

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR WOMEN GLOBALLY

Based on a Parallel Event held at the
63rd Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women
NGO CSW Forum

March 12, 2019, New York



By Jane Stinson,
CRIA-W-ICREF Research Associate

Acknowledgements

CRIAW acknowledges its presence and work on Indigenous Territories. We respectfully recognize the legacy of colonization upon Indigenous Peoples. In the city of New York, we were visiting on the traditional land of Lanape Indigenous people who were there for many thousands of years before European settlers overtook their ancestral homeland, Lenapehoking.

Thanks to Louisa Jones, Morna Ballantyne and Verónica Montúfar for their thoughtful contributions, to Claire Clarke for being the ITF liaison, and to Mélissa Alig at CRIAW for recording this session and laying out the final report.

The Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW) is a research institute that provides tools and research to organizations taking action to advance social justice and equality for all women. CRIAW recognizes women's diverse experiences and perspectives, creates spaces for developing women's knowledge, bridges regional isolation, and provides communication links among researchers and organizations actively working to promote social justice and women's equality.

You'll find free access to many CRIAW publications at www.criaw-icref.ca. **We encourage you to become a member of CRIAW** when you're visiting our home page.

Your membership supports CRIAW's ongoing efforts to build links among feminists through our research, projects and publications.

Suggested citation: Stinson, Jane (ed.) 2019. Building Sustainable Infrastructure for Women Globally. CRIAW. Ottawa.

Introduction

Jane Stinson, CRIAW Research Associate

This paper is based on a panel presentation and group discussion on **How to Build Sustainable Infrastructure for Women Globally**. It was one of the non-governmental organizations' parallel events to the UN Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) in New York, on March 12 2019.

Speakers from three continents shared ideas, experiences, and strategies on how build sustainable infrastructure for women globally. This included:

- Louisa Jones, Assistant General Secretary of First Union in New Zealand, part of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF).
- Verónica Montúfar, Gender Equality Officer for the Public Service International, who lives in Quito, Ecuador.¹
- Morna Ballantyne, Executive Director of Child Care Now in Ottawa, Canada.

This panel addressed the priority theme for the 63rd UNCSW; **Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls**. This theme is also key to implementing the Beijing Platform for Action, the 2030 Sustainable Development goals and more.

Speakers were asked to focus on the importance of public services and public infrastructure for women and girls, and how the privatization of public services, social protection programs and infrastructure undermines equality for women and girls. Each speaker noted challenges in both building, and maintaining public services, and also in preventing private ownership and private delivery of public infrastructure, services and social programs. Speakers and participants shared how women's organizations, unions, Indigenous people, environmentalists and others are organizing for public, sustainable services, infrastructure and social programs around the world.

These struggles around public infrastructure, public services and social programs are shaped by power relations and also help to transform power relations. The power relations between corporate players, governments, NGOs and advocacy groups shaped the negotiations over this year's Agreed Conclusions of the 63rd UN Commission on the Status of Women. And they are also at play in shaping decisions made in each of our countries about how to finance, organize and deliver social programs, public services and infrastructure.

¹ Samira Hasanain from the Palestine Public Services Union was supposed to speak but was one of a number of women denied a visa by the American government to travel to New York for UNCSW63.

Social protection programs, infrastructure and public services offer the potential to transform unequal power relations between men and women. These are key building blocks to liberate women from responsibilities, time and labour related to social reproduction. In a global context, social reproductive labour by women involves a wide range of activities -- fetching water and fuel, providing and preparing food, caring for children, sick and elderly, educating children, doing housework and much more. Women gain a lot of time and the ability to pursue paid employment when these services can be provided. The benefits to women are greatest when these are public services that are universally accessible and at no cost.

Public services also provide many women greater prosperity through well paid jobs, and access to a union through which they can organize for broader economic and social change and to have greater protection through a range of supportive social programs.

The potential for public services to improve equality for women is being undermined by privatization which often results in costlier and poorer services, user fees that destroy universal access, less stable employment and lower wages. Privatization of public services is occurring on a massive, often system-wide scale, through Public-Private Partnerships. These are long-term financial arrangements where the private investor owns and can profit from the provision of services (for example, water, power, roads, bridges, schools, health care facilities).

Canadian financial capital, including some Canadian public sector pension plans, is in the forefront of aggressively trying to privatize social and physical infrastructure globally.² Since the financial crisis of 2008, Canada's largest pension funds have become global leaders in the direct ownership of public infrastructure, particularly in other countries. This includes water and electrical utilities, hospitals and senior's residences, schools and transportation infrastructure including roads, bridges, airports, ports....and more. After years of concerted efforts to privatize infrastructure in Canada, they have set their sights on privatizing public infrastructure around the world, by joining the Global Infrastructure Investors Association which manages over \$500 billion in infrastructure assets globally.³

With capital organizing so aggressively to privatize social and physical infrastructure, the reasons why it is detrimental and how it will undermine equality for women and girls needs to be loud and clear.

