

## **Fostering Sustainable Development Through Decent Work For Paid Domestic Workers Under SDG-8**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This paper analyses the intricate connection between decent work, sustainable development and paid domestic workers within the framework of SDG-8. This study attempts to explain the economic implications of fostering decent work for domestic workers and its role in advancing the objectives of SDG -8. This paper is based on the existing literature and scholarly works relevant to the intersection of decent work, sustainable development and domestic work within the context of SDG-8. This is an attempt to analyse how their participation contributes to and benefit from SDG-8, examining the specific targets related to decent work and economic growth. The study further extends to address the importance of achieving work-life balance for domestic workers, recognizing the necessity for policies for their well-being. Collaborative efforts, involving, government, employers and NGOs are spotlighted as catalysts for fostering sustainable development in domestic work. The present study acknowledges challenges faced by domestic workers and proposes sustainable solutions for achieving a balanced, dignified, sustainable trajectory for domestic workers within the ambit of sustainable development goal -8. For domestic workers SDG-8 involves ensuring fair wages, reasonable working hours, safe working conditions and access to social protections. SDG 8 encourages formalisation of informal sector, which is crucial for domestic workers to gain legal recognition, protection and access to benefits.*

**Keywords:** Domestic workers, decent work, SDG-8, fair wages, informal sector

### **Introduction**

Paid domestic workers are one of the most vulnerable groups in the society. They are working in private household premises but within employment relationship. But most of the time there will

be no formal written contract between these employer and employee. Hence, they are one of the most exploited groups. ILO convention 189 emphasised decent work for domestic workers. Decent work is a concept which is included in the Sustainable Development Goal -8. As per ILO definition “paid domestic workers are those workers who are engaged in cooking, cleaning, washing, caring old age people, children and disabled within an employment relationship”. The studies show that majority of them are women workers those coming from poor socio-economic background. By providing decent work for these workers, we will be paving way for sustainable development. Poverty eradication is one of the major challenges faced by the Global economy and paid domestic workers are one of the large invisible groups which lies under abject poverty. Poverty eradication is one of the big challenges to sustainable development. Sustainable development is impossible without the eradication of poverty. In that context sustainable development and decent work for paid domestic workers are relevant. Before explaining the relationship between, paid domestic work, decent work and sustainability, I think it is important to understand about the idea of sustainable development goals especially SDG 8 and decent work in detailed manner.

### **Sustainable Development Goal-8 and domestic workers:**

United Nations made a 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. United Nations made a 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. There are 17 sustainable development goals and 169 targets. Decent work come under Goal 8.

*SDG-8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.*

There are 10 targets included in this SDG-8. Out of these 10 targets, 3 targets are connected to paid domestic workers. They are the following:

*SDG 8.5: By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.*

*SDG 8.7: Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.*

*SDG 8.8 Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment*

All the above goals are meant for all workers and the present study analyses these in the particular case of paid domestic workers. This paper is an attempt to know the extent of decent work enjoyed by paid domestic workers and the ways for improving their working condition. From the existing literatures it came to know that human trafficking, forced labour and child labour are predominant in paid domestic labour economy. There is no formal rules and laws for protecting these group. There are many labour rights and rules existing in India but none of them are there exclusively for domestic workers. The main reason for this is that they are not even recognised as workers and many of them do not give much importance to household work.

### **Decent work:**

ILO Director General in his report in the 87<sup>th</sup> session of International Labour Conference in the year 1999 introduced the concept of “Decent work”. Decent work implies opportunities for men and women to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity (ILC,1999).The Decent work can be captured through four major objectives: rights at work, employment & income opportunities, social protection & social security and social dialogue & tripartism (Decent work indicators of Asia & Pacific,2008).

