

APPLICATION FORM

Country/project name: ICEM Contract & Agency Labour Project for Sub-Saharan Africa

Implementing organisation: ICEM

Project period (years): 3
Application period: 2009-2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background and previous experiences:

The overall ICEM Contract and Agency Labour project (CAL) concentrates on raising awareness and strategy exchange between affiliates. This strategy has served the ICEM's affiliates well. Not only do almost all of the ICEM affiliated organisations now recognise the issue as key priority, they have also started to address it.

As a region, Sub-Saharan Africa is particularly confronted with problems relating to the contract and agency labour issue. Stories where workers suffer from contract and agency labour, or other forms of precarious employment, are, regrettably, too easy to find, for example those linked to the recent explosion of Chinese investment in the region, which seems to assure in certain countries that CAL becomes even more wide-spread.

During ICEM-organised conferences on the subject, African trade unionists spoke about how widespread this phenomenon is in the Sub-Saharan region - and how urgent the need to deal with the problem.

Participation analysis

During the previous two years of the global CAL project, Sub-Saharan Africa has been lacking both support and coordination on this issue. The CAL campaign has not been developed in Africa as it has in Asia and Latin America, where regional coordination was arranged through the global project.

This new project, which should be seen as an essential and integrated, yet administratively separate, element of the global CAL campaign that the ICEM is running, aims to provide more technical support to those Sub-Saharan African unions that are, or will become, active in the campaign.

The increasing use of contract and agency labour is, of course, not limited to only the ICEM sectors. At a global level, cooperation is ongoing between the different Global Union Federations on this issue. At the regional and local level as well, earlier contacts have been showing that there is a willingness to cooperate amongst GUFs at this level.

Problem analysis

At an ICEM workshop in Johannesburg in 2007, participating unions from the region were asked to identify key securities that are denied to contract and agency workers. These included job insecurity and unemployment risks; lack of protection against accidents and illnesses; difficulties with limits to working time; little or no opportunities to retain or build skills; income insecurity; and representation insecurity as trade union are often lacking for CAL workers.

Participants were also asked to identify particular problems at company level, at legal level, as well as at union level. A particular problem at governmental level that was often quoted is the tendency of regional authorities to primarily promote flexible labour markets, repeatedly through deregulation, including of labour laws. Outsourcing is encouraged as such. Companies in Africa were said to contract out, or use agency labour, to minimise not only costs - and maximising profit for shareholders - but also operational risks.

Trade unions were said to be getting “into the process of organising CAL workers”, but not at a high enough level. Many ICEM affiliates in the region see a reduction in their membership as a result of CAL, as there often is an organisational capacity problem to organise CAL workers. In many cases, union structures are not (yet) adapted to deal with CAL workers.

Another problem for unions is the job insecurity of CAL workers, making them at times less likely to join a union. Yet another problem quoted at the Johannesburg meeting was the signing of individual contracts, as opposed to collective bargaining. One more often highlighted problem is the lack of health and safety provisions for CAL workers.

Among the specific problems that this project would intend to address are:

- Lack of understanding about successful union strategies and best practices in addressing the issues surrounding contract & agency labour in Sub-Saharan Africa
- Lack of coherent regional coordination and response to the problem
- Lack of development of organised initiatives towards governmental policies
- Lack of high level and dedicated regional research, supporting union negotiators and leadership in their campaigns
- High demand for information, exchange and training by ICEM affiliates, requiring much higher degrees of coordination and expertise

Target Groups:

- Leadership/organisers/negotiators in all ICEM affiliates throughout the region
- The project will organise specific activities in a selected number of countries, with selected affiliates, all of which in “good standing” with the ICEM. The target countries are : Guinea, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and South Africa

The choice of countries is the result of a number of discussions at different regional Sub-Saharan CAL and other ICEM statutory meetings, combined with an internal ICEM assessment on the needs and requirements of regional affiliates.

The selected target countries have all been identified as nations where the issue of contract and agency labour is widespread, but also where, at the same time, there are relatively strong unions, meaning that there is room for action and a reasonable likelihood of progress.

Development objective

The overall objective is to implement practical and strategic union responses to contract and agency labour problems in ICEM sectors in Sub-Saharan Africa, also in cooperation with other GUFs present in this region.

Project Objectives

- Maintaining and developing information and strategy exchanges between ICEM affiliates on a regional level, as well as with other GUFs, on a national and/or regional level
- Through close coordination with the ICEM global campaign on contract and agency labour, maintain and develop information and strategy exchanges between the global and the Sub-Saharan African level

- Developing and coordinating a team of key representatives from Sub-Saharan African ICEM affiliates to promote union strategies, campaigns and international support for union initiatives, in response to contract and agency labour
- Encouraging the development and coordination of a team at regional level composed of trade unionists of different GUFs
- Providing advice and information for affiliates dealing with CAL
- Assisting in specific research exercises, when necessary, carried out by academic and support organisations under the coordination of the international CAL project consultant.
- Providing technical support, at national and regional level, for those negotiators that are carrying out direct company negotiations on the issue of contract and agency labour

Expected results

- Information is developed and exchanged between ICEM affiliates on a regional level, as well as with other GUFs, on a national and/or regional level, and with the partners of the ICEM global campaign on contract and agency labour
- Skilled union negotiators able to take the issue of contract and agency labour into the collective bargaining process
- Coordinated solidarity action in support of the campaign and activities, including in support for globally organised activities
- Maintain the promotion and awareness raising amongst ICEM's affiliates in all countries of the region on union strategies, organising, negotiating and campaigns in response to contract and agency labour
- Specifically support organising efforts towards contract and agency labour workers
- Development of dedicated high level research/information to support both the campaign and union negotiators
- Connecting to the global strategies and initiatives on dealing with contract and agency labour at the level of the ICEM and sister Global Unions

Indicators

- Dissemination of ICEM and affiliates' research and publications on contract & agency labour amongst affiliates, and other Global Unions' affiliates in the region
- Direct solidarity support between and towards ICEM affiliates carrying out campaigns and national actions in relation to problems with contract and agency work at regional and international level
- Engagement by ICEM affiliated unions in the region with MNCs on the issue of CAL
- Affiliates in the region discuss CAL with governments in regard to legal action/change of laws
- Collective Labour Agreements including regulations on Contract and Agency Work
- ICEM affiliates organise activities on CAL, including training activities

Activities

1. Research and information
2. Publications/materials
3. Regional Meeting for Sub-Saharan Africa
4. Negotiators Training workshops x 8 per year

5. Continuous assistance, coordination, awareness raising and solidarity support for Sub-Saharan ICEM affiliates

Institutional Framework

The coordinator for the project in Sub-Saharan Africa will be operating as a regional component of the ICEM global contract and agency labour campaign.

This Sub-Saharan project proposal foresees for a full time coordinator for Sub-Saharan Africa. The coordinator will ensure that the global ICEM CAL campaign has a strong regional component in Sub-Saharan Africa, similar as is already the case in Asia and Latin America where the campaign is the most advanced. The tasks of this coordinator include:

- Ensure good regional exchange of information
- Carry out negotiators training in the region
- Make all programme and logistical arrangements for project activities in the region
- Regularly provide case studies and database updates to the ICEM secretariat
- Develop training and research materials jointly with ICEM staff to support these project activities
- Organise and coordinate a regional network of dedicated trade unionists within key affiliates, and liaise between this regional team and the global team
- Encourage cooperation between the GUFs at regional and national level

Project management Team

The project management team will be composed of the following people:

- The African CAL Coordinator
- The consultant for the global ICEM CAL project
- ICEM Projects Officer