

Women in Trades

Sharing good practices from
around the world

*She can do
the job!*



BWI
Building and Wood
Workers' International
www.bwint.org

Introduction

During September and October 2021, with Covid-19 still raging across the world, BWI held three online exchanges with its affiliates across all continents reaching over 250 women trade unionists. The purpose of these exchanges was for women to share their stories of how their trade unions have made progress in promoting gender equality in the trade union and in the workplace, how they have taken up campaigns to get more women into the trades and how they are tackling the problem of gender violence and harassment, both in and out the workplace.

This booklet documents the stories that were shared by women trade unionists at the exchanges. Despite coming from different countries, many spoke of similar problems. All speakers described the poor representation of women in the construction sector and for those women that do work in the sector, they are usually confined to low-paying jobs and boring repetitive jobs. Others have learnt skills on the job, but they lack certificates proving they can do the job. A common cry was the lack of amenities for women working in construction and the expectation that women must just share with men or leave the sector. Unions also indicated a strong awareness of gender violence both inside and outside the workplace. In many countries the Covid pandemic has worsened the situation for women in trades: often women were the first to be laid off; the responsibility of care had shifted overwhelmingly onto the shoulders of women, forcing many women to leave employment and many women have been left depressed and anxious.



Sharing lessons

The women presenters at the exchanges all gave spirited and focused inputs displaying the creative ways in which their unions are taking up these challenges. Common to many of the inputs was the push that trade unions are making for the recognition of prior learning. Tough negotiations with employers and governments have helped trade unions get women's skills that they have learnt on the job certified and recognized. Moreover, unions are challenging the macho construction industry, opening doors to women who want to be trained in trades and encouraging women to take up this training.

In India, trade union SEWA has responded to the needs of women construction workers, the vast majority of whom are employed in the informal sector. It has helped them set up construction cooperatives that can bid directly for construction projects, coupled with a tools library, where members can hire the necessary tools at minimal cost, as and when they need them.

Tunisian women workers were the first to be dismissed at the beginning of the Covid pandemic. Union FGGB fought back educating their women members about employers' discriminatory actions and they helped women deal with the stress and anxiety they were feeling both at home and at work. While Covid has dealt a huge blow to women's employment in construction especially, in many countries trade unions report that there is potential to demand that women are better catered for in economic recovery policies and programmes.



Helping women move into the sector and keeping them there is an important focus for some trade unions. Influencing employers, both government and the private sector, to make advertisements women-friendly is one aspect while educating young women apprentices on what to expect and providing them with a supportive environment during their initial apprenticeship is helping to get them into the trades and to keep them there. This is coupled with a common demand for separate and hygienic amenities for women.

In many unions, women's associations or structures have been the solution to advancing women's rights. Unions stress the importance of having these safe spaces for women to discuss the challenges that they face. In some cases, unions are using top-down victories like quotas for women negotiated both at union and at sector level ultimately to ensure better representation of women in workplaces and demanding the presence of women in collective bargaining negotiations, while in others, the goal of 10 to 20 percent of tradespersons being women is encouraging women to look forwards to a more equal future.

All these measures are trying to make women more visible in the construction trades. As women become more visible, more are being attracted to work in the sector and once they are in the sector, they can be organised in our trade unions.

A big challenge is still trying to get more women into leadership positions in the trade unions. In some trade unions, one-on-one mentoring is used to nurture and support potential women leaders while in others, unions are targeting women-specific campaigns like maternity leave, childcare so that women become involved in negotiating issues at local level and are gradually urged to take up leadership roles at higher levels.

Perhaps the most difficult challenge is that of gender violence, bullying and harassment both at the workplace, in the trade unions and at home. Some trade unions are already using ILO Convention 190 to demand that workplaces are safe and free from violence, regardless of whether it is ratified by their government. Others are taking up this challenge head-on by acknowledging that it is inherent in society but that it can be overcome if all social actors play their part, including trade unions. By inviting men and women to workshops, different perspectives can be shared and visions of a more gender-equal society imagined.

As Rita Schiavi, Chair of BWI's International Women's Committee reminded participants at the exchange hosted by the Pan Europe Region: "If we strengthen women, we strengthen our community and we are enlightening our own future. We are guaranteeing a brighter future for all of us because the future has no gender."



Organizing women in construction

Akayezu Laurence Marie – Stecoma, Rwanda

STECOMA, a construction union in Rwanda with 51 000 members, has a three-pronged strategy to organize women into the union: recruit, train and support.

1. Recruit

To get more women in the trade union, “we start by meeting with women who have joined the union”, says Akayezu Laurence Marie, an electrician and Assistant to the General Secretary of STECOMA. Marie says they encourage these women to meet with other women at work and share their stories – not just their hardships, but their successes as well - and how the union has helped them. In this way, women members encourage other women workers to join the union.

2. Train

... worker rights training

Once recruited, the union follows up by training these new women members. Training covers their rights at work around working conditions, occupational health and safety and gender issues. “If workers don’t know their rights, they won’t know how to claim them.”

Preparing women to deal with problematic gender issues at work is especially important, says Marie. The majority of workplaces have no separate changing room for women and no separate toilet. “If you are a woman, you are not comfortable, there are sanitary issues, it comes with sexual harassment, sometimes some of the women will rather leave the job”.

