

Organizing Informal Women Workers

by Dan Gallin and Pat Horn

Introduction

What are informal workers? To put it simply, they are workers whose rights are not recognized and who are therefore unable to exercise those rights. What is an informal economy? Again, to put it simply, it is an economy where no social rules apply, where the strong prevail by the sole virtue of their strength because they do not meet with organized opposition.

Inevitably, in such an economy, which is not formally organized, the social organization which is dominant in that society comes to prevail by default. In patriarchal societies, this translates into a patriarchal organization of work relationships. It is therefore unsurprising that we find women workers numerically dominant in the informal economy, occupying the low-income, low-skill occupations. Often when activities undertaken by women in the informal economy start to become more profitable, they are gradually taken over by men. Women remain in more subsistence-level activities, while men are often able to move beyond subsistence to accumulate capital for more ambitious economic activities. There are a number of reasons for this, including the easier access of men to credit facilities, the inferior legal status of women, and the fact that women generally take greater direct responsibility for raising their children, which impedes their ability to progress up the occupational ladder or to move beyond the dominant sexual division of labour in the economy in which they find themselves.

At their origin, all trade unions were formed by informal workers, since the entire economy was informal at the time trade unions were first organized. Trade unions were, and still are, self-help organizations of workers who, through collective action, seek to regulate their wages and working conditions so as to eliminate the worst forms of exploitation, i.e. to formalize an informal situation. A "formal" economy is an economy in which the labor movement has negotiated regulated wages and conditions through a combination of Industrial and political action (by collective agreements and by law).

However, trade unions have sometimes avoided tackling the causes of patriarchal exploitation of women workers, often confining their struggles to only those shop floor issues common to male and female workers. This has resulted in more male workers enjoying regulated wages and working conditions while more women workers remain in the unregulated informal economy.

The effort to formalize the informal economy, which has been going on all over the world for the last 150 years or so, has been only partially successful. In terms of social relations, the economy has been "formalized" to a significant extent only in the part of the world roughly corresponding to the OECD countries (mostly Western Europe, North America, Japan, Australia, New Zealand). Elsewhere, the informal economy remained proportionally dominant and, through deregulation and privatization policies imposed by

the International Financial Institutions, has actually progressed at the expense of the "formal" economy (Latin America, most of sub-Saharan Africa, but also India). In some countries, where advanced mechanisms of social protection and workers' rights had been introduced in the early and middle 20th century, the economy was "de-formalized" by State violence during its last three decades (most of Latin America). In the former centrally planned economies, authoritarian formal structures have largely been replaced by an informalized economy (CIS and Eastern Europe) and in the remaining countries with a centrally planned economy, the informal economy is fostered by State policies behind a formal façade (China, Vietnam, Cuba). In summary, most of the world's population lives in an informal economy and even in the countries where formal arrangements have prevailed since the end of World War II, they are currently under challenge.

In most of the world, conditions for trade union activity are therefore quite comparable to those prevailing when trade unionism first started in Europe and North America in the middle 19th century, and to examine the conditions under which trade unionism originally developed is therefore of more than historical interest.

Early Women's Unions

When women workers first started to join unions they frequently had to face not only opposition from the employers and from the State (in the form of anti-labor legislation), but also opposition from their male colleagues. The early labor movement, initiated and led by men, had internalized the prevailing patriarchal values of society, regardless how radical its opposition to other aspects of the social order might have been. With few exceptions, male workers initially viewed women as competitors in the labor market, rejected female participation in the labor force and supported the confinement of women to the home and rearing of children. ⁽¹⁾ This early phase has been described as a phase of "proletarian anti-feminism" ⁽²⁾.

At a later stage, when it was realized that female labor would inevitably increase, the (male) workers conceded that women had a right to work, and sought to eliminate the detrimental effect of female competition in the labor market by incorporating women in the labor movement and adopting the principle of equal pay for equal work (later: for work of equal value).

Although by that time men and women in the movement had forcefully argued for equality at all levels, and some trade union organizations had acted on such principles ⁽³⁾, discrimination against women did not disappear with these new insights. "Proletarian anti-feminism" came up in new and different forms, for example by trying to channel women's activities in the movement into social work so that other spheres of activity, where executive power was exercised, could more easily remain reserved for men ⁽⁴⁾.

In the 19th and early 20th century many independent women's unions were organized in North-Western Europe and North America because women workers were unable to find adequate representation in existing unions. The reasons were several: in Britain and

Ireland, women were excluded from most craft unions and, as overwhelmingly unskilled workers; there was nowhere else for them to go but to create their own organizations. ⁽⁵⁾ In other cases, as in Denmark, they were denied access even to general workers' unions. Some of these developments are described below.

Britain

In the 1870s several women's unions were organized in Britain and in the second half of the 1880s there was a considerable amount of spontaneous industrial action by women who had never organized before. ⁽⁶⁾

In 1874, Emma Paterson organized both the Women's Protective and Provident League, a support organization for women's unions, and the National Union of Working Women in Bristol. She had got the idea of women's unions after a visit to the United States, "by what she saw of women's organizations then most prominent and flourishing in New York, the Parasol and Umbrella Makers Union, the Women's Typographical Union and the Women's Protective Union. She returned to England with a plan for helping women workers to help themselves" ⁽⁷⁾. She was opposed to mixed unions like those in the cotton industry because "the women paid only half contributions and were excluded from management" ⁽⁸⁾.

In 1876, the first two women took their place in the Trades Union Congress. "At first, they were welcomed but conflict soon broke out. The League got its funds from 'middle class friends', and the male trade unionists were suspicious of the influence of middle class women." ⁽⁹⁾

In this connection, Rowbotham observes: "There are many questions about the relationship of middle-class women to the trade union organization of the working class which remain completely unstudied. It is not clear whether they simply imposed their own concerns for the unfortunate upon working class women, or whether they broke with 'rescue' work. ... It is certain however that there was some interconnection between the feminist movement and women involved with the organization and conditions of working class women." ⁽¹⁰⁾

However, at the same time more male trade unionists were beginning to see the need to work with the women and sensing the wider implications of female industrial militancy. For example, a representative of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors wished the Women's Union 'God Speed' at the annual meeting of the League in 1892. It was his 'opinion ... that the women should be allowed to work out their own political and social questions for themselves just the same as the men are doing now.'" ⁽¹¹⁾

Ireland

The Irish Women Workers' Union was formed in 1911 and remained in existence until 1984, when it merged with the Federated Workers' Union of Ireland (one of the

forerunners of the present Services, Industrial, Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU), the largest union in Ireland).

The reasons for its separate existence were, as in Britain, the fact that craft unions did not accept women into membership and that the agenda of the predominantly male unions did not adequately reflect the concerns of women workers. In 1945, the IWWU conducted a laundry workers' strike for 14 weeks which eventually won the right for a two-weeks' holiday with pay for all industrial workers. At its peak, the IWWU organized over 7,000 women, including laundresses, box makers, printers, contract cleaners and electronic workers.

Mary Jones ⁽¹²⁾ comments: "Members came with social problems arising from high rents and poor working conditions, and also for help with Communion, the seeking of marriage partners and provision for decent housing. Accepting the social life of its single bed sitter membership to be an aspect of its brief, the IWWU organized concerts and dances, and served as guardian to its younger members."

The first general secretary of the IWWU, in 1911, was Delia Larkin (1878 – 1949), who had been editor of the Women Workers' Column of The Irish Worker, the journal of the Workers' Union of Ireland, the organization founded by her brother, James Larkin. Mary Jones writes "she was vigilant in opposition to sweated industries, but capable of castigating women for their own failure to organize. Relations with the trade union hierarchy were contentious."

Louie Bennett (1870 – 1956) undertook in 1916 the reorganization of the IWWU – with Helen Chenevix. She came from a middle class background, was educated in London, traveled extensively and wrote two novels. By 1910 she was Honorary Secretary of the Irishwomen's Suffrage Federation and Organizing Secretary of the Irish section of the Union for Democratic Control. According to Mary Jones, "her disposition was intellectual, individualistic and slightly evangelical."

Helen Chenevix (1890 – 1963) was the daughter of a bishop of the Church of Ireland and a graduate of Trinity College. She was vice chair of the Irish Pacifist Movement as well as an organizer of the IWWU. In 1951 she was President of the Irish TUC and a member of the Labour Party, noted for "calm logic and courage".

Helena Moloney (1884 – 1967) was secretary of the IWWU in 1915, joined the Irish Citizen's Army and took part in the Easter Rising in 1916 and was imprisoned from May to December 1916. She was President of the Irish TUC in 1922 and 1923.

Kay McDowell (1910 – 1975) came from a middle class family in Northern Ireland. She became a leader of the Printers' Union in the 1940s and concurrently "put order" in the IWWU, introducing professional procedures. Mary Jones writes ⁽¹³⁾: "While Helen Chenevix features strongly behind the scenes and with employers, Kay McDowell was the leading spirit of the (1945) strike". In 1947, having demonstrated her "great determination when we had our backs to the wall", she was nominated by the IWWU as

Dail (Parliament) candidate for the Labour Party. In 1948, she was a founder member of the People's College, the leading workers' education institution in Ireland. By 1957, she had been elected general secretary of the IWWU. In the same year, she became the first woman to be elected to the Administrative Council of the Labour Party and, in 1959, to the Executive Committee of the ICTU.

A major struggle of the IWWU was in opposition to the Conditions of Employment Bill of 1935, introduced by the conservative Fianna Fail government at the height of the Depression. At the time the women's share of the industrial work force had risen to about 23 percent, as a result of the establishment of new light industries (clothing, food, drink, tobacco). Most of the women workers were unskilled and under 25 years of age. As Margaret Ward noted ⁽¹⁴⁾: "They hardly posed a threat to male workers nor did they challenge the conventional wisdom of a woman's place being in the home, yet in the atmosphere of economic recession and the growing conservatism of Irish society, the very presence of women workers was an affront to male dignity. Unemployed men used the most convenient scapegoat of all - working women."

The Conditions of Employment Bill introduced some progressive changes (limiting the working week to 48 hours, declaring a mandatory one-week annual holiday, imposing restrictions on the employment of young people) but its Section 16 allowed the government to prohibit the employment of female workers in industry, fixed the proportion of female workers to the number of male workers and prohibited employers from employing more women than men in any cases where a ministerial decision on a specific industry had been made.

The IWWU, headed at the time by Louie Bennett, immediately began to organize a campaign to protest, together with many other women's organizations and even women members of Fianna Fail, a campaign that was supported by the TUC and the Labour Party. The Bill passed the Dail nevertheless.

Following this vote, the National Council of Women announced that it had established a committee to study existing and proposed legislation affecting women, in order to ensure that women's interests were promoted. Louie Bennett became the chairwoman of this committee.

The next big political issue, not only for women workers but also for women in general, was the 1937 Constitution, drafted by Eamon de Valera, the head of State. In its original draft, it threatened to disenfranchise women politically as well as excluding them from employment. Women's organizations mobilized to have the discriminatory provisions deleted from the draft, but de Valera would only agree to two amendments that confirmed their political rights but still enabled the State to exclude them from "unsuited" employment. Again, the women's organizations lost the vote in the Dail, which adopted the revised constitution. When they started campaigning for the rejection of the constitution in a referendum vote, the IWWU declared that its "grievances had been adjusted" as a result of the changes in the constitutional draft and withdrew from the campaign. This position has been attributed to the ambivalent attitude of Louie Bennett

towards women going out to work, viewing it as an unfortunate necessity ⁽¹⁵⁾. The ban on married women workers, which started with the teachers and was then extended to women in the civil service, was also not opposed by the IWWU. Margaret Ward comments: "Obviously, the provisions in the constitution would exacerbate the situation, but it was middle-class women outside the trade union movement who consistently argued for an unqualified assertion of women's right to work." ⁽¹⁶⁾

Later in 1937 the IWWU invited other women's societies to join it in a campaign to improve the status of domestic workers. A Charter for Domestic Workers was formulated by the IWWU to "lay down conditions of employment, and domestics should come under the Employment Benefit Scheme." Despite a cool reception from the State, it remained "the opinion of your Committee that such employment must be deliberately raised to the status of a skilled trade." (Mary Jones, p. 144)

Denmark

The most important women workers' union in Europe, and the only one which survived as such until 2004 (when it merged with the General Workers' Union), was founded in 1901 in Denmark. The founding congress of the Women Workers' Union (Kvindelig Arbejderforbund i Danmark – KAD) brought together local unions which had been established earlier: the first was established by washing and cleaning women in Aarhus in 1885. A women workers' union in Copenhagen elected Olivia Nielsen as president in 1892. Olivia Nielsen was then elected the first president of the KAD in 1901 and became a leading figure in the Danish labor movement.

