

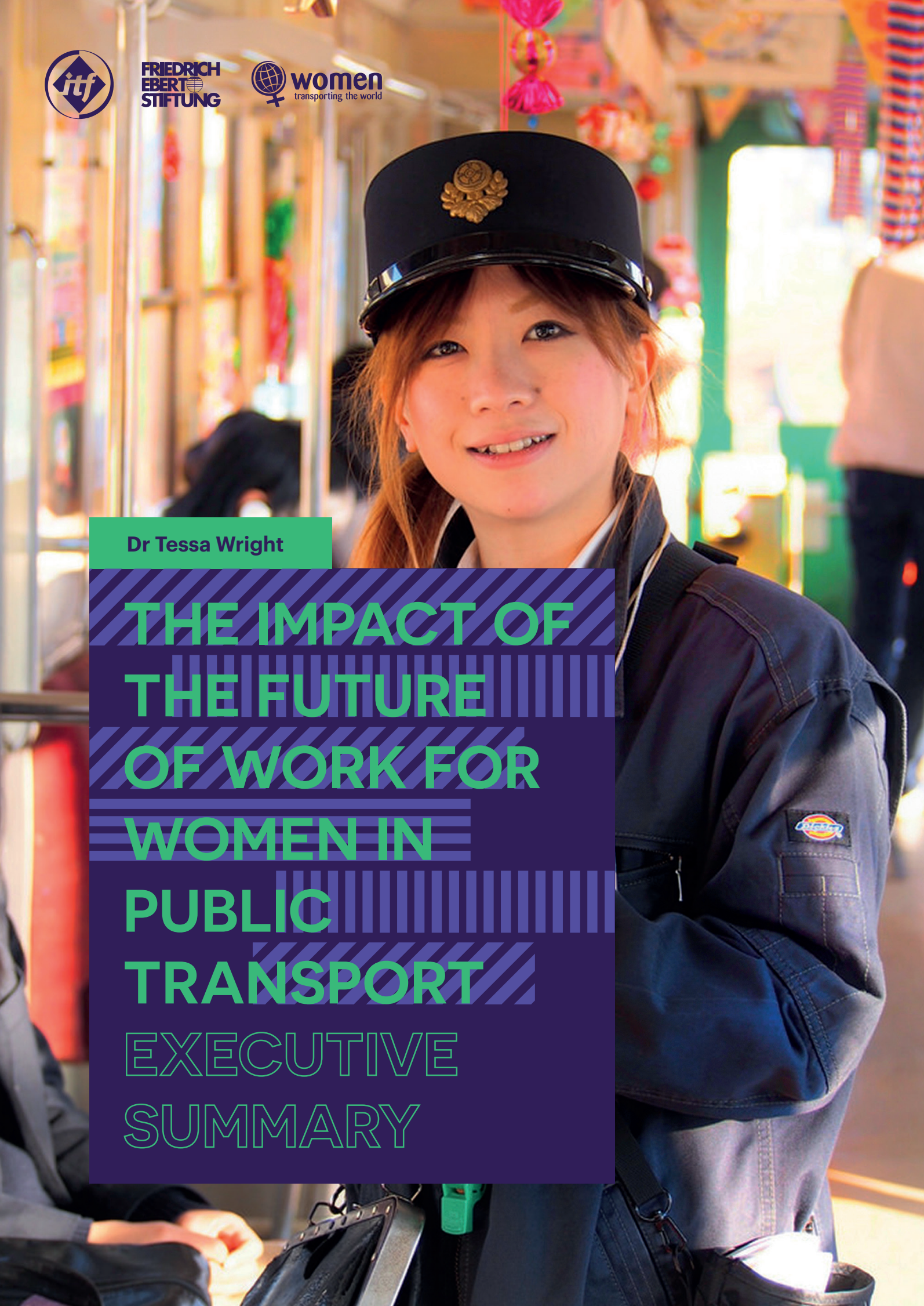


FRIEDRICH
EBERT
STIFTUNG

women
transporting the world

Dr Tessa Wright

THE IMPACT OF THE FUTURE OF WORK FOR WOMEN IN PUBLIC TRANSPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY





ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Tessa Wright is Reader in Human Resource Management at the Centre for Research in Equality and Diversity, School of Business and Management, at Queen Mary University of London. She has researched and written widely on equality at work, with a focus on gender, sexuality and intersectionality, in particular in male-dominated sectors and occupations including the fire service, construction and transport. She is interested in interventions to overcome gender inequality at work, including trade union action and the use of public procurement. She is the author of *Gender and sexuality in male-dominated occupations: women workers in construction and transport* (2016) published by Palgrave Macmillan and co-editor, with Hazel Conley, of the *Gower Handbook of Discrimination at Work* (2011).

September 2018

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was commissioned by the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) and the author received valuable assistance and comments from Claire Clarke, ITF Deputy Women Transport Workers and Gender Equality Officer and Jodi Evans, ITF Women Transport Workers and Gender Equality Officer, with input from Victor Figueroa Clark, ITF Strategic Researcher. The research in the five cities was carried out by the following researchers: Khemphatsorn Thanapatthamanan (Bangkok); Daniela Gomez and Marina Moscoso, Despacio (Bogota); Rob Rees and Sandra Van Niekerk, Naledi (Cape Town); Patricia Robles Muniz (Mexico City); and Anne Kamau, University of Nairobi, (Nairobi).

The research was also greatly assisted by the participation of women trade union participants at a research workshop in Bogota from SNTT and SintraRecaudo (Colombia); MWU, PUTON, TAWU and RAWU (Kenya); ATM (Mexico) and SRUT and SEETU (Thailand) and ITF regional representatives from Africa, Anna Karume; Asia, Su-angcana Tungworachet; and Latin America, Andréa Privatti.

The research would not have been possible without the willingness to take part in interviews of women workers and representatives of trade unions, employers and civil society organisations in each of the five cities, so many thanks to them all.

#OurPublicTransport

The ITF launched its 'Our Public Transport' programme in 2016 to campaign for public transport systems that meet the needs of the majority of people, workers and the environment. The overall objective of the programme is to coordinate activities, actions and projects to strengthen union power and capacities to win an alternative model of public transport based on public ownership, public investment, climate jobs and employment and organisational rights for transport workers organised in strong unions.

The ITF women transport workers' committee has decided to make this campaign a core pillar of the ITF women's programme. Gender-related issues and women's participation and leadership are integrated in every aspect of the programme.

