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It comprises:

Guide to the Booklets
1. Environmental Indicators of Development
2. Political Indicators of Development
3. Economic Development and Security
4. Social Development
5. Equality of Opportunity and Treatment
6. Education and Training
7. International Development

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Introduction

This booklet looks at the rights and opportunities for different sectors of the working community, for environmentally sustainable development can only come about when every individual can have an active role to play.

It shows the importance of promoting opportunities for groups with special needs and skills in the overall drive for development. Several groups in this area are identified, including:

- women workers
- indigenous and tribal peoples
- children and younger workers
- older workers
- workers with disabilities
- ethnic minorities
- migrant workers

In many countries, some of these groups — women, indigenous peoples, older people, for example — have considerable knowledge and experience as protectors and managers of natural resources. In many areas they have direct contact with the natural environment through collection of fuel, food and other resources required for everyday needs.

At the same time, they are those, along with others such as children, migrant workers, displaced persons, etc., who are most vulnerable to environmental degradation, especially in times of adjustment and transition.

Through their management and use of natural resources, through their traditional wisdom and experience, and through all that they stand to lose if the environment is overexploited, all of these groups have an important role to play in promoting environmentally sustainable development. Therefore, putting an end to discrimination, promoting tolerance and mutual respect for the value of diversity, and recognizing and enhancing the participation role of these groups are the themes that run through this booklet.
Hopefully, the following pages will help you and your union to:

- think about the importance of furthering the human rights, needs and opportunities of its disadvantaged members in relation to environmental management;
- define priorities aimed at furthering these rights to include in a union policy on overall environmentally sustainable development.
One of the aims of environmentally sustainable development is to create a society where every individual, each with rights and responsibilities, has an active role to play.

Both the UN Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and the World Social Summit in Copenhagen in 1995 recognized the importance of promoting opportunities for groups with specific needs in the overall drive for development to be economically and environmentally sustainable and socially equitable.

To this end, they called upon governments to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms, to make public institutions more responsive to people’s needs, and to encourage the fullest participation in society. This means that putting an end to discrimination and promoting tolerance and mutual respect for the value of diversity should be the aims of all governments.

Equal opportunities must be available both to present and future generations, and all people — women, men, the young and old, all racial groups — must be empowered to participate in the design and implementation of key decisions that affect their lives. Human development is therefore impossible without equality of opportunity and treatment. As long as any group is excluded from the development process then development will be weak and unsustainable, and, as we shall see, environmental protection also.

Economic growth must be combined with equitable distribution of its benefits.
Many countries have at least some, or even widesweeping, legislation and many ILO standards contain clauses to the effect that people and/or workers cannot be discriminated against because of such reasons as race, colour, gender, marital status, religion, political opinion, social origin, national extraction, etc. . . but all the evidence points to the fact that discrimination affects growing numbers of certain sectors of the population. Groups which are especially affected include women, indigenous peoples, workers with disabilities, children and younger workers, older workers, different ethnic and religious groups, refugees, displaced persons and migrants (both official and unofficial).

Belonging to one or more of these groups means that you have more chance of being both restricted or discriminated against and exploited. Children in some of these groups are more likely to drop out of school; adults are more likely to be unemployed; workers are more likely to be concentrated in certain sectors and activities, such as the informal sector, assembly-line work, export processing zones, dangerous jobs, part-time work, etc. They are also likely to earn less than their young, male, able-bodied and local counterparts, and be subject to harassment because of their different colour, abilities, gender, religion, age, etc.
Additional burdens of home responsibilities (for women), different language (migrants, ethnic groups), different abilities and age combine with discrimination to place such workers in a position of inferiority and marginalization, exposed to exploitation and poverty in daily life at work and in the community.

It is precisely the people within these groups whose lives may be intimately linked up to the environment. In many countries some of these groups — women and children, indigenous peoples, older people — are often the protectors and managers of natural resources. At the same time, they are the groups, along with others such as migrants, displaced persons, etc., who are most vulnerable to environmental hazards, degradation and waste. In many areas they have direct contact with the natural environment through collection of fuel, food and fodder required for everyday needs.

