



# BUILDING DEMOCRACY TOGETHER

ANNUAL REPORT 2018

**UNION  
TO UNION**

LO, TCO & SACO GLOBAL

# UNION TO UNION

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LO, TCO & SACO GLOBAL

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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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# CONTENT

Challenges – But also Opportunities! .....	4
This is Union to Union .....	6
The Way we Work .....	8
Global Trade Unions – Building the Future Together .....	10
FOCUS AREA 1. Union Rights: Organising Independent, Representative, and Democratic Trade Unions .....	12
FOCUS AREA 2. Social Dialogue, Sustainable Global Supply Chains, and Just Transition .....	16
FOCUS AREA 3. Organising in the Informal Sector, Migration, and Precarious Work .....	20
FOCUS AREA 4. Trade Unions as Actors for Gender Equality .....	24
Increased Knowledge Leads to Increased Involvement .....	28
Sustainable Tourism – Together We Can Make it Happen! .....	29
Fairtrade – A Path to Decent Work .....	29
Threats, Restrictions and Violence: The Everyday Life of Trade Union Activists .....	30
Union to Union Board members .....	32

# CHALLENGES – BUT ALSO OPPORTUNITIES!

**I**n recent years, we have seen growing inequality in many countries, paired with a deterioration in democracy, freedom of expression, and trade union organisation around the world. Unfortunately, 2018 was no exception. On the contrary, we can see how violence and abuses continue to increase and how the space for civil society continues to shrink.

At the same time, this also tells us that that trade union cooperation is more important than ever. Together with other actors, who are also fighting against poverty and for human rights and democracy, we must reverse the trend!

The trade union movement, with its 207 million members, is the world's largest movement for democracy. However, this is something that few outside the labour movement are aware of. That is why we – together with our colleagues around the world – need to be better at highlighting the positive role that a democratic trade union movement plays for global development.

In this context, it is also gratifying that the Swedish development cooperation agency Sida and other major participants in development aid are showing increasing interest in the trade union movement as an important actor for development assistance and social dialogue.

Cooperation between different participants is more important now than ever, if we are to achieve the ambitious plan for the UN's Global Goals and the Agenda 2030.

At the same time, in many countries it is a difficult task to build a democratic trade union that protects workers' rights, and where women have a role equal to the one I enjoy. In this, we as trade union organisers must also change and improve ourselves.

This is the first annual report of this kind. As for myself, when writing this I have been working at Union to Union for six months. During this short period, I have been struck by the great

commitment that exists, both among trade union activists in Sweden and among our partners in the world, many of whom actually risk their lives in their daily trade union work. This commitment makes me even more convinced of the important role that Union to Union is playing.

Among young trade union members in Sweden there is growing interest in global issues, not least linked to Climate Change and Just Transition, as well as the UN's Global Goals where we have much to contribute. Another important issue for us is what on-going technological developments will mean for the labour market in the future. The rapid transformation of the labour market, with its opportunities and challenges, will require development cooperation to focus even more on these issues. Here, trade union development cooperation can play a crucial role.

We live in times of rapid change and this also affect us as an organisation. The activities we support are largely financed by Swedish development assistance, and, in the long run, by the Swedish taxpayers who themselves, to a large extent, are trade union members. This represents a great challenge for us regarding transparency, openness, and how we report our results. In the next few years, we will further develop our methodology. The structuring of our work in four thematic areas, presented in this, our first annual report, is a part of that process.

In conclusion, I would like to extend a big thank you to everyone in Sweden and around the world who makes trade union development cooperation possible. You are part of the world's largest movement for democracy – and you are needed today more than ever!

Sofia Östmark  
*Secretary General*  
*Union to Union*



PHOTO: HÅKAN FLANK





Traffic jam in Nairobi, Kenya.



# THIS IS UNION TO UNION

Union labour rights are human rights. But in many countries the right to join a trade union and enjoy a fair working life is ignored. This is why Union to Union has such an important role to play.

Union to Union is the Swedish trade union movement's organisation for international development cooperation, supporting and coordinating the international trade union development cooperation of LO (the Swedish Trade Union Confederation), TCO (the Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees, Saco (the Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations), and their member unions.

Its mission is to support, coordinate, and promote the trade union movement as a strategic actor in development cooperation that can ensure respect for human rights in working life and democratic development, through strengthened cooperation among the actors on the labour market, so called social dialogue. The organisation is unique in the way that it gathers all Swedish trade unions in one single organisation, with a core focus on labour rights and trade union organisation. Its work focuses on decent work, democracy, equality, fair distribution of resources, reduced poverty, and sustainable development. Union to Union is a secular and non-partisan non-profit organisation.



**WE WORK TO CREATE DECENT WORKING CONDITIONS**



**WE INFLUENCE DECISION MAKERS**

**WE CONTRIBUTE TO KNOWLEDGE**



## DECENT WORK

Decent working conditions and human rights are preconditions for reducing poverty and inequality globally. In today's world 300 million workers live in extreme poverty, and some 2 billion workers are in informal employment, most of it insecure. Annually, there are 2.78 million work-related deaths and 374 million non-lethal work-related injuries and illnesses. Strong representative, free, and democratic trade unions are an effective means of

reducing poverty and improving working conditions. Upholding freedom of association and collective bargaining rights and supporting social dialogue (among workers' and employers' representative organisations and governments) as instruments of governance doesn't just mean progress for workers and societies at large, but they are also pillars of functional democracies and sustainable development.

