

# WOMEN WAGE WORKERS IN RURAL BRAZIL - A DIALOGUE 2022 EDITION

## CONTAR

The National Confederation  
of Rural Wage Workers



**CONTAR**  
Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores  
Assalariados e Assalariadas Rurais

**FETAR'S**

**STTAR'S**



Apoio:  **OXFAM**  
Brasil

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FUND  
STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY  
IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY





**WOMEN WAGE  
WORKERS IN RURAL  
BRAZIL - A DIALOGUE  
2022 EDITION**

DAS ASSALARIADAS RURAIS

MULHERES RURAIS  
E ORGANIZADAS

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STIA



**CONTAR**

Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores  
Assalariados e Assalariadas Rurais

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**FETAR'S**

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**STAR'S**

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**Clamu**

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Apoio:



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Brasil

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**CONTAR**

Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores  
Assalariados e Assalariadas Rurais



## HISTORY

Brazil's National Confederation of Men and Women Rural Wage Workers (CONTAR) was founded in October 2015 by dissociation from the National Confederation of Agriculture Workers (CONTAG). That strategy was aimed at strengthening the organization of rural wage earners that, due to their specificity, demanded their own union structure in order to meet the demands and defend the interests of Brazilian rural employees, both men and women.

CONTAR's creation involved the Federations of Rural Wage Workers of the states of Goiás, Mato Grosso do Sul, Pará, Pernambuco and Rio de Janeiro. Since then, the federations from the states of Bahia, Ceará, Paraná, Rio Grande do Norte, Rio Grande do Sul and São Paulo have joined it. Together, these organizations represent over 600 wage workers' unions, which are getting stronger by the day, despite the impacts of Brazil's recent labour reforms.

## CONTAR'S ORGANIZATION

CONTAR is managed by a board that works based on collective decision-making and, since its foundation, its bylaws have provided for quotas for women (30%) and young people (20%) in decision-making bodies, in addition to 30% mandatory renewal of the board at each election. These measures were approved both to ensure union leadership renewed and to strengthen the presence of young people and women in decision-making spaces of member organizations.

The National Commission of Women Rural Wage Workers is a space for organizing and strengthening women's role within the CONTAR system. The Commission was created in 2022 and already works on several fronts, together with the IUF Latin American Women's Committee (Clamu) and national and international organizations.

CONTAR, together with its federations and unions, always works in conjunction with the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF). It formalized its membership application in 2017.

By being affiliated to the Inter Trade Union Department of Statistics and Socio-Economic Studies (DIEESE), the CONTAR SYSTEM is strengthened and well informed to work on Collective Bargaining Agreements and Conventions signed in Brazil. There are more than 600 such Agreements and Conventions in all sectors, and they are all monitored by DIEESE, which provides socioeconomic information for negotiations. We also

work with partners such as OXFAM Brasil, Repórter Brasil and the Land Pastoral Commission.

**POR VOCÊ,**  
São mais de 600 convenções e acordos de trabalho

**PRA VOCÊ E**  
Melhores salários e condições de trabalhos.

**PRA LUTAR!**  
Acabar com a carestia e queremos distribuição dos lucros das empresas.

 **CONTAR**  
Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores Assalariados e Assalariadas Rurais

Todo sindicato tem Assistência jurídica,  
Homologação de acordo, combate ao trabalho escravo e uma  
boa acolhida para resolver seus problemas trabalhistas.

Sindicato é o lugar para melhorar sua condição de vida e de trabalho.

**CAMPANHA NACIONAL DE SINDICALIZAÇÃO**



## UNIONIZATION CAMPAIGN

"For you, to you, and to fight" is the motto of rural wage workers' new campaign to strengthen unions. Thus, we women are engaged in the NATIONAL UNIONIZATION CAMPAIGN, mobilizing federations and hundreds of unions.

### BASIC TEXT OF THE UNIONIZATION CAMPAIGN

For you: Over 60 labour conventions and agreements.

To you: Better wages and working conditions.

To fight: Enough of price rises! We want distribution of corporate profits.

Your union is the place for you to organize.

Every union provides legal assistance, support in contract termination, combat against slave labour, and a good welcome to solve your labour problems.

The Union is the place to improve your working conditions.

For you, to you, and to fight.

## INTRODUCTION

Fellow workers: we face harsh and very challenging times. High prices for food and cooking gas, unemployment, and poor working conditions make our lives more difficult every day. Even in this scenario, we need to fight together to overcome these challenges and guarantee our rights. To help in this process, we present our 2nd edition of Women Wage Workers in Rural Brazil – a Dialogue, the result of the collective work of the National Confederation of Rural Wage Workers, its Federations, Trade Unions, the International Union of Workers in Agriculture and Food (IUF), and sponsored by OXFAM Brasil. This material seeks to expose situations we experience as women in rural wage labour and our working conditions, and show the world that, even in the face of so many challenges, we manage to organize.

Rural and urban women share their struggles, anxieties, hopes and life stories in “DIALOGUE OF WOMEN WAGE WORKERS.” This second edition is an educational tool to be used by our fellow women workers in grassroots debates, courses, exhibitions and discussions. With this text and video, we intend to help organize our struggle. Using data, charts and illustrations, in addition to our fellow workers’ testimonials, we will be stronger.



All testimonies are real and were taken from our everyday lives. Our publication aims to inspire and motivate people working at the grassroots, in their organizations – so that they feel empowered and prepared to face the challenges – and to strengthen their participation in unions and in the struggle for a more just society. At first, we planned this material as a starting point, but now it represents our achievements and our struggle to improve our living and working conditions. With the 2nd edition of Women Wage Workers in Rural Brazil – a Dialogue, we are going to strengthen our strategy to change the gloomy and disastrous scenario we face in Brazil. We will fight for more dignity and for our Human Rights. Enjoy the reading and let's keep up the fight



**Maria Helena Dourado**

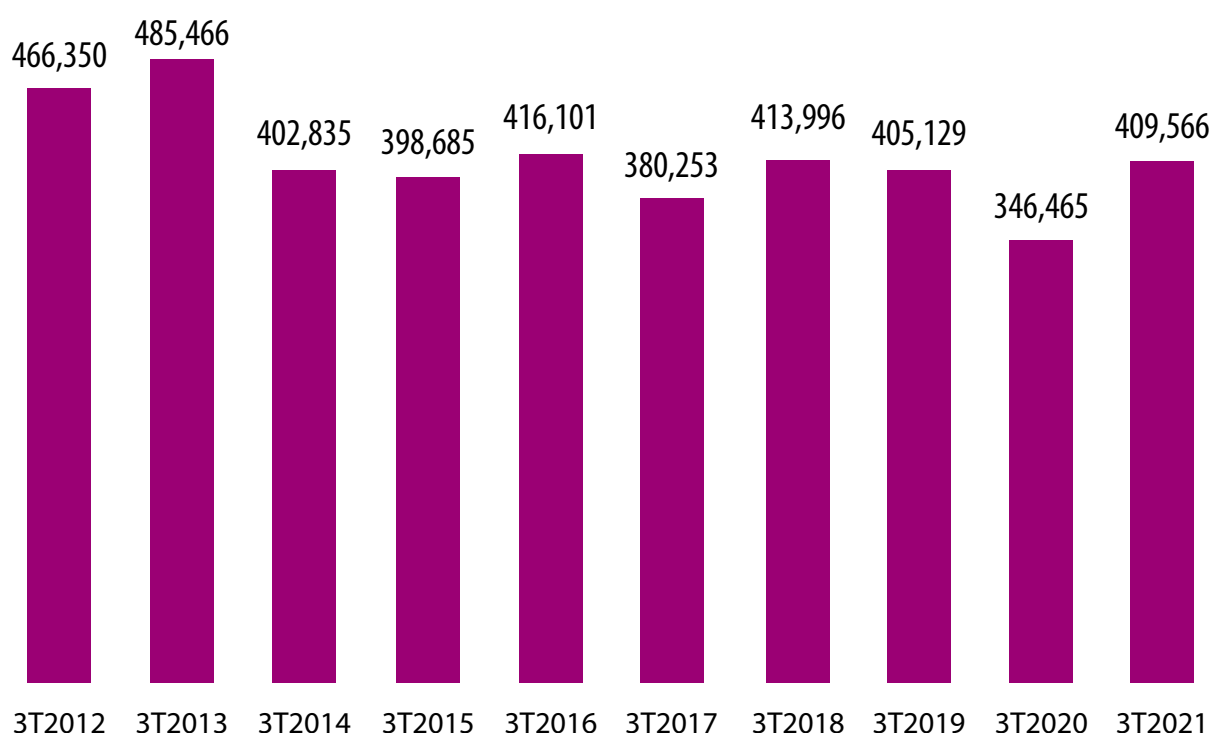
CONTAR's Secretary for Gender and Generation Affairs



