

ACTION GUIDE

ITUC International Trade Union Confederation

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On the Job for a Better Future



A guide to best practice on organising young people

Reality check: Difficult times ahead



Young people are under attack – the economy's a mess and they're usually the first to be shown the door when it comes time for layoffs. That's if they've got a job at all. If you're young, you're more likely to be unemployed or to have no health care coverage. Retirement savings? Just a fantasy... Thinking about your future is completely overshadowed by dealing with your present.

Part-timer, full-timer, trainee, temp, freelancer, student, white collar, blue collar, T-shirt or turtleneck, it doesn't really matter – anyone who's looking for work or trying to keep their job these days likely has one thing in common – they're stressed.

No future? Think again...

Wouldn't it be great if there were an organisation – a worldwide organisation – that was there for you, to help you secure a work situation where you felt you were properly respected? That gave support when your rights were violated on the job? That spoke out strongly on issues like sex and race discrimination? What if they were looking into the impacts of the global economic crisis on regular people and communities and coming up with an action plan to take those to task for creating the mess in the first place? And what if this organisation was also actively pushing for an end to sweatshops and child labour and was campaigning to combat climate change?

The thing is – there is such an organisation, it's the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC).

... and think BIG



The ITUC joins together 175 MILLION people in 155 countries and territories. The driving force behind this organisation, that gives it its strength, are women and men who feel strongly about speaking out in defense of their rights in the workplace, but also about human rights and environmental issues – basically, about seeing that the world we live in is a healthy, just and fair place. Coming together locally in unions that band together at the national level (the ITUC has 311 national affiliates), they're speaking out loud and clear as a powerful voice on the most pressing issues people are facing today.

The ability of the ITUC to be successful in advocating for a fair future is directly related to the engagement of young people in its agenda-setting and the development of its policies and activities. The ITUC aims to improve working conditions and the lives of women and men around the world, striving for human rights, social justice, gender equality, peace, freedom and democracy.

Clearly there's no one-size fits all solution to the problems that are out there today. People are living and working in vastly different contexts. Turning a blind eye to that would doom an organisation that's trying to come up with sustainable solutions to failure. The ITUC's Youth Committee is the think tank for some of the union movement's most creative and bold ideas on how to get the job done, guaranteeing that the needs and priorities of young people get the attention they deserve.

Unions: THE Social Network for a Fair Future



It's a difficult world out there and chances are if you're new to the job market and facing financial insecurity, you're wondering how you're going to get by. How, someday, you'll be able to get that house, start that family and then find the time to be involved in the issues you care passionately about – things like the environment or ending the use of child labour. Getting together with other people who share your concerns is a good way to take on all these challenges. And this is where unions come into the picture...

They're the folks who got together and made things like lunch breaks, a minimum wage and pensions a reality. But the work's not done when it comes to keeping your workplace a safe, healthy and decently paid place to be. By joining a union you can have someone in your corner, to back you up on the issues that matter to you on a daily basis – at work, at home and also out in the world.

Addressing the Needs of Young People, Young Families

Greying men in a smokey room doing deals – it sounds like a classic, old boys network and sadly this is the image some people conjure up when they try to visualise union activities. We're happy to report that this picture can be chucked in the bin.

Today unions are about creating spaces for young people – women and men – to map out their priority issues and to work collaboratively to develop solutions. And then, of course, go out and push for those solutions to be implemented.

Issues that young people involved in unions are taking up include: the need for quality education and training, access to health care, good benefits such as paid maternity leave, and financial and legal advice. Around the world there are examples of unions taking action on the top concerns that young people have today...

Jobs for Young People

**KUNNON TYÖ
VILLELLE!**



With youth unemployment climbing to nearly 22% in Finland, creative young union activists decided to highlight this problem during the 2009 World Day of Decent Work (WDDW). They adopted the case of 26-year-old Ville Karhu, who had been looking for work for four months. With “Operation Ville” they set out to find him a job.

