



DECENT WORK

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International
Labour
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Social Dialogue at work: Voices and choices for women and men

Many hallmarks of good labour practices have been achieved through social dialogue, such as the eight-hour working day, maternity protection, child-labour laws, and a range of policies which promote workplace safety and peaceful industrial relations. The main goal of social dialogue is to promote consensus building and democratic involvement among the stakeholders in the world of work – representatives of governments, employers and workers. Successful social dialogue – which includes all types of negotiation, consultation or exchange of information between and among these stakeholders¹ – depends on structures and processes that create the potential to resolve important economic and social issues, encourage good governance, advance social and industrial stability and boost economic progress. Social dialogue therefore is an important means to achieve social justice. In this time of global economic and financial crisis, the goal of consensus building among the key stakeholders and their democratic involvement in finding solutions is paramount.

As social dialogue echoes the needs and aspirations of its participants, women and men should be represented in an equitable way to have their voices heard without fear of reprisal. Collective bargaining involves negotiation to reach agreement between employers' and workers' organizations on relevant matters, usually involving wages and conditions of work.²

In social dialogue, there can be direct or "bipartite" relations between labour and management (or trade unions and employers' organizations), or "tripartite" relations between governmental authorities and the social partners. For social dialogue to work, governments must be active – even if they are not directly involved in the process – by offering the legal and institutional frameworks that enable the parties to engage effectively.



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¹ Social dialogue is defined by the ILO to include all types of negotiations, consultation, or exchange of information between, or among, representatives of governments, employers and workers, on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy. See <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/ifdial/areas/social.htm>

² ILO Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 (No. 154) and its Recommendation No. 163 spell out ways to promote collective bargaining and highlight the responsibility of governments in creating an enabling environment for collective bargaining and social dialogue.

GENDER EQUALITY AT THE HEART OF DECENT WORK



Social dialogue is conducted at the international, regional, national levels. Collective agreements concluded at the national level, the industry (or sectoral), enterprise and workplace levels result in more immediate effects on the working conditions. Some instances of social dialogue cut across multiple economic sectors or address social concerns applicable to many sectors; others are sector-specific. Social dialogue processes can be informal or institutionalized, and often are a combination of the two. In many countries, there are tripartite institutions for social dialogue at the national level.

Examples of international social dialogue include the growing number of "International Framework Agreements" (IFA) between global trade unions and multinational enterprises. The purpose of IFAs is to stimulate global social dialogue between the multinational companies and the representatives of workers. IFAs also aim at promoting compliance with International Labour Organization (ILO) core standards.³

ENABLING CONDITIONS FOR SOCIAL DIALOGUE INCLUDE⁴ :

- Respect for the fundamental rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining;
- Appropriate institutional support;
- Strong and independent workers' and employers' organizations with the technical capacity and access to the relevant information to participate in social dialogue;
- Political will and commitment to engage in social dialogue on the part of all the parties.

Social dialogue is an essential tool for advancing gender equality in the world of work. The social partners are key actors in the elimination of sex discrimination and the promotion of equality at work. There is evidence however that this can only be done when the voices of men and women can clearly be heard. Two pressing issues regarding social dialogue therefore need to be addressed when talking about gender equality:

- How can the equal participation of women and men in representative bodies in social dialogue be ensured?
- How can social dialogue contribute to advancing gender equality in the world of work?

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL DIALOGUE

As the past decades have witnessed a steady increase in women entering the workforce, whether as employers or workers, women have also increased their participation in the relevant social dialogue institutions. When engaging in social dialogue and also within their own organizations, women have been more active in bringing gender equality issues to the forefront. Thus, an increased involvement of women in social dialogue has resulted in greater attention to gender issues. The participation of women in the institutions of social dialogue can in itself be seen as key to promoting gender equality.

In general, however, the participation of women in social dialogue institutions has remained relatively low. The average of women participants worldwide stands at around 15 per cent; the highest share is found in Europe, with an average of 17 per cent. Examples of female representation are 3 per cent in Malta, 13 per cent in Finland, Poland and Spain, 22 per cent in France and the Netherlands and 28 per cent in Estonia.⁵



³ Papadakis, K. (ed.) 2008. *Cross-border social dialogue and agreements: An emerging global industrial relations framework?* (ILO, International Institute for Labour Standards, Geneva), p. v.

