Digital peer networks

Empowering Tanzanian Domestic Workers through online communities

COMMUNITY **INFORMATION** **SUPPORT**

Overview

The project **Wezesha Project: Reducing Domestic Servitude through Capacity Building** in Tanzania highlights the important role online communities can play for Tanzanian domestic workers who travel abroad for employment opportunities. As these women leave behind their families and social support systems, the local implementing partner, COMHESWA, implemented a WhatsApp-based digital community to provide continued connection and assistance.

Before departure, COMHESWA conducts pre-departure training sessions to prepare the women for life abroad, including guidance on local customs, laws, and cultural norms. Once abroad, the women are provided with phone credits to incentivize the use of WhatsApp to stay in touch with COMHESWA and other domestic workers. However, the WhatsApp group quickly evolved beyond its initial purpose. It became more than a communication tool with the NGO—it grew into a vibrant, peer-led platform where women could share experiences, challenges, victories, and advice with others in similar situations.

While the community can serve as a social outlet—where the women share selfies, jokes, and household tips, the platform also acts as a critical safety net. It enables:

- Urgent appeals for help in cases of mistreatment,
- Peer-to-peer advice on contracts, bank accounts, and lost documentation,
- Real-time alerts about abusive employers,
- Strategies for resilience and survival, and
- Referrals to trusted employers or safer opportunities.

For these digital support networks to function effectively, it is crucial that workers retain access to their phones, which becomes a lifeline for asserting autonomy, safeguarding rights, and maintaining community.

This project demonstrates how digital tools, particularly WhatsApp, serve as beacons of hope, survival, and community for migrant domestic workers in the absence of reliable formal support structures. The impact of this community only continues to grow as more participants join through word of mouth.

How-to Guide

Bring together a group of individuals for a common purpose (e.g. activity or training)

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Create an online community (e.g. WhatsApp) for individuals to join

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Ensure a member from NGO monitors the group to **provide guidance and support**

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Encourage digital community members to **spread the word**

COMHESWA
Community Health And Social Welfare Africa

Success stories

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If you are not getting any help, reference the booklets we were given at [pre-departure training]...look up contact information for the Tanzania embassy in Oman.

When you go to sleep, lock your room... If someone gets too close to you at least give them a frown they will stop harassing you otherwise they would think you are interested. If you sense they are getting too close, pick up your phone and pretend you are calling the embassy.
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excerpts from WhatsApp group