



South Asian
Women Trade Unionist

Woman Trade Unionist

IDENTIFYING COMMON GENDER AGENDAS FOR A BETTER SOUTH ASIA

of Regional Conference of Women Trade Unionists in South Asia
March 15-17, 2003 Kathmandu, Nepal

Proceedings

CWUD-GEFONT

KAD/DANIDA



1

□ Background of the Conference

IDENTIFYING COMMON GENDER AGENDAS FOR A BETTER SOUTH ASIA

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South Asia: Existing Uniqueness & Diversities

Existing uniqueness of South Asia in relation to diversities of socio-economic life is significant on various aspects of outlook, but at the same time it has created complexities and difficulties in development strategy & process. As South Asia is one of the most populous Sub Region of the globe; socio-economic inequalities & discriminations are deeply rooted in the society. Poverty is at an extreme and common is the suffering of women workers and children (especially the girl child) as the most vulnerable victims of poverty.

Moreover, major portion of the South Asian Population is still living within a society dominated by Feudalistic outlook, attitude and behaviour. The majority of the society lives in rural areas with high domination of traditional norms of feudality. Urban life is quite different, however it is yet to be free from traditional feudal norms. Thus, feudal characteristics of society are clearly visible in the pattern of production and industrial relation. The overwhelming majority of population of South Asia in agricultural sector and majority of female workforce within agricultural workforce is the basic reality of the world of work. Informal sector, thus, has been the basic & major source of income and employment as well as the cover for most vulnerable and exploited labour force.

If compared in a gendered framework, women workers are working in terrible working

conditions even in comparison to their male counterparts whether in the workplace or in the family. Poor literacy status in general and heavy illiteracy widespread among women workers in particular is the main characteristic of the society. On the contrary consumerism & changing consumption pattern are fast growing reflecting the influence of market philosophy in actual life - both in urban and in rural areas as well. The fast increasing activities of MNCs and operation of FTZs and EPZs have started to change not only the pattern of employment but also the pattern of consumption. However, the exploitative nature of the employers' class is not changed but revised in new editions and many varieties. Casualisation and exploitative home-based production structure as new forms of informalisation have basically victimised women workers. The result is the exploitative use of women labour further intensified & marginalized with increased workload.

Thus under a feudalistic pattern of society though declining but still dominating, Gender discrimination both in the formal workplace and informal economy is considerably high. Definitely women are at the centre of economy & economic activity having busy & extremely active position within all three angles of the triangular position of work- Care economy, Reproduction and Wage work & self-employment.

Obviously being in the centre of the economic activity is neither sufficient nor it provides





decision-making power; further it creates & adds more & more workload to the workingwomen with their speedy involvement in outdoor work. However, their contribution is still far from recognition; in most of the cases it is excluded from accounting as a part of subsistence work and household chores. Moreover, the outdoor works in many cases are fully indicative of women's working status as attached labour to the male workers of the family and are subject just to one or two meals a day without any payment. In addition, women workers are mostly out of the organisational framework and even if organised, most of them denied from a right-based approach.

Therefore, it is painful to realise that high and increasing labour force participation rates have given less returns and no sigh of relief to them as it adds more and more workload. Observations indicate towards increasing Discrimination and mental torture with new tensions at home, workplace, street and society. They are forced to engage in commercial sexual exploitation irrespective of their age-from adult sisters to the young daughters from their childhood. They are even assault by the domestic violence. Even the involvement of women in union movement and

union activities have been restricted in a number of ways through socio-cultural values, family problems and backward gender bias behaviour. Thus some way outs are necessary to cope with the problems women workers are facing while being involved in union activities.

Urgency of the need

In the South Asia, nature of hardship of workingwomen has almost remained the same though degree may differ from country to country; some progressive and dynamic steps are urgently needed. Some practical initiatives for fast improvement in the condition of women workers in this sub region are the demand of the day both from overall women point of view and specific working women point of view.

Experiences of other parts of the globe outside South Asia in working collectively- regionally as well as sub regionally – are inspiring on women's issues. Initiatives in Europe, Africa and Latin America as well as other parts of Asia may be helpful to locate a point of good departure on the issue of women workers of South Asia. As an example of Southern Africa- **Annual**

Southern African Trade Union Women's Forum (ASATWU) is mentionable. Something concretised with firm determination to be implemented has to be formulated through a collective effort.

Looking at South Asian movement separately, consensus on Women's issues can be observed in general, but if we go into lively discussion and action-frame, every general consensus becomes blurred & dim. As a result, issues in the objective sense become normally scattered and not consolidated.

Here mentionable is the 10 points of common gender concern in Nepal under consensus which have been dug out through intensive exercise covering almost a two year period. Similar or a little different may be the experiences in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan, which have to be shared intensively for creating some concrete & practical common to be implemented that we need in order to improve the situation through our joint efforts hand in hand. With due respect & acknowledgment of the various activities of the existing trade union structures in SAARC region, we are in opinion that their efforts are far from the necessity expected by the working class. That is why we have started to feel the absence of effective & broad based alliance of trade unions in SAARC sub regional level.

Thus the whole scenario urges for lively discussions, frequent sharing, possible common initiatives and mechanisms to address common issues of women workers. Urgent need of the present day is to strengthen lively relationship of organisations, women workers structure under the organisations and women trade unionists within the sub region.

Realising such urgency, the General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (**GEFONT**) decided to host of this Conference; where as **KAD-Kvindeligt Arbejderforbund i Danmark** (Women Workers' Union of Denmark) extended its solidarity and agreed to be a co-organiser of the Conference.

Expected Outcomes from the Proposed Conference

The General Outcomes of the conference was aimed as- Sharing and identifying issues related to gender at workplace, Outline formulation of common gender policy & gender strategy for South Asian trade unions and Development & intensification of Issue-based commonality and creation of a new dimension of harmony on women's issues among Trade Unions.

Like wise, Specific Outcomes were also underlined as- Identifying common Gender agendas at workplace in South Asia and Developing common actions both at South Asian and National level for each of the country concerned.

Expected Participants of the Conference

The specific expectation of participants was- South Asian women trade unionists from National Centres of Trade Unions in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka; where as it was decided to invite several Guest participants from other continents and sub continents - Latin America, Africa, Europe, Pacific, East Asia and South East Asia. The Invitees from International trade unions centres, Global Union Federations and various labour support organisations were among the expected participants.



2

Inaugural Session: Brief Glimpse

The inauguration of the South Asian Regional Conference of Women Trade Unionists on "**Identifying Common Gender Agendas for a Better South Asia**" was conducted on the first day (March 15, 2003) in an inspiring environment. Participated by several trade union activists, especially the women as well as the leaders of trade union federations, women's organizations and NGO activists; there was special presence of Excellencies- the Ambassador of Denmark H. E. Gert Meinecke, the Ambassador of Thailand H. E. Penchome Inchoroensak and the Ambassador of Sri Lanka H. E. Grace A. Asirwatham.

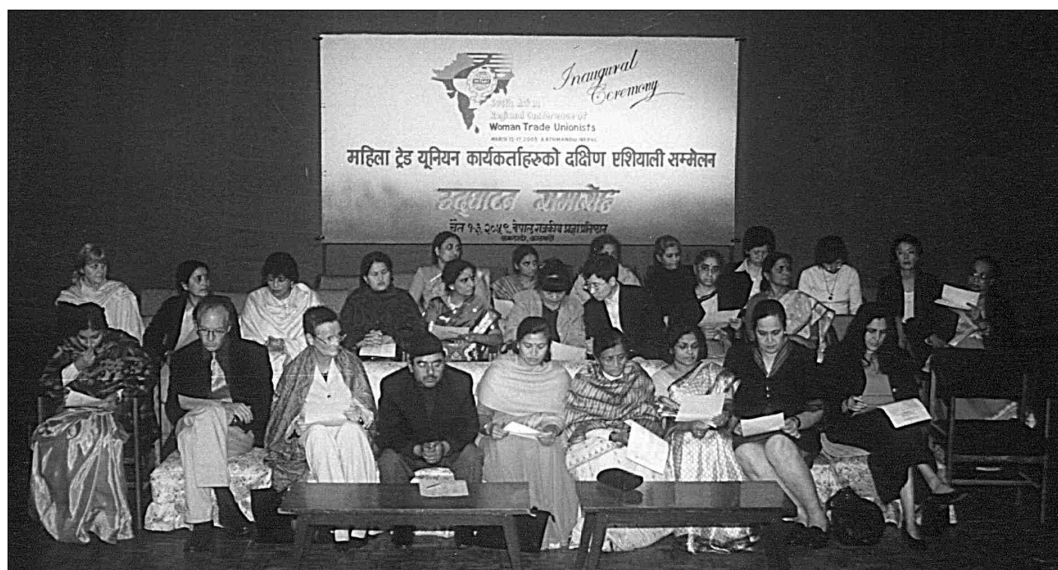
On behalf of the organisers, Comrade Mukunda Neupane, Chairperson of GEFONT had delivered the keynote speech in the session followed by Ms. Maria Baehring, the leader of KAD by her opening remarks.

As a part of the conference, GEFONT Chair Com. Neupane launched a study report on workingwomen entitled **Search for Alternatives**

both in Nepali and English Languages; whereas the guest of honour, senior women Leader Comrade Sahana Pradhan launched a **musical video on workingwomen** named Shamjhandaima Sramik Mahila.

Then comes the turn of inaugural remarks by the guest speakers. The country director of ILO Ms. Leyla Tegmo-Reddy, delivered speech focusing on gender balanced at the world of work. Among the speakers, who were representing conference beyond South Asia, were Ms. Elsa Ramos- Director for Equality and Youth of ICFTU, Ms. Marcelle Rajahmoney, Deputy Chairperson BAWC-BATU/WCL, Chang Eu Yun Alice from UNI-APRO and Ms. Yukie Yabuta from ZENROREN-Japan.

At the end of the inaugural ceremony, a special announcement was made. The GEFONT-CWWD launched a Welfare Fund for the women activist working under GEFONT umbrella. GEFONT Chair Neupane read out





a **Certificate of Appreciation** showing great respect to four sisters from KAD-Denmark for their valuable contribution in order to establish the welfare fund.

"On Tenth of December 2002, the historical and Universal Day of Human Right Declaration, you sisters from KAD- **Maria, Henriette, Astha and Eva**—announced to contribute for establishment of a Permanent Fund under CWWD-GEFONT for the welfare of Nepali women workers". The Certificate reads- " No doubt, your continuous contribution for five years in addition to the initial contribution for establishment of the Fund will play a very fruitful role in the movement of women & women workers including the trade union movement of Nepal in forthcoming days".

Chairman Neupane concludes amidst cheering clapping- "GEFONT, hereby, would like to express hearty thankfulness with full appreciation of your strong solidarity sentiments. May our Solidarity last forever in favour of toiling masses of the Globe!"

The four sisters from KAD will donate from their private purse to the Welfare fund regularly for five years from 2003.

Four FM radio stations at Kathmandu as well as beyond Kathmandu aired this session lively. Comrade Bina Shrestha, Chief of CWWD-GEFONT tendered vote of thanks at the end.

The conference was participated by 10 major trade union centres from South Asia including Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Pakistan, however, could not send its delegate because of some technical problem, but has joined the network later on. Some of the national trade union centres beyond South Asia participated in the conference as guest delegates and shared their valuable experiences.

The first day of the program included a visit to some of the historical places in Kathmandu Valley. The delegates also paid a courtesy call to GEFONT Head Quarter.

3

Keynotes & Remarks in Inaugural Session

Keynote by Comrade Mukunda Neupane

Chairperson, GEFONT

I am inspired and feeling high pleasure at the moment as we are here not only from South Asia but also from various parts of the globe like a big joint family which respects the feelings of each member and goes on with collective spirit.

South Asia, as we all know, is poverty stricken to a larger extent and still dominated in an average by the outdated feudal norms in Personal, Family and Social life. Though in recent years, urban life has undergone a lot of changes and hence some influences have been witnessed even in rural life. Discrimination based on Caste, ethnicity, religion and gender is going on. However, the major forms of discrimination as faced by we South Asians are based on caste and gender. Gender discrimination is widespread violating all boundaries and territories and victimizing all women workers irrespective of their education, qualification and capabilities. The widespread patriarchy in the society fully dominates the social practices and is reflected even in our laws and regulations.

Thus, under this patriarchal and feudalistic nature of South Asian society, Gender discrimination is still in a dominant position though declining but victimizing women workers, the half of our sky and the half of our part of the globe, both in the formal workplace and in the informal economy.

The contribution of women workers is of very high significance in all three arenas of active



life – Care economy, reproduction and wage work & self-employment. It is unfortunate that most of the responsibilities shouldered by women workers are still non-recognized as the economic activity. In recent years, labour force participation rate from female side has increased considerably and labour market is highly feminised but vulnerability and exploitation have also increased. Workload on women workers has increased in recent years with their increasing participation in labour market and social movement. Contrary to the necessity, women friendly environment has not yet developed within home, family, society and workplace, unfortunately even within the trade union movement and trade union organizations.

There are tremendous achievements of our society in comparison to the past. Parallel to the gloomy side of the picture, we have the bright side. But satisfactory level is far off from the present scene. Therefore, efforts with full determination and full dedication from every corner of the social movement basically from trade union movement has now become inevitable in order to achieve a better South



Asia. Government, political parties, bureaucracy and intellectuals should come forward to assist the social movement with their full support.

We believe, this conference as a significant part of GEFONT-KAD cooperation is being organized with the basic objective to go hand-in-hand for a better environment with respect to gender balance, equality and justice in the home, family, workplace and society. Our sisters representing the sub region of South Asia are here to discuss the issues, evaluate the past & present and concretise the practical agenda for hand-in-hand go ahead. Our distinguished guests from all organizations within and outside South Asia from all over the world have assembled here in order

to inspire, assist and support the initiatives of South Asian Women Trade Unionists. On behalf of GEFONT-Nepal, I am grateful to you all. Let us go ahead hand in hand and let us achieve and share the achievements.

Achievements cannot be dramatic and come in the hand only after a series of continued endeavours. Definitely it will take time as social transformation and attitudinal-cultural changes are not so easy. Continuous efforts with full of optimism will dig out the highway of equality & Justice. We are hopeful and we are optimistic. Together let us move forward for a better South Asia.

Keynote by Ms Maria Baehring

President of KAD in Copenhagen, Denmark



It is such a great pleasure and honour for me to be here representing KAD- the Women Workers' Union in Denmark— with our dear friends from GEFONT and with women trade unionists from the region and from across the globe. I would like to thank all the representatives from national and international trade union organisations, the ILO and the various Embassies in Nepal for coming to this very special event.

