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**WOMEN
LEADING
CHANGE**

“ Parity is not enough. We must have equity of power. ”

INTRODUCTION: WHY WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP MATTERS

BY CHIDI KING



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Around 200 female trade unionists from around the world took part in the 3rd ITUC World Women's Conference/Organising Assembly in San José, Costa Rica between 11 and 13 October 2017.

Recent times should have dispelled any doubts that might exist about the significance of women's leadership. In the face of mounting racism, xenophobia and misogyny, the rise of the so-called 'strong men', shrinking democracy, escalating geo-conflicts, polarised societies and environmental degradation, women are showing the way with true feminist vision and leadership. Done waiting, women are rising and claiming this vision: from #MeToo, to the reversal of anti-abortion laws in Ireland and the first-ever 'women's strike' in Spain.

Trade unions stand at the vanguard of resisting corporate greed, rebuilding peace and democracy and establishing social, economic and gender justice. If we are to succeed, we need to transform our own organisations. Whilst progress is being made, there are still far too few women in positions of power and influence in the decision-making bodies of trade unions.

In 2012, the Women's Committee of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) took stock of the status of women in trade union organisations and in the labour market generally. The results were concerning. Whilst women's membership in ITUC-affiliated trade unions amounted to 40 per cent, women occupied less than 15 per cent of the top two positions in their organisations. Further, women's labour force participation rates were stagnating at 26 percentage points lower than those of men, and the gender pay gap remained at an average of over 20 per cent. Women largely remained segregated in low-quality and undervalued jobs, and over-represented in informal and non-standard forms of work, as well as unpaid care work.

Responding to these challenges, the Women's Committee called for a global campaign to accelerate progress on women's leadership within trade unions and achieve at least 30 per cent representation of women in decision-making bodies of ITUC affiliates. The *Count Us In!* campaign was endorsed by the 3rd ITUC World Congress in May 2014, which further extended the scope of the campaign to address key structural issues impeding women's advancement in the labour market, with a particular focus on the role of the care economy.

Since 2014, the *Count Us In!* campaign has galvanised ITUC affiliates to accomplish the following objectives by the 4th ITUC World Congress in December 2018:

- at least 80 per cent of affiliates on the ITUC General Council to have achieved 30 per cent representation of women in their decision-making bodies
- a five per cent increase of women's membership in each ITUC affiliate that joins the *Count Us In!* campaign
- building an economic and social justice agenda for women, as part of a jobs and growth plan to increase women's access to decent work, supported by childcare and aged care with family-friendly workplaces.

Based on the responses to the 2017 ITUC Gender Survey from 86 affiliates representing 81.5% of ITUC membership, on average women make up 42.4% of all members

The *Count Us In!* campaign has, of course, not stood in isolation. Amongst others, it has been supported by the work of the ITUC Organising Academy and the ITUC *Labour Rights for Women (LRW)* campaign. The latter sought to empower women to defend their rights in the workplace through organising them in unions, strengthening women's participation and leadership in collective bargaining and social dialogue, and raising union and public awareness of the issues most affecting women in the labour market. The *LRW* campaign was targeted at women workers in both the formal and informal economy, with a strong focus on young women workers.

As the contents of this publication show, the *Count Us In!* campaign has captured the imagination of women activists, trade union leaders and young and older women trade unionists alike. It has propelled real change within the trade union movement, as this quote from CUT Brazil demonstrates: "Gender parity is a new way of strengthening democracy in our National Centre, a way

of demanding better leadership and democratic changes".

The results of the *Count Us In!* campaign were evaluated at the 3rd ITUC World Women's Conference/Organising Assembly in Costa Rica in 2017. With women's membership rates averaging at 42 per cent in ITUC affiliates, women are still heavily under-represented in leadership positions. However, the high level of affiliate engagement in the campaign has helped to drive improvements, and the average representation rate of women in the highest union decision-making bodies is now 28 per cent, with 7 per cent of top leadership posts held by women.

Clearly, there is still work to be done. The conclusions of the Women's Assembly recommit ITUC affiliates to organising for leadership as well as for transformation, to reinforcing efforts to achieve equal and equitable representation of women in the leadership of unions, and to further develop mentorship programmes for young women. The Assembly further committed to recognising the impacts of intersectionalities and to "organising for equality, equity and an end to discrimination on the basis of gender, race, LGBTI identity, age, disability and any other form of discrimination".

The *Count Us In!* campaign has undoubtedly made a determined step towards the vision expressed by the Assembly, of an inclusive and feminist trade union movement, which organises the unorganised, whether migrant workers, workers in the informal economy, the gig economy, precarious, temporary or agency work, or any other forms of work where women workers are deprived of their rights and protections. Global Union Federations (GUFs) and their affiliates are also making significant strides towards increasing representation of women in top positions. Together, we are on the way to realising the roadmap to equity in women's leadership within unions.

REALISING THE ROADMAP: STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY IN OUR UNIONS

BY TAMARA GAUSI



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Trade unions function as an essential pillar in any democratic society, this we know. But it is equally true that genuine, representative democracy within trade unions is critical to the success, strength and survival of the movement. Women may represent almost 50 per cent of the global labour force according to the latest World Bank figures, and women's trade union membership rates may average 42.2 per cent according to the 2017 ITUC Gender Equality Survey, but women are still significantly under-represented in leadership positions, with women comprising just 28 per cent of members in the highest decision-making bodies of trade unions. The reasons are numerous: discrimination and harassment; the 'triple burden' of balancing work and family responsibilities with trade union activism; a lack of training and mentorship; and the failure to enable women to stand for elec-

tions and to be included in decision-making bodies and collective bargaining teams.

Slowly, things are beginning to change, and with its numerous campaigns, the ITUC has been leading the charge to increase the number of female trade unionists, both in the rank and file, and in leadership roles. The *Decisions for Life* campaign has empowered a new generation of young women leaders from 14 countries, while the *LRW* project organised women in vulnerable employment and bolstered the participation of women in collective bargaining and social

dialogue. The 12 by 12 campaign, run in collaboration with the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Association (IUF), the International Domestic Workers' Federation (IDWF) and allies, spearheaded labour law reforms in 50-plus countries, including 25 ratifications of ILO Convention 189. And then there is the flagship *Count Us In!* campaign which in 2014 set the ambitious goal of 80 per cent of ITUC affiliates to have 30 per cent of women in their decision-making bodies by the 2018 ITUC Congress this December. Unions that committed to this 30 per cent target – which is the minimum required under the ITUC Constitution – were also required to seek a 5 per cent increase in women's membership.

Over 100 affiliates signed up to the campaign with the active participation of a further 20. Five regional action plans were developed, and 60 affiliates created their own. It was an ambitious target and while there is still some way to go, the campaign helped accelerate the number of women in decision-making positions, while highlighting the variety of methodologies and campaign strategies used. For example, the Australian Council of Trade Unions' (ACTU) requirement that women must comprise at least 50 per cent of the National Executive has seen women secure 35 positions out of 65, which includes Sally McManus as the ACTU Secretary and Michele O'Neil as President (the two highest positions in the ACTU).

It has taken the adoption of resolutions, recommendations and quotas, the creation and funding of women networks, training and education for both women and men, media outreach, plus the engagement of men and trade union leaders, to begin to remove the barriers to women's participation in leadership. It has also taken an acknowledgement of the problem and a real commitment to transform gender imbalances, patriarchal norms and male-centred practises in trade unions. The work is still ongoing but there are many inspiring examples of how trade unions have managed to strengthen democracy for an inclusive collective bargaining agenda.

'PARITY IS NOT ENOUGH, WE MUST HAVE EQUITY OF POWER'

Take CUT Brazil, for example. In 2015 it became the first national trade union federation to introduce gender parity in its decision-making bodies at both national and state level. According to Junéia Martins Batista, the National Secretary for Women Workers for CUT Brazil, this is the proud result of a decades-long struggle. "When CUT was founded in 1983, out of 30 leaders, only two were women. So, the women began to organise themselves. In 1986, CUT established the National Committee of Working Women. This was the beginning of the entire debate on women's empowerment," she says.

