

Critical Assessment of COSATU's approach to the achievement of Gender Equality

Mummy Jafta

Introduction

From inception COSATU adopted resolutions on gender equity to ensure transformation internally in the workplace and in broader society. To that end, it established various mechanisms to achieve this aim including the establishment of gender structures.

The purpose of this paper is to engage in a process of debate by exploring the theoretical framework in terms of the relationship between patriarchy, apartheid and capitalism; to reflect on our gender perspectives and vision; assess the implementation of our policies; and evaluate how far we have gone to redefine gender relations in the context of the new democratic dispensation.

2. Nature of Gender Oppression: Theoretical Framework

Gender refers to differences between men and women that are constructed by society. They manifest themselves in differentiated roles, expectations, needs and responsibilities given to people based on their sexual identity of which people are expected to live up to. These roles create expectations in that men and women, respectively, have to conform to those roles. For instance, men are supposed to be 'natural leaders', decision-makers and providers, whereas women are supposed to be caregivers, supporters, followers, particularly of men. It is not only about roles and expectations but is also about the power relationship between men and women in decision-making. Culture can influence gender roles, which again define the roles and power relations between men and women.

Therefore gender as a social construct created by society can be changed. Further, different roles and tasks of people do not necessarily have to be based on oppression and subordination. In order to change patriarchal gender relations it is therefore important to understand the power relations between women and men in different circumstances and societies. Where as we need to acknowledge the sexual differences between men and women, however this difference should not be used to discriminate, exploit and oppress.

In this paper we concentrate on gender relations under patriarchy with special focus on apartheid and capitalism. Patriarchy refers to a system of male domination over women in society where society looks at things from a male perspective and interest. This patriarchy takes the form of discrimination, disregard, control, violence, and exploitation. Social institutions such as the family, education system, religion, workplace and broader society perpetuate and institutionalize these adverse values of patriarchy. Linked to the system of patriarchy is the ideology that men are superior to women and suggests that women are male property, and as such, should be controlled.

Focus on gender is predicated on the understanding that women face particular forms of oppression arising from the patriarchal system. Whereas patriarchy predates capitalism and apartheid, women's subjugation took a particular dimension under capitalism and apartheid:

"While less obvious than racial tyranny, gender oppression was central to apartheid. Apartheid laws set out limited and impoverished roles for African women. In particular, as they enforced migrant labour, they defined the role of African women in society and the economy. At the same time, the colonial system in South Africa, as throughout the continent, greatly intensified the gender oppression found in pre-colonial systems. The combination of colonial and customary oppression denied women basic social and economic rights in the family and the community. Many women were barred from living

in cities, owning land, family planning, inheriting, borrowing money or participating in political and social struggles. The system led to widespread abuse of women, both inside and outside the family."¹

Under capitalism women oppression expresses itself in the reproduction of 'gendered' division of labour and the lack of recognition of women reproductive roles. The gendered division of labour manifests itself in the concentration of women in jobs that mirror their domestic roles in the household, such as caring, nurturing and rearing of children. Also, women are largely found in occupations like nursing, teaching and domestic service. Often women are a source of cheap labour for capital intensive markets and are largely integrated in the labour force.

At the same time, the capitalist system survives on the unpaid reproductive roles of women in the household. Women's reproductive role takes a dual character of replenishing society's labour force and ensuring the productivity of males in the workforce.

According to our theory of social transformation gender, class and racial oppression intersect and are mutually reinforcing. Still, gender and racial oppression mark the underlying economic logic of domination – the exploitation of the black working class. Under the apartheid system, race, class and gender were combined to form an intricate system of oppression. As a result black women faced triple oppression on the basis of their class, race and gender.

It is therefore important to understand the inextricable link between class, race and gender oppression, and the extent to which they were used to form a system of exploitation, discrimination and oppression.

Within organizations gender inequality takes the form of many barriers that inhibit women's full participation in socio economic development, leading to uneven participation in decision-making structures. It is a fact that women are under-represented in both leadership structures and higher decision making structures, even in sectors in which they dominate. Organizational culture also perpetuates patriarchal gender stereotypes regarding the roles of men and women. Such stereotype manifests itself in unfair treatment, unequal access to opportunities, and unfair distribution of resources resulting in the lack of confidence for women leadership.

