

African Trade Unions and Africa's Future:

Strategic Choices in a Changing World



Cover: Firestone Agricultural Workers Union of Liberia (FAWUL) members, Liberia.

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African Trade Unions and Africa's Future:

Strategic Choices in a Changing World

Summary report based on surveys and other research
by Solidarity Center staff and consultants
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By
William Minter, Ph.D.

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Foreword

By Kwasi Adu-Amankwah

General Secretary, African Regional Organization of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa)

The Solidarity Center report titled *African Trade Unions and Africa's Future: Strategic Choices in a Changing World* is a valuable document that provides useful reflection and insight on the African labor market and trade union situation. The report is based mainly on a survey of nine countries, eight with English as the official language, one with Portuguese. Five of the countries are in Southern Africa, namely, Mozambique, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe; three in West Africa, namely, Ghana, Liberia and Nigeria; and one in East Africa, Kenya.

The survey shows that trade unions have played a significant part in the political and economic lives of their countries.



Emmanuel Barchue, 2013

FAWUL members with Imani Countess.

The report highlights the overall preoccupation of governments with macroeconomic stability and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth, which are not necessarily related to expanded employment and job creation nor to improved incomes and livelihoods. Reports by international agencies celebrate high rates of growth in a range of African countries and an inflow of investments, including from new partners such as China and Arabian Gulf States. But as this survey shows, such growth has not automatically translated into better well-being for the people. More striking, as the result of economic growth, are new trends in the labor market such as outsourcing, subcontracting, growing informality and the rise of precarious jobs—all of which have had consequences for trade unions.

The survey shows that trade unions have played a significant part in the political and economic lives of their countries. Among other things, unions have played key roles in:

- The decolonization and national liberation struggles;
- Promoting and defending democratic institutions after the formal achievement of political rights;
- Participating in organized structures for social dialogue or administration of public benefits, which require specialized personnel knowledgeable about these areas;
- Mobilizing on policy issues of particular interest to workers, such as minimum wage legislation and the scope of coverage of social insurance; and
- Participating in debates about the economic policy strategies of government.

An array of conventions at the international level and laws at the national level offer potential for protecting the rights and interests of workers. All too often, however, these legal instruments are not utilized for

the benefit of workers, largely because of unwillingness or inability of governments to enforce them and the failure of trade unions to ensure compliance.

This in turn relates to the capacity of trade unions to function as solid organizations that can defend, protect and advance the interests of workers and meet their expectations. Issues of concern include the shrinking traditional base of trade unions in the formal sector, lack of resources from inadequate subscriptions and other sources, inadequate research capacity and insufficient specialized personnel and skills for negotiations with employers and governments.

As part of the response to their changing fortunes, the survey shows, most unions now attach considerable importance to organizing in the informal economy. Unions have also, over more than a decade, paid increasing attention to enhancing the participation of women in the trade union movement and in union leadership, a theme well developed in the report.

Given that it is based on a single survey covering a limited sample of nine countries, the report does not and cannot provide a comprehensive picture of trade unionism across Africa. In particular, it does not include insights from the trade union movement in the French-speaking countries of West and Central Africa, most notably the Democratic Republic of the Congo. A trend mentioned in the report that merits further research, and which is especially notable in the French-speaking countries, is the fragmentation of unions. This results in multiple national trade union centers, most of them unsustainable on their own, competing for the loyalties of a formal-sector labor force that is a relatively small proportion of the labor force in the country.

The report also does not address the particularly difficult environments for unions in countries such as those in North Africa, where unions must navigate between powerful governments on the one hand and the threats of fundamentalism and terrorism on the other.

More generally, it is essential that African trade unions consider not only the particular issues raised by this report but also the wider framework for trade union intervention in policy. This in turn must be linked to a class and nationalist perspective and analysis. Such analysis must be appropriate for each

country while also addressing broad issues of industrialization, regional integration, domestic control over policy and reclaiming cultural heritage: in sum, an alternative paradigm for development in Africa.

The trade union movement in Africa faces enormous challenges arising from the critical situation that confronts Africa and its people. The African people have been losers in their encounters with other civilizations over several centuries, with negative consequences for the material well-being of the majority of Africans. In the development of the modern state, from the colonial era into what can be described today as the neocolonial era, the systems of governance and institutions of public authority that have emerged often do not serve the interests of the people. Genuine leadership is needed to steer Africa out of its difficulties and enable Africa and its people to progress.

Since precolonial times, popular organization and mass mobilization have been central to advancing the interests of the African people. Trade unions across large parts of Africa marshaled popular forces and played significant roles in the anti-colonial struggle. In the post-colonial era, unions have continued, albeit with varying degrees of success, to play crucial roles in protecting the economic and social rights of workers and in securing benefits for them in the midst of the overall difficulties facing the African masses. In the modern history of Africa, therefore, the union movement has emerged as an important source of countervailing power for securing short- to medium-term benefits for workers directly and for pushing the frontiers of politics and policy in the direction of social transformation for the benefit of the people as a whole.

Neoliberal globalization has brought growing poverty and misery to the world's working poor and unemployed, as well as rising inequalities within countries and between regions of the world. Against this backdrop, there is an urgent need for trade union renewal. African trade unions need to get more workers organized and mobilized to secure day-to-day collective interests and to struggle for changes in the currently dominant paradigm of development. Unions must reach workers in the traditional formal sector to reawaken their interest in unionism and in



Rubber tapper, Liberia.

the struggle for achievement of worker rights. At the same time unions must rise to the challenge of organizing workers in the informal economy, enabling these workers to secure rights and social benefits as well as achieve self-help.

As part of this renewed commitment to rebuilding, unions must develop their capacity not only to negotiate benefits in the world of work, but also to exert political and policy influence on national development strategies. This can help ensure that the imprint of African workers is brought to bear on the imperatives of industrialization, African regional integration and the resurgence of culture that allows Africa to make its own creative contribution to modern development.

Renewed commitment to building unions should also be linked consciously to efforts to reduce the dependence of trade unions, particularly financial dependence. While solidarity may always be

an essential ingredient in the mix of resources on which trade unions draw, trade union dependence on donors, whether external or internal, is certain to compromise union ideals and undermine the growth of sustainable unions that serve their members in the best traditions of the trade union movement. Solidarity support to African trade unions, particularly of a financial and logistical kind, should thus be fashioned in a manner that helps unions move toward independence and self-reliance. Efforts that promote trade union unity, especially at national level, can make an important contribution to achieving such independence and sustainability.

Everything needs to be done to rebuild trade unions in Africa to ensure they can make their due contribution toward salvaging the blighted continent from the depths to which it has sunk. Unions must organize and mobilize workers to secure short- to medium-term benefits while simultaneously joining with other progressive forces for transformation and development. Failure to take on both tasks will condemn Africa to continuing crises and social explosions, betraying the hopes and aspirations of the continent's peoples.

Kwasi Adu-Amankwah is General Secretary of the African Regional Organization of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa), based in Lomé, Togo. He was elected to that post in 2007. He previously served in several positions in the Ghana Trades Union Congress, most recently as its Secretary General from 2000 to 2007.

Preface

After years of discouragement, there is growing optimism about the prospects for economic growth in Africa. According to the International Monetary Fund, growth in sub-Saharan Africa is expected to exceed that of all other regions except developing Asia. Economic growth rates in Ghana are greater than China's, while the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia and Mozambique are growing faster than Brazil and Russia. Recent economic development means that the number of sub-Saharan Africans living on less than \$1.25 a day has fallen from 58 percent to 48 percent. Yet despite these advances, overall growth has not resulted in substantial poverty reduction, nor has it created enough jobs and decent work. And there is a wide gap between macroeconomic growth and the goals of inclusive economic growth and participatory accountable governance for the people in African countries.¹

In fact, income inequality and social inequality in Africa are deepening, despite economic growth. As a result, the majority of citizens are denied the basic human rights to food, shelter, education and decent work. Women are particularly disadvantaged even as they assume primary responsibility for family survival. In the long term, inequality undermines democracy by limiting people's ability to participate fully in governance structures, which are skewed by wealth and influence. In addition, the concentration of wealth among a small percentage of Africa's richest citizens, many of whom hold financial assets in offshore accounts and investments, reduces

¹ Sources for data in this paragraph include *Jobs, Justice and Equity: Seizing Opportunities in Times of Global Change: Africa Progress Report 2012* (Geneva: Africa Progress Panel, 2012), <http://www.africaprogresspanel.org/en/publications>; International Monetary Fund (IMF), *World Economic Outlook* (Washington, DC: IMF, April 2013), <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2013/01/>; IMF, *Regional Economic Outlook: Sub-Saharan Africa* (Washington, DC: IMF, October 2013), <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/reo/2013/afr/eng/sreo1013.htm>; and World Bank, *The State of the Poor: Where Are the Poor and Where Are the Poorest?* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2013), <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2013/04/17/remarkable-declines-in-global-poverty-but-major-challenges-remain>.



Emmanuel Barchue, 2013

Imani Countess and members of the United Workers Union of Liberia (UWUL) at the ArcelorMittal Buchanan port facility.

much-needed revenue for governments. This in turn weakens government's ability to develop social infrastructure for the common good, such as health, education and other social protections for the most needy in society.

In the long term, inequality undermines democracy by limiting people's ability to participate fully in governance structures, which are skewed by wealth and influence.

These realities are not unique to Africa. Today's globalized economy makes governments vulnerable to forces beyond their control, including the workings of global markets, the power of giant corporations and the political influence of free-market fundamentalism in shaping both national policy and international regulatory regimes. These pressures are accompanied by other macroeconomic shifts, notably including global recession, economic policies that increase unemployment and underemployment and the casualization of



Market vendors, Liberia.

labor. Against this backdrop, unions in Africa today have a unique and critical role to play in protecting the promoting the rights of working people. They also face enormous difficulties.

The core functions of unions are well known: Organized labor supports and represents members and negotiates with employers on wages, workplace conditions and benefits. Less commonly understood are their additional functions and responsibilities. As representatives of workers, unions can influence governments to advance social protections that benefit everyone, including social security, national wage structures and provisions for dispute resolution. In addition, unions, by their structures, numbers and relationships with government, create political space for others in civil society, in effect reinforcing democracy and allowing citizens to have a greater voice.

Given the downward pressure on workers and by extension on the unions that represent them, how are worker rights protected? And how are union organizations able to negotiate with governments and employers amid global and national economic pressures? These are a few of the questions the Solidarity Center sought to answer.

For more than 15 years, the Solidarity Center has worked with trade unionists in Africa, continuing the work of its predecessor organization, the African-American Labor Center. Today the Solidarity Center

has offices in four countries and implements programs in 16 nations. As part of that work, the Solidarity Center provides its allies with technical assistance and training to increase union capacity to address major issues—for example, Africa's rapidly growing informal economy. The Solidarity Center also provides basic organizing, administrative support and training to help unions grow worker power and bargaining capacity.

Over the years, the Solidarity Center has been privileged to partner with African unions that have been able to improve the livelihoods of members and their families and communities. Unions have built powerful campaigns advocating decent work for all, produced pro-poor alternatives for sustainable development and worked with governments to draft new laws that protect vulnerable workers in the informal sector. Without a doubt, African trade unions, using their ability to mobilize large sectors of society, have played an important role in advancing and stabilizing worker rights, broader human rights and democracy in the region.

In February 2013, the Solidarity Center, with support from the National Endowment for Democracy, launched a special research project in which organization field staff interviewed trade unionists in Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In addition, single interviews were conducted with

union leaders from Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. This report presents the results of these interviews, supplemented by research conducted by the principal investigator, William Minter. This project is the beginning of efforts to better understand the challenges facing unions in light of the twin phenomena of jobless growth and rising inequality.

In these conversations, the Solidarity Center also asked unionists about gender equality within unions. Gender equality is understood globally as a fundamental human right and as critical for sustainable development and strong participatory democracies. Trade unions understand the importance of gender equality, and Africa boasts strong examples of gender integration policies and majority-female unions. Yet, as in the United States and elsewhere, gender equality and integration require much more attention in African countries. One goal of the survey was to deepen understanding of why and how some unions have made progress in overcoming social mores, patriarchal cultures and structural discrimination against women workers, and why some others have not.

This report includes five topical chapters on the economy, government, internal challenges to trade unions, the role of women and the changing policy environment. The topical chapters include selected excerpts from the interviews.² The chapter on the role

² The excerpts are notes recorded by the interviewers, reporting the comments made by interviewees. To protect confidentiality and encourage participants to speak frankly, interviewees are not identified by name in the body of the report. A list of all interviewees and their affiliations is included in appendix 2.



Gasoline vendor, Liberia.

of women also includes a report on a July 2013 focus group on advancing women's rights in trade unions. These chapters are followed by brief profiles of the participating countries in Southern Africa, East Africa and West Africa.

As the labor movement begins to plan for the post-2015 development agenda, this study and follow-up research will allow the Solidarity Center, as well as its partners in organizations and governments, to develop more efficient and higher-impact programs in support of the labor movement in Africa. The report also provides a tool for reaching out to new allies, in development organizations and elsewhere, who are becoming aware of the critical role that unions play in supporting human rights and expanding democratic space.

Most important, the Solidarity Center hopes that the information contained in this report will be helpful to African unions. Several trade union federations, such as the Congress of South African Trade Unions, regularly survey their members and have built-in processes for self-reflection. Ideally, this report will encourage such efforts in more countries and also provide useful reflection and synthesis that might be helpful for planning and for increasing collaboration and joint campaigning among union structures.

African trade unions have an essential role to play in any critical decisions made about the future of the continent. As elsewhere in the world, the dominant trends are based on an interpretation of "development" that privileges short-term macro-economic growth over sustainable development and equitable distribution of the fruits of growth. Growth that is defined by the short-term interests of a privileged few will be neither sustainable nor just. If trade unions can join with others who recognize that the purpose of growth is to benefit human development, both for those of us living today and for those yet to be born, then another Africa and another world are possible.

Imani Countess

Africa Region Program Director

Solidarity Center

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Abbreviations

AAEUN	Agriculture and Allied Employees Union of Nigeria
ADB	African Development Bank
AfDWN	Africa Domestic Workers Network
AMCU	Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union
ANC	African National Congress (South Africa)
ASSOTSI	<i>Associação dos Operadores e Trabalhadores do Sector Informal</i> (Informal Sector Workers' Association, Mozambique)
CBA	collective bargaining agreement
CCT	<i>Comissão Consultiva do Trabalho</i> (Labor Advisory Commission, Mozambique)
CESTRAR	<i>Centrale des Syndicats des Travailleurs du Rwanda</i> (Trade Union Center of Workers of Rwanda)
COMUTRA	<i>Comité Nacional da Mulher Trabalhadora</i> (Working Women's Committee, Mozambique)
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
COSYBU	<i>Confédération Syndicale du Burundi</i> (Trade Union Confederation of Burundi)
COTU (K)	Central Organization of Trade Unions (Kenya)
CSAWUZ	Civil Servants and Allied Workers Union of Zambia
CUT	<i>Central Única dos Trabalhadores</i> (Unified Workers' Central, Brazil)
EAC	East African Community
EATUC	East African Trade Union Confederation
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Program (Zimbabwe)
FAWU	Food and Allied Workers Union (South Africa)
FAWUL	Firestone Agricultural Workers' Union of Liberia
FEDUSA	Federation of Unions of South Africa
FFTUZ	Federation of Free Trade Unions of Zambia
FOBTOB	Food, Beverage and Tobacco Senior Staff Association (Nigeria)
GDP	gross domestic product
GNI	gross national income
GNU	Government of National Unity (Zimbabwe)
HOSPERSA	Health and Other Service Personnel Trade Union of South Africa
IDWN	International Domestic Workers' Network
ILO	International Labor Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISSER	Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research, University of Ghana
ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation
ITUC-Africa	African Regional Organization of the International Trade Union Confederation
KNUT	Kenya National Union of Teachers
KUDHEIHA	Kenya Union of Domestic, Hotels, Educational Institutions, Hospitals and Allied Workers
LEDRIZ	Labor and Economic Development Research Institute of Zimbabwe
LLC	Liberia Labor Congress

LRPI	Labor Research and Policy Institute (Ghana)
MHWUN	Medical and Health Workers' Union of Nigeria
MUZ	Mineworkers Union of Zambia
NANNM	National Association of Nigeria Nurses and Midwives
NCSU	Nigerian Civil Service Union
NEDLAC	National Economic Development and Labor Council (South Africa)
NEWU	National Engineering Workers' Union, Zimbabwe
NLC	Nigeria Labor Congress
NOTU	National Organization of Trade Unions (Uganda)
NULGE	National Union of Local Government Employees (Nigeria)
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers (South Africa)
NUMSA	National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa
NUPENG	Nigeria Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers
NURTW	National Union of Road Transport Workers (Nigeria)
OATUU	Organization of African Trade Union Unity
OTM	<i>Organização dos Trabalhadores de Moçambique</i> (Mozambique Workers' Organization)
PDL	poverty datum line
PENGASSAN	Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria
PUTZ	Progressive Teachers' Union of Zimbabwe
RATTAWU	Radio, Television, Theater and Arts Workers Union (Nigeria)
SACCAWU	South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union
SACU	Southern African Customs Union
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADSAWU	South African Domestic Service and Allied Workers Union
SATAWU	South African Transport and Allied Workers Union
SINED	<i>Sindicato Nacional de Empregados Domésticos</i> (National Union of Domestic Workers, Mozambique)
SINTIME	<i>Sindicato Nacional dos Trabalhadores da Indústria Metalúrgica, Metalomecânica e Energia</i> (National Union of Metallurgy, Metal Mechanics and Energy Workers, Mozambique)
SINTRAT	<i>Sindicato Nacional dos Trabalhadores dos Transportes Rodoviários e Assistência Técnica</i> (National Union of Road Transport Workers, Mozambique)
TUC	Ghana Trades Union Congress
TUC	Trade Union Congress of Nigeria
TUCOSWA	Trade Union Congress of Swaziland
TUCTA	Trade Union Congress of Tanzania
UWUL	United Workers Union of Liberia
WIEGO	Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing
ZATUC	Zanzibar Trade Union Congress
ZCIEA	Zimbabwe Chamber of Informal Economy Associations
ZCTU	Zambia Congress of Trade Unions
ZCTU	Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions
ZFTU	Zimbabwe Federation of Trade Unions

All dollar amounts are U.S. dollars unless otherwise indicated.

A photograph of a young Black man with short hair, wearing a white and blue horizontally striped polo shirt with a small logo on the chest. He is standing in front of a stall where several soccer jerseys are hanging on display. To his left is a red Liverpool jersey with 'Stafan Chare' printed on it. Behind him are a black Juventus jersey with 'JOSSEL.COM' and 'ep' visible, and a blue Chelsea jersey with 'SUNG' visible. Above these are yellow and red items hanging from a blue metal frame.

Key Findings and Implications

To gain a better understanding of the challenges facing trade unions with which the Solidarity Center works, Solidarity Center staff and consultants conducted interviews between July and October 2013 with 63 trade unionists and other individuals associated with the trade union sector in sub-Saharan Africa. Countries of focus were predominantly English-speaking and included Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The majority of people interviewed (50) held office in a union or trade union federation, five were working at the shop-floor level and eight were affiliated with union-related organizations as researchers or program officers. The interviews were supplemented with desk research, primarily sources accessed on the Web.

It should be noted that there are important differences in the situation, challenges and capacity of trade unions across the countries where interviews were conducted. For example, the trade union movement in Mozambique has very limited capacity to challenge the government's view of its function as ensuring "labor peace." In Swaziland the trade union federation is currently banned and unions function with great difficulty in a nondemocratic state. In Zimbabwe, while the union movement is strong in some areas, such as in analysis and public education on economic policy, it confronts hostility from certain sectors of the state and is weakened by internal divisions. In Liberia, still in a period of post-conflict recovery, several robust unions are active in specific sectors, but the trade union federation is challenged by low capacity. Zambia faces significant issues of competition among different unions and federations despite recent efforts to overcome this problem.

Unions have also come under pressure to adopt government perspectives on economic policy. Governments and large companies court union leaders who they hope will be responsive to management views. The argument advanced, and sometimes accepted, is that economic growth will be good for everyone

and that workers should accept sacrifices so that the country can attract investment and promote growth. While many union leaders are strongly critical of such views, as reflected in these interviews, others buy into the argument or are wary of challenging the dominant perspective, at least in public debate.

In spite of this varied landscape, several broad conclusions stand out based on a relative degree of consensus among interviewees and other sources.

KEY FINDINGS

Unions function in a highly unfavorable economic environment

Today's economic and policy environment poses difficulties for trade unions in several respects. Governments prioritize macroeconomic growth over inclusive, sustainable growth that favors job creation and human development. Globalization and economic competition in their present form promote casualization of work and widen the informal economy. Capital flows, both licit and illicit, drain African countries of the resources they need for investment in public goods and for sustainable development. These realities are global. In Africa, their effects are magnified



Market vendors, Liberia.

by the subordinate position of African countries in the global economy.

While it is too early to speak of a new consensus, more and more international organizations and economists working on African development argue that the state must take a central role in ensuring that growth includes structural transformation of African economies. They call for measures to promote job creation, secure worker rights, invest in social and physical infrastructure and enable African countries to move up the ladder of global value chains. There is also wide agreement on the imperative to address gender equity as essential for development as well as for its intrinsic value as a primary component of universal human rights. However, these perspectives are not yet adequately reflected in the de facto programs and policies of most governments or of key multilateral agencies such as the World Bank.

Protections for workers are not enforced

At both the international and national levels, there is a significant body of conventions and laws that protect worker rights. But interviewees stressed that more often than not, governments do not enforce these legal requirements, lacking both political will and enforcement capacity. Some governments are overtly hostile to worker rights. Trade unions, meanwhile, often lack capacity to negotiate effectively for the implementation and enforcement of laws and

conventions. This holds true despite the wide variation in relationships among trade unions and governments in the countries included in the survey.

Unions lack sufficient resources

Unions differ widely in their capacity to defend workers' interests and meet their expectations, and these contrasts were noted even among unions within the same country. However, interviewees in all countries frequently said that a dearth of resources, both financial and human, hinders union effectiveness. Unions are hard-pressed to sustain adequate financing through dues or other sources. They also find it difficult to maintain staffing with adequately trained personnel who can manage union affairs and negotiate with employers and government.

Growth of the informal economy challenges unions

Trade unions have traditionally had their strongest base in the formal economy. Their membership and resource base are being eroded by the diminishing formal sector, the trend toward casualization and the outsourcing of a wide range of jobs. Downsizing in the public sector, often associated with privatization, is an important factor in some countries. The effect of these changes is to diminish the bargaining power of unions and depress wages.



School children return home from the Firestone Plantation School, Liberia.



Hair stylist, Liberia.

Trade unionists widely recognize the need to find new ways to organize in the informal and formal economies to maximize the capacity of unions to strengthen social protections, improve livelihoods and expand worker voices. While there are a few positive examples of small-scale successes, the difficulties of organizing workers in the informal economy remain formidable. Challenges include the diverse patterns of work organization, the physical dispersion of the informal workforce and the lack of sustainable financing for such organizing.

Women's participation in unions and union leadership is increasing but still limited

Interviewees broadly agreed that in recent years, international pressure and the initiative of women have helped raise the issue of women's roles in trade unionism. Women and their advocates have achieved some concrete gains in terms of increasing women's participation in unions and union leadership. However, survey respondents noted that the commitment

to gender issues is, in many cases, more talk than action. Women in trade union leadership are often confined to positions dealing specifically with gender issues rather than serving in the highest-ranking positions, which limits their impact within unions and the capacity of unions to represent workers.

Women in the informal sector are vulnerable

Interviewees agreed on the importance of organizing in sectors of the informal economy dominated by women workers, such as domestic work. But while some efforts under way are promising, such as those in South Africa, Kenya and Mozambique, they are limited in scope. Most successful initiatives have involved small numbers of people or focused on specific issues, such as ensuring coverage of domestic workers by social security programs. Much remains to be done to address the vulnerability of women working in the informal sector in terms of their pay, working conditions and job security. In practice, it continues to be very difficult to achieve sustainable organization of large numbers of workers dispersed in individual households.

IMPLICATIONS

This general survey does not lend itself to detailed recommendations tailored to specific national situations. Nor are there any easy solutions to the obstacles for trade unions identified in the interviews. However, the results do have broad implications for the tasks trade unions must undertake to be successful in defending the interests of workers and the broader society. Several of the most important points are noted below.

African trade unions must find new ways of organizing unorganized workers, particularly in the informal economy

The primary base for most trade unions remains the formal economy, including employment in government, manufacturing and the service sector. Continued strength in these sectors provides the foundation for the survival and expansion of unions and formal-sector workers must not be neglected. However, national and global economic trends suggest that

the proportion of workers in formal employment will likely continue to decrease. Some unions have begun organizing within the informal economy, but it is clear that these efforts must move much higher on the agenda. Both unions and international agencies supporting unions need to share experiences and invest more resources in finding effective ways to organize among workers in the informal economy.

African trade unions must play an active role in public life

Unions need to actively influence the economic and political environment in their countries, especially in regard to public policies that affect workers' interests directly. In Africa, historically, unions played key roles in decolonization and national liberation struggles and in promoting democratic institutions after the formal achievement of political rights. Except for Swaziland, all the countries in this survey have formal democratic institutions in place. But worker rights and other democratic rights are at risk in all

countries, regardless of the spectrum of formal relationships among trade unions and ruling parties. The active and independent role of trade unions in the public sphere is essential both for the preservation of democracy and for advancing worker rights and inclusive economic growth.

African trade unions must speak out on national and international economic policies

The prospects for trade unions depend in large part on economic policies adopted by national governments and international agencies. As the importance of job creation, sustainable development and supportive social policies gains broader recognition, trade unions have both an opportunity and an obligation to represent workers in economic policy debates. This implies active participation in research and policy advocacy in collaboration with allies in civil society, government agencies and inter-governmental organizations.



Emmanuel Barchue, 2013

United Workers' Union of Liberia (UWUL), Liberia.

African trade unions must help shape policy decisions affecting workers

In addition, trade unions must take advantage of opportunities to participate in organized structures for social dialogue involving government, business and worker representatives. In some countries unions have a formal role in the administration of public benefits, such as social security and health insurance. These tasks require specialized and knowledgeable personnel. Unions can also mobilize their members and the public on policy issues of particular interest to workers, such as minimum wage legislation and social safety nets. The examples of effective participation in the survey countries point to the considerable potential for productive exchange of experiences between unions across sub-Saharan Africa.

African trade unions must step up their efforts to advance women's rights within unions, in the workplace and wider society

As noted in the findings section above, trade unions have taken encouraging steps to achieve more equitable inclusion of women in union structures and to focus on issues disproportionately affecting women in the workplace. These efforts must continue and intensify. However, they will not be successful without parallel efforts to confront the obstacles to equal rights and equal participation for women that are built into current economic structures and societal practices. This implies opening up economic sectors and occupations that are still largely closed to women, as well as advancing education for women, equity within the household and social support for

family obligations now primarily met by women. In short, trade unions need to be and to be seen as leaders in the struggle for comprehensive women's rights.

African trade unions must intensify dialogue and collaboration across national boundaries, including with unions in other African countries and with regional and global trade union allies

Economic globalization and the power of multilateral agencies at all levels mean that trade unions cannot ignore the international context. International solidarity, particularly in terms of mutual support for trade unions facing particular crises, such as attacks on established rights, has long been a fundamental premise of the trade union movement. The African Regional Organization of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa), among other regional and global trade union groups, is actively promoting exchange of experiences and collaboration among unions in different African countries. However, the scale of this collaboration falls far short of what is needed. Trade unions and agencies supporting them should expand these efforts, both by increasing the opportunities for dialogue and by building additional transnational links into current bilateral cooperation initiatives. This should include expanded communication using new information technologies and opportunities for in-person, in-depth dialogue among trade unionists from different countries. Such programs allow the sharing of lessons learned and provide trade unionists with wider frames of reference and sources of support beyond those available in their local context.