CUT – which is the biggest national centre in Latin America and the fifth largest in the world – has always been at the vanguard of the struggle for gender equality, and over the years it has celebrated a number of milestone achievements in this arena:

- Immediately after the creation of the committee, CUT launched a *Day Care for All* campaign to try and address the lack of care provisions for working women
- In 1991, it became the first trade union to introduce a resolution backing the decriminalisation and legalisation of abortion
- In 1994, it passed a 30 per cent quota (for either gender, but in practise for women) in its national and state executive councils
- In 2003, the National Committee of Working Women won executive status, thus becoming the Women's Secretariat
- In 2010, CUT began campaigning for the ILO Convention 189 on Domestic Work, and as a result, this February, Brazil ratified its own legislation on domestic workers
- Then in 2010, CUT decided it wanted to go beyond quotas. "We wanted parity," says Martins. This measure was approved at CUT's 2012 congress, to be fully implemented by 2015.

Initially, there was quite a bit of resistance. "First of all, men said there were not enough women available," says Martins. Even after some women came forward, it became clear they didn't feel empowered to lead. "It was then that I, as the Women's Secretary, said to myself: 'Parity is not enough, we must have equity of power'". Like CUT Brazil, several respondents to the 2017 ITUC Gender Equality Survey referred to various strategies which led to the adoption or enforcement of a quota policy: from organising a critical mass of female members to carrying out surveys and gender audits to adopting a policy at Congress.

For Martins, one of the major goals now is to see a woman lead CUT. At the national centre level, there's already a female Vice-President (Carmen Helena Ferreira Foro) and a female Deputy Secretary-General (Maria Aparecida Faria), but a woman has never held the top spot. "I am a feminist who believes in empowering women and I believe that women must occupy the presidency of CUT because it is our time."

== CHANGING THE RULES AND TACKLING MATERNITY HARASSMENT

For ACTU Secretary Sally McManus, being at the helm of a national centre that has consistently had women leaders for the last two decades doesn't mean the battle for equality at the highest levels is over: "Mandating equality via rules has been essential to overcoming historical disadvantage, unconscious biases and political considerations which have been barriers to equality. Once women began to occupy senior roles in our movement, it became normalised. The challenge becomes spreading this to all parts of our movement, especially in industries which are highly gender segregated, and changing the expectations of leadership which often make it hard for women (or men) with young children or other family members they care for to perform both these roles."

The ACTU is currently running a campaign called *Change the Rules* (which is also the theme of the 4th ITUC World Congress this December) that seeks to ensure better job security and better pay for working people. As some of the most vulnerable workers in society, there are a number of key demands that would specifically benefit women, such as: flexible working arrangement for parents and carers; a living wage that would secure 2.3 million workers a pay rise; changes to the retirement system so that women are not disadvantaged for taking time out to care for children; and measures to close the gender pay gap.

Another key demand of the ACTU (highlighted in the parallel campaign, *We Won't Wait*) is the provision of 10 days paid family and domestic violence leave for workers. "There are real financial costs involved in leaving a violent domestic situation," says McManus. "Research the ACTU conducted in 2017 found that it costs AU\$18,000 and takes an average of 141 hours to leave a violent domestic relationship," counting costs such as truck hire, solicitors' fees and rent. As of August 2018, millions of Australian workers have had access to five days unpaid leave to deal with domestic violence following a ruling by the Fair Work Commission, but the unions have said this doesn't go far enough. "Suggesting that five days of unpaid leave will help people who are in these circumstances is a deliberate attempt to ignore reality while being able to claim having 'done something' on the issue," says McManus. "This campaign is important because the lives of working people are important. And they are certainly worth more than

five cents a day [the estimated cost of paid domestic violence leave to employers]."

In 2013, the Japanese Trade Union Confederation (JTUC-Rengo) adopted a long-term and comprehensive Gender Equality Promotion Plan to, amongst other targets, substantially increase the number of women in leadership roles and decision-making positions by 2020, and to tackle the issue of maternity harassment (the discrimination faced by women who are pregnant, on maternity leave or who have returned to work after giving birth). "In Japan, women are discriminated against simply for having children," Tomoko Yoshino, Vice-President of JTUC-Rengo told *Equal Times* at the ITUC World Women's Conference/Women's Organising Assembly in Costa Rica last October. "Many women still have to choose between having children or having a career. A lot of women are forced to quit their jobs, while sometimes they are relocated or transferred to a different job or department. They cannot continue with their career, simply because they want to have a baby." Even though the prohibition of maternity harassment in Japan is stipulated in the Equal Employment Opportunity Act and the Child Care and Family Care Leave Act, JTUC-RENGO engages in several efforts to protect expectant and nursing mothers, such as conducting surveys to track maternity harassment in the workplace and offering assistance to women who experience it. The union has also produced a guidebook on maternity harassment to offer advice on how women can balance pregnancy and motherhood with work.

== "ORGANISE, UNIONISE, AFFILIATE"

Ana Francisca Soto, the National Women's Director for the Independent Trade Union Alliance of Venezuela (ASI Venezuela), heads a department that ran a strong *Count Us In!* campaign, achieving near gender parity in the composition of Congress delegates (48 per cent), while establishing networks and mechanisms to encourage more women to stand for election. "In terms of

both the long-term and short-term objective, our goal was to reinforce the power of working women. How? By organising them. For what purpose? To be a part in the executive committees of the unions, in decision-making positions. For example, I am the organising secretary for the Union of Workers of Educational Institutes of Lara State. When I took over the secretariat in 2014, we had 5,600 members. Today, with great pride, I can tell you that our base union is crossing the line of 9,000 affiliates. Last month we saw the affiliation of 1,400 workers. This was achieved by presenting the Count Us In! campaign and its principles – organise, unionise, affiliate.”

For the National Workers Union of Angola (UNTA-CS Angola), signing up to the ITUC Count Us In! campaign gave a massive boost to female representation. The union managed to smash the 5 per cent target and swell the number of women in its ranks by a remarkable 17 per cent. But it should be noted that this was built on previous gains: women membership rates went up from five per cent to 40 per cent after the creation of a women’s committee in 1998. “The campaign helped us to raise awareness amongst working women, especially regarding unionisation. And it allowed us to convince people that women are as important to the union movement as men,” says Maria Fernanda Carvalho Francisco, the Assistant General Secretary of UNTA-CS Angola and the Deputy President of the ITUC. The Count Us In! campaign was rolled out in 18 provinces across the country, with the support of the (predominantly male) leadership, “and this made it possible to bring more women into the trade union movement,” she says.

“According to the ETUC’S analysis of the leadership teams of its affiliates, there are 15 confederations where 50% or more of the team is female, although there are also seven where there are no women in any leadership positions”

Carvalho notes the impact of her organisation’s national women’s committee – the National Committee for Syndicated Women – in helping her union achieve such progress. “Our main focus has been not only to empower female workers but also to fight to ensure a better life for women.” To this end, UNTA-CS Angola runs a programme called ‘Decent Work for Informal Workers’. “It has allowed us to get closer to informal workers and at this moment we are developing a programme, in collaboration with the government and with the banks, to help empower these women.” A group of 500 women are currently involved in the programme, with the aim of gradually transforming their jobs from informal

to formal. “For example, banks have given those women credit to enable them to stop selling goods in the streets and instead set up small businesses in places and activities that they have identified themselves.”

Unfortunately, Carvalho says her union’s success with the rank and file does not mirror the situation at the top. “Women in UNTA have a hard time getting into leadership positions. We have 18 provinces and only two of those have women who are leaders. In the national federations and unions, we have no women. It is a big challenge for us.” The reasons, she says, vary from the fact that elections are run with closed lists, which sees female candidates swallowed up amongst the multitude of male candidates, to the prevalence of patriarchal attitudes, even amongst women. “There is still a tendency for people, including women, to believe in men more than we do in women. People will point out a woman’s mistakes without acknowledging her virtues, while voting for men without even knowing if he is capable of doing the job!”

Carvalho remains optimistic that things will change – simply because they have to. “A woman who is the head of her household and lives on a minimum wage, or works in the informal sector not making even a minimum wage, those women are not living; they are surviving. And they survive with all these external and internal misogynistic factors that do not allow them to have a better position in our society. But we are working to overcome this by strengthening our union actions to demand better conditions for all workers, but women workers in particular.”