I would also like to thank GEFONT and its Women's Department for organising the conference, which is sponsored by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We hope the conference can contribute to building a closer and stronger cooperation between the women in the region.

We are gathered here at a crucial moment when we are experiencing some of the most serious political crises in the world and when world peace is threatened. We are certainly not in favour of Saddam Hussein and all the human rights abuses he has committed against his own population, but on the other hand we do not feel convinced that he is actually posing such a serious threat that preventive warfare should be used against him. Where does it stop? Who will be the next? And who is to decide if not our only international body where such decisions can and should be made. We are strongly opposed to a war led by the US and Great Britain without the approval of the UN Security Council. A war, which will have terrible consequences for the Iraqi population! A war which could throw the whole region into chaos and which could mean global instability, more terror and conflicts between the West and the Islamic world. We must therefore urge all the countries involved to give peace one more chance.

But it is also a moment when it is more important than ever to focus on women's rights, the need to stand together and build solidarity across borders and to secure a much stronger and more active

involvement of women in trade unions, and elsewhere.

Even in Denmark where women have been fighting for more than 100 years for equality and equal opportunities, we still have a long way to go in practice— even though we have achieved a lot. Although our Law on Equal pay was adopted more than 25 years ago, we still do not have equal pay. Very few women are having leadership positions and in the trade unions most of our leaders are still men—because even the women are voting for them. We have seen how globalisation and the global neo-liberal wave have affected women everywhere. It has meant restructuring of labor markets, privatisations, sub-contracting, casual and seasonal labor. And women are the most effected. They are the first to be sacked and the last to find a new job. They are the ones who are fighting to survive under inhuman conditions in Export Processing Zones, in factories under appalling conditions, at home sub-contracted by some companies without any protection or legal rights. And millions of women must find some way to feed their family in the growing informal sector.

Girls and women are given far less opportunities for education, and most often women lack access to proper health care. We see the growth in child labor- even though it now often takes place under hidden forms due to the worldwide attention on child labor. Everywhere we see a growth in repression and violence against women, sexual harassment and abuse, and even expanding trafficking of women.

In many countries, as in Nepal for example, we see how religion, culture, tradition and the abominable caste system are used to violate women's most basic rights. Women are often just not considered as human beings. Women are often reluctant to get involved in trade union activities. They have too many

tasks, they are afraid of repression and of losing their job, they feel that unions are male-dominated and worldwide we see too few women in decision-making positions in the trade unions. We need to change this.

But at least now even the World Bank in its new Annual Report admits the importance of (strong) trade unions and social dialogue for sustainable development. Hopefully, this will also be reflected in the structural adjustment programmes they are imposing across the globe.

But we should also highlight the positive sides, which are a proof that we can succeed. Advances have been made, and women's rights are more and more on the international agenda. We have just celebrated our International Women's Day and, especially in developing countries, women have gathered in great numbers and stood up to claim their rights. More and more women are joining the global fight for their rights, and more and campaigns are being undertaken to secure these rights. In this connection I would like to praise the campaigns for organizing and empowerment of women run by the ICFTU. If only all affiliates would follow these campaigns, a lot could be achieved.

Here in Nepal we have seen how the project for the promotion of women's rights, which is presently being implemented by GEFONT in cooperation with KAD and DANIDA, has strengthened the women. The women have gained a higher self-esteem, they are seriously committed to fighting for their rights, and they are showing an incredible courage and a strong desire to learn. More women have been organized, women's committees have been established, and women's specific issues are taken into account in collective agreements. There is now a pool of 100 women leaders and the women structures are well functioning and respected. And this has been achieved in



spite of the extremely difficult political situation in Nepal.

Let me in this connection praise the GEFONT leadership for their strong support and commitment to the women's issues and to getting more women actively involved.

So we see that when women get the knowledge and the skills, when they are supported, when they stand together—even under extremely difficult conditions—results can be achieved.

This conference is crucial to build the cooperation in the sub-region. It is vital to be able to exchange experiences and to learn from each other.

I can assure you that in KAD we are strongly committed to supporting you.

Last year I participated in the Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. We saw this Summit as crucial for taking vital decisions that could mean

a changed relation between North and South. However, it was depressing to see that the Western countries were not willing to make the necessary compromises. Thus, no real commitments were made regarding better access to markets, debt relief or more development assistance. It was a shame!

It is absolutely crucial that we are able to make a different world order than the present where millions and millions of people live in extreme without any possibilities of change or development, where we see lack of stability, still more conflicts, refugees and threats of terror, while the rich world is closing its borders and focusing on its own security and welfare in order to preserve the benefits that we have obtained - and often at the expense of the rest of the world.

This is not the world that we want in the 21st Century. We believe in a different world and we believe that women have a crucial role to play in order to change this world. Let us fight together to make this happen. I wish you all a good and fruitful conference.

Remarks by Ms. Leyla Tegmo-Reddy

Director, ILO Office in Nepal



It is a great pleasure for me to be here today and to be given the opportunity to speak in this inaugural session. I would like to congratulate the organizers for holding this very important meeting to identify a common gender agenda, as this is a very crucial time when the world is facing a serious crisis.

As you know, women are joining the world's workforce at a rapid pace, but usually at the bottom of the labor market in low paid, low status and precarious jobs. Increased labor force participation has not meant improved working conditions or social protection. "More jobs have not meant better jobs". Women are the most likely to be affected by labor market failures or distortions and women continue throughout the world- to bear the brunt of combining work and family responsibilities. Women are paid less than men for work of equal value even in the developed countries and there is a glass ceiling through which few women manage to break through. Women's work is inadequately covered by labor legislation and after women's concerns are not adequately addressed in collective bargaining. Women form the majority of the world's poorest. Poverty is not only income poverty, but also lack of power on

one's own life and environment. Unions are very important for women and need to exert pressure to ensure that specific issues affecting women are addressed effectively.

Throughout the world, unions have been giving priority to women as a target group for recruitment and advancement, and considerable progress has been made, but the result have not been adequate. Unions need women, and to be credible and strong must ensure that the priority concerns of members and potential members are addressed and that gender equality is an integral part of their policies and structures. All those who work, women and men, have rights at work. Not only wage workers in formal enterprises; but also the self-employed, casual and informal workers, agricultural workers, the hidden and the predominantly female workers of the core economy or of the domestic scene. Unions need to find innovative ways to reach and organize workers outside the formal workplace in the informal economy, especially in South Asia where most women are working. I know that unions in South Asia have been very active in this respect, but there is still a long road ahead.

Let me share with you some information about some innovative activities in Nepal which have been successful and which could possibly provide some guidance to other unions in the region. In December 2000, the three trade union confederations in Nepal– GEFONT, NTUC and DECONT, agreed to work together on promoting gender equality in the world of work. This was done within the framework of a Norwegian-funded, ILO-executed project called the "South Asia-Vietnam Project on Tripartism and Social Dialogue in Action (SAVPOT)" which has also been implemented in some of your countries. A committee called the Trade Union Committee for Gender Equality Promotion– TUC–GEP was established and consisted of representatives of the three

trade unions- both senior-most officers and officers from the women's wings, as well as the ILO office in Nepal, the ILO Senior Gender Specialist and the national project coordinator of SAVPOT. It was agreed that the Chair of TUC–GEP would be rotated, to ensure that each union would play an equal role, as well as take on the task of organization of the Committee work, convoking meetings, taking minutes and so on.

The process agreed upon was that each of the three unions should start by reviewing their own policies, activities and priorities on gender and present them to the others. Once this was done, the three would partake in a "unions only" social dialogue on gender equality leading to agreed priority areas for common action. In this process, ten priority areas were identified. These included, amongst others–maternity protection, equal remuneration, sexual harassment, equal employment opportunities, job security and training.

The ILO Office in Nepal, along with the Senior Gender Specialist, Dr. Tuladhar organized separate bipartite meetings with the government and with employers, during which the priority areas of the unions were presented, as the work was intended to move from union only dialogue, to bipartite dialogue and then to a tripartite dialogue and results.

Bringing this all to the national level, of 16 December 2002, a National Tripartite Conference on Gender Equality in the World of Work took place in Kathmandu. In addition to the three confederations, the Ministry of Labor and Transport Management and the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry made presentations, providing their views on how to improve gender equality in the World of Work. All tripartite partners signed a Tripartite Declaration on Promoting Gender Equality in the World of Work. The Honourable Vice-Chairman of



the National Planning Commission of Nepal witnessed the signing.

The highlights of the Declaration include:

1. The agreement that gender inequalities in the world of work hinder economic and social development and without giving fundamental value to gender equality as an explicit goal, sustainable development in Nepal will not be achieved.
2. The agreement to conduct social dialogue and to establish a Sub-Committee of the Central Labor Advisory Committee of Nepal— chaired by the Secretary of the Ministry of Labor— on Promoting Gender Equality in the World of Work, with a view to reviewing and promoting measures to achieve enhanced gender equality.

I believe these are great achievements and that now is the time to move concretely towards finding ways to achieve more tangible results that will benefit all in the world of work, especially women. I feel that it should be mentioned here that including union leadership, in addition to the women's wings of the unions, and having their clear commitment, was essential in this process.

I would like to suggest all of you here that you consider— during the next few days —the development of a network of unions in South Asia, with a view to sharing experiences and knowledge. Developing regional alliances and dialogue are becoming increasingly important.

I would further like to strongly recommend that the TUC-GEP model be reviewed, with the objective of setting up a South Asia Trade Union Committee for Gender Equality Promotion—SATUC—GEP. I am certain that such an initiative could receive technical advice from my colleagues, Mr. Pong-Sul Ahn, Senior Specialist on Workers' Activities, as well as Dr. Jyoti Tuladhar, Senior Gender Specialist and, of course, the trade union partners in Nepal who have gone through the preliminary stages of the successful process.

Let me now turn to another extremely important area where I believe that regional action is absolutely vital. This is in the area of trafficking notably trafficking of children. Trafficking in children and their sexual and labor exploitation has increasingly become a matter of concern in all South-Asian countries. The trafficking of children, which takes place within increasing global migration, occurs not only as cross-border but also as internal movements within countries. The direction of trafficking is usually from rural to urban, and from underdeveloped to developed areas.

There is still a great deal that we do not know about the trafficking of children into labor and sexual exploitation and further research is still required. Gender inequality and the low status of women is an important contributory factor in the trafficking of girls for commercial sexual exploitation. There is increasing recognition of the value of regional and bilateral cooperation to address trafficking.

Workers organizations are committed to the fight against trafficking and examples of action were presented at a meeting in Manila in 2001. Trade Unions can train their members to play a watchdog role in identifying and reporting incidences of child trafficking. Teachers' organizations have played a particular role in this regard, but workers in other sectors, such as transport and tourism can also protect children in this way. Workers themselves need sensitisation to the issue of trafficking through awareness raising in the workplace. Workers who come into contact with children—health and social workers, police and immigration officials need improved training and support. Some trade unions have begun to use collective bargaining as an instrument to combat commercial sexual exploitation of children as well as other forms of worst forms of child labor and this initiative could be replicated for all sectors.

Networking, information sharing, joint programming and the development of a regional social movement among the trade unions against child trafficking are crucial to an effective elimination of the phenomenon.

The ILO, through its International Programme on the Elimination of the Child Labor (IPEC) stands ready to support you in this endeavour! We have a Sub-Regional (IPEC) project on trafficking.

Finally, let me turn to the issue of sustainable peace and conflict resolution. Here I cannot stress adequately just how important it is for women to be active in the peace process. Women have suffered extensively from conflict.

Women's participation in ensuring sustainable peace should not be underestimated and trade unions need to make sure that their voices are heard. I encourage the unions to promote a strong alliance for peace.

I look forward to being with you during the coming days and with you the most fruitful results in your deliberations. I can assure you of the ILO's support in bringing forward– with you– your common agenda.

Remarks by Ms. Elsa Ramos

Director for Equality and Youth, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)

Sometime last year, the KAD, the Women's Union of Denmark, called me about this Conference - to which we had, in fact, received an invitation - urging me to attend. Knowing that it was taking place at the heels of our 8Th World Women's Conference (which we recently concluded, in Melbourne), I could not make a commitment, ... I do remember telling my dear Sister Eva Tabor - who kept up the pressure -that it really depended on whether I would survive the ICFTU Conference! As you will see, I did - barely. Preparing and organising a world conference with 300 women leaders from more than 90 countries, all-brimming with great ideas and unbounded enthusiasm, was an Amazonian feat, indeed, and It sapped alt my energies. But, here I am, a few weeks later, and seeing you all, sisters - and brothers, too - has set my adrenaline flowing again! For this and for the opportunity of visiting, for the first time, this enchanting country, my most sincere thanks to the co-organisers of this Conference, the KAD Denmark and the GEFONT.

I am particularly heartened to see sisters from the Global Unions family in the region: the INTUC and SEWA in India, and UNI-APRO, and of course, the NTUC Nepal. Gatherings such as this are important for our work in



promoting equality at the workplace, in the labour market, in the trade unions and in society. As women trade union officials and activists, we need to talk to each other and share our experiences. And whilst we may not always be In agreement about tactics and strategies, the commonality of our issues and the universality of gender discrimination should spur us to establish dialogue and build strong networks.

Sisters and Brothers, I bring you all the warmest solidarity greetings of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the ICFTU, in particular of its Women's Committee and its Equality Department. The ICFTU today counts 158 million members, from 220 affiliated organisations in 150 countries and territories. Women make up forty per cent of our membership; it never ceases to uplift my spirit knowing that there are 64 million women



out there who share the same vision and fight for the same cause: equality and justice, In freedom and peace. For Bread and Roses...or, as we would say here, Rice and Orchids!

We were not always this many in the trade unions. When the ICFTU was founded, in 1949 women made up only 7 per cent of its 49 million members. Seven per cent makes 3 million four hundred. Therefore, in the last fifty years or so, we've increased 20-fold! And, when we take into account that our total membership has increased only three-fold during the same period, one obvious conclusion we can draw is that women accounted for very much in the growth of unions. And, further, if we consider the on-going phenomenon of the feminisation of the labour force, we can even venture to say that women hold the future of the trade union movement. And what a future it will be! For, if you look at what we have achieved - at local, federation, national, regional and international levels - we cannot help but be proud and confident, given the context of our struggle: the massive growth of women membership, as stated earlier; the increasing (albeit slow) number of women in leadership positions; adoption of international conventions to promote women's equality - the latest being ILO Convention 183 on maternity protection; enactment and/or amendment of national legislation in favour of gender equality and better and safer working conditions for women; equality provisions in collective bargaining agreements; etc. etc.

