

**Who are we ?**

● The International Workers Committee Against War, Exploitation, for a Workers' International (IWC) was set up at the World Conference held in Mumbai ( India ) on November 19, 20, 21, 2016 gathering delegates from 28 countries.

● The IWC was set up on the basis of the Mumbai Manifesto against war, exploitation and precarious labour which was endorsed by labour activist and trade union and political organisations officers from 46 countries (\*)

● Its continuations committee is composed of labour activists from all political/ trade union backgrounds:  
**Innocent Assogba** (Benin),  
**Alan Benjamin** (USA),  
**Colia Clark** (USA),  
**Constantin Cretan** (Romania),  
**Berthony Dupont** (Haiti),  
**Ney Ferreira** (Brazil),  
**Daniel Gluckstein** (France),  
**Rubina Jamil** (Pakistan),  
**Apo Leung** (China),  
**M.A. Patil** (India),  
**Mandlenkosi Phangwa** (Azania),  
**Sergio Pineda** (Mexico),  
**Klaus Schüller** (Germany),  
**Jung Sikhwa** (Korea),  
**John Sweeney** (Great Britain),  
**Mark Vassilev** (Russia),  
**Nambiath Vasudevan** (India).

(\*) Afghanistan, Argentina, Austria, Azania, Belarus, Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Brazil, Burundi, Canada, Chile, China, Czech Republic, Ecuador, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, India, Ireland, Italy, Ivory Coast, Korea, Mali, Mexico, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Rwanda, Senegal, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, USA, Venezuela, Zimbabwe.

**For a workers' survey**

Throughout the world – although in different forms – workers and their organizations are facing problems relative to the pandemic, its consequences, government policies and the positions taken by the labour movement.

We do not hide the fact that, on the basis of facts, we wish to illustrate what we have repeatedly said in all the IWC documents: the capitalist system - based on private ownership of the means of production - is driving the whole society to the brink. The positive solution to the unprecedented crisis facing mankind is in the hands of the working class.

This highlights the question of the independence of the labour movement from the capitalist class and the governments that serve it.

The results of this survey will provide the material for the preparation of the second international conference against war and exploitation, for a workers' international (which will be held, in application of our commitments, when conditions for traveling and meeting have returned to normal).

In order to facilitate the circulation of documents (in English, French and Spanish) among organizations, groups and activists of all tendencies from the 53 countries that have called for the conference, we kindly ask you to limit your contributions to 10,000 or 20,000 characters (2,000 to 4,000 words).

The 8 questions that make up this survey were published in newsletter n° 164 and are available upon request.

Already published:

- 1- Pakistan. Author: All-Pakistan Trade Union Federation (APTUF) - Date: October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020
- 2- Canada. Author: Activists involved in IWC campaigns - Date: October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020
- 3- Australia. Author : Australia Asia Worker Links – Date: November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020
- 4- Indonesia. Author : Dian Trisnanti, Chair Person F-SBPI - Date : November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020
- 5- Benin. Author: Innocent Assogba – Date: November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020
- 6 - Germany. Authors: Klaus Schüller, member of the IWC Follow-up Committee and H.-W. Schuster, co-editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Freie Plattform für Arbeiterpolitik* – December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020

**Report n° 7**

**MEXICO**

**Authors: Liliana Plumeda and Juan Carlos Vargas, Members of the Political Organization of the People and Workers- Date: December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

**1/ What have the consequences of the health crisis for the population been - especially for the working class? What has the covid impact been on employment, how many jobs have been lost?**

According to data from the Mexican Social Security Institute, the cumulative loss of formal jobs from March to the end of November was 1,113,677 – but this number is lower than reality, because it only records formal jobs in the private sector. It does not take into account workers who work illegally and are not registered for social security, nor does it include workers in the so-called informal sector, which accounts for 60 % of the labour force according to INEGI (National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Information).