As elsewhere, women workers trying to organize ran into the opposition of male trade unions who were afraid that the women would undermine their wages. However, Olivia Nielsen succeeded in establishing an alliance with the Working Men's Union (DAF, today SiD), the principal union for unskilled workers, which did not at that time accept women members but contributed seed money to get the KAD started (in 1914, the KAD, in its turn, made a financial contribution to support the DAF strike in the Copenhagen free port). At its peak (in 1985), the KAD had 103,000 members. ⁽¹⁷⁾

In 2004, the KAD had 75,982 members and negotiations with the SiD led to a merger in September 2004. In 1971, a SiD congress had decided to accept women into membership; in 2004, they represented about 20% of its total membership of 307,863. KAD had resisted earlier merger proposals, insisting that equality and policies supportive of women had to be given high priority in a merged union. Since these issues were reflected in the proposed new organizational structure, the draft statutes and in policy documents, the KAD declared itself satisfied and KAD president Lillian Knudsen advocated the merger as the best solution for their members. The new merged union, Fagligt Fælles Forbund (3F) (or the United Federation of Danish Workers) started operating on January 1, 2005.

In the Copenhagen brewing industry a women's local branch of the national Brewery Workers' Union was formed in 1903. This branch continued until 1987, when the male and female branches were merged to form a single mixed branch.

In *Iceland*, a country with long historical ties to Denmark, several women workers' unions existed, all locally based. Their membership was mostly unskilled industrial workers (fish canning and processing, etc.) In the 1980s they started merging with other unions, including male general workers' unions, some also locally based, mainly for economic reasons. The general workers' union "Efling", for example, with 16,000 members one of the largest unions in the country, was formed in the late 1990s through a merger of five unions including women workers' unions.

France

Resistance to acknowledging the right of women to work, let alone recognizing their rights as workers, was strong in French society, in the institutions of the State and also in the trade union movement. ⁽¹⁸⁾

Although a million women were employed in industry as early as 1836, and 1.6m in 1861, it would take until 1914 for the Confédération générale du Travail (CGT) (General Confederation of Labour) to launch an education and organizing program for women workers. Previously, trade union attitudes had been predominantly hostile to women working wherever they were seen to compete with men and trade union congresses had considered prohibiting certain trades for women, or calling for strike action if women were hired at a lower salary for jobs previously held by men.

On the eve of the First World War the exclusionary policies of certain unions against women led to discussions as to whether separate women's structures in mixed unions were needed (at the risk of "weakening the class struggle"), or whether separate women's unions should be created.

In fact, women's membership in trade unions progressed slowly. In 1900, women represented five percent of total trade union membership, in 1914 8.9% and in 1920, after three years of militant strikes, 18.5%. In certain branches where they were predominant (clothing, tobacco), they were able to exercise a significant influence in union structures and on union policy. Women workers' unions existed in the 19th and early 20th centuries among office workers, but eventually became part of mixed unions.

At the end of the 19th century, between 1871 and 1890, only 5.9% of strikes involved women only, and 12% were mixed strikes, often more confrontational. These strikes were short (1-2 days), generally not supported by unions and limited to a single enterprise. The high point of women strikers was reached in 1903, with 21.5%. Their demands were typically for higher wages (then usually half of men's wages) and shorter working hours (the normal working day being 12 hours), although sexual harassment by middle management could also be a strike issue. At no time did these strikes raise the demand for equal wages and conditions to those of male workers.

An important strike in this period was that of the match workers in 1897, for a wage increase and against the use of white phosphorus, a highly poisonous substance exposing the workers handling it to serious diseases. The match industry was a State monopoly; its workers were highly organized, with a high proportion of women. After six weeks of striking, they won their demand and the administration decided to replace white phosphorus by the less damaging red variety. (In 1888, their British counterparts, the "match girls" at Bryant & May, had won a strike on the same issue, and also the right to form a union.)

Another well-known strike of the time was that of the women silk workers in Lyon, in 1867. The strike involved the "ovalistes", workers preparing the thread for weaving. Only women were employed in this job, and 2,000 out of a total of 8,000 went on strike in June and July for higher wages (2 francs per day), shorter hours, the right to talk and to be able to sit down at work. At the time, they were earning 1.40 francs for a 12-hour day (men were earning double). After negotiations broke down, the strikers elected a strike committee with an executive and a president and started public collections for their strike fund. They organized street demonstrations, threatened scabs with violence, threatened death to the bosses, attacked factories and set fire to the machines. Nothing like it had ever been seen before: large numbers of women in the streets, in groups, shouting, laughing and singing. After several weeks of strike, they returned to work having won the ten-hour day with 1.50 francs per day (with men still earning double).

In the State administration, the postal workers are a special case: certain services, entirely staffed by women, were consistently at the forefront of struggles against discrimination, over several decades. In 1909, at the Central Post Office in Paris, 160 "post office ladies" ("demoiselles des Postes") went on strike for an upgrade of their status. The police entered their work place and two strikers were arrested, causing a public outcry. This was the first time in the history of the administration that women had gone on strike by themselves. In the inter-war period, the post office workers continued to campaign against discrimination. In January 1930, having founded a separate women's union, they again went on strike. Thirty-seven were arrested and 107 were dismissed, but they secured a new scale of job classifications equal to those of their male counterparts.

All these struggles were taking place where women were in formal employment. In the informal economy, the picture was very different. A far greater number of women were involved in informal work in a rural or urban setting and, if organizing was difficult where women were wage workers in formal employment it was practically unheard of in the informal economy.

Agriculture accounted for the largest number of women in informal work, throughout the 19th century and in the first half of the 20th: three million in 1821 (or 60% of the active female population), 2.5m in 1921. After WWII, their number declines more rapidly, to 755,000 in 1973 and 320,000 in 1996 (3% of the active female population). These women do not appear as workers in official statistics: they are considered to be part of a family unit. Yet, in addition to farm labour, many also engage in home work supplying a

variety of industries: garments and textiles, wooden boxes for cheese production, knives, parts of watches, etc. These are not just historical, but present-day realities: in 1990, two thirds of farming households had at least one extra source of income outside agriculture. Women accounted for 87% of this extra income, most in office jobs but one third at least as outworkers for industry.

According to the census of 1896, 23% of textile and garment workers, 42% of glove and shoe workers, 41% of workers in watch making, were home workers. In 1906, official statistics recorded 690,000 home workers, a vastly underestimated number: the actual number was estimated at closer to one million. The proportion of home workers to the total labour force has not changed, except that today only 60% of home worker are industrial outworkers. The others are engaged in office and administrative work and, increasingly, in teleworking.

In the 1930s, Catholic unions organized home workers in South-Eastern France (Isère), under the auspices and with the support of the Catholic Church. Twelve local sections were established, which eventually became part of a single union. The nucleus of these unions were women workers who had earlier refused to participate in strikes; they were all-female organizations, and deliberately regional. Their objective was to defend wages and social security benefits and their demands were a minimum wage, production bonuses and a "family bonus" based on the number of children. In 1932, the union demanded the 40-hour week to enable a better balance between wage work and domestic work. Divorced women and women who were part of an unmarried couple were not accepted into membership. In 1936 the union became a part of the French Confederation of Christian Unions (CFTC).

In 1964, the CFTC split into a socialist-oriented majority, renamed French Confederation of Democratic Unions (CFDT), and a Catholic-conservative minority, which kept the CFTC name. Neither organization appears to have maintained an organization of home workers, nor have any of the other French trade unions made significant efforts to get home workers organized.

Domestic workers represent another large group of informal workers (almost 800,000 in the late 19th century, about 200,000 today). Although their wages and working conditions are in theory regulated by law and by collective agreement, these agreements are negotiated by central trade union organizations on their behalf and are not supported by actual trade union organization and membership. Since labour inspection remains deficient, actual wages and conditions usually fall far short of negotiated standards.

Other sectors of the informal economy (informal jobs in sales, catering, small enterprises) also remain unorganized and, in practice, unregulated.

Italy

Women workers' unions as such did not exist in Italy, but some of the most significant social struggles in the first sixty years of the 20th century were conducted by the seasonal women workers in the rice fields of Northern Italy.

Rice production in Italy has a history of several centuries, but grew rapidly in the late 19th century. Today, Italy is the largest rice producer and exporter in Europe, with a surface of 220,000 hectares (or about 500,000 acres). In the early 20th century and up to the early 1960s, some 150,000 women traveled every year to the rice fields of Piedmont (Northern Italy) to work as weeders (removing weeds from the rice fields) and replanting the rice, from May to July. They were known as *mondine* (from *monda*, weeding) (19)

Most came from farming families in Piedmont and Lombardy, as well as from the more remote regions of Emilia and Veneto, later from Southern Italy. They would travel for days in cattle cars to be hired for the season.

The work was backbreaking: 15 to 16-hour days, bent over in the hot sun, up to the knees in water. The wages were very low (and sometimes not paid in full); part of the wage was paid in kind (rice or other grains, sometimes spoiled); housing was miserable and unhygienic, food was inadequate; the *mondine* would catch fish, frogs and snakes from the rice fields to supplement their diet. Widespread occupational diseases included rheumatism, skin diseases, digestive disorders, parasites. Sexual harassment from owners and supervisors was rife.

Local rebellions and strikes started in the 1890s and were put down by police. In 1901 the first general strike broke out, mostly for higher wages but also for better housing and for shorter hours. The *mondine* became organized in the socialist agricultural workers' union, but remained in control of their demands and of their movement. Strikes continued every season in the following years. In 1904 the 10-hour day was made official, in 1906 the 9-hour day, but the *mondine* kept fighting for the 8-hour day, which was finally won in 1909, for the first time in Italy. (20)

Remarkably, the *mondine* maintained their militancy and cohesion throughout the fascist period, for example striking in 1934 against the attempts by the rice field owners to cut their wages and in 1941 for a wage increase.

In the post-war period, the *mondine*, now organized in the Federbraccianti, the agricultural workers' union of the General Confederation of Labour CGIL (representing the communist and most of the socialist current in the labour movement), succeeded in vastly improving their conditions including the 7-hour day. However, mechanization of rice cultivation and the use of herbicides, which began in the 1950s, gradually replaced manual labour: from 100,000 at the end of the war, the number of rice weeders went down to 80,000 in the early 1950s, to less than 50,000 in 1958, to less than 30,000 in 1963. Many also went to work as factory workers in the rapidly developing industries in Northern Italy. Today Italian rice cultivation is entirely mechanized and the *mondine* have disappeared. (21)

They have left behind a legend and a culture of independence and rebelliousness. Their work songs, many of which were songs of struggle and of derision (against owners and supervisors), have remained popular and are sung today by choirs of ex-*mondine* or their daughters. According to some sources the left-wing classic *Bella ciao*, a song of the partisan movement, was originally a *mondine* song – a *mondine* version of the song certainly exists. The film *Riso amaro* (Bitter Rice) by Giuseppe de Santis, a classic of post-war Italian neo-realism (1949), is set in the context of the life and work of the *mondine*, although it fails to fully reflect their hardships and struggles.

Switzerland

Several women workers' unions appeared in Switzerland in the late 1860s and in the following decades of the century, mostly in the textile industry, but they did not last. In 1890, five of them joined to create a Women Workers' Federation (Fédération suisse des ouvrières/Schweizerischer Arbeiterinnenverband), on the initiative of radical socialists like Luise Steck, Clara Zetkin and Angelica Balabanoff. The mainstream (predominantly male) unions looked at it with disfavor, as a competing organization. Although the Swiss Trade Union Federation had decided that all its member unions had to accept women into membership, very few women had actually joined.

In 1904 the Women's Federation decided to affiliate to the national Trade Union Federation under an agreement according to which the Women's Federation would concentrate on organizing home-based workers and domestic workers, laundry workers, etc. It would conduct trade union, social and political educational activities, and encourage industrial women workers to join the existing unions in their branches. At the time, about 3,000 women workers were union members, mostly in the textile, tobacco and paper industries.

About the same time, the Swiss Trade Union Federation decided to appoint a Women Workers' Secretary, in fact an organizer. Of two candidates, Margarethe Faas-Hardegger (later, after her divorce, Margarethe Hardegger) was chosen. Her father was a post office employee and her mother a midwife. When she became the Federation's first women's secretary at 23, she had already organized two unions of women workers in the textile industry. In a circular introducing herself to the local union organizations, she described her task as follows:

"The secretary will have to dedicate herself most particularly to the organization of the female proletariat which, such as it is today, represents a big obstacle to the unfettered development of the labor movement. We shall therefore have to recruit the female worker to her appropriate union and make her join her male colleagues to advance together with them, with the same interests and the same objective: "the emancipation from the capitalist yoke". And since in Switzerland we do not yet have female inspectors of labor, the secretary will have to do that work as well, caring for the personal life of the woman working in the factory or at home, drawing out from her the complaints which a woman has such difficulty confiding in a man..." ⁽²²⁾

In 1906, Margarethe Hardegger started publishing *Die Vorkämpferin* (The (Woman) Vanguard Fighter), a monthly German-language journal of the Women Workers' Federation, with a circulation of 2,000 copies after one year. One year later, and after about one hundred organizing meetings in Western Switzerland, she started a French-language journal, *L'Exploitée* (The Exploited (Woman)), with an initial press run of 10,000. In 1908, both papers had a regular circulation of about 2,400.

