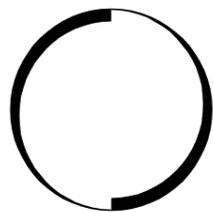


# WOMEN transporting the world

An ITF resource book  
for trade union negotiators  
in the transport sector



# How to use this resource book

**“Women in different countries face different challenges. For some health and safety issues come first. Others will be fighting for maternity rights or freedom from sexual harassment. Whichever it may be, a victory in one country is a building block for change in every other country.”**

*Sarah Finke, ITF Women’s Officer*

## This book is for:

- **Collective bargaining teams in ITF affiliates**
- **Women worker activists in the transport sectors**
- **Union educators and education committees in ITF affiliates.**

It can be used for various purposes. Each union might have different priorities. You can be flexible. Pick and choose from those sections which best meet your needs.

The book provides practical information for transport trade unions. Its main focus is on women workers’ issues for collective bargaining. Each section includes guidelines for negotiators and activists, and questions for discussion. We draw on the experiences of women workers in different countries. These international examples can be used to raise awareness and stimulate new and critical thinking amongst members in your own union.

Collective bargaining teams can use the book to prepare for negotiations with management. Each section provides information on different issues relevant to collective bargaining. There is information on women workers’ experiences, international conventions and national laws. Each section also provides examples of good union practice, including model clauses in bargaining agreements. Answering the questions at the end of each section will assist you to formulate a negotiation strategy.

Many collective bargaining teams do not include women! Women workers might want to use the book to influence the negotiating agenda of their union more effectively. You can come together in your workplace, or meet with other women in your union. Choose those sections which match your priorities. You can read through the section together. Discuss the questions at the end of the section to help you formulate your proposals.

The book can also be used to raise awareness amongst union members and as material in education programmes. You can work through all the sections or you can choose one or two which are of particular importance to your union. At the end of each section, there are questions which can be answered in small groups or in plenary.

You might not have the time or resources to run education programmes. Identify information in this resource book which is useful to fellow union members. Publish it in your union newsletter or circular. Put sections of the resource book on your union website, or create a link to the ITF website at [www.itf.org.uk](http://www.itf.org.uk).

This resource book is an important part of the ITF’s Mobilising Solidarity strategy adopted at the 1998 Congress in New Delhi, India. It is one of a set of three. The other two books are: “*Globalising Solidarity*” and “*Workers’ Rights are Human Rights*”.



## Contents

	How to use this resource book	2
	Introduction	4
<b>1</b>	Equal opportunities – overcoming discrimination	5
<b>2</b>	Negotiating family-related rights – maternity, paternity and parental leave	17
<b>3</b>	Acting against sexual harassment	25
<b>4</b>	Preventing violence at work	37
<b>5</b>	Working hours – protecting women workers’ rights	45
<b>6</b>	Improving health and safety	53
<b>7</b>	Strong unions need women!	61
	Contacts for further information	73

# Introduction

**W**hen the ITF first started taking notice of its women members, in the mid-1990s, the focus was very much on industrially linked problems. What problems do women in the maritime sector have? How can we identify common issues for women railway workers? What are the specific gender issues for women in aviation?

We are still doing this kind of work. It is, of course, vital. In fact, many of our education activities start off just like this. But women in many transport unions are asking other questions too. They are asking: why do we still have this problem? How come this has not been fixed? As a colleague said to me recently: "It's sad when you come to the same meeting five years later and different women are still bringing up the same old problems."

When there are so few women high-ranking officials in transport unions and so few women on negotiating teams, this should come as no surprise. Improvements won't happen without close attention to issues that affect women. We also need the political will to prioritise them. Of course, to get this we need to involve more women in decision-making and in front-line talks with employers. This book contains a section dealing with women's representation in trade unions.

But we must also get male colleagues to commit to gender issues. In times of rapid change for the industry, prioritising such issues can be difficult — how easy is it to argue for benefits such as childcare, for example, when both men and women are losing

their jobs? But it is also necessary, because the transport workforce is still expanding most in areas where women work. Where solidarity and understanding exist between men and women, gender-based improvements can be achieved in the hardest of times.

Better pay for women means better income for all the family. Safer working conditions where women work means other workers can argue for the same (if a job is too dangerous for a woman, then it's too dangerous for a man too). A workplace without harassment and bullying is a happier workplace for all. Childcare for both men and women means more time with the family for all workers. Women in union leadership and organising jobs means more women members, and stronger unions for all.

For these reasons, this resource book has been designed for negotiators, both women and men. It is a tool that can be used to achieve better conditions for women transport workers. Such improvements can bring advantages for everyone.

The intention of the ITF Women's Committee in commissioning this book was to encourage negotiators and activists to bring these issues to the forefront of transport union agendas. But the book will not do the job on its own. It needs you to take its contents and use them in your own work programmes.

**Sarah Finke**  
ITF Women's Officer



# Equal Opportunities – Overcoming Discrimination



**“In passenger sales and check-in, young and pretty women are preferred.”**  
**“Men are more likely to be in the technical departments.”**

**T**his probably sounds familiar to you. It is just one example of gender bias in employment practices.

The gender division of labour between men and women is not specific to one country. It is so entrenched worldwide that many people consider it normal. In the transport industry, there is a high level of occupational segregation. Men have access to a larger number of jobs than women. Although more women are now working in the transport industry, they still only make up approximately ten per cent of the total workforce.

Women are concentrated in those occupations stereotyped as “women’s work”. In some instances, women are banned from “non-traditional” jobs. The Hungarian railway regulations, for example, prohibit women from driving trains. Thai Airways International does not allow women to work as pilots.

“Women’s work” is considered low status. It is mostly men who occupy supervisory and managerial positions. This was clearly shown in a survey of conditions for transport workers in the United States. Almost twice the number of women respondents occupied non-managerial posts compared to men. There was a correspondingly huge gap in earnings.

Getting the job is only the first obstacle which women workers have to overcome. Whether it be in recruitment, promotion, training, or conditions of work, women workers receive unfair treatment.

**“Men are hired full-time while women must serve a three year trial period as part-time workers, doing the same job but with lower pay and reduced benefits.”**

*Cabin crew member, Japan*

**“I thought seriously about getting involved in the union when I found out that married women were discriminated against by the employers – housing allowances, and medical cover and travel allowances for spouses, were not given to married women.”**

*Railway worker, Kenya*

**“It was hard. I would ring up all the job adverts and tell them I was inquiring about a vacancy. The person would ask if it was for my husband. When I answered that it was for me, they would say the job was taken.”**

*Truck driver, Britain*

## Sex discrimination in the transport industry

The ITF Women’s Department carried out a survey of its affiliated unions in 1999. Women reported many different forms of discrimination in all ITF sections.

- **Recruitment**  
22% reported tests relating to women’s appearance, which mostly did not apply to men.
- **Pay and promotion**  
30% said that women were discriminated against when applying for promotion.  
25% stated that there were gender inequalities in pay.
- **Maternity**  
16% were not entitled to maternity leave with cash benefits.  
30% stated that pregnant employees did not have the right to guaranteed job transfers without loss of earnings.  
14% had restrictions imposed upon them after returning from maternity leave.
- **Marriage**  
54% were obliged to disclose their marital status when applying for a job.
- **Company advertising**  
50% said that in advertising, transport companies promote women as friendly providers of services, rather than as professionals.

### Sex discrimination on the railways

Railway workplaces are dominated by men. Women railway workers make up only a small fraction of all railway workers. There is also occupational sex segregation on the railways. Women are clustered in the lowest pay grades, and are scarce in management. Their jobs tend to be clerical or non-skilled manual posts.

Sex segregation on the railways is beginning to change. In some European countries, there are women employed in skilled manual work. In Britain and France, a small percentage of women are train drivers. In 1999, a woman was employed as a train driver for the first time in South Africa. In other countries, however, there are still many stumbling blocks to women gaining entry into skilled railway jobs. In Zambia, for example, maths and/or physics are needed to train as a driver. These subjects are not open to many girls at school in that country.

Jane Brekkhus Sæthre, National Secretary of the Norwegian Railway Workers’ Union, says: “We have only two women in top jobs on the Norwegian railways. Why this is the case is a question that is asked again and again. It is claimed that women do not put themselves forward because we demand so much of ourselves. There may be some truth in this but it is far from a full explanation. It is generally men who appoint managers and who choose men like themselves. Another factor is that managers are often required to work excessive hours, which is often more difficult for women who choose to give priority to their families and homes.”

The ITF finds such discrimination in all transport industries, not just the railways.

## Equality for all – a trade union issue

It is important that trade unions recognise women's right to equality as a fundamental human right. Protecting this right in the workplace, is an integral part of the wider struggle for equality between men and women at all levels of society.

There are many examples where trade union equality policies and agreements have contributed positively to women's employment in transport. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Historically, male workers have often opposed the entry of women into the transport workforce. For example, when women dockers were first employed:

**“Instead of protecting the women dockers and securing higher – equal – pay for them, a number of unions internationally tried to keep women out altogether, with the excuse that women were not fitted for such unladylike and immoral work.”**

*“Together”, Transport and General Workers' Union, Britain*

More recently:

**“Strong union organisation around driving jobs in the European Union, particularly in the public sector, has tended not only to preserve**

**these jobs for male employees but also to construct the jobs on the basis of male working conditions.”**

*Journal “Social Europe”*

The ITF survey revealed further problems. Over a quarter of respondents reported that their companies did not have an equal opportunities policy. 33 per cent of the respondents did not even know whether such a policy existed. 55 per cent did not know if it was effective. These figures suggest that trade unions have not actively addressed equality issues.

At the 1998 ITF Congress, a resolution on women transport workers was adopted. It noted that:

**“Policies designed to promote equal opportunities between the sexes are not issues to be dealt with by and between women only. On the contrary, women do not need to learn that they are equal to men nor that they ought to have the same opportunities. They are victims of discrimination, not its promoters.”**

This poses a challenge for all transport unions to develop or strengthen policy on equality between men and women in the workplace.

### What do we mean by equal opportunities?

Discrimination against women is not arbitrary or incidental. It is part and parcel of the institutions of society. It is not sufficient therefore to deal only with individual acts of discrimination. We also need to deal with the wider processes and structures which entrench discrimination against women. Removing these institutionalised barriers is what is referred to as creating equality of opportunity between men and women workers.

In the workplace, equality of opportunity applies to all employment conditions affecting men and women workers. It means ensuring that:

- Men and women workers have an equal chance to apply for all jobs.
- Men and women workers have the same right to employment, training and professional advancement.
- Working methods and conditions suit both men and women.
- Employment and parental responsibilities can be combined.
- Men and women workers have the opportunity to qualify for jobs of equal value.

The ITF supports Positive Action Programmes as a means of removing obstacles in employment and effectively promoting equal opportunities.

## International instruments

The United Nations (UN) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) have adopted key international instruments against discrimination.

The **UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979)** binds countries to outlaw discrimination in all forms against women. Article 11 says:

**“States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights.”**

The Convention then spells out the rights which should apply equally to men and women such as:

- the right to work
- the right to the same employment opportunities
- the right to promotion, job security and all benefits and conditions of service
- the right to equal remuneration
- the right to social security
- the right to protection of health and safety in working conditions.

The Convention also outlaws discrimination against women on the grounds of marriage or maternity. It calls on governments to provide maternity leave with pay or with social benefits, to develop social services which allow women to combine family responsibilities with work, and to provide special protection to pregnant women in types of work which could be harmful.

Two of the main general equal opportunities instruments have been drawn up by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). They have been widely ratified by governments around the world.

The **Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, No. 111 (1958)** was adopted with the aim of combating discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, national and social origin. The Convention covers equal access to vocational training, employment and to particular occupations, and terms and conditions of employment. Countries which ratify the Convention are committed to apply a national policy which eliminates all forms of discrimination in employment and is under the direct control of a national authority.

The **Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value Convention, No. 100 (1951)** deals specifically with eliminating discrimination between the sexes in terms of pay. It promotes the principle of equal pay for work of equal value, and calls for objective methods for evaluating work.

Both these Conventions are part of the eight Core Conventions identified by the ILO. This means that they apply to all countries who are members of the ILO, regardless of whether they have been ratified. The international trade union movement uses ILO Core Conventions as a primary reference point to protect workers' rights.

**ILO Convention No. 156 (1981)**, dealing with equal opportunities for workers with family responsibilities, has been ratified by only 28 countries. It calls on governments to recognise the specific needs of workers with family responsibilities and to set up childcare and family services.

Different world regions have also adopted instruments relevant to sex discrimination, such as:

**African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, 1968**

**North American Agreement on Labor Co-operation, 1993 (Supplementary Agreement to the North American Free Trade Agreement, NAFTA).**

European Council Directives on:

- equal pay (1975)
- equal treatment in employment, vocational training, promotion and working conditions (1976)
- equal treatment in matters of social security (1978)
- equal treatment in occupational social security schemes (1986)
- equal treatment during pregnancy and motherhood (1986)
- burden of proof in cases of sex discrimination (1997).

More information on the ILO and its Conventions is given in the ITF Resource Book **“Workers' Rights are Human Rights”**.

## Equal treatment at work: women workers in the European Union

On 1 May 1999, the Treaty of Amsterdam came into force. It was negotiated by the member states of the European Union. One of the main objectives of the treaty is to define citizen and employment rights.

The Treaty commits the European Union to the promotion of equality between men and women. It contains important new equality provisions concerning employment. European regional initiatives can now be taken to support and complement national activities dealing with labour market opportunities and treatment at work. It is also now possible to adopt regional measures to ensure that the principles of equal opportunities and equal treatment in matters of employment (including equal pay for work of equal value) are being applied.

A significant change is that the treaty recognises that member states may take positive action to allow “the underrepresented sex to pursue a vocational activity or to prevent or compensate for disadvantages in professional careers”.

The most dramatic change in terms of equal treatment is the new Article 13. It establishes a new legal base which allows the European Council to take action to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. This provides the opportunity to tackle sex discrimination in the workplace and beyond throughout Europe.

## Career prospects improve for women dockers

In October 1999, history was made in the Belgian ports. Three women in Antwerp successfully completed their dock workers’ training.

The women had all worked as fruit sorters in the port for ten years. When the Antwerp port company began a recruitment drive for three hundred new dockers, the women applied. The Antwerp waterfront had been an all-male preserve. After the question of women on the waterfront was aired in negotiations at the container terminal, the ITF-affiliated CVD supported their traineeships.

The jobs are a step up in the women’s careers. They had no chance of promotion as sorters, and their pay and promotion prospects are now much brighter. But they know they must make a success of their new job. **“If we make a go of it, it will open the door for other women.”**

However, Antwerp employers will have to make an effort to accommodate their new employees. As in many male-dominated workplaces, there are no washing and toilet facilities for women in the port.

*“Finally Belgian ports are open to both men and women,”* said Miriam Chaffart from the Christian Transportworkers’ and Diamond Workers’ Organisation (CVD). *“More women will now come forward and join the dock labour force. This is just the beginning.”*

## National legislation

There are many countries around the world which have enacted legislation aimed at promoting equality between men and women workers. In some countries, there are laws which support employment equity and outlaw discrimination on the basis of race, sex, disability, age etc. Other countries have passed laws which deal solely with sex discrimination. For example, the Sex Discrimination Act in Britain makes it illegal for an employer to discriminate against a worker because of her sex or marital status.

These laws tend to address discrimination in recruitment, promotion, training, fringe benefits, retirement and dismissal. They may exist alongside legislation dealing with specific issues; for example, equal pay for work of equal value.

**“The basic principle of this law is that women workers be enabled to engage in a full working life, with due respect for their maternity but without discrimination based on sex.”**

*Law on Securing Equal Opportunity and Treatment between Men and Women in Employment, Japan 1999*

As part of the law, some countries have included a call for affirmative action or positive action programmes. In Australia, there is a separate Affirmative Action Act. Affirmative action programmes are aimed at both eradicating existing discrimination and dealing with the effects of past discrimination. For example, employers can offer positive action training to create career paths for women workers.

The International Labour Organisation has found that anti-discrimination laws have been more effective where special mechanisms have been created to enforce legislation. Some governments have set up an Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) or Commission

on Gender Equality. These are expert bodies, promoting equality between men and women and dealing with complaints where the law has been broken.

However, in many countries outdated stereotypes and attitudes regarding the types of work appropriate to men and women continue to exist. Women continue to earn considerably less than men. Even with the protection of the law, it is mainly women workers who continue to receive unfair treatment. Three-quarters of complaints received by the EOC in Britain are from women. Many are victimised for taking up the issue.

**“The Equal Opportunity Law has not been fully integrated into Japanese society. There is still sex discrimination in employment, and no sanctions can be taken against companies who do not comply. There is still a long struggle ahead for Japanese women in their aim to fully participate and fulfil themselves in all areas of their lives.”**

*Japanese trade unionist at ITF Women Transport Workers’ Conference*

**“Despite Brazil’s existing committed legislation on maternity, equal pay and opportunities, in practice, companies generally do not comply.”**

*Aviation worker, Brazil*

It is important for trade unionists to know whether or not national laws against sex discrimination exist in your country. Such legislation can be used by trade union negotiators to put pressure on management to adopt an equal opportunities policy.



