

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNIONS TO INCLUDE WOMEN CONCERNS DURING COVID-19

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### Women

#### BACKGROUND

Women constitute the vast majority of workers in many of the essential services that are still servicing the population even during times of general lockdown (food retail, care, cleaning, etc.)

Without proper protective equipment, these women workers are not only exposing themselves but their family members as well to the spread of the pandemic.

Women already do three times as much unpaid care work than men<sup>1</sup>, for a total 76.2%<sup>2</sup> of total hours of unpaid care work globally. As the world tries to flatten the curve and avoid the health systems to be overburdened, women are taking a greater load as well as putting themselves at greater risk of becoming infected.

With millions of workers are sent to work from home to stop the spread, domestic violence is also on the rise. Violence affects women disproportionately with statistics showing that one in three women around the world experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime, from intimate partners or family members.

Since the beginning of the lockdown, countries such as France saw increases of 32% in one week while in the UK, domestic abuse calls are up 25% since the start of the lockdown.

To ensure that women and their particular concerns are adequately considered, UNI recommends that unions take into consideration the following recommendations in addition to those issued by UNI's sectors:

#### Information

- Continuous and credible information on measures to protect workers from the spread of the virus as well as on their rights for teleworking from home, highlighting measures particularly designed to protect women workers

#### Provision

- Provide institutional information for workers regarding protection against domestic violence (hotlines, women shelters, etc.)
- Psychological and moral support for workers (hotlines or access to psychological assistance)

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/03/the-coronavirus-fallout-may-be-worse-for-women-than-men-heres-why/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/asia/media-centre/news/WCMS\\_633284/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/asia/media-centre/news/WCMS_633284/lang--en/index.htm)

- Have a union emergency response team to help with information, secure the needs of workers and help protect the workplace

## **Action**

### **With employers**

- Negotiate with employers' provisions for working parents who are considered essential workers, particularly single mothers.
- Inclusion of agreements with expanded access to paid sick leave for workers who are unwell and paid leave for workers who need to take leave for childcare or elderly care.
- Negotiation and inclusion of agreements for paid leave for pregnant women to protect them from the contagion
- Negotiation of agreements that will allow flexible working with staggered hours to limit social contact when home working is not possible
- Negotiation of agreements that will allow flexible working for working parents, particularly considering mothers that work from home and take care of their families
- Negotiate with employers access to distance learning for women workers who cannot work and are in quarantine to help them build skills for the future
- Secure agreements to provide transportation for women workers who are working until late hours as essential workers to avoid sexual harassment and violence towards them
- Negotiate higher wages and compensation for workers deemed as essential workers during the pandemic

### **For unions**

- Psychological and moral support for workers (hotlines or access to psychological assistance)
- Institutional information and psychological support for workers who might be experiencing domestic violence
- Have a workplace emergency response team to help with information, secure the needs of workers and help protect the workplace
- Begin to analyse the impact of the pandemic and how this is going to affect women workers and the workplace (increase of teleworking, increase of precarious work, lower wages, etc.)