

A GENDER EQUALITY GUIDE FOR TRADE
UNIONISTS IN THE AGRICULTURE, FOOD,
HOTEL AND CATERING SECTORS



ALL for ONE = ONE for ALL

International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco
and Allied Workers' Associations



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IUF

International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations

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Introduction

Why the IUF produced this manual

The level of unionisation among women workers is far below its potential. Many women say they do not join unions because they find it difficult to see how unions can help them. They don't see many women at high levels in the unions, and they can't see their own priorities being taken up vigorously. So this manual aims to help create an environment where women workers can participate positively in IUF affiliated trade unions around the world. Why is this important?

It is the **right** thing to do.

Discrimination against women is not accidental or occasional; it is woven through societies in the world. So it needs tackling not on a case-by-case basis but systematically, dealing with the structures which entrench discrimination against women.

International standards exist, from the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), to ILO Conventions on the elimination of discrimination, for which we in the unions helped to fight.

It is the **sensible** thing to do.

The fact is that, if we don't have a gender analysis, we don't actually understand the situation in front of us. As a result, our union strategies towards governments and employers will be weaker.

The other truth is that women's activism brings life and strength to unions, as over and over again the IUF hears from our affiliated unions where women are encouraged and given opportunities. There is clear evidence that where women are active at all levels of the union, the whole organisation gains, not only in terms of membership and capacity, but also in credibility in wider society.

More even than the benefit to unions is the benefit to society as a whole. Only by ending discrimination can we raise women – and therefore their dependents – out of poverty.

This is why, as an international federation of 336 trade unions in 120 countries representing over 12 million workers, the IUF has decided that special efforts must be made. Since 1997 our policy has been to achieve fair representation in all our activities, reflecting the composition of men and women within our membership:

“neither men nor women should have less than 40% representation”.

Yet we have continued to find resistance and excuses for why women have not been attending in sufficient proportion. And at the current pace, it would take at least fifteen years to achieve the standard. So, at the 2007 IUF World Congress, it was agreed to convert the 40% minimum into seats reserved for women on IUF committees and in delegations. And we now have sanctions: voting rights will be reduced in proportion to the number of women missing.

I do not know another issue of importance that we would treat with such patience. I urge women to force the pace, be more assertive with your arguments and activities. I urge men who understand the need for change to give all support. I want to stress that this booklet is for both men and women. It includes difficult discussions, like how to change the perceptions and behaviour patterns of male trade union leaders. But tackling such questions is necessary if we are to work together to improve the lives of our own union members and of the poor wherever we are.

As the examples throughout this booklet show, in many of our affiliates across the world equality is improving. And we intend to encourage this more.

Ron Oswald

General Secretary, IUF

Who this manual is for

It is for any trade unionists, both men and women, who are interested in making their union stronger and more representative by promoting gender equality, at the workplace and in the unions. We hope it will be particularly useful for those in IUF affiliated unions who are:

- Union officials
- Members of women's committees or gender forums
- Education officers

How to use this manual

The manual is divided into two sections:

Section 1: Issues which are high priorities for women workers and so, by taking them up, unions will impress and attract more women to become members.

Section 2: Methods of organising which have been shown to:

- Increase women's membership of unions
- Encourage confidence and activism among women members
- Ensure that women's voice is heard better in the unions, and their concerns are taken up
- Persuade more men in the unions that these moves are just and will strengthen their organisations, and so are in their own best interests too.

This booklet is not designed as a workbook for you to work through from start to finish. Rather be selective, choosing the elements that are most appropriate in your own context.

Using it could be as simple as taking a different case study each week, photocopying it, and putting it up on a union noticeboard, ideally for group discussion later. Or elements might be used in much more in-depth study-circle education, or in strategic discussions in the union about how to deal with a particular problem the union is currently facing.

We hope the manual helps you understand better the problems you face. But, more than that, we hope that the actions ('**What they did**') and reflections ('**What they said**') of others in IUF unions around the world assist you to develop your own strategies and activities. In training sessions and meetings, people often ask what unions elsewhere are doing or saying. This manual is built around giving you such examples.

There are also suggestions for '**What you can do**' and '**Arguments to use**', to:

- persuade more workers, particularly women, to join, to boost union membership;
- negotiate with management to reach agreements;
- influence politicians and government officials to improve legislation;
- win support from the general public;
- promote awareness that gender equality is vital, not only for stronger unions but also to develop a better society for all.

The idea is to select whichever argument suits the occasion, no matter who it is that has yet to be convinced – employers, fellow workers, other union members, union leaders, family members, society at large, etc.

Plus there are **Resources** for further useful information, from both publications and websites.

Also, longer versions of many of the interviews in this booklet are on the IUF website at: www.iuf.org

So we hope these resources will be of value to you, and we welcome your feedback.

And if you wondered why action is needed...

“The women workers are the only ones who give us problems. It would be better to employ robots instead of women, because machines do not feel pain in the arms, have no menstrual pains, and do not have babies.”

Manager at a Nestlé factory at Araras, near Sao Paulo, Brazil, the fourth largest Nestlé plant in the world, where workers with Repetition Strain Injury (RSI) were dismissed, (see page 22).



Equal pay, jobs and opportunities

'Oh, but in our society women don't do that kind of work'.

'Well, it's less skilled; so of course they get less pay'.

'It's no good promoting her because her husband wouldn't let her do the job'.

'After all, a woman's place is in the kitchen'.

We have all heard statements like that, many times.

Barriers to women's equality in employment are often seen as embedded in culture, in traditions that are difficult to change. They are even said to be 'natural', linked to women's biological role as mothers.

In reality, there are very few aspects of life which women technically cannot engage in just because they bear children. What work women do, and how their work is valued, is part of how society sees the different roles of women and men. More than that, it is a question of power between men and women. This means that these views are not based on 'nature' and can be changed.

Such barriers are also infringements of women's fundamental human rights, as fought for and laid down in Declarations and Conventions of the United Nations and the International Labour Organisation over the past sixty years. Without trade unions, these human rights standards would not exist. They are something we should be proud of and actively uphold.

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

Article 10

1. All appropriate measures shall be taken to ensure to women, married or unmarried, equal rights with men in the field of economic and social life, and in particular:
 - (a) The right, without discrimination on grounds of marital status or any other grounds, to receive vocational training, to work, to free choice of profession and employment, and to professional and vocational advancement;
 - (b) The right to equal remuneration with men and to equality of treatment in respect of work of equal value;
 - (c) The right to leave with pay, retirement privileges and provision for security in respect of unemployment, sickness, old age or other incapacity to work;
 - (d) The right to receive family allowances on equal terms with men.
2. In order to prevent discrimination against women on account of marriage or maternity and to ensure their effective right to work, measures shall be taken to prevent their dismissal in the event of marriage or maternity and to provide paid maternity leave, with the guarantee of returning to former employment, and to provide the necessary social services, including child-care facilities.
3. Measures taken to protect women in certain types of work, for reasons inherent in their physical nature, shall not be regarded as discriminatory.

WHAT THEY SAID

”

“Women on farms do find that low wages are a problem. A few, like me, are doing the same job as men, but we are paid less. Women hardly ever get promoted either. You will find the supervisors are always men.”

Pulane Maine, dairy worker and First Vice-President, Food and Allied Workers' Union (FAWU), South Africa

More international standards against discrimination at work

Over and over again for the past sixty years, governments have agreed to international instruments aiming to root out discrimination. As well as the **United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, and CEDAW [see page 5], there are the Conventions of the **International Labour Organisation (ILO)**.

The ILO - which is a 'tripartite' body involving governments, employers and trade unions - promotes the concept of 'decent work' for all.

Two ILO Conventions relating to discrimination at work are 'core' or 'fundamental'. This means that they apply to all countries whether or not they have ratified (signed up to) them. All trade unionists can use them in their negotiations with governments and employers.

- **ILO Convention No.100 on Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value (1951)**, and its Recommendation No.90: these promote the concept of 'equal pay for work of equal value' and call for objective methods for evaluating work.
- **ILO Convention No.111 on Discrimination in Employment and Occupation (1958)**, and its Recommendation No.111: these aim to combat discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, or national/social origin; they cover areas such as equal access to vocational training and particular occupations, as well as terms and conditions of employment.

All ILO Conventions and Recommendations can be found in the ILOLEX database at: www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/index.htm
Here you can read the text and also find out if your country has ratified a Convention. Early Conventions have been signed by most countries. 177 countries belong to the ILO.

Regional declarations that include combating sex discrimination also exist, for example:

- **African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights**, adopted by the Organisation of African Unity in 1981. All 53 member states of the African Union have promised to uphold this Charter.

Article 18, paragraph 3:

The State shall ensure the elimination of every discrimination against women and also ensure the protection of the rights of the woman and the child as stipulated in international declarations and conventions.

www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instreet/z1afchar.htm

- **European Council Directives**, including:
 - Equal pay (1975)
 - Equal treatment in employment, vocational training, promotion and working conditions (1976)
 - Equal treatment in social security (1978 and 1986)
 - Equal treatment during pregnancy and motherhood (1986)
 - Burden of proof in cases of sex discrimination (1997).

Plus, the Treaty of Amsterdam adopted on 1 May 1999 commits the European Union to the promotion of equality between men and women.

European Directives on social/employment policy can be found at: eur-lex.europa.eu/en/repert/0520.htm

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'Decent work' wanted for women

As well as international standards against discrimination there are national employment laws and practice against discrimination in many countries, usually won after much trade union campaigning.

Yet still – all over the world – governments and employers fail to respect these standards that they signed up to. Sometimes this is with the complicity or inaction of trade unionists. So there remain big gaps in employment between men and women, and how we are treated at work.

The reality is that women suffer more from the competitive pressures and cost-saving strategies of employers and governments. Women have less job security than men; relatively more women are in 'casualised' jobs, on part-time or short-term temporary contracts, etc. Women have fewer possibilities for training and career advancement than men. Plus women have much less access to social security coverage such as old-age pensions and sickness insurance.

Even today, jobs, pay, benefits and tax systems are organised according to a stereotype that men are 'heads of households' and women are 'dependents', even though this flies in the face of reality. Many women are actual heads of households – either as single-parents or where the men of the family are selfish with their income.

Gender discrimination in job allocation, training and promotion, pay and benefits is what makes women worldwide relatively poorer than men. And poverty among women means poverty among children and other dependents such as the elderly. So gender discrimination is something that has to be addressed if we are to root out poverty and promote 'decent work' for all.

Job Segregation

Women are generally recruited for, and often themselves seek, particular types of jobs, based on women's double/multiple roles in the home as well as outside or how society sees their capacities. This means that women end up being the majority in lower status jobs, while men dominate higher level positions.

The jobs that women do are often classified as 'less-skilled' than men's and so are paid less, though this is rarely based on an objective analysis. Women's skills are often seen as 'natural' to them, part of their upbringing as girls, and undervalued. For example, many women are employed in service industries for the 'emotional skills' they have in dealing with customers or clients; they are said 'not to need training' and are not paid much for it.

Men are on average taller, larger, heavier and physically stronger than women. But there is also great overlap between men and women sharing similar physical capacities. So allocating some jobs only to men and other jobs only to women is not particularly rational.

In any case, machines often now replace the need for physical strength. These days, you don't actually need a lot of muscle power to drive a tractor or fork-lift truck. Yet still it is said that men should operate such equipment. In fact, in a few cases, there is evidence of employers taking on women to operate expensive machinery because they are said to have "fewer accidents" with it. Gender discrimination is based on stereotypes, and it can cut both ways.

Training and promotion

Even when women are recruited alongside men, we see their career paths trailing off, as opportunities for training and promotion are curtailed. Meanwhile men rise and dominate the positions that have higher status, more power and bigger pay. We need to demolish the 'glass ceiling' and 'sticky floor' that keep women where they are.

Un-Equal Pay

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

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

According to an IUF survey in the early 2000s, pay equality is one of the top issues for women around the world. The gap between men’s and women’s incomes varies between countries: at best it might average 12% less for women; sometimes women get only half of what men are paid.

The Women’s Committee of the **European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions (IUF-EFFAT)** has calculated that, with a wage gap of 28%, women have to work 15 months to earn what men earn in 12 months. Over a working life, the women would be nearly 400,000 Euros poorer.

Men also usually have much better benefits such as bonuses, medical provision and pension schemes. They get more access to overtime pay because they don’t hurry home to look after the children. But decent take-home pay should not have to depend on overtime, and women are entitled to the same basic pay as men.

“

WHAT THEY SAID

“At recruitment, women get the same pay as men. But over time, the allowances become different. And women often do not have access to overtime. So women remain longer in low income groups.”

Adwoa Sakyi, Gender Officer, General Agricultural Workers’ Union (GAWU), Ghana

Often pay inequality is obvious. But in other cases we can see the real situation only after deeper analysis. What is ‘equal work’ is not easy to prove when there is so much stereotyping in the way that jobs are evaluated. So, another term – **‘equal pay for work of equal value’** – was used in ILO Convention on Equal Remuneration No.100 (1951) and remains in widespread use.

This term means that jobs have to be evaluated by employers, governments and unions in detail and with an objective eye, not based on simple stereotypes of skill or effort. Different jobs can be compared against each other. Where the value of the work done by one worker is similar to the value of work done by another, then those workers should get the same pay and conditions.

In reality, a lot of flexibility is allowed in how jobs are evaluated for pay purposes. However, Convention No.100 is one of the fundamental Conventions of the ILO, which means that all governments must bring in legislation on pay equity and employers should respect it.

So equal pay is a subject where unions can and should get involved, and take it up vigorously wherever discrimination is found. It means a lot to women.



WHAT THEY DID

In 1988, the **GMB** union in the **UK** took up the case of Julie Hayward, a cook at a shipbuilding company. They compared her to men in three jobs which they argued were comparable – a painter, a joiner, and a thermal insulation engineer.

They found she got lower basic pay and overtime rates than the men did. Even though she got paid meal breaks, free meals, and better sickness provision than them, the British House of Lords accepted that basic pay and overtime rates should be equal. It was the UK’s first ever ‘equal pay for work of equal value’ legal victory.

WHAT THEY SAID



‘Unmarried girls’ for tax purposes

“In Indonesia, our major problem is the higher taxes for women. Women, even those with children, are seen as ‘unmarried girls’ for tax purposes under law! Men are the ones seen as having families and so are taxed less.

Also, most women cannot get health insurance for the men and children in their family. However, in some FSPM-organised hotels, including the Four Seasons where I work, women can now get health insurance provided their husband has only a very low wage or none at all. It is worth a lot because medical care can be very expensive.

I tell our members, ‘The difference between life and death is thin. Each household needs to know what is coming in from both the woman and the man’. We distribute leaflets regularly with information on pensions and other benefits. Providing such services means they don’t leave the union again.”

Yanti Irawan, Vice-President, Independent Federation of Hotel Unions (FSPM), Indonesia

Negotiating equal opportunities

There are different union approaches to achieving equal opportunities in collective bargaining:

- Some unions negotiate a separate policy for equal opportunities or ‘affirmative action’; sometimes it is called a ‘diversity agreement’;
- Some unions negotiate on specific elements, such as access to training and promotion;
- Some unions develop a model clause which they then try to include in all agreements as they come up for negotiation.

WHAT THEY DID

Diversity Agreement between IUF and Danone

At the time of writing, the **IUF** is about to sign a Diversity Agreement with the French-based food company **Groupe Danone**, which employs over 88,000 people around the world. Danone was the first company to sign a Global Framework Agreement with the IUF, and has committed itself to respecting the core ILO Conventions, including against all forms of discrimination.

The aim of the new agreement is to turn that commitment into more action. It covers steps that Danone companies should take to improve equality in access to employment and recruitment, professional training and career progression, as well as pay and working conditions. It emphasises that harassment is part of discrimination. It covers a wide range of forms of discrimination, not just those of gender.

The agreement states:

“Diversity is beneficial for the company and stimulates creativeness and innovation as well as helping us to meet consumer and employee expectations as well as those of society as a whole.”

The document contains very good principles. Danone and the IUF will jointly monitor progress at global level. But IUF affiliated unions will need to put these principles into their national or local agreements with Danone companies to make sure they are implemented.

www.danone.com





Wage differences that couldn't be 'rationally explained'

The IUF has had an equality agreement with the multinational food company **Nestlé** since 1994. In the early 2000s, union representatives on the company's European Works Council (called the **Nestlé European Council for Information and Consultation, NECIC**) decided to take an in-depth look at how well this was working in the company's European operations.

Montserrat Sagarra Fitó from the **Comisiones Obreras (CC.OO)** in **Spain** was part of the investigation. They uncovered considerable discrimination against women that the company has now agreed needs addressing. But it took a lot of digging to find the real story, as Montserrat explains:

"At first, Nestlé management wasn't interested in a survey to check on women's equality in the company; they claimed there wasn't any problem.



However, the company was producing an analysis of the workforce to help inform its economic strategy. There was data on the different levels (management, supervisors and workers) and a breakdown between men and women – enough for us to show that there was something to investigate. It took 2-3 years but finally in 2004 an equal opportunities committee was set up, with representatives from both workers and management. At the first meeting we agreed to investigate pay equity.

We did a year's research, using pay data from Germany, France, Spain, Poland, Switzerland and Sweden. We produced a table of comparison, breaking down wage figures for men and women in blue-collar and white-collar jobs.

It was not easy. For example, tax rates vary and so you cannot compare gross figures across countries. Also management played for time, saying we couldn't draw conclusions between the different sectors (water, food, petcare products, etc.), types of enterprises, and legal regimes in each country. They continued to insist that Nestlé pays the same wages to men and women.