... Recognition of prior learning (RPL)

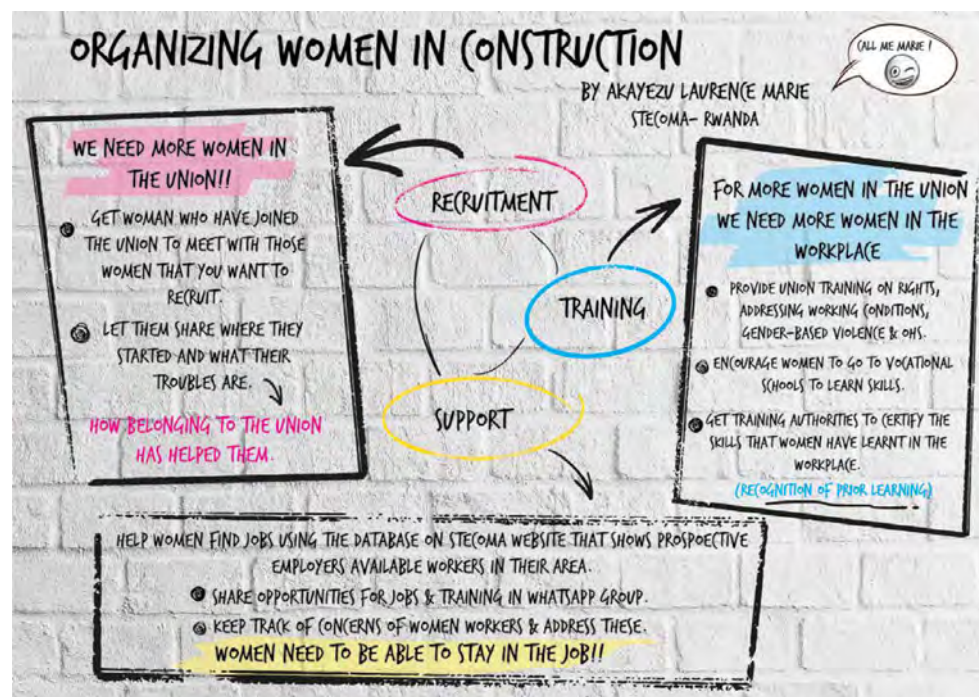
Marie related that often women have been working in the construction sector for many years, but an employer will tell the worker, ‘no you don’t have something to prove that you are able, so I will pay you what I want.’, STECOMA campaigned, they negotiated with government and now they have won recognition of prior learning for these women, and also for men. And now workers have certificates according to skills that they have learnt on the job and their wages have increased, says Marie.

... Vocational training

The construction sector is always “improving technically and technologically”, says Marie. “If you want to be a good technician in this sector, you have to upgrade your skills.” The union encourages women to attend vocational schools to upgrade their skills. And there is a benefit for the union too: if there are more women in the workplace, says Marie, then we will have more women in the trade union.

3. Support ... Database

In Rwanda almost all building and construction workers are in the informal sector. To organise these workers, every union member is included in a database on the union's website. The database lists all of its members, their skills and the area in which they are located as well as providing cellphone numbers so that prospective employers can easily find workers that they need for jobs. When a worker secures employment, they inform the union and the union marks them as unavailable on the database for the period they will be employed. The union advises the worker on securing an agreement of wages and working conditions and also only charges membership fees for the period that the worker is employed.



... Share opportunities and concerns via whatsapp

Covid-19 made it difficult to meet workers face to face but as the union already has all the contact information of its members, the union created WhatsApp groups to communicate with workers. Through these groups they share job and training opportunities with their members. And women members can easily share their concerns and get advice from the union or other members using the whatsapp groups or to directly communicate with union officials.

Know your rights!

Amal Mannai, FGBB, Tunisia

The Covid-19 pandemic caused huge harm to FGBB's women members but resolving these issues has opened the union's eyes to dealing with important issues like fighting discrimination, giving members psychological support, achieving gender equality and promoting women's leadership.

Fighting discrimination

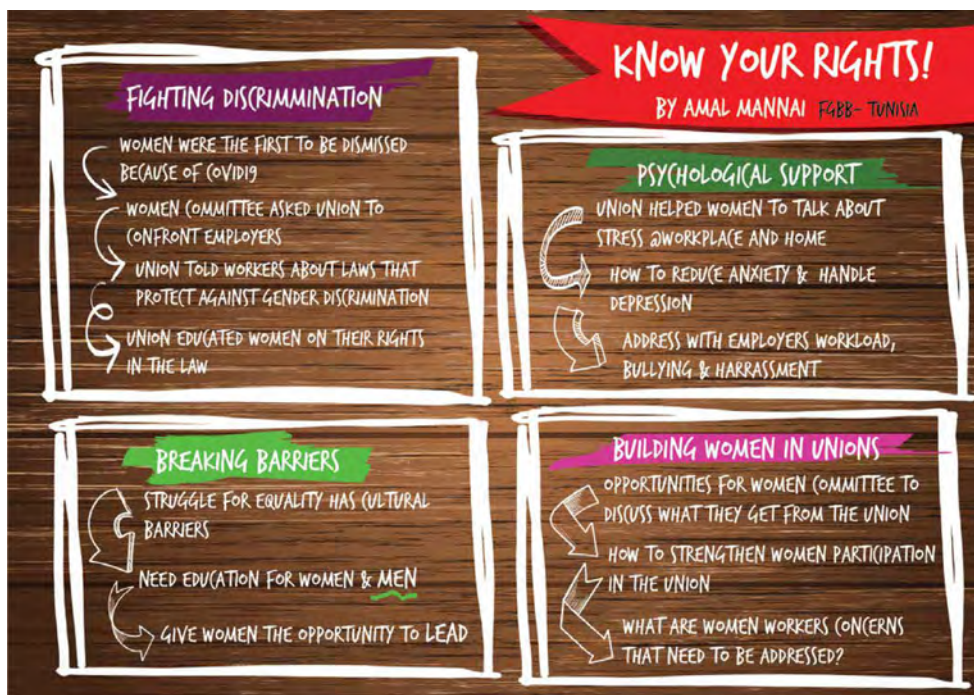
When the Covid-19 pandemic hit Tunisia, the first thing employers did was to fire women workers or to reduce their salaries. Women workers came to the union to get advice. The union's women's committee went straight to the union to get their help to confront employers.