## LABOUR MARKET OVERVIEW

The number of women in rural wage labour increased between the 3rd quarter of 2020 and the same period in 2021. While the figures from the Continuous National Household Sample Survey (Continuous PNAD, conducted by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) indicated the existence of 346,465 employees in 2020, last year this total went to 409,566 women.

### Estimated number of women wage workers in farming Brazil – 3rd quarter of 2012-3rd quarter of 2021



Source: IBGE. Continuous PNAD (3rd quarter of each year) • Prepared by DIEESE.

The data also show that the number of male wage workers in farming remains much higher in 2021, reaching 3,277,197 workers.

### Number of men and women in wage labour (2021)

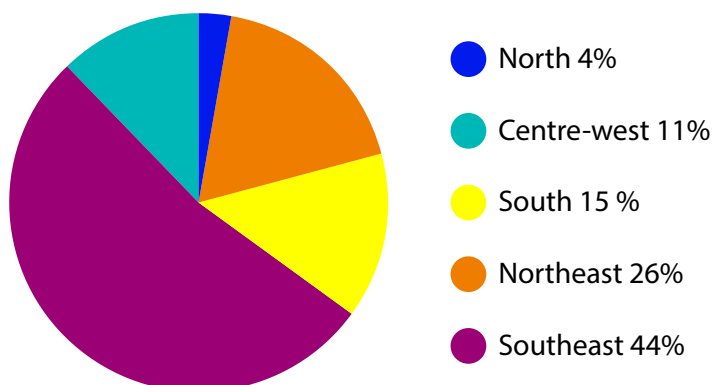


## DISTRIBUTION BY REGIONS

Women rural wage workers are present in all Brazilian regions. According to the same survey, they are 179,354 in the Southeast, which concentrates the majority, followed by the Northeast with 107,830 and the South, with 422,098. Brazil's Centre-West has 438,679 women rural workers and the North region has 15,890.

### WOMEN RURAL WAGE WORKERS BY REGION

CONTINUOUS PNAD • 3rd QUARTER 2021



According to a survey from the 3rd quarter of 2021, coffee plantation concentrated the highest number of women workers – 54,000. Cattle and other crops come second while horticulture comes third.

### Cattle and crops with the highest number of women wage workers Brazil – 3rd quarter 2021

Crop	Men	Women	Total	% of Women
Cattle	851	41	892	5%
Coffee plantation	240	54	294	18%
Sugarcane plantation	268	20	288	7%
Other temporary crops not previously identified	216	37	252	15%
Soy plantation	205	22	227	10%
Forestry	199	14	214	7%
Other permanent crops including fruit and plants not previously identified	146	41	187	22%
Corn plantation	169	12	181	7%
Horticulture	121	39	160	25%
Poultry farming	111	30	141	21%
Others	<b>702</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>801</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,227</b>	<b>410</b>	<b>3,637</b>	<b>11%</b>

Source: IBGE. Continuous PNAD • Prepared by DIEESE.

Registered women workers – those with formal contracts – are more concentrated in São Paulo, Minas Gerais and Mato Grosso, according to the Annual Social Information Report (RAIS) published by Brazil’s Ministry of Economy.

**Number of registered workers in agriculture, cattle, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture  
Brazil 2021**

<b>State</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of Women</b>
Rondônia	12,256	1,522	13,778	11%
Acre	2,935	256	3,191	8%
Amazonas	2,794	457	3,251	14%
Roraima	1,379	209	1,588	13%
Pará	45,606	5,024	50,630	10%
Amapá	946	56	1,002	6%
Tocantins	20,343	2,558	22,901	11%
Maranhão	20,514	1,879	22,393	8%
Piauí	8,373	894	9,267	10%
Ceará	19,011	2,446	21,457	11%
Rio Grande do Norte	15,709	1,886	17,595	11%
Paraíba	14,145	877	15,022	6%
Pernambuco	37,952	10,148	48,100	21%
Alagoas	9,209	445	9,654	5%
Sergipe	9,106	496	9,602	5%
Bahia	81,205	13,866	95,071	15%
Minas Gerais	212,121	38,803	250,924	15%
Espírito Santo	24,101	4,622	28,723	16%
Rio de Janeiro	16,404	2,262	18,666	12%
São Paulo	241,647	63,254	304,901	21%
Paraná	84,167	17,989	102,156	18%
Santa Catarina	32,046	9,695	41,741	23%
Rio Grande do Sul	66,701	13,825	80,526	17%
Mato Grosso do Sul	59,998	9,858	69,856	14%
Mato Grosso	105,757	17,780	123,537	14%
Goiás	79,846	15,638	95,484	16%
Distrito Federal	4,278	1,096	5,374	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,228,549</b>	<b>237,841</b>	<b>1,466,390</b>	<b>16%</b>

Source: Ministry of Economy – RAIS • Prepared by DIESSE.



CONTAR  
Comitê Nacional de Trabalho Rural

FETAR'S

STAR'S

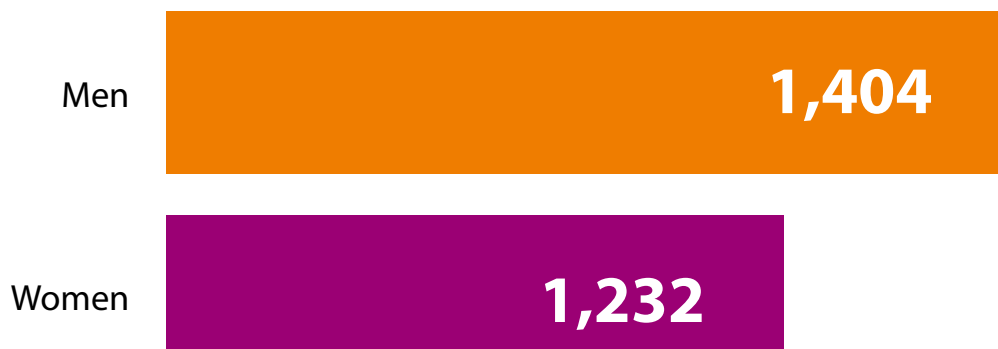


Apoio: OXFAM  
Brasil

## WAGE INEQUALITY

According to data from the Continuous PNAD, when gender is taken into account, wage inequality remains. While rural wage workers as a whole earn R\$ 1,404.00 on average wage, women earn R\$ 1,232.00.

### WAGES AND GENDER Continuous PNAD • 3rd quarter of 2021



Women's wages also reflect average income, indicating the many disparities between Brazil's regions. The Continuous PNAD report shows that women wage workers in the Centre-West have higher average incomes – R\$ 2,094.00. In the Northeast, on the other hand, their income is lower – R\$ 585.00.