⁴ Adapted from Bolwell, D. and W. Weinze, 2008. *Guide for Social Dialogue in the tourism industry* (ILO, SECTOR, Working paper no. 265), p. 20.

⁵ Breneman-Pennas, T. and M. Rueda Catry, 2008. *Women's participation in social dialogue institutions at the national level* (ILO, Social Dialogue, Labour Law and Labour Administration Branch, Paper No. 16, Geneva) p. 9.



Percentage of women participants in social dialogue institutions disaggregated by group

Region	Women in social dialogue institutions	% of women in government	% of women in employers' groups	% of women in workers' groups	% of women in other interests' groups
Africa	12.34	15.29	5.00	4.07	28.40
Asia	11.21	11.11	11.43	8.33	22.22
Europe	16.76	18.03	14.02	20.67	13.68
Latin America and Caribbean	14.16	26.11	7.37	7.14	24.24
Total	14.68*	18.93	10.00	12.95	20.15

* This figure does not include representatives from "other interests' groups"

Source: Breneman-Pennas, T. and M. Rueda Catry, 2008. *Women's participation in social dialogue institutions at the national level*, p. 10.

As the table above shows, the government groups have the highest share of women's participation in all regions except Asia. Factors explaining this higher percentage include the more favourable environment that public administration offers women in reconciling work and family. Clear criteria for career advancement and affirmative action policies have increased the number of women in the managerial positions of public administrations.

EUROPEAN SOCIAL DIALOGUE

European social dialogue is a unique form of social dialogue. It takes two main forms – a bipartite dialogue between the European employers and trade union organizations, and a tripartite dialogue involving interaction between the social partners and the public authorities. It has a clearly defined basis in the European Community Treaty, including a capacity to negotiate agreements which are legally binding. At the European level, the workers are represented by the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), and the employers are represented by three groups: Business Europe, Centre Européen de l'Entreprise Publique (CEEP) and the European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (UEAPME). European social dialogue has resulted in a variety of outcomes, including the adoption of over 300 joint texts by the European social partners and a number of European-wide directives. One such example is the Framework agreement on harassment and violence at work adopted in April 2007.⁶

Emanating from consultations and negotiations, the European Union has six priorities regarding gender equality:

- Equal economic independence;
- Reconciliation of private and professional life;
- Equal representation in decision-making;
- Eradication of all forms of gender-based violence;
- Elimination of gender stereotypes;
- Promotion of gender equality in external and development policies.

Most industrial sectors with high concentrations of workers in large work settings are sectors that are predominantly male, and these are the sectors where union strength has been well established. Workers' organizations are now particularly active in addressing women's participation and representation, in both female dominated sectors as well as in promoting women's entry into male dominated areas of work. Organizing women workers in both the formal and informal sectors with a view to formalizing the employment relationship has been one of the priority areas for the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and its affiliates. Increasing the number of women in elected positions has been another priority. In 2002 the ICFTU⁷ launched a three

⁶ For more information on the European Directive on harassment and violence at work, see http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/news/2007/apr/harassment_violence_at_work_en.pdf
⁷ The International Confederation of Trade Unions (ICTU) merged with the World Confederation of Labour (WCL) in 2006 to form the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC).

year awareness-raising campaign under the slogan, "Unions for Women, Women for Unions" to increase the participation of women in workers' organizations.⁸ This campaign entered a second phase in 2006, targeting especially women working in the informal economy.⁹

Affiliate unions have been urged to aim for a target of one-third participation of women in leadership positions, with some unions actually opting for a target of parity. Women's Committees have helped raise awareness, both at the ITUC and among global union federations like Union Network International (UNI) – the global services union – which passed strong resolutions at its 2005 Women's Congress, such as urging greater participation of women in leadership positions and endorsing detailed platforms on gender-specific priorities.¹⁰

ORGANIZING WOMEN WORKERS IN THE INFORMAL ECONOMY

The Self-Employed Women's Association in India (SEWA) is one successful example of organizing women workers in the informal economy. The association started in 1972 in Ahmedabad, India and focused initially on home workers. But the model has been applied to day labourers, street vendors, and small producers, and it has spread elsewhere, most notably into a number of African countries. SEWA has been affiliated with the ITUC since 2006.¹¹