www.ourpublictransport.org



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

Public transport workers, already heavily affected by neoliberal policies that threaten employment conditions, are facing important changes due to the introduction of technologies that have the potential to further transform the way that work is currently performed, overseen and organised. This report has been commissioned by the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) to ensure that the needs and concerns of women public transport workers are taken into account in discussions on the future of work in public transport. Too often women are considered primarily as users of public transport, with little attention to the issues facing the many women who participate in a variety of roles in the public transport workforce globally.

Gender segregation in the public transport workforce means that women are typically concentrated into the lower-paid administrative and customer service functions, with only small numbers occupying the better-remunerated driving roles. Jobs done by women may be particularly vulnerable to automation. However, there are also opportunities for new forms of work brought about by technological change, but it is essential that women also gain access to the training and skills necessary to benefit from such employment opportunities.

The expansion of public transport infrastructure in developing countries may offer job opportunities for women and men, including the chance to shift from precarious or informal work into formal employment. However trade unions are often not sufficiently involved in consultation over the introduction of public transport developments and additionally some widely-

used systems, such as Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), are tied to particular business models of public-private partnerships that may not favour labour rights and decent work conditions. This research therefore focuses on five cities that are introducing a new form of public transport system or are extending an existing transport mode, which have significant implications for women's employment. The five cities are:

- Bangkok, Thailand (expansion of Sky Train and metro networks);
- Bogota, Colombia (BRT introduced in 2000);
- Cape Town, South Africa (BRT introduced in 2010);
- Mexico City, Mexico (planned electric bus corridor); and
- Nairobi, Kenya (first phase of BRT opening in 2018).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Fieldwork was conducted in each of the five cities by researchers commissioned by the ITF, working closely with the ITF Women's Department and the report author, with additional support from ITF regional officials. The primary data collection methods were a review of documentary evidence and 164 face-to-face and telephone interviews with women public transport workers, union representatives, transport employers, community organisations and NGOs, and policy makers and local politicians.

