

ACTION GUIDE FOR INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY CAMPAIGN 8 MARCH 2016

In 2015, the World Women's Committee (WOC) decided to make Equal Pay the main theme of its celebration of International Women's Day in 2016. PSI has already achieved a lot on this issue, as is widely recognised. It took the lead in calling on its affiliates, the global union federations, the ILO, governments and women's organisations to defend economic rights. PSI is now internationally recognised as a union that defends women's rights at work and in society in general.

In 2016, the issue is becoming increasingly relevant amid preparations for the 60th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW), which will focus on the economic empowerment of women and define Sustainable Development Objectives (SDOs) by 2030.

I. The theoretical base of the problem of the value of work

The main material subordination of women to men is unequal pay, which reflects social relations. This, the most substantive expression of unequal gender relations, determines all the others. It expresses the devaluation of work and life resulting from the sexual division of labour that has existed for centuries and continues in all societies today. It affects women of all ages, classes, cultures, nations, sexual identities and all human beings, who permanently or temporarily have devalued roles.

The heart of the problem is the difference between the social value of work in general and the social value of reproducing life, understanding the latter as the work mainly but not exclusively carried out by women in the home and which represents the daily reproduction of the living conditions, ideology, culture and workforce and the social reproduction of the economic system. The particular function played by reproductive work in the subordination of gender is that it is not considered to be work and this sphere of social reproduction is therefore invisible in the economy even though it plays an essential role in sustaining it.

The social value of work is determined according to the logic of the value chain. The only work deemed to add value is that which is considered to be productive, not reproductive. Currently, most women are still confined to the reproductive sphere, both in their private and public lives, both in the formal and informal economy and in both urban and rural areas. It is women that form the largest sector of the population that contributes “invisible” value to reproducing the economy and economic power.

In many countries, public sector employment starkly reflects the horizontal and vertical segregation of women workers. Productive sectors and occupations in the public services attract higher wages than care services. Most women remain at the bottom of the employment pyramid and are concentrated in occupations that are dedicated to the care and

reproduction of life. Austerity, cuts and privatisation of public services have redoubled the burden of reproductive work transferred to families and, within families, mainly to women.

Unless global policies and the global economy seriously tackle the devaluation of reproductive work and the resulting social relations, it will be impossible to make significant progress in this field or achieve sustainable development.

II. The campaign

The campaign aims to move the issue of equal pay up the trade union and international development agendas. It will lobby governments, conduct media work and use the ILO supervisory bodies to highlight the problem and identify solutions.

Its central argument will be the need to increase the social value of women's work, whether in formal or informal public or private employment, or in the home, at the hub of the reproduction of social life. It will take a sectoral approach on water and sanitation on World Water Day (22nd March) when trade unions in the sector will use this as the focus for their actions.

The campaign will last three weeks, from 8th March to Friday 25th March.

III. Campaign actions

- a) **The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW).** PSI will prepare a statement for distribution to local unions and women's committees and to all government delegations at the UNCSW and to government ministries responsible for gender, women and employment. PSI and other global trade unions have also prepared a joint statement to UNCSW60, arguing that equal pay is essential for the economic empowerment of women. The statement will also be distributed at the national level to governments, the media and civil society organisations: http://www.world-psi.org/sites/default/files/documents/research/en_uncsw60_joint_statement_0.pdf
- b) **Trade union action on the ratification, implementation and monitoring of ILO Convention 100 on equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value.** It will be important to assess the state of play regarding ratification of the convention; identify cases from 2015 that can be submitted to the Commission on the Application of Standards of the ILC 2016; and select countries for making observations on the implementation of the convention to include them on the Commission's agenda in 2017.

http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_COD E:C100 (Convention 100 on Equal Remuneration)

http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:11300:0::NO:11300:P11300_INSTRUMENT_ID:312245 (Countries that have ratified the convention)

http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:14001:0::NO::P14001_INSTRUMENT_ID:312245 (Reports on implementation of the convention)

http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_448720.pdf

IV. Following the campaign

PSI Communications Department will publish materials on its website, social networks and in the international media, for which we will need your contributions. So let us know what is happening in your part of the world.

The next WOC meeting in 2016 will discuss the campaign so please send publications, visual materials and press reports about action taken.