehend what I meant by severance and compensation payments upon termination of contract.

Most of the respondents reported that giving notice of termination was not a common practice among employers or workers. Some expressed that when they had given notice to their previous employers 'to find somebody else', their employers responded by giving them extra work to do (as a contingency in case they did not find a replacement fast and to buy themselves time until the new person learned how to fit into their lifestyle).

Following my probing, respondents expressed their understanding as to why employers would usually prefer to end contracts for personal services without notice to the worker. Accordingly, they reported fear on the employers side that the worker might conspire to rob them, and/or to misappropriate food supplies and/or tools in the house. However, this has huge implications for the workers as the live-in arrangement meant that the domestic worker's workplace is also where they reside. In this regard, Enat stated, "when they suddenly tell you to leave their house ... you have nowhere to go".



5. Findings and Discussion of Draft Regulation

In summary, even though the findings are based on the experiences of only seven respondents, the information obtained in this research was significant enough to conclude that the participants hardly experienced any labour rights. In this regard, the findings augment a very strong argument made by Blackett (2000) that the nature and/or reality of domestic work is indeed very specific. Protections that are extended regardless of the specificity could mean that the real life experiences (on conditions of work) of this group of workers are overlooked; while specific regulations are argued to indicate due consideration given to the reality of domestic workers and to deal with the consequences of that particular reality. However, based on the review of the content of the draft regulation (introduced and presented in section 1.1. above) the researcher felt that efforts for the provision of specific regulation, while valued, have not necessarily taken into consideration the specific realities as experienced by domestic workers. It is understood that labour regulations aim to respond to the needs and challenges of both employers and workers. Since this research focuses on domestic workers, the following paragraphs critically analyse the content of the draft regulation in light of conditions of work experienced by respondents.

'General housework' as a duty resulted in excessive hours of work and heavy workloads (with no appropriate consideration for rest time) for respondents, while employers enjoyed "virtual impunity to exact excruciatingly long hours of work for grossly inadequate wages" (Human Rights Watch 2006, p. 2). Although this is the case in reality, at least as indicated by this research, the draft regulation does not include provisions for the requirement of specific job descriptions.

Regardless of the above experiences by respondents, the draft regulation excludes live-in personal services (domestic) workers from the provisions under normal hours of work a day, meal intervals, and payments for overtime work. The draft only makes a general statement that live-in personal services workers shall rest for 10 hours a day, out of which 8 hours shall be consecutive and it only grants 24 hours off, once a month. This allows for 14 hours of work a day for live-in domestic workers and it implicitly allows employers to have their live-in domestic workers on duty for almost 98 hours a week.

The draft regulation provides public holidays as paid time-off for domestic workers. It also grants all domestic workers a conditional paid time-off to perform social responsibilities and to exercise civil right or duties. Nevertheless, the draft regulation adopts the customary one day a month off for domestic workers, with no consideration for weekly time-off, which is granted to other workers. In addition, the draft regulation ignores the need for annual leave. Furthermore, it overlooks maternity leave for all female domestic workers and the need for protection of women against dismissal from work due to maternity.



The findings indicate that respondents faced labour rights violations in the sense that their respective employers had control over their freedom of movement, and they lacked respect for privacy regarding their personal life. In addition, freedom of association as a labour right for domestic workers in Ethiopia is hardly raised as an issue in the regulation. The very reality of the workers is not acknowledged in the sense that the draft regulation does not mention any of these issues. It just lays a very general obligation statement on the employer to 'respect the worker's human dignity'.

In addition, the draft regulation only gives a very general statement for employers to provide their live-in workers with 'appropriate' sleeping quarters and food. Since there is no standard as to what constitutes 'appropriate', it is subjected to individual interpretations.

During my visits to the relevant institutions that were contacted for this research, there was no assigned body in charge of facilitating favourable conditions of work that arise from contracts for personal services. In fact, some of them even said that issues of labour rights for domestic workers are not within their mandate. In this regard, the draft regulation left this gap unabridged as it does not indicate responsible bodies, nor does not provide details of complaint procedures.



6. Conclusion

Experiences of female live-in paid domestic workers in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia were explored in my research. Respondents' experiences—mainly regarding employment relations and privacy—were characterized by the employers and their family members' superiority and control over the domestic worker. They were also characterized by over demand by employers on the live-in workers.

Most of the respondents were facing a range of labour rights abuses including restrictions on their movement, invasions of privacy, and violence (verbal, sexual, physical, and psychological). The employment relationship was also complicated in the sense that it was a mix of 'kindness', 'over demand' and 'control' over the conditions of work. Based on the findings, the research suggests that the draft regulation, which is still being proposed at the time of writing (2011) needs to address labour rights abuses among domestic workers.

One of the most striking findings of my research was that respondents have accepted their conditions as natural to their work. In this regard, such real life experiences go beyond the need for specific regulation. Human Rights Watch (2006) makes some useful suggestions in this regard as it argues for public awareness efforts and the facilitation of accessible complaint procedures and for the efficient and meaningful application of written provisions.



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