We can draw many other conclusions from the figures I just cited, especially if we compare the number of unionised workers against the total figure of the labour force. Impressive as the figures I've given you may be, these become insignificant when one considers that less than 20% of the world's formal labour force is organised in genuine trade unions.

Of course, these figures and statistics are the result of many factors - social, economic, cultural, political. And, added to all that is the ever-increasing flexibility of the labour market in this era of globalisation! Privatisation, mergers, closures, social dumping,

structural adjustments: all have affected unionisation of working women and men.

But, unionists are optimists, and we, women unionists, even more so! This was amply demonstrated at the 17th World Congress held in Durban in April 2000, when the plan of action proposed by the Women's Committee was put to the floor. The Plan called for a global 3-year recruitment campaign to double the women's membership of the ICFTU. Although met with some indulgent chuckles from some quarters and a dose of scepticism from others, the plan of action was unanimously adopted. With the Global Union Federations, we are now actively implementing this campaign in nearly 60 national centres, with women in the informal economy as one of the major targets.

Other sisters have spoken about the Issues and challenges facing the trade unions today and the crucial role of women in revitalising the movement. And we have the next two days to ponder on these together.

So let me end this brief address with three messages: the first is of great urgency: To echo the loud and clear assertion of women unionists in Melbourne three weeks ago: We say NO to WAR; we say YES to peace, freedom, Justice and equality!

The other two are no less urgent: one is ORGANISE, ORGANISE, ORGANISE! And women, even more so! We must never lose sight of the fact that we are only as strong as our membership and if we do not organise, we shall agonise!

Finally, a message of solidarity: the pain and suffering of our sisters anywhere in the world is our pain and suffering; their victories are ours, too. Our anger and frustration is shared by them; our Joy is theirs, too. Solidarity is the essence of trade unionism; without it, we shall be moved. Let us all remember that sisterhood is powerful in the trade unions and beyond!

Thank you very much!

Remarks by Ms. Marcelle Rajahmoney

President-National Workers Congress & Deputy Chairperson-BAWC

I consider it a privilege to represent BATU and its women members particularly in the SAARC Sub region at the Regional Conference of Women Trade Unionists engaged in identifying a common Gender Agenda for a better South Asia.

Women, because of child birth and child care are confined to a set pattern of living, leading to the belief that their sphere is the domestic sphere leaving the public domain to man. Women are generally considered weak, soft, obedient, calm with the home as domain, while man is considered a protector, powerful, aggressive, strong and assertive. This dichotomy has enabled society to fit women in a secondary position in the labor market and brought up several gender related issues leading to unequal relationships between women and men. However, it is a relief that during the last 50 years, winds of change have blown over South Asia improving the position of women in South Asia. The need for power-sharing and common responsibility between man and woman is an emerging trend. There exists a strong case today against gender bias and for the promotion of equality amongst sexes.

As a women trade unionist I consider it a special privilege to be associated with today's Conference, targeted at identifying conditions for a better South Asia for women trade unionists. It has been estimated that 93% of workers of whom a large number are women in India, are employed in the informal sector. This is so even in Sri Lanka where a large number are employed in the Free Trade Zone enterprises, in the main Tea and Rubber plantations, and in overseas employment, where trade union freedoms are not realizable, as informal conditions of labor prevail within these sectors.



Sri Lanka has ratified the United Nations Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) referred to as an International Bill of Rights for Women. Yet, the trade union movement in our view, faces new challenges today, as large groups of workers, the majority of whom are women, are outside the realm of trade union commitment and influence in developing common actions, identifying common agendas at workplaces and at higher national and regional levels.

We are mindful of the fact that Sri Lanka has ratified 8 key ILO Conventions viz. 87, 98, 29, 100, 111, 138 and recently 150. Amendments to the industrial Disputes Act were undertaken in 1999 to prevent unfair labor practices continuing in the Free Trade Zone enterprises. We are also mindful of the fact that continuous trade union pressure is brought on the government of Sri Lanka to discourage renouncing any of the ILO Conventions already ratified even though the country went through a period of economic stagnation and war. Sri Lanka has taken measures to eliminate gender inequalities in wages, work and conditions of employment. Legislation has been passed to overcome the abuse of women within society.

As trade unionists, we should be mindful of political and social constraints on public



administrations in our region induced by political loyalties. Unless Administrators are fully receptive to the changes brought in by law and regulations enabling administrations to be fine-tuned to grant new rights conferred on workers and trade unions, legal changes became dead letter. The several legal enactments remain to be more meaningful to trade unions and female workers of South Asia. The percentage of higher posts held by women in administration are marginally adequate to inspire confidence in obtaining equality of treatment to women.

Labour Administrators particularly, should be exposed to the best practices prevailing in the region and encouraged to provide resistance to political intervention whenever officers discharge quasi-judicial responsibilities. Moreover, Officers within an administration should be encouraged to escape the shackles of feudalism and colonialism by giving them sufficient training to strengthen their techniques and skills of conciliation and enforcement. Trade unions should be supported by governments to offer worker education systems to enable workers, particularly women workers to have information and a better outlook on socio-economic changes in the Environment.

The right to stay and the right to move within and across borders in dignity are fundamental to human

civilization. The experiences of foreign female domestic workers of South Asia reveal that domestic work has still to be recognized as a socio-economic activity and valued accordingly. Protecting the rights of such workers would entail the inclusion of domestic work in labor legislation and international labor practice. Migration should be incorporated in the development policies and planning of States within South Asia and the several restrictions like the ban on sending female migrants outside the country as in Bangladesh should be removed to uphold core Human Rights Standards. Concerns about security should not turn into xenophobic actions directed especially at female migrant workers.

Programmers should be put in place in South Asia to effectively address trafficking of women and children and the smuggling of people on the pretext of migration. In case of serious human rights violations, such as death, arbitrary arrest, crime, unfair trial, sexual violence and abuse, States should undertake full and transparent investigation and those responsible should be held accountable.

There are several measures that will help restore the balance in society and communities between men and women enabling society to be free of gender bias and this is a goal for trade unions in South Asia to act on an urgent basis.

Remarks by Ms. Chang Eu Yun Alice

Director, Gender and youth Dept., UNI- APRO, Singapore



It is an opportunity for me to stand here today. On behalf of General Secretary of UNI-Apro, Brother Christopher Ng & 15.5 million members of UNI, I

would like to extend you the solidarity greetings. UNI is a huge and serious International Organisation. We are launched on the 1st of January in the year 2000. We are the popular union for a new millennium & a new economy. We are a merger of global unions & heart of Trade Union responses to increasing economic decentralization & globalisation & to the conversions of third world in the fast service industries. The job of the global unions is to help associates & their members to keep people first. I say people first in this increasingly globalised economy. UNI encourages the solidarity actions, correspondence &

racial issues of common concerns with employers, Governments and international bodies for Trade Union Rights worldwide. We have now one thousand plus unions in 140 countries around the world representing more than 15.5 million members. So, we are a global organization having dialogue with to multinational employers to international organization, and to governments. We operate a cross industrial boundaries to bring together members with the common interests especially, women, professional member staffs & young people, because these are the group of people, who are normally marginalized. We preferred to work with the developing countries to train & better equip unions and their members in newer democratic organisations.

Today, we are 3 years old. We had already organised our first UNI-Apro women conference and in that conference, we have adopted an action plan for implementation. The employment and related issues raised by women activists within Trade Union and in society have been focused strategic response which may be referred to address the challenges of the new millennium on the four broad heads. The first is the integration of woman in the Trade Union. Second- to strengthen women in UNI-Apro to stand up against discrimination; the third is, UNI-Apro extends solidarity and fourth is the UNI-Apro women networks. What does it mean? It is very simple, it means we want organize, organize and organize.

But in the global federations like us, organizing is like blood to our body. This is what we do. We organize workers into Trade Unions organization women into Trade Unions & we

want organize women into leadership position. Because what is the basic equality if women are under-representation. That's why; I was very much pleased to have invitation from GEFONT in this conference.

Because this south -Asian regional conference has the main theme which says 'Identifying common agenda for better south Asia' and this conference is called in order to develop a concrete commonality in approach and action for the shake of change in the real life of the million of workers in South Asia. And that what we care about how to develop woman not in paper but in your real life. So for the next two days, we will be working very hard on all the women issues here & also some from Nepal to develop common agenda for this sub-region and we hope that when we review we can actually develop some progress or some activities that we can actually see for a change for the betterment of women & gender. Just now you know there was in practice a problem suddenly it becomes very-very dark and it brought me to remember to one of my colleague in Pakistan. As she mentioned to me, yes we are women, do you know it is better to light a candle against for the darkness! And this is what we have been doing at UNI-Apro.

We discuss about issues but we are also very well aware that discussion on issue is nothing if there is no action. So is that. I thank you for sharing your conference with me and listening me & hope that by the end of the second day here we will actually brought our lot of experiences but also develop common objective in this meeting.



Remarks by Ms. Yuki Yabuta

National Confederation of Trade Unions (ZENROREN), Japan



1. Global Strategy of Japanese Big Business Circle and Industrial Hollowing - Threaten the Jobs and Livelihood of Workers and the Population

In Japan, there are 53.31 million employees (83.5%), 7.69 million self-employed (12.0%) and 2.86 million people employed work in agricultural and forestry industry.

The strategy adopted by the Japanese big businesses and the government to cope with the globalisation of economy is seriously affecting the working people and the population in general. In fact, Japanese big corporations are expanding their activities in other Asian Countries for cheaper labor to the detriment of their activities in Japan, by relocating their major production sites overseas and massively re-importing the products produced there into Japan. The number of workers they employ outside Japan is already exceeding 1.7 million in 2000, they are making colossal profits and the same time contributing to accelerating the hollowing out of the existing industries within Japan. This has led to bankruptcies of small and medium-sized enterprises, subcontractors of big companies, lay-offs in the name of the so-called "streamlining" and substantial wage cuts unilaterally imposed on workers. This in turn deepens the job crisis and increases unemployment.

The on going globalisation of economy, dictated by the United States for its own economic interests, is affecting the working people and the population in

every country of the world, threatening their jobs and livelihoods. To oppose this, international solidarity and struggles of workers, both men and women, and their unions must be developed urgently.

2. Koizumi is Pushing Along His "Structural Reforms" at the Sacrifice of the Population.

The present Koizumi government is pursuing an economic policy that drives small and medium sized enterprises to bankruptcy and massively increases unemployment while supporting in different ways big corporations in pursuing restructuring and streamlining through reduction of workforce. In 2001, more than 20,000 enterprises (about 90 percent of them are small or medium sized companies) went bankrupt, the full unemployment rate exceeded 5 percent mark and the number of jobless jumped to over 3.6 million. In this context, new college graduates, especially women graduates, are faced with increased difficulty in finding jobs. In addition, on the pretext of "redressing the nation's finance", the government has diminished the share of the state and the employers in funding the social security system (national health insurance, pension and unemployment insurance) while increasing the social insurance fees for workers and cutting down insurance benefits. In the same time, the government is actively encouraging the entry of private companies into the market of childcare, nursing care and other social services for the elderly, and is closing down or cutting budgets for public childcare and social service facilities. It has also introduced a new tax system that is favourable solely to big corporations and the rich and is now attempting to impose heavier tax burden on the population, the working people and small and medium sized enterprises in particular.

Today, Japanese workers annually work more than 300 hours longer than their German and French counterparts. A sharp increase in the number of "karoshi (deaths from overwork)" has become one of the major problems affecting the Japanese society.

Despite of this, the Koizumi government is now intending to attack and undermine all the rules that regulate the working conditions, by excluding white collar workers from the application of working time regulation and facilitating the use of temporary workers and workers with employment contract of limited duration in a wide range of occupational categories.

3. Realities of Working Women and Their Struggles

1. Growing number of women in precarious jobs due to increased flexibility

In 2001, the number of the female workers reached 21.68 million, accounting for 40.4% of the country's total working population. However, as a result of the policy pursued by the government and the business circles to further increase employment mobility and flexibility, women workers who have regular full time posts account for only about a half of the total women workers (52.2%) while women workers in precarious jobs (part time, temporary and contract workers have increased to represent as much as 47.8% (against 12.5% for male workers). Female part-time workers in average earn a wage equivalent to 66.9% of that of regular female workers and only 40% of the wage of male regular workers. These figures testify to the urgent need to establish the principle of equal treatment for work of equal between men and women.

Workers and their unions are multiplying initiatives to secure jobs for part-time and temporary workers and to realize the equal treatment by eliminating discriminatory practices against women.

Due to the lack of strong legal regulations for overtime work in our country, women who hold regular posts are suffering from long and intensified work as well as night work that are

imposed on them. Some of them are even made to accept transfers to distant workplaces that oblige them to live alone away from their families. Workers and their unions are intensifying their actions to obtain the establishment of adequate working rules that will allow workers to work in humane conditions by reducing working time through staff increase and by means of restrictions places on overtime, holiday and late night work.

2. Deep-rooted Discriminations in employment against women

In our country, the campaign for equal treatment between men and women has ead widely across the country and succeeded in obtaining significant advances in gender equality in legal provisions. However, discriminations are still deep-rooted in the actual employment conditions, including recruitment, hiring, promotion and wages. Women occupy only 8.1% of lower managerial posts (the percentage of women decreases when going up the hierarchical ladder), and the wage of female workers, excluding those in part-time posts, account for only 65% of that of male workers.

In recent years, several lawsuits for gender equality in employment have won favourable court judgments. However, with the introduction in more and more companies of "double-track personnel management system" (tracks mainly differentiated by the presence of transfers to distant workplaces) for women employers' family responsibilities are further discriminated in employment. This calls for a new type of actions from workers and their unions.

3. Harmonization of work and family life

According to a study made by the Ministry of General Affairs, the time spent for housework



(housekeeping, nursing care of sick or dependent family members, childcare and shopping) is 33 minutes a day for men and 3 hours 45minutes for women: an important gap exists between men and women. The harmonization of work and family life remains today a significant challenge that all women have to take up. Our long years of campaigning resulted last year in the revision of the law on childcare and nursing care leave and the childcare leave was extended to 3 years and the nursing care leave to 6 months for public employees.

Actions are being multiplied aiming at realizing a society in which both men and women can have a sound working life harmoniously combined with family life. The major demands carried by these actions included reduction of hours of work, better childcare and nursing care leave schemes and substantial increases in public funding and facilities for childcare and social services.

4. Self-Employed Women and Their Struggle

In Japan, small-sized enterprises employing 20 workers or less (5 workers or less in commerce and service) account for 87% of the total number of enterprises. However, due to the on-going settlement of bad loans imposed on banks by Koizumi's "reform" as well as to the price breaking due to economic globalisation, there is a sharp increase in the number small companies, especially household companies, going bankrupt.

