

TRADE UNIONS' SOUTH-SOUTH & TRIANGULAR COOPERATION: OUR CONTRIBUTION TO THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

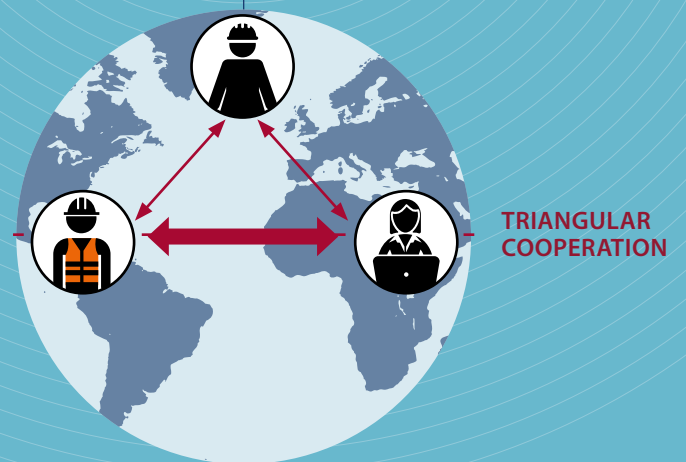
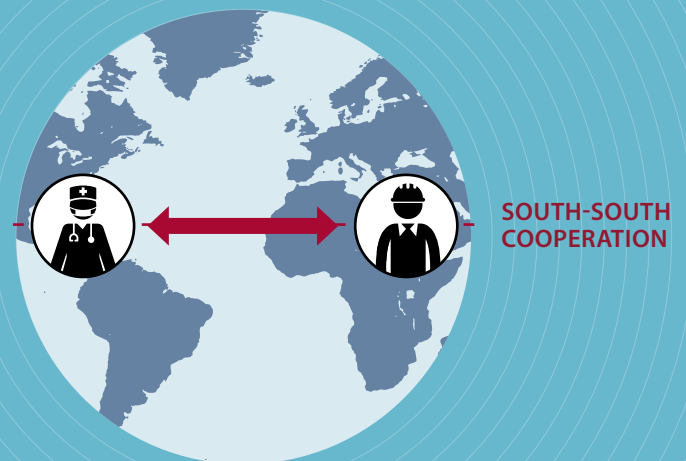


The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)¹ are central in the trade union agenda because of the fact that they are founded on rights, they are universally relevant, and because they are cross-cutting in the three pillars of sustainability, namely the economic, environmental and social pillars.

The trade union movement calls for a *New Social Contract*² between governments, business and workers, with a floor of a universal labour guarantee for all workers. This means rights are respected, jobs are decent with minimum living wages and collective bargaining, workers have some control over working time, social protection coverage is universal, due diligence and accountability are driving business operations, and the social dialogue ensures just transition measures for climate and technology.

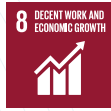
The SDGs represent a key avenue to foster a new developmental model demanded by trade unions worldwide. Development cooperation, including South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC), is critical elements to support change along this path.

Trade unions are strongly involved in SSTC through programmes covering a range of crucial areas to achieve the SDGs, such as labour rights, occupational health and safety rights, social protection, gender equality, organising workers, enhancing social dialogue processes and industrial relations. This brief showcases a sample of trade union SSTC programmes in those areas, illustrating direct contributions to the SDGs, and highlighting the link to the development effectiveness principles.³



Through South-South Cooperation, trade unions of the Global South exchange resources, skills and knowledge, whereas Triangular Cooperation happens when trade unions of the Global North support these South-South exchanges.

LABOUR RIGHTS IMPLEMENTATION



Target 8

Upholding workers' rights is a core component of SDG 8, target 8 (labour rights for all workers, including migrant workers). Trade unions use SSTC programmes to support workers' rights promotion, as well as to improve working conditions at national level and harmonise labour codes at regional level.

Supported by the General Confederation of Liberal Trade Unions of Belgium (CGSLB), Burkina Faso's Union d'Action Syndicale and Niger's Intersyndicale des Travailleurs have been working together since 2013. They compare their respective labour laws to improve working conditions and to advocate for uniform labour legislation at the West African Economic and Monetary Union level.⁴

Labour migration is another issue that unions address through SSTC. An example is the work they do in West Africa, where over eight million African migrants (three per cent of the region's population) are living and working. Trade unions use SSTC to improve their capacity to help these migrants organise and defend their rights.

