



# FIGHTING FOR OUR FUTURE

**IUF 28<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS**  
Geneva, June 13-16, 2023

## **20 Achieving voice, visibility, validation of women workers**

The 28th IUF Congress honors the memory and tremendous lifetime contribution of Sister Ela R. Bhatt (Elaben), the founder of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India, who passed away on November 2, 2022.

Throughout her life Elaben was committed to winning equality and economic and social justice for workers, and especially women workers. She was committed to reaching the most vulnerable workers who were the women in the informal economy. This was achieved through the peaceful, non-violent struggle for the right of women to be collectively represented and involved at all levels of decision making.

Winning economic and social justice for women working in the informal economy meant that they must organize themselves in unions. It is not the presence or absence of an employer or a defined work place that defines them as workers, but their need to combine together and act collectively. Through this union organizing women workers are brought together in unity, ensuring their ability to exercise collective representation and collective power.

This lesson remains important for us today as millions of young workers are designated as self-employed, and millions in developing countries are still in the informal economy and they all need to come together for collective representation and collective power. They need – and have a right to form – trade unions.

Integral to the vision of Elaben and SEWA was the strategy of increasing the combined, collective bargaining power of rural and agricultural workers by organizing together with small and marginal farmers in both trade unions and cooperatives. This collective movement is vital to achieving economic and social justice.

Congress recognizes the importance of Elaben's powerful assertion that through union organizing, women can “achieve much needed VOICE, VISIBILITY and VALIDATION”.

As affiliates of the IUF we are committed to:

- give greater attention to and support for the rights and interests of women workers in the informal economy in all countries and regions;
- give greater voice to women workers in decision-making; in all workplaces in the formal and informal economy; and in our unions;
- ensure greater visibility of women workers in work, employment, recruitment and promotion; government policies and programs; data and statistics; and in our unions;
- actively support the validation of women workers as workers in both the informal economy and formal sectors, and recognize their vital economic and social contribution.

By doing so we honour the legacy of Elaben and her tremendous contribution.