THEMATIC BRIEF

GLOBAL DEAL
TOGETHER FOR DECENT WORK AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH

THE CONTRIBUTION OF SOCIAL DIALOGUE TO **GENDER EQUALITY**

International Labour Organization

GENDER EQUALITY

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This brief has been produced with support from the Government of Sweden within the framework of the Global Deal for Decent Work and Inclusive Growth. It has benefited from inputs and comments received by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Government of Sweden, the Swedish organization Union to Union as well as the International Labour Organization (ILO, Bureau for Workers' Activities; Bureau for Employers' Activities Activities and the International Labour Standards Department).

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Ultimate responsibility for the brief rests with the ILO.

First published in March 2019.
Revised in December 2020.

1. INTRODUCTION: THE NEXUS BETWEEN SOCIAL DIALOGUE AND GENDER EQUALITY

Sound industrial relations and effective social dialogue contribute to good governance in the workplace, decent work, inclusive economic growth and democracy.[1] They can also be important means of advancing gender equality and fair labour markets, and vice versa. This was reaffirmed in the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work (2019)[2] which states:

"III. The Conference calls upon all Members, taking into account national circumstances, to work individually and collectively, **on the basis of tripartism and social dialogue**, and with the support of the ILO, to further develop its human-centred approach to the future of work by:
A. Strengthening the capacities of all people to benefit from the opportunities of a changing world of work through:
(i) the **effective realization of gender equality in opportunities and treatment**" [emphasis added by the authors].

Social dialogue, including collective bargaining, has enormous potential to contribute to the achievement of the ambitious Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, notably those on gender equality (SDG 5) and decent work and economic growth (SDG 8).[3] New initiatives aimed at facilitating the attainment of these goals have been established, including the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC). Spearheaded by the ILO, UN Women and the OECD, this coalition brings together governments, employers' and workers' organizations, companies and academia to devise ways to accelerate progress on the achievement of equal pay for work of equal value by 2030 (SDG 8.5).

However, women workers, everywhere across the world, continue to be under-represented in decision-making bodies and processes that shape workplaces and employment outcomes – including in contexts where women make up the majority of the workforce. This is not only unfair to women, it is also counterproductive for businesses, economies and societies at large.

The current COVID-19 pandemic, according to available evidence, seems to be affecting women more severely than men as they are more likely to bear the brunt of the social and economic consequences of the pandemic. This carries the risk of undoing women's advances in recent decades, widening further gender inequalities in the world of work, thereby jeopardizing the prospect of building back better.[4]

This thematic brief seeks to understand the reasons for this situation and to identify actions that governments, employers' and workers' organizations could take to advance gender equality through social dialogue. The ILO legal framework (International Labour Standards) on gender equality is very important in this context, in particular the fundamental Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100) and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111). These conventions are widely ratified and both highlight the importance of tripartism by setting out requirements of cooperation with the social partners to address gender-based discrimination and promote gender equality. In particular, Convention No. 111 requires Member States to seek this cooperation in promoting the acceptance and observance of the national equality policy and to consult with representative workers' and employers' organizations on the determination of special measures of protection or assistance, such as affirmative action measures.

The brief also examines the importance of social dialogue in the application of the ground-breaking Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) and Recommendation No. 206 on the same subject matter. It draws upon innovative experiences from different regions of the world. In particular, it looks at how social dialogue can deliver gender-equal outcomes in a range of different sectors, whether in the formal or the informal economy, including during the ongoing pandemic, and identifies the circumstances and factors that can help bring about transformative change. The brief concludes with some key recommendations for governments and employers' and workers' organizations.

2. WHAT IS SOCIAL DIALOGUE, AND WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES FOR ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH IT?

Social dialogue includes all types of negotiation, consultation and exchange of information between or among representatives of governments, employers and workers and their organizations.

Over time, the scope of social dialogue, including collective bargaining, has expanded in many countries to encompass topics that are essential to achieving gender parity at work and in the family. These include: equal access for women and men to jobs and skills; maternity and parental leave beyond the duration established by law; the promotion of equal pay for work of equal value to ensure fair wages for men and women; and prevention of and protection against violence and sexual harassment.

Gender-inclusive and gender-responsive workplace cooperation helps enterprises to attract the best employees; enhance organizational performance; reduce costs associated with staff turnover; improve access to target markets; and minimize legal risks – all while enhancing their reputation.[5] Indeed, companies with the highest levels of gender diversity on their executive teams are 21 per cent more likely than others to experience above-average profitability.[6]

However, limitations regarding the impact and sustainability of these efforts, as well as their relatively small scale, are apparent. These limitations are compounded by declining union density rates and shrinking collective bargaining coverage, which are in turn partially caused by weakening support for multi-employer bargaining, unconditional derogations from collective agreements and disorganized decentralization of collective bargaining.[7] In a number of countries, social dialogue institutions are struggling to remain relevant in a context of profound economic, political and social changes.[8]

At the same time, although some progress is evident, unequal power relations between women and men,[9] and the time poverty suffered by women as a result of their bearing a disproportionate burden of unpaid care work,[10] continue to limit women's voice and representation both in the workplace and in related decision-making bodies and processes.[11] And yet, if women had a stronger say in decision-making processes such as social dialogue and collective bargaining, these processes would themselves gain in legitimacy, credibility and effectiveness, to everyone's benefit.

3. IMPROVING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING AND IN SOCIAL DIALOGUE

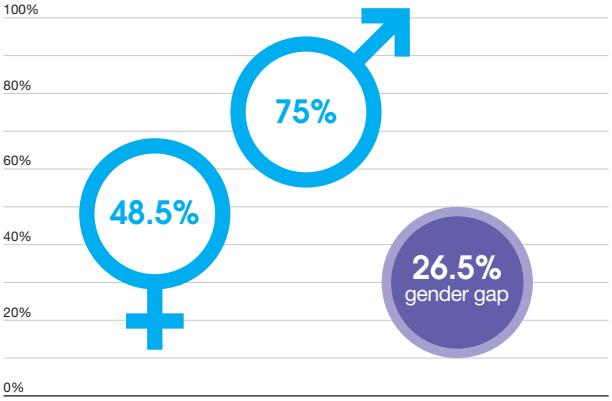
The next section considers how these key conditions can be promoted in practice.

