



bringing unions  
and NGOs together

report of

TUC

international  
development conference



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## Foreword

On 26 March 2007, I had the pleasure of addressing a TUC International Development conference that aimed to enable unions and development NGOs to better understand how we can strengthen and complement each other's work. This is a report of that conference. It is designed for use as a practical tool to encourage more and better joint work.

Trade unions and development NGOs share much in common. Both want to see a world where globalisation has a social and an economic dimension, where public services are accessible to all and where people can work in dignity and take home a living wage. Both also share a common agenda in their support of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)<sup>1</sup>.

Trade unions and NGOs also agree on many fundamental barriers to development – the stifling neo-liberal straightjacket of the International Financial Institutions and the World Trade Organisation, as well as the multinational corporations that make huge profits while continuing to deny their social responsibilities. And we recognise the importance of democratic, accountable and transparent governance whether local or global.

Our task is formidable but our collective power can be immense. When we work well together, for example in the Global Call to Action Against Poverty, we can change things for the better. Last year in Ghana I saw a brilliant example of what the very best co-operation can achieve at a Fairtrade Banana Plantation unionised by Ghana's Agricultural Union.

Not only do alliances between trade unions and NGOs make us better able to tackle poverty, inequality and injustice in the world's poorest countries, it can also serve to revitalise and strengthen us. In the future, I hope many more trade unions and NGOs will explore opportunities for joint work.

**Brendan Barber, TUC General Secretary**

<sup>1</sup> See [www.un.org/millenniumgoals](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals)

# Introduction: a DFID perspective on trade unions and NGOs

The need for effective and accountable states is at the heart of the new Department for International Development (DFID) White Paper 'Making Governance Work for the Poor'<sup>2</sup> which sets out what the UK will do to help deliver the promises the world made in 2005 to Make Poverty History.

Trade unions and NGOs can help to build states that are capable, responsive and accountable to the public. They can help to ensure that poor people have access to essential basic services and decent jobs. They can also – as all of us must – push for action on climate change, here and overseas.

Trade unions are respected for promoting and providing education and for building mutual understanding across social, cultural, political, organisational and geographical divisions. A concern for global justice and solidarity come naturally to both unions and NGOs.

One example is the Global Campaign for Education, in which NGOs and trade unions jointly campaign in over 100 countries to raise awareness of the five million children denied an education.

Another example is the Ethical Trading Initiative. There is a growing global concern among consumers that the goods they buy should be produced in conditions that are safe and decent and which enable working people to maintain their dignity and a reasonable standard of living. Companies are responding by drawing up codes of conduct, and we need to work with suppliers to improve them, if they are really going to improve the lives of workers.

Here are just a few examples of what trade unions and NGOs have achieved:

- In South Africa the Southern Africa Trade Union Co-ordination Council is supporting unions campaigning to eradicate the worst forms of child labour.
- The Self-Employed Women's Association won the right for groups of informal workers to register as a trade union. As a result, hawkers in Ahmedabad bargained for the right to work without harassment; domestic workers in Bangalore sought crèche facilities; rag-picker children in Pune moved to better jobs, and tribal women in Orissa demanded their right to land.
- The International Transport Federation worked with local trade unions in Kenya to get a ban on discrimination in its collective bargaining agreement for dock workers, and for subway workers in Brazil.
- In Nicaragua trade unions are working to improve conditions in the banana plantations and the Export Processing Zones.

**Mike Battcock, Information and Civil Society Department, DFID**

<sup>2</sup> See [www.dfid.gov.uk/wp2006/default.asp](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/wp2006/default.asp)

## Benefits of unions' and NGOs' joint work



Pete Pinlac, President and Lolita De la Cruz, Women's Officer of MKP, the Communication Workers of the Philippines, meeting with Pat Styles of the CWU at the offices of One World Action, as part of follow-up activities to the original "We are many, they are few" project,

### 'We are many, they are few': solidarity with the Philippines

Through their collaboration, One World Action and the Communication Workers Union have supported trade unionists in the Philippines who face threats and harassment on a daily basis. They also hosted a visit from a leading Filipino trade unionist.