## SHRINKING SPACE – THREATS AND VIOLENCE

Shrinking space, also known as the closing of space, for civil society is gaining momentum. In recent years, legislation to restrict the rights of freedom of association, assembly, and expression have multiplied. The annual report Global Rights Index for 2018 shows that the situation for trade union members continues to deteriorate (see page 30).

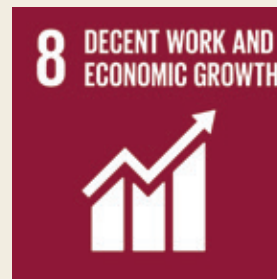
PROGRAMS IN  
**100** COUNTRIES

COOPERATION WITH **25**  
SWEDISH TRADE UNIONS

**207** MILLION  
TRADE UNION MEMBERS

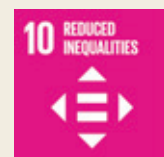
## AGENDA 2030

The global union movement has an important role to play in the implementation of Agenda 2030 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Particularly important for trade unions is **Goal 8, Decent Work and Economic Growth**.



In order to achieve these goals, the future of work must include safe working conditions, within the informal sector as well, and fair wages. Forced and child labour must also be abolished.

Other important goals concerning the future of work are:



# THE WAY WE WORK

**S**upport through Union to Union is primarily aimed at strengthening the capacity of trade unions to recruit, organise, administrate, educate, negotiate, and influence.

This work is made possible by an extensive international network consisting of Union to Union together with Swedish trade unions and trade unions in other countries and carried out in cooperation with the Global Union Federations (GUF's). It is precisely this large international network of free, democratic trade unions and their global federations that makes trade union development cooperation possible.

Union to Union also supports and initiates awareness-raising activities in Sweden, to strengthen knowledge of international trade union development co-operation and its relevance for development, as well as supporting initiatives and associations such as Fairtrade and the Network of Schyst resande.

## Projects and Programmes

Union to Union is currently (2018) supporting projects covering approximately 100 countries around the world. In Sweden, around 25 partners are involved in these projects and

programmes, collaborating bilaterally with individual trade unions or multilaterally with Global Union Federations. The Swedish trade unions have an important role in these projects to provide capacity-building and to share experiences.

## Staff and Organisation

Union to Union has an office in Stockholm with a staff of around 20. The office is headed by a Secretary General. The Board (see page 32 for more information) determines the overall direction of the work and is comprised of members of Swedish trade unions appointed by LO, TCO, and Saco. Union to Union has no offices in the countries where projects are located. The office of Union to Union coordinates Swedish trade union project activities by providing methodological expertise, financial follow-up, services, and tools to trade unions in Sweden and abroad.

## From Sectors to Focus Areas

Union to Union's work has traditionally been divided into sectors along the lines of the Global Union Federation affiliations. Gradually, from now on the work will instead be structured into four different focus areas.

## FOUR FOCUS AREAS



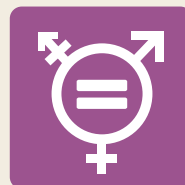
**1. Trade union rights, organising independent, representative, and democratic trade unions**



**3. Organising in the informal sector, migration, and precarious work**



**2. Social dialogue, sustainable global supply chains, and Just Transition**



**4. Trade unions as actors for gender equality**



The projects and our information and communications work are financed by funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), and contributions from the Swedish trade union movement. In total, Union to Union handles (annually) approximately

**126** MILLION SEK  
IN PROJECT FUNDS

**During 2018 the following Swedish trade unions actively participated in cooperation projects:**

- Akademikerförbundet SSR
- Fastighetsanställdas Förbund
- Finansförbundet
- GS-facket
- Handelsanställdas Förbund
- Hotell- och restaurangfacket
- IF Metall
- Svenska Kommunalarbetareförbundet
- Svenska Livsmedelsarbetareförbundet
- Lärarförbundet
- Svenska Musikerförbundet
- Svenska Målareförbundet
- Svenska Pappersindustriarbetareförbundet
- Seko, Service- och kommunikationsfacket
- Fackförbundet ST
- Sveriges Läkarförbund
- Svenska Byggnadsarbetareförbundet
- Svenska Elektrikerförbundet
- Journalistförbundet
- Svenska Transportarbetareförbundet
- Sveriges Ingenjörer
- Teaterförbundet för scen och film
- Unionen
- Vision
- Vårdförbundet

## WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE TO YOU?

**Maria Östberg Svanellind,  
International Secretary of the Union for Professionals (in the social sciences)  
(Akademikerförbundet SSR)**

PHOTO: STEFAN NILSSON



“International solidarity is deeply rooted in our union. We support projects both to strengthen the organising of unions and collective bargaining negotiations, and the human rights of, for example, refugees.

In Nigeria, we support people who have escaped from Boko Haram’s horrible terrorism and I have met with colleagues who work with these victims. Their powerful stories of suffering and commitment have made a profound impression on me.

In many countries, politicians and employers believe that strong trade unions mean disputes and conflicts. But our Nordic experience is the opposite – strong and democratic unions are a constructive social force that contributes to fair and democratic progress.”

