

Feminism and trade unions:

strategies and mechanisms to promote women workers' participation in trade unions



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1.

Introduction

The form of organization of the working class to attain and sustain their labour rights and the conditions in which they organize and do their work is not exempt from general social determinations about gender. Socially-constructed inequalities take on their own characteristics in the corporate form of class organization: trade unions.

The relationship that women and people with other sex-gender identities have with trade unions obeys the ways in which the sexual division of labour operates on the social plane and this relationship changes and is modified as the division progresses and changes. Nonetheless, it is common to find different discourses that argue that women encounter great resistance to their participation and action in trade union structures. These discourses are based on observable differences that provide concrete data on gender parity in decision-making in trade union leadership.

This study set out to reflect on the obstacles that women trade union leaders and activists face in trade union participation and, at the same time, systematize the strategies that they have gradually constructed to eliminate, or at least mitigate, those obstacles.¹

For this, twenty-two in-depth interviews were conducted with over forty leaders and activists.² One of the key elements in the selection of the interviewees was the broad variety of sectors and activities, workplaces and level of participation within the trade union structure. Thus, activists from grassroots organizations and centralized structures were included, from public and private trade unions, from industry, services and farming.

¹ This report will be the object of debate in workshops and talks with the women workers who participated in the interviews, to take place in the second half of 2021.

² The Annex of this report lists in full the trade union associations that were part of this study.

Different experiences were surveyed in the interviews, which were held with women from:

- Various sectors of the labour market: passenger transport (short and medium distance bus drivers, metro drivers, railway management personnel and highway administration workers), the edible oil, baking and printed press industries, energy professionals, telecommunications professionals, civil and sports organizations workers, elementary, middle school and university teachers, judiciary workers, audiovisual media, public administration, shipyards, shops, private homes and the agricultural sector.
- Different organizational levels: federations and unions, grassroots unions, internal commissions and delegations.
- Organizations with different territorial scope: national, in the City of Buenos Aires and in the provinces of Buenos Aires, Misiones, Neuquén, Río Negro and Santa Fe.
- Various organizational union spaces: general management, secretariats, committees, international councils, delegates and activists.

All those interviewed were cis women,³ aged 30-60, with or without care responsibilities for others. Most work in the formal sector of the labour market and live in urban areas, with the exception of agricultural workers.

The interviews were semi-structured, as there was a great deal to be gained from letting the interviewees speak as broadly and as freely as possible. Some of the questions of the guide included:

- What formal or informal strategies have you used to promote the participation of women in trade union activity?
- Are there other strategies within the current debates to be implemented in the short/medium term?
- What obstacles do you encounter when considering trade union participation by women and persons of the LGTBIQ+ collective?
- How is the trade union organization made up in terms of men and women?

The practices that emerged do not constitute complete information but are the experiences that the interviewees shared in response to open questions. While the interviews did not look into oppression related to ableism, ethnicity, sexual inclination or identity, neither did these issues arise in the conversations.

Some of the main conclusions refer firstly and as a main conditioning factor to the impact of the double working day; and secondly the symbolic violence present among interviewees' own male union colleagues. The strategies developed in this report are formed based on this characterisation.

Although this was a first approach to the issue, it constitutes a solid starting point to structure future actions that tend on the one hand to specify obstacles and strategies, and on the other hand to socialize what is constituted among other collectives of workers who face these same obstacles.

The report begins with a chapter that looks at some theoretical considerations that seek to present and order some of the main concepts and how they are related to the obstacles mentioned in the interviews. The second chapter presents the main conditioning factors of the labour market for trade union participation. The third chapter looks at strategies that came out of the interviews, focusing on experiences considered relevant. In the fourth chapter we present some conclusions and final reflections.

³ Cis persons are those whose gender identity is aligned with their assigned birth gender.

2.

Structural obstacles to the participation of women in trade union organizations

The capitalist system organizes society into social classes, one of which can only sell their labour in exchange for wages to make a living. But the system also organizes the way in which workers live their lives before, during and after selling that labour. The capitalist system uses another system that precedes it for its design—the patriarchy—taking the useful parts and discarding anything that implies a cost for the accumulation of earnings. This connection is especially clear if we consider the sexual division of labour.

The sexual division of labour establishes a separation between productive work and reproductive work. The former is assigned to the public sphere (the workplace) and the latter to the private sphere (the home.) In both cases a binary cis hetero sexist gender bias operates on those who form a nuclear family as a form of social organization, imposing material and subjective determinants on the labour market and on homes. Essentializing subjects, that is, imprinting on them personal characteristics by the sole fact of having a given genitality at birth, is also functional to forming and reproducing inequalities within the class.

In this structure, men are allocated the productive role, with greater privileges to access given jobs and

decision-making spaces, and they are expected to play the role of “provider” for their family. Meanwhile, women occupy the reproductive role, they are taught to be docile, understanding, loving, etc., to take on the care role in the home, prioritising access to posts and activities that replicate this role (teachers, nurses, social workers, secretaries, etc.) Women have fewer opportunities/variety of training and jobs, with lower monthly wages, in more precarious jobs, and are in worse conditions to attain or be promoted to a post, even if they have the same (or better) education than a man.

Reproductive/care time is increasingly scarce due to the extension of the working day of many jobs and because one or more jobs are needed to cover basic needs. This is done in worse conditions as a result of wage cuts, the advance of unemployment, the precariousness of work and informal employment (the obligation of employees to register as independent contractors, the “gig economy,” etc.) Both situations generate and worsen the crisis of reproductive and care time.

Salaried workers have the burden of a “double working day” as a result of the extended working day doing childcare/housework, which means more fatigue for

their bodies and a limitation on the possibilities of doing other activities. This overwork is key in preventing their activism and participation in trade unions, a situation that does not apply to men. It is partly because of this that trade union spaces become more masculinised spaces (assemblies, leadership, delegate bodies, etc.) which also makes it difficult to consider trade union demands in gender terms.

Some problems with the above analysis, widespread in gender studies, is to take for granted the existence of a nuclear family, ignoring single-mother home and other family and care networks, and invisibilizing other more complex oppressions outside of this model. Universalizing cis men and women as homogenous social groups conceals the existence of other gender identities such as transvestites, trans, intersex and non-binary, and the simultaneity of other forms of oppression such as social class, ethnicity, ableism and sexual inclination.

The universalization of the "ideal" experience of cis men and women generates absolutist analyses which should be questioned. Not all men have the same chances to earn sufficient wages to support a family, and not all women always have the worst jobs. In both cases, social extraction can be the determining factor in access. Another fallacy is to state that women are always paid less than men for the same work, as the existence of a collective agreement imposes that equality, at least, in the formal sector. However, it is true that women with the same education find it harder to get promoted in the workplace, even in more feminized activities.

