

# GREAT EXPECTATIONS... MIXED RESULTS



**Unions for Women**  
**Women for Unions**

February 2005

International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)



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## I. INTRODUCTION



### **Union women out in force in Beijing UN Women's Conference**

In 1995, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) brought together a delegation of more than 300 women trade unionists at the Fourth United Nations' Women's Conference in Beijing. Working as a united force, their lobbying ensured that the final Beijing Platform for Action included a strong section on women workers' rights.

The Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) covers 12 'critical areas of concern': women in poverty, unequal access to education and training, and health care; violence against women, the effects of conflict, economic inequality; unequal share in decision-making, institutional means for women's advancement, women's human rights, women in the media, women and the environment, and the rights of the girl child.

Five years later, in September 2000, 189 Heads of State agreed the Millennium Declaration in New York and with it a set of eight 'Millennium Development Goals' (MDGs) to be achieved by 2015. The MDGs were inspired by the work carried out on the BPfA and the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). All the goals relate to gender equality, and Goal Number 3 addresses gender specifically. Trade union women believe that the MDGs cannot be achieved unless the gender policies of the BPfA inform the implementation of all eight goals.

## THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower woman
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

In March 2005, the 49th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) will review and appraise the Beijing Platform for Action. This report is the trade union's contribution to that appraisal. It presents the unions' views on government progress on implementing the Beijing Platform during the intervening 10 years and highlights the role unions have played. It draws on the reports and contributions received from a number of ICFTU affiliated organizations and the Global Union Federation (GUFs) - in particular the Public Services International (PSI) and Education International (EI) - and various International Labour Organisation (ILO) studies.

*(Note: A glossary of terms and acronyms can be found in the Appendix 1)*

### **Women and the changing nature of work in the global economy - a decade of struggle**

Globalisation has exploded over the last ten years. Some of its effects have been positive - it has created new jobs, many of which have been taken up by women. However, it has also had a negative impact on women's status at work and in society, exacerbating inequality instead of contributing to its elimination. State support of economic activity has all but disappeared, services have been privatised and public spending on basic services has been drastically cut.

This has frequently taken place in the context of structural adjustment programmes, with GATS negotiations further aggravating the situation. These processes are doubly discriminatory against women, since they adversely

affect employment levels and conditions in sectors where women are highly represented. They also reduce the services on which women are disproportionately dependent, such as childcare, care of the elderly and health care.

Trade is truly international, with workers in weak or developing economies dependent on strong, industrial economies for their livelihoods. This has come about through the creation of global 'supply chains' in which retailers (usually supermarkets or clothing stores) source their products from farms and factories in weak or developing economies and set the terms and prices under which they are produced. Producers in the poorest countries employ workers at low wages under poor conditions as they compete for the work.

### ***Mixed outcomes on new and better jobs for women*<sup>1</sup>**

One positive aspect of these global employment trends is that they have created more jobs worldwide, including for women, so that of the 2.8 billion people at work in 2003, 1.1 billion (ie. 39%) were women. This is a higher female proportion than ever before.

However, outcomes for women are not all positive. While globalisation has improved overall employment prospects, women are still losing out, as more of the new jobs are perceived as gender-specific, favouring men. In the Middle East and North Africa, three times as many jobs exist for men, while in South East Asia, there are twice as many male-defined jobs.

The global female unemployment rate in 2003 was 6.4% compared to a male rate of 6.1%. While it is lamentable that more women are unemployed than men, it shows that more women are expecting to work and filing as unemployed than ever before. Women are most economically active in the Transition Economies, where 91 women to every 100 men are in work, and in East Asia, where the ratio is 83 women to every 100 men. Overall, for most regions approximately 80 women are economically active compared to 100 men. However, in the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia, the ratio is abysmal, with only 40 economically active women to 100 men.

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1. *All figures from Global Employment Trends for Women 2004, International Labour Office, Geneva, 2004*

## *A Look at Women's Work*

Women's employment tends to be concentrated in specific sectors such as services and textiles, and, particularly in developing countries, the agricultural sector. Women are less likely to be in regular paid employment, and they are more likely to earn less than men for the same type of work. Because women are traditionally viewed as the subsidiary breadwinner, they are shunted into the new jobs that are temporary, insecure, consisting of short-term contracts and lacking any legal type of social protection.

As a result, they make up a higher proportion of the world's 'working poor' than men: of a total 550 million working poor, 330 million (60%) are women. The Beijing Platform acknowledged this in its description of women workers' position and globalisation trends as "characterised by low wages, little or no labour standards protection, poor working conditions, particularly with regard to women's occupation health and safety, low skill levels and a lack of job security and social security, in both the formal and informal sectors" <sup>2</sup>

### *Services*

The service sector has been a growth area for women's work worldwide, mainly in the caring services. In 1999 in the industrialised world, more than 50% of all employment was in this sector, with women concentrated in the community, social and care services, including education and domestic work. Even in these sectors women lose out as, for example in the USA, where female nurses' wages are 90% of men's wages for the same work.

The ILO's Global Employment Report of 2004 found that in many poor countries, employment in domestic service was on the increase. In Latin America in the 1990s 22% of new jobs were in this sector, which now accounts for 15.4% of all female employment. Most of the domestic servants are women migrants from ethnic groups in rural areas or neighbouring countries.

### *Export Processing Zones*

Export processing zones (EPZs) are not a new phenomenon - Barcelona's free trade zone was set up at the beginning of the 20th Century. But the

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2. *Beijing Platform for Action: Introduction to section F: Women and the Economy:*  
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Beijing/platform/economy.htm>

trend only really took off in the 1970s. According to the ILO, the number of EPZs increased from 79 in 1975 to 3000 in 2002, and they now operate in 116 countries. Governments establish EPZs to encourage multinational companies to invest in their countries, and offer them special incentives such as a union-free environment, and lower company taxes for a set number of years. The main employers are textile and garment companies. This is the world's largest industrial sector, with more than 23.6 million workers worldwide. Electronics is another favoured industry for these zones, where an average 80% of all workers are women.

While the zones have created work for women, the conditions under which they operate mitigate against the exercise of their workers' rights and the implementation of the BPfA principles. Restrictive labour policies effectively prevent women from forming or joining a union to act together in solidarity to improve their wages and conditions of work. The zones are usually set up in economically deprived areas where labour is cheap and workers refrain from making demands for fear of being sacked.

### *Agriculture*

More than 50% of the world's workforce - 1.3 billion people - is engaged in agricultural production. Of this figure, 450 million are waged and more than 50% of them are women. Over the last 20 years, food production and distribution have changed radically, as agriculture has become part of the global food chain. Women have been more affected by this phenomenon than men because more of them work as smallholders, often tilling small plots of land to provide food for their families and gaining a meagre income from the sale of food products. In countries such as Uganda where agriculture accounts for more than 30% of GDP, employing more than 80% of the labour force, any move to take over agricultural production by large companies will totally destroy the country's subsistence farming, and directly affect women.

### *Privatisation - women lose out first*

Privatisation means the transfer of services from the public to the private sector, usually accompanied by cuts in funding, contracting out, the introduction of user-fees and cheaper, less-skilled staff and poor quality services. Women workers, as primary carers for their families and users of these services are hit hard by privatisation as this is accompanied by cuts in services that are desperately needed for countries to develop. In sub-Saharan

Africa, total public spending on education fell in real terms between 1990 and 1997 from 15% of GDP per person to 10.7% of GDP per person.

Privatisation has also increased the gender wage gap. In Peru, a workplace survey carried out by the Andean Regional Women's Committee discovered that women's earnings after privatisation had been reduced to an average of 76% of men's average earnings.

Privatisation can lead to massive job cuts in the service sector, where the majority of workers are women. The ILO has estimated that 20% of Vietnam's urban workforce was retrenched from social services and state enterprises over a five-year period. The International Transport Federation (ITF) reports that in Zambia thousands of jobs were lost as a result of the privatisation programme. All women station guards and train escorts were retrenched, the railway nursing service hived off, and the cleaners taken over by companies well known for their 'hire and fire' policies.

Finally, privatisation has increased women's poverty. Women make up 70% of the world's 1.3 billion absolute poor. This is increasing as the formal employment sector for women is decreasing and they spend time carrying out more of the caring and household tasks.

## II. Implementing the Beijing Platform for Action at national level



While all of the BPfA's twelve areas of concern are important for working women, Section F on Women and the Economy is most crucial to women workers and we are focusing on this in order to assess how it has benefited them. We weigh up its implementation at national level, giving some examples by regions.

### Section F: Six strategic objectives:

Promoting women's economic rights and independence, including access to employment and appropriate working conditions;  
Facilitating women's equal access to resources, employment markets and trade;  
Providing business services, training and access to markets, information and technology;  
Strengthening women's economic capacity and commercial networks;  
Eliminating occupational segregation and all forms of employment discrimination;  
Promoting the harmonisation of work and family responsibilities."

