

CONFERENCE REPORT

Beyond the Kafala System
December 9-10/2013

Supported by:



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Executive Summary

On December 9 and 10, 2013, with the support of Christian Aid, Insan Association hosted a two day conference titled 'Beyond the Kafala System'. The conference occurred at the Rotana Hotel, Beirut, Lebanon. This report documents both the process and recommendations developed at the conference.

Background & Purpose

There are approximately 200,000 migrant domestic workers (MDW) employed in Lebanon, a country of approximately 4 million. Unlike any other occupation, Domestic Workers are specifically excluded from the Lebanese Labour Code (Article 7). In its place, MDWs working and living conditions are governed by a Standard Unified Contract, administrative regulations and societal norms. These laws, regulations and practices form the "sponsorship system" or kalafa system. The sponsorship system links a MDWs residence and work permit to one employer. Additionally, the Labour Code stipulates that foreigners can join trade unions however they cannot vote on union matters (Article 92). Therefore, in Lebanon MDWs are subjected to a legal framework that is inferior to the one afforded to all other employment categories without the means to challenge it.

The momentum for change to legislation, practices and norms governing Migrant Domestic Workers (MDWs) in Lebanon has grown in recent years. To date much of the advocacy work has been undertaken by international and national non-government agencies.

However, in order to build a sustainable framework for the protection of migrant domestic workers human and labour rights, synergy between MDWs; Unions; NGOs; Government officials; political parties; recruitment agencies; the judiciary; academics and Embassies; must be enhanced. The 'Beyond the Kafala System' conference served as an initial platform for diverse stakeholders to interact and discuss reform of, and alternatives to, the kafala system in Lebanon (please see Conference Agenda at Appendix A). The participation of most stakeholder groups (please see Organisational Attendance List in Appendix B) at the conference laid the foundation for the emergence of consensus regarding the necessary changes to the Lebanese legal framework to protect the rights of MDWs and assist Lebanon to meet minimum international standards. It should be noted that SORAL, the Recruitment Syndicate, were invited and encouraged to attend however declined.

Additionally, representation of key stakeholders will facilitate future partnerships and sharing of resources, enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the sector. Given the unstable political landscape within Lebanon, including a current caretaker government with limited



legislative powers, innovative and creative methods and partnerships must be employed to achieve structural change at a national level. Typical lobbying strategies (for example nurturing ministerial 'champions of change') often have limited long term impact within the Lebanese context due to frequent resignations and shifts in the balance of power. Therefore, memorandums of understanding, codes of conduct, shared principles and the like, must be utilised in the interim. Such agreements and guiding documents will only emerge once a collaborative environment is fostered amongst stakeholders working with and for, migrant domestic workers.

In addition, it is anticipated that cross-sector partnerships will facilitate the eventual ratification of the Internal Labour Organisations Convention on the Rights of Domestic Workers (C189) and incorporation of MDWs under the Lebanese labour Code by gradually bringing practices in the sector into congruence with the standards outlined in the convention and local labour law.

The conference highlighted the integral role of unions in ensuring MDWs are able to negotiate their labour rights both now and in the future. As implementers of the "sponsorship system", individual employers are in a position to exercise extraordinary control over MDWs. The sponsorship system requires MDWs to rely upon their employers not only for their legal status within Lebanon, but also for their accommodation, food, medical care, and other necessities. Such complete dependency leaves the MDW vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. The system provides little to no accountability measures to ensure employers meet their legal obligations or treat workers with dignity and respect. When domestic workers question their employers about violations, the workers have very little bargaining power.

Unions have an institutionalised role in negotiating with employers and governments, on behalf of workers. The conference provided an opportunity for attendees to develop insight into the key role played by unions in achieving labour justice for domestic workers. Moreover, the conference encouraged participants to identify how the organisation they represented could support the effective unionisation of MDWs in Lebanon.

