

SUSTAINABILITY AND DECENT JOBS IN A CHANGING WORLD

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

**UNION
TO UNION**

LO, TCO & SACO GLOBAL

UNION TO UNION

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Cover photo: Karen Robinson/Panos Pictures. Workers at a coffee cooperative in Uganda on the way to their workplace. The cooperative exports Fairtrade-branded coffee to Great Britain.

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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

At this point one year ago, many of us probably thought that Covid-19 would soon be a thing of the past. Instead, the virus has changed things in ways we couldn't imagine. Many industries have been turned upside down and millions of people have lost their jobs. In low- and middle-income countries, many have been hit very hard. Workers in the informal economy have been particularly vulnerable.

Although the year we leave behind has been difficult in many ways, I would like to highlight some of the bright spots. For it is with pride, and with hope for the future, that I look back on the year 2020.

Over the past year, the trade union movement around the world has shown proof of incredible resilience and capacity to deal with crises. Covid-19 has forced trade unions to adapt to new challenges and has been successful in many places in helping its members to make demands for reasonable conditions. What became clear over the year is that strong independent unions have a key role to play in times of crisis and that those who were not protected by trade union rights and social safety nets were those who were hit hardest when the crisis struck.

I am also proud of the adaptability shown by the staff at the *Union to Union* office in Stockholm. Despite the fact that operations have been completely transformed, with remote working and digital meetings, and despite the fact that we cancelled all traveling during the year, it has been possible to maintain the collaboration between Stockholm and partners and colleagues around the world in a fantastic way. We have organised webinars, written opinion articles, made videos and produced new reports (for more information on this, see page 7).

One memorable event from the year was a digital visit by the Minister for Foreign Affairs to *Union to Union*. Ann Linde spoke about the go-

vernment's democracy initiative and about trade union rights as a natural element of the initiative. This is important - not least in view of the fact that authoritarian leaders have used the pandemic to further limit democracy and the ability of trade unions to advocate for and influence workers' rights. This motivates us at *Union to Union* to work even harder for a just world.

The trade union movement has a very important role to play in the work of rebuilding following the Covid-19 pandemic. The world now has a chance to "build back better", and greener, and that's something that we at *Union to Union* want to be an active and leading part of. In the year ahead, we will have to ask ourselves how to rebalance and build secure jobs in a very vulnerable labour market where the need for a fair, and green, transition is great.

I would like to conclude by thanking all Sweden's trade unions and our international partners for their excellent cooperation - together we make a difference! Despite the trials of the past year, I am hopeful and positive. Let's look ahead and continue our work to strengthen human rights at work with full vigour.

Sofia Östmark
Secretary General
Union to Union

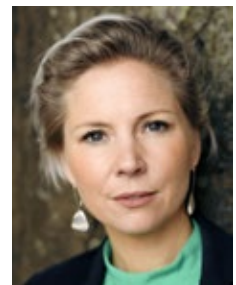


PHOTO: STEFAN TELL

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 movement. 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.

200 million members



85 projects



63 countries

27 swedish trade unions actively participated in development projects 2020

- Akademikerförbundet SSR
- Fackförbundet Scen & film
- Fackförbundet ST
- Fastighetsanställdas Förbund
- Finansförbundet
- GS-facket
- Handelsanställdas förbund
- Hotell- och restaurang-facket
- 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 Läkarförbund
- Unionen
- Vision
- Vårdförbundet

How we work

Union to Union's work is primarily aimed at strengthening the capacity for organising, negotiating, advocacy, gender equality and democracy in unions in low- and middle-income countries.

Activities are conducted via an extensive international network consisting of *Union to Union* and Swedish trade unions – in collaboration with global union federations and the International Trade Union Confederation (GUF, ITUC, see page 9). The focus is on strengthening local unions in countries with widespread poverty. The international network of free, democratic unions and federations makes trade union development cooperation possible.

Union to Union also supports and initiates knowledge-enhancing activities in Sweden. The aim is to increase awareness of and commitment to international trade union development cooperation, as well as 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. Read more on page 31.

Project activities

In 2020, *Union to Union* supported 85 projects/programmes in 63 countries. In Sweden, 27 unions were involved in development cooperation projects. Swedish unions have an important role to play through their contributions of expert experience and knowledge. Projects are grouped into four main thematic areas. See the infographic below, and read more on the following pages.

Staff and organisation

Union to Union has an office with 20 employees in Stockholm. The office coordinates and conducts activities, for example by offering expertise in methodology, financial monitoring and training to Swedish unions and global union organisations. The board (see page 36) consists of representatives from Swedish trade unions and is appointed by LO, TCO and Saco. The board determines the main focus of activities.

UNION TO UNION

Organising for decent work, democracy and social justice



NEW
REPORTS!

JUST TRANSITION

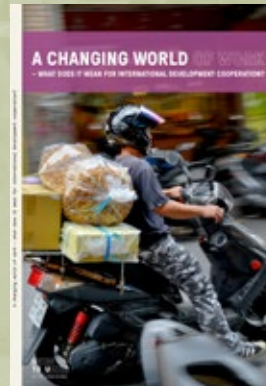
The climate is an important issue in the context of international development cooperation. In order to alleviate poverty, fight the climate crisis and ultimately achieve social justice, it is important that a Just Transition is a part of national, regional and global climate strategies.



This report presents examples of how trade unions work to ensure a Just Transition in low- and middle income countries. It also explains how trade unions, together with other development cooperation actors, can work together to strengthen collaboration on climate issues. The report also presents recommendations for efficient climate change transformation.

THE FUTURE OF WORK

The global labour market is undergoing significant changes. There is, however, not much research on how these changes affect the labour market in low- and middle income countries. One thing is clear: global development cooperation needs to adapt to new conditions in order to protect labour rights.



In "A changing world of work", questions of the future of work is examined from a labour union perspective. How can labour unions tackle this new reality – and an ever growing informal economy? The report presents examples and recommendations.

THE COVID 19-PANDEMIC AND TRADE UNION WORK

For many people, the socioeconomic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic has been greater than the health aspects. The COVID-19 pandemic has made it clear just how important international development cooperation is for rebuilding societies – and make them better.

The livelihood of millions of people is at stake. Those already living in poverty and under tough conditions are also those being hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic: migrant workers, women and workers in the informal sector. During the year, *Union to Union* highlighted several examples on how workers around the world were impacted. There were many challenges – but also good examples of how trade unions adapted to the new situation.

The COVID-19 pandemic affected projects and programmes financed by *Union to Union* as well. Many activities had to be postponed or cancelled. However, together with partners, *Union to Union* adapted several processes to deal with new challenges. There was also special funding made available to promote innovative projects related to the pandemic.