In order to achieve SDG 5.5, ensuring "women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life", it is essential that women are adequately represented in social dialogue bodies and in collective bargaining teams. More women in these bodies and teams would not only make social dialogue more relevant and responsive to women's working lives, it could also trigger transformational changes in other social spheres, provided that women and men are encouraged and trained to advance gender equality in social dialogue, and also in the labour market and the workplace at large.

ILO global research confirms the persistent under-representation of women in national social dialogue institutions (NSDIs). A study of 195 countries, including 187 ILO member States, shows that in 2008 female membership of NSDIs was on average less than 20 per cent; available data for 2018 show average female membership in NSDIs still only between 20 and 35 per cent, in particular in Africa, the Americas and Europe. There are, nevertheless, some inspiring examples of parity or near-parity (female membership in NSDIs of 45 per cent or over), namely France, Norway, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Samoa and Switzerland.[12]

Despite some progress, then, the continued under-representation of women in social dialogue reflects a serious democratic deficit, undermining the functioning and the legitimacy of social dialogue institutions.[13] It also reflects a paradox: namely, that although today women in many parts of the world are better educated,[14] and are more likely to join trade unions[15] and employers' organizations,[16] their representation in decision-making positions in social dialogue remains lower than men's.[17] Moreover, even in places around the world where there is an increase in women trade union members, this does not always result in a proportional increase in women's representation in leadership structures.[18]

Gender gap of the labour force participation rate at global level

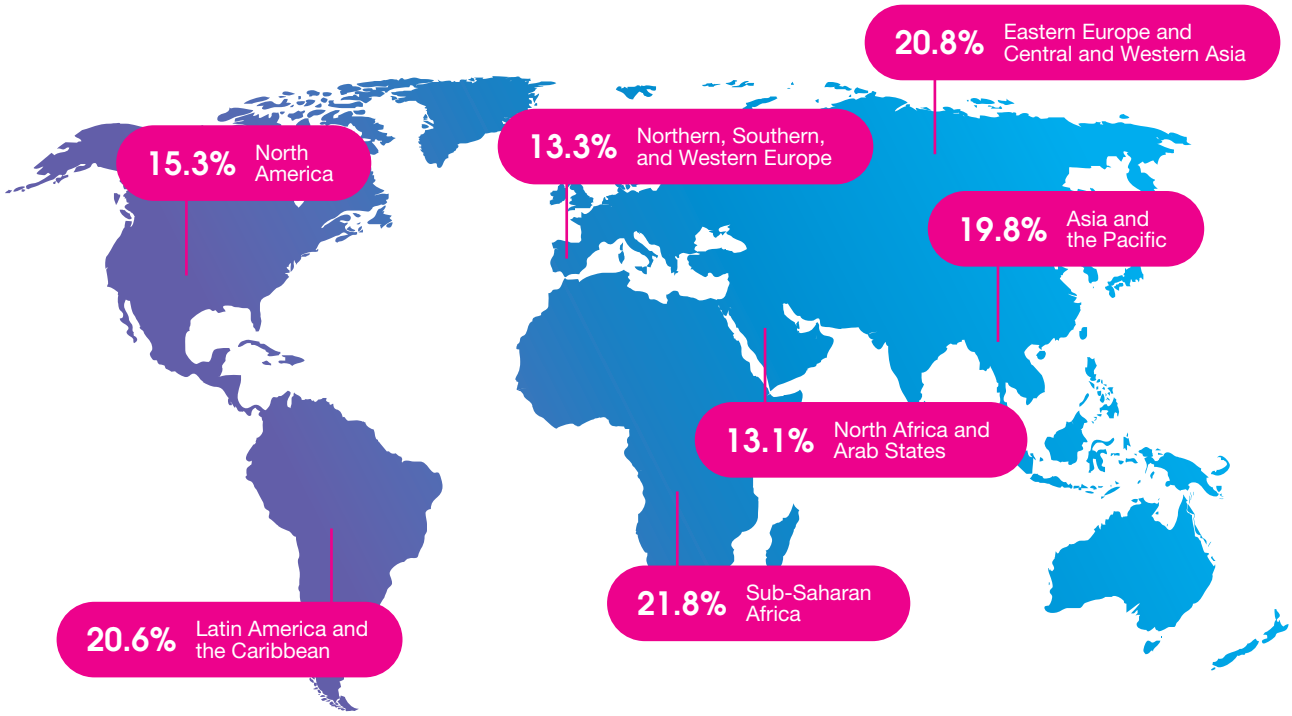


Source: World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends for Women, 2017.

Gender pay gap at global level (hourly pay)

Source: ILO Global Wage Report 2018/19.

Gender pay gap per region (factor-weighted hourly pay)



Source: ILO Global Wage Report 2018/19.

