



STRONG TOGETHER - TRADE UNION SOLIDARITY IN TIMES OF CRISIS

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

UNION
TO UNION

LO, TCO & SACO GLOBAL

UNION TO UNION

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Cover: Workers load their donkeys at a brick factory in Ahmedabad in India.

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Union to Union is the Swedish trade union movement's organisation for international development cooperation. We work for decent work, democracy, equality, a fair distribution of resources, reduced poverty and sustainable development. To create a decent life for all, we promote human rights at work and support the creation and the strengthening of unions.

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Foreword

A great deal has happened since I took up the post of Secretary General of *Union to Union* in January 2022. Not least, Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The reaction of the combined Swedish trade union movement remains clear; the war must be stopped and our support, in deepest solidarity, to our union colleagues in Ukraine is more important than ever.

Even before I took up the post at *Union to Union* I was a firm believer in the power of union development work. After my first months in the job, I have gained even more, entirely new, examples of why what we do matters.

Trade union work is often about defending or expanding the democratic space in a country but it is also about improving living conditions in the form of secure and fair pay, a safe working environment and the ability to influence one's own workplace.

When we look back on 2021, it is at yet another year of union activity in the wake of COVID-19, which took our projects in new directions. Online meetings are now standard and a way of meeting despite long distances. Digitalisation has also made it easier for trade unions in many countries to recruit new members.

The pandemic has challenged and worsened the conditions of workers across the globe. Jobs and livelihoods vanished, many workplaces suffered a widespread lack of PPE and the importance of unionising became extremely clear.

In 2022, the job of talking about what we do and forging closer links with our important partners will continue to evolve. The same can be said of opinion forming and advocacy within trade union development cooperation. In 2021, *Union to Union* included the importance of trade union development cooperation in the motions of several parliamentary parties and has contributed content for Sweden's work on human rights in the workplace in dialogue with the

Ministry for Foreign Affairs. These efforts will also continue.

However, it would not be possible to sum up the year without also mentioning the challenges that we continue to face.

The democratic space, and thus also the space for trade unions, continues to shrink, as can clearly be seen in the figures in the ITUC's annual Global Rights Index. Threats, reprisals and imprisonment of unionists are expressions of an extremely serious trend, which we must reverse. Union rights are human rights all over the world.

The space for civil society, in which unions are an important part, needs to be widened. *Union to Union*, with Swedish trade unions and partners around the world, is an integral part of this work. Therefore, we must continue to be a powerful part of Swedish development cooperation and Swedish aid.

I look forward to a year in which we continue that work, together!



Maria Nyberg
Secretary General
Union to Union

PHOTO: MAJA BRAND

This is Union to Union

Union to Union is the joint international development organisation of LO, TCO and Saco and their affiliates. Its focus is on promoting decent working conditions and strong and democratic unions, as well as on disseminating knowledge and exercising influence to achieve a fairer and more equal world.

Union to Union's mission is:

- > to support and coordinate LO, TCO, Saco and their affiliates in international trade union development cooperation,
- > to secure and develop methods and processes for implementation and quality assurance and to evaluate outcomes and impacts,
- > to communicate and conduct information initiatives in Sweden, with the aim of increasing knowledge of and strengthening confidence in and support for international trade union development cooperation.

Union to Union is a strategic partner organisation of Sida (the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency). Operations are financed via grants from Sida and funds from the Swedish trade union mo-

vement. The organisation is politically and religiously independent.

Background

In the 1970s, as more and more countries became independent from their colonial systems, the worldwide International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and the Global Unions began to organise trade union aid activities.

Initially, the financial resources came exclusively from trade unions. But in Sweden, the aid budget increased and in 1970, LO and TCO contacted the aid agency Sida, to investigate the possibility of also obtaining grants for trade union education activities in countries with widespread poverty.

In 1977, the Secretariat was allocated a block grant for the first time, and the LO-TCO Secretariat of International Trade Union Development Cooperation was established. Since then, the process has continued. In 2015, the central organisation Saco joined the organisation. Upon Saco becoming a member, the organisation changed its name to *Union to Union* and adopted new statutes.

UNION TO UNION

Organising for decent work, democracy and social justice

Independent, representative and democratic trade unions



Social dialogue, sustainable global supply chains and Just transition



Projects and Programs



Informal economy, migration and precarious work



Gender equality



By working with



Policy and Advocacy



Communication and Training

How we work

Union to Union's work is primarily geared towards building the capacity of unions in low and middle-income countries for organising, negotiating, and advocacy, and working for gender equality and democracy. Our work is carried out in a wide-ranging network consisting of *Union to Union* and Swedish trade unions, who carry out the projects in cooperation with Global Union Federations (GUFs, see page 7). The focus is on strengthening local trade unions in countries where poverty is widespread.

