

The CUT's Struggle for Gender Equality: The Campaign for Equality of Opportunities in Life, in Work and in the Labour Movement

Maria Luiza da Costa, SNMT/CUT, Brazil

ABSTRACT

This article looks at the National Secretariat of Working Women of CUT Brazil (SNMT/CUT) and its campaign for 'equality of opportunities in life, in work and in the labour movement'. The article discusses the central issues and context in which the campaign was launched, some significant moments in the history of SNMT/CUT and the general situation of women in Brazil today. Women are responsible for housework and care activities, and the sexual division of labour establishes hierarchies that discriminate against women. This all contributed to the campaign's strategies to build equality between women and men. In this journey there were victories, but also challenges.

Introduction

This article's objective is to show how the Brazilian Central Única dos Trabalhadores (Unified Workers Central, CUT), through the National Secretariat of Working Women of CUT (SNMT/CUT), developed the campaign of 'equality of opportunities in life, in work and in the labour movement'. In order to understand the campaign, it is important to show how the organisational structure of CUT Brazil operates and to illustrate how the SNMT's work is embedded in this structure.

CUT Brazil was founded in 1983 and is organised at two levels: horizontal and vertical. At the horizontal level, CUT Brazil is organised in all twenty-six states and in the Federal District. There is also a national structure, which has its headquarters in São Paulo, where the presidency and all secretaries sit. The National Secretariat of Working Women is part of this national structure.

At the vertical level, there is a range of organisations, including grassroots labour organisations and institutions organised by sectors of economic activity: trade unions, federations and confederations. CUT Brazil also builds on the support of expert and advisory bodies such as the Agency for Solidarity Development (ADS), the National Institute of Occupational Health (INST), Unisoli Travel and Tourism, and the Observatory Institute (IOS). It also has six trade union education and training centres and a Tourism and Hospitality School.

The gender policy of CUT Brazil is the responsibility of the National Secretariat of Working Women, which was created in 2003 and replaced the National Commission on the Question of Women Workers of CUT (CNQMT/CUT). The SNMT/CUT aims to discuss strategies for the development of the CUT's gender policies, as well as to implement these policies nationally. In addition, SNMT/CUT is responsible for developing and coordinating policies within the CUT with regard to the social relations of gender, race and class, in order to overcome inequalities between women and men. It organises women workers to be active in the workplace and the union movement on issues that affect their lives as workers, and strives to sensitise women and men workers on overcoming inequalities in the workplace and in society in general. This latter function is carried out through seminars, written documents and public debates. SNMT/CUT's priority areas

include organising women in CUT to combat all forms of discrimination in society, in the workplace and in the union movement. It also intervenes in public policy processes, in an attempt to strengthen the interface with all policies and projects of CUT. Finally, it works to consolidate cooperation with the international trade union movement, labour movements and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in defending the rights of women (Relações Sociais de Gênero Sindicalismo, 2013: 48).

Patricia Pelatieri explains that women's increased participation has had important implications for the labour movement:

The presence of women in the Brazilian labour market has increased continuously in recent decades. This growing participation, along with the influence of feminist movements of emancipation, have caused changes in the labour movement, to introduce the debate on gender relations and inequality in the labour market and in other aspects of life (Pelatieri, 2015: 1).

Some Significant Moments in the History of the SNMT/CUT

In 1988, the 1st National Meeting of woman workers of CUT took place, which approved one plan of struggles to be presented at the 3rd National Congress of CUT Brazil (III CONCURT). The plan's goals included: to fight against all forms of discrimination against women in the workplace and in society, and to strengthen the National Commission on the Question of Workers of CUT and Commissions of Women in the twenty-six states and the Federal District. The meeting also decided to establish October 12 as the National Day of Struggles for Day Care Centres.¹

In 1991, the 4th National Congress of CUT Brazil (IV CONCURT) agreed that it would support the proposed decriminalisation and legalisation of abortion. It also approved a proposal to take the decision on a quota for participation of women in states and national directorships of CUT Brazil to the 6th National Plenary in 1993.

