



Report on

## Regional Training on Gender-Based Violence (ILC GBV) Convention and SDGs as Organising Tools to Unionise Women: A Step toward Ending Gender-Based Violence at the Workplace in South Asia

23-24 March 2023

Colombo, Sri Lanka

### Background:

Since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action for Equality, Development and Peace (BDPfA) at the fourth world conference on women in 1995, equality for men and women in the world of work has been encouragingly improving and achieving new milestones.<sup>1</sup> However, International Labour Organization (ILO) adopted the first Conventions on women and work in 1919 – more than a century ago.<sup>2</sup> Since the inception of the trade union movement, women have played a significant role in many countries around the globe. Women were never embraced as an integral part of the various social and trade union movements however, the current world of work is breaking all the traditional boundaries and norms and stepping new stones for gender equality and the participation of females in the world of work has been encouraging all the female restrain within the four walls of the buildings. In this changing time, women's participation in the economy is increasing whereas gender-based violence especially, in the workplace is a concern of trade unions.

The rays of hope for violence and the harassment-free world of work has been evolved since the adoption of the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work and the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) and its accompanying Recommendation (No. 206) in 2019.<sup>3</sup> The ILO has adopted the first international standards for eliminating violence and harassment in the world of work, including gender-based violence in International Labour Conference (ILC) 2019 - the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) and its accompanying Recommendation (No. 206). These instruments provide a clear plan for preventing and addressing violence and harassment in the workplace, also, these are considered the key elements for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Convention recognises the right of everyone to a workplace free from violence and harassment.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ILO. 2019. *ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work*. ILC.

[https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed\\_norm/@relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms\\_711674.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_norm/@relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_711674.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> ILO. 2019. *A quantum leap for gender equality: For a better future of work for all*. Geneva.

[https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_674831.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_674831.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> ILO. 2019. *ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work*. ILC; C190 - Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190); ILO. 2021. *Empowering Women at Work: Government Laws and Policies for Gender Equality*. Geneva.

<sup>4</sup> ILO, 2020. *ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190): 12 ways it can support the COVID-19 response and recovery*. Geneva; ILO. 2019. C190 – Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190). Article 1: Definitions.



Most of the female workforce is engaged either in unpaid family businesses or home-based work. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exposed the reality of gender inequality, exacerbating pre-existing gaps and posing a serious threat to the achievement of the SDGs, in particular, SDG-5 on gender equality and women's economic empowerment, and SDG-8 on decent work. In 2020, 41 per cent of employed women or 527 million females, worked in sectors that were highly vulnerable to significant job losses and reductions in working hours due to the COVID-19 pandemic, compared to 35 per cent of men.<sup>5</sup>

Violence and harassment particularly affect women workers in the most vulnerable work situations who have poor access to labour rights such as freedom of association, collective bargaining, decent work and access to justice. Violence and harassment are not limited to the workplace physically but it has been expanded to the digital world as well.<sup>6</sup> Despite women's vulnerability to violence, discrimination and harassment, their participation in trade unions is relatively low because social, religious and cultural impediments as well as a male-dominant culture of union leadership prevent women from joining the unions. Trade unions being instrumental in positive changes can play an effective role in organising women and making them trade union members as well as violence and harassment-free workplace. They can raise awareness, negotiate workplace policies and launch campaigns. Collective bargaining would be a key tool to tackle violence at work. Therefore, the role of trade unions is realised as highly significant to organise and empower women workers in the workplace.

With the above background, In collaboration with ILO-ACTRAV, Mondiaal FNV, and South Asian Gender Platform (SAGP), the South Asian Regional Trade Union Council (SARTUC) successfully conducted two days of regional training with the title - *Regional Training on Gender-Based Violence (ILC GBV) Convention and SDGs as Organising Tools to Unionise Women: A Step toward Ending Gender-Based Violence at the Workplace in South Asia* with the SARTUC and its affiliates (Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan), on 23-24 March 2023 in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

### Objectives:

- To sensitise the SARTUC affiliates trade union women leaders to use ILC GBV Convention and SDGs as organising tools to increase the unionisation of women in the world of work.
- To capacitate the organising skills of the committee members to encourage more women's participation in the unions.

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<sup>5</sup> ILO. 2020. "The COVID-19 response: Getting gender equality right for a better future for women at work". *Policy Brief*. May. Conditions of Work and Equality Department: Geneva; UN Women/UN. 2020. *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals - the Gender Snapshot 2020*. New York: USA.

<sup>6</sup> ILO, 2019. *A quantum leap for gender equality: For a better future of work for all*. Geneva.



- To identify and develop strategies based on ILC GBV Convention to prevent gender-based violence in the workplace.
- To form a SARTUC women's committee to increase women's participation in leadership and raise their voices to end the violence and harassment in the workplace.
- Draft an action plan for the SARTUC Women Committee.

## DAY - ONE

### Opening and Welcome Address

#### Address by Mr Soya Yoshida, General Secretary, ITUC-AP

The training started with an opening and welcome address by **Mr. Shoya Yoshida**, General Secretary of ITUC-AP, congratulated SARTUC and its affiliates for organising youth and women programmes along with the general conference, and he welcomed all the youth and women participants of the SARTUC programme. The ITUC-AP has always been committed to promoting and protecting the rights of workers and in particular, the rights of youth and women who face numerous challenges in the world of work. We recognize that empowering these groups is essential to achieving social justice and building a more inclusive society. The youth and women programme conducted by SARTUC is a remarkable initiative that has helped to strengthen the voices and leadership of young and female trade union leaders. He requested all trade union leaders to take part in similar programmes and to continue working towards achieving decent work for all and eliminating violence and harassment in the world of work. Finally, he expressed the ITUC-AP remains committed to supporting initiatives that promote gender equality, youth empowerment, and decent work for all.

