

Women's Organising Assembly



3rd ITUC WORLD WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

"Building Women Workers' Power"

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

The third ITUC World Women's Conference/Women's Organising Assembly brings together women trade unionists from around the world to claim our rights and realise gender equality through building workers' power based firmly in the principles of feminism and solidarity.

The Assembly takes place at a crucial time for women workers. We are living through a persistent global economic and jobs crisis, worsening impacts of climate change, deepening social and economic inequalities in many parts of the world, and the rise of populist misogyny and nationalism. The social contract between governments and people is broken. Trade union organising and activism is all the more important if we are to change course and create the future we want – for ourselves, for our families and for our communities – built on our values of peace, freedom and democracy.

The main themes of the Assembly, with a view to current and future ITUC priorities, are:

- Peace, freedom and democracy
- The future of work
- Changing the care paradigm
- Eliminating gender-based violence in the world of work

Economic and Social Justice for Women

“ **Absolute poverty and the feminization of poverty, unemployment, the increasing fragility of the environment, continued violence against women and the widespread exclusion of half of humanity from institutions of power and governance underscore the need to continue the search for development, peace and security and for ways of assuring people-centred sustainable development. The participation and leadership of the half of humanity that is female is essential to the success of that search.**

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995 ”

Eradication of poverty based on social development, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, environmental protection and social justice requires women's full and equal participation in economic, political and social decision-making. It requires women's autonomy and control over our own lives and bodies.

Women's labour force participation is an important measure of social and economic well-being. With

the conditions – fair wages, safe working conditions, opportunities for training and advancement, the right to organise and bargain collectively – paid employment helps women achieve economic independence and enhances our agency and social mobility.

“ **Work unleashes human potential, human creativity and human spirit.**
UNDP Human and Development Report, 2015 ”



SOURCE: World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends for women 2017, ILO

Despite important gains in women's rights and gender equality, significant barriers to the full realisation of women's economic, social political and cultural rights remain. Women are still overrepresented in informal and precarious work arrangements, including at the bottom of global supply chains, which now command 60 per cent of global production, transport and services: **ITUC Scandal Report.**