The 6th National Plenary approved a proposal that the composition of the directors must have at least 30% of each of the sexes (Resoluções da 6^a Plenária Nacional da CUT, 1993). The resolution was approved, but it was just a recommendation and did not become law.

In 1994, at the 5th National Congress of CUT Brazil (V CONCURT), the policy of quotas started to be put into practice and to be applied in the national directorships (Resoluções do 5^o Congresso Nacional da CUT, 1994).

In 1995, at the 7th National Plenary of CUT Brazil, the CNQMT/CUT launched a campaign to promote equality of opportunities for women. This campaign had two priorities for the period 1995–2000: valorising women's work, and fortifying the organisation of women in the CUT Brazil. Although there was little progress in achieving the first goal, the second goal was achieved. All twenty-six states and the Federal District appointed a secretary of women. In various fields of activities, the majority of federations and confederations affiliated to the CUT Brazil had an organisation of women.

In 2004, the SNMT/CUT, with support from the Fund for Gender Equality in Canada (FIG/CIDA), launched the campaign 'Violence Against Women: Zero Tolerance'. The campaign's objective was to draw the attention of union leaders to the various forms of violence that women experienced at home, in public places, in the workplace and in the union movement (CUT, 2005). In 2008, at the 12th National Plenary the resolution on 30% minimum representation of each gender was incorporated into the statute of the CUT Brazil. In 2012, the 11th National Congress of CUT (XI CONCURT) approved parity between women and men in leadership positions. It was agreed that from 2015 all the state and national leadership of the CUT must be 50% men and 50% women.

The General Situation of Brazilian Women Today

Women continue to receive less pay for equal work, suffer discrimination in the workplace, and are concentrated in precarious sectors where the working conditions are the worst and which do not have the same rights as formal workers. Pelatieri argues that this gendered division of labour continues to concentrate women in particular types of jobs, most often related to domestic care:

Most women reproduce in the labour market similar activities to that of domestic work – educating children or caring for the elderly and sick, working mainly in sectors related to education and health. The data show that in 2012, the sectors that relied on women's work were those that include activities that have the features of the duties performed in the home, such as service delivery and social activity, which together accounted for 44.6% of employed. (Pelatieri, 2015: 1).

Men and the state often do not share in these responsibilities. The men do little work at home, and the state has little investment in public kindergartens and schools. This situation further hinders the ability of women to gain permanent positions in the labour market. Expanding access to public kindergartens is one way that the state can take responsibility for the care of children.

Currently public kindergartens cater for only 21% of children from birth to three years. There is a shortage of almost nine million places for children in day care centres in the country (Marcolino, 2013).

On 26 June 2014, the National Education Plan (PNE) was sanctioned by the Presidency of the Republic. This law will be valid for ten years, and establishes guidelines, goals and strategies for education. The PNE's goal is to have universal early childhood education for children 4–5 years old by 2016, and to expand the supply of early childhood education in kindergartens to cater for at least 50% of children up to 3 years of age by 2024.²

In general, women work longer hours than men. They tend to work fewer hours in their workplaces, but much more in domestic work and care.

The logic of organisation and structure of the labour market does not value the need to balance family responsibilities with professional work, which limits the availability of women to work. Although women decreased the time devoted to housework: in 2012, they spent two hours less, weekly, with housework hours than in 2001, according to IBGE [Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics] data, still have a working time more than men, 20.8 hours per week while they work 10 hours per week (Pelatieri, 2014: 5).

The wage gap between men and women persists. In general, women are paid on average 30% less than men, demonstrating a specific discrimination against women workers, especially black women. In addition, the burden on working women is more extensive because they bear the social responsibility for reproductive work (caring for children, the home, the family, the sick and the elderly). This wage inequality occurs primarily because women's work is still seen as transitory and as helping men. Furthermore, because women are culturally assigned the responsibility for social reproduction, their professional growth is more restricted.

Women workers are more impacted by changes in production, the flexibility of labour relations and high turnover, which helps to expand their presence in the informal labour market, at home and part-time.