Olivier Nteziryayo in his workshop in Kigali, Rwanda, where he designs and builds drones.

Photo: Sven Torfinn/Panos Pictures

Global unions build the future together

With 200 million members globally, the trade union movement is the largest social movement in the world. Sweden's trade unions are part of this network and have always cooperated internationally. As companies and the labour market become globalised, this international cooperation is becoming increasingly important. Against that background, global framework agreements have come into being, establishing fundamental conditions (see info box).

Most of *Union to Union's* projects are performed in collaboration with Swedish unions and a global union. The global unions are categorised by sector. The Swedish unions are members of one or more global unions.

In addition to the global unions, there is the ITUC (International Trade Union Confederation). It is the world's largest trade union organisation. The principal members of the ITUC are central union organisations – in Sweden these are LO, TCO and Saco.



Global framework

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.

In addition to conducting development projects, the ITUC and the global unions maintain a watch on common union issues and represent their members in various international arenas. They also monitor and influence decisions within the ILO (International Labour Organisation), and other UN agencies. The global unions 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.

WHY DO UNIONS WORK GLOBALLY?

TO STRENGTHEN DEMOCRACY!

Human rights at the workplace are being violated and restricted globally. In order to examine this, the global trade union confederation ITUC annually presents the Global Rights Index. In 2020, the report stated, among other things, that arbitrary imprisonments of union members were carried out in 60 countries. In nine countries, trade unionists were murdered.

– That workers are dying due to their union commitment and their willingness to improve working conditions is unacceptable, says Sofia Östmark, Secretary General at *Union to Union*.

Union to Union, and the Swedish trade unions, urge decision makers in Sweden and around the world to protect democracy and human rights. Read more about the Global Rights Index on page 29.

TO CREATE MORE DECENT JOBS!

Decent working conditions and human rights are necessary to reduce global inequality. Today, an estimated two billion workers work in the informal labour market. Informal workers often lack access to basic security, safety and collective agreements. The existence of strong, independent and democratic trade unions is fundamental to enable the creation of more decent jobs globally. Local unions globally, with the support of Swedish unions and *Union to Union*, work through union development cooperation to facilitate and develop trade unions around the world. Not only because it is necessary – but because union rights cannot be taken for granted. Read more about this on page 13.

FOR A JUST TRANSITION!

The climate crisis mostly affects the poorest and most vulnerable. Digitization and environmental impact is creating a new labour market. Jobs disappear, transform or are created when societies change. Therefore, unions work globally for a Just transition. *Union to Union*, together with local and global trade unions, work to strengthen the ability and capacity of trade unions in low- and middle-income countries, enabling them to negotiate and participate in the dialogue on climate change, biological diversity and decent work. New jobs created must be green, sustainable and decent!



PHOTO: G.M.B. AKASH/PANOS PICTURES

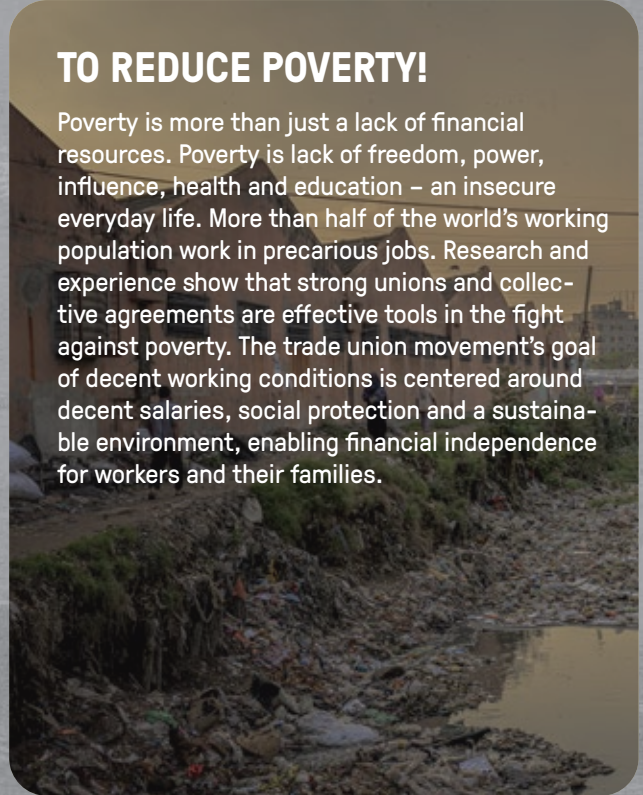
TO EXERT INFLUENCE!

Union to Union and the global trade union movement work for a transition from insecure to secure jobs with decent wages. The purpose of global trade union development is to enable workers in low- and middle-income countries to influence and improve their access to human rights, as well as improving their livelihood. Globally, democracy is under pressure. Through the global cooperation around Agenda 2030, the visibility of union work is strengthened, together with the fact that decent working conditions, equality and Just Transition is the path to sustainable development. The global trade union movement urges decision makers, organisations, politicians and businesses to increase the focus on decent working conditions. Not only for today but for the labour market of the future!



TO REDUCE POVERTY!

Poverty is more than just a lack of financial resources. Poverty is lack of freedom, power, influence, health and education – an insecure everyday life. More than half of the world's working population work in precarious jobs. Research and experience show that strong unions and collective agreements are effective tools in the fight against poverty. The trade union movement's goal of decent working conditions is centered around decent salaries, social protection and a sustainable environment, enabling financial independence for workers and their families.



FOR GENDER EQUALITY!

Union demands are clear: all workers have the right to a decent salary. Furthermore, everyone should be able to influence their work situation. No one should experience violence in the workplace.

Lower wages, poorer working conditions and harassment in the workplace is common for many women all over the world, but the trade union movement's work makes a difference. An excellent example of this is Convention 190, against violence and harassment in the world of work. The convention was adopted by ILO (International Labour Organization), during the summer of 2019. The work for gender equality is streamlined in the projects conducted by local unions globally, Swedish unions and *Union to Union*. Read more about this on page 24.



PHOTO: DAVID LUNDMARK



Workers at a tannery in Bangladesh.

THEMATIC AREA 1.

Independent, representative and democratic trade unions



OBJECTIVE: To strengthen independent, representative and democratic trade union organisations that are efficient in organising new members and conducting successful trade union work with respect for human rights.

Strong organisations are key to success

Freedom of association, the right to organise in unions, protection of the right to organise and the right to collective bargaining are clearly expressed in the core conventions of ILO, the UN's labour organisation.

Over the past twenty years, the democratic space and the ability to freely organise and express one's views has been eroded in many parts of the world. This has made it more difficult for unions to operate. Furthermore, in many countries there is little knowledge of international law and agreements. At the same time, trade union members and unions are subjected to legal assaults,

threats and violence from states and other actors who want to put an end to trade union work for decent working conditions.

