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டாபிந்து கூட்டு ஒன்றியம்
DABINDU COLLECTIVE UNION

For ALL women and girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment.

International Women's Day 2025

For forty years, the Dabindu Collective has built collective power of women, especially those working in the garment sector in the Free Trade Zone, recognizing the essential contribution they make to the economy, and we fight with them, together. Women living in a patriarchal society must go beyond mere existence and actively participate in decision-making, and for this, women's voices must be made a reality by addressing power imbalances.

Women's economic power is fundamental to their overall well-being and their ability to fully participate in society. In 2025, women's representation at the state and government levels in Sri Lanka is be at an all-time high – and women's participation in global supply chains continues to be critical. Therefore, international frameworks and partnerships must be strengthened to advance infrastructure that builds women's collective power.

We are committed to creating a world where women's rights are respected, and where women's collective power and contributions are valued at all levels. On this Women's Day, let us join together to recognize and fight the prejudices that exist among us on the basis of us identities, including race, caste, and gender. We commit to fight for and create a world beyond the global neoliberal regime that continues to exclude, exploit and dispossess women.

1. Ratification of ILO Convention 190: Violence and Harassment.

ILO Convention 190 (Violence and Harassment Convention) provides a framework for the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work. Its adoption demonstrates a strong commitment to workers' safety. Participating in the 2025 CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women) in Geneva, the Government of Sri Lanka openly announced its commitment to adopt the convention. We urge the Government to fulfil its commitments to prevent and combat workplace harassment of women and LGBTQ+ persons.

2. Introducing an Anti-Workplace-Harassment Law.

Sri Lanka's Occupational Health and Safety Laws do not include harassment at work. In addition to ratifying C190, our intention as a women's trade union is to create a space for women and LGBTQ+ persons to enjoy a safe and respectful work environment by enacting and implementing an Anti-Workplace-Harassment Law.

3. Establish 24-hour Women's Desk in Free Trade Zones.

We, as a women's trade union, have emphasize the need for a dedicated and accessible women's bureau should be established in free trade zones 24 hours a day to provide specialized support for women experiencing violence.



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4. The new government must eliminate oppressive unitary labour laws that allow for exploitation of labour.

5. Ensure women's right to unionize and collective bargaining.

In the midst of an economic crisis, women are employed in all sectors that generate foreign currency for the country, including tea plantations, garments and domestic work. However, women of these sectors are subjected harassment and violence when organizing or unionising.

Although the law clearly states that employers cannot take action against employees based on their union membership or activities, the reality is that employers intimidate employees from unionizing and using their collective power. We call on the Ministry of Labor and Labor Departments to protect women's rights and to promote unionization.

6. Providing free sanitary napkins as a basic need for women.

Instead of the current sanitary napkin voucher system in schools, sanitary napkins should be provided and it should be provided to girls in the entire school system.

In recognition of the importance of menstrual hygiene in the workplace, instead of the sanitary napkin provision system currently in place in factories which require employees to buy a napkin for Rs. 20-40 per day, it should be made mandatory for factories to provide 2 free sanitary napkins per 9-hour shift.

7. Abolish taxes on sanitary napkins.

Sanitary products should be made more affordable by removing taxes on sanitary napkins and providing subsidized prices.

8. Enhancement of government-run medical clinic programs in the investment promotion zone.

Although the medical health office has been established in the free trade zone, women and disabled people do not have time to avail its services. The workers are unable to visit the medical clinic in their village/city because their only day off is Sunday. This has a negative impact on the nutrition of pregnant and lactating women and on the sexual and reproductive health of women. At least one day on the weekend should be made available for those workers to avail the services of the public health office.

9. Strengthening support structures for unpaid care work.

Establishing day care facilities in factories and workplaces supports working mothers. We call for more funding in the 2026 budget for child day care centres, elderly homes, and safe houses for women who are victims of domestic violence.



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10. Valuing the Contribution of Care Work to GDP

Women's work often extends to marginalized work in the home and in the informal sector. Including the contribution of care work to GDP helps to demonstrate the economic value of care work environments. To assess this, the contribution of care work should be added to GDP and to women's labour force participation.

11. Ensure a living wage for all workers.

12. End the IMF-driven austerity including increased VAT and electricity/gas price hikes.

13. Continuously urge for bigger cuts for exploitative international private debt and reverse the decision to cut Employee Provident Funds.

As a women's organization and trade union, we celebrate International Women's Day 2025 emphasizing the dignity, safety, love, rest, rights, equality and power of women's labour in factories, plantations, farmlands and the seas and beyond.