

POSITION PAPER

**A GENDER-
TRANSFORMATIVE
APPROACH TO
CLIMATE ACTION
FOR WOMEN
TRANSPORT
WORKERS**



THE INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT WORKERS' FEDERATION (ITF) IS A DEMOCRATIC, AFFILIATE-LED FEDERATION RECOGNISED AS THE WORLD'S LEADING TRANSPORT AUTHORITY. WE FIGHT PASSIONATELY TO IMPROVE WORKERS' LIVES, CONNECTING MORE THAN 700 AFFILIATED TRADE UNIONS FROM 150 COUNTRIES TO SECURE RIGHTS, EQUALITY AND JUSTICE FOR WORKERS' GLOBALLY. WE ARE THE VOICE FOR NEARLY 16.5 MILLION TRANSPORT WORKERS ACROSS THE WORLD.



women
transporting the world

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**THERE IS
NO SUSTAINABLE
FUTURE WITHOUT
GENDER EQUALITY
AT ITS HEART**

INTRODUCTION

We have a climate emergency that we cannot ignore. Climate change is hitting vulnerable populations in countries across the world much earlier and harder than expected.

The transport sector (including private, public and freight transport) is responsible for 23% of all global greenhouse gases and will need to make a 45% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030, in order to keep within the scientific recommendations to limit global temperature increase. Transport will therefore be a critical element to reducing global emissions.

Tackling climate change and building a sustainable transport industry has many challenges and unlike other industries there is no one size fits all in transport. Every sector and region requires a different approach and strategy to meet the challenges of decarbonisation.

Climate change is not gender neutral – women are proven to be more vulnerable to exploitation from the impacts of climate change due to their different social roles, discriminatory and unequal access to resources, decision-making bodies and technology.

Ensuring a gender equal just transition must be a priority as the transport industry responds to the climate crisis, to ensure the systemic exclusion of women transport workers and existing power imbalances in the industry is not only recognised, but challenged.

There is no sustainable future without gender equality at its heart.

This means ensuring women transport workers are fully represented in leadership for discussions and negotiations on sustainable transport at all levels and a gender equal just transition is advanced to build power for all transport workers.

The persistent systemic exclusion of women from decent transport work means that any change, including for a sustainable future will only deliver a just transition for women transport workers if there are gender impact assessments from the start and gender responsive investment, with inclusion of women transport workers' voices and leadership at the core, and strong equality measures agreed with trade unions to address systemic exclusion and ensure women have full access to training and career development.

Progress on decent work and equality within just transition plans and climate action in transport must be measured just as closely as the industry's Green House Gas (GHG) emissions. Concrete targets and indicators are needed that will hold employers and governments accountable.

This paper lays out key themes to define a clear position and demands on sustainable transport and women workers, with gender equality fully included in ITF just transition principles.

VULNERABILITY TO CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS

Transport workers are already being impacted by the climate crisis. They are the ones working through floods, heatwaves, droughts and other extreme weather events, and who will end up paying the price if there is no just transition. All transport workers have an integral role in building the future vision, they are the ones who know the industry.

CLIMATE CHANGE EXACERBATES EXISTING GENDER INEQUALITIES AND FOR WOMEN TRANSPORT WORKERS THERE ARE SPECIFIC AND ADDITIONAL IMPACTS

They are the ones often on the frontline of the climate crisis and more likely to be in jobs that are lower paid, more precarious and more exposed to extreme weather events.

In addition, women globally often bear disproportionate impacts due to their roles as primary caregivers and reliance on public transport systems.

Severe weather often means the closure of schools and nurseries. This puts pressure on women with additional caring duties, especially where there is a lack of childcare provisions within workplaces, or those in informal jobs.

