

Citizens' Assembly – 14 November 2020

Theme - Work

Personal Experience Panel

Mariaam Bhatti

Campaigner, community work and social policy practitioner

I am an experienced campaigner, community work and social policy practitioner, a migrant woman living in Ireland since 10 years ago and co-founder of the Great Care Co-op.

I initially arrived in Ireland to take up employment as a live-in, full-time housekeeper and child carer. For nearly 8 years I campaigned Migrant Rights Centre Ireland's Domestic Workers Action Group (DWAG) which was a support space for domestic workers and later became a dynamic campaigning group for the rights of domestic workers working in Ireland.

I was one of the 23 workers who campaigned successfully for two years for the criminalisation of forced labour in 2013; one of the 25 core group of 500 migrant domestic workers who campaigned for 7 years to get Ireland to ratify the ILO Convention C189 in 2014 and in the same year later got the Department of Foreign Affairs to design a policy for that protected domestic workers employed in diplomatic households in Ireland.

Recently with some of the women from DWAG we set up the Great Care Coop to show what a great workplace should be like and what providing quality care entails.

I hold a BA (Hons) in Community and Youth Work; a Masters in Rights and Social Policy (both from Maynooth University and a postgrad in European Union Policy Making from Vrije Universiteit Brussel. In 2019 I was selected as one of the 12 from around the world to take part in an intensive three week UN Fellowship for People of African Descent. Subsequently as a group we were recognised by the UN General Assembly as (and added to the list of) 100 Most Influential people of African Descent under 40 Worldwide.

Summary of main points

- Working behind closed doors with no support of other workers, poor working conditions and low pay.
- The lack of value that is placed in care work therefore poor working conditions associated with it.
- Low pay that doesn't leave room to upskill and move on to better jobs.
- Joining other workers to support each other and to self-advocate.
- Broader discrimination in accessing decent work for migrants and intersectionalities of being women from the developing world
- Founding the Great Care Co-op, Ireland's first worker-led and owned care co-op to address the above.
- Recommendations