Promoting Gender Equality

A Resource Kit for Trade Unions

Booklet 6
Alliances and solidarity
to promote women workers’ rights

Gender Promotion Programme
International Labour Office
Table of Contents

6.1. Aims and structure of the resource kit 1
6.2. How to use the resource kit 4
6.3. Alliances and partnerships between unions and other elements of civil society 6
6.4. Community level alliances and partnerships 10
6.5. National level alliances 14
6.6. International solidarity and alliances 23
   6.6.1. Solidarity within the international trade union movement 25
   6.6.2. Organizing campaigns and joint actions 33
      6.6.2.1. Codes of conduct 41
References and additional readings 45
Annex
   Some basic concepts relating to gender equality 46
   Additional examples and case studies 49
6.1. Aims and structure of the resource kit

This resource kit is intended to provide background information, practical guidelines and checklists, case studies and examples of “good” and “bad” practice and reference materials:

# to assist and enhance the efforts of trade unions to promote gender equality and protect vulnerable women workers; and

# to improve the understanding and appreciation of the role of trade unions.

The main target audience is trade unionists, especially officials, both women and men. But it hoped that the information will also be of interest and use to all trade union members and to individual workers who are currently not organized. The resource kit is also more broadly addressed to those concerned with the elimination of discrimination or interested in the role of unions and the potential for collaboration or joint action with unions - including non-governmental organizations and other civil groups (importantly, women's organizations and women activists), government agencies, employers and employers' organizations, research and academic institutions and the media.

The resource kit is comprised of a number of booklets. There is also an accompanying report ¹ that provides the empirical perspective based on a survey and case studies of the actual experiences of trade unions and some “lessons learnt”. The survey and this resource kit represent the results of the collaboration between the Gender Promotion Programme (GENPROM) and the Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) of the International Labour Office, the Women's Committee of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the International Trade Secretariats (ITSs), in particular the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF) and Public Services International (PSI). At a validation workshop, trade unionists discussed the relevance, user-friendliness, presentation style and appropriateness of the different booklets and made suggestions for revisions. The resource kit now incorporates the suggested revisions.

Booklets 1 to 6 cover different areas of trade union activities and interactions for the promotion of gender equality and the protection of vulnerable workers. There are, necessarily, some areas of overlap or repetition in the different booklets. Where issues are dealt with in more than one section or booklet, cross-references are provided.

Booklet 1  Promoting gender equality within unions
Deals with what trade unions can do within their own internal structures and policies to recruit more women members, enhance women’s participation in all union structures and activities, and promote equality and solidarity among union members.

Booklet 2  Promoting gender equality through collective bargaining
Explains the importance of promoting gender equality through the collective bargaining process. Focuses on the process of gender equality bargaining (preparing for negotiations, at the bargaining table, and follow-up).

Booklet 3  The issues and guidelines for gender equality bargaining
Focuses on negotiating to avoid sex discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and treatment for men and women workers, and provides bargaining guidelines for a number of key gender equality issues.

Booklet 4  Organizing the unorganized: informal economy and other unprotected workers
Highlights the diversity of informal and atypical workers and the difficulties and challenges of organizing and protecting such workers – who are mainly women, outside the scope of legal and social protection and vulnerable to poor working conditions and abuses of workers’ rights. They include workers in the informal economy, part-time workers, home workers, domestic workers, workers in export-processing zones and migrant workers.

Booklet 5  Organizing in diversity
Illustrates how trade unions can “share the table and create space” for diverse groups including youth, older workers, workers with disabilities, lesbian and gay workers, ethnic minorities and indigenous people.

Booklet 6  Alliances and solidarity to promote women workers’ rights
Explains why community unionism and solidarity within the labour movement are crucial in today’s global context and shows how trade unions are forging alliances and working with non-governmental and other civil organizations at the local, national, international and global levels on a broad social agenda. The range of alliances is large and the bases for such alliances very wide and varied, but the booklet attempts to highlight only those with particular relevance to women workers’ rights and gender equality.

Each resource booklet is structured essentially to:

# highlight the issues and concerns relating to the promotion of gender equality and the protection of vulnerable workers, so as to stimulate and inform the thinking of trade unions and other social actors, identify the tasks and challenges facing trade unions and present the case why their role is critical;
present guidelines and practical tools for action. The “how to” information is especially addressed to trade unions and is presented in various forms: as ideas, issues, checklists, guidelines, examples of what might be possible or effective, international instruments, etc. But the information is not intended to represent “best practices” or even necessarily “good practices” that should be adopted in all situations or be used in any definitive manner.

facilitate learning from the experience of others by providing actual examples of action and operational strategies that have succeeded or failed, and, where possible, by identifying the factors making for success or failure in particular contexts; and

indicate the scope for, and the advantages of, cooperation and collaboration between trade unions and employers’ organizations, governmental and non-governmental organizations and other groups in civil society.
6.2. **How to use the resource kit**

It is very important to emphasize that the booklets do not form a modular training package. They are not intended to be used in total for any step-by-step, how-to-do training programme. Rather, the various booklets are intended to serve as an information resource to be used flexibly by a range of users.

Institutional or individual users can select particular booklets and topics and utilize or adapt the materials according to their specific needs and contexts. The resource kit can serve for:

- **Awareness raising or sensitization:** to improve understanding and appreciation of gender equality issues and the challenges confronting trade unions. For example, trade union officials might use the kit as the basis for stimulating discussions, motivating action or organizing campaigns to promote gender equality;

- **Advocacy and publicity:** as material for media campaigns, to inform or educate other social actors and the wider public about the role of trade unions and innovative initiatives in the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of equality;

- **As a practical tool for action:** users might obtain ideas and inspiration for discussion, debate or action; go through the checklists to ensure that they have taken into account all relevant factors; follow planning steps or guidelines; adopt or adapt examples or models for implementation; and assess the likelihood of success or failure in particular contexts;

- **Training and educational purposes:** as background or reference material for educational seminars or study groups, for training organizers, etc.;

- **As a networking tool:** to help provide a basis for discussion or interaction between workers and employers, give ideas for promoting solidarity within and between unions, suggest bases for forging alliances with other social actors, etc.

To aid users, the materials are presented in different formats:

- **Statements in bold italics:** key ideas and facts;
- **Text boxes in italics:** gender equality issues and the case for trade unions to promote gender equality and protect vulnerable workers;
- **Shaded text boxes in small print:** examples or case studies of actual measures that have been undertaken to promote gender equality. Also relevant international Conventions. Additional examples and case studies are also provided in the
Annex

guidelines for action;

checklists or steps for action – however, these are not intended to be instructional;

measures to be avoided, negative factors;

elaboration or explanation of the suggested guidelines, checklists, etc.

references, additional reading.

The Kit has also been incorporated into an Information Base on Equal Employment Opportunities for Women and Men available on CD-ROM and Internet website: http://www.ilo.org/genprom/eeo
6.3. Alliances and partnerships between unions and other elements of civil society

“The broader social agenda of the labour movement could be advanced only through the building of broad popular coalitions, with the trade union movement at their centre, but bringing together many civil groups, issue-oriented movements and other popular groups that perceive, each in their own way, the social threat that corporate power represents and whose areas of concern overlap, in different degrees, with that of the labour movement.”

Trade unions are increasingly reaching out beyond the traditional workplace, whether at enterprise or industry level. They are connecting with other elements of civil society and building alliances and partnerships at community, national, regional, international and global levels [and accompanying report]. Unions are:

- engaging in ‘community unionism’ with other elements of civil society including local women’s groups, consumer groups, health groups, citizens groups, human rights groups, research organizations, religious organizations, political organizations;
- forming coalitions at both national and international levels with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which are “more and more into the arena of social governance and advancement”;
- participating as members of national bodies dealing with equality issues, such as a country’s national machinery for the advancement of women, or in formal coalitions or joint action committees, for example to combat child labour or the trafficking of women and children;
- vigorously taking their place as counterparts to employers to participate in bipartite or tripartite structures that work with and keep an eye on governments;
- promoting social dialogue, importantly through the tripartite structure of the International Labour Organization;
- strengthening solidarity within the international trade union movement, in particular among unions in different countries which share the same transnational employer; and between national centres and the international trade secretariats; and
- making the voice of working women and men heard at international fora and dialoguing with inter-governmental and international institutions, including the United Nations and the international financial and trade organizations.

---


The characteristics of successful union alliances and partnerships with other elements of civil society include the following:

- A common cause for joint action and solidarity by organizations whose basic interests may differ or even conflict. The areas of common concern and shared values include: the defence of human rights and workers' rights, the rule of law, the promotion of equality and anti-discrimination, responding to challenges posed by globalization and international trade, getting women into politics, corporate accountability, consumer protection, environmental protection, protection of vulnerable groups such as child labour and trafficked women and children – the list is a long and varied one;

- The organizations in the alliance clearly derive mutual benefit (for example through the force of joint action, combined and, therefore, enhanced capabilities and resources, mutually beneficial exchange of information);

- The alliance or partnership results in action that wins the support of the wider public opinion;

- The union is able to capitalize on the fact that its members are not only workers but also important consumers who can make their voices heard through their purchasing power, and members of society with political, religious views, etc.;

- The union itself demonstrates its own democratic credentials. A union cannot successfully enter into alliances to promote democracy and social justice unless its own internal structures give women equal participation and voice as men;

- There is an established institutional structure or framework for such alliances (For example, many unions now have units – often their women’s wing/committee/department – specifically mandated to seek out alliances with other groups);

- There is some initial human or financial resource investments by all parties for joint action;

- There are opportunities for involvement of the general union membership;

- The alliance or partnership leads to better understanding of the perspectives of different social actors and helps build mutual respect and trust;

- There is an open and honest relationship, with the maximum of information sharing and reciprocal transparency and accountability;

- The alliance or partnership is a means of reaching otherwise difficult-to-reach groups. For example, collaboration with local member-based organizations enable unions to tap into the networks that the NGOs have developed at grassroots level, especially with women in the informal sector.

---

These alliances and partnerships provide opportunities to significantly build support for trade union positions and make gains in the struggle for human and trade union rights, social justice and equality. They represent an important strategy for unions to meet the pressures generated by globalization of the world economy and its social consequences.

But the relationship with new partners is often not an easy one. Alliances or partnerships work best when other actors in civil society recognize the unique role, legitimacy and mandate of trade unions as mass organizations which represent workers, characteristics which make unions different from organizations that are not based on associative principles, such as churches, charities or institutions providing support services to vulnerable groups. NGOs have to recognize that they cannot replace trade unions or their specific legitimate role.

At the same time, unions must accept that entering into coalitions with NGOs or other social actors on one or more issues does not mean that disagreements or differences will disappear. It is not unusual for unions to formulate a common vision with a partner but still pursue distinctive objectives. Unions would need to be careful to remain independent from potential partners and not fuse agendas.

All partnerships and alliances, whether or not specifically addressing gender issues, should have a gender perspective. This means continually asking whether and how the activities and goals of the alliance differentially impact on women and men. Do they improve the lives of women? Are women empowered to play an important and active role in the alliance?

