



PSI in the Caribbean
Key outcomes of the 2016 Caribbean SUBWOC meeting
Guyana Public Service Cooperative Credit Union
Georgetown

Thirty (30) women, representing 15 of PSI Caribbean’s 23 affiliates attended. PSI Caribbean women’s titular, Sis Jillian Bartlett (NUGFW TT)¹ chaired the meeting.

**Gender composition, presidents and general secretaries
in the sub-region
as at March 1, 2016**

	Women	Men	Total
General Secretaries	11 (48%)	12 (52%)	23
Presidents	4 (17%)	19 (83%)	23
General secretaries who are young workers	1	0	
Presidents who are Young workers	1	2	

Contact the [sub-regional office](#) for statistics on the gender composition of the membership of selected affiliates.

Work in progress

The meeting examined the 4 main areas of work which started in the last period and the development of that work:

1. Action Arts – Eliminating violence against women and girls

This project started in 2014 with a focus on violence against women and girls and the impact it has on society. Targeting school children provided an important opportunity for the union to highlight the wide reaching impact. And with the support and assistance of partners in the private and public sectors, the union brought greater awareness to its entire membership, highlighting the role that unions could play in exposing the issue as well as in advocating for measures to combat violence against women and girls.

Having completed the competition and awarded prizes, the next stage involves using the information gathered to work with academia, other civil society partners, to make submissions to the ministries responsible for education, gender and labour. The union has **requested** the assistance of the sub-regional office in formulating the submissions.

Savannah, a multiple prize winner is now using her increased awareness of the issue to conduct sessions in her school and community to help raise awareness of the problem and build the confidence and self-esteem of children who are affected.

SUBWOC members **noted** the successes and challenges in carrying out the work spearheaded by the union’s Women’s Executive Council. Of particular note:

¹ National Union of Government & Federated Workers of Trinidad & Tobago

- Raising funds for the campaign was challenging at times, but support came from some unlikely sources
- Building awareness was important in rallying support. The more who understood, the more they brought others along and the more committed they became.
- There are enlightened men who understand and support the quest for gender equality. They play an important role in talking to other men who are not so enlightened.

Especially interesting and noteworthy is that as the project gained momentum and racked up successes, it was no longer being seen as a “women’s thing” but as a “union campaign”.

2. Developing policies on workplace violence

The NUPW Barbados² started its awareness building campaign in 2014. The Ministry of the Civil Service supported the campaign, providing opportunities for the team to visit departments and talk with workers about the wide scope and nature of violence. Gender-based violence became a key focus.

The union **requested the assistance** of the sub-regional office to help develop the campaign work in 2016/2017. The focus is on educating union activists and heads of departments in key workplaces about the issue and on developing some policy guidelines. The workplaces highlighted are in the health and social services sector; Customs and Border control departments. Ultimately, the aim is to negotiate an agreement with government and other employers on the issue of gender-based violence in the workplace.

SUBWOC **recommended** that the experiences and results from the two areas of work by the NUGFW TT and the NUPW Barbados be used as sub-regional input to PSI’s campaign to promote the new standard on gender-based violence at work.

3. Survey of What Women Want – PSU of Belize³ and DPSU⁴

SUBWOC members **reiterated** that affiliates must continue the work on identifying the needs of women members and also must continue to build their awareness and trade union activism. The meeting also **noted** that women’s committees and networks must continue to build and expand their work beyond “women’s issues”. In adopting the gender mainstreaming approach, the key is to ensure a gender lens is used on all aspects of the unions’ work.

The committee also **noted** that considerable assistance was available through the gender units in the various countries and that it is imperative to tap into these sources. Not only to develop the skills sets of women activists, but also to educate all members about gender and gender mainstreaming.

Affiliates **agreed** to adapt the pilot surveys for use in their respective unions.

4. Precarious work in the public service of Jamaica

SUBWOC members **reviewed** the draft Briefing Note prepared by the Jamaica Civil Service Association (JCSA). The meeting reinforced the importance of the issue and the particular relevance in helping the union to develop its position on precarious work in the public service. The focus on women and young people is also key in helping the union to develop policy alternatives and recommendations to

² National Union of Public Workers, Barbados

³ Public Service Union of Belize

⁴ Dominica Public Service Union

the government. The information will also provide input to the union's organising and mobilising strategies.

SUBWOC **agreed** that the Briefing Note needed to be finalised as soon as possible and circulated as a guide for other affiliates.

5. Her Story, Our Story – a union member's story of the impact of gender-based violence

Through its work on gender-based violence, a member of the NUGFW TT agreed to tell her story and share the impact on her life and her subsequent involvement in union work.