A Facebook page was set up two days prior to the launch of the Operation and quickly had several hundred members, they in turn could follow the action on the WDDW and contribute job-hunting leads to Ville. The momentum grew with a leading youth radio station broadcasting updates on the operation hour-by-hour. People formed “patrols” and hit the streets to help find a job for Ville. The Finnish Minister of Labour even turned up to wish the patrols good luck. By the end of the day the Operation was a success: Ville found a job and awareness of the problem of youth joblessness and union commitment to tackle the problem was a whole lot higher.

“There are thousands of Villes out there -- this action was about trying to get attention for their right to Decent Work,” notes Antti Lindtman, youth officer at the SAK union. “Coming together for this Operation the Finnish unions SAK, STTK and Akava made a clear joint statement that securing good jobs for young people is a priority.”

Pushing for an End to Disposable Jobs



In Hungary when union activists learned about the situation of people like Siddiq Aassi, a worker at the Lipton/Brooke Bond tea factory in Khanewal, Pakistan, they knew they wanted to support the campaign to change the unjust state of affairs in his workplace. Despite working at the Unilever-owned tea factory for more than 20 years Aassi still had not been given a permanent contract and the benefits associated with permanent status.

Workers like Aassi were the driving force that kept the factory running, but he and hundreds of casual workers were being treated like they were just disposable inputs for the production of tea. Their case was a powerful symbol of the wave of casualisation that

people around the world are facing and struck a chord with the Hungarian workers.

Creative activists decided to head to the Unilever Budapest head office to show their solidarity with the Lipton Khanewal workers. The Hungarian Trade Union Federation (MSZOSZ) and the Metal Workers Federation (VASAS) staged a symbolic action: they drank a Lipton tea toast to the Pakistani worker activists who had been trying to improve their working conditions, then they threw the tea bags into a trashcan and handed it to a Unilever representative, together with a written demand from the Hungarian Unilever workers' union that the company "Make the Khanewal casual workers permanent through direct negotiations with the Pakistan Union."

International solidarity campaigning like this was one of the factors that pushed Unilever to finally sign an agreement with the IUF to set up more permanent jobs at the Khanewal workplace. With the new agreement, workers are no longer barred from joining a union and negotiating for fair working conditions. Around the world unions are taking on the task of pushing for more secure jobs, with better terms and conditions, in the face of the trend toward casualisation.

Demanding Better Wages

With a union in the workplace workers have a better shot at getting the wages they deserve. And usually that positive impact is felt the most by workers at the low-end of the pay scale, i.e. those who could use a boost the most. Across the United States, for example, according to a 2008 study unionisation raises the wages of typical low-wage workers by 20.6 percent.

There are examples of unions in action on the wage issue across all sorts of workplaces. In transport for example, take the case of Air Berlin: the carrier reached its first collective agreement in August 2008 and less than six months later the newly recognised union had won a wage increase for all crew members. In Eastern Europe it took the Metal Workers' Trade Union of Croatia an entire year but they succeeded in reaching an agreement in 2008 with turbine manufacturer Alstom, securing pay increases for more than 600 workers. In Suriname in 2008 there were difficult months of conflicts and two long strikes, but finally school teachers won substantial wage increases (in some cases up to 46%) and reached a collective agreement with the government to address problematic working conditions. International support played a role in getting better pay for these teachers – Education International, the global union for the sector, took up the case, as did teacher's unions elsewhere, such as the teachers union Algemene Onderwijsbond (AOB) in the Netherlands.



Unions also step in on behalf of workers who are not well-organised and are often the most vulnerable to exploitation due to their weak legal position (lack of contracts), young age and gender. For example in Tanzania where domestic workers are often paid irregularly and experience a range of rights violations, the CHODAWU union has set up several help centres to provide these workers with support, including pushing for higher pay. In 2008 the union negotiated a minimum wage of approximately US\$60 per month, prior to that domestic workers were paid as little as US\$5-\$10 per month.