Women are ideal partners in most alliances, partly because they are used to banding together with like-minded individuals around specific issues. In many societies, women have been at such a disadvantage that they need the strength in numbers to achieve their goals. Although lacking both power and financial resources, women have often been able to design innovative, enterprising and cost-effective strategies for joint action.

To make alliances and partnerships work, unions and other social actors should: Guideline5:

- Treat each partnership as an opportunity to allow people from very different organizational backgrounds to learn from each other. Make every effort to understand the perspectives of others involved in the partnership. Set aside preconceptions and prejudices and be open, so that others can understand what unions are able or unable to bring into the

5Ibid.
alliance;

- Identify the different stakeholder groups and take appropriate action to ensure that they do not feel alienated or threatened. Partnerships often falter because key players were not involved;

- Develop a campaign slogan or mission statement that will bring all the partners around an agreed set of aspirations; and outline the specific targets and goals of the partnership;

- In forming a partnership involving civil action or protest movements, take account of users'/consumers' concerns and the public interest so as to ensure that the partnership has the support of public opinion and is able to apply pressure on companies or governments;

- Consider clearly how the partnership will impact on women in the labour movement and in society at large. Will the partnership differently impact on women and men, and how will women benefit?

- Ensure that women union members can actively participate in the partnership;

- Be ready to question the continuing viability of an initiative beyond the intended lifespan. Partners must be prepared to ask: “has the partnership done what it set out to do?”
6.4. Community level alliances and partnerships

Community unionism and partnerships are good for unions and for women

The potential benefits of forging partnerships and alliances at the community level are:

- They build the credibility and presence of unions in the community;
- Unions are seen as taking a leadership role in the community;
- They open new channels for communications and dialogue with the community;
- They forge understanding and enhance the support of public opinion for unions;
- They transform unions into a social movement of working people;
- Unions become engaged in community concerns and interests and the provision of community services, including those of special benefit to women workers;
- They raise the political horizons of unions;
- They represent a crucial organizing strategy, particularly in terms of reaching out to informal sector and atypical workers, most of whom are women;
- They can help gain geographically-encompassing (for example, through citywide bargaining), rather than enterprise- or industry-level, collective agreements for atypical workers.

Community unionism is critical for expanding the union membership base, building solidarity across communities and diversities and keeping the gender equality agenda alive. Importantly, union efforts to reach out to atypical workers and those in the informal sector, the majority of whom are women, commonly are community-based, rather than centred on the workplace. In community-based organizing, for instance in the areas where workers live, unions often act in close cooperation with institutions providing support services, including local authorities, religious organizations, charities, organizations providing training or assistance to job seekers, women’s groups.

Many unions recognize the need for strong partnerships between labour and the community, whether around organizing drives or pushing for improved community facilities and services or mobilizing against social programme cuts or fighting discrimination or racism at the community level. Union members are not just workers but also community members, consumers, members of religious, political groups. Important worker concerns like childcare facilities, education and training, health and social security cannot be resolved solely at the workplace. Many industrial actions like strikes and pay hikes have a direct impact on families and communities. In these actions, the support of public opinion or consumer pressure is often critical. It is easier to win public support when the union joins forces with groups sharing similar social concerns.

Local community alliances can substantially assist unions to attract and retain women members. Because their lives are so closely grounded in their families and communities, women have long been key proponents of a wider trade union agenda.
Clean Clothes Communities is a new initiative of the Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC) in the Netherlands. The CCC is a coalition of consumer organizations, trade unions, human rights and women's rights organizations, researchers, solidarity groups and activists. The aim of the coalition is to draw attention to labour rights issues in the garments industry; it targets multinational enterprises that do not observe minimum standards in the production of clothes. The campaign normally involves international action that includes the importing and exporting countries.

The CCC has launched community level initiatives. Organizing on a local level gives consumers more opportunities to get involved in the campaign – because consumers increasingly want not only to be informed but also to actively participate. The aim is to create opportunities for local involvement, eg. local organizations will target local authorities, while groups such as local sports clubs will target local branches of national or even multinational department stores. Website: [http://www.cleanclothes.org/intro.html](http://www.cleanclothes.org/intro.html)

Community unionism and alliances and partnerships with other community level actors can be on the basis of:

**Guidelines:**

✔ **Civil action on issues of common concern.** Issues-based alliances tend to be most common. The gender-related and anti-discrimination issues that can be the basis for joint action by trade unions and other civil groups include: violence against women and children, sexual harassment, lesbian and gay rights, implementation of equal opportunity legislation, getting women into politics, elimination of child labour, fighting hate crimes, defending and promoting rights of migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and ethnic minorities. The joint actions can involve public campaigns, lobbying the government, supporting other civil groups in demonstrations, issuing joint communiques or public statements, launching awareness raising campaigns.

✔ **Events-based alliances.** Unions often cooperate closely with other local groups to jointly organize specific events, such as celebrations for Women’s Day, Women’s World March or the Million Moms’ March. Although such events are time-bound, they can serve to widen union contacts and, importantly, to raise their public profile. Unions can also sponsor or participate with other groups in seminars, workshops on gender equality or women’s issues – these are often useful for reaching out to potential members.

✔ **Providing direct services to communities.** Unions often use their particular expertise or experience and resources to build up community unionism. They can provide direct services or facilities which help to bridge the gap...
The Immigration Rights Advocacy, Training and Education Project (IRATE) is a coalition of 10 unions in the Boston area working to help immigrant workers and promoting organizing among them. The main goal of IRATE is to bring together unions and immigrant workers. IRATE has established the Immigrant Workers’ Resource Centre in Boston to provide information, referrals and direct services, from filing claims to workplace abuse problems. Through its advocacy work, IRATE has been able to create goodwill among immigrant workers’ communities towards the labour movement. The Centre has also initiated workers’ committees in different communities to campaign for retraining programmes. The idea behind such core groups “is for the unions to participate in training workplace advocates in each of these communities which means that those workers will be leaders in their workplaces and potential contacts for workplace organizing”.


In the suburbs of Kuala Lumpur, the women members of the ICFTU affiliate, the Malaysian Trade Union Congress (MTUC) managed two hostels/centres for women workers in the EPZs for twenty years. These centres provided a focal point for organizing the largely female labour force of the zone. Through their life in the centre, the women shared their problems and were made aware of trade union work. Proof of the success of this ICFTU-supported initiative is that a group of women who had spent time at the centre went on to create their own hostel, and five of the women participated in the foundation of a new trade union for male and female electronics workers.

Promoting local economic development. Trade unions have a vested interest in local economic development, and can make an important contribution in terms of helping to determine and push for the kinds of jobs a community wishes to attract. Communities should seek employers committed to following ‘high road’ strategies, that pay a living wage,
The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) successfully organized tens of thousands of home care workers, including 74,000 workers in Los Angeles County, many of whom are immigrant women who speak little English. The SEIU overcame the obstacle of not having a common employer by building an alliance of workers, customers and public officials to change the employer-employee structure. A new agency was formed as the employer of record, the Public Authority for In-Home Supportive Services. This agency is an official arm of the county government. It centralizes the public funds that pay for the salaries of the home care workers and it coordinates their employment registry. It also negotiates labour contracts with the union.

Taking legal action. Legal action can be an effective though expensive way to achieve equality rights, both within and outside the workplace. Unions can join with like-minded parties to use the courts to implement, overturn or clarify the meaning of specific legislation, force public officials to undertake or prevent certain acts, or seek new or better precedents to improve the position of women at the workplace or in society.

The first case of sexual harassment filed in the Dominican Republic was in 1994 and occurred in the export processing zone of Bonao. An alliance between two local women’s rights NGOs, the local union and its affiliate, the National Federation of Zone Workers (FENETRAZONAS) widely publicized the case and mobilized public opinion. At the time, the 1992 Labour Code prohibited sexual harassment but did not set out a definition nor a sanction. As a result of the joint action and solidarity, the first collective agreement in a Dominican Republic EPZ was concluded with the company where the sexual harassment incident had taken place. Although the NGOs disagreed with the course of action chosen by the union and with the final form of settlement out of court, they considered that this had been a good test case with a chance of setting a legal precedent in favour of women.
6.5. National Level Alliances

Trade unions have always held that a consistent defense of their members' interests over the long term requires them to work for political, social and industrial democracy, civil and democratic rights for all, the elimination of poverty, equality and the rule of law. As one of the largest, most organized and often most articulate groups in civil society, unions can play a major role in the economic, social and political direction of a nation. Building alliances with other civil groups is an essential part of this process, enabling unions to broaden their scope and strengthen their capacity to undertake issues of concern relating not just to employment but to the wider society and economy.

Social dialogue between trade unions, governments, employers and other representative bodies is necessary to build consensus over national development goals and means of action. Strong social institutions, including free trade unions, are vital to the development of human resources and the allocation of resources in a country. Social dialogue and a sound industrial relations system are crucial not only at the national level but also at the regional and international levels for establishing a social framework for globalization and some rules for the global market.

A number of strategies are available to trade unions at the national level to pursue the wider interests of working people, including protecting the rights of vulnerable women workers, through alliances and partnerships with other elements of civil society:

- participating in tripartite structures and promoting social dialogue;
- promoting democratization and defending human rights;
- launching national campaigns on gender equality and women's issues;
- taking legal action;
- participating in national socio-economic development strategies;
- working with the academic and research community.

Participating in tripartite structures and promoting social dialogue

Tripartite institutions with representation of workers' and employers' organizations and the State are an essential measure for ensuring that the labour movement has a strong and clear voice in the economic and social policies of a country. While not exactly an `alliance' as such, they provide the forum for unions to negotiate and influence policy with the private sector and government and are, therefore, a
In South Africa, the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) was established in 1994 as part of an attempt to reach consensus on economic and social policy among representatives of employers’ organizations, trade unions, the State and community and development organizations. It comprises four chambers: public finance and monetary policy; commerce and industry; labour market and development. Among its achievements, NEDLAC prompted the creation of an agency to promote national investment and a fund for the development of small and micro enterprises. It was also consulted on the adoption of the Small Business Act 1996 and plays an important role in the new system of labour relations put in place by the Labour Relations Act 1995.

Countries where tripartite institutions are weak and where there is a lack of social dialogue are often prone to economic, political and social instability. The countries that tend to have the strongest and most effective tripartite institutions are those where the labour movement is well developed and has had a long history of representing the rights of working women and men.

In some countries, tripartite cooperation and dialogue have led to comprehensive Social Pacts. In Europe, for example, unions have used social pacts to preserve jobs, promote investments and combat unemployment. It is important to note, however, that critics of social pacts argue that unions are required to make too many concessions, such as wage restraints, in exchange for assurances that jobs will be created or at least maintained.

National unions involved in tripartite institutions need to ensure that the equality agenda is fully integrated into the process of social dialogue. To do this, unions can:

**Checklist:**
- Ensure that accurate and up-to-date information, particularly about the situation and implications for women vis-a-vis men, is provided as the basis for social dialogue;
- Ensure that information is disaggregated by sex, and lobby national and local labour market institutions to establish systems for providing this type of disaggregated data;
- Establish indicators to assess the impact on women of policies and programmes agreed upon through social dialogue;
- Ensure that equality issues are not lost in wider national goals;
- Ensure that women are adequately represented in the tripartite institutions and are able to participate actively in social dialogue.