It is against this background that we seek a conscious and concerted effort to tackle gender inequality in broader society, and within our organisation. The adoption of non-sexism and improved participation of women in the labour market will not automatically change the power relations between men and women. For many years, the gender struggle was subsumed under the class and national struggle; and it was thought that victory over apartheid would automatically change the patriarchal gender relations. The Discussion paper tabled at the CEC in 2001 contends that:

"There is a tendency to assume that gender oppression will disappear with the elimination of class exploitation. A more useful approach suggests that there is a need to make a conscious effort to eliminate women's' oppression specifically and simultaneously as opposed to seeing it as simply subsumed under class and race, or as merely functional to apartheid and capitalism. Our goal is that class and national struggles should at all time be engendered and at the same time gender struggle must have a class and national content."²

¹ Advancing Social Transformation in the Era of Globalisation, p.9

² CEC Discussion Paper, 2001. *Gender A Struggle within the Struggle – Engaging our Theory, Assessing out Practice*, p.2.

3. COSATU's Gender Strategy

COSATU's commitment to addressing gender disparity within its ranks and in broader society is unquestionable. To that end it has adopted numerous resolutions that have now culminated into the development of the Gender Policy that was adopted at the 7th Congress in 2000. This is a result of COSATU's commitment to the principle of non-sexism and years of pressure by women within the organization.

COSATU and its affiliates use the following broad areas as sites of struggles to change gender relations for the achievement of gender equality. Namely the

- Trade Union Movement,
- Workplace and
- Society at large.

Changing gender relations in the Trade Union movement: This aims to create forums to lead and guide the organization on strategies for gender transformation; systematically remove barriers to women's participation; change patriarchal culture and the mindset of both men and women; develop and empower women and the leadership. Also, by eliminating sexual division of labour in the organization and the workplace; promoting the development of second layer leadership, and monitoring adherence to the strategies that have been adopted, such the establishment of gender structures and the employment of gender coordinators:

Transformation of the workplace: The objective is to change gender relations in the workplace by working towards a more equitable working environment. To that end, target conditions of women in the workplace and ensure gender sensitive collective bargaining. This forms part of COSATU's bargaining agenda to improve the situation of women workers. It also seeks to change the legacy of apartheid in the workplace by ensuring equity and focusing on the implementation of labour codes and other legislation that affect the workplace, and promote solidarity action between men and women

Social gender transformation: COSATU seeks to contribute to the overall struggle to change gender relations in broader society with the aim of fighting social exclusion on the basis of gender. While we respect and recognize our varied indigenous culture, by the same token, we should challenge cultural practices that undermines and violate women's rights. Work in this area is predicated on the understanding that workplace and societal inequality do reinforce each other; hence they should be tackled both simultaneously and separately. In this regard COSATU seeks to influence social policy and monitor progress in achieving gender equity.

Political coalitions: COSATU works with a number of networks and women organizations in order to form a broader coalition for social justice and gender equity. The principal allies are the ANC Women's' League, SANGOCO, Women's' National Coalition, SHEP, and government departments and institutions. These alliances could be extended to include traditional and community structures, which in turn could form part of the National Women's Movement.

International and Regional Solidarity: COSATU is highly active and influential in both the regional and international trade union movement such as the SATUCC, ICFTU and ICFTU-AFRO, UN Special Sessions for Civil Society, etc and has been given premier position in the women committees of the latter.

To achieve its aims, the federation combines a multifaceted approach that includes the establishment of gender structures and the appointment of gender coordinators; including capacity building through education, campaigns, advocacy and networking with other organizations. In order to translate the policy into reality, an implementation strategy was developed and adopted by the April CEC in 2000 as a guiding document for COSATU and affiliates on gender work. COSATU's policy sets the framework within which affiliates should locate their gender policy and programmers.

As reflected below, various obstacles and challenges have been experienced in an attempt to implement the gender strategy. The challenges range from organizational obstacles such as inconsistent implementation, resource allocation, political will and commitment by the leadership. One of the challenges confronting the labour movement is the overemphasis on redefining gender relations in the trade union movement to the detriment of workplace transformation. This skewed emphasis has slowed down the impact of transformation in the workplace and in broader society, hence the need to develop strategies to effectively influence workplace transformation.

There is a need to effectively mainstream gender into the work of the trade union movement, and this demands changes in organizational culture and practice, such as creating constitutional structures that are conducive for gender mainstreaming.