"It was against the law for employers to fire women and to treat them differently from men," says FGBB's Amal Mannai. "The law prohibits discrimination. Employers were breaking that law," she says.

The union explained to the women that they had rights from the law and encouraged them to let the union take up the matter. The union confronted employers, it pointed out the national laws that the employers were breaking. Because of the union action on the matter, some women were compensated, while others were reinstated.

Psychological support

When women came to the union to get help about their dismissals and their loss of wages because of Covid-19, the union saw that these were not their only problems. Women were encouraged to talk, to share what was making them anxious and depressed. They began to share the stress that they faced both at work and at home. Talking about their troubles helped to reduce their anxiety and depression.



It also helped the union to understand the difficult issues that women faced at work like bullying and harassment, the workload and in some cases, the working hours. This enabled the union to go directly to the employers and urge them to adopt a preventive approach on these issues to reduce women's stress.

Building women in unions

The women's committee met to reflect on what women had gained from the union's interventions. They discussed how to get more women to join the union and resolved that talking to women and taking up women's concerns would encourage women to become more active in the union. The women's committee also recognised the importance of advocating for the ratification of ILO Convention 190 in order to put in place support for women who were being harassed in the workplace.

Breaking barriers

In Tunisia, there are deep-rooted cultural barriers to achieving equality between men and women but progress can be made at the workplace. The union has recognized that in order to make progress towards this there needs to be education for men and women on gender equality at all levels of the union. Also women must have the opportunity to lead, this means putting women in front of men and giving them the opportunity to speak for all workers.

Overcoming challenges of organizing women in construction

Jane Vargas, NUBCW and AWWCI, Philippines

Philippine construction union, NUBCW, organizes both formal and informal women construction workers.

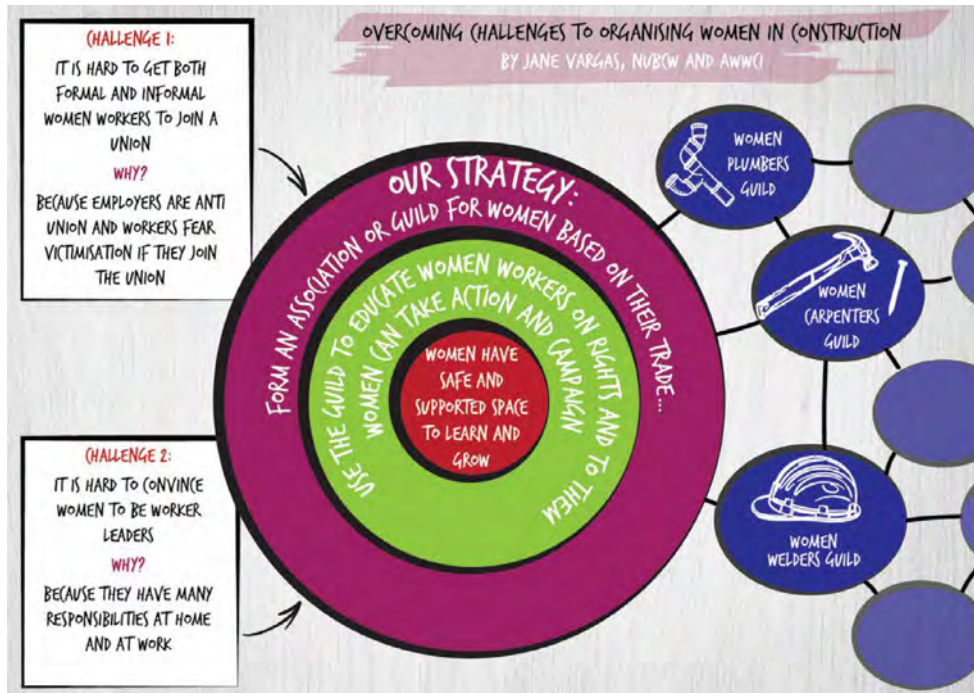
Vargas says there is "rampant use of contract work" in the construction sector. This means most women construction workers are considered informal workers. These women workers experience more poverty, unemployment and discrimination than formal workers. They are "more open to discussing violation of the laws by companies," she says.

"Formal workers are easier to find," but not easier to organise, says NUBCW's Jane Vargas. Employers easily influence formal workers. "They threaten to fire anyone who joins the union, they often give false information, paint unions in a bad light."

To deal with these different challenges, the union has set up the Association of Women Workers in the Construction Industry (AWWCI). This gives women the same support and solidarity that the union gives, but without the fearful connotations that women associate with the name "union".

Increasing visibility and participation of women in construction trades

AWWCI has set up guilds defined by skills: a Women Carpenters' Guild, Women Welders' Guild, a Women Plumbers' Guild. Here women workers, both formal and informal, can find out information on wages, occupational health and safety and



employment benefits, and are slowly introduced to the real work of a trade union. In these guilds, women construction workers become exposed to the “importance of a unified labour force, workers’ rights, and understanding labour law.” Armed with this knowledge, informal workers at their workplaces often “take the lead in organizing other workers within the informal construction sector.”

Skills training and recognition

A key problem, especially for women informal workers, is many don’t have papers for the skills that they have mastered. The guilds help women construction workers get certification of their skills or access to training on new skills that are needed in the sector.