What follows, based on speakers' presentations and group discussion, provides compelling testimony about **what** is occurring in different parts of the world, **why** it's important to have public infrastructure, public social protection programs and public services, **how** women are organizing to protect and expand these vital programs and services and the important role trade unions play.

² Skerrett, K, Westar, J. Archer, S. and Roberts, C. (eds.) 2017. The Contradictions of Pension Fund Capitalism. Labor and Employment Relations Association. University of Illinois.

³ Skerrett, K. 2017. "Canada's Public Pension Funds: The New "Masters of the (Neoliberal) Universe". Pp. 121-154 In Skerrett, Westar, Archer, Roberts (eds.) 2017.

Louisa Jones, Assistant General Secretary, First Union, New Zealand, International Transport Worker's Federation (ITF)

The ITF—the International Transport Workers' Federation—which represents over 18 million working women and men in all transport sectors around the world, strives to improve opportunities for decent work and labour conditions.

From the ITF's perspective, we see three key themes around how infrastructure is important for women – and specifically the expansion of public transport as part of the infrastructure for achieving gender equality. The environmental benefits of mass public transport are enormous, but so too are the social and economic benefits.

Seventy per cent of the 1.2 billion people living in poverty are women. They are less likely to own private modes of transport and men in the household often have priority access. The accessibility and affordability of public transport disproportionately affects women.

The first key piece is around **increased access to public transport for women in daily life** (taking into consideration their additional family care responsibilities) and to be able to access wider economic opportunities in the labour market. Expansion of public transport is vital to provide women with safe, equal access to public services including education, childcare and healthcare, and to their place of work. Therefore, allowing women's empowerment via progressive participation in economic and public life, and facilitating engagement with a wide range of rights (including the right to work and rights at work, the right to education, the right to healthcare, and the right to political participation).



The second key theme, is the **creation of decent and secure work opportunities in the public transport sector** that both attract and retain women, including training for career progression, and which challenges occupational segregation in the sector. Transport can only be gender-responsive if there are women employed in the industry.

International Transport Federation

However, where modern job opportunities are created in transport, these are often in the informal sector which does not offer the protection of secure employment on which women disproportionately rely (due to pregnancy, maternity and other care responsibilities).

The informal sector is a direct response to a lack of infrastructure and particularly government investment in transport infrastructure. There will always be a demand for transport and this is increasing with the growth of mega-cities and urbanization.

There is also a lack of provision of the facilities women need—which is a problem in traditionally male industries such as transport.

Sanitation facilities are a specific aspect of infrastructure with impact: Lack of safe access to bathroom facilities can have a substantial impact on the health, safety and dignity of transport workers, with significant additional impacts for women. We know that when nature calls for shamefully high numbers of transport workers, they find themselves, not exclusively; with nowhere to go, with filthy facilities, with insufficient toilet breaks and vulnerable to sexual violence. Infections, rape, needing to wear nappies at work, clothing drenched in menstrual blood are some of the consequences that transport workers globally are forced to live with as a result of inaction around toilets. And if there is no provision of separate facilities for women, this sends a clear message about how women are seen in the industry. In



International Transport Federation

Nairobi, most bathrooms are privatized and users pay for use. Additionally, there are no free clean water points and workers have to buy water or carry it from home, causing additional expenses for workers. Indeed, workers spend up to 18 per cent of their earnings on access to water and sanitation services. Lastly there is a **need to increase use of public transport in general to address the environmental concerns of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the climate emergency.**

This is important because women are most vulnerable to climate change and because women tend to have less access to resources for climate change adaption. The ITF is working with the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), mayors and city authorities, including in my city Auckland, to develop and implement plans for ambitious national government commitments to public transport with democratic unions, community participation and increased public ownership for a 'Just Transition' to zero emission transport and the formal sector. This must include decent work, and progressive employment frameworks which promote gender equality and challenge gender occupational segregation.

There are big challenges to building sustainable infrastructure for women.

Cities have been planned by men for men. And whilst urban public transport plays an important role for women—as the majority of passengers and as workers in public transport—we know that it is not gender neutral, from an employment point of view, but also from the values that are embedded in its structure and provision. This can be evident in various ways including for example, pricing structure and route planning.



Source: TheBetterIndia.com

It often does not take into account the travel patterns of women. Research shows that there are gender differences in access to mobility and in use of transport. Women's access is limited in most regions. And women's share of public transport use is higher.

Yet women are rarely involved in decision-making so their needs are not taken into account.

Women must be consulted in planning new urban developments, including public transport infrastructure.

