

The 8th ITF Asia/Pacific Regional Conference
Organising to Build Strong Transport Unions in the Asia/Pacific Region
14-17 May 2013, Hong Kong

Agenda item 13: Women Transport Workers Report

1. As globalisation continues apace, the borders between different multinational companies have disappeared, and the focus in many transport jobs is changing from traditional operational functions to logistics and the transport chains. While women's participation in the workforce is increasing, this is mostly true of part-time, casual and temporary jobs, where employees are more likely to be women.
2. Transport has historically and primarily been a male dominated industry, where more and more women are now venturing in. But what has been true for the industry has also been true for its Unions – predominantly male dominated in nature. Even though women are joining the unions, they are not proportionately visible in terms of membership particularly in the private sector where more and more jobs are now being shifted.
3. Gender-based occupational segregation is particularly pronounced and gender discrimination seems to exist and permeate all levels. Sexual harassment, discrimination against women co-workers, lack of provision of basic amenities for women at work place are common issues being faced by women at all levels of work and Transport unions generally speaking are less likely to be paying attention to women workers' needs when this group is a minority of the membership.
4. It is a paradox that while women's contribution to the 'shrinking' of the world is not insignificant, they have to worry constantly about their own mobility. On the one hand, women work in places such as airports, bus or rail stations, docks and BPOs, where their labour makes possible rapid movement of people, goods and information across the globe. On the other hand, gendered violence, sexual harassment, lack of safety and security measures and a host of other phenomena shows how restricted their own mobility is.
5. If transport trade unions are to retain their strength and relevance, they have to organise women. This doesn't mean just to recruit and retain them as members, but also to respond to their demands as members and to represent them at all levels.
6. For the women in the Asia/Pacific Region, most work has been done through education projects. Some of the key issues that have emerged for the region are as follows :
 1. Inadequate participation of women in union activities
 2. Gender insensitivities ; discrimination
 3. Harassment of women by seniors, co workers and passengers
 4. Use of abusive language and violence against women
 5. Lack of sanitary facilities and rest rooms
 6. Shift duties – no transportation available at night
 7. Very few women visible on the decision making levels

The region has made efforts in giving a strategic direction to the women work. Some of the key initiatives that the region is taking are :

- ITF A/P Regional Women's Committee needs to be activated as a functional body with each member taking due responsibility
- Stress upon unions to promote gender sensitivity/ equality
- Mandate 30% women's participation at all meetings, seminars (note in all invites to nominate women)
- Continue to organise women's events in conjunction with main ITF events to promote better participation and integration of women in meetings/seminars
- Develop women's leadership skills

Implementation

- Seminar on Gender Sensitisation
- Leadership Training Workshop for Indian Women
- Revival of Women's Committee in Bangladesh
- Support sought for institutionalising women and HIV work in Indonesia
- Women's comic translated and produced in Bahasa
- Nepal – women elected as vice president of the union – Geeta Shreshtha
- PNG – Negotiating for union recognition, improved health and safety conditions,
- Dockers Resolution in Manila
- Film on SH made by Delhi office
- Observation of Women's Day and No Violence Day
- Active participation of women on World AIDS Day

In terms of the activities for women, Most of the work done in the region has been funded by the FNV through its projects. The projects have been in place since 2001 and have immensely contributed to the progress. Earlier the project was extending to the entire Asia/Pacific Region, but now there has been a drastic reduction in the funding as well as in the 'priority countries' as identified by the FNV. In 2012 the activities were limited to Bangladesh, India, Indonesia and Nepal. These countries were termed as 'priority countries' by the FNV, therefore the funding available had to be used only for these countries.

The regional work has supported the work plan discussed and decided by the global Women's Committee. Activities are planned around the ITF priorities and are discussed with the women in the different programmes /seminars organised so that they can also plan their actions accordingly. In this connection, the most popular actions are held around the International Women's day and the UN Day for elimination of Violence against Women. Over the years it has been seen that while women come out in big numbers to participate in the activities and programmes, men too have started to join them.

In respect of holding the Regional meetings, content is usually agreed with the Women's Section. The Women's officer has participated in the meetings from time to time. Sometimes the section representatives are also present to conduct and support some of the activities . The Women's

departments often provides guidelines for any need based campaigns which are at times organised by the region/unions. However, The women's department needs to take initiative to plan campaigns on specific women's issues, and attempt to seek the support of the male leadership in contributing to the success of the campaign.

It is very difficult to give the women's figures for the region as a lot of unions who have women also do not declare their membership. 10% is only an estimation of the regional representation of women.

No. Of members affiliated to the region	: 1179281 (as per latest CRM figures)
No. Of women affiliated to the region	: Not all unions declare women's membership
Percentage	: Not more than 10%
Women's overall % participation in the region	: 6-7%

Future plans for 2013 :

- Campaigns focusing on gender sensitisation with emphasis on sexual harassment and violence against women will be the highlight of the current year's activities for both men and women in the region.
- All meetings to aim for at least 30% women's participation
- Focus on Gender Sensitisation within the unions
- Organise campaigns on Sexual Harassment and Violence Against women.

