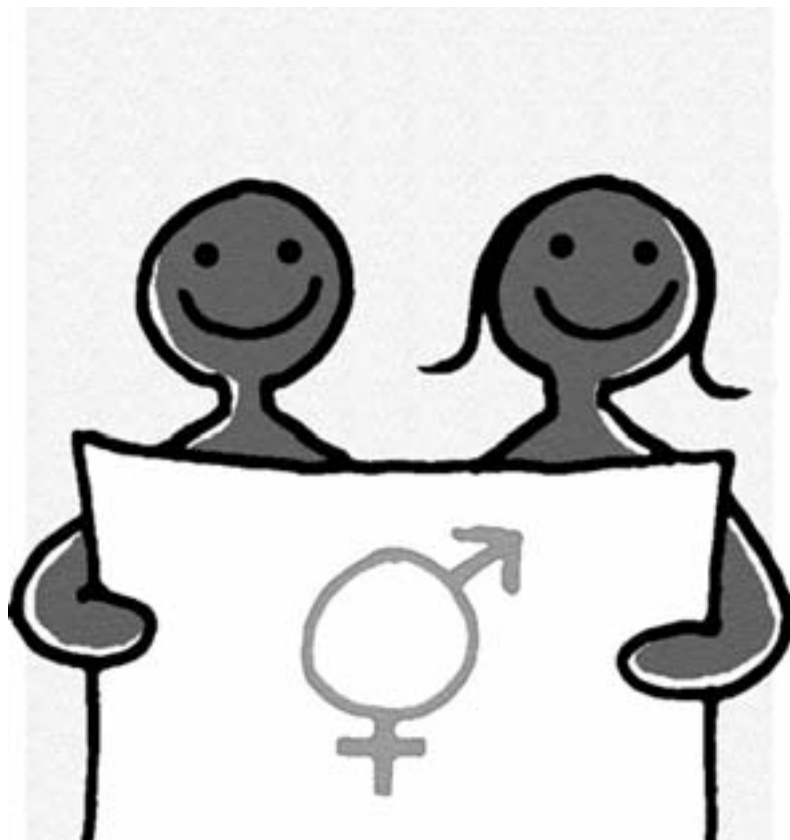


GENDER EQUALITY

ITUC International Trade Union Confederation
November 2007



Action Programme on achieving gender equality in trade unions



Trade unions have a history in the struggle for social and economic rights, equal opportunities and human dignity. We believe in parity between women and men in every workplace, at all levels of society, and in trade unions themselves.

Since its establishment, the global trade union movement has achieved huge progress in developing standards for gender equality.

But there is still much to be done to ensure stronger mainstreaming of gender issues, greater consistency across policy areas, improved awareness of gender perspectives, and fairer distribution of resources.

Gender mainstreaming is an organisational strategy to achieve and maintain gender equality and women's empowerment.

Achieving equality between men and women is not a “woman's” concern, but is fundamental to the aims of all trade unionists. Dynamic measures that target women are required in order to redress existing discrimination and change attitudes and conditions in the unions and by the unions. There is also a need for measures to both increase awareness among women and to enable them to reconcile work with their personal and family life, while also allowing men to spend time with their families and share family responsibilities

There are **seven major areas** where women's rights must be defended and enhanced worldwide: **education and training; employment and equal pay; social protection with particular focus on maternity protection and access to health care; family responsibilities; harassment and violence against women; freedom of association; and integration into trade unions.**

This Action Programme sets down specific measures that we recommend trade unions take to eliminate gender discrimination and promote full participation of women in trade unions. Other support from the ITUC Women's Committee includes an ITUC charter on the Rights of Working Women, action on International Women's Day, a Guide on Sexual Harassment, organising, development of campaign kits, migrant workers and diversity (action against racism and xenophobia based on sex, race, colour, religion, national extraction, social origin, age, disability, health and sexual orientation).

Organising women workers

1. /

Making the trade union movement strong means organising! Strategies should be developed to organise and represent women. Increasing numbers of women are entering the labour market and joining unions. Organising and representing women working in the formal, traditional sectors should extend to women in the informal economy, export processing zones, young women, migrant women, women from ethnic minorities, women in rural and urban areas, teleworking and home-based workers, domestic workers, single working mothers, and women in short-term employment, temporary, casual, low paid jobs and other workers vulnerable to exploitation, by helping them to identify and meet their own needs through solidarity action. By addressing the needs of all working people, unions become stronger and truly representative.

2. /

Organising women requires making women's issues top priority on the trade union agenda, including gender in all policies, programmes and activities and ensuring equal access for women to decision-making positions. Women will be attracted to membership if they see that unions work for women in practice, addressing their issues and representing them effectively.



3. /

Trade union organisations should use **organising methods suited to the needs of women, and their local conditions**. For example, meeting places should be safe and convenient; the timing, agenda and duration of meetings should take account of workers' family responsibilities; and, if necessary, care arranged for young children.



Sharing family responsibilities !

Women - equal members

4. /

Women's organising programmes should be **supported by trade union leaders and trade union action policies** promoting equal rights for women in all areas, in particular in the economic, social and trade union fields.