II Survey Results

CHAPTER 1

Africa Is Rising—But Good Jobs Lag Behind

The *Africa Progress Report 2012* headlined its section on economic growth “Moving to the Premier League.” From *Al Jazeera* to the *Economist*, world media have trumpeted an “Africa rising.” The African Development Bank (ADB) heralded the emergence of a new African middle class, while investment counselors pitch Africa as the new global economic frontier.³

The *Economist* noted in December 2011:

*“Over the past decade six of the world’s ten fastest-growing countries were African. In eight of the past ten years, Africa has grown faster than East Asia, including Japan. Even allowing for the knock-on effect of the northern hemisphere’s slowdown, the IMF expects Africa to grow by 6% this year and nearly 6% in 2012, about the same as Asia.”*⁴

Some of the hype can be dismissed. The ADB’s threshold for becoming “middle class” is set at the extraordinarily low income level of \$2 per day. And economist Morten Jerven has warned that most African development statistics are based on such thin data and changing criteria that “growth” in some cases represents nothing more than a decision by statisticians to estimate the informal economy using a different methodology.⁵

But there is no doubt that economic growth is real, though it varies widely from country to country and within each country. Economic dynamism is evident in new extractive industry developments and construction sites, as well as in the inflow of investment from new partners such as China and the Gulf

States. The proliferation of mobile phone technology, visible in the streets as well as in the statistics, is an additional reflection of this dynamism.

Moreover, multilateral agencies concur in predicting that rapid growth will continue. The World Bank’s newsletter *Africa’s Pulse* for April 2013 noted that about a quarter of sub-Saharan African countries had growth rates of 7 percent or higher in 2012, with a regional average of nearly 5 percent. The *African Economic Outlook 2013*, jointly prepared by the ADB, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Center, the United Nations Development Program and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, cites an annual growth rate for the entire continent (excluding Libya) of 4.2 percent. The *Outlook* projected that growth would increase to 4.8 percent in 2013 and 5.3 percent in 2014.⁶

The countries covered by this survey vary widely in terms of their basic economic and labor indicators. For example, as shown in Table 1, the population of Nigeria is more than three times the size of South Africa’s. And South Africa’s per capita gross domestic product (GDP), at \$11,404, far exceeds the continental average of \$3,204. But annual growth rates for South Africa, averaging 3.6 percent for 2002–2012, have been below the continental average of 5.4 percent.

The proportion of the adult population actively participating in the labor market, by either working or looking for work, also varies widely, from about 53 percent in South Africa to more than 80 percent in Kenya (table 2). There is wide variation as well in the inactivity rate (the proportion of the working-age population that is unemployed and not seeking work), which ranges from about 27 percent in Mozambique to more than 70 percent in both Nigeria and South Africa. Inactivity rates for women range

³ *Africa Progress Report 2012* (see note 1); African Development Bank, “The Middle of the Pyramid: Dynamics of the Middle Class in Africa,” http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/The%20Middle%20of%20the%20Pyramid_The%20Middle%20of%20the%20Pyramid.pdf.

⁴ *The Economist*, “Africa Rising,” <http://www.economist.com/node/21541015>.

⁵ Morten Jerven, *Poor Numbers: How We Are Misled by African Development Statistics and What to Do about It* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013). Also see an essay by Jerven in *AfricaFocus Bulletin*, <http://www.africafocus.org/docs13/real1302.php>.

⁶ *African Economic Outlook 2013: Structural Transformation and Natural Resources* (Paris: OECD Development Centre, 2013), <http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/>.

Table 1: Basic Economic Indicators

Country	Population (thousands)	Land area (1,000 km ²)	Population density (pop/km ²)	GDP based on PPP valuation (\$ millions)	GDP per capita (PPP, \$)	Annual real GDP growth (average 2004–2012)
Ghana	25,546	239	107	83,176	3,256	7.4
Kenya	42,749	580	74	76,074	1,780	4.8
Liberia	4,245	111	38	2,693	635	7.4
Mozambique	24,475	799	31	26,215	1,071	7.4
Nigeria	166,629	924	180	450,535	2,704	7.2
South Africa	50,738	1,219	42	578,640	11,404	3.6
Swaziland	1,220	17	70	6,149	5,038	2.0
Zambia	13,884	753	18	23,676	1,705	6.3
Zimbabwe	13,014	391	33	6,909	531	–0.3
Africa	1,068,444	30,066	36	3,359,148	3,204	5.4

Source: *African Economic Outlook* (<http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/data-statistics/>).

from an extreme 81 percent in Nigeria to 17 percent in Mozambique. Although some of the variation may be due to different measurement criteria across countries, particularly in the method of counting the informal workforce in rural areas, the differences almost certainly also reflect real differences from one country to another.

Almost all interviewees who responded to the Solidarity Center survey, when asked about the general economic situation, noted some economic growth. But they also were emphatic that the growth was not accompanied by good jobs and did not trickle down or benefit the majority of the population. Two countries offered partial exceptions to this pattern. In Liberia, interviewees cited improvement, using conditions during the civil war as the basis for comparison. And in Zambia, interviewees noted higher wages in the formal sector following the entry into office of a new political party that had promised such increases.

The message that quantitative macroeconomic growth is not sufficient to lift people out of poverty or improve lives has been a prominent theme in reports by multilateral agencies in recent years. The Africa Progress Panel titled its 2012 report *Jobs, Justice and Equity*, while the World Bank's *World Development Report 2013* featured a one-word subtitle: *Jobs*.

In a foreword to the latter report, Jim Yong Kim, president of the World Bank, wrote:

*"Almost half of all workers in developing countries are engaged in small-scale farming or self-employment, jobs that typically do not come with a steady paycheck and benefits. The problem for most poor people in these countries is not the lack of a job or too few hours of work; many hold more than one job and work long hours. Yet, too often, they are not earning enough to secure a better future for themselves and their children, and at times they are working in unsafe conditions and without the protection of their basic rights."*⁷

Jobs, the report argues, should be center stage in the development agenda.

The issue of "jobless growth," particularly the lagging creation of good jobs in a growing economy, is fundamental both to the development agenda and to the environment confronting labor unions. While the causes are as complex as development itself, international agencies and critical scholars are increasingly in consensus on a number of key points, which are consistent with the factors cited in the interviews for this study.

⁷ Jim Yong Kim, foreword to *World Development Report 2013: Jobs* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank), http://wdonline.worldbank.org/worldbank/a/c.html/world_development_report_2013/abstract/WB.978-0-8213-9575-2.abstract.

Briefly summarized, these points are:

- Structural adjustment programs, with their emphasis on fiscal balance and privatization, resulted in steep cuts to government budgets. This in turn diminished a major source of formal employment, weakened the institutions needed to ensure a well-educated and healthy workforce, and failed to allow for sufficient long-term investment in infrastructure for balanced development. Although the “Washington consensus” behind these programs has weakened, even among international financial institutions, the legacy of these policies and emphasis on macroeconomic stability above all still weigh heavily on the policy choices of African governments.
- The recovery of African growth rates depends heavily on growth in oil and other extractive industries. These industries are capital-intensive, that is, they produce relatively few jobs for the capital invested, and they are highly dependent on sometimes volatile international commodity prices. In addition, the capacity of governments to negotiate mutually beneficial deals with large multinational corporations is severely limited.
- Much of the capital entering Africa or generated there quickly leaves the continent through mechanisms such as transfer pricing, corruption, legal tax avoidance and illegal tax evasion.⁸ These assets are no longer available to be taxed by the public sector or for job-creating domestic investment; the result is net losses for potential job creation in the public and private sectors.
- The growth of the informal economy and the increasing use of casual or temporary workers in the formal sector has a significant and negative impact on the prospects for good jobs and decent work. It also affects the ability of unions to organize workers and influence policy. Informal and casual workers have little job security and few benefits and they often live in precarious conditions. In many cases, their families depend on income from the rural areas as well as an urban place of employment. In some cases, they may be systematically victimized by labor brokers or even traffickers.

While it is too early to speak of a “new consensus,” many international financial agencies and economists working on African development now agree that

⁸ *AfricaFocus Bulletin* contains links to recent sources on this set of issues, <http://www.africafocus.org/debtexp.php>.

Table 2: Economic Participation Rates, 2008

Country	Participation rate (> age 15)	Inactivity rate (ages 15–64)		
		Total	Male	Female
Ghana	72.5	52.3	54.3	50.2
Kenya	80.6	29.9	24.9	34.9
Liberia	69.8	40.6	33.9	47.2
Mozambique	83.0	27.3	37.7	17.0
Nigeria	54.9	73.1	65.3	81.1
South Africa	53.4	72.5	71.3	73.6
Swaziland	64.4	56.2	57.0	55.4
Zambia	70.4	40.3	31.2	49.5
Zimbabwe	67.8	44.9	37.9	51.7

Source: *African Economic Outlook* (<http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/data-statistics/>).

Note: The participation rate is the percentage of the population engaged in the labor market, by either working or looking for work. This rate is given for all adults over the age of 15. The inactivity rate is the percentage of the population that is unemployed and not seeking work. This rate applies only to ages 15–64.

it is essential for the state to take a central role in ensuring that growth goes beyond the macro level to propel structural transformation of African economies. This transformation must include job creation, investment in social and physical infrastructure, redistribution of resources to counter inequality and advancement up the ladder of international value chains. The role of the state shapes the economic environment that trade unions and workers face, as well as the state's relationship with workers and unions.

“The demands on unions and the overall agenda facing them is of historic proportions. Because fundamentally, African countries need to transform their economies. As was the case in the struggles against colonialism and apartheid, unions have a critical role to play.”

It is also clear that the fundamental economic and political structures will not change without the active engagement of trade unions at the national and continental levels. In the words of Tetteh Hormeku, head of programs for the Third World Network secretariat in Ghana, in an interview with the Solidarity Center in March 2013:

“The demands on unions and the overall agenda facing them is of historic proportions. Because fundamentally, African countries need to transform their economies. As was the case in the struggles against colonialism and apartheid, unions have a critical role to play.”

Trade unions are aware of this challenge, which is continental and global as well as specific to each country. As transnational corporations devise global and Africa-wide strategies, trade unions must further

develop their capacity to act on this wider stage. In recent years the African Regional Organization of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa) has taken the lead in continent-wide collaboration. International links have also been made through the Organization of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU) and through global union federations such as Public Services International, IndustriALL, UNI Global Union, International Transport Workers' Federation and International Federation of Journalists.⁹

The survey did not explicitly ask about international solidarity and relationships with international and global federations, or with unions in other countries, and only one official of a global union federation received the survey. In retrospect, this was a significant omission that was pointed out by several reviewers and it thus remains a topic on the agenda for future systematic investigation. Encouraging examples of such collaboration do exist. Two notable cases are the solidarity shown by the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) with unions in the Southern African region, particularly in Zimbabwe and Swaziland, and the support for the Firestone Agricultural Workers' Union of Liberia (FAWUL) provided by international partners, including the Solidarity Center. But there is still great potential, and even greater need, to expand the exchange of views and collaboration among unions across national borders, both within and beyond the African continent.

In short, the economic constraints stemming from global and national economic forces pose fundamental challenges both for states and for trade unions. In order for states to foster sustainable development policies, they must forge a framework to guide development. Trade unions, in order to defend workers' rights, must take action in direct response to employers' actions and also engage in framing the public debate on economic policies.

⁹ A full listing of global union federations and links to further information can be found at <http://www.global-unions.org>.

Interviewees on the Economic Situation

Note: These are notes from interviews rather than exact quotes. Quotation marks are for convenience in reading. Interviewees are not identified by name but are grouped by country. Each quote is from a different interviewee.

Ghana

"Ghana is experiencing rapid economic growth, but it is export-dependent and jobless growth. Joblessness means a lack of income that people experience differently. [...] The labor movement in West Africa went through a traumatic period as a result of SAPs [structural adjustment programs requiring cutbacks in government spending and other austerity measures]. Eighty percent of the devastation of the trade union movement was a result of SAPs, the rest from other misfortunes. With the loss of economic and manufacturing jobs, the unions' capacity and social muscle has diminished. The basic challenge is to break out of the enclave nature of our economies. Look at the oil/gas/gold finds in Ghana. Africans mine these resources and export them in raw form. The mining doesn't link with the rest of the market—hence the term enclave. All the important sectors of growth are enclaves. Therefore, there is no basis to create jobs through linkages."



"Ghana is doing well compared to the 1980s. There was significant growth following independence, followed by recession. The country has seen 30 years of growth, at around 5 percent per year. However, that growth has not lifted people out of poverty. The informal economy is 90 percent of the workforce. The enclave zones, for example, mines, have done well. But even in those areas the growth has been jobless. [...] Employment has lagged and union density is going down. [...] The minimum monthly wage in Ghana is \$70; approximately 70 percent of the country lives on less than \$2 a day. [...] People do find all kinds of things to do in order to generate income, but 75 percent of that work is precarious."



"Because of the active involvement of the Ghana Trades Union Congress (TUC), there is space within the policy arena for discussions on taxation of natural resources. For example, the mining union proposed increased taxes, and the TUC was able to negotiate with the government the imposition of a 10 percent windfall tax and a restructuring of the agreement process. This is the primary way in which the TUC can influence government, not through the tripartite committee or collective bargaining agreements (CBAs). The tripartite committee is too narrow.

The gap between those with high incomes and those without is alarmingly high. The gap is not only in income, but in social services as well. The country has run down its public school system and children are failing. Public transportation is a nightmare. Everything public has been turned upside down. And the alternative is to resort to private, which few can afford. Private schools in place of public, private security in place of the police, private transport instead of public.

The government is investing in macroeconomic stability as a primary focus as opposed to real growth. The Ministry of Labor is amongst the weakest of all ministries."

Kenya

"Kenya's economy has stagnated at between 4 percent and five percent a year. Coupled with that is the high rate of unemployment, especially youth unemployment. Outsourcing and subcontracting have become a rampant phenomenon in Kenya. The levels of poverty and unemployment have increased a lot, and that has led to the cost of living being so high for most Kenyans."



"Although many people are talking of improved economy and low inflation rates, many workers have not enjoyed or noticed any changes. The majority of workers in Kenya are paid less than 8,000 Kenyan shillings [\$94] per month. With rent to pay, school fees, medical bills, food and water bills, this pay is inadequate."



"The Kenyan economy has improved so much after the post-election violence in 2007. Infrastructure has improved, which is an indicator of growing economy and business. The GDP has improved. However there hasn't been any trickle-down effect. The cost of living is still high, and the salaries that most workers get cannot sustain a decent kind of life."



"The economy was hard hit in 2007 and 2008. But since then we have seen the economy grow. Workers' pay has also gone up. This year the minimum wage was increased by 14 percent, which is a good thing for workers who earn very little. But the pay is still very little for most workers while the cost of living continues to go up. Most workers live from hand to mouth. They cannot save for the future. Jobs are not sustainable and decent enough."



"The economy has improved. But comparing it with the lives of domestic workers, nothing much has improved. A majority of us are still being paid below the minimum wage."



"The economy has grown in terms of figures. But with it the cost of living has also gone up. So the trickle-down effect to the common citizens and workers has not been realized. Poverty levels remain very high, and the lives of workers still remain the same."



Motorcycle riders, Liberia.

Liberia

"Things are getting better. I can say this without any hesitation. I saw the crisis. I was in the country throughout and I saw what happened. With the new government there is now economic improvement. We went close to hell and have come back to where we are today. There was a time when you could go a week with no food, and even if you had the money you couldn't find rice, or if you found it, it would be four times the price it is today."



"The economy is getting better, but there are many challenges. Companies are not paying decent wages, and the workforce is underpaid. The government is not promoting decent wages for fear of losing investors."



"Liberia's economy is growing, however, its infrastructure is poor, and the government has weak bargaining strength with investors. Concession agreements [with foreign companies] signed by the government do not impact the common/ordinary people. Moreover, the labor market reports 85 percent unemployed."



"The current economy is growing at a gradual pace. There are new investments but investments are signed by the national legislators. On the ground, the economic pace is slow."



"When the company thrives, we, the unionized workers, thrive also. Liberia has its challenges but every country is suffering from economic problems."

Mozambique

"Workers employed on megaprojects are the most affected by rapid economic growth. However, racism and discrimination in the workplace has resulted in the rapid exodus of trained and qualified workers to other parts of the world, including Europe and Asia. Ninety percent of the companies in the free-trade zones are owned by South Africans, and managed by white South Africans. Racism is endemic to these workplaces, reflected in the huge discrepancies between the wages and subsidies of Mozambican and foreign workers."



"Under Mozambique's centralized economy in the 1970s and 1980s, workers ran the companies. With privatization, companies closed, others changed sectors and a large number of workers were retrenched. The economic situation in the country is improving, although workers don't yet feel it because we're still in the initial phases of development."



"In terms of national income, the major sector of the economy is the extractive sector, namely gas and coal. Historically Mozambique's economy has been tied to South Africa, and as a result, the northern provinces remained underdeveloped. The mining boom has created the expectation that this is Tete's moment [Tete Province, where coal mines are located]. However, mining is not a conduit for development. The workforce is organized in enclaves, it is capital-intensive, workers are recruited from abroad (e.g., Filipino guest workers) and multinationals are constantly eroding quotas on foreign employment. People in Mozambique are more and more cynical about the extractives boom. They watch the 'big men' in Maputo accumulating [wealth]; they see every corner of the province under exploration, with no land use planning. There is little due process or rule of law."



"The growing sectors are mining, energy, construction, services, the port and railways. The agricultural and industrial sectors are stagnant. The few developments are driven by foreign investment. In terms of the impact, there were a lot of expectations regarding the number of jobs that mining would create, but these are capital-intensive industries, and so it's unlikely that expectations will be fulfilled. Some people are better off, but many are not. People feel that inequality is growing, and this is driving increased dissatisfaction, especially in urban areas, in particular Maputo and Tete. The average person may not be poorer but they see a small minority, well placed in relation to the state, getting richer and richer."



"The primary growth areas of the economy are construction and the extractives sector, but Mozambique's sustained high growth rate has not benefited workers. In fact, things are getting worse because prices are increasing, salaries are being eroded, and inequality is on the rise. The media and politicians have argued that we have to have patience; that we must wait for the benefits to trickle down. Yet while some people are tightening their belts, others are widening theirs."



"They say that Mozambique is developing but prices are increasing and salaries are not. I have been working for seven years but I don't receive a minimum wage. It's a big sacrifice to make ends meet, and we're suffering. At this age, I live with my parents. I would like to have a little piece of land, but I can't because the salary is so small. I don't earn enough to last 30 days."



"The salaries are extremely low; we have seen the erosion of salaries at a rapid and permanent rate. Our salaries depend on our productivity, so we need to increase our productivity by improving skills and training. Previously companies had their own training programs and invested in their workers. Today, they have externalized this function to the state, unions and nonprofits."



"The majority of people in the informal sector are young people. [...] Annually, there are 30,000 new young people who become informal operators. Formerly, it was people who hadn't studied who became informal operators. Today, you even have university students. When someone is unable to find work in their area, they might try to use their skills in the informal sector. In addition, with the erosion of salaries, people realize that they need to have 'side hustles.'"



"Workers are not feeling the benefits of rapid economic growth in Mozambique. Salaries are extremely low and do not keep up with the real rate of inflation. Inflation last year was vastly underestimated at 2 percent, particularly in urban areas."

Nigeria

"The economy, according to economists, is growing, but as a trade unionist, for me, growth in the economy that is not reflected in the lives of the Nigerian people is no growth at all. Presently as we speak, unemployment is on the increase, and jobs are decreasing as factories are closing. People are getting poorer. For the average Nigerian, things are getting worse. For example, in the early 1980s when the seat of government initially moved to Abuja, workers who migrated from Lagos to the capital city could afford to rent a decent accommodation in the city center. Today, workers can no longer afford to stay in the city centers as house rent has drastically increased and is no longer affordable."



"The majority of the Nigerian people are not finding life easy in the present economic situation, and so our economy cannot be said to be growing. In a country where workers currently employed are not getting decent wages at the end of the month and unemployment is growing at an alarming rate, the issue of economic growth does not arise. I do not know from what perspective economists claim that the economy is growing, because when you ask a common man on the street who does not even take three square meals a day, he will tell you that the economy is not growing at all."



“Speaking as a construction worker, I believe that the economy is not growing because the purchasing power of the naira [Nigerian currency] is being weakened on a daily basis. The net pay of an average worker can be much, but the value in the market is nothing to write home about. For us in the construction industry, the economy is not better because the issue against construction companies in Nigeria and their workers is non-payment for completed projects by the government. Our company alone is owed billions of naira, and this has led to the downsizing of the workforce and closure of sites.”



“They say Nigeria is the giant of Africa in terms of size and other resources, but the problem of Nigeria—which has greatly affected our economy and has made it not grow—is corruption. Our economy is not being properly managed by those in power. With the natural resources God has endowed this country with, a Nigerian should not be complaining about not having three square meals a day. But this is what is happening today. The Nigerian economy is not growing, and government cannot continue to deceive us with the message that the economy is growing. How can an economy grow when the government is not even thinking about food production for its teeming population.”



“Nigeria is not insulated from the impact of global economic meltdown, but it is not the worst hit in Africa. However, the high-handedness of the people has contributed to the way things are. Things are not as bad as people paint them to be, especially when you compare Nigeria with other African countries and the Western world. The economy is not stagnant. Rather it is progressing, though not at the rate people expect.”



“The Nigerian economy fluctuates. Sometimes it looks as if things are getting better and after a while, it turns bad. People think that things are getting worse. For me, I know the economy is not going well now as unemployment is very high in Nigeria.”



“For an average worker in Nigeria, the economy is stagnant with little or no improvement in the welfare of the Nigerian worker. The workers are not well paid and are without good social protection, especially the workers of the informal sector in Nigeria.”



“At a broad level, the Nigerian economy has not developed in tandem with the population; neither has it moved in line with the dynamics of economic development globally. This day it is no longer about being the biggest country but rather about being the fastest-growing economy. In Nigeria today, the economy is in shambles. Unemployment is one of the biggest problems the country faces.”



“The citizens hear a lot of money—billions—being mentioned in the budget, but nothing is trickling down to them. The government posits that the economy is growing, but the rates of unemployment and retrenchment for those in paid employment are high. So for me, the economy is not growing.”



Market vendor, Liberia.

South Africa

"Before the new dispensation, things were better. There was work and there was education compared to now. We currently have children who are sitting at home unemployed because they can't find jobs. People used to have manual work, but now workers are being replaced by mechanization and automation of work."



"The economy has grown. There has been a lot of employment. Insofar as workers' rights and demands at the plant level, there are so many demands that workers have won through the union. The workers now know their rights more than ever before. The change is not vast but there is some change."

The union nowadays is not about collectivism anymore, and the spirit of comradeship is lost. What is seen is individualism and corruption. The youth who come from universities don't see a union as a necessity because they believe they can represent themselves."



"The economy is growing, but we do not see any improvement when it comes to the working class. Instead we are seeing more people losing their jobs, and we can safely say that people do not see any improvement."



Rio Tinto Zimbabwe Empress Nickel Refinery, Zimbabwe.

The employees cannot get what they want and deserve from the employer because the employer resists yielding to their demands, such as for a pay increase. This, then, causes a constant struggle to convince people to join unions. Since they are not getting enough money, they are unable to pay the membership fees and be active members of the trade union. It then leads to a negative impact on the growth of the trade union because of the unsustainable membership, and the survival of the union is highly dependent on the subscriptions of union members."



"The economy is a bad state. It is so bad that many employees have lost their jobs and most of them will never find jobs because of one sole reason: the lack of skills. When they were employed, the employer did not equip them enough so that if they were retrenched, they could sell their skills to someone else. Those who are lucky to find employment or be absorbed by the labor market are often employed on a contractual basis, and the job lasts for three months. There is no secure employment anymore. I would not say the economy is good at this stage, and it is fueled by this kind of employment—three months' employment and then everyone is sitting at home."



"Things are getting worse. Prices are going up, and the impact of inflation is hurting the workers. The issues are retrenched workers who lack protection, companies unwilling to share the profits and political unrest in South Africa. It is hard for trade unions to get new opportunities because of the economy and politics. Those in politics are on the side of the companies, which makes it hard to protect the worker."



"It's not an easy question. Domestic workers are getting less money than before even though things are getting better for all of South Africa because of the new government intervention. Apartheid is still alive and kicking. We face unfair dismissals, more hours of work for less money and ill treatment from employers. The communication between employer and employee is no longer good. Not all employers are bad, but it's only 10 out of 1,000 who are good. Non-compliance with sectoral determination [minimum wages within sectors] is a big issue too."



"In terms of the economy and people who are in charge of the economy, despite the downturn, the South African economy has been growing. But all the time it has not been creating enough jobs. In other circles, you hear jobs are created. But we see there are not enough jobs. It's not a good thing when there are no jobs. Things are not going well. There is intervention from organized labor. Businesses and government meet with the intent of growing jobs, but not enough are being created despite the memoranda of understanding and agreements signed and meetings held. Lots of us are in debt, but maybe as a result of our actions. With little money, people get into debt and trouble. Prices are going up, and it is difficult to survive. Meanwhile people in charge, like employers—they hate trade unions with a passion. They hate trade unions."



"The issues? Retrenchments, reductions of hours of work, reduction of money, closure of companies, lack of confidence in unions, unprotected workers, precarious work and loss of permanent jobs. Work is becoming casualized. There is a pool of insecure jobs that border on unemployment. People work for specific hours and are unemployed again. A lot of migrant workers, both local and foreign, breed competition. As for the challenges faced by the trade unions, it's hard to organize non-permanent workers and, the union is weakened financially because it relies on member dues."



Workers and manager at the Rio Tinto Zimbabwe Empress Nickel Refinery, Zimbabwe.



"I've been looking at unions closing ranks. Unions have been organizing within sectors. Unions should merge based on the value chain. With increasing education, primary, secondary and tertiary workers can all work together. All in the chain can work together."



"The economy is declining. There is an economic crunch, probably. It is affecting the poorest of the poor, especially with inflation up by 5.5 percent. The cost for housing and utilities is rising while people lose jobs. I was doing negotiations for 450 people who have been retrenched in Pretoria in the past few days.

Union membership is declining, and they have serious difficulties in engaging employers. Unions spend a lot of time handling retrenchments and dismissals."

Zambia

"The price of copper has gone down slightly, but that fact has not had a big impact on our ability to negotiate good collective bargaining agreements. As the president ran his campaign with strong calls for improving worker salaries, we were able to negotiate very good CBAs in 2012, with the government encouraging copper companies to reach fair settlements."



"The current government led by President Michael Sata came into office about one and a half years ago. They were successful based on a strong populist campaign message that supported putting more money into the pockets of Zambian citizens and improving worker/union rights. In the collective bargaining agreement just completed two weeks ago [the first negotiated with the new government], we were able to increase minimum salaries for civil servants from about \$350 a month to about \$550. But the newly negotiated agreement for civil servants is like a promissory note. The real test will be to ensure that funds are budgeted to fully implement the agreement."



"One of our most serious economic problems in Zambia is that relatively few of our citizens work in the formal economy. We have about 500,000 workers in the formal economy, but almost 4 million in the informal economy. We also have to develop more jobs processing the minerals we mine. We have only a small industry to produce copper wire; most of our copper is exported in an unprocessed form."

Zimbabwe

"There has been a cycle of enjoyment in the early 1980s, then hardship during the Economic Structural Adjustment Program era. Now we are in a transitional phase since the formation of the Government of National Unity (GNU) in 2009. Overall, there has been a decline in living standards over the past 30 or so years. Real wages are now lower than they were in 1976. Formal employment is shrinking and things are so bad that many companies are failing to pay their workers at the end of the month after the workers have fulfilled their part of the agreement—it is unprecedented."



"The economy is not growing. Companies are actually closing down and the informal sector is continuing to grow. However, the government is losing out on revenue from the informal sector as it is refusing to recognize that sector, which is now the source of livelihoods for so many families whose breadwinners have left formal employment."



"Nothing is happening in the economy. There has only been a temporary respite with salaries now guaranteed in the civil service, though they are low. Compared to 1997, salaries have lost half their value. The standard of living for teachers has been going down—it's the worst in Southern Africa. While Zambian teachers are said to earn the equivalent of \$200 for their salaries, the basket value of that money in their local currency cannot be compared with our own in Zimbabwe."



"The economy has generally collapsed over the past few years. Poverty has increased, with 63 percent of the population living below the poverty line. Incomes have collapsed despite the temporary recovery brought about by dollarization of the currency and formation of the GNU. Inequality has worsened. There are no jobs, resulting in a labor aristocracy where only a few are employed. The disease burden has increased, with diseases such as cholera and typhoid resurfacing after having been eliminated during the 1980s. Among those employed, there is a high level of informalization: It was 80 percent in 2004 and now it has increased to 84 percent."



