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Women Negotiating for Family Housing & Work: A Study on Quasi-Live-in Domestic Workers

Dimple Tresa Abraham



Centre for Women's Development Studies

An autonomous research institute supported by the Indian Council of Social Science Research
25, Bhai Vir Singh Marg (Gole Market), New Delhi - 110 001.

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Contents

Acknowledgements & Note	3
Executive Summary	5
List of Acronyms and Word Meanings	8
CHAPTER I	9
Introduction	9
1.1 Background & Context	10
1.2 Importance of The Research	14
1.3 Research Questions	16
1.4 Chapters/ Report Plan	17
CHAPTER II	18
Literature Review & Methodology.....	18
2.1 Defining Paid Domestic Work And Workers.....	18
2.2 Classification of Domestic Workers	19
2.3 Growing Numbers of Women In Domestic Work.....	21
2.4 Preference and Perception of Work.....	22
2.5 Entry, Wages and Conditions of Work.....	23
2.6 Organising for Wages & Conditions of Employment	25
2.7 Legal & Policy Reforms in Domestic Work	27
2.8 Employer Provided Housing	30
2.9 Intergenerational Changes	33
2.10 In-Kind Payments and Regulation	34
2.11 Study Methodology and Data.....	38
2.11.1 Why Quasi Live-In?	38
2.11.2 Justiciable Cash Wages.....	39
2.11.3 Study Site	41
2.11.4 Sample & Data Collection	42
Chapter III	45
Deciphering Quasi Live-in Domestic Work	45
3.1 Historical Background Of Family Residences For Staff/Servants In Delhi.....	46
3.2 Socio-Economic And Regional Profile.....	50
3.3 Why Women take up this form of Domestic Work	54
3.4 Entry, Negotiations, Work And Exit Conditions.....	57
3.4.1 Entry in to the Colony.....	57

3.4.2	<i>Negotiations to get Work and Quarters</i>	59
3.4.3	<i>Work Conditions and Wages</i>	66
3.4.4	<i>Exit/ Vacating the Servant Quarters</i>	71
3.5	Specific Challenges	72
3.5.1	<i>Sudden Evictions & Threats of Evictions</i>	72
3.5.2	<i>Frequent House Shifting</i>	74
3.5.3	<i>Income Shocks</i>	76
3.5.4	<i>Restrictions, Permissions & Verifications</i>	77
3.6	Negotiating Employer Change & Sq Exits.....	78
3.7	Support received from own Household	82
3.8	Intergenerational Changes and upward Mobility	83
3.9	Women’s Perception of Contribution to Household Welfare.....	85
CHAPTER IV.....		89
Worker Remuneration		89
4.1	Worker Rights and Minimum Wage.....	89
4.2	Code on Wages and Wage Floors	92
4.3	ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189)	95
4.3.1	<i>ILO Guidance On In-Kind Payment</i>	96
4.3.2	<i>Housing As Payment</i>	97
4.4	Justiciable Cash Wages.....	98
4.4.1	<i>Wages for Work after Demarcating In-Kind Payment</i>	99
4.4.2	<i>Computing Objective Wages for Workers</i>	102
4.4.3	<i>Comparative Analysis of Wage Increase</i>	108
CHAPTER V.....		112
Summary & Conclusion		112
5.1	Summary	112
5.2	Insights From The Study.....	114
5.3	Measures To Improve Cash Wages	119
5.3.1	<i>Organising Workers for a Collective Voice</i>	119
5.3.2	<i>Policy Push and Sensitisation</i>	120
5.3.3	<i>Expanding Availability of Low Cost Housing</i>	120
5.4	Conclusion	121
Appendix –I		130
Appendix –II		133
Questionnaire		133
FGD Guiding Questions.....		144

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This work would not have been possible without the women domestic workers in the select colony who willingly participated in interviews and discussions, sharing their struggles, aspirations and dreams for a different future. Kudos to their resilience and the work they do for family sustenance. I express my sincere gratitude to all of them for the time they spent with me. Though I would have liked to thank each one of them by name, I refrain for the sake of keeping their identities anonymous. But, I would like to specially mention the support of Ms.Neha Kumari, a young post graduate remedial school teacher, and daughter of a worker in the colony. She was my point of contact and introduced me to many workers and facilitated the fieldwork. I would also like to acknowledge employers, Sunitha, Smitha, Nandini, Shephali and others who shared information on terms of work in similar colonies in Delhi and across other cities, Chennai, Kanpur, Kochi, Mumbai, and Vishakaptnam which were useful towards understanding both similarities and differences.

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The field work for this study was concluded in February 2020, just prior to the onset of the pandemic and the lockdown in March, which had witnessed a massive exodus of the poor from the cities. Delhi witnessed large swathes of migrant

workers, mostly casual labour and others, construction workers, factory workers, restaurant and transport workers, as well as domestic workers crossing its borders as they undertook long journeys back home, many walking over hundreds of kilometres to reach their homes in distant villages. More than the fear of the disease it was the sudden loss of wages, inability towards meeting food expenses and housing rentals that made many go back home.

During the period of lockdown, in end April 2020, I had contacted some of the domestic workers who I had interviewed earlier for this study, to know how they were, and was not really surprised to know that almost all were staying back. Most of them were continuing with their work in the employers' household as before. Except for the use of masks and following other COVID hygiene protocols, nothing much had changed for them. In many cases, the men were not going for work, but they continued to stay on hoping things will get back to normal, and that they would find some work or the other. During this period, worker households were able to manage their basic food and other needs on their own, and in many cases employers were offering them more support in terms of both cash and rations to cope. Even though they were worried about the evolving situation, most did not want to go back as they had no means of livelihoods in their villages. While many had close relatives, and some had land, they were certain that in their villages they could not earn enough to sustain families for long. Those with land, had not cultivated it for years, nor were they interested to work on it, as the meagre landholdings would not provide the family sustainable livelihoods. Thus for low income households, both rural to urban migration and its reverse are definitely complex choices largely driven by desperation for survival. As long as there are sustenance possibilities, many may try to hang on and fight the flight.

In this context, the central theme of this research, the bartering of work for family housing with assured basic amenities by domestic workers, seem a rational household sustenance decision. Poor women's unpaid or underpaid domestic work open up gates to more secure urban spaces for families in the city though real inclusion or *Right to the City*¹ remain as peripheral as ever.

Dimple Tresa Abraham

New Delhi

September 2021

¹ Classic idea first put forward by Henri Lefebvre (1996) in 1968

Executive Summary

'Women Negotiating for Family Housing & Work: A Study on Quasi-Live-in Domestic Workers' examines the everyday lives and negotiations of a category of domestic workers, different from the mainstream, who barter work for obtaining family housing, and are referred in the study as the 'quasi-live-ins'. This term is used to refer to the workers because of unique restrictions and freedom they have since they are neither fully live-out nor completely live-in. Depending on tasks, employers and initial negotiations, a worker may have the freedom of a live-out such as reporting only at specific times to complete agreed upon chores, or restrictions of a live-in who may have to be on 'stand-by' at all times. The central bargaining point for employment here is the family housing or SQ, which is in huge demand given location advantages. Unequal rights to basic urban resources in the city and the system of bartering work for 'decent' housing depresses their wages.

This research is important for two reasons. One, while domestic work has grown since the last few decades and numerous studies on various dimensions of this work with respect to both live-in and live-out workers were undertaken, certain categories have not received any attention. Quasi live-in domestic workers are one such category, quite different from mainstream workers, mostly hidden due to their location and also as they are relatively fewer in numbers. Second, these workers while being different, as they occupy a space somewhere between paid-unpaid continuum, share common features- long hours of work, low wages and vulnerability to exploitation. Another element that mark them separate is powerlessness to demand wages for work, weekly and annual leave, justiciable working conditions and even the freedom to negotiate or decline any new work than what was initially agreed upon, as they try to avoid confrontation with employers to protect their roof.

The study findings are based on in-depth interviews of 19 quasi-live-in workers and focus group discussions with three worker groups. Only a handful of sample workers had ever undertaken paid domestic work before, indirectly pointing to the fact that women from lower income households may willingly take up paid domestic work on barter terms rather than cash wages. Work was seen as an enabler to an SQ house (in-kind wages) than for earning cash wages. Prevailing norms of three-works-in-lieu for SQ provided overall guidance for terms of employment, while negotiations for wages, leave and work conditions were more or less non-existent. More than half, or precisely 8 out of 19 domestic workers in this study were on quarter for work terms (technically 3 cleaning tasks/ cooking all meals) while the rest were on quarter + wages term (mostly in cases of those doing more than three tasks). In cases where quarter was considered as equal to the work (by the employer) the worker did not receive a cash wage. Commonly cash wages were only earned by those doing more

than three tasks, but as there were no standard rates for tasks, wages earned by workers varied and did not correlate to tasks or hours worked. Few workers put up with difficult working conditions, long hours as well as round-the clock availability for below market to zero cash wages to continue living in the SQ as alternate and accessible housing arrangements elsewhere in the city was less desirable.

The work terms were hardly 'fair and reasonable' but over the years or rather, decades, the prevailing system of three cleaning tasks/ cooking all meals had become established and entrenched as a justiciable barter term, and accepted as the norm. Fair valuation is undoubtedly subjective, but given the unequal power relations, it is presumable that the prevailing barter terms, may have come in to existence, from the employers side. For the workers, in addition to comparable physical spaces in terms of area, there may have been other tangibles, such as location advantages, open spaces, play grounds, assured water and electricity supply, as well as intangibles, particularly safety and security the colony offered. In fact it may be this subjective valuation that rendered such 'work for housing' arrangements much sought after among low income families, and why women put up with difficult working conditions, long hours as well as round-the clock availability for below market to zero cash remuneration.

The perpetuation of 'work for housing' is quite incongruent with present times. But the research found these work arrangements to be facilitated from both demand and supply sides. The supply is ensured by the government as it continue to provide housing with SQ to its senior employees, while demand for SQ housing from economically weaker sections result in such households self-selecting these housing for work arrangements, where in a member, mostly adult women barter domestic work services to 'earn' the family 'housing'. Many quasi-live-ins were first and second generation migrants, who found such work-in-lieu of housing arrangements enabling survival in the city. Women workers in the sample shouldered the entire burden for ensuring that their family had access to secure housing and the concern for sustenance of the safe roof for families obliterated the question of cash wages, leave and leisure.

Gendered responsibilities were operational, with the woman working to sustain the 'roof' while the man was responsible for bringing home 'bread and butter'. Thus the 'man' going out for work and cash earnings with the woman managing 'home', both of the employer and of her own, became a 'de facto' household survival strategy. In fact, for many, the *Kothi* (term used by workers to refer to the main house) work was more of an extension of own housework, also explaining acceptance of difficult and in some cases even exploitative work conditions, as long as the family could continue residing in the servant quarter.

A unique aspect of these family quarter situation/arrangement was the intermingling of own household and care work with that of the work done in the employers household. Many worked round the clock- from the time they woke up until they slept, facilitating social reproduction of two households, that of the employer and their own. Thus there was a blurring on time expended in own and employer household, without accounting any 'extra work' or what ought to be the value of 'being on stand-by' and 'exclusivity of service' by both workers and employers. Patriarchal approval was evident as husbands felt the women were safe as they did not technically 'leave' their homes. This led to overvaluation of the house in terms of labour services offered and acceptance of low cash wage compensation as a norm. In the case of workers who did earn a wage (as monthly salary), it was as fixed by the employer without any bilateral negotiations, as 'housing' was critical for the worker and such SQ facilities were in shortage. Hence, generally, the wages earned were, below market rates, but there was no dissatisfaction as they equated work to prevailing locality rents.

The research delineate the value of in-kind payment by fixing the value of housing to a 'maximum percentage' of total wages based on the guidance in the Code on Wages, 2019. The Code has a binding national minimum wage (NMW) for all workers and stipulated a maximum permissible limit of 15 per cent of total wages as in-kind/non-cash payments. The study thus works out total wages workers may have earned using the recommended NMW, locality rates and minimum wages (as applicable to unskilled workers), and extract the cash wages within the total wages after separating out the value of housing. The results indicate that workers would not only receive justiciable wages, but also earn significantly higher cash incomes than their current earnings.

The study indicates that justiciable cash wages is definitely possible but would require political will. As a first step, Government should notify the Wage Code and issue advisories on payment of at least the National Minimum Wages to all workers and capping values for in-kind payments across all categories of workers and workplaces. With respect to domestic workers, the resident welfare associations may be made accountable for implementation on ground and also asked to internally publish hourly wage rates as per the NMW across housing colonies. But to receive cash wages in addition to SQ housing, co-operation and unity among domestic workers may be key, as intense competition for housing had led to prevailing barter terms. Changing of status-quo would definitely face resistance. But if workers hold ground and stand together, there is definite possibility for improvement in cash wages. This would not only improve household incomes of domestic workers, but also self-reliance and self-worth of women workers, as they receive respect and recognition within family as income earners. In addition, it would also address larger issues of equity and equality.

List of Acronyms and Word Meanings

AIDWA	All India Democratic Women’s Association
BPL	Below Poverty Line
CPWD	Central Public Works Department
DDA	Delhi Development Authority
DHDR	Delhi Human Development Report
EWS	Economically Weaker Sections
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ISCO	International Standard Classification of Occupations
JJ clusters	Jhuggi-Jhopdi
LBZ	Lutyen Bungalow Zone
LIG	Low income group
MoHUPA	Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation
MWA	Minimum Wages Act 1948
NFLMW	National Floor Level Minimum Wage
NIC	National Industrial Classification
NSSO	National Sample Survey Office
OBC	Other Backward Classes
PDDWU	Pune District Domestic Workers’ Union
PLFS	Periodic Labour Force Survey
RWA	Resident Welfare Associations
SC	Scheduled Castes
SEWA	Self Employed Women’s Association
SQ	Servant Quarters
UP	Uttar Pradesh

Non English Word Meanings

<i>Baat</i>	Discussion
<i>Khali</i>	Empty
<i>Khetibaadi</i>	Work related to farming
<i>Kothi</i>	The term has several meanings, but in this report it exclusively means the main house as referred to by the domestic workers
<i>Kutchra</i>	Structures which are not permanent and often built as makeshift accommodation
<i>Memsahib</i>	Literally means a white foreign woman of high social status living in India, usually the wife of a British official. In this study, the domestic workers commonly used the term to refer to the lady of the house.
<i>Rishtedaar</i>	Kin
<i>Saab/Sahib</i>	Native inhabitants of colonial India addressed Europeans of some social or official status by this term
<i>Safai ka kaam</i>	Cleaning tasks
<i>Thankha</i>	Salary/Wages

CHAPTER I

Introduction

This chapter gives a brief introduction to the study topic and research objectives.

The Lutyen bungalow zone area² of Delhi houses powerful politicians and government officials in addition to the wealthy elite, in upscale residential areas such as Jor Bagh, Amrita Shergill Marg, Golf Links and Sunder Nagar. It is an exclusive area in New Delhi, with majority of the houses belonging to the Government, of which the best category or Lutyen Bungalows are allotted to ministers, judges, senior bureaucrats and defence officers when they occupy office. Other than the Lutyen bungalows, government accommodation also include housing types³ starting from I, II, III, IV, V, VI, and VII, which are allotted based on pay band and position. An additional director level official is eligible for Type V, which is the level from where there are attached but independent servant quarters (SQ). Type V accommodation has one SQ, commonly found attached or within the vicinity of the main house. Type VI has two, Type VII has three while Type VIII has six independent servant quarters.

The above brief on government accommodation is to situate the location and context of this study which examines the specificities of employment of domestic workers who work in the Lutyen Delhi area and live along with their families in the attached but independent servant quarters.

² The Lutyens Bungalow Zone (LBZ) is in an area of about 26 km². All land and buildings in the LBZ belong to the central government, except for 254.5 acres which is in privately owned.

³ Levels – lowest being Type I

1.1 Background & Context

The urban centre of Delhi has witnessed an influx of migrants who come to the city from far and near in search of livelihoods and better opportunities. The Economic Survey of Delhi (2012-13) records an annual inflow of 75,000 people in addition to a huge population of floating migrants. While the educationally qualified find good opportunities and become well settled, many others, particularly large majority of those belonging to lower socioeconomic groups, struggle to achieve inclusion both in terms of quality and regularity of work and housing/living spaces. The Delhi Human Development Report (2013:p.218) notes that inequality is a reflection of types of employment, particularly predominance of informal employment⁴ which generally are precarious and characterised by low wages⁵. The city thus also houses millions who, borrowing from Gary Fields (2012) are ‘working hard’, but ‘working poor’. DHDR further records that in 2011-12, 1.7 million people were living Below the Poverty Line (BPL), despite Delhi recording an average annual per capita income of around 2,00,000 rupees indicating substantial inequality. The DHDR (2013:p.130) comments upon challenges of high population density which in turn result in housing shortages for the poor, and hence large majority of lower income category live in new resettlement colonies and in urban slums⁶. Here, majority live in one-room cramped rented⁷ accommodation/shanties which even when owned, lack tenure security

⁴ 85 per cent of all workers in Delhi in 2011-12; The 17th International Conference of Labour Statisticians provided guidelines on the definition of informal employment which includes employment in informal and unregistered establishments and households, and informal employment (employment without any social benefits and entitlements) in formal (registered) establishments (http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/normativeinstrument/wcms_087622.pdf).

⁵ According to IHD-IRMA (2010) the monthly incomes of informal workers in Delhi was Rs.6, 175 for men and Rs.3, 886 for women.

⁶ The Slum Census, 2011, indicates that out of the 0.384 million households close to 70 per cent owned their houses, but about 54 per cent or 0.146 million households lived in single-room accommodations.

⁷ On an average, monthly rent for a 200-250 sq.ft. accommodation in urban population dense vertical slums in kotla or Katwaria Sarai in South Delhi was about Rs.3,500 to 6,000 in 2019 (varied according to floor). Households were also paying additional amounts for water and electricity which was about Rs.2000 (personal communication from women living in these areas).

(DHDR, 2013:p.125). The report further comments upon the lack of open spaces for sports and other games for the youth, and that with exorbitant land prices and bleak economic prospects, they have no avenues for escape, except reside in already overcrowded tenements (DHDR, 2013:p.210).

The situation with respect to necessities such as water and sanitation facilities, in many of these tenements are also found to be quite inadequate. According to the Population Census (2011) data, basic services (water, electricity and sanitation) among slum households in Delhi, indicate just 50 per cent of the 0.38 million households to have latrine facilities, 51 per cent had access to water facility through piped connection/bore wells/others within the premises, while 97 per cent had access to electricity. In all, only 44 per cent had access to electricity, water and latrine facility within their premises (DHDR, 2013:p.155). Therefore, for majority of the poor including new and older migrants as well as others who have been residing in the city for decades it is a struggle to find family living spaces with basic amenities (water, electricity and sanitation facilities). Most can afford only jhuggi-jhopdi (JJ) or slum clusters, which means that for the women in these poor migrant families, everyday life may be a constant struggle with uncertainty to both work opportunities and urban amenities (Eapen and Mehta, 2012).

Therefore, it may be noted that for poor migrant families engaged in low paying informal⁸ sector jobs, the option for affordable housing with assured basic amenities is quite limited in the city. Few may find some form of housing in better areas, but access to these may be restricted and facilitated only through social networks. It is also well known that residents in poor communities may have an abundance of strong ties, or social capital which provide them information and gives social support (Briggs, 1998). Thus social networks may help new and older low income migrant families to move in to better areas. In the case of older migrants,

⁸ About 85 per cent of all workers in Delhi are engaged in informal employment (DHDR, 2013:218). According to IHD-IRMA (2010), the monthly incomes of informal workers in Delhi was Rs.6, 175 for men and Rs.3, 886 for women.

few may experience upward social mobility too, owing to children acquiring higher education and thereby better work opportunities.

Many studies also indicate migration to cities and domestic work to be closely related, as earnings of women become crucial for the survival of households. Hence paid domestic work, has found rising participation of women workers which is a contrary trend to otherwise falling women's work participation in urban areas (as reported in the 2011-12 or the 68th round of NSSO data). There is also strong evidence on how domestic work has increasingly become a paid work option for migrant women and for others from low income households though it is characterized by low wages, exploitative working hours and conditions, absence of social security provisions, and social stigma (Neetha 2004, Chandrasekhar and Ghosh 2007, Kapadia 2010). Studies indicate that its growth in recent decades may be driven by both rural and urban factors, as large-scale destitution due to recurring production risks in agriculture has prompted increased rural-urban migration, while falling real incomes, rising inequality and growing urban middle class has been the main pull factors.

Domestic workers in metropolitan cities like Delhi are of two types, live-in and live-out, the former commonly full-timers while the latter, though part-timers in one household, may also be full-timers as they work in multiple houses. Majority are migrants⁹, with about 51.82 per cent of live-ins hailing from Jharkhand, while 66.88 per cent of the live-outs were those hailing from Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal (Neetha, 2004). While the dominant unit of migration in the former is 'individual', in case of the latter it is family or household. Another category of domestic workers found in Delhi and elsewhere are 'quasi live-ins', where in the domestic worker is provided with family accommodation in a 'servant quarter' (SQ) either attached to the main house or separate. Generally the family SQ is provided in exchange for work or labour services of domestic workers (mostly women who are employed for cooking or cleaning or both), gardeners and

⁹ Delhi experience huge in-migration from neighbouring and even far-off states. According to the Economic Survey of Delhi (2012-13) around 75,000 people migrate every year to the city in search of livelihoods and better educational opportunities

drivers¹⁰ and such facilities may be available in both private and government residences. Government officials above certain seniority¹¹, including those working in Defence and Railways, Public Sector Units (PSUs), Universities and others are allotted houses with family SQ facilities. Such housing is found across cities and towns, Bangalore, Chennai, Kanpur, Mumbai, Nagpur, Pune, Vishakhapatnam and others though data with respect to numbers are not available or prevalence of such arrangements recorded in the public domain.

As mentioned, family housing through servant/staff quarter provision may also be a feature of employment in private homes owned by the rich and even the middle class. But it should be borne in mind that family SQ and employment terms in government colonies may be very different from that provided by privately owned properties in Delhi¹² or elsewhere, particularly with respect to conditions of employment and wages. Another distinguishing feature may be the varying level of freedom or restrictions in these colonies, between government and private, and within government colonies itself, across civil and defence areas, with government colonies in civil areas having lower levels of restrictive clauses¹³ in general.

Some private houses in the city may have SQ provisions, either in *barsatis*¹⁴ or separate SQ premises, though there is no reliable data on their

¹⁰ Rarely given to drivers who are always paid a monthly salary; SQ may be given to a driver only when the main house has 2 or more SQ

¹¹ For instance IIT Chennai B, C/C1 allottee which was PB 4, 37400-67000 (with GP above 9000) as per 6th Pay Commission Rules.

<https://web.iitm.ac.in/adminhindi/common/images/nicUpload/Quarters%20Rules.pdf>

¹² For instance, in Central Delhi area, the Sujan Singh Park located near Khan Market have a separate building near the main houses for staff residence which houses over 1700 people in the SQ accommodations and garages <https://www.livemint.com/Leisure/nm8R3heRxdHHR41Uh1lIXI/The-Sujan-Singh-Park-you-dont-know.html>

¹³ Include restrictions on children. For instance military areas have a clause on male children above 18 years living in the SQ and the system of pass for entry into the colony. Private houses in Delhi with family SQ is presumed to be relatively very small in numbers though there are houses which has separate rooms for domestic staff where the individual worker or a couple (who may both be working for the household) is allowed to reside.

¹⁴ 'barsati' is small space at the top of the house where a family can live. Earlier these spaces were given as accommodation for live-in domestic workers, mostly male and at

numbers. It is also probable that they may be relatively small in numbers, particularly family SQ facilities, but they do exist in the private domain too, both in colonies and standalone private houses, as evident from newspaper reports on legal battles¹⁵ fought over non-vacation of SQ. It has also been observed that in certain government colonies without family SQ provisions, some even build makeshift shacks/kutchra rooms either on the terrace or in the backyard which double up as housing for domestic worker families.

Many urban poor, particularly migrant families with social networks, gain entry to these SQ accommodations for better and secure living spaces. As these spaces are generally given in exchange of work, more commonly to female domestic workers, women in lower income households who choose to move into such family SQ accommodations have to reconcile to take up paid domestic work even if they may have never done such work before. Once the worker gains residence with family in to the SQ in exchange of work, after negotiating terms of work with the ‘madam’ or ‘mehsahib’ (either a lady officer residing in the house or the wife of the government official to whom the house is allotted) during the duration of their employment they reside there unless asked to vacate by the employer or when employer vacates his/her house upon transfer/retirement.

1.2 Importance of the Research

The research is important for two reasons. One, while domestic work has grown since the last few decades and numerous studies on various

times married couples who served the household. Such spaces were initially built because of the building regulations - as there was a limit on the number of floors a bungalow could have. For instance, in Chanakyapuri, a bungalow could only have a ground floor and a first floor. On the second floor only a small room could be built and this was called the barsati (literally meaning rain shelter) which originally doubled up as servant quarters. But soon most landlords began to rent these spaces out for earning extra incomes. Further, with changes in building regulations, today in the same area, four full floors can be built and therefore, most bungalows have turned into multi floor apartments without any barsati floor. Available at <https://www.thedelhiwalla.com/2011/05/09/city-life-barsatis-south-delhi/>

¹⁵ <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Delhi/maid-asked-to-vacate-quarter-in-delhi-takes-employer-to-court/article6122517.ece>

dimensions of this work was completed on both live-in and live-out workers, certain categories of domestic workers is less studied and understood. Quasi live-in domestic workers are one such category, wherein, workers reside in employer provided family SQ residences. They are different from mainstream category of workers, mostly hidden due to their location and relatively fewer numbers. Second, these workers while being different from general category share common features of all domestic workers - long hours of work, low wages, non-recognition as workers by self and family. But they are also different as their power to demand fair wages for work, leave and justiciable working conditions are severely constrained because of the power, employers wield over them, through control on family residences. Owing to this, the worker has limited powers to decline any new request or negotiate for decent cash wages as there is constant fear of eviction on displeasing the employer.

This study tries to understand the specificities and decipher the lives and work of ‘quasi live-in’ category of women domestic workers. There are important differences for considering these domestic workers as a separate category. One, these workers are neither living-in within the employer household, nor entirely living-out, as the family living quarter or the SQ provided to them, though separate, is commonly within the same periphery as the main house. Hence, worker lives may be marked by restrictions with respect to overall freedom which vary according to tasks and initial negotiations. There may be both restrictions and freedom with respect to ‘time’ as workers are neither fully live-out nor completely live-in. Depending on tasks, employers and initial negotiations, a worker may have freedom of a live-out such as reporting at specific times to complete set of tasks, or restrictions of a live-in who may have to be on ‘stand-by’ at all times. Two, the central bargaining point for employment here is family housing¹⁶ or the SQ, where the worker resides with her spouse and

¹⁶ The SQ housing in these colonies have assured water and electricity supply, and families have access to play grounds for children, and open parks within the colony. Play grounds are installed in all government colonies in the area, and all have access; but in posh private colonies in the LBZ such as the Golf Links there are restrictions, with guards monitoring the entry to these playgrounds, and children of domestic workers are not allowed inside

children, which means she do not live an isolated life like most live-in workers in the urban, cut-off from family and social networks, but manage her own household affairs and maintain social networks like a live-out worker.

In addition, it may be likely¹⁷ that majority never took up paid domestic work before, and work in the *Kothis*¹⁸ only for family housing. This may also mean that working in the *kothis* for many women is a mode of entry to better housing and living surroundings for their families. Therefore, market wages for work rendered may not be a consideration or hold much significance to these women. Hence conditions and specificities of employment may be very different for these workers from mainstream domestic workers, where cash wages are the chief consideration. The study is thus undertaken to examine the lives, work and wages of quasi-live-in domestic workers, with the following specific research questions.

1.3 Research Questions

- 1.3.1. To understand the historical background of staff/servant residences in the Lutyens Delhi area and what allows perpetuation of these type of arrangements in present times?
- 1.3.2. To examine the socio-economic & regional profile of the domestic workers.
- 1.3.3. What are the major consideration for women to take up domestic work for SQ Housing?
- 1.3.4. To understand the access to area, negotiations, work and exit conditions of these workers. What are the specific challenges these workers face and how do they negotiate them?
- 1.3.5. To examine the extent and nature of support domestic workers receives from family members so as to manage work in both own and employers' household.

¹⁷ Based on information from the pilot study conducted earlier. Out of the four workers interviewed, not one had worked as a paid domestic worker before. All had worked only for Quarter.

¹⁸ A term used by these workers to refer to the main house

- 1.3.6. To examine whether there are intergenerational changes, particularly upward mobility with regard to education and occupation of children (for workers who have been staying in SQ accommodation for over twenty years).
- 1.3.7. To examine how women themselves perceive their contribution?
- 1.3.8. To examine wages/remuneration earned by the Quasi Live-in workers

1.4 Chapters/ Report Plan

The Report has five Chapters. The Introductory Chapter briefly discusses the background and context and lays out the research objectives. The Second Chapter discusses select literature related to domestic work. It further lay out the Methodology followed. The Third Chapter elaborates upon findings based on data collected from quasi live-in domestic workers and addresses the research questions. Further, using detailed narratives of workers who had to negotiate employer changes in the last five years, it discusses coping strategies and measures to manage change, particularly struggles towards finding an alternate SQ house. The Fourth Chapter briefly discusses rights, cash and in-kind payment for work and how it influence lives and livelihoods. It delineate the value of housing or the in-kind payment, fixing a maximum limit for the same within total wages the workers may have earned if they were outside such ‘work for housing’ or ‘barter terms’. The Fifth and final Chapter gives a brief summary and provide concluding comments and suggestions.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review & Methodology

This chapter discusses select literature related to the study drawing upon published works. The review include, but is not limited to dimensions of paid domestic work, cash and in-kind wages and employer provided housing for staff with a brief on its origins. The Chapter also lays down methodology followed towards answering the objectives laid out.