“REVOLUTIONARY PROGRESS”

The Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT), recently made some outstanding advancements in the realm of women in leadership. Its 23rd Congress, held between 22 and 25 January 2017, saw, for the first time, the election of three women into senior decision-making positions. “This came after 70

years of permanent struggle in the quest for female representation in our trade union,” says Sihem Boussetta, the Deputy General Secretary in charge of training and international relations at UGTT and a member of the ITUC Women’s Committee. Naima Hammami became the first-ever member of UGTT’s National Executive Council as the new Deputy Secretary General for the Arab Region, International Relations and Migration. In addition, seats were given to women in two key UGTT committees: Fadhila Melliti was elected to the National Committee of Internal Regulations, while Hamida Akkari became a member of the National Committee on Administration and Financial Control.

“This revolutionary progress was a result of the innovations introduced at the 23rd Congress,” says Boussetta, referring to the amendment of UGTT bylaws during the congress to mandate leadership positions for women. A draft amendment of Article 3 now provides for the use of quotas to strengthen the presence of women on UGTT executive boards, as well as assigning a minimum of two seats for women on each union executive board in all branches, from the local to the national level.

“This quota deeply shook up the trade union landscape, but it allows for more equitable representation of women in decision-making bodies,” says Boussetta. In many ways, trade unions are only just catching up on the massive progress that Tunisian politics and society has made towards protecting women’s rights:

Tunisia’s constitution protects women from gender-based violence; recent proposals seek to ensure that women have equal inheritance rights; Tunisia has more female MPs and local councillors than any other country in the region; and this June Souad Abderrahim became the first Arab woman to be elected mayor of the Tunisian capital of Tunis. Although the election of Hammami in UGTT is significant, Boussetta says the struggle for gender equality in the trade union movement is only just beginning. “We trust Naima Hammami for her qualities as an activist, a progressive and a democrat. We are convinced that she will be a voice for women who are exposed to all kinds of violence, harassment and exclusion in the world of work.” But Boussetta also cautions: “The commitment of Naima Hammami and her comrades in the UGTT executive board for equality between men and women represents a labour struggle, not a personal affair. We cannot implement real democracy or have social stability when women, who represent more than half the population, are treated as secondary citizens.”



Tens of thousands of people filled the streets of Melbourne, Australia on 9 May 2018 as part of the Australian Council of Trade Unions’ nationwide series of Change the Rules rallies.

REALISING THE ROADMAP: ACCELERATING CHANGE THROUGH CROSS-MOVEMENT BUILDING AND STRATEGIC ALLIANCES

With “an injury to one is an injury to all” as one of its key mantras, it’s no surprise that alliance building has always been central to the strength of trade unions. Not only does it deepen solidarity across unions but it also enables collaboration with community groups and like-minded social movements to maximise the impact and output of advocacy and lobbying campaigns since everybody speaks with one voice.

In recent times, we have seen numerous examples of the power of genuine alliance and cross-movement building between unions and civil society, particularly when it comes to women’s rights. “CCOO [the Workers’ Commission] is a trade union that has always been part of the feminist movement. We do not feel as if there are different sides: we are unionists and feminists,” says Ele-

na Blasco Martín, secretary for women and equality at the Spanish national centre. “We do not find it hard to link both these movements. Both movements aspire towards the same goal – to change society and eliminate inequalities and violence of patriarchal origins.”

On the morning of 8 March 2018, in an unprecedented show of strength, CCOO in alliance with the Spanish General Union of Workers (UGT), feminist organisations and other civil society groups, called on female workers across the country to walk out of



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A demonstrator shouts slogans through a placard which reads: “This is what feminist looks like” while protesting against gender-based violence and demanding equality of labour opportunities during Spain’s first-ever Women’s Strike in Pamplona on International Women’s Day, 8 March 2018.

their jobs for two hours in protest over the gender pay gap and gender-based violence. Almost six million women took part in strikes, demonstrations and assemblies across the country that morning. Later that day, hundreds of thousands of women in over 200 cities and towns across Spain marched on the streets. “It was a spectacular event, a historical day and a historical strike,” says Blasco. “For the first time, women were the protagonists, and for the first time, we had a key objective: the fight for equality.”

The impact of that action resonated far beyond one day. “For the first time in history terms such as ‘wage gap’, ‘female impoverishment’, ‘inequality’, ‘discrimination’, ‘sticky floor’, ‘glass ceiling’, ceased to be words that were exclusive to us ‘mad feminists’, explains Blasco. “It became part of the collective vocabulary, and, what is most important, shared by society.” Another crucial achievement of the mobilisation was that it forced political forces to pick a side: “You were either for it or against it. There was no middle ground. As a result, it became known who was and who wasn’t a sexist.”

“By region, Europe has the largest proportion of female members at 51.16%; Africa is next in line at 45.4%; 44.2% of trade union members in the Americas are women; while only 34.1% of ITUC members are women in the Asia-Pacific region”

Regrettably, the march did not wave a magic wand over the affliction of patriarchy: “Inequality and labour discrimination was not erased overnight. We are still seeing a significant number of dismissals, of which 59 per cent are women, according to official data for the month of August.” To keep up the momentum built by their historic mobilisation, CCOO uses the hashtags #8MSiempre (8 March Always) or #8MS to keep people focused on the continued struggle for gender equality. CCOO has also joined forces with women’s groups and other trade unions to put pressure on the government of Spain to ensure the necessary budget to implement the State Pact on Gender Violence, a pledge from 2017 to enact a 2004 law to prevent gender-based violence.

“[The Organic Law 1/2004] incorporated a comprehensive vision and treatment of all the areas on which action must be taken to fight structural discrimination represented by violence against women,” says Blasco. “This means the recognition of labour rights and social security, social assistance and legal assistance, for example, for female victims of gender violence and an advance in the awareness that violence against women is a social problem.” However, previous governments did not sufficiently budget for

the implementation of the law, and so far, it has had minimal impact. But Martín and her colleagues will not give up until the law is effectively applied: “CCOO demands the urgent implementation of the State Pact against Gender Violence and absolute transparency in the application of financing in order to effectively guarantee the application of the measures committed,” she says.

■ MARCHING TO LEGALISE ABORTION AND END GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

This May, the people of Ireland voted by a landslide to liberalise some of the most restrictive abortion laws in the world. This historical victory was the result of a massive

Repeal the 8th campaign which began picking up momentum in 2016 and saw strong involvement from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU). In a statement on the ICTU website published in November 2016, ICTU Equality Officer David Joyce, said: “ICTU opposed this amendment in 1983 [when it was introduced, effectively banning abortion] and opposes it 33 years later. It was bad policy then and nothing has changed in 2016.

As the largest civil society body on the island, Congress stands with Women Rising 2016 [movement] in its demand for repeal of Article 40.3.3. Women comprise more than half of the trade union membership in Ireland and it is unacceptable that they live in a country where the law puts their health and lives at risk, criminalises them and forces them to travel abroad to avail of safe and legal abortion services.”

Over in Argentina, millions of women from across the country and all sectors of society also made global headlines as they campaigned for the legalisation of abortion, also this year. Although in August Argentina’s senate eventually rejected a bill to legalise abortion in the first 14 weeks of pregnancy, the campaign successfully put the issue of female autonomy, particularly when it comes to matters of reproductive health, firmly on the table.



On 14 June 2018, thousands of people gathered outside the Argentine Congress of Deputies. They were wearing the green scarves that have for years been the symbol of one of the feminist movement's long-standing demands: the legalisation of abortion.

As Alejandra Angriman, the Secretary for Women and Equal Opportunities at CTA- Autónoma (Argentine Workers' Central Union), explains, this landmark moment didn't happen overnight: "Our trade union has always been a part of the women's movement. We are part of the national campaign for the right to abortion, and we are the only trade union that has been part of the campaign for the right to legal, safe and free abortion since it began."

And it all started with a meeting. "In Argentina, something happens that is unique in the world. For 34 years now, we women meet once a year [in October] for three days to discuss our problems," she explains. What began in 1984 with 1000 women today involves up to 60,000 women and girls of all ages in what is known as the *National Meeting of Women*.