## Negotiating equal opportunities policy

Trade unions do not need to wait for national legislation. Even with national laws, there is no guarantee that they are implemented effectively. Organising around equality issues must start in the workplace. In some instances, transport trade unions have included successfully the issue of equal opportunities in collective bargaining. This has taken different forms.

Some unions have negotiated a separate policy which deals specifically with equal opportunities. For example, the Flight Attendants' Association of Australia has negotiated a policy with the national airline Qantas. The policy commits the company to achieving equality of opportunity, outlines the responsibilities of management and employees, and specifies in detail procedures for lodging complaints.

**“Qantas is committed to building and fostering a culture in which diversity is valued. Qantas recognises that an organisation is more efficient and effective when it uses all the skills of its employees, and employees have an equal employment opportunity to advance and enhance their careers. Qantas is also committed to providing a workplace that is free of discrimination.”**

*Qantas Equal Opportunity Policy*

In other instances, unions have negotiated policy on specific issues related to equal opportunities. For example, the Trade Union of Railwaymen and Transport Construction Workers of Russia has an agreement covering equal access by women to training and promotion.

Another approach has been to develop model clauses or statements on anti-discrimination or equal opportunities and negotiate for their inclusion in collective bargaining agreements. For example, the New Zealand Merchant Service Guild has an equal opportunities statement covering access to training, promotion and job security in its collective bargaining agreements. Similarly, the Mongolian Transport, Communication and Petroleum Workers' Union has a clause covering access to training.

The Canadian Autoworkers' Union (CAW) has a clause covering discrimination:

**“The Company and the Union agree that there shall be no discrimination, interference, restraint, harassment or coercion exercised or practised by either of them or by any of their representatives, with respect to any employee by reason of age, marital status, sex, race, creed, colour, national origin, political or religious affiliations, disability, sexual orientation nor by reason of union membership or activity.”**

In addition to this general clause on discrimination, CAW has also tried to negotiate for an employment equity co-ordinator in transport companies. Cheryl Kryzaniwsky from CAW's Education Department explains: *“This is both to get women into non-traditional roles in the transportation sector and as importantly to assist them in combating harassment, discrimination and alienation once they are in. In other words, assisting them with how to survive once hired.”* This is the language which is used in bargaining:

**“The parties agree to establish a position of CAW National Employment Equity Co-ordinator to be appointed by the National Union President.**

**The Co-ordinator's role will be to promote a planned, informed and consistent approach to employment equity on behalf of the union through (name of the company; for example, Air Canada).**

**The Co-ordinator will work with the company to develop and implement a joint employment equity plan. The Co-ordinator will also conduct community outreach and other activities to promote employment equity on behalf of the union and company. The role of the Co-ordinator will also be to promote equity in the workplace. This will include work using the joint anti-harassment policy including conducting investigations on harassment complaints.”**

## Global agreements

National bargaining can be strengthened by agreements negotiated at an international level with multinational corporations. Several Global Union Federations (GUFs), formerly known as International Trade Secretariats (ITSs), which are global unions in particular industrial sectors like the ITF, have begun to develop an international relationship with these companies. In some instances, framework agreements have been negotiated which set minimum standards throughout the company's operations.

The International Union of Foodworkers (IUF) successfully secured a framework agreement with Danone, a French TNC in the food and beverage sector, which includes equality between men and women in the workplace. The agreement commits the company to research existing inequalities in the company. A plan of action on priorities would then be drawn up.

Diana Holland, Chair of the ITF Women's Committee, describes the value of these international agreements for women workers:

**“International trade union agreements are an important way of advancing core trade union aims: equal opportunities, training, health and safety, access to information and trade**

**union organisation. Global Union Federations like the ITF, together with union shop stewards and officers representing workers across the world, come together with employer representatives to agree basic principles and the commitment to put these principles into practice.**

**International agreements are a safety net of minimum standards. They can also encourage the development of good practice internationally. For trade unionists, it is vital that we learn from each other, and develop international agreements from which we can all gain strength and support.”**

More information on solidarity in the international trade union movement is given in the ITF Resource Books “Globalising Solidarity” and “Workers' Rights are Human Rights”.



## **Guidelines** for developing equal opportunities policy

The Transport and General Workers' Union in Britain advises that an equal opportunities policy should contain:

- Commitment by the employer to equal treatment for all staff and to removing barriers to equal opportunity.
- A definition of equality covering all forms of discrimination.
- Details of the personnel systems covered by the policy – recruitment, promotion, training, disciplinary and grievance procedures.
- Legal definitions of direct and indirect sex and marriage discrimination and the employer's legal responsibilities to foster a discrimination-free environment.
- Examples of discriminatory behaviour and practices like name-calling.
- Name of the manager responsible for the policy.
- The duty of employees to respect and act in accordance with the policy.
- How employees can pursue complaints of discrimination through the grievance procedure and the role of the union.
- Methods of monitoring the policy and review procedures, for example through a joint union/management equal opportunities committee.

## **Guidelines** for women activists and negotiators

- Ensure that your union has a policy on equal opportunities.
- Publicise the policy.
- Lobby your government for improved equal opportunities legislation.
- Include equal opportunities on the bargaining agenda.
- Use gender-inclusive language in collective agreements – it shows a commitment to equality.
- Ensure that part-time workers have equal rights and benefits.
- Ensure recruitment procedures are non-discriminatory; job application forms should include only those questions relevant to the job.
- Ensure that job descriptions are neutral, do not reinforce stereotypes and recognise transferable skills.
- Consider setting up an equal opportunities committee to monitor the implementation of policy.
- Compile an employment profile at your place of work, and identify where women are under-represented.
- Carry out gender pay audits.
- Develop clear guidelines on what employees should do if they experience direct or indirect sex discrimination.
- Keep a record of complaints.
- Encourage workplace and branch representatives to go on union-approved education and training courses which deal with equal opportunities.
- Look at ways of introducing positive action measures to improve women's access to work in traditional male areas.
- Find out the concerns of women workers in your workplace.
- Ensure that women workers' concerns are taken up adequately by the union as a whole.

## Key questions for discussion

- Has your country ratified the key United Nations declarations and ILO Conventions to combat discrimination? How can your union campaign to ensure that it has, and that they are implemented?
- Do national laws against sex discrimination exist in your country? If so, how has your union used these laws?
- If there are no national laws against sex discrimination, how can your union campaign and lobby for them?

**Activity:** Formulating an equal opportunities strategy for your union

In small groups, discuss from your own experiences:

1. What jobs do women workers occupy in your workplace, company and/or transport sector?
2. What jobs do men workers occupy in your workplace and/or transport sector?
3. What are the barriers facing women who want to move into jobs usually done by men?
4. What achievements are there to build on?

Based on your analysis of occupational segregation in your workplace, plan a strategy for your union to promote equal opportunities.

Report to plenary, followed by discussion.

Notes:

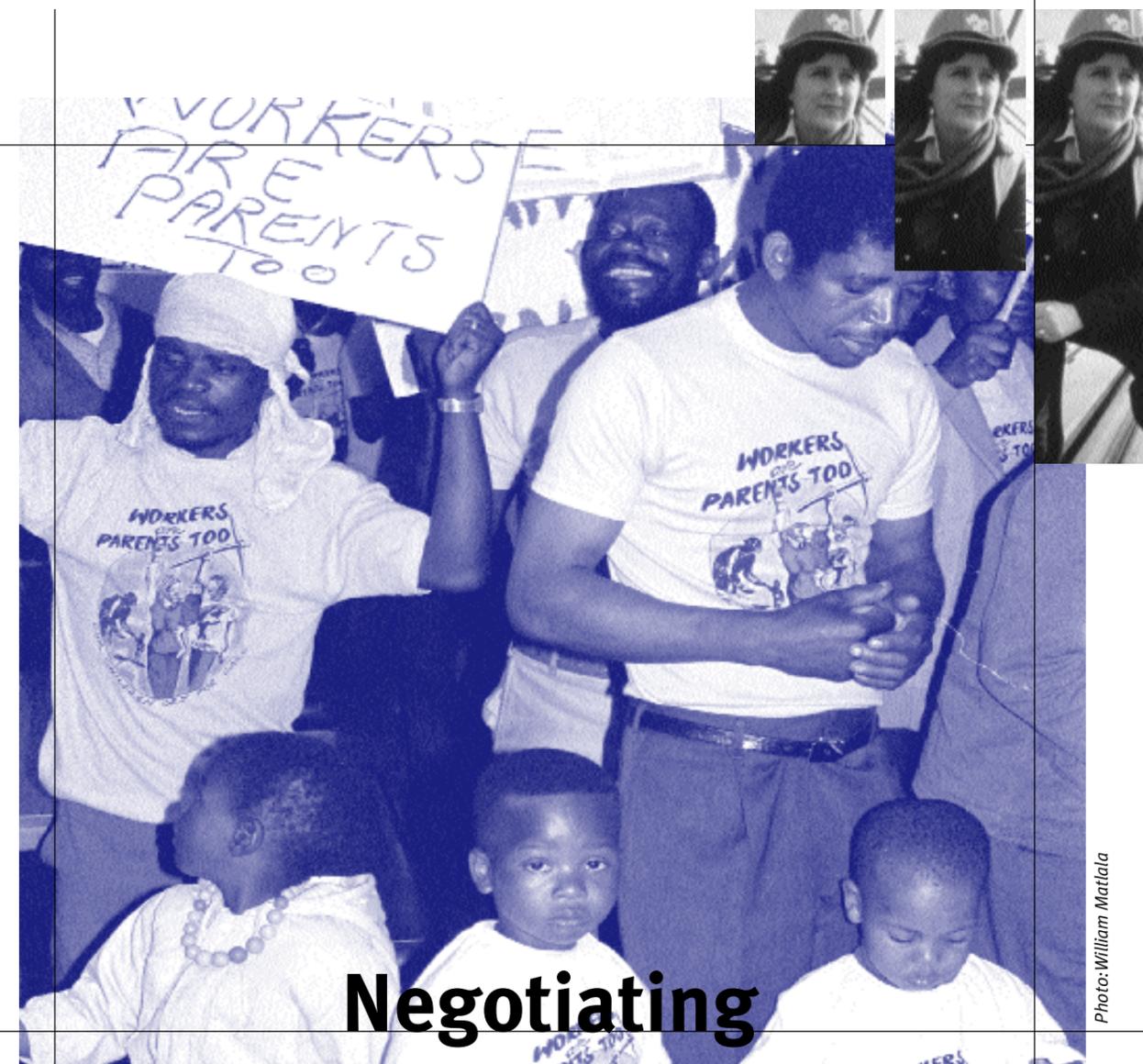


Photo: William Matlala

# Negotiating Family-related Rights: Maternity, Paternity and Parental Leave

WOMEN  
transporting the world

**“They no longer pay those on maternity leave. Once you become pregnant, you ought to know that you cannot return to work. That’s the end. Many of us know that by falling pregnant we’re placing ourselves on automatic dismissal.”**

*Bus conductor, Zimbabwe*

**T**he experience of this bus conductor in Zimbabwe is not an isolated incident. Many women transport workers report that their basic maternity rights are not respected by employers. In an ITF survey, over one third of respondents said they were not entitled to maternity leave with cash benefits. Many stated that pregnant employees do not have the right to guaranteed job transfers without loss of earnings. Others have restrictions imposed on them after returning from maternity leave.

The abuse of women workers’ rights can be extensive. When applying for a job, women workers are sometimes subject to highly invasive practices. In some countries, employers request a negative pregnancy test, a gynaecological examination, or even a medical certificate of sterilisation as a condition of employment.

## Family-related rights are a union issue

Death or serious illness connected with pregnancy is a reality for millions of women around the world. Over half a million maternal deaths occur every year in developing countries. Yet maternity protection in the workplace is still not guaranteed. Many women workers are faced with the threat of job loss and suspended earnings. This increases health risks, leaving women workers with few rights or means of support for themselves and their babies.

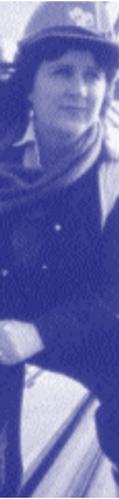
There are people who still argue that a woman’s place is in the home. Yet in many countries, large numbers of families are partially or wholly dependent for their survival on the earnings of women. Maternity leave allows a woman to remain healthy or recover her health and return to work. Income during leave is essential for the well-being of the mother, her child and her family.

Individual women workers should not have to deal with maternity-related issues alone. They need the strong support of their union in protecting their health and safety, and the well-being of unborn children. Both men and women have family responsibilities.

In addition to maternity, other family-related rights such as paternity and parental leave are also important union issues. A survey in Britain found that most men take time off work at or around the time of the birth of their children.

The ITF has committed itself to work for measures allowing both men and women workers to combine employment and family life. As the Canadian Autoworkers’ Union family policy states:

**“Life does not stop at the plant gate or the office door. Working people are citizens, community members, and most immediately, family members. Through their unions, workers have struggled to make progress to improve their lives, both in and out of the workplace, for themselves and their families.”**



### ITF supports family-friendly measures

At its 1998 Congress, the ITF adopted a resolution on women transport workers. The resolution can only be effective if affiliates organise and take action at local and national level. It commits affiliates to work for measures allowing workers to combine employment and family life. Union demands include:

- Public subsidising of childcare in crèches and at home.
- Guarantees in national legislation to ensure holiday periods can be taken in addition to maternity leave, in cases where they coincide.
- Integration of the European Union Directive on parental leave into national law in member states.
- Measures prohibiting dismissal, non-renewal of contracts, or loss of employment due to the failure to pass probationary periods of employment when this is directly related to maternity (pregnancy, birth or breast-feeding) or due to the need to care for children.

### Working conditions cause abnormal childbirth

Bus guides in Japan are women who work on tour buses. It is estimated that there are about 20,000 full-time guides today. Many are very young.

Most of the women are recruited directly after finishing high school and more than 70 per cent quit the job within five years. Working hours are long and irregular. During peak season, it is the norm to be on the road for over a week at a time. Many suffer from fatigue and backache as they work some 5-6 hours daily on their feet. **A union survey showed that 33 per cent had abnormal childbirth.** Wages are low in comparison to the demands of the job.

With support from their union, the guides have taken up a campaign “Can I have a seat too?”. The union says the campaign has fostered better communication between drivers and guides, with some drivers also wearing the badges. More companies are now listening and negotiating agreements with the union to improve working conditions.

**“Promotion depends on the average number of flying hours per year. After maternity leave, no woman has the average.”**

*Cabin crew member, Italy*

**“Employers prefer to employ women with no children. Some women have lost their jobs after taking maternity leave.”**

*Road transport worker, Sweden*

**“Unmarried women go on maternity leave without pay.”**

*Airline ticketing and reservations worker, Nigeria*

## International instruments

The International Labour Organisation's (ILO) **Maternity Protection Convention, No. 103 (1952)** established the basic principles concerning maternity rights in the workplace. It includes:

- **the right to leave**
- **the right to medical benefits**
- **the right to income during leave**
- **the right to security of employment.**

In June 2000, the ILO updated the Convention (with a new number, No. 183), and brought in improved standards:

### Categories of workers

Previously countries could apply to exclude some categories of workers, for example, women who work for companies transporting passengers or goods by sea. It also did not cover part-time, casual, contract or temporary workers. The Convention now includes all employed women. Governments can only exclude any category of worker after consultation with employers' and workers' representatives.

### Duration of maternity leave

The minimum length of maternity leave has been

extended from 12 weeks to 14 weeks. It is recommended, however, that countries apply an 18-week maternity leave period.

### Maternity leave pay

Cash benefits must be provided to women who are on maternity leave; they must be enough for a suitable standard of living; and no less than two-thirds of a woman's previous earnings. It is recommended, however, that women receive the full amount of what they were earning.

### Breast-feeding rights

Women workers have the right to take breaks to breast-feed, or to have their working hours reduced. No pay shall be deducted for these breaks. Pregnant or breast-feeding women are not obliged to perform work which could damage their health.

### Employment protection

No woman worker can be dismissed during maternity leave or extension of the leave, or during a period following her return to work to be set out in national legislation.

## European Union adopts Parental Leave Directive

A European Union Directive on Parental Leave came into force in 1998. The agreement was negotiated by representatives of employers and trade unions. Countries belonging to the European Union are obliged to incorporate the Directive into national law. Parental Leave is described as "an important means of reconciling work and family life and promoting equal opportunities and treatment between men and women".

The Directive includes the following minimum requirements:

- **Men and women workers have the right to parental leave to enable them to take care of a child up to eight years old.**
- **The duration of parental leave should be at least three months. Men and women each have the right to three months' leave, but cannot transfer it to each other.**
- **Workers should be protected against dismissal when applying for or taking parental leave.**
- **Workers shall have the right to the same job on their return.**
- **Workers shall not lose their rights during the course of parental leave.**
- **These rights apply to adoptive parents too.**

The Directive only provides for unpaid parental leave. In many European countries, men have not taken up parental leave. One of the reasons is that it would place a heavy financial burden on the family (since men generally earn more than women). But the main reason seems to be that most men do not see themselves as being responsible for childcare.