1. Engaging MDWs directly

Prior to the conference Insan Association facilitated an all day workshop with the nine MDWs who participated in the conference. The participants involved in the pre-conference workshop represented the principle origin countries of MDWs (Ethiopia, Sri-Lanka, Philippines, Madagascar and Nepal) in Lebanon. During the workshop key messages the MDWs wanted to convey to other conference participants were explored and developed.

Legal frameworks (such as ILO Convention 189, the Lebanese Labour Code and the Standard Unified Contract) governing the employment of MDWs were discussed. MDWs utilised national and international legal mechanisms to frame their demands. Appendix C outlines the activities that were used as vehicles for discussion. Appendix D documents the outcomes of the workshop discussions.

Additionally, workshops were held with MDWs who presented during the conference (as keynote speakers and panel members). During such workshops talking points were identified and the MDWs rehearsed in preparation for their high profile roles.

Keynote Addresses'

The conference was opened by Insan Association Director Charles Nasrallah. Mr. Nasrallah emphasized the need to include migrant domestic workers under the existing labour code. Mr. Nasrallah elaborated that to create a separate law for this work category would further stigmatize domestic work as distinct from other work categories and reinforces perceptions that domestic workers are **inherently** vulnerable. Additionally, Mr. Nasrallah asserted that Lebanon is currently associated with modern forms of slavery and for this to change; reform must occur on many levels, in particular, a re-examination of the work and role of General Security and employment placement agencies.

Former Minister of Labour Dr. Charbel Nahhas concurred that migrant domestic workers should be incorporated under the Lebanese Labour Code as to do otherwise would be discriminatory. Dr. Nahhas stated that the kafala system does not have legal or cultural roots in Lebanon.

Migrant Forum in Asia Regional Coordinator and Representative of Migrant Rights International, Mr. William Gois, proceeded to set the tone by declaring that the conference must produce tangible results that all partners can subsequently pursue.

Ms. Gemma Justo, a MDW and advocate, highlighted the exploitation, physical, sexual and emotional abuse MDWs are commonly subjected to daily. Ms. Justo stated that her experience and research has lead her to recognise that female employers are often harsher than their male counterparts as they feel displaced by the MDW who now cooks, cleans and looks after the children. However, Ms. Justo asserted that male employers often believe they can make sexual advances towards the MDW because he has "bought her" and therefore paid for all the services he desires. Ms. Justo explained the humiliation that a domestic worker feels when having to ask and remind her employer about payment of her salary. Mrs. Justo concluded by demanding an end to the Sponsorship System and its replacement with an employment category based visa. Ms. Justo stated that she was doubtful such reforms would occur while MDWs were denied the right to vote on union matters.

Rowland Tawk, a human rights lawyer, stated that while the labour law qualifies the relationship between employer and employee to be based upon work, monetary exchange, and an association of interdependency; the kafala system is a framework that extends beyond the arena of work. As a result, MDWs are vulnerable to exploitation. Mr Tawk emphasised that many of the violations against MDWs take place with the collusion of Lebanese authorities. Mr. Tawk provided the example of MDWs who are often kept in detention awaiting deportation long after serving the required sentence for residing in Lebanon without a valid visa. Other violations encountered within the judicial sector include false counter claims of theft when a MDW leaves the house of their employer, denying MDWs the right to an interpreter, and an inherent bias against MDWs during investigations.



Day 1

Plenary

Presentations

Summary

Discussions on day one focused on discrepancies between The International Labour Organisation Domestic Worker Convention (C189) and the current Lebanese legal framework regulating the work and living conditions of MDWs. During the plenary the guest speakers provided background information about the Convention and the current regulatory structure.

Zeina Mezher, Project Coordinator at the International Labour Organisation (ILO) provided an overview of the ILO Convention on the "Decent Work for Domestic Workers" (C189) which documents international standards in relation to the rights of domestic workers. Ms. Mezher highlighted that whilst the convention does not specifically apply to MDWs there is a special focus on the needs of **migrant domestic workers** throughout the Convention. Ms. Mezher drew attention to Article 11 which stipulates that domestic workers must be covered by local minimum wages and labour laws. Further Ms. Mezher stated that Article 15 of the Convention (C189) necessitates tight regulation of placement employment agencies including mechanisms to investigate and prosecute violations.