How to make metro stations and bus stops more women friendly. In many places, lighting is very bad. Hanoi is an example of a city which is using technology to collect information about where to build stations in their new metro line, including lighting and security. This is an example of considering women's safety at the design stage.

A key aspect is how women are represented on the streets. In Spain, waiting alone at a bus stop with a sexist advert can feel hostile rather than a place of respect for women. Across Spain, there have been efforts to name streets after women, have murals or public art commemorating contribution of women.

Women's needs as transport users are often prioritized over discussion of women as transport workers. Of course, the two aspects intertwine, however women transport workers should not be forgotten. And if we address the needs of women working in public transport, we will automatically make public transport more attractive for users too.

ITF is concerned about privatization of infrastructure. Privatization undermines the sustainable development goals of infrastructure for women.

The increased privatization of transport infrastructure, with an emphasis on profit, threatens to erode workers' rights and user access. And increased privatization increases the (disproportionate) threat of automation to women's livelihoods, as profit is favoured over other social aims.



Photographer: [Ore Huiying/Bloomberg](#)

Our bus services in Aotearoa, New Zealand have been privatized since the neoliberal reforms of the 1980s. This has led to a steady decline in wages alongside worsening conditions of work. In our largest city, public transport is no longer controlled directly by elected offices, but a council-controlled organization which is run by a group of unelected business people. These people are trained in and good at making fiscally

efficient decisions but not in improving our social situation. In this environment decisions are made which degrade the service for financial benefit, society is poorer for it. The competitive tendering model rewards the worst lowest paying employers with contracts and abandons bus operators who have fair employment standards.

I know one women driver, who, as her break times are so far apart, and the provision of bathroom facilities along her route so sparse, has made the difficult decision to start wearing adult diapers to work. This wouldn't happen in a system that values the wellbeing of workers over private profit. Another women driver I spoke to this week, Carol, talked of regularly driving for over 65 hours a week, including stretches of over 5 and a half hours before she is due her meal break. The fatigue that she and her fellow workmates suffer is hazardous to her and the entire community. Privatization is detrimental to workers and the community in this respect.

As New Zealand moves toward being a country that includes and values everyone, it is vital that New Zealand move away from a competitive tendering model where the very worst employers screw down wages and offer recklessly long working hours. We have an opportunity to improve this situation, as a step toward making the service public again.

The ITF is engaged in a number of actions around public transport through its 'Our Public Transport' programme: www.ourpublictransport.org. We are actively campaigning for public transport based on public ownership, public investment, secure jobs, and union rights for workers in public and private employers—through strategic campaigning in cities and regions, building the industrial and political power of unions, and strengthening our collective voice internationally. Gender-related issues and women's participation and leadership are integrated in every aspect of the programme. And the **two priorities for ITF Women—ending gender-based occupational segregation in the transport industry, and ending violence against women transport workers**—are also reflected in the programme.



International Transport Federation poster

So, in summary, we must ensure that transport infrastructure providers note the particular needs of women workers and users, and these are reflected in the infrastructure itself, which must be accessible to women, to allow their empowerment via progressive participation in economic and public life.

In order to create a public transport system that is safe, accessible and equitable, we need to ensure that women's voices—workers and passengers—are present during the planning, policy-making, research, development and operation of our systems.

This requires taking meaningful action to increase women's participation in this industry at all levels—and just last week, the ITF and the UITP (the employers' organization in public transport) signed a joint global agreement to strengthen women's employment in public transport.

Verónica Montúfar, Gender Equality Officer, Public Service International (PSI)

I was born and live in Ecuador. Now I am the Gender Equality Officer for the PSI, the global trade union that represents public services workers around the world.

For PSI, **privatization will not allow people, communities, and especially women, to address their human rights**. So, we oppose privatization in all ways, in all dimensions and in all public services, but especially those public services that are essential for human beings. And especially those public services that are essential for women and for women trying to achieve equality between men and women.

I also want to point out that for us, **all forms of infrastructure are public services**. If we are talking about infrastructure, we are talking about essential public services. In the dominant discourse, this is not the concept of infrastructure. The dominant discourse has undermined the public service concept. We think we have to highlight the concept of infrastructure as a public service. For us, **water, sanitation, electricity, transport are public services and are essential public services for human beings, and are essential public services for women and girls**.

I want to talk about a specific case in my country, Ecuador, in which public sector unions—PSI affiliates there—were engaged in defending the water enterprise in a city called Manta.

In 2016 Ecuador was impacted by an earthquake—7.8 on the Richter scale—in our central coast zone. Manta was one of the cities where the earthquake had the greatest impact. Privatization has been on the agenda of the Ecuadorian government since long ago—two decades ago. But **the social movement, the trade union movement and especially the Indigenous movement fought against privatization. Twenty years ago, we won**. It was a specific battle in which the government of that year was asking in a popular consultation, if we want to privatize the social security and also water. The social movements, civil society, trade unions, and the Indigenous movement all came together and said, “No”. And we won.