2.1 Defining Paid Domestic Work and Workers

Paid domestic work has seen burgeoning growth, but has remained undervalued and underpaid due to its specific nature as well as the gendered notion of unpaid housework. As women's work in their own homes are unpaid, its extension to others' homes is considered easy work and hence underpaid. While demand-supply parameters determine wages and negotiation outcomes vary according to locality and tasks, paid domestic work may also be undervalued because it is often performed by poor, migrant women mostly from lower castes. This aspect further contribute to inferior status not only in the mind of workers but also in the general outlook and societal perception.

Traditional understanding on the domestic worker were imbibed from feudal and colonial influences where both men and women working in others' homes were commonly referred to as 'servants'. Historically, the affluent class had servants. Loyalty, obligation and patronage was integral to and inherent in the master-servant relationship. Caste based hierarchy was operational, with lower castes performing 'cleaning works' while tasks such as cooking were entrusted to higher caste Brahmin men. No concrete evidence of numbers exist on the work from these times. One of the earliest surveys by the Labour Bureau (1981) on full-time domestic workers in Delhi found that neither sex had monopoly over this occupation. Later, the *Shramshakti* Report (1988), clearly indicated a

gendered shift when it reported approximately 1.7 million female workers out of the total 2.3 million domestic workers. Diverse regional studies undertaken during this time point to sub-standard conditions of work, largely based on feudal relations (Neetha, 2009). But its expansion in recent decades is supposed to have led to changes in notions of servitude and caste connotations and emergence of contractual relationships (Sengupta and Sen, 2013).

2.2 Classification of Domestic Workers

The International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) recognises domestic work under two broad classification groupings (5 and 9) with associated tasks. Classification 5 addresses commercial establishments, institutions and private households. It covers two key categories: housekeeping (minor group 512), which includes housekeepers and related workers and cooks; and personal care and related workers, including childcare workers and home-based personal care workers (minor group 513). Classification 9 speaks specifically of ‘domestic and related helpers, cleaners and launderers’. It covers ‘private households, hotels, offices, hospitals and other establishments’.

In India, domestic workers are included under the category ‘personal social and community services’ (Category 9) under the National Industrial Classification (NIC). Within this, category 95 is that of ‘private households with employed persons’, is usually taken as domestic workers. The place of work is clearly a factor that is addressed in this classification limiting it to private households. The Employment and unemployment surveys under the National Occupational Classification of workers capture domestic workers¹⁹ under occupational categories, Group 51: housekeepers, matrons and Stewards (Domestic and Institutional); Group 52: Cooks, Waiters, Bartenders and Related Workers (Domestic and Institutional);

¹⁹ The National Classification of Occupations (NCO), 1968, which was followed in the last two quinquennial rounds of the NSS, captures domestic workers under division 5, which is that of Service Workers.

Group 53: maids and other housekeeping service workers (Neetha, 2009). While sub-categorisation allows task-based divisions such as cooks, governess/baby sitters and so on, the ‘housemaid/servant’ and ‘others’ are those either doing only cleaning tasks or combining many tasks. There is thus both specialisation, differentiation and also multiplicity of tasks applicable in the context of domestic workers.

As per the Draft Labour Code for Social Security and Welfare 2017, a domestic worker is one who is employed for remuneration in cash or kind, in ‘any household or similar establishments’ through any agency or directly, either on a temporary or contract or permanent basis, part time or full time to do household or allied work. It includes replacement workers who may work for a short period as agreed upon with the main worker. Household and allied work include a wide spectrum of activities such as cooking or parts of it, washing clothes or utensils, cleaning or dusting of the house, driving, gardening, caring/nursing of the children/sick/old/mentally challenged or disabled persons.

Domestic workers may be classified in to part-time, full-time as well as live-in²⁰ or live-out depending on whether they reside within premises of the employers home or not. Engaged in domestic service in return for remuneration payable in cash or kind for a specified period (Neetha, 2009), live-in workers may generally be full-time workers as they reside with-in employers homes and hence available for work throughout or as per the requirement of the employer. Live-out workers and part-timers may be thought of as a similar category, both reporting at an employers’ household only for designated hours. But as part-timers may be working in multiple homes, their total work hours may be longer than eight hours or fulltime work in legal terms.

²⁰ Ministry of Labour and Employment (2011) The Final Report of the Task Force on Domestic Workers.. Available at http://wiego.org/sites/wiego.org/files/resources/files/dw_task-force_report.pdf

2.3 Growing Numbers of Women in Domestic Work

Paid domestic work in the country has also seen increasing feminisation over the last few decades. Neetha (2009) gives evidence of feminisation process in the sector, with female share among total domestic workers rising dramatically from 63.4 to 71.6 per cent²¹ during the period 1999-2000 and 2004-05. Chandrashekhar and Ghosh (2007) estimate women domestic workers in urban India to be about 3.1 million (2004-05), indicating their rise by a whopping 222 percent during 1990-2000. Raveendran and Vanek (2020) brings recent evidence on further increase in their numbers from the 2017-18 Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), estimating women domestic workers to be 3.4 million out of the total 5.2 million²² in the country. The rising numbers may owe to multiple factors particularly fall in women's work in farm and non-farm employment in rural areas and increasing rural to urban migration²³. Raveendran and Vanek (2020) further points out the overall fall in women's employment, from 27.1 per cent in 2011-12 to 22.7 per cent²⁴ in 2017-18. They also give evidence on the dramatic fall of rural women workers engaged in agricultural work from 75.6 million (2011-12) to 55.1 million (2017-18) and in non-agricultural work from 24.1 to about 20 million (see Table 1 in

²¹ Out of the total domestic workers, the sub-categories Housemaid/servant increased from 80.4 to 87.4 per cent, while share under 'Cook' increased from 72.6 to 73.9 per cent while share under Governess/babysitter fell from 76.4 to 74.2 per cent (Neetha, 2009).

²² 5.235 million domestic workers which accounted for 1.1% of total employment of which 3.399 were women (3.2% of total employment). Out of the workers, 3.811 million were in the urban (2.525 million women and 0.986 million men).

²³ In the CWDS (2020) Webinar on *The Neglected Dimension: Gender in India's Labour Migration Story*, Neetha spoke on the distinct shift of higher rural to urban movement (because of rural distress as indicated from the drastic fall in work participation rates of rural women). The 2011 Population Census data had also indicated an urban-ward increase in female migration for employment and business. In absolute numbers, women's migration increased from 3 to 4.5 million in rural areas and from 0.1 to 2.34 million in urban, which in absolute numbers was 7 million which was one-fifth of the total male migration in absolute numbers

²⁴ It was approx. 20 per cent in urban India and 15 per cent in Delhi. During the period from 2011-12 to 2017-18, the share of non-agricultural employment in total employment increased for men from 42 to 48 percent, but remained at 10 percent, for women. Women working in agriculture fell from 17 to 13 percent, but for men it only dropped from 31 to 30 per cent indicating substantial fall in women's employment.

Appendix I). During the same period, the number of women workers in non-agricultural work in the urban grew from about 24.1 to 27.2 million. The data thus seem to strongly point to the fact that declining work in agriculture may be leading to increasing rural to urban migration of women, and further their entry into various low paying options in the informal sector in the urban. Raveendran and Vanek (2020) categorise six major avenues of informal work for women in urban India, home based work (HBW)²⁵, domestic work, street vending/market trade, waste picking, informal construction and informal transport. They record that while HBW was the most important source of employment for women nationally at 16 per cent, in urban India it was 23 per cent. In comparison, women engaged in domestic work was higher in Delhi, at 13 per cent (only 7 per cent in HBW), indicating the importance of paid domestic work for women in poor and lower income groups in the city.

2.4 Preference and Perception of Work

Studies indicate that there is a preference for domestic work among poor women as it is an easily available work with limited entry barriers (Neetha, 2003; Kaur, 2006; ISST, 2009). Many find it convenient, particularly if the work is in surrounding residential areas as it facilitates shouldering own household responsibilities, with few hours at home in between morning and evening shifts. In addition to masculine approval, women's fear of unknown public spaces also make them feel safer in home-like or familiar surroundings (Davidson, 2005; Phadke et al., 2011). A critical aspect that is peculiar to this work is its perception as an extension of work done in one's own home, with little or no requirement for training. Therefore, it may lead to devaluing the work by self and others. As Sengupta and Sen (2013) points out

The familial space of work and type of work reinforces notions of feminine domesticity rather than giving women a separate identity as a paid worker.

²⁵ HBW include both higher end professional and technical workers and others in works like making home-made food/snacks. Raveendran and Vanek (2020) found 70 per cent of HBW among women were engaged in home based tutoring in Delhi.

Now this has a negative impact on self-perception and worth as an individual and contributor to family income and household survival. Economic models of the household indicate *ceteris paribus*, the partner with greater opportunity cost (or potential wages) has higher bargaining power within the household, and therefore could influence household decisions in her or his favour (Becker, 1965; Chiappori, 1997). While these theories may draw upon realities of the developed world, within the heterosexual household, across developing countries, the perception among family members and by women themselves is that they are secondary wage earners. But in reality, many women engaged in paid domestic work in urban areas, may be earning higher than their spouses. Studies by Moghe (2013) indicate that many of the domestic workers in Pune were in fact the main generator of household income for the family and also the de facto head of the household as the men were often unemployed, drunk or missing²⁶ for a variety of reasons. In fact, men may even encourage women to find easily available domestic work to support the household but they were also heavily burdened with household work at home. Studies indicate that many domestic workers living in urban centres like Delhi may be living with extended families, supporting numerous male relatives who may have migrated for work without families, thus bearing double and triple burden of physical housework (Wadhwa, 2019: 195).

2.5 Entry, Wages and Conditions of Work

The expanding market for paid domestic work in the National Capital Region (NCR) has attracted women workers from across the country over the past decades (Kasturi, 1990; Neetha, 2004; Jagori, 2010), and the trend continues as indicated in the analysis of PLFS 2017-18 data by Raveendran and Vanek (2020). Social networks have been the main conduits for entry into this work, particularly for live-out part-time workers, while for live-in

²⁶ Migration, desertion or death

workers, entry channels include among others, registered and unregistered placement agencies.

Vast majority of women informal workers in urban areas work on subsistence wages (Chen, 2012; Unni, 2001). In recent decades among personal services, paid domestic work has become a source of regular income for poor uneducated urban women. However, studies (Chakravarty and Chakravarty 2008; Chandrasekhar and Ghosh 2007; Mitra 2005) also indicate that despite rising demand for these services, wages continue to remain extremely low. Wages and conditions of work widely varies depending on tasks, locality, quantum of work, number of times a particular work is performed in a day, live-in or live-out and many other factors. As there is no minimum wage fixed for domestic work (in most states), it varies across employers, geographical areas as well as socioeconomic characteristics of both employers and employees.

Neetha (2004) has commented on the difficulty involved in arriving at a uniform daily wage rate for domestic work even within a particular locality as it involves number of activities, types, tasks (cooking, cleaning, caring) and worker specificities. In urban areas, wages of part-time workers may also vary according to tasks, with cooks earning higher wages than cleaners, reflecting the socio-cultural hierarchy. Palriwala and Neetha (2009) gives evidence on the wide variation in monthly wage rates, from 100 - 400 rupees for tasks such as washing clothes, utensils, or sweeping and mopping floors. Wages for care work (taking care of children) and cooking, were higher ranging from 500-1500 rupees a month. There were also differences for sweeping and mopping floors based on the area of the house, while rates for some tasks (washing clothes and utensils, cooking) marginally varied depending on the number of individuals in the family.

Studies on part-time and live-out domestic workers in the NCR indicate locality specific norms on wages (Jain and Kodoth, 2019) and wage setting being based on informal norms and standards set by domestic workers in a particular locality (ISST, 2009). For live-in workers who live within the employers' homes, the work conditions are characterised by continuous

and long hours of work, no rest days or payments for over time, low wages and possibility of both physical and sexual abuse (Neetha, 2009). They are often trapped in the employers' household as their wages and identity proofs are withheld (ILO, 2007).

For live-out workers, there was also a paradox of wages being inextricably linked to an area and its inhabitants' affluence. If workers moved to a locality where rents were cheaper, available paid domestic work nearby would not pay better wages and hence they would have to travel longer distances, incurring time and money so as to earn better wages. Mobility issues for domestic workers in Delhi was also raised by Sharma (2016). For a worker living close to middle and upper class locality where wages were higher, rentals would also be higher hence some workers commuted long distances to work in areas where wages were higher (Coelho et al., 2012) or lived in shanties and vertical slums if they were available in the vicinity, pointing out both affordable housing and mobility issues faced by workers.

2.6 Organising for Wages & Conditions of Employment

In India, paid domestic work has been completely overlooked in the evolution of decent work standards including minimum wages, work conditions and social security benefits. Neetha and Palriwala (2011) and others clearly show how lack of collective bargaining, excess supply of workers and reluctance by the State to regulate the sector has resulted in low wages for domestic workers, and absence of annual increase in wages/salaries to compensate inflation, particularly food, fuel and transport (Moghe, 2013). While ultimately prevailing demand and supply conditions determine wages in a locality, because of the absence of statutory minimum wage across most states, there exists large variation both across tasks and locations within cities. Moghe (2013) who has organized domestic workers in Pune city comments upon the low level of "worker consciousness" displayed by women. She further remarks,

“the lack of class consciousness may be partly due to the socially isolated and invisible workplaces (within domestic spaces), and partly due to the social as well as personal perception that paid domestic work is actually an extension of unpaid domestic labour”

Trade Unions such as SEWA and the AIDWA has organised women domestic workers across many states since the 1980s bringing about changes in work conditions and improving bargaining power. Studies have reported challenges in organising these workers, with just a miniscule becoming members leading to overall ineffectiveness and low bargaining power. Some unions, like the Pune Zilla Ghar Kamgar Sanghatana (Pune District Domestic Workers’ Union (PDDWU) has based its organisational strategy on employment and income insecurity as well as the total lack of protective legislation. The PDDWU targeted its demands to the state, focusing on the duty and responsibility of the government to ameliorate pathetic working conditions. The Union did series of struggles in public spaces to visibilise issues and also intentionally worked on instilling in “worker consciousness”. Towards this workers were repeatedly sensitised about their status as “workers” and that their low wages and insecurity were not just because they were unorganised but also because they were women. The specific demands raised by the Union were statutory minimum wages, paid leave (including maternity leave), childcare services, health and life insurance, pensions, apart from benefits such as gratuity which should all be rightful and legal entitlements.

But despite efforts, large majority remains unorganised and informal though recent decades has witnessed some progress in organising and formalising through both trade union collectivisation efforts (raise awareness and visibility) and placement agencies. The role of the latter in improving conditions of work for domestic workers is questionable as most agencies merely play an intermediary role between employer and worker. They are mostly commission agents or operators of job centres²⁷ and do not concern themselves with either training or service conditions.

²⁷ Popular in Kolkata

They merely act as intermediaries linking supply and demand for a fee²⁸ which may be a percentage of daily or monthly salary of the workers (Sengupta and Sen, 2013) in addition to a fixed fee from employers. In many cities such as Delhi, Pune and others there has been some kind of institutionalisation from employers side with certain resident welfare associations (RWA) issuing identity cards and ensuring police verification of workers (Moghe, 2016; Sengupta and Sen, 2013).

Thus lack of worker consciousness, absence of statutory minimum wages, absence of institutional support, in addition to the overhanging shadow of unpaid domestic labour and finally desperation push women in to working below market rates.

2.7 Legal & Policy Reforms in Domestic Work

The persistence of gender based inequalities in wages and conditions of work and their exclusion²⁹ from rights and entitlements despite labour laws is a hall mark of paid domestic work. Persistent campaigns by organisations working among domestic workers, women's organisations, mobilisation by few mainstream trade unions, did result in some policy action, particularly with respect to regulation in work and wages. In June

²⁸ agencies charge registration fees from employers, which ranges from Rs. 4,500-10,000 from the employer, for a contract of 11 months (Neetha, 2009). The fees has progressively increased over the years with some of the agencies in South Delhi charging Rs25000 - 30000 as registration fees in 2019 for providing untrained/semi-trained/fully trained domestic worker for a period of 11 months with an option of two replacement (if needed) during the period. The rates for the worker ranged from 14000- 18000/month depending on her 'level of training'. These agencies also took the first month salary of the worker as an 'advance' from the employer. The workers in general did not get this money back.

²⁹ Domestic workers are not included in the central list of scheduled employments under the Minimum Wage Act of 1948. They are also excluded from core labour laws such as Payment of Wages Act (1936), Workmens' Compensation Act (1923), Contract Labour (Regulation and Prohibition) Act (1970) and Maternity Benefit Act 1961. While this may be due to the fact that these labour laws were to cover workers in manufacturing establishments where a worker was defined as "any person employed in any industry to do any manual, unskilled, skilled, technical, operational, clerical or supervisory work". As domestic workers were employed in the household, industry domestic workers were outside the purview of these Acts (ILO, 2015).

2005, Karnataka³⁰ became the first state to bring ‘domestic work’ in the scheduled list of employment under the Minimum Wages Act (MWA) 1948, thus recognizing the private household as a workplace. According to the notification, a domestic worker who worked for eight hours was entitled to a monthly amount ranging between rupees 1600 and 1800. If the number of members in the employing household were more than four, the charges were rupees 2200, and if she/he worked more than eight hours, the rate doubled (Neetha, 2009).

But, legislations seem to have achieved little to improve bargaining power and wages, as many states, including Delhi has remained hesitant to notify minimum wages for domestic work. True, campaigns for minimum wages across Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Bihar, Jharkhand Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu has advanced rights in the last two decades, but it should be borne in mind that recent developments subsumes the MWA itself under the Code on Wages, 2019. The Code may universalise legal national floor wages, which may be beneficial for poor workers. Estimates by Belser and Rani (2011 p.54) indicate that a National Minimum Wage (NMW) could bring down the probability of low paid workers being poor by 8 to 9 per cent.

But, there is ambiguity about paid domestic work, as applicability of wage floors or NMW may not be extended to workplaces that do not fall under ‘establishments’ (detailed discussion in Chapter IV) thus excluding many informal work arrangements³¹. With wage floors gaining more relevance, studies have looked at how wages for domestic workers compare against

³⁰ Tamil Nadu included domestic workers in their Manual Workers Act and in the Manual Workers Welfare Board, Maharashtra and passed the Maharashtra Domestic Workers' Welfare Board Act in 2008 and the rules for it were framed in 2010. Further, under section 27 (A) of the Maharashtra State Public Service Conduct Act, 1997, government employees were prohibited from employing children below 14 years as domestic workers which was later followed by the Central Government through amendment of Central Civil Service Conduct Rules. Other states Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Bihar, Jharkhand and Rajasthan, also notified minimum wages for domestic workers though there has been no attention on enforcement measures.

³¹ Minimum wage must be shaped by aim of enhancing incomes and consumption | The Indian Express Aug 8,2020 accessed on Nov 28,2020

recommended National Minimum Wage (NMW takes into account data from NSS 2011-12 consumer expenditure surveys on nutritional intakes, average household consumption units and food and non-food expenditure). Raveendran and Vanek (2020) found that majority among domestic workers were earning less than desirable³² minimum wages or the NMW (rupees 375 per day or 46.88 per hour, assuming an eight hour day) both nationally and in Delhi. Based on the recent PLFS 2017-18 data, they computed hourly wage earnings of women domestic workers to be just rupees 24.56 in the country, 25.17 in urban India and 25.67 in Delhi.

Globally, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has lobbied national governments to regulate paid domestic work. In 2011, it brought out the Domestic Workers' Convention 189 & Recommendation 201 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers aimed towards improving working and living conditions of workers worldwide. While India is yet to ratify the same, lobbying efforts has brought domestic workers under the Unorganised Workers Social Security Act, 2008 and the Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act 2013 (Neetha, 2019). Further a Draft National Policy was formulated and circulated to concerned ministries and state governments, which later was amended to include social security, welfare, safety, right to organise and collective bargaining, but it lapsed in 2014. Later it was to be presented before the cabinet in 2015 but remained on the backburner until January 2019 when it again resurfaced, with the labour minister tabling the new National Draft Policy³³ for Domestic Workers for the benefit of 3.9 million domestic workers. The policy

³² Stipulated by the Expert Committee chaired by A Satpathy Rs.375 is the need-based national minimum wage (NMW as of July 2018), irrespective of sectors, skills, occupations and rural-urban locations. It also recommended HRA averaging up to Rs.55/day or Rs.1,430 per month for urban workers over and above the NMW. The NMW (as recommended by the ILC 1957) must just meet the criteria maintaining the work efficiency of workers and healthy living of families. Accounting for regional wage disparities, NMW ranged from a low Rs.342 in Region I to a high of Rs.447 in region IV (GOI, 2019c: 51-52)

³³ <https://pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1558848>. Earlier, there were two draft bills, one by the National Commission of Women and the other by the National Campaign Committee of Unorganized Sector Workers but these could not be enacted

envisages minimum wages, leave provisions, freedom to form associations and other worker rights.

Policy interventions should facilitate registration as workers, payment of minimum wages, hours of work, compensation for overtime, adequate rest including weekly off, paid annual leave and recognition of rights to organize and form associations. In addition there should be emphasis on social security coverage, including maternity benefits, freedom of association and collective bargaining, access to justice, dispute resolution and grievance mechanism. There should also be efforts towards creating public awareness of domestic work as legitimate labour market activity and employers' obligation under the law to provide minimum wages and decent working conditions to domestic workers (Neetha, 2009).

2.8 Employer provided Housing

Except for the fortunate few, living in a city or town is a 'battle for a place to live', for jobs, livelihoods and opportunities for education (Gupta, 1993.p.246). Large majority who come in the hope of secure livelihoods are absorbed into the burgeoning informal sector and may end up in precarious and other low wage employment as construction workers, hawkers, porters, drivers, gardeners, sweepers, waiters, domestic workers among others. Many among them, are hardly able to earn enough to secure decent living standards and 'the right to the city' (Lefebvre, 1996). Decent housing³⁴ remains largely elusive, pushing low income families to slums and shanties of 'jhuggi-jhopdi clusters' which lack basic amenities particularly water and sanitation facilities, even for which, the rent may amount to a third to half their monthly earnings (Bathla 2020). Gupta (1993 p.248), points out how historically, immigrants escaping temporary or long-term rural poverty or seeking to supplement their agricultural incomes came into towns and immigration posed more of a civic than

³⁴ a third of its population lives in sub-standard housing, including 695 slums and JJ Clusters, 1,797 unauthorised colonies, old dilapidated areas and 362 villages (Gupta, 2020) "How can Delhi provide affordable housing near transit to its poor" available at <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/governance/how-can-delhi-provide-affordable-housing-near-transit-to-its-poor-73619> accessed on Nov 18,2020

social problem– in form of accommodation. She further notes that in the Presidency towns, ‘quarters’ were provided for the ‘menial staff’ in the houses of officials.

Affordable housing continue to remain a problem for all low income families, particularly for migrant households engaged in precarious and informal employment. With respect to live-out domestic workers, studies have pointed out the problem of affordable housing. For instance in Chennai, studies by Centre for Workers Management (2012) and Coelho et al (2012) clearly indicate how unaffordable rents for houses in the city is an issue which was repeatedly raised in the discussion on wages. Hence for low income urban households in the city, and particularly for migrant households, family housing in lieu of work become an attractive option as housing costs eat away significant part of household incomes. Thus colonial traditions of housing for ‘menial staff’ at the rear continue in present day as demand for such SQ houses by workers remain strong. Similarly supply too continue with policy ensuring houses with SQ for senior officials in government service, which is also emulated in PSU townships, university campuses and large private houses where such SQ accommodation were built towards ensuring reliable domestic services.

In the context of Delhi, the city has also witnessed rising numbers employed in formal sector ranging from government service, education, private trade and industry. Many in the formal sector, particularly those in government service and few in private sector, are usually provided allowances for housing, medical and other facilities towards a secure life. In the case of government service, all workers in the Central Government service are entitled to employer provided housing (depending on availability)³⁵, under Central Government General Pool Residential

³⁵ There is a shortage of accommodation available for Government officials across the country with Delhi having a shortfall of over 20,000 houses (against a demand for 81,345 houses) while in Chandigarh it was just about 200 (against a demand of 2,728 houses) Hindustan Times, Jul 02, 2020 <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/housing-for-govt-officials-gets-costlier-with-hike-in-licence-fee/story-1gXNxrZH8TR0oj5fQ223VJ.html>

Accommodation³⁶ as per the Allotment of Government Residences (General Pool in Delhi) Rules, 1963 and the Garage Rules, 1964.

Once an employee avail the accommodation, they have to forfeit their House Rent Allowance (HRA) and pay a nominal rent termed as a license fee³⁷. Vast majority of officials avail the housing and pay the small fee, which for lower level employees are smaller, with those occupying Type I accommodation paying 180 rupees in a month. The license fee progressively increase with seniority, which under the 6th Central Pay Commission (CPC) for a joint secretary level officer living in Type VI A, was Rs.1550 (in addition to surfeit of approx.50,000 HRA) while a secretary level officer had to pay Rs.2180 (and surrender of approx.70,000 HRA). These rates have been revised³⁸ under the Seventh CPC. For those eligible for Type V and above accommodation, a nominal rent of Rs.70 is also deducted for servant quarters as these houses have an attached SQ. Houses with more than one SQ are commensurately charged at the same rate, and facility of a closed garage, if provided is levied a license fee of Rs.40.

Thus while adequate housing support is provided for some, affordable housing remains a major issue particularly for those belonging to lower income groups and large majority of informal sector workers. In 2012, the Technical Group set up by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (MoHUPA) for looking into urban housing shortage, projected the need for 18.78 million ‘new houses’ and ‘houses needing enhancement’, based on their estimate of inadequately³⁹ housed urban households across India. Of this, 18 million were low-income households,

³⁶ <http://www.bareactslive.com/ACA/act3029.htm>

³⁷ Which vary from type I to type VIII-- based on the level of pay matrix under the 7th Pay Commission. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/housing-for-govt-officials-gets-costlier-with-hike-in-licence-fee/story-1gXNxrZH8TR0oj5fQ223VJ.html>

³⁸ Was revised after the 7th Pay Commission across levels, for instance the highest level 17 & 18 (HAG scale) it was revised from rupees 3,890 to 4,610

³⁹ This was based purely on physical characteristics of the house and the household. A household was considered to be living in inadequate housing if it was either homeless or living in an unserviceable kachha house or in an obsolescent house or in congested condition.

belonging to the economically weaker section (EWS)⁴⁰ and low-income group (LIG) indicating the severity of housing issue among the urban low income groups. Domestic workers of all categories in metropolitan cities are poor and fall under the EWS categories.

2.9 Intergenerational Changes

The poor and the working class have expectations of upward mobility and aspirations for their children. Many migrate out of their villages driven by poverty and unemployment but the movement may also be induced by aspirations for urban life, better education opportunities for children, higher incomes and upward socioeconomic mobility (Neetha, 2004; Chhetry, 1999). When lower income groups reside in upper class environments, they are constantly exposed to life of the upper classes, which generate both class 'identity', 'aspirations' and may also facilitate some to forge connections. On the other hand, the lower income groups living in poor neighbourhoods lack access to 'bridging ties' that could potentially provide *social leverage* and connections to higher classes.

Granovetter (1974) points out that people most often find jobs through *weak* ties. He speaks of the "strength in weak ties" as they provide individuals with information they do not already have, such as job opportunities. Therefore, having contact with people who have access to different resources and information is critical for obtaining opportunities

⁴⁰ Income criteria for belonging to EWS has changed over time and with progression of housing schemes. Under the latest housing Scheme Prime Ministers Awaaz Yojna launched in 2015 (aiming to provide housing for all by 2022), EWS households are defined as those having an annual income of up to Rs.3,00,000. Whereas earlier, under the Rajiv Rinn Yojana, EWS households were those having an average annual income up to Rs. 1,00,000/- while Low Income Group (LIG) households had an average annual income between Rs.1,00,001/- and up to Rs.2,00,000. But EWS limits for education vary and are non-uniform across states. Under Section 2 (e) of Right to Education Act, (The Right Of Children To Free And Compulsory Education Act, 2009) a "child belonging to weaker section" means a child belonging to such parent or guardian whose annual income is lower than the minimum limit specified by the appropriate Government, by notification- for Delhi, the Government has specified it as less than Rs. 1 lakh, while Andhra Pradesh has fixed the income ceiling at Rs. 60000. Accessed on 20 April 2020 from [http://www.arthapedia.in/index.php?title=Economically_Weaker_Sections_\(EWS\)](http://www.arthapedia.in/index.php?title=Economically_Weaker_Sections_(EWS))

and upward mobility. Studies by Tiggs *et al* (1998) and Dominguez & Watkins (2003) indicate access to social resources above and beyond race and class, and heterogeneity of social networks of low-income women, substantially influence their ability to access opportunities for upward mobility.

