



Building Our Future

Initiatives in Organizing Building and Wood Workers





Contents

- 05** FOREWORD
- 06** INTRODUCTION
- 12** PARTICIPATING
TRADE UNIONS AND
SOLIDARITY SUPPORT
ORGANIZATIONS
- CASE STUDIES
- 15** **Ghana, Burkina Faso,
Kenya**
Sustainable
Forestry
- 47** **Zimbabwe:**
Organizing and
Consolidating the
Union Through
the Occupational
Safety and Health
Study Circle
Approach
- 61** **Latin America and the
Caribbean:**
Defense and
Promotion of
Workers' Rights
- 87** **Russia:**
Transforming
Unions in a Post-
Soviet Conjuncture
- 113** **India:**
Eliminating Child
Labour While
Organizing Brick
Kiln Workers
- 149** **Women-Asia:**
Mainstreaming
Gender Sensitivity
and Equality in
the Construction,
Wood and Forestry
Industry
- 175** **Cambodia:**
Restoring
Angkor's Grandeur
and Respecting
Workers' Rights
- 199** **Philippines:**
Uniting to
Form the First
Construction
Industry Union
in the Philippines
- 223** **Trade Unions:**
Development
Framework
Strategy
- APPENDIX
- 241** About BWI
- 244** BWI Strategic Plan



Editors

Anita Normark
Ambet Yuson

Trade Union Development Project Team

Ambet Yuson, Education Secretary
Carlos Anonuevo, Asst. Education Secretary
Inviolata Chingayanrara, Africa
Apolinar Tolentino, Asia-Pacific
Mikhael Kartashov, Central & Eastern Europe
Carlos Salguero, Latin America & Caribbean
Patrick Fonjallaz, Finance
Christian Hilfiker, Finance

Project Coordinators / Contributors

Inviolata Chingayanrara
Paul Opanga
Abdou Ouedraogo
Apolinar Tolentino
Harcharan Kaur
Rajeev Sharma
Bill Street
Mikhael Kartashov
Marcelina Samaniego

Case Writer

Ana Teresa de Leon

Technical Support

Carmel Abao

Design and Layout

Miguel Mari
Martin Mari

Prepress and Print Production

Art Angel Printshop

Overall Production Coordination

Alan G. Alegre
Foundation for Media Alternatives

Acknowledgement

This publication was made possible with the support of LOTCO Council (Sweden) and the Swedish Affiliates:
Swedish Building Union (BYGGNADS)
Swedish Forest and Wood Trade Union (SKOGS)
Swedish Union of Clerical and Technical Employees in Industry (SIF)
Swedish Electricians' Trade Union (SEF)
Swedish Painters' Trade Union

Foreword



TRADE UNION DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS are used as tools to implement the strategic goals of Building and Wood workers International (BWI). It is a tool that has facilitated membership of thousands of workers into trade unions,

enhanced their capacity to represent their interests and protect their rights, and integrated them to the global labor movement. The case studies in this publication shows the myriad ways on how trade unions around the world are organising, transforming, and adapting in these challenging world of globalisation. They are snapshots of a participatory and clearly result-oriented project implementation.

Such projects are also reflective of the multi-faceted global trade union solidarity. It is a chain of partnership between BWI structures and affiliates. The affiliates that support these projects are involved in the different steps - from conceptualisation to implementation to evaluation. Their members act as trainers, strategy advisers, campaigners, and bearers of information. The BWI staff in the regions, on the other hand, has brought professionalism in project management while at the same time maintained the needed militancy and tenacity of trade union work.

The Solidarity Support Organisations (SSOs) are also instrumental for the gains and successes of these initiatives. We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to them in facilitating greater solidarity and at the same time creating stronger unions in many parts of the world – LOTCO Sweden, FNV-Netherlands, FES-Germany, SASK-Finland, LOFTF-Denmark, CLC-Canada, LO-Norway, 3F-Denmark, ISCOD-Spain and CLSC/CFMEU–Australia and our affiliates (from Sweden, Netherlands, Denmark, Belgium, Finland, Germany, Norway, Singapore and Taiwan).

In particular, we also thank the BWI Swedish affiliates and the LOTCO Secretariat for International Trade Union Development Cooperation whose support made the publication of these stories possible.

Anita Normark
General Secretary

Introduction

AS THE LEADING GLOBAL UNION federation protecting workers in the building, wood, forestry and allied sectors, the BWI – with its affiliates -- has been implementing and supporting projects that promote and enforce workers' rights within the context of sustainable development. This book is an attempt to document “success cases” or “best practices” from among these projects.

BWI aims to use this book as a learning tool for its affiliates so that more and more unions are equipped with ideas on how an industry union can be organized, how unions can be transformed and consolidated, how the women's agenda can be mainstreamed within unions and how working conditions can be improved through unionism. Through these case studies, BWI affiliates may then learn from each other and replicate strategies whenever and wherever possible.

The cases presented herein were selected based on the following criteria:

- **Success Factor:** Has the project generated commendable results, impact and gains in relation to intended project objectives and BWI's strategic priorities especially the strengthening of unions?
- **Level of Participation:** Did the project allow for the broadest possible participation of workers and unions? Do project participants feel ownership of the project?
- **Innovation:** Is the project interesting? Does it provide a new or unique way of doing things?
- **Relevance and Responsiveness:** Does the project address common needs, issues and concerns of affiliates?
- **Project Duration.** Has the project passed the test of time (i.e. at least three years) and rigor?
- **External Evaluation.** Has the project been subjected to external/mission evaluation? Does it have the advantage of prior in-depth project assessment?

- Sustainability. Can the project be implemented and supported by concerned unions even after external funding from donors has ended?
- Level of Documentation. Is sufficient information and data on the project readily available?
- Balance of geographic, donor, sector and thematic agenda of BWI: Does the project reflect BWI's aims and agenda?
- Level of demonstration of BWI project development processes: Does the project show BWI project development processes and procedures?

From among the range of needs-based and/or thematic projects of BWI and using abovementioned selection criteria, eight (8) case studies are presented in this book:



Sustainable Forestry in Ghana, Burkina Faso and Kenya (1998 – 2004)

This case study shows sustainable forestry projects in three African countries: (i) the Timber and Wood Workers Union (TWU) in Ghana, (ii) the Federation of Building and Wood

Workers (FTBBF) in Burkina Faso and (iii) the three-union project in Kenya, namely: Kenya Union of Printing, Publishing, and Paper Manufacturing Union (KUPRIPUPA), Kenya Quarry and Mines Worker Union (KQMWU) and the Kenya Building, Construction, Timber, Furniture and Allied Employees Union (KBCTF & AIEU). These projects have been funded by the FNV Bouw, LOTCO Council and the SKOGS. Under the guidance and support of the Global Sustainable Forestry Desk of the BWI, the unions in these three countries learn how to improve and expand sustainable forestry projects from each other. Through these projects, trade unions get to play a bigger role as relevant social actors, i.e they are able to go beyond the confines of the workplace and reach out to larger social issues of the environment.

Promoting Occupational Health and Safety in Zimbabwe (2000-2003)

For almost five years now, the Zimbabwe Furniture, Timber and Allied Trade Union (ZFTATU) has been supported by the LO/TCO Council and the Swedish Forest and Wood Trade Union (SKOGS) in promoting and implementing the Occupational Safety and Health and education project



primarily through the use of the study circle strategy. Through this project, the ZFTATU has not only improved the OSH situation in the furniture, timber and allied industries; it has also managed to influence OSH policies by getting representation in national tripartite body. The ZFTATU is now replicating its OSH strategy in other regions and sectors and is using the study circle strategy to promote HIV/AIDS awareness.



Defending and Promoting Human Rights as Trade Union Rights in Latin America - Peru, Paraguay, Honduras and Guatemala (1995-2003)

When human rights are violated, trade union rights are violated. This has been the case in Paraguay, Peru, Honduras and Guatemala where repression has resulted

in rampant violations of basic human and trade unions rights. To enable the trade unions to defend and promote trade union rights, the FNV Mondiaal supported projects in these countries to catalyse,

organize and empower trade unions. Implementing partners who participated in the training came from four (4) countries: for Honduras: STINCAH or Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Industria de la Construccion de Honduras, for Peru: FENATIMAP – Federacion Nacional de Trabajadores de la Industria de la Madera del Peru, for Paraguay, FETIMCOMAP or Federacion de Trabajadores de la Construccion y la Madera and STICCAP or Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Construccion Civil del Alto Parana, and for Guatemala, FESITRASMMAR – Federacion Sindical de Trabajadores de la Silvicultura, Madera, Medioambiente y Recursos Naturales de Guatemala which includes SINCCS-G - Sindicato Nacional de la Construccion y Servicios.



Transforming Trade Unions in Post-Soviet Russia (2000-2004)

Having inherited the soviet tradition of centralised and top-down trade unionism, the Russian Building Workers' Union faces the challenge of transforming itself and improving its image to effectively

respond to post-soviet economic and political changes. With the support of the LOTCO Council and BYGGNADS, the Russian Building Workers Union is using the study circle strategy to bring about internal reform to reverse the trend of decreasing membership and to collectively find solutions to old problems. Through the Project, the Russian Building Workers' Union hopes to gain the momentum for reform and become a relevant player in post-soviet Russia by energizing and transforming its membership base of close to a million, providing democratic leadership, recruiting young leaders and inculcating a participatory culture for collectively improving the conditions of workers.



its poor working conditions and employment of thousands of child labourers. To achieve the twin

Eliminating Child Labour while Organizing Brick Kiln Workers in India (1998-2004)

The Brick Kiln, one of the most important building materials companies in India, is mostly unorganised and notorious for

goals of improving the working conditions of the Brick Kiln / Construction workers and pulling out children from child labour, organizing projects have been implemented by the HKMP union in the state of Bihar, BMS in Punjab and UPGMS in Uttar Pradesh. With the project support of FNV Bouw, FNV Mondiaal, BAT Kartellette, CLC, CFMEU and CLSC, the three unions have addressed the worker and child labour situation using the three-pronged strategy of Schooling the Child labourers, Advocacy and Organizing.



Mainstreaming Gender Sensitivity and Equality in the Construction, Wood and Forestry Industry in the Philippines, India, Indonesia (1998 - 2003)

With the support of FNV Mondiaal and FNV Bouw, BWI through its Asia Women Committee, piloted a women's global project in Asia entitled: Promotion of the Rights of Women in Construction, Wood and Forestry Trade Unions. The project, implemented in India, Indonesia, and Philippines from 1998 to 2003, successfully bannered the women's agenda particularly the promotion of gender fair unions at the BWI policy

level. This involved training women leader-cadres of affiliates and developing gender sensitive policies and projects that promote the representation and benefit of the disadvantaged women workers in the construction industry.



Restoring Angkor Grandeur and Respecting Workers' Rights, Cambodia (2002 – 2005)

Organizing construction workers in the Angkor Temples, an Internationally Acclaimed

World Heritage Site challenged the Cambodian Construction Workers Trade Union Federation (CCUTF) to make use of the sandwich approach of : basic trade union organizing working together with international solidarity campaigning to capture the gains for CCUTF's labour union's agenda. Supported by SASK (Finland) and being member of a BWI global union has worked in providing the CCUTF with the international pressure and leverage on making itself a force to contend with as it has to deal with the UNESCO, the secretariat of the international restoration of Angkor, the international employers cum benefactors of the restoration projects and the


indebted Cambodian agencies at Angkor as they are the beneficiaries of international financial and technical assistance.

Uniting to Form the First Construction Industry Union in the Philippines (1999-2004)

With the support of the BAT-Kartellete and LOFTF Council (Denmark), the National Union of Building and Construction Workers (NUBCW) is now in its 3rd year of implementing the "Organizing and Education Project" aimed at consolidating the first ever construction industry union in the Philippines.

Through this BWI trade union development capacity building project, the five BWI affiliates made a historical breakthrough in Philippine trade union history when it succeeded in uniting rival major trade unions into a single construction industry union - the NUBCW. The case study presents the process and strategy that the trade unions employed to foster





trade union unity and consolidate the mostly informal construction workers as a significant player in the construction industry in the Philippines.

After presenting the eight (8) case studies, this book ends with a chapter on the BWI Trade Union Development Framework Strategy. This chapter attempts to systematically present how BWI assists its trade union partners in developing projects that would bring them to the goals of: (i) increased trade union strength, (ii) adherence to human and trade union rights, (iii) improvement of living and working conditions of the building, wood, forestry sectors and (iv) the promotion of a stable and high level of employment in these sectors. It reveals how BWI designs its project strategy for trade union development based on five (5) key result areas of organization, administration and finance, education, advocacy, and, impact to workers. It also discusses the four (4) project phases of a trade union development project, namely: (i) formation & capacity building, (ii) membership expansion & organizational development, (iii) institutional building & sustainability and the (iv) regional & global Network Building. Through this trade union development framework strategy, BWI is able to guide its affiliates design project strategies, decide whether to approve or disapprove a project, evaluate trade union projects and provide the

necessary support and interventions to ensure project success.

With this book, BWI seeks to share the nuances of its affiliates' actual implementation of projects: the best practices, valuable insights, and learning from previous mistakes. For BWI, what is most important is not so much that a practice can be considered "best", rather, that it be shared with others for the worthy purpose of promoting the strength, unity and dignity of all workers. ■

Participating Trade Unions & Solidarity Support Organisations

Australia

- CFMEU – Forestry Division
- CLSC – Child Labour School Company

Burkina Faso

- FTBBF- Federation of Building and Wood Workers

Cambodia

- CCTUF - Cambodia Construction Trade Union Federation

Canada

- CLC- Canadian Labour Center

Denmark

- BAT Kartelette
- LOFTF Council

Finland

- SASK – Trade Union Solidarity Center of Finland
- Rakennusliitto r.y. (Construction Trade Union)

Ghana

- TWU - Timber and Wood Workers Union in Ghana

Guatemala

- FESITRASMAR – Federacion Sindical de Trabajadores de la Silvicultura, Madera, Medioambiente y Recursos Naturales de Guatemala
- SINCCS-G - Sindicato Nacional de la Construccion y Servicios.

Honduras

- STINCAH - Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Industria de la Construccion de Honduras

India

- HKMP – Hind Khet Majdoor Panchayat / (Indian Farm Labourers Union (Bihar)
- BMS- Bhatha Mazdoor Sabha / Construction Workers' Union (Punjab)
- UPGMS – Uttar Pradesh Gramin Mazdoor Sangthan (Uttar Pradesh)
- OKKS – Orissa Kendupatra Karamchari Sangh (Kendu Leaf Workers Union)
- INBCWF – Indian Nat. Blding, Construction Forest & Wood Workers Federation
- MBLKS – Maharastra Bandhkam Va Lakud Kamngar Sangathan (Maharastra Construction and Wood Workers Union)
- ACMS – Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha (Bldg Wood & Forestry Workers Union)
- BMS Gujarat - Bandkham Mazdoor Sanghan (Construction Labour Union)
- GFPGFUW – Gujarat Forest Produces Gatherers and Forest Workers' Union
- KKNCTC – Kerala Building Construction Workers Congress)
- INRLF – Indian National Rural labour Federation, Tamil Nadu
- UNIFRONT – United Front for Rural Plantation and Construction Workers
- SGEU – Shevaroy's General Employees Union

- RWO – Rural Workers' Organisation
- TMKTS- Tamil Nadu State Construction Workers' Union
- AIKTMS – All Indian Building and Construction Workers's Union Indonesia
- DPP FSP Kahutindo – All Indonesian Federation of Wood, Forestry and General Workers' Union Kenya
- KUPRIPUPA- Kenya Union of Printing, Publishing, and Paper Manufacturing Union
- KQMWU - Kenya Quarry and Mines Worker Union
- KBCTF & AIEU- Kenya Building, Construction, Timber, Furniture and Allied Employees Union

Netherlands

- FNV Mondiaal – Trade Union Confederation
- FNV Bouw – Building Union

Paraguay

- FETIMCOMAP - Federacion de Trabajadores de la Construccion y la Madera
- STICCAP - Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Construccion Civil del Alto Parana Peru
- FENATIMAP – Federacion Nacional de Trabajadores de la Industria de la Madera del Peru

Philippines

- ALU – Associated Labour Union

- ATU – Association of Trade Unions
- KAMAO – Kapatiran ng Makabayang Obrero/Brotherhood of Nationalist Workers
- NFL – National Federation of Labour
- NUBCW – National Union of Building and Construction Workers
- SPFL – Southern Philippines Federation of Labour

Russia

- Construction and Building Materials Industry Workers' Union of the Russian Federation

Sweden

- LOTCO Council
- Swedish Building Union (BYGGNADS) Union (SKOGS)
- Swedish Union of Clerical and Technical Employees in Industry (SIF)
- Swedish Electricians' Trade Union (SEF)
- Swedish Painters' Trade Union Zimbabwe
- ZFTATU-Zimbabwe Furniture, Timber and Allied Trade Union



Ghana, Burkina Faso and Kenya

Sustainable Forestry in Africa





“ Most of us know that people need healthy and thriving forests to survive but do we not understand that forests need healthy and thriving people to survive. The well being of forest-dependent people is the criteria that matters most ”

William Street, Key Note Presentation in the World Forestry Congress, Quebec, Canada, September 2003

“ There is a need to enhance awareness on Social Forestry Management and partnership because traditional unionists need to be convinced of the need to participate in environmental protection as a way of projecting the profile of the trade union and striking agreements of tripartite partners ”

Paul Opanga, BWI-Kenya forester





Ghana, Burkina Faso and Kenya: Sustainable Forestry in Africa

I. Situation in the African Region: Ghana, Burkina Faso, Kenya

THE INCREASING GLOBAL DEMAND FOR WOOD products has brought tremendous pressure on forest resources, depleting forest cover, threatening the environment, and, water and food security. This global demand has been accelerated by the lack of adequate mechanism to control and rehabilitate the environment. In a large number of cases, the forest's surrounding local population is likewise dependent on forest resources to acquire firewood and timber for domestic use and for commercial purposes (i.e. as a source of income). Wood has played a crucial role in the survival strategies of rural populations. Such situation can be felt and seen in Ghana, Burkina Faso and Kenya, particularly in the wood and forest sector. This is aggravated by the HIV/AIDS pandemic and at times, by government policies that are unresponsive to the needs of the industry and the workers within the industry.

Ghana

About a third of Ghana's land area is covered by forests. Since the 1980's there has been massive deforestation which has caused many environmental problems. As a result, the government has imposed restrictions on the export of various types of timber and wood





products, the third largest export of the country. With minimal recovery happening to the forest, much remains to be done. There is now an urgent need for sustainable forestry initiatives.

In the early 1990s, the Ghana government moved to curb and halt the massive deforestation that was occurring. In 1994, the government renewed its strategy for improving the sustainability of forest resources by reviewing its forest policy and becoming actively involved in national forest certification initiatives. These initiatives were prompted as well by the increasing interest of Western European markets for forest products from well-managed forests. Moreover, to reduce the rampant threat to forest

covers, government raised taxes and fees on the forest products industry. While these government measures sought to conserve forest resources, they did not fundamentally improve the lives of the Ghana population. Measures to control the use of forests through an increase in taxes resulted in the closure of hundreds of sawmills and the contracting out (informalization) of thousands of jobs in the forestry and wood sector. Directly affected was the Ghana BWI trade union, Timber and Woodworkers Union (TWU) which represents the workers in the furniture, saw-milling, small-scale carpenters, national sawyers association, charcoal producers, firewood cutters, wood carvers, canoe carvers and other wood manufacturing and timber processing sectors in Ghana. As a direct result of government forest policies, TWU's 15,000 members were reduced to 8,000 in January 2003.

Considering the high incidence of poverty in Ghana, any policy that promotes the contraction of formal employment in an important economic sector tends to be counterproductive. Given that the poor in Ghana are found mainly in the rural areas and

are involved primarily in agricultural and forest activities, the tax imposed makes even less sense. Although the economy recorded an average growth of 4.4% per annum over the 1990s, about 43% of the population live below the upper poverty line of \$120 per month. More alarmingly, life expectancy in Ghana today is actually lower than it was when it won its independence in the 1940s. Poverty, the depleting forest cover and its detrimental effects on the environment, aggravated by the contraction of the employed formal sector leading to the rise of the informal sector, and, the continued spread of HIV/AIDS continues to threaten the majority of people in Ghana.

Burkina Faso

In Burkina Faso, massive poverty remains to be the biggest problem. More than half of the population live in poverty. Burkina Faso, in fact, is one of the poorest countries in the world with a per capita GNP of \$300. This level of poverty has resulted in a steady increase of the informal sector with two thirds of the population now belonging to the informal sector. With the majority of the Burkinabe struggling to survive, their lives and future are made even worse by the depleting forest cover and the pandemic spread of HIV/AIDS.

Wood plays a crucial role in the survival strategies of the rural population of Burkina Faso. Without access to wood supply, millions of families currently existing at the edge of survival, would fall into the abyss of famine and death. Next to the cost of housing, the single largest monthly expenditure of poor rural Burkinabe is wood. Approximately, 15% of household costs go to the purchase of wood, sometimes exceeding even the cost of food consumption. Furthermore, the heavy use of wood contributes to the destabilizing of soils and the rural ecosystem, thereby threatening the water and food security of rural Burkinabe.

Abovementioned factors have caused serious environmental degradation and social costs now evident in Burkina Faso's rapid depletion of forest cover, acute erosion of



soil fertility, depletion of water sources, loss of livestock, rural exodus and a generalised state of hunger in rural and urban population. All of these are interconnected due to the increasing pressure of over-population and over-use of the forest for wood supply. Likewise, the depleting forest cover makes the wood industry unsustainable, endangering as well the job security of wood workers. For this reason, government embarked on a programme to conserve the environment and launched a tree planting program meant to incite the public to practice appropriate methods for the conservation of Burkina Faso's natural resources. Government's slogan was "8,000 forests for 8,000 villages", meaning one forest for each village.

Kenya

Kenya is currently struggling with the development process. In recent years, progress has been elusive and a number of advances have been overshadowed by development setbacks. Over half of the population of Kenya live in poverty and more and more people are becoming poor. Poverty is particularly concentrated in rural areas, the population of which are routinely subjected to food insufficiency. In the rural areas, over 80% of those who are poor are routinely subjected to food insecurity and drought. In fact over half of all Kenyans do not have access to safe drinking water. Moreover, the HIV/AIDS pandemic is on the rise. In the last years, life expectancy has declined by 5 years. Finally, Kenya has one of the highest concentrations of income disparity in the world.

The Kenyan government has developed a forestry emergency programme that aims to check the degradation and destruction of forests -- by planting forest backlogs, maintaining plantations and employing participatory approaches with communities and stakeholders for sustainable forest management. Currently, the forest cover falls below 1.7% as against the internationally accepted rate of 10%. Notably, the government has maintained a ban on harvesting of forest logs as a conservation measure. This has continued to constrain industrial growth in the wood and forest sectors. Pulp and sub-sectors have also recorded marginal decline in the past two years.



Ghana, Burkina Faso and Kenya are countries where forest covers have been threatened because of the demands of the wood and building industry. The forests, which serve to provide employment, fuel resources, food, and water security to the region are under siege due to lack of proper management and care. Prevailing massive poverty in the region threatens not only the survival of the people but also the sustainability of the forests. It is in this light that BWI has come forward to reconcile forest management and workers' rights and welfare.

“The increasing global demand for wood products has brought tremendous pressure on forest resources, depleting forest cover, threatening the environment, and, water and food security”

II. From the Workplace to the Forest: The Trade Union's Growing Social Role

THE DECREASING FOREST COVER, worsening desertification, threatened water and food security, HIV/AIDS pandemic, increasing poverty and informalization of work in the African region have challenged the African-BWI unions to integrate social issues into their workplace concerns. These social realities provided the impetus for expanding trade union collective bargaining struggles to lobbying on broader social issues of national and international significance. With affiliates working in sawmill, timber and wood-based industries in the African region, BWI took on deliberate measures to relate the problem of job security to environmental degradation, HIV/AIDS, productivity, and, rural poverty. Being dependent on the forest for income, work and even household needs, the workers' survival is intertwined with the survival of the forests. Yet, it is also a fact that forests need people who know forest protection and management. The symbiotic relationship of the forest and its local community, thus, was given due recognition and action as BWI and its African affiliates resolved to integrate sustainable forestry in its trade union agenda.



In integrating the agenda of sustainable forestry in trade union work, the BWI unions in Ghana, Burkina Faso and Kenya developed its strategies and continued learning and improving along the way. What started as the trade union's attempt to get involved in forestation and forest certification in Ghana eventually developed into community forestry management in Burkina Faso and sustainable forestry tripartite arrangements in Kenya. Where at first the trade union in Ghana took on a lead role in forestation with the support of community action, it eventually involved the community's women and informal workers in Burkina Faso and developed further into tripartite partnerships among local governments, communities and employers (i.e. business sector) in Kenya.

“The decreasing forest cover, worsening desertification, threatened water and food security, HIV/AIDS pandemic, increasing poverty and informalization of work in the African region have challenged the African-BWI unions to integrate social issues into their workplace concerns”

Project Objectives and Strategies Used in Ghana, Burkina Faso and Kenya

The unions in Ghana, Burkina Faso and Kenya have the following common project objectives:

- Strengthen the unions, increase membership and provide basic trade union training to ensure that workers' rights are respected;
- Promote sustainable development by spreading knowledge and technology (training) in sustainable forestry management among workers and communities.
- Increase worker awareness and involvement in forestation efforts (through hands-on training and actual management of an existing nursery and community demonstration project);
- Develop a forestation programme;



- Start the process of finding ways to address the needs of the growing informal forestry workers;
- Assist in the work of empowering local people to be actively involved in sustainable forest management;
- Combat poverty by educating workers and communities on forestation / forest management, health and safety issues, including HIV/AIDS prevention.

Common Set of Activities:

1. **Training and Capacity Building** This includes training workers and villagers who participate in the union's forest project on the following areas: environmental protection through tree planting activities, health and safety education, and, HIV/AIDS awareness. For the workers, trainings cover trade unionism, ILO conventions, industrial relations and global instruments on forest certification.
2. **Community Forestry / Sustainable Forestry Management** This set of activities includes nursery management, measures to stabilize water resources, income generating activities, developing additional sources of food and supporting reforestation activities. Demonstration projects were also implemented to enhance community awareness through the use of a small plant nursery where people can see how trees are effectively raised and how lands are afforested. It also entails providing the practical aspects of learning the whole process of taking care of the community forest. This includes learning the following processes:
 - Obtaining the land
 - Getting the seeds
 - Learning how to plant and cultivate
 - Learning how to manage the forest
 - Developing plans for resource management
3. **Reaching out to the Informal Sector** This entailed research and surveys among



informal workers as the first step to developing a strategy to organize the informal sector

4. Developing Social Partnership To enjoin the community, employers and government to support the union's sustainable forestry project, the union has been implementing activities that encourage participation with other local stakeholders.

III. Pioneering Sustainable Forestry in Ghana

THE GHANA EXPERIENCE SERVES as an eye opener to what trade union movements all over the world can do to enhance participation of workers in forest management. While forest management has always been associated with institutions dealing with natural resource management and conservation movements, the case of the Ghana Timber Workers Union (TWU) is an illustration of a unique and impressive scenario where trade unions are involved in afforestation initiatives relevant to both the wood /forest workers and the local community. Such trade union initiatives in forestry covers sustainable forestry education and advocacy, certification and afforestation activities.

The TWU is recognized as a pioneer in trade union involvement in sustainable forestry. At the time when forestry sector performance and discussion on national forestry issues involved only the government and employers of the forestry sectors, the TWU asserted that trade unions of wood and forestry workers also have a crucial role to play. TWU further claimed that forestry and wood-workers are major stakeholders in forest preservations because they depend on the forest for income. Thus, when the Ghana government's interest in national forest certification was triggered by the demand of Western European markets for wood products from well-managed forests, the unions took this as an opportunity to assert their voice in the review of Ghana's national and regional standards for forest and timber certification. This



was seen as a golden opportunity for trade unions, through the TWU, to raise the strategic concerns of the labour sector within the forestry industry. With BWI globally advocating well-managed forests that include safe and decent working conditions for forest workers, the TWU became a test case for advocating labour-sensitive forest certification on the ground. The TWU advocacy on forest certification thus became an experiment at international-local integration for sustainable forestry.

With its increased participation in policy making on forest certification standards, TWU realized that lobbying work is most effective when combined with practical action and actual demonstration projects. Subsequently, TWU, under its sustainable forestry project, hired a full time forester who, together with the union and in consultation with the community residents at the project site, developed an afforestation project. To ensure proper environmental consciousness, trainings on environmental education, forest management, and occupational health and safety were provided to both the villagers and the forestry workers. Likewise, workshops were conducted among TWU members to enhance their capacity in articulating and lobbying for forest certification standards that include workers' rights.

Practical Work on the Ground: Nursery and Plantation Management

As of this writing, the TWU manages a nursery with 60,000 species propagated to produce a variety of tree seedlings for the forests. The union has planted 142,000 seedlings and 120,195 trees in 106 out of 240 hectares of land. With the community's participation, protection measures are now being undertaken to prevent outbreak of fires, illegal tree cutting activities and entry of grazing animals. Likewise, survicultural activities such as weeding, pruning and general maintenance are regularly done with the support of local village residents.

With the Ghana sustainable forestry project as its model, setting up the project necessarily meant adopting a participatory approach that involved the community from day



The Moringa Tree

(Moringa Oleifera Lan)
Rosine, Secretary General

Rosine is very happy with the union's sustainable forestry project, citing the Moringa Tree as a simple example of the importance of learning about different types of trees and their benefits. The Moringa tree is one of the species planted in the reforestation project in Burkina Faso, planted along the hills of the river. It was chosen because it can grow easily in the type of soil and climate in Burkina Faso and can help solve problems of water security, desertification, health, food supply and income. The leaves of the Moringa provide herbal remedies for jaundice, colds and other kinds of ailment. Its fruits can be eaten while its seeds can give additional income as these produce oils that can be used in creating perfume. Moreover, one can already benefit from the tree in 3 years time, while for other trees, waiting time is 6-7 years. The Moringa is a fast growing tree – its growth becomes evident in two weeks' time. It is one of the 14 different species planted in the union's forestry project area. Rosine has planted trees like the Moringa tree and other species. She feels responsible for these trees and looks forward to the day when she, along with the community, will reap the benefits of tree planting.

one. In designing the project, a needs assessment was conducted with the intention of encouraging local village residents to participate in carrying out the project. This was deemed crucial since the identified land for the afforestation project is located far from the union site but near the residence of the villagers. Local villagers were expected to be at the forefront of the project particularly in protecting and maintaining the afforestation site. Participation instilled a sense of responsibility and ownership among villagers. The project relied on community residents to protect the forests against bush fires, grazing animals, and people cutting down the trees illegally. Through the local chieftains, the community could be mobilized for pruning, weeding and even safeguarding the forests. Moreover, the union trained the community and the workers on setting up a nursery, growing plants and carrying out a reforestation program. In this sense, the community was genuinely recognized as a stakeholder of the project. The community also witnessed how the once idle and unproductive land could become a source of wood supply in due time.

As for the role of the union, the TWU together with the BWI and its forester, provide the strategic direction and technical inputs of the project. The union has been able to show the villagers that with proper training and technical expertise, the land can be forested and made productive to provide the community with wood, water, sources of herbal medicine and alternative sources of income through short term income generating projects like mushroom growing, etc. In consultation with the community and with the technical guidance of the union's forester, plant species most useful for the local people were selected. Likewise, selection of tree seedling varieties ensured that a variety of species were grown so as to avoid over-reliance on a single crop whose price could fall and cause economic difficulties. The union is poised to benefit from the project through proceeds generated from the sale of the forest products, which in turn will be used for increased union income and project expansion.

Training on Forest Management and Forest Certification

Other than reforestation, the union has started an environmental education programme for workers which includes education on forest issues for union representatives. The training program specifically aimed at enabling workers to participate in discussions on sustainable forestry management issues and raise consciousness on the need for effective national standards and ensuring well-defined principles, criteria and indicators that would protect forest and wood workers.

A significant contribution of the TWU training pertain to its forest certification training courses implemented in two modules:

1. March 1998 TWU conducted a seminar on Forest Certification attended by the TWU and the General Agriculture Workers' Union. The seminar was funded by a grant from LO/TCO and the design was developed and implemented by BWI. The seminar intended to:
 - Develop responses to problems faced by forest workers;
 - Provide an overview of sustainable forestry and ways of achieving it;
 - Provide an introduction to the forest certification process;
 - Develop social and labour criteria and indicators for use in discussions among partners.
2. June 2000 TWU held a workshop to train members of the National Executive Council who had been appointed as Certification Monitoring Committee. Topics were:
 - Certification and implications on trade unions and workers;
 - International standards on certification
 - Ghana draft standards on certification
 - Health and Safety in Forestry
 - Monitoring of Forest Certification
 - Project Administration



With the intention of sensitising TWU forest and timber workers on the symbiotic relationship between well-managed forests and forest wood worker rights, the TWU training on forest certification succeeded in developing trade union activists who can champion the union's interests in debates on and advocacy for sustainable forest management. The effectiveness of the training, however, has yet to be seen. Admittedly, enforcing forest certification, the developmental goal of the capacity building project, is a process that takes a lot of time and vigilant monitoring. For forest certification to be truly enforced, workers' training and inputs are required. This involves training workers on the importance of maintaining quality in terms of product development and in relation to the rights of the workers involved in making the product. Thus, forest certification includes issues of health and safety of the workers involved in the production process. Real issues of the forest and its workers such as job insecurity, poor medical facilities, inadequate enforcement of government policies, low income of the forest-timber workers, lack of training opportunities and inadequate social benefits are also some of the concerns that have to be addressed. A milestone is attained only when the forest industry is able to address these issues and produce products that are certified as environmentally sound and worker-friendly.

IV. Making a Difference in the Larger Community of Burkina Faso

INCREASING INFORMALIZATION OF WORK, massive poverty, environmental degradation and the HIV-AIDS pandemic in Burkina Faso require that trade unions re-evaluate their position not just in the workplace but also in their country's very survival. These problems present unions with the challenge of becoming active players in the workplace and in the larger social environment.

This realization challenged the National Federation of Building and Forestry Workers (NFBFW), the BWI affiliate in Burkina Faso, to use their membership base for organizing



not only their ranks, but also deliberately catalysing larger social movements to address poverty reduction and sustainable development. For the NFBFW, seeking out social partners towards the goal of decent work, sustainable development and social equity is a crucial enabling strategy that would bring them closer to these goals. With this perspective, the NFBFW has worked like a double-edged sword, as a trade union fighting for the interests of its workers and as part of a social movement fighting for the survival of its people and the environment. With this comes their decision to fight for sustainable forest management anchored on the clear link between environmental degradation, jobs and rural poverty.

Targeting the Women

“The project made the women more happy, increasing their community life and financial capacity. Through the project, the women gather together to share their existing ideas and give advise to each other” Rosine

The Sustainable Forestry Project in Burkina Faso targeted women workers in the informal sector as a priority and principal beneficiary of the project. Since women were often marginalized in the Burkina Faso culture, this sustainable forestry project gave special preference to women, deliberately aimed at empowering and enabling women to raise voice in the sustainable forestry project. Thus, in selecting participants for the education and project activities, women were given priority in hands-on training on planting, growing and sustaining trees.

Training women to plant trees is a long-term change strategy and an effective entry point to organize women. In learning and implementing proper sustainable strategies on growing trees, women increase their potential for generating household income that will allow them to become economically independent in the long term. This forestry training was even supplemented with math literacy training to ensure that such endeavours become economically viable. The Learning to plant and grow trees strategy is meant to reduce women’s non-rent and non-food cost because they will have their

Lugulu Spring Project Site:

A case of common stakeholdership

The spring protection is currently going on well. This is because the two families living adjacent to the spring have handed over the land to the Lugulu Spring Committee for management. Unions have realized that organizing can best occur when structures are well defined and roles of partners are identified. In the Lugulu case, BWI affiliates contributed 50% and the community 15% in terms of labour and material costs while the Nzoia Sugar Company contributed 35% in terms of expertise in spring construction. It is thus imperative to organize groupings and consult these groups frequently.

Tree Nursery Project

A Case That Can Facilitate Alliance Building

The public- private relationship between the Forest Department, a government agency and the three trade unions indicate that partnership can result in successful production of tree seedlings. The project nursery has raised 30,000 seedlings of various species. Clearly the partnership draws important lessons. If the partnership is properly done, results are impressive. This emphasizes the need for Unions to build alliances to achieve maximum results in matters concerning workers' rights and welfare.

The diversity of tree seedlings in the nursery and their different attributes contributes to developing a stable environment. The lesson for the Unions is that they may be different in structure and management, but they all have the same goal with other BWI affiliates across the globe: to promote and enforce worker rights in the context of sustainable development.

own wood supply for fuel and domestic use. With this as an entry point for organizing, participation and recruitment of women in the environmental movement and informal workers' organization is assured. Likewise, teaching women to plant and care for different types of trees increases the survival rate of trees in a hostile and threatening environment.

HIV/AIDS Education Program

Recognizing that the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Burkina Faso affect not only the forestry workers but also the average Burkinabe, the NFBFW took this issue to the workplace, the community and to the schools using theatre as the medium of education and community awareness.

Initiated and sponsored by the NFBW union, the AIDS theatre program was designed and performed by children. The program is in the form of a contest with participating primary schools submitting scripts on HIV/AIDS authored by the children themselves. The union gets volunteers from the community, government and schools to judge the winning script. The winner gets not only a prize but also the chance to spread the HIV/AIDS script to other schools and communities. With children as the author and medium of the AIDS message, a captive audience is guaranteed. At the same time, a culturally appropriate message is transmitted, ensuring the effectiveness of the message in changing the villagers' views and behaviour that cause the disease to spread. With HIV/AIDS as a previously taboo subject, the children's theatre education program drives the message clearly and widely. For the first year of this program, seven (7) primary schools with a total of 3500 students participated in the contest using various theatre productions and recitals to deliver the HIV/AIDS message to an audience of around eight thousand adults. The powerful impact of the program resulted in a clamour to replicate the program in more schools and communities. Likewise, volunteerism has emerged within the rank and file members of the participating unions. Many volunteers have committed themselves to organizing and participating in a roving theatre group that bring the winning script to rural areas all over the country.



With the HIV/AIDS awareness campaign, the NFBFW has been able to reach out to various social players. The primary school education project puts union members into direct contact with schools and delivers a pro-union, pro-worker, HIV/AIDS prevention message in the voice of the workers' children. This creates a partnership between the union and the school system that is important in influencing socialization of the young. This partnership builds a relationship between union leaders and educators and spreads a pro-union message to the wider society in general. By helping union members and their children reduce their exposure to HIV/AIDS, the union is able to ensure additional productivity necessary in making decent work possible, and, to provide women with health awareness. At the macro level, the union was able to influence the Burkina Faso's Poverty Reduction Strategic Plan (PRSP) particularly in integrating the HIV/AIDS issue. This engagement has opened yet another opportunity for the union to promote the agenda of decent work, sustainable development and social justice.

The HIV-AIDS school-based program is now changing society's views on unionism. Likewise, it has energized and mobilized the union.

Because of its involvement in sustainable forestry and the HIV/AIDS awareness campaign, the NFBFW has earned the recognition, acceptance and respect of the community. Being relevant to the community has given the trade union a very positive social image, which in turn has helped in increasing union membership and political clout.

V. Developing Inter-Union Cooperation and Social Partnership in Kenya

"Unions realized the importance of partnership and building alliances to help foster the process of sustainable development" **Paul Opanga, BWI-Kenya forester**

TRADE UNION INVOLVEMENT IN social forestry has been unifying not only for unions but for other stakeholders as well -- those whose contribution and support are vital in



“The symbiotic relationship of the forest and its local community, thus, was given due recognition and action as BWI and its African affiliates resolved to integrate sustainable forestry in its trade union agenda”

making sustainable forestry work for the trade unions and vice versa. Such a significant issue as the survival of the country’s forests necessitates the involvement of unions, communities, government, and, even the employers. Forging such cooperation and social dialogue has made the BWI trade unions and their efforts on sustainable forestry highly effective.

For the past two years, three Unions in Kenya have been involved in a joint forestry initiative, namely, Kenya Union of Printing, Publishing and Paper Manufacturing Union (KUPRIPUPA), Kenya Quarry and Mines Workers Union (KQMWU), and Kenya Building, Construction, Timber, Furniture and Allied Employees Union (KBCTF&AIEU). This initiative has focused on promoting Sustainable Forest Management in Kenya through direct interventions with communities and social dialogue with traditional social partners such as the business sector and government. Several activities have been undertaken to strengthen the structures and activities of the social partners to enhance effective long-term cooperation. The three Unions, in collaboration with other stakeholders/partners, have advanced interventions in Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) that contributed to livelihood support for the community, turned idle lands into productive forest land, improved the water and food security of Kenyans and improved the credibility of trade unions. To cull learnings from the inter-union cooperation for a common sustainable forestry project, leaders from the participating unions evaluated the process and outcomes of joint project management.

Developing Inter-Union Cooperation in a Common Forestry Project

“Social Forestry could be a good unifying project that could bring forestry workers together.” Paulo Opanga

In June 2003, the three participating Unions held an internal evaluation workshop to evaluate the impact of their cooperation. The following strategies were identified as crucial to building unity and cooperation among the Unions:

- All three unions are involved and are fully in support of the project, with equal representation by officials of the three unions;
- Involvement of the general secretaries or executive officers of the unions in the project;
- Updating each other on what is happening;
- Holding of assessment and evaluation workshop;
- Formation of inter-union working committees where members are drawn from each union – this enhances exchange of information and the spirit of solidarity;
- Inter-union cooperation strengthened by monthly rotational meetings;
- Equal representation by officials of the three unions in decision making processes and rotational meetings that are binding;
- Built-in internal check up system that is reviewed and monitored through joint monthly meetings;
- Joint training programmes – unions have the same needs but they require different strategies; this collaborative mechanism offers room for replication of best practices;
- Workplace action – tree-planting campaigns at the workplace level have enhanced industrial relations and opportunities for recruitment because they involve participation of tripartite or bipartite partners.

Forging Unity and Social Dialogues with Relevant Stakeholders

Inter-unity cooperation became the core strength of the project and served as the take-off point for expanding cooperation among other relevant stakeholders. With the trade unions united on the project, the next step was to enjoin these other stakeholders like the community, the government and the employers to support the sustainability forestry project. Reaching out and getting support from other relevant stakeholders worked out due to the following strategies jointly undertaken by the unions:

- Joint planning with relevant stakeholders (e.g. forest industries, government agencies, civil society and community representatives);

- Exploring opportunities for income generation by introducing alternative modes such as selling seedlings which became a good incentive for community participation;
- Encouraging participatory outdoor activities or meetings among tripartite partners that enabled them to enhance industrial relations (e.g. workplace tree planting activities)

As a result of this progress, the government of Kenya has started the process of donating an additional 500 hectares of land to the project. Employers, meanwhile, recognized the value of the unions' forestry project and showed their support by releasing their workers early and giving them extra 5 work hours a week for the project. The three national unions have allocated some of their own scarce resources to expand the lessons learned to other parts of the country, and the BWI has begun the process of expanding this success to neighbouring countries.

