The stories of women migrant domestic workers you will read do not all tell of extreme abuse or discrimination and, not all recount decent work experiences, but what is clear is that these women’s lives are greatly shaped by luck. In some cases, women find themselves in good working conditions with employers with whom they can negotiate. However, in many cases, the women who shared their stories could not change their circumstances. Many had to accept abuse and exploitation, and even forced labor. This inability to negotiate their terms and conditions of work, as well as the tremendous amount of control employers exert over workers, reveals the problems in the current system of recruitment and employment of migrant domestic workers in Lebanon. At the same time, discrimination against migrant domestic workers, because of their gender, nationality/ethnicity, occupation, class and migrant status, justify treating these women differently, and viewing their work as unique and unlike any other type of work, and thus according them fewer rights.

Exploitation starts with the recruitment process; deceptive practices and misinformation or lack of information about their living and working conditions, contributes to women finding themselves in exploitative situations. Debt also plays an important role in reinforcing domestic workers’ subordinate positions. Migrant women often pay high recruitment fees to secure jobs in Lebanon, as do employers, who then try to protect their “investment” through restrictions on workers’ movements and communications.

Furthermore, the sponsorship system, which is a set of regulations and practices that tie a worker to a single sponsor for the duration of her contract, denies migrant domestic workers’ right to quit and seek new employment. Workers who wish to change employers must first obtain the official release of their employer and then find another employer willing to sponsor her. For many migrant women who face poor working conditions and/or abuse, the only options are to accept the situation or leave their employer’s house and become irregular. Migrant domestic workers’ vulnerability is further exacerbated by their exclusion from the Lebanese Labor Law, which does not apply to domestic workers. Their rights, responsibilities, and duties are outlined in the Standard Unified Contract for Migrant Domestic Workers, which does not grant the same rights and benefits granted to other workers covered by the Labor Law.
One day I fried fish, orange in color as big as my three fingers. My stomach aches and curls, craving for food but I was scared to taste what I am cooking for the reason that it was counted how many pieces.

Just call me Parvin, Bangladeshi, widow with four children, and a domestic worker. This is my story... I came to Lebanon in January 2010, headed to a family of seven members. My first day was hell, I told myself, be patient it will be better when the adjustment period is done. But, as the days went by, my condition became worse and worse. I didn’t have a problem working about some food for very long hours, it’s the way my employers treated me, aside from sleeping on the balcony and it’s very cold. Especially, since we live up high in the hills.

I didn’t even know what the place is called but I know that we are not far from the center of Beirut because I see the airport and when the planes take off, I work and work, harder every day with a bit of food. My madam was the one who decides what I eat. She would give me three leaves of lettuce and Arabic bread, the size of my palm. One day I fried fish, orange in color as big as my three fingers. My stomach aches and curls, craving for food but I was scared to taste the reason that it was counted how many pieces.

I was given as usual three leaves of lettuce, one piece of bread and being lucky to have a piece of the fried fish. I ate slowly little by little and went to madam to ask for some more bread because I still had the remaining half of the fish but “shu??iaaal!” (What?! No!) was her answer. Every night I sleep hungry. I have to wake up every day very early to gather greens from the garden; wash and prepare them to give to my madam’s friends or her married children. Sometimes I have to go and clean her married son’s house, one day I helped prepare mouloukhieh (a green plant cooked with chicken and rice). The daughter-in-law, is good, she put in a plate a generous portion of rice, mouloukhieh and meat for me to eat. I was so happy. It was like heaven for me!

But when I went back home, I wanted to vomit because I was yelled at. “Why did you eat at my son’s house?!” “Why did u ask for food?!” I said I was offered. “La! Kessebel!” (No! Liar!), my madam said.

Letter 1

فِيَكَ نَسْمُوْنَكَ بَارْفِينَ، أَنَا مِنَ الْبَنِيَّةَ، أرْمَلَة، وعَنْدَي أَرْبَعَ وُلَادٌ. أَنَا عَامَّة منَالْمَهِيَّةِ

هَيْدَيْ حَكِيْتِيُّ... جِبَتْ عَلَيْنَا بِكَأْوَنَةٍ الأرْبَعِينَ سِنَةَ 2010 لِعَدَد عَيْنٍ مَلَأْتُهَا مِن سَبْعَ أَشْخَاصَ. كَانِيُّ بُوْمِيُّ الأَرْبَعِينَ جَهَنْمَا. فَقُلْتَ لِحَالَيٍّ كَوَنَيْ قَصْرَةِ الْوَضْعَةُ رَحْ بِتَحْتِنَّ سِبْ عَلَى الْإِيَامَ الْفُرُوضِيَّةُ

