

# 1st National Power Women Convention

Organised by EEFI

Hosted by COTEE

DRAFT REPORT

CHENNAI - OCTOBER 14 2023

## **EEFI National Convention of Power Sector Working Women**

**Chennai, 14th October 2023.**

### **Condolence Resolution**

- The inaugural national convention of working women in the power sector, held in Chennai on October 14, 2023, extends its heartfelt condolences and pays sincere tribute to the leaders and activists who tirelessly championed the rights of the working class and the people and have since passed away.
- This convention offers a heartfelt tribute to the esteemed trade union leader, Comrade Anathalavattom Anandan, who served as the All India Vice President and Kerala State President of CITU. Comrade Anandan's journey began as a coir worker, and he played a pivotal role in organizing coir workers. His leadership extended to various sectors, including Press Workers, Sawmill Workers, private transport workers, toddy tappers, Serified Employees, and SIDCO Employees. He held the position of president in multiple associations, such as the Kerala State Road Transport Employees Association (KSRTEA), Kerala Financial Corporation Officers' Association, Kerala State Co-Operative Bank Employees Federation, Khadi Board Employees Association, and Travancore Titanium Officers' Association.
- This convention expresses deep condolences at the demise of Dr. M S Swaminathan, who was an agronomist, agricultural scientist, plant geneticist, administrator, and humanitarian. Swaminathan was a global leader of the green revolution. He has been called the main architect of the green revolution in India for his leadership and role in introducing and further developing high-yielding varieties of wheat and rice.
- This convention offers its profound respects to Comrade Kanai Lal Bannerjee, a freedom fighter, esteemed trade union leader, prominent ideologue, and former National Secretary of CITU. Comrade Bannerjee was deeply involved with the Rail Road Workers' Union and held leadership positions within the

All India Railway Men's Federation for an extensive period. His pivotal role in the historic railway strike of 1974 is etched in the annals of labor history.

- This convention conveys its profound condolences on the passing of Madan Ghosh, a revered communist and esteemed peasant leader. Comrade Ghosh held the position of President in PBKS and served as the Vice President of AIKS. Additionally, he dedicated his time to the chairmanship of Burdwan Zilla Parishad for a period.
- This convention deeply mourns the loss of Mridul Dey, a prominent figure in the Left movement in West Bengal, and extends its heartfelt condolences to his family and comrades. We also express our profound sorrow at the passing of Sunit Chopra, a former leader in the student movement who later emerged as a leader of the rural proletariat. He served as the Joint Secretary of the All India Agricultural Workers Union and was renowned for his contributions as an art critic. In addition, we offer our condolences on the demise of P Lalaji Babu, a distinguished leader among plantation workers and a former member of the working committee of CITU. He also held positions as the former President and General Secretary of the All India Plantation Workers Federation (CITU). We pay our respectful tribute to Sudhamoy Majumdar, affectionately known as Panu Majumdar, a legendary leader among plantation workers in Tripura who dedicated 86 years of his life to the tea workers' cause. He was the founder of the renowned Durgabari Co-operative Plantation and served as a long standing member of CITU's All India General Council and as the Vice President of the Tripura State Committee of CITU.
- This convention expresses deep condolences at the demise of M. K. Chanda, veteran trade union leader and former president of CG CITU & former General Secretary of Koyla Shramik Sangh. We pays its respectful homage to Comrade Sarojini Balanandan, senior leader of the women's movement in Kerala and former state President of Kerala State Committee and all India Vice President of AIDWA.
- This convention pays respectful homage to Shivshankar Singh, veteran trade union leader from Bihar who passed away at 94 after a prolonged illness. He joined the state government employees' movement and also took an active role in organizing beedi workers under CITU. He served as the general secretary of the state beedi workers' union and was an office bearer of All

India Beedi Workers' Federation (CITU). He was also the vice president of Bihar state committee of CITU.

- This convention pays deep condolences at the demise of Sujit Mukherjee, leader of the construction workers' movement, former national secretary of CWFI and treasurer of CWFI West Bengal committee. He was one of the founder members of CWFI and was instrumental in expanding the federation's organizational presence in many states. He was also a member of the general council of CITU.
- This convention pays deep condolences at the sad demise of CITU leader and veteran communist leader of Karnataka V. P. Kulkarni, and CITU state Vice President of CITU Karnataka state committee and working committee member of CWFI Harish Nayak.
- This convention also conveys condolence at the passing away of Shyama Prasad Roy and Anju Chatterjee who were leaders of construction workers movement in West Bengal and working committee members of CWFI. We convey condolences at the passing away of Babaji Parida, veteran leader of Kisan Sabha and CPI (M) Odisha State.
- This convention pays homage to the anti-apartheid anti-imperialist songwriter-singer Harry Belafonte, to Vivan Sundaram, one of the most creative artists of our country and a people's artist. We condole the death of popular mass singer and political activist Gadar from Telangana.
- This convention expresses its deepest condolences at the demise of Mehmet Seyis, who was a towering leader of the working class in Cyprus in general and The Revolutionary Trade Unions Federation (DEV-IS), a WFTU affiliate in particular.
- We deeply mourn and express condolences to the bereaved families of 291 people who were killed in the tragic railway accident, the worst in recent history near Balasore in Odisha.
- 23 construction workers have died recently when an under-construction railway bridge at Sairang, near Aizwal, Mizoram collapsed. Earlier, 17 construction workers were killed after a girder machine collapsed on them during the third phase of construction on the Samruddhi Expressway in Maharashtra's Thane district. The workers who died in both cases were mostly

migrant workers. This convention expresses its profound grief and conveys its condolences to the bereaved families.

- This convention also condoles the tragic deaths of innocent people who died in Manipur during the ongoing ethnic conflict since the violence erupted on May 3, 2023. We express deep condolences at the loss of human lives in communal violence at Nuh, Haryana.
- This convention also expresses grief at the death of workers in industrial accidents and cleaning sewers and in other forms of work, due to gross negligence of employers. We also expresses condolence at the deaths in the hills due to floods, cloud bursts, and other disasters and calamities, mostly due to wrong town planning, dam water release, and hill slides.
- Subhash Munda, a prominent leader of the Left movement in Jharkhand and a member of the Jharkhand state committee of CPI(M), and also a leading organizer of Adivasi Adhikar Manch, was brutally killed by miscreants near his office at Dalladally. This convention salutes his memory and pays homage to Subhash Munda.
- This convention pays its respectful homage to the cadres and supporters of the Left movement who were murdered by TMC hoodlums during the recently held Panchayat election in West Bengal. We pays its homage to the activists and leaders of the Left and democratic movement who were brutally killed by the RSS goons while fighting against the BJP misrule in Tripura.
- This convention pays homage to all those who laid down their lives across the world in the struggle against imperialism, exploitation, in defense of the rights of the toiling people, and for a just and egalitarian society. We pledge to carry forward their struggles for a just and egalitarian society.
- This convention deeply mourns the deaths of innocent masses in the Israel – Hamas conflict which is ongoing.
- **Inquilab Zindabad**

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INTERNATIONAL

The global capitalist order is facing unprecedented recession-stagnation-inflation (stagflation), rise of right-populist-authoritarianism, endless attacks on the toiling masses and the pervert private accumulations through non-productive and expropriatory routes. The ongoing conflict between US led NATO and Russia in Ukraine and the subsequent months long war resulted in massive shortage of supply of food, fuel and fiscal turmoil due to regrouping of global trade orders. This corporate created global inflation reached alarming 8.75% in 2022 and even ILO has depicted that the same large corporations who were given stimulus packages to overcome the covid pandemic have taken advantage of the inflationary environment to raise their prices and profits leading towards a greedflation. This has led to a disastrous impact on the low income households due to greatest price increase in food, housing, energy and transport sectors. In this terribly troubled condition of global economy and working class, the imperialist forces led by the international finance capital and US based energy and armament corporations are looting nations and people in atrocious ways. US energy firm EXXon Mobil registered a record profit of over \$55 billion

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which is 142% higher than last year and gas prices in the second half of 2022 increased ranging from 45% to 283% in all 25 EU member states.