## Government plans for the Beijing Platform

The BPfA called on governments to draw up national plans to fulfil their commitments. How many of them did so, and were unions involved?

An ECOSOC Report issued last year said that most Governments had either set new legislation in place, amended gender-biased policies or issued policy statements to address gender discrimination and the violation of women's rights<sup>3</sup>. How did unions feel they played out on the ground?

3. *UN Economic and Social Council Paper, E/ESCAP/BPA/1, 9 August 2004*

## *Africa*

According to the trade union centre, **FMM**, the government of **Madagascar** engaged in a process of social dialogue, and had discussions with the FMM prior to drawing up its National Policy for Women. As part of the Beijing follow-up in **South Africa**, the government consulted the three national centres, COSATU, FEDUSA and NACTU, through the National Economic and Development Labour Council (NEDLAC). Consultations were held prior to the setting up of the Commission for Gender Equality, in 1997, and the Office of the Status of Women (OSW) in the President's Office.

## *Asia/Pacific*

The **Malaysian** TUC reports that the Ministry of Women and Family Development was established in 2001 to examine issues affecting women, the family, welfare and community development. The MTUC is involved in the National Labour Advisory Council, a tripartite organisation to discuss labour issues and policies. The JTUC-RENGO in **Japan** reports that in 1999, following strong union campaigning, the government introduced the Basic Plan for Gender Equal Participation in Society. In **the Philippines** the government has drawn up the Plan for Gender Responsive Development which integrates the BPfA goals, says the TUCP, the national union centre. The TUCP has a representative on the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women - the national machinery for women's advancement.

## *Europe*

The KSSH of **Albania** believes that the Law on Gender Equality in Society will help to detect cases of gender discrimination. In **Italy**, all three national unions, the CGIL, CISL and UIL, worked with the government in 1997 on the Equality Directive, but comment that in 2001 "With the change in government, consultations with the unions are at a minimum, with hardly any concrete results". The SAK in **Finland** reports that the unions were consulted for the government's 1997 - 1999, 2004 and 2007 Equality Action Plans. The FNV is highly critical of **the Netherlands** government policies towards women, which it says are gradually being watered down. It notes that the government report on Beijing + 10 is 'weaker, less ambitious and less comprehensive' than previous ones.

## *Latin America*

In 1997, the **Brazilian** government passed a Constitutional Amendment to reserve 30% of all seats for women in decision-making bodies. The three Brazilian national union centres, CUT, CGT and FS, are part of a Ministry of Employment working group to combat racial and sexual discrimination at work. In **Ecuador**, the government drew up the first Equal Opportunity Plan (1996 - 2001). CEOSL is working with other women's groups to reform the electoral law to require 35% of all candidates to be women. The government in **Argentina** has drawn up the Equality Protocol which operates at national and local levels. The CGT is a signatory.

## *Ratification of ILO Conventions*

For trade unionists a sign of a government's commitment to gender equality at work is the ratification of ILO Conventions to protect women workers' rights and promote gender equality.

There are four major Conventions: 100 on equal pay (1951), 111 on stopping discrimination at work (1958), 156 on workers with family responsibilities (1981), and, most recently, 183 on maternity protection (2000; revision of C103 of 1952).

Conventions 100 and 111 are two of the most widely ratified Conventions: C100 has been ratified by 161 countries, 35 since 1995, and C111 by 160 countries, with 39 additional ratifications since 1995. Since 1995, an additional 13 countries have ratified C156 (36 ratifications in all), and 11 countries have ratified C183 since it was adopted in 2000.

While ratification of a Convention is a strong signal of a government's commitment to promote and uphold gender equality at work, it is only the beginning of a process: effective implementation - adoption of national legislation, setting-up of enforcement, supervisory and monitoring mechanisms, etc. - must follow.

Two other conventions, Convention 175 (1994) on part-time work and Convention 177 (1996) on home work are of great importance to women, as they make up the majority of these workers. Only a few countries have ratified these: 10 for C175 and 4 for C177. The reluctance of governments to do so could be considered as yet another indication of their lack of commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action.

The texts and lists of ratifications of these Conventions can be found in the ILO website; (<http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/convdisp1.htm>).

### III. The Beijing Platform - how does it affect workers ' on the ground'?



Unions looked at five actions called for by the Beijing Platform that would improve the lot of women workers: eliminating discrimination against women, achieving equal pay for work of equal value; improving maternity protection; strengthening work-place health and safety and improving education and training. So what was their assessment of progress?

#### **Discrimination at work**

##### *Overview*

Two main features of discrimination against women are job segregation and 'female occupations' - which are invariably less well-paid and have lower status than 'male' ones<sup>4</sup>. One reason cited by employers for refusing to employ women is that they incur higher labour costs than men because of maternity protection benefits, have higher absenteeism rates and are less willing to move for work than men. Is this really the case? The ILO carried out research in Latin America and found that in reality it only cost employers 1% more to employ a woman than a man for the same job.<sup>5</sup>

A 'sexually segregated occupation' is one in which more than 80% of the workforce are the same sex. While about 50% of all workers are in sexually segregated occupations, women are concentrated in a far smaller range of occupations than men. There are seven times as many 'male' non-agricultural occupations as female ones. The highest number of sexually segregated occupations occurs in the Middle East and North Africa and the lowest, in the Asia-Pacific region and in OECD countries.

4. *Time for Equality at Work, International Labour Office, Geneva, 2003, p. 45*

5. *Time for Equality at Work, p. 50*

Several countries, such as the Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Belgium and Spain have seen signs of progress (see below) in the fight against discrimination at work. However, gender stereotypes have already crept into 'new' occupations such as information and communication technology (ICT), which are deemed 'male occupations'. Rather than providing women with equal opportunities, this sector exhibits all of the characteristics of a male dominated and segregated occupation, with women concentrated in lower-level data entry jobs. Worldwide, with the laudable exception of Thailand and Belarus, the average share of women computer programmers and systems analysts is 30%. Sadly, it seems that old gender biases will persist in new sectors, without special affirmative action policies to support women's integration.

### *Africa*

Several African countries have taken steps to fight discrimination against women. The UGTCI in the **Côte d'Ivoire** reports that nominations for government posts are now subject to scrutiny to prevent gender discrimination, and to ensure that qualified female appointees receive the same salaries as male colleagues. However, in **Guinea**, the USTG of Guinea says that women's position in society has declined, so it is strongly supporting women workers, particularly in the informal economy. In **Mali**, the government implemented Ordinance 92-024 in 1995 to create a framework for equity between male and female workers, but the UNTM says discrimination continues. The government of **Malawi** encourages women and girls to go into scientific areas such as medicine and mechanical engineering, and the number of female scientists increased from 50 in 1995 to 500 in 2004<sup>6</sup>. To support these initiatives, the national centre, MCTU, is negotiating with employers for female-friendly working conditions in these professions.

### *Asia/Pacific*

HMS in **India** is part of the National Core Group set up to review the BPfA. A 1998 Indian government study found that 93% of women work in the informal economy, the majority in low-income jobs. HMS has been active in sectors dominated by women. JTUC-RENGO **Japan** has campaigned for better pension rights for part-time workers, the majority of whom are women. The CMTU **Mongolia** reports that as more women are taking part in economic and political life, it is organising a three-year training and cam-

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6. *Malawian government's submission to DAW.*

paigining programme on women's employment, health and safety, women's rights and the media.

### *Europe*

The **Belgian** authorities passed the Sexual Equality Law in 1999, and a second law, in 2003, to fight discrimination. The FGTB reports that the unions have set up committees to improve the rights of part-time workers, who are usually women. In the **Czech Republic** the trade union centre CMKOS complains that, despite eliminating gender-based discrimination through collective bargaining, indirect discrimination continues, so its Equality Committee distributes leaflets to workers on equality issues and monitors cases of discrimination. CC.OO. and UGT in **Spain** (where 50% of all public workers are women) include specific provisions against gender discrimination in all their collective agreements. The unions are also actively involved in social dialogue with the employers and government on all gender and work-related policies.

### *Latin America*

Over the last five years the Ministry of Labour in **Peru** has set up the Women Entrepreneurs Programme (PROFECE) in poor urban zones to improve women's employment options and upgrade their skills. Plades, an NGO that works closely with trade unions stresses, that men and women need to build alliances to overcome male machismo<sup>7</sup>. In **Argentina**, where 70% of women perform unskilled jobs, the government has set up the National Women, Equity and Work Programme to promote capacity building and improve women workers' self-esteem. The CGT has met with President Kirchner to push for more emphasis on equality, including establishing a dialogue with the social partners and prioritising activities to support women. The CTRP in Panama says many of its women members need training so they can successfully negotiate with employers.

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7. Report from ORIT Women's Conference "Working Women Building the union movement of the America", September 2004

## Equal Pay

### *Overview*

One hundred and sixty one countries have ratified ILO Convention 100 on equal pay. Despite these ratifications, the wage gap persists in many of these countries. Women workers receive lower wages than their male counterparts, and their chances to increase their pay are restricted, for example by laws preventing them from working paid overtime. Studies in the European Union show that 15% of the pay gap between men and women is caused by indirect discrimination of this sort.