Mobilizing around campaigns relevant to women

NUBCW and AWWCI and the guilds recognize that women’s participation is limited because of their many responsibilities outside of the workplace: taking care of the children, cleaning the house, etc. The organizations choose relevant campaigns like maternity leave and reproductive health and ensure women can easily participate.

Encouraging women to take up leadership positions

Many women have dared to take up the challenge that “construction work is not just for men”, Vargas says. However, encouraging them to take up leadership positions is not easy. Their multiple burdens at home make them hesitant to take on a further leadership responsibility.

AWWCI tries to overcome this by providing a “safe space” for women to become leaders. All members are women, all leaders are women and they can be leaders at a local level which makes it easier for them to juggle their many other responsibilities. And once in these positions, Vargas says, the training that AWWCI gives them “creates a sense of responsibility in women workers to take up positions at the national level and be involved in creating change and representing community issues.”

Building women construction workers

Shalini Trivedi, SEWA, India

In India, almost all women construction workers are informal. The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) with 1.8 million members, is central to the organisation of these women and other informal workers. It has organized informal women construction workers strategically and methodically, always putting their needs first.

SEWA started to focus on organizing informal women construction workers in 1996 after the government passed two laws. One regulated the welfare of construction workers and the other their working conditions. However, government was slow to implement these laws.



Talking to workers

SEWA took up the challenge to get government to implement them. It first met and talked with the construction workers and asked them what problems they faced. Workers told SEWA, "there were lots of accidents happening and medical aid was not provided," says SEWA's Shalini Trivedi.

From workers' common complaints, SEWA organized a campaign demanding an insurance policy for workers. It had two components: a medical benefit as well as payment of 50 percent of a worker's wage while the worker was off sick. They went direct to workers to tell them about the campaign. They organized community level meetings, worksite meetings and met at particular crossroads where builders go every day to hire informal workers. Workers joined up.

Using organization to pressurise government

“Through that [campaign] we were able to organize many of the construction workers,” says Trivedi and that gave them the power to go to the labour minister in Gujarat and tell him: “See, we are in such a great number, you need to implement this central Act.”

Once they had a base of members, says Trivedi, SEWA was able to take up another burning issue for the women members – men and women did the “same work, but they do not get the same money, they are always paid less.” Even if they were expert plasterers or experts in masonry work, they didn’t have the certified skill training, they were “always seen as unskilled workers.”

Co-operative

SEWA set up a builders’ co-operative which now has 500 construction women workers. The co-op provides certified training for its members and bids direct to the state and private companies for construction contracts. So far, its members have worked on building an international stadium and several hospitals. It negotiates a memorandum of understanding with the contractor to guarantee workers’ wages and conditions.

The co-op also resolved another problem that women faced. Women workers battled to get work on the open market because they didn’t have tools and equipment, nor did they have money to buy them or to store them safely in their small homes. The co-op now has a tool library with books, tools and equipment that its members can rent from which makes the library sustainable.

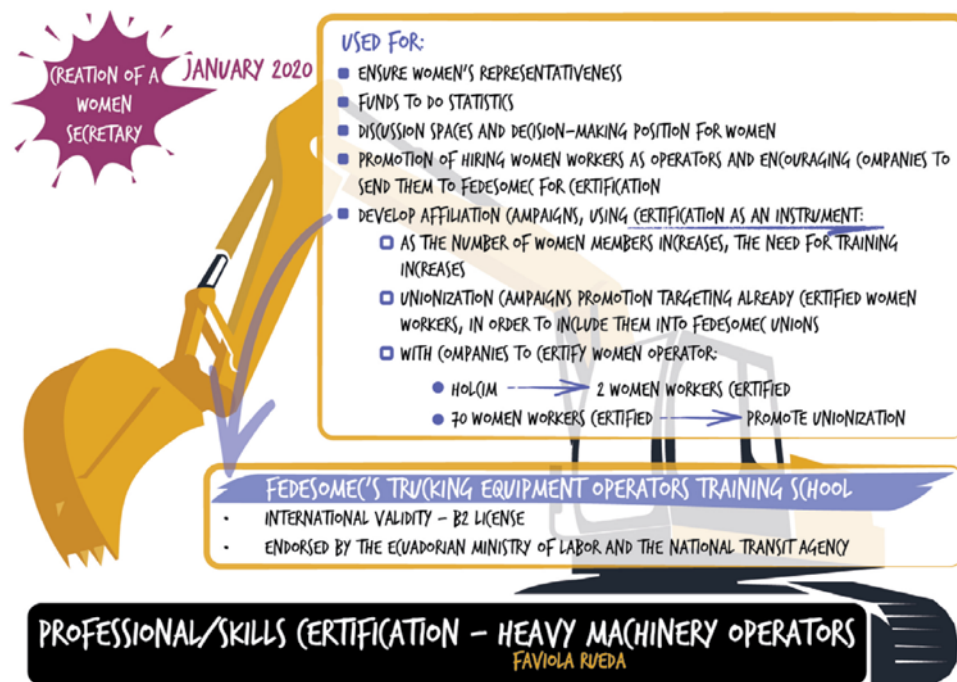
Trivedi sums up SEWA’s strategy saying they have a dual organizing approach: **struggle and development**. Organized workers **struggle** to demand that government provide them with the rights as the law stipulates. The union focuses on its members’ **development** by building its co-operative, providing tools through its tools’ library, upgrading the skills of its members by certifying their skills and providing ongoing leadership, as well as issue-based and financial literacy training.

Certifying women as heavy machinery operators

Faviola Rueda, FEDESOMECE (Ecuador)

Ecuador trade union federation, FEDESOMECE, created its Women Secretariat in January 2020. Since then the structure has worked to promote professional and union training campaigns, ensure the representation of women workers, promote the hiring of women as operators of heavy construction machinery and to ensure that women’s voices are heard.

