



## **TRADE UNION PRINCIPLES ON DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS**

**(DRAFT)**

**Context:** This document has been prepared following the establishment of the Trade Union Development Cooperation Network (TUDCN), created by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), bringing together trade union organisations and TU Solidarity Support Organisations (SSOs) both from the north and the south, which are active in the fields of international development cooperation and human rights. This includes members of the ITUC from the industrialised countries; the regional organisations of the ITUC (Africa, Asia/Pacific & Middle East, the Americas, and Eastern Europe); and the Global Union Federations (GUFs), which represent sector unions both from the south and the north at international level.

TUDCN brings together autonomous TU organisations, democratically representing affiliated workers in their respective countries. ITUC and GUFs member organisations have equal rights and obligations.

The network's aim is to boost the importance of trade unions in international development and improve the coordination of trade union development cooperation activities.

**Purpose of the Principles:** To define a set of fundamental principles for trade union organisations to endorse and use when operating in the field of international development cooperation.

These principles are designed to serve as a reference and a guide for development cooperation initiatives, to enhance the impact of trade union solidarity actions in the developing countries. They are meant to apply in all situations, whether trade unions are using internal resources or donor support coming from national official development agencies or multilateral institutions.

These principles may also serve as a tool to spread awareness about the role of trade unions and their working methods and dynamics in the field of development cooperation as well as their understanding of development effectiveness.

**Trade Union Development Effectiveness:** Sustainable trade unions improve the working and living conditions of male and female workers and advance respect for human and trade union rights, thereby contributing to social justice and democratisation processes. Trade unions are both a social partner and a part of civil society.

## **Trade Union Development Cooperation Principles:**

### **DEMOCRATIC OWNERSHIP**

Trade unions define democratic ownership as *respect for and responsiveness to the objectives and priorities of trade union partners, with a view to building their self-reliance within the context of the mission of the international trade union movement*. This means that partner organisations, based on the challenges they face in their operating environment at country level, define and determine their own needs within their democratic structures and elected leadership, which in turn should be a reflection of the plans, choices and orientations of their affiliated members.

Donor organisations support the priorities of partners, and they use appropriate experience and expertise to accompany them in the design and effective implementation of development cooperation initiatives, recognising and respecting the partner's primary responsibility in these tasks. Democratic ownership in the trade union movement is a dynamic concept that takes account of local and global challenges facing trade unions as international actors.

### **PARTNERSHIP**

Partnership aspires to be a *'relationship of equals, based on mutual respect, trust and understanding, where diversity and differences are recognised and accepted'*. Trade unions understand partnership to be a two-way relationship and a learning process for all parties involved. Partnership is based on a solidarity approach centered on inter-organisational cooperation.

It is founded upon long-term shared values and principles relating to the rights of working people and their democratic, representative organisations. In these terms, partnership represents a participatory form of cooperation designed to strengthen trade unions' capacity, through utilising respective strengths and responsibilities and within a shared international framework. In line with this dynamic, initiatives should be managed, whenever possible, in a decentralised manner that recognises the partner organisations' primary responsibility for their own development.

## **AUTONOMY**

For trade unions the principle of autonomy is deeply interconnected with democratic ownership, and it is a precondition for autonomy within north-south trade union relations. Donor trade unions commit to maintain independence from political strategies of governments/employers, and/or international donors, safeguarding the needs, the interests, and the priorities of the partner organisations, which have emerged from a democratic membership driven process.

*Trade union donor organisations commit to respect the autonomy and the ability of their southern partners to make decisions and take action without political interference.* Autonomy is also an important value for the development of the trade union movement as such. It does imply the capacity of the local organisations to establish their organisations politically, intellectually, organisationally and financially without external interference. Cooperation partners should support and promote that autonomy.