Supported by the Belgian General Federation of Labour (FGTB), West-African trade unions (in Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Guinea Conakry, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Togo) and Moroccan trade unions are building alliances on migrant workers' rights. They organise awareness raising campaigns directed to their members, analyse data on migration trends, and share good practices about protecting migrant workers.

"Trade unions are key development actors. Their role of workers' rights promoters is essential to ensure that no one is left behind."

Lais Abramo, Director, Division on Social Policies, UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean



OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY RESPECTED

In developing countries, regulations about occupational health and safety are often "outdated, fragmented, gender insensitive and non-deterrent to perpetrators".⁷ This situation has worsened in the wake of globalisation, as health hazardous economic activities have increasingly delocalised to the developing world. Again, SDG 8 reflects the need to address this issue.

An estimated 107,000 workers die every year from asbestos related diseases. Most of them worked in developing countries. The Southern Initiative on Globalisation and Trade Union Rights (Sigtur⁸) - gathering trade unions from 35 countries in the Global South to advocate jointly for policy reforms - launched a global campaign against the use of asbestos in April 2018⁹ to:

- organise international and national campaigns to promote the elimination of the use of all forms of asbestos and asbestos-containing materials;
- resolve to campaign for the realisation of an "Asbestos-free World" for the health and safety of all workers, their families and their communities; and
- resolve to campaign for alternative products and transition of local industry jobs.



DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS PRINCIPLES

Workers' rights implementation is at the very heart of long-term and sustainable growth paths, thus aligning with the principle of **Focus on Results**, referring to the "lasting impact on eradicating poverty and reducing inequality".

IMPLEMENTING SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS



Target 3



Target 4

Social protection is at the heart of the trade unions' agenda, and a priority for their SSTC programmes. These latter focus on strengthening the key role trade unions can play in many national instances to promote the extension of the social protection coverage.

Social protection is one of the priorities of the SSTC programme between the Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (TUCA) and Haitian trade unions.¹⁰ The programme provided training to five trade unions to set up the Inter-union Committee on Protection and Social Security. The committee engages in running campaigns directed to the whole of society, the parliamentarians, and the government, promoting the ratification of ILO Convention 102 on minimum standards of social security.

This example of SSTC programme clearly contributes to both SDG 1, target 3 (implement nationally appropriate social protection systems) and SDG 10, target 4 (adopt fiscal, wage and social protection policies).

"Before we knew very little about social protection, whereas today we managed to convince the Minister of Social Affairs to discuss the social protection system with us."

René Prével Joseph, Secretary General, Confederation of Haitian Workers and the Caribbean

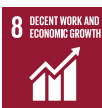
FOSTERING GENDER EQUALITY



Poverty and work exploitation often have a woman's face. Women are more discriminated against in the labour market¹¹ and receive lower salaries¹² than men. Trade unions firmly believe that the right of women to participate fully in economic, social and political life is fundamental to achieving gender equality, social justice and lasting peace and democracy. Therefore, contributing to SDG 5 is a key priority for the unions and is also reflected in their SSTC programmes. The latter address gender inequalities at workplaces, advocate for work-life balance and break the exclusion of women working in precarious conditions, such as domestic workers.

Through a programme supported by the IWE,¹³ campaigns of India's National Domestic Workers Federation (NDWF) inspired the South African Confederation of South African Workers' Unions (CONSAWU) to initiate a policy of including kindergarten services for children of domestic workers. The experience of NDWF provided a solution to the South African trade union's challenge to organise domestic workers with limited means.

ORGANISING WORKERS



Target 5

Support to workers organising is an essential part of trade unions SSTC programmes. Trade unions' defence of "full and productive employment and of decent work for all" (SDG 8, target 5) is key to inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Formalisation of informal workers is included in this challenging endeavour. Depending on the different contexts, informal workers are not always familiar with unions nor are they aware of their rights and how to claim them from the authorities or their *de facto* employers.

