

AFRICAN REGIONAL WOMEN'S WORKSHOP

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ITF AFRICA REGIONAL CONFERENCE REPORT (KENYA)

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Overview

In a three day workshop attended by women of the informal transport sector in East Africa (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania) we had a great experience and got the chance to interact, socialize and learn so many new things we didn't know about women and the informal sector.

The objectives of the workshop were:

- to increase the visibility of informal women transport workers within national and international trade unions, as well as to governments, employers and development agencies;
- to increase their participation in the unions both through membership and leadership.

We divided ourselves into various groups where we tackled some questions in group discussions. These questions included:

- who are the informal women transport workers?
- how do we organize them?
- what are their experiences?

Our observations included:

- informal workers are those that do not have social protection or those whose rights are infringed and who are often paid only on commission.
- some of them are organized while others are not. They are mobile, they have no appointment letters, they have inadequate awareness, they face stiff competition and inequality and there often is hatred amongst the women themselves. They sometimes get hesitant and they have too many problems to be solved.

We also looked at organizing and recruiting. In order to succeed in organization and recruitment, there are various things we need to know about the worker. These include: name; occupation; experience; age; whether they are organized; specific challenges and issues; location of the work place; attitude towards the union and the bargaining counterparts.

A lot of research needs to be carried out through mapping and developing activists (these are people who are not members of the union but have the interests and could be influential to fellow workers to join the union).

Mapping helps build sustainable union structures by gathering information, analyzing it and choosing priority issues.

We concluded that workers should also have anger, hope and the willingness to take action in order to achieve.

Bus Station Exercise

We visited one of the bus parks in Kampala and interviewed several women in the informal sector like conductors, vendors, hawkers, call girls, stage clerks and even security guards.

They shared their experiences of:

- sexual harassment;
- discrimination;
- stiff competition from the men;
- poor sanitation;
- earning very little etc.

Most of them are not organized nor do they know what a union is. Those who are organized are organized in associations and Saccos. They got interested when we talked to them and requested for more education.

On the final day we regrouped ourselves according to our countries where we come from and each group drew a one year action plan (May 2014 to April 2015). We were told the work plan should be:

S - Specific

M - Measurable

A - Attainable

R - Realistic

T - Time bound

We are still working on ours (Kenya) and hope to achieve it. So far I have received several text messages from one of our team members and that I believe is a sign of progress.

Conclusion

In conclusion women are involved in both the formal and informal sectors. They are taken to be honest, efficient, reliable and more effective. Women are denied rights when:

1. they are not educated;
2. not employed in well paid jobs;
3. subjected to sexual harassment;
4. discriminated against - especially when they give birth.

We should enhance employment of women, educate them and also give them a chance to vie for leadership positions. That way domestic economies and the global economy will grow drastically because the women, whether in the formal or informal sector, will be involved in decision-making.

Team Leader

Synaida Khaenda