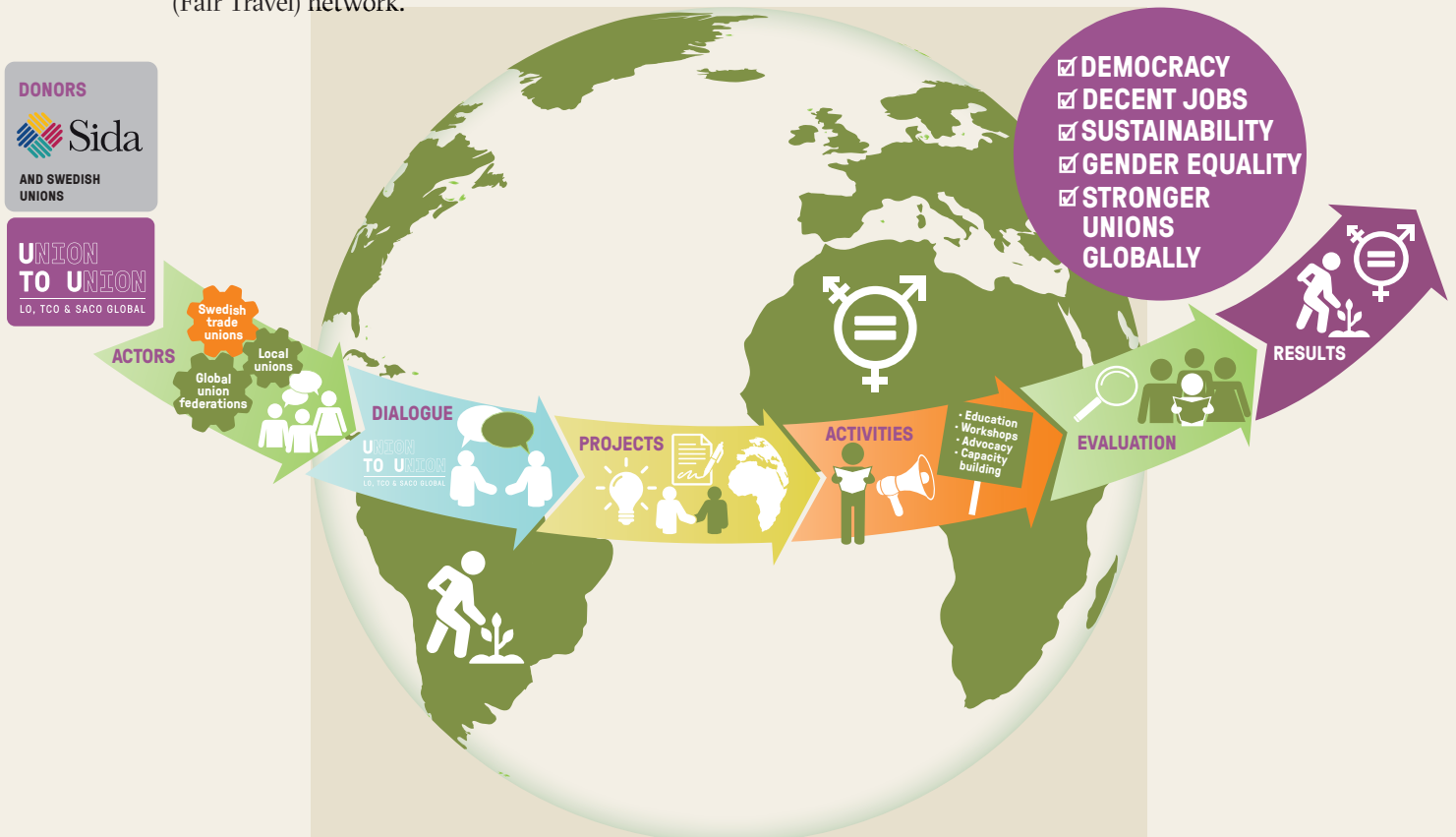
Union to Union also supports and initiates knowledge-enhancing activities in Sweden. Here, the aim is to increase awareness of and engagement in international trade union development cooperation, and to develop an understanding of how this is linked to sustainable development around the world. *Union to Union* also supports various initiatives and organisations, including Fairtrade and the *Schyst resande* (Fair Travel) network.

Project activities

In 2021, *Union to Union* supported 88 projects/programmes in 75 countries. In Sweden, 27 trade unions were involved in international projects. The expert role of Swedish trade unions, in which they contribute experience and knowledge, means they have an important mandate. All projects are grouped into four overarching thematic areas.

Personnel and organisation

Union to Union has about 20 employees in an office in Stockholm. The office coordinates and conducts activities, such as offering expertise in methodology, financial monitoring and training to Swedish and international trade unions. The Board consists of representatives of Swedish trade unions and is appointed by the central organisations LO, TCO and Saco. The Board determines the main focus of our work.



Global federations are building the future together

With 200 million members worldwide, the trade union movement is the largest popular social movement in the world. Sweden's trade unions are part of this network and have always engaged in international cooperation. As companies, economies and labour markets become globalized, this international trade union cooperation is becoming increasingly important. This is why there are global framework agreements establishing fundamental conditions to protect workers' interests (see info box).

Most of *Union to Union's* projects are carried out in collaboration with Swedish unions and their global federations. The federations are set up according to sector, and the Swedish trade unions are members of one or more federations.

There is also the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), the world's largest trade union organisation. The main members of the ITUC are the central union organisations; in Sweden these are LO, TCO and Saco.

In addition to conducting development projects, the ITUC and the global federations monitor common union issues and represent their



Global framework agreements

In the early 2000s, several global unions began to negotiate agreements, known as global framework agreements, with multinational companies as a direct response to the globalisation of the economy. These agreements establish conditions that must never be breached within a corporate group, regardless of where in the world business is conducted. The conditions must be specified and supplemented by national agreements. The agreements also counteract social dumping, by which companies relocate their operations to countries where working conditions are poorer.

members in various international contexts. They also monitor and influence decisions within the International Labour Organization (ILO), and other UN agencies. The global federations have regional, and in some cases sub-regional, offices around the world.

Global union federations

BWI - Building and Wood Workers' International
Organises the building and wood working industry.

EI - Education International
The education sector.

FIA - International Federation of Actors
The actors union.

FIM - International Federation of Musicians
Musicians, stage workers and the entertainment sector.

IndustriALL Global Union
Mining, energy/chemistry and manufacturing.

ICN - International Council of Nurses
Healthcare.

IFJ - International Federation of Journalists
Journalists and media.

ITF - International Transport Workers' Federation
A union federation within the transport sector.

IUF - International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations
Hotels, restaurants, tourism, catering, tobacco and agriculture.

PSI - Public Services International
Workers in public services.

UNI - Uni Global Union
The global union for the skills and services sector.

ITUC - International Trade Union Confederation
Organising the central union organisations.

Global voices

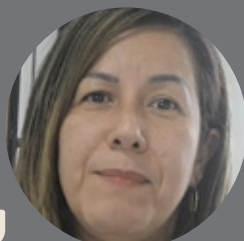
At the end of 2021, *Union to Union* published a campaign in social media. The aim was to highlight global union voices. We simply asked one question: What would you like to tell us about your union engagement or the major challenges facing unions in your country?



”

We have struggled to force through a law putting an end to outsourcing in the waste management sector.

Jazmin Leyva, Secretary General, Sitobur, Peru



”

My dream is that, one day, working for human rights will be risk-free.

Adriana Hurtado Cortés, Chairman, Fecolper, Colombia



”

Working as a midwife is risky. It is important to have a union that supports us.

Ann Dzifa Gedzeye, Regional Chairman GRMA, Ghana



”

We fight for equality and against all forms of discrimination.

