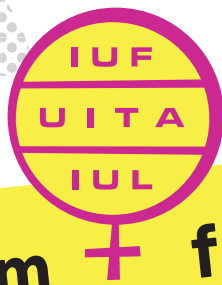


2023-2027



IUF Action Program for Equality



FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING



Since 1980, IUF Congresses have unanimously adopted resolutions reaffirming the principles of equality among men and women, especially:

- Equal rights and access to decent employment, training and professional advancement;
- Equal pay for work of equal value;
- The right to reconcile work and family responsibilities;
- Fair representation of women in decision-making bodies at all levels of trade unions (local, national, regional, international) according to the rules of the IUF;
- The right to be safe at work and safe at home;
- Equal rights to social protection.

We have always called for equality to be widely promoted at the workplace, in the trade union movement and across society. However, despite all the many advancements made on gender equality, women still face discrimination and do not have equal treatment. Women started entering the formal labour market some 70 years ago but, this labour world was shaped by men for...men.

Sadly, women are still regarded as secondary workers, as a commodity (objectification of their body), as disposable workers (part time workers are disproportionately women), and as "invisible" workers (women are overrepresented in informal employment and have higher rates of unemployment or under-employment than men). They are the workers with the lowest paid jobs (because most of the jobs performed by women are undervalued as they are related to so-called "natural" women tasks...) and this leads to gender occupational segregation. This situation partly explains the existing gender pay gap.

Today, women around the world earn on average 20% less than men. In some countries, women are forced to work beyond the age of 60 to survive.
Women receive on average pensions 25% lower

than men in high-income countries, and 60% of women workers worldwide have no legal protection or no social security at all.

While men are still considered as breadwinners, women continue to spend many more hours carrying out unpaid work due to the unequal division of family responsibilities, despite being breadwinners themselves. Self-employment is increasing and women workers are often engaged in two or three occupations to earn a living. Moreover, the lack of access to affordable and quality childcare considerably reduces women's job opportunities and their incomes. It makes it difficult to reconcile work and family life and results in even greater stress. A high proportion of unpaid family work and child labour, especially by girls, is carried out in home-based trades.



Despite ILO Conventions, national legislation, and collective agreements, maternity related issues are a major factor in workplace discrimination. Frequently, women's biological specificities are not fully taken into consideration. For instance,

menstruation or menopause may still be used as a pretext for discriminating against women employees and workers.

The fact that women are acquiring additional educational, or training qualifications has had few impacts on the number of women in employment or on narrowing the gender pay gap. ILO research demonstrates that the more feminized the workplace, the lower the average wage. With women workers more engaged in home-based trades, wages are deducted at every level along the supply chain.

Women disproportionately face violence and harassment worldwide, in every country without exception. This is labelled as gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH). At work, GBVH is one of the main obstacles to equality. The precarious employment status of so many women workers has also increased the incidents of bullying, violence, and harassment against them, particularly in the agricultural, hotel, restaurant, and food processing sectors and for domestic and home-based workers. Some women are forced to give sexual favours as a condition of continued employment.

Millions of women in the IUF sectors have to work outside their home state or country. Women migrant workers are more vulnerable than their male counterparts, since they are more likely to be discriminated against not only as migrants but also as women. There is evidence that forced labour, child labour and trafficking of girls and women have dramatically increased. There are also difficulties of official registration and access to social security.

Rural women workers in particular are often denied the right to food security, education, housing, health systems, credit, and social security.

COVID-19 has made things even worse. During the pandemic, women dropped out of work and the rates of women's participation in the labour market are in decline. Those who re-entered the employment market often did so on a part time or precarious basis which has reinforced the trend towards a disproportionate amount of casualization on women workers. Consequently, many women workers are deprived of social security benefits because their employment terms differ from the standard employer-employee relationship.

Automation and the advance of technology may also impact on women workers within IUF sectors due to jobs being replaced by machines.

Women make up a large proportion of workers in the IUF sectors. Many countries guarantee minimum representation of women in all decision-making and planning bodies, but much remains to be done. Unions have to ensure that they are representing their membership effectively as the level of trade union organization among women remains generally lower than among men. This may be because of precarious forms of employment and/or the fact that women do not always see how unions can help to improve their living and working conditions. There is also the fear of reprisals by employers. We still have a lot to do to enable men and women to combine work and family life with trade union work. There are too few women at the negotiating table both at national and international levels. However, there is clear evidence that where women, including young women, are active at all levels of the union, it benefits the whole organization, and strengthens its credibility within wider society and communities.

Equality is not about getting more women CEOs or more women on companies' executive committees and boards. Equality will not be reached by improving living standards alone as structural gaps will continue to exist until the system that allows for discrimination and unfairness is changed.