The informal sector, i.e., precarious workers without rights or organization, has suf-

fered most from covid, particularly due to social distancing measures and the cessation of economic activity.

In the public sector, there have been no layoffs in the unionized sectors, but there has been a reduction in temporary contracts, task work or subcontracting, which is a form of contract that is widespread in the administration, especially in areas such as cleaning and security.

As for GDP, a contraction of about 12 per cent per year is expected, and inflation has remained stable at 4 per cent, largely due to the reduction in fuel prices encouraged by the federal government.

**2/ Are there any figures available concerning the lives lost of workers in general and particularly front-line workers, including doctors and other hospital staff?**

According to the Johns Hopkins University, Mexico is the fourth country in the world in terms of deaths due to the pandemic, and the thirteenth in terms of the number of people affected by the Sars-CoV-2 virus.

As of December 31, the cumulative number of infected people was 1,426,094, official figures presented by the Ministry of Health, but these data, depending on the methodology used, are only an approximation; they only count those people who use the health system for testing (most of the time with severe or moderate symptoms). Thousands of workers go undetected because of the lack of widespread testing; thousands more refuse to be tested because of lack of resources; thousands more refuse to be tested because of fear of knowing they are infected (there are many rumours circulating in social networks encouraging people not to go to health services, feeding on distrust of health systems), or because of a lack of knowledge of the procedure.

The official national death toll is 125,807, which has accelerated in recent weeks due to winter and to the increase in the rate of contagion in the second wave.

Health authorities also reported that as of December 21, there were 1,884 deaths among healthcare personnel. To date, 140,196 cases of infection have been confirmed among healthcare workers, mainly in the country's capital and in the state of Mexico. An estimated 3,362 (about 2 %) are active cases. Nurses are the most affected sector, with 41 % of cases, followed by other healthcare workers with 29 %, doctors with 26 %, laboratory technicians with 2 %, and dentists with 1 %.

One sector that has been hard hit is that of maquila workers, especially on the northern border, where the number of deaths in these factories is in the hundreds. In Tijuana alone, in the first few months (May), it was reported that more than 500 maquila workers died from complications of covid; the same happened in Ciudad Juárez and Matamoros. In the case of the automobile industry, independent trade unionists complained that conditions for returning to work were not adequate, resulting in dozens of deaths, especially in factories in the centre of the country.

### **3/ What measures were taken or not taken by the government to cope with the pandemic? Were any wage deductions imposed by the bosses and governments?**

The government of Andrés Manuel López Obrador declared a state of health emergency and issued two presidential decrees ordering the closure of non-essential activities, the protection of the most vulnerable population (over 60 years old, chronically ill) and the guarantee of full salary for one month for all workers in non-essential companies.

At the State level, government activities were reduced to a minimum and the majority of office workers were locked down. Educational activities were suspended face-to-face and were conducted remotely, via television channels.

However, companies systematically violated these decrees, accompanied by international pressure from the United States. The parent companies organized to force local and federal governments to consider the maquiladoras as essential businesses, arguing that they are part of the supply chains in the United States, according to the new legal figures of the T-MEC (Mexico-US-Canada Free Trade Agreement).

In many companies, there has been a reduction in wages, sometimes with the complicity of the leadership of the "charras" (1) trade unions, which are passing temporary wage reduction agreements ranging from 25 to 45 %; in other cases workers are being asked to count their days off or holiday time as part of their home leave, or they are being asked to resign voluntarily with the promise of re-employment after the pandemic.

The reopening of the economy has also favoured layoffs, for example in the "orange" zones, only 30-50 % of company activity is allowed, which legitimizes the dismissal of "surplus" workers.