"Mutare [in eastern Zimbabwe] is endowed with natural resources, fruits and minerals, but it is one of the poorest regions in the country. The diamond mines around this area are only developing the immediate vicinity of their mines in order to ensure easy access to the mines. They do not care about development of the entire area. Mutare, as a city, is dying as industries are closing down. The biggest company historically was Mutare Board and Paper Mills, which employed 6,000 people. It went under in 2009, and the plant is now a primary school. That trend is continuing with no end in sight. Hence things are getting worse every day."



"There has been cosmetic economic growth. The use of the US dollar gives a false picture of growth, when no new jobs are being created and the existing ones are not decent work. There is a high level of informalization. The growth that has been experienced is not human-centered. There is no creation of new jobs, and students from universities and colleges are failing to get jobs. The future, for now, is looking bleak."



"There has been some growth in some sectors like mining, which is managing to pay salaries on time, unlike almost all the other sectors, which are struggling. Construction has also had a mini-boom due to the road construction project from the border with Botswana in Plumtree to Mutare on the border with Mozambique. However, manufacturing, which used to be the main activity in Bulawayo, has been in continuous decline, and there is no end in sight. There has been massive deindustrialization, with over 20,000 jobs lost between 2000 and 2010. The decline far outweighs the little growth that I mentioned in mining, construction and a third area, hospitality."



Monrovia, Liberia.

II Survey Results



UWUL members at the ArcelorMittal Buchanan port facility, Liberia.

CHAPTER 2

African Governments and Worker Rights: Fine Words, Sober Realities

African countries have a significant body of laws relevant to worker rights and have ratified many of the relevant international conventions.¹⁰

However, trade unionists interviewed for this survey stressed that while official government policies and laws may be praiseworthy, implementation often lags far behind. Many added that the laws are implemented only when there is significant trade union pressure to do so, but unions in general lack the financial resources, technical expertise and political influence necessary to bring such pressure in more than a few isolated cases. Other respondents, particularly in Kenya and Liberia, commented on the differences among government officials in their attitudes toward workers.

The relationship of unions to governments and the government support provided to unions varies widely from one country to another, although the survey results were not sufficiently detailed to make a systematic comparison. But overall, results were consistent with observations from publicly available sources about the countries included in the survey. The legal and policy framework for worker rights is most extensive and potentially worker-friendly in South Africa, followed by Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In these countries, also, the principal union federations combine active participation in public affairs and debate on policy issues with a commitment to non-affiliation with political parties. In Swaziland, regardless of the legal framework, the government is hostile to unions. In Liberia the policy framework is weak, as is the trade union federation, although some individual unions are strong. In

Mozambique, trade unions are still very weak and largely dependent on the government.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) has developed a Decent Work Agenda to promote work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families. Of the countries in the Solidarity Center survey, Kenya, Mozambique, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe have official ILO Decent Work programs as of May 2013. So does the East African Community, which includes Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.¹¹ Two of the three West African countries in the survey, Ghana and Nigeria, have implemented such programs in the past in coordination with the ILO, although they are not listed in the ILO database as having current programs. In Liberia, at the time of writing, a decent work bill was expected to be approved by the Liberian legislature after extensive debate.

The closest relationships between unions and political parties are in South Africa, Mozambique and Zambia, but the relationships are different in each country. Mozambique's unions have a heritage of control by the ruling party. Zambian unions hoped for worker-friendly policies from the government elected in 2011, but the result have been mixed. And in South Africa, COSATU is part of a political coalition with the ruling African National Congress (ANC), but the federation often disputes government policy and takes an independent stance on issues of worker rights and economic policy.

In South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe, former trade unionists have taken part in government at different

¹⁰ The International Labor Organization maintains databases on national labor legislation and the ratification of international standards. See, for example, the NORMLEX database at http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/?p=1000:10015:2934338369757410:::P10015_DISPLAY_BY:3.

¹¹ See the ILO website at <http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/decent-work-agenda/lang--en/index.htm> for a summary of the Decent Work Agenda and <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/program/dwcp/index.htm> for descriptions of country programs.

times, sometimes in high office. However, in most of these cases, a trade union background did not seem to carry over into commitment to advance worker rights while the individual was in government.

When asked about the gap between legal requirements for worker rights and the implementation of these rights in practice, many of the interviewees cited lack of education of government officials on worker issues, as well as a lack of funding and personnel for ministries of labor. They also noted that unions lack sufficient personnel and funding to interact effectively with government bureaucracies and tripartite forums of employers, workers and government. More broadly, failure to implement legislation and policies that are, on paper, “worker-friendly” reflects the weak political influence of workers and the array of embedded social and economic practices in each country.

One observer notes that South Africa “has some of the most progressive mine safety legislation in the world” but “much of this legislation goes unenforced.”

Analyzing these political, social and economic contexts, which are specific to each country and economic sector, is beyond the scope of this brief report. But two examples, one from the formal economy and one from the informal economy, illustrate the problem.

The first case in point is the South African mining sector, which is fundamental to the South African economy but has been among the slowest sectors to transform in the post-apartheid period. In August 2012, a wildcat strike in response to workplace hazards and other issues at Lonmin Mine in Marikana led to dozens of deaths and provoked discussion of the continuing harsh conditions in the mines. The South African mining industry is increasingly dependent on migrant contract labor arranged through labor brokers, while the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) is faced with competing unions which accuse it of complacency. One observer notes that South Africa “has some of the most progressive mine safety

legislation in the world” but “much of this legislation goes unenforced.”¹²

A second example comes from the informal sector in Kenya. Kenyan labor law, reaffirmed by the nation’s high court in 2013, requires all employers, including employers of domestic workers, to make social security and health insurance payments for their employees. Yet, for a variety of reasons, including suspicion of corruption in the government agencies responsible for administering these systems, full implementation has repeatedly been postponed. Many employers of domestic workers say that it is impossible for them to meet the costs of complying with the law. This example highlights the difficulty in applying even good legislation to protect domestic workers and others in the informal sector.

In many cases, unions do have channels for interaction with government structures that can be used to press for stronger implementation of existing laws within the legal system. The results of such pressure depend in part on the number and competence of government workers dealing with these issues. But the number and capacity of union officials who can engage in this arena can also make a difference, particularly within formal sectors, where unions are strongly represented and in the administration of social services, where unions have a seat at the table.

More significant change, however, will depend on fuller implementation of specific programs related to workers. It will also depend on changes in government policies on national economic strategy, which can in turn affect the economic environment in which unions have to function (*see Chapter 5*).

¹² Philip Frankel, *Between the Rainbows and the Rain: Marikana, Migration, Mining and the Crisis of Modern South Africa* (Johannesburg: Agency for Social Reconstruction, 2013). Frankel concludes that “labor relations, wages and working conditions at the Marikana mine (and others that extract platinum, gold and other valuable ores) are incomparably bad when compared to those in other mining countries.” For additional background on the Marikana events, see Peter Alexander et al., *Marikana: A View from the Mountain and a Case to Answer* (London: Bookmarks, 2013) and the continuing investigation by the Marikana Commission of Inquiry at <http://www.marikanacomm.org.za/>.

Interviewees on the Government and Worker Rights

Note: These are notes from interviews rather than exact quotes. Quotation marks are for convenience in reading. Interviewees are not identified by name but are grouped by country. Each quote is from a different interviewee.

Kenya

"The government, on most occasions, respects worker rights and is partially pursuing a Decent Work Agenda."



"The government policies are good on paper, but in practice, they are not. As we all know, making laws and good policies is one thing but enforcing them is another. In Kenya the main challenge is not the lack of legislation or policy but the enforcement of the same. Many employers are senior politicians and people in authority and Labor Ministry officials have challenges when dealing with them. On decent work, health and safety, the government is doing well in passing good legislation, but the Ministry of Labor has no capacity to enforce these laws."



"Like any government, our government is the biggest employer, so in making a choice, it has to protect itself first. The laws are there but implementation is a problem due to lack of funds for the Ministry of Labor. In the end it looks like the government is not keen on labor."



"The government recognizes the role of the union. It may not embrace trade unions but it realizes that they are an important stakeholder. With a new government in place, there have been a lot of changes and transition going on. The government has yet to settle in. The laws do exist but they are not implemented fully as expected due to the lack of capacity of the Ministry of Labor."



"The government is trying. If I can talk about the domestic [work] sector specifically, we are now covered under the social security and national health insurance program by law. The minimum wage was increased by 14 percent this year."



"Generally we have good labor laws. But the trade unions have to sensitize the government on the reasons why trade unions exist. Most of these government officials know nothing about trade unions. They need to be educated. Implementation of the law remains a challenge because the Ministry of Labor is underfunded. Trade unions have to be consulted in policy formulation processes according to law. Take, for example, the Salaries and Remuneration Commission: Even though the labor movement is represented, their voice is not being heard. Workers are not being consulted like the other stakeholders. Social dialogue is strong in Kenya. The labor movement is involved in the national economic council, national labor board, wages council and tripartite committee."

Liberia

"Other governments were anti-worker. Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf listens to workers. Others in her administration may do their own thing, but she listens to workers. I would say that she is pro-worker."



Member, FAWUL Woman's Committee, Liberia.



"The government is biased against workers, in many cases; some officials are soliciting money from the investors/companies. The members of the legislature meet with workers, about three to four times per year, to discuss workers' issues and challenges. During these meetings, they state that they will investigate the situations with the employers, but in far too many cases the workers do not receive a follow-up to redress the issues. Most times, the officials use the information received from the workers to solicit money from the employers."



"The government is not hostile, but some officials are biased against the workers because of their need for investors to come in. They are not making sure that the workers' voices are heard. However, the Ministry of Labor is helpful. The ministry has designed training programs to help strengthen the unions' capacity in adopting fair standards. Even though the Ministry of Labor has safety inspectors, there is no specific guideline or procedure enforced."



"We are effective by sector in influencing the government. On a national level, we are weak and fragmented. FAWUL [rubber sector union] is in a good position to influence the government. UWUL [mining sector union] is in a good position to influence the government. Nationally, we are not so good. It is a serious weakness."



"The government should do more—promote worker rights, amend the laws, et cetera. The union has limitations, especially in accessing legal rights. Most times, when workers have issues or cases, they cannot afford to pay for a lawyer to seek legal actions. The case remains at a standstill; workers continue to face the same problems. The government does not ensure workers' interest at all times."

Mozambique

"The government does not apply the law equally. In contradiction to the labor law, foreigners get higher salaries. Furthermore, while the Ministry of Labor and its labor inspectors do a good job, it is ultimately the respective ministry [corresponding to the sector] which has to sign off on any action taken against a megaproject. Inspectors do not have the autonomy to make decisions. In relation to other parts of the world, health and safety standards are more lenient."



"We need to ensure that legislation is implemented—for example, inspection does not take place regularly, so the union often acts as a mediator between employers and workers. If we cannot find a solution, we contact the inspectorate, and they resolve the issue according to their criteria. So there's a partnership. The Labor Advisory Commission (*Comissão Consultiva do Trabalho, CCT*) is the arena where issues—such as the minimum wage and health care—are presented, discussed and negotiated among the state, employers and the union. While we have been able to resolve issues, it is not always easy. The state leans at times toward the employer, but it plays an important role."



"The government wouldn't be sympathetic to completely independent unions. The government is a centralized body, and they are also employers. [...] Employers and the government have pushed unions into assuming the role of mediator. If a strike breaks out they have to go and solve it. This push is also regulatory because the

labor courts are so dysfunctional. Workers don't feel represented by the union and so they rebel by reducing levels of productivity."



"The unions get funding from the state. The legal framework includes the labor law and specific regulations. The people in the province are not familiar with labor law. The challenge is implementation: The labor inspectors need to do their job, and the provincial directors need to know the law and be transparent. It's not a question of what's contained in the law but of how people understand the law."



"The CCT is a tripartite structure that has fostered social dialogue. But there's a weakness in terms of actually getting proposals approved, for example, minimum wage, approval of paid domestic work regulation."



"I think the government is not paying any attention to the plight of domestic workers. At the Labor Day celebration on May 1, the people marching are, themselves, employers. They rely on us, they're there waiting for us to do their work. I don't know what the government should do, but it needs to realize that we work very hard, and they need to do something. We work long hours, our salaries are low and we get no respect at work."

Nigeria

"The government in Nigeria, as a major employer, tends to dish out policies that would seem biased against workers. Our problem in Nigeria is not dearth of laws or policies but their implementation. The country's labor laws have a lot of good provisions that favor workers, but the government as employer constantly violates these laws and, by their conduct, equally encourages private employers to violate the law. I believe that Nigeria is not sincere in pursuing the [ILO] Decent Work Agenda as there are not enough inspectors to carry out inspections on a frequent basis."



"In conflicts between government employees and workers, sometimes you will find that the government will not come out openly to state its stance on issues until the final minute. Even where promises are eventually made, they are sometimes never fulfilled. The only thing that makes life and trade union activism a little bit endurable today is that, unlike in the military era when people were locked up for protesting against labor violations and anti-people policies of government, this is not happening so much. So for me, looking at it from that angle, I can say that government is no longer hostile to worker rights."



"If you look at laws at face value in Nigeria, they appear to guarantee all rights, but our problem with the government is that implementation is not effective. For me, government policies have been more to break rather than build trade unions. An example is what former President Olusegun Obasanjo tried to do during his tenure, when he tried to review the labor laws to write in a clause that would prevent trade unions from embarking on strike action based on the 'no work, no pay' principle. This to me was very hostile, as government tried to take away a worker's right to organize."



"To me, government is not biased because there is a set legal framework with which to settle disputes, even though those structures have their own problems of being cumbersome and very slow. Government should do more in that direction as it takes years to get a verdict in our industrial courts. We all know that justice delayed is justice denied."



"Government policies are biased against workers. Take, for example, the issue of the minimum wage. Most states have not implemented the new minimum monthly wage of 18,000 naira [\$113]. For several years now, government has not employed workers. To me our government is not responsive and worker rights are not protected."



"The government-labor relationship is not too bad. Government, however, sees labor as a necessary evil on issues of policy formulation and therefore cannot afford to be biased against workers, because labor will hold them to task on this. For example, in a local dispute, a state government refused to implement the new minimum wage and was in arrears on workers' salaries for months. When workers went on strike, the government totally ignored them. Workers resorted to violence by attacking political office holders and their houses. The state government, at this point, started looking to the Ministry of Labor, which knew that there was no way the issue could be resolved without the involvement of the Nigeria Labor Congress (NLC). This showed that even the Ministry of Labor cannot mediate in any matter without the involvement of the NLC and trade unions."



"The government is largest employer in Nigeria and has so far been fair. Sometimes they are biased and sometimes they are not. It all depends on the issue at stake. Even where policies are put in place to encourage the Decent Work Agenda with the standards prescribed, what you will find is that such policies or standards are followed only to a certain extent. For oil workers in the drilling section, safety standards are not as they should be. The government does not try to enforce standards where they are lacking."



"Generally, the Nigerian government does not appreciate the role of the trade union partnership to maintain a stable democracy. The concept of tripartite partnership

was to promote true dialogue, but our government is failing in this area. Government should ordinarily play the role of a regulator on issues that bring conflict of an industrial nature, but most times government takes sides with employers. Government has been more supportive of employers than workers, but I would not use the word hostile."



"Government's policies are inconsistent. At times those policies favor the people and at other times they are detrimental."



"It might not be fair to say government in ALL cases is unfair with regard to worker rights, but there is a general tendency in this direction."



"Despite the warts and all, unions have been largely effective in influencing government policies. Historically, the trade unions in Nigeria have been key nonstate actors, right from the colonial period onward. The unions have had about 10 strikes since 2000, and all have led to (partial) victories. The issue has almost always been the increase in petroleum product prices."

South Africa

"When talking about government, we are talking about us. The government must not implement anything without our consent. There is not a good relationship between government and worker. The government does not push for decent work; for example, in South Africa civil servants work long hours. The government does not want to ban labor brokers [who serve as intermediaries between workers and large companies, allowing the companies to avoid paying higher wages and benefits]."



"The government is not pursuing the [ILO] Decent Work Agenda. An example is the domestic workers—they are the lowest paid. If the government were serious about decent work, the government would do a door-to-door campaign, identifying houses that have domestic workers and finding out if the employer pays them the minimum wage per month and what the working conditions for the employee are."



"The question is tricky in the sense that some of the government employees/officials come from the trade union movement or have been employed by the unions. They are the ones who are supposed to help us and the government. But to our surprise when they get to government positions, they change their tune and pretend as though they do not understand where the trade unions are coming from. They then become biased, we not sure why, maybe they have seen something that we are not exposed to or they just being biased to protect the employers or just taking care of their interests or turf. Yes, you do find biases within the government. Worker rights are not fully respected in the country. Even the trade unions are not respected in this country.

We do have policies, but are not being used effectively by the people, that is, the government of the day. People overlook them and compromise them in the process. In short, implementation of the policies is a challenge. Remember that policies are there to protect the workers and the role of the government is to ensure that they are working. The environment is hostile toward the workers.

I do not think the government is pursuing the [ILO] Decent Work Agenda if we are still seeing more and more independent contractors and "labor brokers" who are employing people on a contractual basis. We call that decent work? If our government can allow this situation to grow to the rate it has, they clearly are not interested in pushing the agenda of decent work."



"Government is a bully, they are bullying us. We are only in the National Economic Development and Labor Council (NEDLAC) because we have to be there. It is a tripartite structure, otherwise what we say does not go. For example, we have raised so many concerns about labor brokering. Instead we are told that it is going to be regulated. I do not think they understand the meaning of worker rights because you cannot regulate slavery. Government actually undermines labor rights. The regulation of labor brokering actually changes the definition of an employee from the definition in the Labor Relations Act. The rights of workers are stripped away.

Health and safety are the only two components that are given more attention than decent work in my industry [services industry], which is outside the mining sector. I have been involved with a number of cases where the worker complains about their workplace not fully complying with safety issues, I launch a complaint and inspectors investigate. I have seen good results from the intervention of the Labor Department on issues of safety. I have also heard other organizers singing the praises of the Labor Department on health and safety."



"Government is doing everything in its power to protect the workers. But government has not reached the level of decent work and still has a long way to go. There is not enough dialogue. Most people in government are from trade unions, but when they get to government, they forget where they came from and why they are there, which is to help the workers."



"The government will put things in writing, on the radio and on television, but the employers still don't comply. The employers don't care. They feel that their workplace is their property and the government can't tell them what to do on their property. Laws should be amended to allow inspectors to visit domestic workers in private homes as they have done in the past."



“Decent Work Agenda, yes. It is the manifesto of the ruling party, and the government talks a lot about decent work and trying to pursue the agenda. But there is too much pushback from employers and other agents, such as politicians who don’t understand the Decent Work Agenda and worker safety and health.

For health and safety, there are few officials and inspectors who are employed to do the work. Some employers don’t have a health and safety budget.”



“The government needs to develop legislation to force more compliance from employers.”



“The government is on the right path to the ILO agenda, however. As far as worker health and safety, they need implementation as a key area.”

Zambia

“The biggest difference we see with the new government is that we are now free to negotiate with employers without interference. In the past, the government wanted to control the trade unions and even supported the creation of splinter unions as a way to weaken existing unions. Unions have a strong influence on government policies in Zambia. We have a strong history of fighting colonialism, supporting multiparty democracy and even throwing out the old government when it wasn’t performing well. We don’t endorse candidates or parties, but we are active on sensitizing our members and speaking out on issues.”



“While the early indications are that the new government is supportive of worker/union rights, it is difficult to make judgments at this time. We will continue to monitor results. There are some indications that their zeal for worker rights has cooled a bit, but I believe that they are trying to fulfill the promise they made during the campaign. There is currently a collaborative process in place to reform our labor laws. Unions are actively participating in the process and are submitting recommendations, as are employers. The government has not yet taken a position on what reforms it will support.”



Monrovia street scene, Liberia.



"The labor movement has goodwill toward the new government as it is making efforts to keep the promises made during the presidential campaign. They passed a new minimum wage bill last year. They have gotten tougher with investors to ensure they are sensitive to worker issues. They also worked with the public-sector unions to equalize salaries across education, health and civil service for workers with similar education and duties. The test for the new government will be how it handles the development of a new labor law and constitution."

Zimbabwe

"Many excellent policies are never implemented. The right to freedom of association and assembly is provided for trade unions in the laws, but trade union activities are always disrupted by the authorities, who cannot be challenged. The culture of demonstrations is nearly dead as demanding rights has almost been criminalized. The indigenization policy [requiring majority control over all firms by local Zimbabweans] is promoting the looting of resources and the abuse of workers by the new business owners, who operate with impunity."



"Government policies are anti-worker. There has been a lot of rhetoric over the years about the workers' plight that never translated to worker-friendly policies. In fact the government formulated new laws under ESAP [Economic Structural Adjustment Program] that were anti-worker; employers could fire workers willy-nilly. Civil servants have no CBA, and the government minister can change the definition of 'essential service' at will to make sure that the government workers can never have a legal collective job action."



"Government attitude toward workers is worsening with a strong backlash against trade unions and our members. Government workers are being displaced through transfers despite a government pronouncement that no one will be promoted, demoted, or transferred in the interim until further notice. There is no decent work that exists when there are no jobs in the first place, and the few employed live in fear of losing the jobs they have. They would do almost anything under any circumstances to maintain their jobs. Government is doing nothing to promote decent work."



"The government has been only reactive. An example is the employment policy developed with assistance from the Labor and Economic Development Research Institute of Zimbabwe (LEDRI). It is supposed to be reviewed annually but it has never been reviewed since 2009, when it was adopted. The government does not care about labor rights as these are almost nonexistent in government-owned companies and the civil service."



"Government policies are anti-worker regardless of the political affiliation of those heading the various ministries."



"Government is not sensitive to workers. While labor laws generally protect workers, there is resistance from government to observe and incorporate ILO standards. Furthermore, government workers are not covered by the general labor laws as they have their own set of regulations. Workers are therefore divided. The government has made it almost impossible to strike, so workers cannot exercise the right to strike. It seems the government gives with one hand and takes with the other."

II Survey Results



UWUL members at the ArcelorMittal Buchanan port facility, Liberia.

CHAPTER 3

Internal Challenges to the Trade Union Movement

While responses to questions on the economy and government tended to highlight a few common themes, the responses on challenges facing the trade union movement were more diverse, with differences among countries and individual respondents. Given the wide range of experiences even within the same country, the number of interviews is not nearly sufficient to support confident generalizations about the situation in any particular country. The observations in this section therefore should be regarded as tentative hypotheses for further exploration rather than as firm conclusions.

Nevertheless, the interviews provide some basis for comparison between countries and for isolating a few general observations that appeared often enough in the interviews to be worth reporting.

It was clear, for example, that the trade union movement in Mozambique has limited capacity for independent initiatives. In Swaziland, the trade union federation is currently banned and unions function with the greatest difficulty in a nondemocratic state. In Zimbabwe as well, while the union movement is strong in some areas—such as in analysis and public education on economic policy—it confronts strong hostility from sections of the state and is weakened by internal divisions. In Liberia, still in a period of post-conflict recovery, there is a contrast between several strong unions in specific sectors and a very weak trade union federation. Zambia faces significant issues of competition between different unions and federations, despite recent efforts to overcome this problem.

Among countries surveyed in this report, the strongest unions, in terms of size, public prominence and capacity to defend their members, are in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa. These countries have well-established unions and union federations that are acknowledged to be significant players in the economic and political arena. But assessing the specific challenges faced by unions in each country

would require far more than the data available from this set of interviews and from published information.

A number of general observations based on the interviews suggest key issues meriting attention both by unions and by organizations involved in building union capacity:

- With few exceptions, unions find it difficult to maintain stable financing because of declines in the formal workforce in established sectors and problems with collection of dues.

Unions are largely in a defensive posture as a result of macroeconomic growth without comparable growth in jobs and hostility or indifference to worker interests on the part of governments.



Emmanuel Barchue, 2013

Rubber tapper, Liberia.

Monrovia street scene,
Liberia.



- A large number of interviewees reported that shortages of trained union personnel, particularly those with legal and economic expertise, make it difficult to use existing negotiation mechanisms and bring pressure for compliance with existing laws.

The bargaining power of workers is further weakened by the trend toward casualization of the workforce, in which employers turn to outsourcing or to workers not included in collective bargaining agreements

- Unions are largely in a defensive posture as a result of macroeconomic growth without comparable growth in jobs and hostility or indifference to worker interests on the part of governments.
- The bargaining power of workers is further weakened by the trend toward casualization of the workforce, in which employers turn to outsourcing or to workers not included in collective bargaining agreements (where such agreements exist).
- While there is wide recognition that organization of the informal economy is needed, the efforts to

do so have been successful only on a small scale. Few results are sustainable without significant outside funding from federations, formal sector unions, or donors. The sub-sector receiving most attention, albeit with only limited success, is that of domestic workers (*see discussion in next chapter*).

- In almost all countries, fragmentation between and within unions is to some extent an obstacle; this was particularly the case in Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Each of these trends warrants focused exploration in greater depth than was possible on the basis of this general overview survey. However, a few additional notes may be useful in interpreting the interview comments, particularly with respect to how the challenges differ in the formal and informal economies.

First, the issues of dues collection, union finances and the financial and personnel capacity to provide services stood out as concerns frequently mentioned by interviewees. While the survey did not provide the detail necessary to reach any overall judgment, it is clear that this is a fundamental area in which some unions do much better than others. Comparative study and exchange of experiences among trade

unions in Africa would be fruitful, similar to the studies done recently by the African Labor Research Network on trade union services and benefits and on social protection in Africa.¹³

Second, the distinction between formal and informal is not a sharp boundary but rather a question of employment. While some economic activities may be totally “off the books,” that is, either criminalized or completely unregulated, others may be partially formal and partially informal. Self-employed street and market vendors vary in terms of how much they interact with formal state structures and whether those structures are designed to protect their interests.

And the category of precarious, casual, or outsourced employment has varying degrees of formal relationship with enterprises also employing formal workers, including unionized workers. Thus, argues a paper on *Trade Union Organizing in the Informal Economy* prepared for the Solidarity Center in 2012, one may consider those workers being “casualized” within the formal economy as a part of the informal sector.¹⁴

Reaching this category of workers is key to the advocacy efforts and survival of formal sector trade unions. This is because bargaining power with employers and the capacity to maintain stable dues and organizational structures depends upon resisting the tendency toward casualization and expanding formal protections to those workers made vulnerable through contracting and denial of protections. Failure to build unity between workers with formal contracts and those without is probably one of the factors behind the crisis at Marikana, which erupted into lethal violence in August 2012.¹⁵

Third, in addition to casual workers in the formal economy, as described above, the informal economy includes a wide variety of other workers, including self-employed owners of small enterprises in unregulated sectors, workers employed by those enterprises and domestic workers employed by individual families. Lacking a structure appropriate for collective bargaining agreements, these sectors pose particular challenges for trade union organizing. Relevant case studies include organizing efforts in the retail and hospitality industry in South Africa¹⁶ and the efforts made to organize domestic workers in a number of countries, discussed in the next section of this report.

Generally, interviewees varied widely on whether unions were meeting the expectations of workers and tended to be less specific on the obstacles to union work than on other topics. The most common opinion was that there were some successes and some failures, but the question in most cases did not elicit specific answers. Nevertheless, many interviewees stressed the successes of unions in bringing improvements through collective bargaining agreements, such as the agreements with Firestone and Arcelor-Mittal in Liberia. In Nigeria and Kenya, in particular, interviewees cited policy interventions on national issues such as minimum wage, access to health care and social security for previously uncovered workers and the 2012 demonstrations in Nigeria against cuts to the fuel subsidy.

¹³ *Social Protection in Africa and Trade Union Services and Benefits in Africa* are available on the ITUC-Africa website, <http://www.ituc-africa.org/-Livres-.html>.

¹⁴ Susan J. Schurman and Adrienne E. Eaton, eds., *Trade Union Organizing in the Informal Economy*, http://www.solidaritycenter.org/Files/infcon_rutgers_final.pdf.

¹⁵ For a structural analysis of the mining industry and background on the Marikana events, see the sources in note 12.

¹⁶ See Sahra Ryklief, “The Informal Economy in Africa,” in Schurman and Eaton, *Trade Union Organizing in the Informal Economy* (note 14).

Interviewees on the Internal Challenges to the Trade Union Movement

Note: These are notes from interviews rather than exact quotes. Quotation marks are for convenience in reading. Interviewees are not identified by name but are grouped by country. Each quote is from a different interviewee.

Kenya

"Mainly it is the budgetary constraint due to diminishing membership and the fact that leadership in most unions is not very strong."



"On collective bargaining agreements, unions don't do their homework well, and the employer usually wins. Many unions cannot justify their claims. When members join trade unions, they have a lot of expectations but after a short time they are disappointed."