The research process included a participatory workshop in Bogota organised by the ITF and FES,

involving all the researchers plus union representatives from the cities covered in the report and ITF head office and regional representatives. This provided a valuable discussion of initial research findings across the five cities, with input from union representatives on the findings and on their experiences of organising and campaigning for women within the public transport sector. Following the workshop, researchers in each city produced a report summarising the findings of their documentary analysis and fieldwork.

WOMEN'S WORK IN PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The research confirmed that women continue to face gender segregation in the public transport sector, being concentrated into lower-paying and in some cases more precarious or informal positions. But there has been some change, with growing numbers of women entering the public transport workforce in Mexico City and in South Africa. Women are also gaining greater opportunities to move into typically male-dominated areas, including driving, in new forms of transport systems such as BRT and expanding metro systems. Women are also being attracted by the flexibility that driving for platform taxi services can offer, although there are issues with equal access and decent work, including employment status.

Nevertheless, gender stereotypes persist, expressed in negative attitudes about women's driving abilities or suitability to work in public transport, and in practice through differences in status and conditions of the jobs done by women and men. On the other hand, some

“ On a public holiday I arrived half an hour late, because there were no taxis available that day and they summoned me to a disciplinary process. Now I’ve had to ride my bike at 3:00am in a city where they kill you for a cell phone. I must go out and risk my life to try to get to my job quickly.”

woman Recaudo Bogota S.A.S worker

saw women drivers as less reckless and safer than men, as well as more likely to be polite to passengers. Having more women drivers was seen as a solution to women passenger safety too. For example, in Mexico City the Atenea bus routes provide a service for women passengers operated by women drivers, while Laudrive is a platform taxi service for women riders, operated by women drivers.

Violence and sexual harassment were experienced by women transport workers in all cities, from male colleagues and passengers, with insufficient action taken by employers and the authorities in response to passenger violence according to workers. Sexual harassment was also prevalent for women passengers, with measures taken to address it at local state level in Bogota and Mexico City, and by trade unions in conjunction with civil society organisations in Cape Town and Nairobi.

Working hours and shiftwork contributed to women’s fears about safety, and constrained their participation in certain jobs or at certain times, for example, driving buses on late shifts or platform taxi work at night, so missing out on the more profitable hours. Women in customer service and sales roles also worked early and late shifts, but were less likely than drivers to be provided by the employer with safe transport to and from work.

Access to toilet facilities and sufficient break time remain persistent problems for workers in public transport, causing particular difficulties for women. Several interviewees in driving and station-based roles reported a shortage of toilets, in some cases having to use the same toilet as passengers, often with insufficient break time to use the facilities. In some cases, lack of toilet facilities was believed to have contributed to medical conditions, such as cystitis.

THE INTRODUCTION OF NEW TECHNOLOGY

Some technological innovations, such as automatic ticket vending machines, have led to loss of jobs, primarily among informal workers. However, where workers affected by automation were unionised, redeployment agreements meant that ticket sellers, for example, were transferred to office positions or to jobs as ticket machine facilitators, in some cases resulting in improved conditions at work.

Further automation of ticket sales and fare collection is likely in all cities, although progress in further roll

out has been limited by technological, business and political difficulties. Interviews with women workers in ticketing and customer service roles showed a strong preference from passengers for human interaction over machine services, which are often slower or function poorly. Indeed inefficient machines leading to passenger frustration could contribute to violence to staff.

Opportunities for training are essential to ensure that women gain access to new jobs when transport infrastructure is introduced or upgraded, including training to gain driving licences, or operate new technological systems. In some examples, such as the Cape Town BRT, apprenticeship or sponsored learnership schemes were used to train women to get driving licences and increase their numbers as bus drivers.