But the government and those with economic power were not stopped. They say, ‘OK. This time you won’. **But in 2008, they started to have another plan to privatize all public services in Ecuador**. I'm going to tell you why.

In 2008 the Constitution was changed to include a very progressive statement that water is a human right. Having water as a human right in the Constitution was a major gain for us. But in 2010 the Ecuadorian government called for new legislation on water that was tricky. At first, they said, 'we are going to have the state as the higher controller of all water around the country'. But this issue of having the state controlling the water—not only the public services of water but also the water sources—was undermining the Indigenous peoples' right to control the water sources because they are in their lands.



Public Services International

We started asking 'What happened here?', 'Why is this government, that seems like a progressive one, that is saying all water will be under the control of the state, now undermining the Indigenous peoples' right to the water sources?' 'What's going on?'

Then we realized that **there was an agenda to privatize water in Ecuador**. That is why the government started to try to get the control of all the water sources and all the public services of water. Since 2010, the biggest enterprises were the beneficiaries of water sources, like Coca Cola Enterprise and big industries that were doing agriculture like flowers. Have you heard about the Ecuadorian roses? They needed this water. And also, the mining industries.

So, we then understood that the purpose of having the state control of all water was because the state was going to have alliances with the private sector and with national and international corporations.

Then **in 2015 the Ecuadorian Parliament approved a law regarding Public Private Partnerships**. In that year we also started to negotiate a trade agreement with the European Union.

Previously all of the water enterprises in the country were public. But then Veolia, the French multinational, came to our country and in 2014 the decision was made to privatize the water system in Guayaquil, the second biggest city in Ecuador.

In 2015 Veolia started negotiations to sign Public Private Partnerships (PPP) with the water enterprise in Manta. In 2016 the earthquake struck Manta. Veolia took the opportunity of the earthquake to sign a strategic agreement that says they will help the public enterprise to reconstruct the water services in the city.

As PSI we have followed Veolia's business around the world. For example, the public water system in Paris was privatized. Veolia was one of the companies involved but it failed. And then the public municipal water of Paris returned to be public and municipal. Veolia did not have the capacity to provide water to all of the population of Paris.



Public Services International

Having this information in hand about Veolia's failure in Paris, our public sector unions started to inform the population in Manta about how Veolia was undermining human rights in other countries. And how they could do that in Manta. We started a big campaign. We called women's organizations in Manta, other trade unions, civil society organizations to try to explain to them why profit does not fit with

human rights and the state's commitment to have real equality and real social justice for the communities. Especially with women's organizations, they made a big commitment to be part of this campaign.

In 2018, on World Water Day (March 22), we organized a campaign against Veolia in Manta. The trade union movement, based in Manta, the women's organizations there, and students' organizations. We had media coverage for our action. We invited the management of Veolia and the management of the public water enterprise in Manta to be on a panel and provided a forum to discuss our worries about what was happening or what could happen in the future. They did not accept our invitation. But they sent us their cameras to film us to know what we are doing and what we are saying in order to reply to us. At our forum we recognized those cameras. We said 'Hello' to Veolia management and the public water enterprise management and said 'We are here and we are demanding transparent information about this strategic agreement. We are proposing a Public-Public Partnership that would not have profit as its highest aim. We want the ultimate goal of a public water enterprise to be equality and to address the human rights of the population, especially women.'

Now we are trying to put this on the election agenda because Ecuador will have elections in March for local authorities. At this time, three of the local government candidates in Manta are committing to us that they will revise the strategic agreement. We hope that will be the case.



Public Services International

In this case we see how governments—national and local—are allies of corporations. They are not working for equality. They are not working for human rights for their population. We see clearly that these authorities are trapped. They are kidnapped by this corporate agenda. We think that the best thing to do is to build a real force - a **real social force between trade unions, between women's organizations, and in my country, also between the Indigenous movement, to fight and defend our common goods - to fight and defend our public services for our people.**

That is why PSI is standing up and saying ‘We don’t want privatization’. ‘People over profit’. That is our main statement and main issue that we also want to have represented here in the UN CSW63.⁴ Our priority is women over profit.

Morna Ballantyne, Executive Director, Child Care Now, Ottawa, Canada

My focus will be on the social and physical child care infrastructure required to provide women—particularly mothers with young children—the opportunity to participate equally in the paid labour force. My comments about what works when it comes to child care, and what doesn’t—and specifically what kind of government policy works, and what doesn’t—is informed mostly by my Canadian experience. But international research and evidence backs me up, so I hope what I say will resonate with you regardless of where you live.