Patricia Salazar, Secretary General, Sincrediscotia, Peru



”

A fascist government is putting our lives and democracy at stake. I dream of a peaceful world.

Vilani de Oliveira, Chairman, Contram, Brazil



”

I am proud to make womens' job security issues visible.

Adwoa Sakyi, regional co-ordinator, IUF Afrika, Ghana



”

For two years I've run a successful project regarding the working conditions of public transport employees.

Alana Dave, Head of Education, ITF, Great Britain



”

Being able to offer advice on worker's rights makes me happy.

Liudmila Tatarynova, Regional Chairman, SEUU, Ukraine



”

We must find common denominators and cooperate to promote the peace process.

Avital Shapira, Histadrut International Relations, Israel



”

Many migrant workers feel helpless. They need success to build hope.

Apolinar Tolentino, BWI Asia-Pacific, Malaysia



”

The biggest challenge for our members is the access to basic human and worker's rights.

Hidayat Greenfield, Secretary, IUF Asia/Pacific, Indonesia



”

A major challenge is when workers are afraid of encroachment from their employers.

Geoffrey Akedi, AUMKW, Kenya



”

The challenges faced by workers in Malaysia are rigorous.

N. Gopal Kishnam, Secretary General, NUTEAIW, Malaysia



”

I have become more aware of injustice and poor working conditions through my work.

Eunice Aranzamen, Youth representative, CFW, Philippines

Trade unionist in Nepal – low pay and threats part of working life

In Nepal, the vast majority of the population live in inaccessible rural areas. However, the difficult terrain is not the only problem faced by the country’s postal and telecommunications workers. “Many postmen are extremely poorly paid. Despite successes, much remains to be done,” says Tanka Prasad Humagain, chair of the Union of Extra Postal Workers (UNIEXPO).

Nepal is one of the poorest countries in Asia. The country has major challenges in the form of infrastructure, accessibility and unemployment. Nepal’s union movement is a clear political force.

“The unions are divided, but things are heading in the right direction,” says Rajendra Prasad Joshi, chair of the Nepal Telecom Workers Union (NTCWU). He points out that work to increase awareness of trade union and human rights is fostering greater agreement on core issues such as salaries, security and collective bargaining.

Informal employment is common in Nepal,

and found in the majority of sectors. Privatisation is hitting trade unions hard, while anti-union sentiments are frequently heard among decision-makers and employers.

“Unions have a poor image among young people. We are seen as ‘troublemakers,’” says Shankar Lamichhane, chair of the global union federation UNI in Nepal.

Unemployment is high in Nepal, as is emigration. Around a million Nepalese are estimated to be working as migrant workers in countries in the Persian Gulf.

“Things aren’t as bad in the postal and telecommunications sector as they are in the construction industry,” says Shankar Lami-



Chandrika Pokharel, National Telecom Employees Association (NTEA). Photo: Sunil Acharya



Tanka Prasad Humagain, Chairman, Union of Extra Postal Workers (UNIEXPO). Photo: Sunil Acharya



Nepal is largely inaccessible rural areas, where infrastructure and poverty are major challenges. Photo: Lisa Jansson

chhane. He adds that privatisation is a major problem. Not to mention the generally poor picture of unionists in society.

To build stronger trade unions in Nepal, Seko is running a union development project in the country, with the global union federation UNI and supported by *Union to Union*.

The aim of the project is to increase the skills of Nepalese trade unions in negotiating collective agreements, but also to modernise and rejuvenate the trade unions, partly to change the prevailing negative view of trade unions.

Increased knowledge and awareness of the right to a safe and secure workplace is an important ingredient in the project. Members are trained in union rights and committees to combat harassment have been set up. However, the latter has not been an easy process.

“We encounter resistance. Workers have been threatened with dismissal if they join these committees, for example. But we are

” More of us are aware of our rights now. I used to be the only one raising my voice. I’m not alone any more.

– Tanka Prasad Humagain

standing our ground, we have formed a committee anyway,” says Chandrika Pokharel from the National Telecom Employees Association (NTEA).

Despite opposition and anti-union sentiments, unions in the post and telecommunications sector are making progress.

“More of us are aware of our rights now. I used to be the only one raising my voice. I’m not alone any more,” says Tanka Humagain, chair of UNIEXPO.

THEMATIC AREA 1.

Independent and democratic trade unions



WHAT IS THE AIM? To strengthen independent, representative and democratic trade union organisations so that they are able to efficiently organise new members and conduct successful trade union work with respect for human rights in the workplace.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

- Democratic space is shrinking across much of the world
- Millions of workers are not paid a living wage and work in dangerous and unhealthy conditions
- Strong unions are essential for decent conditions and sustainable jobs for the workers of the world
- The labour market is changing – increased digitalisation, more precarious jobs, the climate crisis, increased poverty following the COVID-19 pandemic



Metal worker in N'Zerekore, Guinea. Photo: Sylvain Cherkaoui/Panos Pictures

Trade unions are actors that defend human rights and decent working conditions in the workplace. This means that employees and unionists around the world often encounter various forms of threats or harassment.

The trade union movement is working to safeguard workers' rights in a global labour market that is undergoing constant change. Knowledge of international and national legislation and agreements governing industrial relations is an essential prerequisite for



autonomous and strong trade union organisations to be able to exercise influence.

An important part of the work of Union to Union and the trade union movement is therefore to support and help unions organise and increase representation and gender equality.



Union to Union's operations focus on the core activities of trade unions, internal democracy, economic sustainability and capacity to be a negotiating partner.

RESULTS 2021 THEMATIC AREA 1



Education, recruitment and the establishment of free, democratic and representative unions are key in this program. The activities helped to equip trade unions to overcome obstacles, but also provide enhanced knowledge and methods to harness their own power to improve working conditions.



New, innovative strategies and successful negotiations with employers saw 30 new trade unions registered at different levels in eleven different countries. Examples include three newly formed trade unions in the hotel industry in Pakistan, where unionisation is often very difficult. These results have been achieved thanks to training and other efforts in the trade union development projects funded by *Union to Union*.





Support from *Union to Union* led to the global federation Building and Woodworkers International (BWI) launching an international organisation academy for training, discussion and networking. This has led to increased exchange of experiences and improved contact between trade unions. It has also led to increased learning and lower costs for travel and producing materials, etc.



