

ITF ORGANISING MANUAL

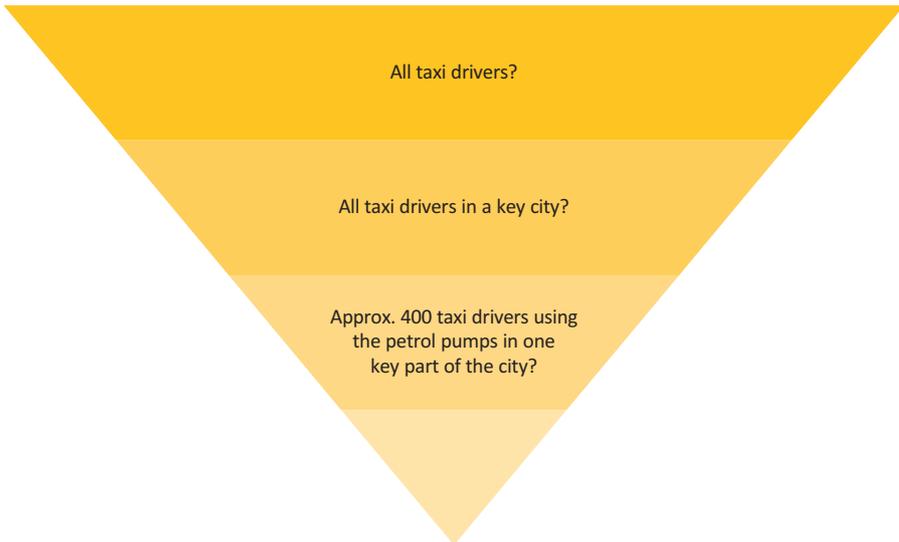
UNION STRUCTURES AND RESOURCES

UNION STRUCTURES AND RESOURCES

As trade unionists, we understand that everything we have achieved can be taken away if we don't continue to organise and involve more workers in our unions. In order to build power in the industry or supply chain, it is important that we (1) increase the involvement of our current union members and (2) invest resources in organising key non-union workplaces.

Deciding where we want to organise can be a very simple task if we are organising a group of workers who are familiar to us and with whom we have ongoing contact. Perhaps our goal is to increase the participation of workers who are already in our union or to prepare for a strike. Maybe we want to organise a group of sub-contracted or informal workers within our industry who work near

ORGANISING TAXI DRIVERS...



our current active union members.

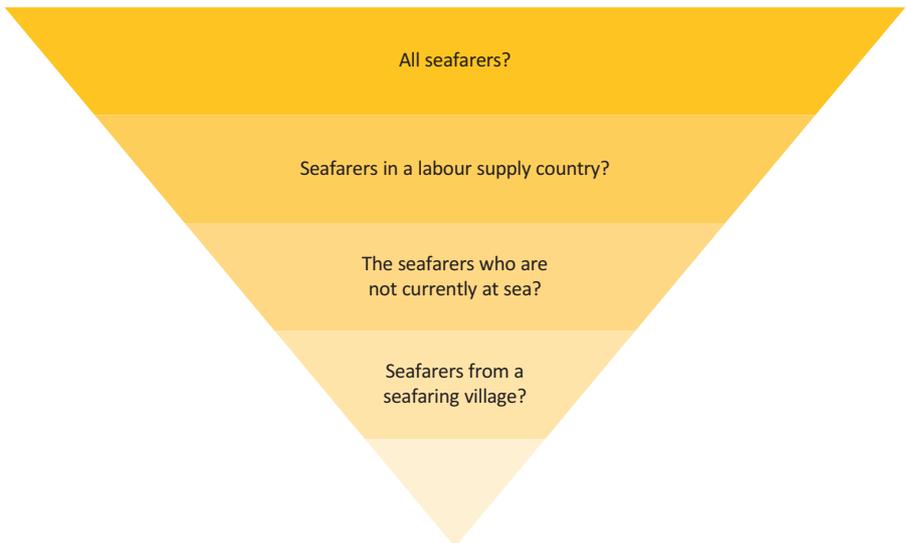
Focusing on a small group of workers is less resource-intensive.

We can always broaden our organising goals once we have shown some success, built some momentum and can allocate more resources.

Focusing on a group of workers as large as your resources allow you to organise will help build power and increase our ability to have an impact on the employer.

We must be able to make contact with the workers we want to organise. If we cannot make contact with them, we cannot organise them. You might want to go to the non-union workplaces to see where workers gather, whether you can follow workers until you can get a moment to talk to them, obtain lists of workers, visit workers at home or at neutral meeting places like cafés, or organise social

ORGANISING SEAFARERS...



UNION STRUCTURES AND RESOURCES

or industry events that non-union workers might attend. If there are job openings, you might want to have unemployed union members apply and develop contacts from inside the workplace. Current union members can help contact non-union or uninvolved workers.