According to the Public Services International, the wage gap ranges from 12 to 60%, with the highest differentials in developing countries or in countries<sup>8</sup>, such as Japan, where the non-egalitarian role of women in the labour market is manifest. There is some good news, however, as in some OECD countries, the wage gap has been closing since the 1970s. In the United States it decreased by as many as 38 points and in France by 34 points. The story is the same in Latin America - between 1990 and 2000, the ratio of average monthly income between women and men in non-agricultural sectors increased from 59% to 66%<sup>9</sup>. However, according to other sources<sup>10</sup>, in Eastern Europe women earn 20 to 25% less than their male counterparts.

According to a Conference on equal pay in Hong Kong in March 2000, both employers and trade unions tend to make pay equity a lower priority than other issues<sup>11</sup>. Trade unions tend to perceive pay equity as a concern for women workers, not a general concern for all workers. The ICFTU's own survey *Ask a Working Woman* identified achieving higher pay as the top issues and equal pay as an important issue for women workers<sup>12</sup>. Union women have, therefore, pushed their organisations to campaign for pay equity and to put this issue high up on their agenda. Thanks to their lobbying, the Workers' Group was successful in getting the 2004 ILO Conference to adopt a Resolution on "Gender equality, pay equity and maternity protection".

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8. *Pay Equality Now. Pay Equity Resource Package. PSI 2002, <http://www.world-psi.org>*

9. *Time for Equality at Work, ILO, p. 53*

10. *ICFTU Briefing on Equality through pay equity, March 2003.*

11. *Quoted in Time for Equality at Work. p. 51*

12. *Ask a working woman, 2001. <http://www.icftu.org/pdf/awwreport.pdf>*

## *Africa*

In **Niger**, pressure from the USTN has led the government to set up a framework for collective bargaining, and a tripartite framework for social dialogue. In **Malawi**, the government report notes that only 16% of women are in paid employment and 91.8% of women are engaged in subsistence agriculture. The Malawi Congress of Trade Unions, MCTU, is using the 2000 Employment Act to push for equal pay for work of equal value. The FMM in **Madagascar** is also using legislation to push for equal pay, and is working with the Employers' Organisation to agree on the minimum wage. Their efforts are supported by the country's labour code which states that there must be equal pay for work of equal value.

## *Asia/Pacific*

For **Korean** women workers one of the most significant outcomes of Beijing has been the Gender Discrimination Prevention and Relief Act, effective from July 2000, that outlaws gender discrimination in employment, education and all law enforcement. Unfortunately, union and NGO involvement in this was very limited. The **Malaysian** federal constitution (2002) includes a provision that there should be no discrimination based on 'gender, sex colour race or creed', but the MTUC says there is no mechanism to monitor and assess this provision. For its part the MTUC always stresses the importance of equality and equal pay for work of equal value in its training courses and meetings. The CWC in Sri Lanka has been lobbying the government for equal pay for work of equal value and to improve the economic and cultural status of women

## *Europe*

In October 2004, **public sector and education unions from Europe**, including the New Independent States (NIS) and CEE held a major equal pay conference. Participants discussed issues such as low pay and delays in payments and raised concerns about the draft EU Bolkestein directive on Services in the Internal Market, which will impact on health, community care and education. In the **Czech Republic** CMKOS is focusing on collective bargaining as the main tool for removing pay gaps between men and women. The government in **Montenegro** has enacted laws to prevent discrimination in the work place, but women in CITUM say that women have fewer responsibilities in the workplace, and are paid 15% less than men. The **French** government reports a discrepancy of 25% between men and

women wages, because women are concentrated in certain sectors and work part-time. The CGT-FO has been carrying out an information campaign and training scheme to raise awareness about the issue. The UGT in **Spain** says that despite legislation introduced in 2002 to modify Article 28 on Workers' statutes, there is still a difference of 30% between men and women's salaries. Unions have been involved in a European project on equal pay, focusing on gender-based pay comparisons between **Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain**.

### *Latin America*

In **Bermuda** the BIU has demanded wage increases linked to the growing cost of basic consumer items, but reports that the employers' insistence on percentage rather than across the board raises keeps the lowly paid, most of whom are women, in poverty. Women's participation in the workforce increased in **Brazil** from 29% in 1976 to 43% in 2002, which has been reflected in an increase in women's per capita income. However, CUT says that pay discrimination remains, so it is setting up a social dialogue with business to discuss the issue. In **Colombia**, the National Statistics Department (DANE) reported that in 2001 women received only 70% of men's income, and the female unemployment rate was 11% higher. To counter these negative trends, the CTC has implemented the 'Unions for Women' organising campaign and is strengthening the women's structures in the union. The Ecuadorean government has set up a Forum on "Employment policies and gender"; however, the CEOSL is pessimistic about the government's willingness to involve the unions in consultations. The CEOSL is engaged in organising campaigns covering all sectors, but reports that organisers have been victims of threats and harassment.

## **Maternity protection - including maternal health, family responsibility and parental leave**

### *Overview*

In most countries a woman's ability to participate in the labour market, either full-time or part-time, depends on her balancing work and family, as the burden of household duties and caring still falls on her.

While many women welcome the opportunity to engage in family-building activities, it is important that they maintain their labour market skills and

improve their career prospects and earning rates. Gender-friendly labour policies should allow working parents the opportunity to work fewer hours or give them greater flexibility so they can carry out their caring responsibilities. These policies should be designed to guard against their becoming trapped in long-term part-time work, with the associated low pay, precarious working conditions and lack of social protection.

Among the OECD countries, Nordic countries have the highest female labour-force participation rates, while Italy, Mexico and Turkey have the lowest. These differences may reflect differing approaches to the provision of supporting mechanisms to facilitate women's paid work. In North Africa and the Middle East the generous maternity benefits for public sector workers may explain why this has been a popular career area for women.

Harmonising family and work responsibilities is one of the areas of concern of the Beijing Platform. The adoption of ILO Conventions 156 on workers with family responsibilities and 183 on maternity protection was a major step forward. What is happening on the ground?

### *Africa*

In **Benin**, the government recently adopted its first "Code of Persons and of the Family" to promote equality between men and women. It is reported that in **Kenya** the employee gets her full salary during maternity leave. Unfortunately in **Uganda** most of employers pay full maternity benefit for only one month. The CDT in the **Democratic Republic of Congo** has negotiated an extension of maternity leave from 14 to 16 weeks in some professions. FEDUSA reports that in **South Africa**, thanks to strong union lobbying, maternity leave is protected by the 1997 Employment Act. Lobbying by women's organisations and unions in Zimbabwe led to an amendment of the Labour Relations Law (2002) so that women are entitled to 90 days' maternity leave on full salary. Unfortunately some unscrupulous employers are refusing to hire women because of the possible increased costs.

### *Asia/Pacific*

The **Australian** Council of Trade Unions is campaigning for paid maternity leave, as Australia is one of only two OECD countries where this right does not exist. It is also calling on the Federal Government to ratify and implement ILO Convention 183. Unions in **Indonesia** report that while there are legal provisions for three months' maternity pay, many women

are dismissed when they demand their legal rights. Employers are now hiring women as casual workers to avoid paying benefits such as maternity pay. The CMTU in **Mongolia** played a role in developing the government's National Programme, and is lobbying to improve women's rights through legislation and collective agreements and upgrading social protection including maternity leave and benefits. In **Singapore** the NTUC works closely with government and employers on education and training programmes for women re-entering the workforce and on family-friendly and flexible working policies.

### *Europe*

CGIL, CISL and UIL in **Italy** report that the unions played an important role in pushing through equality legislation, in particular the 2000 Law on Parental Leave and the 2001 text on maternity, paternity and parental leave. Thanks to pressure from LO **Norway**, maternity and parental leave has been increased since the Beijing Conference. **Slovakia** was the first country to ratify the ILO Convention 183, largely thanks to the efforts of the KOZ-SR. Women get 28 weeks' maternity leave and men the same amount of parental leave. Where employers do not respect this, they can be taken to court. The FNV in **the Netherlands** has lobbied its government to improve legislation on maternity rights, and in 2004 lodged a complaint at the International Labour Conference (ILC) about government infringement of Convention 103 (on maternity protection, adopted in 1952) as several categories of women workers have to pay part of medical maternity expenses, instead of being fully compensated. The SGB/USS in **Switzerland** reports that, following an intensive series of union campaigns, in September 2004 the federal government agreed to give women 14 weeks' paid maternity leave.

### *The Americas*

In **El Salvador** the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare has begun to modernise the health system to provide all round care for women with an emphasis on reproductive health. Women in the union are planning information and training programmes on this issue. Women in the CNTD in the **Dominican Republic** say old attitudes towards child-care prevail and when they go out to work in EPZs, men stay at home without taking up any family responsibilities or go out to bars. The AFL-CIO campaigned in the **United States** for the Family Medical Leave Act (1993), but says that

while it gives women more flexibility to work part-time, all leave taken is unpaid and the legislation only applies to work places of more than 50 people<sup>13</sup>.

