



Decisions for Life, ITUC, 2011

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Young women take the lead

Decisions for Life changes lives

Decisions for Life has enhanced young women's careers, brought thousands of young women into the trade union movement, encouraged many of them to apply for – and get – trade union leadership positions, to stand up for themselves at work and in the home, to organise and to help others. It has shown younger and older women how to work together, build coalitions between trade unions with different traditions, and between trade unions and NGOs. It has changed trade unions, collective agreements and organising strategies, ensuring that women's lives improve.

Decisions for Life...

- Reached out to more than 90,000 women, of whom 30% have joined the union. Decisions for Life has the potential to multiply that figure many times. Significant increases in trade union membership among young women were seen in Brazil (5,000) and Indonesia (15,000).
- More gender clauses in collective agreements: Brazil is negotiating 50 new collective agreements with gender sensitive clauses, South Africa has 5 new collective agreements with clauses on sexual harassment and parental rights and in Indonesia gender clauses on equal pay and maternity leave were negotiated in two food factories covering 1,200 women workers.
- Setting up trade unions: In Kazakhstan women journalists covering the campaign press launch were so inspired they have formed their own union and in Belarus 1,000 women market traders registered for a union. The government does not recognise the union but the women continued: they formed an NGO with a view to becoming a trade union in its own right.
- More women become activists and leaders: In South Africa women held 40% of decision-making positions in SACCAWU¹ by the end of June 2010. ■

¹South Africa Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union

1 • Introduction

Young women everywhere face important, life-shaping decisions as they begin their working life, when they get married and when they become mothers. Those decisions – about career, partner choice, family planning, work-life balance – may seem burdensome, and bewildering. Many feel the decision is not even theirs to make. Yet the life decisions of adolescent women determine not only their individual future but also that of society. Their choices are key to the demographic and workforce development of their nations.

The Decisions for Life campaign is about empowering young women by giving them the information they need, and showing them that they have choices. The campaign is about women helping other women in a structured way, through the trade union movement. The campaign seeks to:

- organise young women
- develop their leadership and negotiating skills
- get more women into decision-making posts
- help women negotiate more gender-specific clauses in collective agreements
- help women press for changes in their country's legislation, such as the ratification and application of ILO Conventions, including No. 183, the Maternity Protection Convention
- give women the confidence to seek better opportunities at work.

2• Decisions for Life in a nutshell

The Decisions for Life campaign is targeted at young women (aged 15-29) working or looking for work in eight large occupational groups in the service sector. It is part of the ITUC Decent Work Decent Life for Women campaign and was designed within the framework of Millennium Development Goal 3 (MDG3) to “Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women.”

The service sector

The services sector is the fastest growing sector internationally. A large number of employees are young women workers, working on a casualised (a-typical, temporary, contract, part-time) basis with all the accompanying problems of job security, bad working conditions, long hours, often vulnerable to abuses such as sexual harassment.

Target groups

Call centre operators	Travel agency intermediaries
Secretaries	Sales persons and cashiers in retail outlets
Housekeepers in hotels	Bookkeepers
IT programmers	Receptionists/front office workers
others chosen by local teams, e.g. telecoms workers, job seekers/university students	

The Decisions for Life campaign is being carried out in 14 developing countries in the Americas, Africa, Asia and the CIS. Overall management is in the hands of the ITUC, working in partnership with the global union UNI, the WageIndicator Foundation in Amsterdam and the University of Amsterdam. Since the campaign began other Global Unions, notably the IUF and PSI also become closely involved in certain countries.

At the end of the campaign (June 2011) the Decisions for Life method and best practices will be integrated in ITUC gender equality policies, programmes and activities.

Decisions for Life countries per region

- **Americas:** Brazil
- **Africa:** Angola, Botswana*, Malawi*, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe
- **Asia:** India, Indonesia
- **CIS countries:** Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Ukraine

*web campaigns only

In several of the countries selected for the campaign, trade unions encounter a hostile environment when trying to organise. In Zimbabwe trade unionists face constant harassment, including physical violence and prosecution. In Belarus too, trade union leaders are routinely harassed, blackmailed and arrested, while in Ukraine there have been numerous violations of trade union rights in recent years. In Indonesia, trade union rights are not well protected in law, and even less so in practice. Many Indian states restrict trade union rights in law, many employers are hostile to trade unions and in 2009 there were numerous incidents of police sponsored violence against trade union officials.²

Each country has a trade union campaign team and a web team (see table above).

