
Guidance to ITF Affiliates



Preparing for the International Labour Conference 2018 discussion on a new international law on violence and harassment against women and men in the world of work

The ITF is working alongside other Global Union Federations as part of an International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) coordinated struggle to win the first international law specifically addressing violence and harassment against women and men in the world of work. We are fighting for an International Labour Organization (ILO) convention supported by a recommendation, that recognises and addresses the issues faced by transport workers, and in particular the gender-based violence that plagues our industry globally. Conventions are legally binding international treaties and recommendations are non-binding guidelines.

“Women working in transport, health, education, public services, entertainment and every other area of the economy experience violence, and it’s time that governments and employers accept their responsibility to work with unions to end it. It is scandalous that sexual assault, sexual harassment and other forms of violence are not only tolerated at work, but in some cases used as a means to subjugate women in the interests of the corporate bottom line.”

Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary

107th International Labour Conference 28 May – 8 June 2018

The broad policies of the ILO are set by the International Labour Conference (ILC), which meets once a year in June, in Geneva, Switzerland. This annual conference brings together governments’, workers’ and employer’s delegates of the ILO member states. Often called an international parliament of labour, the conference establishes and adopts international labour standards and is a forum for discussion of key social and labour questions. It also adopts the Organization’s budget and elects the governing body.

Violence and harassment against women and men in the world of work is the only item on the ILC agenda this year that could lead to a new international law. We are likely to face opposition from the employers’ group and some governments. We must make sure our voice is heard loudly and clearly during these discussions so that we can achieve a convention and recommendation that provides the strongest possible outcome for women transport workers.

What can you do?

- Make contact with your national trade union centre to discuss the need for strong women’s representation in their delegation to the ILC, including the possibility of a woman from your union’s transport section.
- Note: To be present for this discussion you will need to register to attend the ILC, along with registration for this specific session.
- If your delegation doesn’t include a transport representative, but will be represented during the violence discussion, please make sure they are fully briefed so the voices of transport workers, including women workers, are included in their strategy.

Help us coordinate transport representatives who will be attending the ILC discussion on violence at work



If a representative of transport workers, man or woman, is part of your national delegation and is registered to be present for the discussion on violence at work please let us know. Email women@itf.org.uk with contact details of the representative and we will communicate with them about coordinating with the ITF delegation in the lead up to and during the ILC in Geneva.

What information does the workers' group need in order to win?

Here are some tips on what information will be most valuable to prepare your national delegation. Please also send any information to women@itf.org.uk to help us coordinate the ITF Global strategy for the ILC. Sending this information to ITF Women will be particularly important if your national centre will not be represented during the ILC discussion on violence.

Describe what violence looks like in transport workplaces in your country and sector

- What are the forms of violence faced by all transport workers in your union?
- What forms of violence are women workers additionally subjected to?
- Who is perpetrating the violence? (for example passengers, management, the police)
- What impact does violence have on workers and workplaces?

A quote is a particularly powerful way to show the human impact of violence at work

“During a 15-year railway career, I have been sexually assaulted twice, physically assaulted twice and I am now verbally abused on a daily basis, especially on late night trains. It leaves me feeling vulnerable and shaken.” (Railway worker)

“A woman was raped and her underwear was hung on the notice board, whilst the offender boasted to the rest of the crew that he had finally ‘got her’.” (Maritime worker)

Provide any details you may have of statistics, collective bargaining agreements clauses, employer policy or campaign activity

When collecting evidence, factors of particular importance to building a strong case include;

- Violence disproportionately affects women, especially those in low-wage jobs
- Precarious workers are more vulnerable to violence, especially women
- Unsociable hours, lone working, inadequate facilities and remote locations increase the risk of violence
- Violence prevents women from entering or remaining in the transport industry
- Workplace factors such as poor HR, lack of rules/responsibilities, discriminatory practices, poor organisation of work and unrealistic production targets all contribute to violence and harassment in the workplace
- Existing effective mechanisms to reduce violence at work

Remember! Transport workers and their trade unions need:

- A convention and recommendation, not just a recommendation
- The convention to fully cover all violence against women, including the impact of domestic violence on the workplace, and the heightened risk to women facing multiple forms of discrimination
- Clear recognition of violence against women in the transport workplace
- The role of collective bargaining and trade union women's advocates to be included