#### Partners:

Communication Workers Union (CWU)

One World Action (OWA)

Manggagawa sa Komunikasyon ng Pilipinas (MKP) (Communication Workers of the Philippines)

#### Aims of the project:

- to raise awareness of international issues at grassroots level in the CWU
- to produce educational resources for an activist training programme
- to foster links between unions

'Dozens of trade unionists in the Philippines have been subjected to arbitrary arrest, kidnapping, threats, assassination attempts and even murder'. (ICTUR, 2005)

### Trish Lavelle, Head of Education and Training, CWU, explains how the project got off the ground...

'The driving force was a lack of awareness about development among our members. This became a concern when many of our call centres were transferred to India. Our activists see international work as almost ceremonial, something that happens at the very top of our organisation that doesn't involve ordinary people. We wanted it to become part of the core activity at branch level.

'When we first met with OWA we didn't fully understand what NGOs do. Being part of a large UK union, we overestimated the capacity of the union in the Philippines which was in a pretty bad state in terms of finances and infrastructure. The practicalities of bringing someone over were quite challenging and we couldn't have done it without OWA.

As a result of the project, which was funded by the old DFID/TUC Strategic Grant Agreement, we now have branches twinned with trade union branches in the Philippines. We've also set up an international solidarity fund. This isn't a charity, just one way of practically helping our fellow trade unionists'.

'Pete Pinlac's visit worked fantastically and it had a positive impact far beyond the people he actually met. It was a huge

success and we would definitely do it again'.

**Graham Bennett, Director, One World Action (OWA), says trade unionists in the Philippines face daily harassment...**

'We have always felt that we were part of the labour movement and One World Action wanted to work jointly with a union on a practical basis. We were tiny compared to the CWU but one of the chief added values we brought was my personal knowledge of the Philippines over many years.

'One challenge was that we have a broader perspective on international development than the union. The union's primary aim was to educate members which caused a little tension. Identifying a union in the Philippines we wanted to work with wasn't that easy because the political situation is very complicated.

**'Trade union members in the Philippines face daily harassment and some have even paid for their union membership with their lives. To meet someone who lives this was very powerful. It was interesting to find that for them, global issues are part of day-to-day business'.**



## WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED:

- successful visit to the UK by Pete Pinlac, President of the MKP, April 2005
- higher levels of awareness of development among union members
- a subsequent visit to the UK by four leading trade unionists sponsored by a TU branch, one spoke at AGM
- twinning of UK and Filippino union branches
- DVD and booklet of the visit
- CWU set up an International Solidarity Appeal to provide practical support
- regular email contact between members
- trust built for further joint work in 2007 onwards



Harriet Eisner, Senior International Officer, Unite – Amicus section, and Euan Wilmshurst, Director, ACTSA, present their Africa Matters case study to the conference

## 'Africa Matters'

**(launched in 2004 at a reception hosted by Gordon Brown)**

Over the last three years of working together on Africa Matters, Amicus and Action for Southern Africa have played an important role in working for peace, democracy and development and have influenced decision-makers in Britain and in Europe to keep policies that affect southern Africa under the spotlight.

### Partners:

Amicus

Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA)

### Aims of the project:

- to raise awareness among Unite – Amicus section members about the impact of globalisation on workers in Africa
- to build relationships with sister unions in Africa
- to support practical solutions by raising money
- international solidarity

Harriet Eisner, Senior International Officer, Unite – Amicus section, describes the project...

'In 2003 Amicus was fairly new and we wanted to establish an internationalist outlook. There was also a compelling industrial logic to the partnership due to the global reach of multinationals that Amicus members work for.

'Getting visiting trade unionists into workplaces is vital - not just shaking hands with union officials. Our members meet them and ask them questions. It also makes sense to share visiting trade unionists with other unions.

'Africa Matters isn't a charity, it's about solidarity. One of the most important things we achieved was negotiating International Framework Agreements<sup>3</sup> and at Nampak, the trade unionists in Southern Africa led the way.

'We have been able to do lots of joint campaigning and lobbying with ACTSA especially on HIV/AIDS on which we organised a groundbreaking conference. Amicus has also provided practical help. For instance we have funded drugs for malaria and sent footballs through our 'Balls to Poverty' campaign which brought young people together across continents.

'ACTSA enabled us to work with Southern African trade unions in a way that we could never have done on our own'.