Through the Women’s Secretariat, FEDESOMECE lobbied for the expansion of spaces for women’s representation, so that their demands could be prepared by themselves. In addition, they considered that obtaining funds to do statistics would also be an important work instrument to negotiate jobs for women. In these spaces of discussion and decision-making positions for women, important advances for FEDESOMECE were debated and achieved.



FEDESOMECE has set up a Training School for Truck Equipment Operators and will ensure a number of women and young workers are trained annually. FEDESOMECE's Trucking Equipment Operators' Training School provides a license with international validity and is recognized by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Labor and the National Transit Agency.

The Women Secretariat of the federation has promoted the hiring of women workers as operators and encouraged companies to send them to the FEDESOMECE Training school for certification. Already 70 women workers have been certified, as well as two women workers from Holcim. As the number of women members increases, the need for training is also increasing. The federation has also developed affiliation campaigns, which target already certified women workers and encourage them to join FEDESOMECE unions.

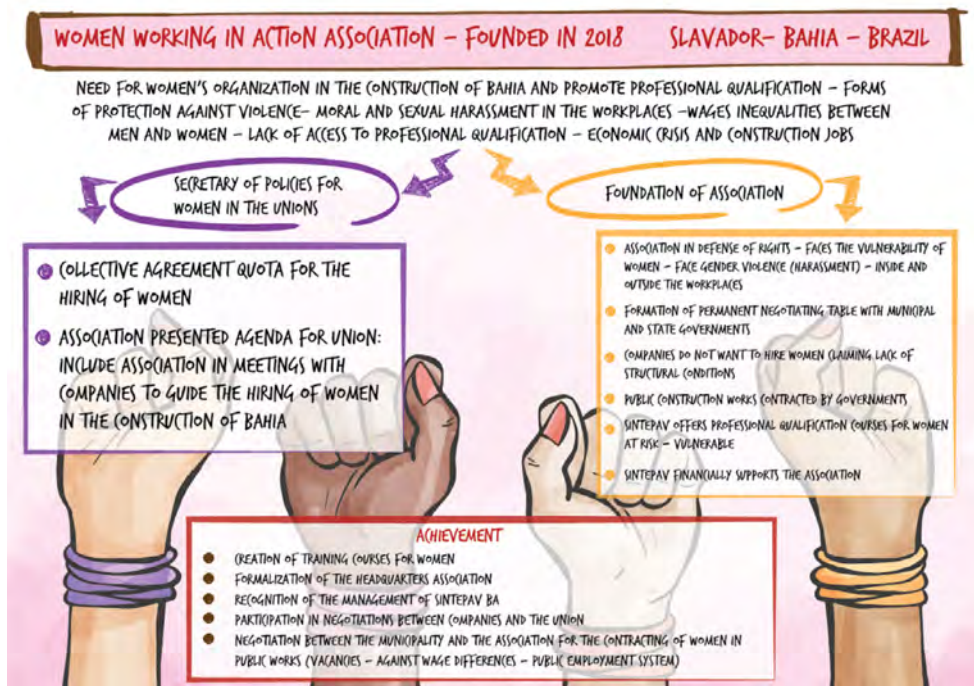
Women's Association wins rights for construction women

Golda Mazur - SINTEPAV-BA (Brazil)

SINTEPAV-BA created the Association of Women Workers in Action in 2018. This structure works to include more women in the construction industry in the State of Bahia, fight against discrimination and harassment, demand equal pay and develop campaigns and training for women construction workers.

1. Fighting against discrimination and harassment

The Association works to defend women's rights. A key focus of the Association's is to create ways to overcome the vulnerability of working women both in the



workplace and in situations of vulnerability outside of work. Women workers are participating through actions in the workplace and have demonstrated that workers need to organise to address the issues of harassment and gender-based violence to overcome them. They are showing that whilst gender violence and harassment inside and outside the workplace may be a cultural element of our society, it can be overcome.

The Association works on the rights of women and defends them legally so that through these actions and others, women secure more dignified living conditions. The Association offers professional qualification courses for vulnerable women at risk, to provide them with opportunities to attain financial security through employment as this is often a factor that keeps women in abusive situations. The Association also engages male workers, it encouraged them to join with women workers in their struggle to overcome discrimination and harassment, guided by the principles of inclusion and class solidarity.

