

# Shaping the Future of Women at Work

“ The future of work must be a future where women and men are equal. ”

The future of work starts now, and **trade union organising, collective bargaining and political strategies to shape the future world of work** are firmly embedded in the realities of working life today. People have formed and joined unions for over 150 years to promote and defend their interests at work, and pursue broader goals of social justice, equality and democracy. Workers still come together to take collective action, even when the denial of their rights by governments and by employers is absolute, whether they be **domestic workers in the Gulf, plantation workers in Honduras** or workers in Asia's **supply chain factories**.

“ Imagine instead of corporations making 30 per cent more off women's labour, imagine if that 30 per cent were coming back to our communities in the form of wage ”

And whilst stubborn inequalities persist, unions have led efforts to break occupational segregation, close the gender pay gap, enhance women's access to social protection, and promote women's access to paid formal work. **Construction sector unions** are running **training programmes** for women. Through SEWA's work in India, childcare educators in the informal economy are receiving skills training and

certification. Unions are developing expertise in objective job evaluations to bridge the gender pay gap. Union organising is formalising the work of street traders and market vendors. And throughout Latin America, unions have led the way in winning decent work for **domestic workers**.

Changes in the organisation of work in the era of globalisation, in particular through technological innovation, have made it more difficult for unions to organise. **Growing fragmentation and precarity in the labour market** are making the challenge yet harder. Forty per cent of the world's workforce is struggling to survive in the informal economy, and the majority of formal economy workers are experiencing levels of insecurity as never before – the ITUC 2017 Global Poll shows that 73 per cent of people are worried about losing their jobs. Many of the jobs predicted to disappear by 2050 are lower skilled jobs where women predominate, including in sectors such as transport, hotel and food.

Erosion of the **public sector**, with its relatively higher level of union density and employment of women and equity-seeking people, threatens both job security and social cohesion. The union movement faces the challenges of defending and promoting the public sector and organising workers in privatised services – such as the growing numbers of women working in privatised care services and in the increasingly casualised and informal jobs in the care economy.

**Unions are on the front line of defending decent work**, whether the work is done through direct employment, subcontracting, agency recruitment or contracted through digital platforms or other means. All workers must have the same fundamental rights: the right to social protection, a minimum living wage, to collective bargaining and employer compliance with labour standards – and to work free from

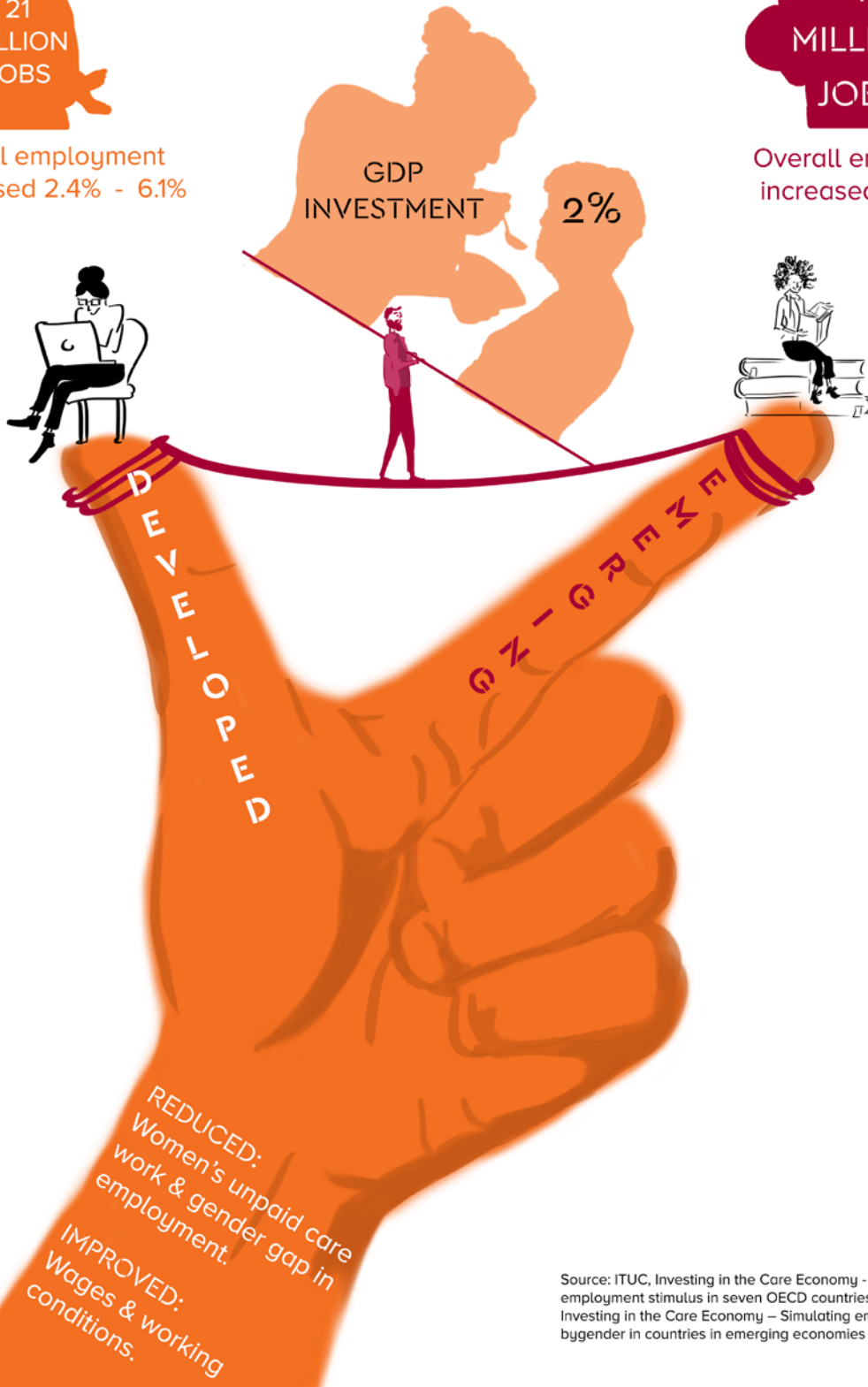
## Closing gender gaps in employment outcomes for women: Investing in the Care Economy