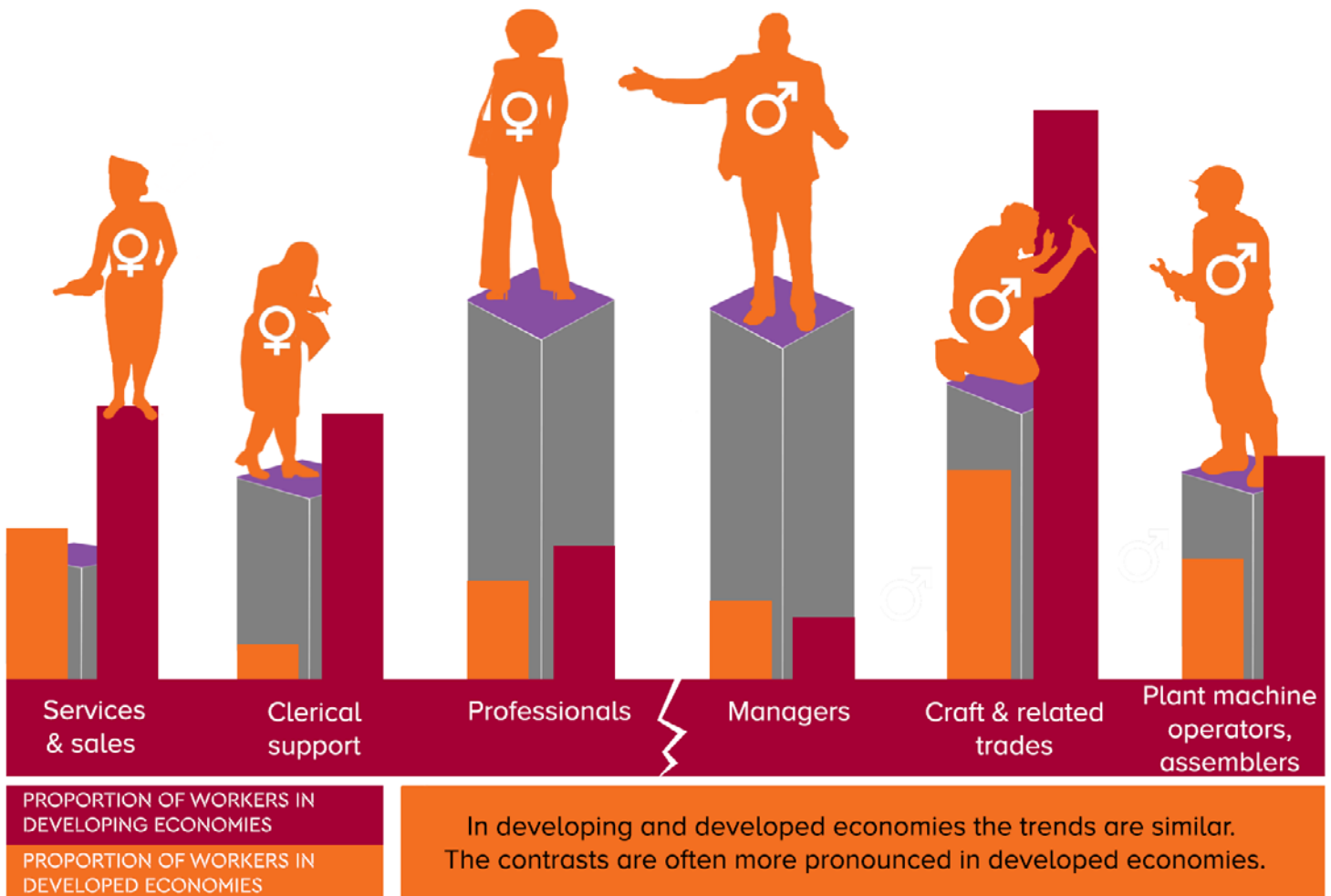
Occupational segregation and undervaluation of work in female-dominated sectors persist as do the resulting gender wage and pension gaps. Discrimination based on not only gender but also class, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation and identity, disability, HIV status,

indigenous and migration status still pervade our experiences in the world of work and our access to opportunities.

Social and economic justice for women means **transforming women's work.** This won't happen without a transformation in the way we view and value care, caring roles and care responsibilities. Care is essential to our well-being and development as human beings. Without care we cannot survive and we cannot thrive. But when unpaid care work in the home falls primarily on women, it can limit our choices and opportunities for other activities, including paid work, education and leisure activities.

Occupational Segregation

Relatively high concentrations of gender prevail in certain occupations



“ Women experience oppression in varying configurations and in varying degrees of intensity. Cultural patterns of oppression are not only interrelated, but are bound together and influenced by the intersectional systems of society. Examples of this include race, gender, class, ability, and ethnicity.”

Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw ”

♀ [The World's Women 2015](#)

♀ [ITUC Supply Chains Resources hub](#)

♀ [ILO Supply Chains discussion](#)

♀ [ILO Women at Work Trends 2016](#)

