



A Gender Equality Guide for Trade Unionists in IUF Sectors

All for One = One for All

2nd Edition





The International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF) is an international federation of trade unions representing workers employed in agriculture and plantations; the preparation and manufacture of food and beverages; hotels, restaurants and catering services; all stages of tobacco processing. The IUF is composed of 425 affiliated trade unions in 127 countries representing over 10 million workers.

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Acknowledgements

This guide is based on a previous guide the IUF published on gender equality 'All for One = One for All' It is available to read at <http://www.iuf.org/AllforOne.pdf>. It is updated and extended with new chapters and stories.

The guide was developed through workshops, meetings and interviews with representatives of IUF affiliated unions. The author would like to thank all those who provided stories and input in the preparation of this guide.

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Inclusive unions are stronger unions.

Unions that represent all workers are stronger unions and become more relevant to both existing and potential new members. Fighting against any kind of discrimination is a way to organise and build collective power.

But women continue to face inequality in the workplace, in society and in the union. At the same time, the voices and concerns of women continue to be underrepresented.

The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent crisis is also causing extreme hardship on those working in IUF sectors. The pandemic has magnified vulnerabilities that exist in our societies. Women's lives are being disproportionately affected.

This reaffirms the need for continued and reinvigorated efforts in the fight for global equality. It is one of the pillars of a world resilient to crisis and encourages the greater representation of women in all parts of society. It also highlights the need to strengthen solidarity and promote closer cooperation – between our unions, within countries and across borders.

This guide is intended to foster equality by promoting solidarity, building union strength, and tackling the inequality issues that women face.

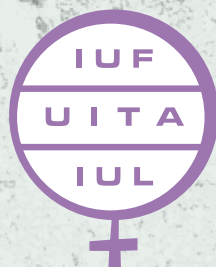
Shaped by the experiences of IUF affiliated unions, this guide is supported by the stories of women from all over the world who have experienced inequality and have organised in response. It highlights the amazing work of union activists – including the support of male unionists – and their achievements in the fight for equality.

Section One highlights the inequality that women face and provides global examples of how activists are fighting inequality.

Women face obstacles in accessing equal pay, jobs, and opportunities. They suffer from a double burden, carrying out unpaid domestic work on top of their paid jobs. The environmental crisis and insecurity in the food system are hitting women the hardest. On top of this, women continue to disproportionately suffer from sexual harassment and domestic violence. Women are exposed to different health and safety risks at work because of their gender and sex. Many women also have intersecting identities, which cause them to suffer from multiple discriminations.

Section Two emphasises the need to build union power and solidarity to fight gender inequality.

Organising strategies can help to build women's union membership. Empowering and strengthening women's confidence and activism can help to improve their representation and ensure their voices and concerns are listened to. Persuading more men of the benefits of equality and encouraging them to become advocates are essential for strengthening solidarity. Building a global sisterhood across borders can strengthen the global fight for equality.



All for one = One for All is one of our most inspiring publications, highlighting how women across all IUF sectors have fought for equality and won.

The original version, published in 2007, challenged us to examine why there was often a low level of unionization among women workers even in those sectors with a predominantly female workforce. It asked why women were under-represented in union structures and leadership... And it gave us practical examples of how we could change both situations.

Ten years later we came out of the IUF's 2017 Congress with the strongest women's representation in IUF Governing Bodies – both the Executive Committee and the Strategic Leadership Committee – with a strengthened IUF Women's Committee... and the 1st woman general secretary of the IUF.

I know I am a product of the IUF's work on gender equality – sisters sharing experience and knowledge, building confidence, helping each other. And I could not be prouder of having the honor of leading the IUF.

We also came out of the Congress with a strengthened program of work on gender equality and commitments to take on new areas of work to support LGBTI workers and young people and ensure they had not just a place but a voice in the IUF.

Since 2007 we have made enormous progress in tackling the scourge of sexual harassment – sadly widespread and an everyday battle women have to confront in many IUF sectors. We have new agreements with companies and a new international convention. Now we have to move those commitments from paper to real action in workplaces and our new manual will help us do that.

We have many challenges, the COVID 19 pandemic has shone a harsh spotlight on the inequities and inequalities in society but I am confident that together we will fight against those inequities and inequalities and together we will win. We are All for one and One for All.

Sue Longley, General Secretary of the IUF

PS: sadly Malin Klingzell-Brulin who contributed to the first guide passed away unexpectedly in March 2021. Malin and all other sisters who we have lost since 2007 are in our thoughts. Our continued struggle for equality is our a tribute to them.



"I know that women, once convinced that they are doing what is right, that their rebellion is just, will go on, no matter what the difficulties, no matter what the dangers, so long as there is a woman alive to hold up the flag of rebellion."

Emmeline Pankhurst, leader of the British suffragettes (1858-1928)

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This guide is for all of us – women and men.

It is for everyone who wants to make the union stronger and more representative by promoting gender equality – at work, in society and in the union. But as this is a guide on gender equality – and historically women have been marginalised - it focuses mainly on women’s experiences.

The guide is divided into two sections:

Section 1: Fighting Inequality highlights gender equality issues on which we should work together to tackle.

Section 2: Union Power for All introduces organising strategies which can:

- Build women’s union membership;
- Empower and strengthen women’s confidence and activism;
- Ensure that women’s voices and concerns are heard and taken up in the union;
- Persuade more men that including and listening to women is the right thing to do, will help the union and so is in their best interest too.



This guide can be used in any way you like. You can read it from start to finish, or you can select the parts that are most appropriate for you and your union.



The actions (**‘What we do’**) and reflections (**‘What we say’**) of IUF affiliated unions around the world can help inform your strategies and activities. These suggestions can help to inspire all of us to take action.



There are also suggestions for **‘What we can do’** and **‘Arguments to use’**, to

- persuade more women to join the union;
- negotiate with management to reach agreements;
- influence government to improve legislation;
- promote gender equality to strengthen the union and build a more equal society.



There are also **Key Resources** for more useful information.



Longer versions of many of the interviews in this guide are on the IUF website.

Section 1

Fighting Inequality



"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights..."

(Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 1, United Nations, 1948)

1.

Equal Pay, Jobs and Opportunities for Women

Women have long worked in informal jobs. But it was only 50 years ago that most women started to enter the formal labour market, into an unequal world shaped by men, for men.

As a result, women face discrimination at work.

We suffer from the effects of globalisation. We are first in the queue when jobs are cut. We have less job security – more casual, part-time, and temporary work.

We are overly represented in jobs that are most likely to be automated, putting us at risk of job losses. We have fewer opportunities for training and promotion than men.

We have less access to social protection – pensions, health insurance and so on. Even today, men are often seen as the head of the household with women as 'dependents' in pay, taxation and benefits. (ILO, 2017)

Worldwide, we face greater poverty than men. (UN Women, 2018)

Yet, according to internationally accepted fundamental human rights:

- Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of unemployment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.
- Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.
- Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and by his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.

(Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 23, United Nations, 1948)

Some think that inequality between men and women is ‘natural’, embedded in our cultures and traditions, and caused by our biological roles.

But there is nothing natural about discrimination. It is the result of unequal power between men and women – it must be resisted, fought, and condemned.

UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, (1979)

Article 10 requires states to take measure to remove discrimination against women and give them equal rights with men in education, vocational guidance and qualifications.

Article 11 (1) states that measures should be taken to ensure all women have equal rights with men in: choice of employment and opportunities, promotion, job security, social security and benefits, vocational training, equal remuneration and health and safety in working conditions.

1.1 International Standards

Our human rights are laid down by global organisations.

The **United Nations (UN)** is an international coalition of almost every country. It works to promote peace globally. Together the UN has agreed on a **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)**. These are rights which apply to everyone.

Two covenants give the **UDHR** legal force:

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (1966)

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (1966)

These treaties create legally binding obligations to states that agree to them.

The **International Labour Organisation (ILO)** is an international tripartite body that is part of the UN system, involving governments, employers and trade unions. Its aim is to stop discrimination at work and achieve ‘decent work’ for all. It sets international standards through ‘Conventions’ and ‘Recommendations’. Countries are encouraged to ‘ratify’ Conventions which are legally binding or adopt these standards into their national laws. Recommendations offer practical guidance for the strengthening of national laws.

There are also fundamental ‘Core’ Conventions of the ILO which all member states must implement even if they have not ratified them:

Fundamental Right	ILO Core Convention No.
The freedom to form and join trade unions	87
The right for trade unions to negotiate with employers	98
An end to forced labour	29 and 105
Minimum age for workers	138
An end to discrimination in the workplace	111
Equal pay for equal work	100
Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention	182

You can find all the ILO Conventions and Recommendations at: www.ilo.org/normlex

The **UN Convention Against the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)** is an international treaty adopted as an international bill of human rights for all women.

There are also regional agreements which protect and promote human rights and equality.

- **The European Convention on Human Rights (1953)**
https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf
- **The American Convention on Human Rights (1969)**
<https://www.cidh.oas.org/basicos/english/basic3.american%20convention.htm>
- **The African Charter on Human Rights (1981)**
<https://www.achpr.org/legalinstruments/detail?id=49>

National employment laws and practices also exist, often based on these standards.

These international standards are included in this guide. You can use them in your negotiations with employers and governments.



1.2 Division of Labour

Work is generally divided between men and women according to our gender roles. Harmful stereotypes mean that some work is considered to be ‘women’s work.’

This is called **job or occupational segregation**.

Women are generally hired for, and often apply for, jobs based on the roles we are given inside and outside the home or based on how society sees us. Often, we have to stay at home, clean and care for our family, rather than go out to work. Often, we have the double burden of doing both.

Many of us do not have the same opportunities for education as men. This means that we often end up in work that is far below our potential. Even when we are educated, discrimination means that our participation in the labour market is still limited. We are overrepresented in precarious and informal jobs with low pay and little security, while men dominate in higher-level positions.

People often see the jobs that we carry out as ‘less-skilled’ than men. Our skills are perceived as ‘natural’ to us. Often, we are deliberately recruited for particular jobs because of our tendency to have greater interpersonal skills. Despite this, our skills are undervalued. Because of this, we are often paid less.

Although men are generally taller and physically stronger, we share many abilities and can do many of the same jobs. What’s more, where efforts are made to attract us into traditionally ‘masculine’ jobs, these are rarely matched by equivalent efforts to attract men into ‘feminine’ jobs.

But these gender stereotypes do not only hurt women. They hurt men too. Giving men and women different jobs is just not logical. **It restricts everyone’s choices.**



What We Do

Fighting for Inclusion

In Colombia, women are underrepresented in the labour market. **The Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Industria Agropecuaria (SINTRAINAGRO)** has been fighting to give women more job opportunities in the banana farms in Colombia.

Adela Torres is the General Secretary of **SINTRAINAGRO** and knows that for women in Colombia, finding work is difficult.

“There are few women in the banana sector in the region. Our goal is to increase the number of women since many aspire to work in the plantations and so will be able to improve their quality of life...”

Many women have not completed primary and secondary education, there are many widows, many are mothers, heads of household and very young.”

The union has been working with the National Apprenticeship Service (SENA), and other bodies such as the employer’s association AUGURA, the Mayor’s Office and non-profit organisation ACDI/VOCA, to develop a training programme for young people. The programme is giving women the skills they need for working in the banana industry and is improving the participation of young women in Colombia’s banana sector. It has been a huge success. 80% of the members are young women and many of these women are already working on the banana farms of the Urabá region.

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In 2019 the union signed a two-year collective agreement with the Colombian employer's association of banana growers, **AUGURA**. The agreement commits employers to increase women's employment. All banana plantations in Urabá must hire at least two women.

The IUF Latin America Regional Secretariat (**ReI-UITA**) and **SINTRAINAGRO** have also signed a Letter of Commitment with Colombia's largest banana producer Banacol. Banacol has pledged to employ 400 more women workers on their plantations by 2020.

SINTRAINAGRO is monitoring the agreements for proper implementation. As a result of the agreement, 200 more women are already working on the banana farms.

The initiatives are tackling the exclusion of women from the workforce and improving their inclusion in social, political and union life. In Colombia, political violence has left many homes with a female head of household. 75% women banana workers in Urabá are head of families. The women as the head of the family are the providers. Giving women the opportunity to access decent work and pay will improve the quality of life of these women and their families and will end the cycle of poverty

"Access to employment for women in Urabá is difficult. There are also large wage differences caused by high levels of informality... One of the ways to promote gender equality is to create labour inclusion policies, which includes not only technical training in employment but also leadership training that yields trained, empowered and employed women.

Education... is essential for young people, women and workers to acquire tools that allow a better level of development... SENA allows free education which allows real access to training. As a result, women are empowered, with better self-esteem linked to work.

It is an opportunity to build a better society. They are the next generation, and it is from individual empowerment that we improve other parts of a person's life."

Astrid Lucia Suaza Gomez, Director of SINTRAINAGRO Social Foundation, **SINTRAINAGRO**, Colombia



What we say

"In some companies, employers hire more men and do not put the job numbers at fifty-fifty. There are very few women working, most of the jobs are done by men. The employers tell us: 'Women just don't apply for the jobs.' But women do apply. Men just don't choose them for the jobs because they think that they bring too many problems, ask for too many things and make complaints. But this is wrong.

Places like hotels naturally employ more women. It is a stereotype about what jobs women should be doing. But this is wrong. Things must balance.

Astridah Phiri, National Project Coordinator, National Union of Commercial and Industrial Workers (**NUCIW**), Zambia



What We Do

Working Together to Build Strategies for Change

In Ghana, women are underrepresented in the labour market. Harmful cultural and gender norms give women limited access to training. They end up in the lower paid jobs.

The **General Agricultural Workers Union of Ghana (GAWU)** has a long history of supporting rural communities in Ghana. Together with the **Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU)**, **GAWU** is working to improve the situation of women workers in the Banana Industry.

GAWU mapped the leading banana plantation in Ghana, **Golden Exotic Ltd (GEL)** in Eastern Ghana. The union found that only 8% of the 2,000 employed by **GEL** were women, and they were carrying out low paid jobs in packing, pruning and administration.

In support of **GEL Management**, research was conducted aimed at “Improving and increasing women’s employment in GEL.” It aimed to understand the attitude of local women towards employment in GEL banana production, and to identify whether specific barriers existed that prevented women working in the informal economy from taking jobs at GEL.

In 2018, GAWU and ICU, together with GEL Management held a three-day validation workshop to discuss the barriers to women’s employment. The methodology involved all stakeholders. On the first day GEL Management were the targeted participants. The second day focused on workers and their trade union representatives. The final workshop on the third day brought both groups together to agree on recommendations for improvements:

- Invest in organic crops to expand female employment;
- Develop gender and sexual harassment sensitisation for management and workers;
- Build community outreach programs to local communities to attract more women to apply to work at GEL;
- Review gender health and safety risks;
- Build union education on women’s leadership and collective bargaining;
- Establish a monitoring committee representing members of the company, women’s committee, unions and other stakeholders (among them the IUF).

As a result of the project, women are doing jobs previously restricted to men. As of 2019, 40% of new employment opportunities in the organic farm were targeted at women.

“We were able to identify areas to encourage more employment of women.

To deal with the problem of using chemicals in agriculture, the company established an organic farm. They advertised for women to come and work in the organic farm, emphasising that it would be safer for women and their OHS. They have expanded the organic farm and increased employment of women to 40%.

It is not just sitting in the book; it has been translated into action. Because we included the company – they now understand the problem and why they need to employ women. Women that have been employed have greatly improved their livelihood.”

Adwoa Sakyi, IUF Africa Regional Women’s Project Coordinator

1.3 'The Glass Ceiling'

Even when we are hired alongside men, we rarely get the same opportunities for training or promotion. Men climb up the ladder and end up in the top positions with more power and pay. We end up stuck working in the same jobs. We rarely get opportunities to better ourselves. This means that most leaders are men.

We must break through the 'glass ceilings' on our opportunities. We need to get rid of the 'sticky floors' that hold us down.

There are different union approaches to breaking the glass ceiling and achieving equal opportunities in negotiations:

- We can negotiate an equal opportunity policy and gender equality plan;
- We can negotiate on specific issues, such as access to training and promotion;
- We can develop model clauses which we can include as we negotiate agreements.



What We Do

Equality Plans to Enforce Transparency

In Spain, Act 3/2007 for Effective Equality between Women and Men states that employers must promote equal treatment and opportunities. Companies with more than 250 employees must work with worker representatives to develop an equality plan which includes:

- Measures to remove discrimination and achieve equal opportunities;
- Strategies and practices to achieve equality objectives;
- Systems for monitoring and evaluating the progress and implementation of the plans.

By 2022 this will be applied to all companies with more than 50 employees.

The largest trade union in Spain, **Comisiones Obreras (CC. OO)**, has used the law as an opportunity to sign more than 120 equality plans with companies in trade, hospitality and technical and financial services. **CC.OO** has played an active role in implementing and monitoring the plans to ensure that they will help to eliminate inequality, with measures including:

- Promoting better representation of women at all levels of work;
- Fighting precariousness;
- Equalising professional training opportunities;
- Providing equal remuneration;
- Encouraging a more equitable share of domestic responsibilities;
- Improving the health of working women;
- Providing a workplace free from sexual harassment and gender violence.

The equality plans have become a platform for worker representatives, employers and union members to meet.



ILO Convention No.111 on Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) and accompanying **Recommendation No.111 (1958)** aims to reduce discrimination in employment, promote equal access to training and employment, and equal terms and conditions of employment.

European Council Equal Treatment Directive (2006/54/EC) on equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in employment and occupation prohibits all discrimination based on sex including harassment and sexual harassment. It also promotes equal pay, equal treatment, training, promotion, working conditions and occupational social security.

1.4 Closing the Pay Gap

"Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work".

(Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 23(2), United Nations 1948)

Worldwide, women are paid on average 20% less than men. (ILO, 2018) The gap is much bigger for older women. EFFAT – the European regional secretariat of the IUF – report that the pay gap in the European sectors of the IUF can be up to 29%. At the current rate, the gap could take 257 years to close. (World Economic Forum, 2020)

We are less likely than men to participate in the labour market. When we do, the jobs we get are usually of low quality. When women do get the same jobs as men, we are often paid less. This means that a pay gap exists.

Often pay inequality is obvious. But in other cases, it becomes clear only when we compare our bonuses, medical provision, and pensions to men. 200 million women in old age live with no regular income from social protection. This is compared to 115 million men. (ILO, 2016)

Men often also have more access to overtime at work because they do not have to look after the children and do the housework.

We all have the right to 'equal pay for equal work'. When we do the same or similar work we should be paid equally. But job segregation means that women often carry out very different work to men, involving different responsibilities, skills and qualifications.

Gender inequality means that the jobs that women carry out are often undervalued and underpaid.



What we say

“In Uganda women are paid less than men. Housekeepers do most of the work in hotels, but their wages are low. The chefs - who are usually men – prepare the meals and management see this as an essential job and think the chef should be paid highly. But they don’t think the same about housekeepers. If the housekeeper does not keep the room clean, then the customers won’t come. So, they are also essential.

We must remember this. The women housekeepers are just as essential as the male chefs. The way that the management value work that the women do is bad. It is not equal. Women’s wages are just not high.”

Assumpta Namaganda, Deputy General Secretary, Uganda, Hotels, Food, Tourism, Supermarkets and Allied Workers Union (**HTS-Union**), Uganda

To address this, core **ILO Convention on Equal Remuneration No.100 (1951)** uses the term ‘equal pay for work of equal value’. This means that the right to equal pay should include equal pay for the same work and work of equal value.

Where the value of the work of one worker is similar to the value of work of another, they deserve the same pay and conditions. This is very useful when women are concentrated in low paid, undervalued sectors. It means that jobs must be evaluated without bias.

The ILO’s Job Evaluation Method sets out four factors which can help to compare jobs:

1. Level of skill and qualifications
2. Responsibility for equipment, people and money
3. Effort (physical or psychological)
4. Working conditions (physical and psychological)

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_122372.pdf

The pay gap will **never** close if we do not address the gender-biased job classification. But to address pay inequalities, we need to be inclusive in our approach and raise the living standard of everyone.

We need to tackle violence against women, promote a better work-life balance and push for a proper living wage which allows workers to live with dignity and fully take part in society.

Unions must fight for equal pay. It means a lot to us.



What we say

“When trade union density is high the gender wage gap is smaller. The gender pay gap is always less for unionised women.”

Debora De Angelis, Ontario Regional Director & Chair of the Women and Gender Equity Committee at the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (**UFCW**), Canada

As of 2018 in Iceland, by law all companies with more than 25 employees must get a Pay Equality Certificate from the Centre for Gender Equality to prove that they pay their employees equally.

Companies with between 25 and 90 employees which do not fall in line by 2021 will have to pay a daily fine of EUR 420. This legislation means that Iceland's pay gap is expected to close by 2022.



What we do

As a result of the hard work of unions, their members and women's coalition groups, in July 2020 the Parliament of New Zealand unanimously adopted the Equal Pay Amendment Act. The Act encourages **workers to use collective action to submit pay equity claims for work that is, or has been undervalued because it is or was female-dominated**. The implementation of the Act will help to challenge sex-based discrimination in pay.

"This is a significant law for women in Aotearoa New Zealand. It paves the way for widespread increases in pay for female-dominated work. Women can now join together to repeat in their own lives the inspiring story of Kristine Bartlett and the 50,000+ caregivers who acted together and now receive enough pay to live on. The equal pay legislation recognises that women's low pay is a collective issue. It does this by making collective bargaining, in union, the mechanism for achieving equal pay settlements. Settlements won't happen individual by individual, but collectively, benefiting large groups of working people at each go. Our new equal pay legislation is a good thing for women and for unions."

Rachel Mackintosh, Support Director and Assistant National Secretary, **E tū**, New Zealand



What we do

Wage Differences Without Justification

In Germany, women still earn 21% less than men (Eurostat, 2019). The causes of discrimination against women are varied, as are the solutions.

Since 2013 the trade union **Nahrung-Genuss-Gaststätten (NGG)** in Germany has been developing a wage equality initiative to combat wage inequality. The initiative includes the development of educational brochures and seminars as well as the testing of various agreements for potential discrimination. Within this framework, the NGG has also conducted a review of the collective wage agreement and other existing agreements in one location at the Unilever food company. In addition to the collective bargaining agreement, the correct classification for bonuses at collective bargaining level and a company agreement were also examined. The audit revealed that both the collective agreement and the company agreement had potential for discrimination in some areas. The NGG is now working to adapt the agreements accordingly. Fortunately, it has been found that the way in which workers are grouped into pay grades in the company has been carried out correctly and is not discriminatory.

The German catering company **PACE** also carried out a wage equality review. The review showed that the job descriptions of employees needed to be more clearly formulated and that this was possible to achieve in some jobs where women

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are the majority of employees. This enabled female employees to be placed in a higher wage group. These results are important for the next collective bargaining negotiations, and will be incorporated there.

Anke Boessow is the Head of Women's Policy at **NGG** and is responsible for the initiative.

"Patience and continuity are vital for implementing pay equity. This also means that ongoing training should be provided to raise awareness ... the issue of pay equity should remain a topic of collective bargaining policy, but also reviews of our collective agreements should become an integral part of collective bargaining policy."

We have to keep on identifying injustices and gender discrimination, also regarding pay, and highlight specific examples. This is how we will raise awareness of the issue. We can also draw on our trade union's strengths: identifying issues and working together to find solutions. Worldwide!"



1.5 Informal Work

Informal work happens everywhere. It is employment which is not covered by labour legislation, social protection or entitlements to benefits.

Over half of us earn our income working informally.

Worldwide, more women work informally than men. Agriculture has the highest level of informal employment. Women are the majority of these workers.

When we work informally, we are not protected. Without contracts, benefits or representation, our wages are low, and the risks we face are high. We work in unsafe conditions and more in danger of sexual harassment.

