

ITF ORGANISING MANUAL

# INTRODUCTION

**This handbook serves as both an overview and an introduction to the ITF Organising Manual. The ITF Organising Manual includes (1) this handbook and (2) more-detailed training modules in PowerPoint. There is one PowerPoint training module for each chapter in this handbook. The PowerPoint modules are more extensive than the handbook, so if you have a particular interest in a topic, you can go to the corresponding PowerPoint module for additional content and details.**

**These materials are extensive and contain lessons from many different parts of the world. You will need to adjust them, often substantially, to fit any one situation. Some parts of the materials will be more useful than others. The materials are meant to be drawn from, not used in their entirety, so you will need to adjust them each**

**and every time you use them.**

**Whether you are not sure if organising is for you or you have been organising for many years, there is much to learn from other countries and contexts. You will find these materials useful if you want to engage workers in resolving a work-place problem, prepare for difficult negotiations, strengthen the union presence in works councils, or plan for a strike. Some workers may face physical violence and threats, while others may face a pervasive sense of apathy supported by the wider culture and media. These organising materials are meant to be used any time you want to increase the involvement of workers, whether you are working to win union recognition for the very first time or to increase member participation in a unionised workplace.**

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### Learning from each other

*In organising, the first thing we do is to share information with our LAN cabin crew, to build deep confidence with each other and to build the real and deep solidarity of workers acting collectively. Organising is fundamentally about building the base of the union and the democratic structures. Organising helps make our unions more democratic.*

**Arlete Gay**

*ITF affiliate, Chile*

### WHAT IS ORGANISING?

Organising is increasing the participation of workers in our unions, with a goal of increasing union power within our workplaces and industries.

One of the most common weaknesses identified by unions worldwide is the insufficient involvement and participation of workers.

The vast majority of transport workers in the world are not members of unions.

If we are to take advantage of the strategic opportunities in the global transport industry, we need to organise.

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*\* How do you define “organising” in your union?*

*\* Is it similar or different from this global ITF definition?*

*\* Why and how is your definition similar or different?*

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### WHAT IS A UNION?

A union is an organisation of workers acting collectively to improve working and social conditions for all workers.

The majority of transport workers in the world are informal, unprotected workers, often without a clearly identified company or government entity as their employer.

Especially in this globalised economy, transport worker organisations can take many forms and may vary from a traditional trade union collective bargaining model. The fundamental contradiction between labour and capital remains.

Our organising strategies and methodologies must reflect the different realities that workers are facing – the real risks and dangers – as we work together collectively to improve conditions.

### **HOW IS ORGANISING DIFFERENT FROM CAMPAIGNING, RECRUITING, NETWORKING, TARGETING, RESEARCH AND MOBILISING?**

Our organising work cannot be separated from campaigning, recruiting, networking, targeting, research and mobilising, which are all part of the ITF organising globally

#### **Learning from each other**

*In the beginning, in the Arab world, we had to explain the word “organising” to our unions. In Arabic, “organising” can mean drawing out organisational structures, like an organisational chart or diagram. Now we have a common understanding of the word.*

**Bilal Malkawi**

*ITF secretariat*

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programme. Organising is the specific part of the ITF organising globally programme that focuses on increasing workers' participation in unions.

**Campaigning** helps us put pressure on employers and governments. Good campaigns which force employers to improve conditions are excellent opportunities to increase workers' participation.

Organising and campaigning are closely linked but different. Campaigning focuses more on what we are doing to put pressure on the employer. Organising focuses more on what we are doing to involve workers in the campaign or work of the union.

Campaigning work is difficult to separate from organising work. We use campaigning to influence decision makers as part of our organising. However, if in campaigning we pressure the employer without sufficient involvement of workers, we will not have built the union. Even if we win substantial benefits for workers as part of a campaign, we may have

weakened the union rather than strengthened it if the workers were not involved.

The central focus of the ITF Strategic Campaign Manual is how to pressure the employer or decision maker. The ITF Organising Manual focuses on how to involve workers. Both manuals complement each other.

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- \* We need to organise to form union structures and win union recognition. We also need to organise where we already have union structures and union recognition, and we want more workers more involved.*
  - \* Whom is your union interested in organising?*
  - \* What do you hope to accomplish?*
  - \* What workers does your union want to organise to get more involved in the union? Why?*
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**Research** helps us to identify clearly the employer or major decision makers and to learn their – and the industry's – strengths, weaknesses and points of vulnerability. Sometimes the

employer will not be the major decision maker (for example, with sub-contracted workers or informal workers).

**Targeting** is a process that unions use to decide where and when to organise. Targeting will always depend on the interest and ability of workers to organise. Targeting will also involve a deep understanding of the employer and the industry, including their position within global or regional transport hubs and supply chains.

**Networking** helps us connect union structures and leaders globally and regionally within employer and industry structures. We need workers involved in our networks. A strong network is able to co-ordinate actions and solidarity on the ground as well as share information and different experiences.