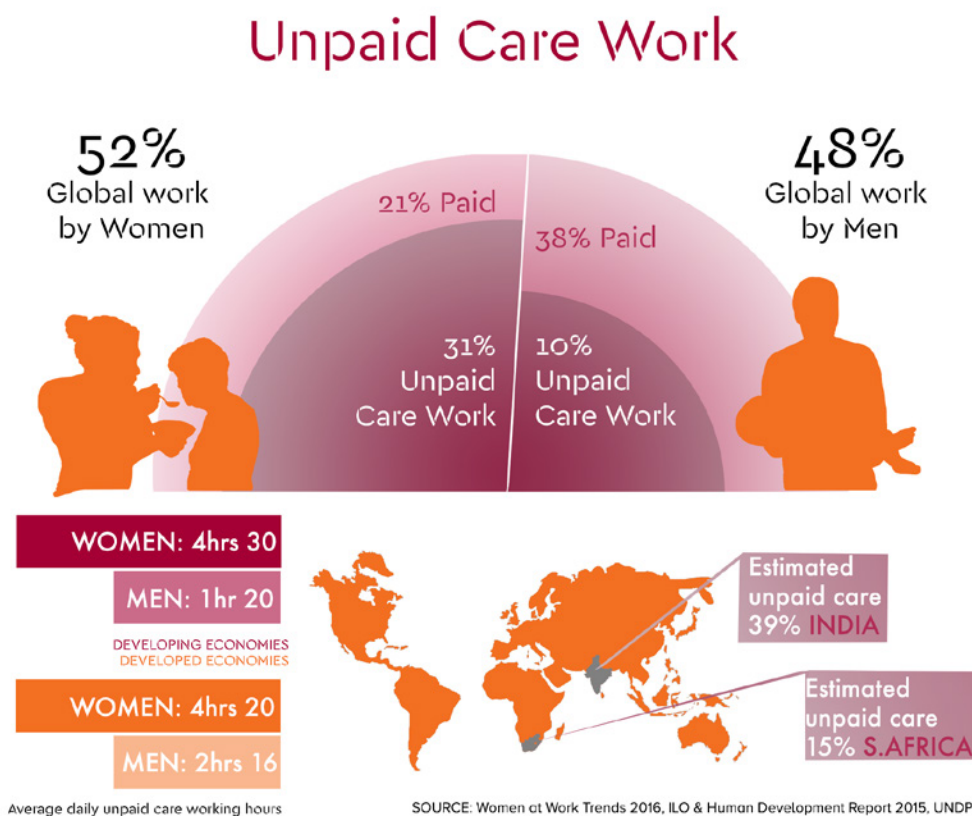
♀ [AFL-CIO/Solidarity Center Transforming Women's Work: Policies for an inclusive economic agenda](#)

♀ [AWID/Solidarity Center Challenging corporate power: Struggles for women's rights, economic and gender justice](#)

♀ [UNDP Human Development Report 2015](#)

♀ [UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment: Final report \(2016\)](#)

Changing the Care Paradigm, Tackling Discrimination and Closing Gender Pay Gaps



Care has an intrinsic social value. It also has an economic value. Women contribute between **20 – 60 per cent of National Gross Domestic Product** through unpaid care work. Care responsibilities and reproductive roles profoundly affect how women participate in the workforce, including the type of work women do, the positions women hold, the quality of female-dominated jobs and the pay women receive. Even when care work is paid, it remains undervalued and often characterised by poor pay and working conditions. Financial cuts, outsourcing and privatisation contribute to the casualisation and informalisation of paid care work. Redefining care

as a collective social responsibility, funded through progressive taxation systems, is a necessary step in giving women and men the freedom to care and revaluing the way we view paid and unpaid care work.

Care is indispensable to the functioning of our societies and to our well-being and contributes enormously to the economy. Yet, when women have to bear the lion's share of unpaid care work, it limits our choices in other activities, including paid work. Globally, men's share of paid work is twice that of women while women's share of unpaid care work is three times that of men.