"Many of the officials the members elect don't have the capacity to handle disputes or negotiate for CBAs. Unions are unable to employ qualified people like legal advisers, economic experts and negotiators to assist them. As a result, if you attend a negotiation between the employer and the union, you will be shocked. While the employer has data from research and good negotiators, the union comes up with figures for their claims that they cannot justify. Trade unions are weakened internally by infighting. Even if the current officers are performing well, there will always be a group wanting to remove them."



"The unions are trying, but it's challenging. The main function of our union is recruitment, collective bargaining, dispute resolution, training and representation. It requires money and personnel to carry out all these. Most unions lack funds due to diminishing membership and cannot recruit qualified staff to carry out work."

Liberia

"The internal financial reporting system is poor. In addition, given the size of the plantation, the presence of leadership is not felt throughout."



"Management is not providing time for the union to do the union's work. In terms of what the union is doing right: The union is promoting worker rights and operating independently. For example, we negotiated and workers are receiving a shift allowance/differential, additional pay to an employee scheduled to work other than the daytime shift. Another benefit is the educational allowance for dependents. Workers are receiving \$280 per child for up to five children."



"The way the unions' constitutions are structured does not promote democracy. Unions are not institutionalized; some people feel the unions are their heritage."



Textile vendor, Liberia.



“Internally, the union cannot divorce itself from union infighting and politics. There is internal wrangling.”



“One of the obstacles the union faces is limited manpower. The plantation is huge, over 5,000 workers. Sometimes cases are delayed because the shop steward has not had time to tackle the worker’s issue. Weak labor laws weaken workers’ ability to negotiate. For example, by law the current minimum wage is \$2 per day. Workers at Firestone are receiving low wages; however, they are among the highest paid in the country, earning more than many civil servants. During our negotiations, we are always deadlocked on the wage section. Management refuses to increase salary, stating that they are paying better than the minimum wage required. The current labor law has to be amended.”

Mozambique

“Union leaders are not able to adequately represent their members, especially when it comes to large mining companies that are used to negotiating with capable unions. The leadership must hand over power to a younger generation.”



“We face many challenges. These include:

- Outdated union statutes: We need to hold a congress to update these, for example, creating a social fund.
- Few collective bargaining agreements.
- Lack of technical training and leadership development.
- Absence of a social fund: According to the labor law, striking workers are not eligible to receive a salary. A fund would provide support in case of dismissals and strikes and also for solidarity.”



“The labor movement in Mozambique is very weak. Challenges include:

- A big union movement that has completely come into line with the neoliberal world order and is concerned about labor peace, not labor justice.
- An extremely hierarchical movement in which all decisions emanate from Maputo. At the level of the union committee, leaders are often nominated by the provincial staff person rather than elected by the membership. Ninety percent of dues revert to the national office.
- Collusion between the union and the company. Historically, unions in Mozambique have not had an adversarial relationship with employers.”



"Union leadership does not represent the working class. In 2010, when the strikes broke out in Maputo, the unions could not explain what was going on. They had very little sense of what was happening in society, very little contact and they played no role. In fact they opposed the food riots, in part because they're out of touch and in part because of the close link to the ruling party, Frelimo. They're financed by the state. Unions like to see themselves as close to government. They want to receive continued support from the state."



"The trade union movement is in decline, in part a reflection of what's happening globally. Unions have been unable to respond to this new environment, to negotiate a wage sufficient for families to survive in urban areas."



"Financial stability: The [domestic workers'] union has functioned to some extent with support from international donors, but that support has been limited. It is difficult and costly to collect dues because [domestic] workers are dispersed, you have to collect directly from members on a monthly basis and salaries are low."



"Lack of human and material resources: We do not have the trained staff (lawyers, researchers, psychologists, economists). All researchers are employed by the state. There are few independent researchers. Most say 'yes, baas.' The unions cannot be that; unions have to be capable of imposing conditions. Unions need to figure out how to collect dues and become self-sufficient. The moment we do that, we can hire economists to represent us."



"Our goal is to mediate between the company and the workers. We have stopped many strikes from happening. In fact, many times the employer asks us to mediate, even if it's ultimately the union committee who negotiates. We face multiple challenges: lack of financial resources, cost of transport, especially in rural provinces and lack of human capital, including researchers and lawyers."

Nigeria

"Lack of sufficient staff and funding. Affiliate members are not paying dues to the Nigeria Labor Congress (NLC) as they should. If unions pay constantly, NLC will then be able to employ more hands and serve them better. Another internal obstacle is this issue of power struggle within unions. This affects the movement so much."



"For me, the only internal obstacle apart from lack of finance is lack of patience from members. Members usually expect union executives to act like magicians who should fight and win all battles. They want something today and they feel union officers should be able to make sure they get it today also."



"Funding and lack of manpower. The federation has so much work to do, yet few staff and even some of the affiliates are not remitting dues when due. All this affects the work NLC can do. Another obstacle is the leadership tussles that are eating up the unions. People in the movement are so much interested in power and so what you have is leadership tussles within affiliates and even between federation members. This is a big challenge to meeting the expectations of workers."



"Management is not supportive of union activities in most construction firms in Nigeria. Employers expect workers to do their normal office work while running union activities, and we know that there is no way such a union officer can effectively run a union if he does not have time to do it."



"Lack of funding is the most pressing issue. We have lost a lot of members because of our government's neglect of the agriculture sector and leaning toward massive importation of foods and raw edible products that can be produced in Nigeria."



"Lack of financial discipline is one of the obstacles unions face. I do not know of any state branch union in my union that is complying with remittance of dues as ordered by our union constitution. The constitution says you must remit and collect your percentage from the national office but the reverse is the case. We keep complaining about government being corrupt and fraudulent, but some trade union officers are endemically corrupt too. Other obstacles include infighting among members, intra- and inter-union disputes over issues that can easily be resolved."

South Africa

"Many workers think of the union as organizer whereas all members should be organizing workers for [the union]. The union does its part to assist workers. However the members are the ones that should direct the union expectations."

I don't think the federation or union can satisfy workers' interests 100 percent because leaders are looking after their own interests rather than those of the workers. The union has changed from the union of yesterday."



"We as unions have shifted from the struggle of workers; in particular, the leadership has moved [away] from being conscious of the worker struggle. The unions are becoming capitalists themselves, wanting money and fighting for power among themselves at the expense of our members. We can safely talk about the Marikana issue as a case in point that shows how fragmented the unions are. It was pretty obvious that the members were



Workers at the Rio Tinto Zimbabwe Empress Nickel Refinery, Zimbabwe.

unhappy about a lot of things, ranging from salaries to service delivery, to the point where the members felt that they needed to take matters into their own hands since they felt that the union was taking them for granted. This then translated into members joining other unions and building other unions. Those for me are clear signs that unions are no longer servicing their members as they should. Our leadership is losing the grip of having the members in mind as the main people in the union. Yes, you still find one or three people who are still passionate about unionism or labor rights and have members at heart. If we are not careful as a trade union, we might be hampering the work that we have done over the years and running the movement down.

The Marikana issue has forced unions to revisit their strategies and how they approach issues. In our trade union, I have noticed the changes and seriousness on servicing members and prioritizing their grievances. We are also involving members in various issues, to have their voice on matters that they are happy with. We are creating a platform for them to share their issues and express their dissatisfaction. In 2011 we started forums where we engage with our members to close the gaps that we have seen—and we wanted to close them and firm up our relationship with our members. Marikana propelled our strategy to continue bringing our members closer to us, by constantly engaging with them in debates in these forums."



"Funds, funds, funds are great obstacles for us. The infighting within the union is another obstacle that leads to the union not giving its all to the members."

Undermining young people, saying that they do not know anything about unionism, they are just academics with empty theories. Older people being threatened by young people and not mentoring them to build and develop the movement to better heights."



"When it comes to fighting for a living wage for agricultural workers, we have a long way to go. Most farm workers feel thrown away and the union needs to take bold steps to fix it."

Some people in charge have not been informed about the daily situation and struggles of people who work on the farm and they can't identify with the issues."



"We are not as effective as we should be. We organize people who are paid poor wages as their sole source of revenue. We are not able to meet the needs of all workers because our funds and revenue are limited. Higher-salary members subsidize the lower-paid workers. Shop stewards as well as union officials handle local grievances."

We do have the savings clubs, funeral plans and a banking club, and we are pushing for employer-paid medical aid and the Provident Fund [pension fund] as a way of trying to improve the lives of our members, beyond wages."

Zambia

"Another obstacle that is both internal and external is how we counter the poaching of our members by competing unions. Our union has to demonstrate that we put our members' interests first and that none of our officials are in bed with employers."



"Our members lack fundamental education on trade unions. We lack qualified researchers and information to better advocate for our members. We also lack financial resources."



"Zambia has a big problem with splinter unions. There is a lot of competition and the unions are frequently resentful of one another."



"Fragmentation and competition of unions is definitely an obstacle to the labor movement in Zambia. Selfishness of some union leaders, undemocratic tendencies and outside political interference have all contributed to this environment of competition among unions. We are also constrained by limited finances and need for capacity building to help our affiliates be more effective."

Zimbabwe

"The attainment of a decent standard of living by all workers in the informal sector is still a pipe dream. We would like to have social security for our members, medical insurance. This is still at the planning stages, but there seem to be some legal challenges along the way. The union has poor administrative structures, manned by volunteers, hence membership service is limited. Interaction with membership is limited due to cost constraints that make it difficult to travel throughout the country to service the vast membership."



"Service delivery by unions has been very poor, and unions are very weak. The power to engage in collective bargaining is limited by shrinking membership numbers. Incomes have also been falling for the unions, resulting in failure to meet the expectations of the members. Meanwhile, a multiplicity of unions exists due to splits and leadership problems, as some leaders do not want to

relinquish positions and go on to form their own union or lose some disgruntled members who then form their own union. Political polarization in unions can be due to differences in partisan politics.”



“Workers are not happy with the performance of the trade unions because we are failing to deliver on our mandate. Failing to meet expectations such as loans, cars for bereavement service. Workers cannot access these on the open market as they are completely out of reach. This is worsened by the lack of visibility of the union on the ground. Limited financial resources have resulted in the union failing to open up more offices to service membership in all the provinces and regions in the country.”



“The trade unions have not delivered on their mandate due to a variety of reasons. While they have generally been able to service membership in terms of grievances, securing collective bargaining agreements has been a challenge. The economy has played a part while the trade union movement has been overwhelmed by the enormity of the challenges they face. They are dealing with a rogue state in which arrests for no apparent reason are common, making mass protests scary. They are dealing with a predatory state that is blocking some resources from the national coffers for the benefit of the ruling elite. They are dealing with a failed state where service delivery has collapsed, electricity is unreliable, water is unavailable throughout the country and rubbish collection is erratic at best. These are issues that affect workers, and they expect the trade union movement to deal with the problems so that the quality of their lives is better all round.”



“Since the introduction of the multicurrency system to replace the Zimbabwe dollar in 2009, unions have only been begging and receiving and accepting whatever is given by the employers. Workers are not happy with the situation of no bargaining at all, and they see the union as totally useless. Some workers are now approaching the federation for assistance, bypassing their union. The



Workers at the Rio Tinto Zimbabwe Empress Nickel Refinery, Zimbabwe.

federation, however, cannot bargain on behalf of the workers as this is done at union level.”



“One: The welfare of union workers is being ignored or not being taken seriously, hence there is disgruntlement. While calling on the government and other employers to pay wages indexed to the poverty datum line (PDL), the federation itself is paying its workers salaries below the PDL. Two: Incompetence of the political leadership drawn from affiliates. Even those in the general council are mainly interested in the financial benefits that accrue with attendance and they are totally incompetent. Three: Apart from lacking knowledge and leadership skills, most of the general council members also lack commitment to the cause of the workers. Four: The poor quality of leadership was caused by the split in the ZCTU [Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions], resulting in a lack of seriousness in choosing leadership at the last congress.”



“The trade unions are doing their best but with serious shortcomings. They have not been fulfilling their mandate as they have no money for educational programs; they have struggled to represent workers in the courts but they lack money to take up cases to the higher courts. Unions are failing to negotiate with employers, and collective bargaining agreements are taking too long to conclude. Other problems: low membership, poor remission of union dues resulting in a very poor financial base for the unions, selfishness in leadership resulting in the formation of splinter groups.”

Additional Interviewees on Unions Meeting Workers' Expectations

This section includes additional interview notes from Kenya, Liberia and Nigeria in response to the question on meeting workers' expectations. This specific question was not addressed by interviewees in the other survey countries.

Kenya

"COTU (K) [Central Organization of Trade Unions (Kenya)] is very active in policy intervention, especially policies that touch on the welfare of workers, for example health and social security. It is also involved in social dialogue with employers in order to maintain a harmonious environment, which is key to the country's development."



"The unions are trying, but it's challenging. The main function of our union is recruitment, collective bargaining, dispute resolution, training and representation."



"Our mandate as a union is to organize, represent, educate and engage in collective bargaining and dispute resolution. I cannot say we are 100 percent effective, but we have tried our best to satisfy our members' needs."



"KUDHEIHA [Kenya Union of Domestic, Hotels, Educational Institutions, Hospitals and Allied Workers] has done a lot for its members, especially domestic workers, in organizing them and training them. The union has also fought to ensure we are covered under NSSF [social security] and NHIF [health] and our basic pay has gone up."

Liberia

"In August 2012, our union local completed its negotiation and signed a collective bargaining agreement. Some highlights include salary increment; enhanced employee benefits, such as increase in maternity, paternity and annual leaves; establishment of a joint health and safety committee; and a peace obligation binding management and union to follow requisite procedures to ensure all disputes are resolved internally."



Emmanuel Barchue, 2013

UWUL members at the ArcelorMittal Buchanan port facility, Liberia.

"In 2008, FAWUL won its first collective agreement, increased wages from \$3.38 to \$4.26 a day, reduced the quota system on tapping natural rubber from trees and granted new schools and free tuition for the children of the workers. In 2010, the second contract goes further, with a 3.5 percent wage increase, the construction of more schools and school transportation and most important, a mechanized transport system to haul the rubber latex to weigh stations. For decades, the workers had to haul 150-pound buckets of rubber sometimes miles on their shoulders to the stations.

On May 21, 2013, we signed a third CBA, with new wage increases; a management commitment to implement the tractor/truck method to change the mode of transportation of latex across the plantation; commitment to review compensation at all levels of the company's operation; reduction in work quota for rubber tappers; as well as an incentive bonus for new development workers and other benefits."

Nigeria

"NLC is meeting the needs of its affiliate members and to me is doing well because it has kept affiliates together and tried to maintain harmony. The federation is even doing some of the jobs that its affiliates should do, like trade union education."



"Since we joined the union, so many things that workers had been agitating for are now being received from management. For example, before now, our hours at work were from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., but by the struggle of the union we have been able to get it reduced to 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. The union has helped us achieve a salary review during collective bargaining. We also have a structure for grievance handling. I will rate my union 90 percent at being able to meet workers' expectations because our union leadership at its highest level is always available to assist us in fighting for our entitlements."



Worker at the Rio Tinto Zimbabwe Empress Nickel Refinery, Zimbabwe.

"NLC as a federation tries its best within its limited resources to meet the expectations of members. We have tried to establish a minimum wage for the country. We also try to supervise activities of affiliates and provide support to them. We have, in the recent past, focused on sector-specific campaigns like good governance, the electoral system, pensions and corruption campaigns. We have tried to educate and enlighten trade union leaders so as to carry the workers' education to the grassroots through various education programs."



"On a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being best, our union has been able to meet the yearnings of the members up to an 8. Improving the conditions of service of the members, securing their jobs and adequately defending their rights have been the main focus of the association. This is done mainly by being proactive in dealing with the employers. We were able to stop the employers from abolishing gratuities in the industry, which they claimed was no longer needed as a result of the Pension Reform Act. We are also in the forefront of the struggle against illegal expatriates who are taking over jobs that can be done by Nigerians. Our collective bargaining machinery has been very active, resulting in improvements in salaries and fringe benefits for the members."

A woman with dark skin is shown from the chest up, wearing a red short-sleeved shirt and a headwrap with a yellow, brown, and purple pattern. She is looking down at a plant stem she is holding with both hands. The background is a lush green field with trees in the distance. An orange banner is overlaid on the top right of the image.

II Survey Results

CHAPTER 4

Women and Trade Unions

For more than a decade at least, international trade union federations and international agencies such as the International Labor Organization have focused major attention on unions and gender equality, as has the Solidarity Center. Extensive general literature on the subject includes substantial information on African countries (see Annexes 4 and 5 for resources). Although the brief interviews carried out for this report allowed for only limited discussion of gender issues, the interviews were supplemented by a focus group of African trade unionists convened by the Solidarity Center at a forum in July 2013 in São Paulo, Brazil, on “Women’s Empowerment, Gender Equality and Labor Rights: Transforming the Terrain.” Findings from the focus group are summarized at the end of this chapter.

The interviews and focus group results made clear that there is wide awareness in unions of the need to advance gender equality and that there has been significant progress in recent years. They also showed that the extent of progress is very mixed, that the results still fall far short of full equality and that successful efforts require, in addition to international support, both pressure from women workers themselves and support from sympathetic male trade union leaders. Such efforts within unions, moreover, are constrained by structural issues of gender equality embedded in the economy and by cultural values justifying inequality as “natural” or even desirable.

This chapter provides a brief summary of general issues of gender equality for workers in Africa, partly based on a summary literature review. It also briefly considers the issue of organizing domestic workers, which has received considerable attention. There have been some small-scale successes in this area but little evidence exists that these can be scaled up to include the majority of domestic workers.

According to the ILO’s *Global Employment Trends for Women 2012*, the overall gender gap in the employment-to-population ratio in sub-Saharan Africa, at



Gasoline vendor, Firestone Rubber Plantation, Liberia.

11.6 percentage points, is roughly comparable to that of the developed economies and East Asia. It is much less than the world average of 24.6 percentage points. In contrast, the gender gap in North Africa is much higher than the global average, at 48.5 percentage points.

The ratio of employment to working-age population in sub-Saharan Africa was 59.2 percent for women, compared to 70.8 percent for men. But the distribution diverged for men and women. Among men, wage and salaried workers accounted for 28.6 percent of total employment, while the corresponding figure for women was only 14.7 percent. Self-employed workers were 50.4 percent of the male working population; 44.7 percent of working women were self-employed. “Contributing household workers” accounted for 39.7 percent of employed women, but only 19.2 percent of employed men.¹⁷

¹⁷ International Labor Office, *Global Employment Trends for Women 2012* (Geneva: ILO, 2013), http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/global-employment-trends/WCMS_195447/lang--nl/index.htm.

For South Africa, using a breakdown between formal sector, informal sector and private households, national statistics for 2009 showed 80.4 percent of employed men in the formal economy, in comparison to 67.8 percent of employed women.¹⁸ In contrast, private households employed 15.9 percent of employed women and only 3.5 percent of employed men.

It is harder to find statistics on gender pay gaps. But it is clear that the differential distribution by sector, lower educational opportunities for women, discrimination and the housework burden on women's time all contribute to significantly lower income for women overall and in most industries—in Africa as elsewhere in the world. And the definition of what is commonly considered “men's work” or “women's work” differs across sectors such as mining, government employment, manufacturing and services.

International support has been critical in stressing the importance of gender equality and in supplying funds for work on gender equality. Equally important, if not more so, has been the role of women workers themselves in pressing for change and of sympathetic leaders in unions, both women and men.

These structural realities affect the level of representation of women in different unions and in union leadership, making it particularly difficult to reach general conclusions from the interviews conducted for this report.

The interviews point to a continuing tendency to accept only token representation of women in leadership, with particular concentration in posts dealing with gender issues. Nonetheless, overall there does seem to be a growing realization of the importance of recruiting more women to leadership positions, with some unions adopting specific targets. In addition, there is also growing consciousness of the signifi-

¹⁸ Debbie Budlender, *Gender Equality and Social Dialogue in South Africa* (Geneva: ILO, 2011), http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_150430.pdf.



Worker at the Rio Tinto Zimbabwe Empress Nickel Refinery, Zimbabwe.

cance of adapting workplace rules to women's needs. And a significant number of unions do have staff focused on gender issues.

As one interviewee put it, “Well, to be very candid, women are picking up very seriously. As I said, early on, we did not understand, from the beginning, the role of women in a union. The perception was that the union was just men. Fortunately, [we found] our thoughts were very wrong. So now, as I speak, when you have a local union election, every woman wants to run [for the] leadership of the union. Women are fast picking up. Fast picking up. Women are growing in the union sector.”

And another noted, “There is increased women's participation generally in the workforce. Women now mobilize to look at gender issues in workplaces. For example, women are taking active interest in knowing what trade union policy is towards breastfeeding, *crèches* [day care centers] within their offices and maternity leave. This interest has helped to move the duration for maternity leave from what it was in the past [12 weeks] to 14–16 weeks depending on the industry in question.”

As illustrated by the unions discussed in the focus group, several factors need to come together to make significant progress possible. International support has been critical in stressing the importance of gender equality and in supplying funds for work on gender equality. Equally important, if not more so, has been the role of women workers themselves in pressing for change and of sympathetic leaders in unions, both women and men.

In 2013, the ILO estimated that there were approximately 3.8 million female domestic workers and 1.4 million male domestic workers in Africa, making up 2.5 percent and 0.6 percent of female and male employment, respectively.¹⁹ In recent years, international attention to organization of domestic workers has grown significantly, with the involvement of organizations such as Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) and the International Domestic Workers' Network (IDWN). In 2011 the International Labor Organization adopted the Domestic Workers Convention (C189), which formally came into effect in September 2013.²⁰ Two African countries were among the first nine to ratify the Convention: Mauritius in September 2012 and South Africa in June 2013.

Also in June 2013, the Africa Domestic Workers Network (AfDWN) was launched at a convention in Cape Town, South Africa, with 95 representatives of 17 domestic worker organizations from 17 African countries. The network has a total membership of some 95,000 workers. That number includes an estimated 50,500 domestic workers from the South African Domestic Service and Allied Workers Union (SADSAWU) and 15,000 from the Kenya Union of Domestic, Hotels, Educational Institutions, Hospitals and Allied Workers (KUDHEIHA), with smaller numbers from other countries.

Given the huge overall numbers of domestic workers, the number organized is not a very large percentage, an indication of the difficulties in organizing

workers who have no common workplace and whose economic position is highly vulnerable. Nevertheless, the increased attention to their position has led to significant legal advances, most dramatically in South Africa but also in other countries, such as Kenya. These include their official inclusion in social protection programs, regulations of hours, minimum wages and other legal measures.

Implementation of such measures, however, depends upon the capacity of individual workers, the vast majority of whom are not organized in unions, to demand their rights. In South Africa, despite significant government protection measures, the lives of domestic workers are still fundamentally constricted by the apartheid-era legacy of racial separation. Live-in workers are separated from their families and live-out workers face exhausting travel from their homes to work. In Kenya, despite a judicial decision in 2012 that the employment law covers domestic workers, enforcement of the law is still problematic.

The challenges for domestic workers and for unions promoting decent work for domestic workers continue to be profound. More generally, union work to advance gender equality continues to demand not only targeted efforts by unions in workplaces but also efforts to combat gender inequality in education and throughout society.



Market vendor, Liberia.

¹⁹ International Labor Office, *Domestic Workers across the World: Global and Regional Statistics and the Extent of Legal Protection* (Geneva: ILO, 2013), http://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_173363/lang--en/index.htm.

²⁰ The text of the Domestic Workers Convention is on the ILO website at http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C189.

Interviewees on

Women and Trade Unions

Note: These are notes from interviews rather than exact quotes. Quotation marks are for convenience in reading. Interviewees are not identified by name but are grouped by country. Each quote is from a different interviewee.

Ghana

"The federation has made a number of improvements. There are reserved positions for women and the chairperson is a woman. The TUC [Ghana Trades Union Congress] organizes a women's congress that is parallel to the main congress. The TUC Women's Desk has a budget, although it is never enough. These are important steps and achievements.

There is still much work to be done to ensure that members understand that gender equality is not just an issue of structure but is a human development imperative. There are some aspects of the work that are cosmetic as opposed to inherent."

have women committees in all the affiliate unions and several women have been elected to leadership positions from the shop, branch and regional levels. However, they have not been able to penetrate the national level, where there are only four women out of the 36 executive board members [of the federation]."



"Women are now involved in leadership roles, advocacy, negotiations. We now have gender policies in all unions and gender committees. This has helped institutionalize rights of women in the unions and federation."



Kenya

"Women have been given positions up to the executive committee level. The union negotiates before they go for elections and decide on which seats will be reserved for women. Most of the women have performed well in those positions. Women's rights have improved. Initially it was hard to get a woman branch secretary but the situation has changed. In Thika, the current branch secretary of [the union] is a woman. About 36 percent of top leaders in the union are women."



"Yes, women's rights have improved significantly over the years, but we still have a long way to go. Women's issues are now part of the agenda of the union. We now

"Women are an integral part of our union. Their rights have greatly improved over the years. However, access to meaningful jobs is still a challenge for women."



"Women form a big chunk of our union due to the sectors that we target, like hotels, hospitals and domestic work. They are vital in our union and cannot be ignored. We have developed a structure that ensures they are part of our leadership structure. It is mandatory to have them on board in our union. They play an active role in the union."



"We have many women in the unions now. Though it is still a challenge [for women] to get into top leadership positions, at least it is a step in the right direction. Women are catered to in our union structure, but we still need more women in other positions, not just women and gender committees only. The union has been able to attract a lot of women members due to the sector it serves. The CBAs cover a lot of women's rights. The challenge has been in the domestic sector, where we have individual employers. It is hard to sign a CBA with each individual employer."



"The position of women both in the union and in the workplace has greatly improved. We have the 30/70 gender rule [affirmative action]. So it means you cannot employ men only. Women have to be given a fair chance and share as per the law. The same applies in our union leadership positions. These policies have brought a great change. Women are now an important part of the unions. They simply cannot be wished away or ignored."

Liberia

"Women's rights have improved. The only outstanding challenge is in the area of transport. Women are supposed to be at the workplace by 5 a.m., but sometimes transport is not available for those women who don't live close to the fields where they are working."



"Women are part of our union. Right now, we have five women in key positions: two shop stewards and the treasurer, assistant secretary and chairwoman of the women's wing. More women are becoming involved and voicing out opinions. We are hoping that more women can participate in and contest future elections. Our local union has 740 workers, of whom 102 are women."



"Women are getting involved in the unions. We have women serving as the local women's committee chair



Firestone Rubber Plantation worker family, Liberia.

and as the vice president. Women are voicing out their issues and what is affecting them. Women have opportunities to contest for positions on the shop floors and at the national federation level. The head of the Liberia Labor Congress (LLC) is a woman."



"To be frank, women's participation is only starting up, starting to get equal pay, benefits. Most of the women are not interested in the union because of children, husband, education. It's a challenge. We have a women's committee and women on the executive board. At the national federation, the LLC, the president is a lady. At the workplace, they are not involved. There needs to be more education in the union. FAWUL has 16 women who are leaders and 115 men as leaders."



"The myth of Liberian society is that women should not be involved in the union. If a woman is involved, she is considered hostile and disobedient. For a long time, women have had phobias about playing an active role in the union. However, things are changing. FAWUL's leadership consists of eight people—seven men and one woman. There are 32 board members, 15 of whom are women.

Women's rights have improved. We have a committee that responds to women's issues and builds awareness. However, we need education; too many women are taking the backseat. We need training to raise gender equality among the women. Moreover, we need to encourage the men to motivate their wives, sisters, daughters to play an active role in the union."

Mozambique

"At our company, 10 percent of workers are women (total workers are 1,050). One-fourth of the union committee secretariat is made up of women. There is a program at the union to train and emancipate women, so perhaps they'll be more interested in joining the union. But women are scared of losing their jobs. If even men are being dismissed, they think, what about us? Even in the former state enterprises, women's participation is negligible. Where there are women representatives, it's because union leaders, pressured by donors, felt obliged to recruit women at the grassroots to leadership positions."



"Women are treated with extreme seriousness, which is why we established the Working Women's Committee [Comité Nacional da Mulher Trabalhadora, COMUTRA], which represents the rights of women. Recently, in partnership with CUT [Central Única dos Trabalhadores of Brazil] and IndustriALL, we are organizing leadership trainings. Our union has around 10,000 members, and about 1 percent are women. This industry is a man's industry. The union does not have specific policies in relation to women workers."