World is undergoing an energy transition from fossil fuel to renewable and this is going to restructure the camps and contradictions between the global powers – the US imperialism and allied forces and the rest of the world. This overhauling change in world energy sector will drastically change the global work-processes and work-force. Our struggle has to be focused towards this paradigm shift.

### **NATIONAL CONTEXT**

The RSS led Modi government is on an aggressive pursuit of neoliberal measures on the economic front aimed at grossly authoritarianising the economic management to further forcible expropriatory height. In milieu of ethnic clashes and barbarity unleashed in Manipur, atrocious attacks and killings of minorities in Haryana, the government has passed one after another anti-people, anti-worker, anti-national bills in parliament without any discussion and debate from any corner. The enactments and policy-exercises through executive order route covering wide segments of the basic, strategic and infrastructural sectors of the economy like electricity, minerals, forest-lands, digital-management etc to assert more plunderous and expropriatory authority and control of the capitalist class on the economy do not stop there. They have also gone beyond to traverse into the areas of administration and political governance with the same content of more aggressive authoritarian direction as seen in the hasty introduction of amendment bills for restructured codification of Indian Evidence Act, Indian Penal Code, Criminal Procedure Code, matters relating to press and publications etc having a serious bearing on basic democratic rights of the people. Actually what India's economy is facing is a classic example of rabid neo-liberalism induced economic disaster. With around 8% of unemployment throughout the last seven months, ever decreasing wage share and consumption rate, high inflation and volatility of job due to rapid informalization, India is facing an acute demand side crisis. But the government is claiming robustly about the huge investment in infrastructure, which is nothing but the siphoning off of people's money to large private corporate for construction of infrastructure followed by handing over of brown field assets including Transmission lines owned by PGCIL through monetization pipeline to private cronies. Neither it will create short term demand, nor generate stable job opportunity for future.

In the midst of the ongoing economic crisis, the Modi government is looting the people and subsidizing the corporates, domestic as well as foreign by fresh write offs of bank loans amounting to Rs. 2.14 lakh crores in 2023. This is additional to the write offs of Rs. 15.32 lakh crores given from 2014. While on the one hand the union government is gifting out mines, minerals, forests and all sorts of natural resources of our country to national and international private corporations, on the other hand it is attacking the public energy sector of India in general and Electricity sector in particular in a planned and tremendous way. The Generation sector,

both the Hydrocarbon and renewable, is rapidly being taken over by the private sector, the transmission sector is under severe attack. And while being resisted to pass the Electricity (Amendment) Bill 2022, the government is desperately unleashing the last course of attack on public electricity distribution sector by maliciously imposing prepaid smart metering scheme and various unilateral amendments in the existing rules and regulations.

These will lead to massive de-electrification and food security of our country will be jeopardized. It will ensure the entry of private licensing in established state utilities' network and cherry picking of most profitable revenue generating areas. It is an attack on federal structure of India. Electricity workers of various states are coming into streets against this imposition of smart metering scheme along with its corollary projects. It needs utmost attention, participation and planning on our part to bring all section of consumers, the farmers and the downtrodden section, to build a valiant movement to resist and defy the central government blue print to destroy India's public sector electricity sector.

The growing attack of restructuring and changing profile of employment relations in all sectors need to be addressed. Galloping rise in contract workers with corresponding deep depletion of regular workers and the shifting of core paralyzing capacity of any industry to the non-regular workforces inescapably demand urgent re-orientation and establishment of shoulder to shoulder organic relations between the regular workers and contract workers. No remote fraternity but action oriented integration is a mutual necessity to save our movement as well as industry from the attack of privatization-monetization onslaught.

Meanwhile though the Labour Code are not notified facing the resistances from all sections of Indian working class, different state governments are trying to exercise various provisions to enhance the working hours, the latest being the attempt by the Tamil Nadu government. With prompt and strong intervention from CITU and other trade unions and agitations at factory level, the government rolled-back the order. These attacks and resistances should be seen as an integral part of our tasks to fight the restructuring of the labour management processes by the capital. The introduction of Artificial Intelligence Chatbot named ChatGPT in public domain with a reach to more than 100 million users in few months has created a huge hue and cry in all sections.

The RSS-BJP is installing divisive reactionary ideology among the masses, especially the poor unemployed youths, to exploit them as fanatic mercenaries for their Hindutva agenda. From Manipur to Haryana, the nation is burning; all downtrodden sections are being brutally mutilated by this fanatic force; large number of people are losing their lives everyday, women are being subjected to torture and atrocities; and the worst sufferers are the mass of the toiling people and their families; all these are engineered by the ruling clique bandwagons of the Hindutva brigade with the tacit support of the ruling class. After Babri Masjid, now they are attacking Gyanvapi mosque to keep alive their agenda; Uniform Civil Code is going to be their main bait for the next Parliament election; One India One Election survey being undertaken by a



committee headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind; divisive-diversionary tactics are the last resorts of this corporate-communal nexus to transform the state into a weapon of assault upon the working people, national harmony and the national interest as a whole. We have to fight them on all occasions; in face of all venomous propaganda, we have to unite and rally the working people with broadest possible class unity and alliances. The workers, peasants and agricultural workers of India under the banner of CITU-AIKS-AIAWU met in a historic rally in Delhi on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2023 to launch a heightened course of struggle against this corporate-communal regime. For the first time in India, the joint platform of central trade unions and Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) have come together, held a convention to plan the future course joint counter offensive of workers and peasants. The opposition parties of India have formed a conglomeration under the name of INDIA to isolate and defeat the Modi government. We welcome this development.

## INDUSTRY

Electricity is the mother of all industry and centre of modern human civilization. It is a service which affects every worker, peasant and citizen of our country. India produced 1624.158 billion units of electricity in 2022-23; with average Rs.6/unit revenue generated, it is an ever increasing market of Rs. 975,000 crores per year. And so Indian as well as foreign monopoly-finance corporate groups are pouncing on the Indian electricity sector to commodify it completely, with an intention to establish monopoly control over the consumers through market.

Indian power sector has gone through a long complex route of anti-people, anti-national reforms for last few decades. The Electricity Act 2003 was enacted to distance government from regulation of electricity business with the obvious intention of privatization. Certainly we can claim that, due to strong protracted nationwide resistance by the workers and people in general and electricity workers in particular, still the lion share of electricity distribution sector is in the hands of the state DISCOMS.