VI. Outcomes and Milestones

IN DESIGNING THE SUSTAINABILITY projects in Ghana, Burkina Faso and Kenya, the following indicators and key result areas were identified as the gauge of project success:

- Trade Union Strengthening / Improvement of Labour Relations
- Increased profile (level of influence) of the union
- Afforestation (Advances in Sustainable Forestry)
- Water Security / Water Quality Enhancement
- Social Dialogue / Social Partnership
- Improved Access to Health and Safety Measures
- Income Generation

In view of these indicators of success, the following achievements have been attained by the three project sites:

Ghana

- Organized and recruited about 3,000 members from among government forest workers, most of whom come from the informal sector;
- The project has been used to raise awareness around OHS and HIV/AIDS issues;
- TWU Recognition. The TWU has received regional and international recognition for this project. In a number of countries in Africa and in Europe, TWU leaders have been asked to speak on this project and to assist others in replication attempts;
- Increased the profile of the union in Ghana forest policy decisions and negotiating for the OHS and HIV/AIDS issue. The TWU, despite its rapidly diminishing size, continues to expand its role in national policy making. In addition to becoming a force within the country on community forestry and afforestation projects, the union has recently had one of its OSH representatives named to the national committee involved in re-writing OSH regulations in the industry;
- Enhanced participation of trade unionists and local communities in the maintenance and expansion of plantations and wood lots;
- Increased capacity of unionists in forest management and advocacy for forest certification standards and issues;
- Developed linkages for information exchange on sustainable forest management among African affiliates;
- Developed awareness on the need for communities to preserve natural and human-made forests and encouraged the participation of community leaders;
- Nursery management: A new nursery has been established and a total of 60,000 species have been propagated;
- Plantation management: Out of the total 240 has., 106 has. have been planted

“Other than reforestation, the union has started an environmental education programme for workers which includes education on forest issues for union representatives”

with 142,000 seedlings and 120,195 trees, all of which are currently growing well. Protection work including patrol duties, survicultural activities (weeding, pruning, and general maintenance) have been continued. There has been no outbreak of fires. Likewise, re-filling activities have been conducted;

- Fire protection regimes have been introduced and installed;
- Short term revenue projects are underway including bee keeping and cashew planting; food security has been a high priority in these income generating activities. This strategy was used to motivate and sustain the involvement of the community in the forestry project;
- Water security has been addressed;
- The community forestry project has an 85% survival rate, with major problems now confined in the river stabilization areas. Excluding these river stabilization areas, the project has a survival rate in excess of 95% of all species both native and exotic. In addition to being a source of revenue, water security, and food security, the community forestry projects have been excellent opportunities to promote sustainable development among grassroots members.

Partially because of the success of the Ghana Community Forestry Project, backed up by the technical support and guidance of BWI, the African Development Bank recently launched a community forestry program in Ghana through the national forestry service.

Burkina Faso

- Since the project began, 25 hectares have been planted in Burkina Faso. Aside from being a source of revenue, water security and food security, the community forests have been provided the venue to educate grass roots members on sustainable development;
- The HIV/AIDS school education project is changing how society views the union. It has energized the union to engage on a number of volunteer projects including

the theatre troupe organizing;

- Additional 350 new members were recruited (most of whom are from the informal sector);
- The OSH training has created a core of trained leaders who are now expanding into HIV and OSH community education projects.

“Training women to plant trees is a long-term change strategy and an effective entry point to organize women. With this as an entry point, participation and recruitment of women in the environmental movement and informal workers’ organization is assured”

Kenya

In the past two years, the Kenya Community Forest Project has achieved gains for the environment, the community and the union:

A. Contributions to the Environment and the Community

- Established a 21,000 seedling nursery, with capacity to produce seedlings for afforestation including trees species used in native healing and traditional medicine;
- Planted and donated 3,350 tree seedlings to schools and communities;
- Transformed 5 hectares of project land into forests;
- Improved living conditions at specific project sites through water quality enhancement in 4 different spring sites thus stabilizing water supply in four different villages;
- Reduced water borne diseases by about 20% as recorded by the Ministry of Health Officials -- in areas where water springs have been rehabilitated;
- Reduced the erosion of stream banks along rivers critical for water supply;
- Enriched water tables by planting trees;
- Assisted in combating deforestation in rural Kenya;



- Created good working relationships within the community by involving residents in tree planting activities, creating employment for them and training them on some basic skills in forest management. This in turn has led the community to start their own self-help groups to engage in tree planting that can be a nucleus for community forestry;
 - Created employment for some community members;
 - Initial income generation was established by the sale of forest products especially seedlings and this benefited local communities.
- B. Gains of the Unions
- Promoted critically important work in rural areas through the development of collective bargaining agreements that stabilizes employment, increases productivity, and assists in the development of regular work with fair compensation packages.
 - Labour relations were formalized and professionalized largely because of the on-going social dialogues. This has resulted in the following gains for the labour movement in Kenya:
 - International Labour Standards (ILO standards) were incorporated in education programmes and workplace meetings;
 - The issue of informal workers in Forest and Wood sector was documented and a program was initiated to develop methods for the provision of workers' social protection;
 - Formal contracts with employers were concluded among employers and this included the protection and creation of work in the formal economy and the development of a consumer base.
 - The Unions recorded a remarkable increase in membership from the recruitment and organizing sessions facilitated by the Wood and Forestry Programme, specifically from pilot exercises held in targeted industries. Furthermore, the social forestry project enhanced workers' participation as they



got involved in the unions' tree planting activities.

- The forest initiatives improved industrial relations between workers and employers (e.g. Athi River Mining and All Packs Industries where union membership has increased). Likewise, management has committed to creating joint health and safety committees after tree planting has been done.
- A multi-institutional structure was established with representation from the three unions meant to organize forestry activities and common training programs.
- On the HIV/AIDS awareness, the project expanded its HIV/AIDS education program for rural workers through a train-the-trainer program. In partnership with a number of employers the program is helping infected workers learn about medical options and educating all workers on how to stop the spread of this disease.

A Milestone in Kenya

Using the union strategy of practicing sustainable forest management, social dialogue to foster harmony among various players (employers, government, community and workers) and advocating the criteria and indicators of the Kenya Poverty Reduction Planning process, the union has earned respect and political mileage resulting in the commitment of the Kenyan government to donate an additional 500 hectares of land to the sustainable forest project of the Union.

VII. Insights / Reflections

1. In implementing projects for social causes and benefits such as social forestry, it is important not to lose sight of the role of and benefits for the union. The challenge is to continuously craft strategies that will benefit the union such as increase of membership or increase of union income. Otherwise, the project





“Trade union involvement in social forestry has been unifying not only for unions but for other stakeholders as well--those whose contribution and support are vital in making sustainable forestry work for the trade unions and vice versa”

becomes tantamount to merely doing service work to the community, similar to what NGOs do. It is important to always remember how the project will ultimately relate to and benefit workers and trade unions. Being a trade union makes it imperative that project involvement is recognized as relevant to its constituents - the workers themselves.

2. Community and union participation should be a deliberate and inherent value in the design of sustainable forestry projects.

Participation and ownership of forestry projects should not just be incidental to the intention and design of sustainable forestry projects. In Ghana, the Forestry Project was union-led and largely union leadership-driven, with a hired full-time forester taking a lead role. Community participation ensued and eventually became a necessary ingredient for the survival of the forestry project. Looking back, the Ghana Forestry Project taught BWI lessons in improving community participation in succeeding forestry projects in Burkina Faso and Kenya where union members are also the community members residing and working in the forestry project.

3. Social Forestry projects have long-term impacts. Project results thus should not be viewed in the short term, rather, as a continuing process.

Awareness building and changing attitudes toward the forest and the environment is a process that takes time. Positive impact can be seen in the long term. Benefits are not necessarily immediately visible but will be most likely enjoyed by future generations. Felt benefits such as generating income from seedlings trickle slowly after a few years. The challenge therefore lies in developing projects with short-term benefits that are complemented with education activities that instill the



consciousness that sustainable development is a sound investment for future generations.

4. The very nature of the forestry project requires capacity building: obtaining land to be utilized, getting seeds, learning how to plant and cultivate trees, learning how to manage the forest and developing plans for resource use. Such activities should be appreciated and internalised by the workers so that the project can be claimed as a union activity that promotes the interests of workers.
5. Local union leaders should have the capacity to engage in debates regarding key problems in their industry (i.e. wood and forestry) and recognize how their local workplace issues are connected to global issues. Trade unions are then able to develop appropriate local, regional, and international responses.
Trade unions should be exposed to national, regional and global issues, especially on forestry concerns. Workers should be aware of these issues so that they are able to discuss, articulate and engage in policy discussions and advocacy work. They should be able to articulate the challenges facing workers in the forestry sector and the linkage between local and global issues. They should also be able to defend the message that fighting for the forest is also about fighting for workers' rights and interests.
6. Social forestry management is most effective when done through an inclusive process involving all relevant stakeholders.
In designing and launching a sustainable forestry project, there is a need to consult concerned unions, policy makers, forestry departments, local chiefs and the community. It is important that decision-making is participatory and inclusive to establish joint ownership and responsibility for the forest project. Without giving due importance to participatory and consensus processes, internal conflicts are likely to ensue and thereby endanger the project.
7. Public opinion toward union issues is important in shaping the role of unions in sustainable development. In their lobbying and advocacy, unions must continue



projecting their image and one sure way is involvement in environmental protection.

8. When the image of the social partners is enhanced positive outcomes are amplified. The image and status of the trade union movement and the industry was improved and their position in national dialogues was strengthened by the success of the environmental conservation program activities.

VIII. Next Steps

AS THE TRADE UNIONS IN GHANA, Burkina Faso and Kenya integrate sustainable forestry into the agenda of the workers in the forestry, wood and timber industry, the concerns and advocacy of the workers are expanded. Trade unions have become vital players in the survival and development not only of workers but also of the environment and the larger community.

With the trade unions' growing role in and relevance to the larger community, the next step would be towards combating poverty by influencing poverty reduction programs such as those of government and the World Bank. The unions must move in the direction of relating poverty with the forest and showing the role of forestry in alleviating poverty.

Using the workers' perspective to combat poverty means specifically targeting healthy workers with full-time formal employment in healthy forests. This kind of perspective would eventually bring the trade unions into the concerns of the World Bank's Poverty Reduction strategies pertaining to health, schools, increase of the informal sector, HIV/AIDS, the environment -- where various stakeholders are included in the process of policy making and problem solving. With the trade unions' involvement in sustainable forestry discussions, the trade unions in Ghana, Burkina Faso and Kenya are gradually finding themselves involved in the broader concern of poverty alleviation.



The trade unions are moving into a broader social movement, advocating multiple but inter-related social issues and engaging in social dialogues with a broader range of stakeholders.

Development Objective

As they get involved in broader social issues, trade unions face the challenge of continuing its labor agenda, deriving strength from a strong membership base, grounding its advocacy on actual workplace realities and practical forestry experiences and being capable of articulating and engaging in debates that relate the rights and concerns of the workers to broader social issues. With this challenge, the trade unions in Ghana, Burkina Faso and Kenya will -- in the next 2 years -- strive for the development objective of:



Contributing towards sustainable industrial development and poverty reduction by building on best practices in implementing forestry programs including tree-planting campaigns, and, building alliances and inter-cooperation among trade unions and various social partners.

Indicators of Achievement should be the following:

1. On Trade Union Expansion and Strengthening

As a pre-requisite in advocating sustainable forestry among workers, participating trade unions should be strong and capable. The following shall be targeted in succeeding projects:

- Improved skills in recruitment, organizing, grievance handling, negotiations, collective agreements to enable workers to develop good industrial relations;

- Increased membership and union income;
 - Raised awareness on health and safety, ILO Standards and Framework Agreements;
 - Better informed informal workers;
 - Expanded social dialogue and more formalized labour relations.
2. On Sustainable Forestry
- Sustainable forestry is both a means and a goal of forestry workers. Without losing sight of the objective of improving the lives of forest workers, sustainable forests can become the means for better working and living conditions of workers. Likewise, with the benefits that the community receives from sustainable forests, workers are able to appreciate the presence of healthy forests. Having this perspective, the following indicators shall be targeted by the workers in its next projects,
 - Increased acreage under tree cover;
 - Increased income from forest activities;
 - Enhanced livelihood support for forest-dependent communities;
 - Enhanced dissemination of best practices in sustainable forest management;
 - Increased sub-regional cooperation among social partners.

Based on the specific conditions of Ghana, Burkina Faso and Kenya, the following have been recommended in their respective project sites:

Ghana

- Begin the process of transferring more direct control to the union;
- Explore ways to expand participation of rank and file union members in the project (i.e. this has been difficult to obtain because of the location of the project site). The project must also provide relevance to the everyday lives of TWU members.



Burkina Faso

- Extend and expand the reforestation project to as many areas as possible in the country;
- Popularise the project: use native languages and more popular forms such as the theatre group.
- Ignorance is a big problem due to lack of literacy. The use of theatre thus becomes necessary to raise consciousness and educate the people. Theatre is inter-active and encourages people to participate and give their opinions. Through theatre, people remember ideas better and are able to think differently.

“Community and union participation should be a deliberate and inherent value in the design of sustainable forestry projects”

Kenya

For the Kenyan initiative, future activities that are likely to produce good results include the creation of a tree nursery with a variety of seedlings both for afforestation development and income generation, an evolving multi-institutional structure for sustainable resource management championed by social partners, trained Union representatives equipped with knowledge on social forestry management (SFM), a forestry committee with representatives of the three Unions and a targeted industry-based recruitment/organizing plan that will rationalize the industry and promote stable non-agricultural employment in the rural areas. Having accomplished this, the BWI-Kenya unions would like to proceed further by doing the following:

- Scale up forestry programme to other regions in Kenya and also into neighbouring country Uganda through BWI affiliate Uganda Building Construction, Civil Engineering, Cement and Allied Workers Union (UBCCECAWU) – this is likely to offer more opportunities to generate sustainable income and enhance industrial



Project Details:

Timeframe:
1998 – 2004

Solidarity Support Organisations:

- LOTCO Sweden
- FNV Netherlands

National Partner Unions:

- SKOGS Sweden
- FNV Bouw Netherlands

Participating Unions:

Timber Unions in Ghana, Burkina Faso and Kenya

Project Coordinators:

Charles Ofori (in memoriam) 1998-2002,
James Akuntam (in memoriam) 2002-2004 (Ghana);
Abdou Ouedraogo (Burkina Faso);
Paul Opanga (Kenya)



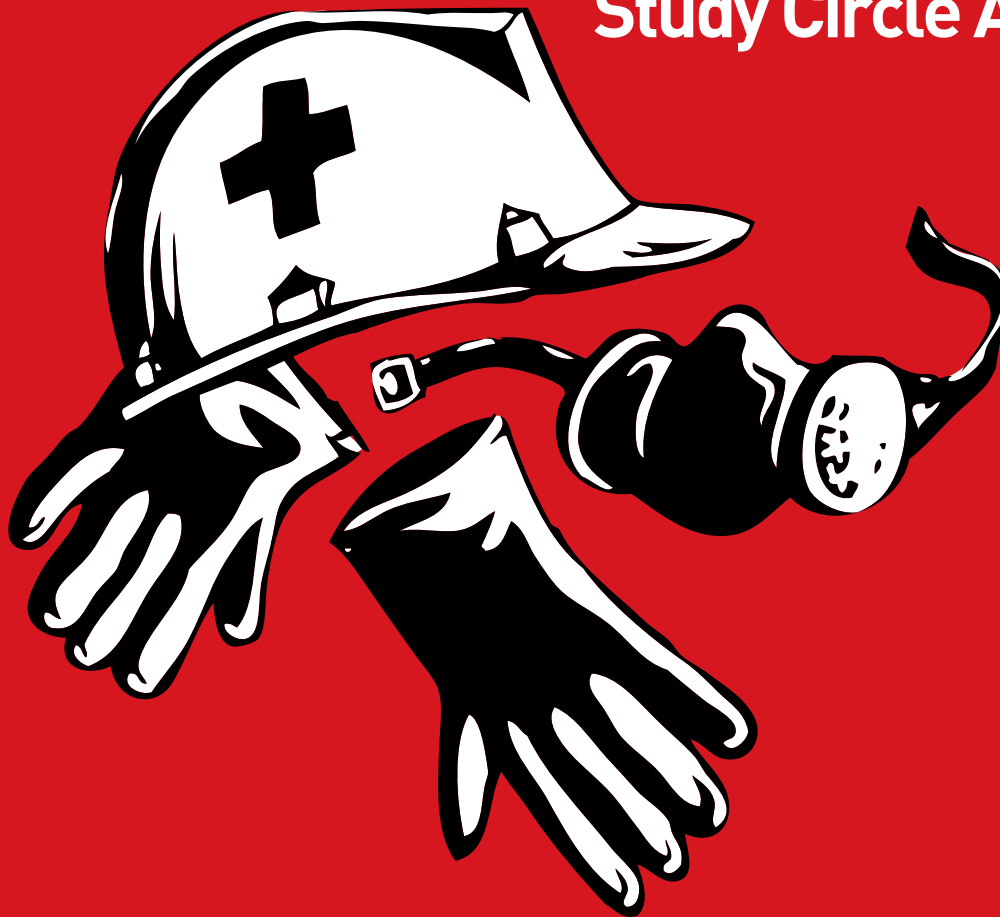
relations between the unions and the social partners.

- The proposed forestry activities will enhance inter-country cooperation among the social partners and pave the way for replicating best practices in the East Africa region. They will also serve as ways for unions to contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable industrial development.
- To continue to integrate into Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs) the advances made in the social dialogue process in order to build an institutionalised structure.
- On Health and Safety:
 - Undertake campaigns and trainings at the workplace level to highlight the preventable nature of workplace accidents with special emphasis on the prevention and control of HIV-AIDS.
 - Draw programmes or campaigns with the appropriate social partners to reduce occupational diseases, injuries and illness proven to occur in the formal and informal sectors of the forest industry.
 - Pilot attempts to engage informal workers in disease prevention particularly health and safety awareness campaigns. ■



Zimbabwe

Organizing and Consolidating the Union through the Occupational Safety and Health Study Circle Approach





“The OSH Study Circle is a successful organizing tool worth replicating because it is participatory in all levels, it has a human face based on real and felt needs, and it is a good unifying issue among the workers, the employer, the government and even across unions”

Inviolata Chinyangara, BWI Regional Education Secretary in Africa

“For the OSH study circle to work, you have to get the full commitment of the officers and members of the trade union. The OSH should make use of the political structure of the trade union to ensure that it is rightfully supported, monitored and implemented”

Martin Chikuni, General Secretary of ZFTATU



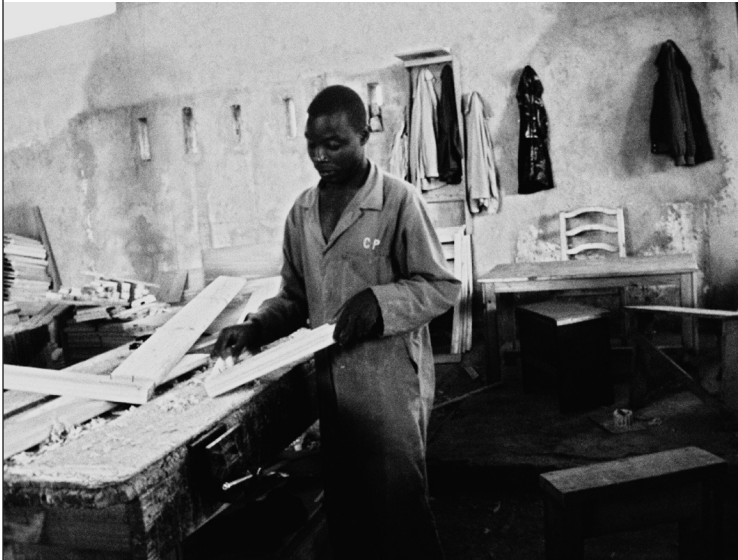
Zimbabwe:

Organizing and Consolidating the Union through the Occupational Safety and Health Study Circle Approach

I. Background

ZIMBABWE HAS A LARGE PLANTATION TIMBER industry over 90% of which is based in THE Manicaland province on the border with Mozambique, an area also known as the Eastern Highlands. The industry holds roughly 120,000 hectares of timber plantations and occupies 0.02% of the total land area of Zimbabwe. Timber production is an important national industry contributing from one to two percent (1-2%) of revenue to the gross domestic product. In addition, it is the largest employer in this region employing about 15, 000 people directly and many more indirectly. Major operations in the timber industry include forestry production, saw milling and processing. There is a high demand for timber in the local market due to an increase in housing and construction projects. Timber is also demanded by the local furniture-manufacturing sector.

Machinery and equipment for timber processing are not locally manufactured thus workers in this sector are exposed to a lot of accidents and hazards due to low levels of in-house training and orientation. Most accidents are caused by the workers' lack of training and knowledge on occupational health and safety. Employers, meanwhile, have not prioritized occupational health and safety because they do not consider this as an important workplace



issue. While employers have been more interested in productivity rather than safety, workers have also been more interested in wages and benefits. Because timber processing requires vast amounts of capital over long periods of time - it takes over 20-25 years for timber to mature and be ready for harvest -- employers have refused to spend for occupational health and safety needs of workers in this sector.

Despite numerous accidents and hazards reported in the timber-processing sector, there were no workplace activities to discuss these events. Occupational health and safety committees were chosen and controlled by employers. The few workers trained on occupational health and safety through in-house training programmes were being lost to retrenchments, and, the ugly spectre of HIV/AIDS was beginning to take its toll on the industry.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic has also been seen to have a serious impact on the economy and the workplace thus demanding a clear code to protect the rights of the workers and deal with workplace effects from this epidemic.

It was against this background that the Zimbabwe Furniture, Timber and Allied Trade Unions (ZFTATU) realized the need to educate both the workers and employers on occupation, health and safety measures, and, in the process develop OSH programs and policies for the timber processing sector.

II. The OSH-Study Circle as an Organizing and Consolidating Strategy

DUE TO THE HIGH LEVEL OF ACCIDENTS, diseases and hazards in the wood and forestry sectors in South Africa, including the spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the need for



a clear code to protect workers' rights in these sectors led to the development of a union-led Occupational Health and Safety (OSH) program strategy. The ZFTATU sought the support from BWI, LO/TCO and the Swedish Forest and Wood Trade Union (SKOGS) to carry out an education project to address issues of occupational health and safety in the timber processing sectors.

Objectives of the OSH Education Project

The ZFTATU implemented a four-year OSH Education project from September 2000-December 2003 with the over-all purpose of: improving the OSH in the Zimbabwe timber sectors as well as reducing workplace accidents and work-related diseases.

The short term goals were to ensure that by the end of the three- year project, workers in the sector organized by ZFTATU will be able to do the following:

- Identify and control workplace hazards;
- Know the different occupational diseases peculiar to the forest sector and how to control them;
- Be able to develop workplace OSH policies and facilitate the setting up of OSH Committees and;
- Be able to direct the existing OSH legislation for the benefit of the workers by lobbying for its enforcement.

The urgent need for OSH became the driving and uniting force for the union leadership to put in place its OSH program strategy. The OSH project strategy also ensured that all levels of the union were involved, from its leadership down to its rank and file membership. In this sense, the OSH served as a crucial organizing and consolidating strategy for the union.

Target Participants

With the OSH as the goal and the entire union structure as the vehicle, the OSH, through



“Because timber processing requires vast amounts of capital over long periods of time employers have refused to spend for occupational health and safety needs of workers in this sector”

the study circle methodology, improved working conditions at the same time consolidated, strengthened and activated all levels of the union -- from the leadership to the shop stewards to the rank file -- under the banner of OSH. The OSH thus became the crucial uniting issue. It was also effective because of the participatory process that was used through the study circle methodology.

The key process of the OSH Study Circle project was anchored on the participatory nature of the project. The project targeted all structures of the union at various stages of the three-year implementation. The project's intended beneficiaries were union policy makers, members of the National Executive Committee (NEC), union educators, rank and file members, and, the OSH stewards.

The first structure to be involved was the union's policy making body, the National Executive Committee (NEC). The project targeted the NEC first to make them aware of the importance of OSH and to get their commitment for the project. As a result, the NEC resolved to prioritize the issue and included the OSH project as an agenda in its annual planning at the beginning of the year and regular evaluation sessions at year-end. Likewise, the NEC also ensured that the project be monitored at the regional and branch levels, including its effects on women. Because of the NEC's interest in and commitment to the project, the OSH became a priority national project of ZFTATU.

With the NEC committed to the OSH project, the next structure that was mobilized was the regional structure of ZFTATU. This was where the content of the OSH study circle curriculum was developed and the study circle manual created. Throughout the three-year project, the seminar design also looked into the OSH needs and problems of women in forestry and came up with strategies and solutions for addressing their particular concerns. It was ZFTATU's regional structure that provided the pool of OSH activists. These activists were also regional organizers who worked closely with union members at the workplace level. They became the trainers tasked with training study circle leaders among the shop

stewards from the various union branches. The trainers developed from the ranks of the regional and branch levels, in turn, were pooled to form the workers' OSH committee.

Content of the trainers' training for study circle leaders generally included the following topics :

- Concept and Definitions of Occupational Health and Safety
- How to use OSH as an organizing tool
- How to form committees
- National legislation on OSH that workers can use for the collective bargaining agreement (CBA)

Through the trainers' training on OSH, branch and regional participants learned not just about OSH but how this could be used as a strategy to organize, consolidate and strengthen the union. Henceforth, with a pool of trained study circle leaders, study circle discussions were implemented among rank and file union members.

Conduct of the OSH Study Circles

A study circle is usually composed of twelve (12) rank and file union members and often held in the workplace at break time or at the most convenient place and time for the workers. Such sessions have been recognized by employers and hence time spent for these sessions are considered part of paid work. The study circles usually take one and half hours where an assigned topic is discussed. These sessions often take on the following discussion flow:

- What are the problems related to the assigned topic?
- Brainstorming of issues felt
- What solutions does it imply
- Inputs to provide information on how to solve the problems raised

- Danger signs and symptoms of OSH
- Resolutions and Summary

Feedback and Monitoring

With the documentation of study circle sessions, the study circle leader would report back to branch leaders who, in turn, intervene in cases where study circle leaders are not able to address the issues being raised. If the issue is not resolved at the branch level, this would be raised to the NEC level for intervention in terms of policy support. Such information feedback has been vital in keeping the union leadership in touch with OSH issues and concerns of the rank and file, providing the necessary inputs for policies to be formulated and issues to be negotiated in the CBA. On the other hand, the study circle consolidated and activated the unions' membership since union members experienced being part of decision making processes. In effect, through the study circle, union members became more actively involved with the union.

III. Gains for OSH, Gains for the Union

THE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY (OSH) theme using the study circle method succeeded not only in improving the health and safety situation of the workers but also consolidated and strengthened the union. The OSH Study Circle Method was a very good organizing and consolidating experience for ZFTATU. The project accomplishments can be summarized as follows:

Safer and Practically Accident-Free Working Conditions

From a situation where there were frequent accidents and at times even death in the workplace due to unsafe working conditions and carelessness of workers due to lack of OSH orientation and protective measures, after the project, no major accidents have been reported in the lumber and furniture industries. Likewise, as a result of consultations between workers and employers on preventive measures, workers have been provided with protective clothing.

Seventy percent (70%) Reduction of Accidents

Trained OSH cadres who work on building OSH awareness among union-members led to the emergence of vibrant and effective workers' committees able to effectively negotiate with employers for OSH protective measures. This resulted in a seventy percent (70%) reduction in workplace accidents.

Better Protection for Workers

Because of greater awareness of measures and programs to protect workers from possible work hazards, there was a fifty (50%) increase in the number of workers seeking to join the National Social Security Authority (NSSA) scheme. Likewise, the union gained concrete benefits particularly in the awarding of compensation and social security for sick, injured and retired workers.

Increased Awareness on OSH among Wood and Forest Workers and Employers

There is an increased awareness of the importance of OSH even among employers in wood and forestry industry. Indicators of such awareness and appreciation of OSH issues include attendance of employers as observers in OSH discussions as well as their willingness to free up employees' work time to attend OSH seminars and study circle sessions.

Functioning OSH Committees and Structures in Unions

The union institutionalised OSH programs by putting in place democratically elected, union-led and functioning OSH committees and structures. These structures replaced the employer appointed OSH committees. Likewise, trained cadres focused on building these structures have enabled workers to effectively negotiate with employers for measures to reduce accidents. To ensure the continuity of the OSH program, seventeen (17) study circle leaders drawn from all the seven (7) regions were trained and an OSH study circle manual has been developed.



“The HIV/AIDS epidemic has also been seen to have a serious impact on the economy and workplace, demanding a clear code to protect the workers rights and deal with workplace effects“

Increase in Union Membership and Dues

As a result of the OSH study circle methodology, union membership increased from 6,800 workers in January 2000 to 10,800 workers by December 2002. Likewise, the union, cognizant of the concrete benefits of the OSH project, also managed to pay its affiliation fees to the BWI.

Building OSH Awareness in Various Levels of the Union

The study circle methodology resulted in increased OSH awareness among workers in different union structures namely union policy makers, the executive leadership and intended beneficiaries: shop stewards, rank and file members and women workers in the wood and forestry industry from across the six (6) regions where the ZFTATU union operates.

Unity and Active Participation within the Union

The project resulted in uniting the union around a single vision: OSH. At its December 2002 Congress, the entire leadership responsible for addressing OSH issues was retained. The study circle method, meanwhile, activated union members as it entailed mobilizing the rank and file and shop stewards as participants in OSH study circles.

Improved Union Credibility and Bargaining Leverage

Due to the seventy percent (70%) reduction in work-related accidents and the increase of workers' productivity -- attributable to the union's OSH study circle project -- the union's image and credibility became very positive among employers, government and union members. To date, the ZFTATU is considered a role model in articulating worker OSH issues in wood and forestry and a lever for new standards of Collective Bargaining Agreements in Zimbabwe.

OSH Facilitated Open Discussion of HIV/AIDS

From a situation where HIV/AIDS was considered taboo and a social stigma, the



study circle discussions became the entry point to open discussion on such a sensitive issue. These discussions surfaced the existing realities of HIV/AIDS in the workplace including the existence of discrimination that happens in the workplace and the lack of supportive policies to address and prevent its spread. As a result, ZFTATU decided to focus on HIV/AIDS as the next theme for the succeeding study circle project.

OSH Improved ZFTAFU Networking

Since OSH is a cross-cutting issue deemed important by various sectors such as workers, employers, government and unions, the OSH study circle project improved the union's network of contacts and supporters. As such, the union was able to utilize resources of both employers and government to educate union members on HIV/AIDS. While the employers provided venues and company time for the study circles, government provided reading materials, inputs and resource persons for study circle discussions on social security issues and government policies. Consequently, union members benefited as they can now work under safe conditions. Employers also benefited because the project increased workers' productivity. Likewise, because few accidents occurred, government decreased its spending as reimbursements releases became lower.

IV. Evaluation of the Strategy: What made it work?

"Look for Hazards, Think of Solutions, SUGGEST"

an OSH poster in one of ZFTATU's work areas

THE OSH, RECOGNIZED AS A NEED AND RIGHT of workers, also became the strategy that united and consolidated the union. What made the OSH study circle project of ZFTATU effective was how the union leaders used this issue to address the problem of occupational hazards and workers' welfare and to organize and strengthen the union.



Specifically, what made the OSH project work in ZFTATU were the following measures taken:

1. There was full commitment and support of the project among the union leaders. Getting the union leaders' interest, commitment and participation in the project was crucial in making the OSH study circle project effective.
2. There was regular monitoring, evaluation and follow-up on the project by the union leaders. Planning and identification of new needs/ problems were continued during the implementation of the project so much so that new needs such as discrimination of workers affected and infected by HIV/AIDS were addressed as the project progressed. In so doing, the union became more in touch with the needs, issues and concerns of its members.
3. The training process provided sufficient time to train the direct target groups into OSH trainer-cadres which in turn provided them with enough time to train others and run study circles at workplaces as planned.
4. In between, there was a time for self-evaluation and review by the union, whereby the union educator would visit the regions to assess how far they were meeting their targets. Problems or difficulties encountered were immediately addressed rather than at the end-year evaluation meeting.

V. Next Step: Study Circle and HIV/AIDS

1. Due to improved working conditions and a strengthened union organization, ZFTATU resolved to replicate the OSH study circle project in the forestry sector in Zimbabwe and among timber, wood and forest unions in other countries in Southern Africa, particularly in Malawi, South Africa, Swaziland, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. ZFTATU would be a resource base for other training seminars on OSH in wood and forestry. The training material that was developed under this project would be

reproduced in the form of a “Wood and Forestry OSH module” which unions can use during workplace meetings.

2. After successfully educating and consolidating its members on the OSH issue using the study circle method, ZFTATU will now be focusing on HIV/AIDS education and policy development in the workplace as this is also a felt health issue repeatedly raised in the OSH study circles.
3. Sustainability of the OSH study circle methodology is assured due to the following:
 - Institutional memory of the project within ZFTATU;
 - It has been institutionalised within the education department of ZFTATU;
 - The project has trained a pool of trainers so that it does not depend on only one or a few trainers;
 - There is a manual that can be adopted and can be eventually revised as the situation changes.

“Due to the high level of accidents, diseases and hazards in the wood and forestry sectors, the need for a clear code to protect workers’ rights led to the development of a union-led Occupational Health and Safety (OSH) program strategy”

VI. Reflections

1. OSH study circle works because :
 - It is participatory
 - It improves productivity;
 - It unites various players at all levels – unions, employers, government- because prevention of work-related accidents is a common interest;
 - It has a human face based on the real and felt needs of ordinary rank and file workers.
2. The ZFTATU best practice clearly demonstrates that in order for OSH education

Project Details:

Timeframe: 2000 - 2003

Solidarity Support Organisation:

- LOTCO Sweden

National Partner Union:

- Swedish Forest and Wood Trade Union

Participating Union:

- ZFTATU

Regional Education Secretary:

Inviolata Chinyangara



- programmes to have a lasting impact on the union and its members, OSH activities should not be ad hoc in their operation. Rather, OSH education programmes should be focused on issue-solutions that have lasting impact;
3. Because of the OSH study circle union strategy, ZFTATU has proven that unions can have the capacity to influence workers and employers alike to ensure that OSH issues are prioritized. Likewise, OSH can also be included in CBAs with employers;
 4. For the OSH to work and be a best practice, it has to be:
 - a project that is needs-based, i.e it addresses the real needs and problems of the target group;
 - effective as a strategy in responding to the identified needs and problems;
 - sustainable, where the skills have been transferred to and internalised by a pool of activists;
 - replicable, so that it can be repeated and applied elsewhere where positive results can also be gained.
 - Participatory, i.e all levels of the union membership must be involved in the project.
 5. Project implementation entails making use of the political structure of the union to get the leaders and the structure involved. This way, political will is ensured in the course of project implementation.
 6. The rank-and-file must be involved because they compose the majority of union members and are the most affected by hazardous and unsafe working conditions. ■



Latin America and the Caribbean

Defence and Promotion of Workers' Rights



“ Personally, the project changed the economic vision that workers and union leaders used to have regarding our labour rights, since this was only seen from the point of view of the economic violations (wages, pensions, etc) and things relative to human conditions were ignored. We learned how to value human beings and their dignity because we understood that both dimensions are closely linked.

On the other hand, in the work place, the project has been useful to set up the parameters that allow us to identify when workers' rights are violated by the employers and the State. In other words, we have learned how to organize ourselves around the problems that we are facing and to plan the most possible efficient strategies of defence in order to be successful in our fights ”

Luis Manuel Travis, Education Secretary of FENTICOMMC, Dominican Republic





Latin America and the Caribbean: Defence and Promotion of Workers' Rights

I. Trade Union and Human Rights Violation in Latin America and the Caribbean

COUNTRIES IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE Caribbean region continue to experience violations of fundamental trade union and human rights. When human rights are violated, trade union rights are violated. Both are intrinsically inter-related with each other. This has been the case in Paraguay, Peru, Honduras and Guatemala where traces of repression have resulted in rampant violations of basic human and trade union rights. Trade union leaders organizing and fighting for the rights of the labour movement were persecuted and harassed. Collective bargaining agreements were ignored. The police supported employers' unfair labour practices and union busting with violent dispersals. Repressive regimes and neo-liberal policies reinforced employers' unfair labour practices and these have led to massive poverty and unrest especially among workers.

Basic human rights can no longer be separated from trade union rights. "It is universally admitted that it is not possible to develop trade union freedom without the pre-existence of human rights, and that neither is it possible to respect human rights without the existence of trade union rights. In other words, union freedom is not possible without the exercise of the other human rights and vice versa." This intrinsic link





challenged the trade union movement to address both human rights and trade union rights as a common cause.

Being the target of basic human and trade union rights violations, trade unions have found themselves in the frontline against human rights abuses. Murders and harassment of trade union leaders, weak or even anti-labour legislation, non-compliance of labour laws and standards, violence against peaceful strikes, non-payment of basic pay and benefits, precarious and hazardous working conditions, rampant child labour practices and poor compliance of women rights like

maternity leaves are some of the prevailing conditions plaguing the labour sector. Such violations were common in the pilot areas of the BWI human rights and trade union rights program in Paraguay, Peru, Honduras and Guatemala when it implemented its projects in 1995- 1997 and 1998-2001.

In Paraguay, although the Stroesnner dictatorship has ended, the trade unions continue to suffer persecution as evidenced by union leaders' disappearances and murders. While the democratic space was formally opening up, violations of the people's economic and social rights were increasing due to the high degree of corruption in government and the implementation of liberal economic policies. Employers deliberately ignored the right to freedom of association. Legal provisions for maternity leaves were oftentimes left unenforced while child labourers were not given social protection and were arbitrarily dismissed. Likewise, trade unions had difficulty in negotiating collective agreements in companies due to the non-recognition of the right of workers to strike by many employers, who often call on the police for violent dispersals of union strikes.

In Peru, the construction sector was plagued by the lack of fulfilment of the national collective agreement signed in 1994. The neo-liberal policies of the Peruvian govern-



ment resulted in low salaries, precarious working conditions, increase in unemployment and low level of investments in the construction sector. Consequently, in some regions, mainly in the Amazonian jungle, cheap manual labour was prevalent especially in sawmill and wood extractor companies. Workers experienced slave-labour conditions of work and received very little compensation. They were not given compensation for years of service, security benefits and maternity leave. Wages could not pay for even half of families' basic needs. Moreover, FENATIMAP, the BWI participating union, suffered serious persecution with over 30 legal cases pending against the FENATIMAP leadership for having taken part in peaceful demonstrations and other protest actions against anti-labour and regressive measures in the labour code.

In Honduras, construction workers suffered all kinds of rights' violations such as arbitrary dismissal without payment of salary, hazardous working conditions, social charges and harassments, employers' non-recognition of the right to organize, non-compliance of legal duration of maternity leave and sexual abuse of women. Employers oftentimes did not comply with labour laws while government lacked the political will to enforce sanctions on violations of labour laws. Such a situation was aggravated by the prevailing culture of fear, apathy and unawareness among workers of their rights, making it easier for employers to abuse them. Likewise, rampant practice of Child Labour in the commercial, construction, agricultural and transport sectors made children easy targets of abusive employers.

In Guatemala, widespread human and trade union rights violations plagued the trade union movement. Persecutions, death threats, assassinations of union leaders like Carlos Catalan and campaigns of intimidation against trade union leaders – those involved in trade union activities or those who fought against the privatisation of companies such as the Public Works -- were common practices. Even workers were persecuted for being members of the union in an attempt to sow fear and disunity within the ranks. While employers violated basic human and trade union rights, government on the other



hand was seen as uncaring and weak as it oftentimes failed to implement the Guatemalan Labour Code and ILO Conventions 87 and 98.

BWI Response

Recognizing the severe violations of basic human and trade union rights in Latin America and the Caribbean regions, BWI committed itself to defending and promoting both human and trade union rights. In its 1997-2001 congress, BWI affirmed its commitment to actively promote the following agenda in its advocacy and future projects:

- Freedom of association and right to bargain collectively
- Elimination of forced labour, bonded labour and child labour;
- Equality of treatment and opportunity in employment and occupation;
- Right to strike;
- Social justice;
- Access to productive and freely chosen employment;
- Security of employment and income;
- Elimination of risks and hazards at work

Recognizing the urgency and gravity of the situation plaguing its partner unions in Latin America and the Caribbean, BWI committed itself to denouncing violations of trade union and human rights by using its international solidarity network to put pressure on governments, employers and companies. Hence, it committed itself to continuing awareness-raising among affiliates on trade union and human rights, and, available mechanisms at national, regional and international levels to denounce violations. BWI hoped that international support would respond to the real needs of affiliates.

With this commitment high on its agenda, basic human and trade union rights projects were implemented in Latin America and the Caribbean, starting with the project entitled “Workers’ Rights in Latin America – Training for Solidarity in Peru, Paraguay,



“Murders and harassment of leaders, anti-labour legislation, non-compliance of labour laws and standards, violence against peaceful strikes, non-payment of basic pay and benefits, hazardous working conditions, child labour practices and poor compliance of women rights are some of the prevailing conditions plaguing the labour sector”

Honduras, Guatemala” (1995-1997). Eventually, this became the springboard for another project, “Workers’ Rights in Latin America: Defence and Promotion of Workers’ Rights - Peru, Paraguay, Honduras, Guatemala” (March 1998-2001). This second phase has set the precedent for future replication and expansion to the other countries within the Latin American and Caribbean region.

II. Enabling Unions to Defend and Fight for Trade Union and Human Rights Through the Formation of Promoters

CONFRONTED WITH A SITUATION WHERE fundamental human and trade union rights were being violated, BWI affiliates in Latin America designed a project strategy that would enable them to defend and promote basic human rights with the over-all aim of improving the human and trade union rights situation in the country, and eventually expanding the promotion of trade and human rights to other countries in the Latin American and the Caribbean region. The project strategy that started in 1994 was piloted in three selected countries (Paraguay, Peru, Honduras and to a limited extent to Guatemala), developed further in 1998-2001 in the same countries, and eventually replicated to Columbia, Venezuela, Dominican Republic and Argentina from 2002 until 2005.

Having finished the second phase of the project (from 1998-2001), this case study will focus more on the original pilot countries (Paraguay, Peru, Honduras and to a limited extent to Guatemala) for the FNV funded Project entitled: Defence and Promotion



“Basic human rights can no longer be separated from trade union rights. This intrinsic link challenged the trade union movement to address both human rights and trade union rights as a common cause”

of Workers' Rights in Latin America and the Caribbean. The project objectives from 1998-2001 were the following:

- To improve the capacity of BWI affiliates and associates to denounce violations of human and trade union rights and to obtain satisfactory solutions;
- To improve the capacity of the BWI Latin American Regional Office to monitor the situation of human and trade union rights and provide support to its affiliates in creating procedures -- at the national, regional and international levels -- to denounce violations;
- To increase membership awareness of basic rights and fundamental freedoms;
- To assist women workers to define their demand and needs and propose strategies to increase their representation at the union level;
- To provide expertise in the field of trade union rights including women's and children's rights;

Project Structure of Activities:

The project strategy focused on the training and formation of Promoters to catalyse, organize and expand the work of human and trade union rights defence and promotion. With the promoters as the backbone of the project, the project structure was designed in such a way that promoters were trained to train other members of the local union and thereby strengthen the union's and network's capacity to promote human rights. The following are the major features of the project's strategy:

Training Promoters of Trade Union and Human Rights

The project was a combination of national and local trainings, campaigns, and solidarity work all of which were designed to train promoters of human and trade union rights so that they could re-echo the training to local leaders and members. The promoters were selected among the national leadership, education and women officers of the BWI affiliates and associates in Peru, Paraguay and Honduras. Promoters trained were then

made responsible for organizing the necessary campaigns to realize their strategies in defence of human rights and solidarity work for the purpose of generating more support and allies for the cause of human rights. The strength of the project was anchored primarily on the training of promoters as the organizers and activists of trade union and human rights. In selecting the promoters who would undergo training, both the project coordinator and the union agreed that the criteria for selecting the promoters should be the following: a respected union leader, commitment, good relationship with union members, good moral values, literate, responsible and does not discriminate others. Such criteria were strictly enforced as the promoters' tasks and responsibilities were crucial to the attainment of the project objectives. The following are the tasks and responsibilities of the promoters:

- Organize the work and trainings for the promotion and defence of human rights in the union;
- Create a trade union-human rights network within the organization;
- Plan, implement, evaluate and document trade union and human rights activities;
- Raise the awareness of the executive committee members on their role and responsibilities resulting from the project;
- Set up interdisciplinary groups to support the trade union and human rights advocacy (i.e. composed of promoters, union officers, media persons, women, organizers, human rights officers, legal experts, etc.)

With more developed capacities, promoters became instrumental in raising the profile of human rights, transforming the union leadership's stance on human rights and developing alliances with other unions. The promoters were also able to multiply the number of human rights activists and supporters by organizing follow-up activities to share, practice and replicate learnings from national-level seminars to local union work.

National Seminars

An annual national training course in each participating country was conducted during the three-year project period. These courses were designed to train 20 human and trade union rights promoters from the national leadership, education and women's officers of BWI affiliates and associates in Peru, Paraguay, and Honduras . The courses included workshops with themes specific to each country and training participants on collective bargaining, national labour codes, international labour standards and women workers' rights.