In Brazil, it is mandatory that land use grants are made on behalf of both women and men; since 2003, in the event of separation the land stays with the children. However, despite this, women

still have less access to land. Even though women can legally own land, they often face barriers when deciding how to use the land, and there has been little progress on policy regarding financing and credit for women (Mulheres e agroecologia, Undated: 17).³

In 2011 there were approximately 93.5 million employed persons in Brazil. Table 1 shows the number of unionised workers in urban and rural areas; it also shows a breakdown by gender.

TOTAL			URBAN			RURAL		
Total	Men	Women	Urbano	Men	Women	Rural	Men	Women
16.046.808	9.553.377	6.493.431	12.377.905	7.397.732	4.980.173	3.668.903	2.155.645	1.513.258

Source: National Household Sample Search (PNAD), 2011. Data presented by National Secretary of Organisation to a meeting of the national leadership. São Paulo. 2013.

The participation of women inside the trade union movement is significant and positive, but it does not reflect the real participation of women in the labour market. Women are half of the working class and have increased unionisation, but there are still very few women in the union movement's positions of power, especially in the three positions of greatest importance: president, treasurer and secretary general.

In 2013 the CUT-Brazil launched a national campaign with the objective of extending the representative base, partly by increasing the affiliation of new unions. According to data presented by the National Secretary of Organisation to the national leadership in São Paulo in 2013, 'Unionisation rates in Brazil have not risen in the last twenty years, even with the resumption of growth and job creation since 2003'. According to the data, the rate of unionisation in 2011 was just 17.2%. Of the total number of employed persons in that year, 53 million (58%) were men and 39 million (42%) were women). Of these, 17.7% of the men and 16.5% of the women were unionised (PNAD, 2011).

The Campaign for Equality of Opportunities in Life, in Work, and in the Labour Movement

Considering the situation outlined above, the 2008 12th National Plenary of CUT approved the re-launch of the Campaign for Equal Opportunities as part of the Platform of Women. (The women's platform is the action programme of the SNMT/CUT, set for a certain period.) For the SNMT/CUT the situation of women in the world of work is related to the approach to gender that arose out of patriarchy and emphasised by capitalism – that is, men are considered to be more suitable to the public sphere and women to the private sphere. Despite this attitude, women are increasingly active in the world of work; despite the lack of solidarity from their companions and the difficulty of convincing the leadership to understand domestic work as work that need public policy.

It is in the interests of capitalism and patriarchal society for women to be responsible for housework and care activities. This ensures that (male) workers have all the conditions that enable them to be more productive. This sexual division of labour ensures that the conditions of entry and stay in the labour market are differentiated for women and men. Women are always at a disadvantage.

If we consider that the working class is made up of people of both sexes, CUT Brazil should accept that domestic work is work. It should fight for the state to assume its responsibilities in public policy, and for male workers to share the household chores with their partners. With the resumption of the campaign for equality of opportunities, CUT attempted to articulate various aspects related to the daily life of women including the situations they face in the union world and in society; they tried to analyse how being a man and being a woman impacts different situations in terms of access to and permanence in the formal labour market, and political participation in the trade union movement.

The re-launched campaign also dealt with other aspects in relation to equality – in life, in society and in the labour movement – and then proposed actions for union affiliates and for the CUT itself. It demanded public policies that focus on the gendered division of labour, especially in the household and in care. On the one hand, achievements in everyday life (reproductive work) are linked to the executive power; on the other hand, those related to the workplace and the so-called world of work relate mostly to the legislative power, the National Congress, and employers and their organisations.

In addressing various aspects of the world of work it is necessary to take into account that this requires action on several fronts. For example, the relationship in wage negotiations is established directly with employers or their representatives. To fight for equal rights for domestic workers it is necessary to act in coordination with the trade union movement and women to press the legislature. And internally, we need to ensure and broaden the participation of women. In each case, the strategies are different.

The campaign platforms

Unlike the first campaign, the second campaign did not establish general priorities, but focused on specific goals to be achieved in various areas. The discrimination faced by women in the working world is not isolated. It has to do with the sexual division of labour, little investment in public policies that impact the lives of women and lack of commitment by the union movement to encourage the participation of women workers.