4. Progress since 1994

4.1 Setting the Scene: Legislation and Social Policy

Against this theoretical framework, how do we measure progress since 1994? The democratic breakthrough in 1994 represented a qualitative shift in the struggle against apartheid colonialism. It ushered in a new dispensation that redefined gender relations and opened a new chapter that held promise for gender struggles, including Broad Based Economic Empowerment. The question to ask is to what extent has the democratic movement used this space to transform gender relations? Also to what extent has the gender structures by the labour movement and other progressive women organizations advanced gender equity, and put pressure on the state and other institutions to concretize the constitutional rights of women?

Since 1994 to-date, it is now evident that massive progress in terms of rights, protection and social service has been recorded. Major milestones from a gender perspective include the provision of basic services to rural and urban households, and the prohibition of statutory discrimination.

The South African constitution makes provision for the establishment of the gender machinery, namely the Commission on Gender Equality (CGE) the Office on the Status of Women (OSW), Human Rights Commission, and government focal points in government departments. Such machinery has been tasked with the promotion, respect, protection, development of gender equality and the attainment of gender equality. They are given the power to regulate, research, investigate and monitor national legislation and issues pertaining to gender equality.

The women's struggles in South Africa can also be measured through the adoption of a minimum of 30% quota as a policy position to ensure women's participation in government institutions including parliament. This has been demonstrated through increased levels of participation by women in positions that were traditionally a male preserve, such as ministerial, lawmakers and parliamentary positions. The success in this regard has largely depended on the consistency with which the ANC has insisted upon and upheld this policy position even by its leadership.

In the workplace a package of laws was introduced to protect workers across the board, especially vulnerable ones which include a sizeable portion of women and the disabled. The Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) sets a floor of rights for all workers, and as such, is crucial to protecting women workers who faced the worst forms of exploitation under apartheid. Several sectoral determinations issued in terms of the BCEA for farming, retail and domestic workers will go a long way to improve the conditions of women workers in these sectors.

The Labour Relations Act (LRA) provides organizational rights to workers including the right to strike and to challenge the power of employers among others. Also Health and safety legislation promulgated in 1993 and currently under review provides set of rights essential for women workers in the economy. Regrettably, domestic workers are still excluded from coverage from both the Health and Safety and Compensation Laws. Hence the need to call on the government

to ratify the ILO Maternity Protection Convention No 183, which seeks to standardize the salary and extend the current benefits to vulnerable sectors.

Skills Development Legislation holds the possibility of transferring skills to workers across the board, and promises to change the workplace. The jury is still out on the impact of the Act on skills formation, particularly for women workers.

The Employment Equity Act outlaws discrimination and provides for affirmative action measures. Affirmative action is crucial to reversing historical racial and gender inequity in the workplace. It also includes mechanism to close the wage gap. Employment equity has been aligned with the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Discrimination Act, which apply to socio-economic issues.

Recent, amendments to the Unemployment Insurance Act have important gender dimensions. One major victory for women workers is the separation of maternity benefits from unemployment benefits. In the past a woman would forfeit her unemployment benefit if she were dismissed immediately after returning to work following a period of confinement.

However major concerns have been raised regarding the level of the benefit. The sliding scale of benefits will in general benefit poor workers, and since women are concentrated in lower paying jobs, in theory, they stand to benefit the most.

Other legislative interventions to change gender relations include the Domestic Violence Act and the Maintenance Act. The former deals with domestic gender-based violence and aims to protect women from abuse. The Maintenance Act seeks to ensure shared childcare responsibility and in the main to give high priority to the rights of children, their survival, protection and development.

From the above it is quite clear that at formal and legislative levels a lot of changes were introduced since 1994. The fundamental question is whether these changes have had an impact in the material lives of women, particularly working class women. Evidence seems to suggest that middle class or professional women across the racial divide benefited more compared to working class women. (See table 1). A related question is why inequality persists even in the absence of formal statutory discrimination.

The social and economic reality of working class women seems to have improved very little. It may be argued as indicated below, that the broad changes since 1994 coexist to a large extent with exclusion on the basis of gender and class. Working class women bear the burden of poverty and unemployment, and are largely concentrated in low paying and insecure jobs. This occurrence is more pronounced in the manufacturing, retail and agricultural sectors, including rural areas especially the former 'homelands'.

