

EAST AFRICAN TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

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EATUC Women's Committee Meeting Report

Date: 20th – 21st March, 2025

Corridor Springs Hotel, Arusha, Tanzania

Day One: 20th March 2025.

Registration and Accreditation of the Women Committee Participants

The meeting commenced with the registration and accreditation of 16 participants (13 women and 3 men), organized by the EATUC Secretariat. Among the participants were members of EATUC Women Committee from six EATUC affiliates, including ZATUC, NOTU, COSYBU, COTU (K), CESTRAR, and TUCTA, facilitators and EATUC Secretariat staff. The gathering aimed to foster discussions focused on strengthening EATUC women's committee as well as amplifying the role of women in the trade union movement. This session also provided participants with an opportunity to network and familiarize themselves with the objectives of the event.

Opening Session

The opening session featured welcome remarks by Brother Steve Mwaiko from EATUC and Brother Edmund Moshi, representing the International Labour Organization (ILO). Both speakers emphasized the critical importance of women's participation in the trade union movement and highlighted the urgency of addressing gender-specific issues in the trade unions and workplace. The main objectives of the meeting were outlined, including the promotion of stronger advocacy for women's rights and leadership within the trade unions.

First Session: Gender-Based Violence and Harassment at the Workplace

This session, facilitated by the ILO and moderated by NOTU, addressed the growing concerns surrounding gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) in the workplace. It highlighted the vital role of trade unions in combating these issues and in ensuring that workplaces are safe, inclusive, and free from discrimination. Key topics included gender bias, intersectionality, and effective strategies for preventing and responding to harassment. The session also explored how unions can advocate for safer and more equitable work environments, with a focus on the ratification and implementation of C190 and policies that protect women workers.

Group Photo and Tea/Coffee Break

A group photo was taken to commemorate the meeting, followed by a tea/coffee break. During this time, participants engaged in informal discussions and continued networking.

Second Session: The Role of Women in the Trade Union Movement (Leadership and Empowerment)

Facilitated by Sister Rose Omamo and moderated by CESTRAR, this session emphasized the importance of promoting women's leadership within trade unions. It underscored the essential role women play in driving social change and advancing gender equality.

Topics discussed included:

- The Current Landscape of Women in Trade Unions: Despite comprising 40–50% of trade union membership in many countries, women remain underrepresented in leadership roles.
- The Importance of Women's Leadership: Women in leadership positions are crucial for effectively addressing gender-specific issues such as maternity rights, equal pay, and workplace safety.
- Challenges Faced by Women in Trade Unions: Key challenges identified included fear of victimization, lack of awareness of rights, underrepresentation, gender pay gaps, and cultural barriers.
- Strategies to Advance Women's Leadership: The session proposed strategies such as targeted recruitment, the creation of women-centered platforms, and advocacy for gender-sensitive labor laws.

Lunch Break

Participants enjoyed a lunch break, providing an opportunity to network, share experiences, and reflect on the morning's discussions.

Third Session: Growing Unions Through Women Organizing

This session, facilitated by Sister Rose Omamo and moderated by ZATUC, focused on the critical role women play in strengthening trade unions. It emphasized how organizing women can contribute to growing union membership and increasing influence in leadership structures.

Topics discussed included:

- Role of Women in Trade Union Organizing: Women have been instrumental in advancing gender equity, improving working conditions, and advocating for stronger legal protections for female workers.
- Strategies for Strengthening Women's Organizing: These included capacity building, mentorship programs, and the integration of gender mainstreaming in union policies.
- Challenges: Limited representation in leadership, gender discrimination, work-life balance constraints, and harassment were identified as ongoing obstacles to women's full participation in trade union activities.
- Effective Organizing Strategies: The session proposed practical approaches such as organizing women-only events, offering flexible meeting times, and forming partnerships with women's networks to enhance female participation in unions.

Fourth Session: Group Work – Discussion and Planning for EATUC Women’s Committee Activities

Moderated by COTU-K, and facilitated by Sister Teresa Wabuko, EATUC women’s committee chairperson. Participants engaged in group work through group discussions and information sharing to plan future activities for the EATUC Women’s Committee. The discussions focused on four key areas:

- Education and Training
- Gender Advocacy
- Organizing and Recruitment
- Communication and Publicity.

Each focus area aimed on actionable steps and practical initiatives for continued advocacy on women issues.

Day Two: 21st March, 2025

Recap of Day 1

The second day began with a recap of the previous day’s discussions. This session allowed participants to reflect on the key outcomes of Day 1 and set the stage for the sessions ahead.