An understanding of structural and other reasons why women are so poorly represented in social dialogue institutions can help in identifying strategies to overcome this shortfall. Deficits in women's voice and agency in social dialogue reflect women's uneven participation in the labour force. Currently, only 48.5 per cent of women, compared to 75 per cent of men, are in the labour force (a gender gap of 26.5 points).[19] Those women who are in the labour market experience a range of disadvantages, including discrimination at recruitment and during employment and vertical and horizontal occupational gender segregation, with implications for the type and quality and level of jobs in which women are employed. Globally, women continue to be paid, on average, 20 per cent less than men; in some regions, their income can be 40 per cent lower than that of their male peers.[20] In addition, working arrangements and non-standard forms of employment, as well as occupations and sectors in which women are predominantly employed, often "fall outside the scope of labour legislation, social security regulations and relevant collective agreements".[21] It is also alarming that progress towards gender parity, including in the area of economic participation, is reported to be shifting into "reverse" mode.[22]

Deficits in women's voice and agency at work are caused by unequal power relations between women and men, persistent gender stereotypes, the undervaluing of women's work and women's shouldering a disproportionate burden of care work: all these factors lead to both direct and indirect discrimination.[23] As the global initiative on women in business and management by the ILO Bureau of Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) has found, gender stereotyping linked to family responsibilities and masculine corporate cultures remain among the strongest barriers to women's participation in business and management.[24]

Many employers' and workers' organizations, as well as governments, believe that more needs to be done to promote women's representation in decision-making[25]. In terms of monitoring ILO Conventions on equality, ILO constituents could better promote gender equality by providing relevant and timely information to the supervisory bodies on the many issues relating to gender equality both in law and in practice in the country concerned in terms of the application of both Conventions No. 100 and No. 111 (as envisaged under article 23 of the ILO Constitution).

Trade unions have made efforts to ensure that women's representation in decision-making reflects the range of jobs, skill areas and sectors in which women work.[26] Examples of such efforts include quotas for women's participation in union congresses, reserved seats on executive bodies, and representation of women in decision-making bodies proportional to their membership in the organization at large.[27] Dedicated gender equality departments and gender equality or diversity committees have also been created in many trade union confederations as a basis for advancing equality in both the internal and external functions of trade unions.[28]

A survey by the ILO Bureau of Workers' Activities (ACTRAV)[29] points to ways in which women's representation in trade union decision-making structures can lead to improved outcomes in setting union wages. The survey found that 34 per cent of unions responding to the survey had women on their executive committees.

Regional variations are apparent: for example, in North America 45 per cent of union executive committee members are women, whereas in the Arab States the proportion is just 25 per cent. Worldwide, women make up around 30 per cent of trade unions' wage negotiation teams, but this percentage is much lower in Asia and the Pacific, Africa and the Arab States. Around half of the trade unions responding to the survey stated that their negotiating teams or commission members are briefed or trained on gender issues in preparation for wage negotiations. Most had a specific gender or broader equality committee. In addition, 70 per cent of responding unions stated that they had an internal operational strategy to improve female representation in the organization (e.g. internal guidelines or quotas). The European Trade Union Confederation has been particularly proactive in this regard (see **box 1**).

Box 1.

"From membership to leadership": Gender-balanced representation in trade union decision-making bodies – The experience of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)

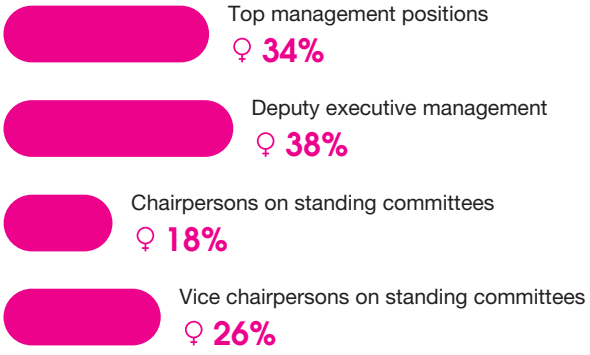
In 2011 the ETUC executive committee adopted recommendations for improving the gender balance in trade union structures to better reflect the diversity of the membership and to ensure that the ETUC adequately represents women's interests.[30] At its 2017 mid-term conference, the ETUC introduced equal representation – 50:50 women and men – in the ETUC executive and other committees. As part of its effort to promote gender diversity in trade union membership and decision-making structures, the ETUC carries out an annual equality survey to monitor women's representation in unions. The 2018 survey[31] noted that while female trade union membership had risen to 46.1 per cent of overall union membership, women accounted for just 37.2 per cent of union leadership teams, 33.5 per cent of unions' key decision-making bodies and only 26.2 per cent of the national confederations' key leaders. Although these figures show that there is still room for improvement, they mark significant progress since the 2011 resolution.

A survey by the ILO's Bureau of Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) found that some progress had been made in improving the representation of women in employers' organizations (EOs): "Women leaders and managers are gaining ground in EO secretariats."[32] The survey, based on responses from over 50 employers' organizations, found that women occupy 34 per cent of top management positions and 38 per cent of deputy executive management positions. Women made up 18 per cent of the chairpersons and 26 per cent of vice-chairpersons on standing committees; these data were "indicative of the increase in women's participation in lower level leadership positions".[33] Of the top two positions in EO executive committees that manage the day-to-day implementation of the respective organizations' strategic plans, 18.7 per cent were held by women. Of all the EOs surveyed, 7.5 per cent had women chairing the board; most had 10 per cent or fewer women on the board of directors; and just 8 per cent had gender-balanced boards.[34]

As the global initiative on women in business and management by the Bureau of Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) has established, there are plenty of good practices available to promote women in business and management at company level. Measures suggested by EOs included child-friendly policies, positive discrimination, addressing male-dominated cultures and encouraging more dialogue around gender diversity to support work–family balance and greater equality in leadership and management for their staff.[35] Gender diversity in EOs is crucial: "Ultimately, the more gender diverse the members of the EO, the greater the pool of women able to lead, represent and/or participate in decision-making within EO governance structures."[36]

Greater efforts are needed to improve women's access to senior and leadership positions in the workplace and in workers' and employers' organizations in order to integrate gender equality into bargaining more effectively. In some cases work to this end can be facilitated through legal measures to strengthen women's representation in social dialogue, as in Algeria and Chile, where legislation was recently enacted stipulating that one-third of members of NSDIs should be women.[37] It is also encouraging that women and migrant workers are increasingly challenging unions with the assertion that they should be more inclusive in order to be effective agents of social change.[38]

Representation of women in employers' organizations at global level



Source: ILO: A Global Snapshot: Women Leaders and Managers in Employers' Organizations, 2017.