From this perspective of both users of environmental resources and major victims of social and environmental degradation let us now look at the rights and opportunities of some of these groups.

The World Social Development Summit in Copenhagen committed the nations of the world to:

- Promoting social integration by fostering societies that are stable, safe and just and based on the promotion and protection of all human rights, and on non-discrimination, tolerance, respect for diversity, equality of opportunity, solidarity, security and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons (commitment 4);

- Promoting full respect for human dignity and to achieving equality and equity between women and men, and to recognising and enhancing the participation and leadership roles of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life and in development (commitment 5).
Strengthening the role of disadvantaged groups

Women

Women in particular have considerable knowledge and experience in managing natural resources and controlling environmental degradation. This is mainly because they are direct consumers of basic resources in most developing countries, providing most of household food, water and fuel for cooking and heating.

In developing regions, women (and children, especially young girls) spend a considerable time collecting fuelwood and water and other basic resources for their families. This time spent is greatest in rural areas and is worsened by environmental degradation when they have to walk further to collect their wood and water and carry heavier loads. In other words, women are having to work harder to provide for daily needs. In the Sudan, for instance, the loss of forests has increased the time spent gathering fuelwood four-fold over the last decade.

In addition, women make up between 40-90% of unpaid labour in family, mostly agricultural, enterprises in all regions. In developing countries, women and girls have an even greater role in subsistence farming and produce most of the food consumed in rural areas. In urban areas, women must generate additional income in order to meet the rising costs of natural resources that are household necessities, often in response to the increasing scarcity of these through environmental degradation and increased transport costs through encroachment of settlements on previous agricultural land.

In booklet 4 on “Social development” we saw how structural adjustment and transition impact on the poor and thus the environment. Adjustment programmes doubly affect women. Women are one of the biggest groups among the poor, who have little to cushion them from the effects of adjustment and transition. They are also affected more because of their traditional roles. Structural adjustment and transition affect men mainly as producers, but affect women in a variety of ways.
As mothers, household managers, community workers and producers of goods and services, they have responsibility for feeding the family; and they may have to take on more paid work, both formal and informal, to make ends meet. Cuts in government services that hit health, childcare, family planning, education and removal of food subsidies all have greater impact on women.

Development projects also often ignore women’s needs and skills. Even worse, some undermine their independence by funding new technologies, such as tractors, for men to replace traditional women’s employment.

But women and girls must not be seen only as victims of environmental degradation and social change. As consumers and producers, caretakers of their families, and educators, women also play an important role in promoting environmentally sustainable development through their concern for the quality of life for present and future generations. Their active role in achieving sustainable development is therefore vital, and they should be seen as positive agents of change and development, particularly in the protection and management of the environment.
But in every nation, this role has been limited by such barriers as discrimination and lack of access to schooling, land and equal employment opportunities. Women make up one-third of the world’s labour force yet perform two-thirds of the world’s working hours, much of which remains unappreciated, unrecognized or undervalued. The result is that they earn only one-tenth of world income and own only one percent of the world’s property.

Women and girls make up just over half the world’s population, but:

- 70% of the world’s poor;
- 60% of the children without access to primary schooling;
- two-thirds of the world’s illiterates;
- only 14% of managerial and administrative jobs;
- 10% of parliamentary seats; and
- 6% of cabinet positions.

The ability of women to play a greater role in sustainable development and environmental protection will therefore mean removing the barriers — constitutional, legal, administrative, cultural, behavioural, social, economic — to women’s full participation in development and public life.

The full and complete development of a country, the welfare of the world and the cause of peace require the maximum participation of women on equal terms with men in all fields.

UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
These obstacles to full participation were also discussed at the UN’s Fourth World Conference on Women, which was held in Beijing, China, in September 1995. The Declaration and Platform of Action that came out of the conference showed that absolute poverty and the feminization of poverty, discriminatory employment practices, increased environmental degradation, continued violence against women and the widespread exclusion of half of humanity underline the need to press for equality, development, and peace, and for ways of assuring people-centred sustainable development.

Part of this search will mean:

- ensuring the full enjoyment by women and girls of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, and respect for international laws;
- eliminating all forms of discrimination against women and girls and all obstacles to gender equality and the advancement of women;
- promoting women’s economic independence, including employment, and putting an end to women’s persistent and increasing burden of poverty;
- ensuring women's equal access to economic resources, including land, credit, science and technology, vocational training, information, communication and markets, as a means of empowerment.

**DISCUSSION POINTS**

March 8 has been designated “International Women’s Day”

- Does your union plan any activities on this day to highlight the special needs and role of women in development?
- What would you like to see your union do on this day?
- What role would male trade unionists have in these activities?
The rights of indigenous and tribal peoples, economic development and environmental protection are closely linked. Indigenous peoples make up a significant proportion of the world’s population, and depend on renewable resources and ecosystems to maintain their style of life and well-being. Over many generations they have evolved a traditional, scientific knowledge of their land, natural resources and environment. But the ability of indigenous peoples to practice sustainable development on their lands has been limited by economic, social and historical factors.

Governments and international organizations should recognize the values, traditional knowledge and resource management practices that indigenous peoples use to manage their environment, and apply this knowledge to other areas where development is taking place.

Indigenous and tribal peoples are among the most economically and politically disadvantaged of the world’s population, tending to be situated in ecologically fragile but resource-rich areas of developing countries — although some are also found in similar areas in developed countries. They are thus at the centre, and all too often victims, of numerous environmental conflicts.

There are many examples of economic development which has driven indigenous peoples from their native lands onto even more fragile ecosystems or into crowded cities and towns, in Amazonia, Siberia, South East Asia, Australia and elsewhere. This adds to the already insecure nature of their economic and social position and contributes to further environmental and human degradation. When the culture and habitat of any indigenous or tribal people disappears from one generation to the next, so disappears centuries of accumulated knowledge of local ecosystem management.

In the process of economic development up to now, many governments have been reluctant to grant special rights to indigenous peoples for fear of losing control over territory and natural resources, or through fear of creating a special class of citizen at the expense of other, equally poor, citizens. However, governments should recognize
that indigenous lands need to be protected from environmentally unsound activities and from activities the people consider to be socially and culturally inappropriate, and incorporate the rights of indigenous peoples into law.

These goals are already contained in ILO Convention 196 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples. This Convention is based on the recognition of the long-standing existence of such peoples as distinct societies with their own customs, territories and rights, with privileges to be preserved and further defended within the larger society they inhabit. This is not to put a “freeze” on the cultural and environmental mores of indigenous and tribal peoples and isolating them from the “modern” world. Rather it is that they are a resource to be understood and learned from.

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<th>Population* (millions)</th>
<th>Share of national population (percent)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
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<td>70</td>
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<tr>
<td>Former Soviet Union</td>
<td>1.4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Generally excludes those of mixed ancestry

Children and younger workers

Young people make up nearly one-third of the world’s population, and half the population in developing countries, and they need to have a voice in determining their own future.

Exploitation of children and young people is, however, one of the most disturbing aspects of human rights violations. Millions throughout the world see their rights to health and education, or even just plain childhood, sacrificed to long hours in often dangerous, and sometimes illegal, work. Among the most exploited are those enslaved in bonded labour or as prostitutes. (The issue of child labour is dealt with in more detail in booklet 2 on “Political indicators of development”.)

Children, because of their vulnerability to exploitation, need special protection, not only to uphold their rights but also to ensure that they enjoy a healthy environment, free of dangers, and access to the education that is essential to future environmental development.

