



ITUC CAMPAIGN GUIDE

ITUC International Trade Union Confederation
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Decent Work, Decent Life for Women

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Introduction

8 March 2008 marks the Centenary of International Women's Day (IWD), which has its origins in the protests, strikes and marches of women trade unionists. Their courage and determination to stand up for women workers' rights calls for a very special celebration. That is why the ITUC and the Global Union Federations (GUFs) are launching a two-year Global Campaign for Decent Work, Decent Life for Women on this historic date.

This guide explains what the campaign is, why it is important, and what you can do to take part. It includes background information on decent work for women, and tips and resources to get started with your Campaign.

What is the campaign?

The key objectives of the **Global Campaign for Decent Work, Decent Life for Women** are:

- > To advocate decent work for women and gender equality in labour policies and agreements;
- > To seek gender equality in trade union structures, policies and activities and a significant increase in the number of women trade union members and women in elected positions.

The ITUC and the Global Union Federations (GUFs) will focus their activities on sectors/ areas of work where women workers are most vulnerable such as Export Processing Zones, domestic work, part-time workers, women migrant workers and the informal economy.

After 8 March the next **key dates** for action will be:

- > The **World Day for Decent Work** on **7 October 2008**. Special Campaign events focusing on women workers will be planned around this date.
- > **UN Day for Elimination of Violence Against Women on 25 November**. The ITUC and Global Union Federations are participating in a global initiative to stop violence against women, running from 25 November (UN Day for Elimination of Violence Against Women) until UN Human Rights Day on 10 December. The initiative is based on the 1993 Declaration on this issue adopted by the UN.

This women's Campaign is linked to the "Decent Work, Decent Life" campaign launched in January 2007 by the ITUC, the ETUC, the Global Progressive Forum (GPF), Solidar and Social Alert International which aims to build awareness of Decent Work and show that it is fundamental to democracy and social cohesion. As part of this global campaign, the ITUC and its partners are currently collecting signatures for a Decent-Work Petition. For more information please see the section 'Resources'.

ILO definition of Decent Work

Decent work has been defined by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and endorsed by the international community as being productive work for women and men in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. Decent work involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income; provides security in the workplace and social protection for workers and their families; offers better prospects for personal development and encourages social integration; gives people the freedom to express their concerns, to organize and to participate in decisions that affect their lives; and guarantees equal opportunities and equal treatment for all.

Campaign web page and e-mail list

From 8 March 2008 onwards you will have access to e.g. the Campaign Guide, the Pay Equity report, the Campaign poster and other interesting materials through a special **Campaign webpage: www.ituc-csi.org** and click on 'equality'.

A Campaign **email** list will also be launched on 8 March through which we will send updates about the Campaign. You can sign up for this email list by going to the Campaign webpage or by sending your email addresses to **equality@ituc-csi.org**

Send your appeals and solidarity messages in support of the 'Decent Work, Decent Life for Women' Campaign. They will be published on the Campaign web page and at a later stage in a special publication which we would like to present at key trade union meetings and events.

Invite a wide audience to send their personal messages: women and men trade unionists, trade unions, women's organizations which share the principles of trade unions, well known persons in your country. Collect appeals and messages during a trade union meeting or event. Messages of support can include:

- > a call for specific actions to achieve a decent work and life for women;
- > examples of day to day experiences of women at work;
- > shocking facts and figures;
- > a description of a trade union action which improved the rights of women workers.

Use your creativity! Messages of support can also be expressed through poems, photos or art works. **You can send the messages by email (equality@ituc-csi.org) or by mail to the ITUC.**

Why do we need the campaign?

In virtually every country, women face multiple forms of discrimination in both policy and practice on a daily basis. Young women find it particularly hard to enter the labour market as employers tend to favour young men. The gender pay gap remains a reality even in those countries with the most advanced legislation on non-discriminatory matters. It is difficult for women who leave the labour market to care for their children to re-enter it when their children are older. And due to their often disrupted career, women tend to be over-represented among the low income elderly. The situation of women from developing countries is certainly among the least advantageous. There are 1.2 billion women in work today – about 40% of total world employment – yet women still:

- > earn 12 to 60% less than their male co-workers, even in occupations such as nursing and teaching;
- > account for an increasing proportion (60%) of the world's poor and working poor;
- > face a higher level of unemployment than ever before (81.8 million women in 2006);
- > are concentrated in low-paid, unprotected, temporary or casual work;
- > lack maternity protection rights and face violence and sexual harassment at or near the workplace;
- > do not enjoy the same level of social protection as their male counterparts.