Grassroots trade union campaigns at national level

The teams identify their own target groups and activities and the best tools and methods to use.

By developing their own campaign plan they can ensure that the most urgent issues and needs in their country and sector are addressed and that they reach a maximum number of young women.

The campaign teams meet young women face-to-face and organise training sessions. They campaign to achieve better working conditions and increase the involvement of young women in trade unions. One of their key activities is to train young women as campaigners, because other young women can relate to them.

Web teams

The web teams prepare their own websites, designed to meet the needs of the local campaign. The WageIndicator websites provide multiple tools specifically developed for young women workers to

help them make well informed career and family choices. They feature opinion polls, salary and jobs' information, workers' rights information, interviews and articles related to family and work as well as research studies by the University of Amsterdam.

Research studies

Research studies by the University of Amsterdam/AIAS give an overview of women's work and employment. The reports provide a gender analysis of work and employment, addressing the country's sectoral labour market structure, labour relations and wage-setting, communication facilities, population and fertility, health, women's labour market share, literacy, education of girls, female skill levels, and wage and working conditions. The reports include inventories of the national legislation, the national educational system, and regulations at company level, as far as information was available.

Coalitions

Big coalitions have been formed to run the campaign, such as in South Africa, where the team is composed of four national trade union centres affiliated to the ITUC, namely COSATU, NACTU, FEDUSA and CONSAWU, three trade unions affiliated to UNI, namely SASBO, SACCAWU and CWU and three major women's NGOs. By June 2010 this broad coalition had already reached over 5,000 women directly. The Brazilian campaign is also a coalition, of six trade union confederations, CUT, UGT, Força Sindical, CTB, CGTB and NCST, and targets were also exceeded. The trade union research body DIEESE had hoped to reach 500 women in call centres. After one year of the campaign they had reached 2,209 in call centres, and also went well beyond their targets among cashiers and industry workers.

Campaign topics

Advocating women workers' rights	Pay Equity
Work/Life balance including maternity and paternity rights and leave, working time, child care Precarious jobs	Violence against women Sexual harassment HIV/AIDs Career planning

South-South Cooperation

Representatives of the campaign teams meet each other at regional and global meetings. These meetings allow the different country teams to get to know each other, share experiences and learn from their best practices, creating a strong sense of solidarity between the countries. Having put a face to the names, this South-South Cooperation continues through e-mail, Facebook, Twitter and other channels of communication. ■

3• The campaign in practice

The campaign teams conduct a wide range of activities. They use various means of communication depending on the country, and produce their own materials, as well as those provided by the ITUC, UNI and WageIndicator Foundation. Major events such as International Women's Day on 8 March, World Day for Decent Work on 7 October, and the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November are often used to hold Decisions for Life events and draw the attention of a wider public.

The country campaigns began with launch events, in some cases organised around those key dates. These often drew wide

media attention, which proved extremely useful in attracting participants. To reach young women, campaign teams visit public spaces such as shopping malls, organise public events, hold debating and training sessions, and interview young women. Sometimes very creative techniques are used, such as theatre productions. Communication can be by e-mail, telephone, through trade union and/or NGO networks, or social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook. In numerous cases, however, the teams cited face-to-face contact as the most effective form of communication. Materials include leaflets, posters, questionnaires, publications, as well as T-shirts, and baseball caps.

Zimbabwe

Mobilising women to stand up for their rights

“**D**ecisions for Life helps women in the trade union to rise to positions of leadership and to mobilise the rank and file. From my position I survey the activities of affiliated unions nationwide. The issues raised by Decisions for Life filter down through union officials to shop stewards and the shop floor. Each quarter, labour forums are organised at local ZCTU offices, after the working day, to debate issues such as conditions at the work place, sexual harassment, legal protection and combining work with family responsibilities. These are public debates, not just for union members. Such labour forums are held in each of 35 affiliates in different industries.