In all countries children and young people are also directly vulnerable to the effects of environmental degradation. Being amongst the least protected and unable to protect themselves, children often come last when scarce resources such as food and water are distributed.

Development plans should therefore ensure young people of a secure future, which means a healthy environment, improved living standards, education and jobs. Governments should combat human rights abuses against youth, especially women and young girls, and see that their children are healthy, adequately fed, educated, protected from pollution and toxic substances. Part of future development will also mean that the young are taught about the environment and sustainable development throughout their schooling.

Older workers

At the other end of the scale, older workers are also finding themselves in increasingly insecure circumstances. Whilst they may not be subject to exploitation like child labourers, they are facing discrimination in many countries and increased insecurity on retirement.

The world is definitely “aging”. In 1990, some 18% of the industrialized countries’ population was over 60 years old. By 2030, the World Bank estimates that figure will have risen to over 30%. In developing countries also, the numbers of over-60s are set to double over the next 30-40 years. By the year 2000 there will be 400 million people...
over 60 years old in developing countries. Only Africa, if present trends continue, looks to remain a young continent for some time.

Although in many societies the old are respected for their experience and wisdom — a fact that can be put to good use in environmental management and education — prejudice against older workers is widespread in others.

They are discriminated against in job recruitment, mainly because it often costs more to employ older rather than younger workers. The old are often the first to be made redundant, and once out of a job, they find it harder to get another. But perhaps the main reason that employers are reluctant to employ older workers is that they believe they are not able to do the job effectively. Physical performance does decline with age, as does eyesight and hearing and reaction times. But older workers can, to some extent, compensate for all of this by their experience. It seems that differences in performance within age groups are far greater than those between age groups. Since older workers do not constitute a uniform group, age is not a good indicator of how someone will perform at work.

Discrimination in employment then is a real problem for older workers which can lead to insecurity. This is often coupled with a drop in living standards on retirement. The changes that occur in old age also bring about increased social costs in the form of social security, medical care and nursing care. With decreased income and dignity, coupled with cuts in public spending almost everywhere, the old often find themselves among some of the most disadvantaged poor. In very poor countries of course, old people usually stop work only when ill-health or frailty force them to. Most will then have to rely on their families for support or care.

Ways have to be found to prevent this increasing population from joining the vicious circle of poverty and environmental degradation, as well as to positively tap their wide knowledge and skills to help in environmental decision-making and further environmental protection.
Migrant workers

Migrant workers are another group at risk — whether they are official migrants or “undocumented”. When migrant workers get jobs, even if they are legal, they often receive no social security or sickness benefit. This is particularly serious as many end up in high risk occupational sectors.

Migrant workers also face particular obstacles in that they are often not proficient in the language of the new country, they may not know their legal rights, nor where to find available resources. This makes them particularly vulnerable to exploitation and discriminatory treatment.

Even as they contribute much to building the economic prosperity of many countries they are also the first victims of rejection. Faced with rising unemployment, foreigners are no longer seen as part of the rich cultural diversity vital for economic and social development, but are held to blame for the situation. Action to fight unemployment then is action against the risk of intolerance and exclusion — of migrants and of other disadvantaged sectors of the workforce.

The UN Social Summit recognized the need for equality of treatment for documented migrants and called for the ratification of existing ILO Conventions concerning the rights of migrant workers to benefit from the protection provided by these instruments. It also called for cooperation in reducing the causes of undocumented migration, and measures to facilitate the return and reintegration of migrants into their home communities.

Ethnic and religious groups

Economic growth has often come about through systematic discrimination of different ethnic and religious groups, both between and within countries. The old colonial powers got rich on the exploitation of labour in far away lands. This same labour fares better nowadays, but equal opportunities and treatment take a long time to evolve, both at home and in the adopted country if workers decide to emigrate.

Discrimination in education, training and employment especially still produce imbalances in favour of the ruling ethnic or social class.