This Campaign is an important opportunity to strengthen gender equality at work and in trade unions. We know that campaigns tailored specifically for women, on issues that matter to them, are effective. They show that trade unions, both nationally and internationally, are relevant to women. They help to bring women into the trade union movement and improve equality in the workplace. Experience shows that campaigns targeting women and issues of priority for women:

- > increase membership rates by up to 150%;
- > increase political support at the national level for organizing women;
- > encourage unions and national centres to push for better labour legislation to stop discriminatory policies and practices and promote better maternity protection, child care, pay equity and protection from sexual harassment.

Women in the Informal Economy

A large share of the global workforce remains outside the world of full-time, stable and protected jobs in what is known as the informal economy. According to recent ILO statistics over 60 per cent of working women are in informal employment outside agriculture, and when agriculture is taken into account the figures are even higher. Even

within the informal economy women are concentrated at the lower end where decent work deficits are the greatest. Outside of agriculture, women are in the least protected and most precarious forms of work including domestic work, unpaid family workers and industrial outworkers.

See:

- > Video on Maternity Protection, Burkina Faso <http://www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article722>
- > Spotlight on Renana Jhabvala (India - SEWA) ITUC must encourage organising of informal workers" <http://www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article399>
- > Spotlight interview with Mariama Dioulde Diallo (Dyers' Union - Guinea), "We women have no rights": <http://www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article1564>
- > ILO: <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/policy/events/informal/index.htm>

How you can take part in the campaign

You will decide on and design your own Campaign activities. In this section we suggest **themes** on which you could focus your activities and give **tips** about strategies.

Getting started

- > First decide on your **themes and objectives**, who is to take part, as well as methods and activities. Try to **involve the women coordinators** of your affiliated trade unions and other national centres in your country as this will maximise impact.
- > **Inform your members** about the Campaign and tell them how they can take part.
- > Plan a special **launch** of the Campaign either at a key trade union meeting and/or by organizing a special event like a women's march.
- > Prepare a **press release** covering issues of concern for women and related to the Global Decent Work, Decent Life for Women Campaign.
- > Take **photographs of your events** and publish them in your trade union magazine, on a special poster or in an exhibition. Send your photographs with a description of your activity to the ITUC: equality@ituc-csi.org
- > **Send your Campaign plan to the ITUC** (equality@ituc-csi.org) together with your contact details and email address. This will help us to keep you informed about the Campaign and send you interesting publications.
- > For more tips and ideas: **check the Campaign webpage:** www.ituc-csi.org and click on 'equality'.

Suggestions for themes

Theme 1: Women workers' rights in law and in practice

Governments have a responsibility to guarantee rights at work through labour laws that meet the basic standards set out by the ILO and ensure gender equality at work. ILO Conventions that specifically relate to women workers are:

- > 183 - Maternity Protection
- > 177 - Home Work
- > 175 - Part-Time Work

- > 171 - Night Work
- > 156 - Workers with Family Responsibilities
- > 117 - Social Policy
- > 100 - Equal Remuneration
- > 111 - Discrimination /Employment and Occupation Convention.

It is also crucial that governments respect the Core Labour Standards of the ILO, which include both Conventions 100 and 111, as listed above, as well as Conventions 29 and 105 on the abolition of forced labour, 87 and 98 on freedom of association, the right to organise and collective bargaining, and 138 and 182 on the elimination of child labour. Furthermore they can be guided by the many Recommendations of the ILO, notably the recent ILO Recommendation No. 198 on the employment relationship, which provides useful elements to help facilitating the transition from informal to formal employment.