## National legislation

### Maternity leave

In most countries where maternity protection is provided, legislation covers industrial and non-industrial sectors and both the public and private sectors. However, legislation does not guarantee protection for all women workers.

Women who work on a part-time, contract, casual or temporary basis are mostly unprotected. As a result, millions of women workers around the world have been denied their maternity rights. In some countries this is beginning to change. For example, in Spain, Singapore and Ivory Coast, part-time workers are now covered.

Women transport workers are particularly vulnerable to being excluded from maternity leave. In some countries, specific economic activities such as the transport of goods are excluded from the national legislation.

Companies with less than a certain number of workers are excluded from the legislation in countries such as India, Nepal, Jordan, Korea, Kuwait and the United States.

For women workers who are protected by the law, their rights are often restricted. There are sometimes limits on the number of children a woman may have in order to get maternity leave. This is the case in many countries in Africa and Asia. Other restrictions concern the spacing of children. In Tanzania, for example, maternity leave can only be granted once every three years. In other instances, women are excluded from maternity protection during the first months or year of employment. Qualifying periods of three to twelve months are often stipulated in national laws and collective agreements.

Internationally, maternity leave provisions differ considerably. In some countries, it is compulsory to take a certain number of weeks' maternity leave. In others, this is optional. In some countries, women are paid during maternity leave. In others, maternity leave is unpaid. There is also a wide range of differences between countries concerning the protection of women from dismissal during and after pregnancy. Similarly, there are differences relating to the right of a woman to return to her own job after pregnancy.

There are also wide variations between countries related to protecting pregnant women from dangerous

or unhealthy work. Some countries have general prohibitions on such work for all women workers. Other countries have specific restrictions for certain occupations or for pregnant and nursing mothers. In many instances, pregnant women are entitled to transfer to other duties.

Only 39 countries have ratified the ILO Maternity Protection Convention No. 183. In many countries, national legislation does not meet the minimum standards set by the ILO. Furthermore, employers often ignore the law.

**“Our labour laws permit pregnant women to take maternity leave and to continue receiving 60 per cent of their normal pay. But in reality this has been widely disregarded by the bus companies. Pregnant women have been subject to automatic dismissal though it is clearly unlawful. Some companies make it clear that they expect women employees to remain single and not become pregnant.”**

*Woman transport worker, Zimbabwe*

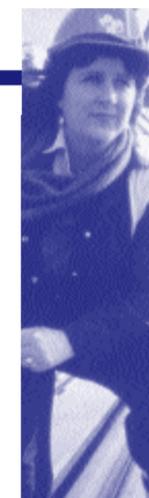
### Paternity leave

Paternity leave is a period of time off work for the father to spend time with his new baby and partner/wife.

National legislation differs widely around the world. For example in Denmark, New Zealand and Norway, men are given two weeks' paternity leave. In other countries like Algeria, Argentina, Egypt and Tunisia, the duration is between one and three days. In some countries like the Netherlands, Romania and Vietnam, the amount of time is unspecified. Countries such as Benin, Chad, Cameroon, Congo, Mali and Madagascar allow men to take ten days' leave for "family events concerning the worker's home".

In India, 15 days' paternity leave has been granted to all male government employees. Women demanded, however, that paternity leave should be granted when the mother goes back to work. Many women felt that husbands do not assist during the postnatal period.

In Britain, the Transport and General Workers' Union has argued that maternity support leave should be included in legislation. This leave should be available



to a nominated carer, where the woman is a lone parent or has a partner of the same sex. For example, the same leave as paternity leave should apply to a grandmother or lesbian partner.

In many countries, there is no legal right to paternity leave whatsoever.

## Parental leave

Parental leave is a long-term leave designed to allow parents to care for children. It allows parents to reconcile work and family life. It enables men to share in the care and nurturing of their children.

Underpinning parental leave is the belief that men should take an equal share of child-rearing.

About 36 countries have adopted parental leave legislation. In Europe, there is a Directive on Parental Leave which came into force in 1998 (see box on page 20).

Major differences exist between countries over the conditions of parental leave and the payment of benefits. In some countries, the duration of parental leave is one year. In others, it is a few months. Parents do not receive payment in some countries. In others, benefits or a proportion of wages are offered.

## Negotiating family-related rights

Many transport unions have negotiated maternity-related provisions and other family-related rights in collective agreements, which often go beyond the legal minimum. These are just a few examples:

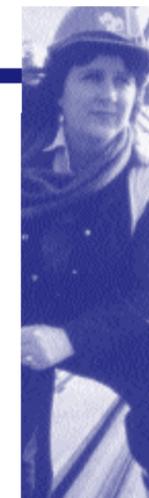
- **KOKU Rengo in the aviation sector in Japan has 20 weeks' maternity leave as their best example of a negotiated agreement with management.**
- **The National Railway Mazdoor Union and the South Eastern Railwaymen's Union in India have negotiated a 19-week paid maternity leave period.**
- **The Transport and General Workers' Union in Britain has negotiated a maternity agreement with London Central Buses, giving women 18 weeks' full pay for both full- and part-time workers after just one month's employment.**
- **The Latvian Seafarers' Union of Merchant Fleet has signed an agreement with the Baltic Transport Insurance Company granting women seafarers a cash allowance when they give birth.**
- **In their best agreements, US civil aviation unions have won the right for fathers to have 120 days' leave. Payment periods vary from company to company.**
- **The Mongolian Transport, Communication and Petroleum Workers' Union has won the right for some employees to have 14 days' leave a year to**

**care for children, family members or to deal with family emergencies.**

- **The National Confederation of Road Transport Workers in Brazil has negotiated a childcare allowance for women workers in some companies.**

At a collective bargaining workshop of the ITF Southern African Women's Network in November 1999, the participants agreed on the main points for a model collective agreement on parental rights. Their proposals could be used as guidelines by other unions:

- **The right of a pregnant woman to transfer to another job during pregnancy.**
- **Attendance at antenatal classes by pregnant workers.**
- **The duration of maternity leave.**
- **The formula for pay for maternity leave.**
- **Rights of a woman who has a miscarriage.**
- **Rights of the father to attend the birth and have time off after the birth.**
- **Job protection for a woman on maternity leave.**
- **Time off for both parents to attend to sick children or other needs.**
- **Rights of foster parents and adoptive parents.**
- **Childcare facilities at work or subsidised childcare.**
- **Breast-feeding at work.**



## CAW guidelines for collective agreements

The Canadian Autoworkers' Union (CAW) has a policy that all collective agreements must contain language which guarantees the following maternity rights:

- **Paid leave**
- **A return to the job/position and rate of pay held immediately preceding the leave**
- **Full vacation entitlement in the year following the leave**
- **Full pension credits during the maternity leave**
- **Access to all negotiated benefits during the maternity leave.**

CAW also aims to include paid time off in collective agreements, so that workers can attend to the care of their sick children or elderly parents.

CAW runs its own childcare centres for members, including those working irregular shifts. Although CAW childcare centres offer high quality, flexible, affordable care, not enough members have access to this benefit. So CAW has tried to put childcare on the negotiating agenda. It has managed to win an agreement with a few companies to contribute towards a childcare fund. It has also taken up "A National Child Care Campaign for all Canadians". Using postcards and petitions, pressure has been put on government structures to give all parents access to affordable, quality childcare.

## Guidelines for women activists and negotiators

- **Ensure that your union has a policy on maternity and other family-related rights in the workplace.**
- **Publicise the policy.**
- **Lobby your government for improved maternity and family-related legislation.**
- **Monitor the implementation of national legislation by employers.**
- **Include family-related rights on the bargaining agenda.**
- **Conduct a survey of workers' childcare needs.**
- **Keep a record of complaints where family-related rights have not been respected.**
- **Consider how to take action around the ITF resolution at local and national level.**

## Key questions for discussion

- Has your country ratified the ILO Maternity Protection Convention? How can your union campaign to ensure that it has, and that your national maternity rights legislation meets at least the ILO's minimum standards?
- How can you campaign so that more men in your union are convinced of the need to support family-related rights?

**Activity:** Improving maternity and family-related rights in your workplace

In small groups, discuss:

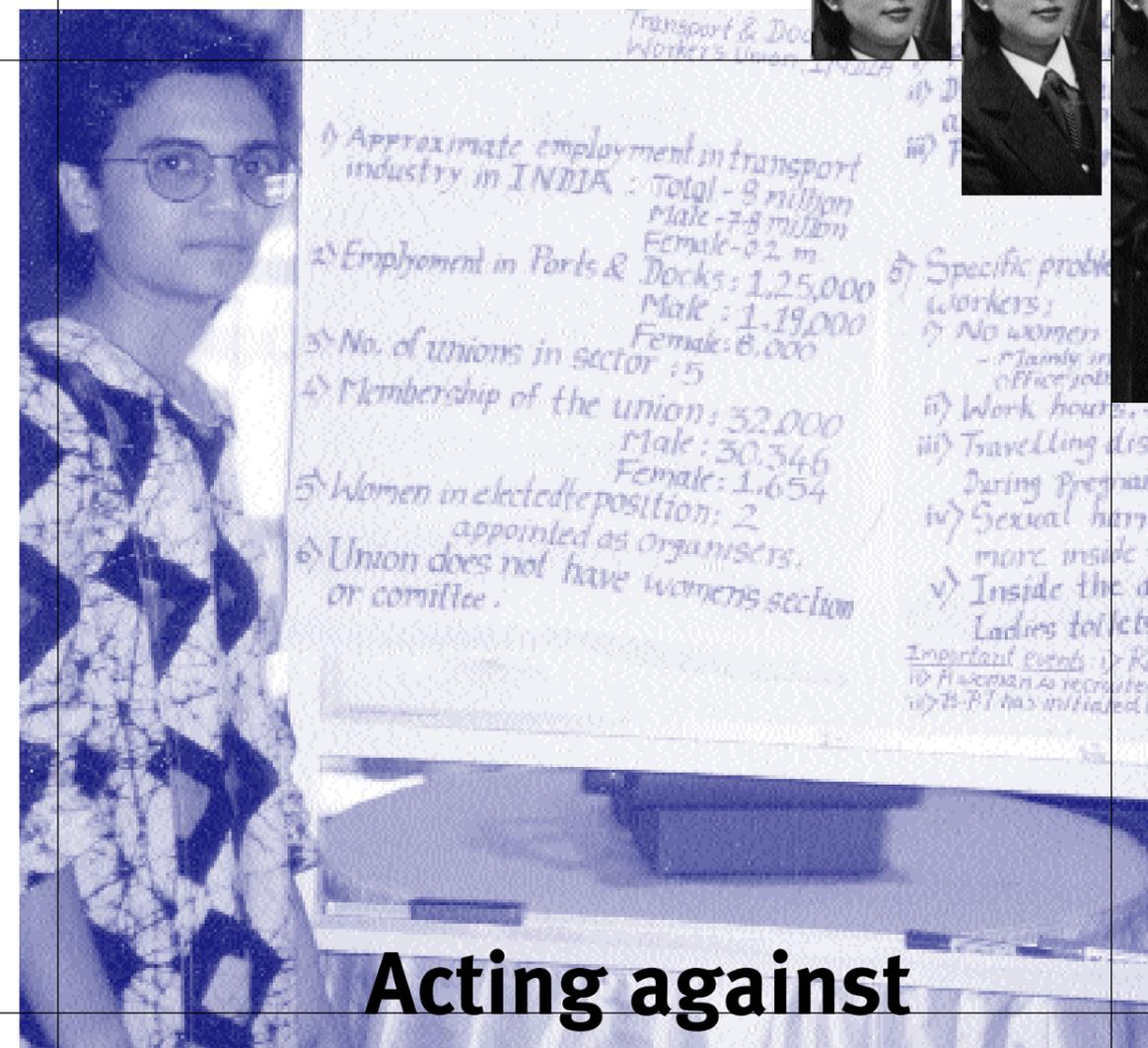
1. What are the problems that women workers experience concerning maternity protection and childcare in your workplace?
2. What arguments would you use to convince management that they need to introduce or improve family-related rights in your workplace? How is management likely to respond?

Develop an outline of what women workers in your union or section should aim for in a collective agreement with management.

Based on your analysis of occupational segregation in your workplace, plan a strategy for your union to promote equal opportunities.

Report to plenary, followed by discussion.

Notes:



## Acting against Sexual Harassment

# 3

WOMEN  
transporting the world

**“The gender dynamic in violence, harassment and bullying is power. The problem won’t go away until we can redress the balance in broader society.”**

*Peggy Nash, Canadian Autoworkers’ Union*

**S**peak to any woman worker about sexual harassment in the workplace. She is likely to have experienced it at some point during her working life. The transport industry is no exception.

The effects on women can be devastating. It lowers morale and self-esteem. Often women are forced to change jobs. Their careers and financial security are undermined. Sexual harassment can also seriously damage their health. Victims often experience physical and psychological problems.

### What is sexual harassment?

Defining sexual harassment is important. Often male managers or colleagues argue that sexual attraction is natural. Consensual sexual behaviour between two people is natural. This does not constitute sexual harassment. Uninvited or unwanted sexual advances are not natural. It is the power which men have over

women in society. Men use this power to take sexual advantage of women. Most victims of sexual harassment are women.

**“Sexual harassment is unwelcome or uninvited behaviour of a sexual nature which is offensive, embarrassing, intimidating or humiliating and may affect an employee’s work performance, health, career or livelihood.”**

*ITF Negotiators’ Guide to Policies and Procedures, ITF Women, Issue 2, 2000*

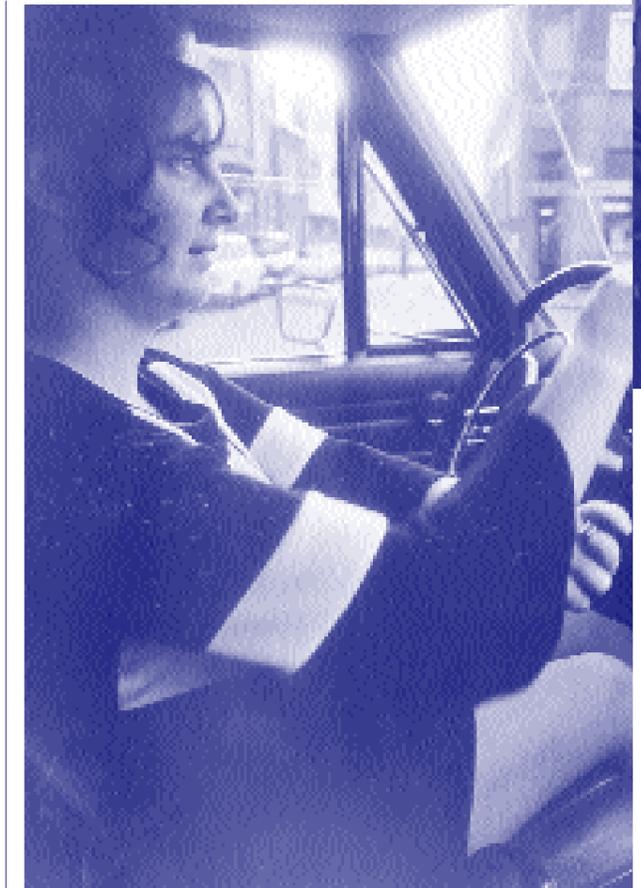
Sexual remarks, jokes and touching are not just a bit of fun at work. Many women find this behaviour unwelcome and distressing. It can come from managers, supervisors, co-workers and the public. Sexual harassment includes:

- **Physical contact – ranging from unwanted patting, pinching, touching to more extreme cases of sexual assault and rape.**
- **Verbal abuse – unwanted comments, leering, explicit jokes, insinuations of a sexual nature, observations about the woman’s personal life, lewd gestures.**
- **Visual materials – pornographic pin-ups, letters, emails with a sexual content.**

## Sexual harassment in the transport industry

Surveys and reports from unions in all the ITF sections show that sexual harassment is widespread. *“This is despite its lack of visibility, since the women who report it, or at least make it public, constitute a tiny minority”*, observes a member from the Transport and Communication Workers’ Federation (FCT) in Spain.