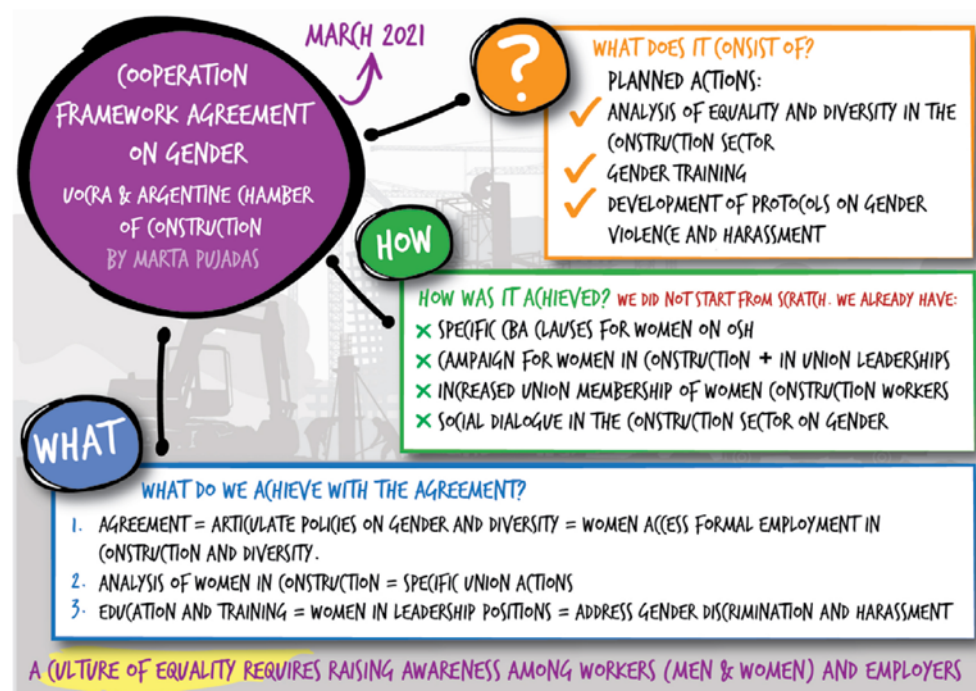
The Association has presented a Gender Agenda to the Committee Board of Union. It requested that the Association be included in meetings with private companies to guide the hiring of women workers in the Bahia construction sector. SINTEPAV-BA has now signed an agreement with private sector construction companies that recognizes that the Association to be present in negotiations with private sector construction companies which allows participation of women leaders in the negotiation teams and negotiations between companies and trade unions. They have also agreed on a quota for the hiring of women in construction projects and continue to discuss with private companies how to overcome structural conditions they claim prevent them from hiring women workers. In the public sphere, the Union's Association has formed a permanent negotiating table with municipal and state governments. This is making it possible to overcome the reticence of the public sector to hire women because of structural conditions. Also acknowledged is that the hiring of women workers must be based on equal pay for equal work, which is a great achievement.

Cooperation Framework Agreement on Gender

Marta Pujadas - UOCRA (Argentina)

In March 2021, following campaign activities of the unions women's structures nationally, UOCRA in Argentina signed a Framework Cooperation Agreement on Gender with the Argentine Chamber of Construction CAMARCO. The objectives of the Cooperation Agreement are the preparation of a joint diagnosis of the state of equality and diversity within the construction sector; the promotion of comprehensive strategies and training activities aimed at workers in situations of gender-based violence; the guarantee that discrimination will be eliminated between women and men in the construction sector; the design of a comprehensive training plan on gender perspective and the development of protocols and devices for addressing and preventing situations of violence and gender-based harassment in the workplace.

Then, in October 2021, UOCRA, in conjunction with the Ministries of Labor, Public Works and Social Development and the CAMARCO also signed an agreement to implement the Program "Building Jobs and Equality". This agreement aimed to develop training activities, certify the competencies of labour or professional skills; and incorporate unemployed women workers in the construction sector.



The new Cooperation Agreement will help the UOCRA-Women Team to analyze if equity and diversity in the construction industry are respected by employers at the workplace. This is a great opportunity for the union to highlight problems in these areas. It also seeks to develop protocols on gender violence and harassment to be implemented at the workplace.

The Cooperation Agreement supports UOCRA's national actions on gender. It enforces specific CBA clauses for women workers on OHS. It allows women to access formal employment in construction and the union can then analyze the number of women in construction needed to accomplish gender equity.

The Agreement supports the Union's campaign for more women in construction and enables it to hold social dialogue in the construction sector on gender. It's now up to the union to increase union membership of women construction workers and get more women into union leadership positions.

Women building women trade unionists through mentorship

Ivana Dimitrova, SGIP, North Macedonia

Ivana Dimitrova belongs to trade union SGIP and has been the main trade union representative for the past 12 years at a construction company in North Macedonia. One of the few women in a male-dominated industry and trade union, she puts down her achievement to the mentoring that she received from an older woman trade unionist early in her working life.

Learning from another

When she was a new, young worker, Dimitrova responded to an invitation to a workshop "to learn about trade unions". She attended and there she met an experienced woman trade unionist. "She explained what was happening, she then invited me to different meetings, she involved me in all the seminars that were taking place and I could hear and learn about the trade unions, the rights of women, the rights of young people, and so on."

Daily she and her mentor would be in touch. "Whenever I had a question or something unclear, I was able to call her and she was there to explain," says Dimitrova.

Her mentor monitored her and supervised her. If Dimitrova made a mistake, her mentor never criticized. Instead, she was constructive and used the mistake to build up Dimitrova's experience so that she "could improve and advance and one day be a trade union leader too."

Very quickly Dimitrova became familiar with trade unions and the challenges so that when a woman trade union representative at her own workplace retired, Dimitrova was able to take her place. Now she is not only trade union representative at her own workplace but also holds the position of deputy president on BWI's women's committee for Europe.

Passing on her own trade union experience

Now that Dimitrova is an experienced trade unionist, she is doing what her own mentor did for her: “transferring that knowledge onward to young people.” She goes to seminars for young people. “I watch the young people, they were me actually [in my youth],” and there she identifies young women who are active to whom she can pass on her skills.

She has started working with Daniella, the president of the youth section of the trade union. “I talked to her about everything, I explained the things to her, I help her to feel better because here as everywhere else in the world, the construction sector is considered to be a man’s environment.”



Dimitrova hopes that one day Daniella will do the same and transfer everything she learnt on to another young woman. “There are not so many women in this construction world and it’s good to stick together, it’s good to work together, we learn from each other and we should be supportive of each other,” says Dimitrova.

Mentors like Dimitrova are keeping women in the union and the industries, building their trust in the union and developing new leaders.

Getting women into trades and keeping them there

Ellen McNally – ETU, Australia

The Electrical Trade Union (ETU) in Australia organises more than 60 000 electricians, apprentices and electrical workers. In union-organised electrical workplaces about three to four per cent of workers are women; in non-unionised workplaces the number of women can be as low as just one in 100 workers.

