

Winning a better deal for women

Maritime women's best practice guide



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Welcome

On behalf of ITF, I hope that this guide, with its many practical examples from you, our affiliates, will inspire all unions to reach out to organise and better represent women workers – resulting in winning a better deal for women.

ITF affiliates have been implementing best practice from workplace campaigns through to leadership programmes at a global level; from solidarity actions to creating new union structures, and many have kindly contributed to this guide. Whilst the evidence base and case studies are generated from our maritime affiliates, this best practice is also prevalent in and relevant to our affiliates seeking to support women trade unionists across the transport industry.

The recent gender audit of membership carried out by the ITF shows that, by far, the strongest growth of union membership is amongst maritime women members and this is slowly starting to be reflected at union leadership level across the world.

Our future depends on unions continuing to organise women transport workers – to ensure that women are participating in all areas of union life, setting their own agenda and bringing working conditions up to and beyond acceptable standards.

Our hope is that women will continue to work in all transport industries, join their union and then play an active part in making gender equality a reality for all our members, present and future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen" followed by a stylized, cursive flourish.

Stephen Cotton
Acting General Secretary

Challenges for unions representing maritime women

Background

In 2011, the ITF women's committee commissioned this guide to show practical evidence of the challenges faced by unions when representing women workers in the maritime industry. Not only did the questionnaire ask for challenges; crucially, it asked for reports of union activities that were contributing to better representation of women in all aspects of working and union life.

This guide outlines the challenges that many unions face – but most significantly, it shares the best practice solutions that our affiliates have been implementing to strengthen women's participation.

The good practice represented here was drawn from survey responses via questionnaires and interviews which are evidenced throughout the guide with quotes and illustrative case studies. All the women transport workers quoted participate in ITF unions and provide inspiration to those of us who are continuing the struggle to achieve gender equality.

ITF women maritime workers best practice guide questionnaire – overview of what maritime unions said

The questionnaire asked maritime unions about the challenges unions faced in organising women members. The challenges identified encompass problems resulting from the low density of maritime women workers, as well as the difficult working conditions women face across the maritime sector.

These problems are compounded by barriers to women participating fully in the life of their unions and their lack of influence in a traditionally male-orientated collective bargaining agenda. Whilst these problems are consistent with earlier studies done by different organisations, this guide also showcases successes around the globe achieved by maritime unions.

Low numbers of maritime women

“Especially on fishing vessels, there are very few women.” **Norwegian Seafarers' Union**

“Very few women show an interest in taking on a career at sea.” **Singapore Maritime Officers' Union (SMOU)**

“We face a lot of misconceptions about the seafaring life. Women are unaware of the profession ... and often think it is not a viable career for them.” **Seafarers' International Union, Canada**

Only 9 to 10 per cent in the port sectors and 0.29 per cent at sea – and they are usually in the traditional [women's] jobs of administrative work, cleaning, typing etc. There are a very few women crane operators and shore workers.” **Transport and Dock Workers' Union, Mumbai, India**

“Traditional opposition to women in our industry is the biggest obstacle, bias by the employers that women are not suitable for the work, and sometimes finding women who want to work in the industry.” **Maritime Union of Australia (MUA)**

“Many transport companies have few women employed and some women have less interest in the union.” **South African Transport and Allied Workers' Union (Satawu)**

“[Few women work in the docks] due to the working conditions.” **General Union of Port Workers, Jordan**

Working conditions

The **Japan Seafarers' Union** reports a lack of on-board facilities, such as women's bathrooms, toilets, and washing machines, as well as on-board harassment, and the difficulties of on-board communication.

“Long periods away from home for seafarers, barriers related to ongoing male dominance in marine transportation-related workplaces, and lack of meaningful or effective efforts to recruit and sustain women in marine transportation-related workplaces are all deterrents to recruiting women into maritime employment.” Mike Menicanin, national representative, **National Automobile, Aerospace, Transportation, and General Workers Union of Canada (CAW)**

Local employment contracts and contact with unions

Local employment conditions can also be a hindrance. For example, although workers for the Barbados Port Authority have to be union members because of a closed shop arrangement, dockers are recruited on a casual basis, reporting for possible work at 5.30 am each day.

“This is challenging for women most of whom are not able, usually because of family responsibilities, to participate in that process.” **Barbados Workers’ Union (BWU)**

“New entrants into dock work require a certificate of ‘good behaviour’, a psychological -test and medical examination and also three weeks professional training in the training centre of the Port of Antwerp before they become recognised by the joint committee for employment purposes.” **Belgische Transportarbeidersbond – Union Belge des Ouvriers du Transport (BTB)**, Belgium

“The number of women who work in the maritime sector is still very low due to the difficulties of life on board and the resistance of the companies to recruit women. Many of them are employed in unqualified work and they never reach top positions. Women, therefore, do not feel well represented by trade unions.” **Federazione Italiana Trasporti – Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori (FIT-CISL)**, Italy

By contrast, the **General Union of Port Workers** in Jordan reports that “the majority of women working in the docks occupy leading positions, and this means they are closer to the employer.”

Work-life balance

“Many women who work at sea resign when they have children. Often they combine shore work with family responsibilities.” **Estonian Seafarers’ Independent Union**

“Women do not have sufficient time to spare for union work as they have multiple roles to play in the family and at work.” **Cochin Port Staff Association**, India

Participation in life of unions

“[Women are hesitant during meetings] where procedures can be cumbersome. [Togolese women are suspicious of union activities] because they fear drawing attention to themselves and being perceived badly by the managers.” **Syndicat des Travailleurs du Port Autonome de Lomé (Syntrapal)**, Togo

“Lack of understanding of the role of unions was also a factor inhibiting women workers from taking part in the union,” reported unions in Barbados, Jordan and Kenya.

“The challenge comes from a lack of interest and misunderstanding by workers regarding what the union can do or its role.” **Barbados Workers’ Union**

“We face recruiting and organising obstacles as ship-owners do not want to recognise trade unions.” **Tanzania Seafarers’ Union**

Whilst recent developments will impact on the **Seafarers’ Union of Burma** who are currently exiled in Bangkok, Thailand, it has been making efforts – with very limited resources and no legal status – to organise Burmese migrant fishers, fishery workers and seafarers since 1995.

Next steps

Our questionnaire revealed a number of general approaches used by affiliates to involve maritime women. These emphasised the importance of women’s participation in the union, the general benefit

of gender equality, the role of equality legislation and its potential as a base from which to build the collective bargaining agenda.

Responses emphasised the role of women's structures and networks in unions, as well as the the scope for union training in organising women in the maritime industry, supporting their participation and developing women leaders.

Many respondents to the questionnaire highlighted ways in which they thought their union could continue to develop the role of women. The union responses are included in the guide as evidence of good practice and checklists are provided for unions to use when identifying problems and possible solutions.

For ease of reference, the guide summarises the case studies and examples into three main areas to demonstrate the three main change agents for improving women's rights in the workplace – employers and the state; unions; membership and potential membership:

1. Addressing women's issues in bargaining and negotiating
2. Representing women in union structures and leadership
3. Strategic campaigns for women transport workers



Alison McGarry
ITF Women Transport Workers' Coordinator



Diana Holland
Chair of the ITF Women's Committee

Pursuing women's issues through collective bargaining

Solution 1



Pursuing women's issues through collective bargaining

This section uses case studies and examples to show case good practice around the globe, from changing workplace procedures and policies, to ensuring that equal rights are debated and secured at state and industry level. At the end of the section is a checklist summarising union activity to ensure that employers and state legislatures take responsibility for improving women's rights in the workplace.

Questionnaire responses show that where ITF unions have negotiated for gender equality they have found the whole membership benefits. For example, reducing levels of bullying or harassment in the workplace – whether aboard ship or onshore – is usually welcomed by male workers, many of whom find the level of bullying unacceptable and unpleasant. Union membership is strengthened and improved conditions benefit the working lives of men as well as women. In Belgium, the General Trade Union ABVV organised an 'Equal Pay Day' in March. The **BTB** participated to show solidarity with women workers who do not yet earn the same wages as men, although women dockworkers have the same wages and working conditions as their male colleagues.

To ensure women's concerns are included, **Syntrapal** from Togo involves women members in its negotiations with the port authority and when drawing up the collective bargaining agreements.

CAW in Canada reported that it has successfully achieved new measures to advance women's equality and human rights through its integrated approach. Affirmative action policies advance equality within the union while the collective bargaining agenda improves pay and conditions for maritime workers.

CAW has negotiated collective agreements that include:

- anti-discrimination clauses
- harassment and complaint procedures
- the right to refuse work based on harassment
- harassment prevention training
- a women's advocate programme.

CAW says that there are also local union efforts to bargain around issues such as improved maternity/parental leave and protection against harassment and violence at home or in the workplace, as well as to support women working on board vessels and in marine transportation-related workplaces.

There are a number of key issues for women in ITF-covered workplaces that appeared regularly in the questionnaire responses. These include pregnancy protection, and maternity and parental leave. Some ITF unions have successfully met these challenges by bargaining for improvements in collective agreements at workplace and industry levels. There are also some examples where unions have effected changes at the state legislative level.