Other international instruments on women workers' rights that governments must adhere to are:

The **United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**, an international statement of women's rights signed by 185 countries - over 90% of the members of the United Nations. <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>

The **Beijing Global Platform for Action** which commits governments to “ensuring that gender perspective is reflected in all our policies and programmes” and the **Beijing Declaration** which includes ‘Section F’ on Women and the Economy. Section F calls for labour legislation and practices to ensure opportunities for women and men to take job-protected parental leave and to promote the equal sharing of family responsibilities <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/>

The Millennium Development Goals, notably Goal Three, to “Promote gender equality and empower women”, for example through the elimination of gender disparity in education. Other goals include “Improving maternal health”, measured in part by the reduction in the maternal mortality ratio and “Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases”, measured inter alia by the level of HIV prevalence among 15-24 year old pregnant women <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

Violence against women and girls

Violence against women and girls is perhaps the most socially tolerated of human rights violations, and it occurs in every region, country and culture. It prevents women and girls from enjoying their human rights and fundamental freedoms. There is a growing awareness that violence at work is not merely an individual problem but a structural, systemic problem rooted in wider social, economic, organizational and cultural factors. The power imbalance in the workplace and precarious employment conditions of numerous women increase their risk of being victims of sexual harassment, abuse and

rape which also raises the risk of HIV/AIDs infection. Certain types of work situation increase this threat, such as women who travel for their work or who migrate to find work and female domestic workers.

Sources:

- > **Weblink to the ITUC press release and statement of 2007:** <http://www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article1621>
- > **UNIFEM** <http://www.saynotoviolence.org/>

TIPS for Campaign actions:

- > Lobby your government. Call for a review of national labour legislation and practices with the aim of significantly increasing the number of women with a decent job and a decent life. Key policy areas to focus on are maternity protection, the sharing of family responsibilities, pay equity and legislation to combat sexual harassment at the work place.
- > Urge your government to ratify and implement all ILO Conventions related to gender equality, if it has not already done so. Make use of the ILO supervisory machinery (see ITUC circular letters no.6(2007) and no.30(2007), which you can request from equality@ituc-csi.org or turights@ituc-csi.org)
- > Call for the full implementation of Chapter 11 of CEDAW and 'Section F' of the Beijing Platform of Action.
- > Ensure women are included in union negotiating teams and that gender issues are included in collective bargaining and collective agreements.
- > Organise activities to support your lobbying work, such as:
 - A roundtable discussion with the social partners.
 - A press conference where you present a survey on women workers - with statistics, facts and figures showing the continuous discrimination of women at work.
 - A national petition to mobilize the public to call for Decent Work, Decent Life for Women. Present a giant version of this petition to a government delegation and invite the press.
 - A variety of communication tools to inform the public such as radio programmes, street theatre, cartoons, etc.
 - Coalitions and networks with women of different national centres and unions, like-minded Women's NGOs (who are involved in e.g. CEDAW, G CAP (Global Call Against Poverty) or the World Social Forum.
- > Prepare a list of contact persons, notably MPs who can take action
- > Organise a march ending in front of the parliament building

Export Processing Zones

The ILO defines Export Processing Zones (EPZs) as “industrial zones with special incentives set up to attract foreign investors, in which imported materials undergo some degree of processing before being re-exported.” There are over 3000 zones in the world and the majority of workers are women. Jobs are usually low-tech, low-skilled and low-paid. EPZs are notorious for the suppression of human and trade union rights and forced overtime work. Typically, governments either exempt the zones from labour legislation or do not take action against breaches in labour law, especially when it comes to working hours and trade union rights. In many cases workers are subjected to harsh conditions, sexual harassment, poor health and safety standards, long working hours including forced overtime and an extremely high pace of production.

See:

<http://www.icftu.org/www/PDF/EPZreportE.pdf>

Theme 2: Women workers’ rights in specific sectors or areas of work

Women workers, particularly those in the informal economy, export processing zones, or women migrant workers, bear the brunt of the demand for cheaper and cheaper products and services. They, together with women in domestic service, are the most vulnerable workers. They are all too often forced to work long hours for low pay, in poor conditions with unsafe work practices, a lack of adequate maternity protection or the risk of losing their job in an instant when pregnant, and are frequently subjected to sexual harassment. Do all you can to ensure that companies and employers are held accountable for their actions and for what happens throughout the production chain.