Organisational capacity and financial resources are vital prerequisites for trade unions to be autonomous and strong. An important part of the work of *Union to Union* and the trade union movement is therefore to support union building and facilitate organising and increased representativity. This is done for example through the development of membership recruitment methods. Training and capacity development are important elements in the drive for better working conditions – which we help to achieve by strengthening local unions.



PHOTO: GRMA

“There is a huge potential for midwives in Ghana”

A photo from the award ceremony for “Midwife of the year in east Ghana” in 2019. The picture shows Netta Forson Ackon, Cynthia Dzordzorme, Comfort Aabea Danso and Elsie Abankwah.

Midwives play a vital role during pregnancy and childbirth, but their work doesn’t stop there. Midwives are also important players in areas such as sexual counselling, gender equality and domestic violence. Despite this, low wages, inadequate working conditions and discrimination are commonplace for many midwives in Ghana. GRMA (the Ghana Registered Midwives Association) hopes to change that in the future.

In 2019, GRMA was re-organised from a stakeholder organisation into a trade union. There were many challenges during the process, but with more than 11,000 members, the potential is huge.

– We had problems getting people involved at regional level, says Fredrica Hanson of GRMA. Part of the problem, she says, has been that GRMA itself has not been good enough at marketing itself. In addition there has been a lack of strategic thinking for the future.

This is where the project that the Ghana Registered Midwives Association and the Swedish Midwives Association are implementing, with support from *Union to Union*, comes into play. The objective of the project is to help strengthen

GRMA as an organisation, to enable it create better ways to recruit and retain members – so that it can become a stronger voice for the country’s midwives.

– The project has created a forum for sharing knowledge and becoming inspired, as well as a means of building a stronger union, says Fredrica Hanson, explaining that the first activity in the project was a much-needed evaluation of the union’s own activities.



– We established annual planning, which was a milestone because this was the first time that regional departments were also involved in the planning of activities. We are already seeing the results, in terms of increased membership in local branches.

Due to the pandemic, GRMA has been focusing intensively on converting to digital project activities. In Ghana, midwives were not included in PPE training during the first wave. This led to several deaths. But Fredrica Hanson is optimistic about the future. She points out that within GRMA there is a widespread desire to develop.



– There is a huge potential for midwives in Ghana, she concludes.

RESULTS IN 2020 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.




In particularly affected sectors, union work has become increasingly difficult during the pandemic, but many unions have successfully restructured their activities during the year to adapt to the current situation. Several examples show that adapted recruitment methods, digital solutions and innovative ways of conducting negotiations and advocacy work have led to increased membership and more people being trained in trade union issues.




Despite a year that resulted in jobs being lost due to the pandemic, 95 trade unions in 44 countries participating in the global trade union BWI's program Amandla! recruited more than 68,000 new union members. This is a result of training in methods and strategies for recruiting members.



In Malawi, after several years of persistent work, PSEUM, the trade union for private school teachers, has become a sought-after actor in the field of improving teachers' working conditions and national educational issues. In 2020, the PSEUM visited 120 schools, recruiting 1,045 new union members. In the project, advocacy work and skills development are important parts.



By 2020, nine new trade unions have been formed or recognised by employers. One of these was formed in Namibia, and was the country's first union for journalists.

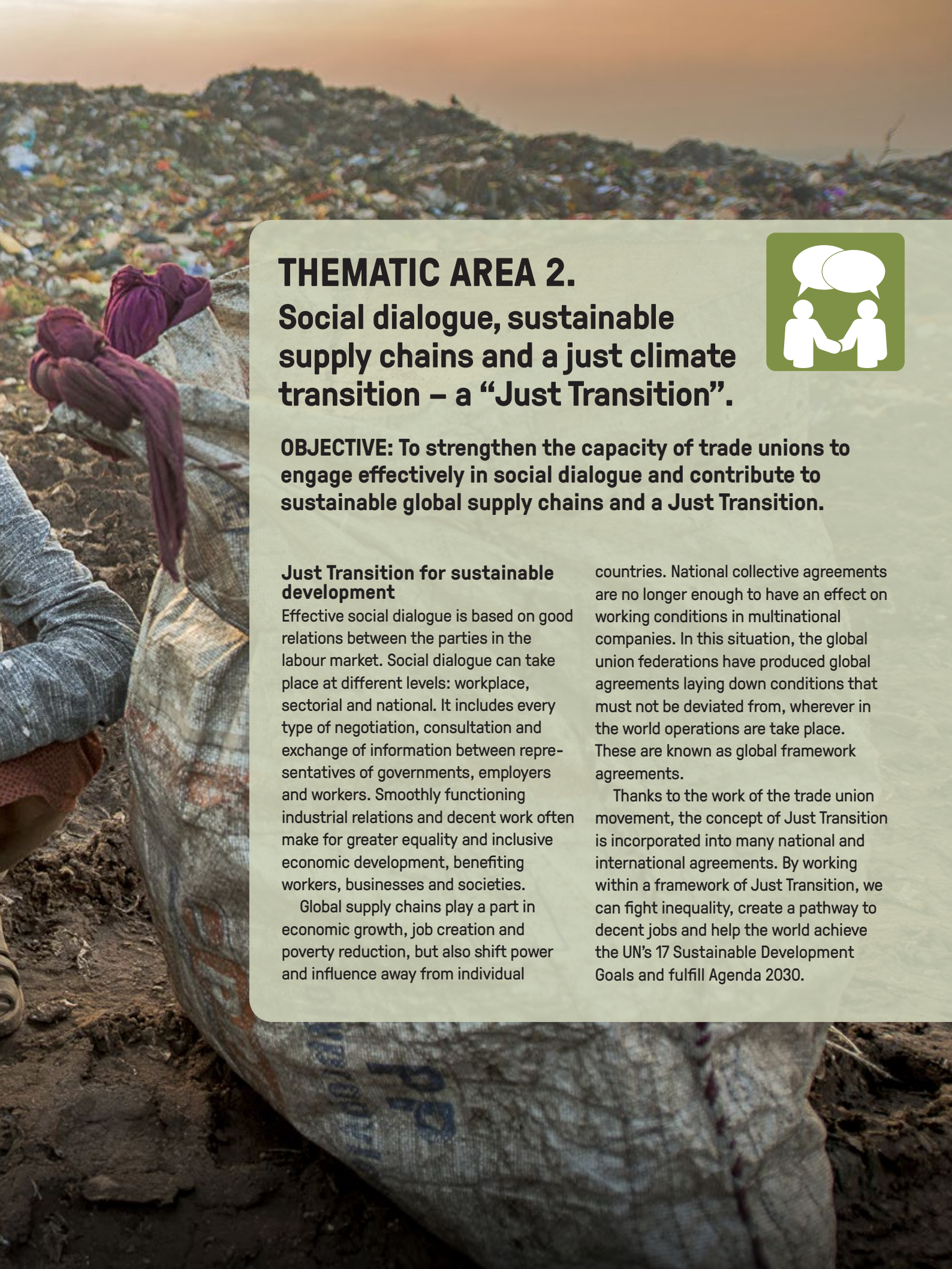


In Lesotho, the LNA (Lesotho Nurses Association) successfully carried out advocacy work towards the government to ensure that healthcare workers had access to protective equipment and the risk supplement due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the trade union development project, the LNA has become stronger as an organisation and thus able to become more effective in its advocacy.