4. MAKING SOCIAL DIALOGUE MORE RESPONSIVE TO GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS

Social dialogue can promote gender equality, taking into account different levels of institutionalization of social dialogue and collective bargaining. In some countries, where there are no formal social dialogue structures for resolving work-related problems, dialogue between workers and managers/employers can be encouraged with the aim of implementing practical changes and adjustments in the workplace, often opening doors to the representation of workers by trade unions. In addition, employers' and workers' organizations often adopt their own gender equality policies and strategies to advance gender equality with a view to informing and enriching the process of social dialogue.

One important point is that unionized workplaces offer a range of benefits for women at work, for example through non-discriminatory employment and recruitment practices. The Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100) encourages the cooperation with workers' and employers' organizations as appropriate (see article 4). Trade unions often promote inclusive wage setting, including minimum wages, along with efforts to improve women's representation in wage negotiations.[39] Not only do unions improve workers' pay and conditions of employment, they can also increase the take-up rates of workers' entitlements. For example, one study revealed that union-represented women in the United States were 17 per cent more likely to take maternity leave than non-unionized women.[40] In non-unionized workplaces, a lack of information about rights to maternity leave, along with fears of losing other entitlements, were reasons given for not taking maternity leave.

Tripartism is an important mechanism for integrating a gender perspective into discussions about issues such as social and economic policies, minimum wages and gender equality that are carried on through national economic and social councils. To be effective, these tripartite institutions need to have sufficient leverage and impact to make the reaching of tripartite consensus a realistic prospect (for an example from Viet Nam, see **box 2**).

Bipartite social dialogue between workers and employers includes collective bargaining and work-place cooperation at all levels, and when success-fully implemented can help to raise awareness about sensitive or new issues that are emerging in the world of work and to establish priorities on gender equality. An example of bipartite social dialogue is the European Social Partner Framework of Actions on Gender Equality that was agreed in 2005. Working together, the social partners found common ground in identifying four priority actions for their work: to address gender roles; promote women in decision-making; support work–life balance; and tackle the gender pay gap. The national social partners implemented the framework of actions through collective bargaining, positive actions and awareness raising. Continuing this focus, and in an effort to share learning and good practices, in May 2014 the European social partners launched a web-based "Toolkit for gender equality in practice", setting out 100 innovative initiatives by social partners in different sectors across Europe.[41]

Box 2.

Viet Nam's code of conduct on sexual harassment in the workplace

In Viet Nam the absence of legislation on sexual harassment at work prompted the tripartite partners to jointly agree measures to fill this gap by drawing up a code of conduct on sexual harassment in 2015.[42] The Ministry of Labour, the Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour worked together, with assistance from the ILO, to draw up the code of conduct to provide guidance on preventing and addressing sexual harassment in the workplace. The code recognizes that sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination that results in high costs for companies. It gives practical guidance on implementing and monitoring policies on sexual harassment. A pilot programme led to the implementation of workplace and company policies in 20 enterprises, which committed themselves to monitoring their implementation. The code of practice has become a useful tool in the growing garment sector, which is predominantly staffed by women, and in which some leading companies now require factories to adopt policies to prevent violence and harassment at work.

4.1. Collective bargaining – how to make it work for gender equality

Collective bargaining is a process of voluntary negotiation between independent unions and employers (or employers' organizations) to determine terms and conditions of employment and relations between the parties. Collective bargaining is an important mechanism for implementing gender equality across sectors and in workplaces, in particular in conjunction with other regulatory measures such as company agreements[43] It plays an important role in addressing gender inequality in areas such as narrowing the gender pay gap and facilitating the full participation of women in the labour market.[44] In addition, women's representation in negotiating teams has helped expand the scope of collective bargaining to include issues of particular importance to women workers, such as maternity protection, work–life balance and the prevention of sexual harassment at work.[45]

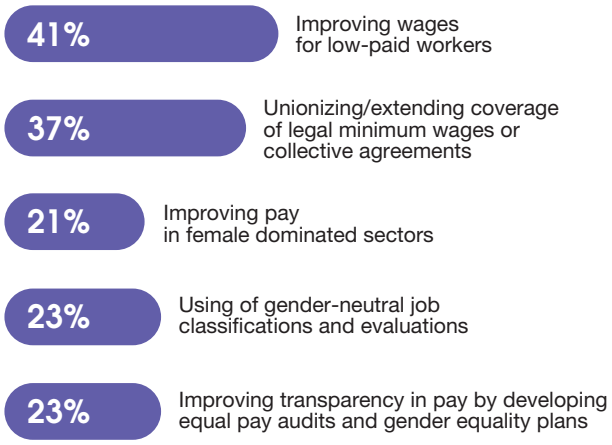
Preconditions for successful approaches to gender equality in collective bargaining include a strong commitment to gender equality on the part of both employer and union negotiators. Provisions to extend collective agreements across an entire sector by ministerial decision after consultation with the most representative employers' and workers' organizations help to increase the coverage of collective agreements considerably. Provisions in the law to incentivize the bargaining teams to tackle gender equality issues can also have a significant effect.[46]

Collective agreements contribute to the implementation of the obligations stemming from the relevant national legislation and can also broaden such obligations, for example, in the area of extended rights to parental or maternity leave. There are a number of different ways in which collective bargaining has contributed to gender equality; these are described below.[47]

4.1.1. Integration of gender equality concerns regarding pay into traditional bargaining topics

This entails ensuring that pay bargaining takes into account discriminatory pay systems and the undervaluing of women's work, as well as promoting specific gender pay equality measures, such as gender pay audits, the use of objective jobs evaluation methods and action plans designed to detect and address the gender pay gap.[48] The ILO ACTRAV survey on the role of trade unions in wage setting for gender equality found that trade unions have given a particular focus to improving wages for low-paid workers (41 per cent of unions responding to the survey) and to efforts to unionize, or extend coverage of legal minimum wages or collective agreements to, groups of workers traditionally in vulnerable types of employment (37 per cent).[49] In addition, some trade unions focused on improving pay in female-dominated sectors (21 per cent), the use of gender-neutral job classifications and evaluations (23 per cent) and improving transparency in pay by developing equal pay audits and gender equality plans (23 per cent).