Pregnancy protection, maternity leave and parental leave

Becoming pregnant is a frequent cause for dismissal and discrimination for women workers around the globe. In the transport and maritime sectors, there are additional barriers: women are often a small minority in a strongly male sector; maritime women can work in conditions described as "unsuitable" for women – let alone a pregnant woman; and the work may involve activities that in some countries should not be undertaken by women in later stages of pregnancy, for example heavy lifting. These issues have been addressed by a number of maritime unions.

Satawu in South Africa is negotiating to raise state paid maternity leave from four to six months fully paid, along with permission to breastfeed and post-natal days off for clinic check-ups. When the union wins a recognition agreement with a new company it makes sure that maternity leave is part of the agreement, as well as an HIV/AIDS policy and a code of good practice on gender, and include a member of the gender desk in the negotiations. Maternity leave is included in wage negotiations.

The **Japan Seafarers' Union** has developed collective agreements that support women seafarers, including establishing new rights to pregnancy protection and maternity leave.

The **Transport and Dock Workers' Union**, Mumbai, India negotiates on women's issues, including maternity benefit and occupational health and safety for women workers.



Maritime unions in Australia have negotiated maternity leave and some parental leave, which have both proved popular with members.

“A man rang to thank the union for being able to take ‘maternity’ leave to look after his twins for 12 weeks.” MUA

In Norway (and on Norwegian-flagged vessels) both men and women workers are covered by state-paid parental leave provision. But the **Norwegian Seafarers’ Union** has been successful in negotiating maternity arrangements in collective bargaining agreements for its members working on Bahamas-flagged cruise vessels. Under these arrangements, the company repatriates the woman worker no later than the 26th week of her pregnancy, and she is entitled to 100 days basic pay and priority in filling a suitable equivalent vacancy within three years of the birth of the child.

The importance of strong collective agreements to support maritime women cannot be over-stated. One area where it is particularly important is for those maritime women working in ships under flags of convenience, a device that allows many shipping companies to avoid providing pregnancy protection (protection from dismissal as well as protection of the health and safety of pregnant workers) or maternity rights.

The ITF has developed model clauses for use in collective agreements to ensure that pregnant seafarers are accorded pregnancy and maternity rights. This also includes pre-recruitment pregnancy testing, which contravenes international labour standards.

ITF-approved agreements for merchant vessels stipulate that pregnant seafarers:

- *must be repatriated at the cost of the company;*
- *must receive two months’ full pay in compensation;*
- *the timing of the repatriation may vary depending on place of work and stage of pregnancy. Where the ship is trading coastally, or where a doctor is on board, it is generally safer for pregnant women to work later into a pregnancy;*
- *if working on deep sea vessels or very high speed craft, the risks need to be assessed carefully;*
- *pregnancy should never be treated as a disciplinary offence;*
- *pregnancy testing before being employed may violate International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 183.*

*Adoptive parents rights are too often neglected, but not by the **Transport and Dock Workers’ Union, Mumbai, India**. It achieved an important*

benefit for adoptive parents when “*it emerged that women who had adopted a child were not getting maternity leave benefit*”.

The union took up adoptive mothers’ need for leave with the Ministry of Shipping, with the result that the notification of leave regulation was amended. In Mumbai Port, women workers are now entitled to maternity leave when they adopt a child.

Keeping parents in work, family friendly policies

In the maritime industry women workers are in a small minority and unions can reach out to men, as well as women, through negotiating family-friendly deals. These agreements allow all parents access to long-term benefits that enable them to stay at work. The agreements shown are powerful examples of how union negotiations on gender equality can boost the union’s collective bargaining agenda for all its members.

In Australia, the **MUA** has family-friendly template clauses for enterprise bargaining, and a policy that women members are included on all delegations, enterprise bargaining negotiating teams and workplace committees.

The **Seafarers’ International Union** in Canada includes non-discrimination language protecting women’s rights in all its contracts, and references to laws that guarantee family leave rights, maternity/paternity rights and childcare leave.

In May 2011 a workplace deal was negotiated for longshore workers on Canada’s Pacific coast. The eight-year pay and conditions agreement between the ITF-affiliated **International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU)** Canada and the British Columbia Maritime Employers’ Association boosts maternity, paternity and pensions benefits. The deal’s new programme for maternity and paternity leave was one of the union’s key bargaining demands.

“For the first time, longshore workers will have the support they need to raise their families. [It would also] make the job more attractive to women.” **ILWU** president Tom Dufresne, Canada

In the Port of Felixstowe, England, **Unite** negotiated a family-friendly policy in 2011. Although the union had only 40 women out of its 2,500 members in the port – mainly working as drivers, charge hands and team leaders – it went

for the deal “as part of our ongoing process of improving terms and conditions for all our members”. Phil Pemberton, **Unite** convenor, said: *“Our new agreement allows a more flexible approach to shift patterns. Currently our members work a four-day on, four-day off pattern. That’s not ideal for everyone, especially if they have dependants. Under the new agreement, members are entitled to request flexibility in their shifts – and most are usually allowed.”* Despite the shift working, the union branch is able to reach out to all its members through its four full-time shop stewards, as well as through newsletters and its website.

Women’s working conditions and facilities

Improved working conditions for maritime members are always a key bargaining issue. But they have a particular importance for maritime women who, all too often, work in predominantly male workforces with inadequate provisions for women. Sanitary facilities, washrooms and clothing designed for women are important issues for almost all maritime unions.

Force Ouvrière (FO) Languedoc-Roussillon in France, which represents some women who are officers and captains of tugboats and maintenance vessels/vehicles, says that it responds to women’s specific workplace demands through its collective bargaining agenda. These have included establishing separate rest areas, female toilets and issues concerning work clothes and safety equipment.

The **CAW** in Canada is working to improve washroom and changing room facilities for women on board maritime vessels and in marine transportation related units.

The **BTB** in Belgium has successfully negotiated for specific working conditions and clothing for women seafarers. These include female sanitary facilities and safety clothing designed for women dockers.

Sexual harassment & workplace bullying

Sexual harassment policies and procedures are crucial for all maritime women, whether working on land or at sea. While sexual harassment is a major issue for most of our women members, maritime women often face the additional problem of living in cramped conditions far away from home in close proximity to mainly male colleagues.

The **Transport and Dock Workers' Union** of Kandla in India was successful in setting up a women's sexual harassment committee in Kandla Port, which includes a union representative. The union also handles grievances from women members and looks after their requirements in the workplace.

Bullying and harassment have also been identified by the **MUA** in Australia as a major issue for women in seafaring. The union notes that concerns include: *"Small behaviours that may not be considered as such, including the displaying of posters or jokes in the workplace."* The union's 2011 national council resolved to continue to work with members to create workplaces *"that are not only female friendly, but respectful of all workers"*.

A project from the Anglo-Dutch-Swiss maritime union **Nautilus International** to eradicate harassment and bullying on ships resulted in both UK and European guidance being agreed by social partners.

In 2010, **Nautilus** organised a major survey into bullying, discrimination and harassment in the maritime workplace. The research followed up a 1999 survey of women members that led to best practice guidelines between the union (then **NUMAST**) and the UK Chamber of Shipping on tackling bullying and harassment. These subsequently led the union to work for the development of Europe-wide standards on tackling bullying and harassment in the shipping industry.

The 2010 survey found that 43 per cent of respondents had personally experienced bullying, discrimination and harassment at work in the last five years, and 55 per cent of all women respondents reported sex discrimination, even though they made up only 8 per cent of all respondents. The overall findings showed widespread concern about ill-treatment at work, with its effects on the morale of those who had experienced it and reluctance to make formal complaints. However, the vast majority of respondents said they enjoyed working at sea. **Nautilus** is working with the **ITF** to develop international principles to tackle harassment and bullying at sea, and is working at company level to follow best practice guidelines and other measures, such as appointing an equality officer on board every ship.

Dealing with grievances and sexual harassment complaints

A number of unions adopt broadly similar measures to counter maritime women's reluctance to complain about harassment and to ensure that women members can talk to a woman union representative about sensitive issues. This is an important step in addressing a culture of harassment and bullying, especially in the small, confined workplaces in which maritime women often work.

The **Seafarers' International Union** in Canada uses non-discriminatory language and protects women's rights in all its contracts. To ensure that women feel confident to make a complaint about a sensitive issue such as sexual harassment, members are able to be represented by a woman officer.

"Female union officials can work with female members if they request it, and a [dedicated woman] deals with women-specific issues in the grievance process." **Seafarers' International Union, Canada**

Also in Canada, the **CAW** has developed the use of "women advocates" in the workplace to assist women employees who *"may sometimes need to discuss with another woman ... violence or abuse at home or workplace harassment"*. The women's advocate is appointed by the union from among the female bargaining unit employees and receives training for the role. She meets individual women members as required, discusses problems with them and refers them to the appropriate agency when necessary. As part of their bargaining for women advocates, the **CAW** negotiates with the employer to provide a confidential phone line and voice mail accessible for women employees to contact the advocate, as well as a private and confidential meeting space.

The **Transport and Dock Workers' Union**, India has developed a successful social partner initiative on sexual harassment in the port, ensuring that the employer provides suitable training courses for all workers.

"If sexual harassment is an issue, individuals can approach the port sexual harassment committee with a complaint. I represent the unions on the port committee. We try to reach a mutual understanding, but some severe cases have led to suspensions. Management has also been trying

to organise awareness raising programmes for women, and we have seminars etc. on harassment. The union is very supportive.” Seema Mohan, secretary, Transport and Dock Workers’ Union, Kandla, India

Changes in legislation

As well as bringing issues affecting women members to the bargaining table, many ITF unions around the world are also active in campaigning for changes to national and state law to benefit all women workers. Some countries have led the way in adopting legislation to benefit women workers. This can provide helpful models for unions in other countries.