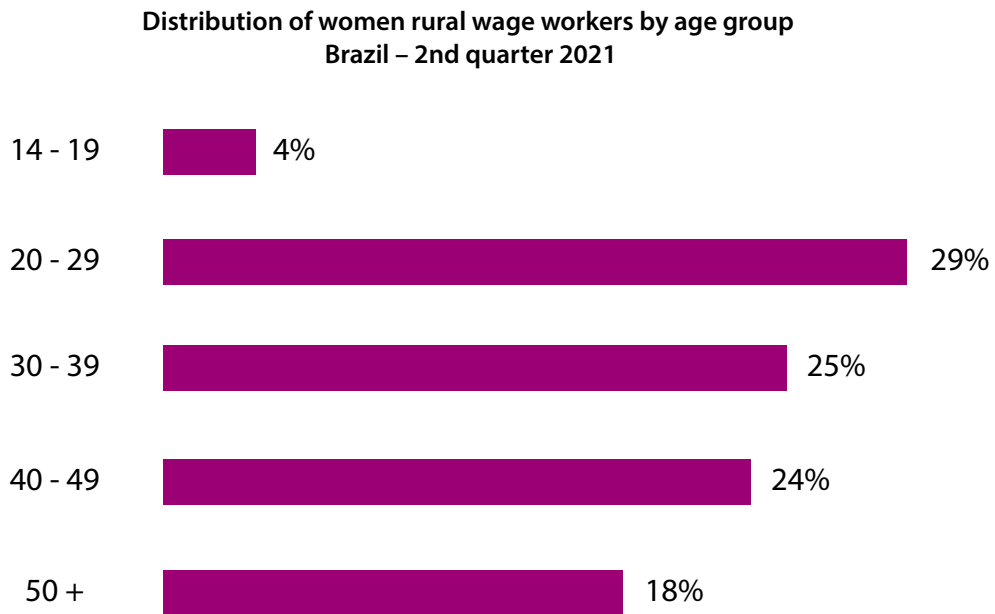
### Average income of women rural wage workers by region Brazil – 3rd quarter 2021



Source: IBGE. Continuous PNAD • Prepared by DIEESE.

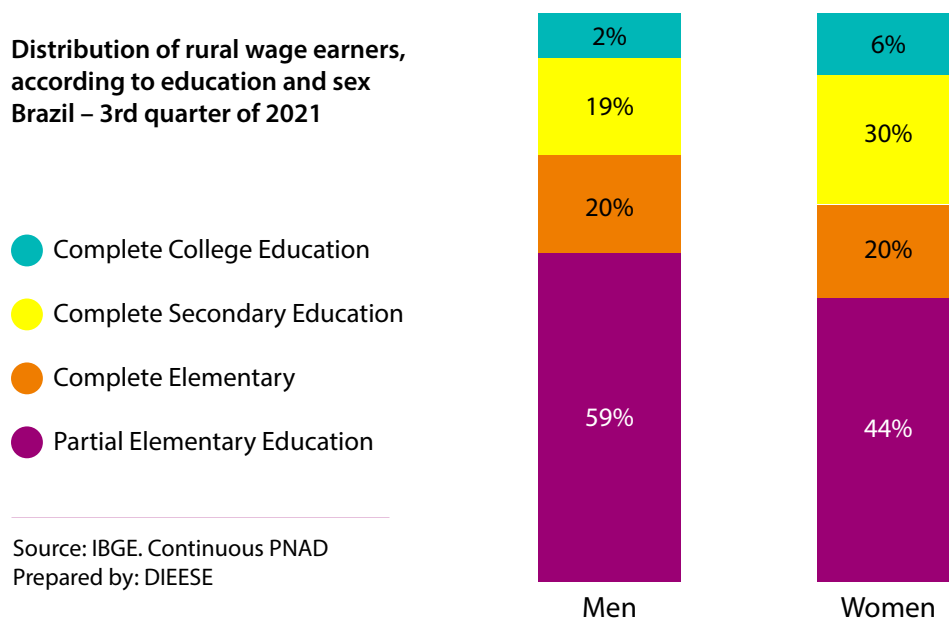
## AGE, EDUCATION AND COLOUR/RACE

**AGE** • As for age, the 20-29 group is increasing:  
29% of 409,566 women rural wage workers are in this age group.



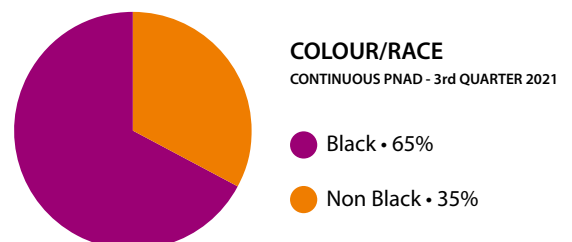
Source: IBGE. Continuous PNAD • Prepared by DIEESE.

**SCHOOLING** • Continuing the trend of 2020, women rural wage workers' level of schooling in the 3rd quarter of 2021 remains higher when compared to that of male workers.



### COLOUR/RACE • CONTINUOUS PNAD 3RD QUARTER 2021

• Data provided by the Inter-Union Department of Statistics and Socioeconomic Studies (DIEESE) indicated that black women are the majority of women rural wage workers. According to DIEESE, there were 143,668 non-black women and 265,898 black women.



## WOMEN WAGE WORKERS IN RURAL BRAZIL - A DIALOGUE INTERVIEWS

From North to South of Brazil, there are many voices to be heard. That is why we have released this new series of interviews with women employed in rural activities in Brazil, showing the reality of each region and the common struggle that brings them together in their quest for rights and dignity.

### ELISABETE VITOR

Três Corações • Minas Gerais



Elisabete Vitor is a union leader with a long history. At the age of eight, she started working in coffee plantations in the municipality of Três Corações, Minas Gerais state. Today, at 55, she has transformed her whole experience into a struggle for the rights of other women who, like her, are well aware of the difficulties the face as wage workers. She knows there is still a lot to do, but she is sure of one thing: she will not give up.

#### WHAT'S YOUR STORY IN THE STRUGGLE OF WOMEN RURAL WORKERS?

I started working in the fields with my mother when I was eight years old. She was either in the fields or employed as a domestic worker. Now I'm 55 and I have spent my life working in plantations. But when my mother died in 2002, things got tough and I had to go to the fields for real. Then I wanted my rights, because I didn't have a labour contract. During that period, the boss didn't register me and when the plantation was good enough, he laid us off, claiming that a truck would have to be fixed. It was a lie. I went to the union and realized what I was losing and all the money the boss was making.

Since then, I started to encourage other women to participate as well. In 2009, I was on the front lines coordinating the union in Três Corações. It wasn't easy, being a woman, and a black one. Being a strong and brave leader was and will continue to be hard for women who are also mothers, grandmothers, wives. I've been threatened several times; I could never be alone because Elisabete Vitor was already looked

at differently. I didn't give up because I knew fighting in rural areas is very difficult, it's too painful.

"I've been threatened several times; I could never be alone because Elisabete Vitor was already looked at differently. I didn't give up because I knew fighting in rural areas is very difficult, it's too painful."

#### TODAY YOU KEEP FIGHTING AND ENCOURAGING OTHER WOMEN. HOW IS YOUR WORK? WHAT IS THE STRUGGLE LIKE NOW?

I think it's even more difficult now than it used to be, can you believe it? Women tell me they need to ask their husbands' permission to join the struggle. "I want to, but I don't know if he'll let me participate," they say. So that's a different view. Why is it that only your husband is registered – and sometimes you work even more than he does, but you're not registered? That's not fair. Why does a man get to retire while his wife has to struggle to prove she has worked? I met a woman who had been married for 35 years, and she asked me if I thought she could retire since she'd never had a contract. These are the women who stand with me, and I can't lose hope or faith. I believe in union struggle. There's still a lot to be done, but I'm sure we can make a difference. However, there is still prejudice among women themselves. And now is the time for us to be united. Enough of dying without our rights.