### **4/ What new attacks against workers' rights and democracy were launched by the bosses and governments during this year, as they took advantage of the pandemic?**

Many large companies have infringed the call for social distancing or closure of non-core activities, expo-

sing their workers to contagion, illness and death. In recent weeks, it has been reported that some companies do not recognize covid-SARS-2 as an "occupational disease" that involves full payment of wages during vacations, classifying these cases as general illnesses. (2)

The bosses' unions have always demanded a financial rescue plan, but the government has not agreed to implement it as in other countries. Andrés Manuel López Obrador did not approve a package of direct support to large firms, but instead provided non-repayable credits to small businesses and continued to distribute funds from social programs. But it has supported some sectors of the bourgeoisie through other means, such as giving 500 million pesos to private television channels to set up distance learning, which is produced and carried out by the public sector, which absorbs the costs, but is transmitted by private channels that set up additional channels, despite the fact that the State has its own channels and the power to open more channels.

The government of Andrés Manuel López Obrador, largely under the pressure of the signing of the T-MEC, has promoted a series of legal reforms in the labour legislation, which allow for the free unionization and the transformation of labour justice. The pandemic has been the perfect pretext for not implementing them. In recent months, the government has renewed legal recognition for corporate union leaderships, while independent and democratic unions have been denied this recognition or have been subjected to additional requirements, as was the case of the Mexican Union of Electricians. Various labour conflicts were triggered during the pandemic and the government's response in favour of workers was null and void, as was the case of the university strikes or the strike by workers of the Mexican State news agency NOTIMEX, which lasted more than 315 days.

A particular case that shows the acuteness of the class struggle in these moments of pandemic is the increased repression against workers who demonstrate against the conditions generated by covid.

The first months of the pandemic were used by the governments of the

border states of Chihuahua and Tamaulipas to imprison lawyer Susana Prieto, legal advisor to the 20/32 movement (strikes by 70,000 maquila workers in 2019), accusing her of damage and threats against public officials. Using fear of illness in order to avoid a reaction from workers in favour of Susana and in order to strike a blow against SNITIS (a union created as a result of the strikes), members of the union's leadership were also kidnapped and threatened, weeks later.

Fortunately, the mobilization and solidarity action in many parts of the country, in the United States and around the world (of which the IWC was a part), succeeded in pressing for Susana Prieto's release, although her legal proceedings are still ongoing.

In the automobile industry, dozens of workers were fired when they protested against working conditions. Currently, a day of action is being prepared for January 21 to demand the reinstatement of four independent union leaders.

**5/ For years, the number of workers in the informal sector has continued to increase. The fight against precarious labour must lead the labour movement to think about organizing these workers. The workers in the informal sector have paid a very heavy price in the health crisis. What has their situation been since March 2020? What reactions has this triggered?**

As a result of free trade and deregulation policies, the precarious have become the majority of the working class in Mexico. Without the right to union organization, hired through "subcontracting," for a limited period of time, or working as "independent professionals," workers in all sectors face the violation of their most basic rights.

It is not only in the private sector that this reality is observed; the Mexican State itself, as a result of privatization policies, is the largest subcontractor in the country, from specialized workers in the energy, oil and electricity sectors, to cleaning workers in public offices who work without the right to a definitive contract or to unionization. Most of the public sector union leaderships, being complicit in

the precarious situation, have given up recruiting these workers into their organizations.

Young people are the sector most affected by precariousness. In most collective bargaining, they are the bargaining chip between employers and union leaderships, who have agreed that corporate restructuring will only affect new employees, jeopardizing the future of young people and destroying collective contracts.

The President, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, launched a legislative initiative to prohibit outsourcing, which – although very limited (it would only affect companies dedicated to this work, and it was interpreted as a reform aimed at perfecting its action within a legal framework) – has provoked a very harsh reaction from companies, which completely disqualified it, threatening the loss of 200,000 jobs after its approval. He has faced opposition within the ranks of his own party from several deputies who, together with the bosses' unions, the main trade unions and the secretaries of State, have agreed to freeze the project and keep it under discussion until 2021.