صَارَتُ مِنْ أَسْوَى أَلْوَانًا، كَانَتْ مَشْكُوْلاتُ بَكْتَةِ الشَّغْل، وَلَا بِبَسْاَعَاتِ الطَّوْلِيَّةِ. كَانَتْ مَشْكُوْلاتُ مُثْريَّةً تحَايْلَ صَحَامَةِ الشَّغْل مَعِيُّ، وَهَيْدَا عَيْنَا النَّوْمُ عَالِيَةُ بَلَدَرُ الْقَانِسِ. خَصَوْسُيُّ إِنَّهَا عَانِيَةً عَالِيَةً.
Whenever madam baked a cake I was next to her to assist her and keep the sink clean. Never I tasted a bit, after a week there was some leftover cream for the icing in the fridge, madam said, “Killi” (Eat now). Of course no matter how hungry I was I threw it away. Three months passed, I lost three kilos. My body was numb, my hands and fingers were sore with blisters. I prayed to God to just let me die.

After four months I can’t live any longer, no one will help if I won’t make the move, I decided, I told madam please let me go. But she said I have to pay the amount of $2,500 she spent for me. I said take me back to the agency. I was rebellious, I didn’t answer so I can get rid of my agency, too!

The agency was not friendly at all. Of course it’s entirely my fault. After a week of cleaning my recruiter’s house for free, she took me to her sister’s house around seven in the evening to work again! But, it was the luckiest day of my life! There was a couple who were guests, who were badly in need of someone to attend to their sick mother. At the same moment when they asked me if I wanted the job I said yes! As fast as I could reply so I can get rid of my agency, too!

That same evening the couple took me to their home. I was expecting to work as soon as we get in, but no! It was the contrary, my new employers said, “Yalla! Killi inti!” (Eat now) then take your shower and rest. They showed me a proper bed in the room, and said, “We’ll talk tomorrow morning”.

Since I didn’t have any clothes with me to change into, my new madam gave me some, as well as underwear. As I lay down on my bed I was asking myself is this for real. Thank God! Please let it not be that I am only dreaming!
God is good and God is great! He sent these people to my rescue. My sir is Lebanese married to a foreigner. Both of them treat me as a human. They let me call home to my family every weekend. I am paid $150 every month, sometimes it’s even in advance. I eat properly and I can cook Bengali food. Now it’s been two years and a half since I started working for them. They asked me if I wanted to go for a vacation but I told them that I will stay until they do not need my services anymore. I am scared to go home and lose my good fortune.

Good things, good chances happen only once. I was able to pay all of what I borrowed back home to come to Lebanon. I bought a parcel of land next to my house and I am able to send my youngest daughter and three grandchildren to school. I am learning here. I learned a lot from my new madam. I now see the importance of education, I am illiterate, but I don’t want my daughter and grandchildren to be like me, married at very young age and suffering for a lifetime.

I don’t know how to cope with Bangladesh’s tradition of getting married at a very young age through an arrangement done by the parents. Now, I can say that this is how life should be. Every time I call my family, I say this to them. I tell them the good things I learned from my madam. I didn’t know before what human rights are and that there are so-called domestic workers’ rights.

To everyone who reads my story, I hope that it will serve as a lesson.
When I first came to Lebanon, I didn’t receive my salary for the first 10 months, even I was not able to call my family. I only spoke to my mom to tell her that I arrived and then I didn’t speak to anyone for 10 months. My mom got anxious so she went to the recruitment agency in Ethiopia. She was able to take the phone number of my sponsor from the agency. But when she called, the madam answered her and said no one works here by this name.

For 10 months she locked me inside the house. The door was closed all the time. But once when I went with her to her mother’s house, I spoke to the Ethiopian girl who works for her mother. I told her to talk about my problems with the Ethiopian Embassy because I can’t go out. The Embassy called my employer but she told them that she is abroad and she had taken me with her.

One day, I was cleaning and I found the house keys. I left the house and went to the Embassy. They called my employer to ask her to give me my salary, and that if she does then I am willing to go back and work, but she refused.

She used to beat me with the hose, but I couldn’t care less about myself. I was thinking about my mother all the time and that she is suffering because of me.

When they locked the door, I felt that I am in a big prison. When I was in Ethiopia, I thought that I will have a day off, and that I will be able to meet my friends. But I came here and I found myself in a big prison.
I know a story of a Filipino girl; she stayed with her sponsor for 7 years.