If we look at other forms of oppression, at the risk of falling into an additive, excluding analysis, we see that studies into intersectionality or feminism of colour show other complexities. For example, poor, racialized women historically entered the labour market by taking on outsourced childcare work in high-income homes or in other low-wage activities, just as men with the same determining factors entered the most precarious, physically demanding and badly paid jobs. When looking into other realities, 80% of trans people, for example, in the City of Buenos Aires, have never had a formal job and 70% have never had a job interview.⁴

In light of these reflections, we see how the white hetero-cis-sexist, ableist and racist logic operates on our understanding of the reality to see the problem only from one form of oppression, concealing the multiple realities and inequalities generated by the communion of capitalism and patriarchy.

The trade union movement in general, and trade union structures in particular, are not alien to this logic, like any other organization. This generates in many cases a gender bias, a prevalence of sexist male practices and a blindness to other forms of oppression. However, in recent years, (cis) women have started to have a louder voice and greater presence in leadership, secretariats, internal commissions and activism in general. This was possible due to their active participation, resistance and longstanding pressure to break certain logics that reject them.

⁴ Report by Public Defence Ministry, 2017.

3.

Structural labour market factors that condition trade union participation

In line with the argument set forth in the above section, trade union participation is profoundly limited among workers due to fear of hostile management responses (such as dismissal), a lack of available time, and the difficulty of coming together as a collective with shared demands. In other words, union action is not sustained by the will of those who wish to exercise it, but also by the real possibilities implicit in exercising it. So it is that different conditioning factors restrict this participation which discriminates among genders. The interviewees mentioned three main limitations: a) the type of labour contract; b) wage levels and c) the way in which labour is organized.

Regarding the first conditioning factor, the people interviewed differed in the degree of stability of their contract. Within the public sector we can find workers with full stability, i.e., on the permanent staff, and workers with contracts for a given length of time, i.e., a contract that is generally renewed annually. In the private sector there are registered workers but also workers on temporary contracts which, illegally, are renewed every three or six months. The degree of precariousness in their labour contracts determines a greater vulnerability and, therefore, a greater fear of participating in a trade union, with the understanding that dismissal is a closer

threat for some workers than for others. This situation is further aggravated in contexts such as the present one, when unemployment is comparatively high.

The second conditioning factor leads to us to consider wage levels, understanding that wages vary depending on the sector in question and the position. Wage levels in the edible oils industry, for instance, are certainly not similar to those received by domestic workers providing their services in private homes. Wage levels fundamentally influence the availability of workers' time, as those with lower wages have a greater need to find more work. Thus, working more than one job limits the possible time allocated to trade union activism.

The third conditioning factor refers to the way in which labour is organized. Trade union organization and action take on a certain character and continuity in workplaces that concentrate a number of workers that make possible the construction of a collective connected to a single place of work. Spaces with few workers or where work is done online, i.e., working from home, are more limited in trade union organization and activism. This situation was aggravated in the last year by the pandemic, where possibilities of meeting and mobilizing were completely restricted. Differences are also

observed between rural and urban labour. In agriculture, work is organized differently, but other factors also play a part such as weather, geographical distances, the length of the working day, etc.

Although these conditioning factors do not always limit action, it is worthwhile explaining them in studies such as this one, which focus and reflect on the trade union action of workers who are not only affected by what is happening at a more general level of sexual division of labour, but also by specific conditioning factors of the sector in which they work, the job they do, the contract they have, the wage they receive and the area where they work.

4.

Current strategies and actions to overcome obstacles.

This chapter presents eight sets of strategies that women leaders, activists and workers have developed and continue to develop to encourage and achieve greater trade union participation. This classification was constructed from the experiences recounted in the interviews, in an attempt to cover specific cases by way of example within each of the groups. This, however, does not mean that each strategy reflects all the examples surveyed, as this would be very difficult to present.

The groups of strategies included are: 1) quota/discussion on the hiring of women; 2) education in gender and diversities: meetings, workshops, leaflets, dissemination activities; 3) strategies to offset violence and harassment in the workplace and domestic violence; 4) care policies; 5) organization of women in workplaces and in trade union structures; 6) resources for gender-focused entities and activities; 7) time-credit systems and leave of absence and 8) specific exchange spaces for women: assemblies, commissions, networks.

4.1 Quota/discussion on the hiring of women

One of the main obstacles mentioned in the interviews was the lack of participation by women and people with other sexual and gender identities in trade union activity. These are mainly "masculinized" activities that negate or limit access to other identities. The precondition for promoting participation in these cases is to succeed in making the staff equal. The masculinization of activities, sectors or work posts is based on cultural prejudices that are concealed under supposed biological or behavioural differences to do one job or another. The legal basis on which this type of hiring is supposedly legitimized refers to the so-called "freedom of contract" and the business owner's prerogative.

In response to this, different strategies have been developed, ranging from women coming together and implementing actions in the workplace (where there are any women) to the promotion of quotas to hire external providers where there are none. At the same time we can observe processes promoted by the trade unions themselves (Río Santiago Shipyard, ATE) or which have emerged outside of them (promotion of

quota by UTA passenger transport workers.)

The goal of these experiences is not just the hiring of women, but also women's participation in different sectors and duties of the company or activity. The main strategies to achieve this focused on generating internal training processes so that women working in administrative positions could work on production lines (Rio Santiago Shipyard, ATE.)

“ Many of our women comrades are not trained for the posts that are advertised or never find out about the job openings. They are in cleaning jobs, with no internet access; they are excluded from job searches ”

However, the interviewees explained that trade union work does not end once the hiring has occurred as the work environment itself can reject women workers (Rio Santiago Shipyard, ATE.) Once entry to this kind of work is guaranteed, problems arise that continue to hinder trade union participation.

“ It is not just a question of getting them hired, we have to keep working with our male colleagues; their workshop is like a men's locker room, with posters and everything ”

Another strategy is based on the mixed labour health committees⁵ to negotiate more equal hiring (Federation of Oil Workers.)

“ There is a perspective that is missing in the factory and that also threatens men who work in those conditions, that's why we encourage women to enter through the mixed labour health committees ”

In many masculinized activities, women's participation is centred on cleaning work or cooking in the factory canteens. These posts have undergone a process of outsourcing in recent decades that means that the few women who are present in factories have work and contract conditions that are even less favourable than those of their male colleagues. With this in mind, another of the strategies used is that of trade union campaigns to end outsourcing and make staff permanent in maintenance and janitorial sectors (Federation of Oil Workers.)

Legal action is a strategy for work spaces that restrict hiring directly. In these cases, favourable legal rulings have not been enough to change these practices, and

had to be complemented with different forms of organization and resistance (passenger transport workers, UTA.)

In the context of these strategies, a trans-travesti⁶ labour quota (AJB) was presented as a specific approach to ensure diversity in the workplace.

