

**The 8<sup>th</sup> ITF Asia/Pacific Regional Conference**  
**Organising to Build Strong Transport Unions in the Asia/Pacific Region**  
**14-17 May 2013, Hong Kong**

**Agenda item 14: Education Report:**

Education has been an integral part of the activities in the region. Right since the inception of the region, great stress has been laid on education and almost all the unions at least from the developing countries have been a part of it at some time or the other. Education has played a major role in organizing the workers and preparing them to participate in union activities in the national and international levels. The benefits of the education activities conducted over the years is reflected in the current roles being played by the unions in times of globalization and the ongoing economic crisis. The Regional Strategy for Education is :

- Build critical awareness of industrial and political issues, and importance of internationalism
- Develop capacities and skills for responding to industrial challenges, including organising, networking and solidarity
- Promote active participation of membership in unions at local, national and regional levels, specifically for women and youth
- Strengthen leadership engagement on international issues
- Build network of educators to support union participation in industrial activities and campaigns of the ITF.

Asia/Pacific regional initiatives include education projects and activities both externally and internally funded. These programmes are used to implement the regional education strategy and help the unions to sustain the education work as a priority. Some of the large affiliates also have their own internal education teams to take forward the education to the grassroots. Organizing the unorganized transport workers has been identified by the ITF affiliates as the optimal way to build unions. In order to support the affiliates in their organizing efforts, the ITF has now come out with an Organising Manual which includes a handbook and training modules in power point format. The manual has been successfully tried and positive results obtained in the region.

Amongst the externally funded projects, the major ones are:

a) **LO-TCO Trade Union Education Project.**

This project has mainly been responsible for education amongst transport workers in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka. For some time LO-TCO also supported activities in East Timor. Education activities have focused on strengthening the unions by building capacity and skills of the leaders and activists within the Railways, Civil Aviation, Road Transport, Port & Docks and Inland Navigation sections.

- Based on the developments in the railway industry, education projects have focused on restructuring and privatisation processes, which continue to dramatically impact workers and unions. The aim is to bring unions together in order to share experiences and develop strategies, including developing concrete alternatives to government plans.

- Training of Trainers and leadership development Programmes conducted for the affiliated unions in Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal.
  - The Road transport industry is facing increasing informalisation particularly in developing countries. Education is focused on strengthening union capacity to organise road transport workers both in the formal and informal arenas. Unions from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and India also organised education programmes for their members under the project.
  - In **Nepal** in the road transport sector, ITF unions (NETWON & ITWAN) have continued to effectively use the education programmes under the ITF-LO/TCO supported education Project to organise passenger and cargo road transport workers and urban transport workers like taxi, municipal corporation drivers, tempo and rickshaw drivers. Through regular education activities, NETWON managed to organise a unit of aviation employees of Air Traffic Services, an influential group that has been working to bring other ground staff and airport staff under the umbrella of the Union.
  - Industrial changes in the civil aviation sector means that unions need to work together in order to analyse and respond to deregulation, which could result in lower labour and safety standards. Education programmes assist aviation unions to analyse the changes and develop counter responses
  - In **Sri Lanka**, education activities conducted for the civil aviation workers helped the union during their collective bargaining negotiation process
  - In **Timor-Leste** LO/TCO funded an organising and education programme from 2005 designed to promote financial sustainability for ITF affiliate Sindikato Maritima, Energia no Transporte Timor-Leste. The most recent 3-year phase of the programme concluded in 2012 with the goal not having been 100% achieved. Norwegian ITF affiliate Industri Energi is now funding the project and organiser and delegate training has intensified and a sustainability plan formulated in order to achieve the goal by year's end.
  - In **Bangladesh**, BNSF our union in the private sector inland navigation industry utilised the education activities under the ITF-LO/TCO assisted project to continue to build their federation. They were more active with the programmes and a successful strike action helped secure long pending benefits to the workers in this sector. Meanwhile a new Committee of office bearers of the BIWTC Workers Union has some office bearers who have developed through the education programmes during previous years, and this is a good sign.
  - **Kiribati** – Kiribati Islands Overseas Seafarers' Union hosted a climate change education activity in Tarawa in August 2012 funded by LO/TCO and ITF, which raised awareness of the seriousness of the issue for these vulnerable low-lying islands and heightened the union's profile and political influence through connecting with other interested NGOs and village activists. Fijian and Tuvaluan affiliates were also represented.
- b) **SASK-Thailand Organising the Unorganised transport workers** :
- After 8 years of ITF-SASK-Thai education programmes which contributed to enhanced capacities of leaders, creation of unions with informed grass roots, trained cadre of activists