**Euan Wilmshurst, Director, Action for Southern Africa, says women are key to development...**

'We have a long history of working in Southern Africa and most UK trade unions are affiliated to us. We really wanted to refocus our priorities and we wanted to work closely with Amicus not least because of their political contacts and connections with the multinationals in Southern Africa. We wanted to share our resources and our respective political influences'.

'Engaging women in developing countries is a big challenge mainly because they have now been pushed out of the formal sector economy. They are the lifeblood of any economic development and their advancement must be a major demand. Unless women can decide for themselves when to have sex and when to have children, HIV/AIDS will be a huge problem.

'We believe there should be a meaningful UN agency that deals with the rights and advancement of women. This is a deeply political issue and one that is at the core of development.

**'Working with Amicus has really helped us to recruit more members and supporters and it has increased our grassroots engagement'.**



**WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED:**

- visits to the UK by trade unionists from Southern Africa (Swaziland, Zimbabwe and South Africa)
- a conference on HIV/AIDS
- delegation of 10 shop stewards to Southern Africa
- negotiated International Framework Agreement with Nampak which will benefit workers
- Africa Matters Module, a new study programme by Amicus, ACTSA and Leeds University funded by the old TUC Strategic Grant Agreement
- 'Dignity Period Campaign' campaign, highlighting the lack of sanitary products for women in Zimbabwe and the multiple problems this brings. Awareness led to action and the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions with the support of ACTSA and UK unions is now able to distribute sanitary products
- organised joint rallies and demonstrations
- sent footballs through 'Balls to Poverty' campaign
- group of young people from disadvantaged areas went to South Africa
- Amicus donated £40,000 for malaria drugs in Mozambique

<sup>3</sup>International Framework Agreements (IFAs) are a relatively recent tool used by Global Union Federations and their affiliates to lay down the rules of conduct for transnational companies. Since they are negotiated on a global level and require the participation of trade unions, International Framework Agreements are an ideal instrument for dealing with the issues raised by globalisation.





Group work at a personal empowerment seminar, Ghana. Photo by WOMENKIND International

## 'Ending violence against women'

A number of delegates at the conference stressed that the meaningful advancement of women is absolutely key to development. It is invariably women who bear the brunt at every level in society. The UK NGO WOMANKIND Worldwide has supported the General Agricultural Workers' Union in Ghana to push for a Domestic Violence Bill.

### Partners:

General Agricultural Workers Union, Ghana (GAWU)

WOMANKIND Worldwide.

### Aims of the project:

- research, pilot, roll out programme
- raise awareness about violence against women
- gain support from local traditional leaders
- reduce tolerance for violence against women
- support local women and gender centres

### Adwoa Sakyi, Gender Officer, GAWU, says WOMENKIND has strengthened women's voices in Ghana...

'GAWU covers all 10 regions of Ghana. We have been working on the issue of violence against women at the community level for a long time. WOMANKIND supported a gender centre in 1998 and this helped us to establish an anti-violence team to give support, education, training, counselling and legal advice to local women.

'We feel that the programme is sustainable because as trade unions we have some power, we have the right to organise and we can increase collaboration and dialogue with local government.

'For five years we lobbied very hard for a Domestic Violence Bill and it has just been passed by Parliament. This is partly thanks to our relationship with NGOs.

'Through working with WOMANKIND Worldwide we have created a bigger space for women's voices to be heard in Ghana'.

### Kanwal Ahluwalia, West Africa and Albania Programme Officer, describes WOMANKIND's support...

'We have supported programmes in Ghana for 15 years. There, female genital

mutilation, bride price, forced marriage and polygamy are cultural norms. Rural women are especially disadvantaged'.

'WOMANKIND began to support the Gender Centre in Ghana in 1998. The first phase of the project involved researching the causes and extent of violence against women in Ghana. We had a strong focus on working with the traditional and religious leaders. Our research showed that there was a poor state response to violence against women, that there were difficulties in reporting, and that rural women were especially isolated.

'The second phase was developing a strategy to deal with violence against women. This focused on piloting a Rural Response System in three areas. This system involved community based action teams (Combats) selected by community members, working with chiefs and priests to find ways of eliminating violence against women'.



## WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED:

- GAWU already had the trust of local communities but the project was able to strengthen GAWU's women's activities
- expanding project into new areas
- programme used as a tool to organise potential members
- joint lobbying with national civil society organisations led to new Government Bill
- learning and joint resources used by GAWU for negotiations and by the Gender Centre and WOMANKIND for lobbying
- increased collaboration between local government/NGOs/trade unions



image by GoodElectronics campaign

## Improving company practice

### 'GoodElectronics Network'

In the electronics industry there are 14 million workers many of whom have low wages, appalling working conditions and no unions. The partnership between the International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF)<sup>4</sup> and the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) has strengthened the position of the unions in the industry.

#### Partners:

International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF)  
Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD)

#### The 'GoodElectronics Network' aims to:

- strengthen civil society organisations and workers to improve human rights and working conditions
- improve corporate and public policy and practice in the industry

Jenny Holdcroft, Director Equal Rights, Export Processing Zones, International Metal Workers' Federation, says the electronics and textiles industries have much in common...

'The electronics industry is similar to the textile industry in a number of ways. These workers are often afraid of aggressive management, and governments do not always enforce workers' rights. They work up to 72 hours a week, do compulsory overtime, have short-term contracts, unsafe working conditions and degrading treatment. They are predominantly young women often working in Export Processing Zones (EPZs).

'The industry is growing at a terrific speed and the union movement has not always succeeded in making sure that the workers have access to their rights.

'There are several barriers to organising in these sectors. There is a failure by governments to enforce human rights, a fear of sticking your neck out and losing your job and very aggressive management

<sup>4</sup>The IMF is one of ten sectoral Global Union Federations to whom unions affiliate to all over the world

tactics including threats. The workers are often employed by agencies which makes it difficult to know who the employers are. Sexual harassment can be a problem and discrimination at the point of recruitment. There are also practical barriers such as gates around EPZs.

'There is a lack of a tradition in union involvement and the unions are also ill equipped. Our affiliates are male dominated and are used to operating within traditional metal manufacturing. It is quite a challenge to translate that model into recruiting members in a young female workforce. This is why we would like to work more closely with the textiles unions who have a lot of experience in this area.

**'We need an industry-wide approach because relationships are so complex and brand name companies are being supplied by many different workforces'.**

**Anne Lindsay, Private Sector Analyst, CAFOD, describes how NGOs can open to the door for unions...**

'We set up the network because conditions in these companies is in stark contrast to the PR image of the IT industry as being clean and green.

'Brand name companies are beginning to look at human rights issues. We are trying to expose and challenge the idea that everything is rosy within the electronics industry. It is essential that workers are involved in improving conditions themselves.

'It makes absolute sense to be working with the unions because many of the key demands we have made as NGOs have been around ILO standards, particularly the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining, so that workers have a voice.

**'Our Network shows that NGOs can help prize open the door so that unions can get a place at the table'**



## WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED:

Following NGO campaigns in 2004–6 the electronics industry responded:

- by endorsing a Code of Conduct
- with a Global e-Sustainability Initiative (funded by UN Environmental Programme)





Colombian flower worker. Photo by War on Want

## A relationship blossoms in Colombia

At first, when Prospect approached War on Want to work collaboratively, War on Want couldn't think of a project that was relevant to Prospect's members. However the choice of an NGO that supports flower growers in Colombia has become a good partnership.

### Partners:

War on Want (WoW)

Prospect

Cactus

### Jackie Simpkins, Campaigner for War on Want describes the relationship between the charity, Prospect and Cactus ...

'We were approached a few years ago by Prospect who wanted to do some joint work with us. At first we tried to work out what would be relevant to Prospect members. In the end we established a partnership between Prospect, WoW and Cactus, an organisation which represents workers in the flower industry in Colombia.

'Flower cultivation is one of Colombia's most important export industries, employing 90,000 workers, 90% of whom are women. Many of them have no formal education, many have families to support, and many are on short-term contracts, which are not renewed when workers

become pregnant or fall ill even though most illness is work related. There is a high use of pesticides and harsh weather conditions compounded by a lack of adequate health and safety measures. Colombia is one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a trade unionist.

'Cactus is a non-profit making organisation based in Bogotá, working to improve conditions for the workers. They offer legal advice, support local community involvement, carry out research into working conditions and support the formation of unions.

'The project is about building and supporting health and safety committees in the communities. In the first year of our collaboration more than 21,000 postcards were sent to the Chief Executive of the Colombian Association of Flower Exporters, deploring the resistance to unionisation in some flower factories.