In Mozambique, CUT Brazil supports the development and action of the Association of Operators and Workers of the Informal Sector (AEIMO). With the support of CUT Brazil, AEIMO successfully negotiated the inclusion of informal workers in the social security system and the right for all informal economy workers to open bank accounts.¹⁴

In 2012-2017, the *Confédération Syndicale du Congo* (CSC) learned useful practices from the *Confédération Syndicale des Travailleurs du Togo* (CSTT) in the context of organising informal economy workers. The Belgian Institute for International Workers Education (IWE) facilitated this process. This collaboration helped CSC Congo to organise market vendors in the informal sector per type of activity and of product, instead of by sector. The vendors set up basic committees, which gave CSC Congo the mandate to negotiate with the government on improvements in income and labour conditions. These negotiations were successful. Taxes decreased by 30 per cent and half of them are now used for cleaning, safety and improvement of the market infrastructure.



DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS PRINCIPLES

Putting in place or improving systems of social protection contributes to strengthening the principle of Ownership of Development Priorities by Developing Countries.

ENHANCING SOCIAL DIALOGUE AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

The trade union movement is calling on governments and business to establish a “New Social Contract”. As underlined by the report of the Global Commission on the Future of Work,¹⁵ social dialogue plays a key role in ensuring the relevance of this contract to managing the changes under way. Social dialogue involves governments, workers and employers in decision-making processes ranging from labour issues to wider development strategies. As such, it is a governance tool for the implementation of the whole SDGs’ agenda, and not only limited to SDG 8.¹⁶

Trade unions promote the creation, reinforcement and institutionalisation of social dialogue processes - also thanks to their SSTC cooperation.

In 1986, trade union confederations from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela set up the Coordination of the Trade Union Centrals of the Southern Cone.¹⁷ This platform enabled the adoption of the 1998 Social and Labour Declaration of the Mercosur. In 1999, a tripartite Socio-Labour Commission was created in order to ensure compliance with the Declaration in the framework of the MERCOSUR Common Market Group.¹⁸ This led to the update of the Social and Labour Declaration in 2015, establishing a minimum floor for labour rights of MERCOSUR workers.

The promotion of industrial relations is particularly challenging in Free Trade Zones (FTZ), where governments usually allow companies to disregard labour rules. In Haiti, enterprises operating in FTZ employ more than 40,000 workers.¹⁹ These enterprises often violate labour rights and exclude trade unions by establishing enterprise committees.

Haitian trade unions are part of a SSTC programme led by the TUCA to strengthen their representation in the enterprises operating in FTZs. In 2015, these efforts led to an increased trade union representation in 15 out of the 27 enterprises operating in FTZ that year. As part of this programme, TUCA and the Haitian unions set up a series of capacity-building programmes, which has helped organising over 17,000 workers from different sectors since 2013. Furthermore, unions established an Inter-Trade Union Committee for the Respect of the Rights of Workers in Export Processing Zones. This Committee is comprised four Haitian unions,²⁰ which document complaints about working conditions and engage in dialogue with the employers.²¹

SOCIAL DIALOGUE



DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS PRINCIPLES

Supporting social dialogue processes fully aligns with the principles of **Inclusive Development Partnerships** and of **Transparency and Accountability**. In “recognising the different and complementary role of all the actors” and in particular of social partners.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Moving beyond the GDP rhetoric, trade unions demand a rights-based development model fit for purpose to tackle the growing inequality gaps and global transitions. Through their longstanding involvement, trade unions' SSTC contributes directly to this objective, in line with the ambitions of the SDGs.

Therefore, trade unions call SSTC actors to:

PRIORITISE

the Decent Work Agenda and Climate Justice related SDGs (such as SDG 1, 5, 8, 10, 13 and 16) in all projects and programmes.

INVOLVE

trade unions and social partners, in policy dialogues, when defining priorities and implementation strategies, as well as when monitoring and evaluating results.

SUPPORT

capacity building of social partners in implementing SDGs.