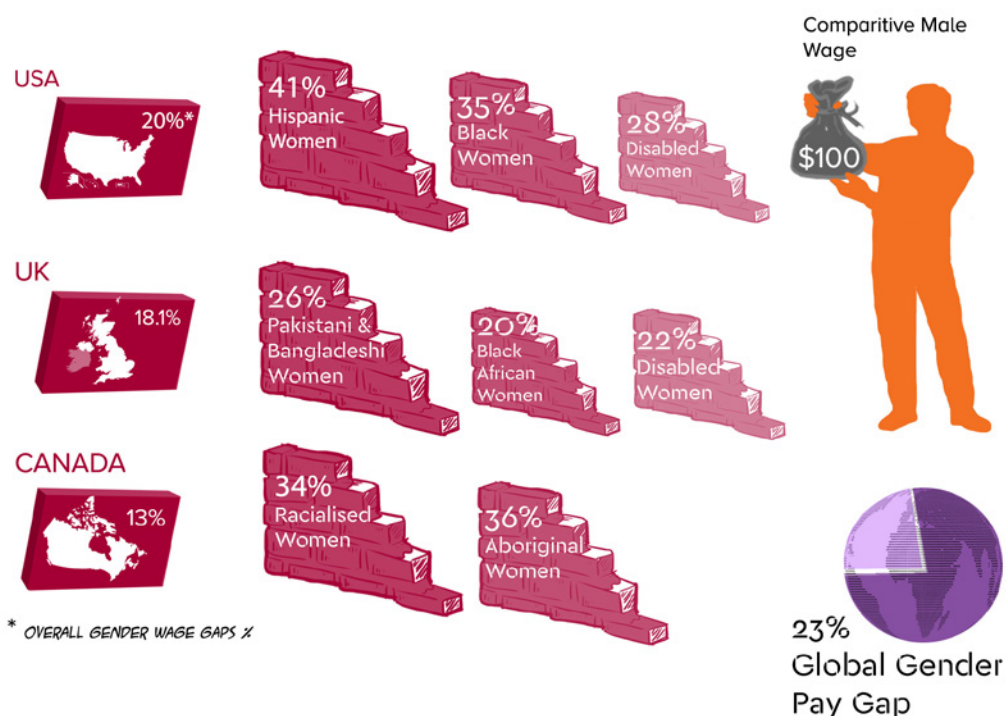
Discrimination often follows women into paid work. The evidence of the glass ceiling is just one example. Women hold only 22 per cent of senior leadership positions. Whilst figures vary across regions, globally 32 per cent of businesses do not have any female senior managers. For women of colour, disabled women and migrant women, the figures are even worse. **Occupational segregation** has been pervasive over time and across levels of economic prosperity. In both industrialised and developing economies men are over-represented in higher paid jobs in crafts, trades, plant and machine operations, and managerial and legislative occupations, with women overrepresented in lower paid jobs in the “caring” and service sectors, such as education, health and care services, hospitality, clerical shop and sales work, and in light manufacturing in global supply chains.

put in longer hours, more likely to take leave to care for dependants and to take career breaks to care for small children. This impacts women’s earnings over our working life, contributing to the gender pay gap. Again, for women of colour, disabled women and migrant women, for example, the gender pay gap is even higher. As social security systems are based on continuous remunerated employment, women are less likely to fulfil the minimum contributory requirements. Failure to address the gender pay gap adds to the already unacceptably high number of working poor women and translates to more women retiring into poverty. On current trends, the global gender pay gap of 23 per cent will not be closed until 2069. Given that women are overrepresented in low paid work, introducing **minimum living wages** helps to reduce gender pay gaps and lift women out of in-work poverty.

The **gender pay gap** is perhaps the most tangible expression of persistent inequalities between men and women at work and in society. Women make only 77 cents for every dollar men earn. Larger care responsibilities mean that women are more likely to take up part-time work, are less likely to be able to

For the **millions of women working in the informal economy**, the disadvantages are even more pronounced, including lack of access to minimum wages, labour rights and social protection. **Domestic workers** are increasingly filling in the deficits in the public provision of care, but are among the most exploited workers.

Gender Pay Gap



Macro-economic policies play a key role in advancing or hindering gender equality, as they shape the overall economic environment. Adopting macroeconomic policies to boost both short-term and, crucially, long-term inclusive economic growth and that promote women's economic empowerment requires approaches that recognise and prioritise the creation of productive and decent jobs and support existing livelihoods in agriculture and the informal economy. It requires adequate, universal social protection over the life cycle, public investments in social and rural infrastructure, reductions in the amount of unpaid care and domestic work borne by women, and maximising and optimising fiscal space through tax regimes that redress inequality and provide sufficient public resources.