The basic contents of the promoters' training included the following topics other than the participatory analysis of cases and issues on human rights violations and situation in the Latin American region:

- Basic human rights and trade union rights that included a gender perspective
- Analysis of national labour legislations and practices
- International human rights standards such as ILO conventions
- International instruments – like UN instruments of human rights and organizations of American states
- Mechanisms and procedures of defending against human rights violations (e.g. ILO, International Court of Human Rights and BWI) in the national and international arena;
- Pedagogical education and training techniques and methodology
- Women's Rights
- Tools and strategies to design action plans, solidarity and information campaigns, advocacies and mass actions on trade union and human rights
- Models and mechanisms of defence and denunciation of human rights violations at the national, regional and international level
- Writing reports, press releases and human rights documentation



“Recognizing the urgency and gravity of the situation plaguing its partner unions in Latin America and the Caribbean, BWI committed itself to continuing awareness-raising among affiliates and to denounce violations”

Local Activities

After each national seminar, the participants (i.e. the trained promoters) carried out three to four follow-up workshops with local leaders and union members in each of their respective countries. These local workshops would inform and train local leaders on basic trade union and human rights such as women workers’ rights, freedom of association, and procedure to denounce violations of rights at local and national level. Likewise, local activities also took the form of discussion, fora and campaigns all of which allowed the promoters to reach more workers and promote human rights including the surfacing of individuals who were suffering from human rights violations.

Sub-Regional Workshop

Per year, one (1) sub-regional seminar was implemented for 15-20 participants from the implementing unions. Sub-regional seminars were held six months after the national seminars to enable participants to exchange experiences about the local follow-up activities, discuss difficulties encountered and re-focus on the themes discussed. The workshops also became venues to discuss and evaluate – at the regional level -- the strategies taken to denounce trade union rights violations and to coordinate national and sub-regional campaigns. Promoters trained during the national seminars attended these sub-regional workshops.

Sub-regional Women Workers Training Programme

The women’s committee conducted three (3) national workshops that focused on women workers’ basic rights and working conditions. During these national workshops, representatives to the women’s sub-regional workshop were selected. The sub-regional



“The project strategy focused on the training and formation of Promoters to catalyse, organize and expand the work of human and trade union rights defence and promotion”

workshop, in turn, produced the common platform of demands and strategies that were presented in the Latin American Regional Women's Committee. The women workers sub-regional programme was attended by women workers, their representatives at national level, and members of the Latin American Regional Women's Committee.

Regional and National Campaigns

In consultation with the implementing unions and in coordination with their union leadership, promoters planned regional and national campaigns on specific themes of human rights. Campaigns in the form of conferences, workers' strikes, mass actions, use of media and materials dissemination were undertaken to bring attention and resolution to various rights issues such as the right to collective bargaining.

Solidarity Actions

Solidarity actions ranging from press releases, protest letters to governments, written denunciations and complaints to international bodies and mechanisms such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations (UN) were implemented to create international pressure and foster cooperation among partners and organizations fighting for human rights. Some of the themes referred to the persecution and assassination of trade union leaders in Ecuador, Brazil and Columbia, non-payment of wages and non-respect of working conditions in El Salvador, persecution of trade unionists in Ecuador, Guatemala and Columbia, occupational health and safety violations in Argentina, violations of ILO conventions in Panama, anti-union decrees in Venezuela, police violence against striking workers in Paraguay, national strikes in Peru for non-payment of wages, and, other human rights violations.

Work Missions in Guatemala

In Guatemala, meetings of BWI affiliates and Human Rights organizations were held to provide legal support and counselling particularly in cases of violations. Likewise, the mission aimed to reinforce the cooperation between unions and organizations working



for the defence of human rights. The Carlos Catalan assassination case was one of the specific legal cases provided with constant legal support and consultancy.

III. Milestones and Gains of the Trade Union and Human Rights Promoters' Training

ALTHOUGH THE PROJECT EFFECTED POSITIVE impact on the actual defence and promotion of trade union and human rights, enabling unions to fight for their rights -- in a programmatic manner -- was equally important. From a situation of powerlessness, fear and political apathy, unions are now beginning to stand up in defence of their basic human rights. Equipped with the knowledge and capacities to confront human and trade union rights violations, trade unions in Latin America are becoming crucial players in the improvement of the human rights situation in their countries. This is best revealed by the success stories of the unions themselves in capacity-building, increasing political leverage of unions, and, integrating women's rights as trade union rights.

Success Stories:

Guatemala: 1998 murder of Carlos Catalan, a Trade Union Leader

Due to actions taken by the SINCS-G, BWI's local union, the perpetrator of the murder of Carlos Catalan – who had enjoyed 2-3 years of impunity -- was sentenced to 25 years of imprisonment. Because of the project, the union was able to identify the perpetrator, lobby for his prosecution and take legal action. This eventually led to the perpetrator's court trial where the penalty of 25 years of imprisonment was meted out.

The Carlos Catalan murder was plagued by a lot of delay, controversy, whitewashing and undue harassment to cover-up the truth but the SINCS-G, together with BWI, persisted in investigating and re-opening the case. The BWI mission and the union withstood all threats including the threat to their lives. Moreover, careful research and strategizing enabled the union to re-open the case and to get the attention of Carlos Alberto Godoy, Secretary of Public Ministry and Adolfo Rodas, General District Attorney. The





courage and persistence of the work missions paid off. A thorough follow-up of all police and judicial efforts around the case was obtained. Such determined follow-through of the SINCS-G and BWI work missions eventually led to the sentencing of Marcos Morales, perpetrator of Catalan's murder.

Peru: Peruvian Supreme Court's recognition of Collective Bargaining Agreements strongly influenced Peruvian Government Because of the constant lobbying of Peruvian (BWI affiliated) unions for the recognition of the right of workers to collectively bargain, the Peruvian Supreme Court decided in their favor

and issued a resolution recognizing the right of workers to be covered by Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs). The unions lobbied at the national, local and international levels using international instruments such as ILO conventions.

The Union's effective lobbying resulted in the Constitutional Tribunal's ruling that the Peruvian State is obliged to recognize collective negotiations. The State, therefore, was mandated by the High Court to create the necessary conditions to enable both parties (i.e. employers and workers) to negotiate freely. The tribunal's ruling rationalized the role of the State in providing certain positive actions to assure that collective negotiations are effectively carried out. This meant that the legal bottlenecks weaved by former president Alberto Fujimori could be dismantled and corrected, opening the possibility for fair, technical and systematic legislation of a new General Labour Law. This milestone legislation signalled the possibility of achieving social agreements between workers and employers. The new government, in fact, was left with no option but to recognize the right of workers to collectively bargain with employers.

Dominican Republic: Implementation of the Pension and Retirement Fund for Workers For Luis Manuel Travieso, Education Secretary of FENTICOMMC, Dominican Re-

public, the biggest contribution of the BWI project was to enable and empower the unions to plan an advocacy program on pensions and retirement funds of workers. Through the project, the union mobilized a sizeable protest assembly against employers who refused to pay pension and retirement funds as stipulated in the law. Two thousand (2000) leaders representing all the construction branches and related occupations attended the national leaders' assembly. After this offensive, the employer sector supported and developed proposals which have been subjected to negotiations with the unions. Consequently, the new social security legislation covering the Fund of Pensions, Family Health Insurance, Labour Risk Insurance was maintained and protected by Supreme Court decisions. The Supreme Court ruling was crucial to get the State to recognize the validity of providing workers with social security.

Guatemala: Defending the Rights of the Trade Union, a successful judicial case

In 2002, the construction company Paez Reyes was in charge of building a big market in the town of Coatepeque, Department of Quetzaltenango in Guatemala. At the time the work was finished, the company refused to pay compensation and benefits to the bricklayers and manual workers affiliated to the BWI. In response, the SINCS-G union filed a complaint at the Court of labour, which ruled in favour of the union. Unfortunately, despite the court ruling, the owner of the company continued to refuse to pay benefits. To follow-through on this, the union pursued their demand to the higher courts of justice in Guatemala that also ruled in favour of the union and solved the conflict definitively, resulting in the payment of labour benefits to 72 workers amounting to 882 thousand Quetzels (US\$107,000). Crucial to the workers' victory was the mandatory order of the Attorney's office of Human Rights in Coatepeque that played a vital role in the complementary actions of the local union. Likewise, Carlos Perez, a trained promoter was actively involved in the whole judicial process, earning for him and the BWI project, the respect of and credibility among the workers.

Peru: Gaining Victories for the Union

Through persistent collective actions, negotiations and mass actions of the Union of Workers in Civil Construction of the Skacochi Association, an affiliate of FENATIMAP, the 800 workers building the Hydroelectric YUNCANI for the Department of Pasco reached a collective agreement solving its 15-point petition in the strike term. Crucial tactics that led to the success of the CBA were the mediation of the General Management of Labour and the mediation of the Swedish unions in SKANSKA. The following are the highlights of the CBA:

- A structure of remunerative categories is maintained, assigning an increment of 6% to the basic wage of the different categories of workers starting on February 18, 2004;
- Extension of the economic benefits of the production bonus to all the work fronts: S/300 soles per month;
- Work completion allowance, with an equivalent of 15-days wages of the worker's salary structure or 50 days of wages for years worked;
- Allowance for tunnel communication: 50 days of wages;
- Allowance for accidental death and permanent invalidity of the worker. The association agrees with maintaining the validity of the life insurance policies for workers and the responsibility of 150 days wages;
- School allowance for children in school age. This was given in the form of a loan to be paid in five monthly payments starting April 2004;
- Payment of leave of the work site. Every 60 days, including the cost from the ticket to the place of residence;
- Improvement of meal services provided by the concessionaire;
- Logistical support to the union. The Association agrees to donate a computer and a printer to the union;
- Trade union leave for union leaders;
- Training course for workers in masonry, carpentry and ironworks;

- Distribution of goods and tools. At the moment, the furniture belong to the workers (beds, mattresses, benches, sheets) and they will continue being workers' property after their contract finishes;
- Commission given to Social assistance of Lima. The Association will commission the social assistance of the Lima headquarters so that it offers the social support to workers – especially for health purposes;
- Respect for the union leaders. The Association will reinforce its internal administrative mechanisms to maintain sound relationships in different organizational levels;
- Safety tools: Execution of safety measures such as safe water, uniform, boots and gloves.

“Solidarity actions ranging from press releases, protest letters to governments, written denunciations and complaints to international bodies and mechanisms such as the ILO and the UN were implemented to create international pressure”

Capacity Building:

Change and Improvement of Trade Union Leadership

Local trade union leaders that were trained in the project as human rights promoters were either appointed or elected to higher and more important positions in the local, regional and national union. Promoters trained to defend and promote trade union and human rights became either the next generation of union leaders or became instrumental in developing union leaders equipped with skills necessary to defend and promote trade union and human rights.

Consciousness Raising, Organizing and Mobilizing Amidst an Environment of Repression

The project educated, organized and mobilized the workers. It raised union members' awareness concerning trade and human rights and the importance of respecting



“From a situation of powerlessness, fear and political apathy, unions are now beginning to stand up in defence of their basic human rights”

fundamental rights in all countries and in all circumstances. As a result of the project, a new federation in Paraguay, the Federacion de Trabajadores de la Construccion y la Madera del Paraguay (FETRACOMP) was formed on October 12, 2003. Likewise, four local unions have since joined this Federation, namely: Sindicato de Obreros, Carpinteros, Ebanistas, Similiares y ANEXOS (SOCESA); Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Construccion Autentico (SINATRAC-A); Asociacion de Profesionales Pintores del Paraguay (APP) y el Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Empresa de Ceramica Itagua (SITRACISA), with the latter having a membership base of more than 10,000 workers.

Local workers acquired the tools to defend their rights

Unions are now able to detect and anticipate violations and thus prevent these from further happening. Training activities resulted in concrete actions and discussion of strategies on the defence and promotion of trade unions. The BWI affiliates thus improved their capacities to denounce violations of human and trade union rights. Likewise, the promoters have also improved their capacity to plan and design training activities on human and trade union rights.

Improved Education Program

The project has significantly improved the organisation's education policy and training schemes in the area of trade union and human rights thereby enhancing union capacity to adopt and implement strategies in this area.

Regional Solidarity in the Human Rights Campaign in Latin America and the Caribbean

The project resulted in the setting up of a regional secretariat for trade union and human rights advocacy. With a regional human rights secretariat in place, the BWI re-





gional office increased its capacity to respond, monitor and coordinate – internationally -- cases of trade union rights violations in a more efficient and effective fashion. Likewise, the regional secretariat is regularly provided with a broader and updated picture of the trade union and human rights situation in Latin American countries. The secretariat thus has become the pivotal force in monitoring human rights violations and coordinating solidarity campaigns to support the struggle for human rights in the region.

Building Political Leverage:

Increased visibility and acceptance of the unions

The project made the union visible. Before the project, unions were silent especially in situations where there were many human rights and trade union violations. After the project, even in a repressive situation that sowed fear, the unions had the confidence to stand up, speak out and mobilize their ranks to defend their rights.

Recognition of the Promoters

The programme allowed the promoters to increase their presence in their areas of action and at the same time increase their level of recognition among civil society groups. As a result, there was a dramatic increase in the number of protest actions and joint demonstrations with other groups. Meanwhile, in the communities where the promoters worked, people recognized them as defenders of people's rights. The promoters' legitimacy increased the political impact of the unions within civil society and enabled trade unions to strengthen their organisations' clout at the local level.

Established contacts with human rights organisations

In each of the participating country (i.e. Peru, Paraguay, Honduras, Guatemala), the trade union organisations established contacts with human rights organisations (e.g. religious institutions in the Peruvian amazons) for the purpose of strengthening and gaining support for the human rights campaigns. Given the difficult political and economic context in which trade unions work, any progress towards the creation of alli-





ances in the area of human rights were deemed necessary to enhance the work BWI affiliates in this area.

Improved Profile of trade unions due to Publication of BWI Human Rights Manual

The BWI Human Rights Manual has been widely used by trade unions and civil society organisations as their permanent guidebook in defending and promoting human rights. Consequently, the high acceptance and utilization of the manual improved the image of trade unions and facilitated contact building contacts with human rights

institutions in participating countries.

Sharing of experiences promoted unity and solidarity in the region

The project was instrumental in providing venues for sharing strategies to address trade union and human rights violations. Regional activities allowed for information exchange and the development of training materials. Such sharing promoted unity and solidarity at the regional level in the field of trade unionism and human rights and at the same time improved strategies, plans and cooperation among the partners.

Expanding the Trade Union and Human Rights Movement

The strength of the project is its capacity to multiply and replicate itself to as many local unions as possible through trained and committed promoters. Because the trained promoters have been given the proper tools (knowledge, skills and exposures) to defend and promote human rights, they have been instrumental in replicating these to several local unions and multiplying the number of trade union and human rights advocates.

Empowering Women and Promoting the women's agenda

The activities implemented have also promoted the participation of women and young

workers in the union. In particular, gains in terms of gender equality within the participating unions are as follows:

- Women's participation in training activities increased by 30% over the last two years of the project's implementation;
- Creation of women's committees with around 250 women partners;
- Conduct of 4 women congresses in various unions;
- Organization of 400 women at the national level from among the various women's committees;
- Conduct of 7 regional women meetings in the Latin American and Caribbean regions;
- Participation of 645 women in the BWI programs, mainly on the development of activities pertinent to the human and union rights.
- Women trainers have increased.
- Women's committees were created and women secretaries were appointed;
- There is improved awareness among trade union leaders and officers of gender issues and the need to support the participation of women in the union work;
- There is increased presence and participation of women in the governing bodies and decision-making processes.

IV. Reflections and Insights

Due to the positive impact of the Project in enabling unions to defend and promote trade union and human rights in Peru, Paraguay, Honduras and Guatemala, replication and expansion in four other Latin American countries is now underway. These replication activities aim to improve the general trade union and human rights condition in Latin America through the development of a regional network of human and trade union rights activists and activist-organizations. For a region that still encounters violation of funda-

“In the struggle for human rights defence and promotion, trade unions should work at becoming part of a larger social movement “

mental human and trade union rights, capacity building of unions and alliance building with other civil society groups is an imperative. The implementation of the Project in Peru, Paraguay, Honduras and Guatemala has surfaced valuable insights and learning in the union's succeeding work on trade union and human rights. The following insights and lessons can be surmised from the evaluation missions and reports generated:

Organizing starts with addressing the workers' interests

In the immediate term, the project was able to address the need to help union members to defend and promote their rights. This was a very important entry point for the project.

Using real cases and actual situations bring urgency and relevance to the project

Human Rights projects like this should always be based on and adopted to the real situation. In so doing, the project becomes relevant, legitimate and appropriate from the vantage point of participating organizations.

Sustaining the struggle entails balancing Strategic and Local Tactical Victories, Political and Socio-Economic Gains

The human rights problem in Latin American and the Caribbean region is a structural problem that is not easy to solve and address. Changing the situation in this region requires huge resources (especially human resources), time and a strong determination to advance the struggle. Hence, the question of how resources are to be allotted to human rights work always arises especially in view of expected changes and results. This requires a balance of having small tactical and felt victories at the workplace without losing sight of the real, deep structural problems and the developmental goal of improving trade union and human rights conditions in the region. It is both a challenge on effectiveness and efficiency of strategies. Any strategy thus must move towards solving the structural human rights and trade union problems in specific country contexts while achieving tactical gains (i.e. also without watering down the strategic developmental goal of having structural changes).



Related to this tension of balancing strategic and local tactical victories, there is also the constant challenge of balancing between the economic and political struggles in the region. When confronted with an environment where there are structural human and trade union violations, there is a need to sustain the struggle with socio-economic and winnable gains for the people. In the long struggle for structural change, the union needs to attain small concrete gains to sustain the interest and involvement of the workers.

An Empowering Project Design

While the structures were set up and the promoters were trained to take on the fight of trade union and human rights promotion, the strength of the project was in its design-- that of being participatory, empowering and grounded on the real situation of the union. Trainings were given in the spirit of immediately passing these on to the local union, so that ideas could be shared, replicated, and utilized as soon as possible. Activities were implemented with the intent of raising human rights awareness and enabling the union to be critical of their situation. Likewise, the training activities were designed to involve problem solving about real situations followed by action planning and campaign strategizing that would address concrete situations of human and trade union rights violations. The project, therefore, was an empowering and organizing strategy by itself, as it not only raised the unions' awareness but also enabled them to find ways to strengthen their unions and organize activities for the improvement of their human rights situation.

Solidarity Work Strengthens the Advocacy for Trade Union and Human Rights

The project showed that the human rights issue is a global issue. This makes employers wary since putting human rights advocacy under an international umbrella lends it more legitimacy and leverage. The appearance of broad international unity is important against the rampant use of impunity. Fostering international solidarity for human rights is done by undertaking joint solidarity actions in the local, national, regional and international level to create more pressure on governments. Likewise, solidarity networks should



promote cooperation and alliances with non-government organizations, national trade unions, as well as international trade union movements to improve the efficiency and impact of actions undertaken for the defence of trade union and human rights.

Trade Unions as Part of a Bigger Social Movement

In the struggle for human rights defence and promotion, trade unions should work at becoming part of a larger social movement. This would entail intensifying the denunciation of all type of abuses (whether they are trade union or community abuses) of authorities at all levels. Local struggles have to be supported. At the same time, trade union formation should be as broad as possible, at the local, national and regional level. Members of the community should be involved in the defence of human and trade unions rights.

Keep the fire burning

Ensuring commitment to the defence and promotion of human rights is crucial to the project's success and sustainability. A project of this nature requires commitment, devotion, capacity of service and dedication to workers. These values have to be instilled in all the human rights promoters. These values should be the heart and soul of the project. The more technical part of the project is capacity building--- learning how to organize the union around actual violations and planning the most effective strategy.. Commitment and capacity need to go together. To keep the work going, human rights activists need to be supported.

V. Recommendations for Succeeding Projects on Human and Trade Union Rights

These are a few of the recommendations that the project evaluation missions and interviews generated pertinent to the improvement of the trade union and human rights project in Latin American and the Caribbean region:

- Training does not automatically guarantee that implementing organisations are able to systematically denounce the violations and arrive at satisfactory solutions. Training on human and trade union rights, therefore, should always be integral to the strengthening of the organisations' capacity to set up and institutionalise a full programme on trade union, human and labour rights.
- Provide winnable and tangible socio-economic gains and benefits to the workers to support and complement the political struggle on trade and human rights. These tangible benefits can be in the form of providing safe and healthy working conditions, and, issues that are mutually agreeable and beneficial to both employers and workers. This will help sustain the struggle and workers' interest and involvement.
- The project should maintain its regional component and focus on selected countries to further develop strategies and mechanisms to defend fundamental workers' rights. It should also try to involve organisations already active in the promotion and defence of human rights.
- Focus on consolidating the work done by developing mechanisms and strategies to denounce violations systematically and successfully. Future programs should also strengthen the union at the local level.
- For weaker organisations, it is advisable that the project contributes to the strengthening of structures by focusing on practical case studies for the defence and promotion of human and trade union rights. For organisations with a higher level of development, priority should be given to the development of effective dialogues with institutions active in the field of human rights, the design of trade union proposals for the defence of these



rights, and, the denunciation of actual violations.

- To enhance future work in the area of trade union and human rights, trade union education programs should include the analysis of various prevailing trade union and human rights situations and seek to gather necessary training and technical materials appropriate to the issues at hand. To achieve this, contacts should be established with academic institutions or any other similar organisation that are open to assisting trade unions.
- After the completion of the project, a database should be established to allow trade unions to exchange experiences and get the support from the regional office or other organisations whenever needed. A web page should also be created at the sub-regional level to improve the efficiency of the education network. This page should be regularly updated and consolidated by the promoters trained in the project.
- Involve middle-level and rank and file leaders in project design and in developing the project's strategies so as to create their interest in the multiplication of training and the application of knowledge to the union's daily practice. ■

Project Details:

Timeframe: 1995 - 2003

Solidarity Support Organisation:

- FNV Netherlands

National Partner Union:

- FNV Bouw Netherlands

Participating Unions: Unions in Paraguay, Peru, Guatemala, Honduras

Project Coordinator:

Marcelina Samaniego





Russia

Transforming Unions in a Post-Soviet Conjuncture





“ Transforming the trade union in a Post-Soviet Russia is a process that takes a lot of participation and un-learning at all levels. Having been used to a centralised style of leadership, the prevailing mentality of leaders has been top-down while members feel that they cannot influence union policies. The key therefore is to make members active so that they influence the union. It is important for members to realize that the union is us, the members... not the structure and not the leaders ”

Michael Kartashov, Project Coordinator, BWI-Russia

“ We try to make members understand that their union is a tool, and they should use it, and that we are strong when we are united and work together, when everyone participates and does his or her own bit, and not only put demands on the union and complaints. We are trying to make members feel proud to be part of the union and be a representative of our industry ”

Zenaida Arkhipenko, Vice President, Moscow Regional Committee



Russia:

Transforming Unions in a Post-Soviet Conjunction

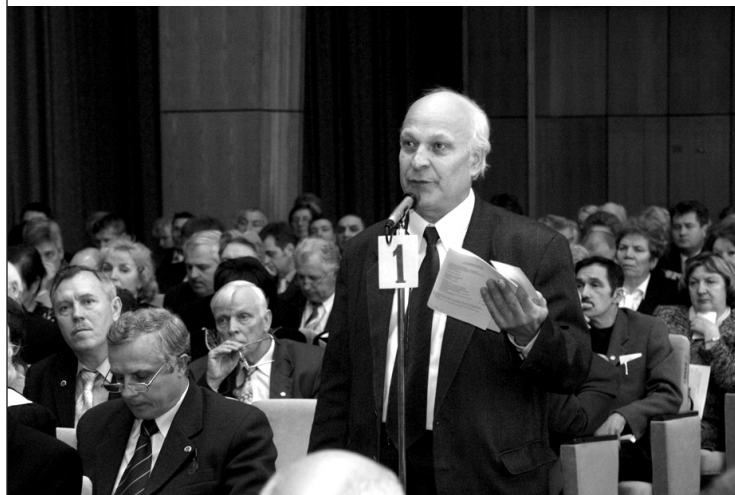
I. Post-Soviet Trade Union Situation

THE TRANSITION IN POST-SOVIET RUSSIA poses serious challenges to trade unions as relevant players in society and more importantly as the people's hope for better working and living conditions. Trade unions face the challenge of responding effectively to the socio-economic challenges of post-soviet Russia: how to transform top-down and centralized organizations into democratic unions that genuinely represent workers thereby making unions crucial stakeholders of Russian society.

Industrial situation influencing the trade unions

Post-soviet Russia continues to present serious challenges to the survival and relevance of unions. In an overwhelming majority of regions, Russian trade unions are losing members. This phenomenon is triggered by both the deterioration of industry, which can be attributed to positions taken by the government, and the subjective conditions of the unions.

A number of negative tendencies in the Russian economy have caused a crisis among the unions (i.e. decrease in union membership), some of which are due to the following trends:



Restructuring of the Construction and Building Materials Industry

Big companies traditionally owned by the state and then turned into joint stock ventures are being divided up into a number of small or medium private companies. In most cases, the union does not automatically inherit its members but has to recruit them anew. This situation is aggravated by the negative attitude of employers towards unionism.

Uptake and Buying-up of Companies

There is a trend where big companies from some sectors of the economy (for example, metal processing) are buying up companies from the construction sector as a matter of investment. In such cases, unions lose members because workers need to become members of “the other” union due to the fact that the “company-based membership principle” has to be followed.

The response of Russian civil society to the brewing political and economic crisis has not been quick nor substantial. This is understandable in the context of decades of statism. Trade unions, however, remain to be in the best position to represent and defend the interests of the working people. Trade unions could in fact signal the rebirth of civil society in post-soviet Russia,

Trade Union Situation

The Construction and Building Materials Industry Workers’ Union of the Russian Federation (referred to hereinafter as the “Union”) has undergone a period of transformation characteristic of all post-soviet unions. The first stage of this transformation (1991-1995) was accompanied by the loss of the Union’s former status in society, loss of political and economic influence, drastic fall of membership, and, changes in legislation





that restricted unions' rights. All of these occurred within the context of an overall trade union movement crisis. The second stage (1995 to the present) has brought new interpretations of the trade unions' role. Unions continue to lose members but their status is being confirmed in the legislation, both at the federal and regional levels. Public activity has become more brisk and social partnership is being developed. Long-established union committees at the workplace level have taken on new union functions. Majority of the newly established private companies, however, are opposed to union formation.

The changing economic situation has resulted in worse working conditions for the majority of workers. Non-payment of wages and other violations has led to conflict situations that are new for people used to social security. In this context, there is a demand for unions to be organizations that would settle such conflicts.

Personnel and Image Problems of Trade Unions

While it is imperative that trade unions continue to ensure and safeguard the interest of their members, it is disheartening to see that trade unions in post soviet nations like Russia have been experiencing two serious internal crises inherited from its soviet past: the "personnel" and the "image" problems.

Due to the previous Soviet style of appointing leaders to trade union structures as opposed to the development of the union's own personnel, the trade union's leadership and personnel have weakened in skill and competence, remaining estranged from the needs of union members. Since appointments to trade union leadership positions were considered as career steps or springboards to further advancement in the Party or economic management structures, the quality and motivation of the union leaders suffered. There are also incumbent trade union officers who were appointed as some sort of exile or punishment by the Party. Consequently, such appointed leaders who are still holding key positions in union structures have become a burden to the union's capacity for change and strategic leadership.





This lack of union leadership is likewise aggravated by the poor image of trade unions. Rooted in the so-called trade union monopoly where membership in trade unions were compulsory for all workers, the prevailing attitude of workers is to be passive and dependent on the union's top-down structures. Basic worker's participation is limited to timely payment of membership fees and attendance in every union meeting to listen to reports already decided by the Party and union leadership. At the same time, there is a culture of silence and non-participation among members. Only leaders take charge of trade union matters. This reality is the very foundation of the "them and us" attitude of workers in many unions. It is an attitude that persists to this day.

“Trade unions face the challenge of transforming top-down and centralized organizations into democratic unions that genuinely represent workers thereby making them crucial stakeholders of Russian society”

On the other hand, the Soviet State was in many respects socially oriented while the trade unions took on the peripheral and membership maintenance functions. While the state took care of the socio-economic and labour relations regulation functions, it delegated some of the controlling and supervision functions to the unions, preferring the unions to take care of workers' free time. Thus, everything that had any relevance to socio-economic relations was integrated into the State functions, while the union representation in the society and in the workplace concentrated on peripheral functions such as cultural and social activities. Such limitations crippled the trade union leadership's capacity for strategic planning and democratic decision-making.

At the beginning of the Post-Soviet period, the first reaction of union members was to leave their unions as one of the first free choices they were granted. The loss of members increased when the unions became independent. Obtaining independence from the State also meant a loss of the trade union's protection and delegated functions and





resources. After decades of working according to well established patterns and with the lack of motivation and initiative among union officials and members, the unions could not face up to changes. For the last ten years, unions have been trying to find their place within these new realities.

Trade unions are barely coping with the over-all political-economic changes in Russia. If unable to reform internally and work out possible solutions to problems confronting them, both the Russian society and the unions would degenerate and plunge into crises. With the trade unions as the working population's vehicle for a better quality of life, the remaining hope lies on the capacity of unions to strengthen themselves and thereby effectively act within shifting economic and political situations.

II. Using the Study Circle as a Strategy for Transforming and Energizing the Union

AS A FIRST STEP TO CONFRONTING the challenges of a new economic and political system, the Construction and Building Materials Industry Workers' Union of the Russian Federation agreed that internal reform and strengthening of the union was a necessary prerequisite. If they were to confront the situation and find solutions, the union should have both competent leadership attuned to the changing situations, and a motivated and supportive membership. Personnel and organizing policies should be reformed as a prelude to improving the image and capacity of the union. Only with this internal consolidation and capacity building could the Union be capable of improving its position in industry and society. Addressing the internal weaknesses of the trade union organization would enable the Union to achieve its developmental objectives and indicators of success.

Developmental Objectives:

- The implementing union plays an increasingly important role in the process of





building civil society through involvement of workers in the development of participatory democracy.

Expected Results:

- The building workers are aware of trade union functions and resources;
- The building workers deliberately join the union to improve their working conditions and achieve fair and justified levels of wages;
- The building workers actively participate in collective bargaining and solidarity campaigns;
- The implementing union collects, processes and acts upon all cases of violation of trade union rights;
- The implementing union has strong bargaining position in its negotiation with employers organizations, multi-regional companies on the national level, and with local companies on the regional level;
- The implementing union is strong enough to negotiate with political parties for support and lobby of its social initiatives;

Indicators of Achievement:

- Facilitation and commencement of a process of structural and political reforms in the union;
- Increased, stable and active membership base;
- Increased level of unionisation in the small and medium size construction companies;
- All construction companies are covered by collective bargaining agreements (CBA);
- Improved solidarity and cooperation of members at the local, regional and inter-regional and national level;



To achieve the development goal of making the union a recognized player and important stakeholder in the construction industry and the post-Soviet Russian society, the Union agreed that they should develop a strong, sustainable and effective construction and building union both at the regional and national levels.

Project Objectives:

- For trade union members to gain a higher level of awareness of fundamental workers' rights;
- To improve the ability of trade unions to organize campaigns around issues with the aim of preparing the political ground for the necessary structural and political reforms.
- To increase membership and improve the financial base of the union.
- Within the framework of the education and information network, the implementing union develops a new personnel and organizing policy aimed at training young workers and promoting them to key positions in the union structure

With these objectives in mind and in response to a needs assessment survey, the Union decided to focus its energies on three aspects of trade union work. These are:

- 1) Membership --- To motivate and activate the apathetic and declining membership towards enabling them to communicate with co-members and find solutions to the political and economic changes.
- 2) Understanding and Confronting the Economy – To find solutions that would create a stable economic situation for the union.
- 3) Negotiations – To devise better ways of negotiating with employers in the new situation.

It was agreed that the union members and officials themselves must meet these chal-

“In the struggle for human rights defence and promotion, trade unions should work at becoming part of a larger social movement”

“Due to the previous Soviet style of appointing leaders, the trade union’s leadership and personnel have weakened in skill and competence, remaining estranged from the needs of union members”

allenges and that solutions must be developed through education, awareness raising and discussions. Since the union has very limited means, the study circle was seen as the most appropriate methodology to address the immediate project objectives of the union.

The Study Circle Methodology

The Swedish Building Union (BYGGNADS) introduced the study circle methodology as a tool for activating and transforming the union in the direction of its strategic goals.

As the Union experienced using this methodology, they defined the study circle as a methodology that uses a lot of brainstorming and discussions among participants from various levels of the union. Participatory discussions persuaded union members to be interested, to get involved and know more about the union thereby becoming instrumental in awakening and activating the union membership. Through study circles and brainstorming, the union found new ways of finding solutions to old problems. These sessions serve as perfect venues for the union to discuss its comprehensive analysis of the current situation. Moreover, union leaders got feedback from all levels (from the rank and file to the regional levels). Study circles provided these leaders with a “bigger picture”: what measures the union should take and how the union should change to adjust to new conditions and thus be a strong union. Likewise, in the process of conducting study circles, the union leaders were able to build their support in the regions, the support that they would need to introduce changes. The study circle enabled union leaders to build the base and driving force for future changes in the union.

In using the study circle methodology in problem solving and introducing change, the following conditions were always adhered to:

- That strategies discussed in the study circle should be practical and attainable goals;
- That solutions developed should be based on interests of all levels on the union structure;

- That all levels of the union's structure should actively support and participate in implementing the strategy;
- The dynamic complexity of the union structure should be evaluated and possible directions of counteraction to changes should be predicted;
- That the strategy should lead to gradual changes and improvement of the situation since a radical strategy may be interpreted as a challenge and threat that could lead to resistance; and
- Priorities should be defined to achieve maximum results using minimum resources.

Phases of the Project

The study circle thus became the primary strategy in consolidating and transforming the union towards enabling it to attain its strategic goals. The Project is now in its second phase, with the first phase already accomplished and evaluated.

1. Capacity Building (2000-2002)

Goal of Phase 1: Start the process of union modernization and improve the national union's capacity to analyse the current situation and approach deeply- rooted internal problems. The principal goal of the first phase was to build up the national union's capacity to work out a strategy and clear priorities necessary for developing a strong and effective organization.

In 2000, a group of union activists from three (3) Northwestern regions of Russia had started their training in skills required for organizing and educating rank and file members and activists. By 2001, six (6) new regions representing the Central-European part had been included in the project. Participants acquired skills in organizing basic union education, simple health and safety campaigns at the workplace level and in producing basic information materials. These trainings also created a forum for internal union discussions. Both training groups developed basic study materials.

In this first phase, the study circle methodology was introduced and tested in the Project regions as a tool for recruitment, awareness raising, developing union consciousness and improving membership participation.

This first phase of the project produced thirty-eight (38) trained study circle leaders divided into two groups, capable of organizing study circles, recruiting new members, producing study and information materials, and, initiating occupational health and safety (OHS) campaigns at the workplace and regional levels.

2. Organization Building and Consolidation (2003-2004)

Goal of Phase 2: Address both the internal and external part of the union's strategy. The internal strategy had two objectives: 1) increase the number of active, dues paying members; and 2) recruit, train and promote young activists in union structures at all levels. Meanwhile, the external strategy aimed to improve collective bargaining at the workplace, increase wages on the national level and improve the health and safety conditions in the workplace.

During the second phase of the Project a new training group representing the Volga region was formed. Twenty (20) participants from five regions (Republics of Tatarstan, Chuvashia, and Bashkortostan, Samara, Saratov regions) representing both workplace and regional union structures started their training in adult training principles and group pedagogy.

Selection of participants was carefully undertaken, taking into account all the lessons learned during the first phase of the Project. As a result, a highly motivated and active group was formed. Moreover, resource persons came from selected participants of the Central European group trained in the first phase of the project.

Meanwhile, the North-West group and the Central European group of phase 1 contin-

ued with more specific trainings (i.e. OHS and work in the Project Editorial Board) and started with informal regional trainings and networking. In the next phase of the Project, their experiences will be summarized and synthesized in one package and will be used in the Project regions network and in non-project regions.

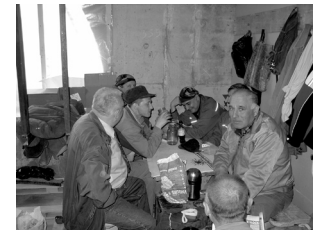
The focus of this phase of the Project:

- “Give the union back to members”. The second phase sought to make a serious shift in the priorities of everyday union work. It aimed to develop more active and systematic work among rank and file members and local activists by involving these members in discussions and decision-making.
- Recruiting and developing young and future building workers. The Project deliberately targeted recruiting the new generation of workers who are not burdened with tradition or rigid stereotypes. Moreover, the young leaders serve as potential change agents as they have the idealism of looking at their union as a tool for social change in contrast to their parents who may have already been disillusioned not only with political parties but also with the unions’ potential to lobby for socially oriented reforms.

By creating pressure from the bottom-up rather than from top to bottom and by developing an ideologically motivated and trained pool of personnel, the union is now headed to achieve its goals and development objectives. The project, to a large measure, arrested the decline of union membership and subsequently increased membership and drew in young union activists.

III. From Soviet Style to Post-Soviet Style of Union Work

“Now, I can make people think and find their own solutions to their problems. This helps in my approach to our daily work. Before, union work was just paper work, but





nowadays it means working with people, with union activists, and with members.”

Zenaida Arkhipenko, Vice President of the Moscow Regional Committee

“The project is successful because it is not about something abstract, but rather is it about the members of our union. Even when we speak about global issues, we take on the perspective of the members. The project is aimed at a very clear target – the members, with their own interests. ”

Evgeny Maslikhov, President of the Tula Regional Committee

IN THE SOVIET DAYS, UNION LEADERS “talk to” members. Through the project, leaders get to “talk with” members. Before, decisions were centralized from the state to the union leadership. Members were informed of decisions merely as a matter of ratification and formalization, with no discussion or participation. Now, leaders listen and facilitate discussion and brainstorming among members. From a top-down leadership style, the union leaders are starting to use a bottom-up approach to find solutions to old problems. Such changes are radical shifts in union work, from a Soviet style of centralized leadership to a democratic and membership-driven union.

With emerging rapid changes in the post-soviet political and economic system, solutions could not simply be imposed for there were no ready and clear-cut answers coming from the top. Rather, solutions are now born out of a lot of brainstorming and creative discussions, seen from the eyes of various levels of the union. This way, solutions are not just made, membership support for these solutions is also assured. Previously inactive and apathetic union members are now getting more involved. The study group methodology has been instrumental in transforming both the leadership style in and membership response to problem solving and union work. This paradigm shift – from top-down to bottom up unionism -- represents a sort of cultural revolution for post-soviet unions in Russia and has resulted in a number of observable positive changes in the participating unions.





Raising Awareness and activity of union members. For the leaders who undertook the study circle training and are now using the study circle in almost all aspects of union work, this methodology has evidently been instrumental in raising awareness, activating the membership and rejuvenating the unions. Visible changes in the member-participants of the study – active participation in decision-making processes of the union -- reveal an increase in membership motivation. Because of the project, fewer members are quitting the unions and more unions are starting to pay membership dues. Union work has become more interesting for members after attending the study circles. Moreover, members are extending support to leaders, volunteering their services to them. Increased membership participation has also improved the collective bargaining position of the participating unions (i.e. in some cases up to 30% increase and a monthly indexing of wages).

Increase in quantity and quality of membership. From a situation where there was a decreasing trend of membership, the union started to increase its members and dues paying members. As of 2003, the union has been recruiting more members, as much as five times more. Likewise, the new vision of union functions and goals is gradually being developed among members.

Increase in membership quantity was seen in the following regions: In Cherepovets, there was an increase in 200 members and a new regional committee has been established. In St.Petersburg, there was an additional 1,500 new members. The Regional union committee, together with the study circle participants, are expanding to newly established companies. In the Moscow Region, 115 new members were recruited and the regional union officers together with the participants are engaged in organizing union committees in 8 new companies. More members were up for recruitment in the beginning of 2004. In Briansk, the membership base started to grow in the whole region. The participants are organizing not only study circles at the work floor level but also at the regional level. As a result, the number of newly established union committees is





Tulachemet Company 2004 BWI solidarity campaign

Four hundred (400) trade union members of four (4) building materials factories in the city of Tula were dismissed after holding mass actions.

This threat to workers' security was linked to the situation of the big metallurgical company Tularchamet located near the factories. Owned by a deputy of Parliament, Tularchamet represents an important industrial center in the Russian federation. To harass workers, electricity, water, and heating were cut off and transportation was blocked by armed men to force people to sell their shares to Tularchemet. Consequently, this paralysis caused the dismissal of four hundred factory workers.

Because state and police authorities did not dare to interfere, it was the ordinary people who decided to step forward and declare their rights, maybe for the first time. They did it deliberately with the belief that their union is a tool to solve problems. They supported the action their union took despite the danger this posed to them.

growing. In Kaluga, the membership is starting to grow as new union committees have been established.

Enhanced effectiveness and strengthening of the union. The Construction and Building Materials Industry Workers' Union of the Russian Federation demonstrated more effectiveness in managing and leading the unions since the commencement of the Project. In the past, union decisions apparently did not prioritize nor redound to substantial benefits to union members. Now, union priorities are clearer and the union is more active in giving information and training union activists and members. Likewise, strategic discussions are taking place between and among leaders and members, thus strengthening the organization. The Union is starting to feel its potential as a mass organization, goes to court more often to defend members' interests and no longer seek short-term political allies. Moreover, there is a significant improvement in the strategic planning capacity of the union. There is thus a marked improvement in the level of unionization of the Construction and Building Materials Industry Workers' Union of the Russian Federation.

Increased appreciation for national and international union movement and solidarity. Among the unions, there is increased awareness of national and international union movement and activities leading to a better understanding of common goals of the organization and more active involvement in strategic discussions. This has also led to better planning of activities on the regional level and more active work with information and training for the members and union activists. Likewise, among the project regions, there is better understanding of the benefits and necessity of mutual support and solidarity between and among local branches, regions and the national level structures.

Better communication and coordination among the various structures of the union. On the national level, due to direct involvement in project planning, organizing and coordination, the union leadership is better informed of what is required by regional





structures and able to restructure its activities and work accordingly. On the regional level, participants provide support for regional committees and are beginning to influence regional policy. More cooperation and solidarity is taking place among the regional unions. For example, in St. Petersburg, the participants from that region acted as a driving force in electing a new, young and active President of the regional union committee.

Improvement in the priorities of the union. Instead of simply providing financial support to members or organizing cultural activities, union priorities have shifted to more substantial union work and CBAs towards wages and health and safety. The most striking example comes from St. Petersburg. A shop steward from the brick plant Keramika has been able not only to demand for a wage hike but for the administration to attend to dangerous and harmful work conditions. In the past, the administration had been indifferent, sometimes aggressive towards the Union, but of late, has been paying attention to workers' demands. As a result, a new CBA in 2001 replaced harmful workplaces and conditions with safer ones.

Increasing number of youth members. The Union is now taking a more pro-active approach towards recruiting and training technical students and young workers to be promoted to key union positions in the future. Recruiting more youth into the union is a step towards improving the dynamism of the union, resulting recently to the establishment of 60 union youth councils at the work floor level.

Improvement in working conditions / external policy of participating unions. Since 2000, average wages increased three times. Since 2003, the building worker of the 1st grade wages was pushed to be equal to the regional subsistence level (according to the negotiated Industrial Tariff) that should then lead to 30-50% increase of wages in 44 out of 73 regions. Furthermore, 82% of companies are now covered by CBAs. Previously, only 68% of companies had CBAs. Regarding occupational safety and health,





work-related accidents have decreased and there are now thousands of OSH union representatives being trained. Some companies have also developed special OSH attachments to CBAs.

Change in Leadership. In some unions, presidents from the old schools of thought have been replaced by new leaders who are products of the project trainings and study circles. Moreover, these new leaders in formal positions have gained new knowledge of union issues and laws and new skills necessary to communicate and relate with union members. Because of such new leadership style, there is an improvement in the methodologies of trade union work and in the development of trade union structures.

IV. Evaluation: What We Did Right

THE CONSTRUCTION AND BUILDING Materials Industry Workers' Union of the Russian Federation has changed considerably since the commencement of the Project. The union now has clear priorities, more active work in giving information and training for union activists and members, and, strategic discussions, all leading to the strengthening of the organization and formulation of its development strategy. As a result, the Project has helped reverse the Union's decreasing membership while setting the pace of improvements in structure, unionisation and financial base. With the Project halfway through, interviews and project evaluation were undertaken in an attempt to ensure the effective transformation of the Russian federation.

