

Women Working Worldwide



PROMOTING WOMEN WORKERS' VOICES FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

Summer 2011



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Research

Productivity, garment workers' wages and working conditions

Special Report

Ugandan women workers in words and pictures

New Project

Building decent workplaces for women garment workers



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Women Working Worldwide



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Send us an email: contact@women-ww.org

Call us: +44(0)161 247 1760 or 247 6171

Write a letter: MMU Manton Building, Rosamond Street West, Manchester M15 6LL UK

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Who are we?

Women Working Worldwide was established in 1985 and works in partnership with grassroots organisations to assist and empower women workers in international supply chains to claim their rights, improve their working conditions, seek solutions to women's issues and be rewarded equitably for their work.

Although we have worked in different sectors, with different international partners, on different continents our core focus has always remained the same: to empower women workers to claim their rights as workers.

Our current team of staff and volunteers in the Manchester office are:

Rachel English (Project Coordinator)

June Hartley (Project Manager)

Marta Medusa (Development Worker)

Jo Smith (Finance and Admin Worker)

Bénédicte Brahic (Research Worker)

Sally Pinder (volunteer)

Ruth Craven (volunteer)

Who do we work with?

AMRF Society (Alternative Movement for Resources and Freedom Society) in Bangladesh brings together development professionals, activists, social scientists and experts to support and inform civil society organisations such as women's, agricultural and industrial workers, informal sector workers etc. to enable them fully to participate in public policy planning and claim redress of violation of rights. AMRF Society has several years' experience in conducting action-research, campaign and awareness raising work, organisational capacity building.

HWW (Homeworkers Worldwide) has worked for many years to make home based workers visible and recognised. It conducts networking, research and training with organisations in different countries as well as awareness raising and campaigning in the UK.

LECAWU (Lesotho Clothing and Allied Workers Union) has approximately 5,500 members and supports these workers in disputes with employers, collective bargaining and other trade union activities. As an affiliate of the ITGLWF (International Textile Garment and Leather Workers Federation) it has been involved in international advocacy activities in the past.

READ Foundation (Rural Education and Development) investigates homebased work in India (researching and identifying workers), organises workers into self help groups, links homebased workers to formal workers' organisations and ensures they are recognised by employers and that they can negotiate for improved working conditions.

RINDRA consists of women representatives from 8 unions in Madagascar. Its mandate is to support unions to address women's issues in the workplace and promote women's leadership.

SAVE (Social Awareness and Voluntary Education) carries out research, education and training on workers' issues particularly labour rights focusing on Tirupur, the major textile exporting district in Tamil Nadu, India. SAVE collaborates with trade unions and with other organisations both within and outside India on labour rights, particularly those in the unorganised sector.

Welcome Note



This newsletter marks a time of change at Women Working Worldwide as we launch a new project in the garment sector and reach the end of a current piece of work in the horticulture sector.

We are really pleased to see so much progress for workers in the horticulture sector. As we sit in our office in Manchester, our partners have been fighting long and hard battles with employers and industry organisations to get women organised and their rights properly awarded to them. They really are inspiring women. Their hard work has led to real improvements that will lead to material changes in the lives of women workers. Importantly we have also seen a voice given to women through our research, the creation of women leaders through the training, women increasingly taking responsible positions in unions and raising key issues from their vulnerability to sexual harassment and lack of access to maternity leave to the problems of getting home after a late shift and access to sanitary towels.

This work isn't enough – the wage paid to these workers is deplorable, women have not achieved parity with men in the workplace and issues such as sexual harassment remain a big problem. As the current funding draws to a close, Women Working Worldwide hopes to continue to support these workers in close collaboration with other organisations.

Lessons from the work in horticulture, combined with the long experience and expertise of our project staff and partners will be used to strengthen our new work in the garment sector. We look forward to supporting our partners who are engaged with workers experiencing extremely difficult working situations. Our greatest aspiration is that in three years time, we will see a women-led movement of workers fighting for, and winning better conditions in the countries where we are working.

Meanwhile, in addition to our project work, we continue to organise and participate in networking and advocacy activities in order to promote a gendered approach to labour rights, where women lead the campaign for their own rights. The international workshop in support of women workers (page 5) was a big job to organise but encouraging in that it provided an opportunity for a number of women around the world to share information, best practice and common strategies. Perhaps one of the best things about it was the power and feeling of solidarity of having so many strong women leaders from so many different countries in one room!