- **Sexual harassment is a serious problem in civil aviation. The sexist advertising campaigns of airlines portray flight attendants as mere sex objects.**
- **A British union found that women train drivers experienced constant sexual harassment, making their lives “a misery”.**
- **Women road transport workers in Latin America often face employers who try to force them to have sexual relations. The recent ITF Road Transport Workers’ Section conference heard that those who refuse are forced to work night shifts or very early morning shifts, or to work in distant locations from home.**
- **In South Africa and Mexico, rape of women road transport workers is extremely common.**



**“On a domestic flight carrying a large group, I was subjected to a variety of offensive actions by a passenger. He pinched my bottom on a number of occasions when I was passing his seat, touched my breasts while I was serving his meal and later, stood up behind me, grasped my hips and simulated sexual intercourse. His fellow passengers cheered him on in his actions.”**

*Cabin crew member*

**“Our airline recently restricted business class flight attendants’ jobs to women only. The object is to exploit the female body, to attract business class passengers. It undermines women’s dignity both as women and as professionals.”**

*Cabin crew member*

**“In 1989 I commenced my training as a cadet deck officer. I was on my way to being a ship’s captain. I can’t begin telling you how often I was belittled, threatened and verbally abused, and in many instances I have simply tried to forget. What I do remember are the tears I shed. I have never cried so much in my life. I simply could not understand what I had done to deserve all this.”**

*Deck officer cadet*

### Sexual harassment – an evil for solidarity

Kalpna Desai from the Transport and Dockworkers’ Union in India reveals how sexual harassment and violence at work is rampant in civil aviation:

**“Shehnaz Mudbhatkal registered strong protest against sexual harassment and paid a heavy price. She was a ground staff member in West Asian Airlines. The manager of the airline would detain her at work after 22:00 on flimsy pretexts. He would demand sexual favours from her which she always refused. As a result, she was refused promotion. She complained against the incident which caused her dismissal. This included a bunch of fabricated memos.**

**To her great dismay, her husband also wanted her to surrender because his job in the same company was also threatened. Yet, she fought for eleven years in court. On 16 April 1996, the Labour Court awarded Shehnaz reinstatement with full back pay and privileges. The airline appealed to the Bombay High Court. It took another few years for the High Court to allow compensation to Shehnaz.”**

## Sexual harassment is a union issue

“It is the responsibility of management to ensure that the workplace is free of harassment. But just leaving the issue up to management is not good enough.” This is the view of the Canadian Autoworkers’ Union (CAW) which has adopted a policy on harassment in the workplace. The union’s view is confirmed by the findings of a recent ITF survey of all affiliates.

- Only one quarter (26%) had negotiated sexual harassment procedures with management.
- 44% were not aware of any written guidance on rights and procedures for victims.
- 42% said that managers were not trained to deal with cases of harassment.

Without trade union pressure, management is unlikely to address harassment in the workplace adequately. Trade unions must fight to ensure that the workplace environment is free of discrimination. Sexual harassment is also a health and safety issue. It needs to be given the same attention by trade unions as other health and safety problems in the workplace.



The Transport and General Workers’ Union in Britain advises that “the potential for sexual harassment should also be considered in health and safety risk assessments”.

Sexual harassment can be detrimental to building strong unions. It undermines unity and solidarity between workers, and creates a climate of fear and intolerance. These divisions may be exploited by management. By taking a strong stand against sexual harassment, trade unions show their members that sexual harassment is not acceptable.

### Sexual harassment of women seafarers

Sexual harassment is particularly prevalent in workplaces where women are in a minority. Only nine per cent of the world seafaring workforce are women. Male workers have tried to resist women workers taking jobs traditionally held by men.

Sexual harassment is a serious problem for women seafarers. A study of women seafarers in Europe showed that they often feel forced to withdraw to their cabins and lock themselves inside to escape harassment. Women become isolated. They develop a sense of alienation from their male colleagues. Some give up their jobs.

NUMAST, the British officers’ union, has reported that 76 per cent of its women members on board ships have experienced harassment. Only 50 per cent felt that it had been dealt with adequately by the company. “You’re in the middle of nowhere, literally hundreds of miles out to sea. There are no police stations, no law courts and no emergency number to call,” says an ITF union member who has been working in the industry.

The ITF Seafarers’ Section has adopted policy guidelines on racial and sexual harassment for inclusion in all ITF-approved collective agreements for flag of convenience and national flag vessels. A model ITF clause has been developed: “Each seafarer shall be entitled to work, train and live in an environment free from harassment and bullying, whether sexually, racially or otherwise motivated, in accordance with ITF policy guidelines.”

## International instruments

The United Nations (UN) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) have adopted declarations, resolutions and conventions which are relevant to sexual harassment. Most recognise fundamental principles with implications for sexual harassment. But sexual harassment is not spelt out explicitly.

The **UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights** has many articles which recognise the human rights of all workers.

- All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. (Article 1)
- Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person. (Article 3)
- No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. (Article 5)

The **UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979)** says:

“State Parties shall take all appropriate measures to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other

practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women.”

Article 5

Sexual harassment, although not mentioned, is covered under the **Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, No. 111 (1958)** of the ILO. It has been ratified by 152 countries and says that all governments must have a national policy to eliminate discrimination. Discrimination on grounds of gender should be banned. In 1989, the ILO adopted the **Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, No. 169**, which specifically aims to protect women and men belonging to indigenous and tribal peoples from sexual harassment.

Different regions have also adopted instruments relevant to sexual harassment, such as:

- African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, 1968
- CARICOM Model Legislation on Sexual Harassment, 1989
- Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women, 1994.



## European Commission code of practice: measures to combat sexual harassment

In 1991, the European Commission (EC) adopted a resolution on the protection of the dignity of men and women at work. A code of practice to combat sexual harassment is linked to the resolution, and gives practical guidance to employers, trade unions and employees. It does not have the force of law.

The code says that: *“Since sexual harassment is a form of employee misconduct, employers have a responsibility to deal with it as they do with any other form of employee misconduct as well as to refrain from harassing employees themselves. Since sexual harassment is a risk to health and safety, employers have a responsibility to take steps to minimise the risk as they do with other hazards. Since sexual harassment often entails an abuse of power, employers may have a responsibility for the misuse of the authority they delegate.”*

### Recommendations to employers

- Employers should issue a policy stating that sexual harassment will not be permitted.
- The policy must be communicated effectively to all employees.
- There should be training for managers and supervisors to deal with sexual harassment.
- Clear and precise procedures should be developed to deal with sexual harassment.

### Recommendations to trade unions

- Formulate policy statements on sexual harassment.
- Raise awareness of the problem of sexual harassment in the workplace.
- Raise the issue with employers and encourage the adoption of policies.
- Provide clear guidance to members as to what they should do if they are harassed.
- Consider specially trained officials to advise and counsel members.

## National legislation

Only a few countries have passed laws which deal specifically with sexual harassment. In Canada, there is a Federal Labour Code. This obliges employers to put in place a sexual harassment policy. The policy must inform workers of their rights, condemn harassment, warn that perpetrators will be disciplined and set out procedures for tackling the problem. Other countries include Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Belize, Costa Rica, New Zealand, Philippines and Portugal.

**“It shall be the duty of the employer or the head of the work-related, education or training institution, to prevent or deter the commission of acts of sexual harassment and to provide the procedures for the resolution, settlement or prosecution of acts of sexual harassment.”**

*Anti-Sexual Harassment Act of 1995, Philippines*

In some countries, there are laws which include references to sexual harassment or which have been interpreted by the courts as covering sexual harassment. These laws cover sex discrimination, human rights, and employment equity. For example, in 1997 the Indian Supreme Court ruled that public and private sector employers must now “take appropriate steps to prevent sexual harassment and provide appropriate penalties” against offenders. The Court recommended that employers introduce a committee, headed by a woman, to examine such cases.

Yet *“despite this fact, the majority of women in India do not come forward with complaints. They fear that they may be held responsible for the sexual harassment since Indian society is male dominated. This might result in losing a job,”* says Kalpana Desai from the Transport and Dockworkers’ Union in India.

In many instances, employers simply ignore the law. This has been the experience of the Transport and General Workers’ Union in Zimbabwe with commuter transport operators. The operators do not take the law seriously. Sexual harassment is illegal, yet women conductors and drivers in long distance operations are forced to sleep in the same buses with male colleagues. Women have been flocking to the union with sexual harassment grievances.

In the Philippines, for example, both management and workers have a lack of knowledge about the law. The definition of implementation procedures has been left to individual workplaces. There is no penalty for non-implementation. A Filipino activist commented that: *“in a country where basic labour standards are violated, how much more of sexual harassment which is considered a mere woman’s issue?”*

Strong national laws against sexual harassment are important. As trade unionists, we can campaign for them. We also need to ensure that they are fully respected and implemented. National legislation can be used by negotiators to put pressure on management to adopt an effective sexual harassment policy.

**“There should be lobbying for changes in the labour laws to include sexual harassment as misconduct. The laws should include a clear statement against sexual harassment, a clear definition of sexual harassment and procedures to outline a policy for employers with respect to sexual harassment.”**

*Zimbabwe Amalgamated Railwaymen’s Union*



# Developing and negotiating policy

Some transport trade unions have adopted policies on sexual harassment to guide members and negotiators. This is an important first step. It shows that the union takes sexual harassment seriously. Policy can be used as a tool to educate members. It can also be used to inform bargaining strategy.

**“COSATU and affiliates commit themselves to the elimination of sexual harassment in the labour movement by taking active measures to prevent sexual harassment.”**

*COSATU union federation code of conduct, South Africa*

**“Our goal as a union must be to help create a workplace environment free of harassment. This means not only dealing with complaints when they arise, but also watching for instances of harassment and confronting the source.”**

*Harassment policy of Canadian Autoworkers' Union*

In some instances, transport trade unions have successfully included sexual harassment on the bargaining agenda. This has taken different forms.

Some unions have negotiated a separate policy or code of conduct which deals specifically with sexual harassment.

The Zimbabwe Amalgamated Railwaymen's Union has signed a code of conduct making sexual harassment an offence. Women can use the code to lodge

complaints against managers, supervisors and fellow workers. It sets out penalties ranging from a written warning to a final written warning plus wage deduction and six months' demotion to a lower grade.

Australian maritime unions have developed a policy with the Australian Shipowners' Association. It identifies the strategies which management should implement including:

- Ensuring that employees are aware that such behaviour is unacceptable
- Developing the appropriate workplace culture
- Ensuring that the workplace is free from sexually explicit material
- Taking swift action when sexual harassment occurs
- Making available material explaining the procedures for and rights of workers who have been harassed
- Setting up integrated training on sexual harassment as part of industry training and retraining.

Other unions have developed model clauses on sexual harassment and negotiated for their inclusion in general agreements or equal opportunities policies.

**“The Company and the Union agree that there shall be no discrimination, interference, restraint, harassment or coercion exercised or practised by either of them or by any of their**

**representatives with respect to any employee by reason of age, marital status, sex, race, creed, colour, national origin, political or religious affiliations, disability, sexual orientation nor by reason of union membership or activity.”**

*Model clause of Canadian Autoworkers' Union*

**“The basic rights of the workers include respect for their privacy and due consideration of their dignity, including protection from verbal insults or physical insults of a sexual nature. Any acts by the businessman/woman which infringe respect for workers' privacy and due consideration of their dignity will constitute a labour offence.”**

*National collective agreement with travel agencies negotiated by Comisiones Obreras, Spain*

**“Companies shall punish any employee who disadvantages another person or adversely affects the working environment through sexual speech or actions.”**

*Model clause of Japan Federation of Aviation Industry Unions*

The Canadian Autoworkers' Union has tried to bargain for a clause which recognises the need for a women's advocate in the workplace, particularly where all the elected representatives are men. This position has been negotiated successfully with the railways in Canada.

**“The parties recognise that female employees may sometimes need to discuss with another woman matters such as violence, abuse, harassment etc. They may also need to find out about specialised resources in the community such as counsellors and/or women's shelters.**

**For this reason the parties agree to recognise that the role of women's advocate in the workplace will be served by a female union member. The corporation will pay for training to be provided by the union. The trained female women's advocate will meet with female members as required on company paid time to discuss problems with them and where necessary to refer them to appropriate community agencies.**

**The company agrees to establish a confidential phone line that female employees can use to contact the women's advocate. As well the company will provide access to a private office so that confidentiality can be maintained when a female employee is meeting with the women's advocate.**

**Appropriate communications will be jointly developed to inform female employees about the advocacy role.”**

## Qantas adopts anti-harassment policy

The Flight Attendants' Association of Australia (FAAA) negotiated an anti-harassment policy with its national airline, Qantas.

- Harassment of employees is not permitted
- Harassment is defined as any behaviour that offends another person and/or makes the workplace unsafe; the perception of whether behaviour is harassing lies with the receiver
- Managers and supervisors are responsible for ensuring that harassment is not tolerated
- Harassment complaints must be investigated immediately
- Appropriate counselling should be given
- Disciplinary action should be taken, including termination of employment where appropriate.

## Woman bus driver fights sexual harassment

When one British woman bus driver was promoted she found her colleagues, resentful of her good fortune, began a campaign of sexual harassment against her. At first she tried to soldier on, but when things finally came to a head, she decided to take action with the help of her female district officer and her regional women's organiser.

The member took her complaint to the company directors and found them very sympathetic. They agreed to provide her with professional counselling to help her over her ordeal and to draw up a specific procedure and policy on sexual harassment in conjunction with the TGWU.

The policy was circulated to every employee and the company also arranged for a woman's officer to be made available at head office to be contacted in the event of such harassment ever happening again. At a more local level, the member herself pressed her branch to create a new position of women's representative, to provide help and support for women at the depot.

*“Winning for Women in Passenger Transport”, Transport and General Workers' Union, Britain*

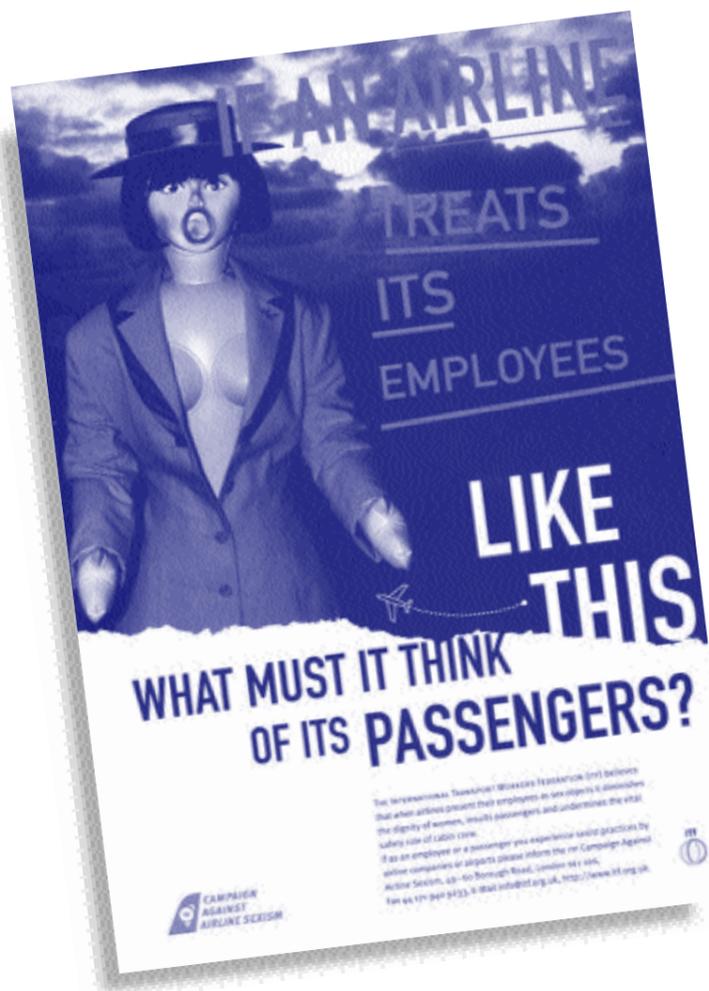


## ITF campaigns against airline sexism

On 8 March 1997, the ITF launched a campaign to stop airline advertising using sexist images of cabin crew. The campaign poster showed an inflatable sex doll dressed in a cabin crew uniform. *“It reflects the way many airlines effectively treat their cabin crew. We simply took what these airlines are doing to its logical conclusion, to show it for what it really is,”* said the then ITF Civil Aviation Section Secretary, Stuart Howard.

Male sexual fantasy has always been a powerful element in advertising, but probably nowhere more blatantly than in the airline industry. And probably in no other industry is there a group of employees with duties which so immediately bring them into contact with the effects of these deliberately cultivated fantasies in the form of sexual harassment.

Linked to the campaign, tens of thousands of cabin crew and airport staff in around 100 countries took action against air rage. Air rage frequently involves sexual harassment. Ground staff distributed thousands of leaflets to passengers, information booths were set up in airports, banners were displayed in departure lounges, and announcements were made on different airlines.



## Guidelines for women activists and negotiators

- Ensure that your union has a policy on sexual harassment.
- Publicise the policy.
- Lobby your government for improved sexual harassment legislation.
- Find out the concerns of women workers in your workplace regarding sexual harassment.
- Include harassment on the bargaining agenda.
- Develop clear guidelines on what employees should do if they are sexually harassed.
- Provide victims with the opportunity to talk to a female union representative or women's committee.
- Set up a service for counselling victims.
- Keep a record of complaints.
- Take action against members involved in harassment.
- Encourage workplace and branch representatives to go on union approved education and training courses which deal with sexual harassment.
- Raise the issue of sexual harassment at union meetings and promote discussion about the removal of offensive pin-ups or other materials.
- Ensure that anti-harassment statements are read at all union functions.
- Take workplace action.

Whatever form your agreement with management takes, it should include:

- A clear definition of sexual harassment including examples of behaviour.
- A statement of the employer's commitment to tackling and preventing harassment.
- How harassment will be dealt with – an outline of procedures.



## Key questions for discussion

- Are you happy that your union takes the issue of sexual harassment seriously enough? If not, how can you mobilise for a greater understanding of the issues?