Jassiben takes a break from collecting garbage at the garbage dump Piranha in Ahmedabad, India. Jassiben and her colleagues have organised to be able to push for better working conditions.



THEMATIC AREA 2.

Social dialogue, sustainable supply chains and a just climate transition – a “Just Transition”.



OBJECTIVE: To strengthen the capacity of trade unions to engage effectively in social dialogue and contribute to sustainable global supply chains and a Just Transition.

Just Transition for sustainable development

Effective social dialogue is based on good relations between the parties in the labour market. Social dialogue can take place at different levels: workplace, sectorial and national. It includes every type of negotiation, consultation and exchange of information between representatives of governments, employers and workers. Smoothly functioning industrial relations and decent work often make for greater equality and inclusive economic development, benefiting workers, businesses and societies.

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

countries. National collective agreements are no longer enough to have an effect on working conditions in multinational companies. In this situation, the global union federations have produced global agreements laying down conditions that must not be deviated from, wherever in the world operations are take place. These are known as global framework agreements.

Thanks to the work of the trade union movement, the concept of Just Transition is incorporated into many national and international agreements. By working within a framework of Just Transition, we can fight inequality, create a pathway to decent jobs and help the world achieve the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals and fulfill Agenda 2030.



PHOTO: UNI GLOBAL UNION

Negotiations created results in Peru's financial sector

Demonstrations against layoffs in the financial sector in Lima, Peru.

Peru's constitution guarantees freedom of association as well as giving public and private sector workers the right to bargain collectively and to strike. Nevertheless, violations of trade union rights are commonplace.

– Our employer violated our rights on so many occasions that we realised it was vital to get organised to defend our human rights. It was just a small group of us at the bank who formed the union that is now Sincrediscotia, says Patricia M. Salazar Parra, Board Chair.

Today, Sincrediscotia is one of the major trade unions in the country's financial sector.

Shortly after the union succeeded in signing a collective agreement with the bank Crediscotia, following a long period of negotiation, the bank suddenly announced that 353 employees had been made redundant. Among those made redundant were 70% of the bank's union members and the entire union Board.

Social dialogue – which basically encompasses all kinds of negotiation and consultation between representatives of, for example, workers and employers – turned out to be the solution. After several rounds of high-pressure talks and negotiations through legal channels, the parties agreed that the dismissed employees were to have their jobs back.

– The solidarity and international support that we received played a crucial role, says Miguel A. Portuguez Herrera, CFO at Sincrediscotia. He refers to the development project in progress with the global union UNI and the Financial Sector Union of Sweden, with the support of *Union to Union*. One of the aims of the project is to increase knowledge of and skills in negotiation techniques.

Another positive effect of the events is that the country's solidarity movement has awakened. Despite the pandemic, membership of Sincrediscotia has increased by 20%.

RESULTS IN 2020 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.

After years of negotiations, the National Federation of Food and Beverage Workers (FSBMM) in Indonesia signed a national framework agreement covering all workers at three factories and one distribution centre. It was the first national framework agreement of this kind in the country to include a comprehensive wage scale. This was a major achievement after 5 years of negotiations of the national bargaining team trained under this project. The negotiations were completed in virtual meetings.



In 2020, both global and local unions, with funding from *Union to Union* focused on implementation and compliance of more than 2,500 collective agreements at workplace or sector level including issues of occupational health and safety. This has been especially important in light of the pandemic and its consequences.



Thanks to the swift action of the State Employees' Union, SEUU, in Ukraine, a planned 50 percent reduction in civil service jobs resulted in a 34 percent reduction. This saved 9,000 jobs and was a result of SEUU's systematic work on collective bargaining and training of union members.



In 22 countries, 52 trade unions contributed to the adoption of 36 laws and regulations on government obligations regarding working conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic. These included personal protective equipment, minimum wages and conditions for teleworking.



The projects that focus on Just Transition, a fair way to address climate change, show significant capacity and knowledge development. Among other things, this has led to several trade unions being involved in strategies in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC).





In Nigeria, extremist group Boko Haram has forced more than two million people to leave their homes and workplaces. In the north eastern parts of the country, there are several camps for these displaced people. Global Union Federation PSI has established a project in the area, to ensure that people have access to basic human rights.

THEMATIC AREA 3.

Organising in the informal sector, migration and precarious work.



OBJECTIVE: To improve conditions for people in the informal sector, migrant workers and workers in precarious jobs.

Unions work together for the rights of vulnerable groups

Precarious work is a term used to describe jobs and other work that fall outside the scope of contracts and regulations – and where wages are often too low to make a living on.

In recent decades, new forms of work, in the “gig economy”, have become more common. At the same time the number of traditional jobs has decreased. This change has been driven partly by the shift from manufacturing to services, and partly by digital developments. The informal sector is estimated to provide a livelihood for between 50 and 70 per cent of all workers in sub-Saharan Africa, as well as in South Asia and Latin America.


Those working in the informal sector fall outside the reach of labour law and all forms of social protection. The creation of more jobs in the formal sector is therefore a fundamental issue

in terms of a fair, inclusive and sustainable future with decent working conditions.

This is also part of the ILO’s Decent Work Agenda and Goal 8 of the UN’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Today, 200 million people live as migrant workers, which means they work outside their country of origin. Discrimination and exploitation of migrant workers deflates the level of wages and working conditions for all workers in the country concerned. That is why migration is a labour market issue. Successful global trade unionism is key to securing the rights of migrants and refugees and ensuring that they have access to basic services where they work.

Unions need to intensify their focus on workers outside traditional forms of employment, including supporting the creation of independent organisations – to make it possible for migrant workers to join unions as well.



Nepalese workers seeking work abroad must collect certain documents. During the years before the COVID-19 pandemic, up to 3,000 people per day could gather at the offices where documents were held. This photo is from one of those offices.

Tough negotiations for Nepal's migrant workers

The pandemic struck migrant workers from Nepal fast and hard. Their already precarious conditions, often on construction sites in Asia and the Middle East, resulted in a complete loss of livelihood for many: no jobs, no money. That's when Gefont stepped in.