Her sponsor used to renew her residency without taking her opinion. She should ask her if she wants to stay or not? Right? She was not allowed to talk with her family on the phone, except for once per month and for two minutes only so she would speak to whoever answered the phone.

She used to wake her up at 4 am to start work. If the weather was cold she was not allowed to wear boots, only flip-flops. Every Thursday and Friday, her sponsor takes her to clean the other houses in Choueifat and Aramoun.

Her sister came from the Philippines in order to help her and she was able to do so with the help of an NGO. Her sponsor let her travel, but when the time came for her to leave the country, her sponsor didn’t let her get near her sister to kiss her goodbye at the airport.
I am Niru from Nepal.

When I first arrived at the airport in Lebanon, they put me in a dirty room until my boss came to pick me up. I just wondered is this Lebanon? The guard called my name and I left the dirty room. I saw my boss waiting for me with her son, I felt safe. When we went home, there was an Ethiopian girl, who showed me my own room. She told me to take a shower and then rest. I slept for a little bit but I couldn’t relax, I was afraid.

The next day, she showed me how to do my tasks: clean the rooms, bathrooms, etc. I have continued to do my job, it’s not difficult, and I still adore it. I am happy as usual.
I come from Ethiopia. My story starts in the first few months I arrived in Lebanon. My madam does not stay at the house, she travels a lot for work, so we are by ourselves – we are two girls in the house. Sometimes the father of the madam calls us to give him something. He has an office in the same building downstairs. He usually called me more than the other girl.

One time he asked me to prepare coffee and bring it downstairs. When I came, he showed me a lot of money in his pocket, and then he tells me to kiss him and sleep with him in the other room. I told him, "You have a woman why you want to sleep with me?"

He said that his wife is sick. He asked me why I was being stubborn, other girls who worked here did what he wanted and they took a lot of money home. I told him, "What you are doing is wrong. I came here to work and raise money for my daughter."

Then I went back upstairs. But, he told his granddaughter that I am leaving the house and sleeping outside. She told me to work downstairs and I told her no because I work for her mother. Then the granddaughter called the agent and two men came. One of the men said, "Why are you going outside the house?", and he tried to hit me. I grabbed his hand to stop him. He then said, "Yalla, we are taking you to the office."

I told them, "I don't want to change. My madam is good, I want to work. But let me at least change my clothes." The men agreed and I used this opportunity to escape. I ran to the elevator and went down. But when I got downstairs the natour (concierge) tried to stop me. So I told him I want to work and not go home. He told me to leave because he knows what they do with the girls here.

I didn't know where to go. I don't know the area. I was walking and crying. I didn't know where to go. Then an Ethiopian woman found me and took me in.

I thought in my country that I came here to work but there is no justice here, I feel that I am in a prison. I am afraid when I go around the city because of the police. If I want to work, I can't without iqama (residency permit). I don't know what is going to happen to me.
One day, the madam told her to go out with her for an outing but instead she took her to her sister’s house to clean. I will tell you the story of my friend, Françoise, who is Malagasy. She didn’t speak much French but she understood what the madam would tell her to do.

When she first arrived, she was shocked to know that when they all go out, they lock the door and she is stuck inside the house and can’t go out. Her madam is never satisfied and her children are impolite. One day, her madam told her that she is sick of her and does not want her anymore because she is dumb and if she stays here, she will be a danger to her children. She said, “They will be savages just like you.” But she didn’t want to lose the money she paid to the agency so she kept her. So she became the maid. She did all the work in the home. They have another house with a garden, and during the summer, she also cleaned this house and worked in the garden.

The husband of the madam was a severe guy, and so if there is something that the master doesn’t like he shouts at her and sometimes he slaps her. As if he is a lion coming to eat her. Even his wife is scared of him. She works from Monday to Sunday, and every Sunday the madam’s children all come over to her house.

My friend finished her three-year contract and asked them to let her go to church on Sundays but they refused, saying it’s very dangerous here in Lebanon.

She accepted everything and kept on working. One day, the madam told her to go out with her for an outing but instead she took her to her sister’s house to clean.

My friend tells me that when her children come by, they always nag about her work and say here it is not clean. She would tell me, “They consider me always as not clean. Even when I sing she says shut your mouth you are making noise.”
She finally decided to go back home. But when all her papers were finished and she said she wanted to go, her mister yelled, insulted her and slapped her across her face. After this happened, she called me. I am her good friend and I work for her madam’s cousin’s house. She told me everything and I told my madam who then called her cousin. But then her mister called me and threatened me, saying he could send me back to Madagascar.