I start by perhaps stating the obvious—the dominant approach by governments in most parts of the world is not working, and that is because **child care continues to be regarded as a private not a collective and social responsibility.**

Like other labour related to reproduction, most governments continue to relegate primary responsibility for child care to the family—almost always the women in the family: mothers, grandmothers, great grandmothers, aunts, nieces, and older female siblings. Globally, almost all child care is done by women—whether in or outside the family—and it’s done for no pay, or very little pay. While no economy can work without child care, child care work is undervalued and unrecognized—it’s as private as private can get.

In Canada, even though women have a higher participation rate in the paid labour force relative to most countries—at just over 80 per cent—**we don’t have a child care system.** When it comes to child care, governments in Canada rely on the private child care market to deliver services.

Outside of the province of Quebec, there is almost no government planning of child care services; there is no public management and very little public financial support for the supply of services—either for the creation of spaces through capital funding, or for ongoing maintenance through operational funding.

⁴ Public Services International (2019) Privatization and Women’s Human Rights: A Factsheet for CSW63 Advocacy.



Child Care Now

This is why 44 per cent of young children live in Canadian child care deserts, where three or more children have to compete for the same licensed child care space. This is why licensed child care is unaffordable for most families, with parent fees reaching a median high of almost \$1,800 a month for infant child care. On average, Canadian households spend a quarter of their income on child care. This is why the wages and working conditions of the almost entirely female child care work force are so inadequate.

Child care workers in Canada make on average slightly more than minimum wage—very few have pensions or benefits and they work in difficult and precarious environments. As a result, attracting workers to post-secondary programs for certification, and getting those who do get their papers to enter or stay in the field, is becoming more and more difficult. And the high turnover of staff is creating a crisis in quality of care.

Most government funding for child care in Canada, takes the form of fee or tax credits. These subsidies are directed mainly to low-income parents—in other words, child care support is essentially viewed as welfare—not as a right of all residents. We know from international evidence, that a very different approach is needed. We know that the market can't be relied on to deliver high quality services in an equitable way. We know that child care must not be treated as a commodity, but as a public good.

Child care must be organized as a universal public service—available and accessible to all families, and inclusive of all children. Child care services must be affordable for parents. Parent fees should be kept low, tied to family income, or eliminated altogether. Parent fees must be replaced by public operational funding. Funds must be allocated to improve the quality of care—primarily by improving the wages and working conditions of child care workers. Access to licensed child care must be improved through gradual capital funding and expansion. The big gaps in availability must be filled, and proper local planning processes must be put in place to make sure that new gaps don't arise.

In Canada, the absence of publicly funded universal child care has been widely acknowledged to be the major obstacle in the way of women's economic equality and security. A publicly-funded universal child care would largely eliminate the gap between male and female participation rates in the paid labour force, and it would contribute to the narrowing of the wage gap between men and women. Economic growth goes hand in hand with an increase participation rate of women in the paid labour force.

That's why the Bank of Canada, and the IMF, and other unusual allies have all come out in support of more affordable child care. In the case of Canada, the IMF says the Gross Domestic Product would increase by a minimum of 4 per cent if just the gap between men and women of high educational attainment is eliminated.

That growth—plus the increases in tax revenue that governments would enjoy as a result of more women being in the paid labour force—is more than enough to pay the costs of putting in place a fully-funded public system.

But in calling for more public funding of child care, we must be extremely careful to also insist that any **expansion must be limited to not-for-profit child care**. The child care movement in Canada has called for a gradual ramping up of public spending so that we reach the recommended minimum spending of 1 per cent of GDP. We are asking for initial spending of \$1 billion in 2020 and an additional \$1 billion each year thereafter.

But if that spending is not limited to spending on not-for-profit services, we will see the rapid expansion of corporate child care. **The big global child care chains will sweep in—and use the public funds as a base for a full-scale takeover of the sector.**

Once the provision of child care becomes dependent on the for-profit operators, we know what they will do because we have seen this happen in every other part of the public sector. They will raise parent fees. They will cut wages. They will push to lower regulatory standards. They will limit access by setting up shop only in communities where it is most profitable—we can be sure that rural communities will be left out, as will communities in the North. Children with special needs will be excluded because they require more supports. We will end up with the worst-case scenario: publicly funded privatized services for the few. And that, sisters, will do nothing for women's equality—it will be a disaster for children, for families, and for child care workers.

Child Care Now, working with the child care sector, women's organizations, anti-poverty groups, policy experts, and the trade union movement, has developed **an alternative plan. We call it the Affordable Child Care For All Plan**. It provides a roadmap for action by the federal government to move from our current market system to a system of public and not-for-profit child care. It speaks to the particularities of Canada's federal system of government that gives responsibility to the provinces and territories for the delivery of social services, including child care but the concept and principles underpinning the plan can have global application.