TIPS for Campaign action:

- > Prepare a guide for trade unions on how to include gender equality issues on the bargaining agenda. Refer to existing national laws on gender equality which can be used by trade union negotiators to put pressure on management to adopt and implement gender equality policies.
- > Consider setting up an equal opportunities committee to monitor the implementation of policy.
- > Gather statistics regarding women in the workplace and in your sector (for example, how many women are in different job categories, what is the differential in pay between men and women). Keep a record of complaints. Find out the concerns of women workers in your workplace for example through questionnaires or women shop stewards.
- > Develop clear guidelines on what employees should do if they experience direct or indirect sex discrimination.
- > Look at employers’ recruitment procedures to ensure they are non-discriminatory.

- > Look at ways of introducing positive action measures to improve women's access to work in traditional male areas.
- > Ensure that the definition of "employee" within the collective agreement covers all types of workers.
- > Inform all workers about the negotiated results e.g. at the workplace, in newsletters, at trade union or lunchtime meetings. Monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the negotiated results.
- > Ensure that women workers' concerns are taken up adequately by the union as a whole e.g. through evaluations.

Domestic Workers

There is no definitive data on domestic work because it is not seen as work and is often excluded from labour force surveys. Some estimates say that one-third of the world's households have some form of 'hired-in support'.

The Asian Migrant Centre estimates that there are at least two million migrant domestic workers in Asia, over 90% of whom are women. In the Middle East, the countries of the Persian Gulf employ millions of immigrant women in domestic work. Domestic/household workers make up to 60 per cent of internal and cross-border migration in Latin America, while female immigrants from Mexico and other parts of Latin America make up most of the domestic workforce in the US. In South Africa domestic/household workers (including men gardeners) represent roughly 9% of all formal and informal employment. In Europe, domestic work is the largest single area of female employment in Spain, while in France more than 50% of migrant women are employed in domestic work.

Sources:

- > Spotlight on Sartiwen Binti Sanbardi (Hong Kong - IMWU) <http://www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article472>
- > International Labour Organisation,
- > 'Domestic Workers Far from Home', UNFPA http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2006/moving_young_eng/stories/stories_Noraida.html
- > European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2007/02/articles/it0702079i.html

Theme 3: Organising women in trade unions

Trade union surveys show that many women do not understand why unions are relevant to them or what the role of a trade union is. Informing women workers about what trade unions are and what they do is a first important step to motivate and mobilise them to become a trade union member. The best way is through personal contact with women trade unionists.

TIPS for Campaign action

- > Inform women workers about their rights. Hold discussions about the union at or near the workplace or organise informal meetings. Talk about issues that matter to women workers.
- > Carry out research or use a questionnaire to find out which issues are important for women. Use your findings as a basis for a special leaflet to be distributed to women workers. Make the results available to trade union staff and use it to strengthen trade union policies on gender equality.
- > Make sure your union sends out frequent press releases, articles or information sheets on trade union activities to improve women workers' rights. Include in your mailing list key trade union contacts (involved in collective bargaining, press and policy work, etc), women NGO's and members of parliament.
- > Make a list of trade union benefits for women workers e.g.: Earning more money than non-unionised workers in the same job; more job protection than workers without unions; better benefits (e.g. health benefits); paid maternity leave; etc.
- > Inform women of the rights they will have as a trade union member such as the right to be invited to union meetings (which should be arranged at times which are convenient to women); express their own views and be consulted about their pay and working conditions before their union holds negotiations with the employer; elect union representatives; be represented by the union if they have problems with the employer; take part in union education and training programmes.

Migrant women

The United Nations Population Fund, UNFPA, estimated in 2006 that there are 95 million female migrants, accounting for almost half of all international migrants. Some are well educated and searching for opportunities, others are from low-income or poor rural backgrounds and are seeking a better life. Bangladesh, the Philippines, Mexico and Nepal are the four leading sources of migrant labour. The main host countries are those of Western Europe, North America, the Gulf States and Japan. While some benefit from their migration, millions face serious risks. Women migrants can become trapped in dangerous situations, ranging from trafficking to prostitution and severe exploitation in domestic work. Many are unaware of their rights. UNFPA has called for labour migration policies that aim to eradicate discrimination and gender inequality and to tackle other vulnerabilities.