"All unions have a women's structure, COMUTRA. A woman, who is never the president of the union but represents women's issues on the secretariat, always coordinates COMUTRA."



"Very few women have any leadership positions. There is resistance to women in the union structures, and it's difficult to recruit women because it means working after hours, being subjected to harassment (pressure for sexual favors) and having to deal with patriarchal and centralized structures."



"In terms of leadership, women are well represented in the labor movement, even at the highest levels. There are always one to two women at high-level meetings, and most of the time they replace the general secretary when he is not available."



"The [domestic workers] union is led by a group of strong women leaders. Of the nine leaders, two are men. Policies toward women are driven by COMUTRA, which has a coordinator and two representatives. HIV/AIDS, sexual harassment, maternity protection and child labor are just some of the topics addressed by the committee. Men are also part of the struggle for gender equality."

Nigeria

"Women at the union level are more active and interested in participating in union activities now. The strategy of having women's committees in our unions has really worked, as women are taking up leadership positions at state levels of the NLC now. A good example is Bayelsa and Ondo states of Nigeria, where women now hold the position of chairperson—something that was unheard of before."



"Yes, women's rights have improved in my union in recent years, especially at the level of the local union leadership here, where the proportion of women to men in the executive is four to seven."



"At the union level, women are playing important roles. A woman is the vice president of our union at national level. We have women as unit representatives [shop stewards] here. Yes, there is no longer discrimination in pay between men and women in our company. If a woman does the same job as a man, they get the same pay. Maternity leave under the company's internal condi-



Worker at the Rio Tinto Zimbabwe Empress Nickel Refinery, Zimbabwe.

tion of service with employees here has been increased from three to four months. We equally have two hours' nursing break for mothers breastfeeding and this lasts until the baby is six months old."



"Women are gradually taking up more roles in unions. We now have women participating in all union activities and I see this continuing as the years go by. We now have a national women's coordinator who coordinates affairs of our female members across Nigeria. She ensures that women are carried along by the union in all activities. The proportion of women among top leaders is four women to nine men. We organize women leadership programs twice a year, one in the north and one in the southern part of Nigeria."



"[My union] has mainstreamed gender into its activities. There are women's committees, and even the highest organ in our union has proved that it is very important to include women in trade union activities. Forty percent of our members are women. This is my own statistic and not based on union statistics. The proportion of women in top leadership positions at state levels is one woman to 36 men, while at the national executive council, we have zero representation of women at top leadership level."



"Women's participation is negligible, but of late, the union has been motivating women to actively participate in union activities. Our culture has not helped union activism, as women are more engaged with domestic duties and have little time for union activities."



"Within the workforce, women play important roles and NLC recognizes this. NLC has attempted to ensure that women have better voice in the system. For example, we have a policy of 30 percent participation of women in congress activities. There are two positions for women in ex-officio capacity on the National Executive Council [of the NLC], and the chairperson and deputy of our women's committees are all members of top leadership at NLC state councils and even the national level.

We have established a National Women Commission in recognition that women should have a place to articulate policies too. Our rallies and picketing show that the number of women is close to that of men in mass protests. This was unheard of in the past."



"Though we have just one woman at the Central Working Committee level of our union, the activities of the women at the branch level have been quite impressive as they are now more forceful and bolder in their participation and contributions. I foresee a situation where more women would indicate interest in taking up leadership positions at the next delegates' conference of the union.

More women are showing interest in the activities of the union. As a result, their rights are now being better pursued as they are able to convince the men of the need to carry women along in the union activities. Issues of shift work, overtime, nursing mothers and provision of crèches are adequately agitated for and obtained by the branch unions."



“Obstacles to the advancement of women’s rights are both internal and external. Internally, even where a lot of gender mainstreaming has been done, as in our union—which was the first to take concrete steps toward mainstreaming gender—there is still that element of tokenism in how the male-dominated leadership relates to ‘our women.’ This stems from the external [environment], i.e., the general patriarchal nature of our society.”

South Africa

“There is no empowerment of women—women are used as spares in the union. For example, when there are union elections coming, the male comrades and leadership will use the gender structure to lobby support for the candidates. The role of the gender structure is seen as important during the election period only.

In the NUMSA [National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa] national leadership, there is only one woman out of six executive committee members. The COSATU federation has, out of six national office bearers, only two women in the executive committee.”



National Mine Workers Union of Zimbabwe leadership, Kadoma, Zimbabwe, 2013.

“In NUMSA sectors and industries, many working women have a low level of education. Women who are in leadership positions must be very strong or educated women to be able to stand up to the nonsense thrown toward them by male comrades. The union should capacitate women to be able to take up the leadership of the trade union.”



“Yes, the union and the federation have dedicated gender structures. I am a coordinator of the gender structure at national level of the union.”



“Women play a significant role influencing how the unions are run and in amplifying the positions of women in the labor movement. We are beginning to see movement with how policies are drafted and the language is changing. With our federation, women are the ones who pushed for the gender equity forum, for they felt a need to have a structure that was going to address their concerns within the organization. The rights have improved if we compare it to other years, though we are not yet there as yet. We still have a lot of work and we are using the space we are given to voice our opinions.

In FEDUSA [Federation of Unions of South Africa] we have one woman in the top leadership, which was a no-no before.

I think they have started now to be more explicit on issues of gender. For example, in our union we have a constitutionally established gender structure. What this means is that the union is compelled to deal with matters of gender and women. I can also share, proudly so, that for the first time our leadership sat with us and the ILO in a brainstorming meeting. The meeting was planning for the HIV program plus gender issues. The meeting really gave meaning to why women are needed in leadership positions and why their role is not just to fill up a seat but is necessary.

We are beginning to see a slow movement in the use of policies in defending women’s rights. I think women

were not well aware of what is out there in terms of their rights and where and when to use them. Some of us are grateful that we have organizations such as LRS [Labor Research Service], Solidarity Center and others, for highlighting the significance of using the legislations and other legal documents.”



“Yes, women are visible in the union, and in SACCAWU [South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union], we have women in leadership, but when you get to the shop floor there are no women elected as shop stewards. Therefore we can safely say that in part, yes and no.

We have two women as national leaders, a few others in provincial structures, but [even though] you go out to the people we are servicing and majority of them are women, you only see a handful of women in positions of power.

Women’s rights have improved significantly; we have gender coordinators within each region and local. For example, there is no negotiation that is happening without gender coordinators being involved, and we have also made sure that each agreement has parental rights included in it. Yet we are not where we are supposed to be.

The federation is doing its bit, but mainly on developing papers and policies, and when it comes to it, no women are placed in high positions. They lack in implementing the policies that are being developed.”



“When it comes to women’s participation, women are limited. They are vulnerable. FAWU [Food and Allied Workers Union] is not known for women leaders. In 2010, women’s rights were coming in, but slowly. Men treat women like assets. They don’t give them enough respect, and that is a cultural understanding.

FAWU has a program designed to help women, but when you don’t have women in leadership, it makes a difference in whether you empower people. They don’t see it with farm workers. The policies are not making much of a difference.”



“Gender issues are developmental issues. Development doesn’t happen immediately, it happens very slowly. Too slow for my liking. You’ll see progress in a few years.”



“Women are not prepared to stand up. They have very big roles as they have dual responsibilities [in the workplace and] for daily chores at home. Women have to sustain the unions.

We have a draft policy, but it is still a draft that needs to be implemented. We have programs on sexual harassment and HIV/AIDS, but lack of funds hinders progress.

If the policies could be implemented, they could advance the union more.”

Zambia

“We have a gender policy in ZCTU [Zambia Congress of Trade Unions] and a women’s committee. We have sent out a survey to our affiliates on a number of issues, one of which is how many women elected leaders they have.”



“Women make up a large segment of our membership, somewhere around 50 percent. I think that women often don’t support other women when they stand for office. In our national executive we have two women out of eight officers. We have women’s committees at the national level and in many of our branches.”



“Over 90 percent of our members are men. However, we have been taking steps to ensure that women are active in our union. We created a women’s committee within our union structure, and several branches have elected women to leadership positions. We are a very democratic union so we can’t mandate that women will be elected to office, but we do what we can to encourage them.”

Zimbabwe

"Our union's strength has been in organizing women. Women constitute 65 percent of the total membership. There are four women out of the eight elected leaders. In the management team of 11 people, six are women, three of whom are permanent, drawn from the women's and youth structures."



"There is generally a lack of interest in trade unionism among women. There have been lots of resources and effort put into promoting women's participation, but with limited success. Women should make it easier by assisting and contributing. Cultural practices have also negatively impacted participation of women in trade unionism. Most of the active women are either single or older women whose husbands are no longer as jealous as the younger ones.

There have been some gains, though, over the years. A girl child can now inherit her late parents' estate. Women can now get documentation for their children without a man's involvement. And maternity laws have improved to include time off for breastfeeding.

In the federation, there is one woman out of eight elected leaders. It was four of eight some years back, but there has been a drop in active women's participation, especially due to the pursuit of political careers by most of the prominent women in the trade union movement."



"Women have been very active in our union, with 52 percent of our members being women. However, cases of violence against women are still common. We have had some positive results on the rights of women while we continue to fight for more. Gained so far: Paid maternity leave is now a right with no conditions attached. There are now three of 10 female education directors after we demanded a redress of the situation as it was unheard of in the education sector. We are still fighting for the right to be granted maternity leave within the first year of work and 50 percent representation of women in leadership at the schools. That is, if the head is a man then the deputy should be a woman."



Used clothing vendor, Liberia.



"Women have become more visible in the labor movement, feeding into the political movement as well. There are currently three ministers in government who are products of the trade union movement. It is remarkable as trade unionism is generally still a male-dominated area and it is tough for women to break through. The LEDRIZ [Labor and Economic Development Research Institute of Zimbabwe] board is chaired by a woman and has a total of three women of 10 board members.

At the last congress of the ZCTU [Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions], we had a workshop targeted at women that brought a motion to the main congress and had resolutions passed. The most significant was one of the congress resolutions that said all unions are to have 50 percent women representation in leadership."



"Women have been very active in union activities in the eastern region of the ZCTU. Our current regional chairperson is a woman who is very articulate on union issues. The eastern region's leadership comprises four women and two men. The Mutare district structure has three women and three men."



"Women are helping with improvements in working conditions in the workplace. In a number of companies, they spearheaded the campaign for formation of clinics within workplaces and the establishment of rest beds. They are very active at the works council level as shop stewards who sit together with management on worker issues. They have been very active within the labor movement and are taking part in union activities at all levels.

The formation of women-specific structures is a positive development that has resulted in women's issues being almost a permanent agenda item within the trade union movement. There has been a concerted effort to establish women-specific educational programs that address women's issues to feed into the ongoing debate on gender and women's rights. While we passed some positive resolutions at the last congress of the ZCTU to aim for 50/50 male/female participation and in decision making, we still have a male leadership that is not gender-sensitive. There is some resistance from some men. Women also tend to have the 'pull her down syndrome' where they hinder each other from attainment of set goals.

We did a survey in 2011 to check on women's participation, especially in leadership positions. There were six women in the ZCTU's 45-member general council. From a survey of about 20 unions, we found out that there were 267 positions filled by women out of 721 leadership positions. Of the 267, only 10 occupied presidium positions (either union presidents or vice presidents); three were general secretaries, nine were deputy general secretaries, while four were treasurers and the rest were national executive committee members.

Women now have a full realization of their challenges, rights, and potential and have a better understanding than ever before of how to deal with these. They are coming out of their shells and taking an active part in union activities."

Advancing Women's Rights in Trade Unions: REPORT FROM A FOCUS GROUP

On July 30–31, 2013, the Solidarity Center held a forum in São Paulo, Brazil, titled "Women's Empowerment, Gender Equality and Labor Rights: Transforming the Terrain." In the context of this forum, a small focus group experienced in work on gender equality with unions in Africa was convened. Its members were given the task of identifying, from personal knowledge, trade unions that had been successful in addressing gender issues and advancing women's rights and reflecting on the reasons for the successes in these cases.

Members of the focus group included:

- Nina Benjamin, gender research program coordinator, Gender at Work (South Africa)
- Oretha Garway, vice president, United Workers Union of Liberia and president, Domestic Workers Union of Liberia
- Chidi King, Equality Department, International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), Belgium
- Gertrude Mtsweni, national gender coordinator, Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)
- Khamati Mugalla, executive secretary, East African Trade Union Confederation (EATUC), Kenya

Also present were Solidarity Center staff members Imani Countess and Cynthia Mariel, based in Washington, DC; Tom Bacote and Nhlanhla Mabizela, based in Johannesburg, South Africa; Nkechi Odinukwe, based in Abuja, Nigeria; and Hanad Mohamud, based in Nairobi, Kenya.

The unions identified as successful were:

- *Centrale des Syndicats des Travailleurs du Rwanda* (CESTRAR)
- Firestone Agricultural Workers' Union of Liberia (FAWUL)
- Food and Allied Workers Union, South Africa (FAWU)
- Kenya Union of Domestic, Hotels, Educational Institutions, Hospitals and Allied Workers (KUDHEIHA)
- National Association of Nigeria Nurses and Midwives (NANNM)
- National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA)
- South African Transport and Allied Workers Union (SATAWU)
- Trade Union Congress of Tanzania (TUCTA)

The notes below briefly summarize the discussions in the focus group.

SOUTH AFRICAN TRANSPORT AND ALLIED WORKERS UNION (SATAWU)

SATAWU operates in a traditionally male-dominated industry (railway, seafarers, road transport and security guards) but has done a good job of recruiting women and ensuring that gender is integrated into the overall work of the union. The primary factor in this success has been that women fought for their rights and their spaces. They saw themselves as equal to their male counterparts.

The women who pushed their way into the transport sector did so because they saw that women are able to do the work usually done by men. For example, in South Africa, historically, women did not drive buses or taxis. The taxi sector, in particular, is known for its violence, so for a woman to enter that environment takes courage.

Some women union members, both seniors and young workers, labor in the rail yards, putting train cars together. In several workshops, many shared that they faced challenges, such as being told they were not strong enough to do the work. They were even insulted by men in the train yards, but they persevered. Today, the union is about 35 percent female.

Specific achievements:

- Gender issues have been integrated in the union's work.
- The union has a female leadership presence.

What made achievements possible:

- Women fought for their space by challenging stereotypes.
- Union members (male and female) see themselves as equals.
- Male union leaders are able to see that women can do same work as men.

NATIONAL UNION OF METALWORKERS OF SOUTH AFRICA (NUMSA)

The Solidarity Center began working with NUMSA through the union's HIV/AIDS program. Here, again, the union works in a sector that is heavily male-dominated. The HIV/AIDS gender coordinators were largely people working in the administrative sector who were not designated to do gender work. They eventually moved from administration to their own designated roles in teams. The union now has national gender coordinators.

NUMSA has a strong history of activism and is very good at both consciously working to bring in young people and training shop stewards. It has its own training facility and hostel. Their vibrant in-house training program allows the union to ensure that good people are brought into the union.

COSATU's second deputy president is a woman and she comes from NUMSA. Also within NUMSA, the second deputy president is a woman. Women are also found in research, in the policy department and in the investment arm. The chief of staff is a woman and the secretariat has women in prominent positions.

The group members noted that it sometimes helps to be a minority; it is easier to negotiate when one does not represent a substantive threat to the status quo. But even with that fact, NUMSA has made far-reaching advances for women. Within NUMSA women are able to advocate for other trainings. And because NUMSA has several internal publications, women write about their own successes, which helps a lot. In addition, meetings are organized in a way that engages women and they are encouraged to speak out.

Moreover, NUMSA is a union with sufficient resources that it was able to expand the Solidarity Center HIV/AIDS program beyond the handful of provinces the Solidarity Center could cover. NUMSA provided funds to ensure that all their regions received training.

Focus group participants felt that one important difference within NUMSA was the relative age of the leadership. NUMSA's leaders are relatively young and they have prioritized the elevation of women.

What made achievements possible:

- The union has its own youth desk and women are vocal on issues.
- The union has resources in terms of pension funds and is willing to invest its own resources in growing the union.
- The union talks about its own successes.
- The relative youth of the trade union leaders is a determining factor.

TRADE UNION CONGRESS OF TANZANIA (TUCTA)

Of all the confederations, TUCTA is the only one that has gender-disaggregated data that show the overall number of women in terms of membership and leadership, all the way down to the affiliate level. These data have been key in terms of planning gender programs within the national center.

In addition, TUCTA has a designated budget for women's activities: 15 percent of national center subscriptions are set aside for this purpose. As a result, TUCTA runs vibrant women's conferences and has one of the most active women's councils. The confederation holds competitive elections and women work hand in hand with the resolution process. TUCTA also is strategic and intentional about ensuring that women have space and time to meet during the national conferences. And it has organized pre-congress activities focused on building female leadership.

Also, because of the availability of funds, gender coordinators from the affiliates meet and come up with programs and raise funds for other activities.

There are other federations that have constitutional provisions for budget set-asides for women, but they do not actually carry it out.

What made achievements possible:

- The confederation has a strong gender coordinator who pushes for program implementation and is very committed. Of concern is the fact that the coordinator will retire at some point and it is not clear who will succeed her, but she is pressing the confederation to formulate a succession plan.

- The gender coordinator works to hold the secretary general accountable. She has been practical in her programming. One cannot underestimate the role of individual dynamic trade union sisters.
- TUCTA's Constitution.
- The percentage of the confederation's budget allocated for gender programs is publicized, at 15 percent.
- TUCTA focuses on issue-based organizing and has concentrated on identifying issues that concern women.
- The confederation is currently running a campaign on domestic workers.
- The culture and history of work, politics and organizing in Tanzania is also a factor in the union's successful work on gender.

FOOD AND ALLIED WORKERS UNION, SOUTH AFRICA (FAWU)

FAWU works in KwaZulu-Natal province with agricultural workers, many of whom are women and migrants. The majority of the cane cutters in the province are women and the union has pressed for sanitary facilities. The Solidarity Center experience is that young women want to be involved and the union's general secretary supports them. If they did not have the support of the leadership, they would fail, particularly given the patriarchal structure of KwaZulu-Natal. The general secretary holds members accountable. And the union supports leadership training courses that are associated with the university, which is a way to further opportunities for female leaders.

Solidarity Center staff noted that it is clear that at the provincial level, the union has prioritized advancing women as shop stewards and as members of bargaining committees. In addition, the general secretary is willing to participate in workshops and trainings; he encourages gender training and is actively involved.

FAWU is the only union within COSATU that has male gender coordinators, although focus group participants noted that male coordinators encounter the same problems as female coordinators.

Other factors worth noting:

- Women are taking a lead in the province in organizing agricultural workers.
- Women pushed for and were willing to take up leadership positions.
- Women leadership courses are accredited in universities.

KENYA UNION OF DOMESTIC, HOTELS, EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, HOSPITALS AND ALLIED WORKERS (KUDHEIHA)

KUDHEIHA's leadership has been very strategic in its decision and approach to organizing domestic workers. The union began more than 50 years ago as an initiative by five male domestic workers who were angry over employer restrictions on family visits. The current leadership has invested in organizing domestic workers because they are most vulnerable workers and include migrants from the surrounding region.

In a 2010 interview with the ITUC, the secretary general of KUDHEIHA, Albert Njeru, noted that the union had been "organizing women workers since 1948, long before independence."

"At that time we held meetings in the evenings for the women working for the colonialists, mainly in Nairobi, so they could exchange experiences and information. Little by little, the union opened up to other categories of workers and now we have about 40,000 members, nearly 5,000 of whom are women domestic workers. Domestic work is a difficult sector to organize because the women are not aware of their rights and because there is no collective bargaining. The 35,000 other members are nurses, non-teaching staff, etc."

Njeru described how the union reached out to domestic workers:

"Before beginning our training we select a number of women in the area. We ask them when they are free and where we could meet them and we bring them together, group after

*group. We begin by inviting one, then two, then a whole group. They prefer Sundays, but some employers lock their maids up in the house, even on that day. It is also difficult because they are worried about being seen as someone who knows about trade union activities, because in Kenya employers look upon the unions as trouble makers."*²¹

Because KUDHEIHA has a wide base, it has financial resources to invest in organizing domestic workers. In addition:

- There is a commitment throughout the union to promote gender equality.
- Work is done through national federations and the union conducts education activities on issues around gender equality.
- There is a real political will to move gender programs and unions understand that growth of the union is at stake when it comes to issues of gender equality.
- Union leadership is progressive and conscious of the need to create space for work with domestic workers.
- The union has a survival and growth strategy.
- The union is open to adapting and learning from other models and other labor movements on what is considered best practice.
- The union has embraced models of organizing that were not well known or had not used before in Kenya.
- Male trade unionists support women in addressing issues of gender equality, but they are conscious that they should not take center stage.
- The union is organizing in difficult sectors that require communication, coordination and membership-based organizing that also raises difficult questions of the home as workplace.
- Women are taking critical positions in bargaining.

²¹ "Laws to Protect Domestic Workers Scrutinized," ITUC press release, January 30, 2010, <http://www.ituc-csi.org/spotlight-interview-with-albert>.

CENTRALE DES SYNDICATS DES TRAVAILLEURS DU RWANDA / TRADE UNION CENTRE OF WORKERS OF RWANDA (CESTRAR)

CESTRAR is composed of vibrant young female members. The union is unique in that respect. The post-genocide environment has created an “enabling environment” characterized by new laws, including tripartite and bipartite structures. These have worked to ensure male and female representation.

What made achievements possible:

- Issues of gender equality are addressed in Rwandan legislation.
- Women’s equality is a national issue and not just a trade union issue, so CESTRAR has no option but to adopt a policy of involving women in activities. Participation of women in trade unions is related to the aftereffects of the Rwandan genocide.
- The union has a young, energetic membership.
- The union has more women attending meetings than before.
- The union has an environment that promotes gender as seen in its legislative framework and language in the Rwandan Constitution.
- The union has similar tripartite and bipartite structures with which they engage with their government on national issues.

FIRESTONE AGRICULTURAL WORKERS’ UNION OF LIBERIA (FAWUL)

FAWUL works in the rubber industry, which is vital to Liberia’s economic growth. The union has a checkered history of not taking gender equality seriously and its leadership is male-dominated, with only one woman present. The male union leadership, however, is sensitive to women. The union takes seriously its responsibility to sensitize women members on the CBA and union resources are used to train them. Women receive equal pay and are employed in technical areas of the plantation.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA NURSES AND MIDWIVES (NANNM)

The nurses’ union in Nigeria also represents midwives. It was established and registered as a trade union in 1979. Since its inception, it has had only two women leaders and that was during its earliest years. More than 80 percent of the members are women, but less than 5 percent of the national leadership is female. NANNM previously had a gender desk officer who handled activities that had nothing to do with gender.

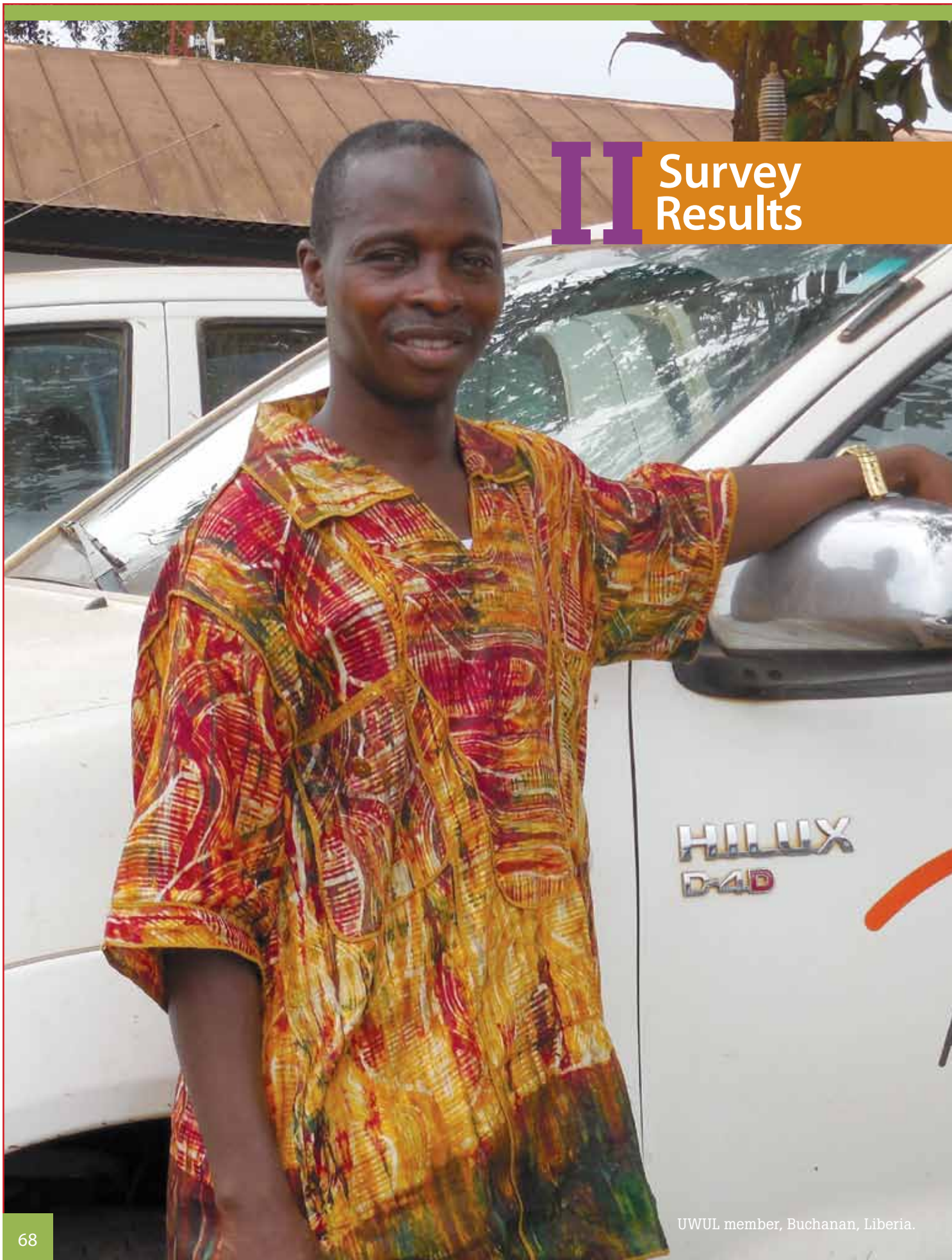
Specific achievements:

- Since the union started working with the Solidarity Center in 2009, it has developed its own gender policy, which has been adopted by the top leadership of the union.
- There is a pronounced presence of women in union leadership at the state and local level.
- The union provides day care at its national office and usually has a mobile day care area set up for mothers attending the national conference with their children.
- The union has a budget for gender activities, though it is insufficient for all planned activities.

What made achievements possible:

- Gender-sympathetic male members in the leadership of the union.
- Vibrant and committed gender desk staff who wanted to see changes.
- Support from funders like Solidarity Center.

II Survey Results



UWUL member, Buchanan, Liberia.

CHAPTER 5

Changing the Policy Environment

Chapters 1 and 2, on the economy and government, respectively, make clear that both sets of external factors have enormous influence on the capacity of trade unions to organize and defend their members' interests. When formal enterprises are shedding jobs or turning to outsourcing, attracting new members or even retaining existing members becomes more difficult. Unions are forced into a defensive posture. When even governments that have passed laws favoring workers are indifferent or passive in implementing those laws, unions must take action or be seen by the public and potential members as ineffective.

The potential for action and the type of action needed, however, vary enormously according to the specific situation in each country, which requires investigation in far greater detail than possible in this report. However, the interviews and literature review do allow for some general observations on areas that are essential to include.

DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES

Whether or not they have been affiliated with specific parties or movements, trade unions have played a significant role in promoting the democratic process in most of the countries surveyed.²² Although their current relationships with government are shaped in part by that history, unions have found that even their former colleagues who now serve in government are not necessarily defenders of worker rights. Even a formal electoral alliance, as exists in South Africa, is no guarantee of union influence on government policy.

The participation of unions in the democratic process, by lobbying government and undertaking other advocacy on a range of issues, is most active currently in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa and Zambia, of the countries included in this report. In the other four countries surveyed, distinct factors have impeded such participation to varying degrees:

- In Swaziland, the government has refused to register the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA). Nonetheless, the trade union movement continues to be a major component of the campaign for basic democratic rights in that country.