'We have just produced a report called 'Growing Pains' which Prospect has supported. Our commitment to Prospect is that we report back regularly to them so that they are fully briefed. It is also likely that we will establish some partner exchange. Last year there was a very successful visit to the Prospect conference by one union member.

**'The key lesson we have learned is that as an NGO you don't have to think you can only offer something relevant to the workforce of that union'.**



Trade unionists in Scotland mark five years since the Los Alamos violence. Photo by Banana Link

## Solidarity with unions in the south **Banana Link**

Banana Link works with seven banana workers' unions in Latin America. This programme is about building solidarity between Latin American and British trade unions and campaigning to extend union rights. This programme links workers along the banana chain – from the docks to the supermarkets. It is a dynamic partnership between unions and NGOs.

**Alistair Smith, International Co-ordinator, Banana Link says we can learn from trade unions in the south...**

### Partners:

Banana Link

GMB, USDAW, TGWU, Amicus, UNISON, Northern TUC and Scottish TUC

Seven Latin American Banana Unions

'In Latin America, banana workers face appalling working conditions, including low wages and exposure to toxic chemicals. Workers joining unions face repression, from daily psychological pressure to violence.

'Through this programme banana workers' unions are training and organising, undertaking legal defence work, lobbying for changes in labour laws, company practices and trade rules at national and international level.

'Unions have supported youth training events in Ecuador, funded a new training centre in Costa Rica, helped organisers increase membership in plantations and lobbied British and Latin American companies and governments. British unions involved include: GMB, USDAW, TGWU, Amicus, UNISON, Northern TUC and Scottish TUC.

'Trade unions in the South are an inspiration and we have much to learn from them. There is an appetite within the trade union movement to work with NGOs on finding ways of tackling these issues.

'In a world where it is no longer possible to keep consumers from knowing what happens at the production end and vice versa, solidarity and mutual support is the new order of the day'.



### WHAT BANANA LINK HAS ACHIEVED:

- facilitated links along the supply chain, bringing together all actors
- ensured that international labour standards are always on the UK civil society agenda and TUs are always at the table
- organised delegations and speakers tours
- a concerted programme of awareness-raising and solidarity-building in UK TUs



## JOINT ACHIEVEMENTS:

- increased membership of unions in Latin America
- helped in formation of new unions
- facilitated legal action against multinationals using banned pesticides
- enabled Latin American unions to participate in trade policy discussions with British government and EU
- took leading role in International Banana Conference
- established dialogue between plantation workers' unions and British supermarkets
- increased the capacity of NGOs and trade unions to achieve common objectives i.e. alleviating poverty



Campaigners protesting outside Calvin Klein Store. Photo by Labour Behind the Label

## 'Strengthening workers' rights'

### Labour Behind the Label

Labour Behind the Label is a campaign that supports garment workers' efforts worldwide to improve their working conditions. It educates consumers, lobbies companies and government, raises awareness, and encourages international solidarity with workers. Members include trade unions and their local branches, consumer organisations, campaign groups, and charities. LBL is the UK platform of the international Clean Clothes Campaign.

**Maggie Burns, Chair of LBL, describes a six month campaign she helped organise in 2004...**

#### Partners:

TUC

Labour Behind the Label (LBL)

Oxfam

In 2004, there was a six-month, southern led campaign to persuade sportswear and footwear companies together with the international Olympics committee to take concrete measures to eliminate exploitation and abuse of workers.

Internationally the campaign involved global unions – the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the International Textile Leather and Garment Workers' Federation, the Clean Clothes Campaign and Oxfam International. In the UK, the TUC, LBL and Oxfam formed a coalition.

**'Working in a coalition is a bit like a marriage. When you date you can enjoy one another's company. When you are married you really have to work with your differences'.**



### WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED:

- all key companies came to the negotiating table
- some joined the Fair Labour Association based in US
- the British Olympic Committee came to the table
- the alliance has continued between the TUC and LBL in the UK and globally between the International trade union Confederation (ITUC)/ITGLWF and the Clean Clothes Campaign
- joint campaigning during the 2006 World Cup





