

# Concept workshop No. 4: Women at work

## 4. Working women, their role in the struggle as part of the labor movement and in trade unions

*Themes working women – equal pay for equal work – women and union work – child care at the workplace – discrimination against mothers – political and economic review of the situation of women – discrimination against women in access to leading positions – the situation of young women*

### The organization of the workshop

- To be organized together with Bangladesh, Germany and Tunisia. The official language is English.
- We assume that there are about 100 women participating in the workshop.
- We come up with a catchy title for the workshop
- The workshop itself can make resolutions for the General Meeting
- We want to gather all the experiences and then concentrate them to be able to present them to the General Assembly
- We bring pictures, flags, banners and other materials to brighten up the workshop and ask others to do the same. Esther proposes to ask colleagues for greetings (messages).

### Which topics are covered?

The Platform of World women in the Netherlands organized a discussion about the subject of 'working women' on October 3, 2015 and February 14, 2016 the following aspects were discussed:

- How do women combine work, life and struggle?
- Fighting for economic independence
- Forms of harassment at work and the fight against it
- Philippines want to bring experiences with 'defend jobs', how they fight for work.
- Work and poverty – 65% of the cleaners in the Netherlands live in poverty and many young people live in poverty. Many young people are unemployed. Officially 17%, but with many jobs you cannot build an independent life. Youth wage should be abolished and all other forms of nearly free work, such as 'paid' internships, traineeships etc.
- The life of (young) women is heavily burdened by expensive child care and the severe cuttings in the care system, causing the care for family and sick / old / unemployed family members to end up on their backs. The crisis of bourgeois family will grow.
- Women earn 20% -24% less than men (who don't earn to much themselves)
- Propagate demands such as permanent employment, free health care, child care in the workplace, equal pay for equal work.
- Organization, collective action is the solution. How can you develop autonomous struggle as an active union member. How do you find each other? Organize, how do you do that? How do you involve other sectors? How to enter the discussion with colleagues? How do you find each other? How can you support the struggle of others? Cleaning women and women in (Health) Care have gained experiences in actions for jobs, higher wages, respect and against cuts of the government in (Health) Care. We want to visit more workplaces, other companies and schools. Solidarity statements and solidarity actions. According the five principles: discuss the case together – formulate offensive demands – organize independently – it should be an active committee, not just talking – create relationships with others – We organized

ourselves.

- Safety at work. In Bangladesh a factory collapsed and there are frequent fires in the factories. In the Netherlands, for example, the pressure at work is rising. How do you fight for good working conditions?
- How do we make our struggle self-financing. Collect money, every bit helps. People want to support often because they believe it is important that these things happen. We need to keep our eyes open and make it less individual. Travel together, collect places to stay, expand the possibilities to organize.
- The right to strike. In the Netherlands there is only a very limited right to strike. In Bangladesh people strike a lot and massively. Despite very difficult circumstances. Young women organize unions. In Tunisia there is no right to strike.
- How unions are organized. Movement of active union members: "We are the union and we want to be in control." The union leadership tries to take over every militant movement among colleagues and keep the fight within the frames.
- Replacing payed jobs by compulsory unpaid work
- Situation of young working women. We want to make a special effort to organize young women. The turnaround of permanent jobs into flexible work.
- Discrimination against women with children
- Women have to take over leadership. Therefore practical and ideological obstacles must be removed.
- The beauty industry with its beauty ideal reduces the chances of older women at work.
- The abolition of the scholarship increases the debt burden of young people and reduces access to education and study.
- In our struggle we want to change society ourselves. For example, in Peru and South Africa collectives of women and children are being formed.
- We support each other's actions and international

initiatives.

The above mentioned aspects we started to work out in four thesis, in which always special attention is given to the situation of young women:

1. Working, living and fighting – women direct the whole life
2. Stronger through struggle, organized and in solidarity
3. No more unemployment and poverty while working
4. Safety is required at work

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