“ We knew it was important, but our first job was to convince our own colleagues, male and female, that it was a fair claim. It was a long process, we held lectures, conferences, we gradually gained consensus ”

4.2 Gender and diversity training: meetings, workshops, leaflets, diffusion

One of the central strategies that was mentioned recurrently in most of the interviews was to offer opportunities for training, reflection and debate. These initiatives take on different forms, ranging from meetings for internal discussions and activities featuring external specialists in specific subjects, to the production of own materials such as portfolios, leaflets and pamphlets. In this type of activities training and dissemination strategies come together.

• Training strategies

The possibility of massification of these spaces is related to the degree of formalization of the space occupied by these activists in the organization. Thus, organizations with gender secretariats and commissions set forth in their bylaws have greater possibilities of planning meetings and general workshops, which are even mandatory in some cases for all trade union members. At the same time, the respondents mentioned the characteristics of the current context in relation to online work and how this is empowering and limiting at the same time. In relation to the current context some activists recognised online work as a powerful tool to act in coordination with organizations throughout the country (ATE-CNEA, ATE-MT, ATE-national) although they also recognize it has entailed an increase in intensity and fatigue.

⁵ The word "travesti" in Spanish refers to a political category that allows activists to claim their gender identity and voice their struggles.

“ At first we were enthusiastic, we held frequent meetings and we got in touch with women all over the country, but now we’ve noticed a decrease, there’s a general fatigue in relation to the possibilities of distance training ”

“ We joined together with the comrades from the Women’s Department of ATE Ensenada and from then on we organized trainings and workshops. We learned a lot in these spaces ”

Workshops and spaces for self-training:

These spaces were the result of the women workers’ need to join groups, commissions and gender secretariats. In some cases, the participation of external experts or specialists was sought (public administration-ATE national, ATE MT, private homes-SPDS, metro-AGTSyP, telecommunications professionals-CEPETEL, energy-APSEE, television-SATSAID, technical education-AMET.)

“ This supposedly gender-focused training allowed us to understand that wages, work conditions, even the trade union organization were influenced by gender, and this gave us tools and encouraged us to intervene in other spaces of trade union life ”

Apart from the need to include trade union training opportunities, the interviews revealed that professional training processes and spaces are necessary for consolidating tools that will allow workers to participate in the labour process they are part of (AEJBA, AJB, ATE-national.)

“ Justice has to be rethought from a feminist perspective; we must get involved because we are part of this and if a reform is discussed we have a lot to contribute. At the same time we’re looking for ways to better support cases of violence at work and at home, both those that belong in the courtroom and those of our own women comrades ”

This training often involves coordination with other sectors. The respondents mentioned on numerous occasions the importance of joint training processes coordinated with federations and trade unions that are beginning to include strategic gender and youth spaces (AJB, ATE-national, ADUNC, SATSAID.)

“ Women from all the provinces, from all the sectors and traditions, came together to form the Federation. Trade unionism is in us. It was a turning point, it strengthened the ties between fellow workers from all over the country and allowed us to strengthen our positions. ”

Optional training workshops and spaces for trade union colleagues:

As well as self-training spaces, some experiences succeeded in promoting within the trade union workshops and general debates on gender issues or through the transversal introduction of these perspectives in workshops planned by the organization as a whole. One example of this was the mainstreaming of a gender perspective to the training workshop for delegates in the internal commission of the ATE of the Ministry of Labour, and the initiative of the gender commission of the AEJBA to include a gender perspective in the training of trade union members and delegates.

The process of the CONADUH’s gender secretariat, in terms of training, involves the construction of centralized spaces where grassroots unions and their gender secretariats can meet to discuss training strategies and common issues. The strategy is to transcend the specificities of each local trade union to construct shared training lines within the Confederation.

Mandatory training workshops and spaces for trade union members or leaders:

The AJB held a series of five workshops in 2020 for all union authorities on the Micaela Act . The workshop was mandatory and was declared by the executive provincial committee as a necessary condition for candidates running in the next trade union elections. The activity was organized and carried out by the union’s Secretariat of Gender and Diversity in conjunction with its interdisciplinary team.

In turn, the National ATE incorporated a fixed, central module dedicated to gender into their national youth training programs.

In the Federation of Oil Workers, a women-only panel was included in the last Ordinary Congress. This is a highly masculinized activity so this action was very rare, and indeed resisted by many male colleagues. The committee was organized by the union’s women’s

group and was made up of a union advisor, a plant worker and a leader from another union.

“ When I saw my women comrades on the stage I wanted to cry, I don't know how many of the men were listening to what they were saying, but being up there, occupying that space, that was an immense achievement, even if a lot of people were upset about the situation ”

• Dissemination strategies

A book was recently published that compiles the anecdotes and actions of women workers at the Río Santiago Shipyard, “Women Who Make Boats.” This initiative made it possible not only to visibilize the work of women at the shipyard, but also had repercussions outside of the factory. For the women workers, this meant new connections and possible scenarios not only within the town of Ensenada, but also in the rest of the country with different sectors of activity and groups of activists. This constitutes a strategy of legitimization within the factory and visibilisation outside of it.

“If you want to do something, do it yourselves” was a phrase that encouraged AEJBA activists to take into their own hands the processes of training and dissemination of their activities. The gender commission gives the press “canned” releases regarding form and content. For the inter-secretariat relationship to work, they present everything “ready and closed.” They even outsource the design of the materials in order to expedite the process and avoid internal frictions.

The CONADUH gender and diversity leadership produces a magazine called ALEERTA as its main diffusion strategy. The magazine addresses different subjects and presents life stories. Informative videos have also been made about the campaign for the abortion law. The process was developed jointly with the Press Secretariat, as one of the women who works there is considered an “ally.”

The AJB has a specific technical team for audiovisual products that works jointly with the secretariat, producing thematic materials but also recording on video the main meetings, conferences and congresses organized by the gender secretariat.

4.3 Strategies to offset workplace violence and harassment and domestic violence

Violence against women is exerted inside and outside the workplace and conditions a woman's chances of staying in the job and organizing to campaign for better conditions. It is possible that because of this, the organizational spaces that bring together the most women trade union members and at the same time allow the participation of women who are not frequently active in the trade union structure are those which set out to eliminate different forms of violence against women (AEJBA, ATE-national, CONADUH.)

Some interviewees mentioned the importance of organizing around the construction of a protocol against violence, such as the cases of the ATE (CNEA), the active participation of women in mixed labour health committees in the oil industry, or in specific activities that seek to secure a leave of absence due to gender violence, as in the case of judicial union leaders (AEJBA and AJB.)

At the same time, different strategies have been organized by trade union structures to control specific situations of violence through the organization of specialised committees or commissions structured for this purpose. These work lines constitute spaces of trade union activism that succeed in reaching sectors and colleagues who would otherwise not be reached. Assuming this from a comprehensive position but especially from a gender perspective also legitimizes and strengthens the construction of these spaces, which are often structured on the margins of regulations. Thus, in some activities, these spaces visibilize the organization and action of women while also explaining the need for them.