Thanks to persevering actions of self-employed women and women working in small household industries and businesses, the Agency for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises for the first time in 22 years conducted a survey on the "actual health and working conditions of women self-employed or working in small and medium-sized household industries and enterprises". According to the report of this survey

recently issued by the Agency, 37.4% of the respondents say that they "work longer than their employees" and 14.4% can "take almost no holidays". The main stress they mention (37.7%) is "difficulty in finding funding necessary to keep running their business" and 17.2% say they are "unable to take maternity leave" and 33.4% "work even when they are ill". To improve their condition, Self-employed women and women workers in household businesses are demanding that their human rights be fully established and that the work done by the household members be acknowledged and evaluated fairly at its actual value as expenses in the income tax calculation of their household.

5. Farming Women and Their Struggle

In Japan, the government neglects the protection of domestic food production and does not put any restriction on the importation of cheap agricultural products from foreign countries. Due to this governmental policy, the market price of many crops including rice, vegetables and fruits have crashed and the farmers are often forced to sell these products below cost. As a result of this, Japan's food self-sufficiency rate has gone down to below 40% level. In addition, the BSE problem and the pollution of imported vegetables by residual agricultural chemicals have affected the sales of agricultural products and farmers are facing growing difficulties in running their farms. An increasing number of women farmers are thus obliged to work longer hours in their attempt to seek for a source of revenue besides agriculture which fact leads to the worsening of their working and living conditions. In this context, women farmers are campaigning for the revision of the WTO agreements and are playing a major role in a variety of joint initiatives with the citizens who look for safe "domestically produced products" instead of imported products.

4

Core Session in Brief

The core session of the conference was started on second day. Ms. Leyla Tegmo-Reddy, the Country Director of ILO office in Nepal, chaired first session of the day.

Introduction: The session was started with introduction of delegates. All the delegates introduced themselves by speaking about their personal and professional backgrounds. Many participants described their national and regional experiences as activists in south Asian trade union and women movements.

Opening Paper and the GEFONT: As the host organisation, GEFONT had prepared a paper to open and facilitate discussions on common gender agenda at the work place in south Asia. Binda Pandey, presenting the paper said that expectation of GEFONT is three fold:

- Identify common challenges for women workers in south Asia;
- Design a plan of action for addressing these issues together;
- And, agree on a co-ordinating mechanism.

Responses to the GEFONT Opening Paper: Delegates responded positively to GEFONT's paper. Sujatha Gothoskar, south Asian co-ordinator for the Committee for Asian Women, outlined three elements that might be included in the paper.

- South Asian employment rates do not adequately explain the reality of work for women. These statistics do not, for example, document home based women workers, or the care economy.
- In the south Asian context, there are divisions between private and public spaces that restrict the mobility of women.
- Many women do not have access to capital or resources and to the income generating mechanisms that can enable self-sufficiency.

Position Paper by ILO-SAAT: Second paper was on ILO viewpoints on women workers and gender equality in the world of work. **Dr. Jyoti Tuladhar**, Senior Specialist on Gender and Women Workers presented this paper, based on the ILO Conventions related with women workers.



What was to be discussed in these themes in the two workshops were the following aspects:

Step 1: □	Problems: □ Process: □	Listing of actual Problems□ Problem assessment in the group.
Step 2: □	Aims: □	Need assessment & setting their aims□ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • □ Prioritising the aims□ • □ Selecting those aims, which have the best chances of success
Step 3:□	Strategies:□	How can problems be tackled to achieve out aims□ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • □ in the short term□ • □ in the long term
Step 4:□		Responsibility: Who will do this?□
	Process: □	Setting out mechanisms
Step 5: □	Control:□ Process □	How and who will monitor and follow-up?□ co-ordination and meetings

She had stressed that ILO recognizes all women as workers, and does not address women in the workplace separately from women at home. The issues of women cannot be addressed in isolation, but in relation to workers rights. Work and life are joined. **Responses to the ILO-SAAT Position Paper:** Delegates had raised a number of questions and made comments following the presentation.

Basic concern of most of delegates was on the extent to which ILO conventions are implemented.

The Nepali delegate of NTUC, said: “We hear about ILO conventions all the time, but we don’t hear about

how to implement them.” And the representative of BJSJ Bangladesh asked what procedures are used by the ILO to check implementation aspect.

Leyla Tegmo Reddy, the Director of the ILO Office in Nepal, explained that the ILO’s role is to encourage and facilitate.

Thematic workshops as part of the discussion: Two themes were proposed for discussion in the two workshops. Workshop one was on *Maternity Protection and Reproductive Health in the Workplace Environment* related issues. This was facilitated by Elsa Ramos from ICFTU. Workshop two was on



List of the Workshop Participants

Workshop one

1. Elsa Ramos
2. Dr. Jyoti Tuladhar
3. Mercelle Rajamoney
4. Chang Eu Yun Alice
5. Pong-sul Ahn
6. Shirin Akhter
7. Geeta Dhananjay Mahajan
8. Vinaben B. Naik
9. Nisha Shah
10. Sudha Dahal
11. Yukie yabuta
12. Amala Shrestha
13. Goma Timilsina
14. Hiru Pun
15. Indira lama
16. Manju Lama
17. Radha Acharya
18. Bina Shrestha

Workshop Two

1. Maria Beahring
2. Eva Tabor
3. Leyla Tegmpo-reddy
4. Sujata Gothoskar
5. Itsuko nagasaka
6. Dr. K. Hemlata
7. Anusuya Sharma
8. Bidhya Bhandari
9. Rama Paudel
10. U. Jothinathan
11. Goma Acharya
12. Kalyani Khadka
13. Kamallaxmi Shrestha
14. Manju Thapa
15. Mira Basnet
16. Renuka Pandey
17. Sita Lama
18. Binda Pandey

Empowerment of Women leadership: Representation and Participation of Women in Trade Unions. This workshop was facilitated by Maria Baehring and Eva Tabor from KAD, Denmark.

GEFONT prompted groups to follow a number of steps in their discussion. Synopses of the group discussions are included in this document.

Plenary Debate: Both groups presented their discussions, their priority areas, and their aims to the conference delegates.

Chairing the debate, Pong-sul Ahn, the Senior Specialist of Workers Activities in ILO-SAAT observed that the question of how to put aims into practice had not been strategically and realistically addressed. He called for South Asia's women trade unionists to devise collective and consolidated actions.



Representing the Global Unions Federation, Chang Eu Yun Alice from UNI-APRO raised two critical questions that trade unions should ask themselves as they try to build a common gender agenda as

- How do unions relate to non-union workers' organisations?
- Why have non-unions been successful in the informal economy?

She said that some workers' organisations are becoming irrelevant. "They run to put out fires after they have already started." For example, she said that some unions were unable to organise casual or non-contract workers because their members still considered these people as competitors. Instead, she called on unions to recognise that "these are the people who actually need protection."

With this session, the day's programme was adjourned. For the purpose of socializing GEFONT's friends/working partners with foreign delegates, a reception dinner was organised with some more additional guests/friends of GEFONT.

Declaration: Debate and adoption: A conference declaration drafting committee, which included Dr. Jyoti Tuladhar, Leyla Tegmo-Reddy, Eva Tabor, Sujata

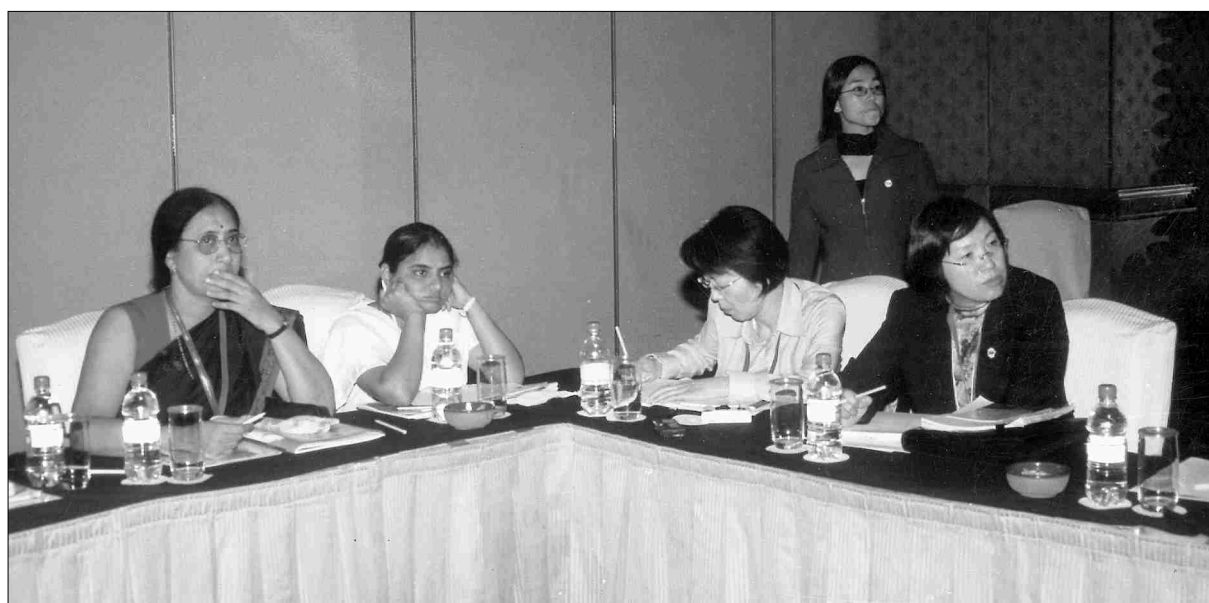
Gothoskar, Urohdhindevi Jyotinatham and Binda Pandey prepared a draft of the Conference Declaration. The draft Declaration was presented in the first session of the final day, which was chaired by Ms. Sujatha Gothoskar. After the presentation of the declaration by Dr. Jyoti Tuladhar, participants discussed it paragraph by paragraph before adoption.

Further Action: Questions about how to take the Conference declaration to regional networking forward were raised in the final session.

Maria Baehring, chairing the session explained that it was necessary to discuss who is going to take the initiative to continue the network and follow-up activities.

Dr. Jyoti Tuladhar proposed to form loose type of South Asian Women Trade Unions Network (SAWTUN). Delegates of the conference unanimously adopted it.

The Indian trade unions representatives at the conference made a unanimous declaration: "We urge GEFONT to continue its co-ordination and get more unions on board until the task force is underway." Accepting GEFONT's responsibility, GEFONT Secretary General Bishnu Rimal suggested a deadline of May 1st 2003, for unions to forward official



nomination of contact persons from each participating trade union centre.

The Concluding session was chaired jointly by CWWD-GEFONT and KAD. In this session, a resolution condemning the war against Iraq was passed by the participating trade unions.

Like wise, the participants also adopted separate motion expressing their experience in the conference, which reads as follows:

"It has been a great experience and a very useful one for all of us here at the South Asian women trade unionist meet. We would like to thank GEFONT, the international unions and all the supporting organizations for initiating such an important process.

We would like to express our concern that we would like to take this process forward and involve more unions as well. We would urge GEFONT to continue this co-ordination for some more time till the Task Force is on its feet.

We would also request the international and global unions and the ILO to support this effort."

Following this, there was brief sharing session among the likeminded participants to express their feeling. It was felt that the Conference has started a very important and much-needed process that should be nurtured and geared-up.

Mentionable is the Nepali experience, where all national trade union Centres are working together on gender issue. The Union Centres have developed a joint programmes for action and a platform entitled the Trade Union Committee for Gender Equality and Promotion (TUC- GEP). Considering towards this experience, some of the participants, especially from India even expressed their feeling that they are very much optimistic to form network among Indian women trade unionists for the betterment of Indian women from working class.

The whole core session was successful to keep the discussions within a bi-lingual (English and Nepali) and sometimes tri-lingual (Hindi) framework.



employment but also the pattern of consumption

- The exploitative nature of the employers' class is not changed but revised in new editions and many varieties

2. Existing uniqueness in a Gender Framework

- Gender discrimination both in the formal workplace and informal economy is considerably high
- Women workers are working in terrible working conditions even in comparison to their male counterparts both in the workplace or in the family
- Poor literacy status in general and heavy illiteracy widespread among working women in particular is the main characteristic of the society
- Casualisation and exploitative home-based production structure as new forms of informalisation have basically victimised women workers, which has resulted into further intensification & marginalisation with increased workload.
- Women are at the centre of economy & economic activity having busy & extremely active position within all three angles of the triangular position of work
 - o Care economy & community work
 - o Reproduction and
 - o Wage work & self-employment
- Women's contribution is still far from recognition; in most of the cases it is excluded from accounting as a part of subsistence work and household chores
- A large number of women are working in a status as attached labour to the male workers of the family and are subject just to one or two meals a day without any payment
- Women workers are mostly out of the organisational framework and even if organised, most of them are in exclusion from a right-based approach
- High and increasing labour force participation rates have given less returns with added workload

- Observations indicate towards increasing Discrimination and mental torture with new tensions at home, workplace, street and society
- Intolerable are the domestic violence at home and commercial sexual exploitation irrespective of the age outside
- Socio-cultural values, family problems and backward gender bias behaviour have restricted the involvement of women in union movement and activities

2.1 Problem Structure in Family & Society

- Patriarchal nature of society
 - o Lower status of women & male chauvinism
 - o Poor participation in social movement
 - o Gender Discrimination
- Existing superstitious belief victimising women
- Poor ownership position
 - o Property
 - o Decision making
- Poor social protection

2.2 Problem Structure in workplace

- Gender division of labour
- Gender-based discrimination in opportunity on employment, training, promotion & remuneration
- Quality of care including maternity protection & reproductive health
 - o Malnutrition
 - o Health hazards
 - o Health check-up
 - o Miscarriage & stillbirth
- Maternity and Paternity leave
- Childcare
- Sexual Harassment
- Male-domination in union structure
- Rapid informalisation of labour market & more victimisation of women
- Poor feminisation of union movement

Solution is in Gender sensitised union movement with full participation, but what is the existing scenario in Trade union structures?