The BJP government has desperately attempted to pass the Electricity (Amendment) Bill since 2014 as Distribution is the end point of the electricity service chain with revenue collecting mechanism, the anti-people Modi government tried to blow the deadliest death-nail on state DISCOMS by introducing Electricity (Amendment) Bill. They desperately attempted to pass the Bill again and again – latest being the Electricity Amendment Bill 2022, obviously with a very clear intent to destroy the state DISCOMS and hence the remnant of the public service orientation still existing in the electricity sector. If the Electricity Amendment Bill 2022 is passed, private distributors will not need own distribution infrastructure for having parallel license for electricity distribution; state DISCOMS will be forced to offer their infrastructure and network to their competitors; the responsibility of incurring expenditure on maintenance, losses and

network development will remain with state DISCOMs. On the other hand, private distributors can demand compensation in case of breakdown, private generators will enjoy advantages as private distributors; new Power Purchasing Agreements can be made by private distributors at lower rate.

When there are multiple distributors in a territory, the private distributors will offer incentives to lure profitable and large customers initially like telecom sector (especially the example of JIO) and then will enhance the tariff as per their monopoly control over the supply-system. State DISCOMs will not be able to compete due to their universal supply obligation, vast customer base and costs associated with past regulatory gaps. State DISCOMs will be left with small and unprofitable and far-away customers. The losses of state DISCOMs will have to be made up by people's money. Ultimately, DISCOMs will be fully privatized at throw away prices and entire burden will be on people.

The clear objectives of this Bill are to privatize electricity distribution – which is the main source of generating revenue; to turn already financially stressed state distribution companies sick to gift-over at throw away price to corporates; and to destroy huge public service infrastructure of state DISCOMs built since independence with public money through blood and sweat of the electricity employees. But the attempts were opposed and fought valiantly by the power men and the people of India. The heroic electricity sector movements against privatization for last few years are resonance and reflection of CITU's slogan of Resistance and Defiance. And the key to the success of all these movements is obviously the involvement of people, the consumers.

Market Base Economic Dispatch – another short route for Privatization: Being challenged to pass and implement the Electricity Amendment Bill 2022, the Power Ministry issued a notification on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2021 to initiate the Market Based Economic Dispatch (MBED) programme. Under this framework, there will be a centralized Day-Ahead-Market (DAM) where the sellers and buyers of whole country have to mandatorily submit their offers and bids. The Power Exchange will then unilaterally fix the dynamic Market Clearing Price (MCP) without having any consultation with or disclosing any mechanism to the stake-holders. Clearly the whole mechanism is to make the generators and state DISCOMs surrender to the Central-controlled market system, to pave a way for giant private players to manipulate and control the market in all possible criminal ways, to take over the pricing mechanism of entire Indian public power sector and to push the state DISCOMs and State Load Despatch Centres towards riskier high-priced need-based real-time purchase.

And the latest attack – most heinous hitherto – the Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS): But this was not all, but just prelude of a dangerous blue print. In the incessant course of the planned onslaught on public electricity sector and under the direction of World Bank, the Ministry of Power, Gol launched the disastrously nefarious smart metering project. This scheme has been made mandatory with sudden compulsory withdrawal of all existing central financial support schemes. This dangerous Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS) is devised to put

the entire burden of the until now cumulative debt of the electricity sector upon the state distribution utilities, state governments and all consumers – which will practically lead to massive de-electrification in rural India. It will segregate the agricultural consumer lines from non-agricultural one, in order to antagonize one against the other and do away with the cross-subsidy. The farmers will run out of pump water and devastatingly it will impact upon the food security of our country. It will finally make each and every consumer prey to the market forces in regard to their electricity bill. It will throw away the majority section of the electricity sector workers abolishing the jobs permanently. This scheme will facilitate the pushed sell of private renewable electricity (REs) in energy mix and will ensure the handover of entire state distribution infrastructure to private parties in throw away prices. This scheme is a desperate attempt to find alternate routes to implement the draconian clauses of this Electricity (Amendment) Bill without passing it in Parliament. While the revamped reforms based and results linked Distribution Sector Scheme has an outlay of Rs.3,03,758 crore with an estimated gross budgetary support of Rs. 97,631 crore from Central government, it clearly imposes the huge burden of Rs.2,06,127 crore on the consumers and state DISCOMs.

Salient Points of the Scheme: Gruesome attack on the people: The salient points of the reform guidelines as stated in the document are – demarcating and accounting the exact Electricity consumption by the subsidized categories, doing away with all forms of direct cross subsidies through regulating tariff (electricity charges) in the name of Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), forcing State Electricity regulatory Commissions to continuously enhance the tariffs to reflect the ever increasing Electricity purchase cost promulgating in a tariff shock for the poor consumers, blatant introduction of market-profit driven corporate governance reforms, operation of part or whole area of supply of DISCOM through private participation, forcing the state governments to set up Electricity police stations to torture and cut the lines of poor or sometimes defaulted consumers and installation of feeder, transformer and consumer meters by people's money in total expenditure (TOTEX) mode. The consumers, who have less approved contractual load, will be in problem if suddenly the consumption exceeds the sanctioned limit. For extension of sanctioned load, they have to run to the Distribution offices. If there is some technical problem in the meter or any over billing is appeared, the consumers have to complaint to the third party smart metering agency; the DISCOM's customer care centers will have no functioning. If power is cut due to no-balance in prepaid smart meters (even due to some technical fault of the metering agency), the consumers have to pay fine and the reconnection may take hours.

Every individual consumer will have to pay Rs 7000-8000 per prepaid smart meter for installation. Its maximum life-time is around 7-8 years. With around 26 crore consumers in India, it is a direct loot of Rs 26 X 8,000 = Rs2,08,000 crore from people's pocket. In India, the key players applying for installation of these smart meters are Adani and Tata! Practically, the conditions for approval of grant are framed to guarantee no fund assistance from the Central government. And at half of this total cost, entire infrastructural up-gradation of distribution system could be done.

Central government's push towards electricity market: For last few years, the Central government is increasingly pushing the state DISCOMs to enter into virtual electricity market. In Power exchange mechanism, a real-time dynamic market price for electricity is fixed through some algorithm created by the market agencies. Shockingly the volume of electricity transacted through Power Exchanges has increased manifold over the years at a CAGR of about 25% from 2009-10 to 2021-22. Actually about 77% of the financial burden over DISCOMs is the purchase cost of power alone. And the cost of Power is in a trajectory of unbridled rise! On 1st April 2022, the Commission had directed the power exchanges to set the bidding price in the range of Rs 0-12/Unit for the day ahead and real time market. But the market players created a supply scarcity by not submitting bid at even the highest sanctioned limit of Rs.12/Unit and the commission was compelled to enhance the bidding price in all segments. A Staff Paper on Pricing prepared by CERC in October 2022 revealed that in March 2022, India witnessed a period of demand surge coupled with supply shortage. The increased prices of fuel, particularly imported coal led to an abnormally high market clearing price, frequently touching Rs 20/Unit, i.e., the maximum quotable price. Significantly high market prices and apprehensions regarding super normal profits earned by the infra-marginal generators was the core of the problem. And Modi government is pushing the consumers towards this dangerous path. Suddenly the Ministry of Power (MoP) proposed to introduce a High Price Market segment (HP-DAM). Taking plea of that order, Indian Energy Exchange (IEX) approached CERC to enhance the price cap up to Rs 99/Unit and consequently, in the Order dated 16th February 2023, CERC allowed the upper price limit of HP-DAM to be Rs 50/Unit. Certainly, market pricing is a devastating and cheating mechanism to plunder the consumers, imagine how they even have maliciously reached at a looting price of Rs 50/Unit! Generally, the market clearing price emerges as the highest bidding price. So, any company can put a very high priced bid through any of its sister or daughter/ subsidiary company and can amass windfall profit out this mechanism!