## **Education and training at the workplace**

### ***Overview***

Education and vocational training are two concrete aims of the Beijing Platform, as women need to be educated and literate to avoid the trap of poorly paid, low status and precarious employment. Education is also the Second Millennium Development Goal, focusing on the girl child. As the Global Campaign for Education, an international coalition of trade unions and NGOs (spearheaded by Education International) explained, "Because education is so crucial to improving health and increasing incomes, the girls' education goal has a domino effect on all of the other Millennium Development Goals".

In 2000, 860 million adults, i.e. about 20% of the world population, were illiterate. About 70% of them lived in three regions: Sub-Saharan Africa, South and West Asia, and the Arab states and North Africa. Two thirds of all illiterate adults were women, with the gender gap being more pronounced in the Arab states and North Africa.

Literacy is gradually increasing for both men and women. It is projected that in 2015 the number of illiterate adults will come down to 800 million and the gender gap will also have been reduced,

The aim of the Second MDG is for every child to be in primary school by 2015, ensuring gender parity in achieving this goal. While gender parity improved for all countries in the 1990s, overall it remained below 0.9% and in favour of boys, in South and West Asia, the Arab States and sub-Saharan Africa. At the primary school level, girls' enrolment improved from 93% in the 1990s to 96% in 1999. It appears that once girls are enrolled in primary school and complete their studies, their access to secondary education is almost equal to boys', even though the overall transfer from primary to secondary differs vastly between countries.

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13. *Family and Medical Leave, AFL-CIO*. <http://www.aflcio.org/issuespolitics/worknfamily/fmla.cfm>

However, as well as acquiring literacy women need training to improve their access to the labour market. This has happened in two areas: information technology and entrepreneurship. The shortage of worldwide skills in ICT has enabled women in some countries to take the plunge very successfully into the information technology pool. For example, women in India occupy 27% of professional jobs in the software industry, worth \$4 billion annually. However, as mentioned earlier, in some countries gender segregation continues in this sector with women concentrated in the low-skilled, lower valued-jobs, and men in the higher-skilled, higher valued jobs.

The second particularly successful training area for women in developing countries has been in small business entrepreneurial skills. Several developing countries are focusing on this in their post-Beijing activities.

### *Africa*

The **Guinean** government's Education for All Programme is aimed at school-age children and illiterate adults and has produced training booklets for 12,000 women's groups under the women's literacy programme. For its part, the USTG of Guinea has prioritised education and training. In **Madagascar**, the FMM reports that the government adopted the National Action Plan for Girls' Education in October 1995 to fight illiteracy among young girls and women. Girls can now follow the same academic courses as boys, with special programmes to get young women into professional careers. In **Cameroon** the government has set up agricultural development projects on horticulture and biological agriculture to help women entrepreneurs. Videos are being developed in **Ethiopia**, **Tanzania** and **Zambia** to generate more positive attitudes towards women entrepreneurs. The CDT in **RD Congo** has been offering its own training in revenue-generating activity for women such as production of salted fish and other foods.

### *Asia/Pacific*

In **Thailand** the aftermath of the 1997 economic crisis has pushed women towards new occupational skills such as commercial cooking, computers and electronics. The TUCP Women's Committee in **the Philippines** signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the TESDA Women's Centre to increase women's participation in training, particularly those who have been retrenched. In **Japan** JTUC-RENGO has lobbied the government to rethink traditional school administration from a gender dimension, and to

abolish separate roll calls, seating and school events. In **Vietnam**, Oxfam and the ILO SIYB (Start and Improve Your Business) have targeted women entrepreneurs in provincial areas.

### *Europe*

CGT-FO reports that the **French** Ministry of Education has been working to ensure that girls have access to all levels of education and from there into professional life, although boys far outnumber girls at the specialised professional schools (grandes écoles). The **Polish** union NSSZ-Solidarnosc has focused its efforts on women's training programmes. CITUM in **Montenegro** explains that "Parents would rather send a son to university than a daughter because they believe that a male child needs education more than a female child. Our task is to fight against this". According to the **Swedish** TCO, the government's long-term objective described in its 2001 Open Higher Education Bill is for 50% of students in each year to start higher education by the age of 25. In **Spain** the government has been working to ensure more girls are enrolled at school, and the UGT has produced its Manifesto in support of teaching migrant women literacy skills.

### *Latin America*

In the **Caribbean**, ICT is a developing industry and almost 5000 women are employed in data-processing activities. The ILO's FORMUJER programmes in Argentina, Bolivia and Costa Rica are designed to strengthen technical and vocational training for low-income women. Non-traditional skills are taught so that women can enter new employment sectors. The **Brazilian** government is working to cut out gender stereotypes in its school books. Female literacy in Brazil rose from 79.72% in 1991 to 86.5% by 2000. CUT Brazil has run its own "Literacy for everyone" campaign. In **Ecuador**, CEOSL says that parents are reluctant to enrol their children in school, as the government has not maintained the educational infrastructure. At the adult level CEOSL has negotiated collective agreements that allow workers time off to attend school, college or university.

## **Health and Safety - women's health hazards, sexual harassment, bullying, violence against women at work and HIV/AIDS**

### *Overview*

Health and safety at work is the fifth main issue facing women workers.

Like all workers, women want to work in safe workplaces that do not endanger their health. Women have been poisoned by chemicals at a garment factory in El Salvador (July 2002) and burnt to death in toy or garment factory fires (Thailand 1993). Women also predominate in agriculture where half of all fatal accidents occur (170,000 agricultural workers die each year). In 1999 the ICFTU highlighted women workers' concerns during their International Day of Mourning, April 28, for those killed or injured at work

Women face additional hazards at work, like sexual harassment, bullying and violence. This is particularly prevalent in the world's EPZs where young women make up the majority of the workforce. For example the 2004 ICFTU Survey of Trade Union Rights Violations describes how women in the Southeast Textile Factory in Choloma, Honduras were physically and verbally abused by (male) supervisors.

In 1995 the International Labour Conference called for measures to combat harassment in all national policies. The ICFTU has campaigned strongly against sexual harassment at work, issuing its Trade Union Guide in 1986. In December 1997, two years after the Beijing Platform, its Executive Board reiterated its clear opposition to sexual harassment as unacceptable and offensive and adopted a programme of action to combat this within the trade unions..

In the last 20 years, an additional health hazard has arisen: HIV/AIDS. This has affected all workers', including women's, ability to work. The ILO Conference acknowledged this in 2001 with the adoption of the ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work. It provides guidance on eliminating stigma and discrimination on the basis of actual or perceived HIV/AIDS status and suggests methods for managing and mitigating the impact of AIDS at work. The Code also acknowledges that HIV/AIDS has a gender dimension.

### *Africa*

In 2000, the ICFTU's regional organization, AFRO, adopted a Framework of Action in Fighting HIV/AIDS in the Workplace which stressed the need for trade unions to take into account the gender dimension of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The AFRO is implementing the 'Trade Union Action against HIV/AIDS' Project in Botswana, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Namibia, Tanzania, Uganda, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. According reports received

from the regional and national coordinators, impressive work is underway on HIV/AIDS prevention, care and support. It has published a training manual for shop stewards on HIV/AIDS in the workplace.

In 1999 the Women's Department of the CDT in **RD Congo** produced a report on sexual harassment at work, based on surveys of workplaces. It has also drawn up a Plan of Action to fight against HIV/AIDS. The MCTU in **Malawi** has organised workshops to sensitise working women on HIV/AIDS and intends to carry out more education programmes directed at women in the informal economy. The USTN in **Niger** has taken up the issues of women's health and violence against women. Through their participants in the National Economic and Development Labour Council (NEDLAC) in **South Africa** the unions negotiated a Code of Good Practice on Sexual Harassment in the Workplace.

### *Asia/Pacific*

Following the ICFTU-**APRO**'s regional campaign against sexual harassment at the workplace, unions in Asia have carried out intensive advocacy and lobbying work at national level. In **Malaysia** the MTUC's Women's Committee has vigorously campaigned for the Sexual Harassment Bill to be passed, so far without success. It also complains that most employers are refusing to adopt the new 'Code of Practice on the Eradication and Prevention of Sexual Harassment at the Workplace'. HMS in **India** launched a campaign - together with women's groups - on safer train travel, centred on stations in Delhi, Bilaspur, Kota and Vishakhapatnam. The Supreme Court issued mandatory guidelines against sexual harassment in the workplace in August 1997. JTUC-RENGO reports that in **Japan** the Law for the Equal Employment Opportunity of Men and Women was amended in 1999 to incorporate employers' obligations to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace, following an intensive campaign by the unions. In **Korea** the Sexual Equality Employment Act (1999) combats sexual harassment at work. Of the cases dealt with under the Gender Discrimination Prevention and Relief Act in 2002, 48.7% of them concerned sexual harassment. The unions in **the Philippines** have prepared a booklet on Sexual Harassment. The **ITGLWF** has produced training kits on women's health and safety in the garment and clothing factories in Asia.