and proactive interventions in the anti-privatisation and restructuring campaigns led by State Enterprises Unions the project was phased out. After another round of planning a new project was on Organising the Unorganised transport workers in Thailand was started. Supported by the Finnish Trade Union Solidarity Support Organisation, SASK, this project is focusing on organising the private transport workers in Thailand in light of the different laws for workers in the State Enterprises and private workers. Since restructuring and outsourcing in the established state sector transport is happening in a big way in Thailand, the new project is focusing on organising the private transport companies and those doing outsourced activities and employing casual, contract workers primarily qualifying as precarious employment. Workers from the private sector and the state enterprises have been identified and are being trained to become organisers in order to reach out to their co-workers and others prompting them to be part of the unions. The new project which took off in October 2011, will conclude in December 2013. During this process, one of the primary organising targets is at the Lamcheabang Port where all 4 GNTs (Hutchison, APM, PSA and DPW) are operating. BMTA, the urban transport union has a big organizing issue in upcoming public-private partnership ventures and the railway and civil aviation unions are also outsourcing work in a major way replacing regular workers with contract, casual employment in many activities and operations. It will be a big challenge for our unions to organise the private sector as among other things labour laws are different for the private and state sectors in Thailand.

c) **SASK-SPKA Trade Union Education Project in Indonesia** :

- Serikat Pekerja Kereta Api (The Indonesian Railway Workers Union) was initiated into a basic trade union education project to strengthen the union and help it to evolve into an independent and democratic union at the national and regional level. In 2009, a pilot project was undertaken towards building individual and organisational capacities and competencies in the SPKA. After having achieved positive outcomes, the project was further developed into a 3 year one. During the period 2010-2012. The project aimed to democratise the structures of the Railway union in Indonesia and build union capacities for trade union education and leadership building apart from creating an informed, aware and active rank and file membership. More than 100 trainers were trained during the last 3 years to help reach out to the grass root workers in order to organise them. Though the project has now officially ended, a one year extension has been received so that the union can now plan to sustain its work and independently continue to become a strong union.

d) **FNV Women's Project:**

Since 2001, the Regional office has been involved in promoting the participation of women and integrating them in union activities. Initially the project was catering to the whole of Asia/pacific Region but gradually over the years due to the changing priorities of the Trade Union Social Support Organisations, it is now available for only India and Bangladesh. Women have immensely benefited from the education imparted to them over the last more than one decade. Participation of women in almost all activities, seminars and conferences have seen an upward trend, as has their presence in the union activities. However, despite these trends, women are still awaiting opportunities to be in the decision making levels.

Over the years 2 films have been produced by the Delhi office, “Organising Women, Strengthening Unions” and “Breaking the Silence”.

e) **FNV HIV/AIDS Project for South Asia**

The regional office has been involved in creating awareness, providing care and support and assisting unions in developing workplace policies on HIV/AIDS in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Cross border interventions and clinical services are being provided on borders between India and Nepal and India and Bangladesh. Unions have adopted resolutions committing themselves to combating HIV-AIDS in their respective sectors. The Delhi office has produced a film “Being Positive” with HIV+ transport workers and it being used as education material to sensitise people.

f) **Freidrich Ebert Stiftung :**

- In other activities, with the help of FES, trade union education seminars on industrial issues were conducted in India for women and railway and aviation sector unions
- A series of 3 **ITF-FES Fisheries Seminars** were held in Manila, Colombo and again in Manila during 2009-2011 for unions in South Asia and South East Asia and Japan organizing in the sector. The Seminar discussed the present state of unionism in the sector and organizing artisanal and industrial fishing fleets. The seminar discussed the salient features of the ILO Fisheries Convention 188 and discussed how unions need to become an integral part of national strategies to lobby for implementation of this convention. The participants also discussed the menace of Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing and what responses trade unions can evolve to combat this. The Seminar evolved country organising plans including further activities and resources necessary to achieve effective organizing.
- With the emergence of the multimodal transport companies, of late more and more programmes are being organised for these **Global Delivery** companies like DHL TNT, FEDEX, UPS etc. with a view to organise their workers and bring them under the union coverage. A series of events were organised with FES support from 2010 - 2012, a FES supported programme was organised for India in Chennai and Mumbai.
- **ITF-FES Seminar on Restructuring in the Civil Aviation Industry – Preparing the Unions to influence the process** were organized from 2009-2012 at Colombo, Bali, Manila and Kuala Lumpur, respectively for aviation sector affiliated unions in Asia Pacific Region. The seminars took stock of the massive and rapid growth of aviation particularly the non-unionised low cost carriers which in some countries of the two sub regions had left behind the legacy carriers in terms of growth and profitability. The seminars identified the need for unions to undertake sustained organizing work in a rapidly changing civil aviation industry and discussed key elements of an organizing programme to be undertaken after some capacity building training to be imparted by the section and the regional ITF education team.
- **An ITF-FES Seminar on fighting Railway Restructuring and Organising to regain and strengthen union power in Asia/pacific Region** was held in Bangkok 27-28 July 2011. The programme was organised in Bangkok to provide solidarity support to the dismissed workers of SRUT who were expecting the Labour Court’s ruling. The court had ruled against the dismissed workers.