Nizar Sagieh, a human rights lawyer, stated that the sponsorship system inhibits MDWs access to justice. Mr. Sagieh explained that MDWs will often refrain from pursuing complaints against their employer in cases of abuse or exploitation in exchange for release papers (tenesol) which allow them to commence work with another employer. Further, MDWs are often denied the opportunity to make a complaint against their employer as once they leave their employers home they are considered to no longer have a valid work and residency permit and consequently deported by General Security. This process does not acknowledge that often MDWs leave their place of employment due to abuse and exploitation and therefore have a right to access the judicial system.

Mr. Rangidh Gunaratna, the Ambassador of Sri Lanka to Lebanon, asserted that racism plagued the lives of Sri Lankan domestic workers in Lebanon. Mr. Gunaratna, explained that racism experienced ranged from disrespect in public places to lack of due justice in relation to crimes committed against domestic workers from Sri Lanka. His Excellency stated that in March a Sri Lankan domestic worker was heinously murdered and her stomach and head were found dismembered from her body. Mr. Gunaratna stated that he believed that no one had been prosecuted for the crime as a result of the investigating authority's negligence, which in turn was influenced by racism. His Excellency further elaborated that the primary reason Sri Lankan women travel to Lebanon to work is because they wish to save money. Mr. Gunaratna explicated that often Sri Lankan MDWs are unable to do this as once they arrive in Lebanon they are informed that the contract they signed in Sri Lanka is not valid and their wage will be comparable to what they could earn in Sri Lanka.

Workshop 1

Following the plenary, conference participants worked in breakout-groups to develop specific amendments and steps that could be taken to bring the Lebanese legal framework governing MDWs into congruence with C189. The following recommendations were produced:

- 1- The right to have and keep a mobile phone is included in the Standard Unified Contract;
- 2- Establish a system of fines and bans that apply to employers who do not adhere to the Standard Unified Contract (including provisions for breaches of the right to a day off and the working hours set out in the Contract);
- 3- A requirement that MDWs are paid into a bank account to ensure there is an electronic record of payment of wages;
- 4- A requirement that MDWs sign the Standard Unified Contract in their native language at the Notary Public;
- 5- Amend Article 7 of the Labour Code to include DWs as this is a requirement of C189;
- 6- The Lebanese government to require MDWs to sign a copy of the Standard Unified Contract (in their native language) in their country of origin and send it to Lebanon prior to their visa being issued;
- 7- Form a cross-sector lobby to pressure the National Employment Agency to closely monitor and enforce regulations governing placement employment agencies and further support good practices within the recruitment sector;
- 8- Form a cross-sector lobby to pressure the Ministry of Labour to enforce the Standard Unified Contract and other Lebanese Laws (such as the Penal Code). This should include in-house monitoring. It was originally suggested that civil society could carry out this monitoring function. However, it was eventually agreed that responsibility for monitoring labour conditions must remain the responsibility of the State as to begin undertaking these functions would reduce pressure on the Government to fulfil its obligations.
- 9- A taskforce should be set up to monitor MDWs access to justice. This would include undertaking a study to compare the prosecution rate of crimes committed against MDWs with the prosecution rate of crimes committed against Lebanese citizens.
- 10- Coordinate with the police to circulate a notice by the Department of Public Prosecutions forbidding the withholding of workers' identification papers (including their passport and work permits).

Day 2

Summary of Presentations in Plenary

Day two focused on the status of MDW unionisation within Lebanon. During the plenary the guest speakers outlined current efforts and barriers to supporting the unionisation and mobilisation of MDWs.