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Two other examples of global union federations seeking to address the under-representation of women are Building and Woodworkers International (BWI) and the International Union of Food and Agricultural Workers (IUF). BWI reported significant under-representation of women in trade union membership in their ranks, with only 20 per cent women's membership. This can partly be explained by the low level of women workers in their sectors. Recognizing that women are often paid less, employed in temporary or casual work with irregular hours and have family responsibilities, BWI adopted a Charter for Affirmative Action and Bargaining Agenda for Equality in 1998.¹² The BWI Policy calls for gender balance in all educational and training activities, mandating at least 30 per cent in most activities but 50 per cent parity in others. The IUF reports women's membership at 40 per cent in the aggregate. It has also sought to have its main leadership bodies and all of its working committee composed of 40 per cent women.¹³ In 2007 the IUF has also produced a comprehensive Gender Equality Guide entitled *All for One and One for All* that details strategies for attracting women to unions and making unions more women-friendly.¹⁴

Available information shows a continued tendency towards growth of female union membership in some countries and within specific sectors. In some industrialized countries like Canada, the United Kingdom and Ireland, there is an equal male/female unionization rate and in the Northern European countries, female unionization rates are even higher.¹⁵

Above and beyond the issue of targets for involving women in decision-making structures and positions, workers' organizations are coping with the inadequate level of organization in sectors that are predominantly female. Women have tended to be in precarious employment in lower paid, part-time and non-permanent jobs. Women are also overwhelmingly found in the informal economy. These are the challenges that all workers' organizations are seeking to overcome as they aim to organize women. In March 2008 the ITUC launched a two-year global campaign "Decent Work, Decent Life for Women".¹⁶ It is directed primarily at the sectors where women form the majority of workers, often with insecure contracts and where unions are still poorly represented (such as informal work, export processing zones, migrant labour and atypical employment).

⁸ For more information on this campaign see <http://www.icftu.org/focus.asp?Issue=u4w&Language=EN>

⁹ For more information on the gender equality policy of ICFTU and the campaign see <http://www.icftu.org/focus.asp?Issue=equality&Language=EN>

¹⁰ Conclusions from 2005 UNI World Women's Conference, 23-25 August, see <http://www.union-network.org/uniwomen.nsf/2ndWorldWomenChicago2005?openpage>.

¹¹ See www.sewa.org and also www.wiego.org

¹² For more information on BWI's Equality Policy, see <http://www.bwint.org/default.asp?Issue=Gender%20Equity%20and%20Youth&Language=EN>

¹³ At its most recent Global Congress in 2007, it was agreed that women's participation was still well below this figure, on the average of some 28 per cent. IUF Congress decision, as reported in campaign document in next footnote.

¹⁴ IUF, "All for One and One for All", June 2007 at <http://www.iufdocuments.org/women/2008/All%20for%20One.pdf>.

¹⁵ ILO, 2007. *Equality at Work: Tackling the challenges* (Geneva), p.86.

¹⁶ ITUC Decent Work Decent Life for Women Campaign, launched in March 2008, at <http://www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?rubrique198>



A number of initiatives exist on the promotion of women entrepreneurs by employers' organizations. Several employers' organizations have set up specific women's committees, promoting the inclusion of women members on corporate boards, appointing staff responsible for gender matters or taking other voluntary measures.

Examples include:

- ✓ the Businesswomen's committees that have been established in all Chambers of Commerce and Industry in the Syrian Arab Republic;
- ✓ the establishment of a Committee on Women (now the Committee on Gender and Equality) within the Employers' Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP) to work on training, advocacy and research on gender issues;
- ✓ the encouragement the Croatian Employers' Association (CEA) gives to their members to nominate women to participate in events and for functions in the bodies of the association;
- ✓ the affirmative action approach of the Federation of Kenyan Entrepreneurs (FKE) to actively seek out women chief executives for its Board of Management and other bodies;
- ✓ the Confederation of Norwegian Business and Industry (NHO)'s *Female Future* launched in 2003 to help its members increase the number of women in management and on boards of directors with the objective of having more diversified boards, thus increasing the recruitment base and competitiveness of enterprises. *Female future* consists of developing meeting places, or networks, and mentorship programmes to help women make the contacts they need for their personal advancement;
- ✓ the commitment expressed by the Chambers of Commerce in Yemen to more involve business women in their organization by determining the number of female members of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and supporting the formation of women's committees to help businesswomen voice their concerns more collectively and systematically.¹⁷



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In its publication *Approaches and policies to foster entrepreneurship: A guide for employers' organizations*, the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) identifies the barriers limiting the potential of women entrepreneurs to develop and expand their businesses and explains how employers' organizations can provide better representation and support services.¹⁸ Important gender equality issues addressed by employers' organizations are work-family issues, career development, training and sexual harassment in the workplace.