“At the end of the month, domestic workers are told they will be paid the following month... There is no certainty as to when they will be paid and, in some instances, the employer holds on to their wages until their departure, saying that they do not really need the money. So they end up like slaves, as they do not have the freedom to leave the job with the guarantee of being paid,” explains Titus Mlengeya of CHODAWU. “The families

who have access to the media know that there is now a law that obliges them to apply this wage, but most people have not yet heard about it. Our duty as a union is to help spread this awareness, in the same way that it is the government's duty to enforce the law.”

Q: What can unions deliver?
A: Support and security in the workplace

Unions work to get their young members the support and security they deserve by...

1. Pushing for the creation of more decent jobs for young people.

Not only are unions active at the community level and in shaping national policy to see that jobs are there for young workers, at the international level unions are weighing in on the toughest issues surrounding jobs: building sustainable economic systems that are good for people and good for the planet. With the Global Financial Crisis Unions' Watch (<http://www.ituc-csi.org/financialcrisis>) the ITUC is serving as a clearinghouse of information on responses to the global crisis. In sectors that are set to grow, such as “green jobs” (those linked to environmentally friendly products and services), unions work to ensure that these are good jobs that match Decent Work criteria.

2. Ensuring the quality of existing and new jobs

Safety on the job is just one of the many issues unions get involved in. Each sort of job has its own set of safety issues and unions, setting their agendas based on input from the people who actually face the on-the-job risks, push to have these priority concerns addressed. Ranging from the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (ICEM), whose many members work in some of the most hazardous and resource intense industries in the world, to the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), which actively campaigns for greater safety for journalists (including freelancers), who are at risk from those who wish to silence a free and investigative press, either through violence, intimidation or restrictive media laws. Whether it's exposure to toxins or an assassin's bullet, unions are taking on these issues.

3. Enhancing skills, qualifications and access to education

A union in the workplace makes it much more likely that agreements will exist with employers to pay for courses and provide time off for workers to attend them.

4. Improving the **transition** from school to work, matching employees with employers, and shortening the time young people find themselves unemployed.

“Korean youth are highly educated,” says Eunmi Ahn of the policy bureau of the FKTU in Korea, “unfortunately, this doesn’t guarantee that they will find a decent job. Even though youth unemployment has become a serious social issue, the government has not been able to provide any fundamental solutions.”

To address this the FKTU is pushing three key demands to get the government moving on the issue of youth unemployment: Set up a vocational training and an occupation-related system for students as well as graduates to help move young people into good jobs; increase support for middle- and small-sized companies and improve social security so that unemployed young people without unemployment insurance policies can get assistance.

Sounding Off on the World’s Most Pressing Issues

Unions are about breaking down barriers and bringing people together around common interests therefore it’s completely logical that today they’re key actors in important campaigns in communities, not just in the workplace. Unions, and particularly young unionists, are a driving force within the movements to resolve some of the top social and environmental problems facing society today.

Climate Change: There is no ignoring that the Earth is changing: the seasons are shifting, temperatures are going up and so are sea levels. Without taking action to stop and reverse these changes, people around the world are going to feel the impact on their communities, natural resources and livelihoods. They already are.

“Climate change is everyone’s problem and we will be part of the solution,” says Giulia Baggio, of the Australian Trade Union Congress.

Trade unions are committed to lobbying governments to firmly commit to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and implement a transition to a green economy that is based on social justice – a just transition.

“It can’t be jobs or the environment,” observes Manfred Warda, of the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers’ Unions (ICEM). “It will be both or it will be neither.”

Decent jobs can be created from investments in new green industries as well as from the transformation of traditional sectors, explains Guy Ryder, the ITUC's General Secretary, however a just transition has to be in place to ensure that "workers will have the tools to be a part of the new climate-friendly society we want to build."



In December 2009 at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, trade unions organised the World of Work (WoW) pavilion and met for three days to discuss concrete experiences and policy options to be promoted by the trade union movement on climate change. More than 1,000 people, from unions, social movements, NGOs and government representatives from developed and developing countries attended at least one of the more than 40 events organised in the WoW, which dealt with issues like energy conversion in Japan; green jobs in India; low carbon industrial policies in Europe; women workers and green jobs; climate justice; sustainable transport policies in Spain; challenges for the power generation sector; and the role of public services to name just a few topics.