Democratic transition has raised hopes both in ex-colonized countries and in other countries of the world, but there has been a disturbing revival of ethnic conflicts in many countries. These conflicts are mainly internal, among people, rather than external, among countries, and more than 90% of the casualties are civilians.
Women and children of any ethnic group suffer disproportionately in such situations.

Workers with disabilities

Whatever can be said of discrimination and of restricted opportunities on the basis of gender, age, colour, etc., can also be said concerning workers with disabilities.

These people have seen their work opportunities limited in favour of more able-bodied workers or because of a lack of facilities to be able to cope with their different capacities. The commonly dismissive attitude of others towards them can be summed up by the term “disabled workers”. However, it is becoming more usual in trade union circles to refer to “workers or people with disabilities”. This takes account of the fact that such workers are not entirely “disabled” and can contribute to work and the community in spite of a disability, and even offer much because of a disability.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- What legal provisions exist in your country to promote opportunities for different disadvantaged groups? For example, provisions of Discrimination Acts; maternity/paternity leave; employment of workers with disabilities; minimum age for employment?
- Are these provisions implemented? If not, what could the union do to help implement them?
- What collective agreements with employers exist at local and national level to promote opportunities for these different groups? (For example, language courses for migrant workers, childcare facilities, access facilities for workers with disabilities... )
Opportunities for disadvantaged groups: promoting skills and traditional wisdom

All these groups have much to offer in the way of achieving the goals of environmentally sustainable development, but we have seen that they are held back by social, economic and cultural constraints that prevent them from taking part in community and work opportunities.

Whichever group we study, common to them all is the basic need for enhanced quality of education and work. For young people this may be a consideration for the future; for older people at, or nearing, the end of productive employment it may mean enhanced social protection to maintain income. It means improving employment opportunities for youth, workers with disabilities, different ethnic groups, etc., and promoting access of women to traditionally male-dominated occupations.

The promotion of such opportunities, and human rights in general, will require policies, legislation and other practical measures. The injustices that these workers suffer are often against groups without full access to knowledge or power to protect themselves. Whilst anti-discrimination legislation does exist in many countries, it is difficult to see how people can use it if they are unaware of their rights and do not know how to start claiming them.

It has generally been up to organizations, and the trade union movement in particular, to take up the case for better opportunities for these groups of workers. It is therefore particularly important for unions to develop policies concerning the rights and opportunities for their disadvantaged members and others in the community. This will have to extend to organizing and defending the rights of workers in the informal sector who are more often than not totally by-passed by protective legislation.
Trade unions must make equality of opportunity and rejection of all forms of discrimination key demands. They should try to establish alliances with disadvantaged groups to help safeguard the interests of the latter. Such trade union programmes can be an effective means of empowering the excluded or disadvantaged, and it is in the interests of unions to support such empowerment.

Affirmative action

Affirmative action is an attempt to give special treatment to a particular group until imbalances have been corrected. It goes further than an “equal opportunities policy”. Often also called “positive action”, it does not have to rely on quotas, which often antagonise other groups, but can include such measures as those listed below. It can, however, also be a controversial issue, mainly from

Affirmative Action

Affirmative action can take many different forms according to local circumstances and the disadvantaged groups being helped. Some typical measures which employers may take are:

- **Training** — ensuring that minority groups are adequately represented on training courses.
- **Quotas** — setting targets which encourage employers to include minorities in the proportions they represent in the local population as a whole.
- **Skilled personnel** — ensuring that recruitment, guidance and counselling services are familiar with the special problems of minorities. Adapting working conditions — providing more flexible working hours for women, for example, or allowing use of minority languages.
- **Education programmes** — counteracting prejudice in other employees through information schemes or gender or racial awareness programmes.
- **Providing special services** — creches for working mothers, for example, or language courses for linguistic minorities.

Source: ILO World Labour Report 1992
the point of view of the more advantaged individuals in society who point out that it is in itself discriminatory. (Indeed, to counter this, it is sometimes referred to as “positive discrimination”.) However, policies of affirmative action are under way in many countries, especially to encourage women workers, but also other groups which suffer discrimination in the workplace and other areas of daily life.