#### **1. Rights at work:**

From the existing literature it came to know that labour rights are absent for domestic workers because they are not coming under formal worker category. But it is essential to provide them the basic human and labour rights. ILO convention 189 ,2011 emphasised the need for creating awareness about their rights, fight violence and harassments. ILO report quoted the words of one Filipino worker “Everyday the employer would tell me that I am crazy & stupid. I could not take that. But since she kept on saying that every day, I got used to it. Whenever they beat me up, I just cried in a corner”. These sentences gave a clear picture about the violation of rights and about their vulnerable condition. After ILO C-189 many countries have made several attempts to improve their condition and very few countries ratified the recommendations of the convention. India still not ratified it. As per ILO report (August 2018 ) only 25 countries have ratified the convention and 30 countries adopted certain laws or policies for the protection of domestic workers. In India Central government and various State governments started their attempts to implement laws for protecting their rights. Recently Kerala Government drafted a bill for Domestic workers but that is still under the scrutinization of Law department.

#### **2. Employment & income opportunities:**

Employment and income opportunities must be expanded for the removal of poverty. Eradication of poverty is one of the main agenda of this SDG-8. Generation of employment and income to the vulnerable group is one of the main agenda. In the case of domestic workers, they faced lack

of employment opportunities during the Covid pandemic. At that time they didn't get any social protection from the government and from any organisation. Hence that adversely affect their employment and income opportunities.

### **3. Social Protection & Social security:**

Majority of the domestic workers are women and they do not get any maternity benefits. In order to take care of their baby they are forced to leave their job(ILO,2022). Social protection policies contributed to inclusive growth and decent employment (ILO, Global commission for future work ,2019) hence ensuring social protection for domestic workers are important for their growth and for providing them decent employment situation. It also states that social security ensures income security and access to health care. Access to health care will help to improve their productivity. In India domestic workers are included in the Unorganised workers social security welfare board. There is no special welfare board for domestic workers even though there is an increasing demand for it. Some of them took membership in this unorganised social security welfare board but their number is meagre. In India government introduced Rashtriya swasthya Bhim Yojana for providing health insurance for workers in the unorganised sector. Un organised workers those who are under BPL category can be the beneficiary under this scheme. Beneficiaries will be issued smart cards for the purpose of identification. Health insurance is one of the ways of providing social security to poor people. But due to lack of awareness and knowledge many of them do not come under this scheme. By providing proper guidance and awareness it is possible to bring them into this social security net. In India there is no laws are there for exclusively for domestic workers. Unorganized workers social security Act 2008 and Sexual harassment of women at workplace(Prevention ,Prohibition and Redressal) Act of 2013 are the two laws which incorporate domestic workers.

### **4. Social dialogue and tripartite:**

As per ILO definition social dialogue include all type of negotiation, consultation and exchange of ideas between representatives of government, employer and workers. An active involvement of government, employer and workers are essential for providing decent working conditions. In the case of domestic workers, no such tripartite agreement existed. Strong and independent workers and employers' organizations are one of the prerequisites for social dialogue. But in the case of domestic workers the number of domestic workers organisations and employer's organisation are limited. Social dialogue and tripartite agreement depend on each country's traditions and customs (Geneva,2016).

### **Forced labour, Modern slavery and human trafficking:**

The term Modern slavery is not defined in law but it indicates the situation of exploitation that a person cannot leave due to threat, violence abuse of power etc. (ILO,2017)As per ILO convention 1930 (no 29) there are certain indicators of forced labour: restriction on workers' freedom of movement, withholding of wages or identity documents, physical or sexual violence, threats and intimidation or fraudulent debt from which workers cannot escape. Nearly 53 million, mainly women and children, are employed as domestic workers and nearly 16 million have no access to legal protection (Un,2014).As per the Global estimates of modern slavery (ILO ,2017), domestic workers are the largest working group which coming under forced labour ie. 24 per cent. Many domestic workers are faced the evils of human trafficking. It is very difficult to identify human trafficking among domestic workers because they are occurring behind the doors.

### **Conclusion:**

Paid domestic workers are one of the most vulnerable sections and their invisibility increases their vulnerability. Introduction of rules and laws and proper implementation of them help domestic workers to improve their condition and status. Before introducing rules and laws the first step is to make them visible. It is a tedious task and registration of domestic workers must be made mandatory. Identification of stakeholders are very important. As per the report road to decent work for domestic workers (ILO, 2023)the services of domestic workers are undervalued.ILO report published in 2021 state that 81 per cent domestic workers were working in the informal sector due to the gap of legal coverage. Hence it is important to formalise them by bringing into the legal framework.

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