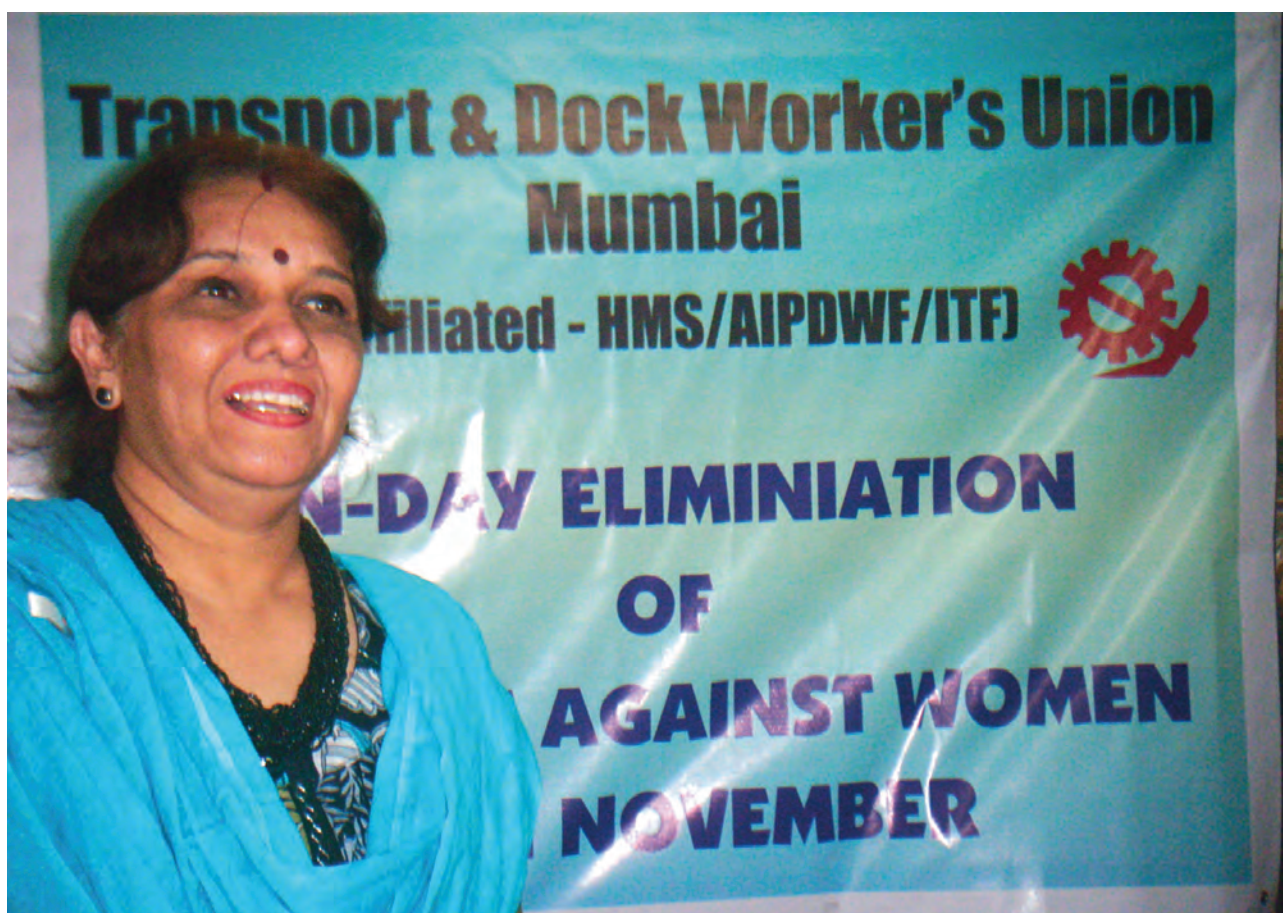
There are many examples where a campaign generated by one union can lead to significant benefits for the wider workforce. That was the case in Australia, for example, where the MUA was part of a national paid parental leave campaign that eventually achieved a paid parental leave policy for all workers in the country.

In Canada, the CAW was part of a broader coalition that recently won changes to the Occupational Health and Safety Act in Ontario to protect individuals (mainly women) from domestic violence while at work, a significant gain for all

women in Ontario, including women seafarers/dockworkers. The government legislation in Belgium covers sexual harassment, including dockers, which is handled by the Joint Committee of the Ministry of Labour. The CAW is also involved in gender-specific political campaigns, such as the woman-to-woman campaign (during the 2008 and 2011 federal elections) on childcare, pay equity and ending violence against women.

The ITF campaigns for proper procedures to be established to protect non-domiciled crews. Where it is acceptable that they are employed, they should have genuine contracts of employment that grant them their rights to social security payments, time off and a fair wage. The ITF continues to fight against unfair competition based on inferior working conditions. It campaigns for better regulation to protect the interests of all workers in inland navigation.

The FIT-CISL in Italy has held meetings and taken part in campaigns for health, especially for women immigrants. In Barbados, the BWU also takes part in national campaigns against human trafficking and to promote the adoption of ILO Convention 156 on workers with family responsibilities. It serves on a national committee examining draft legislation for a sexual harassment bill, and



lobbies for a sectoral minimum wage, “to ensure that some sectors of workers, especially women, are not disadvantaged”.

Women being able to access training and work in the sector

A campaign by Argentinean maritime unions won an important right that established women’s seafarer training, and helped make it available around the world.

After a childhood fascination with ships, Natalia Prosdocimi decided in 1992 that she wanted to be a seafarer. At that time, Argentinean naval schools still didn’t accept women as students. However, inquiring at the Centre for Merchant Navy

Overseas Captains and Officers, Natalia learned that new legislation would soon allow women to join the industry.

“To a large extent, we have to thank trade unions for this law, which gave women the right to graduate as deck or engine officers,” says Natalia. In 1994, when she was finally able to join the naval school, she was the only woman in her class. Ten years later, Natalia graduated from first mate to become the first woman captain appointee in Argentina, and by 2005, according to Natalia, the level of demand hit a new record when 50 per cent of places in Argentina were held by women.

Pursuing women’s issues through collective bargaining. Checklist for unions.

Collective bargaining

- ☐ Are women’s issues identified prior to bargaining and included on the bargaining agenda?
- ☐ Are women involved as members on negotiating and bargaining teams?
- ☐ Do women get pay and conditions equal to their male counterparts?
- ☐ Are there specific provisions for women maritime workers in your collective agreement, for example:
 - separate washrooms with sanitary facilities
 - sleeping and other rest areas
 - suitable safety and protective clothing

National & legislative considerations

- ☐ Does your state provide security of employment for all women maritime workers?
- ☐ Does your state have laws asserting the right of equity in pay and conditions between men and women?
- ☐ Do you have state-set minimum pay rates?
- ☐ Do you have state-set maternity and other parental paid leave provisions?
- ☐ Do you have national laws against sexual harassment and violence against women?
- ☐ Are there national occupational health and safety laws?
- ☐ Does your state have anti-discrimination laws for women?

Representing women in union structures and leadership

Solution 2



Representing women in union structures and leadership

This section looks at how unions represent their women members through union structures and other mechanisms to ensure that women's voices are heard in the union. These mechanisms increase the likelihood of the collective bargaining agenda reflecting women members' concerns. Unions that have effective structures for representing women are also the unions that adopt strong campaigns on women's issues, such as violence against women. These unions will also have women in leadership positions.

Women's structures are important. Many unions have structures that are traditionally oriented to male members, and not particularly encouraging to women's participation. As **CAW's** director of organising, John Aman, says, when unions were first introduced the overwhelming majority of members were "male (and white), and thus most unions' internal structure, staffing levels, culture and philosophy reflected that fact". He adds that, "with greater participation of women in the workforce, progressive and forward-thinking unions have had to become more inclusive and open up space for their women members".

Unions have approached the representation of their women members through a variety of mechanisms. These range from formal structures within their constitution, such as women's committees, to representation on union policy making bodies or the establishment of women's schools, as well as less formal arrangements such as networks and women's activities. Many unions have appointed women's officers to ensure that gender equality and the specific needs of their women members are addressed. Others have adopted positive action measures to encourage women's representation at national or local leadership levels.

Membership recording systems are crucial. It is important to record members by their gender, and to set up systems so that it is possible to extract information about who women members are and where they work. This enables unions to focus on women members, encouraging their participation

in specific events and participation in the union's structures and organisation.

This section summarises **ITF** examples which demonstrate good practice, and showcases both how unions can make a direct difference and their successes in including women in union activity and leadership.

Women's committees

Many unions have a specific committee for their women members. This often acts as an advisory committee to other union policy-making committees. The women's committees have a double function – a focus for women's concerns as well as a place where women take action and gain valuable experience within the union. **ITF** unions have adopted a range of models and working methods for their women's committees.

The **MUA** in Australia has a women's committee with representatives from each state. Because of the size of the country, it meets bimonthly by phone. The committee develops a work plan, which is then implemented by branch committees in each state.

The UK branch of **Nautilus International** set up a women's advisory forum in 2010 as a result of a conference motion following an education school for its women members. It meets three to four times a year and is open to all women members.

