Solidarity with workers abroad

TUC Aid Annual Report

1 May 2016

TUC Aid in 2015 – a year in summary

TUC Aid Trustees met in April to agree the annual accounts for 2015, and as part of those accounts, agreed a summary of the activities of TUC Aid that year, as well as some of the plans for 2016. Here are the highlights.

Bangladesh

The women’s leadership development programme, consisting of twelve one-day training sessions, launched in collaboration with the National Garment Workers’ Federation (NGWF) was successfully completed in 2015. Training in employment rights, collective bargaining and health and safety was provided for 354 women workers. In addition, 163 union organisers were trained in collective bargaining and organising skills to enable them to bargain with management for better pay and conditions. The training also equipped participants with the skills and confidence to participate in the Occupational Health and Safety committees established by the Bangladesh Accord on Fire and Building Safety. An external evaluation of the training programme carried out by the 3FDanish trade union office in Dhaka recommended continuity of support for NGWF’s training activities due to the success of the programme in building women’s confidence and leadership skills.

Rwanda

The activities under the Employment Support Programme for Disabled Workers in Rwanda implemented in partnership with Disability Aid Abroad (DAA) were completed in May 2015. 65 officials of the national trade union centre – CESTRAR -and its affiliates received training in the protection and promotion of employment rights of disabled people. 25 disability champions trained under the project had reached out to some 300 trade union leaders following their training. CESTRAR and the Rwandan National Disability Council (RNDC) have agreed to collaborate on the development of a National Employment Support Project for Disabled People.

Tunisia

The Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail (Tunisian General Labour Union) conducted training courses in labour standards, social protection, employment rights, gender equality, economic and social empowerment of women with financial support from the charity in 2015.

Haiti

The charity supported trade union capacity building in Haiti with a grant towards the implementation of a multi-donor initiative in partnership with the Trade Union Confederation for the Americas (TUCA). The programme included a workshop on ILO Conventions 87 and 98 with expertise from the ILO as part of awareness-raising in advance of the reforms to the Labour Code and organising campaigns in various sectors (education, construction, textiles, agriculture, food, transport etc.) resulting in the recruitment of new 8,944 members and provision of training for the members of the Inter-Union Women’s Committee (IUWC) to ensure full participation of women in union activities.

Somalia

A grant from TUC Aid made it possible for the Federation of Somali Trade Unions (FESTU) to carry out a survey on pay and working conditions of informal sector workers in Somalia and organise a workshop to develop a trade union action plan to protect their employment rights. The workshop made recommendations on the need for effective action by FESTU and its affiliates through advocacy and lobbying of the government and relevant agencies to improve the pay and working conditions of informal sector workers in Somalia. The agreed work plan is to be implemented by February 2016.

Gaza

The charity, in partnership with APHEDA – the development cooperation arm of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) – raised funds to repair a plant nursery and its offices, badly damaged during the Israeli bombardments in 2014 and replenish the stocks destroyed in the raids. The restoration work is in progress.

Guatemala

The five training workshops conducted under the training project implemented in partnership with SITRABII – a banana plantation workers’ union - enhanced the capacity of the union to defend the interests of its members effectively through collective bargaining. Following a collective bargaining agreement with Del Monte, SITRABI secured a 17.3% salary increase. Negotiators trained under the project were instrumental in signing new agreements with employers on behalf of SITRABI’s sister unions. The training agreement with Bolaños – plantation owners - extended the reach of the education programme in the plantations.

Nicaragua

The Confederation of Self-Employed Workers (CSEW) in Nicaragua received a TUC Aid grant to implement a project aimed at recruiting 4,000 women union members and encouraging them to take up leadership positions. Work-related training was provided for self-employed women members while seven additional district committees and four additional municipal committees are to be set up under the project. The education and training imparted through the project has equipped women with the knowledge and skills to deal with challenges of self-employment, improve efficiency of their businesses and play a greater role in the affairs of their union.

Plans for Future Periods

Ethiopia

An employment support programme for trade union workers with disabilities in Ethiopia implemented in collaboration with the Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions (CETU) is currently underway. The programme inspired by the successes of similar initiatives in Tanzania, Uganda and Rwanda carried out by Disability Aid Abroad (DAA), a Northern Ireland charity, with financial support from TUC Aid, will provide specialised training in disability rights for trade union officials in CETU and those of its affiliates.

Bangladesh

On the recommendation of the evaluation report by 3F- the Danish trade union office in Dhaka, TUC Aid is providing further training for women workers in a follow-up programme implemented in partnership with NGWF. The programme consists of three sets of two-day training sessions for 25 women run by NGWF on the key areas of negotiating skills and the new labour laws in Bangladesh. NGWF will use this programme to build a pool of experienced women leaders who have the confidence and knowledge to negotiate with management to tackle the key problems women workers face in garment factories of gender discrimination, unsafe working conditions and low wages.

Gaza

The restoration of the Beit Lahia plant nursery in Gaza is expected to be completed in 2016.

Tunisia

We are awaiting a further submission from the Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail (UGTT) who want to build on the project they have already conducted developing women leaders in their union.

Guatemala

The TUC will collaborate with its international partners, including the ITUC, Italy’s CGIL and the AFL-CIO, to work at local and national level to support SITRABI and other unions, with the possibility of having recourse to an ILO Commission of Inquiry, if necessary, to drive progress by the Guatemalan government, as well as supporting the ongoing organising efforts in the south.