Fifth Session: Group Work Presentations

The group presented their findings and proposals from the previous day’s group work. The presentations focused on actionable strategies to enhance the participation, leadership, and representation of women in the trade union movement. Key focus areas included recruitment strategies, advocacy for gender-sensitive policies, and organizing women in both formal and informal economy. **The group work is attached to this report as annex 1.0**

Health Break

A short break allowed participants to recharge before the next session.

Sixth Session: Introduction of the EATUC ISRP System to Report GBVH

EATUC introduced its Integrated System for Reporting Gender-Based Violence and Harassment (GBVH), developed to help affiliate unions effectively report and address such cases. The system aims to enhance support for women workers facing GBVH, enabling unions to respond in a more structured and efficient manner. The session encouraged unions to adopt and implement the system to promote safer working environments.

Seventh Session: Gender Equality in the Workplace

Facilitated by the ILO and moderated by TUCTA, this session focused on promoting gender equality in the workplace. It explored supportive policies and practices such as equal pay, equal opportunities, and non-discrimination. The vital role of trade unions in advocating for these policies was emphasized, and the session highlighted successful cases where unions had made significant progress in improving gender equality.

Lunch Break

Participants enjoyed a lunch break, providing another opportunity for networking and informal discussions.

Eighth Session: Plenary & Workshop Evaluation

The final session consisted of a plenary discussion and an evaluation of the workshop. Participants reviewed the overall success of the meeting and provided feedback on the sessions. Suggestions for improving future meetings were collected. The meeting concluded with closing remarks from EATUC leadership, reaffirming their commitment to advancing gender equality in the workplace and supporting women in trade unions.

Meeting Recommendations

1. Advancing Gender Equality within EATUC

Based on the discussions and outcomes of the EATUC Women's Committee Meeting, the following recommendations have been identified to enhance gender equality, women's leadership, and organizing efforts within trade unions in the East African region:

Development of a Regional Gender Policy with Technical Support from the ILO Recommendation

EATUC should develop a comprehensive Regional Gender Policy that outlines specific actions, frameworks, and goals for promoting gender equality across East African trade unions. This policy should address key areas such as women's leadership, gender-based violence, organizing, recruitment, and gender-sensitive workplace policies.

Action Plan

EATUC should collaborate with the International Labor Organization (ILO) to provide technical support in the development of the policy, ensuring alignment with international labor standards and regional best practices.

The policy should be adaptable to local contexts, considering the diverse legal, economic, and cultural environments within each country. EATUC should engage with key stakeholders; including member unions, women's committees, and governments; to ensure buy-in and successful implementation.

Expected Impact

- A regional framework that clearly defines gender equality goals for the labor movement.
- Increased cohesion among unions across the region in addressing gender disparities.
- Strengthened advocacy for gender-sensitive laws and policies at both national and regional levels.

2. Data Collection and Statistical Analysis on Women Leaders in the Region

Recommendation

To effectively address the underrepresentation of women in union leadership, EATUC should prioritize the collection of accurate and comprehensive data on the number of women leaders within East African trade unions. This data will provide a clearer picture of existing gender

disparities and inform targeted strategies to promote women's leadership, recognize the efforts, struggles and achievements of women trade unionist whose impact remain significant in the labor movement and documenting their stories.

Action Plan

- Conduct a regional survey to collect data on the number of women in union leadership roles, their representation in decision-making, and the types of positions they hold.
- Identify women with remarkable histories within the labor movement
- Establish a centralized database that tracks gender-related metrics, including gender pay gaps, leadership development opportunities for women, and their participation in union organizing and campaigns.
- Partner with national statistical offices and organizations such as the ILO to ensure data accuracy and consistency across the region.

Expected Impact

- Enhanced visibility and awareness of gender disparities in union leadership.
- Data-driven policy interventions targeting areas with the most significant gender gaps.
- Strengthened monitoring and evaluation of gender equality initiatives across the region.

3. Branding and Visibility of Gender Equality Initiatives

Recommendation

To raise awareness and improve visibility around gender equality within the trade union movement, EATUC should invest in developing branded materials that communicate its commitment to women's empowerment and inclusive organizing.

Action Plan

- Develop branded materials such as banners, posters, and pull-up banners that promote EATUC's commitment to gender equality, women's leadership, and inclusive organizing.
- Ensure that all regional conferences, workshops, and events prominently feature these materials to reinforce key gender equality messages.
- Incorporate gender equality branding into all public-facing documents, websites, and social media platforms, ensuring consistent messaging on women's rights in the labor movement.