**Promoting democratization and defending human rights**
At the national level, trade unions can play a central role in defending and promoting human rights, women’s rights and democratization. Not only because civil and political liberties are essential preconditions for exercising labour rights, but also because it is most often workers – especially women workers – who bear the brunt of human rights violations.

Union priorities include:

- Developing public opinion on the role of labour and trade union rights as the critical catalyst for the promotion of human rights and democratic institution building;
- Defining the role of unions in the promotion and monitoring of human rights and democracy;
- Exploring appropriate action programmes on human rights issues, in particular those relating to gender equality, child labour, social protection; and
- Ensuring that women’s issues and concerns in civil liberties and human rights struggles are not lost in the broader agenda for social transformation.

To fulfil these priorities, trade unions need to collaborate with other civil society actors, including:

Checklist:

- Establishing and maintaining contacts with national and international human rights and women’s rights organizations and other civic institutions;
- Keeping national and international media informed about human rights abuses against workers;
- Providing accurate and up-to-date information about violations to all partners in the campaign, international solidarity networks, and international trade union structures;
- Publicizing abuses using brochures, pamphlets, posters, media articles, press statements, the internet;
- Establishing good contacts with the media in general and making good use of broadcast media – keeping them informed about particular developments and, where possible, making sure that they are on hand, together with other social partners, to record violations or abuses;
- Organizing letter writing, petition signing, faxes, e-mails, phone-ins, pickets, boycotts;
- Lobbying international agencies, development organizations, donor governments to condemn particular human rights abuses;
- Reporting violations of trade union rights to international trade union structures and organizations, such as the ILO;
- Ensuring that women play a central role in the campaigns and actions, and continually monitoring the impact on women – unless this is done,
the fight for gender equality and, hence, for true democracy and human rights may be sidelined.

Many trade unions throughout the world have been instrumental in accelerating political transformation through their support and solidarity with the struggle to establish democratic institutions. In several African and Asian countries, the trade union movement played an important part in the struggle for the country’s political independence. Women have been very active in these struggles, taking their place in the forefront of many of the civil actions. In a number of Latin American countries, there have been close political ties between trade union confederations and political parties.

However, the capacity of unions to campaign for greater democracy can only be credible if they demonstrate their own democratic credentials. This requires unions to continually assess and, if necessary, reconstruct their own representative capacity and internal processes of agenda building and decision-making. Promoting women’s leadership within the union and ensuring that women’s concerns are an integral part of the union agenda are essential prerequisites for deepening democracy within union structures.

Alliances for national campaigns on gender equality and women’s issues

National campaigns, whether on reforming legislation, pressuring governments or awareness raising on issues of national concern, can give unions greater visibility and lend legitimacy to their claims of representing the broad interests of the country. While unions often take the lead, such campaigns cannot be undertaken by the labour movement alone and require active partnerships with other groups in the society.

National campaigns to promote gender equality and women workers’ rights are commonly of two types:

# campaigns for legislative reform; and
# campaigns for national awareness raising.

Many countries have gaps in legislation with regard to equality issues. Lobbying for and enforcing legislation is often a long drawn out process, but can have wide impact. Unions can use international instruments, such as ILO Conventions, as the basis
The Lithuanian Trade Union Unification had a successful alliance with not only national public agencies and NGOs but also international ones, including Spanish Mujeres and Latvian Women's Organization, in their campaign to formulate the Equal Opportunities Act and generate proposals for enforcement mechanisms. The Act was passed in 1999.

In 1997, the Women's Committee of the Union of Autonomous Trade Unions of Croatia (UATUC) launched a highly successful three-stage campaign to raise awareness of Croatian society of the problem of sexual harassment. The UATUC worked closely with the NGO ‘Transition to Democracy’ and other civic groups to formulate the ‘How to say No to the Boss’ campaign. The campaign which started with the preparation of publications, pamphlets, posters and brochures built up to a nation-wide series of seminars, in which representatives from national unions as well as Swedish, Norwegian and Dutch unions, women's NGOs, political parties and journalists were invited to participate. The Croatian media gave the campaign a high profile with a number of articles in major newspapers and magazines, and on radio and television programmes. The campaign was particularly successful among the youth, and especially in the universities where lively debates and discussions took place. As part of the ongoing campaign, the UATUC and its partners are also pushing for the establishment of mechanisms to deal with the issue in the labour courts, the penalty courts, within legislation and within collective bargaining agreements. Unions and their partners were astonished at the success of the campaign, particularly given the sensitivity of the issue. With the UATUC's success, other unions in the region including Moldova and Slovenia are launching their own national campaigns against sexual harassment.

To forge alliances with other social partners for campaigns to raise awareness or
The ILO Gender Promotion Programme (GENPROM) has developed an Information Base on Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO) for Women and Men, which is available on Internet and CD-ROM. The EEO Database contains information on national legislation, national institutions, case law, corporate policies and collective agreements on a wide range of equality issues, such as equal pay, elimination of discrimination against women, training, family-friendly policies, sexual harassment. The website is http://www.ilo.org/genprom/eeo

Sri Lankan activists, working on highlighting violence against women in the home and workplace, rented advertising space on the outside of an intercity train for a year. Colourful murals and catchy slogans on the side of the train ensure a high-profile campaign throughout the country.

Guidelines:

- Network and share experiences with unions in other countries which have undertaken similar initiatives. International trade union structures and international trade secretariats (ITSs) have a wealth of information, experience and resources to assist in these types of campaigns;
- Appoint a coordinator and/or steering committee for the campaign. Women’s committees of trade unions are often ideally suited to take on such positions;
- Compare legislation in other countries on similar issues:

- Keep abreast of international conventions and use national and international fora to pressure governments towards ratification;
- Contact and hold discussions with potential national level partners, including women’s groups, law societies, human rights groups, students groups;
- Develop a phased plan of action with these partners, beginning with general awareness raising for the public, so as to gain the broad support of public opinion;
- Use innovative methods to reach a wider audience. This could be in the form of media and internet campaigns. Develop information materials for use in public institutions, trade union sites and partner agencies:
- Organize seminars for key social actors, and invite key media persons to participate;
- Make use of public events, such as International Women’s Day, Labour Day, public festivals, to disseminate information about the campaign;
- Network with and lobby key parliamentarians, government ministers and members of the judiciary;
Once the legislation is passed, ensure follow-up, monitoring and awareness raising of the relevant parties.

In the Dominican Republic, the National Confederation of Dominican Workers (CNTD) and members of the umbrella organization coordinating the action of NGOs in the area of gender (Coordinadora de Organizaciones No Gubernamentales en el Area de la Mujer) collaborated in the national process of Criminal Code reform. A working group of lawyers from these organizations produced an analysis of the new law on family violence with the objective of raising the awareness of the judiciary on the realities of the problem.

Taking legal action

In some cases, unions have forged alliances or partnerships with other civil groups to use the justice system and courts in the country to enforce rights, overturn unfair rulings and practices, or highlight gaps in legislation pertaining to gender discrimination or women workers' rights. While litigation is never free of difficulties, it can be an effective way to resolve a specific legal problem or to focus attention on the plight of a large group of workers.

In Canada, pension plans must be registered under the Income Tax Act in order to receive important tax deferral advantages. When the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) amended its staff pension plan to provide for survivor benefits for partners of the same sex, Revenue Canada refused to register the amendment and threatened to de-register the whole pension plan. CUPE, with the support of lesbian and gay groups, fought the government through the Courts arguing that this was a violation of the equality rights of lesbian and gay workers, who pay the same amount into pension plans but are denied equal benefits. CUPE won. This was an important legal landmark for gay and lesbian rights in Canada.

Participating in national socio-economic development and employment strategies

The labour movement obviously has the capacity to make a unique contribution to the national development agenda. To become full partners in the development process of the country, trade unions may need to:

Guidelines:

✓ Highlight the potential role of trade unions as development partners so as to change the misconception by the development community of unions

as part of the problem rather than as part of the solution;

✓ Make a case with donor agencies and global financial institutions for greater collaboration with trade unions in development programmes;

✓ Define areas of common interest between development agencies and trade unions. These could include: women’s employment promotion, micro-credit, cooperatives development, literacy and healthcare, the elimination of child labour, development projects, developing local institutions;

✓ Provide donor agencies with union information resources and networks, particularly relating to the situation of vulnerable women workers;

✓ Give regular training to affiliates and local union organizations in fundraising techniques and writing project documents. Make sure that the project documents mainstream gender concerns:

1. Are women the main target group of the project/programme? If not, are women identified explicitly as part of the project/programme?
2. Have women been consulted in the design and implementation, monitoring and evaluation plans for the project?
3. Are barriers to women’s participation identified and have measures been considered for overcoming these?
4. Has the current situation of women and men in relation to the issue/need/problem being addressed by the project been thoroughly investigated?
5. How will the project strengthen women’s position vis-a-vis men?
6. How will the project improve gender awareness of men and women in trade unions?

Source: ICFTU Positive Action Programme for Women in Development Cooperation

✓ Ensure that projects implemented by local trade unions using development agency funds are regularly monitored and are meeting the stated objectives;

✓ Provide regular reports and have regular meetings with development and donor agencies.
The Women Workers Unity Group, comprising women trade union leaders, joined with the Labour Congress of Thailand (LCT), NGOs and other civil groups to help workers in Thailand deal with the impacts of the recent Asian financial crisis. The Women Workers Unity Group:

# worked closely with an NGO, the Friends of Women Foundation, on a survey of the impact of the financial crisis on women in the export processing zones and on strategies for assisting retrenched workers;

# participated in a national tripartite body to consider cases of unfair dismissals since some employers appeared to be using the crisis as an excuse to lay off workers;

# cooperated with the Skills Development Department of the Ministry of Labour to help retrenched women workers, particularly older women, to receive training for starting their own businesses;

# in conjunction with the Thai Hill Tribe Fund, set up a trade union scholarship fund for the children of retrenched workers.

Working with the research and education community

Unions have been making increasing efforts to develop linkages with academic and research organizations to carry out research on important women’s issues, such as childcare, maternity rights and pension reforms. More and more unions are recognizing the significance of research for keeping abreast of the shifts in work and the workforce, to determine the priorities of workers, to take a pro-active role in dealing with changes in the workplace, and to understand attitudes of workers and the civil population towards unions.

In many countries, unions and academic institutions jointly conduct labour training programmes. There can also be regular cooperation between independent but labour linked educational institutions and trade unions. This can take the form of provision of services, such as jointly conducting training courses or joint education and organizing programmes.

The International Institute for Labour Studies (ILS), an autonomous research-based institution of the ILO, has set up a global network inviting trade unionists, academics and other interested parties to investigate challenges facing trade unions around the world, to present their varying responses and to identify the policies and activities which have proved successful in different regions around the world. In addition to gathering information, the Institute links research with practitioner participation and academic dialogue, by means of electronic communication. The discussion groups and research papers have included topics on women and young people in unions; transnational industrial relations; collective bargaining and social dialogue; informal sector and marginalised workers; social protection. These discussion forums are complemented by case studies from particular countries around the world and by the archiving of contributions and publications, enabling a sharing of experiences and ideas on the network. See ILO Website: http://mirror/public/english/bureau/inst/project/network/do.htm

“Whether they know it or not, workers who try to organize a trade union or who find themselves in a difficult collective bargaining situation, have trade unions all over the world on their side. International solidarity means more than answering calls for help from workers in desperate situations. International solidarity includes a wide range of mutual assistance. Trade unions can show solidarity by sharing information about the common employer with trade unions in other countries. Trade unions, by consulting with their foreign counterpart before making decisions that affect the members of their counterpart unions, are also showing solidarity. Ensuring that the international activities of a trade union also contribute to the strengthening of the organizations of the international trade union movement is showing solidarity as well”.