SOCIAL DIALOGUE AS A MEANS TO ADVANCE GENDER EQUALITY AT WORK

The ILO is the only international organization where social dialogue and tripartism have been at the core of its activities since its creation in 1919. Its annual International Labour Conference (ILC) – often referred to as the international parliament of labour – is the highest policy-making body of the ILO where each member State is represented by a tripartite delegation.¹⁹ In addition to the normative activities – the adoption of international instruments such as conventions and recommendations and the supervision of their application at the national level – the ILC also examines the mandatory reports submitted by all member States.

¹⁷ All examples come from ILO, 2005. *Employers' Organizations taking the lead on Gender Equality* (Geneva).

¹⁸ See the gender webpage on the website of the International Organization of Employers <http://www.ioe-emp.org/en/policy-areas/gender/index.html>

¹⁹ It is interesting to note that the gender balance in the ILC has been a cause for concern and that already in 1991 the ILC adopted a resolution during its 78th session, which called on governments, employers' and workers' organizations to include more women in their delegations. In 2006, women's participation made up 24.3 per cent of the total number of delegates.

Since the adoption of the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998),²⁰ the ILC has looked at the issues of equality and non-discrimination in two Global Reports (2003 and 2007).²¹

In June 2008, the ILC adopted the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization which affirmed the role of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda in the context of globalization.

The Declaration establishes a new foundation on which the ILO can effectively support the efforts of its constituents to promote and achieve progress and social justice through

the Decent Work Agenda comprising the strategic objectives – employment, social protection, social dialogue and tripartism, and fundamental principles and rights at work.²² Gender equality is specifically mentioned as cutting across all four strategic objectives.



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ILO CONVENTIONS ON GENDER EQUALITY AND ON SOCIAL DIALOGUE, TRIPARTISM AND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

All ILO Conventions²³ are the result of tripartite social dialogue on work-related issues, that are identified as needing an international regulation by governments, employers and workers.

Key equality Conventions

- Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111);
- Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100);
- Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156);
- Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183).

Two fundamental Conventions

- The Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87);
- The Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98).

Conventions on social dialogue and collective bargaining

- The Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144);
- The Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 (No. 154);
- The Workers' Representatives Convention, 1971 (No. 135).

Selected sectoral Conventions

- The Right of Association (Agriculture) Convention, 1921 (No. 11);
- The Right of Association (Non-Metropolitan Territories) Convention, 1947 (No. 84);
- The Rural Workers' Organizations Convention, 1975 (No. 141);
- The Labour Relations (Public Service) Convention, 1978 (No. 151).

On the regional and national levels, when looking more in detail at the percentage of the inclusion of gender in the social dialogue agenda, an ILO study²⁴ found that overall, 48 per cent of the institutions reported, have included gender in social dialogue, although the scope can vary considerably. Europe holds the highest percentage

²⁰ ILO Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, 1998. The four fundamental rights are: (a) freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; (b) the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour; (c) the effective abolition of child labour; and (d) the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation. The 1998 Declaration commits ILO member States to observe these principles and rights irrespective of whether they have ratified the Conventions.

²¹ These Global Reports are *Time for Equality at Work* (2003) and *Equality at Work: Tackling the challenges* (2007).

²² See http://www.ilo.org/global/What_we_do/Publications/Officialdocuments/lang--en/docName--WCMS_099766/index.htm

²³ More information on the ILO Conventions can be found on ILOLEX see <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/index.htm>

²⁴ Breneman-Pennas, T. and M. Rueda Catry, 2008. Op. cit., p. 23.



of institutions that have placed gender on the agenda of social dialogue, with an average of 65 per cent. The lowest share can be found in Latin America and the Caribbean.

On the regional level, one successful social dialogue example is the ILO Regional Programme for the Promotion of Social dialogue in French-speaking Africa (PRODIAF) that helps countries to nurture and develop a culture of dialogue among government institutions and employers' and workers' organizations. Some 23 countries have benefited from PRODIAF support to strengthen the capacity of the social partners to initiate and consolidate dialogue, consultation and negotiation.²⁵ Gender equality is considered as a cross-cutting issue in this programme.