**Sofia Eriksson, International Secretary,  
Swedish Municipal Workers’ Union  
(Kommunal)**

PHOTO: KOMMUNAL



“International trade union issues are very important for my union, simply because the labour market is global.

We learn a lot from our sister organisations, they have very creative solutions even when the situation seems impossible.

My most powerful experiences in this job are when women dare to raise their voices simply because they have learned what rights they actually have. I especially remember a woman at a trade union meeting in Brazil. She stood up and asked to speak: “It was only when I joined the union that I understood that I had human dignity,” she said. Those words have stayed with me. Trade union rights are about so much more than just the job. They affect the whole person.”

# GLOBAL UNIONS – BUILDING THE FUTURE TOGETHER

Trade unions collaborate worldwide to strengthen their capabilities nationally and globally. Equal cooperation is the key for a future of decent work.

**M**ost Union to Union projects are carried out in collaboration with a particular Global Union Federation (GUF), the international representatives of unions organising in specific industry sectors or occupational groups. The federations have affiliates all over the world. Sweden's unions are members of the various GUF's. Many unions are members of more than one global federation, as their members can work in several different

sectors, for example both in manufacturing and in construction.

In addition to the Global Union Federations for specific sectors, there is also the **International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)**, the world's largest trade union federation. The ITUC represents 207 million workers in 163 countries and territories and has 331 national affiliates. The primary members of the ITUC are the central trade union organisations (in Sweden TCO, LO and Saco).

## The Global Union Federations (GUF)

### 1. **BWI - Building and Wood Workers' International**

Represents 326 unions in the building, building materials, wood, forestry, and allied sectors, representing about 12 million members in 130 countries

### 2. **EI - Education International**

A federation of 401 associations and unions in 171 countries and territories, it represents 30 million workers in the education sector.

### 3. **IndustriALL Global Union**

Represents 50 million workers in 140 countries in the mining, energy, and manufacturing sectors.

### 4. **FIA - International Federation of Actors**

Represents several hundreds of thousands of performers within some 90 member organisations in more than 60 countries.

### 5. **ICN - International Council of Nurses**

A federation of more than 20 million nurses worldwide.

### 6. **IFJ - International Federation of Journalists**

Represents 600,000 media professionals from 187 trade unions and associations in more than 140 countries.

### 7. **FIM - International Federation of Musicians**

The international organisation for musicians' unions and equivalent representative organisations, which represents about 70 member organisations in 60 countries throughout the world.

### 8. **ITF - International Transport Workers' Federation**

Represents more than 18 million members from 665 affiliated unions in 147 countries.

### 9. **IUF - International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations**

Composed of 416 affiliated trade unions in 128 countries, representing 10 million workers.

### 10. **PSI - Public Services International**

Represents more than 20 million workers, represented by over 700 unions in 163 countries.

### 11. **UNI - Uni Global Union**

Represents more than 20 million workers from over 900 member organisations in more than 150 different countries within the service sector.



PHOTO: ANNA NYLANDER / UNION TO UNION

Kenya. We can do it! Helen Adhiambo and Margaret Njeri, with some of the other union women at Kenya Nut Factory who show that women can change how things are.





Sitali Muyunda, car mechanic and union president at MMI Steel in Zambia.



## FOCUS AREA 1.



# UNION RIGHTS: ORGANISING INDEPENDENT, REPRESENTATIVE, AND DEMOCRATIC TRADE UNIONS

**OBJECTIVE:** To strengthen trade unions as independent, representative, and democratic organisations that are efficient in organising workers and exercising trade union rights at the workplace.

### **Strong Organisations are Key to Success**

The Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention are core documents for the realisation of workers' rights.

Over the past 20 years a general trend of diminishing civic space has been gaining momentum, which creates additional obstacles for democratic trade unions. Ignorance of the internationally recognised legal frameworks, or indifference to their enforcement on national and international levels, opens the door for endless breaches of workers' and human rights. Unions face prosecution, threats, and violence when attempting to organise and represent workers.

For trade unions to be independent and strong actors, administrative and financial stability are of major importance. Efforts are needed both in facilitating enabling environments for organising, and in strengthening innovative and inclusive organising techniques. Training is an essential component. In the longer perspective, the effects of these programmes will lead to the combined global trade unions, with their 207 million organised members, continue to strengthen and remain the largest democratic movement in the world.





IFMETALL

Fackligt samarbete  
för bättre villkor  
på jobbet och i  
samhället.

IF Metall i världen

PHOTO: ANNETTE LACK / IF METALL



Ussarin Kaewpradap, coordinator of development projects in Thailand between Thai union TEAM and Swedish IF Metall.

## THAILAND: DETERMINED WORK PROVIDES UNION SUCCESS

Sometimes the successes come one after another: it took only a few months for the trade union at the Volvo Group's truck factory in Thailand to be formed, approved by the authorities, and then able to negotiate its first collective bargaining agreement.

"We see Sweden as a pioneer in terms of working conditions and the right to organise", says union coordinator Ussarin Kaewpradap.

The project "Building Union Power Philippines & Thailand", which IF Metall (a Swedish industrial workers union) operates and Union to Union supports, aims to increase the capa-

city for trade union organisation and to create functioning democratic trade unions at Swedish companies in Thailand and other countries.