Sources:

- > ITUC Briefing on the migrant workers in the Middle East: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article1694>
- > Global employment trends women/ ILO 2007 <http://www.cinterfor.org.uy/public/english/region/ampro/cinterfor/temas/gender/news/getw07.pdf>
- > ITUC http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/VS_Jordanie_EN.pdf

Theme 4: Women in elected positions

There is a pressing need to increase the number of women elected to leadership positions in trade unions. Although about 40% of the ITUC 's total membership are women, very few women around the world are in elected leadership positions. This must change.

There are examples to follow. Some unions have adopted measures aimed at increasing women's participation, such as reserved seats on decision-making bodies, targets, quotas or proportional representation.

The ITUC Constitution states that women delegates to its Congress: "shall constitute half of the delegations of organizations having two or more delegates". At the national level the Constitution urges its member organisations to "promote actively full gender parity in their leadership bodies and in their activities at all levels".

The ITUC has gender parity in its own leadership positions: the General Secretary is a man but the President is a woman and one Deputy General Secretary is a man while the other is a woman. Currently 30% of the ITUC General Council are women, and the aim is to progressively achieve gender parity.

Link to the ITUC Constitution: www.ituc-csi.org and click on 'about us'.

TIPS for Campaign action

- > Encourage and support women to stand for elections and to take part in trade union delegations which bargain with representatives of governments, local municipalities and employers.
- > Provide clear information to women members about how their union leaders are elected, how to nominate union members for leadership posts, when and where the elections will take place and the results.
- > Organise workshops or integrate a module in existing education programmes for women in leadership positions.

Young women workers

Although the proportion of women on the labour market has steadily increased (with 67 women per 100 men in 2006), the rate of increase has slowed. This is partly because more young women are in education but there is still a gap between female and male education levels. And there is considerable doubt that women get the same chances as men to develop their skills throughout their working lives. The difficulty of finding work is most pronounced for young women (aged 15 to 24 years), with 35.6 million young women seeking employment in 2006. Many enter the labour market facing high obstacles and low expectations, as a young woman worker from Morocco explains: "Due to our cultural heritage, women are still confronted with a feeling of inferiority to men,

which puts them in a position of weakness when faced with sexual and moral harassment, and confines them to laborious and mediocre jobs without decision making powers”.

Sources:

- > Global Employment Trends for Women, ILO, 2007. <http://www.cinterfor.org.uy/public/english/region/ampro/cinterfor/temas/gender/news/getw07.pdf>
- > Spotlight Interview with Karima Boudrouaz (Algeria - UGTA) “We have to fight to ensure that the law on equality is implemented” <http://www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article630>
- > ITUC Spotlight Interview with Asma Elbassir (Morocco - UMT): <http://www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article509>

Resources

ITUC publications on gender:

Contains the Trade Union Manual on Achieving Gender Equality and the Action Programme on Achieving Gender Equality in Trade Unions

> www.ituc-csi.org and click on 'equality'

Web-pages women/ equality of the Global Union Federations:

Contain handbooks and manuals on advocating and negotiating for women workers rights:

> International Transport Workers' Federation - www.itf.org.uk

> Public Services International - www.world-psi.org

> Education International - www.ei-ie.org

> Union Network International - www.union-network.org

> International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Association - www.iuf.org

> Building and Wood Workers International- www.bwint.org

> International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Union - www.icem.org

> International Federation of Journalists - www.ifj.org

> International Metalworkers' Federation - www.imfmetal.org

> International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation - www.itglwf.org

> International Transport Workers' Federation - www.itf.org.uk

'Decent Work' webpage:

Contains a link to the general Campaign of the ITUC, explains the concept of decent work and provides several background documents.

> <http://www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?rubrique69> and www.decentwork.org

ILO Conventions and Recommendations

> http://www.ilo.org/global/What_we_do/InternationalLabourStandards/lang--en/index.htm

Annual reports on gender:

> ILO - Global Employment Trends for Women: www.ilo.org

> UNIFEM – Progress of the World's Women: www.unifem.org

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