5. /

Special bodies/structures (such as women's committees, women's departments or task forces, women's groups and women's networks) are needed at different levels of trade unions to examine the problems facing women workers and make proposals for **eliminating discrimination, encouraging women's participation, promoting equal opportunities and monitoring the advancement of gender equality in trade unions**. These bodies/structures should have the power to take initiatives, liaise with other groups of members, and input directly into decision-making. Joint action in cooperation with women's organisations should be a means to achieve common objectives.

Participation of women in trade union decision-making and responsibilities

6. /

Women, whether organised or not, will make their own judgement about trade unions based on their performance, including the extent to which women participate in trade union decision-making. The number of women holding union office should at least correspond to the percentage of women members (proportionality).

7. /

Positive action is needed to overcome direct and indirect discrimination against women taking up leadership positions in trade unions. This requires:

- strong commitment from trade union leaders;
- transparent budgets for gender initiatives in trade unions;
- implementing intensive training programmes to prepare women for leadership positions;
- collection of separate statistics on male and female membership, on their participation in all trade union activities and on the representation of women and men in decision making bodies;
- reporting on progress in policies and measures, supported by facts and figures, be made to Congresses;
- examining structures and removing obstacles that prevent women taking leadership roles, and ensuring they are at least proportionately represented at all levels, if necessary through the creation of additional seats (which should carry equal rights and responsibilities) or co-option;
- giving statutory status to women's structures; providing special budgets and adequate working conditions and logistical support;
- establishing a standing committee within unions to promote the gender equality and recruitment policy;
- inclusion of women unionists in trade union delegations to meetings, conferences and missions at national, regional and international levels; including to international financial and economic institutions and bodies;





Access to leadership positions!

- introducing minimum target, starting at 30% for women's participation, and a parity target, at all trade union levels;
- introducing, reserved seats, quotas or other transitional measures in trade union decision-making bodies where parity has not been achieved;
- transparency in nominating women to consultative and decision-making bodies;
- supporting women by extra training, childcare or the sharing of family responsibilities;
- making full use of women trade unionists' skills in all areas of activity;
- inclusion of women in negotiating committees/teams at all levels and gender dimension in all items of the bargaining agenda.

Training, Communication and Research

8. /

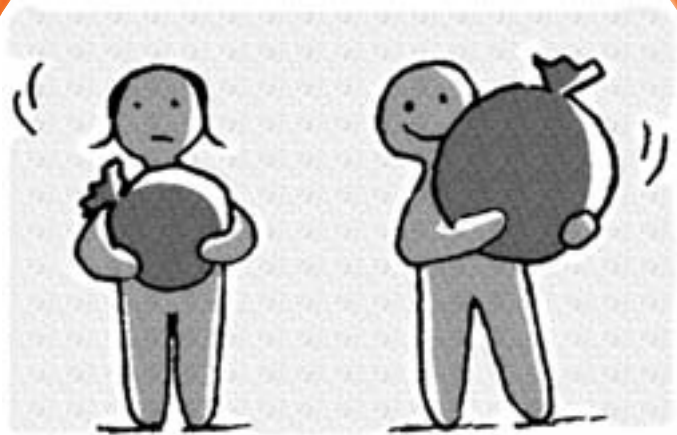
Men and women in trade unions should accept, practise and disseminate the principle of equal rights and opportunities between men and women, including women who return to work after a career break. Gender awareness training as well as practical training on gender mainstreaming should be part and parcel of all trade union education programmes and activities, at all levels. All general trade union training should include an element on equal opportunities and gender issues, especially equal pay.

9. /

All trade union literature and educational material should present the image of women workers and their economic role in a positive manner.

10. /

Trade unions should carry out research into the working conditions of women, to help them respond more effectively to women workers' needs. Trade union research should be disseminated to policy makers and other stakeholders to ensure a wider understanding of the gender and decent work agenda.



Equal Pay!

11. /

Training programmes catering especially for women are needed in many trade union organisations to encourage women members and help them to express themselves and their own demands. It is very important that more women should receive training without loss of pay. Trade unions should fight for educational leave where it has not yet become a right, and encourage women to take it up. Educational activities should be tailored to the time women have available and, where necessary, childcare should be provided.

Internal procedures

12. /

Trade unions should:

- Develop equal employment, recruitment and training guidelines to ensure that they are not inadvertently discriminatory and that they reflect the diversity of their membership with the aim of gender parity;
- Elaborate equality plans for the unions;
- Undertake gender-impact assessment of all internal policies and programmes in order to ensure gender mainstreaming;
- Carry out gender audit of the trade union organisation, including gender-budgeting.

Women in Development Cooperation

13. /

In development cooperation activities, the global trade union movement sets a minimum target for overall women's participation in activities at the national, regional and international levels of 30%, or 40% for organisations with a higher percentage of women members, and a parity quota as a final target. Nominations by affiliates should include the names of female and male participants for regional and international level activities.