While there may be potential benefits for women workers from the introduction of BRT systems, the financing model under which it operates insists on public-private partnerships, introducing competition between vehicle operating companies and the separation of local authority control and regulation from operation of services. This normally results in little monitoring of worker terms and conditions in each

“Public transport is not friendly to women workers and users, and both the passengers and workers experience harassment.”

male union representative, Nairobi

operating company, and in some instances resulted in poorer driver terms and conditions compared to previous union agreements. Therefore, women may be entering new driving jobs under worse conditions than previously.

PLATFORM WORK IN URBAN TRANSPORT

Ride-hailing taxi firms are expanding in most of the cities in this study, although Uber withdrew from operating in Thailand in 2018, following a government declaration that platform taxis are not properly registered in Thailand. The legal position for platform operators is inconsistent in Bogota, where the platform legally exists but drivers using the platform operate outside the regulatory regime. This presents a barrier for women drivers who cannot make legal complaints, or ask the police for help in case of danger from passengers. The unregulated nature of the service also makes it difficult for unions to organise platform drivers.

The research supports claims that platform taxi driving work can offer access to flexible employment opportunities for women, enabling them to balance work with other commitments such as family responsibilities or studying. However, these benefits may be more available to women who are not relying on this work as their sole household income, or those who have access to their own vehicle. Therefore, for poorer women who have to pay others for a vehicle, or who need to work very long hours to earn sufficient income – especially in cities with high competition

from multiple platform companies and downward pressure on earnings – the potential for exploitation is great.

The risks of violence and sexual harassment can be a deterrent for women drivers, with the result that women tend to avoid working in certain areas and during night times, thus losing out on some of the most profitable jobs. Technology can be used to alert women drivers to dangerous clients, or in some instances to call for assistance from other drivers, and there may be more that can be done to develop consistent, widely accessible apps or systems to ensure that drivers are confident that they will receive immediate assistance in case of danger.

TRADE UNION STRATEGIES FOR WOMEN PUBLIC TRANSPORT WORKERS

More women public transport workers are organising within their trade unions to defend jobs and improve terms and conditions when women are in leadership positions and there is visible action on gender issues. For example, SintraRecaudo in Bogota has been successful in organising ticket sales workers on the BRT system, through addressing their concerns about terms and conditions, safety and job losses. Both informal matatu workers and platform taxi workers have joined PUTON in Nairobi. Women have taken a prominent role in resisting deactivation by Uber following attendance at a union meeting, in the organisation of platform workers in PUTON and in negotiating with the government and other

“ I am a gentleman with my wife, my daughter and even with girls on the street, but on the route where I drive... women know how the male environment is, even though they want to work here... It is not me who must change the behaviour... they wanted to work here, they are not like other women. I know they are women, but not like others, you get it? If they want it, come and get it.”

male trolleybus driver, Mexico City

stakeholders to address issues of pricing control, employment conditions and safety.

Women trade unionists have also successfully collaborated with community activists and passengers, for example in a campaign by the ATM in Mexico City to save the trolleybuses, highlighting their popularity with users. Additionally, unions have made links with NGOs on campaigns over sexual harassment in Cape Town and in Nairobi, revealing the further potential for alliances with community organisations and passengers, to strengthen union campaigns on issues affecting both women public transport workers and passengers, to the benefit of both groups.

“ I don't have a bed on the train to take a rest. I have to sleep beside the toilet, using a sheet as a curtain to make a partition between the passengers and myself.”

woman train host, Bangkok

There are significant challenges for trade unions in organising platform workers, given the individualised and precarious nature of their employment. However the report has shown examples of successful organising in Cape Town and Nairobi, where platform workers have joined or worked closely with existing public transport unions. For example, drivers in Cape Town have formed their own association, the Uber Drivers Guild. SATAWU supported drivers in challenging their legal status as self-employed, a case which was lost on a technicality, but which represents an important example of collective organisation in this sector. It is likely that the legal basis of self-employment among platform workers will continue to be challenged in other cities, supported by trade unions.