Work to digitalise trade unions continued. 26 trade unions and nine union networks in ten different countries report that an increased online presence led to increased recruitment and improved the efficiency of trade union work. This is the result of knowledge boosting efforts in trade union development projects supported by *Union to Union*.

Union to Union supports a project to strengthen public sector unions in Egypt. The project has seen the Egyptian trade union movement initiate and carry out investigations into unsafe jobs, working conditions and the safety and security of ambulance drivers during the COVID-19 pandemic themselves for the first time. The investigations will now form the basis of a strategy to lobby Egyptian legislators to protect workers' rights.



Training is crucial to global trade union development cooperation. In 2021, many trade unions set up online learning programs with the support of *Union to Union*. This led to greater interaction among participants – but also to increased opportunities for several occupational groups to participate. One example here is female teachers in Latin America who were often forced to turn down union training opportunities due to their domestic duties.



THEMATIC AREA 2.

Social dialogue, sustainable supply chains and a just climate transition



WHAT IS THE AIM? For trade unions to have the capacity to effectively engage in broad social dialogue and collective bargaining and contribute towards sustainable global supply chains.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

- Good relations between the social partners are crucial
- Decent work reduces poverty and increases equality
- A fair climate transition creates decent and sustainable jobs



Factory workers in Bangladesh. Photo: G.M.B. Akash/Panos Pictures

Effective social dialogue is based on good relations between the social partners. Social dialogue can take place at different levels; in the workplace, by sector and nationally. It covers every type of negotiation, consultation and exchange of information between representatives of governments, employers and workers.

Global supply chains play a part in economic growth, job creation and poverty reduction, but also shift power and influence away from individual countries. The trade union

movement plays an important role in regulating working conditions; what are known as global framework agreements are becoming increasingly important (see box on page 7).

Virtually all workers and all workplaces in the world's low and middle-income countries are affected by the climate crisis. By working within a framework for a just climate transition, workers can be at the negotiating table and create a fair transition with decent jobs – a Just Transition.

RESULTS 2021 THEMATIC AREA 2

Every collective agreement at sectoral level or within a multinational company is an important step towards Goal 8 of Agenda 2030. Through training courses, conferences and the sharing of experience, unions improve their skills and negotiation techniques to represent the interests of employees.



Approximately 1,000 new or renewed collective agreements have been negotiated in 48 countries at different levels. This is the result of capacity building activities in projects supported by *Union to Union*. The activities include training and campaigns on workers' rights in areas such as safety, harassment and pay negotiations.

In Indonesia, several trade unions joined forces and successfully stopped the "Omnibus Law" which would have made it easier for employers to create precarious jobs. The project work involved an arena where people came together to discuss and coordinate efforts to halt the Omnibus Law.



Work to develop the role of trade unions for a fair climate transition – Just Transition – continues. In 2021, the global union BWI set up the Amazon Trade Union Network to investigate and understand the situation in the Amazon rain forest. The network has highlighted several problem areas that need to be tackled, not least illegal deforestation and slave-like working conditions.



Several trade unions in *Union to Union's* projects report improved expertise in collective bargaining. One such example is in Indonesia, where unions in the pharmaceutical industry set up inter-union working groups on collective agreements and threats and harassment in the workplace.



In Uganda, the hotel and restaurant industry was hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. The trade union HTS has negotiated 27 different agreements to mitigate or compensate for the different effects the COVID-19 pandemic has had on workers, including with Marriott, the world's largest hotel chain.



In Zimbabwe, with the support of *Union to Union*, the Zimbabwe Energy Workers Union (ZEWU) set up a centre which coordinated the union's efforts during the pandemic. ZEWU managed to bring together questions relating to COVID-19 in a government employer's health and safety policy to safeguard workers' rights. Different forms of support from the employer were also negotiated for workers who contracted COVID-19.



THEMATIC AREA 3.

Organising in the informal sector, migration and precarious work



WHAT IS THE AIM? For trade union organisations to have the capacity to improve conditions for workers in the informal economy, for migrant workers and for workers who lack job security.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

- The growing global gig economy
- Migrant workers face discrimination and exploitation
- Negative trend towards labour market deregulation



Street sales of handicraft products in Guatemala. Photo: PSI Global Union

For many years, there has been a negative trend of labour market deregulation in several countries. The consequence of deregulation is often worse terms of employment and lower pay. A shrinking manufacturing industry worldwide and accelerating digitalisation are also having an impact on labour market conditions.

A majority of workers in low and middle-income countries are now working in the informal economy. This mainly involves women and young people who, in many cases, are struggling to survive on low and insecure incomes, working without contracts, agreements or social security.

Today, 200 million people are living as migrant workers. Discrimination against and exploitation of migrant workers lowers the level of pay and working conditions for all workers in the country concerned.

Union to Union's work focuses on the capacity of trade unions to adapt their structures and strategies to influence working conditions in the informal labour market. Efforts are also focused on the working conditions of vulnerable workers, to achieve decent working conditions, social security and secure jobs.

RESULTS 2021 THEMATIC AREA 3

The Agenda 2030 principle that no one should be excluded is a guiding principle of this programme. The unions participating in the projects work with the most vulnerable employees on expanding the scope of organisation, and thus of collective agreements. The projects also include training in how collective agreements can be used to promote human rights, social inclusion and economic and social justice for all – irrespective of employment and refugee status.

In Zambia, the Mineworkers Union of Zambia (MUZ) successfully organised miners with temporary, insecure employment for the first time, in a *Union to Union* project. This is an important result in a sector that often lacks security and regulated working conditions.



In the Democratic Republic of Congo as well, informal miners have organised themselves into unions, thereby creating networks with other organisations and actors in the mining sector.



The global union federation IUF's partner in Bihar, India successfully included precarious workers in a national health programme, "Ayushman Bharat", which includes health insurance for union members.

The Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India negotiated permits for over 15 000 street vendors to resume selling after the lockdowns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.



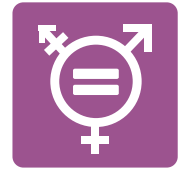
In India, the Indian National Municipal & Local Bodies Workers Federation (IMMLBWF) has negotiated pay rises of 19 percent for female childcare workers in rural areas.