Expected Impact

- Increased awareness and visibility of gender equality initiatives across the region.
- Strengthened advocacy campaigns and recognition of EATUC as a leader in promoting gender equality in trade unions.
- Empowerment of women workers through symbolic representation and public support for their role in the labor movement.

4. Building the Capacity of Focal Persons and Committees Handling Reported Cases of GBVH

Recommendation

To strengthen the response to Gender-Based Violence and Harassment (GBVH) in the workplace, EATUC should prioritize capacity building for focal persons and committees tasked with handling reported GBVH cases. The focal persons and groups play a critical role in ensuring that incidents are addressed effectively and that victims receive appropriate support and protection.

Action Plan

A. Training Programs for Focal Persons and Committees

Develop specialized training programs tailored for focal persons and committees responsible for handling GBVH cases within trade unions. These training programs should cover:

- i. Legal frameworks and rights related to GBVH and workplace harassment, including national labor laws and international conventions such as ILO Convention 190.
- ii. Psychosocial support for GBVH victims, including how to provide trauma-informed care and referrals to counseling or legal services.
- iii. Confidentiality and data protection, ensuring that sensitive information is handled in compliance with legal and ethical standards.
- iv. Case management skills, including documentation, investigation, follow-up procedures, and ensuring accountability within the workplace and the union.

B. Collaboration with the ILO and Experts

EATUC should collaborate with the International Labor Organization (ILO) and other relevant partners to provide technical support and expertise in developing these capacity-building programs.

Engage gender specialists, legal experts, and experienced counselors to facilitate training sessions and offer guidance on complex GBVH cases.

C. Establishing Clear Reporting and Follow-Up Procedures

Develop standardized reporting and follow-up procedures for focal persons and committees, including:

- i. A standardized reporting format to capture all relevant details consistently.
- i. A feedback loop to monitor case resolution, ensuring that victims receive appropriate outcomes and support.
- ii. Regular follow-up mechanisms to check on victims' well-being and ensure that perpetrators are held accountable.

D. Monitoring and Evaluation

Set up a robust system to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of training programs and the performance of focal persons and committees:

- i. Conduct regular assessments of skills and knowledge to ensure continuous improvement.
- ii. Collect feedback from GBVH victims on the reporting experience and case handling.
- iii. Use reporting tools to track case outcomes and identify trends or gaps in response mechanisms.

E. Creating Awareness and Encouraging Engagement

Raise awareness about the role of focal persons and committees in addressing GBVH, ensuring all union members know how and where to report incidents.

Promote a zero-tolerance policy for GBVH within unions, emphasizing the shared responsibility of both men and women in creating safe and inclusive workplaces.

Expected Impact

- Improved response to GBVH cases within trade unions, ensuring that victims are protected and perpetrators are held accountable.
- Strengthened capacity among union representatives to manage complex GBVH cases fairly, empathetically, and in compliance with legal standards.
- Increased trust and confidence among women workers in the union's ability to address GBVH effectively.
- A growing culture of zero-tolerance for GBVH within unions and workplaces, contributing to safer, more inclusive environments for all workers.

Key Outcomes

Increased Awareness: In-depth discussions focused on combating gender-based violence and promoting gender equality within trade unions.

Leadership Empowerment: A strong commitment to nurturing women leaders through targeted recruitment, mentorship, and capacity-building programs.

Strengthened Organizational Structures: Emphasis on organizing women workers; particularly in informal and male-dominated sectors; to ensure inclusive representation and participation.

Actionable Plans

A clear roadmap for future initiatives, including education and training programs, gender advocacy campaigns, and media outreach to advance women's rights in the labor movement.

This meeting marked a significant step forward in placing gender equality at the heart of trade union priorities. It reaffirmed the collective resolve to take concrete actions that empower and support women in their ongoing efforts to improve working conditions and representation across the East African region.

Conclusion

The EATUC Women’s Committee Meeting proved to be a vital platform for women trade union leaders to engage in meaningful dialogue and develop practical strategies to address gender-based challenges in the workplace. The meeting underscored the importance of increasing women’s leadership within trade unions, advocating for gender-sensitive labor policies, and organizing women workers across all sectors.

Through collaborative efforts, participants formulated actionable strategies to enhance the role of women in the trade union movement. With a renewed commitment to gender equality, the meeting concluded with a unified plan to continue advocating for the empowerment of women within East African trade unions.