On the national level, many examples can be found of how social dialogue has contributed to advancing gender equality. Topics that lend themselves well to gender equality-related social dialogue include: equal pay, working time arrangements, leave policies for workers with family responsibilities, maternity protection and benefits, childcare provisions, skills training, violence in the workplace and sexual harassment.²⁶

The Rural Workers' Organisations Recommendation, 1975 (No. 149), in providing guidance on how to organize rural workers, recognizes the gender-based challenges. It encourages the competent authorities to promote programmes highlighting the role which women can and should play in the rural community, and to integrate them into general programmes of education and training offered to women and men.

- In Singapore, for example, the Tripartite Declaration on Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Performing work of Equal Value affirms the commitment of the Government and the social partners to the principles embodied in ILO Convention No. 100. The tripartite partners also agreed to insert an appropriate clause in collective agreements to ensure that employers adhere to the principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value.²⁷

- In Nepal, the Trade Union Committee for Gender Equality and Promotion (TUC-GEP) identified ten priority gender issues, which were presented to and discussed with the Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI). Three of these items formed the start of the dialogue process between them (sexual harassment, maternity benefits and HIV/AIDS) and were later endorsed by the Ministry of Labour and Transport Management.

In December 2002 the three partners signed a Joint Declaration affirming their commitment to engage in social dialogue with the purpose of advancing gender equality in Nepal.²⁸

- In certain countries gender-specific institutions of social dialogue have been created. The Tripartite Commissions, created in the framework of an ILO-ITC project on Women Workers Rights, have been the most stable social dialogue mechanisms in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, and have played an important role in national politics. The Commissions are composed of government (Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Women's Affairs), employers' and workers' organizations. Among their main achievements are the recent law (2006) on domestic workers in Uruguay, and the ratification of the ILO Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156) in 2007, led by the Tripartite Commission in Paraguay.
- In South-Africa the government comes together with organized business, organized labour and organized community groupings in the National Economic Development & Labour Council (NEDLAC) established in 1995. The objectives of NEDLAC include: striving to promote the goals of economic growth; participating in economic



²⁵ ILO activities in Africa 2004–2006. Report of the Director General at the Eleventh African Regional Meeting, Addis Ababa, April 2007 (ILO, Geneva), p. 38.

²⁶ For a more detailed list, see Olney, S., Goodson, E., Maloba-Caines, K. and O'Neill, F., 1998 (reprint 2002). *Gender Equality: A Guide to Collective Bargaining*. (ILO, DIALOGUE and Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV), Geneva), Section on Gender Equality bargaining: an overview, p. 8–9.

²⁷ ILO, 2007. *Equality at Work: Tackling the challenges* (Geneva), p. 91.

²⁸ ILO, 2005. *Gender Equality and Decent Work. Good practices at the Workplace* (GENDER, Geneva), p.77–79.



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decision-making and social equity; seeking to reach consensus and including agreements on matters pertaining to social and economic policy. The Women's National Coalition is a member of NEDLAC and promotes the role of women in business. Continued attention to women is part of its key priorities.²⁹

People work in different sectors of economic activity – this is a simple premise that universally underpins the world of work. Industries and services face their own specific set of issues, just as individuals do when tackling occupational challenges that impact their lives. Social dialogue will be a key means for addressing sectoral issues during the current economic, financial and social crisis, as some sectors will be dramatically affected. At the international level, sectoral social dialogue benefits from direct consultation with governments, employers' and workers' organizations from a wider knowledge base, identify good practices and negotiate strategies to address sector-specific issues. At the national level, the social partners develop innovative responses to the challenges facing their sectors, provide opportunities for them to share common concerns, and address critical issues.