The global union the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) is working hard, with the support of *Union to Union*, to adapt its union structures to the needs created and demanded by online journalism. Digitalisation projects geared towards young people were carried out in Indonesia, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, India and Pakistan in 2021. New recruitment strategies and digital platforms were created, including for freelance journalists.



THEMATIC AREA 4.

Increased gender equality in the workplace, society and within trade union organisations



WHAT IS THE AIM? For trade unions to be a leading light in promoting gender equality and combating discrimination in the workplace, in society and in their own organisations.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

- Structural inequalities between men and women
- To increase safety and security
- To improve equality in the workplace and in society



Trade unionists from the trade union organization for public employees (FSPT) in Chad. Photo: PSI Global Union

In today's global labour markets there are unacceptable differences between women's and men's working conditions and wages. There are several structural factors that are putting a stop to gender equality, such as attitudes, values, legislation and cultural norms.

Just over a third of women over the age of 15 have experienced sexual or physical violence at work, at home or in the community. This violence often means that women are unable to work due to their injuries and there is a greater risk of them losing their jobs due to absence.

Around the world, LGBTQI people are

excluded from the labour market because of discrimination. Despite the prevalence of harassment, protective legislation is often lacking or not enforced.

Strong trade union organisations are important in increasing gender equality in working life – and in the rest of society. *Union to Union's* efforts focus on the attitudes, values and behaviours of trade unions and their capacity to work internally on gender equality. This work is also done to contribute towards improving the workplace conditions of women and LGBTQI people and increase their empowerment in society.

RESULTS 2021 THEMATIC AREA 4

Results show that education, campaign work and advocacy work increase female representation in leading positions in trade unions. A common method of projects in this thematic area is to form women's committees, which are a strong voice in the fight for better working conditions and greater equality. The work against gender-based violence at work is also central within this thematic area. Many trade unions, for example, work with the ILO's (International Labor Organization) convention C190, Elimination of violence and harassment in working life.



The Zanzibar Teacher's Union (ZATU) reports that almost half of participants attending workshops and training courses in 2021 were women. At recruitment meetings, a clear majority of participants were women, as was the case at recruitment meetings for young people. Work to get more women into management positions continues, as more than two-thirds of members are women.

Vulnerability and victimisation increased for many women during the pandemic. With financing from *Union to Union*, the global union federation, the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) created a self-help guide entitled "And Still We Rise", for women trade union leaders working with domestic as well as workplace related violence and threats. The guide has been translated and is being used in several languages.



The Uganda Hotels and Domestic Workers' Union (HTS) carried out extensive efforts to introduce ILO Convention C190, the Violence and Harassment Convention, in Uganda. The union ran a major lobbying campaign, including on radio and TV on C190, the pandemic and workers' rights. This resulted in HTS improving its collective agreements in these areas.

The trade union UNIEXPO in Nepal is organising postal workers in inaccessible rural areas. Pay continues to be low but thanks to improved negotiation skills, UNIEXPO has managed to raise wages. Women were long banned from union membership but in 2021 UNIEXPO carried out training sessions involving women.



In 2021, the global federation UNI produced a report entitled "Inconvenient truth" on violence and harassment in commerce during the COVID-19 pandemic. The report will form the basis of several campaigns and strategies from unions in the 20 countries that participated in it.



Trade unionist in Colombia: Freddy's deadly mission

Being a trade unionist can be dangerous in Colombia, ultimately even fatal. This truth is not lost on journalist Freddy León, who does not appear outdoors in clothes that show he is a union member.

Freddy León, active in the Colombian journalists' union FECOLPER, always changes his top before leaving the office. Off with the purple one bearing FECOLPER's logo. On with a white, anonymous version.

It only takes a few seconds to change his top but the gesture is part of a long-standing practice; never obviously showing that you are a journalist and actively campaigning for decent working conditions in one of the most dangerous countries in the world for reporters and trade unionists.

"Colombia has long had a strong, deeply embedded contempt for union involvement, in many occupational groups," he explains.

Media companies are frequently hostile to staff joining a union. Furthermore, increasing numbers of journalists are being forced to go freelance instead of earning a living in permanent employment. This means that they have no social safety net or employment contract. And suffer price dumping.

Lower rates

"Today, you're lucky to get 100,000 pesos (about USD 23) for a 500-word article," says Freddy León. "The days when you could earn 300,000 pesos for the same job are long gone. Today we're forced to be grateful to have a job at all."

According to him, it is important that the union FECOLPER actively supports journalists professionally and also fosters faith in the future, but especially that it works to overcome the biggest problem in Colombian journalism:

"Self-censorship. Take me, for example, I don't investigate everything that ought to be investigated because I've got my family to think about. There are no guarantees and I've got no desire to play the hero just because I'm a journalist.

"Here in Valle del Cauca alone, 75 journalists were murdered between 1979 and 2021," says Freddy León.

Reprisals have forced journalists to exercise self-censorship; the country's self-image as



Bogotá. Photo: Wikimedia Commons



” Here in Valle del Cauca alone, 75 journalists were murdered between 1979 and 2021.
– Freddy León

Freddy León has a life-threatening job as a union activist in the journalist union FECOLPER in Colombia. Photo: Klas Lundström

South America's oldest democracy and a bastion of social debate and free journalism simply doesn't tie in with reality.

“Interest in training as a journalist in Colombia is constantly shrinking. And I can see why; it has to do with poor working conditions and topics you can't cover or you'll find yourself with a price on your head,” says Freddy León.

A union mandate for society

Freddy León therefore thinks that FECOLPER has to be even better at supporting journalists and fight to ensure that more people in Colombia see free journalism as being crucial to a functioning democracy – and ultimately that it becomes a force for engagement rather than fear.

As he sees it, journalism is similar to social work – it is about telling people what is really going on and contributing to public education and critical thinking.

A belief in the future, despite everything

However, the situation for unionised journalists in Colombia is not completely bleak. Freddy León sees a future in grassroots initiatives and global networks:

“All we can do is give the world a push in the right direction by learning from and being inspired by each other. And this is where journalism and trade union work go hand in hand,” he says, adding that one day he hopes to be able to walk down the gravel road without having to hide the fact that he is in a union.

When that day comes, he walks the streets in his purple top with FECOLPER'S logo boldly visible.

Text by Klas Lundström

The Swedish Journalism Association together with the global International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) is running a project with FECOLPER, aimed at strengthening the Colombian organisation, which is an important actor and voice for journalists in Colombian society.