We are now entering into a new phase of strategic planning and the activities of the last six months have given us valuable ideas where our focus on women workers can be directed in order to create sustainable change for women workers. We are grateful to our partners and all the new women we have met in the past nine months for inspiring us in our continued work . . .

In Solidarity – Women Working Worldwide





Strategies for Women in East African Horticulture

End of Project Meeting Report

Our project 'Developing Strategies for Change in East African Horticulture' came to an end in March 2011. Whilst this may not be the end of work with horticulture workers (future funding efforts permitting), it is now time to evaluate the contribution that this work has made to the changing lives of women workers that have been involved in the project.

With this in mind, women leaders from our partner organisations from Uganda (the Uganda Workers Education Association), Tanzania (the Tanzanian Plantation and Agricultural Workers' Union) and Ethiopia (the National Federation of Farm, Plantation, Fishery and Agro-Industry Trade Unions) gathered in Uganda for the first stage of our end of project evaluation. Women workers and organisers also attended the meeting which took place in Kampala in November 2010. The meeting was facilitated by our Kenyan evaluators Atieno Ndomo and Eve Odete, and by Rachel English of Women Working Worldwide.



Training programmes have led to huge increases in the number of women joining unions

The details of progress made will be published in our end of project report and the findings of the evaluation. However our partners reported the following:

- Training programmes have led to huge increases in the number of women joining unions.
- In turn, gender-sensitive, sector-level collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) have been or are being negotiated in Tanzania and Uganda, and several CBAs have been negotiated at farm level in Ethiopia.
- This has led to significant improvement across several labour rights indicators including number of workers with permanent contracts, increased wages, terms of employment, health and safety, working hours and annual, sick and maternity leave.
- The number of women's committees and women leaders at branch level has also increased and as such issues such as maternity leave, sexual harassment and women's reproductive health are being more openly discussed on the farms.

Whilst the progress that has been made in these countries has far exceeded our expectations, there are still outstanding issues. These include:

- very low wages,
- lack of policies on gender and to combat sexual harassment
- a need for more women's committees to tackle outstanding reproductive health issues
- Some farms still not organized or covered by a CBA – until all farms are covered workers will not be satisfied

Over the next few months we hope to release all three partner research reports as well as an overview of the research findings. This will be followed by an end of project report. Advocacy work continues in the three partner countries and in the UK.

In Support of Women Workers

International Workshop Hosted in Manchester

October 2010

In October 2010, Women Working Worldwide brought together thirty organisations from Europe, South Asia, North America, East and Southern Africa and Central America working to support women workers in the formal and informal sectors to organise and improve their conditions at work. The objective was to share best practices in organising women workers, advocacy strategies to improve working conditions and accessing resources for our work. 34 of the 37 participants were women and many brought years of inspirational experience to share with us . . .

The diversity of participants added much to the richness of the discussions however it was certainly challenging bringing together such a cross section of people. Many of the organisations had different ways of working and it was necessary to set an agenda that identified common ground between us all: a common interest in the need to focus on women in our work; a common belief in the power of organising and shared concerns over the impact of our international advocacy and ongoing scarcity of funds. What follows below is a very brief summary of the workshop.

Over the three days of the conference we were extremely fortunate to hear from a huge range of speakers who presented their work, reflecting on key achievements and shared their views on challenges and priorities for the future. One of the most lively and enthusiastic debates was around better organising by women workers and tackling key issues affecting women workers, stimulated by inspirational presentations given by Sandra Ramos (MEC, Nicaragua), Maria Rhie (Working Women Academy, Korea), Vicky Cann (UK TUC) and Jane Tate (Homeworkers Worldwide).



The main area of common concern expressed during the meeting was regarding resources for our organisations over the next few years. Presentations by Ireen Dubel from HIVOS and Dave Spooner from WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment, Globalizing and Organizing) introduced key challenges, such as the reduction in government funds and the shift away from interest in labour rights and trade by the bigger NGOs. One of the main strategies discussed during this session was to work with AWID to see how their forthcoming conference can focus this debate on finding funding for work on gender and labour rights.