Working informally without social protection violates our human rights. But social and cultural gender barriers mean that when we take action to get protection, we are often not taken seriously in negotiations.



[See also Section 2 Chapter 7]



What we say

In many countries women work informally in family enterprises as ‘contributing family workers.’ Often, the perception is that it is normal for women to be involved.

“Where women are working for free as ‘family labour’, such as on tobacco farms, it is a form of slavery...Women work long hours in hazardous conditions. The rate of women’s formal employment is very low – they are engaged in unpaid work.”

Juliet Kutwabwana, National Youth Representative, National Union of Co-operative Movement and Allied Workers (**NUCMAW**), Uganda

UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

Article 22

Everyone (...) has the right to social security...

Article 23

1. Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.
2. Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.
3. Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.
4. Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

Coming together to fight for our rights can be difficult. As informal workers, we are excluded, hidden and often isolated. We live all over the world. Many of us do not see ourselves as legitimate workers with voices to be heard.

But all informal workers – **women and men** – have the same rights as formal workers.

Globally, we have formed cross-border networks and become trailblazers to fight for our rights and be recognised as real workers.

- **The Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA)** is a national trade union of self-employed women workers in India. In 1996, **SEWA** helped to develop international networks of home-based workers, known as HomeNets, which campaigned together to achieve the adoption of **ILO Convention No. 177 on Home Work**.

This Convention protects the rights of those who work in their own homes creating products for an employer. It has still only been ratified by only 10 countries. Find out more here:

https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312322

- In many countries, domestic workers are firmly rooted in the informal economy. The **International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF)** is a new global union federation, founded in 2013 out of an international network of domestic workers' unions and associations which mobilised globally to win a Convention to protect the rights of domestic workers. In 2011, employers, workers and governments adopted **ILO Convention No. 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers**.



[See also Section 2 Chapter 10]

The Convention addresses the long exclusion of domestic workers. Find out more here:

https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C189

Both Conventions state that **homeworkers** and **domestic workers** should be treated the same as other workers in:

- The right to organise
- Social protection, including occupational health and safety
- Fair remuneration
- Worker benefits

Many governments are not upholding these Conventions. But these standards do exist. They are a beacon of hope, and we can use them to organise. If we empower ourselves to use our voices to fight for protection, our opportunities are endless.

In 2015, the ILO adopted **Recommendation No. 204 on the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy**, emphasising the need for a transition to provide decent and inclusive work for everyone.

https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:R204



What we say

“Our biggest challenge is convincing the community and employers that domestic workers are workers. We also need to change the perceptions of domestic workers themselves – many of them don’t consider themselves as workers. Many of them don’t have written contracts, only verbal, and they are not covered by social protection. This makes them easy to dispose of. So, we encourage them to negotiate for a written contract. We have made huge gains. People used to think that this issue was trivial, but now people are taking it more seriously. It is important to remember the value of the care economy. Domestic workers make huge social and economic contributions in supporting others to go to work and they must be protected.”

Ann Dela Apekey, Gender Equality Specialist, Ghana

1.6 Precarious Work

Women are suffering from the changing nature of work. Work is being ‘casualised’. Jobs are becoming more precarious and flexible.

We are found in the lowest paid jobs that are more likely to be casualised. Our double burden of unpaid work at home makes it more difficult for us to obtain ‘standard’ jobs. Employers may not want to hire us because of these demands outside of work.

This is making us insecure and is weakening our unions too.

To save money, employers are hiring us on all kinds of temporary, part-time, agency, zero-hour and trainee contracts, rather than employing us properly. It is also a deliberate strategy to weaken our unions.

Precarious work is uncertain and unpredictable. It provides low pay and gives us little, or sometimes no, control over our working hours and conditions. This means that for many workers, having a good work-life balance is impossible, especially those of us who have families to look after.

Many of us feel so insecure in our jobs, that we don't think that the union can protect us. But the union is a place for everyone. And no matter our gender or work situation – **we all have the right to protection.**



What we say

“In the food processing companies here in Uganda, most casual employees are females because of their vulnerabilities. Women need to secure any money they can get and so they come to accept poor conditions. But the problem is that casual workers are not issued with employment contracts. They stay like this for 10 years. This is not legal, but they are not informed until the union comes and informs them...”

What these employers do is fire those who have been working for years and then hire new workers. They use this to scare the workers who are still employed. The workers then become concerned about losing their jobs and get scared and become very hard to unionise...But we tell them, if you pay union dues you are a union member and you are a worker, whether you have a contract or not.”

Assumpta Namaganda, Deputy General Secretary, Uganda, Hotels, Food, Tourism, Supermarkets and Allied Workers Union (**HTS-Union**), Uganda



What we say

“Casual workers are vulnerable and they back away from the union out of fear. They think, and probably know from experience, that taking the time to talk to the union about their workplace issues puts their jobs at risk. Fear is a great method for employers to stop recruitment into the unions, and companies are good at creating a sense of fear. But workers are less fearful if they are employed on a strong union site because they know that the union will take up their issues and fight for their job security. When workers are angry, they need to work together to fight for their rights and demand change, because if we work together it can be won.”

Angela McCarthy, Regional Organiser, Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union (**AMWU**), Australia

ILO Convention No. 175 on Part-Time Work (1994) states that part-time workers have the same trade union rights, rights against discrimination, occupational health and safety rights, access to social security, maternity leave, sick pay, and paid holidays as full-time workers

European Council Equal Treatment in Social Security Directive (1978 &1986) (79/7/EEC) promotes equal treatment for men and women in social security and social assistance.



What we do

Winning Permanent Jobs for Precarious Workers

“I have been working for 11 years as a packer at PepsiCo FritoLay. In 2008, I fell from the machine I was cleaning and was knocked unconscious. I lay on the floor for almost two hours before I was brought to the hospital. I needed 10 stitches in my head. The company did not pay any of my medical costs, so I had to spend all my money on the treatments and medicines. After four days I had to go back to work again because I didn’t want to lose my daily wage. I want PepsiCo to provide workers with medical coverage.”

Samina Mehboob, Union Member, PepsiCo FritoLay Plant, Pakistan

In Lahore, Pakistan at the **PepsiCo Frito-Lay plant** workers are organising against abusive precarious employment. Women workers have been fighting for their union rights. They have been demonstrating regularly to demand union recognition and permanent employment.

The **Pakistan Food Workers’ Federation (PFWF)** has been supporting women working precariously to secure permanent jobs. So far, 570 permanent jobs have been secured for precarious workers and priority is guaranteed for women.

“I have been working at PepsiCo FritoLay Factory in Lahore for five years in the waste department under the no work, no pay system. I always arrive at the factory at 5:00 AM and if I am late only for few minutes, I will not get the work because my position is already filled by another woman contract worker that arrived earlier than me. Together with the other women contract workers, we gather in front of the factory gate every day wondering if we can get work. If I don’t get the job, I wasted my time and have to pay my transport back home. The company says this is not their problem - but then who is responsible for that?”

Anwar Bibi, Union Member, PepsiCo FritoLay Plant, Pakistan

At the **Ferrero Confectionary Factory** in Baramati, India most women work in casual jobs, with minimum wages and no social protection. The **Imsofer Manufacturing Employees Union (IMEU)** has been fighting to win permanent employment for the precarious women workers, organising awareness raising activities, mass meetings and protests to oppose the denial of workers’ rights.

IMEU had previously negotiated clauses in the collective agreement each year to secure permanent jobs for casual workers. But using workplace mapping, the union identified potential permanent positions for women. It has now negotiated a minimum quota for women in the conversion to permanent jobs.

This is the first negotiated agreement that includes gender balance in the conversion from precarious to permanent jobs in any manufacturing site in India.

Baramati is a poor rural area. This means that permanent jobs for women pull entire families out of poverty. On average, each woman in a unionized, permanent job supports 10 family members.



What WE can do

- Measure progress to hold companies to account:
 - **Workplace gender mapping:** produce a map of your workplace, noting where men and women work, include skills/job classifications, access to training, employment contracts of men and women. Reflect on these patterns and challenge them.
 - **Pay mapping:** basic pay will not reveal the full extent of pay discrimination; you also must consider bonuses, benefits and access to overtime.
- **Include equal opportunities in collective bargaining related to pay, recruitment, training and promotion;** use 'equal pay for work of equal value' when evaluating jobs.
- **Develop new ways of bargaining for informal and precarious workers' rights,** if employers' associations do not exist, perhaps there are government structures to use.
- **Collectively negotiate to secure permanent jobs for precarious workers.**
- **Build networks and committees of informal workers** to give voice and representation within unions and to governments and employers, nationally and internationally.
- **Campaign for living wage legislation and adopt a gender approach to calculate it;** target both national and local governments.
- **Lobby governments to support the transition from informal to formal economy** by providing universal social assistance and improving the quality of public services.
- **Lobby government to ratify and implement ILO Conventions C177 and C189** and extend legislation and social protection to informal economy workers.



ARGUMENTS TO USE

- ▶ Muscle power should not be used as a main criterion to classify jobs and pay. Aren't women also tired at the end of the working day?
- ▶ There are very few jobs that women cannot do just because they bear children. Ignoring the potential of women is a waste to society.
- ▶ Lower pay for women leads to more poverty at home and in society. Women are often the real heads of households. They need the pay they deserve.
- ▶ Ideas about the differences between men and women are not fixed; they change through time. Cultures change and are strengthened by improving women's lives.
- ▶ These are questions of human rights: gender discrimination violates internationally agreed standards. The right to a living wage is expressed in the Conventions and Covenants of the United Nations – they must be respected!
- ▶ Informal workers have rights too! They need to be equally respected.
- ▶ Working precariously is dangerous for women and is bad for company efficiency.
- ▶ Trade unions have an obligation to respect, promote and realise the ILO's 8 Fundamental Conventions. Equal opportunities must be guaranteed to all workers, no matter their gender!



Key Resources

United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

<https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979)

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx>

African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981)

<https://www.achpr.org/legalinstruments/detail?id=49>

American Convention on Human Rights – The Pact of San Jose (1969)

<https://www.cidh.oas.org/basicos/english/basic3.american%20convention.htm>

European Convention on Human Rights (1953)

https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf

European Directives on social/employment policy

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/PERI/2017/600416/IPOL_PERI\(2017\)600416_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/PERI/2017/600416/IPOL_PERI(2017)600416_EN.pdf)

ILO: Understanding the gender pay gap (ILO, 2020)

https://www.ilo.org/actemp/publications/WCMS_735949/lang-en/index.htm

Video: Decent Work for a Lifetime of Gender Equality (ILO, 2009)

ILO's campaign to promote gender equality in the world of work.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7WVI24oi9Lo&feature=youtu.be>

Map: 'Explore the gender labour gap around the world (ILO, 2016)

https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/multimedia/maps-and-charts/enhanced/WCMS_458201/lang-en/index.htm

Organizing Informal Economy Workers into Trade Unions (ILO, 2019)

A trade union guide on the adoption of the ILO Recommendation 204.

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-ed_dialogue/-actrav/documents/publication/wcms_711040.pdf

Living with economic insecurity: women in precarious work (ITUC, 2011)

https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/Women_8_march_EN.pdf

Equal Pay - An introductory guide (ILO, 2013)

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-dgreports/-dcomm/-publ/documents/publication/wcms_216695.pdf

Ontario's Action Plan to End the Gender Wage Gap (UFCW Canada, 2015)

<http://ufcw.ca/templates/ufcwcanada/images/directions16/august/1662/UFCW-Canada-Report-to-Ontario-on-the-Gender-Wage-Gap.pdf>

IDWF (International Domestic Workers Federation)

<https://idwfed.org/en>

SEWA (Self Employed Women's Association)

<http://www.sewa.org/>

World Economic Forum: Global Gender Gap Report 2020

http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf

WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising)

A global research-policy network working to secure livelihoods, especially for informal women workers.

<http://www.wiego.org/>



2. Women's Responsibilities

All women should have the opportunity to live a fulfilling life and be able to work.

But we often find that the pressure of long working hours and low pay means that we do not get enough time to care for our families, or ourselves. At the same time many of us work outside the home as well as within. Also, many of us are single parents.

These pressures are because of harmful gender stereotypes and inequality. They are as a result of the patriarchal system in which we live.

The patriarchy is a social system in which men are more likely to hold positions of power, leadership, authority and privilege. Some assume that this is the natural state of affairs. But this is not true.

It is an oppressive system which defines the roles of men and women and causes inequality. As women, we suffer from the gender roles it imposes on us. It needs to be opposed.



What we say

"In Germany we are still very firmly rooted in traditional role models. In concrete terms, this means that women are still mainly responsible for care work and to take care of household and family. Often earning a little on top of the family income in part-time or lower paid jobs. Men traditionally take on the role of family breadwinner. This role model is further reinforced by fiscal framework conditions or also by the often, lower valuation of women-dominated activities. Such entrenched structures must be identified and changed."

Peter Buddenberg, Gewerkschaft Nahrung-Genuss-Gaststätten (NGG), Germany

ILO Convention No. 156 on Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Men and Women Workers: Workers with Family Responsibilities (1981) calls on governments to make sure that people with family responsibilities are not discriminated against at work or in job recruitment. Governments must promote equal treatment and develop childcare and family services. As of 2019 it has been ratified by only 44 countries.

2.1 Flexible Working Hours

Women continue to carry out most of the domestic work and caring in the home. This means that as women we have a greater demand for accommodating working hours to fit around our busy lives. But most of our workplaces don't offer family-friendly policies.

Our employers assume that we are always available and demand 'flexible' working hours from us to maximise productivity. But this is the opposite of what most of us want or can realistically commit to. Many of us have to fit work in around school and nursery hours. Many of us also have to care for the sick, disabled and elderly too. Where employers do offer family-friendly hours, they often see this as a privilege they are giving us rather than a necessity that we require.

At the same time, more of us are being hired on temporary contracts. We do not have employment security or adequate pay. We have little control over our own working lives. This makes negotiating working hours much harder. If we demand better conditions, we risk being fired.

We suffer both from the downward pressure of global competition and the patriarchal system in which we live.

2.2 Domestic Responsibilities

Our employers and governments do not address our need for childcare. Instead, we are left to make our own arrangements, relying on family members or hiring childminders at great expense to ourselves.

Many of us also have other commitments too. We want to be active in our communities, political organisations and voluntary groups. We all need time to take care of ourselves as well.

As we take on more and more domestic responsibilities, we suffer from stress. This affects our well-being and productivity - at work and at home.

But most governments and employers do not give us enough support. We need them to better consider our multiple roles. We need a better work-life balance.

We also want a better-balanced life for men. We need men to take their fair share of the domestic and caring work in the family. In fact, it can improve their quality of life too.

We need to become active in our unions and lead the way in challenging oppressive views about the roles of women and men.



What we say

“Many of us work and are very proud single mothers. For those women who work and have a husband, we encourage them to understand that they have the same rights as the husband to rest and he has the same right also to help with household duties.”

Dania Obando Castillo, General Secretary, Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Palma (**SITRAPA**), Costa Rica

European Council Parental Leave Directive (2010/18/EU) compels employers to give parental leave to either parent for a minimum of four months on the birth or adoption of a child. Workers have the right to return to work after taking parental leave. The scope also includes part-time workers, fixed term contract workers and temporary workers.

Work-life Balance Directive (2019). This Directive encourages more equal sharing of parental leave and addresses women's underrepresentation in the labour market.

Measures include:

- Paternity leave (minimum of 10 days leave around the birth of the child)
- 4 months parental leave (2 out of 4 months non-transferable between parents)
- 5 days of leave per year for caregivers
- Flexible working arrangements for caregivers and working parents



What we do

Childcare Centres to Support Working Mothers

Since 1972, the **Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)** has been fighting to organise, protect and support poor women working in the informal economy in India.

SEWA is the world's most successful trade union for women workers in the informal economy. Both an organisation and a movement, it runs a wide range of services for its members, helping women find solutions to their problems.

SEWA has opened several childcare centres that meet the specific needs of its members. The centres are run according to the needs of the mothers' working hours. They are affordable and flexible. For example, mothers working on farms can come and breastfeed their children in their breaks.

The first centre was established in 1980 with the **Sangini Child Care Cooperative** in Ahmedabad. **SEWA** now has several other local organisations that provide childcare for its members.

Shaishav Child Care Workers' Cooperative in the Kheda district is running centres for children aged 0 to 6 year of tobacco workers and agricultural labourers.

The **Balvikas mandal** in the Surendranagar district runs childcare centres for children of salt workers.

The **Banaskantha DWCRA Mahila Sewa Association** is running centres in the Banaskantha district for rural workers in agriculture and dairying.

The centres also build outreach to the local community. Members of the local community who want to gain new skills and employment are offered free training courses to become childcare workers. All the centres give workers a living wage and access to social protection.

The support from the centres has enabled working mothers to increase the number of days they work. This increased their incomes and well-being.

The health of children – who used to come to the plantations with their mothers and were put at risk of exposure to toxic chemicals – has also improved.



2.3 Maternity

Bearing and raising healthy children is very important to many of us. But it should be important for all of society. Men are fathers, after all. But too often maternity is seen as a 'women's issue'.

Maternity can be a vulnerable time for us. Having a baby can be hard. We suffer from stress, post-partum depression and other mental health issues. On top of this, many of us face discrimination at work.

Employers should have no say in our pregnancy. But too often we are victimised for becoming pregnant. Employed in informal and precarious work, maternity benefits are the first things that we lose. Even when we are employed on permanent contracts, employers discourage us from getting pregnant. When we do, we are fired or pressured to resign.

Where we do get maternity benefits, our employers rarely go above the basic requirements.

When we return to work after giving birth, we are often mistreated. Our jobs have been given away. We are put on lower wages. We do not get sufficient facilities, especially for breastfeeding.

What we say



At the tobacco processing factory in Russia where Anna Kashina works, when women go on maternity leave, men take their jobs. When they return, they are given 'lesser' jobs...

"If a woman leaves or retires, the position is always filled by a man."

Anna Kashina, Agro-Industrial Workers Union of the Russian Federation (AIWU), Russia

On top of this, some male union leaders do not support our fight for better maternity rights.

But these attitudes are deeply embedded in how men's responsibilities are seen in society. They are the result of the patriarchal system in which we live. We can only achieve equality if we challenge this system. Unions can lead the fight to protect mothers and encourage employers to offer parental leave for fathers, adoptive parents, grandparents and same-sex parents too.



What we do

Encouraging Men to do their Fair Share

Sweden has one of the most progressive parental leave systems in the world giving 480 days of parental leave per child. It can be split between the parents as they choose.

But norms and attitudes in society affect how parental leave is taken – particularly for men. Men often face pressure at work to take shorter leave. This means that women are often left taking most of the parental leave and looking after the children.

The **Swedish Municipal Workers' Union Kommunal** believes that parental leave should not reinforce inequalities, stop women taking part in the workforce and stop men from parenting. The union is campaigning to change attitudes and encourage parents to share leave equally to break the gender segregation in labour and promote the equal obligations and rights of all parents towards their children.

ILO Convention No. 183 on Maternity Protection (2000) and accompanying Recommendation No.191 (2000) provides 14 weeks of maternity leave for employed women. It also stops employers from ending a woman's employment during pregnancy or maternity, and women returning to work must have the same or similar position and pay.



What we do

Pay, Time, Respect

Switzerland is one of the richest countries in the world, but gender inequality is still widespread. Pay is unequal, parental leave is short and violence against women continues to violate women's human rights. In 2019, women across Switzerland went on strike in protest of the continuing gender inequality the country faces.

"The model in Switzerland has always been a very conservative one, one where the woman was at home and the man was the bread earner. Women's right to vote was not introduced until very late in 1971. For a long-time, men voted against it because they were afraid of losing power.

Because of this our struggle for equality is far behind where it should be. Maternity leave is very short, as is paternity leave. Women have to return to work very quickly after giving birth. There is also no guarantee for children to get a place in childcare and the way that schools are organised makes it very hard for working parents. This forces women to stay at home and look after them. We have become angrier about this and are challenging it.

Women's anger has grown so big that women across Switzerland went on strike at work and at home to demand action on the promise of equality. This strike was an immense success and it showed clearly that equal pay, violence against women and equality in family services are really important issues. Central to the strike was the idea of sharing childcare and changing working times so it can be shared equally between men and women."

Corinne Schärer, Head of Political Department, **UNIA**, Switzerland.



What we do

Building Alliances to Mobilise for Action

In the Philippines, unions have been fighting to successfully win improved maternity rights.

In February 2019, the Expanded Maternity Law was passed which increased maternity leave from 60 to 105 days, coming into effect in March 2019. **The SENTRO Food and Beverages Workers' Council**, through its national union **Sentro ng mga Nagkakaisa at Progresibong Manggagawa**, contributed in leading the fight. It was an active member of the **Nagkaisa Women's Committee** - an alliance of labour groups and workers organisations which established the campaigning group 'Workers for Expanded Maternity Leave'.

"We mobilised the women leaders inside the Nagkaisa Labour Coalition. We were able to share our resources - financial and human - in conducting meetings, forums and mass action in making sure that the passage of Expanded Maternity Leave Law would come into life. We also facilitated the key research in defending our arguments on why it is necessary to have the law. We actively participated during the Senate and Congress deliberation even in the creation of the implementing rules and regulations.

This is a major victory for us...It is one step forward in improving women's reproductive health. It will benefit mothers, their children, their families and society... But most importantly, shared parenthood is encouraged. We really appreciate that the law encourages shared parenthood and domestic workers will also benefit from this."

Joanna Bernice Coronacion, Deputy General Secretary, **SENTRO**, Philippines

Since the law was passed, the union has monitored and reviewed the implementation of the law.

<https://www.dole.gov.ph/news/implementing-rules-and-regulations-of-republic-act-no-11210-of-the-105-day-expanded-maternity-leave-law/>



What WE can do

- **Include work-life balance** in collective bargaining, especially flexible working hours as a workers' right rather than an employers' right.
- **Develop a model clause on maternity benefits**; include the right for women to return to the same job under the same conditions/pay, and for employers to give conditions for breastfeeding.
- **Campaign to influence social attitudes on work-life balance and the importance of sharing domestic responsibilities and parental leave**; especially how long hours and low pay undermine how well we care for the sick, and children.
- **Encourage men to see that maternity is not a 'women's issue' but an issue for everyone**; to help change society's attitudes about men's role in the family and negotiate equal parental leave.
- **Lobby governments to ratify and implement ILO Convention No.156 (1981) on Workers' with Family Responsibilities and ILO Convention No.183 (2000) on Maternity Protection**; if a government has not properly implemented it, then report them to the ILO complaint procedure.



ARGUMENTS TO USE

- ▶ The children of today will be the workforce of tomorrow; we must nurture our future.
- ▶ Workers Are Parents Too! We need societies where people can live and work; family well-being is fundamental to society.
- ▶ As more women start working, husbands and fathers need to take on more of the domestic responsibilities. They need the working conditions to allow them to do this.
- ▶ Employers' demand for flexibility is usually far from the kind of flexibility needed by working parents; it should not be just up to employers to determine working patterns.
- ▶ Long hours, low pay and casualised jobs put workers and our families under great stress; rest and recuperation are also needed for the workforce to be productive.
- ▶ Maternity is not only an issue for women to solve. Men are also fathers! When mothers are not supported, all of society suffers.



Key Resources

A Quantum Leap for Gender Equality (ILO, 2019)

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-dgreports/-dcomm/-publ/documents/publication/wcms_674831.pdf

Decent Working Time (ILO, 2007)

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-ed_protect/-protrav/-travail/documents/publication/wcms_145391.pdf

Work-family reconciliation: What trade unions are doing (ILO, 2004)

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-ed_protect/-protrav/-travail/documents/publication/wcms_170709.pdf

Maternity and Paternity at Work: Law and Practice across the world (ILO, 2014)

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-dgreports/-dcomm/-publ/documents/publication/wcms_242615.pdf



3. Planet in Crisis

Our planet is in crisis.

