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**MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

All event information is available at: <http://www.rialnet.org/?q=en/6GenderDialogue-DomesticWork>

*(Preliminary version—For comments and additions from the RIAL/GENDER focal points in the Ministries of Labor. Please kindly send your comments or edits, if any, to:* *trabajo@oas.org* *before June 20, 2023)*

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6. **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

 The Hemispheric Gender Dialogue among Ministries of Labor “Towards paid domestic work with rights”, held virtually on March 15, 2023, brought together representatives from 27 Ministries of Labor of the Americas with the aim of sharing their advancements and strategies, as well as identifying lessons learned and policy recommendations to guarantee compliance with labor legislation and respect for fundamental rights and principles in paid domestic work. It was organized by the OAS General Secretariat, with the support of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM), and also counted with the participation of representatives of workers and employers, and the government of Spain.

By virtue of the commitment assumed by the Ministers of Labor of the Americas with the mainstreaming and institutionalization of gender within their operations, policies and programs within the framework of the Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor (IACML), the Inter-American Network for Labor Administration (RIAL) of the OAS and the CIM have deployed various efforts to support the Ministries in this direction, including technical studies, participatory gender assessments, regional and subregional workshops, and bilateral cooperation activities, among others. These efforts resulted in the creation of the RIAL/GENDER, a specialized community made up of the people in charge of the gender units or areas of the Ministries of Labor of the Americas and pursues the purpose of contributing to achieving full gender equality in the world of work, through the strengthening of said units. To meet this objective, the Network has tools such as the portfolio of programs, bilateral cooperation, and hemispheric dialogues or events, among others.

This 6th Gender Dialogue is part of the **RIAL/GENDER 2022-2023** **Work Plan** and, like previous dialogues, it provided a space for exchanging experiences, reflecting and facilitating the formulation of proposals on paid domestic work by the participating delegations.

During the Dialogue, the results of the study “*Rights of remunerated domestic workers in the Americas: Progress and persistent gaps”*, elaborated by the CIM together with the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF), were presented and provided an important guiding framework and basis for subsequent discussion. For their part, the Ministries of Labor and Social Security of Uruguay and Jamaica, considered two countries with important advances in the matter, presented their experiences. Additionally, there were spaces in the plenary session and subgroups for all the delegations to share their experiences, challenges and proposals on the central issues related to paid domestic work, such as regulations, inspection, social security coverage, training and professionalization, dissemination and awareness-rising, and alliances with social actors, as well as related emerging issues such as the care policies that are being implemented in different countries.

1. **MAIN REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

To meet the stated objective, and as in previous opportunities, the 6th Dialogue was divided into two parts, preceded by the presentation of the results of the study carried out by the CIM and PADF. 1) The first part of the Dialogue focused on learning about national experiences, led by presentations from the Ministries of Labor of Uruguay and Jamaica and followed by a space for exchange. This first part was aimed at answering two guiding questions seeking to identify the main actions taken by the Ministries towards achieving the full exercise of the rights of paid domestic workers. 2) The second part consisted of an exercise in subgroups to identify the main successes and lessons learned from such actions, as well as recommendations on policies and measures that should be carried out by the gender units or areas of the Ministries of Labor to achieve the full exercise of rights of domestic workers.

Below are the main reflections and conclusions that could be drawn from the Dialogue and, in a later section, the recommendations.