On 8 March 2010, International Women’s Day, in each of ZCTU’s six regions the federation organised manifestations and debates in major cities, as well as in

some outlying districts. In Harare alone some 500 women participated. Elsewhere the turnout was similar, so several thousands of women participated. We distributed leaflets explaining what Decisions for Life is all about. We handed out T-shirts, which were much appreciated. We received reports back from our women’s committees in all regions. From this we got the impression that women everywhere stand up for their rights. They demand equal opportunities, maternity benefits and an end to sexual harassment.”



*Fiona Gandiwa Magaya,
Women and Gender
Coordinator, Zimbabwe
Congress of Trade Unions
ZCTU.*

South Africa

Learning to work together

The Labour Research Service (LRS) coordinates the campaign with all four national centres affiliated to the ITUC and three UNI affiliates. This coalition was later broadened as they formed networks with NGOs and cultural groups, extending the reach of the campaign.



A Decisions for Life team supporting an SABC strike.

At their regular campaign team meetings the four confederations learned how to work together, respecting each other's different traditions and political views. At the same time older women trade unionists shared their experience with younger women relatively new to the union. One of the highlights they identified was the direct involvement of young women workers in the planning, coordination, implementation and evaluation of activities. Targeting women sales staff, hotel housekeepers and bank tellers, as well as call centre operators and administrative staff, the campaign focused on women's

rights, principally sexual and reproductive rights, on work/life balance, violence against women and sexual harassment. As a result of the campaign, key sector-related issues affecting young women are now on the collective bargaining agenda of trade unions as demands. Those issues include safe transport for young women working late hours, sexual harassment in the hospitality sector, the impact of shift work in call centres on work/life balance and the need for subsidised child care facilities.

Encouraging women to protect themselves

The work of the campaign team included a specific campaign on the “Right of women to choose to use a femidom”. For young women very little space exists to voice their fears, hopes and desires in relation to sex and reproduction. Yet the right to take control of their bodies is essential for being able to make decisions about other aspects of their lives. The femidom campaign has been an important practical means of raising awareness, articulating collective bargaining demands e.g. the provision of femidoms in the workplace and most importantly allowing young women to take control over their bodies.

Teaching women to protect themselves

Phina’s story

“My name is Phina Mogosi, I am 29 years old. I tested HIV positive in 2003 when I was pregnant with my daughter. My husband was devastated and started blaming me for getting the disease and passing it to him. I was sad, angry and in denial and started drinking alcohol a lot. My mother in law took my daughter to go stay with her. Then I met Mama Nomvula, she counselled me, supported me and I felt better. She urged me to go to the clinic and check my CD4 count. I was alarmed to find that my count was a mere 5! They coached me to take ARV’s. As I speak my CD4 count is picking up, bit by bit, and I feel much better as I can now work again at my hair salon.”

I would like to tell other young women who are infected, that yes there is life after being HIV positive. Yes they will feel terrible and bad after testing, but they have to continue to have a positive, optimistic attitude towards life, because life does not stop after their diagnosis.

Young women/mothers must heed the Decisions for Life campaign and be confident to make choices and protect themselves from the disease by choosing to use female condoms when it gets tough to negotiate with your man to use protection. Stay positive, be aware, be prepared, get tested and know your status, PROTECT yourselves!"

*By Phina Mogosi.
Living positively.*

Daring to lead

In SACCAWU young women involved in the campaign say it has changed their lives. It has encouraged them to become active in their union,

to dare to apply for leadership positions and even to become more assertive in the home. By the end of June 2010, women held 40% of decision-making positions in the union. By June 2010, a total of 259 young women had been organised, the majority of whom were aiming to become future leaders of SACCAWU, from shop steward up to national level.

The key to the campaign's success they believe was that it is about young women organising other young women. Their approach included mentoring and integrating the campaign in their union's campaigns. They used existing gender structures to provide coordination. One of the main campaign topics was sexual harassment, identified as a serious problem in South Africa.

The workshops brought a strong response, with young women realising they can respond differently. The union has already negotiated a sexual harassment policy at a major retail chain, the Lewis stores, and has proposed amendments to the

government's Sexual Harassment Code of Good Practice.

"We young women also have a contribution to make towards building the union and need to be taken seriously."

