

# Trade Union Modernization and Organising in Eastern Europe, Central Asia & Transcaucasus

Project period: March 2009 – December 2011

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Background and Strategy

In 2005-2007, a project on strategic management and modernization of trade unions was implemented in Russia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. The project helped to improve the efficiency of sectoral trade unions' work by streamlining union structures, increasing the amount of funds assigned to central committees, improving management skills and train the tutors capable of running seminars using active learning methods. The project was a unique initiative undertaken jointly by the affiliates of 5 GUFs – ICEM, IUF, UNI, BWI, ITF - who worked together to solve their common problems. ICEM played the role of formal contractor with the FNV and was managing coordination between the GUFs headquarters, while IUF organized coordination at the regional level. UNI has contributed with the office desk for the coordinator.

Modernization of unions, aimed to make operating organizations more flexible and effective, has been performed for three years. Especially the year 2007 has seen many efforts in this direction. Many unions, for example the agro industrial workers' unions of Russia and Ukraine, the All-Ukrainian Commerce Workers Union, the Fishing Industry Workers Union of Ukraine, NPGU, Rosugleprof, the Oil and Gas workers Union of Azerbaijan, as well as others, have changed their structures and increased the proportion of funds assigned to their governing bodies. Though this work has just started, some first results are there. In addition, even in those unions where this work was successful, there is a need to build on the present achievements and go on with this work.

At present, the need for the project remains no less (or, probably, even more) acute than 3 years ago. All five GUFs that have been participating and cooperating in the project for 3 years are unanimous about this. Despite their cultural and industrial differences, all of them have been moving in the same direction and were able to achieve better results by working together. Practice has demonstrated that this kind of close cooperation and interaction permits absolutely different organizations to be strengthened and developed simultaneously. This positive experience can become the cornerstone to success for the following stage of the project. Moreover, the International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF) has shown its interest to join the project at its new stage. If approved, the new stage of the project will bring all together in a synchronized effort to continuously improve sectoral unions' capacity to challenge global capital in the region.

At the Evaluation Conference in Kyev, held in January 2008, regional representatives of the 6 abovementioned GUFs came to the conclusion that the first stage achieved its objectives by creating a new set of networks of union activists trained on various issues. The first stage also set up a unique working mechanism, where all 5 GUFs contributed with their knowledge and expertise to the benefit of the entire GUFs membership, achieving positive structural, financial and organization changes.

This conference, and follow-up GUFs' meetings, suggested that a new application has to be submitted for the consideration of FNV Mondiaal. Based on identified areas of common interest, the following project objectives were suggested at these meetings:

## **Development Objective 1: Improved union capacity to organize members and confront multinational companies**

### **Project objectives:**

1. Support for proactive organizing initiatives, by providing professional training for committed union organizers and organizing directors of the GUF affiliates that requested such cadre training
2. Development of TNC coordination in different forms by providing analysis, expertise and training on dealing with TNCs
3. Development of expertise in representing union members in the courts by (re)training union labour law experts

## **Development Objective 2: Improved union management, organizational and democratic representation structures**

### **Project objectives:**

4. Further support for union reform processes, by providing leadership trainings on union management, organizational development and change
5. Further support for trade union training initiatives, the development of participatory training and of active learning methods as a tool to re-motivate members and increase internal union democracy by membership engagement in decision making processes
6. Support of women workers' promotion in the union leadership by providing expertise and training on organizational gender audits

## **Expected Results**

- New members are organised in selected target companies, aiming at 1200 new members
- New plants are organised in the selected target companies, aiming at 12 new plants
- Unions and unionists are getting involved in global union TNC networks and international union activities
- Regional trade unionists have a better knowledge about TNCs in general, as well as about research techniques
- Trade unionists are better equipped to organise and bargain in TNCs
- New regional TNC workers networks are set up, one per participating GUF
- National unions have TNC coordinators, and budget for TNC campaigning
- In-company bargainers and organizers are nominated
- Trade union advocates achieved results in court hearings
- The internal union reform and modernization process continues and develops in ways that support the developments listed above within a large number of unions in the region
- Gender equality audit conducted to lead to changes so as to ensure better women representation in the unions
- Courses and manuals on organizing and on legal support for organizing campaigns, as well as an ABC of trade union action are developed and published.

## **Activities**

Under the project the following lines of activities will take place during its 3 year duration:

1. Preparation
2. Planning conference
3. Methodological meetings
4. Courses development
5. Courses implementation
6. Organising activities
7. Publications
8. Internal Evaluation Seminars
9. External Evaluation
10. Evaluation Forum