So we delved deeper into the data from Germany, France and Spain. We had to separate out basic salaries from all the various bonuses and additions. Finally we got data which showed the real differences between men and women.

In Spain, for example, the wage gap for women production workers is 8.1% and for women managers is 14.7%. Plus we showed the significance of who has which jobs. Women are disproportionately in lower positions and service jobs.

So Nestlé had to accept there were wage differences that could not be 'rationally explained'. Now a study is being done in each country covered by NECIC. Where pay and job allocation is not objectively determined, Nestlé management has agreed this must change."

In France, the wage gap at the Nestlé headquarters was shown to be a staggering 37%, far higher than the national average of 20%.

The research also confirmed that men benefit from more rapid promotion in Nestlé, while the majority of women remain stuck in the lowest job categories.



What YOU can do

- **Workplace gender mapping:** get together to produce a plan of your workplace, noting where men and women work. You can then take it further by including skills/job classifications, access to training, what kind of employment contract men and women are on, etc. Use this to reflect on these patterns and how they can be challenged. Doing this over time shows the detail of employment trends in your workplace.
- **Pay mapping:** remember that just looking at basic pay will not reveal the full extent of pay discrimination; you also need to take into account bonuses, benefits, access to overtime pay, etc.
- **Include equal opportunities in your collective bargaining with employers** in relation to pay, recruitment, job allocation, training and promotion.
- **Use the concept of 'equal pay for work of equal value' in job evaluation.**
- **Use the international anti-discrimination standards** that exist to argue for better national law.
- **Be active in raising public awareness** about the link between women's rights at work and combating poverty.



ARGUMENTS TO USE

“The argument I use is: ‘We use the same energy; we also lose sweat’. So we should get the same pay’.”

Yanti Irawan, Vice-President, Independent Federation of Hotel Unions (FSPM), Indonesia

- ⇒ Women workers expend on the job the energy that they have. Why should gross muscle-power 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.
- ⇒ Not using and developing the skills and talents of women is a waste to society.
- ⇒ Lower pay for women = more poverty at home and in society at large. Men are seen as 'the main providers', but they often use their freedom to spend their earnings on themselves. By contrast, women are often the real 'heads of households', tending to use their earnings for their families.
- ⇒ 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.

Resources

'Time for Equality at Work'

ILO, March 2003. In Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Russian and Spanish.

www.ilo.org/dyn/declaris/

DECLARATIONWEB.GLOBALREPORTDETAILS?var_language=EN&var_PublicationsID=116&var_ReportType=Report

'Promoting Pay Equity through Job Evaluation Methods free from Gender Bias: A Step-by-Step Guide'

ILO, forthcoming 2007

In English, French and Spanish

'Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value: An Introductory Guide'

ILO, forthcoming 2007

In English, French and Spanish

'Gender Equality: A Guide to Collective Bargaining'

ILO, Actrav, 1998

English: www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/actrav/publ/gender/gender2.pdf

Arabic: www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/actrav/publ/othrlang/arabic/gender1.pdf

'Promoting Gender Equality: A Resource Kit for Trade Unions'

Booklet 3: The issues and guidelines for gender equality bargaining

ILO, GenProm, 2002

English: www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/gems/eo/tu/tu_toc.htm

French, Spanish and Arabic: www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/gems/advance/trade.htm

'Pay Equity Now!'

Pay equity information/resources, plus a training manual

Public Services International and Education International, 2005

English: www.publiset.be/iegpe/ei-ie/EN/index.lasso

Spanish: www.publiset.be/iegpe/ei-ie/ES/index.lasso

French: www.publiset.be/iegpe/ei-ie/FR/index.lasso

'Steps to Pay Equity: A Quick and Easy Method for the Evaluation of Work Demands'

By Anita Harriman and Carin Holm

Swedish Equal Opportunities Ombudsman, 2001. In Swedish and English.

www.jamombude.se



WHAT THEY DID



In 1998, the Salaried Employees' Union (HTF) in Sweden ran a campaign against unequal pay for women. Its symbol was the 'Women's Coin' – a coin with a section cut out, representing the missing part that women were not being paid.

Fighting against discrimination in the workplace wins women members for unions and helps to create a better society.



Being safe at work

Health, safety and the environment are issues at the heart of many women's concerns. Perhaps it is because of women's caring role at home. Taking these issues up is certainly something that gains women's interest and respect.

Women's health and safety at work should also be taken up because women are particularly exposed to risks. Women often work in low status jobs with high demands, and have relatively little control over their own work. Women are more likely than men to be employed in precarious types of employment, and here risks are higher because there is less protection from the law or from collective bargaining agreements.

Yet women have often been side-lined in efforts to improve workplace conditions:

- In most legislation, no distinction is made between men and women doing the work, and the standards have largely been developed by men for men, including those for:
 - Length of arms or legs (ergonomics)
 - Muscle strength for lifting or handling equipment
 - Risks of chemical exposure
 - Fitting of personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Much less is known about the risks that women face; yet physical differences between men and women have an impact on risk; women's capacity to bear healthy children is particularly vulnerable.

Studies have shown, for example, that women workers in food processing who are exposed to extreme cold have problems with their menstrual cycles; yet this has not been taken up as an occupational health and safety issue.

- Most women do not have as much opportunity to rest as men, because of the work that they do in the home as well as in the workplace.
- Women are more prey to violence, emotional/psychological abuse and sexual harassment in the workplace, the home – and the union.

Reports received by the IUF suggest that violence in the workplace is increasing; as employers demand greater productivity in the global marketplace, workers in precarious jobs are in a weaker position to defend themselves.

- Women have less access to health and safety training.
- Women's occupational accidents or diseases are less likely to be taken seriously by health and safety inspectors, and their claims for compensation are less likely to be accepted.



ILO Convention on Occupational Safety and Health No.155 (1981)

This is the main ILO Convention aimed at preventing accidents and injury to health linked with work; it applies to **all** workers, no matter what their employment status.

It has been ratified by only 48 countries.

Safe women = healthy children

Being able to bear healthy children is at the heart of many women's concerns. Yet this fundamental right is put at risk by many employers. Night shift work has been found to lead to longer pregnancies and lower weight babies. Stress is linked to miscarriages as well as painful periods. Pregnant women at work are entitled to safe and healthy conditions.

Women who are exposed to chemical or biological agents are at extreme risk. Many women working in agriculture, for example those producing cash crops of fruit, vegetables or flowers, are exposed to toxic chemicals such as pesticides. The effects can be spontaneous abortions, premature births, malformed babies, contaminated breast milk, and well as cancers and skin diseases.

ILO Convention No.184 (2001) on safety and health in agriculture

This is an important new ILO Convention. Along with its accompanying Recommendation, it is designed to help defend against the terrible risks faced by agricultural workers, particularly women.

Article 18

Measures shall be taken to ensure that the special needs of women agricultural workers are taken into account in relation to pregnancy, breastfeeding and reproductive health.

The Convention covers:

- Risks assessments on equipment, chemicals and work activities;
- The rights 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;
- Seasonal and temporary workers.

ILO Recommendation No.192 (2001) on safety and health in agriculture

Paragraph 10: Employers should provide:

- Facilities for eating meals, and for nursing children in the workplace where practicable;
- Separate sanitary and washing facilities, or separate use thereof, for men and women workers.

Paragraph 11: In order to give effect to Article 18 of the Convention, 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.



What YOU can do

ILO Convention No.184 (2001) has only been ratified so far by eight countries: Argentina, Finland, Kyrgystan, Moldova, Sao Tome & Principe, Slovakia, Sweden and Uruguay.

So, your union can lobby your government to:

- ratify the Convention if it has not already, and once it has
- implement the Convention into national law.

You can also use it in your bargaining with employers, and in training more women agricultural workers to become health and safety trainers and representatives

WHAT THEY SAID

”

“My breakfast and lunch is Gromoxon. It’s very nice if you get use to it... except that it caused me to lose two babies through miscarriages. It makes your skin itch and makes it difficult to breathe at night.”

Barjiah, a worker on a palm oil plantation, North Sumatra, Indonesia

WHAT THEY DID

A Women’s Charter for rural women

Kumushbek Mambetov is President of the **Agro-Industrial Workers’ Union (AIWU)** in **Kyrgyzstan**, in Central Asia, a union largely of small farmers. Health and safety standards on the farms have been deteriorating, and so the union has made this a focus of its work. One result is that the country was one of the first to ratify ILO Convention No.184 on health and safety in agriculture. Kumushbek Mambetov explains how these activities have involved women in the rural areas and in the union:

“Ours is an agricultural country; over 80% of the people live in rural areas. Over the past few years, many of our members complained of an increase in accidents, cases of poisoning, and so on. When the Soviet system of state farms collapsed, a few were converted into cooperatives and they kept a health and safety system with inspectors. However, most land was divided into 255,000 small farms without the capacity to maintain health and safety standards.

With so many accidents being reported by our members, we decided to take action. From 2002, helped by the IUF and the ILO, we developed a programme of workshops throughout the country, as well as education seminars with MPs, Ministers and state authorities. This meant that Kyrgyzstan became one of the first countries to ratify ILO Convention No.184 on health and safety in agriculture.

Now, every state in Kyrgyzstan must have tripartite discussions on health and safety in agriculture. Our union suggested to the government that this needed to be accompanied by an education programme especially for the small farmers. We also insisted that each local authority must have local health and safety inspectors, as well as the national programme to develop cooperatives having a strong focus on health and safety standards.

The health and safety education programme includes a special focus on child labour and women’s health issues. Many women have participated in over 100 workshops in the rural areas. They have come forward with information about the risks they face, and women activists have used this to develop a new manual called ‘Health and Safety at Your Farm’ which includes a Women’s Charter. This explains to the women workers and their families the potential hazards for women working in tobacco, rice or cotton plantations, the risk of chemicals to women’s reproductive health, the correct handling of dead animals, and so on.

Technically there are no barriers to women participating in union structures. However, there is a mentality in our region that women should be at home, looking after the household. In some countries of our region, women and men are not even allowed to sit at the same table when eating, although in our country we can.”





WHAT THEY DID

'We Accept Women' in Colombia

Women in the Central American country of **Colombia** are among those facing great dangers from pesticides. Women who work on the country's banana plantations are exposed to over 400 chemicals. Some 63,000 women work in the fields and packing houses that produce cut flowers for export mostly to the USA (70% of the flowers workforce). More women are brought in on temporary contracts, and therefore are even more at risk, during the rush, ironically, before St. Valentine's Day and Mothers' Day. Not only that but the women, their communities, animals and the wider environment suffer from aerial spraying of the fields.

In December 2005, **Adela Torres** was the first woman ever to get on the National Executive of the agricultural workers' union **SINTRAINAGRO** in thirty years of the union's existence. Then, in March 2006 she was elected its General Secretary. Previously she had been the union's head of training and education, as well as the Women's Department, when they launched a campaign called 'We Accept Women', targeted at both employers and union members.

Adela says that, as well as the toxic effects on women's childbearing, other issues that she intends to see taken up are women's access to stable employment (many women have lost jobs because employers don't want to cover maternity leave) and sexual harassment by managers and co-workers.

"It is vital that women struggle to participate in their society, not just at the local level but also at the national level. Women needed their own spokesperson in the national collective bargaining negotiations... In this way our needs can be expressed and enshrined in the text of the agreements", says Adela Torres.

The Colombian agricultural and food union federation **UNAC** also now has a woman General Secretary, **Sonia Peréz**. Sonia was previously the leader of an organisation of small producers Semillas (Grains). Semillas' core membership is women, and they are very active on biodiversity, food security and poverty alleviation. Where UNAC has been actively organising women, there is significant progress in reducing maternity-related deaths.

www.rel-uita.org

'**Derechos y Reveses de las Mujeres Bananeras**' ('Rights and Reverses of women banana workers') SINTRAINAGRO campaign booklet.

A 25-minute video of the 'We Accept Women' campaign among women banana workers in Urabá, Colombia, is at: www.tu.tv/videos/derechos-y-reveses-de-las-mujeres-banane In Spanish, with English subtitles.

'**Bananeras: Women transforming the Banana Unions of Latin America**'

By Dana Frank, South End Press, 2005. ISBN: 0-89608-755-7

Personal safety

All women are aware of the dangers of abuse that exist in the workplace, whether verbal, psychological or physical, in the form of bullying, beating or sexual harassment. It can be as vicious as rape, or as insidious as calling women who travel to union meetings 'licentious'.

Women know that this abuse is part of the unequal power relations between men and women, and that this makes it very difficult to confront as an individual. Without support from other workers or the union, individuals are reluctant to report abuse. This is even more so where the perpetrator is the boss, or indeed a union representative.

Those who are most vulnerable include women who are:

- in precarious jobs, and so are especially scared of losing their jobs and income if they report an abusive manager;
- in jobs where they are required to be pleasant and helpful to male customers who then abuse this situation, such as in the hotels, catering and tourism industries;
- working on the night shift or long overtime hours, at risk both in the workplace and while travelling to and from work;
- migrant workers, on the journey, where they work, and where they stay; they are dependent on the agent that finds them work, and at extreme risk if that agent turns out to be a predator or a trafficker linked to the sex trade; if they are 'undocumented' (do not have the correct immigration/work permit), migrant women cannot appeal for protection from the authorities.

Sexual harassment is conduct which is in some way sexually-related that:

- Causes discomfort, embarrassment, a feeling of insecurity or fear
- Is unwanted and unwelcome, and unreturned.

It may be expressed in visual, verbal, physical or psychological terms. It might be a leering look, a pat or squeeze or attempted kiss, a proposition or persistent requests for a date, or pornography posted up in a public place. It can be threatened or actual rape.

Though expressed through sexual means, it is an expression of power or control. It has a serious impact on those harassed, undermining their confidence and sense of safety. Most victims of sexual harassment are women because most people in powerful positions are men.

Women do not take sexual harassment lightly, and nor should men, particularly in the union movement. Sexual harassment in the workplace is a union issue, not a women's issue, nor a 'personal' issue. So too is sexual harassment in the union. Taking this issue up is a strong signal to women workers that the union is serious about their well-being, a strong motivator for women to join.

WHAT THEY SAID



“There was the case of a woman held on her own overnight for a ‘security investigation’. I said this should never happen; any woman must have the right to have another woman with her; and she must never be held overnight. By taking these issues up, we got more members. Now of the 846 union members at Grand Hyatt, 116 are women.”

Susilawati Soehoed, Chair, Jakarta Regional Women's Committee, Independent Federation of Hotel Unions (FSPM), Indonesia



WHAT THEY DID

When there is little workplace solidarity...

Eight women at Frito-Lay, **PepsiCo's** snack food plant near Warsaw, the capital of **Poland**, are accusing a supervisor of sexual harassment. The man was arrested but released, and remains on the payroll. By contrast, the women were fired or pressurised into handing in their notice; they have neither got their jobs back nor been compensated. The union chairperson in the plant was also sacked, and union members put under pressure to resign their membership.

The trade union **Solidarnosc** ensured the women got legal aid, organised a petition of 180,000 signatures, demonstrated, and got big media coverage in the country. But the matter is dragging through the Polish courts.

Solidarnosc also sought international support. PepsiCo has a 'code of conduct' (which the women knew nothing about). It is a notoriously anti-union company, and has utterly failed to deal properly with the case. So the IUF launched a complaint against PepsiCo for violation of the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Companies, and against Polish Government in the ILO. Massive support came in from IUF affiliates and sister organisations all over the world.

Other workers at the plant in Poland showed little solidarity, however. They were under huge pressure from the anti-union environment there, including company spies monitoring any activities. Meanwhile in their local community, the women are isolated, with reports of their children being bullied by others. The women themselves have only found temporary work. They remain under great personal strain.

“

WHAT THEY SAID

'If only she had come when the harassment started'

“We tell workers not to wait. We advise them, 'When you see even small signs of victimisation, come to the union immediately. Any small statement that is not union-friendly, or any bit of sexual harassment may seem minor now, but it could become a big issue. We will take it up with the employer'. One lady was suspended from work when she became pregnant with the child of her boss; if only she had come when the harassment started.

There is little solidarity from men at the workplace. Even some men shopstewards say that sexual harassment is a 'personal issue' instead of helping the women. But we are planning to have more gender training with the men.”

Dorothea Makhasu, General Secretary, Hotel, Food Processing and Catering Workers' Union (HFPCWU), Malawi

IUF policy on sexual harassment

The IUF has long tried to root out sexual harassment in unions as well as the workplace, producing a booklet called 'When I Say NO, I Mean NO' some twenty years ago. Yet, unhappily, some men in the unions are still behaving badly.

In October 2006, the **IUF Asia-Pacific Regional Conference** adopted a policy restating that sexual harassment will not be tolerated at IUF meetings, events and social interaction in the region. As well as indicating what sexual harassment is, there is a procedure for taking up complaints. Penalties include counselling, a reprimand, a report to the person's union, or even exclusion from future IUF activities. In March 2007, the **25th IUF Congress** adopted a policy that “sexual harassment of participants or staff will not be tolerated in any way in any IUF activity”.
www.iuf.org/women

WHAT THEY SAID



All the women joined

“A union officer visited a flower plantation in the Mount Hampden area of Zimbabwe which employs over 200 women workers. In the thirty minutes she was allowed to address the workers, she highlighted their rights to join a union and freedom of expression, and to protective clothing and equipment. She asked for comments or questions, but managers were present and no women spoke up.