Vision and Sustainability:

The vision for women in the region in the long term would be that:

- a. All unions in the region are committed to building and supporting women's membership in transport and its ancillary areas. This is demonstrated by achievements in organising, in women's participation and in collective bargaining wins.
- b. Active women's cadres, who have been equipped with campaigning and organising skills, exist in unions and push the agenda of improving women transport workers' lives and conditions.
- c. That ITF organising and solidarity projects in the region are mainstreamed and monitored, to contain a strong gender element
- d. That women's regional coordination is achieved through task-based working with women in affiliates, regional staff and international staff, on mid- to short-term practical objectives, in responses to policies and needs identified at the ITF's Regional Conferences.
- e. Those ITF women are active in solidarity initiatives within the ITF and in broader union and community-based work.

The Asia Pacific Regional Conference is requested to take note of the above report and advise and guide the future direction and focus of women's work in the A/P region.

Annexure

Participation of women in ITF Activities in the region : 2012 :
2012 Asia/Pacific Regional Activities and Events

Activity	Section	Date(s)	Women Participants	Total participants	% women
AP Seafarers Regional Committee Meeting	Seafarers	12-13 June 2012	4	65	6.1%
AP Fisheries Meeting	Fisheries	14 June 2012	5	28	17.85%
AP Civil Aviation Section Conference	CA	19-20 July 2012	7	24	29.16%
AP Road Transport Section Conference	Road Tpt	6-7 August 2012	6	38	15.78%
AP Dockers Section Conference	Dockers	January 2013	12	42	28.57%
ITF AP Women & Young Transport Workers Seminar	Mixed	22-24 November 2012	13	26	50%

Activities conducted & Developments - 2012:

1. **Women's & HIV Seminar for Indonesian women** – 2 seminars were held in June and September to create and awareness for women on issues and challenges facing them and on HIV-AIDS. ILO representatives also participated in one of the seminars to sensitise the women in respect of care and support of the people living with HIV.
2. A **gender sensitisation** programme was held for the transport workers of India on 30 October – 01 November 2012 at Visakhapatnam. Two external consultants were invited to run the programme which was the first of its kind. Each participating union was asked to send a male and a female participant to this programme. The participants discussed various aspects of gender. The film on Sexual Harassment produced by the Delhi office 'Breaking the Silence' was shown. The programme received a very large media publicity as it was the first such programme ever organised in Visakhapatnam.
3. **Women's Leadership Development** programme was organised in Gurgaon on 3-6 November 2012 with women from all sectors participating in the workshop. The programme was conducted jointly by Sis. Alison McGarry, Women's officer from ITF London and Nishi Kapahi, the Education & Women's Coordinator. 20 women participated in the workshop and were trained to become leaders.
4. The **Coordinating Committee meeting of ITF Indonesian Affiliates** – this was held in Jakarta on 17th September seeking the support of the senior leadership of ITF affiliated unions in

Indonesia to the women's and HIV-AIDS project which was to be written for the year 2014-2016. The leadership welcomed this step and promised to provide full support not only to the current activities to be organised (in year 2012) but to all the future activities also.

5. **Project Review and Future Planning Seminar** was held on 27-29 December 2012 at Dhaka with participants from India, Indonesia, Nepal and Bangladesh participating. The programme was conducted with Meenakshi Ahluwalia, the external consultant who will help us write the next project proposal. The workshop was conducted around the two major themes – Gender and HIV-AIDS focusing the activities broadly on the Decent Work agenda of the ILO and how could it be adapted by the unions for integrating them as part of their mainstream agenda.
 6. **Revival of Bangladesh Women's Committee.** On 25th August 2012, the long dormant women's committee of the Bangladesh affiliates was revived. 5 women who were elected to the position of the Chairperson (Saki Rezwana), General secretary (Helena Karim) and committee members (Rekha Rani Barua, Amina Begum and Ferdousi Begum) decided to actively fight for their rights, share information with other women and work towards increasing women's power in Bangladesh Transport Sector. The women have since then conducted 6 activities in Dhaka and Chitagong. The programmes conducted for women have also included one awareness session on HIV-AIDS.
 7. **March 8**, International Women's Day was observed in a big way by all the unions. The day was marked by week long programmes organised by unions in form of seminars, symposiums, group discussions etc. on the theme of Strong Unions Need Women and Rights for Women mean Rights for All. This has been a regular feature each and every year
 8. **25th November**, UN Day for Elimination of Violence against Women was observed by many unions with men also participating in the activities in a big way. Each year sees enhanced level of activities on this day.
- **India gets Sexual Harassment Law** – needs to be seen how far the government is able to implement the law. The bill under which cases of sexual harassment at workplace, including against domestic help, will have to be disposed of by in-house committees within 90 days failing which a penalty will be imposed has been passed by the Parliament. Non-compliance with the provisions of the act shall be punishable with a fine of up to Rs 50,000 (US\$ 1000).
 - The recent brutal **rape incident** in Delhi involving a young girl enraged not only the whole of India but shook the world as well. Issues around gender discrimination, sexual harassment, violence against women once again became central themes of discussions. In fact these issues have continued to dominate discussions and protests in the public arena and hopefully this will continue till all stakeholders do something concrete and lasting to address the issues which are basic and core to dignity and rights of working women and women in general. The transport unions as a civil society group also organised protests and rallies.