Annex 1.0

Discussion and Planning for EATUC Women Committee Activities

- Education and Training
- Gender
- Organizing and Recruitment
- Communication and Publicity

EATUC Women Committee Activities Planning

The EATUC (East African Trade Union Confederation) Women Committee plays a critical role in promoting gender equality, empowering women in the workforce, and advancing the interests of working women across the East African region. A structured plan for the committee’s activities, focusing on the above key areas.

Education and Training

Objective: To Equip women workers with the necessary skills and knowledge to become leaders and active participants in trade union activities and decision-making.

Activities

Skills Development Workshops: Organize training programs focused on leadership skills, labor rights, and advocacy. Key training topics:

- i. Financial literacy and economic empowerment.
- ii. Workers' rights and legal protections.
- iii. Negotiation skills for workplace improvements.
- iv. Advocacy lobbying
- v. Gender
- vi. Collective bargaining
- vii. ILO C 190

viii. Research

Capacity Building for Trade Unionists: Conduct training sessions aimed at enhancing the capacity of women trade unionists to advocate for gender-sensitive policies, including labor laws that address women's concerns.

Train the Trainers Programs: Identify and train women within unions who can further disseminate knowledge within their respective organizations with the targets of:

- i. Training at least 200 women annually across East African countries.
- ii. Focus on both younger women workers and seasoned women activists to balance new energy with experience.
- iii. Timeline: Ongoing, with quarterly workshops.

Gender

Objective: Promote gender equality and empower women workers to address gender-specific issues in the workplace and society.

Activities

Gender Sensitization Campaigns: Create awareness about gender equality in the workplace, sexual harassment, and gender-based violence. This could include:

- i. Public awareness campaigns on the importance of gender equality in trade unions.
- ii. Collaborate with other regional and international bodies to push for gender-specific policy changes (e.g., equal pay, maternal rights, and workplace safety).

Policy Advocacy: Advocate for gender-sensitive policies within the unions and workplaces. Some key areas might include:

- i. Equal pay for equal work.
- ii. Maternity and paternity leave.
- iii. Protection from sexual harassment.
- iv. Work-life balance initiatives.

Networking with International Gender Bodies: Strengthen relationships with global organizations that focus on women's rights, such as UN Women or the International Labor Organization (ILO), to exchange best practices and ensure the committee is aligned with international standards. Target:

- i. Advocate for gender-sensitive policies in at least 70% of unions in the region.
- ii. Conduct gender awareness training for 500 women workers per year.

Organizing and Recruitment

Objective: Increase the participation of women in trade unions, ensuring their voices are heard and that they are represented at all levels of the union movement.

Activities

Women-Only Union Events: Organize women-centric union events such as mentorship or workshops that focus on issues specific to women workers.

Build/Strengthen Women-Only Local Chapters: Establish or strengthen women's committees within national trade unions, ensuring that these committees have a strong presence and voice in union decision-making. Strengthening the regional EATUC women round table.

Recruitment Drives Targeting Women: Implement targeted recruitment strategies that appeal to women workers in traditionally male-dominated sectors such as construction, mining, and transportation.

Partnerships with Women's Networks: Collaborate with other women's advocacy groups to increase the visibility and attractiveness of trade unions to women, especially those in informal or vulnerable sectors. Target:

- i. Increase women's union membership by 20% annually.
- ii. Recruit at least 100 new female union members per year.
- iii. Timeline: Immediate action to begin recruitment campaigns, ongoing for sustained membership growth.

Communication and Publicity

Objective: Raise awareness about the committee's activities, create a strong media presence, and ensure that the issues of women workers are given the attention they deserve. Increase advocacy, publicity and awareness on women issues.

Activities

Social Media Campaigns

- i. Launch regular social media campaigns highlighting success stories, important events, and issues facing women workers. Utilize existing EATUC platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram.
- ii. Share educational content about women's rights and trade union involvement.
- iii. Highlight gender-related issues and achievements in the workforce.

Annual Report and Newsletter: Publish annual report and quarterly newsletters that include highlights of the committee's work, updates on gender-related policy changes, and spotlights on outstanding women trade unionists.

Press Conferences and Media Partnerships: Engage with the media through press releases, conferences and messaging. Develop partnerships with local media outlets to cover issues affecting women in the labor market and the union's actions.

Documenting Success Stories: Collect and share case studies or success stories of women who have benefited from union membership, education programs, or workplace improvements. Targets:

- i. Achieve a 30% increase in social media engagement annually.
- ii. Timeline: Immediate (with continuous updates).

Report Compiled by: EATUC Secretariat & EATUC Women's Committee Chair Person **Date:** 13th April, 2025