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- In Mozambique, the weak state of the union movement, including its formal links to the ruling party, have ensured that it generally plays a subordinate role to government rather than actively engaging in advocacy.
- In Zimbabwe, even during the period of the Government of National Unity before the most recent election, unions have found it extremely difficult to influence government policy, despite formal institutions for dialogue. The current period is highly uncertain for the unions, as well as for civil society in general.
- In Liberia, the weak national federation limits the impact of unions on national debate, as illustrated by the failure (as of this writing) to secure new minimum wage legislation.

²² See Edward Webster, *Trade Unions and Political Parties in Africa* (Bonn: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2007), <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/04961.pdf> and Johann Maree, *The Role of Trade Unions in Sub-Saharan Africa in Defending and Promoting Democracy* (prepared for 16th ILERA World Congress, 2012), <http://ilera2012.wharton.upenn.edu/RefereedPapers/MareeJohann%20ILERA.pdf>.

Interviewees were emphatic in stressing that government responsiveness to worker interests depends in large part on the capacity of unions to bring pressure on governments to respond.

Political scientists may use a variety of classifications to assess the degree of democracy in a country. Whatever the classification, it should be clear that the existence of formal democracy allows for wide variation in the degree to which government responds to the needs of the people of a country. Interviewees were emphatic in stressing that government responsiveness to worker interests depends in large part on the capacity of unions to bring pressure on governments to respond. There was also consensus that while unions in many cases do have such an impact, the net effects are still far from sufficient to meet the needs of the majority of workers.

Unions need the capacity to monitor and influence government policy, in addition to their capacity to organize workers and to achieve and administer collective bargaining agreements. They must speak out on broad issues of public concern, particularly national economic strategy. The skills needed, including legal, lobbying, public advocacy and analytical skills, may require more training for union officials and/or the hiring of specialized personnel.

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MONITORING AND PRESSURE FOR COMPLIANCE WITH EXISTING LAWS

The International Labor Organization maintains extensive databases on international norms adopted by ILO member countries as well as on national legislation (*see links in Annex 4*). As interviewees noted, governments often have a wide variety of laws on the books which, if fully implemented, would provide significant benefits to workers. One requirement for influence on government is being able to mobilize union membership. As one interviewee said, "Governments, in general, don't respond to the 'excellence of our logic.' If you can't put people on the street, then you can't impact government."

Mobilization may take the form of an actual strike or public demonstrations or, in some cases, the credible threat of such action. But interviewees also made clear that unions should take advantage of existing mechanisms available to them as a means to engage and influence government, such as formal tripartite forums or joint administration of social security programs. The capacity for such representation, it was also noted, is linked to unions' capacity for negotiations in multiple arenas requiring specialized legal and economic knowledge. All too often, employers and the government have an array of lawyers and other specialized personnel while unions can field only a handful of staff, some of whom lack the necessary technical knowledge.

Systematic surveys of the gaps in technical knowledge and technical personnel on the staff of unions could be conducted by specialists in the appropriate fields. While there is frequent reference in the literature to training programs, most of these references are to training of a general nature rather than to specialized professional training, which unions also need.

In addition to the International Labor Organization databases noted above, the U.S. State Department's annual human rights reports for each country contain a section documenting issues of worker rights. The ITUC also publishes an annual survey of violations of trade union rights. While these international reports do not provide sufficient detail for evaluating the priorities for union action in each country, they can be

valuable resources in combination with relevant local knowledge. (See links in Annex 4.)

INFLUENCING NEW GOVERNMENT POLICES

Another arena for union action is in advocating or opposing new government policies that affect workers, either positively or negatively. In terms of defensive reaction, undoubtedly the most prominent in recent years, and mentioned repeatedly by interviewees in Nigeria, was the mass protest against a rollback in the fuel subsidy in that country in January 2012. These popular protests involved wide civil society action, including both the social-media-driven #OccupyNigeria and a general strike by unions. They were partially successful in minimizing an increase in gas prices and prompting a subsequent legislative investigation by the National Assembly. In Mozambique, by contrast, similar popular protests against subsidy removals in September 2010, also successful in gaining a government rollback, were led by youth, without participation by the unions.

In most of the countries included in this report, unions have been involved in lobbying on issues such as minimum wage and extension of social security and health insurance to workers not previously covered. Neither the interviews for this report nor a literature review provided sufficient data for systematic comparison of union success in this regard. It would be difficult to draw general conclusions even with more extensive research, but there can be no doubt that this is a critical area for trade union action. Focused opportunities for sharing of experiences within Africa on union advocacy and lobbying efforts would undoubtedly be useful, whether on a bilateral basis or through sponsorship by regional institutions.

TRADE UNION RESEARCH AND ACTION ON ECONOMIC POLICY

In some countries, unions have succeeded in establishing sufficient research capacity to play active roles in debates on national economic policy. In South Africa, COSATU as well as many individual unions have significant research capacity. Although COSATU is officially allied with the ruling African National Congress, it has a long history of critical opposi-



Market, Liberia.

tion to the conservative economic policies that have generally prevailed in government decision making since 1994. There is, moreover, a strong tradition of critical commentary by independent researchers and observers on trade unions in South Africa and on the issues of worker rights and national economic policy. COSATU has sponsored regular surveys of its shop stewards and has allowed independent scholars access to this data. The National Labor and Economic Development Institute (NALEDI) is COSATU's research organization. The Labor Research Service, supported by 15 South African unions, is another leading example of an institution with significant research output on labor-related issues.

It is far beyond the scope of this report to provide even a brief survey of these debates, which are closely intertwined with political and economic policy in South Africa today. But a wide range of such studies are available in print and on the Web (see Annexes 4 and 5).

Outside South Africa, notable research bodies are the Labor Research and Policy Institute (LRPI) in Ghana and the Labor and Economic Development Research Institute of Zimbabwe (LEDRI), associated with the Ghana Trades Union Congress (TUC) and the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), respectively. Both institutes have authored well-documented and well-publicized studies of national economic policy.

Interviewees on

Changing the Policy Environment

Note: These are notes from interviews rather than exact quotes. Quotation marks are for convenience in reading. Interviewees are not identified by name but are grouped by country. Each quote is from a different interviewee. Interviewee comments in chapter 2 are also relevant to this topic.

Kenya

"Union influence on government is average as the trade unions cannot force the government to change its policies. Once the government has taken a stand, it is usually final. The unions can make noise, but at the end, the government goes ahead with the policy."



"KUDHEIHA has been actively lobbying for ratification of ILO Convention 189, and we have made a lot of progress. We have been at the forefront in ensuring that domestic workers are covered by the national social security program and national health insurance fund. Both are now in the law, and KUDHEIHA is known worldwide for those efforts."



"Unions need to transform themselves into professionally run organizations that can articulate issues clearly and from an informed perspective. That way they will be seen as forces to reckon with, not just as reactive noisemakers. As for social dialogue, I can't say it's very effective because mostly it happens to solve problems and the government is in control. It's not an even playing field."



"We are mostly reactive rather than proactive. We wait for the government or employers to do something in order for us to react. We do not engage as required and therefore it is mostly seen as if we are troublemakers. We are not advising the government on labor matters as should be expected."



"Unions need to invest in expertise in order to get proper guidance and advice when making or participating in critical policy decisions. They also need to take advantage of the goodwill of the government as far as involving them in participatory decision making. Unions need to build internal capacity within themselves if they are to engage other stakeholders effectively in policy-making processes."

Liberia

"Unions are advocating for the passage of the decent work bill. The bill was passed in the Senate but rejected by the members of the House of Representatives. The bill calls for raising the minimum wage from 75 cents per hour to \$5 per hour." [The bill was later passed by both houses in September 2013.]



"We will launch a campaign in the second half of this year to push for the ratification of ILO Convention 176. It addresses the inherent deficiencies on health and safety in the mining industry. I do not think it will meet a strong resistance since the government has agreed and signed on to the UWUL's [United Workers Union of Liberia] health and safety agreement with ArcelorMittal. We are hoping it is ratified before the next ILO conference, which is scheduled in June 2014."



"We need a lot of protests, nationwide. We need to organize protests and actions, including protest letters to influence the government."

Mozambique

"Unions do not take an active role in promoting democratization, voter participation, or public debate. They have had a very polite approach."



"Municipal laws regulate the informal sector—questions of hours of operation, taxes, et cetera. We engage the municipal parliament. This happens across cities, because OTM [*Organização dos Trabalhadores de Moçambique* / Mozambique Workers' Organization] represents the interests of informal workers. For instance in Maputo, informal traders have agreed with the municipality about where to operate."

Nigeria

"The country's labor laws have a lot of good provisions that favor workers, but government employers constantly violate these laws and, by their conduct, encourage private employers to violate them also. A clear example is the recent campaign carried out by NLC and its affiliates in support of pensioners and the pensioners' union in Nigeria. Government is aware of statutory provisions which state that wage review should reflect on pension payments too. They have repeatedly ignored this statutory provision even after repeated demands from unions. The government also withheld check-off dues that have accrued to the pensioners' union on the baseless grounds that a retired worker is not supposed to pay check-off dues from pensions collected. It was only when NLC threatened the government with a work stoppage that they quickly ordered the immediate release of the withheld monies, amounting to millions of naira."



"One of the most important things is trade unions trying to collaborate and work with civil society organizations in order to influence government policies. The 2012 January fuel subsidy demonstration was a clear example of what such collaborations can do to help the workers. The effectiveness of that demonstration had a lot to do with the collaborative efforts of all organizations involved. After what happened, government will be a bit cautious when they want to introduce policies that will work more hardship on workers and citizens."



"Trade unions should be proactive in tackling government policies. They should also be more involved in monitoring the implementation of government funds around projects that benefit the people."



"Another example is the campaign against excess taxation deductions from public workers' salaries. Unions have equally been encouraging members to get into politics. These are good things."



"There is also need for labor unions to be proactive in the way and manner they approach issues. They should not wait until the last minute and then implement a fire brigade approach. They should be able to make government know their stance over issues before crises erupt. The Nigerian government believes in the fire brigade approach and usually consults labor at the last minute."



"The most important thing I think unions do to influence and improve policies on workers and trade unions is their ability to do a huge mass mobilization to challenge and change some bad government policies that would have a devastating effect on workers."

South Africa

"There is a lot of work the union is doing, through workshops, to educate workers about issues affecting labor. The union is forcing the government to abide by and implement policies that have been agreed upon."

I believe that COSATU should have more worker representation in government to advocate for worker rights and ensure policies that are favoring the workers."



"Our federation has a parliamentary office and we are occupying different seats in different committees within Parliament. It is there to influence decisions that are taken in Parliament. The whole aim is to defend the rights of workers and our interest as unions."



"When the government was busy with the gender bill, we received the draft as the union and we then circulated it to our members to get their inputs. We wanted to hear from our members on the shop floor."

I would say we are influential, but I also think that we can put more pressure on government if we can pull together as labor movements in this country."



"Yes, our union is making noise. Our union was bold enough to stand up against a major multinational and won a case for workers who were dismissed because of a merger. They were reinstated. Yes, our union is bold enough to challenge government decisions, even if it takes a long time for the government to listen."

The unions are not enforcing the laws enough and are not challenging enough. The unions are more visible on political issues than worker issues; wearing more than one cap actually compromises the union."



"FAWU has proposed a national minimum wage and put measures in place. But we don't involve members enough in the policy making. We should create our own identity by organizing campaigns and being more visible. The union is no longer serving the people. FAWU should mobilize more people and do more road shows."



"COSATU is fighting tooth and nail with us to make sure that the workers have a living wage and are educated."

Health and safety must be enforced. If domestic workers go for maternity leave, there is no payment. It should be mandatory."



"The federation should shame the ANC. Road shows are the language that the government understands: lobbying and picketing. Domestic workers are not easy to mass mobilize."



"FAWU meets with government to discuss a range of things such as wages, health and the plight of farm workers. Engagement with the union at the national level includes land, housing and social issues such as national pension for workers, national minimum wage and a push for land reform. There is a shopping list of resolutions from the 2012 summit, but no program to pursue the resolutions to logical conclusions."

We should follow up on issues that have been started, [taking them] to their conclusion. Some actions may be overtaken by events, such as the illegal strike by the farm workers who wanted an increase in the minimum wage. That should be discussed. People will take over immediate issues if they see the union is failing to implement action."

FAWU must take action on food prices, especially for poor people who are impacted by inflation. They should also do more on worker education, regarding tertiary and other skills, especially to help people understand the economics of the various sectors. The union is not

participating in the decisions on who produces what, for whom and why. Therefore, it leaves the economic decisions in the hands of the few. As FAWU, we must understand the economics of food. We must also vigorously pursue freedom of association.”



“We are engaging the government in some areas. However, we need to continue to seek legislation that requires the government to publish policies in multiple languages besides English, because the farmers are illiterate or speak only their native languages. Things should be simplified.

FAWU should develop collaborations and revive the bilateral process to engage on issues with the government. Road shows will make noise, but without meeting, there won’t be much action.”

Zambia

“Unions have a strong influence on government policies in Zambia. We have a strong history of fighting colonialism, supporting a multiparty democracy and even throwing out the old government when it wasn’t performing well.”



“We participate in joint technical committees (dealing with issues such as pensions, entitlements, career progression and recruitment) with the government, which reviews policies and practices for civil servants. Our union has an economist heading our research department and other trained staff who are able to represent our interests in these joint technical committees. After they have made their recommendations, our union’s national officers will meet with government officials to determine which recommendations are proposed to be enacted into law.”



“With the registration of another national center, Federation of Free Trade Unions of Zambia (FFTUZ), in 1994, and many competing sector unions, it has been difficult for us to form unified positions and strategies to influence the government. Government and others have taken advantage of the disunity to weaken unions in Zambia. We have made some progress in recent years in better coordinating our positions with the other national center.”

Zimbabwe

“Engagement with the government is very important and should be continued, but lobbying and advocacy are weak. There is lack of resistance and we are giving too much respect to oppressive government and local government officials. There is too much fear of the authorities.”



“Nothing has happened because the Tripartite Negotiating Forum has no legal framework; it is just child’s play. Social dialogue in its current form has reduced us to collective begging. We have approached the ILO and sent a list of our complaints against the government. This list has since been circulated to other partners.”



“We need increased research to give a holistic approach to issues affecting the country. A good example is the all-encompassing book *Beyond the Enclave* [published by LEDRIZ], which gives alternatives on how to address the country’s economic and developmental problems. An advocacy program at all levels, starting from the grassroots right up to national level, may put the necessary pressure on government and win positive results.”



“There has been a lot of advocacy work at the national level with some positive results, but almost nothing at the grassroots.”

III Country Overviews



Workers at the Rio Tinto Zimbabwe Empress Nickel Refinery, Zimbabwe.

The following overviews provide brief summaries of the economic context and the situation of trade unions in the countries included in the survey. The overviews are grouped by region. The country with greatest economic prominence within each region appears first in each section.

CHAPTER 1

Southern Africa

SOUTH AFRICA

Almost 20 years after the end of apartheid, South Africa's economy remains the most advanced on the continent. South Africa is a member, with Brazil, Russia, India and China, of the BRICS club of "newly emerging" economic powers. Veterans of the liberation struggle, prominently including former trade unionists, occupy key seats of power not only in the government but also in the economy and other institutions. Both the Constitution and additional legislation provide substantial protection for human rights and, in particular, for the rights of workers. In some respects, the South African transition to democratic rule and the institutions established there have provided a model for the world.

At the same time, many of the fundamental structures of inequality inherited from the apartheid era remain in place. Despite a comprehensive social safety net program, which accounts for some 58 percent of government spending, unemployment remains high, at more than 25 percent. Poverty and inequality are fundamental challenges, while economic growth following the global recession has been consistently below that achieved by many other African countries, dipping to 2.5 percent in 2012.

The reasons for the gap between post-apartheid hopes and the sobering reality are complex and the subject of intense academic and political debate, including within the ranks of the governing African National Congress and in trade unions. The Congress of South African Trade Unions has a formal Tripartite Alliance with the ANC, along with the South African Communist Party, and has consistently campaigned for the ANC in elections. Many former trade union-

ists are now in government or in the leadership of private-sector companies. Yet unionized workers and union leaders, among other South Africans, increasingly voice critical views of current government policies.

Analysis of these debates is beyond the scope of this report. However, it is necessary to provide at least a brief note on the economic structures that have not



Workers at the Rio Tinto Zimbabwe Empress Nickel Refinery, Zimbabwe.



Worker at the Rio Tinto Zimbabwe Empress Nickel Refinery, Zimbabwe.

undergone fundamental transformation since 1994. Successive post-apartheid governments have decided that it is essential to retain the confidence of both South African and international investors, thus ruling out policies that might threaten “investor confidence.”

Analyst Hein Marais, in his 2011 book *South Africa Pushed to the Limit*, provides a succinct summary of the consequences:

“South Africa is saddled with a stagnating industrial base where ownership is at least as concentrated as 20 years ago and which remains excessively dependent on the minerals-energy complex (MEC) for export earnings. The capital and intermediate goods sector has hardly stirred from its slumber. Consequently, technological innovation, industrial growth and infrastructure development depend on ever-increasing exports. Those have to be financed with the earning of precious mineral (mainly gold) exports and short-term capital inflows, which add up to a balance of payments constraint on growth.

Capital flows readily reverse into outflows—on terms and in volumes that the government prefers to leave in the hands of the market. [...] There is nothing ‘stable’ about such a state of affairs.

The other defining feature of the economy [...] is the intense financialization that has occurred in the past two decades, alongside an enduring reliance on the mineral sector: The MEC is

now symbiotically entwined with a politically domineering financial sector. Braided into that circuitry are the junior partners of corporate South Africa, the few dozen moguls who have monopolized the spoils of black economic empowerment to date. This phenomenon would be a footnote in the political economy of post-apartheid South Africa, were their financial heft not so important to the ANC—in fiscal, political and ideological respects.”²³

While the post-apartheid political and economic system incorporates South Africans of all races at higher levels in management and the workforce, the lowest ranks of the nation’s workforce are still overwhelmingly drawn from the most vulnerable sections of the black population. This is particularly apparent in the strategic mining sector. Despite the presence of the National Union of Mineworkers, which has had a strong tradition of opposition to apartheid, the mining industry stands as the most stubborn reminder of these realities inherited from apartheid. Although there have been improvements for some sectors of the mining workforce, the imperatives of profitability continue to take priority in an industry that has relied upon cheap black labor since its inception. This has led to violations of safety regulations and worker rights, with the most exploited workers recruited through labor brokers from the most disadvantaged sectors of the rural Southern African labor force. These unresolved issues have also led to the formation of a rival mining union, the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU). Mentioned earlier, in the context of government failure to implement good legislation already on the books, the killings at the Lonmin Mine in Marikana in August 2012 may well become a symbol of the failure to transform apartheid institutions.

This survey did not attempt to explore this complex post-apartheid reality, which could hardly be addressed through short interviews with a limited number of workers. Fortunately, since 1994, COSATU has sponsored regular, independently researched surveys of its members, the latest in 2012. These have provided a rich source of data for the federa-

²³ Hein Marais, *South Africa Pushed to the Limit: The Political Economy of Change* (London: Zed, 2011).

tion itself and for independent researchers. The 2012 survey report, available online, samples workers who are union members and those who are nonmembers. Earlier surveys have been analyzed in depth in a number of studies, most notably the book edited by Sakhela Buhlungu and Malehoko Tshoaedi.²⁴

Among the highlights of the 2012 COSATU survey report:

- In all categories of workers, the vast majority said better pay was what they wanted most from their employers.
- About a quarter of workers said their employer discriminated against black workers.
- Just under half of union members and a seventh of non-members said there had been a strike in their workplace in the past five years.
- When asked for the most important reason they belong to a union, more than a third of union members said their top priority was for the union to defend them against dismissals and disciplinary challenges. Around a third wanted improvements in pay, conditions and benefits.
- Around a third of union members said there was corruption in their union, but fewer than one in seven said they had personally experienced it.
- While most members agreed that women were underrepresented in union leadership, they largely ended up blaming it on women's own characteristics and competencies.
- Two-thirds of COSATU members said they would vote for the ANC if elections were held next week.
- More than 70 percent of COSATU members, as well as 60 percent of non-members, said that the federation should stay in the Tripartite Alliance with the ANC and the South African Communist Party. However, 23 percent of COSATU members said that COSATU should leave the Alliance.

²⁴ *Findings of the COSATU Workers' Survey 2012* (Johannesburg: 11th COSATU National Congress, 2012), http://www.cosatu.org.za/docs/reports/2012/final_workers_surveys_results_August_2012.pdf. Sakhela Buhlungu and Malehoko Tshoaedi, eds., *COSATU's Contested Legacy: South African Trade Unions in the Second Decade of Democracy* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2013).

Even in-depth surveys such as those conducted by COSATU cannot keep pace with the complex and changing debates on these issues, which are at the heart of the wider public debate about the future of South Africa. Whatever the uncertainties about developments within the country's trade union movement, there is no doubt that it will continue to play a vital role in South African public life and in defending the interests of union members. The outcomes will be of critical importance for South Africa, for other African countries and indeed for the world.

MOZAMBIQUE

In 2012, Mozambique continued its rapid economic growth with a 7.4 percent increase in GDP, following a decade of annual growth rates of more than 6 percent. Predictions were for even higher rates in 2013 (8.5 percent) and 2014 (8 percent). Beginning from a low base in the early 1990s, after more than a decade of internal war fueled by South African intervention, the country's post-war growth initially depended largely upon external aid flows. But the current growth comes from a boom in what are called "megaprojects." The Mozal aluminum smelter, which opened in 2000, has been followed in recent years by a flood of investments in coal, natural gas and associated infrastructure projects.

Nevertheless, international economic agencies, as well as independent critics and interviewees for the Solidarity Center project, note that Mozambique's highly capital-intensive growth has not resulted in significant job creation or contributed to poverty reduction. According to the *African Economic Outlook* for Mozambique, the megaprojects "have driven economic growth but [have] not had a significant impact on government revenues, employment creation and economic diversification."²⁵

In a country case study for the World Bank's 2013 *World Development Report*, Sam Jones and Finn Tarp focused on jobs and welfare in Mozambique. Poverty remains widespread, they conclude. The smallholder

²⁵ "Mozambique Economic Outlook," <http://www.afdb.org/en/countries/southern-africa/mozambique/mozambique-economic-outlook/>. See also the Mozambique chapter in *African Economic Outlook* (note 6).

agricultural sector, where most Mozambicans earn a living, is stagnant. Their paper summarizes the jobs situation in a series of 10 “stylized facts”:

- Mozambique’s population is young, rural and growing rapidly.
- Rates of labor force participation are high; unemployment is low and principally confined to urban youth.
- Underemployment is rife. Only a minority of workers are fully employed.
- The informal sector is large and is the principal locus of new job creation.
- Levels of education and skills remain low throughout the economy.
- Structural change in the labor market (away from agriculture to manufacturing) has been limited.
- There are large spatial differences in the distribution of Mozambican labor, that is, a disconnect between the south and the rest of the country.
- Productivity gaps between sectors are large and widening, largely due to slow productivity growth in agriculture.

- Household income sources have become more diversified over time. Multiple sources of income are the norm.
- Social discontent appears to be rising, particularly among the urban youth.

The capacity of Mozambican unions to confront these structural problems is limited, given its history both under Portuguese colonialism and since independence. Unlike the situation in many English-speaking African countries, trade unions did not play a significant role in the struggle for Mozambique’s independence. And for the most part, the trade union movement remains closely linked to the ruling party, with a primary commitment to seeking labor peace rather than assertively defending worker interests.

SWAZILAND

The economy of Swaziland, largely dependent upon revenues from the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), grew by only 0.2 percent in 2012, according to official estimates. According to the *African Economic Outlook*, that rate may even be an exaggeration, hiding a marginal contraction. In striking contrast to other countries featuring capital-intensive



Workers at the Rio Tinto Zimbabwe Empress Nickel Refinery, Zimbabwe.

investment, Swaziland lacked significant new investment, while government finances remained in deficit. Although the country has one of the highest literacy rates in Africa, at more than 92 percent, it also has one of the highest unemployment rates among youth, at 52 percent. And it suffers from one of the highest HIV prevalence rates in the world, estimated at between one-fourth and one-third of adults.

The issues confronting the country and its trade unions lie as much in the political context as in global economic trends. The country remains an absolute monarchy, with little or no scope for democratic participation in governance. Political parties have not been allowed to take part in elections since 1973, and the African Union observer mission to the September 2013 parliamentary elections was strongly critical of the “no-party” system in use. Lavish expenditures by the royal family, including upkeep for 13 palaces, are among the major factors underlying a persistent fiscal deficit, exacerbated by declining revenue from sugar exports.

Cutbacks in government wages and in health and education have not been matched by cuts in expenditures for the royal family. King Mswati is estimated to have a personal fortune of \$200 million, equivalent to roughly 5 percent of GDP, and he controls a trust fund of several billion dollars. Officially, the royal family receives \$23 million a year for personal expenses.

The Swazi trade union movement has been and continues to be one of the major components of civil society and of opposition mobilization for democratic rights. Yet it has also been plagued by internal divisions and disorganization. Although a new national federation, the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA), was formed in a merger in March 2012, it was deregistered by the government only a month later, in a decision approved by the Industrial Court in February 2013. Individual trade unions continue to function, but they are only reluctantly tolerated by the government as a result of international pressure.

With respect to the Solidarity Center research, these conditions meant that it was not prudent to conduct formal interviews in Swaziland as was done in the other countries covered in this report. But a Solidarity Center team was able to engage in a large number



Workers at the Rio Tinto Zimbabwe Empress Nickel Refinery, Zimbabwe.

of informal conversations on a visit in August 2013. The visit confirmed the extremely difficult conditions under which trade unions work in Swaziland, as well as their significant internal organizational problems.

ZAMBIA

With a 7.3 percent growth rate in 2012, Zambia is one of the countries commentators cite as a sign of “Africa rising.” The country attracted some \$3.5 billion in new foreign investment in the first half of 2013, exceeding its target for the year. Inflation declined from 8.7 percent in 2011 to 6.5 percent in 2012. And, predicts the *African Economic Outlook*, “In the next two years, growth is expected to remain strong and inflation low.” Although growth comes in part from high copper prices and investment in new mines, other growing sectors include agriculture, construction, manufacturing, transport and finance.

Nevertheless, *African Economic Outlook* also notes that the growth is not accompanied by commensurate job creation or poverty reduction. Growth remains concentrated in capital-intensive sectors. Of Zambians who are employed, an estimated 95 percent are employed in vulnerable sectors. As the World Bank noted in October 2013, formal wage jobs are being

created slowly and are “nowhere close to being able to absorb the new cohorts of youth that are entering the labor market.”²⁶ The country remains primarily dependent on copper mining, which accounts for about 80 percent of foreign exchange earnings. But because of a continuing fiscal bias in existing agreements to the benefit of foreign investors, revenues from copper mining account for only 6 percent of government revenues.

Zambian trade unions have a long tradition of participation and leadership in the public policy arena, without fully identifying with any political party. As noted in the comments from interviewees in Part II, the Patriotic Front government, led by President Michael Sata, came into office two years ago promising more worker-friendly policies. Although the Solidarity Center interviews with trade unionists, in early 2013, still reflected hopes that the government would deliver on these promises, there was little sign of fundamental change.

²⁶ *Zambia's Jobs Challenge: Realities on the Ground* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank).

Among the most difficult issues noted by interviewees was disunity among unions, which has been exacerbated over the years by pressures and manipulation by successive governments.

ZIMBABWE

Since independence in 1980, the economy of Zimbabwe has passed through several distinct stages. In the first decade after independence, investments in social programs (health and education) were significant. However, though the country began with an economic structure diversified among agriculture, mining and manufacturing, this level of investment could not be sustained. From 1991 to 1996, the government implemented an Economic Structural Adjustment Program under strong pressure from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, featuring cutbacks in social spending and a greater reliance on the free market.



Street scene, Liberia.

When this program failed to restore the economy, the country entered a period of economic and political crisis. Hyperinflation and economic decline led to virtual economic paralysis in 2007 and 2008. Government policies became erratic and civil society protests, in which trade unions played a prominent role, met with repressive response.

Following a disputed election marred by violence in 2008, a Government of National Unity (GNU) was formed under pressure from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in February 2009. The Zimbabwean dollar was abandoned in favor of hard currencies such as the U.S. dollar and the South African rand. Economic recovery was rapid in the years immediately following, with GDP growth exceeding 5 percent in 2009 and rising to more than 10 percent in 2011. But a slowdown to 4.4 percent annual growth in 2012 was projected to continue, given political uncertainty, continued fiscal problems and increased corruption linked, particularly, to new diamond discoveries.