“There’s still a lot to be done, but I’m sure we can make a difference. However, there is still prejudice among women themselves. And now is the time for us to be united. Enough of dying without our rights.”

**THE BIG QUESTION IS THAT THE WORK ENVIRONMENT IS VERY SEXIST, WHERE MEN DO THE TALKING. BUT YOUR EXAMPLE ENCOURAGES MANY WOMEN TO BE STRONG. IN NEGOTIATION, FOR EXAMPLE, DO YOU FEEL THAT THERE IS MORE FLEXIBILITY WHEN A MALE VOICE IS INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS?**

They listen more to men. They look at women and think we are talking nonsense. These differences exist in all forms, but it’s much worse in coffee plantations, in the fields. That job hurts your spine, you see people depressed. It’s just sadness. We need doctors who can look at these women’s problems. When we go to the hospital in my town, the person who sees us is a landowner’s son, and he is a landowner himself. So there’s no use going there and saying that you have a hernia from carrying coffee sacks. They’ll say that you are allergic to pesticides and will give you an antiallergic drug. I say that because I’ve been there, and other people too. But I won’t give up anyway. I don’t know if I’ll be able to see the change, but I’m sure many will come after me. I will always be here, encouraging them to speak out, so that women have a chance and a voice.

The most beautiful thing over these 20 years completed in 2022 was a 98-year-old lady who used to accompany us. She believed in our struggle. So all of this is for her, it’s for others, it’s for those who will come. It’s worth it, despite the threats. That’s why this struggle is worth it.

“I don’t know if I’ll be able to see the change, but I’m sure many will come after me. I will always be here, encouraging them to speak out, so that women have a chance and a voice.”

**HOW DO YOU COORDINATE YOUR ACTIONS WITHIN THE MOVEMENT? HOW IS YOUR UNION WORK WITH THE OTHER WOMEN?**

I actually feel like a volunteer. I’m not in the Union’s board. I’m always sticking my nose, debating and clashing with other people so that we women have a voice. That’s why I’m always involved.

**WHAT ARE WORKING CONDITIONS LIKE IN COFFEE?**

We don’t have a place to eat. And it’s hard for us women during our period. We have to change, but where can we do it? That’s a problem. There is also the issue of weight. The 60-kilo sacks are very heavy, and there is no one to carry them for us. The hardest thing is not having contracts. Women work for many years and their big problem is not being entitled to any benefits. So there has to be more law enforcement on women’s side. It’s all very insecure, a very sad reality.

**THE COFFEE PLANTATION INDUSTRY SAW A RECORD NUMBER OF CASES OF SLAVE LABOUR LAST YEAR. IT’S A VERY HARD REALITY BY ITSELF, AND BEING A WOMAN IN THIS ENVIRONMENT IS EVEN HARDER, ISN’T IT?**

It’s too bad. It’s awful, really, because many times you’re there in pain and you just can’t stop working. You know you’ll get paid for what you produce, and when you get to be registered, they won’t pay you what you’re entitled to. It’s R\$ 10 per measure, so you take R\$ 200 a day. But at the end of the day, you get nothing, you only get what you did during the time you worked in the fields.



Point your phone’s camera at the QR Code and watch the interview on CONTAR’s Youtube channel

# NELI MARIA DOS SANTOS

Finance Secretary of the Goiás Federation and president of the Union of Rural Wage Workers of Goianésia-Goiás



From Goianésia, Goiás, comes an example showing that only organized struggle is effective. There, the situation of wage women workers is already much better than in many other parts of Brazil. Neli Maria dos Santos, Finance Secretary of the Goiás State Federation and president of the Union of Rural Wage Workers of Goianésia, tells the story of her life and the progress already made by women in the region's sugarcane plantations.

## **SINCE YOU WORK IN THIS CONTEXT AS A RURAL WAGE WORKER, PLEASE TELL US ABOUT THE SUGARCANE CUTTING DAILY ROUTINE IN YOUR REGION.**

A woman's daily routine here is to get up very early, prepare her little lunch box, put it in her backpack and go to the fields. She leaves home at 5 am, starts working in the fields at 7 am, and goes until 4 pm. A lot has changed here in our region now, and there is almost no manual cane cutting. It's mostly mechanized.

I was 10 years old when I started cutting cane. At that time, I used to go with my mother and the whole family. The routine was already different. We'd go to the fields at 4 am, hopping on those trucks that would leave us in the plantation to 'pull' the cane. And we had to stay there until 10 pm, waiting for the truck to unload at the mill and then come to pick us up and take us home. Women faced lots of discrimination. If a man's daily wage was, say, R\$ 30.00, a woman's would be R\$ 15.00. And the children – they were allowed to work back then – used to earn R\$

10.00-R\$ 12.00 and work as adults, doing the same amount of work. Today, with labour movements, unions, things have improved a lot for women, but I see that we still have a great challenge ahead.

## **YOU SAY WOMEN USED TO EARN HALF A MAN'S WAGES FOR THE SAME WORK. WHAT'S DIFFERENT TODAY?**

Well, things have improved a lot. Women's wages, especially in the fields, are the same as men's, there's equality and they have their rights. In the old days, we didn't have contracts (we used to work on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays, we worked any day we wanted), but not anymore. Today we work Monday through Saturday. Working hours are established and women are entitled to their rights, but I think we can achieve more. Women still have more rights and more victories to achieve, especially when they have children. They are entitled to maternity leave, but when they return to work, they'll go back to the fields and have trouble finding a day care centre to put their children in, or full-time school. So that's something we have to change.

"Women still have more rights and more victories to achieve, especially when they have children. They are entitled to maternity leave, but when they return to work, they'll go back to the fields and have trouble finding a day care centre."





### **IT IS ACTUALLY ABOUT OCCUPYING SPACE, ISN'T IT?**

Yes, today, even in company shows more appreciation for women, especially to operate machines, because women are more careful, they are more thorough, their machines are clean, tidy, they even break down less often. They show more appreciation for women.

### **WHAT DO YOU EXPECT FOR WOMEN IN THIS NEXT GENERATION, WHO ARE COMING NOW, WHO ARE TRYING TO OCCUPY THAT SPACE AS YOU'VE BEEN DOING FOR MANY YEARS? COULD YOU LEAVE A MESSAGE FOR THEM, ON THIS MOMENT OF STRUGGLE?**

Well, what I want to say to these fellow women who are coming to the struggle is that they should never lower their heads. Be warriors, occupy their spaces, especially in politics, because today our space is very narrow; there is no room for women in politics. Let's fight! Study, fight, empower yourselves and be winners. Let's be strong women, let's be winners!

### **HOW IS THE WORK YOU DO IN THE GOIANÉSIA AREA, WITH THE OTHER WOMEN, RAISING AWARENESS IN TERMS OF RIGHTS AND UNIONISATION?**

It's good. Here in my region, we have good jobs, there's training. Before that, a woman could not work on a tractor, on a machine, there was lots of discrimination. Through dialogue with the companies, bosses, we managed – several of my colleagues managed – to do the training, and now they operate machines. They are happy with their work, and things have been changing, you know? The reality of a few years ago has changed a lot, through struggle, victories and women's empowerment.

*"Never lower your heads, be warriors, occupy your spaces, especially in politics, because today our space is very short, there is not that space for women in politics"*

*"The reality of a few years ago has changed a lot, through struggle, victories and women's empowerment."*



Point your camera at the QR Code and watch the interview on CONTAR's Youtube channel.