The trade union at the Volvo Group's truck factory is part of TEAM, the country's largest industrial association and according to Ussarin Kaewpradap, the trade union organisation is crucial for reaching social agreements and improving working conditions through social dialogue:

"It is a problem that workers are not aware of their rights. That gives employers an extra advantage," Ussarin Kaewpradap concludes.

# EXAMPLES OF RESULTS IN 2018

## SUCCESSFUL RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGN IN THE BUILDING SECTOR

A project in partnership with five Swedish trade unions (Seko, GS-facket, Byggnadsarbetareförbundet, Målareförbundet and Elektrikerförbundet) contributed to the coverage of at least 80,000 workers in Africa by workplace or company agreements signed during 2018, through the Global Union Federation BWI. Affiliates participating in the project recruited 28,000 new members in 2018. Nearly all of the new members are paying trade union dues and affiliates in the sub-region increased their affiliation fees to BWI by 4,297 members in 2018. In addition, nearly 1,000 migrant workers have been organised, mostly in Nigeria.

## EMPOWERING YOUNG TRADE UNION LEADERS IN THE MENA REGION

Unionen, IF Metall, and Pappers, together with the Global Union Federation IndustriALL and unions in Morocco and Tunisia, implemented a project aiming to increase youth leadership in trade unions.

The Tunisian metal workers' union has begun special activities within its sector for youth, integrating young participants into their own leadership strategic planning meetings. Based on the initiative of 20 young leaders from Moroccan affiliates, the CDT confederation is currently working on founding an Industries Unions Youth Secretariat. In Tunisia, the metal workers' union is now working on founding a youth committee. The critical perspectives of many of the young leaders in the network have helped them to gain insights into the role they should play to improve future union activities.

## WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE TO YOU?

Karl-Petter Thorwaldsson, President of the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO)

PHOTO: FREDRIK HJERLING



“The most important issue for us is the right to organise. Everyone benefits when wage earners worldwide have decent working conditions and union rights. Strong and democratic unions are an enormous force for a fairer distribution of wealth

and to help to build democratic societies.

Also in focus for global unions are the millions of people who are forced to work in the informal sector without any union rights or legal protection. The conventional knowledge is that slavery has been abolished, but that is not really true. Many, many people work under slave-like conditions – and that number is increasing!

One example is in the production of our mobile phones. These contain several rare metals, including cobalt, which is often mined by poorly paid migrant workers under abusive conditions.

As president of LO, I devote more and more time to international issues, as they are constantly growing in importance. And we often see the results of our unions' global solidarity work.

Politicians and employers who deny the right for workers to exercise their trade union rights do not stand up for the principle of the equal worth of all people. They exploit the weaker position of vulnerable people in order to become rich and live comfortably themselves. The Gulf States are a hair-raising example of this incongruity. So even if our international solidarity work has been successful, much still remains to be done!”





Brick factory in Kathmandu valley, Nepal where workers produce bricks by hand.



## FOCUS AREA 2.



# SOCIAL DIALOGUE, SUSTAINABLE GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS, AND JUST TRANSITION

**OBJECTIVE:** To strengthen the capacity of trade unions to engage effectively in social dialogue on issues relating to economic and social policy, and to contribute to sustainable global supply chains and Just Transition.

### **Just Transition for Sustainable Development**

Effective Social Dialogue is key to sound and productive employment relations and decent work. Social dialogue includes all types of negotiation, consultation, or exchange of information between or among representatives of governments, employers, and workers. Global Supply Chains (GSC) contribute to economic growth, job creation, and poverty reduction. Still the GCS's have failed to protect rights at the workplace. To tackle these problems, trade unions and Global Union Federations have been working on Global Framework Agreements (GFA's), in order to achieve new collective bargaining agreements, and as instruments for tackling anti-labour attitudes. The term Just Transition is included in many climate agreements, thanks to the work of the trade unions. A fair transition is not only possible, but also necessary to achieve the UN's Global Goals for Sustainable Development, Agenda 2030.

Trade unions are already working to change rules and legislation, to add environmental and climate clauses to collective agreements, and to develop green profiles to strengthen their position at the negotiating table.





Sara Nyokabi works as a bus conductor and is a member of the trade union for "matatus". She is worried about the future.

## KENYA: UNION COOPERATION FOR JUST TRANSITION

**T**rade unions are increasingly committed to a Just Transition, a green and social transition to a more sustainable future. One example is Kenya. A new system for buses should improve the environment, but what happens to the jobs?

Nairobi is characterised by traffic congestion and polluting exhaust emissions. The public transport system consists of a myriad of mini-buses, the so-called matatus. Those who work with the buses are part of the informal sector, with insecure jobs and poor pay.

An on-going transition to the system "Bus

Rapid Transit" means larger, but fewer buses, and not as many jobs. Cooperation among the Kenyan trade unions and the Swedish trade union Seko (The Swedish Service and Communication Union), and the ITF (the International Transport Worker Federation) is part of the project "Strengthening Union Influence, Campaigning and Organising in Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) in Selected African Countries".

Union to Union supports this project and the hope is that dialogue with the government will lead to new, greener, and secure jobs with better working conditions for those employed in the new transport system.