Climate change - the global change in climate patterns caused by the warming of the planet - is endangering our world. It is affecting all workers - particularly those working in sectors dependent on natural resources and the climate. Because of how labour is divided, women often work in the sectors that are affected most - agriculture, food production and tourism.

The climate crisis is threatening the world's food supply. It is also leading to shortages in water. Harmful agricultural and industrial practices are contaminating our water supply. And still, global poverty persists. Women - as the majority of the world's poor - are suffering most.

At the same time, the world's population is growing. There are more mouths to feed. This is putting a greater strain on food security. As the caregivers of most households, women are affected disproportionately.

But food scarcity is not the cause of hunger and food insecurity. Globally, we produce enough to feed the world's population. Hunger and food insecurity are caused by poverty and inequality.

3.1 Climate Crisis

The climate crisis is devastating food production.

It has reduced harvests, making employment more precarious, intensifying poverty, and worsening inequality. Agricultural workers, who represent around 30% of the global workforce, are the first to feel the impact.

Women rely on agriculture. We are the backbone of the rural, agricultural economy. But our contributions to agriculture are under-valued.

- We are excluded from decision-making and representation;
- We lack resources and control over our own land;
- This means we cannot invest in adaptation and mitigation solutions;
- Agricultural policies do not address climate change's disproportional impact on us.

The climate crisis forces us to leave our homes and jobs. We become displaced, at greater risk of exploitation and violence.

When crops fail, our husbands and sons leave to find employment. We are left to provide for our families. As natural resources grow scarce, we travel farther to collect them.



What we say

“Women working in agriculture are a powerful force that can bring changes through their particular experiences, attitudes and habits. We should realise the advantages of women leading this change and inform, organise and empower them.”

Valentina Vasilyonova, Vice President, Federation of the Independent Trade Unions in Agriculture (FNSZ/FITUA), Bulgaria

But the food system is deeply connected. Agriculture is both a victim and a perpetrator of climate change.

Increased industrialisation is putting pressure on the food system and negatively impacting women.

Burning fossil fuels for energy supply, intensive livestock production for meat and dairy consumption, land deforestation, toxic agro-chemicals and monocultures are contributing to climate change. Current methods of processing, manufacturing and transportation harm the planet too.

Trade agreements are making economies over-dependent on the export of raw resources. Plus, the food system is being invaded by financial speculation which is violating agricultural workers’ rights and destroying their livelihoods, particularly rural women farmers who have little protection.

Industrial scale intensive agriculture must be replaced with more sustainable agricultural methods. We need to be actively included, represented and supported in making this transition.



What we say

“We must include the growing threat of climate change on a global scale and the possible dire consequences for the world’s population in the agenda of the IUF agricultural trade unions. Monitoring and development of awareness about agroecology, water and air conditions is an important tool to ensure safe food and proper health care for workers and the entire population. We can also fight for investment and training in workplaces to deal with this.”

Svitlana Samosud, Agro-Industrial Workers’ Union of Ukraine (AIWU), Ukraine

As people become aware of the negative impacts of aviation and try to reduce their carbon footprint, tourism and hotels may be affected too.

Although number of major global hotel chains engage in fake green-washing programs, there is an increasing number of efforts to develop genuinely environmentally sustainable hotels like the Hotel Sasso in Argentina, owned and operated by IUF affiliate **Unión de Trabajadores del Turismo, Hoteleros y Gastronómicos de la República Argentina (UTHGRA)**.



The IUF is calling for a transition to agroecology. This means a move away from chemical and resource intensive ingredients which poisons food workers and food products and fighting for rural workers' and peasants' rights.

Unions are calling for a Fair or Just Transition to a clean energy and food system while protecting workers livelihoods and communities and providing re-employment opportunities.



What we do

Adapting to the Impacts of Climate Change

Bihar is one of the most impoverished states in India. Extreme weather has devastated crops and reduced farming seasons. This has led to increased poverty, insecurity and unemployment. As a result, climate migration is increasing. Workers are being exploited as they migrate to find jobs.

The agricultural and rural workers' union **Hind Khet Mazdoor Panchayat (HKMP)** in Bihar is fighting to tackle the negative impacts of climate change. The union has been raising awareness of the **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)** which gives rural workers 100 days of paid employment on public works.

HKMP members did not know how to access their rights under MGNREGA. Thanks to awareness raising by HKMP and the IUF Asia Pacific Regional Secretariat, rural workers can now secure their sustainable livelihoods. Workers are planting trees, building roads and constructing ponds. They are creating infrastructure to generate future income while also mitigating the impact of climate change.

HKMP has enabled workers to seek a livelihood that can help them in the longer off farming season. This will help to keep workers out of poverty and debt. 570 jobs for agricultural workers have been secured under the MGNREGA, boosting the income and livelihoods for 1,850 people, including their family members.

For the first time they are also able to monitor **MGNREGA** budgets at village council level. As a result, democratic and participatory decision-making is taking place and corruption in the town is being tackled.

Although not legally binding, the **UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (2018)** is an important tool for peasants and rural workers. Led by La Via Campesina, it is the result years of struggles and alliances among unions and NGOs including the IUF.

The Declaration sets out a framework for protecting the rights of peasants and rural workers struggling to defend their livelihoods. It includes the right to a decent income, social security, the right of peasants to keep control of their land and their full participation in government policies affecting food production and distribution.

The Declaration emphasises the elimination of discrimination against peasant women and the empowerment of women to protect their equal rights and freedoms. It also highlights the obligation of states to combat climate change **and** the rights of peasants to contribute to climate adaptation and mitigation measures.

3.2 Food Security

Food security is when **"all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life."**

(Food and Agricultural Organisation, 1996)

Under international human rights law, we all have the right to adequate, affordable and safe food.

But this right is being violated. 1 billion people suffer from malnutrition or hunger. Over half are food producers and waged agricultural workers.

Climate change is creating new challenges for food security. At the same time, the food system is one of the biggest contributing factors to global warming.

Women play an important role in achieving food security. We are the backbone of the agricultural workforce. But many of us suffer from food insecurity.

- We are not given access to credit services or equal rights to land ownership;
- We face discrimination at home. Male family members receive more food than us;
- Our biological differences, a legacy of malnourishment from prehistoric times, mean that our specific nutritional needs are not met.

Our food security is reliant on us receiving a proper living wage. But we are often paid less than men. Those of us who work in agriculture remain among the lowest paid.

Building trade union power for agricultural workers can transform the food system. Our basic demands as agricultural workers - for a living wage, secure employment, and a safe working environment - will make the food system sustainable and provide universal food security.

Unions must negotiate for these rights. **Climate change, food security and gender equality are interlinked challenges that must be addressed together.**



UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

Article 25 gives everyone the right to a “standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food...”

UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Article 11 recognises the “right to an adequate standard living, include adequate food’ and the fundamental right to be ‘free from hunger.”

The **right to food** is also recognised in:

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006).

UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

General Comment No. 12 states that the right to adequate food is realised when everyone “has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement (...)” It also says that states have an obligation to take action to mitigate and alleviate hunger.

<https://undocs.org/en/A/C.3/73/L.30>



What WE can do

- **Push companies through collective bargaining to develop sustainability programs together with unions.**
- Demand companies negotiate the setting of targets for the reduction of emissions and involve unions in the planning to achieve agreed targets.
- **Build union power for agricultural workers and small-scale farmers;** campaign for a transformation of the food system; lobby employers for transparency in their global supply chains.
- **Support women's networks to encourage equal representation in decision-making** at national, local and community levels in environmental governance.
- **Campaign to raise awareness of the climate crisis** and the contribution of the emissions of major corporates to climate instability. Build climate action by workers and their unions to help reduce the impact.
- **Campaign to reach the living wage.**
- **Negotiate with governments** to shift economies to a more sustainable, low-input and less fossil-fuel dependent system of energy and crop production.
- **Lobby governments and negotiate with employers to incorporate a gender perspective into their climate change policies;** encourage them to support Just Transition policies.
- **Lobby governments** to properly respect and implement the right to food as it is recognised under international human rights law.



ARGUMENTS TO USE

- ▶ People, human rights and nature must come before profit!
- ▶ Gender equality needs to be mainstreamed in climate adaptation programmes.
- ▶ The food system will never be secure unless we transition to more sustainable methods.
- ▶ The barriers to change are social and political and controlled by global TNCs. We must challenge their unsustainable methods.
- ▶ A clean and safe working environment will make food security sustainable for everyone!
- ▶ A proper living wage will raise the standard of living for everyone and give us enough to buy the food we need.



Key Resources

Green Jobs: Improving the climate for gender equality too! (ILO)

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-dgreports/-gender/documents/publication/wcms_101505.pdf

Decent Work for Food Security (ILO)

http://ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-ed_dialogue/-sector/documents/publication/wcms_161946.pdf

IUF Report: The Food System and Climate Change

https://iuf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/2013-The-food-system-and-climate-change_0.pdf

The WTO and the World Food System (IUF, 2002)

<https://iuf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/2002-The-WTO-and-the-World-Food-System-a-trade-union-approach.pdf>

Towards a Rights-Based Multilateralism for the World Food System (IUF)

<https://iuf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/2004-Towards-a-Rights-Based-Multilateralism-for-the-World-Food-System.pdf>

The GATS Threat to Food and Agriculture

<https://iuf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/GATS-e.pdf>

IUF Call for International Action to Address Global Crisis/Real Issues Facing Workers

<https://iuf.org/news/iuf-agricultural-unions-call-for-international-action-to-address-global-crisis-real-issues-facing-workers-not-on-the-wto-agenda/>

IUF at ILO Calls for Social Regulation of Trade, Investment in Tackling Food Price Crisis

<https://iuf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/IUFonFoodCrisis2008-e.pdf>

Trading away the right to food at the WTO

<https://iuf.org/news/trading-away-the-right-to-food-at-the-wto/>



4. Violence and Harassment Against Women in the World of Work

Violence and harassment can take many forms. It can be psychological, physical, sexual or economic. Fundamentally, it is a range of unacceptable behaviours, practices and threats which aim to harm.

Violence and harassment can impact everyone – both men and women. But women are more at risk from violence and harassment. This is because of their unequal position in society. This is called violence against women or gender-based violence (GBV) because it targets women because of their gender. Gender-based violence is a cause and a consequence of power inequalities between women and men.

The **World Health Organisation (WHO)** reports that 1 out of every 3 women will experience gender-based violence in their lifetime. The **European Union (EU)** reports that 40-50% of women have experienced some form of sexual harassment at work.



What we say

“Violence is internalised as normal and acceptable. But we need to make people aware that this should not be the case. Violence against women is never acceptable. We need to work to change this attitude.”

Ana Martel, Comisiones Obreras Servicios (**CC.OO Servicios**), Spain

We may find it hard to confront or report violence if we are alone and unsupported. When we do report it, sometimes we are ignored. When the culprit is the boss, or a union member, or a customer, this is even harder. Often the union does not effectively take up violence against women even when negotiating with bosses.

Many of us have come to accept it as a part of everyday life. But these dangers violate our human rights and we must condemn them.



What we say

“The legislation on discrimination, harassment and violence that exists in Russia has extremely low efficiency, there is virtually no practice of its application. This is topped up with low public awareness of such things as harassment and bullying, with perceptions of ‘victim’s guilt’ and, finally, with a tendency to attribute gender-based violence and harassment to ‘natural behavior’ or ‘tradition’. When people, including law enforcement and social protection officers, are confronted with cases of violence and harassment, they often choose to ignore them. Also, the victims themselves do not know what to do and who to ask for help.

When women are threatened at work the usual response of employers is to remove women from the dangerous job. But this is the wrong attitude to take. You cannot remove a woman from the job. You must make the job less dangerous.”

Masha Kurzina, IUF Eastern Europe and Central Asia Team

4.1 Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is sexually related behaviour that is unwanted, unwelcome, unreturned and offensive. It includes physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature or based on sex which creates an intimidating, hostile or humiliating environment for the victim.

Sexual harassment disproportionately affects women at work. It causes us discomfort, embarrassment, insecurity and fear. It affects our dignity and can negatively impact our health.

It includes:

- displays of offensive visual material;
- any insult, remark or inappropriate insinuation with a sexual connotation;
- a condescending attitude with sexual implications undermining a person’s dignity;
- an inappropriate sexual invitation or request, implicit or explicit, with or without threat;
- any gesture which has a sexual connotation;
- unnecessary and unwanted physical contact, such as touching, caressing or assault.

Regardless of how a perpetrator intends a gesture, if it impacts us as harassment, then it is harassment. What matters is the effect that the behaviour has on us.

It is displayed sexually, but it is an expression of power.

Most victims of sexual harassment are women because most people in powerful positions are men. Men take advantage of their powerful positions. Women tend to work in lower-paid and lower-status jobs where harassment is more common.

The most vulnerable include those of us who are:

- in precarious jobs, and so could lose our jobs if we report an abusive manager;
- in service jobs where we must be friendly to male customers who then abuse this;

- working on night shifts, overtime or in isolation, at risk both at work, and while travelling to and from work;
- migrant workers: ‘undocumented’ and with fewer legal protections, we can become dependent on our labour agent; we cannot appeal for protection from the authorities.

It can take place at work, and on our travels to and from work.

Often, we don’t report sexual harassment. Many of us are unaware of our rights. Sometimes we are threatened. We might be afraid that we will be punished or humiliated. But sexual harassment should not be taken lightly by anyone. It is **never** part of the job.

The #MeToo movement – the global movement against sexual harassment and sexual assault – has made visible the stories and experiences of women who have suffered from sexual harassment. It is an opportunity for unions to connect to the experiences of women in all workplaces and show all workers that the union is listening to them.



What we say

“Power relations and patriarchy mean that women are silenced, and the problem continues. Our employers must provide us with the ability to be safe both inside and outside the workplace. This includes transport, particularly those who work nightshifts...”

There was a case in South Africa where the manager didn’t provide the required transport as per the collective bargaining agreement and the woman had to organise her own transport home late at night. When she was waiting for the taxi to take her home, she was brutally raped. We must fight to make sure we are protected inside and outside the workplace.”

Patricia Nyman, National Gender Coordinator, South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union (**SACCAWU**), South Africa

Sexual harassment in the workplace is not a ‘women’s’ issue, or a ‘personal’ issue. It is a union issue, for everyone in the union. Encouraging our unions to take up sexual harassment is a strong signal to **all** women that the union is listening to us.



What we say

“If we don’t take sexual harassment seriously, people will just leave the union. On top of this, people won’t join. We need to make dealing with sexual harassment a fundamental union policy. We need our unions to develop training so we can prevent the problem and stop firefighting issues. Many women would rather leave their workplace rather than report a case of sexual harassment. This has got to change.”

Debi Bell, National Convenor & Vice Chair of IUF/EFFAT Women’s Committee, **Unite the Union**, UK



What we do

‘Draw the Line on Sexual Harassment’

The **Nordic Union for Workers in the Hotel, Restaurant, Catering and Tourism Sector (NUHRCT)** is campaigning to raise awareness of the extent of sexual harassment in their sectors and promote zero tolerance at the workplace. Using the slogan #notonthemenu workers are speaking out to create a zero-tolerance culture of harassment at work.

The **United Federation of Trade Unions (Fellesforbundet)** in Norway has also launched a campaign titled ‘Draw the Line!’ to increase knowledge of sexual harassment, its consequences and the responsibilities and rights of employers and employees. It has also launched free training sessions and a website providing training materials for workers and employers.

The union has identified six measures to prevent and deal with sexual harassment at work:

Action 1: Identify and assess risks

Action 2: Develop a code of conduct

Action 3: Design procedures for handling complaints

Action 4: Make sure inappropriate behaviour has consequences

Action 5: Designate a clear leadership responsibility for dealing with complaints.

Action 6: Talk about sexual harassment

<https://www.ido.no/settestrek>



What we say

“In Malawi especially, many women say that they have been harassed but they just don’t know where to report it. Sexual harassment often comes from someone using their power to take advantage of poverty. Powerful men, such as managers and supervisors, use their positions to harass women who want to have their contract renewed. These powerful men use sex to be part of the job. For many poor women, if they want to have their contracts renewed, they must have sex with the boss. This is particularly true when girls are working in precarious work. Bosses sleep with many girls. This also spreads HIV/Aids and worsens the cycle of poverty.”

Zione Leah Pakulantanda, Projects Officer, Hotel, Food Processing and Catering Workers Union (HFPCWU), Malawi

International Framework Agreements to Tackle Sexual Harassment

In response to IUF affiliates requests, the IUF has signed several joint agreements with transnational corporations to prevent sexual harassment at work.

It is now up to affiliates to implement them.

- French-based catering and services provider Sodexo
<https://iuf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/2017-Sodexo-IUF-Joint-Commitment-on-preventing-sexual-harassment.pdf>
- Banana company Chiquita
<https://iuf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/2013-Chiquita-Appendix-on-Sexual-Harassment.pdf>
- Spanish-based Melia Hotels International
<https://iuf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/2019-Melia-IUF-Joint-Commitment-on-preventing-sexual-harassment.pdf>
- Unilever (in collaboration with another global union federation IndustriALL)
<http://www.iuf.org/w/sites/default/files/2017%20No%20place%20for%20sexual%20harassment%20at%20Unilever.pdf>
- French-based hotel chain AccorInvest
<http://www.iuf.org/w/?q=node/7065>
- Danish dairy company Arla Foods
<https://iuf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/2019-Arla-IUF-agreement-to-fight-sexual-harassment.pdf>

Several affiliates have already started to do so. For example, in Italy (**Filcams-CGIL**, **Fisascat-CISL** and **UILTuCS**) and Finland (**PAM**) affiliates have signed agreements with the local management of Sodexo to implement the IUF joint commitment to prevent sexual harassment.



What we say

“Despite the existing progressive legislation in many of the Nordic countries, sexual harassment still happens in our workplaces. An explanation for this is the lack of application and enforcement of the laws that we already have in place.

So how can we make sure that the law actually stops sexual harassment in our workplaces in the future?

One solution to the problem is for employers to take responsibility for tackling sexual harassment. Employers have an important role in working locally with the issue and clearly showing their position.

With collective bargaining, employers and trade unions can work to remove sexual harassment from the workplace. This is a commitment that legislation – even very good legislation – alone can never give!”

Anja Westberg, National Officer, **Kommunal**, Sweden



What we do

'Hands Off Pants On'

In the United States, **UNITE HERE Local 1 in Chicago, Illinois**, represents many women of colour in the hospitality industry. The union has been fighting to address the harassment of workers in hotels and casinos in Chicago.

In 2016, the union carried out a survey of 487 hospitality workers. It revealed that 49% of housekeepers had experienced guests exposing themselves, flashing them, or answering the door naked, and 58% of hotel workers had had some experience of harassment by guests.

<https://www.handsoffpantson.org/wp-content/uploads/HandsOffReportWeb.pdf>

The union realised that this endemic and systemic problem needed addressing, and in 2016 launched the campaign 'Hands Off Pants On.'

The union, along with the Chicago Federation of Labour, held public meetings, lobbied City Council members and developed campaign materials, including a video. The campaign presented sexual harassment not just as a women's issue, but a labour issue and a health and safety issue.

<https://www.handsoffpantson.org/>

As a result of UNITE HERE Local 1 and the Chicago Federation of Labor's efforts, in 2017 Chicago City Council passed the 'Hands Off Pants On' ordinance to protect Chicago hotel workers from sexual harassment.

It legislated that:

1. All hotel employers must provide a panic button to workers cleaning alone in guest rooms and rest rooms;
2. All hotel employers must develop, maintain and comply with a written anti-sexual harassment policy;
3. Hotel workers are protected from retaliation when they report sexual violence by guests.

"An industry wide problem needed an industry wide solution. We needed to develop something that would protect both union and non-union workers in Chicago... The passing of the law was possibly because women in Chicago's hospitality industry spoke out and shared their stories and experiences.

As part of our implementation we held a training for shop stewards so that they knew what their rights were... The training embedded the campaign in broader questions of – where harassment comes from, how it harms us and how to check our own internal bias. We had 'know your rights' cards that we circulated. We also did standouts at bus stops to communicate with workers not yet part of the union. We also had a hotline for people to call. There has been an upsurge in calls to the new organising team, who can then provide help for people who may not know what the union is/does but want that panic button protection...

The momentum of the whole campaign has really grown. Seattle was the first to pass panic button legislation, followed by Chicago. Since then, the state of Illinois passed similar legislation to what Chicago did, but for both hotels and casinos throughout of the state. New Jersey also passed the panic button legislation and a number of other cities throughout the United States have passed similar measures."

Sarah Lyons, Research Analyst, **UNITE HERE Local 1**, Chicago, IL, USA

4.2 Safe at Home, Safe at Work

Domestic violence is a workplace issue. It may happen behind closed doors, but it has far reaching consequences for women.

When we experience domestic violence, our work suffers. We are less focused and often end up taking time off work. If employers are unaware or unsympathetic to our reasons for being late, absent or performing poorly, we risk losing our jobs.

This is disastrous. When we lose a job, we lose a way out.

But the workplace is an important location for unions to tackle gender-based violence:

- Job security and a living wage can help us to escape violence and be independent;
- Unions can be a 'safe place' for us to find support - they can help to recognise the signs of domestic violence and can educate the workplace;
- Unions can develop agreements to give practical measures for workers to stay in their jobs, including sick leave, flexible hours and monetary assistance;
- Unions can make sure that global agreements with companies with specific clauses on domestic violence are properly implemented.



What we do

Domestic Violence is a Union Issue

In **Canada**, the labour movement has successfully won support for survivors of domestic violence. All Canadian provinces now have a law that gives leave (paid and unpaid) for cases of domestic violence and the Canadian federal government has instituted amendments to the Canada Labour Code to include five days of paid domestic violence leave for workers in federally-regulated workplaces. This is an expansion of the already ten days of unpaid leave for workers experiencing domestic violence.

Debora De Angelis is the Ontario Regional Director and Chair of the Women and Gender Equity Committee at the **United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW)**, Canada. Her union has developed a guide for union members on negotiating for support for domestic violence.

“One in three workers have experienced domestic violence, and for many, the violence follows them to work... domestic violence is not a women’s issue...it’s a union issue! Negotiating language into collective agreements that protects these workers, is the value that unionisation brings to these members...”

http://www.ufcw.ca/templates/ufcwcanada/images/women/publications/Domestic-Violence-and-the-Workplace-A-Bargaining-Guide-EN_V4.pdf

In **Denmark**, 28,000 women a year suffer from domestic violence. The Danish trade union centre **3F** has also published a guide that gives practical steps to address domestic violence.

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“Some companies don’t see the sexual culture as a problem – many even think that it is all a joke. When the shop stewards raise the issue, companies are often not enthusiastic about change. We try to encourage cooperation to build understanding so shop stewards and employers can work together to change company culture – not only the way people act but the way they talk as well. Together with other trade unions we have formed equality networks in which shop stewards are able to come together, have discussions and debates and use theatre to explore the issues around violence. It also enables them to discuss how to deal with violence in the workplace.”

Susanne Fast Jensen, Equality and Diversity Consultant, Fagligt Fælles Forbund (3F), Denmark

<http://fiu-ligestilling.dk/wp-content/uploads/0ddb5c87cae68ec0b831035cc9aa8886.pdf>



What we do

“We need to build up the struggle to win.”

Angela McCarthy is a Regional Organiser for the **Australian Manufacturing Workers’ Union (AMWU)**. She recognises that domestic violence is a widespread problem in Australia. Her union has signed an agreement with multinational food company **McCain** which includes a domestic violence clause. **Angela** says:

“The agreement gives 5 days of paid leave for dealing with family and domestic violence and covers full, part time and casual employees. It also gives further paid leave and flexible working arrangements on a case by case basis. McCain is a strong site in terms of union power. This is a key reason that we were able to eventually win. Workers had already organised on the issue, which meant that we already had a good standing. So, when we asked them to go further and provide paid leave, it was not a big struggle. Building union power is important. We need to build up the struggle to win.”