# MARIA SAMARA DE SOUSA

Leader of the Union of Rural Wage Workers of Juazeiro, Bahia



Maria Samara de Sousa is a union leader in Brazil's largest fruit production hub, in Juazeiro, Bahia state. As a young black woman, she participates in this edition of "Women Workers in rural Brazil – a dialogue," sharing facts about her life, stressing the importance of union organization, always highlighting the need to include more women in decision-making.

## **YOU ARE A REFERENCE IN THE STRUGGLE OF WOMEN WAGE WORKERS. TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR LIFE SO FAR.**

In 2008, I started my life as a rural wage worker in a company that ran an irrigation project in Jardim Curaçá, an Agricultural Cooperative called Alberto Sasad. I've been a rural wage earner since 2008, and later I started working in fruit farming. Then I joined the union movement. I came to know our Union in 2015, and then I became a union rep for the first time and spent two years in that capacity. In 2016, I was invited to be a member of the board. I joined the Juazeiro Union of Rural Workers as a secretary for youth and adolescents and I have been here since 2018. In 2020, there was the union dissociation, and I joined the new union's board as a secretary for youth and adolescents. From that point on, we became the Rural Wage Workers Union.

## **AND WHAT WAS IT LIKE FOR YOU TO JOIN THIS UNIVERSE OF THE LABOUR UNION MOVEMENT?**

For a woman, it's not easy to be a union leader in such a male-dominated movement. There are few female leaders. But I had support. Bargaining is not easy. The Union doesn't always have the support of workers at the

grassroots. We have to convince our fellow workers of the importance of the Union, that it is the Union that keeps up the fight for rights, that fights for better working conditions, for social conditions, for wage raises. We are present at the companies almost every day, visiting workers, meeting with liaisons, talking about social rights, about the CLT [Brazil's Labour Laws], about the collective bargaining agreement. And workers' support increases every day. The pandemic was a difficult time; we couldn't go to workplaces for almost a year. But we kept permanent contact on WhatsApp groups.

*"We have to convince our fellow workers of the importance of the Union, that it is the Union that keeps up the fight for rights, that fights for better working conditions, for social conditions, for wage raises."*

## **YOU ARE IN ONE OF THE LARGEST FRUIT EXPORT HUBS IN BRAZIL, WHERE THERE IS THE ADVANTAGE OF LARGER COMPANIES. WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE IN THIS ASPECT: NEGOTIATING WITH COMPANIES? BRINGING WORKERS TO THE UNION?**

It's a huge hub. The biggest hub for irrigated fruit farming is located here in our São Francisco Valley and negotiation is the crucial point for rural wage workers. It's hard because companies change their stances towards rural wage earners every year, they don't look at them kindly. The 2017 Labour Reform made collective bargaining even more difficult.

Before that, we used to negotiate based on the CLT; today that legislation has been destroyed, so it's difficult to negotiate. We faced great resistance from companies in this aspect; they attacked our rights. We see that businesses' agenda came stronger than workers' agenda, and we had never witnessed that.

"The 2017 Labour Reform made collective bargaining even more difficult. Before that, we used to negotiate based on the CLT; today that legislation has been destroyed, so it's difficult to negotiate."

### **HOW IS THIS DIALOGUE WITH WOMEN? HOW CAN YOU ADDRESS THEM SO THEY ENGAGE IN EVERYDAY STRUGGLES?**

Whenever we go to the companies, I try to mingle. I tell workers that I'm a rural wage earner, that I come from the grassroots, that I understand what they go through. Because it's not easy to be a woman, it's not easy to be black. We come from poor families, I come from a family of rural workers and farmers. I came from the grassroots. I speak about how hard it was for me to go to school and get my degree. So it's always important to speak about this, and I see that when you say that you are from the grassroots, that you came from there, just like them, we have this dialogue that is more consistent and we have the workers' support. Today I work as the Union's secretary general, but tomorrow it could be one of them, and I always stress this: "look, I'm the one who's there now, but tomorrow it could be one of you, because the struggle never stops, the struggle is not just today." When I started college, in 2015, the category's legal wage was R\$ 816.00, and only tuition – if I had to pay for it – would cost R\$ 750.00, so I always speak about Proni [University for All, a federal government scholarship program created in 2004]. I was granted a full scholarship. It's very rewarding for us to keep this fight going. It's not easy, but I'm passionate about this work now, and I hope to leave a beautiful legacy in this union, so that those who come next will also keep up this fight.

"It's very rewarding for us to keep this fight going. It's not easy, but I'm passionate about this work now, and I hope to leave a beautiful legacy in this union, so that those who come next will also keep up this fight."

### **SAMARA, YOU INSISTED ON THE UNITY OF WOMEN, AND NOW CONTAR HAS A COMMITTEE AIMED AT WOMEN WORKERS FROM ALL OVER BRAZIL. WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE PART OF THIS CONTEXT AND WHAT WILL THIS COMMITTEE DO?**

This is a very important moment. We had been trying to organize for a long time and now CONTAR kick-started it. We couldn't make this women's committee work for some time, but now we have it. On the April 7, 2022, I'll be traveling to Brasília to participate once again in a meeting with our fellow women workers from several states. We'll talk about new working conditions, about the reality of women workers in each state.

This women's committee is very important. We will talk, try to improve working conditions, try to improve social conditions. We have our reality here in the valley, and realities are different in several Brazilian states, but they are still a working woman's reality. Congratulations to CONTAR for helping us with this.



Point your camera at the QR Code and watch the interview on CONTAR's Youtube channel.

# TEREZINHA GONÇALVES

Feterpa – Federation of Rural Employees of the State of Pará, Garrafão do Norte, Pará



This edition of 'Women Wage Workers in Rural Brazil – a Dialogue' presents this interview with Terezinha Gonçalves Franca, from the Federation of Rural Employees of the State of Pará (Feterpa). She speaks about struggle and organization in a state with very high rates of modern slave labour. She lives in the municipality of Garrafão do Norte, and she says that Pará's size and labour informality rates contribute to rural workers' harsh situation, and points to their losses with Labour Reform.

## **MUCH HAS BEEN SAID ABOUT THE LABOUR SITUATION IN PARÁ. WHAT IS THE WORST CHALLENGE THAT RURAL WAGE-WORKERS FACE IN THE STATE TODAY?**

Things are not easy right now, with this pandemic, especially now when we are closing collective bargaining agreements. We've lost a lot, especially wage workers, rural women. So, our biggest challenge is to close agreements, and the Federation has been assisting in all negotiations. The Federation is always present and tries to improve rural workers' lives as much as possible. And this is only possible within these collective agreements.

"The Federation is always present and tries to improve rural workers' lives as much as possible. And this is only possible within these collective agreements."

## **WHILE THE SITUATION IS DIFFICULT IN GENERAL, WHAT AFFECTS WOMEN WORKERS SPECIFICALLY?**

First of all, it's hard for women to get jobs at companies. It's already difficult to find someone to leave their children with. And this is not just in Pará; I think it's the same all over the country. Companies don't hire women very often. So much so that, based on the country's figures, we can see the number of women workers we have. Figures are high for men, while we women are the minority of workers.

## **HERE'S THE QUESTION THAT NEVER GOES AWAY, AND SOMETIMES THERE ARE SEVERAL ANSWERS: WHY ARE SLAVE LABOUR RATES SO HIGH IN PARÁ?**

I think there's the issue of informality. We try to solve it through bargaining agreements, which is where we can assist all those workers, but the problem is quite complex. The state of Pará, as you just said, has such large rates of slave labour. Pará is huge, it's very big. And then it's hard to control all that, because informal, unregistered labour is very high, and not only in Pará, we know that. But that's what causes slave labour.