"The [education school] in turn has set up a network of activists and, as a result, more women members are looking to become elected lay representatives and stand for election to the union's council." **Nautilus International**, UK/Netherlands/Switzerland

In Belgium **BTB** organises four day training sessions for the dockers' section union board members on a regular basis and, as the women's representative, Monique Verbeeck always involves on or two women in these sessions.

The **BWU** in Barbados has a gender equality committee, which is a sub-committee of the executive council and is mandated to make representation on behalf of women workers.

"[The women's section] keeps track of all issues and problems women have to deal with on board and, consequently, take steps to solve them." **Seafarers' Union of Croatia**

There are also national women's committees or councils in the **Vereinte Dienstleistungsgewerkschaft (ver.di)** in Germany, **FIT-CISL** in Italy, the **All-India Port and Dock Workers' Federation**, the **Dock Workers' Union**, Kenya, and the **Syntrapal and Syndicat National des Transitaires Mandataires du Togo (Synatram)** unions in Togo.

It is encouraging that women's committees are on the agenda of emerging trade unions, such as the newly-formed **General Union of Port Workers** in Jordan and the **Seafarers' Union of Burma**.

The **CAW** in Canada has a national women's committee and local women's committees, whose overall goal is "to involve more **CAW** women in our union." Women's committees can set up sub-committees on issues such as education, bargaining, community involvement or women's health, and can hold special education sessions for women members on the union policies that affect them. The union also has women's networks where women from local branches can meet together through seminars and campaigns.

"The priority of the network is to get more women involved in their union and active in the community ... By networking in a supportive environment, women are able to become more active and engaged in the union." **CAW**, Canada.

Informal networks

Informal networks are proving to be an increasingly effective way for women union members to keep in touch with each other. Networks can provide informal contact in the absence of formal union structures for women's organisation. But even where unions have women's committees and officers, many women members enjoy the benefits of informal contact and online social networks – an increasingly important way of keeping in touch with national and global campaigns – alongside more formal participation in union activities.

Meetings for women members ensure that the gender perspective of an issue is picked up by the union. This is particularly important in the current financial crisis, as the impact of cuts on women and men can be very different – for example women are more likely to be casualised.

In the dockers' section of the **BTB** in Belgium, the women's representative, **Monique Verbeeck**,

organises informal meetings for women members when there are specific issues to be discussed, such as the impact of the economic crisis on women workers. In 2011 they collected gender issues to consider in the European Social Dialogue with the European Commission. The **BTB** dockers' women's network has grown from two to 13 in 2012.

The **Seafarers' International Union**, USA and the **Japan Seafarers' Union** have informal networks and forums to exchange views actively with women members and develop strategies for addressing issues raised by them.

The **CAW** in Canada points to the growing importance of the new social media. It reports that during the 55th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, in March 2011, its delegates blogged daily updates and analysis, and its women's department blog received 556 views.

"One of the surprising by-products [of the blog] was the depth of connections with activists from around the world. While the majority of visits to the blog came from Canada, people checked in from the United States, United Kingdom, Switzerland, France, Singapore, Brazil, Sweden, Australia and Belgium." **CAW**, Canada

The **MUA** in Australia says women seafarers – often the only woman on board a ship – communicate through Facebook and the union's website as they sometimes cannot get personal emails. This is an example of how the union provides practical benefits to members beyond negotiating decent terms and conditions of work.

Confederación Marítima de Chile (Comach) in Chile has women's networks for maritime and dock workers, where women are in a small minority of workers and have specific needs, such as female safety clothing and protection against sexual harassment.

Women's Officers

Some **ITF** unions have appointed women's officers at national level to work specifically on the promotion and participation of women members, including organising women transport workers and developing the gender aspects of the collective bargaining agenda.

Several maritime unions have made good headway in ensuring women are employed as



staff members and officials, despite a predominantly male membership. This has helped ensure that the gender aspects of policies and negotiations are picked up at head office and by unions at local level, as well as encouraging women's structures within the union.

Half of the senior staff of **BWU** in Barbados are women, including industrial relations officers. The **Estonian Seafarers' Independent Union** has three full-time officials who are women, and the **Norwegian Seafarers' Union** also employs women as union officers. **Nautilus International** currently has two women officials based in its Netherlands office, representing about 10 per cent of all officials. The **SMOU** in Singapore has one full-time woman official; the advisor in maritime policies and legislation for the **Seafarers' International Union, Canada** is a woman; and the **Seafarers' International Union, USA** has many women working in its legal department.

At **CAW** in Canada, women work as organisers, service representatives, national representatives, directors and department heads, and in education, pensions and benefits, research, and health and safety. They report: *"Most of the women appointed to staff positions came up through the ranks and had held local union leadership positions."*

The **MUA** in Australia has a national women's liaison officer who is the organiser of women's

activities, promotes the organisation of women and generally supports women members in the industry. Mich-Elle Myers, a "wharfie" (dockworker), is being paid by her employers two days a week to be the union's full-time women's officer for a two-year period. The main issues for her women members are casualisation, bullying and harassment, and maternity rights.

"Women who have always wanted to go to sea often don't mind being just the one woman on board, but isolation can be one of the hardest things they face. You've got to have a thick skin."

Maritime women in leadership

The leadership of a union is a major influence on policy and practice. In traditionally male unions it is particularly important that women are in leadership positions, as male-dominated transport unions may not always appreciate the gender dimensions of policy or the collective bargaining agenda.

While some women union members are able to rise to leadership positions through their work and experience in the union, others need more specific encouragement and provision to enable them to play a full part in the union. Reserved seats or proportional representation of women are constitutional mechanisms that can overcome the tendency of a predominantly male membership to elect male leaders.

Reserved or designated seats on executive and union committees to encourage women to come forward are a widely-used device. For example, in Canada, the **CAW** has two designated seats for women on the national executive board, which currently has four women members. Women are also elected to leadership positions at local level, including as bargaining committees members. Women **CAW** members serve as union delegates and health and safety representatives on board vessels.

The **Seafarers' International Union**, Canada has two women on its executive board, as secretary-treasurer and director of a non-marine division. The **Seafarers' International Union** in the USA has elected and appointed women officials (port agents, a union representative and assistant vice-presidents). Women make up five of the union's 24 officials.

The president and elected secretary of the **Norwegian Seafarers' Union** are women, and there are also women members on the board. The president general of **BWU** in Barbados is a woman, as are 25 per cent of the elected officers. The **Swedish Ship Officers' Association** has several women on its board and also as chairwomen/board members in local representation. The **Estonian Seafarers' Independent Union** has two women as elected members of its board, and 10 out of 27 shop stewards are women.

The **Tanzania Seafarers' Union** has women elected to positions on its executive, general council and congress, and also has women deputy regional secretaries. **Syntrapal** in Togo says that its education programmes have enabled its women members to take leadership positions, including: the **ITF** coordinator for Togo; the assistant treasurer for women's structures of the West African sub-region; and the first vice-chair of the African Dockers' section. The union contact person for STI/HIV/AIDS issues for the port and the vice-chair of the **ITF** West Africa sub-regional committee are also women.

Women make up 1,400 of the 6,000 members of the **Kenya Dock Workers' Union**. About 700 women are dockers, while other women work as forklift operators, drivers and on tractors. Training is on the job and the work is well paid and attracts all ages. But, says assistant treasurer Judith Abuka, women have to be tough, particularly to deal with sexual harassment. The union's

structure and constitutional arrangements have changed to accommodate the growing number of women members – the union's constitution says that women should have 30 per cent representation in all union structures. There are now seven women's seats on the 17-seat NEC, and women's structures, motions and events, such as International Women's Day. But there remain problems in getting women's commitment to the union.

Satawu in South Africa has a quota system of 25 per cent women in all decision-making structures, but now has above that ratio – its governing structure is about 35-40 per cent women. There are women in leadership, as gender representatives, secretaries and shop stewards.

"Women have created alliances with male comrades – we cannot do anything without women in all structures. We have women as chair and secretary of our maritime section – these are meaningful positions." **Satawu**, South Africa

Satawu and **Comach** in Chile both have women treasurers, and **Satawu's** two national full-time representatives for Transnet National Ports Authority are women.

"Women are represented in all structures within our union, with many women officials." **Satawu**, South Africa

The **Japan Seafarers' Union** currently has five women delegates to its supreme decision-making congress.

"As women representatives, they are making efforts to ensure that women members' opinions are reflected in the decisions." **Japan Seafarers' Union**

The **SMOU** in Singapore has women on its executive council and general council, and **Nautilus International** has women members on its council and national committees as well as serving as elected lay representatives. The **Seafarers' Union of Burma** is planning to have women workers' executive seats in its structure.

Transport unions in India have taken the challenge of ensuring female representation very seriously. The **All-India Port and Dock Workers' Federation** has appointed Kalpana Desai, representing Mumbai Port, and Marry Kutty of Cochin Port, on to the national committee as joint secretaries to focus on women's issues. The **Cochin Port Staff Association**, India has reserved some important

positions – including the vice-president, secretary and assistant secretary – exclusively for women. The **Transport and Dock Workers' Union**, Mumbai has 10 women elected as general council members and women have nominated posts as an organiser, deputy secretary and vice-president. The **Transport and Dock Workers' Union**, Kandla has one woman at the secretary level (on the executive board), one at joint secretary and four at organising secretary levels (executive members).