This leads to the question, whether women or gender activist have effectively organized to occupy the political space to mainstream gender and ensure consistent attempt to address gender inequalities for vulnerable groups. A related question is whether working class women have led mass struggles to place gender equity at the top of the agenda of the union, and in broader society? The women movement seems to have been weakened by several factors and this has left a void that official institutions are incapable of filling. This is exacerbated by the fact that gender struggles are not taken up consistently by the union movement, notwithstanding the redefined gender relations in the new democratic dispensation

4.2 Social and economic exclusion on the Basis of Gender

Exclusion on the basis of gender as noted above, seems to coexist with major progress recorded since 1994. This may be analyzed from various levels. In the labour market women are concentrated in low paying occupations. The table below shows that women are more likely to occupy clerical positions and are under-represented in skilled and managerial positions:

Table 1: Occupations by Gender

Occupation	Female (%)	Male (%)
Management	12%	88%
Skilled Employees	46%	54%
Semi Skilled	36%	64%
Legislators	25%	75%
Service and sales	30%	70%
Clerks	64%	36%

Source: Department of labour, 2004 Employment Equity Report.

Equity at work is still far from being a reality. White males still disproportionately dominate management. Where affirmative action measures have been implemented, middle class women gain more relative to working class women. However, it is hard to measure advancement of middle relative to working class women, as the Employment Equity report does not specify promotions by occupations; however evidence points to the fact that it is mostly middle class women who benefit from promotions.

Table 2: Unemployment by Gender

	Female	Male
Official definition	4,205, 000	4,058, 000
Expanded Definition	9,199, 000	6, 957, 000

Source: Statistics South Africa, Labour Force Survey, September 2004

The above table indicates that women were more affected by unemployment relative to men. Women were more likely to be affected by long-term unemployment as depicted by the expanded definition of unemployment in table 2. In addition, black African women have a higher unemployment rate compared to other groups. In September 2004 the unemployment rate for black African women stood at 36% compared to 27% for black African males.

Poverty in South Africa continues to have gender, race and spatial dimensions. According to the UNDP Development report (2003, p 41) 11.9 million of the poor (54.4%) are female, compared to 10 million poor males. Africans constitute 91.1% or 21.9 million of the poor in South Africa. Also it is stated in the same report that there was a 2.5% reduction of women living in absolute poverty between 1995 and 2002³. Even with this reduction there are still more women than men living in absolute poverty.

Table 3: Trends in absolute poverty (1995 and 2002)

National Poverty Line			
Population Below the poverty line (%)			
		2002	1995
	National	48.5%	51.1%
	Gender		
	Male	45.9%	48.9%
	Female	50.9%	53.4%
Race	African	56.3%	62%
	Coloured	36.1%	38.5%
	White	6.9%	1.5%
	Indian	14.7%	8.3%

Source: UNDP. 2003, Human Development report, p.41.

Women are also deeply affected by the process of economic restructuring and globalization. Some of the problems highlighted above can be traced directly to this economic restructuring

³ UNDP. 2003. *Human Development report*, pp 41-2

process. The South African economy underwent dramatic liberalization especially on trade issues, which in turn led to a rise of imports and diversification of exports. As a result local industry faces stiff competition from cheap imports and also has to compete, often unfairly, against multinationals on the international market.

Capital's response was to retrench and reorganize workers contracts. This has led to massive job losses in the mining, manufacturing agriculture and the public sector.

South Africa has witnessed a phenomenal growth of casual labour, mostly in the retail industry. Women are affected directly through retrenchments for example in the textile and clothing industry; also, they have higher susceptibility to be employed as casuals. Capital is taking advantage of women's lower levels of skills and vulnerability.

Economic restructuring in South Africa has directly led to the exponential growth of the informal sector. According to the latest Labour Force Survey figures about 2 372 million work in the informal sector of which 936 000 are estimated to be women.

4.3 Gender in Trade Unions

4.3.1 Principal Achievements

COSATU has adopted resolutions and a policy to advance gender struggles; and enhance the status of women; to conscientize both men and women about patriarchal practices; to breakdown practical; structural barriers which hinder the full participation of women; and to empower the latter to engage with socio-economic and political issues, both internally and externally.

In broad terms progress has been uneven across the federation of which the salient features are as following: Representation and visibility of woman leaders at the national level has improved, with NEHAWU now having a women President for the first time in its history. Still, at the lower levels of the organization we have not made sufficient progress. COSATU (with two women in decision making structures, as Treasurer and Second Deputy President at national level) and some of the affiliates have adopted a quota as a policy position, to increase and sustain women leadership. The quota is not only to secure women in leadership positions, but also for developmental programmes and activities.