Moving forward the need to raise awareness of these and other environmental issues remains strong.

"... It is often the very poor, including many women, in the developing countries, who are the most affected by the disasters linked to climate change. In my view it is essential for the trade unions to raise awareness of this issue in the developing countries," notes Nadia Shabana (30) a former Palestinian unionist with the PGFTU and former vice chairperson of the ITUC Youth Committee.

HIV-AIDS: Some 60 million infected and 25 million dead of HIV-related causes since the pandemic began – HIV-AIDS remains a top global health issue and unions are at the forefront of the response: through education in schools, workplaces, the communities – even couples' training -- and through collective bargaining negotiations to ensure health care for workers and prevent discrimination in the workplace.

Education efforts can be found in a variety of sectors. Transport workers are the focus of the International Transport Workers' Federation's compelling movie "Highway of Hope" about the attempts to battle HIV-AIDS along East Africa's major transport corridor in Uganda and Kenya.

In Kenya the ITF, working in partnership with Narativ Inc., used story-telling methodology to break the silence, fear and stigma surrounding HIV-AIDS. During a week-long project workshops took place involving truck drivers and

Grounded in the Local but Acting Global

Unions know that working together is essential if any real change is going to be accomplished. That simple principle makes sense not just in the workplace but on a larger scale as well: think worldwide. Taking this sort of approach to the global level the ITUC is committed to the concept of internationalism. This commitment means recognising that international trade union action has to be an integral part of national trade union life.

Unions are working to close the gap between national and international. So you're wondering, what does that really mean, concretely? It means a commitment to supporting development cooperation on education and providing solidarity where it's needed, when it's needed (at the policy level, and in the form of solidarity action and material support). The ITUC for example has a solidarity fund that provides assistance to unions who experience harsh repercussions when they confront government policies that undermine workers' rights, which was the case in Guinea and Guatemala where violent opposition to rights advocates lead to injuries and even death.

At the ITUC's website (www.ituc-csi.org) you can read about the latest news on how unions are engaging people across borders to address the top concerns around the world.

dockworkers (who are heavily stigmatised as the conduits of HIV in Kenya); members of an HIV positive support group; doctors and nurses for the Kenya Port Authority clinic; and members of the dockworkers' union and ITF. The innovative pilot project culminated with some 40 transport workers coming together in a circle and listening to one another tell stories of their experiences with being infected and affected by HIV and AIDS.

If you can think of a type of workplace, most likely there's an example of a union active in that sector that's produced a tool to support awareness-raising efforts on HIV-AIDS prevention, testing, treatment, care and support services. Meanwhile, negotiating good agreements places unions at the heart of efforts to see that employers deliver on promises to meet the real needs of workers with HIV-AIDS.

In Swaziland, with an estimated adult prevalence rate of over 25 percent, Jan Sithole of the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions (SFTU) describes his country as holding the dubious honor of gold medal in terms of HIV-AIDS.

"Whilst we have a population of about 1 million, we now have 200,000 AIDS orphans and the number of families headed by children is growing by the day," notes Sithole.

In Swaziland an absolute monarchy harshly represses any voices of dissent, and respect for workers' rights is not a governmental priority. Despite facing intimidation and arrest, pro-democracy unionists like Sithole have pushed for collective bargaining agreements that offer people with HIV-AIDS protection against discrimination and stigmatisation in the workplace and the possibility to challenge violations in court.

"We now have over six industry sectors that have agreed to adopt this collective bargaining agreement model on HIV-AIDS and the good thing about it is that whilst the negotiations on terms and conditions of service occur once a year, with the collective bargaining agreement on HIV-AIDS, we can approach the employers any time, which is important because we are dealing with a disaster here: we can't wait for another year to discuss how best to deal with a pandemic," observes Sithole.

Ending Child Labour



Official government estimates put the level of child labour in India at 12 million, however non-governmental organisations say that the number of child "out of school" is as high as 100 million. Either figure is staggering.

