

# Trade unions and the struggle for gender justice

**Intended outcome:**

Reflection on our organisational policies and practices in relation to creating a gender equitable trade union.

**INTRODUCTORY WORKSHOP EXERCISES**

## Exercise 1

### A birds eye view of your journey in the union

*In this exercise we have the opportunity to reflect on our journey in the trade union:*



💡 **Imagine that you are a bird** flying high up in the sky and you are able to view your life from high up in the sky.

💡 **Now imagine** you are looking at your life in the UNION.

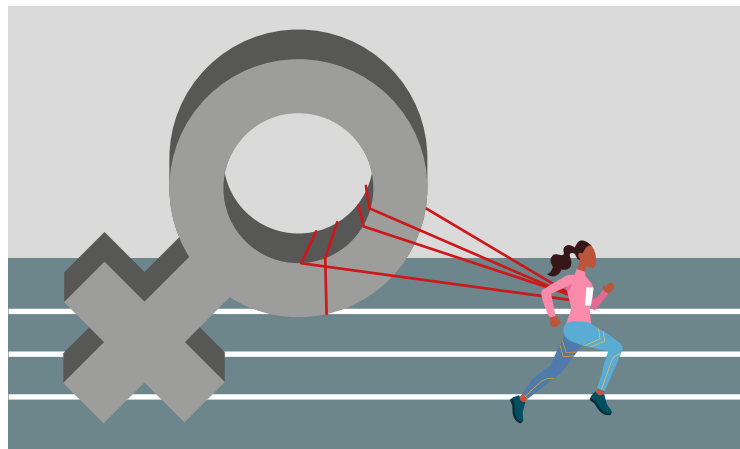
💡 **Close your eyes and remember** all the important moments you have spent in the unions - moments when you felt excited, inspired, nervous, sad, disappointed etc.

💡 **Choose one** of these moments to share with your fellow participants.

## Exercise 2

### Sharing our experiences as women in the trade union

*In this exercise we take an imaginary journey into the life of a woman leader in the trade unions struggling for gender justice. We identify what she is thinking, feeling and doing.*



The woman in this picture is running a race for gender equality in her trade union.

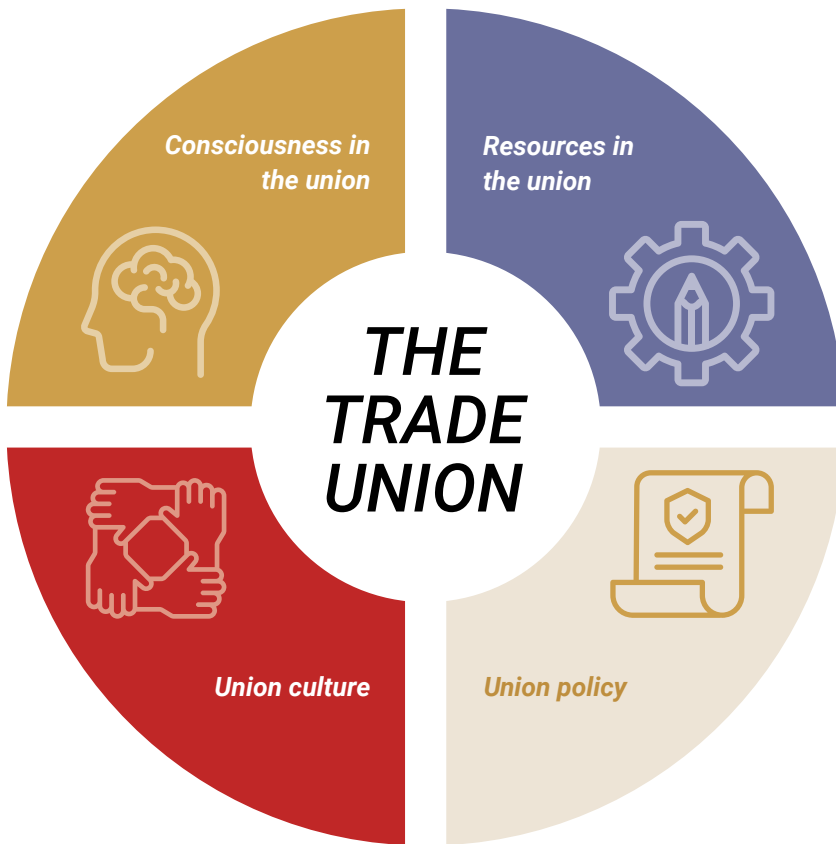
💡 **In groups in the breakout rooms** – give this woman worker leader a name. Imagine that she is telling you her story of struggling for gender justice in the union.