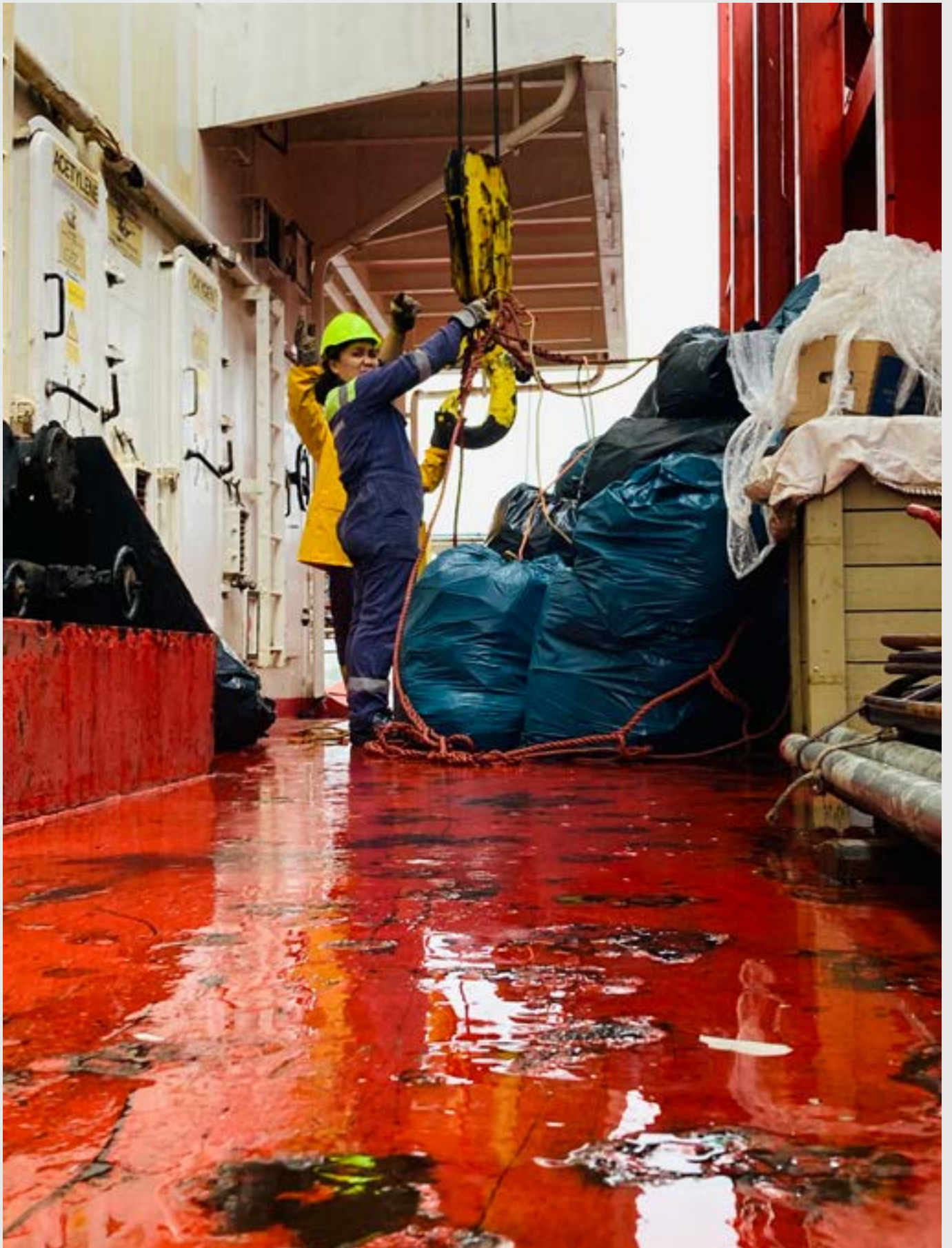
Extreme weather also causes delays, disruptions and route changes, linked to longer work hours in all transport sectors, which are often unpaid, especially in informal jobs.

Women workers, in precarious and informal jobs, tend to live further away from the locations of their work and spend more time going to and from work. Those who rely on public transport to get to and from work can be impacted by the delays and disruptions.

There are also safety issues with regards to the commute, especially with women who work shift patterns, or who have to commute during off-peak hours.