After this incident, she asked them again to let her go back home because she can’t stand them anymore. But the madam’s husband said that my friend has to pay because she is breaking the contract. Then they disconnected the landline and she doesn’t have a mobile, so I don’t know what happened to her.

She is isolated from the outside world. She is still waiting and she can’t talk to me anymore.

أخبارا، قررت ترجع عبدها، بين ما خلصوا وراقها وقالت بدها نقل، صرخ السّتر وسبها وضربها وغوبها. بعد ما صار هائشي تلقتني، أنا زيقتها، وبشتكع عند قراءة مدامها، خبرتني كل شيء، أنا خبرت المدام بالزي بدورها حكت مع قرانيها، بين السّتر هديني وقالي إنه يرجعني عمده عقير، بعد هالحادثة، رجعت قالتن إنها ترجع عنها لأنو ما بقى فيها تحملن، بين جوزها للمدام قال إنه فهي لازم تدفع كل شي لأنو انفس العقد، بعدين، قطعوا خط البيت وهي ما عندها موبايل.

وهلّق ما يعرف شو مسار معها لأنو صارت معزولة عن العالم الخارجي، بعدها ناطرة وما عاد فيها تحكي معي.
When we are at the airport, the police confiscate our passports and they take us to a room where they lock us inside. Thus, the prison begins at the airport. We reach home; there is no time to rest, directly we work. Madam explains the tasks: wake up at 5:30 am, take a bath at 6 am and then the work starts. Breakfast, prepare the children to go to school, clean the house, wash the dishes, wash the clothes, dinner, sleep at midnight. 24/7 Nonstop.

Sometimes I had to clean the house of mister’s brother or the madam’s parents’ house. It’s obligatory and unpaid. I didn’t have the right to say no. There is no one to make contact with. I couldn’t go to church. I didn’t go out at all. I endured this hell of a contract and I became an object belonging to my sponsor, he told what to do and I executed, I am not myself anymore, I lost my self-confidence.

I talked with my family five minutes every month. They never paid me my salary directly. My employer transferred it to my family. I didn’t have the right to send the money by myself.
I am Jane, a Filipina, a domestic worker, my encounter is not the worst case, still I will tell you.

I served a man alone, a bachelor. He is maniac about cleanliness, he wants his house tiptop! Bed linens, towels should be changed and washed every day in exchange for the fulfilling salary he pays me.

I do ironing every day and polish his leather shoes. Three times he has to change his clothes, every day, so I have to clean and dry the bathroom also for three times. I have to clean his two cars daily, because he does not want the smell of the gasoline boys at the car wash to remain inside his car. Later on he asked me to cut his nails and hair. In the beginning I didn’t mind, I groomed him with no malice at all. He took advantage, he also asked me to trim the hair of his armpits. I was hesitant but I calculated my salary and the future of my three children who are all attending college.

Two years and three months passed, he asked me to help him shave his pubic hair; I was then impolite. "What", I said. He wanted to have sex with me. I left him with these words: “You don’t own me. You didn’t buy me to do whatever you want. I am being paid to do domestic work. Sir, you are an educated and civilized man, so act like one.”

You don’t own me. You didn’t buy me to do whatever you want. I am being paid to do domestic work. Sir, you are an educated and civilized man, so act like one.
I am Laxmi from Nepal.

When I first came to Lebanon, I worked for a family of four. The next day after I arrived, my madam asked me to cook, clean the house, etc. I continued to do my job. Then she asked me to clean the stairs of the whole building.

After a week, my boss took me to her sister’s house to clean. Four months they used me without paying me anything. Then I told them if you don’t pay me for my extra work, I am not working anymore. When the madam heard this she stopped asking me to clean the houses of others.

Now I am still working with this family, and I am so satisfied and happy.
The first day I came to Lebanon, she asked me to cut my hair. I was lucky since all the family members speak French. She used to wake me up at 6 in the morning during winter time to clean the balcony. If I was cold she didn't care that I will get sick since she didn't give me the right clothes for the cold. She didn't give me enough time to understand when I had difficulty in adapting. She would keep asking me whether I was in Africa if there is this or that, even her children asked me if we have a home in Africa or if we sleep in the trees!

It was a way to make fun of me and let me feel that I am an idiot and nothing. For me, it was verbal abuse. And one day her daughter's phone rang and I ran to give it to her. You should see how she yelled at me not to touch it, and I wanted to help her since she was far.

