

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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'JUST CITIES' AND WOMEN PUBLIC TRANSPORT WORKERS IN LATIN AMERICA

NOVEMBER 2022



ITF

THE INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT WORKERS' FEDERATION (ITF) IS A DEMOCRATIC, AFFILIATE-LED GLOBAL FEDERATION OF 670 TRADE UNIONS IN 147 COUNTRIES, REPRESENTING OVER 18 MILLION WORKING MEN AND WOMEN IN ALL TRANSPORT SECTORS. THE ITF PASSIONATELY CAMPAIGNS FOR TRANSPORT WORKERS' RIGHTS, EQUALITY AND JUSTICE.

This research is part of the ITF programme 'Just Cities and women public transport workers in Latin America'. It was written by Louise Sophie Sträuli and Marijke Vermander. The research was possible thanks to the active involvement of union representatives from Mexico City (ATM and SNTSTC) and across cities in Colombia – Bogotá, Bucaramanga, Cartagena (SNTT), the coordination by Andréa Privatti (ITF Americas) and the guidance and assistance from Claire Clarke (ITF Women) and Alana Dave (ITF Urban Transport).



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The 'Just Cities' and Women Public Transport workers in Latin America report explores the current and future challenges for women working in public transport in cities in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). Based on secondary research and interviews with trade union representatives, the report develops a scenario of a just and feminist city and identifies priority areas where trade unions can advocate for socially just and feminist change in the public transport sector.

SCENARIOS OF FUTURE CITIES

Thinking about the future of cities and mobility, a multitude of visions emerge characterised by buzzwords such as smart, sustainable and resilient. The term 'smart cities' refers to a variety of smart technologies and processes deployed in a city, or a variety of actors at governmental, business or civil society level taking the initiative to make a city smarter. Between top-down and bottom-up smart city management lies the vision of a smart city as a local innovation platform through which the city becomes an intersection of private interests, the public sector and citizens coming together to create value, collaborate and innovate. Smart city visions are sometimes criticised for the risk of exacerbating urban inequalities, widening the digital divide and overshadowing citizens' freedom and privacy and workers' rights. A smart 'sustainable' city uses advanced ICT to contribute to the goals of sustainable development. While sustainable development focuses on mitigation of environmental damage, the concept of resilience is about adaptation and incremental change. A resilient city, therefore, is able to withstand or adapt to hazards and crises, be they environmental, political or social.

In order to design a scenario for a just and feminist city for women transport workers, we draw upon a variety of existing justice concepts to understand how resources, opportunities, responsibilities and benefits are shared or distributed within society. A feminist approach to the city recognises that the built urban environment supports patriarchal social structures that define gender roles and determine what activities are carried out, by whom, where and when. Based on an intersectional approach that recognises discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, age or ability, the feminist city offers a perspective for creating just urban visions based on incremental change and different futures shaped by place, history and context. In conjunction with the visions of trade union representatives in the participating cities in the project, we can define ten key points that make up a just city of the future for women transport workers.

JUST CITIES MUST:

01. PROVIDE A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE

Enable citizens to have equal access to urban services, infrastructure and resources, to use urban spaces and participate in urban life. This includes, but is not limited to, access to public spaces as well as public services for care, health and education, employment opportunities, and the freedom and ability to move freely in the city.

02. BE SMART

Planning processes take a bottom-up, user-centred approach, involving trade unions in consultations, negotiations and decision-making on new technologies and involve co-creation that also addresses challenges faced by smart technologies. Smart technologies must be deployed to make women's lives and work easier, and in a way that creates decent and secure job opportunities for women. The identification and removal of barriers in the recruitment and retention of women including challenging occupational segregation and exclusion, and the provision of digital access and education, is central.

04. BE SUSTAINABLE

Promote climate policies which improve and expand public transport, including public transport powered by clean energy and technologies.

03. BE RESILIENT

Resilience to climate hazards and recovery from crises is supported by positive adjustments towards sustainability and transport policies that support operators and workers in rapid change and adaptability.

05. BE INCLUSIVE

Marginalised population groups are visible and part of urban life and work. To achieve this, policymaking as well as financing starts from the embodied experiences and an intersectional approach that acknowledges the particularities of individual experiences by passengers as much as workers and is responsive to a diversity of needs and inequalities emerging from gender, age, race, ethnicity or ability.

06. BE CREATIVE

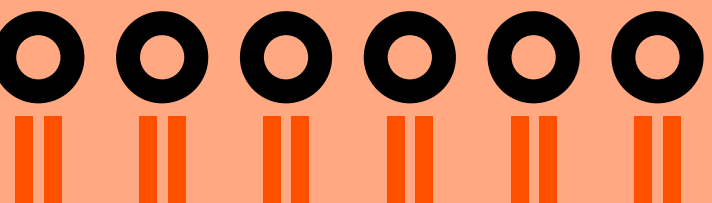
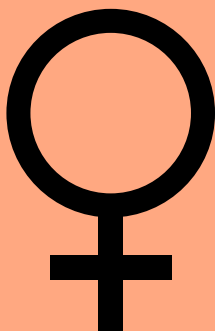
Facilitate the creation of alternative urban futures and spaces with the active involvement and participation of transport workers, unions and marginalised groups in the transformation of our cities.

