

IUF contribution

CFS: Women's Empowerment in the context of Food Security and Nutrition - Case Studies

Maternity rights are food rights:

Breastfeeding is a right protected under maternity rights. Maternity rights are the food rights for the children. Day care facility is an enabling right to ensure right to food defined in CFS's Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition (GSF) *"adopt and implement maternity and paternity protection legislation and related measures that allow women and men to perform their care-giving role and therefore provide for the nutritional needs of their children and protect their own health, whilst protecting their employment security."* Day care facilities enable children to access their right to food.

In tea plantations in West Bengal, where women form more than 60% of the workforce, IUF affiliated independent union Progressive Plantation workers' Union secured maternity rights through collective bargaining for all workers including mobile crèche facility. Mobile crèche facilities in the plantation enabled workers to be in close proximity of their children to provide for their nutritional needs by breastfeeding.

At the Coco-Cola and Unilever factories in Pakistan, the unions negotiated onsite day care facilities in safe environment including potable water. The union took the position that infant feeding is a part of right to food.

Agriculture women workers' access to land rights

Women in rural communities when widowed were denied access to land and they had to work as seasonal workers on other people's land and therefore couldn't access land. The campaign for land rights by IUF affiliated Gujarat Agriculture Labour Union got half acre of land for 50 widowed women workers Limkheda block of Dahod district in Gujarat. The union gave them education to grow organic food crops such as miaze and ayurvedic medicinal crops along with 750 grams of seeds. The union continued training on crop cultivation and the income from the land increased by 30% compared to when men in the family were cultivating that land. The women farmers set example that when women are given access to resources they could increase yield on their farms.

Food workers' access to living wage rights through collective bargaining

According to article 7 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights the remuneration of workers should provide a *"decent living for themselves and their families"*

Another example of ensuring food security through living wage by collective bargaining is of home based workers in India. In Gujarat, India the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) successfully organised beedi workers and negotiated 15% increase in wage through collective bargaining for more than 15,000 home based women workers employed as beedi (cigarette). In Rajasthan, India SEWA negotiated an initial 78% wage increase for women beedi workers to bring it up to living wage and progressively raising wages each year through collective bargaining.

Food workers' access to right to food security and nutrition through permanent jobs

Right to collectively bargain wage ensure that wages rise in real terms to keep pace with rising food prices. When wages are decided unilaterally the workers do not have certainty of progressive increase in real wage. Secure jobs provide stable income which guarantees continuous access to food for workers and their families. So that workers and their families are certain of their collective bargaining rights.

At food processing plant of Unilever in Indonesia, for the first time the union had collectively bargained permanent work for more than 600 workers to ensure access to food, health, education for themselves and their children. 126 women within that group for the first time had permanent work which gave them certainty to provide food for their families.

According to Article 11 (c) of the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women *"the right to free choice of profession and employment, the right to promotion, job security and all benefits and conditions of service and the right to receive vocational training and retraining, including apprenticeships, advanced vocational training and recurrent training"*

At Coco-Cola plant in Pakistan, the union intervened to ensure gender based hiring in permanent jobs. Women had precarious jobs with unstable income and weren't given the same jobs as men. For the first time women workers were given training and they now operate forklifts at Coca-Cola plant in Pakistan. The union negotiated the hiring of more women and placement in all job positions without discrimination.

For example - A 24 year old woman forklift operator who supports 6 family members including her parents and siblings now has the certainty of income to ensure continuous access to food for her and her family. This illustrates that living wage can be insured through collective bargaining.

Women agricultural workers and the right to freedom of association

Respect of basic worker' rights of agricultural workers' is set out in the fundamental ILO conventions, especially the right to bargain collectively ILO convention 98 and freedom of association Convention 87.

Women agriculture workers in seven rural districts in Sindh Province in Pakistan exercised their right to freedom of association and collective bargaining, IUF affiliated Sindh Haryani Union is the first union of women agricultural workers in Pakistan with 1000 members. The union is promoting maternity rights and access to potable water on farms and in rural community through education and awareness programs.

Women workers' empowerment through addressing persistent barriers

Literacy centre was established by the union for women workers working at biscuit factories in Multan, Pakistan to provide basic education to read wage slip to stop wage theft by the employers. 50 women were giving training to read and write numbers, to do basic calculations and to read and write Urdu. Once the women workers knew how to calculate and read their wage slip, they were aware that the employers were cheating them by *** deductions in their wages. They organised and secured full wages which enabled them to access nutritional food. This is one example of breaking down barriers to empowering women to better access food security and nutrition.