One interesting experience is that of metro workers (AGTSyP) who for the last six years have had an Undersecretariat of Workplace Violence, through which over 200 complaints have been registered.

• Internal protocols

For some of these experiences, the collective construction of protocols to follow in situations of gender violence was structured around the possibility of including more women and, in time, legitimizing their trade union action (ATE-national, CNEA and MT-,

SATSAID, APSEE.) Some debates regarding these protocols have focused precisely on their scope. In some cases, it has been possible to promote these tools jointly with employers and create protocols that include all the personnel of the establishment, and may even extend to situations of violence outside of the workplace. Other protocols only apply to and set procedures for cases of violence that occur only within the workers' organization (AJB.)

“ We put together the protocol as we went along; there was a case with a provincial leader that we had to deal with (...) we developed and applied the protocol at the same time. It was very tough because we had to legitimize our actions and those of the tool (...) they threw everything at us, but we came out of it stronger ”

In the case of the CNEA trade union activists, the organization around a protocol also enabled a national debate and inter-union coordination, as it was decided to present the proposal to the *Comisión de Igualdad de Oportunidades y Trato* (Commission for Equal Opportunities and Treatment CIOT,) with the hope that the same would apply for all relationships within the organization.

The experience of the Internal Commission of ATE Trabajo (the union of the Ministry of Labour) succeeded in constructing an internal trade union relations protocol, which lays the foundations for a broader system that will include all the relationships within the ministry.

The Federation of Oil Workers is advancing with protocols for cases of violence in the context of mixed labour health committees, which at the same time allows them to use existing consolidated tools to support future claims.

women's participation within the workplace, and a first action step within the trade union structure (AEJBA, AJB, AGTSyP.)

• Interdisciplinary commissions and teams

The AJB has an unpaid team, affiliated to the trade union, that functions as a consultative structure of the trade union leadership and the gender secretariat. The team acts as a consultant both in trade union cases in which the union has to act in defence of a worker who is the victim of gender violence by a supervisor or colleague, or when the complaint involves members of the trade union itself. This team is made up of psychologists, social workers, psychiatrists and a lawyer, all of whom support and advise on these cases and participate in the planning and construction of content for trade union training processes. Although it is not clear how it increases women's participation in the trade union structure, the strategy is indeed the result of women's organization and legitimizes their actions. In this respect, it is interesting that when asked about the obstacles faced, women repeatedly responded that “they don't take us seriously” and “we have to construct legitimacy.”

• Leave of absence due to gender violence

A leave of absence due to gender violence refers to a set of rights given to those who have suffered a situation of gender violence, including outside the workplace. In recent years this has been widely debated by gender secretariats and in some cases it has been possible to regulate this via collective labour agreements. The most relevant aspect, in this case, is the possibility of increasing participation around this issue. Indeed, in some cases the campaign for this leave of absence has been a pillar for

4.4 Care policie

As indicated in the description of the obstacles, the double working day is the main impediment both to participating in trade union activity for delegates and leaders and to bringing more women workers into trade union activism. This problem applies throughout the working class, and is related to the way in which the sexual division of labour is organized and the way patriarchal logic imposes duties on women. This erodes their job security in the labour force and forces them out of trade union activity. However, none of this has prevented women workers and trade unionists from existing over the course of history. But they have been invisibilized, overlooked for leadership posts, contracted into work with inferior wages and overburdened with reproductive work.

As a result of greater insertion in the labour market and more political presence in trade union activity, there are currently numerous trade union actions (organizational and/or economic) to overcome the limitations imposed by the double working day. These actions have different degrees of formality and arise from the need, pressure and practice of each organization. They range from informal women's meetings and women's assemblies during the working day to day care spaces in the workplace and paid childcare for leaders' children. The goals include: promoting/maintaining the presence of women in different deliberative trade union instances and/or in conflictive actions, guaranteeing that women occupy trade union positions, disputing childcare costs and time, deconstructing essentialism in terms of care, undermining the concept of the cis heterosexual nuclear family, etc.

• Childcare spaces and economic resources for care in the workplace

Childcare facilities in the workplace are a longstanding demand of women workers. Having these spaces means that childcare is not an impediment to keeping a job, and allows workers to maintain trade union activism when their children are young. But it also passes on to the employer part of the economic cost and time dedicated to reproductive work. This explains, to some extent, the refusal of most employers to adopt article 179 of the Labour Contract Law, which obliges them to grant this right.

Some of the interviewees mentioned that they gained a

space that guarantees access to day care for all workers (shipbuilding -ATE ARS, agricultural -FETAAP, and atomic energy-CNEA) or they have a project under way (APDFA.) In other cases, there is very limited availability in relation to the number of workers who request it, which has led to demands to increase the space and the staff (CONADUH, ATE -MT.) There are also trade unions that managed to include this in their agreements, but as they are subject to a minimum number of women and it is a masculinized activity, in reality this requirement is not met (FGB.)

In some activities, demand was covered with a collective agreement, negotiating an economic sum (telecommunications-CEPETEL, metro-AGPSyP- and judicial-AEJBA.) The problem is that the total cost of private kindergartens or a carer's wages is not always covered, and its renewal is subject to the vagaries and weaknesses of every collective wage agreement. There are also experiences where breastfeeding spaces were attained (APDFA and Federation of Oil Workers) or where a demand for them is being processed (CEPETEL.)

• Childcare facilities or economic resources for childcare to promote trade union activity

The existence of the double working day is one of the main obstacles to women's participation in trade union activity. Various actions seek to overcome these obstacles both at the grassroots and structural levels.

“ If you want to be active in a trade union you have to be prepared for three or four times the work, or not have kids, or have kids who've already grown up, it's impossible ”

In the experiences with the greatest organizational difficulty, WhatsApp groups are the main channel of communication, while in others progress is made in meetings, but these are contingent upon time available outside of the working day (bakers-STARPyH.) Furthermore, in some cases areas for childcare (AEJBA and AJB) or play activities (SUTIBA) are organized where women workers can go with their children. During the pandemic, a large part of the experiences had to adapt to online meetings on days/times of lower childcare demand.

In some trade unions, the organizational accumulation allows trade union activities (in assemblies, meetings and trade union training, etc.) to take place during the working day, and the total or partial presence of women

workers and delegates is guaranteed (metro -AGTSyP, shipyard-ATE, Universidad de Comahue-ADUNC, and CNEA-ATE.)

Other actions include the organization of recreation activities for children during meetings, activities, trade union procedures and strikes. The experience of the AJB is relevant in this regard as this is a consolidated policy within the trade union structure that involved the permanent hiring of trade union personnel dedicated to the care of leaders' and activists' children in all collective trade union activities.