The campaign to decriminalise (which later evolved to a call to legalise) abortion began 12 years ago and encompassed demands for sex education, secularism in education, the right to contraceptives, and an end to violence against women, particularly the scourge of femicide. Like the 2005 Brazilian campaign *Violence Against Women Is Not The World We Want* organised by CUT and a coalition of Brazilian feminist organisations to draw attention to gender-based violence in the world of work, the female activists of Argentina were able to marshal a national 'army of women' to take to the streets to demand their rights.

It is important to note that the rallies for the legalisation of abortion in Argentina grew out of the #NiUnaMenos – or Not One Less

– movement which saw tens of thousands of women take to the streets, and many more mobilise on social media, to demand the safety of women and girls following a series of brutal murders. Argentina has one of the worst records for gender-based violence in the region (according to 2017 statistics, one woman was murdered as a result of domestic violence every 29 hours), and on 3 June 2015, approximately

300,000 people marched in downtown Buenos Aires under the #NiUnaMenos banner, forcing the Argentine government to take a serious look at how to implement anti-femicide legislation that had already been passed in 2009, while raising awareness about an issue that had been viewed for too long as 'just part of the culture'.

== ORGANISING AND EMPOWERING INFORMAL WOMEN WORKERS

With women disproportionately represented in the most vulnerable categories of informal work (such as domestic work, agriculture and low-paid home-based work), empowering informal women workers is not only essential to accelerating the cause of gender equality and decent work, it is also key to the growth of the trade union movement.

There are countless examples of trade unions organising informal women workers with great success, particularly in the Global South where informality is often the norm. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, for example, the Trade Union Confederation of Congo (CSC) has been organising market traders

and offering them access to microfinance and mutual health co-operatives. In Kenya, the Central Organisation of Trade Unions Kenya (COTU-K) is increasingly engaged with informal economy workers and represents their interests through social dialogue. For example, workers in the informal economy can now contribute to the National Hospital Insurance Fund (NHIF) for a monthly contribution of about US\$5. COTU-K also succeeded in negotiating an 18 per cent minimum wage increase in 2017, thus ensuring that most informal economy worker can earn enough to put them above the international poverty line, while entitling domestic workers in major Kenyan cities such as Nairobi, Mombasa and Kisumu to monthly salaries of about US\$130, when they previously earned as little as US\$30 a month.

“Based on the data of 82 affiliates, the majority (37 affiliates) saw an increase in both female membership rates and total membership rates, while more than a third (29 affiliates) recorded no changes”

Speaking of domestic workers, the almost entirely female-led IDWF has made great strides in its mission to protect and advance the rights of domestic and household workers everywhere. Since emerging from a network to a federation in 2013, the IDWF has grown to 67 affiliates from 54 countries, representing over 600,000 domestic/household workers' members. Most workers are organised in trade unions, although some are represented by associations, networks and workers' cooperatives. The IDWF's achievements include its involvement in the adoption of a new law in 2017 providing domestic workers in Qatar with labour rights for the very first time, and the recent approval of the ratification of ILO Convention 189 (C189) on decent work for domestic workers by Peru this June, thus becoming the 26th country to do so. IDWF will be holding its second Congress in November 2018 in Cape Town under the theme *United and Strong - Equal Rights, Respect and Justice for Domestic Workers*. According to IDWF President Myrtle Witbooi, who spoke to *Equal Times* back in 2013 when C189 first came into force, the key to furthering the rights of domestic workers is sensitisation and education. “Listen, if you go in the streets and you ask a domestic worker, ‘what is Convention 189?’, she is going to look at you and think you are crazy. But if you ask a domestic worker ‘what would make your life better?’ She will say ‘I want a decent wage, decent working hours’ – and then she will get it. Convention 189 is no use as a piece of paper. We need to make it a reality.”

“THE WORLD IS WATCHING US”

One of the biggest success stories in the fight for gender equality in decades comes from Iceland. On 1 January 2018, Iceland became the first country in the world to legally enforce equal pay for work of equal value. Even though Iceland has had laws mandating equal pay for men and women since 1961, Icelandic women still earn, on average, between 14 and 20 per cent less than men. Now with the new Equal Pay Law, companies and institutions with 25 or more employees are legally required to implement the Equal Pay Standard and undergo an audit before receiving their Equal Pay Certification, which must be renewed every three years. Marianna Traustadóttir, Equality Advisor for the Icelandic Confederation of Labour (ASÍ), was one of the key figures in the process, and she describes it as one of the country's great social dialogue successes.

“Now its 2018 and the world is like: ‘Wow, Iceland, you made this law!’ But it has been a 10, 12 year journey. It actually began back in 2006 when we were experiencing an economic boom with the banks. Everyone was getting these really high salaries, but we could see that the gender pay gap was widening, so we said: ‘We have to do something,’” she explains. The first ‘something’ began with the collective agreements between ASÍ and the Icelandic Employers' Association: “In 2008, we came to the understanding that we would develop some kind of a certification scheme on pay equality.” Because of the strengthen of the tripartite system in Iceland (where union density is around 90 per cent), the government agreed to amend the Gender Equality Act to include a provisional clause on equal pay, and as a result, the unions had to develop a certification scheme. “That's what the Equal Pay Standard and the Equal Pay Certification is based on – this one tripartite agreement.”

Government officials from the ministries of labour and finance, the employers' confederation and ASÍ then agreed to create an Equal Pay Standard, based on ILO Convention 100, that would require employers to

prove that they were paying their male and female employees the same. “It was the first time that a standard was made from scratch in Iceland, and it was also the first standard on gender equality in the world, so it was a huge challenge.” What was supposed to take one year ended up taking four but in 2012 the Equal Pay Standard was introduced, with several companies voluntarily undergoing certification.

“According to the 2018 Gender Equality Survey conducted by the ETUC, out of 39 confederations, 11 have women in the top leadership position in Europe”

Traustadóttir admits to being as surprised as anyone that the standard evolved into a piece of binding legislation. “Honestly, when we started this journey we never thought that would happen. The discussion between the social partners was always on the basis that this would be voluntary, just like ISO 9001 [the international standard that specifies requirements for quality management systems] and ISO 140001 [a family of standards related to environmental management]. I am sure that if the employers had the idea that this standard would become a law, they would never have agreed to it!” Traustadóttir says. “Employers don’t want any rules or regulations. However, they did later join forces with the trade unions to secure a better implementation of the standard.”

Indeed, the amendment to Article 19 of the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men happened because all the social partners involved were committed to ensuring the goal of equal pay for work of equal value, even if it meant that each group had to ‘put their money where their mouth is’. “At ASI, we decided that we, the unions, are responsible because we put this forward in our collective agreements and this is something good for the labour market, so the government paid half, the unions paid a fourth and the employers paid the other fourth.”

The next step now is its implementation, which also requires the attentive involvement of all social partners. “For example, once I finish this interview, I have a meeting with representatives from various unions, from the academic community, the public sector, the ministry of finance, the ministry of labour, the employers, the communes – everybody that is dealing with collective agreements. We meet regularly because we need to agree on

how we are going to control the labour market and make sure that workplaces are getting their mandatory certifications.”

Traustadóttir says that both she and her union feel a great sense of responsibility and are determined to see the Equal Pay Standard and Certification succeed. “Along with the government and the employers, this is our baby. There are many challenges ahead, particularly as the certification environment was maybe not ready to receive all the workplaces in Iceland, so we have some ‘interesting’ obstacles to overcome. But the world is watching us, and everybody involved is motivated to work very carefully and do this thoroughly to get a good result that we all believe in. If we do, I think in five- or ten-years’ time, the whole labour market in Iceland will have gone through a major change – and for the better.”



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On 24 October 2016, thousands of people across Iceland took part in the fifth annual ‘Women’s Strike’ to protest the gender pay gap and violence against women.

REALISING THE ROADMAP: NETWORKS AS STEPPING STONES TOWARDS LEADERSHIP



© AP/Dita Alangkara

About four years ago, KSBSI Indonesia began to train women to take part in collective bargaining negotiations to ensure gendered bargaining priorities, such as childcare, were included in collective agreements.