In her journals, Hardegger not only denounced the abuse to which women were subjected at work, but also in society and in their families. She advocated contraception, disseminated information about contraception methods and also campaigned against the criminalization of abortion. She denounced "legal prostitution" (i.e. marriage) and the repression of prostitution without addressing its social causes. She campaigned for women suffrage. She also denounced the arrests and expulsions of "foreign agitators" (in particular the Italian anarchist leader Bertoni).

Very soon Hardegger's relations with the Federal Executive turned sour. The two other (male) secretaries and the Executive were increasingly irritated by her freewheeling style (she would take direct action when she believed it necessary and would not bother about protocol and office routine) and by her radicalism. She was twice dismissed (in 1906 and in 1908) and both times reinstated after leading trade unionists intervened on her behalf.

In Spring 1907, the women workers at the Vautier cigar factory in Yverdon invited Hardegger to a meeting to explain trade unionism; they were considering affiliation to the Food Workers' Federation. The owner immediately dismissed the seven leaders and almost all women walked out on strike demanding their reinstatement. The men working at Vautier were then offered a half an hour reduction of daily working time and a raise of 50 cents per day and kept on working, which Hardegger denounced as treason. (At that time, the women were working an 11-hour day for a daily wage of 1.50 francs). The municipal authorities called on the army to protect the strikebreakers. The local employers blacklisted the striking women and got the municipality to close the crèche to the children of the striking women, to prevent them from seeking employment outside the city.

When the Trade Union Federation and its Food Workers' Federation would not support this strike, ostensibly because the workers were not yet members, in reality because the struggle had taken more radical forms than they cared to endorse, Hardegger declared a boycott of Vautier cigars and turned to the *Fédération des Unions Ouvrières de Suisse romande* (the regional federation of unions in Western Switzerland), led by revolutionary syndicalists. The *Fédération* fully supported the women at Vautier and the cigar-making co-operative that they had established. The Vautier boycott ended in 1909 when the owner agreed to reinstate all dismissed workers at better conditions and to recognize the union (the Food Workers' Union of the national Federation).

The same year, Hardegger resigned from the secretariat of the Trade Union Federation, exhausted by her struggles, not least inside the organization. In 1908, the Federation

had decided to reorganize on the basis of industrial unions, which the women workers were invited to join. The Women Workers' Federation was no longer recognized, although an independent women's secretariat was maintained. The position of women's secretary was advertised at a salary of 2,700 francs per year; the salary of the two male colleagues was respectively 3,300 and 3000 francs. Hardegger was invited to re-apply for her own job – she did not bother. In recognition of her services, the Federal Executive offered her one half of a monthly salary: the princely sum of 112.50 francs.

In the April 1909 issue of *Die Vorkämpferin*, she took leave as an editor:

"Over the last four years, my views have developed in such a direction as to make it clear that my place is apparently no longer among you as secretary and editor. This has been a slow and irreversible development, while I was keeping the company of the poorest, the most miserable, the lowest social layers to which we women workers belong – with those who are desperate, and for whom there is no hope, no salvation, no life except in an entirely new society. My only wish today is to contribute, together with the comrades who share my opinions, to building this new society; to show you how it is possible to live and work without the salary system, without exploitation – in freedom. This is why I am told that I am no longer suitable."

At that time, there were 9,000 organized women workers, three times more than in 1904, representing over ten percent of the membership of the Trade Union Federation: half of them in textile, about a quarter in watch making, another quarter mostly in food production and tobacco.

In her letter of resignation to the Federal Executive she wrote: "My experience in the Yverdon conflict and on other occasions have given rise within me of an immense disgust with the centralist bureaucracy and its heavy quasi-statist apparatus. It is this disgust which has led me finally ... to resign from my position of trade union secretary."

Her last trade union function was her participation in the Congress for the Protection of Home Workers in August 1909. At that time, about half of the industrial labor force in Switzerland were home-based workers, three quarters of these women and children, in certain occupations only women. The Women Workers' Federation had made the organization of home-based workers a priority.

The congress, which was attended by four hundred delegates from different countries, discussed protective legislation for home workers; it was accompanied by an exhibition illustrating the great variety of products made by home workers under miserable conditions.

Hardegger's successor as Women's Secretary, Marie Walter(-Hüni) told the congress that the true calling for women was motherhood, and that the task of the Women's Secretariat was therefore to protect motherhood. Women had to have access to any kind of work, she added, but such work should not compete with men: "especially home

work in its present forms represents an extremely dangerous competition, which must be eradicated by all available means."

Verena Conzett, president of the Women Workers' Federation, however, said that women's home work, far from being a mere supplement to the family income, was in fact in many cases the main income. Because the men were unwilling to admit that they depended on the incomes of the women, they played down the importance of home work and therefore made the organization of women home workers much more difficult. Since men were the main reason why women were so hard to organize, Conzett concluded: "When we seek to organize these women, let us therefore begin in the first place with the men. Let us teach them, in all associations and unions, to regard homework on its own merits. Let them lose the false shame of accepting that women must contribute to the family livelihood; instead, they should enlighten the women and bring them into the organization." Hardegger also addressed the congress, although she no longer had an official position. In "her last brilliant appearance before the Swiss labor movement"⁽²³⁾ she dealt with the conditions of home workers in rural areas and advocated more intensive and high value added agriculture as a solution to their problems.

Public reactions were mixed. Much of the press was hostile because the congress and the exhibition had exposed the true, and shameful, conditions of home workers. The journal of the Trade Union Federation took the same line as Marie Walter and wrote that home workers needed protection because otherwise they would represent "ruinous" competition for factory workers. The left social-democratic press thought the congress lacked the "spirit of the rebellious proletariat". Hardegger answered in *Der Sozialist*, a libertarian socialist journal of which she was co-editor with Gustav Landauer (24). She wrote that there were four attitudes with respect to homework: the "legislating and regulatory", the "philanthropic-religious", that based on "trade union and co-operative self-help" and the tendency to "postpone everything to the great day of proletarian dictatorship" and, in the here and now, to "confine oneself to destructive criticism". Clearly, she identified with the third option. She left no doubt about her anger with the "snide hollowness of the 'revolutionaries'" and their superficial and dogmatic attitude to "this most colorful of all congresses, where, under so many flags, so many capable people of good will had assembled."

Margarethe Hardegger never returned to the labour movement. After leaving the Social-Democratic Party in 1918, she ceased to be a member in any party. She remained active in the anarchist and in other radical movements for the rest of her life. She died in 1963 at the age of 81, a few months after participating in the first Easter March for Nuclear Disarmament in Switzerland, from Lausanne to Geneva.

By 1910 the Women Workers' Union, which had stayed outside the Federation, had declined to 805 members. Marie Walter, Hardegger's successor as Women's Secretary in the Federation, turned out to be less controversial and charismatic, and also less competent. The journal *L'Exploitée*, which Hardegger had published on her own, was shut down in 1908, with substantial debts. *Die Vorkämpferin* continued under the

auspices of the Trade Union Federation, and was expanded in 1910 from four pages to eight, with a circulation of 3,000. In 1916, it was taken over by the Social-Democratic Party and in 1919 became a victim of the Communist split. The Women's Secretariat of the Trade Union Federation was abolished in 1924. Thereafter, women's activities in the Swiss trade union movement went into a long decline until the 1970s when new developments, such as the resurgence of feminism and the political radicalization of the late 1960s, led to a new women's movement within the unions that is still active and growing today.

United States

In the United States, the first strikes of women workers took place as early as 1828 and several are reported in the subsequent decades, mostly in the textile and garment industries. They were all local and only led to short-lived organizations.

The first longer lasting organization of women workers was the Collar Laundry Union, founded in 1864 in Troy, NY by Kate Mullaney and Esther Keegan, with an initial membership of 300. This union had the full support of the all-male Iron Moulders' Union and its president William Sylvis. When the Collar Laundry Union went on strike in 1869, the Iron Moulders declared: "We will to a man support our fellow working women who are now struggling for their just dues and independence. Our hand is in theirs and the purse in it."

Sylvis was instrumental in the creation of the National Labor Union in 1866, a national trade union federation, and was its first president. At its founding congress, he acknowledged that prejudices existed against the employment of women: "It was natural that male workers had objected to the introduction of female labor when used as a means to depreciate the value of his own", but ended his address by saying: "We trust, therefore, that the workingmen of America will protest against this iniquitous system, and lend their powerful influence to effect a reform, and in no manner can they do so more thoroughly than by aiding in the formation of those labor associations in which experience has demonstrated their own safety lies."

The Collar Laundry Union lasted six years, longer than any other women's union and, indeed, longer than many men's unions at the time. In several strikes, it raised the women's wages from 3 or 4 to 14 dollars a week, to a level almost equal to the average earnings of working men. It was dissolved in 1870 after a seven-months' strike in 1869 when the Shirt Manufacturers' Cartel finally threatened to introduce paper collars and to put 3,000 women out of work. All members other than the leaders went back to work at their old wages.

The Cigarmakers' Union admitted women into membership in 1867, although with some local resistance, particularly in New York and in Cincinnati, where a local went on strike in 1877 against the admission of women in defiance of the national union. A Women's Typographical Union grew out of Susan Anthony's Working Women's Association. In 1869 it was accepted as Women's Local 1 in the national Typographers' Union and its

president, Augusta Lewis, was made corresponding secretary of the national union. Local 1 was dissolved in 1878 and from then on the national union admitted women on an equal basis with men, instead of organizing separate women's locals. For a time, the Cigarmakers and the Typographers were the only national unions, of about 30, to admit women to membership.

In 1869, a group of women shoestitchers in Lynn, Massachusetts established what became the first national union of women, the Daughters of St. Crispin, modeled on and supported by the national shoe workers' union, the Knights of St. Crispin, which also went on record supporting equal pay for equal work. When the Daughters of St. Crispin went on strike in Baltimore in 1871, the Knights successfully demanded that the women strikers be rehired.

The Knights of Labor, organized in 1869, began admitting women in 1881, both as separate and mixed locals. In 1885, the KoL established a Women's Work Department. At that time, with 700,000 members, the KoL were the largest labor organization that had ever existed in North America. In the 1880s, however, it went into rapid decline and was defunct by the end of the century. The Women's Work Department was dissolved in 1890.

A broader-based development with a more lasting impact was the formation of the National Women's Trade Union League. This was inspired by the example of the Women's Trade Union League in Britain founded by Emma Patterson who, as we have seen, had herself been inspired by the example of the American women workers' unions she saw in 1874. William English Walling, an American socialist, visited Britain in 1902 and met Emma Patterson as well as Mary MacArthur, head of the Women's Protective and Provident League. In November 1903, Walling attended the annual convention of the American Federation of Labor (AFofL) in Boston and lobbied for a WTUL in the United States. AFofL president Samuel Gompers introduced Walling to Mary Kenny O'Sullivan. She was the first woman hired by the AFofL as an organizer. She has earlier organized women bookbinders into the AFofL and had been elected a delegate to the Chicago Trades and Labor Assembly. Taking advantage of the presence of unions from all parts of the United States, a meeting was called and the WTUL was founded on November 14, 1903.

Gompers was fully supportive: "William English Walling – an old friend – came to the Boston convention full of enthusiasm for a league of women workers. Mary Kenny O'Sullivan's quick mind caught the possibilities of the suggestion. When they submitted to me a proposal, I gave it most hearty approval and participated in the necessary conferences. Under the leadership of Jane Addams and Mary McDowell, the movement became of national importance. In more recent years, Mrs. Raymond Robins, as president of the league, exercised good influence in promoting the organization of women workers into trade unions."⁽²⁵⁾

The WTUL was a hybrid organization from the beginning including women trade unionists as well as middle class and professional women concerned not only with

organizing workers but with women's suffrage and women's rights in general. But its main purpose was organizing. As Alice Henry, the editor of its journal, wrote: "The one main purpose of the new league, as of its British prototype, was from the first the organization of women into trade unions, to be affiliated with the regular labor movement, in this case with the American Federation of Labor, and the strengthening of all such organizations as already existed. While, as in England, the backbone of the League was to consist of a federation of women's unions, provision was made for taking into individual membership not only trade unionists, but those women, and men too, who, although not wage-earners themselves, believed that the workers should be organized and were unwilling that those who toil should suffer from unjust conditions."