Eliminating prejudice through education

The principle of equality between men and women as a basis for employment policy is perhaps one of the most well-established priorities in this area. Training in “gender sensitivity” should also be promoted to eliminate prejudice against the employment of women. Women’s access to technologies that can help them in their occupations and home work should be improved so that they are not limited to stereotyped, low-paying jobs. Policies and attitudes that reinforce the division of labour based on gender need to be changed, and support provided for such arrangements as flexible working time, maternity protection, etc. At the same time, men should be encouraged to take an active part in all areas of family and household responsibilities.

It is easy to see that several of these principles are just as appropriate to other disadvantaged groups. Ethnic minorities, migrant workers, indigenous peoples, older workers, have all suffered in employment opportunities. Substitute “racial” or “age” sensitivity for “gender” sensitivity and there is plenty of scope for training to eliminate prejudice in this area also.
Trade unions and equality

Trade unions have sometimes tended to side-step the issues raised by discrimination for fear of upsetting other — usually more advantaged — members of the union. This situation is changing rapidly and more and more unions are publishing their own guidelines and policies for tackling discrimination, at least for some of the groups mentioned in this booklet.

According to a survey on equal opportunities conducted by an international trade union, the Public Services International, about 80% of the unions responding had overall policies, campaigns, education work and special committees to promote the rights and opportunities for women workers. If the long-standing effort given to women’s issues is reflected in this positive figure, the same cannot be said of promoting the rights of other workers. Generally, the survey found, unions tend to take up the defense of other workers’ rights in a more structured manner only after they have had experience with women workers’ rights. There was a general progression from the number of activities and structures concerning women’s rights down through concerns for workers with disabilities (around 40% of unions), followed by around 30% of unions having policies on racial and ethnic issues.

The survey also found that more unions tend to channel their efforts through collective bargaining and education work rather than through forming special committees to promote their different disadvantaged members’ rights.

Training, education and awareness are obviously important factors in promoting equal opportunities — both to challenge the established views of all concerned, and to encourage more participation of the different groups in work opportunities and in the union.

Only with increased opportunities can the traditional wisdom and experience that women, the poor, indigenous and tribal peoples, the experience and knowledge of older people, and the potentially fresh outlook that different disadvantaged groups can bring to the situation be built on to secure participation and integration of all into development projects.
**DISCUSSION POINTS**

- Does your union have any policy or special programmes or campaigns concerning the special needs and rights of:
  - women workers
  - indigenous peoples
  - migrant workers
  - ethnic minorities
  - young people
  - older people
  - people with disabilities

- Does your union have any affirmative action or equal opportunity programmes to encourage recruitment of disadvantaged or poorly-represented groups into:
  - union membership
  - activist work and position of leadership
  - union staff position

- Does your union, through collective bargaining or through government or employers, promote adequate pensions or retirement programmes for the elderly?

Give examples to illustrate your answers
FURTHER READING

- World Labour Report. ILO 1992
- The World of Work. Magazine of the ILO. Published five times a year, in English, French, Spanish, German and Arabic.
- ILO Briefing Note on Women in Environment and Development
- Women, Environment and Sustainable Development Discussion Booklet: Five ILO Case Studies
- Women’s Participation in Trade Unions. Special issue of Labour Education, 90-1993/1. ILO.
- Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action adopted by the fourth World Conference on Women: Action for equality, development and Peace. UN.
- Women Workers’ Rights. Modular training Package. ILO
- Indigenous and Tribal Peoples and the ILO. ILO, 1994
- First Things First: Eliminating Work Detrimental to Children. ILO, 1995
- Protecting the Least Protected: Rights of Migrant Workers and the Role of Trade Unions: Guidelines for Trade Unions. ILO, 1996.
- Towards Equalizing Opportunities for Disabled People in Asia: A Guide. ILO Bangkok, 1994

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