### *Europe*

The KSSH in **Albania** explains that the Law for the prevention of

HIV/AIDS (2000) provides for measures to prevent, detect and combat sexual diseases, including diagnosing the HIV virus. The KSSH is also promoting gender sensitive approach to combating HIV/AIDS. The FGTB notes that in 2002 the **Belgium** government improved the law against sexual harassment to protect women workers. The union was consulted on the new law and produced its own booklet about harassment at work. In **Finland** the SAK believes that the revised Equality Act gives improved protection against harassment and has contributed to a guide on preventing harassment at work. The CC.OO. in **Spain** is concerned about general hazards facing women at work, and is involved in awareness-raising campaigns aimed at women on the risks of using toxic substances. The FNV in the **Netherlands** takes a development perspective towards HIV/AIDS and sponsors several projects in Africa which address HIV/AIDS, ensuring that gender is integrated in all aspects.

### **Fighting sexual harassment at the workplace**

Alerted by the food workers' union of the NSZZ-Solidarnosc, the IUF and the ICFTU sent early February 2005 strong protest messages to PepsiCo over the unjust treatment and dismissal of women workers of the Grodzisk Mazowiecki Frito-Lay factory, its subsidiary in Poland. The women had filed sexual harassment charges against a male supervisor.

### ***Americas***

In the **Caribbean** the social partners have used the ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS to eliminate discrimination against workers with HIV/AIDS and a Pan-Caribbean Partnership project is identifying legal obstacles to eliminating discrimination. In **Brazil** the unions are active in the government Health and Safety Working Group. In **Canada**, the CLC uses the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women (December 6) to urge unions to participate in an audit at work and in their communities on women's safety concerns. CEOSL in **Ecuador** has lobbied the government to approve the law against Violence against Women. In **Argentina**, Decree 2385/93 operates in the public sector and punishes any man who sexually harasses a women worker, and the CGT has organised campaigns against sexual harassment at work to support this. On HIV/AIDS it has organised conferences, produced leaflets and held discus-

sions with the Social Development Minister on campaigns to prevent AIDS. The ICFTU's regional organisation for the Americas, the **ORIT**, continues to be actively involved in campaigning against violence against women at the workplace and in society. It sets aside a week each November to focus on this issue.

#### IV. What unions have been doing to reform their own structure for gender equality since Beijing 1995



Unions have successfully lobbied their governments to implement legislation and programmes to support women workers. So what about the unions themselves? What have they done to promote gender equality within their own ranks?

Women now make up 58 million or 40% of the total membership of 145 million workers of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. While union membership is declining in some countries, in many others, workers are joining up in increasing numbers. In 2003, 46 national centres responded to an ICFTU questionnaire on union membership. Twenty-two reported a loss in membership over the previous five years, but in three unions, fewer women had left than men, while in another five women's membership had actually increased.

In the sixteen unions which had increased membership, women's membership rose between 1.5% and 14%. In the BMSF in **Bangladesh** (which ran an organising drive in the manufacturing sector) and in CC.OO. **Spain**, women constituted an impressive 40 - 50% of new members. The FNV in **the Netherlands** increased its women's membership from 22.3% in 1992 to just under 30% in 2004.

A large number of unions, such as the ACTU in **Australia**, NOTU in **Uganda**, CTH in **Honduras** and CC.OO. in **Spain**, have run successful campaigns specifically aimed at unionising women. In each case they prioritised a particular issue, such as child care, maternity protection or equal pay.

However, women will only join unions and retain their membership if they feel that the unions are working for them. So are unions addressing women workers' concerns and are they reforming their own structures? Are they changing the way they relate to their women members? Do their campaigns reflect women's concerns?

## **Ask a working woman**

In 2001, the ICFTU Women's Committee undertook a world-wide survey entitled "Ask a working woman" in which 13,500 respondents participated. The survey gave a picture of what working women want and whether they thought their unions were delivering. The five priority issues for working women are:

- 1) Higher pay,
- 2) Job security,
- 3) Respect on the job,
- 4) Retirement security, and
- 5) More control over work hours.

Fifty per cent of the women felt that unions were addressing these issues and were responding to their needs.

## **Union reforms to reflect women workers' concerns**

Unions have adopted equality policies and amended their Constitutions to push for women's concerns at work and within their unions. Many have integrated a gender perspective into their policies, programmes and activities.

### ***Training***

Unions all over the world run training programmes for women on a variety of subjects, e.g. confidence-building, leadership skills, collective bargaining, gender and trade. Gender-awareness training, for both men and women, has become part and parcel of trade unions' education and training programmes. A 3-year gender awareness training programme for men and women was sponsored by the ICFTU in the late 90's for 19 national centres in Asia/Pacific and Africa.

The FGTB in **Belgium** has been running special training programmes on gender as well as developing programmes on gender mainstreaming. The MCTU in **Malawi** has been running workshops for women on advocacy training, lobbying and civil education. Women's participation in general training programmes has also increased, in particular in Latin America, partly as a result of the ICFTU's 30% minimum target policy. Many unions, such as LO **Sweden**, LO **Norway**,

GTUA **Georgia**, LPSK **Lithuania**, LBAS **Latvia**, CITUM **Montenegro** and KOZ **Slovakia**, have surpassed this marker.

In **Italy** the CGIL has focused its programmes on violence against women and equal pay, while CC.OO. in **Spain** has produced training materials for women trade unionists. Education, training and gender awareness raising have been the priority for the USTG in **Guinea**. The UNTM in **Mali** has organised formal and informal education and training for women focusing on the environment, health and safety at work and the legal rights of women workers. The CMTU in **Mongolia** organised training on women's employment, health and safety, women's rights and the media and the NTUC in **Singapore** has organised leadership training programmes. The CGT in **Argentina** has found training very important in helping women workers make the move from dictatorship to democracy over the last twenty years, and the union organised workshops and seminars on these topics.

### *Restructuring the unions for equality*

The majority of national centres have set up Women's Committees or Departments since the Beijing Conference. The CGT, CUT and FS in **Brazil** have all taken measures to integrate a gender perspective in their policies and programmes. In **DR Congo** the CDT has created the position of Union Vice-President in charge of gender and youth issues. The CGIL in **Italy** is working to achieve gender parity in its own Secretariat, and the other Italian unions - CISL and UIL - have a policy of gender mainstreaming throughout the organisation. Over the last four years the MTUC in **Malaysia** has encouraged women to take up leadership positions to increase women's voice and visibility in the unions. The UGTCI in **Côte d'Ivoire** has pushed for women to participate at all levels of the union structures.

Unions are also taking other measures to integrate women at all levels and in all activities and programmes. They organise meetings at suitable times for women with family responsibilities and provide child-care at Congresses, meetings and training activities. A growing number are amending their statutes to include positive action measures to fully integrate women into trade unions and mainstream gender into all aspects of trade union work.

### *Starting at the top - Women in leadership positions*

While progress has clearly been achieved in some areas, obstacles remain in the access of women to leadership positions; the glass ceiling is taking an inordinately long time to break!

A few national centres have achieved, or nearly achieved gender parity in their leadership: the DGB **Germany**, LO **Sweden**, ACTU, **Australia**, LO **Norway** - where five of the 8 top are female - and CSN and CLC Canada. SAK **Finland** reports that 29% of its leaders are female and it is working towards a 40% level by 2014. These and a few others - e.g. ÖGB **Austria**, CGSILA **Angola**, LO **Denmark**, CGT **Argentina**, NZCTU **New Zealand**, FEDUSA South Africa, AFL-CIO **USA**, FNV **Netherlands** - have women in top level positions, i.e. Presidents, Vice-Presidents, General Secretaries or Assistant General Secretaries.

The ICFTU itself has led the way in breaking the glass ceiling, with every World Congress adopting positive action measures, either as amendments to the Constitution or as Resolutions. Thus, there are five reserved seats for the Women's Committee on its 53-member Executive Board. In keeping with the ICFTU Constitution's objective of gender parity, the recent 18th World Congress (December 2004) agreed a progressive target for women membership on the Executive Board, starting at 25%. The recent election of 14 women has brought the percentage to 26%.

An added victory was the election of Sharon Burrow of the ACTU Australia, as the first ever woman President of the ICFTU. One of the three top Secretariat positions in the ICFTU is held by a woman: Mamounata Cissé of ONSL Burkina Faso, appointed Assistant General Secretary in 2001.

The ICFTU's regional organisations have followed this lead. In 1997, **AFRO**, the ICFTU's African Regional Organisation amended its Constitution to allocate two seats for women on its Executive Board, while in the Asia/Pacific region, **APRO**'s Executive Board approved a proposal to increase the number of women members on the Board from one to three. For the Americas, **ORIT** enlarged its structure to include three Deputy General Secretaries each with their own area of responsibility, one of whom is a woman. ORIT's President is Linda Chavez Thompson of the AFL-CIO (USA), the first woman to hold this position.