The Building and Wood Workers International (BWI) knows firsthand the challenges associated with moving children from the workplace to the classroom. BWI (made up of some 318 trade unions representing around 12 million members in 130 countries) regularly comes across children in the informal sectors of the construction and building industries, forestry, and as part of family labour operations in India's brick kilns. Confronted with this reality they've taken up the challenge to do something about it.

For more than a decade this global union has been working to reduce and ultimately eliminate the problem of child labour, helping kids transition from work to school. Along with the Australian-based charity CLSC (Child Labour Schools Company) "child labour schools" were set up in three states in India to get kids out of the work and on the path to being mainstreamed into governmental schools. Through the project in India, underway since 1997, more than 11,000 children have moved out of the workplace and into school. Support comes from the Dutch Trade Union Federation (FNV), Finnish Trade Union Solidarity Centre (SASK), Danish trade unions (BAT-KARTEL) and Dutch-based charity Child Learn Netherlands (CL.NL).

Thanks to these efforts to tackle the issue of child labour 364 brick kilns and 82 villages have been made child labour free.

Meanwhile, the schools set up through the project are now so well-established in the communities they serve that they've also been used as centres from which to reach out to the community to address other issues local people are facing, such as HIV-AIDS.

The total number of children at work worldwide is pegged at about 212 million and unions are at the frontlines of trying to put an end to this terrible reality. Combating child labour is a clear trade union priority – working children represent an abundant and easily exploited source of cheap labour. When kids are in the workplace they're not only robbed of their childhood but adult unemployment (particularly young adult unemployment) goes up and wages go down (since children are available to do the same work at lower rates). With children deprived of education and adults deprived of work, child labour jeopardises both adults' and children's future. The ITUC works with its national affiliates as well as the Global March Against Child Labour and others to help keep up international pressure to get children out of work and into school.

No to Nuclear Weapons



In the lead up to the United Nations' 2010 review of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty trade unionists are taking part in a huge international petition campaign to mobilise support for the abolition of nuclear weapons. The ITUC, which spearheaded the campaign, used a manga-comic format to spread the word, a stylistic nod to Japan's place in nuclear history. The campaign throws its support behind the "Mayors for Peace" initiative headed by the mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, calling for a ban on all nuclear weapons by 2020.

"The lives of millions of women, men and children are being ruined by actual conflicts and threats of conflict, with devastating social and economic consequences," says campaign coordinator Kristin Blom (34). "Trade unions have an important role in promoting tolerance, respect and cooperation among working people across the lines of conflict."

Young people within unions, for example through youth committees in Belgium, Slovakia and Japan, are playing an important role within this initiative.

“The sense of urgency is there -- young people realise we’re now at a point in history where we may be the first generation to make ethical decisions as to whether we will be the last generation on this planet,” notes Blom.

Speaking out to Stop Violence Against Women

Wake up call: Women aged 15 - 44 are more at risk of death and disability through domestic violence than through cancer, car accidents, war and malaria.

Unions are coming to grips with this sad truth, ditching the un-informed, old-fashioned response that domestic violence is a “personal problem”, something not to get involved with. Instead, unions are recognising that domestic violence is a societal problem and also a workplace issue; thankfully they’re now trying to do something about it. Domestic violence is one of the issues being taken on in a broader campaign to stop all forms of violence against women, which is just one part of the ongoing Global Unions Campaign “Decent Work, Decent Life for Women”.

What can unions do about domestic violence? In Ireland for example in November 2009, to mark the UN International Day on the Elimination of Violence against Women, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions unveiled new guidelines on providing concrete assistance to women at work who are experiencing domestic violence.

“The workplace can play a key role on raising awareness about domestic abuse,” observed Clare Tracy of the Congress Womens Committee at the time. “We know for many women work is a place of safety where they may confide in others about their experiences and where they can access help. Congress and its affiliates have been campaigning over the last few years to ensure that domestic abuse is seen as an issue that unions can - and - should be doing something about for women who are affected by violence at home.”

Guidelines like these provide practical information, ideas and contacts on domestic violence to union representatives in the workplace so they can give consistent and effective assistance to their colleagues who experience domestic abuse. No turning a blind eye, but steps to address the problem.