The protection of women workers’ rights has to be seen increasingly in the context of globalization, in particular the situation of women in increasingly complex international production chains and their position vis-a-vis increasingly powerful and ubiquitous multinational enterprises (MNEs).

In this context, international labour structures and international alliances and solidarity to influence and direct the internationalization of production, development and trade are very relevant. Trade unions have been opening up their strategies, activities, procedures and structures to the new international dimension and forging international and global alliances with non-governmental and inter-governmental organizations.

International solidarity and alliances can take many forms:

- **Solidarity within the international trade union movement**, which essentially involves requesting and providing assistance between:
  - the international trade union organizations and their national affiliates,
  - counterpart organizations, especially where they share common affiliation (for example, between trade unions in different countries which have the same multinational employer or are members of the same International Trade Secretariat),
  - the international trade union movement and other international non-governmental or inter-governmental organizations.

- **Organizing international campaigns or joint action**, including with NGOs, and inter-governmental organizations to:

---

✓ promote or protect trade union rights, mainly targeting governments;
✓ promote or protect workers’ rights, and mainly targeting multinational corporations;
✓ promote or lobby on broad social issues of global concern, including women’s issues and child labour.

# Participating in international fora and international institutions to:
✓ give working people a voice in the international arena;
✓ highlight the plight of vulnerable groups and raise international awareness of their concerns.

International cooperation can be particularly relevant for women workers. An important aspect is the potential for organizing effective international pressure in support of women workers in countries where they are denied freedom of association or are subject to very poor working conditions or exploitation by multinational enterprises. Especially since women are often the basis of cheap labour policies in developing countries but have little or no recourse vis-a-vis the powerful multinational corporations employing them, the support of international organized or coordinated efforts is often critical [ Booklet 4].
6.6.1. Solidarity within the international trade union movement

To connect and influence workers and their unions across country borders, participation by trade unionists in the international trade union movement is essential. The international trade union organizations are namely the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), the World Confederation of Labour (WCL) and the International Trade Secretariats (ITSs). There are also the regional trade union bodies such as the regional organizations of ICFTU in Africa (ICFTU-AFRO), in Asia-Pacific (ICFTU-APRO) and the Inter-American Organization of Workers (ICFTU-ORIT), the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). 8

Practical solidarity within the international trade union movement is essentially a matter of requesting and providing assistance – between the international trade union organizations and their affiliates, and between affiliates themselves across national borders. The assistance can be in the form of providing financial or technical assistance, supplying information, conducting education and training, lobbying on behalf of national affiliates or backing up solidarity or organizing campaigns.

International solidarity is not only in times of disputes or campaigns against employers or national governments. International cooperation is also important for organizing workers in multinational corporations (MNEs) and strengthening the trade unions’ capacity to defend and promote their rights. Practical international solidarity should also relate to the day-to-day work of trade unions, “it is building ongoing relationships, support and understanding which will help everybody do better work in our common trade union mission”. 9

But at the international level, it is not always a simple matter for some trade unions to request assistance and for others to provide the assistance. Whether requesting or showing solidarity, trade unions need to remember that:

**Checklist:**

- Things may work very differently in one country from another. There are differences in systems of industrial relations and labour practices. Lack of understanding by others of specific relevant features of laws or practices can limit the effectiveness of solidarity. Specific activities may be effective in one country and not in another or may not be possible or appropriate. Accurate information will help to identify the most effective tactic;

- The details of a particular issue or dispute or the company involved may be common knowledge or widely reported in one country but not known

---

8. See ibid, Chapters 2 and 5 for more detailed information on the international trade union structures.

in another. Therefore, it is essential to provide full and accurate information in seeking solidarity. The government or MNC could challenge or correct the information, and this would undermine the credibility of the trade union claim and destroy the basis for solidarity;

✓ International activities may take time to organize, especially where there are practical difficulties, such as language differences. Good working relationships also take time to develop. Therefore, it is important to give early notice of requests for support;

✓ The structures of, and the relationships between, trade union organizations at different levels should be respected. In requesting or providing assistance, keep in mind the structure of national centres, ITSC and ICFTU affiliates, and counterpart organizations;

✓ Regular reports must be provided to keep international supporters informed of developments, including significant changes in the situation, precise details of resolutions and terms of settlements. Whether the campaign is won or lost, international partners in other countries must be thanked for their support.

The main strategies for real, practical and effective international solidarity include:

- coordinating solidarity or protest messages;
- sharing and disseminating information and research;
- improving communications across national borders;
- education and training;
- legal action;
- direct cross-border sectoral assistance;
- negotiating framework agreements;
- organizing and supporting international campaigns or joint action addressing governments or employers [Section 6.6.2].

**Coordinating solidarity or protest messages**

Trade union action at the national level is often much more effective when accompanied and supported by international solidarity. In some cases, trade unions depend for their survival on the ability of unions in other countries to deliver solidarity when needed. Women workers, in particular those in export processing zones, have often been supported in their struggles to organize by international solidarity.
"In some countries, the mere threat of action by international trade union organizations has been sufficient to achieve settlements, secure the reinstatement of sacked union leaders or end legal attacks on unions" 10

One example of the effective use of solidarity messages concerned Coca-Cola in Poland. At the time, efforts were made by the local management to deny that Coca-Cola was an organized company in other countries. This denial met with numerous solidarity messages sent to Solidarnosc, the ICFTU’s Polish affiliate, from affiliates of the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers’ Association (IUF) representing Coca-Cola workers. This was all that was needed to gain recognition. Through the intervention of the IUF, Coca-Cola met with Solidarnosc and considerable progress was made, including an agreement to establish health and safety committees in company facilities.


Sharing and disseminating information and research

The international trade union organizations can supply national affiliates with the information and research they need for the international dimensions of their work. In a globalizing world, trade unions need up-to-date and accurate information about: the multinational enterprise (MNE) they are dealing with; what the MNE applies in its operations in different countries; what constitutes good practice or norms in any industry or sector; what trade unions in other countries are already doing; how their proposed actions are likely to have international implications.

The International Trade Secretariats (ITSs) are an important source of information on companies and industries, not only facts and figures but also insights into corporate practices and cultures. They also help by providing tips to affiliated unions about gathering information and contacting other trade unions, friendly organizations, local companies or MNEs.

Improving networking and communications across national borders

An important element of international solidarity is the strengthening of networking and communications between union members, local unions, national unions, national centres and international trade union organizations.

10 Ibid, Chapter 7.
For women trade unionists, networking strategies both within countries and across borders are particularly important for building up the support structures for their cause, sharing experiences and resources, raising their profile and strengthening their voice in national and international campaigns.

Every four years, between its World Congresses, the ICFTU organizes the World Women’s Conference. The 4-day Conference assesses progress in the implementation of the ICFTU’s gender equality policies and programmes at national, regional and international levels, and draws up appropriate recommendations for consideration of the World Congress. The Conference’s participatory method (panels, group work, regional and sectoral sessions, sharing of tasks) as well as the cultural and social exchanges ensure active and lively networking amongst the 300 women leaders and greatly contribute to the strengthening of women’s solidarity within the trade union movement.

Unions are also making increasing use of new technologies such as e-mail and the internet to boost traditional networking strategies and to speed the flow of information between the international trade union organizations and affiliates and between each other. A recent example is Global Unions, the world trade union movement’s new web site. Another example is the Union Network International’s UNI Journalists Network [http://union-network.org]

Global Unions [http://www.global-unions.org]

In April 2000, Global Unions, the world trade union movement’s new web site was launched to enable people using the internet to find up-to-date information on what is happening in the international trade union scene from a single site. Global Unions is designed as an aid to trade union activists on how to get involved, as well as giving people working inside trade union organizations the most up-to-date news on what is happening. It also sends a clear message to the media on the current thinking, campaigns and concerns of the international trade union movement, as a united force, or as individual organizations.

Global Unions is jointly owned and run by:
# Education International, [http://www.ei-ie.org]
# European Trade Union Confederation, [http://www.etuc.org]
# International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, [http://www.icftu.org]
# International Federation of Building and Wood Workers, [http://www.ifbww.org]
# International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers’ Union, [http://www.icem.org]
# International Federation of Journalists, [http://www.iffj.org]
# International Metalworkers’ Federation, [http://www.imfmetal.org]
# International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers’ Federation
# International Transport Workers’ Federation, [http://www.itf.org.uk]
# International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers’ Association, [http://www.iuf.org]
# Public Services International, [http://www.world-psi.org]
# Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD, [http://www.tuac.org]
**Education and training**

Another way in which international solidarity is practised is through the education and training that the international trade union organizations offer to their affiliates. The international trade union organizations have developed and tested educational materials and training programmes, and they can sponsor training, including covering the financial costs, for unions in less developed countries. Such education and training can be especially useful for enhancing the effective participation of women in trade unions.

The African Regional Organization of the ICFTU (ICFTU-AFRO) and its affiliates implemented a project on Integrating Gender Perspectives into Trade Union Work between 1997-1999. The ten selected national centres that participated in the project were UST-Chad, ONSL-Burkina Faso, UGTT-Tunisia, USTN-Niger, UNTM-Mali, COTU-Kenya, NACTU-South Africa, TFTU-Tanzania, ZCTU-Zambia and ZCTU-Zimbabwe. Recognizing that it is not enough to just have official policies on gender equality, the project aimed to promote the full integration of a gender perspective into all aspects of trade union work. To achieve this longer term aim, the project focussed on (a) raising awareness of gender and equality issues among trade union trainers; and (b) bringing about a change of attitudes among union leaders and members.

Men and women trade union educators were the target group for this project, owing to the decisive role they play in changing the attitudes of men and women within the trade unions. The project consisted of training seminars at the national, local, federal and regional levels. In using interactive learning methods and techniques, a woman trainer and a man trainer ran each activity, with an equal number of men and women participants. Gender perspective teams (GPTs) responsible for implementing and monitoring the activities and follow up were established at the international level and within each of the organizations involved in the project. An evaluation of the project found that the impact had been good in relation to:

- change of attitudes towards gender issues;
- shift in policy in most of the national centres which had participated; most have a gender policy in place;
- issues of equal opportunities in relation to participation, representation and constitutional review are being addressed by various centres;
- some centres have adopted a quota system to ensure that women are always included in various programmes and activities;
- overall, the project established the relevance of the need for trade unions to continue implementing gender programmes which raise awareness among women and men.