Overall employment  
increased 2.4% - 6.1%



Overall employment  
increased 1.2% - 3.2%



Source: ITUC, Investing in the Care Economy - A gender analysis of employment stimulus in seven OECD countries (March 2016) and ITUC, Investing in the Care Economy - Simulating employment effects by gender in countries in emerging economies (January 2017).

discrimination and violence. Unions are working to shape the future of work through political action to challenge the dominant economic model and ensure decent jobs and rights for all workers, through negotiating and bargaining around new technology and industrial transformation, a just transition to green jobs, and through campaigning to increase the wage share and ensure living minimum wages. Success will depend on organising workers from all sectors and all types of employment into union membership.

Whilst much of the attention of the future of work is placed on the impact of rapidly evolving technologies, the care economy will be one of the fastest growing sectors of the future. The World Health Organisation predicts that that at least **40 million new jobs** will be needed in the health sector alone by 2030. Trade unions must organise across sectors of the care economy to ensure that the jobs created are decent: paid according to their true value, with respect for freedom of association and collective bargaining, with social protection and regulated for occupational health and safety – and in which occupational segregation is consigned to the past.

Strong unions are inclusive unions. Our membership and leadership must reflect the diversity of working

people: women, young workers, black workers, disabled workers, LGBTI workers, migrant workers, indigenous workers must all have a fair and equitable say in the leadership of their unions. And unions need to address the disadvantages caused to workers through an intersectional lens that reflects how different forms of discrimination interact.

The corporate capture of government is a major threat to a future that ensures good and sustainable jobs, secure incomes on which people can build a decent life, tax justice and a range of other matters which are crucial to prosperity for the many rather than the few. With corporate interests seeking to erode laws and standards yet further and using technology in a way that makes labour entirely subservient to capital, union strength and unity in action to shape the future world of work is indispensable – not only to guarantee fairness at work, but to the very future of democracy and equality in every part of the world.

“ **The future of work: jobs that care for the earth – jobs that care for people** ”

♀ [ITUC Shaping the Future of Work](#)

♀ [ITUC The Future of Work: a Global Deal](#)

♀ [WHO High Level Commission on Health Employment and Economic Growth – Working for Health and Growth: Investing in the health workforce \(2016\)](#)

♀ [ITUC Count Us In campaign](#)

♀ [ILO Women at Work Centenary Initiative](#)