The following were the highlights of the project's evaluation from the perspective of the leaders and the BWI project coordinator:

- 1) The Study Circle Methodology is the most appropriate and cost-effective strategy to address the project objective --- to transform the Construction and Building Materials Industry Workers' Union of the Russian Federation





The Project of Basic Union Education development through the introduction of Study Circle methodology shared by Byggnads, the Swedish Unions affiliate to BWI, has simplified the process of transformation and assisted the Russian federation to find the right road to modernization.

In the project evaluation, it was observed that the study circle strategy is the most appropriate tool in raising awareness on national and international union movements and ground activities among local and regional trade union structures. Although the Byggnads shared the study circle methodology with the Union, solutions to the latter's issues and problems were not imposed on the participants. Instead, through the study circle methodology, participants were trained in analysis and discussion skills and were left free to choose, change and test what they found to be valuable.

This paved the way for a better understanding of the common goals of the organization and more active involvement of both leaders and members in strategic discussions. There has been much improvement in the regional level planning of activities and more active work in information dissemination and training for union members and activists. Moreover, more young union activists were promoted and trained as a result of the project.

2) The serious commitment of the National Union leadership to support the project and incorporate changes in everyday union work is highly important.

The national union's leadership showed their interest and commitment to the project by attending the training activities and making this part of internal union policy. Representatives of the union leadership and national office were present during all activities. Likewise, the union president continuously makes demands on the project, maximizing it for everyday union work. The issues and suggestions raised in the study circle activities were perused in the unions' agenda and activities.





- 3) The participants represented a wide spectrum of union structure levels – regional structures and workplace union structures from different types of companies;

The wide range of participants coming from the different union structures provided a wealth of perspectives and diversity of views and opinions. The issues and suggestions raised in the Project activities were broader and more comprehensive in scope. This provided depth and scope to the strategy development of the unions, at the same time, provided the leaders and members with legitimate venues for union involvement.

- 4) The participants tested certain elements of a development strategy actually practiced in their regions.

The relevance and validity of the development strategy was greatly enhanced not only by the broad scope of participants of the project activities, but also by the participants' resolve to test the strategy in their respective unions. The project activity (i.e. study circle) became the medium for learning, sharing and improvement of the union's development strategy.

- 5) Serious attention was given to the selection of participants.

To ensure the project's sustainability, participants were selected from among those likely to share what they learn with others and apply their learning to the union (i.e. members who would not keep the training benefits to themselves or use these for personal purposes).

- 6) Minding the Learning Process and Follow-through

The process of training takes place over an extended period of time. Participants learned about long-term perspectives rather than quick and short-lived results. They



gradually became aware that systematic work brings more tangible effects.

Moreover, participants had follow-up discussions on their experiences and these gradually turned into communication and cooperation mechanisms outside the Project. These discussions also served as a venue to report on actual application of skills learned and to exchange learnings and opinions.

7) Good Swedish Resource Persons

The Swedish resource persons from a partner affiliate, the BYGGNAD, were key to the success of the Project.

It helped that the resource persons had both a good grasp and actual experience of the study circle principle and methodology. Likewise, BYGGNAD's experience in socio-economic training projects were highly useful in training and communicating with Russian trade union leaders and members.

With this marked improvement in strategic thinking among the Union's leadership and members, it is expected that the Union will improve its position in industry and society. This process of improving its image and relevance, however, is expected to take time. The major goal of the Project in the near future is the institutionalisation of this participatory direction of development for the implementing union and for the Union to gain momentum before the Project is terminated.

Project Learning and Assessment

Taking into consideration all the lessons learned since the commencement of the Project in 2000, revisions have been made in the strategy planning. This has to do





“Only with this internal consolidation and capacity building could the Union be capable of improving its position in industry and society”

with the experience from this particular project for the Construction and Building Materials Industry Workers’ Union of the Russian Federation and the starting conditions for the process of change and modernization.

According to project participants, it is only at this stage when the project seems to be far advanced and successful, that they are starting to realize the complexity of internal problems in the Russian trade union movement. As was articulated in the evaluation workshop, the overwhelming majority of Russian unions (including the Construction and Building Materials Industry Workers’ Union of the Russian Federation) are continuing to lose members despite the implementation of projects and programs. Projects financed by donors and programs implemented by local unions tend to commit the following mistakes:

- Setting too ambitious aims;
- Trying to eliminate the effects of the problems rather than the problems themselves;
- Trying to reach results too quickly;

Nevertheless, this cannot and should not be taken as a reproach. The situation of the Russian trade union movement is both unique and complex. Unlike Western industrialized countries where unions emerged as a response to the development of a market economy, in Russia, the market economy started to develop when the unions were already burdened with their tradition, internal problems, and when the society at large had long formed its stereotypes and perceptions of the union movement. In view of both the external and internal complexities of a post soviet situation facing the trade unions, it would be quite ambitious or even naïve to expect a project to change the unions overnight. Still, with all the limits and possibilities of the Project, what is most important is the impetus the Project has created in the union, setting in motion the wheels of change within the Russian Building Workers Union. In this regard, two key successes can be attributed to the Project:



- Developing a Climate for Critical and Strategic Thinking. The project provided the venues to conduct problem analysis on a deeper level, enabling both the leaders and members to recognize the root causes of their situation. This made them realize that strategic planning was crucial to attaining sustainable results.
- The study circle, being a participatory method, has contributed to a broad range of improvements within the union. Through the study circle methodology, the union experienced various opportunities for collective discussion, personal member-leader involvement, use of various methods of information, recruitment, awareness and consciousness raising, all contributing to a range of goals. These goals span leadership development, activating an apathetic and declining membership and inculcating a culture of participation and critical thinking, among others.

Considering the seeds of change planted and the process of reform that are gradually taking place as catalysed by the Project, all other achievements (like the recruitment of thousands of new members in the Project regions, a number of youth and OHS campaigns, regional training workshops, a pool of circle leaders) can be counted as unintended positive outputs. In view of the internal and external problems facing the Construction and Building Materials Industry Workers' Union of the Russian Federation, the project has managed to create a positive experience. The challenge ahead is to maximize, internalise and institutionalise both the Project gains and strategy so that these can be sustained and expanded to other project regions.

V. Future Directions and Challenges

TRANSFORMING AND MODERNIZING A LARGE union in a very large country takes a lot of time and perseverance. While the desired changes are important, the process of transforming the leaders, the members and the union is equally important. There is no shortcut so to speak. After almost three years of implementing the study circle project,



with a union of about a million membership, only 10% of the regional leadership have been reached. To effect changes, a critical mass of at least one-third of the leadership is necessary. Admittedly, the process is slow. The union leaders and members, nevertheless, are satisfied with the changes and the work in progress. With gradual progress comes a certain level of confidence that they are moving towards the right direction.

It is with confidence that the union leaders feel that they are starting off in the right direction. The seed has been planted with the study circle leaders developed from the project. The question now is the pace and duration of the transformation process: how long or how fast this process should take. The answer depends on a strategy that would be realized and formulated by the leaders with the support of members. Seemingly, the project is turning out to be a learning process and a work in progress. The process is an empowering and transforming journey in itself. To reach the destination, the aspired change, the journey has to be taken, not only by the handful of leaders, but this time, by the leaders with the support of members. This is where the study circle method has been most helpful: bridging the gap between the leaders and the members and in empowering the union to carve out its own future.

Next Steps: Sustainability Building and Networking (2005 – 2006)

Having pioneered the Study Circle to put in motion the desired changes in the Construction and Building Materials Industry Workers' Union of the Russian Federation, the bigger challenge is to ensure that these wheels of change pick up speed, cover more ground and spread to the other regions covered by the union. To do this, the next phase shall focus on sustainability, on the quantitative and qualitative speeding up process through the development of union education structures and networks of regions involved in the Project. Doing so would institutionalise the process of training and information policies and their implementation in the regions.



With the expansion of the network, new ideological and political tasks shall be added to union tasks. Such includes adjusting the union's youth policy and development of a strategic organizing policy. The final purpose of this phase should be a situation where:

- The Union has a centralized vertical structure: Strong National Center – Strong Regional Offices – Highly motivated and trained members at the work floor level;
- The Union has a clear strategic development plan;
- There is clear division of labor between all Union structures with clear, corresponding rights and responsibilities of each unit;

The National Education Committee (formally established, with regular strategic and coordination meetings) shall decide on priority areas for training and information, develop work plans and methodological recommendations to be put into practice in Project regions network and present pilot programs to non-project regions.

By the end of this “sustainability building and networking phase” of the Project, the implementing union should have a functioning and effective education and information network in the Project regions with sufficient resources and level of skills to expand the Project to all other regions.

Necessary structural changes in the implementing union should have taken place by that phase of the Project. The level of inter-structural discipline and accountability should improve considerably as a result of increased union consciousness among members and the process of enjoining a new generation of union activists and leaders into key positions in union structures.

With the new image of the Union and revitalized spirit of doing union work, it is thus hoped that with better information and basic training, workers will be holding jobs



Project Details:

Project Timeframe: 2000 – 2004

Solidarity Support Organisation:
• LOTCO (Sweden)

Partner Trade Union:
• BYGGNADS

Participating Unions:
Construction and Building Materials
Industry Workers' Union of the Russian
Federation

Project Coordinator: Michael Kartashov



with a more positive and pro-active perception of the trade union movement and its role in society.

VI. Reflections and Lessons

1. The process of introducing necessary structural and political reforms of unions will take a long time. Change is possible only if there is tangible pressure from ordinary union members. For this purpose, the basic union training network in the regions using the Study Circle methodology is considered by the Union leadership as the best way of spreading the process of rethinking and transformation;
2. The project helped the union to realize and analyze the internal weaknesses and external factors that influence its level of effectiveness. This opens a clear road to modernization and points to the necessity of long-term strategic planning.
3. Transforming the Union is a long process.

The goal of transforming the Union into an effective stakeholder in Russian society is a daunting developmental goal, a goal that goes beyond the project's time frame and limits. What is crucial is planting the seeds of change, starting the journey towards change and minding the process towards the destination. Equally important is sharing of goals by both union members and leaders. The challenge now is speeding up the process of change with tangible and small victories and reforms along the way. ■





India

Eliminating Child Labour while Organizing Brick Kiln Workers





child labour. These outputs enhanced the over-all union image. Workers issues are addressed and child labourers have decreased because they are now in school. So many people are benefiting from the project ”

Bro. Kulwant Singh Bawa, BMS General Secretary

“ The Child Labour Project is like hitting two birds with one stone. With the Child labour school project, we decrease the incidence of child labourer by bringing them back to school, and the union gains in membership, credibility and political clout. The school improved both the lives of the children and the union ”

Rajeev Sharma, BWI Project Coordinator

India:

Eliminating Child Labour while Organizing Brick Kiln Workers

I. Child Labour Situation in India

Sonam Kumari was barely 6 years old when she started working by her parents' side at a stone quarry next to her village, Mandi Mirza Khan in Uttar Pradesh, India. Life was tough – while children her age were enjoying school and discovering the joys of childhood, Sonam was caught in the rigours of work. She would wake up early each morning to assist her mother in household chores and then head towards the stone quarry for a day's work. Her future seemed devoid of hope and promise. Her illiterate parents who belonged to a nomadic tribe (Banjara) never considered sending her to school. Education was never a priority in her family. Even the hazardous nature of work at the quarry or its ill effects on the health of Sonam were dismissed in favor of much-needed earnings for household needs. At the end of each day, Sonam's father would collect her daily wage of 12-15 Rupees (about 35-40 cents).

INDIA HOLDS THE DUBIOUS DISTINCTION of having the highest concentration of child labour in the world with estimates ranging from 11.8 million (i.e. according to the Indian government) to about 100 million (i.e. according to Indian NGOs and trade unions). Some statistics also show that in the country's impoverished regions, around 92.2 million children are out of school because they are working somewhere to earn a living. Majority of these children work in the informal economy where the



reach of the law is minimal and trade union activity is practically absent. Almost 92% of Indian workers belong to the informal sector.

The brick kiln industry, one of the most important building materials industries in India, employs millions of workers including children. Most of them are unorganized. For this reason, the BWI Child Labour Project was piloted in the brick kiln industry in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Punjab.

“The brick kiln industry employs millions of workers including children. Most of them are unorganized. For this reason, the BWI Child Labour Project was piloted in the brick kiln industry in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Punjab”

Workers' Situation in the Brick Kiln Industry

The brick kiln industry which involves the moulding and firing of bricks from clay is a significant employer of Indian women and children. There are about 50,000 brick kilns all over India employing on the average around 150 workers. Brick kilns are often located in small scale manufacturing units on the outskirts of urban areas. Work in these kilns is seasonal and often attracts migrant labourers from the rural areas. Kiln labourers form the large bulk of India's inter-state and inter-district migratory labour force.

Workers in the brick kilns constitute one of the poorest and weakest sections of India's rural society. Most of them are landless. Operations in the kilns often take place from October to June and are shut down during the monsoon period. The migration of workers depends highly on the agro-climatic features of the areas where kilns operate.

Recruitment process

Workers are recruited through jamadars (labour agents/contractors) of the kiln owners who pay aspiring workers advances for a specified period of employment.



Entire families comprising of husbands, wives and children move to the brick kilns and work as individual units for a full season. Only the male heads of families are registered as workers in the master lists of employers. The rest of the vast labour force remain invisible to social production and thereby are not made part of the economy's social accounting.

Working Conditions

Working conditions in the brick kiln industries are generally exploitative, precarious, unsafe and unhealthy. These include the following:

- Working hours are between 10 to 14 for all workers
- Workers are allowed only one (1) non-paid rest day for every fifteen days
- No medical benefits (except for a first aid box)
- No maternity leave
- No protective gear for the workers
- Labour standards -- social, economic, health, safety – are not applied
- Workers are not compensated for days when work stops because of rain;
- All implements are provided by the owners except the lights required by moulders to work at night. The moulders pay for their own gas lights and also bring their own implements for digging;
- No electricity
- No crèche
- No separate rest room
- No toilets

Although brick kiln workers enjoy legal protection and benefits under a wide range of national laws such as the minimum wage act, employees provident fund act, factories act, payment of gratuity act, and contract labour act, they hardly ever benefit from these laws.



“Entire families comprising of husbands, wives and children move to the brick kilns and work as individual units for a full season. Working conditions in the brick kiln industries are generally exploitative, precarious, unsafe and unhealthy”

Worker and Child Labour Situation in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Punjab

In Uttar Pradesh, the most populous state of India which accounts for around 18 per cent of the country's population, some 21.6 million children are out of school (the Census Statistics from the Government of India classify them as neither in school nor at work) and 1.12 million children work as child labourers . The 2001 Census shows that the literacy rate in the State is 57.36 per cent. As per estimates of the Planning Commission, 42.28 per cent of the total population in the rural areas and 35.39 per cent in the urban areas live below the poverty line.

While Indian workers in the construction and building sector are paid on a daily basis, in the brick kilns, wages are paid on a piece-rate basis (measured per 1000 bricks). Minimum wage for construction and building workers range from 40 rupees per thousand bricks (loading/unloading work) to 135 rupees per thousand (moulder). Wages are even lower in brick kiln sites where union activities are minimal or non-existent.

Bihar is one of the most backward states of India where 58.21 percent of the population in rural areas and 34.5 percent of those in urban areas live below the poverty line. As per available data from the Census , 942,245 children are classified as child labourers and 14.3 million children are recorded as being out of school. The literacy rate in this State is 47.53 percent. Wages in Bihar range from 40-130 rupees depending on the category of the worker at the brick kilns. Cases of exploitation and harassment of workers are most visible in Bihar.

In sharp contrast, the State of Punjab is an economically developed state. The Planning Commission of India estimates that 11 per cent of the population of this state live below



the poverty line. Workers from the backward states of India including Bihar and Uttar Pradesh go to Punjab for work. The wages are much higher in these parts: 155 rupees per thousand bricks. Union activities and membership fee collections are also more significant in this state. Still, the census of India has recorded 1.5 million children who are out of school and 142, 268 child labourers in Punjab.

Government's Response to Child Labour

The government's role in the elimination of child labour has not been entirely forthcoming. While it is encouraging that on November 28, 2001, the Parliament of India unanimously passed a constitutional amendment making education for children within the age group of 6-14 years a fundamental right, the government has barely given sufficient resources to implement this law. Due to lack of political will and resource provision, the law on compulsory education has hardly been enforced much less made accessible to low-income communities. Consequently, the numbers of child labourers in India have not decreased over the years.

BWI Response

BWI and its affiliates recognize the double social stigma in the Brick kiln, building, construction and stone carving industries of India: exploitative working conditions and the high incidence of child labour. Its affiliates in India recognize that child labour has occurred for three generations and that workers remain poor and unorganized. The plight of these workers motivated BWI affiliates to work towards the restoration of workers' rights, the improvement of working conditions and solutions to put an end to the rampant use of child labour.

II. History of the Union's Involvement in Child Labour Issues

THE DEPLORABLE SITUATION OF WORKERS in the construction and brick kiln industry has been aggravated by the presence of very young children perform-

**“Schooling,
Advocacy,
Organizing: This is
the three-pronged
approach in fighting
for workers’ rights
and abolishing Child
Labour”**

ing heavy and difficult labour. It is this tragic reality that pushed the labour unions to seek the support of the ILO-IPEC to pull out the children from the workforce and bring them back to school where they should be.

In 1995, the unions, with the intent of pulling out child labourers from exploitative work conditions, accessed funds from ILO-IPEC to operate two schools that would educate child labourers and thereby prevent them from working. With this experimental one-year project, the union saw that the two schools they operated were successful in pulling out children from the workforce and bringing them into the educational fold. While the project addressed the child labour problem, it also boosted the image of the union, attracting more workers, especially construction working mothers to the union. The Child Labour School, thus, was good for the children and the union. It put children back to school at the same time increased the membership and credibility of the union. Hence, when the ILO-IPEC funds for the Child Labour School ended, the union decided to carry on with the school project on its own, not quite sure of how the child labour school project would proceed from then on.

In 1997, after operating the child labour schools on its own for a year, the union sought the assistance of BWI to facilitate funding support from BAT-KARTEL (Denmark), FNV Bouw (Netherlands) AND CFMEU (Australia). With new funding from these donors, the union expanded the child labour schooling project to 2 areas in Punjab and 3 areas in Uttar Pradesh for at least 6 more years. The school project boosted the union’s efforts in addressing the child labour problem, but admittedly, union organizing and advocacy work lagged behind. The growing demands of the child labour project, the increasing number of workers wanting to join the union and the continuing poor working conditions of the construction and brick kiln workers pressured the union to bolster its organizing and advocacy work on an equal footing. A union that was weak in effectively addressing workers’ rights could not possibly sustain efforts to address the plight of both child labourers and construction-brick kiln workers.



The Union's determination to address both child labour and worker issues on a more programmatic basis prompted the need for a feasibility study-research. With the assistance of BWI, FNV was approached to fund the research in 1998. The research managed to surface measures that would integrate the twin agenda of strengthening trade unions to fight for workers' rights and the abolition of child labour. The resolve to integrate the child labour and trade union agenda led to the three-pronged strategy of schooling, organizing and campaigning. FNV supported a comprehensive child labour project using the three-pronged strategy. Later, CLC Canada provided support to strengthen the unions' campaigns and improvement of many child labour schools; and, the NFCCWU Taiwan supported the expansion of new schools in the state of Orissa.

III. Schooling, Advocacy, Organizing: The Three-Pronged Approach in Fighting for Workers' Rights and Abolishing Child Labour

Recommendations of the Feasibility Study

Following the Union's resolution to abolish child labour while strengthening the construction labour unions in India, the results of the commissioned feasibility study provided inputs and directions for the child labour project. A number of these recommendations from the study were adopted by the Union from 1998 onwards:

- The project should be developed in areas where there is a potential to have an impact on child labour. Henceforth, child labour schools were established within the communities where workers lived, particularly in the Brick Kiln Industry which was then a booming industry and had one of the largest concentration of child labourers. Establishing child labour schools within the community did not only provide accessible education to child labourers but also paved the way for union organizing.
- Provision of schooling for child labourers must be linked to an overall trade





union organising program that includes a number of strategies meant to deal with the myriad causes and effects of child labour;

- The integrated program of support to the targeted BWI construction industry (i.e. Brick Kiln, et al.) should include the following:
 - 1) Development and implementation of union organising and collective bargaining strategies;
 - 2) Awareness-raising to build the commitment of workers and union members to reduce the incidence of child labour;
 - 3) Participative research programs to identify the optimum range of services and training in selected target areas (i.e. with high incidence of child labour) and to link those services with organising goals.

Long-Term Goals of the 1998-2000 Child Labour Project

Recommendations from the feasibility study were then translated into the following long-term goals of the Child Labour Project of the Union (reflected in the 1998-2000 BWI Project Application), namely:

- To abolish child labour in the brick kiln industry and related industries;
- To work for state provision of good quality, accessible primary education in the rural areas where the brick kiln and related industries exist;
- To organize strong and effective trade unions in the brick kiln and related industries;
- To strive for the recognition of the workers in the brick kiln industry as part of the formal work force and unions representing them as legitimate bargaining partners;
- To attain decent wages and working conditions from employers;



- To minimise or eliminate health and safety problems associated with the industry through collective bargaining or national industry agreements.

With the complementation of the child labour agenda and the trade union strategy, the commissioned feasibility study served as the springboard of the three-pronged strategy of Schooling, Advocacy and Organizing.

Three-Pronged Strategy:

Schooling, Organizing and Campaigning

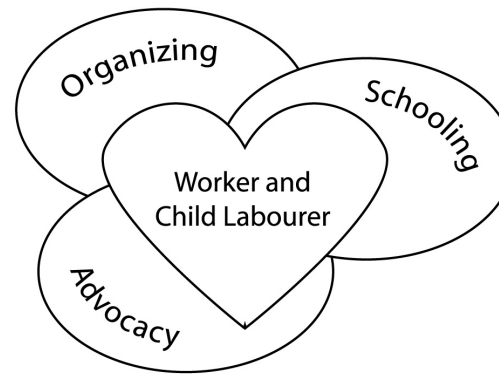
Conceptual Strategic Framework:

Target:

Workers and Child Labourers

Strategy: (Integrated and Inter-related)

- Schooling the Child Labourers
- Campaigning for Workers’ Rights and Abolition of Child Labour
- Organizing the Labour Unions and Support Network for Child Labour Education



As the union developed its strategy in addressing both the issues of the workers and the abolition of child labour, its three- pronged strategy developed gradually as well. What started in the first few years as experimental schools for child labourers turned into a programmatic and integrated three- pronged approach of Schooling the Child Labourers, Campaigning for the abolition of Child Labour and the promotion of Workers’ Rights, and Organizing the trade union, with each strategy complementing and strengthening the other. Having realized the complementation of the trade



union strengthening and child labour project, the union accessed funding from FNV for the three-pronged approach, moving with more clarity and improvements in both endeavours. Below are the particular objectives adopted in each of the strategies.

“The lack of accessible and quality education for children was assumed to be one of the major causes that contributed to the rise of child labourers. The unions responded by establishing child labour schools accessible to the working children”

Schooling Strategy

The Schooling Strategy aimed to provide quality and accessible education to children to pull them out of child labour and bring them into the education fold. Though the government was supposed to be the provider of compulsory education, it barely managed to provide accessibility of schools that were accessible and good quality education either due to its lack of resources or political will.

The schooling strategy targeted the following specific outcomes:

- Children are removed from work and brought into the educational fold
- Increased enrolment of girl child labourers since girls tended to be the least schooled;
- Child Labour Schools are well-integrated within the community and society;
- Fully functioning parents’ committee in all the schools

The lack of accessible and quality education for children was assumed to be one of the major causes that contributed to the rise of child labourers. With this understanding, the unions responded by establishing child labour schools accessible to the working children near the brick kiln work sites with the aim of prodding government to support these schools. By catering to the unfulfilled demand for formal education among the targeted child labourers, the unions hoped that this would strengthen





their advocacy against child labour and push government to improve its function of providing compulsory education specifically targeting child labourers. Subsequently, the decision to establish child labour school brought in thousands of child labourers to these schools, pulling them out from work. Unfortunately, the government's response was hardly enough to cater to the thousands of child labourers outside the education system. While the child labour schools managed to earn the recognition of government, this was not automatically translated into resources and more government schools for child labourers.

It is important to note that the union's Child Labour project was not meant to compete or duplicate government's effort in providing compulsory education to children. Rather, the intention was to supplement the gaps of government provision of accessible education for child labourers. It was also meant to provide a model of how to provide quality primary education to children . By taking on the missing link of providing accessible basic education to child labourers, the unions hoped that the project would facilitate the entry of more children to government schools and prevent them from going back to child labour. To ensure this, the union's child labour schools likewise facilitated the transfer of its students to government schools and implemented a database to monitor and track down children who enrolled, left school or transferred to other schools. The database now contains the socio-economic profile of enrolled child labourers, the performance of children in school and the status of children who left the school.

With the intention of shifting the children from the child labour schools to government schools and propelling government to do its role in providing accessible compulsory education to prevent child labour, the unions complemented the schooling strategy with advocacy and negotiations. Combining the Schooling and Advocacy strategies enjoined government to engage in the child labour schools as partners in providing education for child labourers. This is exemplified in a number of cases:



PINKY JAIN

A child labourer who became a teacher

Pinky used to be a child labourer in a factory and earned 10-15 rupees/ day. She worked with her mother in Agra. The union noticed her and sent her to a nearby school. In 1995, when the first BWI Child Labour School was established, Pinky was appointed as a schoolteacher. She completed her graduation with the support of the union. To date, she is still providing her services at the BWI Child Labour School at Village Dhanoli, Agra, as Head teacher. Having been a child labourer herself, Pinky fully understands the problems of the child labourers admitted to the school. She has earned the respect of the children and the community. She is now happily married with two children.



- The FNV-supported child labour school located at the Village Joura, District Firozpur sought to make the state government more responsible in providing education by challenging them with a well functioning union-managed child labour school. The FNV-supported child labour school used the government school building that was left unused due to the absence of teachers. The successful running of this school by the union caused an embarrassment for the State Government, so much so that it stirred Government into action by deploying its own teachers to the school. As of this writing, the union has retained its own teachers as well as government-deployed teachers to ensure that the school continues to function.. The union's plan is to remove its teachers and turn the school over to the government thus reviving state-sponsored schooling in the village;
- The partner union in Bihar-HKMP in cooperation with the district officials in District Kishanganj merged the FNV-supported child labour school at Village Majhia in District Kishanganj with the Government School. The Education Superintendent of District Kinshangj agreed to shift all the children from the BWI/FNV School at Village Majhia to a nearby government school and provide additional teachers to meet the school's requirements.

The schooling strategy was clearly the union's direct response to the missing link of accessible education for children. Combined with Advocacy, the schooling strategy became a model, a leverage and pressure point for government to deliver compulsory education to child labourers and in so doing decrease the incidence of children going to work.

Advocacy Strategy

The advocacy strategy aimed to raise awareness on child labour and construction workers plight, gain victories for the workers, promote accessible education for child labourers, and develop a network of support within media institutions, the commu-

nity, NGOs and other like-minded groups. Advocacy entailed conducting various forms of mass actions, mass campaigns and public activities that mobilized people, captured the attention of tri-media and raised public awareness on the phenomenon of child labour.. This strategy targeted the following outcomes:

- Increase wages and improve working conditions of the workers
- Increase awareness of the public on the problems of child labour and on the need to educate children, especially female children;
- Lobby to end social and economic exploitation of women workers;
- Develop networking with media, NGOs and other like-minded organizations for the ratification of ILO Convention 138 (minimum age for work) and 182 (prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour).

Advocacy and campaigns targeted the state and government offices to respond to the union's charter of demands on workers' and child labour concerns. On the child labour issue, the unions campaigned for government to increase its commitments and resources to provide children with compulsory education and thereby prevent the rise of child labour. For the workers, this meant targeting the Labour Departments and Labour Courts to improve working conditions and address abuses or non-compliance by employers of labor standards.

Advocacy also strengthened the union's collective bargaining vis-à-vis their employers. The idea was to build up more bargaining leverage, invoke public sympathy and get government intervention on the agenda and demands of the union.

Advocacy and campaigns likewise targeted the general public and the community, raising their awareness on the workers' plight and child labour issues. The unions advocated for child-labour free brick kiln communities, and for better working conditions in brick kiln and construction industries.

The Bhatha Mazdor Sabha (BMS) Strike to Restore Workers' Rights

The Bhatha Mazdoor Sabha has been an active defender of trade union rights in the brick kiln sector, Punjab State. In September 2003, the BMS was confronted with a serious problem in the Beas area, District of Amritsar. The owner of M/s. Harjinder Bricks, Mr. Suri, had abruptly terminated the services of 12 workers and in their place, recruited migrant workers from Rajasthan State and paid lower wages.

The aggrieved workers immediately approached their union, the BMS and immediately the BMS leadership took up the issue with the brick kiln owner and demanded for immediate reinstatement of the workers who were dismissed. The owner, however, was adamant and did not accede to the union's demand.

The BMS decided to take up this issue in a big way and called for an "indefinite strike" beginning 29th September at M/s. Harjinder Bricks. All the activities of the brick kiln came to a standstill. The strike evoked a great deal of solidarity especially among workers from nearly 20 brick kilns in the area. On the 4th day of the strike, 2nd of October, the BMS organised a large rally in the area and over 15,000 workers from different brick kilns took part in it.

The BMS rally was widely reported in the media. The brick kiln owner's image took a beating and his actions were criticised. Finally, the owner gave in and agreed to all

continued on succeeding page

Guided by this strategy, the campaigns benefited both the workers and the child labour school agenda. Gains on the labour front ranged from union recognition by the labour ministries, winning labour disputes in and out of labour courts, forced compliance by abusive employers of labour laws and increases in wages and benefits either through collective bargaining agreements or state intervention. On the child labour issue, advocacy gains included increased community awareness and support for the schools, more government resources provided to child labour schools, union representation and recognition in child-labour policy and education committees and getting the industries and communities to commit to child labour-free brick kiln communities.

Organizing Strategy

The organizing strategy entailed fielding full time organizers to consolidate, organize and strengthen the union's membership and structures. Organizing took place in the village level (where schools were set-up), the block and district levels where the campaigns took place extending up to the state and national levels. Brick kiln committees were organized as the basic units of contact between the membership worker base and the union leadership structures. Likewise, organizing work also ensured regular dues collection, membership participation, functional committees (e.g. women committees) at the grass root level and continued capacity building of leaders and members.

The organizing program served as the consolidating measure of the union as the child labour schools drew in a lot of prospective members to the union, especially women workers. Likewise, the schools also became a physical centre for implementing an adult literacy program for women union members. Feedback from the partner unions – UPGMS, BMS and HKMP indicate that union activities got a tremendous boost due to these schools, enhancing the recognition and respect of the partner unions in their respective organizing areas. The Child Labour project thus proved to be an effective strategy to organize workers. The organizing strategy targeted the following outcomes:



- Increase in union membership base
- Increase or expansion in the areas of coverage and influence of the unions
- More women union members
- Formation of unit-level Brick Kiln committees
- Trained union cadres at the grass roots level

With these three strategies integral to the implementation of the Child Labour School Project, the children, the union and even the community have become both actors and project beneficiaries. These stakeholders enhanced the role and image of the union as an important player in the promotion of workers' and children's rights.

IV. Achievements and Milestones

"The Child Labour Project's biggest impact has been the kind of awareness generated amongst the workers' fraternity on the importance of trade unionism and education, especially for the working children and their parents..."

Bro. Tula Ram Sharma, UPGMS President-

"...The workers now understand the evils of child labour and are forthcoming in sending their children to schools"

Bro. Alimuddin Ansari, HKMP General Secretary"

WITH THE TWIN AGENDA OF ABOLISHING child labour and strengthening the trade union using the three-pronged strategy of schooling, campaigning and organizing, the Trade Union's Child Labour Project has succeeded in improving the lives of the workers and the future of the children. Below are some of the major accomplishments of the Project in the Child Labour and Trade Union fronts:

continued from preceding page

the demands of the union. The owner reinstated 11 out of the 12 workers. The 12th worker did not want to work in that particular brick kiln anymore and so the union demanded that all his dues - amounting to INR. 60,000 were released immediately. This action of the union further strengthened the faith of workers in the trade union movement.



A Poor Tribal Migrant Worker's Freedom from a Life of Bondage and Injustice

Saila Soren, a poor tribal migrant worker, after taking an advance of 200 rupees, started working at a Brick Kiln located in the Village of Sabodangi, Block Thakurganj, District Kishanganj in Bihar State. Saila used to work with his family, i.e. his wife and 3 daughters. Despite the odds, the family has somehow managed to meet household needs. However, on 10th August 2000, Saila and his family ran out of money to buy food. He went to the Manager of the Brick Kiln and pleaded for the payment of his dues. The Manager expressed his reluctance to pay. Frustrated and sad Saila decided to leave the brick kiln. The Manager came to know of his intentions so he summoned Saila to his office. There the Manager along with his associates beat him up for daring to leave his work and to teach him a lesson, Saila was kept tied in the manager's office.

Next morning, Saila managed to free himself from his captors and reached the Child Labour School at Village Salguri along with his family and narrated his plight to the teachers and the Union Field Organiser Jago Das of the Hind Khet Mazdoor Panchayat (HKMP), one of the Child Labour Project Partner Unions. Saila was taken to the HKMP Union Office at Purnea and the Union General Secretary Bro. Alimuddin Ansari took the matter up with the Deputy Labour Commissioner. Saila's plight was also reported in the local

continued on succeeding page

Towards Schooling the Children and Abolishing Child Labour

- Since its establishment, the child labour project of the union has managed to pull out approximately 10,000 children from child labour. From this figure, 1,830 children are presently enrolled in the 15 child labour schools of the unions in the 3 states of Punjab, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh while 600 children have been transferred to the government schools. Pulling children out from the workforce involved a combination of advocacy to end child labour, encouraging the parents to bring their children to schools and campaigning to enrol the child labourers to the schools of the unions especially in communities where there were no accessible primary schools. Through a database installed in 2003, the union was also able to track child labour students of the union schools and monitor if they continued schooling and did not revert back to the workforce.
- UPGMS run BAT-KARTEL-supported child labour schools at the Village of Dhanoli in District Agra has received government recognition. Other schools are also expected to receive similar recognition.
- The Child Labour Project Partner Unions, the BMS and the UPGMS now have representatives in their respective state governments' child labour committee.
- The union campaigns carried out by the partner unions created awareness not only among the workers but also the population in and around the project areas. The Child Labour campaigns were widely reported in print and visual media. As a result, the state government started to hold continuing dialogue with



the union, one of which resulted in discussions with the State of Punjab and Uttar Pradesh aimed at getting government recognition and financial support. Further, both BMS and UPGMS have been able to put representatives in their respective State Governments' Committee on Child Labour.

- The BWI/FNV-supported schools have been increasingly gaining support from the community and even among brick kiln owners. In the Village Garhia in Uttar Pradesh, the village community's constant interest in running the schools has ensured proper schooling despite the odds. For instance, to address the problem of lack of teachers, educated youth of the village teach in the schools. Some brick owners are also beginning to contribute to child labour schools by providing stationary and notebooks for the children.
- HKMP has been able to enter into Collective Agreements with individual employers not to employ children and make their workplaces child labour free.

Towards Strengthening the Trade Union and Improving Workers' Conditions

The Child Labour School directly helped in mitigating the problem of child labour and benefited the partner labour unions. It increased the bargaining power of workers resulting in a significant expansion of the union's membership base, expansion of the areas of influence, improvement in the wages of workers and increased awareness of workers on both the child labour and trade union issues. The project, thus, proved to be an effective tool in organizing the brick kiln, stone quarry and construction workers. While the Child Labour schools of the union increased the membership and credibility of the union, the organizing and advocacy program consolidated and strengthened the union's capacity to address the plight of workers and child labourers. Below are some of the major milestones in the labour front.

- Partner unions' membership base expanded by more than four times since the commencement of the Child Labour Project. From a base membership of 25,689 in 1995, membership rose to 107,657 members in mid-2003;

continued from preceding page

newspapers.

The brick kiln owner first tried to intimidate Saila into withdrawing his complaint but the pressure of the Union and the demonstrations at the Labour office and at the brick kiln forced the Brick kiln owner to agree to an unconditional immediate settlement. The owner agreed to compensate the worker adequately and remove the Manager from his Brick Kiln. Today Saila Soren is an active Union Organiser of HKMP. He organizes Brick-kiln workers and ensures that no one else has to undergo what he went through and that all workers are treated with dignity and respect.

Taking The Cudgels for an Injured Child Worker

In Village Sagwanvadi, district Kishanganj in Bihar, Naimul Haq's 11-year-old daughter Behla Begum suffered serious injuries while loading bricks in the MDM Brick Kiln located in Village Tausa. Her left leg was fractured and the Brick Kiln owner, after getting her treated at a Private Doctor's Clinic, sent her home. Later the employer deducted the medical expenses incurred from the child's wages. During one of the HKMP's awareness campaigns, this matter was brought to the notice of the General Secretary of HKMP, Bro. Alimuddin Ansari.

The HKMP took up the matter with the Deputy Labour Commissioner who ordered investigations. Since the investigations were taking time, the HKMP again intervened and got a case filed in the Court of Chief Judicial Magistrate. Fearing an adverse ruling, the Brick Kiln owner agreed to provide compensation for Behla Begum in an out-of-court settlement. The HKMP also managed to get 6 workers their due wages amounting to total 36,000 rupees from the same employer.

- The partner unions formed 300 brick kiln committees, developed grass-root level women leadership in the union, eventually extending to forming women committees in the villages near the child labour schools. Holding of gender awareness campaigns in year 2003 further helped in highlighting women issues and motivated women workers to join the trade union movement;
- The area of influence of the BWI labour unions widened from a mere three (3) districts to nineteen (19) districts in the three (3) major states of India.
- Labour unions in the three states engaged in collective bargaining, negotiations and sustained mass actions to improve the wages of the workers and secure other benefits, thereby also addressing the economic reason that pushes children into the workforce. In Bihar, the HKMP successfully negotiated a wage increase from 70-90 to 110-130 rupees for Brick Kiln workers. The UPGMS in Uttar Pradesh reported a wage hike of 10% and got the minimum wages act implemented in their areas of influence. Besides these benefits, the UPGMS has been able to procure ration cards for many of the newly recruited brick kiln workers. The ration cardholder provides these workers with essential food grains and cooking fuel from the Fair Price Shops (FPS) at government subsidized rates. In Punjab, the BMS has been able to ensure bonus for Armistar (17.5%), Faridkot and Moga 8.33% of their wages for each for the brick kiln workers. The union in Punjab has also been successful in securing a Provident Fund, and provisions of the Factories Act have been implemented since June of 2002.
- The partner union won a number of cases for its members through labour courts and out of court settlements. Through the union's legal representation in the courts or through pressure tactics and campaigns, a number of grievances have been settled in favour of the workers.
- Employers' compliance of the Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act has been enforced in Brick Kiln industries. . In Punjab, the

unions developed good rapport with the Provident Fund Department and union cases were prioritized .

The Child Labour Schools heightened political and mass awareness on the plight of child labourers and the rights of the workers in the surrounding communities, and consequently strengthened the legitimacy and relevance of labour unions.

In addressing the Child Labour problem, the BWI partner unions were able to promote not just the child labour issue, but the union's credibility and respectability as well. As the union's leverage grew because of such renewed legitimacy, more poverty issues were addressed including the need to prevent and eliminate child labour.

VI. Sustaining the Child Labour Project

WITH THE EXPANSION OF THE CHILD LABOUR schools and the increase in union membership, the question of getting continued funding for more Child Labour schools started to emerge. Until when should donors fund the schools? When should government step in? Why is the union taking almost full responsibility in running these schools when government should be the one providing the compulsory education?

In 2001, in an evaluation mission workshop with the union, issues pertaining to sustainability were discussed. A sustainability strategy had to be worked out to increase the role of the government and the community in sustaining Child Labour Schools.

Meeting the Demand for More Child Labour Schools

As the Child Labour Project progressed rapidly, the question of sustainability became an issue of concern especially among the donors of the Child Labour Project. With the growing demand to expand the schools, how can the union sustain them? Is it really the role of the union to run the school? How can the unions respond more effectively to the

Getting the Provident Fund to the Employee (in Punjab)

Mr. Mahendra Singh, at age 47, had been working as a bricklayer at M/s Satis Kuman Balla & Co for twenty years until he died of a massive heart attack in 1996 while at his workplace. He left behind a wife and 6 children. After his death, the brick kiln owner did not offer Mahendra's family any compensation. Neither the wife nor the union knew much about outstanding legal dues that the deceased worker's family was entitled to. However, in 2003, when the union got a list of workers covered by the Provident Fund Act at this brick kiln site, the name of the late Mahendra Singh appeared. The BMS union revived this case and coordinated with the Provident Fund department so that the family could get their legal dues. The Brick Kiln owner apparently had not deposited the employers' share for the deceased's Provident Fund account. The union along with the Provident Fund department made the owner pay his share plus penalty amounting to 40,000 rupees and this money was then handed over to his wife. Today, Ms. Charna Singh is getting a pension of 1,000 rupees/ per month from the Provident Fund Department and an additional sum of 250 rupees/ per month for two children until they reached the age of 25.



“Advocacy and campaigns targeted the state and government offices to respond to the union’s charter of demands on workers’ and child labour concerns”

huge number of child labourers in India? These were some of the questions raised by BWI and the donors in the 2001 evaluation workshop of the Child Labour Project. This evaluation served as a requisite for project continuation.

At its conception, the child labour school started as a union program meant to pull out child labourers from their workplaces. Later, it evolved as an organizing tool that significantly doubled union membership; it also became a concrete service of the union to its members. The child labour school consequently became a viable alternative for the children of workers as well as an effective union program. Clearly, the unions felt a deep appreciation and sense of ownership for the Project. Thus, even if donors stopped funding support for the child labour school, the unions were determined to continue the project.

In the evaluation it was clarified that the ultimate goal of the union was to pull out the children from the workforce by bringing them into the educational fold. Education was deemed the basic right of every child. In India, providing compulsory education is the responsibility of government. It therefore followed that government should have an increasing role in supporting the child labour schools. Unfortunately, education in India is not given high priority. This has been the main reason for union intervention. The union’s role, however, is not to replace that of government. The child labour project, however, tended to do just this: to serve as an alternative to state-initiated schools. Further, by proving that preventing child labor through education could be done, the unions also aimed at pressuring pressure government to fulfill its role of education provider. In this regard, the union’s demand to the Indian government -- that child labour be abolished through the adoption of the schooling strategy – should be asserted.



Having clarified the role of government in providing education, and the advocacy role of the unions in ensuring that child labourers are educated accordingly, the strategy on the long-term sustainability of the child labour schools was then shifted towards increasing the role of government in the Child Labour School Project. Increasing the role of government was the challenge at hand but government's participation needed to be calibrated and worked out to ensure that standards of the Child labour schools and proper education were not compromised.

Although the state governments expressed willingness to take over the child labour schools, the unions were not entirely comfortable for the following reasons:

- The State lacks the financial capability to sustain and expand the school (thus, sacrificing the quality and standard of the school);
- The State will eventually use these schools to cater to regular children and not child labourers; and,
- The union will lose its voice in running these schools and thereby lose the support of its members.

With this condition, the unions thus realized that at this point, a partnership approach would be the more viable and appropriate mechanism. This meant that the child labour schools would be managed by both the state and the unions. But is it the role of the union to manage schools? Or should the unions limit their role as part of the decision making body? These questions needed to be clarified before entering into such partnership. Notwithstanding the need for further clarification, the unions identified the following as urgent tasks:

- Institutionalise the child labour schools as a sustainable, manageable and effective alternative for child labourers; and,
- Engage state and national government to commit to concrete and progressive policy and programs that address the issue of child labour in the building industry.



Developing the Sustainability Strategy of the Child Labour Schools

To effectively achieve the vision of total elimination of child labour in the building, wood and forestry industry and in the whole of India, the government should eventually implement a comprehensive child labour program including the institutionalisation of the Child Labour School as its regular funded program. This vision, however, is far from reality. Considering the current limits and possibilities, the most viable option is to establish a joint partnership between the unions and the government, with the objective of increasing government's role and financial support. This option would move towards the sustainability of the child labour school strategy.