Handing over to the private DISCOMs - all data to choose the cherry picking regions for private players: Most dangerously, the prepaid smart metering, communicable smart feeder and DT level metering will provide the entire real time data in a systematic manner to the market players through SCADA mechanism. It will facilitate them to manipulate the speculative market price. It will enable the private competitors to cherry pick the most profiteering regions for supply. Just recall that how Adani and other private players are pouncing for the Parallel Distribution Licenses in most revenue generating areas of Maharashtra, UP and other states. With availability of the entire consumption and billing data of consumers (which will be in the possession of private smart meter companies like Adani!), they will apply for exactly the most lucrative areas! The enactment of Electricity (Amendment) Bill along with smart metering will complete the vicious cycle of destructing the public DISCOMs.

It will finally enable the mechanism for establishing a dynamic pricing system for each and every individual consumer directly linked with the real time demand of the household electricity. Moreover, the underlying technology controlling all data-smart operations introduces

substantial IT and process impacts making it vulnerable to the cyber-attacks. Even World Bank in its survey paper on International Experience of Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) clearly stated smart metering technology introduces a number of accidents leading to voltage surges that risk the health and safety of utility personnel and customers, can potentially subject electricity service delivery to prolonged, multi-year disruptions, can be used for political purposes (Imagine the dangerous role of BJP government on non-BJP states!) and breaches of customer data privacy can be utilized to attack customers residential or industrial networks and equipment!

Time of Day (ToD) Tariff: A win-win for corporate, lose-lose for consumers: While all the risks to link the smart metering scheme with the dynamic pricing of electricity was coming into public discourse and discussion, the Central government in a swift and sudden blow, amended the Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Rules vide a notification dated 14th June 2023. Practically our words are vindicated now!

Time of Day (ToD) tariff means that the tariff will be completely flexible and only the lower limit of the tariff will be fixed, i.e., the normal tariff. Dynamic tariff will be fixed as per the rules of the market – if demand is high, the consumers have to pay higher prices for availing electricity. As per this amended rule, immediately after installation of smart meters, all consumers will be brought under ToD tariff latest by 1st April 2025. As per the ToD tariff system, only 8 hours of the daytime will be off peak hours. It is obvious that, the household consumption is greater in night time and the irrigation is also done majorly after sunset. The consumption of electricity will be higher at peak time and as demand will be higher, the consumers have to pay higher and higher dynamic tariff for using electricity! Though the Power Minister has claimed that it is a win-win for the company and the consumers, the reality will be devastating for the households. Resist de-electrification – Rise in Rage: Now, with clear conviction, we must understand, it is the last course of attack on India's public electricity distribution sector. It will lead to massive de-electrification and food security of our country will be jeopardized. It is an attack on federal structure of India. Already some State Governments have started refuting this scheme. Electricity worker of various states are coming into the streets against this imposition of smart metering scheme with its corollary projects. It is our time to act now - integrated and united! We have to take up these issues to the consumers, the workers, the farmers and the general people of our country. We have to launch wide campaign programme taking all section of affected consumers with us and have to build resistance and defiance at all possible levels. From today's convention, CITU calls upon the entire workers, farmers and people to get united, rise and resist this most draconian forms of attacks on the right to electricity. Even if the state distribution utilities are compelled to surrender, resist and defy at the villages, slums, households. This not only for the present but for future of the Nation!

The world Economic Forum has been publishing Global Gender Gap Report since 2006 and the report for the year 2023, assesses gender parity in 146 countries. This annual report measures gender equality across four key dimensions: Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment. The global gender gap score in 2023 stands at 68.4% closed, with a slight improvement of 0.3 percentage points compared to the previous year. However, at the current pace, it would take 131 years to achieve full gender parity. Notably, no country has reached full gender parity, but the top-ranking nations, including Iceland, Norway, and Finland, have closed at least 80% of their gender gap. Iceland leads the index for the 14th consecutive year, having closed over 90% of its gender gap. While progress varies across dimensions, there's a significant time gap to close gender disparities fully, with Political Empowerment taking 162 years, Economic Participation and Opportunity 169 years, and Educational Attainment 16 years. The Health and Survival gender gap remains undefined.

### **Labour Market**

The global labor market continues to reflect persistent gender disparities. Women's participation has seen a decline, though there has been a slight recovery in the labor-force participation rate from 2022's 63% to 64% in 2023. However, the recovery is not yet complete. The labor market portrays women facing higher unemployment rates than men and when employed, often facing suboptimal conditions, with a significant portion of their job growth occurring in the informal sector. Data from Linked-In highlights that while women represent 41.9% of the global workforce, their presence in senior leadership roles stands at a mere 32.2%, with an even lower 25% in C-suite positions. Industry-specific analysis shows varying degrees of representation, with sectors like Consumer Services and Education offering better opportunities compared to Construction and Financial Services.

In the evolving landscape of professions, **STEM (Science Technology Engineering Mathematics)** roles, which are both high-paying and pivotal for future developments, see under representation of women. Even though almost half of the non-STEM occupations feature women, they account for just 29.2% of all STEM roles. Despite an increase in female STEM graduates, retention in post-graduation diminishes significantly. This trend is pronounced in

specialized fields such as AI, where women represent only 30% of the workforce. Online learning, a potent tool for skill acquisition, reveals gender disparities in enrollment, especially in future-relevant courses.

### **Working Conditions**

When women secure employment, they often face substandard quality of working conditions. A significant portion of the recovery in employment since 2020 can be attributed to informal employment. The ILO estimates that out of every five jobs created for women, four are within the informal economy, whereas for men, the ratio is two out of every three jobs. While informal work is critical and may drive production and employment, it is often a “last-resort” option characterized by a lack of legal protections, social security, and decent working conditions, and poses numerous challenges for women’s economic and social well being. Overall, over the last decade, there has been insufficient progress in improving working conditions, interrupted by shocks in key labour force indicators. Women still encounter barriers while entering the workforce, struggle to find jobs, and face relatively poorer working conditions, calling for renewed focus by governments . Across the world, inadequate care systems are one of the largest roadblocks to improving gender gaps in the labour market.

Global data, as provided by LinkedIn, indicates that women continue to face representation disparities in the workforce across various industries. Although women accounted for 41.9% of the LinkedIn sample workforce, their representation witnessed fluctuations over the years with a notable decline in 2023. Industry-specific analysis reveals that while Healthcare and Care Services (64.7%) remain female-dominated, sectors such as Oil, Gas, and Mining, and Infrastructure have women constituting less than a quarter of the workforce.

Additionally, there's a distinct gender gap in STEM occupations; women comprise just 29.2% of all STEM workers, although there has been a slight increase from 27.6% in 2015.

With the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the labor market, there's a notable gender gap in the distribution of AI talent. By 2022, only 30% of AI professionals were female. This under representation in a critical field like AI not only compounds the existing workforce disparities but

also threatens the quality and diversity of AI developments. When female perspectives are underrepresented in AI, the potential for biased algorithms and non-optimal solutions becomes a significant concern, emphasizing the need for a balanced gender representation in this rapidly evolving sector.

As the work landscape evolves with new technologies and working arrangements, education and skill development are crucial not just for employability but also for work-life balance, especially post the COVID-19 pandemic. The traditional approach of obtaining skills at the start of one's career is outdated due to the rapid shifts in skill demands, emphasizing the importance of lifelong learning. The World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs survey identified skills like creative thinking, analytical thinking, and technological literacy as increasingly essential.