Under our plan, the government of Canada can pass legislation and use its federal spending power to ensure universal access to affordable child care to all who live in Canada, regardless of place of residence or economic circumstance. It would use its



spending power by giving provinces and territories significantly more child care funds than it does now.



Child Care Now, Federal Lobby Day 2019

And it would make the funds conditional on each province and territory agreeing to take specific, measurable action, within a prescribed timeline on three fronts simultaneously:

- making child care affordable by lowering parent fees and increasing direct operational funding for child care;
- expanding the availability of not-for-profit child care through planned capital expansion
- putting in place a workforce strategy to ensure that workers can be trained and retained, and so that expansion of child care is actually possible. Because without more and better paid child care workers, we will never get more quality child care in place.

We encourage organizations to endorse the plan. It is available at: <https://timeforchildcare.ca/the-affordable-child-care-for-all-plan/>

In Canada, we've been fighting for this kind of system for more than 50 years. Fifty years ago, the Royal Commission on the Status of Women made many recommendations for change to advance women's equality—the Commission recommended that a national child care program be put in place. It is the only recommendation that has not been implemented.

Canada is scheduled to have its next federal election in October of this year. We are working hard to get our plan for affordable child care for all endorsed by individuals and organizations in the next months, and we are pushing hard to have it included in the platforms of the federal parties.

The child care movement in Canada is resilient. We have suffered many setbacks. We've almost succeeded in getting a child care system many times, and then victory has been snatched from us because of an election.

Regardless of what happens in October—or before—we will persevere. We are growing as a movement—in numbers and diversity. We will win public, not for profit child care—of that I am sure.

Discussion

Q: What impact will Artificial Intelligence and driverless vehicles have on employment in the transportation sector globally?

Louisa: Transportation isn't the only industry that will be and is being affected by automation. Privatization does cause job losses because it causes people to make decisions to replace people with robots. We can't stop automation from happening but we can demand that the jobs that exist be decent work and in the formal employment sector. The jobs that tend to be created at the moment tend to be in informal work that is precarious, so not good for women or anyone. So, stop privatization and focus on decent work. In my country, we have a shortage of drivers. And everywhere I look there is a shortage of drivers. We talk a lot about driverless vehicles but we also don't have enough drivers.

If you picture a public transport system where vehicles drive themselves, who works in the system? Who is doing the security? Who will be standing at the station making sure everyone has paid? Who is making sure the bus stops are in the right places? There are going to be jobs. We just want to make sure they are decent jobs.

Q: What can we do to stop the privatization of public services? What is being done to stop privatization from happening in the first place?

Verónica: We are struggling around the world on that. Trade unions in the public sector are struggling in Africa, for example in Nigeria we have a big campaign and we are winning our commitment there but we also need to have an alternative proposal in hand. So, our proposal is instead of Public Private Partnerships, we are trying to build on Public-Public Partnerships; how public enterprises could also help other public enterprises to reorganize to have a better management and better service. Our struggle is at many levels. At first, to advertise the risks of privatization and all the aspects of privatization—PPPs, concessions, etc. Second, to have a proposal in hand. Now to stop privatization we propose Public-Public Partnerships. To bring back services that have been privatized, we have strategies for re-municipalization that have been successful. Third, we need to construct a movement. We need a movement that is not only trade unions. We need a big movement with all the sectors there—women, environmentalists, human rights defenders.

Morna: I've been involved for thirty years in fighting privatization. We've tried to stop big-box childcare from moving in. The only thing that has ever worked in my experience is in building a strong movement of resistance. That involves being very specific. It's hard to organize against privatization on principles. Most people join movements because they understand first-hand what it means for access, cost, etc. They believe in the principles but it has to be very specific. It can be well argued on the grounds of decent work but unions are sometimes reluctant to campaign on those grounds because it seems self-interested but it is an argument that is effective. People do want there to be decent jobs for themselves, for others and especially for the next generation.

Also issues of accountability are important; shining a light on the corruption that frequently comes with the privatization and sell-off of public assets. And rebuilding a sense of what should belong in the commons. That what is being privatized does and should belong to the people. It is an issue of power. Trade unions have to exercise much greater bargaining power and the threat of withdrawing labour to fight privatization. They in many ways have more organized power than many groups in civil society.

Q: The argument of neoliberalism is efficiencies. They say public utilities are not efficient, they suck up a lot of money. The private sector is more efficient and we will save money. How do we challenge this notion of efficiency?

Verónica: For us the way to do this is to put Public-Public Partnerships on the table for discussion that are based in cooperation between public enterprises, that are based in solidarity and not based in profit. Yes, we need to understand and also to recognize that in some cases the enterprises do not have good management and do not have good services. We have to recognize that but we also have to see where we have really good services and try to share experiences.