In the context of the Child Labour Project in India, sustainability means the capacity of the unions to support a manageable size of schools on their own. Sustainability, however, does not necessarily mean absence of external funding. Generally, no school is 100% internally generated, it also requires external funding. But in the context of this project, sustainability means that without external support, the union can continue to operate the school on its own pace and with minimum capacity. Depending on the availability of funds from the government or from BWI and its partner donors, the school can expand its enrolment.

In the context of increasing government's role in and commitment for the Child Labour Project, the following Child Labour schemes for sustainability have been proposed and adopted by the union:

Union-Managed School

Based on the financial capacity of the union, a manageable school size that the union can financially support is that with an average of 40 children. The average annual cost for one (1) child is estimated to be CHF50. There is no doubt that the unions have generated their own child labour fund deposited in their respective School Trust funds. The unions reported the various means they generated funds for the school: allocation of a



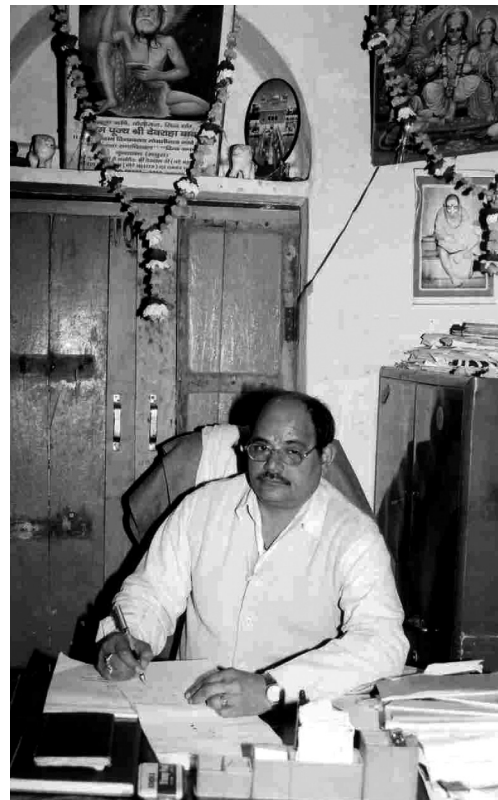
certain percentage of the union dues; special union levy to members; community contributions; inclusion of child labour fund in collective bargaining agreements; company donations (either cash, food or bricks); state or district food subsidy or free use of facilities; and, contribution from parents.

Various options have been explored to make the school operation sustainable. As a pre-requisite to sustainability, the unions should reduce the number of children to a manageable level and align it with the BWI Child Labour School Guidelines to ensure both quality and sustainability of the school. The reduction in the number of children can be done by transferring children to Government schools whenever possible and by keeping a tab on further enrolment. Emphasis should be more on the quality of education, and if the Union allows the entry of children more than it could support, the quality of schooling is likely to suffer.

BWI Sponsorship Scheme

Once the Union-managed School is determined, BWI will continue to support an additional child for every 1 Child that the union supports. This will be the sharing that BWI will propose to the donors. In this way, BWI support will be given only if the union has proven that it can manage and run the school at a sustainable and manageable level. In case of pull out from the donor, the continuation of the school is then ensured.

It should also be noted that the cost for infrastructure and technical assistance will continue to be treated as a grant and therefore is not factored in the definition of sustainability. BWI will register CHILD LEARN (Child Labour Elimination Resource Network) as a non-profit company in India that will be responsible for the management of assets as well as the provision of technical assistance to the schools. Child Learn will generate contributions from donors and unions for the schools' infrastructure.



Partnership with State Government

As reported by the unions, state governments have started to be interested in the unions' child labour schools. They have even expressed willingness to takeover the schools. With careful assessment of such offer, the unions have started to engage the state government for concrete partnership schemes.

1. Punjab State. The National Child Labour Project (NCLP) under the Ministry of Labour covers child labour school operations in Punjab. The NCLP has identified ten (10) schools in Punjab including the union's child labour schools for inclusion. The union is now in the process of forging a partnership with the state. However, the union has to lobby for some changes within this program that would suit the needs of the Child Labour Project.

2. Uttar Pradesh State. Similarly, the Uttar Pradesh State expressed possibilities to provide financial support for the union's child labour school through the District Primary Education Program (DPEP). This program will provide funding support for the salaries and trainings of teachers.

3. Bihar State. In Bihar, the possibilities are not as promising as the other states. Although the State has expressed willingness to take over the child labour schools, it is very clear that State support will not be substantial. Bihar, after all, is cash-strapped and one of the poorest in India. Fifty (50%) of the rural population in Bihar live below the poverty line. At present, the Government's role is restricted to providing 3 kg. of grain per child in two (2) out of the four (4) BWI child labour schools in the state. This situation, however, may also be used to the union's advantage. Because of its lack of capacity, the State is likely to seek out a partnership with the union to run the schools. The union can also get State support to lobby jointly for national funding, e.g. that the NCLP be made available for the children of Bihar.

Through sustained campaigns and negotiations, these possibilities can become reality in



“Organizing took place in the village level (where schools were set-up), the block and district levels where the campaigns took place extending up to the state and national levels. Brick kiln committees were organized as the basic units of contact between the membership and the union leadership”

the near future. The aim is to develop child labour schools that are jointly managed by the union, government and the community.

Gathering all the stakeholders – union, government, community, donors – is necessary if the child labour schools are to be sustained. Sustainability does not necessarily entail a total pull out of donors since it is impossible for unions to continue project implementation by themselves, given the magnitude and complexity of the child labour problem. In this case, sustainability means that the union will not depend entirely on donors, rather, that it will source funding from various institutions, at the community, state and national levels.

The BWI contribution will be declining every year as the union takes more financial responsibility and/or the government starts to assume some costs of the school. BWI is projecting that at least half of the schools will be sustainable at the end of three (3) years.

VI. Moving Forward: From Child Labour Schools to Centres for Workers' Development (2003-2005)

THE SUCCESS OF THE CHILD LABOUR Schools Project in mitigating the child labour problem and strengthening the trade union resulted in the enhancement of the project strategy toward the transformation of the Child Labour Schools into Centres for Workers' Development.



With the success of the Child Labour Project from 1995 to 2002, the current direction of the Project from 2003 to 2005 has expanded the Child Labour Project Concept into a Workers' Centre for Development. With this more integrated strategy, the Child Labour project will serve not only child labourers pulled out from work but also adult workers particularly on gender awareness, workers' literacy, health and safety, and, trade unionism.

This integrated approach provides a distinct image for the Union's child labour schools. The schools are maximized to benefit workers who continue to be instrumental in working for the abolition of child labour and to create a conducive environment that would eliminate the causes and effects of the child labour problems. The evolution of the Workers Centre for Development Project design necessarily had some bearing in the components of the project, sharpening the current overall strategy of the project (2003-2005).

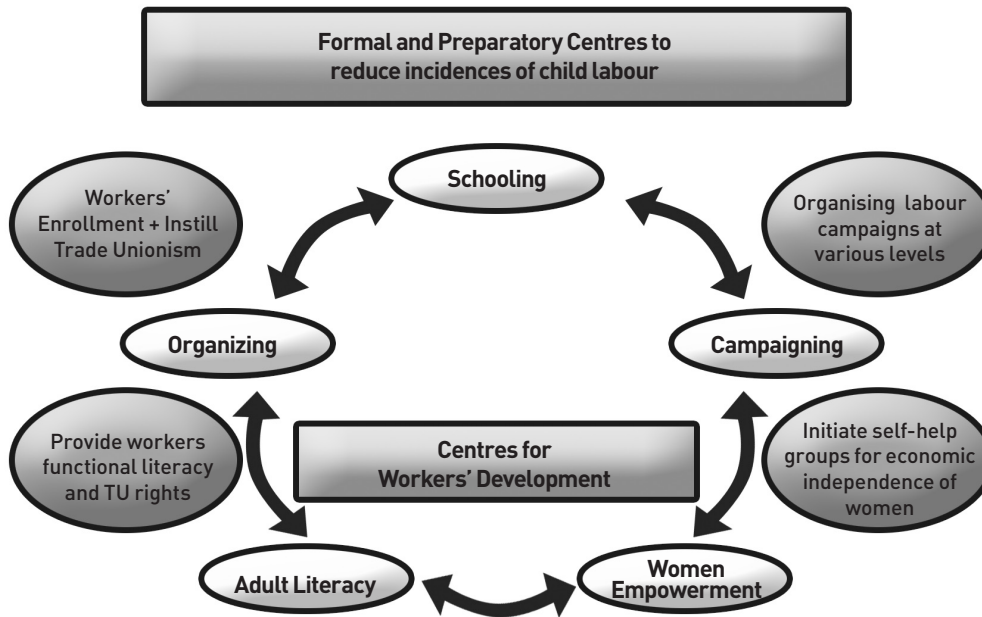
Over-all Strategy:

Development Objective:

To develop strong, democratic and stable trade unions in the brick kiln, stone quarry and related industries in India that would enable them to effectively bargain collectively for better working conditions of workers in the work sites and to contribute to the elimination of child labour in the industry

Immediate Objectives:

- 1) Child Labour School Program – To develop sustainable, manageable and responsive child labour schools (integrating workers' literacy, gender awareness)
- 2) Organizing Program – To recruit and organise the workers in the brick kiln and stone quarry in three (3) states (integrating workers' literacy, gender awareness, occupation health and safety)



3) Campaign and Advocacy Program- To campaign for collective bargaining agreements for the workers and a responsive child labour policy and support programme.

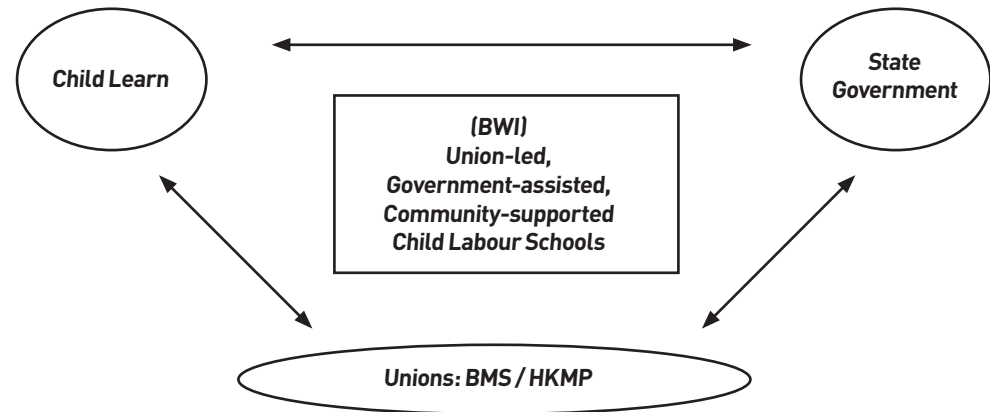
Re-envisioning the Child Labour Project:

Schooling Strategy

When the BWI Child Labour Project was conceived, the emphasis was on shifting



children from the child labour schools to the government school after some basic education. However, due to lack of government schools or poor quality of education and facilities, workers were not motivated to send their children to these schools. This has led to an increase in the number of children in BWI child labour schools, much above these schools' budget capacity. The schooling strategy direction was then shifted towards making the child school projects sustainable by working out a viable mechanism of partnership between the Union, Government and BWI. To date, the Child Labour Schools are union-led, government assisted and community supported. The following diagram reflects the current schooling strategy with the role of each of the three (3) stakeholders:



The three stakeholders (Union, government and BWI) are expected to work out a sharing and counterpart scheme. In the spirit of partnership and with the union as primarily responsible for the proper and sustainable management of the schools,, the BWI for its part formed a non-profit company – “CHILD LEARN” -- tasked with the management of assets and provision of technical assistance to the schools. CHILD LEARN was also



aimed at generating contributions from donors and unions to help provide infrastructure of the schools. As for the role of government, it is envisioned that by taking the lead in initiating child labour schools, government would be encouraged if not pressured to increase its responsibility in developing child labour schools, jointly managed with the unions, sustainable, and, fully integrated in the community.

Campaigns / Advocacy

The child labour schools proved to be an effective tool for organizing and campaigning. The campaigns under the Child Labour Project were developed through the years, and advocacy was elevated from the village to the block, district, state and national levels. These campaigns boosted the bargaining power of the unions and increased their clout with the concerned government departments. With the assistance and participation of children, parents, teachers and other workers' union, campaigns were raised from the local level to the higher levels, advocating issues of child labour and the restoration of workers' rights. With this increased coverage and impact of the Project, the focus is now on mobilizing workers, children and others sectors in the society towards developing effective and result-oriented State Campaigns on child labour as well as improving working conditions of the brick kiln, quarrying and construction workers in Bihar, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. Meanwhile, national level campaigns are directed on forging alliances with like-minded NGOs, trade unions and interested organization on the issue of child labour.

Organizing Strategy

While child labour schools provide a good strategy for recruiting, organizing and expanding the membership base, the organizing program is expected to focus largely on strengthening the union's capacity and bargaining power necessary to improve working conditions and continue the work for the abolition of child labour. Recent improvements of the organizing strategy include the Adult Workers Literacy and the Gender components.

The Adult Workers Literacy was added as an additional component under the Organizing strategy, to provide functional literacy and workers' education on trade unionism, and, health and safety. This strategy was conceived in response to the reality that 85-90% of the construction workers are illiterate and that having literate parents is likely to create a more conducive environment for educating children. Meanwhile, the Gender Program was developed as another supporting component largely influenced by the increasing number of women who were involved in and recruited into the union through the child labour project. The strategy aims to increase the membership and participation of women in the unions, reduce discrimination against women and promote gender sensitivity among children as well.

With these enhanced components surrounding the Child Labour School Program, the Child Labour Schools is currently functioning as Centres for Workers' Development, no longer limited to providing education for child labourers. The BWI Child Labour Project thus encompasses schooling, union organizing, campaigning, adult workers education and gender programmes.

VII. Role of the BWI

BWI HAS BEEN THE PARTNER OF THE UNIONS in Punjab, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh in providing strategic direction, technical and financial support to the Child Labour Project. Committed to strengthening trade unions and eliminating child labour, BWI sought to ensure that both objectives were met without losing sight of the nature and mandate of trade unions.

Fighting for the abolition of child labour through the child labour schooling approach could compromise core trade union work (i.e. trade union strengthening to fight for workers' rights) especially when the school projects demand much time and resources from the union. Though the project, for instance, brought in new members



and gave the union a credibility boost, trade union organizing and workers' advocacy tended to take a back seat as the Child Labour Project took up more attention and resources from the unions. Running the child labour schools entailed the provision of sufficient resources (i.e. funding, infrastructure) and technical support on school administration. It was not possible for the unions to take on the school projects on their own and this was where BWI stepped in.

“The success of the Project in mitigating the child labour problem and strengthening the trade union resulted in the enhancement of the project strategy toward the transformation of the Child Labour Schools into Centres for Workers’ Development.”

While the Union took the lead role in running the Child Labour schools, organizing and campaigning for the workers and children, BWI facilitated the financial, logistical and technical support. As back-up support, BWI helped provide technical capacity building on school administration and facilitated donor funding for infrastructure, school equipment, land and building.

Eventually, BWI support was institutionalised through the CHILD LEARN project.

Child Learn is a non-profit organization that manages the property and assets of the child labour schools. Since the local unions and BWI are represented in the its board, Child LEARN continues to be a trade union agenda. At the same time, because it is a separate NGO that handles sustainability issues and asset management of the schools, local trade unions are relieved of the demands of day-to-day operations of the schools. The unions are then able to devote more time to advocating for the increased role of governments in managing the schools.





VIII. Lessons and Reflections

1. Broad participation and commitment of various players are key to the success of the Child Labour Project.

Other than the integrated strategy of organizing, campaigning and advocacy, major contributing factors to the success of the project were (i) the active participation of union officials (i.e. leadership, organisers, active members), school teachers, workers, parents, and (ii) the support structures existing within the community. Engaging the right kind of people and generating community support and government contribution were key to making the project successful.

2. The first step in ensuring the viability of the Child Labour School Project is to conduct a participatory feasibility study.

Good intentions to eradicate child labour and establishing child labour schools is a necessary driving force but may not be enough to develop a viable strategy. As a first step, a feasibility study provides a clear socio-economic and political analysis of child labour in relation to the construction industry. A study also gauges and analyzes government's responses to child labour and compulsory education. The identified needs, gaps, opportunities and resources at hand then become the bases of the child labour school strategy. Equally important is the conduct of this study. It should be participatory, involving all targeted stakeholders: the union, the state government, and the community. This participatory approach is useful in establishing an environment of mutual ownership and partnership of the Child School project and in clarifying roles and commitments of the various stakeholders.

3. Sustainability is now the major challenge of the Child Labour Schools



At the onset of the project, sustainability plans were not integrated in the schooling strategy. Issues pertaining to the continued and proper roles of the stakeholders, however, soon emerged. These issues should have been anticipated from the start. One major issue for instance was the role of the union vis-à-vis government. It was only in the course of the project that the unions realized that their role was not to replace government as education provider, rather, to engage government toward the direction of abolishing child labour and bringing children back to school.

Pinning down the commitment of the union, government, and, community is crucial to the sustainability of child labour schools.

4. “Quality” not just “quantity” education should be an important goal of the Child Labour project.

In putting up child labour schools, ensuring quality education for the children should be an equally important objective to pulling out a large number of children from the workforce. Quantity, however, can compromise quality. To ensure optimum quality of education, enrollees to child labour schools have to be limited. Because the ultimate aim is to abolish child labour altogether, the unions may have no choice but to push government to provide all child labourers with access to proper education.

5. Trade Unions can be effective advocates against Child Labour.





Project Details:

Project Timeframe 1998-2004

Solidarity Support Organisations/Trade Union Partners:

- FNV Netherlands
- FNV Bouw Netherlands
- BAT Kartel Denmark
- CLC Canada
- CFMEU Australia
- CLSC Australia

Participating Unions:

- BMS Punjab
- HKMP Bihar
- UPGMS Uttar Pradesh

Project Director:

- Rajeev Sharma
- JL Srivastava
- Anup Srivastava



In India, traditionally, NGOs are more involved than the unions in the child labour issue. Why then is it important for trade unions to take up this issue? Can a trade union be an effective advocate against child labour?

Trade unions cannot turn a blind eye to the child labour issue because it is the labour conditions – low wages, bad working conditions – that drive children to become part of the workforce. These children work side by side with their parents and other adult workers in the quarry, brick kiln and construction site. The workers, thus, have firsthand knowledge of the negative impact of child labour. They know because some of these labourers are their children.

Workers, thus, are both actors and beneficiaries of the campaign to stop child labour. From the perspective of workers' rights, trade unions are in the best position to advocate for the abolition of child labour and to pressure government toward this direction. Together with the NGOs and organized communities, the trade unions can deliver a very strong message to the Indian government and society: End Child Labour Now! ■





Women Asia

Mainstreaming Gender Sensitivity and Equality in the Construction, Wood and Forestry Industry





“ The Women Project has changed me in a lot of ways and in many aspects. Through this project, I have acquired knowledge and strength. I now know my rights as a woman and as a worker so that, I find my strength and power to stand for my rights. I can face anybody without fear and inferiority. I have learned to speak up not only for myself but also for other people’s benefits. It also enables me to empower other women to come out from their shell to help and educate other women ”

Narisa “Beb” Traya, NUBCW member and volunteer educator/organizer, Compostela Valley, Philippines





Women Asia:

Mainstreaming Gender Sensitivity and Equality in the Construction, Wood and Forestry Industry

I. Situation of Women in Asia

IN THE ASIAN SUB-CONTINENT, the level of exploitation of women is much greater and the proportion of women in the work force is much higher than in other regions. The complexity of Asian societies, the subordination of women, and, the nature, structure and history of their trade union movements have created substantial obstacles to successful organizing among women workers.

While conditions for many workers in the construction sector are difficult, dirty and dusty, the situation of women is particularly bad and severe. For example, in the construction industry in India, women work very long hours carrying bricks and mortar, breaking stones, and pouring concrete. Although their work requires skill and tremendous stamina, they generally continue to be regarded as unskilled even after they have worked for many years in the industry. When young, they are exploited and harassed and when they get to their senior years, they are told to leave without compensation or compassion. Most of the time, the women in this industry are single women, widowed, deserted or divorced. These are women who have to look after their families single-handedly. As they grow older, jobs – especially decent jobs -- are harder to come by. Most of the time, women enter the



“In the Asian sub-continent, the level of exploitation of women is much greater and the proportion of women in the work force is much higher than in other regions“

construction industry out of expediency because the work does not require a certificate or any qualification.

Unsafe, unequal and unjust treatment and working conditions of women were surfaced in the participatory research conducted by BWI in 1998 among the forestry, woodworking and construction sectors. The following are the most common problems facing women workers in India, Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines:

- Large numbers of women are forced to work in the informal sector where working conditions are unsafe and precarious;
- Unequal pay for equal type of work;
- Less access to benefits of employment;
- Less job security because of status as contract workers;
- Poor employment conditions;
- Lack of protection against violence, harassment and discrimination;
- Lack of skill recognition and less access to training;
- Unemployment and underemployment which cause poverty;
- Concentration in part time workforce;
- Disproportionate share of family care services;
- Lack of interest and time in participating in union activities.

Despite the harsh working conditions and the unjust treatment facing women in the construction industry, trade unions have had difficulty in recruiting women to join unions. Asian culture and societies make it very difficult for women to become actively involved in trade unions. In most of the Asian countries, unions are struggling to organize these women workers. However, these unions generally do not give enough consideration to the fact that women workers face special problems and they may have special needs such as child care, schools or crèches for their children.

Women's lack of interest in labour unions is often due to a number of reasons: domestic constraints such as lack of child care, gender constraints such as double burden, traditional and customary restrictions, male domination and even personal constraints such as lack of awareness, high level of illiteracy and low sense of self esteem -- all of which are made worse due to the lack of socio-political support systems within workplaces in particular and society in general. To date, many women suffer from sexual harassment, exploitation at work and economic insecurity.

As a rule, women who work in the construction and building sector in Asia have very little exposure to trade unions and are generally unaware of their basic labour and civil rights. In many of the Asian countries, unions have a limited organisational base and have yet to give special consideration to the specific needs and problems of women workers. In the newly industrialised countries where the work force is predominantly composed of young women – especially in the wood processing and furniture industries --women feel economically empowered for the first time in their lives but are unaware that they are actually being exploited and will be unemployed by the time they reach 30 years of age. Many unions, unfortunately, do not recognise the need or importance of supporting women-specific rights at the work place and in society as an essential factor in their own growth. Two major reasons give rise to low participation of women: trade unions, especially in the construction industry, are basically male dominated, and, in many cultures women are meant to “be seen but not heard”. Women, thus, find it very difficult to speak out and when they finally do, they have to work thrice as hard to reach leadership positions.

Admittedly too, even within BWI, although there have been notable changes in the overall policy framework regarding women's participation at all organizational levels, especially since the start of the gender project in 1998, this has not been translated into operational terms at the work place level. Trade unions still do not adequately address women's concerns during collective bargaining. Likewise, women's participation in trade union decision-making structures at the national and local levels is still extremely low. Such

realities have challenged the BWI leadership to pilot a gender program in Asia that would empower women and mainstream gender issues in trade union life at all levels.

II. Mainstreaming the Gender Equality Agenda in BWI

WITH THE SUPPORT OF FNV MONDIAL, BWI piloted a women's project in Asia from 1998 – 2003 entitled: Promotion of the Rights of Women in Construction, Wood and Forestry Trade Unions. The project was implemented in India, Indonesia, Thailand and later, in the Philippines (after the Thailand project was withdrawn in 2001). The evaluation of the 5-year project resulted in a number of milestones for BWI at the policy, organizational, and, behavioural levels.

Policy Reforms: Adopting the Gender Agenda in BWI

Creating a gender sensitive organization and affirming the women's agenda is a necessary ingredient for improving the position of women. In BWI, policy reforms and the adoption of programs and issues that support and affirm the women's agenda for empowerment and equality were adopted. Through the active participation of the women's committee in the Asia Pacific region, the following policy advances have been achieved thus far:

- 1) A union policy statement on sexual harassment was circulated for the first time in the Asian region at the 20th Regional Asian Pacific Committee Meeting and distributed at every BWI activity held thereafter in the region thus becoming the International Policy of BWI;
- 2) BWI adopted the Regional Policy and Guidelines for the Participation of Women;
- 3) Adoption of 30% women participation in all BWI activities as affirmative action for women;
- 4) In the BWI Vision Statement, strategies to recruit women in the informal sector

was used as a document in the World Congress of BWI in 2001;

- 5) The Policy on Sexual Harassment has been adopted and distributed in all activities of the Asia-Pacific Region and all international activities of the BWI;
- 6) The Women's Committee in the Asia Pacific Region contributed to the development of the Strategic Plan of BWI (i.e. Bargaining for Equality and Fight Against Discrimination of Women) which was endorsed in the congress.
- 7) Gender mainstreaming was made a priority in the 2001-2005 Strategic Plan for BWI to promote and support women, to wit:
 - Fight discrimination against women at our workplace and promote women's participation in our internal trade union work and representation in trade union structures;
 - Support the International Women's Committee and Regional Women's Committees to effectively implement the Bargaining Agenda for Women;
 - Fight sexual harassment and violence against women and children and ensure the implementation of women's rights.

Global Actions:

- Support women membership in BWI structures through a policy that actively encourages women and ensures that representation reflects the level of women membership in the BWI;
- Create an on-going Women Officer position in Geneva, responsible for the implementation of a coordinated global women's programme that has a goal to encourage the active participation of women in our sectors;
- Promote the ratification of ILO Convention 183 on Maternity Protection and seek its full implementation;
- Coordinate global activities to mark the International Women's Day on March 8;

“The situation of women is particularly severe. When young, they are exploited and harassed and when they get to their senior years, they are told to leave without compensation or compassion“



Regional and National Actions:

- Support the establishment of women's structures in unions and promote education and development of women leadership positions;
- Undertake training to sensitise men and women on the need to support women at the workplace and in union structures.

Mainstreaming Women in the BWI union

From a situation where the women were virtually an invisible and unheard presence in the male-dominated labour unions, their increased and felt presence has proven to

be a strong gauge of the empowerment of women. Increased number and participation of women in BWI is starting to make a real difference within unions, at the local and regional levels. The following organizational milestones have been achieved as a result of the project:

Increased Union Membership

More than 20,000 workers were recruited to the union, half of which are women. This level of recruitment was made possible because of the mass campaigns conducted and the crèches established in India. An average of 50% of those recruited is now dues paying members.

Women in Decision Making Structures

Women members were elected in leadership positions of the unions: 1 vice president, 2 secretaries, 1 member in the national council of leaders, division chairperson, 2 women members in each committee level, members of Collective Bargaining Negotiations, among others. Likewise, women's committees have been formed at the local, regional and national levels.



Trained Women Cadres in the Labour Unions

BWI trained seventy-one (71) women labour union cadres (India- 20, Philippines –25, and Indonesia – 26) who are now integrated in the union leadership structure. Trained in various labour union skills, these women cadres are actively involved in union organising and recruitment, and, the campaign on labour union issues particularly on women’s issues. These women cadres emerged from the 474 women leaders who participated in the project trainings conducted.

Integration of Women in the Union Agenda and Structures

Due to the problems of gender disparity and discrimination in Asia, the BWI pursued activities to promote gender equality at all levels. The aim was to ensure that BWI Asia-Pacific regional leaders, staff members and project coordinators support, encourage and assist affiliates to develop and implement gender policies and programmes in all union activities. Another objective was to ensure that gender issues related to equal opportunities for men and women would be integrated in all aspects and activities of BWI: policy formulation, planning and implementation of programs and activities.

Integration of Women in BWI Structures

Since the establishment of the Regional Women’s Committee of Asia Pacific, BWI has supported the annual regional women’s seminar on various themes. Twenty (20) women leaders of BWI participate in these annual seminars, the aim of which is to enable more women to participate in regional meetings and learn more about developments in the labour movement.

Enabling Mechanisms and Programs

Gender sensitivity trainings for project coordinators, staff and union leaders have been developed and implemented regularly to increase awareness and generate support. Such trainings have resulted in a common and better understanding among male BWI leaders on the need and strategies to achieve gender equality and women empowerment.



“Asian culture and societies make it very difficult for women to become actively involved in trade unions. In most of the Asian countries, unions are struggling to organize these women workers”

Likewise, monitoring and reporting mechanisms to ensure the implementation of BWI’s policy on gender equality have been installed. Notably, there has been an increase in women’s participation in all education programmes implemented by the BWI in the various regions. Moreover, women committees have been formed at the local and national levels in almost all of the participating unions. These committees have been formed to take care of health, safety and sanitation facilities at the workplace. Self-help groups have also been established to assist women members in augmenting their immediate economic needs.

Empowering the Women

Behavioural changes and manifestations among women and men have been visible and can be considered as direct results of the project. These changes are encouraging barometers of the level of empowerment of women and support of the men. The following manifestations have been observed among women participants of the trainings and campaigns conducted.

- There has been an increase in women’s visibility and attendance in union activities especially in various campaigns, union meetings, assemblies and lobbying in parliament to address women’s concerns (e.g. sexual harassment, benefits, etc).
- Women graduates also assist in networking to mobilise other resources from government and non-government organizations (NGOs). An example of this is in India where women leaders guide and assist members to enroll in the welfare boards enabling them to avail of some benefits.
- There was a tremendous increase in the alertness and awareness of sexual harassment cases and domestic violence because more women came out to file complaints to police authorities.
- Male participants of Gender Awareness Programmes have become more sensitive and open towards women’s issues and now empathize with the oppression of women.
- Indicators of increased empowerment and assertiveness of women were affirmed

in the evaluation workshop of the project. Reported manifestations include: marked improvement in public speaking skills of women and increased women participation in collective bargaining negotiations, planning and conducting local level programmes, handling of grievances, conduct of campaigns, decision making, union activities, education activities, and, increased number of women in leadership positions.

III. Gender Mainstreaming Strategy

TRAINING WOMEN CADRES TO RECRUIT, organize and implement campaigns that would advocate and mainstream the women agenda was the major strategy used to empower women in the BWI\labour unions.

BWI piloted a 5-year women-global project in Asia (i.e. India, Indonesia, Philippines) to catalyse and mainstream the gender empowerment agenda within the labour union. The project aimed for the following developmental objectives:

- To improve the status and employment conditions of women in construction, wood and forestry industries;
- To continue to increase the number of women in the BWI sectors who are organised into the trade unions.
- To continue to increase women's representation in decision making positions in the BWI affiliates and structures;
- To lobby in support of women's rights, together with the international community

To achieve the gender developmental agenda of the labour unions, BWI focused on training a core of women cadres tasked to recruit, organize, lobby, campaign and educate the union on the women developmental agenda. The intention was to integrate these women

continued on page 18

continued from page 11

cadres in the union leadership structure and thereby influence the union leadership to include the women's agenda in its structure, policies, priorities and collective bargaining agreement (CBA). The women cadres would then be instrumental in achieving the union's women developmental agenda.

Taking on the path of training women cadres as the project's core strategy meant systematizing the process of preparing and implementing the gender project, making it participatory and instrumental to organising the union, and, utilizing both the formal leadership structures of the organization and the women themselves in realizing the project. Systematic because the gender mainstreaming design was based on a participatory research to identify the needs and culture of the targeted areas followed by a strict selection of women participants to the trainings. The criteria for selecting participants had to be agreed upon by the leadership of the participating union and the gender project coordinator. Likewise, like a formal education course, the training team was committed and strict in enforcing the participant selection criteria and the participants' consistent attendance. The project was also participatory because its design adhered to the "Learning by Doing" methodology which always involved a combination of training and actual practice of the women participants in the local unions' issues and campaigns. Furthermore, it was an organising strategy because the gender project involved and ensured the commitment and participation of the union leadership in the gender mainstreaming process and at the same time became a strategy to actually organize the women and consolidate the union. Henceforth, the gender mainstreaming strategy -- training and organizing women workers -- reformed the union leadership's gender orientation and in the process consolidated and strengthened the union.

Preparation Phase: Phase One - Preparing the Groundwork and creating an environment conducive to the entry of the Gender Mainstreaming Agenda (1998-2001)

To ensure the responsiveness of the Project to the targeted women and unions, participa-



“These are made worse due to the lack of socio-political support systems within workplaces in particular and society in general. To date, many women suffer from sexual harassment, exploitation at work and economic insecurity”

tory research on the situation of the women workers was carried out in Thailand, Indonesia, India and the Philippines. The results of the research identified the education needs of the women workers, the burning issues and concerns of women in the construction industry and the direction of building up women membership in unions. Based on the needs identified, the second phase of the project was developed.

Recognizing the needs, issues and working conditions of the women in the building, wood, rattan and construction sector, BWI conducted gender awareness workshops to sensitise the leadership and the BWI staff on the gender issues and compel them to create the necessary structures and policy that would support the gender mainstreaming agenda. Key achievements for this period were:

- 2 crèches established for the children of construction workers in 2 BWI affiliates in India. These crèches have become focal points for recruiting and organising both women and men members to the union.
- The Asia-Pacific regional women’s committee was established in 1998, and soon after, national women’s committees were established in Thailand, Indonesia and Tamil Nadu in India. These committees now monitor and oversee women activities in the Asia Pacific region.
- A regional gender awareness workshop for men and women was held in Malaysia in 1998. Participants included BWI regional staffmembers, full time officers, coordinators and selected national education coordinators. The purpose of the seminar was to ensure that BWI staff members and coordinators would support, encourage and assist affiliates to develop and implement gender policies and



programmes in all union activities. Issues covered in the workshop were policy approaches, bargaining for equality, discrimination against women and policy on sexual harassment. This workshop resulted in national gender awareness trainings in Thailand, Indonesia, South India, North India, East India, that were eventually duplicated at the plant level.

- Women membership in unions increased especially where the programme has been actively implemented.
- A quarterly newsletter on women's issues called the "BWI News Reel (Representation, Education, Equality and Leadership)" has been published and circulated since 1998.
- The Asia Pacific region has adopted a policy on sexual harassment and the document is now being distributed at every programme, workshop or activity implemented by the BWI.

Phase Two: Women Cadre Development - Learning by Doing (2001-2003)

Based on the research inputs, the gender mainstreaming strategy through women cadre development – anchored on the training methodology "learning by doing" -- was designed and discussed by the union's leadership.

Selection Process

The trained women cadre would be instrumental in recruiting, organizing and implementing campaigns for the union and thereby strengthen the women developmental agenda. Because of such expectation, the union leadership was involved from the start of the project, especially with regards the selection criteria and the list of women participants recommended for the training.

Enjoining Union support for the Project

At the start of the project, union leaders (i.e. union's leadership and plant level members) were expected to attend the first gender awareness workshop to ensure appreciation of the

project and gender sensitisation. The union was made to commit to support the women trained cadres by contributing to the women participants' allowance in exchange for their substantial time and services rendered in union's campaigns, education and organizing activities. The union leadership also enjoined their male members to participate in the gender sensitivity training. Finally, the unions were made to provide support to the women activities such as the maintenance of the crèche.

Training Methodology

Based on the needs identified from the participatory research, a continuous education, training and campaign methodology was developed and implemented in the three years of the project's 2nd Phase, using the learning by doing methodology.

Trainers' Training, the backbone of the Project, was the major strategy used in training the targeted women cadres. The trainers' training skills training is a ten-day course comprised of two parts: the first 5 days provides the inputs on the women-related subject matter and at the same time introduces the different methods of training including audio-visuals, poster, and picture story telling; the next 5 training days are used for preparing campaigns including a session. Each of the trainers trained implements at least 2 activities in the form of campaigns, rallies, study circles, seminars.

This means that at the end of 10 days, the participants would have learned how to prepare materials, the methods and context of the seminar, how to conduct rallies, campaigns, role plays or games, and, actually run a programme for their plant level members. The issues which they should plan are those that they are comfortable to articulate, be it sexual harassment, recruiting and organizing members, gender awareness, bargaining for equality, discrimination of women, CBA, human and trade union rights or integration of women's issues into training programmes. After the training, the participants are expected to undergo a "practicum" by implementing at least two activities (i.e. campaigns, rallies, study circles, seminars). The practicum part provided

the women cadre participants with actual experience to practice what they learned and advanced the gender agenda among union members.

Campaigns, study circles, seminars and the trainers' training thus provided benefits for the women cadre trainees and the participating unions. The following describes the "learning by doing" approaches that were used.

Campaigns are mass gatherings or meetings educating a broader audience about issues. In the case of the Women's Global Project in Asia, campaigns are heavily used to educate union members (both male and female) on women's issues and thereby recruit members to the union. In campaigns, the trained women cadres try to persuade and motivate union members or non-members in the audience who may have negative views about trade unions and women in the hope of transforming their views and getting their support and involvement. Campaigns can be in the form of case studies, women sharing real-life experiences, role-plays, dramas and visuals. These are the most effective methods used for the informal sector most of whom are lowly educated or illiterate. Sometimes, to amplify issues, street marches are conducted after the discussion of issues. To enhance the quality and impact of campaigns, pamphlets are produced, posters are drawn and pasted on trees around the villages and leaflets are distributed to the houses of union and community members.

Study Circles are like chat sessions and are meant to motivate women to discuss their problems while sitting together. The study circle, however, has to be done systematically. Study circle team leaders have to undergo training before they can seriously handle this methodology.

The seminar and workshop method is useful and good for leaders, potential women organisers and participants who are literate. Participants using this method are provided with methods of training combined with inputs on different issues of trade unionism.

Implementation of the Second Phase of the Project:

The first year of the 2nd Phase of the project began in 2001 and focused on Skills Training in the Development of Campaigns.

Target participants were the women organizers, coordinators, activities, education officers and potential women union members. A total of 56 follow-up campaigns were implemented in the form of either actual campaigns, study circles, rallies, or one-day awareness programs by the women who were trained under the project.

The second year of the project implemented in 2002 focused on Organising and Recruiting,

The themes for 2002 were: developing skills on how to recruit members and how to organise them. This training targeted women organisers, coordinators, women activists, education officers and potential women union members. This was guided by the long-term objective of the project to develop women cadres who would assist the union in building up an education network that would strengthen the union especially with regards the status of women in the construction sector.

Follow-up activities in the form of campaigns proved to be more practical, effective and successful given the needs and peculiarities of the unions and countries involved. A total of 96 follow-up activities in the form of campaigns, study circles, jamborees and one-day rallies were implemented in India and Indonesia. In India it was mostly campaigns, in Indonesia it was study circles and jamborees, while in the Philippines, due to the higher educational and motivational level of the women members, a combination of rallies, campaigns and 1-2- day programmes were implemented. All these resulted in follow-up gender awareness trainings, mobilisation on maternity protection, anti-sexual harassment policy-building, and, lobbying for amendments to the anti-discrimination law including roundtable discussions with legislators.

“Gender sensitivity trainings for project coordinators, staff and union leaders have been developed and implemented regularly to increase awareness and generate support”

The 3rd year of the project focused on Occupational Health and Safety (OHS).

The project's third year involved three national workshops in the three participating countries. As a result of this, 170 (1 day) follow-up activities were planned in the form of campaigns, study circles and rallies. OHS and the issue of HIV/Aids took a dominant role in India because these were pressing issues of women in their workplaces and homes. OHS activities were integrated into the Child Labour Project whereby the Brick Kiln workers and the mothers of the child labourers were given awareness on the subject, with emphasis on work-related health problems brought by the hazardous nature of their work. Some adjustments were made in the Philippines and Indonesia in consideration of the felt needs and recommendations of the unions. The Philippine project prioritised organising and mainstreaming gender in response to the urgent need of organising and recruiting women members to the union. In the case of Indonesia, follow-up activities were conducted to address the lack of basic knowledge on trade unionism and women's rights.

CRECHE: a strategy to recruit and organize women to the union

The crèche was used a strategy to recruit members to the union and became the focal point for union organizing especially among women. Setting up two crèches in India was in response to the explicit needs of women for a support structure that would allow them to give time to union activities. This also became an organizing strategy to entice women to the union and encourage husbands to allow their wives to participate in the union training. With concrete union services felt by women and their children, it was easier to recruit women and at the same time raise the consciousness of husbands on gender issues. Likewise, the crèche proved to be a very important support system to working mothers who were always anxious of their children's well being. Moreover, children benefited the most because in the crèche, they are nurtured, fed, and groomed. Parents also get to be educated about child rearing. Mothers of children in the crèche become potential recruits and participants to the campaigns and study circles implemented by trained women cadres.

IV. Next Steps

1) Changes in the union such as an increase in women membership and women participation in leadership positions may not automatically ensure or translate into improvements in the working conditions of women.

Although the Project demonstrated dramatic gains in developing pro-women policies in BWI and improving the presence and leadership of women in unions, the project's strategy of developing women cadres has yet to improve the working conditions of women. This is so because training women cadres is a pre-requisite, a necessary building block towards the next step - achieving better working conditions for and equal treatment of women workers.

With the women cadres now in a better position within the union structures and with the increased membership and improved participation of women, the logical next step should be to push for better working conditions for women. With this as the focus, the succeeding strategy should be directed towards deploying trained women cadres not only within the unions but also in expansion areas, among sectors and unions that have a large women base. In so doing, more women get to benefit from the project and vice-versa. Thus, in the case of India, women in the informal sector will be the next area of expansion while in Indonesia it will be the wood industry where women are the majority. In the Philippines, where the construction industry is male-dominated, training of women for non-traditional jobs (i.e. welding, painting, tiling) will be implemented to equip women for potential jobs.

2) Which is the more effective strategy: to organize and empower women in the union first or immediately mainstream the gender agenda within the union and involve both men and women?

Advancing the women's agenda necessarily requires women to be front liners but this should not result in the dichotomy or isolation of women's issues, i.e. projecting these

Project Details:

Timeframe: 1998 - 2003

Solidarity Support Organisation:

- FNV

National Partner Union:

- FNV Bouw

Participating Unions:

Trade Union affiliates in India, Indonesia and Philippines

Regional Project Coordinator:

Harcharan Kaur



issues as the business of women only. The gender issue should not be treated as a special concern only for women. Rather, the issue should be a priority agenda of the union and a concern of both men and women members. While it is necessary to empower women as actors and recipients of the gender equality agenda, deliberate efforts should be taken to mainstream the gender agenda within the union structure, leadership and agenda.

V. Lessons and Insights: Testimonies from the women cadres

- 1) Asserting the advocacy against sexual harassment means coming out to expose harassment cases.
- 2) Gender sensitivity is a component of and pre-requisite for women's empowerment.
- 3) Sensitising both men and women on gender-related issues in the workplace and in the household is important to gender mainstreaming in the union.
- 4) Providing concrete support services to the women like the crèche is an important component of organizing women.
- 5) Gender sensitising the formal leadership of the union is a must in mainstreaming gender sensitivity in the union.
- 6) In the words of Bebs Traya of NUBCW-Philippines, gender-fair working conditions should uphold the following: a) Men and women are equal so treat them so. b) Give women equal opportunities to work. c) Don't underestimate women or their power. ■

Women Empowerment is "Knowing you are equal to others especially to men is Power itself. Knowing your rights as a woman and as a worker is Strength. Strength and Power will sustain me to fight for my rights and demand for things intended for me and not settle for less."

Narisa "Bebs" Traya, NUBCW member and volunteer educator/organizer, Philippines

Testimonies: Empowering The Women And Sensitizing The Men In The Unions

2 Cases Of Gender Empowerment: Developing Confidence, Developing Leaders

PADMAVATHI KISHEN

Assistant Secretary General of OKKS (Orissa Kendupatra Karamchari Sangh), a union where 95% of members are women, India

IN 2000, FNV FUNDED a BWI women's project and OKKS was one of the participating unions. Padma was selected to attend a National Level Gender Awareness Programme. Padma says she has increased her knowledge and awareness on women's rights because of the project. Practical experience gained through the various campaigns has built up her confidence to such an extent that she is able to address any large crowd without fear. She says she is now well versed with the contents of topics such as Gender Awareness, Campaign development, Organising and Recruiting, Occupational Health and Safety and other issues pertaining to women. Women's issues had not been projected in such a systematic manner. No other programme has given women the opportunity to be trained in various skills.