Castro Abdullah, the President of the Fenasol Union Syndicate, provided a historical glimpse of the origins of syndicates. Mr. Abdullah explained, in Lebanon small workers organizations started to appear during the Ottoman rule. Soon after, during the French mandate, these organizations became syndicates and created the Lebanese Labour Code. Mr. Abdullah stressed that Fenasol is not only interested in the rights MDWs but also the rights of all migrant workers. Mr. Abdullah outlined the impact of Article 92 of the Labour Code. Article 92 stipulates that foreigners can join unions but are unable to vote on union matters. Mr. Abdullah stated that if Article 92 was ammended to allow foreigners to vote on elections matters, unionsation would be an effective way for MDWs to contribute to developing an alternative regulatory framework that is better able to protect their labour rights.



Theresa Pontillias, a MDW within Lebanon, outlined the importance of collective bargaining through unions from a domestic workers perspective. Ms. Pontillias explained that as foreigners without the right to vote in national elections, unions are an essential method for negotiating change. Ms. Pontillias stated the lack of citizenship rights creates a very unequal relationship between employers and migrant domestic workers, as employers can influence the employment framework through their local Member of Parliament and parliamentary elections. However migrant domestic workers have no way of collectively negotiating and expressing their needs and interests. Ms. Pontillias asserted that this unequal relationship has lead to gross abuse and violations of migrant domestic workers basic rights.

Marie-José L. Tayah, Research Coordinator at the ILO, outlined a project initiated by the ILO to encourage the mobilisation and unionsation of MDWs in Lebanon. Ms. Tayah explained that the purpose of the project was threefold: to raise MDWs consciousness as workers; to increase MDWs direct representation in NGO and union events nationally and internationally; and to build relationships between stakeholders currently supporting MDWs. Ms Tayah stated the projet had contributed to many successes, including: MDWs articulating their experiences and needs on several radio programmes; attended international forums in Nepal and Uruguay; and were attending this conference as equal participants and panel members.

Workshop 2

Following the plenary, conference participants worked in break-out-groups to identify and develop cross-sector efforts to support the unionisation of MDWs within Lebanon. The following recommendations were produced:

- 1- Promote Fenasol with flyers pasted onto electrical poles, walls and other spaces around the country;
- 2- Ensure Embassies promote the role of Unions to MDWs, including distributing flyers about the service;
- 3- Implement a media campaign which raises awareness about the role of the Union for MDWs;
- 4- Support MDWs to more strategically spread information about MDWs rights and responsibilities in their country of origin. For example, MDWs who have travelled or are living and working in a destination country can form an alliance with local municipalities in their country of origin and arrange for information about the union to be distributed to prospective MDWs;
- 5- The International Organisation for Migration to disseminate information about domestic worker unions at the airport in Lebanon and countries of origin;
- 6- Increase the services offered by the union to include training provided to employers, by MDW union members, about the roles and responsibilities of the employer and employee;
- 7- Amend Article 92 of the Labour Code to allow MDWs to vote on Union matters;
- 8- Until Article 92 is amended, an NGO with a membership base consisting of MDWs should nominate a Lebanese person to represent them in domestic worker unions. This Lebanese representative will be bound to represent the views of MDWs when voting on union matters and will therefore provide a vehicle for MDWs views to be heard (albeit a unified MDW voice).

Alternatives to the Sponsorship System

The conference concluded with a plenary session outlining a vision for the future without the kafala system.

Ms. Rola Abi Mourched, Project Coordinator at KAFA, highlighted alternatives to the sponsorship system that are currently in place both in Lebanon and abroad. Ms. Abi Mourched explained that Sukleen employees within Lebanon are covered by the Lebanese Labour Code despite being mostly foreigners. Ms. Abi Mourched referred to the United Kingdom (UK) migrant domestic worker visa system that was in place prior to 2012. Ms. Abi Mourched stated that whilst such a system did require a MDW to have an official offer of employment prior to a visa being granted, once issued, the visa did not link the MDW to one employer. Such a framework allows MDWs to quit their job and seek employment as a MDW with another employer, at their discretion. Additionally, MDWs, like all other employment categories, are covered by the UK Labour Law. Further, the employer is not responsible for the MDW whilst she resides in the country. Ms. Abi Mourched also referred to the regulatory framework utilized within Hong Kong. Ms. Abi Mourched stated that within Hong Kong MDWs are also covered by local labour laws.