#### Address by Mr. Harbhajan Singh Sidhu, the President, SARTUC

**Mr. Harbhajan Singh Sidhu**, President, SARTUC, and General Secretary, HMS, in his address, welcomed all the youth and women participants. He emphasized the need to promote second-line leadership in unions and appreciated SARTUC's initiative in organizing the Youth and Women program. He hoped the youth and women programmes would decide the future course of action to protect workers' rights. Further, he criticized governments in the region for supporting big corporate houses and highlighted the violation of workers' rights, thus youth and women leaders have to work innovatively on these issues.

#### Address by Mr Laxman Basnet, General Secretary of SARTUC

**Mr Laxman Basnet**, General Secretary of SARTUC, who welcomed all the participants of women's training as well as participants of the youth's regional consultation and highlighted the objectives of the programmes along with the importance of the regional gathering in promoting gender equality, ending gender-based violence in the workplace, promoting decent work and youth engagement in the trade union. He also emphasised the need for more youth and women's participation in leadership roles in trade unions, thus, they have to take responsibility to step forward the regional cooperation of trade unions and workers. The constitutional process for the women's and youth committee is the committee's election and adoption of ToR. He further shared, this is the first time SARTUC is initiating the two committees - women's and youth's committees where SARTUC will provide ToR to participants and they will make their own constitution.



### **Address by Mr Ahok Singh, Vice president, SARTUC/INTUC**

**Mr Ahok Singh**, Vice president, SARTUC/INTUC, welcomed all the participants in the programme. He highlighted the importance of youth and women in the trade union movement, especially in the case of South Asia where the number of youth population is high. He expressed the suffering of most marginalized and vulnerable groups like women and youth during the COVID-19 pandemic. He believed that the youth and women programme organised by SARTUC is a positive step towards empowering young and female trade union leaders. This initiative reflects SARTUC's belief that youth and women's empowerment is essential to promote a fair and equal society.

### **Address by Ms. Champa Verma, Deputy General Secretary and Chair, Women's Committee, SARTUC**

**Ms. Champa Verma**, Deputy General Secretary and Chair, Women's Committee, SARTUC, welcomed and thanked all the participants attending the women and youth programmes. She expressed that women and youth make up a significant proportion of the workforce, and their contributions to the labour movement are invaluable, thus, the gathering is an excellent opportunity for us to learn from one another, share experiences, and strategize on ways to strengthen the labour movement. SARTUC provides opportunities for women and youth to strengthen the trade union movement and promote gender equality. She highlighted the involvement of female workers in the informal sectors is around 90 per cent so gender equality along with unity shall be promoted and recommended to connect OSH and C190 to protect women, mostly in the informal sector. Also, she appreciated the SARTUC for the formation of women's committee in 2017 when she got elected as chair.

### **Address by Ms Simrin Singh, ILO, Country Director Sri Lanka and Maldives**

**Ms Simrin Singh**, Director, Country Office, ILO Sri Lanka and the Maldives, welcomed all the participants on behalf of ILO to a beautiful island. She thanked SARTUC and General Secretary for inviting her and ILO to such an important event. She expressed that Youth, women, and migrant workers are facing more difficulties in the world of work despite being key stakeholders. She applauded SARTUC's planning for youth and women's programmes and assured the availability of ILO support for the trade union movement. They constitute a significant portion of the workforce and yet continue to face numerous challenges that hinder their full participation and contribution. Therefore, it is essential to empower and equip them with the necessary skills, knowledge, and resources to overcome these challenges and realize their full potential. SARTUC is planning to make a second line of leadership and equip youth and women with knowledge of the trade union movement.

### **Address by Mr Prabhu Rajendran, Regional Consultant, Mondiaal FNV**

**Mr. Prabhu Rajendran** thanked SARTUC for the opportunity to share his views with women and youth leaders from South Asia. He highlighted the importance of the youth and women programmes in trade unions to make leadership a strong and secure future. Young workers need to organise more youth workers into the trade union and shall have discussed topics like climate change, just transition, and stronger representation. Also, he requested leaders to provide spaces



for young and women workers in the unions at the leadership so that they can prove the true sense. He ensured the partnership with the SARTUC and trade unions in South Asia.

### **Address by Mr. Syed Sultan Uddin AHMMED, Senior Specialist in Workers Activities, ILO-ACTRAV**

Mr. Sultan Ahmmmed thanked SARTUC and welcomed all the participants in the programme. He shared his experience of joining the trade union movement in his youth age. He said youth is composed both of males and females so, there shall not be confusion on the meaning of youth. The trade union movement is a continuous process and one has to hand over his/her torch to another for the continuation, it never stops. So the young leaders have the responsibility to carry a torch and move ahead. The preparation of youth is two-way - the elder generations have to prepare the youth and the youths also need to prepare themselves. Now, young people have to come forward to strengthen SARTUC and move ahead. Technology, climate change, and demography are shifting the future of work. We are working in a world where workers don't know who is their employers. Connecting ourselves is a challenge in this technological world.

