

In Uganda, one seat per electoral district is reserved for women. In addition, women are guaranteed representation in seats that are reserved for the military, youth, persons with disabilities and workers. Between 1995 and 2015, the share of women parliamentarians doubled, reaching 35 per cent by 2015 (IPU, 2015a). Quotas in the public sector have also been implemented through legislation, as in the case of Timor-Leste, where there is a mandatory gender balance in the staffing of the Administrative Council of the Employment and Vocational Training Fund and the Development of the Labour Force Institute. Other countries have also set similar quotas in their public administration, including Belgium, Belize, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Cuba, El Salvador, India, Japan, Nepal and Pakistan (ILO, 2012c).

Quota systems are also increasingly used in the trade union movement at the international and national levels. For instance, the International Trade Union Confederation of Africa (ITUC-Africa) has introduced a 30 per cent quota for its leadership positions and those of its national confederations. To remedy the gender imbalance in Ghana's Trade Union Congress, the Congress has set a minimum quota of 40 per cent, and taken steps to increase women's participation in training and education programmes, which has improved women's representation in decision-making roles in the organization (Britwum, 2014). In South Africa, under the 2012 gender policy of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), unions are advised to reserve seats for women. Although the COSATU has yet to reach the quota of 50 per cent, one third of leadership positions are now held by women (Munakamwe, 2014). Similarly, in the "Count Us In" campaign spearheaded by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), 80 per cent of affiliates, including the Japanese and Italian trade union confederations, have committed themselves to meeting a 30 per cent target for women in decision-making bodies by 2018 (ITUC, 2015).

Positive trends in women's participation in unions, in particular in leadership positions, have led to a wider inclusion of gender issues in union campaigns (Britwum and Ledwith, 2014) and has heightened the attention paid to issues related to women in the informal economy, and in particular the situation of domestic workers (Hobden, 2015). More effort is still needed, however, to close the gap in women's participation and leadership in trade unions, also as part of broader efforts to make trade unions more inclusive of the needs and interests of workers – both women and men – in the informal economy (box 4). In addition, strengthening women's presence in collective bargaining, in particular the participation of women delegates, offers another means of advancing women in leadership and influential positions within the union. In order to promote women's participation in collective bargaining, trade unions should collect sex-disaggregated data on the composition of their teams over time, in addition to setting targets.

Box 4

Capacity-building in unions to promote gender equality and women in leadership

Targeted action to improve women's representation in decision-making positions in the labour movement should be a priority, as these gaps are also the result of the cultural and structural issues highlighted in other sectors: the male-dominated culture, the gender stereotypes which confine women to administrative roles, the lack of training and access to other opportunities to develop leadership skills in addition to family responsibilities, which limit the time that women can devote to union activities. In an effort to make unions more inclusive, the ILO conducted its gender-participatory audit process with ITUC-Africa between 2011 and 2013, which focused on capacity-building in gender equality and women's participation and leadership, with the involvement of 789 trade union leaders from 52 national trade unions in 24 countries. As a result of the audit, 5 out of 15 newly elected members of the ITUC-Africa Council for 2015–2019 are now women. By December 2012, 19 trade union presidents and leaders in 11 countries, including Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Senegal and Togo, were women. That number rose to 23 in 13 countries by December 2013 (Saizonou, 2015).

In addition, governments can set voluntary targets and quotas to promote women in leadership positions in business and promote diversity at all levels. For instance, in Norway, there is a gender quota of 40 per cent for certain companies, such as State-owned enterprises (McKinsey Global Institute, 2015). As a result of this quota, by 2013 over 40 per cent of board members were women, while in 2003 only 6.8 per cent of board members were women (ILO, 2015g). In 2015, Germany set gender quotas requiring 30 per cent of board seats to be allocated to women. The quotas are expected to be implemented by 2016 (Smale and Cain Miller, 2015).