Provision of quality public services such as childcare and elderly care and family friendly workplace policies that help workers balance care responsibilities and paid work are critical factors in promoting gender equality and closing gender gaps. **ITUC research** shows how investing in care can create millions of quality jobs, narrow the gender pay gap, reduce overall inequality and help redress the exclusion of women from decent jobs. Care services must form part of **universal social protection systems**, which provide for income security to the unemployed or underemployed, paid maternity leave, child care and other social and health care support, insurance against lost earnings due to sickness or occupational injuries, and "care credits" for periods spent out of the paid work caring for dependants.

SDG Target 5.4: Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate

The Nordic governments are leading **by example**, through regional and international cooperation to break occupational segregation and gender stereotypes; investment in quality public care, including early childhood education; work-life balance policies such as paid parental leave and flexible working arrangements; and promoting diversity in leadership. Iceland has become the first country in the world to

introduce legislation to mandate equal pay for work of equal value for men and women in both the public and private sectors. The new legislation, set to come into force in 2018, is also intended to address pay discrimination based on race, nationality, religion, age and gender identification.

To contribute to the implementation of **SDG Target 8.5**, the ILO, UN Women and the OECD have launched an International Coalition for Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value between women and men (EPIC). The Coalition includes governments, trade unions, employers, academics and civil society. The broad goals of the Coalition are:

- Increased awareness and greater engagement of the ILO and UN constituents and other key stakeholders at the global, regional and national levels to close the gender pay gap by 2030
- Universal ratification of **ILO Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)**
- Improved national legislation and strengthened enforcement mechanisms and access to remedies in line with international norms and good practice
- Strengthened national capacity to formulate and implement policies and practical measures to close the gender pay gap

SDG Target 8.5: By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.

Draft recommendations:

1. Organise the unorganised, including in the informal economy, and improve working conditions for care workers, including migrant care workers.
2. Prioritise family-friendly workplace policies and arrangements in collective bargaining agendas and social dialogue
3. Lead by example and make union offices and working arrangements family-friendly.
4. Train union wage negotiators on objective job evaluations free from gender bias, and to encourage pay transparency.
5. Campaign to recognise, reduce and redistribute care work through gender-responsive macroeconomic policies and investment in social infrastructure jobs.
6. Lobby and campaign for universal social protection and national minimum living wages.
7. Challenge social norms that exist around care and women's reproductive roles.

- ♀ [ITUC Investing in the Care Economy – Simulating employment effects by gender in countries in emerging economies \(January 2017\)](#)
- ♀ [ITUC Investing in the Care Economy - A gender analysis of employment stimulus in seven OECD countries \(March 2016\)](#)
- ♀ [ITUC Domestic Workers Unite - A guide for building collective power to achieve rights and protections for domestic workers \(2016\)](#)
- ♀ [UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment: How to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid work and care \(toolkit\)](#)
- ♀ [ILO Decent work in the care economy \(video\)](#)
- ♀ [Macroeconomic policy and women's economic empowerment 2017](#)
- ♀ [IDS Redistributing Unpaid Care Work – Why Tax Matters for Women's Rights](#)
- ♀ [Nordic Council of Ministers/ILO The Ultimate Balancing Act – Working and Family in the Nordic region \(2016\)](#)
- ♀ [UN Women/ITUC “At the current rate of progress, no equal pay until 2069”](#)
- ♀ [Equal Pay International Coalition - Coalition for equal pay for work of equal value between women and men](#)

Eliminating Gender-based Violence in the World of Work

There can be no decent work with violence at work. An end to workplace violence must be part of our vision for the future of work.