2.10 In-Kind Payments and Regulation

The duality of payment, of both cash and in-kind wages has been a feature that is more specific to agricultural labour in rural areas, both in India and across developing countries. A detailed discussion on the same is beyond the scope of this study, but many reports⁴¹ cover in-kind wages and its calculations with respect to agricultural wages. For instance, the Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS) rates and minimum wages in Maharashtra following the Page Committee Recommendation fixed different rates across four zones based on the paying capacity of employers, and had both in-kind and cash element in the total wages. In 1978, the EGS daily wages were 2.7 in cash and 1.3 in kind (1 kg of grain) in the fourth zone. In later revisions, the cash component increased with commensurate decrease in kind. Duality of payment of wages continue to exist in the rural, though vary according to regions, crops (from tea to paddy and potato) and other factors.

In the case of domestic work, a mix of cash and in-kind may operate primarily owing to the nature of work, workplace being employers home, workers being individual isolated entities and servitude based work relationships. The work is also characterised by ‘intimacy’ where the relationship between the employer and domestic worker at times may make her seem like a family member, and not a worker. According to Anderson (2003), the false intimacy is definitely advantageous for employers, generally women of different status. Studies indicate that

⁴¹ Report of the Study Committee on Employment Conditions of Agricultural Labour in Maharashtra State with reference to minimum wages, Government of Maharashtra, July 1973.

across many countries⁴², domestic workers, especially live-in workers may be treated like ‘members of the family’, and may be considered under the ‘protection of the household head imbuing paternalistic qualities’. Similarly, studies by Ipsos (2014) and Kweka (2013) indicate that domestic workers who consider themselves being treated like a ‘family’ member may associate higher social status in being considered so than as a ‘mere’ worker. This ‘affinity’ in turn result in servitude and dilution of contractual relationships.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO), Protection of Wages Convention, 1949 (No.95) allows “for partial payment of wages in the form of allowances in-kind, in occupations or industries in which payment in the form of such allowances is customary or desirable because of the nature of the industry or occupation concerned” (Article 4.1). In-kind payment is non-cash remuneration received by an employee for work performed, such as food, fuel, clothing, footwear, free or subsidized housing or transport, electricity, nurseries or crèches, low or zero-interest loans or subsidised mortgages⁴³. Given the subjectivity associated with in-kind payments, ILO also recommends measures to ensure that the share of such payment in within certain limits to ensure worker protection. System of National Accounts (1993), also recognises how these payments limits financial income of workers. It states “*income in kind may bring less satisfaction than income in cash because employees are not free to choose how to spend it*”⁴⁴

⁴² ILO (2016) give many instances, for example, in the Philippines, domestic workers, especially those who do all the work cleaning house and premises, laundry and cooking - , are referred to as “katulong”, the Tagalog term for “helper”. The employers, particularly the head of the family, are usually addressed “kuya” or “ate”, which means older brother or older sister. In focus group discussions with employers of domestic workers and domestic workers in Tanzania, Zambia, and the Philippines, employers who were proud about how well they treated their domestic workers likened it to how they would treat one’s own daughter or son (Ipsos, 2014; Kweka, 2013).

⁴³https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/wages/minimum-wages/domestic-workers/WCMS_483831/lang--en/index.htm (accessed on 19 December, 2020)

⁴⁴ In paragraph 7.38

Recognising the risk of abuse, ILO insist upon safeguards and legislative protection, and on measures to ensure that “such allowances are appropriate for the personal use and benefit of the worker and his family” and that “the value attributed to such allowances is fair and reasonable”. ILO Recommendation No. 201, Article 14b, identifies several criteria to measure the value of payment in-kind. It suggests that monetary value of payments in-kind should have objective criteria for reference, such as market value, cost price or prices fixed by public authorities, as appropriate.” The 12th International Conference of Labour Statisticians, also provides guidance and states “payment in-kind should be measured on the basis of the value accrued to the employee (and not the cost to employer), since earnings refer to the remuneration or income of a specified group of employed person”

ILO recommends that countries could regulate payment in kind in four ways. These are, (a) as a maximum percentage of the wage, (b) at a level (c) at market value or less than the cost to employers, and (d) at a fair and reasonable value . For instance, Spain and Cambodia ***prohibits it to be part of minimum wage***, but the former allows for the inclusion of wage payments in-kind up to 30 per cent. While ILO Conventions or Recommendations do not fix a ***specific threshold for payments in kind***, at least 44 countries restrict the level of payment in kind to a percentage of the wage across all sectors, with half of them restricting it to 30 percent or less of the total wage. Only two, allow share of payments in kind to exceed 50 per cent of the wage- Brazil (70 per cent) and Tanzania (68 per cent), in the domestic work sector. Some countries such as Switzerland and France also stipulate the value with regard to specific benefits in kind.

In Switzerland, food and housing with respect to domestic work sector is limited to a maximum of 33 CHF⁴⁵per day (further broken down into individual expenses, 3.5 CHF for breakfast, 11.5 CHF for accommodation...). Some countries explicitly state that employers may

⁴⁵ The federal hourly minimum wage for unskilled domestic workers in Switzerland was 18.55 CHF (Swiss Franc). For a live-out worker working eight hours for six days a week, who had breakfast (3.5 CHF) and lunch (10 CHF) at employers’ home, the weekly in-kind payment received equals $(3.5*6) + (10*6) = 81$ CHF. Subtracting this from the total weekly wage of 890.4 CHF, the domestic worker earns Rs.809.4 CHF per week.

not charge more than the actual cost of the goods provided thus *valuing in-kind payments at cost or less than the cost to employers*. Certain countries, namely, Chad and Senegal *limit the value of in-kind benefits to a multiple of the minimum wage*, for instance, the value of one meal is equivalent to one hour worked at the minimum wage⁴⁶. There is also *varying limit by income* as in Cambodia where in-kind payment cannot be part of the minimum wages, except when employee earn multiple times the minimum wage. Thus if one earns ‘up to three times’ the minimum wage, 20 per cent of the wage can be paid in kind, and if more than ten times the minimum wage, then 50 per cent of the wage can be paid in kind. The above methods do facilitate objective measurement of in kind payments though, the subjectivity element in (c) at market value or less than the cost to employers, and (d) at a fair and reasonable value are high and may not ensure workers with minimum cash wages.

India is yet to ratify Convention 189 and hence these guidelines remain just a reference to desirable standards towards more equitable outcomes, for those in work situations where a sizable portion of remuneration, is in-kind. But while domestic workers receiving majority of payment in-kind may be a minority in the country (in comparison to mainstream categories such as part-time live-out/full time live-in workers) there could be changes in other sectors such as plantation workers (where in-kind payments are substantial) once the Code on Wages⁴⁷ is implemented. Because, under the Code on Wages, 2019, in-kind (non-cash) benefits have been put under the definition of wages and limited to a maximum of 15 per cent of total wages. But to what extent the new legislation would protect domestic worker rights remains a moot question given the ambiguity of the Wage Codes to protect worker rights in general (Jayaram, 2019). In the case of plantation⁴⁸ workers, the Plantation Labour Act, 1951 had made it mandatory for

⁴⁶https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/wages/minimum-wages/definition/WCMS_439068/lang--en/index.htm

⁴⁷ The Labour Code on Wages Act (henceforth referred to as the Wage Code), enacted in August 2019, has been celebrated for codifying India’s four wage related laws, namely the Minimum Wages Act, 1948; the Payment of Wages Act, 1936; the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976; and the Payment of Bonus Act, 1965.

⁴⁸ Primarily, tea, coffee and rubber

employers to provide non-cash benefits such as housing, medical, education, water, toilets and other welfare provisions⁴⁹. The industry is therefore concerned at the cap⁵⁰ which it feel is inadequate, as at present cost for providing in-kind benefits may be as high as 50 per cent of total wages.

2.11 Study Methodology and Data

The section discusses methodology and data collection approach undertaken.

2.11.1 Why Quasi Live-in?

The study has termed domestic workers in the sample as ‘quasi live-ins’. This is because, though quite heterogeneous in comparison to both live-in and live-out workers, they also share features of both. Live-in workers in the domestic work paradigm in urban India, are commonly single female/male workers and at times also married couples, who are provided accommodation within the main house or in separate housing quarters. Live-ins generally leave behind family members (children and spouses in case of married workers) in native villages and thus live an isolated⁵¹ existence in the employers’ household, away from family and friends.

Workers in this study on the other hand were living with their families in the SQ in the centre of the capital city, and received support from extended social networks, of both friends and relatives residing within and outside the colony. Thus on this count, they were more like live-out workers unlike live-ins who have very limited access to larger social networks. Workers were also able to manage own household and childcare responsibilities, much better than regular live-out workers as the family living quarter

⁴⁹ The industry has been demanding that the obligation of employers to provide welfare amenities to workers to be taken over by the Government, or a reasonable value to be assigned to non-cash benefits which should be treated as part of the wages

⁵⁰ <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/agriculture/govt-to-repeal-plantation-labour-act-tea-industry-concerned/articleshow/73586167.cms>

⁵¹ Some may not even be allowed to step out of their employers’ households

provided to workers though separate, was either within the same periphery as the main house or located nearby⁵². But then, this also curtailed their freedom with respect to mobility and restrictions on movement depending on tasks, employers disposition and initial negotiations. For instance, workers who had agreed on cooking tasks negotiated *restrictions of a live-in who may have to be on 'stand-by' at all times* while those bartering cleaning tasks *had freedom of a live-out such as reporting only at specific times* to complete chores.

2.11.2 Justiciable Cash Wages

The research looks into what should be the justiciable cash wages rightfully due to workers. The prevailing barter terms indicates the valuation of SQ housing (in comparison to work rendered by the women) to be much higher than its normative value. Total cash wages the workers would have earned is computed in three ways – The total cash wages that the workers would have earned is worked out on the basis of the recommended national minimum wages (NMW), minimum wage rates (notified rates for unskilled work) and locality rates. The study computes the real cash wages that should have accrued to workers by separating the in-kind (housing) component from the total wage after assigning a value-limit for it. The value limit for 'housing' is calculated after limiting the value of 'in-kind' as per the Code on Wages 2019, (under which non-cash benefits have been put under the definition of wages), where it is limited to a maximum of 15 per cent of total wages.

(a) Total cash wages as per NMW stipulated by the Expert Committee (GOI, 2019c) was employed by Raveendran and Vanek (2020) in their study on urban informal workers in Delhi. This study use the same rates, that is NMW of Rs.375 per day or 46.88 per hour, assuming an eight hour day. The hourly rate for total cash wage calculation is rounded off to a uniform rate of Rs.47, irrespective of number of hours worked. The Expert

⁵² Some government colonies in the area have the SQ within the same compound/attached to main house while some others have it separate https://labour.delhi.gov.in/sites/default/files/All-PDF/Order_MW2019.pdf

Committee took the view that a reasonable rent for urban workers should be ₹ 457 monthly per consumption unit, or for an average labour income-based family of 3.6 consumption units, ₹ 1,645 per month at July 2018 prices. As worker was provided with family accommodation, the value of in-kind/housing (15 per cent of total wages) is equated to Rs.1,645/month (the rental allowance that should be added to total wages) and hence total wages and cash wages earned by the workers is the same.

(b) As per the Minimum Wages Act 1948, ‘wages’ mean all remuneration, capable of being expressed in terms of money,... and does not include the value of any house-accommodation, supply of light, water, medical attendance, or any other amenity or service...(Sec.2 (h) and (i))⁵³. As minimum wages for paid domestic work is not notified in Delhi, the research calculate the total monthly wages based on minimum wages notified⁵⁴ for unskilled workers in 2019. Value of housing @15 percent of total wages is deducted to obtain cash wages earned by workers.

(c) The total cash wages that the workers would have earned is worked out on the basis of locality rates. The colony did have established wage rates for outsiders/ part-time workers. The prevailing rates (at the time of field work) in the colony were Rs.1,000 for various cleaning tasks (sweeping, mopping, dusting), outdoor/garden cleaning and dog walking was Rs.3,000, while cooking per time was Rs.2,500. Value of housing @15 percent of total wages was deducted to obtain cash wages that may be earned by workers.

⁵³https://www.indiacode.nic.in/show-data?actid=AC_CEN_6_6_00025_194811_1517807324200§ionId=24391§ionno=2&orderno=2

⁵⁴ At time of field data collection in 2019 The monthly rate for unskilled workers was Rs.14,806 per month (for 8 hours and 26 days of work), while daily rate was Rs.569. https://labour.delhi.gov.in/sites/default/files/All-PDF/Order_MW2019.pdf

2.11.3 Study site

The study site is restricted to one government colony with Type V housing (D-II houses, the level from which houses have authorised SQ). Located near the India Gate (which has close to half a dozen similar government colonies as well as a private housing colony which provide family SQ) the colony has advantageous location in terms of access to public transport, upscale markets and offices. It was observed that the terms⁵⁵ were more or less similar across government colonies in the area, while terms in a private colony located nearby with family SQ varied widely.

While the study site is restricted to one colony alone, the practice of exchange of work for family housing (where workers live with their spouse and children) have common threads everywhere, and include (a) mix of in-kind and cash payments with the quantum of cash wages varying widely as there is no objective method for determination (b) guidelines absent or if present, skewed in favour of employers, though in urban locations where there is less demand⁵⁶ for SQ housing there may be favourable terms for workers (c) question of cash wages remaining peripheral, and arise only if there is more work than prevailing barter norms. Terms and conditions may also change according to (a) location within the city- for instance, in Delhi, a government colony located in Central Delhi may have different terms from those in Moti Bagh, Daula Kuan or University campuses. (b) location (town/city) in the country – Mumbai, Kochi, Nagpur, Visakhapatnam and others – terms may differ depending on relative demand and supply conditions of domestic workers (c) government or private colonies

⁵⁵ Three works in lieu of quarter was the barter system. Cash payment for the ‘extra’ work as determined by the employer/fixed rate by the management which was the case in military colonies allotted to defence personnel (if it existed). For instance, in a military flat located in the area, three times cooking was Rs.1200/month in 2019.

⁵⁶ Based on personal communication from employers in such colonies in Delhi, Kochi, Mumbai and Vishakhapatnam. Terms in Vishakhapatnam & Kochi were more favourable to workers (see 5.3.3).

2.11.4 Sample & Data Collection

Detailed interviews with 19 women domestic workers who reside in the family servant quarters (SQ) were carried out during July 2019-February 2020. In addition to the face-to-face interviews, three FGDs were also conducted with small groups of domestic workers (4-5 women). The rich information collected were further strengthened with insights gathered over the years⁵⁷ by the researcher from interactions with workers in the colony. The sample of 19 domestic workers represent close to 20 per cent of the total houses in the colony. The colony with about 105 occupied D-II houses, had one attached servant quarter for every house. While technically these houses had only one SQ, it was observed that some of the ground floor houses had built additional number of such SQ facilities to employ more domestic workers. Hence, there may be more number of domestic workers in the colony than the number of houses, though an accurate estimate of them may not be possible as these were unauthorised⁵⁸ constructions which the allotted occupants made for housing their staff (more commonly domestic workers, and rarely drivers and gardeners).

Purposive selection of respondents using snowball sampling technique was followed ensuring only those domestic workers meeting the selection criteria (lived in the area for at least a minimum of five years) was chosen. In addition, efforts were made to also select workers who had lived and

⁵⁷ Between 2010 and 2018 I had lived in this colony.

⁵⁸ The CPWD office generally destroyed such structures upon vacation of the main quarter by a resident. In general these were temporary structures which had electricity connection but with water connection outside. The ground floor servant quarters shared the bath and latrine facilities

Of the country's 400 million strong workforce, 49% are dependent on wages for the sustenance of their households (National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) 2010). However, both urban and rural wage growth rates have declined dramatically in recent years, falling to single digits from a high of 20.5% in 2010–11 and 27.7% in 2013–14, respectively (Mohanty 2019). At the same time, labour share in profits has fallen, such that the wages paid to workers have not risen in proportion to the increase in labour productivity (ILO 2018). Furthermore, the *Economic Survey 2018-19* has revealed that 1 in 3 wage workers are not protected by the minimum wage laws due to a faulty enforcement mechanism (Department of Economic Affairs 2019). Of these waged workers, two-thirds are casual workers and represent the poorest and most vulnerable sections of the country (NSSO 2010; NCEUS 2008).

worked in the area for longer period, of over twenty years. All respondents were informed about the nature and purpose of the interviews, and assured confidentiality with respect to information shared. The interviews with the workers, which took on an average about 90 minutes, was conducted using a structured questionnaire (see Appendix II) with both close and open ended questions to capture responses suitably.

The questionnaire had five parts covering information on the individual, family/household, work (nature of work, time spent, specific tasks performed, negotiations, specifics related to finding work/house, challenges and others), entry in to the area, and previous work/residence particulars. The study adopted noting/recording relevant information immediately in a field diary and later completing the questionnaire on the same day to eliminate missing information. The interviews were analysed to decipher the work and life of these workers. Aspects that were closely examined include, among others, socioeconomic and regional profile of workers, entry, negotiations and exit conditions, wages and work conditions, intergenerational mobility, and specific challenges. Detailed narratives on SQ search from those workers who had experienced employer changes and subsequent SQ shift during the last five years helped to understand how women negotiated transitions.

The interviews were carried out in the SQ (in case of two workers), in public parks within the colony (8 workers) and at a sweet house in the locality (9 workers). This strategy to shift location of interviews from SQ to common parks and ultimately to the sweet house in the area, was a gradual decision primarily for privacy towards interviewing in a more relaxed and neutral environment. In addition to the 19 interviews, three FGDs were conducted with small groups of domestic workers of 4-5 women to address broad questions such as awareness about rights, market wages, possibility of collective negotiations, membership in domestic worker groups (if they were functional in the area), negotiating exit challenges and other aspects. The FGDs were conducted separately with women from Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar as the three were observed to be different groups with distinct regional identities and were

more or less socially exclusive of the ‘other’, despite living in the same colony. One FGD was conducted in a domestic workers’ servant quarter (the employer had been transferred and the domestic worker was yet to vacate the SQ, which offered freedom for such a group meeting), while the other two were conducted in parks located within the colony.

The study had taken field work support from an educated young woman residing in the colony as it was difficult to approach workers as an outsider. The insider support enabled convincing workers to participate in the study though it was not devoid of challenges. In fact, many women had agreed to be part of the study because of repeated requests and only after they were convinced through own social networks that ‘there would be no harm’⁵⁹. This was an aspect that as a researcher I had been extremely careful about - being aware of ‘power’ and ‘powerlessness’ operating in these residential areas. The control wielded by the employer over domestic workers through the ‘family housing’ was always kept in mind. But despite these assurances, there were four cases where workers had backed out (despite agreeing to participate initially).

⁵⁹ The study has ensured complete confidentiality of workers using alternate names and not disclosing quarter numbers anywhere in the report.

CHAPTER III

Deciphering Quasi Live-in Domestic Work

This study looked into the work and life of Quasi-Live-in Domestic Workers living with their families in employer provided housing in the capital city. The study is titled '*Women Negotiating for Family Housing & Work: A Study on Quasi-Live-in Domestic Workers*'. The field study was carried out in a government housing colony that fell under the Lutyens' Delhi zone, a central area of the capital. But while the study is restricted to a single colony, SQ for work arrangements are also present elsewhere in Delhi and other cities both in the Government and private, which share certain commonalities (see 2.11.3).

The colony had predominantly D-II houses which followed identical CPWD layout pattern, with each housing block having four houses, two on the ground floor and two on the first floor. All four houses had independent SQ facility with assured electricity and water supply. The houses on the ground floor had expansive front and back lawns, while those on the first floor had independent terraces. The SQ where the worker resided with family was a one room house with a kitchenette. In general, these were about one-tenth the size of the main house, and area-wise ranged approximately between 150 to 200 sq. ft. In addition, SQ for houses on first floor had attached private bath & toilet, but for houses on the ground floor, bath and toilet facilities were shared between two SQs. All had assured electricity and water supply with separate meters for recording electricity consumption while water was billed jointly with the main house.

The specific research questions that the study set out to answer were

- 3.1. What is the historical background of staff/servant residences in the Lutyens Delhi area and what allows perpetuation of these arrangements in present times?

- 3.2. What is the socio-economic & regional profile of domestic workers?
- 3.3. What is the major consideration for women to take up domestic work for SQ housing?
- 3.4. How is the access to area, negotiations, work and exit conditions of these workers determined? What are the specific challenges these workers face and how do they negotiate them?
- 3.5. What is the nature of support domestic workers receive from their own family members so as to manage work in both own and employers' household?
- 3.6. Are there intergenerational⁶⁰ changes, particularly upward mobility with regard to education and occupation of children?
- 3.7. How do women themselves and their families perceive her contribution to household sustenance?
- 3.8. Are domestic workers earning justiciable cash wages/remuneration?

3.1 Historical Background of Family Residences for staff/servants in Delhi

Historically, attached family SQ in Delhi and elsewhere in the country owe its origin to colonial influences, while its continuing perpetuation in present times owe to certain underlying factors. These include, both, provision of such facilities for employees (above a certain seniority) in government colonies and even upscale private residences determining supply side, and the deplorable housing situation for lower income groups in urban areas influencing demand side. As mentioned in the Introduction, government accommodation in the Lutyen zone include independent bungalows as well as houses for ministers and senior officers in the civil services and others, judicial services, railway services, armed forces and so on. Officers above the rank of Additional Director and above are eligible for Type V, which is the level from where, there is provision for

⁶⁰ Examined only in cases of workers who have been staying in SQ accommodation for over twenty years

independent SQ. In the case of Type V government quarters, there is a single attached SQ within the vicinity of the main house. Houses bigger than Type V have two or more independent servant accommodations, which without doubt indicate favourable housing policy towards senior officials, who are not only provided larger houses but also facilitated to keep more number of private staff (domestic workers, gardeners, drivers and others), for its upkeep, another tradition carried on from colonial times (Gupta, 1993).

Historical Background and Current Situation of SQ attached residences were examined from published housing policy documents, both past and present. As this study is on domestic workers residing in SQ in the Lutyen Delhi zone, a brief on its historical context is discussed first. Servant quarters were integral to the palatial colonial bungalows found across British presidencies of Madras, Bombay and Calcutta as well as in other parts of India. The early suburban houses the British built in India had an exclusive residence in the Centre of a large landscaped plot with lawn, flowering shrubs and trees in the front, while servants' quarters and stables occupied the rear.

These colonial bungalows were built wherever the British settled and had separate living areas for 'staff' emulating grand houses⁶¹ back in England. Many of these bungalows were later bought by the *zamindars* and *rajahs* who more or less followed the British lifestyle⁶². King (1975) gives detailed account on the colonial bungalows, which commonly had a large walled 'compound', with one main exit to the road. The bungalows had servant quarters, stables and room for carriage or car, separate from and placed at the rear of the bungalow. Such bungalows were situated in three areas: one in rural, to house tea, rubber or indigo planters, government rest houses and inspection bungalows which were generally isolated or semi-isolated away from other members of the colonial community; the second

⁶¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Servants%27_quarters

⁶² Desai, Madhavi, Miki Desai and Jon Lang (2012), "*The Bungalow in Twentieth Century India: The Cultural Expression of Changing Ways of Life and Aspirations in the Domestic Architecture of Colonial and Post-Colonial +Society*", Ashgate, UK.

was five or six complexes located outside and away from the indigenous settlement area and built to house the representatives of the colonial political, administrative and technical system such as the district magistrate, inspector of police, civil surgeon and executive engineer. The third location was in the colonial urban settlement, namely the units of the 'civil station' or 'civil lines', the residential quarter of the civilian government officers and other members of the colonial community, and the military 'cantonment' area (King, 1975, p.41).

In the specific context of Delhi, which became the capital of British Raj in 1911, an extensive urban design addition called New Delhi was constructed between 1913 and 1930. A range of bungalows were built here, located on tree-lined roads in what is known as the Lutyens' Bungalow Zone⁶³. By the 1930s, many such houses were built on vast virgin lands for British legislators and civil servants, for the Indian nobility, professionals and senior officials in the colonial administration and the legal system. The size and characteristics of each bungalow were commensurate with the occupants' position in the socio-economic and political hierarchy. Even today, these bungalows remain prestigious addresses in post independent Delhi, with top government officials and politicians in power residing in them. In addition to these bungalows and numerous institutional buildings such as the Vigyan Bhawan (1955), Azad Bhawan (1958-61) and others, from the late fifties, and through the 60's and 70's, bulk of the work of both Central Public Works Department (CPWD) and the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) were towards creating mass housing. The CPWD built accommodation for residential purposes of government officials in Kaka Nagar, Bapa Nagar, Pandara

⁶³ Named after Sir Edwin Lutyens, the principal architect the Lutyens' Bungalow Zone (LBZ). The LBZ is an expanse of about 26 km² with manicured lawns and grand buildings, separate from Delhi's crowded parts: on the west is the vast wooded area of the Delhi ridge, adjoining the Presidential Estate; to the west and south is Nehru Park, the Race Course, the Air force station the Safdarjung Airport and the Diplomatic enclave; to the south is the Lodi Gardens, on the SE is the Delhi Golf club, and beyond the Golf course, on the edge of the LBZ boundary is the National Zoological Park, lakes, the Purana Qila, and the Humayun's Tomb. Available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lutyens%27_Delhi#Lutyens_Bungalow_Zone (accessed on 12-11-2020)

Park, Rabindra Nagar, Netaji nagar, Sarojini nagar, Laxmibhai Nagar⁶⁴ and so on (Lang, 2000).

These houses in general, had a common layout according to Type. For instance in the case of D-II houses, each housing block had four houses, two on the ground floor and two on the first floor. Houses provided to officers of gazetted rank had an attached SQ, though due to housing shortage, gazetted rank officers, including those in the Indian Administrative Services could be residing for years in hostel accommodation (such as the Pragati Vihar hostel) that did not have any attached SQ. But nevertheless, the tradition has continued till date, with government housing policy providing accommodation inclusive of SQ to officials above certain levels, as is seen in the new government housing complex constructed for senior government officials in Moti Bagh, Kidwai Nagar and elsewhere. In fact, CPWD in a 2012 press brief⁶⁵ notes that SQ would be provided from Type IV onwards (eligible to those with Rs.5400 and above grade pay), while the existing norms until then, had provided the attached SQ from Type V accommodation only, clearly indicating the continuity of SQ facility with in Government pool accommodation. Thus colonial traditions of provision of housing with SQ facilities has continued ensuring its availability or supply in present times.

On the demand side, SQ are much sought after, as cities like Delhi and others, attract large number⁶⁶ of migrants every year, many belonging to lower-income groups from deprived rural areas (Gupta, 1993). The Population Census 2011, enumerated approximately 42 per cent of the total

⁶⁴ Laxmibai Nagar is a typical housing project built by CPWD during the fifties. It consist of two-storey structures and was built specifically for housing government employees. It had 756 three room flats for gazetted employees and 665 two bedroom units for non-gazetted employees. It also has a school located at the centre and a market in a corner. The blocks of housing were organised around open areas that served as parks as well as parking areas (Lang, 2000:p.37).

⁶⁵ <https://cpwd.gov.in/Publication/NewPlintAreaNormsGPRA.pdf> (accessed on 15 October 2019)

⁶⁶ The Population of Delhi grew from 406,000 in 1901 to 1,744,000 in 1951 and to 6,220,000 in 1981. Large scale immigration of about 116,000/year mostly from Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh contributed to the rising population.

population as migrants, recording a decadal increase of one per cent. Net migration accounted for 23 per cent of population growth in urban areas between 2001 and 2011 (Chandrasekhar et al., 2017). The PLFS 2017-18 brings evidence on continuing migration from rural to urban, may be owing to declining farm and non-farm employment and rising numbers in urban non-farm employment (Table 1 in Appendix I). Most of them, or over 90 per cent get absorbed in low waged informal sector jobs, where earnings are insufficient to meet basic family needs, in particular that of secure housing. The need for 'decent' and relatively secure housing in the urban, thus may motivate many low income households, particularly migrant households, to enter in to bartering women's labour 'for a roof'. Hence such 'work for housing' arrangements perpetuate in contemporary times.

3.2 Socio-economic and Regional profile

The study examined socio-economic & regional profile of 19 quasi live-in domestic workers selected in the sample. All workers chosen had met selection criteria of having lived in the colony for over five years. It was interesting to note that even without any intentional effort, about half the sample workers who were ultimately selected had been those living in the colony for over 20 years, indicating domestic workers with longer residence in the colony to be in large numbers.

There were both first and second-generation migrants, the former being women who came to Delhi from their villages after marriage, either immediately or after the birth of children (in case of some, children were left back home and joined subsequently after the couple had settled into the city and colony life). The second-generation migrants were those who had been living in the city with their natal family (in this case, parents had migrated to the capital city decades before, in search of better livelihood opportunities). In the case of first generation migrant domestic workers, all had children, some young and school going, while some were grown up, attending college or in some job or the other. Majority, or 15 out of the 19 domestic workers were first generation migrants and hailed mostly from

three regions – Darbhanga region in Bihar, Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh (UP) and from Uttarakhand (both Kumaon and Garhwali regions). The rest, second generation migrant workers also had their roots either in UP or Bihar, their parents having migrated to Delhi several decades back.

All workers, except for one whose husband was a cook working in the border security force (BSF), a widow and another who had been deserted (but received some financial support) reported their spouses to be in occupations such as gardeners, drivers, peons/attendants/guards in private firms, and in petty business (cycle shop, tea stall, food hawking).