Mr. William Gois asserted that whilst much of the conference focused on measures to reform the Kafala system in order to provide more immediate protection of MDWs within the current framework, the ultimate aim must be its replacement.

– APPENDIX A –

Conference Programme

9th and 10th December 2013

1st Day - 9th December

Time	Topic	Speakers
9.00 – 9.30	Presentation: Welcome and introduction to the purpose of the conference.	Mr. Charles Nasrallah - Insan Association Director. Mr. William Gois - MFA Regional Coordinator.
9.30 – 10.00	Presentation: Overview of the human rights violations experienced by MDWs: Violations enshrined in law; Violations that occur through norms and practices.	Mrs. Gemma C. Justo - MDW 10mn. Me. Roland Tawk - Lawyer 15mn. Embassy representative 15mn.
10.00 – 10.30	Morning Tea	
10.30 – 11.30	Plenary: Specific changes required for the Lebanese legal framework to be congruent with C189: Outline of the sections of the convention that are incongruent; Outline what processes need to be followed for the changes to be made.	Insan Association moderator: Introduction (to the topic and the speakers) 5mn. Panel Members: Ms. Zeina Mezher - National Project Coordinator ILO 15mn. Me. Nizar Saghieh - Lawyer 15mn. Embassy representative 15mn.
11.30 – 1.15	Workshops: Create a priority list (top 5) changes to ensure the Lebanese legal framework is congruent with C189. Separate priorities into material changes to legal framework and norms and practices.	Groups of 7
1.15 – 2.15	Lunch	
2.15 - 3.30	Breakout session: Develop steps to achieve priority list identified in previous sessions.	Groups of 7
3.30 – 3.45	Afternoon Tea	
3.45 – 5.30	Plenary: Group priority presentations and implementation plan . Moderator presents top priorities for each sub-classification (legal amendments / practices and norms).	Insan Association Moderator Group representatives

2nd Day – 10th December

Time	Topic	Speakers
9.00 – 9.30	Presentation: Welcome and recap.	Mr. Charles Nasrallah. Mr. William Gois - MFA Regional Coordinator.
9.30 – 10.00	Presentation: The role of the union.	Mr. Castro Abdullah - Fenasol Union President.
10.00 – 10.30	Coffee Break	
10.30 – 11.45	Plenary: Current efforts to form a union. Barriers to effective union mobilization and participation	Fenasol 15mn. MDW Mrs. Theresa Pontillas 15mn. Ms. Marie-Jose Tayah - ILO Research Coordination and knowledge sharing officer 15mn.
11.45 – 1.15	Breakout session: Identify 3 cross sector efforts that could be engaged to support legalization of Union activity on behalf of MDWs, participation and mobilization of MDWs (this should include what resources would be required – money, time etc).	Groups of 7
1.15 – 2.15	Lunch	
2.15 – 3.30	Plenary: Presentations on cross sector efforts (including resources required) to support Unionisation of MDWs.	Insan Association Moderator. Group representative.
3.30 – 3.45	Afternoon Tea	
3.45 – 4.45	Plenary: Alternatives to the Kafala system – best practice abroad in preserving the right to quit and freedom of movement.	Mr. William Gois - MFA Regional Coordinator 20mn. Me. Roland Tawk - Lawyer 20mn. Ms. Roula Bou Mourched- Kafa representative 20mn.
4.45 – 5.00	Conclusion: Closing session.	Mr. Charles Nasrallah - Insan Association Director. Mr. William Gois - MFA Regional Coordinator.