“ The childcare space has been there a long time, 6 or 7 years, but the fathers don't use it much, they don't bring their children to trade union activities, and we know this means that there is a woman who is at home supporting her partner's union activity with her work; on that point we haven't progressed much ”

In SUTEBA (Tigre division) a play area was set up for affiliates, and assemblies are held in the schools that have a play space. There are also self-organized spaces created by the AEJBA women trade union activists, who bring their children to the gender commission and to protests. There is also an informal care network in CONADUH to guarantee childcare during protests.

Other strategies identified include the provision of financial resources to render women's trade union activity and childcare compatible. Some trade unions pay for kindergarten or the wages of a caregiver for leaders during their trade union activity (ADUNC.) Another practice for union leaders with children is to cover the care costs while they travel on trade union business, whether by paying the child's travel expenses or a sum that ensures childcare during their stay (ADUNC.)

• Actions to influence time dedicated to care activities

There are other measures that indirectly promote women's participation by reducing childcare time through trade union recreation spaces. These include holiday camps (UTEDYC, AJB), campsites with games and a swimming pool (ATE-national, AJB) and trips (SATSAID.) SATSAID gives affiliates' children aged 6 to 16 five days' paid vacations, covering childcare and other costs. Every year they take 1500 children in the summer and 1500 in the winter to different tourist spots in the country. Having any of these benefits frees up part of the

time women and families devote to childcare.

Leave of absence to care for children and other people is a strategy to tackle the double working day and the essentialist role of the caregiving mother. Paid leave to care for people recognises care for others as work, while not causing a loss of wages. However, such leave is limited to direct relatives, legal family and blood relatives. Furthermore, a leave of absence with no gender bias makes it possible to advance in the redistribution of these tasks, at least within traditional homes and families. But even in cases of non-gendered leave for the care of people, those who most frequently use this leave are women, or it generates tensions among heterosexual couples who share a workplace and trade union (ATE -ARS.)

“ Often when there is an illness or death of a relative, more days are needed than those established in the agreements and they have to be negotiated directly with the management, and then you come up against 'good or bad predisposition.' It's often the case that if you're a woman they give you leave because it's logical for you to care for someone, but if a man asked for leave it would look strange ”

In terms of leave for birth or adoption of children, the most remarkable progress has been the extension of paternity leave, but without eliminating the difference in time off compared to maternity leave, which even exists in cases of adoption. The main problem with these formulations is that they continue to reproduce the logic of the heterosexual nuclear family, which implies that the woman is the main caregiver in the home. Another new form of regulating this leave is to recognise the gestating person and the non-gestating person, accepting the existence of non-hetero-cis couples and de-essentializing pregnancy, but without modifying the difference in time off. Consequently, this reproduces part of the same logic, where giving birth is the determining factor for being the caregiver.

One common feature of the two types of leave is that they imply (and impose) that the child is the product of a couple's decision, who are also the main source of care, ignoring not only the existence of single parent families but also other networks of non-family care.

Without detracting from these advances as a whole, or ignoring the recovery time necessary before and after a birth, it is interesting to rethink care leave from a different perspective that puts the focus on the child and not on the accompanying adult (AJB.) In this way, the care time

can be assigned within or outside of the nuclear family, breaking the frontiers of the classic systems.

“Defamiliarizing this leave could be a useful tool to incorporate or recognise other care networks. If anyone can take leave to care for another person (adult or child), we all potentially cost the same for the employer”

It is important to note that putting this type of regulation into practice, like any other that seeks to transform our perception of parenting, requires much discussion, debate and collective organization, and a general legal framework for it to be truly effective.

4.5 Organization of women in workplaces and in trade union structures

Trade union participation among women has undergone a change in recent years. While not radical, participation has changed positively as a result of greater activism and the pressure that women have been putting on the trade unions. Evidence of this is the creation of different organizational spaces in gender matters and the greater presence of women in trade union leadership, secretariats, commissions, delegate bodies, etc. The existence of these instances provides spaces of support and debate related to their issues inside and outside work. However, there is a lack of participation in trade union leadership committees and in instances of collective bargaining.

• Grassroots organization spaces

In the workplaces, there is a solid experience in gender commissions (ATE -MT-, AEJBA), assemblies (ATE -ARS and MT-), meetings (STARPyH) and women's groups (ATE-CNEA.) In the case of the Ministry of Labour, the commission is a space that has been in operation for several years and provides an opportunity to reflect upon the issues of the sector and acts as a place where many workers can begin their trade union activism. It also offers training workshops in different areas (diversities, care, etc.) and campaigns in favour of the legalization of abortion and other issues. Women workers' meetings in the bakers' industry are a channel of communication and participation, mainly for the struggle for contract equality between men and women. At Río Santiago Shipyard, the women have their own assemblies, mobilized by gender

delegates, where they seek to make progress on masculinized work posts and call out male bosses and colleagues for their disrespect for women in certain sectors. The "Las Curie" group, in the CNEA, organizes multiple activities and distributes videos; women are encouraged to speak in assemblies and meetings are held during lunch breaks. In all these experiences, there are women delegates and members of internal committees. Parity was even achieved in the total number of delegates (ATE -CNEA) and participation in negotiations (ARE-ARS.)

• Spaces in trade union structures

There has been progress at this level in the formation of: gender commissions (STV), gender secretariats or undersecretariats (APSEE, ATE, FGB, AJB), gender leadership (CONADUH), informal gender secretariats (AEJBA) and a transversal policy that does not require them (ADUNC.) In the case of the Road Authority (SEVINA), the commission is a recent experience, working on the inclusion of women in masculinized sectors by adapting the workplaces to enable such inclusion (restrooms, changing rooms.) A protocol was recently drawn up against violence and harassment in the trade union.

However, women union leaders demand further hierarchical organization through statute reform to gain management posts and funding (ATE, AEJBA.) In AEJBA, women workers imposed the gender secretariat even though it was not recognised in the statute. This is a space that has been in operation for some time and which women workers and their children succeeded in establishing as their own. There they hold training workshops, participate in mobilizations with the trade union and with the LGTTBIQ+ collective. Participation is coordinated in women's meetings and leave has even been obtained so that all the women workers can participate.

Other more formal, hierarchically-organized trade union advances with more resources include the gender secretariat, or similar. This space promotes different actions such as meetings for women in the sector, campaigns and materials on women's issues, training actions in gender, LGTTBIQ+ rights, care work for workers, affiliates and delegates, etc.

“One of the challenges is the formation of new trade union cadres with gender awareness, and the deconstruction of men and women. We're

looking for a different trade union, which includes us and which we can belong to”

Another challenge is related to the possibility of influencing matters of collective bargaining that generate equal conditions, and the inclusion of travestis, trans and non-binary people in work spaces and in the organization.