**Legal action**

International solidarity can also be put into practice by trade unions taking up lawsuits on behalf of vulnerable workers in other countries. Such action can also include appeals to international courts to win rights for workers at the national level.
Class action lawsuits filed in California, Hawaii and Saipan in 1999 against high-profile US clothing manufacturers and retailers represent the first-ever attempt to hold US companies accountable for mistreatment of workers in foreign-owned factories operating on US soil. These companies were accused of violating federal law by engaging in a racketeering conspiracy using indentured labour, mainly young women from China, Philippines, Bangladesh and Thailand, to produce clothing on the island of Saipan. Their foreign-owned contractors in Saipan were also charged with failing to pay overtime and on-going intolerable work and living conditions. Since the migrant contract workers had no recourse on their own and were afraid to seek redress, especially since many paid exorbitant recruitment fees and feared losing their jobs, they needed established trade unions and human rights groups to take up their cause. The law suits were filed by the Union of Needletrades Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE) and human rights groups - Global Exchange, Sweatshop Watch, and Asian Law Caucus.

Since Saipan is part of the Northern Mariana Islands, a US Commonwealth in the South Pacific, the factories which are mostly run by Chinese or South Korean companies, were able to pay the foreign workers substantially less than the U.S. minimum wage but still export over $1 billion dollars worth of clothes annually to American markets stamped ‘Made in the USA’ and free of duties and quotas. Since they carry the ‘Made in the USA’ label, American consumers could have been deceived into believing that they had purchased a product made by American workers protected by US labour laws.

Some of the companies have settled the lawsuits and agreed to independent monitoring of their Saipan contractors in their future contracts. The settlements put in place detailed employment standards, including overtime, safe food and drinking water and basic civil rights. They also prohibit the use of unlawful ‘recruitment fees’. A Massachusetts based non-profit firm, Verité monitors compliance and has established an ombudsman on Saipan. Verité reports jointly to the US companies, UNITE, Global Exchange, Sweatshop Watch and Asian Law Caucus.

Website: [http://www.sweatshopwatch.org/swatch/marianas/lawsuit.html](http://www.sweatshopwatch.org/swatch/marianas/lawsuit.html)

---

**Direct cross border sectoral assistance**

Unions in developed countries can provide resources, sometimes including financial resources, and support to unions and workers in developing countries, particularly to unions involved in the same sector or working for the same company. This should not be seen as charity but as solidarity. Such cross border action needs to be mindful of possible cultural and language barriers and respectful of democratic structures in other unions.
The Maquiladora Health and Safety Support Network (MHSSN) was formed in 1993 as a network of American occupational health professionals who volunteer to provide health and safety training to workers in Maquiladoras, the large proportion of whom are women. It responds to requests from Mexican unions and community organisations regarding the wide range of environmental and toxic hazards prevalent in the zones. The MHSSN uses a hands-on method conducted in Spanish to teach workers about the hazards of their workplaces and how hazards should be addressed. It provides technical assistance to plant management, a directory of American volunteer technicians, a newsletter and course list. Its collaborators have included the American Friends Service Committee, the Support Committee for Maquiladora Workers, the United Electrical Workers, the Border Workers Regional Support Committee, the Border Committee of Women Workers, the AuthenticLabour Front and the Tijuana Association of Company Physicians.

**Negotiating framework agreements**

Particularly with the help of the ITSs, unions can coordinate their strategies at the international level to negotiate with specific multinational companies or sectors. In the best of cases, negotiations can lead to framework agreements. Such framework agreements are agreements on certain principles which, while they do not constitute collective agreements in the same sense as agreements reached at the national or local levels, provide a rights framework to encourage recognition and bargaining to take place at those levels. The framework agreements can refer to internationally recognized standards, and can incorporate follow-up, review and monitoring mechanisms.

For example, the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers’ Association (IUF) has negotiated framework agreements with both the Danone Group and the Nestlé Group that cover all the companies of the two groups and that include strong provisions for the promotion of gender equality [Booklet 3, Section 3.4.1.b].
Negotiations between **IUF and the Danone group** led in 1988 to a formal joint undertaking. The IUF and Danone management delegates agreed to work together and to commit themselves to promote four areas of concern to all companies in the group:

- a training policy which allows employees to anticipate the effects of the introduction of new technologies or of industrial restructuring;
- the transmission to unions and to representatives of Danone information adequate for the purpose of reducing the existing disparities between one country and another or between one company and another in the group because of different legislative or contractual obligations;
- equality between women and men in the companies of the Danone group, both in salaries and in working conditions and respect of their equality of opportunity or chances for promotion. Formulation of an action plan and joint initiatives to achieve this goal;
- implementation of trade union rights that take into account issues of the exercise of union rights in different countries and of access to union training.

Recommendations and guidelines were elaborated in each of these four areas at the international level and taken back to the national level and to each company in the Danone group. This resulted, for instance, in the identification of the expectations of female employees of Gerveais-Danone in Germany, and agreement on the integration of women during and after absences for maternity. In France, a system for care of children sick at home was established.

Since 1988, union and management representatives at Danone meet each year. The practice of regular meetings for information and consultations was formalized by a written agreement in 1996, which covers all the operations of Danone within the countries of Europe and includes the presence of representatives of unions from other regions of the world.
6.6.2. Organizing Campaigns and Joint Actions

Increasingly, international trade union campaigns involve alliances and partnerships with non-governmental and inter-governmental organizations and the support of the wider public and consumers. International campaigns can be reactive in terms of responding to government or company actions or trade union requests for assistance. Several high-profile campaigns have had to do with abuses of women workers’ rights or exploitation of women through “cheap labour policies” linked to foreign investments. Campaigns can also be pro-active, where the long-term objective is to put a human face to globalization, to put in place rules at the international level that will protect the human dignity and freedom of workers and contribute to social and economic progress and justice.

International solidarity and alliances to organize campaigns and joint actions are mainly on the basis of:

- protecting or promoting trade union and women workers’ rights, mainly directed at governments;
- promoting global concerns and action on women’s rights;
- protecting or promoting workers’ rights vis-a-vis the employer;
- developing corporate social responsibility;

Alliances in campaigns to protect or promote trade union and women workers’ rights

Many disputes with companies involve violations of trade union rights. But the ultimate responsibility lies with Governments for respecting or protecting the basic trade union rights of its citizens. These rights are provided for in established international standards, treaty obligations and national legislation.

Trade union rights campaigns are therefore almost always directed at specific governments, and they address interference with the right of workers to organize, including the dismissal or imprisonment of activists and trade union organizers, limits or bans on trade unions, or the suppression of strikes. Campaigns can also address less flagrant violations of trade union rights, such as excessive administrative obstacles or unduly long and complicated procedures for trade union recognition, interference in the internal affairs of a union or failure by the employer to bargain in good faith. Sometimes, too, investment incentives offered by governments to attract international business may contain provisions that infringe the rights of workers to join unions and bargain collectively.
For several years, the ICFTU had been denouncing trade union rights violations in Indonesia. In 1996, the authorities launched an unprecedented campaign of repression against trade unionists. One of those arrested was a young woman trade unionist, Dita Indah Sari, who was sentenced in 1997 to six years imprisonment for leading a demonstration of workers and students groups. The ICFTU launched a major international campaign for her freedom, including getting its affiliates and other human rights and women’s organizations to send protest letters to the Indonesian President to call for her release. The Committee on Freedom of Association and Direct Contacts Mission of the ILO considered the charges against her unjustified and derived from legitimate trade union activities, and repeatedly called for all criminal charges to be dropped. In July 1999, in a surprising move by the Indonesian government, Dita Sari was released. When interviewed, she said “my release has proven the effectiveness of international solidarity”.


To conduct a successful trade union and women workers’ rights campaign, unions should:

**Checklist:**

- ✔ Relate the rights campaign to the obligations of governments. Violations of trade union and women workers’ rights occur where governments do not observe established international standards or even treaty obligations or where they fail to adopt adequate national legislation or do not adequately enforce national legislation;

- ✔ Be familiar with the international instruments addressing workers rights, in particular women workers’ rights [Booklet 2 on the relevant ILO Standards]:

  - **Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention, 1948 (No.87);**
  - **Right to Organize and to Bargain Collectively Convention, 1949 (No.98);**
  - **Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 (No.154) and Recommendation, 1981 (No.163);**
  - **Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No.111) and Recommendation, 1958 (No.111).**

- ✔ Where disputes with companies involve violations of trade union rights, address campaigns also to companies. However, take care to ensure that the government concerned is not absolved of the ultimate responsibility.

- ✔ Learn how to submit complaints through national centres or the international trade union organizations to the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association [“Stand up for your Rights” on ICFTU Website, http://www.icftu.org ]. The ILO Committee on Freedom of Association examines complaints of violations of the international instruments and provides reports with conclusions and recommendations to the ILO Governing Body. The Committee decisions often lead to positive changes because of the international pressure on
national governments.

✓ Provide accurate, complete and well-documented information, so as to ensure that there is a strong basis for complaints that are lodged. To provide such information, good cooperation is needed between local unions and their national centres, between the national centres and the international trade union organizations and other human rights groups.

✓ Maintain good relations and communications with international human rights and women’s groups and the media for the regular sharing of information and coordination of campaign actions and efforts.

The ICFTU has developed an extensive system of information exchange with Amnesty International on cases of specific human rights or trade union rights violations. Amnesty International then conducts an in-depth verification of all allegations. In a reciprocal fashion, the ICFTU both uses Amnesty International information and feeds its own information into the Amnesty verification exercise. In this way, specific cases affecting trade unionists regularly become also Amnesty International campaigns.

✓ Since rapid responses to appeals for solidarity are often critical for the success of a campaign, it is important to have arrangements for an ongoing process of promoting and protecting trade union rights.

The ICFTU has a Committee on Human and Trade Union Rights consisting of representatives from ICFTU affiliates and of the ITUs for the purpose of mobilizing trade unions in various ongoing campaigns to protect trade union rights. The ICFTU Women’s Committee is permanently represented on this Committee.

Promoting global concerns and action on women’s rights

International trade unions, being conscious of the links between the workplace, civil society, the state and global forces, have been increasingly involved in alliances and strategies of issues of global concern. Several of these issues are especially important for women. These include, for example, an action programme on violence against women, a global campaign for ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Migrants, a programme of action to fight HIV/AIDS, and the Maternity Convention Campaign. Since these are broad-based concerns, they can attract a great deal of support and, clearly, alliances are easier to forge around such issues. In addition, since they are high-profile issues, the global programmes and campaigns are an excellent way to enhance public awareness of the social role of unions and that unions have moved well beyond their sectional interest in labour issues.
Action Programme on Violence Against Women

At the ICFTU 16th World Women's Conference in the Hague in 1994, a Trade Union Action Programme on Violence against Women was adopted. This followed from the United Nations Declaration on Violence Against Women adopted by the General Assembly in 1993. The ICFTU welcomed the fact that the topic would be on the agenda of the Fourth World Conference on Women (held in Beijing in 1995) and called upon the United Nations to report to the Conference on its efforts to promote and protect women's human rights. The campaign covered both domestic violence and workplace violence and harassment [see Booklet 3 Section 3.4.5 for the types of action proposed in the action programme].

Protecting or promoting workers' rights vis-a-vis the employer (Company campaigns)

International campaigns targeting companies, especially multinational companies, need not always be related to trade union disputes with an employer. They can be part of a strategic plan to organize workers employed by specific companies in specific countries or to enhance the trade union presence in an MNE.