The age of the workers ranged from 24 to 58 years (about half the workers interviewed were below the age of 40). But almost everyone had first come in to the colony when they were in their late teens or early twenties. About half of the women in the sample (9 out of the 19) were illiterate while the rest had some school education with two having completed matriculation. All respondents interviewed belonged to low income Hindu households. It was also observed that caste groups varied according to region of origin, with those from Darbhanga, Delhi and Mirzapur mostly from scheduled castes (SC) and other backward classes (OBC) caste groups, while some of the women from Uttarakhand were from Brahmin caste groups. In all, nine women belonged to SC, six were from OBC while the rest were from General caste groups.

Some of them, or rather the families owned small sized land parcels back home, mostly joint family holdings, but none had land assets that ensured adequate livelihoods, a reason, stated by many, as to what drove their outward migration. Land assets varied among those interviewed in the study, with ‘four out of the five’ women from Uttarakhand having some family land, while in the case of those hailing from Bihar, only ‘one out of the five’ women owned land. In the case of those from UP ‘four out of the five’ owned small parcels of land back home while none of the ‘four’ second generation migrants owned any land or house assets in their native villages, indicating disappearance of rural roots over time.

Vimla belong to the *Dhobi* caste group and grew up in East Delhi. After her marriage, as her husbands' family was doing ironing/Press work in this area, she shifted to the colony and has been living here since last 30 years. Though her husband own some land in his native village in UP, she and their grown up children have no connection and consider Delhi as their home. But her husband continued to visit his native village occasionally, to visit his mother.

Among the first generation migrants, women who had some land and close relatives back home, said they would go back to their villages at some point, after children had completed schooling or the family had enough savings to start some livelihood activity in the village.

Suma and her husband plan to leave Delhi after their children complete schooling. Their old parents live alone in a hilly village near *Ranikhet* in Uttarakhand and they were worried about them. The couple planned on going back to their village and do some small business and manage the family land which had been lying *banjar* (fallow) for want of people willing to cultivate the land. They were aware of some individuals who had resettled back in the village after being away for decades and wanted to do the same.

But there were also women, irrespective of the region to which they belonged, who wanted to stay on in Delhi as there was no work in the villages and their children wanted to live on in Delhi.

Indira came from Darbhanga region of Bihar and is living in the colony for over 16 years. Being landless, they worked as daily wage agricultural workers in their native village and came to Delhi in search of work. They did not want to go back to their village as there was no work and no land, and hence survival itself was difficult. Indira said that here they manage as house is taken care of and her husband manage to earn some wages doing several odd jobs including washing cars.

The mean household size of the workers was four, though few had 5-7 family members, all residing in the same SQ. In fact those with larger family size and with married sons found it difficult to find quarters as prospective employers rejected them despite assurances of completing all cleaning and cooking tasks in lieu of SQ.

Lata had been living in the colony for over 30 years and had shifted as many as seven SQ over the years. Her family of four children expanded to nine after marriage of her sons (who continued to stay with them). As they were in a ground floor house (with 5-10 cents

of land in the rear) there was no problem of space as they had built up additional housing arrangements with brick and asbestos sheets (after seeking permission from the employer). But they had to vacate the particular SQ four years back as the new allottee of the *Kothi* did not want them, despite numerous requests and promises to do all work. Because of the huge family size, they could not find another SQ for months. The family therefore split-up, with Lata, her husband and two younger children moving to a garage in the colony on 'rent'⁶⁷. The two married sons and families moved to rented accommodation near Badarpur border and now visit them occasionally.

The older workers in the sample had adult children while the relatively younger ones (24-39 years) had school going children. None of the workers interviewed had infants though few had children who were below five years of age. Some of the women had moved through pregnancy and childbirth effortlessly during their younger years with support from family and friends (who had helped/substituted for them to complete the *Kothi* work). Few also spoke of co-operation extended by the employer, though it was not the case for all. There were women who had gone back to their villages 'for' or 'after' the birth of children as it was difficult for them to work in the same manner as before.

Manju and her husband first came to the colony in search of job and home, when their first-born was two years old. They had lived with her sister and searched for a SQ for months, but were not successful and hence had returned to their village. Months later, they came back, and this time the family found their own SQ accommodation. All was well for them with Manju settling into her *Kothi* work and household routine. But then she had conceived again and her employer while supportive during the initial months was sceptical about her ability to manage as the pregnancy progressed. Her sister though sympathetic was busy with her own *Kothi* work and four children, and hence could not lend support to help Manju with *Kothi* work. Nor could any family members from the village come, as they had to manage farm and household work. Hence, the couple went back to the village for childbirth. After four years, Manju again returned to the colony, with three daughters. She found employment with a doctor. She considers the period when she worked for the doctor (till her retirement) as the best. *Manju believes that it was the medicines and care given by the 'doctor memsahib' during the fourth pregnancy that had ensured her a 'son'*. She gratefully remembers how her employer had helped her

⁶⁷ There were garages in the colony but these were fewer in numbers than the houses. Hence there was a waiting period to get a garage allotted and generally most of the houses got the garage slightly away from their quarter. This led to many possessing it but not using them and in some cases people also surrendered an allotment as it was not convenient. Hence there were many garages in the control of the housing office which lower officials unofficially rented out on temporary basis. Though illegal the practice was quite rampant.

admission to *Safdarjung* hospital for delivery and had employed a part-timer for three months to ensure she had received adequate rest after delivery.

3.3 Why Women take up this form of domestic work

The narratives undoubtedly indicate that in the case of married women, it was normally a joint decision by the couple to barter women's work for the SQ, though in cases where the women directly came to the colony immediately after marrying men already residing in the colony, it may have been circumstances. In fact for these women, the colony and life as quasi-live-ins was the only way of life they had experienced in the city. Most respondents (except for three women) stated that they had never really worked as paid domestic workers earlier. The family had known about the possibility of such work and living quarters 'which was in a safe and peaceful area near to the India gate' either while visiting a relative in the area or because a close relative living in the colony under such 'work for housing' arrangements had spoken about it when they had visited the village. They had also learned that men could go out to work while the woman managed the housework, both of the '*Kothi*' and own household and in-lieu would get housing for the family. Hence the 'man' going out for work and the woman managing 'home', both that of the employer and her own, became a kind of 'de facto' household survival strategy.

It was interesting to note that in case of many women, the men preferred their wives working in these '*Kothis*' as they did not have to practically leave their homes, or travel in any public transport (which some perceived as quite unsafe). Many also seemed to consider the *Kothi* work as an extension of their own housework and therefore cash wages had little significance. But if the woman brought home some cash income it was always welcome though many seemed to be diffident about asking for cash wages as they felt the SQ was sufficient payment. In the words of Manju,

'apne ghar ke saath saath Kothi ka kaam bhi sambalthe hai...ghar bhi dekhbaal kar sakte hai aur kahi jaana bhi nahi..isliye paisa ki baat nahi aate..agar kuch dediya to theek hai...jo memsahib apne marzi se deta hai woh humare liye manzoor hai. Jab kuch zaroorat hai to mangta hai, aur woh deta bhi hai'

Women who had lived elsewhere in Delhi before shifting to this colony felt that in addition to the overall safety (they felt because of the general surroundings and environment), assured '*bijli*' *aur* '*pani*', clean sanitation facilities, parks and playgrounds (with unrestricted access) for children, were all facilities that they had in the colony, which they could not afford to 'rent' elsewhere in the city.

Swati came to Delhi in 2003, from a village in the district of Bhagalpur in Bihar. A mother of five sons, she had finally decided to leave her village with three of the younger children to join her husband and their two elder sons who were already working and living in the city. None in the family wanted to farm the inherited land anymore because of the hardship and miniscule income from their fields. She had felt that moving to the city will enable her younger children to attend good schools, in addition to the family being able to live together. As her husband was working in a mill at Shakarpur in East Delhi, initially the family had stayed in a rented *juggi* around the area. Life there involved constant squabbles and skirmishes for amenities, particularly water and use of toilets. From an acquaintance, Swati soon learnt about the availability of alternate opportunities of 'work for housing' in the Central Delhi area and was able to move into one of the colonies in the area. She had convinced her prospective employer that her family consisting of five children would be more of an asset than trouble, and that they would all help in maintaining the lawns and kitchen garden of the house in addition to the 'three' works she'd do in lieu of the quarter.

Radhika had earlier lived and worked in a *Kothi* in one of the private colonies in South Delhi. She had earned about Rs.8,000/month but had long work hours, sometimes extending well into mid-night. There was also restriction in the colony about where her children could play and they were barred from entry to common playgrounds located within the colony. These factors played a role in the family moving into the colony when they found a SQ purely on work for quarter basis.

It was not as if the women here were ignorant about market rates for domestic work. In fact as the colony was situated very close to an affluent private colony, many were aware of prevailing market rates for work, particularly part-time task based rates. Some were even aware of rates in Gurugram as they had relatives living and working there. But, they were not keen to shift out of the present situation, even in cases which were tough unless and until they were forced to by circumstances (because of employers moving out due to transfer/retirement, or they were asked to leave).

Many among the older workers were of the opinion that the government colony offered 'freedom', which was different from private colonies (for example, there were no restrictions with respect to use of common parks and play areas). Women spoke of how they were able to socialise and interact with friends and relatives living in the colony regularly, and even go for morning and evening strolls together. Few also felt that similar situations in private colonies was hard to find as again it was all through kinship networks. Another aspect that came up during discussions was freedom with respect to grown-up children living with them- which was not there in all colonies. One woman spoke of how they had moved out of a military area to this colony because of this particular problem.

Lata was living in the SQ of a multi-storied flat for Defence officers before moving to this colony five years ago. She had moved out of the Defence Officers Flats when her elder son had turned 17 as he could not live with them once he turned 18. She felt that she was lucky to find this SQ arrangement in time – it was more inclusive and free and had no restrictions on older sons living with the family. She felt this colony offered more freedom than her previous quarters in all aspects.

Many also felt the work load in private *Kothis* was much higher. Few who knew⁶⁸ about work conditions in private *Kothis* also stated that there was a general preference to employ either a 'husband and wife team' or '1 or 2 men', more often the later, particularly for cooking. The duty hours were also longer. For many women this was not desirable and few who had worked in private *Kothis* in the past, also stated this fact plainly.

Neena hails from Ranikhet region of Uttarakhand. After marriage, she had joined her husband who was working as a cook at a huge mansion in Noida. The couple had worked and lived in a room on the terrace of the *Kothi* for about two years. Jointly they had earned a good salary, but work hours were long. But later she went back to her village to give birth to their first child. As conditions of work was tough in the *Kothi* she never returned while her husband continued to stay on. Later from her cousin sister, Neena learned about work and housing arrangements existing in the colony and expressed her desire to find such a living arrangement. She felt the family could stay together and her children would have better education and future prospects. She has now been in the colony for over 12 years, with the same employer and like the work and living arrangement.

⁶⁸ From connections working in a private colony nearby or their own past work experience

3.4 Entry, Negotiations, Work and Exit conditions

This section looks into how the domestic workers had access to information about the ‘work for housing’ arrangements, and how they managed to gain residence in the colony. Studies indicate that placement agencies are the major intermediaries for live-in workers in the city, but in the case of almost all quasi-live-in workers interviewed, the access was exclusively through social networks. The section further discusses negotiations with employers for gaining access into SQ and work, conditions of work and other aspects. It also briefly deal with how workers negotiate exit from SQ, and cope with transition from one employer to another, or rather from one SQ to the next.

3.4.1 Entry in to the Colony

It was not surprising to observe that all workers in the study had gained entry through social and kinship networks. Given the fact that information about these ‘work for housing’ arrangements are not widely known, only those with some links to people in the colony or area, gain entry into it. All workers in the sample had social networks/connections in the colony/the area, with either a relative or friend already residing in the colony or in a neighbouring colony. Most came to know about the possibility of a vacant SQ/vacant *kothi* either through relatives or friends residing in the colony. In case of three women, their spouses were already residing in the colony with relatives, and therefore, they had moved in almost immediately after marriage, lived initially with extended family and subsequently found SQ of their own.

Babli is from Tiwari ka Pura in Mirzapur, a village in Uttar Pradesh. She came to the Colony soon after her marriage, as her husband was working as a driver in Delhi and living with his relatives. She refers to the colony as her ‘sasuraal’.

On the other hand, some had close relatives in the colony, and had decided to move into the city from their villages, since they were assured of kinship support for finding work and housing. In these cases, the couple came and resided with their relatives for months, and underwent a period of initiation

and ‘search’ in the area (not just the colony but also nearby colonies). The lucky ones managed to find a SQ within of a couple of months but there were also cases where they did not find anything even after several months. In some cases the couple therefore returned to their villages, and later came when their relatives again sent word about vacant quarters in the colony. Thus support from ‘*jaan-pehchan log*’ and ‘*rishtedaars*’ was critical for entry into these ‘work for housing’ arrangements.

Manju and her husband came to the colony from a village in UP following an acrimonious incident with his brothers. At that time, her sister who was residing in the colony had offered to take them in until they found a space of their own. But they were not successful, and could not find a SQ ever after trying over several months. During this time the brothers had patched up and so they had returned to their native village. But as the couple had no interest in tilling the family owned agricultural land, they decided to try their luck again the following summer⁶⁹, when her sister send word about quarters becoming vacant in the colony. This time they successfully moved into the SQ and since then has been living in the colony (but for a three year shift to another city accompanying an employer).

In some cases, relatives did much more than providing information about these work arrangements. They also ‘talked to a prospective employers’ and ‘even worked on behalf’ and held on to the quarters until their kin reached the colony.

Neena (from Uttarakhand) had received word to come to the colony as there were a couple of houses on the verge of becoming vacant. On reaching the colony she was quick to find a house, not only because of the information she had received but also as her cousin sister had already spoken for them and had worked in-lieu/ for her so that there would be no risk of someone else moving in to the SQ. Another aspect that helped her was that her ‘madam’ was keen to employ women from the ‘hills’ and was prepared to wait for her for a couple of weeks.

In case some, the couple had reached the colony together, after living few months to years in the city, mostly in difficult conditions. Again, it was information and support from social networks that helped them to find both work and the SQ.

⁶⁹ Summer time were also transfer months, as officers retained accommodation until end of academic year. Hence houses were usually vacated during March/April and new occupants generally moved in during May/June.

Suma is from the hills of Uttarakhand. She had married at 18 and had her first child at 19. Then her husband left for Delhi in search of work. He soon found work and lived with his sister in Khoda village in Noida. Later Suma joined her husband and the couple moved to a rented room nearby. Life here was difficult and soon after conceiving her second child she went back to her sasuraal in the village. She continued living there with the children and mother-in-law for over five years, but was worried about her husbands' well-being in the city. She came to know about the colony and 'work for housing' situation from her cousin sister living in one of the colonies in the area and wanted to find a similar situation. The following summer when her cousin sister sent word about the possibility of SQ becoming vacant soon, she was quick to travel from her native village near to Ranikhet town and reach the colony quickly. She was also lucky to find a separate SQ for 'halka kaam' within a short period. During the interim period, they had stayed with the cousin sister and family.

3.4.2 Negotiations to Get Work and Quarters

As discussed in the previous section, the women gained information on the colony and 'work for housing' arrangements through social and kinship networks. After securing the first employment/SQ, many settled in, learning how to negotiate subsequent quarter changes and work. For those negotiating a change or a new employment (commonly only upon transfer/retirement of the current employer) and SQ, the general practice was to find out about the availability of a vacant quarter through social networks or other sources. These included CPWD service centre, in addition to information from personnel at outlets such as the Mother Dairy, *Safal* and *kendriya bhandar* located in and around the colony. At times, those who required workers also pasted notices on walls around these outlets so that workers could get in touch with them (photo in appendix). Some of the worker families who had been staying in the colony for long, had formed influence with the CPWD service centre within the colony, from where, 'prior information' on possibility of 'houses becoming vacant' was obtained. Of course, for this, either the workers themselves or other family members needed strong personal connections, particularly with lower level employees. Acquaintances living near to houses that were on the verge of getting vacant, also shared information with those on the look-out.

To gain entry into these SQ facilities, women had to negotiate both 'covert' (age of children, other dependents like aged parents) and overt conditions

with the employer, generally the ‘madam’ or ‘mehsahib’ (either a lady officer residing in the house or the wife of the government official to whom the house was allotted). The overt conditions laid out by employers were - timings, work, being available on call/ring of ‘bell’ at agreed upon times and in many, especially for cooks/those doing all work, throughout the day (‘standby’ even if they had completed work for the particular shift), number of children (smaller families were preferred) and annual leave. During initial negotiations, there were discussion on the number of days workers may go on annual leave (to visit their villages), including whether they would arrange a substitute worker (friends/relatives) who may work in their place while they were away. Some workers agreed upon ensuring a substitute though it was not possible for all.

Meena and Suma said that though they had close relatives living in the colony, it was not really possible for them to substitute all her work at the *Kothi* as they did not have time. Hence they never went home for more than two weeks during the summer, which was the maximum period the employers’ allowed.

Many workers initially agreed upon minimum period of annual leave (1-2 weeks) as longer absence risked rejection. There was always possibilities for further negotiations after they had gained trust and confidence of the employer (after moving in). Longer annual leaves were negotiable in cases of workers serving households with multiple servants.

Few of the workers had found the SQ based on reference from their previous employers. Another aspect that was common here was that workers (16 out of the sample workers as depicted in Table 3.1) irrespective of tasks (cooking/cleaning) had to give a ‘trial’. This was an accepted practise, through which, employers decided whether to hire a particular worker or not. Few reported that trial in some cases were more than ‘once’, particularly for cooking as some employers needed multiple trials to ‘make a decision’ on whether the woman was a good cook and also whether she was adept at preparing variety of dishes. But in general, most prospective employers made their decision based on single trials. The trial requirement was a condition, specific to these workers, and less observed in case of general domestic worker categories (where a worker may be fired after weeks/ months if not up to expectations) .

Table 3.1 *Servant Quarter Search by Workers*

Name of Worker	How they found the SQ presently residing in	How many houses approached before finding the SQ	How many months of search to find the SQ
Manju	searched many houses and got this after trial	4	2 months
Babli	Reference from previous madam. After trial	2	1 month
Vimla	Son made multiple requests. Gave trial	3	1 month
Guddi	First try and trial	1	immediate
Vimala Devi	Reference from previous madam	0 (lived in opposite house)	immediate
Neelima	Reference from previous madam. And trial	None. Reference	immediate
Swati	Sister helped and trial	1	1 month
Indu	Through trial (relative had spoken before)	1	immediate
Salena	Search & gave trial	4	2 months
Gomti	Search & gave trial	5	3 months
Suma	Search & gave trial	6	2 months
Neena	Through trial (relative had spoken before)	1	immediate
Meena	direct talk and trial	5	3 months
Anita	Search & gave trial	6	2 months
Gajapati *	On search	NA	Over 12 months utility bill
Sunitha	Direct talk and trial	8	1 months
Purnima	Search & gave trial	1	2 weeks
Radhika	Reference from previous madam.	5	1 month
Lata	Search & gave trial	2	2 months

Note: Names of workers are changed to protect identities. Primary Data from 18 workers. One respondent Gajapati* could not find a SQ in the colony even after 3 months and therefore had to move out. She was presently living on rent outside though was actively looking and frequently visiting the colony.

Source: Field Study, July 2019- Feb 2020

Manju had mostly worked as a cook, and considers herself to be a good cook. She had usually observed that employers decided based on single trials and told her yes/no directly. But she had also come across prospective employers who asked her to give multiple trials, wherein she had to cook a variety of dishes over 2-3 days. Once she had experienced a case where a prospective employer had asked her to come for 'trial' for a whole week. She had refused. She stated, '*aise log humara fayda uttathe hai*'

In addition, few employers also asked for references from previous employers. This could be a letter, and many even asked for contact details (phone number) of past employers. Workers shared contact details only if they were sure their previous employer (either transferred/retired) would give them a good reference, and also informed them about the possibility of receiving such a call.

Once the worker gained residence with family in to the SQ in exchange of work, during the duration of their employment they lived in the SQ, unless asked to vacate by the employer or when the employer vacated his/her house upon transfer/retirement. The negotiations were very different from usual, as in these worker-employer discussions (commonly referred as '*baat*') nothing much was discussed on salary/wages. The most common work arrangement was 'three works in lieu of quarter' or 'cooking all meals' in lieu of quarter. Most of the conditions were laid out by the employer in the initial meeting itself, and negotiations in general were one-sided. Workers would be asked about their hometown, number of members in the household and their occupation, years in the colony/area and skill set possessed.

The only 'demand' raised by the domestic worker was about utility payment (*paani aur bijli*) and whether the employer would pay it. In majority of cases, the electricity and water charges were paid by the employer if 'SQ was in-lieu of three works' though an upper limit/threshold was imposed on the amount of the electricity bill that would be borne by the employer. Only in cases where the employer refused, there was some 'pleading' on this aspect, either citing that other employers paid it or that it was an accepted norm in the colony.

As stated, because of the practise of bartering three works in lieu of the SQ, workers generally did not receive cash wages/salary for work rendered. Workers who received some cash in wages were either those engaged as cooks or those performing both cooking and cleaning tasks. There were no standard rates for tasks, and cash payment if any, were decided by the employer quite arbitrarily and unilaterally and hence varied widely. None of the workers in the sample had ever bargained over 'cash wages' as they were wary of 'losing the SQ' to competition. If there were more than 'three works', then there was possibility for 'some salary' or cash payment, but generally there were no direct negotiations, though at times workers did employ some ingenious ways.

Lata had changed her SQ two years back as her previous employer had retired. Then, she had been doing all works (both cooking and cleaning) and was receiving Rs.1500 + utility payments as remuneration. Upon retirement of the employer, she had approached two prospective employers and the second had liked her and had asked her to move in to the SQ for all works. Lata had then asked whether she would be paid some *tankha* as expenses were high and her family was struggling to survive. The employer enquired what she was earning and Lata had stated 'Rs.3000 + bijli bill' and the employer had readily agreed. Lata was very happy but also little anxious as she was asked to share her previous employers' phone number. She had then thought quickly and promised to get the number the next day. On the same evening she had recounted all that had taken place to the previous employer. She further requested support from her previous employer, to not counter the amount she had stated as what was her salary. The next day Lata had passed on the phone number and the employer did have a chat with the previous employer (who had given her a good reference).

During negotiations, the tasks the domestic worker agreed to do was determined primarily by the desperation for the 'servant quarters' and in cases when they were less 'desperate' they did wait and searched longer to find 'suitable' employers. Negotiations thus depended on relative necessity. If the domestic worker was desperate for the servant quarter, then the employer had the upper hand which was generally the case as similar housing options⁷⁰ was in shortage in the city. Some employers during the initial discussions laid out rules, which also involved workers 'not declining' any work if there was a requirement. To this condition,

⁷⁰ alternate housing options were in 'kuccha colonies' or slums dotting the city and its outskirts lacked basic urban amenities and safe environment. There were few who had earlier lived in these areas and for these women the colony was really a safe haven

some of the workers stated that they had made it clear during initial negotiations itself, that they were ‘not willing to do toilet cleaning tasks’. Few workers reported that new works kept adding/piling up later, from what they were initially asked to do, and they were scared to ‘refuse’ them due to fear of losing the SQ. Some workers also spoke of how this aspect had led ugly situations and how life became difficult over time.

Gomti had agreed with her previous employer to do three cleaning works in-lieu of quarter (jaadu-pocha with dusting, bartan and kapda). After a couple of months, her employer also asked her to do the cleaning of the front and backyard lawns, for a monthly payment of Rs.1000 (the gardener who was being paid Rs.3,000 for the same work had quit the job). Though Gomti initially agreed to do the work, she found it increasingly difficult to manage all the work along with her own household responsibilities. When Gomti had informed her employer about her difficulty to do the task after a couple of months, the employer had become enraged and ordered her to vacate.

Another aspect that came at the time of negotiations was ‘permission to work part-time’. Some workers wanted to take up task based part-time domestic work within the locality and did ask prospective employers permission to undertake such work either regularly/occasionally. Some employers explicitly ‘banned’ it, and even laid out ‘exclusive availability’ as a condition, and told workers that they had to be available whenever they were called. As workers were living within the employer household, normally within the same periphery as the main house, they could not disobey these rules, which were operational with the ‘*ring of a bell*’. Hence their freedom with respect to going outside as well as taking up other part time⁷¹ work was curtailed though it did depend on the employer, nature of

⁷¹ Some workers who did only three-work in lieu of the SQ from their primary employer (in whose SQ they are residing) may have time to take up other ‘part-time’ paid domestic work during their ‘free time’ provided their primary employer give ‘permission’. Three workers in the sample were ‘explicitly barred from taking ‘part-time’ work while 10 did not take up any such work primarily because they had no time or was not keen on doing it. Five workers were doing paid-part-time work, out of which the worker who did ‘maalish’ work had left the colony and SQ housing because the ‘maalish’ work was not allowed by prospective employers after her previous employer of 20 years had left the colony. One worker said she never looked for any part-time work as she had to help her husband with the ‘press-work’

work, and initial negotiations⁷². While many workers really did not care about finding part-time work, there were few who wanted to, particularly those whose family incomes were not sufficient enough for supporting the household. Out of the 19 workers interviewed, three were ‘not allowed’ to take up any part-time work, while some did want to (but could not find time, as they were responsible for cooking or all works in their own *kothi*) while five women were doing part-time work. Part-time work was quite remunerative as the task rates for part-timers were ranging between 1000-1500 in the area for cleaning tasks, depending on whether the part-time work was in the colony or in the nearby private colony. Cooking tasks also paid well⁷³.

Neelima, a 45 year old from Bhagesar in UP was one of the few workers who was relatively on better employment terms than many others in the study. She received Rs.3500 as monthly salary for cooking (for 1 person) and cleaning and had ample time at hand as all the *Kothi* work was done before 2 pm in the afternoon. She was keen to pick up a part-time work, but the employer had specifically told her that she was to be present in the house premises all the time (as both were away).

Swati had carefully and cleverly managed to stick to cleaning tasks (in lieu for the quarter), a preference that was ‘shrewdly chosen’ based on cash wages and time considerations. She used tactics to ensure that the employer would hire her only for cleaning jobs, by conveying that she could only cut vegetables (a prerequisite for cooking) by sitting on the ground using the traditional knife, balanced on foot. Cleaning jobs ensured she had sufficient time to take up part-time jobs whenever they were available unlike cooking jobs which left little free time. She earned over 5000 rupees every month doing part-time work opportunities in two houses in the colony.

Indu was really keen to find suitable part-time work. Her employer had no problem with her doing any other work as long as she was punctual and reported at the agreed upon time to the *Kothi*. But as she was engaged in cooking all the meals at the *Kothi* she could

⁷² Work, salary (if any) and time at which work is done is agreed upon at the time of initial negotiations and before the worker moved in to the SQ with her family.

⁷³ Neena was working as a part-time cook. She went for part-time work at 6 AM and cooked breakfast and lunch. She had got the work as the employer, an officer (whose family was in another town) did not keep anyone in the SQ but rather employed part-timers for cooking and cleaning. She earned Rs.4,000/month for her work which was completed in just about two hours leaving the rest of the day for managing both *kothi* work and own household work.

not really find 3-4 hours of continuous break-time to pick up suitable part-time work. She stated that she would do part-time work if she found something suitable.

But in general, for majority of the women in the sample, their work in the *kothi* was not really an avenue for '*kamai*' (to earn cash wages) but rather an entry mode to better and safer housing for their families, and hence market wages for work rendered was not a point of consideration. This was clear during FGDs with worker groups, both from responses to questions on negotiating for wage increase, as well as bargaining for cash wages. Another factor that was clear was majority had never undertaken paid domestic work earlier and were doing the same in the *Kothis* only for the SQ.

3.4.3 Work Conditions and Wages

Tasks/Nature of Work For those who were doing cleaning works in-lieu of quarter (jaadu-pocha, bartan & kapda), there was ample leisure time and 'quality of life' and in most cases freedom to use their non-working hours freely (without restriction on taking up part-time work). But if the domestic worker has agreed upon all works (cooking and cleaning) or cooking in-lieu of quarter, they had to be available throughout their waking hours. A cook was given a place to stay in lieu of cooking breakfast, lunch and dinner, which were considered as 'three works'. A cook did not generally have fixed work hours as in addition to regular meals they were also called in between. Unlike those engaged for cleaning, they had to take prior permission to leave their SQ during the day, and also had extended work hours if there were guests (outside normal duty time during morning, noon and evening).

Hence it was not surprising to see some of the workers in the study preferring cleaning works, and referring to 'only cleaning works in lieu of quarter' as *halka kaam* (light work) and aspired to get such work. But they also stated that it was difficult to get such work as most employers gave SQ to those who could cook and if they were unable to do the cleaning, hired part-timers for the cleaning work. It was observed that 11 out of the 19 workers were engaged in cooking tasks (of which, seven were doing

both cleaning and cooking, while four were into cooking alone). Eight workers were engaged in cleaning tasks alone, while four workers were only cooking in lieu of quarter.