The other thing is the privatizer's strategy is to go into the enterprise in advance and try to undermine their capacities. That is a strategy they have. We also have to be very careful about that. We have seen in the Andean region how all these water, public enterprises were in the way of privatization but at first the public authorities did not do anything to try to have better management. So, they are there, also to undermine the service. When the service is bad, awful, they say, 'OK. We are going to privatize'.

Jane: We have seen this strategy in Canada as well. What used to be called the Business Council on National Issues had a twenty-year campaign against public debt. 'We can't have too much public spending. We can't have too much public debt'. This was partly to make sure that public services are underfunded and become more attractive to people to privatize.

In terms of efficiency, many arguments can be made about the efficiency of universal public services. In Canada health care is the example of efficiency when compared to the American system of private insurance. One can also argue that profits are taking away from potential efficiency.

I would also like us to think about gender-responsive budgeting as a tool we can use to call attention to designing public budgets to meet women's needs, and analyzing budgets from that perspective to ensure there is adequate money going into services that work for women's equality. And to make sure it is not public money going into private delivery, as Morna raised with childcare.

Q: Is there a role for a new Social Entrepreneurship model, as with Public-Public Partnerships? How do we develop a model where one election doesn't change a service from public to for-profit?

Morna: In Canada, most childcare follows a social entrepreneurial model in the sense that if child care exists at all it's because a group or an individual has decided to set up shop. Often it will be a group that operates on a not-for-profit basis. But it is very inefficient and not sustainable so I'm not convinced that the social entrepreneurial model would work in the delivery of public social services, especially the services on which women are particularly dependent and need efficiency. By definition, what's true for the social entrepreneurial model, as is also the case for the big box operators, there is a tendency to only set up shop where it's viable and profitable to do so, in the absence of a public system. For example, there is almost no infant child care delivered through that model because it's the most expensive form of child care to deliver in a child care centre because the regulations require higher ratios (more staff to be hired per number of children) so I don't see it as a possibility. It exists now but it just does not work.

Verónica: PSI published a research paper in 2016 in which we analyze the proposal of Public-Public Partnerships and how this can address the profit, no-profit issue.⁵

We are trying to engage more with specific examples of these PUPS, especially in South America. For example, the Argentinian public water enterprise is doing Public-Public Partnerships with our sisters and brothers in Peru and Columbia, trying to make these enterprises more efficient. It is an ongoing discussion but we have to have proposals to ensure discussion of this option.

Louisa: The only thing I would add is that when you think about the structural problems, it all fundamentally comes back to this idea that it's a for-profit system. Actually, that should only be a for-profit system and that you are delivering the service because you want profit. It doesn't matter whether it's water or buses or whatever, it comes back down to that. If that's going to be your only goal, then you're going to get these outcomes. So, unless we can develop different goals and not prioritize profit, then we're going to end up having the same problem.

Q: Every country is different, with different laws that influence whether services should be public or private. For example, President Trump is dismantling all of the water laws. If that happens, private industry like Coca Cola, Pepsi and Dasani, will just get richer and they'll be sucking water out of Michigan's water sources and California, which is already in a drought. If there aren't laws, then the private sector will take advantage of that. I agree that privatization is probably not the way to go. But how do we work with

⁵ Xhafa, Edlira. (2013) Alternative Ways of Organising Public Services and Work in the Public Sector: What role for Public-Public Partnerships? Working Paper 09/2013. Kolleg.

the fact that there are laws in different places and we decipher when it should be private and when it should be public?

Louisa: Such an interesting question. I was thinking about how Verónica talked before about how when the state decided they were going to take control of water, but there was a question of why would you take control when you're taking it away from Indigenous people? Aside from the legislative differences, I think each area of the world has differences in the people there and cultural differences as well. So, I still think it goes back to the same thing: If you're only goal is profit I think you're going to have a problem. And if the State are in fact allies of corporations, and not allies of the people who put them in office, then you've got a problem.

Verónica: For PSI, we are firmly convinced that none of the essential service should be privatized. Some other services, maybe. But essential services, no. What do we understand by essential services? Education, health, care—social services, social protection, water, energy, transport, and sanitation. For us those are essential services because those provide the material basis for communities and addressing their human rights.

Morna: When you list the services and you look at who works in those services and who needs those services most to advance equity, it's women and girls. So, for me it is very much a feminist question as well. The two go hand in hand.

Verónica: Another thing is that we need to clearly understand this concept of infrastructure and public services. For example, we are saying water is infrastructure and not a public service. We are saying that energy is infrastructure and not a public service. At first, we need to recognize that those are public services and have to remain public. This discourse of saying 'infrastructure' opens the doors for privatization.