In December 2003, Padma was appointed Assistant General Secretary of O.K.K.S. and is now in-charge of

a division called Raurkela in the district of Sundergarh. There are 16,000 women pluckers working in this district. Padma has set up self-help groups, collected subscriptions from the workers, helped workers get health cards from the Welfare Scheme and is now working on introducing an insurance system for the workers. Two years ago, during CBA negotiations of OKKS with employers, a demand was made for the provision of shoes for pluckers. After a two-year dispute, very recently, shoes have been awarded to these workers. The union has also managed to get a raise of 50Rs increase every year.

NEELAM BALA SOLOMON

Secretary of the Executive Body of National Building and Construction Federation (INBCWF), General Secretary of women's wing in Chattisgarh, India

NEELAM'S CAREER AS A nurse progressed further in the trade union after she attended several programmes for women organised by BWI and became aware of women's issues other than health and safety. She learnt that the unorganised and informal sector was in dire need of awareness. She attended courses on organising and recruiting and got an opportunity

to actually practise what she had learnt at the courses through implementing campaigns on women's issues. Before attending the BWI educational programmes for women, Neelam was a very shy person – she could not speak aloud and was always afraid to comment or share her views, as she did not have enough knowledge of trade unionism. In the last 4 years, however, she has conducted campaigns on various problems faced by women and while working in difficult areas she greatly improved her skills. As a result of being active she was elected as secretary in the women's wing of INBCWF. The other positions that she holds are as follows:

- Chairperson of Chattisgarh State INTUC women's wing
- Member of the Minimum Wage Board of Chattisgarh -State government.
- Chairperson –Dowry Elimination Advisory Committee in Korba district
- Member of the Chattisgarh Government Labour Welfare Board

Neelam also reveals that prior to attending the programmes organised by BWI/FNV she lacked confidence but now she is confident enough to organise and struggle for the rights and welfare of women workers. She has also gained heaps of knowledge during her participation in the project.

A Case Of A Woman Leader: What One Learns, One Shares With Others

SUJATA PATIL

Chairperson of Maharashtra Construction and Wood Workers Union (MBLKS), India

AFTER ATTENDING THE educational programmes of BWI/FNV and having the opportunity to implement follow-up campaigns, Sujata experienced profound changes in her personal and professional life. She now feels very confident because she has gained knowledge in organising and recruiting new members and solving problems of women at the workplace level.

Sujata also feels proud that she is now able to deal with difficult problems and has learnt the art of bargaining, demanding for better wages and other benefits for women and is now able to approach employers without fear.

Says Sujata: "As a result of the continuity of the programmes I have managed to form self help groups – a total of 51 groups and now working towards establishing self-saving groups, which will happen very soon. With the knowledge and confidence gained I have encouraged the women to open a Women's bank and co-operative society to help women financially. Besides this I am able to look into the safety and health problems of women at workplace and will keep on improving the status of construction women workers".

Although Sujata is a worker, a wife and a mother of a

12-year-old daughter, she is able to cope with all her duties. Her husband is very supportive of her participation in the union and is always encouraging her and assisting her whenever she needs help. Domestic responsibilities are shared between the two of them and so she is able to devote enough time for trade union activities.

A Case Of A Gender-sensitive Male Union Leader And A Husband

INTERVIEW - BRO. JEGAJEEVAN PRESIDENT INRLF, TAMIL NADU

BRO. JEGAVEEVAN ATTENDED the Gender Awareness seminar and became fully involved in implementing programmes. This global women's project gave him a new perspective on women's problems and gender related issues that women union members are expected to deal with in their day to day lives.

He now recognizes the importance of the contribution of women to the development of the domestic economy. As an advocate for women's rights, he shares in domestic chores often relegated as the role of women. Attending the gender sensitivity training helped Bro. Jegaveevan organize more women union members and thereby helped in improving the lot of these women. The OHS campaigns have educated the women members about work-related hazards and risks. As a result of the project, collective awareness has been sharpened to the extent

that women have begun to demand, through the union, the provision of safety measures and equipment by employers.

The greatest contribution of the women's project was the mobilization of women. Women have come forward in great numbers to take up not only union work but also shoulder leadership responsibilities. This has provoked the union to carve out Thiruvannamalai, a model district with an all-women leadership. This district has provided a good example of recruiting women workers into the union.

MARIO (BUBOY) D. PARDE IV Volunteer Organizer - NUBCW, Philippines Married with 1 child

"THE UNION SPONSORED seminar on Gender Awareness made me realize that women have their particular rights, as well as men. It also changed my outlook in life specifically the way I relate to my wife and child. Also, it explained to me the rights of women and men, as well as the women's oppressive conditions. The effectiveness of the gender awareness seminars, its contents and methods, made the participants know how the men are instrumental in the women's oppression. It opened their minds, like me, and now we are trying to be gender sensitive in our way of life. After the seminar, I resolved to support wholeheartedly all activities and campaigns on women issues as well as in fighting for their rights."

ALEXANDER ESQUILONA

President – NUBCW, Philippines
Married with 1 girl-child

AT THE PERSONAL LEVEL, I gained knowledge and became aware, sensitive and truthful on women issues like violence against women. At the organizational level, I will push the union in fighting against women's oppression.

My advice to trade unions are the following:

- Be open to the women/gender issues and give time and venue to discuss this.
- Institutionalise resources (financial) for women/gender programs.
- Organize women in the construction industry through skills' training, testing and certification.
- Continue gender sensitivity training for men.

Gender Awareness Case: Personal And Organisational Transformation

INTERVIEW- K.M.RATNA

General Secretary of UNIFRONT, TAMIL NADU, India

“OUR UNION HAS A SUBSTANTIAL number of construction workers in 3 districts: Trichy, Pudukkottai and Karur of Tamil Nadu. I have enrolled all my members in the Welfare Board. In this venture, the women's global project of BWI has contributed a great deal. I am proud

to say that our union has moved from a stage where there was very minimal representation of women, to the current stage of having 1/3 representation for women in all the union activities and leadership positions. This has been made possible to a great extent by the global women's project given by BWI. The inputs given in the project have helped our members in gaining greater awareness of their personal problems as well as organisational issues. I am able to pursue a tangible development in my personal attitude towards family and union. I have extended this attitude to the union and contributed my ideas and activities to make the union strong and broad-based. The OHS campaigns have instilled safety consciousness in the members both at home and at the workplace. The potential members have been inspired by their exposure to the campaigns organised by the union that they too started, feeling the necessity of unionisation and contributing to the union more.”

Proving That Women Could Be Better Leaders Than Men

REVATHI

INRLF (Indian National Rural Labour Federation)
Vice President of Thiruvannamalai, a district with exclusive women leadership

REVATHI ATTENDED A LEADERSHIP course implemented by the LO-TCO project in 1987 . She became aware about trade unions and the INRLF. Before this, she

had heard of INRLF but did not know what it was. This was the starting point which actually laid the foundation of her active union involvement. From here she involved herself in women's activities and her husband gave her full support. Through the trade union training, she was awakened on trade union issues. Because she was the only woman who showed potential, she was nominated and appointed as the District Vice President of Thiruvannamalai district union comprising of 2,500-3,000 construction workers and the others - 500 of whom were unorganised – tailors, weavers, potters and barbers.

In 1989, within 6 months of taking up the position, she made an attempt to take 250 members to the delegates' conference but she failed. The district male president who collected money for uniforms and travel for the delegation disappeared with a total of 20,000 rupees. Revathi took it upon herself to bear the amount and distributed the uniforms to the delegation and postponed the conference. She told the workers, however, that the conference was cancelled. After her performance in the district, she was made treasurer of the union. At the same time, the union wanted to make an experiment on whether a women's district would be possible. In the meantime, Revathi was selected to participate in the FNV Women's Project and this increased her knowledge and confidence. The project also gave her motivation to do better and prove that women leaders can do better than men. From 1999 until 2003, she learned the tactics of organising

and recruiting, and managed to enrol 2,500 construction women members by herself. She formed 60 self-help groups to assist the workers to get benefits from the government. Likewise, she enrolled another 500 workers from the agriculture and unorganised sectors. She was thus able to prove that women can be better leaders than men and that women would never run off with funds.

Tiruvannamalai District was declared as an exclusively women leadership district on an experimental basis as per the State Executive decision and this facilitated the enrolment of more women workers into unions and union activities. Although it started on an experimental basis, it later proved to be successful. This district is now reserved as a women leadership district and is managed by women leaders. The FNV women's global project has contributed quite effectively through the campaigns that have been implemented to boost the participation of women in all union activities. Since then, requests have been made to declare more districts as women's districts. INRLF has 27 districts with a membership of 64,000 workers 25,000 of who are women, and, 5,000 of who are construction workers. They have moved to Vallipuram district to initiate the same move.

Revathi says she could not have done it without her husband's blessing. Although her husband has not attended any training, he has been looking after domestic affairs. While a spectator to Revathi's union involvement, he has been sensitised by her regular attendance at meetings and

presentations made at campaigns and union meeting, and, sometimes assists her with errands.

The INRLF leadership has a lot of confidence in Revathi and is very cooperative towards women's activities. This has been due in part to their participation in the National Gender Awareness Workshop conducted in Tamil Nadu in the year 2000.

A Woman Leader Fighting For The Cause Of Women's Empowerment

LEELAMMA RAVI

Kerala Kettida Nirmana Thozhilali Congress (Kerala Building Construction Workers' Congress, Convenor of Women's Wing)

LEELAMMA RAVI IS 55 years and holds the position of Convenor of Women's Wing. She has a diploma in nursing and has had 15 years experience in trade unionism. She is an organiser, educator and coordinator of the union and assists the union in women's activities.

Says Ravi: "I have always been interested to work for the unorganised and informal sector and the under-privileged women who are depressed because of their status at work. I also do volunteer social work and have improved my personal and interpersonal skills through this project. In my 15 years in the union, I still see that women even in the union are exploited because of male domination. At the same time, women have no role in the union and still need to fight hard to integrate themselves into the

trade union movement. Then again, there is no unity amongst women and this is due to lack of awareness and education. Through educating them and by giving them awareness programmes on women's issues, they are made aware of the exploitation they face at home, at work and in society. This can make the life of workers better and can also strengthen the unions." ■



Cambodia

Restoring Angkor's Grandeur and Respecting Workers' Rights





“ It’s very good and significant for workers in Angkor sites to have cooperation between local unions and international union. Because of this solidarity, CCTUF is not isolated at all, and if any management discriminates, intimidates or abuses workers in Angkor sites, it means the issues will not be only the concerns of workers in Siem Reap, but it’s the concerns of 10 million people in the world. The twin approach with the international solidarity is absolutely imperative to developing democracy in Cambodia as well as improving working conditions in the construction sector ”

Chenglang Ken, Vice President of CCTUF





Cambodia:

Restoring Angkor's Grandeur and Respecting Workers' Rights

I. Cambodia in Transition and Angkor under Restoration

ORGANIZING THE WORKERS of Angkor, Cambodia is a big challenge to the labour movement's political will and creativity. Organizing workers in the construction industry, in an internationally-acclaimed heritage worksite, in a country in-transition, and, within a relatively young labor movement is a precedent that signals a breakthrough in the country's history. For the Cambodian Construction Workers Trade Union Federation (CCTUF), such organizing entails a combination of basic trade union organizing and international solidarity work. With this combination, the CCTUF expects exponential gains for the construction workers' movement in Cambodia.

Cambodia in Transition

For the international community, especially foreign investors, Cambodia is a country still reeling from decades of civil and political strife. To date, Cambodia's economy faces the dual and difficult objectives of attempting reconstruction of a society and economy torn by conflict and war, along with transition from a centrally planned to a free market economic system.



With an average monthly household income of US\$105.72 and an average monthly per capita income of US\$20.80 for its 11.56 million people (Socio-Economic Survey 1999), Cambodia remains in the bottom heap of the World Bank's ranking of national economies (World Bank 2001 report). With a population growth rate of 3.1% per annum between 1990 and 1998, Cambodia is among the fastest-growing populations in the world. These realities, along with serious social tribulations that range from political instability to peace and order problems (e.g. in the capital, thousands of unregistered small fire-arms continue to circulate) prove to be major obstacles in the country's bid to economic recovery.

“Organizing workers in the construction industry, in an internationally-acclaimed heritage worksite, in a country in-transition, and, within a relatively young labor movement is a precedent that signals a breakthrough in the country's history”

Labour Conditions in Cambodia

Cambodia's labor market has all the typical characteristics of a developing economy emerging out of a long history of war. Among these are the dominance of agriculture and rural employment, higher female labor participation rate, and, extremely low literacy rates. The 2001 Labor Force Survey (LFS) shows that only around six (6) million are economically active. About 57% of workers earn less than 100,000 riels (US\$25) per month. The bulk of the labor force participants (56.4 percent) have attained only primary level education (Class 1-6); 18.9 percent have not attended school or completed class 1.

Workers' Rights and Labor Legislation

Cambodia has taken pride in legislating one of the most comprehensive and strongly-worded Labour Codes in the region. Enacted in 1997, this Code outlines regulations on labour contracts, collective agreements, working conditions and social security, safety standards, freedom to organize trade unions, dispute settlement, and, labour relations

administration. In practice, however, the implementation of this Code remains unrealized and there is general consensus among Cambodian trade unions that labor laws continue to be unenforced. The venerated words of the Code have been undermined by real issues of restriction on the freedom of association, forced overtime and gender discrimination.

Labour Relations System

The Ministry of Social Affairs, Labour, Vocational Training and Youth Rehabilitation (MOSALVY) is responsible for enforcing the Labour Code. The Minister of Labour chairs the Labour Advisory Committee which is the only national forum for tripartite consultations. The Ministry has evidently failed to enforce labor legislation and lacks the resources to carry out systematic inspections. The Labour Court, meanwhile, is still non-existent.

Labour Movement in Cambodia

Still in its infancy stage, the labour movement in Cambodia is, at best, thriving amidst a complex political-economic environment. The movement's unprecedented growth started only in 1993. In previous regimes, workers' unions were viewed as tools necessary to facilitate the implementation of government policies rather than as instruments to protect workers' rights.

While the labour relations system and policy environment in Cambodia have not addressed the pressing concerns of workers, the Cambodian labour movement's level of internal development leaves much to be desired. Cambodian trade unions suffer from lack of resources, training, and experience and it is estimated that only about one percent (1%) of the total workforce is organised. Unionisation of workers is limited mostly to those in the industrial sector, specifically the garment industry where roughly 25 percent of the workers belong to unions. As of January 2002, only 27 of the 245 registered labour unions did not belong to the garments industry.

Construction as a Strategic Priority

Prime Minister Hun Sen has been quoted as saying that construction of physical infrastructure especially roads and bridges is a strategic priority of his government, designed to lay the foundation and create the necessary conditions for economic growth and poverty eradication. This comes as no surprise given the social and physical devastation that Cambodia experienced in its conflict-ridden history.

While the construction industry is recognized as vital in developing the country's infrastructure, it is also seen as having a key role in promoting tourism, a booming industry in Cambodia. Cambodia's desired economic growth is being linked to the tourism industry, and, constructing and repairing roads, bridges and hotels have been deemed urgent. Each year, an estimated 215,000 foreigners visit the capital and Siem Reap (where the massive Angkor Wat is located). Safe and accessible infrastructure/facilities are viewed as key to bringing in the much-needed infusion of dollars into the Cambodian economy.

The Angkor Monuments

The Angkor Wat of Siem Reap is known all over the world as a rich, architectural heritage. The monuments single-handedly represent the lasting legacy of the Khmer civilization and in 1992, the UNESCO declared Angkor Wat a "world heritage site". It has also been listed as a "heritage site in danger" -- meriting immediate and massive infusion of resources for its restoration and preservation.

Angkor consists of temples, castle ruins, and remnants of a vast hydrological control system (Baray). Situated in Siem Reap, the temples are spread over northeastern Cambodia, between the Kulen plateau and the Tonle Sap. Of these monuments, the Angkor Wat temple is by far the most majestic. It covers an area of 210 hectares bounded by a 200-metre-wide moat. There are enclosures within enclosures that lead to the main temple. The entire temple complex spans over 200 sq. kms. encompassing some 300

temples of varying styles and sizes. It is the largest archaeological site in the world and widely considered as an important cultural heritage site in Asia.

The Angkor Preservation Project

The restoration and conservation of the Angkor monuments started in 1908 with the EFEO (Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient) at the forefront of these efforts. Work was interrupted in 1970 by the civil war and turmoil in Cambodia. At that time, Angkor was placed on the "List of World Heritage Sites in Danger". Following the end of the civil war, several teams of foreign experts, including those from France and Japan, cooperated with the Cambodian government for its research on and restoration of Angkor.

Upon the inclusion of Angkor in the World Heritage List, working mechanisms were established to promote national and international collaboration. At the first Intergovernmental Conference on the Safeguarding and Development of the Historic Site of Angkor in October 1993 in Tokyo, an International Coordinating Committee for the Safeguarding and Development of the Historic Site of Angkor (ICC) was created. The ICC is now co-chaired by France and Japan with UNESCO acting as secretariat. The Committee's inaugural meeting in December 1993 assembled representatives of more than twenty countries and organizations and marked the first high-level international discussion on Angkor. The ICC continues to hold plenary sessions in Phnom Penh or Siem Reap once a year. All national and international projects concerning Angkor are submitted to the ICC via its Technical Committee.

The huge complex of Buddhist temples and historical artifacts is the beneficiary of funding and technical assistance commitments from country-benefactors led by Japan, USA and France. Other countries involved in preserving the Angkor are China, Switzerland, Germany, Italy and Indonesia. The usual scheme of benefactors is to contract out restoration work to a construction firm from their own countries and then employ locals for manual labour. Such practice accounts for the multitude of professional expatriates

"Cambodia's labor market has all the typical characteristics of a developing economy emerging out of a long history of war"



– architects, engineers, and preservation specialists -- in Angkor. Sub-contracting is also a norm. Under this arrangement, small local companies provide specialized services such as brick making while following guidelines on work quality and pricing/costing. As of June 2003, there are ten restoration and construction projects in Angkor Wat. Some benefactor-countries, however, have not confined themselves to a single project or site. Japan, for one, currently has two projects led by the Japanese Government Team for Safeguarding Angkor (JSA) and the Sophia Center for Research and Human Development.

The UNESCO coordinates international efforts to restore the Angkor monuments. It also oversees international campaigns for the Angkor's preservation and ensures that foreign assistance is sustained.

Management Structure at Angkor

While UNESCO is responsible for overseeing the international campaign for Angkor's preservation, on the ground, a number of other players are involved in the restoration of Angkor. At the local level, the Authority for the Protection and Management of Angkor and the Region of Siem Reap (APSARA) is the government structure assigned to the protection and management of Angkor and Siem Reap region. Meanwhile, international organizations that take their mandate and resources from supporting member countries represented in ICC have been assigned to restore the temples.

Authority for the Protection and Management of Angkor and the Region of Siem Reap (APSARA)

Created through a 1995 Royal Decree, APSARA is under the dual supervision of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers (technical supervision) and the Ministry of Economy



and Finance (financial supervision). In collaboration with other governmental agencies, APSARA is responsible for the protection and conservation of Siem Reap's and Angkor's cultural heritage as well as the tourist and urban development of the region. The Authority presides over the Cambodian delegation to ICC and its Technical Committee.

Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient (EFEO)

The EFEO has been engaged in restoration efforts at Angkor since 1908. Back then, teams were formed to fight back plant overgrowth that had taken the form of brush and large trees. From 1971 to 1995, when war ensued and the Khmer Rouge emerged, the EFEO stopped work and left the country. Today, with support from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the EFEO is concentrating on restoring the Baphuon temple which has an enormous 40-metre-long, three-metre-high reclining Buddha on its west face.

Japan Government Team for the Safeguarding of Angkor (JSA)

In 1994, in response to a request from the government of Cambodia, Japan dispatched the Japanese Government Team for Safeguarding Angkor (JSA) headed by Professor Takeshi Nakagawa of Waseda University. Today, five Japanese experts for restoration and contractor management are stationed full-time in Angkor. There are also 197 local Cambodian staff working with the JSA. Funding for the team is provided through the UNESCO/Japan Trust Fund for the Preservation of World Cultural Heritage, a fund set up to help preserve tangible cultural assets.

Phase one of the team's work has been completed with the partial dismantling and restoration of the northern library of Bayon Temple. Phase two is currently underway involving the restoration of Prasat Suor Prat, the northern library inside the outermost enclosure of Angkor Wat, and, other parts of the complex.

Sophia University Angkor International Mission

In addition to the government-sponsored JSA team, Japan has also deployed a team in





Cambodia from Sophia University. The Sophia University Angkor International Mission carries out restoration work and trains historical site preservationists and stonemasons.

The GACP

The GACP is engaged in conserving Angkor Wat itself, the largest religious stone monument in the world. It is repairing 360 of the 1,850 sandstone apsaras which “are in an extremely alarming state of decay”. The Germans have spent DM 1.8 million (about Rs. 360 crores) thus far and are employing modern computerised documentation and imaging techniques. GACP is also training Cambodians to undertake some of the work so that the latter can preserve their own heritage site in the future.

II. The Challenge to Labour Unions

HOW ARE WORKERS TO BE organized in a world heritage site with intensive reconstruction, in a situation where labour unions are not duly recognized by their non-profit employer organizations-international donors? This is a highly sensitive and politically-charged concern that CCTUF-BWI has been trying to address.

Labour Relations at the Angkor Preservation Project

For the UNESCO, the specialised entities conducting restoration work are non-profit organizations and so laborers working under these organizations should not be unionized. Even without this attitude of the UNESCO office in Cambodia, there are real constraints. Since UNESCO is dependent on the goodwill of donor governments for restoration funds, it can hardly impose conditions on the specialized entities working at the Angkor Preservation Project, except perhaps those of a technical nature.

Not much can also be expected from the Cambodian government. Considering that Cambodia is a beneficiary of international donations for Angkor's reconstruction, it is also



unlikely that the Cambodian government will impose conditions upon the specialized agencies at Angkor, not even the implementation of the country's labour laws.

Moreover, relations between companies and project holders remain to be tenuous especially in the Angkor preservation sites. Some foreign contractors like the Japanese do not believe that the usual labor-management relations apply in their case because they claim to be non-profit organizations performing goodwill tasks. They also claim that they need to follow their own budgets and guidelines.

Situation of the Workers at the Angkor Sites

In the international effort to restore various temple sites in Angkor, local workers have been tapped to provide the labour requirements for current restoration work and are expected to continue to do so in the future. Workers are employed by the different entities working at the Angkor Preservation Project. Those engaged in restoration work hire masons, stone cutters, stone carvers, draftsmen and all-around utility personnel. In some cases, however, these workers do multiple tasks so that draftsmen, for instance end up doing jobs such as bush-clearing, digging, hauling of soil/stone, etc.

Many of the workers are highly skilled. Restoration work involves shoring up unstable structures/monuments, piecing together monuments that have crumbled and rebuilding parts of monuments that have fallen. Workers do the cutting of laterite used as filling material, photographing and sketching artifacts that have to be dismantled prior to rebuilding, numbering and dismantling parts of artifacts, restoring/ repairing and piecing together disassembled parts. These workers are also taught the latest and most appropriate technologies in restoration.

Unfortunately, however, the local construction workers employed to restore the temples are not given the recognition due them. The UNESCO and the Cambodia Labour Ministry are inclined to exempt the international donors of Angkor restoration efforts

“The venerated words of the Code have been undermined by real issues of restriction on the freedom of association, forced overtime and gender discrimination”

from complying with core labour standards by virtue of their being “non-profit organizations”. UNESCO has taken on this attitude when worksite reconstruction companies (from donating countries) refuse to recognize or negotiate with labour unions. Wages and working conditions are thus left to the discretion of construction entities. While the ICC oversees the reconstruction of the Angkor temples, addressing the concerns of construction workers is not part of its agenda. Despite the request of CCTUF for representation in the ICC, workers are not represented in this body.

The resistance of UNESCO and international employers to recognize labour unions in the Angkor worksite has served as a challenge to the CCTUF - to strengthen its call to organize locally, to prove itself as a representative labour union, to coalesce as an industry, to elevate the workers' struggle to the international arena, and, to put to the test the global solidarity of international affiliates of the BWI.

III. The Twin Approach of Organizing Locally and Campaigning Internationally

THE NON-RECOGNITION OF labour unions by UNESCO and the international employers did not become a stumbling block to labour organizing, rather, it became the challenge and the rallying call among construction workers in Angkor. This became the driving force to organize workers, galvanize international support, and put international pressure on concerned Cambodian and international entities.

Organizing and Coalescing to become the Cambodian Construction Workers' Trade Union Federation (CCTUF)

The only construction workers' federation organizing in the Siem Reap area is the Cambodian Construction Workers' Trade Union Federation (CCTUF). It was organized as a labour federation in 2003 but its origins date back to organizing efforts with the JSA project which started in early 1999. CCTUF's former president, Rath Mony, started the union at JSA and was dismissed in April 2000 because of his labour



organizing efforts. He continued his organizing efforts at JSA and later expanded it to cover workers in four other sites, the EFEO, Sophia, CSA (the Chinese project site) and APSARA.

“How are workers to be organized in a world heritage site with intensive reconstruction, in a situation where labour unions are not duly recognized by their non-profit employer organizations-international donors“

When the unions of the five sites were able to comply with the requirement of a membership base of at least eight workers for each site, they filed an application for registration and this was granted on 6 November 2001.

Starting with small group meetings in each worksite or in the homes of workers, more and more people soon became involved in organizing the Angkor Preservation Workers' Union (APWU). Subsequently, mass meetings were held at each site and more members were recruited. The APWU-Sophia attained majority-union status by the end of 2002; the APWU-APSARA in December 2002, the APWU-EFEO in March 2003 and the APWU-JSA in May 2003.

While organizing efforts were pursued in the Angkor Preservation Project sites, the union leaders also proceeded to organize a Siem Reap-wide union of construction workers, the Cambodian Construction Workers' Union or CCWU-SRP.

In December 2001, 32 leaders from the unions in JSA, APSARA, EFEO, CSA, Sophia and the CCWU-SRP met and decided to form a federation, the Cambodian Construction Workers' Trade Union Federation (CCTUF). The federation filed an application for registration in May 2002 and got its registration certification in May 2003



In 2003, the CCTUF, through the support of SASK and in partnership with the BWI, undertook a federation development program and began strengthening its internal organization. The program focused on five areas: effective union administration, enhancing legal aid assistance to unions and union members, setting up mechanisms to address local problems, generating resources and initiating common activities. The current programs of the CCTUF are: safety and health, legal aid, organizing, vocational training and the women's program. CCTUF's membership comes from the worksite unions of APWU-EFEO, APWU-SOPHIA, APWU-JSA, APWU-SCA, APWU-APSARA and CCWU-SRP and the federation now has a combined total membership of 4,055. ** Estimated total number of construction workers at Siem Reap Province

Organizing in the Angkor Reconstruction Sites

The APWU-EFEO

Organizing the APWU-EFEO union started on 15 December 2001. By March 2003, the union was able to recruit majority of the workers to the union and gain its representative status. As soon as the union attained its representative status, union officials met with the EFEO management and the union was de facto recognized. Because of this recognition, the union was able to provide members with services such as grievance handling, representation in disciplinary cases, and, negotiation on wage rates. Union officers were also granted union leaves to attend to union business such as grievances and education and training seminars. Generally, the union has maintained good relations with the EFEO management.

Another concrete victory of the APWU-EFEO union is the wage increase for the EFEO construction workers. The union was able to negotiate higher wage rates that are now currently implemented. Salary increases ranged from US\$11.00 to US\$14.00. Negotiations for higher wage rates started in July 2003 and increases were implemented in May 2004.



To date, the union is close in concluding its collective bargaining agreement with the EFEO. On 8 August 2004, the union held a general assembly of its members to discuss their CBA proposal. Shortly thereafter, the union submitted the proposal to the EFEO management. Mr. Pascal, representing EFEO, forwarded this CBA proposal to the EFEO Paris office and the unions expect to receive the counter proposals.

The APWU-JSA

The APWU held its founding assembly in April 1999. This was attended by a majority of JSA workers and the body elected Rath Mony as APWU President. The union then proceeded to initiate negotiations with the JSA management. Shortly thereafter Mony began to have serious trouble with management and lost his job in April 2000.

Despite Mony's dismissal, a core of leaders continued with union work at the JSA. They started reorganizing the union and by the end of the year 2000, held another election wherein Raiy Chrib was elected president. The APWU-JSA was granted its certificate of registration on 6 November 2001.

After getting majority representation and their certificate of registration from the MUSOLAVY, the APWU-JSA pursued union recognition and representation with the JSA management -- only to be refused and rejected by the JSA management. All union CBA proposals to the JSA management were blatantly ignored. The JSA management's insistent refusal to recognize the union emanated from its belief that JSA is a non-profit organisation that was actually lending help to the Cambodian people by restoring the temples through Japanese taxes.

In response, CCTUF filed a complaint at the MOSALVY Provincial branch and provided the MOSALVY main office in Phnom Penh with a copy of its complaint. To date, neither the MOSALVY Siem Reap provincial office nor its main office in Phnom Penh has acted on the complaint.



Among the current issues and demands of the union are:

- Annual Pay: Implement the law which mandates an annual pay of 5% for workers
- Monetization of Unused Leaves: Implement the law that provides for 18 days leave convertible to cash, retroactive on the day of employment (except 1999 when unused leaves were paid)
- Status of the Project. At this point, the JSA management claims to be uncertain if the project will continue with its third phase once the second phase ends in February 2005. The union is thus demanding that:
- Workers be informed beforehand if the project is going to be terminated;
- If the project is to end, the workers are demanding that they be paid for the whole month even if the project ends before the month-end. They are also demanding for Separation Pay (termination Pay) equivalent to 15 days for every year of service for those who have worked for less than one year and 45 days for every year of service for those who have worked for one year or more.

The APWU-Sophia

The CCTUF began organizing at the Sophia site late 2000. Through a BWI seminar on unionism and Cambodian labour laws, a number of participant workers from the Sophia worksite became convinced of the need to unionize Cambodian workers. In response, CCTUF and a core of workers at Sophia began to quietly organize the workers at the site. They talked to workers during break time and visited workers' homes to explain the benefits of organizing a union and the rights of workers according to Cambodian labour law. Small group meetings were held with Rath Mony and federation officials.

After two to three months, CCTUF organized openly and a large assembly was held for the first time in early 2001. To dramatize their disgruntlement at the low wages they were receiving, the workers went on mass leave for 2 – 3 days during this period of



organizing. They had their formal founding assembly shortly after, elected the first set of union officers and approved the union's constitution and by-laws.

Having recruited majority of the workers, the APWU-Sophia applied for registration with the Ministry of Labour, and, recognition was granted on 6 November 2001. The union then informed the management at the Sophia site that the union had been granted recognition and representative status by the Ministry of Labour and formally asked the management to negotiate a Collective Bargaining Agreement. The union met management five times but failed to achieve any agreement. In these meetings, the union repeatedly raised the issues of union recognition, wages, and problems of workers at the site.

Management refused to recognize and bargain with the union. After its repeated attempts to negotiate with management, the union filed a complaint with the Ministry of Labour. After some time, the management continued to refuse to negotiate and the Ministry of Labour could not to compel management to sit with the union. Despite these odds, the union continued the struggle for recognition.

On 28 June 2004, Sophia University issued new employment contracts and threatened to dismiss workers. Members of the union refused to sign the proposed contracts on the ground that this did not reflect their CBA proposal. Subsequently, they went on mass leave but the Sophia site management remained recalcitrant.

The CCTUF then filed a case with the Labour Inspector at Siem Reap and this was forwarded to the Labour Minister. The Labour Minister, meanwhile, directed the Labour Inspector to resolve the case. The Labour Inspector called the management three times but the Sophia management did not make any appearance. The CCTUF then filed a case with the Governor of Siem Reap. The Governor, in turn, wrote to APSARA about the matter. The case is still pending and the APWU-Sophia and the CCTUF are planning tougher actions against the Sophia University and APSARA.



“The workers’ struggle in Angkor has entailed the combination of strong local unions and international solidarity campaign. In this case, one cannot work without the other”

International Solidarity in tandem with Local Union Organizing

With the prevailing attitude of non-recognition of the workers’ rights in the local scene by the international employers and UNESCO in the Angkor site, CCTUF, with the full support of BWI, elevated the unions’ struggle to the international arena. CCTUF-BWI launched international solidarity campaigns to pressure the international employers, the Cambodia Labour Ministry and even UNESCO to uphold the core labour rights and standards stipulated in the International Labour Agreement. The campaigns were aimed at challenging the lack of political will of the Cambodia Labour government and the reluctance of international employers and UNESCO to recognize the core labour standards.

Being an affiliate of the BWI, the CCTUF used a number of international campaign tactics including getting the support of BWI affiliates in countries that had companies or agencies working in the Angkor site.

Information Campaign

BWI launched its first solidarity campaign on workers’ rights in the Angkor Wat in October 2004. It held an Asia-Pacific Regional meeting in Seam Reap with more than 150 trade union delegates from 20 countries including representatives from Japan, Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Finland and Sweden. A protest march was led by then-BWI Deputy President Klaus W and General Secretary Anita Normark. International delegates went to the Angkor site, made their presence felt and explained the plight of the workers to the both local and international tourists visiting the temples at that time. This event was covered by both international and local media especially the radio network and made a public impact that started to reach government authorities and international companies.

This protest was followed by the publication and distribution of campaign materials and information flyers to various trade unions, NGOs, and, international organisations. Exposing the unfair labor practices of government and international employers to interna-



tional labour representatives provided CCTUF with additional leverage and impetus to negotiate for better terms.

To follow through this media event, Mr. Balan, BWI's international Asia desk representative, made an official visit to the Cambodia Labour Ministry, bringing with him the BWI's region's resolution to demand that MUSOLAVY expedite action on CCTUF's pending complaint on the labour unions' grievances against the International employers. In response, the Labour Ministry sent its investigators to the worksite.

To further strengthen the international campaign, the BWI informed UNESCO about the situation of workers in the Angkor Wat and reiterated the need to implement internationally accepted labour standards stipulated in the ILO. Likewise, BWI requested participation in the ICC meeting to inform them about the situation and the union. At that time, UNESCO was not in a position to respond to BWI's request for participation in the ICC. Despite this negative response, the BWI continues to maintain contact with the UNESCO.

Involving Affiliates in Donor Countries

When collective bargaining between the union and the EFEO management started, the BWI informed its French affiliates about the negotiations and the demands and proposals of the union. This prompted the French affiliates to contact EFEO and express its support for the CCTUF. After a year of waiting for EFEO's counter-proposal to union demands, EFEO sent a representative to Seam Reap to meet with the union. Negotiations then ensued and to date, only the issue of "automatic check-off authorization" remains unresolved. The French union is closely putting pressure on EFEO towards a final conclusion of the negotiations.

The Japanese JSA and Sophia, however, continue to refuse to bargain with the union. BWI has started to inform its Japanese affiliates calling on them to follow the precedent set by the French union with the EFEO.



Meanwhile, BWI is gearing up for a more intensive international campaign using public campaign, solidarity action, tri-media and the internet. It plans to publicize the situation of workers in the Angkor Wat and target the international community including UN agencies and donor communities.

IV. Assessment of Gains and Recommendations

“Through CCUTF, workers’ families have been found to be better than before as their husbands or sons get higher wages and could share more money with the family. It’s very important for workers and the whole society to have the project from BWI and we could improve our living conditions, especially members of the family can have the opportunity to get education.”

Pang Kun, General Secretary of CCUTF

Impact and Gains

1. As the recognized trade union and bargaining agent of the construction workers of EFEO, CCTUF is in the process of concluding its collective bargaining negotiation. The following are the major highlights of the CB provisions agreed so far:

- The employer will not employ any temporary/casual workers. All workers hired by the employer must be regular workers.
- Workers worked for more than 5 years, their monthly wages will be increased up to 5%.
- The minimum wage for workers is seventy-nine (US\$79.00) dollars a month.
- The union leaders, namely the president, the vice-president and the general secretary or their representatives can participate in the grievance settlement process at any time, and the employer should not deduct their wages or bonuses.
- The employer shall provides time for unionists to do union activity, and take some days off with wages/benefits to attend workshops or training conducted by National/ international unions, NGOs, and/or Government.

- The employer will support and provide a monthly fee of US\$ 50 to the workers' foundation (workers center) for culture and social activities.
- The employer and the union will establish a joint committee to involve in Labor disputes on Safety, Health and Environment.
- The employer is totally responsible for worker's health and accidents prevention. Workers will be covered with a health accident insurance.
- The wages paid to workers must cover the cost of food, health expend, children schooling, accommodation, travelling etc.

2. There is a de facto recognition of CCTUF as the construction union in Cambodia. Despite its difficulty in negotiating for collective bargaining agreements at the Angkor Wat, the clout and legitimacy of the CCTUF has been established and projected. CCTUF is recognised by the government, construction workers, some employers, media, the ILO and civil society groups as the trade union representative of construction workers. Its international affiliation with BWI and international support from SASK have provided CCTUF with bargaining strength.

3. Concluding the CBA in EFEO is a first for the construction industry in Cambodia and sets a precedent for other employers and workers in the Angkor reconstruction project sites. This has been an achievement not only for EFEO workers but for the entire CCTUF as well. It also sends a positive signal to employers and workers in the Angkor Wat.

4. The UNESCO and most of the international employers still argue that non-profit institutions should be exempted from bargaining with unions. The EFEO example, however, is likely to create international pressure on the JSA, SOPHIA, UNESCO and APSARA to follow suit. Likewise, the union can use this as a good example and leverage to participate in the ICC. The symbolic value and victory of the CBA of EFEO union-CCTUF in general cannot be overstated. Concluding this CBA is a substantial driving force to organize and expand unionism in Seam Reap and Cambodia.

Assessment

1. Labour laws are new in Cambodia. The government does not have the capacity nor the political will to enforce the law and Labour courts have yet to be established. Trade union strategies, therefore, cannot be dependent on the country's legal framework. The challenge for Cambodian workers is to adopt a multi-pronged approach that will push the Ministry of Labour to exercise its political will at the same time build the capacity of this Ministry to perform its functions. This approach requires capacity building that can be arranged by the ILO and perhaps also by the BWI.
2. The political situation remains unstable, and, human and trade union rights continue to be violated and threatened. Trade union leaders remain unsafe in Cambodia. Efforts should thus be directed towards increasing the democratic space for labor union organizing, reaching a broader constituency and achieving international solidarity.
3. Organizing in Angkor, Cambodia has been the breeding ground for training the current crop of trade union leaders in the construction industry. With a very young trade union movement in Cambodia, this new generation of trade union leaders will be playing a vital role in organizing, expanding and leading the labour union movement in the construction industry of Cambodia. Despite their low level of formal education, the workers at the Angkor have demonstrated their commitment and openness to learn from trade union work. Their commitment, eagerness to learn, and, exposure to international trade union solidarity work have been the rich and fertile grounds for planting the seeds of the trade union movement in Cambodia.
4. The workers' struggle in Angkor has entailed the combination of strong local unions and international solidarity campaign. In this case, one cannot work without the other.

International solidarity work has provided the impetus for learning, strategizing and leveraging an international network of allies and affiliates. With the guidance of and capacity

building support from SASK, an international solidarity support organization, and, BWI, a global union federation, CCTUF has been provided with training on political education and campaign management training – all of which have been vital inputs to CCTUF's trade union strategies at Angkor. Specifically, the headway gained from the CBA of EFEO can be attributed largely to the strategizing and training undertaken by SASK and BWI with the CCTUF trade union leaders.

International solidarity work, however, can not thrive on weak local trade unions. The basic engine and muscle for pursuing workers' rights will always be anchored on solid trade union organizations. Strong and organized trade unions are the pre-requisite for advancing the workers' struggle. The other unions in CCTUF, specifically the unions in JSA, SOPHIA, CSA and APSARA should take strength and inspiration from EFEO's precedent and should be assured that there are international allies willing to support their cause.

5. International solidarity campaigning, in tandem with solid trade union organizing on the ground, requires a well-coordinated command and coordinating structure. Given the fact that CCTUF is preoccupied with organizing the local trade unions at the Angkor site, coordination is sometimes loose, communication weak and monitoring inconsistent, both at the local and international levels.

This is where the BWI regional and global structures can come in. A command center should be in place to coordinate and monitor the developments and inputs from the local and international players, synchronize the strategies of the local and BWI international affiliates toward continued engagements with international employer counterparts in the Angkor donor countries, UNESCO, ILO and other players. International alliance building of workers should work in parallel with the International Coordinating Council and the respective international employers from its donor countries.

Learning and Recommendations

1. Involve the affiliates from donor countries.

The pressure exerted by the French affiliates of BWI on EFEO strengthened the CCTUF's bargaining leverage. The CBA proposal was submitted in 2004 and it started to move when the French affiliates contacted EFEO in 2005. EFEO representatives went to Cambodia to meet with the union representatives. The collective negotiation is now almost done except for the provision on check-off authorization. With the final push from the French affiliates, this is likely to be concluded soon. This strategy is both a precedent and a challenge to BWI's Japanese affiliates to facilitate dialogue with JSA and Sophia.

The solidarity support of the French affiliates to the CCTUF struggle in EFEO exemplifies the value of global unionism. The political support provided by the French affiliates enhances the meaning of international partnership because it goes beyond the stereotypical kind of international support (i.e. financial support).

Moreover, the support provided by CCTUF's international partners such as SASK was crucial in providing guidance, support and political direction to the young CCTUF trade union. The vast trade union experience and expertise of these international partners provided CCTUF with sound strategies that could be adopted on the ground. In the CCTUF case, SASK was indeed a crucial stakeholder in the local labour struggle.

2. Utilize UNESCO as the platform for social dialogue and promote labour standards in partnership with the ILO.

Engaging with the UNESCO Cambodia Office is not enough especially since the Cambodia office has a tendency to be cautious against antagonizing donor countries of the Angkor restoration project. BWI, together with the ILO, need to seek dialogue with the UNESCO Head Office. In principle, UNESCO cannot argue against internationally accepted labour

standards. BWI must exploit this opportunity to develop close cooperation with UNESCO. At the global level, BWI can forge a global framework agreement. It is equally important for the BWI to work closely with the UNESCO Cambodia office and the ICC to develop concrete guidelines or a common program for implementing labour standards in the Angkor Wat restoration. Perhaps, ILO can play a role in facilitating this program.

3. Aim for industry unionism as a strategic goal.

Given the long-term program of the Angkor restoration and the nature of employment, the union has to develop a new strategy. Engaging the employers through the ICC is strategic in forging negotiations between all the employers in the Angkor Wat and the union. Such strategy could be an acceptable bargaining framework for each employer. This could also set standards in the Angkor Wat in the areas of Occupational Safety and Health (OSH), wages, employment and skills training. The union can thus become stronger and this will be helpful in the work of establishing an industry union even beyond Angkor Wat.

4. Include awareness-raising of tourists in the international campaign.

With a weak labour enforcement mechanism and the non-profit nature of the companies involved in the restoration, international public pressure plays an important role. The targets of this pressure are the donor countries involved in restoration. Moreover, the awareness of Angkor Wat tourists and the solidarity actions of affiliates have made an impact on the donor countries as well as UNESCO.

5. Push the ILO to play a strategic role in facilitating the implementation of labour standards in the country.

Firstly, the ILO can assist in developing the capacity of the Labour Ministry particularly in labour enforcement and the establishment of labour courts. These capacities are needed

Project Details:

Timeframe: 2002 - 2005

Solidarity Support Organizations:
• SASK Finland

National Partner Unions:
Rakennusliitto (Construction Trade Union)

Participating Unions:
• CCTUF

Project Coordinator:
Apolinar Tolentino



to strengthen effective mechanisms within the labour relations system. Secondly, the ILO can provide mechanisms for social dialogue and consultation between trade unions and employers' association. Thirdly, the ILO can facilitate and provide guidelines for the implementation of ILO labour standards in internationally-financed infrastructure projects (e.g. Angkor Wat).

As a recognized partner of the ILO, the BWI is also in a good position to help build the capacities of the Cambodia Labour Ministry (i.e. especially since the CCTUF is a BWI affiliate). The BWI needs to harness its global character and strengthen its presence in Angkor.