Social protection systems will be vital to cover livelihood support and recovery linked to the climate crisis, including income support, flexible working arrangements, parental leave, childcare support and reproductive health care support.

Unions need to ensure that Collective Bargaining Agreements are negotiated in order to obtain enhanced remuneration, compensation and benefits to allow for these impacts.



THERE MUST BE SAFE AND INCLUSIVE WORK ENVIRONMENTS

Climate change impacts can have significant physical and mental health implications for transport workers, particularly those working outdoors or in poorly ventilated environments.

More than ever with extreme weather events, women workers need access to appropriate protection and PPE, this also includes access to uniforms specifically designed for the emerging climate and for women's bodies.

Access to safe sanitation facilities, which are essential for all transport workers, especially during heatwaves and other extreme weather events is vital.

Violence at work continues to be an endemic issue in the global transport industry, which while an issue for both men and women, women workers are targeted on an overwhelming scale. As an example, women transport workers are more likely to be in the customer-service roles that are exposed to passenger violence and frustration when transport is cancelled or delayed due to weather events.

It is essential that there is strong union representation in key decision-making bodies and initiatives at the industry level so that unions are involved in developing and implementing safety standards.

We need to demand investment in mechanisms to prevent and respond to gender-based violence and harassment in the workplace, this includes ratification and implementation of the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) Convention 190 (C190) on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work.

Work environments should be free from violence and harassment and provide workers with access to safe spaces and sanitary facilities.

Useful resources

- [The ITF Sanitation Charter](#) outlines the issue and action that is needed from governments, employers and investors. In conjunction the [ITF Sanitation Toolkit](#) is a comprehensive and interactive resource for transport unions to lead the campaign for better sanitation facilities for workers.
- The [ITF's ILO C190: A Transport Workers' Toolkit](#) includes briefings on the commute and sanitation aimed at helping unions understand the issues better, examples of successful campaigns and how ILO C190 can help.



A GENDER EQUAL JUST TRANSITION

A just transition secures the future and livelihoods of workers in the transition to a low-carbon economy.

The transition must centre on the needs and demands of women workers, it needs to be an opportunity to build power for women transport workers. This means tackling long-standing equality issues within the transport sector. The industry must use this opportunity to make jobs more attractive and fairer for all groups.

Unions must collaborate with the relevant stakeholders, industry partners and educational institutions to ensure industry and employer level just transition plans are based on the principle of a gender equal just transition, this includes:

STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT AND PROMOTING DECENT WORK

Attracting women to transport jobs, where they still remain underrepresented in key roles, is an essential part of the just transition process, while also facilitating access to the profession of those from different backgrounds, including through ensuring equal standards, pay and conditions and proper implementation of labour standards.

It is important that the long-standing issue of the systemic exclusion of women from decent and secure jobs is addressed. Women workers

must have equal access to transport jobs and positions of leadership and power within the industry.

This means identifying and addressing the barriers that restrict women from entering and advancing in all industry occupations. A just transition will only happen if we tackle these inequalities now.

TECHNOLOGY AND AUTOMATION

For a lot of transport sectors technological changes will be necessary in order to reduce carbon emissions. Technology does not have a simple, linear impact on workers, but there is potential to further exacerbate existing inequalities if the new technology does not take into account existing inequalities in the world of work. Often gender is ignored in discussions around technology.

New technologies which are brought in as part of the formalisation of transport such as contactless payments tend to disproportionately impact women workers.

A just transition is essential to address such risks and include measures to ensure that no one is left behind. This requires labour and social impact assessments, early and ongoing engagement with workers, trade unions and users in the planning, design, decision-making and implementation of sustainable transport measures.

Trade union action is needed to influence these new developments to ensure that new technology benefits women transport workers and advances gender equality.

TRAINING AND RE-SKILLING

Meanwhile, the introduction of new technologies, fuels and environmentally friendly energy sources will require good quality training and reskilling.