What we do

Safe at Home, Safe at Work

The problem of gender-based violence in Russia is huge. 40% of violent crimes are committed in the family. 93% of the victims are women. There is a high tolerance of gender-based violence in society. The typical reaction is victim blaming.

In Russia, with the support of the **Swedish Municipal Workers' Union (Kommunal)**, the **Agro-Industrial Workers Union of Russia (AIWU)** and the Interregional Trade Union **Noxye Profsoyzu (NOVOPROF)** have developed a worker-led project to tackle violence against women. The project 'Safe at Home, Safe at Work' aims to empower women through education and challenge attitudes towards violence. It is developing model agreements to implement the international commitments to tackle violence and is encouraging open discussion about the violence that women face.

The **AIWU** carried out a survey of 255 women workers of food and agriculture enterprises in the town of **Timashevsk** in the Southern Russia to identify the violence that women face. It revealed:

- Over half of respondents have faced psychological, physical, sexual and financial violence, and harassment ever in their life;
- Most violence takes place at home or in the family;
- Most women receive no psychological support or other assistance at all;
- Women seek financial support, additional paid leave, and shelter, but very few seek punishment of an abuser.

Male and female union activists from **NOVOPROF** from Unilever Inmarko came together to develop collective bargaining proposals on violence and harassment. They also developed a roadmap to implement the agreement against sexual harassment between Unilever-IUF-IndustriALL. The workshop gave men and women a better understanding of wage inequality and power relations as a factor of gender-based violence and why it needs to be tackled.

In 2019, the project held an open public seminar 'Safety and Freedom from Violence' in Timashevsk. It attracted 115 participants – local union activists across the sectors, with local media, experts and authorities also attending. The project has improved public awareness of violence against women.

“The project has been a very successful organising tool to encourage more women to join unions as well as to mobilise and empower existing members. At the start of the project many women were listening but not engaging. By the end of the first project period, we saw women starting to speak about home and workplace violence – there was a clear change in attitude. They now recognise that discrimination exists. Women always do what the man says, but... it should not be like this. We need to do awareness raising so that we can change the attitudes of both men and women.”

Marina Mospaneko, Agro-Industrial Workers' Union of the Russian Federation (**AIWU**) Russia



ILO Convention on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work

Astonishingly, sexual harassment is not illegal in many countries. Plus, until very recently, there was no international standard categorically addressing violence and harassment in the world of work.

But thanks to the considerable efforts of committed trade unionists, the International Labour Conference in 2019 finally passed ground-breaking **Convention 190 (C190)** and accompanying **Recommendation 206 (R206)** to tackle violence and harassment in the world of work. The adoption of these instruments is the victory of trade unions and women workers and is a powerful tool for us to use.

The Convention recognises violence and harassment in the world of work as a human rights violation that threatens equality. It gives a clear message: **we all have the right to work free from violence and harassment and violence at the workplace is no longer tolerated.**

- It takes an inclusive approach, protecting all workers – formal and informal, and it covers the world of work, which is wider reaching than just the workplace.
- Importantly, it explicitly states that the safe environment is up to the employer to provide.
- It recognises the important role of collective bargaining in adopting and implementing gender-responsive approaches to address violence and harassment.

The Convention directly addresses the concerns of many IUF sectors, recognising:

- We all have the right to be protected from violence and harassment by ‘third parties’, including clients, customers and service providers.
- Those of us working in isolated environments like plantations and the hospitality sector are more exposed to violence and harassment.
- The impact of domestic violence on the world of work should be addressed.

R206 compels employers to work with unions to evaluate risks at work and suggests measures and policies that trade unions can negotiate with their employers.

Even if our governments have not yet ratified it, we can use the language of the Convention as well as the language of the Recommendation in our negotiations.



What we do

Putting the Convention into Action

In Zimbabwe, two sexual harassment cases were reported to the **Federation of Food and Allied Workers Unions of Zimbabwe (FFAWUZ)** from a food processing company. Two women had been verbally abused and physically sexually harassed. The male perpetrator had said inappropriate things and touched them inappropriately.

The women reported the case to management, who ignored them.

The women then reported the case to the union which wrote to the company, using the language of the **ILO Convention C190 on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work**. The union stated that harassment in the world of work constitutes a human rights violation and emphasised the company's responsibility to promote an environment of zero tolerance.

After this, a hearing was held, and the perpetrator was found guilty and was dismissed from work.



What WE can do

- **Support women into senior negotiating positions** which will increase the likelihood that violence against women and sexual harassment are included in bargaining agendas.
- **Adopt and implement a policy against sexual harassment in negotiating agreements;** this includes definitions and a programme of action and fair and safe complaints procedures.
- **Negotiate for support for domestic violence survivors in collective bargaining agreements:** unions can also provide support services of their own, including counselling.
- **Encourage men – especially male leaders – to step up and speak out:** this can help to change the culture and encourage a zero-tolerance approach to violence.
- **Make sure that the union's constitutions have guarantees against sexual harassment;** unions need their own internal policy to fight sexual harassment within the organisation.
- **Provide training:** establish self-defence classes and sexual harassment/domestic abuse training in the union to improve public awareness.
- **International Agreements negotiated by the IUF can set the framework for negotiations;** trade unions must now implement these at the local level.
- **Produce guidance and train representatives** to negotiate policies to tackle violence, sexual harassment and domestic violence; translate this into local languages.
- **Lobby governments to ratify C190;** negotiate clauses in CBAs using the language of the text; building alliances with civil society and NGOs can help too.
- **Lobby government to legislate paid leave for domestic violence survivors.**



ARGUMENTS TO USE

- ▶ Sexual harassment is not a ‘personal’ issue; nor is it a ‘women’s’ issue; it is abuse and should not be tolerated. Combating it is about the right of all workers to be free from harassment, and so it is a union issue.
- ▶ When unions don’t take harassment seriously, they send a message to women that the union is not the place for them. This discourages women from joining and becoming active.
- ▶ Domestic abuse is not a women’s issue – it is an issue for all of us. What happens in the home affects all of us in society. Recognising and identifying the signs of domestic violence, providing support and practical measures to enable workers to keep their jobs can save lives.
- ▶ Violence at work is bad for business. Women are more efficient when we are safe!



Key Resources

Addressing violence and harassment against women in the world of work (UN, 2019)

Emerging good practices to address violence and harassment in the world of work.

<https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2019/addressing-violence-and-harassment-against-women-in-the-world-of-work-en.pdf?la=en&vs=4050>

Violence and Harassment Against Women and Men in the World of Work (ILO, 2017)

Trade Union Perspectives and Action

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-ed_dialogue/-actrav/documents/publication/wcms_546645.pdf

International Labour Conference – C190 + R206 (ILO, 2019)

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-ed_norm/-relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_711570.pdf

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-ed_norm/-relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_711575.pdf

Safe at home, Safe at work. Trade union strategies to prevent, manage and eliminate work-place harassment and violence against women (ETUC, 2017)

https://www.etuc.org/sites/default/files/document/files/brochure_-_safe_at_home_-_en_5_0.pdf

IUF, UNI, IDWF, IndustriALL, IFJ and PSI Common Campaign and Leaflet on C190 & R206

<https://www.iuf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/ilo190flyer-e.pdf>

Breaking the silence - why domestic violence is a trade union issue (IUF resource)

<https://www.iuf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Breaking-the-silence-Domestic-violence-a-workplace-and-union-issue.pdf>



5.

A Gender Approach to Health and Safety in the Workplace

Women and men tend to carry out very different jobs. This means that we are exposed to different hazards at work. Both gender – the characteristics of women and men created by society – and sex – the characteristics that are biologically determined – affect occupational health and safety. But too often, these differences are ignored.

Gender-stereotyped views mean that the work we carry out is often wrongly presumed to be safer and easier than work carried out by men.

But, while men do suffer more accidents at work, we often work in more physically repetitive sectors – especially in agriculture, domestic work and manufacturing. These can negatively impact our health.

Also, we more commonly work in informal and precarious jobs, with fewer protections. So the risks we face are bigger. As well as this, many of us have less access to health and safety training.

For example, agriculture – where women are the majority of workers – is one of the most dangerous sectors. Farm and plantation workers run risks particularly from chemical pesticides and heavy machinery.

Trade unions work tirelessly to make workplaces a safer and healthier environment for all workers. But too often, women’s occupational health and safety (OHS) needs are ignored. OHS research largely defines the human subject as a man.

ILO Convention No. 155 on Occupational Safety and Health (1981) aims to prevent accidents and injury to health linked with work. It applies to all workers, whatever their employment status. It has been ratified by only 68 countries.

ILO Convention No. 187 concerning the promotional framework for occupational safety and health (2006) encourages the development of national occupational safety and health programmes focused on national priorities.

ILO Convention No. 161 on Occupational Health Services (1985) provides for the establishment of occupational health services to advise employers, the workers and their representatives in maintaining a healthy and safe working environment.

UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (1979) Article 12 states that parties must ‘take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of healthcare in order to ensure... access to health care services, including those related to family planning.’

5.1 Safety in the Workplace

We all have the right to be protected at work.

But existing safety standards have generally been developed by men for men. This includes those for length of arms or legs (ergonomics), muscle strength for using equipment, risk of chemical exposure, and the fitting of personal protective equipment (PPE). This 'one size fits all' approach is dangerous for women. Tools and equipment traditionally designed for the male body size and shape mean lower protection for women. When we work in traditionally 'male' professions, we are put at risk from inappropriately designed tools.

In most health and safety legislation, there is no distinction between men and women.

Our employers often use the behaviour-based safety approach to make us responsible for our own OHS. But this is wrong. OHS protection is up to the employer to provide.

ILO Convention No. 184 (2001) on Safety and Health in Agriculture

Article 18 states that measures should be taken to ensure that the special needs of women agricultural workers are considered in relation to pregnancy, breastfeeding and reproductive health including,

- Risk assessments on equipment, chemicals and work activities;
- The right of workers to be consulted, to have safety representatives, and to remove themselves from danger without victimisation;
- Accommodation standards, which is important for the security of women against sexual harassment.

This includes seasonal and temporary workers.

ILO Recommendation No.192 (2001) on Safety and Health in Agriculture

Paragraph 10 states that employers should provide:

- Facilities for eating meals, and for nursing children in the workplace;
- Separate sanitary and washing facilities, for men and women workers.

Paragraph 11 states that measures should be taken to ensure assessment of any workplace risks related to the safety and health of pregnant or nursing women, and women's reproductive health.

5.2 Physical Well-being

Our health is very important to us. But many of us suffer from disease and illness because of the jobs that we do and the conditions that we are forced to work in.

Repetitive work in manufacturing and office work, and prolonged standing in the hospitality and service sector and in flower pack houses, can lead to musculoskeletal disorders. Discriminatory attitudes mean that in some jobs, women are often also required to wear high heels. This adds to the risk.

As companies compete, production lines get faster. We are required to repeat the same tasks. Using the same parts of our bodies thousands of times a day, we suffer aches and pains. Soon this pain becomes crippling. When we must use tools and equipment not properly designed for us, this makes it worse.

Many of us are not able to rest properly, because of our double burden of work – in the workplace and in the home. Our different hormone levels mean that we are impacted differently to men. Many of us end up with osteoporosis, some even permanently disabled and unable to work.

This devastates our lives.

Our ability to bear children is also vulnerable when we are exposed to extreme cold and heat and chemical toxins. Because we tend to be smaller than men, have different biology, hormone cycles and the surface of our skin is thinner, we have a lower resistance to toxins and other dangerous substances. This can lead to problems with our menstrual cycles and fertility.

But these issues are rarely properly addressed as OHS issues. Our occupational accidents and diseases are also less likely to be taken seriously by health and safety inspectors and our claims for compensation are less likely to be accepted.



What we do

Fighting for the Dignity of Hotel Housekeepers

Comisiones Obreras Servicios (CC.OO Servicios) and Federación Estatal de Servicios, Movilidad y Consumo de la Unión General de Trabajadores (FeSMC-UGT), who organise workers in the Spanish tourism sector, have been campaigning to improve the working conditions and health and safety problems affecting hotel housekeepers.

As a result of their long fight, in 2018 the employment quality body in the Spanish hospitality sector – which brings together employers, unions and governments – recognised a group of pathologies specifically affecting hotel housekeepers as occupational diseases.

The agreement reached recognises specific pathologies caused by the repetitive movements of housekeepers at work. This includes conditions of the hand, wrist, elbow, forearm and shoulder.

Diseases including Carpal tunnel syndrome, De Quervain’s tenosynovitis, stenosing tenosynovitis (‘trigger finger’), epicondylitis (‘tennis elbow’), epitrocleitis (‘golfer’s elbow’), and chronic bursitis are now formally recognised as occupational diseases of housekeepers.

This is a breakthrough for health and safety in the hospitality sector, particularly for hotel workers, whose dignity **FeSMC-UGT** and **CC.OO** have long been fighting hard to defend.



What we do

Mapping Workplace Hazards

Building everyone’s awareness of health and safety – women, men, workers and managers – is one of the most effective ways to address women’s specific OHS concerns. It can also help to recruit more women into the union.

Mapping workplace hazards can enable us to use our own experiences to identify issues and raise awareness. It can be a fun way to encourage workers to develop strategies to improve health and safety on the job.

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First, we can map what health problems we are suffering from by **Body Mapping**:

- On a sheet of paper make an outline of the front and back of a body;
- Organise participants into groups by gender, age, job, seniority;
- Use different colours to mark on the body the different types of symptoms.

Then, we can identify the causes of these problems by **Hazard/Workplace Mapping**:

- Draw the layout of the work area, including doors, windows, washrooms, desks, machinery and equipment;
- Mark where hazards exist (divide this into safety, physical sources, chemical, biological, ergonomic, psychosocial risks).

By identifying the problems and their causes, workers can improve their knowledge, become empowered and realise that they are not alone. Mapping is also a very useful tool where workers speak different languages or cannot read very well.

Carrying out body mapping can highlight the responsibility of the employer – rather than the employee - to make the workplace safe.

“By letting people talk about their own health and safety issues through body mapping, it is fun and informative in its delivery. It is a great way for them to learn, but we also learn about their problems. Drawing speaks more than words and it also brings out the subtle issues, so that we can reach as many women as possible. Organising around health and safety is also a recruitment tool. It can encourage more women to participate in the trade union activities.”

Adwoa Sakyi, IUF Africa Regional Women’s Project Coordinator



What we say

“We carried out an OHS audit and we found out that many women who were pregnant experienced miscarriages. This was a rampant problem. So, we knew we had to do take action about it.

We tried to look for the root cause and we found out pregnant women were made to lift heavy loads as part of their work. They were working in very hot rooms where the company dried milk. Also, to cut down cost, the company had gotten rid of shifts forcing pregnant women to work while sitting down for long hours with lunch break. This meant that many of them got backache and swollen legs – which is really big problem during pregnancy. We used body mapping to identify the problems in the body depending on the department.”

Rebecca Muthoki Mutua, Gender Officer, Kenya Union of Commercial, Food and Allied Workers (KUCFAW), Kenya



5.3 Stress and Mental Health

Stress often affects women more than men. This is because of our double burden of work demands and our larger load of caring responsibilities which mean that we are more likely to remain stressed after work. This is particularly true when we have children, the sick and elderly to look after.

We often work in professions that have a higher risk of stress and burnout. When we have to deal with clients and customers, we are more exposed to the risk of harassment.

We are facing greater pressures to meet the demands of modern working life. Increased competition, higher expectations and longer working hours all make our work environment more stressful. Many of us are experiencing precarious and informal work, reduced opportunities, loss of jobs and financial instability.

These can all seriously affect our mental well-being.

Although there is no specific international statute dealing with stress at work, it should fall under the general responsibility of safety at work. Because the workplace is a great place to raise awareness about our mental health difficulties, unions can negotiate to encourage employers to put effective workplace health and safety policies in place to prevent stress.



What we do

Battling the Stigma of Mental Health

Unions can negotiate for provisions in their collective bargaining agreements to give workers access to free or reduced cost mental health care providers including counsellors, psychologists, and psychiatrist, as well as prescription medicine for treating mental health problems.

In the UK, **Unite the Union** has recognised that stress and mental health affects us all – union members, family, friends and colleagues. The true scale of mental health issues in the workplace has been masked by workers who are reluctant to admit their problems due to shame and isolation.

But these issues should not be ignored.

To make mental health concerns more visible for workers, the union has been developing initiatives to support union members to deal with mental health.

The union is giving worker representatives and negotiators tools and guidance to help them support workers to reduce and prevent stress and promote good mental health.

It has also developed educational courses for union representatives on Mental Health Awareness and Mental Health First Aid to increase awareness about mental health issues.



5.4 Menstruation and Menopause

Menstruation is vaginal bleeding that occurs as part of our monthly reproductive cycle.

Absent, heavy or painful menstrual periods can cause discomfort, fatigue and concern. We find this difficult. We may be unable to carry out our jobs effectively or we may miss work. In many countries, sanitary products are taxed as a luxury product making them expensive and for many of us inaccessible.

To manage menstruation, we need access to menstrual hygiene materials, safe and clean water and sanitation facilities, and an understanding environment. But too often, we

lack the services needed. This is made worse by poverty.

Ignorance means that often we suffer from discrimination. In some cultures, when we menstruate, we are seen as 'unclean.' We are forbidden to attend school or work. We come to feel ashamed. We are excluded and become isolated.

Many of us work informally where there is no legal obligation to provide proper sanitation facilities. Where obligations do exist, they are often not enforced. Many of us lack the power to fight for sanitation facilities. But **promoting menstrual hygiene is vital for improving gender equality.**



[See also Section 2 Chapter 7]



What we say

“On the farms we need to have soap, have something to eat. But the tenant’s family doesn’t give us that. When a woman gets her period – we don’t have soap to deal with it.”

Regina Ledson, Vice-President and Women’s Rights Coordinator, Tobacco and Allied Workers Union of Malawi (**TOAWUM**), Malawi

Menopause is when we stop having periods. This usually happens after the age of 45 and lasts up to 8 years. The ageing workforce means that more menopausal women are working.

Menopause brings physical and emotional changes to the body which can deeply affect us.

We experience hot flushes, fatigue, poor concentration and irritability. These changes can affect how we do our work. They can also change our work relationships. They can even change our reaction to chemical exposure and toxins.



What we say

“Menopause is often seen as a joke. When women reach the age of 50, they start to have different symptoms from the menopause. Many do not feel well, have hot flushes and their mood changes. However, too often people make jokes about women being ‘grumpy’. But this is a biological change and making jokes about it is ageist discrimination.”

Patricia Nyman, National Gender Coordinator, South Africa Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union (**SACCAWU**), South Africa

Our menstrual lives need special consideration. They are occupational health issues and must be taken up by unions. Workplaces need a gender inclusive approach to health and safety. We all have the right to clean, secure and suitable sanitation facilities at work.



What we say

Tackling Period Poverty

In Zimbabwe, many women are extremely poor with no money to buy proper sanitary products. Cultural taboos – particularly in rural areas – mean women may feel unable to talk about their periods.

Since 2018, with support from the **Swedish Municipal Workers Union Kommunal**, the **General Agriculture and Plantation Workers’ Union of Zimbabwe (GAPWUZ)** has been providing its union members with sanitary pads to tackle period poverty among working women. The union has also used this as an organising tool to recruit more women.

“Many of our union members work hand to mouth. They cannot afford even the most basic things like sanitary pads. Often women must use newspapers or old rags instead. This can lead to many infections. They are not sanitary and are not proper products. So, we have started to provide sanitary products to union members.”

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We have used this as a recruitment tool. We give sanitary pads to our women committee who go out and show women this practical benefit of the union. Women often know that we negotiate for better salaries and conditions, but they don't care about this, they want to see the practical benefits of the union. When they see other members of the union receiving sanitary pads, they realised that as they are not union members, they will not benefit from this. This encourages them to join. When they saw what the union was providing, women queued up to join."

Juliet Sithole, Gender Coordinator, General Agriculture and Plantation Workers' Union of Zimbabwe (**GAPWUZ**), Zimbabwe



What we do

Demanding Period Dignity

Having a period is natural and should not be a source of awkwardness for anyone.

In the UK, **Unite the Union** is demanding period dignity for women and girls. The union is fighting for period dignity by demanding for women and girls to be able to access sanitary products and have a positive period. The union is campaigning to change perceptions to tackle the wider gender inequalities issues around menstruation.

Through the campaign **Unite the Union** is hoping to:

1. Change negative attitudes towards periods;
2. Encourage employers and places of education to provide sanitary products;
3. Remove the tax on tampons and other sanitary products.

5.5 Water and Sanitation

Access to clean water and sanitation is a basic human right. But every day many of us struggle to access the clean water and sanitation that we need. This affects our health and well-being.

Often, we are the ones responsible for collecting water. But, as climate change makes water scarce, we must travel further. We spend our time collecting water rather than going to school or work.

For some of us, our workplaces do not give us adequate sanitation facilities. We work in informal and precarious jobs where conditions are worse and legal requirements are minimal. This makes managing menstruation and using the toilet difficult and means that we often miss work.

- Without safe facilities, many of us wait until night to relieve ourselves, making us vulnerable to violence;
- When we delay using the bathroom, we suffer from infections and constipation;
- Without access to toilets, we eat and drink less. We become malnourished;
- When we carry heavy loads of water, we get neck and back problems;

To improve our standard of living, we need the union to negotiate for better water, sanitation and hygiene facilities for all workers.

UN General Assembly Resolution 64/292 recognises the human right to water and sanitation and acknowledges that clean water and sanitation are essential for the fulfilment of all human rights.

The **Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has adopted General Comment No. 15** state that ‘The human right to water is indispensable for leading a life in human dignity.’

ILO Convention No. 110 on Plantations (1958)

Article 86 establishes minimum standards for plantation housing that cover water supply and sanitary facilities.

The **ILO’s Code of Practice on Safety and Health in Agriculture (2011)** contains important recommendations on the provision of safe water and sanitary facilities.

ILO Convention No. 184 on Safety and Health in Agriculture (2001) and accompanying Recommendation No.192 call for employers to provide adequate welfare facilities including a supply to safe drinking water.



What we do

‘Clean, Safe, Sufficient’

In India, many women who pluck tea leaves on plantations have limited access to water and sanitation facilities. They often have to queue for several hours to collect water. The open water taps, tanks and drainage at work and in the housing areas are breeding grounds for mosquitos which carry diseases.

In Assam and West Bengal, women have launched a water and sanitation campaign across nine tea plantations to demand better rights to water and sanitation. They have formed Water and Sanitation Committees and have been holding meetings and rallies to highlight their lack of access. The Committees have also mapped the water and sanitation facilities in the plantations as an organising tool to demand their rights.

On the Nowera Nuddy tea estate in West Bengal, the 11-member all women **Water and Sanitation Committee** has surveyed households, mapped taps, pumps, toilets and their conditions, and identified where repairs and new taps, pumps and toilets were needed.

This mapping formed the basis of their demands to the companies that own the tea estate. The committees demanded investment in facilities and for the companies to ensure their access to the human right to water and sanitation. As part of their work, the Committee has also launched a campaign targeting **Tata’s Tetley** tea company. It is demanding the rights to water and sanitation of tea plantation workers.

Through the campaign, women workers have collectively self-organised, approached management for negotiations, and expressed their demands in terms of their human rights. Working in a patriarchal culture, the women have become empowered to represent their own concerns to the global management.

As a result of the campaign, more women workers in tea plantations in Assam and West Bengal have a greater awareness of their human right to water and sanitation, to a living wage, and to housing. The committees have made huge progress in improving gender equality.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has further shown the risks that poor water and sanitation facilities poses. Without adequate facilities, workers on the tea plantations are at a heightened risk from the virus.