The pandemic has also highlighted the exploitation faced by electronics workers, mainly young people, who have been sold the idea of "self-employment", "being your own boss" or "an entrepreneur". Without social security, without a base pay, thousands of young people risk their lives in the delivery sector, without any responsibility for the employer. It is in this sector that resistance began, and there have been some demonstrations of discontent and attempts to organize so that the character of employed work is recognized. Another sector where organizing began was that of private teachers, who have begun to build a union.

**6/ Women workers have also been particularly hit. They are the first to lose their jobs, the last to be taken back at their work places when they reopen. They have to take in charge their children deprived of schooling. Domestic violence has increased with the lockdown. What form has it taken? What mobilisations have taken place to defend the**

**rights of working women?**

**Young female students:** until before the pandemic, 6 out of 10 uneducated people were women in the population aged 15 and over. Today, after the lockdown and elimination of face-to-face teaching hours, the educational future of many adolescent girls and young women attending high school and university is threatened, due to the burden of household chores and caring for young children, and the role of tutoring for children's distance learning courses at home, a role that is imposed on young sisters or aunts, to the detriment of their academic progress. In addition, access to technology or the Internet is precarious in the country (which affects both working class men and women). In some cases, there is only one computer for everyone at home. Generally, young women are culturally forced to give up their time to their families, which reduces the amount of time they can devote to school activities.

The lockdown has meant a greater workload for all women, regardless of age (statistics indicate that girls aged 5-6 years are included in the obligation to contribute to domestic chores, as well as to the care and education of younger children). For it is women who are in charge of housework, child and elder care; all these tasks that are not recognized as work. This is not insignificant, since the economic value of unpaid work in the domestic and care environment represents a little less than 24 % of Mexico's GDP, which implies a huge saving for the capitalist system.

Another area that weighs on the shoulders of working class women and girls is healthcare for the family and the sick, mainly those who are sick from covid. According to figures from the healthcare sector in Mexico, women contribute 70.3 % of the equivalent economic value of unpaid work in healthcare.

**Employment:** The covid-19 pandemic in the Mexican labour market has increased inequalities for women, according to the socio-demographic statistics of the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI). In July 2020, there were 3 million fewer women employed than in the same month in 2019. During the same period,

the number of unemployed women increased from 800,000 to 1.2 million and the number of unemployed women from 27.3 million to 30.5 million.

In other words, an inequality that already existed was followed by the covid-19 pandemic, which further limited the return of women to the Mexican labour market, because they were employed mainly in activities that were not considered essential. In addition to the fact that precarious jobs and telework have a higher rate of feminization than formal jobs, official figures estimate that recovery will be slower in sectors where women have obtained more work.

As labour income declines, there is an increase in domestic work and unpaid care work. In the second quarter of 2019, women spent an average of 19.4 hours and men 9.7 hours. In April 2020, women reported 25.7 hours of unpaid care work.

**Violence:** While the majority of victims of violent deaths in the streets are men, women are killed in their homes, according to official statistics, even before covid. The only thing that has happened during the lockdown is that the number of reports of violence has skyrocketed, as well as the demands for entry into shelters, which are insufficient. Instead of increasing the money allocated to them by the State, the State has decreased it.

**Maternity:** Children are confined to their homes due to the closure of day care centres and schools. Working mothers are faced with the choice of stopping working, leaving them in the care of older daughters in the family, or paying for private childcare. Whereas they should be allowed to receive full pay and stay home until conditions permit.

**Mobilizations:** After the beginning of the pandemic, feminicides and domestic violence became more visible, and as a result, sectors of women began to mobilize in several cities of the country while even the trade unions were immobilized with the argument of lockdown. These small, disorganized mobilizations were subjected to brutal and disproportionate repression, one of the most extreme of which took place on November 9 in the city of Cancun, where fire was opened on a peaceful demonstration

that was mobilizing to shed light on the latest feminicide in the city. The federal, state and municipal governments, although showing a "feminine face," denied or minimized the problem, taking advantage of the demobilization provoked by the covid. Before the lockdown, women were mobilized for only one case of feminicide reported in the local news, but we raise our voices from a class perspective, because bourgeois feminism has monopolized the media with its position on these facts and its radical/separatist positions; the informal media or social networks attracted young working class women at first, but later they distanced themselves from the movement feeling unrepresented by their slogans; for this reason we participate and claim the right to assert our position, with the LCI, in the face of what is happening in Mexico.

