



WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

Brussels, 26 – 27 February 2009

Women in the current global crisis

The ITUC Women's Committee challenges the assumption that the consequences of the global crisis we are currently facing are gender neutral.

The full employment effect of the crisis is still unknown. However, women's disadvantaged position on labour markets renders them particularly vulnerable to lay-offs in restructuring processes. Further women are overrepresented in certain sectors which are being severely hit by the economic recession such as clothing, retail, electronics, finance, service and export oriented sectors.

In developing countries, where social security is virtually inexistent, the negative effects of the crisis on employment may force women to accept lower wage, longer working hours and even more precarious employment conditions.

Further, the expected decrease in household's income will reinforce societal gender segregation and discrimination against women and may drive more women into the informal economy and may give rise to an increase in cases of domestic violence.

In addition, previous experiences have shown that women are most negatively affected when public provisions are cut. In the current circumstances, it is very likely that the pressure on developing countries' national budgets will significantly increase as will pressure to cut public expenditure. Women and girls' access to public services might be reduced while their care duties within the family are likely to increase.

The on going food crisis has already demonstrated that women and girls are the worst affected when prices go up. They have to bear additional burdens for their family and often end up making huge sacrifices, such as being the last to eat.

Low income households headed by women are at particular risk of falling into abject poverty.

Further, knowing that the gender impact is being felt everywhere in the world now and for the coming years, it is of serious concern that hardly any women are part of the decision-making bodies of the International financial Institutions.

The ITUC Women's Committee demands that:

- Gender equality be put at heart of both short and long term policies, programmes and processes related to the crisis,
- Women be integrated in decisions making processes concerning the crisis given the unique contribution they can make on the issue;
- Women be provided with access to programmes aimed at immediately alleviating poverty and hunger;
- The level of national and international financial policy and commitments to achieve gender equality and promote women's rights be strengthened and not undermined;

- Efforts aimed at fighting discrimination in labour markets be pursued and increased;
- The commitment of the states be pursued for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals;
- The conversion of debts of developing countries to social programmes.

We urge the ITUC and affiliated organisations to recognize the gender impact of the crisis and take on board the above mentioned demands in their activities and policies.

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