**Activity:** Developing a bargaining strategy on sexual harassment

In small groups, plan a bargaining strategy for your workplace on sexual harassment. Your discussion should include recommendations on:

1. How existing union policy or agreements on sexual harassment can be improved. (These might or might not exist in your union)
2. What a model clause or policy on sexual harassment should include.
3. How this will be negotiated with management.
4. How it will be publicised.
5. What procedures should be followed by the union and management to deal with sexual harassment.
6. What other steps your union can take to strengthen its stand against sexual harassment.

Report to plenary, followed by discussion.

Notes:



## Preventing Violence at Work

WOMEN  
transporting the world

# 4

**“A passenger grabbed the hair of a female check-in clerk in Delhi airport and repeatedly banged her head on the counter.”**

**T**ransport workers in all sectors have experienced or witnessed violence at work. From bullying to physical assaults, many transport workers carry out their daily duties under conditions that place them in a high risk group for violence.

**“Women are more vulnerable to violence, due to their inferior position in the labour market.”**

*Duncan Chappell, International Labour Organisation*

In the United States, for example, job-related violence has been the leading cause of death in the workplace for women since 1980.

Violence against women *because they are women* is part of a pattern of violence that women also experience beyond the workplace – in the home, community and other public places. Bullying can be defined as persistent, offensive, abusive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour or unfair penal

sanctions which make the recipient feel upset, threatened, humiliated or vulnerable which undermines self-confidence and which may cause suffering and stress.

### Examples of violent incidents at work

Homicide	Interfering with work tools and equipment
Scratching	Physical attacks
Ostracism	Bullying
Rape	Hostile behaviour
Squeezing, pinching and related action	Kicking
Leaving offensive messages	Mobbing
Robbery	Swearing
Stalking	Biting
Aggressive posturing	Victimising
Wounding	Shouting
Harassment, including sexual and racial abuse	Punching
Rude gestures	Intimidation
Battery	Name-calling
Innuendo	Spitting
	Threats
	Deliberate silence

*Source: Violence at Work, ILO*

## What is violence at work?

When we speak about violence at work, we need a broad definition which goes beyond the traditional workplace. It should also include other settings related to work such as the home, satellite centres, mobile locations and commuting to work.

Traditionally, violence at work is perceived as involving physical attack and serious injury. A recent ILO study however has shown the harm caused by non-physical violence or psychological violence. Persistent and repeated psychological violence, including verbal aggression, can have a potentially devastating effect on the victims.

Sexual harassment consists of repeated, unwelcome and imposed actions such as touching, leering and sexually explicit remarks. Workplace bullying is another form of violence. It can involve cruel and malicious attempts to undermine an individual or group of employees. Mobbing is on the increase in a number of countries. This involves ganging up on an employee and subjecting them to psychological harassment. This harassment includes making continuous negative remarks about a person, isolating a person and gossiping or spreading false information.

The Transport and General Workers’ Union in Britain has included the following definition of workplace violence in their model agreement.

**“Workplace harassment is regarded as any conduct related to sex, race, colour, disability, sexual orientation or any other personal characteristic that is unwanted by the recipient. Harassment can include unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct, and may be persistent or an isolated incident and may be directed towards one or more individuals. The source of harassment may be a single work colleague or several colleagues, a supervisor or manager, a contractor or a client/member of the public.”**

Women are more vulnerable to certain types of victimisation than men. Since women tend to be concentrated in low status jobs, they become easy targets for perpetrators of psychological violence who consider them inferior and less self-confident. So women workers make up a disproportionate number of its victims.

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

*Maritime worker*

**“There are call centre staff who sit all day with earphones on, listening to unrepeatable insults from customers – things they would never dare say face-to-face.”**

*Transport Salaried Staffs’ Association, (TSSA), Britain*

**“Violence against women has little to do with the man being aggravated and even less to do with what the victim has done. Instead, its roots lie in the man’s desire to exert control and power over a woman and would occur no matter what she did or did not do.”**

*Zimbabwe Amalgamated Railwaymen’s Union*

**“Our members have been screamed at, threatened, kicked, punched, hit, slammed against galley walls – all by outraged passengers.”**

*US Association of Flight Attendants*

### Violence at work – a trade union issue

The risk of workplace violence in the transport industry is high. Many transport workers face the threat of violence every day. Violent incidents have serious physical and psychological effects on workers. It is an occupational health and safety issue which should be given the same attention as other workplace hazards.

The Canadian Autoworkers’ Union believes that: *“we must insist that corporations take seriously this workplace safety issue and deal with it in a suitable manner”*. Preventative actions are possible and necessary. Employers need to take steps which help reduce the potential for workplace violence.

Trade unions and workers need to put pressure on management to address violence in the workplace. They should also be part of the process of identifying strategies to prevent violence and dealing with violence when it does occur.

For example, the ITF has drawn up a “Zero Air Rage” Charter. It calls on airline operators, handling agents and airports to negotiate policies with trade unions for preventing, managing and penalising disruptive passenger behaviour.



# Violence in the transport industry

Transport workers across all sectors have reported incidents of violence in the workplace. Certain occupations are at special risk. For example, workers are more at risk if they are working alone, dealing with the public or handling cash. Yet most staff are not trained to deal with violence in the workplace. In an ITF survey, over half of the respondents felt that they did not have adequate training to deal with violent incidents.

- **In Finland, an investigation is being conducted into violence against women working on ferries between Finland and Estonia and Finland and Sweden. Women crew members have been subjected to brutal attacks.**
- **In the United States, a female bus driver in Los Angeles was stabbed in her arm and thigh. Another female driver was sexually assaulted by a passenger who boarded the bus with a knife and ordered the other passengers to leave.**
- **In Australia, figures show that taxi drivers are 28 times more likely to experience non-sexual assault and almost 67 times more likely to be robbed compared to the broader community. Women taxi drivers face a much higher risk than men of sexual assault.**

There are general working conditions which expose women workers to the danger of violence, regardless of their job. For example:

- **The type and frequency of transport to and from work. Many women transport workers have complained of long and dangerous waits for transport by the side of the road.**
- **Location of car parks, bicycle sheds etc. Women transport workers at Heathrow Airport in London, for example, have complained of the dangers of walking alone at night to car parks which are some distance from the terminals.**
- **External lighting of car parks and exterior areas.**
- **The type of security devices provided to women working in male-dominated environments. For example, women seafarers fear the intrusion into their cabins by male employees.**

The ITF Women's Department is trying to build up a global picture of how violence affects women workers in the different transport sectors. This will help formulate counter-strategies.

## Air Rage



**“A cabin crew member of a British aircraft flying from London to Malaga in October 1998 needed 18 stitches in her arm and back after a male passenger smashed a bottle of vodka over her head and raked her body with the jagged glass.”**

Air rage is a growing problem and a serious danger to flight safety. Disruptive passenger behaviour ranges from not observing safety instructions through to verbal harassment or physical assault directed at staff, passengers or the aircraft.

The highest percentage of the ITF's women transport members are employed in the civil aviation sector as cabin crew and check-in personnel. So they are in the front line of dealing with often irate and aggressive air passengers. *“Imagine going to work with the expectation that you might be screamed at, hit or kicked while doing your job,”* commented a woman member of the Association of Flight Attendants in Washington, US.

Surveys conducted by the ITF show that the majority of airlines still have no proper policies and procedures to deal with air rage. Most do not provide any training for staff and even fewer airlines provide training for ground service employees.

In July 2000, the ITF held a week-long campaign against air rage. A further Day of Action was held in July 2001 to reinforce the message.

# National legislation

Currently, only Sweden and the Netherlands have developed specific statutory measures regarding violence at work. In Sweden, workplace violence and victimisation is addressed by the Work Environment Act. The emphasis is on prevention strategies, requiring employers to plan and organise work in such a way that violence and victimisation is minimised. They must also make it clear that violence will not be tolerated in the workplace.

Similarly in the Netherlands, the Work Environment Act was extended to cover sexual intimidation, aggression and violence at work. It is the responsibility of the employer to ensure that employees are protected from this behaviour, including when perpetrated by “clients”.

Most countries do not have specific legal measures to deal with violence at work. They have responded by making use of general laws related to the workplace. For example, in health and safety legislation, a duty is placed on employers to protect workers and to prevent hazards and dangers in the workplace. In a growing number of countries, this is considered to mean that employers should provide a violence-free workplace. In New Zealand, health and safety legislation has been used to develop guidelines for employers and employees on dealing with violence at work.

A book by the ILO on violence at work states that there is a growing interest in a new type of legislation directed at supporting workplace initiatives against violence. One of the first initiatives in this area is the United States Workplace Violence Prevention Tax Credit Bill 1997. It encourages companies to establish workplace safety programmes to combat violence against women. A tax credit of 40 per cent is granted for programmes which do one or more of the following:

- **ensure the safety of women employees including the hiring of security staff and the purchase of lighting and security systems.**
- **provide counselling to employees, including the establishment of a hotline or direct counselling service.**
- **are designed to educate employees about violent crimes against women.**
- **implement human resource policies to protect employees.**
- **provide legal, medical and financial services to employees subjected to violent crimes against women.**



# Negotiating workplace violence policies

Some transport unions have included workplace violence in collective bargaining. Different strategies have been used.

In some instances, unions have negotiated a clause in general agreements. For example, the South Eastern Railwaymen's Union (Calcutta) and the Northern Railwaymen's Union of India have negotiated a clause on violence at the workplace. The Canadian Autoworkers' Union has a model agreement which has the following clause relevant to workplace violence:

**“The Company and the Union agree that there shall be no discrimination, interference, restraint, harassment or coercion exercised or practised by either of them or by any of their representatives, with respect to any employee by reason of age, marital status, sex, race, creed, colour, national origin, political or religious affiliations, disability, sexual orientation nor by reason of union membership or activity.”**

The ITF has developed a clause for inclusion in all ITF-approved collective agreements for flag of convenience and national flag vessels.

**“Each seafarer shall be entitled to work, train and live in an environment free from harassment and bullying, whether sexually, racially or otherwise motivated, in accordance with ITF policy guidelines.”**

There are cases where more specific workplace violence issues have been negotiated. For example, the Barbados Workers' Union has negotiated security provisions which stipulate that companies will provide transportation to and from work when public transport is not running. Unions have also developed policies and clauses specific to sexual harassment (see Section 3 on Sexual Harassment).

The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), affiliated to the AFL-CIO Transportation Trades Department, suggests that employers who are serious about addressing workplace violence should have a comprehensive workplace violence prevention programme. Prevention is the most effective way of dealing with workplace violence. This programme should be negotiated with the union.

The AFSCME suggests that when negotiating with employers, there are three components which should be part of a prevention programme:

- **Assessing violence hazards.** The programme should describe methods of determining the extent of the problem, documenting incidents and evaluating the programme.
- **Preventing and controlling violence hazards.** The programme should use the information gathered from the hazard assessment to implement different methods of minimising or eliminating the risks of workplace violence.
- **Reacting to violence.** If violence occurs, employers and workers should be prepared to deal with it. This includes assessing the causes of the problem, making appropriate changes in the workplace and providing the psychological support needed by the victims of the violence.

Unions can negotiate a clause with management which states a commitment to a prevention programme. An AFSCME model text says:

**“The Employer, in co-operation with the Union, shall develop a comprehensive workplace violence prevention programme that includes:**

- (a) methods for identifying work practices and environmental factors that may lead to violence**
- (b) procedures for implementing controls that will reduce the risks for violence, including training employees**

- (c) procedures for responding to violence if it occurs**
- (d) the provision of support to staff who have experienced violence.”**

More specific clauses can be negotiated in addition to the clause which commits employers to tackling workplace violence. For example, a clause on training suggested by AFSCME says:

**“The Employer will provide employees training in techniques in recognising potentially violent situations/behaviour, defusing violent situations, and protecting themselves. The employer will provide annual refresher training.”**

An ILO book on Violence at Work suggests special preventative steps which could be taken by employers to reduce the risks of violence in the transport workplace. Unions need to ensure that these are part of a prevention programme.

For example, transport system planners need to address issues such as the comfort and size of waiting areas, noise levels, colour and lighting, and toilet facilities. They also need to review requirements for controlled entrances, security screening and guards, surveillance cameras and alarm systems to alert co-workers that urgent help is needed. Special protection is needed for transport staff working alone, like bus and taxi drivers.



## Guidelines for women activists and negotiators

- Ensure that your union has a policy on violence at work.
- Publicise the policy.
- Lobby your government for improved legislation dealing with violence at work.
- Find out the concerns of women workers in your workplace regarding violence at work.
- Include violence at work on the bargaining agenda.
- Develop clear guidelines on how employers can minimise the risk of violence.
- Develop guidelines on what female employees should do if they experience a violent incident.
- Provide victims with the opportunity to talk to a woman union representative.
- Set up a service for counselling victims.
- Keep a record of complaints.
- Take action against members involved in violence.
- Encourage workplace and union representatives to go on union approved education and training courses which deal with violence at work.

## Key questions for discussion

- What is the possibility for including violence in the work environment legislation of your country? How could you campaign for this?
- What is the possibility in your country for government-backed initiatives that support employers' action against violence in the workplace, such as that introduced in the USA? How could you campaign for this?

**Activity:** Understanding the causes of violence against women workers in the transport workplace

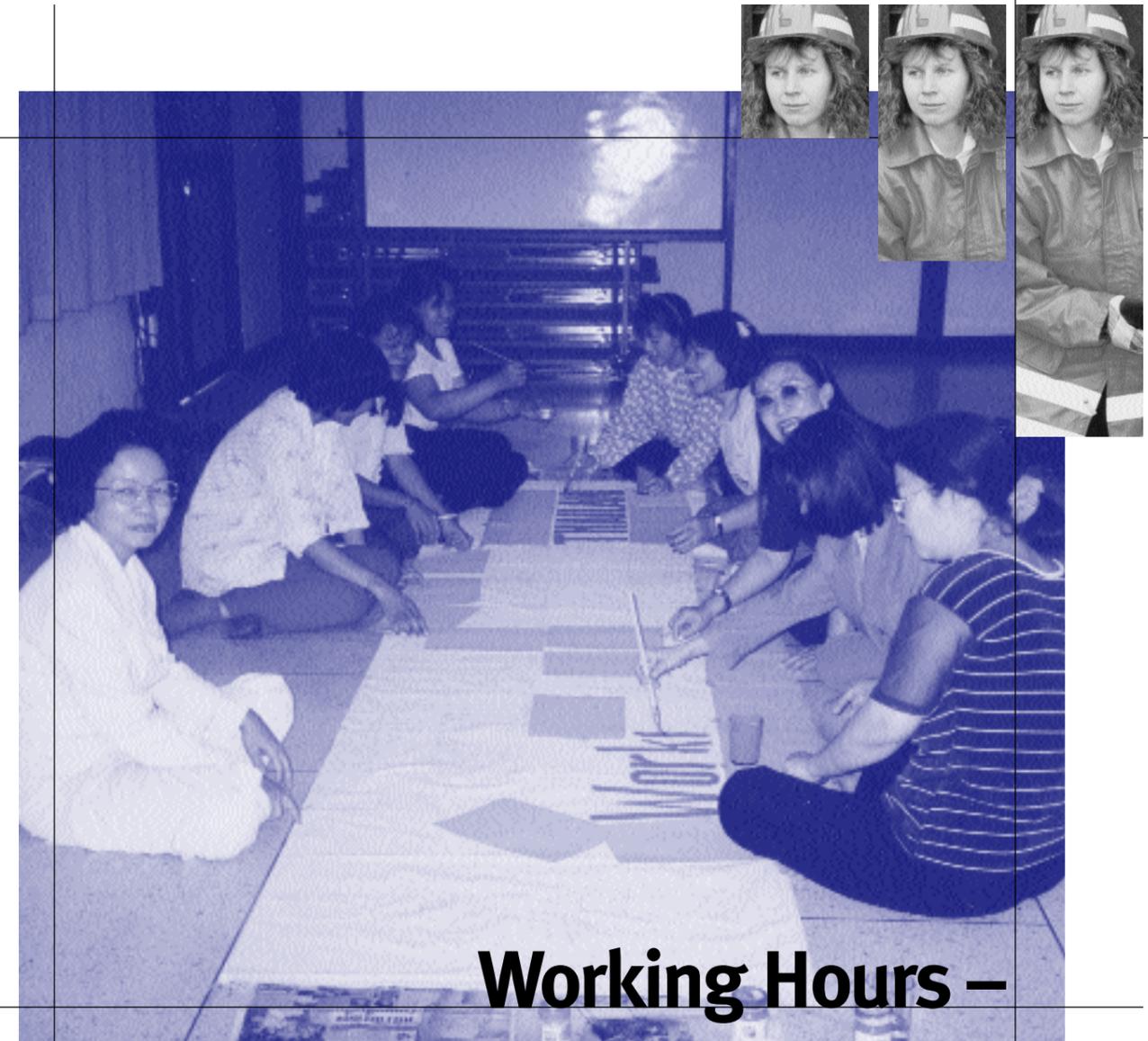
In small groups, discuss the causes of violence against women workers in your workplace or sector.