Digital platforms have enabled greater accessibility to lifelong learning, experiencing a significant surge in enrollments during the pandemic lock down. However, gender disparities persist in online learning enrollments, especially in areas of technological literacy and advanced cognitive skills. Women show parity with men mostly in beginner levels of certain skill sets, but these numbers decline at advanced levels.

Despite these challenges, women tend to achieve proficiency efficiently, often in less time than men, especially for skills that take longer to acquire. This efficiency might result from various factors, including time constraints faced by women. Persisting gender-based disparities in skill acquisition have economic implications, potentially restricting job opportunities, hindering economic growth, and maintaining occupational segregation. Boosting women's access to skilling opportunities is vital to address the changing demands of the job market and promote gender equality in the workplace.

### **Parity in Political activities**

There's been a positive trend in women's representation in global parliaments. While in 2013 only 18.7% of parliament members were women, this rose to 22.9% by 2022. However, regional disparities persist. Europe boasts the highest female representation, whereas the Middle East and North Africa saw a decline, especially evident in Algeria's drop from 26% to 8%. Some countries, such as Malta, Colombia, and Slovenia, witnessed substantial increases, mainly



attributed to legislated candidate quotas. Meanwhile, countries like Canada, the US, China, Brazil, India, and Turkey still have below one-third female representation.

The importance of women in local governance is increasingly recognized, leading to shifts in representation. While traditional focus centered on national parliaments, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) highlight women's roles in local decision-making. This emphasis has unveiled the disparities across regions and countries. Among 117 countries with data since 2017, only 18 have achieved over 30% female representation in local governance. In contrast, 24 countries, primarily in the Middle East, North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa, have less than 15%. Meanwhile, 75 countries lie between 15% and 30%. Women in local decision-making redefine local priorities, focusing on inclusivity, family-friendly policies, and gender equality.

Encouragingly, 85 countries have introduced legislated gender quotas for local elections, with 66 countries legislating candidate quotas and 19 reserving seats for women. However, despite these positive developments, as of January 2020, out of the 6.02 million elected members in local government worldwide, only 2.18 million (36%) are women. Although this is a higher percentage of women's representation than in national parliaments (25%), achieving gender parity in local governance remains an urgent priority, pointing to the need for more balanced gender representation. The increasing representation of women not only diversifies the decision-making landscape but also emphasizes issues critical to societal growth and inclusivity.

#### **Over view of gender parity:**

The gender gap report covers gender parity in several countries, focusing on the top 10 nations, as well as the 15 most populous ones. Together, these countries represent a significant share of the world's female population, and their trends are both statistically and strategically crucial for global monitoring and benchmarking efforts.

#### **Top 10 Countries in Gender Parity:**

- **Iceland:** Leading the chart for the 14th year, Iceland has closed 91.2% of its gender gap. Political empowerment and economic participation drive its high rank. It's noteworthy that over the past 50 years, Iceland had a female head of state for 25 years.
- **Norway:** Ranking second, it has achieved a gender parity score of 87.9%. Significant progress is seen in political empowerment, where women make up half of the ministerial positions and 46.2% of parliamentary seats.
- Other countries in the top 10 include Finland, New Zealand, Sweden, Germany, Nicaragua, Namibia, Lithuania, and Belgium. Each exhibits unique strengths and areas needing improvement in their journey towards gender parity.

## India

India ranks 127th globally, closing 64.3% of the gender gap, an improvement from the previous year. Although educational enrollment has achieved parity, economic participation stands at 36.7%. While wage and income parity have risen, representation of women in senior and technical roles has slightly decreased. In political empowerment, parity rate of India is 25.3% ie: women represent 15.1% of parliamentarians, and in local government, India has achieved a representation rate of 44.4% which is only due to the constitutional (73<sup>rd</sup> & 74<sup>th</sup>) amendments during 1992. The Health and Survival index shows a boost in birth sex ratio to 92.7%, leading to better gender parity.

Women in general and working women in particular are living in the worst living conditions today, when the country is celebrating 75 years of our independence. Employment situation, High level of unemployment and underemployment is aggravated by the pandemic and resulted in huge job losses and wage cuts, loss of income and increase in poverty. This has affected the women most, world over. Women's employment which was an all time low even before the pandemic has declined further in a bigger rate than that of men. The fact that more than 22 million people, most of them daily wage workers, lost their jobs in April and May 2021 during the

second wave of Covid-19 in India reveals the gravity of the situation. A report by Centre for Sustainable Employment at Azim Premji University found that 47% of women workers who lost their jobs between March and December 2020, permanently lost their jobs, compared to 7% of male workers. This is in addition to the already worst situation of women's employment. India has fallen further 28 points in 2021 in the Global Gender Gap Index ranking 140th among 156 countries (this was 108 in 2017 and 112 in 2020). This is mainly due to the very low work participation and huge wage gap. The female labour participation rate in India was 20.3% in 2019 (It was more than 26% in 2005). This means eighty percent of women in our country (of 16-59 years of age) are out of work. Female work participation is 30.5% in Bangladesh and 33.7% in Sri Lanka. There is a continuous decline in the women's work participation, contrary to the big claims of women's empowerment by the governments. What this means? Is it a fact that 80-85% of women in our country are sitting idle? These statistics show the distress situation where majority of the country's women, in the absence of job availability, are doing precarious jobs and just surviving. As the World Gender Gap report (2017) pointed out, 66% of women's work (may be more) in our country is unpaid! Thus, the women who do such work are not counted as working! The employment situation is worse in rural India, where work participation of females, who were engaged in subsidiary activities, has drastically declined from 25 per cent in 2004-05 to 5.7 per cent in 2017-18 (Economic survey 2022)! The majority of agricultural workers are women and the major chunk of the agricultural operations and animal rearing work in the small land holding are done by women from the family who are never treated as farmers or will own any land. They are not having land rights and they do not get any other legal entitlements or the benefits of the government schemes for farmers. Covid pandemic has made the situation alarming. The female labour participation rate in India fell to 16.1% during the July-September 2020 quarter, and was a record low of 15.5% during the April-June 2020 quarter (Ministry of Statistics and World Bank). At a time, when the employment is the most essential requirement in the country, Modi government has again made drastic cut in the budget for MGNREGA from Rs.98000cr to Rs.73000 cr. Last year also the budget was slashed by 40% from the previous year. Even the wages of the work done is pending for more than six months in many states. Covid pandemic has again brought the necessity of improving the health infrastructure and services as well as the food security schemes. The educational system had collapsed for the common