## **TRANSPARENCY**

Trade unions define transparency as *a commitment to high standards of openness and access to information, helping to build the trust necessary for equitable relations between trade union partners to grow and become stronger*. Transparency relates to both the achievement of effective trade union multilateral cooperation among organisations involved in development initiatives at regional level, as well as to bilateral cooperation between partner organisations. Transparency and openness in reference to internal and organisational development constitutes a fundamental principle for any partnership. Trade unions are committed to working toward ensuring maximum transparency in financial aspects and in terms of organisational management, as well as sharing information on development cooperation initiatives dealing with similar thematic or geographic areas.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

Trade union organisations are bound to multiple forms of accountability. The first and most important form of accountability of trade union partners is toward their members. They should be in control and be aware of the contribution of cooperation initiatives in the bettering of their living and working conditions in general and the improvement in the quality of their trade union work in particular. Partner organisations are also bound to accountability towards donors in terms of using resources according to agreed standards and conditions.

Because solidarity projects are often supported by internal trade union funds, donor organisations in turn are accountable to their leaders and members and must seek to ensure political coherence and sound financial management. Where trade unions have access to public/government resources, they are also accountable to taxpayers. Therefore, *donor and partner trade union organisations commit to a system of mutual accountability at a political and financial level, providing a basis for the joint assessment of evaluation, impact and lesson learning to gain increased effectiveness in future activities.*

## **COHERENCE**

*Trade union organisations aim to achieve maximum level of global coherence among the variety of development cooperation initiatives.* There are several elements of coherence: *policy coherence*, meaning compliance with policies elaborated and approved at regional and global level; *strategic coherence*, as contributing to the achievement of overall processes supported by trade union partners at county level; *coordination coherence*, operating in order to avoid duplication and towards optimum use of resources.

Coherence is the key element to ensure complementary linkages between the single project's strategic objectives and other initiatives (past, present or future) with a view to minimising duplication of efforts and avoiding potential counterproductive effects. Coherence also refers to relating local action and bilateral solidarity to the overall context of the global trade union agenda, both in terms of policies and development cooperation practices. Trade unions recognise the role of the ITUC, its regional structures and the GUFs in strengthening coordination and making it more effective. Partner

unions commit to provide relevant and appropriate support and communication in order to facilitate optimum coordination mechanisms at various levels. Partners will also endeavour to ensure coherence between national and international policies and commitments, including their communications and interactions with their own members and governments (when they receive financial support).

## **INCLUSIVENESS AND EQUALITY**

*Trade unions and solidarity support organisations commit to target, as part of their development cooperation programs, the most marginal and less represented groups of working people. Depending on national and local contexts, these groups might be migrant workers, youth and the elderly, workers in the informal economy, disabled workers and workers living with HIV. Trade unions also commit to practices supporting equal opportunities in order to enhance the empowerment of women and youth in the development process as well as their participation in decision-making within trade union structures at national, regional and international levels. Cooperating partners will strive to use gender impact assessments as an integral component of evaluation methods in their development cooperation projects and programs so as to enhance gender equality.*

## **SUSTAINABILITY**

*Trade unions understand sustainability as the long-term viability of project outcomes, as well as the strengthening of cooperating trade union*

*organisations.* All the principles enunciated previously contribute to the development of sustainability. Sustainability comprises self-reliance, ownership, autonomy in political and economic terms, thus contributing towards eventual independence from external assistance of partner organisations. In this perspective, development cooperation will support empowerment and self-financing mechanisms. It will also include phase-out or exit strategies developed jointly by the partners and designed in ways that will contribute to building sustainability.

Trade union dimensions for sustainability include:

- The democratic sustainability of an organisation is primarily assessed by the extent to which the organisation has established and complies with formal structures and procedures, which ensure that decisions and the policies have been democratically determined. Equally important is the organisation's ability to accommodate the views of minorities and develop a culture of consensus, which ensures continued support from all members, and promotes trade union unity
- Political sustainability is manifested through the organisations' ability to develop its own political strategies, which can serve to exert influence on the relevant decision makers, as well as in general public debates of the society in which they operate.
- Organisational sustainability is the organisation's ability to administer and prioritise its tasks and work areas that enable it to fulfil its mission and commitments. This includes membership recruitment, internal organising, capacity to provide services to workers as well as the ability to develop and manage budgets, including the collection and



administration of membership fees. All development cooperation initiatives should seek to contribute towards improving organisational sustainability.

- Financial sustainability: Financially sound practices should be put in place and should apply to all aspects of development cooperation, including remunerations. This will contribute to the financial sustainability of the recipient trade union. They should also apply to the collection and administration of membership fees, so as to financially sustain the organisation after external funding has ended.

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