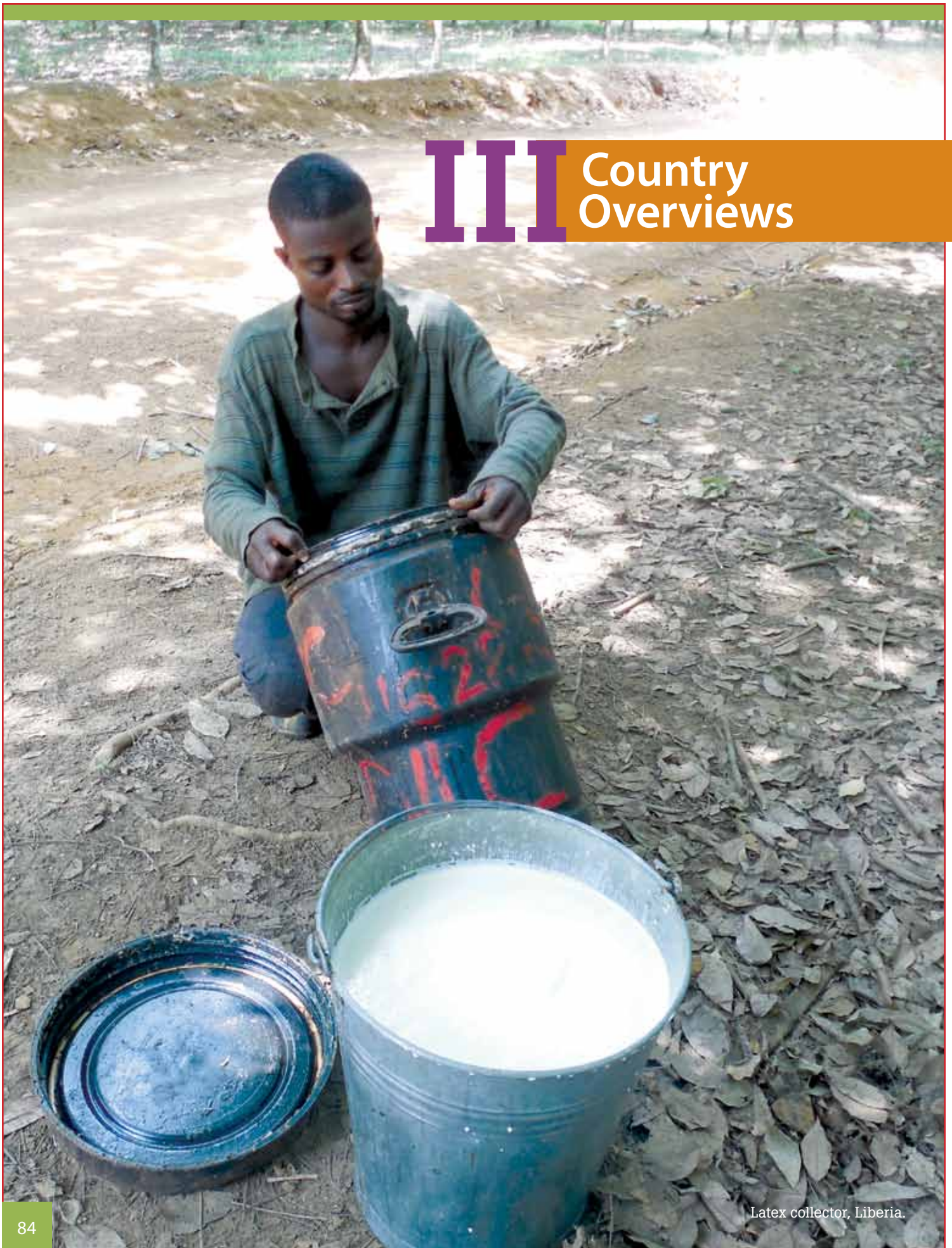
The growth of the mining sector, including but not limited to diamonds, was a significant component of the economic turnaround that began in 2009. Mineral exports rose by about 230 percent over the 2009–2011 period, making mining the leading export sector. By the end of 2011, mineral exports accounted for 47 percent of total exports, led by platinum (43 percent), gold (28 percent) and diamonds (20 percent, not including diamonds exported illegally). In 2012 mineral exports were even higher, at 64 percent of total exports. As the *African Economic Outlook* observed, however, “there is a lack of transparency and accountability in the allocation of mining rights, as well as in the distribution and use of revenue from mining.”

Trade unions in Zimbabwe have faced a highly volatile political situation in which they have played a leading role as part of civil society in campaigning for democratic rights and for the interests of workers. Individual trade unionists, most notably opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai, took leading roles in the political opposition and in the GNU. However, the principal trade union federation, Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), maintained independence from opposition parties and continued its role as an independent critic of government policies during the period of the GNU. As noted earlier in this report, it has also taken the lead in trying to organize informal workers. The ZCTU research affiliate LEDRIZ, since its founding in 2003, has provided excellent critical analysis of the situation of workers and trade unions and of government economic policies, bolstering the role of the trade unions in national debates.

Despite its strengths, however, the trade union movement has been significantly weakened in recent years by government repression and by internal disunity, including internal disagreements within the ZCTU. A rival trade union federation, the Zimbabwe Federation of Trade Unions (ZFTU), is allied with the dominant party, ZANU-PF.

In addition to these specific issues related to the political situation in the country, Zimbabwean unions must contend with the same structural issues facing unions in other countries covered in this report. These include the rapid informalization of employment, employer opposition to unions, government indifference or hostility to worker rights and the effects of declining financial resources and internal rivalries. The unions nevertheless remain one of the most significant sectors in the national debates about the economic and political future of Zimbabwe.

III Country Overviews



Latex collector, Liberia.

The following overviews provide brief summaries of the economic context and the situation of trade unions in the countries included in the survey. The overviews are grouped by region. The country with greatest economic prominence within each region appears first in each section.

CHAPTER 2

East Africa

KENYA

Kenya has the largest economy in the East African region and is its economic hub, although Ethiopia and Tanzania have greater land area and population. With an estimated \$34 billion in gross national income (GNI) and a population of almost 42 million people in 2011, Kenya has an annual GNI per capita of \$820. The growth rate of the economy was 3.8 percent over the past decade. Although this rate fell short of the average of 6 percent for sub-Saharan Africa (excluding South Africa), Kenya's growth rate was 4.6 percent in 2012, with predictions of 5.7 percent and 6 percent for 2013 and 2014, respectively.

Kenya's leading position in the region dates from the colonial period, when British settlement, investment and transportation links were concentrated in the country, while the colonies of Uganda and Tanganyika (now Tanzania) were less favored. Today, Kenya's capital, Nairobi, is a regional hub for international transportation links and media, as well as a center for innovation in information and communications technology on the African continent. Since 2007, the East African Community (*see next section*) has included Burundi and Rwanda as well as the original members of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania and plans are advancing rapidly for greater economic integration in the region.

Agriculture remains prominent in the Kenyan economy, producing 28.5 percent of GDP, compared with 17.6 percent for industry (including 11 percent for manufacturing). Agriculture is outweighed by the services sector, however, which contributes 53.9 percent of GDP. In terms of employment, of some 14.3 million Kenyans in the workforce, 6.5 million people

(45 percent) are engaged in family farming, 5.1 million (36 percent) in wage jobs and 2.7 million (19 percent) in non-farm self-employment. There are thus fewer farmers than 20 years ago, when two-thirds of the workforce was still engaged in family farming.

The profile of the workforce is changing rapidly. With falling birth rates and longer life spans, the proportion of the population that is of working age is increasing. This means potential for rapid growth, but only if new jobs are found for those entering the workforce. Although approximately two-thirds of Kenyans live in the countryside, the urban population is growing twice as fast as the population overall. Men outnumber women two to one in wage employment, while women outnumber men two to one in family farming.

According to estimates by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, wage employment in the modern sector accounted for 2.1 million of the total 5.1 million wage jobs. Of the 2.1 million engaged in modern-sector wage employment, 800,000 workers were in services, 680,000 in the public sector, 350,000 in industry and 290,000 in agriculture. Modern-sector wage jobs are estimated to be increasing by some 50,000 a year, while the working age population is increasing at 800,000 a year. That is, only 1 in 16 people entering working age are finding modern wage jobs.

The result is that despite aggregate economic growth, Kenyans overwhelmingly judge the economic situation to be negative. According to an AfroBarometer survey in late 2011, 84 percent of Kenyans rated the economic condition of the country to be "very bad or fairly bad," up from 54 percent in 2005 and 78 percent in 2008. Although ratings for their own personal



FAWUL member, Liberia.

situation were slightly better, 71 percent still said their personal living conditions were “very bad or fairly bad.”²⁷

Economic analysts, including the World Bank team responsible for the periodic Kenya Economic Update, recognize that more high-productivity wage jobs are needed and that growth without good jobs is not a viable strategy for the country’s economic future. The December 2012 update focused on jobs, noting that the major problem is underemployment rather than unemployment. While the analysts note that more education and skills are important in the long run for creating jobs, they find that weaknesses in transport and electricity are more significant constraints to the expansion of private businesses and that pervasive corruption is seen by job seekers themselves as the principal obstacle to getting a job.

COTU (K), the Central Organization of Trade Unions (Kenya), represents some 1.4 million workers and has more than 30 affiliated unions. It is among the most established trade union federations on the continent and in recent years it has played an active role in public life while rejecting political party affiliation

²⁷ Paul Kamau, *Declining Confidence in Economic Performance in Kenya* (Afrobarometer, 2012), <http://www.afrobarometer.org/publications/afrobarometer-briefing-papers/item/641-declining-confidence-in-economic-performance-in-kenya>.

and defending national unity. It is actively involved with national institutions for labor relations and with advocacy on social security, health and wage policies. It has an active education and training program, including the Tom Mboya Labor College. And it plays a significant role at the regional level, with its secretary general, Francis Atwoli, serving as chair of the East African Trade Union Confederation. In recent years, as noted in Chapter 4, the Kenya Union of Domestic, Hotels, Educational Institutions, Hospitals and Allied Workers (KUDHEIHA) has actively expanded the organization of domestic workers and has successfully joined in lobbying for inclusion of domestic workers in national social security and health funds. The largest non-COTU trade union is the Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT), which is estimated to have almost 200,000 members.

Despite such achievements, however, Solidarity Center interviewees in Kenya consistently stressed several major points:

- Despite macroeconomic growth, the majority of Kenyan workers have experienced few benefits from that growth and find their wages insufficient to meet basic needs.
- The intense competition for jobs and the large proportion of jobs that are casual rather than in the formal sector makes it very difficult to recruit workers to trade unions, to maintain regular payment of dues and to defend worker rights.
- The legal framework for labor relations and worker rights is, in general, very comprehensive, but lack of government capacity and lack of union capacity to bring pressure ensures that implementation of these norms is rarely effective.

EAST AFRICAN REGION

The East African Community (EAC) consists of five countries—Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda—with headquarters in Arusha, Tanzania. It has a population of approximately 135.4 million, a land area of approximately 703,000 square miles and a total GDP of \$84.7 billion. A customs union went into effect in 2010 and plans are advancing for a common market, free movement of people and other steps

intended to lead eventually to a full political federation. South Sudan and Somalia currently have pending applications for membership in the EAC.

The East African Trade Union Confederation (EATUC) includes affiliates from the Central Organization of Trade Unions (Kenya) (COTU (K)), Trade Union Confederation of Burundi (COSYBU), National Organization of Trade Unions (NOTU) of Uganda, Trade Union Center of Workers of Rwanda (CESTRAR), Trade Union Congress of Tanzania (TUCTA) and Zanzibar Trade Union Congress (ZATUC). COTU (K) is the strongest affiliate. NOTU and TUCTA also have long institutional histories, with TUCTA in particular being active in public advocacy. Unions in both Burundi and Rwanda are weak, while those in South Sudan and Somalia are in their infancy.

While EATUC is active at the regional level in policy advocacy, the greatest challenges for trade union development in the region are faced by the national unions in member countries other than Kenya. Many of these unions are weak or nascent. In all their countries, the manufacturing sector is much less prominent than in Kenya and new foreign investment is concentrated in the capital-intensive extractive sector. East African oil and gas are rapidly becoming new major growth areas on the continent, but it remains to be seen whether or not they will bring good jobs to the region. Given the track record for the industry, governments and trade unions both will likely have to confront this challenge.

A background paper prepared for the World Bank's *World Development Report 2013* compares the record

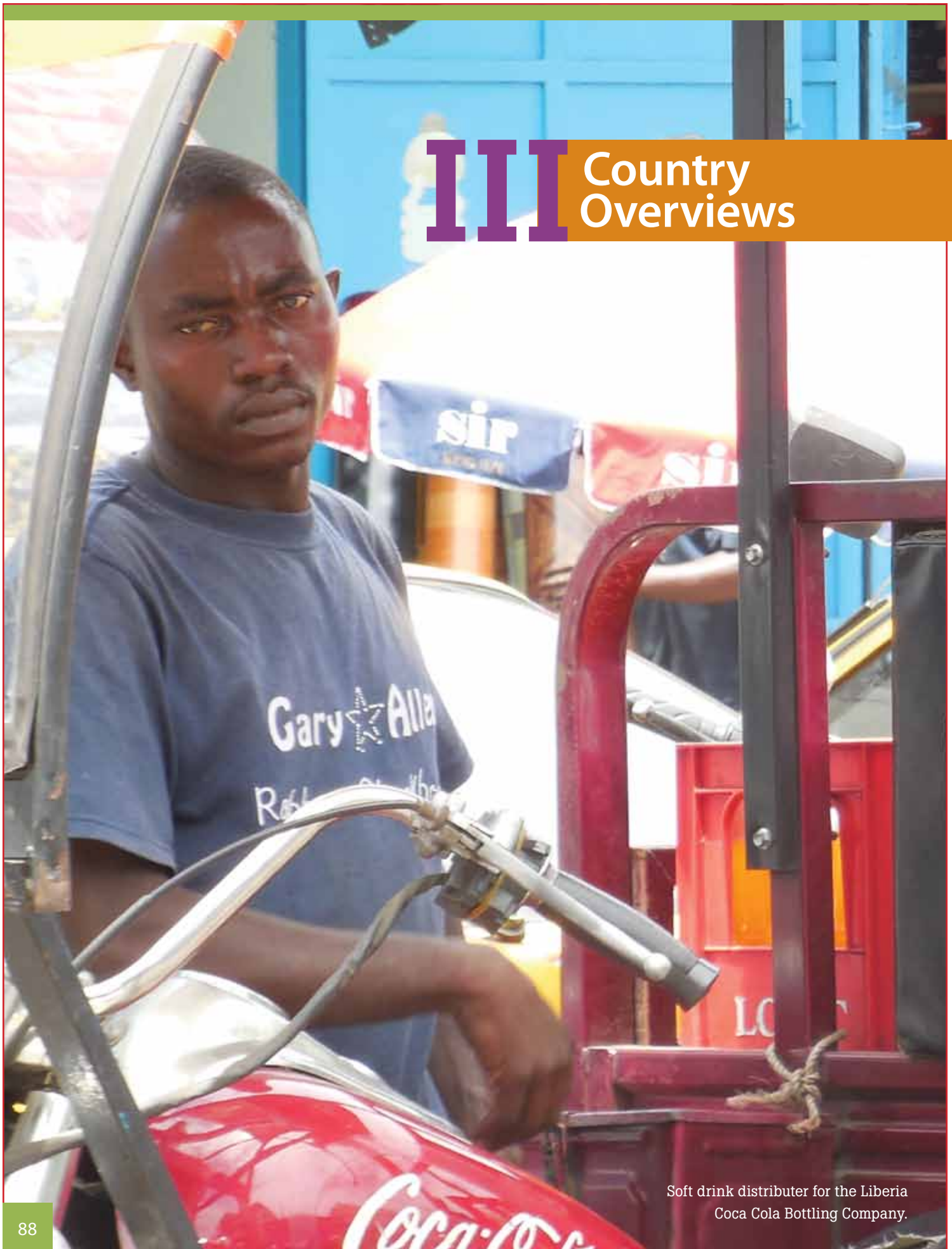


FAWUL member, Liberia.

of Ethiopia, Ghana, Mozambique and Tanzania on growth and employment.²⁸ It provides strong support for the thesis that capital-intensive investment, as in Mozambique and Tanzania, produces less employment and benefit for the poor than does employment-intensive investment, which is predominant in Ghana and Ethiopia. It is imperative, then, to expand the debate on how to use East Africa's newly developing resources. In this regard, East African unions would do well to study the experience of and seek advice from West African unions, particularly in Nigeria and Ghana, which have had to confront these issues.

²⁸ Pedro Martins, "Growth, Employment and Poverty in Africa: Tales of Lions and Cheetahs," <http://www.odl.org.uk/publications/7294-growth-employment-poverty-africa-ales-lions-cheetahs>.

III Country Overviews



Soft drink distributor for the Liberia
Coca Cola Bottling Company.

The following overviews provide brief summaries of the economic context and the situation of trade unions in the countries included in the survey. The overviews are grouped by region. The country with greatest economic prominence within each region appears first in each section. Ghana was included in this survey because of its important role in the African trade union movement.

CHAPTER 3

West Africa

NIGERIA

Nigeria, the most populous country on the African continent, also has the second-largest economy. Economic growth rates have averaged more than 7 percent over the last decade. But Nigeria is also a textbook illustration of how macroeconomic growth does not automatically translate into jobs or lower poverty rates. The country ranked 153rd out of 187 countries worldwide and 23rd within Africa, on the UN Human Development Index for 2012.

The authors of the most recent World Bank *Nigeria Economic Report* note that “Nigerian economic statistics reveal a puzzling contrast between rapid economic growth and quite minimal welfare improvements for much of the population.” The *African Economic Outlook* for Nigeria for 2013 is more explicit:

“The economic growth has not translated into job creation or poverty alleviation. Unemployment increased from 21% in 2010 to 24% in 2011 because the sectors driving the growth are not high job-creating sectors. [...] The economy lacks diversification and agricultural production lacks modernization.”

Interviewees for this survey made a similar point, noting rising unemployment, closing factories and increasing poverty among ordinary Nigerians.

According to the AfroBarometer survey at the end of 2012, 67 percent of Nigerians said the country’s economic situation was either very bad or fairly bad. Forty-two percent described their personal living conditions as very bad or fairly bad. Asked about the performance of the government in managing the economy, 81 percent called it very bad or fairly bad

and 84 percent said the government was doing very badly or fairly badly in job creation.

The oil and gas sector accounts for 79 percent of Nigeria’s federal government revenue and 71 percent of export revenue, but, strikingly, for only 15 percent of GDP. Agriculture contributes about 31 percent of GDP. The National Bureau of Statistics reported in a 2010 survey that agriculture accounted for 14.8 million people of the total 48.6 million people employed, roughly comparable to its percentage of GDP. In contrast, according to the same survey, the extraction of oil and gas employed only 21,974 workers, less than 0.1 percent of total employment. Other sectors with significant percentages of the workforce included trade, with almost 25 percent and manufacturing, with 11 percent. Of the total employed population in all economic sectors, 13.6 million people were estimated to be owners in informal sectors and 18.8 million were workers in informal sectors, for a total of 67 percent of the labor force. Only 1 percent of workers were employed in information and communications, despite the sector’s rapid growth over the last decade, driven by widespread adoption of mobile phone technology.

Nigeria has two major trade union federations, the Nigeria Labor Congress (NLC), with approximately 4 million workers in 43 affiliate unions and the Trade Union Congress (TUC), with approximately 2.5 million workers in 25 affiliate unions. Major unions include two in the oil and gas sector—the Nigeria Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG) and the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (PENGASSAN)—as well as the Medical and Health Workers’ Union of Nigeria (MHWUN), National

Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE), National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) and Nigerian Civil Service Union (NCSU).

A survey in the banking, oil and gas and telecommunications sectors found that workers were generally aware of their rights.²⁹ However, those surveyed also rated both the level of compliance by employers and the level of enforcement by government as low. Workers also said that trade unions have the capability to defend these rights but had not yet succeeded in overcoming opposition by employers and the government.

Both the interviews for this report and regular coverage in the Nigerian press confirm that unions are active both in defending the interests of their members in specific sectors and in participating in public debate on relevant issues. Specific campaigns cited in the interviews include the dispute with the telecommunications company Airtel in 2011, the January 2012 campaign against the fuel subsidy reduction and the March 2013 campaign on pensions. Nigeria has a Labor Party, but it is weak and has few ties to unions. Unions tend to exercise their own initiative on issues of specific concern, such as minimum wages and labor legislation, as well as broader national issues such as the fuel subsidy. The success of such efforts, interviewees agreed, has been mixed. There have been some successes but major obstacles stand in the way of achieving sustainable victories.

GHANA

The Solidarity Center does not currently have programs in Ghana. Only three interviews were conducted in Ghana and this summary is largely based on public documents, including rich empirical research by the Ghana Trades Union Congress (TUC). See Annex for references.

In 2011, the World Bank reclassified Ghana from a low-income to a lower-middle-income economy, defined by the Bank as a country with a GNI per capita of \$1,036 to \$4,085. Although the reclassification resulted partly from a statistical adjustment to

Ghana's national accounts, the new status reflects not only quantitative economic growth but also growth spread out over multiple sectors. This included new oil income but also services and traditional exports, such as cocoa and gold. Overall annual growth rates, averaging less than 2 percent for the 1960s through 1980s, exceeded 4 percent in the 1990s and are projected to surpass 7 percent per year for the current decade.

Nevertheless, according to *African Economic Outlook*, "improved macroeconomic management and enduring political stability have not significantly transformed the structure of Ghana's economy over time. Mining and construction have sustained the industrial sector, while manufacturing has been declining as a share of GDP over the past 20 years. The country needs to develop new, labor-intensive economic sectors such as manufacturing and agro-processing in order to tackle the employment challenge and provide economic opportunities to rural areas."³⁰

The Labor Research and Policy Institute (LRPI) of the TUC has developed a substantial program of research and policy analysis and the TUC has taken an active public role in policy debate while remaining neutral with respect to party politics. According to LRPI reports from 2009, the formal economy employs only about 10 percent of the workforce, down from about 20 percent before the structural adjustment policies of the 1980s, which drastically reduced public-sector employment. According to estimates from the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) of the University of Ghana, some 250,000 young people enter the labor market each year but only about 5,000 of them find jobs in the formal economy.

Although trade unions are well established in Ghana, surveys show that unionization has declined, even in the formal sector. According to LRPI, "approximately 50 percent of formal sector workers were working in unionized enterprises [in 1998/99] compared to about 38 percent in 2005/06." LRPI adds, "Policy-makers seem to acknowledge the labor market failures. But economic policies continue to focus on

²⁹ Funmi Adewumi and Adebimpe Adenugba, *The State of Workers' Rights in Nigeria: An Examination of the Banking, Oil and Gas and Telecommunication Sectors* (Abuja: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2010), <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/nigeria/07651.pdf>.

³⁰ *African Economic Outlook*, Ghana Country Note, <http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/countries/west-africa/ghana/>.

inflation management. Employment creation continues to be regarded as the residual outcome of economic growth.”³¹

LIBERIA

Ten years after the end of the civil war, Liberia’s economy continues to grow rapidly. GDP grew by more than 8 percent in 2011 and 2012 after exceeding 5 percent annual growth rates every year since 2005. Economic growth projections for 2013 and 2014 stand at more than 5 percent.

Yet the expansion of the Liberian economy is linked almost entirely to the export of raw materials, particularly rubber, iron ore and timber. All depend upon international commodity prices and foreign investment, often on concessionary terms. Most of the major staple food, rice, is imported. Lack of transport,

electrical and communications infrastructure is a major obstacle to growth, other than in the favored export sectors. A shortage of educated workers may also hinder sustained economic development. Liberia ranked 174th out of 187 countries on the UN Human Development Index for 2012. And security may be a renewed concern with the expected drawdown of the UN peacekeeping mission from 8,000 to 4,000 troops by 2015.

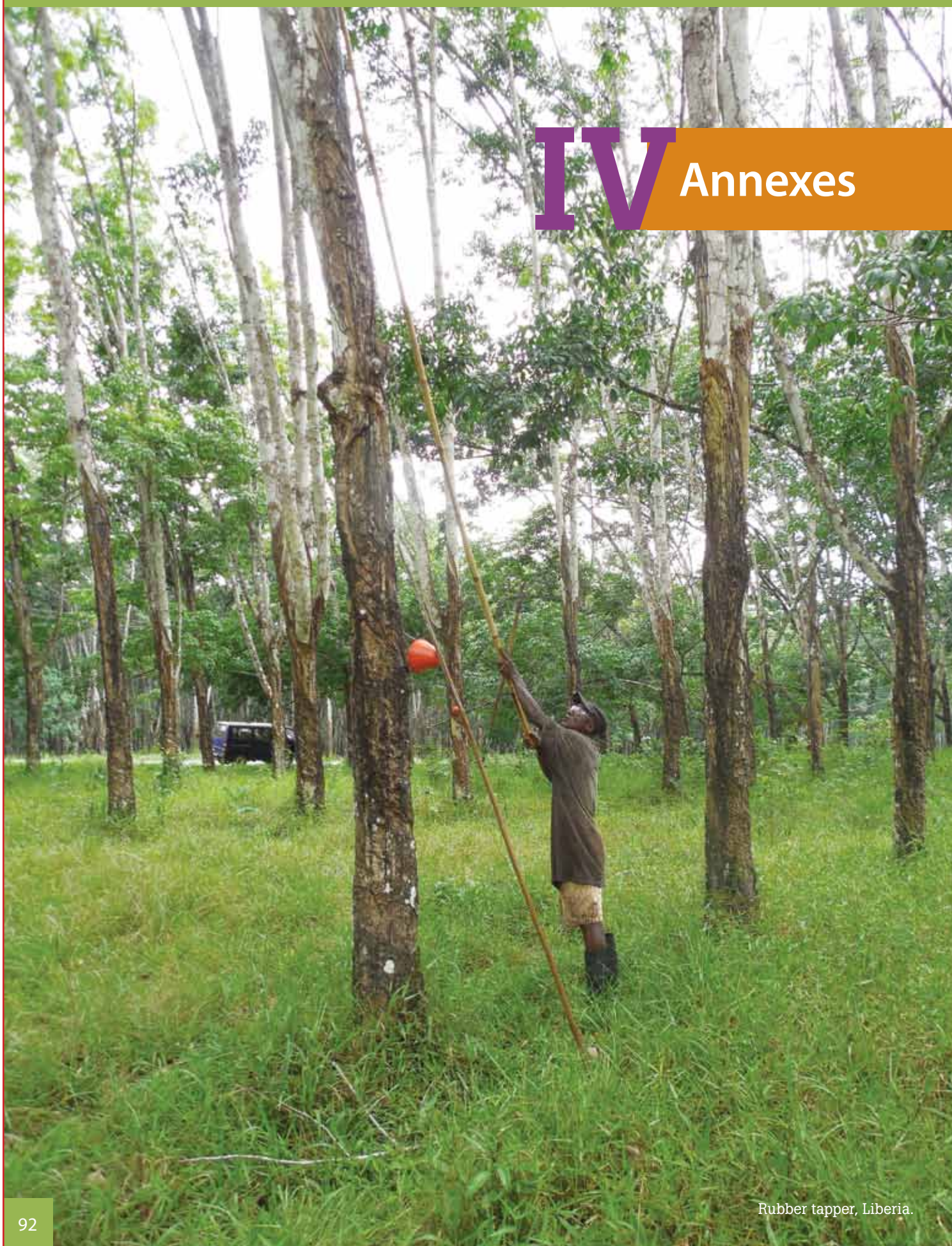
In this context, the Firestone Agricultural Workers’ Union of Liberia (FAWUL) and the United Workers Union of Liberia (UWUL) have been successful in organizing at large companies such as Firestone (rubber) and ArcelorMittal (iron). But the national Liberia Labor Congress (LLC) is weak. Unions have lobbied for a new bill on decent work, including an adequate minimum wage, but without success so far. In general, governmental labor policies are not helpful to unions and there is much public controversy about the granting of concessions, such as in palm oil or timber, without adequate public accountability.

³¹ Kwabena Nyarko Otoo, Clara Osei-Boateng and Prince Asafu-Adjaye, *The Labour Market in Ghana* (Accra: LRPI, 2009), <http://www.ghanatuc.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/The-Labour-Market-in-Ghana.pdf>.



UWUL members, Liberia.