There was also a session around improving international advocacy strategies used to tackle a wide range of stakeholders using a wide range of different approaches. Some of the presentations led to very interesting debate, for example, the presentation by BWI on their work with Fifa to improve rights for workers in South Africa was inspiring for those working on other international sporting events. The work of CAW was inspiring for African women who expressed a need for similar regional women's organising in Africa.

One of our principal objectives had been to build stronger solidarity and relationships during the course of the workshop. Although a slightly intangible outcome, we know from feedback from the participants that many left with follow up tasks to support fellow participants. By being together and learning from each other, the workshop inspired a feeling of being united through common ground and affirmed a belief that we need to build both cross regional and cross sectoral networking, solidarity and information sharing.



For a full copy of the conference report please contact Women Working Worldwide.

Ugandan Women Workers in Words and Pictures



Van Zanten Flower Farm

Sarah Nanteza : Supervisor, Mandela Stadium

“My advice to fellow women is that we should aim higher and assert ourselves in case of any challenge”



Saida Bidi (left) : Director of Women's Affairs, National Union of Plantation and Agricultural Workers, NUPAW)

“In a nutshell hard work and interest propelled me to the top’

Joyce Tumwesigwa (right) : Deputy Director of Education, NUPAW

“I advise women to attend/participate in trade union education, it inspires”



In August 2010 Giuliano Matteucci, an Italian photographer, visited Uganda on behalf of Women Working Worldwide to take photographs of women workers in the horticultural industry and also women working in other areas such as trade unionists and politicians. Our partner in Uganda, Flavia Amoding of UWEA, accompanied him and recorded the thoughts and opinions of some of the women workers.

Here is a snapshot of some of the photographs and quotes from the women who Giuliano and Flavia met along the way.

You can view all the photos and testimonies on our website at www.women-ww.org

Xclusive Cuttings Flower Farm



Mother and baby clinic

Van Zanten Farm



Women in Maintenance Department: Van Zanten Farm

“We do the same work as men”

Christine Amoït : Greenhouse Supervisor, Ugarose Flowers

“Before the union came to our farm we used to work without offs, no leave and no PPEs. When we joined the union we started getting offs - at least one day off every week. Then also PPEs were provided at least to the sprayers”

Building Decent Workplaces for Women Garment Workers

Women Working Worldwide are pleased to announce the start of a new three year project focusing on improving the workplace for women garment workers.

Starting in March 2011, the project focuses on work in four countries, namely Madagascar, Lesotho, India and Bangladesh and is jointly funded through the Responsible and Accountable Garment Sector Challenge Fund (RAGS) and Comic Relief.

The project will contribute towards building decent workplaces by ensuring sustainable improvement in working conditions for women workers in the formal garment sector in Lesotho and Madagascar and for home/informal workers in India. We expect that 10,000 workers across 20 factories in Lesotho and Madagascar and 2,000 workers in India will directly benefit from improvements in wage, hourly earnings, working hours and overtime, access to social protection, access to maternity rights, improved women's leadership and reduced incidence in child labour. We will be working with Homeworkers Worldwide and a number of partners on a local level to deliver the work including RINDRA, Lesotho Clothing and Allies Workers Union (LECAWU), Alternative Movement for Resources and Freedom Society (AMRF), Rural Education and Development Foundation (READ), Social Awareness and Voluntary Education Foundation (SAVE).

What will we be doing?

Around 200 trainers (majority female) across Lesotho, Madagascar and India will be trained on national labour laws and ILO core conventions and skills building around freedom of association and collective bargaining; organising workers and negotiating legally binding improvements (CBA). A proportion will be trained on leadership, women and networking, gender and organising women. The trainers will educate a minimum of 5,000 workers in Lesotho and Madagascar together and 1,650 workers in India.

In southern India we will undertake research with home and informal workers to show conditions and key concerns of workers, identify priorities for building decent work places and the impact of codes of conduct. A manual for tracing home workers in supply chains will assist local organisations to continue to locate home workers after the project's duration.

In Bangladesh we will be carrying out research with workers across five factory sites and establish a network of women workers' from these factories. Workshops will be organised with stakeholders such as owner associations, labour rights NGOs, companies, social audit firms, buyers' forum, workers representatives and government ministries.