* In recent decades **there have been many advances in the regulatory legal aspect of domestic work** to integrate workers in this sector into the labor spectrum that guarantees a level of social protection and occupational safety and health equivalent to the protection provided to any other workers. Various interventions indicate that progress has been made in the regulation of working hours, protection against unemployment, dismissal regime, affiliation to social security, among other benefits.
* In the debate on this issue, great importance was attached to the ratification and/or harmonization of regulations with ILO Conventions 189 and 190 to ensure that all countries in the region give paid domestic workers the same rights as everyone else in the workforce.
* The **strengthening of the institutional framework** around domestic work is a prominent issue. To achieve more global policies centered on domestic workers, it must be considered that not only Ministries of Labor have a responsibility, but that it must be a State policy in which the Ministries of Labor have the responsibility of promoting actions and formulating policies with the participation of institutions and organizations of domestic workers and representation of employers, and where other ministries and entities that support domestic work are involved. In this regard, tripartite dialogues are mentioned as positive tools.
* **It is widely recognized that the formalization process for domestic workers is slow** and that it is necessary to promote recognition of the benefits of contributing to social security systems by domestic workers, inform about rights and obligations, and make the advantages of formalization visible. There is difficulty in reaching both the workers and the employers with information; in the case of workers, because they do not always have access to all means of communication or are not easily identifiable; in the case of employers, because in general they are not represented by an association or group and do not have information channels.
* Countries shared a major challenge around **the effective implementation of the regulations**, and considered it necessary to **develop an inspection model that allows monitoring compliance with the existing regulations** without violating the rights of individuals and the inviolability of the household (private space). To address this issue, it is necessary, on the one hand, to establish better channels for inspection within households and, on the other, to establish how to face the challenge of carrying out inspections without complaints, given the difficulty that workers have in submitting them, either due to unfamiliarity with their rights, fear of retaliatory actions by their employers, or the accessibility of complaint mechanisms.
* One of the issues that raises great concern is **the historical gap in social security coverage** to incorporate all domestic workers into social security systems, including access to retirement and pensions. In this regard, there have been important advances in legislation, although implementation has been slower, so the challenge lies in improving the effectiveness of social policies aimed at domestic workers, ensuring that care policies include them and their families.
* **Raising awareness about domestic work stands out as a key element to achieve progress in respect for the regulations** so that the employer fulfills the established obligations, which implies a particular challenge, because employers do not usually have an association that represents them, which makes dialogue difficult and the process very slow. On the other hand, awareness-raising actions are carried out aimed at the personnel of government institutions, specifically those in labor inspection, so that they can detect infractions, accompanying the process with dissemination. It is also necessary to change public opinion around domestic work so that it is considered socially as a dignified job, with rights.
* Additionally, awareness-raising activities are carried out aimed at **expanding knowledge of the rights** of domestic workers and of the responsibilities of the State.
* In a cross-cutting way, the need to adopt an **intersectional approach to domestic work** was recognized, considering the heterogeneity of circumstances of domestic workers, whether of ethnic, racial, or rural origin and, especially, of migrant workers, and that the intersection of two or more of these identities can increase the situation of vulnerability in which a worker finds herself.

Regarding the answers to the guiding question: **What has worked? What are the main successes and lessons learned from these actions?** Various experiences were shared on the topics addressed in the initial reflection, which are presented below.

