



Working Women and COVID-19

The TUCA and the Working Women's Committee of the Americas - CMTA reaffirm that the health, economic and social crisis caused by COVID-19 highlights the failure of the neoliberal model and the policies it promotes, affecting women and men in different ways. Therefore, it is necessary to understand its particular effects and put into practice public policies and interventions that are effective and equitable.

In the context of the crisis, it is important to take into account the specific difficulties faced by women, so recovery measures must have a gender perspective, considering the diversity of realities that they are going through in the region. According to the United Nations - UN, the impacts of the pandemic could reverse the achievements of the gender equality agenda and make it difficult to achieve Goal 5 of the 2030 Agenda, making it more difficult to reduce the gaps between men and women, therefore fueling the decay that has been occurring in several countries.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, informal women workers, according to UN Women, represent 59% of the workforce, this implies that they lack the protection offered by labor laws and social benefits such as sickness benefits, and pensions and health insurance plans. This employment condition has other repercussions, involving a greater number of women living in poverty, working for lower wages and in unsafe conditions, which increases the risk of harassment, sexual and reproductive violence. In this sense, we insist on the importance of the ratification and implementation of Convention 190 against violence and harassment in the world of work.

According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean - ECLAC, domestic workers in informal labour conditions represent a 77.5% in the region, a situation that is difficult in the absence of labor control, for their workplace is considered a private space. During the pandemic, the double risk this sector faces is exemplified: contagion from continuing to work, or poverty from lacking work.

In the case of workers in the front lines, where the health personnel are 72.8% women, there are multiple complaints about the absence of individual protection equipment or adequate protocols to avoid contagion, as well as working conditions characterized by long hours, physical and psychological pressure and, in some countries, violence, and discrimination.

On the other hand, the lack of health policies to return to the classroom in the countries that are implementing it, as well as the lack of safety conditions, or even training before, during, and after the pandemic for educators is troubling.

Teleworking as a response to maintain economic activity in the context of confinement and distancing has made labor relations even more precarious, transferring operating costs from companies to workers, implementing regulation initiatives and emergency decrees that go over democratic mechanisms and without collective bargaining, these conditions will hardly be reversible in the future.

On the other hand, the imbalance in the distribution of domestic tasks and unpaid care have increased exponentially during the pandemic, which implies a devaluation of care work and its role in sustaining the economy. According to the ILO, women contribute 76.2% on average of hours of unpaid care work (more than triple that of men), this difference deepens the triple working hours for women during the crisis, placing them at greater risk of contagion for their socially assigned role as caregiver of the sick at home. This situation causes a serious impact on their health and safety, therefore, the recognition of family co-responsibility is essential.





This crisis also increases the vulnerable situation of rural women and those of indigenous and native populations due to the abandonment and disregard that they have endured before and during confinement, being without economic income, exposed to situations of violence, and made invisible by the policies of the States.

The pandemic period indirectly generated conditions that drastically increased gender-based violence in the region. For many women and girls, homes continue to be places of greatest insecurity, leaving them, in many cases isolated, with few possibilities to report their aggressors.

All these situations promote a considerable setback in the achievement of human and labor rights of women, so it is necessary to adopt inclusive public policies that consider gender equality and women's rights, considering the diversity of necessities essential to overcome this crisis caused by COVID-19.

In this sense, from the TUCA and its CMTA we propose the following measures and/or affirmative actions to thus advance and minimize the effects of the pandemic for women:

▶ Increase the government's resources allocated to prevent violence against women and the protection of victims..

▶ Demand that governments promptly ratify Convention 190 against violence and harassment in the world of work, as well as the ratification and implementation of C156 (family co-responsibility) and C189 (domestic workers).

▶ Demand that the government guarantees the stability of work and wages for women through existing public policies or through the creation of new mechanisms that guarantee it, both in formal or informal work conditions.

▶ Adopt, reestablish, and/or expand comprehensive social protection regimes that reflect the understanding of the particular circumstances of women and the recognition of the care work economy, considering national laws and international agreements.

▶ Demand the prohibition of the suspension or termination of contracts for the provision of temporary services of female workers during the time of the emergency in all national or territorial, centralized or decentralized public entities of services, as well as in the private sphere in all its forms, under the argument of bankruptcy, low productivity, loss of earnings, or others.

▶ Regulate the implementation of telework to avoid the precariousness and/or flexibility of existing labor relations, taking as a premise the guarantee of work under ILO standards.

▶ Promote the representation of women in trade unions or other bodies at the national level, as well as in tripartite negotiation spaces where measures are defined to guarantee the protection of women workers against the effects of the pandemic.

▶ Urge governments and employers to generate data segregated by gender and thus be able to carry out analyzes on the impacts of COVID-19 and establish new short and long-term strategies with a gender perspective.