Despite a deep crisis, unions in Lebanon are making a difference

Economic crisis, political instability and growing unemployment. In Lebanon, it is clear how important the work of unions is. “It’s stressful. But we are finding solutions,” says Najwa Hanna, who works at the global union federation PSI’s office in the Lebanese capital Beirut.

The situation in Lebanon has been chaotic for several years. Political turmoil led to an economic crisis with soaring inflation and in recent years the Lebanese currency has lost 93 percent of its value.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic spread. In the autumn of 2020, there was also a major explosion in the port of Beirut, which destroyed several hospitals and medical stores. The situation remained chaotic in 2021.

“There are hardly any words to describe the situation in Lebanon today. There are long queues to petrol stations, soaring unemployment, and a privatised health system that makes healthcare inaccessible to many people. On top of that, we only have access to electricity for about two hours a day,” explains Najwa Hanna, regional secretary at PSI

Union efforts during the crisis

Amidst all this, unions are working in the interests of all workers, not merely those of their own members. And despite the challenges, many unions have achieved important things.

Najwa Hanna says that the most funda-

mental achievement is attempting to safeguard members’ basic needs, such as food, medicine and fuel. One of the things done to achieve this is setting up a solidarity fund.

Successful pressure

Trade unions are pressurising the Government to expand public transport because many people, mainly low earners, lack other means of getting to work. This pressure resulted in the Government prioritising the issue.

“It’s clear that the work of the union is making a difference but this is a situation that is set to continue for a long time to come,” concludes Najwa Hanna.

Union strength in times of crisis

In 2021, *Union to Union* produced a new publication – *Union strength in times of crisis* – on the role played by trade unions in various crises. The situation in Lebanon is one example. You can find it on *Union to Union’s* website.

Kenya and Sweden working together for sustainable outdoor environments

As climate change gains pace, interest in planning sustainable cities is growing. To influence decision-makers and increase awareness of the importance of climate-smart outdoor environments, landscape architects in Kenya and Sweden are working together in a project that is attracting growing attention.

What we are doing is important, firstly to be able to resolve our climate problems but also to understand how what we do locally has an impact globally,” says project leader Pia Jonsson.

The project “Act local, Think global” is run by Architects Sweden, Sweden’s architects’ union with the support of *Union to Union*. The aim is to strengthen cooperation between landscape architects in Sweden and Kenya.

The partnership is teaching project participants more about similarities and differences in terms of working conditions and working life. Knowledge about the climate crisis and the 2030 Agenda is growing.

The hope is also to strengthen the profession in Kenya.

“Our Kenyan colleagues need a stronger voi-

ce,” says Pia Jonsson, who is a landscape architect. The project has given them greater scope to talk about the breadth of landscape architecture for sustainable urban development.

“The partnership is about the trade union work, about professional roles, working towards the Sustainable Development Goals and how climate change is affecting us,” says Pia Jonsson.

Trade unions, union press and organisations linked to trade unions are important sources of information about unions as actors for development and democracy. Supported by information grants from *Union to Union*, funding is provided for partnerships, news articles and other activities in Sweden that talk about or deepen understanding of human rights in the workplace.

The project between architects and landscape architects in Sweden and Kenya is one example of a project funded by this information grant. More information can be found on Union to Union’s website.



The Association of Architects visits Kenya. Through the project, architects from Sweden and Kenya could meet to exchange knowledge and experiences. Photo: Pia Jonsson



Effects of the pandemic, threats to democracy and poverty – advocacy is more important than ever!

At a time when the number of democracies in the world is shrinking while the number of people living in extreme poverty is growing, we need organisations fighting for democracy, sustainability and equality more than ever before. This is exactly what unions do.

Unions work for fair working conditions, promote dialogue between the social partners and thus build societies founded on trust and active citizens. Trade union development cooperation is vital to the work of trade unions across the globe. *Union to Union's* opinion-forming and advocacy work in Sweden is a key component in safeguarding a strong international trade union development cooperation for the future.

In our advocacy work, we engage in dialogue and work with politicians and decision-makers on aid issues. We also work in networks that act in the UN and other international bodies. To shape opinion, we also write opinion pieces,

run seminars and carry out campaigns. In 2021, for example, *Union to Union's* advocacy work led to the Minister for Foreign Affairs launching a trade union drive as part of the Government's Drive for Democracy, including instructions to the foreign service and the diplomat trainee programme. This came about as a result of *Union to Union* maintaining dialogue with the Minister for Foreign Affairs' staff and contributing material on several occasions showing the importance of foreign policy that protects union rights across the globe. *Union to Union* has also contributed a paragraph to Sweden's official report to the UN on Sweden's implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Here we showed how the international efforts

of unions are helping to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Through CONCORD, we have also contributed to civil society's *Spotlight report on the 2030 Agenda*, thereby spreading the trade union movement's perspective on sustainable development in civil society. Other examples of our work in 2021 include opinion pieces, for example addressed to the newly appointed Minister for International Development Cooperation, and dialogue with members of the Swedish Parliament who work with aid issues.

The Global Rights Index, developed by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) with the support of *Union to Union*, is an annual review of the global situation of trade union rights. The 2021 report continues to show a negative trend for union rights worldwide. For example, workers are prevented from unionising in 74% of the countries surveyed.

The report has been an important opening for dialogue with a number of Swedish embassies in low and middle-income countries, which in turn has resulted in cooperation on roundtable discussions with union representatives, and to *Union to Union* being able to provide the Swedish foreign service with important information on the situation of trade unionists in several countries.

In many countries, the COVID-19 pandemic has continued to serve as an excuse to limit workers' rights and as a pretext for sacking trade unionists and breaking agreed contracts. At the same time, the pandemic has further underscored the important role of trade unions in building democratic societies and protecting workers' rights.

Unions have defended workers on the front line in the pandemic, saved jobs in the face of mass redundancies and provided local communities with information. One of the ways *Union to Union* highlighted this was by producing a brochure on trade union strength at times of crisis.

Our opinion forming and advocacy work will see us continuing to work for democracy and human rights in the workplace, and emphasising the importance of strong support for trade union development cooperation.

