

Domestic Work is Work: an illustrated booklet

This booklet is based on a two-year study of domestic workers conducted by faculty at Azim Premji University.

To know more about the struggles of Domestic Workers, here are some online resources. Please share it with friends/family so that more people and employers are aware that Domestic Workers need to be accorded their due rights and be treated with dignity.

Minimum wages for Domestic Workers

<https://tinyurl.com/y9sl3une>

Bonus for Domestic Workers

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M3lgggBBJno&t=41s>

Struggle to collectivize Domestic Workers

<https://www.wiego.org/campaign-domestic-workers-convention>

If you wish to help Domestic Workers, here are some key organisations in Bengaluru:

- Domestic Workers Rights Union (DWRU) : +91 9845445408
- Manekelasa Karmikara Union (Makayu) : 080 25353560/190
- Akhila Karnataka Domestic Workers Trade Union : 080 25743464
- Karnataka Domestic Workers Union : +91 9945716052

We thank all domestic workers and the union leadership who helped with our study and this illustration, especially the Domestic Workers Rights Union (DWRU), Stree Jagruti Samiti (SJS), Manekelasa Karmikara Union (Makayu) and Foundation for Educational Innovations in Asia (FEDINA)

3 Demands of Domestic Worker Collectives

Domestic workers (henceforth, DWs) are a significant part of India's informal labour sector. They are predominantly women from marginalised backgrounds, and their work is easily undervalued, invisibilised and stigmatized. Their workplace, often an employer's home, amplifies the paternalistic working relationship.

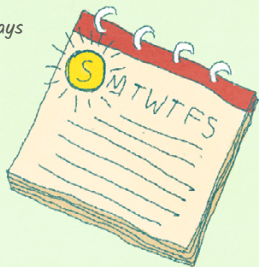
All this leads to tremendous exploitation and oppression of domestic workers. They are not supported by strong legislative and welfare measures. There are also many hurdles that hinder collectivisation.

Apart from social security, domestic workers in Bangalore have three major demands - a six-day work week, fair wages and a bonus. Let us understand these a bit more.

6-Day Work Week

The wage code says, "There shall be a day of rest for every period of seven days of work."

However, because of the nature of domestic work, the workers are expected to work all seven days.



Many DWs use different strategies to ask for their weekly off.



I have a family to take care. My two children need time with me. Please give me a weekly day off.

However, this doesn't always work.



Only full-time workers need a day off. You only work at my house for one hour, why should I give you a weekly off?

Domestic workers are workers whose work is invisibilized. They ought to have the same labour rights as all other workers.



Anna I work for 1-2 hours for you everyday. But I work in multiple houses. Hence, I am a full-time worker.

Living Wages

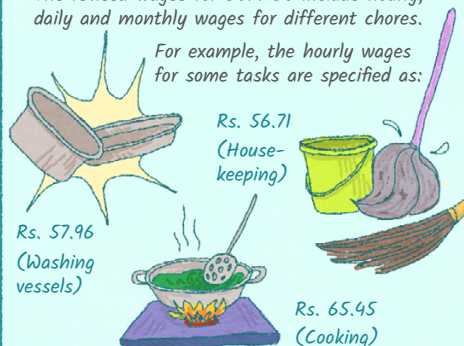
"A living wage is different from minimum wage. It takes into account the fair and just cost of living and the basic needs of workers.

This includes daily sustenance but also aspirational needs like education of children, standard of living, etc.



The Government of Karnataka notified the minimum wage for Domestic Workers in 2004. The revised wages for 2019-20 include hourly, daily and monthly wages for different chores.

For example, the hourly wages for some tasks are specified as:



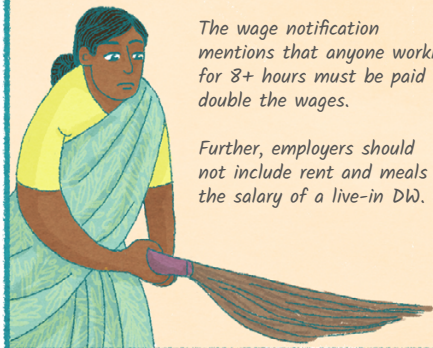
The hourly/daily wage breakdown is a starting point to follow in order to pay DWs according to their labour and to ensure they are always paid living wages.



While the wage directives are a starting point, there are issues to consider. If a DW is working for 3+ hours in one house, she cannot visit other homes, and her total wage reduces. So, she must be paid more than the minimum suggested wage.

The wage notification mentions that anyone working for 8+ hours must be paid double the wages.

Further, employers should not include rent and meals in the salary of a live-in DW.



While it is important to shift the preception of the salary of DW from a token to wages, the minimum wage directives are just a stepping stone in the larger fight.

We need to be mindful of the fact that minimum wages can only take us a limited distance to ensure good labour practices. Our long-term fight should be for **LIVING WAGES!**



Bonus

It is a common practice for most workplaces in India to give a 'bonus' of **one month's wage** to their employees, usually during festival time.

However, for domestic workers, a lot of employers give 'gifts' like sarees and sweets instead of a bonus.

This is because the employers perceive their relationship with DWs as a patronage and not a formal working relationship.



DW unions encourage workers to ask for a bonus, but the labour dynamic makes it a difficult negotiation.



Happy diwali, Akka!
This is for you, I chose the sari myself!



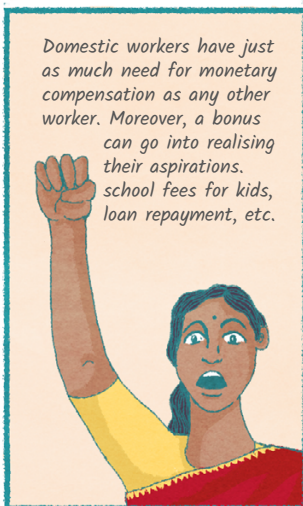
Thanks, ma. But I'd rather you gave me a cash bonus instead of the gift. It is a fair demand.



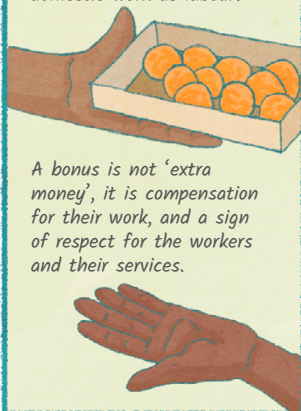
Akka, I am giving this gift out of love. How can you ask for bonus?
This is not an office, no?



Domestic workers have just as much need for monetary compensation as any other worker. Moreover, a bonus can go into realising their aspirations. school fees for kids, loan repayment, etc.



The struggle for Bonus is a big step in recognising domestic work as labour.



A bonus is not 'extra money', it is compensation for their work, and a sign of respect for the workers and their services.