– 89 migrant workers, working for a construction company in Kuwait, had not been paid for two months, says Bidur Karki, Vice-President of Gefont, the General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions.

– We helped them with food for the day, then we contacted their employer. At first it was just impossible, but after many meetings the construction company paid out all the wages due.

But the major effort in the year of the pandemic was bringing home as many as 700,000 migrant workers when their jobs disappeared. Gefont is working hard to increase the union's influence on the political level and, drawing on its negotiating experience, was able to put pressure on the Nepalese government. Gefont pushed through paid home travel and some financial support.

– We are putting pressure on the government to ensure that the professional skills of returnees

are put to use and that they get paid jobs, says Bidur Karki.

The project “Transformation by Building Workers Power” in Nepal is being conducted in partnership with the LO-TCO Project Office. Gefont operates on a broad front in trade union training, recruitment and organisation of, not least, migrant workers. The slogan “Gefont is there wherever there are migrant workers from Nepal” holds good: in more than ten countries, Gefont holds trainings and negotiates to improve tough working conditions, raise the level of long-term pay and put an end to harassment.

Bidur Karki emphasises how important training is in a country with a neglected educational system.


– Around 100 migrant workers attended courses during the year and they really appreciated learning more, so they can organise and defend their rights.

To ensure that more people can afford to stay in their home country, Gefont has successfully campaigned for regulated minimum pay in Nepal. But the opportunities for earning a living remains slim.


– Many people are waiting to be able to return to their jobs abroad, says Bidur Karki.

RESULTS IN 2020 THEMATIC AREA 3


The Agenda 2030 principle that no one should be left behind 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.





The projects within this programme report that over 13,170 migrant workers joined a trade union. This not only reduces poverty, but also increases their ability to secure their human rights in working life. The success is a result of several things: new innovative recruitment strategies (such as recruiting in the countries of origin), workplace visits, COVID-related support packages from trade unions, and the fact that many in the industrial and construction sectors have become members when their employment was formalised through union work.




Trade unions in the public sector, such as healthcare and other community services, in Nigeria have, through successful bargaining work, gained more employed workers and safer working conditions, enabling them to meet the rights of vulnerable groups, such as refugees.



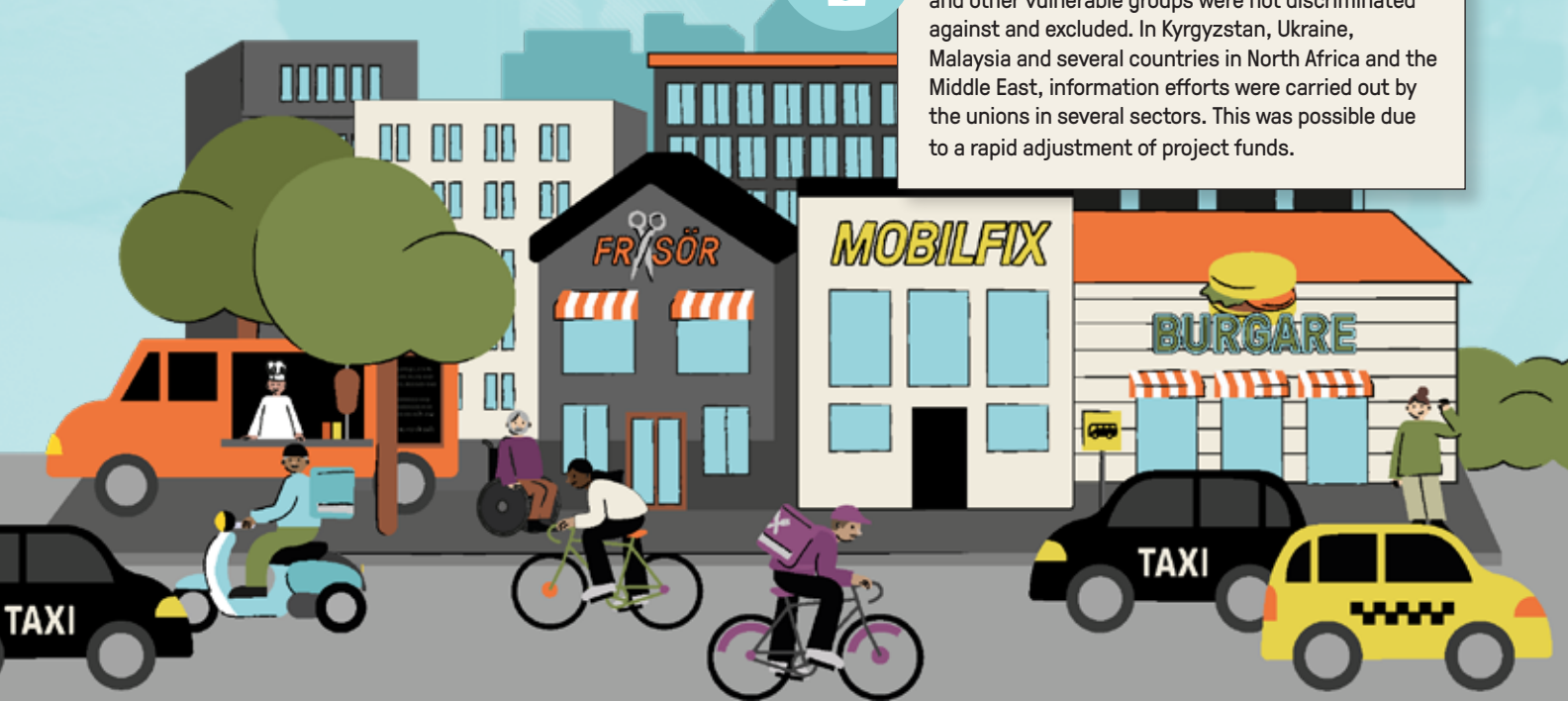
In Eswatini and Egypt, increased knowledge and understanding of the situation of informal workers has led trade unions to raise the issue of working conditions in the public sector and propose measures to improve them. This result shows that when unions are strengthened as actors of change, it creates ripples on the water affecting the work situation for both organised and unorganised workers.



Through negotiations, sectoral unions in Malaysia, Vietnam and Niger have succeeded in contributing to better working conditions and social protection for informal workers in national labour laws. This includes, among other things, health care, sick leave and housing costs for migrant workers.

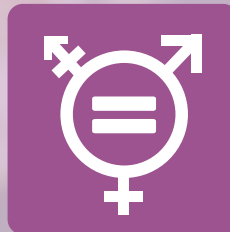


During the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic, the trade union movement was an important player in disseminating information to vulnerable groups in the labour market about occupational health and safety, but also in disseminating knowledge so that migrants and other vulnerable groups were not discriminated against and excluded. In Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, Malaysia and several countries in North Africa and the Middle East, information efforts were carried out by the unions in several sectors. This was possible due to a rapid adjustment of project funds.