PHOTO: AXEL ÖBERG



Journalism project funded by Union to Union

Interview: Ivar Andersson, editor Arbetet Global

Hello Ivar, What is Arbetet Global?

Arbetet Global is a journalism project, funded by *Union to Union*, that is linked to the trade union magazine *Arbetet*. We monitor the world of work across the globe, focusing on the conditions of ordinary people. It might not sound that exciting but in fact we're the only ones in Sweden doing this. Foreign coverage tends to depend on elite sources and workers are often invisible. *Arbetet Global* is an attempt to change that.

Why is what you do important?

We highlight issues that wouldn't otherwise gain coverage in the Swedish press and strive to make local voices heard. Swedish readers would be unaware of a large proportion of what *Arbetet Global* writes about if we weren't reporting on it. And our project wouldn't be possible without *Union to Union*.

What was your biggest challenge in 2021?

The pandemic. We aim to tell the story of society through the people affected. But this is a journalism aim that often requires a presence on the ground. The lockdowns meant it was difficult for us and our freelancers to travel. We tried to resolve this by forging new contacts with local journalists in the countries we cover. It was a challenge but it's going to prove beneficial in the future.

What would you like to highlight from 2021?

At the end of last year, the world started to open up again. We were able to cover the ongoing climate disaster in northern Kenya and our reporting there has just been nominated for the Red Cross Journalism Prize. Generally, we stepped up our climate monitoring in 2021, focusing on a Just Transition. I would also like to highlight our reporting on the military coup in Myanmar and the independent trade union movement's courageous fight for democracy.

“When we give talks, there is often a powerful reaction; people want to know more”

Union to Unions mission is to use the infokom grant to tell people about the global development cooperation that Swedish trade unions have long been actively involved in. The global issues are fundamental to the international trade union movement but despite this they are not so well known at home in Sweden.

Much of what we buy, eat and consume is manufactured, produced and transported by people in low and middle-income countries with low pay, precarious jobs and poor working conditions. Trade unions are fighting to change this injustice.

Talking about this, and making the voices of workers heard, listening to people able to



PHOTO: UNION TO UNION

” Our job is to show how unionisation is the key to resolving the big, global issues – and that decent working conditions and a secure income are the key to a sustainable future for all workers.

– Maja Aase

bear witness to how important union support from the outside world and Sweden is, engages people, creates pride among union members and leads to thought-provoking discussions: “We now realise that we are united with our colleagues world-wide”.

Many forms of communication

In practice, communicative work involves a number of different things. *Union to Union* disseminates information on social media and on its website. We arrange seminars, hold debates, produce training material, write opinion pieces and are visible at fairs and other events.

“Additionally, we give talks to union members and organisations and are in contact with the trade unions to inspire them to share what we do, to draw attention to their own global work and remind them that most things in the world, the economy and the labour market are global,” explains Maja Aase, communications strategist at *Union to Union*.

The target groups range from trade unions and their three million members, to journalists, policy makers and anyone interested in global justice and the potential of aid. Getting this message across isn't always that easy.

“Connections tend not to be drawn between global issues such as the climate crisis, poverty and the lack of gender equality and the work of trade unions. Our job is to show how unionisation is the key to resolving the big, global issues – and that decent working conditions and a secure income are the key to a sustainable future for all workers,” says Maja Aase.

Ongoing pandemic and new opportunities

Despite the pandemic continuing for another year, many activities were carried out in 2021.

The digital transformation continued, as could be seen on social media.

“For example, our Instagram campaign in December where we highlighted engaged union voices from all around the world, was very successful,” says Maja Aase. *Union to Union*’s work becomes clear when people talk about it in their own words based on their own experiences.

The most effective way of showing the importance of people organising and knowing their rights is when our colleagues in low and middle-income countries provide concrete examples of how union efforts have led to sustainable, decent working conditions.

The pandemic has increased opportunities for online meetings with unionists in project countries and strengthened contacts. The transformation has also been marked in *Union to Union*’s lecturing work, which was often carried out online in 2021. Whatever the format, the results were often clear.

“When we give talks to union members there is a powerful reaction; many people have their own experiences of countries with major injustices and want to know more. People often tell me that union members thought their membership was mostly about themselves and they are surprised and proud that in fact they are part of a global popular movement for global justice,” says Maja Aase.

An important part of the information work is passing on grants to trade unions, union press and organisations with links to the unions, who carry out various activities to create dialogues and foster engagement on global trade union issues in Sweden.

“The trend in 2021 was for more members in Swedish unions to start exchanging experiences with sister unions in other countries. One example is Architects Sweden’s partnership with landscape architects in Kenya, another is Swedish Midwives’ partnership with midwives in Ghana. More examples of relevant projects include Klimatagendan (Climate Agenda), run by Global Challenge and Arbetet Global,” says Beatrice Jansson, who works on communication projects at *Union to Union*.

Read more about *Arbetet Global* and *Global Challenge* on page 25 and 27.

PHOTO: EMA MALMSTEN NORDELL



Information
project
funded by
Union to Union

Interview: Anna Linell, Programme Manager Climate and Resources, Global Challenge Think Tank

Hi Anna, What is Global Challenge?

“Global Challenge is an independent think tank that promotes sustainable development in every sense; climate-related, economic and social. The UN’s Sustainable Development Goals lead the way on everything we do.”

Why is what you do important?

“The greatest strength of Global Challenge is its pioneering spirit. Not merely mobilising resources but also having the courage to tackle the big difficult questions that others shy away from. We create platforms that enable research, business, civil society, administration and politics to work together.”

What do you want to highlight from 2021?

“In 2021, we produced popular education materials on a Just Transition, with the support of *Union to Union*, among others, and in partnership with a number of trade unions and study associations. I would urge everyone to complete the online climate course Klimatnyfiken at <https://klimatnyfiken.klimatagendan.se!>”

Is there anything you would like to say to Swedish trade unions?

“The time is now! The emissions curve needs to have fallen sharply by 2030. The Swedish trade union movement must take this issue seriously and play an active role in the rapid transformation of society we need to see in the immediate future.”

