



**STOP  
VIOLENCE**



# STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Violence against women is the most glaring manifestation of gender inequality. From domestic violence to sexual harassment, trafficking, female genital mutilation, and even rape and murder at work; women are the object of violence in all countries every day.

According to the UN, violence has been perpetrated against one woman in three worldwide. Between 40 and 50 per cent of women in the European Union experience unwanted sexual advances, physical contact, verbal suggestions or other forms of sexual harassment at their workplace; in Asia-Pacific countries it is 30 to 40 per cent.

The violence is taking on epidemic proportions. Violence against women also means the Rana Plaza industrial homicide, forcing women to

work excessive hours and paying them below a living wage.

In times of rising extremism it is women who bear the brunt of assaults, as we see for example in the abductions of young girls in Nigeria. Drug and mafia wars are behind the femicides in Central America. Conflict minerals stoke the rapes in the Democratic Republic of Congo. **The potential of too many women is wasted by gender-based violence.**



# A TRADE UNION ISSUE

Due to women's multiple roles and gendered responsibilities women take any domestic violence suffered with them to work. Domestic violence affects performance and safety at work and is ultimately a trade union issue.



Socially constructed gender discrimination causes sexual harassment. It is primarily an abuse of power. Women workers in precarious employment arrangements – such as unstable or non-permanent jobs – may be particularly vulnerable to harassment at work. This vulnerability may occur as these workers may have less power in the workplace, fewer protections and may be less likely to report harassment given the instability of their jobs.

At Petrobras in Brazil, women contract workers are bullied, humiliated and earn much less. The women in the union need to speak with one voice on their behalf. The patriarchal culture, values and attitudes are viewed as inevitable for women and women are seen as subordinate to men. Unfortunately even male colleagues are sometimes reluctant to accept women into

their ranks, especially in male-dominated sectors.

**“The men insult the women and tell them they look like prostitutes if they are well dressed and correctly turned out. I want to fight all harassment against women and combat abuse at work. The women’s committee can protect us from sexual harassment and violence,”** says a woman textile worker in Ethiopia.

Sexual harassment is taboo and people are uncomfortable sharing it. The shame attached to being the victim also contributes to the silence and the perpetuation of the violence. In most cases the perpetrators are either unpunished or let go with light sentences. In many countries court cases take so long that women are dissuaded from seeking justice.

Prevention is the best solution to stopping violence. Men must be implicated as part of the solution. One example is IndustriALL affiliate UNIFOR, Canada, where men pledge, **“I swear never to commit, excuse or remain silent about violence against women. This is my oath.”** Furthermore, a White Ribbon campaign was started by men to end men’s violence against women.

Photos:

1. More than 1,100 garment workers perished in the Rana Plaza factory collapse in Bangladesh in 2013.

Source: Qamrul Anam

2. A silent protest at India Gate after a woman was fatally gang raped on a New Delhi bus in 2012.

Source: Ramesh Lalwani



Some unions have clauses on sexual harassment and bullying in collective agreements. One is CNQ-CUT Brazil, where it is said that sexual harassment and bullying can be denounced and a grievance made, in an agreement with the mining giant Vale. Trade unions can create hotlines to denounce harassment either by themselves or together with the authorities. NUM South Africa has created a harassment officer position. In Jordan at the workers' centre women are given self-defense training, so-called Shefighter. In Turkey Petrol-İs held a Twitter campaign against violence on international women's day.

The world's largest fashion retailer, Inditex, has an equality agreement with Spanish unions, which pays extensive attention to violence and sexual harassment. It provides for prevention in the form of awareness, training and protection against gender-based violence. It provides for financial assistance and transfer to another job within the company and adjustment of work schedule as well as job guarantee.

**IndustriALL's assistant general secretary,  
Monika Kemperle:**

“

We need to continue lobbying our governments with a view to adopting a proposal at the ILO Governing Body on gender-based violence. It is vital to keep the pressure up in order to achieve an international standard.

**Without the elimination  
of gender-based  
violence there can be  
no emancipation of  
women!**



**[www.industrialall-union.org](http://www.industrialall-union.org)**