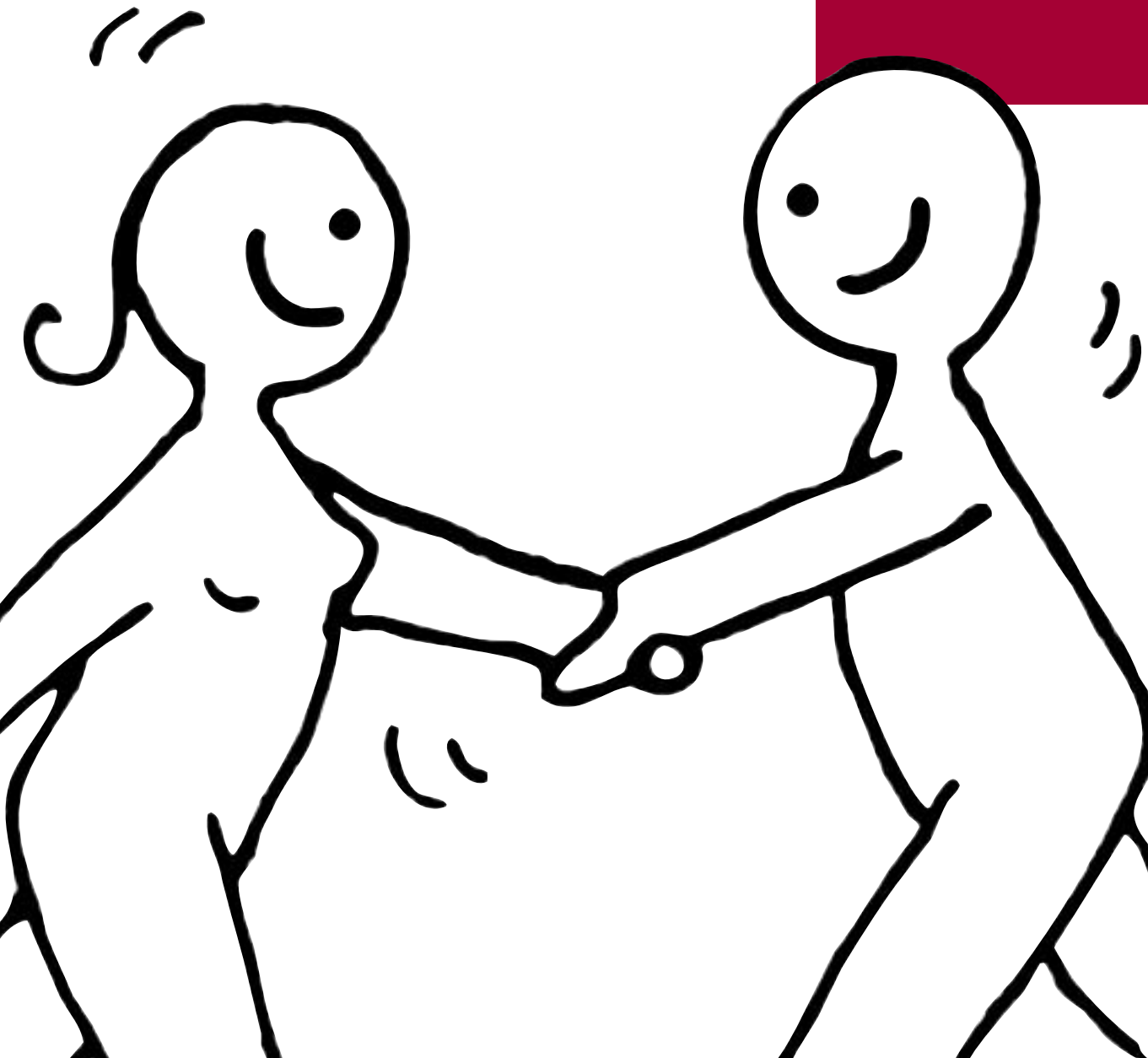
Gender Checklist for Projects and Programmes



- Are women a main target of the project? If not, are women specifically identified as part of the project/programme?
- Have women's representatives been consulted on all aspects of the project/programme – its design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation?
- Are barriers to women's participation identified and have ways of overcoming them been considered? (attending meetings outside working hours, childcare, safe transport at night, different traditions and cultures which don't allow women to go to meetings, etc.);
- Are women included in the target group for the project/programme and if not, what is being done to make sure that women participate as well?
- How will the project/programme strengthen women's position compared to that of men?
- How will the project/programme improve awareness of issues concerning equality in trade unions?



- When issuing invitations and announcements of meetings and events, does the wording itself appear to be speaking to men only? Carefully look at what language is being used;
- Women's representatives are to be actively involved in all decision-making at every stage of the project cycle: planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and resource-management;
- Gender perspectives are to be fully integrated in projects and programmes;
- All those involved in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the projects/programmes will be made aware of this agreement.



ITUC International Trade Union Confederation
5 Bd du Roi Albert II, Bte 1, 1210 Brussels, Belgium
Tel: + 32 2 2240211, Fax: +32 2 2015815
E-Mail: info@ituc-csi.org • Web Site: <http://www.ituc-csi.org>

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