Helen Marot, another WTUL leader and a socialist, wrote in 1914: "The League was organized in recognition of the fact that woman's part in the labor movement needed undivided attention. Its purpose was to emphasize that need. In the ten years of its existence the League has functioned as a woman's as well as a labor organization. Its executive councils are made up of a majority of trade union women who are members of the American Federation of Labor, but it has been materially assisted in its work by women who have no trade affiliations."⁽²⁶⁾

Gompers, quoted by Marot, wrote: "... the forces that have contributed to the woman movement have been increasing in scope and in intensity. Women's education is no longer inferior to that of men ... the popular attitude toward woman's work has changed completely ... This woman movement is a movement for liberty, freedom of action and thought, tending toward a condition when women will be accorded equal independence and responsibility with men, equal freedom of work and self-expression, equal legal protection and rights."

Besides organizing women workers, the League fought for the eight-hour day, the establishment of a minimum wage, the end of night work for women, the abolition of homework and the abolition of child labor. It made a major contribution to the large-scale strikes in the garment industry of 1909 to 1911, which involved hundreds of thousands of women workers in New York, Philadelphia and Chicago and gave a tremendous impetus to the unionization of the industry. The final settlement, or Protocol of Peace, covered 300,000 workers, women in their great majority.

League members marched side by side with striking workers and helped set up strike funds. Some of the wealthier members organized a boycott of the clothing manufacturers who refused to settle with strikers. Alice Henry writes that the League "was in great part responsible for the very considerable measure of success which has been the outcome of these fierce industrial struggles. On the whole, the strikers gained much better terms than they could possibly have done unassisted. Almost entirely foreigners, they had no adequate means of reaching with their story the English-speaking and reading public of their city. The League made it their particular business to see that the strikers' side of the dispute was brought out in the press and in meetings and gatherings of different groups."⁽²⁷⁾

Following the Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire in 1911 in New York, where 146 young women perished because they were trapped in the factory, League members conducted a four-year investigation of factory conditions that helped establish new regulations.

Alice Henry also explains why it was so important that women organizers should be organizing women workers: "... she necessarily contrasts favorably with the average man organizer when he tries to deal with girls, because she understands the girls' work and the girls' problems better, and the girl knows that she does." ⁽²⁸⁾

She went on to write: "A most emphatic presentation of the practical reasons why a man organizer can rarely handle effectively young women workers, and why therefore women are absolutely necessary if the organization on any large scale is to be successful, was made before the Convention of the American Federation of Labor in Toronto in 1909."

"The speaker was Mr. Thomas Rumsey of Toledo. He described his own helplessness before the problem. He told how, to begin with, it was not possible for a man to have that readiness of access to the girl workers when in their own homes and in their leisure hours which the woman organizer readily obtained. ... Then he went on to say that he himself often did not know what best to say to his girl when he had caught her. He was ignorant, perhaps almost as ignorant as an outsider, of the conditions under which she did her work. He might know or be able to find out her wages and hours; he might guess that there was fining and speeding up, but he would know nothing about the details, and on any sanitary or moral question he would be utterly at sea. He could neither put the questions nor get the answers, nor in any way win the girl's confidence. Therefore, Mr. Rumsey concluded, if the American Federation of Labor is going to acknowledge its responsibilities in the great field of labor propaganda among women it must seriously take up the question of organizing women by women."

Alice Henry mentions other obstacles to women's participation in male dominated unions, related to their traditional habits and practices: meeting hours and venues are determined by the male leadership and may be uncongenial to the women members, the discussions do not address the women members' concerns and the women find it difficult to get the floor. For this reason, Henry favored separate locals, not as a matter of principle, but as a temporary solution to a practical problem:

"Where the conditions of the trade permit it, by far the best plan is to have women organized in separate locals. The meeting of women and girls only draw better attendances, give far more opportunity for all the members to take part in the business, and beyond all question form the finest training ground for the women leaders who in considerable numbers are needed so badly in the woman's side of the trade union movement today." ...

"The mixed local for all mixed trades is, I believe, the ultimate goal which women trade unionists ought to keep in mind. But with the average girl today the plan does not work. The mixed local does not, as a general rule, offer the best training-class for new girl

recruits ... To begin with, they are often so absurdly young that they stand in the position of children put into a class at school two or three grades ahead of their capacity and expected to do work for which they have had no preparation through the earlier grades. ... It is to be regretted, too, that some trade union men are far from realizing either the girls' needs in their daily work or their difficulties in meetings, and lecture, reprove or bully where they ought to listen and persuade." ...

"The girls, as a rule, are not only happier in their own women's local, but they have the interest of running the meetings themselves. They chose their own hall and fix their own time of meeting. Their officers are of their own selecting and taken from among themselves. The rank and file, too, get the splendid training that is conferred when persons actually and not merely nominally work together for a common end."⁽²⁹⁾

We have seen that the WTUL received institutional support from the AFofL and, in due course, from most of its affiliated national unions, as well as from some State and city federations. Writing in 1914, Helen Marot, noted that "discrimination against women as members of a union is negligible. Where women are eager to organize they usually find it possible to secure the cooperation of the union representing their trade."

However, she also noted that "discrimination against women is within rather than without the membership. Women are discouraged from taking an active part in the executive affairs of the organization. There are no women among the national officers or the national executive of the American Federation. In the 111 national unions there is but one woman president. It would be rare to find women presiding over a city or state organization."

The situation was not much better among the revolutionary syndicalists: "While the leaders of the Industrial Workers of the World show confidence in the part women have taken and will take in the industrial struggle, the women of Lawrence, Mass. (30) observed that the officers of the local organization in that city have given them no better opportunity for taking part in the administration of union affairs than have the men in the American Federation."

Marot concluded: "Labor union men are like other men: they are not eager to trust office-holding to women. Labor union women are like other women: they lack the courage and determination to overcome the prevailing attitude that women are unfit to assume executive responsibility. It is the lack of the executive representation of women rather than lack of membership in the unions that endows the labor movement with a masculine point of view and limits it to masculine ability. The real problem of the organization of women in labor unions is not discrimination, but the position of women in their domestic relations and industry. This is complicated by a special attitude assumed toward women, of which their attitude toward themselves is a part."⁽³¹⁾

During the late 1920s and continuing through the Great Depression, the WTUL suffered serious financial problems that permanently weakened the organization. In 1950 it was dissolved.

Canada

The situation in Canada was not much different from that in the United States. Julie White (32) writes about the labor movement's response to women in the period 1881 to 1921:

"Unions were faced with the reality that single women were a small and transient contingent of the labor force, while the vast majority of married women were dependent on their men's wages. Confronted with the employers' use of cheap female labor to undercut men's wages, and unable to move beyond the ideology of women's domestic nature, most often unions failed to organize women workers and turned instead to protective legislation and the idea of the family wage to deal with the "problem" of the working woman."

Writing in 2001 about the labor movement of the 1960s, Meg Luxton (33) observes: "By the early 1960s most unions either continued the practices White describes or, especially in workplaces with significant numbers of women, conceived of the women as "workers" just like men, ignoring gender differences. (34) Women workers themselves often shared this perspective. (35) But when apparently gender-neutral policies and practices ignore gender differences. "issues are shaped according to men's lives, men's visions and men's needs". (36) Some of the more politically progressive unions began to address women's issues explicitly. In 1964, for example, the United Auto Workers held its first conference for women workers and called for full equality." (37)

Eventually women workers started to form their own organizations to advance their agenda:

"Union women formed organizations to help them fight inside the labor movement to improve women's situations; for example, in March 1976 Organized Women Workers (OWW) was formed in Ontario, ... with a membership restricted to women already in unions, while in September 1979 Saskatchewan Working Women (SWW) formed with its membership open to all women who agreed with its objectives. Frustrated by the lack of support for women in the existing unions and outraged by the failure of the union movement to organize in predominantly female workplaces, a group of socialist feminists in 1972 formed an independent union in British Columbia, the Service, Office and Retail Workers' Union of Canada (SWORC). Unable to sustain their efforts in the face of employers' hostility and the reluctance of the union movement to support them, they collapsed after a few years but their initiative prodded the union movement to pay more attention to predominantly female sectors of the labor force. (38) ... Responding to increasing pressures from their members, unions began to take up women's issues." (39)

Bolivia

Women workers' unions in Bolivia were formed in the 1920s as part of the anarcho-syndicalist Federación Obrera Local (FOL), at that time the leading trade union organization in the country. (The FOL was actually a national trade union center, but the

anarcho-syndicalists considered themselves to be merely the "local" (Bolivian) branch of a world-wide organization: the syndicalist International Workers' Association formed in 1920).⁽⁴⁰⁾

In 1927 a group of anarchist women workers, led by Catalina Mendoza, Rosa Rodríguez de Calderón, Susana Rada, Felipa Aquize, and others, created the General Women Workers' Union (Sindicato Feminino de Oficios Varios (SFOV)) under the auspices of the FOL. The (male) FOL leadership considered that the basic principle of the First International, that "the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves", also applied to women and fully supported this initiative. Relations between male and female unions remained mutually supportive, in this case probably because of a serious commitment to a shared anarchist philosophy.⁽⁴¹⁾

On the other hand, the anarchist trade union women soon came into conflict with the women's rights movement, dominated by women from the creole oligarchy. In 1929, a delegation from the SFOV participated in the National Women's Convention where it submitted a document entitled "Ignorance is the mother of slavery", denouncing the social situation of working class women. They got a hostile reception and withdrew from the Convention. According to Petronila Infantes, later a leader of the Cooks' Union, "the ladies were upset because the "cholas" (working class Indian women) came to mix with them."⁽⁴²⁾

The SFOV included cooks working in households, laundry workers, dairy workers, flower vendors and other street and market vendors. As membership grew, separate unions were established for the different categories of workers and the SFOV was eventually reorganized as the Women Workers' Federation (Federación Obrera Feminina (FOF)). At its peak, the FOF had sixty unions the most important of which were the Cooks' Union (Unión Sindical de Culinarias (USC)), founded in 1935, and the Flower Vendors' Union (Unión Feminina de Floristas (UFF)), founded in 1936.

Both these unions were the outcome of specific struggles. The USC originated in a struggle against discrimination in public transport: middle class ladies had objected that cooks, with their bags of purchases, were taking too much space in the streetcars. The municipality then prohibited the cooks from using streetcars; in response, the cooks held a mass meeting at city hall and got the prohibition rescinded. Subsequently, a raise in streetcar fares was also cancelled after another mass demonstration of the cooks at city hall. The USC was organized shortly after these incidents and met with a mixed response from the employers (the middle class ladies): some refused to hire USC members, others on the contrary preferred to hire union cooks because "they were guaranteed by the union" and more responsible in their work.

The main demands of the USC were: recognition of cooking as a skilled trade, the eight-hour day for domestic work (later the five-hour day, from 09:00 to 14:00, with cooking only, to the exclusion of other domestic tasks), the establishment of public child care centers, freedom of expression (the right to say what they pleased, at work and off duty,

without reprisals), the abolition of the "health certificate" imposed by the municipal authorities and increased wages.

The UFF became organized after a flash flood at the end of 1935 wiped out the street markets in La Paz. The flower vendors and, through them, other street vendors became organized to demand the establishment of municipal markets. In 1938, several municipal markets were opened, but they turned out to be far too small, with a capacity of 600 places, although 2,000 were needed for union members alone. On the grounds that "official" markets now existed, the police started repressing vendors selling elsewhere in the city. Violent clashes took place, with police beating and arresting the vendors and destroying their property and produce. In 1940 and 1941 the FOF lodged complaints with the authorities against police abuses and demanded that street vendors be recognized as a "social function." As they were getting no response, they threatened a general strike and obtained the resignation of the mayor. They also sued 25 policemen known for harassing vendors in different street markets and, although they did not obtain the destitution of the policemen, the abuses ceased for a time.

In 1943, the UFF again led a protest action of the FOF against another mayor held responsible for the arbitrary conduct and the abuses of the municipal authorities. The FOF now also demanded municipal price controls of basic commodities, the punishment of abusive policemen and an end to favoritism at the markets.

The women workers' unions of the FOL not only confronted municipal authorities but, as Indian women ("cholas"), also the creole upper class, in the households and in society, as shown in the streetcar incident, which raised basic civil rights issues. The markets became spaces of communication where social relations were cemented, not only among vendors but also among cooks who would do their shopping there and thus break out of the isolation of their workplaces. Because of their strong roots in specific social and cultural struggles, the women's unions outlasted their male counterparts. In the 1940s the FOL went into decline because of the combined effect of repression by successive authoritarian governments and the competition from new unions led by political parties of the radical Left. By 1947 it had practically ceased to exist. The FOF however, continued, still under anarcho-syndicalist leadership, and eventually joined the Central Obrera Boliviana (COB) in 1953.