The story will be published and will serve as an inspiration to others in similar situations; to highlight the wide ranging impact on the society; to celebrate the role of the union in building confidence and helping them to find a way out and to motivate people to work for change.

PSI's policies on gender mainstreaming, gender equality and equity

Through small group work, SUBWOC members identified:

1. the priority gender issues in the sub-region for:
 1. Health and social care services sector
 2. Local government/municipal services sector
 3. Public/central administration sector
 4. Climate change and emergencies and disasters
 5. Tax justice and anti-corruption
 6. Water and sanitation sector
2. ways to improve the functioning of the SUBWOC between meetings in order to maximise limited resources.

The meeting **agreed** that the gender issues related especially to trade union rights (discrimination and victimisation on the basis of sex); collective bargaining (no focus on equal pay for work of equal value and some instances of unequal pay); health and safety especially gender-based violence at work; sexual harassment and other unsafe and unhealthy working conditions; decent work.

The outcomes from these discussions were inputted in the SUBRAC's discussions and planning on sectoral work in the sub-region.

The meeting **agreed** that there must be more effort on education and training and building the skills and competencies of women activists if they are to have equal access and opportunity in the trade union movement. This work must be done by the respective affiliates in the first instance. SUBWOC **recommended** that PSI must provide additional and more advanced union development work to help increase the role and effectiveness of the women activists.

The meeting also **requested that PSI assist** with developing relevant and appropriate education and training materials.

Role and functioning of the SUBWOC

Committee members **reiterated** the points made in previous meetings:

- Having identified the SUBWOC workplan for the year, the SRS, titulars and substitutes identify specific areas of focus, allocate affiliates amongst themselves and establish communications/links with them to share experiences and provide support, information, assistance.
- Use various forms of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) to maintain contact between affiliates.

The above process is used in the sub-region. There is room for improvement. Affiliates present **agreed to improve** their communication with each other and with the sub-regional office.

Empowering women activists and women leaders

90% of the women attending the SUBWOC are general secretaries, presidents and executive members of their unions. Some serve in leadership positions in the national centres of their countries. The meeting reiterated the importance of enhancing and further developing their skills and capacities in order to function effectively in their new roles. This can be done through the education and training programmes of their respective unions. It is equally important that these activists make full use of the online trade union training and leadership training that is available.

The sub-regional office **affirmed** that it will continue to notify SUBWOC members of online and other training and resources to assist them in their leadership development strategies.

The meeting **reiterated** the importance of mentoring young women activists referring to the set of [framework guidelines for mentoring young women members](#) developed in 2009.

60th session on the UN Commission on the Status of Women

The SUBWOC **noted** that Sis Jillian Bartlett (NUGFW TT) and Sis Annie Mongen-Arndel (ABVO Curaçao) are the sub-region's representatives on the PSI delegation. They started their preparation by contacting ministries and civil society organisations in their respective countries. The sub-regional office also initiated contact with Sis Shirley Pryce, President of the Jamaica Household Workers' Union, while Sis Bartlett also made contact with Sis Ida Leblanc, president of National Union of Domestic Employees of Trinidad & Tobago.

The meeting also learnt that Sis Karen Corbin, chair of the Guyana TUC's women's committee was a member of Guyana's official delegation.

All the sisters will collaborate while in New York.

They **agreed** to communicate with other SUBWOC members on follow-up actions.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

The meeting **noted** that UN agencies had organised training sessions for government departments and civil society organisations responsible for preparing reports to the CEDAW committee. Sessions had taken place in Antigua & Barbuda and Barbados. In neither case had the trade union movement been invited to participate.

SUBWOC members **agreed to investigate** further to find out the more about the preparation of reports in their respective countries and to seek to be included in civil society training and capacity building.

The meeting **noted** upcoming CEDAW sessions:

July 4 to 22, 2016 – Trinidad & Tobago
October 24 to November 18, 2016 – Antigua & Barbuda
2017 or 2018 – Barbados

The **sub-regional office will contact** the respective affiliates to follow-up on their involvement in the preparation of and responses to the governments' reports.

Reporting on implementation of ILO Conventions 100 and 111

Having reviewed the reporting obligations and the status of reports, SUBWOC members also advised that these reports were not high on the priority list of their various unions. In fact, it appears that many unions/national centres are not fully aware of the reporting obligations. In many cases these issues are dealt with at the national centre level without appropriate consultation with other unions in the respective countries.

The sub-regional office **will follow-up** with further information and guidelines to SUBWOC members to help them make the case for inclusion in the process.

March 8 – International Women's Day

Plans included:

1. Continuation of the campaign on Workplace and gender-based violence
2. Participation in national IWD activities
3. Discussion forums on women's empowerment

SUBRAC **approved** SUBWOC's report and recommendations.