Unions in some instances are still not doing enough to attract or defend women public transport workers, with some interviewees believing that unions do not take sexual harassment seriously when reported to them, thus deterring women from joining. Union strategies on tackling sexual harassment and violence towards women workers need further development, and to be widely publicised and fairly implemented to reassure women transport workers. Some small-scale examples

of union training and awareness raising on issues of harassment and gender discrimination were shown.

Several women union leaders and activists participated in this research, highlighting that where women are in leadership positions in the union, the issues facing women transport workers come to the fore and are addressed more effectively by the union. The visibility of women leaders also contributes to the recruitment of women public transport workers, as the SintraRecaudo example in Bogota shows.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Campaign to ensure that unions are key stakeholders in consultations on all new public transport infrastructure and extensions of existing systems from very early stages of discussion, that gender implications are included, and that gender impact assessments are provided and corresponding action is taken.
- Campaign to ensure that unions are key stakeholders in consultation on all new technological developments in public transport – including platform work – from very early stages of discussion, that gender implications are included, and gender impact assessments are provided and corresponding action is taken.
- Negotiate the inclusion of terms in contracts between BRT management organisations and operating companies that address decent work and labour rights, such as minimum wages,

hours, facilities and include gender equality measures, such as sexual harassment policies, and promotion and training opportunities.

- Campaign for public transport infrastructure to include adequate facilities for workers and passengers, such as toilets and provision of clean drinking water.
- Ensure that relocation agreements and policy guidelines on job restructuring also cover jobs mostly done by women, such as ticketing, and not only for drivers.
- Highlight evidence that passengers prefer human interaction over machines, as well as recommendations from public transport inspection and monitoring organisations (i.e. Veeduria in Bogota) on the need for more workers in ticket collection and customer service and safety risks to passengers of cutting staff (link to work on preventing sexual harassment of female passengers).
- Negotiate promotion, training and retraining opportunities to support women of all ages into higher paid work, such as in driving, supervisory and management positions, and roles created by new technology
- Negotiate working hours and shift patterns that accommodate women's and men's family responsibilities, and address safety risks of early and late shifts, for example by providing transport to and from work.
- Introduce policies and procedures to address sexual harassment perpetrated by union members; publicise policy among union members and women transport workers who are not members; train members on the policies and union representatives on how to support a case of sexual harassment.
- Develop campaigns in conjunction with employers to tackle passenger violence, making the connection between the provision of a safe environment for both passengers and female staff; and build coalitions with NGOs campaigning to end gender-based violence and/or safer public transport.
- Build women's leadership in trade unions through women's structures, networks and training that develops the capacity of women trade unionists to become active and play leadership roles.
- Campaign for policies to help address technology and gender inequality – at the workplace level, at government level and in regulation, including making use of opportunities linked to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and ensuring that such discussions explicitly include labour rights and gender inequality.

ABOUT ITF

The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) is a democratic, affiliate-led global federation of 670 trade unions in 147 countries, representing 19.7 million working women and men in all transport sectors. The ITF passionately campaigns for transport workers' rights, equality, and justice.

The ITF women's department works with the ITF women transport workers' committee, to support ITF affiliates to organise and mobilise more women transport workers and maximise our global influence and transport workplace power. Our aim is to strengthen their collective voice to win better conditions for women transport workers around the world. Key issues include gender-based occupational segregation, access to decent pay and jobs, and the right to work free from violence, sexual harassment and sexual coercion.

www.itfglobal.org

ABOUT FES

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) is the oldest political foundation in Germany with a rich tradition in social democracy dating back to its foundation in 1925. The foundation owes its formation and its mission to the political legacy of its namesake Friedrich Ebert, the first democratically elected German President. The work of our political foundation focuses on the core ideas and values of social democracy – freedom, justice and solidarity. This connects us to social democracy and free trade unions. As a non-profit institution, we organise our work autonomously and independently.

www.fes-london.org



**FRIEDRICH
EBERT
STIFTUNG**