Monique Verbeeck, from **BTB** in Belgium, reports that her union made an appeal to encourage young and women dockers to become board members in their specific professional category, in order to bring young and women members into the union's future leadership. This resulted in three women coming forward, increasing the informal women's group to 13 members. *"These women will keep us informed about specific problems on the work floor through regular meetings."*

Like some other unions, **ver.di** in Germany has implemented a rule change that women should make up 30 per cent of all elected positions in the union. This is an important – and effective – mechanism to ensure that women serve in elected leadership roles throughout the union.

Paid time off for union activities encourages participation. This will vary from country to country – and from company to company – but can be an important negotiating issue in some countries.

The **ITF Women's Department** plays a leading role in bringing women activists together to share information, policy and campaigns, develop networks and provide training for women activists to take on leadership roles in their unions.

In September 2011, as part of a unique training opportunity, the **ITF** brought together 37 maritime union women leaders from 25 countries in a landmark maritime women's strategic, leadership and organising conference, organised in collaboration with the Harvard Trade Union Program. The event was an opportunity to share experiences, tactics and strategies on how to further strengthen unions and build women leaders.

ITF Women Transport Workers' Coordinator Alison McGarry explains that: *"The women developed strategic campaigns – all of which are ultimately contributing to building union power and securing*

more wins for all transport workers, men and women."

"[The programme was] an opportunity for women to come together to discuss and develop strategic planning and share ideas. We had the opportunity to get to know each other and develop a camaraderie, which we should all be able to do in our own unions, through developing women's committees and support systems for our women members." Tracey Mayhew, **Seafarers' International Union, USA**

Regional maritime women

Women from the **ITF Asia/Pacific** maritime sector have been active in regional events since a project for women transport workers in the region in 2001, in which women from the ports were very active. The first regional port and dock women's seminar was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka in 2007, with participants from India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines and Sri Lanka. Women from India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka also joined the **ITF South Asian** port and dock strategic planning seminar, attended by the leadership of the port unions. It was perhaps the first time that these women had sat alongside their union leaders to discuss the issues that affected them.



Marcos Canosa – La Opinion

The region always tries to organise a women-only activity immediately before a major **ITF** event. This familiarises the women with the issues to be discussed and enhances their participation.

“We try not to hold activities for women during examination times or special holidays or festivals. Women sometimes bring their children to the activity, particularly to local programmes.” Nishi Kapahi, **ITF** office in New Delhi, India

ITF women officials and Inspectors

The **Kenya Dock Workers Union** has seminars and training for women in negotiations, and special training from the gender desk on harassment and other issues. The women’s committee covers recruitment of women, women’s issues, policies on health and safety and gender etc., and a women’s project of awareness-raising in the workplace.

ITF’s women officials and Inspectors play an important role in advancing policies and conditions for all members – men and women – in transport industries. This has helped to break down stereotypes, even in the male-dominated

maritime industries. For example, in October 2011 two **ITF** women Inspectors, Betty Makena Mutugi from Kenya and Luz Baz from Spain, exposed sub-standard conditions for the Russian crew working on a vessel chartered by the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) in Mombasa, Kenya. As a result of the inspectors’ campaign, the **ITF** is working with the WFP to ensure minimum standards for the crews of the ships it charts.

Luz Baz is an **ITF** Inspector in Spain. Her work is mainly dealing with crews on flag of convenience ships, where there are not many women seafarers. Most Spanish women who work at sea are employed on passenger vessels run by good companies or national carriers with good conditions. However Luz says conditions for women on cruise ships *“can be really rough”*. As more women begin to work on such vessels, both as officers and ratings, she wants it to become *“normal for women to be part of the shipboard environment”*. The companies should also make sure that women are visible at the top of their organisations and she says: *“There should be rights for women seafarers to talk to their union about their problems.”*

Representing women in union structures and leadership. Checklist for unions.

- ☐ Does your union have a women’s officer or someone responsible for women’s work?
- ☐ Does your union have an active union women’s network?
- ☐ Does your union have an elected women’s committee?
- ☐ Does your union have women in elected or paid official positions?
- ☐ Are women represented in the union’s decision-making bodies?
- ☐ Do you have a quota or affirmative/positive action policy in your union?
- ☐ Do women participate in your formal and informal union development and education programmes?
- ☐ Is your union in contact with the **ITF** Women’s Department or regional representatives?
- ☐ Does your union participate in **ITF** women’s activities?

Strategies for increasing women's participation in unions

Solution 3



Strategies for increasing women's participation in unions

Many transport unions are implementing strategies to increase the participation and inclusion of women workers throughout union activities and structures. This is important because more women are working in transport/maritime jobs and the continued and improved strength of trade unions depends on increasing membership levels through organising new women members.

ITF unions are increasingly involved in employer and industry recruitment drives and encouraging women to both work in the industry and join the union from the outset. This first step in union activity is as important as the previous section where we looked at the inclusion of women in union structures and leadership.

This section looks at some of the activities of maritime unions that seek to broaden their base of women members. This can take many forms and can range from organising days of activity on a specific topic such as violence against women or HIV/AIDS awareness, from targeted recruitment drives in workplaces that have high levels of non-union women workers through to more women led strategic campaigns.

Recruitment of young women to maritime industry

Many unions in the maritime industry play an important role in recruiting young women to maritime jobs, encouraging them to join the union when they start work.

“We participate in many job fairs and we realise that girls are less aware of the possibilities offered by seafaring careers. We need to spread a lot of information tailored for women’s interests.”

Seafarers’ International Union, Canada

They hold meetings with women cadets in marine institutes “to address their questions and give them advice and information about the union and the ITF”.

Nautilus International says that it is seeing more women students in the nautical training colleges around Britain, which it visits for regular

recruitment drives. The union’s monthly magazine has regular articles highlighting the merchant navy as a career among women and the issues faced by women seafarers.

The **Japan Seafarers’ Union** visits maritime universities and mercantile marine schools annually “to promote women in the maritime industry”.

Recruiting maritime women to the union

The focus on recruiting women into the union is exemplified by a woman activist member of the **General Union of Port Workers** in Jordan who participated in a recent training union organisers’ workshop. She said her mission in the coming months will be “to attract the largest possible number of women to join the union”.

In a move to incentivise women to come into the union, the women’s committee of **Synatram** in Togo asked the executive to waive the membership fees for women wishing to join. This encourages low-paid women workers – possibly new recruits or those working part-time – to join the union and participate in union activities.

Unions also target recruitment efforts at women working in specific companies. For example, the **Seafarers’ Union of Croatia** has an ongoing campaign to attract women seafarers in the country’s biggest national shipping company, Jadrolinija. It is also planning a further campaign aimed at Croatian women working on board cruise ships around the world. To help promote the role of the union, the **Tanzania Seafarers’ Union** is using its women’s policy to educate women in the importance of joining the trade union. **Satawu** in South Africa provides childcare facilities for women to enable them to attend meetings.

Nautilus International has taken pioneering steps to increase women members’ profile in the union. Women make up just 600 out of its 25,000 members but the number is growing as more women are joining the industry. **Nautilus** has forums where women can meet and discuss their experiences, helping the union to develop its policy. It has also developed the role of a designated women members’ contact person who works alongside the senior national secretary for organising young members and women.

In 2010, the union held its first-ever training conference for women, which proved an important

opportunity for members to share their experiences and to network. One direct result of this was that more women members were inspired to attend the union's conference in London in June 2010. Despite making up just 2 per cent of the membership, women delegates made up a record one-third of delegates to the conference. This conference passed landmark resolutions on maternity, paternity and adoptive leave rights, and setting up the union's first-ever women's advisory forum – demonstrating the way in which the votes of women can powerfully influence union policy development.

The most important aspect of these developments, says Gary Elliot, **Nautilus** national secretary for organising, recruitment and membership, is that women members are firmly part of the union's mainstream.

“Collective bargaining covers everybody, no matter your nationality, race or gender. But part of collective bargaining is the individual issues that affect women, such as maternity and paternity leave and jobshare arrangements. If the union had a 50:50 membership, we wouldn't need a women's advisory forum. But with women being such a small minority in the union, it's really needed.” **Nautilus International**, UK/ Netherlands/ Switzerland

As one women delegate to the **Nautilus** conference said: *“We're not asking for special treatment, just to be treated equally. That's not too much to ask!”*

Communications

Communicating with union members is essential – but can be particularly difficult in the maritime industries, where members are on the move, often isolated and out of phone or internet contact. Although the nature of much maritime work can be a barrier to participation, it can also be an opportunity for the union to develop new methods of communication, bringing new benefits to members.

For example the **MUA** in Australia has a women's Facebook page. Overcoming the isolation of maritime women is a tangible benefit of union membership and can bring maritime women together, through online social networks, blogs or Facebook pages.

Unions that communicate regularly with their women members (and potential members) can focus on the work the union does for women, as

well as identify the issues that are important for different groups of women in the union. By using social media the union can also be 'ahead of the game' and pick up issues that women are dealing with in otherwise isolated situations, such as at sea – for example incidents of sexual harassment or lack of female sanitary facilities.

Many unions have promoted the role of women through their membership magazines and other publicity. This has helped to focus on women's issues, even where women make up a small proportion of the membership.