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– APPENDIX B –

**List of Attendees
In alphabetical
order**

Anti-Racism Movement
Danish Refugee Council
Embassy of Ethiopia
Embassy of Philippine
Embassy of Sri Lanka
Fenasol, Federation of Workers and Employees Unions
Filipino Community in Lebanon
French Protestant Church
Free Patriotic Movement Party
Lebanese General Security
Human Rights Law Center
International Organization for Migration
International Labor Organization
KAFA enough violence and exploitation
Lebanese Forces Party
Ministry of Interior Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Madagascan Community
Nepalese Community
Pastoral Care of Afro-Asian Migrants
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
Sri Lankan Community
La Troisième Voix pour le Liban

– APPENDIX C –

Workshop Interactive Discussions

Week 1, Horizontal Mapping and Living Conditions

Time	Activity Objective	Activity Description	Supplies
20min	Warm-up and begin sharing experiences	A form of musical chairs where three chairs are hot-seats. When the music stops, three participants will end up in the hot-seats, and have to draw from a hat a theme or question related to living and working conditions to share with the group (proposed questions from guide but somewhat 'light' to begin building trust). Open for discussion with other participants that want to add to the thoughts of others.	Chairs, signs taped on chairs to indicate hot-seat, questions, hat, music.
30min	Visually show shared experiences	In the room, four corners are labeled never, sometimes, frequently, and always. Various statements are read, and each participant moves to the corner that most appropriately describes their experience. For example, the statement 'You sleep less than 6 hours' is read, one goes to 'sometimes' and the others to 'frequently.' The facilitator asks an individual from each corner to talk more about their experience, and other participants are encouraged to share.	Labels, prepared questions/statements
30min	Sensitively discuss biggest fears	Drawing/writing fears and putting them into a hat in order to facilitate discussion of the more difficult topics, such as abuse. Each participant shares what they put into the hat, and then further questions on the themes raised are discussed.	Pens and paper, hat, questions

Week 2, Legal Worker's Education

Time	Activity Objective	Activity Description	Supplies
30min	Realize that responsibility is held by more than just employers	Participants respond to a set of statements (based on priorities identified in the previous workshop) by moving to the section where they feel the responsibility lies: recruiters, law enforcement, and employers... the 8 sectors. Their position is discussed: Why do they think that particular sector is responsible? Are the other sectors blameless, or do they all play a part? The facilitator should ask questions that facilitate MDWs' realization that though it feels like employers are to blame, all sectors are complicit and share responsibility. A successful workshop is one where participants begin to move away from the 'employer' sector and towards other key sectors.	Tape and paper to indicate sectors, prepared questions and knowledge of legal framework
40min	Articulate responsibility in terms of specific demands	After the above exercise, specific claims or demands can be discussed as a form of debrief. For example, 'We said that recruiters hold responsibility in this. What do we want recruiters to do better?' Sector by sector, improvements and responsibility should be discussed, forming the main skeleton of demands. Could use poster paper and colored post-its to display demands for interactivity.	Poster paper, post-its
20min	Fine-tune demands and practice their presentation	Role play and mock presentation of demands.	

– APPENDIX D –

INSAN Workshop Minutes

December 1st, 2013

The main objective of the workshop was to develop a common platform of demands that will be expressed at the Conference of December 9th and 10th that will count with the presence of authorities. The final goals of INSAN and other participant actors are to change the current Lebanese Labor Code in order to include in it the Migrant Domestic Workers (MDWs) and to make Lebanon signatory of the ILO Convention C189 regarding migrant domestic work.

These changes will allow MDWs to unionize -among other important issues-, as well as the ending of the Kafala System in favor of an International standard regulating migrant domestic work in Lebanon.

The workshop lasted from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the premises of MCC (Migrant Community Center in Gemmayze) with an attendance of 8 MDWs previously contacted by INSAN.