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dce@ituc-csi.org | www.ituc-csi.org/development-cooperation
Twitter: @TUDCN_RSCD | Facebook: @TUDCN.RSCD

ENDNOTES AND REFERENCES

- ¹ The complete list of Goals, targets and indicators of the SDGs is available at the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>
- ² ITUC, 4th Congress Statement, December 2018, available at: <https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/ituc-congress2018-en.pdf>
- ³ The Principles adopted in 2016 at the Nairobi High Level Meeting of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC) are: "Ownership of development priorities by developing countries"; "Focus on Results"; "Inclusive Development Partnerships"; "Transparency and Accountability to each other" <http://effectivecooperation.org/about/principles/>
- ⁴ More information of the Project "Strengthened trade union partners are able to improve social dialogue, contributing to more favourable working conditions for vulnerable workers in the informal and formal economy with focus on women & youth" available here: https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/fich-v4_fr_cgslb.pdf
- ⁵ <https://www.iom.int/west-and-central-africa>
- ⁶ The organisations involved are the affiliates of the ITUC Africa in the mentioned countries (list available here: <https://www.ituc-africa.org/-ITUC-AFRICA-Network-.html>). More information of the triangular cooperation promoted by the Belgian General Federation of Labour (FGTB) is available here: <https://www.ifs-i-svi.be/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/FR-Jaarrapport-ISVI-2017-print.pdf>
- ⁷ Ncube F. & Kanda A. (2018), "Current Status and the Future of Occupational Safety and Health Legislation in Low- and Middle-Income Countries", *Safety and Health at Work*, Volume 9, Issue 4, December 2018, Pages 365-371.
- ⁸ See <https://www.sigetur.com/>
- ⁹ Sigetur, *Communique on Asbestos*, Buenos Aires Congress, April 2018.
- ¹⁰ The organisations involved in the project are: Haitian Workers' Confederation (CTH), Confederation of Workers of the Public and Private Sector (CTSP), the Haitian Trade Union Confederation (CSH), the National Centre of Haitian Workers (CNOHA) and Batay Ouvryè. The project counts with financial and technical support from southern and northern trade unions. More information on the project is available at: <http://csa-si.org/NormalNews.asp?pageid=11544>
- ¹¹ At 48.5 per cent in 2018, women's global labour force participation rate is 26.5 percentage lower than that of men. ILO, *Trends for Women* (2018) https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_619577.pdf
- ¹² Globally, the gender pay gap is on average 20 per cent. ILO, *Global Wage Report 2018/19 - What lies behind gender pay gaps* https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_650553.pdf
- ¹³ De Bruyn T. & Huysse H., (2017), "Unlocking the potential of Southern Trade Unions through South-South Cooperation: Experiences from the IWE South-South Exchange Programme", Policy Brief, HIVA-KU Leuven.
- ¹⁴ Pavan R. (2018), "CUT Brazil and South-South Cooperation", in *Policy Research on Operationalizing People-Oriented South-South Development Cooperation, CSO Partnership for Aid Effectiveness and The Reality of Aid*, pp. 61-71
- ¹⁵ ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work, "Work for a brighter future", available at: https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_662410/lang--en/index.htm
- ¹⁶ TUDCN/ILO (2017), *Issue paper: social dialogue as a driver and governance instrument for sustainable development*, ITUC, Brussels.
- ¹⁷ The full list of member of the Coordinator is available at: <https://www.coordinadoraconosur.org/course/view.php?id=7§ion=2>
- ¹⁸ Powell S. (2008), *Humanizing Trade's Economic Benefits: An Analysis of MERCOSUR's Effects on the Environment, Labor Standards, Indigenous Populations, and Health*, Ninth Annual Legal and Policy Issues in the Americas Conference, May 26-28, 2008, Rio de Janeiro.
- ¹⁹ TUCA, 2018, «Organising and Decent Work: Joint Project Supporting the Strengthening of the Haitian Trade Union Movement" – Phase I», Report 2017-2018.
- ²⁰ The unions involved in the Committee are: Confédération des Travailleurs Haïtiens (CTH), Coordination Syndicale Haïtienne (CSH), Confédération des Travailleurs et Travailleuses des Secteurs Public et Privé (CTSP) and Coordination Nationale des Ouvriers Haïtiens (CNOHA).
- ²¹ More information on the project is available at: <http://csa-csi.org/NormalNews.asp?pageid=11544>