## WHAT WORKED WELL DURING 2004:

- the alliance between trade unions and NGOs. It enabled us to play 'good cop, bad cop'. NGOs made strong demands and unions were good at negotiating
- mutual respect – key to making alliances work
- TUC brought credibility, political clout and access to government ministers
- Oxfam brought brand recognition, media expertise
- LBL brought knowledge of conditions within the garment industry
- all partners had links to workers' organisations in producing countries
- roles and responsibilities were clear
- clear objectives for every part of the campaign
- rolling strategy to allow for flexibility



## WHAT DIDN'T WORK SO WELL:

- no strategy for popular campaigning
- didn't always understand partner organisation
- no continuity of staffing in the largest organisation
- lack of human-interest stories

## Martin Hearson, LBL campaigns coordinator says...

'Labour Behind the Label would like to have more trade union involvement and collaboration. We need unions to help us fight for freedom of association and to accompany us in meetings with employers to represent the workers. Trade unions and NGOs can achieve practical things together that they couldn't achieve separately. When workers demonstrate in the south we can put pressure on the buyers in this country.

'In the future we will work with global trade unions for a campaign called Play Fair 2008 for the Olympic Games in China. We are also preparing for the 2012 Games to make sure that the sportswear are made in conditions where labour rights are respected.

'Other campaigns where we would welcome trade union involvement are:

- focusing on high street fashion (See our report 'Let's Clean Up Fashion', resources 5)
- a campaign on school uniforms which are now available at budget retailers and supermarkets, pushing down prices in this country
- Clean Clothes at Work with public sector unions, focusing on the clothing worn by nurses and dinner ladies.



Garment Worker in India, picture from ETI

## Ethical trade

Dan Rees, the Director of the ETI, explains the vision of the organisation...

### Partners:

Trade unions

Multinational companies and their suppliers

NGOs

Ethical trading Initiative (ETI) as the Secretariat

'The vision of the ETI is a future where all workers are free from exploitation and work in conditions of freedom, security and equality. There is huge potential for NGOs and trade unions to work together, which is often unexplored.

'Because of globalisation, the workers who make the products that we buy can be very poor, marginalised and vulnerable and labour rights have become a central part of the strategy to address poverty.

'We are a membership organisation of companies, trade unions and NGOs. To become members, companies have to adopt a set of standards for their suppliers based on ILO standards and national law. Our projects are aimed at increasing good

practice and corporate responsibility. We also have a working partnership with DFID.

'Codes of conduct have been vital in raising the understanding of the business community worldwide in what ILO standards actually are and what compliance to them means.

'For example, a woman who sews garments in northern India is crucial to the Indian export garment industry and to a big global brand. She earns very little, half a dollar a day, payment can be six months late, she and her family have little social protection.

'We map the chain of responsibility for all the actors and we are beginning to implement guidelines now. As a result women like her have doubled their income.

'ETI can open up a space for bargaining, act as a tool to promote workers' rights and provide access to companies'.



Global Campaign Against Poverty, Scotland. Picture by Ian McNicholl

## Development campaigning

### Building alliances in Scotland

Oxfam Campaigner and lifelong trade unionist John McAllion says alliances between trade unions and NGOs are well established in Scotland...

#### Partners:

Oxfam Scotland

UNISON

'In a globalised world, if you are not on the side of the workers, then you are not really interested in justice'. Working with others is absolutely essential if we are ever going to overcome poverty and suffering. It isn't always easy to work in alliances but they are our natural habitat. Whether we are working on Make Poverty History, on labour rights for women or with workers in the global supply chains, there is no more relevant alliance than the one between NGOs and trade unions.

'Last year, along with WaterAid we produced a report called 'In the Public Interest', which was based on our knowledge and experience around the world. The key message is that if you are serious about making poverty history, you can only do it if the governments in developing countries use taxes to invest in strong effective public services and

employ public sector workers.

'Our work is made immeasurably stronger by the involvement of UNISON, the biggest public sector union. Oxfam and UNISON use our distribution networks to reach a much wider constituency than we could each reach separately. Through six and a half million members of the TUC including UNISON's one million members, we get our message out to many more people than we could ever hope to reach on our own.

'We also need to work with local branches. Scotland and Wales have opted for Fair Trade nation status, the first in the world. The NGOs working through the Trade Justice Movement and the Corporate Responsibility Coalition tried to put together a Scottish Fairtrade Forum. We recognised right from the beginning that unions had to be involved. We are not just talking about Fairtrade tea and coffee but making sure all goods are ethically sourced.