## **HOW DO THE FEDERATION AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS WORK IN THIS FIGHT AGAINST INFORMALITY TO GUARANTEE GOOD AGREEMENTS WITH COMPANIES?**

Look, it's been like this: we're closing agreements according to official wage adjustment dates. It's very hard with some companies. The challenge to close it lies in the economic side, right?

I can't tell you the precise number of agreements we have in Pará, but they are many, and we try to improve workers' lives. It is only through agreements that we achieve our rights. Because we lost many rights in that Labour Reform. Workers lost many rights, and now agreements and conventions are our tools to try to have gains.

point. We faced many losses. But thank God, haven't we reinvented ourselves? At least we're managing to meet and try to solve some of our problems, even though it has to be done online.



"It is only through agreements that we achieve our rights. Because we lost many rights in that Labour Reform. Workers lost many rights."

**STUDIES BY DIEESE HAVE PROVIDED FIGURES AND CONCRETE INFORMATION TO SEVERAL ORGANIZATIONS. HOW HAS THAT HELPED YOUR WORK?**

DIEESE has been very helpful. We always get in touch with them in [Pará's state capital] Belém, and that's very important, especially for helping us in this partnership with workers and in women's issues in our state. In 2019, we debated the creation of our women's committee. We asked the Board and we managed to approve its creation. When Covid-19 came, it was hard on us. Our meetings are all held online because our lives in Brazil are still very difficult at this



Point your camera at the QR Code and watch the interview on CONTAR's Youtube channel.

# MARIA HELENA DOS SANTOS

President of the Federation of Rural Wage Workers of Mato Grosso do Sul and Secretary for Gender and Generation Affairs at CONTAR



One of the biggest challenges faced by the category today is to include the hiring of women wage workers in formal bargaining agreements. The President of the Federation of Rural Wage Workers of Mato Grosso do Sul and CONTAR'S Secretary for Gender and Generation Affairs, Maria Helena dos Santos Dourado Neves, speaks about the

**WOMEN RURAL WORKERS ARE MAKING PROGRESS IN COLLECTIVE ORGANIZATION. WHAT IS THE IDEA NOW? WHAT ARE YOUR NEXT STEPS?**

We need to advance, through the committee, in raising awareness among all women workers. Current unregistered labour figures are very high in Brazil. Those figures have to be



mobilization and the strategies so that the debate gets to all women working in rural areas. This debate is essential for possible victories. Check it out.

reduced. One challenge we face is to occupy these spaces in rural areas, because there are very few contracts. Through the committee, we want to take this information to all women

workers in our country. We want to improve everyone's knowledge, the issue of structure, to gain grassroots recognition as a union, to be recognized by employers. Women need this education, this understanding.

**WOMEN'S MAIN DEMAND IS ABOUT THEIR LACK OF OPPORTUNITY IN THE JOB MARKET. IN SUGARCANE CUTTING IN BRAZIL'S NORTHEAST, COMPANIES VIRTUALLY REFUSE TO HIRE WOMEN. HOW WILL THE CONFEDERATION AND THE COMMITTEE DEBATE IT AND ADDRESS IT?**

The first step in including women wage workers is through bargaining agreements. We raise that debate in agreements addressing the grassroots. Each State that is going to discuss its agreement, that is going to sign an agreement, will include the topic on the agenda. These workers have to be ahead of it so they participate in the agreements and access that information. That opportunity will reduce the gap between these women and the job market.

"These workers have to be ahead of it so they participate in the agreements and access that information. That opportunity will reduce the gap between these women and the job market."

**THE STRATEGY IS TO DEBATE IT AT THE UNION AND THEN BRING IT TO THE COMMITTEE, RIGHT?**

Yes! That's one of our goals: to bring women workers to the unions, provide them with that vision too, so they can take this knowledge to the women working in rural areas.

**IN THIS DISCUSSION ABOUT THE BARGAINING AGREEMENTS, YOU MEAN THAT THEY MUST INCLUDE A PERCENTAGE FOR WOMEN WORKERS?**

Yes, yes! Our goal now is to include a percentage of jobs for women in the conventions. I don't know if you've heard of it, but it already exists

in the state of Pernambuco, and that's one of the debates there. We want to take this to other states through local committees. We have to create some committees in the states. First here, at the national board, then go to the states with the women's departments, where they participate in bargaining, in these agreements, and then include a percentage for women that, today, is being discussed at 20%. At least 20% of women workers in rural areas, which is something we don't have now.

"They must participate in bargaining, in these agreements, and then include a percentage for women that, today, is being discussed at 20%."



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# JUVANDIA MOREIRA LEITE

President of Contrafe-CUT, São Paulo



Juvandia Moreira Leite is the president of the National Confederation of Workers in the Financial Sector of the Unified Workers' Central (CONTRAFE-CUT). As the first woman to lead one of the largest unions in Brazil in 87 years, she underscores the idea that women, both rural and urban, must organize, fight and occupy decision-making spaces.

## WHAT IS CONTRAFE AND HOW WAS OUR JOURNEY TO BE PRESIDENT OF THE ORGANIZATION?

CONTRAFE is the National Confederation of Workers in the Financial Sector. I'm a bank worker, I work at Bradesco. I started my career in São Paulo and I was the first woman to be president of a bank workers' union in São Paulo, Osasco and the surrounding region, which represents about 140,000 workers. The union was 87 years old when I took office as acting president, and then I was elected president in 2010 with 84% of the votes. I was ahead of the Union for two terms and now I'm at the Confederation and I coordinate the National Command of Bank Workers. Our bargaining negotiation is done on a national basis, on a single table.

## THAT'S A HISTORICAL TRAJECTORY. IT'S BEEN ALMOST 90 YEARS SINCE THE FOUNDATION OF ONE OF BRAZIL'S LARGEST UNIONS AND YOU ARE THE FIRST WOMAN AHEAD OF IT. HOW DO URBAN WOMEN WORKERS DEAL WITH

## THESE ORGANIZATIONAL CHALLENGES IN UNION STRUGGLE?

We women suffer a lot in this society that is patriarchal, sexist, misogynist. These prejudices turn into discrimination and then into violence, whether physical or psychological, whether it is moral or sexual harassment in the workplace. So this model of society that discriminates against women is bad for everyone. Both rural and urban women face this challenge because this is how society was organized, and we are struggling to deconstruct it to achieve equal rights. A woman's place is anywhere, it's everywhere, it's doing whatever she wants to do. You can't have a stamp there saying that women live in the private world and take care of the home while men go to the job market, that women are sensitive and men don't cry. These legacies caused lots of discrimination. We also fight for that in the labour movement because we are the reflection of this society. The union movement is an example of that.

Look at how long it took for a woman to be president – 87 years. And when I left, another woman replaced me. I see that as our role: to empower women. And we have to do this wherever we are, we have to exercise solidarity among women, to support other women. When I left the Union, they were already 70% of the executive board. Three women are in the main positions. When I left, a black woman became president. This makes me very proud, because that means our struggle is bearing fruit.



“Both rural and urban women face this challenge because this is how society was organized, and we are struggling to deconstruct it to achieve equal rights.”

We have to fight for these spaces, in both rural and urban areas. Even in the union movement, because our views can change the agenda. Men and women have different agendas that must be addressed by the union movement, in Congress, in

**FOCUSES ON THE FEMALE MAJORITY, WHICH IS 70% IN YOUR SECTOR. YOU MENTIONED WOMEN’S MUTUAL SUPPORT AND SOLIDARITY. HOW DOES CONTRAFE WORK IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH WOMEN RURAL WORKERS? BECAUSE THERE ARE BARGAINING AGREEMENTS, SO IT DEPENDS A LOT ON THE CONFEDERATION FOR THESE NEGOTIATION TO CONTINUE.**

Certainly. We have an equal opportunity negotiation table in our sector. We have national bargaining, we negotiate on behalf of almost 500,000 workers – the category is



the Legislative, in the Judiciary, in the job market. We must have access to credit, income, employment. We have to face that fight all the time. We’ve come a long way, but we still have a long way to go. In this last period of the Bolsonaro administration, we had many setbacks in this area.