6. Broaden alliance work with local and international players.

Credible local and international partners providing support to CCTUF have been valuable to widening both the trade union perspective, strategy and leverage of CCTUF. These partners include groups such as SASK, the ACILS (American Center for International Labour Solidarity), CFBW in Phnom Penh, BWI, and other global union federations. When trade union work is embattled with harassment and non-recognition, credible allies are crucial in catalyzing and enhancing trade union organizing. ■

It is highly important to empower construction workers in the construction sites as well as in Cambodia, to work together to put pressure on management and the government in order to respect labour rights and develop democracy. The approach helps to unify workers' voice.

Den Veasna, President of the EFEO union

International unions are strong. So, it's very important for CCTUF to work with BWI. I believe that BWI has a great deal of experience. BWI helps us through technical assistance and fund support. If there is no BWI, CCTUF will not be strong.

Pang Kun, General Secretary of CCTUF



Philippines

Uniting to Form the First Construction Industry Union in the Philippines





“ Put above everything the importance of unity and democratic decision-making processes in the organization.

In dealing with construction workers, you must be frank, transparent and honest ”

quotes from a construction worker of NUBCW





Philippines:

Uniting to Form the First Construction Industry Union in the Philippines

I. Situationer: Philippine Construction Labour

ORGANIZING THE NATIONAL UNION of Building and Construction Workers (NUBCW) has been a pioneering and breakthrough experience for labour union leaders and organizers in the Philippines. Aware of the difficulties of organizing contractual and highly mobile construction workers in a country where the labour relations structure is undeveloped, BWI's five (5) labour affiliates set aside long-standing ideological differences and worked together to find ways and means to organize an industry-level union of construction workers.

Organizing the construction labour sector in a developing country: a Complex and Costly Task

In the Philippines today, construction workers face multiple issues: perilous jobs with no safety nets and social security, lack of job security and low, unpredictable income. Most of them become construction workers by virtue of their poverty, lack of education and lack of employment opportunities.



“In the Philippines today, construction workers face multiple issues: perilous jobs with no safety nets and social security, lack of job security and low, unpredictable income”

Even within the hazard prone construction industry, occupational health and safety has not been a priority. A construction worker dies every week due to work-related accidents, many falling from upper floors of high rise buildings, some caught under collapsing structures or heavy equipment, others electrocuted or suffocated by toxic fumes. Construction workers also remain vulnerable to various diseases acquired at their workplaces. Yet, despite these high risks, the construction worker will grab any opportunity to get a job – any job – even for a limited amount of time and even without safety and security nets.

Despite the occupational hazards of construction work, low pay and the absence of social security benefits prevail. The construction and building industry is very exploitative of workers given the low demand for jobs and oversupply of labour in a sluggish economy of a developing country. On the global level, governments in national economies which are desperate to project their competitive edge in the new international market system virtually turn to their country’s abundant supply of cheap labour power as the basis for economic recovery schemes. This has proven detrimental to workers in the long-run as their rights and welfare are given less consideration in the development process.

In the building and construction sector, the subcontracting method of pooling and hiring labour has been an effective means of keeping labour costs down. Engaging in contractual or casual labour to do away with compulsory benefits to the workers has become common. Consequently, this arrangement has aggravated job insecurity among many construction workers making it very difficult and costly to organize them into unions.

Likewise, the complexity of Philippine labour laws has also made the trade union movement heavily dependent on lawyers and a few personalities who have continuously occupied leadership positions in unions and federations over the years. This has led to a patron-client relationship between the workers and the trade union movement’s leadership. Moreover, the labour relations system in the country discourages



union activities among construction workers as many project-based employees are effectively prohibited from joining organizations aimed at collective bargaining and the advancement of members' rights.

In view of the trends in the labour market and complexities confronting the construction sector, many Filipino union leaders and organizers have considered organizing the sector as an impossibility. Among the major industry groups, the construction sector ranks lowest in terms of union membership. With regard to the number of workers covered by the collective bargaining agreements (CBA's), the sector is second to the lowest with only 8.6% of the total number of CBA-covered workers in all sectors. To complicate this further, ideological, political and organizational lines leading to unhealthy competition, turfing and infighting within and among labour organizations have divided the labour movement. Because of such fragmentation, the intricacy of organizing a sector where workers have no security of tenure or stable wage rates that could support union activities has often been dismissed by many trade unionists as costly and unsustainable.

II. Taking up the Challenge: Organizing the Construction Sector and

Uniting the Labour Movement

Aware of the complexities of organizing construction workers, the five (5) BWI affiliates decided to get their acts together, and, with the support of the BWI, LO-FTF Council and the BAT-KARTEL, embarked on a project that after more than six years has produced a landmark in Philippine unionism: the first-ever Construction Workers Industry Union in the Philippines.

The project achieved significant results in organizing construction workers, alliance building among the five affiliated federations and advocacy to improve the working conditions and quality of life of Filipino construction workers.





On Trade Union Development

After more than six years of project implementation, the five (5) affiliates were able to organize five (5) construction workers associations and four (4) guilds with a combined membership of 54,000, 44% of which are dues paying members. These associations formed the founding membership base of the National Union of Building and Construction Workers (NUBCW).

Organizing project workers through community-based associations and guilds was the BWI affiliates' contribution to the realization of so-called "social movement unionism".

On Alliance-Building

The biggest breakthrough of the project is the formation of the National Union of Building and Construction Workers (NUBCW), an industry-based union in the construction sector, a first in Philippine labour history. This entailed getting the major labour organizations and rivals to transcend political and organizational barriers and work together to formulate and share viable organizing strategies, resources and information vital to the formation and sustainability of the industry union.

The formation of the NUBCW signals a significant impact on the current set-up of the highly fragmented Philippine Labour Movement whose membership cut across all industries. The country's outdated and regressive labour relations system has limited negotiations between workers and employers at the enterprise level. This kind of labour relations has unfortunately promoted intense competition among trade unions in recruiting firm based members. More labour federations have been organized along general lines rather than along industry-wide unities. In view of this fragmented labour movement, the NUBCW was organized and registered with the Department of Labour. The NUBCW formation was meant to catalyse the restructuring of the Philippine trade union movement along industry lines with the aim of contributing to a three-tiered

collective negotiations, i.e. plant level, industry and national levels, and thereby develop stronger unities within the labour movement.

On Advocacy

Advocacy for the labour construction sector has opened up a favourable policy environment for the previously ignored sector, and more importantly, has expanded and advanced the organizing work of BWI among construction workers. BWI made use of the “bibingka” approach, a combination of grassroots organizing and program-policy advocacy in pushing its agenda for the construction sector. This meant using a top and bottom approach to broaden the space for organizing the sector.

With a mass base of construction labourers, the five affiliates, with the support of BWI, engaged government and employers’ associations in social dialogues to create a more favourable policy environment for the sector. These engagements contributed to furthering the agenda of the construction workers in terms of occupational safety and health, skills upgrading and certification, and, political reforms, thus making the trade union movement a respected and relevant actor in creating a responsive environment for the construction workers. This process of social dialogues necessarily earned political recognition for the BWI Philippine affiliates as members of these unions have been often designated as official representatives of the construction workers in negotiations and dialogues with social partners. This has paved the way for the institutionalisation of grassroots support and participation.

While winning over policy and program advances for the construction labour sector, the five affiliates used these tactical gains to their advantage by widening their network of contacts, expanding the opportunities for organizing, and, consolidating and developing industry skills in their respective organizations. Some of the significant advocacy gains used to strengthen organizing were the following:

- Amendment of Policy Instruction No. 26 in favour of construction workers. Labour relations in the construction industry used to be governed by Policy Instruction No. 26 which stipulated that project workers were technically barred from organizing. It was through the intervention of the BWI in the ILO that prompted the Philippine government to make a conscious effort to issue Department Order 19 which provided a more liberal element for labour relations in the construction industry.
- The promulgation and issuance of the DOLE Department Order No. 13 (DO 13) - the Occupational Safety and Health Policies and Guidelines in the Construction Industry. Armed with the DO 13, the five affiliates used this new policy as an educating and organizing tool to consolidate the ranks of construction workers.
- Resource generation from government -- the project has generated local resources for skills training, convincing TESDA to allocate 20 million pesos for skills training; and for DOLE to earmark 2 million pesos from this amount to finance skills training and upgrading of individual members of NUBCW affiliates. This government program was used to improve the skills of NUBCW members and at the same time provided an opportunity to expand the organizing network's activities such as the Skills Olympics . This eventually led to the classification and testing of the building skills of participating workers which has become a pre-requisite in organizing them into guilds.
- Getting health and safety passes to construction projects enabled BWI to monitor Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) measures of government and private construction projects sites and provided BWI affiliates with new contacts for organizing.
- Gaining representation and membership to various policy making bodies for the sector such as the TESDA, Tripartite Industrial Peace Council, Regional Wage and Productivity Boards in the regions, National Anti-Poverty Council Informal Labour Sector Council, among others, provided BWI with venues to promote the interests of construction workers and air their grievances.



III. Strategy and Phases of the Project

WHEN THE BWI STARTED the organizing project of construction workers in the Philippines in March 1995, it had 3 major objectives: first, to organize the construction workers; second, to advocate for policy reforms in the Labour Relations Framework that would allow construction workers to organize; and third, to develop cooperation among the BWI affiliates for the unification of workers within the construction sector. These objectives were based on the premise that the realities surrounding the construction sector make organizing difficult: the labour relations framework hardly recognizes the sector's rights and unions are part of the fragmented labour movement. Determined to organize the sector despite its awareness of potential difficulties, BWI together with the five affiliates developed the three phases of the project called "Organization and Education Project for Construction Workers in the Philippines" (hereinafter referred to as the Project).

PHASE 1: Confidence Building: An Experiment in Organizing the Construction Sector (1995- 1998)

The objective of Phase 1 of the Project was to assist the five affiliates organize independent, sustainable and democratic unions among construction workers. Specifically, it aimed to increase union membership, gain recognition and collective bargaining leverage in advancing workers' interest and encouraging cooperation among the BWI affiliate federations in the Philippines who were then treating each other as competitors rather than partners.

The first phase of the project was experimental. Aware of the difficulties in organizing the construction sector, the BWI affiliates took the challenge of organizing the project-based, mobile, temporary, unskilled and lowly-educated construction workers. Independently, each affiliate organized workers in their respective areas while the BWI project office (IPAPO) dealt with the affiliates individually. The project thrust then was



to organize construction workers with an unwritten rule of not getting into each other's territory thus avoiding conflicts on the ground.

Towards the end of Phase 1, through BWI, evaluation and reflection sessions were held. In these sessions, the affiliates collectively developed a toolbox for organizing the construction labour sector. The ground experience and shared difficulties in organizing the sector compelled the five affiliates to develop the 3Cs and 5S' in organizing the construction sector; these became their common strategy in organizing construction workers.

Having shared a common organizing experience, the five affiliates agreed to a common strategy, a toolbox in organizing the sector--- the 3 C's: the Company, the Community and the Craft as entry points for organizing and the 5S': Safety, Skills, Social Insurance, Security and Salary as the organizing strategies. By the end of Phase 1, as a result of the 3Cs and 5S' strategy, the five BWI affiliates organized five construction associations and five guilds with a combined membership of 54,287, 44% of whom have become dues paying members and with each association having core programs and services reflecting the 5S' such as the mutual aid program, job facilitation, skills training and upgrading.

Organizing the Construction Workers, an Evolving Strategy

The strategies employed by the BWI Philippines affiliates in recruiting construction workers to the various associations and unions as well as the resulting experiences and insights during the past six years have been considered by many sectors in the labour movement as representing some of the most innovative organizing approaches existing today. These creative methods have been shaped through the process of confronting common difficulties encountered in organizing and mobilizing project-based construction workers, using the 3Cs approach: Company-based, Community-based and Craft-based approaches.



The Philippine affiliates started out with the traditional Company-based approach during the initial months of the project. Organizers would visit construction sites and attempt to recruit workers to the association or union. However, as expected, the result of this strategy was soon limited by the fact that the organized workers were highly mobile and would have to be transferred to other sites after the project. In most cases this would mean severance from the organization and its activities. Given this situation, the affiliates came up with the Community-based approach to organizing construction workers. Here, organizers went directly to the communities where workers spend much of their time in-between projects. Contact with the organizations was thus maintained even with the workers' contractual work arrangements. The combination of the two approaches facilitated rapid expansion in union membership.

Recently, the Craft-based Approach using the formation of guilds along specific trades has enhanced the organizing efforts of the affiliates. Guild formation emerged as a specific agenda in trade union development during the second phase of the BWI organizing and education project. It was seen as an effective and viable strategy for reconstituting the existing chapters, unions and existing units of BWI along particular trade lines. Through the guilds, skills specialization could be facilitated particularly skills upgrading and certification. Skills certification was in turn used to bring about the eventual professionalization of construction work in the country, elevating the engagement with employers and government regarding workers' status and benefits to a higher level. Guilds were thus considered as an important requirement for the formation of an industry-based union.

In developing the organizing strategies, the five affiliates used the 5'S approach to respond to the interests and immediate needs of the construction workers: Safety, Skills, Social Insurance, Security and Salary. This eventually became the backbone of the NUBCW in terms of delivery of particular services like job facilitation and advocacy for alternative working arrangements within the construction sector. The development

“The construction and building industry is very exploitative of workers given the low demand for jobs and oversupply of labour in a sluggish economy of a developing country”



of appropriate union programs that could immediately satisfy existing economic needs of workers succeeded in diminishing the fear and resistance that construction workers initially had towards unions.

The 5S' approach consisted of addressing the issue of Safety evident in education programs and advocacy on Occupational Health and Safety. The second S referred to the Skills Development and Upgrading where the low skilled and lowly educated construction workers were provided venues for trade testing and skills development in partnering with the TESDA and its accredited schools. The third S responded to the lack of appropriate Social insurance schemes needed because of the high risks and unpredictable nature of construction labour; for this, mutual aid programs were developed and insurance schemes advocated. The fourth S addressed the common aspiration of project-based workers for Security of Jobs. BWI affiliates responded to this by a Job Facilitation strategy which entailed scouting for job openings and training opportunities in TESDA, DOLE Public Service Office and the JOB Net and monitoring of bulletins to provide employment information to project organizers and local educators who took charge of information dissemination on the ground. Likewise, the guilds partnered with contractors for employment purposes. The final S was the Salary factor where BWI affiliates worked on ensuring better salary packages through schemes ranging from Collective Bargaining Agreements to wage discussions in the regional councils and other venues for industry negotiations.

PHASE 2: Consolidation and Alliance Building: Cooperating and Talking to Each Other (January 1999-2001)

Having a shared experience of organizing the construction associations and a common strategy in organizing the sector, Phase 2 of the Project attempted to build on these gains by consolidating each of the five construction associations and strengthening cooperation among the affiliates. Phase 2 of the Project thus sought to strengthen and sustain the labour unions formed during the first phase of the project through a

combination of separate organizing work and joint advocacy activities. While organizing each respective construction association was important to strengthening the mass base of labour unions, advocacy through joint activities and alliance building was seen as equally important in pushing for better working conditions for the industry, which, in turn, could be used in strengthening and expanding the affiliates' organizing work.

It was during the second Phase of the Project that cooperation among the affiliates became a crucial backbone for project implementation. Affiliates held joint deliberation and decision-making on matters of project development, fund allocation and advocacy at the level of the National Project Committee (NPC), a joint mechanism composed of representatives of the five affiliates, representatives of the 5 construction workers' associations and the BWI Regional Representative and the National Project Coordinator of IPAPO. The NPC became the venue to coordinate, share experiences, plan and evaluate the project. Thus, unlike Phase 1 where the IPAPO dealt with the 5 affiliates individually, Phase 2 differed dramatically since the IPAPO started dealing with them collectively, as a body where consensus building became the mode of decision making particularly regarding joint activities and campaign advocacies.

This collective decision making however did not cut-off independent organizing activities, for such was still addressed in half of the activities implemented in Phase 2 particularly those dealing with direct organizing concerns of individual construction associations. For the other half of the Project, however, joint undertakings and advocacies were matters that had to be discussed and decided collectively. Such an arrangement was implemented in the use of project funds called "Regular funds". Fifty percent (50%) of Project funds were equally allocated among the five affiliates for each of their respective organizing work. The other 50% were allocated for joint pro-active projects and could only be used upon the collective decision of the NPC. The NPC thus became the venue for cooperation and concrete solidarity work between the affiliates, and, provided the project with political direction.



While modes of cooperation were discussed at the leadership level through the National Project Committee (NPC), at the bottom of the structure, the affiliates took the responsibility of implementing the project in their respective construction workers' union. Part of their task was to develop a mechanism for the sustainability of the project including dues collection and providing counterpart resources for union activities. They were also expected to participate in the implementation of joint activities and campaigns through a system of joint task forces under the coordination of the BWI Philippine Affiliates' Council (PAC) and the IPAPO.

In the course of joint undertakings, unprecedented solidarity was forged among the affiliates, from the top leadership to the rank and file membership. Eventually, such collaborative efforts started to generate not only internal solidarity but also external recognition from government and employers' associations. These efforts eventually led to the creation of the BWI Philippine Affiliates Council composed of the broad and united representation of construction workers associations that the construction associations could identify with. This Council was also meant to be the instrument that would deal with government and construction industry employers.

As the BWI affiliates increasingly becoming co-stakeholders in a shared Project of organizing and improving the working conditions of construction workers, the BWI Project Office took on the role of facilitator to ensure that each had equal representation and enjoyed equal benefits. Coming from a history of division and ideological turfing, the IPAPO project coordinator had to ensure that each of the five affiliates were equally represented and that decisions were made with the spirit of impartiality, transparency and camaraderie. This required political sensitivity and savvy that comes from earning the trust of each of the labour union movements. Likewise, openness, political maturity and the capacity to transcend ideological biases were vital ingredients in fostering the spirit of collegiality among the national leaders representing the five affiliates in the Project's joint mechanism (NPC). Although most of these leaders were firstliners in ex-



perience, many were second-generation leaders (i.e. three of the leaders in the Council were sons of established key union leaders) and perhaps had less ideological baggage of past encounters within the trade union movement. The broad composition of the Project's joint mechanisms paved the way for uniting the construction labour movement.

Phase 2 of the Project was thus instrumental in bringing the five previously adversarial labour federations to a collective undertaking: to organize construction workers with the spirit of cooperation and transparency -- where the strength of one was eventually seen as a building block in strengthening the entire construction labour sector. Policy gains achieved through joint collaborations under the auspices of the BWI Philippine Council provided the political leverage for the construction associations, contributing greatly to the expansion and consolidation of each of the construction associations.

A Paradigm Shift: The Birthing of the First Single Industry Construction Union in the Philippines (2001-2002)

By the end of 2000, the question of sustaining the construction labour organizing project was problematized and closely linked with the need to form a construction industry union.

Within the BWI Philippine Advisory Council, it was agreed that organizing of construction unions independently of each other would hinder rather than contribute to unity-building among construction workers. Council members realized that further advances in organizing work would not be possible if the union movement remains fragmented. The state of construction workers, most of whom are project based, always left behind any economic advancement in the country and treated as non-entities in Philippine society needed a visible, broad and united labour front. With this realization, the BWI Philippine Advisory Council resolved to unite under the Philippine Alliance of Construction Workers' Organizations (PACWO).



For almost two years, the alliance projected unity within the sector and held common activities and advocacy. Through this alliance, the spirit of camaraderie and working together for a common cause was fostered not just among the leaders but members as well. This experience at unity-building also revealed the imperative to venture into a merger if industry-based unionism was to make a real difference in the labor relations landscape. The positive experience and impact of coming together led to more collective sharing, assessment and re-thinking, eventually paving the way for the formation of a national industry union. Henceforth, the experience of coming together under the Philippine Alliance of Construction Workers' Organization became an important basis for unions to transcend their organizational and ideological differences and unite under a single industry union. This resolve to work together to form the first industry union was to be their most significant contribution to the construction sector and the broader labour movement.

Having no precedents in the Philippines and no clear cut policies for recognizing industry unions under Philippine labour laws, forming an industry union was seen as a "concept" whose viability needed to be discussed. The "paradigm shift" henceforth led to a yearlong process of consultations among members of the five affiliates, culminating in a Construction Workers Leaders' Assembly in September 2001. The assembly formally approved the principles of and working guidelines for establishing a national union of workers in the building and construction sectors. The all leaders' assembly likewise selected representatives to the NUBCW Council of Leaders that was tasked to prepare for the founding congress of the new industry union. Meanwhile, the Philippine Advisory Council commissioned a research on the legalities and nuances of establishing an industry union. Addressing both organizational and legal implications of establishing a construction industry union became a critical process that paved the foundations of the National Union of Building and Construction Workers (NUBCW).

The painstaking process of establishing the first industry union eventually culminated in the founding congress of the National Union of Building and Construction Workers



on September 8, 2002. Under a common organizational structure that was completely independent from their mother federations (i.e. five BWI affiliates), it was hoped that inter-union friction on the ground would be reduced. With the formation of the NUBCW, after more than a century of the labour movement in the Philippines, unionism among the construction workers was once again revitalized.

With the resolution of the five BWI affiliates to transcend their ideological and organizational divide in the interest of the construction sector, the Project far exceeded its expectation of developing cooperation among the construction workers and affiliates. The second phase of the Project produced the first-ever single industry union, the National Union of Building and Construction Workers (NUBCW).

PHASE 3: Institutionalisation and Consolidation of NUBCW(Jan 2002-December 2005)

NUBCW's formalization signalled the challenge of institutionalizing industry-based unionism toward greater political effectiveness and organizational viability.

As of this writing, Phase 3 of the Project is underway with the aim of building the capacity of NUBCW to promote construction workers' basic human and trade union rights and provide better working conditions. This entails developing the capacity of both the local and national leadership as agents in membership maintenance and recruitment, educators, welfare program and service providers, negotiators and lobbyists, and employment promotion coordinators. Likewise, both the NUBCW and its affiliates continue to initiate social dialogues at the national and local levels aimed at promoting construction workers' welfare, developing policies and programs on employment promotion, skills training and better and safe working conditions.

NUBCW was instrumental in the recent formation of the Construction Industry Tripartite Council (CITC). NUBCW played a significant role in determining the key activities of the Council. In this Council, the NUBCW is recognized as the duly



authorized representative of the organized construction workers. NUBCW, thus, has gained legitimacy and political ascendancy in the sector. To date, the Council is working on a joint legislative agenda, the amendment of the Labour Code so as to include a separate code on labour relations in the construction industry, and, the drafting of the Construction Levy Bill.

With the NUBCW now formalized and politically recognized, the challenge of sustaining an industry union of construction workers continues.

IV. Challenges Ahead

*“Forming an industry construction union is like creating your own path in the forest.”
Dong Tolentino, former IPAPO project coordinator*

ORGANIZING PROJECT-BASED and highly mobile construction workers within a construction industry union is a pioneering and challenging task. Aware of the difficulties and complexities of organizing this sector within the framework of an industry union is no easy task for there are no answers or precedents in Philippines. Only the vision -- a better life for all construction workers -- is clear.

Pioneering an industry union in the Philippines is a daunting task since the country’s labour relations system has not adopted industry-based unionism as part of its institutional framework. While industry unions are strong and important players in developed countries, in a developing country such as the Philippines, industry-based unionism is still the exception rather than the rule. Philippine labour laws do not even have regulations for the registration of industry unions. In such an environment, the struggle and advocacy of the NUBCW is necessarily a break-through. NUBCW now needs to create the policy environment that would allow industry unionism to thrive.

High on NUBCW's agenda are the following:

1. Addressing the job insecurity and unpredictable nature of construction workers by developing ways and means for the employers to recognize the NUBCW as a pool of employees even when these are project contractual workers;
2. Developing effective strategies to organize the vast number of unorganised construction workers under the NUBCW umbrella;
3. Maintaining organizational unity, loyalty and discipline through democratic processes;
4. Ensuring participatory and organic unity among the associations and unions at the local chapter level not only at the national level.
5. Ensuring the sustainability of NUBCW, covering not only the financial aspect but also continued program operations, human resource development and organizational maintenance and expansion.

The Project's long term developmental objective is to pilot a workable form of social contract and create a national collective bargaining structure that could effectively present a unified front of construction workers in negotiations with industry and the national government. This advocacy stems from the aspiration to address the job insecurity of the workers by veering away from the workers' limited view of Job Security and expand this to Employment Security. In so doing, the construction worker will go beyond the view of "simply having any job" and focus instead on conditions of work, occupational health and safety (OHS), competitiveness and a social security package. Hopefully, this could start the process of uplifting the social status of construction workers in the Philippines.

V. Insights and Reflections

ORGANIZING AND UNITING construction workers under the National Union of Building and Construction Workers (NUBCW) is both a process and product of

“Organizing project workers through community-based associations and guilds was the BWI affiliates’ contribution to the realization of so-called “social movement unionism”

“The struggle and advocacy of the NUBCW is necessarily a break-through; it now needs to create the policy environment that would allow industry unionism to thrive”

experimentation, collective sharing and building genuine commitment among second generation labour leaders and organizers. The formation of NUBCW is a direct result of several circumstances and interventions. Some lessons from the NUBCW experience are as follows.

Interplay of the national industry union and local struggle: A combination of top and bottom struggle for workers’ rights

One of the most important lessons of NUBCW has to do with the significant role played by a national union mechanism in any programmatic effort to alleviate the lives of workers in the construction industry. While strong and sustainable local unions and community-based organizations have proven to be effective vehicles for mounting collective actions among construction workers, the experience during these past years has also revealed the need for an industry level mechanism to coordinate actions and organize representation of construction workers in a national bargaining process.

Considering the intermittent and project based employment of most construction workers, an industry union can provides these workers with the leverage and mechanism to continuously protect and promote their rights. Advocacy won on the national industry level can be used to strengthen local struggles and organizations. Likewise, local issues such as OHS violations at the worksites provide the national industry union with the basis for monitoring standards and improving the working conditions of the construction workers.

Second Generation Leaders are vital to the growth of the organization

Having second-generation leaders within the joint mechanisms of the BWI Philippine Council was crucial to creating a climate of openness and cooperation due to their capacity to set aside ideological differences and come up with innovative and radical options such as the formation of the NUBCW. Developing second line leaders assures re-generation of movements (i.e. there is ready pool of new blood, new ideas and new



energies). These leaders not only share the burden of increasing responsibilities of a growing organization, they also bring fresh perspectives into the organization.

Forging unity is easier among organizations when they are still in their formative stage

The idea of bringing together construction unions under a single industry union came from the realization of the limitations of local union organizing -- most evident during the formative stage of the construction associations. Since no single construction union could carry on the organizing and advocacy struggle of the sector on its own, broader unity was the only way even for local unions to become viable.

Respecting internal union democracy and union traditions is key factors in maintaining unity

The decision of the affiliates to unite into a single construction industry union is a very important development in the fragmented trade union movement. This also decision implies that these five (5) affiliates will support NUBCW and will not organise another construction unions. That’s why it is important that internal process must be respected. Domination of one affiliate or intervention from external organisation will alter the internal dynamics and the balance of forces inside the organisation. This will have serious implication in future unity project.

Networking beyond trade unions is good for organizing

NGOs helped in organizing construction workers residing in areas where these NGOs operate. They help provide assistance in the form of grants and capacity building. Government organizations through partnership arrangements also boost skills training and certification programs. Both can be tapped to provide financial assistance to the union’s programs. Networking is a requisite in union organizing.

BWI playing a catalyst role in the formation of the industry union.

BWI played significant role in two (2) areas. First, BWI plays a catalyst role in organis-





ing the construction workers who are mostly informal workers. The affiliated trade unions took the challenge to experiment non-traditional organising approaches. BWI was also used by the affiliates as its platform to campaign for the rights of construction workers. BWI, an internationally recognised global union federation was used by the workers to bring about their issues at the international and national level. Second, BWI through this project, provided the affiliates the platform to work together, exchange experiences and organising strategy. BWI facilitated confidence building processes that lead to the realisation of the need to unite and form a single industry union.

Be open to various forms of organization and methods of organizing

As long as the substance, reason and aspirations for organizing are ripe, the form will follow. When the five affiliates saw the need to unite and strengthen the construction workers union under one single industry union, the decision to push through with the idea was made despite the absence of local precedents and legal provisions. Going beyond the limits of legal environments which are oftentimes anti-union can change the course of labour movements.

Providing immediate relief to members is crucial to recruitment and maintenance

Organizing efforts should be grounded in the plight of the sector, in their daily struggle of survival against job insecurity, occupational hazards and sheer poverty. Providing immediate relief to union members without losing sight of the long-term struggle for policy and programmatic reforms is the best way to recruit, maintain and expand unions.

Inside Stories from interviews and discussions with workers:

Drawing Construction Workers to the Fold

The primary factor that helped draw construction workers to NUBCW was the skills training and certification program. The certification program attracts a lot of construction workers to organize or join the construction workers' association. Workers



perceive the program as an employment opportunity or a chance to upgrade their trade skills level. Job placement and facilitation are also associated with the Skills Training and Certification Program. Skills training especially on health and safety draws a lot of workers to join the organization.

Gaining skills improves confidence and can improve income

The Skills and Certification Program of IPAPO provided the ladder for workers to become TESDA certified skilled government workers. Being certified as “skilled” boosted the confidence of workers and increased their bargaining power. Consequently, their wages and income level improved.

Skills and Certification Programs boost employability

The Skills and Certification Program and the Trade Testing Program of IPAPO addressed problems related to employability and competition given the limited construction jobs available for construction workers. Some workers, after having been recognized by TESDA as skilled workers, improved their chances of landing construction jobs as they increased their level of competency in the job market. This led as well to an improvement in their economic conditions. Likewise, some members have moved from living in squatters’ areas to residing in more secure and decent housing. For other members, certification has landed them construction job abroad. Others found jobs in government offices as part of the maintenance crew.

Information is key to Job Facilitation

Construction workers organizations (with BALIKATAN and SANCOWA) were able to negotiate with their respective local government units using Republic Act 6685, a law that gives hiring priority to resident workers in municipal or local projects. In the municipality of Taguig, knowledge of this law motivated construction workers to negotiate for possible construction jobs with the mayor. This opened up the opportunity for BALIKATAN and SANCOWA construction worker-members to attend local government



sessions and be informed of government construction projects that would be hiring workers. In the city of Caloocan, meanwhile, worker-members were able to get into the priority-hiring list for future local construction projects.

BWI's role in uniting a politically and organizationally diverse labour movement

Being an established international labour movement identified with the construction workers' interest rather than with any partisan political grouping, BWI become an effective facilitator of the process of uniting the fragmented labour movement. In the absence of organic unity among the labour leaders, an external player such as BWI, with the capacity and political sensitivity to maintain impartiality, transparency and collegiality can play a crucial role in providing and facilitating venues for joint activities. Likewise, providing deliberate venues for cooperation in a spirit of mutual trust facilitates the process of unity building. ■

Project Details:

Timeframe: 1999 – 2004

Solidarity Support Organisation:
• LOFTF Denmark

National Partner Union:
• BAT Kartellet

Participating Unions:
NUBCW, ALU, ATU, NFL, SPFL, KAMA0

Project Coordinator: Apolinar Tolentino



BWI Trade Union

Development Framework Strategy

IN ASSISTING TRADE UNIONS IN developing projects that would bring them towards the BWI goals of “building a strong global union movement, defending and promoting human and trade union rights, and promoting and enforcing global labour standards”, BWI came up with a “framework strategy for trade union development”. This framework strategy was collectively developed through a rich mixture of hindsight, foresight, consultation and synthesis: hindsight, meaning lessons derived from BWI’s project experiences; foresight pertaining to the affiliates’ decision to design strategies that would lead to the achievement of BWI’s goals; consultations referring to the discussions undertaken by BWI project implementors to validate common project strategies used in their projects, and, synthesis, meaning BWI’s attempt to consolidate a strategic framework that will guide BWI and its partners in approving projects, and, in designing and implementing project strategies.

The BWI framework strategy for project and trade union development entails four phases with corresponding success indicators for each phase. Activities and strategies applicable to the conditions of trade unions are then suggested in relation to the targeted indicators. The framework strategy ends with possible issues that the trade union or project may encounter in each of the phases. The last phase is meant to help the trade union and BWI in anticipating potential risks, weaknesses and problems, and, formulating appropriate responses such as sufficient preparatory work, safeguards and contingency plans.

Designing A Project Strategy For Trade Union Development

IN DESIGNING A PROJECT strategy for trade union development, the project identification phase is highly

important. In this phase, key result areas (KRAs) must be identified. BWI has five (5) KRAs namely: 1) Organization, 2) Administration & Finance, 3) Education 4) Advocacy / Campaigns and 5) Impact on Workers. These five serve as the basic components in designing and evaluating appropriate project strategies.

Key Result Areas for Assessing Trade Union Strength:

A trade union is considered strong, effective and capable based on the following indicators:

1. Organization

1.1. Membership

- a. Quantity of members - the more members, the better. More members mean that the union has a broader representation of workers, giving it stronger leverage for bargaining and mobilizations.
- b. Quality of members – quantity of members is best qualified by having a large number of dues paying members. Dues paying members provide the regular source of trade union income, which in turn becomes the basis for planning the union's sustainability and budgeting of its core operations. Dues payment is a good gauge of the membership's level of commitment to and participation in the union.

1.2. Structure




- a. Functional democracy - A trade union should have a functional democratic structure that effectively represents its members and acts on the union's goals. This means that its structures (i.e. congress, executive council, executive committees, program committees) are operational and responsive in meeting the union's goals and objectives.
- b. Forging unities - Beyond its internal structures for operations and decision making, the trade union should also be representative and part of larger unities that broaden its mandate and legitimacy (e.g. membership in industry and geographic alliances).

1.3. Networking

Being part of a national, regional & global network that has appropriate infrastructure for communication and coordination strengthens the union's leverage and positioning in representation, advocacy, campaign & negotiation.

2. Administration and Finance


- 2.1. Accounting System – There should be a reliable accounting system in place to ensure that internally and externally generated financial



resources of the union are used efficiently and properly (i.e. as agreed upon and prescribed). The union must be accountable and transparent to its contributors especially its membership.

- 2.2. Counterpart Contribution - The union should be capable of financing its core operations and of raising a counterpart contribution in its projects. This way it does not become dependent on external funds and is able to share in the cost of projects.

3. Education



The education program of a trade union impacts on its internal capacities: skills, knowledge, and orientation of leaders and members that enable the union to achieve its goals and mandate (i.e. defend/ promote the trade union rights). If these capacities are not present within the union, external resource persons may be tapped to assist in capacity-building. The kind of education program to be implemented should be based on the needs of the workers at each particular stage of union development.

4. Advocacy/Campaign


The level and scope of advocacy and campaign progresses as the union matures from a local branch union to an industry federation to a national union and a regional/global alliance. This area of work includes the following:

- 4.1. Capacity to do Campaigns - Effective

campaigning requires the capacity to identify and analyse issues, plan and strategize appropriate and effective campaigns, mobilize members and resources, get media coverage and generate public and political support.

- 4.2. Political Gains – refers to the recognition, concessions and power given to the union as a result of its advocacy and leverage (e.g. being a member of a regional wage board or tripartite council of the industry).
- 4.3. Alliance Building - refers to the level of organization and alliance work needed to effectively represent and advocate for the union's agenda.

5. Impact on Workers



This refers to the efforts of the union to address and provide benefits, policy gains, and effective redress or resolution to members' grievances and improvement in workers conditions -- all of which are functions of defending and promoting workers' rights and interests. Impact on workers may be in two forms: direct tangible gains to the workers like improvement in working conditions and wage increases, or indirect gains such as policy directives of government to employers (e.g. a directive to provide specific occupational protection for workers). Indirect policy gains may not be immediately felt by workers because these are dependent on the effectiveness of policy implementation.



The project framework below illustrates the phase-by-phase process of interventions in five levels of interventions: Organizational, Administrative, Education, Working Conditions and Advocacy.

PROJECT PHASES

THE PROJECT PHASES DESCRIBE the level of development and maturity of the trade union based on the indicators discussed earlier (i.e. organizational, administrative, education, advocacy, workers' impact). Understanding the project phases of trade union development is crucial in designing trade union projects for this serves as the platform for identifying the appropriate set of project interventions and activities. Likewise, the phases illustrate the progression of trade union development. By using such a framework, the project implementor is provided with a road map particularly on the direction of trade union development work. Developing the trade union from the pre-project phase to phase four (i.e., regional or global trade union network) is estimated to take six to ten years of project assistance.

PRE-PROJECT PHASE

Pre-Project Phase is the entry point. BWI's decision to recommend and approve a project is guided by a set of criteria. For BWI, this phase involves making a sound decision on whether or not to support or revise a particular project application, and, assist the applicant-trade union

to qualify for project funding. Applicant-trade unions are informed of the minimum requirements for project application and approval. This phase can be likened to a preparatory stage where the union prepares for basic prerequisites of project identification and implementation.

For the Pre-project phase, the following are the required target indicators:

Organizationally, the trade union should have the following characteristics:

- 1) Functional, at least in its structures at the national level;
- 2) Union leaders are democratically elected by the union members;
- 3) At least 1,000 dues paying members in the BWI industries;
- 4) A legally registered trade union;
- 5) Has a good analysis of workers' needs and has identified potential areas for union building.

On the Administrative aspect, the trade union should have:

- 1) A basic accounting system in place;
- 2) A latest union financial report;
- 3) Capacity to contribute 10% of the costs of the pre-project activities.

The pre-project phase provides BWI with a gauge on both the project's viability and the trade union's capacity to implement the project. In view of the "feasibility nature" of the Pre-Project phase, the following preparatory activities guide BWI in its project selection process and the applicant-trade union in qualifying for project funds.

PHASE ONE: Formative and Capacity Building Stage

Phase one focuses on developing the basic core capacities of a trade union to organize, educate, advocate workplace issues and manage simple projects. The emphasis of this phase are on the following themes: organizing and educating the membership on trade union and human rights, developing the leadership, research and issue analysis for simple advocacy and putting in place a sound administrative structure that can sufficiently report, account and manage simple projects. Projects of this type normally take one to two years of capacity building interventions.

The formative and capacity building stage targets the following indicators:

Organizational

1. Developed and piloted an effective organizing strategy at the local or branch level;
2. 30-50% increase (or at least 2,000) increase

in membership with at least 40% dues paying members and at least 10% increase in women members;

3. 100-150 newly trained union leaders (as trainers, organizers, safety representatives, shop stewards, etc.) with improved capacity to manage and implement training courses and/ or local campaigns;
4. At least one working committee is in place to implement the project (e.g. organizing, women, education or OSH committee);
5. Simple and user-friendly membership database list, 30% of which should be women.

Administrative

1. Union is able to prepare annual union plans;
2. Union is able to prepare and submit annual project plans and reports to BWI;
3. Annual union budget and audited financial report are presented to and adopted by the union leadership;
4. Basic financial system is in place and the union submits six-month financial reports to BWI;
5. 20% of the project cost is covered by the union.

Education

1. Knowledge on basic trade union rights, labour

relations and standards, occupational health and safety, and, women's rights;

2. Skills on democratic leadership, organizing, campaigning, CBA negotiation and education;
3. Orientation on free and democratic trade unionism.

Campaign & Advocacy

1. Union has a good grasp of the issues and has identified possible local campaigns;
2. Majority of the local members participate in union meetings and campaigns;
3. Safety committees are organized at the workplace level;
4. Grievance mechanism is in place;
5. Unions have experienced acting on winnable workable issues;
6. Union is recognized at the enterprise level;
7. Union is recognized as a bargaining agent at the enterprise level.

Impact on Workers

1. Unions are able to win small concrete issues in the workplace (e.g. personal protective equipment, Occupational Health and Safety improvements);
2. Unions are able to provide services to members (e.g. mutual aid, legal assistance, job facilitation);

3. Unions are able to enrol members for social insurance (e.g. welfare boards in India);
4. Increased awareness of workers on their legal rights.

PHASE TWO: Organisational Development and Membership Expansion Stage

After a trade union has undertaken the formative and capacity building phase of its core trade union functions (i.e. organizing, education, project management and administration and simple advocacy), the second phase then focuses on the organisational development and expansion of the trade union. The second phase now moves towards developing a broader and higher union profile that includes an expanded base of dues paying members, multiple committees, building union capacity to implement simultaneous projects, campaign on various issues (local workplace, industry or national political issues), and, providing concrete services to members on a more programmatic basis. Projects of this type normally take two to three years.

The Organisation Development and Membership Expansion Stage targets the following Indicators:

Organizational

1. Re-structured (merger, or formation of federation or industry union / alliance) and developed the

- union's viability and strength;
- 2. Union is responding effectively to the needs and issues of the members;
- 3. Expanded organizing work in specific regions with high concentration of workers in targeted companies, big projects or MNCs;
- 4. Expanded membership by 80-100% (or at least 5,000 members) with at least 60% dues paying members and at least 30% increase in women members;
- 5. Maintained a pool of leaders of 200 or with a target leader-member ratio of 1:100; trained second liners leaders from the national and local levels where 50% are appointed or elected into the various union structures (with minimum of 20% women leaders);
- 6. At least 2-3 committees (e.g. Women, Occupational Health and Safety, Youth, Education) are institutionalised and operational;
- 7. BWI policies and programs are integrated into union policies and activities.

Administrative & Financial Capacity

- 1. Union leadership conducts annual assessment, planning and budgeting session;
- 2. Improved documentation and reporting of activities, membership, and dues collection;
- 3. Developed capacity to prepare simple but proper

- project application and reports;
- 4. 30 % of the project cost is covered by the union;
- 5. At least 50% of the core expenses of the union is covered by membership dues;
- 6. Developed an efficient mechanism for dues collection with average of 50% collection rate.

Education

- 1. Knowledge – a good grasp of the industry situation and issues affecting the workers, government policies and programs, ILO Core labour standards;
- 2. Skills on organisational development, alliance building, training and education, financial management and strategic planning;
- 3. Orientation – national industry-wide perspective on trade unionism.

Campaign & Advocacy

- 1. Successfully implemented campaigns at regional, local or workplace level;
- 2. At the national (or regional / state) level, union is able to mobilize at least 3,000 of its members to participate in campaigns;
- 3. Established alliances with trade unions and cooperation with other unions in the same industry;

4. Unions are able to negotiate CBAs on issues affecting the workers (e.g. retrenchment, company, policies);
5. Union representation in regional/state bodies;
6. Union is consulted by local government on issues affecting the workers;
7. Unions are engaging in social dialogues at the local level.

Impact on Workers




1. Tangible improvements in any of the following: wages, working conditions and occupational health and safety (OHS) situation in the workplace;
2. 20% decrease in work-related accidents;
3. Concluded collective bargaining agreements (CBA) at the workplace or local level, affecting majority of the workers (including women) in the area;
4. Collective agreement covers at least some improvement in OSH working conditions (equally applied to women);
5. Legal cases are won;
6. Women issues are addressed;
7. Anti-sexual harassment policy is in place;
8. Union members have access to skills training.

PHASE THREE: Institution Building and Sustainability Phase

After the trade union has reached a sufficient level of maturity in its organizational development and membership expansion, it reaches phase three where it now strives to institutionalise and sustain the trade union in anticipation of the inevitable phase out of project support. This means that the trade union should be able to function and rely, first and foremost, on its own resources and organization rather than on external funding and support. Internal resources (i.e. membership dues), organizational soundness, capable and democratic leadership, broad and active membership base and track record become the primary sources of strength in day-to-day trade union work. After undertaking capacity building, organizational development and membership expansion, the third phase then focuses on ensuring functioning democratic structures, sustainability and continued relevance of the trade union as seen in the following indicators:

Organizational

1. Functional democratic structures as evident in the regular holding of the union's congress, and meetings / activities of the executive committee, and, regional structures (including a permanent women's committee) are in place;
2. Expanded membership by 100%-200% (or at least

- 
- 
- 
- 10,000 total members) , with at least 80% dues paying members (at least 30% women members);
3. Mechanism for regular consultation of members is effectively used;
 4. Well-represented and democratically elected union leadership with effective representation of women (30%), young workers and local leaders (with at least 240 trained leaders positioned in various structures of the union);
 5. 10-20 union leaders are trained on new skills (e.g. social dialogue, global campaigns, global organizing);
 6. Unions have developed policies and approved strategic plans and have integrated BWI strategies into these policies and plan, and in program implementation;
 7. Actively affiliated with BWI with at least 3,000 dues paying members.

Administrative and Financial Capacity

1. Unions are able to cover the core expenses of the union (office costs, staff salaries, union meetings/ congresses & union services);
2. Union have allocated 30% of its budget to union programs (e.g. women, education, legal, organizing)
3. At least one (1) full time educator/organizer is paid by the union;

4. Efficient financial system is in place and audited annual accounts are reported;
5. Union is electronically linked to BWI;
6. Capable of running and managing small projects;
7. The union covers 40-50% of the project cost.