The importance of creating networks for women in trade unions cannot be overstated. Whether at a local, sectoral, national or international level, whether online or offline, they not only allow women to strategise and support one another, but they also provide vital access to leadership roles and elected positions. There are some within the union movement who still ask: ‘Why do you need a separate gender department?’ or ‘What’s the point of a women’s committee?’ but these structures are crucial safe spaces for the incubation of gender equality policies and the next generation of female leaders. One of the major challenges, however, lies in ensuring that unions integrate gender equality throughout their organisational agendas and structures – and this way successfully transforming the movement.

One example of this at an international level is the quadrennial World Women’s Conference/Organising Assembly organised by

the ITUC, which sees delegations from all over the world gather to chart a course for building women workers’ power over the next four years. This then feeds into the priorities of the ITUC Congress, as well as the policy and action plans of the ITUC Women’s Committee. The ITUC also has several dedicated campaigns for young women, such as the *Decisions for Life* campaign, which seeks to empower young female trade unionists aged between 18 and 35. For Natalia Levytska, Deputy Chairperson of the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine (KVPU), joining *Decisions for Life* in 2008 was a pivotal moment for her career. “It really helped me, and other female trade un-

ionists, to develop our leadership skills.” Crucial in her ability to use *Decisions for Life* as a stepping stone to leadership (Levytska is also the Deputy Chair of the Independent Trade Union of Miners of Ukraine and Vice President of the Pan-European Regional Council of the ITUC) was the support of her union, particularly from her boss, KVPU Chairman Mykhailo Volynets. “When this project started in Ukraine, KVPU did everything they could to help women take up leadership positions and to help organise women at their workplaces. As a result, the increase in women leadership was nearly 30 per cent. We have even seen the increase of women leaders in primary trade unions such as in the coal mining sectors, which is a very male-dominated sphere.”

WOMEN NEGOTIATORS AND GENDERED BARGAINING PRIORITIES

Emma Lilifena, who chairs the Women’s Committee for KSBSI Indonesia, says that the institution of networks and the provision of quotas and training at every level of her union across the country has been vital to strengthening the position of women workers. As well as running gender audits, KSBSI also provides leadership training for women. But according to Lilifena, the most impactful work comes in the form of the KSBSI Gender Equality Commission, which is made up of three women and two men in 23 provinces. “We run two big programmes: one focusing on gender counsellors and the other on gender negotiations. The first is for all women workers and members of civil society. We have 15 gender counsellors in 15 provinces, and they can be contacted by phone or text at any time to discuss any problems women are having in their workplaces.”

“Based on the data of 82 ITUC affiliates, 14.4% of the top two leadership positions are held by women”

About four years ago, KSBSI Indonesia also began to focus on training women to take part in collective bargaining negotiations at a company level to ensure that gendered bargaining priorities such as childcare were on the table. “So far we have trained about 90 women to negotiate women’s issues with the management. As a result, some of our CBAs now include issues like equal pay, the promotion of women to top positions and maternity leave.”

The increase in women negotiators resulted in a direct increase in the number of gender-responsive CBAs. Four CBAs that contained gender-specific clauses, notably on equal pay, were concluded in 2012, four in 2013, one in 2014 and three in 2015 (with a fourth

that included better transportation and meal allowances for all workers, not just women). The clauses negotiated in these CBAs cover 26,329 women workers, “and more are still in the process of negotiation,” Lilifena says proudly. “There is a much greater awareness of the need for gender-specific clauses in CBAs as a result of our work, but the capacity is still lacking. A useful lesson for the future therefore is the need for more training for women negotiators.”

KSBSI also recognises the importance of extending its networks. “We work very hard to reach plantation workers, for example. They are very isolated – sometimes it takes one or two days to reach them by car. And they receive less information because it can be difficult for them to access the internet. But for those workers in the cities and towns, we have several WhatsApp groups where we talk about our programmes and our problems,” says Lilifena. “We are also working with other trade unions and NGOs to tackle gender-based violence, particularly in support of the ILO convention and recommendation [on ending violence and harassment in the world of work].” She also explains that KSBSI is collaborating with numerous local provinces in Indonesia to campaign for women’s rights in the workplace. “In North Sumatra, we have campaigned with the government there to ensure women’s rights in the workplace – maternity leave and protection from sexual harassment, for example. And in West Kalimantan, we have been helping women trade union members who are victims of domestic violence to bring their perpetrators to the court. In places like East Kalimantan, South Kalimantan and West Java, we also provide training for migrant domestic workers who are going to the Middle East and the Gulf because it is important that they know their rights before they go.”

■ NURTURING YOUNG WOMEN LEADERS

Ensuring that there is always a new generation of young female leaders is essential to the lifeblood of the movement. Most global union federations run various programmes in this regard, as does the ITUC. At UNI Global Union, for example, a mentoring programme was launched in 2013 to prepare young women trade unionists for future leadership, running in tandem with *40for40*, a campaign to ensure 40 per cent female representation in all UNI decision-making bodies. In Senegal, the Confederation of Autonomous Trade Unions (CSA) runs a programme for young women in the youth movement to prepare them for leadership roles and facilitate their transition to the women's movement.

For Olesia Briazgunova, a former journalist who is now the National Youth Coordinator for Ukraine's KVPU, being a young female trade unionist is not without its challenges: "Frankly speaking, for me the main difficulty was getting the respect of trade union members because as a young woman, sometimes it's...I don't want to call it discrimination, but it can be very hard to show that you have the skills and the knowledge to do your job." Briazgunova credits the steadfast mentorship, training and opportunities that she has received in the trade union movement for spurring her on. "Thanks to the help and guidance of my colleagues, particularly Natalia [Levytska] and Mykhailo [Volynets], I quickly understood that I need to work a lot to achieve my goals and to become a good leader for our youth. Sometimes it is difficult to work with elder male unionists, but times are changing. As a representative of the youth committee, I have participated in different trainings on youth leadership and on communication, for example, and it has really helped me professionally."

“Sixteen ITUC affiliates reported a substantial increase in women's membership rates since 2014, most of them reaching the 5% or more target set by the *Count Us In!* campaign. The biggest increase by percentage came from CGTM Mauritania (which recorded a 23% increase), while the biggest increase by number came from the Chinese Federation of Labour, Taiwan (who gain an additional 205,410 female members)

■ THE IMPORTANCE OF ROLE MODELS

If networks are essential to ensuring women in leadership positions, so too are role models. There are an increasing number of excellent examples: the General Secretary of the ITUC, the highest position within the global trade union movement, has been held by Sharan Burrow since 2010; Rosa Pavanelli was elected General Secretary of the Public Services International global union federation in 2012, with Christy Hoffman elected General Secretary of UNI Global Union just this June. At a national and sectoral level there are scores of examples, from the recent election of Zingiswa Losi as the first female President of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) this September to the May 2018 election of Inga Ruginiene as President and the re-election of Janina Matuiziene as General Secretary of the Lithuanian Trade Union Confederation (LPSK), marking the first time that Lithuania's biggest trade union has been headed by two women.

But it is imperative that female trade unionists see more examples of women in leadership positions, at all levels and in all contexts. Even in a country like Iceland, where gender equality is far more advanced than most countries, the need for strong examples of female leaders in the trade union movement is still pertinent. "We have quite a lot of women who are in politics in Iceland and they have been leading political parties or they are MPs or in the city council, but within the unions, we have not had many of these role models," says Marianna Traustadóttir of the national centre, ASÍ. "It is very important for people, especially young women, to see positive examples of leadership that look like them". Things are slowly changing. This October, Drífa Snædal became the first woman to be elected as President of ASI in its 102 year-history. In addition, a new 12-person central committee was also elected with a 50:50 split between women and men. Also, Traustadóttir adds: "This year, our second largest affiliate [Efling Trade Union], the un-

ion of unskilled and semi-skilled workers, has for the first time in its history elected a woman leader – Sólveig Anna Jónsdóttir. This makes a really big difference to young women who now have an example of female leadership to look up to.” Traustadóttir says that networks have also been of vital importance to female trade unionists in Iceland. “One of the first things I did when I joined ASÍ in 2005 is that I started to build a network for women. We didn’t have one before. Women would come for meetings from outside of Reykjavik and they would not know the other women, so there was no connection between them. Many female trade unionists didn’t have any other women within their own unions either, so they felt isolated.” Every two years, Traustadóttir now runs a two-day women’s retreat for female trade union members. “It’s fantastic. We go to the country, we stay in a hotel and we discuss the latest issues and trends within gender equality. We have limited places and there are always more women that want to come than we have places, but it is so important for women to have this opportunity to network and get support.”