Trade unions' focus on enhancing gender equality in social dialogue



Source: Closing the gender pay gap: What role for trade unions?, 2019.

4.1.2. Gender-neutral job evaluation methods

An important issue is ensuring that there is no bias or discrimination in pay setting and in the relative value given to women's and men's jobs on the basis of job evaluation taking into account objective criteria such as qualifications, efforts, responsibilities and conditions of work. **Box 3** describes an instance in the water sector in Peru that shows how collective bargaining led to the implementation of a gender-neutral job evaluation scheme that helped to revalue women's jobs and skills and increase women's pay.

4.1.3. Guidance and technical assistance to bargaining agents

This is another means that has been used by social partners to incorporate a gender perspective in preparations for pay negotiation. An example of this was a joint initiative undertaken in Belgium by experts in the three union confederations and the Government's Institute on Equality for Women and Men, which led to gender-neutral job evaluation and job classification criteria being agreed to inform collective bargaining with the aim of closing the gender pay gap.[50] This has been important in equipping negotiators with the relevant knowledge, skills and data to engage in collective bargaining on this complex issue.

Box 3.

Collective bargaining for gender-neutral job evaluation in the water sector in Peru

The agreement by the Lambayeque water trade union (a member of the FENTAP national union) and the Public Water and Sanitation Board (EPSEL SA) to undertake a gender-neutral job evaluation followed from a labour court ruling requiring that the company and union review the existing discriminatory job classification system. This case represents a good example of bipartite collective bargaining, leading to a joint union–employer job evaluation task force. Task force members were trained in gender-neutral job evaluation techniques; an occupational health risk assessment was also carried out; and a survey was conducted to collect information about the requirements of every job. On the basis of the information gathered in these ways, a new job classification system was agreed, giving higher value to the work traditionally carried out by women. Over time, the salary scales are being gradually modified so that they are in keeping with the new classification system. Every year, a budget is assigned to pay for these upward adjustments.[51]

4.1.4. Working time and work–life balance

The Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156) states that "employers' and workers' organisations shall have the right to participate, in a manner appropriate to national conditions and practice, in devising and applying measures designed to give effect to the provisions of this Convention." The revised European Framework Agreement on Parental Leave signed by the European social partners in 2009,[52] which led to a revised Directive on parental leave,[53] sought to encourage men to take parental leave by providing for at least one of the four months to be non-transferable, as an incentive to increasing men's take-up of parental leave.

Examples of national agreements include a 2013 agreement on paid parental leave between the Swedish trade union confederation LO and the Confederation of Swedish Employers which introduced a parental supplement as part of the collectively agreed national parental leave insurance system, compensating for 80 per cent of the wage reduction faced by parents taking parental leave (up to a wage of about 37,000 Swedish krona a month).[54] **Box 4**, outlining the recent agreement on working time in the metal sector in Germany, shows the application of an innovative approach to addressing the need for flexible working time, with positive outcomes for working parents and carers.

Box 4.

German social partners in the metal sector agree on an innovative collective agreement to increase flexibility for workers and redistribute working hours

In February 2018 the metalworkers' union IG Metall signed a cutting-edge collective bargaining agreement with the employers' organization Südwestmetall enabling workers to renegotiate working hours according to their preferences and thus improve their work–life balance.[55] The agreement includes a 4.3 per cent pay rise from April 2018, plus much greater flexibility including reduced working time to 28 hours a week for those who want or need it, and a choice for those workers who have children still in education, are caring for dependent parents or are shift workers of an additional pay rise in 2019 or extra paid days off. All workers will receive a supplement of 27.5 per cent of a monthly wage, to be paid for the first time in July 2019 together with a one-off payment of €400. In return, the employers can recruit a higher proportion of employees on contracts with longer working hours (up to 40 hours a week) to balance the reduction in working time. The collective agreement covers around 900,000 workers in the metal and electrical industries in Baden-Württemberg.

4.1.5. Addressing violence and harassment in the world of work

The growing awareness of the pervasiveness and adverse impacts of violence and harassment in the world of work has led to the adoption of the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) and its accompanying Recommendation No. 206 by the International Labour Conference in the Organization's Centenary year (see **box 5**). The new Convention articulates for the first time the right to a world of work free from violence and harassment and provides a clear framework for action not just for employees, but for all workers, irrespective of their contractual status, persons in training, including interns and apprentices, workers whose employment has been terminated, volunteers, jobseekers and job applicants, and individuals exercising the authority, duties or responsibilities of an employer. It also recognizes that violence and harassment may involve third parties (e.g. clients, customers, service providers and patients) who, depending on the circumstances, may be victims or perpetrators of it. The new instruments acknowledge the different and complementary roles that governments, employers and workers, as well as their respective organizations, play in preventing and addressing violence and harassment in the world of work.

Box 5. Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) and Recommendation (No. 206)

Convention No. 190 provides for the first time a definition of "violence and harassment", which covers gender-based violence and harassment, including sexual harassment.[56] It acknowledges that gender-based violence and harassment disproportionately affects women and girls and provides for specific measures to address it, while recognizing the need to tackle its underlying causes and risk factors. The Convention provides an opportunity to shape a future of work for everyone based on dignity and respect and free from violence and harassment. It requires ratifying Member States to adopt, in consultation with representative employers' and workers' organizations, an inclusive, integrated and gender-responsive approach that envisages action ranging from prevention and protection, enforcement and remedies to guidance and training. The Convention further highlights the role of employers' and workers' organizations in Article 8, stating that "Each Member [of the ILO] shall take appropriate measures to prevent violence and harassment in the world of work, including by" […] " (b) identifying, in consultation with the employers' and workers' organizations concerned and through other means, the sector or occupations and work arrangements in which workers and other persons concerned are more exposed to violence and harassment," […]. Convention No. 190 also requires Member States to recognize the effects of domestic violence on the world of work and to mitigate them, as far as reasonably practicable and notes that employers' and workers' organizations can help to respond and address these effects (Preamble).