### **Introduction of Participation**

**Ms. Anna Tuvera**, Director of Gender Equality Activities, ITUC-AP, conducted an interactive exercise for the introduction of participants – Paper Facebook, where participants made their pictorial and descriptive representation through drawing and writing on paper and pasted it onto their chests to introduce to others. After the interaction, the participants were told to explain the feature of one person and said to guess that person by other participants. The Paper Facebook helped the participants to know each other and also helped in networking.

### **Session on “Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment”**

**Ms. Vraie Balthazaar**, a Gender Expert

The first session was on “Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment”. **Ms. Vraie Balthazaar**, a Gender expert from Sri Lanka, conducted the session in an interactive way based on her presentation - Gender Stereotyping and Sexual & Gender-Based which covered the concept and understanding of ‘Sex’ and ‘Gender’ and highlighted how they are different and constructed differently. The session also explored into the importance of gender equality and women’s empowerment in promoting social and economic development. She fostered an environment where participants were able to share their experiences and views on gender and sex. Additionally, she shared her experiences from the research work she conducted in Sri Lanka where women have faced violence at the workplace however, the women themselves were not aware of the violence – lack of toilets and drinking water at the workplace. The presentation covered a wide range of topics, including Sex vs Gender, Social norms and Gender roles, the traits of masculinity and feminism, fitting into gender stereotypes, and Gender-based violence. She emphasized that reducing violence against women requires male engagement, sensitivity, awareness, and bystander intervention. Finally, she urged not to promote unhealthy gender norms as parents, professionals, and adults.



## Session on “ITUC-AP Platform of Action for Gender Equality (PAGE): Key learnings and takeaways for SARTUC”

### **Ms. Anna Tuvera, Director, Gender Equality Activities, ITUC-AP**

The session on *ITUC-AP Platform of Action for Gender Equality (PAGE): Key learnings and takeaways for SARTUC* was conducted by **Ms. Anna Tuvera**, Director, Gender Equality Activities, ITUC-AP. She made the session lively and interactive and created an environment to share the opinions and views of participants as well. The ITUC-AP Platform of Action for Gender Equality (PAGE) is a comprehensive framework designed to promote gender equality and empower women workers in the Asia-Pacific region. During a session, she discussed the key learnings and takeaways from the PAGE initiative for the South Asian Regional Trade Union Council (SARTUC). She emphasized that the ITUC-AP has committed to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment through its Platform of Action for Gender Equality (PAGE). Progress has been made in improving women's representation and leadership in unions, incorporating gender equality principles into collective bargaining agreements and workplace policies, and securing legal precedents on gender equality and non-discrimination. However, critical gender gaps persist, such as low labour force participation rates, high rates of vulnerable employment, and a gender pay gap of 20 per cent in the region. The ITUC-AP's continued work on gender equality will focus on four priority areas: building an inclusive trade union movement, building women's leadership, removing barriers to women's economic empowerment, and addressing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. She highlighted the need to address intersecting forms of discrimination, such as those based on race, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation, and to engage all in efforts to promote gender equality. The challenges ahead include protecting progress made against backlash and accelerating progress towards women's rights and agenda. Overall, she stressed the importance of prioritizing gender equality within the trade union movement and working collaboratively to create more inclusive and equitable societies for all workers.

Participants shared their experiences regarding gender equality, gender violence and C190 in the context of their learning within their trade unions. They expressed the plan to push domestic workers on awareness of C190. Also, they will push the government to ratify C190. Where **Ms. Nishi Kapahi** from South Asia Gender Platform expressed that if the ratification happens the problem will begin from then onward, ratification doesn't solve all the problems. After the ratification, new laws and rules shall be made, and governments taking a long time for the ratification will take longer to make new laws. Implementation is another problem that will take a longer time. Furthermore, **Ms. Champa Verma** from SARTUC expressed that trade union importance shall be provided to the grassroots level to include more youth and women in a trade union.

## Session on “ILO Convention 190 – C190”

### **Ms. Anna Tuvera, Director, Gender Equality Activities, ITUC-AP**

**Ms. Anna** made the session interactive on gender-based violence. The session covered the C190 as a ground-breaking instrument for women workers and C190 drives efforts to eliminate GBV in law and practice. Whenever there is a gender issue, it has been always the talk of gender-based violence. She made the session more interactive through different questions comprising the ILO



conventions, their ratification process, and C190. There are a lot of gender-based violence apart from sexual harassment. Gender-based violence is very prevalent in the workplace, thus, it is important for all unions to raise the issue of ratification of C190 - it shall be a key demand for trade union women leaders. The convention is the first instrument to cover violence and harassment in the world of work. Fiji is the only one in the Asia-Pacific to ratify C190. At least 2 countries need to ratify the instrument so that it can enter into force. Uruguay and Fiji ratified this convention at first and after one year that came into force. She has highlighted the differences between conventions and recommendations - A Convention establishes fundamental principles that must be executed by countries that ratify it, whereas a corresponding Recommendation complements the Convention by offering more elaborate instructions on how to put it into practice. She expressed the entire process from the formation of the convention to ratifying the conventions and their implementations at the national level. The convention covers all kinds of workers who are vulnerable and marginalized workers, thus, it's very much crucial. Trade unions can do dialogues through collective bargaining at the enterprise level and organize the workers. She expressed that the connection between OSH and gender-based violence is safety issues of workers, now the OSH has become Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (FPRW) in 2022. Even though the states have not ratified the core conventions, they have to implement them.