The water and sanitation committees have been fighting to secure the water they need to protect tea workers and their families from the virus. The committees have been raising awareness of the virus, fighting for quarantine facilities for workers returning to the plantation, and for water and soap facilities in plantations, factories, and worker housing.

<https://www.iuf.org/news/india-women-s-water-and-sanitation-committees-fight-to-secure-water-facilities-on-tea-plantations/>

5.6 Pregnancy

Having healthy children is important for many of us. But employers often put it at risk. Our health as new and expectant mothers is affected by long hours, shift and night work, and exposure to chemicals and extreme temperatures.

Our exposure to biological agents puts us at extreme risk. Those of us working in agriculture are often exposed to toxic chemicals. The effects can be disastrous, leading to miscarriage, premature births, malformed babies, contaminated breast milk, as well as cancer and lung and skin diseases.

When we undertake strenuous activities such as manual work while pregnant, we put our babies at risk. It hurts our back, which is already under strain during pregnancy. This can be linked to miscarriages. Many of us also suffer from stress and post-natal depression.

Our employers need to protect us and our children by doing proper risk assessments which take our gender into account.



What we say

“If I am pregnant, I work until the day of the birth. Only a week or even a few days after the birth I will go back to the fields.”

Regina Ledson, Vice-President and Women’s Rights Coordinator, Tobacco and Allied Workers Union of Malawi (**TOAWUM**), Malawi



What we do

Improving the Health of Expectant Mothers

The **Uganda Hotels, Food, Tourism, Supermarkets and Allied Workers Union (HTS-Union)** has been carrying out awareness raising training on gender-related occupational safety and health in the workplace and has encouraged union members to negotiate for better OHS protection for women.

At the food processing company **Metaplus Limited**, pregnant women were expected to work through the day without rest. Many of them also had to work at night.

As a result of the training and awareness raising activities, union members have signed a collective agreement that provides better health protection for women in pregnancy and maternity. The agreement states:

- Women who are more than six months pregnant will not work night shifts;
- Women can take paid days off work to attend prenatal and postnatal care;
- Management must provide conditions and facilities for breastfeeding;
- Women with babies under one year, should have the option not to work a night shift;
- It also includes a zero-tolerance policy on sexual harassment.

The agreement is improving gender equality within the company. The specific occupational needs of mothers are finally being met, and the risks to their health and safety removed.

5.7 HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS affects women disproportionately.

- Biologically, we are more susceptible to the disease;
- We have less power over our own bodies and lives than men;
- We are more at risk from sexual violence which increases the risk of us becoming infected;
- We also bear more of the financial and caring burden in looking after the sick;
- In many countries, we have less access to medical care to treat the symptoms;
- We may be discriminated against at work due to the stigma attached to the disease, even dismissed from work. This can cause isolation and stress.

HIV/AIDS is feared by all workers. It is also of great concern to employers. Open discussions can remove shame and encourage tolerance. It can bring people together to share solutions.

But it cannot be tackled unless sexual behaviour and power relations are also addressed in union activities. Unions can negotiate with employers to provide support for those affected.



What we do

“There is no shame in having HIV...”

The HIV/AIDS epidemic in Ukraine is one of the fastest growing in the world.

The **Women’s Committee of the Agro-Industrial Workers’ Union of Ukraine (AIWU)** jointly with ILO Project Coordinator on HIV in the World of Work in Ukraine and IUF Coordinator in Ukraine has been raising awareness and tackling negative attitudes about the disease. In 2019-2020 the union held workshops focusing on gender inequality, workplace discrimination and HIV/Aids.

“Before the meeting, we distributed questionnaires asking people what they knew about HIV. Most answered ‘I don’t know’ to the questions. We then carried out awareness raising activities to inform participants about the disease and showed how it can affect people. After the workshop, most respondents answered ‘yes’ to the same questions. The workshops also helped to change perceptions. The workshops also helped to change the perception of the problem and of people living and working with HIV.

What we tried to show is that there is no shame in having HIV/AIDS, it is an everyday problem for many people, and we must remove the stigma attached to it. People do not know that someone can become infected with HIV / AIDS without even foreseeing it and that a person can live and work with this disease. This means that all people need to be provided with work and with good conditions of work. We used to just distribute leaflets on HIV/Aids but now we dedicate more time to it. We understand that young people must know about it – not only so they can protect themselves, but also so that we can change people’s attitudes and give everyone good conditions at work. The availability of information and an increase in the number of informed people who can explain to others about everything related to the acquisition, spread and prevention of the virus are also helpful. This means that there is less fear about those who are HIV positive.”

Nadia Burlaka, Agro-Industrial Workers Union of Ukraine (AIWU), Ukraine



What we do

“Those who are HIV positive should not be discriminated against...”

The **Syndicat national des travailleurs de l’environnement, du tourisme et de l’hôtellerie (SYNTETH)** in Burkina Faso has been raising awareness of women’s health and safety. **Assétou Esperance Dabiré-Traoré** is the Women’s Officer and is the National Coordinator of the IUF Women’s Project in Burkina Faso:

“A member of our union was excluded from her work at a bakery because all her colleagues thought that she was HIV positive. So, our union organised a training on HIV/Aids that explained what the disease was and emphasised that those who are HIV positive should not be discriminated against.

The union, with the collaboration of the hospital, also organised a blood test and the woman discovered that she was not HIV positive. We explained that you should not discriminate against people with HIV. Many people do not realise that it is not such an infectious disease as many people think. Those living with HIV, you can still shake their hands, share a meal with them and you will not be affected. People aren’t informed. As a union we must fight against all discrimination.”

5.8 Women Workers and the Pandemic Crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic is causing extreme hardship on those working in IUF sectors – particularly women. Industries are collapsing and workers are being plunged into poverty overnight.

Women’s lives are being disproportionately affected. Women are the majority on the frontline of the pandemic response.

Agriculture, beverage, and food processing workers are facing greater pressure to keep the world fed. Work previously labelled ‘low-skilled’ is now considered essential.

At the same time, female dominated sectors - already in a precarious position - are facing greater pressure. The hotel, restaurant, catering, and tourism industries have been brought to a complete standstill. Some parts of the sector are near collapse, affecting the livelihoods of millions of workers and their families.

Domestic workers providing essential care are facing increased vulnerability due to a lack of social protection. Global travel restrictions are further threatening female migrant workers.

The pandemic and its subsequent crisis have increased inequalities and inequalities exacerbate the crisis:

- Women are facing an increased double burden with more pressure at work and additional care work at home with children out of school and ill relatives to look after.
- There has been a huge increase in gender-based violence including domestic violence, sexual harassment, and violence against frontline workers.
- With public services under more pressure, women and girls are finding it harder to access reproductive health services.
- Already overrepresented in the most precarious jobs with low pay, limited flexibility, and little social protection, women will be the first to lose their jobs.
- The needs of women will only increase when the crisis is over.

The lives of women and girls must be at the centre of response and recovery efforts.

Trade Unions Fight to Protect Workers

Trade unions have been fighting to safeguard jobs and ensure the health of workers is protected.



What we do

In Colombia, the **Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Industria Agropecuaria (SINTRAINAGRO)** has negotiated COVID-19 support and health and safety protection measures for 22,000 banana workers.

At the start of the pandemic, the union signed an agreement with the employer’s association **AUGURA**. The agreement included provisions for providing workers with personal hygiene facilities and safe distancing in work transport. It also included measures such as monitoring workers temperatures, staggered meal provision and canteen hygiene.

Under the agreement, workers with pre-existing medical conditions and those aged over 65 were excused from work during the government lockdown. All workers were eligible, no matter their employment contract. Workers continued to receive the basic salary plus an 8% supplement.



What we do

In Burkina Faso, the **IUF Women's Committee** has collaborated with a national personal product company for several years to teach women working in the informal economy how to make soap.

During the pandemic, the women have been using this knowledge to provide health and safety products for IUF members. The women have been making liquid soap in containers for distribution to IUF members in workplaces and offices.

The IUF Coordination Committee organised for the soap to be distributed in the capital city of Ouagadougou, alongside disinfectant and locally designed face masks.

They have also used this as an awareness raising exercise. The containers included information about COVID-19. Working with local civil society



organisations, they have also been informing members about how to protect themselves, their families and their communities – both at work and at home. **Similar initiatives have taken place in Niger, Togo, Senegal, Benin, Mali, Ivory Coast.**



What we do

In Tanzania, Kenya, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Benin, Burkina Faso, and Nigeria, IUF Women's Committees launched awareness campaigns through the media and social networks focused on tackling violence against women, including domestic violence.

In Zimbabwe, the **Federation of Food and Allied Workers' Union Zimbabwe (FFAWUZ)** produced a video which was circulated on social media. The video highlighted the challenges facing women during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their challenges varied from transport challenges, the rise of food prices, gender-based violence and domestic violence. Several companies are now responding to the issues that were raised in the campaign. For example, Cairns Foods secured transport to and from work for its workers.

The unions have also managed to recruit more members during the COVID-19 pandemic.



What we do

At the outbreak of the pandemic, IUF affiliates in the Asia Pacific region launched education and awareness campaigns, playing an important role in the fight against COVID-19

In the fishing community in General Santos in the Philippines, the campaign helped to raise awareness and empower women workers. 1550 face masks were sewed and distributed together with 1000 copies of education posters.

In Pakistan, to support the livelihoods of **Sindh Nari Porhyat Council (SNPC)** members and raise awareness about the risk of COVID-19, women workers made and distributed 1000 masks to workers and their communities.

<https://iufap.blog/supporting-the-most-vulnerable-workers-and-their-communities-in-the-covid-19-crisis/>



What WE can do

- **Collect data on occupational health for women and men to help identify gender specific problems and help us negotiate;** when we act together, employers are more likely to listen.
- **Make sure that all women’s health needs are covered in collective bargaining agreements;** including facilities for breastfeeding, sickness absence policies (for menopause, miscarriage, pregnancy, menstruation, osteoporosis), and access to sanitation facilities.
- **Include gender-based workplace violence as a health and safety issue.**
- **Negotiate paid leave for painful menstruation in CBAs.**

- **Consider gender differences in risk assessments and when providing uniform and protective equipment** – one size does not fit all!
- **Make sure your union has a gender-sensitive approach to health and safety matters;** provide information, instruction and training on OHS and gender and encourage reporting of occupational injuries and ill health by all workers.
- **Negotiate for access to water and sanitation in collective agreements with employers.**
- **Campaign to combat the idea that women’s work is light and harmless.**
- **Campaign to break the taboo** around periods and remove taxes on sanitary products.
- **Lobby governments to implement the UN Resolution on the Right to Water and Sanitation.**



ARGUMENTS TO USE

- ▶ It is a myth that it is only men who do the dirty and dangerous jobs; women work on high-speed production lines which cause Repetitive Strain Injuries (RSI); women’s reproductive capacity is at risk from chemicals used in agriculture; and women are more likely to be on ‘precarious’ employment contracts with less protection.
- ▶ Chemicals and high temperatures can impact on men’s health too! It can affect their reproductive systems and can cause serious illnesses like cancer. More activities by and for women workers on health and safety at work could encourage more men to take these issues up for themselves.
- ▶ Dangers to workers are linked to dangers to the public and the environment. Safe food requires safe working conditions.
- ▶ A gender-neutral approach to health and safety in the workplace is dangerous for women. Women must be involved in decision-making about their health.
- ▶ Menstruating and menopause are normal and part of a woman’s life cycle; they should not be taboo; menstruation is only blood!
- ▶ Women and girls with good health are more likely to attend work – they can provide for their families and end the cycle of poverty. Stopping women attending work when they menstruate leads to huge losses for workplaces, the public and financially for us!
- ▶ Menstruation impacts our working lives – it is therefore a trade union issue. We all have a responsibility to support women who are menstruating!
- ▶ We all deserve equal work opportunities – and with this comes equal working conditions and appropriate sanitation conditions.
- ▶ It is the employers’ responsibility to make the workplace safe – behaviour-based safety is wrong.
- ▶ Access to clean water can help people practice better hygiene.



Key Resources

ILO: 10 keys for gender sensitive OSH practice (ILO, 2013)

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-ed_protect/-protrav/-safework/documents/publication/wcms_324653.pdf

Making Women Visible in Occupational Safety and Health (IUF, Susan Murray)

<https://www.iuf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/3.-Making-women-visible-in-OHS-ENGLISH-def.pdf>

IUF Report: If water is life (2015)

Why do agricultural workers die every year from lack of access to potable water?

<http://pre2020.iuf.org/w/sites/default/files/If%20water%20is%20life.pdf>

WASH4WORK

The ILO has developed a toolkit which explains the importance of WASH, different hazards and codes of practice based on International Labour Standards.

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-ed_dialogue/-sector/documents/publication/wcms_535058.pdf

IUF: COVID-19 Information and Resources for IUF affiliates

<https://www.iuf.org/what-we-do/covid-19-information-and-resources/>



6. Multiple Discriminations

When someone experiences discrimination for more than one reason, they suffer from multiple discriminations.



6.1 LGBTI Equality

LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex
Sexual Orientation	<p>Homosexual: Sexual orientation towards persons of the same sex.</p> <p>Heterosexual: Sexual orientation towards persons of the opposite sex.</p> <p>Bisexual: Sexual orientation towards persons of the same and opposite sex.</p>
Gender Identity. <i>The gender we feel we are inside.</i>	Transgender/Trans: Individuals whose appearance, sexual and/or gender identity differs from the biological sex recognized at birth. This includes those who wear clothes traditionally ascribed to the opposite sex.
Intersex	Individuals born with a sexual anatomy that do not fit typical definitions of male or female.
Discrimination	<p>Homophobia: Irrational fear or hatred of lesbian, gay or bisexual people.</p> <p>Transphobia: Irrational fear or hatred of transgender people.</p>
Intersectionality	The overlap of different social categories e.g. race and gender, which cause the challenge of multiple discriminations.

Society accepts heterosexuality and gender identities of man and woman as normal. Those identities that do not fall into these categories are usually perceived as abnormal.

This means LGBTI people suffer from discrimination.

As LGBTI women, we are held back by our LGBTI identity as well as by being a woman in a world racked by inequality. We become disproportionately affected by violence and harassment.

LGBTI women have limited opportunities.

We find it hard to acquire, maintain and advance in work.

Homophobia, transphobia and misogyny can create a hostile work environment.

Those of us whose behaviour or appearance is not traditionally seen as ‘feminine’ may have difficulty finding employment.

Fear of discrimination, job loss and violence can lead us to keep our identity secret. We live in fear and feel powerless.

We can be forced to leave work and become isolated. Some turn to prostitution, which increases their risk of sexual violence and disease.



What we say

“Prejudice ... has meant that in the past there was no job market for LGBTI people. Underemployment led to prostitution, trafficking and theft. Here in Brazil, now that the LGBTI debate has started in the field of work, we are starting to be seen as workers. Our flag is very much about life and the right to live in a safe environment, but work is still very scarce because it is hard to find places that are not prejudiced against LGBTI.”

Gisele Adao, LGBTI Secretary, Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura (**CONTAG**), Brazil

Shockingly, in most countries, LGBTI workers are not protected by law. Culture and the political context can impact equality. Homophobia is entrenched in customs and traditions and imposed through laws and violence. For some of us it is dangerous and even illegal to be open about our sexuality. This makes discrimination even more difficult to tackle.

Some unions might be reluctant to promote LGBTI rights out of fear of persecution or because of internal union prejudice. In some places, union leaders can even be murdered for speaking out in support of the LGBTI cause. This makes challenging discrimination and persecution very difficult.

But discrimination undermines our basic human right to equality as protected under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).

Making such discrimination illegal can shift attitudes and encourage tolerance. LGBTI groups and trade unions can and should work together to inspire acceptance. As trade unionists, we must fight against all forms of discrimination and promote equal rights for all, in the workplace and beyond.



What we do

Under IUF rules, the IUF must fight against discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation, and promote equal rights, opportunities and treatment in IUF sectors, affiliated organisations, the wider labour movement and society.

To promote equality, the IUF is integrating its commitment to equality into all of its structures and activities. In 2017, the IUF established an LGBTI Workers and Allies' Committee as a formal group within IUF structures. It will be represented on the governing bodies. The IUF has also developed a guide with model clauses for developing collective agreements that secure LGBTI workers' rights.

<https://www.iuf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/2019-Bargaining-demands-for-LGBTI-workers-rights-1.pdf>

The **United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council** has adopted several resolutions on sexual orientation and gender identity. Not all states have agreed to them. But they can pave the way for LGBTI rights to be accepted. Hopefully this will one day lead to an international legal standard.

- Human Rights, sexual orientation and gender identity 2011 (A/HRC/RES/17/19)
- Human Rights, sexual orientation and gender identity 2014 (A/HRC/RES/27/32)
- Protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity 2016 (A/HRC/RES/32/2)

International human rights groups have also developed the **Yogyakarta Principles** (2006/2017) to set international human rights standards on sexual orientation and gender identity. Trade unions can use these principles to guide their work.



What we do

Challenging Discrimination through Awareness-Raising

Since 2013, the **Cooks and Servers Workers Union** in Thailand has been carrying out workshops on sexual orientation and gender identity to sensitise its members and build awareness around diversity issues. Using the Yogyakarta Principles as the basis for education, the workshops teach union members about LGBTI movements and campaigns and discuss the changes that are needed in society to promote acceptance around diversity.

As a result of the workshops, union members have an improved understanding on gender issues and are becoming more accepting.

6.2 Ethnic Minorities

Ethnic minority women face multiple discriminations, as women and as people marginalised for our race, colour or cultural heritage.

Globally, we suffer from ‘Snowy Peaks Syndrome’:

- White men dominate at the top working in the well-paid and secure positions. Precarious and informal jobs, with low pay and little security, are largely carried out by indigenous women and women of colour.
- Ethnic minority women are oppressed by the power inequality between men and women, as well as racial and cultural inequality, which means we are often treated as second-class citizens.

Because of this, those of us who are indigenous women and women of colour face barriers at work.

Sometimes employers will not hire us. When we are hired, often we are given jobs far below our potential. As a result, we are over-represented in precarious, low paid work in sectors with a higher risk of abuse.

Ethnic minority women also experience a bigger pay gap, both with men and with white women.

We deserve protection from discrimination and representation in the union too.



What we do

“Our differences are what make us strong and powerful.”

In Canada, Indigenous women and girls make up 24% of female homicide victims, are sexually assaulted 3 times more often than non-Indigenous women and represent the majority of women being trafficked in Canada today.

Just 4.9% of the Canadian population are Indigenous but are disproportionately represented in instances of violence and femicide.

In Canada, the **United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW)** has worked with community organisations to raise awareness of the discrimination and violence that Indigenous women face. The union also has an Indigenous Sub-committee which works to build cooperation between indigenous and non-Indigenous workers and strengthen the intersection between labour rights and Indigenous justice.

“We are guided by the sub-committee of Indigenous members. We bring Indigenous UFCW members together for a yearly conference to talk about all these things. They provide guidance on the issues we profile within UFCW Canada. We call for a national action plan to end violence against women, in partnership with Women’s Shelters Canada, as barriers to service provisions in women’s shelters across the country are dire, especially for Indigenous women’s shelters. It is through these partnerships that we receive so much more than we put out. We say, ‘we see you’ and ‘we hear you’...”

We are not monolithic. We exist because we are different. Our differences are what make us strong and powerful.”

Emmanuelle Lopez-Bastos, Human Rights, Equity and Diversity Department Co-ordinator, United Food and Commercial Workers Union (**UFCW**), Canada

6.3 Disability

Many women have physical and mental impairments or ‘disabilities’ which may limit their movements or ability to perform some activities. Those of us with disabilities suffer discrimination. We make up one of the most excluded and isolated groups of people in society.

We face discriminatory stereotypes based on our disabilities as well as our gender. We are seen as outsiders, not fit for work. Most importantly, we are not given adequate support – in society, in the workplace, and often in unions too. Because of this, women with disabilities are more likely than men with disabilities to be underrepresented in the labour market.

We are more likely to be poor, under-educated, unemployed, lack access to public services, and suffer from violence and abuse.

We need to provide education, employment and protection to address this. All women need to be represented in the union so we can work together to address challenges.

ILO Convention No. 159 on Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) (1983) promotes the equal opportunity, treatment and respect of disabled men and women workers.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities (2006) and General Comment on Article 6. Women and Girls with Disabilities (2016) recognise that women with disabilities are often at greater risk, both within and outside the home, of violence, abuse and exploitation.

6.4 Migrant Workers



Women have long migrated within their own countries to find work, particularly from rural to urban areas. But in recent years there has been a big shift. Many more of us are migrating internationally to find work opportunities outside our home country than ever before.

Women often become migrants out of desperation. We lack power; some of us run away from abuse. Many of us are very poor, in search of a better life for ourselves and our families. We become at risk from corrupt labour agents and traffickers. Official work permit systems are often so weak that we become ‘undocumented’ the moment we leave an abusive employer or agent.

We often risk being coerced into the sex industry.

Migrant workers are extremely vulnerable.

Those of us working outside our home country have fewer legal protections. With limited access to information, we are unable to access decent work opportunities and escape our situation. We are concentrated in low-skilled, low paid and informal jobs.

Among the most difficult to organise are those of us who are migrant domestic workers. Our workplaces are private households, and so we are isolated. We are more vulnerable to harassment. We are also undocumented and so will often not trust union organisers.

But as migrant women, we make huge contributions all over the world, performing vital jobs in care, cleaning, agriculture, and food processing, and we deserve protection. Unfortunately, many people have discriminatory attitudes of migrant workers and use negative language to speak of them – including union members. To tackle this, we need to educate and challenge perceptions.

Our position in society means that many of us are pushed into forced labour. Regional Secretariats of the IUF are forming alliances to address the exploitation and trafficking of migrant workers.

- The IUF Latin America Regional Secretariat (Rel-UITA) has signed an agreement with the **Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW)** – an alliance of organisations defending the human rights of migrants. Together they are working to address labour exploitation.

<https://gaatw.org/>

- The IUF Asia Pacific Regional Secretariat (IUF-Asia Pacific) is working with the **Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW)** – an international network of organisations fighting the sexual exploitation of women – to build the capacity of the IUF to support cases of trafficking and to encourage trafficking to be taken seriously as a union issue.

<http://www.catwinternational.org/>



What we say

“This was a significant step in recognising that the fight against trafficking must also include the protection of labour rights. The many testimonies that we have collected have shown that victims of trafficking are usually recruited using labour promises. This is why we need to have strong union organisations that act as prevention agents and also collaborators in the care of victims.”

Patricia Alonso, President of IUF Women’s Committee, Federacion Argentina Union Personal Panaderias y Afines (**FAUPPA**), Argentina



What we do

The Union for Migrant Workers

In Canada, together with the **Agriculture Workers Alliance, the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW)** operates an agriculture workers’ association with over 13,000 members. Many are migrants entering Canada as part of the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Programme. The union has support centres across Canada and has successfully campaigned for migrant workers facing abuse to have the opportunity to be granted an extended work visa to allow them to find different work.

http://www.ufcw.ca/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2009:the-union-for-agriculture-workers&catid=95:agricultural-workers&Itemid=198&lang=en



What we say

“If we unite, we can fight back and stand up for our rights.”

For many years, migrant workers in the UK have been organising themselves in associations to fight for their rights. In 2009 the **Voice of Domestic Workers** (formerly known as Justice for Domestic Workers) was established as an organisation of migrant domestic workers in the UK. It is fighting to improve the rights and recognition of domestic workers. It now has 1,500 members.