We will hold training programmes aimed at building partners' awareness of the purpose and operations of Ethical Trade Initiative (ETI), training on technical issues that impact progress towards the decent work agenda, such as productivity programmes, the living wage campaigns and social auditing.



In the UK we will be carrying out advocacy activities targeting key companies to ensure that they are aware of and acting on workers' own priorities for building decent workplaces.

Throughout the duration of the project we will be sharing key research findings and holding regular international project meetings, partner exchange visits and visits to work sites.

What do we hope to achieve?

- Over 5,000 workers (majority women) are aware of their labour rights and technical issues impacting the decent work agenda.
- Trained workers join unions or self help groups and negotiate for improved working conditions. Women's increased unionization and representation in trade union leadership roles will ensure the incorporation of gender clauses in collective bargaining.
- In India, informal workers are recognised as workers and gain access to social protection through the Manual Workers Welfare Board.
- Industrial stakeholders including employers and UK retailers are made aware of workers' priorities and the impact of retailers' productivity programmes on wages and other decent work areas.
- The capacity of workers' organisations to engage with UK and global retailers sitting on ETI is strengthened.
- Lobbying activities targeted at UK and global brands and retailers sitting on ETI bring about changes in company practices and effective responses to workers' demands.
- Workers, partner organisations and other civil society organisations working with garment workers will benefit from sharing information across supply chains, best practice in supporting workers, and strength through mutual support, solidarity and joint advocacy actions.



Look out for regular updates on this project in future newsletters and on our website at

<http://www.women-ww.org/index.php/programmes/garment-project>

Fair Globalisation that Works for All



BETTER WORK

This year Women Working Worldwide's work is connecting with the ILO Better Work Programme. This article introduces the programme and how our work complements this strategy for change.

Better Work is a unique partnership programme between the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) which seeks to improve labour standards compliance in global supply chains, both to protect workers' rights and to help enterprises become more competitive. The programme focuses on building co-operation between governments, employers' and workers' organisations and international buyers.

The programme believes that improving compliance with labour standards in global supply chains is an important part of a pro-poor development strategy. The protection of workers' rights and entitlements helps distribute the benefits of trade to promote human, social and economic development. Compliance with labour standards can also help enterprises be more competitive through factors such as access to new markets and buyers and new sources of financing and credit, and can contribute to high productivity and quality.

In December 2010 the first Better Work Programme in Africa was launched. Better Work Lesotho will focus on the garment industry and provide assessment, advisory and training services to participating factories. The goal of the programme is to have industry-wide implementation in the country, where garment factories employ approximately 40,000 workers, mainly women, and account for about 80% of Lesotho's manufacturing sector jobs.

Earlier in the year Women Working Worldwide had also started a process engaging possible partners in Lesotho with the aim of exploring priority areas for support. In response to the activities

initiated by the Better Work Programme, June Hartley from Women Working Worldwide attended the launch of the Lesotho programme. The need to focus on addressing women and in the process strengthening their union organisation was affirmed in the discussions shared. Our partners are part of the Better Work Programme and are excited by the possibilities ahead.

A full report on the programme in Lesotho will be in our next newsletter.



For more information about the Better Work Programme visit <http://www.betterwork.org>



Win Win Win?

Productivity, Garment Workers' Wages and Working Conditions

One response by brands and retailers to the calls for garment workers to be paid a living wage has been to implement productivity projects, the idea being that increased wages can be paid for through savings made by productivity gains.

Whilst brands and retailers are claiming wins for buyers, suppliers and workers, there is concern by labour rights organisations that these projects do not lead to a living wage and that they could in fact lead to negative impacts on workers.

In response to these concerns, last year Women Working Worldwide, Labour Behind the Label and Central American Women's Network commissioned a piece of research by **Liz Parker** on the development and impact of productivity initiatives on wages and working conditions. This article provides an overview of her key findings.

Activities to increase productivity and efficiency in a factory take many forms and many examples of different practices can be cited. It might involve changing the way in which the workplace is organised: one common change is to move away from having workers carrying out the same task in lines to putting workers into teams to produce a whole garment. It might be about improving communication systems or the way in which a product moves within a factory. Data collection is a key element of many productivity activities that can support better production planning. It could involve changing the way in which workers are incentivised through pay and bonuses, or the targets that workers are set. It might be an overhaul of the management system for a factory. Some activities are about improving worker productivity, others are aimed at improving efficiencies or quality.