*Decisions for Life
campaigner*

Reaching out

Several methods were used to bring young women into the Decisions for Life campaign. The launch event in Johannesburg in August 2009 received a lot of media coverage and created a public space for young women to gain direct access to the campaign. Later, workplace visits and visits to public spaces allowed campaigners - usually young women themselves - to engage directly with women workers, giving it a young, human face. A visit to the Maponya Mall, for example, allowed campaigners to speak to non-unionised women about the union in a non-threatening environment. That contact was later continued by e-mail, phone calls and text messages. Interactive processes such as theatre

and poetry productions were also used and proved very effective, being both fun and educational. A particularly strong form of communication was community radio, through local radio stations in Cape Town and Johannesburg, and a joint SABC/ Workers' World production. Gradually support networks of young women were created inside the union, across unions, across federations and between employed and unemployed young women. Young women were encouraged to tell and write about their life stories, to make decisions that impact on their lives, and to take control.

"Young women are often not in charge of their lives, and decision-making is often left in the hands of men who are not aware of the issues affecting young women. We say stop the exploitation of young women at the workplace!"

*Alinah Mbethe, 28 years,
Decisions for Life
Campaign team,
South Africa.*

The campaigners are now experimenting with more informal ways of recruiting young women and at finding ways of ensuring young women's issues are on the union agenda, and will continue their relationship with NGOs focused on women.

Mainstreaming

Women trade unionists in South Africa promoted Decisions for Life in such a way that within six months of its introduction in March 2009 it became a part of mainstream trade union policies. They consider this achievement as a unique event in their trade union history.

Strategies

The campaign teams in South Africa have used a range of innovative strategies, including the Mall Committees and mentoring.



Mall Committees: The Mall Committee offers an opportunity for building worker solidarity across companies but importantly can be an easily accessible space for women workers who can meet during lunch times rather than after the working day, when they may have a long journey home.

Mentorship: Another organising strategy is mentorship where the campaign team gets in touch with a senior, and usually older, woman leader who agrees to provide guidance to a younger woman. In turn these younger women would then mentor another younger woman. The problem of the generation gap where mature comrades fear the younger comrades, whilst younger comrades feel that their views are not being heard, can be overcome with the mentorship approach.

Angola

Raising awareness and recruiting young women

“ I feel inspired to carry out new activities in a systematic way. In August, October and December 2009 we held seminars to educate women workers on Decisions for Life issues. This culminated in an agreement within the union leadership to direct efforts towards young working women, with the dual aims of raising their awareness and to recruit them as trade union members.”



*Luzia Tanguica,
Vice-President of the UNTA
Women's Committee.*

Women as equal partners

“Angolan women have already demonstrated that they are able to undertake activities in any field of human endeavour and are partners in building a more just and fraternal society.”

*Maria Fernanda Carvalho
Francisco, Chairperson,
UNTA-CS Women's
Committee Angola,
speaking at the
campaign launch,
Luanda, August 2009.*



Mozambique

Decisions for Life helps you to achieve your own goals

"Decisions for Life has had a great impact on me. Over the last year, since I was elected in May by all five UNI-affiliates in Mozambique to become their coordinator I have grown personally. I learned to speak in public and last December I, of all people, even acted successfully as a moderator of a meeting. So for me there is no question that Decisions for Life helps you to achieve your own goals as a working woman faster and more efficiently.

Since the launch of the Decisions for Life campaign in October 2009, I have set up a committee of young female SNEB-members. Together we have been working out a strategy which



includes seminars for training, selection of topics for debates at meetings and events, as well as active participation in international and national events. The strategy also includes a media component. We seek maximum exposure of events in close cooperation with the Meu Salário web team."

Hagira Faquir, national women's coordinator at the Mozambican union of bank employees SNEB.

Zambia

Decisions for Life issues integrated into collective bargaining

“Within the union I use my position and the freedom I enjoy to do my own training programme for mainstreaming the Decision for Life campaign.

Now Decisions for Life issues are already on the agenda of the regular youth and women’s programmes. Women are silently taking over leadership of the trade union. This means that the issues raised by Decisions for Life will find their way to collective bargaining in a structural manner.”