Jane: While there may be different laws around the world it is very much the same model - of privatization – that is being proposed around the world and often by the same corporations. They are looking for new markets around the world and it's very much the same dynamic.

Participant comment: My name is Irene Khumalo, from Swaziland. I am with the PSI. As a trade unionist, we already have a lot of work to do because the environment that we are in is so non-conducive such that the governments are working very hard to weaken the strength of the trade unions. So, when you penetrate the government, it means you have to be strategic. They make it sound polite. It's a Public Private Partnership, politely so. And yet we know that it is really private. To be strategic, we penetrate the government through the decent work agenda. When we tackle the decent work agenda it is there we enroll the public services issue and confront it. Otherwise if you just talk about privatization they won't even listen. So, the bargaining part is very critical and as such trade unions still have a lot of work to do to drum some sense into government that these are public services, they are for us and it is the state that is supposed to fend for those services, not privatize them. They shouldn't run away from

that responsibility to fend for the public services. So, the trade unions really have a lot of work to do. And I second the motion that we need a movement, a global movement. Here we are. We're saying 'No to privatization. For what? For public services.'

Participant comment: Often politicians promise tax breaks which, when it comes down to it, are minimal. We've been sold this idea that taxes are going to be reduced and there's going to be a trickle-down effect. I really like the language that you're using. This is infrastructure. This is the whole basis of your society. People should have the right to water. They should have the right to health. They should have the right to an education. And if you start to make those for-profit, those services don't go up. We all know that the quality of the service that you're getting is going down. In Canada, where we have an election coming in October, we have to remind ourselves not to be sold on the idea that we're going to pay less in taxes. Sure, we might get a few dollars a month more in the pocket but we're going to be paying for it massively in other areas.

Participant comment: I work in sanitation and infrastructure and so much of it does not work and is not designed for women. It's really important that the unions have to reach out and consult local women in the expansion of local infrastructure, whatever it is. Because low-income women, poor women, women in slums, they don't have the kind of voice that they need to get infrastructure designed for them. The Public-Public model has to be gender-responsive and it also has to look at equity in hiring and make sure that the jobs are 50:50 men and women. A lot of women are getting education and training but for example, women engineers in water and sanitation aren't getting jobs in the sector. In the movement, we need more accountability to women and girls in the overall design and management of infrastructure.

Morna: Hand in hand, the more you push engagement in decision-making locally, the more you're likely to engage women in decision-making. There has to be some sense of design of both a national or state support, but also one that really engages people in communities. If you can't have responsive community-controlled processes, then you will actually exclude women because that's where we work, where we live, and that's where the users are.

Louisa: ITF has the 'Our Public Transport' programme. www.ourpublictransport.org. It includes examples of projects where the ITF is working with unions to make sure that workers' voices and in particular women's voices are present to ensure that transport systems reflect the needs of transport workers (men and women), including to opportunities for promoting women's employment. This includes projects in Nairobi and Bogota.

The ITF signed the C40 green and healthy streets declaration to involve unions in negotiations about the planning and design of public transport infrastructure and operations, including gender equity. C40s Green & Healthy Streets Declaration may have positive wider impacts as gender equity can be promoted by attracting and retaining women, and challenging occupational segregation in the sector. Procurement

for public transport has the potential to incorporate decent work standards as well as training and apprenticeships for women, youth, and marginalized communities. The ITF is also campaigning for re-municipalisation—the public transport union in Seoul has just won the first stage of a campaign to bring line 9 in the metro system back under public ownership thereby ensuring democratic ownership and control of infrastructure and operations.

Participant comment: I'm Claire Clarke from the International Transport Workers' Federation and as Louisa said, access to sanitation facilities is a huge issue for transport workers across all the different sectors, with a specific impact for women transport workers. As part of lobbying and campaigning on public transport infrastructure, definitely we're campaigning for sanitation facilities for both workers and passengers. We highlight the need for toilets and clean water. This has been something that transport unions have been working on for a number of years. At our global congress last year, which decides what the priorities will be for the next five years, we held an event for the first time called Our Right to Flush, which looked at all the different issues that transport workers were facing. It was a very popular event. You could see from the line of people wanting to talk about the issue, that it's something that affects workers in every region, in every transport sector. We are now coordinating action across the International Transport Workers' Federation to develop a charter for safe access to decent toilets for transport workers, including women and informal workers. We're aiming to launch that charter this coming World Toilet Day, November 19, 2019.

The Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women is a non-profit organization and federally registered charity. CRIAW's work depends on the support of its members and donors from across Canada. Please support CRIAW's fact sheets and ongoing research work.



**Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women /
Institut canadien de recherches sur les femmes**

**250 City Centre Avenue, Suite 807 Ottawa, ON K1R 6K7
Tel: (613) 422-2188 Email: info@criaw-icref.ca**

www.criaw-icref.ca