- g) ITF education programmes create awareness of and support the ITF campaign against Flags of Convenience and now the Port of Convenience. Education seminars are also run for port workers on issues related to port reform and privatisation.

#### **Other Education Activities :**

- **India** - Delhi Office continued to train port and seafarers unions activists to assist the FOC Inspectors and promote the campaign activities in the various ports in India.
- An ITF Regional Workshop on Building Strategic Research and Campaign Skills Capacities in Unions was organized in Mumbai from 1-3 December 2009. Activists from port Unions organizing/ trying to organize terminals owned /operated by Global Network Terminal Operators like APM, PSA and DPW in **South Asia and South East Asia** attended the workshop. The ITF Ports of Convenience (POC) Campaign focuses on the Global Network Terminals (GNTs) as one of its key themes. The workshop sessions included discussions on systematically collecting information and developing knowledge about the operations of the targeted companies as also using research to plan and implement corporate campaigns and promote organizing.
- **Bangladesh:** After a gap of nearly two years when union activities virtually came to a stand still (2007-2008) due to the political situation in Bangladesh, 2009 saw the revival of trade union and education activities in the country. At the request of the affiliated unions, a Training of Trainers was conducted in February, 2010. affiliated Unions nominated new educators to be trained as many had experienced a loss of educators and activists during the previous two years of turmoil
- Education activities also promote a cross-sectoral approach and perspective. A **seminar for the Young transport workers and women of the Asia/Pacific region** was conducted in Bangkok in November 2012. Participants from Railways, civil aviation, seafarers, road transport and port unions attended this programme which familiarised the young participants about ITF, its objectives and work plans etc
- **Oceania/Pacific** : The ITF Pacific/Oceania Organising Globally Seminar was held in Sydney, Australia from 9-11 November 2009. The Seminar discussed potential organizing targets and strategies in the countries of the sub region and ways to forge cross sectoral unity and cooperation in the working of the affiliated unions.
- **Thailand** – a leadership and activist maritime organising seminar was held in Bangkok in September 2012 for the newly-affiliated Thai Seafarers’ Association
- **Vanuatu** – The ITF/VNWU Introductory Seminar, Civil Aviation Organising Project Planning Seminar and a Tourism Sector Organising Strategy Meeting were all held in Port Vila in January 2012.
- **Vietnam** – the Regional Secretary and Deputy Regional Secretary attended the ITF-VGCL Workshop to Share Experiences of Transport Workers, Hanoi, 24<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> November 2011 and the DRS attended the VGCL/TUSSO/GUFs 4<sup>th</sup> Information Sharing and Cooperation Meeting, Hanoi, 27<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> November 2012. The opportunities were used to build

relationships with the transport sector unions, in particular the VGCL maritime and civil aviation affiliates.

- In **Pakistan**, unfortunately the affiliates could not conduct any education programmes, partly due to the volatile political and security situation that is affecting the functioning of the trade union.
- **Papua New Guinea** – A series of education activities under the two ITF priority projects, ITF/IUF Fisheries and PNG LNG Organising Projects were organised during the period September 2011- 2012
- **Fiji** – In October 2010 the ILO-ITF Seafarers’ Union Capacity Building Workshop was held in Nadi. It was attended by 20 representatives from seafarer unions throughout the Pacific and subjects covered were maritime mapping, setting national organising targets, developing an organising strategy, MLC 2006 and the Pacific Growth & Employment Project.
- **Solomon Islands** – An ITF/SINUW FOC/POC Seminar was held in Honiara and an ITF/SINUW Supply Chain Organising Seminar for Fisheries Workers was held in Noro in March 2011 that resulted in the Solomon Islands National Union of Workers recruiting 676 fisheries workers.
- The annual Summer School organised by ITF has been a popular programme for the regional unionists. a large number of affiliates and different layers of union activists including leadership, educators, organisers, and shop stewards have participated and gained substantially from this activity. Summer Schools have brought a wider layer of union activists closer to the ITF and more involved in international work.

### **Future direction & focus**

-Organising for sustaining the unions will continue to remain a priority for our Unions and will have to be integrated in any education strategy that is evolved.

-The ongoing process of building capacity amongst ITF affiliates in the countries of the region to respond to transport restructuring by training activists with specialised knowledge and skills, will continue.

-ITF Education support for Basic trade union education activities will also continue, in developing countries, aimed at developing democratic union structures with a focus that this helps build a membership base capable of participating in and controlling the core activities and relationships of their unions, and reaching out to unorganised workers.

-Future education activities will endeavour to address climate change issues so that understanding both the nature of the problem and the responses, which it requires is developed in the overall union perspectives on how to defend and advance the interests of transport workers while promoting a sustainable transport industry.

**The Asia Pacific Regional Conference meeting is requested to take note of the above report and advise and guide the future direction and focus of trade union education work in the A/P region.**