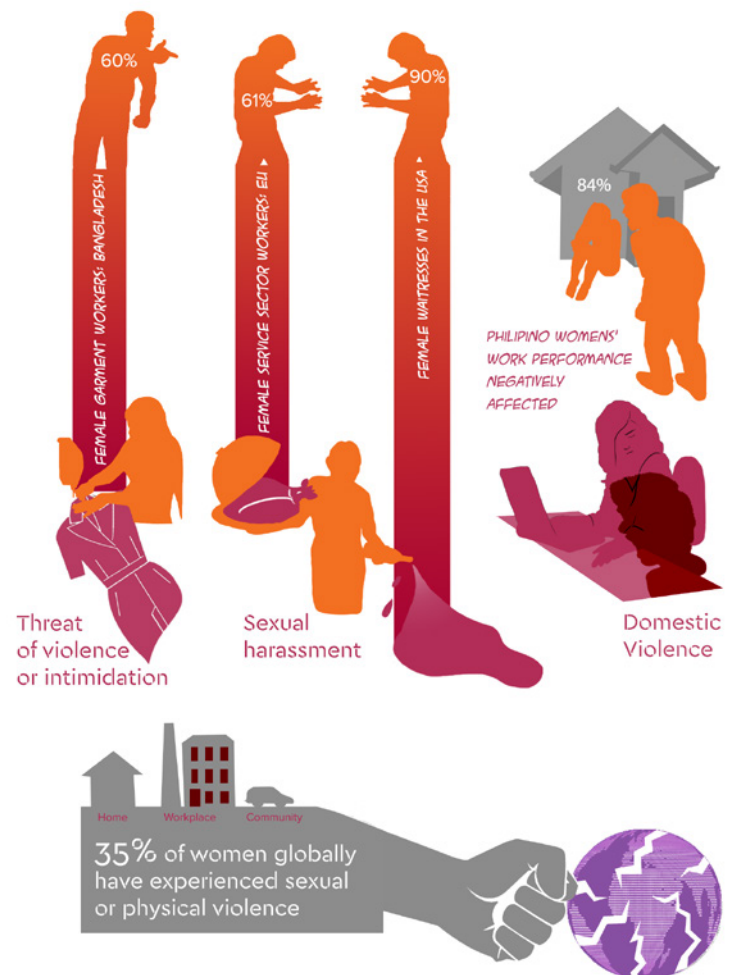
“ All human beings, irrespective of race, creed or sex, have the right to pursue both their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity.

ILO Declaration of Philadelphia, 1944 ”

Whilst both women and men experience violence and harassment in the world of work, unequal status and power relations in society and at work often result in women being far more exposed to violence and harassment. Gender-based violence remains one of the most tolerated violations of workers' human rights. According to the World Health Organisation, 35 per cent of women – 818 million women globally – over the age of 15 have experienced sexual or physical violence at home, in their communities or in the workplace. Violence against women can restrict women's economic and social position and have a significant impact on physical and mental health, leading to absenteeism, missed promotions and job loss.

Yet there is still no law at the international level that sets a baseline for taking action to eradicate

Gender-Based Violence in the World of Work



SDG Target 5.2: Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation

violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment, in the world of work. Trade unions have been lobbying for an ILO Convention on gender-based violence for many years. In 2018 the International Labour Conference will begin work towards an international standard on “violence and harassment against women and men in the world of work”. In preparation for the discussion, the ILO held a [Meeting of Experts on violence against women and men in the world of work](#) and issued a [Law and Practice report](#).

In addition to lobbying for an international law, trade unions are organising to stamp out gender-based violence in the world of work. Trade union organising has won paid leave for workers experiencing domestic violence, agreements with multinationals to eliminate sexual harassment in global supply chains, inclusion of prevention measures in occupational health and safety policies and has raised awareness that gender-based violence is simply not part of the job.

Draft recommendations:

1. Lobby and campaign for an ILO Convention and Recommendation on “Violence and harassment against women and men in the world of work”, with a strong focus on the gender dimension and an intersectional approach.
2. Strengthen union organising on gender-based violence, with special attention to young women and women in precarious and informal work.
3. Address gender-based violence as a priority in trade union collective bargaining agendas at the enterprise, sectoral, national, regional and global levels.
4. Build alliances against gender-based violence at national, regional and global levels.