“ Today we talk about a Secretariat of Gender and Diversities but it's more wishful thinking than anything else, since we haven't succeeded in including other gender expressions (...) often they decide to campaign elsewhere, outside of the trade union ”

4.6 Resources for gender areas and activities

Another possible strategy that can be mentioned is the trade union's decision to allocate resources to gender areas or activities. Two factors are involved in considering this strategy: a) the political decision of the trade union to allocate resources for gender areas and activities and b) the size of these resources, which will not only be closely related to factor (a), but also the real possibilities of bringing about that transfer of resources. What we want to show by this is that the economic and financial situation of the organization has an impact on this type of decision, not as a conditioning or excluding factor, but one that influences the type of activities or proposals to be carried out. However, the political will is key: although many resources may be available, if there is no will to contribute to the growth and development of gender work and activities, this will constitute a further obstacle to their promotion.

In this regard we identified three types of strategies: funding by the organization for gender activities and events; funding for those leaders whose work involves travelling to other provinces/cities for activities related to this issue; and funding for training leaders in such matters.

• Funding for gender and diversity activities and events

Among these strategies, we came across experiences devised by the trade union organization to visibilize, commemorate or bring different people together around a given gender action. As mentioned above, events organized by entities with a national structure would not require the same economic and logistic efforts as provincial or grassroots organizations.

Some examples of national spaces of exchange and training are the Conference of Women in Television Unions, or the Conferences of Women of the Argentine Judicial Federation. The first case is a meeting that women television trade union workers have been holding since 2018, conceived as an annual meeting but also for training. What is interesting about this conference is that it is mandatory for all General Secretaries of the television unions in the country; that is, the trade union establishes it as a mandatory activity, and therefore funds all the secretaries' travel costs to the meeting. The meeting is optional for all other leaders and delegates.

“ The obligation on all secretaries to attend made us evaluate in detail what issues are going to be covered and who is responsible for carrying out the training. As it is an important event, the goal is that those who attend should feel 'attracted' by the issues to guarantee their active permanence but also that this should be an opportunity to raise awareness and visibilize problems related to gender questions ”

Two more examples arise from the experience of the women workers of the Federación Gráfica Bonaerense (Federation of Print Workers of the Province of Buenos Aires) who for the last four years have organized an annual meeting of women in Mar del Plata for which the trade union funds the travel expenses of those who wish to participate; and the women workers of the UTEDYC, who hold meetings through the union with all the different divisions in the country, to have greater contact with the provinces and share experiences.

Lastly, some respondents mentioned the organization of women's soccer tournaments, not only to attract women workers to activities organized by the trade union, but also to promote exchange between them. An example is the experience of the Sindicato de Comercio (Retail Workers' Union), which organized a women's soccer tournament through their Gender Secretariat and Sports Secretariat. The women judicial workers of the AEJBA organized a similar tournament.

• Funding of travel expenses for women leaders

For many years various trade unions have funded travel and hotel expenses for women workers to attend the Encuentro Nacional de Mujeres (National Women's Conference), held annually since 1986. Although this is not a strategy that most women leaders listed, it is true that in the interviews it emerged as an important event; firstly, because it implies the political decision of the trade union to fund travel for those women colleagues who wish to attend the conference and the specific resources to make it possible (buses, minibuses, tickets, hotel, organization of childcare, etc.) and secondly because it is an event from which shared ideas, proposals and issues necessarily arise which workers take back to their unions to work on and rediscuss them, and put them to the consideration of others, etc.

“ The Women's Conference was an important starting point in consolidating our organization, firstly because we realized that we weren't alone and secondly because we were able to establish the idea that trade unionism is a potential place to fight for equality. Many of our current women comrades joined after participating with the union at the Conference ”

Aside from the fact that these meetings constitute an opportunity for training and learning, they have often led to demands that have in turn translated into concrete victories. From the experiences that we surveyed, the workers of the Sindicato de Comercio, AEJ, Suteba, ATE -CNEA and -MT, AEJBA and AJB stated that their unions fund women workers' participation at these meetings.

Another initiative that emerges from the interviews on this point is the funding of women leaders' travel expenses to attend meetings and activities on gender matters in places where they do not reside. There is the case of teachers at the Universidad de Comahue (in southern Argentina) whose union funded trips to activities in provinces such as Buenos Aires, whether to attend activities with other trade union organizations or to participate in training and education activities, and the case of the Gender Director and Deputy Director of CONADUH, whose travel expenses were funded so they could meet with each other, as the former resides in Buenos Aires and the latter in Tierra del Fuego.

One interesting element that emerged from the interview with AJB is regarding the support that the trade union provides to working families even in the case of male

leaders. There was a case in which the trade union covered the travel costs of the partner and children of a leader when he had to use the family car to travel from Mar del Plata to the City of Buenos Aires.

“ This case visibilizes the fact that male leadership is possible because there is one or more women at home taking responsibility for all the reproductive work ”

• Funding for training women leaders

Although training women leaders is not a widespread strategy, in some cases it is presented as a way to contribute to the development of gender areas and, once again, through support from the union. In this case there is the experience of the women workers of CONADUH whose Director and Deputy Director of Gender and Diversity had a postgraduate course in gender at the University of Buenos Aires funded by the union.

4.7 Time credit and trade union leave

One of the most important achievements of workers for participating in trade union activity is the possibility to have time credit and leaves of absence to do trade union work. Time-credit systems involve an accumulation of remunerated hours per day, per week, per month or per year to allocate to trade union work within or away from the workplace. The way in which this credit is regulated is through collective work agreements and there are many variations and inevitably degrees of usefulness for those who receive this credit. That is, a more efficient use is made of that time when more hours are given and fewer requisites are imposed. Those who receive this credit have union protection to exercise this position, that is, they cannot be dismissed while they hold this position and up to one year after they leave it.

Trade union leave, in this case, refers to a leave of absence for those persons who, because of the position they occupy in the trade union, are exempt from doing their job. This means that they can opt for paid or unpaid leave (with their position reserved until they finish their mandate) because they occupy a position in the trade union that requires them to perform the work required of that position.

The fact that most of the higher positions in trade unions and representation in the workplace are occupied by men hinders further women's union activism as this must be done outside of work hours. If they do not have protection they cannot access the right to time credit or union leave, and they do not have protection because the existence of a double working day limits their chances of union activism. A vicious circle is thus consolidated that excludes women in charge of the reproductive work from trade union life.

“ This, regardless of who takes responsibility for family care and the home, is a limitation for those who have more than one job, that is, the work of trade union activity ‘competes’ with childcare work and having multiple jobs which in our sector typically applies to women ”

There are various strategies to overcome these obstacles. One of the most interesting experiences can be found at the Río Santiago Shipyard, where since 2006 and due to a claim for a greater presence of women in the factory, three “gender delegates” were elected, that is, women delegates who deal with gender matters.

These delegates have trade union protection, time credit of two hours daily and are in continuous coordination with sector delegates.

Time credit depends on the number of women delegate workers and the amount of credit regulated via collective labour agreement. One relevant experience was in the Asociación Gremial del Subte (AGTSyP, Metro workers' trade union), where it was agreed many years ago that delegates only have three hours a week as time credit, and Secretaries six hours a week.