* **Progress has been made in the legal framework in relation to social security coverage** for domestic workers. Experiences with important achievements in the region were identified, among which Uruguay was mentioned, where social security coverage for domestic workers covers a wide spectrum of social benefits extendable to caregivers of children, sick people, and personal companions. Also noteworthy is the rise in wages for domestic work, which increased well above the rest of the average private wages by being integrated into the tripartite body for fixing and adjusting minimum wages. Additionally, the experience of Peru was mentioned, a country in which a registry of domestic work contracts has been implemented that allows inter-institutional monitoring of the obligation to contribute to the social security system. In addition, various delegations mentioned during their interventions that progress has been made in the regulation of working hours, unemployment protection, dismissal regime, affiliation, and coverage of social security systems, among other benefits.
* Progress has been made in **developing efficient labor inspection and complaint mechanisms.** Countries have implemented various initiatives to identify labor violations, due to the difficulty for domestic workers to file complaints, often due to the lack of knowledge on the ways to present them or due to unfamiliarity with their rights. Experiences such as that of Uruguay are highlighted, where they carry out door-to-door inspection as a mass practice for inspecting all homes; in Jamaica, with the use of tablets for the work of the inspectors on the field, it was possible to receive complaints in-person. For its part, in Spain, a Decree Law was approved in 2022 through which it is possible to cross labor inspection data with the social security treasury to ensure that effective compliance with the minimum wage or social security contribution are correct and, in the case of detecting an anomaly, the employer is summoned to the labor inspectorate.
* **Progress has been made in strengthening the information systems and registration mechanisms on domestic employment** as a way of activating the formalization and payment of social security. It was recognized that, due to the informal nature of this sector, it is difficult to track and collect data from it, but there is progress in such recording systems. In Paraguay, neighborhood tours are carried out with a view to advancing in the process of formalizing labor relations (subscription to an employment contract and registration with the Social Welfare Institute) and a positive impact could be verified in the visited areas after the crossing of data with the Social Welfare Institute in subsequent months. In Chile, training has been provided for the use of a registration and information portal on rights and duties and labor inspection where the workers can register and create a work contract.
* **In terms of training, there are also several initiatives and advances.** The technical training aimed at domestic workers is noteworthy, conducive to facilitating their work and going beyond care work. Here, the case of Jamaica is highlighted, where the Ministry partnered with the union of domestic workers to offer training with excellent results, as well as experiences in Chile, Guatemala, and Mexico. Certification of skills based on useful knowledge and skills for domestic workers has also been promoted, including free programs with flexible hours to facilitate the participation of workers. There is great agreement on **the importance of generating professionalization actions** for paid domestic work in various areas.
* **Social dialogue acquires critical relevance in the identification of needs, challenges, and opportunities for domestic work**, which is why the representation of all the social actors that participate in the execution of said work is essential. In this regard, the following was identified:
	+ **Support for organizations and unions of domestic workers is important,** particularly for their expansion/reach to peri-urban and rural areas, whether it is for the dissemination of rights and promoting formalization, for accompaniment in inspections, to facilitate the collection of information and obtain information from the sector and, fundamentally, to ensure the protection of their rights and the effective implementation of regulations. The importance of tripartite instances is recognized: in Uruguay, the 2006 Domestic Work Law arose with the support of the Tripartite Commission for Equal Opportunities, made up of the sectors of workers, employers, the Ministry of Labor, and INMUJERES. Paraguay also attributes a high degree of support in moving forward to the Tripartite Commission. On the other hand, Trinidad and Tobago mentioned the existence of a union and a cooperative of domestic workers that offer training, to which people go more frequently than to the government; Jamaica also works with unions to facilitate data collection and with its data agency to gain data from this sector.
	+ **The organization of employers** is one of the greatest challenges in decent work public policies for domestic workers, because it implies a greater effort and creativity to see how this organization is achieved.
1. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The main recommendations on policies and actions that the gender units or areas of the Ministries of Labor must carry out to achieve the full exercise of the rights of domestic workers are the following:**

**General Recommendations:**

* Adopt an intersectoral approach to paid domestic work, considering linguistic and intercultural diversity and the situation of migrant domestic workers.
* Ensure that the legislation that regulates domestic work enshrines equal conditions with respect to workers and not generate differentiated legislation because, in general, differentiation leads to discrimination.
* Include paid domestic work in the care policies that are being developed in the countries, ensuring that these policies include domestic workers and their families.
* Promote the coordination of all relevant social actors at the local and national level.

**Specific Recommendations**

Regarding labor inspection:

* Design and implement awareness-raising processes and the incorporation of the gender perspective in labor inspections, both with domestic workers and their employers, so that they are aware of their rights and obligations.
* Incorporate, in addition to the gender approach, the intersectionality approach in inspection. Include elements and necessary adjustments according to the conditions of each group served; for example, having materials in different languages.
* Develop inspection and complaint mechanisms and practices to meet the challenge of carrying out inspections without invading the privacy of households, considering the difficulties that domestic workers face when making complaints.