3. Map of main Interests: unions/federations

Main interest of Unions

- Improve participation of women
- Workers' education
- Trade Union Unity
- Code of conduct against sexual harassment at the work place
- Assist individual members
- Research
- Health & Safety
- Reorganise industries
- Increased Membership
- Organising informal sector
- Working conditions

Special interests of Women in Trade Unions

- Involve women in leadership & decision making positions
- Sexual harassment at the work place
- Establish structure to support women
- Amend discriminatory laws & regulation
- Women focused various programmes including education
- Feminising union movement
- Campaign for maternity Protection & Reproductive health
- Demand for equal opportunities, remuneration and other benefits for women
- Equal
- Ratification of ILO Conventions (Nos. 89, 183, 155, 156)

4. Why Women Do Not Join Unions

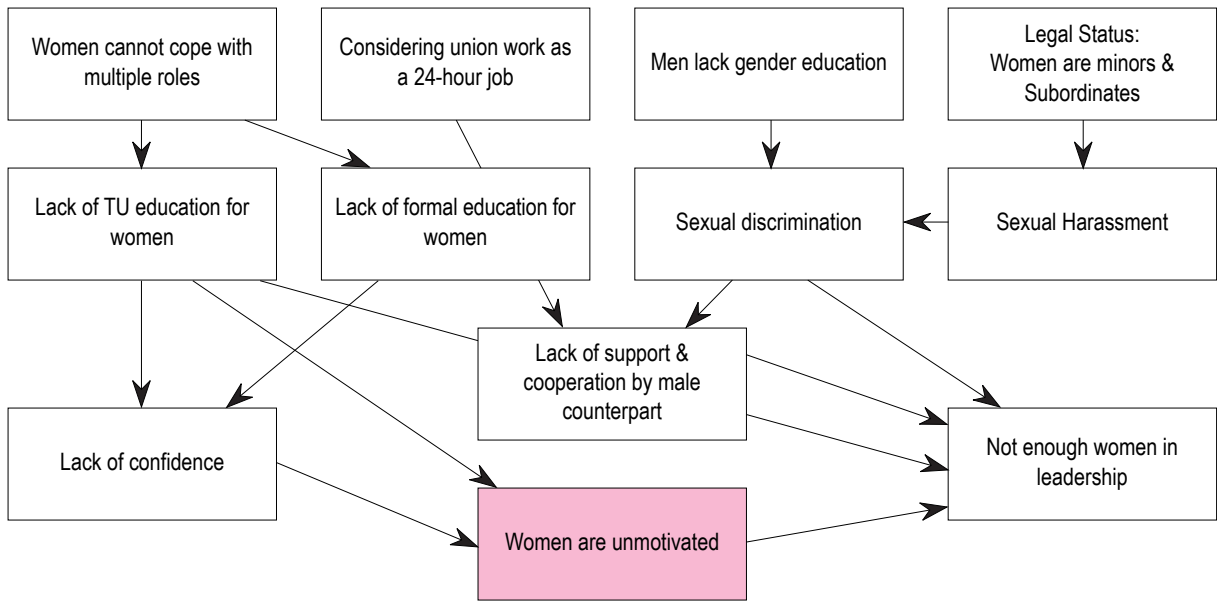
- Family responsibilities such as child care, and all household duties are left mainly to women. This means that a woman who is

active in her trade union usually has triple responsibilities as family responsibilities, reproductive work & productive work and trade union activities.

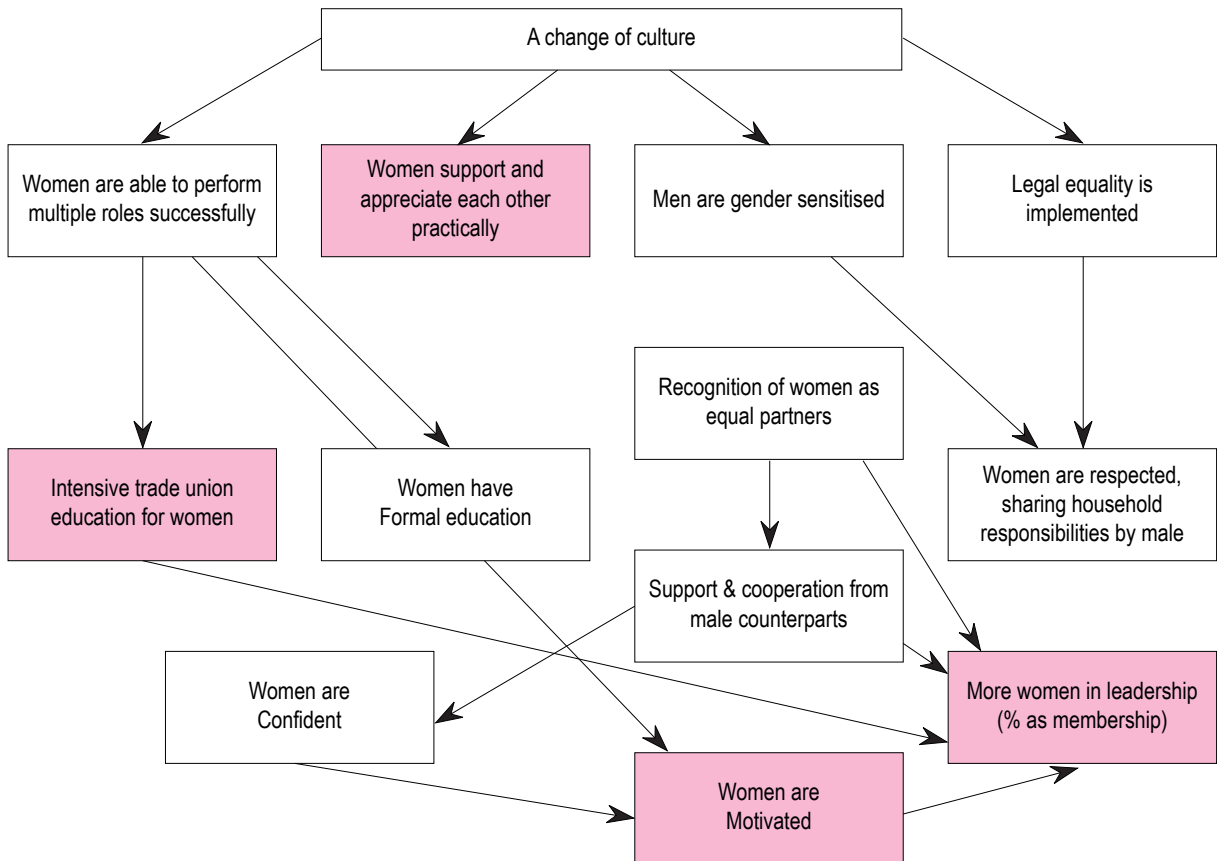
- Traditional roles and religion, taboos and cultural inhibitions make it difficult for women to break into the male environments.
- Women are often socialized to play subordinate roles to men, which has resulted in a lack of confidence when it comes to assuming public and leadership roles.
- Women often employed in subordinate position under the supervision of men in more powerful positions leads to only a few women being represented on committees and bargaining teams. It is also difficult for a woman in a low status job to represent workers in higher grades.
- Trade union environments are often male dominated because–
 - o The notion that working in the union is a 24-hour-a-day-job.
 - o Tendency to have meetings at night and before & after working hours
 - o Male-dominated union committees and use of gender-unfriendly language
 - o Little encouragement for women; less interest in women's issues
 - o Less access to education and training for women in many places
 - o Lack of physical infrastructure to take care of basic needs like childcare and toilet facilities and safe, convenient and affordable transportation facilities, time & venue management



5. A Map of interlinked problems: What difficulties do women face in participating in trade unions?



6. How to Develop a Gender Sensitised trade union structure?



7. What can be achieved through Gender sensitised Union movement?

Workplace

- Breaking sexual division of labour
- Ensuring equal wages for work of equal value
- Ensuring equal opportunity in every layer of work & labour market
- Ensuring equal participation of women workers in union movement
- International Trade Union Fora (including ITSs)
- Principal Office Bearer Positions in National & local level
- Membership in tripartite and bipartite fora at national, regional/sectoral and enterprise/local level.
- Training programmes conducted at international, national, regional/sectoral and local level
- Paid positions beyond secretarial jobs in trade union secretariats at international, national, regional/sectoral and local level
- Ensuring full sensitiveness on women issues

- Ensuring strong bargaining in CBA on women issues
- Ensuring proper enforcement of legal provisions

Family

- Promote equal sharing of household and care activities
- Discourages domestic violence
- Opportunity equalisation in family
- Full participation in decision making including the use of income

Society

- Promote fast attitudinal changes
- Minimisation of superstitious beliefs
- Minimisation of sexual (commercial as well) exploitation & trafficking
- Minimisation of gender-based crimes
- Improvement in health with focus on maternity protection and reproductive health
- Democratic and rightful participation in all social & political fora

The ILO Conventions and Women Workers' Rights

By Dr. Jyoti Tuladhar, Senior Specialist on Gender and Women Workers, ILO-SAAT, New Delhi



The ILO Conventions and Women Workers' Rights

Jyoti Tuladhar, ILO-SAAT, New Delhi

ILO's View of Gender Equality

Equal rights, responsibilities, opportunities, treatment, and valuation of women and men

- in employment
- in relation between work and life

Equality

Same human and workers' rights
Equal value and fair distribution of

- responsibilities and opportunities
- workload and decision making

Why ensure gendered approach in Workplace?

- Increased informalization and insecurity
- Larger share of economically active women in informal economy
- Gender gap in incomes and insecurity higher in informal economy
- Vast majority not covered by social protection
- Gender inequalities persist - "missing women in Asia"

Women in Informal Economy

- Increase in flexi-jobs
- Own account - self-employed, homework, subcontracting
- Increase in low quality jobs
- 3 Ds: dirty, dangerous, demeaning:
 - low pay, hard work, high turnover
 - no job security, dismissal upon marriage or pregnancy,
 - lack of safety and health provisions

Discrimination/ Segregation

- Gender Wage Gap (2/3 only)
- Horizontal Segregation (across jobs)
- Vertical Segregation (in job hierarchy)
- Retrenchment (when technical skills required)
- Reconciling work and family responsibilities

Persisting barriers for women at work

- ➔ Gender stereotyping: common beliefs
 - All women are mothers first
 - Sex of worker = best indicator for competence
 - Men are natural leaders and managers
 - Men will stay - Women will go
 - Women prefer not to be promoted.
 - Nobody will accept a woman boss.
 - Fast track promotion:
 - a must for promising men
 - a waste for promising women

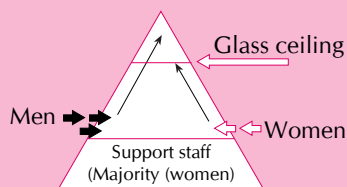
Changes in stereotypes take place.

Japan: View on: Women should stay at home. Men are paid workers.

	Men	Women
1987	50%	38%
1990	36%	24%

Occupational segregation

- Still wide-spread
 - Glass ceiling



Horizontal Segregation

- Horizontal segregation** = across jobs:
- women cooks - men guards
 - women in narrower range of occupations
 - horizontal segregation going down: lowest in Asia, except China
 - more women in men's jobs, not more men in women's jobs
 - women jobs: less pay, status, career options

Vertical Segregation

Vertical segregation in job hierarchy: □
women workers - men's supervisors
Old idea: not enough qualified women out
of date, but
Glass ceiling remains intact world side:
< 20% women in management position
1-5% women in top jobs

Decent Work

Productive work in conditions of freedom,
equality, security and human dignity

Four Key Strategic Objectives

- fundamental principles and rights at work
- greater employment and income
- more social protection: safe work and security
- organizations, networking and dialogue between them

Key issues for women workers

- Decent work:
 - Equal pay for equal work
 - Less horizontal and vertical segregation: breaking glass ceiling and walls
 - Reconciling work and family responsibilities
 - Respect and healthy work environment, free of sexual harassment
 - Networking

Some Critical Needs

- Revaluation of women's work (taking into account both paid and unpaid work).
- A broader recognition and understanding of work and family.
- Adapting working times and patterns to take into account family responsibilities.
- Creating family-friendly workplaces.
- Enactment and enforcement of legislation to eliminate discrimination against women.
- Positive or affirmative action programmes to do away with the current direct and indirect consequences of past discrimination.

Some Critical Needs (continued)

- Vocational training, guidance and counseling to widen occupational choices for women.
 - pre recruitment
 - on-the-job
- Information campaigns to promote:
 - sharing of work and family responsibilities between women and men,
 - positively influencing employer prejudices on women workers.
- Support measures to integrate and maintain women in non-traditional employment sectors.

ILO Conventions of Direct Relevance to Gender Equality

Equality of opportunity & treatment between women and men in world of work as reflected in ILO Conventions:

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

Conventions (continued)

- Part Time Work Convention (No. 175) – 1994
- Home Work Convention (No. 177) – 1996
- Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work – 1998
- The Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention – 1999 (special situation of girls)

Equal Remuneration Convention

- Principle of equal pay for work of equal value: rates/types of remuneration fixed without discrimination on sex
- Applies to basic salaries + additional emoluments, paid directly or indirectly
- Job classification systems and pay structures to be based on objective criteria
- Review, adjustment, corrective measures



Discrimination (Employment and Occupation)

- Promote equality of opportunity and treatment in respect of employment and occupation without discrimination based on race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin

Discrimination (Employment and Occupation)

- Stop all forms of discrimination in employment and occupation
- Access to vocational training, access to employment, particular occupations, terms/conditions of employment
- Any laws/administrative instructions and practices not in line with this policy to be modified

Forms of Discrimination

- **Direct discrimination** occurs when formal, legal rules and regulations prohibit men and women from participating in activities equally ('de jure').
- **Indirect discrimination** occurs when social rules and practices, norms and values inhibit girls to participate equally in activities ('de facto').

Workers with Family Responsibilities

- Develop national policy to enable employment without discrimination and without conflict between employment and family responsibilities
- Appropriate measures taken in community planning, development of community services – child care/family care services and facilities
- Organizing vocational guidance and training
- Family responsibilities not valid reason to lose his/her job

Maternity Protection

- Applies to all employed women, including those in atypical forms of dependent work
- Not less than 14 weeks of maternity leave with entitlement to cash benefits and medical care – six weeks compulsory leave after childbirth
- Nursing women entitled to interrupt for breast feeding – counted as working hours
- Prohibition of dismissal for maternity reasons
- Prohibition of any work harmful for health (both mother/child)

Part Time Work Convention

Ensure part time workers same protection as full time workers in respect of:

- Freedom of association and collective bargaining
- Occupational safety and health
- Discrimination
- Remuneration
- Job security – maternity protection – statutory social security – working conditions (holidays/sick leave)

Home Work Convention

- Refers to work performed for remuneration at home or other premises of choice, resulting in product or service specified by employer
- Ensure equality of treatment with wage earners in respect to: Freedom of association and collective bargaining
- Occupational safety and health
- Discrimination
- Remuneration
- Access to training – minimum age for admission - maternity protection – statutory social security

ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work

- Covers four main areas for establishment of “social floor” in world of work:
- Freedom of Association and collective bargaining
- Elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour
- Effective abolition of child labour
- Elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation

Declaration (continued)

Comprises of 8 Core Labour Standards:

- Freedom of Assoc. and Right to Organize (No. 87)
- Right to Org. and Collective Bargaining (No. 98)
- Forced Labour (No. 29)
- Abolition of Forced Labour (No. 105)
- Minimum Age (No. 138)
- Worst Forms of Child Labour (No. 182)
- Equal Remuneration (No. 100)
- Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) (No. 111)

Strategies for Decent Work

Three Crucial Linkages:

- Linkage between care economy and paid work (Reconciling work and family responsibilities)
- Linkage between formal and informal economy
- Linkage between quantity and quality of employment, social protection and voice at work (Chilly workplace climate with sexual harassment and no networks/no organizing/no solidarity)

Decent Work

Promotion of employment opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equality, security and human dignity.