Always the madam locked me inside the house when she wanted to go out, and she never cared if something bad were to happen or if a fire should breakout.

I used to work until 2 in the morning. Always she had guests. I didn't have the right to take a rest. Every time she sees me sitting, she invents something for me to do, saying you are here to work, not rest. I would get a backache, and even my feet would hurt as would my shoulders. When her friends would leave she would be even tougher with me. Her friends made fun of me and encouraged her to be mean to me, instead of teaching her how to be kind towards the domestic worker. I used to babysit, clean, and garden, all at the same time.

Her husband tried to convince me to sleep with him; he told me that he will tell his wife not to be so harsh with me.
One day, her 16 year old son asked me to bring him water, but I was watering the plants and had gloves on and my boots were full of mud so I didn’t do it right away. I didn’t pay attention that he is behind me. When I turned around he slapped me. For me it was physical abuse.

Every day I have to go to her mother’s house for two hours to clean for free, without paying me a penny. And sometimes her friend would come to leave her children so I have to take care of them too. They didn’t pay my salary and every time I ask them for it they would say you cannot take it before finishing your contract. I couldn’t send any money to my children so they stopped going to school.

I was shocked that I couldn’t call even call my family because I didn’t have money for a phone card, and for me this was economic abuse.

Her children would insult Africa every time I made a mistake, saying we didn’t have anything but disease. I was traumatized. When it comes to food, I have to eat their leftovers but they didn’t care if I had good food or even if I had energy to do my work. All they cared about was that I wake up early in the morning, start cleaning and don’t complain; otherwise madam said she would bring the police so “shut your mouth!”

When she was invited to a restaurant, directly I had to change my clothes to go with her, walking behind her as if I am her slave until 1 am at night. She doesn’t care if I am tired. She taught her children to call me maid; she doesn’t use my name. Her children never hand me the things but instead throw it on the table. They talk to me the way they want without paying attention to my feelings.

I lost my self-confidence. I didn’t have anyone to understand me. I cried a lot. I was violated in all senses.
Dear Reader,

I will tell you a friend’s experience, let’s call her Joy, she is 21 years old, and before leaving her country of origin she was aware that it was illegal. She ended up in Malaysia where a nice guy invited her for a walk but they ended up in a hotel. To make it short, she was raped by this Malaysian guy. Two days later, she left for Lebanon. Her contract was for two years, her salary was $150 and she didn’t have a day off. She had to clean the whole big house and after that she had to run to the employer’s office to clean it as well. It was really tiring for her at this young age. I remembered when she was sharing her experience she started to cry, but all I could do was to comfort and encourage her. She was afraid of asking for a salary increase and a day off. She sacrificed all these years but decided to go back home. I never saw that she was enjoying herself or happy at work. All I would hear from her was, “I am tired but I cannot do anything but to sacrifice until I finish the contract.” I am happy about her decision to go back home and build a better future, and especially that she will be with her family again.

God bless her.
I need justice for what they did to me and the others. Help! I have cried a lot but it's not helping my situation. I need to recover my money and beat me. A good ending to my story depends on how you will react. I am begging you to solve my problems. If I am caught by the police and deported, surely my husband will badly beat me. I am now in a state of misery. What should I do? I weigh 33 kilos. I can't eat because of nothing is done.

Ports of other Bangladeshis because they promise to fix their papers for money but I later found out that the daughter's agency is crooked. They have a huge pile of passports of other Bangladeshis because they promise to fix their papers for money but nothing is done.

When I arrived in Lebanon, I was first employed by an elderly couple. After five months, they decided that I have to leave because they can't afford my salary anymore. One of the neighbors, an old lady, took me. I worked for her for a year and three months. The lady had a daughter who owned a recruitment agency. They promised to fix my papers, and they asked me if I wanted my husband to come to work in Lebanon. I told my husband to get his passport. He also borrowed money and sold our cow. As the months passed by, they said my husband is coming, and I was so happy, but then they said I must pay $500, which I gave them.

But then the General Security (immigration authorities) called my madam to ask about my papers. She told me to leave their house and find another job. I have no money, they took my gold and they didn't pay me for one month. I also cleaned for the lady's neighbors, an old lady, took me. I worked for her for a year and three months. The lady had a daughter who owned a recruitment agency. They promised to fix my papers, and they asked me if I wanted my husband to come to work in Lebanon. I told my husband to get his passport. He also borrowed money and sold our cow. As the months passed by, they said my husband is coming, and I was so happy, but then they said I must pay $500, which I gave them.