“The women's department use Twitter and Facebook as a common tool to connect and mobilise our members on current equality campaigns. [The] Facebook page promotes education programmes, conferences and campaigns and is also an important venue for women members to engage and discuss current events.” **CAW**, Canada

Nautilus International women members also network informally using email, Facebook and Twitter to keep in touch and exchange views and news.

The union itself sometimes provides financial support to assist members to play a part. In India, for example, the **Transport and Dock Workers' Union**, Kandla provides financial assistance for women-related activities, and holds regular awareness programmes, seminars and training, and celebrates International Women's Day to involve more women. **Syntrapal**, Togo also sometimes supports women's activities financially, including support for female delegates attending **ITF** meetings abroad.

Education and training

Education and training programmes, often designed specifically for women, help develop women members and build union organisation. Education and training can also enable women members to take up union posts or play an active role within the union.

Some education and training programmes are part of a wider affirmative or positive action strategy to build female union membership. For example in Canada, the **CAW** national women's department offers many campaigns, education programmes and conferences specifically for women as part of its ongoing affirmative action policy. Specific education programmes include: women activists;

women in leadership; women's advocacy; and women in collective bargaining.

In Italy, **FIT-CISL** has focussed on the needs and rights of women generally. It promotes meetings, seminars, conferences and information sessions with specific topics about protection against discrimination and gender equality. It also holds training courses on parental leave laws, family-friendly policies and best practices.

Satawu in South Africa organises programmes on gender education and non-discrimination, and participation of women in union structures. The **Kenya Dock Workers' Union** also organises gender-based activities, HIV and AIDS awareness at the workplace, and health, safety and environment awareness programmes, as well as seminars and training for women in negotiations and special training from the gender desk on harassment. The **Japan Seafarers' Union** actively calls on women members to take part in annual communications schools and training sessions for new shop stewards and union employees.

The **Transport and Dock Workers' Union**, Kandla reports that its educational activities and seminars on basic rights, sexual harassment, and elimination of violence, HIV/AIDS and its International Women's Day campaign have been a success.

"These programmes have helped women to develop their leadership skills and they have started to take a more active part in union activities. They have achieved a lot of awareness among women members and been able to tackle difficult situations at their workplaces."

The **SMOU** in Singapore organises workshop and seminars to help women know their rights and responsibilities in the workplace and society. The events offer important networking opportunities for women leaders.

When it comes to encouraging women members to participate, **Nautilus International** found that organising a training event just for women members led to a marked increase in women's profile in the union. For example, in 2010 the union ran a course at Ruskin College in Oxford, England – *Women at Sea* – specifically for women members. That led to a successful motion to the 2010 UK branch conference calling for the establishment of a women's forum to advise the union's national council on gender issues.

International efforts to reach women through union-organised events

The most significant day for women worldwide is International Women's Day (IWD) on 8 March. The United Nations marks International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women/White Ribbon Day on 25 November. Besides unions calling for "Decent work, decent life and respect for women", these days can play an important role in bringing women together and engaging male leaders from government and trade unions in women's issues.

The occasion of IWD is used by many unions to organise special events for women or to publish a new report on women workers – for many unions it is a key time to reach out to a wider audience. Because International Women's Day is internationally recognised, special reports released on women workers are more likely to be picked up in the media.

Many, if not most, unions mark IWD with rallies, seminars, parties or other events.

"[International Women's Day] is an asset, sponsored and organised by the general management of the port, for all women in the autonomous port of Lomé generally. This has resulted from various negotiations by the Syntrapal women's committee with the port authority." **Syntrapal, Togo**

In 2011, more than 500 women took part in the IWD event in the port of Mumbai, India, organised by the **Transport and Dock Workers' Union**, Mumbai. The event included an address by its vice-president Kalpana Desai on women's rights and sexual harassment at the workplace, as well as a cultural programme with dance and song performances.

"On IWD we have almost 90 per cent of women workers take part in a meeting during working hours. We have a talk – last time with a speaker on women's empowerment – and cover basic rights and health problems of working women, as well as a games session and lunch." **Transport and Dock Workers' Union, Kandla, India.**

The **Transport and Dock Workers' Union**, Mumbai says that since its involvement in events such as 8 March and 25 November, *"we are establishing effective links with other ITF-affiliated unions, and women are coming forward with their workplace issues"*.



"[In 2011] we had the largest number ever on our IWD celebrations. This time we had over 100 – it is the one time that you can tell how women are participating in the union."

Kenya Dock Workers' Union

Many unions mark the annual United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women through reports, activities, and education events or by rallies and marches. In Chile, **Comach** holds seminars on the day.

In Australia the **MUA**, a male-dominated union, reports that all members of the union participate in White Ribbon Day. In 2011, **MUA**-organised ships flew "Not silent – not violent" flags. Members wore T-shirts, ribbons and wristbands, and participants at the **MUA** seafarers' conference in Sydney swore the oath: *"I swear never to commit, excuse or remain silent about violence against women."*

Other days that unions traditionally mark, and which can lend themselves to promoting issues for working women, are May Day/Workers' Day on 1 May, International Migrants Day on 18 December, World AIDS Day on 1 December, and European Maritime Day on 20 May.

World AIDS Day on 1 December is a focus for many unions. In Togo, Syntupal, for example, takes part in events sponsored by the port of Lomé. As well as marking 1 December, the **Dock Workers' Union, Kenya** takes part in Breast Cancer Awareness Day (the fourth Monday in October, also known as Pink Ribbon Day) and Tuberculosis Awareness Day (24 March), as well as May Day and other international celebrations.

Many countries also mark specific national events concerning women. For example, in Canada, the **CAW** commemorates every 6 December with a minute's silence to remember 14 women gunned down on a Montréal campus in 1989.

National trade union centres organise women-related events in which maritime unions take part, such as Equal Pay Day in Belgium, on 25 March 2011, in which the **BTB** took part to show solidarity with women workers who do not yet earn the same rate as men.

Developing local union activity

Helen McAra, general secretary of the **Merchant Service Guild Industrial Union of Workers**, underlines the importance for the union of profiling maritime women's issues. She says: *"It is unfortunately the under-resourced nature of unions that causes them to approach women's issues more reactively than other issues of general application. In a 'male' industry, working on a 'women's issue' can be seen as diverting valuable resources. It is therefore crucial that union policy gives authority and support for this work."*

Attracting women through local union activity often includes recognition of the dual role of many women – as workers and as carers. By recognising the importance of both work and domestic responsibilities, unions are more likely to increase the participation of women within the union.

An opportunity for women to take leadership roles at a local level develops new skills and confidence among women members. So it is important to involve women from all levels of the union in campaigns – this gives women at local level their first opportunity to feel part of the union. Local leaders gain the experience necessary to take on more senior positions in the union and community. Local campaigns around workplace or community issues often attract support from those not usually active in union events.

In Canada, **CAW** has high profile campaigns focussing on ending violence against women and sexual harassment at work.

Veronica Mesatywa, national secretary (maritime) of **Satawu**, South Africa and chair, **ITF Dockers Africa** outlines how her union approaches campaign issues. Veronica says: *"There's the difficulty of women segregating themselves as workers as well as mothers and in the home."*

We need to groom them and assign them to campaign roles. Satawu has a gender desk with a committee of six plus a coordinator. The committee develops programmes for women at the workplace. Women's issues are taken up by our leadership as mainstream issues. Our deputy president, who is male, pushes women's issues. We have strong women and training to strengthen them. We provide childcare facilities for women to attend meetings."

The **Kenya Dock Workers' Union** campaigns on a range of issues, including gender sensitisation, child abuse and women's rights protection. Their campaign on women's rights has extended the scope of maritime union campaigning and involves women in issues they feel strongly about – violence against women and health. The union's case work has helped to open up job opportunities to women that were once male-dominated. Violence against women in the workplace has dramatically decreased.

Unions in the community

The success of social, health and community projects by maritime/transport unions illustrates the potential for the future. These campaigns have succeeded where unions have shifted from "fire-fighting" problems, using their existing membership, to strategically-focused campaigns using paid organisers who have worked to mobilise transport workers.

An important campaign benefiting Kenyan dockworkers and seafarers covers HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment. A health service provided to both men and women, the **ITF** wellness centre in Mombasa sends out a powerful message to women working in the maritime industries that the union is taking action on issues that affect their lives, and the lives of their families.

Transport workers and members of the community benefit from the wellness centre. Key stakeholders – from government representatives and trade unions to employers' associations and transport companies – joined forces to set up the centre in Mombasa's port. Truckers, dockers and other workers regularly use the port, along with community members.

The Mombasa facility is based in an old shipping container for maximum sustainability and offers transport workers free health services. These

include counselling and HIV testing, treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and condom distribution. An information technology system also links all the centres together to ensure the highest standards. An **ITF** affiliate, the **Kenya Long Distance Truck Drivers' Union**, which is among the key stakeholders, played a pivotal role in planning the centre. Its members were also trained as peer educators who will work there. The Kenyan health ministry has provided two full time staff and funded the provision of drugs. Ten more centres will be established in southern Africa over the next two years. This partnership approach helps union members in their fight against HIV/AIDS, and the centres also give unions the opportunity to reach out to unorganised workers.

The importance of tracking membership trends

To properly understand maritime membership trends, all union membership records should be 'sex-disaggregated', which means recording male and female membership data in separate columns. The trends of membership can then be tracked and checked to see that women workers are fully organised by the union.

