

Human Rights Centre Clinic

Making ILO Convention 189 Real for Domestic Workers in the Caribbean

Partners: Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising (WIEGO) and the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF)

About

[Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing](#) (WIEGO) is a global network focused on empowering the working poor, especially women, in the informal economy to secure their livelihoods. Since its establishment in 2015, the [Law Programme](#) has supported workers in informal employment and their organizations to know, use and shape the law, to claim their rights and secure their livelihoods. Recognizing that law reform and political struggle are inseparable, our approach to legal advocacy is grounded in the principles of solidarity, legal empowerment and responsiveness to the political economy of the different contexts we work in. We carry out our work alongside international networks of workers in informal employment and their affiliates.

The [International Domestic Workers Federation](#) (IDWF) is a global member-based organization serving over 670,000 domestic and household workers through its affiliates in 68 countries. Since its inception as a network in 2006 (the Federation was officially formed in 2013), the IDWF has evolved into a key advocate for the rights of domestic workers globally. One of its foundational principles is that domestic work is work, and all domestic and household workers deserve to enjoy the same rights as all other workers. The IDWF's objective is to build a strong, democratic and united domestic/household workers global organizations to protect and advance domestic workers' rights everywhere.

Project overview

This project will support two domestic worker organisations in Grenada and Guyana carry out research in relation to Convention 189 on Domestic Workers of the International Labour Organization (ILO), as

part of a joint initiative between WIEGO and the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF). The research will be used to support the organisations' organising and advocacy, including by contributing to the workers' reports to the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) in 2026. The project will strengthen accountability for the commitments made by the Governments of Grenada and Guyana by ratifying the ILO Convention 189.

Background

For several years, Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) has been collaborating with the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF) to strengthen the domestic workers' organizations in Africa and the Caribbean. Part of the work of the Law Programme and the Organisation and Representation Programme involves building domestic worker leaders' capacity to better support members to claim and enforce their rights as workers. A key tool for this is [ILO Convention 189](#) (C189) concerning decent work for domestic workers. In 2018, WIEGO and the IDWF launched a project entitled "[C189 and Domestic Workers: Making it Real](#)".

Once a government has ratified the Convention, it must periodically report to the ILO's Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) detailing the steps they have taken to apply it. Workers' organisations may comment on the government reports, or send comments directly to the ILO on the application of Conventions. The CEACR typically calls on governments to respond to workers' organisations' comments, making these comments essential to the process of holding workers' organisations accountable.

In 2023, WIEGO and the International Network of Lawyers Assisting Workers (ILAW) supported the Antigua and Barbuda Domestic Workers' Association and the Namibian Domestic and Allied Workers' Union to submit comments on the extent to which their governments are complying with the provisions of C189. The comments comprehensively analysed the legal provisions through desk research and investigated the realities on the ground through consultations with domestic worker leaders and members. The CEACR has called on their respective governments to respond to the analyses and recommendations presented therein.

Project output

WIEGO and IDWF will work with a project team from the Essex Human Rights Centre Clinic to produce a report (totalling approximately 10-12,000 words) about the extent to which labour laws and practice in Guyana and Grenada are in compliance with the provisions of ILO C189, guided by the questions in the [WIEGO-IDWF C189 toolkit](#). This report will include an executive summary that outlines key areas of compliance and non-compliance with the Convention both in law and in fact and provide recommendations for legal and policy reform and practical measures to promote decent work in the sector. The team will submit a 1,000-word blog as well in May 2025.

This research would be used to support the organisations' advocacy on C189 and as a basis for workers' reports to the CEACR in 2026, which is when both Grenada's and Guyana's reports will be due. This, in turn, will strengthen accountability for the commitments these governments made by ratifying C189 and

amplify worker demands for greater legal protection. As [observed](#) by Virginia Mantouvalou, C189 is interesting in the way it ties a human rights approach to concrete principles that target the problems of a specific sector, exemplifying how human rights “can be intertwined with labour standards in law”. Supporting worker organisations to use C189’s mechanisms, in practice, will also yield important lessons for IDWF’s members both in the Caribbean and cross-regionally.

Timeline

Phase 1: November 2024 – 31 January 2025:

- Orientation meetings with WIEGO key informants from IDWF and domestic worker leaders to understand the cultural, political, organisational aspects of working in the domestic sectors and in the Caribbean region, and on legal issues arising in relation to C189.
- Preliminary research, understanding the project and developing the report outline.
- Legal analysis of labour laws in Guyana and Grenada to identify areas of alignment and non-compliance with C189.
- Outline and bibliography to be submitted to the partner organisations for comments.
- Submission of draft detailed legal analyses on compliance with C189 to the IDWF, WIEGO and for sharing with local lawyers and any other allies.

Phase 2: February 2025

- Revision and finalising of the report based on comments received from WIEGO and the IDWF.
- Presentation of key findings of the report to the partner organisations with suggestions as to issues to highlight and questions to ask during exploratory visit to one or both countries.

Phase 3: March – June 2025

- IDWF/WIEGO visit to Guyana and/or Grenada to make connections with organisations, members and allies and subsequent debriefing meeting on the country visit(s).
- Discussion on research methods with WIEGO and IDWF and decision on methods to be used for the research.
- Supporting the development of a research plan: sampling and identifying a list of experts or advocates for interviews, questionnaires, or other research tools as necessary.

- Support the preparation of materials to be used in the training of the domestic workers/leaders who will undertake the research.
- Blog for the partners, on their site or another platform, about the main findings of the project.
- Presentation of project to the partner organisations.

Initial reading

- ILO Convention 189 and Recommendation 201 concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers
- IDWF and WIEGO Domestic workers [Legal Toolkit on C189](#)
- Domestic Workers and C189: Making it Real Africa [video](#)
- [Namibia Domestic and Allied Workers' Union report to the CEACR](#)
- [Antigua and Barbuda Domestic Workers' Association report to the CEACR](#)
- [Bamu, Pamhidzai, Promoting Decent Work for Domestic Workers: Lessons from Five Countries](#)
- [Bamu, Pamhidzai From the Palace to the Kitchens: Making C189 Real for Domestic Workers in Africa](#) (forthcoming)
- Paige Carr, Courtney, (2021) [“Triply Sewn: Evoking Past, Present, and Future Selves in Guyanese Domestic Work”](#)
- Red Thread Guyana, [A Profile of Domestic Workers in Guyana](#) (2013)
- Mantouvalou, V. (2012) [‘Are Labour Rights Human Rights?’](#) *European Labour Law Journal*, 3(2)

Focal point

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