” **The time is now! The emissions curve needs to have fallen sharply by 2030. The Swedish trade union movement must take this issue seriously.**

Union to Union Board

PHOTO: MAGNUS LANJE



Chairperson: Heike Erkers, chairperson, Akademikerförbundet SSR (Saco)

PHOTO: CAMILLA SVENSK



Vice Chairperson: Peter Hellberg, 1st vice chairperson Unionen (TCO)

PHOTO: KOMMUNAL



Sofia Eriksson, international ombudsman, Kommunal (LO)

PHOTO: DANIEL ROOS



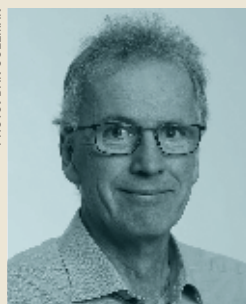
Martin Gunnarsson, Federal Secretary IF Metall (LO)

PHOTO: FREDRIK SANDIN CARLSSON



Pim van Dorpel, vice Federation President, Hotell- och restaurangfacket (LO)

PHOTO: DAN COLEMAN



Mikael Johansson, Federation President, Målareförbundet (LO)

PHOTO: VISION



Katarina Holmqvist, Member of the board, Vision (TCO)

PHOTO: TCO



Anna Gustafsson, international Secretary (TCO)

PHOTO: ANDERS WIKLUND TT



Marina Tuutma, second vice chairperson, Läkarförbundet (Saco)

PHOTO: KJUT CAPRA PEDERSEN



Peter Olding, Head of Department of Federation Support (Saco)

2021 in numbers

27 Swedish trade unions participated actively 2021 in trade union projects

- Akademikerförbundet SSR
- Fackförbundet Scen & film
- Fackförbundet ST
- Fastighetsanställdas Förbund
- Finansförbundet
- GS-facket
- Handelsanställdas förbund
- Hotell- och restaurangfacket
- IF Metall
- Journalistförbundet
- Livsmedelsarbetareförbundet
- LO & TCO Projektkansli
- Lärarförbundet
- Seko, Service- och kommunikationsfacket
- Svenska Barnmorskeförbundet
- Svenska Byggnadsarbetarförbundet
- Svenska Elektrikerförbundet
- Svenska Kommunalarbetareförbundet
- Svenska Musikerförbundet
- Svenska Målareförbundet
- Svenska Pappersindustriarbetareförbundet
- Svenska Transportarbetareförbundet
- Sveriges Ingenjörer
- Sveriges Läkareförbund
- Unionen
- Vision
- Vårdförbundet

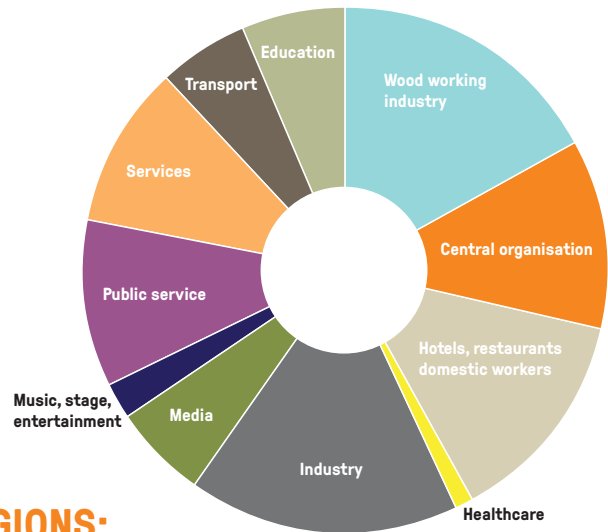


PROJECTS

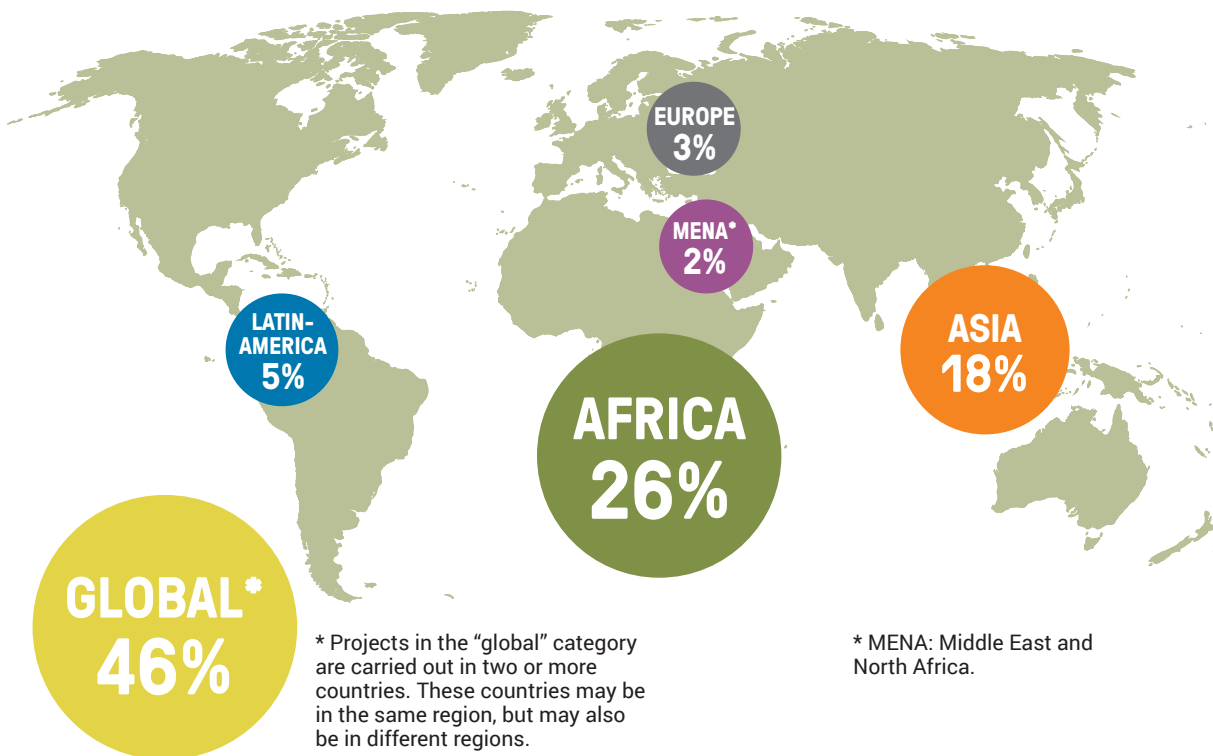


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