From the perspective of women workers, list the main proposals which your union should negotiate with management concerning a workplace violence prevention programme. Your proposals should include recommendations on:

1. how to assess workplace violence hazards.
2. how to reduce the risk of violence.
3. how to deal with violence when it occurs.

Report to plenary, followed by discussion.

Notes:



## Working Hours – Protecting Women Workers’ Rights

# 5

WOMEN  
transporting the world

**“Women bus conductors are expected to work 14-16 hours. If the person taking over your next shift fails to turn up, you are obliged to keep working.”**

*Bus conductor, Thailand*

**A**sk a woman worker to describe her terms and conditions of employment. Working hours will feature prominently. Many women in the transport industry are concentrated in those jobs which are part-time, or temporary. In some occupations, long working hours and awkward shift patterns conflict with a woman’s family responsibilities.

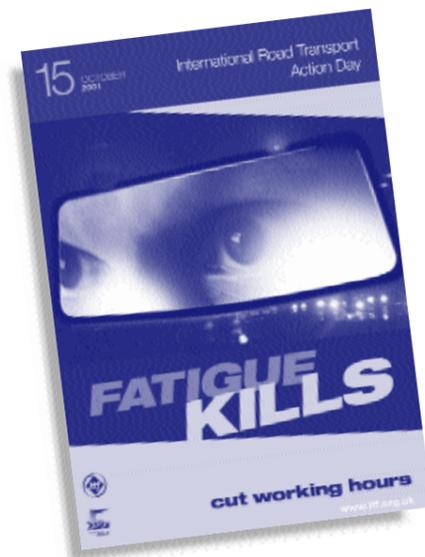
Gerd Nyberg of the Swedish Municipal Workers’ Union says that this is what has happened in bus companies in Sweden:

**“Working hours are being shifted to work peaks around the clock, running counter to the employee’s interest in combining work with the family. Loose forms of employment of hourly paid workers are associated with this system of work. Work is being timed for hours when childcare is not available, and time off occurs during the day, when children are either at nursery or in school.**

This affects passenger traffic particularly in large cities. It certainly applies to passenger

transport by bus companies in Sweden. At each new traffic allocation, the number of jobs without fixed hours is tending to increase. At certain workplaces, up to 30 per cent of employees are not working fixed hours.

**Those most affected are women. It has also resulted in women not staying in the job. It is difficult to combine being a bus driver with having children. People working for staff hiring companies represent a type of employee who have no possibility of planning their lives, since they never know very far ahead what their working hours are likely to be.”**



**“The image of ground staff cultivated by the airlines is different to the reality experienced by the workers. There are big stress and psychological problems caused by 7-day shiftwork, varying shift patterns, travelling times making longer days and the pressure of being the frontline person explaining delays.”**

*United Service Employees’ Union (Ver.di), Germany*

**“Below decks on virtually all cruise ships is a hidden world of long hours, low pay, insecurity and exploitation. Like their male counterparts, women on cruise ships will work long hours, seven days a week. We find no woman who has expressed an intention to work at sea for more than six years.”**

*Seafarers’ International Research Centre*

## Working hours in the transport industry

With globalisation and technological changes, many workers no longer have permanent jobs. They are now employed on more vulnerable terms as part-time, temporary, seasonal or casual workers. Employers refer to this as “flexibility”. They can increase and decrease hours and types of work according to the needs of the company.

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), between 65-90 per cent of all part-timers in the developed countries are women. Part-time work is sometimes defined as employment of less than 30 hours per week. But this differs from country to country. There are large variations in part-time hours worked, with many workers employed for just eleven hours per week.

Part-time work enables women to combine work and domestic responsibilities. However, for the majority of women, there is no choice. When full-time work is not available, women are pushed into part-time work. For example, the Canadian Labour Congress reports that a third of women working part-time want to work full-time, but can only find part-time employment. Likewise, women with small children are often forced to give up full-time jobs because of the very long hours which they would otherwise have to work.

Many studies have shown that part-time workers are vulnerable and exploited:

- **Most part-timers are women earning low wages.**
- **Part-time work holds fewer promotional prospects.**
- **There is less job security.**
- **Part-time work has fewer fringe benefits compared to full-time work.**
- **Part-time workers have reduced access to paid leave (including parental leave).**
- **There is reduced entitlement to pensions and other social security benefits.**

At a seminar organised for women railway workers in the European Union in 1995, part-time work was discussed and debated. The women were concerned, for instance, that in Britain part-time workers are being brought in to replace full-time jobs. Their terms and conditions are worse. In France, part-timers are often on temporary contracts and are not protected by legislation in the same way as other railway workers.

The ITF has also reported a growth in the use of temporary contracts. For example, they are being used by airlines such as British Midland and Japan Airlines.



### Working hours in civil aviation

In recent years, airline unions have reported extensive changes in terms and conditions of employment. These changes have been caused by industrial restructuring in the context of globalisation.

An ITF survey showed that industrial restructuring and flexible working practices had negative effects on working hours. A third of all unions reported that shifts were longer, whilst 40 per cent said that there was an overall increase in total working hours.

These development have had a particular effect on cabin crew – a sector where women are concentrated. Increases in working hours were reported by 88 per cent of the unions representing cabin crew, compared to less than 20 per cent among ground handling and maintenance workers.

As a result, the vast majority of unions believe that airline staff are working harder with less job security and satisfaction. Some airline companies are no longer prepared to negotiate over key dimensions of change such as working time.

*From “Contesting Globalisation”, ITF*

## International instruments

In 1994, a **Part-Time Work Convention (No. 175)** was adopted by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The Convention has so far only been ratified by eight countries: Cyprus, Finland, Guyana, Italy, Luxembourg, Mauritius, Netherlands and Slovenia. The ILO's approach is to promote measures that give part-time workers the same protection as full-time workers in the following areas:

- **Freedom of association and collective bargaining**
- **Occupational health and safety**
- **Discrimination in employment.**

The Convention states that part-time workers should have equal conditions to full-time workers in terms of:

- **Pay**
- **Job security**
- **Statutory social security**
- **Benefits such as paid annual leave and sick leave**
- **Maternity protection.**

Other Conventions adopted by the ILO relevant to working hours focus on work at night. The **Night Work (Women) Convention, No. 89**, adopted in 1948, prohibits night work by women for periods of at least eleven consecutive hours. The vast majority of ILO member states have legislation of some type prohibiting night work by women. Some countries have repealed this legislation; for example, Barbados, Ireland, Israel, Spain, Suriname, Australia and the United States.

There has been controversy in recent decades about prohibiting women from night work. Some people argue that this has discriminatory effects. For example, in the European Union it has been ruled that banning women from night work contravenes the principle of equal opportunity.

In response, the ILO states: *"In many countries, removal of protection could in practice aggravate women's working conditions, exposing them to longer hours of work and low pay while increasing their exposure to harassment, notably in transport to and from work at night."*

The ILO adopted a new **Night Work Convention, No. 171**, in 1990, protecting men and women workers who work at night. The night is defined as a period of at least seven consecutive hours, including those between midnight and 05:00. The Convention states that night workers should have the following rights:

- **Health protection (first-aid measures, health checks)**
- **Maternity protection**
- **Social services**
- **Extra compensation in the form of working time, pay or similar benefits.**

Some categories of workers are excluded from the Convention. These include sectors covered by the ITF such as maritime transport and inland navigation.

### EU Directive protects rights of part-time workers

In 1997, a Directive was adopted in the European Union which gives full employment rights to part-time workers. The Directive was negotiated by employer and trade union representatives. Countries of the European Union were obliged to integrate the Directive into national law by January 2000.

The principle of non-discrimination is central to the Directive. It states that *"in respect of employment conditions, part-time workers shall not be treated in a less favourable manner than comparable full-time workers solely because they work part time..."*

This means that part-time workers should have the same rights as comparable full-time workers in relation to pay, bonuses, holidays, maternity protection, promotion and other such rights.

The Directive also calls on management to consider requests by workers to move from full-time to part-time work, and vice versa. However, there is no obligation on management to agree to such requests. The Directive calls on the social partners to review obstacles which might limit the opportunities for part-time work.

## National legislation

Sex discrimination legislation or equal opportunities legislation (see Section 1) can be used to show that less favourable treatment of part-time workers disproportionately affects women and therefore amounts to sex discrimination. This is because women make up the bulk of the part-time workforce.

In some countries, anti-discrimination legislation has been used successfully to improve the rights of part-time workers. However, this is not always the case. A 1998 report from the European Commission said that *"despite equal opportunities legislation, in reality promotion opportunities are almost uniformly limited for part-time workers"*.

In other countries, specific legislation has been introduced on equality for part-time workers. Many of these countries are in the European Union and are obliged to translate the Part-Time Workers' Directive into national law.



### Equal opportunities for part-time workers?

Scandinavian countries are regarded as world leaders where equality of opportunity between men and women is concerned. Yet experiences on Norwegian railways show that part-time work is used to employ women on worse terms and conditions. Jane Brekkhus Sæthre, National Secretary of the Norwegian Railway Workers' Union, explains:

**"Improving efficiency and reducing costs in the never ending search for greater profitability has led to the employment of more staff on reduced hours or split shifts. This is evident in the Norwegian State Railways ticket call centre which is staffed by women in posts that are the equivalent of between 50 and 85 per cent of a full-time job.**

**The management sells this solution as a benefit, arguing that the job is so demanding that it couldn't possibly be undertaken full-time and that more flexible hours fit in better with family life.**

**However, what is never mentioned is that the women have reduced pension rights. In this way, the employer gets a more flexible workforce at the expense of the women. They lose between 15 and 50 per cent of their potential earnings. We are now seeking to ensure that all those who want to work full-time are able to do so."**

## Fighting for the future of work

### UPS strike

In August 1997, the IBT (Teamsters) union in the United States, which represents workers in the package delivery giant UPS, took strike action. Along with increases in pay and pensions, the Teamsters demanded limits on subcontracting, better health and safety provisions and more full-time jobs.

Some two-thirds of the drivers, sorters and other UPS workers represented by the union worked part-time. The union highlighted that these workers wanted full-time employment – but were given no chance to get it. *“The part-time issue is one that affects working families everywhere. It would particularly affect women and minorities,”* said the Teamsters.

The strike was successfully resolved after two weeks of action and protracted negotiations, which resulted in a five-year contract and the creation of ten thousand new full-time jobs from existing part-time positions.

### British Airways strike

In 1997, a highly effective strike in British Airways resulted in a major victory for the unions. ITF General Secretary David Cockroft commented at the time that *“at the heart of the dispute is a struggle about the future nature of work – about whether the jobs that today’s huge global companies are creating are to be real jobs with permanence, security and career prospects or whether work is to become temporary, impermanent and casual”*.

For almost a year before the strike, British Airways had made vague announcements about a cost-saving programme. One of BA’s aims was a radical restructuring of cabin crew working arrangements – an occupation where the majority of employees are women. This involved working longer hours, a pay freeze, as well as developing a new workforce of younger and less experienced but super-cheap cabin crew.

The company said that employees must accept these conditions. It said there would be no negotiations with the union and threatened to dismiss workers who went on strike.

After three days of strike action, the company was forced to negotiate with the union. Aviation workers in other countries showed support for BA workers by taking solidarity action. With the assistance of the ITF, the picket line became global!

## Negotiating working hours

Some ITF affiliates have successfully negotiated measures related to part-time and contract work.

- **The Barbados Workers’ Union has negotiated equal treatment for part-time workers in terms of promotion and training.**
- **The Trade Union of Railwaymen and Transport Construction Workers of Russia has negotiated agreements offering women the chance to work part-time and to job share. The agreement also covers equal access by part-timers to promotion, vocational training, job security and equality in terms of pay and conditions.**
- **The Japan Federation of Aviation Industry Unions has tried to win improvements in working conditions for workers on short-term contracts, including hourly pay increments.**
- **The FNV and its affiliates in the Netherlands have tried to get part-time work available in all sectors.**

Flexible working hours is another issue which unions have tried to negotiate with management. The Transport and General Workers’ Union (TGWU) in Britain, for example, argues that some flexibility is important for both men and women workers who have parental responsibilities.

**“Most parents need at least some flexibility in their working hours. The TGWU’s aim is to maximise workers’ control over their hours and minimise dependence on management discretion. Although employers will often informally rearrange shift patterns and/or working time in exceptional circumstances, such ad hoc arrangements often breed resentment amongst other workers and result in accusations of favouritism. To avoid such problems, whilst still achieving the flexibility that members will sometimes need, negotiators should aim to win a formal agreement over the circumstances in which shifts and working hours can be rearranged to deal with particular needs.”**

*TGWU, Britain*

In the **ITF Employer and Trade Union Equality Guidelines for the Civil Aviation Industry**, job sharing and flexible working patterns are proposed. This allows employees, especially women, to remain at work while having family commitments which make it difficult to sustain a full-time job. The guidelines state that job-sharing has advantages over part-time working: the job is less likely to be marginalised; it will retain all the characteristics of a full-time job, and can help women keep managerial and supervisory jobs.

### Guidelines for women activists and negotiators

- **Ensure that your union has a policy on issues concerning part-time, temporary and casual work.**
- **Publicise union policy amongst women workers.**
- **Lobby your government for improved legislation on part-time work.**
- **Find out the concerns of women workers in your workplace regarding working hours.**
- **Include issues concerning working hours on the bargaining agenda.**
- **Ensure that part-time workers have equal rights and benefits to full-time workers.**
- **Ensure that workers on temporary contracts are protected.**
- **Develop proposals concerning flexible working patterns that will benefit women workers.**
- **Develop strategies with your union to recruit non-unionised women workers, for example, in call centres.**



## Key questions for discussion

- Has your country ratified the ILO Part-Time Work Convention? How can your union campaign to ensure that it has, and that it is implemented in national legislation?
- What strategies does your union have to recruit women who are part-time, temporary or casual workers, and those who are employed in call centres? How can these strategies be strengthened?

**Activity:** Developing proposals on working hours

In small groups, discuss what are the problems which women workers face concerning working hours in your workplace?

From the perspective of women workers, develop a set of proposals on working hours which your union can negotiate with management.

Report to plenary, followed by discussion.

Notes:



## Improving Health and Safety

# 6

WOMEN  
transporting the world

**“In this era of globalisation, when companies and countries often start cutting hidden costs such as health and safety, women often pay the greatest price.”**

*Benjamin Alli, Occupational Health and Safety expert, International Labour Organisation (ILO)*

Workers all around the world are at risk of occupational accidents and diseases. Every year, there are 250 million accidents resulting in over 300,000 deaths. For workers in the transport industry, health and safety in the workplace are significant concerns.

The number of women workers internationally who die or have a disease as a result of their occupation is unknown. Yet many women workers experience the worst abuses. Stress, manual handling, repetitive strain injuries, as well as violence and sexual harassment are all hazards facing women workers.

Many transport workplaces are male-dominated, and have not been designed to accommodate women. Machinery and other aspects of the workplace may be unsuitable for the body shape and size of women. The health and safety of women workers is still not taken seriously. Many women passenger transport workers, for example, do not have access to separate and adequate toilet and washing facilities.

Women workers have specific health concerns and problems which are workplace issues. For example, health and safety risks during pregnancy, pre-menstrual syndrome (PMS) and painful periods, health



screening and HIV/Aids. In an excellent book called “One-Eyed Science – Occupational Health and Safety”, Karen Messing argues that workplace health and safety provisions need to reflect women’s working lives.

**“There are no facilities, including water, for women workers on the trains. This is used as an excuse not to employ women on the trains.”**

*Woman transport worker, Zambia*

**“We all had headaches; we’d forgotten things. My body felt like I had been run over by a truck and everything was achy; we had shakes.”**

*Woman cabin crew member describing problems with aircraft cabin air*

## Health and safety in the transport industry

- Research is being done on the effects of vibration on pregnant women working on board hydrofoils.
- In jobs which have been traditionally carried out by men, there is a need to adapt equipment to suit smaller frames. For example, some women bus drivers report problems because their driving seats are excessively large. The distance between the seat and the pedals can also result in muscular problems.
- Jobs which require the handling of loads carry risks of injury. For example, a study in 1999 showed that women cabin crew had significant concerns about lifting heavy bar boxes on aircraft. They were also concerned about opening aircraft doors, pushing carts and the handling and storage of baggage. Pregnant women workers are more susceptible to manual handling injury.
- An ILO and ITF-sponsored study on the hazards faced by airport check-in staff showed that they may be as vulnerable to occupational injury as manual workers. In a one year period, 44 per cent had been absent from work due to back pain.
- The effects of radiation exposure on air crew have received worldwide attention. This is a very important health issue. For example, relatively small doses of radiation can cause leukaemia or deformity in the developing foetus or stillbirth. Mental and physical fatigue associated with flying can also be harmful in pregnancy.
- Large numbers of ITF-affiliated members are women working in administrative roles. Research has been carried out into the possible negative health effects of working in front of visual display units (VDUs) on computers. It has been shown that the level of radiation is not dangerous, and there are no findings to suggest that exposure to VDUs can cause miscarriage and birth defects. Computer work has, however, been shown to have a direct effect on the eyes, and computer workers sometimes suffer from musculo-skeletal problems. In particular, repetitive strain injury can result from using computer keyboards during long periods without adequate wrist support.