Education

1. Knowledge on globalisation particularly its negative impact on industry and workers, workings of MNCs, International Financial Institutions (IFIs), and, various international standards, guidelines and conventions.
2. Skills on coalition building, information management, social dialogue, tripartism and policy advocacy;
3. Orientation – sustainable industrial development.

Campaign & Advocacy

1. Launched a nation-wide campaign on a particular policy or program;
2. Established networking and cooperation with other trade unions, communities and NGOs to pursue national campaigns;
3. Campaigns are covered by media;
4. At least 5,000 members participate in nationwide rallies;
5. Union is recognized by both the government and

employers;

6. Represented in national tripartite mechanisms (e.g. industry boards, OSH councils, welfare boards) or multi-stakeholders bodies;
7. Establishment of industry level bargaining;
8. Union is consulted on policies (industry, privatisation policies);
9. Participation in monitoring and inspection of workplaces.

Impact on Workers

1. Policies and programs (such as social security, OSH, women, employment and skills training) affecting majority of the workers are enacted and implemented;
2. Establishment of an industry labour standard (national or state level);
3. Industry agreements affecting many workers (including women) are signed;
4. Increase in the number of workers covered by CBAs;
5. Union services are delivered and members are provided with benefits (e.g. number of legal cases won; number of workers covered by social security, numbers of workers affected by improved OSH program, etc).

PHASE FOUR: Regional and Global Network Building

As the trade union surpasses the test and challenge of institutionalisation and sustainability -- of being able to stand primarily on its own strength and resources -- it then moves towards a regional and global level of engagement and perspective. From dependence to independence to inter-dependence; from local to national; from regional to global. Anchored on basic trade unionism and moving from simple to complex, BWI would like to see its affiliates bloom into regional and global networks of trade unions that can act and make a difference locally at the same time think, act and collectively make a difference globally. With globalisation threatening the plight of workers, it becomes imperative for unions to foster global unities and organize strong regional and global trade union networks and to advocate globally. In this phase, the following are required:

Organisational

1. Regional/sub-regional industry union network is established and able to address regional issues;
2. Developed and adopted a regional campaign plan with corresponding support from the national leadership;
3. Unions are actively participating in global and regional campaigns through visible presence at the national level;
4. 30-50 trade union representatives have established

effective working relations/ responsive on-line communication (with at least 30% women representation);

5. 50-100 union representatives are trained on global issues and global work;
6. Established a strong on-line regional network.

Administration and Finance

1. 20-50% of regional and national activities are covered by the participating unions;
2. Regional campaign funds are raised from the contribution of unions;
3. Project coordinators or focal persons are appointed to assist in regional campaigns.

Education

1. Knowledge on international framework agreements, labour clauses and multilateral guidelines and standards, international certification bodies, international trade union policies and advocacies;
2. Skills on global organizing, regional networking, campaigning, international solidarity work, able to relate local issues to industry and global issues;
3. Orientation on global trade unionism, multi-cultural and pluralist orientation.

Campaign & Advocacy

1. Participated in BWI regional and global campaigns;
2. Engagement in social dialogue with employers' group, inter-governmental bodies, International Financial Institutions;
3. Representation in monitoring / auditing bodies on labour standards.

Impact on Workers

1. Improvement of working conditions of workers as covered by framework agreements;
2. Workers are organized in companies certified by forestry certification bodies;
3. Labour standards are implemented in major public infrastructure projects.

Concluding Remarks

The Trade Union Development Framework is meant as a guide -- not a rigid standard -- to help both BWI and its partner unions in designing project strategies on trade union development, approving or rejecting project applications, evaluating trade unions and providing the necessary project support and interventions.

The following reminders are useful in keeping a healthy perspective in the use of BWI's trade union development framework:



1. Be Real. The framework is meant to be used within the context (i.e., objective and subjective conditions) of the trade union. To ensure that the project is realistic, relevant background information that have a bearing on the project must always be provided.
2. Be Attainable. The framework assumes a certain degree of project viability where the union is able to control external variables and risks that may be detrimental to the project's outcomes. Matters beyond the control of the union and the project should always be surfaced and taken into consideration in formulating target indicators.
3. Be Mindful of the Process. There are some indicators (e.g. wage increase) that may be beyond the control of the trade union. Hence, success should not always be linked to the key result areas for at times it is the process of moving towards one's goal that is empowering. Project evaluation should examine both the key result areas and the process, in relation to the external environment.
4. Be Relevant. The framework is also meant to be regularly and collectively evaluated, enhanced and validated vis-à-vis its purpose of bringing the union closer to the four-fold goal of BWI trade union work: trade union strengthening, promotion/defence of trade union and human

rights, improvement of working conditions, and, improvement of employment in the sector.

BWI's framework is meant to make the task of trade union development easier and clearer. The framework guides trade unionists but unionists themselves must also bring life to the framework. The union should view such framework as a reminder of the need to continue the process of learning, growing, and, becoming the trade union envisioned by BWI. ■



Phases of Trade Union Development

Building & Wood Workers International

INDICATORS	PRE-PROJECT PHASE	PHASE 1 FORMATIVE AND CAPACITY BUILDING (1-2 YEARS)	PHASE 2 DEVELOPMENT, CONSOLIDATION AND EXPANSION (2-3 YEARS)	PHASE 3 SUSTAINABILITY AND PHASE-OUT (1-2 YEARS)	PHASE 4 REGIONAL/GLOBAL NETWORKING (2-3 YEARS)
O R G A N I Z A T I O N A L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functional trade union structures at least national level • Union leaders are democratically elected • At least 1,000 dues paying members in the BWI industries • Union is legally registered as trade union • Union has an analysis of their needs & identified potential area for union building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Piloted effective organizing strategy at the local or branch level • 30%-50% (or at least 2,000) increase in membership with at least 40% dues-paying members (at least 10% increase in women members) • 100-150 newly trained union leaders (as trainers, organizers, safety reps, shop stewards and the like) with improved capacity to run and manage training courses and/or local campaigns • At least one working committees is in-place to implement the project (e.g. organizing, women, education or OSH committees) • Simple and user-friendly membership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-structured (or merger, or formation of federation or industry union/ alliance) and developed the union into viable, stronger & effectively responsive to the needs & issues of members • Expanded organizing work in specific regions with high concentration of workers or targeted companies, big projects or MNCs • Expanded membership by 80% - 100% (or at least 5,000) at least 60% dues-paying members (at least 30% increase in women members) • Maintained a pool of 200 (or 1: 100 ratio on leaders & total members) trained union leaders from the national and local leaders with 50% are 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functional democratic structures: Congress, Executive committee and regional structures (including a permanent women's committee) are in place • Expanded membership by 100% - 200% (or at least 10,000) with at least 80% dues paying members (at least 30% women members) • Mechanism for regular consultation of members is effectively used • Well represented and democratically elected union leadership with effective representation of women (30%), young workers and local leaders (with at least 300 trained leaders positioned in various structures of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional /sub-regional industry union network is established addressing regional issues • Developed & adopted regional campaign plan with corresponding support from national leadership • Unions are actively participating in global & regional campaigns through visible presence at the national level • 30-50 Trade union representatives have established an effective working relations / responsive on-line communication (with at least 30% representation) • 50-100 union representatives are trained on global is-



INDICATORS	PRE-PROJECT PHASE	PHASE 1 FORMATIVE AND CAPACITY BUILDING (1-2 YEARS)	PHASE 2 DEVELOPMENT, CONSOLIDATION AND EXPANSION (2-3 YEARS)	PHASE 3 SUSTAINABILITY AND PHASE-OUT (1-2 YEARS)	PHASE 4 REGIONAL/GLOBAL NETWORKING (2-3 YEARS)
O R G A N I Z A T I O N A L		<p>database & dues collection system are in place</p>	<p>appointed or elected in the various union structures (at least 20% are women)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 2-3 union committees (i.e. women, OSH, youth, education, campaigns) are institutionalized and operational BWI policies and programs are integrated in the union policies and activities 	<p>the union)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10-20 union leaders are trained on new skills (e.g. social dialogue, global campaigns, global organizing) Unions have developed and approved a strategic plan (integrating BWI strategies) that serves as the union's guide post in implementing programs Actively affiliated with BWI with at least 3,000 full financial membership 	<p>sues and global work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established a strong on-line regional network





INDICATORS

PRE-PROJECT PHASE

**PHASE 1
FORMATIVE AND
CAPACITY BUILDING
(1-2 YEARS)**

**PHASE 2
DEVELOPMENT,
CONSOLIDATION
AND EXPANSION (2-3
YEARS)**

**PHASE 3
SUSTAINABILITY AND
PHASE-OUT
(1-2 YEARS)**

**PHASE 4
REGIONAL/GLOBAL
NETWORKING
(2-3 YEARS)**

**E
D
U
C
A
T
I
O
N**

- Knowledge on basic trade union rights, labor relations and standards, occupational health & safety, women's rights
- Skills on democratic leadership, organizing, campaigning, CBA negotiation and education
- Orientation on free and democratic trade unionism

- Knowledge – a good grasp of industry situation and issues affecting the workers, government policies and programs, ILO Core labor standards
- Skills on organizational development, alliance building, training and education, financial management and strategic planning.
- Orientation – national industry-wide perspective on trade unionism

- Knowledge on globalization particularly its negative impact to industry and workers, MNCs and IFIs and various international standards, guidelines and conventions.
- Skills on coalition building, information management, social dialogue, tripartism and policy advocacy
- Orientation – sustainable industrial development

- Knowledge on int'l framework agreements, labor clauses and multilateral guidelines int'l certification bodies, international trade union policies and advocacies
- Skills on global organizing, regional networking, campaigning, international solidarity work, able to relate local issues to industry and global issues;
- Orientation on global trade unionism, multi-cultural and pluralist orientation





INDICATORS	PRE-PROJECT PHASE	PHASE 1 FORMATIVE AND CAPACITY BUILDING (1-2 YEARS)	PHASE 2 DEVELOPMENT, CONSOLIDATION AND EXPANSION (2-3 YEARS)	PHASE 3 SUSTAINABILITY AND PHASE-OUT (1-2 YEARS)	PHASE 4 REGIONAL/GLOBAL NETWORKING (2-3 YEARS)
ADMINISTRATIVE & FINANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accounting system is in place A latest Union Financial Report Union has the capacity to contribute 10% of the pre-project activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Union is able to prepare an annual union plans Union is able to prepare and submit annual project plan and report Annual union budget and audited financial report is reported and adopted by union leadership Basic financial system is in place and union submits 6-month financial report to BWI 20% of the project cost is covered by the union 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Union leadership conducted annual assessment, planning and budgeting workshop Improved documentation and reporting of activities, membership, dues collection Developed capacity to prepare simple but proper project application and reports 30% of the project cost is covered by the union At least 50% of the core expenses of the union is covered by membership dues Developed an efficient mechanism for dues collection with average of 50% collection rate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unions are able to cover the core expenses of the union (office costs, staff salaries, union meetings/congresses, & union services) Union have allocated at least 30% of its budget to program (e.g. education, legal, organizing, women) At least one (1) full time educator /organizer is paid by the union Efficient financial system is in place and submits annual audited account Union is electronically linked to BWI Capable of running and managing small projects 40% of the project cost is covered by the union 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20%-50% of the regional and national activities will be covered by the participating unions Regional campaign fund is raised from the contribution of the unions Project coordinators or focal persons are appointed to assist the regional campaigns





INDICATORS	PRE-PROJECT PHASE	PHASE 1 FORMATIVE AND CAPACITY BUILDING (1-2 YEARS)	PHASE 2 DEVELOPMENT, CONSOLIDATION AND EXPANSION (2-3 YEARS)	PHASE 3 SUSTAINABILITY AND PHASE-OUT (1-2 YEARS)	PHASE 4 REGIONAL/GLOBAL NETWORKING (2-3 YEARS)
C A M P A I G N		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Union has a good grasp of the issues and identified possible local campaigns • Majority of the local members participate in union meetings and campaign activities • Safety committees are organized at the workplace • Grievance mechanism is in place • Unions have experienced winnable workplace issues • Union recognition at the enterprise level • Union is recognized as a bargaining agent at the enterprise level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successfully implemented regional. Local or workplace campaigns • At the national (or regional / state) level, union is able to mobilize at least 3,000 of its members to participate in campaigns • Established alliances with trade unions • Unions are able to negotiate CBA / on issues affecting the workers (e.g. retrenchment, company policies,) • Union representation in regional/state bodies • Unions are consulted by local government on issues affecting the workers • Unions are engaging into social dialogue at local level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launched a nation-wide campaign on particular policy or program • Established network and cooperation with other trade unions, communities & NGOs to pursue national campaign • Campaigns are covered by media • At least 5,000 members participate in nationwide rally • Union is recognized by both the government & employers • Represented in national tripartite mechanisms: (industry board, OSH, welfare board) or multi-stakeholders bodies • Establishment of industry level bargaining • Unions is consulted on policies (industry, privatization policies) • Participation in monitoring / inspection in workplaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participated in the BWI regional & global campaigns • Engagement in social dialogue with employers' group, inter-governmental bodies, IFIs • Representation in monitoring / auditing bodies on labor standards





INDICATORS	PRE-PROJECT PHASE	PHASE 1 FORMATIVE AND CAPACITY BUILDING (1-2 YEARS)	PHASE 2 DEVELOPMENT, CONSOLIDATION AND EXPANSION (2-3 YEARS)	PHASE 3 SUSTAINABILITY AND PHASE-OUT (1-2 YEARS)	PHASE 4 REGIONAL/GLOBAL NETWORKING (2-3 YEARS)
I M P A C T T O W O R K E R S		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unions are able to win small concrete issues at the workplace (e.g. PPEs, OSH improvement) • Unions are able to provide services to members (e.g. mutual aid, legal assistance, job facilitation) • Unions are able to enroll members to social insurance (e.g. welfare board in India) • Increase in the awareness of workers on their legal rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement in wages and working conditions • Improvement in OSH situation at workplace • 20% decrease in work-related accidents • Concluded CBA or collective agreements at workplace / local level affecting majority of the workers (including women) in the area • collective agreements at least covers improvement in OSH working conditions (equally applied to women) • legal cases won • women issues are addressed • anti-sexual harassment policy is in place • union members have access to skills training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies and programs (such as social security, OSH, women, employment & skills training) affecting majority of our workers are enacted & implemented • Establishment of an industry labor standard (national or state level) • Industry agreements affecting many workers including women • Increase in the number of workers covered of CBA in the industry • Union services as delivered and benefiting to members (i.e. number of legal cases won; no of workers covered social security, no. of workers affected by improved OSH program, etc) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement of working conditions of workers covered by framework agreements • Workers are organized in companies certified by forestry certification bodies • Labor standards are implemented in major public infrastructure projects



Appendix

About Building and Wood Workers International





About Building and Wood Workers International

The Building and Wood Workers' International (BWI) is the new united global union federation for building, wood and forestry workers. The BWI brings together the International Federation of Building and Wood Workers (IFBWW) and the World Federation of Building and Woodworkers (WFBW), with a combined membership of over 350 unions, representing more than 12 million workers in more than 130 countries. The formation of this new global trade union federation is a response to the need for greater international solidarity, unity and strength in order to confront corporate-driven globalisation.

IFBWW was established in 1934 by a merger of Building Workers' International and Wood Workers' International. However, the birth of the first international for building and wood workers dates to 1893. IFBWW represents the building, building materials, wood, forestry and allied

industry workers with more than 10.5 million members with 279 trade unions in 125 countries.

WFBW, affiliated with World Confederation of labor, is the continuation of the International Federation of Christian Building and Woodworkers' Unions, constituted in Paris in 1937. WFBW represents 1.5 million workers with 51 unions in 40 countries.

BWI Mission

As a united, independent and democratic global union federation, BWI's mission is to defend and advance the interests of building, wood and forestry workers through national, regional and international action.

Through global solidarity, BWI will support its member-unions in defending, promoting and enforcing human and trade union rights towards the vision of decent, sustainable and safe living and working conditions



of all the building, wood and forestry workers across national boundaries.

BWI represents the interest of building, wood and forestry workers at the International Labor Organizations (ILO) and the United Nations. BWI takes up the interest of the workers at the World Bank and Regional Development Banks, World Trade Organization, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and other global multilateral institution.

BWI Strategic Action Plan

Negotiating For Sustainable Industrial Development

- (1) Negotiating Stable Employment and Good Working Conditions

- (2) Negotiating International Framework Agreements with MNCs
- (3) Pressing for Reform of Global Governance

Organising A Global Trade Union Movement

- (4) Organising Strong Independent, Autonomous and Democratic Trade Unions
- (5) Strengthening Global Networking and Regional Structures

Campaigning For International Solidarity

- (6) Mobilising Solidarity Action and Campaigns
- (7) Alliances with Other Unions and Relevant Social Movements

Mainstreaming Gender In Trade Unions

BWI Partners

BWI is working in solidarity with the Global Union Movement together with the International Confederation of Free Trade Union (ICFTU), the World Confederation of Labor (WCL) and the Global Union Federations (GUF). At the European level, BWI is working closely with the European Federation of Building and Wood Workers (EFBWW) and the Nordic Federation of Building and Wood Workers (NFBWW). BWI has established a long and strategic partnership with Trade

Union Support Solidarity Organizations such as: LOTCO Council (Sweden), FNV Mondiaal (Netherlands), Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES, Germany), Trade Union Solidarity Center (SASK, Finland), LOFTF Council (Denmark), LO Norway and Canadian Labor Congress (CLC, Canada).

Building And Wood Workers International

54, rte des Acacias
 CH-1227 Carouge (GE), Switzerland
 Tel +41 22 827-3777; Fax +41 22 827-3770
 Email: info@ifbww.org
 Website: www.ifbww.org

Trade Union Development Project Team

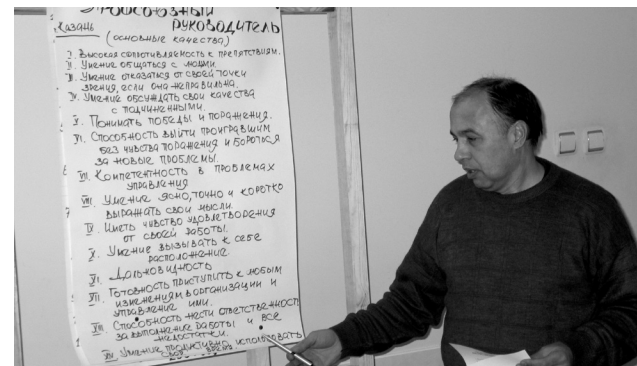
Ambet Yuson, Education Secretary
 Carlos Anonuevo, Assistant Education Secretary
 Inviolata Chingayanrara, Africa
 Apolinar Tolentino, Asia-Pacific
 Mikhael Kartashov, Central & Eastern Europe
 Carlos Salguero, Latin America & Caribbean
 Patrick Fonjallaz and Christian Hilfiker, Finance

Acknowledgements

This publication was made possible with the support of LOTCO Council (Sweden) and the Swedish Affiliates:

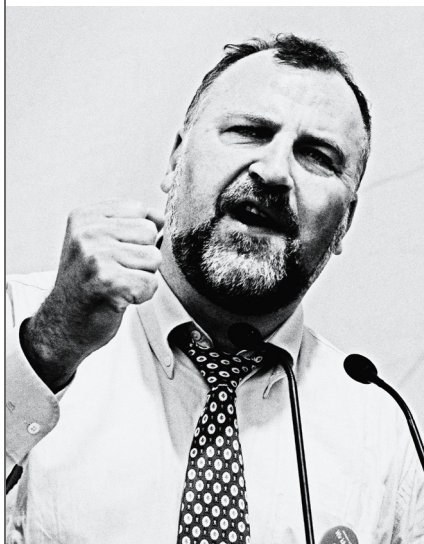
Swedish Building Union (BYGGNADS)

Swedish Forest and Wood Trade Union (SKOGS)
 Swedish Union of Clerical and Technical Employees in Industry (SIF)
 Swedish Electricians' Trade Union (SEF)
 Swedish Painters' Trade Union



BWI strategy plan 2005 – 2009

Adopted by the BWI World Congress, 9 December 2005 in Buenos Aires, Argentina



building, wood and forestry workers' unions through national regional and international action.

Our Vision

A world without poverty where peace, social justice, gender equality and respect for trade union and human rights prevail – where all workers have stable jobs, just wages and safe work.

Our Mission

As a united, independent and democratic global union federation, BWI's mission is to defend and advance the interest of

Our Strategy

- Organising, international action by affiliates and supporting affiliates in organizing;
- Campaigning, developing and promoting policies and exerting political pressure;
- Negotiating, representing affiliates on global level and engaging in international social dialogue.
- Gender Mainstreaming

Our Goals

BWI and its affiliates seek to achieve the following:

- Strong, independent, autonomous, gender fair and democratic trade unions in all countries.
- Universal respect for trade union and human rights
- Stable employment and humane working and living conditions for all building, wood and forestry workers through collective bargaining agreements.

Our challenges and opportunities

The majority of the building, wood and forestry workers remain deprived of their rights while living in very poor conditions. Those who are well organized are increasingly under attack as their trade unions and their collective bargaining systems are threatened. The working condition of building, wood and forestry workers continue to deteriorate. Health and safety conditions are often unacceptable.

Building workers and workers in the building materials industry and forestry and wood workers are confronted with an increasing competitive global economic environment. They are pressed to accept more arduous working conditions and lower wages if they are to survive in the competition for jobs on an increasingly global world labour market. As a result of this policy, the informal workers are becoming larger in all parts of the world. Trade union membership worldwide is declining, also among unions in industrialised countries.

Globalisation is driven by a more open world market in which multinational corporations (MNCs) operates through their foreign direct investment, cross border integration of production and services, intra-company transfers, centrally managed research and development, and globally co-ordinated labour and social policies.

MNCs push their agenda forward by intensive pressure on governments and international institutions. Their

vision of a business dominated global economy is largely shared by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the international financial institutions (IFIs), essentially the IMF, the World Bank, and the regional development banks.

Global business pressures are exerted on workers in our industries in different ways. Migration – from one country to another or within large countries – is increasing, and migrant workers often have to work under inhuman conditions, many of them in an illegal or otherwise legally insecure situation. The 48 least developed countries, with their 600 million inhabitants, account for just 0.4% of the world trade. In addition a large part of internationally traded goods come from countries whose governments systemically suppress labour rights. At the same time, labour standards are being undercut in an all too familiar process of social dumping, provoking xenophobic sentiments that benefit right-wing populists and endangering the natural basis of existence.

In the building industry, companies increasingly transfer their employees to sites in other countries. And in wood and other manufacturing industries, production is relocated to countries with lower wages. In many cases, that is done without taking any or sufficient care for the rights and conditions of the workers in either the home or the receiving countries. For workers, these tendencies bring unemployment but also in increasingly precarious jobs with worsening conditions.

Instead of giving a more social dimension to globalisation, governments tend to compete with each other in order to attract investment by MNCs. As a result of this policy, Export Processing Zones are created where employers do not respect trade union and human rights. Privatisation and liberalisation are pushed forward, and governments undercut each other in weakening legal and financial requirements on MNCs, while hurrying to make labour markets “more flexible”, in other words, less protective of workers’ well-being. All this weakens or further weakens trade unions.

A consequence of inter-government competition for the graces of MNCs is that foreign direct investment, instead of leading to more and better jobs and balanced development, is provoking the erosion of labour rights and the deterioration in working conditions. Stable jobs regulated by collective agreements between employer and workers is being replaced by precarious arrangements and informal work fostered by outsourcing, sub-contracting, bogus self-employment and the use of temporary work agencies.

In too many cases, unions are being marginalized even by national governments that have traditionally backed effective collective bargaining and other elements of the social contract. The only choice that business-friendly governments are offering to unions is what concessions they should make first. But this short-term policy of many governments will in the long-term lead to political

and social instability. The decline in union membership and workers’ confidence in unions could lead to power vacuum and greater economic instability leading to more violent expressions of labour discontent.

The “race to the bottom” with workers’ rights and conditions affects workers in industrialised as well as in developing countries, and underscores the need for greater transnational solidarity and co-operation. There are growing pockets of deprivation in industrialised countries especially in our sectors. Workers in poorer countries remain more vulnerable as they generally have fewer social safety nets.

Today’s corporate-driven globalisation does not give an answer to the social problems in developing countries. It often aggravates the problems arising out of national failures of political and economic governance, including endemic corruption and gaps in the rule of law; socio-cultural obstacles, especially the unequal status of women and of certain social groups; and, in some regions, persistent civil insecurity and armed conflict within and between nations. Moreover, many developing countries are beset by social crises that are not caused, but are worsened, by employment insecurity and poor working conditions (for example, the HIV/AIDS, education of children, social insurance and other welfare benefits).

The most recent (2003) UNDP Human Development Report estimates that some 1.3 billion people have to

survive on an amount of less than one US dollar a day. The report also concludes that 54 nations are poorer now than they were in 1990; life expectancy has fallen in 34 countries, due primarily to HIV/AIDS; and the populations of 21 countries are hungrier today than in 1990. The Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations include halving the proportion of people in extreme poverty by 2015. But the UNDP Report says that in 31 of the poorest countries, progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) has stalled or begun to reverse.

The shocking numbers in the UNDP Report form the everyday reality of far too many building, wood and forestry workers, as in many countries they continue to be among the poorest workers. On the other hand, BWI has created new windows of opportunities to promote and advocate its agenda at the global and national arena to defend respect for workers worldwide as free and responsible human beings for whom dignity finds expression in fundamental and indefensible rights such as the right to freedom, social justice, cultural values, work and peace.

For the past years, BWI is in the forefront of lobbying and engaging in social dialogue with international financial institutions, multinational companies, and multilateral institutions. Though the trade union engagement with these global institutions are political and long-term in nature, BWI made some breakthrough in getting tangible or workable results that could be useful at the national level.

BWI succeeded in concluding and implementing international framework agreements; moved forward in its lobbying efforts at the World Bank; created significant presence in the United Nations Forum on Forests, UN Summit on Sustainable Development, UNEP on Sustainable Construction; Global Asbestos Campaign; and other international fora such as World Social Forum, World Economic Forum and Global Reporting Initiatives. BWI presence in various global fora has created new opportunities to develop new alliances and expand its influence in the global advocacy and condemnation of all forms of exploitation.

At the national front, BWI affiliates have mobilised and succeeded in their national campaigns to defend workers' rights. Many affiliates gained national recognition in the various efforts to promote health & safety, sustainable forestry, gender equality, campaign against child labour, skills training and organising informal and migrant workers. Solidarity actions also made positive impact to union campaigns. These have strengthened national unions' credibility and capacity to engage government and employers to address workers issues and move towards sustainable industrial development.

Our strategy

If building, wood and forestry workers are to confront the challenges associated with present-day globalisation, they need an International that is able to raise the level of solidarity among its member unions and effectively harness

that solidarity to achieve jointly agreed objectives. BWI must provide a global response to the adverse effects of globalisation and help lead the way to an alternative international order that meets the needs of workers around the world. Strategy is about agreeing on priorities and the means to achieve them. The figure below illustrates some of the ways in which we intend to use three broad means of action –, organising, campaigning and negotiating – to achieve key objectives.

In the figure below, BWI campaigns for respect for trade union rights help create a favourable environment for organising workers in strong and democratic trade unions, which are capable of effectively negotiating, within countries and internationally, for stable employment and better working conditions. In the course of the extensive consultations among members that were held for the preparation of our strategy, the following themes emerged. BWI, acting together with its affiliates and, where appropriate, with other Global Unions, should:

- Press for Sustainable Industrial Development and a Social Dimension to Globalisation;
- Defend and promote trade union rights and other human rights, especially full implementation of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and other relevant ILO instruments from paper into real action aimed to reshape the political and social direction of globalization;
- Promotion of the rights of children, women and

young workers;

- Promote the implementation of Occupational Health and Safety standards;
- Engage in and exert pressure on global negotiations with MNCs, so as to guarantee decent working conditions and union recognition;
- Exert pressure on and engage in dialogue with the economic, trade and financial international institutions, principally the IFIs and the WTO, with a view to realizing a true social dimension of the world economy;
- Use the mechanism provided by the ILO and other UN agencies, and support them so that they are better able to countervail the influence of the business-oriented IFIs and the WTO;
- Continue its commitment to arrive at enforceable inter-governmental regulations for the implementation of real social dimensions;
- Promote the rights of migrant and cross border workers through organizing and integration to trade unions in sending and receiving countries;
- Strengthen cooperation within the Global Unions and with relevant social movements focused on redirecting globalisation in a more socially sound way.

ILO Core Labour Standards

No. 87 - Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise

No. 98 - Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining
Nos. 29 & 105 – Abolition of Forced Labour
No. 111* - Discrimination (Employment & Occupation)
No. 100* – Equal Remuneration (between men & women)
No. 138* – Minimum Age
No. 182* - Worst Forms of Child Labour
Other Key ILO Conventions
No. 94* - Labour Clauses (Public Contracts)
No. 162* - Asbestos
No. 167* – Safety and Health in Construction
No. 169 – Indigenous and Tribal People’s

* Convention accompanied by a Recommendation

In their contributions to the debate on strategy, our affiliates noted that some of the above objectives are of a continuing and long-term nature. But it was stressed that our advocacy work at the international level must be negotiated into concrete results, relevant to national unions and workers, such as safer and better jobs, job security and union recognition.

BWI affiliates also recognised that, in order to achieve the above goals and other ones, we must have both the confidence and the active support of our affiliates. And we must also be able to communicate its vision and actions to public opinion. In sum, we must continually seek

to integrate the international dimension of local, national and regional struggles into cohesive international action.

Our global strength depends on strong affiliates. Therefore, we must be able to rely on constant and rapid international solidarity from our members. It is also essential that our affiliates press their governments and national employers or employers’ associations to adopt and implement our global agenda and policies. In turn, we must be responsive to the changing needs of affiliates. We will facilitate global and regional networks of affiliates, and strengthen its regional structures.

Our action plan

BWI’s priority activities for the next Congress period can be grouped under three (3) broad headings:

- negotiating for sustainable industrial development;
- organising a global trade union movement;
- campaigning for international solidarity.

A. Negotiating for sustainable industrial development

1) Negotiating stable employment and good working conditions

We will continue to advocate sustainable industrial development ensuring reporting on ‘social responsibility’ jointly with workers’ representatives with due respect for the rights to information and consultation. Sustainable industrial development is based on the three pillars of industrial growth, social

progress and environmental protection. We will assist our affiliates in engaging employers and governments to look at the long-term stability of the industry. A weakening of the industries bring about a lasting increase in unemployment and more precarious jobs. Collective bargaining and pro-worker national labour laws remains the best instrument to improve working conditions, the working environment, and security of employment. We will continue to defend and promote collective agreements and improve labour legislation that ensure good wages, better and safer working conditions, and job security.

With this as the basis of sustainable industrial development, we will explore and develop alternative industrial models and other measures:

- At the national level, BWI affiliates will continue their cooperation with governments, employers and NGOs in promoting sustainable industrial development: such as vocational training and skills certification, tripartite and workplace health and safety committees, measures to enhance the working environment, welfare boards, industry councils, national forestry certification councils, and community forestry.
- At the global level, BWI will initiate or support global mechanisms or instruments that promotes sustainable development: such as

the ILO's sectoral activities programme, which brings together trade unions, employers and governments; social dialogue with employers' organisations; dialogue with UNEP on sustainable construction; dialogue with UNFF on forestry issues; an international forest certification system; eco-labelling; and other mechanisms that favour employment and environmental protection.

2) Negotiating international framework agreements with MNCs

BWI and its affiliates will continue to pursue the negotiation of IFAs while continuing to debate the merits of international framework agreements (IFAs) with multinational companies in the building and wood industry, including regional multinational companies.

BWI and its affiliates reaffirm the belief that the State must have the main responsibility for regulating company behaviour through socially, economically and environmentally sound legislation. IFAs can be an effective tool in the defence and promotion of minimum social standards in multinational companies and their subsidiaries, contractors and suppliers. We will support and assist affiliates in using these agreements to organize unions and negotiate

collective agreements which guarantee the payment of decent wages, ensure occupational health and safety, social protection including medical and insurance coverage, and the right to strike. IFAs must, within each country, create conditions for, and lead to or strengthen, union organising and collective bargaining.

- BWI and its affiliates will develop its capacity to monitor the compliance of multinationals on the framework agreements.
- BWI will initiate negotiations for an international framework agreements with MNCs based in Europe as well as in Asia, Latin America, Africa or North America.
- BWI will ensure the better distribution of information and dialogue with MNCs and focus activities on cautiously activating members on site.
- BWI and its affiliates will endeavor to ensure the terms of IFAs have coverage of subcontractors and transitory workers.

3) Pressing for reform of global governance

Under the powerful influence of transnational business, the IFIs and the WTO have been the key players in shaping and promoting corporate-

driven globalisation. BWI and its affiliates together with Global Unions will press for the reform of these global institutions, with a view to ensuring that comprehensive social and environmental dimensions are integrated into their policies and programmes. The World Bank and the Regional Development Banks must adopt and implement ILO Core Labour Standards and decent work policies in their lending and procurement programmes.

Other priorities in relations with the WB, IMF, WTO and regional trade & economic blocs are meaningful consultation of trade unions at all levels, including the international level; full democratic accountability of these organisations; transparency (access to complete and meaningful information); respect for labour standards in procurement and



lending policies as well as in trade agreements; environmental protection; poverty reduction, including debt cancellation. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the United Nations (UN) must countervail the power of the IFIs and the WTO, if a social and environmental dimension is to be added to globalisation. The ILO and the UN will be pressed to assert their role in global governance. The ILO, having a mandate from governments, employers and workers, must take a lead in engaging IFIs, the WTO and MNCs to respect and implement international labour standards.

- BWI will put stronger pressure to the World Bank for the adoption of the ILO Core Labour Standards as mandatory to procurement policies.
- BWI will initiate social dialogue with Regional Development Banks on the ILO Core Labour Standards.
- BWI in alliance with the global union and social movement will campaign on the protection of migrant and cross-border workers under the WTO negotiations on GATS (Mode 4).
- BWI and its affiliates will actively participate in the World Social Forums and continental social forums, such as the European Social Forum to ensure a stronger trade union role as a key stakeholder in the global social movement.

B. Organising a global trade union movement

4) Organising strong, independent, autonomous and democratic trade unions

To negotiate favourable collective agreements and to be effective political players in their countries, trade unions must be strong and democratic. That means that they must be self-reliant and capable of attracting and retaining members. At the global level, BWI's effectiveness depends largely on the strength and international commitment of the affiliates. One of our organising tasks is to increase the number of its affiliates and their capacity to participate fully in the International.

As regards persuading building and wood workers to join or form unions, our primary task is to help create a favourable environment for the organizing activities of BWI affiliates. To that end, BWI defends and promotes trade union rights, negotiates international framework agreements with MNCs and, where needed, provides direct assistance to affiliates. BWI will give special emphasis on promoting trade union rights in the informal sector.

Organising will be a core activity of all BWI affiliates. In support of national organising by affiliates:

- BWI will launch a coordinated global organizing campaign that will increase the financial membership by at least 10%. BWI affiliates will be encouraged to allocate a significant percentage of their resources to organising work, particularly in organising strategic construction, wood and forestry worksites. The organising will also include on informal workers, self-employed workers, workers working for sub-contractors, migrant workers, workers in MNCs and their suppliers or contractors, and women and young workers, and on retaining workers that are made redundant (laid off). Regional Committees will plan, monitor and report on organising campaigns which optimize the working and wage conditions including protection of social benefits of these workers, and call on governments to set an example by complying with the ILO standards in their hiring practices and report to the World Board and World Council.
- BWI will strengthen and expand its Trade Union Development and Training Program that would effectively improve the capacity of affiliates. Through the Trade Union Development and Education Program, BWI will facilitate financial and technical assistance to affiliates. This program is implemented through projects supported by various trade union solidarity

support organisations and affiliates. These will include training and capacity building; facilitation of mergers and alliance building at the national level; organisational development; organising; and campaigns. Projects will be implemented to achieve the strategic goals of BWI.

5) Global networking and regional structures

BWI represents affiliates in international fora, leads and informs affiliates in international trade union campaigns, and helps to strengthen relations between affiliates. We will encourage affiliates to integrate international priorities more closely into their national trade union activities and to help develop stronger ties among affiliates. To that end:

- Global and Regional Union Networks will be organised. Complemented with electronic communication methods wherever possible (e.g., “virtual committees”), these network will facilitate cooperation; development of common policy and strategy; and stronger response and solidarity to common issues. Such networks may be industrial working parties (forestry, building, health & safety), industry networks (e.g., Asia Construction Network), issue-based networks (e.g., migration, women, youth), economic

integration networks (e.g., MERCOSUR, ASEAN, SADC), or global company networks (e.g. MNCs)

- The World Board may appoint Adhoc Working Groups on particular issues that needs BWI action such as issues on WB/IMF, WTO, ILO, UN, OECD, Industrial Policies, health & safety, IFAs, etc. The working group will be supplemented by internet-based discussions, which is open to all affiliates.
- BWI Regional Structures will be strengthened, particularly in their social dialogues, manage and monitor project activities, organize regional solidarity campaigns, and increase membership financing in the regions.
- European Regional Structures will be consolidated to address the desire for a more unified and efficient coordinating structure in Europe, especially to bring affiliates in Western and Eastern Europe closer together. BWI and the affiliates and regional organisations concerned will also develop a common regional strategy and coordinated approach among BWI, EFBWW, NFBWW and their affiliates. That common strategy and co-ordinated approach will be applied, in particular, to the implementation of trade union development programme in Central and Eastern Europe.

C. Campaigning for international solidarity

6) Solidarity action and campaigns

It is our fundamental role to build solidarity among affiliates, so as to promote universal respect for trade union and other human rights. We will propose measures to obtain broader and faster participation in solidarity actions by affiliates, further developing user-friendly communication methods to that effect. Solidarity must go beyond internal solidarity among BWI affiliates. We will seek to act together with other trade union organisations and with relevant NGOs. To enhance its impact in solidarity actions and campaigns, we will develop a communication and media program to raise its public profile.

BWI will initiate or join:

- Complaints to ILO, OECD, UNHCHR and other bodies, planned and co-ordinated to bring maximum pressure on governments, companies or other agents that violate trade union or other human rights;
- Campaigns on major global issues affecting workers in the building and wood industries, with widespread participation of affiliates, other trade union organisations, and NGOs. Possible

examples of such campaigns are Elimination of Child Labour; 2008 Beijing Olympics; “Safe Work, Fair Play”;

- Campaigns to organise migrant workers and cross border workers and ensure the protection of their rights.
- Alliances to better provide assistance in legal advice, information and training.
- Campaigns aimed at strengthening national laws and ILO standards to improve the living and working conditions of all workers particularly those in the informal sector, especially women workers.

7) Alliances with other unions and relevant social movements

BWI will continue to work with the Global Unions. We will support a more strategic form of cooperation among the international trade union movement at all level in developing and implementing common global and nation actions as well as regional coordination.

BWI and its affiliates will build alliances relevant social movement that are willing to support campaigns for workers’ rights and to develop alternative economic and social policies and

projects. Such organisations many include human rights groups, women’s groups, migrants’ associations and networks, environmental organisations, or other NGOs.

D. Gender Mainstreaming comprises of the re-organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of decision-making processes in all policy fields and areas of work of BWI

- BWI and its affiliates should integrate women and gender concerns and analysis in all education and training activities.
- BWI should promote 50% women participants in all gender-fair training programmes and at least 30% in all other training programmes.
- In order to organize effectively women workers in our sectors, BWI should address both the practical and strategic needs of working women.
- BWI should continue to ensure that women be integrated in all structures, particularly decision making structures. ■

Building and Wood Workers International

Head Office

Building and Wood Workers International - BWI
54 route des Acacias
CH-1227 Carouge GE
Switzerland
Phone: +41 22 827 37 77
Fax: +41 22 827 37 70
E-mail: info@bwint.org
Website: www.bwint.org

Africa and Middle East

Southern Africa Project Office
23 Jorissen Street,
2nd Floor Braamfontein Centre
P.O. Box 30772
Braamfontein 2017

South Africa

Tel: +2711 339 4417-9
Fax: +2711 339 39 10
E-mail: sapo@bwint.org

Bureau d'éducation d'Afrique de l'Ouest

West Africa Project Office
01 Boîte Postale 1519
Ouagadougou 01
Burkina Faso
Phone: +226 50 30 32 53
Mobile: +226 70 25 30 16
Fax: +226 50 30 32 53
E-mail: abdou.ouedraogo@bwint.org

Forestry Project Office

c/o Elangata Wuas Ecosystem Management



Programme

Herbarium Building, National Museums of Kenya
P.O. Box 40658
Nairobi, Kenya
Mobile: + 254 722 72 66 90
Tel: + 254 20 375 13 19
Fax: + 254 20 375 13 19
E-mail: paul.opanga@bwint.org

Middle East Project Office

Colombia Center, Bloc B, 4th Floor
Ahmed Takieddine Street
2048-1305
Mazraa, Beirut, Lebanon
Phone: +961 1 70 07 57
Mobile: +961 361 63 85
Fax: +961 1 70 07 57
E-mail: mustapha.said@bwint.org

Asia & Pacific

Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
No 7, 1st Floor, USJ 10/1G
47620 Subang Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan,
Malaysia
Phone: +60 3 56 38 33 67
Fax: +60 3 56 38 77 21
E-mail: apro@bwint.org

Pacific Project Office

1st Floor, 500 Swanston Street
Carlton, Victoria 3053
Melbourne
Australia
Phone: +61 3 93 47 10 29
Fax: +61 3 93 49 25 80
Mobile: +61 409 25 22 46
E-mail: sarah.fitzpatrick@bwint.org
sropacific@bwint.org

South Asia Project Office

A-364, 1st Floor, Defence Colony
New Delhi 110 024
India
Phone: +91 11 41 55 06 70 / 41 55 06 80
Fax: +91 11 243 31 811
E-mail: srodelhi@bwint.org

Korea Project Office

C/o KFCITU
A-soo Bld, 2nd Floor
700-4 Daerim 1-dong
Youngdeungpo-gu-Seoul
Phone: +82 2 843 1432
Fax: +82 2 843 1436
E-mail: jinsook.lee@bwint.org



Europe

South East Europe Project Office
"Uzundjovska" str. #12
Sofia 1000
Bulgaria
Phone: +359 2 986 32 56
Fax: +359 2 986 32 56
Mobile: +359 8 88 90 11 88
E-mail: boyko.atanassov@bwint.org

Russia Project Office

42, Leninsky Prospekt
119 119 Moscow
Russian Federation
Phone: +7 095 938 82 36
Fax: +7 095 930 98 95
Mobile: +7 916 121 74 01
E-mail: mikhail.kartachev@bwint.org

European Federation of Building and Wood Workers

EFBH/FETBB
Rue Royale 45
1000 Brussels
Tel. +322 227 10 40
Fax +322 219 82 28
E-mail: info@efbh.be
Web: www.efbww.org

Nordic Federation of Building and Wood Workers

NBTF
SE-106 32 Stockholm
Sweden
Phone: +46 (0)8 728 48 14 or 728 48 16
Fax: +46 (0)8 728 48 97
E-mail: Nbtff@byggnads.se

America Latina / Latin America & Caribbean

Oficina Regional para America Latina y los Caribes / Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean

Vía Ricardo J. Alfaro,
Edificio Century Tower
1er. piso, Oficina D-17
Apartado 0816-00769

Panama, República de Panama

Phone: +507 260 23 92 / 3681
Fax: +507 260 63 54
E-mail: orl@bwint.org

Argentina Project Office, Oficina de proyecto en Argentina

Phone: + 54 (911) 4971 4602
Email pepe.robles@bwint.org



Brasil Project Office, Oficina de proyecto en Brasil

Ave. Principe de Gales 536
Bairro Principe de Gales
Santo Andre – Brasil CEP 09060-650
Phone: +55 (11) 4438 6998
Email eduardo.magalhaes@bwint.org

Perú Project Office, Oficina de proyecto en Perú

Ave. Arica 401
Departamento 303, San Miguel
Lima, Perú
Phone: + 51 (1) 263 0548
Email patricia.balbuena@bwint.org