*Silvia Chimpapwe,
chairperson of Zambia’s
national women’s
movement and Head of
the Women’s Education
programme of the Union
of Financial Institutions
and Allied Workers
ZUFIAW.*

**DECISIONS
FOR
LIFE**
WHAT WORKING WOMEN WANT

Brazil

Gender clauses in collective agreements

The trade union research organisation DIEESE in Brazil focuses its campaign activities on the inclusion of gender sensitive clauses in collective agreements. By the end of the campaign they expect to have negotiated 50 new collective agreements with gender sensitive clauses. They have reached out to thousands of women in the campaign, notably in call centres, industry and sales and this has proved a powerful organising tool.

To bring the campaign message to so many women, several methods were used. The campaign was promoted within the trade unions and at public events, major events became a platform for discussing Decisions for Life issues and workshops were organised with all the Brazilian confederations and UNI affiliates. A newsletter to keep union representatives informed about the campaign proved very effective, as did the Meu Salário website, which provided extensive information about the campaign content and activities.



*The CUT
Brazil
promotes
the
Decisions
for Life
campaign.*

UNI-Brazil also found training on collective bargaining for women to be particularly useful. Thanks to a workshop designed for the UNI-Americas Women's Network, they were able to provide women with guidelines on negotiating gender clauses. As a result of the workshop, they found that women from different sectors were prepared to participate at the negotiating table.

Another important issue tackled during the campaign was domestic violence. At a seminar for young women from the graphical sector, the role of the perpetrator and victim was explained, and how Brazilian law can be used to help victims of domestic violence. Trade unions and the government are now working together to promote the use of the law.

Work/Life balance

Decisions for Life has put the reconciliation of personal and working life very high on the trade union agenda. Reconciliation is now addressed in all trade union activities. Trade unions are now taking into account the importance of the time spent with the family. This has been translated into collective bargaining issues such as parental leave for both fathers and mothers or the six months paid maternity leave. Decisions for Life facilitated this process."

*Rosangela Da Silva,
Decisions for Life campaign
Coordinator in Brazil, and
Secretary of the National
Print Workers' union.*



Indonesia

Decisions for Life issues are used in our recruitment drive



“**D**ecisions for Life has helped us in two ways. First of all the position of our Equality Commission at the confederation level has improved. Before we were not consulted in matters of policy. But now we are making policies. Decisions for Life was used to achieve this. Also the campaign issues were used in our recruitment drive. From April 2009 till April 2010 our confederation grew with approximately 50,000 new members. We now have 511,000 members, 35% of whom are women.”

Afrileston Sulistri, Decisions for Life campaign leader, Deputy President of KSBSI.

Social networking

The Indonesian national trade union centre KSBSI has seen its membership grow steadily since the start of the campaign, with a 30% increase in the number of women trade union

members. Its campaign activities have been carried out in cooperation with UNI affiliate ASPEK Indonesia, forming a strong and effective coalition. Targeting sales staff, call centre operators, secretaries and IT programmers the campaign has focused on the topic of women’s rights, as so few women are aware of their rights at work. More trade unions are being created as a result: following an informal meeting with employees at B; Integrated, an advertising company, the human resources department called in the Decisions for Life team who put them in touch with the Federation of Financial, Information, Trade and Banking unions to negotiate the creation of a union in the company. New collective agreements are also being negotiated with gender clauses, including two at food factories (PT. Kemang

Food Industries and PT. First Marine Seafoods) in Jakarta, covering 1,200 women. These agreements include clauses on equal pay for women and men, maternity leave and menstruation leave.

So far they have found that informal, face to face contact works best to win women's trust. The KSBSI team is also reaching out to young women using the communication tools they use most, such as Facebook and Twitter. Not only have they improved communications and reached a wider audience, they have also improved the image of the union which is now seen as an organisation for young workers.



The campaign launch in Indonesia.

Regulating working conditions in the arts

A meeting by the Decisions for Life team with students at the Jakarta Art Institute led to the drafting of a regulation on working conditions in the film industry. After talking to the students, the Decisions for Life team found that some of them were being employed on an ad hoc freelance basis with no contract, no regular working hours and no protection. The women said they would like to have a union to protect their rights and would be happy to pay affiliation fees. After the meeting the Decisions for Life team got in touch with the Equality Commission of KSBSI which made an informal proposal to the Minister of Manpower to develop a specific regulation for workers in the film industry. By July 2010 the Equality Commission was in discussion with workers' representatives in the industry on the contents of the regulation.