Regarding the coordination with different actors and social dialogue:

* Promote coordination with all stakeholders (employers, workers and organizations representing domestic workers) at the local and national level.
* Create inter-institutional tables with all the actors and adopt work plans with public policy objectives in the medium and long term.
* **Strengthen the spaces for social dialogue, which allows knowing the needs of domestic workers to create policies and meet the needs of the employer sector. An example is tripartite commissions with a gender focus.**
* **Through social dialogue, make use of and promote appropriate language, as well as achieve a name for domestic work that is consistent with the needs and preferences of those who make up said sector.**

Regarding social security coverage:

* Expand social security coverage accompanied by an awareness process aimed in particular at the employer.
* Establish the obligation for employers to carry out the social security registration of domestic workers.
* Evaluate the creation of unemployment benefits so that this benefit can be given when the employment relationship is interrupted, especially when the domestic worker has more than one employer.
* Carry out an information cross-check of the data registered in the different State institutions to facilitate the verification of compliance with legal obligations in terms of contributions to the Social Security Systems.

Regarding professionalization and training:

* Create and promote free skills certification programs with flexible hours aimed at formalizing, training, and improving the conditions of domestic workers.
* Generate actions to professionalize domestic workers in various areas, including care.

Regarding dissemination and awareness-raising:

* Carry out campaigns and dissemination and awareness-raising material on rights and obligations with all relevant social actors to publicize the regulations and work to consolidate a culture of compliance to them.
* Inform, sensitize, and advise domestic workers (through campaigns and dissemination through various media) about their rights, considering their particular conditions.
* It is recognized as a success to support those domestic workers who speak another language with translations, so that they have the appropriate advice and knowledge about their rights in the workplace.
* Have guides and tutorials to raise awareness and train on how to create work contracts with coordination between state institutions to verify if the obligations to which workers are entitled to are met.
* Take a rigorous sensitization approach when it comes to raising awareness about the benefits of contributions to social security systems.
1. **NEXT STEPS**

Continuing with the fulfillment of the RIAL/GENDER 2023-2023 Work Plan, the following activities will be addressed:

* Implementation of the Documentation Center, which will contain important materials and resources for the gender units of the Ministries of Labor.
* Carrying out the 7th virtual Hemispheric Dialogue on insertion into the labor market and closing of occupational gaps — July 2023.
* Incorporation of more programs in the RIAL Portfolio of Programs, for which each RIAL/GENDER focal point has received their username and password.
* Continue promoting bilateral cooperation — During the 16th RIAL/OAS Call for Bilateral Cooperation, a bilateral cooperation was selected between the Ministry of Labor of Colombia (requesting institution) and the Ministry of Labor of Uruguay (providing institution) on “Formalization of Paid Domestic Work” that will be carried out during 2023.
* The Technical Secretariat of the RIAL/GENDER has proposed the publication of a repository of actions carried out by the Ministries of Labor throughout the region regarding domestic work, classified into five major areas of intervention: 1) Training and professionalization, 2) Dissemination and awareness-raising, 3) Inspection, 4) Social security coverage and, 5) Alliances with social actors. To do this, it has prepared documents for each country and is consulting each Ministry to validate and publish the information.
* The repository of actions mentioned above will be connected to the CIM microsite on the matter, which seeks to provide concrete tools and pieces of awareness-raising and dissemination (video, audio, graphics for social networks, etc.) to workers, employers, and public officials on key issues for the exercise of the rights of domestic workers (https://www.oas.org/en/cim/domestic-work/pages/descargas.html).
1. **LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

**ESTADOS MIEMBROS / MEMBER STATES**

**ARGENTINA** – Ministerio de Trabajo, Empleo y Seguridad Social

* Patricia Sáenz, Directora Nacional de Protección e Igualdad
* María del Mar Ortolano, Directora del Tribunal de Trabajo para el Personal de Casas Particulares
* María José Olguín, Analista de Planificación e Implementación de Políticas Públicas con orientación en Asuntos Internacionales
* Gustavo Ángel Riccombeni, Asesor, Unidad de Gabinete de Asesores
* Thiago Sabato Martins, Analista, Dirección de Asuntos Internacionales

**BAHAMAS –** Ministry of Labour and Immigration

* Donnava Dorsett, Technical Associate

**BELIZE** — Ministry of Labour

* Aida Reyes, Senior Labour Officer

**BOLIVIA** — Ministerio de Trabajo, Empleo y Previsión Social

* Maya Verazain, Funcionaria, Dirección de Asuntos Internacionales
* Erika Arteaga, Técnico de Relaciones Internacionales
* Cinthya Quispe Silva, Responsable de Derecho Laboral
* Wendy Marlene Paño Titirico, Profesional de Derecho Laboral