Two days later, however, two women visited the union office. They were upset by the lack of adequate clothing for women weeding in the fields. As they bent over to do their work, men supervisors would look at them, make comments or in other ways pick them out for attention. The women felt it was sexual harassment.

The organiser visited the compound to gather more information and took it up with the managers, who agreed to provide extra cloth and dustcoats. As a result, all the women joined the union.”

Gertrude Hambira, General Secretary, General Agriculture and Plantation Workers' Union of Zimbabwe (GAPWUZ)

WHAT THEY DID

New union, new policy

Women workers in local bread and biscuit factories in Multan, **Pakistan**, complain of frequent harassment and violence when travelling to and from work. At a women's workshop run by the IUF Asia-Pacific region in November 2006, they said they often have to work 12-14 hour days. Yet few employers provide safe transport. When they do, there is favouritism; only selected women can use it.

Until recently, women in these and many factories in the region have not been welcomed in the male-dominated trade unions. So, they set up their own **Multan Working Women's Federation (MWWF)** in 1995. Women could join the MWWF as individuals, to air their grievances and try to find solutions.

In November 2005 a new union federation was founded, the **National Federation of Food, Beverage and Tobacco Workers** of Pakistan, with a clear strategy to overcome past obstacles to women's participation. The founding Congress adopted a policy of reserved seats for women on the Executive Committee, and elected a woman as Vice-President: **Mehek Butt**, who has been MWWF President for ten years.

Mehek says that most women factory workers in Multan are casual, contract or daily workers, paid under the legal minimum wage. *“They are very concerned about getting permanent status. Forced overtime, late payment of wages, non-registration by the employer for social security, and sexual harassment are also big issues.”*

According to Mehek, *“women are interested in how to form trade unions, but it is a long way off for them”*. Many are illiterate; they are also not used to attending meetings or gatherings. So the IUF and local partners are producing audio-visual materials such as cassettes and posters to inform them about social security rights, minimum wages, etc. At this stage, more women-only training sessions and consultations are planned, along with encouraging discussion on gender in local union activities, hopefully including support for women's safety.





HIV/Aids

According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), HIV/Aids is hitting agricultural communities in developing countries the hardest. More rural people are getting the disease; and those who get sick in the cities tend to return to their villages. It is affecting the sustainability of agriculture, as people are dying before they can pass on their knowledge. And the more that people migrate to find work, the more at risk they are. www.fao.org/FOCUS/E/aids/aids6-e.htm

HIV/Aids affects women disproportionately. Women are biologically more susceptible to the disease. They also have relatively less power over their own bodies and lives than men do. In fact, the greater the gender discrimination in society, the greater the risk of sexual harassment and of women becoming infected by HIV/Aids. Women also bear more of the burden in looking after the sick, affecting their opportunities to have a job and earn an income.

This shows that HIV/Aids as a workplace issue cannot be combated unless sexual behaviour patterns and interpersonal power relations are also addressed in union activities.



WHAT THEY DID

Gender equality to combat HIV/Aids

The unions in **Guyana** have reached an HIV/Aids cooperation agreement with the sugar estate company Guysuco. The agreement builds in gender equality as this is more effective in dealing with the disease, as **Seepaul Narine**, General Secretary of the **Guyana Agricultural and General Workers' Union (GAWU)**, describes:

"Some of our training programmes are women-only, especially those to combat HIV/Aids. This allows women to talk more freely and openly, particularly about sexual behaviour patterns. It is too personal in front of men. We recognise this. So, we have separate discussions first and then mixed ones.

Some employers resist health and safety programmes, claiming that it is 'costly'. But to unions, a healthy employee is a productive employee. So we, along with a union of mainly clerical workers, have negotiated an HIV/Aids cooperation agreement with management of the Guyana Sugar Corporation (Guysuco).

The policy includes the right for all estate employees to be treated equally, with no forced testing, no discrimination in job allocation, assistance and time off for testing and treatment, and help with access to retroviral drugs. The agreement also says:

Guysuco will promote gender equality in its efforts against the epidemic. All programmes will be gender sensitive as well as sensitive to high risk groups.

On each estate there is a Health and Safety Officer and a committee responsible for organising the programme. In our CBA there is time off with pay for employees to attend training organised by the union, and we ensure that every programme includes an element on HIV/Aids."

The pace of work

As companies compete, factory production lines get faster. Workers are required to repeat the same small tasks over and over; they use the same bits of their body thousands of times a day; fingers, wrists and arms are particularly vulnerable. Workers suffer aches; the aches turn to pain; the pain becomes crippling. Some workers end up permanently disabled and unable to work. It is called Repetition Strain Injury, or RSI.

Women, who are the majority, on the production line of food processing factories are particularly badly hit. It can have a devastating impact on women's lives and responsibilities outside the workplace.



WHAT THEY DID

She couldn't even hug her fiancé

In June 2004, **Argentina** became the first country in South America to adopt legislation recognising RSI as an occupational injury. The **FAOPCHPyA** food workers' union was at the forefront of the campaign to have RSI recognised. FAOPCHPyA Women's Officer **Silvia Villaverde** says there was little awareness of RSI until a conference in 2000 organised by the IUF's regional office in Latin America. Women in the union realised that health issues might be a good way to attract more women. Together with women from other unions they formed a group called 'Women For Health' (Mujeres Pro Salud).

Some twenty unions joined in the RSI campaign. At one meeting, Gabriela Caro, a young woman worker from the La Nirva biscuit factory in Buenos Aires, stood up and said that she was a sufferer. She had started work aged 18 and, now aged 23, she was in constant pain; she couldn't even hug her fiancé. *"It was a big step",* says Silvia. *"Owning up to suffering from RSI is something a lot of people will avoid."*

Many employers and doctors were also reluctant to admit the existence of RSI in Argentina. It was a 'Brazilian problem', they said, referring to media reports from their neighbouring country (see 'The Silent Massacre'). Or they said the pains the workers were reporting had psychological roots, something to do with home or social life.

Things were looking bleak for the campaign until working conditions at a car component factory hit the news. Young women workers were carrying out identical tasks a thousand times a day. If someone couldn't keep up, a deafening alarm sounded until whoever was falling behind got back up to speed. Twenty women, aged 22-30 years, incurred such serious injuries that they were unable to continue working. Silvia Villaverde says it was a shock to the Argentinian public, and a new Labour Market Minister, well known to the unions, responded positively. So the new law was won.

Now there are improvements at factories like La Nirva, where the speed of the production line has been reduced. But women still have to do too much repetitive work. *"I have pains in both my arms. When things get really bad I take painkillers",* another worker called Gabriella Beatriz Sanabria reports. A scar on her right wrist shows where she had an operation to help alleviate the pain. *"I've been to see the doctor but he says he can't do anything. He encouraged me to go back to work",* she says with a smile of resignation.

However, the new law in Argentina does give some security. If you have to seek help more than three times a year for this type of problem, it is counted as an occupational injury, and you have the right to medical treatment and sick pay.

**Fighting for safe and healthy workplaces
wins women members for unions and
helps to create a better society**





WHAT THEY DID

'The Silent Massacre'

Awareness about RSI among unions in Latin America greatly increased after managers at the Nestle instant coffee plant at Araras in **Brazil** summarily dismissed workers suffering from RSI (see also page 3).

Poultry production in Brazil has become notorious for RSI too. Brazil is now the global factory for chicken meat, exporting as far as Japan, the Middle East, Europe and Scandinavia. The industry employs some 2.5 million Brazilians. They are processing 9,000 chickens an hour, and the pace of work is often extreme. Company doctors give the workers pain killers rather than sick leave to rest their injuries. In **Sweden**, the **Food Workers' Union** has been putting pressure on importers and retailers not to import chicken produced at such cost to Brazilian workers, but more consumer awareness needs to be generated too.

'El Massacre Silenciosa' ('The Silent Massacre')

On RSI at the Nestle plant at Araras, Brazil
By Carlos Amorin, IUF Latin America Regional Office, 2004
In English, Spanish and Portuguese
www.rel-uita.org/index.htm



Resources

'Health, Safety and Environment: A Series of Trade Union Education Manuals for Agricultural Workers'

Especially Fact Sheet No.12, Manual 4: 'Health and safety and women workers'
ILO/IUF, 2004

'Improving Working Conditions in the Cutflower Industry: A Trade Union Training Manual'

IUF/FIAN/FES, November 2001

'Gender, Work Equality and Health: A Review of the Evidence'

World Health Organisation, 2006
www.who.int/gender/documents/Genderworkhealth.pdf

'Promoting Gender Equality: A Resource Kit for Trade Unions'

Booklet 3: The Issues and Guidelines for Gender Equality Bargaining
Pages 21-24 on sexual harassment; pages 45-53 on HIV-Aids and violence in the workplace.
ILO, GenProm, 2002

English: www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/gems/eeo/tu/tu_toc.htm

French, Spanish and Arabic: www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/gems/advance/trade.htm

'Implementing the ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work: an education and training manual'

Module 5: The gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS and the world of work.
ILO, 2002

The manual is in English, French and Spanish. The Code is in many languages.
www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/trav/aids/publ/code.htm

'Fight Speed Up'

Campaign and information on Repetition Strain Injury (RSI)
Canadian Auto Workers
www.caw.ca/whatwedo/health&safety/pspeed.asp





What YOU can do

- **Adopt and implement a policy against sexual harassment**, including clear definitions of what it is and a programme of action: have union leaders take strong and widely-publicised positions; educate the membership, both men and women; ensure there are safe procedures for complaints that are fair to both sides; include the issue in workplace negotiations, and in lobbying for improved legislation where necessary.
- **Make sure your union has a gender-sensitive approach to all health and safety matters**, making a distinction between the impact on men and women, and the different measures to be taken; lobby your government for a better gender approach in all official health and safety policies and practices, including inspectorates and compensation schemes.
- **Do health and safety workplace mapping**, especially to get women workers to identify their health priorities in relation to the jobs they are doing.
- **Run public awareness campaigns** to combat the idea that women's work is relatively light and harmless.
- **Develop campaigns** with consumer groups and environmentalists that make the link between workers' health and food safety, and put pressure on companies in the food chain, including the big retailers.
- **Lobby your government** to ratify ILO health and safety Conventions No.155 (1981) and No.184 (2001) if they have not done so already, and then implement them properly.



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, whoever does it; combating it is about the right of all workers to be free from harassment, and so it is a union issue.
- ⇒ It is a myth that it is only men who do the dirty and dangerous jobs; for example, many women work on high-speed production lines which cause 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 from the laws that do exist.
- ⇒ Chemicals and other conditions, like high temperatures, have an impact on male reproductive systems too, on sperm count, for example. More activities by and for women workers on health and safety at work could encourage more men to take these issues up for themselves too.
- ⇒ Dangers to workers are linked to dangers to the public and the environment. Safe food requires safe working conditions.



Maternity protection

“To be pregnant is our nature as women. Yet it is used to discriminate against us. At the workplace, we are not allowed to get pregnant, and it is not fair.”

Participant at the IUF African women’s seminar, July 2006

To bear and raise healthy children is an issue of greatest concern to women. It should also be an issue for the whole of society. Men are fathers after all. Yet, strangely, men often see maternity as a ‘women’s issue’.

Employers ought to enable their women employees to give birth safely. Yet so often women workers are told, ‘Your baby or your job’.

Just to get hired, some women have to take a pregnancy test or produce a doctor’s certificate that they have been sterilised. When women are employed on short-term, temporary contracts, maternity benefits are among the first things they lose. Even women with permanent jobs find themselves discouraged from getting pregnant, or dismissed or under pressure to resign if they do. Some are even told they can keep their job only if they have an abortion. Maternity protection is something that many employers like to dodge so as to save money.

Where better employers do give maternity benefits, they often feel no obligation to provide conditions better than those laid down in national legislation. It is treated as if it is a necessary evil.

There can even be a lack of support from male union leaders. All-men collective bargaining teams can somehow ‘forget’ to include maternity benefits in their negotiations with management.

Of course, attitudes towards women and maternity are deeply embedded in how families are seen in society, particularly to men’s responsibilities and behaviour at home.

WHAT THEY SAID

“Hotel managers ordered one of our members to return immediately. She was on family leave after giving birth, and had a doctor’s letter saying she needed more time. But the company refused, saying ‘We have a business to run’.

As the union representative, I jumped up and replied, ‘You have a business to run but I have a duty to protect workers. If you sign this order, you are responsible for anything that happens to her baby. Only if you agree to that, will I let her come back early’. The Manager saw I was serious and gave in.

If we cannot protect our members over maternity, there is no use having a union.”

Liviana Qoro, President, National Union of Hospitality, Catering and Tourism Industry Employees (NUHCTIE), Fiji.

After a long period of industrial action, in December 2005 NUHCTIE won a new industry-wide agreement with the employers’ association for Fiji’s hotel sector. This doubles the maternity leave allowance to US\$6 per day for 84 days.

ILO Convention No.183 on Maternity Protection (2000)
and Recommendation No.191

PROTECTION	PROVISIONS IN THE CONVENTION
Scope - Who is Protected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All married and unmarried employed women including those in atypical forms of work
Amount of Leave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Not less than 14 weeks (Recommendation 191 calls for 18 weeks) ■ Provision for 6 weeks compulsory postnatal leave
Cash Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Two thirds of a woman's previous earnings OR Equivalent payment ■ Benefits to be provided from social insurance or public funds or determined by national law and practice
Medical Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Prenatal, childbirth and postnatal care and hospitalisation care when necessary
Health Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pregnant and nursing women shall not be obliged to perform work that is assessed as detrimental to the mother or child
Employment Protection and Discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Unlawful for employer to dismiss a woman during pregnancy, whilst on maternity leave or nursing, unless the reasons are unrelated to pregnancy or nursing, and the burden of proof rests with the employer ■ Guaranteed right to return to the same position or an equivalent position with equal pay ■ Protection against discrimination in employment (e.g. hiring policies) on grounds of maternity ■ Prohibition of pregnancy testing at recruitment
Breaks For Breastfeeding/Childcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Right to one or more daily breaks for breastfeeding/ lactation ■ Right to daily reduction of daily working hours for breastfeeding ■ Breaks or reduction in hours counted as working time and therefore paid.



What YOU can do

ILO Convention No.183 on Maternity Protection (2000) has been ratified by only 13 governments (Albania, Austria, Belarus, Belize, Bulgaria, Cuba, Cyprus, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Moldova, Lithuania, Slovakia).

So, your union can lobby your government to:

- ratify the Convention if it has not already, and once it has
- implement the Convention into national law.

You can also use it in your bargaining with employers, and in training more women workers to become health and safety trainers and representatives.

WHAT THEY SAID



“At one sports club, women who got pregnant and could not fit into their uniforms were told, ‘You must buy a new uniform, or don’t come to work until after you give birth’. This meant, of course, that they lost pay which is very bad when you are about to have a baby.”

Dorothea Makhasu, General Secretary, Hotel, Food Processing and Catering Workers’ Union (HFPCWU), Malawi

WHAT THEY DID

Women’s coalition wins legal reforms

In **Korea**, trade unions have joined forces with women’s organisations in a **Coalition for Reform of Laws on Women Workers**. Together, they pushed for legal reform on maternity protection and other women’s rights in two waves. In 2001 and again in 2004, they ran campaigns to raise public awareness, with rallies and sit-ins at national parliament.

In 2001, they won legal changes that extend paid maternity leave from 60 to 90 days. In 2005, they won complete coverage of maternity leave by social insurance, and the addition of leave for stillbirth and miscarriage. By 2008, these provisions will apply to all workplaces. The Coalition is continuing to campaign for women on ‘irregular’ work contracts to be included.

WHAT THEY DID

Unlike in most countries, in Australia there is still no right to paid maternity leave under law. In 2002, unions tried but failed to get a Bill passed. What maternity rights do exist are the result of collective bargaining, and only benefit about 15% of women in the country’s manufacturing industry.

In 2003 the **Australian Manufacturing Workers’ Union (AMWU)**, despite being a male-dominated union, launched a campaign for 14 weeks’ paid maternity leave. AMWU’s National Executive decided that, whatever the make-up of the workforce, maternity rights affect everyone, and so all future Collective Bargaining Agreements must include maternity provisions.

As a result of the campaign, AMWU has achieved maternity leave agreements with four major corporations, including Nestlé and Unilever. However, Australian women in other workplaces are still without their maternity rights. And now fundamental union rights in the country are being utterly undermined by new legislation brought in by the Liberal Government under Prime Minister John Howard. Some hard-won paid maternity leave provisions have been cut or, in some cases, completely abolished under the individual employment contracts being promoted by the new laws.

Everybody needs their mum



Especially in the first year of life.

Make paid maternity leave a right for all women.

Did you know that only 15.4% of women in the manufacturing industry are entitled to any paid maternity leave?
The AMWU is campaigning for 14 weeks paid maternity leave across the manufacturing industry.
Make paid maternity leave a priority in your next bargaining round.
It is too important to be traded off.

For more information speak to your delegate and go to Campaign 2003 at www.amwu.asn.au



WHAT THEY DID

IUF maternity protection programme

In 2004-2005, the **IUF Asia-Pacific Region** ran a special programme on maternity protection with affiliated unions, knowing that this is an excellent way of stimulating women's involvement in unions as well as getting them vital protection.

At sub-regional workshops, women from the unions analysed their maternity rights under law, using ILO Convention No.183 as a point of comparison. The exchanged information on collective bargaining agreements in their own countries, and methods of organising to get these rights in reality.