THE DANGERS OF ‘NOTWORKING’ TOGETHER

The 2017 ITUC Gender Survey highlighted a number of recurring barriers to leadership, regardless of the continent or context. One was the lack of support with regards to care duties. Women workers usually have demanding family responsibilities, be it as wives, mothers, daughters, or all three. Adding trade union activism to that mix is, for many, impossible, especially as meetings and organising activities often take place at times (in the evening) and places that are inconvenient, both in terms of family responsibilities and personal safety.

In Indonesia, Lilifena says that women have “the chance and the challenge, when it comes to leadership. The chance is that the constitution gives us the opportunity to have 40 per cent of leadership positions. Another regulation is that 30 per cent of all trainings at every level – be it district, provincial or national – should include women. But women face a double burden. They are not only workers, but they also have to look after their families,” she says. KSBSI is doing “everything we can to improve the capacity of our members. As well as networking, we provide training and also discussion groups where female trade unionists can share

their experiences. They not only talk about what challenges they face but also how they get around them.” At the Ghana Trades Union Congress, having identified access to quality childcare as a major obstacle for its female members, the trade union is “leading by example”. Not only has it pledge to provide childcare services whenever it holds meetings, but it also plans to offer childcare provisions at its new head office.

Other obstacles that prevent women from taking leadership roles identified in the Gender Survey include the barriers to freedom of association and collective bargaining in many countries, a general lack of awareness from women about workers’ rights and their right to join a union, and also the persistent verbal abuse, online harassment and physical danger that many women face when they stick their heads above the parapet. We have countless examples within the trade union movement – from the ongoing attacks and physical threats endured by Nermin Sherif, General Secretary of the Dockers’ and Seafarers’ Union of Libya, simply because of her trade union activism and her tireless defence of women’s rights, to the untold number of female trade unions murdered in countries like Colombia and Honduras. Even outside of the trade union movement, women leaders who have risen to the highest levels of political office face a barrage of sexist abuse which is often wrapped up in ‘concerns’ about competency or corruption as the former leaders of Malawi (Joyce Banda), Brazil (Dilma Rousseff) and Australia (Julia Gillard) can all attest to. It’s also not hard to see the ways in which rank misogyny prevented Hillary Clinton from becoming president of the United States in 2016.

Alejandra Angriman of CTA-Autónoma Argentina identifies another ‘invisible’ barrier to the women’s participation in leadership, and that’s communication. “For example, there may be many female colleagues in a meeting, but it does not mean that those women will participate. It is not like men, who like to speak for five to 10 minutes, followed by another man who will talk for another five to 10

Based on the data of 82 ITUC affiliates, 26% of women are in top elected leadership positions, such as presidents, vice-presidents, general secretaries, deputy general secretaries and treasurers

minutes. Women tend to make shorter interventions, and in Argentina we see this very clearly,” she says. “But this type of participation from men, speaking in this way, is very much linked to patriarchy, to sexism. We want to insist that the participation of the female workers is very important, but we must also think about what mechanisms exist so that the voices of women are heard,” she says, noting that: “There is still a tension. Some men do not feel very comfortable with our presence.”

“On average, women comprise 28% of the highest decision-making bodies within trade unions – which is close to the 30% target set by the *Count Us In!* campaign”

The final barrier to women’s participation in leadership that was repeatedly mentioned by survey respondents is the attitude and mindsets of women themselves. “Sometimes I feel that women cannot access positions of power because there are women who don’t work to empower other women,” says Martins of CUT Brazil. “At the national level, what women do not yet have is a spirit of body. By this I mean that us women need to understand that it is necessary to have unity in action. We will only achieve this when women in CUT do not submit blindly to agreements with men.”

She also says it is important that CUT’s female members defend the gains they have made. “We must maintain the spaces that we have already won.”

For Maria Fernanda Carvalho Francisco of UNTA-CS Angola, internalised patriarchy is also something that she is familiar with. “Sadly, women in UNTA have a hard time getting to leadership. We only have two female leaders in the provinces. In national federations, we have no women in the top positions, so it is a big challenge for us,” she says. “Our statutes stipulate that women’s participation must be guaranteed, while respecting the principle of representativeness, but even in the categories where the majority of workers are women, such as nursing, education and the informal sector, women still elect men rather than women. There is still a tendency for us women to believe more in men than each other.”



Young women trade unionists at the 3rd ITUC World Women’s Conference/Organising Assembly in October 2017.

REALISING THE ROADMAP: WOMEN'S LEADING ROLE IN PEACEBUILDING AND DEMOCRACY



© IAP/Amine Landoulsi

A young woman walks past graffiti in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia, where the self-immolation of a young fruit vendor triggered the Tunisian revolution and the wider Arab Spring.

“Universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice,” says the preamble of the ILO’s constitution. And for working women, social justice looks like the ability to live and work free from violence, to receive equal pay for work of equal value, and to see the recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care work. At a time when peace and democracy are under threat the world over, women, and specifically trade union women, have a crucial role to play in ensuring the continuity and advancement of labour rights. On one hand, dialogue, negotiation and compromise are all central to the success of effective industrial relations and conflict resolution; on the other hand, accountability, inclusivity, transparency and compassion are all hallmarks of transformative, feminist leadership. In the first chapter we already established some of the ways in which trade unions strengthen democracy; this section explores some

of the ways in which trade unions are helping to build peaceful and equitable societies.

Natalia Levytska of the KVPU and the Independent Trade Union of Miners of Ukraine says the unions have played an important role in assisting workers affected by the armed conflict in the Donbass region of eastern Ukraine that has resulted in thousands of deaths since 2014. “Unofficially we have 1.5 million displaced persons in Ukraine. A lot of them are women, and displaced women face many different issues such as losing their jobs and income, while struggling to find new jobs.”

Levytska says these women face a “double discrimination” because they are women and because they are displaced persons. If they are older women, this discrimination is compounded even further. Although the conflict has adversely affected KVPU’s numbers (in terms of members and finances), as well as offering some financial help, the union also offers free legal advice to members who have been affected by the conflict, help with accessing benefits and assistance in finding new work.

In Tunisia, trade unions were fundamental to the country’s democratic transition following the ousting of the dictatorship of President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali in 2011. In 2014, the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT) was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize as part of a quartet of civil society organisations, with UGTT receiving particular commendation for having initiated the process of social dialogue which brought together the employers’ organisation, the Tunisian Bar Association and the Tunisian Human Rights League (LTDH), thus enabling the appointment of a consensus government and ensuring the country’s peaceful transition to democracy.

“Based on the data of 84 affiliates, more than half – **58.3%** – have female representation of 25 per cent or more in the highest decision-making bodies, while 41.7% are below 25% representation

Today, Tunisia is held up as a shining example of the progress that can be made towards women’s rights in the MENA region, but what role have trade unions played in this? “The trade union movement was decisive in preserving the gains of Tunisian women, which were being threatened by the conservative and religious parties after the [2011] revolution,” says Sihem Boussetta of UGTT. “Through its collaboration with the civil society, UGTT supported protests, sit-ins and demonstrations led by Tunisian women, with a fierce determination to safeguard their rights.” Boussetta says that after supporting the integral law against all forms of violence towards women (something that she calls a “second revolution in the legislative field”), UGTT is now calling on the Tunisian government to “adopt all international agreements relating to women, especially ILO Convention 183 on maternity protection”.

But there is a long way to go in Tunisia when it comes to the topic of the universal right to social protection. “There are twice as many women unemployed as there are men. Only 34.5 per cent of women are covered by social security. Thirty-eight and a half

per cent receive a retirement pension and only 50 per cent have health insurance. The situation is even more appalling in the rural areas, where only 11 per cent of women are beneficiaries of social security,” says Boussetta. “Women employed in the informal sector are most vulnerable to all kind of precarity, hardship and marginalisation. Also, the degree of participation of women in national, regional and local decisional authorities remains weak.” While Tunisia has made great strides towards creating a more equitable society, Boussetta admits: “We are still very far from the parity advocated by the Tunisian constitution.”