THEMATIC AREA 4.

Increased gender equality in the workplace, society and trade unions.



OBJECTIVE: To strengthen trade unions as an actor in the work of increasing equality in the workplace, in society and among trade union representatives, and to increase female representation in unions.

Economic empowerment is key to gender equality

Women around the world face a wide range of structural inequalities in the labour market. 71% of men worldwide, compared to only 46% of women, are in paid employment. Even when women have good and secure jobs, their pay is on average 23% lower than men's, even though they do the same work.

In 104 countries governing legislation prohibits women from working in certain industries and professions. In 18 countries a man has the legal right to decide whether or not his wife can take a job. Promoting women's economic empowerment is central to the work of advancing women's rights and greater equality in society.

Trade unions have a key role to play in

this work. The promotion of gender equality is integral to every part of *Union to Union's* work. Strong trade union organisations play an important role in increasing gender equality in working life. The outcomes, achieved through collective bargaining and other forms of social dialogue, are often linked to gender equality and help in improving the situation of women, and thus in building better societies for all.

Union to Union is working to increase gender equality within union structures. Globally, more and more women are joining trade unions, but nevertheless more men than women occupy leading roles in unions, even in female-dominated industries. That's why *Union to Union* is working to increase the representation of women in unions both as members and in leadership roles.

Pauline Tshegofatso from Johannesburg works at Pick n Pay, one of South Africa's largest chains of retail stores.



Pick n Pay
TSHEGOFATSO

Two women observe a Chinese freight ship pass through the Suez channel.

YANG

Ship Ahoy! - Algerian women weigh anchor for gender equality

Most international transport takes place by sea – some 1.2 million seafarers are employed in civil shipping. Yet only a little more than one percent of them are women. Many women working at sea face discrimination and sexual harassment. They are also fighting against stereotyping and prejudices that seafaring is not for women, or that they bring bad luck on the seas, which makes it difficult to get a job even if they are better qualified than their male colleagues.

In some countries, women are not accepted to courses in marine education. This is something the union wants to change. In North Africa, the International Transport Workers' Federation, ITF, is working with Seko, with the support of *Union to Union*, to change social norms and create a work environment that is inclusive and equal.

Part of the project has been to set up Women's committees. Katia Krazam is a trade unionist with the Federation Nationale des Travailleurs des Transports, FNTT, in Algeria. She chairs the country's first women's committee for seafarers.

– Our first aim is to end the harassment that takes place at sea. Many women who work at sea don't know their rights or how to report harassment.

The project provides training and support to newly elected members of the women's commit-

tee to encourage more women to join the union and raise awareness of women's rights among members. Katia Krazam says that it is through trade union training that she has learned about seafarers' rights and obligations – but also about her rights as a human being and a woman.

The establishment of women's committees is one of several tools the project uses. The idea is to create space for women to be involved in decision-making within their own unions and thus also to be able to raise issues of sexual harassment or discrimination. This has contributed to a better understanding in the local unions, and within the male-dominated shipping industry, of the problems that women face in their professional role.

Another challenge for maritime unions is to retain the few women who are active and engaged, as many choose to go ashore when they get pregnant and do not return to work at sea when they have children.

– This is one of the reasons why I started getting involved in trade union issues, says Katia Krazam, who works as a third engineer on a passenger ship.

The lessons learned and experience gained from the Algerian Women's Committee are now being referred to as a model in the other countries participating in the project, with the aim of setting up women's committees for seafarers there as well.

RESULTS IN 2020 THEMATIC AREA 4

Over the past 10 years, unions around the world have worked intensively to raise awareness of the need to address gender-based violence at work. In 2019, these efforts culminated in the adoption of a new convention at the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) Annual Labour Conference – C190 Violence and Harassment at Work. The Convention is intended to protect all workers – irrespective of employment contract – from violence and harassment at work.



The projects in this thematic area include trainings in issues important for women at work and collective agreements that promote gender equality. Within trade unions, establishing women's committees is a common way of working. Globally, 37 trade unions reported new committees and networks in 2020. In Vietnam alone, the central organization VGCL (Vietnam General Confederation of Labour) formed 1,393 new women's committees in workplaces around the country.

Union to Union's projects are about strengthening trade unions' work against all forms of discrimination in the workplace. The tools include quotas, setting up special committees and making the trade union's position on particular issues visible. An example from 2020 is SUTRA, the union for H&M employees in Peru, which increased representation from both women and LGBTQI members in its bargaining teams by introducing quotas.



In Malaysia, the National Women's Committee LLRC (Labour Law Reform Coalition) organised a campaign that succeeded in including the requirement of 14 weeks' maternity leave in the official proposal for a change in the labour law. This is another example of how trade union work through women's committees can yield results.



Globally, 63 unions with the support of *Union to Union* were involved in campaigns around the international convention C190, which focuses on workplace safety and a stop to work-related violence.



Globally, 21 trade unions, participating in projects aimed at increasing gender equality, report an increase in the number of women in decision-making positions.





PHOTO: LINA KARLSSON

The trade union movement – a force for democracy

Gender equality workshop in Cotonou, Benin. The workshop was a part of the gender equality project "Promote women's participation in their unions Africa", conducted by Global Union Federation IUF and the Swedish unions Livs, Kommunal and HRF.

Around the world, the space for democracy is shrinking. The *Global Rights Index* is an annual review of the global situation of trade union rights conducted by ITUC (the International Trade Union Confederation). The 2020 report (see right) showed that the world's workers remain under pressure in their unionised work. Arbitrary arrests and imprisonment of workers took place in 60 countries and trade unionists were murdered in nine countries.

In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, there is also a risk that democratic space will shrink further as governments use the crisis as an excuse to restrict fundamental rights and freedoms.

The conclusion is clear: democratic trade unions are a counterweight to anti-democratic forces. Trade unions contribute to building societies of consensus and trust, not least through a trustful dialogue between the parties in the labour market.

As a way of helping to advance democratic development, *Union to Union* engages in advocacy activities. But how does it work?

Advocacy activities are mainly pursued through dialogue and cooperation with actors who promote, or have an interest in, seeing positive change in our partner countries. These

may involve politicians and diplomatic missions in Sweden, but advocacy is also conducted through networks operating at the UN and other international organisations. Work on influencing public opinion is conducted, for example, via articles, campaigns, panel discussions and seminars.

In 2020, *Union to Union's* advocacy work included, following dialogue with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, formulation of a number of recommendations as to how the Foreign Service can help to advance trade union rights within the framework of the government's democracy initiative.