# EXAMPLES OF RESULTS IN 2018

## UNION LEADERS TRAINED IN NEPAL

The Swedish central organisations LO and TCO and the Nepalese trade union GEFONT have trained 250 union leaders in Nepal. Membership numbers have increased, activities have been carried out to strengthen the position of women in the union and working life, and the organisation has successfully participated in social dialogue. At the local level, awareness has been encouraged through work place campaigns and various activities. More than two hundred women leaders have participated in the interaction programme.

## VICTORY FOR CLEANING WORKERS IN PERU

The Swedish building Union Fastighetsförbundet together with the global union federation UNI Global Union, have worked to strengthen union networks in the major companies within the janitorial (cleaning) subsectors in Latin America. This has improved the companies' treatment of workers, along with providing workers with decent labour conditions.

The trade unions participating in the project have specialised teams to develop trade union organising campaigns to strengthen them-selves and boost growth.

As a part of the social dialogue, a committee has been set up within the Labour Ministry in Peru between companies and trade unions to address the issue of the informal sector and in this way improve the economic conditions of these workers and ensure their employment.

## WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE TO YOU?

Eva Nordmark, President of the Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO)

PHOTO: EVA EDSJÖ



“International commitment is very important for us in the Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO) and for many years we have cooperated with sister organizations around the world. In this way, we support our partners in demanding and defending the right to form and join trade unions.

We are also involved in projects supporting education and capacity development in order to strengthen employees in their fight for better working conditions. Our global cooperation involves sharing experience and knowledge, so that we can learn from each other.

The most important trade union issue for us today is the shrinking space for activists for human rights and democracy, which is affecting some of our sister organisations to the greatest possible extent. Free and democratic trade unions are vital for democratic development – the global trade union movement is actually the world's largest movement for democracy. But in many countries it is difficult, or even dangerous, to support union rights. In those countries, governments and others regard trade unions as a threat to their own power and authority. But the right to form and join trade unions and to promote union rights is a fundamental human right.”





Stephenson Kisingu, BRT Coordinator at ITF Africa, informs a matatu worker about the importance of a Just Transition during the implementation of the Bus Rapid Transport system in Nairobi.



## FOCUS AREA 3.



# ORGANISING IN THE INFORMAL SECTOR, MIGRATION, AND PRECARIOUS WORK

**OBJECTIVE:** To strengthen working conditions for informal workers, migrant workers, and workers in precarious situations.

### **Protecting the Human Rights of Vulnerable Groups!**

Precarious work is a term used to describe non-standard employment, those who are poorly paid, insecure, unprotected, and without a living wage. It is mainly a result of the shift from manufacturing to the service sector and the spread of information technology. These changes have created a new economy, which demands flexibility in the workplace and, as a result, encourages a decline in the standard employment relationship.

Informal employment accounts for more than 50–70 per cent of work in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America. Informal workers are normally excluded from all forms of social protection and workers' rights. The transition to formal working arrangement is fundamental to achieving equitable, inclusive, and sustainable development and making decent work accessible for all – goals explicitly set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Today, more than 200 million people are working outside their country of birth or citizenship. Together with their families, migrant workers make up the large majority of all international migrants. Therefore, migration is first and foremost a labour issue. Unfair treatment of migrant workers undermines wages and working conditions for all workers. Trade unions are key to securing basic human rights and access to basic services for migrants and refugees.

Trade unions need to increase their focus on workers who are not in traditional forms of employment and/or migrant workers with even less rights than citizens of the country to which they have migrated. One strategy is to organise informal workers by supporting the creation of independent organisations, and by opening up trade union structures for workers in the informal sector and exploring innovative ways of working.





Syrian refugees in Lebanon heading home to the refugee camp after a working day.

## LEBANON: MIGRATION – ONE OF TODAY’S MOST IMPORTANT UNION ISSUES

**I**n a country like Lebanon, where 25 percent of the population is estimated to be refugees, the trade union movement has an important role to play.

In the project “Human Rights, Trade Unions, and Quality Public Services for Refugees and Migrant Workers”, the Swedish trade union Akademikerförbundet SSR, the Swedish trade union Kommunal, the Swedish trade union ST, the Swedish trade union Vision and the Swedish trade union Vårdförbundet cooperates with the global union Public Services International (PSI), together with partners in Turkey, Lebanon, Tunisia, and Algeria to strengthen the human rights situation for refugees and migrants.

The trade unions’ opinion-influencing activities from the grassroots level up is necessary to counteract the spread of racist and xenophobic attitudes and discrimination in the labour market.

Ensuring that the entire community has access to qualitative public services, decent working conditions, and social protection contributes to promoting social development.

“Our dedicated members are proud of what we do and believe in global solidarity”, says Maria Östberg Svanelind, head of international cooperation at the Swedish trade union Akademikerförbundet SSR.



# EXAMPLES OF RESULTS IN 2018

## DIGITAL MEMBERSHIP STREAMLINES COMMUNICATION

As part of its collaboration with Unionen (Sweden's largest trade union in the private labour market) the Indian organisation SEWA (Self Employed Women's Association) has developed a database system which gives the organisation a better understanding of its membership and the ability to process online membership applications. As a result 1,000 new members have signed up. Through the system, SEWA also has mobile phone numbers for its members, which makes text communication via SMS possible. Furthermore, in order to increase its financial sustainability, SEWA have begun to charge smaller fees for the services it provides to its members and their families.