DW means meeting or exceeding core social standards as endorsed in ILO Declaration:

- Allow men and women to have decent standard of living
- All those who work have rights at work
- Qualitative aspects of work – more and better jobs
- Dynamic and evolving concept

Thank You!



Group Report

Group 1: Working Environment with Specific emphasis on maternity protection and Reproductive health

Category

1. Informal Economy
 - Salt
 - Bidi
 - Jute
 - Domestic work
 - Hawkers/Vendors
 - Construction
 - Garbage
 - Fish/shrimp
2. Agriculture Workers
3. Export processing zone (EPZ) /Free Trade Zone (FTZ)
 - Bangladesh/Sri Lanka
 - Migration of women workers in Sri Lanka
 - Trafficking of women
4. Garment Industry/Carpet Industry

Maternity Protection

1. Ratification of ILO Convention 183
2. Equalisation of
 - Paid maternity leave
 - Benefits
 - Pre-post Natal Medical Care (India, Bangladesh, Nepal)

3. **Health Protection:** Pregnant and nursing women shall not be obliged to perform work that is assessed as detrimental to the mother or child.
4. **Employment Protection:** women cannot be dismissed before, during or after delivery.

Decent work

1. Decent Wage (Decent minimum wage)
2. Equal treatment for women and man (equal pay = Equal value)
3. Social and legal protection

Trade Union Rights

1. Ratification of C87 and C98: India and Nepal
 - Freedom of association and collective bargaining

IMPLEMENTATION: WHY?

1. Weak trade union movement (lack of awareness of legislation for all constitutes)
2. Weakness of labour inspection Machinery
3. Lack of legal aid
4. Lack of unity among trade unions
5. Lack of political independence/ autonomy of trade unions



SPECIFIC VIOLATIONS OF WOMEN RIGHTS

1. Women's issues not fully integrated into the main trade union's agenda.
 - Women not organized into the trade union
 - Decision making
 - Knowledgeable and informed (active)
2. Lack of Gender Sensitivity
 - Trade Union
 - Government
 - Employer
 - Society

STRATEGIES

1. Maternity Protection
 - A) Active Campaign: Use Kit
 - National Level
 - Sub-Region
 - Regional
 - International Level
 - B) Improvement of Maternity Protection
 - Unity of Action

- with the trade union
- like minded organization
- cooperation from ILO & other international agencies

2. RESPONSIBILITIES

- Individual women committee to get into the agenda of trade unions
- Leadership
- The whole trade union movement

3. DECENT WORK

- Information gathering at national level
- Joint trade union action

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

- ILO
- International Trade Union Bodies
- GUFs

5. TRADE UNION RIGHTS

- Campaign of rectification C87 and C98
- Training in legislation of labour laws: ILO
- Joint Trade Unions
- Solidarity Action

Group -2: Empowering women's leadership with specific emphasis on women's representation and participation

Problems

- Existence of social ill-practices and evil such as dowry, witches etc.
- Problem create by family member of women trade unionists
- Not included household work as economic activities



- ❑ Lack of vocational/skill training for women
- ❑ Lack of proper sensitisation of policy making body
- ❑ Not recognising reproductive health as social responsibility
- ❑ Not enough organising activities in informal sector

Aims

Union and workplace

- ❑ Women committee/quota system
- ❑ Gender sensitive facilities
- ❑ Improve participation in all level
- ❑ Identification of the workers
- ❑ Special gender course for trade union leadership
- ❑ Law and implementation
- ❑ Gender sensitivity

Family

- ❑ Sharing responsibilities
- ❑ Equal access to decision making

Society

- ❑ Improve education, health and curriculum
- ❑ Sensitising social practice/ media
- ❑ Decent work
- ❑ Micro economic policy
- ❑ Social security system extending to informal sectors

Strategy

- ❑ Co-ordination among union, federation, confederation and among women
- ❑ Networking among women's committee, women organisation and local government.
- ❑ Create safe and conducive environment
- ❑ Building self-confidence
- ❑ Training on gender sensitivity and legal rights
- ❑ Human value, activities with children
- ❑ Information centre (data)
- ❑ Political lobbying
- ❑ Cooperative organising

6

Declaration

Declaration For a Better South Asia

1. We, women trade unionists of South Asia, gathered at the Regional Conference on Identifying a Common Gender Agenda for a Better South Asia, held in Kathmandu from 15-17 March 2003, hereby declare that we stand united to overcome discrimination suffered by all women across South Asia at all levels. We recognize that severe forms of discrimination exist in families, societies, at the workplace and within organizations. These are rooted in socio-cultural traditions of South Asia, further aggravated by the negative impact of globalisation and conflicts. Poverty and violence against women have had a devastating effect, impeding sustainable social and economic development.

2. The Conference prioritised the following areas for immediate action and engaged

in intensive deliberations on two themes: *Working environment with specific emphasis on maternity protection and reproductive health and Empowering women leadership with specific emphasis on participation and representation.*

3. As an outcome of the discussion on the theme of the *Working environment with specific emphasis on maternity protection and reproductive health*, we have identified five categories of workers as deserving high priority for action. These are: (1) *informal economy workers, including home-based workers* (2) *agricultural workers*; (3) *workers in the export processing zones (EPZ) /free trade zones (FTZ)*; (4) *migrant women workers and trafficked women*; and (5) *workers in the garment and carpet industries.*



4. In the context of these categories of workers, three major critical issues for consideration are related to maternity protection, Decent Work promotion and trade union rights. We feel strongly that every effort should be made to promote the ratification of the ILO Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No.183) that equalization of provisions under paid maternity leave, benefits and pre- and post-natal medical care should be extended to all categories of workers, irrespective of the sectors to which they belong and their position at work. Provisions of health protection (pregnant and nursing women shall not be obliged to perform work that is assessed as detrimental to the mother or child), and employment protection (women cannot be dismissed before, during or after pregnancy), should be specially safeguarded and implementation should be ensured.
5. For the promotion of Decent Work, we consider it imperative that decent wages should be ensured and that minimum wage provisions, wherever they exist, should be of decent levels to meet the basic requirements of decent living standards for these workers. Two other critical requirements are equal treatment for women and men, in particular, equal pay for work of equal value and full social and legal protection.
6. For the promotion and protection of trade union rights, campaigns must be launched to bring about the ratification of the ILO Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention, 1948 (no.87) and the ILO Right to Organize and to Bargain Collectively Convention, 1949 (No.98). The prevention of specific violations of women's rights should be achieved by fully integrating women's issues into the main trade union's agenda; organizing women into the trade unions; increasing women in decision making; and, enhancing their awareness and knowledge levels. Gender sensitivity needs to be strengthened at all levels and among all groups of constituents: trade unions, government, employers and even society at large.
7. In order to achieve the objectives, the following strategies are required for each of the priority issues:
- a. For promoting maternity protection:
 - i. Launching of an active campaign at various levels, including, the national, sub-regional, regional and international to promote the ratification of Convention No. 183
 - ii. Improving maternity protection provisions and their effective implementation, through unified action of trade unions and like-minded organizations, and the pooling of resources
 - b. For promoting Decent Work:
 - i. Generating sex disaggregated data and information at the national level on wages and benefits, workforce participation, occupations, trade union participation, childcare facilities, working conditions, etc.
 - ii. Launching joint trade union action and developing effective alliances
 - c. For promoting trade union rights:
 - i. Conducting campaigns for the ratification and implementation of Conventions No. 87 and No. 98
 - ii. Organizing training on labour legislation and international labour standards
 - iii. Launching joint trade union actions at the national and South Asian levels
 - iv. Enhancing women's participation and representation in trade unions and promoting women to decision-making positions and top leadership
8. The deliberations on the theme of *Empowering women's leadership with specific emphasis on participation and representation* identified the problems of participation as multidimensional and emphasized the need to tackle them at various levels and sites. These encompass cultural values

and traditions of male dominated societies, resistance from employers and the state, economic systems and government policies. Rampant underemployment, unemployment and poverty affect women disproportionately, increasing their vulnerability.

9. The atmosphere in trade unions should be more conducive to women's participation and efforts should be intensified to include women in trade unions and take up their concerns as priorities. Various factors hinder women's participation in unions, including: lack of time due to their multiple roles (family, work); lack of support from the family to their participation in unions; and, lack of access to education and support services.

10. There is an urgent need to organize women in trade unions; to increase their participation in trade unions at all levels, including leadership and decision-making; and, to increase their opportunities for education and training. We also need to include women's issues in trade union agendas, to bring about a change in the mindset of the leadership about women and women's issues, and to enhance the democratic functioning of trade unions. It is also necessary to increase the participation of women in the movement

to bring about changes in government policies, as well as in social, economic and political systems.

11. To achieve these aims, we feel that multiple strategies are required. These include:

- a. Mobilizing resources and developing effective strategies to organize women, particularly in the informal economy
- b. Conducting training and education and promoting women in trade unions
- c. Gender sensitisation of leadership and cadres of trade unions
- d. Taking up issues of particular concern to women in trade union agendas, for example: sexual harassment; employment, training and promotion; maternity protection, etc.
- e. Forming women's committees within trade unions and instituting quotas for women at all levels to increase their representation
- f. Creation of a women friendly atmosphere and activities in trade unions
- g. Encouraging women to address union meetings, to take part in collective bargaining and negotiations, and to take responsibility in unions.
- h. Using cultural activities to encourage women to join unions
- i. Encouraging interaction of trade





unionists with family members of women workers to facilitate their participation in unions

- j. Educating communities and families on issues of gender equality
- k. Networking amongst trade unions and with women's organizations and other like-minded organizations
- l. Promoting political advocacy on women workers' rights and sustainable development

12. We are convinced that increasing women's representation and participation in trade unions is important not only for women, not only for trade unions, but also for A Better South Asia.

13. In order to achieve the outlined objectives and make the Declaration a reality, we have decided to form a Network/Task Force to move the gender agenda forward.

14. We call upon the international trade union federations, the Global Union Federations (GUFs) and the International Labour Organization to actively support the initiatives and strategies proposed in this Declaration, which we will prioritise in our own unions.

Kathmandu, 17 March

Signatories

Bangladesh: Bangladesh Jatio Sramik Jote (BJS)

India:

- All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC)
- Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU)
- Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC)
- Bharatiya Majdoor Sangh (BMS)
- Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)

Nepal:

- General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (GEFONT)
- Nepal Trade Union Congress (NTUC)
- Democratic Confederation of Nepalese Trade Unions (DECONT)

Sri Lanka: Ceylon Tamil Teachers Union

Other Participating Organizations:

Denmark: Women Workers Union in Denmark (KAD)

Japan: National Confederation of Trade Unions (ZENROREN)

Korea: Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU)

Nepal: All Nepal Women's Association (ANWA)

- Brotherhood of Asian Trade Unions-World Confederation of Labour (BATU-WCL)
- Union Network International-APRO (UNI-APRO)
- International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)
- ILO-South Asia Advisory Team, New Delhi
- ILO-Kathmandu Office
- Committee for Asian Women (CAW)

Annex: 1

SOUTH ASIA: SOME INDICATORS

Source: All Data from UNDP Human Development report 2002, whereas Data of Pakistan (Chart 10) and Sri Lanka (Chart 7) has been taken from ILO World Labour Report 2002

1. Human Development & Gender Development Indices

Ranking based on Human Development Index and Gender Development Index in comparison clearly indicate strong position of Sri Lanka, followed by India and poor status of Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh.

2. Life Expectancy at Birth

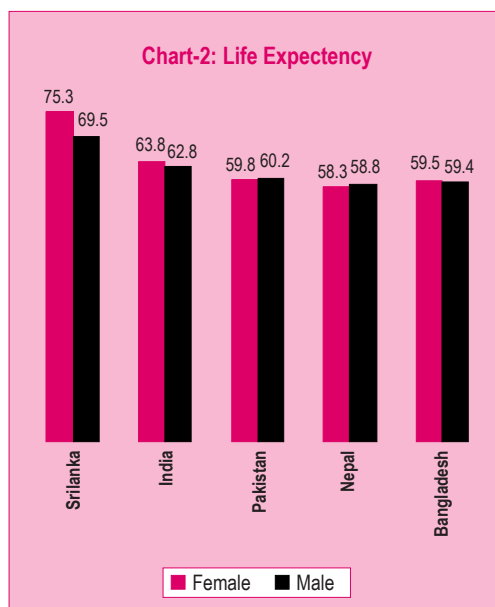
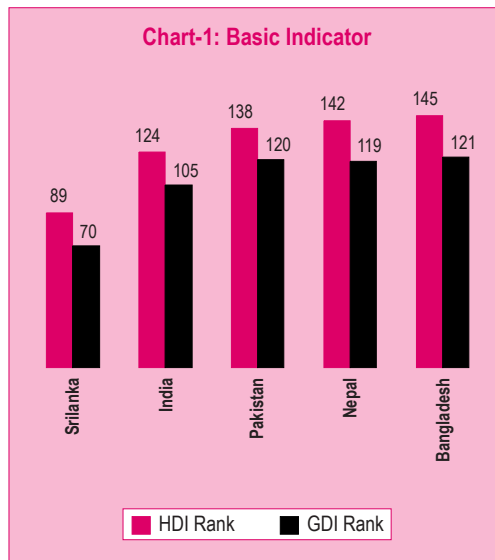
Sri Lanka, in spite of violent conflict of more than two decade, is in a highest position among other SAARC countries where female life expectancy is much higher than that of males. Nepal is in the lowest position, with Pakistan and Bangladesh having lower female life expectancy compared to males life expectancy.