people. The major chunk of the covid management, direct contact with the people was subsidized by the frontline workers- ASHA and Anganwadi workers while the Mid Day Meal workers and Anganwadi helpers and workers ensured the food security of the children. Covid showed the world, the importance and volume of their work and the risk they take each day delivering essential services. But again, instead of strengthening the schemes and recognizing their work, the government made drastic cuts in the budget allocations for food security and health as well as for the schemes like ICDS, MDMS and NHM. There are certain sectors where mostly women are working, faced serious problems in this period. It is estimated that over 98% of domestic workers suffered from job losses, and 15 months later, almost 72% have lost their earlier employment on a permanent basis. This a shift from paid to unpaid labour adding to the women's unpaid labour at home. This also creating a risk of "retraditionalization" of gender roles. Gender disparity in wages is on increase. Various studies shows 35-55% wage gap between male and female workers/employees. Increasing Poverty and high rocketing price rise are major issues. Poverty in India was already alarmingly high. NSSO data shows that that 58 per cent in rural and 57 per cent in urban India in 1993-94 were below this poverty line. In 2011-12 the percentages were 68 and 65 respectively. During pandemic households on an average lost 12% income during the last year. The loss for poor and middle class households will be even more. According to some estimates this means that 218 million more people (168 million rural and 50 million urban) would have been pushed into poverty last year and an additional 150-199 million people will fall into poverty this year. That means an overall increase in poverty by 15-20%; around half of the country's population will become poor. The unprecedented price rise fuelled by the petrol price hike, the increase in healthcare expenditures due to non availability of quality public healthcare and the closure of schools, digitalization of education system during the pandemic together is creating a situation where the vast majority of our people are deprived of their right to food, health and education. Here also, the government has made drastic cut(Rs.65000cr from the allocation to Food Corporation of India) in the food subsidy. Market ideology combined with Hindutva and religious fundamentalism – Divide the people, divert attention The vigorous pursuit of neoliberal policies with the Hindutva ideology and the centralization of economic, political and social spheres have disastrous ramifications in the society. Covid and lock down had also very negative impact in the social status and oppression of

women. Domestic violence has increased in alarming proportions. Violence against women and children as well as socially backward sections is on continuous rise. All retrograde, unscientific and obscurantist practices and ideology is being promoted by the ruling classes. Child marriages have increased during this period. RSS – BJP combine is vigorously pursuing their retrograde anti women and divisive communal agenda and diverting attention from real issues. Their move in Karnataka banning Hijab in educational institutions is a move not only denying the right to practice any religion, but targeting the right to education of the muslim girls. Similarly, the effort to change law to increase the age of marriage is to control the youth and push the women into the labour market as surplus labour. The efforts to change the recruitment rule in SBI and the reports of re-emergence of practices like ‘sumangali thittam’ in garment industry in Tamil Nadu are reflective of the increasing exploitation. BJP government is now proposing to change the criminal laws to allow marital rape! The RSS led government is taking the country to such “Amritkaal’ where the country is losing even the very meager improvement in human development achieved through decades by cutting down drastically in social sector spending. This along with the rampant privatisation of energy, transport, infrastructure etc will take the country back by decades. In this background, Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) has decided to observe 8 March 2022 as “Working Women’s Action Day”. This is in continuation of the working women’s jail bhara on the occasion of the international women’s day 2020 focusing on the basic class issues behind the gender oppression. It is the legacy of the International Women’s Day, which originated from the women workers’ strike demanding better and equal wages and right to vote more than a century ago. The situation is much worse today with the Modi government advancing much with the disastrous policies detrimental to the basic democratic and secular fabric of our country. The resistance movement is also advancing as we could witness in the historic farmers’ movement, developing the unity of the working class and peasantry, it is utmost important that the issues and rights of women as workers and peasants to be taken up with due importance. At present the country is witnessing a wave of struggles of the scheme workers especially the anganwadi and ASHA workers in various states. The continuing struggle of the Anganwadi Workers and Helpers in Haryana is inspiring the movement throughout the country. The working women’s action day helped to develop a strong movement of the working women on basic class issues. District level action programmes need to be

organized along with women workers from service and finance sector trade unions and other organizations including women's organizations. The issues of the women workers who are taking a disproportionate burden of the world economic crisis and the covid pandemic will be taken to as many women workers as possible through a massive campaign. This will be helpful in bringing the vast section of highly exploited women workers in the fold of trade union and the maximum participation of working women in the Countrywide General Strikes.

#### WORKING WOMEN IN POWER SECTOR

As an overview of Power Sector, this sector is not termed as employment potential sector but it is a sector, which enabling sector for job creation. Total direct and indirectly placed employment in this sector is around 5 million. Out of these 5 million how many women employees are there - no dependable data is available. This first National Convention of Power Women is to shoulder one historical task of ascertaining the gender ratio in power sector job.

Initially, at the onset of Power development in our country by the imperialist forces, fixed this sector as new area of profit, so the sector was not only a Male dominant sector but an ALL MALE SECTOR. In the primitive Bio Mass fuelled Generating Station, manual activities were prevalent. So, MEN were first choice. Internal combustion engines imported from UK were deployed to operate the Dynamo and Generators by the British enterprises. They had no intention over job creation in this sector. British men and women were engaged in power sector jobs. Cities were served totally by the UK based companies, deploying total skilled work force from UK was too costly to keep the business profitable. Hence, Indians were deployed through training and skilled transfer. When Indian business men developed themselves as entrepreneurs in the Power Generation and distribution sectors in the Towns and Suburban localities, family members of those family enterprises were entrusted to Low TECH and NON-Tech jobs.

**Infact there existed a Government of India initiative for skill development of women Self Help Group (SHG) members through REC under Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vaidyuthikaran Yojna (RGGVY). Some of the rural women workers belonging to the backward districts in West Bengal and some other states got training under this scheme and they obtained Workmanship License for LT network maintenance. But now such trained women workers of SHG are on low Tech individual jobs. This is clearly an act of discrimination towards women workers in the**

**industry. Most of Generation, Transmission and Distribution jobs are male dominated and this need to be addressed in our Convention.**

**The most vulnerable section of power sector women workers are definitely the Contractual workers. These workers include those who work as meter reading & billing staff, engineering staff in substations engaging in night shifts as well as cleaning and sub staff in all wings – generation, transmission and distribution. From highly educated B Tech qualified to lowest uneducated women are part of this ever increasing contractual workers’ strata. Almost all members of this working force are denied of equal wages for equal work, maternity benefits, creches for taking care of children, proper toilet facilities, etc. Women who engage in meter reading have to walk long distances and they are not provided with adequate gadgets like raincoats during rainy season nor proper identity cards etc. Sexual harassment of these sections of women are also not properly reported or addressed when reported. So this need to be presented before the managements of State Electricity Boards and concerned state governments also for solution.**

In the 9<sup>th</sup> Conference of EEFI held at Chandigarh from 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> October, 2022, we decided that a Women’s Sub Committee shall be formed. The 1<sup>st</sup> Working Committee Meeting was conducted in New Delhi on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2022 and reviewed the 9<sup>th</sup> Conference and decided to comply with the decisions taken by the conference. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> WCM held in Amravati, Maharashtra on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2023, Working Women Sub Committee of EEFI was formed with Com. Deepa K. Rajan as Convenor and all women WC members as Committee members and the President and General Secretary as ex-officio members of the committee. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> WCM held in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala on July 21-22, 2023 the first convention of Working Women in Power sector was decided to be conducted in Chennai on 14th October 2023.

### **COTEE Tamil Nadu**

The Tamil Nadu Electricity Board employs more than 20,000 women, from engineers to part-timers, in Tangedco and Tantransco. On August 15, 1989, Co-ordination Committee of Working Women was formed at Central organization of Tamilnadu Electricity Employees union. The founder leader was Com. D. Janakiraman. The first Convenor was Com. Devi Parameswari followed by Com. Mallika, Com. Dhanalakshmi and presently Com. Vijayalakshmi. The Working Women Coordinating Committee works with women as leaders to address the problems, needs

and demands of women working in the Power Board. There are more than 4000 women members of Central Organization of Tamil Nadu Electricity Employees Union. Since the formation of the Working Women's Coordinating Committee, 10 conferences have been held so far. The 10th State Conference was held in Coimbatore on 7th May.