IV Annexes



ANNEX 1

Interviews Completed for Solidarity Center Survey

Country or region	Interviewer	Interviewee	Date of interview
Africa	Rick Hall	Fabian Nkomo	April 19, 2013
Burundi	Caroline Kasina	Ndayizeye Léandre	March 14, 2013
East Africa	Caroline Kasina	Caroline Mugalla	April 22, 2013
Ghana	Imani Countess	Tetteh Hormeku	March 21, 2013
Ghana	Imani Countess	Trades Union Congress (group)	March 21, 2013
Ghana	Imani Countess	Kwabena Nyarko Otoo	March 22, 2013
Kenya	Caroline Kasina	Josedas Muthama	March 19, 2013
Kenya	Caroline Kasina	Monica Musau	April 24, 2013
Kenya	Caroline Kasina	Noah Chume	April 28, 2013
Kenya	Caroline Kasina	Kilonzo Musyoka	June 24, 2013
Kenya	Caroline Kasina	Albert Njeru	June 28, 2013
Kenya	Caroline Kasina	Evelyn Mulo	June 24, 2013
Kenya	Caroline Kasina	Jacob Omolo	June 28, 2013
Liberia	Imani Countess	Abel Ngigie	March 31, 2013
Liberia	Deddeh Tulay	Amos Monweh	July 3, 2013
Liberia	Deddeh Tulay	David Sackoh	June 24, 2013
Liberia	Michael Leslie	Edwin Cisco	June 22, 2013
Liberia	Deddeh Tulay	Comfort Wallace	July 11, 2013
Liberia	Michael Leslie	Oretha Garway	June 2013 (exact date not available)
Mozambique	Ruth Castel-Branco	Adriano Manhica	June 19, 2013
Mozambique	Ruth Castel-Branco	Américo Macamo	June 14, 2013
Mozambique	Ruth Castel-Branco	Judith Marshall	June 12, 2013
Mozambique	Ruth Castel-Branco	Oscar Marleyn	June 12, 2013
Mozambique	Ruth Castel-Branco	Igor Felice	June 17, 2013
Mozambique	Ruth Castel-Branco	Pedro Saela	June 16, 2013
Mozambique	Ruth Castel-Branco	Catarina Diogo	June 16, 2013
Mozambique	Ruth Castel-Branco	Rafael Dava	June 17, 2013
Mozambique	Ruth Castel-Branco	Armando Alexandre	June 17, 2013
Mozambique	Ruth Castel-Branco	Naftal Simbine	June 18, 2013
Nigeria	Nkechi Odinukwe	Lucy Offiong	April 16, 2013
Nigeria	Nkechi Odinukwe	Tiamiyu Nurudeen	April 24, 2013
Nigeria	Nkechi Odinukwe	Rita Goyit	April 17, 2013
Nigeria	Nkechi Odinukwe	Joseph Anugwolu	April 18, 2013

Country or region	Interviewer	Interviewee	Date of interview
Nigeria	Nkechi Odinukwe	Simon Anchaver	April 18, 2013
Nigeria	Nkechi Odinukwe	Rasaq Ikadebu Lawal	April 18, 2013
Nigeria	Nkechi Odinukwe	Kpokporo Seikeba Paul	April 23, 2013
Nigeria	Nkechi Odinukwe	Princess Dr. Jennifer Spiff	April 24, 2013
Nigeria	Nkechi Odinukwe	Chris Uyot	April 25, 2013
Nigeria	Nkechi Odinukwe	Babatunde Ayelabola	April 25 and 30, 2013
Nigeria	Nkechi Odinukwe	Solomon Adebosin	April 26, 2013
Rwanda	Caroline Kasina	Kabibi Kacyira Jowe	March 14, 2013
South Africa	Percy Nhlapo	Roseline Nkgapele	April 15, 2013
South Africa	Percy Nhlapo	Duduzile Ngcobo	May 6, 2013
South Africa	Nhlanhla Mabizela	Phumzile Mashishi	April 22, 2013
South Africa	Nhlanhla Mabizela	Sisanda Mbokotho	April 29, 2013
South Africa	Sheena Foster	Themba Mokena	October 4, 2013
South Africa	Sheena Foster	Eunice Dhladhla	October 1, 2013
South Africa	Sheena Foster	Howard Mbana	October 1, 2013
South Africa	Sheena Foster	Philip Mokena	October 1, 2013
Swaziland	Percy Nhlapo	Selby Mtshali	date not available
Tanzania	Caroline Kasina	Kassim Kapalata	March 14, 2013
Tanzania	Caroline Kasina	Khalfan Suleiman	March 14, 2013
Uganda	Caroline Kasina	Yazid Baligasima	March 14, 2013
Zambia	Rick Hall	Joseph Chewe	April 9, 2013
Zambia	Rick Hall	Joy Beene	April 10, 2013
Zambia	Rick Hall	Luke Makinishi and Stephen Mumbi	April 12, 2013
Zimbabwe	Ashbel Musaringo	Wisborn Malaya	April 22, 2013
Zimbabwe	Ashbel Musaringo	Japhet Moyo	April 24, 2013
Zimbabwe	Ashbel Musaringo	Raymond Majongwe	April 25, 2013
Zimbabwe	Ashbel Musaringo	Godfrey Kanyenze	April 28, 2013
Zimbabwe	Ashbel Musaringo	Tenson Muchefa	April 30, 2013
Zimbabwe	Ashbel Musaringo	Percy Mcijo	May 7, 2013
Zimbabwe	Ashbel Musaringo	Fiona Magaya	May 10, 2013

In addition to these formal interviews based on the survey template, additional informal conversations concerning Swaziland were held August 4–17, 2017 in South Africa and Swaziland. Solidarity Center staff members involved in these conversations were Imani Countess, Thomas Bacote and Rick Hall. Interviewees included people affiliated with the Swaziland National Union of Students, Swaziland United Democratic Front (UDF), Swaziland Union of Non-Academic Staff of Higher Learning Institutions (SUNASHI), Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT) and Swaziland Transport and Allied Workers Union (STAWU), as well as Freedom House, the International Labor Organization (ILO), the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA) and the United States Consulate.

ANNEX 2

Interviewee Affiliations

Country or region	Interviewee	Affiliation/position at time of interview
Africa	Fabian Nkomo	Africa Regional Secretary, IndustriALL.
Burundi	Ndayizeye Léandre	Member, Coordinating Committee, Confédération Syndicale du Burundi (COSYBU).
East Africa	Caroline Mugalla	Acting General Secretary, East African Trade Union Confederation (EATUC).
Ghana	Tetteh Hormeku	Head of Programmes, Third World Network Africa.
Ghana	Kofi Asamoah	Secretary General, Ghana Trades Union Congress (TUC).
Ghana	Dr. Yaw Baah	Deputy Secretary General, Ghana TUC.
Ghana	Georgina Opuku Mankwaa	Chairperson, Ghana TUC.
Ghana	Kwabena Nyarko Otoo	Director, Labor Research and Policy Institute (LRPI) of the Ghana TUC.
Kenya	Noah Chume	Director of Education, Central Organization of Trade Unions (Kenya) (COTU (K)).
Kenya	Evelyn Mulo	Member and Organizer, Kenya Union of Domestic, Hotels, Educational Institutions, Hospitals and Allied Workers (KUDHEIHA).
Kenya	Monica Musau	Women/Gender Coordinator and Educator, COTU (K).
Kenya	Kilonzo Musyoka	Shop Steward and Coordinator, KUDHEIHA.
Kenya	Josedas Muthama	Executive Director, Human Rights and Information Forum.
Kenya	Albert Njeru	Secretary General, KUDHEIHA.
Kenya	Jacob Omolo	Lecturer, Kenyatta University.
Liberia	Edwin Cisco	General Secretary, Firestone Agricultural Workers' Union of Liberia (FAWUL).
Liberia	Oretha Garway	Vice President, United Workers Union of Liberia (UWUL) and President, Domestic Workers Union of Liberia.
Liberia	Amos Monweh	Secretary General, UWUL Local 4 (ArcelorMittal Workers).
Liberia	Abel Ngigie	Grievance Chairman, FAWUL.
Liberia	David Sackoh	Secretary General, UWUL.
Liberia	Comfort Wallace	Treasurer, FAWUL.
Mozambique	Adriano Manhica	Member of Secretariat, Mozal Union Committee, Sindicato Nacional dos Trabalhadores da Indústria Metalúrgica, Metalomecânica e Energia (SINTIME).
Mozambique	Américo Macamo	Secretary General, SINTIME.
Mozambique	Judith Marshall	Retired, Steelworkers Humanity Fund, Canada, with extensive experience in Mozambique.
Mozambique	Oscar Marleyn	Thematic Coordinator for Southern Africa, FOS-Socialist Solidarity, Belgium, based in Mozambique, with extensive experience in Mozambique.

Country or region	Interviewee	Affiliation/position at time of interview
Mozambique	Igor Felice	Country Coordinator, International Labor Organization (ILO).
Mozambique	Pedro Saela	National Secretariat, Sindicato Nacional de Empregados Domésticos (SINED).
Mozambique	Catarina Diogo	Member, SINED.
Mozambique	Rafael Dava	Director for International Relations, Organização dos Trabalhadores de Moçambique (OTM).
Mozambique	Armando Alexandre	Member of Secretariat, Associação dos Operadores e Trabalhadores do Sector Informal (ASSOTSI); Secretariat for Youth, OTM.
Mozambique	Naftal Simbine	Secretary General, Sindicato Nacional dos Trabalhadores dos Transportes Rodoviários e Assistência Técnica (SINTRAT).
Nigeria	Lucy Offiong	Deputy General Secretary, Nigerian Civil Service Union (NCSU); Chairperson, National Women Commission of the Nigeria Labor Congress (NLC) and Deputy Vice President, NLC.
Nigeria	Tiamiyu Nurudeen	Senior Supervisor, Human Resources Department, Corporate Affairs Commission, National Office, Abuja. Has represented his department in the local union since 2009.
Nigeria	Rita Goyit	Head of Women and Youth Department, NLC. From 1992 to 1998 she was state council chairperson of her union, Radio, Television, Theatre and Arts Workers Union (RATTAWU).
Nigeria	Joseph Anugwolu	Construction worker and union chairman (Unit B), Julius Berger Nigeria construction firm. Vice-chairman of local branch of union from 2000 to 2008, when he was elected chairman.
Nigeria	Simon Anchaver	National President, Agriculture and Allied Employees Union of Nigeria (AAEUN). Worker and union member in agriculture development since 1994. In 2012 elected national president of AAEUN.
Nigeria	Rasaq Ikadebu Lawal	Deputy General Secretary, National Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE). Joined union in 1993 as State Secretary in Osun State. Served in national office 2003–2006 and in Oyo State 2006–2011.
Nigeria	Kpokporo Seikeba Paul	Operations Assistant, Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (PENGASSAN). Joined union staff as a driver in 2000.
Nigeria	Princess Jennifer Spiff	Coordinator, Women's Initiative for Transparency and Social Justice, Rivers State.
Nigeria	Chris Uyt	Acting General Secretary, NLC. Joined union staff as an assistant secretary in 1987.
Nigeria	Babatunde Ayelabola	Head, Education, Planning, Research and Statistics Department, National Secretariat, Medical and Health Workers' Union of Nigeria (MHWUN).
Nigeria	Solomon Adebosin	Assistant Executive Secretary, Food, Beverage and Tobacco Senior Staff Association (FOBTOB). Joined union staff as research officer in 1999.
Rwanda	Kabibi Kacyira Jowe	Legal Officer, Centrale des Syndicats des Travailleurs du Rwanda (CESTRAR).
South Africa	Eunice Dhladhla	Organizer and national office holder, South African Domestic Service and Allied Workers Union (SADSAWU).

Country or region	Interviewee	Affiliation/position at time of interview
South Africa	Phumzili Mashishi	Project Coordinator for gender and educational programs, Health and Other Service Personnel Trade Union of South Africa (HOSPERSA).
South Africa	Howard Mbana	National Sector Organizer, Food and Allied Workers Union (FAWU).
South Africa	Philip Mokena	National Gender Coordinator, FAWU.
South Africa	Themba Mokena	Shop Steward, Libyuile Fruits, FAWU.
South Africa	Duduzile Ngcobo	National Gender and HIV/AIDS Coordinator, National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA). Joined union staff as administrator in 1998.
South Africa	Roseline Mosibudi Nkgapele	Shop Steward, NUMSA and warehouse clerk, AutoZone. Became involved in labor union in 2003.
Swaziland	Selby Mtshali	Organizer, Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA).
Tanzania	Kassim Kapalata	Director of Occupational Health and Safety, Environment and HIV, East African Trade Union Confederation (EATUC).
Tanzania	Khalfan Suleiman	Treasurer, Zanzibar Trade Union Congress (ZATUC).
Uganda	Yazid Baligasima	Program Officer, Education, Training and Research, National Organization of Trade Unions (NOTU).
Zambia	Joseph Chewe	General Secretary, Mineworkers Union of Zambia (MUZ). Worked in copper mine beginning in 1998. Became shop steward and rose steadily in union ranks. Became general secretary in 2012.
Zambia	Joy Beene	General Secretary, Civil Servants and Allied Workers Union of Zambia (CSAWUZ). Worker in Health Services Ministry. Outspoken in union in 2008–2009; became general secretary in 2010.
Zambia	Luke Makinishi	Director, Education Department, Zambia Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), since 2009. Joined ZCTU in 2002 as an accountant.
Zambia	Stephen Mumbi	Director of Organization and Trade Union Development, ZCTU, since 2002. Elected in 1990 as school representative for Zambia Teachers Union. Founding member of Secondary Teachers Union in 1995.
Zimbabwe	Wisborn Malaya	Secretary General, Zimbabwe Chamber of Informal Economy Associations (ZCIEA). Involved since 2000 when Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) began organizing the informal sector.
Zimbabwe	Percy Mcijo	Regional Officer, ZCTU, Bulawayo, Western Region.
Zimbabwe	Japhet Moyo	Secretary General, ZCTU.
Zimbabwe	Raymond Majongwe	Secretary General, Progressive Teachers' Union of Zimbabwe (PUTZ).
Zimbabwe	Godfrey Kanyenze	Director, Labor and Economic Development Research Institute of Zimbabwe (LEDRI).
Zimbabwe	Tenson Muchefa	Regional Officer, Mutare, ZCTU, since 2009. Previously organizer for National Engineering Workers' Union (NEWU) from 1989.
Zimbabwe	Fiona Magaya	Women and Gender Desk Coordinator, ZCTU. Became union member in 1990. Worked in accounts department of Zimbabwe Financial Holdings for 13 years before joining ZCTU as a paralegal officer in 2006.

ANNEX 3

Survey Questionnaire

STATUS AND CONTEXT OF TRADE UNION MOVEMENT: OBSTACLES TO AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ORGANIZING

Template for 1-hour Interview

Read this first

This is the template for the 1-hour survey.

- The purpose of this interview is to give a broad picture of the situation in a particular country (or, for interviews with regional officials, in the region).
- The ideal is to do the interview in person. If this is not possible, by telephone.
- You should take notes. You should also record the conversation, if the interviewee is comfortable with that.
- There is no need to transcribe the interview word-for-word. Use your notes and the recording to enter the essence of the answers given in the file. Be detailed enough to give a good idea of the content and the tone of the interview.
- Questions within sections for conversational replies are not numbered. The most important point is to get the interviewee talking about the topic rather than to get specific questions answered.
- Most questions are intended to be prompts for conversations about broad issues, not to get “boilerplate” answers like “the situation is good” or “the situation is difficult.” These questions are not intended just to be read as written. Put them in your own words so as to facilitate a natural conversation. Add your own follow-up questions to draw out the person being interviewed on the topic.
- Please note that the wording of questions is generic and intended to be adapted as needed. Before each interview you should carefully review the questions and adapt them by editing them in the file you will use to record answers, as you think best for the particular person you are interviewing. You may also need to adjust on the spot depending on how the interview is going.
- The time indications for the sections are approximate! If the conversation is going well, don’t break it off just to move to the next question.

I. About the interviewer (fill this out ahead of time)

1. Name: _____
2. Position/title: _____
3. E-mail address: _____
4. Country the interview is about: _____

Note: For interviews with officials of regional federations, substitute appropriate region within Africa, e.g., “East Africa.”

5. Amount of experience of the interviewer with trade unions in the specific country (or region—see note in question 4) the interview is about (select one):

_____ Number of years living in the country and working with the trade union movement in that country

_____ Number of years working with them, with occasional visits to the country

_____ Limited contact (less than one year or infrequent visits)

_____ E-mail or phone only

_____ No contact at all

Please add any additional comments on your experience:

II. About the interviewee and the interview (fill in as much as possible ahead of time)

1. Name: _____

2. Position/title: _____

3. E-mail address: _____

4. Phone (with country code): _____

5. Address: _____

6. Date and time of interview: _____

7. _____ In-person or _____ telephone

8. Place (city, country) of interview (if telephone, indicate for both interviewer and interviewee):

9. Please add any additional general observations about the interviewee or the interview:

III. Background and experience of interviewee (5 to 10 minutes)

Can you tell me how and when you first become involved in the trade union movement?

What kind of work positions have you held in the past (paid employment, whether for the trade union movement or other employers)?

Can you describe what you do in your current employment?

What are your responsibilities within the trade union movement (official, shop steward, rank-and-file member, etc.)?

IV. Obstacles and opportunities for trade unions coming from the economic situation of the country (5 to 10 minutes)

Please tell me about the general situation of the economy now and how things have been going for workers in the last few years. For example, is the economy growing rapidly, stagnating, or declining? Do people think things are getting better or worse?

What are the major problems that the trade union movement faces because of the current economic situation in (country)?

Are there new opportunities for the trade union movement opening up as a result of changes in the economy in (country)?

V. Government and workers' rights / relationship with unions (5 to 10 minutes)

Please tell me about how the government deals with workers' rights and independent trade unions. Are government policies and government officials generally helpful? Or do they tend to be biased towards employers and hostile to workers?

Is the government in the country actively pursuing the "decent work" agenda? Are they advancing standards for worker safety and health?

Thinking of your union or federation, what are the most important and promising things unions are doing to influence and improve government policies on workers and trade unions?

Thinking of your union or federation, what are the 3 most important things unions are neglecting but should be doing to influence and improve government policies on workers and trade unions?

How effective are union actions to influence government policies on workers and trade unions?

What additional actions do you think they should be taking to influence government policies on workers and trade unions?

Are there regular opportunities for "social dialogue" among trade unions, governments and employers' organizations?

VI. Obstacles and opportunities within the trade union movement (10 to 15 minutes)

We've talked about the union movement's involvement with the economy and the government. Now I want to focus on the trade unions themselves. Focusing primarily on your union or federation, can you give me an idea of how and how well the union is meeting the needs and expectations of members? Be as specific as you can.

For example, what does your union or federation consider to be their core functions? How well are grievances and collective bargaining handled and who is responsible?

What are the internal obstacles to serving current union members better? What internal factors are responsible for weakening trade union work?

What are examples of what unions are doing right in terms of serving their members? What approaches are they taking and why do you think they are working?

VII. Position of women and gender issues in the trade unions (10 to 15 minutes)

Thinking of your union or federation, can you give me your opinion on the role women now play in the workforce and in unions.

Specifically, have women's rights improved in your union or federation in recent years? If so, in what way? If not, what are the obstacles to improvement? Give specific examples if you can.

In particular, what proportion (how many out of total) of top leaders in your union are women? How many in your federation?

Does your union have any policies or programs specifically designated to support gender equality, such as training to advance women into leadership positions, programs to combat violence against women, or bargaining demands that address women's issues explicitly?

Does your union or federation have staff focused on gender issues?

In your opinion, to what extent are these policies making a real difference in empowering women?

VIII. Organizing the unorganized (10 to 15 minutes)

Thinking primarily of your union or federation, how active are they in organizing the unorganized? Actively engaged? Not actively engaged, making some initial efforts? What about the labor movement in the country as a whole?

Within which sector(s) are these organizing efforts being made? Are any organizing efforts targeting the informal sector in particular?

Are there sectors of workers that you feel are being overlooked in terms of organizing efforts? If yes, which ones?

What are the major challenges your union faces in organizing unorganized workers in these sectors?

In what sector(s) has your union been most successful in organizing efforts? Can you give examples of successful campaigns, strategies, or tactics?

IX. Other issues that you consider important for workers' rights and union organization (5 to 10 minutes)

Please comment on any other issues that you think important to include in assessing the status of the trade union movement and obstacles to and opportunities for organizing.

Interviewer comments

[Please use this section to share your observations and analysis of the interview and the interviewee.]

ANNEX 4

Web Resources

GENERAL RESOURCES

African Economic Outlook.

<http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/>

Well-organized source of basic economic data by country. Not as detailed but far better organized than data from the World Bank. Reports are available on the website for each of the countries included in the Solidarity Center survey.

African Regional Organization of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa).

<http://www.ituc-africa.org/>

<http://www.ituc-africa.org/-Livres-.html>

Includes links to affiliates and to publications, including two detailed reports, *Social Protection in Africa and Trade Union Services and Benefits in Africa*.

Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. Trade Unions in Sub-Saharan Africa database.

<http://www.fes-southafrica.org/pages/tu-competence-centre/databases.php>

Includes summary information on regional and national trade union organizations in 20 countries.

Global Union Research Network.

<http://www.gurn.info/en>

A platform for trade unionists and researchers dealing with the challenges of globalization from a labor perspective.

Heintz, James, and Imraan Valodia. *Informality in Africa: A Review*. WIEGO Working Paper 3. Cambridge, MA: WIEGO, 2008.

http://wiego.org/sites/wiego.org/files/publications/files/Heintz_WIEGO_WP3.pdf

International Labor Organization legal databases.

NATLEX: http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex_browse.home

NORMLEX: <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:1:0>

International Labor Organization. *Success Africa III: Realising a New Era of Social Justice through Decent Work: Success Stories from Africa*. Geneva: ILO, 2011.

http://www.ilo.org/addisababa/WCMS_166733/lang--en/index.htm

Highlights small-scale projects from around the continent rather than overall advance toward "decent work."

International Trade Union Confederation. Annual Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights.

<http://survey.ituc-csi.org/>

Includes summaries by year for individual countries.

Maree, Johann. *The Role of Trade Unions in Sub-Saharan Africa in Defending and Promoting Democracy*. Paper prepared for 16th ILERA World Congress, 2012.

<http://ilera2012.wharton.upenn.edu/RefereedPapers/MareeJohann%20ILERA.pdf>

Schurman, Susan J., and Adrienne E. Eaton. *Trade Union Organizing in the Informal Economy: A Review of the Literature on Organizing in Africa, Asia, Latin America, North America and Western, Central and Eastern Europe*. Report to the Solidarity Center, 2012.

http://www.solidaritycenter.org/Files/infecon_rutgers_final.pdf

Include a section (pages 12–24) on "The Informal Economy in Africa."

Schurman, Susan J., and Adrienne E. Eaton. *Trade Unions Organizing Workers 'Informalized From Above': Case Studies from Cambodia, Colombia, South Africa, and Tunisia*. Report to the Solidarity Center, 2013.

<http://smlr.rutgers.edu/research-centers/research-partnership-with-solidarity-center>

United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.

<http://www.uneca.org/publications/serie/Economic-Report-on-Africa>

Annual reports include both data and analysis of economic strategies.

United States Department of State. *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012*.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper>

Each country report contains a section (section 7) on worker rights. One can also build a composite report on the website by selecting section 7 and checking the number of countries required. A very useful source of detailed information.

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<http://wiego.org/publications/wiego-research-project-informal-workers%E2%80%99-organizing>

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<http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Knowledge/AEC%202012%20-%20Towards%20Inclusive%20African%20Labour%20Markets-%20Empirical%20Analysis%20of%20Gender%20Equality%20in%20Employment%20and%20its%20Implications%20for%20Policy.pdf>

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http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/global-employment-trends/WCMS_195447/lang--nl/index.htm

International Labor Office. *The Role of Trade Unions in Promoting Gender Equality: Report of the ILO-ICFTU Survey*. Geneva: ILO, 2002.
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International Trade Union Confederation, Decent Work Decent Life for Women Campaign.
<http://www.ituc-csi.org/+decent-work-decent-life-for-women-.html>

EAST AFRICA

East African Community.
<http://www.eac.int/>

East African Trade Union Confederation.
<http://www.eatuc.info/>

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Ghana Trades Union Congress.
<http://www.ghanatuc.org/>

Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research, University of Ghana.
<http://isser.edu.gh/>

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ANNEX 5

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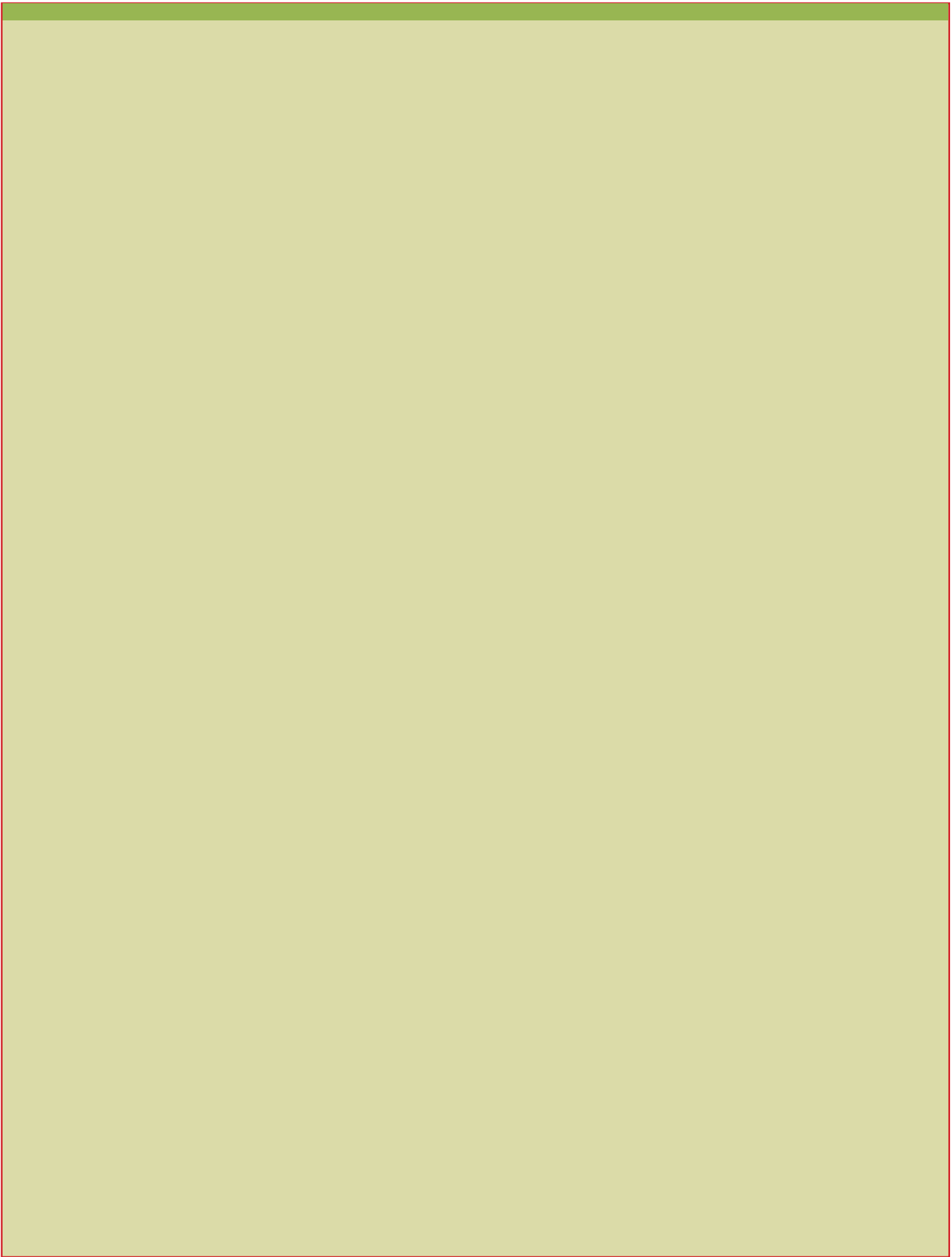
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The Solidarity Center's mission

is to help build a global labor movement by strengthening the economic and political power of workers around the world through effective, independent and democratic unions.

Solidarity Center

888 16th Street NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20006

Phone: 202-974-8383 • Fax: 202-974-8384

E-mail: information@solidaritycenter.org

Website: www.solidaritycenter.org