I later found out that the daughter's agency is crooked. They have a huge pile of passports of other Bangladeshis because they promise to fix their papers for money but nothing is done.

I am now in a state of misery. What should I do? I weight 33 kilos. I can't eat because of my problems. If I am caught by the police and deported, surely my husband will badly beat me. A good ending to my story depends on how you will react. I am begging you to help! I have cried a lot but it's not helping my situation. I need to recover my money and I need justice for what they did to me and the others.
To whom it may concern,

I’ve been working here for 8 years, so since I have seen what happens between sponsors and migrant domestic workers, it is clear to me that the situation is a bit complicated.

A friend of mine worked for a bachelor, a well-educated, but very picky guy. She worked for him for four years, doing everything he asked her to do. One day, she told her sponsor that she wanted to go back home for a while, as soon as possible, because her family was having some problems. So her sponsor said, “I will let you go home but you cannot come back.” She felt so bad because of what he said.

In the end, she didn’t go home. She told me working as a domestic worker is very hard, because your sponsor just needs your services regardless of what you are going through.

No sympathy at all.

No consideration.

There is a real lack of understanding.
Hi, my name is Sujana. I came here to work on July 23, 2007.

When I first arrived to the airport in Lebanon, the police kept me in a small room. I was nervous. After three hours my employer came to take me. When I saw her I felt safer. My salary was only $135. When I arrived to the house they showed me my room. It was my own room but it was like a storage room, where they kept everything.

Day after day, I start work at 6 am until 1 or 2 am. After three days, she brought a dog which made caca and pipi everywhere; they used to wake me up at 2 or 3 am to clean up the caca and pipi.

My madam asks me, “Rana I want massage,” and I do it every day. I also put cream on her feet and help her put on her shoes and socks but when I was sick she wasn’t there for me.

Her son accidently burnt my hand with the iron. I told my madam but she didn’t even give me a plaster. Then after one year, I had a toothache then I got sick and had a fever. I bought medicine but I didn’t get well. I told her but she didn’t come to help me. So at that time I felt I am really poor; here there is no humanity. They love dogs and cats but they don’t love us. They want me to work like a machine: cleaning, cooking and everything.

I had to cook three different kinds of food for them but for the first two years I didn’t have a day off. My madam she goes to Paris every month and I have to take care of her children, house, dog and cat, and I have to do the cooking. Sometimes, they borrow money from me but my madam or the children don’t pay me back. The grandmother calls me every day to come to take food for the children, but I have a lot of work and I don’t go. If I don’t go my madam shouts at me.

And luckily I got to know KAFA. They are helping me to learn how to help other girls who have a bad situation like I did.
Before coming to Beirut, I was working for missionaries for 12 years. I met different people from different nationalities. But when my employers finished their contract in the Philippines, they went back to their country. So I started looking for another job.

I found a few but the salary was not enough. So I decided to go abroad, and on October 17, 1989, I left the Philippines. When I arrived in Beirut, I saw a man and woman, who introduced themselves as my employers. I didn't like my boss. My heart start beating fast and I felt nervous because of the way he looked at me. But I ignored my feelings. When we arrived to the house, the madam told me to take a shower and get some rest. The next morning she introduces me to her two children: a boy and a girl. And she says that she would talk to her husband.

I didn't go with her; instead I stayed at the agency for three or four days. She then called the agency and asked them to bring me back, because the children liked me and I had been there for four months already. She promised me that he will never do it again. I continued working for them for three years, until I finished my contract and went back to the Philippines.

This is my story and my experience with my first employer.

The second time I came back to Lebanon I found a good employer. I can say that I am so lucky to have them. And thank God that I am still working for them and earning a good salary.
I am from Nepal. When I came to Lebanon I didn’t know how to speak Arabic. For example, madam would ask me to bring her this or that and I would give her the wrong thing. She would shout at me, even though I came to Lebanon to work, I of course didn’t know Arabic. If she had gone to Nepal she wouldn’t know the language, so why does she have to yell. She should teach me. If she kept yelling at me, I didn’t want to stay. My madam is an old lady. I know a bit of English but she doesn’t. Her kids told her to be patient with me, but she kept on yelling. Finally, I got a book of Nepalese and Arabic from the recruitment agency, which helped me learn the language.

My madam is 88 years old. She has money but she always changes its place and she forgets where she puts it. She always accuses me of stealing her money. She comes and shouts at me saying, “You are the only one in the house so you must be taking the money.” She threatened to call the police, but I was not scared. She searched my stuff but she didn’t find anything. Then her granddaughter asked me too many questions, but then they found the money in her closet. I said, “Do what you want to do but I didn’t do anything wrong. What you are doing is wrong.”