"Lean", a system developed by Toyota, has been used by sportswear brands such as Nike and Adidas for the last 10 years or so, is a whole philosophy of ensuring continuous improvement or elimination of waste. There is no single definition of what this means in practice and it is implemented differently by different brands. However, it is associated with just in time production, product based production systems and 'empowering' workers to identify and solve problems in the supply chain.

Motivations behind productivity projects can be broadly grouped into three key areas: i) ethical trade ii) business gains and iii) international development. These motiva-



tions may overlap and may utilise the same tools to bring about changes. The remainder of this document focuses on the first motivation, which is driving productivity projects by UK brands and retailers. Motivated by the pressure they are under to pay living wages, UK brands are implementing projects aimed at increasing wages and reducing working hours whilst increasing productivity. Countries in which productivity projects are taking place include Bangladesh, India and China. Companies include Asda-George, Marks and Spencer, New Look and Next, often carried out in collaboration with consultants and donors.

Impact on Workers

It is not possible to talk in general terms about the impact of productivity programmes on workers as productivity gains are made in numerous different ways and therefore it is difficult to identify causal links. There is no evidence to suggest that productivity projects or Lean are necessarily good or bad for workers, or that they are a panacea for poor working conditions. There is little rigorous or conclusive data to prove the impact either way and it is impossible to isolate the factors that may cause negative or positive impacts. This is acknowledged by some brands, retailers and donors engaging in projects.

Companies, consultancies, donors and international organisations publish reports to show that workers have positively benefited from productivity projects through increased wages and reduced working hours. Sometimes the data shows wages have increased by high percentages. This is of course to be welcomed, but within the following context:

- Increasing wages by a high percentage can still be an appallingly low wage and there is no evidence that productivity / Lean programmes can or will lead to a living wage, as opposed to increases in wages.



Photo: Project Literacy's Ikhwelo Skills Training Programme, Limpopo, South Africa

- Wage data is very unclear making it impossible to compare to trends in wages with industry in the area.
- To prove a causal link between different aspects of the productivity activities and increases in wages, information is needed to show that improvements are not the result of other factors such as wage increases across the country or from workers moving up pay scales.
- It is unclear whether productivity gains are proportionately shared with workers - projects could include agreements between buyers and suppliers, and support for worker organisations to negotiate wages to allow any savings from productivity to be diverted to workers' wages rather than lower prices.
- No data has so far been published by brands or retailers about the impact of productivity programmes on freedom of association which would allow workers to form trade unions to negotiate collective agreements on wages and working conditions. Collective bargaining would have a long term impact on wages.
- There is no data publicly available about how productivity activities are affecting employment status (e.g. permanent or casual) which directly affects the wage package of workers or about the effect on the position of workers.
- What productivity activities mean for women workers is currently unknown (with no evidence that data being collected by brands and retailers is being disaggregated for women and men or migrant and national workers) but is likely to have a bigger impact on them than on their male counterparts.

Different productivity activities present potential dangers for workers: targets are often set too high leading to overtime, low wages, stress, fear and a lack of breaks. More

work may be expected for less and health and safety may be compromised as workers are required to take on multiple roles. Workers that have been moved from line production systems to team based cells responsible for creating whole products report that work is increasingly stressful. They are expected to be aware of what is holding up production and to find the solutions. As targets are set for the whole team, workers report that workers effectively take on the role of supervisors and put each other under pressure to work harder.

From a rights based perspective, changes to business processes that may impact on wages and working conditions should be measured by their effectiveness in delivering positive outcomes for workers, and in mitigating negative outcomes. Employers must ensure that where they exist, trade unions are fully consulted with regard to any changes in the workplace. The focus of activities should be on:

- Payment of a living wage to workers for a normal working week
- Provision of safe and hygienic working environments
- Entering into stable, formal employment relationships with workers
- Respect for workers' right to freedom of association and collective bargaining
- Ensuring that women have the same opportunities as men

How this is done is a matter for brands / retailers to decide, along with worker representatives. To what extent labour rights organisations should engage with this debate, is still open to debate. That said, there are ongoing projects looking at productivity improvements and their impacts on wages and working conditions and it is important to ensure that workers benefit as fully as possible and negative impacts are mitigated. It is important that sweeping conclusions about the efficacy of such approaches are not made and caution must be exercised in assumptions that productivity projects will lead to the payment of living wage.