Marissa Begonia is a domestic worker originally from the Philippines, and is one of the founding members:

“I have felt pain like many domestic workers. I have suffered from low wages, physical abuse and sexual harassment. I thought at that time that it was only me who had suffered, but I met so many fellow domestic workers who were suffering. Many of them had been raped and physically abused...They would come to meetings and the only possession that they had was the clothes they were wearing. The more I saw them the more eager I was to stand up for them. As individual workers we are weak but if we unite, we can fight back and stand up for our rights.”

Unite the Union was there from the beginning to provide support in our work. Being part of the union, we feel protected and safe knowing that we have a big family. The education classes we hold teach English but we also role play interviews of domestic workers and help them to be more confident and have more knowledge about negotiating for better salaries and conditions...We also do campaigning and lobby MPs. It is not just about working conditions but being able to stand up and speak about their rights...

It is important to remember that no one could go to work without domestic workers – it is the beginning of all work sectors. Domestic workers deserve to be respected.”

Diana Holland is the Assistant General Secretary of **Unite the Union** and describes how the union has been working to provide support and build solidarity with the domestic workers.

“We told them about the benefits of the union and in return they asked us for three things. Firstly, a membership card – this was their only piece of identification because for many their employer kept their passport. They also wanted to be recognised as workers because everything in this country defined them not as a worker. They also needed a loud voice in the political sphere - we gave them the platform to do this. We have given them a place for emergency and regular meetings, and support with publications and education. But we have to recognise that the domestic workers will lead the way.”

All international labour standards apply to migrant workers. There are also specific provisions on migrant workers:

- **ILO Convention No. 97 on Migration for Employment (1949) and accompanying Recommendation No.86**
- **ILO Convention No. 143 on Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) (1975) and accompanying Recommendation No.155**
- **ILO Convention No. 181 on Private Employment Agencies (1997)**
- **ILO Convention No. 189 on Domestic Workers (2011)**

Migrant workers and their families are also protected by the nine UN core international human rights instruments. These apply to everyone, whatever their nationality.

UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (1990) also confirms that migrant workers and their families have the same rights as all other workers and people, including freedom from all forms of discrimination.

6.5 Protecting the Girl Child

Discrimination affects women from birth. We are born into a global system of patriarchal oppression facing discrimination from a young age. This leads to long-term gender inequality.

Often this discrimination occurs even before birth. Male children are seen as future breadwinners, while female children are seen as costly. Some parents terminate female foetuses.

But this is **femicide**. It is a violation of our human rights.

Our role is often viewed as being of less value than men. Boys are seen to have the potential for work opportunities, while girls are to marry and raise children. This means that girls often cannot access education and are sent to work at a young age. Globally 100 million girls work in child labour. The low purchasing price of raw materials mean that families on plantations often have no other option.

Girls' work is often hidden and informal. This puts their health and safety at risk.

Girls often have the 'double burden' of having to carry out unpaid labour that limits their opportunities for education.

By the time we reach proper employment age, we are already at a disadvantage. We end up out of work or working informal or precarious jobs.

Education can help to tackle poverty and inequality.

But child labour will not end without a change in the way prices are defined. In agriculture, we must increase the bargaining power of producers and small farmers. Building power along the supply chain can pressure companies to address child labour.



What we say

"In Uzbekistan child labour as a systemic phenomenon is being eradicated in the cotton sector. However, it is still used in agriculture and many other sectors. This is mainly because of the distressing situation of people, predominantly in the rural areas."

Markhaba Khalmurzaeva, IUF Eastern Europe and Central Asia Team

ILO Convention No. 138 on Minimum Age (1973) states that the minimum age for employment should not be below the age for finishing compulsory schooling, generally 15 years old.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

Article 32 states that parties should recognise the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing work that is hazardous, will interfere with the child's education, or be harmful to the child's health or development.

ILO Convention No. 182 on Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999) targets practices such as the use of children in slavery, forced labour, trafficking, debt bondage, prostitution, pornography, forced or compulsory recruitment, for armed conflict, illicit activities and hazardous work.



What we can do

- **Build tolerance by holding awareness-building workshops;** adopt and implement a policy against LGBTI discrimination, educate management and fellow workers on LGBTI rights and why they must be respected.
- **Lobby governments for an international standard to protect the rights of LGBTI workers;** and negotiate clauses on LGBTI protection.
- **Map the pay and jobs worked by women, and ethnic minority women;** this can help to identify where racial inequality is happening in the workplace.
- **Campaign for equal treatment and inclusion of those with disabilities in the workplace and in society.**
- **Campaign to change attitudes about migrant workers,** highlighting that their work is of huge value and that long working hours and low pay go against human rights.
- **Organise migrant workers to join the union:** fight to win migrant workers the same protections as every other worker; build links with migrant workers organisations.
- **Lobby governments to end child labour;** encourage them to properly implement ILO Convention C138 on Minimum Age and to recognise the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- **Build the capacity of women from a young age:** educate and empower young women to give them the voice they deserve.



ARGUMENTS TO USE

- ▶ LGBTI workers deserve protection! Our basic human rights state that we are all born equal – this needs to be protected and promoted. We don't want to live in fear!
- ▶ All women – no matter our race or ethnic background – deserve the same opportunities at work.
- ▶ Disabled workers are workers too! We deserve the same rights and opportunities to work! We should not be treated as second-class citizens.

- ▶ Migrant workers often do the jobs that no one else wants to do! We contribute to our communities and need to be valued. We deserve better pay and security at work!
- ▶ Protecting girls when they are young is the best way to challenge gender norms. Girls have value too and they should be given the same opportunities as boys!
- ▶ Ending child labour means addressing the whole system of inequality. Invest in families and mothers, reach a living wage and improve the purchasing price of raw resources from poor farmers!



Key Resources

Our Common Struggle for Rights and Equality (IUF, 2017)

<https://www.iuf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/2017-Our-common-struggle-for-rights-and-equality.pdf>

Gender Equality and Sexual Orientation: PRIDE (ILO, 2012)

Promoting Rights, Diversity and Equality in the World of Work

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-dgreports/-gender/documents/briefingnote/wcms_368962.pdf

ILGA, International Lesbian and Gay Association: A global membership organisation

<https://ilga.org/>

Women of Colour in the Workplace (European Network Against Racism, 2017)

https://www.enar-eu.org/IMG/pdf/20112_equal_work_2018_lr.pdf

Integrating Women and Girls with Disabilities into Mainstream Vocational Training (ILO, 1999)

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-ed_emp/-ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_107918.pdf

Women Migrant Workers' Journey Through the Margins: Labour, Migration and Trafficking (UN, 2016)

<https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2017/women-migrant-workers-journey.pdf?la=en&vs=4009&la=en&vs=4009>

Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (2018)

This is the first ever UN global agreement on a common approach to international migration. It ensures that the human rights of everyone are respected at all stages of migration.

https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/180713_agreed_outcome_global_compact_for_migration.pdf

Workers and Unions on the Move: Organising and defending migrant workers in agriculture and allied sectors (IUF, 2008)

<https://www.iuf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/IUFmigrantworkersmanual-e.pdf>

International Labour Standards on Labour Migration (ILO)

<https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/labour-migration/standards/lang-en/index.htm>

International Organisation for Migration

<https://www.iom.int/about-iom>

Give Girls a Chance – Tackling child labour, a key to the future (ILO, 2009)

https://www.ilo.org/ipec/Informationresources/WCMS_107913/lang-en/index.htm

Section 2

Union Power for All



Women face barriers to organising.

We are usually not properly represented in unions. Even when we are, our voices are often not heard.

- Fewer of us are members of trade unions than men.
- We are not properly represented at the negotiating table or in leadership positions.
- Many of us do not see how unions can help improve our living and working conditions.
- Some of us fear losing our jobs if we unionise.
- We work in precarious and informal jobs, which are harder to unionise.
- Unions still have a lot to do to enable us to combine family life with trade union work.

But we are the future of the trade union movement. We must organise to achieve and maintain equality.

According to the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, it is the fundamental right of everyone:

- To have just and favourable conditions of work
- To get equal pay for equal work and suffer no discrimination
- To get just and favourable pay, giving the worker and his/her family “an existence worthy of dignity”
- To form and to join trade unions to protect our interests
- To have rest and leisure, reasonable working hours and paid holidays.

There are rights for all of us in the union laid down in the **ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work 1998**.

Fundamental Right	ILO Convention No.
The freedom to form and join trade unions	87
The right for trade unions to negotiate with employers	98



7.

Organisation – Building Women’s Membership

Trade unions have always promoted women’s rights to some extent. But the international trade union movement has largely been dominated by the industrial worker – typically a man. This means that the membership and leadership of trade unions are typically male.

But more women are entering the labour force. There are more of us to unionise. We are working in jobs where pay and security are low, and conditions are poor.

In agriculture, we are migrating for seasonal employment with very poor conditions;

In food processing, many of us are being shifted from permanent to short-term contracts so that employers can hire and fire us when they choose;

In hotels, catering and tourism we are being laid off. Our employers are then rehiring through ‘service providers’ and labour contractors to save money;

Production is often outsourced to those of us working in our own homes. Many of us work for companies but are not clearly employed by them. This means that our status, rights and benefits are rarely recognised.

We are hidden. We need unions. We need to be invited, encouraged, and empowered to show us the benefits of the union.

But unions need a new approach, especially if we want to be more representative of society. Unions need new organising strategies to build women’s membership.

Unions need to organise workers in precarious and informal jobs – where women are the majority.

In some places, unions have become so dominated by men that we don’t see how they are relevant to our lives. Or we become active and find ourselves ignored. Many of us become apathetic.

Our lives are also full of other responsibilities and commitments. Many of us don’t have the time to give to the union.



What we say

“While it is important to have structures in our Union that ensure gender equality can occur in our formal democratic bodies and our leadership roles, it is equally important that we encourage and promote gender equality in every activity in the union. Whether it be the election of workplace leaders, spokespeople for the union in the media and public forums, planning of workplace campaigns and in the taking of industrial action we must have roles and access for women at a scale that is meaningful and makes gender equality normal.

If we do this in the workplace every day we will have a positive impact on society. That is why in all our workplace plans, it is ingrained in our thinking about what we are doing about gender equality, racial equality, worker equality.

For the United Workers Union, it does not matter where you come from, your visa status, your gender, whether you are full time, casual, contract - every worker counts and that is the way we rebuild the power of working people and build gender equality.”

Tim Kennedy, National Secretary, United Workers Union (**UWU**), Australia



What we say

“A lot of women still think men will always lead. Organising and educating them will bring them to the union. Union training should be pursued with women working together. We need to recruit more women and educate rural women. This will bring a companion complex. Women need to reach out to one another and keep the committee active at all times.”

Lydia Matluga, Shop Steward, South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union (**SACCAWU**), South Africa

7.1 Understanding Our Problems and Concerns

We need unions that address and represent the issues that we care about. This is the only way that we can encourage other women to become active members of the union.

Once we become dedicated members, we can then help spread the word and organise women in their community and workplace.

As a marginalised and oppressed group, having organisations that represent our interests can be life changing. By having unions that address our concerns, we are given a voice in a world where so often our voices are ignored. We need to be directly involved so that our ideas become reality.



What we do

“We showed them that trade unions are important for discussing the interests of women.”

In **Burkina Faso**, the **IUF Women’s Committee**, used innovative organising strategies to recruit new women into the union. Assétou Traoré says her union asks local women what their biggest concerns are and then organises training workshops which address these issues. The union encourages everyone to attend - union member or not, men as well as women. The union uses this as an opportunity to make a presentation about the union to publicize the benefits of the union.

“We asked informal workers to tell us what the most difficult thing that they were dealing with was. Many said that their biggest challenge was difficult children and inheritance rights. So, we decided to organise a big meeting for informal workers on how to deal with difficult children and what are the rights of women in matters of inheritance (generally for widows). Then, in the breaks of the meeting, we discussed union issues. Many of the women didn’t know what a trade union was. They didn’t realise that trade union discussions were open to family issues. After we told them what trade unions do, they recognised that through trade unions they can learn. After this, they joined the union.

The common perspective in Burkina Faso is that when women affiliate to a trade union, they will become unmanageable at home. Many think that women standing up for their rights is a negative thing. At the meeting, even some men attended. We showed them that trade unions are important for discussing the interests of women.”

Assétou Espérance Dabiré-Traoré, Vice-President of the IUF Women’s Committee, Syndicat national des travailleurs de l’environnement, du tourisme et de l’hôtellerie (**SYNTETH**), Burkina Faso



What we say

Faiza Ahmed works at **PepsiCo Lahore** in **Pakistan** as a process operator. She is the Secretary of Youth Affairs at PepsiCo Aman Workers Union. She says that the best way we can increase women membership in unions is to build their awareness on how the union can protect their rights.

“For women to earn their own money is important, because it builds a sense of equality within the family which lays the foundation for a better enlightened future for women. In our global culture, a woman is assumed to be lesser than a man, so when I joined the union and took the position of Secretary Youth Affairs, I also faced opposition. I was also mocked... but I remained determined on my goal and I’m working as a Youth Secretary in my union.”

7.2 Techniques

To build women's membership we need to develop innovative organising techniques to draw attention to the issues that women face. We can examine the jobs, pay and opportunities of women (gender mapping, pay auditing) and gather women together to discuss particular concerns (focus group discussions) to highlight pay inequality and job segregation and find common issues to encourage our fellow sisters to join.

At the same time, women are often at the forefront of organising strategies.

We are developing new methods and providing services for union members, especially for women.

We are developing inventive new recruitment methods. We are helping to form micro-credit and savings associations and cooperatives, providing counselling services, support for accessing government aid programmes and helping women to obtain identity documents so they can be recognised as citizens.

These activities are both community and workplace based, but they are all about the collective self-organisation of workers for their mutual benefit.



What we do

“We show what the union can do for its members...”

In Zimbabwe, the **General Agricultural and Plantation Workers' Union of Zimbabwe (GAPWUZ)** has been using theatre to educate women working in agriculture and inform them about the importance of joining the union and the benefits it can bring. The union trains up members who are then sent out to perform to the workers in the farms and encourage them to join the union.

“Many issues are addressed and discussed. We have different characters such as manager, employer and employee, and the workers really recognise these characters and their shared experience. The plays are performed in breaks. Women hear about the plays and are so interested in the issues that they come in numbers to watch them. Afterwards, we ask women what they have learned from the play.

They often also do the plays in the presence of the employer. Even the employers have started to see the problems that plays highlight and have started to investigate these problems. The plays also dramatise on the issues of employers. The plays are not one-sided – if an employer is bad then we show it, but also if the employer is good then we portray this. We dramatise the best practices and employers accept this and listen. Employers appreciate it, and this means that they encourage it.

We use this as a tool to bring people in to provide education. In the performance, we send a message to the workers and encourage them to join the union. We portray the benefit of joining trade unions and we show what the union can do for its members, including occupational health and safety and protection from sexual harassment.”

Juliet Sithole, Gender Coordinator, General Agriculture and Plantation Workers' Union of Zimbabwe (**GAPWUZ**), Zimbabwe



What we say

“My union is trying to find new, different ways to encourage new generations to join the union culture. In 2019 we organised a mobile office of our union organisation. Over 6 months, our mobile office travelled all over the country, meeting our workers in their workplaces and towns. We spoke about issues they were facing regarding pay and working conditions, as well as many other questions. This brought much vitality and strengthened members’ trust in the union but it has also been a very successful recruitment tool. During the meetings we held as we travelled, it was not only members who came to the meetings, but also people who are just curious to get news from the capital. After that they really wanted to be part of the organisation.”

Valentina Vasilyonova, Vice President, Federation of the Independent Trade Unions in Agriculture (FNSZ/FITUA), Bulgaria



What we do

Informal Workers win Identity Cards

After years of campaigning in India, in 2016 the **Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA)** won a major victory for informal workers in the state of Gujarat. **SEWA** exerted pressure on the government by signing up over 60,000 informal workers to the union. The union also created an extensive database of the workers, identifying them as legitimate workers.

As a result, the government is now issuing identity cards for informal economy workers. The cards recognise them as workers and give them access to free health insurance, hospital coverage, rural health services and accident insurance for women and children.

SEWA has been helping workers to apply for and receive their cards.



What we say

“The organising strategies we use for domestic workers is different to other sectors. When organising domestic workers, we go house to house to recruit. In Tanzania we have a street campaign where we target domestic workers very early in the morning before they go to work. This has been very successful. 700+ domestic workers have been recruited in a year. We also target supermarkets, the community and churches. We also use meetings for recruitment. Those who are already members, we ask them to bring others. We hold meetings at weekends because it is easier for workers to get the day off. We use radio and tv and get journalists on board so that we can send the message of unions out to domestic workers. We develop brochures and posters which we put in the bus stations which give women information about how to join the union and what their rights as domestic workers are. It is important to use language that domestic workers understand.

Their salaries are very low, and for many their salary is paid in board and food which means that they cannot pay union dues....

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Also, many of them don’t know how to pay. Union offices can be far away, or employers may not allow domestic workers to go out. When leaders collect fees, sometimes they have to go door to door.”

Deograsia Vuluwa, Programme Officer, International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF), Tanzania

7.3 Young Women



Many women choose not to engage with the union at all. They don’t see its relevance. Some don’t feel represented. Many cannot relate to the traditional union structures.

But young workers - **young women in particular** - are the future of the trade union movement.

They have important knowledge and offer a unique opportunity to organise.

Young workers are plagued by precariousness. The rise in part-time, temporary work has reduced the quality of the jobs available to them. These workers need protection.



What we say

“Young people think that they have to put up with bad conditions at work because they don’t think that they can change it. So many young people have no clue. But we need to tell them about the union through new methods like social media.”

Claire Trevor, Union Member, **Unite the Union**, UK

Changing attitudes among younger and more diverse workers presents a huge opportunity to improve gender equality. We need to change our organising strategies to overcome the gender and age gap.

To do this we can organise around issues that are affecting young people such as precarious work. We can also build alliances with social movements to encourage youth-led activism. Using social media can be a successful way to bring the union to young workers.

If unions are going to be relevant for a new generation of trade unionists, the structures and leadership needs to reflect the members. To do this, unions can:

- Introduce a youth quota, start a Youth Committee or young workers meetings;
- Encourage more participatory democracy in the union structures;
- Mentor young women to pass on knowledge;
- Scrap traditional titles and descriptions.



Engaging young women early on can empower them and end the cycle of inequality. Family pressure – especially when we are young - can make it difficult for us to attend meetings or travel for union conferences. For many of us, our husbands, brothers and fathers are often concerned about us becoming involved in the union. But, if we invite them to participate in meetings, we can show them the positive impact of the union.



What we say

Iqra Jamil works as a forklift operator in **Faisalabad** in **Pakistan**. She is also the Chair of the Regional Youth Committee in the IUF Asia Pacific region. Her father used to be the only bread winner in the family but, after he became ill and could no longer work, Iqra started working. She thinks that it is essential for young women to be in a strong position economically, not only for themselves but also to support their families in a time of need.

“Initially my family was not really supportive of me travelling for union activities, apart from my mother and father. But later I kept showing them pictures of our activities and the benefits we get because of the union power and now they understand why I’m a part of this union. It’s necessary for women to be a part of a union to protect their rights at workplace.”

IUF Young Workers’ Committee

In 2017 the IUF established a Young Workers’ Committee so that workers aged 35 and under are represented on the IUF’s governing structures. The IUF wanted to create an inclusive structure that represents all IUF geographies, trade groups and committees and pursued initiatives which would bring value to all affiliates.

- A seat is allocated for a Women’s Committee representative on the Young Workers Committee;
- The IUF Committee rules state that neither women nor men should have less than 40% representation on the Young Workers’ Committee;
- As of the last election in 2019, the Chair and two Vice Chairs of the Young Workers’ Committee are women.



What we say

Gabriela Tricolici is the Vice-Chair of the IUF’s Young Workers Committee and is a member of the **Moldsindcoopcomert** union in Moldova.

“My first involvement in trade union activities was during my university studies and I really saw the importance of raising awareness among young people... When I returned home to Moldova, I started working for the Trade Union Federation in the fields of Cooperatives, Commerce and Entrepreneurship “Moldsindcoopcomert”, an affiliate member of IUF. One of our union’s goals is to train members, including young people (students and workers); so that in seminars I share my experience abroad and help them know about their rights at work.

In 2017, at the 27th IUF Congress, the first IUF International Young Workers’ Conference took place, during which the participants agreed on the urgent need to set up youth structures at all levels in order to respond effectively to the needs and demands of young workers, because they are under-represented in trade unions. The conference further recommended that an ad hoc young worker committee consisting of a minimum of 6 young workers be mandated to develop proposals for an IUF Young Worker Committee structure and rules.

On April 1, 2019, IUF young workers from around the world...held the constituting meeting of the IUF Young Workers’ Committee...As IUF Young Workers’ Committee, we promote the participation of young trade union members at international and national levels by supporting regional network meetings and developing communication tools. At international level we have created several online communication links, namely we have a Facebook and Whatsapp group, and a web page of youth sector within the official IUF website, which are important for youth organising, sharing experiences and the activities carried out. Together we work with young activists globally to show the need to be active in the unions. We have set a number of objectives which focus on the youth issues and how we can work together to resolve them.

Young workers face specific challenges in the labor market: they are particularly vulnerable to unemployment, poor working conditions, low wages, difficulty in accessing rights and lack of social protection. The IUF Youth Committee wants to equip and inspire young people to be a positive force. To do this we need to motivate, empower, organise, educate and disseminate best practices. Young trade union members have the potential for innovation, for the modernization of trade union structures and as a result of union training, many of them will achieve successes in defending their rights at work.”

7.4 Outreach and Alliances

Women experience unions differently from men. Often, the traditional and hierarchical union systems do not work for women. We know that women often place more importance on grassroots organising than on formal membership structures.

To address this, we can encourage our unions to build alliances with civil society, women’s groups and the local community to build membership and awareness of the value of unions.



By working together with non-labour groups, we can achieve common goals. Examples include:

- Outreach to women’s grassroots community groups to build alliances around key issues affecting women;
- Develop regional and national women’s networks to campaign and carry out activities to empower women;
- Ally with social movements to contest exploitation, inequality and discrimination;
- Raise awareness by building campaigns around issues affecting the local community.

Outreach can build women’s capacity. It can also build enthusiasm for the role of unions.

To progress, our unions need to decentralise themselves. We need to go into workplaces and community groups to have informal discussions about the most pressing issues facing women today.

By doing so, trade unions can show that our goals go beyond simply the workplace and that unions are important for wider social change.



What we say

“Our gender committee is part of a campaign called ‘Keep the Girl Child in School’ where we collect sanitary towels and donate them to schools. We partner with schools and build outreach in rural areas and carry out awareness raising three times a year. We spend half a day talking to the young girls about menstruation to mainstream the discussion so that we can break the taboos. It is important to build this bridge between the community and the trade union because trade union work can impact the whole of society, and it is only by engaging the whole of the society around these issues that our work can lead to transformation. This is also a great way to organise for the future. We sensitise the girls about trade unions at a young age, so when they start working, they will join the union.”

Patricia Nyman, National Gender Coordinator, South Africa Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union (**SACCAWU**), South Africa



What WE can do

- **Recruit more women by making unions more responsive to the needs of women workers**, even when the issues that women raise and the services needed are beyond what is thought of as a traditional ‘trade union agenda’; for example, helping women to obtain identity cards and literacy training.
- **Develop strategic organising programmes and use imaginative methods**; women organisers need to reach out to women and take account of work situations and domestic responsibilities. This can be done in a variety of ways; through community-based meetings instead of workplace ones, door-to-door visits, public outreach stalls at events, radio broadcasts, and drama or singing, especially where there is low literacy or lack of confidence.
- **Encourage ‘irregular’ workers to establish special union structures and activities** to accommodate the needs and rights of ‘informal economy’ workers.
- **Promote positive images and activities** to help counteract negative picture of unions as aggressive by being positive about finding solutions to problems.
- **Develop new strategies to build outreach to young workers and encourage them to join the union**; this can include social media campaigns, connecting with social movements, introducing youth structures in the union and providing support to young workers to give them confidence.