Union to Union also contributed to the formulation of proposals for action on sustainable global development, including a section on labour migration, for CONCORD's *Barometer 2020*. *Barometer* has been widely used by civil society organisations in meetings with policymakers and the Foreign Service and has also served as a reference document for Sweden's ongoing work on the Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030.

Opinion pieces, articles, meetings with politicians and various panel discussions are further examples of *Union to Union's* work in 2020

Union to Union, in partnership with Sweden's trade unions, will continue its work to promote democracy, human rights and a green and fair working life for as long as it is necessary.

Global Rights Index 2020

The ten worst countries for workers



Trade unionists in

9

countries were killed



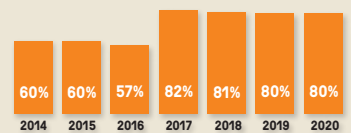
In **60**

countries there were arbitrary arrests or detention of workers



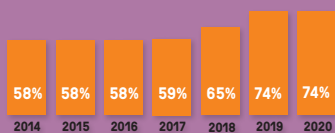
80%

of countries have violated the right to collective bargaining



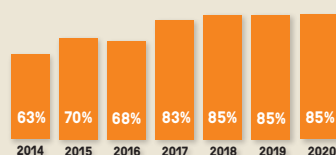
74%

of countries excluded workers from joining or establishing trade unions



85%

of countries violated the right to strike



56

countries have no or limited freedom of speech





Commitment starts with knowledge

The annual launch of Global Rights Index. In the photo: Sofia Östmark, Heike Erkers, Karl-Petter Thorwaldsson, Therese Svanström and Foreign Minister Ann Linde.

Knowledge is key to raising awareness of how crucial global trade union work is to achieving a just and socially sustainable world. Against that background, it is vital that people are made more aware of the often miserable conditions of the workers who sew our clothes and mine the metals for the batteries for our cars.

The communicative work of *Union to Union* aims to increase awareness and commitment to global labour issues among union members, teachers, policymakers and those of the public who are interested in development cooperation issues. This is partly done by describing the collective work of trade unions in low- and middle-income countries.

One of our interviewees during the year was Sister Sushma, who works on the Borhat tea plantation in Assam, India. When she went to meet her bosses, she took a bottle of cloudy liquid: “This water makes us and our children sick and then you complain that we don’t come to work”, said Sister Sushma, who negotiated clean drinking water for workers through the union’s women’s committee.

This is part of a project for Just Transition, in partnership with local unions, the global union IUF and Kommunal (the Swedish Municipal Workers’ Union), with the support of *Union to Union*. It is also an example of the #facketgörskillnad (“unions make a difference”) campaign, which also included digital training courses and webinars to raise awareness of the projects’ successes.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on workers

in countries with widespread poverty has been documented in reports, video interviews and webinars. Unions have had to work in new ways, and *Union to Union* has strengthened its collaboration with communicators at Swedish and global unions to become more member-oriented and relevant.

Other issues that have shaped the year include the debate on the labour market of the future, Just Transition and also the people’s protests in Belarus. *Union to Union* were involved in a number of issues, with contributions for example to several podcasts partly due to our expertise on Belarus and a Just Transition. *Union to Union* also collaborated on the Restart the World initiative.

In cooperation with the Swedish Union of Journalists, the If Metall union and Östgruppen (the Swedish Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights), *Union to Union* organised webinars on Belarus, including one at the Nordic Labour Film Festival in Malmö. *Union to Union*’s seminars and training packages have become more accessible through digitalisation. This enables participants and speakers from different locations.

This year’s biggest campaign to raise the profile of workers’ rights and the global work of trade unions was the launch of the Global Rights Index, produced by the ITUC with the support of *Union to Union*. The fact that more and more people have no way of making their voice heard at work, and risk being killed for their union involvement, continues to engage the media, Swedish trade unions and our material was again widely disseminated this year. See page 29 for more info.



ETI – Ethical Trading Initiative Sweden

ETI Sweden was founded in December 2019. The aim of the organisation is to serve as a platform for cooperation between businesses, trade unions, civil society and public sector organisations to secure human rights in global supply chains.

2020 was ETI's first year of operation. Over the year, the organisation's 16 members conducted a series of activities to strengthen the work of companies on sustainable supply chains. These included training courses on the situation of migrant workers during the pandemic, on how to better detect gender discrimination during factory inspections and on Human Rights Impact Assessments (HRIA) and Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD).

– By gathering experiences from different stakeholders, we can create the conditions that'll enable us to develop knowledge and methods to improve working conditions in our global supply chains, says Henrik Lindolm, Head of ETI Sweden.

Union to Union, one of the founders of ETI Sweden, is represented on the organisation's board and also manages the Sida support to ETI.

Union to Union supports information and advocacy initiatives in Sweden

Through *Union to Union*, Swedish trade unions and organisations with close links to the trade union movement can apply for grant funding for information and communication initiatives. Through better information to members and others regarding trade unions as an actor for a just climate transition, gender equality and democracy, we increase understanding of and commitment to trade union cooperation globally.

One vital channel for this is the trade union press, which publishes reports highlighting people and cooperation projects in low- and middle-income countries.

In 2020, *Union to Union* had a stated goal that more non-union organisations should apply for the grant, to highlight the fact that trade union issues are relevant outside the union sector. Examples of initiatives funded include the Reporters Without Borders' "Press Freedom Podcast" and a cooperation with the Global Challenge think tank, which will start in 2021.

New target groups are also reached via the Swedish Association of Architects, and Swedish and Kenyan landscape architects have found ways to deepen cooperation on working conditions and links between the profession and climate change.

Major initiatives supported by *Union to Union* in Sweden include the Schyst resande (Fair Travel) network, Fairtrade Sweden and Arbetet Global, a thematic area in LO's magazine Arbetet.

“What we do is important, both in terms of solving our climate problems, but also in understanding how what we do locally has an impact globally.”

Project Manager Pia Jonsson on “Act Local, Think Global”, a collaboration between landscape architects within the Swedish Association of Architects and the Architectural Association of Kenya (AAK).

Trade union voices on this year's global challenges

It is impossible to ignore the impact of the pandemic on trade union work around the world. What actually happened? Here, local unions, local unions and global union federations answer the question: “What were the biggest challenges of the past year?”

Nazma Akhter, founder of Awaj Foundation, Bangladesh

PHOTO: PRIVATE



” The biggest challenge was to organise workers and factories. Because of the pandemic, many factories closed down, which made it harder for us to organise. In addition, a major challenge during the year

was the loss of many women's jobs – that made it difficult to create female leadership.