Equality is about transforming the system, tearing down the patriarchal society and the gender division of labour in the world of work. It is also about transforming unions. Fighting for and promoting the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining remains at the heart of the equality agenda.



In light of the above, the IUF 28th Congress calls on affiliates and on the IUF itself to make urgent progress and prioritize work on the following five pillars of the action program for equality:

1 MORE WOMEN, MORE POWERFUL UNIONS

- Collect statistics of women workers by occupation and sector;
- Collect statistics on women/men union membership by occupation and sector and report back at IUF meetings;
- Support women workers from the informal sector to develop and assert their “identity as workers”;
- Develop and actively implement special organizing strategies for women, particularly young women, as well as women in precarious employment and in the informal economy, including home-based and migrant workers, and actively promote their participation in trade unions’ activities;
- Closely monitor and enforce the IUF rules requiring at least 40% representation of women in all decision-making bodies of the IUF, including regional committees and other structures;
- Train women as leaders, organizers, negotiators, and educators;
- Use the IUF gender equality guide “All for one = One for all” in leadership courses for both men and women trade unionists;
- Ensure that at least 40% of union representation in decision-making bodies at trade union level are women, as well as in collective bargaining teams, and if that is not the case, evidence should be provided that agreements have been equality proofed;
- Promote, support and strengthen regional women’s TNC and sectoral networks and establish them where they do not currently exist;
- Look critically at our own structures, including bargaining groups and understand how separate groups can often disadvantage women;
- Ask if our unions are promoting enough women trade unionists;
- Ensure women trade unionists participate in IUF international meetings with companies;
- Support women workers in the informal sector to effectively access decision-making and policy intervention.

- Identify and understand the barriers to women's employment in IUF sectors and develop strategies to address them (including conducting surveys in communities to identify those barriers and checking that the recruitment process is not gender biased);
- Put pay equity on trade unions' negotiating agenda by doing the following at plant level:
 - Carry out equality mapping including agency, outsourced and temporary workers (noting that equality mapping is a good organizing tool!)
 - Calculate the gender pay gap
 - Look at any occupational segregation and at grading system
 - Identify and fight against any kind of gender-based discrimination
 - Demand pay transparency
 - Require neutral job evaluation based on the principle of equal pay for work of equal value
 - Ensure that there is equal access to overtime and training
- Promote ILO C100 (equal remuneration) and C111 (discrimination) and reflect their clauses in collective agreements and workplace policies;
- Look at ways to upgrade women workers' skills, including through partnership with vocational schools and companies;
- Promote the importance of women in apprenticeships as an opportunity to provide safe and secure employment;
- Focus on the disproportionate impacts of automation and new technology on women workers and the ways to mitigate them (also through equality-mapping);
- Promote a just transition toward a green and sustainable economy with a gender responsive and inclusive approach to mitigate the worst impacts of the climate crisis on women workers and their families;
- Promote skills training programs and ensure certification for all women workers;



- Campaign for the extension of social protection to all workers, including universal health care, welfare benefits, and fair pension systems;
- Advocate for trade/occupation/sector specific social security benefits to enhance work opportunities;
- Campaign for public policies for rural women workers to ensure they have equal access to land ownership titles, education, housing, credit, maternity leave, social protection, etc.;
- Advance rights of women workers in the informal sector utilizing for example ILO C141 (rural workers' organization) and C177 (home work);
- Ensure smooth transitioning of women workers in informal employment according to ILO R204 (transition from the informal to the formal economy).



3 MAKING WOMEN VISIBLE IN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Ensure that there is an equitable representation of women in Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Committees and train more women as OHS representatives;
- Conduct mapping exercises to understand occupational hazards and risks on women workers;
- Make menstruation and menopause trade union and workplace issues, to be acted upon through negotiation, and raise awareness about the specificities of women's health-based discrimination;
- Make sure there is access to women-only toilets, sanitary and changing facilities in all workplaces (inclusive of the right of trans women to safe toilets and changing facilities of their choice);
- Look at the impact of climate change, such as heat stress, on women workers' health;
- Request specific studies on the impacts of chemicals and pesticides on women's bodies;
- Prioritize actions to take care of and improve women workers' health, including mental health;
- Include awareness of gender-based violence and harassment in OHS and in risk assessment and management;
- Include women-specific clauses/issues in OHS legislation;
- Campaign for the ratification and implementation of ILO C155 (occupational health and safety) and C184 (health and safety in agriculture).