Why Women Organize Differently

Underlying all these struggles described above is an uneasy relationship between struggles by workers against their exploitation at the hands of the rising capitalist classes, on the one hand, and feminist struggles against the patriarchal oppression of women in their workplaces and in society, on the other. The early trade union struggles of workers were informed by a range of theoretical analyses and approaches to class struggle which largely failed to come to terms with 'the Woman Question' as the forms of exploitation specifically applied to women were referred to ⁽⁴³⁾.

At best, the oppression of women was regarded by trade union leadership as a secondary derivative of the class struggle under capitalism – which should therefore automatically disappear once an effective (albeit gender-blind) class struggle is waged for the rights of all workers. At worst, trade union leadership simply ignored the oppression of women in its specific aspects, and any organizational initiatives for the emancipation of women were regarded as being divisive of working-class struggles and treated with hostility. It is in the context of this underlying organizational dynamic that the repeated re-emergence of new forms of self-organization of women workers engaged in the most unprotected forms of work needs to be understood.

When women workers organize, the issues of autonomy and leadership are crucial. As Alice Henry so clearly explained, as the experiences of pioneers like Emma Paterson in Britain, Olivia Nielsen in Denmark or Margarethe Hardegger in Switzerland showed, and as the cases of organizations like SEWA, SEWU and the KWTU demonstrate (see Appendix 1), women organizers have always been most effective in organizing women workers.

Autonomy does not necessarily have to mean all-women organizations. What it does mean, also in mixed unions, which are serious about organizing women workers, is the acceptance of the necessary political space where independent and creative initiatives, recognizing the specific problems of women workers and focused on their needs and sensitivities, can develop. When this space is not conceded, organizing efforts fail or women are compelled to create their own organizations.

The issue of leadership is linked to the issue of autonomy. Successful organizing means that women must be led by women and that there must be an opportunity to create a trained cadre of women leaders. As Alice Henry, arguing for separate meetings of women workers pointed out, they provide the "finest training ground for the women leaders who in considerable numbers are needed so badly in the woman's side of the trade union movement of today." In that context, it is also worth reflecting on the "incredible sense of freedom" Ela Bhatt mentions as she describes the first meeting of SEWA as an independent organization, without any "topee" telling the women what to think and what to do (see Appendix 1), thereby opening the way to an organization starting with a few hundred members to 700,000 today.

Beyond the gender issue, these insights are merely one instance among others of the general insight any union with organizing experience and any competent union organizer share: the organization of any particular group of workers is best done by their own. White European and American organizers are rarely successful in organizing workers in Chinese restaurants, organizers from the brewing industry are not in the best position to organize workers in the hotel and restaurant industry, which is a different world, Black organizers are best suited to organize Black workers in any racially divided society and women are, for reasons that should be obvious, more effective in organizing women workers than men are.

What is involved here is a question of trust and communication: trust by the workers that the organizer understands their problems and identifies with them because she or he is one of their own. This is not an argument for separate unions for every group that may have its own special characteristics, although under certain circumstances, to fight social exclusion or because of de facto job reservation, the need for unions based on ethnicity or race has also arisen. The all-Black Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in the US, or the Hebrew Butchers' Union Local 234 and the Chinese Staff and Workers' Association in New York, are such examples, and in South Africa, with forcibly imposed segregation in the unions out of the way, the issue of all-Black or mixed unions has nonetheless remained alive in the labor movement.

The difference between such situations and that of women workers is that in the case of racial or ethnical divisions, these are caused by historical situations that are transient by nature, even though they may last a long time, whereas the issue on how men and women relate to each other is a permanent feature of all human society. Moreover, women do not represent a minority but half of the human race and two thirds of the world working class.

It would be an exaggeration to maintain that, as far as women in the trade union movement are concerned, nothing has changed in the past hundred years. The picture has become more complex, all the more so since the present-day trade union movement, unlike that of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, is truly world-wide and covers most countries in all regions of the world, with a wide range of cultures and stages of development. Significant progress in some areas co-exists in the international movement with 19th century attitudes, irrespective of the political complexion of the organizations involved.

However, notwithstanding such differences, to different degrees in different places the problems of women trade unionists today remain recognizably the same as those the early pioneers had to face in their time: lack of interest in the organization of women workers where such organization is difficult and expensive (44), lack of recognition by men that specific problems of women workers required specific responses and promotion of "gender neutral" organizing patterns, under-representation in the leadership, male domination of the agenda and of the priorities of the organizations.

To a large extent these are not only gender issues, but also issues of democracy within trade union organizations, inasmuch as a democratic culture and democratic procedures are far more likely to open spaces for the participation of women members at all levels of the organization, whereas authoritarian structures and patriarchal hierarchies are mutually reinforcing. In that respect, the feminization of the trade union movement is an important element in its democratization and, through democratization, in its ability to conduct effective struggles under present conditions, where the active involvement of the whole membership is the only real source of strength any union can count on.

Many unions recognize this. To quote just one example: in 1978, the Geneva section of the Swiss Metal and Watch Workers' Union conducted a survey among its members. Reviewing its results, its committee then said: "Why do women not always feel free to express themselves? Is it perhaps because the union is mostly composed of men who, in many cases, are part of lower management, foremen, etc. and who represent, whether they like it or not, the boss? A question arises: how are situations like these (discrimination of women at the work place) still possible? What has the union done all this time? This legitimate question forces us to a self-critical assessment of our action. For too long, the union has failed to listen adequately to its male and female members. We have not faced the challenge of social reality, and too easily took silence to mean approval. The time has come to re-examine all our activity, our entire way of functioning, to make a reality of trade union democracy and of the self-management of our struggles." ⁽⁴⁵⁾

As we have seen in many instances, women of middle-class or upper class origin, often with academic training, have played a significant role in the leadership or women workers' organizations. Sheila Rowbotham has raised the question whether such women were driven by a welfare agenda or had in fact identified with and assimilated to the women workers' organizations where they were, and still are, active.

It is of course not unheard of that men of similar backgrounds assumed leadership positions in the general labor movement, and had their motives questioned on the grounds of their social origin, both within the movement and by its opponents. These issues are ultimately decided by the record of a lifetime commitment, usually motivated by adherence to a socialist or other radical ideology.

In the case of women, as Rowbotham herself goes on to say, "It is certain however that there was some interconnection between the feminist movement and women involved with the organization and conditions of working class women." From its earliest beginnings, the women's trade union movement has had to adopt, implicitly or explicitly, a feminist agenda since, in organizing, women workers have always had to defend their rights both as workers and as women. Incorporation of feminist elements in the ideology of the movement, alliances with organizations fighting discrimination against women in society at large (for example on issues like women's suffrage, family legislation, access to education, etc.) and links at leadership level are therefore natural. Middle-class women joined working-class women in building the labor movement much in the same way as radical intellectuals have joined the movement in the past and still do. Indeed, many feminist women intellectuals were also motivated by socialist or other radical ideologies, certainly most of those who chose to work with the women's unions.

The women's trade union movement has always been both a women's movement and a workers' movement. This has always been a problem with men in the trade union movement who regard the assertion of women's rights as a challenge to their authority, and it has never been a problem with men who regard the trade union movement as a liberation movement of humanity based on democracy and equal rights for all.

The Informal Economy Today

When it comes to organizing workers in informal employment ⁽⁴⁶⁾, the gender issue is crucial. The most important general statement that can be made about workers in the informal economy, which is valid however they are defined, is that a substantial number of them are women workers. A majority of workers expelled from the formal sector by the global financial crisis, which started in 1997, are women. As the ICFTU has reported ⁽⁴⁷⁾, women are the principal victims of the precarization of labor and the pauperization created by the crisis and have therefore massively entered the informal sector since 1997.

Even before the crisis, however, women were over-represented in the informal labor force (child labor is also strongly represented). The very great majority of home workers are women (and home work represents as much as 40 to 50% of labor in certain key export sectors, such as garments and footwear, in Latin America and Asia); women are also a majority of street vendors in informal markets (which in certain African countries represent up to 30% of the urban labor force).

Although export processing zones (or free trade zones) do not fall into the terms of reference of this paper, it is worth noting here that also 90% of EPZ labor are women and that in the majority of cases workers' rights and social protection are non-existent also in EPZs. What workers in EPZs have in common with workers in the informal economy is that they are in both cases unprotected, largely unorganized, female labor.

The overrepresentation of women in the informal economy in most regions (the former centrally planned economies may be an exception) is linked to the persistence of patriarchal power relationships in society, reflected in a paternalist ideology of a gender-based division of labor, where women are seen as a second-tier, expendable workforce. Women's unequal status on the labor market and their concentration in the most precarious salaried jobs make them the prime victims of economic downturns and layoffs. In this context, the organization of women workers in the informal economy into unions is an act of self-empowerment both as workers and as women.

These circumstances explain much about the nature of women workers' organizations in the informal economy where these have arisen spontaneously. Like in the early organizations of women workers, gender separatism is not a matter of principle but a practical response to a specific situation. Also, as in the early organizations, the struggle for the rights of women as women and their rights as workers are inseparable. In both cases, middle-class women, often with an academic education and training in the socialist or feminist movements, play a leading role alongside working-class women and the feminist agenda is often marshaled as an organizing tool.

Predictably, this can lead to tensions when the male-dominated mainstream trade union movement perceives the implicit or explicit radicalism of women's unions as threatening. This radicalism is not necessarily political, although it can be; it is in any event cultural and, as such, far more disturbing insofar as gender relations are at the root of the

organization of society, even at a deeper level than confrontation between social classes. In that context, "proletarian anti-feminism", in modern guises, can be used demagogically to reject and isolate women's unions.

In some cases, the legitimacy of women's unions as unions has been challenged, especially in the case of organizations in the informal economy where the employment relationship is not always clear: women's unions have been misrepresented as NGOs and recognition, together with access to the institutions of the trade union movement, support and solidarity, have been denied. ⁽⁴⁸⁾

There have also been more positive developments, where unions of women in informal employment have become members of representative national trade union bodies and have received their support or, more rarely, where mainstream male-dominated unions have successfully organized women workers in the informal economy (mainly in West Africa). In all such instances, there has been awareness and acceptance of the importance of the gender issue, as well as acceptance of a sufficient degree of autonomy of women's organizations in terms of structure and policy making.

Today, women workers' organizations in the informal economy are many, of different origins and types. They can be independent organizations that have arisen outside the framework of the traditional trade union movement, or independent unions within established trade union structures, or part of unions originating in the formal economy organizing informal workers. They cover a great variety of industrial sectors and services, as well as agriculture and rural occupations. Women workers' unions have also formed international networks, sometimes including NGOs and individuals. Some examples, not an exhaustive list, are given in Appendices 1 and 2.

Appendix 1

Cases

India

The **Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA)**, based in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, grew out of the Women's Wing of the Textile Labour Association (TLA), India's oldest and largest union of textile workers founded by a woman, Anasuya Sarabhai, in 1920. The inspiration for the union came from Mahatma Gandhi, who had led a successful strike of textile workers in 1917.

The Women's Wing was established in 1954, initially to assist women belonging to the households of textile workers and its work was focused largely on vocational training and welfare activities. The scope of its activities expanded in the early 1970s when groups of informal women workers (women tailors, cart-pullers at the cloth market, head-loaders carrying loads of clothes between the wholesale and retail markets, used garment dealers) approached the union for protection.

In December 1971, to meet the demand by these women workers for an independent structure, the TLA and its Women's Wing decided to establish the Self Employed Women's Association. The head of the Women's Wing, Ela Bhatt, became its first general secretary.

The first struggle of SEWA was to gain official recognition as a trade union. The Labor Department refused to register SEWA on the grounds that since there was no recognized employer, the workers would have no one to struggle against. SEWA argued that the main function of a union was to unite the workers, regardless of their employment relationship. Finally, SEWA was registered as a union in April 1972.

SEWA grew continuously, from an initial membership of 320 in 1972 to over 6,000 in 1981. By then, however, relations between SEWA and TLA had deteriorated. The TLA (male) leadership had become increasingly uncomfortable with an assertive women's group in its midst with its own agenda and its own views on union priorities: "The growing personal and political strength of all the women in the organization was disconcerting to the TLA leadership in a society where women are taught to defer to men." (49). Tensions came to a head in 1981 over the issue of reserved seats for low-caste students in medical college. High caste students and their supporters had launched a campaign to abolish these reservations involving riots that caused over 40 deaths. The TLA had decided to remain silent on this issue, whereas Ela Bhatt took a strong public position in defense of the reservations. Bhatt was accused of "extreme indiscipline" and SEWA was expelled from the organization, at a meeting where she, and her fellow delegates from SEWA, were treated with derision and contempt.