ARGUMENTS TO USE

- ▶ The feminisation of the workforce means that women are essential to the survival of the union.
- ▶ Women are not disproportionately employed in casual/irregular work by accident; it is a direct result of gender discrimination by employers. If we don’t challenge it, it will weaken the union and have a negative impact on everyone’s working conditions.
- ▶ All workers have rights; this includes those who may not be regarded by society or the law as ‘workers’, domestic/household workers, or temporary or seasonal workers.
- ▶ Even if workers in precarious jobs cost the union more in resources than they bring in, the long-term cost to members, and society, of not organising them will be greater.
- ▶ Young workers are the future of the union movement. Without them there is no future. We need to organise and support them to become the next generation of leaders.



Key Resources

Promoting Gender Equality: A Resource Kit for Trade Unions (Hard copies at the ILO)

Booklet 4: Organising the Unorganised: Informal economy and other unprotected workers

Booklet 5: Organising in Diversity

Booklet 6: Alliances and Solidarity to Promote Women Workers' Rights

A Manual for Gender Audit Facilitators (ILO, 2007)

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-dgreports/-dcomm/-publ/documents/publication/wcms_093425.pdf

Organizing on-demand (ILO, 2019)

Organizing on-demand: Representation, voice and collective bargaining in the gig economy

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-ed_protect/-protrav/-travail/documents/publication/wcms_624286.pdf



8. Power and Voice – Representing Women



What we say

“It undermines our negotiating position with companies on equality if our own union structures remain unequal and fail to meet equality standards... When we use an equality tick box and quota approach – we lose out.”

Sue Longley, IUF General Secretary

“If we women don’t participate as unionists in policy-making and bargaining agreements, there’s no point.”

Patricia Alonso, President of IUF Women’s Committee, Federacion Argentina Union Personal Panaderias y Afines (**FAUPPA**), Argentina

“Women lack self confidence as well as not knowing how to overcome it. It’s important that sensitisation is carried for women to build confidence in themselves. At the same pace, sensitisation should equally be carried out to our counter parts to appreciate that women are human beings and are equally able to do a lot that men can do and have the same human rights.”

Theopista Ssentongo Nabulya, General Secretary, National Union of Co-operative Movement and Allied Workers (**NUCMAW**), Uganda

“Being a trade unionist is very demanding. For the most part women do step forward in our union. However, it can be hard for women to balance their family lives with their trade union duties, especially because we are all so passionate about it. Sometimes our families do not understand why we always have to be in the union because we can be so busy doing what we do, and we do not take the time to explain it to our families. We need to bring our families into the union so that they understand what we are doing and to balances ourselves.

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Also, the problem is often that women question their ability to lead due to their own personal confidence. I really admire all the women who I have met through the IUF. They are incredibly strong women. The problem is that men sometimes do not hear you unless you speak up and speak your mind. But what I have learned is that if you speak with passion and compassion then people will listen.”

Ronnie Burgess, Organizer/Recording Secretary, Bermuda Industrial Union (**BIU**), Bermuda

8.1 Empowering Women



What we say

“We need to train women in their rights – very few women are aware. We also have to involve women as only women can have a true understanding of a woman’s issue. We need equality to live without fear at home and at work.”

Anna Kashina, Agro-Industrial Workers Union (**AIWU**), Russia

Where unions are supportive to us, our membership numbers have gone up. But we also need the confidence to become actively involved once we become a member.

The way that unions are organised also has a big impact on whether we join or not. To become active, we need opportunities to gain knowledge, experience and confidence. But the reality is that many of us are not confident. Many of us have not had the opportunity of education.

Building confidence, in ourselves and in the union are vital to make sure we become active members.

Women-only seminars and get-togethers are an excellent way of doing this. They can build sisterhood and solidarity, encouraging us to gain strength from each other. Women’s groups and networks can give us the freedom to discuss issues which can be difficult when men are present such as sexual harassment. Training can also be harder when men are present and dominate.

Of course, this means finding the time to meet up and take action. But for many of us, our lives are very busy. We need activities which allow for us to fit union work around our busy schedules.



What we do

Building Networks for Solidarity and Empowerment



Unions in Guatemala have established a network called the **Latin American Committee of Women of the IUF in Guatemala (Clamu-G)**. The network is a space for women to come together, exchange experiences, become empowered and build a common agenda to fight for their rights.

Delmi Nohemi Aguilar Lemus is a member of the coordination team of Clamu-G. She believes that uniting women through shared experiences builds strength and is essential in the fight for gender equality.

“Clamu-G is giving us opportunities for political trade unionism. We created it to shorten the distance between women comrades and to stimulate support. The goal is to grow in quantity and quality because we are the women who fight, and we will keep fighting in memory of the women who have lost their lives while defending our rights.”

In Costa Rica, **Dania Obando Castillo** is the General Secretary of **Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Palma (SITRAPA)**. She is also the Gender and Environment Secretary in the **Federación Nacional de Trabajadores de la Agroindustria, Gastronómica, Hotelería y Afines (FENTRAGH)** and she also occupies a seat on the **Confederación de Trabajadores y Trabajadores Rerum Novarum (CTRN)**. Her union has also helped to establish a network of women called **CLAMU - CR Pura Vida**.

“As women, many of us lack information and we lack confidence. We must empower women because I can say that most women have always been very submissive and we have let it be the men who take control, and it is time that we show how valuable and intelligent we are and that it does not necessarily take a man to get ahead. We are women, we are strong, and we have a lot to learn to change these systems that for decades have been led by men and our fear for ourselves.”

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The main thing that women need to understand is that they do not deserve to be mistreated and they know that if they suffer from a blow, humiliation or psychological abuse, there is a network of women in Costa Rica to help them. It is very important that women take control. The day that happens we will change this sad story full of injustices.”

8.2 Women Organisers

One of the best ways of encouraging women to join is by having women as organisers. We know that this can be a successful tactic. The IUF has long promoted the principle that ‘like organises like’; that is to say, the best people to organise farmworkers are other farmworkers, or migrant workers for organising migrant workers, and so on. This is because we can relate better to the people who are organising us and share our stories more easily.

Thinking strategically like this about our union organising can bring excellent results. Having more women organisers can encourage other women to be involved in the union and can build their power and confidence.



What we say

“The previous Chair of my union was a man of age. The union work was not done properly. He was not interested in women’s issues. Now, it is a woman and the differences are huge. The union has got a second breath.

She is conducting events on gender issues, equality issues, child labour and decent work. She is also spreading information and carrying out training so that we can go back to our workplaces and encourage more people to join.

Simply having her as a Chairwoman is also encouraging women to be more active and has helped to organise new members. As a woman she is able to encourage other women to be involved in the union. She understands their stories and can share in their struggles. They see this and respond to her. They want to join the union because they see it is a place for them.

She also created a Women’s Committee Network which is giving us the space to speak. The change in the attitude of the union is noticeable. It is completely different. We are finally moving forward.”

Raushan Sabirova, Union and Women’s Committee Member, Food and Processing Workers Union (FWU), Kyrgyzstan



What we say

“We are guided by the gender policy in employment and we allocate resources equally to both men and women. We have employed female organisers to take up responsibilities that were previously largely confined for male organisers.

We exposed women to equal opportunities in jobs and we gave them an equal platform. We realised that the female organisers excelled. Many female organisers were recruited, and the result was perfect. It helped to recruit other female workers. Female workers appreciated that female organisers can talk about the issues that affect them. It also gave the union an appreciation and showed them that female organisers can work equally at the same level – and perhaps even better – than male organisers.”

Austin Muswere, Deputy General Secretary, General Agricultural and Planation Workers Union of Zimbabwe (**GAPWUZ**), Zimbabwe

8.3 Women’s Committees



What we say

“Women must have formal gender structures running parallel to the constitutional structures. Otherwise the gender issue will just be washed away and forgotten about. Gender must be mainstreamed in all the policies so that we are not forgotten about and our concerns are not left behind.”

Patricia Nyman, National Gender Coordinator, South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union (**SACCAWU**), South Africa

Whatever the union progress, patriarchal values still dominate much of wider society. Having a Women’s Committee shows women that there is a special place for them in the union. Women’s Committees can be a safe space for us to voice our opinions freely and discuss the issues that are important to us.

We can use them to develop strategies, policies, and organise activities and make sure that our issues are at the top of union priorities. Committees can also support new activists and encourage young women to be active union members. They can also help to build campaigns alongside other equalities bodies in the union. They can give us a powerful voice in the union.

But they must not be just a ‘tick box’ exercise, seen by some in the union as the ‘place for women’s issues’ and then ignored. The concerns and policies of these committees must be integrated throughout the union agenda. Otherwise the committees do not have power or influence.

Our committees need constitutional rights, sufficient resources and a loud voice in decision-making so that they have the power to make the changes that are needed.

But it is often hard to get the resources, as well as acceptance from union leaders for this.

One strategy is to meet regularly with union leadership. Our concerns can be integrated down through the union’s overall aims.

We can and should also build a structural link with other union committees. This way the whole union agenda can be influenced.

Another method is to monitor union activities for gender equality. We can then recommend improvements.



Even where unions have thoroughly taken equality on board, Women's Committees are generally still needed. They ensure that any gains in equality last over time.

The IUF has started to hold sectoral women's meetings to foster the creation of women's networks within TNCs and sectors, with the aim to eventually have them for each sector. At these meetings, women can discuss concerns and find solutions to the sector- or company- specific gender issues that they face and become stronger negotiators.



What we do

“We called on our affiliated organisations to send protest letters to him to express their solidarity...”

In Ukraine, the Agro-Industrial Workers' Union (AIWU) and its Women's Committee have always supported union activists in dealing with harassment at the workplace.

The Women's Committee received a complaint from the chairwoman of a trade union organization of one of the agricultural enterprises of the Sumy region. She said that at a meeting discussing a vacation schedule, the director of the company used physical violence to push her out of the boardroom and verbally abused her for expressing the opposite opinion of union members about the vacation schedule for the coming year.

After advice from the AIWU Women's Committee, the woman filed a complaint with the police. The Women's Committee also wrote a letter to the Director of the company explaining that his behaviour was unacceptable, inappropriate and illegal, and demanded a public apology.

“We asked him if he would like to see his daughter or wife be treated like this and put in this position. We asked him to apologise, which of course he didn't do. We called on all our affiliated organisations to send protest letters to him to express their solidarity with the woman. He received 22 solidarity letters. Local police also invited the Director of the enterprise to a discussion to explain that he had committed a wrongdoing. As a result, the Director apologised to the union Chairwoman and she has not faced any other harassment or pressure since then.”

Nadia Burlaka, Agro-Industrial Workers Union of Ukraine (AIWU), Ukraine



What we do

A Safe Space to Discuss Reproductive Health

In Indonesia, the national Women’s Committee of the **Federation of Hotel, Restaurant, Plaza, Apartment, Catering and Tourism Workers’ Free Union (FSPM)** meets twice a year to discuss workplace conditions related to women.

The **FSPM** has been supporting its regional Women’s Committees at **Crowne Plaza Jakarta** and **Novotel Bogor** hotels to hold annual training and counselling about reproductive health and cervical cancer. In these sessions, the Committee also provides education about menstrual pain and menstrual leave. Members are given information about their rights and learn about the need to address reproductive health in the workplace.

Despite the education sessions, many women at Novotel Bogor are still reluctant to take menstrual leave. So, the Women’s Committee also raises awareness by printing and distributing legal regulation documents in the canteens and locker rooms. **Melly Mokodompit**, the Chairwoman of the Committee at Novotel Bogor, supports workers to negotiate with management to win menstrual leave. Together they make an agreement and schedule linked to the workers’ menstrual schedule.

“That is the function of the Women’s Committee to give education and encourage them about menstrual leave as it has been regulated by the law.”

8.4 Women Leaders

More women are becoming active in unions at the local level. But we continue to be underrepresented in the leadership. Often, we are represented as members but not recognised as leaders.

This might be because of the culture of traditional male unionism that continues to exist, or because we do not have the self-confidence to stand for leadership positions. Whatever the reason, more needs to be done.

For women’s issues and campaigns to be better integrated into union activities, we need to take our place at all levels and become fully involved in the policy and action debates.

We need to promote women’s access to top positions in the unions.

When they get there, we need to make sure that they are taken seriously.

Women need to be presented in all trade union decision-making bodies – local, national, regional and international.

But we must remember that quota systems alone are not enough. Even if women are at the table – it does not mean that they will speak. We need to challenge harmful attitudes and norms which maintain women in a culture of silence. We need to empower women to speak and give them the space to do so. This way we can ensure women’s full participation.



What we say

In 2001, **Adela Torres** was the first woman to ever join the Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Industria Agropecuaria (**SINTRAINAGRO**) in forty years of the union's existence. Then, in March 2006, she was elected as General Secretary, a position she continues to hold. She is now part of the Executive Committee of the IUF, of COLSIBA – a body of unions in the banana and agricultural industries and has been a Councillor in the city of Apartado in Colombia.

“I have to say that it has not been easy for me to be in a role that historically has been occupied by men and, being the only woman on the Board of Directors of a total of 12 members and 177 male leaders nationally (4 women), sometimes I have had to cry in silence but I have gathered strength and kept going ...

Despite all that, I have managed to do my job with a lot of responsibility and commitment...

At first, I didn't want to be a leader because I was scared. The violence in the Urabá region was very strong, killing many affiliated men and leaders who joined the union. It was because of my co-workers insisting that me and other women could be leaders, and after some time I realised that it was important for women to come to these spaces to work with women...

It has been difficult because in previous years, the union was only made up of men. But, with the death and retirement of men there has been a need to make links with women and establish work with women. Since then it has caused a change of perspectives in men and they are very committed to hiring women in the farms...”



What we do

“The activism and wisdom of UFCW Canada sisters is fundamental to our union...”

Despite the **United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW)** in Canada being 54% women, very few women hold leadership roles. The union has been actively making space for women at the table to give them equal representation in leadership.

In 2017, union members passed a historic Resolution at the National Council Convention to support women into leadership positions.

Local Unions with more than 4,000 members get an additional seat at the national decision-making body. This seat is reserved for a woman. In addition to this, 2 of the women must be from ethnic minorities.

As a result of this constitutional change, half of the National Council are now women. Gender equity has become a reality in the leadership of the **UFCW Canada**.

Paul Meinema, the National President of **UFCW Canada** says

“UFCW Canada women activists make up 52% of the membership. The activism and wisdom of UFCW Canada sisters is fundamental to our union – and to the National Council...A Council with gender equity makes us stronger as a union and as an advocate – not just for women, but for all members and their families.”



What we say

“There has been significant progress in our country. Our Prime Minister and Governor General are both women. Our General Secretary and President are also women. This has had a significant impact on women being better represented. Of course, there are some negative responses from some because of the patriarchal perspective that guide decisions and attitudes, with many thinking that running the union is not a woman’s place...”

When we got our female General Secretary, it was a culture shock, particularly for some people in our society who found it difficult. However, our union is now mainly dominated by women and we are able to bring our valuable and unique qualities into industrial relations and negotiations. It is particularly really useful when negotiating issues and grievances which directly affect women. We have a shared perspective and can identify with the situation...

The trade union is moving forward away from the stagnant and old patriarchal ways. Now most people are starting to see the value in having a better balance. We are working towards breaking the glass ceiling and removing the veil of ignorance, but our work is not over yet. The major issue is about breaking cultural barriers and the socialization that is engrained in all of us. We need to use education and information to plant the right seeds that bear the fruit to move forward.”

Shakeda Williams, Industrial Relations Officer, Barbados Workers’ Union (**BWU**), Barbados



What we say

“In the meatpacking plants in the US, there are individuals from every microcosm of the world. There will be between twenty and forty different languages, male, female, gay, straight, bisexual, of all nationalities. We need to not only have gender equality, but also have gender equality inside all of the different subsets of identities that we represent.

Although we all have the same goal in the union, each of us has a different set of issues that need to be addressed to get to our ultimate shared goal. If we miss out the issues of women, transgender individuals, the issues and concerns of any voice, then we are not going to achieve our goal.

When you sit in a leadership position, I think it is important to not only listen to those voices, but to go out and put those voices in positions of leadership in order to fulfill our mission. We have to find leaders of every race, religion, gender, or any other identity to make sure that in every union every voice is represented and represented at every level – from rank and file all the way up to the top leadership level as well...

We need to look into our membership and find that person to cultivate and empower. People are not born with leadership skills - leadership skills are taught, learnt, and earned. We need to lead by example, provide opportunities and create the space for those new leaders to take the role and succeed.”

Mark Lauritsen, IUF President & UFCW International Vice President for Meatpacking, United Food and Commercial Workers Union (**UFCW**), USA

8.5 Women Negotiators

In collective bargaining, majority rules – and men have always been the majority. For this reason, women’s interests have not been properly represented by trade unions.

We are often not included in negotiating structures, committees or teams where we might have helped to draft and negotiate agreements to address our concerns. Sometimes our demands are left off the bargaining agenda on the grounds that there are only a few women in that workplace.

But when women are a minority, they need even **more** support and opportunity to be actively involved.

But the reluctance to involve us is not limited to unions. Managers can be hostile in negotiating with women union representatives; they try to intimidate or patronise us. Even when we are at the negotiating table, often we are not heard.

But, when we are involved, the outcome can be impressive. We often make excellent negotiators. We have valuable knowledge which can be used to negotiate for both women and men. But also, more male negotiators need to understand our concerns and actively include these concerns in the bargaining agenda.

Collective bargaining is not just a nice idea. It practically helps people too. We can actively improve our rights, while standing up for ourselves.



What we do

“The Committee used to fear the estate management...”

In Zimbabwe, the **General Agricultural and Plantation Workers Union of Zimbabwe (GAPWUZ)** has been training women union members on negotiation and leadership skills.

Shupikai Saidi is a wage negotiator in the GAPWUZ and Secretary of the Workers Committee at Nyanga Pine estate. The union training has given her more confidence to stand up for women’s rights in negotiations.

“The Committee used to fear the estate management and could not present workers grievances to them...”

When I got elected into the Workers Committee, I took the role to educate my fellow members about trade unionism. I led discussions on issues such as the role of a good leader, teamwork, speaking with one voice...

I attended the leadership training, and workers’ rights and collective bargaining trainings conducted by the union and this assisted me in building my confidence. The trainings were an eye-opener to me on the roles and duties workers can play in strengthening the union.”

Her improved confidence enabled her to lead the Committee in negotiations and successfully persuade the management to provide clean water in the Pine estate. The Committee has also negotiated for the management to provide materials to build new toilets.



What we do

“It taught me how not to be afraid when speaking...”

In Indonesia, the **Federation of Hotel, Restaurant, Plaza, Apartment, Catering and Tourism Workers’ Free Union (FSPM)** has been carrying out training to make sure that women are properly represented in their negotiation teams and leadership structures.

Dyah Ambhara (Ara) is the Chair of the Union at **Hyatt Regency Yogyakarta** hotel and has taken part in several education and leadership training workshops. They have played a big part in her becoming the strong union leader that she is today. The workshops have encouraged her to become bolder and more confident in speaking – in public, and in front of management too. She still remembers one of the trainings that she attended which really interested and empowered her

“It was a training about how to talk and negotiate with management, where it taught me how not to be afraid when speaking, and also how to read their gestures and body language.”

In 2017, **Florentina Rahayu** was re-elected as chairwomen of **Sheraton Mustika Yogyakarta** hotel union. She has said that the education and trainings – which included topics from basic unionism to gender equality – have shaped her to become a braver person and helped her to express her opinion.

The training also made Florentina realise the importance of passing on knowledge and skills to young women to prepare a new union leader for the future. She often encourages other union members to accompany her to regional or national meetings so that they can have the opportunity to learn about the union structures and says that *“Now the others have begun to appear [in union activities].”*

8.6 Votes by Women for Women

Because we were previously excluded, we often lack the confidence to stand for election. We might even be reluctant to vote for other women in elections. Some of us still see leadership as something only for men – rooted in ideas about power.

So, encouragement and confidence-building are needed so that women stand for election, and when they do, other women vote for them. Voting for a woman sends a powerful message to the patriarchal system that it is being challenged.

But it is counter-productive to have women elected only to fail. This will only reinforce bad stereotypes. So, women leaders should be active in training young women in communication skills such as public speaking and in technical matters such as national legislation. We should also publicise the achievements of women leaders to inspire and motivate others.

When it comes to standing for election, we have to consider how we can fit union responsibilities in with the rest of our lives. Support from our family members is often vital.

This raises a question of how our unions are themselves structured. Reorganisation of union structures and schedules to fit around our busy lives may also be needed.



What we say

In Uganda, **Theopista Ssentongo Nabulya** was the first woman union Education Officer and then the first woman General Secretary, elected in 1989. In 1994, she was elected to represent workers in the constitutional formation of Uganda, and helped to include workers' rights in the constitution for the first time. She later went on to represent the views of workers in parliament between 2001 and 2016. Today she is General Secretary of the **National Union of Commercial, Manufacturing and Agricultural Workers (NUCMAW)**. Theopista's own rise was the result of many years of working with other union sisters to overcome male resistance.

“When I was elected as the General Secretary, there was no woman who had ever been a General Secretary in Uganda, not even in East and Central Africa... The inequality in the Labour Movement was so obvious that prompted me to contest the leadership in the Union alongside men....”

As we formed Women Committees' men misunderstood that we were forming new unions. Women were victimised so badly, to the extent of forcing those women who were very active in the fight against inequality to lose their jobs and they were expelled from the unions. I and other colleagues took up the matter up to the Industrial Court. A union had to pay compensation but never allowed them back in this union.

I can proudly say that I have worked as a role model to other women to encourage them to offer themselves for leadership positions in the unions in Uganda...

I am a General Secretary of NUCMAW, but I was also elected recently as a Deputy Secretary General at NOTU (National Organisation of Trade Unions, Uganda). We should be voting for women as leaders to show their potential in leadership and also to encourage them and help them believe that they are able to lead in the union. Through training we can empower women to take up leadership roles.”

8.7 Passing It On

Once we make it into leadership, we need to make sure that it is a sustained legacy. We don't want these achievements to disappear with us and become token. We want gender equality to be a lasting reality.

Those of us already trained or who have become leaders have an added responsibility. We must pass on our knowledge and skills to young women to inspire and prepare the next generation of female leaders.

Women leaders who are competitive and exclude other women are doing great disservice to both women and the union.



What we say

“Even when we have won something, we need to keep vigilant so that we make sure it is retained. We don't reach anything if we don't fight – people don't give women privileges...”

We have come a long way, but we need to protect what we have reached. Otherwise it will go down the drain.”

Ute Funk, Gewerkschaft Nahrung-Genuss-Gaststätten (**NGG**), Germany



What we do

The Anna Stewart Mentoring Project

Unions in Australia have a special programme to help women activists to become more confident and active. It is named after Anna Stewart, a remarkable trade unionist from the State of Victoria. Anna continually sought ways to involve women in decision-making in their unions. She fought for maternity leave and childcare facilities and she exposed sexual harassment, convincing unions and employers that the issue was an industrial one. She died in 1983. Wanting a fitting memorial, unions in Victoria started the Anna Stewart Project soon after her death. It now runs across the country.

Several times a year, active women union members go for a few weeks' union training. The women activists go around with individual union officials to onsite visits, to union executive meetings, to the courts. They also meet up to discuss their experiences. Then they go back to their jobs and spread the word. As a result, more women become delegates, because they have a better idea of how the union works.

Lee Matahaere is a casual worker and a member of the **Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union (AMWU)**. This is what she says she learnt by going on the programme:

"It was an eye opener... Women are a large part of the workforce now, and I think their voices should be heard... It still seems to me that women who are outspoken are called troublemakers but men who are outspoken are said to show great leadership skills... The most important thing I learnt in trips out with the organisers was that we can't just pay our union fees and expect everything to be done for us."