### Questions for the group discussion

- 1) How your unions are helping the elimination of gender-based violence in the world of work? (List down 3 points of your act as Government has yet to ratify the convention)
- 2) How the unions are helping women who experienced domestic violence?

### Pakistan

1. We are working within the organisation, created a full tripartite committee on C190 and other stakeholders and they are reviewing and analysing the existing laws and policies. This is an important process to avoid the duplication of laws at the national level.

### India (SEWA)

1. We have an act, "Prevention of Sexual Harassment at the Workplace in 2013". Initially, there was no provision for domestic workers but after the efforts from SEWA, the act included domestic workers as well.
2. We have an act, "Protection of Women from Domestic Violence 2005". So every district has a protection officer. Unions do aware to women about the act and the process.

### Bangladesh

1. Awareness programmes, high court verdict 2009, anti-harassment committee
2. Unions go to the home of victims and persuade a lawbreaker from a family person if no agreement then supports the victim to enter into the legal system.

### Nepal

1. Organising for youth and women, awareness programmes, and lobbying the government to ratify C190.



SARTUC  
Sri Lanka



1. Support domestic workers and migrant workers. Plantation sector staff (union) visit to field and ask about the issues of OSH and violence - then try to solve it.

## Session on “Trade Unions in Transformation: Youth and Women for Change”

**Mr. Syed Sultan Uddin AHMMED, Senior Specialist in Workers Activities, ILO-ACTRAV**

The expert discussed the challenges and opportunities in the changing world of work, with a focus on South Asia stating that there are no political forums existing in this world, except the UN, but all are business forums. He highlighted globalisation, technological change, demographic change, and climate change as the key causes of change. In an interactive session, he kept questions to groups – participants discussed the challenges faced by workers and trade unions in their respective countries - Nepali participant explained other civil societies or organisation are challenged to trade union that provides heavy allowances to their programmes and discourage workers to be a member of trade unions. Political parties politicised the issues of workers which is also a challenge to the trade union, and informalisation of the market and domestic workers are also going to be another challenge to workers in Nepal. Indian participants expressed privation as a challenge to Indian workers. Political instability is a challenge in Pakistan. Digitalisation, automation and OSH are a challenge in Bangladesh, mostly for women workers. The economic crisis and targets given to the pluckers in tea plantations are a challenge to workers in Sri Lanka. India - change in labour laws, Informal sector and decreasing number of members in trade unions. He has also talked about the cooperation framework - a written partnership agreement between the UN and the government that sets the plan for the implementation of Agenda 2030 in a country. The speaker emphasised the importance of Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) and urged trade unions to use it as a bargaining tool as the OSH became as ILO Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (FPRW). He also discussed the role of women and youth as actors and suggested creating a cooperation framework between the UN and the government. He has provided the example of Rana Plaza collapsed to the situation of OSH in South Asia. Finally, he recommended making strategic steps to turn challenges into opportunities. Overall, the session aimed to identify the challenging issues in South Asia for trade unions and find universal tools to resolve them.

In between the session **Mr Prabhu Rajendran**, Regional Consultant, Mondiaal FNV discussed **Climate change in South Asia and Climate Migrants:**

He addressed the concerns of youth and women leaders in trade unions and emphasised the importance of collective efforts to strengthen the trade union movement. He drew attention to the alarming effects of climate change in South Asia, including floods, rising sea levels, and water scarcity, which are affecting workers. He stressed the need for a transition in the labour market that prioritises workers' welfare and highlighted the crucial role that trade unions can play in this process. To achieve a just transition that does not harm workers, he proposed the 4 R's - Recognise, Responsible, Respond, and Respect. He urged union leaders and workers to change their behaviour and adopt a proactive approach to tackle these challenges. Furthermore, he emphasised the importance of youth engagement in the transition process. He concluded by showing a video that explains the concept of just transition and how unions can demand social justice and work together for decent work on a healthy planet.



## DAY TWO

The day started with quick recap as “connecting stories” by **Ms Anna Tuvera**, and demonstrated by **Mr. S. M. Fahimuddin Pasha**. Ms. Anna expressed that the world of work has been defined more broadly in C190 and is not limited to the workplace. Participants shared their learning on the world of work, C190, FPRW, OSH and gender equality from the previous day.

### Session on “LGBTIQ+ Community: Equal Opportunity”

**Ms Bhoomi Harendran**, a sexual and reproductive health and rights advocate and activist

Ms. Bhoomi Harendran is an award-winning actress in Asia and Sri Lanka who identifies as transgender, making her the first of her kind to receive a SAARC award. She emphasizes the importance of understanding the differences within the LGBTIQ+ community and has led interactive sessions and discussions on sexuality and gender. She explains that when a person is born, they have both a physical and mental body, and it is the mental body that determines their gender identity. For some individuals, their physical and mental bodies may not align, and they are referred to as transgender. She clarifies the differences between transsexual and transgender and addresses intersexuality, where a person may have two distinct physical bodies or genitals that do not fit typical male/female categories. Additionally, she discusses sexual orientation and attraction, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer identities, and stresses that discrimination and violation should not occur in the workplace. She advocates for change within society and plans to establish a union for transgender individuals known as the National Union for Transgender (NUFT), the first of its kind in Asia for sexual minorities. At last, she replied to the questions from the floor. The questions were raised by Dur e Shawar Siraj, Neha Singh, Anna Tuvera, and Sushila Ghimire. **Mr Pasha** thanked the expert for her interesting and interactive presentation and highlighted the importance of equal opportunity and non-discrimination to the transgender community. **Ms Champa Verma**, Deputy General Secretary, and women’s committee chair, SARTUC thanked the expert for her wonderful presentation. She promised to include the transgender voice in ITUC, ITUC-AP, and SARTUC and put effort to include people from the LGBTIQ community in the trade unions trade union movement. To make a strong trade union movement, we have to include the LGBTIQ community in the movement.