“Trades are good jobs,” says ETU’s National Women’s Committee leader, Ellen McNally. During the Covid-19 pandemic, women in “traditional female jobs, lost those jobs, but the trades were able to continue. We need to bring our younger generation into the trades so that they have good secure jobs and financial independence. We need to take this moment that we have with Covid to create a new future for the next generation.”

This is not an easy task, “this is very much a man’s world and we are still told to love it or leave it,” she says. Not only are there barriers to women entering the trades, but “the increasing number of women who leave each year,” has forced the union to start dealing with why this is happening.

The result is a two-pronged campaign to make it easier for women to enter the trades and to improve conditions that are forcing them out.

Making it easier for women to enter the trades

- **ENGAGE** employers on language in advertisements so that women are encouraged to apply
- **NEGOTIATE** higher adult apprentice rates of pay – apprentices are no longer teenagers being supported by their families. They are adults in their 30s and 40s (many women) and the higher rates are encouraging them to apply.
- **ORGANIZE** work site tours for potential apprentices so that women can see for themselves what to expect
- Female tradeswomen (sparkettes) **MENTOR** women apprentices in the electrical trades and industry
- Sparkettes **MEET** through social media and face-to-face meet-ups

Improving the conditions forcing women out of trades






The union launched its **NOWHERE TO GO CAMPAIGN** and invited its women members to share their stories of their workplace amenities like toilets. The reports were alarming. Women were “often expected to use toilets with no doors”, share them with men and travel great distances to use bathrooms. Some women reported no toilets at all, others that toilets were often “dirty, unhygienic”, there were no “sanitary disposal bins” nor warm water with “appropriate soaps to remove oil from hands so women could safely change sanitary products”, she says.

INCREASING THE NUMBER OF WOMEN IN TRADES

1 BARRIER = RECRUITMENT

MORE WOMEN START APPRENTICESHIPS BUT THERE ARE LOW JOB APPLICATIONS




OVERCOME BY:

-  ENGAGING EMPLOYERS ON LANGUAGE IN ADVERTISEMENTS
-  ADULT APPRENTICE RATES OF PAY
-  WORK SITE TOURS FOR POTENTIAL APPRENTICES
-  MENTORING THROUGH "SPARKETTES" = FEMALE TRADESWOMAN SUPPORT GROUP FOR ELECTRICAL TRADES AND INDUSTRY
-  SPARKETTES HAS A SOCIAL MEDIA DISCUSSION GROUP AND FACE-TO-FACE MEET-UPS

2 BARRIER = RETENTION

WOMEN DON'T COMPLETE APPRENTICESHIPS
WOMEN DON'T STAY LONGTERM IN TRADES
DUE TO CULTURAL BARRIERS

OVERCOME BY:

-  LOOKING INTO ISSUES OF OHS & PSYCHOSOCIAL INJURIES
-  **NO WHERE TO GO** (CAMPAIGNS AND VARIOUS OTHER CAMPAIGNS TO COMPEL EMPLOYERS TO PROVIDE WORK ENVIRONMENTS THAT TAKE WOMEN INTO CONSIDERATION)
- 

BY ELLEN MCNALLY
ETV - AUSTRALIA

The failure to supply appropriate amenities for women is a “health and safety issue”, says McNally. With the responses of their members, the union put together a campaign booklet, [Nowhere to go](#), which includes detailed recommendations to employers and government on what must be provided.

The responsibility doesn't just lie with employers and government, says McNally. “It's not enough to bring women into our industries if we are not making the cultural changes and starting with ourselves as unions. [Our unions] need to be reflecting what we want to see in our workplaces.”

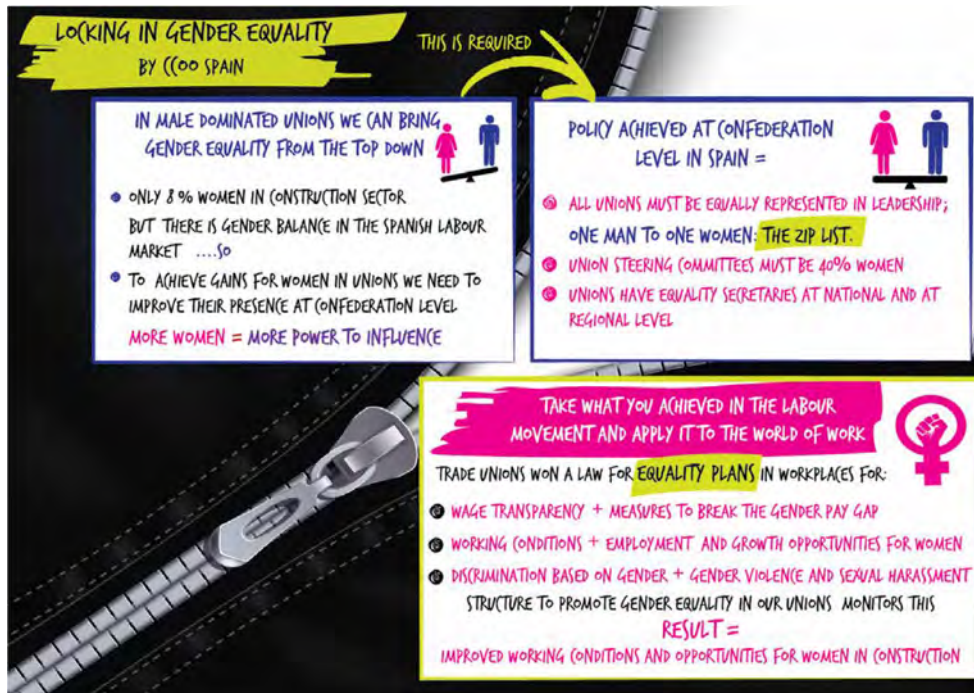
Locking in Gender Equality

Phila Expositor – Habitat, CCOO, Maria de Angeles, CCOO

Spanish trade union federation, CCOO, is focusing on bringing gender equality to its unions and to the workplaces it organizes.