I thought God will help me because I hadn’t done anything wrong. Finally, my madam’s son told her that he will take her to the police if she doesn’t stop accusing me!
When I first came to Lebanon, I worked for a madam, who had twins, and I was happy. But, there was our neighbor in the upper floor who needed someone to work for them. My madam asked me if I know someone good. So I brought my cousin. It was in the summertime and usually we go to the village. So my cousin stayed in the city. On her first day they cut her hair, she called me telling me what happened. I told her not to worry it will remain the same if you put some oil on it. She wasn’t listening she was crying all the time. And then she sent me a letter telling me that I must come to Beirut.

I came for her and I asked her madam why she cut her hair, the madam said it is very normal to do so! My cousin told me that she wanted to commit suicide. I got scared because she is my responsibility in the end.

One day, her madam came to my madam’s house where she found me eating before my madam. She was shocked. She asked me why I was eating before my madam had eaten. So my madam told me in front of her, “Eat whenever you want.”

Our neighbor was angry because she doesn’t let the “girl” eat until 5 pm when they are all at home. I used to send her food, which I placed in a basket which she would then take from the balcony. Finally, I told them I wanted to send her back home. The madam asked me to pay $2,000, but my cousin refused because she couldn’t pay me back. I got really angry and I paid this amount anyway, and now I won’t bring anyone under my responsibility anymore.

RSALA ١٧

One day, her madam came to my madam’s house where she found me eating before my madam. She was shocked. She asked me why I was eating before my madam had eaten.
My name is Saru, I came to Lebanon in 2009, and I had so many questions in my mind, like: What am I going to do? And how will my employer treat me?

I ended up like the rest of us working as a domestic worker with an employer who is never satisfied and always calling me names.

I couldn’t bear with it, so I had a fight and changed my first employer to another after ten days.

The new employer was worse than the first one. I had to work every day until 2-3 am and to wake up early the next day to do the daily duties in the house and the garden. I accepted this situation, but, one day, my boss came and tried to do bad things to me, so I left the house because I didn’t want to lose myself, even if I have to be illegal, which is better than having to handle such behavior.
I am Christine, and I have been working in Lebanon for 13 years now. My first experience in Lebanon was very difficult because whatever I did for them, they would complain that I did it wrong. I sacrificed everything. I finished the three-year contract with God’s help, and I decided to go back home for good. But my employer offered to double my salary so I stayed. To make the story short, it didn’t matter that I had stayed with them for so long. Last March when my mother died, my employers showed me that they didn’t care. I told my female employer that I wanted to go home for the funeral but she told me if I wanted to go I would have to pay her back everything she spent on me. I was emotionally down because I couldn’t attend the funeral.

I couldn’t work properly for two weeks and they got mad at me because of my behavior. Since I was so upset, they sent me back home for two weeks. And when I came back to Lebanon they listed every single cent they paid so that I could go. When I checked, it was more than the money I borrowed from them. Then we would argue a lot and they threatened to send me home as soon as possible. But they changed their mind when they heard me crying for nearly the whole night. Madam knocked on my door and told me we would talk the next day, and after we did, we were on good terms again. Now, thank God, they listen to me when I have something to say.

Letter 19

Last March when my mother died, my employers showed me that they didn’t care. I told my female employer that I wanted to go home for the funeral but she told me if I wanted to go I would have to pay her back everything she spent on me.
إن قصص عاملات المنازل المهاجرات التي ستقرأها ليست كلها قصصًا عن الاستغلال المفرط أو التمييز، كما أنها ليست بالضرورة ناجحة عن تجارب عمل إلزامية. الأمر الواقع أن للحظر دورًا كبيرًا في تحديد شكل حياتهن. ففي بعض الحالات، تجد النساء أنفسهن في ظروف عمل جيدة مع أصحاب عمل يستسلمون لASHBOARD معيون، أما في حالات أخرى، لم تستطع النساء اللواتي تعرضن لتبعياتهم في هذا الكتّب تغيير ظروفهن القاسية. كان على العديد منهن تقبل سوء العاملة، والاستغلال، وحتى العمل النفسي. إن عدم قدرة العاملات على التفاوض حول شروط وظروف عملهن، بالإضافة إلى الحيزة الهاشمية لسيطرة أصحاب العمل على المهاجرات، كان له تأثير كبير على ظروف عملهن. بدأت تجربة لجمعية سارقة تجاربهن مع الالة. لمهاجر كفالة وتحرض على عمليات قباب على عمليات رباً لليومية لعاملات رأياً لهذه إنّ قّلبة حالة من النوم واحد، يتعين على المهاجرة لتعلق مايزيد من شموع جديد. كما أخذت من سوويل كان لؤلؤة للعمل إلى عمل، وكثير من الأحيان إلى مبرّرات لعملاء هؤلاء النساء بشكل مختلف، والنظر إلى عملهن على أنّه عمل فريد من نوعه وليس كأي عمل آخر، الأمر الذي يؤدي إلى حرمانهن من الكثير من الحقوق.