They can aim to enhance corporate accountability to society. As MNEs are increasingly outsourcing much of their production and services throughout different parts of the world, the result has been far-flung production chains with little central corporate responsibility for worker abuse by smaller companies or contractors along the supply chain. It is commonly women workers in these smaller companies or working for individual contractors who are most exploited or abused.

International solidarity and organizing in MNEs

International trade union cooperation in organizing campaigns, especially where a multinational enterprise (MNE) is involved, has certain obvious advantages:

1. Provides ties with the home-country trade union;
2. Shares knowledge of different industrial relations systems;
3. Facilitates exchange of information, including corporate research;
4. International organizations can bring in their expertise when dealing with sophisticated anti-union campaigns by companies;
5. Trade unions can contribute financial resources or other resources, including training or legal assistance;
6. Trade unions in other countries can provide leverage with either the parent corporation or with customers or suppliers of the company targeted for organizing.

Company campaigns at the international level can:

1. Apply pressure to the parent corporation by focusing on the company’s financial relationships or its Board of Directors;
With ever more countries having stock markets, the importance of investments in stocks has grown significantly. Institutionalized investors, such as pension funds, have become an increasingly important source of investment capital in the global economy, owning more and more stocks in companies worldwide. The behaviour of companies on the rights of men and women workers is a legitimate consideration in the investment of capital that comes from the savings of workers. It is often relevant to the stability and performance of a company. Pension funds may be a major source of investment in a particular enterprise and, in some cases, workers and their trade unions may be involved in the investment decisions of these funds. In this context, information about funds and their investments can become an important tool to convince companies to assume social responsibility. As companies usually listen to the concerns of major investors, considerations of ethical labour practices may become more of an integral part of doing business.

Union Network International (UNI) is operating four Union Alliances dealing with specific multinationals: SBC/Ameritech, Cable & Wireless, Telefonica and Atlantic Alliances. The purpose of the alliances is to increase the leverage of member organizations through greater joint activity; share information and offer solidarity support when any affiliate of the alliance is engaged in collective bargaining; undertake common activity to support organizing; and provide all possible support from the host country union for members of any other affiliate who are working in the host country.

Campaign strategies can include:

- Use shareholder actions to raise issues of corporate social responsibility at the annual shareholder meeting of the company;
- Be more strategic or comprehensive by focusing on the vulnerabilities or “pressures points” that can be used to influence company behaviour. These “pressure points” include customers, suppliers and/or investors of the company.

Solidarity work between international and national unions. For example, some ITSs have formed multinational union alliances to systematically coordinate the actions of affiliates to put truly global pressure on MNEs.
Alliances and partnerships with other pressure groups, including consumer, human rights and women’s rights groups. Such partnerships can also apply pressure or lobby governments in support of their campaigns against companies:

| The first collective agreement in the long history of export processing zones in the Dominican Republic was signed in 1994 through a striking example of international alliances and the courage and tenacity of workers, mainly women. An international partnership, consisting of the ICFTU-affiliate National Confederation of Dominican Workers (CNTD), the Federation of Free Zone Workers (FENATAZONAS), the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers’ Federation (ITGLWF) and its regional organization FITTCC-ORI, the AFL-CIO and its American Institute for Free Labour Development (AIFLD) and UNITE, developed and implemented a well-planned and coordinated strategy. The strategy was based on applying pressure to targeted companies and the government in direct support of aggressive organizing on the ground by trained organizers, followed up with trade union education of new members. The partnership contributed support for union organizers, legal assistance and other technical advice and training. The organizing campaigns were supplemented by pressure on the US-based corporate customers of the targeted companies and by the use of the workers’ rights provisions in the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) section of US trade law. Faced with the threat of losing their trade privileges, the Dominican Republic reformed its labour code so as to allow trade unions in its EPZS. |

Raising awareness of consumers. An increasingly important aspect of campaigns is the mobilization of purchasing power of consumers. Consumers are not only interested in the quality of the products they purchase, but also the work behind the brand names and the social and environmental conditions under which these items were produced. When informed of violations of minimum standards, consumers are often ready to vote with their wallets by buying alternative products. They will not buy certain products if they know that they have been produced through the exploitation of poor women in developing countries. Investors too are increasingly concerned that they are not putting their money into companies that are not socially responsible [Section below on corporate social responsibility]. Companies, especially large MNEs with markets in developed countries, are very sensitive to adverse publicity and will respond to public pressure. Well coordinated publicity campaigns based on thoroughly researched facts about the unethical practices of MNEs can, therefore, be very effective.
Organizing consumer boycotts of the products of companies. In common circumstances, the campaigns encourage consumers to send messages to companies to use their influence to improve working conditions. For example, the Clean Clothes Campaign organizes consumers to send postcards to companies with questions about their working conditions but they do not call for boycotts. However, in very serious situations, organizing boycotts of the company’s products can have a very major impact on sales and can pressure the company into an urgent review of their policies and practices especially regarding vulnerable women workers.

Multinational sportswear giant NIKE faced a boycott after reports from CBS News and the New York Times highlighted cases of physical abuse, sexual abuse, salaries below minimum wage and a debilitating quota system in their Vietnam subsidiary. A Working Group on NIKE – a broad coalition of NGOs, labour rights organizations, church groups and unions – developed a strategy to persuade NIKE corporation to treat their workers fairly. While not all partners advocated a boycott, the campaign urged consumers to refrain from buying NIKE products until minimum labour standards are observed. Their campaign website has links to letters to the President of the United States asking his help and to the CEO of NIKE to resolve the issue. Web users can simply add their names to the letters. Fact sheets about NIKE are available from the site.

Website: http://www.saigon.com/~nike/

Taking legal action. Campaigns to improve working conditions for women, especially those in export processing zones or the informal economy, can pursue legal possibilities. Various coalitions have filed lawsuits with national or international courts in support of workers in developing countries [For example, Box above in this booklet on the class action suits in support of the women workers in Saipan]. There have also been initiatives based on consumer law:
The Clean Clothes Campaign in the United States filed a case against Nike in the State of California where consumer protection laws exist to protect consumers from false advertising. These laws were used to raise the issue of bad working conditions as evidence of false advertising, on the part of a MNE that claims to take steps to ensure that good working conditions are the norm in the factories that produce their products. Website: [http://www.cleanclothes.org/intro.html](http://www.cleanclothes.org/intro.html)

---

**Promoting corporate social responsibility**

International alliances are also focusing on mechanisms to enhance corporate accountability to society especially in the context of globalization:

“...let us choose to unite the power of markets with the authority of universal ideals. Let us choose to reconcile the creative forces of private entrepreneurship with the needs of the disadvantaged and the requirements of future generations”

A high-profile initiative to promote corporate social responsibility is the Global Compact proposed by the United Nations Secretary-General. At the World Economic Forum in Davos in 1999, he invited the private sector (individual corporations and business associations) to join in a closer and mutually supportive partnership with the United Nations in a “global compact of shared values and principles” in the areas of human rights, labour standards and environmental practices.

**The principles of the Global Compact**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Human rights:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Business should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. make sure they are not complicit in human rights abuses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Labour:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Business should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. the effective abolition of child labour; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. eliminate discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Environment:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. Business should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

6.6.2.1. Codes of conduct

The most common form of corporate social responsibility is the adoption of codes of conduct for ethical practices relating to labour practices, human rights and the environment. The two major corporate codes of conduct which international business, as well as governments and trade unions have pledged to support are:

The ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy; and
The OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises.

There are also a large and growing number of unilaterally adopted corporate codes of conduct. Major consumer product firms, particularly in the female workforce-dominated garment and sportswear industries, have been engaging with trade unions, religious and non-governmental organizations in the development of multi-company, industry-wide or multisectoral codes of conduct.

Codes of conduct are a series of standards or rules that a multinational company undertakes to apply to its international operations. Codes are meant to address the responsibility of the company for not only its own labour practices but also those of its contractors, sub-contractors and principal suppliers. They are usually barebone text, aiming to limit the worst forms of abuse and exploitation of workers and their labour rights. They generally contain references to working hours and overtime, remuneration and benefits, health and safety issues and the banning of child labour. Some include the right to unionization and collective bargaining.

Most corporate codes of conduct have not focused on the special interests and concerns of women workers. While many codes include a reference to non-discrimination according to sex (among other criteria like race and religion), they rarely make reference to other issues of concern to women, such as equal pay for work of equal value, training, family friendly policies, harassment, pregnancy leave and reproductive health.
Furthermore, and very importantly, women workers, especially those in developing countries, are not even aware that their companies have such codes. Project on Women Workers and Codes of Conduct carried out by Women Working Worldwide (WWW) in six Asian countries found that [Website: http://www.poptel.org.uk/women-ww... workers and codes of conduct]:

“this was the first time that workers knew that their factories were working as subcontractors for foreign companies. They had only been aware that the factory sends its goods abroad. But what are the names of the parent companies, the brand names and the receiving countries? They do not know. They are scared that if they do try to know then the employer can terminate their services. In any case in the factory, every worker thinks only about how to complete her production target....... Without awareness workers cannot use a code as a tool for bargaining with management. Workers have to be aware of codes first and then mobilize to put pressure on management for implementation of codes. For bargaining there should be a union. But a great number of workers, especially women workers, have not been given appointment letters so they have no rights. In such a situation, how can a code play an effective role in defending workers’ rights?”

Codes, therefore, have clear limitations and are not a panacea that will force all multinationals to respect labour rights. They are voluntary and can be as inclusive or as vague as a company wishes; they are not legally enforceable. Independent monitoring can be a problem since most monitors or auditors tend to be hired by the company. It is not always clear who is covered by a code of conduct since trading relationships can be quite difficult to untangle. Who works for whom can be difficult to devise.

Corporate codes of conduct should be used hand in hand with other worker rights strategies. They are not a replacement for unions, collective bargaining or the need for strong national labour legislation with effective labour inspectorates. Codes only cover workers producing goods for export; national labour legislation covers also workers producing goods for the domestic market. Codes could also have a negative impact on some workers eg. homeworkers or other informal sector workers who might lose their jobs if production is more formalised; whereas national legislation can be designed to cover and protect the rights and interest of these sectors too.

The value of codes is that they are a clear acknowledgement that multinational companies have a responsibility for their own labour practices and the labour practices of their contractors, sub-contractors and suppliers. Any trade union organization negotiating with companies or working with NGOs in campaigns involving codes of conduct should attempt to ensure that at the minimum, the codes contain:
Checklist:

✓ Minimum International Standards: All of the standards found in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work should be referenced, if not directly quoted in codes of conduct. These are accompanied by a body of jurisprudence interpreting the meaning of specific words. Encouraging the use of consistent language will help ensure that codes surpass a minimum internationally agreed normative threshold. Codes of conduct that are composed of vague “feel good” language are not transparent nor credible because their words can be construed for different ends.

✓ Language protecting and advancing the interests of women workers: In addition to equality of opportunity and treatment and non-discrimination and equal pay covered in the international standards above, these could include fair remuneration with benefits, limited overtime, adequate housing and transportation, reproductive health issues like abolishing forced contraception or forced sterilization, pregnancy and family leave, child care, safety in the workplace.