They agreed that campaigning for ratification of ILO Convention No.183 is very important. Even if this is an ambitious task, it is a powerful tool for unions when organising and lobbying for better maternity protection. There is also great concern to see that women in all types of work are covered.

The workshops generated a lot of activity among women in affiliated unions. They also showed the impact that such opportunities can have on women's lives in general.



WHAT THEY SAID

“A woman was sacked when she was seven months’ pregnant. So we organised letters of solidarity from all the local unions and within days management relented.”

Susilawati Soehoed, Chair, Jakarta Regional Women's Committee, Independent Federation of Hotel Unions (FSPM), Indonesia

The seven unions in the Hyatt Hotel group in Indonesia have formed a Council in the FSPM, with a common bargaining agenda; maternity protection and outsourcing are priority areas for negotiation.

IUF Resources



The maternity protection programme of the IUF Asia-Pacific region in 2004-2005 has produced very useful resources, for example the table of Standard-Setting Clauses in Collective Bargaining Agreements opposite. Others include:

Maternity Protection: Collective Bargaining and Legislative Reform

(also in Bahasa Indonesia)

Maternity Protection in Law Compared Across the Asia-Pacific Sub-Regions

Model Collective Bargaining Agreements

asianfoodworker.net/maternity/index.htm

See also 'Asian Foodworker', Vol.36, No.1, February-April 2006



Fighting for maternity protection wins women members for unions and helps to create a better society.



IUF Affiliates in Asia-Pacific Region Standard Setting CBA Clauses on Maternity Protection

AREA	WORKPLACE/COMPANY (UNION)	CLAUSE
Length of Leave	Hyatt Indonesia property (FSPM)	4 months maternity leave (1 month above the legal minimum)
	Pansea Hotel Cambodia (CTSWF)	100 days maternity leave with no limit on the number of births (10 days above legal minimum)
	Snow Brand Dairy, Fujiya Confectionary (Food Rengo)	7 weeks before childbirth and 8 weeks after childbirth (1 week above legal minimum)
Cash Benefits	Indonesia: Hyatt property, Alila Hotels property, Four Seasons property (FSPM); Pansea HotelSiem Reap (CTSWF)	Full pay plus service charge and all other allowances
	Intercontinental Hotels property Indonesia (FSPM)	Full salary (not inc. service charge) plus Rp.500,000 (US\$55) cash payment
Medical Benefits	Hyatt Indonesia property, (FSPM)	All childbirth costs (home, hospital, normal & caesarean) and post-natal care covered by employer
	Various CBAs negotiated by NUWHRAIN	Full medical benefits offered by employer for pre- and post-natal care as well as childbirth
Health Protection (Lighter duties)	Nestlé Korea (NKLU), Coca Cola Bottling Korea (National CBA negotiated jointly with enterprise unions at three sites), Lotte Hotel Seoul (KFSU)	Upon request, the Company shall transfer pregnant union members to less intensive work and shall not demand overtime work without worker's consent
	British American Tobacco (BATEU)	Pregnant or breastfeeding women can ask to be moved from areas of radiation and may not be asked to work standing up or at night
Health Protection (leave during pregnancy for medical checks)	Hyundai Dept. Store (KFSU)	The company shall provide one day's paid leave per month for pregnant union members to get regular health check-ups
Health Protection (leave after childbirth in case of complications)	Pansea Hotel Siem Reap (CTSWF)	An additional 100 days leave may be given for health reasons (with medical certificate) at full salary plus benefits
Premature delivery, miscarriage & stillbirth	Coca Cola Bottling Korea (National CBA negotiated jointly with enterprise unions at three sites)	Regular maternity leave shall apply to any delivery after at least four months and also to miscarriage, still birth and preterm birth
	Lotte Hotel Seoul (KFSU)	Paid leave shall be given in cases of miscarriage, stillbirth or preterm birth as follows: - Under 12 weeks: 5 days - 12-28 weeks: 45 days - Over 28 weeks: same as for full-term/healthy delivery
Employment Protection	Hyatt Indonesia property (FSPM)	Explicitly guarantees right of return to same position after maternity leave or different position with same wages and seniority
Breast feeding / lactation breaks	Hyundai Dept Store (KFSU), Coca-Cola Bottling Korea, Nestlé Korea (NKLU)	Upon request by a woman union member with a child of less than one year, the company must grant a break, and apart from this, two 30-minute breast-feeding breaks per day
Childcare leave/ flexible working hours	Lotte Hotel Seoul (KFSU)	Upon request, the company shall grant one day of paid leave per month to women union members with children under one year old



What YOU can do

- **Encourage men to see that maternity is not a 'women's issue' but everyone's issue, and therefore a union issue;** campaign on this publicly, to help change society's attitudes about men's relationship to women and the children they bear.
- **Develop a model clause on maternity benefits,** using the information gathered by the IUF Asia-Pacific region, and then ensure this is used in CBA negotiations; remember to include protecting the right for women to return to the same job under the same conditions/pay, and the need for employers to ensure the best possibilities for breastfeeding.
- **Argue strongly for the maternity rights of casualised workers.**
- **Lobby your government** to ratify ILO Convention No.183 (2000) on Maternity Protection, and improve maternity rights as a key element of eradicating poverty.
- **Emphasise how, where fertility rates are falling, maternity protection helps to prevent this.**



ARGUMENTS TO USE

“Maternity leave is not a luxury. It is a necessity for the health of women, their babies, and the long-term well-being of families.”

Anne Donnellan, Convenor, National Women's Committee, Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union (AMWU)

“When men don't support our claims for maternity benefits, we should make the argument that 'if women don't get pregnant, there will be no men'!”

Participant at the IUF Asia-Pacific Region Women's Seminar, October 2006

- ⇒ Maternity is not an issue for individual women to solve. Men are also fathers! When mothers – particularly the poor – are not supported to give birth to healthy babies, all of society suffers.
- ⇒ Giving birth is a basic human right; those companies which do not support their women employees who bear children are being very irresponsible.
- ⇒ Maternity is no different from any other issue under collective bargaining aimed at getting employers to give provisions better than the legal minimum.
- ⇒ The children of today will become tomorrow's workforce; it makes sense to nurture that future.



Resources

'A New Standard for a New Century: Maternity Protection – ILO Convention No.183'

Guide and campaign kit: ICFTU (now ITUC), 2001

Plus more materials for the ITUC campaign for maternity protection, on International Women's Day, 8 March 2007

www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?rubrique109



Work-life balance

We need to build societies where people do not simply live to work but are able to live and work; societies which recognise the fact that many women work outside the household as well as within; that many women are single-parent heads of household or the main provider; and that most men are family-members as well as earners.

Take the case of Australia. To back their case for new rights for working parents, the Australian trade unions produced evidence of work/family patterns there today:

- Up to 47% of the Australian workforce has caring responsibilities;
- 35% of mothers have returned to work by the time their child is 12 months, and about a half of mothers are back at work by the time the child is 2 years old;
- More women working outside the home, and more sole parent families, mean that most children live in households where all the adults work;
- Parents of young children face extreme time pressure, particularly mothers of children under five years who are working full-time, and this has a negative impact on family wellbeing, including children's wellbeing;
- Working parents on individual contracts rather than union negotiated contracts have less access to family leave; they also have less time for family life because they are working longer hours.

By making a good case, strengthened by a campaign, the Australian unions won some new parental rights in 2005.

See: www.actu.asn.au/Campaigns/CurrentACTUCampaigns/WorkandFamily

Work-life patterns vary around the world. However, the reality for working parents in many countries is not so vastly different from Australia. Many find that the pressure of long working hours and low pay means that there is not enough space to care for our families and our communities, let alone for ourselves. A healthy lifestyle is made up of decent paid work, caring for others, and personal time.

Flexible working hours

Women worldwide continue to do most of the domestic work and caring at home. This means that they have a greater demand for working hours that are flexible, so as to integrate their jobs with their lives as mothers and carers.

Yet the way that work is organised usually assumes that workers are constantly available. Where in the world are employment hours related to school hours, for example? Or, where an employer does allow family-friendly hours, the suggestion is that this is a big concession rather than simply sensible.

Meanwhile, many employers are now demanding 'flexible' work patterns to maximise the company's productivity and profits. This is very different from what most women want. It is often at the expense of work-life balance. Remember that relatively more women than men are hired on temporary contracts, without security of employment or pay. Here we can see how a combination of the downward pressure of global competition plus gender discrimination puts extra pressure on women's lives.

“

WHAT THEY SAID

“We have gender sensitisation programmes where we have separate discussions by women and men, and then joint activities. One is mapping how the day starts. Women say they are up by 7 a.m. and already cooking. Men tried to say the same, but everyone laughed.”

Adwoa Sakyi, Gender Officer, General Agricultural Workers' Union (GAWU), Ghana



WHAT THEY DID

'Get a Life!'

Unions in **New Zealand** have become very active on issues of work-life balance. **Christina Phillips** is an administrator for the Fonterra Cooperative Group in Tirau, **New Zealand**, and is on the Women's Committee and National Executive of the **Dairy Workers' Union (NZDWU)**. Here she talks about the rights to parental leave for both women and men that her union has won.

“Women in our country are legally entitled to up to 14 weeks' leave with 80% of their earnings paid by the State when a baby is due, either by birth or adoption. There is also unpaid leave of up to two weeks available to a partner at the time of birth or adoption. Plus there are other forms of leave to assist pregnancy or to help care for a new child.

On top of this, the DWU has negotiated additional entitlements with certain employers. In our collective agreement at Fonterra, for example, the primary care-giver can get 14 weeks' leave at full pay, and their partner is entitled to 2 weeks' leave at full pay at the time of birth.

It is important to make sure workers have the right information about parental leave. So the union has produced a two-sided laminated sheet which is distributed to all site delegates, both men and women. It sets out what the law contains, and then explains how to apply for the leave, what you can expect from your employer and how to seek union help if necessary. It gives the delegates confidence that they can supply accurate information to their members”.

The NZDWU's activities are part of a bigger campaign for work-balance called 'Get a Life!' run by the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions (NZCTU).

“To our membership, work-life balance is about the fundamental aspects of decent work – fair pay, reasonable working hours, manageable workload, quality and affordable childcare and good leave provisions. It is also about equity, and satisfying and rewarding paid work.”

And now the unions in New Zealand have linked with community groups to form the **Quality Flexible Working Hours Coalition**. Launched in November 2006, the Coalition is campaigning for the right under law for workers to request flexible working hours. flexihoursnow.wordpress.com

www.union.org.nz/campaigns/getalife.html



'It's About Time', NZCTU campaign guide

www.union.org.nz/files/about_time.pdf

Appendix 8 has more examples from Australia, UK and Ireland

The Parental Leave Collective Bargaining Agreement between the NZDWU and Fonterra is at:

asianfoodworker.net/maternity/NZDWU-parental-leave.pdf

Time to care

Employers have by and large washed their hands of supporting working parents by providing workplace crèches. Sufficient affordable childcare places are not being provided by governments either. Instead, we have to make personal arrangements with family members, or organise contracts with individual childminders whose pay takes up a lot of our income.

Then there are the elderly, the sick and disabled who need our love and attention too. Plus many of us wish to be active in our communities, local voluntary groups, political organisations, and so on. All of us need time to rest and recuperate too.

But in most countries there is inadequate social provision. The demand for collective responsibility for the care of the young, the elderly, and other vulnerable groups is falling on deaf government ears.

And long working hours, shift work, jobs under precarious terms and conditions, and so on, make it hard to integrate all these aspects of our lives. This brings great stress and strain particularly to women who take on most of the responsibility for caring for others. So women are certainly demanding a better work-life balance for themselves.

But women also want a better balanced life for men too. Women do need men to share more of the domestic and caring work in the family.

Women also need the union to take up the issue of work-life balance, to bring more pressure on employers and government, and to raise greater awareness of how life could and should be.

WHAT THEY SAID



‘Parental leave is as natural for men as it is for women’

In Sweden, parental insurance covers 13 months at 80% of salary, and parents can choose how the leave is to be shared between them. In order to encourage more fathers to take up this opportunity, since 2002 they must take two of the 13 months or that time is deducted from the total. The **Salaried Employees’ Union (HTF)** has also successfully negotiated a clause in their collective agreements which means the employer tops up the pay difference to 100% for three months.

Bengt Olsson, HTF President, told the IUF Women’s Conference in Geneva in March 2007:

“We are trying to achieve a better reconciliation of work and family, to open the labour market to more women, and at the same time to encourage people to have children. These days, women in precarious jobs hardly dare to have children. We want shorter working hours, without loss of pay, and for people to have more influence over the structure of their working time – so that they can combine life and work.

We need to change society’s attitudes, that it is a positive thing to have children. I spent half the time looking after my daughter when she was young. Spending this time with my daughter was the best time of my life; I learnt so much, and I grew as a result. Now she is 24 years old and we have a very close relationship. Men who do not use this opportunity are really stupid. Parental leave is as natural for men as it is for women.”



WHAT THEY DID

More parental rights in CBAs

In Korea, the Korean Federation of Private Service Unions (KFSU) has negotiated parental rights clauses in several Collective Bargaining Agreements:

“Upon request by a union member the company shall grant the member parental leave of up to one year including the maternity leave period.”

CBA between KFSU and Hyundai Department Store

“Upon request the company shall grant one day of paid leave per month to women union members with children under one year old.”

CBA between KFSU and Lotte Hotel, Seoul

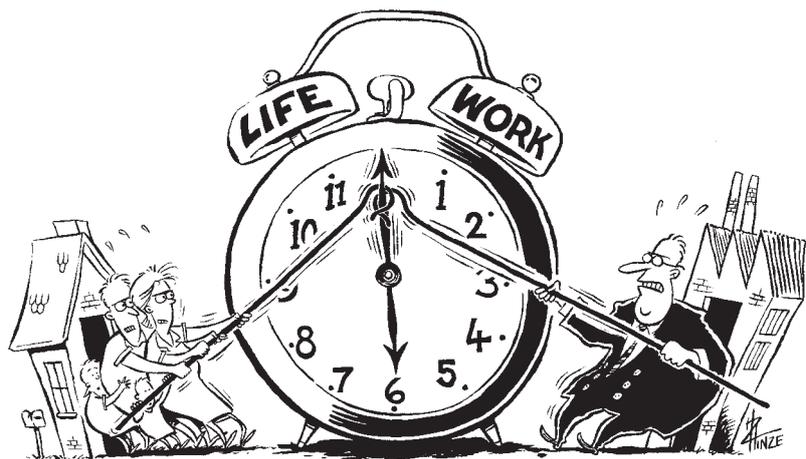
ILO Convention on Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Men and Women Workers: Workers with Family Responsibilities No.156 (1981)

This calls on governments to make sure that people with family responsibilities are not discriminated against at work or when being recruited for jobs; family responsibilities are not a valid reason for dismissal; governments should also foster childcare and family services, and promote public awareness about equal treatment.

Convention No.156 has been ratified by 37 countries.

Europe: EC Parental Leave Directive (96/34/EC)

Passed in 1996, this Directive requires Member States to ensure that employers give a minimum of three months’ unpaid leave to both mothers and fathers after the birth of a child. Adoptive parents of children up to eight years old must have the same right. Dismissing a person for taking or applying for parental leave is unfair dismissal. The Directive also says that workers must have right to time off for urgent family reasons such as life-threatening illness or accidents. www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/1998/01/study/tn9801201s.html



“

WHAT THEY SAID

“Even though they say that women are better workers, women refuse to work the three-shift system because of family commitments, and so they don’t hire women any more. The three shifts per day system is a big problem.”

Nestlé worker, Malaysia



WHAT THEY DID

'Workers are parents too!'

This was a slogan of the **South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union (SACCAWU)** in the early 1990s. At a time when the trade unions were at the forefront of liberating South Africa from racism, SACCAWU also led the way on trying to root out gender discrimination.

After drawing up a model agreement in 1991, within a few years they had parental rights included in collective bargaining agreements with a number of employers. The CBA with the commercial chain Makro, for example, said:

"The parties commit themselves to the elimination of discrimination based on sex, race and gender."

The CBA aimed to "ensure that women are not unfairly discriminated against on the grounds of pregnancy, and that male and female employees who are parents of young children are able to exercise their parental responsibilities..." and went on to say:

The parties acknowledge the equal right of men and women to combine a job and family life, to work under safe and healthy conditions and to give their children the necessary care and attention."

"The Company agrees that it has a social responsibility towards its workers and their children."

"The parties acknowledge the right of parents to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children." "

They also agreed:

- no dismissal for being pregnant;
- 12 months' maternity leave for all women employees, with nine months paid;
- special health and safety protection for pregnant mothers including time off for pre- and post-natal care.
- 14 days' paid paternity leave for male employees;
- the right for parents to divide up parental leave time if both were employed by the company;
- no retrenchment while on parental leave, and the right to return to employment after parental leave.

SACCAWU negotiators said the agreements "opened the way for greater participation by men in childcare... all this has broader implications for the restructuring of gender relations and relations between parents and children."

SACCAWU publicised its campaign through a booklet called '**Sharing the Load: The Struggle for Gender Equality, Parental Rights and Childcare**'.

In South Africa today, family leave of three days for men is widely respected, but the struggle for further parental rights has been displaced by other issues considered more pressing. However, the case shows that parental rights need not be something only for wealthy countries. Rather it is a question of political will and strength within the trade unions.

"Before the parental rights negotiations, I didn't realise the problems that women face... Until women are free, we will only have half freedom".