Ela Bhatt recalls the rally of solidarity which followed. Two thousand women came, the majority of them lower-caste, "and there was fire in their heart and eyes. Everyone who had been there (at the meeting where SEWA was expelled) spoke with great courage and indignation about what they had heard and seen. Both leaders and working class women took turns speaking with equal assertiveness. There was such a sense of liberation that there was no man heading the meeting and telling us what to do or think. There was no one we had to be careful not to hurt if we did not pay him enough respect. It was our first meeting without a *topee* (literally "hat", but meaning, male leader). We passed a resolution that day that men would not be allowed as members or as office bearers of our union. Although insulted at the way we had been thrown out, really, we felt most powerfully, an incredible sense of freedom."(50)

Subsequently, SEWA discussed on several occasions allowing male members to join the union, since many issues of the self-employed are common to both men and women. Ultimately, they decided against it, believing that if men are admitted they would take over the union and SEWA's purpose would be lost. SEWA stresses women's need for self-confidence in order to grow and believes that the cultural conditioning which makes women defer to men would undermine women's confidence in a mixed forum. Also, a woman's participation in an all-women's organization is more easily accepted by her extended family than it would in a mixed organization.

However, SEWA's perspective is not exclusionary: it believes that by improving the conditions for the woman, it can improve the conditions for the entire family, and thus for society. As many occupations are family occupations, setting up networks and support for women contributes to the support of the family. For example, when the union demands identity cards for bidi workers, their entire family gains access to the medical clinic, or, if a vendor-members' husband is harassed by the police, SEWA will take up his case also. The new situation that has been created through an all-women membership, however, is *which* family member gets access to support and services for the family: the fundamental difference is that resources are channeled through the women's hands. Because of the obvious beneficial effects of SEWA membership, the organization has become accepted by the husbands and sons of its members, and so has the role of the woman as a provider for the family.

SEWA has been described as a trade union, a women's movement and a co-operative movement. These are complementary and mutually reinforcing functions of the organization reflecting an integrated approach to gaining work security and social security for its members:

"SEWA believes that the basis of development and progress is organizing and building workers' organizations. Self-employed women must organize themselves into sustainable organizations so that they can collectively promote their own development. They can be trade organizations, which promote employment, increase in income or link the women workers/producers with the market. They can be organizations that build assets through savings and credit, such as the SEWA Bank. They can be organizations that provide social security, such as health care or child care. They can be organizations that promote - the cause of and advocate for - poor women. They can be organizations at the village level, district level, state level, national or international level. They can be registered as co-operatives, societies, producer associations or even remain unregistered. Their members may be self-employed women or primary organizations of self-employed women."(51)

Through its co-operatives and service organizations, SEWA has built an extensive support network for its members. Its largest co-operative is the SEWA Bank, which was established in 1974 with 4,000 members contributing INR10 each and now has 200,000 members, with a working capital of INR625.4m on March 2002. It provides micro-credit and other financial services to SEWA members. The shareholders elect a board which makes policy. Professionally qualified managers, who are accountable to the Board, run the bank. The bank is a member of the SEWA Co-operative Federation in Gujarat, which also has 88 other co-operatives in production and services.

In addition, SEWA has set up service organizations providing health care, child care, insurance, housing and affordable electricity. In times of crisis (earthquakes, recurrent communal riots) it has materially assisted its members to survive and to recover their livelihood.

The SEWA Academy, established in 1991, stresses the self-development of the member so that her latent talents may be encouraged and developed. It offers programs in organizing, leadership training, research, writing, planning and communication. It also runs programs to develop practical skills (literacy, marketing, budgeting, book-keeping, conducting a meeting, writing the minutes of a meeting, etc.) Last but not least, the Academy is also a means by which SEWA unites its large and diverse membership through a common ideology (Gandhism).

Video SEWA is a unit producing videos for training and communication purposes. Since 1982 the organization also publishes a fortnightly journal (Anasuya) and, since 1997, a magazine for the daughters of SEWA members (Akashganga) where young girls are encouraged to write poems, stories, etc.

In 2002, SEWA had 694,551 members, out of which 535,674 were in Gujarat, 103,220 in Madhya Pradesh, 47,000 in Uttar Pradesh and smaller groups in Bihar, Kerala, Rajasthan and Delhi. In Gujarat, 69% of its membership is in rural areas, and 31% in urban areas. The largest group (59%) is labor and service providers (paper pickers, garbage collectors, head loaders, rural agricultural workers, construction workers) followed by home-based workers (bidi and incense stick rollers, food producers, artisans), (26%), producers (dairy products, salt, gum collectors) (8%) and street and market vendors (7%).

Annual membership fees are INR5, which covers core activities. Members also pay a fee for different services (health, legal services, etc.) and many SEWA services make donations or pay rent to the organization. In addition, SEWA runs over 170 projects, which are largely financed by outside funding agencies.

SEWA is governed by a two-tier level of elected representation. Once every three years the members of each trade elect their representatives (one per 250 members) to the Trades Council (Pratinidhi Mandal), which meets once a year. Every three years, the Trades Council elects an Executive Committee, which meets once a month. It has 25 members, eight of who are office holders and 17 lay members. Of the eight office holders, four are full-time officials.

In addition to the meetings of these governing bodies, SEWA also organizes monthly meetings of the councils of different trades and areas. The Executive Committee also sets up sub-committees for different tasks (campaign committee, election committee, etc.)

About two-thirds of SEWA's membership are Hindus, one third are Moslems, a few are Christians. The president, a vice president and a secretary are Moslems, and out of the EC members seven are Moslems, two are Christians and many are dalits ("untouchables").

Most of the SEWA executive leaders are women with a university education, in some cases American universities (Harvard, Yale, Johns Hopkins). Ela Bhatt is a lawyer by

training. Because SEWA has attracted such highly educated women, and at the same time has been able to educate rank-and-file members through its Academy, it has developed a broad-based second and third tier leadership, in contrast to other Indian women's organizations who largely depend on one central leader. Rose observes: "It would be difficult to find another instance in the world of women from such diverse educational, class, religious and occupational backgrounds working together as colleagues."(52)

Beginning with the 1980s, SEWA developed international links and activities. Ela Bhatt received several prestigious international distinctions and thus raised SEWA's profile. In 1983, SEWA affiliated to the International Union of Food and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF), subsequently to the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation (ITGLWF) and to the International Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (ICEM). SEWA is also a member of the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA), of StreetNet International (see below) and of HomeNet, the international alliance of home-based workers' organizations. The SEWA Academy is a member of the International Federation of Workers' Education Associations (IFWEA) and, in 1997, SEWA was instrumental in setting up Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO – see below). It has also conducted training programs, on its own, for women's organizations in Yemen and in Turkey.

South Korea

The **Korea Women's Trade Union (KWTU)** was formed in 1999; it grew out of Korean Women Workers' Association United (KWWAU), a network of six regional women's organizations founded in 1992, chaired by Maria Rhie Chol Soon.

Korean unions are enterprise based, organizing male workers in regular employment, despite the fact that much of Korea's economic growth has been based on industries where low paid women workers make up the bulk of the labor force. More than 60% of working women are employed in small companies with less than 10 employees. Three quarters of all women workers are employed on a casual basis and an increasing number work in the informal economy.

The Korean economic crisis brought a sharp deterioration in women's working conditions and employment status. The impact of the crisis was general, cutting across industries and occupations. Forced into temporary or informal employment, women workers lost their legal protection. Women's union membership actually dropped from 11% in 1987 to 5.6% in 1997.

KWTU strives to unite women workers across company and industry borders and assist them in their common struggles for equal opportunities, legal rights and against discrimination. KWTU organizes administrative workers, scriptwriters, nutritionists, school cooks, janitors, room maids, golf caddies, domestic workers, workers in the electronic industry and sub-contracted workers in the free trade zones. The union had 400 members at its founding and 5,000 members in 2004.

The union has built up regional and local structures that are adapted to the needs of women workers scattered at small workplaces. It tries to increase the awareness and self-confidence of the women by offering them training programs and developing leadership skills. Together with the KWWAU, the union has initiated national campaigns for obtaining legal rights for women workers in irregular employment.

In 2001, the KWTU highlighted the fact that the national minimum wage had not been adjusted since its introduction in 1988. Following a three months' campaign, the minimum monthly wage was increased by 12.6% in 2001 and by another 8.3% in 2002. The union is still campaigning for further increases, now together with the two national trade union centers FKTU and KCTU and public interest organizations.

The union has taken up over 2000 legal cases in eight regions, ranging from non-payment of wages, sexual harassment, health and safety violations, maternity protection and reinstatement of fired workers. In 2001 alone, the Seoul branch recovered the equivalent of USD427,747 of unpaid wages owed to members.

At the end of 2003, the KWTU won a crucial victory for golf caddies, a woman's job in Korea. The union succeeded in gaining its first ever collective agreement for caddies in 2001. When the agreement was to be renewed in 2003, the employers refused and locked out the workers under the pretext that the golf caddies were not legally recognized workers as defined by the Labor Standards Act. The union fought back with a series of demonstrations and actions, with international support from the IUF, to which it has been affiliated since 2002. The employers eventually agreed to resume negotiations and a renewed collective agreement was signed. It guarantees the workers' right to union recognition and representation, contains provisions against sexual harassment by golfers and guarantees 60 days of maternity leave and one day of menstruation leave per month. ⁽⁵³⁾

The President of the KWTU since its founding in 1999 is Choi Sanglim (born 1957). A graduate of North Kyongsang University, majoring in mathematics education, she was a worker in garment and electronic factories from 1980 to 1983. She then founded the Korean Labor Movement Research Center in 1988 and, in 1990, started working for the Incheon Women Workers' Association where she served as president from 1994 to 1998. In 1991, she co-authored and published a book: "Conscious Women and Strong Workers".

The union has two vice presidents: Yoon Kyong-ran (born 1965) worked in the garment industry for eight years and in the shoe industry for two years. She joined the Pusan Women Workers' Association in 1996 and in 1997 became its education officer. Nah Ji-hyun (born 1961) worked for a computer company and became an officer of the Incheon Regional Trade Unions United. From 1989 to 1996 she worked for the Incheon Urban Industrial Mission, then for the Korea Labor Research Center.

Both became KWTU vice presidents in 1999.

South Africa

Formed in 1993 in South Africa, based on the SEWA model, the **Self Employed Women's Union (SEWU)** was an unregistered union of women in the informal economy (until its dissolution in 2004), mainly street vendors, home-based workers, small agricultural producers, cardboard collectors. SEWU was formed as an independent union unaffiliated to any of the three national trade union centers in South Africa. However, SEWU has aligned itself within the labour movement in relation to labour market institutions such as NEDLAC (National Economic Development and Labour Council) and labour service organizations such as the Workers College of KwaZulu-Natal and the Labour Research Service.

SEWU started in the province of KwaZulu-Natal just before the first democratic elections took place in South Africa in 1994. In order to be able to unite women in the informal economy from political parties violently opposed to each other, SEWU adopted a strongly-upheld policy of political non-partisanship, and thereby succeeded in uniting women across party-political lines at a time when few other organizations were succeeding in doing so.

SEWU first started organizing women street vendors in Durban, and succeeded in establishing a more democratic organizing style than that found in many other street vendors associations. As a result, SEWU was successful in creating a reasonably regular collective bargaining practice between street vendors and local government structures of the Durban City Council. The introduction of a WIEGO research project on women street vendors in South Africa (managed by SEWU) and the interest of the new South Africa office of the ILO in local government issues, provided further timely interventions which ultimately resulted in the Durban City Council undertaking a policy process which led to the adoption of a Policy on the Informal Economy which has become something of an international best practice.

In 1996 SEWU expanded to the provinces of the Eastern and Western Cape, followed by the provinces of Mpumalanga and the Free State in 2001. The majority of SEWU's members were home-based workers in both urban and rural areas. A major service sought by home-based workers is skills training, including in skills in work which has not been traditionally regarded as women's work. The commitment of the new South African government to improving gender equality has resulted in increased possibilities for women to do work traditionally regarded as men's work – particularly in the construction industry.

SEWU operated with a democratic structure based on membership control of the organization through elected structures at branch, provincial and national level. An impressive level of leadership among women in the informal economy was created over

the ten years of SEWU's existence. SEWU's women-only constitution was criticized by the formal trade union movement in South Africa – which has nevertheless had to continue making self-criticisms of its own inability to attain or sustain a satisfactory level of women leadership.