## ORGANISING MIGRANT WORKERS IN CONSTRUCTION

The Swedish trade unions Seko, GS-facket, Byggnadsförbundet, Målarförbundet and Elektrikerförbundet are organising migrant workers in partnerships with many of the BWI affiliates in Asia and in total 1,756 migrant workers were recruited in 2018. The trade unions held a number of outreach activities with migrant workers and lobbied governments for the better protection of migrant workers.

The HaveaPac plant in Seremban in Malaysia employs more than 1,500 migrant workers from Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Myanmar. After intense organising, the Timber Employees Union of Peninsula Malaysia (TEUPM) received a majority vote in the secret ballot required for trade union recognition in September 2018.

## WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE TO YOU?

Göran Arrius, President Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations (Saco)

PHOTO: KNUD CAPRA PEDERSEN



“The most important international trade union issues right now are about justice and human rights. One example is the increasing pressure on professionals such as teachers and researchers in countries with authoritarian regimes. Many of them are forced into silence or simply sacked, for no proper reason.

For Saco, it is important that academics also have the protection of trade union rights, and we see increased interest among our colleagues internationally in forming unions.

Saco is a fairly new member of Union to Union, as we joined in 2015. The fact that the entire Swedish trade union movement now works together with global labour issues makes us stronger, as we can cooperate with unions on all levels and in all professions.

International trade union cooperation is also about learning from each other. I think it is extremely rewarding to share our experience with people who live and work in other ways than we do here in the Nordic countries. We are often convinced that our own labour market model is the best, and this perception can make us blind for solutions from other parts of the world.

The strong union commitment we encounter in many partner countries is also very inspiring. It has been a long time since it was really dangerous to demand union rights here in Sweden. But in many countries, our colleagues are taking great risks when claiming their union rights. This fact makes our global cooperation within Union to Union even more important.”

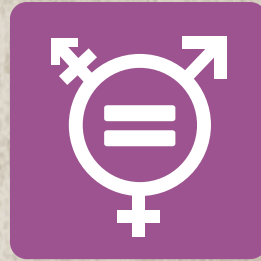




A woman who works at the collective Gitanjali, which was started by the union SEWA in India, which organizes female informal workers. The collective produces notebooks, blocks, binders and folders of recycled paper.



## FOCUS AREA 4.



# TRADE UNIONS AS ACTORS FOR GENDER EQUALITY

**OBJECTIVE:** To strengthen trade unions as actors for gender equality in the labour market and in society as a whole, and to increase the representation of women in trade union structures.

### **Economic Empowerment is Key for Gender Equality**

The current share of the global male population holding a paid job is 71 percent, compared to 46 percent among women. Even when they are able to find decent work, women continue to be paid less than men for work of equal value. The economic empowerment of women is central to realizing women's rights and gender equality, and trade unions play a key role in tackling these challenges.

Trade union membership among women is on the rise. Despite this, even in sectors with high rates of female employment and union membership, men continue to occupy leadership positions in trade unions.

Strong trade unions are important to improve gender equality at work. Gains achieved through collective bargaining and social dialogue are many times related to gender equality and help to empower women's lives and improve society at large.



# EXAMPLES OF RESULTS IN 2018

## **WOMEN'S WORKING CONDITIONS IMPROVED THROUGH NEGOTIATED CBA'S**

The Swedish trade unions Kommunal, Livsmedelsarbetarförbundet, and Hotell- och restaurangfacket, together with the global union federation IUF's regional office in Africa, have empowered women to speak out and denounce gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual harassment, thanks to activities organised by the project in 16 African countries. Important issues for women (maternity protection, parental leave, equal access to employment, equal remuneration) have been prioritised by the IUF affiliates when negotiating new or renewed collective bargaining agreements (CBA's) in almost all project countries.

In Kenya, the local IUF affiliate signed a new CBA with the Kenya Nut Company Limited, which has improved an existing clause on maternity leave to protect casual workers. Ten out of twelve shop stewards at the company are women, which has resulted in a greater focus on women's issues. IUF affiliates in Kenya have also succeeded in getting lactation rooms at the Nzoia Sugar Company, and in negotiating a clause in the CBA to prevent sexual harassment. Moreover, Nzoia is one of five sugar companies that have created committees on sexual harassment as well as occupational health and safety, made up 50 per cent of workers and 50 per cent management. This has reduced reported accidents by half.

## **NETWORKING PROMOTES GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERS WOMEN**

Läraryrbundet, the Swedish Teachers' Union, continues to operate as a dialogue partner in organisational development with local partners, in the role of coach and experience sharing, focusing on gender equality and other issues. An evaluation conducted in 2018 of the African Women in Education Network (AWEN), which Läraryrbundet supports, shows that AWEN has improved the professional capacity of women and contributed to positive changes in their professional, as well as personal, lives. Lessons from the case studies indicate that AWEN has contributed quite considerably to union leaders' increased knowledge and awareness of gender equality issues.

In Zanzibar, the Teachers' Union succeeded in getting an amendment added to the constitution, which will ensure the establishment of women's committees and female representation at all levels. The constitution now requires a 50/50 male/female representation of elected representatives at all levels. These changes were also considered to be the result of enhanced awareness among union leaders. In Ghana, there has been an increase of women in leadership positions, and currently, three out of five national trade union officials are women. In Zimbabwe, all trade unions now have women represented at the national level.