### Session on “Mental health and Wellness: dealing with anxiety and stress”

**Ms. Nishi Kapahi**, Coordinator, South Asia Gender Platform

The session was conducted by **Ms. Nishi Kapahi**, Coordinator, South Asia Gender Platform, on “**Mental Health and Wellness: Dealing with Anxiety and Stress.**” She started the session with a discussion with participants and explored their views on mental health. She expressed mental health includes emotional, psychological and social well-being and if a person is not mentally fit s/he is said to be mad – stigmatisation of mental health. Also, most of the time, it has very few or no physical symptoms however, it impacts physical health, relationships, finances and emotional well-being. She defines stress can as any type of change that causes physical, emotional, or psychological strain. Stress is the body's response to anything that requires attention or action. Stress happens because of external reasons but anxiety happens within - persistent feelings of unease, fear, or apprehension about a perceived threat or uncertainty. The participants have shared their experiences of mental health during and post COVID-19. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted mental health worldwide, leading to a surge in psychiatric illnesses. Violence against women, harassment, and cases of domestic violence increased during the time of



COVID-19. Moreover, children and adolescents faced mental health problems. Harassment and bullying at work are commonly reported problems and can substantially harm mental health. Burnout is a situation where you get a lot of pressure from work and the workplace environment and you don't get an exact solution. A negative working environment may lead to physical and mental health problems, thus, workplaces that promote mental health and support people with mental disorders are more likely to reduce absenteeism, increase productivity and benefit from associated economic gains.

### **The rise of the new 21st-century unionism and activism** (visioning exercise)

**Ms. Anna Tuvera, Director, Gender Equality Activities, ITUC-AP**

#### **Imagine the ideal stage for SARTUC in 4 years (Anna)**

The participants were divided into 4 country-wise teams (Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka) however, a single participant from Pakistan joined the Indian group (easy for communication among group members).

Anna requested all the groups to create a magazine by using anything they want from the hall with creativity to represent the future of the work and the role of women in the world of work in South Asia. The covers of magazines were developed by the participants.

#### **Women's - Anna**

##### **Magazine cover activities (Photo)**

It was a very interactive session and participants shared their experiences on the discussion topics raised by the moderator.

##### **Gallery Walk**

**Bangladesh team:** "*Together we can make a change*". She represented the challenges and dreams through the magazine cover.

The team mentioned:

Dreaming of the changes

The world with love

A world without gender discrimination - empowered women and equality.

A world without harassment and violence.

The world with mentally and physically healthy

Self-care and helping hand.

We will be able to change for the future - solidarity for women.



**Magazine cover (Bangladesh Team)**

### India, Pakistan, and Nepal Team

Very colourful, and visionary.

Promote diversity - different communities, women, women with disability, Transgender, and everyone are joining the movement.

Glasses for vision.

Given the voice through pen (tool).

Strong hands represent the ratification of C190

The inclusion of women in trade union movements, its committees, and boards - increase women's membership at least by 20 per cent.

Organising informal women workers, home-based workers, and care economics.

Decent work and social security for all.

Importance of digitalisation to women.

Climate change and migrant workers.

Violence-free world and democracy.

Focus on core convention.



**Magazine cover (India, Pakistan, and Nepal Team)**



## Sri Lanka Team

Power of Sri Lankan Women

Sirimavo Bandaranaike - the first woman prime minister of the world - inspires other women to be in a leadership positions.

The leadership of women - 50/50 members in parliament.

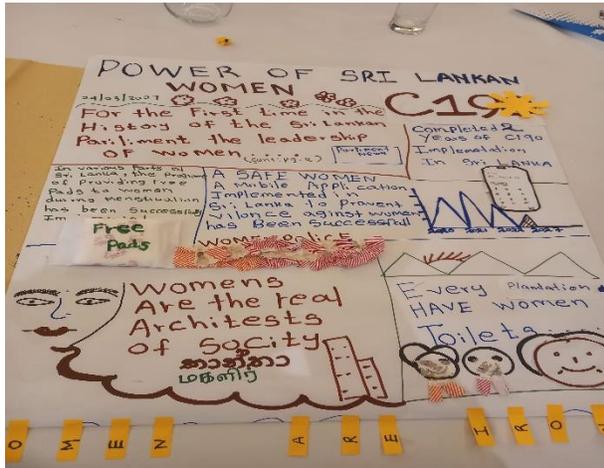
Ratification of C190.

Free pads for all women as many school girls faced problems during the economic crisis.

Violence-free world.

A Safe Women - a mobile App, a helpful app to eliminate violence against women.

Availability of toilets in all the plantation sectors.



Magazine cover (Sri Lanka Team)

## Discussion on the Establishment of the SARTUC's Committees (Women and Youth Committees)

**Mr Laxman Basnet**, General Secretary, SARTUC, expressed the importance of women and youth committees for SARTUC, and further he explained the frequent efforts of SARTUC to empower the women and youth trade union leaders through training, orientations, workshops, and consultations.