There must be reskilling and training available during the transition, including a gender-transformative education.

Useful resources

- Further information on the impact of technology and automation for women transport workers can be found in the report ['The impact of the future of work for women in public transport'](#).
- [A Just Transition for Urban Transport Workers](#) highlights the issues and experiences from unions in the Global South, including what a gender equal just transition looks like for urban transport workers.



HIGH LEVEL CLIMATE ACTION AND GENDER

2024 marks ten years since the adoption by the UN Climate Change Conference (COP20) of the Lima Work Programme on Gender. In line with the decision made at COP28, November 2023 in Dubai, a review of the implementation of the [Lima work programme on gender and its action plan](#) took place in 2024.

While there has been some progress made, the latest Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) [synthesis report from 2023](#), showed that while 79% of parties made explicit reference to gender, only 33% committed to including gender in their implementation plans on climate change.

Governments must submit new NDCs in 2025, we must use this opportunity to demand an increase climate ambition and ensure gender is included within implementation plans and national climate plans.

INCLUSIVE DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES AND INFLUENCING POLICIES

Women are still significantly underrepresented in decision-making structures on climate change. If women do not have full and equitable participation and leadership on planning transport infrastructure and systems then decisions regarding sustainable transport options are likely to fall short.

While policymakers tend to focus on the long-term impacts of climate change, transport workers are already feeling the impacts on their working conditions. Worker health and safety, training, and job quality must be central to climate policies and not an afterthought.

Women transport workers must be included in all decision-making processes related to climate action and transportation planning. This means establishing the correct platforms for women's meaningful participation and consultation, and ensuring women have a representative role throughout.

There must be an adoption of gender-based analysis when considering decarbonising policies. This includes gender responsive impact assessments and analysis of how climate policies impact women transport workers differently from men and ensuring all needs and perspectives are addressed.

CLIMATE FINANCE

Climate finance can be an effective tool in addressing the existing gender inequalities. We need to advocate for investment in sustainable and accessible transport infrastructure that benefits women transport workers and the communities they serve.

Most of climate finance money currently goes to infrastructure, and there is little consideration for operational funding. This tends to affect women workers since they hold the jobs that are often outsourced, to lowering operating costs.



International Financial Institutions (IFIs) such as the World Bank are also key sources of climate finance, and while they have their own set of 'safeguards' to cover protection rights for women and gender equality, often these are not sufficient enough.

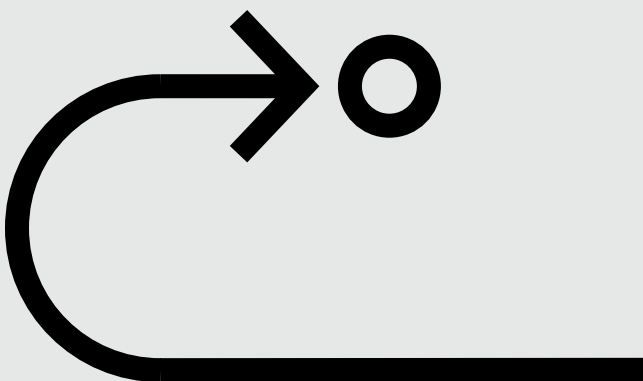
By targeting climate finance towards initiatives that benefit women workers, policy makers and investors can advance gender equality within the transport industry and strengthen resilience to climate change.

BUILDING ALLIANCES

Building alliances with environmental organisations and others who support our demands on gender-based climate action needs to be a focus area at local, national and global level for trade unions. Forging alliances on gender-based climate action and just transition will be integral to share knowledge, foster collaboration and mobilise collective action.

Useful resources

- The ITF Toolkit: [Labour and gender related safeguard frameworks of International Financial Institutions](#) acts as an educational and practical resource for trade union activists to understand and strategically engage with the safeguard frameworks of IFIs.