يمكن تسمّى بداية الاستغلال منذ بدء عملية الاستغلال: ممارسات خادعة، ومعلومات خاطئة. أو تنص في المعلومات حول ظروف العيشية، وعمل، وهي عوامل تساهم في وجود هؤلاء النساء، ووضع استغلال منذ بداية الطريقة. لديهن أيضًا حصة كبيرة في تعزيز حالة من التعنيف لدى عاملات المنازل.

فإن النساء المهاجرات غالبًا ما يدمجون رسو في استغلال عائلة بهدف تأمين عمل في لبنان، كما أن أصحاب العمل يحاولون دورهم حماية "исتثمارهم" من خلال التضييق على تحركات العاملة وتوافرها مع العالم الخارجي.

إضافة إلى ذلك، يأتي نظام الكتّاب، وهو مباشر عن مجموعة ممارسات ونظم إدارية تربط العاملة بصاحب عمل واحد فقط. هذا يحرم العاملة من الحق بالاستغلال والبحث عن عمل آخر، فالأعمالات اللواتي يرغبن في تغيير صاحب العمل عليلهن، أولاًً، الحصول على تزايل رسمى من صاحب عملهن، وثانيةً، إيجاد صاحب عمل جديد مستعدًا لكتائفهن. فيبقى الخيار الوحيد أمام العديد من النساء المهاجرات اللواتي يعترفن بظروف عمل سيئة أو لا تاستغلال أن يتقبلن وضعهن الحالي أو أن ينطلق منزل صاحب العمل ليصبحن في وضع غير منظم.

نتوقف همّشًا وضع عاملات المنازل المهاجرات أيضًا بفعل استغلالهم من قانون العمل اللبناني الذي لا يُزل يشملهن، حيث ترد حقوقهن ومسؤولياتهن وواجبهن فقط في العقد المحدد لعملاء المنازل المهاجرات الذي لا يعطي الحقوق والنازيا نفسها المتناولة للعمل الأخرى المشمولين في فانون العمل.
لكيفية عنف واستغلال

تأسست منظمة "كوني عنف واستغلال" (كفي) في العام 2005 وهي منظمة مدنية لبنانية لا تهدف إلى الربح، غير سياسية وغير طائفية. تتعمل من أجل حقوق الإنسان وتعاليمها كمرجعية لها. وتسعى إلى إحقاق السماوة بين الجنسين في الشرع والنظام والقضاء، على التمييز الممارس على المرأة والطفل.

تسعى "كفي" على مكافحة كافة أشكال العنف والاستغلال الموجة ضد النساء والأطفال من خلال المداورة للتعديل والاستعداد القوانين وتنظيم السياسات والقواعد، وتمكين النساء والأطفال، تركز "كفي" في عملها على مجالات العنف الاجتماعي، التعامل الجنسي للأطفال، استغلال النساء والاتجار بهن، والتمكين والدعم النفسي الاجتماعي والقانوني للنساء ضحايا العنف.

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الجمعية الدولية لكافحة الرق

تأسست "الجمعية الدولية لكافحة الرق" في العام 1839 وهي تعمل على القضاء على سائر أشكال الرق المعاصر. تسعى جمعية "الجمعية الدولية لكافحة الرق" إلى العدل والحرية بين النساء والأطفال، وتعمل من أجل ضمان حقوقهم الأساسية وحقوقهم الإنسانية، وتعمل على القضاء على جميع أشكال الاستغلال من خلال القضاء على حالة معاصرة للرق والقضاء على عدم تجاوز هذه الانتهاكات من خلال الإضاءة على حالات معاصرة للرق، وتسعى من أجل القضاء عليها. ودعم مبادرات المنظمات المحلية من أجل تحرير الناس، وكما والضغط من أجل زيادة تفعيل القوانين الدولية لكافحة الرق.

www.antislavery.org
عاملات المنازل في لبنان
يخبرن أنفسهن