Collective agreements with references to gender based violence and harassment had been signed prior to the adoption of C 190,[57] and the new Convention is expected to influence the next generation of collective agreements on issues concerning violence and harassment in the world of work, including gender-based violence and harassment. For example, in October 2019, the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF) and the dairy transnational Arla Foods concluded an agreement on measures to protect workers against sexual harassment in the workplace. The agreement acknowledges sexual harassment as a form of gender-based violence and gender discrimination and provides that its implementation is to be negotiated between Arla and IUF affiliates in companies that are owned and controlled by Arla Foods internationally.[58] In Senegal, the inter-professional agreement, which was concluded in December 2019, includes an article on violence and harassment which stipulates the right to a world free from violence and harassment and the need for an inclusive, integrated and gender responsive approach on violence and harassment.[59]

4.2. Ingenious ideas to foster gender equality through workplace cooperation

Workplace cooperation (at the level of a company or workplace) involves information sharing, consultations, workplace policies and joint initiatives on the part of both the company and workers' representatives. An example of a relatively new area of workplace cooperation is addressing gender-specific safety and health risks, moving occupational safety and health beyond the traditional focus on physical risks to include a wider range of risks affecting psycho-social well-being at work. This is an important entry point in the search for joint solutions on specific gender-related issues in the working environment, such as women's and men's reproductive and sexual health, or reducing the impact of the menopause and menstruation on women's full participation in work.[60] A related issue is limited access to sanitation facilities or toilet breaks, which represents a serious breach of workplace rights for women and men with significant health consequences, particularly affecting menstruating or pregnant women. Limited access to sanitation facilities can even prevent women from going to work at all, making it difficult for the women and their families to break out of poverty. The campaign run by the International Transport Federation (ITF) on "The right to flush" exemplifies the seriousness of this issue and the importance of providing safe toilets for women.[61] Social dialogue has been one way of highlighting and finding joint solutions to these workplace issues.

4.3. Finding solutions through social dialogue during the COVID-19 pandemic

According to the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC), COVID-19 has demonstrated that our economies and societies are built upon essential, but often undervalued, underpaid or unpaid female labour.[62] Across the world, about 136 million workers are in the health and social work sectors. Of these, 96 million are women, who constitute the large majority of the health and social workforce in most countries.[63] **Box 6** shows how collective bargaining helped mitigate the negative impacts on women in the hospital and care sector.

Box 6.

A collective agreement for public sector workers includes a substantial pay increase and a special premium for workers in hospitals and care facilities in German

Hospital and care workers were particularly at risk of acquiring a COVID-19 infection in the course of their work during the early days of the pandemic when personal protective equipment was not readily available. They were also required to work overtime on a regular basis to replace their co-workers who contracted the virus or were quarantined. This had a significant toll on women as they constitute the majority of workers in the hospital and care sector. In October 2020, the public sector and services sector union *ver.di* and the civil servant federation *dbb beamtenbund und tarifunion* signed a collective agreement with the association of local government employers' organizations (VKA) and the federal administration in Germany. The collective agreement includes a pay increase for care workers of 8.7 per cent and a pay increase for those in intensive care of up to ten per cent. Furthermore, a bonus payment for hospital and care workers of 50 Euro per month was agreed for those who were predominantly working to mitigate the Covid-19 crisis.

Women in the workforce have been disproportionately impacted in the short-term economic fallout of COVID-19. This includes:

- **Lack of adequate social protection:** The ILO estimates that 71 per cent of the world's population lack access to comprehensive social protection and that half the people do not have any social protection[64], with women over-represented in both groups. Particularly during a health crisis, no adequate social protection means poverty and hunger for millions or workers and their families. **Box 7** shows how social dialogue in Argentina helped mitigate the loss of income of domestic workers.

- **Increased retrenchments:** In the case of dismissals due to COVID-19, women are likely to be disproportionally hit as common criteria for retrenchment include contractual status and years of service, and women are more likely to have interruptions in their career due to caring responsibilities. Industry sectors such as accommodation, food, beverage and retail services, which have been hit hard by the pandemic, are also major employers of women.[65]

- **Exacerbated gender based violence:** Emerging data shows that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased gender based violence. This is partially due to increased stress levels related to the pandemic as well as more time spent in close domestic proximity due to mandatory telework. Although Convention no. 190 recognizes that both women and men can be affected by gender based violence, it also acknowledges that violence and harassment disproportionately affect women and girls.

- **Increased care load:** Before the COVID-19 crisis, 16.4 billion hours were spent in unpaid care work every day across the world, two-thirds of these were performed by women.[66] The COVID-19 related closures of schools and care facilities further exacerbated women's role as carers.

Box 7.