**BRAZIL** – Ministerio do Trabalho e Emprego

* Maira Lacerda, Coordinadora de Cooperación Técnica Internacional

**CANADA** — Ministry of Labour

* Jillian LeBlanc, Team Lead Gender Based Analysis Plus Center of Expertise
* Shanaya Singh, Policy Analyst

**CHILE** – Ministerio del Trabajo y Previsión Social

* María Karen Mejías, Encargada Ministerial de Género
* Pamela Carrasco Geve, Coordinadora Medidas Igualdad de Género
* Abril Campos, Apoyo Experto de la Unidad de Transversalización de Género de la Subsecretaría del Trabajo
* Marcelo Tapia Valenzuela, Jefe de Asuntos Internacionales
* Antonia Riveros, Profesional Dirección de Estudios

**COLOMBIA** – Ministerio del Trabajo

* Erika Tinoco Rivera, Funcionaria del Grupo Interno de Trabajo para las Victimas y Equidad Laboral con Enfoque de Género
* Rubiela Agamez, Profesional especializada de la Dirección de Derechos Fundamentales
* Daniela Aragón Salleg, Asesora de la Oficina de Cooperación y Relaciones Internacionales

**COSTA RICA** – Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social

* Yamileth Jiménez Cubillo, Jefa de Unidad de Género
* Marisol Bolaños, Jefa de Departamento de Asuntos Internacionales
* Ana Lucia Blanco Valverde, Asesora de Asuntos Internacionales del Trabajo
* Jorge Tortos, Consejero, Misión Permanente de Costa Rica ante la OEA

**DOMINICA** — Ministry of National Security & Legal Affairs

* Gloria Joseph, Permanent Secretary

**ECUADOR -** Ministerio del Trabajo

* Daniela Peralta, Directora de Atención a Grupos Prioritarios
* Daniela Gallo, Analista de Relaciones Internacionales
* Laura Vásquez, Especialista, Misión Permanente de Ecuador ante la OEA

**EL SALVADOR** – Ministerio de Trabajo y Previsión Social

* Fabiola Aquino, Técnico de la Unidad de Atención Laboral a Sectores Prioritarios
* Karla Luna, Colaboradora Jurídica

**GRENADA –** Ministry of Labour

* Brenda Bain, Planning Officer

**GUATEMALA** – Ministerio de Trabajo y Previsión Social

* Juana Sotz Chex, Jefa de Sección Mujer Trabajadora
* Gabriela Soria, Asesora de Viceministra
* Belbet González, Analista de Cooperación

**HONDURAS** – Secretaría del Trabajo y Seguridad Social

* Nelson Erazo, Asistente Técnico de Inspección

**JAMAICA** – Ministry of Labour and Social Security

* Lyndon Ford, Director Electronic Labour Exchange

**MÉXICO** – Secretaría del Trabajo y Previsión Social

* Graciela Ramirez Zepeda, Directora de Políticas de Trabajo Digno
* Mara Salazar, Directora de Asuntos Hemisféricos
* Omar Laborde Velázquez, Funcionario de Subdirección de Promoción para la Incorporación a la Seguridad Social
* Ignacio Maldonado, Operativo
* Socorro Guadalupe Jorge Cholula, Representante Alterna, Misión Permanente de México ante la OEA

**Panamá** – Misión Permanente de Panamá ante la OEA

* Juana Mudarra, Delegada, Misión Permanente

**PARAGUAY** – Ministerio de Trabajo, Empleo y Seguridad Social

* + Patricia Lunchin Rumak, Responsable de Programas y Proyectos de la Dirección General de Promoción a la Mujer Trabajadora
	+ Viviana Cano Cantero, Directora General de Planificación