4

PREVENTING AND ELIMINATING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

- Educate **all** trade union members, including leaders, on the root causes of gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH), including against LGBT+ workers, and on the characteristics of GBVH;
- Prioritize sexual harassment as an obstacle to equality at work and ensure that a zero-tolerance policy on bullying and sexual harassment is agreed upon at every workplace and/or is part of collective agreements;
- Negotiate and implement international agreements with TNCs on eliminating sexual harassment;
- Make domestic violence a trade union and workplace issue by raising awareness and develop and negotiate workplace policies that address its impacts at work;
- Campaign for the ratification, implementation and enforcement of ILO C190 (violence and harassment in the world of work);
- Actively participate in relevant international institutions to combat human trafficking;
- Negotiate access to safe paid transportation to and from work, especially for women workers in developing countries.

5

BUILDING A WOMEN FRIENDLY WORKING ENVIRONMENT

- Conduct research into the working conditions of women workers in order to respond more effectively to their needs;
- Support technological advancement training to promote women's access to technological tools and equipment;
- Promote women workers-oriented community research and development centres to improve their trades and work prospects;
- Enable women and men to balance their domestic and care responsibilities with their job (flexible working hours, care leave or credits for the sick and elderly, etc.) including through promoting provisions of ILO C156 (workers with family responsibilities);
- Negotiate affordable and flexible childcare facilities and space for working mothers to breastfeed and campaign for affordable public quality service childcare facilities;
- Fight for full respect of maternity rights:
 - Promote and implement provision of ILO C183 (maternity protection) which states that women shall be entitled to a period of maternity leave of not less than 14 weeks
 - Fight any maternity-based discrimination
 - Ensure respect for maternity leave provisions
 - Protect pregnant women workers and emphasize the importance of risk assessments specifically for them
 - Negotiate light work or reasonable adjustments whenever possible for pregnant women workers
 - Negotiate meaningful paternity leave.



AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST...

A women friendly labour environment cannot be sustained without general gender responsive policies elaborated, with the involvement of unions, at national and international levels such as:

- Fighting for women workers' rights;
- Treating the gender pay gap as a human right priority;
- Raising/improving minimum wages and campaigning for living wages;
- Advocating for piece rates to be at least at the level of minimum wages through tripartite negotiations where appropriate;
- Fighting against all forms of precarious work and outsourcing;
- Ensuring that women workers who are at the lowest rung of the global supply chains such as those who work from home, can avail themselves of the digital technology needed to make their working lives easier and their markets more accessible;
- Mainstreaming equality into collective bargaining agendas throughout the supply chain;
- Setting up effective enforcement and monitoring mechanisms for women workers' rights along the supply chain;
- Addressing class and racial divisions among women;
- Lobbying for important legislative changes wherever possible to help with enforcement in areas where there is no collective bargaining;
- Fighting for the civic space, peace and democracy.

HOW? THROUGH:

- Valuing the importance of workplace organisation;
- Bargaining collectively, negotiating workplace policies, etc.;
- Training, research, policy documents, education, meetings (physical and online), gathering and exchanging good practices;
- Looking at examples of successful organizing campaigns and develop an action plan based on the strategies used;
- Developing resources that can be easily accessed and brought into the collective bargaining arena;
- Building a sector picture of good practice to promote across workplaces;
- Advocating for change at the recruitment stage where there are labor shortages;
- Providing training and qualifications to women workers in the informal economy to raise the value of their work;
- Developing on a systematic base accessible communication such as short videos to encourage women's participation;
- Making partnership with feminist, migrant workers', communities' organisations, etc.;
- Raising equality on a systematic basis in IUF international and sectoral meetings;
- Referring to ILO conventions and other standards, the International Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (especially article 7 a (i)), and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW);
- Encouraging the participation of unions in social dialogue institutions to develop women friendly legislation;
- Encouraging the active involvement of all affiliates in utilizing International Women's Day to promote women's rights and gender equality for the whole of the month of March, as well as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women through the month of November.

Employers/companies (and governments for informal economy) should be requested to provide statistics on:

- The number of women/men workers per job category;
- Job classifications of women/men;
- Type of employment contract (permanent, full time, part time, seasonal, temporary, casual) women/men;
- Earnings (hourly wages or yearly earnings including benefits) by gender;
- Training and further training opportunities by gender;
- Resources to facilitate family-work balance.

These statistics should be drawn up annually to measure developments and to take action on any negative results, e.g. through a gender equality plan. Gender equality plans should be developed to address inequalities at the workplace. They should state clear goals and activities regarding recruitment, salaries, skills development, parental leave, and health and safety, including bullying and sexual harassment policies. A regular review procedure should also be included in all equality plans.



The IUF Women's Committee shall monitor the implementation and progress of the action program, leading up to next Congress.