All these factors boosted the re-launch of the Campaign for Equal Opportunities and therefore promoted actions to combat gender inequalities at all levels, from the base to the national CUT. The campaign required different strategies and a series of coordinated actions aimed at discussing and securing equal opportunities at three levels: in life, in the union and at work. In each of these dimensions, we selected a priority issue, and defined relevant objectives and actions.

- Central Axis Campaign for life:
 - Fight for increased access to public childcare.
 - Encourage sharing of responsibilities between men, women and the state for reproductive work and care for human life.
 - Ratify ILO Convention C156 – Workers with Family Responsibilities.
- Central Axis Campaign for the workplace:
 - Provide equal pay for work of equal value – ILO Convention C100.
 - Reduce working hours without loss of pay.
 - Extend maternity leave with shared responsibility.
- Central Axis Campaign for the labour movement:
 - Guarantee the minimum quota of 30% women in the trade unions, federations and confederations.

- Emphasise participation in collective bargaining in union formations.
- Begin a unionisation campaign aimed at women.

The actors

When this campaign was approved the SNMT/CUT had a goal to work with the women and men of CUT Brazil, as well as with popular movements, the feminist movement, governmental organisations and international organisations. Some examples will show how SNMT/CUT worked in this campaign. The first action SNMT/CUT took was to provide guidance for Secretaries of Working Women in states, federations and confederations.

The SNMT/CUT operates so that there is the engagement of the whole of the CUT at all levels, including the National Collective of Women, so that the Campaign is present and implemented across the country. It promotes debates and workshops on the campaign, and disseminates information in various newspapers.

The broad extent of the campaign is the result of the engagement of trade unions that promote the campaign in their areas, using newsletters, the Internet, radio and television programmes, etc.; they also participate in activities driven by CUT. This is an extraordinary network for diffusion of information in the workplace, in trade unions, and in social and feminist movements.

Different levels of struggle and action

The SNMT/CUT produced a pamphlet explaining about ILO Convention 156, concerning equal opportunities and equal treatment for men and women workers with family responsibilities, and promoted a national petition for ratification. The pamphlet was distributed in all states, but was not very successful in mobilising for the national petition. The National Secretariat of Working Women participated in the tripartite commission that approved proposals for ratification.

In the final documents of 3rd National Conference on Policies for Women, held in 2011, the women of CUT Brazil, in partnership with women's movements, recommended increasing access to public child care in rural and urban areas. In Brazil, the first stage of basic education consists of day-care centers for children up to 3 years and 11 months and preschools for children up to 5 years and 11 months. The CUT Brazil proposes to expand access to public day care, and to make it full time. This action should be coordinated between departments to meet the need of children, mothers and others caretakers of children.

The same proposal was put forward by the Brazilian Central of Workers, and was approved in the 1st National Conference on Employment and Decent Work in 2012. This is very important because the approved proposals became part of the work plan of the federal government.

Beyond the initially proposed actions related to women's equality, a focus on two themes was developed: abortion and violence against women. For CUT Brazil, especially for the women, the right to decide about our own bodies is related to a fundamental struggle for our independence. It is unacceptable that women die or are arrested for interrupting unwanted pregnancies. Since 2008 the SNMT/CUT has been part of the National Front against the criminalisation of women and for the legalisation of abortion. Besides the mobilisation against the conservative sectors that campaign to remove the right to abortion, the Front produced a document called 'Platform for Legalisation of Abortion in Brazil'. This platform spells out the terms of the abortion legalisation proposal that guarantees the life, rights and reproductive self-determination for women, and at the same time it indicates the necessary measures and policies to implement it in a fair and respectful manner, on equal terms for all women.

Combating violence against women is a theme that appears in almost all activities of the National Secretariat of Working Women. In 2013 SNMT worked with the feminist movement to

press the president to sanction a specialised care law that assures women victims of sexual violence access to public health services. Hospitals should provide victims of sexual violence emergency, comprehensive and multidisciplinary care aimed at treatment of physical and psychological injuries resulting from sexual violence, as well as referral, if any, to social services (Law No. 12.845 of 1 August 2013, Art. 1).