“The aim was to ensure that no representative lost ‘contact’ with the grassroots and continued in their role, so as not to lose sight of everyday issues. Now we realize that those hours are insufficient and are not enough to do all the union work”

Although the company at present has ceased to count trade union hours strictly, representatives end up using work overtime to do their union activities, a situation that once again is disadvantageous for women delegates and secretaries because it often takes up the time they allocate to childcare.

In the public sector, the size of time credit and the requisites to receive it vary enormously. There are cases such as the CNEA where the hours that delegates dedicate to trade union activity are not “counted,” that is, there is a very uncertain limit although all delegates have paid leave for plenary meetings and meetings organized by the trade union (ATE.) In the case of the printed press industry, delegates have paid leave to do training organized by the union and delegate candidates, since they do not have the possibility of receiving this leave because they are not elected, can take the day off and the trade union takes responsibility for their remuneration, so that the worker can attend training.

In the case of retail workers, for some years the trade union succeeded in allowing delegates not to clock in at their workplace, that is, the time when they start and finish work is not controlled. In this respect and considering that this right may be different for men and for women, the women delegate of the Sindicato de Comercio commented that the body of delegates organized how to use this benefit, for example, prioritizing assemblies in work hours for those who have children to look after, so as not to interfere with the times outside of work hours.

An interesting case of a time-credit system achieved by

the AJB refers to an accumulation of hours without nominal adjudication that the trade union must distribute, and inform the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation (CSJN). Although the interviewees pointed out some limits to this system, they also acknowledged that it results in a more favourable internal dispute.

In relation to trade union leave, we surveyed the case of women workers at the University of Comahue and Suteba (Tigre division), where they are guaranteed a given compensatory monthly sum from their salaries so that the worker can take leave and thus be free from teaching duties to take on their post in the trade union. However, in both cases, the women leaders are General Secretaries, which responds to the pattern of use for this type of leave.

4.8 Specific places of exchange for women: assemblies, commissions, networks

One of the most common strategies among all experiences surveyed is the need for exchanges with other women's spaces, whether unions or otherwise. This communication is essential due to the need to familiarize and train people in gender and feminism questions or share experiences, consult other problems that may be shared or communicate, exchange or celebrate achievements. In fact, the result of many of these exchanges is the formation of different women's networks and organizations that have become leading groups today.

• Space for women's participation within the trade union

Many of the experiences surveyed are born in spaces within the trade union organization where only women participate. Whether clandestinely or open to the participation of anyone, there is first the need to share concerns and problems among women colleagues. In fact, many of the interviewees stressed the difference in sharing, expressing and speaking in spaces made up only by women compared to others where the participation is broader, and a certain sensation of greater empathy and freedom in participating was mentioned. In some cases, these instances that constitute the "first meeting" then lead to other spaces and even to formal structures within the trade union, such as departments, secretariats or

commissions, that are sustained and last over time.

We can mention here the experience of the women metro workers who over twenty years ago decided to meet clandestinely (outside of the workplace, in a bar or the home of a worker) to debate strategies that made it possible to democratize their access to all the job posts and avoid isolation in categories of ticket sellers or janitorial positions. Over the course of their meetings they were able to influence the organization of posts and today they occupy the same categories as their male colleagues. This women's forum continues to this day, no longer in secret but in the form of a women's assembly, although as one interviewee mentioned, it is difficult to achieve mass participation.

There are other experiences where women's assemblies are held, such as the case of the Federation of Oil Workers, the judicial workers of the AEJBA, the workers of the Rio Santiago Shipyard and CNEA workers. Within the public administration and under the representation of the ATE, there are many places where women's assemblies are held and the national ATE organized a federal women's committee, whose first output was a protocol for dealing with violence and harassment in the workplace.

One experience of the Ministry of Labour is the formation of a Gender Commission within the Committee of the ATE Ministry of Labour, between 2008 and 2009, which succeeded in bringing many women into the trade union. This commission coordinates with other similar commissions which were also formed within other Internal Committees of the ATE. In the case of university teachers, in the CONADUH and with the aim of federalizing the Gender Office and socializing experiences, meetings are held with one or two members of each Office at provincial level. This contributes to thinking about the future creation of a network of trade union colleagues to address the issue. We found other experiences along the same lines: judiciary workers participate in a space of "women judicial workers" within the Federation of Judicial Workers; at the APDFA there is a project to form an APDFA women's front, still in a process of formation, to bring more women into the trade union and debate common problems.

In the baking industry workers, they have been following a claim to eliminate the salary gap between men and women for some time. In this regard, they succeeded in establishing meetings in the trade union every Saturday in which seven women participate, where they debate

with the leaders. Before and after the meetings, the workers organize discussions with the rest of the women workers (online during the pandemic) to agree on issues/proposals to discuss in the trade union and socialize the matters covered.

Lastly, another of the experiences which, while not widespread, came across as interesting was the coordination among workers and workers' families, with different purposes. In the case of Río Santiago Shipyard, the family commission emerged in the 1980s to support claims from shipyard workers. The commission is still operating today and has covered gender issues such as workplace violence and harassment. In the case of oil workers, the La Esperanza trade union works with the partners of the workers to discuss issues that may apply both to work and the home. In the words of the Secretary General of the trade union, this is done as a form of "collaboration" between comrades and their partners to promote learning and so that the impact is not limited just to the home but also the workplace.

• Coordination with other spaces and agendas for exchanges on gender/feminist issues

In addition to the spaces generated within trade unions, there is coordination with other trade unions in the same activity and in other activities, with the idea of sharing and socializing experiences. Thus we find that teachers from the Universidad del Comahue participated in an "inter-union" experience where various trade unions were present from different activities; the case of domestic workers in private households who affiliated with other trade unions in the sector to the CTA Autónoma and coordinate their strategies for discussions from there within the Comisión Nacional de Casas Particulares (National Commission of Domestic Workers in Private Households) and to attract more affiliates to the respective unions. The FETAAP of agricultural workers, is a federation also affiliated to the CTA Autónoma, which not only confronts their employers but also the trade union that currently holds union legal status.

"Often the UATRE behaves just like another employer, that's why we decided to form our own federation and affiliate to the CTA Autónoma. This allowed us to meet and coordinate with the other trade unions in the federation but also with public and private sector trade unions that are in our provinces"

The women bus drivers of Rosario (UTA) approached the Asociación de Mujeres Conductoras (Association of Women Drivers), a trade union with simple registration that came about as a result of a complaint against Rosario taxi drivers.

As well as coordinating with other organizations, one item that came up in many of the interviews was the change that occurred around six years ago when the feminist agenda took on more visibility and movement.