Many national centres now ensure that women are well represented in decision-making bodies. In 2000, in **Hong Kong** HKCTU amended its Constitution so that one member of its Executive Committee is elected from its Women's Committee. CUT **Brazil**'s policy is to have a minimum of 30% and a maximum of 70% of either sex in leadership positions. In **Montenegro** women have demanded at least one seat on the CITUM Council. In the **Côte d'Ivoire**, the UGTCI has achieved gender parity in nominations to its Central Council. The UGT in **Spain** adopted a positive

action policy to ensure that women are well represented on all union committees and at all Congresses, while at FO in France, by 2002, 30% of all elected positions were filled by women.

Other encouraging signs: six women were elected to the 25-member Executive Board of the ONSL, in **Burkina Faso**. In **Argentina**, the CGT has a minimum of five members on its executive committee. In **Spain** eight out of 25 of CC.OO.'s Board, and six out of 13 of UGT's Board are women. Other unions also reported increases: the GTUC **Ghana**, NOTU **Uganda**, FO **France**, LPSK **Lithuania**, MTUC **Malaysia**, CEOSL **Ecuador**, UGTT **Tunisia** and BMSF in **Bangladesh**, to name a few.

### ***Monitoring***

Monitoring is a crucial component of equality plans. The ICFTU's own Women's Committee has a Task Force, set up in 2001, to monitor the implementation of the ICFTU's two major Positive Action Programmes: 'The Integration of Women into Trade Union Organisations', and 'Women in Development Cooperation'. The Executive Board adopted its most recent recommendation that while the 30% as the absolute minimum for women's participation should be retained, regional and national organisations with a large female membership should aim for a 40% minimum. A number of national centres are systematically monitoring the progress towards gender equality at work and in the unions and making recommendations based on their findings, e.g. MTUC **Malaysia**, SAK **Finland**, GTUC **Ghana**, NZCTU, **New Zealand**, ACTU **Australia**, TUC **United Kingdom**, CLC **Canada**.

### **Steady progress**

The recent 18th World Congress of the ICFTU, the organisation's highest body, which meets every 4 years, registered an all time high women's participation: 38% of delegates, as compared to that of the 17th (29%), 16th (27%) and 15th (20%). This was the result of a Constitutional amendment adopted by the 17th Congress that imposed gender parity on union delegations of two or more members. The 18th Congress also adopted the Resolution "Unions for Women, Women for Unions" (see Appendix) which called for a gender audit of the ICFTU Secretariat.

## V. Special categories of women workers



### *Young women*

The world youth population (aged 15-24) is over 1.05 billion making up 25% of the working age population: of these over 510 million are young women and 540 million young men<sup>14</sup>. With 88 million of them out of work, they constitute 47% of the world's unemployed. This is all the more pronounced in the developing world where they make up 21.8% of the unemployed. In the industrialised world they constitute 14% of the unemployed. When they do find work, it is insecure, intermittent and even dangerous<sup>15</sup>.

The employment prospects of young women job-seekers are particularly bleak<sup>16</sup>. In all developing regions, except East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, more young women are unemployed than young men. In the Middle East and North Africa, 31.7% of young women are unemployed, compared to 22.7% of young men; in sub-Saharan Africa, the figures are 23.1% and 18.4%, respectively. Because of the long-term structural nature of unemployment in many economies, the overall trends of higher unemployment rates among young women are likely continue into adult life.

14. All figures from the UN.

15. All figures from ILO *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2004*.

16. *Global Employment Trends for Youth, ILO, p.12*

## **Union action**

The ICFTU has specifically asked unions to target young women in their programmes by offering them capacity-building workshops to strengthen their self-confidence, increase their skills and chances to find work, and support their unionising efforts.

Young women in the Greek Mobile Telecom Company (COSMOTE) started the company's first-ever union in 2000. It has negotiated a reduction in daily working time by one hour for three years' employment, and 15 weeks' maternity leave.

As part of its organizing campaign, the SINTETEL in Brazil ran seminars and information sessions for call centre workers. The seminar discussed the growth of the call centre industry worldwide and its impact on the labour market, as well as the benefits of union membership. As a result, 600 new members from one call centre, mostly young women, joined the union.

One of the important aims of the International Transport Workers' Federation's (ITF) "Women Transporting the World" Campaign, begun in 2003, is to organise young women workers.

## **Migrant women**

Between 1965 and 2000, the number of migrants worldwide increased from 75 million to 175 million. They now make up 2.3% of the world population. Forty-nine percent of migrants in the developing world and 51% of migrants in the developed world are women, leading to what is called the 'feminisation of migration'. Women often work as 'autonomous migrants', leaving their families at home, and sending back their earnings as remittances. They are segregated into some of the least protected and most exploited sectors of the workforce, and increasingly are being trafficked into illegal employment and prostitution.

Female migrant workers are also concentrated in female-dominated occupations such as domestic workers, nurses and entertainment workers. Up to 83% of all female migrants from Sri Lanka worked as domestic servants in their new country.

## **Union action**

The ICTU in **Ireland** is campaigning to improve the situation, working conditions, wages and rights of migrant women domestic workers. It informs domestic workers about their rights and encourages them to join unions and get involved in campaigning for improvements. It is calling for:

Recognition that domestic workers have rights and should be treated with dignity and respect.

A campaign to inform migrant workers of their rights and employers of their responsibilities.

Full enforcement of the current legal protections for domestic workers.

Improved legislation for more effective regulation and control of recruitment agencies

Union Network International (UNI) provides a 'Passport' for prospective migrant workers with advice and guidelines on living abroad. It explains their rights, and puts them in touch with UNI's office in their new country.

## ***Women in the informal economy***

A continuing trend since 1995 has been the massive increase in the number of workers in the 'informal economy' throughout the world. In developing countries 50% to 75% (excluding those in agriculture) of all workers are informal, and in sub-Saharan Africa, a staggering 84%. In the European Union just over 30% of workers are in the informal economy.

'Informal' workers have no formal employment contract and, so are outside the country's legal and regulatory framework. As a result, they have no legal or social protection and little access to public benefits or infrastructure support for economic activities.

The majority of the workforce in the informal economy are women. They work as home based workers, on the street (street vendors) or in small or undefined workplaces, with unsafe and unhealthy working conditions for long hours and earning a very low or irregular income. Their skill and pro-

ductivity levels are low and they have little access to information, markets, finance, training and technology.

Many of them work at the bottom of the production chain/ for sub-contractors who produce for multinational companies. Because most informal workers are dependent on their employers' good will they are very vulnerable. Some of these women are own-account workers, eking out a living on the margins of the economy, in petty commerce, food production or food processing.

### **Union action**

As part of the Global Unions Organising Campaign Unions For Women, Women for Unions, unions have taken up the challenge of organising women in the informal economy. In the Maghreb region the UGTA **Algeria** and UMT **Morocco** have launched an organising campaign for female informal workers. In **India**, the HMS has 1.2 million members in the informal economy, many of whom are women, while the Self-Employed Women's Association, the SEWA now has 700,000 members.

### ***Female ethnic minority workers***

Female ethnic workers face double - or even triple - discrimination in employment: as women, being of ethnic origin and, sometimes, as mothers. The problem begins when looking for work. For example in Liverpool (UK), a furniture company had a policy of not recruiting anyone from Liverpool 8, an area where 50% of the population are black. When this issue was taken to court, the judge ruled that this was discrimination and fined the company.

Once in work, the discrimination continues. Ethnic women workers in the UK<sup>17</sup> talked about the vertical segregation of their workplace, with low pay, isolation, and lack of promotion being their lot, at the bottom of the workplace hierarchy. According to a union organiser, "African or black nurses get talked down to a lot. In the hospital, the sisters are all white. We haven't got one black sister in the department. As for the retail sector, you'll find that in most retail stores the race composition is mainly black on the lower levels, but in terms of management it's pure white"<sup>18</sup>.

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17. *A Double Disadvantage? Minority Ethnic Women in Trade Unions*, Harriet Bradley, Geraldine Healy and Nupur Mukherjee, Universities of Bristol and Hertfordshire.

18. Quoted in *A Double Disadvantage? Minority Ethnic Women in Trade Unions*, p. 20

SAK, the **Finnish** trade union centre, carried out a survey on attitudes to workers from ethnic minorities and found that racial discrimination occurred in 12% of the workplaces surveyed. Six percent of employers and 11% of workers discriminated against ethnic minorities.

### **Union action**

Unions have been taking positive action measures to fight racism. The CLC in **Canada** has an information and campaign Kit entitled "Multiculturalism - Respecting our Differences" Since 1995 CUT Brazil has been running a campaign 'Citizenship: equal opportunities in life, at work and in the trade union movement' to combat racism and discrimination against the country's black population. 'Gender and race' workshops are part of its education programme. In Spain, a booklet for schoolchildren explaining what is racism and how to combat it has recently been produced by a consortium of organisations -including the UGT and its teachers' union, the FETE- collaborating with the Ministry of Education and Sciences and the Ministry of Labour and Social affairs.