1. *During the meeting, several topics were discussed in relation to the working conditions of MDWs (described from own experiences or other fellow worker's), such as:*
 - The "release papers" and the usual monetary demand from the part of the sponsor in order to issue the papers when the MDW wish to change employer.
 - The lack of judicial action in suspicious cases of "suicides" of MDWs that are ruled as such without further investigation.
 - The inhibiting of contact between MDWs and their families, usually by means of confiscating mobile phones and preventing the use of the home telephone, even though they should be allowed one phone call a month paid by the sponsor.
 - The mistreatment in the form of physical violence, withholding of food and/or deplorable living conditions that MDWs have to endure without knowing what to do or who to go to get help.
 - The lack of will and cooperation usually observed at police stations where there have been reports of officers taking the abused MDW back to the employer's house.
2. *Several ideas were mentioned as possible solutions that might change the current situation of disadvantage and exploitation of MDWs under the kafala system:*
 - MDWs should be able to quit their place of employment. An employment category based visa similar to that used in the UK was suggested. Under such a system MDWs / new employers would pay back recruitment fees paid by the initial employer on a pro rata basis.
 - Amend the Unified Contract to explicitly allow MDWs to choose whether they want to live at their sponsor's house or not.
 - Change the current 6 days annual leave to 15 days leave (in keeping with the current standard for Lebanese workers), and a financial compensation at a pro

rata basis of the standard monthly wage, in situations where the leave is not taken.

- The mandatory presence of a female police officer in charge of attending the cases of physical or sexual abuse of MDWs.

- The establishment of more emergency shelters where MDWs can find help and protection for at least 72 hours, where social workers will take their cases to investigate. The Embassies and NGOs should afford the cost of the taxis when needed.

- Extend to other countries the example of the Philippines, where MDWs must pay a certain amount for insurance to their government, which covers health for the MDW and her family members, loans, etc.

- Demanding a comprehensive comparative study of the prosecution and conviction rate of crimes committed against MDWs and the general Lebanese population. This should be conducted by NGOs in partnership with Universities and then the findings presented to the Government.

- Extensive monitoring of recruitment agencies and effective enforcement of penalties to those who take money unlawfully from MDWs.

- Have a wide-ranging insurance policy that covers not only emergency cases but all kinds of clinical and dental attention.

- The Unified Contract should be signed in the native language of the MDW at the Notary and a copy of the signed contract in the native language of the MDW provided for her to keep. The signing of the contract in the native language of MDWs will reduce trafficking as the MDWs are in a better position to consent to the working conditions.

- The Unified Contract should state that the MDW is entitled to keep their mobile phone with them at all times. This will increase the MDWs access to support.

- The Unified Contract should state that hours worked above the 10 hours maximum per day, 6 days a week (as stipulated in the contract), are considered extra and as such must be compensated as an overtime rate of 1.5 times the normal wage.

- All wages should be paid monthly into a bank account set up in Lebanon in the name of the MDW upon her arrival. This is a way to monitor and avoid payment irregularities.

- The existence of a grace period of 1 month to find a new employer at the end of the contract. This will end the need of release papers and the tanesol. In this case, the new employer should pay the fees for the new contract.

- The demanding of a greater background checking of the employer's household in order to provide this information before hand to the MDW.

- The right to form unions due to the lack of civic participation in elections because of their immigrant status, thus the necessity to galvanize the demands of MDWs through unionizing.

3. *At the end of the workshop, the list of key issues were narrowed to three main targets that will be presented as concrete demands at the Conference:*

- a) To have the contract signed in the native language of the MDW when signed at the Notary.
- b) To stipulate in the contract that MDW are entitled to keep their mobile phones at all times.
- c) To have a comprehensive comparative study of the prosecution and conviction rate of crimes committed against MDWs and the general Lebanese population. This should be conducted by NGOs in partnership with Universities and then the findings presented to the Government.

Final considerations:

The workshop proved to be a powerful platform to create and extend the consciousness of the problems that MDWs face in Lebanon, particularly under the kafala system. All the women involved participated in an active manner and willingly discussed every issue, bringing their ideas and thoughts in a convivial way. They are about to engage in further demands for change at the upcoming conference, where they will face the authorities and the people with the power to modify the current state of affairs.