■ A TWO-FRONT BATTLE

In Palestine, where trade unions carry out various important social functions, Iman Abu Salah, a member of the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU), says that Palestinian women are fighting a two-front battle – against the occupation and against patriarchy: “Even though women represent 49 per cent of the population, their political role is still not demarcated in terms of political candidacy and participation to decisional authorities. This is mainly due to the political, social and cultural challenges that Palestinian society must still address,” she says. “Palestinian society is still governed by a patriarchal system, with oppressive traditions and customs. Women are fighting to destroy the distinctions imposed between men and women.”

She says that “the role of women in the resistance against the Israeli occupation and the fragmentation of Palestine has been an active one in every step of our history.” Scores of women and girls – from 17-year-old youth activist Ahed Tamimi who made international headlines after she was sentenced to eight months in prison for slapping an Israeli soldier, to human rights activist and Palestinian lawmaker Khalida Jarrar, who has been held in administrative detention without trial or with no information on the charges held against her since

July – have paid a heavy price for fighting for the liberation of Palestine. There are also several female trade union activists who are in detention “for their commitment to the liberation and the unification of Palestine,” Salah says.

The other challenge that Palestinian women face is economic. “Women are on the frontline of the economic crisis in the Palestinian territories. They are the one who must search for basic survival needs for their families. This factor reduces their presence in the labour market. Women are mainly confined to sectors of health and cleaning, while employment with added-value is reserved for men. This reality undermines the role of women in the society.”

For Abu Saleh, it is crucial that women start to see more role models and positive examples of what they can do and achieve: “One of the most urgent steps to undertake is to promote more women success stories inside Palestinian society, to impose a more positive and active vision of women. One day, I hope that men and women will be able to stand side to side, without requiring any more quotas to defend women’s participation to Palestinian society.”

“IF WOMEN ARE UNITED, WE CAN WIN”

In Brazil, trade union women are on the frontline of their country’s existential struggle between extreme-right authoritarianism and the inclusive social democracy of former presidents Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff’s Workers’ Party. With Lula sentenced to 12 years in prison on trumped-up corruption charges and far-right candidate Jair Bolsonaro winning the October presidential elections by a substantial margin, Martins says it is time for women to roll up their sleeves and fight – as they have always done. “Women, as long as they have unity, can fight against that one who is a Nazi figure [Bolsonaro]. If we have unity of action, we can do it.”

“Women make up 44% of the ITUC General Council. Excluding the Women’s Committee and the Youth Committee, that figure drops to 38.8%”

black women; in March 2016, the Honduran indigenous and environmental rights defender Berta Cáceres was murdered for trying to protect indigenous land from the construction of a hydroelectric dam. “Women have the right to a voice but in reality, she can never truly be outspoken because if she dares she is killed, she is arrested, she is tortured. And not only because she is living in the time of a military dictatorship as Dilma Rousseff did [Rousseff was jailed and tortured between 1970 and 1972 at the height of Brazil’s military dictatorship]. Women often suffer a type of violence which is greater than what men experience simply because they are women.”

In Venezuela, which has been in severe economic crisis since 2015, Ana Francisca Soto, National Women’s Director for ASI Venezuela, says that it is Venezuelan women who have been hit hardest: “Any worker who has to comply with a schedule has to leave her house at five o’clock in the morning to be able to grab a transport that no longer exists – because of the country’s current situation we no longer have the public transport that previously took workers to their workplaces. Now we have to leave very early to take dangerous forms of transport to be able to arrive on time to carry out our jobs. Women lose a whole day in a queue only to buy some kind of food.” But Soto says that peace is possible through dialogue and a desire for unity. “If we add identity and the culture of peace to the culture of solidarity, to the culture of brotherhood, we can achieve great things. Together we can break paradigms. I know that women are capable of overcoming any obstacle.”

But too often, women often pay the ultimate price for taking a stand: in Brazil, Rio de Janeiro council woman Marielle Franco was executed in cold-blood this March by still-unidentified gunmen on her way home from an empowerment event for young

REALISING THE ROADMAP: INTERSECTIONAL TRADE UNIONISM



© The Voice of Domestic Workers

Members of The Voice of Domestic Workers rally outside of the Houses of Parliament in London, UK, just after International Domestic Workers' Day, on 17 June 2019.

In just a few decades, the concept of ‘intersectionality’ has gone from being a specialist academic term coined by the African-American feminist and critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw, to becoming one of the central principles of social justice movements everywhere. It describes the ways in which various social identities interlock and overlap, particularly in relation to systems of oppression and discrimination. And it is an essential paradigm by which the global labour movement can orientate its work.

South Africa’s national centre COSATU, provides a helpful description of the “mutually reinforcing relationship between racism, capitalism and patriarchy” in its most recent gender policy document, outlining basic concepts that should form the crux of any discussion on gender equality: “Women’s experience of oppression is affected by their race, class, geographic location, age and other factors. For instance, women with disabilities...are marginalised and lack access to support. The levels of unemploy-

ment and poverty experienced by young black women are extraordinarily high. Lesbians are discriminated against in the workplace and society purely on the basis of their sexual orientation. Migrant women are vulnerable to exploitation, abuse and violence, and are generally not organised into local unions. A ‘gendered perspective’ aims to mainstream and integrate gender struggles, rather than seeing these struggles as women’s issues that are taken up in a separate and isolated way.”

As the poet Audre Lorde once famously said: “There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.” That’s why unions cannot afford to de-

defend workers' rights without defending women's rights, migrant rights, disability rights, LGBTI rights, racial justice, economic justice and environmental justice. From the membership to the leadership, the more that unions reflect their multi-dimensional societies and the multi-faceted issues that workers face, the stronger the collective bargaining power of those unions will be.

■ "BRINGING PEOPLE IN DOESN'T MEAN PUSHING OTHER PEOPLE OUT"

For Marie-Clarke Walker, who made history in 2002 when she became the first black woman and youngest person ever elected to the position of Executive Vice-President of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), and again in 2017 when she was the first racialised woman elected as Secretary-Treasurer, opening the doors of the labour movement only serves to strengthen it. "We – women, racialised people, indigenous people, gay people – never used to be welcomed in the union movement. Now that we are part of it, everything we do needs to reflect that reality, especially the leadership." In the CLC's response to the ITUC Gender Survey, the union noted that: "We are committed to building the leadership of women with multiple or intersectional identities, and have developed, or are developing, leadership education for workers from specific equity-seeking groups."

Based on the responses of 86 affiliates, slightly more than half (45 affiliates) have adopted a quota policy. Of the 24 affiliates that do not plan to adopt a quota policy, nine of them have 30% or more female representation in their highest decision-making bodies

Although more needs to be done – both to ensure inclusivity at a membership and activist level, and to sustain the progress made at the leadership level – the CLC is still streets ahead of most national centres, even those with similarly diverse populations. "Three out of our four officers are racialised. Our president, Hassan [Yussuff, who became the first person of colour to lead Canada's union movement when he was elected President in 2014] is a straight, racialised male from Guyana. We also have Larry [Rousseau, the Executive Vice-president] who is a racialised gay man. And there's me."

Clarke-Walker says there are still those who feel threatened by this kind of inclusiveness. "I've heard people say: 'I am a white male. I will never get elected or re-elected' but that's not how this

works. People elect the people who best represent their interests, who share their goals and objectives. Bringing people in doesn't mean pushing other people out. In fact, when more people feel included they actually get involved. And when you have that critical mass, it is a lot easier to make demands. It's a lot easier to build a movement."

For lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) workers, exclusion, discrimination and violence is a major issue. LGBTI workers everywhere still face obstacles accessing employment because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, as well as harassment and bullying. But a growing number of trade unionists are working to ensure that their specific needs are represented and defended. For example, at a national level, in 2014, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) teamed up with BeLonG To – a national organisation for LGBT youth – to extend their *Stand Up! Don't Stand for Homophobia or Transphobia* campaign from schools to the workplace. The Dutch

Trade Union Confederation (FNV) runs the Pink Network, which is dedicated to improving the situation facing LGBTI members in the workplace and in the labour market. There is a strong international element to the work of the Pink Network, particularly in collaboration with the independent labour movement in Turkey, where an international exchange programme on discrimination and LGBTI workplace policies has been running since 2011. And amongst the GUFs, since 1998 Education International (EI) has been conducting a global survey on LGBTI teaching personnel every three years, while EI also teamed up with PSI to produce a joint publication for LGBTI workers. The two GUFs have also held several joint international forums on the issue.

■ PROTECTING THE MOST VULNERABLE WORKERS

To mark the 2018 World Day for Decent Work, the ITUC recently bolstered its campaign for the adoption of an ILO Conven-

tion and Recommendation on violence and harassment in the world of work with the action *Solidarity Through Diversity* which called for ‘No Discrimination. No Exceptions’ by highlighting different examples of what violence and harassment looks like around the world. In the UK, for example, more than half of all disabled people have faced bullying or harassment at work; more than a third of all LGBTI workers have been bullied or harassed; and more than one-in-three black or minority-ethnic workers have been bullied, abused or experienced racial discrimination. In Australia, 38 per cent of indigenous workers, 34 per cent of disabled workers and 30 per cent of young workers have reported experiencing bullying and harassment at work. And acts of violence against migrant domestic workers in Lebanon are resulting in an average of two deaths per week.

“Although there has been a general decrease in trade union membership rates in a number of unions, trade union membership amongst women is generally increasing, as is their representation in decision-making bodies”

A number of unions have been working hard to organise and protect the rights of migrant workers. At a European-level, the ETUC ran a successful campaign which resulted in a revised directive on the rights of posted workers this May, and it is currently working with affiliates to help organise undocumented migrant workers across the continent. And in the UK, Unite the Union has been working with migrant domestic workers to advance their labour rights. Marissa Begonia is the migrant domestic workers’ rep for Unite the Union and the founder of the 1500-member strong grassroots support and campaign group, The Voice of Domestic Workers (formerly known as Justice for Domestic Workers). As a migrant domestic worker herself, Begonia says the support of Unite the Union has been vital to empowering migrant domestic workers in what has been a very hostile political environment.

“The support from Unite the Union [for The Voice of Domestic Workers] has been very strong. Even though some of the workers are undocumented, everything is open to them. We have access to the Unite headquarters and every Sunday we meet there: we run English classes, IT classes, mindfulness workshops. We also offer livelihood training, and sometimes we run exhibitions or have film screenings.” But more than having access to the building, Begonia says that having a safe space is what’s most important to migrant domestic workers. “They are very vulnerable, so it is important that migrant domestic workers, who are very afraid to go anywhere, have at least one place where they can feel safe. Where they don’t have to worry about being raided by immigration officers and deported.”

Begonia, who herself suffered at the hands of an abusive employer when she first arrived in the UK from the Philippines, says it is very difficult to organise migrant domestic workers and convince them to join a union – or keep them once they have joined: “It’s hard to find them because they work in individual households, but word of mouth helps. In the beginning, they are not really aware of Unite but when they enter the building, they learn about the union and we explain the benefits of being a member. But once a migrant domestic worker loses their job, they lose their right to be in the UK, then they lose everything. Current [Conservative] government policy means that migrant domestic workers cannot access their rights as workers, they can only get protection if they have evidence of abuse. Then they can access all the employment rights due to them. But their rights are very much defined by their immigration status.”

Despite this hostile environment, Begonia says that the Unite has been crucial in empowering migrant domestic workers in the UK – including herself. “I did not plan to become any kind of leader for migrant domestic workers. It is not even something that I thought I would be able to do. But Unite the Union and the TUC sent me to the ILO in Geneva for the discussions about Convention 189 [in 2010 and 2011]. And I am glad they put forward someone who could really talk about what it is like to be a domestic worker. I am very grateful about how they shaped me in leadership.” Begonia also commends Unite for providing migrant domestic workers with the same access to education and training as other legal workers: “This really equips them with new skills. We want migrant domestic workers to be able to speak about their own experiences with confidence, and go out and talk to people directly, or lobby the government, even if they are undocumented. What I have achieved, all my fellow domestic workers can achieve. We don’t need other people to speak out for us. That is why our organisation is called The Voice of Domestic Workers – we are the voice of our own rights.”

GENDER EQUALITY IN TRADE UNIONS: THE WAY FORWARD

BY MARIEKE KONING



© ITUC/Tamara Gausi

Participants at the 2nd ITUC World Women's Conference/Organising Assembly in Dakar, Senegal, which took place between 19 and 21 November 2013.

After years of dedicated global campaigns, the women's movement in trade unions is growing and our concerns are increasingly being prioritised on the bargaining agenda. The stories and experiences shared in this report show the various ways in which trade unions are moving forward and overcoming challenges to bring inclusiveness and diversity to our ranks, decision-making structures and agendas. To continue to do so will require a deepening of solidarity within our union movement – between women and men, across generations, and with an intersectional lens – to share the seats available at the collective bargaining table, and in leadership. It's not about getting the numbers right; it's about enhancing our trade union democracy and collective strength by acknowledging the skills, capacities and potential of all our members.

Women's inspirational leadership has built bridges across unions and between like-minded civil society groups, including feminist organisations, migrant groups, anti-racism movements, human right defenders, indigenous communities and LGBTBI groups. These strategic alliances deliver sustainable change for workers: for example, women in unions – in solidarity with domestic workers – paved the way for the union-wide support for an ILO Convention leading to a global campaign where more than 50 countries adopted labour law reforms, including 25 ratifications of Convention 189. Domes-

tic workers across the world joined forces and are now part of the 600,000-strong women-led IDWF.

Today, union women – across the ITUC and the Global Union Federation family, in collaboration with civil society partners – are spearheading a global campaign for the adoption of a strong ILO Convention, accompanied by a Recommendation, to end violence and harassment in the world of work.

The previous examples show that inspirational female leadership – from the grassroots to the international level – is infusing strength and transformation into our union movement. In addition, the value of women’s networks in unions, the power of dedicated women’s campaigns and the building of women’s solidarity as shown in this report, are all important stepping stones to securing inclusive trade union agendas and leadership.

There is more: the majority of respondents to the ITUC Gender Equality Survey pointed towards the critical importance of embedding gender equality principles into our trade union structures and culture. While the union movement is building the care economy agenda, with a special focus on organising across the care sector, we need to apply the care agenda in our own ranks, thus enabling both women and men to balance their trade union roles with their jobs and unpaid care work.

And while the union movement is building momentum with its global campaign for an ILO Convention on violence and harassment in the world of work, trade union leaders need to address it in their own ranks. This was recently demonstrated, for example, by the commitment shown by AFL-CIO President Richard Trumпка who declared that “the AFL-CIO will not tolerate discriminatory, harassing or otherwise unacceptable behaviour in the workplace or at any of its activities, events or meetings”. As the Count Us In! campaign has shown, women and men can stand firmly together on gender equality and achieve an increase in women’s representation – and even secure gender parity at the top leadership level.

Our movement needs to value and multiply the steps taken by women towards transforming our unions. This strengthens our movement and our collective bargaining power, which in these challenging times, is needed to realise a global shift and just transition where people from all communities can access decent work, income security and live a life in dignity.

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Written by: Tamara Gausi

Spanish and Portuguese-language interviews by: Mayra Castro Vizentin

French and Arabic-language interviews by: Emmanuel Haddad

Editors: Tamara Gausi (English), Marta Checa (Spanish), Mathilde Dorcardie (French)

Translators: Guiomar Pérez Rendon, Nathalie Vernay, Raquel Mora García de Oteyza, Salman Yunus, Soledad Pérez

Design: xcel7 - Layout: Vicente Cepedal

EQUAL TIMES, NEWS AT WORK

<http://www.equaltimes.org> | info@equaltimes.org

Phone: +32 (0)2 224 0233 | Fax: +32 (0)2 201 5815

Boulevard du Roi Albert II, 5, Bte 1 – 1210 Brussels – BELGIUM