In 2007, the Presidency's Secretariat on Policies for Women brokered an agreement between federal, state and local governments with the objective of coordinating actions and public policies throughout the country aimed at consolidating the National Policy Combating Violence against Women. In 2011 the Pact underwent a review of priorities and objectives.⁴ On 9 March 2015 President Dilma Rousseff signed the law that criminalises femicide in Brazil.⁵

In the working world our main theme is the struggle for equal pay for work of equal value. This must necessarily be linked to discussions on technological development and industrial structure, and the impact these changes have on the workplace. It is important to consider that wage differences are related to the ways in which women enter and remain in the labour market; their working conditions often expose them to greater sexual and psychological violence, and devalue their work.

The Bill for specifically ensuring implementation of equal pay for men and women is another area of focus. The National Secretariat of Working Women of CUT Brazil, along with partners from other unions, prepared a project called the 'Equality Act' (PL 4857/2009) to present to Congress. This project creates mechanisms to prevent discrimination against women, ensuring the same opportunities for access and retention in employment and equal pay:

The participation of women in the Brazilian labour market is growing. In the 1970s, women with 10 years or more as participants in the labour market totalled 18.2%. Currently this figure has increased to more than 52% in 2012, according to PNAD [National Household Sample Search]. That's over half of the women are in the labour market. Studies show that the greater presence of women did not come accompanied by greater equity between men and women. Despite the prohibition of sex-based pay discrimination guaranteed by law, they continue to have, on average, 73.7% of the remuneration of men (IBGE, 2013). It could be argued that it is a qualification that difference is reflected in a wage gap.... However, women are more qualified than men⁶ and, when comparing men's and women's gains in more educated population groups (12 or more years of studies), the abyss opens wide: they received in 2012 66% of the salary of men, the same proportion as in 2002 (IBGE, 2013) (Krein and Castro, 2015: 1).

In Brazil, workers in the public sector have 180 days of maternity leave paid by the federal government. Those in the private sector have 120 days. Only women in the formal labour market have this right. The Federal Constitution guarantees men the right to paternity leave of five days. The SNMT supports the increase of maternity leave from 120 for 180 days for women workers in the private sector, as well as the increase of paternity leave from 5 days to 180 days for all the men workers, without loss of job and salary for both. The women of CUT Brazil believe that, in the first six months of life, the baby should stay with the mother, especially considering the need for breastfeeding. For the next six months she should be with her father. It is important for children to enjoy the warmth and affection of parents for a longer period. But it is also important that men and women share responsibilities for the care of their children and that women are not discriminated against in the workplace for being mothers.

The campaign to reduce working hours is also partly an attempt to ensure gender mainstreaming. A reduction in working hours would generate thousands of jobs, and may mean that

more women are included in the labour market. The notion of gender mainstreaming is meant to highlight the significance of time. There are different perceptions and uses of time by women and men. Whereas the workload of women is greater due to the imposition of social responsibility for reproductive work, the reduction of working hours without loss of pay is critical for women so that they can focus on studying, have more time for leisure and recreation, and have more time to gain professional qualifications.

The SNMT/CUT developed a proposed list of demands that deals with gender issues, as a guide for the base unions. This is a useful working tool, especially for the small trade unions. However, it is important to mention that categories such as banking and metallurgical workers ensure the presence of women at the negotiating table. Assurance mechanisms in the structures of trade unions that enable the participation of women include local nurseries and changes in schedules of activities.

Within the trade union movement our challenge is to ensure a greater presence of women in various spheres of power within the union movement, including increasing our presence in the presidency of trade unions and in CUT branches. The quota is the minimum, not the maximum. Enabling women to participate in all positions of power in the labour movement is not only a task for women, but for all workers. Inequality is a direct result of discrimination. To overcome it, affirmative action for women's inclusion in the spaces of representation and working-class decision making is required (Secretaria Nacional da Mulher Trabalhadora, 2009).