### Stress in the workplace

According to the ILO, women workers experience higher levels of stress than men. This is mainly due to the double workload of many women. Combining work commitments and domestic responsibilities means that, in most cases, women work far longer hours than men. Women also experience greater stress because they are in low pay jobs, in organisations which lack family friendly policies, and in occupations which do not give them control over their jobs and work organisation.

Studies in civil aviation show that stress amongst cabin crew workers is high. Increases in the speed, volume and intensity of work are all sources of stress. A further source of stress has been the increasing numbers of abusive passengers. Many cabin crew members feel that their health has suffered because of their jobs.

Stress is also an issue for women drivers. Both men and women face possible attacks by passengers, traffic congestion, the risks of carrying large sums of money, and isolation. Women are far more likely to experience sexual harassment than men. This results in further stress.

Men and women seafarers are subject to stress because of their work. They deal with long periods of time away from their families and the physical dangers of being at sea. Since seafaring is male-dominated, the work environment is generally hostile to and stressful for women.

## International instruments

The ILO has two Conventions on Occupational Health which are relevant to women workers.

**ILO Convention on Occupational Safety and Health, No. 155 (1981)** states that member states must adopt national policy on occupational health and safety issues. This should include provisions for the:

**“...adaptation of machinery, equipment, working time, organisation of work and work processes to the physical and mental capacities of workers”.**

An adequate system of inspection must be set up to ensure that national policy and legislation is implemented, with penalties if laws are violated.

**ILO Convention on Occupational Health Services, No. 161 (1985)** requires governments to provide occupational health services which help to prevent workplace hazards. This should include:

- identifying health hazards in the workplace
- evaluating facilities such as toilets and canteens which may affect workers' health
- advice on the planning and organisation of work (including the design of workplaces, on the choice and condition of machinery, and substances used in work)
- promoting the adaptation of work to the worker
- collaboration in providing information, training and education in the fields of occupational health and hygiene
- participation in the analysis of occupational accidents and diseases.

**ILO Convention on Maternity Protection, No. 183 (2000)** includes provisions related to the health and safety of pregnant women. It states that measures need to be taken to ensure that pregnant or breast-feeding women are not obliged to perform work which could damage their health.

A declaration on **Occupational Health for All** adopted by the World Health Organisation in 1994 states that:

**“Employers are responsible for planning and designing a safe and healthy workplace, as well as for maintaining and constantly improving health and safety at work.**

**Workers in many countries are trained in occupational health and safety. They have the right to know the potential hazards and risks in their work and workplace, and they should, through appropriate mechanisms, participate in planning and decision-making concerning occupational health and other aspects of their own work, safety and health.**

**Workers should be empowered to improve working conditions by their own action, should be provided information and education, and should be given all the information, in order to produce an effective occupational health response through their participation.”**



## National legislation

Under health and safety law in many countries, there are provisions which are directly relevant to women transport workers. For example, in Britain the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 state:

- Sanitary conveniences and washing facilities should be provided at readily accessible places.
- Washing facilities should have running hot and cold or warm water, soap and clean towels or other means of cleaning or drying.
- Men and women should have separate facilities. Joint facilities for both sexes are permitted but they must be provided in a room which can be locked from the inside, and is only used by one person at a time.

In a number of countries, laws have been adopted which protect the health of pregnant women. For example, in Denmark and Finland, the employer must try to reduce the risk or find a less hazardous work environment for the woman. If this is not possible, the woman may take paid leave without incurring a reduction in her normal maternity leave. National legislation however does not guarantee adequate protection. Women workers at an ITF Southern African seminar on health and safety commented that laws are often not implemented. Some laws need updating to cover new technologies and chemicals in the workplace.



### European health and safety legislation

There are several European Union Directives relevant to the health and safety of women workers. In 1992, the EC adopted a Directive aimed at protecting the health of pregnant women, and women who have recently given birth and/or are breast-feeding. Employers must make an assessment of the workplace and the work of pregnant or breast-feeding women. If the assessment reveals a risk to health and safety, then the employer is obliged to take steps to avoid the risk. If this is not possible, the worker must be transferred to another job. If transferring her is not feasible, then the worker is to be granted leave in accordance with national legislation. The Directive provides a list of agents and working conditions considered to be harmful to pregnant women.

Other relevant European Union Directives relate to the minimum health and safety requirements for the manual handling of loads, and working with display screen equipment. This Directive does not apply to drivers' cabs or control cabs for vehicles or machinery and computer systems on board a means of transport. It establishes the right of workers to receive eyesight testing before working on display screen equipment and at regular intervals thereafter.

New legislation on cosmic radiation for airline workers is being introduced. This legislation deals with the issue of radiation and pregnancy, and recommends *“that it should be as low as reasonably achievable”*. It seems to give employers a basis for transferring cabin crew to ground duties early on in their pregnancies.

## Negotiating health and safety

Government regulation and control is crucial. Employers must also be pushed to take responsibility for the health and safety of workers. Many unions negotiate health and safety issues with management as part of the collective bargaining process. However, the specific health and safety concerns of women workers are often neglected. Some ITF affiliates have negotiated special rights for women. These include:

- **The Trade Union of Railwaymen and Transport Construction Workers of Russia has negotiated that 20 styles of protective clothing are designed for women railway workers.**
- **The Transport and Dockworkers' Union in Mumbai negotiated toilet and rest facilities for women working at a port shed.**
- **As a result of union intervention, facilities have been provided for women railway workers in Zimbabwe.**
- **The Transport and General Workers' Union in Britain has negotiated menstrual-leave agreements and health screening for breast and cervical cancer in a number of bus companies.**



### Health and safety training for women workers

The ILO Safework Programme is helping women workers to address occupational health and safety issues.

Kalpana Desai is a port computer worker in Bombay. She has borne a heavy burden as a women activist in her union – the Transport and Dockworkers' Union.

Kalpana had never taught or organised workers before the first ILO workshop. Together with a group of other Indian women, she learned about participatory training techniques and studied technical occupational health and safety materials. At the end of the first workshop, Kalpana had developed enough self-confidence to go out and organise health and safety workshops for her union. After a second workshop, Kalpana was elected to the Women's Steering Committee of the ITF.

Today, Kalpana organises and teaches trade union workshops on health and safety. She speaks publicly in her community about HIV/Aids.

### Dealing with HIV/Aids in the workplace: ITF women in Southern Africa

At a workshop of the ITF Southern African Women's Network Project, HIV/Aids was discussed in detail. In all the countries of the sub-region, the virus now affects approximately one out of every five adults. The overwhelming majority of people living with HIV/Aids are young, African women. The workshop participants – women from Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe – shared their experiences of HIV/Aids in the workplace. They did this by means of a role-play. The participants worked on this scenario in small groups:

**A member who has been diagnosed as HIV positive comes to her shop steward to get support against possible discrimination both by fellow workers and by management. The worker is also looking for advice on treatment and maintaining her health. In the meantime, other members have expressed fears about working alongside a worker who is HIV positive. Management has not yet adopted a sympathetic policy towards workers who are HIV positive, and needs to be persuaded to do so.**

Through the role-play, workers showed that:

- **Managers are usually resistant to taking a sympathetic position on HIV/Aids. They need to be educated about the condition.**
- **Workers are often ignorant about HIV infection and are therefore afraid of working with a person known to be HIV positive.**
- **When workers understand more about the infection, they usually come to see HIV as a trade union issue and can apply their negotiating skills to the situation. Issues to be negotiated include education for all workers about transmission of the virus, the rights of workers who are HIV positive, sick leave provisions, health care access provisions, and education on the care of people living with Aids.**
- **Knowledge about the condition also helps workers to deal with HIV/Aids infection in the family. Knowing the basics about caring for a person with Aids helps reduce the stress of living in a society where levels of infection are so high.**

The Zimbabwe women told a touching story to demonstrate the importance of talking openly about HIV/Aids, and of taking steps to end discrimination against fellow workers who are HIV positive. The story, based on true events, went like this:

**“Mrs Juru is an office worker in a transport company. She shares her office with Mr Goro who has disclosed that he is HIV positive. Mrs Juru is frightened of Mr Goro's situation. She insists that he should not touch her lunchbox or drink from her cup. She states emphatically that she won't talk to anyone who is HIV positive. Mr Goro says that it is possible for anyone to be HIV positive, and that after all it was not his fault. He points out that Mrs Juru herself could be HIV positive. As his health declines over time, he gets lots of support from fellow workers – but not from Mrs Juru. He eventually dies, but gets a decent burial and his family receives lots of love and support from his fellow workers. Mrs Juru by this stage has gone for a test. She is devastated to find that she is HIV positive. Having been so antagonistic to Mr Goro, she can't face telling her boss or her fellow workers. She commits suicide by stabbing herself.”**

The story sadly demonstrates that although the governments of Southern Africa have adopted a Code of Conduct on HIV/Aids and employment, ignorance and discrimination are still common in the workplace. The concluding messages of the workshop were “A friend with HIV/Aids is still my friend”, and “Down with discrimination against people living with Aids”.

*Jane Barrett, ITF Southern African Project Co-ordinator*

## Guidelines for women activists and negotiators

- Ensure that your union has a policy on health and safety in the workplace, including the specific problems and issues faced by women workers.
- Publicise the policy amongst women workers.
- Lobby your government for improved legislation on health and safety.
- Find out the concerns of women workers in your workplace regarding health and safety.
- Include health and safety issues affecting women workers on the bargaining agenda.
- Develop clear guidelines on how employers can minimise health and safety risks for women workers.
- Ensure that women workers have information on the health and safety risks in their workplaces.
- Ensure that women trade union representatives are part of risk assessments and/or health and safety committees.
- Develop guidelines on what female employees should do if their health is affected by work.
- Keep a record of complaints.
- Encourage workplace and branch representatives to go on union approved education and training courses which deal with health and safety.

## Key questions for discussion

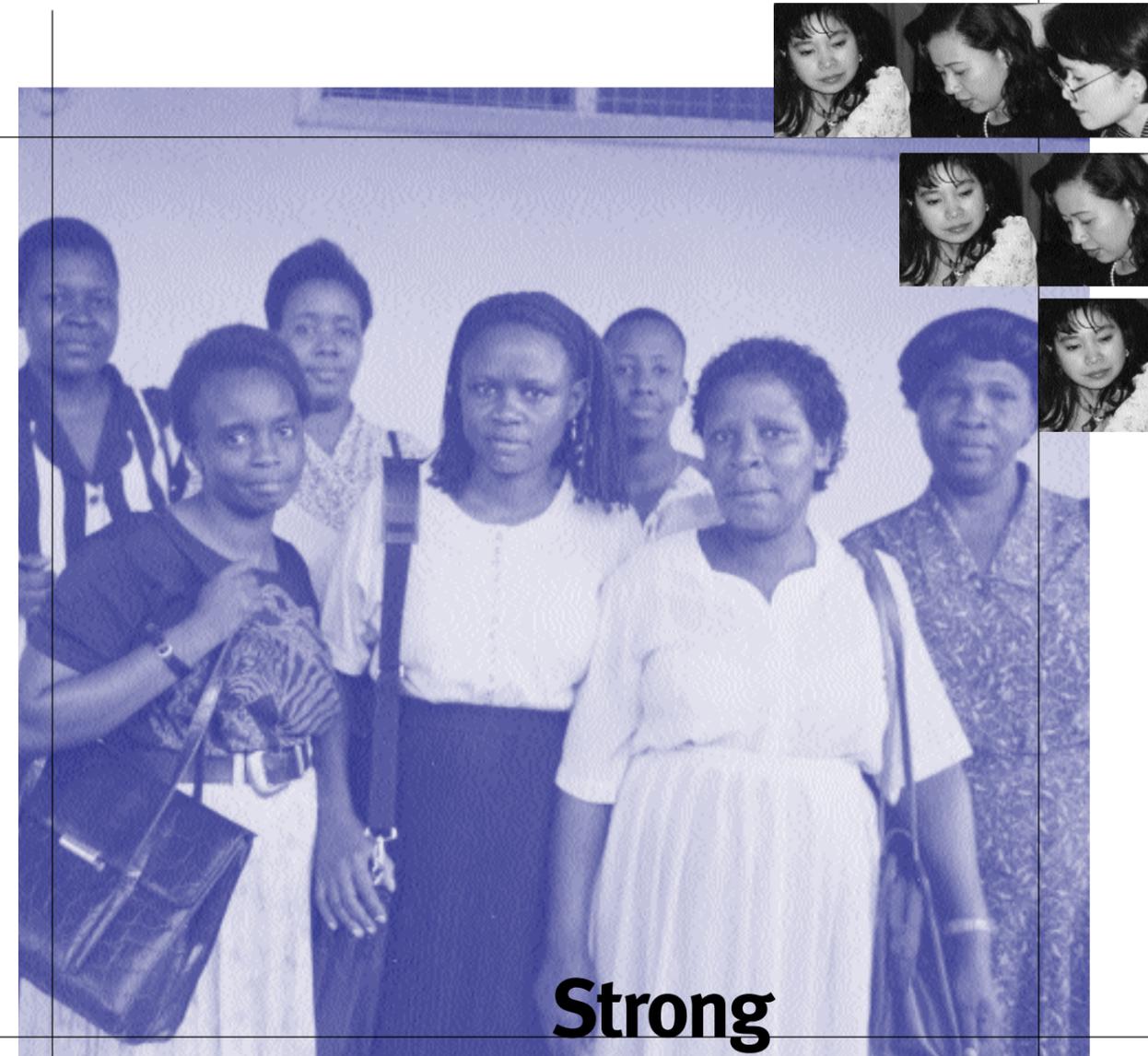
- What provisions especially for women workers exist in the health and safety laws of your country? How can they be improved? How can they be better implemented?
- What policy and activities does your union have in relation to HIV/Aids? How can they be strengthened?

**Activity:** A trade union strategy on health and safety for women workers

In small groups, discuss the main health and safety hazards which women experience in your workplace.

Develop a strategy on health and safety for your union from the perspective of women in your workplace. Your strategy should cover collective bargaining and other activities.

Report to plenary, followed by discussion.



**Strong  
Unions  
Need  
Women!**



WOMEN  
transporting the world

**“Unions which do not fight for the rights of their women members will face both a threat to their membership and to working conditions and salaries for all workers. It’s our job to make sure that does not happen. Unions need women, and women need unions!”**

*Sarah Finke, ITF Women’s Officer*

**W**omen workers are entering the transport industry in increasing numbers. However, the industry remains male-dominated. Many ITF-affiliated unions have not dealt adequately with the needs and concerns of women workers. Women have generally not been integrated fully into unions and have often faced hostility and harassment from fellow male workers.

In many instances, women workers choose not to join unions. A survey of national and international trade unions, conducted by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the International Confederation



of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) in 1998, shows the many factors preventing women from becoming union members. The most common reason mentioned is that women do not understand how trade unions can help them. Another common reason is that women do not have the time to join unions because of family responsibilities.

## Why do women find it difficult to participate in trade unions?

Women transport workers who are union members are often in a minority – both in their workplaces and in their unions. They find it difficult to participate and make themselves heard.

The style of meetings is often the first barrier which women encounter. Male-dominated union meetings can be hostile and threatening. Sexist language is often used. This can have an alienating impact on women. Alongside sexist language, meetings can be confrontational and aggressive. Heckling and derisive comments are commonplace. Women and men also communicate in different ways. Men often tend to dominate conversations with women or to interrupt. Women participants struggle to make their voices heard.

Women also face practical barriers to attending meetings. When meetings are scheduled outside working hours, particularly at night, this discourages women’s participation. In most cases, transport is not provided and there are no childcare arrangements.

Or, women workers go to a meeting but find it is not relevant to their needs and problems. Equality,

maternity issues, and childcare are seen as “women’s issues” and seldom addressed. So women are discouraged from attending future meetings.

Similarly, collective bargaining tends to be dominated by men. This means that important issues for women workers are often not on the bargaining agenda. This might lead women workers to question the benefits of being part of a union in the first place.

Women also face barriers which restrict their access to leadership positions. These include the predominantly male culture of unions, the disproportionate family responsibilities of many women, the stereotyped expectations about their roles, and the lack of confidence which women often have in their own abilities.



**“Women have not been well represented at most of our union seminars and hence lack exposure and experience in the union’s decision-making bodies. We strongly support the ITF’s resolution that 30 per cent of delegates must consist of women at all seminars.”**

*Railway worker, Zambia*

**“It was very difficult for our male unionists to organise meetings with young women who started to join our union. They arranged everything and women were just guests at the meeting. As a result, the young women regarded the union as a place to make complaints and did not understand it as an organisation which could change situations.”**

*Railway worker, Japan*

**“Getting women into the collective bargaining process and persuading male negotiators to place issues affecting women transport workers on the agenda, remain major stumbling blocks to women trade unionists all over the world.”**

*Woman worker at ITF seminar*

### Check-list for branch participation

The Transport and General Workers’ Union in Britain drew up this check-list in order to make branch meetings more accessible to women workers:

- Can women members get to the meeting?
- Is it accessible by public transport?
- Could lifts be organised?
- Should it be held at a different time?
- Can the branch provide a childcare/babysitter allowance?
- Are there branch childcare allowances?
- Do women members get notices of meetings and activities?
- Are branch meetings conducted in an open, friendly style?
- Is jargon avoided or explained?
- Are debates organised around a variety of union issues?
- Is the meeting interesting?
- Does the branch have a social side; for example, a drink after the meeting or an occasional fundraising social or disco?