Unlike SEWA, SEWU did not attempt to form its own bank, but instead utilized the political space created by the political changes of 1994 to engage in negotiations with various institutions to make credit more easily available to those who have traditionally not been able to access it, including women in the informal economy. SEWU also engaged with a number of other trade union, community and political organizations in a major popular campaign for the transformation of the financial sector to make savings and other financial services available and more user-friendly to the poor. This has resulted in a number of women in SEWU's consistently being able to access savings and credit facilities, which was not previously possible.

SEWU was involved in international campaigns with SEWA since its inception. This gave the organization a global as well as a local perspective. SEWU affiliated to HomeNet International, StreetNet international, Union Network International (UNI) as well as to the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers Federation (ITGLWF) and participated in a number of the programs of WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing). SEWU was also involved in exchange visits with SEWA and with other informal workers' unions in Southern Africa.

SEWU's main weakness, however, was its persistent inability to become financially self-sufficient, or even to sustain its levels of paid-up membership. After ten years, SEWU's paid-up membership remained less than 5,000 – while more than 10,000 members who previously joined had allowed their membership to lapse by not keeping up their payments of membership dues. This is a problem shared by other unions of vulnerable workers in South Africa, such as the South African Domestic and Allied Workers Union (SADSAWU) and the South African Agricultural, Plantation and Allied Workers Union (SAAPAWU), both affiliated to the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).

On July 7, 2004 SEWU announced its dissolution as a result of a financial crisis, which arose when two staff members, who had been dismissed in September 1999 for what the union regarded as irregularities, won a labour court case in June 2004 against the union. The court ruling supported their claim to back pay from September 2000, or a total of half a million Rand, an exorbitant amount for a union with fragile financial resources like SEWU. Since then, the former SEWU leadership has been in discussion with COSATU about forming a new informal economy union, which will be a new organizational home for SEWU members. This incident illustrates the vulnerability of incipient unions in the informal economy. Despite impressive achievements in its short history, SEWU did not succeed in consolidating sufficiently as an independent organization to resist an unexpected attack on its financial base.

Appendix 2

New Independent Unions

Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), India: founded in 1972; the earliest and best known example of this type of organization (see above).

Self-Employed Women's Union (SEWU), South Africa: formed in 1993 on the SEWA model, includes street vendors and home workers, dissolved in 2004. (see above).

Kagad Kach Patra Kastakari Panchayat (KKPKP), India: founded in 1993, based in Pune, Maharashtra; 5,000 members who are scrap collectors (waste pickers and itinerant buyers), mostly low-caste single women.

Korean Women's Trade Union (KWTU), South Korea, founded in 1999, represents casual and irregular women workers in different occupations (see above). Two other women's unions also exist in Korea: the **Seoul Women Workers' Union**, which also organizes unemployed workers, and the **Women's Trade Union** affiliated to the national trade union center KCTU.

Associação do Movimento Interestadual de Quebradeira de Coco Babaçu (AMIQCB), Brazil: a union of women harvesting, shelling and marketing Brazil nuts in the Amazonas region, founded in 1989. The union has formed alliances with environment protection groups to fight over-exploitation of the crop by private and public companies. Women generally work with their children and are organized both within the union and co-operatives with links to trade union federations. The union has organized several inter-state meetings since 1991.

Sindicato de Trabajadoras de la Provincia de Cloque, Panama is a rural women workers' union that provides services to promote crafts and trade union training, as well as medical support services. It is currently involved in developing a micro-credit program. The organization is a member of the Convergencia Sindical and was a founder of the Federation of Workers in the Informal Sector (FETRUC).

Federación Nacional de Trabajadoras del Hogar, Peru is a union of women domestic workers with some 10,000 members. In 2003, after more than thirty years of struggle, the union secured a new law regulating working conditions for domestic workers, including social security, breaks for breastfeeding, health coverage, vacation time and an eight-hour working day. It has created a support organization, the Centro de Capacitación para Trabajadoras del Hogar (CCTH) which acts as a lobby and a vocational training center. It is affiliated with the Latin American federation of domestic workers (Confederación Latinoamericana y del Caribe de Trabajadoras del Hogar (CONLACTRAHO), formed in 1988 and based in Cochabamba, Bolivia) and, in Peru, works with the national trade union centers CUT and CGTP.

National Union of Domestic Employees, Trinidad and Tobago, established in 1982, initially to organize domestic workers, since 1992 also other low wage workers without protection and guaranteed benefits. In 2002, the union had 450 members, of whom 65

were men, and an all female executive. The union has been campaigning against discrimination of domestic workers in labor legislation and for having women's housework counted in the national budget. It has convened several meetings of domestic workers' organizations at Caribbean regional level, which defined common demands, and has hosted meetings on domestic workers' issues involving unions, NGOs, government agencies, UN agencies, universities and individual researchers.

The United Workers' Association, United Kingdom (formerly Waling Waling) is a union of migrant domestic workers in Britain formed in 1987 (almost all women, 30 different nationalities, 4,000 members in 2002). It works closely with the Transport and General Workers' Union and is supported by Kalayaan, an NGO, which, in 1996, also became the base for a European network of organizations of migrant domestic workers, called *RESPECT*, initially supported by SOLIDAR, the international organization of labor movement welfare and solidarity organizations. In Britain, the UWA and Kalayaan successfully campaigned to change the immigration rules tying domestic workers to a named employer and for the regularization of undocumented migrants.

Domestic workers' unions, some independent and some part of national trade union federations, also exist in **Brazil** (the Union of Women Domestic Employees in Recife) and in **Mexico**, some with a long history (the Female Union of Domestic Workers in Vera Cruz, the Female Union of Domestic Servants and Related Workers of Ahuey de Angostura and the National Association of Domestic Workers in Mexico City).

A campaign collective of domestic workers' organizations was formed in the 1990s in the state of Maharashtra in **India**, to campaign for legislation recognizing domestic workers as workers. It includes a variety of organizations including religious ones, which workers join for reasons described in a report of the Committee for Asian Women: "employers find it difficult to refuse their domestic workers to go to a religious ceremony. As one worker put it: "If we had said we wanted to go to a meeting, we would not be allowed. This time is often used for sharing what we are experiencing and sharing our complaints and solutions." Several organizations deliberately assume a non-union shape while partially undertaking trade union activities. Some organizations feel that it is important to take a non-threatening role due to the situation of extreme vulnerability of this section of women. There are also conscious attempts to involve the community and the family of the workers so that this area of resistance can be taken care of collectively or organizationally rather than the workers having to deal with such issues as individuals." (54)

Women workers' organizations, most of them with union characteristics, have also formed in Hong Kong, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines and Turkey. Some have formed co-operatives; many are on the way to becoming unions or engendering unions.

New Unions in Trade Union Confederations

These are women workers' unions which were established on the initiative or with the encouragement of national trade union centers, or which organized independently and subsequently joined a national trade union center.

Syndicat des Femmes Vendeuses de Poisson (SYFEVEP), Chad, founded in December 2002, affiliated to the Union des Syndicats du Tchad (UST); 500 members, mostly at the Dembé market near the capital N'djamena. The union "aims to protect the interests of female fish vendors, to develop solidarity amongst them, fight for better fish purchase prices and encourage socio-economic projects designed to reduce the difficulties involved in storing and re-selling fish" ⁽⁵⁵⁾.

Hong Kong Domestic Workers' General Union (HKDWGU), China (Hong Kong SAR) (affiliated to the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU)); established in 2001; the first union in the HKCTU in which all of the membership and all of the executive committee are women, and the first in which all of the members are casual workers. Initial membership: 500; 2,000 members in 2003, part-time workers, mostly middle-aged women. An organization of migrant domestic workers, the Asian Domestic Workers' Union, was formed in 1988 with HKCTU support and at its peak had 1,700 workers, but eventually broke apart in its national components and is now defunct.

Equality Trade Union – Migrants' Branch (ETU-MD), South Korea (affiliated to the KCTU), currently fighting a government operation to deport 120,000 undocumented workers (two thirds of the migrant work force) and against new legislation which would tie migrant workers to the same employer for three years. This struggle has involved hunger strikes, suicides and forcible deportations. A significant number of undocumented migrant workers in Korea are women.

Asociación de Mujeres Meretrices de Argentina (AMMAR), Argentina; a sex workers' union established in 2002, with 1,700 members in 2004. It provides legal, health and social services and is affiliated to the Central de los Trabajadores Argentinos (CTA). A leader of the union, Sandra Cabrera, was assassinated on January 28, 2004 in Rosario while campaigning against police corruption.

Sindicato das Costureiras de São Paulo e Osasco. Brazil: a union of home-based and self-employed garment workers (all women); because of the low revenue, most of them also work as street vendors. The union has branch offices in São Paulo, Osasco and Rio de Janeiro. It provides occupational health information, support in negotiating with municipal authorities, financial, legal and trade union consultancy, access to micro-credit and participation in traveling fairs. A significant proportion of its members enjoy social security cover. Affiliated to Força Sindical.

Sindicato Interempresas de Trabajadores Textiles de la Confección y Vendedores de Patronato, Chile: a union of home-based garment workers, organized in response to the closure of garment factories with massive redundancies. Affiliated to CUT.

Asociación de Mujeres Campesinas de Huancabamba, Peru; established in 1989, affiliated to the Central Unitaria de Trabajadores del Peru (CUT) since 1995, represents some 4,000 rural women workers in Piura (Northern Peru) who do not own the land they work (in some cases they rent it). They are self-employed, selling produce in towns as well as crafts objects they manufacture themselves. The Association has an agricultural production center and self-managed breeding facilities, as well as several small businesses providing services and vocational training. It is also part of a national network of rural women (Red Nacional de la Mujer Campesina) and has two representatives on the CUT Executive Committee, one of which is the Women's Secretariat.

Sindicato dos Trabalhadores da Indústria Bordados, Tapeçarias, Têxteis e Artesanato da RAM (STIBTTA) is a union on the Portuguese island of Madeira, which started out with 700 workers in one textile plant and, since 1976, has been organizing home-based embroidery workers and, for the last four years, wicker weaving workers. It currently has about 5,000 members, almost all of them women. Affiliated to the Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores Portugueses (CGTP).

Moldova-Business-Sind, Republic of Moldova (affiliated to the Confederation of Trade Unions in the Republic of Moldova (CSRМ)): established in 1989; organizes self-employed workers, mostly street and market vendors, some home-based workers (over 14,600 members in 2003, 90% women).

Vakwerk De Rode Draad (Red Thread), Netherlands is a sex workers' union established in 2002, following the legalization of prostitution in 2000. It is affiliated to Bondgenoten FNV, is the largest union within the FNV trade union confederation, itself the largest central trade union organization in the country. The Foundation De Rode Draad, established in 1985, continues as an advocacy and support group. In 2004, the VDRD started negotiations with the association of brothel owners for a national agreement and established an organization for trafficked women called Atalantas.

South African Domestic, Service and Allied Workers' Union (SADSAWU), South Africa, was formed in 2000. A predecessor union, the South African Domestic Workers' Union (SADWU), a COSATU affiliate, was dissolved by COSATU in 1997 following an internal crisis, but since no other union was able to organize domestic workers, former SADWU members regrouped and created the new union. SADSAWU had 15,000 members in 2001 (5,000 dues paying). Its main issue is securing the inclusion of domestic workers in labor legislation covering other workers, such as the minimum wage and unemployment insurance. SADSAWU co-operates with COSATU but is not affiliated at this time.

The **Namibia Domestic and Allied Workers' Union**, an affiliate of the National Union of Namibian Workers, was formed in 1990 and claimed 5,000 members in 2002 (23% of the potential). To overcome obstacles to organization (hostile employers and workers dispersed in individual workplaces), the union has used radio programs and has contacted workers at bus stops. The main issue is enforcement of existing labor

legislation, which applies to domestic workers but is not implemented. As in South Africa, the great majority of domestic workers are women.

Traditional Unions Organizing

A number of unions organize workers in the informal economy, including women, and in some cases account for significant numbers of organized women workers, but do not always address the position of women specifically and are often led by men. In the following instances, women have been in the lead in organizing informal women workers by traditional unions.

Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of the TUC (ICU), Ghana: the largest affiliate of the TUC, the ICU lost most of its members as a result of government restructuring and privatization; it was decided to organize informal workers in the ICUs field of activity in order to recover membership losses. The first informal work sector to be organized was the Ghana Hairdressers and Beauticians Association (GHABA), which originally included hairdressers and beauticians (women) and now also includes barbers (men).⁽⁵⁶⁾

United Domestic Workers of America, United States, is an affiliate of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). In 2002, it organized about 14,000 home care (domestic) workers in California.