**YOU SPOKE ABOUT OCCUPYING SPACE AND DOING IT WITH DECISION POWER TO CHANGE THE AGENDA AND DIRECTING IT SO THAT IT**

well divided in half there, between men and women.

In 2020, we signed an agreement, a program to combat violence against women. It was negotiated with the banks and we proposed that agenda. Banks have to create a service channel for female employees who are victims of domestic violence. These women often suffer violence at home and go to work, and they can’t do their jobs well because they have suffered emotional violence, so they can’t produce as much

as someone who hasn't. Or they miss work because they are injured. Then these women end up losing their jobs.

And the union movement is there to take care of that. We created the program in 2020, and since then unions have also been providing this service. Here at CONTRAFE, we created a campaign called 'Enough!' We train union leaders to assist not only bank workers but also the entire population. Over 300 women were assisted during the time the program is operational. Even teenagers call to denounce their fathers who are being violent with their mothers.

Actually, this is a topic that unfortunately also affects rural women. In fact, it affects all women, regardless of social class. We have to join forces to defend this view in parliament and include it on the bargaining agenda. For example, rural women are not entitled to retirement. We always say that children do not belong to women, they belong to society. If women stopped having children, society would end, the human race would end. So they can't bear all the burden. Bolsonaro has already said that women have to earn less because they get pregnant. That's absurd! A woman doesn't have to earn less because she gets pregnant. And that's because society needs women. That is why maternity leave paid by the government was created so as not to burden companies and not to exclude women from the job market.

"Bolsonaro has already said that women have to earn less because they get pregnant. That's absurd! A woman doesn't have to earn less because she gets pregnant. And that's because society needs women."

These are general demands. Access to credit, for example, since women are often unregistered, and unemployment is higher among them. That agenda has to be put in place to unite rural and urban women to

achieve victories and improve our country. Our struggle is already international, we have March 8th demonstrations all over the world, when women organize. The Daisies' March is also a very beautiful struggle. So that's it: we have to occupy our spaces and expand, to bring in other women, gain more support.

When I joined CONTRAFE's leadership, we had 30% of women on the board. During my term as president, we went to 35%. We'll have a congress in April, and I hope to surpass 40% of women on the board.



Point your camera at the QR Code and watch the interview on CONTAR's Youtube channel.

# KÁTIA MAIA

Executive Director at Oxfam Brasil



Women workers have to believe in their strength. This is one of OXFAM Brasil's executive director Kátia Maia's messages in this interview, in which she details the important role the organization has been playing by encouraging women workers to occupy decision-making spaces and showing the real situation in rural Brazil through studies such as the report such as 'Sweet fruits, bitter lives.'

## COULD YOU TELL US ABOUT OXFAM BRASIL'S DISTINCT APPROACH IN THE COUNTRY? IT IS AN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION, BUT IT HAS ITS OWN APPROACH TO LABOUR RELATIONS HERE, DOESN'T IT?

OXFAM Brasil is a Brazilian organization, but it is part of that international organization. When we started our work in Brazil, we focused on fighting inequalities. And if there is an area where inequality is high, that's labour. It's labour rights. The right to fair, decent work, where people are paid right for their work. And that's why we've focused a lot on working with the rural world, which puts food on our tables.

## HOW DOES OXFAM CONTRIBUTE TO THE STRUGGLES AND ORGANIZATION OF LATIN AMERICAN WOMEN, ESPECIALLY IN RURAL AREAS, WHICH PUT FOOD ON OUR TABLES, AS YOU SAID?

Both here in Brazil and in other countries where we operate, we see women rural workers as crucial. First, they have the strength of their struggle, they have the strength of their hard work, they work

twice, three times as much, and they are always paid less and face worse conditions. So if we want a more just society, we need to work with women. They face the worst injustices, but they also show the way for us to change this situation. In other countries, OXFAM also focuses on women, and rural wage workers are very important in the food supply chain, this rural production chain. They are not recognized – neither by rural men themselves nor by the rest of society.

"If we want a more just society, we need to work with women. They face the worst injustices, but they also show the way for us to change this situation."

## AND HOW IS THIS WORK DONE? CAN YOU ILLUSTRATE HOW CAN PEOPLE REACH THAT EQUALITY?

One thing that is very important to us and that we have been doing in Brazil is working with the labour union world. Because we understand that representation is an important form of struggle and we need to have many more women in the unions, of any type, including rural ones.

Because unions do that direct confrontation with employers, with landowners, with company owners. They negotiate. And it's very important that women's voices be raised by themselves directly, that women be union leaders. OXFAM Brasil has been

working to strengthen unions – in this case, the union of rural wage workers – both men and women, to give them this visibility and guarantee women’s rights. We conduct several studies, field research, we go to the place where we know working conditions are not right, not fair, and we conduct research, produce video, publish reports to give visibility to this matter, so that society understands what is happening

“OXFAM Brasil has been working to strengthen unions – in this case, the union of rural wage workers – both men and women, to give them this visibility and guarantee women’s rights.”



in rural life. Plus, as OXFAM Brasil is a member of this international network, we have had dialogues, including in the case of products that are for export, with buyers abroad, because those buyers, international supermarkets, they buy international coffee to produce special coffee. They can’t buy products that don’t respect the rights of women workers.

**YOU SPOKE ABOUT OXFAM REPORTS, AND ONE OF THEM IS “SWEET FRUITS, BITTER LIVES.” HOW DOES IT PORTRAY THE SITUATION OF RURAL WORKERS IN BRAZIL? HOW CAN THIS VISIBILITY IMPROVE THEIR LIVING CONDITIONS?**

The report illustrates people’s real lives with figures. It shows what is actually happening and it becomes a very important

tool for unions. When we manage to give it visibility, we say that the fruit industry in Brazil makes a lot of money, but rural workers, those at the bottom of the supply chain – in planting, harvesting – get the lowest value. So, when we say that, we hope to point to that injustice in society and also in large supermarkets, for example, which always say they are extremely concerned with social and environmental issues. We want to show that they are buying fruit from suppliers that have no such concern, both in Brazil and abroad. The reports are important to make that issue visible, and that's serious research. We try to have the right information. But the most important thing is that it really becomes a tool for society to know that reality and for those union leaders, both women and men, to be able to bargain and guarantee better working conditions and rights. Today we see, with this study, many rights that are neglected, many rights to which these rural workers are entitled to but do not enjoy. The issue of pesticides, for example, is a terrible thing when we see the consequences of the substances these workers have to use.

Wages are very low, working conditions for women are always the worst. Women can't get pregnant, they can't enjoy proper maternity leave. It's a very unfair situation, and we need to show the population that this is not right.

**I WOULD LIKE YOU TO LEAVE A MESSAGE SAYING HOW WOMEN CAN JOIN FORCES AND BE REPRESENTED WITHIN UNIONS FOR THIS FIGHT TO CONTINUE AND ENDURE.**

I want to tell something to women rural workers: participating in unions, being part of leadership, that's your right. It's not a favour men do to you. It's your right! You work twice as much, you work in the fields and then at home, taking care of your families. Women who are wage workers have to understand that they can be in these bargaining spaces with the power of their work, of their production. Believe

in yourselves! It's very important to be together in the fight, united, because it's unity that really makes you strong.



Point your camera at the QR Code and watch the interview on CONTAR's Youtube channel.

# ELAINE PAGGI

CONTAR leader



A CONTAR leader in the municipality of Jandaia do Sul, Paraná, Elaine Paggi has her roots in family farming and has always been in close contact with the local union. In this interview, she speaks about her experience and how women rural workers must get involved in bargaining agreements and the importance of organized struggle so they can achieve their rights together.