# Strengthening women's participation in trade unions

Women workers and trade union activists have been at the forefront of challenging the dominant male culture of many trade unions. They have developed strategies to build the democratic and active involvement of women members at all levels of union life.

## Building structures

Many unions have established an internal structure to promote equality. The nature and role of these structures differ from union to union. In many unions, a women's committee has been established. Some unions have also appointed a Women's Officer and/or set up a Women's Department. For example, the national Women's Department of the Canadian Autoworkers' Union supports women's local union initiatives and is responsible for co-ordinating policy concerning equality issues.

There are good reasons for establishing women's structures, including:

- To encourage women to join trade unions
- To boost women's participation in trade unions

- To prepare women for posts of responsibility within the unions
- To build the awareness, confidence and organisational skills of women
- To design educational materials for women workers
- To lobby for legislative changes in favour of women's needs
- To collect, record and discuss information on women's issues
- To formulate strategies for collective bargaining and action.

Women workers have fought hard to ensure that these structures are treated seriously. As a woman member of Thai Airways International Union pointed out: "The union neither supports nor gives importance to the women's committee. Women's problems are seen as soft or light issues."

Some unions have set up gender committees which include both men and women. In most Scandinavian countries, women's committees have been replaced

with equality committees. The goal is to ensure that a gender equality strategy is incorporated into the union's decision-making structures and general activities.

There are many arguments for and against different kinds of structures for women in trade unions. Other women's experiences hold useful lessons.

## Women and decision-making

Only a small number of women hold top posts in unions around the world. Diana Holland, Chair of the ITF Women's Committee, comments that:

**"Across ITF unions, there are only a handful of women general secretaries and with the exception of aviation and tourism, women rarely represent their unions at international level. Transport is a very male-dominated industry. So the obstacles are enormous in the first place. It's really not going to change without major efforts at decision-making levels, and the introduction of targets and systems to guarantee women's representation, such as reserved seats or proportionality."**

Women in unions have challenged their lack of representation in union decision-making. In response, some unions have adopted measures aimed at increasing women's participation. This has taken different forms.

In some unions, there are reserved seats on decision-making bodies. For example, the South Eastern Railwaymen's Union in India has five seats reserved for women on the union's "central organisation". In some cases, unions have quotas. For example, the Trade Union of Railwaymen and Transport Construction Workers Union of Russia has a policy that a minimum of 35 per cent of Congress delegates must be women.

Achieving proportional representation has been another strategy. For example, the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) in Britain has a rule that women must be represented on national, regional and district committees in proportion to the number of women in the union as a whole.

**"The revolution in women's representation followed recognition by the General Executive Committee that efforts to secure full representation of the TGWU's 176,000 women members by voluntary means had not been fully successful."**

## Women and collective bargaining

Very few trade unions involve women in collective bargaining. Since collective bargaining is the heart of all trade union activity, the needs and concerns of all union members should be included. The main problems, however, faced by women workers are often ignored in collective bargaining. The lack of women officers/organisers and women shop stewards make this situation worse.



## Mexican women organise!

In 1996, women members of the Mexican Tramway Workers' Union, a public transport union based in Mexico City, started organising themselves to ensure they were democratically represented within the union.

The union leadership at the time did not encourage women's involvement in union affairs and women did not participate in union assemblies. There was a representative for women — the son of the General Secretary! He did not properly represent the views of the women members.

Some of the women started to meet in each other's houses to talk about how to get a real voice in the union. They got more and more support from other women members. They joined forces with others in the union who wanted a more active leadership.

When the next trade union elections were held, women participated fully and deposed the son of the General Secretary. They elected a women's representative who really would work on the issues that women were concerned about.

Now the union has a fully functioning women's committee. One of the recent achievements of the committee has been to open up tram-driving jobs to women — an area previously reserved for men.



## Establishing a Women's Committee

The Dutch Transport Workers' Union, FNV Allies, has developed women's structures over the years. The union's Women's Secretary works part-time. Her job is to look after the interests of working women (and of women who have worked) in the transport sectors. She co-ordinates meetings, education events and activities for women. Women are represented at many different levels of the union. The most important body is the Women and Work Committee, an advisory group to the union's governing bodies. This Committee can have up to fifteen members, who are elected once every three years at special meetings of women trade union officials. The Committee draws up specific areas of policy around which the union can concentrate its activities for women workers. For example, priorities have included work and caring responsibilities, working hours, affirmative action, equal treatment and working conditions. The union has made constitutional arrangements to ensure women's representation at various levels in the organisation. Seats are reserved for women on its highest decision-making body. There are also two different advisory groups for women, one for the railway sector and the other for regional transport.

## Setting up a Women's Department

In 1991, at the Annual Delegates Congress of the Kenya Railway Workers' Union, the constitution was amended to include a Women's Department. In the same year, a Women's Affairs Co-ordinator was appointed to head the Department and carry out education within the union. The main aim was to make women feel they are an integral part of the union and can participate actively in all union matters without discrimination or fear. For a long time, women had felt marginalised from union activities.

The measures taken involved the combined efforts of both women and men from the grassroots up to the national level. Women had to campaign at the grassroots level both for election and to form part of the delegation to the annual congress. The union's General Secretary assisted the women to lobby the board to amend the constitution.

Other measures have also been implemented, including organising and recruitment skills seminars. These have helped to prepare women for more active roles within the union. Efforts have also been made to ensure that a third of the participants are women.

These actions were monitored in several ways. The Women's Affairs Co-ordinator and General Secretary worked closely together to monitor the impact of the programmes implemented by the Women's Department. The evaluation showed that there were successes. A significant number of women took up positions at different levels in the union, participated with their male counterparts in all union activities, and became very vocal and active in delivering services to the membership.

## Building a Women's Network

Jane Brekkhus Sæthre, National Secretary of the Norwegian Railway Workers' Union, says it is important for women in male-dominated industries to be able to come together to exchange experiences and discuss solutions.

*"Our union has established its own network of around 150 active women from different regions and different professional groups on the railways. Through this network, we provide training in trade union rights, speaking and negotiating skills, and bring out each individual's personal abilities and strengths.*

*As a result of the network, the number of women representatives in our organisation has grown considerably. We also place great importance on women being represented on bodies, committees and working groups. Women often seek different solutions and think differently from men. The decisions that come out of such deliberations are often more effective when both sexes have been involved."*

## Women transport workers and international solidarity

Women transport workers around the world share many experiences and problems. By coming together, women can learn from each other, seek common solutions and build collective action.

At the ITF Congress in November 1998, new structures designed to guarantee the representation of women in the ITF were agreed. An international women's committee was set up with representatives from the ITF's eight industrial sections and its five regions. There are also five seats reserved for women on the Executive Board – the ITF's governing body between congresses. For the first time in the ITF's history, a woman was elected as vice president.



Diana Holland (left), from the TGWU (Great Britain) and chair of the Women's Committee, describes the Committee's role:

**"We don't just want to talk about the situation of women transport workers. We want to make a difference."**

**The Women's Committee decided to prepare a campaign for basic women's rights in the transport industry, launched in 2000. Its work programme is quite detailed, and we hope it will inform the activities of all ITF unions.**

**Given the examples of violence against women suffered in the aviation, maritime, road and rail industries, the ITF Women's Committee also plans to join the international campaign being conducted by other global union federations against violence.**

**We have launched a newsheet to promote and strengthen the ITF Women's Network. Union education too is very important. In addition to implementing a thirty per cent target for women's participation in education events, the ITF is organising a two-year**

**education programme for women in Africa, and preparing similar projects for Latin America and the Asia/Pacific region. This ITF resource book is also an initiative of the Women's Committee."**

The ITF has also set up an international women's network. The main purpose is for women activists in transport unions to share and exchange information on a regular basis. Each ITF union has been asked to nominate a contact person for the network. The contact person should report back on trends, problems and successes both to the Country Co-ordinator (who should be nominated by the contact people in each country) and to the ITF regional office or Women's Department.

First the contact people identify where women members are in the union. Their general role is to work for the formation of women's structures, for women's recruitment and for positive policies concerning women union members. They have an important job. They are best placed to tell whether the work the ITF is doing is useful to women members.



Photo: SIRC

## Building an ITF Women's Network in Asia/Pacific

**“With the Asia/Pacific Women's Conference in 1994 held in Bangkok, the ITF Women's Programme took off. The aim was to encourage women to join trade unions. We hoped to create an awareness, increase women's participation and build their confidence. Once national and regional activities started, women transport workers showed a keen interest.**

**Slowly, the participation of women has been increasing. With the launch of the ITF campaign “Women Transporting the World”, for which a number of unions have enrolled, women in the Asia/Pacific region felt a need to remain in close contact so as to extend support and solidarity. It all started with an informal network of volunteers/contact persons from a few unions in India. We kept in touch with each other through telephone, fax, emails and letters, and shared information regularly. A remarkable achievement of this network was the celebration of International Women's Day for which three separate programmes were organised in Mumbai in March 2001.**

**It is our endeavour to expand this network. An ITF-FNV South Asian Sub-Regional Seminar provided the opportunity for the contact people from different countries to meet. The network spread from India to Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal. Though it is too early to evaluate the success, we can be sure of one thing – it will bring women transport workers of the region closer to each other than ever before. The network is providing a platform for women to voice their achievements, their failures, their concerns and grievances and to share them with their fellow workers.”**

*Saki Rizwana, Bangladesh Biman Sramik Union (BBSU)*



## Women Transporting the World

Women Transporting the World is a global ITF campaign to win better employment rights for women transport workers. The campaign also aims to get more women involved in trade union activities. *“This is the first time we have asked unions to campaign on an issue that affects every transport mode and every transport workplace,”* said David Cockroft, ITF General Secretary.

The ITF carried out a survey of affiliates to identify areas for campaigning. The survey confirmed that women transport workers face direct discrimination in the workplace.

In the first year of the campaign, participating unions identified specific targets for reducing inequalities between men and women workers. They also organised education activities for their members. The ITF supported the campaign by distributing campaign posters and postcards.

On International Women's Day in 2001, many ITF affiliates organised events to promote women's basic rights. Rallies were held in Burkina Faso, Guinea, Ivory Coast and Niger. In Brazil, a campaign was launched on the health of women airline workers. In New Zealand, women aviation workers campaigned for company childcare provision. Over 50 countries participated in the events.

*“From discrimination and harassment to lack of childcare, this event has ensured that issues that matter worldwide to women have been raised by women,”* says Sarah Finke, ITF Women's Officer.

WOMEN  
♀ transporting the world



## The Southern African ITF Women's Network Project

The Southern African ITF Women's Network Project was established in early 1999. The project aims to develop the confidence, knowledge and ability of women in the transport unions of the sub-region. All ITF affiliates of Southern Africa were invited to participate.

A total of eleven affiliates in Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe signed up to the project. A part-time project co-ordinator was employed. The project has been funded by the Dutch trade union federation, FNV.

The project has consisted of four components:

- **Two sub-regional workshops a year over a two-year period, to which each affiliate could send two women. The women participating in these workshops were known as "contact persons" and were expected to be consistent throughout the programme. The themes of each workshop were decided by the participating women at the first planning workshop. They were health and safety, collective bargaining, and trade union and human rights.**
- **National workshops in each country, where a wider group of transport union women could participate. These workshops were run entirely by the "contact persons", who made use of the materials and information produced for the sub-regional workshops.**
- **An occasional newsletter produced by the project co-ordinator.**
- **Telephonic and written communication between the project co-ordinator and the "contact persons", and between the "contact persons" themselves.**

Half way into the pilot programme, it was agreed that the project should be replicated in East Africa and in Francophone West Africa. Similar programmes are currently being run out of the Nairobi regional office and the Francophone office of the ITF.

An interim evaluation of the project by the participating women themselves has shown:

- **All the women have grown in confidence in their trade union activities, and they have expanded their knowledge on a wide range of subjects.**
- **The participation of women in leadership positions has improved. More women have been elected into national and regional or branch leadership, and more women are involved in collective bargaining teams.**
- **The active participation of all members in trade union activities has however been hampered by wide-scale retrenchments/redundancies throughout the sub-region. Women trade union members have been particularly badly hit by retrenchments.**
- **In some countries of the sub-region, notably Zimbabwe and Swaziland, political instability has created new challenges for trade union women. The network participants have felt empowered to meet these challenges.**

We hope that the links made between transport trade union women of the sub-region will be long-lasting, and that these links will be sustained through the contact persons.

*Jane Barrett, ITF Southern African Project Co-ordinator*

## Guidelines for women activists and negotiators

- **Find out the concerns which women workers have in your workplace regarding participation in a union.**
- **Ensure that your union has structures to promote women's issues and equality.**
- **Ensure that your union has measures to guarantee women's participation in decision-making and collective bargaining.**
- **Develop guidelines on how your union can improve its recruitment of women workers.**
- **Develop guidelines on how your union can ensure women's participation in local meetings.**
- **Encourage women members to attend union education courses.**
- **Encourage women members to stand for shop steward or workplace representative elections.**
- **Ensure that your union has elected an ITF contact person for the women's network.**



## Key questions for discussion

- “Unions which do not fight for the rights of their women members will face both a threat to their membership and to working conditions and salaries for all workers.” How can you persuade the majority of men members of your union that this is the case?
- How can the ITF Women’s Network help to strengthen women’s participation in your trade union?
- How can your union help to strengthen the ITF Women’s Network?

**Activity:** Improving the participation of women workers in your union

In small groups, discuss how women participate in your union. What problems do they experience?

Evaluate the mechanisms which your union has put in place to strengthen the role of women in the union. What have been the successes and problems?

Prepare a resolution for your next union Congress on strengthening women’s participation in union activities and decision-making.

Report to plenary, followed by discussion.

### Notes:

## Contacts for further information

### International Transport Workers’ Federation

ITF Women’s Officer: **Sarah Finke**

ITF House  
49-60 Borough Road  
London SE1 1DR  
UK  
Tel: +44 20 7940 9258  
Fax: +44 20 7357 7871  
Email: women@itf.org.uk  
Internet: www.itf.org.uk

### ITF Interamerican Office

Contact Person: **José Iglesias**

Avda. Rio Branco, 26-11 Andar  
CEP 20090-001 Centro  
Rio de Janeiro  
Brazil  
Tel: +55 21 2223 0410 / 2223 0411/ 2223 0412  
Fax: +55 21 2283 0314  
Email: rio@itf.org.uk

### ITF-Bureau Afrique Francophone

Contact Person: **Nazi Kaboré**  
1450 Avenue Kwame Nkrumah  
10 BP 13499  
Ouagadougou 10  
Burkina Faso  
Tel: +226 20 53 62  
Fax: +226 33 31 01  
Email: itfwak@fasonet.bf

### ITF Asia Pacific Sub-Regional Office

Contact Person: **Nishi Kapahi**  
12D College Lane  
New Delhi 110001  
India  
Tel: +91 11 335 4408  
Fax: +91 11 335 4407  
Email: itfindia@del2.vsnl.net.in

### ITF African Regional Office

Contact Person: **Wairimu Mwangi**  
P.O. Box 66540  
Westlands  
Nairobi  
Kenya  
Tel: +254 244 8019  
Fax: +254 244 8020  
Email: itf@kenyaonline.com

### International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)

Equality Co-ordinator: **Elsa Ramos**  
5 Boulevard du Roi Albert II  
1210-Brussels  
Belgium  
Tel: +32 2 224 0211  
Fax: +32 2 201 5815  
Email: equality@icftu.org  
Internet: www.icftu.org

### International Labour Organisation (ILO)

Equality and Employment  
4 Route des Morillons  
CH-1211 Geneva  
Switzerland  
Tel: +41 22 799 7115  
Fax: +41 22 799 6344  
Email: egalite@ilo.org; genprom@ilo.org  
Internet: www.ilo.org

### Coalition of Labor Union Women

1925 K Street, NW  
Suite 402  
Washington D.C. 20006  
USA  
Tel: +1 202 223 8360  
Fax: +1 202 842 7888  
Email: info@cluw.org  
Internet: www.cluw.org

### Women Working Worldwide

**Angela Hale**  
Room 412, Geoffrey Manton Building  
Manchester Metropolitan University  
Rosamond Street  
Manchester M15 6LL  
UK  
Tel: +44 161 247 1760  
Fax: +44 161 247 6333  
Email: women-ww@mcr1.poptel.org.uk  
Internet: www.poptel.org.uk/women-ww

### International Federation of Workers’ Education Associations (IFWEA)

GMB College  
College Road  
Manchester M16 8BP  
UK  
Tel: +44 161 860 5952  
Fax: +44 161 881 1853  
Internet: www.ifwea.org

## Notes

---

## Notes

---

# Notes

---