Table 3.2 Work and Wages of Sample Workers

Name of Worker	Nature of work/ Task	Approx. time spent (Hours)	Code of work done by workers	No of years in the current SQ	Cash Wages (in addition to the SQ)
Manju	Cooking	6	3,7,11	5	1500 +(utility bill)
Babli	ALL	8	1,2,3,5,7, 11	3	3000 +(utility bill)
Vimla	Cleaning	4	1,2,3,5,9	2	(utility bill)
Guddi	ALL	12	1,2,3,4,5,7,8,12	6	(utility bill)
Vimala Devi	ALL	8	1,2,3,5,7	3	(utility bill)
Neelima	ALL	6	1,2,3,4,5,7	4	3500 + (utility bill)
Swati	Cleaning	3	1,5	6	Nothing. They pay for electricity
Indu	Cooking	6	7	2	1000 + (utility bill)
Salena	Cooking	7	3,7	2	1500 + (utility bill)
Gomti	Cleaning	4	1,2,3,5	2	(utility bill)
Suma	ALL	9	1,2,3,5,7,10^	8	4500 + (utility bill)
Neena	Cleaning	4	1,2,3,10	12	1500 + (utility bill)
Meena	ALL	7	1,2,3,5,6,10	3	3000 + (utility bill)
Anita	Cleaning	3	1,2,3,5	1	500 + (utility bill)
Gajapati *	Cleaning	3	5,12	20	utility bill
Sunitha	Cleaning	2	10 & 12	2	Nothing. They Pay the utility bill
Purnima	Cleaning	4	1,2,3,5	2	(utility bill)
Radhika	Cooking	6	7	5	3000 + (utility bill)
Lata	ALL	9	1,2,3,5,7	3	3000 + (utility bill)

Note: Names of workers are changed to protect identities. ALL works include cooking, cleaning & all other works required for upkeep of house. The Codes of specific work done by workers are: 1. Cleaning, jaadu-pocha; 2. Dusting; 3. Bartan; 4. Kapda (washing, drying & folding); 5. Kapda (washing of delicate hand wash cloths, drying and folding of machine cloths); 6. Cooking (only 1 time) 7. Cooking (all meals); 8. Cutting vegetables; 9. Ironing; 10. Cleaning garden and jaadu, safai of front lawn and backyard (10^terrace in case of first floor houses); 11. Walking and taking care of dogs (generally this work was well-paid as either husband/sons of the worker did this task); 12. Others - car washing, gardening, maalish work were some* Gajapati had lived in the colony for over two decades but was no longer living in the colony but was still searching for a suitable employer who would allow her to carry on with her maalish work.

Source: Field Study, July 2019- Feb 2020

Depending primarily on the nature of work, the work hours and wages varied, though the latter did not really hold any direct correlation with wages. For instance from Table 3.2, it is clear that workers received very different cash wages. Those who were engaged in all works (cooking and cleaning tasks) worked longer hours than the rest, working on an average over six hours daily. In terms of hours of work, the hours ranged from 2 to 12 hours and cash wages varied from 0 to Rs.4,500. Eight out of the 19 workers were not receiving any cash wages at all, and in case of two who were doing only two cleaning tasks (which they termed as *halka kaam*), the utility bills were also paid by them.

Adjusting to unreasonable demands Many feared losing the SQ, if they displeased the employer. They also felt that, because of the shortage for such SQ in the area, finding an alternate one within limited time would be a major challenge. Hence they did their best to adjust to conditions of work, which at times were unreasonable.

Guddi has lived in the colony for over 20 years. She has been working for her present employer since the past six years, bartering about 12 hours of work every day for the SQ and utility payments. She stated that her employer was very demanding but said that she'd rather 'adjust' than look for another house. In her words, "*Finding a new house here is such a problem. I do not say no to any work as madam may get angry and even tell us to vacate. Madam keep ringing bell every 10-15 minutes⁷⁴ summoning me back to the house. So no free time, from 7 in the morning to 9 in the night. Have to inform even if I have to go for a couple of hours out of the house*"

Her decision may have been influenced by her past experiences and failures to find SQ in time. Once, upon transfer of an employer she and family had stayed with a relative for over two months. Another time, upon retirement of her employer she could not find a SQ for over six months. At that time, they had stayed on in the SQ for about three months after the employer had vacated (requesting CPWD personnel) but finally had to move out on rent. They later found another SQ, but after searching for months.

⁷⁴ May be an exaggeration though she may have remarked that because she was being called back for some work or the other even after her morning-noon and evening duty.

Thus while the prevailing norms of three-works-in-lieu for SQ provided overall guidance, there was variability on cash earnings of workers as there were no task based/hourly wage rate operational in the colony. Some of the domestic workers had to put up with difficult working conditions, worked round the clock putting in long hours and earned below market or nil cash wages, to continue living in the SQ. Many workers, particularly those engaged in cooking tasks had to be available always, or rather were on 'stand-by', meaning they had to report for work when the employer 'rang' the bell, which could also be outside the normal meal-times.

Wages and Wage increase As discussed, wages if any, were below market rates as the primary consideration for the worker was the quarter. On the other hand, for the employer, despite being senior government officials, paying low cash wages or none at all, seemed to be 'justifiable' as the 'barter' was an established norm, perpetuated over many decades.

Work conditions and wages depended on the nature of work that was agreed upon. The quantum of work depended on the nature of work, number of members as well as workers in the household, nature of employer and initial negotiations about work. In general there was no cash wages for those doing three tasks in-lieu of the SQ, but it was also observed, few were given 'some' cash wages despite not performing more than three tasks, while workers who completed similar tasks received different cash wages. Eight out of the 19 workers in the sample worked for zero cash wages (Table 3.2) though the utility bill was paid in all cases by employers except for two workers (who had only couple of tasks as the household had multiple servants). Out of the eight, only two were engaged in cooking while the rest were performing only cleaning tasks.

All workers, except for two⁷⁵ who were engaged in 'cooking alone' or 'cooking and other tasks' received some wages as cash payment (in addition to the utility payment and SQ). But there was no uniformity of cash wages earned by workers.

⁷⁵ Guddi & Vimla Devi

For instance, Radhika and Lata received the same salary (3000 rupees per month). Radhika was engaged only in cooking three meals (which as per established colony norms was even exchange for the SQ) while Lata was doing both cooking and cleaning tasks. Radhika felt she was also paid *thankha* as the employer was 'kind' and 'both saab and memsaab were Government employees'. The household had multiple servants including a driver and a personal ayah for the children.

Guddi who had stated that she was on call for over 12 hours daily received no cash wages, while Suma who worked for over 9 hours received Rs.4,500 as salary every month. In both cases utility bill was paid by the employer. Another worker Vimla Devi was also paid only the utility bills despite doing both cleaning and cooking tasks.

There was generally no annual increase in cash wages even on a nominal basis. None of the workers had ever asked for a wage increase though two workers reported that they had received some hike in their salaries without them asking for it. Workers in general felt cash wage hike was not to be expected, as they were staying in the employer provided house. In the words of Vimala Devi,

“Humko thankha se makaan ki jaroorat hai. Agar hum thankha bhadane ke liye pooch liya aur madam gussa se humko nikal diya to hum sadak par khadenge. idhar servant log itna zyada hai aur makane kum... thurant madam ko das log milega, lekin humko mahino tak chakkar katna padeda” (we need the house more than salary. If we ask madam for salary raise and she get angry and ask us to vacate, then we will be on the street. There are so many servants here but less houses...so madam will get a replacement easily but we will have to search for months to find a house)

Negotiations for Leave Some of the migrant workers did take annual leave with majority reporting they arranged for a substitute to do their work while they were away. But they were prompt to return back in time, as they were wary of losing the SQ. While none of the workers in the sample had such an experience, during the FGDs, the discussion had brought out a couple of instances where women had found their entire belongings 'outside' the SQ and another family occupying their SQ (as they came back a couple of weeks late, from what was agreed).

None of the workers had a weekly off, nor did they feel they had any right to take even a couple of holidays in a month. The general understanding was that they had to report for work on all days of the week. In case they were sick, some did not report to work, in which case, a family member did go to the employer to inform about the case, and if there were adult women in their households, they even substituted (particularly if the employer was insistent). It was also observed that despite justiciable weekly/monthly leave provisions being absent, some workers were also held responsible for providing a ‘substitute’ when they went home to their villages.

Manju who was engaged in ‘cooking and bartan’ work spoke of how her madam expected that she would send her daughters to do at least the ‘bartan’ cleaning if she fell sick. In fact the first time she had fever and took three days off she had not send any substitute. But then the madam was angry and had asked ‘who had done the work in her house?’. Ever since that, she sends her college going daughter to help out with the bartan cleaning, whenever she falls sick. She said her daughter did not mind doing the work though some of her friends’ children were not ready to substitute for them in the *Kothi* though they did not hesitate to help at home.

Anita, a worker from Delhi said she did not take any annual leave as she did not need it. But she did take off when she was sick – and she would generally send one of her young sons to inform the madam of her illness and then rest the whole day. But even during those days, if she could manage, she would offer to do the ‘bartan’ to ensure that the all was well between her and the employer.

3.4.4 Exit/ Vacating the Servant Quarters

Exit happened primarily owing to employer transfer or retirement, and rarely because of sudden eviction orders from employers. All workers⁷⁶ were asked about the reason for their last three changes of the SQ. Out of the times they had moved 24 cases of the SQ change had been because of the transfer of the employer while in five cases the workers were asked to vacate by the employer. In the case of the latter the workers were given

⁷⁶ Some had only shifted once/twice while one had only worked with one employer and stayed in a single SQ despite being in the colony for close to a decade. In all, 24 times they had moved because of transfer, 10 times because of retirement and 5 times because of eviction

two days to a one month notice to move out. In general, workers voluntarily did not leave an SQ or the employer for another, though there was one case where a worker had shifted employers.

Purnima had shifted from her previous employer to the current one as she was offered a monthly salary in addition to the SQ. Purnima had found the opportunity (that came in as the houses were located in the same block) as she had filled in for a worker who had gone back to her village on an extended break. Purnima who was on a three-work in-lieu of SQ basis with her previous employer had permission to do part-time work during her free hours and had thus filled in for her friend. The madam had liked her work and had offered her a position with salary. This had attracted Purnima and she had left the previous employer after finding a replacement who had quickly moved into the SQ (in fact, on the same evening after Purnima shifted out).

3.5 Specific Challenges

Challenges faced by the quasi-live-in domestic workers were quite different from that faced in general by both live-in and live-out domestic workers.

3.5.1 Sudden Evictions & Threats of Evictions

Workers had an innate fear that they could be asked to ‘vacate’ the quarters if they or family members ‘displeased’ employers. These eviction orders came with some notice (if the employer wanted the servant quarter for some other purpose) or suddenly. Sudden evictions were more common and happened if any conditions initially agreed upon (some of these in certain cases included use of non-vegetarian food, alcohol, tobacco and others) were violated.

Vimla was living in the SQ for over a year when her employer asked her to vacate as they wanted the SQ for personal purposes. Though she managed to get few months of notice, after repeated requests, eventually had to vacate as the employer was insistent. Later she found that they had employed a single male domestic help. She felt that the particular employers’ had some religious reasons for replacing her as they had issues with her family eating non-vegetarian food. Though they tried to find a SQ and stay on in the colony they eventually had to shift out to private accommodation near *Ashram*. They were able to afford the rent only because one of their grown-up sons was a call centre employee.

Fear of eviction was very much ingrained even if they had not themselves experienced such an event. This was because it was very difficult to find a '*khali quarter*' at short notice as there were limited number of SQ in the colony. In the likelihood of sudden vacation they would inevitably have to move to a rented accommodation. It would then take months to gain entry to another quarter, as quarter searches itself became difficult. About six out of the 19 respondents had experienced an eviction sometime during their stay in the colony. The duration given to vacate was as short as 'same day' to a 'week' and 'two weeks'. Reasons for sudden evictions were similar and different, but ultimately it was employer displeasure for some reason or the other.

Babli had experienced sudden eviction once, because her 'madam' got really angry with her for 'something' (she states it was a minor matter). She felt the anger was unjustified but then madam did not forgive her despite repeated efforts at appeasement. Babli had then tried to find an alternate SQ but at the time was not successful, and hence had shifted out to rented accommodation near Lajpat Nagar. Later Babli managed to get a SQ accommodation in another government colony nearby. Babli spoke of how difficult it was for her to move back to SQ as there were limited number of such quarters. While rented accommodation was fine, she and her husband found they were paying close to Rs.12,000 as rent + electricity & water charges, which was steep despite her husband earning well, working for a tourist/travel company as a driver for luxury cars serving mostly foreigners.

Some did get evicted because of misbehaviour of family members, most commonly excessive drinking related behaviour exhibited by spouses. In case of some workers eviction orders were later withdrawn. The respondent who had experienced such a case also spoke of how 'good hearted' the particular madam was, and that it was 'her husbands' fault' that had led to madam and saab asking her to vacate.

Gomti's alcoholic husband had lost the gate key and had come home drunk after midnight. Since he had lost the gate key he made a ruckus at the gate waking up the employers. As he was not in his senses he even ended up using abusive language. The next day the family was asked to vacate. Gomti pleaded with the madam and her husband also asked for 'maafi' multiple times from the 'saab' before they were allowed to stay on (But Gomti did not have similar luck with all employers and did get evicted because of her husband multiple times)

Anita, Salena and Gomti had to face eviction orders from their employers. The misbehaviour of children (the exact behaviour was not divulged by the worker) was what led to Anitas' eviction, while in case of the other two, their spouses had hurled abuses outside the house in an inebriated state, with Salenas' husband conducting vandalism too, destroying the light fixtures on the gate. All were asked to vacate immediately and employers had not relented despite multiple requests.

At times workers were threatened of eviction if they did not live in peace with other workers in the same house or in the same compound. Though this was more to ensure workers and families behaved, women were worried about it as there had been cases in the past, where employers had evicted belligerent workers.

Manju, a cook had frequent fights with the other maid of the house, Swati who was employed in cleaning jobs. Manju felt superior as she was the 'cook' and was paid a higher amount for her services but was also jealous of Swati who had more freedom and was earning well through part-time jobs. She also felt *Swati* and her family fought with them from time to time because of this aspect. But both were able to get along without letting the minor fights escalate in to full blown battles, particularly because 'madam' had given them strict warning and threatened of dire consequences (eviction) if they did not live in peace.

3.5.2 Frequent House Shifting

Most of the respondents interviewed in this study had shifted their homes multiple times, mostly within the colony or occasionally even to SQ in nearby colonies. In this colony, the laid down practice was that the SQ had to be vacated upon the main quarter becoming vacant⁷⁷. In case of not finding a *khali* SQ or an employer willing to employ them, a worker was at the mercy of the CPWD service centre in the area, who generally gave two weeks to a month to vacate. So women kept searching frantically as soon as they were aware of their employers impending transfer/retirement. But there was a problem here, as some employers did not give advance notice about retirement/transfer (to ensure the worker did not move out before they themselves vacated), though most did give their workers

⁷⁷ and was handed over by the occupant to the department of estates on transfer or retirement of the official to whom the house was allotted.

sufficient time to enable 'SQ search'. In general, women served their previous *Kothi* till the last day, even if they shifted out upon finding a new SQ (because of fear of losing the SQ in the event of the new madam employing another). Many workers in the sample had found a home in time before the authorities evicted the family, and if they did not, they had moved in with close relatives (if any are residing in the colony), or to makeshift structures within the colony, or to a rented accommodation temporarily.

Radhika was given just two weeks of notice by her previous employers about their transfer out of Delhi. She was not certain whether the transfer came suddenly or she was deliberately 'kept in the dark'. She had then struggled to find a new house and had to temporarily shift to a garage for four months before finding another SQ accommodation.

In the words of Swati who has negotiated multiple SQ shifts,

“yeh samasya sab ka hai...kabhi to kitna bhi doondo ghar nahi milega..par kabhi jaldi mil jati hai..atchi kothi..Mere ko safai par rahna theek hai...cooking ka kaam mein bahut samasya hai” (all has to deal with the problem... Sometimes we get a house quickly where the work is to our liking., sometimes just don't find one...I like to find SQ in-lieu of cleaning tasks as cooking is problematic)

Some tried to stay on in the SQ even if their electricity was disconnected, hanging on till they found another house or was forced to vacate. This was purposely done by some workers who had stayed on in the hope of the new occupant employing them, thus saving them from both SQ search and house shifting.

Gomti had once stayed on in the SQ for over two months after the employer had vacated. Since her employer had also put in a request with the CPWD personnel, they had let her stay on for over two months without cutting the electricity, but after that Gomti was asked her to vacate. When she continued to stay on, they had finally disconnected her electricity connection. Gomti then requested her neighbor for power connection (who allowed an electrical wire to be drawn from her house after getting permission from employer) and continued to stay on. She ultimately found another SQ in the adjoining colony for *safai* work and moved out as the main quarter went under extended period of repair works delaying its allotment.

Those who moved to rented accommodation always tried to come back. Some found success, though quarter search was not easy after moving out of the colony. The study had come across two respondents who had moved out but had eventually come back to the colony after few years.

Babli had managed to come back to the colony after living in rented accommodation for over four years. She was a good cook but had fallen out of favour with her previous madam and had to vacate her quarter on short notice. She then moved to a rented accommodation but found another house finally after four years. It was difficult but she had managed as she was in touch with her old friends who had helped with information.

There was also one worker who was still in search of a SQ in the area having moved out of the colony a year ago. This worker was quite different from the rest of the sample workers as she had secured a SQ for over 20 years, primarily by providing masseur services.

Gajapati had moved out of the colony and was now living in a rented accommodation in the Nizamuddin area with her grown up daughters. She had worked with the previous employer for over two decades and had provided masseur services in addition to washing the 'hand wash' clothes. Since there were multiple servants, she had managed the SQ by doing this work alone, in addition to stepping in as temporary replacement when any other servant went on leave. After the madam had shifted out to another area (upon retirement) Gajapati had decided to stay back in the colony to search for another house. She had multiple clients both in the colony as well as in the affluent private colony in the locality. But as she was not getting a 'suitable employer' or rather someone who would allow her to do part-time masseur work she had to shift out to a rented accommodation. Since her daughters were also earning they were able to afford the house. But she missed the colony and came periodically to enquire about vacant SQs.

3.5.3 Income Shocks

The discussion under 3.4.3 gives a clear picture of cash incomes earned by workers in general. In terms of daily hours of work put in, there was wide variability ranging from 2 to 12 hours and monthly cash wages varied from 0 to Rs.4,500. Out of the 19 workers, eight were not receiving any cash payment at all. In these cases, the household was dependent on income earned by others, most commonly the spouse, though in some cases grown-up daughters and sons were also supporting the household. As long as they

brought in regular monthly earnings, the family were able to take care of all needs: food, clothing, transport and education expenses. But in the event of some unfortunate happenings such as job loss, disease and death then the household suffered.

Meena, had recently lost her husband in an accident. After the initial shock, the family was learning to cope. Her 17 year old son studying in higher secondary, had got a part-time job to support the family. Her employer too had doubled her cash component to Rs.3000 so that the family could sustain though these still were insufficient to meet all needs as before.

Five years back, Manjus' husband had lost his ticket delivery agent job at a travel agency as most ticket booking went online. The household which had a combined income of close to Rs.15,000 suddenly found they had to survive on Rs.1000 that Manju was at the time earning for her cooking work in the *Kothi*. They had then coped by moving out of Delhi to another city where her previous employer had moved. Her erstwhile employer had offered her 'family housing' and some 'salary' so that the family could survive.

Income shocks due to death or job loss of major bread winner of the family is not uncommon. Generally, family members adjust to the occasion, but here it may be harder, particularly if there are no other earning members in the family. Since cash earnings of most quasi-live-in workers are very small, the family suddenly finds it difficult to meet basic food and other expenses needed for sustenance. But yes, one could argue that the expenditure of rent and utilities was taken care of and hence the family could live on in the city.

3.5.4 Restrictions, Permissions & Verifications

Employers in general had reservations about guests, particularly visitors who stayed overnight. It was generally a laid out condition that if relatives visited they could only stay for a limited period. Workers generally had to inform the employer about the same and take prior permission if they had relatives over for a longer period. Some workers found these conditions were in fact good, as they were absolved of denying a relative shelter for 'weeks to months' and would not receive 'family displeasure' as the 'employer was to blame'.

Neelima was relieved as this condition ensured her in-laws and relatives who stayed in another part of the city, lived there, and did not have the option of permanently moving in with them. While they visited frequently, no one stayed on for more than a day. This ensured she could manage her housework and employers housework well, unlike the days when she had stayed with her in-laws near a juggi in the railway colony area. As a young bahu Neelima remembers her days working from morning till mid-night cooking and cleaning, serving all needs of the eight member household.

Indu had requested her employer for permission when her sisters' family had to move in with them upon their employers' transfer. She had pleaded the case stating that she and her sister had a 'give and take' relationship and supported each other. The employer had agreed and her sister (and family) had moved in with her and subsequently lived with her for over three months. They were also 'allowed' to make a make shift shed on the terrace so that the 'family of 9 people could all fit' temporarily.

There was also a system of verification for new workers, particularly when they had SQ changes. This was carried out by the beat constable in the area, and there was a requirement to fill out a form which had to be submitted with the employers' signature. This was a procedural requirement to live in the area, and workers felt it was good for the 'safety' of all.

3.6 Negotiating Employer Change & SQ Exits

Majority of workers had experienced an employer change in the last five years, more commonly due to transfer or retirement, while in case of few, it was sudden evictions. The section looks into how they managed through the transition, whether transfer/retirement or sudden vacation notices, and how they negotiated the change either on their own or supported by friends and family members.

It was interesting to note that none of the workers who had been asked to vacate the SQ had received that order because of overtly demanding better work terms, either in terms of time or cash wages. Rather, it seemed either a sudden shift or a gradual souring of relationship over time, owing to multiple causation factors.

Manju had worked with as many as ten employers since she first came to the colony over three decades back. She had negotiated equal number of SQ changes, mostly managing to find one well in time before the CPWD personnel forced the family to move out. At times, the family had also moved into her sisters' SQ if there was a delay and the CPWD personnel had disconnected *bijli* and *paani*.

Manju had once followed her previous employer to another city upon their transfer. Not immediately, but after six months of them leaving the colony (as her husband had lost his job). This was a shock as they had found the monthly household income deplete from 15,000⁷⁸ to just 1,000 in six months. Though upon her previous employers transfer, she had found a SQ in lieu of all works for Rs.1000 (for a single person family), without her husbands' income they could not survive in the city. The family had then moved to Hyderabad where her previous 'madam' had given them a house and also Rs.12,000 as salary (jointly for the couple). They had lived there for three years, and her son had completed his graduation. But later they returned back to the colony as they felt more at home in the colony and soon she found a SQ for cooking work.

At times, workers, particularly those with large families, could not find a suitable SQ after an employer moved and hence had to vacate. In these cases, some workers had to move out of the colony to a rented place. Few came back, while others did not, as circumstances changed or they resettled to new ways of life.

Swati, matriarch of a large family of eight members (until recently) had experienced a sudden SQ exit few months back. The CPWD office, contrary to norms that was generally followed, refused their request for living on in the SQ beyond 10 days following the employers⁷⁹ transfer. This was because they were in a makeshift SQ (and not the authorised SQ) which as a rule had to be demolished when the *kothi* got vacated. As they were not successful in finding a SQ, the family had packed up their makeshift structure and moved to a rented space at Badarpur border with their belongings. They lived there for a while but was on the look-out for another SQ in the neighbourhood as they were spending close to Rs.7000⁸⁰ a month, just for travelling to the area. This was because four members had to commute daily to the area to attend work/school. Her husband worked at

⁷⁸ Manju supplemented her husbands' earnings of Rs12000 with Rs.3000 that she earned for cooking, cleaning utensils and dusting her previous *kothi*. This money really helped in meeting her sons' education expenses, particularly that of tuition.

⁷⁹ With this employer she had worked for over three years, mostly doing cleaning tasks, while her husband had tended the kitchen garden and her youngest son (studying in class XI at the time) had looked after the dogs. The family was paid Rs.4500 and electricity (restricted to Rs.500 per month) in addition to the extended backyard area where they had constructed a *semi-pucca* living space.

⁸⁰ Four members had to commute daily to the area to attend work/school

the Delhi zoo⁸¹ as a gardener, one son worked as a waiter in a restaurant situated in the upscale market near to the colony, another had to attend school, while she herself was into part-time domestic work in two houses in the colony.

Finally after two months, Swati through her son was able get permission to make another makeshift structure in the backyard of the *kothi* next door. The new employer had liked her sons' work, particularly gardening and his willingness and capability to take care of household pets. For Swati, it was an ideal situation, as she could now work part-time in two houses as the living space was obtained in-lieu of her sons' labour. But the new employer was strict about restricting number of family members, and allowed only parents and unmarried brother to live with him. Hence the married son and wife continued to live on in the rented accommodation at Badarpur.

In case of another worker exit happened because of changes with employers' household circumstances.

Vimla belong to the dhobi caste and she and her husband has jointly managed press work for close to thirty years. They had always managed to find ground floor *Kothis* which had multiple domestic workers and servant quarters⁸². Thus over most of their life in the colony, the housing was secured by trading press work or ironing all/some of the cloths of the employers household, though at times Vimla also had to complete a couple of cleaning tasks. But over time, it had become increasingly difficult to get accommodation for ironing work because of major demolition⁸³ drive that happened in the colony (many employers were now reluctant to make unauthorised structures in their backyards).

Upon retirement of their last employer, the family had managed to stay on in one makeshift structure or the other for a couple of years. But finally Vimla found a first floor SQ accommodation in exchange for three cleaning works and some presswork. They were also allowed to do the presswork on the terrace. Everything was fine for the first few months as the employer who was single did not bother them with anything. In fact, Vimlas' son, a post-graduate, even got a referral to join a good Business Processing Outsourcing (BPO) company in Noida through the employers' relative. For Vimla herself, work was light and she was able to complete all her cleaning tasks before the employer

⁸¹ At walking distance from the area

⁸² as mentioned earlier, most of the ground floor houses had more than one SQ, though the additional ones were all makeshift structures. But since there was enough land some who wanted to employ gardeners/drivers in addition to domestic workers allowed them to make these structures and live in the backyard area.

⁸³ There were rules with respect to additional structures, and in general this was not allowed though many continued to erect these structures even after they were demolished.

left for work in the morning, which enabled her to have almost the entire day to complete own household chores as well as help her husband with the press work.

But then things changed drastically after the employers parents shifted into the house. While the father was non-interfering, the mother who was particularly religious had very strict purity norms and behaved strangely with her. Vimla said that once they came to stay, she was barred from washing bartans. Though she continued to do cleaning tasks she was strictly told not to ‘touch anything’ particularly furniture and other items. In her words,

“saab ka maaji hum ko ashudh mante the”

Then one day, the employer called and told them that he may be soon going on transfer, and therefore wanted the family to vacate. Vimla started searching for alternate SQ but was unable to find any. They continued to stay on but the employer was continuously asking them as to when they would vacate. Vimlas’ family tried their best to adjust but there were many issues, non-vegetarian food, high electricity bill and even the daughters’ fiancé who was a regular visitor. According to Vimla the saab was quite understanding and he did try to let them stay on as he did not order them to vacate suddenly but rather was requesting them to find an alternate place. Finally the family vacated the SQ and moved to a rented accommodation because she felt it was quite insulting to stay on...

*“Abhi hum kiraye par gaya lekin press ka kaam abhi bhi kar rahe hai,
saamne wale chatth par rakha hai humara poora press ka saaman.
woh saab log bahut acchhe log hai”*

While in some, relations soured because of work changes. There was dissatisfaction and bitter exchange of words leading to sudden order for vacating the SQ.

Gomti, was forced to vacate her SQ twice⁸⁴ during the past 12 years primarily owing to her husbands’ non-cooperation and alcoholic nature. Her life in the colony had been particularly challenging as two of her three children suffered from a genetic disorder which entailed frequent visits to a medical facility located at a distance from the colony for receiving life-saving injections. All household chores including the care of three young children, cooking of all meals, hospital and school visits were her responsibility alone. The husband, a petrol pump attendant not only refused to share her burden but demanded hot meals and threw into a rage if he was not served with freshly made food every time. These burdens at times led to her inability to report on time for work. Gomti felt that while some employers were sympathetic they did want her to ‘be on time’ which at times was not possible.

⁸⁴ In fact, it would have been thrice if one employer had not taken pity on her condition. In that instance her drunk husband had verbally abused the saab at mid-night. They were asked to vacate the next morning but she managed to stay on after repeatedly asking for forgiveness

While one eviction was because of her husbands' drunken rudeness to the employers, in the other case, Gomti felt the relationship soured more because of additional work which she was unable to complete. This work involved cleaning the front yard and back yard which was both time consuming and difficult. She also felt it was not correct that the employer had only offered 'extra remuneration' of Rs.1000/month, while the gardener who was doing the work earlier was paid Rs.3,000. While she had agreed to the work when the gardener had quit, it was difficult to find time for the work along with all other *Kothi* work and own household responsibilities. For a couple of days she was unable to do the work and the employer had showered some abuses at her. Already at breaking point, Gomti ended up answering back, which led to exchange of bitter words and finally led to immediate orders to vacate the SQ.

Gomti vacated the SQ on the very next day, temporarily moving to a 'under repair' house in the colony with labourer families as they could not find any SQ at such notice. She lived there for a couple of months, before finding the another SQ where she managed to stay on as the employer was more understanding and kind-hearted.