'The unions could never have got 250,000 people onto the streets of Edinburgh as Make Poverty History did. We know that unless the unions are involved in our campaigns we will not have the political clout we need. The trade unions can help us influence the political decision-makers. The trade unions have links to government and to politicians and if we are serious about influencing decision makers we need to work with the unions.

## Workshop conclusions

There are three strands of development activity where trade unions and NGOs can interface: Working with unions in developing countries; development awareness; and development campaigning. During the conference, each workshop posed a series of questions to participants, attempting to draw out best practice and learning lessons. The main points made in each workshop are summarised here.

### Working with unions in developing countries

The idea behind this workshop was to explore what it takes for good partnership work to be developed between UK unions and NGOs and unions in developing countries, as well as an approach to all three working together. There was agreement between union and NGO participants that from a very early stage, the likelihood of a successful project outcome is determined by the quality and depth of the relationship developed between the UK and Southern partners. Without a partnership based on mutual respect and real understanding from the beginning, the project idea and design itself is likely to be wrongly targeted. It is also important that there is buy-in from union leadership in the UK and partner unions and that trade union representatives attending international meetings have opportunities to contribute to development activities.

**NGOs can learn from the experience of unions in these areas:**

- how to build links between organised and unorganised workers – many developing country unions are engaged in this
- how sub-contracting and casualisation and migration are

impacting on formal working patterns and union membership levels

- legislation on the statute books but not enforced

**Unions can learn from NGOs about:**

- the appetite of young workers (and union members) to be involved in development activities
- campaigning strategies and involving members

**Unions and NGOs can work together to:**

- campaign for better labour legislation and its enforcement, especially with regards to labour inspectorates
- develop new initiatives to reach out to informal economy workers
- understand and learn from each others' southern partners
- lobby DFID and other government departments on labour issues



# Developing new partnerships: development awareness

## Background

In recent years, the TUC has produced a large amount of development education materials and held a number of training events for tutors, education officers and international officers. Many of the TUC's affiliates have also undertaken discrete amounts of development education work (some with NGO partners) and there are exciting possibilities for more work through the TUC's International Development Learning Fund, some of which will lead to applications to DFID'. The following points were made:

### Unions can bring to a partnership

- credibility
- resources – this includes additional funding, human resources and channels of communication
- in certain instances, access to political leaders and government
- an established audience and/or support base
- appropriate professional expertise
- global partnerships and networks through the Global Unions

### NGOs can bring to a partnership

- specific campaigns according to their brief
- experience on the ground
- street credibility and a wider audience that includes youth and women
- funding resources
- voice on issues trade unions typically do not speak about or engage with
- practical engagement and fresh ideas

## What works easily and what is difficult in union/NGO partnerships

Easy	Difficult
TU's have structures & networks already established	NGO lack accountability
Core principles of fair treatment for all	NGOs can have a single issue focus
TU's have democratic structures giving all a voice	NGOs are often led by funding

## Practical ideas for joint work

- create network to share expertise and experience. In response it was explained that the TUC already has an International Development Group involving both trade unions and NGOs and co-ordinates an annual 'Next Steps' seminar specifically on Development Education.
- create a generic trade union 'curriculum' for development education
- develop a website/database of on-going work or projects (perhaps TUC/DFID)
- work with teaching unions on the presentation of solidarity efforts/ support for workers and campaigns

# Developing new partnerships: campaigning

## Background

In recent years, development campaigning has become more popular within the UK trade union movement. For example, trade unions play key roles within the Play Fair at the Olympics campaign, Make Poverty History and the Trade Justice Movement. Some unions and NGOs, such as Unison and Oxfam (public services), PCS and War on Want (conditionality) and Unite – Amicus section and ACTSA (Africa Matters) work together bilaterally on specific campaigns and the TUC continues to partner with Labour Behind the Label in the Play Fair Alliance. The following points were made:

### Unions can bring to the partnership

- access to decision makers through their collective bargaining and work with political parties (i.e. Labour Party)
- expertise in their relevant industries and policy analysis;
- experience in organising and motivating volunteers
- contacts for campaigns and events including speakers
- access to their membership for campaigns, although unions have varying ways and successes of communicating through their branch structures
- members have often already signed up to a basic level of activism
- media relationships to exploit

### NGOs can bring a partnership

- ready made expertise and policy analysis on relevant international issues
- union organising around international

issues often activates different groups of members including young and can bring in new members