Phineas Zikhali, a SACCAWU shopsteward, South Africa



What YOU can do

- **Include work-life balance in collective bargaining**, especially flexible working hours as a workers' right rather than an employers' right.
- **Lobby government to ratify ILO Convention No.156 (1981) on Workers' with Family Responsibilities**, and see it implemented by taking a stronger stand against the demands of employers as well as for improved social security systems.
- **Campaign to influence social attitudes on work-life balance**, especially how long working hours and low pay undermine how well we can care for the sick, elderly and disabled as well as children.



ARGUMENTS TO USE

- ⇒ Workers Are Parents Too! We all need societies where people can live and work; family well-being is fundamental to a stable society.
- ⇒ As more and more women are integrated into the workforce, husbands, fathers and other family members need to take more of the domestic responsibilities too – and they need the working terms and conditions to allow them 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 under great stress; rest and recuperation is needed also for the workforce to be productive.



Resources

'Work and Family'

A series of Information Sheets

ILO, Conditions of Work and Employment Programme, 2004

www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/condtrav/infosheets/index.htm



Fighting for a better work-life balance wins women members for unions and helps to create a better society.



Bringing more women into unions

Finding out where potential women members are employed, and reaching out to give them the confidence that unions are on their side, mean developing appropriate organising strategies.

In many countries, the gender make-up of the workforce is shifting, as more women choose to enter the labour force, and companies change their employment patterns. There are simply more women out there to unionise.

WHAT THEY SAID

“The unionisation rates for women have improved over the last twenty years, whereas male rates have fallen, partly because of the types of jobs in Australia.”

Helen Creed, former President, Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers' Union (LHMU, Australia)

However, organising women workers often needs a new approach. This is partly because, when they shift to employing more women, employers often take the opportunity to lower working terms and conditions. Women are more likely than men to be in 'precarious' jobs, pushed onto casualised contracts, rather than in permanent jobs. Especially where women are relatively under-unionised, it is a chance for employers to reduce standards.

Many workers – both men and women – are employed in very poor circumstances:

- In agriculture there have always been a lot of seasonal jobs, often taken up by the local community; now, we see more and more migrants from distant places employed on farms and plantations with very poor employment conditions;
- In food processing, production line workers are being shifted from permanent status to short-term, even day-to-day, contracts so that employers can hire and fire them at will; many of these workers are migrants too;
- Similar patterns exist in hotels, catering and tourism, where there is an increasing pattern of lay-offs and then rehiring through 'service providers' and labour contractors;
- Some assembly/production tasks are outsourced to women working in their own homes; homeworkers may look self-employed but in reality work for certain companies; it is just that they are not clearly employed by those companies, and so their status as 'workers' and their rights and benefits are barely recognised.

It means that who is working in the 'formal' and who in the 'informal' economy is often obscure.

It also means that many workers are difficult to organise into trade unions, much more so than permanently employed ones whose workplace and employer are obvious. And the majority of workers concerned are women. So, in order to survive, unions face the huge and growing challenge of organising workers in precarious forms of employment; and this is where women tend to be the majority.

WHAT THEY SAID

“Every year when a union member retires, they replace them with a contract worker. Our membership is getting smaller, because the number of contract workers is growing. They are all women too!”

Malaysian participant in the IUF Asia-Pacific Women's Project, 2004

All workers have rights

All workers have rights, and that includes those in precarious jobs and the 'informal' economy.

This basic principle was laid down in the **United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights** signed in 1948. Articles 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 23 and 24 say 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.

Plus there are rights for all laid down in the **ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work** 1998; this confirms that all member States must implement the ILO's Core Conventions even if they have not ratified them. The Core Conventions are:

Fundamental Right	ILO 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

www.ilo.org/dyn/declaris/DECLARATIONWEB.INDEXPAGE
See also page 6.

Plus there are various international conventions applying to particular types of workers:

Migrant workers

United Nations Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (1990)

This confirms that migrant workers and their families have the same freedoms and rights as all other workers, and that includes freedom from all forms of discrimination.

www.ohchr.org/english/law/cmw.htm

Part-time workers

ILO Convention on Part-Time Work No.175 (1994)

Part-time workers have the same trade union rights as full-time workers, the same rights against discrimination in employment and occupation, and the same occupational safety and health rights. Plus they should not be paid disproportionately lower, and should have access to social security, maternity leave, sick pay, and paid holidays. It has been ratified only by 11 countries so far.

Homeworkers

ILO Convention on Home Work No.177 (1996)

Homeworkers have the same rights as other workers: to set up or join organisations of their own choice, to be protected against discrimination or health and safety hazards, to pay, social security and maternity protection. This has still only been ratified by 5 countries.

Many governments are not fulfilling these promises to their citizens made in the United Nations, the ILO, or other international bodies. Nor indeed are governments always upholding national legislation passed in their own country. However, these standards do exist; they are a beacon of hope, and they are something to organise around.



Taking on the challenge

Many IUF affiliated unions are taking on the challenge; they are going beyond their traditional constituencies of largely male workforces employed in obvious workplaces for a known employer, under recognisable employment terms and conditions.

In this section, and throughout the booklet, there are examples of the ways in which unions are reaching out to casualised workers, workers whose 'formal' employment status is unclear, migrant or child labourers, domestic/household workers, and so on.

Women do appear to be at the forefront of these organising strategies, developing new methods of organising and of providing services for union members, especially for the women. They are helping with the formation of micro-credit associations and cooperatives, with obtaining identity documents for women so they can be citizens in their own right, with accessing government aid programmes, and more. Some of these activities are community-based rather than workplace-based, but they are still about the collective self-organisation of workers for their mutual benefit.



WHAT THEY DID

Fighting casualisation in Korea

Korea is a country where over 60% of the workforce is now employed on a non-permanent 'irregular' basis. Every government in recent years has pushed hard to liberalise the economy and allow the greater use of casual labour.

On the country's golf courses, the caddies who carry the equipment are mostly women, and there are 20,000 of them. But their status as 'workers' under law is unclear. The **Korean Women's Trade Union (KWTU)** had won a collective agreement for them in mid-2001 after 18 months of struggle, but the caddies remained neither covered by workplace accident insurance nor protected against unfair dismissals or sexual harassment.

Then, in October 2003, the government-owned **88 Country Club** tried to transfer 41 women caddies' jobs to a subcontractor in violation of the agreement. Managers tried to use the women's ambiguous legal status to avoid meeting the union. As the dispute escalated, they closed the Club and expelled all union members, cutting off the electricity to the union office. 110 women caddies were locked out of their jobs. A peaceful union march was met with assault by riot police.

The **Korean Federation of Private Service Workers' Unions (KFSU)** is campaigning to reverse casualisation, and mobilised its members in support of the women caddies. There was a 39-day sit-in in front of the company owning the 88 Country Club, plus a hunger-strike, and an occupation involving 500 supporters.

Eventually, management gave in and a new collective agreement was signed in April 2005. This accepts the caddies' rights to union recognition and representation, contains provisions on sexual harassment by golfers, and gives 60 days' maternity leave and one day of menstruation leave per month which the country's Labour Standard Act guarantees all women workers.

Other workers in Korea campaigning against outsourcing include 13 women and 2 men housekeeping staff at the Renaissance Hotel in Seoul, run by the Marriott global hotel chain. Over one hundred housekeeping employees were forced to resign in 2001 and rehired under an outsourced company. Though doing the same work and promised the same terms and conditions, their wages actually fell by 60%. As well as supporting a picket by the 15 determined workers, the KFSU waged a legal battle against the outsourcing at Renaissance.

Korean unions have recognised that, if they don't include casualised workers, they face a weaker future.



WHAT THEY DID

So successful, they had to stop recruiting

The **Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)** in **India** is the world's best-known and most successful trade union for women workers in the informal economy. SEWA's members include labourers, street vendors, homeworkers and small producers. Registered in 1972, by the early 2000s SEWA's total membership had reached 700,000 members in seven States. In fact, some 100,000 were recruited in a recent three-year period and SEWA had to stop recruiting for a while in order to consolidate its membership. Thousands of them are tobacco and agricultural workers.

SEWA calls itself "both an organisation and a movement" and it runs a very wide range of services and campaigns for its members. There is no doubt that its participatory methods and capacity-building for women have enabled grassroots members, many of whom have little or no literacy, to gain self-confidence and take on responsibilities. SEWA takes care to find out what the women want and helps them to find solutions.

In the Madya Pradesh region, for example, women go into the forests to harvest the leaves that are made into 'bidi' cigarettes. They are treated as 'independent workers' even though they have to sell to the government, and they are paid very little. So SEWA reached out and has organised 165,000 female leaf pluckers.

Among their activities, SEWA is helping the women to form cooperatives. **Shikha Joshi**, SEWA's General Secretary for the Madya Pradesh region, says that it takes a lot of time and effort but over one thousand cooperatives involving women workers have now been registered by the State government. Previously only men leaf-pluckers belonged to cooperatives, but SEWA put pressure on the government and mobilised the women. SEWA is currently working in 57 cooperatives in 10 districts covering 2160 villages and 567 collection centres.

The benefits for the women are numerous. *"Even having a certificate for being a cooperative member is very important", Shikha says. "It can act as an ID Card, enabling access to social security. For some women, this is the first time they have ever had their own official ID".* Through SEWA, the leaf pluckers now get proper wages, in due time, along with bonuses and social insurance.

www.sewa.org



WHAT THEY DID

Just getting ID helps many women

Helping women in the informal economy, especially migrants and those in rural areas, to obtain identity documents turns out to be a service of great value to individuals, as well as a worthwhile organising tool. SEWA in India has found this (see above), as has the T&G in the UK (see page 44), as well as **UATRE**, the rural workers' union of **Argentina**.

Sometimes just a union membership card may be the first independent document a woman has ever had. Once they get an official identity, women become 'citizens' in their own right rather than being identified through their relationship to a husband or a father. They officially 'exist' where they did not before, and this gives them better possibility of claiming their rights including, importantly, social benefits. They are immensely grateful to unions that help with this.

In Latin America, the **Flora Tristan Women's Centre**, a women's human rights centre based in Lima, **Peru**, has similar experiences. Women workers in the rural areas who suffer violence and sexual harassment, and are therefore at great risk of HIV/Aids, find it especially hard to take a case against their abuser if they have no formal identity documents of their own and so have no civil status. The Centre helps rural women get IDs and, with training, also to confront sexual harassment and HIV/Aids. The Centre and the IUF Latin American Regional Office now have a cooperation agreement on capacity-building for women workers and leaders in the region.

www.flora.org.pe



WHAT THEY DID

'It started with 28 women'

Adwoa Sakyi is Gender Officer of the **General Agricultural Workers' Union (GAWU)** in **Ghana**. She is also Chair of the IUF Agricultural Workers' Trade Group and a member of IUF Women's Committees at international and African regional levels. GAWU has long had a policy of reaching out to rural communities through community-based organising. Here Adwoa describes one case where, by assisting women farmers, GAWU increased its own membership and activities at the same time as dramatically improving the lives of the rural poor.

"We support our rural members, particularly women, with revolving loans and access to other forms of credit. We help them get hold of basic tools and inputs like fertilisers. Where necessary, GAWU gives advice and legal assistance, and sometimes leads members in negotiations, for example, to acquire land. The union also puts up agricultural storage facilities, and helps train members in literacy and practical skills, including environmentally-sound farming practices.

Because rural workers have very low incomes, the union has to invest more finances in organising them than we can hope to realise from their dues. So, assistance has been sought from home and abroad. For example, GAWU benefited from the programme 'Workers Education for Women Members of Rural Workers Organisation in Africa' organised by the IUF, the ILO, and the Norwegian aid agency NORAD.

One rural community we have supported is Manchie in the Greater Accra region of Ghana. It has a population of about 746, slightly more women than men. Farming is their major occupation, producing cassava, pineapples and vegetables, amongst others. In 1990, GAWU carried out a socio-economic survey that identified that the women of Manchie were involved in processing cassava into 'gari', and from that we developed a project with the community.

First we encouraged 28 women to each contribute some funds as seed money, and from that a revolving loan system was set up. This was a tool to bring women together as a group. Responding in this way to what the women needed was an opportunity for the union to organise them. As their activities increased, the women needed a processing facility. So GAWU organised a seminar about the Government's Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS). This enabled the Group's leader, who is also the Assemblywoman for the community, to negotiate support from the GPRS to put up a 'gari' processing factory.

Then the women needed somewhere for their young children to go while they were busy with cassava production. So the union supported them to set up a day-care centre, using the proceeds of their 'gari' processing plus communal labour from the community. They were also keen to get better education for their children. So we gave them information about the Government's policies on education, and then they asked the Government to put up a school building. Now we even have some children from this community going to University.

So, what started with 28 women in one community has led to over 200 more people in the union, and they have both a cassava processing factory and a school which really improve the quality of their lives."



© Karen Robinson / PANOS PICTURES

Women migrant workers

“Women migrant workers are particularly vulnerable.

They face discrimination as women and as migrants.”

IUF Charter of Rights for Migrant Workers in Agriculture, 2004

Migrant and immigrant workers now make up a large percentage of the workforce in many industries, especially in agriculture and plantations, as well as in food processing and meatpacking, plus service industries such as hotels, tourism, and catering.

Among these migrants are many, many women. Plus there are literally millions of women moving across the world to work as domestic/household workers. For example, some 1.5 million Asian women now work as migrant household workers in other countries.

These workers are extremely vulnerable. They are often migrants out of desperation, hoping it will prove to be a way of raising the children they have had to leave behind with family or friends. Migrants are at risk from unscrupulous labour agents and traffickers. Official work permit systems are often so weak that they put migrant workers in vulnerable situations, such as becoming ‘undocumented’ the moment they leave an abusive employer or agent. Always there is the greater risk for women of being coerced into the sex industry.

Among the most difficult sectors to organise are women migrant workers doing domestic/household labour. Their workplaces – and often their living accommodation too - are private households, and so they are usually isolated from each other let alone from workers’ organisations in their host country. And yet here too we find women trade unionists taking imaginative steps to find ways of supporting them, and the unions gaining in return.

Unfortunately, there are often many negative images about migrant workers in society at large, including among union members. Combating this requires positive leadership and education where necessary. Even if state authorities regard ‘undocumented’ migrants as ‘illegal’, there is no excuse for trade unionists to use this language.

As the IUF Charter of Rights for Migrant Workers in Agriculture also says:

No worker is an illegal worker

All workers have the right to decent work and equal treatment

The IUF Reciprocity Agreement

Going back as far as the 1920s, the IUF has had in its Rules (Appendix 1) an agreement which means that if you are a member of an IUF affiliated union in one country and then migrate to another country, you can automatically become a member of an IUF affiliate in your new country, entitled to support. This is something that could be used much more to protect migrant workers. To include women, it means signing more women up as union members also before they depart as migrants.



IUF Resources

‘Workers and Unions on the Move: Organising and Defending Migrant Workers in Agriculture and Allied Sectors’

IUF manual, forthcoming 2007





WHAT THEY DID

'Our most important duty: to save lives'



International Women's Day on 8 March 2006 was marked by rallies across the district of Jalpaiguri in West Bengal, **India**, including many members and supporters of the **West Bengal Cha Mazdoor Sabha** union. Themes of the rallies included the struggle against sexual harassment and for health and safety measures at the workplace, as well as reproductive rights, and rights to work and food.

The right to work and food is especially important in West Bengal. Merciless restructuring has caused the closure of many tea estates and the loss of over 100,000 jobs. Companies say the plantations are no longer profitable and are abandoning the land and their workers. It is actually illegal for those abandoned to plant anything other than tea on the land, and the authorities have failed to step in with sufficient aid. Starvation is already hitting the communities.

The majority of tea workers are women and they are feeling the crisis the most. A survey of tea workers in mid-2005 revealed, for example, that 41% of non-pregnant mothers and 14% of pregnant or breast-feeding mothers were taking "less food than the rest of their families".

Durga Gurung is Chair of the Women's Committee of the West Bengal Cha Mazdoor Sabha. She says that traffickers are taking advantage of the desperate situation. *"One of the biggest problems is that young women are prey to labour agents who take them to work in the cities. They hope to get jobs but they are pushed into prostitution. Men also go away to work, and when they come back, they often bring HIV-Aids."*

As well as collaborating with others on anti-trafficking and HIV-Aids awareness programmes, the union is trying to persuade young women to stay in the area by supporting them to set up micro-enterprises together. Durga adds, *"It is our most important duty to save their lives"*.



© Aubrey Wade.



WHAT THEY DID

'We found out what they wanted'

In the **UK**, the **Transport and General Workers' Union (T&G)** has developed strong links with migrant workers' groups. **Diana Holland**, National Organiser for Women, Race and Equalities, describes how the union discovered what support it can give by asking the workers, and how much it has gained in return.

"Migrant workers in the UK had already organised themselves, building such associations as Kalayaan for migrant domestic workers. One Sunday in 1990, they invited the T&G to a social event with plays, songs and presentations which showed the terrible situation they were in. I pledged to do all I could to help.