3.7 Support Received from Own Household

The extent and nature of support the woman domestic worker received from her own family members varied. The research tried to look into the extent of redistribution and reorganization of unpaid domestic work in the workers household, given the fact that some of the employers were demanding long hours of work spanning from morning till night. The hours of work put in to complete *kothi* work depended on the tasks assigned, and varied from as low as two hours to about 12 hours a day.

Older domestic workers most commonly received help from grown-up children, particularly daughters and *bahus* who did most of the cooking, cleaning and washing work thus enabling social reproduction of domestic worker households. In case of women living in nuclear family households with young children few did receive substantial help from their husbands', which enabled them to manage both household work and care responsibilities. The husbands in the case of few 'lucky' women (who praised their husbands co-operation and were very 'grateful' for such spouses) mostly helped in managing the morning hours, particularly getting the children ready for school. Few also shouldered some of the morning cooking tasks. This support was essential for women who had cooking work in the *Kothi* which meant they had to report for work as early as 6:30AM or 7:00AM.

Suma had to report for work by 7 AM as she was in charge of cooking all three meals. While weekends were relaxed, on working days she had to get both breakfast and lunch ready by about 8:30AM in her employers' household. This meant that she could not help her children to get ready for school or drop them off to school in the morning. It was her husband who took care of the children and also prepared their tiffin and his own before leaving at 9 AM for work.

In certain other cases they had to manage entire household work on their own, as spouses were not co-operative and firmly believed that managing children and household duties of cooking, cleaning and washing were exclusively the responsibility of the woman and were obstinate about sharing any of the '*aurat ki kaam*'⁸⁵.

Unlike Suma, for Gomti, a woman from Pittoragarh district of Uttarakhand, support from spouse was totally absent. Her alcoholic husband behaved as lord and master of the house fixing all household responsibilities including the care of three young children (two were haemophiliacs and required frequent visits to the hospital) solely on her. Gomti had to cook all meals, complete all household chores, and also make frequent visits to the hospitals as her children were prone to bleeding excessively even from normal wounds. Her husband not only refused to share her burden but demanded hot meals and threw into a rage if he was not served with freshly made food every time. Gomti was even forced to vacate her SQ twice in the past 12 years due to her husbands' non-cooperation and alcoholic nature.

3.8 intergenerational changes and upward mobility

In the case of workers who had been living in the SQ accommodation over twenty years the research had looked into the occupational mobility and educational level attained by grown-up children. It is expected that the poor and working class have expectations of upward mobility and educate their children towards improving opportunities. Life in the colony also exposed worker families to life of upper classes which may generate both class 'identity' and 'aspirations'. They may also be able to forge connections with the upper class or economically better placed households and find opportunities that may be not usually come in their way.

⁸⁵ Women's work

It was observed that out of the nine older domestic workers only in case of three there was some noticeable upward mobility with respect to occupation of grown up children. These young adults (all below 30 years) had completed post-graduation and were employed in private firms. Two young women were working as receptionists and a young man was working in an accounting function in a business process outsourcing (BPO) firm in Noida. In the case of two domestic workers, it was observed that one of the family members (husband in one case and son in another) had been appointed as peons (contractual) in government offices because of recommendation received from employers.

Neena has been working with a single employer since 2008 and has forged strong connections with them. She felt her employer has helped her family substantially by finding her husband a contractual job in a Government office located in the vicinity. This allowed him to rebase from his job as a cook in Noida to that as an office peon (contractual) in Delhi. Her husband continue to occasionally work as a cook (for marriage and other large functions) bringing home additional cash income.

In the case of other six older workers, sons and daughters were already married and living separately. Except for one daughter who had trained as a beautician, none of the others were working. One of the daughter had moved to a separate SQ in the same colony and was living with her husband and children. Some of the women reported their sons had moved outside Delhi and were working in factories/offices (in Noida, Kanpur and Chandigarh). There were also sons who were working as drivers and guards. Hence intergenerational mobility varied to a large extent and only in case of very few, there seemed to be significant improvement in socioeconomic status of children in comparison to the parents.

Vimlas' three children had moved up in life compared to their parents who had mostly survived on income from press work. The eldest son was working abroad, while the younger children had all completed college education. In fact the family was able to afford rented accommodation when they had to leave the last SQ as the son, a Commerce post graduate had a good salary that enabled him to support the family. In fact, the children no longer wanted to live in SQ accommodation anymore.

All respondents aspired for a better tomorrow for their children, and particularly hoped for '*sarkari naukri*'. During the FGDs there was also a

discussion on this aspect, and none of the women wanted their children to be like them. Few of the older workers also felt that there was some significant assistance from employers in the past (whom they referred to as *purana zamane ke saab log*) for helping deserving children. Some workers felt that unlike the previous employers the present ones were not 'helpful'.

Manju had words of praise for her previous employers who according to her were comparatively more helpful than the present day ones, a feeling that emanates mostly because of the fact that her son and daughters despite being educated are yet to find 'suitable' work while her '*unpad*' husband had found work all those years back because of a 'helpful' employer whose recommendation for employment had found him a messenger/delivery boy job in a travel agency in *Sheikh Sarai* for a monthly salary of Rs.1100. During the early nineties, this amount was quite sufficient for a family of six to live quite comfortably in Delhi (particularly since they did not have to pay rent and utility bills). But now her husband had lost his job with the travel agency (as bookings were going online) while her graduate son was yet to find a job. It was her 12th pass daughter, who was now the main income earner of the family, having picked up a full-time paid domestic work in one of the private colonies nearby.

Some of the domestic workers spoke of how few of the workers' children who had previously resided in SQ had got '*sarkari naukri*' with the help of their employers and had moved out of the colony though none of the children/spouses of respondents in the sample had been fortunate to manage such jobs. Workers⁸⁶ seemed to accept the fact that may be this was because of the '*theka*' system (contract worker culture) that was now operational everywhere, including government offices which no longer had low-end jobs like that of peons /office attendants as regular employment positions.

3.9 Women's Perception of Contribution to Household Welfare

In the case of low income families who have migrated to cities such as Delhi, women are active labour market participants. Among them, many may be engaged in paid domestic work while the spouses may find low wage informal employment options such as drivers, gardeners, cooks,

⁸⁶ FGD with women workers from Uttarakhand

security guards, peons, waiters, cleaners, laundry men and so on. Here, the women may be significant earning members whose income is critical to ensure household expenses are met. For families living in rented accommodation in metropolitan cities and towns, the expenses include accommodation, food, education, health, transportation and leisure, of which rent is a major chunk. It has been documented that most of the low income urban households generally live in spaces such as *jhuggi jhopari* clusters with limited access to sanitation and hygiene facilities. On the other hand, workers in the sample were able to secure a roof for their families in an otherwise inhospitable and harsh urban environment by bartering women's labour. For many women, work at employers' household was more of an extension of the unpaid housework she did at her own home. But for the work, she was able to get in return, a 'roof for her family'.

Literature indicates paid domestic workers in metropolitan cities to be significant contributors of total household income, and many even being primary breadwinners. But findings from this field work indicate that many did not receive cash wages. But they were working hard, bartering their labour towards ensuring the family a secure roof in an otherwise inhospitable and harsh urban environment. In these circumstances, does she feel she is contributing equally to household survival as other earning members, particularly her husband? While her contribution in cash terms may be negligible, it is her labour that allows the family to live in comparatively better environment than similar low income households.

The discussion in the previous sections has clearly shown how women gain family housing by bartering her work thus securing a roof and saving on the rent. More than half, or 8 out of 19 domestic workers in this study were on quarter for work term (technically 3 cleaning tasks/ cooking all meals) while the rest were on quarter + wages term (mostly in cases of those who were doing more than three tasks). In cases where quarter was equated as equal to her work (by the employer) she did not earn a cash income.

The workers were asked as to how they perceived their contribution to the household. It was not surprising that almost everyone in the sample had responded that it was significant, and that it was their work that provided ‘a roof’ or ‘chhath’ for the family. They did feel that their work was important as it provided the family a ‘peaceful environment’. But yes, for meeting all expenses the cash wages or ‘thankha’ of the husband was critical.

Suma and Gomti, (both from Uttarakhand) felt it was their husbands who provided for all needs of the family and met the *ghar ka karcha*. Their words ‘*unka kamai nahi hai to kya khayega?*’ echoed similar sentiments – particularly that the sustainability of the household were dependent on the men and their earnings. But yes, they did feel their labour and hardships ensured a house with basic amenities, particularly water and electricity for the family which aided them to live peacefully in the city. In addition they were also able to complete own household responsibilities, cooking, cleaning, washing and caring for children.

A unique aspect of these family quarter situation/arrangement was the intermingling of own household and care work with that of the work done in the employers’ household. Women thus were not keeping a time check as she kept going back and forth between employer household and her own, completing chores. At times because of this blurring, there was no check on the extent of hours or ‘extra work’ done. Another aspect that has been already mentioned was that most of the quasi-live-in domestic workers in the sample had never been in paid domestic work elsewhere to compare earnings or regular paid domestic work situation. Many stated that their spouses approved them working in the *Kothis* as they did not have to travel or go far from own households. In the case of workers who did earn a wage (as monthly salary), it was as fixed by the employer without negotiations/bargaining over money as ‘shelter’ was critical and such SQ facilities were in shortage. Hence in most of these cases, the wages earned were below market rates but there was no dissatisfaction as they equated work to the rent (which also increased every year). While only three cleaning related works/tasks or cooking was the common barter in lieu of the rent, many did all chores (cooking and cleaning) on very meagre cash wage payment or even no payment, thus undervaluing work done.

The discussion in this Chapter has thrown light on relatively unexplored areas of domestic work and worker housing arrangements in the capital city. Women workers in the sample shouldered the entire burden towards ensuring their families had access to secure housing. They were primarily responsible for search, negotiations, and adjustment to work conditions and the singular focus on secure roof for the families obliterated the question of cash wages and need for leisure. Many worked round the clock, from the time they woke up till they slept facilitating social reproduction of two households, both of the employer and their own.

CHAPTER IV

Worker Remuneration

This Chapter deals with what ought to be justiciable cash wages. The prevailing barter terms indicates substantially higher valuation of SQ housing in comparison to work rendered by the domestic workers. Underlying reasons are many, though deplorable housing situation for low income households seem to be a critical causal factor for the unequal terms. Worker narratives in the previous chapter indicate unequal power relations between employers and workers, criticality of SQ housing for workers and competition among them for housing which had led to acceptance of conditions laid out by employers without any negotiations for cash wages. This Chapter first discusses domestic worker exclusion from worker rights, particularly Minimum Wages Act 1948 and the ILO Domestic Workers Convention focusing on guidance on ‘in-kind’ payment. It further works out justiciable cash wages by separating out the in-kind/housing from total wages after fixing a threshold limit to the SQ accommodation/housing (at 15 per cent). Fixing a limit to in-kind/housing component in the total wages would help in objective demarcation and further in transitioning from undervaluing the work rendered by quasi-live-in workers to valuing it in line with clauses laid out in the Code on Wages 2019, thereby ensuring justiciable cash wages to workers.

4.1 Worker Rights and Minimum Wage

Globally, about 42.5 per cent of the world’s domestic workers do not enjoy minimum wage coverage despite the fact that minimum wages are set for other workers (ILO, 2013). In India, despite early legislation on wages, payment of wages (1936) and minimum wages (1948), large numbers of wage earners do not earn minimum wages (Satpathy et al., 2021; Besler and Rani, 2011). Thus it is not surprising that paid domestic work, has remained conveniently excluded from legislations including the MWA,

given the gendered notion of ‘easy unskilled house work’ guiding policy makers. In addition, question of minimum wages, work conditions including hours of work, overtime payment, basic worker rights such as paid leave and social security are completely overlooked on the ground of worker and workplace definitions. As per the Minimum Wages Act 1948, ‘wages’ mean all remuneration, capable of being expressed in terms of money,... and does not include the value of any house-accommodation, supply of light, water, medical attendance, or any other amenity or service...(Sec.2 (h) and (i))⁸⁷. But, despite decades of struggle, minimum wages for domestic work has only been notified in a handful of Indian states, and even when included are not categorised into skilled or unskilled (Sankaran, 2019), leading to wages being set at even below unskilled wage rates applicable to general workers.

Neetha (2019:p.282) points out that the task based hourly minimum wage rates, notified across states were worked out primarily based on the “social understanding of domestic work”, while Sankaran (2019:p.309), comparing wages payable to nurses and cooks in establishments and private households within localities found them different, with the former being significantly higher. She remarks that it is a ‘systematic undervaluation’ because they are performed by women within households. She further points out that in the context of live-in workers, there has been many omissions, and most states have not separately indicated their wage rates as in case of other works (for instance a shop or restaurant worker where food and lodging are provided by employer). She further states that, *‘under the MWA, minimum wages are to be paid in cash; however, if there is a custom to pay whole or part in kind, the government may authorise part or whole payment in kind’*. Therefore, without prior approval, no employer can deduct any amount for lodging and boarding, but notifications are silent on this aspect, which has led to common practise of lowering of minimum wages in the case of live-in domestic workers for provision of food and accommodation. Again, it should also be borne in

⁸⁷https://www.indiacode.nic.in/show-data?actid=AC_CEN_6_6_00025_194811_1517807324200§ionId=24391§ionno=2&orderno=2

mind that compliance is the crux for improving worker conditions and legislation of a “minimum wage will not make it happen” (Murgai and Ravallion 2005: 2), an aspect particularly relevant here, as enforcement is difficult because of private households and isolated workers.

Data indicates that the enforcement of minimum wages outside formal sectors has been dismal⁸⁸, and is attested even in the recent PLFS (2018-19), which indicate deplorable state of earnings for large majority of regular salaried employees, self-employed and casual workers. Belser and Rani (2011) based on simulation of a scenario where in mandatory national minimum floor wage or state-level minimum wages were extended to all workers (instead of those in “scheduled” employment alone), would reduce poverty by 8 to 9 per cent and that the impact would be enormous on female casual workers⁸⁹. This was not because they were over-represented among workers with sub-minimum wage, but as even in this category, women were paid lower wages than their male counterparts.

Lifting all wages to a mandatory minimum, such as floor wages to all workers is indicated in the Code on Wages, 2019, may eliminate inequality among the lowest paid. At present, there is ambiguity over what would be the floor wages itself– while it was proposed by the Expert Committee on Determining the Methodology for Fixing the National Minimum Wage (GOI, 2019c) at rupees 375/day or a minimum monthly wage of rupees 9,750, it still is not anywhere near this figure if recent hike rates by the

⁸⁸ Data from the Periodic Labour Force Survey (2018-19) indicate that less than 10 per cent of the workforce is engaged in regular formal jobs earning an amount above the minimum wage (approximately about Rs.26,000 in a month). About 14 per cent are engaged in regular informal jobs with average monthly earnings of about Rs.9,500 which is roughly equivalent or slightly below a minimum wage. The self-employed (own account workers as well as unpaid family workers) is the largest or about 50 per cent while casual workers account for 24 per cent of the workforce. These workers have average earnings which is below a decent minimum amount (Rs.8,400/month for self-employed and Rs.209/day for casual labour). As per ILO report, *Extending the Coverage of Minimum Wages in India, 2010* out of all wage earners in 2004-05, large numbers earned less than the national notified minimum wage (Nimushakavi, 2019:p.262).

⁸⁹ average wages of women compared to men would rise from 74% to 92% for casual workers. In the dataset the researchers used (NSS-EUS 2004-05), women represented one-third of all wage earners, including sub-minimum wage earners

Centre are an indication⁹⁰. While the Economic Survey 2019 had recommended a higher national wage floor towards reducing inequality and poverty in the country, the Government fixed it much lower, at rupees 178 per day⁹¹, which is incongruent with both recommendations.

4.2 Code on Wages and Wage Floors

The Labour Code on Wages Act (GOI, 2019a), enacted in August 2019, has codified many wage related laws, namely the Minimum Wages Act, 1948; the Payment of Wages Act, 1936; the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976; and the Payment of Bonus Act, 1965. It has further published the Wage Code Rules (GOI, 2020) in July 2020, and only the final notification remain. The wage rules will make effective certain key reforms introduced in the wage code, namely: extension of legal coverage of both floor wages and minimum wages to all wage earners in the country; establishment of a statutory national floor wage and simplification and rationalisation of the complex minimum wages including removing the practise of fixation by scheduled employments (Satpathy et al., 2021). A mandatory national floor level minimum wage (NFLMW which is referred to as the NMW in this report) would presumably cover all workers, thus ensuring minimum wages for domestic workers unlike the MWA 1948 which excluded them. This could be of significance in the context of gender equality in labour markets, though to what extent they would really benefit is questionable as ‘definition of workplace’ may again exclude them altogether.

Satpathy et al., (2021) clarifies how Section 5 of the wage code states “no employer shall pay to any employee, wages less than the minimum rate of wages notified by the appropriate government” (GOI, 2019a). But the definition of employee is stated as “any person employed on wages by an

⁹⁰ <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/rs-375-minimum-wage-plan-junked-as-govt-opts-for-rs-2-hike-1563035733771.html>

⁹¹ As per the Economic Survey 2018-19 published by GOI (2019b), 20% of regular and 42% of casual workers earned below the NFLMW in 2012. The NFLMW was established as an advisory, a non-binding minimum wage in 1996, to address wide interstate variations. In June 2017 it was revised to Rs.176/day

establishment⁹²”. This ‘establishment clause’ is the one that would lead to exclusion of wage earners in the household and agricultural sectors, as private households or owners of agricultural holdings may not fall under it, and therefore workers here would not be under the purview of minimum wage/floor wage coverage. Thus, wage rules (2019a) through its definition of ‘employee’ may exclude large numbers of women workers. While unequal pay and high informality affect women in other sectors (construction, agriculture and others), the undervaluation may be higher in domestic work, owing to its gendered nature and other specificities.

It is possible that the legislation thus may not really bring protection to domestic workers, who have always remained invisible and ignored because of definition of worker and workplace (as before), and even the mandatory wage floors may not really provide a pathway towards better wage outcomes given the exclusions in Schedule E of the Wage Rules (GOI, 2020). Hence positive guidance and rectification of the establishment clause and relook of Schedule E, and Information and Communication of the NMW policy through various channels including social media is crucial to ensure awareness and compliance from employers.

A positive in the Code on Wages, 2019 is that it has touched upon in-kind payments, though from the wordings it aims more at formal sector workers. Definition of Wages under Section 2.y in Chapter 1 states, *‘wages’ means all remuneration ...and includes basic pay, dearness allowance and retaining allowance, but does not include a, b, c, d, ...k items, where ‘b’ is the value of any house-accommodation, or the supply of light, water, medical attendance or other amenity or of any service excluded from the computation of wages by a general or special order of the appropriate government. It further states, ‘where an employee is given in-lieu of the whole or part of the wages payable to him, any remuneration in kind by*

⁹² As per Section 2.m of the wage code, establishment means any place where any industry, trade, business, manufacture or occupation is carried on and includes government establishments. Available at <http://egazette.nic.in/WriteReadData/2019/210356.pdf> (accessed on 29 March, 2021)

*his employer, the value of such remuneration in kind which does not exceed fifteen per cent of the total wages payable to him, shall be deemed to form part of the wages of such employee*⁹³. Certain sectors such as plantation⁹³ are likely to be affected as non-cash benefits have been put under the definition of wages and limited to a maximum of 15 per cent of total wages. While the specific category of quasi-live-ins discussed here are miniscule in comparison to total domestic worker population, such limits on in-kind payments in other sectors could not only have spill-over effects, but become guiding frameworks for championing rights and demanding justiciable cash wages for those in such work arrangements.

In-kind benefits are relevant for all domestic workers but on a scale, of least relevance for live-outs, followed by live-ins, but of high relevance for the quasi-live-in workers provided family housing. The previous Chapter clearly illustrated how patriarchy, subsidiary earner status and most importantly intermingling of own and employers' housework had influenced undervaluation of work rendered by domestic workers.

Taking into account, the specificities of quasi live-in workers, this research focuses on fixation of a value limit for housing, thus demarcating total remuneration in to cash and kind (housing) components. This would be useful in the event of a NMW or floor wages/minimum wages becoming applicable for all workers. Even if domestic workers as expected are relegated into the 'unskilled'⁹⁴ category, fixing a value limit in cash terms for housing would help in improving total cash compensation to workers and leave them better off than before. In this context, what should the 'housing proportion' in the total wage be, to ensure a justiciable system of

⁹³ The Plantation workers (tea, coffee, rubber) until now, were under the Plantation Labour Act, 1951 which had mandated employers to provide non-cash benefits such as housing, medical, education, water, toilets and other welfare provisions.

⁹⁴ Under Schedule E of the Wage Rules (GOI,2020), various occupations have been classified under skill categories. Many occupations have not been included, particularly occupations overrepresented by women such as domestic work (Sathpathy et al., 2021). There is no clear rationale as to how various categories have an occupation and its skill has been arrived at. For example, head cook – is under skilled, while a 'cook' is under semi-skilled. On the other hand, all tailors are under skilled category.

remuneration? Before getting into the valuation, ILO Domestic Workers Convention and ILO guidance on in-kind payments are discussed.

4.3 ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189)

Seeking to address specific challenges faced by domestic workers in light of certain cases⁹⁵ that were brought before the European Court of Human Rights, the ILO adopted the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), a landmark legislation towards protecting domestic worker rights. In its preamble, the Convention recognize paid domestic work as undervalued and invisible, mostly taken up by women and girls who may often be migrants. The Convention is legally binding for countries that ratify it, and the accompanying Recommendation 201 while not legally binding, contains guidelines that may be referred to in the process of interpretation.

Convention -189 defines ‘domestic work’ as work performed in or for a household, and the ‘domestic worker’ as any person performing domestic work in an employment relationship (Article 1), thus excluding family members and those who are not in an employment relationship, such as those on casual basis. The Convention has many articles, for instance workers are to be informed of their terms and conditions of work (Article 7), and there should be work time and leisure time (Article 10). The Convention urges ratifying countries to ensure that domestic workers, like all workers enjoy fair terms of employment as well as decent working conditions (Article 6), minimum wage coverage (Article 11), to be of a minimum age (Article 4), effective protection from all forms of abuse, harassment and violence (Article 5), right to safe and healthy work environment (Article 13), social security protection, especially in respect to maternity (Article 14) and be paid directly in cash (Article 12). Since

⁹⁵ Siliadin v France (App No 73316/01, Judgment of 26 July 2005) refer Mantouvalou and Albin (2011)

2011, some countries⁹⁶ have ratified the Convention and included domestic workers under minimum wage coverage. But the non-ratification of the Convention by a large majority of countries including India, means the document remains just a guiding framework for those championing domestic worker rights.

4.3.1 ILO Guidance on In-Kind Payment

The ILO (2011a) Protection of Wages Convention, 1949 (No.95) allows “for partial payment of wages in the form of allowances in-kind... in which payment in form of such allowances is customary or desirable because of the nature of industry or occupation concerned” (Article 4.1) and pertain to non-cash remuneration received by an employee for work performed, such as food, fuel, transport,free or subsidized housing and so on. ILO also recommends measures to ensure that the share of such payment is *within certain limits* to ensure worker protection because of the subjectivity involved. Further it recommends legislative protection to ensure “such allowances are appropriate for the personal use and benefit of the worker and family” and that “the value attributed to such allowances is fair and reasonable”. ILO Recommendation No. 201, Article 14b, identifies several criteria to measure the value of payment in-kind⁹⁷. It suggests that monetary value of payments in-kind should have objective criteria for reference, such as market value, cost price or prices fixed by public authorities, as appropriate.”

ILO (2011b) also gives guidance on regulation of in-kind payments. These are, *(a) as a maximum percentage of the wage, (b) as a level (c) at market value or less than the cost to employers, and (d) at a fair and reasonable*

⁹⁶ Adopted by ILO in the 100th International Labour Conference. 31 countries have ratified the Convention, which include Namibia, Mexico (2020), Madagascar, Sweden (2019), Brazil, Granada, Peru* (2018), Guinea (2017), Jamaica (2016), Belgium, Chile, Dominican Republic, Finland, Panama, Portugal (2015), Argentina*, Colombia*, Costa Rica, Ireland, Switzerland (2014), Bolivia*, Ecuador, Germany*, Guyana, Italy*, Nicaragua*, Paraguay*, South Africa* (2013), Mauritius*, Philippines* and Uruguay*.

⁹⁷ Discussed in detail under section 2.9

value. While ILO Conventions or Recommendations do not fix a *specific threshold for payments in kind*, the ILO Committee of Experts has reservations on payment in-kind that exceeds 50 per cent of the total wage. Few countries have clear guidelines on in-kind payments with some prohibiting it to be part of the minimum wage, some others banning employers from charging more than actual cost of the goods provided, thus *valuing in-kind payments at cost or less than the cost to employers*. As India is yet to ratify Convention 189, these guidelines may remain just a reference, but a clear demarcation of cash and non-cash component of wages would help to determine payments based on objective criterion. It would benefit workers in such ‘work for housing arrangements’, and may be particularly crucial for the well-being of single women⁹⁸ and women headed households living in such colonies.

4.3.2 Housing as Payment

It is clear from the discussion in the previous Chapter that the quasi-live-in workers are quite different from domestic workers in general as ‘family housing’ the major payment, obliterate the question wages in cash for work done. Drawing upon ILO Convention No.189 which explicitly state that domestic workers are to be paid in cash, it is important that there is a guidance on what proportion of wage can be paid in kind. Therefore, it is important to limit value of family housing in the calculation of total wages. ILO also recommends only a limited proportion of the remuneration in the form of payments in-kind may be allowed, provided they are not less favourable than those generally applicable to other categories of workers, and that ‘monetary value attributed to such payments in kind must be fair and reasonable’ (Art. 12(2)). Paragraph 14 of the Domestic Workers Recommendation, 2011 (No.201) provides further guidance on how policy-makers can ensure that payments in kind are not abused. Further, Code on Wages 2019 clearly explains, when an *employee is given in-lieu of the whole or part of the wages payable to him, any remuneration in kind by his employer, the value of such remuneration in kind which does not*

⁹⁸ widowed/unmarried/deserted.

exceed fifteen per cent of the total wages payable to him, shall be deemed to form part of the wages of such employee'. The next section works out justiciable cash wages, based on overall guidance from the Law.

4.4 Justiciable Cash Wages

Interviews with workers indicated that in case of almost all currently married respondents it was a joint decision by the couple to barter women's work for 'housing' while the man went out to 'earn the bread'. As already stated, because of the prevalent practise of bartering three works in lieu of the SQ, eight out of 19 workers, did not receive any cash payment as wages/salary. Those who received some cash in wages, were either those engaged as cooks or those performing both cooking and cleaning tasks. There were no standard rates, hourly, and cash payment if any, were decided by the employer quite arbitrarily and unilaterally and hence varied widely from 0 to Rs.4,500 (daily hours ranged from 2 – 12 hours).

Now from a human rights⁹⁹ perspective as well as the Minimum Wages Act 1948, cash wages is a worker right, and wages in cash is definitely warranted in current times as most informal sector workers are in precarious employment. As illustrated in some of the narratives in the sample, households struggled financially in case of job loss or untimely death of primary earning members. But despite this, workers also willingly self-selected themselves into such work for housing arrangement. It is evident that the present valuation of housing is way higher in comparison to valuation of work rendered, owing to multiple factors, primarily large supply of workers, lack of adequate supply of housing for low income groups, undervaluation of housework and patriarchal norms. From the narratives, it was also clear that some had agreed to 'be on stand-by', 'exclusive availability', were working without weekly or monthly holidays, but never raised the issue of wages because of fierce competition

⁹⁹ Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes that everyone who works has the right to just and favorable remuneration to ensure an existence worthy of human dignity. 281 Universal Declaration of Human Rights art. 23(3), G.A. Res. 217 (III) A, U.N. GAOR, 3d Sess., U.N. Doc. A/810 (Dec. 10, 1948)

for SQ housing. The study had found it quite baffling that not even a single worker out of the 19 respondents had ever bargained for ‘*thanka*’ or cash wages, because of the inherent fear of ‘losing the SQ’ to competition. The FGDs indicated that some did try, but the prevailing barter terms of ‘three works in lieu of SQ’ was quite entrenched and could not be dismantled though FGDs with worker groups did indicate that there were attempts towards improving cash wages.

The sections below illustrate how housing and cash components for work may be separated. Total cash wages the workers would have earned is computed by limiting the in-kind payment, considering broadly the ILO guidance (which do not clearly specify a upper threshold) in 4.4.1, but specifically with the guidance under the Code on Wages 2019 in 4.4.2.

4.4.1 Wages for Work after Demarcating in-kind payment

(a) ILO guidance on regulating in-kind payments has four measures. These are (i) up to a level (ii) maximum percentage of the total wage (iii) market value (for the house) / fair & reasonable value and (iv) at cost/less than cost to employer. (b) The guidance on in-kind/non-cash payments as stipulated in the Code on Wages, 2019 has a maximum permissible limit of 15 per cent of total wages.

Both at cost/less than cost to the employer and market value/fair & reasonable value is not of relevance to this study. The SQ, if valued at ‘cost to the employer’ is just Rs.70, the license fee for the SQ, which is a tiny amount and may be equated to free provisioning of a facility. Central Government employees and other government as well as formal employees in the private sector are either provided housing or allowances towards meeting housing expenses by the employer. The employee for availing housing is deducted of the HRA in addition to a nominal rent (termed license fee as per the GPRAs rules) from his/her salary for the house. Thus for a government official who has availed housing/accommodation facility, HRA has to be forgone, which approximately accounts for nearly

27 per cent¹⁰⁰ of the salary. As already discussed in Section 2.7, in addition to the HRA foregone, there is also a license fee. For instance, a Government employee who is allotted either Type V and Type VI A, has to pay a nominal license fee of around Rs.1600 (in addition to surfeit of approx.50,000 HRA) for his/her own accommodation, while Rs.70 is deducted for the servant quarters. Hence the direct cost incurred by the employer is Rs.70 for the SQ, in addition to the utility payment made (which in general is below Rs.1,000)¹⁰¹.