Social Dialogue on gender equality during the COVID-19 pandemic in Argentina

In 2020, the employers' and workers' organizations in Argentina successfully lobbied the government to obtain an extension of emergency income support measures (compatible with universal child support) to the domestic work sector. This measure predominately benefits women workers as Argentina is one of the countries with the highest proportion of women in domestic service in Latin America.[67]

Long-term risks for women include **declining employment opportunities and declining quality of jobs**. Some female-dominated industries, such as the garment industry, may use the pandemic for further digitalization and relocation of production. This might also lead to a reduction in employment opportunities and a deterioration of working conditions for garment workers, especially in developing countries. For instance many workers in Asia were offered temporary contracts as a way to reducing risk to suppliers, which led to increased uncertainties for workers.[68]

4.4. Cross-border social dialogue, global framework agreements and gender equality

Cross-border social dialogue is another level on which a gender perspective can be integrated, for example through joint agreements, commitments and corporate social responsibility initiatives. This is increasingly taking place in global framework agreements and joint commitments between multinational enterprises and global union federations. It is notable that there has been a significant increase in recent years in the inclusion in such agreements of gender equality clauses and the monitoring of their implementation, covering sectors where women predominate, such as retail, garments and agriculture.[69] While globalization has opened up opportunities for women's participation in formal work, export processing zones (EPZs) and the lower segments of global supply chains in female-dominated sectors frequently fail to provide rights to decent work and living wages.[70]

Most global framework agreements adhere to principles on social dialogue and gender equality as set out in the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy. The OECD's recent guidance on due diligence specifies: "Applying a gender perspective to due diligence means thinking through how real or potential adverse impacts may differ for or may be specific to women."[71] Particularly relevant are provisions to establish due diligence frameworks for gender equality on issues such as gender-based violence or gender diversity.[72] **Box 8** provides an example of how tackling violence against women was incorporated into a global framework agreement.

Box 8.

Carrefour–UNI global framework agreement on social dialogue and diversity

The Carrefour–UNI global framework agreement (2001, 2015 and 2018) covers one of the world's largest retail distribution groups.[73] The agreement reflects a long-standing joint commitment on the part of the company to promote social dialogue and joint initiatives on anti-discrimination, gender diversity, equal opportunities in hiring and promotion, support for pregnant and nursing women, and adjustments to hours and working conditions for staff returning from maternity or paternity leave. The 2018 renewal added a joint commitment to address violence against women at work, building on recent work to prevent violence against women; this is exemplified in Carrefour's guide for human resources managers and employees on "Tackling violence against women in the workplace", and its training of 200 store managers in prevention campaigns and how to identify violence and provide support to victims.

5. EXTENDING SOCIAL DIALOGUE TO THE INFORMAL ECONOMY[74]

Two billion people – more than 61 per cent of the world's employed population, comprising 58 per cent of working women and 63 per cent of working men – make their living in the informal economy.[75] Women are also much more likely than men to be in the most vulnerable segments of the informal economy such as domestic workers, home-based workers, or as contributing family workers which means they have little or no protection against dismissal, and little access to social protection including paid sick leave.[76] Workers in the informal economy also lack access to social dialogue mechanisms.[77]

Although social dialogue for informal workers remains a challenge, tripartite social dialogue is promoted under the ILO's Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204) as a means to represent the interests and participation of informal workers and their transition to the formal economy.[78] The need to redress the low coverage of informal workers in social dialogue and collective bargaining has prompted trade unions to make greater efforts to recruit, organize and represent informal workers, often in partnership with informal workers' organizations, for example, the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) and the global network Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO).[79] This work has helped to strengthen the collective voice of women informal workers.[80] Indeed, as the editors of one study note: "Informal workers, their organizations and their campaigns, represent the leading edge of the most significant change in the global labor movement in more than a century."[81]

Structures created within trade unions to represent informal workers include the Union of Informal Workers Associations, established in 2015 by the Ghana Trades Union Congress, and the Ugandan Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union Informal Sector Women's Committee, which focuses on informal women transport workers.[82] Similarly, employers' organizations in several regions have collaborated with informal economic units and small employers in promoting the transition from the informal to the formal economy.[83] Examples include representation of the interests of small and/or informal enterprises as carried out by the Federation of Kenya Employers, the Ghana Employers' Association and the employers' organization in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, COPEMECO.[84]

Box 9 shows how education by a trade union in Uganda helped to reduce abuse of and violence towards informal economy workers.

Box 9.

Supporting social dialogue for informal women transport workers in Uganda

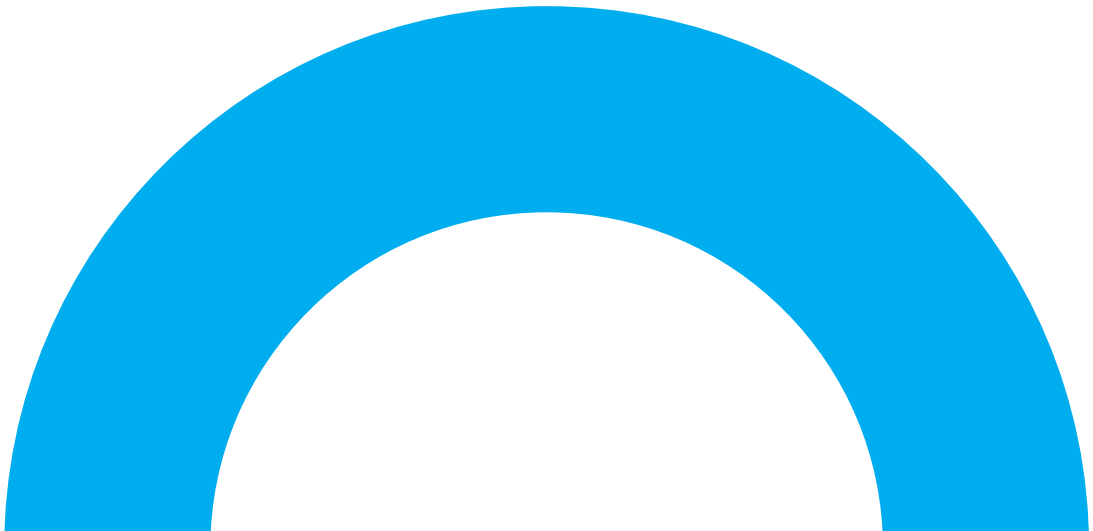
The Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union (ATGWU) is helping informal women transport workers and women working around transport hubs to organize to end violence and inequality at work.[85] Working through the ATGWU Informal Sector Women's Committee, negotiations have been carried out to protect women's safety and improve access to toilet and other facilities, as well as access to social protection. There has been an increase in the union's membership following the affiliation of associations of informal transport workers and its work in organizing and supporting GALIMA (an all-women association of survivors of HIV and AIDS in transport), as well as traders and home-based workers organized through the Tukolere Wamu Craft Development Association, among others. The establishment of the ATGWU Informal Sector Women's Committee has also led to local women's committees being formed, helping women to understand their rights and encouraging them to report violations of rights and abuse. In addition, education workshops and informal education work on the streets in major transport hubs and within the union have helped to change men's attitudes and given women more confidence to report abuse.