**Mr S. M. Fahimuddin Pasha**, Senior Officer, Workers' Rights, ITUC-AP, said the formation of the SARTUC Women's Committee is an internal matter of SARTUC so the delegates from ITUC-AP (himself and Ms Anna Lee Fos-Tuvera, Director, Gender Equality Activities, ITUC-AP) would not intervene in the process. They are in the meeting to support, assist and guide SARTUC. He further clarified it's all SARTUC and its affiliates' decision to form and elect the committee members. Additionally, he expressed that due to some technical reason and realisation of the need for some more time to formulate the committees, SARTUC is unable to formulate the Women's Committee and youth committee from this gathering. Maybe after 5 or 6 months, SARTUC will have another meeting to formulate these two committees, also SARTUC will decide on Chair for both – the women's and youth committees. He requested SARTUC to circulate the ToR on women's and youth committees to all its affiliates, and they will provide suggestions or changes for the incorporation. The updated ToR will be discussed in the executive board meeting. ToR



mentioned that Women's Committee shall be composed of six (6) members, one from each SARTUC affiliate but after discussion with Brother Laxman, General Secretary, he agreed to have 2 persons from each country for both – youth and women committees. For the youth committee, the gender balance is important – one male and one female from each country. Moreover, he mentioned the need to elaborate on the role of the chair. SARTUC affiliates realised more time to discuss among affiliates in the country – who shall be the 2 members of committees. All affiliates shall sit together and nominate the members from the country.

**Ms. Champa Verma**, deputy General Secretary, SARTUC, expressed that she was elected as a Chair of the Women's Committee meeting that was held in Kathmandu, Nepal in 2017 and it was proposed the members recommend one name from each member country to nominate as the committee member. However, the name of Nepal has not been announced yet, they said they will send the name after the official agreement among the member affiliates. The committee was unable to have a meeting because it didn't receive the member's name on time. Then, we were unable to conduct any meetings due to the unpredicted emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is the first time since the meeting happened after the Kathmandu meeting in 2017. She explained, having only 6 members in the women's committee is not justified where the SARTUC has 19 affiliates, thus she proposed the committee with 19 members, comprising one member from each affiliate. Additionally, she proposed the physical meeting shall happen half-yearly if not at least once a year. According to her, the meeting will provide a platform to discuss gender issues with women trade union leaders from SARTUC affiliates across South Asia where the Women's committee could ask for financial support from ILO, ITUC-AP, or any other friendly organisations.

**Mr. Laxman Basnet**, General Secretary, SARTUC, expressed the meeting of SARTUC's Executive Board in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 30 September 2015 decided to establish a women's committee at the SARTUC. He further highlighted Article 1: (ii) of ToR expresses the Women's Committee shall be composed of six (6) members, one from each SARTUC affiliate, nominated by and representing SARTUC affiliated organizations. Based on the decision, SARTUC held a Women's Committee meeting on 13 September 2017 in Kathmandu, Nepal where Ms. Champa Verma from HMS was elected as a chair of the ad hoc committee and proposed the members recommend one name from each member country to nominate as the committee members. But, the committee has never organized a meeting thereafter. This is the first time we have gathered for the women's committee meeting since the meeting happened after the Kathmandu meeting in 2017. It is difficult to find the financial resources thus, he thought, doing a half-yearly physical meeting for the women's committee is not possible now for SARTUC.

Thus, he proposed to all the SARTUC women trade union leaders that the Women's Committee shall have twelve (12) members, 2 from each affiliated country, but different SARTUC affiliate unions, and among them, they shall elect the chair of the SARTUC's women's committee. Each affiliate country shall nominate 2 members for the Women's Committee.



## Decisions

- SARTUC will send the ToR of the women's committee and youth committee to all its affiliates and ask for their suggestions and comments on it.
- Then the General Secretary will take the issues to the Executive Board meeting to discuss on the establishment of the women and youth committee.
- Committees – youth and women - shall be composed of twelve (12) members and each country shall nominate two (2) members with internal discussion among them at the country level.
- The youth committee shall be composed of a gender balance – one male and one female from each country and less than 31 years of age.
- Women's committee shall be responsible to find out the financial resources to conduct meetings or any other programme on women.
- The constitution process or election for the women's committee and youth committee shall be done as per the decisions from the Executive Board meeting.
- The constitution process or election for the women's committee and youth committee shall be done after six months.

## Closing Remarks

### Mr. Ariel B CASTRO, Senior Specialist in Workers' activities-Desk Officer for Asia and Pacific

Mr. Ariel B Castro thanked SARTUC and South Asian trade union leaders for the opportunity to express his views with youth and women leaders from South Asia and he congratulated all elected members of SARTUC. He added, with the election of new leaders the new chapter of SARTUC has begun. He has given some information about ACTRAV to youth and women participants. The organisation will work on sustainable development and trade union development in the region. Decent work for the platform economy is been an emerging issue in which SARTUC youth and women will play a vital role in promoting decent work. Approval of the Singapore statement in APRM is a new milestone and looks for the improvement of the workers' condition. Global social justice coalition - as part of the Director-General's campaign at the election - is a plan to establish a Global Coalition for Social Justice, the goal is to gather the tripartite constituents of the ILO, multilateral organizations, and other interested parties together. The ACTRAV is going to set a new programme and budget which will have great implications for SARTUC's activities as well. He is expecting strong, independent, and democratic trade unions in the region, and influential in the policy and development in their respective countries. He expressed, the recent study by ILO shows an increase in members of youth males and females in trade unions. He suggested participants go through and good use the study materials produced by ACTRAV. There are so many restrictions and challenges to the trade union movement and workers' rights in South Asia and the rise of the undemocratic government, so he suggested new ideas shall come from youth and women to cut out these challenges. The capacity building programme by ACTRAV increases awareness and expects to come up with new innovative ideas and strategies from youth and women. Further, he ensured to be with trade unions and available to support trade unions.