Similarly, Market value for the house is also not applicable, as according to rules, the SQ cannot be sub-let or used for purposes other than for personal usage. But it seems probable that given the central location of this colony, rents for comparable housing in nearby localities, either the unauthorized JJ colonies or the vertical congested housing facilities¹⁰² may have been a consideration for both parties in determining barter terms. 'Fair and reasonable' value is a subjective measure which cannot give an objective criteria for measurement. In fact the prevailing system of three cleaning tasks/ cooking all meals was established over many decades and became entrenched as the norm, based on some hidden 'fair value' system operational in the colony. Of course, the fair valuation is subjective, and it is not clear how the fair value terms came in to existence- whether it was dictated by employers or determined by the workers. Given the unequal power relations, it is likely that the barter terms were put forward by the former and accepted by the latter. For the workers, in addition to prevailing market rent for comparable physical spaces in terms, there may have been other tangibles, including open spaces, play grounds, assured water and electricity supply, and intangibles, particularly safety and security the

¹⁰⁰ The recommendations of the 7thCPC were accepted by GOI with certain modifications which include HRA shall be revised to 27%, 18% & 9% of Basic Pay in X,Y & Z cities when Dearness Allowance (DA) crosses 25% and further to 30%, 20% and 10% of Basic Pay in X, Y & Z cities when DA crosses 50%.available at https://doe.gov.in/sites/default/files/177181_0.pdf

¹⁰¹ Government has waived off payment for those consuming up to 200 units per month. As in case of Delhi in 2020. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/power/delhi-govt-announces-0-bill-for-power-consumption-up-to-200-units/articleshow/70478200.cms?from=mdr>

¹⁰² Kotla or the Nizammudin area

colony offered. In fact it may be this subjective valuation that rendered these housing for work arrangements much sought after among low income families.

Table 4.1 Indicative Cash Wages for combination of Tasks after Valuing Housing- at a Level & as a Percentage

Number of Tasks* done by the worker & total wage	3 cleaning tasks Total wage = Rs.3,000	5 cleaning + other tasks Total wage = Rs.5,000	Cooking (once) + 3 cleaning tasks Total wage = Rs.5,500	Cooking (All meals) Total wage = Rs.7,500	Cooking (All meals) + 3 cleaning tasks Total wage = Rs.10,500
(i) Housing Value limited Up to a level (for example Rs.1500 with utilities paid by employer.)	Rs.1,500 for house (inclusive of utilities). Rs.1,500 as cash payment to worker	Rs.1,500 for house (inclusive of utilities). Rs.3,500 as cash payment to worker	Rs.1,500 for house (inclusive of utilities). Rs.4000 as cash payment to worker	Rs.1,500 for house (inclusive of utilities). Rs.6,000 as cash payment to worker	Rs.1,500 for house (inclusive of utilities). Rs.9,000 as cash payment to worker
(ii) Housing Value as a Maximum percentage of the total wage (maximum 15%)	Rs.450 for house (inclusive of utilities). Rs.2,550 as cash payment to worker	Rs.750 for house (inclusive of utilities). Rs.4,250 as cash payment to worker	Rs.825 for house (inclusive of utilities). Rs.4,675 as cash payment to worker	Rs.900 for house (inclusive of utilities). Rs.5,100 as cash payment to worker	Rs.1,575 for house (inclusive of utilities). Rs.8,925 as cash payment to worker

Note: *the market/locality wage rates for tasks is what was prevalent for part-time workers. Cleaning tasks were @Rs.1000/task while cooking per time was approx. Rs.2500. 1. Cleaning, jaadu-pocha; 2. Dusting; 3. Bartan; 4. Kapda (washing, drying & folding); 5. Cooking (only 1 time) 6. Cooking (all meals); 7. Cutting vegetables; 8. Ironing; 9. Cleaning garden and jaadu, safai of front lawn and backyard (terrace) 10. Others

The ILO (2011b) specify that ‘in-kind’ should be a maximum percentage of the wage or fixed as a level though it do not give any particular limit. Cash wages the workers may earn, is therefore worked out for different set of tasks, if ‘in-kind’ were fixed at a nominal level or limited as a percentage of total wages to give a comparative picture. The study keeps this limit at 15 percent in line with the maximum percentage allowed in the Code on Wages, 2019. Table 4.1 works out indicative cash earnings of workers engaged in different tasks (cooking, cleaning) when the housing/in-kind payment value is capped ‘at a level’ (Rs.1500) and as a ‘maximum percentage’ (15 per cent). It demarcates housing value and objectively determine cash wages for combination of tasks if they were paid the locality wage rates.

4.4.2 Computing Objective Wages for Workers

The real cash wages that should have accrued to workers is calculated after hiving off the in-kind (housing) component from total wage. The value limit of housing is calculated after limiting the value of ‘in-kind’ as per the Code on Wages, under which non-cash benefits have been put under the definition of wages, but limited to a maximum of 15 per cent of total wages. The total wages that sample domestic workers would have earned is worked out based on recommended National Minimum Wages (NMW), minimum wage rates (for unskilled workers) and locality wage rates.

(a) The total wages workers would have earned was worked out as per the recommended NMW¹⁰³ stipulated by the Expert Committee (GOI, 2019c). The rate is employed by Raveendran and Vanek (2020) in their study on urban informal workers in Delhi. The study use the same rates, that is the recommended NMW of Rs.375 per day or 46.88 assuming an eight hour day. The hourly wage rate for cash wage calculation is rounded off to Rs.47 as illustrated in Table 4.4. The Expert Committee took the view that a reasonable rent for urban workers should be ₹ 457 monthly per

¹⁰³ Committee has also estimated different NMW for five regions with Delhi grouped under region IV with Rs.447 per day or Rs.11,622 per month

consumption unit, or for an average labour income-based family of 3.6 consumption units, ₹ 1,645 per month at July 2018 prices.

Thus for a worker who worked on an average three hours every day for 30 days (as most workers had reported not to have taken weekly/monthly off¹⁰⁴), monthly wages was calculated for 30 days of work, the total monthly wages worked out to Rs.5,875 (4230 + 1645). If SQ value @15 per cent was deducted, then the worker earned a cash wage of Rs.4,994. On the other hand for one who worked six hours daily, the total wages worked out to Rs.10,105 (8,460 + 1645). If SQ value @15 per cent was deducted, then the worker earned a cash wage of Rs.8,589. But for a worker who worked nine hours, total wages worked out to Rs.12,690 (11,045 + 1645) while cash wages after deducting SQ value @15 per cent was Rs.12,185. This imply that those who work longer hours earn higher cash wages if total wages are computed with the NMW rates and SQ housing is equated to the rent allowance of Rs.1645 as stipulated by the Expert Committee. Also, in the case of the workers here, family housing is provided to workers by the employer, and hence it is only rational that the house rent allowance of Rs.1,645 is equated to the SQ value which is otherwise computed at 15 percent of total wages. Hence total wages earned by workers is also the cash wages earned by workers.

(b) As minimum wages for paid domestic work was not notified in Delhi, the research computed total monthly wages based on minimum wages that were notified¹⁰⁵ for unskilled workers in 2019. The monthly rate for unskilled workers was Rs.14,806 per month (for 8 hours and 26 days of

¹⁰⁴ As discussed in the Third Chapter, workers did not take weekly or even monthly off as a practise. They took a holiday only if there was some urgent matter (need basis) or when they were unwell. It was never more than a couple of days in a month. Even then, unless they were sick, they would complete most of the assigned chores. Some did take few weeks off during the summer (commonly about two weeks) to visit their native villages.

¹⁰⁵ At time of field data collection in 2019 The monthly rate for unskilled workers was Rs.14,806 per month (for 8 hours and 26 days of work), while daily rate was Rs.569. https://labour.delhi.gov.in/sites/default/files/All-PDF/Order_MW2019.pdf Committee has also estimated different NMW for five regions with Delhi grouped under region IV with Rs.447 per day or Rs.11,622 per month

work). Monthly wages for 30 days worked out to Rs.17,082. Based on this, hourly wages were Rs.82.13 (rounded off to Rs.82), which was applied as the uniform hourly rate irrespective of tasks. The total wages were thus calculated based on hours worked and cash wages due to workers was obtained after subtracting the value of SQ house @ 15 per cent of total wages

(c) The colony did have established wage rates for part-timers. This was so as some employers in addition to the worker living in SQ, also hired other workers on part-time basis for cleaning or any other chores, particularly if the worker in the SQ could not manage cooking and all other tasks. But, part-time work opportunities in the colony were relatively few, workers with spare time, actively scouted for such work both within the colony and even in the upscale residential private colony located nearby, where rates were much higher. The prevailing rates (at the time of field work) in the colony were Rs.1,000 for various cleaning tasks (sweeping, mopping, dusting), outdoor/garden cleaning and dog walking was Rs.3,000, while cooking per time was Rs.2,500. Value of housing @15 percent of total wages, was deducted to obtain cash wages that may be earned by workers.

The study work out cash wages for workers based on three rates, the NMW based computation seems to be the most ideal especially as it is part of the Wage Code. But it should also be borne in mind that while the Wage Code may universalise legal national floor wages, its applicability is not currently extended to workplaces that do not fall under 'establishments'. Therefore, the possibility of exclusion of domestic workers remain strong, unless the state realise the anomaly and add 'private houses' as recognised workplaces.

Table 4.2 Cash Wages as per Expert Committee recommended National Minimum Wage

Approx. time spent by Workers (Hours/day)	Major Tasks (Code of tasks done by workers)	Cash Wages (Rs) Received (Present)	Total Wages & Cash Wages (Rs) as per the recommended National Minimum Wage rates (hours/day*30*47) (SQ value @ 15% considered \cong to the rent allowance)
W- 1 (6)	Cooking (3,7,11)	1,500	8,460
W- 2 (8)	ALL (1,2,3,5,7,11)	3,000	11,280
W- 3 (4)	Cleaning (1,2,3,5,9)	0	5,640
W- 4 (12)	ALL (1,2,3,4,5,7,8,12)	0	16,920
W- 5 (8)	ALL (1,2,3,5,7)	0	11,280
W-6 (6)	ALL (1,2,3,4,5,7)	3,500	8,460
W-7 (3)	Cleaning (1,5)	0#	4,230
W-8 (6)	Cooking (7)	1,000	8,460
W-9 (7)	Cooking (3,7)	1,500	9,870
W- 10 (4)	Cleaning (1,2,3,5)	0	5,640
W-11 (9)	ALL (1,2,3,5,7,10^)	4,500	12,690
W-12 (4)	Cleaning (1,2,3,10)	1,500	5,640
W-13 (7)	ALL (1,2,3,5,6,10)	3,000	9,870
W-14 (3)	Cleaning (1,2,3,5)	500	4,230
W-15 (3)	Cleaning (5,12)	0	4,230
W-16 (2)	Cleaning 10^ & 12	0#	2,820
W-17 (4)	Cleaning (1,2,3,5)	0	5,640
W-18 (6)	Cooking (7)	3,000	8,460
W- 19 (9)	ALL (1,2,3,5,7)	3,000	12,690

Note 1 : ALL works include cooking, cleaning & all other works required for upkeep of house. The Codes of specific work done by workers are: 1. Cleaning, jaadu-pocha (brooming, mopping); 2. Dusting; 3. Bartan (utensils); 4. Kapda (washing cloths, drying & folding); 5. Kapda (washing of delicate hand wash cloths, drying and folding of machine cloths); 6. Cooking (only 1 time) 7. Cooking (all meals); 8. Cutting vegetables; 9. Ironing; 10. Cleaning garden and jaadu, safai of front lawn and backyard (10^terrace in case of first floor houses); 11. Walking and taking care of dogs (generally this work was well-paid (about 3000/month) as either husband/sons of the worker did this task); 12. Others (car washing, gardening, maalish work were some) # Paid the utility bills

Note 2 : * Monthly wages are calculated for 30 days of work as per the NMW rates as stipulated by the Expert Committee (GOI, 2019c) which is ₹ 375 per day or 46.88 per hour, assuming an eight hour day. This rate was employed by Raveendran and Vanek (2020) for their study on urban informal workers in Delhi. I use the same rates, 46.88 rounded off to Rs.47 in the wage computation shown in the above Table. The value of in-kind/housing is equated to Rs.1,645/month (the rental allowance that should be added to total wages) and hence total wages and cash wages earned by the workers is the same.

Source: Based on Field Study, 2019-2020

Table 4.3 Cash Wages for Workers at Minimum Wage Rates of Unskilled Workers

Approx. time spent by Workers (Hours/day)	Major Tasks (Code of tasks done by workers)	Cash Wages (Rs) Received (Present)	Total Wages (Rs) as per minimum wage rates (hours/day*30*82)	Cash Wages (Rs) as per minimum wage rates (after deducting SQ value @ 15% of total wages)
W- 1 (6)	Cooking (3,7,11)	1,500	14,760	12,546 (2214)
W- 2 (8)	ALL (1,2,3,5,7, 11)	3,000	19,680	16,728 (2952)
W- 3 (4)	Cleaning (1,2,3,5,9)	0	9,840	8,364 (1476)
W- 4 (12)	ALL (1,2,3,4,5,7,8,12)	0	29,520	25,092 (4428)
W- 5 (8)	ALL (1,2,3,5,7)	0	19,680	16,728 (2952)
W-6 (6)	ALL (1,2,3,4,5,7)	3,500	14,760	12,546 (2214)
W-7 (3)	Cleaning (1,5)	0#	7,380	6,273 (1107)
W-8 (6)	Cooking (7)	1,000	14,760	12,546 (2214)
W-9 (7)	Cooking (3,7)	1,500	17,220	14,637 (2583)
W- 10 (4)	Cleaning (1,2,3,5)	0	9,840	8,364 (1476)
W-11 (9)	ALL (1,2,3,5,7,10^)	4,500	22,140	18,819 (3321)
W-12 (4)	Cleaning (1,2,3,10)	1,500	9,840	8,364 (1476)
W-13 (7)	ALL (1,2,3,5,6,10)	3,000	17,220	14,637 (2583)
W-14 (3)	Cleaning (1,2,3,5)	500	7,380	6,273 (1107)
W-15 (3)	Cleaning (5,12)	0	7,380	6,273 (1107)
W-16 (2)	Cleaning 10^ & 12	0#	4,920	4,182 (738)
W-17 (4)	Cleaning (1,2,3,5)	0	9,840	8,364 (1476)
W-18 (6)	Cooking (7)	3,000	14,760	12,546 (2214)
W- 19 (9)	ALL (1,2,3,5,7)	3,000	22,140	18, 819 (3321)

Note 1 : Same as in Table 4.2

Note 2 : * Monthly wages are calculated for 30 days of work for which the wages work out to Rs.17,082 (In 2019 October it was Rs.14,806 per month for 8 hours and 26 days of work for unskilled workers). Based on this, hourly wage would work out to Rs.82.13 (rounded off to Rs.82).

Source: Based on Field Study, 2019-2020

Table 4.4 Cash Wages for Workers at Locality Rates

Approx. time spent by Workers (Hours/day)	Major Tasks (Code of tasks done by workers)	Cash Wages (Rs) Received (Present)	Total Cash Wages (Rs) as per locality Rates	Cash Wages (Rs) to be Received as per locality task specific rates* (after deducting SQ value @ 15% of total wages)
W- 1 (6)	Cooking (3,7,11)	1500	11500	9775 (1725)
W- 2 (8)	ALL (1,2,3,5,7, 11)	3000	14500	12325 (2175)
W- 3 (4)	Cleaning (1,2,3,5,9)	0	5000	4250 (750)
W- 4 (12)	ALL (1,2,3,4,5,7,8,12)	0	14500	12325 (2175)
W- 5 (8)	ALL (1,2,3,5,7)	0	11500	9775 (1725)
W-6 (6)	ALL (1,2,3,4,5,7)	3500	12500	10625 (1875)
W-7 (3)	Cleaning (1,5)	0#	2000	1700 (300)
W-8 (6)	Cooking (7)	1000	7500	6250 (1250)
W-9 (7)	Cooking (3,7)	1500	8500	7225 (1275)
W- 10 (4)	Cleaning (1,2,3,5)	0	4000	3400 (600)
W-11 (9)	ALL (1,2,3,5,7,10^)	4500	12500	10625 (1875)
W-12 (4)	Cleaning (1,2,3,10)	1500	4000	3400 (600)
W-13 (7)	ALL (1,2,3,5,6,10)	3000	6000	5100 (900)
W-14 (3)	Cleaning (1,2,3,5)	500	4000	3400 (600)
W-15 (3)	Cleaning (5,12)	0	4000	3400 (600)
W-16 (2)	Cleaning 10^,12	0#	2000	1700 (300)
W-17 (4)	Cleaning (1,2,3,5)	0	4000	3400 (600)
W-18 (6)	Cooking (7)	3000	7500	6375 (1125)
W- 19 (9)	ALL (1,2,3,5,7)	3000	11500	9775 (1725)

Note 1: Same as 4.2

Note 2: *the rates for tasks is what was prevalent in the colony for part-time workers. Cleaning tasks were @Rs.1000/task while cooking per time was Rs.2500. Cleaning garden and jaadu, safai of front lawn had different rates. Maalish had different rates (Rs.300/hour session in the colony. Outside it was higher)

Source: Based on Field Study Data, July 2019-Feb 2020

Table 4.2, 4.3 & 4.4 illustrates how total wages computed applying minimum wage rates and locality rates clearly unlocks the real value of work done in monetary terms. All computations indicate that fixing a valuation limit for SQ (15 per cent of total wages) unlocks realistic value for work in form of cash earnings. Wages computed as per minimum wage rates for unskilled workers were most advantageous for workers. As expected, those who were working longer hours and performing all tasks

or engaged in cooking tasks (workers 1,2,4,5,6,8,9,11,18 &19) were found to earn higher cash wages than others under both locality as well as minimum wage rate based computations.

Between the two minimum wage rates (as shown in Table 4.2 & 4.3) NMW based rates unlock more realistic wages than minimum wages for unskilled workers. The latter, may also be unrealistic, particularly as Delhi had never notified minimum wages for domestic workers. NMW on the other hand may be a more plausible and practical wage as the Government is actively considering it for all wage earners. It further may also be more relevant here, as the Expert Committee (GOI, 2019c, p.49) took the view that a reasonable rent for urban workers should be paid (Rs. 1,645 per month at July 2018 prices) and that the amount should be added to arrive at monthly wages. The NMW has been used in recent studies by Raveendran and Vanek (2020) who had found that in Delhi, average hourly wage rates for domestic workers were just around Rs.25, falling way below the stipulated NMW rates of Rs.47. Since the workers in this study are provided family housing, the research equate the ‘reasonable rent’ amount of Rs.1,645 to the SQ value. Therefore, the total wages and cash wages are the same.

4.4.3 Comparative Analysis of Wage Increase

Tables 4.2, 4.3 & 4.4 clearly indicate the manifold times cash wages could increase for these workers. Tables 4.5 & 4.6 further gives a comparative picture in absolute terms and increase (per cent) from current earnings for select cases.

Table 4.5 clearly illustrates the rise in cash wages for select workers (W-14, 12, 6, 13, 2 & 9 in Tables 4.2, 4.3 & 4.4) if objective methods for determining cash wage payment become the norm. The workers selected were those with highest cash wage earnings among peers working similar hours (3,4, 6, 7, 8 & 9 hours per day). It further indicates the subjective nature of wage payments as there is no uniform wage rates currently operational in the colony. This is observable from the fact that the highest cash wage earner among those who worked six hours received

Rs.3500/month while the highest cash wage earned among those who worked eight hours was Rs.3000/month.

Table 4.5 Comparative Analysis of Wage Increase for Select Workers

Approx. time spent by Workers (Hours/day)	Cash Wages (Rs) Received (Present)	Cash Wages (Rs) to be Received as per the recommended NMW rates (hours/day*30*47) (SQ value @ 15% considered \cong to the rent allowance)	Cash Wages (Rs) to be Received if locality rates are paid (after deducting SQ value @ 15% of total wages)	Cash Wages (Rs) to be received if paid at minimum wage rates for unskilled workers in 2019 (hours/day*30*82) (after deducting SQ value @ 15% of total wages)
3	500	4,230	3400	6,273
4	1500	5,640	3400	8,364
6	3500	8,460	10625	12,546
7	3000	9,870	7225	14,637
8	3000	11,280	12325	16,728
9	4,500	12,690	10625	18,819

Note: For this comparative illustration, select workers from the sample who earned highest wage in comparison to peers working similar hours (3,4, 6, 7, 8 & 9 hours) are taken. See Table 2 in Appendix-I for all workers. **Source:** Computation based on Field Study Data, July 2019-Feb 2020

Table 4.6 gives percentage rise in cash wages for select workers (same as in Table 4.5). The increase from current wages is sharp and significant irrespective of method employed for computing cash wages. For example, in the case of the worker who was working six hours/day and earning Rs.3500/month, wages rose by 142 per cent (or to Rs.8,460) when wages were computed at NMW, 204 per cent (or to Rs.10,625) when computed as per task based locality wage rates and by 259 per cent (or to Rs.12,546) when wages were calculated as per minimum wage rates for unskilled work, even after accounting for housing. The wage rise for workers was dramatically higher when wages were worked out with minimum wage rates for unskilled workers than NMW and task specific locality rates.

Table 4.6 Rise in Wages (% Increase) for Select Workers

Approx. time spent by Workers (Hours/day)	Cash Wages (Rs) Received (Present)	Increase (%) from current earnings when wages are computed as per National Minimum Wage Rates	Increase (%) from current earnings when paid locality rates	Increase (%) from current earnings when paid as per minimum wage rates for unskilled workers in 2019
3	500	746	580	1155
4	1500	276	127	458
6	3500	142	204	259
7	3000	229	141	388
8	3000	276	311	458
9	4500	182	136	318

Note: Same as Table 4.5

Source: Computation based on Field Study Data, July 2019-Feb 2020.

Now, can such wage increase be practically achievable? Possibilities are bleak, particularly when minimum wages for domestic workers and the work itself continue to remain excluded, with wages not being notified earlier under the MWA1948, except in few states in the country. The Code on Wages, 2019 having done away with schedule employments altogether, at present seem to exclude domestic workers through workplace definitions. Now, this could be an oversight which may be amended before notification if there are concerted actions and lobbying by organisations championing domestic worker rights. But it is the cultural devaluation of housework, and as an extension paid domestic work which cause these exclusions from labour laws and justiciable rights in the first place. Economic considerations, particularly affordability and opportunity cost may also operate for large number of middle-class households, once paid domestic work crosses a particular wage threshold. Possibilities of paid domestic workers becoming replaced with unpaid workers, commonly women in the household, or replacement with gadgets also become strong. Thus dramatic wage increase may reduce work opportunities for paid domestic workers.

Despite these arguments, minimum wages, either state specified minimum wages, or a mandated NMW for domestic workers is critical, but changes under the Code on Wages 2019 particularly inclusion of homes as

workplaces may be crucial. A mandated minimum wage may ensure growing numbers of paid domestic workers are able to earn justiciable wages. Recent studies (Raveendran and Vanek, 2020) had indicated low wage earnings for domestic workers, both nationally and in Delhi, with majority among domestic workers earning less than the desirable or Expert committee recommended minimum wages (Rs.46.88 per hour) with average hourly wages being way below in urban India (Rs.25.17) and in Delhi (25.67).

The analysis in this Chapter definitely substantiate the need for cash wages in ‘housing for work’ arrangements, the focus of this study. It is evident that the present valuation of housing is way higher in comparison to valuation of work rendered. While the Code on Wages 2019 has a clause on capping in-kind wages to a maximum of 15 per cent, it would become applicable to these work arrangements only if there is specific guidance on inclusion of such work arrangements from the Government. Directive on in-kind payment is already stipulated under the Wage Code, but towards realisation on ground, particularly in such arrangements, an objective method of working out the same, may be developed. In the specific case of ‘work for housing’ arrangements highlighted in this study, the limit on ‘housing’ in the total wages should be notified and thereafter publicised widely. This would in turn lead to employer associations taking steps which may possibly include notifying hourly wage rates as per NMW rates in housing colonies. Employers may comply with in-kind limits and paying minimum wages once RWA become responsible for ensuring mandated NMW is paid to workers. This would improve workers’ household economic situation and more importantly their self-reliance and self-worth as income earners.

CHAPTER V

Summary & Conclusion

The Chapter first gives a brief summary. It further brings out study insights and provide suggestions for improving worker rights and conditions of the quasi-live-in domestic workers.

5.1 Summary

'Women Negotiating for Family Housing & Work: A Study on Quasi-Live-in Domestic Workers' examine the everyday lives and negotiations of a separate category of domestic workers termed by the study as the 'quasi-live-ins' who barter work for obtaining family housing. Socioeconomic profile of the Quasi live-in workers in the sample, indicated that they belonged to low income Hindu households, and were either first and second generation migrants. They hailed from Darbhanga region in Bihar, Mirzapur in UP and from Kumaon and Garhwali regions of Uttarakhand. The second generation migrant workers also had their roots either in UP or Bihar, their parents having migrated to Delhi several decades back. The caste groups of workers varied according to region of origin, with those from Darbhanga, Delhi and Mirzapur mostly from SC and OBC caste groups, while some of the women from Uttarakhand were from Brahmin caste groups. In all, nine women belonged to scheduled castes (SC), six were from other backward classes (OBC) while the rest were from general caste groups. Spouses of workers were mostly in occupations such as gardeners, drivers, peons/attendants in private firms, and in petty business (cycle shop, tea stall, food hawking). Demographics indicated both young and older workers were between 24 to 58 years, but all workers were young (late teens or early twenties) when they had first arrived. About half the women in the sample were illiterate while the rest had some school education with two having completed matriculation.

The research is important for two reasons. One, while paid domestic work has grown rapidly during the last few decades, possibly due to falling rural farm employment and increasing rural to urban migration, and has been well researched, certain categories of domestic workers particularly those hidden from mainstream live-in and live-out workers, has not received attention. Quasi live-in domestic workers are one such category, their relatively small numbers and location, veiling their existence as domestic workers. Second, because they occupy a region that may be placed between the paid-unpaid continuum, their contribution as workers itself is not recognised. But the workers share common features of all domestic workers - long hours of work, low wages and vulnerability to exploitation. They are also different because of their powerlessness to negotiate for cash wages because of the inherent fear of losing their homes upon displeasing employers.

Out of the 19 quasi-live-ins interviewed, only few had ever undertaken paid domestic work indicating the fact that women from lower income households reconciled to take up paid domestic work when they moved into such SQ accommodations for better and safer housing for their families. Work was seen as an enabler to the SQ (in-kind wages) than for earning cash wages. Prevailing norms of three-works-in-lieu for SQ provided overall guidance for terms of employment, while negotiations for wages, leave and work conditions were more or less non-existent. More than half, or precisely 8 out of 19 domestic workers in the study were on quarter for work terms (three cleaning tasks/ cooking all meals) while the rest were on quarter + wages terms. In cases where quarter was considered as equal to the work (by the employer) the worker did not receive a cash wage. Commonly cash wages were only earned by those doing more than three tasks, but as there were no standard rates, either task or hour based, wages earned by workers varied and did not correlate to tasks or hours worked. Few workers put up with difficult working conditions, long hours as well as round-the clock availability for below market to zero cash wages, to continue living in the SQ, as alternate and accessible housing arrangements elsewhere in the city was less desirable.

The study had tried to understand the perpetuation of these type of ‘work for housing’ in present times. From the supply side, Government allotted housing with SQ to its senior employees, while demand for SQ housing from economically weaker sections led to perpetuation of such work where in a member, most commonly women bartered domestic work services in lieu of family accommodation. As already stated, many quasi-live-ins were migrants, who found such work-in-lieu of housing arrangements enabling survival in the city. Gendered responsibilities were operational here, with the woman taking on both the quest and negotiations to find and sustain a roof while the man was responsible for bringing home ‘the bread’. Thus the ‘man’ going out for work and cash earnings with the woman managing ‘home’, both of the employer and of her own, became their ‘de facto’ household survival strategy. In fact, for many the *Kothi* work was an extension of their own housework, also explaining their acceptance of low cash wages as long as they and family could continue living in the SQ.

The study found that the cash wages earned for tasks performed/hours worked were not commensurate. It further worked out justiciable cash wages that should have accrued to workers after hiving off the in-kind (housing component limited to a maximum of 15 per cent of total wages) from total wages. The increase from current wages was sharp and significant irrespective of method employed for computing cash wages. For example, in the case of the worker who was working six hours/day and earning Rs.3500/month, wages rose by 142 per cent (or to Rs.8,460) when wages were computed at NMW, 204 per cent (or to Rs.10,625) when computed as per task based locality wage rates and by 259 per cent (or to Rs.12,546) when wages were calculated as per minimum wage rates for unskilled work, even after accounting for housing.