A major challenge is that women are mostly elected as deputies and treasurers across the board and are easily targeted for replacement; this tendency is not consistently applied to male comrades. Other problems include lack of support and mentorship; Often organizational culture remains intact placing further impediments to women leaders. On the whole, leadership at all levels is still the domain and preserve of males.

Few of our affiliates have resolutions and gender policies, which have set a framework for gender struggles. As a result some of the affiliates established gender structures and appointed full time gender coordinators. However, on the one hand, there is a **concern** that gender work is **considered a burden** for the organization, and as such, is often shifted to gender structures and gender coordinators in particular, with very minimal political support and intervention. On the other hand, a perception **is created that gender structures are not adding value and in turn gender structures feel** marginalized and this dichotomy results in a vicious cycle of blame. In the future, the organization has to devise strategies to ensure effective gender mainstreaming and to adhere to policy stipulations regarding financial and human resource and the strategic location of gender structures.

Another principal gains yet uneven across COSATU, affiliates and regions are taking up gender struggles in the workplace. Some unions have effectively mobilized and forced employers to adopt progressive parental rights policies, which have been incorporated into the union's general collective bargaining agenda. On the whole gains made in collective bargaining are meant to

improve conditions for all workers, and therefore a gender impact analysis can help reveal the position of male and female conditions of work and benefits on this matter.

In order to address barriers to women's full participation in the socio-economic sphere, COSATU has adopted a Sexual Harassment Code of Good Practice to deal with Sexual Harassment (SH) in the federation and its affiliates. This code is aligned with the NEDLAC Code of Good practice, which has recently been amended and integrated into the Employment Equity Act; and this has a direct bearing for COSATU to update and align its code likewise.

In 2004 shop stewards were trained by COSATU in collaboration with the Sexual Harassment Education Project (SHEP) as sexual harassment officers; they undertook to establish affiliates and workplace reporting mechanisms to handle SH, and to continuously educate and raise awareness on this issue. Unfortunately, sexual harassment is one of the least used provisions of our labour law; and therefore, there is a need to take up a campaign on prevention and handling of SH cases.

Mechanism to address women barriers to participation also includes provision of childcare by trade union organizations during meetings; and demanding child care facility or benefit from employers. Progress in this regard has been unsatisfactory, and the primary focus on workers and employers as the target for this campaign in the workplace (as per the relevant congress resolution) has been lost. Instead, affiliates tend to deviate from forcing employers to provide childcare to address general children's issues. The challenge is to ensure that all affiliates have childcare policy and take up struggles against employers.

Training and development of women leaders; and to conscientise male has also received attention from the Federation. This has been replicated by affiliates. This exercise takes many forms including gender courses and National and Regional Workshops, which are mainly targeted at women. However, COSATU need to strategize to include men as a specific target, so that they may act as catalysts in bridging the cultural gap in gender relations. The challenge is to develop mechanisms to keep record and sustain this development to ensure that it yields the desired effect. The major obstacle in this regard is lack of resources, which result in developmental programmes not reaching lower structures.

4.3.2 Challenges facing COSATU

The above analysis attempted to identify key achievement in our gender activities. Overall, the challenge is to ensure consistent and effective implementation of our gender policies. COSATU is now celebrating 20 years and in part, this also marks a milestone in gender struggles within the Federation. In its 20 years history the Federation has explored various mechanisms to deal with gender issues. A more in-depth study to evaluate the impact of our policies and strategies on gender is necessary.

Unions provide valuable political experience for women and have produced outstanding women leaders that have also been absorbed to other fields in society. Yet, unless there is focused attention for lower structures and change in the organizational culture with regard to investing resources to lower structures, to accommodate women workers at all levels, ordinary women at lower structures will be denied the opportunity for political training. Therefore is a need to review organizational practices that impede women participation.

The absence of a mass women's movement led by the working class is detrimental to the struggle to advance gender equality. This is borne out by very limited gendered approaches to development, as highlighted in the previous section. A mass women movement that will take up gender struggles is sorely needed, especially to advance the interest of working class women.

Due to their organizational infrastructure and experience, unions are better placed to contribute towards the emergence of the movement with a working class bias.