## TELL US ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE IN THE UNION. HOW IS YOUR ROUTINE, HOW DID YOU GET TO OCCUPY THIS SPACE?

My whole family comes from family farming and we have always been Union members. In 2014, I was hired by the mill and went to work planting sugarcane. I was a field supervisor and we continued to participate in the union, going to meetings and assemblies. In 2016, the first Rural Wage Workers Union was founded here in Jandaia. We are the only union that gathers exclusively rural workers in Paraná state. Then I was invited to be part of the board of directors and everything started. They invited me to work at the union. At first, they couldn't pay an employee, so I came to work here, on paid leave.

## HOW IS THE DYNAMICS THERE IN JANDAIA DO SUL? WE INTERVIEWED WOMEN FROM ALL OVER BRAZIL AND EACH PERSON HAS SOMETHING TO SAY ABOUT COLLECTIVE BARGAINING, WAGES, WHICH ARE OFTEN DIFFERENT FOR MEN AND WOMEN. PLEASE EXPLAIN THE ISSUES OF WOMEN RURAL WORKERS WHERE YOU LIVE?

We know the bargaining agreements in many states, and they often include mandatory percentages of women to be hired. We don't have such clauses in agreements in our town, but we have no problem for women to be hired, because it's all very diversified here. We have sugarcane plantations, right? Cutting includes both women and men. There is grape, which employs lots of female labour since it requires fine skills. Many women are hired. There are also poultry farms, which employ many women. So, in this matter of hiring women, we don't have much trouble. In terms of wages, as far as we know it, it's OK. Wages are equal. We follow them very closely, and this board of directors made a commitment to workers, to follow them closely. But it's very difficult for workers to come to the Union. If we schedule a meeting or an assembly during the week, they can't come because they can't stop working. So we promised to visit them in the fields. Once every two months, we choose a place to visit, to see if they are being paid right, if PPE is being used, all that. Since this is a small municipality, we can monitor their work.

## IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT ARE THE MAIN CHALLENGES FACED BY THE UNION: DEALING WITH THE COMPANIES OR WITH WORKERS?

We face many challenges with companies, to access workers. It's hard to convince people to be on the board, especially because if someone speaks about the union, companies' owners won't like it, and many workers are afraid to work with us, they fear being persecuted by their bosses. There is also the resistance of

workers themselves. The image of the Union was a little bad because governments put pressure on us, mistreat us. It's quite difficult to convince workers to join the cause, the struggle, right? Because they made strong demands on us for wage increases. But today, if you look at it, our wage has increased very little. So we can't even fight with companies for better conditions.

"It's hard to convince people to be on the board, especially because if someone speaks about the union, companies' owners won't like it, and many workers are afraid to work with us, they fear being persecuted by their bosses."

**IN THIS FIGHT, YOU HAVE TO TELL WORKERS THAT THEY HAVE RIGHTS, IT'S NOT THE UNION'S FIGHT. HOW IS THIS DIALOGUE WITH THEM, TO MAKE THEM UNDERSTAND THAT THE STRUGGLE, THE FIGHT, IS THEIRS AND NOT THE UNION'S AS AN ORGANIZATION?**

Exactly! We always try to visit them. We have access to a large number of workers on the farms, in sugarcane cutting, and at the fields. We are there, trying to talk, explaining: "Hey folks, it's no use for me or the board to be fighting if you don't join our cause. We come here, have a meeting, and when it's time to sign an attendance list or something, you don't want to sign it that because you think you're favouring the Union." The fight is not mine, it's not the president's; it's every worker's fight. If they do not realize that they need to join forces and be together for us to fight, we won't get anywhere, because if the company sees that the workers are against the union, they won't listen to our demands. So we have to be united, and we try to make them understand that they need to be with us, because we have the strength to fight for their rights.

"The fight is not mine, it's not the president's; it's every worker's fight. If they do not realize that they need to join forces and be together for us to fight, we won't get anywhere."

**LET US CLOSE THIS CONVERSATION WITH RIGHTS. YOU'RE NOW PART OF THE CONTAR WOMEN'S COMMITTEE. WHAT STRUGGLES AND CHALLENGES ARE CURRENTLY ON THE AGENDA?**

We had a meeting in Brasilia and worked a lot on this topic. We hear reports from women who go through many challenges. The biggest fight is to include women in the job market so they can earn the same as men... Let's start this fight together with our fellow women workers. It's a little difficult sometimes, we know it's a major struggle, it won't be easy, but we're willing to fight. We talked about it, it's very hard among women themselves. Sometimes a woman is there, say, in a position a little higher, and she is frowned upon and judged by other women. So sometimes we fight against ourselves.



Point your camera at the QR Code and watch the interview on CONTAR's Youtube channel.

# JAQUELINE LEITE

In charge of Gender and LGBTI policies at CLAMU



In this edition of 'Women Wage Workers in Rural Brasil – a Dialogue,' Jaqueline Leite, who is in charge of Gender and LGBTI policies at the IUF Latin American Women's Committee (CLAMU), stresses the importance of education for empowering women in the category. She points out the visible results of these moments when women from all over the country meet and join forces in the struggle at unions and beyond, so that their rights are preserved and improved.

within the Confederation. Then we prepared educational programs where women could reflect, communicate, understand what their issues and problems were in a country that is so plural. It was a moment for everyone to be together and talk about these issues and the need to take advantage of this space to build an action plan where they could also have all the necessary victories, both in the unions and in the public space, where they could gain that visibility.



## THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION

We all know about the tragic times Brazil is undergoing and all the destruction of workers' rights. Importantly, CONTAR was responsive to women's issues and opened a door, a possibility for women to organize

## UNITY AND VISIBILITY

That training program brought up several issues to be worked on and also some women's strengths. One of them is that the educational programs managed to make women more united and join forces under common goals,



to be able to have strategies of struggle, both in their unions, such as in the gender struggle, and outside their unions, with issues that are brought to the public.

It also gave that visibility that women rural workers no longer had. That visibility was possible after they met, communicated and understood each other, and were able to join forces and share their common goals. The program strengthened women's empowerment strategy and they managed to draw up an action plan where they would have more empowerment, not only in their local unions, but also at national level.

### STRATEGIES OF STRUGGLE

The results of these programs were clearly visible. One of the first results that was noticed was unity. The women reflected, they had this unity of thought, these shared problems that also made them unite around an action plan. All of this makes them feel closer and much stronger. Another point was that of common strategies. They understood that there are some points that must be worked on, that must be especially made visible for improvement.

Another point was women's role in the political space of unions. They understood that this space exists and it needs to be occupied, and their role has to be made visible. This was important for them to understand about the role of women rural workers in unions' political space. Another strong point was the creation of the National Commission of Women Rural Wage Workers. The Commission will allow us to reflect on these meetings, on women's advancement within unions, as well as their future achievements.

### FOCUSED AND STRONG

Women workers can't just relax thinking that their rights are already established. That is a permanent struggle. We can't stop it because our rights are always about to be removed, reduced, taken away. Therefore, we women workers have to insist to maintain our demands, rights and achievements. What we really want is to achieve gender equality within

unions, first of all. Secondly, to give visibility to women workers. Their work is important, it's crucial and it has to be appreciated. Our message is that we have to be vigilant in our journey so that all these achievements are not forgotten or cancelled, that our victories are permanent. Daily and permanent. This is our result and our proposal for continuity. We will always remain vigilant.



Point your camera at the QR Code and watch the interview on CONTAR's Youtube channel



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# WOMEN WAGE WORKERS IN RURAL BRAZIL - A DIALOGUE 2022 EDITION