Some informal workers have been brought within the scope of social dialogue and collective bargaining,[86] for example in respect of minimum wages, social security or maternity rights. Tripartite social dialogue has been crucial in establishing measures to formalize domestic workers' employment and to negotiate minimum wages.

6. SOCIAL DIALOGUE AND THE FUTURE OF WORK

As the *Inception report for the Global Commission on the Future of Work* notes, the future organization of work faces unprecedented challenges arising from the increasing fragmentation of production, the growth of non-standard forms of employment and technological advances.[87] Social dialogue can contribute in the search for solutions to issues raised by these changes, taking into account the gender-related effects of new patterns of work on digital labour platforms such as crowd working and more fragmented working patterns in the "gig" economy.[88] As the ILO points out, there is a need "to manage the unequal distribution of these gains and potential disproportional impacts by gender, sector and skill level".[89] In relation to the growth of employment in the digital economy, women lag behind men partly because of their lower share of employment in information and communications technologies and in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields, but also because of their systematic under-representation in top management and academia in these sectors. As the OECD argues, the digital gender gap must be closed, not only because of the business opportunities doing so would provide, but also to ensure women's inclusion in opportunities arising from digitalization and automation.[90]

Women's care roles are a major structural barrier to women's equal participation in work at all levels,[91] and balancing work and family life is one of the biggest challenges for women across the world.[92] Prior to COVID-19, women did, on average, three times more unpaid care work than men.[93] Since the pandemic, the care load has increased further, given closures of school and care facilities. This issue will increasingly appear on future social dialogue agendas as part of efforts to enhance women's career progression and to close the gender pay gap, along with wider societal measures to redistribute unpaid care work more equally between women and men, and through the provision of state-subsidized and/or state-provided care for children and elders. While the anticipated future growth of jobs in the care economy, particularly in response to demographic change and also in the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic, may help to enhance women's participation in work, there is an imperative need to ensure the quality of work in this sector.[94]



GOING FORWARD: KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WORKERS' AND EMPLOYERS' ORGANIZATIONS AND GOVERNMENTS FOR PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH SOCIAL DIALOGUE

Recommendations for **governments**

- Promote tripartite social dialogue and encourage the development of national policies on gender equality, gender-disaggregated data and measures to promote the transition from the informal to the formal economy.
- Ratify and effectively implement ILO Conventions on freedom of association, collective bargaining, gender equality, equal pay, violence and harassment and tripartite consultation.[95]
- Encourage the social partners to engage in gender-responsive social dialogue strategies to close the gender pay gap, and to promote work–life balance, parental leave, maternity protection and ending violence and harassment in the world of work.
- Given that women are at the forefront of the COVID-19 response as caregivers and community organizers, it is paramount to ensure equal representation of women in social dialogue including related to COVID-19 and target women and girls in all efforts to mitigate the socio-economic impact of COVID-19.[96]

Recommendations for **employers' organizations**

- Implement policies to support and promote women's further participation and representation in the workplace, in employers' organizations and in social dialogue institutions, including in leadership positions and in all COVID-19 related planning and decision-making.
- Provide practical support to employers and companies to encourage them to implement gender equality strategies and programmes in the workplace, within employers' organizations and in social dialogue institutions.
- Put in place awareness raising and training to find effective solutions to tackling unconscious bias and other factors that inhibit women's appointment to senior and leadership roles.
- Take appropriate steps to prevent violence and harassment in the world of work, including gender-based violence and harassment (in line with the guidance provided by Convention No. 190). This is particularly important during the COVID-19 pandemic due the surge of domestic violence related to increased stress and time in close domestic proximity due to mandatory teleworking.

Recommendations for **workers' organizations**

- Promote the representation of women in decision-making bodies in proportion to their membership in trade unions, and ensure that women are effectively represented in senior and leadership positions in workers' organizations and through gender-balanced collective bargaining teams. Equal representation is critical in COVID-19 related planning and decision-making to mitigate the socio-economic impact on women and girls.
- Engage in organizing and recruitment of workers in non-standard and informal work and in the platform economy.
- Draw up training and guidance materials for workers' representatives so that they can effectively advocate gender-responsive social dialogue, including guidance on how to effectively integrate gender equality in social dialogue processes.
- Make full use of tripartite and bipartite social dialogue mechanisms and negotiations to advocate gender-based policies, including policies to address the gender pay gap and violence and harassment in the world of work (in line with the guidance provided by Convention No. 190) as well as policies on work-life balance.

Source: Author's illustration.

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THE GLOBAL DEAL FOR DECENT WORK AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH

The Global Deal is a multi-stakeholder partnership with the objective of addressing challenges in the global labour market to enable all people to benefit from globalisation. The fundamental purpose of the Global Deal is to highlight the potential of sound industrial relations and enhanced social dialogue to foster decent work and quality jobs, to increase productivity, and to promote equality and inclusive growth. The Global Deal welcomes a variety of different stakeholders to join the partnership. This includes governments, businesses, employers' organisations, trade unions, as well as civil society and other organisations.

Check the list of Global Deal partners at **www.theglobaldeal.com/partners**.

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