Woman working on a banana plantation in Costa Rica.

## LATIN AMERICA: FOCUS ON GENDER EQUALITY

**C**ombating sexual harassment and violence at work is a fundamental trade union issue. A major part of the project “Regional IUF Women’s Network Latin America” is about developing strategies for gender equality and against all forms of discrimination.

“The problems are still taboo and we must together demand common change,” says Pim van Dorpel, Vice Chairman of the Swedish partner union The Hotel and Restaurant Workers’ Union (HRF). “It is also very important that men work equally actively with the issue”, he adds.

Through the project, a trade union network was created in Costa Rica, which negotiated better working conditions for 900 women. Another success is the written agreement with companies in the food sector that favours 50,000 workers, mainly women, in Brazil. In Peru, trade unions are working against trafficking.

“For change, active action is required and not just words”, says Pim van Dorpel. “We operate in a global market and there is a need for structured efforts to clarify the basic feminist view of all trade union activities. This is solidarity.”

## WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE TO YOU?

Anneli Gåverud, Swedish Association  
of Health Professionals, Region Öster-  
götland

PHOTO: VÄRDFÖRBUNDET



“The Swedish Association of Health Professionals cooperates with both Union to Union and the International Council of Nurses, ICN, which is an international professional federation. In many countries, nurses and other public employees are not allowed to join or form unions, but they may participate in professional organisations. One such country is Lesotho, where we participate in a project that I have visited many times.

It is vital to be able to improvise and suddenly our common efforts will bear fruit, as when our colleagues in Lesotho recently, despite it being forbidden, decided to try to form a union.

It is a privilege to work with global union issues with colleagues from around the world.”

Ina Eriksson, Principal  
International Secretary, Swedish  
Teachers’ Union

PHOTO: STEFAN NILSSON



“Engagement in global union issues is of major interest for our union, and for many years 1.5 per cent of our union dues have been set aside for international solidarity. This commitment is part of our identity. An important issue for us today is the de-professionalisation

that is taking place globally. There is a lack of teachers in many countries, and non-professionals receive low pay, can be sacked easily, and are often denied their union rights.

We know that strong unions and social dialogue are an excellent mechanism for resolving social conflicts.

Violence is not needed to bring about social justice, change can be achieved by peaceful means!”





Students at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria.

## INCREASED KNOWLEDGE LEADS TO INCREASED INVOLVEMENT

**C**ommunication is key to ensuring respect and awareness for global labour rights, the importance of social dialogue, a Just Transition, and UN Sustainable Development Goals. Union to Union strives every day to promote human rights at work and support for the creation and strengthening of trade unions. Our work in communications seeks to influence and raise recognition of working conditions in low-income countries and to strengthen awareness of international trade union development co-operation and its relevance for the challenges of the future.

Working closely together with trade unions in Sweden, Union to Union develops and produces campaign and training materials on global issues that can be used in trade union communications and lecturing, as well as by educators.

Union to Union is continuously developing

and adapting its communications channels in order to reach out in the most efficient way. The most important annual campaign is for the Global Rights Index, which details current democratic challenges in approximately 140 countries and the increasing number of violations of labour rights worldwide.

Through Union to Union, Swedish trade unions can also apply for grants for information and communications activities to familiarise their members with trade union development cooperation. One channel for reaching out is through news stories and reports in magazines published by trade unions.

Union to Union is also supporting and financing initiatives to spread knowledge and awareness of labour rights in low income countries, among them the Network of Schyst resande, Fairtrade Sweden, and Arbetet Global, a special edition of the magazine Arbetet.



# SUSTAINABLE TOURISM – TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN!

**G**lobally, sustainable travel and tourism is a growing trend. Union to Union supports financially the Swedish Network of Schyst resande, that promotes fair and socially sustainable tourism as a force for development. The network highlights various aspects of tourism, focusing on labour rights and the need for trade unions and decent working conditions.

The network reaches out to the Swedish general public with information, organises training courses, and facilitates cooperation with involved participants. The goal is to show the possibility of experiencing the world while at the same time contributing to the sustainable use of our common resources.



Backpacking in Thailand.

The Network of Schyst resande is a collaboration among seven organizations, including two trade unions and Union to Union, each of them contributing expert knowledge. The network is in dialogue with Swedish travel agencies and tour operators. Another aim is to influence travel policies within the Swedish public sector. The network also works internationally through the non-profit organisation Roundtable Human Rights in Tourism.



Man working on a banana plantation in Costa Rica.

## FAIRTRADE – A PATH TO DECENT WORK

**T**he main reason behind Union to Union's financial support of Fairtrade in Sweden is simple. We want to strengthen public involvement on behalf of better conditions for workers and respect for human rights in low income countries and in the supply chain, as well as local sustainability and environmental awareness.

Fairtrade's vision is world trade under fair conditions, where workers in countries with widespread poverty can enjoy a safe and sustainable existence, and where they can determine their own futures. These criteria not only impose requirements on long-term trade agreements, but also mean increased wages for employees.

Through Fairtrade, employees gain better knowledge of their rights, improved livelihoods, and a stronger position on the world market. It is a force of action for change - and provides a possible path out of poverty.