Tepphallin Ou, President of the Cambodian Food and Service Workers Federation (CFSWF), Cambodia

PHOTO: PRIVATE



” It was a tough year. Many of our members lost their jobs, but even those who still have their jobs experienced increased insecurity and uncertainty. Also, there is high pressure on trade unionists, in a

country where trade unionism in itself is a challenge. But in tough times, it's even more important that we make our voices heard, work strategically and ensure that workers' interests are protected.

Adriana Hurtado of trade union Federación Colombiana de Periodistas (FECOLPER), Colombia

PHOTO: PRIVATE



” It was a huge challenge to confront the government about its actions, which made it difficult during the pandemic for journalists to do their job. The media was seriously affected, for example, by

being deprived of access to facts. In addition, our members found it a major challenge to adapt to digital activities 100%. Despite the difficulties, FECOLPER still managed to deliver high quality digital training and workshops for its members.

Fozert Mugabe of the Zimbabwe Construction and Allied Trades Workers' Union (ZCATWU), Zimbabwe

PHOTO: PRIVATE



” The Covid-19 pandemic raised many questions about employment contracts and aspects of employment security. In addition, many unions lost members. But several good changes were also successfully implemented, including innovative new organisational strategies that fit the ‘new normal’ – in communications, for example.

successfully implemented, including innovative new organisational strategies that fit the ‘new normal’ – in communications, for example.

Juan Carlos Galvis of Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores del Sistema Agroalimentario (SINALTRAINAL), Colombia

PHOTO: PRIVATE



” It was a year of many challenges for union work. The pandemic forced us to make several rapid changes in the way we communicated – and it’s taken time to adapt. The situation also destabilised the union organisation. Working from home created challenges, with issues around equipment and who should pay the costs. It’ll be a challenge to find a way through these new conditions and challenges.

Working from home created challenges, with issues around equipment and who should pay the costs. It’ll be a challenge to find a way through these new conditions and challenges.

Rosa Elena Flérez González, Secretary General of the Confederación de Trabajadores de Colombia (CTC), Colombia

PHOTO: PRIVATE



” The government made workers’ conditions worse in 2020. We carried out many digital consultations and several meetings during the year. It was a challenge to create political will for dialogue. Another

problem was the low level of union membership. The country’s anti-union environment can put workers at risk of dismissal if they join a union.

Jackie Nalubega, Project Coordinator for the global union Public Services International (PSI)

PHOTO: PRIVATE



” Most countries in the region implemented various types of ‘lockdowns’ that affected many industries. It was a challenge to switch to digital meetings, as that requires stable internet connections, which is not

a given. Another challenge, mainly for health workers, was access to protective equipment – and an increased workload.

Together for a fairer world

Global solidarity is nothing new - quite the contrary. Sweden's trade unions are strongly committed to climate justice, human rights and democracy, and the presidents of the three Swedish central organisations agree: Trade unions are key players in achieving vital change globally.

Research and experience show that strong unions are one of the most effective tools in the fight against poverty, says LO's Second Vice-President Lisa Bengtsson, and she has support:

"To a small, export-dependent, knowledge-based nation like Sweden, it's hugely important that we support trade union activities around the world," says Göran Arrius, President of Saco. He continues:

"If all workers had decent conditions, it wouldn't be possible to dump wages, and it wouldn't be attractive to relocate manufacturing to countries with widespread poverty."

During the year the pandemic and the climate crisis made it even more evident how immense the inequalities are in the world.

"Here in Sweden, the pandemic has given us perspective and we mustn't take our union victories for granted", says Therese Svanström, President of TCO. "Quite simply, it's important to jointly support and strengthen trade union rights in a globalised world."

More and more union projects

The majority of Sweden's trade unions - 27 out of 48 - are operating in a total around 70 projects in 80 countries, in cooperation with *Union to Union* and trade unions in low- and middle-income countries. In other words, global cooperation is a natural part of trade union involvement:

"Strong unions can negotiate better conditions for workers, lobby for secure employment and a safer working environment without harassment, which also benefits business and society at large," says Göran Arrius.

In addition, the risk is that working conditions in Sweden will be affected and deteriorate if colleagues in other countries work under increasingly unequal conditions.

"When workers are confronted against workers in competition with each other, our solidarity is put to the test and we don't want that", says Lisa Bengtsson.

PHOTO: FREDRIK SANDIN CARLSON



Lisa Bengtsson,
Second Vice Chairperson LO

PHOTO: EVA EDSJÖ



Therese Svanström,
Chairperson TCO

PHOTO: KNUIT CAPRA PEDERSEN



Göran Arrius,
Chairperson SACO



Workers at a tea plantation in Limuru, Kenya.

Global cooperation inspiring

At its core, global trade unionism is about organising, sticking together and fighting for justice in a world where democracy is under severe pressure.

“We clearly see a trend that union perspectives and strengths are pushed back in volatile times,” says Therese Svanström. The ITUC’s annual Global Rights Index review, which lists the worst countries for workers, reveals a serious trend.

Global trade union cooperation is the way forward, not least thanks to mutual exchange:

“In Sweden we are well off, but sometimes I miss that union fervour”, says Göran Arrius. “It seems to me that many people don’t realise that behind successes like regulated working hours and holiday entitlements lies a lot of focused, effective union work.”

Climate crisis “so unfair”

There’s also a growing global understanding of the need for decent jobs to make the transition

to a sustainable, fossil-free world – a Just Transition – a real success.

“We won’t be able to make the climate transition if new gaps are created in society”, says Therese Svanström.

“What’s more, the climate crisis always hits hardest to those who are already worst off, it’s so unfair,” says Lisa Bengtsson.

Union to Union makes a difference

That *Union to Union* plays a vital part in the Swedish trade union movement’s development cooperation is also self-evident.

“To be able to handle such difficult issues, we need a specialised organisation”, says Göran Arrius, and the others agree:

“*Union to Union* is needed for us to create the best possible difference”, says Therese Svanström.

“It’s also very good that LO, TCO and Saco have a common organisation, for the best possible solidarity work with the best possible outcomes”, says Lisa Bengtsson.

Union to Union Board

PHOTO: CAMILLA SVENSK



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

PHOTO: MAGNUS LANJE



Vice Chairperson: Heike Erkers, President, Akademikerförbundet SSR (Saco)

PHOTO: LO



Vice Chairperson: Lisa Bengtsson, 2nd Vice Chairperson LO (LO)

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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: DAVID BICHO



Torbjörn Bredin, Senior advisor TCO (TCO)

PHOTO: PRIVAT



Ann-Katrin Dolium, International Secretary (TCO)

PHOTO: STEFAN TELL



Karin Bätelson, 1st Vice Chairperson, Läkarförbundet (Saco)

PHOTO: KNUZ CAPRA PEDERSEN



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

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