India

Overcoming scepticism



In India, the campaign team of UNITES³, an affiliate of UNI, focused on young women in call centres, banks and IT companies. Realising that their target group understood and used IT extensively, they decided that that was the best way to communicate with them. Websites (see the web site section below), blogs, social networking sites and of course e-mail have proved very effective in reaching out to the target group and the campaign topics selected were issues that most affect them in their daily working lives - women's rights at work, work/life balance and violence against women.

A series of major events were used to draw attention to the campaign, beginning with a launch event in October 2009. Since then other events have been organised, timed to coincide with significant days in the international calendar such as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, National Girl Child Day and International Women's Day.



To commemorate International Women's Day, the Decisions for Life team in India held a forum on "Sexual Harassment at the Workplace". The forum was co-organised

together with ITF (International Transport Workers' Federation) and NRMU (National Railways Men's Union), and attended by 137 participants.

³ Union for Information Technology Enabled Services-Professionals

At the one of the three Decisions for Life events held in 17 November, International Student's Day, the initial response was scepticism. However as they found out more about the campaign from the information stand, plenty of students at Delhi wanted to get further information through workshops and seminars and were looking forward to being invited. The campaign attracted the attention of not only female students, but also males who asked for information regarding the campaign for their female friends or siblings.

Between the launch and the June 2010 event on the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking they succeeded in bringing over 1,109 women participants to their activities.



International Women's Day event in India.

Belarus

Creating a union against the odds

When self-employed women market traders tried to create a trade union, “Vmeste”, they were repeatedly refused recognition by the authorities. To continue their efforts seemed risky, as activities by unregistered organisations are prohibited. Members of the Decisions for Life team from the independent confederation BKDP decided it was time to find ways of getting round the problem. One member of the campaign team, Zhanna Rogova and her activists, who work with about 3,000 women traders in the Gomel region, decided to first register as an NGO in order to be able to legally organise activities for self-employed workers.

Through campaigning within the Decisions for Life campaign on child care, working conditions, social protection, legal advice and HIV/AIDS, they have been activating more young self-

employed women. By July 2010 the NGO had its own office, it had developed cooperative relations with local authorities and other organisations and had won credibility among the self-employed. Having been given the space to discuss their problems, several groups of activists said they were motivated to work further on organising self-employed women. The plan is to work in stages to turn the NGO into a trade union.



The regional campaign partners meet in Minsk, Belarus.

Kazakhstan

Realising potential



After the FPRK organised workshops on women's rights, gender equality and leadership, workers in small and medium sized enterprises in trade and catering founded two grass roots unions. The campaign team is seeking potential leaders among the women with whom they can work in the future. Training has continued successfully since then and participants have said they were surprised to find they had qualities they did not know they had. After their FPRK leadership training many of the women have committed to the campaign and have said they are prepared to negotiate with their employers when they go back to work.

Targeted training

The research carried out by the CFTUK by means of detailed questionnaires in six regions enabled them to target their campaign activities carefully. It became clear that many women knew

very little about trade unions or their rights at work. Self-employed market traders, hotel workers and media workers were targeted for training, which focused primarily on trade unions and trade union rights. As a result women in all these areas decided they wanted to create their own unions and organise others. The training also introduced young women to the internet. An additional boost to the campaign was the inclusion of a young woman journalist from "Stan TV" on the team who helped ensure wide media coverage.

Inspiring others

Another unexpected result was that after the Decisions for Life press conference in September 2009, the young women journalists covering the event were so inspired they decided to set up their own union. They are planning to file for registration at the end of the year.

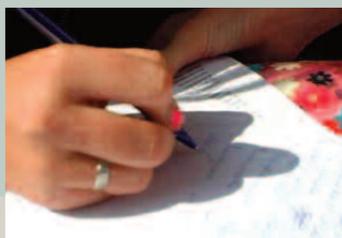
Decisions for Life – uniting the unions

As part of the Decisions for Life campaign, the two Kazakh Federations CFTUK and FPRK, together with journalists, held a joint roundtable in March 2010, on the occasion of International Women’s Day. This cooperation of the two Kazakh federations is highly significant, as differences in the approach and history of the two trade union centres have meant that they have almost never worked in collaboration. Decisions for Life encouraged them to join their efforts to combat hardships which young women face nowadays.

