

Rights of the Child for child domestic workers

Main findings from a large scale study on the prevalence of child domestic workers in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

This study is based on a probabilistic sample of 3,171 girls aged 12 to 18, who were working as domestic workers

Under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child



Article 19
Protection from all forms of physical or mental violence

Article 24
The provision of necessary medical assistance and health care to all children



Article 28
Right to free and compulsory primary education

Article 31
Right to rest and leisure



Article 32
Protection from economic exploitation, hazardous or harmful work

Experiences of girl child domestic workers

At the hands of their employer

34% 
reported emotional violence

22% 
reported physical violence

20% 
were not given medicine or health care when needed

 **54%**
are not currently attending school

55 
hours per week worked on average

40% 
worked every day with no rest day during the week

 **25%**
made to undertake hazardous activities

 **85%**
of those aged 12-17 were in worst forms of child labour¹

In Ethiopia, domestic work is one of the most common forms of work for girls and young women. Household data from the study areas revealing that 37 percent of girls aged 12 to 17 were working as domestic workers. The majority of these girls were not receiving a wage and 56 percent had no savings. In addition to being financially exploitative, child domestic work can also be harmful as it frequently keeps children out-of-school, confined to the home of their employers, socially isolated, and burdened with excessive domestic duties.²

Child domestic workers (CDWs) are often hidden within private homes and are dependent on their employers for housing, food, and income. This reliance can lead to harmful work and living conditions.³ CDWs are less likely to report negative experiences about their current employer, such as physical and sexual violence, because of this dependency and for fear of retaliation or loss of income.

Despite Ethiopia's ratification of the the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, child domestic workers face clear violations of their rights. The vast majority, 91 percent of girls aged 12 to 17 were in illegal forms of child labour,⁴ 85 percent were in the worst forms of child labour¹ and 20 percent were not given medicine or taken to the clinic when sick. These assessments were largely due to excessive working hours, a lack of rest and breaks, and exposure to hazardous conditions.

Child domestic workers have the same rights as any other child in Ethiopia under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Clear legal parameters are needed for CDWs and their employers that stipulate limited working hours, adequate time for rest and learning, and the important responsibility the employer has as an adult caregiver. Spaces and mechanisms should be resourced for CDWs to come together and build relationships of solidarity, to improve awareness of children's rights and availability of services, and to provide a platform for CDWs to garner support and take their concerns to duty bearers. We call on government officials, policymakers and other stakeholders to consider the recommendations of this study to protect the rights of CDWs in Ethiopia.

1 Based on the International Labour Organization's Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (C182).

2 In the study, domestic duties included, preparing meals, washing clothes, cleaning the house, carrying for younger children or a sick or elderly

3 CDWs include girls who self-identify as domestic workers as well as girls who report a minimum of 14 hours of domestic work undertaken per week and not living with conjugal family members.

4 Based on provisions of the Ethiopian Labour Law (Proclamation No. 1156/2019).

Recommendations

- Recognise domestic work under official labour laws, as well as through the ratification and incorporation of ILO Resolution Convention 189.
- Ensure adequate consultation, representation and voice for child domestic workers in future policy and legislative decisions.
- Support collaboration between government bodies, non-governmental organisations and community structures to ensure seamless and efficient identification, referral, shelter and aftercare services for child domestic workers.
- Break the isolation of child domestic workers with safe spaces aimed at: building their confidence, skills and social capital; raising awareness of current laws and policies; and connecting them with support services and entitlements.
- Provide opportunities for alternative basic education, life skills and financial literacy training in a flexible format adapted to the needs of domestic workers.

This publication was funded by a grant from the United States Department of State. The opinions, findings and conclusions stated here in are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the United States Department of State.

Read the full report at <https://freedomfund.org/eth-cdw2022/>

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