The 11th National Congress of the CUT, held in July 2012, was an event that went down in history for having secured another major breakthrough in the fight for the equality of working women. Parity was approved, and this mechanism is already expressed in the statute. In 2015, the directorships of the National Executive and the state will have to allocate 50% of posts to women. This will help to properly reflect their majority in society, in the labour market and in political spaces, especially in the labour movement.

It is common to hear that in some places it is difficult to put this proposal into practice, but there are also good practices. For example, at the 9th National Congress of Metal Workers held in April 2015, despite women metal workers representing only 19.1% of all metal workers in Brazil,⁷ the elected leadership for 2015–2019 was 26 men (63%) and 15 women (37%).⁸ This situation shows how developments within the unions can be attributed to gender mainstreaming strategies instituted by the CUT.

What has been the Impact beyond the Specific Policy Gains?

The policy of quotas increased the participation and visibility of women in the Central to the extent that it changed the face of the CUT Brazil. The increased presence of women meant that they came to occupy positions of political leadership such as Secretary of the Organisation, Department of Women, Youth Secretary and Department of Social Policy, among others. This gave more visibility and, importantly, increased political participation, although few women occupy higher positions such as President, Finance and General Secretary.

In 2012, the 11th National Congress of CUT (XI CONCUR) approved a proposal to carry out research on the profile of the leaders of the CUT Brazil. The research was to be carried out by the Inter-union Department of Statistics and Socioeconomic Studies (DIEESE), and the results were to be presented to the 14th National Plenary in 2014. The objective of this research was to identify certain information about the profile of national leaders of CUT Brazil, such as age, race/ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, disabilities, schooling, position in the family and number of economic dependents. This information was intended to support discussions on affirmative action.

Interviews were carried out with CUT leaders at state and national level. Those interviewed represented 85% of the leaders (357 out of 492), being 37.8% women and 62.2% men. At national level, 100 out of 131 leaders responded to the survey, being 59.0% men and 41.0% women.

The results for gender by region of the country showed that the proportion of leaders who were women was as follows: North (40.8%), Northeast (43.3%), Midwest (43.7%), Southeast (32.5%) and South (46.7%). In the country as a whole the total is 36.9% women and 63.1% of men.

The proportion of women leaders by position was: President (23.8%); Vice President (23.8%); Secretary General (30%); Combating racism (54.5%); Communications and press (31.3%); Working women (100%); Formation (52.4%); Youth (22.2%); Environment(42.9%); Organisation and trade union policy (21.7%); Social policies (22.7%); Labour relations (4.8%) and Occupational health (43.5%). Among the surveyed leaders, 44.1% said that the basic entities have quotas, but they did not mention the percentage. In 59% of these entities, the quota for women in leadership is 30%. In 13% of responses the quotas are 50% (parity). Among the basic entities, 39.5% have a collective of women and 45.4% have a secretariat of women.

A significant number of leaders (78.2%) said that the basic entities have actions to include women. When asked what these actions were, the responses were: events, debates, conferences, meetings of women (78.9%); campaigns for increased participation and awareness (42.3%); training for women to pursue representation (32.6%); inclusion and expansion of women's claims in the guidelines for collective bargaining (30.8%); campaigns to expand the rights of women in society (28.3%); and encouraging the participation of women in leadership (24.4%).

Regarding the main difficulties in realising the political participation of women, the responses were: personal, family and other difficulties related to joining the union (25.6%); lack of interest of the entity (25%); lack of interest of women in participating in the trade union (22.6%); prejudice and discrimination, that is, between the workers (17.9%); prejudice and discrimination of the entity (direction) (12.1%).

The views of women and men diverge particularly for the last point. For 21.4% of women prejudice and discrimination of the entity (direction) is the main difficulty, while 6.5% of the men considered that to be an obstacle. Few men feel that there is discrimination by the union leadership.

We must recognise that the government has taken several positive steps in the area of combating violence against women and early childhood education, among others, but there is still much to be done. By incorporating the proposals of women's movements into its work plan, the state breaks the neutrality and assumes that it is the government's responsibility to have policies that change the lives of women.