Should any organisation implement productivity improvements, projects need to take a rights based approach and adequate and relevant data needs to be generated to truly assess impacts on women's rights, wages and working conditions. Information about projects should be made publicly available to allow for greatest learning and sharing of best practice. This would prevent misleading claims being made and ensure key stakeholders can meaningfully engage in debates about these kinds of projects.

In addition, further research is needed that identifies the means to improve employment relations, including freedom of association and human resource management systems that will bring about decent work. Other areas for further research are the potential pitfalls and key challenges in implementing 'Lean' or other productivity improvements that are known to impact negatively on women's and workers' rights, and the identification of practices and tools that can be used to overcome these challenges.

“We Are Not Alone”

The Clean Clothes Campaign International Forum

Turkey, November 2010

In November 2010 Women Working Worldwide joined more than 200 participants from 51 countries at the Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC) International Forum in Turkey. This provided a valuable opportunity to stay connected with developments within the garment sector labour movement, discuss issues around organising, campaigning, productivity and workers' rights and connect with our colleagues internationally.

The forum activities were organised through a number of workshops, offering choices for participants. The workshops were all valuable in their own way and a gender working group ensured gender remained a central thread through many of the discussions. We facilitated two workshops with the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation (ITGLWF) on organising and the situation in the textile and garment sectors for workers in the Sub-Saharan Africa. These were attended mainly by colleagues from Cambodia and Turkey. The organising workshop was an eye opener as we shared experiences demonstrating tremendous courage and determination by women in both countries.

Not only did they speak of challenges but also success stories where women are beginning to make inroads and winning some rights. In Turkey it was also of great interest that women in their homes were organising and engaging the city/local authorities on their civil rights with some success.



CCC International forum 2010 - Workshop fun

(image: Clean Clothes Campaign)

We also organised a briefing with participants from Asia and Africa to explore future possibilities for collaborative work with Women Working Worldwide.

All in all the International Forum was very important, generating a lot of information as well as energy. More important was the sense that we are not alone in our fight for improving conditions for workers around the world.

For more information, see the December 2010 issue of Threads, the CCC's newsletter, which you can access here:

www.cleanclothes.org/resources/ccc/newsletter

Case Study: Defending the Rights of Strawberry Picking Women Workers in Morocco

In Morocco labour conditions in agriculture are generally very difficult and work is seasonal, informal and temporary. In the region of Larache in the north of Morocco around 80% of strawberry pickers are women. Thousands of women living in the fields of Larache work as pickers in the farms or in the conditioning and freezing facilities. Since 2008 Oxfam's Economic Justice Program in Morocco, in collaboration with the civil society, the Moroccan Government, farm owners and the waged working women themselves, has created various projects that contribute to the enhancement of working conditions of these women.

From an original idea coming from these women, Oxfam has supported the creation of an Association of strawberry picking women in Morocco. The Al Karama (“Dignity”) Association has as its main objective the defence of the labour rights of these women. The main aims of the Association are learning and acquiring experience on empowerment, leadership, women's rights and labour issues which, at a second stage will enable them to disseminate this knowledge to other women working in agriculture. The



Association exchanges experiences with similar associations. The women that form the Association work directly in various projects of Oxfam's Economic Justice Program, for example, the Association is an active member of the Unit for the Defence of Socioeconomic Rights in Agriculture, composed of development associations, women's and human rights' associations and unions.

These women also work as labour rights' promoters through the mobilisation of other working women and encouraging them and the male members of their families to be present when the awareness raising caravan goes to the field near their homes. The women of the Association also work in the Caravan informing other working women of their labour rights as well as on the administrative procedures to claim them (see photo). They also participate with the Observatory, which was created to record information on labour rights violations and to accompany and support women in the claim of their working rights. The Association works now as a formal group and expects to be legally formed next year.