Bringing gender equality to male-dominated unions

In male-dominated unions, “we can build gender equality from top down,” says CCOO's Maria de Angeles. In Spain, only 8% of workers in the construction industry are women. But at a confederation level, union policy says that “all unions must be equally represented in leadership,” says de Angeles. The Zip List as it's known, says that at a leadership level there must be ONE MAN TO ONE WOMAN and that union steering committees must be made up of at least 40% women. Moreover, equality secretaries at national and regional level ensure that women's voices are heard.



Bringing gender equality to the workplace

New laws put in place in Spain that the unions have been campaigning for, make it compulsory for employers with more than 50 workers (including part-time and contract workers) to have detailed gender equality plans and to ensure equal pay for equal work. The laws also helps women workers by banning discrimination based on gender, gender violence and sexual harassment.

These new laws provide a “historical moment ... to bring more women into the [construction] sector,” says Phila Expositor, Women’s Secretary of Habitat, an affiliate of CCOO.

Recently two Royal Decrees (laws) were passed that significantly advance the equality of women. The new law “regulates the presence of women not just for collective bargaining in the sector, but it also targets specific areas for promotion of equality between men and women in production,” says Expositor.

Companies must draw up an equality programme. This must detail how many women they employ and what positions they hold. This exercise will expose under representation in the trades. “Then we can agree on compulsory percentages and increase the presence of women in the company,” says Expositor.

Surprisingly, they found that often women were “properly qualified or more qualified than men but their career was stagnant because of the glass ceiling,” she says. Having all this detail has helped them to understand why women hold unequal positions at the workplace and “attack the problem at its root”. Their strategy addresses issues like recruitment, training and internal promotion.

Develop women structures... promote women agenda in the trade union

Jennifer Neduzak, IUPAT, USA

Unions in the USA face a problem: only about one in ten workers belong to a trade union. This makes it easy for employers to disregard minimum wage laws, abuse overtime and health and safety laws and many other workers' rights. Women, African American, Latino and young workers receive the brunt of this discrimination.

Forming constituency groups

In 2014, IUPAT, a trade union that organizes painters and allied trades, passed a resolution to add CORE constituency groups to their organization. "CORE stands for Community Organizing for Real Economics," says IUPAT's Jennifer Neduzak. Constituency groups included African American, Latino, women and young workers. In 2021, an LGBTQ constituency was added.

"I'm very proud that our union is progressive enough to see the changes that are coming and decided that they wanted to get ahead of this," says Neduzak.

CORE aims to grow the union by partnering with local community groups and bringing unorganized workers from these different constituencies into the union.

DEVELOP WOMEN STRUCTURES PROMOTE WOMEN AGENDA IN TU

- UNTIL 2018 NO WOMEN STRUCTURES IN THE UNION
- UNION CONVENTION FORMED CORE WOMEN CONSTITUENCY GROUPS AND MADE CHANGES IN THE UNION STATUTES (ALONG WITH OTHER CORE GROUP OF YOUTH, LATINO, ETC...)
- CORE WOMEN CONSTITUENCY GROUPS EXPANDED MANDATE AND FORMED INTERNATIONAL WOMEN COMMITTEE - IWC - FOR THE USA AND CANADA.
- IWC CREATED TEMPLATE HOW TO ESTABLISH WOMAN COMMITTEES AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL. THERE ARE CURRENTLY 12 OUT OF 32 DISTRICTS WHO HAVE ESTABLISHED A WOMEN'S COMMITTEE
- MATERNITY LEAVE PROGRAM IN UNION
- THE GOAL IS 20% WOMEN WITHIN OUR TRADES OR CRAFTS BY 2024
- AFFORDABLE CHILDCARE CAMPAIGNS AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL
- LEADERSHIP TRAINING SERIES FOR WOMEN

JENNIFER NEDUZAK
IUPAT - USA

Setting up women's committees

Once CORE was adopted, the women's constituency group set up an International Women's Committee (IWC) that covered the USA and Canada.

It functioned so well that the IWC decided to set up women's committees at a district level as well. The IWC drew up a template to advise districts how to do this and from zero women's committees in 2018, there are now 12 established women's committees in 32 districts. These groups are made up of rank-and-file members and staff of the district councils in the USA and Canada.

Work of the district women's committees

Women's committees are focused on 5 programs:

1. Rolling out a maternity leave program:

- ▶ **Some conditions apply:** Women must be enrolled in the District Council Health and Welfare Program and must have worked 1000 hours
- ▶ **Benefits include:**
 - Wage replacement of 67% or \$800/ week
 - If they cannot work during pregnancy, they will receive up to 6 months paid leave
 - Paid post-partum leave for 6 weeks (8 weeks for c-section)

2. Targeting 20 percent women in the painting trades or crafts by 2024:

The women's committees work with district councils to engage signatory contractors on the issue.

3. Campaigning for affordable childcare at the district level so women can go to work and be active trade union members.

4. Running a leadership training series for women entering leadership positions in District Councils, Locals and as international staff.

5. Changing the culture by running anti-harassment training for apprentices, journeymen, site-management and union leadership. Engage with employers to open their doors and evolve their hiring practices to include a diverse and inclusive workforce.

Women in Trades

Sharing good practices from around the world

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