

RESOLUTION 14

Women, Work and Families

Submitted by AFL-CIO Women's Committee
Amended by the Civil, Women and Human Rights Committee

WOMEN WORK EVERY DAY. No matter where they live, their economic activity is vital to the economy and society at large, their communities, their families and their personal autonomy and growth.

Around the world, women plant and harvest crops, build roads, manufacture goods, carry water and run the office. They care for the young, the sick and the elderly, often without due recognition of their work. They make up more than 40 percent of the global labor force. Whether they are teachers, sales clerks, pilots or plumbers, women fill many professions and perform many jobs. Although they speak different languages, they share the vision of a world founded on respect, peace, equality and solidarity, and without violence, harassment and discrimination.

For all women, especially for the millions who work in insecure, temporary, unsafe, underpaid and unpaid jobs, this vision lies far beyond the truth of their daily lives. To meet their needs and those of their families, women increasingly are moving around on their own initiative as economic migrants, rather than as dependents of male migrants, and are subjected to exploitation by unscrupulous employment agencies and employers. In both developing and industrialized countries, women's jobs are often part-time, low-wage, temporary, insecure, unregulated and unprotected. Women appear in disproportionate numbers among the world's poor and suffer the worst effects of unregulated trade and corporate-driven globalization. The privatization of public services has a disproportionate impact on

women, both as workers and as consumers of services.

As social inequality rises across and within countries, so does the need to redress these wrongs. To that end, changes must be made to ensure that the system of world trade promotes gender equality, eradication of poverty, respect for human rights and environmental protection and sustainability. Women and men alike are entitled to decent work, which is a vital precondition for having a decent life. Women and men alike are entitled to basic human rights in the workplace.

To this end, the AFL-CIO will do all in its power to secure for women the rights set down in this Charter.

The freedom to organize and bargain collectively.

- Particular attention should be paid to organizing young women, immigrant workers and women in the informal economy, and to ensuring their full participation in trade union activities and responsibilities.

Access to employment and promotion.

- Equal pay for work of equal value should include any additional reimbursements with all social rights and benefits linked to the employment relationship.
- Discrimination against women in social security schemes must be abolished, particularly provisions in pensions that penalize career breaks for maternity reasons or to provide care to dependent persons.

- Employers must be held responsible for ensuring that women have a safe workplace free of all forms of violence and sexual harassment.
- Governments should take effective measures to prevent and combat human trafficking by devoting particular attention to protecting women and children and by prosecuting the traffickers.
- Women and girls should have equal access to vocational guidance and training, including on-the-job training in technical skills.
- Positive action programs and gender mainstreaming programs for women and men should be put into operation with a view to changing stereotyped attitudes and addressing the effects of discrimination.

Maternity protection.

- Maternity protection is a duty of society. Women must have the right and the opportunity to plan their families and to choose motherhood freely. These protective measures should not negatively affect women's promotion at work or their pension and retirement rights.
- Women on maternity leave should be provided with cash benefits at a level allowing them to meet their own and their children's needs and to retain good health.

Family responsibilities.

- Family responsibilities should be shared between women and men on equal terms. Reductions in and flexible working hours are needed to help parents combine working and family life.
- The mother and father should have the right, before or after the maternity leave of the working woman or the leave for adoption of a child, to take parental leave without forfeiting any employment and related rights.

Education and training.

- Inequalities in access to education and training and programs must be eliminated, as should curriculum content that helps perpetuate the concept of a division of labor between women and men and thereby discriminates against women.
- Access to free, good-quality public education is a prerequisite for the eradication of child labor. Parents need access to decent jobs and a living minimum wage.

Integration of women in trade unions.

- Actively promoting the goal of women's integration in union organizations and gender parity in trade union activities and decision-making bodies at all levels, appropriate constructs should be set up to analyze the problems facing women workers, propose solutions, eliminate discrimination and encourage participation.
- A gender perspective should be incorporated in trade union work, including family-sensitive scheduling of union activities and child care at union meetings and events.
- Training programs for women should be organized within unions with the goal of training women to take up positions at all levels.
- Training on equal opportunities for men and women should be included in the training provided to activists.

Solidarity among diversity.

- As a driving force for promoting solidarity among women and between women and men, unions should initiate activities designed to remove the barriers that women face owing to factors such as civil conflict and occupation, race, language, ethnicity, culture, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation or socioeconomic class, or because they are indigenous peoples, immigrants, displaced women or refugees.

In furtherance of these rights we resolve:

- 1.** The AFL-CIO calls on its affiliated organizations and other progressive forces to commit themselves to the promotion and implementation of the principles set out in this Charter.
- 2.** Further, we urge the U.S. government to ratify and actively implement all current ILO Conventions, including but not limited to those with specific application to women, and that the AFL-CIO utilize its mobilization tools and other resources to work toward these goals.

These should include ILO Conventions 87, 98, 100, 105, 111, 138, 156, 175, 177 and 183, covering freedom of association; the right to organize and bargain collectively; equal remuneration; abolition of forced labor; prohibition on discrimination with respect to employment and occupation; minimum age for employment of children; protection of workers with family responsibilities; part-time work; home work; and maternity protection.

- 3.** In our country, to implement the above principles, the AFL-CIO should prioritize several key issues in 2009–2010 to show support for working women:

- Congress should pass the Healthy Families Act (H.R. 2460), which would provide full-time employees with seven paid sick days per year (and a prorated amount for part-time employees). Paid sick days would reduce the spread of illness by workers forced by economic necessity to go to work while sick, and would benefit the 79 percent of low-income workers, a majority of whom are women, who currently do not have a single paid sick day.
- The Family and Medical Leave Act should be strengthened to cover more workers, include paid leave and to cover more family needs.
- The Paycheck Fairness Act (H.R. 12) would close loopholes in the Equal Pay Act of 1963, improving fairness in the workplace by requiring employers to demonstrate that wage gaps between men and women doing the same work are truly a result of factors other than gender and strengthening the government's ability to identify and remedy systematic wage discrimination.
- Continuing and higher education have a special resonance to women workers. The AFL-CIO supports the Campaign for College Affordability and urges the United States government to expand access to higher education by working to reduce barriers to entry, financial or otherwise.