### ***Women in the Export Processing Zones (EPZs)***

The majority of factories in the world's export processing zones produce textiles, garments, footwear and electronics. Most of the workers are female - in some factories 90% are female. While EPZs provide young women with job opportunities in the formal economy, they afford little job security. Some women are forced to undergo pregnancy testing before they are hired, and are sacked if they become pregnant.

Factory owners tend to prefer women as they carry out unskilled repetitive tasks, and are considered to be more disciplined, meticulous and dextrous than men. Employers also see young women as more docile, as they are used to following orders at home. As a result they are easier to bully and are perceived as less likely to join or form unions.

## **Union action**

Although employers in the zones are very hostile to unions, there have been some successes. In the **Philippines** the Forum of Unions in Zone Enterprises (FUZE), established in 1997, has 45 member unions representing 12,645 workers. In **Honduras**, 2000 workers at the Korean-owned Yoo Young plant in La Lima finally managed to get legal recognition for their union, despite constant opposition from the employer and the country's Labour Ministry. They were strongly supported by the **ITGLWF** and FNV, **the Netherlands** union centre.

## VI. Conclusions and Recommendations



The strength of this publication lies in the fact that it draws on a decade of experiences of trade union women in the forefront of the struggle to ensure that the principles of gender equality of the Beijing Platform for Action become a reality in the workplace, in the union and in society.

Ten years after Beijing, the record on eliminating gender discrimination at work has been extremely mixed. Much still needs to be done if the commitments of Section F of the BPfA are to be fully realized. Globalization and its neo-liberal agenda of flexible labour markets, privatization of public services, promotion of EPZs, increasing pressures to become migrant labourers or informal sector workers, these have all operated in tandem to undermine women's rights, and to marginalize them in the global economy. Many new jobs have been created, and women have benefited from them, but they are still limited to certain sectors and to the lower occupational levels, with little job security.

Gender-based segregation in some occupations and workplaces and pay inequity remains a persistent problem in industrialized countries and in the formal sectors of developing countries. We have seen an increasing feminization of poverty in the informal and agricultural sectors of developing countries. Precarious, low-paid, unprotected work in the informal economy is the growing lot of working women in many countries in the global north and south. Migrant women face particularly formidable challenges as they are exploited in domestic work or the entertainment sector, and increasingly trafficked, and are subject to gender-based violence at the work place.

Women from ethnic minorities face both gender and racial discrimination, while young women are disadvantaged in relation to men, when it comes to finding decent work. The rules of economic and trade liberalization are stacked against women workers. A case in point was the dismantling of the

Agreement on Textiles and Clothing (ATC) on 1 January 2005, with its guaranteed quotas for textile imports to Europe and the USA from countries such as Bangladesh, Cambodia and Mauritius. Millions of textile workers in these countries, the majority of whom are women, may now lose their jobs, as textile exports face competition from lower-cost locations such as India and China. Unfortunately, union organising in face of such challenges, exposes women to threats of intimidation, dismissals, victimization even violence from unscrupulous employers, particularly in some EPZs.

Unions and their women members have not hesitated to respond to the innumerable challenges of gender discrimination and injustice at work. They have been pro-active within the civil society struggle to hold their governments accountable to the commitments they made in Beijing. They report that most governments have set up national machineries as a framework for the implementation of the BPfA to combat gender discrimination, but often the reality of achievements falls far short of expectations. To their credit, many governments have consulted with the unions in the process of setting up national machinery. In some cases, social dialogue on policy formulation and implementation is part of an on-going consultative process.

Equally important, union women have been transforming the structures, working methods and culture of trade unions, which are generally perceived as male-dominated, hierarchical and overly bureaucratic and slow to adapt to the changes in the world of work. Union women are spearheading organising campaigns, giving special attention to young workers and to those in the informal economy. They are participating across the board, including at the highest levels of union leadership. Through them, unions are changing their profile to reflect the diversity of work more accurately. They are responding more effectively to the needs and concerns of all workers, women and men, fighting for bread, and roses too!

Trade unions are concerned about the serious obstacles to attaining the Millennium Development Goals. If these are not overcome through bold policies on poverty eradication and decent work, 2015 will be a year for commiseration with the millions of poor working women trying to sustain themselves and their families on less than \$1 a day. If the MDGs are fulfilled, it will be a year of triumph.

## **Recommendations**

Bold policies are needed to fulfil the BPfA and MDG commitments. Trade unions women are calling for the following:

- \* Incorporate the principles of the BPfA and the Millennium Declaration in all economic, trade and employment policies at national and global levels.
- \* At national level fully adopt the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, with a strong focus on gender equality.
- \* Set up union campaigns to combat gender discrimination, pay inequity and the erosion of women's rights.
- \* Set up union campaigns to organise women workers, including in the informal economy.
- \* Set up union and ILO campaigns for governments to ratify and implement:
  - \* the Conventions enshrined in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at work<sup>19</sup>.
  - \* ILO Conventions 183 (Maternity Protection), 156 (Workers with Family Responsibilities), 175 (Part-time workers) and 177 (Homeworkers).
  - \* the Conclusions of the ILO Discussion on Decent Work and the Informal economy, adopted in 2002.
- \* The ILO should adopt a pro-active approach to eliminating laws prohibiting union organising in certain sectors, such as EPZs.
- \* Governments must affirm and take responsibility to provide equal access to quality public services. Any changes in provision should be subject to gender impact assessments.
- \* Governments must fulfil their commitments to the Dakar Framework of Action for education. They must support gender parity and gender equality goals in education and training and provide resources for Quality Public Education for All.
- \* Include a gender dimension in all HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment programmes and take account of gender-based coercion, harassment and violence at the workplace. Use the education system with teacher training and gender-sensitive curricula. Use work-place approaches, based on the ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work

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19. These Core Conventions are: C87 and C98 (*Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining*), C100 and C111 (*Equal Pay and Non Discrimination*), C29 and C105 (*Forced Labour*), C138 and 182 (*Minimum Age for Employment and Child Labour*).

\* Governments must develop policies and action plans to bring about the institutional changes in the workplace and the home to foster gender equity and an equitable sharing of family responsibilities.

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**Glossary**

ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations
BIU	Bermuda Industrial Union
BMSF	Bangladesh Mukto Sramik Federation
CC.OO.	Confederación Sindical de Comisiones Obreras - Spain
CDT	Confédération Démocratique du Travail - RD Congo
CEOSL	Confederación Ecuatoriana de Organizaciones Sindicales Libres
CGIL	Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro
CGSILA	Central Geral de Sindicatos Independentes e Livres de Angola
CGT	Confederación General del Trabajo de la República Argentina
CGT	Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores - Brasil
CGT-FO	Confédération Générale du Travail - Force Ouvrière - France
CISL	Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori
CITUM	Confederation of Independent Trade Unions of Montenegro
CLC	Canadian Labour Congress / Congrès du travail du Canada
CMKOS	Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions
CMTU	Confederation of Mongolian Trade Unions
CNTD	Confederación Nacional de Trabajadores Dominicanos
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CTC	Confederación de Trabajadores de Colombia
CTH	Confederación de Trabajadores de Honduras
CTRP	Confederación de Trabajadores de la República de Panamá
CUT	Central Única dos Trabalhadores - Brasil
CUT	Central Unitaria de Trabajadores - Colombia
CWC	Ceylon Workers' Congress - Sri Lanka
DGB	Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund - Germany
FEDUSA	Federation of Unions of South Africa
FGTB	Fédération Générale du Travail de Belgique
FMM	Confédération des travailleurs malgaches - Madagascar
FNV	Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging
FS	Força Sindical - Brasil
GTUA	Georgian Trade Union Amalgamation
HKCTU	Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions
HMS	Hind Mazdoor Sabha - India
ICTU	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
JTUC-Rengo	Japanese Trade Union Confederation