**PERÚ** – Ministerio de Trabajo y Promoción del Empleo

* + Cecilia Tello, Directora de la Dirección de Promoción y Protección de los Derechos Fundamentales Laborales
	+ Katherine Durand, Especialista de la Dirección de Promoción y Protección de los Derechos Fundamentales Laborales
	+ Ana Gisela Cuzcano, Especialista en Igualdad y No Discriminación en el Ámbito Laboral
	+ María Isabel Moscol, Oficial Administrativo, Oficina de la SG/OEA en Perú
	+ Kelva Morales, Representante Alterna, Misión Permanente de Perú ante la OEA

**REPÚBLICA DOMINICANA** — Ministerio de Trabajo

* Katherine Lizbeth Leger Valera, Coordinadora, Dirección General de Trabajo

**SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS** – Ministry of Tourism, Civil Aviation, International Transport, Employment & Labour and Urban Development

* + Shernel James, Labour Commissioner
	+ Annick Bedford, Labour Officer
	+ Astric Wyatt Archibald, Labour Officer
	+ Amy Seaton, Labour Officer

**SAINT LUCIA** – Ministry for the Public Service, Home Affairs, Labour and Gender Affairs

* Bynta Ernest, Gender Affairs Officer
* Nadia Pierre-Louis, Employment Officer III

**SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES –** Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, Rural Transformation, Industry and Labour

* + Icelma Samuel, Labor Officer
	+ Avette Abbott, Admin Officer

**TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO –** Ministry of Labour

* + Farouk Mohammed, Chief Labour Inspector Specialist
	+ Mary Lyn Lewis-James, Senior Labour Inspector Specialist
	+ Cherisse Coward, International Affairs Officer
	+ Danica Smith, Planning Officer
	+ Paula Achaibar, Labour Inspector II
	+ Indira Dookiesingh, Labour Inspector
	+ Tara Rampersad, Labour Inspector

**UNITED STATES** – Department of Labor

* + Carolina Rizzo, Senior Advisor on Western Hemisphere Affairs
	+ Katherine Roth, International Relations Officer
	+ Amy Dalrymple, Policy Analyst
	+ Mathilde Roux, Policy Analyst

**URUGUAY –** Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social

* + Laura Triaca, Jefa de la Unidad Especializada en Género
	+ Magela Escutari, Integrante de Unidad Especializada en Género
	+ Nataly Rodríguez Bessio, Asesoría Letrada
	+ Laura Zúñiga, Asesora
	+ Andrea Badolati, Integrante de Dirección Nacional de Trabajo (DINATRA)

**ÓRGANOS CONSULTIVOS / CONSULTATIVE BODIES**

Comité Sindical de Asesoramiento Técnico (COSATE)

* Marta Pujadas, Presidenta
* Gabriela Prado, Representante de Trabajadores
* Nahuel Placanica, Representante de Trabajadores

Comisión Empresarial de Asesoramiento Técnico en Asuntos Laborales (CEATAL)

* Maria Paz Anzorreguy, Coordinadora de CEATAL

**ESTADOS OBSERVADORES ANTE LA OEA / OAS OBSERVER STATES**

**ESPAÑA** — Embajada de España en EEUU

* Marcos Fraile, Consejero de Trabajo, Migraciones y Seguridad Social

**ORGANISMOS INTERNACIONALES / INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

**Organización de los Estados Americanos (OEA) / Organization of American States (OAS)**

* + Jesús Schucry Giacoman, Director del Departamento de Desarrollo Humano, Educación y Empleo, SEDI
	+ Maria Claudia Camacho, Jefa de la Sección de Trabajo y Empleo, DHDEE, SEDI
	+ Lylian Mires, Especialista de Género
	+ Beatriz Piñeres, Especialista, Comisión Interamericana de Mujeres (CIM)
	+ Hilary Anderson, Senior Gender Specialist, Comisión Interamericana de Mujeres (CIM)
	+ Azul Hidalgo, Oficial de Programas, Sección de Trabajo y Empleo, DHDEE, SEDI
	+ María Camila Salazar, Pasante, Sección de Trabajo y Empleo, DHDEE, SEDI