<https://www.amwu.org.au/asmp>



What we can do

- **Carry out training and mentoring to build women's confidence;** this can help to promote women's access to bargaining teams.
- **Develop strategic organising programmes which include women organisers** to bring in more women; look for existing informal leaders to draw in to become union organisers.
- **Make sure the language and pictures in union publications include women.**
- **Organise women-only social events** to identify and attract more women activists and build a sisterhood.
- **Run workshops to develop individual and collective motivation,** confidence and assertiveness, and to identify priorities for action.
- **Establish Women's Committees at different levels in the union** to provide focus for the women's activities and maintain a consistent gender approach.
- **Consider how to reorganise union meetings to involve more women.**
- **Challenge 'cultural' / political barriers to women's leadership;** this includes encouraging women to stand for election, and women voting for them; it also means men voting for women leaders – and accepting women's right to represent men and making visible the achievements of women leaders.
- **Mainstream gender in the union and adopt measures such as quotas or reserved seats** to ensure that women sit in decision-making bodies of the union.



ARGUMENTS TO USE

- ▶ Women-only activities are needed because of past – and continuing – gender discrimination, in the unions and in society; they are part of the solution.
- ▶ If women are not involved, women’s demands may not be addressed.
- ▶ Women leaders have a special responsibility to make sure that more women are encouraged to rise up in the union.
- ▶ Being assertive is not being aggressive; it is just standing up for what is right.
- ▶ Women leaders are essential to make sure that women’s issues are taken up by the union, and to give other women confidence that this is so. We should all take pride in the achievements of women leaders and publicise them widely.
- ▶ Women are quite capable also of representing men; after all, men have assumed they can represent women for all these years.
- ▶ It is counterproductive to train women if they are then never given the opportunity to lead. They will feel frustrated and may well leave the union.



Key Resources

Global Solidarity (IUF, 2019)

<http://www.iuf.org/w/sites/default/files/GlobalSolidarity2019-e.pdf>

Educating for Union Strength (ILO, 2015)

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-ed_dialogue/-actrav/documents/publication/wcms_382787.pdf



9. Winning Men's Support

Many men in trade unions around the world support gender equality. They work tirelessly to promote it in the union and in society.

Others agree but are still unsure what action they can take. As a man, it can be hard to address women's demands when you are not familiar with the key issues at stake. This is even harder when women are not included in committees and executive bodies.

Some men find it difficult to challenge the 'macho' culture. It is much easier to carry on with the status quo rather than trying to confront other men who continue to believe in, and actively promote inequality between men and women.

We need to find ways to support those men who agree with us to help change the minds of those who don't yet, to persuade them that gender equality is the right and sensible thing to do – for a stronger union movement and a better future for all.



What we say

“Full, equal participation of women and men at all levels at work, in trade unions and civil society is a vital factor for democracy and welfare. I believe achieving gender equality is a shared responsibility of both men and women...”

Women in the European labor market remain a largely untapped pool of skills and their employment rate is overall lower than that of men. Low participation of women in the labor market and the gender pay gap are the consequences of systematic discrimination against women at work and in wider society.”

Kristjan Bragason, IUF/EFFAT General Secretary



What we do

Reserving Seats for Women

In Malawi, at the **Hotel, Food, Processing and Catering Workers Union (HFPCWU)**, men have agreed to support women’s activities by allocating 10% of the total union monthly subscription to support women’s involvement in the union.

“There were awareness training activities organised by the union to look at the Union’s Constitution and come up with gaps and also suggestions for the amending it. The process started in 2017.

The Union is now amending its Constitution to have reserved seats for women, to have 10% of union subscription to go towards women activities. At the end of their term of office, only men were receiving a gratuity but now Women’s Committee members will also receive a gratuity.”

Zione Leah Pakulantanda, Projects Officer, Hotel, Food Processing and Catering Workers Union (HFPCWU), Malawi

9.1 Why is Gender Equality Important for Men?



What we say

“I have the experience of moving from a developing country to a developed one and the experience we see is very similar – it is a universal experience. Men are not educated about violence or about inequality. Men should be more aware – we need to educate them, or they will not understand.”

Neelam Verma, National Executive Committee Member for Food, Drink and Agriculture, **Unite the Union**, UK

Many men have long supported our struggle for equality. But there is still a long way to go. Our status – in society and the union – is based on our culture. It is reinforced by the power inequality that exists in our reality.

But trade unions have always been at the forefront of challenging such ‘realities’, especially where they are unjust, oppressive, exploitative and unsustainable. A society based on oppression might benefit the oppressors in the short term, but eventually it will fail.

Gender discrimination is an unjust and unsustainable system of exploitation that prevents us from achieving social equality and progress for all. Men need to know the benefits.

Gender equality campaigning has long been seen as a woman’s struggle. Some think that women are the only ones who will benefit from a more equal society. But men can benefit too. They too face rigid gender norms that harm their lives.

More men are wanting to take on the responsibility of caring for children. They also want extended parental leave. Gender stereotypes need changing to achieve this.

Societal pressures for men to be aggressive and not reveal vulnerability or emotion can have negative effects on mental health.

Gender equality will enable men to have greater freedom in their careers. They will be able to take on jobs traditionally assigned to women.

We can only succeed through the participation of both women and men in the fight for equality.



What we say

“If we look back to the patriarchal beliefs and the behaviour of men, men have always been on top. The idea is that men should lead, and women belong in the kitchen and not in the workplace. But we can win the struggle together. If men pioneer and champion equality it changes the behaviour of other men. It also gives encouragement and confidence to other women if men give them spaces to lead.

The major barrier to equality is men’s lack of awareness. We need to educate, otherwise gender empowerment will be limited. Awareness must go down to every worker at the grassroots level so that they appreciate that gender equality is critical. Also, resources are limited. When they are allocated, they are given mainly to men. Resources must be shared equally so women have the same opportunity to develop economically, legally and socially. We need to challenge the patriarchal beliefs and failure to accept that men and women can do the same things. Education is power.”

Austin Muswere, Deputy General Secretary, General Agricultural and Planation Workers Union of Zimbabwe (**GAPWUZ**), Zimbabwe



What we do

“They are fathers to girls, brothers to women and friends to women too.”

Juliet Kutwabwana from the National Union of Cooperative Movement and Allied Workers (**NUCMAW**) in Uganda realises the importance of including men in gender equality activities to encourage them to understand the struggle. Her union holds workshops and training on gender issues and invites men to attend to improve their awareness.

“At the end of the day, they all were born of a woman. They are fathers to girls, brothers to women, and friends to women too. We make them appreciate that they have to work hand-in-hand with us and support our cause. I am glad to note that of recent we have several men supporting women struggles. It is important to win men’s support because then it’s easier to work as a team and to move forward with less opposition...”

When women speak out, men get an informed point of view from the people affected. Men appreciate it – they know about the issues and join the campaign and struggle.”



What we say

“Men must understand that their comforts and advantages result from inequality. Without concessions from men, the existing inequalities cannot be eliminated. Men must understand that they will also be winners in the development of gender equality. For example, they will have more time for children and family.

Our union has a high proportion of women. So, it is my daily work to stand up for the rights and equality of women. We regularly review our collective agreements for possible injustices in terms of unequal treatment and pay between women and men.

I do not only believe in the positive impact of gender equality; I am firmly convinced of it. We as a trade union are committed from the very beginning to ensuring that all people in our society have good working conditions and can therefore also have a good life. We will only achieve this goal if we take all genders into account. In my view, this includes inseparably equal opportunities for women and men.

As soon as all people in our society have the same opportunities in life and are free not only in their choice of career but also in how they want to shape their lives, we as trade unions will benefit from this.”

Peter Buddenberg, Gewerkschaft Nahrung-Genuss-Gaststätten (NGG), Germany



What we say

“Gender equality is important because it is fundamentally about a shared human dignity. Gender equality is a recognition of the fundamental dignity and worth of every single human being. It is the basis upon which we can build cohesive and caring societies based on the respect of every person no matter what their gender.

The struggle for gender equality, if it is to be successful, has to be a shared struggle. The notion of solidarity is very important in this context. In my role as a leader in the union, I need to frame every decision by asking and reflecting on whether I am providing opportunities for women to be heard, to act and to lead...

The major barriers to equality are fundamentally around the lack of access for women to leadership positions in organisations generally. Until women gain a fair share of leadership roles and recognition of the structural constraints placed upon them by society then the struggle will be ongoing...

In creating the United Workers Union, we crafted a new set of rules in our constitution that ensured that every elected representative body and office would be composed of at least 50% women.

With respect to the two most senior offices of National Secretary and National President we crafted a rule to recognise the need to positively promote gender equality by mandating that if the National Secretary were a male then the National President must be female. However, importantly we had a rule approved that if the National Secretary was a female then the National President could be either female or male. We believe that these rules of the new union exhibit a leading approach to gender equality in the union movement.”

Tim Kennedy, National Secretary, United Workers Union (UWU), Australia

9.2 Integrating Gender Analysis

Integrating a gender analysis means examining the power differences between women and men in their given gender roles. Gender equality and empowerment of women should then become central to an organisation, integrated through all its activities and policies.

It involves:

- Collecting data on men and women (it can be broken down by age, ethnicity, disability).
- Identifying the gender differences between women and men and identifying the underlying causes of gender inequalities.
- By identifying how existing union policies and practices reinforce gender inequalities, the union can then make sure that all new union policies and practices are targeted at overcoming past discrimination.

Issues such as maternity rights, work-life balance and sexual harassment should not be separated off as 'women's issues' to be dealt with only by women. They are 'union issues' for all of us to deal with.

Occupational health and safety and climate change are not gender neutral. Gender runs through everything, which is why a gender approach needs to be included in any OHS or climate change policies.

More men need to be trained on gender issues – both new activists and existing union leaders. Women also need to be trained so that they can be active in integrating a gender analysis into everything they do.

Many of us have grown sceptical of policies like **gender mainstreaming**. Too often it has been used to understate the problem of gender inequality. Often used as a decoy, as a 'tick box' exercise which is later ignored. Some of us have seen union leaders doing away with women-specific activities and then not replacing them with something more effective. The 'business as usual plus gender' approach that is often taken does not address the need for transformational change.

But integrating a gender analysis into all policies and practices, supported by local women-focused and context-specific activities, can help to redistribute power, and achieve gender equality.



What we say

"Every union leader that is trying to diversify has faced the same issue – there is often some backlash. People may say "well she got that position because she is a woman." When I hear this backlash, I am often surprised who I hear it from, but I welcome it because it opens up the discussion. We should not be afraid to have that discussion. It is only by opening up the conversation and directly addressing these issues that we can start to change things and get more buy-in on the importance of diversity..."

Some people think that because an issue does not affect them, it means that they should not have to address it. We need to train and educate to enable the membership to understand why it is important to them because an injury to one is an injury to all. Once it becomes important to the membership, then it becomes important to the leader, and then the leaders will help to move that change through the system..."

Mark Lauritsen, IUF President & UFCW International Vice President for Meatpacking, United Food and Commercial Workers Union (**UFCW**), USA

9.3 In the Union, and in the Home

Gender changes in the union movement are linked to changes in wider society. What happens at home affects, and is affected by, what happens in our unions. As discriminatory attitudes to gender change in one part of life, this has a trickle-down effect on others.

If we can build women's confidence to take on more public-facing roles and encourage women and men to work together in the union, we can challenge cultural norms. This can positively impact family life. It can encourage our families to question how labour is divided at home. It can also positively impact our children, affecting how we raise our children and what we teach them about the roles of men and women.

Some men seem to want to keep these spheres separate. Many of us have seen male union leaders publicly support gender equality, and then harass or bully a woman member of staff, or their wife at home, behind closed doors.

These double standards damage the union and damage women's trust. Women become sceptical about unions.

But as men's values change, they start to value our involvement. They see the benefits in the union. Our contributions are respected.



What we do

'Everyone is Welcome'

In Sweden, the **Municipal Workers Union Kommunal** has developed materials to encourage discussion on diversity, equal treatment and anti-discrimination.

As part of the work on diversity issues, the union has developed a card game called 'Everyone is Welcome'. The card game gives information and discussion points to support broader discussions on values. The cards are given to union members to use at courses, conference, at the workplace or even at home.

"It can be difficult to see our internal bias which can serve to maintain a discriminatory environment. The game can help us to evaluate our internal bias and hear other people's thoughts and opinions. This can enable workers to understand better people's different values."

These cards have been hugely successful. People recognise that to challenge inequality we need to start by having these types of conversations. We need to deal with ourselves first and challenge our internal bias before anything else. Only after this can we start changing things."

Anja Westberg, National Officer, **Kommunal**, Sweden

9.4 Confronting Misogyny

In some places, men provide support and actively participate. They become role models for others to follow. In others, men – in the union and at home - still operate in a patriarchal system. They continue to behave badly.

Some men are threatened by what women's equality could mean for them.



Any rise in misogyny needs to be addressed.

Education can encourage men to change their thinking. Women can take the lead in educating men and building awareness around gender equality – explaining why it is important for women, and men too. Men-only work groups and involving men in women’s work groups can enable them to explore their own understanding of gender equality. They can work together to see how to promote it in their unions. It is very rare for men to have these opportunities.

When men see women leading education, they can see our potential.



What we say

“Inequality is not born. It is made...Equality must stop being a Utopia and become a permanent and sustained reality.”

Patricia Alonso, President of IUF Women’s Committee, Federacion Argentina Union Personal Panaderias y Afines (**FAUPPA**), Argentina



What we say

“Men will move away from such a culture when they have lived experience of women playing their rightful role as an equal partner in leadership roles and in positions of power. Ultimately this culture comes down to power, and who has it. If our values are grounded in a shared dignity for every human, and equality and fairness for all, then from this base men and women can build a culture that is not grounded in patriarchy and the negative aspects of our society that flow from that.

These are the values that underpin the union movement. Building solidarity between workers everyday around these values, is a path to moving men from a negative patriarchal culture.

When I look to the generation of my children, I am full of hope that the ‘macho’ culture is no longer one that is seen as legitimate.”

Tim Kennedy, National Secretary, United Workers Union (**UWU**), Australia



What we can do

- **Integrate a gender analysis in union policy and practice;** union leaders should also take an active role in advocating equality; misogynistic or prejudice behaviour or language from anyone – including union leaders – should lead to disciplinary action.
- **Hold mandatory gender equality training, including for men union leaders and members;** this includes raising awareness of how the public and private spheres of life are integrated, and **challenge any misogynistic and sexist language and behaviour in the union.**
- **Keep senior union leaders informed of the achievements as well as the demands of women members.**
- **Encourage men to acknowledge male privilege,** show solidarity, and understand the causes of gender inequality.
- **Invite male union members to women’s meetings** to improve understanding on issues affecting women.



ARGUMENTS TO USE

- ▶ If you do not have a gender analysis of the situation, then you do not yet fully understand it.
- ▶ Being hypocritical about equality – saying one thing and doing another - is very damaging to the union and will put many people off the organisation.
- ▶ Changing perceptions and attitudes is a necessary part of the labour movement’s struggle to achieve dignity, equality and rights for all workers; respect for culture, for example, should not be used as an argument without thought about how that culture might grow and develop even further.

Key Resources



Understanding of Gender Equality and Gender Mainstreaming (ILO, 2015)

http://www.oit.org/wcmstp5/groups/public/—africa/—ro-abidjan/—ilo-pretoria/documents/publication/wcms_413784.pdf



10. Sisterhood Across Borders

Women continue to suffer from discrimination – in society, in the workplace and in the union. This means that we need to continue and strengthen the fight for global equality.

We need to strengthen solidarity and build close cooperation and collaboration – between our unions, within countries and across borders.

Building a global sisterhood of active and dedicated trade unionists across borders will help us learn from and support one another. It will also help to revive the Global Union movement.

This globalisation of the world economy means that we face real threats. Alongside gender inequality, we are facing uncertainty and loss of jobs as precarious and informal work, outsourcing, and agency work have taken over.

We need to work together to build solidarity so that we can collectively exercise our rights to voice our concerns and to win much needed improvements in our workplaces and in our lives.



What we do

A Global Sisterhood of Domestic Workers



In 2006, the first ever global conference of domestic workers took place in Amsterdam. It provided an opportunity for domestic workers to build solidarity, share experiences and most importantly, develop a common strategy to win an ILO Convention to protect the rights of domestic workers.

After the conference, domestic workers stayed in close contact and united in a global sisterhood which spanned across borders. The sisterhood came to be known as the **International Domestic Workers Network (IDWN)**. It mobilised globally to raise awareness of the need for a Convention to protect the rights of domestic workers.

After hard campaigning by the IDWN, the ILO adopted the proposal of the Convention and at the International Labour Conference in 2010 the first negotiations of the Convention took place. Domestic workers from all over the world attended to fight their case.

In 2011, after years of hard work and fierce negotiations, ILO Convention C189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers was passed by an overwhelming majority.

The network has now formed the first global union federation run by women, for work dominated by women – **the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF)**. The organisation has 68 affiliates from 55 countries, representing 500,000 domestic workers.

It carries out campaigning, organisation, and representation work:

- Advocacy and awareness campaigns:
 - Ratification of ILO Convention No. 189
 - My Fair Home campaign for employers to protect domestic workers rights
- Supporting domestic workers to form new organisations

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- Building capacity and strengthening women's leadership among affiliates
- Building solidarity with other trade unions and labour rights organisations.

The IDWF was born within the IUF. Under Article 13 of the IUF rules, the IDWF constitutes a special group. This means that the two organisations cooperate closely and the IDWF is invited to participate in IUF activities.

“Yes, We Did it!” How the World's Domestic Workers Won Their International Rights and Recognition

https://idwfed.org/en/resources/yes-we-did-it/@@display-file/attachment_1



What we do

Margaridas Fighting for Democracy, Justice and Equality



In Brazil, since 2000, over 30 feminist and working women's movements, trade union centres and international organisations have been organising against exploitation, marginalisation and violence against women.

Together these organisations have established the **March of the Margaridas**. The movement was developed in tribute to **Margarida Maria Alves**, a progressive union leader and rural working woman who encouraged workers to seek justice to guarantee their rights. She was tragically murdered in 1983. In her memory, every four years in August, thousands of women from all over Brazil take to the streets of the capital city Brasilia to march for justice and equality.

Coordinated by the **Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura (CONTAG)**, 27 federations and over 4,000 affiliated unions, representing rural women, urban workers, family farmers, peasants and indigenous women, march together.

In 2019, the **March of the Margaridas** took place again, fighting for democracy, justice, equality and freedom from violence, resisting and confronting the undemocratic and conservative government agenda. It protested against rural living conditions, poverty, economic and social inequality, violence, racism, homophobia and the exclusion of women in public policy.

10.1 Building Global Campaigns

Globalisation – the growing internationalisation of production and trade – has meant that the system of power has changed. Transnational Corporations (TNCs) have taken control.

Women suffer from globalisation. Our working conditions are getting worse. Pay is decreasing. We are losing our rights. On top of this, our bosses are demanding more from us. The global supply chains of TNCs are cutting across traditional trade union boundaries. This makes it harder for us to organise.

But trade unions are the last defence against unjust and exploitative power. TNCs are vulnerable to disruption. To confront this power, we are building global campaigns and organising across borders.

To challenge TNCs we need to look at how supply chains are constructed:

- Who runs the company?
- Who are the suppliers, customers and investors?
- How can we take action?
- Which unions represent employees in the supply chain?

We can also cooperate within sectors across existing boundaries to raise awareness and improve our conditions of employment. We can map different sites on gender issues and develop a global campaign to fight to set minimum standards for working conditions, gender equality and union recognition.



What we do

Global Hotel Housekeeping Campaign

Hotel housekeepers perform exhausting tasks for low pay and little or no employment security. Most are women, often migrant workers. Their vulnerability exposes them to health, safety and security risks including worsening conditions and downward pressure on their already low wages.

Since 2013, the IUF has been running a **Global Hotel Housekeeping Campaign** which calls on companies in the hospitality sector to bring about change in the industry. Hospitality workers have created a global network to share strategies and fight together.

Every year IUF unions hold a Global Week of Action; protests, meetings, and workshops are held to highlight the need for better wages, working conditions and protection against sexual harassment.

The campaign has also engaged with national and international hotel chains to expose unsafe workplaces and work practices, including hospitality companies Accor and Marriott International.

The campaign has raised global awareness of the serious, long term health impact of the working conditions of hotel housekeepers and how their rights are violated. It has also encouraged many unions to start organising hotel housekeeping staff.

10.2 Women's Representation in the IUF

The **IUF** is a Global Union Federation with member unions across the world. It represents workers in agriculture and plantations, tobacco, food and beverage processing, hotels and catering, tourism and domestic workers.

The **IUF** has long fought for gender equality and more women's involvement in union activities. Since 1980, IUF Congresses have adopted resolutions promoting equal opportunities and calling for the promotion of equality at the workplace, in unions and in society.

With the support of the IUF Secretariat, IUF affiliates have developed a common commitment to protecting and promoting equality. The **Action Programme for Equality** outlines affiliates' shared responsibility to work towards equality and address inequality. With technical and financial support from the **IUF**, many affiliates have developed awareness-raising and mobilisation activities – to attract more women to unions, to encourage them to be active, and to win more support among men too.

<https://www.iuf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/1.-IUF-Action-Program-2017-2022.pdf>



What we do

Also, in 2007, member unions at the 25th IUF World Congress passed a historic resolution to improve women's involvement in the IUF. It was agreed that, in every decision-making body of the IUF, women must comprise at least 40% of the union representatives there. And there are sanctions: voting rights are reduced in proportion to the number of women missing.

“Women need the opportunity to meet with other women without the so-called ‘expert’ guidance from men. We established a women’s committee to meet the day before the governing body so that they could organise themselves and their concerns.

Then we discussed introducing a statutory basis for guaranteeing 40 % of women’s representation. We told affiliates that they could pick their delegates based on their own internal procedures. But at Congress, they were under IUF rules which state that 40% of the voting delegates must be women. If their delegates didn’t meet the gender requirements, then they would lose a proportion of their voting rights.

I told Congress that if we left it to volunteerism, it would take 110 years. We shouldn’t be prepared to wait that long. At the 2012 Congress, 39.2% of delegates were women. It was similar in 2017. We now have the 40% rule across our governing bodies.

But there is always going to be a limit to what the IUF can ask of its affiliates. We must be realistic. Many affiliates are still trying to improve their own representation. This means we must make sure that women have equal access to jobs to change the workforce composition. More women will become shop stewards, rise through unions and become leaders. But there are some changes that we just can’t wait for. We have to make the move now.”

Ron Oswald, former IUF General Secretary



Bringing women together, within and across countries, can lead to greater confidence and promote women into the structures of the global unions. Through regional meetings, exchanges and sharing of information, we can create a global sisterhood and develop our unions to be stronger and more effective in fighting for all workers' rights.

The IUF has published useful information materials on important issues affecting us at work for affiliated unions to use.

<https://www.iuf.org/publications/>

It also has a dedicated Women Workers site where you can hear all the latest news:

www.iuf.org



A Gender Equality Guide for Trade Unionists in IUF Sectors

All for One, One for All

2nd Edition

THIS GUIDE IS FOR ALL OF US – WOMEN AND MEN.

IT IS FOR EVERYONE WHO WANTS TO MAKE THE UNION STRONGER AND MORE REPRESENTATIVE BY PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY – AT WORK, IN SOCIETY AND IN THE UNION. BUT AS THIS IS A GUIDE ON GENDER EQUALITY – AND HISTORICALLY WOMEN HAVE BEEN MARGINALISED – IT FOCUSES MAINLY ON WOMEN’S EXPERIENCES.