"Being together in every mobilization and achieving the unity on the streets that the men can't achieve in the leadership of our trade unions was a turning point for us. It isn't easy, but we women march together, side by side, it doesn't matter if we're CGT, CTA-T or CTA-A, we're feminist trade unionists"

Some of the moments highlighted by the respondents as instances of coordination and growth are the mobilizations for the Ni Una Menos (Not One Less) campaign against gender violence, the first women's strike on 19 October 2016 after the murder of Lucía Pérez, 8 March as the day of international struggle for women workers, mobilizations and vigils led by the National Campaign for the Right to Legal, Safe and Free Abortion, and marches and actions on 25 November.

Whether joining marches, mobilizations and vigils together as women workers affiliated to the same union, or debating in assemblies and plenary meetings issues on the feminist agenda such as legal, safe and free abortion, workplace violence and claims for equal working conditions, many figures pointed out the momentum that this movement has given to their own demands, raising awareness not only among women colleagues but also male ones.

• Formation of organizations to address gender issues

The need to coordinate and share experiences with other colleagues and organizations has led to the formation of specific spaces for the treatment of questions that have to do with women's participation in trade unions.

Although the National Women's Conference is a space that has existed for some time, bringing together an enormous number of women, it is clear from the

interviews that for some years it has been an event with great participation, and one that the trade union decided to fund. This makes the Conference a key place to meet and socialize for women from different unions, who participate as workers and trade unionists.

Another space that has taken on importance in recent years is the formation of *Mujeres Sindicalistas* (Trade Unionist Women), which while emerging from within the *Corriente Federal de Trabajadores* (Federal Organization of Workers), brings together women trade unionists whose organizations respond to the political line of other trade union associations, such as the CTA-T and the CTA-A. This space has organized different activities and even published leaflets tackling different issues. Many of them claim that the existence of this space and the possibility of access to materials facilitate tackling issues within their own union.

In this regard, the *Red Nacional Intersindical contra la Violencia y el Acoso Laboral* (National Inter-Union Network against Workplace Violence and Harassment) was formed with the presence of numerous unions from different sectors and with different political background. Indeed, in the world of trade unions, this network has managed to publish documents with the support of the three trade union federations: CGT, CTA-A and CTA-T. Various trade union figures and founders of the network indicated the importance of this plural space, which permits broad and active participation.

5.

Final Words

The work presented in this document seeks to give a general outline of strategies that women workers and their organizations implement to promote and broaden women's participation in trade unions, and the obstacles they face on this path. This constitutes a first approach to the subject, and although over twenty interviews were conducted, towards the end of the fieldwork we observed a saturation of this technique. That is, in the final interviews, we only came across different forms of the same strategies, but no new dimensions appeared.

One of the things that most caught our attention was the women's disposition to conduct the interview, to attempt to turn it into an internal space of collective exchange. Although our initial prejudice was that it was not going to be easy to get interviews due to online fatigue after over a year of the pandemic and women activists' numerous responsibilities, we came across a different situation.

As we mentioned in the introduction to this work, one of the elements that we highlight in this first approach is that the obstacles tied to the existence of a double working day are perceived as the main conditioning factor and constitute the fundamental basis of trade union action on which the main strategies surveyed are

deployed. When we approached the subject, we thought that the main problems would be related to violence from male co-workers, sexism in the workplace, stereotypical conceptions on what women "can" or "cannot" do, and that internal protocols and mechanisms were going to constitute the main strategy. However, these limitations took second place, although they are no less important for it.

In terms of organization processes, we observed that women's spaces within the workplace have constructed and sustained processes of organization and massification. These have a strong influence related to the level of trade union structure to which they belong. Indeed, in the most decentralized spaces, tied to the trade union grassroots, exhaustion is beginning to be seen as a result in part of the context of the pandemic and the specific way in which it affects women. In preliminary terms, we can think that the most centralized structures have had greater possibilities of sustaining ties and connections with different trade unions and social organizations and, as a result, constitute more visible and solid structures. Meanwhile, the grassroots spaces have survived the onslaught of this last year and a half and greater exhaustion is seen in women workers in relation to union activity, work and childcare.

Finally, some respondents mentioned the existence of a false debate between feminism and unionism, voiced by the workers themselves: "we are feminists and we are unionists," "in the unions they exclude us because we are feminists and in the feminist organizations they exclude us because we are unionists," "our identity is feminist-unionists." Likewise, the experiences that these collectives have and the progress they have made show that it is possible and even necessary to conceive of and sustain this coordination.

Annex

The following trade union associations took part in this study:

TRADE UNION	ACRONYM	ACTIVITY / SECTOR
Asociación de Docentes de la Universidad Nacional del Comahue	ADUNC	Higher Education
Asociación de Empleados Judiciales de Buenos Aires	AEJBA	Public administration (judiciary)
Asociación de Trabajadores del Estado (Astillero Río Santiago)	ATE (ARS)	Public administration (shipyards)
Asociación de Trabajadores del Estado (Comisión Nacional de Energía Atómica)	ATE (CNEA)	Public administration (atomic energy)
Asociación de Trabajadores del Estado (Ministerio de Trabajo)	ATE (MT)	Public administration (ML)
Asociación de Trabajadores del Estado (nacional)	ATE	National Public Administration
Asociación del Magisterio de Enseñanza Técnica	AMET	Middle and tertiary technical education
Asociación del Personal de Dirección de Ferrocarriles Argentinos	APDFA	Railways
Asociación del Personal Superior de Empresas de Energía	APSEE	Energy
Asociación Gremial de Trabajadores del Subte y el Premetro	AGTSyP	Metro
Asociación Judicial Bonaerense	AJB	Public administration (judiciary)
Federación de Trabajadores Agrarios de la Actividad Primaria	FETAAP	Agricultural
Federación de Trabajadores del Complejo Industrial Oleaginoso, Desmotadores de Algodón y Afines de la República Argentina	FTCIODAARA	Edible Oil
Federación Gráfica Bonaerense	FGB	Print
Federación Nacional de Docentes, Investigadores y Creadores Universitarios CONADU Histórica	CONADUH	Higher education
Sindicato Argentino de Televisión, Servicios Audiovisuales, Interactivos y de Datos	SATSAID	Television
Sindicato de Comercio (Seccional Ciudad de Buenos Aires)	SEC	Retail
Sindicato de los Profesionales de las Telecomunicaciones	CEPETEL	Telecommunications
Sindicato del Personal del Servicio Doméstico de Río Negro y Neuquén	SPSD	Domestic Workers
Sindicato Trabajadores Alfajoreros, Reposteros, Pizzeros y Heladeros (Mar del Plata)	STARPyH	Bakers
Sindicato de Trabajadores de Vialidad Nacional	SEVINA	Road Authorities
Sindicato Unificado de Trabajadores de la Educación de Buenos Aires (Seccional Tigre)	SUTEBA	Elementary and middle education
Unión de Trabajadores de Entidades Deportivas y Civiles	UTEDYC	Civil and Sports Associations
Unión Tranviarios Automotor (Buenos Aires)	UTA (BA)	Automotive transport
Unión Tranviarios Automotor (Rosario)	UTA (Rosario)	Automotive transport