**Ms. Nishi Kapahi, Coordinator, South Asia Gender Platform**

Ms. Nishi Kapahi thanked SARTUC for organising the programmes for youth and women. She Appreciated **Ms Anna Tavera** and **Mr. S. M. Fahimuddin Pasha (ITUC-AP)** for making the programmes a success and handover the token of love to them. Additionally, she had handover a token of love to **Mr. Ch Saad Muhammad (PWF)**. She thanked the SARTUC secretariat and the hotel as well as hotel staff for providing the space and entire support throughout the programmes.

**Address by Mr Laxman Basnet, General Secretary of SARTUC**

Mr. Basnet thanked all the participants for their active participation throughout the programmes. Now the constitutional process is on the way, we have received a lot. Within six months we will go for the formation of committees. We have so many helping hands and friends whom we can request to support our programmes.



## Annex-I Participants Detail

S.no.	Name	Organisation/ Designation
1	Ms. Simrin Singh	Country Office, ILO Sri Lanka and Maldives, Director
2	Mr. Shoya Yoshida	ITUC-AP, General Secretary
3	Mr. Syed Sultan Uddin AHMMED	ILO-ACTRAV, Senior Specialist in Workers Activities
4	Ms. Anna Tuvera	ITUC-AP, Director, Gender Equality Activities
5	Mr. S. M. Fahimuddin Pasha	ITUC-AP, Senior Officer, Workers' Rights
6	Mr. Manorajan Pegu	Solidarity Centre, Country Program Director
7	Mr. Prabhu Rajendran	Mondiaal FNV, Regional Consultant
8	Ms. Nishi Kapahi	South Asia Gender Platform, Coordinator
9	Mr. Harbhajan Singh Sidhu	Hind Mazdoor Sabha, General Secretary
10	Mr. Ashok Singh	INTUC, Senior National Vice President
11	Ms. Iffatara Shely	Bangladesh Free Trade Union Congress (BFTUC)
12	Ms. Nasrin Akter Dina	Bangladesh Jatyatabadi Sramik Dal (BJSD)
13	Ms. Salina Begum	Bangladesh Labour Federation (BLF)
14	Ms. Mousumi Nishat Shimul	Bangladesh Mukta Sramik Federation (BMSF)
15	Ms. Shelena Chowdary	Bangladesh Sanjukta Sramik Federation (BSSF)
16	Ms. Tawseen Rahman Meem	Jatio Sramik League (JSL)
17	Ms. Neha Singh	Hind Mazdoor Sabha(HMS)
18	Ms. D.C.S Mounika	Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC)
19	Ms. Moumita Chakrabarty	Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)
20	Ms. Sangita Baniya	All Nepal Federation of Trade Unions (ANTUF)
21	Ms. Maya Devi Bhandari	General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (GEFONT)
22	Ms. Shushila Ghimire	Nepal Trade Union Congress (NTUC)
23	Ms. Dur e Shavar Siraj	Pakistan Workers' Federation (PWF)
24		Ceylon Workers' Congress (CWC)
25		
26	Ms. Dhammika Kumari	National Trade Union Federation (NTUF)
27	Ms. Sumitra Damayanthi	
28	Ms. Inoka Nishanthi	Sri Lanka Nidahas Sevaka Sangamaya (SLNSS)
29	Ms. Shamali Fernando	
30	Ms. W.W. Sachithra Jayasiri	
31	Ms. Hithdetige Sageewani Nilanthi	
32	Ms. Champa Verma	SARTUC Women committee Chair/HMS, Women Secretary
33	Mr. Laxman Basnet	SARTUC
34	Mr. Indra Deo Yadav	
35	Mr. Kishor Bikram Shah	