Unions in the railways, ports and road transport sectors were seen at many places actively mobilising their cadres and venting anger against the ghastly act.

2011 :

1. During the period under reporting, the following regional activities were conducted :
 - ASEAN Women's sub-Regional Seminar in Kuala Lumpur
 - Asian Civil Aviation Women's Seminar in Bali
 - Asian Women's Port & Dock Workers Seminar in Colombo,
 - South Asian Women Transport Workers Seminar in New Delhi.
 - Besides these, national level programmes were conducted by unions in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, PNG and Thailand
2. Though the stress in the regional and sub-regional seminars was on organising, basic issues relating to women still came on the forefront. Whether the women come from the port and docks, aviation, railways or road, the issues and challenges being faced by them are virtually the same in the region, only their degrees vary. Gender bias, Unequal Opportunities and responsibilities, wage disparities, lack of sanitation and rest room facilities, violence, sexual harassment and bullying and women's voices not heard are some of the issues unanimously raised by the regional women, irrespective of the sectors they came from. These challenges are also exacerbated due to the lack of women in the decision making levels where they can ensure sensitised action on these issues.
3. Women members may be an asset to the organisations and unions but gender sensitisation must be addressed as an important issue by the unions. The lack of gender sensitization amongst the male members of the unions including sometimes the leadership has made this fight doubly tough for the women in the world of work.
4. Organising was an important topic high on the agenda of the women's programmes being organised in the region. However women need to be integrated in the trainings imparted for organising. Though organising in the GNTs is a priority for the region, most of these new private terminals do not have women workers in operational categories, which has made it difficult for involving the women in the process of organizing in the ports.
5. The following women from the region were elected to the ITF Women's Committee at the ITF Congress held in Mexico City in 2010:
 - Mary Liew
 - Wen Lee Err
 - S. Buyanaa
 - Mich-Elle Myres
 - Jaya Agarwal / Diptiben Shukla (member for 2 years each)
6. **Other Activities:**
 - 8 women from the region attended the Maritime Organising Conference being held in Maryland USA in September 2011.
 - The region also played host to the 1st ITF Women's Committee meeting held outside London on December 5-6, 2011 in Singapore.

2010 :

1. In June 2009, the ITF Asia/Pacific Conference confirmed the Asia/Pacific women's global organising priorities, elected the AP regional women's committee, and created a position of women's representative on each regional section committee. Additionally, it agreed that the ITF's regional gender strategy needs increased support from male colleagues and leaders. Women transport workers' union participation must be more visible in order to deliver solidarity through campaigning, communication and active education methods.
2. The Asia/Pacific region and Women's Department intend to focus on training women organisers as well as leadership positions. A call centre organising project is being investigated.
3. The **ITF Asia Pacific Women's meeting at Kuala Lumpur** was organised prior to the ITF Asia Pacific Conference so that all the 49 women could participate and take up their issues at the regional level. During the conference many women put forth their views.
4. **Asia-Pacific Inland Transport Women Workers Seminar** on 23-24 November 2009 in Singapore (24 women representing railway and road transport sectors attended from India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, Thailand and Singapore). The women reported on the challenges being faced by them due to the threat of privatisation in their respective industries and countries and as women transport workers.
5. ITF Delhi office has made a film on women – **Uniting Women – Strengthening Unions** on the issue of Women in unions, young workers, need for organizing and sexual harassment.
6. Women in the Asia/Pacific region have identified their two "Organising Globally" priorities as *New Forms of Work* and *Defending Union Rights*. Contract work, employment rights, discrimination and work intensification have been highlighted as priority issues affecting women that are closely linked to these themes.
7. Women in the region have agreed the ITF's strategy must foster increased support from male colleagues and leaders, that women transport workers' union participation must be more visible in order to deliver solidarity, through campaigning, communication and active education methods and that we need to focus on training women for jobs as organisers as well as positions in leadership.
8. Building women's capacity, strengthening their abilities, motivating them to take up issues, mobilizing and collectivization in the trade unions has been very relevant. Skills enhancement of women through leadership training, building confidence, oratory and communication skills, self-esteem have all been positive measures, that women themselves claim has had positive impacts in their roles – be it in union, be it in the work sphere or at home. This has also helped them to negotiate with male union leadership better, negotiate better for the improvement of women's working and living conditions.
9. However, ensuring that women's issues get reflected and integrated as union's mainstream issues, giving women the opportunity to sit at the negotiating table and increase of women in decision making levels are aspects that still pose most challenging.