- good media relationships on development issues
- campaigns with NGOs can bring a global perspective on difficult issues such as members blaming worker's in other countries for job migration
- contacts unions may not have i.e. across political parties
- help unions tackle negative public perceptions of only being 'self interested'

### What works easily and what is difficult in union/NGO partnerships

Easy	Difficult
Distribution through networks	Unions may be unwilling to put at risk relationships that are key to their 'core' work e.g. good industrial relations with employers or the government
Shared goals	Conflicts of priorities between union and NGO e.g. a union may represent workers in the company an NGO is attacking
Not natural competitors (many joint NGO alliances are with competitors)	Understanding the politics of each organisation e.g. due to different political/democratic processes unions decision making may appear slow and NGOs undemocratic
Finding common links	There is a difference between individuals and the organisations they represent - an individual may want to links partner but the organisation may not

**What practical suggestions are there for joint work?**

- campaigning on Europe's global competitiveness
- climate change issues are quickly becoming high profile. Both NGOs and unions are considering their role in these
- access to education and welfare, following the concept of a hierarchy of needs with basic social justice issues at the forefront
- basing campaigns on a 'rights' approach
- working with global union federations e.g. Education International has done a lot of work on the Global Campaign for Education

## Further information and resources

### Trade union/NGO conference case studies

**Building Alliances:** CWU and One World Action

[www.cwu.org](http://www.cwu.org)  
[www.oneworldaction.org](http://www.oneworldaction.org)

**Africa Matters:** Amicus (UNITE) and Action for Southern Africa

[www.amicustheunion.org/africamatters](http://www.amicustheunion.org/africamatters)  
[www.actsa.org](http://www.actsa.org)

**Ending Violence Against Women:** General Agricultural Worker's Union, Ghana and WOMENKIND International

[www.gawu.net](http://www.gawu.net)  
[www.womenkind.org.uk/ourprogramme-ghana.html](http://www.womenkind.org.uk/ourprogramme-ghana.html)

**Improving Company Practice the Goodelectronics Network:** International Metalworkers' Federation and CAFOD

[www.goodelectronics.org](http://www.goodelectronics.org)  
[www.imf.org](http://www.imf.org)  
[www.cafod.org.uk](http://www.cafod.org.uk)

**Flowers in Columbia:** Prospect and War on Want

[www.prospect.org.uk/interantional/cactusf-lowerworkers](http://www.prospect.org.uk/interantional/cactusf-lowerworkers)  
[www.waronwant.org](http://www.waronwant.org) (see partners – sweatshops and plantations – Cactus)

**Solidarity with Unions in the South:**

Banana Link  
[www.bananalink.org.uk](http://www.bananalink.org.uk)

**Strengthening Workers Rights:** TUC, Labour Behind the Label, Oxfam, ITUC, ITGWF

[www.tuc.org.uk/playfair](http://www.tuc.org.uk/playfair)  
[www.labourbehindthelabel.org](http://www.labourbehindthelabel.org) (see campaigns)  
[www.fairolympics.org](http://www.fairolympics.org)

**Ethical Trading:** Ethical Trading Initiative  
[www.ethicaltrade.org](http://www.ethicaltrade.org)

**Development Campaigning:** Oxfam Scotland and UNISON

[www.unison.org.uk](http://www.unison.org.uk)  
[www.oxfam.org.uk/about\\_us/scotland/index.htm](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/about_us/scotland/index.htm)

**In the Public Interest**

[www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/papers/publicinterest.html](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/papers/publicinterest.html)

### General resources

**TUC International Development Education materials:**

Amongst other things including two International Development Digests, there are thematic Fact Files with fact sheets and activities on Migration and Refugees, Trade and Trade Unions, International Development and the Role of Trade Unions and Slavery in the Twenty First Century.  
[www.tuc.org.uk/deved](http://www.tuc.org.uk/deved)

**TUC/DFID Partnership work and current funding opportunities**

[www.tuc.org.uk/devfr](http://www.tuc.org.uk/devfr)

**International Trade Unions Confederation**

[www.ituc-csi.org](http://www.ituc-csi.org)

**Global Unions** [www.globalunions.org](http://www.globalunions.org) (includes details of each global union federation)

**International Labour Organisation**

[www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org)





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