One out of every three women around the world has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime – by upping their efforts to stamp out the many forms that violence against women currently takes, unions are betting they can change those odds to make them more favourable to women. The ITUC’s compilation of actions taken (<http://www.ituc-csi.org/list-of-actions.html>) within the context of UNIFEM’s “Say NO – Unite” global campaign to eliminate violence against women (www.saynotoviolence.org) gives you an idea that they’re headed in the right direction.

Going Forward with Gender Justice



Right now there are women who are jobless, unable to get the promotion they deserve, badly paid or faced with intimidation or harassment simply because they are women. Gender justice has gone from being a fringe issue to something that unions are seriously working to mainstream.

With campaigns to draw attention to the pay gap between men and women and to demand maternity protection for workers, unions are taking part in important initiatives to improve workplace realities for working women.

“In the textile sector, a male office worker earns 10,000 Hong Kong dollars a month (860 euros) whilst a female office worker earns between 7500 and 8000 (647 to 690 euros),” explains Cheung Lai-ha, vice president of the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU), president of its Women’s Committee and general secretary of the textile sector union. She chalks up the difference in pay to the mentality of employers that view women as second-class labour. Discrimination against pregnant workers is also a major issue, with many ending up fired or forced to give up their jobs.

“The employer puts pressure on the pregnant worker so that she ends up resigning. They use several techniques: making her work in a place without air conditioning, with poor ventilation, overloading her with work, forcing her to carry out useless tasks, installing a camera to keep her under constant surveillance, etc. Eighty percent of women workers that contact our union after being placed under this type of pressure are in need of psychological help. We help those affected to file a complaint. In 90 percent of the cases... we obtain reparation and/or a ruling against the employer.”

In a current project unions are specifically reaching out to young women to help them get the tools they need to deal with all sorts of issues that come up in relation to their careers, family planning and partner choice and achieving the ever-elusive work-family balance. Pretty much the whole range of life choices – hence the project’s name: Decisions for Life (DFL).

The campaign targets women who work in or are seeking work eight service industry jobs: call centre operators, secretaries, bookkeepers, IT programmers, sales persons and cashiers in retail, front office workers/ receptionists in hotels, travel agency intermediaries in tourism, and housekeepers in hotels. These are the service industries that employ the bulk of

working women aged 15-29 and most of these industries in the 14 developing countries selected, are growing.

Different themes are taken on in different countries – in Zimbabwe and South Africa for example there's a focus on sexual harassment, while in Indonesia the focus is on social benefits and the illegal practices of employers, like illegally preventing young women marrying without employer permission. There are also moments for joint action – like International Women's Day. And importantly, organising women in the workplace.

In Belarus for example DFL campaigning involved unions successfully setting up a union of indoor/ outdoor vendors, a notoriously difficult sector to organise and where 90 percent of the workers are women, mainly young.

It's young people involved in unions that are often paving the way for an end to gender-blindness and for the inclusion of women in decision-making and agenda setting.

“... Youth committees often get closer to gender parity than other structures. That is one of the reasons why helping youth structures is also a way of advancing the cause of women in the trade union movement,” notes Daniela Alexieva, chairperson of the PERC Youth Committee of the CITUB in Bulgaria.

Ethical Consumption

Were my sneakers made by someone in a sweatshop in Vietnam?

Is the chocolate bar I'm eating made with child labour in Africa?

Was my laptop put together by a young woman in China forced to work overtime?

And the metals in my mobile phone, were they mined in conditions that ruined the health of African miners and destroyed their communities?

Increasingly consumers are pushing companies on questions like these. In part that's because unions have raised awareness about working conditions in all sort of situations – from electronics factories to banana plantations. In addition to the obvious role of trying to support workers in their efforts to negotiate with employers to improve conditions, unions are also pushing companies to be transparent with consumers about the reality of working conditions and their responsibility to see that problems are addressed.