Campaigning for maternity rights

CFTUK has also begun collecting signatures for a petition urging Kazakh authorities to ratify ILO Convention 183 on Maternity Protection. Ratification of the Convention would force employers and the government to strictly abide by labour laws, providing benefits of up to two-thirds of wages. Women’s incomes fall sharply after the birth of a child, with current benefits amounting to about \$ 50 a month regardless of the level of wages. Campaigners say women have needed no persuasion to sign the petition.

Collecting signatures in support of the ratification of ILO Convention 183 on Maternity Protection in Kazakhstan.



Azerbaijan

Women role models

The AHİK, in cooperation with Khidmat-Ish, an UNI/IUF affiliate, has involved successful Azeri women in its campaign as role-models, using them in story telling sessions to inspire younger women. Theatre techniques were also used during its 8 March activities, dedicated in 2010 to Decisions for Life. The 8 March event received wide media coverage, and the theatre production attracted 360 women participants. AHİK has also published a book on the “Rights of young workers”, which covers international conventions, the European Social Charter, the Labour Code of Azerbaijan and other national laws. Trade union membership has steadily increased since the start of the campaign, notably among market traders and telecommunications workers.



Women attending a Decisions for Life campaign activity.

Ukraine

Innovative ways of attracting young women

The Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine, KVPU, sought to raise women's awareness of their rights, through working groups, seminars, and the distribution of books and leaflets. It also regularly printed articles on women's issues in the union newspaper ASPECT as part of its campaign, including an interview with a woman who suffered harassment at work. By October 2010, the KVPU had succeeded in organising over 100 women, and plans to continue that work. This organising has included setting up grass roots trade unions, including three in different branches of the Epicentre chain store. At the same time the campaign has gathered 678 signatures so far for ILO Convention 183 on Maternity Protection.

Thanks to the campaign, women leaders within the PIT.Ua have set up their own women's committee.



Innovative and creative

The Ukrainian union of Information, Communication and Business Technologies Professionals, PIT.Ua has come up with a very innovative and creative way of attracting young women's attention to the Decisions for Life campaign, while making them think hard about its goals. It has launched a Decisions for Life essay competition. Contestants are requested to write an essay about leadership – how they see their future, how they plan their social activities, what they will do to achieve their goals, and so on. There will be two winners. One will be determined by on-line election by PIT.Ua website visitors, while a second will be elected by the PIT.Ua Board. The prizes will be presented on 10 December 2010, International Human Rights Day.

Using ICT as a training tool

The PIT.Ua is using web technology to train greater numbers of young women. It organised web-Conferences on topics such as “How to influence your employer” and online seminars, for example on “Know your Rights!”, to inform young women about their rights at work and how to take action. ■



4• The WageIndicator websites

Information, information, information

Information is key to empowerment, and the dedicated WageIndicator websites set up by the local teams in each of the countries concerned provide the kind of information that young women need to help them make decisions in their lives. The web teams work in close cooperation with the trade union teams, which helps ensure the websites meet the needs of the campaign. This cooperation is mutually beneficial as they realise they are all part of the same group working towards a common goal.

One of the key tools on the website is the salary check where young women can verify whether they are being paid a fair wage for the job they do. The websites also contain a decent work check, information on how to improve their career, on work/life balance and, in some cases, on labour law, minimum wages as well as articles about the campaign, young women's rights, women's health, and interactive sections to allow young women to share their experiences. These websites are getting tens of thousands of visits a month. Users of the sites debate online and ask for legal advice via email.

Confidence building in Indonesia

The launch of the Gajimu.com website in Indonesia was an instant success. "We expected four or five journalists," reports Michel Maas, the site's organiser, from Jakarta. "But suddenly we had a room with 30 journalists, including internet, print and TV-stations." The presence of a few local celebrities might have helped. A successful launch for a national WageIndicator website is very important, since it needs a critical mass of visitors and completed surveys, before it can provide scientifically viable figures on wages and labour conditions in a country. This site informs women that they can have a career of their own, that they do not have to stop after the birth of children, that they have maternity rights, the right to a decent salary, and to a work/life balance. It also gives women tips on how to present themselves at a job interview, so that they can do so with confidence.