In some unions, there is a common view that there is no under-representation of women in the areas where the union has historically organised. However, this view may not take sufficient account of the 'new' jobs that tend to be done by women; or of backroom and service women workers, such as administration, IT and canteen staff. These jobs are not always union organised, especially if the workers have precarious contracts or are informal economy workers.

It is important for unions to check whether the proportion of women maritime members truly matches the proportion of women employed in maritime industries. The only way to do this is to carefully research, on an employer-by-employer basis, how many women are employed and how many women are members of the union.

At the **New Zealand Merchant Service Guild Industrial Union of Workers**, a database is used to provide information on the gender breakdown of members. The union also carries out analyses of database statistics on women membership by industry group, qualification, and age, to create targeted email groups on specific issues. This has helped the union to take a more direct and

personal approach, and enhanced its efforts to encourage female participation in what is an almost totally male union.

The ITF gender audit in 2010 *Mapping Women Members in Transport Unions* demonstrates how valuable it is to establish reliable sex-disaggregated membership trends in unions. All ITF affiliates were asked to provide their sex-disaggregated male and female membership data.

The audit was an important exercise, not least because it showed that women's membership of transport unions was increasing while male membership was either static or had declined. This reflects important industrial changes in the transport industry. Study of disaggregated membership statistics can influence the purpose and style of union organising campaigns.

Mapping Women Members in Transport Unions showed beyond doubt that the future strength of transport unions lies in organising women transport workers, including those working in new transport-related jobs. Women's issues – and women members – have an increasing importance to unions.

A membership survey that is sex-disaggregated will help unions to:

- map out patterns of female employment;
- identify where women actually work and the jobs that they do;
- assess women's proportion in the workplace;
- identify the issues; and
- help set targets for recruitment drives.

For the gender audit,

The union membership survey showed that between 2004 and 2010, female transport union membership grew by over 20 per cent. This overall

growth in women members in all the occupational sections, apart from recession-tourism services, was significantly larger than the much more modest growth in total (male + female) membership in the same period.

The fisheries section, though starting from a very small base, gained two-and-a-half times as many women members (149 per cent) in the six year period between 2004 -2010. The dockers' section showed a marginal loss in total membership (– 0.03 per cent), but very strong growth in its female membership produced a 52 per cent increase in women members over the period, suggesting that the loss of male members was offset by new women members. While there was an overall increase in members in seafarers, the 7.5 per cent increase in women seafarer members accounted strongly for this overall increase.

Interpreting membership data to make decisions

In order for unions to know how to develop activity and target it to achieve the goals set, it is usually necessary to look at the jobs where women work in maritime industries, including service work, in order to check whether women are under-represented in union membership. The fictional example below shows how the number of potential new members can be calculated:

Number of women workers employed by Cruise Ships International?	= 300
Number of women members in the Cruise Ships International Union?	= 30
Potential women union members	= 270

The table below is an example of how important information can be extracted from union membership data.

Cruise Ships International Company Departments/union breakdown

	Stewarding/ entertainment	Catering	Deck/ engine	Administration
Men employed	200	100	100	12
Men in union	150	100	70	0
Potential new members	50	0	30	12
Women employed	175	15	10	100
Women in union	15	0	10	5
Potential new members	160	15	0	95

In the example above *stewarding/entertainment* and *administration* have high levels of women employed, but few members. At this stage, a union could decide to target two sections for developing activity:

- *Administration*, where staff are probably easiest to speak to as they are more likely to be a static, relatively cohesive workforce and based in one workplace. This should make an organising campaign easier to manage.
- *Stewarding/entertainment*, where the workers are likely to be mobile (e.g. on board a ship), have irregular work patterns and be more dispersed. This presents some challenges to a union organising campaign. But on the other hand, workers on board a cruise ship will be staying in one place for the duration of the cruise, pointing to the importance of union activists in workplaces who can organise their colleagues, especially on board ships and boats.

Developing a campaign tool

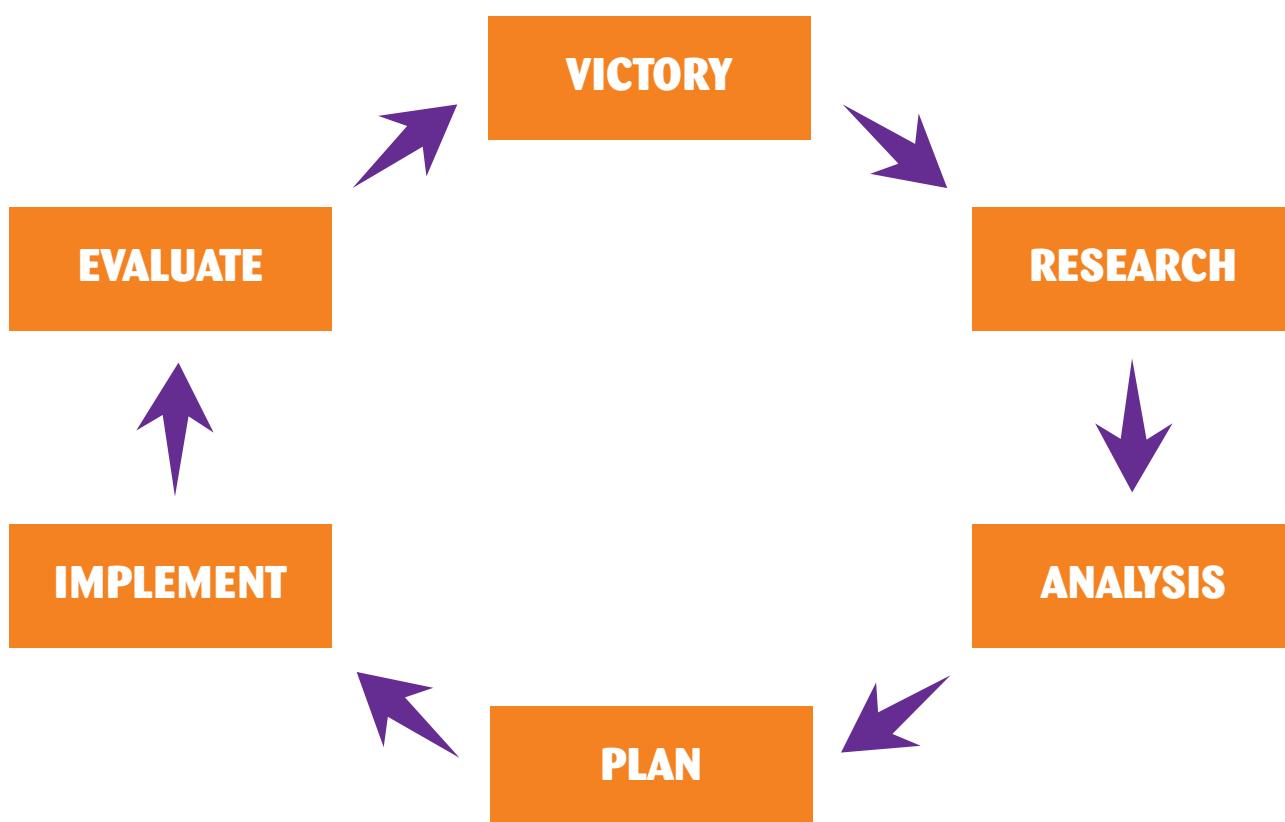
Below is a framework that is used and taught in many countries for developing any campaign that unions want to run. It provides a structured approach to activity. Central to this activity is

GROWTH, and while the VICTORY is specific to the issue raised by the workers, the union must also ensure that the goal of increasing representation of women is met too.

Growth in union membership

Each stage is an important part of the process and should not be missed. There are various methods at each stage to ensure that women are fully involved in the campaign and objectives can therefore be met.

Collective bargaining gains are often the direct result of this type of approach. The **International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU)** in the USA ran a campaign to help nearly 600 warehouse workers in California. It was sparked, in part, by a conflict arising because management wanted employees to remain at work after their official end time and continue working mandatory overtime. As a result, parents were unable to pick up their children after school or from childcare providers. The issue was a key point of conflict that motivated workers to form a union and affiliate to the **ILWU**. The workers then negotiated with their employer to address the problem in their new contract.





Strategies for increasing women's participation in unions. Checklist for unions:

- ☐ Does your union work with educational and industry bodies to promote the maritime industry as a career for women?
- ☐ Does your union know how many potential women members there are in all workplaces?
- ☐ Does your union know which jobs, departments, and hours of work women are deployed in?
- ☐ Does your union record and track this data?
- ☐ Has your union targeted recruitment or campaigns in these areas?
- ☐ Is your union asking potential women members to join and get active?
- ☐ Does your union provide targeted information on issues affecting women members?
- ☐ Have you considered special incentives for women recruits, such as free or reduced first subscriptions?
- ☐ Does your union provide childcare facilities for members attending meetings and courses?
- ☐ Does your union run specific women's campaigns?
- ☐ Does your union run activities to mark International Women's Day and the UN Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women?