Often unions work closely with a broad spectrum of organisations to press for these changes. For example, unions are an integral part of the Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC), an alliance of NGO and trade union coalitions in 14 Euro-

pean countries seeking better conditions in the global garment industry. One of the biggest public campaigns ever to demand better conditions for the workers who make sportswear for brands like Nike, adidas and Puma has been the Play Fair campaign. The ITUC and International Textile Garment and Leather Worker's Federation (ITGLWF) worked with the CCC to campaign for better conditions in the sportswear industry and also along supply chains for Olympic goods. Meanwhile, in the electronics sector unions are participating in the GoodElectronics network alongside other organisations with the aim of improving human rights and environmental conditions in the electronics industry.

Thinking Outside the Box

Trying to make a difference today for a better tomorrow is a tall order. There's no one single approach that can work as an effective strategy to address the issues people are faced with these days. Young trade unionists are using Opeople and to push for positive change on a variety of important social and environmental issues.

Young people in unions are doing everything from organising hip hop shows and basketball tournaments to designing online games and SMS-text actions to get people to come together around different issues. The following are just a few examples of how unions today are getting the job done.

Direct Action!

Workers involved in unions take part in negotiations with their employers and if things don't go smoothly there are demonstrations, leafleting and people go out on strike. Unions engage in petition actions and public meetings to do awareness raising out in the community. These are tried and true methods and aren't about to be given up on. But there's other things happening out there. Take Germany for example, where young activists have regularly been using flash mob tactics to get their point across. [For those on the sidelines so far, a flash mob is when a large group of people suddenly assemble in a public place or a shop – usually a message goes out online or via mobile phones – they do a short attention-getting stunt and then depart quickly.] Impromptu, low cost, mobile and if cleverly conceived, likely to get much-needed attention for a problem that needs to be resolved.

In a notable example from 2009 ver.di, the German union that represents nearly 2.5 million employees in the retail and public sectors, some 150 people were organised to gather at a shopping centre in the state of Saxony-Anhalt. The flash mob entered the shopping center and proceeded to load up shopping carts with products before abandoning them in the store aisles. Instead of paying for the goods, the flash mob passed out cards with slogans like “fair wages” and “fair means more.”

Their protest was organised to draw attention to pay and working condition problems in the states of Saxony-Anhalt, Thuringia and Saxony. Just days earlier Germany's Federal Labor Court had ruled that flash mobs were a legitimate form of industrial action.

Going Viral: Videos to Make You Stop and Think



- Hordes of suit-clad businessmen rushing into an office to cart off the women employees, who are a bargain since they're paid 25 percent less than their male counterparts.

- A woman at work in an office, sweat pouring down her face, takes a phone message, pauses to experience contractions and gives birth directly under her desk. Medical staff take away her newborn, while she turns back to her computer.

These are the storylines of two union-made videos that quickly and effectively drive home the point on important issues where unions are working to make a difference: the scandal that is the ongoing gap between what is paid to men and what's paid to women and the fact that millions of women still don't have maternity protection at work.

One of the most popular and powerful tools used to communicate important messages today is video and unions are making the most of it. Union videos aren't always talking heads expounding on policy issues; they're the clever clips that you find in your inbox forwarded by friends who think they're must-sees. One of the videos to "go viral" last year and be caught up on a wave of word-of-mouth enthusiasm was the ITUC's "hammer child" video on child labour. Seeing a child turned into a human jackhammer is cringeworthy and makes a point – jarringly – that child labour is awful and needs to be stopped. The message quickly spread to nearly 30,000 viewers and continues to make the rounds.

Ranging from moving personal testimonies that bring viewers up close and personal with real people struggling with difficult circumstances to short funny videos or animation that use humor and take just a minute to convey important information – the ITUC and unions around the world are using a variety of ways to distribute their moving images to reach a wide audience.

Curious about these videos? Have a look at the ITUC's YouTube channel <http://www.youtube.com/ituccsi>

Blogging: Online Soapboxes Spread the Word

From the protests in Tibet and Burma to the G20 in Pittsburgh to the World Economic Forum in Davos – bloggers have been generating immediate, opinionated reporting in lively, first-person styles. Unions are blogging as well, using these diary-like web logs to reach all sorts of different audiences to engage them on the issues.