✓ The unambiguous right of workers to join trade unions and to bargain collectively: Codes are not a replacement for the universally accepted right of workers to join a union or to bargain collectively. Good collective agreements elaborate and protect more detailed and substantive women workers’ rights than generic codes of conduct.

✓ Provisions to mainstream the implementation code throughout company operations: The overall responsibility for the implementation of the codes should be at the highest levels of the company’s management. The observance of the company code should be both enforceable and an enforced part of the supply contracts of the company. Labour practices must be monitored with the same commitment that is given to monitoring production timelines and quality. Workers should receive a translated copy of the code with clear explanations where necessary and all company personnel should receive training in implementing and adhering to the code.

✓ Ensure high quality independent monitoring: Workers covered by a code should be provided with a confidential and accessible means to report code violations. Companies should accept regular and ongoing monitoring of their codes – these should be done by qualified persons working to agreed processes – including workers and unions. Verification is a more comprehensive process involving checking on both code compliance and implementation systems. Verification should be done by professionals working to defined standards and trained in skills including factory inspection, accountability, health and safety and detection techniques and gender equality. For example, Tommy Hilfiger employed an independent monitoring organisation Verité to perform and audit of its suppliers. Women workers groups were invited to conduct worker interviews as part of the audit process.
The ICFTU/ITS Basic Code of Labour Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provisions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Name of company) and its contractors, principal suppliers and licensees (franchise holders) involved in the production and/or distribution of products or services for (name of company) shall ensure that:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EMPLOYMENT IS FREELY CHOSEN:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There shall be no use of forced, including bonded or involuntary prison, labour (ILO Conventions 29 and 105). Nor shall workers be required to lodge “deposits” or their identity papers with their employer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>THERE IS NO DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality of opportunity and treatment regardless of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, nationality, social origin or other distinguishing characteristics shall be provided (ILO Conventions 100 and 111).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHILD LABOUR IS NOT USED:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There shall be no use of child labour. Only workers above the age of 15 years or above the compulsory school-leaving age, whichever is higher, shall be engaged (ILO Conventions 138 and 182). Adequate transitional economic assistance and appropriate educational opportunities shall be provided to any replaced child workers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND THE RIGHT TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ARE RESPECTED:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The right of all workers to form and join trade unions and to bargain collectively shall be recognized (ILO Conventions 87 and 98). Workers representatives shall not be the subject of discrimination and shall have access to all workplaces necessary to enable them to carry out their representative functions (ILO Convention 135 and Recommendation 143). Employers shall adopt a positive approach towards the activities of trade unions and an open attitude towards their organizational activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LIVING WAGES ARE PAID:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wages and benefits paid for a standard working week shall meet at least legal or industry minimum standards and always be sufficient to meet basic needs of workers and their families and to provide some discretionary income. Deductions from wages for disciplinary measures shall not be permitted nor shall any deductions from wages not provided for by national law be permitted without the expressed permission of the worker concerned. All workers shall be provided written and understandable information about the conditions in respect of wages before they enter employment and of the particulars of their wages for the pay period concerned each time that they are paid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOURS OF WORK ARE NOT EXCESSIVE:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours of work shall comply with applicable laws and industry standards. In any event, workers shall not on a regular basis be required to work in excess of 48 hours per week and shall be provided with at least one day off for every 7 day period. Overtime shall be voluntary, shall not exceed 12 hours per week, shall not be demanded on a regular basis and shall always be compensated at a premium rate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WORKING CONDITIONS ARE DECENT:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A safe and hygienic working environment shall be provided, and best occupational health and safety practice shall be promoted, bearing in mind the prevailing knowledge of the industry and of any specific hazards. Physical abuse, threats of physical abuse, unusual punishments or discipline, sexual and other harassment, and intimidation by the employer is strictly prohibited.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>THE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP IS ESTABLISHED:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obligations to employees under labour or social security laws and regulations arising from the regular employment relationship shall not be avoided through the use of labour-only contracting arrangements, or through apprenticeship schemes where there is no real intent to impart skills or provide regular employment. Younger workers shall be provided the opportunity to participate in education and training programmes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References and additional reading


Useful web sites:
http://www.global-unions.org (Global Unions)
http://www.union-network.org (Union Network International)
http://www.sweatshopwatch.org (Sweatshop Watch)
http://www.cleanclothes.org (Clean Clothes Campaign)
http://www.poptel.org.uk/women-ww...workers_and_codes_of-conduct (Women Workers and Codes of Conduct)
Annex

Some basic concepts relating to gender equality

Gender equality: basic concepts

**Gender** refers to the socially determined differences between women and men such as roles, attitudes, behaviours and values.

**Sex** identifies the biological differences between women and men. While sex is genetically determined, gender roles are learned, vary widely within and between cultures, and are thus amenable to change over time.

**Gender Equality:** Equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men, girls and boys. Gender equality is not just a “women’s issue”; it concerns men as well. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same, but that women’s and men’s rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female.

**Sameness or difference:** Gender equality does not mean *same treatment*. If gender equality is seen as requiring men and women to be treated the same, this may lead to women being offered equality only on male terms (eg. only if they can conform to male-centred norms or requirements) and may reinforce the notion that difference = disadvantage. It is also important to address changes in male-gendered (but often taken as neutral) organizational and occupational structures, practices, cultures, norms, value systems, etc. Such changes may require “women-friendly” provisions to help women adapt to, or get on within structures as they currently are, or, alternatively, call for changes in those structures, cultures, etc. to accommodate women.

**Discrimination:** Any distinction, exclusion or preference based on designated criteria such as race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction, social origin or other designated criteria which have the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation. The existence of discrimination in fact (in reality or in practice) is *de facto discrimination* (a legal expression). The existence of discrimination in law is *de jure discrimination* (a legal expression).

**Direct or indirect discrimination:** Sex discrimination can be overt or direct discrimination or more subtle, indirect discrimination. Employers may discriminate against women directly by limiting applications for certain jobs to only men or only women. Discrimination is indirect when employers impose criteria for applicants or specify characteristics which are not closely related to the inherent requirements of the job, as a screening device. The purpose of the screening is either to exclude women or to obtain workers of a certain type. Many jobs are still seen as exclusively ‘male’ jobs or ‘female’ jobs.
The promotion of gender equality: basic policy and programme concepts

**Gender-blind and gender neutral policies and programmes**

‘Gender-blind’ policies and programmes do not distinguish targets, participants or beneficiaries by sex or gender.

‘Gender-blind’ policies and programmes are not necessarily ‘gender-neutral’ in impact, that is they do not necessarily affect men and women in the same way.

**Gender analysis**

The systematic effort to identify and understand the roles and needs of women and men in a given socio-economic context. To carry out gender analysis, it is necessary to collect statistics by sex, identify gender differentials in the division of labour and the access to and control over resources, identify the practical and strategic gender needs of women and men, identify the constraints and opportunities facing women and men and assess the institutional capacities to promote gender equality.

**Gender planning**

Gender planning consists of developing and implementing specific measures and organizational arrangements for the promotion of gender equality, identifying how to incorporate gender concerns into mainstream activities and ensuring that adequate resources are earmarked.

**Gender mainstreaming**

A strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres and at all levels, so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality.

**Positive or affirmative action:** To eliminate the current direct and indirect consequences of past discrimination, special measures may need to be designed in order to achieve de facto equality of opportunity and treatment. Such positive measures (also termed affirmative measures) are intended to be temporary: once the consequences of past discrimination have been rectified, the measures should be removed. Positive action is seen as essential for the achievement of genuine equality between women and men in the world of work and society. Positive action may encompass a wider range of measures, including corrective actions such as setting targets for women’s participation in activities from which they have previously been excluded, or promotional measures designed to give women access to wider opportunities.
To ensure that their policies and programmes are gender-sensitive and responsive, unions may wish to conduct gender analysis by:

1. **Identifying the issues:**
   - in what ways are both women’s and men’s experiences reflected in how issues are identified?
   - How is diversity taken into account?

2. **Defining desired/anticipated outcomes:**
   - what does the union want to achieve with this policy, and how does this objective fit with a commitment to gender equality?
   - who will be affected: How will the effects of the policy be different for women and men?

3. **Gathering information:**
   - what types of gender-specific data are available? Is there information on other designated equity groups of workers?
   - how is the union enabling women to express their needs and concerns?
   - how will the research you consult or conduct address the differential experiences of gender and diversity?

4. **Developing and analysing options:**
   - how will each option disadvantage some, or provide advantage for others? Does each option have differential effects on women and men within the union and at the workplace?
   - how can innovative solutions be developed to address the gender equality or women’s issues identified?
   - what are the solutions that the affected groups have suggested?

5. **Making recommendations:**
   - in what ways is gender equality a significant element in weighing and deciding upon options?
   - how can the policy be implemented in an equitable manner?

6. **Communicating the policy:**
   - how will communications strategies ensure that both male and female union members have access to information?
   - is gender-aware language used?

7. **Evaluating the results:**
   - how will gender equality concerns be incorporated into criteria the union uses to evaluate its effectiveness?
   - what indicators does the union use to measure the effects of a policy on women and men?

Additional examples and case studies

Improving community support structures and services

1. The Working Women’s Forum in India, together with other community groups, organized street demonstrations and exerted public pressure to improve the public distribution system in Madras, including improving access and eliminating hoarding. As a result, government officials appointed 5,000 women to positions in the public distribution system.

2. The Northern California Work and Family Coalition (NCWFC) is a broad-based coalition of local labour federations, child care organizations, researchers, senior citizen advocates and other community organizations. Members meet informally to discuss work and family advocacy. The group’s joint agenda includes advocacy for the distribution of new child care subsidies and the preparation of a work and family alternative state budget.

Social pacts

1. Several Western European countries have social pacts, which are centralized bi-or tripartite agreements. In these national pacts, the State and social partners attempt to find innovative ways to deal with redundancy and unemployment through solutions which depart from the strict application of the laws of the market. In a sense, these pacts have a political dimension in that they aim both to legitimize innovative solutions and to maintain a stable framework while ensuring the solidarity necessary to tackle certain issues at times of rapid labour market changes. For example, the “Revival of Concertation” Pact was signed in Italy in 1996, to promote employment with special attention to the less developed regions of the country. The pact is tripartite, and includes elements for educational reform, training and reduction of working time.


2. Hungary was the first country in Central and Eastern Europe to create a tripartite body at national level. The National Council for Reconciliation of Interests (NCRI) was established in 1988. In 1997, a new agreement was signed within the NCRI aimed at promoting collective bargaining, facilitating the settlement of industrial disputes and strengthening the application of labour legislation. The social partners agreed upon a series of practical measures which were to be implemented to this end.
Alliances for legislative reform

1. **STINDE in Guatemala** successfully joined forces with women’s groups to submit a bill on sexual harassment to Parliament.

2. In **Ghana**, there has been a joint union-NGO initiative on the intestate succession law, to protect women’s rights and guarantee them a share in the husband’s estate.

3. In **Benin**, unions submitted comments on the Bill on Family and Persons’ Code and organized seminars and information sessions to raise public awareness of the issues raised in the bill.