💡 **As a group construct her story** telling us what she is thinking, feeling and doing..


💡 **Prepare to share a 5 minute story** with the rest of the group in the plenary discussion.

## Exercise 3

## Examining the union using a gender lens



*In this exercise we reflect on the internal gender dynamics of our unions.*

 *In groups in breakout rooms* discuss the questions below and choose one person to report to the plenary.

**01**



### **Consciousness in the union**

**Find one word** to describe what men in your union think about gender equality

**Find one word** to describe what women in your union think about gender equality

**02**



### **Resources in the union**

**Identify** two resources for e.g. education courses that are specifically allocated to the empowerment of women in the union.

**03**



### **Union policy**

**Identify** any union policy focused specifically on gender equality and women's empowerment.

**04**



### **Union culture**

**Identify** one aspect of the union culture that promotes gender equality

**Identify** one aspect of the union culture that acts as challenge to furthering gender equality.

Quadrants adapted from Gender at Work framework <https://genderatwork.org/analytical-framework/>

## Exercise 4


### Our Union Gender Equality Barometer



**In this exercise we do an overall analysis of our progress in moving towards gender justice in our union.**

A barometer is a meteorological instrument that measures air pressure in the atmosphere and is primarily used to help determine current and future weather conditions.



**We will use the idea of a barometer to measure the current levels of gender equality in our unions.**





 **In the plenary discussion rate the level of gender equality in our unions** using a scale of 1 – 10 with one being the least visible and ten being a perfect score.

 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 



- Rate the **level of consciousness** in our unions

 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 


- Rate the **level of resource provision for women empowerment**

 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 

- Rate the **level of policy provision for gender equality**

 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 

- Rate **the level of the cultural gender sensitivity in the union**

 **Lets now work out the average across the different areas** and get our Gender Equality Reading (your total divided by 40 multiplied by 100)

## Exercise 5

### Strategies for promoting Gender Equality – The mainstreaming approach

***In this exercise we discuss our understanding of gender mainstreaming and debate its effectiveness.***

Read through the ITUC's description of Gender Mainstreaming below:


*Gender mainstreaming is an organisational strategy to achieve and maintain gender equality and women's empowerment. Achieving equality between men and women is not a 'woman's' concern, but is fundamental to the aims of all trade unionists. Dynamic measures that target women are required in order to redress existing discrimination and change attitudes and conditions in the unions and by the unions.*


*Women's committees/structures have challenged but not been entirely successful in changing the culture of unions, the way they work, the priorities they set, and the roles they play. Unions recognise that all of their members need to be fully involved in building equality. Instead of focusing on a need that women may have and isolating that need as a problem for women, we look at what role the whole organisation can play and the benefits to the whole organisation that will flow, from tackling that need together.*

*Mainstreaming helps all of the members to become aware that it is not just women who will benefit from change; more membership dues, more talent in organising new sectors or industries, more family friendly work and union practices are good for everyone.*

*Mainstreaming has sometimes been given as a reason for disbanding women's organisations. However, a clear, collective women's voice is needed to guide the process of reform, without it reform will lack a sense of direction. A women's committee may therefore have a useful role to play in guiding and assisting with the monitoring of a mainstreaming strategy.*

#### **ITUC Action Programme on Achieving Gender Equality in Trade Unions**

 **Set up a debate in the plenary group** with half of the participants in support of gender mainstreaming and half of the participants arguing against gender mainstreaming.

 **Everyone has five minutes to prepare their argument** for or against and everyone has an opportunity to share their opinion

This exercise will act as a reflection on what you have learnt from the mainstreaming discussion.

**Share your responses with the group**