Blogs have become a staple of union campaigning tools. Like unions themselves, blogs break down barriers and invite dialogue. Unpretentious and conversational blogs can also be interactive, when readers are invited to contribute content.

The ITUC's youth blog (<http://youth.ituc-csi.org/>) is a space where young workers are sharing their experiences. Launched just a year ago the blog has so far already received contributions from 26 different countries and had more than 50,000 views.

Many unions are using micro-blogging to distribute news and information about activities. For example CFDT in France and Forca Sindical in Brazil use Twitter to get the word out when something's developing.

Online and Ready to Organise

Websites and social networks like Facebook have become a mainstay of union activities. Many unions are working with intranet systems to facilitate better internal communications. Some unions are building their own niche social networks to help out with their efforts. For example Unionbook, an advertising-free platform where several thousand trade union folks come together to share ideas, opinions and information on a wide range of issues. Specialised websites put loads of information at the fingertips of union members, for example the WorkSmart employment rights database developed by the Trades Union Congress (TUC) in the UK. The site (www.worksmart.org.uk) features info on such topics as legal rights and pensions as well as quizzes and games. The ITUC also cooperates with the LabourStart website, which carries news about unions and work, and which uses electronic campaigning to generate international solidarity.

Increasingly campaigns involve a range of tools to get the job done. Take for example the youth organising campaign run by SAK in Finland tied in with the hit Finnish TV programme the Dudesons. A campaign website created personalised videos with a viral feature, with the Dudesons urging people to join the union. SAK took the campaign on the road to rock festivals in the summer and shopping malls in the winter. Lots of positive media coverage followed, the site attracted some 120,000 viewers and young people joined the union.

Youth Recruiting: Keeping Unions Relevant and Effective

Young people are the future of unions; that's a no-brainer. But sometimes the obvious needs to be shouted from the rooftops. That's why the ITUC campaigns specifically to support the engagement of young people in union activities.

The ITUC is committed to putting the needs and priorities of young people at the centre of global trade unionism. To learn more about the ITUC's youth campaign and to download campaigning materials, see <http://youth.ituc-csi.org>.

Stay Connected



Join the ITUC on Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/pages/ITUC/20556338116>



Follow the ITUC on Twitter [@ituc](https://twitter.com/ituc)



Check out the latest videos on the ITUC YouTube channel <http://fr.youtube.com/profile?user=ITUCCSI>

Have Your Say

The ITUC blogs about the latest issues involving young people and unions at <http://youth.ituc-csi.org/>.

Just a few of the topics that people have posted opinions on include: the lack of a minimum wage law in Canada, youth unemployment in Ghana, and child labour in Palestine. Your input is welcome: if you'd like to contribute to the discussion, contact the ITUC at youth@ituc-csi.org.

Let us know what's on your mind.

Global Union Federations

There are many trade union organisations that work on the issues we have mentioned in this brochure; from campaigning on topics like child labour and global warming, to active negotiations for better conditions for workers all around the globe. Here are the contact information so you can know more about who does what:

Building and Woodworkers International (BWI)

www.bwint.org

Education International (EI)

www.ei-ie.org

International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine & General Workers' Unions (ICEM)

www.icem.org/

International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)

www.ifj.org

International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF)

www.imfmetal.org

International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF)

www.itfglobal.org

International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers Federation (ITGLWF)

www.itglwf.org/

International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)

www.ituc-csi.org

International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF)

www.iuf.org

Public Services International (PSI)

www.world-psi.org/

Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC)

www.tuac.org

UNI Global Union (UNI)

www.uniglobalunion.org

International Arts and Entertainment Alliance (IAEA)

www.fia-actors.com

www.fim-musicians.com

Have We Missed Anything?

Ideas on issues that are important but you feel aren't getting enough attention? Ideas on how to better engage young people in union activities? We'd like to hear from you:

Contact the ITUC Youth Officer at youth@ituc-csi.org

Publisher responsible in law:

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