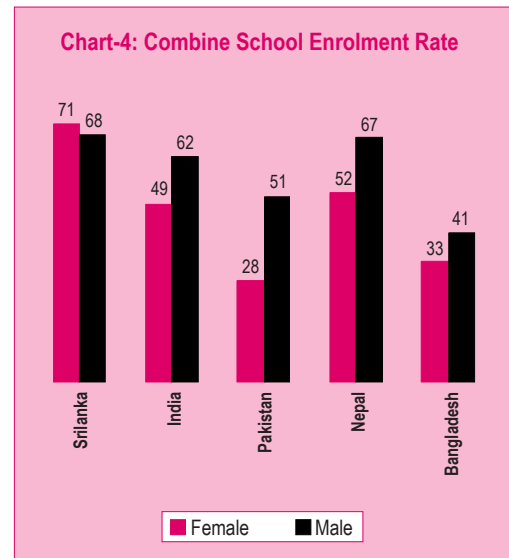
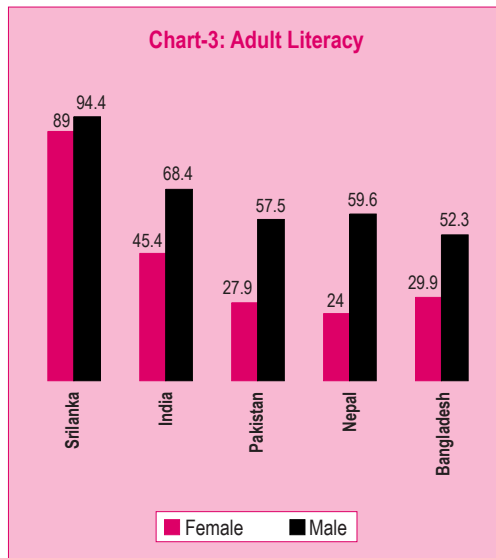
3. Adult literacy

Adult literacy is highest in Sri Lanka and average in India, but poorer in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. Also the gender gap in literacy is nominal in Sri Lanka, but wide in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal.

4. Rate of School Enrolment

School Enrolment is highest in Sri Lanka and second highest in Nepal. But the gender gap between the enrolment of boys & girls is insignificant in Sri Lanka whereas it is considerably high in other countries and the highest in Pakistan.





5. Fertility Rate

Female Fertility is very high at 5.5 per woman in Pakistan whereas it is lowest at 2.1 just at a replacement of couple in Sri Lanka. Bangladesh and India close to each other, but Nepal is in higher position.

6. Percentage of population below poverty line

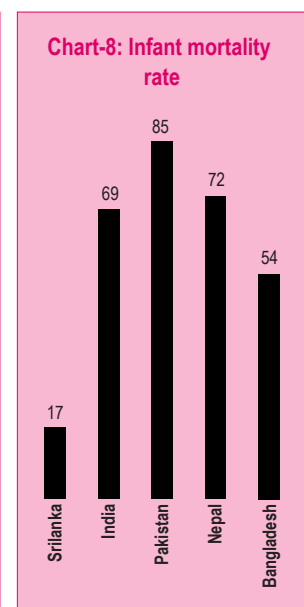
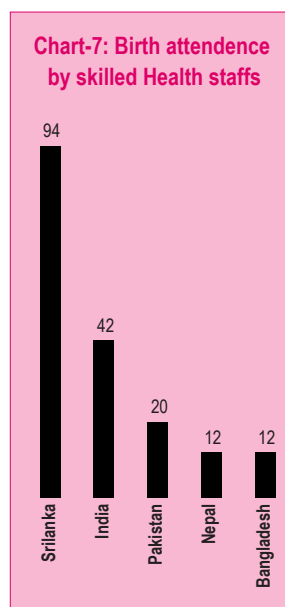
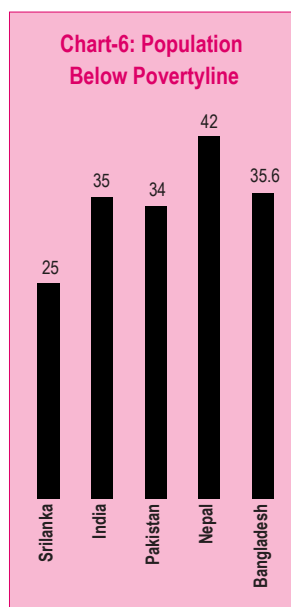
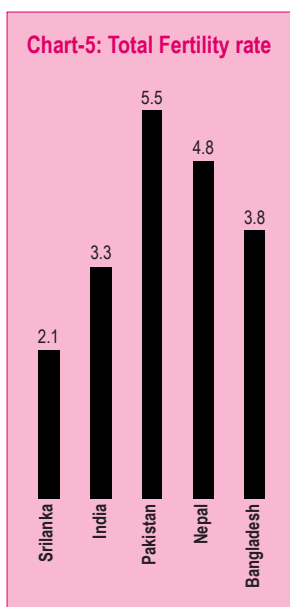
Smaller proportion of population is below poverty line in Sri Lanka, but others range in between 34-42% and Nepal has the highest percentage of poverty stricken population.

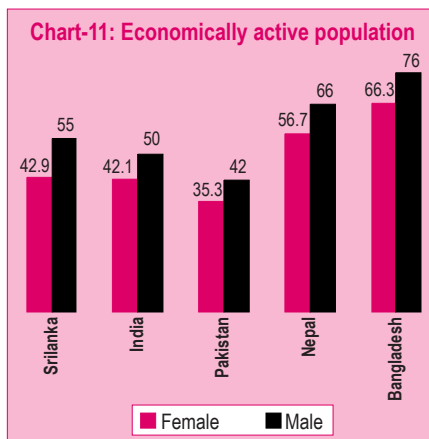
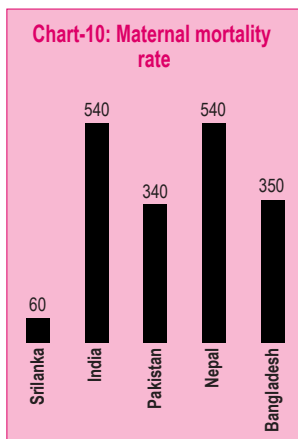
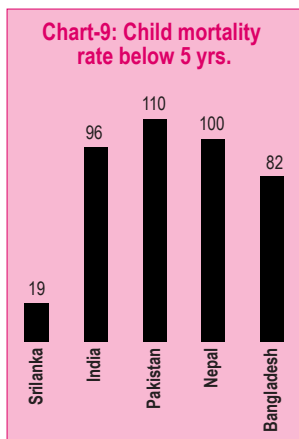
7. Birth Attendance by Skilled Health Staff

Nepal and Bangladesh are in worst position where Sri Lanka is in a far better position.

8. Infant Mortality Rate

Indicative of very poor health service availability, infant mortality per thousand live births is very high in Pakistan and Nepal, followed by declined rates in India and Bangladesh. But the rate in Sri Lanka is quite low and comparable to developed countries.





9. Child Mortality Rate

Reflecting very poor childcare scenario, Child Mortality at less than 5 years of age is highest in Pakistan followed by Nepal, India and Bangladesh; whereas Sri Lanka has been successful to have a lowest rate of child mortality.

10. Maternal Mortality rate

The maternal mortality per 100, 000 delivery is highest in Nepal & India, followed by Bangladesh and Pakistan. Sri Lanka has gained the lowest rate perhaps reflecting a sound system of maternity protection and Reproductive health care.

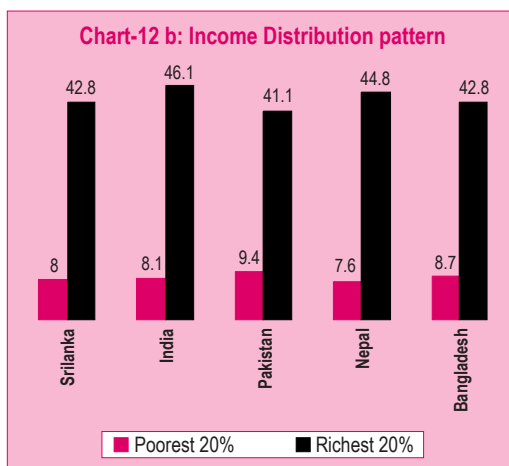
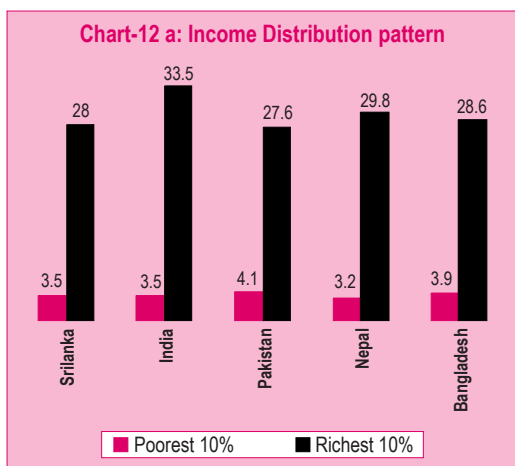
11. Economically Active Population

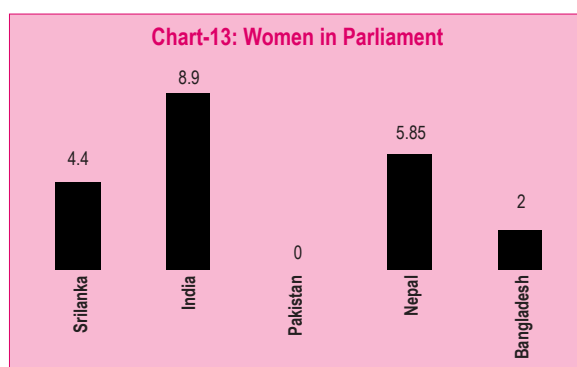
Percentage of economically active population in total population seems considerably high in Bangladesh and Nepal indicating hardships in earning the livelihood. It is followed by Sri

Lanka and India; here Pakistan remains at lowest. However, the gender disparity seems almost equivalent in the SAARC countries.

12. Income Distribution pattern

Comparing the income distribution pattern, two scenarios have been considered. Income inequality between Richest 10 % and Poorest 10 % of the population is indicative of high disparities in all 5 countries where gap is considerably very high in India, followed by Nepal Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. The gap is slightly lesser in Pakistan in comparison to others. While looking at the second scenario of income inequality between Richest 20 % and Poorest 20 %, Nepal has the highest gap holders followed by India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh respectively. In comparison to other SAARC countries Pakistan has lowest gap in this regard.





13. Women in Parliament

India seems more forward in women movement & awareness as nearly women leaders cover 9 % of the Member of Parliament. Nepal is in a second position and Sri Lanka the third. Bangladesh has a poor representation level and Pakistan at present is without Member of Parliament and hence outside the comparison.

Maternity Protection at Work in Asia & Pacific

Country	Length of Leave	Cash Benefits	Who Pays?
1. Afghanistan	90 days	100	Employer
2. Bangladesh	12 weeks	100	Employer
3. Cambodia	90 days	50	Employer
4. China	90 days	100	Employer
5. India	12 weeks	100	Employer/S.S.
6. Malaysia	60 days	100	Employer
7. Myanmar	12 weeks	66.7	Social Security
8. Nepal	52 days	100	Employer
9. Pakistan	12 Weeks	100	Employer
10. The Philippines	60 days	0	
11. Sri Lanka	12 Weeks	100	Employer
12. Thailand	90 days	100 for 45 days then 50% for 15 days	Employer for 45 days, then Social Security

Ratification of the ILO Fundamental Conventions (as of February 2003)

Country	Freedom of association and collective bargaining		Elimination of forced and compulsory labour		Elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation		Abolition of child labour	
	C. 87	C. 98	C. 29	C. 105	C. 100	C. 111	C. 138	C. 182
Bangladesh	•	•	•	•	•	•	-	•
India	-	-	•	•	•	•	-	-
Nepal	-	•	•	-	•	•	•	•
Pakistan	•	•	•	•	•	•	-	•
Sri Lanka	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

Ratification of the ILO Conventions related to women (as of February 2003)

Country	Maternity Protection			Night Work		Other Relevant Conventions						
	C. 30	C.103	C.183	C. 89	C. 171	C. 14	C. 45	C.127	C. 141	C.156	C.158	C. 177
Bangladesh	-	-	-	•	-	•	•	-	-	-	-	-
India	-	-	-	•	-	•	•	-	•	-	-	-
Nepal	-	-	-	-	-	•	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pakistan	-	-	-	•	-	•	•	-	-	-	-	-
Sri Lanka	-	•	-	Denounced	-	-	•	-	-	-	-	-

Note: C. 14: Weekly Rest C. 45: Underground work C. 141: Rural worker organisation C.127: Maximum Weight C. 156: Family Responsibility C. 158: Termination of Employment C. 177: Home based work

Annex: 2

Participating Trade Union in Brief

(All data is based on the information supplied by respective unions)

1. Bangladesh Jatio Sramik Jote (BSBJ)

Established date: 26th May 2002

Address: 35-36 Bangbandu Avenue, Dhaka-1000

Tel: 880-2-9559972/9122226

Fax: 880-2- 9122226

E-mail/URL: knari@agni.com

Particulars	Number of Members		
	Total	Male	Female
Total members	10,000	8000	2000
Total Number of local Unions/Committee	17		
National affiliate unions (if have)			
National Executive committee	30	26	4
Position holder in the top decision making (If any other mechanism)	11	7	4

Women Mechanism: Central women's committee with 21 members from various trade status equivalent of area committee. Monthly meeting and membership fees.

Contact Person of the Network: Shirin Akhter, President

Top five gender issues at the workplace

- Equal treatment
- Equal payment for equal work
- Maternity protection act
- Sexual harassment
- Transportation

2. All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC)

Established date: 31st October, 1920

Address: 24 Canning Lane, K.G. Marg, New Delhi-110001

Tel: 91-11-23387320

Fax: 91-11-23386427

E-mail/URL: aitucong@bol.net.in

Particulars	Number of Members		
	Total	Male	Female
Total members	35,000,000	90%	10 %
Total Number of local Unions/Committee	Around 3000 local affiliates		
National Executive committee	75	71	4
Secretariat	19	18	1

Women mechanism: Women's Sub Committee

Contact Person of the Network: Amerjeet Kaur, Secretary of Central committee

Top Five Gender Issues at the workplace

- Discrimination in wages
- No support system for childcare services
- Sexual harassment at workplace
- Lack of occupational, safety and health measures



3. Centre of Indian Trade Union (CITU)

Established date: 30th May 1970

Address : BTR Bhawan, 13-A, Rouse Avenue, New Delhi- 110002, India

Tel : 91-11-23221306/2322-1288

Fax : 91-11-23221284

E-mail/URL : citu@vsnl.com

Particulars	Number of Members		
	Total	Male	Female
Total members	28,13,265	22,53,675	5,59,590
Total Number of local Unions/Committee	24 state and 3295 local committees		
National Executive committee	117	108	9
Secretariat	35	32	3

Women mechanism: All India Coordination Committee of Working Women

Contact Person of the Network: Dr. K. Hemalata, Chief, Women Coordinating Committee
khemalata@hotmail.com (private)

Top five Gender issues at the workplace

- Equal remuneration
- Maternity benefit for all working women including unorganised sector and agricultural workers
- Law against Sexual Harassment at workplace
- Separate toilets, Crèches etc for working women
- Legal protection for Home based workers

4. Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC)

Established date: 3RD May 1947

Address : Shramik Kendra, 4 Bhai Veer Singh Marg, New Delhi 110001, India

Tel : 91-11-23747767/23747768

Fax : 91-11-23364244

E-mail/URL : intuchq@del3.vsnl.net.in

Particulars	Number of Members		
	Total	Male	Female
Total members	79,37,436	About 75%	25 %
Total Number of local Unions/Committee	Around 4625 local committees		
National Executive committee	51		
Secretariat	15		

Women mechanism: Central Women Committee

Contact Person of the Network : Ms. Shaila Limaye- General Secretary, INTUC-CWWC;
intuchq@del3.vsnl.net.in

Top five Gender issues at the workplace

- Lack of literacy and educational qualification
- Lack of awareness regarding their rights
- Equal wage for equal work
- Minimum wage problem
- Security of Life (P.F., Insurance, compensation etc.)