### **Learning from each other**

*To understand organising in France, we often use the phrase “organiser dans le syndicat” or “to organise in the union”. We will sometimes say “syndiquez-vous” when we are talking about joining the union as a member and “organisez-vous” to indicate participation and involvement.*

**Liliane Debeche**

*ITF affiliate, France*

### **Learning from each other**

*The word for organising in Hindi is “sangathit”. It is the same word in Nepal. It means organisation-building and the recruitment of new workers into the union structures.*

**Ajay Ray**

*ITF affiliate, Nepal*

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- \* ***How do you define “union”?***
  - \* ***Is it similar or different to this global ITF definition?***
  - \* ***Why and how is your definition similar or different?***

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**Recruiting** helps us sign up workers as members of our unions, which increases the size of our unions and our income. But if we just sign workers up and they don't participate, we have not done enough. Our ability to win improvements for these workers is limited, and they may become disillusioned. And if we only recruit certain age groups, certain races or ethnicities, or a certain gender, we may create divisions and weaken the union rather than strengthening it.

By defining organising as an important part of our union work, we do not want to imply that we have to organise before we begin campaigning, creating networks or doing research. Quite the contrary; unions will usually want to research the company and industry before they organise more workers. Networks are frequently formed in order to support the organising of non-union workers. Campaigns are sometimes created to win the protections that workers need to be able to organise in the future.

**No matter how strong we are as unions, we can always increase the depth of involvement of workers.** Organising is an essential part of our union work. We need organising skills and strategies.

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*\* Sometimes unions have enough power to win improvements in conditions without involving workers.*

*\* We may win conditions, but will we have organised a union? What is the cost in terms of the future strength of the union?*

*\* As leaders, are there ways we can include more workers more often in our successes?*

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**Organising takes skills, strategy, planning and perseverance. That's why we have an organising curriculum.**

Organising is possible. As union leaders and activists, we all decided at some point to get more involved in our unions.

Organising is different in every union, and even within the same union, different groups of workers

organise differently.

What can we learn from each other? What can we teach each other?

The ITF Organising Manual includes lessons and stories collected from transport unions around the world.

The manual covers organising skills such as listening, overcoming fear and apathy, systematic person-to-person communications, list-building, predicting the employer's actions, training and education, group planning and group decision making.

Organising strategy is also a key part of the manual, such as when to “go public” with your demands, how to stay “underground” while you build the base and how to use the full international and regional force of the ITF with all the strategic strength and solidarity of transport workers when it is time.

The ITF Organising Manual is designed to be used as part of a planning process. It gives us an opportunity to bring together top

### **Learning from each other**

*In South Africa, we use the word “organising”. Organising takes place in the context of explicit class politics and is expressed through the union’s policies and mandates. Organising involves targeting (based on extensive knowledge of the employer and linked to collective bargaining), electing shop stewards, negotiating recognition, dealing with individual cases, collective bargaining, consultation on non-bargaining issues and industrial action. For us, organising is supported by worker and shop steward education, including political economy and gender education.*

**Jane Barrett**

*ITF affiliate, South Africa*



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### **Learning from each other**

*To meet the challenge of organising global logistics corporations, ITF affiliates are co-ordinating globally and investing in strategic campaigns.*

*From this experience, we have learnt that traditional recruitment approaches such as form filling don't organise workers, especially "flexible transport workers", who do not work in one company in one location. Only union activists communicating one-to-one with workers in their homes, workplaces and communities will build unions and embed the union in workers' hearts and minds.*

*Using the advantageous position that ITF unions hold in the global logistics chain, our transportation and warehousing union members can win workplace gains and organise new unions.*

**Alison McGarry**  
*ITF Secretariat*

union leaders, union members and workers who want to organise – whoever is able to participate and assist – to make an organising plan that suits the current situation.

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- \* How and why did you get involved in your union?*
  - \* Can you identify a specific time or event when you knew that you wanted to be more involved?*
  - \* How were you different from others who did not get involved?*
  - \* What helps you stay involved, even when it is not easy?*
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### **WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE ITF IN ORGANISING?**

The ITF can provide assistance with research, education, multinational and regional networks, and mentoring for organising campaigns, particularly in key sectors of the transport industry.

The ITF cannot plan or implement affiliate organising. Organising skills and strategy must be applied in each affiliate union's own context and culture by your own union leadership structures.

When it is time, the ITF will be available to provide regional and global campaign support in the public fight to win the organising demands of workers.

*Written and developed by Teresa Conrow and the ITF education department.*

*The ITF education department would like to thank all of the ITF affiliates and members of the ITF secretariat who helped to develop these materials.*



The attached PowerPoint module on “Organising Strategy” contains additional information and questions about the definitions of organising and why we want to organise. You will also find more discussion of common barriers to organising.

### **Learning from each other**

*In francophone West Africa, the word “organising” includes three levels of work:*

- 1) Recruiting*
- 2) Mobilising, training and motivating workers*
- 3) Seeking co-operation and alliances with other unions and community organisations.*

*The word “organising” works well for us.*

*In anglophone countries in West Africa, we would describe organising as increasing membership and worker participation in unions. If we don’t use the word “participation”, people think we are only talking about recruiting members and many of them have automatic membership.*

*We need to explain and describe what we mean by “organising” in detail. It is very important that all regions think carefully about how they describe organising, redefine words and add words so that we can best educate ourselves, continually improve our organising skills, and learn from each other.*

**Nazi Kabore**

*ITF Secretariat*