A few sectoral examples of social dialogue covering gender issues are:

- Within the ILO Better Factories Cambodia project, research on gender in the garment industry was conducted in 2006. As the overwhelming majority of garment workers (over 90 per cent) in Cambodia are women, questions pertaining to their well-being and concerns at work are of crucial importance to the industry and the economic and social development of the country as a whole. The study commissioned by the ILO and the World Bank was designed to provide detailed data on critical issues identified concerning women workers to allow the stakeholders of the project – Governments, Employers' and Workers' Organizations, NGOs, and fellow United Nations and Bretton Woods organizations and agencies – to better understand, communicate on and improve the wellbeing of women workers through development of appropriate policies and pragmatic new approaches at the workplace level. It covered issues such as: health and nutrition, breastfeeding, childcare, personal safety, various forms of workplace harassment as well as dispute resolution and collective action.³⁰
- In agriculture, an analysis of 23 recent collective bargaining agreements in agriculture from Africa revealed the importance of such agreements to ensure basic rights in the workplace as well as the setting out of procedures to ensure stable labour relations. All agreements included sections on wages, overtime and severance pay, occupational safety and health, and funeral costs and facilities. The latter section may be one indicator of the impact that HIV and AIDS is having on the agricultural workforce in Sub-Saharan Africa and the efforts of employers and workers to deal with the consequences of the epidemic in a humane manner. Twenty-two of the twenty-three agreements included sections on allowances (for example, housing allowances), leave (annual leave, sick leave, maternity leave and compassionate leave) and medical care. This is particularly relevant for women as they are still the main caregivers in the households and most often confronted with work-life balance challenges. Seventeen agreements contained provisions related to education, whether of workers themselves or of their children.³¹
- The British Association of Women Police developed, in a close partnership with other organizations, a Gender Agenda to focus on problems affecting women officers. The aims are to have a police force that consistently demonstrates the value of women in its ranks and undertakes the creation of an enabling environment for their effective performance (such as suitable working hours, adequate equipment). The Gender Agenda promotes a balance between the sexes, ethnic origins as well as sexual orientation in the police force. It also promotes women's involvement in policy-making.³²

²⁹ Annual Report 2007-2008 of the National Economic Development & Labour Council (NEDLAC) *Actioning social dialogue*, see <http://www.netlac.org.za>

³⁰ For more information on Better Factories Cambodia, see <http://www.betterfactories.org>

³¹ ILO, 2008. *Promotion of rural employment for poverty reduction* (Geneva) p. 108-109.

³² ILO, 2003. *Public emergency services: Social dialogue in a changing environment* (SECTOR, Geneva), p.86.



ILO RESPONSES AND PARTNERSHIPS

For the ILO, social dialogue is crucial for men and women to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equality, security and human dignity. As such it is an integral part of its Decent Work Agenda. Several ILO units work specifically on this strategic pillar of the ILO: the Social Dialogue, Labour Law and Labour Administration Branch (DIALOGUE), the Sectoral Activities Programme (SECTOR), the Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACTEMP) and the Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV).

DIALOGUE promotes an integrated approach to the key components of labour market governance such as relevant legal frameworks, effective social dialogue and efficient labour administrations. It is in charge of coordinating ILO technical advice and comments on draft national labour legislation in light of both international labour standards and comparative labour law and practice. The ILO systematically encourages member States to follow contemporary legislative drafting techniques which emphasize the desirability of using gender-neutral terminology in statutory language. DIALOGUE's *Labour Legislation Guidelines* provides examples of how gender equality is translated in international and comparative labour law.



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"Participatory labour law-making"³³ is a training course designed by DIALOGUE and the ILO Training Centre in Turin for national social partners who are involved in labour law reforms and the tripartite legislative drafting process on socio-economic issues. Specific modules of this training are devoted to gender equality issues and to drafting techniques specifically focused on gender mainstreaming in labour law.

DIALOGUE, in cooperation with ACTRAV, produced *Gender Equality: A Guide to Collective Bargaining*. As the overview to this guide states, "Collective bargaining is proving to be an important means of promoting equality for women in employment, but to be truly effective the concerns of women must be understood and given credence."³⁴



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SECTOR's objective is to promote social dialogue at the sectoral level and to facilitate the exchange of information among the ILO's constituents on labour and social developments concerning particular economic and social sectors. It constitutes the principal ILO interface with its constituents at the sectoral level. Continued attention is given to eight groupings of major primary, industrial and service sectors: Agriculture and forestry; Education and research; Energy and mining; Infrastructure, construction and related industries; Manufacturing; Private sector services; Public services and utilities; and Transport. SECTOR regularly conducts meetings to facilitate social dialogue on a sectoral level. Many of its research items and meetings have specifically addressed gender equality in their assessment and prescriptions for improving social dialogue in public services, health services, education, mining, financial services, and many others.³⁵

³³ <http://www.ilo.org/en/training-areas/social-dialogue>

³⁴ Olney, S., Goodson, E., Maloba-Caines, K. and O'Neill, F., 1998 (reprint 2002). *Gender Equality: A Guide to Collective Bargaining*. (ILO, DIALOGUE and Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV), Geneva). p. 6.