## ANNEX-II Programme Agenda

Day 1: 23 <sup>rd</sup> March 2023 (Thursday)		
9:00 – 9:30	Registration	
9:30 – 10:30	<p><b>Opening</b> <i>(Jointly with the participants of the women's programme)</i></p> <p>Opening and welcome address: <b>Mr Laxman Basnet</b>, General Secretary, SARTUC</p> <p>Address by <b>Mr Soya Yoshida, General Secretary, ITUC-AP</b></p> <p>Address by <b>Mr. Harbhajan Singh Sidhu</b>, the President, SARTUC</p> <p>Address by <b>Mr Ahok Singh, Vice President, SARTUC/INTUC</b></p> <p>Address by <b>Ms. Champa Verma</b>, Deputy General Secretary and Chair, Women's Committee, SARTUC</p> <p>Address by <b>Ms Simrin Singh</b>, ILO, Country Director Sri Lanka and Maldives</p> <p>Address by <b>Mr Prabhu Rajendran</b>, Regional Consultant, Mondiaal FNV</p> <p>Address by <b>Mr. Syed Sultan Uddin AHMMED</b>, Senior Specialist in Workers Activities, ILO-ACTRAV</p>	
10:30 – 10:45	Introduction of Participants	<b>Ms Anna Tuvera</b> , ITUC-AP
10:45- 11:00 <b>Tea/Coffee Break</b>		
11:00 – 12:15	<p><b>Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment</b> <i>(Jointly with the participants of the women's programme)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concept and understanding of 'Sex' and 'Gender'.</li> <li>• Women in the changing world of work: Issues, trends, and challenges</li> </ul>	<b>Ms. Vraie Balthazaar</b> , a Gender Expert
12:15 – 13:00	ITUC-AP Platform of Action for Gender Equality (PAGE): key learnings and takeaways for SARTUC	<b>Ms. Anna Tuvera</b> , ITUC-AP
13:00 -14:00 <b>Lunch Break</b>		
14:00 – 15:15	<p><b>ILO Convention 190</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What makes C190 a ground-breaking instrument for women</li> <li>• How does C190 drive efforts to eliminate GBV in law and practice: Examples of good practices and lessons</li> </ul>	<b>Ms. Anna Tuvera</b> , ITUC-AP
15:15 – 15:50	Group work and report back	<b>Ms. Anna Tuvera</b> , ITUC-AP
15:50 – 16:00 <b>Tea/Coffee Break</b>		
16:00 – 16:45	Trade Unions in Transformation: Youth and Women for Change <i>(Jointly with the participants of the youths' programme)</i>	<b>Mr. Syed Sultan Uddin AHMMED</b> , Senior Specialist in Workers Activities, ILO-ACTRAV
16:45 -17:00	Reflections and learning from Day 1	



**End of Day 1**

**Day 2: 24<sup>th</sup> March 2023 (Friday)**

9:00– 9:30	Registration	
9:30 – 10:30	LGBT Community and equal opportunity <i>(Jointly with the participants of the women's programme)</i>	<b>Ms Bhoomi Harendran</b> , a sexual and reproductive health and rights advocate and activist
10:30 – 10:45	<b>Tea/Coffee Break</b>	
10:45 – 11:15	Mental health and Wellness: dealing with anxiety and stress <i>(Session for women's programme)</i>	<b>Ms. Nishi Kapahi</b> , Coordinator, South Asia Gender Platform
11:15 – 12:15	<b>The rise of the new 21<sup>st</sup> century unionism and activism</b> (visioning exercise) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preventing GBV at the workplace</li> <li>• Organising women workers to protect worker's rights</li> <li>• Advocacy and campaigning for the rights and interests of women</li> </ul>	<b>Ms. Anna Tuvera</b> , ITUC-AP
12:15 – 13:00	<b>Country reports</b> about the union activities and policies on Women and GBV <i>(Creative presentation by the participant: Participants shall prepare this in advance focusing on key accomplishments/changes made)</i>	
13:00 – 14:00	<b>Lunch</b>	
14:00 - 14:30	a review of the draft <b>Women's Charter of SARTUC</b>	
14:30 - 15:00	Formation of a <b>SARTUC Women's Committee</b>	
15:00 - 16:00	<b>Plan of action for the next 4 years</b> to SARTUC Women's Committee (Priority Areas)	
16:00 – 16:30	Presentation	
16:30 – 16:45	Closing remarks by <b>Mr. Ariel B CASTRO</b> , Senior Specialist in Workers' activities-Desk Officer for Asia and Pacific	
16:54 – 17:00	Closing remarks and Vote of thanks by <b>Mr. Laxman Basnet</b> , General Secretary, SARTUC	
<b>End of the training</b>		

Annex – III  
Photos



**Group photo with youth and women participants**



**Ms Simrin Singh, ILO, in her opening address**



**Address by Mr. Syed Sultan Uddin AHMMED**



Address by Ms. Champa Verma, Deputy General Secretary and Chair, Women's Committee, SARTUC



Ms. Vraie Balthazaar in her session



Ms. Bhoomi Harendran in her session



Magazine cover Photos prepared by Women's participants



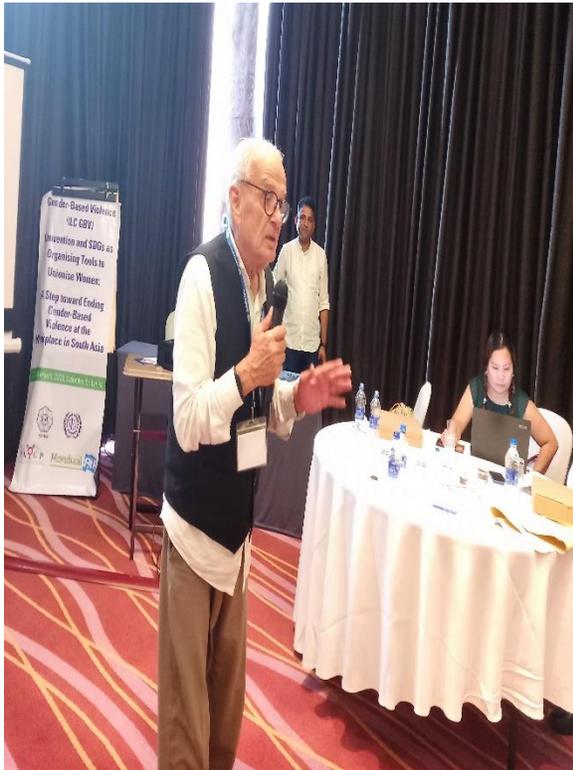
Participants listening to the speaker



Group discussion going on



All the Participants in opening session



Mr Laxman Basnet, General Secretary's closing remarks



Mr. Ariel B. Castro, provided his closing remarks through Zoom