KOZ-SR	Confederation of Trade Unions of the Slovak Republic
KSSH	Confederation of the Trade Unions of Albania
LBAS	Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia
LO	Landsorganisationen i Danmark
LO	Landsorganisasjonen i Norge - Norway
LO	Landsorganisationen i Sverige - Sweden
LPSK	Lithuanian Trade Union Confederation
MCTU	Malawi Congress of Trade Unions
MTUC	Malaysian Trades Union Congress
NACTU	National Council of Trade Unions, South Africa
NOTU	National Organisation of Trade Unions - Uganda
NSZZ	NSZZ - "Solidarnosc" Niezalezny Samorzadny Zwaiazek Zawodowy - Poland
NTUC	National Trades Union Congress - Singapore
NZCTU	New Zealand Council of Trade Unions
OGB	Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund - Austria
ONSL	Organisation Nationale des Syndicats Libres - Burkina Faso
SAK	Suomen Ammattiliittojen Keskusjärjestö - Finland
SGB-USS	Schweizerischer Gewerkschaftsbund - Union syndicale suisse
TCO	Tjänstemännens Centralorganisation - Sweden
TUC	Trades Union Congress - Ghana
TUC	Trades Union Congress - United Kingdom
TUCP	Trade Union Congress of the Philippines
UGT	Unión General de Trabajadores - Spain
UGTA	Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens
UGTCI	Union Générale des Travailleurs de Côte d'Ivoire
UGTT	Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail
UIL	Unione Italiana del Lavoro
UMT	Union Marocaine du Travail - Morocco
UNTM	Union Nationale des Travailleurs du Mali
USTG	Union Syndicale des Travailleurs de Guinée
USTN	Union des Syndicats des Travailleurs du Niger
TESDA	Technical Education and Skill Developments Authority (Philippines)
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
EPZ	Export Processing Zones

GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
GUFs	Global Union Federations
ILO	International Labour Organisation
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

**INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF  
FREE TRADE UNIONS  
EIGHTEENTH WORLD CONGRESS**

Miyazaki, 5 - 10 December 2004

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**RESOLUTION**

**UNIONS FOR WOMEN, WOMEN FOR UNIONS**

1. Congress recognises the immense contribution of women to society, to economic life and to the trade union movement. It deplores the continuing reality of deep and pervasive discrimination against women in all areas of economic and social activity and commits the ICFTU to its elimination.

2. Gender discrimination is evident throughout the world in access to resources, educational and economic opportunities, political power and leadership positions. The rate of women's participation in the global workforce is now about 40%, and growing, but they are paid between 30 and 60% less than men, concentrated in low skill, undervalued and insecure jobs, frequently experience sexual harassment in the workplace, and suffer more and longer unemployment. Statements of increased political commitment and more extensive legislative provisions for equality, while important, have not proven adequate to uproot discrimination, particularly in its hidden forms. In addition, women continue to bear the largest burden of family responsibilities.

3. Many aspects of globalisation are having a negative impact on the status of women at work and in society, exacerbating inequality instead of contributing to its elimination. The withdrawal of the state from regulatory and economic activity; privatisation; and the reduction of public spending on the provision of basic services have been widespread. These have frequently taken place in the context of structural adjustment programmes, with the risk of GATS negotiations further aggravating the situation in the future. These processes are doubly discriminatory against women, since they adversely affect levels and conditions of employment in sectors in which women are highly represented, as well as reducing the provision of those services on which women are disproportionately dependent, particularly because of their unequal assumption of family responsibilities.

4. Women constitute about 80% of the 50 million strong workforce in export processing zones (EPZs) which are multiplying around the world as governments seek low cost solutions to the increased competitive pressures of the global economy. EPZs provide employers with an environment in which trade union organisation is either prohibited or made practically impossible and permit exploitative,

dangerous and sometimes brutal practices of which women are the most frequent victims.

5. Women constitute, too, 48% of the world's migrants. With the feminisation of migration, the extreme vulnerability of women migrants presents urgent new challenges for the ICFTU. Women are segregated into some of the least protected and most exploited sectors of the workforce, and increasingly are being trafficked into illegal employment and prostitution. Congress expresses its deep concern at the growth of such odious, slavery-like practices and underlines the responsibility of the ICFTU to join the fight against them.

6. Women make up the majority of workers with atypical or precarious jobs, such as part-time, temporary and casual work. Moreover, almost half of non-agricultural women's work is undertaken in the informal economy, meaning that they are denied the minimum benefits and protection of national regulations, and subject to sub-standard conditions of work and widespread denial of their fundamental rights. Trade union activities to formalise informal work and to organise workers performing informal work will be to the particular benefit of women. All ICFTU member organisations recognise that the concentration of women in such work is a symptom of deeply-rooted discrimination and oppression which needs to be addressed directly.

7. Congress welcomes efforts made by trade unions over the last four years to put gender issues at the centre of their policies and programmes. Such efforts have been particularly evident at regional and international levels, and have included close monitoring of the integration of gender perspectives in policies and publications, and better women's participation on economic policy questions. Nevertheless, considerable progress has still to be made, particularly in capacity-building for women and in having trade union leaders and officers mainstream gender issues in all areas of work on the global economy. Trade unions have a basic responsibility to bring about gender parity in their own structures, especially in decision-making and negotiating bodies, and a manifest interest in doing so. Trade unions must further ensure that discrimination, sexual harassment and abuse of women do not occur within trade union structures.

8. Although women's membership has now risen to 40% in the ICFTU, Congress regrets that the full integration of gender issues into trade union policies and activities remains a distant prospect. It is important to acknowledge that outdated and conservative attitudes to women at all levels of trade unions are still a major barrier to progress, and that gender equality will not be achieved without a sustained and sincere commitment by trade unions to change their culture as well as their structures and methods. While Congress can note with satisfaction the election of women to top positions in a number of organisations, it stresses that it is at leadership level - where women's representation is about 20% only - that the gender gap is widest, and where change is most urgently needed.

9. Congress acknowledges that the need for such change is not restricted to the union movement, but applies also to the representation of women in employer

organisations, political parties and parliaments.

10. Congress reiterates the conclusion of the ICFTU Millennium Review that the future strength and vitality of the trade union movement depends on larger numbers of women joining its ranks and becoming leaders. It welcomes progress made in implementation of the Plan of Action adopted by the 17th World Congress, particularly through the organising campaign "Union for Women; Women for Unions", and urges affiliates to participate in it. Congress further welcomes the Conclusions and Recommendations of the 8th World Women's Conference (Melbourne, February 2003) including the revised ICFTU Charter of Rights of Working Women.

### **ICFTU Action Programme**

11. Congress instructs the ICFTU and regional organisations, working together with Global Unions partners and affiliates, to:

- a) step up the Global Unions' organising campaign, "Unions for Women; Women for Unions", giving priority to women workers in the informal economy and EPZs;
- b) intensify campaigning at national, regional and international levels for the ratification and implementation of ILO Conventions 100 (Equal Remuneration), 111 (Discrimination), 156 (Workers with Family Responsibilities), 175 (Part-Time Work), 177 (Home Work) and 183 (Maternity Protection), and for effective follow-up to the ILO Conference Resolution on gender equality, pay equity and maternity protection adopted in June 2004 ;
- c) support initiatives by its affiliates that promote the respect of women's fundamental human rights such as: the right to make decisions that affect their lives, the right to marry freely, and reproductive rights, as well as the right to education, to literacy, to vote, and to own property ;
- d) undertake action on the issue of pay equity at national, regional and international levels, including research and information dissemination on the gender wage gap and on successful strategies and best practices; training of members and officials; and campaigning for the right to a minimum wage sufficient to cover basic needs, with a clear focus on women workers and pay equity ;
- e) implement a gender audit of the ICFTU and regional organisations, with results being reported to the Executive Board for appropriate follow-up. National centres and other members of Global Unions should be encouraged to carry out gender audits as well;

- f) assist unions to develop or revise gender equality plans (with realistic and measurable goals, a specific time frame and regular monitoring and evaluation mechanisms), ensuring that the process is participatory and inclusive, taking into account diversity in the trade union movement;
- g) strengthen advocacy work at national, regional and international levels regarding labour and women's rights in EPZs and the informal economy, in collaboration with human rights and women's organisations, co-operatives and other organisations with shared objectives;
- h) promote actively the attainment by women of more positions of responsibility in trade unions generally and within the ILO and a higher representation of women at the ILO Conference, in line with the relevant resolutions and decisions of the ICFTU Executive Board and the Workers' Group;
- i) carry out gender analysis of the policies and actions of the institutions dealing with the global economy, in particular the WTO, the World Bank and the IMF, and facilitate exchange of information among union women with relevant experiences of regional and global integration processes;
- j) promote vigorously implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, in particular Section F on women and the economy, at national, regional and international levels, and ensure effective trade union input and participation in Beijing + 10 (New York, March 2005) .

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***Global Unions***

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**International Federation of Chemical Energy, Mine & General Workers' Unions (ICEM):** [www.icem.org](http://www.icem.org)

**International Federation of Journalists (IFJ):** [www.ifj.org](http://www.ifj.org)

**International Textile, Garment & Leather Workers' Federation (ITGLWF):** [www.itglwf.org](http://www.itglwf.org)

**Public Service International (PSI):** [www.world-psi.org](http://www.world-psi.org)

**International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF):** [www.itf.org.uk](http://www.itf.org.uk)

**International Federation of Building and Woodworkers (IFBWW):** [www.ifbww.org](http://www.ifbww.org)

**International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF):** [www.imfmetal.org](http://www.imfmetal.org)

**International Union of Food Agric. Hotel Rest.Cater.Tobac.& Allied Work. Assoc. (IUF):** [www.iuf.org](http://www.iuf.org)

**Union Network International (UNI):** [www.union-network.org](http://www.union-network.org)