The starting point is that unions must begin take up major struggles on gender equity issues, both, at the workplace and in broader society. For example, we need an effective campaign against discrimination and for equity in the work place. Experience and reports have shown that working class women are being left behind. As such, the campaign must tackle various aspects including Employment Equity, Skills development, wages and conditions of employment which put emphasis on women and the disabled as beneficiaries, parental rights, social security, health and safety.

The annihilating effects of HIV and AIDS, and the scourge of poverty, which mainly affects women, children and the youth, is totally unacceptable and can be eradicated. While embracing the strategy of eliminating HIV and AIDS in terms of awareness, treatment, prevention (ABC) strategies, the general public including labour, need to shed the element of ignorance and indifference on finding a vaccine or a cure; such forces need to focus on the eradication strategy by pronouncing its interest on this matter. This can be done by showing an interest on the matter, and putting pressure on the international science, pharmaceutical, government and research donors to multiply their efforts in finding a vaccine or a cure. Needless to say that there is a need to research; profile and appreciate the efforts of those working towards finding a vaccine or a cure, and establishing working relations with them.

Mass recruitment of women, especially casual, domestic and young women should also form a critical part of the campaign.

One of the difficult subjects that the trade union movement has to confront is that of discrimination based on sexual orientation. The extent of this form of discrimination in the work place is not well known. In this regard, trade unions must begin to create a conducive environment for gay and lesbian workers.

Organizationally, we need to ensure that all affiliates have a gender policy and have adopted strategies and policy positions as guided by the COSATU Gender Policy; and they need to adhere to systematic reporting in terms of the policy process that was agreed upon by the April 2001 CEC.

Experience has shown that it is not adequate to have a policy in paper that will not be effectively implemented, for that reason the Federation should ensure that affiliates implement the guidelines set on the COSATU Policy. The objective is to address the variation in strengths between affiliates because the gender struggles should largely be driven at that level. Also required, is the need to ensure the integration of gender demands such as parental rights and childcare in our bargaining strategy.

In order for COSATU to achieve its ambitious vision and programmes to realize gender equity, it must mobilize both financial and human resources; ensure effective gender mainstreaming in departments and in constitutional structures; and adhere to policy stipulations in terms of the strategic location of gender structures.

6. Conclusions

No one can dispute the need to address the class, race and gender question simultaneously and with the same vigour in order to change patriarchal gender relations to achieve gender equality. The challenges of globalization, where the onslaught of colonialism takes the new form of creating a modern labour force, requires that we adapt to those trends by reviewing our recruitment and organizing strategies to meet these challenges. This can be achieved by focusing

on the new forms of the labour force, namely casual workers and those in the informal sector, which has far reaching implications for women.

COSATU has played a key role in the fight for the liberation of this country; and contributed to the attainment of political power and most of the socio economic gains that seek to protect the working class against injustice, discrimination and exploitation. There is a need to work towards sustaining and demonstrating this power by tightening the strategies for engagement and influence in the transformation process, so that the gains benefit all including women, the disabled and rural communities.

COSATU can capitalize on the political will to act in the interest of the poor by initiating united actions, solidarity and partnership with grassroots women organizations through the National Women's Movement.

The successful translation of COSATU's vision for gender equality is largely determined by the political will of leadership; shared understanding and commitment to implement the policies and strategies put in place to translate this goal into concrete benefits for women.

For COSATU to take its rightful place in the transformation of society, it will have to lead the transformation of gender relations. This will require an honest reflection of individual, collective and organizational practices, including commitment to challenge discriminatory and oppressive culture.

The salient question to ask in this regard is, in what way does one contribute towards sustaining the status quo; and to what extent does one begin to redress and work towards the realization of COSATU 's leadership role in the transformation process? It is worth noting that, successful leadership should be measured not by rhetoric and charisma but by the quality of holistic representation and leadership one has produced.

In working towards the realization of this commitment to gender equality, it is critical to move from a premise of a commonly understood and shared vision, and clearly defined roles. While we respect that affiliates remain autonomous trade union organizations, however, they comprise the federation and as such, they are the custodians of the vision, resolutions, policies and decisions, which can only find expression when they translate them into concrete programme of action. Therefore, the need to work towards closing the variations in the strengths and the uneven implementation of policy among affiliates is necessary.

Women in their quest for emancipation should acknowledge that they might meet challenges and resistance. They should stop perceiving themselves as victims because this can provide them with a false comfort zone, which in turn may lead them to relinquish their responsibility for self-empowerment and emancipation.