But what help the union could give was not obvious. Thinking strategically about individual workers within households was not top of the union list of priorities. Many of the workers had left abusive employers and so had become undocumented. There was no formal employers' body. Domestic workers were not covered by employment laws. But it was also important to find out what the migrant domestic workers wanted from the union, rather than to presume. We found out that they wanted:

- *A union card; this helped to give them an identity and status; for some, the card was the only document they had in the UK with their name on it.*
- *An opportunity to tell their story to many more people.*
- *To benefit from the louder voice of a large trade union linked to the whole labour movement.*

Working with Kalayaan and others, some 600 migrant domestic workers joined the T&G. After the Labour Government was elected in May 1997, the status of migrant domestic workers was restored. A big thanksgiving ceremony was held. Legal rights gave domestic workers more confidence to challenge their employers. But of course they continued to look to the union for support. So the T&G:

- *Spoke at Sunday meetings of migrant domestic workers; sometimes hundreds would attend and it was very inspiring.*
- *Arranged trade union education sessions.*
- *Translated leaflets about union membership.*
- *Produced model employment contracts.*
- *Provided rooms and food for events.*
- *Arranged for migrant domestic workers to speak out at international union movement events.*
- *Jointly lobbied Ministers, providing migrant workers with that extra opportunity to state their case.*

It is also very important to recognise what the union has gained:

- *The benefit of a campaign victory – at a time when unions are often suffering losses.*
- *The political significance of activities that are visibly led by women and ethnic minority members.*
- *New members.*
- *Stronger community links.*
- *Stronger European and international links.*
- *The opportunity to end terrible abuse."*

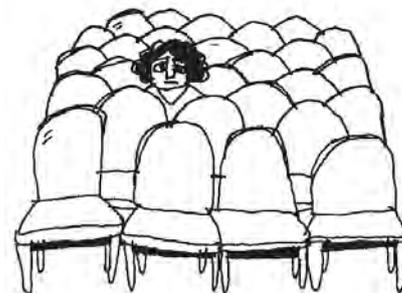
Edited extracts from '**Out of the Shadows: Organising and protecting domestic workers in Europe: the role of trade unions**', European Trades Union Confederation, 2005
 English: www.etuc.org/a/2809 / French: www.etuc.org/a/2810

Challenging stereotypes: the 'what' and 'who' of unions

There is no doubt that these kinds of organising activities by and for women in the trade union movement is changing the nature of our organisations: who they are for, which issues are prioritised, what services are offered to members, and so on.

Above all, these activities are sending out new messages to workers, their communities and wider society. They are promoting a positive image of the constructive role of unions, rather than a negative one of confrontation and aggression.

...women officials
in trade unions



WHAT THEY SAID

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‘They thought unions were only against things’

We asked ourselves: ‘How can we recruit more women? What would interest them most?’ So we decided to run a series of conferences on ‘Women, Health and the Environment’. We know these are issues that women are concerned about. We think women care more than men about the environment, about keeping it clean, safe and healthy.

So we held two conferences in the capital city Ouagadougou and one in the city of Bobo. At each, we invited a woman environmental specialist to talk in the morning, and then we posed the question: ‘How can trade unions help find solutions to these problems?’

The reaction from the women was very interesting. Several said things like, ‘I didn’t know unions do this. I thought unions were only against things, saying ‘no’ to whoever is in power’.

It is true that these are not traditional issues for unions. But if we had called it a ‘trade union conference’ few women would have come. By bringing women together to discuss issues that greatly concern them, we were much more successful. Altogether, we recruited about 150 new members from just these three conferences.

We have also been considering how to raise the profile of the menopause as a workplace issue, to include in collective bargaining. Many women do not want to talk about it and can be quite ignorant. They are even shy about going to the doctor about it. Yet it can cause women difficulties at work. So we have made it a theme at our conferences and are circulating leaflets.”

Assetou Esperance Traoré, Women’s Officer, Syndicat Nationale des Travailleurs de l’Environnement, Tourisme et Hotels (SYNTETH), Burkina Faso, and Chair of the IUF Women’s Committee in Burkina Faso



WHAT THEY DID

'Not just our traditional things'

The **Conservation, Hotels, Domestic and Allied Workers' Union (CHODAWU)** in **Tanzania** is part of a multi-faceted campaign to root out the use of children, mostly girls from poor rural communities, as domestic workers. The programme is supported by the **ILO International Programme to Eliminate Child Labour (IPEC)** and the Tanzanian Government. **Vicky Kanyoka**, CHODAWU's Director for Women and Organisation, and Chair of the IUF African region Women's Committee, explains the how and why, and what it has meant for their union, including how it has led to the recruitment of 4,500 adult domestic workers as union members:

"First we had to create public awareness about the consequences of child labour. We held meetings in the rural communities where the children come from, in collaboration with local government officials, village committees and other leaders. The children are often taken from their homes by agents with promises like 'she will work and send you money'. Families are poor, and so they agree. Some are even taken to other countries. This is trafficking, and we have been working with the police to track and arrest the agents.

The poor are in great need of alternative income-generating activities. So CHODAWU has been supporting the formation of micro-businesses, as well as savings and credit schemes, with funds and training in entrepreneurship skills and financial management. You might ask how this is of direct benefit to the union, but the fact is that we now have 1,300 new members through these schemes, three-quarters of whom are women.

Also, we have linked up with NGOs which specialise in HIV/Aids. They draw in funds from donors. So here the union's financial contribution is small. Some children get infected through sexual abuse by their employers, and need psycho-sexual counselling as well as HIV/Aids treatment before being returned to their villages.

Not only that, the union has helped establish vocational skills training facilities for young people of 15-18 years, with funds from the ILO and others. Developed under the Ministry of Education, the three-month courses include tailoring, electrical installation, cookery, and handicrafts; they also include HIV/Aids awareness, gender aspects and entrepreneurial skills. So far 2,500 young people have been on the courses, three-quarters girls, who are doing mechanics, carpentry and welding. Our union runs seven of the facilities, and private providers run others.

Plus we have done 'physical and social mapping' to help identify the most vulnerable places from which the children come. Working with local government officers, we look at incomes and access to services such as electricity, water, and education. We even include recreation facilities – in many places there are only drinking clubs for men and football for boys, nothing for women or girls.

Through this mapping, each community produces a strategic plan, working out who can tackle what. Teachers check school registers to find out who is not attending. The youth say who among their friends are missing; they help identify the bus-stops and train stations through which children have been taken. This helps the police track the agents. This mapping has been an eye-opener even to local politicians. It has helped influence local governments to increase the budget to the areas where children are most vulnerable.

It has been a fight, though. Women have pointed the finger at men. Some men have come to realise they were not being responsible by wasting time and money on beer. Through the child labour programme we have been able to change men's attitudes at home.

Many people said, 'We didn't realise this is the work of a union. We thought it was 'only for workers in the formal sector' or 'only for adults'. The name of CHODAWU has been spread far and wide; they now see we are for human rights, not just workers' rights. But working on child labour has also helped us organise 4,500 adult domestic workers. And, in any case, the children are the workers of tomorrow. We in the trade unions must not just concentrate on our traditional things. In reality, we don't depend on the big industries and companies. Over three-quarters of people depend on the informal economy for their livelihood. Our friends' problems will become our own business."

IPEC: www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipecc



What YOU can do

- **Recruit more women** by making unions more attractive/responsive to the needs of women workers, even when the issues that women raise and the services they want are beyond what is thought of as a traditional 'trade union agenda'; for example, helping women to obtain identity cards and literacy training can be valuable tools to involve many in unions.
- **Develop strategic organising programmes:** use imaginative methods – and women organisers - to reach out to women, taking account of their work situation (casualised jobs, informal economy status, etc.) as well as their domestic responsibilities; this may mean community-based meetings instead of workplace ones; door-to-door visits are an opportunity to educate family members too; hold a bazaar or have a stall at events; consider radio broadcasts, and drama or singing, especially where there is low literacy or lack of confidence.
- **Encourage 'irregular' workers to organise:** consider setting up special union structures and activities to accommodate the needs and rights of 'informal economy' workers; if there are legal obstacles preventing some workers from being members of trade unions, assist them to organise and then associate with your union, while also lobbying for legal changes.
- **Organise migrant workers** or find out if migrant workers in your country have set up their own organisations, for example cultural or religious groups, and consider building links with them; promote the use of the IUF Reciprocity Agreement giving workers union rights across borders.
- **Lobby government to ratify and implement ILO Conventions** relating to the rights of part-time workers and homeworkers, and extend labour legislation and social protection to informal economy workers.
- **Consider new ways of bargaining for the rights of informal economy workers:** if employers' associations do not exist, for example, perhaps there are government structures (local or national) to approach.
- **Promote positive images and activities:** counteract any negative picture of unions as combative or aggressive by being positive about finding solutions to problems.



ARGUMENTS TO USE

- ⇒ With all the changes in employment around the world, it is essential to unions' survival and defending employment standards that more women are brought in, even though many are in difficult workplaces to organise.
- ⇒ Women are not disproportionately employed in casual/irregular work by accident; it is a direct result of gender discrimination by employers; if it is not challenged, it will eventually weaken the union and have a negative impact on overall rights and working conditions.
- ⇒ All workers have rights; this includes those who may not be regarded by society or the law as 'workers', for example 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 wider society, of not organising them will be even greater.



Resources



'Outsourcing & Casualisation in the Food & Beverage Industry: The Threat to Workers and Unions & Union Strategies for Fighting Back'

IUF, 2006

Available in Chinese, Croatian, English, Filipino, French, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Spanish; by email from iuf@iuf.org

'Agricultural Workers and their Contribution to Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development'

ILO/FAO/IUF, October 2005

www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/actrav/new/061005.pdf

'A Row to Hoe: the Gender Impact of Trade Liberalization on our Food System, Agricultural Markets and Women's Human Rights'

by Alexandra Spieldoch, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, January 2007

In English, French and Spanish.

www.fes-geneva.org/publicationsFrame.htm

'Enhancing African Trade Unions' Capacity for Promoting Gender Equality: Focus on Poverty, Informal Economy and HIV/Aids'

GEPATU (Gender Mainstreaming Project for African Trade Unions), ILO/OATUU, 2005

'Respect and Rights: Protection for Domestic/Household Workers!'

Report of the international conference on domestic/household workers' rights, Amsterdam, Nov 2006

www.irene-network.nl/workers_is/domestic.htm

'Promoting Gender Equality: A Resource Kit for Trade Unions'

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

ILO, GenProm, 2002

English: www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/gems/eoo/tu/tu_toc.htm

French, Spanish and Arabic: www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/gems/advance/trade.htm

WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising)

A global research-policy network that seeks to improve the status of the working poor, especially women, in the informal economy

www.wiego.org

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WHAT THEY SAID

“Management will try to split the workers into different parts: core and periphery, permanent and temporary, men and women, old and young, long-term employees and newcomers, direct and indirect employees. Make sure people understand that they can win this fight only if they are united! The goal must be to organise every worker as a union member.”

'Outsourcing & Casualisation in the Food & Beverage Industry: The threat to workers and unions & union strategies for fighting back', IUF, 2006

Building women's confidence and skills

“In our culture, women should never speak in public.”

“Women need to ask their husband's permission first.”

Where unions have been open and supportive to women, their unionisation rates have gone up. The question then becomes how to organise so that women want to stay in the union and, more than that, become active members. One vital element is to build women's confidence, both in themselves and in the union as a whole.

The reality is that many women workers have low levels of education and/or confidence. This is of course directly related to the attitudes and behaviour of men around them, at home, in the workplace – work colleagues as well as management - and indeed in the union. How unions are organised has a significant impact on turning women away or bringing them in.



WHAT THEY DID

‘They said we were forming rival unions!’

In the trade unions of **Uganda**, **Theopista Nabulya Ssentongo** was the first woman union Education Officer and then the first woman General Secretary, elected in 1989. Today she is General Secretary of the **National Union of Commercial, Manufacturing and Agricultural Workers (NUCMAW)**. She is also one of the two women representing workers in the Ugandan Parliament. Theopista's own rise was the result of many years of working with other union sisters to overcome male resistance.

“We went out vigorously to mobilise women in all the unions. We had to forfeit our lunch; we had no money and sacrificed from our own pockets to visit workplaces. We formed women's wings in each union; each had the responsibility to go to more workplaces to bring more women into these wings.

It was not easy; there was quite a lot of resistance from men trade unionists. They said we were forming rival unions! The hostility of one leader went as far as getting a woman from his union's women's wing dismissed from her job. We explained and we explained; but they could not understand. Sometimes they were not honest with us.

They would not give us any resources; they argued we were not ‘legitimate’ because our structures were not in the Statutes. So we campaigned for amendments to unions' Constitutions. We made a noise about the need to include women on any delegations to workshops, seminars or conferences, and managed to achieve a ‘one-third’ rule in union constitutions – although it took a lot of time...

Today, in every union, women hold positions of responsibility. Men are now embarrassed if there are no women at the meetings – we make them embarrassed in front of others.”

WHAT THEY SAID

“I am a member of the union committee and, before, I couldn't say anything in the meetings – I was too scared. I just sat and listened. Now I always suggest activities for the union committee and give opinions.”

Malaysian participant in the IUF Asia-Pacific Women's Project, 2004



Turning recruits into activists

To become active in unions, women need opportunities to gain knowledge, experience and confidence. Women-only seminars and get-togethers are an excellent way of doing this; they build sisterhood and solidarity, encouraging women to gain strength from each other. Many IUF affiliates have found the Study Circle method very effective in building women's capacity.

Of course, this means finding the time to meet and act. As we know, women's lives are already very full. Not all who turn up for one or two events will be able to become consistently involved. This means organising activities in such a way as to allow for dipping in and out, accepting whatever contribution women can offer.

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WHAT THEY SAID

“One 8 March (International Women's Day) we had a meeting to which all women were invited, to raise any issues that they were not confident about. We had training in how to communicate with employers; how to get issues taken seriously. We included role plays. There was very positive feedback; women got more confidence to address problems they face.”

Susie Allison, Industrial Officer, National Union of Workers, Australia



WHAT THEY DID

Give women 'room and scope'

The IUF's 'Global Sugar Programme' intends to encourage the involvement of more women sugar workers. This was agreed by the world conference of the IUF Agricultural Workers' Trade Group in Spain in December 2006:

“To emphasise the presence of women workers in the sector, encourage their participation in unions as members and in leadership positions, and support the effort of unions to develop gender-sensitive activities, and the negotiation of gender-related clauses in the collective bargaining agreements, guaranteeing maternity protection.”

It was the **Guyana Agricultural and General Workers' Union (GAWU)** that proposed this. GAWU's General Secretary **Seepaul Narine** explains why:

“Unless women are given opportunities and feel accommodated in the unions, they will not be encouraged into the movement. Sometimes we see only men in the unions. Men tend to feel they are more competitive and adopt a position, 'you stay out'. So women feel curtailed, not recognised and sometimes not valued for their contribution. Women can be better organisers than men, but can only prove themselves if there is that space for them. On our sugar estates, most of the workers are men. Only about 10% of our union members are women. So activities could be dominated by men unless we have a conscious attitude that women should be given room and scope.”

“

WHAT THEY SAID

“Women's participation may not be consistent but we can understand that and keep the communication with them going, make use of their participation when it is available. Union structures and procedures need to be built around the reality of women's lives, not just men's lives... Childcare facilities are important because, without them, only two types of women can get involved in the unions: older women with grown-up children or single women who are 'married' to the trade union, and that in itself is a huge sacrifice.”

Jorgette Honculada, General Secretary, National Federation of Labor (NFL), Philippines



WHAT THEY DID

A mobile union training course

Zaharatou Hamani Abdou is Women's Officer of the industrial workers' union of **Niger**, the **Syndicat Nationale des Travailleurs d'Industrie de Niger (SNTIN)**, and a member of the IUF Executive Committee. Here, Zaharatou describes the 'union caravans' that the women have been organising between neighbouring countries in the region, successfully recruiting more women into the unions, and getting them active.

"Often in regional seminars you hear about interesting things happening in other countries. So the idea of a 'caravan' between neighbouring countries was conceived. It was first discussed at a meeting of Francophone African unions in Burkina Faso, and women in our unions in Niger got it organised.

The first caravan from Niger was to Benin in 2004. We went there because we heard that they had an active Women's Committee, much more successful in getting women involved than we were in Niger. About 80 people joined in, travelling in a bus and two cars. It included young workers, and some women brought their children.

In Benin we learnt about recruiting in your neighbourhood. A union member who knows someone who is not a member tries to recruit her. In Benin, they have recruited many just by approaching other sisters to join.

In 2005, there was a caravan to Togo and then one to Ghana. On that one, about a hundred joined in, all squeezed into a coach for 80! Here we looked at the question of migrant labour between our countries and how to maintain union membership when people cross borders. We are now discussing the next caravan, perhaps to Mali or Burkina Faso, though we haven't got all the finances yet.

The caravans are financially supported by the unions, for example to cover fuel and accommodation costs. We also got the Government to lend us the buses. However, participants must pay for their own costs. Women in West Africa are well-known as traders, and so they bought and sold things like clothes to generate income.

The caravans are mainly a recruiting and organising exercise for Niger unions. To join in, you must have a union card. If you not a member, then you must enrol first.

Really it is a mobile training course. As we go along, we discuss what a union is, and the history of trade unionism. We talk about the advantages for workers of being union members, of our rights and collective organisation. We discuss how to eradicate the bad image that unions have in the media by focusing on the positive things. In fact, the caravans attract a lot of media interest for our own unions as well as those in the host countries.

The main aims of the caravans are to recruit new members, exchange ideas and experiences about unions, and establish good relationships between countries. After the caravans, we hold meetings and study circles for those who participated, to involve them in more union activities and recruit more people."

WHAT THEY SAID

"Women often do not feel confident and tend to nominate men for union positions, rather than other women. And yet, often women go to another woman for help, someone known to be wise and sympathetic. It is important for the union to identify who this is and bring her more formally into the union."