Alliances to campaign for gender equality and women workers’ rights

1. The **Japanese Trade Union Confederation RENGO** has participated in the government’s Council on Equal Participation for Men and Women. The Women’s Group with which RENGO collaborates took part in a convention to follow up on the Fourth World Conference on Women in November 1995. RENGO publicized the Beijing Platform for Action among affiliates, and campaigned to increase the number of female union officials.

2. Three Brazilian unions, **Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores (CGT)**, **Central Unica de Trabalhadores (CUT)** and **Forca Sindical (FS)** are part of a working group set up by Ministry of Employment to implement measures to combat racial and sexual discrimination at work.

3. An offensive sexist advertisement by multinational giant Mitsubishi was the target of a nationwide campaign spearheaded by the **Thai Airways International State Enterprise Employees Association**. The union allied with the Women’s Foundation of Thailand, staff of various government ministries and the general public, using International Women’s Day 1999 to organise mass demonstrations against the sexist advertisement. Faced with growing outrage from the general public and a flood of telephone calls denouncing the advertisement, Mitsubishi withdrew the commercial and agreed in principle to the union’s demand for full page apologies in five major newspapers and a fifteen second apology aired on television.

4. In the United Kingdom, the **National Group on Homeworking**, has involved NGOs, local authorities and trade unions in the campaign for homeworkers to be included in the national minimum wage. The group has been a major influence on government policy, public awareness and trade union policy on homework.
Alliances and partnerships for national development

1. The Confédération Générale de Travail (CGT) is a partner in the project launched by the Ministry for the Advancement of Women known as “Let’s Share Equality”. It has also taken part in policy discussions within the framework of the Committee for Women’s Work: a quadripartite consultative group of the Ministry, also involving NGOs.

2. The Union Générale des Travailleurs de Côte d’Ivoire (UGTCI) organized a round table debate with the Minister responsible for women’s issues, drew up a White Paper with United Nations support and joined the group of NGOs and trade unions established in the wake of the Fourth World Conference on Women. Nationally, a new law banning genital mutilation of girls was adopted. Jobs formerly reserved for men have been opening up to women.

3. The National Organisation of Free Trade Unions (ONSL) in Burkina Faso established a literacy and production centre for women, with funds from international donor agencies and trade unions. The literacy, education and health programmes run by the centre are confronting the challenges of a country where 95% of women are illiterate, where many do not have access to education and paid employment, where female genital mutilation and polygamy are common practices and where child mortality is among the highest in the world.

International networking of women unionists

The Coalition of Labour Union Women (CLUW) represents some 60 American and international trade unions. CLUW’s aims are to increase the number of organised women workers, implement affirmative action policies, work for the passage of legislation favourable to women workers and increase women’s leadership in trade unions. A Center for Education and Research was established in 1978, dedicated to empowering women workers and developing leadership strategies for women within organised labour. The CLUW supports legislation to end wage discrimination and other gender-based inequities. It also supports the implementation of childcare and parental-leave policies. It has advocated for the Equal Rights amendment, a women’s right to choose, pay equity and family leave. The CLUW publishes a number of publications and educational materials to update and educate members about current issues of importance to working women. In accordance with its principles of increasing women’s political involvement in labour issues, the CLUW encourages its members to write letters to legislators and to participate in political demonstrations.
Cyber-campaigns

Since the launch of websites by trade unions all over the world, the potential of this technology has quickly become clear. Around the world, workers and communities have already been illustrating this by using the internet as a tool for campaigning. Cybercampaigns, where the internet is the centrepiece of the campaign, are ideal methods to exchange views, raise public awareness and give union members as well as other interested persons a chance to forward their concerns for a particular campaign.

The International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (ICEM) has been at the forefront of the cyberpicket techniques. Their campaign sites include:

- links to lobby top executives of companies and governments. For those who want to take part, it is simply a question of adding their name to the protest letters on the site, which are then automatically sent to company management and/or government;
- links enabling web users to put questions to parliamentarians in countries where a particular company is operational;
- links to factsheets with background information about the campaign;
- links to other unions in the alliance or partnership;
- links to press releases, providing up to date information on developments;
- discussion forum;
- an overview of the campaign news;
- an image library; and
- full texts of all relevant reports.

Website: http://www.icftu.org/

International solidarity through education and training

1. The International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers’ Union (ICEM) has a Latin American project for training women educators who are then expected to train their women colleagues and strengthen their participation in unions.

2. The International Federation of Building and Wood Workers (IFBWW) has succeeded in organizing and training tribal women in forest areas in India, setting up literacy programmes for them, and assisting them to secure better prices for their products.

3. ICFTU-APRO organized a training project in the Pacific for affiliates in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Kiribati and Western Samoa. The project provided leadership training, set up and strengthened women’s committees and helped develop intra-regional cooperation and solidarity among women trade unionists.

4. ICFTU-ORIT created a thematic and methodological school (ETM) with a strategy based on the ripple effects of sustainable training of a group of women and youth trainers at regional level. During the first phase of the ETM, ORIT supported a group of continental and subregional trainers from affiliated unions, with the mandate to replicate the ETM at the national level and adapting it to local contexts. The ETM establishes continuity and sustainability by requiring participants to return for higher level courses. The permanent school, ETM/CNTD is in the Dominican Republic and is the result of ORIT’s regional training programme.
Lawsuits across borders on behalf of women workers

A European Court of Justice ruling in May 2000 brought to a successful conclusion a long campaign by British unions to win backdated entry to pension schemes for part-time workers. The Trades Union Congress (TUC) helped coordinate what was probably the biggest combined legal campaign by UK unions. The court also ruled that excluding part-timers from pension schemes was discrimination - because most part time workers in the UK are women. Now attempts by employers to limit backdated entry to just two years has also been overturned. UK affiliate UNIFI and five public sector unions provided test cases which could give eventual benefit to 60,000 part time and former part time workers.

Website: [http://www.union-network.org/unif](http://www.union-network.org/unif)

International campaigns for trade union and women workers' rights

In May 1997, Human Rights Watch, the International Labour Rights Fund and the Mexican National Association of Democratic Lawyers, which had been alerted by trade unions and women’s associations, filed a complaint with the National Administrative Office of the United States Department of Labour. The grounds for the complaint were infringement of the rules of the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), because of violations of Mexican labour legislation and sexual discrimination in the maquiladoras. In June 1997, the ICFTU alerted its members about the multinational firms implicated in the violations and asked them to send letters of protest to the management.

Source: ICFTU. Claiming our Rights! Women and Trade Unions. [http://www.icftu.org](http://www.icftu.org)

Raising awareness of consumers

The Clean Clothes Campaigns (CCC) started in the Netherlands and are now operating in ten Western European countries. In each country, they are coalitions of consumer organizations, trade unions, human rights and women’s rights organizations, researchers, solidarity groups and activists. The campaigns also cooperate all over the world with organizations of garment workers in factories of all sizes, homeworkers and migrant workers. Most of these workers are women. Information on working conditions in the garment industry is distributed via newsletters, the Internet, and in the form of research publications. The CCC is a consumer campaign; the purchasing power of consumers is mobilized on the issue of working conditions in the garments industry.

Website: [http://www.cleanclothes.org](http://www.cleanclothes.org)
Some major multi-stakeholder code initiatives

1. The Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC) was successful in bringing together Dutch NGOs, labour centrals and associations of apparel retailers and manufacturers in a five-year process of negotiations for an industry-wide code of conduct with provisions for independent monitoring and certification. Unions, NGOs, retailers and manufacturers are represented on the Fair Wear Charter Foundation that will hire external monitors, evaluate their reports and certify apparel companies and their supplier factories. Agreement has been reached on a voluntary code that includes strong provisions on freedom of association, hours of work and a living wage.

2. Social Accountability 8000 (SA8000) is an initiative of the US-based Social Accountability International (formerly the Council on Economic Priorities Accreditation Agency, CEPAA) which calls SA8000 “a comprehensive global verification standard for auditing and certifying corporate responsibility”. Its objective is to bring consistency to labour rights standards in various codes and in procedures for social auditing. SA8000 standards are based on ILO and UN Conventions and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

3. The Textile, Clothing and Footwear Union of Australia (TCFUA) and its religious and NGO coalition partners in the Fair Wear Campaign have succeeded in pressuring major retailers, manufacturers and fashion houses to sign the Homeworkers Code of Practice. This code is unique in addressing the specific problems of homeworkers and in its strong provisions requiring companies to disclose to the union detailed information on contractors, subcontractors and the use of homework. The code requires retailers and manufacturers to ensure that homeworkers sewing for their labels receive minimum wages, benefits and working conditions provided for under Australia’s awards system. The union is mandated to monitor working conditions.

4. The Worker Rights Consortium (WRC) grew out of the anti-sweatshop campaigns of the United Students against Sweatshops in the US. The consortium will verify that university-licensed apparel is manufactured according to the WRC Code of Conduct or other university codes with provisions for full public disclosure, a living wage, women’s rights, the right to organize and bargain collectively and basic health and safety rights. WRC informs workers of their rights under the code and provide them with means to report violations securely and confidentially.

5. The Worldwide Responsible Apparel Production (WRAP) factory certification programme was launched in January 2000 by the American Apparel Manufacturers Association (AAMA). Its appeal for US apparel manufacturers is its lower standards (relative to the other initiatives listed above) and the fact that responsibility for seeking and paying for certification and achieving compliance lies entirely with local factory owners rather than with North American companies who contract out the manufacture of their products.

Website: [http://www.maquilasolidarity.org/resources/codes/](http://www.maquilasolidarity.org/resources/codes/)
Global campaigns and action on women’s rights

1. **Global Campaign for Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Migrants**
   Website: [http://www.migrantsrights.org](http://www.migrantsrights.org)

2. **Fighting HIV/AIDS**
   At its 17th World Congress, the ICFTU together with the ITUs, launched a global campaign to fight HIV/AIDS, requesting affiliates to impress upon their respective governments the urgent need for the international community to intensify an internationally coordinated programme for curative research, prevention and treatment of the disease. The ICFTU has also approached the relevant United Nations institutions with requests for committing substantial resources in programmes for fighting HIV/AIDS, in particular for treatment in Africa, as well as supporting and strengthening similar work by national civil society organizations, including trade unions, for work amongst their members and the community at large. The campaign takes special note of the particular impact the disease has had on women and has advocated for the elimination of existing barriers, ignorance, inequality and economic burdens that confront women affected by HIV/AIDS. [also Booket 3, Section 3.4.5a].
   Website: Trade Unions fighting against AIDS, [http://www.icftu.org/](http://www.icftu.org/)

3. **Maternity Convention Campaign**
   The campaign was launched in the context of the discussion of the International Labour Conference in June 2000 to adopt a new international standard for maternity protection. The initial debate for the standard, which had started in 1999, raised concerns that some employers and governments were seeking to water down standards of maternity protection. The campaign, therefore, was launched to ensure that the new ILO Convention is strong and reflects the reality of women’s lives. The slogan for the campaign was “Maternity protection benefits everyone: men and women, young and old, employers, workers and governments; Maternity Protection 2000: It’s for All of Us”. The adopted Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183) was hailed as a success because it gives greater protection to pregnant and nursing women workers than the earlier proposed text [also Booket 3, Section 3.4.3b]