5.2 Insights from the study

The discussion from literature and reports such as the DHDR has clearly brought forth the situation of housing shortages for economically weaker sections. Exorbitant rents, inadequate basic services and lack of affordable housing options means that for majority among the economically weaker

sections, there are limited options for housing, except reside in overcrowded tenements. For many low income migrant households who are absorbed into various low paying informal sector jobs, everyday life in the city is therefore a struggle for work and basic amenities, as the option for housing is limited.

Literature gives evidence on how migration to cities and paid domestic work are closely related, as earnings of women become crucial for the survival of households. Further, National Sample Surveys also indicate rising participation of women workers in paid domestic work which is a contrary trend to otherwise falling women's work participation in urban areas. Studies also substantiate that its growth in recent decades may be driven by both rural and urban factors, as large-scale destitution due to declining returns from agriculture has prompted increased rural-urban migration.

This research clearly brings out the workers journey into the colony, many fleeing the rural for livelihoods and better prospects, particularly education for children. It further brings out initial negotiations for gaining entry into the first SQ, and further difficulties in search and negotiations to find alternate SQ upon employers' transfer/retirement. The narratives indicate minimal initial negotiations on workers part as most are ready to 'adjust' to work conditions as they are almost at the end of their 'search period' and are worried about 'moving out' of the colony to rented accommodations, if they do not soon find success with the SQ search.

The narratives point to the struggle towards finding family SQ housing, and how it solely rest on the women, both the search and subsequent stay in the SQ. The maintenance of 'cordial relationship' with the employer is also critical as there is always 'the fear of eviction' in the subconscious of workers, either because of lived experiences or that of others. Hence they 'adjust' and 'question of cash wages' remain outside as they balk at displeasing the employer. Many workers had openly stated 'the SQ is far more important than cash wages'. Negotiations for cash wages was totally absent, and workers agreed to wages fixed by the employers. Many

perceived employers as ‘good’ and were happy with ‘cash wages received’ and did not make demands. The narrative from Manju clearly indicate priorities

‘apne ghar ke saath saath Kothi ka kaam bhi sambalthe hai...ghar bhi dekhbaal kar sakte hai aur kahi jaana bhi nahi..isliye paisa ki baat nahi aate..agar kuch dediya to theek hai...jo memsahib apne marzi se deta hai woh humare liye manzoor hai. Jab kuch zaroorat hai to mangta hai, aur woh deta bhi hai’.

Now were they ‘perfectly content and happy workers’? As already stated, almost all workers had reached the colony through social networks and over the years were socialized into the prevailing work arrangements. New workers too adapted into the system and all in the sample seemed to be working primarily for securing the SQ. They did seem ‘happy’ with their situation despite working extended hours with some even having to manage severe restrictions during off-duty hours, having agreed to be on ‘stand-by’ at all times. Despite such conditions, unequal power relations ensured that no one, out of their own volition raised the ‘question of cash wages’ but lived on in obedient servility. Even workers who did more tasks than the operational barter of ‘three works in-lieu of SQ’ did not demand to be paid as per the existing ‘outsider’ rate for part-timers, though there were cases of conflict (as Gomtis’ eviction illustrates).

Acceptance of wages dictated by employers also rose from the fact that there was intense competition for the SQ houses. In fact, the shortage of SQ and competition for the limited SQ houses, severely curtailed workers’ bargaining power. The fierce competition for housing ensured that if one was evicted out of an SQ, while it took her long to find another SQ, the employer found a replacement almost on the same day¹⁰⁶. Many women who lost their SQ or had sudden exits, had stated that their replacement worker had moved in almost as soon as they had moved out, or had already started working in the *Kothi* and was waiting to move in to the SQ as soon as they vacated. The fear of eviction thus kept them from raising any demands. But they were aware about prevailing wages elsewhere in the city, particularly part-time rates in the colony, nearby colonies and even

¹⁰⁶ As conveyed by women during FGDs, and also during individual interviews

rates in other parts of Delhi/NCR. But they were also aware of the rentals as well as amenities available in affordable alternate housing options.

Continuity of residence in the SQs within the colony/area also was important for most workers, as family members were working in nearby private colonies/ in upscale markets in the neighbourhood where wages were good. For many women and their families, this was a secure way of life, the only one they had experienced in the city. In fact, for some, it was a safe space with some social networks, the only home they had known in urban Delhi, after migrating to the city from rural villages in Bihar, UP and Uttarakhand. They found it convenient as the work required little or no training but brought for the family 'free housing'. As they did not really leave their homes, they could also manage own household responsibilities, with few hours at home in between *Kothi* work. Patriarchal approval was also evident in the narratives, with spouses encouraging the work, for in their viewpoint, it was nothing but an extension of own household work and care responsibilities.

The household strategies operational for many workers in the sample was the 'man bringing home the bread' while the 'woman ensured the roof' through her labour in maintaining the employers household. *A unique aspect of these family SQ housing/arrangement was the intermingling of own household and care work with that of the work done in the employers household.* Many worked round the clock- from the time they woke up till they slept, facilitating social reproduction of both households, that of the employer and their own. In fact, many considered employers' household work as an extension of own household responsibilities without keeping a count on hours worked or cash wages received. Thus there was a blurring on time expended in own and employer household, and no realisation of 'extra work' or what ought to be the value of 'being on stand-by' and 'exclusivity of service' by both workers and employers.

All this led to overvaluation of the house in terms of labour services offered and acceptance of low cash wage compensation as a norm. In the case of workers who did earn a monthly cash wage, it was as fixed by the employer

without any bilateral negotiations. Hence, generally, the wages earned were below market rates, but there was no dissatisfaction as they equated work to prevailing locality rentals.

Cash wages also seemed to hold less significance to majority of workers in the sample, as they considered themselves as supportive housewives than main breadwinners of the family. Again, the migrant status, as well as the fact that majority had never worked as paid domestic workers in the city led to higher valuation of housing (in relatively unsafe urban Delhi), which was even stronger for those who had lived on rent in other localities in the city. But there were few who did feel cash wages would have helped but did not want to raise any demand for justiciable wages as they feared losing their SQ to competition.

Thus the possibility of workers collectively raising demands for better cash wages seems quite improbable. Therefore a change from status quo or a dramatic cash wage increase may not happen unless there is political will to improve the lot of domestic workers in particular. But policy concern for domestic worker wages may not happen without some impetus, particularly if we keep in mind exclusions in the Law with respect to minimum wages for paid domestic work. The Code on Wages, 2019 having done away with schedule employments altogether, at present also seem to exclude domestic workers through workplace definitions. But political will to address wage issues of domestic workers may strengthen once workers become a united force, as data indicate their growing numbers. The argument of increasing wages leading to declining work opportunities for domestic workers remain strong as economic considerations, particularly affordability and opportunity cost may operate for large number of middle-class employer households, once paid domestic work crosses a particular wage threshold. Another consideration is the differential wage paying power of single and double income households, which was also evident in the colony as reported in FGDs (with worker groups) during discussion on wages.

Rise in cash wages can only occur with such work arrangements becoming known, homes being recognised as workplaces, and limit on all in-kind payments for workers across sectors getting capped at a maximum permissible percentage of total wages. Study findings definitely substantiate the need for significant change from the present. The next section deals with suggestions and what may result in positive changes.

5.3 Measures to Improve Cash Wages

The interviews with workers clearly indicate a total absence of worker consciousness, and inhibition and inability to negotiate for cash wages because of inherent fear of losing the SQ. In addition, patriarchal influences, overhanging shadow of unpaid domestic work and *the intermingling of own household work with that of the employers household* owing to *housing arrangement* within the same periphery led to gross undervaluation of the work rendered. Shortage of SQ and desperation to ensure family housing resulted in the women accepting terms dictated by employers. But they were not oblivious of market rates as some were undertaking paid part-time domestic work within and outside the colony. While situation of these workers are far from desirable, what may be the realistic possibility of these workers getting better terms? Given the unequal power relations, intense competition among workers for SQ housing, and inherent fear about losing the SQ being deeply entrenched, it is unlikely that the workers would collectivise or make demands for justiciable wages. But this could change if they become aware of possibilities, for instance, wide media coverage on NMW as a right for all workers or policy push on NMW by the Government could lead to positive spinoffs.

5.3.1 Organising Workers for a Collective Voice

There is a possibility for organising workers but it may take dedicated efforts either from outside the colony or strong internal leadership from within the colony. But it would be difficult to achieve given the prevailing housing shortage and fierce competition for SQ within the worker community in the colony, as well as the fact that workers in the colony are regionally aligned with allegiance to workers within ones region than

others. Therefore, they may first have to come together as a unified collective to voice concerns on conditions of work and need for justiciable cash wages.

5.3.2 Policy Push and Sensitisation

Political will to address wage issues of domestic workers may strengthen once workers become a collective and united force, as data indicate their growing numbers. A dramatic cash wage increase may happen only through political will to improve the lot of informal workers through targeted measures. With respect to domestic workers, policy changes may not happen without some impetus, particularly if we keep in mind exclusions in the Law with respect to minimum wages for paid domestic work. The Code on Wages, 2019 at present also seem to exclude domestic workers through workplace definitions and this need to be rectified. Meaning the home has to be recognised as a workplace, which would enable worker rights champions to demand for national minimum wages rates for all domestic workers. The inclusion would also objectively value in-kind payments such as housing and food to a maximum percentage of total wages, leading to higher cash wage earnings for workers in such work arrangements.

It is also important to sensitise employers on rights of domestic workers, including minimum wages and leaves, and this could happen through public awareness through audio and video communications and social media campaigns. Employers could become receptive/open to idea of rights of workers as in this case they are also government employees. Also, in the event of ‘in-kind’ payment limits becoming publicised with the notification of Code on Wages, there could be discussion on cash wage issues among employers in these housing colonies, which could lead to RWA drawing up wage rates for tasks and capping the value of the SQ housing in total wages.

5.3.3 Expanding Availability of Low Cost Housing

As low cost housing options expand and workers have access to such housing, the number of workers competing for such SQ facilities may decline. With more SQ and less workers, the ‘invisible hand of the market’

would automatically become more favourable for workers. In such cases, RWA may proactively fix rates, either task/hour based as in government colonies elsewhere¹⁰⁷ which has family SQ facilities. In fact, it would be the availability of low cost housing that could become a great enabler for improving bargaining power of workers (see footnote)¹⁰⁸ in such work arrangements.

5.4 Conclusion

The remnants of our colonial past, perpetuate into the present, in these alternative categories of work for housing arrangements. Paid domestic work and workers remain marginalised, their services undervalued and low paid, in spite of advances and better prospects opening up for educated workers across sectors in modern India. Despite paid domestic work by women from lower economic classes being integral to educated women of higher classes, both to participate in labour markets and for social reproduction, systemic injustices remain.

The study has shown how over valuation of in-kind remuneration, particularly family housing by worker households led to acceptance of low cash wages for services rendered. Women workers in the sample

¹⁰⁷ Military housing areas and in many PSU colonies in Delhi and other states (source: Personal communication)

¹⁰⁸ The city of Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh in comparison to Delhi is different, particularly in terms of housing needs of the poor and migrant influx. But the present state government intervention on low cost housing has led to changes here with respect to both wages for work and availability of workers in the SQ. The State government is on a massive project towards building 3.1 million¹⁰⁸ houses (of which 2.83 million is to be built under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana for which the Centre will release a grant of Rs150000 per unit) under the Pedalandariki Illu (housing for the poor) scheme. The scheme has already begun, and even before, under the previous state government, 2,68,625 housing units had been built and handed over to beneficiaries. The title deeds are issued in the name of women, and one cent of land in urban areas and 1.5 cents of land in rural areas is allotted to each beneficiary under the programme. This has had an impact on the SQ situation in a Government Officers colony in Visakhapatnam, with acute shortage for workers. The workers here barter 'one' cleaning work in exchange of the SQ. For all other works, they have to be paid, though the rates are 75 per cent of market wages for a particular task. (Source: Personal Communication. Information from a resident in Naval Officers Colony in Visakhapatnam).

shouldered the entire burden of search, negotiations, and adjustment to work conditions, thereby ensuring secure housing for their families. The overarching focus on securing safe roofs totally obliterated the question of cash wages. But these choices seems rational, certainly taken after weighing in options, particularly of alternate affordable housing.

Particularly in light of the COVID 19 pandemic related news reports on evictions¹⁰⁹ by landlords and basti demolitions¹¹⁰, massive job and wage losses for the poor, and the ‘stay home, stay safe’ campaign. Each of this bring in new dimensions on why these housing for work arrangements is really sought after by low income households.

While the field work for this study was completed before the lockdown, the conclusion is written after Delhi and other cities witnessed exodus of the poor from the cities. The capital city witnessed large swathes of migrant workers, casual labour and others, construction workers, factory workers, restaurant and transport workers, as well as domestic workers crossing its borders, as they undertook long journeys back home, many walking over hundreds of kilometres to reach their homes in distant villages. More than the fear of the disease it was the sudden loss of wages, inability towards meeting food expenses and housing rentals that made many go back home.

During the period of lockdown, in end April 2020, I had contacted some of the domestic workers interviewed earlier for this study, to know how they were, and was not really surprised to know that almost all were staying back. Most of them were continuing with their work in the employers’ household as before. Except for the use of masks and following other COVID hygiene protocols, nothing much had changed for them. In many cases, the men were not going for work, but they continued to stay on

109

https://www.hlmn.org.in/documents/Press_Release_Evictions_COVID19_November_2020.pdf

¹¹⁰<https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/others/portal-to-map-evictions-in-delhi-since-1990-101618426913285.html>

hoping things will get back to normal, and that, they would find some work sooner or later. During this period, worker households were able to manage their basic food and other needs on their own, and in many cases employers were offering them more support in terms of both cash and rations to cope. Even though they were worried about the evolving situation, most did not want to go back as they had no means of livelihoods in their villages. While many had close relatives, and some had land, they were certain that in their villages they could not earn enough to sustain families for long. Those with land, had not cultivated it for years, nor were they interested to work on it, as the meagre landholdings would not provide the family sustainable livelihoods. Thus for low income households, both rural to urban migration and its reverse are definitely complex choices largely driven by desperation for survival. As long as there are sustenance possibilities, many may try to hang on and fight the flight.

In this context, the central theme of this research, the bartering of work for family housing with assured basic amenities, seem a rational household sustenance decision. Poor women's unpaid or underpaid domestic work open up gates to more secure urban spaces for families in the city though real inclusion or *Right to the City* remain as peripheral as ever.

These exclusions and vulnerabilities further strengthens the need for justiciable cash wages in these housing for work arrangements. The study argues that cash wages for workers is critical, and an objective method of working out the same should be developed which could either be NMW based hourly rates or task based locality rates. As the Code on Wages 2019 has a clause on capping in-kind wages to a maximum of 15 per cent, it could become applicable to these work arrangements provided there is specific guidance from the Government on inclusion of such work arrangements and all workers. This would improve workers' household economic situation and more importantly their self-reliance and self-worth as income earners. Further, it would reduce inequalities and enhance resources for investing in human capabilities thus furthering intergenerational mobility.

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Table 3 Total & Cash Wages as per NMW after adding HRA and deducting in-kind @15%

Approx. time spent by Workers (Hours/day)	Major Tasks (Code of tasks done by workers)	Cash Wages (Rs) Received (Present)	Total Wages (Rs) as per the recommended National Minimum Wage rates (hours/day*30*47) Rs.1645 the rent allowance as per NMW)	Cash Wages (Rs) as per NMW (SQ value @ 15% of total wages is deducted)
W- 1 (6)	Cooking (3,7,11)	1,500	10,105 (8,460 + 1645)	8,589
W- 2 (8)	ALL (1,2,3,5,7, 11)	3,000	12,925 (11,280 +1645)	10,986
W- 3 (4)	Cleaning (1,2,3,5,9)	0	5,640	6,192
W- 4 (12)	ALL (1,2,3,4,5,7,8,12)	0	16,920	15,780
W- 5 (8)	ALL (1,2,3,5,7)	0	11,280	10,986
W-6 (6)	ALL (1,2,3,4,5,7)	3,500	8,460	8,589
W-7 (3)	Cleaning (1,5)	0#	4,230	4,994
W-8 (6)	Cooking (7)	1,000	8,460	8,589
W-9 (7)	Cooking (3,7)	1,500	9,870	9,788
W- 10 (4)	Cleaning (1,2,3,5)	0	5,640	6,192
W-11 (9)	ALL (1,2,3,5,7,10^)	4,500	12,690	12,185
W-12 (4)	Cleaning (1,2,3,10)	1,500	5,640	6,192
W-13 (7)	ALL (1,2,3,5,6,10)	3,000	9,870	9,788
W-14 (3)	Cleaning (1,2,3,5)	500	5,875 (4,230 +1645)	4,994
W-15 (3)	Cleaning (5,12)	0	4,230	4,994
W-16 (2)	Cleaning 10^ & 12	0#	2,820	3,795
W-17 (4)	Cleaning (1,2,3,5)	0	5,640	6,192
W-18 (6)	Cooking (7)	3,000	8,460	8,589
W- 19 (9)	ALL (1,2,3,5,7)	3,000	12,690	12,185

Note 1 : ALL works include cooking, cleaning & all other works required for upkeep of house. The Codes of specific work done by workers are: 1. Cleaning, jaadu-pocha (brooming, mopping); 2. Dusting; 3. Bartan (utensils); 4. Kapda (washing cloths, drying & folding); 5. Kapda (washing of delicate hand wash cloths, drying and folding of machine cloths); 6. Cooking (only 1 time) 7. Cooking (all meals); 8. Cutting vegetables; 9. Ironing; 10. Cleaning garden and jaadu, safai of front lawn and backyard (10^terrace in case of first floor houses); 11. Walking and taking care of dogs (generally this work was well-paid (about 3000/month) as either husband/sons of the worker did this task); 12. Others (car washing, gardening, maalish work were some) # Paid the utility bills

Note 2 : * Monthly wages are calculated for 30 days of work as per the NMW rates as stipulated by the Expert Committee (GOI, 2019c) which is ₹ 375 per day or 46.88 per hour, assuming an eight hour day. The value of in-kind/housing @15 per cent is deducted from total wage (monthly wage as per NMW rates + Rs.1,645/month for rental allowance)

Source: Based on Field Study, 2019-2020

A Notice on the Wall of *Kendriya Bhandar* in the locality for informing Workers of an SQ



Questionnaire

I. Identification & Basic Family Particulars:

Name of the Respondent/ Domestic

Worker _____

House No _____ (**ground floor/ First floor**)

Years stayed in this Colony _____

1. House of Parents is in Village/Town/City: _____ 2.State: _____

3. Religion: _____

4. Caste: _____ (SC-1; ST-2; OBC-3; General -4)
(Hindu/Muslim/Christian)

5. Respondents Age: _____ 6. Education _____

7. Marital Status _____ [1. Married 2. Single (deserted/unmarried) 3. Widow]

8. Total Number of Family members residing in SQ _____

9. No. of Children _____ 10. No. of Adults _____

Date of interview: _____ Time: _____ Mob. No: _____

II. Work Particulars:

11. **Kind/Nature of Work:** 1. Full Time (cooking & all other work)
2. Three work in Lieu of Quarter
3. Cooking work in Lieu of Quarter
4. Any Other _____

12. Approx. **Time (hours) Spent Daily on Work in the *Kothi*** _____

13. Name the works done (write YES in column next)

1. cleaning –jaadu pocha		8. Cutting vegetables Only	
2. Dusting		9. Ironing	
3. Bartan		10. Cleaning garden – jaadu outside	
4. kapda (washing, drying & folding)		11. Walking and looking after Dogs	
5. Kapda (few hand wash kapda, others (machine) drying & folding)			
6. Cooking (only 1 time)			
7. Cooking (All meals)			

14. How many months/ years since working in this house (Tick the choice)

1. Less than 6 months
2. 6 – 12 months
3. 1 year completed
4. 2 year completed
5. More than 2 -5 years,
6. 5-10 years
7. More than 10 years
8. More than 20 years

14.1 How did you find the present Work (& Servant quarter)

(1) Searched many houses and found this after giving trial; (2) Reference from previous madam and after trial; (3) Relatives and friends helped to find the house which I got after giving trial (4) Any Other (specify)

14.2 How many houses did you search and spoke to the madam asking for the servant quarter before finding the present work (and servant quarter)

(1; 2; 3; 4; 5; More than 5 houses but less than 10; More than 10 houses)

14.3 How long did you have to search before finding the present *Kothi* for work and quarters?

(1 week; 2 week; 3 week; 1 month; 1-2 month; 3 months; more than 3 months)

15. Monthly Payment in cash/ non-cash if any from *Kothi* for the work (other than servant quarters)

- 15.1 No Salary, Only Quarter for work _____
15.2 Salary/month _____
15.3 Any other Benefits (water/electricity bill) _____
15.4 Irregular (eg. festival gifts) _____

16 Was there any negotiations? Both for salary and work at the time of moving in? Specify.

16.1 Have you asked for Raise in salary from Madam after 1 year of working in this house?

1. Yes 2. No

16.2 Were you given the Raise 1.Yes 2. No

16.3 If not, did you try to look for another house? 1. Yes 2. No

(If No, Why)

17 Do you take leave? Any provision for weekly/ monthly off? As well as annual leave?

- 17.1 Weekly Off day Yes/ No
17.2 Monthly leave Yes/No
17.3 When you are Sick Yes/No
17.4 Annual Leave to go to native place Yes/No

17.5 Do you get leave if you ask for a day off for some requirement (jaroori kaam) Yes/ No

17.6 In case you require long leave (3-4 weeks to 1-2 month) for some problem (shaadi/ gaav mein koi bimar) do you get it?

Yes/ No _____

17.7 If you need such leave, How do you Manage?

18. If YOU have time (after *Kothi* & own household work) have YOU taken up any other part-time domestic work?

(1) Yes (2) No

18.1 If NO, why did you not try for other part time work? _____

18.2 If YES, Why are you doing the part time work?

18.3 In How many houses do you do part time work? _____

18.4 Where do you do part time work? _____

18.5 How did you find the part time work? _____

18.6 What is the total money you get from part-time work in a month _____

19. Did you have to take permission from the madam (of the quarter) to go for part-time work (1) Yes (2) No

19.1 Did you get the permission easily from the madam to work part-time outside (1) Yes (2) No

19.2 Did you get permission after negotiations/ based on any new conditions, what were the new conditions? Specify

20. **Are you happy with your work and Conditions of *Kothi* Work** (time, payment)
(1) Yes (2) No

21. **Any Specific problems of working here and living here?** Explain

(Example: Extended work hours; Money not sufficient to meet all needs;
 Employers permission for guests/ relatives staying over Finding new house if employer ask to vacate Finding new house when they are transferred is a tension Fights with others in the neighbourhood Difficult to say No to any work the madam ask as she may tell us to vacate chori ka inzaam aur dhamki of police Any other (Tick the relevant problems and also write other specific problems mentioned by domestic worker)

22. **Has any madam asked you to vacate the quarter due to any issue? If yes what happened?**

23. **Saab log ka retirement/transfer ke baad kitna samay tak quarter khali karna hai? Have you requested anytime permission to stay some more days? If yes how do you manage.**

24. **If you were asked to vacate, were you able to find another quarter? Did you try to stay with some relative or other family in their quarter? Or did you move to rented house? Explain in detail**

How many houses (servant quarters) have you shifted till now (approximate):

25.

26. **Why did you have to shift out** (Give reason for the last three times you shifted house)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

—
(Employer got transferred/ retired; Employer asked to vacate; you vacated because you were not able to do all the work; Childrens' school was far; It was ground floor quarter, too many fights with other servants for bathroom/toilet)

27. Are there other domestic workers in this *Kothi* other than you? If Yes, No.

What do they do

III. Entry to the Area/ Colony and the City

28. When did you come to Delhi? Approximate Year _____

29. **No. of Years since living in Delhi** _____

30. **Did you come to Delhi Before/ After marriage** _____

31. **Why did you come to Delhi?** (Husband worked in Delhi/ Relatives in Delhi/ No Work in village/Fight with relatives in village/ Not enough income from khetibaadi in village/ for better education of children/ other reasons...)

32. If you were in Delhi as a child, where did you live in the city before marriage?
(With parents/relatives)

31.1 What did your parents do? (both Father & Mother, whether living in village/ Delhi)

32. Have you lived and worked only in servant quarters of this colony?
(1) Yes (2) No

33. If No, where have you worked and lived in Delhi before coming here? What work did you do

1. Place Lived : _____ Worked: _____
2. Place Lived : _____ Worked: _____

34. Why did you decide on coming to work in this colony and live in servant quarters? (Give three major reasons beginning with the most important)

- (1) _____
- (2) _____
- (3) _____

House with no rent, water & electricity payments peaceful & clean environment, feel safe

Relatives & Friends Live here *Kothi* is in the same compound, so husband permit me to work

Education of Children Can Look after both my own home & children Any other

IV. Household work & Family Information

35. Number of Family members of the domestic worker who are working

35.1. Number of family members with Regular work (with monthly/weekly salary)

35.2. Those in self- employment (selling food at India gate/ Press or dhobi work/ Any other) or in other part-time/casual employment _____

36. Does the Husband of the Domestic Worker have regular Job

1. Yes 2. No

37. Monthly Income Earned by Husband/ other main income earner _____

38. Total Expenditure (Karcha) of the family in a month

Food _____ Gas _____ Education _____

Transport _____ Water/Electricity _____ Others _____

39. What are your children doing?

S. No	Son/ Daughter	Age	Studying/ Working/ searching for work/ Not doing anything	If Studying in school (class) (Govt/private) /college(reg/part-time) If Working – what is the job/work	What’s the approximate monthly salary (in case of those working)
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					

40. Do any other Family member help in completing work of *Kothi*

1. Yes 2. No

If Yes, Specify Who Helps? (Whether regularly or occasionally)

40.1 Do you (the domestic worker) feel you are doing equal work as your husband for helping household karcha in this city?

If Yes, Why? _____

If No, Why? _____

41. What are the works you do in your own house?

Work in Own House by the respondent (woman worker)	Put tick mark	If you are unable to complete the household work, who helps you (Husband, bahu, daughter, son, other relatives)	Put tick mark
Jaadu, pocha			
Bartan			
kapda (washing, drying & folding)			
Cooking (all meals)			
Cooking (1meal)			
Cutting vegetables			
Taking Children to School			

42. Describe a typical day Time Use (all you do at your own house and in the *Kothi*)

Time	Activity	Time	Activity
		Total <i>Kothi</i> time use :	Own house time use:

V. Previous Work/ Residence Particulars:

43. Where did you stay in Delhi before coming to this colony _____

44. What was the Monthly rent paid _____

45. Did you have Continuous tapped water _____ (1. Yes 2. No)

If No, How did you get water _____

46. Did you have to pay separately for water _____ (1. Yes 2. No)

If YES, How Much in a Month _____

47. Did you have own bathroom/toilet _____ (1. Yes 2. No)

If No, were there common facility _____

48. Did any of your family members suffer from fevers (dengue etc) and other diseases while you were staying in the rented area (may be kotla, khoda, nizamuddin)

_____ (1. Yes 2. No) If Yes, Specify _____

49. Was there electricity _____ (1. Yes 2. No)

50. Were there frequent electricity problems (power cuts) _____ (1. Yes
2. No)

51. Were there criminal elements in the neighbourhood/ was fights a regular feature?
_____ (1. Yes 2. No)

52. Did you and your family feel safe there (as much as in this colony)
_____ (1. Yes 2. No)

53. Do your family members like this colony in comparison to where you were earlier?
_____ (1. Yes 2. No 3. Not Applicable as we have only lived here)

Why _____

54. Has your employer helped you in getting the following:

50.1 Gas connection _____ (1. Yes 2. No)

50.2 Identity/ Aadhaar Card _____ (1. Yes 2. No)

50.3 School/college Admission for your children _____ (1. Yes 2. No)

If yes Specify _____

50.4 Job for Family Members _____ (1. Yes 2. No)

55. Are your children motivated to study and work towards better marks to get good jobs?

Do they have aspirations to become doctor/ engineer/ teacher/ officer/ police etc?
Specify.

VI. Other Information (on Assets & other aspects)

56. Do You have a bank account in your name? _____ (1. Yes 2. No)

57. Where do you go at the time of illness _____
(1. Primary health centre/ Government hospitals 2. Private doctor 3.
Others)

58. Do you /family have land in your native village? _____ (1. Yes 2. No)
If yes, how many bighas? _____

59. Do your family have a house in your native village? _____ (1. Yes 2. No)

60. Do your family have OWN house in Delhi or somewhere? _____ (1. Yes
2. No)

61. Do you /family plan to go back to your native village after some years? _____
(1. Yes 2. No)

If Yes why? _____

If No, Why? _____

FGD Guiding Questions

- How and Why did you come to Delhi and to this Colony? Will you go back?
- What do you like about living in the colony? Can you share the positive and negative aspects of living and working here?
- Have any of you been asked to vacate suddenly? Or you know of such cases? What happened? How did the family manage?
- Do you have an idea on the salary for the kind of work you are doing- around here, say in any nearby private colonies/other parts of Delhi? Would you consider looking for work elsewhere?
- Do you feel there is scope for negotiating for better getting salary/wages for your work with the employer? Have you done that ever?If yes what was the response.....If No Why have you not asked?
- Do you feel that if all of you stood together and asked for better conditions of work and some wages/salary (thanka) it will happen? Do you feel there is a possibility of workers joining together in this colony? Do workers help each other?
- Have you heard of Domestic workers Union and organisations that help domestic workers?