Working women coordination committee has been formed in 19 divisions like South Chennai, North Chennai, Central Chennai, West Chennai, Chengalpattu, Tuticorin, Coimbatore, Vellore, Dharmapuri, Nellai, Madurai, Erode, Dindigul etc. After the 10th State Conference, a Coordinating Committee of Working Women has been started in Thanjavur. In recent times, the participation of women has increased in all the movements taking place in the Tamil Nadu Electricity Board. Women participate in large numbers in strike, Dharna, power board demonstrations and movements. The joint action committee organized a rally towards the fort on March 28, emphasizing various demands of the electricity workers. More than 36,000 people participated in the rally, mostly women. Now women are performing well as elected as state office bearers, division secretaries, working committee member and division treasurers of the COTEE than in the past. Working Women's Coordinating Committee is working on the problems faced by the women working in the Power Board, such as job transfer, promotion and sexual problems faced by women from engineers to part-time employees. Central organization of electrical workers also intervened and found a solution. In many places, we have also transferred those who committed sexual misconduct. Through this we have created an environment for alternative Sangh women to join our Sangh.

Every year on March - 8th International Women's Day, Working women coordination committee members participate in seminars and conference meetings in collaboration with District Committees of CITU, presenting the slogan of the All India Organization. And in places like Chennai, Trichy, Dindigul, Tiruvannamalai, Nellai, Vellore, Coimbatore, office celebrations are also held. In the future, there are plans to hold separate seminars and meetings for each division.

Although the demands of the category-wise employees are taken into consideration and the demands are met, women participate in demonstrations and movements, but there is a slight decrease in the meeting and discussion of the working women's coordination committee.

Working Women Coordinating Committee is functioning under the guidance of COTEE as there is a duty and need to mobilize and establish all the women in the power board and make women leaders in the movement.

The Tamil Nadu Electricity Board is trying to introduce privatization by introducing a smart meter installation scheme. In Tamil Nadu electricity board not only trialed in smart meter but also Mobile App pilot study trial was carried out. In Tangedco of Tamilnadu already in trial basis at one division in Chennai, (T. Nagar) has smart meter fixed by Genus company. We opposed and agitation conducted on 6th July at section level. Further COTEE printed 2 lakhs pamphlets and



circulated on 18th July all over Tamilnadu regarding the fixation of smart meter. An awareness campaign was conducted by circulating pamphlets to public and consumers.

Tamil Nadu Electricity Board has more than 62,000 vacancies. Instead of filling vacancies, the Tamilnadu Electricity board is implementing privatization activities through E-Tender. 21.09.2023 COTEE conducted a Massive Dharna in all 12 Regional headquarters. (Chennai, Kanchipuram, Vellore, Villupuram, Thiruvannamalai, Karur, Thanjavur, Trichy, Erode, Coimbatore, Madurai, Thirunelveli ). More than 10,000 workers participated in the dharna demanding filling up of vacancies, protesting Totex model of smart meter, protesting outsourcing throw-e-tender system, appointment of contract labour, and payment of salary hike arrears. Women participated in large numbers in this dharna.

#### **KSEB Workers' Association:**

The womens' sub committee of KSEBWA is functioning in a remarkable way, forming not just State level committee but District level and Division level committees in all 14 districts in Kerala. The women workers' membership is near to 10% of the total membership. Womens' sub committee has taken up all calls by AICCWW and also by CITU and enthused women workers in KSEB Ltd. The most important of them is the state level camp for educating and leadership building conducted in 2019 which was inaugurated by Com. A R Sindhu, AICCWW Convenor. Sub Committee has also stood in the forefront during the struggles in electricity sector especially on August 8, 2021 when the Electricity Amendment Bill was introduced in Parliament. Women involving in poster campaigns, wall writings, distributing leaflets in public places, speaking in gate meetings etc. all drew attention of consumers, public at large and also by media.

International Womens' Day observation is conducted jointly with KSEBOA in all districts. Such joint programmes include cultural activities as well as organizational and political empowerment are also made sure. Sub Committees in different districts has several times came forward to help consumers or public who are in need like education of poor children by providing smart phones and televisions for needy children for online classes, supplying food packets during pandemic time etc.

Active involvement in matters of special concern to women workers like demand of separate toilets, resisting the harassment of male counterparts / officers etc. are also to be mentioned specially. The state women sub committee leadership has taken active and effective role in protesting against sexual harassment of women contract / daily wages employees in KSEB Ltd by regular employees and getting the complaint registered in district level ICCs and getting justice to the affected.

#### **KSEB Officers' Association:**

KSEB Officers' Association women sub committee play a pivotal role in promoting gender equality and empowering women in various aspects of life. They are responsible for organizing and conducting a wide range of activities, including Women's Day celebrations, sports events, trips, arts and cultural programs, and even political interventions. The women members of KSEB Officers' Association have participated in many agitations and strike programs during the last organizational year during 2021 to 2023.

The strike was held on 28th and 29th March 2021 against the extreme liberalization policies of the central government and raised the slogan of 'Save Public Sector Save India'. Majority of women members of KSEB Officers' Association participated in it.

On August 8, when the Electricity Act Amendment Bill was introduced in Parliament, the NCCOEE had called for a nationwide boycott of all the workers and officers in the electricity sector. Most of the women employees of KSEB Officers' Association participated in the said strike.

The Electricity Amendment Bill was introduced in the parliament. This made the nationwide agitation more powerful. There was a good representation of the women employees of the Electricity Sector from KSEB Officers' Association in the convention held at Aluva on 22nd September. Our women members participated in the Grihankana Protest Jwala organized by EEFI on 27th September 2022.

NCCOEE formed a picket line on November 10, 2022 in Thiruvananthapuram city with a strong representation of women members of the KSEB Officers' Association, raising the demands of withdrawing the Electricity Amendment Act, protecting the power supply in the public sector, resolving the various crises in the power sector on an urgent basis.

The Nineth National Conference of this EEFI was held at Chandigarh on 13th 14th 15th October 2022. The central slogan of the conference was Save Power sector Save India. 4 women delegates participated in this conference.

NCCOEE formed a protective chain in Thiruvananthapuram city on November 10, 2022, raising the demands of withdrawing the Electricity Amendment Bill, protecting electricity supply in the public sector, and urgently solving various crises in the region. In turn, many women from the KSEB Officers' Association participated in this chain.

In November 23, 2022 Janthar Manthar, New Delhi witnessed the furious protest of the workers in India. A large number of women from Kerala participated in this agitation led by NCCOEE as part of the KSEB Officers' Association.

A workshop was organized on January 8, 2023 at Thiruvananthapuram under the leadership of EEFI Kerala Chapter against the proliferation of smart meters on the TOTEX model. As part of that, a large number of women members of KSEBOA participated in the dharna held in front of the division offices on January 12, 2023.

Then, under the leadership of NCCOEE, from June 27 to July 6, 2023, Samara sandesa Jadhwas were organized across the state and many women members of KSEBOA actively participated in this.

In the EEFI working committee meeting held at Thiruvananthapuram on 21st 22nd July 2023, a resolution was passed against the barbaric attacks on women in Manipur. To strongly defend the anti-people, anti-national, anti-labour policies of the central government, which is polarizing the Indian people on the basis of caste and religion and giving opportunity to the corporates to loot the public property of the country. The meeting requested the working class to take up the existing activities. The meeting was held with a good number of women participation. Also, almost all women members in the KSEB Officers' Association participated in the protests against the privatization of the electricity sector in various states of the country by declaring solidarity .