Winning a better deal for women

Summary checklist for unions



Pursuing women's issues through collective bargaining

Collective bargaining

- ☐ Are women's issues identified prior to bargaining and included on the bargaining agenda?
- ☐ Are women involved as members on negotiating and bargaining teams?
- ☐ Do women get pay and conditions equal to their male counterparts?
- ☐ Are there specific provisions for women maritime workers in your collective agreement, for example:
 - separate washrooms with sanitary facilities
 - sleeping and other rest areas
 - suitable safety and protective clothing

National & legislative considerations

- ☐ Does your state provide security of employment for all women maritime workers?
- ☐ Does your state have laws asserting the right of equity in pay and conditions between men and women?
- ☐ Do you have state-set minimum pay rates?
- ☐ Do you have state-set maternity and other parental paid leave provisions?
- ☐ Do you have national laws against sexual harassment and violence against women?
- ☐ Are there national occupational health and safety laws?
- ☐ Does your state have anti-discrimination laws for women?

Representing women in union structures and leadership

- ☐ Does your union have a women's officer or someone responsible for women's work?
- ☐ Does your union have an active union women's network?
- ☐ Does your union have an elected women's committee?
- ☐ Does your union have women in elected or paid official positions?
- ☐ Are women represented in the union's decision-making bodies?
- ☐ Do you have a quota or affirmative/positive action policy in your union?
- ☐ Do women participate in your formal and informal union development and education programmes?
- ☐ Is your union in contact with the ITF Women's Department or regional representatives?
- ☐ Does your union participate in ITF women's activities?

Strategies for increasing women's participation in unions

- ☐ Does your union work with educational and industry bodies to promote the maritime industry as a career for women?
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Appendices

Appendix I

ITF maritime women's best practice questionnaire

The questionnaire asked nine questions:

1. What does your union do to support women seafarers/dockworkers/fishers?
2. What challenges does your union face in recruiting women workers?
3. Does your union have specific policies that encompass women members' needs?
If yes, please give details.
4. Does your union have women in elected positions or who work as union officials?
If yes, please give details.
5. Please give examples of specific union campaigns or actions that have benefited women members/workers in your industry.
6. Please provide any examples of specific activities your union has undertaken to promote or represent women members/workers in your industry.
7. Does your union have specific organisational structures that enable women to exchange views e.g. women's committee or network? If yes, please give details.
8. If your union has no active women members, what policies or activities does your union use to promote or engage them?
9. Any other comments?

Appendix II

Model bargaining clauses

The following are examples of model equality clauses and templates used by some ITF member unions in bargaining that could be adapted for use in other countries and unions.

Parental leave

1. Full-time and casual employees shall, after 12 months' continuous service, be entitled to the following paid parental leave as part of their entitlement to a total of 52 weeks parental leave in relation to the birth of a child:
 - a) 28 calendar weeks' maternity leave where a female employee, is the mother of a newly-born child and has 12 months' continuous service
 - b) Four calendar weeks' paternity leave where a male employee is the father of a newly-born child; or
 - c) Four calendar weeks' parental leave where an employee is the non-birth parent of a same-sex couple with a newly-born child.
2. The balance of any period of parental leave will be unpaid. An employee may, however, apply to take available annual leave, long service leave or accrued days' entitlements in conjunction with their paid parental leave entitlement as part of any parental leave absence.
3. Where an employee is the primary care giver for a newborn child and there are circumstances which prevent the employee from returning to work after a period of 52 weeks from the commencement of any period of parental or related leave, the employee may apply to their manager for up to an additional 52 weeks of unpaid parental leave.
4. Adoption leave, special maternity leave and provisions for employees returning to work after parental leave shall be in accordance with the above arrangements.
5. All employees will be entitled to continuing superannuation payments for the whole duration of parental leave provision as described above.

Domestic violence support

General principle

The employer recognises that employees sometimes face situations of violence or abuse in their personal life that may affect their attendance or performance at work. Therefore, the employer is committed to providing support to staff that experience domestic violence.

Definition of domestic violence

Domestic violence includes physical, sexual, financial, verbal or emotional abuse by an immediate family member as defined in this agreement.

General measures

- (a) Proof of domestic violence may be required and can be in the form an agreed document issued by the police service, a court, a doctor, a domestic violence support service or lawyer.
- (b) All personal information concerning domestic violence will be kept confidential in line with company policy and relevant legislation. No information will be kept on an employee's personnel file without their express written permission.
- (c) No adverse action will be taken against an employee if their attendance or performance at work suffers as a result of experiencing domestic violence.
- (d) The employer will identify a contact in human resources [personnel department] who will be trained in domestic violence and privacy issues. The employer will advertise the name of the contact within the company.

- (f) An employee experiencing domestic violence may raise the issue with their immediate supervisor or the human resources contact. The supervisor may seek advice from human resources if the employee chooses not to see the human resources contact.
- (g) Where requested by an employee, the human resources contact will liaise with the employee's supervisor on the employee's behalf, and will make a recommendation on the most appropriate form of support to provide.
- (h) The employer will develop guidelines to supplement this clause and which details the appropriate action to be taken in the event that an employee reports domestic violence.

Leave

An employee experiencing domestic violence will have access to 20 days per year of paid special leave for medical appointments, legal proceedings and other activities related to domestic violence. This leave will be in addition to existing leave entitlements and may be taken as consecutive or single days or as a fraction of a day and can be taken without prior approval.

An employee who supports a person experiencing domestic violence may take carer's leave to accompany them to court, to hospital or to mind children.

Individual support

In order to provide support to an employee experiencing domestic violence and to provide a safe work environment to all employees, the employer will approve any reasonable request from an employee experiencing domestic violence for:

- Changes to their span of hours or pattern or hours and/or shift patterns;
- Job redesign or changes to duties;
- Relocation to suitable employment within the company;
- A change to their telephone number or email address to avoid harassing contact;
- Any other appropriate measure including those available under existing provisions for family-friendly and flexible work arrangements.

An employee experiencing domestic violence will be referred to the employee assistance program (EAP) and/or other local resources. The EAP shall include professionals trained specifically in domestic violence.

Appendix III

Model mutual respect policy

What we ask of our union members

- To treat everybody, including other members as well as officials and staff members, with respect and dignity.
- To make absolutely sure your own behaviour does not cause offence or misunderstandings.
- To think before you make personal remarks.
- To accept responsibility for challenging all forms of unacceptable and offensive behaviour, and for upholding personal dignity. This may involve such forms of unwanted behaviour as:
 - unwanted physical contact
 - physical or sexual assault
 - sexual or compromising propositions
 - racist, sexist or religious jokes
 - offensive language, insults and obscene gestures
 - unwelcome gifts
 - intrusion by pestering or stalking.

These lists are not definitive.

We are aware that among trade unionists there is a very high degree of appreciation of the need to respect the dignity of every individual. We welcome your cooperation in our practical efforts for making our union as a workplace and all union meetings a positive experience for everyone.

List of contributing unions

Responses were received from:

Australia	Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) – www.mua.org.au
Barbados	Barbados Workers' Union (BWU) – www.bwu-bb.org
Belgium	Belgische Transportarbeidersbond/Union Belge des Ouvriers du Transport (BTB) – www.btb-abvv.be
Burma	Seafarers' Union of Burma (SUB) – www.burma-seafarers-union.blogspot.com
Canada	CAW (National Automobile, Aerospace, Transportation, and General Workers Union of Canada) – www.caw.ca
	International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) – www.ilwu.org
	Seafarers' International Union (SIU) – www.seafarers.org
Chile	Confederación Marítima de Chile (Comach) – confederacionmaritimadechilecomach.blogspot.com
Croatia	Seafarers' Union of Croatia (SPH) – www.sph.hr
Estonia	Estonian Seafarers' Independent Union (EMSA) – www.emsa.ee
France	Force Ouvrière du Languedoc-Roussillon (FO Languedoc-Roussillon) – fo-regionlr.pagesperso-orange.fr
Germany	Vereinte Dienstleistungsgewerkschaft (ver.di) – www.verdi.de
India	Cochin Port Staff Association
	Transport and Dock Workers' Union, Kandla
	Transport and Dock Workers' Union, Mumbai
Italy	Federazione Italiana Trasporti – Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori (FIT-CISL) – www.fitcisl.org
Japan	Japan Seafarers' Union (JSU) – www.jsu.or.jp
Jordan	General Union of Port Workers (GUPW)
Kenya	Kenya Dock Workers' Union (DWU) – www.kenyadockworkersunion.com
Norway	Norwegian Seafarers' Union (NSU) – www.nsu.org
Singapore	Singapore Maritime Officers' Union (SMOU) – www.smou.org.sg
South Africa	South African Transport and Allied Workers' Union (Satawu) – www.satawu.org.za
Sweden	Swedish Ship Officers' Association – www.sjobefalsforeningen.se
Tanzania	Tanzania Seafarers' Union
Togo	Syndicat National des Transitaires Mandataires du Togo (Synatram)
	Syndicat des Travailleurs du Port Autonome de Lomé (Syntrapal)
UK/Netherlands	
/Switzerland	Nautilus International – nautilusint.org
USA	Seafarers' International Union (SIU) – www.seafarers.org

ITF women transport workers committee

Maritime representatives

These sisters represent and promote policies in the interests of Maritime women workers on the ITF Women's Committee. If you are interested in their work on behalf of Maritime women workers please contact: women@itf.org.uk



Denitsa Sokolova: Inland Navigation Federation of Transport Trade Unions in Bulgaria (FTTUB)
Bulgaria



Jacqueline Smith: Seafarers Section
Norsk Sjømannsforbund (NSU)
Norway



Monique Verbeeck: Dockers Section
Belgische Transportarbeidersbond (BTB)
Belgium



Tracey Mayhew: Fisheries
Seafarers' International Union of North America (SIU)
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