International Networks

StreetNet International, Because street vendors' organizations (except those which are women-only organizations) are invariably notoriously male-nominated in their leadership structures – even when the membership is numerically dominated by women – StreetNet's constitution contains a mandatory quota of 50% women in all its leadership structures and of participants at congresses.

StreetNet's main purpose is to build and promote strong organization among street vendors so that they may have the capacity to effectively represent their members and to influence government policies and practices affecting street vendors, informal market vendors and hawkers. This is done by means of provision of information, organizational support programs and exchange visits, building links and working relationships with trade unions that can assist with organizational capacity building and training in collective bargaining. Some of StreetNet's stronger affiliates (such as the National Alliance of Street vendors of India and the Alliance of Zambian Informal Economy Associations) have already succeeded in influencing government policy on street vending and informal trade.

In December 2003, SEWA and StreetNet International, together with the Ghana TUC, Nigeria Labour Congress and HomeNet Thailand, brought together many of these

organizations in an international meeting to consider how to combine their efforts and consolidate their work to promote the further organization of workers in the informal economy.

Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) is a hybrid organization, not unlike the WTUL of the US in its day, but at international level. Established in early 1997, it grew out of earlier collaboration between the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), the Harvard Institute for International Development (HIIV) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

It is a world-wide network of individuals, some of whom represent their institutions and some who participate in a personal capacity, from unions, support NGOs, research and statistics institutions and international development agencies concerned with advancing the interests of women in the informal economy through research, action programs and policies. It includes already existing women workers' organizations, some of which are themselves international networks, such as HomeNet and StreetNet International, or national unions, such as SEWA and SEWU.

WIEGO has five program areas: on urban policies, particularly as they affect street vendors; global markets, particularly as they affect home based workers; social protection, and organization and representation. WIEGO works with membership-based organizations of workers in the informal economy to strengthen organizing capacity and to increase the visibility and voice of women in the informal economy. WIEGO also works with international trade union organizations and tries to put informal sector workers on the agenda of governments and international organizations.

WIEGO organizations—particularly SEWA and HomeNet—have worked closely with the international trade union movement in securing the adoption of the ILO Home Work Convention, 1966 (No. 177). One of the WIEGO programs supports organizing of women workers in informal employment, also at the international level.

Initially an informal network, WIEGO now has a constitution and provisions for formal membership. Its Steering Committee includes representatives from membership-based organizations, research or academic institutions and international development institutions. It is chaired by Ela Bhatt, founder and first general secretary of SEWA, and its co-ordinator is Martha Chen, Lecturer in Public Policy at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

End Notes

(1) The Swiss anarchist James Guillaume, commenting on the first congress of the International Working Men's Association (the First International) held in Geneva in 1866,

wrote: "It has been said that the International Association advocated the so-called emancipation of women and the abolition of the family. I wanted to hear an unequivocal explanation on this issue. Here are the conclusions of a memorandum on the role of women in society, read by a Paris delegate: The family is the foundation of society; the woman's place is at the domestic home; not only do we not want her to abandon it to be a delegate in a political assembly or make speeches in a club, but we would even prefer, if that were possible, that she should not leave it to take up industrial employment. The meeting unanimously demonstrated by its applause that it shared this view." (James Guillaume, *Le Premier Mars*, Neuchâtel, September 9, 1866).

(2) Werner Thönnessen, *The Emancipation of Women (The Rise and Decline of the Women's Movement in German Social Democracy 1863-1933)*, Pluto Press, London, 1973, pp. 6-8.

(3) Sheila Rowbotham, *Hidden From History*, Pluto Press, London, 1973, pp. 34 and 62.

(4) Thönnessen, *op. cit.*, p. 9

(5) Correspondence with Mary Jones (author of: *These Obstreperous Lassies: A History of the Irish Women Workers' Union*, Gill & Macmillan, 1988)

(6) Rowbotham, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-63

(7) Alice Henry, *The Trade Union Woman*, D. Appleton & Co., New York, 1915 (Boondocks Net Edition, 2002), Chapter IV: The Women's Trade Union League.

Alice Henry (1857-1943) was born in Melbourne, Australia. She worked as a journalist and in 1905 embarked on an overseas tour, which led to a career in the United States as a lecturer and writer. She edited the journal of the National Women's Trade Union League. She returned to Melbourne temporarily in 1925 to address meetings and urge the importance of combining unionism and feminism. This visit inspired women to form a similar organization to Henry's in Melbourne, the Women's Trade Union League, in July 1925.

(8) Rowbotham, *op. cit.*, p. 60

(9) Rowbotham, *op. cit.*, p. 60

(10) Rowbotham, *op. cit.*, p. 63

(11) Rowbotham, *op. cit.*, p. 62

(12) Mary Jones, *corresp. cit.*

(13) Mary Jones, *corresp. cit.*

(14) Margaret Ward: *Unmanageable Revolutionaries – Women and Irish Nationalism*, Pluto Press, London, 1983, p. 234

(15) Margaret Ward, *op. cit.*, p. 242

(16) Margaret Ward, *op. cit.*, p. 243

(17) Poul Andersen and Solveig Schmidt, *Jo, det kunne nytte – Kvindeligt Arbejderforbund I Danmark 1901-2001*, KAD, Copenhagen, 2001; and: Eva Tabor: *Olivia Nielsen – A Strong and Challenging Woman in Difficult Times*, 2003

(18): Sylvie Schweitzer: *Les femmes ont toujours travaillé – Une histoire du travail des femmes aux XIXe et Xxe siècles*, Editions Odile Jacob, Paris, 2002

(19): Alessandro Savini, *Una terra, una popolazione – Sannazzaro dei Burgondi attraverso il suo giornale – 1890/1926*, Comune di Sannazzaro, 1987

(21): Osvaldo Galli, *Il silenzi della risaia*, EMI Editrice, Pavia, 1997

(22) quoted in: Anon. (Marianne Enckell), introduction to the facsimile edition of "L'Exploitée", *Organe des femmes travaillant dans les usines, les ateliers et les ménages 1907-1908*, Editions Noir, Geneva, 1977

(23) Ina Boesch: *Gegenleben: Die Sozialistin Margarethe Hardegger und ihre politischen Bühnen*, Chronos Verlag, Zürich, 2003, p. 315

(24) Gustav Landauer (1870-1919), libertarian socialist theoretician, journalist, novelist, translator (Tolstoi in German), literary critic, minister of culture in the Bavarian Council Republic, assassinated on May 1, 1919 by a counter-revolutionary army unit.

(25) Samuel Gompers, *Seventy Years of Life and Labor*, 1925 (quoted in: *Education on the Internet and Teaching History Online*, Women's Trade Union League)

(26) Helen Marot, *American Labor Unions* (Henry Holt & Co., New York, 1914; BoondocksNet Edition, 2001), Chapter 5: Organization of Women

(27) Alice Henry, *op. cit.*, Chapter IV, The Women's Trade Union League

(28) Alice Henry, *op. cit.*, Chapter VII, The Woman Organizer

(29) Alice Henry, *op. cit.*, Chapter VII, The Woman Organizer

(30) Lawrence, Mass. was the scene of the great textile strike of 1912, led by the IWW and involving mostly women workers.

(31) Helen Marot, *op.cit.*

(32) Julie White, *Sisters and Solidarity: Women and Unions in Canada*, Toronto, 1993, p.56, quoted in Luxton (see note 19).

(33) Meg Luxton, *Feminism as a Class Act: Working-Class Feminism and the Women's Movement in Canada*, in: *Labour/Le Travail*, No. 48, Fall 2001

(34) Renée Geoffroy, *Attitude of Union Workers to Women in Industry*, *Studies of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada*, Ottawa, 1971, p. 9 (cited in Luxton, op. cit.)

(35) Ester Reiter, *First Class Workers Don't Want Second Class Wages: The Lanark Strike in Dunnville, Ontario*, in Joy Parr, ed. *A Diversity of Women: Ontario 1945-1980*, Toronto, 1995, pp. 168-199 (cited in Luxton, op. cit.)

(36) Pam Sugiman, *Labour's Dilemma: The Gender Politics of Auto Workers in Canada 1937-1979*, Toronto, 1994, p. 10 (cited in Luxton, op. cit.)

(37) Pam Sugiman, *Unionism and Feminism in the Canadian Auto Workers' Union, 1961-1992*, in Linda Briskin and Patricia McDermott, eds., *Women Challenging Unions*, Toronto 1993, pp. 172-188 (cited in Luxton, op. cit.)

(38) Jackie Ainsworth et al., *Getting Organized: In the Feminist Unions*, in Maureen FitzGerald, Connie Guberman and Margie Wolfe, eds., *Still Ain't Satisfied*, Toronto 1982, pp. 132-140 (cited in Luxton, op. cit.)

(39) Bank Book Collective, *An Account to Settle: The Story of the United Bank Workers (SORWUC)*, Vancouver, 1979 (cited in Luxton, op. cit.)

(40) Zulema Lehm Ardaya, *Silvia Rivera Cusiconqui: Los Artesanos Libertarios y la Etica del Trabajo*, Ediciones del THOA (Taller de Historia Oral Andina) La Paz, 1988

(41) see interview of Catalina Mendoza and Petronila Infantes, in Lehm and Rivera, op.cit., p. 163

(42) Lehm and Rivera, op.cit, p. 37

(43) Pat Horn: *Marxism and Feminism: Uneasy Bedfellows?* in "The African Communist", No. 126 (Third Quarter 1991)

(44) This is particularly the case for home-based and domestic workers, who are dispersed over thousands of individual workplaces. To organize individuals or small groups of workers in a hostile environment requires a substantial long-term investment with no expectation of immediate returns. Most unions do not have the resources for this kind of investment and will rather give priority to still unorganized large workplaces in their jurisdiction. This also explains why fast-food chains such as MacDonaldis remain largely unorganized: unless supported by law or public opinion, most unions are unable

or unwilling to mount the sustained campaign over time that would achieve this objective. The same applies to casual, temporary and transient workers who frequently change employers.

(45) Femmes et syndicats, by Annick Mahaim and Ursula Gaillard-Christen, in: Un siècle d'Union Syndicale Suisse 1880-1980, Office du livre, Fribourg, 1980

(46) Informal employment is employment without secure contracts, worker benefits, or social protection. It is comprised of two basic components: self-employment in informal enterprises and paid employment in informal jobs. As defined by the ILO (*), it includes: own-account workers in survival-type activities, such as street-vendors, garbage collectors or scrap and rag pickers; paid domestic workers employed by households; home-based workers and workers in sweatshops who are "disguised wage workers" in production chains; and the self-employed in micro-enterprises operating on their own or with contributing family workers or sometimes apprentices/employees.

(*) International Labour Office (2002): Decent Work and the Informal Economy; Report of the Director General, International Labour Conference, 90th Session, Report VI, International Labour Office, Geneva, 2002

(47) ICFTU (1999): From Asia to Russia to Brazil - The Cost of the Crisis, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, Brussels, May 1999

(48) For example when SEWA sought international affiliation in the early 1980s, certain other Indian unions would describe it as "not a real union" and a "women's NGO" to discourage its acceptance by international trade union bodies.

(49) Kalima Rose: Where Women are Leaders, Vistaar Publications, New Delhi, 1992, 286 p. (p. 75)

(50) quoted in Rose, op. cit. p. 80

(51) SEWA Annual Report, 2002, p. 6

(52) Rose, op. cit. p.89

(53) IUF "Women at Work" bulletin, Nr. 1, 2004

(54) Committee for Asian Women, Bangkok, 2001

(55) ICFTU Trade Union World Briefing: The informal economy: women on the front line. Brussels, March 2004

(56) (4) Reference: Ghana, by Kwasi Adu-Amankwah, Deputy Secretary-General, Ghana Trades Union Congress, in: Trade Unions in the Informal Sector: Finding Their

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Glossary of Acronyms

(where not explained in the text)

DAF: Dansk Arbejdsmands Forbund (Danish Workingmen's Union)

EPZ: Export Processing Zone (also: Free Trade Zone, FTZ)

FKTU: Federation of Korean Trade Unions

GLI: Global Labour Institute

ICFTU: International Confederation of Free Trade Unions

ICTU: Irish Congress of Trade Unions (main national trade union organization)

IFWEA: International Federation of Workers' Education Associations

IRENE: International Restructuring Education Network Europe

ITUC: Irish Trade Union Congress (one of the forerunners of the ICTU)

IUF: International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Catering Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations

IWW: Industrial Workers of the World

KCTU: Korean Confederation of Trade Unions

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

OECD: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

SiD: Specialarbejderforbund I Danmark (General Workers' Union in Denmark)

WEAZ: Workers' Education Association Zambia

ZCTU: Zambia Congress of Trade Unions

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