♀ [ITUC campaign toolkit “Stop gender-based violence at work - support an ILO Convention”](#)

♀ [ITUC campaign “Stop gender-based violence in the world of work – Support an ILO Convention”](#)

♀ [ILO/ACTRAV Violence and Harassment against Women and Men in the World of Work - Trade Union Perspective and Action](#)

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

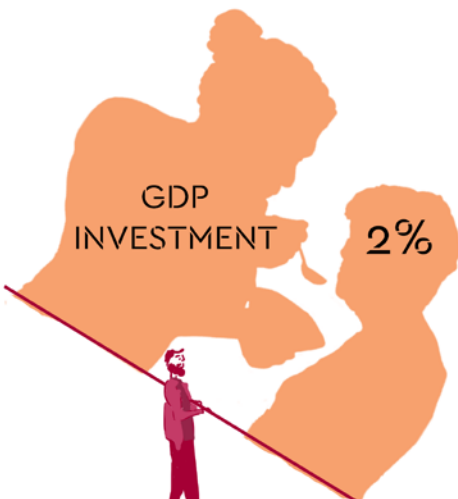
Closing gender gaps in employment outcomes for women: Investing in the Care Economy



Overall employment increased 2.4% - 6.1%



Overall employment increased 1.2% - 3.2%



DEVELOPED

EMERGING

REDUCED:
Women's unpaid care work & gender gap in employment.

IMPROVED:
Wages & working conditions.

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](#)

Peace, Freedom and Democracy

“ Freedom of peaceful assembly and association are foundational rights precisely because they are essential to human dignity, economic empowerment, sustainable development and democracy. They are the gateway to all other rights; without them, all other human and civil rights are in jeopardy. Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association ”

Trade unions have stood at the frontlines of struggles for democratic change and social justice throughout history. In many countries we are the only organised voice of opposition to governments attacking their own people or operating at the behest of corporate power and vested interests.

The escalation of geopolitical conflicts and proxy wars, a crisis of people seeking refuge, the growth in inequality, the now systemic unemployment of young people, the persistence of the informal economy, the rise in violence against women and the threat of climate change all make the need for a strong, democratic, unified trade union movement more relevant and urgent than ever.

The failure of governments to support and defend their people from the effects of unbridled corporate power has led to a complete breakdown of trust, spreading popular anger and fear which in turn fuel the rise of populism, nationalism, racism, xenophobia, patriarchy, misogyny and homophobia. Young people feel disenfranchised and abandoned by the “political class”. The gains made towards gender equality and women's autonomy are in danger of being reversed

by regressive policies and politics. When governments fail their people, the role of civil society becomes even more important. Alliances across social movements are deepening and strengthening – even in the face of sometimes violent government crackdowns.

“ Education either functions as an instrument to...bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. Paulo Freire. ”

By placing education in the hands of privateers, we have moved away from education systems that foster conscientisation, common bonds of citizenship and the encouragement of critical thought, making it still easier to marginalise, dehumanise and oppress.

Grabbing of land and natural resources by multinational corporations is displacing women farmers and indigenous communities, violating their right to land, food, water and a livelihood. The extraction of natural resources through agribusiness, hydropower, and large scale mining leads to ecological damage and contributes to climate change that will disproportionately affect women, particularly in the global South.

Working for peace means securing a decent standard of living for all. It means taking care of our environment. It means social justice, equality and equity. It means accessible quality public education, health, care and housing services. It means finding a human alternative to the “globalisation of indifference” and putting economies at the service of the people. It means leaving no one behind.

♀ [ITUC Freedom Report: Peace, Democratic Rights \(2016\)](#)

♀ [ITUC Global Rights Index](#)

♀ [Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association \(2016\)](#)

♀ [UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment: How to strengthen visibility, collective voice and representation \(toolkit\)](#)

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