Transformative Potential

After the achievement of parity in policy, it is necessary to take action so that parity is also realised in practice. Parity is not a number. For the women of CUT it is politics. Therefore, it is necessary to have assurance mechanisms in place in the structures of trade unions that facilitate the participation of women. For instance, unions should schedule their meetings in ways that facilitate the participation of women, and guarantee spaces for children during these activities. In addition, there has to be an ongoing focus to stimulate women workers to organise in their workplaces, to include guidelines for women at the negotiation table, and to promote action for the unionisation of women.

There have been great strides in the organisation and preparation of proposals dealing with equality between women and men, but relatively little progress in achieving these in law and public policy. The current Congress is very conservative. The workers must be permanently mobilised to ensure that they do not lose rights. The feminist movement and other social movements, including

CUT, are part of the movement for political reform. It is essential to continue this articulation with popular movements.

When we examine what has been achieved and where there have been greater advances, we have an issue that applies to all axes and actions. The importance of seeking allies within and outside the CUT was crucial. We realised great mobilisations in 2013 to demand the end of outsourcing, reduction of working hours, ending child labour and for the equalisation of rights for domestic workers. Now, to apply parity as a policy and not just as a number, you need the commitment of all leaders, with concrete actions to encourage and give concrete conditions for the participation of women.

The Prime Movers of Change and Leaders of the Campaign

The women of CUT Brazil are the prime movers of change and leaders of the campaign to change gender relations in the labour movement, in the workplace and in society in general. The activities organised by women inside the CUT Brazil marked the debate over the sexual division of work and power relations. The activities always sought to point out the challenges related to overcoming gender inequality and implementing actions with this perspective. They have also sought to convince all members of the trade union movement, men and women, that this fight is not only for women, but for the working class as a whole. From this point of view, the incorporation of a gender perspective in the actions of various departments and levels of government is essential to the reduction of inequalities between men and women, since the state is not neutral.

Rosane Silva (2010: 145), the National Secretary of Working Women of CUT Brazil, has argued that this campaign is one of SNMT/CUT's priorities, and emphasises that it is the product of a historical process constructed over time. DIEESE has contributed a great deal of research that shows the campaign had an impact on the number of women leaders; however, the challenge of breaking with the sexual division of labour and achieving equality in the workplace still remains.

The oppression and exploitation of women continue to give support to capitalism and its contradictions. Therefore, actions and demands to 'a gender approach' to changing women's lives means to transform the world we live in. And for SNMT/CUT there is no way to transform the lives of the working class without transforming the lives of women. Therefore, women's history in the CUT fills women workers with pride and strengthens us in the struggle to transform society and defend the deepening of a political project that advances in rights, equality, income distribution and radicalisation of democracy.

NOTES

¹ Child care is important for children's education and for women's autonomy. In most families, it is women who are responsible for the care and security of the children.

² <http://www.observatoriodopne.org.br>. The Observatory PNE is an online platform which aims to monitor the indicators for each of the twenty goals of the National Education Plan and their respective strategies, and to provide analysis on educational policies already exist and that are to be implemented over the ten years of the Plan

³ This situation of prejudice and discrimination also occurs in relation to trade union participation of rural workers.

⁴ <http://www.compromissoeatitude.org.br/pacto-nacional-pelo-enfrentamento-a-violencia-contra-mulheres/>

⁵ <http://noticias.uol.com.br/cotidiano/ultimas-noticias/2015/03/08/dilma-sanciona-nesta-segunda-feira-lei-que-tipifica-feminicidio.htm>

⁶ In 2011, women represented the majority of entrants and higher education graduates: 55.8% of freshmen in higher education were women and 61.1% of the students were female. This indicates that the female success rate is higher than that of men in the university education system (Brasil, SPM, RASEAM, 2013: 78).

⁷ <http://www.cnmcut.org.br/midias/arquivo/212-perfil-das-trabalhadoras-metalurgicas-2015.pdf>

⁸ FEMONLINE 976 – <http://fem.org.br/newsletter>.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

MARIA LUIZA DA COSTA is a journalist and feminist. Since 2009 she has been working at the National Secretariat of Working Women as an assessor. [Email: luiza@cut.org.br]