DELIVERING GENDER- TRANSFORMATIVE CLIMATE ACTION FOR WOMEN IN TRANSPORT



**WE COMMIT
TO BUILDING
A GENDER-
TRANSFORMATIVE
APPROACH TO
CLIMATE ACTION**

A FIVE-YEAR IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR WOMEN TRANSPORT WORKERS 2025–2029

The ITF position paper on a gender-transformative approach to climate action for women transport workers sets out the key issues, principles and strategies for delivering a gender-transformative approach to climate action for women transport workers.

The outcomes and recommendations from the ITF Women Transport Workers' Conference held in September 2023 (that provide the foundation for our work programme and priorities for the next inter-Congress period) include the following commitments in relation to sustainable transport:

- It will be our mission to improve the visibility, status and working conditions of women within the transport industry including the impact for women transport workers of changes associated with automation, digitalisation and innovation, and the climate crisis (Recommendations, paragraph 2).
- We commit to building a gender-transformative approach to climate action for women transport workers, including defining clear positions on sustainable transport

and women and establishing just transition principles for women transport workers (Recommendations, paragraph 10, bullet point 3).

Specifically, the Conference adopted Resolution 3 on 'Promoting Women Transport Workers through Just Transition Industry Plans', which includes some clear demands to help deliver this.

Through the implementation plan, we will support the ITF and its affiliates to give visibility to women transport workers in global, regional, national platforms and discussions on climate change and sustainable transport, as well as in negotiations with governments and employers on this issue in order to advance gender equality.

We want to support ITF unions to empower women during the transition to zero carbon emission, and we want to ensure that women transport workers are properly integrated into the ITF strategy on sustainable transport as well as section, region and department strategies on sustainable transport.

OUR PATHWAYS

In line with the key issues and principles described in the position paper and considering our objectives for the next inter-Congress period, we have identified four key pathways to deliver a gender-transformative approach to climate action for women transport workers:

- 01. Campaigning**
- 02. Engaging with industry**
- 03. Building women's voices and leadership**
- 04. Influencing international policy**

It is important that we understand the different policy spaces and opportunities to put forward women transport workers' perspectives and ensure the ITF demands that are taken into these spaces include women transport workers. However, recognising that opportunities to make real change for women transport workers will be limited through high level climate action, our implementation plan necessarily also focuses on campaigning, engaging with industry, and building women's voices and leadership.



01. CAMPAIGNING

We will **build alliances** with organisations leading in this space.

We will **collaborate with relevant stake-holders, industry partners, and educational institutions** to ensure industry and employer level just transition plans are based on the principle of a gender equal just transition and that women transport workers are fully represented in discussions and negotiations.

We will develop and share **case studies and examples of good practice**.

We will develop **tools to support visibility and understanding of the key issues and demands** for women transport workers.

02. ENGAGING WITH INDUSTRY

We will take steps **to understand aspects relating to just transition and women transport workers**.

We will develop and organise **targeted training, mentorship and support programmes** to empower women transport workers and unions to engage with industry on these issues and ensure a just transition that advances gender equality.

We will utilise opportunities at a **global level to engage with employers** on just transition and women transport workers.

03. BUILDING WOMEN'S VOICES AND LEADERSHIP

We will **promote the position paper** with ITF unions and women transport workers – providing spaces for women transport workers and union activists/leaders to discuss the content, share experiences and become climate advocates.

We will gather **worker stories** of the impacts of climate change on women transport workers and what a gender-transformative just transition looks like.

We will work with the ITF sustainable transport team and ITF sustainable working group to ensure that the **ITF strategy and response on sustainable transport is gender-transformative**.

04. INFLUENCING INTERNATIONAL POLICY

We will explore **leverage opportunities at international policy level** (climate focused and broader gender policy platforms).

We will use the opportunity of governments having to submit new **NDCs** in 2025 to demand an increase in climate ambition and ensure gender is included with implementation plans and national climate plans.

We will consider undertaking research to understand the gender aspects of **climate finance**, including opportunities for system-wide transformation and gender justice.

We will explore opportunities through **workers' capital** to advance gender equality in relation to climate action.

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