³⁵ For more information on ILO sector-specific publications, see <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/sector/index.htm>

ACT/EMP's mandate is to support employers' organizations that represent the collective interests of business on labour market issues in order to strengthen their representativeness, influence and value to members. ACT/EMP has an important role in promoting gender awareness among employers and the business case for greater equality at the workplace.³⁶ Together with the ILO Conditions of Work and Employment Programme (TRAVAIL), the unit produced a toolkit on Balancing Work/Life Responsibilities³⁷, and is preparing similar training packages on maternity protection and sexual harassment. These tools are designed to equip employers with knowledge and possible solutions for gender-related workplace issues. ACT/EMP's technical cooperation programme includes support for employers' organizations to participate in developing adequate legal framework to promote economic participation of women; capacity building and training on gender issues for employers' organizations on the national and regional levels, promotion of women's entrepreneurship development, support for gender-equality-related services as well as general gender mainstreaming in its projects and activities.



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ACTRAV's mandate is to strengthen representative, independent and democratic trade unions in all countries, to enable them to play their role effectively in protecting workers' rights and interests and in providing effective services to their members at national and international levels. ACTRAV supports trade unions in developing their strategies and policies aiming at promoting gender equality in the world of work. Those include strengthening representation of women within trade unions, building union expertise and capacities to engage in gender sensitive collective bargaining and social dialogue,

building strong gender dimensions of trade union education. Over the years, ACTRAV has supported trade unions in their effort to strengthen representation of women in the informal economy, EPZ and migrant women; to raise awareness and conduct trade union internal reforms allowing for better representation of interests of working women; to promote policies in support of women leadership in trade unions; to develop training materials on gender sensitive collective bargaining including addressing gender pay gap.

The **International Labour Standards Department (NORMES)** has a primary role regarding the supervision, promotion and effective application of key ILO Conventions that address freedom of association and collective bargaining as well as gender equality and non-discrimination, in particular Conventions Nos. 87, 98, 100, 111.

The **Bureau for Gender Equality (GENDER)** plays a leading role in supporting the implementation of gender equality in the ILO's Decent Work Agenda by promoting gender mainstreaming in all ILO policies, strategic objectives, programmes and activities. The Bureau gives advice to governments, employers' and workers' organizations and units, alike, on specific issues, in addition to conducting technical cooperation programmes and participatory gender audits.

³⁶ ILO, 2005. *Employers' Organizations taking the lead on Gender Equality, Case studies from 10 countries* (ACT/EMP, Geneva) see http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/actemp/downloads/publications/emp_gender_06.pdf.

³⁷ For the ACT/EMP Training Package on Work and Family, see <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/actemp/whatwedo/projects/diversity.htm>.



WHAT CAN BE DONE?

The following non-exhaustive list may provide guidance in regard to means to increase the voice of women and men in social dialogue as well as place gender equality on the agenda of social dialogue.

- Ratify and effectively implement the key ILO Conventions that address freedom of association and collective bargaining as well as gender equality and non-discrimination, particularly Conventions Nos. 87, 98, 100, 111.
- Put in place mechanisms to increase the participation and representation of women in trade unions and employers' organizations, as well as in social dialogue institutions such as National Labour Committees or Economic and Social Councils.
- Promote education, skills development and training for women thus providing them with the tools to effectively participate in social dialogue processes.
- Strengthen the voice of women and men workers in the informal economy as well as those facing precarious conditions of work, such as domestic workers and migrants, through organizing their adherence to workers' organizations.
- Sensitize, raise awareness and advocate the advantages of gender equality in the world of work through media campaigns.
- Organize trainings and sharing of best practices on mainstreaming gender issues into the agenda of social dialogue and collective bargaining.

SELECTED ILO PUBLICATIONS ON SOCIAL DIALOGUE AND GENDER EQUALITY

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This background brochure has been prepared as part of the ILO public awareness raising campaign on "Gender equality at the heart of decent work".

Please contact us on gendercampaign@ilo.org for information on additional ILO themes addressed by this gender equality campaign.