Susie Allison, Industrial Officer, National Union of Workers, Australia

Women organisers

One of the best ways of stimulating women to join and become active in the union is by having women organisers. This is on 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.

Thinking strategically like this about your union organising, and developing an on-going programme, can bring excellent results. One tip for identifying potential women organisers is to find out who are the women already acting as informal advisers to other women workers. In most workforces there is such a person, and unions do well to encourage them in.

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WHAT THEY SAID

'...if we stayed on afterwards'

“One way that we used to identify women organisers was to hold a mass meeting, say of 100-200 workers from several farms. At the meetings, only men would speak. But if we stayed on afterwards, women would come up and say 'This is my problem. Can you help?'

This helped us to identify individuals who might become organisers. We started by inviting them to 1-2 days' training on basic trade unionism and workers' rights. Later there would be a 5-days' training with others from different sectors. Finally, we had a ten-day 'educators' training'. We told them, 'You are now a union educator at shopfloor level. All the responsibility for union education lies upon you; that's union ownership.'

In this way we recruited a team of ten women organisers from the farm-level to go around farming communities. It is very important to show that it is farm women themselves who can do it. That really motivated others to be in the unions. As a result, women-only committees were established at branch level. We used the study circle method, which is a good participatory method for on-the-ground organisers.”

Gertrude Hambira, General Secretary, General Agriculture and Plantation Workers' Union of Zimbabwe (GAPWUZ)

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WHAT THEY SAID

'It's changing the face of the union'

“The biggest change in our union has come from the 'Organising Strategy' adopted a few years ago. New organisers are recruited through both the union and advertisements, and then get training in how to be a union organiser. At least 50% of the new organisers are women and/or from ethnic minority groups in the UK, and this is already changing the face of the union. In time, no doubt some of them will become full-time officials.

This is really bringing new life into the union. These new organisers are not steeped in the old traditions of the union, which can be rather stifling for women. It is so refreshing to see them gaining confidence and becoming active. The organising strategy is about 'mapping the workplace' to identify the activists and those most likely to join the union; people are coming forward who had never been approached before.”

Teresa MacKay, Chair: Rural and Agricultural Workers' trade group (RAAW), Transport and General Workers' Union (T&G), UK

Women's committees

Having a functioning Women's Committee, or indeed women's committees at many levels from the workplace upwards, is a sign to women that there is a special place for them in the union. Their well-being is not dependent on one or two good but isolated individuals but is being given regular attention. These committees are where women can consolidate their strategies, develop policy, and organise a programme of activities to implement it.

Women's Committees must not be just for show, of course, not just consulted when convenient and then ignored. Their concerns and policies need to be integrated into the agenda of the union as a whole. But it is not always easy to get the necessary resources and mechanisms for this.

One method is to meet regularly with the top union leadership. Even better is to build a structural link between the work of Women's Committees and that of other union committees so that the whole union agenda is influenced. Another is to win the power to monitor any union activities for gender equality and to make recommendations for improvement, (see also Section 2.4).

Interestingly, even where unions have thoroughly taken equality on board, Women's Committees are generally still needed. They give support to new women activists; they ensure that any gains in equality are not temporary but last over time. In any case, whatever the progress inside unions, patriarchal values still dominate much of wider society.

In some countries where there are several unions affiliated to the IUF, women have set up a national IUF Women's Committee. Some of these have spearheaded imaginative women's recruitment campaigns, as the examples of Burkina Faso (see page 45) and Niger (see page 51) show.

WHAT THEY SAID

“The value of Women's Committees is that they provide space and time for women to be on their own, as a group of women. There we can develop fellow feeling on issues such as sexual harassment. It is a place to lick your wounds, so to speak, and get affirmation. Women's experience is validated and we gain strength from each other. There women find out you are a person in your own right – someone separate from your personal relationships. Having gathered your strength, you can then reach out to other women.

After training, women slowly emerge and can be plucked off into wider union work. This is a good thing – but not if you have not yet groomed your successor generation. It is important for women who succeed to understand this.”

Jorgette Honculada, General Secretary, National Federation of Labor (NFL), Philippines

WHAT THEY SAID

“At first, both the union and management let the Women's Committee ‘happen’, as if it wouldn't amount to much. But at the first meeting we called at the Grand Hyatt hotel, 18 women came and they raised many issues: that they had to buy their own stockings, menstruation leave, discrimination in promotion, night transport, medical insurance, maternity leave, and so on.”

Susilawati Soehoed, Chair, Jakarta Regional Women's Committee, Independent Federation of Hotel Unions (FSPM), Indonesia

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WHAT THEY SAID

“I think specific Women’s Committees are needed because there are still many women who are not union members... It makes it easier for women to join if they feel there is somewhere specifically for them. I think this is especially true for migrant women...”

Then, for women to be able to rise up in the union structures, they need the training, confidence-building and tools to do this. Women coming to regional women’s conferences and committees gain so much in that respect.

And we still need special ways to bring in the new generation of women, and give them the confidence to speak up. Even though New Zealand is supposed to be an ‘equal’ society, women are not used to facing male bosses and negotiating with them. For all the progress, it is still a patriarchal society.”

Julie Kahaki, Women’s Convenor, SFWU Nga Ringa Tota, New Zealand

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WHAT THEY SAID

“The level of representation and activity in our union has come about because of the specific women’s structures, and I want to encourage other organisations to establish such structures. Our union is a much stronger, better union for having the full and active participation of women.”

Campbell Duignan, Southern Regional Secretary, SFWU Nga Ringa Tota, New Zealand, speaking at the IUF Asia-Pacific Regional Conference, October 2006

The women’s logo of SFWU Nga Ringa Tota

Hibiscus flower: Pacific women

Koru leaf: Maori women

Women’s symbol: All women



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WHAT THEY SAID

“We have a voice now. Without the union or the Women’s Committee, we would sit quietly and be scared all the time. But now, because of the training, we feel more valued.”

Indonesian participant in the IUF Asia-Pacific Women’s Project, 2004

Passing it on to other women

Once some women have made it into union leadership, it is important to make sure that this achievement does not stay just with them and disappear when they are gone. Otherwise it will be tokenism, rather than gender equality as a lasting reality.

This means that women who have been trained or become leaders have an extra responsibility - to pass on their knowledge and skills to prepare the next generation. Women leaders who take a competitive stance and exclude other women are doing great disservice to both women and the union.

Some women pass it on because, as individuals, they understand the importance. In Australia, women in the unions got together and developed an on-going programme.

WHAT THEY SAID

“I'm encouraging my sisters: 'Speak up about your successes. Don't be shy to 'beat your own drum. If I can do it, you can do it too'. I believe it is the duty of women in leadership to strengthen other women.”

Liviana Qoro, President, National Union of Hospitality, Catering and Tourism Industry Employees (NUHCTIE), Fiji.

'Sister Livi', as she is known, was elected NUHCTIE President in August 2006, and is probably the first ever woman President of a private sector union in Fiji.



WHAT THEY DID

Australia: the Anna Stewart Mentoring Project

Unions in Australia have a special programme to help women activists become more confident and active. It is named after Anna Stewart, a remarkable trade unionist in the State of Victoria until her suicide in 1983. **Gwynnyth Evans** of the **Australian Meat Industry Employees' Union (AMIEU)** told an IUF Asia-Pacific regional women's meeting in 2006 about the programme.

Anna Stewart continually sought ways to involve women directly 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 helped to develop the Working Women's Charter of the national union federation ACTU. Wanting a fitting memorial to Anna, unions in Victoria started the Anna Stewart Project soon after her death. It now runs across the country.

Several times a year, unions get women who are active members released for a few weeks' union training. Where the union is strong, the women get paid leave from the employers. Or the union pays their lost wages. For those weeks, the women activists go around with individual union officials: on site visits, to union executive meetings, to the courts, and so on. They also meet up to discuss their experiences and get more training. Then they go back to their jobs and explain to the other workers. As a result, more women become delegates, because they now have a better idea of how the union works. Some participants have gone on to rise in the unions.

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."

As well as supporting individual women activists, the Anna Stewart Project promotes greater awareness within unions of the needs of women members, and of the important contribution women can make to the development and growth of unions. www.amwu.asn.au





What YOU can do

- **Carry out gender audits within your union:** find out where the members are, who is active where, and what their demands are – separating out the information by men and women; use this to find out where there are more women yet to be organised.
- **Develop strategic organising programmes which include women organisers** to bring in more women; look especially for existing informal leaders among the women workers whom you might draw in to become union organisers.
- **Organise women-only events** to identify and attract more women activists; **run workshops** to develop individual and collective motivation, confidence and assertiveness, and to identify priorities for action; through visual tools such as videos or DVDs help get information across, especially where there are high rates of illiteracy; **hold social events** for women to develop sisterhood.
- **Establish women's committees** at different levels in the union to provide focus for the women's activities and maintain a consistent gender approach.
- **Promote mentoring** of women activists by women union leaders.
- **Consider ways of organising childcare** so as to allow women who are mothers to be active.



ARGUMENTS TO USE

- ⇒ Women-only activities are needed because of past – and continuing – gender discrimination, in the unions and in society; they are not the whole solution but they are certainly part of it.
- ⇒ If women are not involved, there is no guarantee that women's needs and demands will be consistently taken up by the union.
- ⇒ Women leaders have a special responsibility to make sure that more women are being encouraged to rise in the union.
- ⇒ Being assertive is not being aggressive; it is just standing up for what is right.

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WHAT THEY SAID

“When I stood up, I got accused of being aggressive. I said, ‘No, I just want what’s right.’”

Patricia Fernandez. Health and Safety Officer, Australian Meat Industry Employees’ Union (AMIEU), Australia



Resources

'Education for Promoting the Participation of Women in Trade Unions in the Asia-Pacific Region'

Report of the IUF/FNV Project, May 2004

<http://asianfoodworker.net/gender/iuf-interviews.pdf>



'Made in India'

An inspiring film by Patricia Plattner showing the story of SEWA, as told by six of its members.

DVD format in English/Gujarati with subtitles in French, German and Spanish.

It can be ordered from Light Night Production

www.lightnight.ch/1999_madeInIndia.html#pho





Promoting women's concerns

Among IUF affiliated trade unions there is good news. It is clear that many, many women are active at the local level, particularly where there are Women's Committees to encourage and provide the opportunities. Plus, as local activists become more experienced, this is feeding through to more women becoming senior union leaders.

By 2006, some 57 of the 359 IUF affiliates (16%) had women General Secretaries or Presidents. There are also many women today who are union Vice-Presidents, members of national Executive Committees, and union officers.

In the IUF Asia-Pacific region, a survey on women's participation in 2003-4 showed that most unions in the region had some women leaders; nearly three-quarters of unions were running women-only training programmes, and a similar figure had gender policies. These are very good building blocks for the future.

However, there is clearly much room for improvement. According to the same survey in the Asia-Pacific region:

- The proportion of women leaders was nowhere in proportion to the number of women members;
- Almost 20% of unions had no women leaders at all.

This was despite the fact that, in almost half of the unions in the region, women comprised over 40% of the membership; very few unions had less than 10% women's membership. There are similar discrepancies throughout the IUF global membership.

So, how can women's issues, committees and campaigns be better integrated into overall union structures/activities? How are women taking their rightful place at all levels, fully involved in the debates where policy and action programmes are determined, redressing the past imbalances?

WHAT THEY SAID

Not 'old and male'

"... if we were going to try and attract women and young people to join unions you could not have a leadership that was old and male. You had to have a union leadership that reflected the membership. It was absolutely vital to the survival of the union movement to have women in leadership positions.

It has also meant that unions have taken up issues that before were seen only as 'women's issues' and now are seen across the board as workers' issues... Work and family started out as a women's issue; it is now seen as the ability of all workers to balance their work and family life."

Helen Creed, former President, Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers' Union (LHMU), Australia

Women's representation in decision-making bodies

One key step is to ensure that women have access to top positions in the unions and, when they get there, are taken seriously.

As an international union federation, the IUF has long been trying to improve women's representation. In 1989 reserved seats for women were introduced for IUF decision-making bodies. After an initial increase, women's representation stayed at about 20%, however. So, in 1997 the policy for all IUF activities, agreed by the 23rd World Congress, became:

"... reflecting the composition of men and women within the membership... neither men nor women should have less than 40% representation".

Yet, a decade later, the IUF Executive Committee still comprised only 28% women; a further 7 women would need to be elected to this body to make it representative. All Regional Committees were also failing to meet the standard, as were numerous national delegations to IUF meetings. Only the Agricultural Workers Trade Group met the standard by 2006. At the rate that things were improving, it would take at least another 15 years to achieve the target. Extra incentives were clearly needed.

So, at the 2007 IUF World Congress it was agreed to convert the 40% minimum into seats reserved for women on IUF committees and in delegations. And now there will be sanctions: voting rights will be reduced in proportion to the number of women missing.

- The IUF policy is based on **proportional representation**, reflecting the proportion of women within the membership.
A similar policy has been adopted in the **Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU)** in the **UK**, which has a rule that women must be represented on national, regional and district committees in proportion to the number of women in the union as a whole.
- Some unions starting from a very low base have introduced **a series of target quotas**, aiming to improve women's presence progressively over a number of years.
- **Reserved seats** for women on decision-making bodies can also be a useful method where women are a significant minority in the overall union membership.

To make any change stick, it is often necessary to change the union's Statutes. In all cases, there have to be proper efforts to make sure that women are identified to fill the seats, and then are given support or training, where needed, to have the skills and confidence to carry out their duties.



WHAT THEY DID

A law on quotas in trade unions

Argentina was the first nation in the world to introduce a law on gender quotas for political posts, in the early 1990s. In 2002 a law was passed governing gender quotas for trade union representation. The Labour Market Minister behind the 2002 law was **Graciela Camaño**, who is a member of the hotel workers' trade union (**Unión de Trabajadores Hoteleros, Gastronómicos de la República de Argentina, UTHGRA**). Graciela later reported it was hard going, that male trade union leaders were especially avid in their opposition to the quota law.

Silvia Villaverde, in charge of women's issues for the **FAOPCHPyA** food workers' union in Argentina and President of the IUF Women's Committee, has high hopes that the quota law will help. By late 2005, though, there were still no women among the negotiators for collective agreements in her union. Silvia commented, "They claim it's hard to find women". The federation of IUF affiliates in Argentina has started training activities for women members to help them take up union positions.

Collective bargaining teams

The IUF receives many reports of women not being included in negotiating structures such as national bargaining committees or local teams, where they might have helped draft and negotiate agreements and ensure that women's issues are properly addressed. Instead, demands which are seen as 'women's issues' can be marginalised, or forgotten altogether. Where women are involved, by contrast, the outcome can be impressive.

Reluctance to involve women in bargaining is not limited to men in unions. Men managers can be hostile at negotiating with women union representatives; they may try to victimise or intimidate, or they may try to patronise to persuade women to give in. Again, the best answer is to provide women with training and support to be properly assertive.

Sometimes women's demands are left off the bargaining agenda on the grounds that there are only a few women in that workplace or industry. It can be argued, however, that when women are a minority, they need even **more** support from the union and opportunity to be actively involved.

WHAT THEY SAID

Women's demands fell 'by the wayside'

Shi-yeon Kim is Director of Women's Activities for the Hyundai Department Store Workers' Union, an affiliate of the Korea Federation of Private Service Workers' Union (KFSU). She is one of four women full-time officers out of twenty-three in her union, and the only one involved in collective bargaining. She explains how this isolation, plus lack of support from men in the bargaining team, has seriously limited what women could gain through the bargaining process.

"In the 2005 bargaining round, I was the only woman elected as a bargaining committee member and, virtually on my own, I had to identify issues around gender equality and maternity protection, draft demands and arguments, prepare materials, and speak on the articles I was responsible for at the negotiating table. So I was really busy.

If you look at CBA proposals, you will see that most of them place 'women' or 'gender equality and maternity protection' in a separate section. Statutory working hours for women, menstruation leave, protection of pregnant and nursing women, maternity leave, parental leave, breastfeeding breaks, and prevention and prohibition of sexual harassment within the workplace are items representing 'women workers' demands'.

Shi-yeon Kim recounts that she was excluded from the CBA preparatory team and only called in right before the negotiations. Then she was given only one opportunity to speak, and so could not use all the information she had prepared. She comments:

"A lot of the Women's Department's demands fell by the wayside. If I had been given several opportunities to speak forcefully or if the organisation had offered more proactive mutual assistance, I do believe the regrets I feel would have been lessened."

WHAT THEY SAID

Susilawati Soehoed, Chair of the Women's Committee of the FSPM hotel workers' union federation in the Jakarta region of **Indonesia**, says that men in the FSPM first failed to involve women in the collective bargaining process, and then excluded women from the definition of those entitled to healthcare benefits. Women in the union are renegotiating this, and winning (see page 9). A video of Susi talking about this is at: asianfoodworker.net/indonesia/O61103discrimination.htm



WHAT THEY DID

The right words make women visible

Many languages in the world, including French, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese, alter words when referring to men or to women. In **Brazil**, where Portuguese is the national language, the **CONTAC** union confederation of workers in food and agriculture industries decided it was time that all documents must use feminine as well as masculine words. Since it was set up in 1994, CONTAC has a quota of at least 30% women on its National Executive.



WHAT THEY DID

'We obviously have many capable women'

In **Sweden**, women in the food industry on average earn 7% less than men. Perhaps the composition of union delegations has something to do with it. Three conferences on wage agreements in 2003 involved very few women delegates.