**7/ With the new technologies, the capitalists dismantle labour relations, restructure companies and destroy jobs. What are the consequences and what are the threats to labour relations in the coming period?**

In addition to layoffs and wage cuts, telecommuting has been one of the new means used by the capitalist system to take advantage of the pandemic and increase exploitation.

Telework has resulted in the double exploitation of workers, with the cost of technological tools falling on the workers, the purchase of stationery, supplies, mid- and high-end computers or cell phones, and the payment of higher electricity, water and Internet bills.

These ways and means of working facilitate the increase in the extraction of absolute added value by largely eliminating working hours and replacing them with production targets or the completion of projects in limited terms outside agreed working hours.

On the other hand, in the sphere of private enterprises, it has facilitated layoffs and the concentration of work on only a few isolated workers. The dispersion of the working class and its transformation into isolated individuals makes union organization and communication among workers difficult, facilitating this unfair distribution of the workload.

In addition, working conditions at home are poor; most workers live in social housing that does not exceed 60 m<sup>2</sup>, overcrowding is a constant in the homes and has increased stress and domestic violence.

**8/ What were the positions of workers' organisations and their leaderships during that period? What were the demands? What was their attitude towards the plans designed by the bosses and governments?**

The majority of the unions are corporatist, the large trade unions have supported the actions of the bosses' unions, approved unemployment, partial unemployment and wage cuts, without consulting the rank and file.

However, there has been resistance, such as the hundreds of health care workers who have expressed themselves through small street demonstrations or demonstrations of discontent over working conditions in hospitals by means of banners, in hospitals or on social networks. They demonstrate in particular against the lack of equipment for the care of the sick, against late payment of wages and against corruption in the health care system.

Members of the National Independent Maquila Union SNITIS MOM 20/32 has maintained a constant mobilization and denounced the violation of health and safety conditions in the maquila companies in the northeast of the country. As described above, the mobilization for the release of their councillor Susana Prieto was an example that it is possible to act in solidarity, despite the conditions of the pandemic.

Another sector that has taken to the streets, albeit in a limited way, has been that of teachers who reject the distance education plans and have renewed the mobilization for the total repeal of the education privatization reform, which has only been partially cancelled by the current government. Several sectors of school teachers are mobilizing for concrete demands such as the creation of tenured positions, the payment of salaries for temporary teachers, the hiring of graduates from teacher training colleges, against the closures of schools.

The workers of the Mexican Electrical Workers' Union also mobilized for the recognition of their union

leadership, against the repression and imprisonment they have suffered in recent months, and are once again advancing the demand for the renationalization of the electrical industry, which puts at the center the repeal of the energy reform approved under the government of Peña Nieto.

For its part, the Nueva Central de los Trabajadores (which, although a minority, includes various unions and cooperatives) has made several calls for mobilization and positioning in

relation to the presidential initiatives. In particular, its National Political Council has just approved the promotion of a national popular consultation to prohibit outsourcing, a consultation through which millions of workers are seeking a vote to demand that the President and Congress go to the root of eliminating this form of exploitation.

It is difficult to focus the different elements of the pandemic on the working class, and this report is only a

snapshot of the most relevant ones. We hope that it will contribute to the international discussion and the preparation of the World Conference against War and Exploitation, for the Workers' International. ■

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(1) Who collaborate or are created by companies from straw men to appear legal and independent.

(2) For workers who benefit from social security in Mexico, when sick leave is granted, only 60 % of the salary is paid from the 4<sup>th</sup> day of leave.