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PRESS RELEASE

In Remembrance of the Life and Work of Clotil Walcott

The Institute for Gender and Development Studies expresses its solidarity with the National Union of Domestic Employees in commemorating Clotil Walcott Day on Sunday 7 September 2014. We applaud the union’s continued struggle toward the ratification of ILO Convention 189 Concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers.

As a trade union activist, Clotil Walcott was extraordinarily committed to the issues of working women’s exploitation and oppression. In 1974 she began the fight in earnest against the non-recognition of Domestic Employees as workers under the Industrial Relations Act 1972 of Trinidad and Tobago, a situation that remains largely unchanged at present.

Non-recognition of Domestic Employees as workers means that a large number of citizens fall outside of the protection of the state and the law, while engaging in work that is important, significant and necessary to the efficient and productive functioning of society. These workers include maids, cooks, helpers, butlers, yardmen and gardeners, to cite a few. Protection within the law would guarantee legally standardized wages and working hours for workers, healthy working environments, national insurance and healthcare, sick days and maternity leave and pensions. It would also engender greater respect for the work of these employees.

The IGDS remains committed to achieving gender equality and equity in Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean region. We urge the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to take steps to ratify ILO Convention 189 Concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers that enable these goals.