07. BE SAFE

Ensure marginalised population groups, including women, can live and work safely, and that public transport is a space free of violence, harassment or abuse.

08. BE EQUAL

Provide dignified, equal and inclusive opportunities for women workers. Through social dialogue, negotiation and consultation between employers and workers, women's voices are heard, and women's rights are respected. Women are therefore found in all professional and political positions and are involved in shaping public transport policy.



09. BE CARING

Provide and facilitate networks of care and support in the workplace and beyond.

10. ENCOURAGE ACTIVISM

Provide diverse channels of civic engagement and encourage activism as a fundamental part of societal change.

CURRENT ISSUES AND DRIVERS OF CHANGE

In recent decades, there have been significant improvements in LAC on issues such as women's labour force participation and gender-based violence. However, women transport workers still face high levels of violence and harassment, are discriminated against due to stereotypical gender roles and lack basic facilities and support networks. In addition, smart city technologies deployed globally to improve services, sustainability and safety offer new opportunities for workers (e.g. creating space for more intellectually stimulating work, supporting staff safety, making drivers' jobs more accessible), but also new challenges. Women transport workers are particularly vulnerable to the risk of automation, changes in job experience and quality, and access to jobs through the adoption of AI in recruitment processes. To address the increasing urbanisation and economic growth of cities in LAC in recent decades, many local authorities are creating sustainable city visions. These include the expansion of transport networks with new lines or new modes, deploying clean energy technologies in the transport sector and strengthening public transport through integrated networks. Combined with new approaches to transit-oriented development (TOD) that aim to coordinate transport investments with land development, these developments could potentially provide transport workers with additional job opportunities, improved working and living spaces in peri-urban areas and increased participation in urban development processes. In addition, women workers play an important role in shaping sustainable cities of the future by supporting modal shifts, reducing emissions, creating networks for exchange and support, and finding solutions for balancing care and work responsibilities.

“the introduction of new technology at the different stations [...] is replacing labour, women's labour especially. [...] Thus, at a station where there were five or six women workers, now there are two or three colleagues.”

Union representative, SNTT Colombia



MEASURES TO PROMOTE SOCIALLY JUST AND FEMINIST CHANGE

To support transport unions, operators as well as local governments to advocate for socially just and feminist change, we propose the following measures:

- 01. Educate and train resilient women workers:** promoting women's resilience and addressing their systemic exclusion from decent and secure jobs requires education and training opportunities for women to enter the labour market—both in operational occupations and in urban or transport planning and STEM occupations—as well as opportunities to train and upgrade skills to adapt the current workforce to technological change, e.g. automation, and secure stable employment in the future.
- 02. Co-create and negotiate automation strategies and transport policies:** automation strategies as well as smart and sustainable development goals should be co-created and negotiated by companies, public sector organisations, trade unions and workers.
- 03. Create networks of support and safe spaces for women workers:** work environments should be free from violence and harassment and provide workers with access to safe spaces and sanitary facilities. In addition, training and networking activities for women workers provide opportunities to create networks of support and exchange and to strengthen the position of women workers in defending their rights. Trade unions should advocate for and support efforts to incorporate gender as well as safety audits into the planning and management of public transport. These audits provide a tool to measure the extent to which the organisation and the environment are meeting women's needs, to identify priorities for improvement and to measure progress towards gender objectives.
- 04. Support flexible but reliable working arrangements:** in order to facilitate the participation of women in political and professional positions and decision-making processes, working conditions and contracts must be adapted to their needs, i.e. prevailing gender-specific division



of labour and expectations for the performance of care work must be recognised, without compromising on reliability, duration or pay in employment contracts. Unions should advocate for decent work and labour rights (i.e. minimum wages, working hours and facilities) and flexible working arrangements for women workers to support care work, as well as parental rights, thereby recognising the responsibilities of both men and women in child rearing.

- 05. Strengthen union activism through cross-sectoral collaboration and political allies:** to promote socially just and feminist change, it is essential to increase the proportion of women in decision-making positions across the transport sector and in policy, and to introduce new ways of thinking and problem solving. Unions should continue to find allies in decision-making positions and in policy, and create cross-sectoral cooperation with non-union platform workers, workers from other unions or sectors, and community organisations or NGOs as a fruitful way to advance and link workers' rights and union activism.
- 06. Support alternative and diversified financing of public transport:** diversifying investment opportunities to support reliable and safe employment conditions for women workers can be achieved by incorporating gender equality clauses into existing funding agreements or creating alternative financing options in which workers gain ownership over smart city technologies.
- 07. Inform and educate passengers:** measures to support safe and just working environments for women include information and education campaigns, through which passengers are informed about expected, respectful behaviour as well as their role in the public sphere.
- 08. Imagine and rethink the social contract and role of technology:** rethinking the future of smart and sustainable cities from an intersectional perspective means rethinking the relationship between humans and machines, as well as the social contract that divides rights and responsibilities between workers, states and cities, and the division of gender roles in society at large. The goal of a just city is to find new ways to integrate technological innovations into everyday tasks to support women workers and advance gender equality.

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