- * What workers are you interested in organising?*
- * What do you know about their*

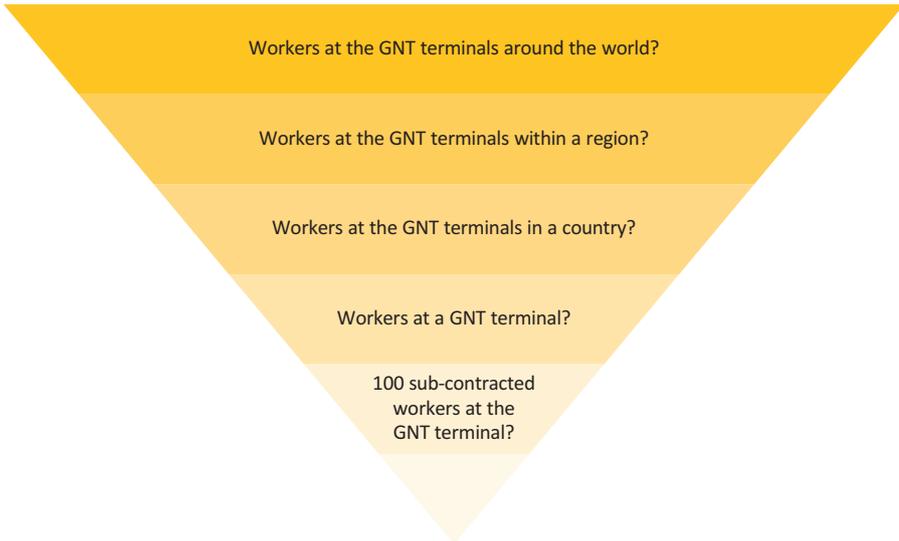
location, numbers, current conditions and level of interest in the union?

- * Do you know who the employer or key decision maker is?*

Before significant resources are allocated to organising, we should have a minimum of:

- * Two or more worker leaders, from the employer or the industry, who are committed to organising*

ORGANISING GNT TERMINALS...



- * A union structure that is committed to supporting these worker leaders and to giving the new members a voice in the union*
- * A good plan of how we will be able to contact workers*
- * Sufficient resources to support the organising*

We need to reach out to the members of the union to assist us.

Think about what might encourage union members to get more

involved in organising. It may be important to provide information about how the uninvolved members or non-union workers threaten wages and conditions. Look for opportunities for active union members to be in direct contact with less-active workers.

ORGANISING FOR A NATIONAL STRIKE...



Learning from each other

As a flight attendants' union in the United States, we have been on both sides of the outsourcing of jobs. We were recently contacted by flight attendants working in the United States for a foreign carrier. We do not have a negotiations relationship with this airline.

Our union is happy to organise the workers, but we would like to offer to work with the union from the carrier's home country to represent them. We are thinking that workers should be represented by the union which has the primary negotiations with the company. Internationally, we need to figure out how to co-operate about this.

Patricia Friend

ITF affiliate, USA

Learning from each other

SATAWU [South African Transport and Allied Workers' Union] organised thousands of casual staff as part of their bottom-up negotiations process.

General meetings are held once a month at the workplace. All members attend and shop stewards are elected to four-year terms. Workers set the policy and campaign priorities. Together, they decide the negotiations mandate, the fallback position for negotiations, the point at which they will strike.

SATAWU is driven by mandate. All elected leaders have a recall process. If stewards do not follow the workers' mandate, they can be recalled with a majority vote at the monthly general meeting.

During the 2009 negotiations for Metro Rail, casual staff who collect the entrance tickets convinced their co-workers that they were

serious about organising.

In negotiations, Metro Rail management agreed to an 8 per cent wage increase and to make all casual staff permanent. Certain provinces were not in agreement on the wages and wanted their provincial mandate of 10 per cent to stand, but the majority mandate from all of the provinces was 8 per cent plus permanent status (with all the benefits attached) for the thousands of casual staff who had been on fixed-term contracts for so many years. After much intense debate, the contract was settled with the majority mandate.

If SATAWU had hired staff to organise the casual staff, it might not have yielded the same results. Additional staff is not always the best way for unions to organise.

Patricia Peterson
ITF affiliate, South Africa

UNION STRUCTURES AND RESOURCES

- * Are union leaders, members and staff informed about and involved in our organising plans?*
 - * What are the decision-making structures that give us the mandate to organise?*
 - * Is it clear what resources are available to us for organising?*
-

Union staff who are assigned to organising play an important role in the organising process. Staff can help us “jump-start” worker involvement. For many organising campaigns, having at least one staff person to co-ordinate the work is important. One organiser or a small number of volunteers cannot handle the demands of a large group of workers.

When there is an insufficient number of people working on a campaign, we tend to take shortcuts, such as relying on written materials to communicate with workers. We either have to allocate a sufficient number of personnel to organising large groups of workers or stick to organising small groups of workers.

Sometimes union constitutions or union decision-making structures need to be changed to allow us to organise new workers. There may need to be a new union or organisation formed for the new workers.

- * Is the union prepared to welcome an increase in involved members and leaders?*
 - * What union members, activists and leaders are willing to help with organising?*
 - * Are there non-union workers who are ready to organise?*
 - * Are there community organisations or other unions that could assist us?*
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Once we know where we want to organise, we need to have frank discussions to determine what resources will be available to help us and how long we can maintain these resources.



The accompanying PowerPoint module on “Union Structures and Resources” contains additional information to help you decide where you want to organise. A discussion about gathering wider community support for organising is included.

There is an activity that will help you determine what resources your union currently has available for organising and what additional resources are needed.