Siti – confidence got her a job

After reading stories on Gajimu.com, 24-year-old Siti felt inspired to look for a better job, instead of staying in her boring office job working 10-hour days and waiting to get married. She went for a vacancy in the hotel business, made a confident presentation and got the job. She was also given fixed working hours and overtime pay, things she had never had before.

India – articles for, by and about women workers

In addition to the usual salary check, decent work check and legislative information, the Indian website, Paycheck.in, includes many articles on women and work, including articles on work/life balance, women's health and first-hand accounts of women successfully pursuing their careers after marriage. A posting on the accompanying Twitter site gives an article about maternity benefits, while the campaign's Facebook account carries an article on more jobs for women in the public sector.

Changing the trade union's image



“With Decisions for Life we really have had to start from scratch. We had to think of the kind of information we would provide, how to map the targeted sectors, where to find them. In India you have to fight misconceptions about unions, overcome a negative image.

We trained young women from UNITES to work on the campaign, decided on a work plan and had the official campaign launch on 7 October 2009, the World Day for Decent Work. We prepared downloadable legislation on women's rights and made a little booklet for the campaign team in the field with an offline pilot survey, to find out what needed to be changed or improved. We greatly improved Paycheck.in, which resulted in a huge increase in web visits and data intake. All this was prompted by Decisions for Life.”

*Khushi Mehta,
Indian Institute of
Management, Ahmedabad.*

South Africa – the one-stop-shop

The web team in South Africa explains how their website, Mywage, can help young women, and how the feedback from users helps improve the site. “We aim to provide a one-stop-shop where young women can find the answers to their questions on maternity leave, what they should be earning, their rights in the workplace and lots more, all at the click of a mouse. We base a lot of our work on the feedback we get from users, as well as trade union feedback, so we have a good idea of what people want to know. And we aim to help them. We believe having access to this free, up-to-date and practical information, such as how to design a CV and find a satisfying job, is essential for young women, and can make a big difference to their working lives.”

Belarus – interactive

The WageIndicator website in Belarus, run by Mojazarplata, provides information for young women on salaries, career, rights, work/life balance, promotion options etc. to enable young women to make informed choices



about their work. It also contains blogs by two young women writing about their experiences after marriage. The website provides interactive tools and checks for a wide audience, with a questionnaire on wages, a tool to calculate your wage, a decent work check, information on bonuses, a partner check and an economic crisis test. An important part of the website is the online survey for visitors, providing comparable data within and across countries. Users can also send in questions. In one year, 122 questions were received on maternity protection, career, legal cases and how to live on a minimum wage. Mojazarplata is among the 30 most popular sites in the country. ■

Taisa Bandarenka, Web Manager for Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Ukraine - Mojazarplata.com

Stay connected

Follow Decisions for Life activities on:

<http://dfi.wageindicator.org/home>

<http://www.ituc-csi.org/decisions-for-life.html>

Join Decisions for Life on Facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=133311066703863>

Check out Decisions for Life photos on ITUC flickr:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ituc/collections/72157622932771134/>

Wage Indicator websites per country

- Angola: <http://www.meusalario.org/angola>
- Azerbaijan: <http://www.qazancim.az>
- Belarus: <http://mojazarplata.by>
- Botswana: <http://www.mywage.org/botswana>
- Brazil: <http://meusalario.uol.com.br>
- India: <http://www.womenpaycheck.in>
- Indonesia: <http://www.gajimu.com>
- Kazakhstan: <http://mojazarplata.kz>
- Malawi: <http://www.mywage.org/malawi>
- Mozambique: <http://www.meusalario.org/mocambique>
- South Africa: <http://www.mywage.co.za>
- Ukraine: <http://mojazarplata.com.ua>
- Zambia: <http://www.mywage.org/zambia>
- Zimbabwe: <http://www.mywage.org/zimbabwe>

Interested to get in touch with the teams directly?

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