Fairtrade Sweden is the Swedish representative in Fairtrade International. Union to Union and Fairtrade Sweden have a joint mission to increase awareness of the need for a world of Decent work, and to encourage interest in Fairtrade-labelled products in Sweden.



# THREATS, RESTRICTIONS AND VIOLENCE: THE EVERYDAY LIFE OF UNION ACTIVISTS

Globally, the need for stronger trade unions grows every year, as the democratic space for working people continues to shrink. The 2018 Global Rights Index saw restrictions on free speech and the right to protest, as well as increasingly violent attacks on defenders of workers' rights. Access to decent work and democratic rights grew weaker in almost every country, while inequalities continued to increase.

**C**ompared to previous years, the situation in 2018 worsened in most aspects. Sixty-five percent of countries deny workers the right to establish or join a trade union, an increase from sixty percent in 2017. Eighty-five countries refuse to recognise the right to strike.

The number of countries that deny or constrain freedom of speech increased from 50 in 2017 to 54 in 2018.

The number of countries where workers were the targets of murder, physical violence, death threats, or intimidation rose significantly from 59 in 2017 to 65 in 2018. In Colombia alone, 19 trade union members were murdered during the year.

The year was also marked by the increasing use of claims of defamation by employers targeting trade union leaders, creating a climate of fear and intimidation which stops people from voicing opinions. The ten worst countries for workers in 2018 were Algeria, Bangladesh,

Cambodia, Colombia, Egypt, Guatemala, Kazakhstan, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey.

## Methodology

For more than 30 years, trade unions have documented violations of labour rights. The Global Rights Index aims to increase the visibility and transparency of each country's record on the rights of workers. The ITUC has compiled a list of 97 indicators corresponding to violations and recorded in the survey. The Global Rights Index ranks countries on the degree of respect for workers' rights on a 1-5 scale based on the degree of respect for workers' rights (with 1 as "sporadic violations of rights" and 5 as "no guarantee of rights due to the breakdown of law").

Violations are identified by ITUC affiliates through a questionnaire to 325 national unions in 161 countries. Some countries have not been included in the most recent report as some trade unions were unable to submit reports or the information gathered by the ITUC didn't fulfil the criteria.

**The Global Rights Index** is a unique compilation of data from all over the world on the rights of workers. The Global Rights Index is supported by Union to Union and compiled by the ITUC. The annual report generates extensive coverage in the media.





## COLOMBIA, ONE OF THE WORST COUNTRIES FOR WORKERS

On the 21st of June 2018, teacher and local trade union leader Evelia Francisca Atencia Pérez was on her way home from work, in the La Guajira region of Colombia. A man on a motorcycle was waiting outside her home. Without a word, he shot her dead at close range. Evelia Francisca Atencia Pérez was 51 years old.

According to the ITUC Global Rights Index, during 2018 nineteen trade union members were murdered in Colombia, a dramatic rise from eleven the previous year. This makes it the most dangerous country in the world to be a trade union activist. The report lists Colombia as one of the worst countries for workers in 2018, with no guarantee of rights”.

The situation today “is a global threat to democracy and security. Governments must act in the interest of working people”, said Sharan Burrow, General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation, in a statement.

According to the National Trade Union School (Escuela Nacional Sindical, ENS) 3,000 trade union activists have been murdered in Colombia since 1973. By the end of 2018, there were at least 14,805 violations of life, liberty and integrity, including 3,180 homicides and 7,281 death threats.





## MEMBERS OF THE BOARD, UNION TO UNION

**From left to right:**

**Jonas Nordling**, President The Swedish Union of Journalists; TCO (Vice President)

**Laila Abdallah**, International Secretary Saco; Saco

**Pim van Dorpel**, Vice President Swedish Hotel and Restaurant Workers' Union; LO

**Anna Jensen Naatikka**, Union Secretary The Swedish Industrial Union and Swedish Metalworkers' Union; LO

**Ove Andersson**, Second Vice President The Swedish Medical Association; Saco

**Maria Rönn**, Vice President The Swedish Teachers' Union; TCO

**Heike Erkers**, President The Union for Professionals; Saco (Vice President)

**Mikael Johansson**, President Swedish Painters' Union; LO

**Berit Müllerström**, Second Vice President LO; LO (President)

*Not in the picture:*

**Sofia Eriksson**, International Secretary International department Swedish Municipal Workers' Union; LO

**Torbjörn Bredin**, Administrative Director TCO; TCO

**Anna Gustafsson**, International Secretary TCO; TCO



” Through Union to Union, the Swedish trade unions’ international development and solidarity organisation, trade union members and elected representatives work for a more equal world.

We are proud that the entire Swedish trade union movement stands behind the organisation and its mandate to coordinate and support Swedish trade unions’ international development cooperation as well to work to increase the role for trade union development work.

The work of trade unions is essential for achieving decent working conditions, democracy, poverty reduction, gender equality and social justice in low- and middle income countries.

We both want to and need to change the world in order to reach the UN’s global goals for sustainable development. At the same time being member of a trade union can be a threat to one’s life in an increasing number of countries and workers’ rights are diminishing at a worrying pace.

This confirms the importance of international engagement and we are proud of the work that is supported through Union to Union. Being a member of a trade union means being a part of this international effort and trade unions do make a difference. Together we are strong.”

*The Union to Union Board*



**UNION**  
**TO UNION**

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