5. Self-Employed Women Association (SEWA)

Established date: 1972

Address: SEWA Reception Centre, Opposite Victoria Garden
Bhadra, Ahmedabad 3800001, India

Tel: 91-79-5506444, 5506477

Fax: 91-79-5506446

E-mail/URL: bdmsa@icenet.net

Particulars	Number of Members
Total members	75,36,000
Total Number of local Unions/Committee	Nine district committees and many local committees
National Executive committee	25

Women mechanism: It is only women organization

Contact Person of the Network: Nisha Shah- Coordinator, Agricultural Workers Campaign

Top five Gender issues at the workplace

- Rapid expansion there fore related capacity
- Capital formation
- Technical related input to increase work efficiency
- Consolidation
- Social Security

6. Bharatiya Majdoor Sangh (BMS)

Established date: 23rd July, 1955

Address: Ram Naresh Bhavan, Tilak Gali, Chuna Mandi, Paharganj, New Delhi - 110 055, India

Tel: 91-11-23620654, 23624212

Fax: 91-11-23517307

E-mail: ho@bms.org.in

URL: www.bms.org.in

Particulars	Number of Members		
	Total	Male	Female
Total members	76,39,460	-	-
Total Number of local Unions/Committee	5680		
National Executive committee	85	76	9
Position holder in the top decision making	22	20	2

Women mechanism: Central Women's Committee

Contact Person of the Network: Veena B. Naik-Member, Women Committee

Private phone: 0261-2692763; e-mail: veenabnaik@hotmail.com

Top five Gender issues at the workplace:

- Maternity protection
- Equal opportunity and protection from indignities
- Childcare facilities
- Illiteracy
- Well representation of women



7. General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (GEFONT)

Established date: 20th July, 1989

Address : P.O.Box 10652, Man Mohan Labor Building, Putalisadak, Kathmandu, Nepal

Tel : 977-1-4248072

Fax : 977-1-4248073

E-mail : info@gefont.org

URL : www.gefont.org

Particulars	Number of Members		
	Total	Male	Female
Total members	310757	83%	17%
Total Number of local Unions/Committee	1025 affiliates committee		
National Executive committee	35	32	3
Secretariat	10	8	2
Position holder in the top decision making	11	9	2

Women mechanism: Central Women Workers' Committee (CWWD)

Gender policy: Equal Participation, not mere Representation

Contact Person of the Network: Binda Pandey, Chief-Dept. of Education

Top five Gender issues at the workplace

- Maternity Protection
- Equal opportunity, training and promotion at work
- Equal wage for Equal value of work
- Sexual harassment at the workplace
- Occupational Safety and health including reproductive health issues

8. Nepal Trade Union Congress (NTUC)

Established date: 1990

Address : Kupondole, Lalitpur, Nepal

Tel : 977-1-5527443

Fax : 977-1-5550769

E-mail : ntuc@wlink.com.np

URL : www.ntuc.org.np

Particulars	Number of Members		
	Total	Male	Female
Total members	250,000	200,000	50,000
Total Number of local Unions/Committee	1000 affiliates committee		
National Executive committee	27	21	6
Secretariat	6		
Position holder in the top decision making			

Women mechanism: Women's Sub-Committee

Contact Person of the Network: Sudha Dahal- Director, Women Committee

Top five Gender issues at the workplace:

- Working condition and environment
- Employment opportunity, promotion and training
- Sexual harassment at workplace
- Equal pay and working hours
- Child care facility and family responsibility

9. Democratic Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (DECONT)

Established date: 1997

Address : Sinamangal-9, Kathmandu, Nepal

Tel : 977-1-4486987/4488486

Fax : 977-1-4488486

E-mail : udecont@wlink.com.np

URL : www.decont.org.np

Particulars	Number of Members		
	Total	Male	Female
Total members	251307	200,097	51,210
Total Number of local Unions/Committee	60	494	166
National Affiliates	18		
National Executive committee	27	24	3
Secretariat	11	10	1
Position holder in the top decision making	Women vice president		

Women mechanism: Woman committee with 11 members including one male

Major policy: Woman vice president at all level and 33 percent women participation in training programme

Contact Person of the Network: Rama Paudel -Women vice president

Top five Gender issues at the workplace

- Maternity protection
- Traditional employment opportunity
- Sexual harassment
- Discrimination in benefits providing by employers
- Problem in unionisation and participation

10. Ceylon Tamil Teachers' Unions (CTTU)

Established date: na

Address : 210. Dyke Street, Trincomalee, Sri Lanka

Tel : 94-26- 22437

Fax : 94-26-27401

E-mail/URL : rtnathan@sltnet.lk

Particulars	Number of Members		
	Total	Male	Female
Total members	na	na	na
Total Number of local Unions/Committee			
National Executive committee			
Secretariat			
Position holder in the top decision making			

Women mechanism: Central Women's Committee

Contact Person of the Network: Urohinidevi Jothinathan- Secretary, Women Wing

Top five Gender issues at the workplace

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11. Women Workers' Union in Denmark (KAD)

Established date: March 3, 1901

Address : Applebys Plads 5, DK-1411 Copenhagen K, Denmark

Tel : +45 32 83 83 83

Fax : +45 32 83 86 12

E-mail/URL : www.kad.dk

Particulars	Total Members
Total members	approx. 81,000
Total Number of local Unions/Committee	42 branches, (do not have system to have local unions at the workplaces)
National Executive committee	32 members
Secretariat	4
Position holder in the top decision making	All
Women mechanism: Its members are only women workers.	

Top five gender issues at the workplace

- Equal pay and equal opportunities;
- Training;
- Sexual harassment;
- Working environment (physical and psychological) and health;
- Working hours (the relation between family life and working life)

12. Korea Confederation of Trade Unions

Established date: 1995

Address : 5th Floor, Daeyoung Bldg., 139 Youngdeungpo-2-ga, Youngdeungpo-gu, Seoul, Korea

Tel : +82-2-2635-1133

Fax : +82-2-2635-1134

E-mail/URL : www.kctu.org

Particulars	Number of Members		
	Total	Male	Female
Total members	593,881	475,104	118,776
Total Number of local Unions/Committee	889		
National affiliate unions (if have)	15		
National Executive committee	46	44	2
Secretariat	39	30	9
Position holder in the top decision making	757	650	107
Women mechanism: Women's Committee			
Major policy and activity focus: Expansion of the Quota on Women's Participation			

Top Five Gender Issues at the workplace

- Workplace childcare facilities
- Women's quota in promotion at work
- Elimination of gender-based wage difference
- Strengthening of maternity protection (prohibition pregnant women's night work)
- Prevention and elimination of violence, verbal abuse, and sexual harassment at work

PROGRAMME SCHEDULE

Inaugural Session (March 15, 2003)**Venue:** Royal Nepal Academy, Kamaladi, Kathmandu

13:00-15:00	MC	Binda Pandey, Chief, GEFONT DE
Chairperson	Bina Shrestha,	CWWD-GEFONT
Organiser Chief	Mr. Mukunda Neupane	Chair, GEFONT-NEC
Co-organisers	Maria Beahring,	KAD/Denmark
	Eva Tabor,	KAD/Denmark
Acknowledgment of the guests		
His Excellency	Ms Gert Meinecke	The Ambassador of Denmark
Her Excellency	Ms Grace A. Asirwatham	The Ambassador of Sri Lanka
Her Excellency	Ms Phenchome Incharoensak	The Ambassador of Thailand
ILO-Kathmandu	Leyla Tegmo-reddy	Director
ILO-SAAT	Dr. Jyoti Tuladhar	Senior Specialist on Gender & Women Workers
	Dr. Pong-Sul AHN	Senior Specialist on Workers' Activities
GUF	Elsa Ramos	ICFTU
	Mercelle Rajahmoney	WCL-BATU
	Alice Chang	UNI-Apro
Bangladesh	Shirin Akhter	BJSJ
India	Anusuya Sharma	INTUC
	Geeta Dhananjay Mahajan	AITUC
	Dr. K. Hemlata	CITU
	Nisha Shah	SEWA
	Vinaben B. Naik	BMS
Nepal	Sahana Pradhan	Senior women Leader
	Bidhya D. Bhandary	ANWA
	Rama Paudel	DECONT
	Sudha Dahal	NTUC
Pakistan	-	-
Sri Lanka	Urohinidevi Jothinathan	CTTU
Japan	Yukie Yabuta	ZENROREN
	Itsuko Nagasaka	ZENRONREN
Korea	Kim Geun Ye	KCTU
Regional Organisation	Sujata Gothoskar	CAW
Keynote Speech	Mr. Mukunda Neupane	Chair, GEFONT-NEC
	Maria baehring	KAD
Launching of Research Report		By GEFONT Chair
		Search for Alternatives
Launching of Music Video		By Sahana Pradhan
		Samjhadaima Sramik Mahila



Speakers	Ms. Layla Tegmo-Reddy	ILO-Director
	Ms. Elsa Ramos	ICFTU
	Ms. Mercelle Rajahmoney	WCL
	Ms. Alice Chang	UN
	Ms. Yukie Yabuta	ZENROREN
Special Announcement	GEFONT	
Vote of Thanks	Ms. Bina Shrestha	Coordinator, CWWD-GEFONT

Core Sessions (March 16-17, 2003)

Venue: Hyatt Regency Kathmandu Hotel, Buddha, Kathmandu, Nepal

Plenary-1	Presentation of the Conference Papers	
	Chair	Leyla Tegmo Reddy
	Introduction of the Participants	
	Presentation of the Conference Paper	Binda Pandey
	Presentation of ILO conventions and women workers' Rights	Dr. Jyoti Tuladhar, ILO-SAAT
Workshop- 1	Working Environment with Special focus on Maternity Protection and Reproductive health	Elsa Ramos, ICFTU
	Workshop- 2 Empowering women Leadership with Special focus "Issue of Participation and representation"	Maria Tabor/Eva Beahring, KAD
Plenary: 2	Workshop Report Presentation	
	Chair	Pong-sul Ahn
	Presentation by the thematic workshop Discussion	
Plenary: 3	Preparation of Future Plan of Action and declaration	
	Chair	Sujata Gothaskar
	Draft presentation	Drafting Committee
	Discussion	
	Adoption	
Planery: 4	Closing Session	
	Chair	GEFONT/KAD
	Remarks by the participants	
	Chair and Co-chairs remarks	
	Programme Ends	

Annex:4

List of PARTICIPANTS

Shirin Akhter

Executive Director
Bangladesh Jatio Sromok Jote (BJSJ)
Bangladesh

Geeta Dhananjay Mahajan

Member Women comm., AITUC
India

Dr. K. Hemlata

Chief, Women Coordinating Committee, CITU
India

Anusuya Sharma

CWWD-INTUC
India

Vinaben B. Naik

Member, Women comm. BMS
India

Ms. Nisha Shah

Co, Agri. worker camp
SEWA, India

Rama Paudel

Women vice president
DECONT, Nepal

Sudha Dahal

Chief, Women Comm.
NTUC, Nepal

Urohinidevi Jothinathan

Secretary-Women wing, CTTU
Sri Lanka

Yukie Yabuta

Member, Women Committee
ZENROREN, Japan

Itsuko Nagasaka

Member, International Department
ZENROREN, Japan

Kim Geun Ye

Women Dept.
KCTU, Korea

Maria Baehring

Chairperson-copenhagen
KAD, Denmark

Eva Tabor

International consultant
KAD, Denmark

Mercelle Rajahmoney

Vice-chair, BAWC/WCL
WCL-BATU

Chang Eu Yun Alice

Director, Gender & youth
UNI- Apro

Elsa Ramos

Director, Equality & youth
ICFTU

Pong-sul AHN

Senior Specialist Actrav
ILO-SAAT, India

Jyoti Tuladhar

Senior Gender Specialist
ILO-SAAT, India

Leyla Tegmo-reddy

Country Director
ILO-Kathmandu, Nepal

Sujata Gothoskar

SA coordinator, CAW,
Thailand

Bidhya Bhandari

Chairperson, ANWA
Nepal



NEPALI PARTICIPANTS

GEFONT

1. □ Amala Shrestha
2. □ Goma Acharya
3. □ Goma Timilsina
4. □ Hiru Pun
5. □ Indira Lama
6. □ Kalyani Khadka
7. □ Kamallaxmi Shrestha
8. □ Manju Lama
9. □ Manju Thapa
10. □ Mira Basnet
11. □ Radha Acharya
12. □ Renuka Pandey
13. □ Sita Lama

Steering Committee

1. □ Bina Shrestha
2. □ Binda Pandey
3. □ Binod Shrestha
4. □ Bishnu Rimal
5. □ Umesh Upadhyaya
6. □ Maria Baeharing
7. □ Eva Tabor

Interpreters

1. □ Jitendra Jonchhe
2. □ Khagamaya Gajurel
3. □ Madhav Neupane
4. □ Manju Thapa (Korean)
5. □ Pemba Lama
6. □ Ramesh Badal
7. □ Shova Baral

Secretariat

1. □ Ajaya Kranti
2. □ Belimaya Ghale
3. □ Gunram Acharya
4. □ Kabindra Shekhar Rimal
5. □ Kabindra Shrestha
6. □ Kamala Tamang
7. □ Kiran Mali
8. □ Mahendra Shrestha
9. □ Phanni Prasad Mainali
10. □ Som Rai
11. □ Suman Upreti
12. □ Wakilman Shakya
13. □ Subhadra Upreti
14. □ Narayani Khanal
15. □ Maiya pode