#### **WBSEWMU:**

**West Bengal State Electricity Workmen's Union has a glorious history of Women's struggle. However, their struggles and contributions to the movement of different issues are recognized at the same level of prominence as that of the men of the movement.**

**Women shouldered critical responsibilities in class struggle for the sake of industry as well as for the sake of organization. Their participation in public meetings and other organizational activities has lots of significance in our electricity organization. We have working women sub committee since 2004 who have direct contributions towards our organizational activities and also have independent entity under the banner of Workmen's union. Our organization has a history of celebrating International women's day. Previously it was celebrated with the joint participation of management and employees , but after political change in West Bengal now we celebrate it under the banner of our union and that day men employees of the organization use to tie red ribbon to the women employees and followed by a cultural program where most of participants are the non members of the union but electricity employees.**

**Management conspired against the female technical employees and was forcing them to do night shift alone with other male employees. When the particular female employee protested against that management took vindictive attitude towards the employee by giving show-cause notice. Our union immediately took action against that and gave a letter against this. Our continuous protest forced the management to retreat from this and to obey the laws.**

**Maternity leave was not treated as on duty leave which was obstructing female employees to get promotion on time which is retrograding them from their rights. Our union protested against that and we had to fight a long way to get the success and at last management agreed to treat maternity leave as on duty leave.**

Currently we have 287 female members in our union and we demanded for crèche facility within our office premises.

The participation of Women employees in strike against privatization is also satisfactory. They are taking pivotal role for the publicity against the anti people policies of modi government that is against privatization of electricity and smart meter. As in the near future smart meter will be a curse towards the sustainable development of the society.

With the rising cost of livelihood and decreased actual wages, running a family has never been so difficult. With LPG cylinder price hovering around the 1000 mark and prices of eatables skyrocketing too, the latest attack on the homefront is the dark shadow of prepaid smart metering looming large. Actual wage not rising implies difficulty in running the family and the homemakers are to struggle meeting the cost of lighting a bulb. With the prepaid smart meters and the added peril of the Time of Day tariff system, evenings are bound to be dark. The high end day ahead market has facilitated the generating companies to sell power at the maximum of 50/- per unit, which again would be the actual price the common man would be forced to bear after addition of transmission and distribution costs. Running the kitchen is more difficult today than any other timeline. With the rising cost of livelihood and decreased actual wages, running a family has never been so difficult. With LPG cylinder price hovering around the 1000 mark and prices of eatables skyrocketing too, the latest attack on the homefront is the dark shadow of prepaid smart metering looming large. Actual wage not rising implies difficulty in running the family and the homemakers are to struggle meeting the cost of lighting a bulb. With the prepaid smart meters and the added peril of the Time of Day tariff system, evenings are bound to be dark. The high end day ahead market has facilitated the generating companies to sell power at the maximum of 50/- per unit, which again would be the actual price the common man would be forced to bear after addition of transmission and distribution costs. Running the kitchen is more difficult today than any other timeline. Now the homemakers have to devise an additional sorcery to provide for something as obvious as a well lit room, all thanks to the union government under this BJP regime. Rolling back time to reach a state similar to pre-independence seems to be the 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav ' under this rule.

The women require empowerment of all kinds in order to protect themselves from all such atrocities and to preserve their rights and dignity in the workplace. The class struggle will continue and WBSEWMU vows to be in the continuous struggle against any kind of oppression of the electricity employees.

Our Union welcome EEFI decision towards organising the First National Convention of Power Sector Women. Tasks to be assigned by the convention will be meticulously implemented by our union in our state.

We greet COTEE for their excellence in hosting the first Convention of Power Sector Working Women.

#### **Contract Workers Union: Paschim Banga Rajya Bidyut Shilpa Sahayak Karmi Union**

Women Contractual Workers are deployed into three job categories in West Bengal – Part Time Sweeper (PTS), Spot Bill Reader, Courier. The PTS employees are many time harassed and heckled by the Officers. They are asked to provide personal service even water cleaning of the top managerial cadres. The women Meter Readers are exploited in a grotesque way. For some minute errors in meter reading, they are fined, laid off or retrenched. Our organization is in continuous struggle and we have been successfully reinstated some of these retrenched women workers.

Due to the rapid processing of smart meters, the women employees are in great insecurity. Our organization is meeting at every possible level with the workers and trying to bring them into the fold of struggle. We are going to hold huge state level protest demonstration on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2023.

The EEFI Working Women Convention held in Chennai, Tamil Nadu organized by COTEE which is our largest constituent union takes stock of the day-by-day worsening situation of women workers of our country at large and power sector working women in particular due to the destructive and disastrous pro-corporate policies being aggressively pursued by the government at the centre since 2014. We commit ourselves to work jointly on the following Charter of Demands:

#### **Charter of Demands**

1. Immediate measures for addressing unemployment; Special employment scheme for women.
2. Immediate increase in budget allocation for MNREGA. Ensure 200 days work in MNREGA @Rs600 per day. Extend to urban areas. Clear all arrears of wages.
3. Immediately increase budget allocation for basic services schemes. Regularise scheme workers – Anganwadi, ASHA, Mid Day meal workers and other scheme workers as workers/employees; Pay Minimum wages and social security as per the recommendations of 45th ILC, immediately.

4. **Arrest Price Rise.** Withdraw the increase in the prices of cooking gas and other petroleum products. Ensure free ration including all essential items to all and income support of Rs.7500 per month to all non tax paying families
5. **Recognise women's work as workers and farmers; include women's unpaid and underpaid work in the GDP.** Take specific measures to reduce women's unpaid work such as provisions for adequate water to each household, subsidized cooking gas, arrangement for childcare (crèches) and elderly care etc
6. **Ensure equal wages for equal work for women in all sectors; make gender neutral appointments in all categories and also ensure maternity leave and benefits to all working women.**
7. **Legal measures to promulgate amendments in all laws for joint pattas including under Forest Rights Act to ensure women's land rights. Special priority to single women headed households including widows, abandoned and deserted women. Women farmers must be included in all government schemes for farmers.**
8. **Strict implementation of POSH Act in all work places.**
9. **Take effective measures to prevent violence against women; implement Justice Verma Committee recommendations.**
10. **Enact Act to provide 33% reservation for women in all legislative bodies at the earliest.**
11. **Withdraw the Labour Codes.**
12. **Stop Privatisation of PSEs and Services; Scrap NMP.**
13. **Ensure quality public health services to all.**

#### **Action Plan**

The first Convention of EEFI Working Women calls upon all delegates, power sector working women, all constituent Unions and Managements of Power Utilities as well as State and

Central governments to work for the above demands collectively at all levels unfailingly. Those State Unions who have not formed Women Sub Committees should form the same after this Convention and the elected Convenor shall be included as Office Bearer of the union. Much more unified actions are needed to weed out the decadent anti women culture and mentality being propagated by the neoliberal and communal ruling dispensation. Utmost priority must be given to cadre development of women cadres and also the political ideological understanding of our cadres, particularly in the fast changing conditions in almost all sectors, needs to be enhanced along with their trade union skills.

This report is presented for active, constructive and concrete discussion before this Convention.

With revolutionary greetings

Deepa K Rajan

Convenor