Then, at its Congress in May 2005, the **Swedish Food Workers' Union (Livs)** changed its Rules. Article 1 now says:

"The union shall safeguard the interests of its members in the labour market and in society from a socialist and feminist basic view."

This wording only got accepted after a long and heated debate. The new union President **Hans-Olof Nilsson** was one of its strongest advocates. He says:

"It is a question of fairness. There is no reason why women should have worse conditions than men just because they are women. We have to do something about it. It is a matter of credibility for us."

Eva Karlsson was elected Second Vice-President, the first woman in Livs' top leadership in its 110 year history. And the union's operational plan for 2006-2009 now has equality as a priority. Kristina Nordström, Livs Equality Officer, is looking forward to better women's representation, more training programmes for women, and more surveying of wages. *"Our ambition is to achieve a group who can make more demands than they have so far. We obviously have many capable women"*, she says. The union now has five women national officers, or 35%.

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WHAT THEY SAID

Where's the 'work-life balance' in unions?

"We talk about the low participation of women in trade unions and the need for leadership training and committees. But I participate and every time I feel that women have the higher motivation and awareness."

In fact it should be the men who get the training; they are the ones who are not ready to welcome women into the leadership. If more men allow more women to participate, then even more women will join the unions."

The men in unions work excessively long hours; they have no work-life balance; and now they expect women to put in such hours."

Chika Nishino, Executive Committee Member, All Morinaga Labour Union, Food Rengo, Japan

Women not voting for women?

Because women were previously excluded, there is often a lack of confidence when it comes to standing for election. There can even be reluctance among women to vote for other women. Leadership can be seen as something for only men, again rooted in questions of power and culture.

WHAT THEY SAID

“When there is voting, women think that leadership is a male function and don't vote for other women; there are no women in our parliament, for example. Only very strong, powerful women can get elected. But most women don't try; they don't believe they will be elected.

In fact, women are often more effective than men; they are more responsible. So it is obvious that more women in higher positions would be useful. As yet, however, women are much more active at the local level; AIWU local leaders are about 55% women.”

Kumushbek Mambetov, President, Agro-Industrial Workers' Union (AIWU), Kyrgyzstan

WHAT THEY SAID

“Once women become union members, I find they tend to be more active than men. The pity is that, when it comes to elections, they tend to put men in high positions, leaving out their fellow women.

At Blantyre Sports Club, the women workers waited for feedback from the shopstewards but they got none. It is because there was no woman shopsteward. We tell the women, 'If you don't become a shopsteward, you cannot be sure your issues will be taken up. Please participate. Let your voice be heard. Otherwise you won't be taken seriously.'

Men tend to hold meetings at the end of the working day when we women rush off to look after our children. We ask the men to move the meetings, for example to lunchtime when everyone can be there. This has been successful in involving more women.”

Dorothea Makhasu, General Secretary, Hotel, Food Processing and Catering Workers' Union (HFPCWU), Malawi

Encouragement and confidence-building is needed so that women stand for election, and so that other women vote for them. Efforts are also needed to ensure that men vote for women.

Training and support are important. It is obviously counter-productive to have women elected and then set them up to fail. This will only reinforce bad stereotypes. So, mentoring by other women leaders should be encouraged (see page 55), as well as training in communication skills such as public speaking and in technical matters such as national legislation.

Another key step is to document and publicise the achievements of women leaders. Making them visible will inspire and motivate others.

To stand for election, women have to consider whether they can really fit union responsibilities in with the rest of their lives. The quality of support from family members at home is often vital. But encouraging women to come forward also raises questions of how unions are themselves organised. Reorganisation of union structures and schedule to fit around women's lives – and achieve a better 'work-life balance' for all – may well be needed. The case of SEWA in India (see page 40) shows that women who are already busy with work and families can still build successful, vibrant organisations.

What YOU can do

- **Challenge ‘cultural’ / political barriers to women’s leadership;** this includes encouraging women to stand for election, and women to vote for them; it also means men voting for women leaders – and accepting women’s right also to represent men - including at the highest levels.
- **Adopt measures such as quotas based on proportional representation or reserved seats** to ensure that women sit in decision-making bodies of the union.
- **Organise training** for women in union leadership skills, such as how to address a meeting, and how to assert your position.
- **Make visible** the achievements of women leaders, within the union and in wider society.
- **Promote women’s access collective bargaining teams,** with training where necessary, for example in national legislation or ILO Conventions.
- **Consider how to reorganise union meetings,** for example the place or time of day they are held, so as to involve more women.
- **Make sure the language** as well as pictures in union publications clearly include women.



ARGUMENTS TO USE

“We pay the same union dues. So we should have the same rights in the union.”
Therese Hulthén, Hotell-och Restaurang Facket, Sweden / IUF Women’s Conference, Geneva, March 2007

- ⇒ 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. Or they may even be poached by management. Either way, the union loses.
- ⇒ Women are particularly important in collective bargaining teams so that gender equity is built into the full range of negotiations.



Resources

‘Promoting Gender Equality: A Resource Kit for Trade Unions’

Booklet 1: Promoting Gender Equality within Trade Unions

Booklet 2: Promoting Gender Equality through Collective Bargaining

Booklet 3: The Issues and Guidelines for Gender Equality Bargaining

ILO, GenProm, 2002

English: www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/gems/eoo/tu/tu_toc.htm

French, Spanish and Arabic: www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/gems/advance/trade.htm

‘Collective Agreement Equity Audit’

The Canadian Auto Workers (CAW), which also organises in IUF sectors, produced this as a tool for national representatives and bargaining committee members to check bargaining priorities and agreements before negotiations; it includes anti-discrimination/harassment, pay equity, benefits, working hours, and preparing for negotiations.

www.caw.ca/whatwedo/women/pdf/EquityAudit.pdf

Winning men's support

“I will never be led by a woman”.

“When it comes to training the men, the process of change has started but it will take time, because of our culture.”

WHAT THEY SAID

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“There hasn't been much of a change in the attitude of the men in the union. We don't receive active support from them. It's not that they oppose us, but they are also not interested in helping us with our ideas.”

Malaysian participant in the IUF Asia-Pacific Women's Project, 2004

Many men in trade unions around the world do accept the arguments for equality, and actively promote it. There are contributions from several in this manual.

Other men agree but are unsure what to do about it. 'Women's issues' may be an item on each meeting's agenda but, if there are no women there to help or the men have not been made aware of women's demands and activities elsewhere in the union, there's an embarrassed silence and then they move on, ticking the matter off as 'addressed'. Or, as individuals, they may find it difficult to stand up to the dominant 'macho' culture when it reasserts itself. Hopefully these men will get more ideas by consulting more women, making sure more women are at the meetings, and even from this manual! 'Gender mainstreaming' will certainly help them too (see page 67).

However, it seems there are still many yet to be convinced. How can we change their minds? What can we – women and men together – do to persuade them that these are the right and sensible things to do, for a stronger union movement and a better future for all?

It is often argued that the status of women in society, and therefore in unions, is based on 'reality'. Or it is part of 'our culture'. The implication is that it therefore cannot be changed, or only very slowly.

But trade unions have always been at the forefront of challenging 'reality' where it is unjust and oppressive. Throughout our history we have fought feudalism, racism, fascism, and the exploitation of workers by employers, in order to create a more just and democratic society. We can and should fight against gender discrimination for the same reasons. It is a system of exploitation that prevents us from achieving social equality and collective rights, and progress for all.

WHAT THEY SAID**Challenging the ‘macho culture’**

“Very many of the most committed dedicated trade unionists I have known have been women, but often they have not had the credit for what they do. There is a macho culture in the unions, as elsewhere, and women are expected to fit in...

It is partly because of the way that unions are structured. Most officers are men, who have a lot of control over the agenda. Women are often in staff positions, very professional but in service roles, under the control of someone else who is usually a man... I can’t remember a course in gender equality for national officers. Perhaps there is hope for the future if those who are rising now have had training earlier in their career.

Many men unionists are expected to have skills they don’t necessarily have, especially if they have risen from the ranks of ordinary workers. There is a fear among many middle-aged male officers about clever, younger people, especially if they are women, but I believe it is to the organisation’s advantage to use their abilities.

If you preach equality but are hypocritical, you are not really promoting equality, and it is very damaging to the organisation; large sections of the membership will be disaffected. The importance of unions is to give people confidence and support to apply themselves individually and collectively to overcome the problems they face.”

Barry Leathwood, former National Secretary for the Rural, Agriculture and Allied Workers (RAAW), Transport and General Workers’ Union (T&G), UK, now retired.

**WHAT THEY SAID**

“Men must not see the Women’s Committee as a challenge, but something to make the union stronger. That is why I think there should be more gender training for men.”

Indonesian participant in the IUF Asia-Pacific Women’s Project, 2004

WHAT THEY SAID

“We are training both men and women. Men can be violent towards women, but we find that, if they come to understand it from a women’s perspective, then they do reduce their violence. As well as more education for men, we are promoting more women into leadership positions.”

Hun Peouw, Vice-President, Cambodian Tourism and Service Workers’ Federation (CTSWF)

'Gender mainstreaming'

This term means that women and men accept joint responsibility for rooting out gender inequality; that gender equality becomes a central policy of the organisation and integrated into all its activities. It is a concept that became current after it was adopted at the United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995.

Gender mainstreaming involves:

- Identifying how existing union policies and practices reinforce gender inequalities, and then changing them;
- Making sure that all new union policies and practices are targeted at overcoming past discrimination by actively promoting gender equality.

It means that issues such as maternity rights, work-life balance and sexual harassment are not separated off as 'women's issues' to be dealt with only by women's structures and ignored by the rest. These are 'union issues' for everyone to deal with.

It means being aware that issues such as occupational health and safety or access to union training programmes are not gender neutral. In fact, gender runs through everything, which is why it needs to be 'mainstreamed'.

It implies much more training for more men on gender issues. Gender training does happen in some unions, particularly for new men activists. However, there is rarely training for existing senior male leaders, which is why some women are putting more hope, and effort, in the next generations of men.

Some women are sceptical of gender mainstreaming, however, because they have seen it used as a decoy, a way of doing away with women-specific structures and activities and then not replacing them with something more effective.

However, if gender-mainstreaming is properly implemented, alongside women-specific activities, then the possibilities for achieving gender equality are maximised.

WHAT THEY SAID

"In South African unions, we have Gender Forums. We think it is necessary for men to be there and become gender sensitive. While we had Women's Forums, you could preach and preach but they would never understand. You have to involve the men so that they understand. The FAWU President, for example, attends the Gender Forum.

Gender Forums exist also at a regional level. They exist in all COSATU (union federation) structures. Men can't argue against them any more. We have won the argument 'What is gender and why it is important'. Past union leaders did try to say it is a waste of time, but now it functions."

Pulane Maine, First Vice-President, Food and Allied Workers' Union (FAWU), South Africa

WHAT THEY SAID

"In gender training, we have to analyse the men, the differences between the older and younger generations. We have limited resources, time, energy and saliva. So choose your targets – young men are better. The credibility of your trainers is important, those who are able to speak to men at their level. And not just for one session; men have a tendency to return to their male, macho clubs and so we have to follow up with more training."

Loida Ty, Secretary for Women and Child Labor Concerns, National Union of Workers in Hotel, Restaurant and Allied Industries (NUWHRAIN), Philippines

WHAT THEY SAID**‘What is it about power?’**

“We do find that the younger men are more open to these ideas but new ideas soon get overtaken by traditional beliefs. Older male leaders do not necessarily help sustain new learning; there is a tacit acceptance with gender relations that ‘that is how it is’.

And there are two major temptations among men of power: money and sex. This male sense of entitlement is so pervasive in society that it spills over into trade union culture. It means that young women can be agog at older male leaders, and this provides a sub-text for sexual harassment within trade unions.

Gender mainstreaming challenges how unions are constructed. You can have committees, conscientisation workshops, policies on paper, etc., but does it make a difference within the leadership and how they direct the organisation? Checks and safeguards, policies and procedures do make a difference, and they must apply also to the leadership...

Our hope must be in the younger generation of male leaders, but their partners have to be strong too. I have seen male leaders picking up the rhetoric of gender equality, paying it ‘lip service’, while at home they perpetuate the gender division of labour that frees them from housework. There is a big gap between what they say and what they do. Equality starts at home.

What is it about power? Men just can’t let go of it. Women have a different take on power. We are not enamoured by it. By and large, women are more interested in collective leadership, and in the mentoring of the younger generation. In large part it is because of our responsibility for the family, for the weak and the strong, finding a win:win situation for everyone. We know we can’t feed the weak to the wolves. A greater integrity among women springs from that.”

Jorgette Honculada, General Secretary, National Federation of Labour (NFL), Philippines

WHAT THEY SAID**‘Because I can do it’**

“I am happy to say, I have been elected into union positions in my own right rather than because of my gender. I certainly wouldn’t want to get these positions out of tokenism. I want to do this work, and be recognised for it, because I can do it.

If it is OK for men to represent women, why is it a problem when women also represent men? I represent all my members, not just the women.

I couldn’t have done what I have without 100% support from my partner. We have four children and four grandchildren; yet I have always been politically active. He is a teacher, and at home he does more than his share of the domestic work, cooking and cleaning, whatever is needed. He has never tried to stop me from doing anything. It is because we share the same political values and he recognises my commitment.”

Teresa MacKay, Chair of the Rural and Agricultural Workers’ trade group (RAAW), Transport and General Workers’ Union (T&G), UK

In the union, and at home

Gender changes in the union movement are not, of course, separate from changes in wider society. What happens at home, with family, friends and community affects, and is affected by, what happens in our unions. Raising women's confidence to take on public roles, integrating men and women in collective action, and so on, obviously will have an impact on family life. It provokes a discussion about how domestic labour is divided. In particular, it affects how children are raised, what we teach them about what it is to be a man, and what it is to be a woman.

WHAT THEY SAID

“When I began to learn about gender equality, things changed in my household. I said to my husband, ‘I work and you work’, and we talked about the jobs that I do at home. Now he helps with all of those, and we are starting to be equal. But it’s not just my husband, we have also started to talk to our children about these things, and make sure they all know how to take care of themselves.”

Indonesian participant in the IUF Asia-Pacific Women's Project, 2004

WHAT THEY SAID

“Despite women becoming ‘working partners’, many men still don’t see their role in sharing domestic chores. That is not a fair position; it is discriminatory. If both are working – and even if the woman is not working outside the home - the men should help in the home. But many do not. I sometimes do the cooking on Sundays while my wife can do something else. When I mention this to other men, they are surprised; they say they don’t know how to.

Respect and good attitudes are developed in children mainly from what they experience at home. This is then taken into society when they become workers. So it also depends on how you raise your children.”

Seepaul Narine, General Secretary, Guyana Agricultural and General Workers' Union (GAWU)

WHAT THEY SAID

“The relationships that exist in the household have an impact on how men behave in the workplace towards women. When they are in decision-making positions in offices, they forget that their own women get pregnant. We have to have a strategy of changing men’s attitudes at home to share family responsibilities. We have helped to change men’s attitudes through our child labour programme.”

Vicky Kanyoka, Director for Women and Organisation, CHODAW, Tanzania

For more on the child labour programme in Tanzania, see page 46.

Some men seem to want to keep the spheres of home and work separate, however. Too often women have seen male union leaders make public pronouncements on their support for gender equality and then harass or bully a woman member of staff, or abuse their wife at home, or never lift a finger with domestic work. Such double-standards are immensely damaging to the union movement. Women will spot them and retreat into scepticism about unions, and unions will be the losers.

As men's values change, however, they come to value the involvement of women. They see how this greatly improves what trade unions can achieve, and any hostility or wariness they may have had turns into respect and pride for the contribution that women can and do make.



What YOU can do

- **Adopt gender mainstreaming** as union policy and practice; bring in checks and safeguards that apply also to union leaders.
- **Promote gender training in your union**, including for men union leaders and members; this includes raising awareness of how the public and private spheres of life are integrated.
- **Keep senior union leaders informed** of the achievements as well as the demands of women members so that they are better informed to carry out their responsibilities.
- **Make Labour Day / May Day family friendly!**



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; it will be spotted and 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.
- ⇒ Women want to be given the opportunity and valued for themselves, because they can do it.



Resources

ILO Information on Gender Mainstreaming

www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/gender/newsite2002/about/defin.htm

'Gender Equality and Decent Work: Good Practices at the Workplace'

ILO, March 2005

With case studies from some 20 countries.

Part of an ILO Toolkit on Gender Mainstreaming in the World of Work

www.ilo.org/dyn/gender/docs/RES/398/F1448380228/

Good%20practices%20at%20the%20workplace%20-%20text.pdf



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WHAT THEY SAID

“Before, my husband was like a military man; he was very dominant. His policy was, ‘Obey first, then complain’. But now, since the seminar, I have told my husband that if he is the ‘king’ that means I am the ‘queen’, which means that we are equal as men and women.”

Malaysian participant in the IUF Asia-Pacific Women’s Project, 2004



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WHAT THEY SAID

“In my experience men never really appreciate what women do and achieve. They really need to change their attitudes, to appreciate and accept women as their counterparts alongside whom they can work, and not keep looking at women’s multiple roles and ‘their place in the kitchen’.”

Gertrude Hambira, General Secretary, General Agriculture and Plantation Workers’ Union of Zimbabwe (GAPWUZ)



IUF



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We hope the manual helps you understand better the problems you face. But, more than that, we hope that the actions and reflections of others in IUF unions around the world assist you to develop your own strategies and activities.