

Trade unions as DEAR actors

Having global solidarity at their foundations, trade unions are natural actors of Development Education and Awareness Raising (DEAR). To trade unions, Development Education is a life-long, participatory and open-ended learning process that leads to a critical understanding and an active engagement in addressing the challenges of the rapidly changing, interdependent world we live in.

Trade unions have been actively engaged in DEAR for decades, but in the times of a global economic and environmental crisis, the involvement of workers in development education is more important than ever to build understanding and active participation in global development processes, such as human and trade union rights, Decent Work, inequalities, social justice and social protection.

DEAR as trade unions' core business

Development Education and Awareness raising responds to the core values and objectives of the trade union movement, making it a useful tool in delivering the union agenda at local, national and global level:

- DEAR builds international solidarity, global citizenship and understanding of global challenges among trade union members and the wider public;
- DEAR mobilizes for a global action and active civic engagement, demonstrating and further increasing the strength of the trade union movement;
- DEAR contributes to building ownership and political support for international solidarity work;
- DEAR deepens and strengthens North-South relationship and understanding; and enables learning and exchange between organisations and countries;
- DEAR explores and addresses the complexity of the global trade union agenda, building a deeper understanding and critical engagement among trade union members and leaders;
- DEAR contributes to poverty prevention through mobilizing for personal engagement and action for global social justice;
- DEAR explores and supports a critical approach to development cooperation policies, contributing to a more holistic approach (including Policy Coherence for Development, Development Effectiveness etc.)

The unique role and potential of trade unions in DEAR

Uniting tens of millions of workers around the world, the trade union movement has a unique potential of effectively reaching a large number of people, often not yet familiar with development issues. Being directly affected by the challenges of economic globalisation, the trade union movement has a first-hand experience and direct impact in various aspects of social and economic development on local, regional and international level.

What is crucial in DEAR, trade unions have a long-standing tradition of international solidarity and cooperation and thus well established and partnership-based North-South relations. Institutionalised and democratic regional and international networks provide platforms for cooperation, exchange and joint action. Active communication channels (including various types of union media) and a well-developed training capacity and infrastructure add to the efficiency and effectiveness of trade union DEAR activities.

Engaging with other actors in DEAR

Given the shared values and objectives with many civil society organisations cooperation, further cooperation between them and the trade union movement should be encouraged through:

- Building recognition in the civil society of trade union as development and DEAR actors;
- Building strategic alliances and coalitions;
- Initiating common campaigns and programmes;
- Maintaining a strategic focus on Decent Work;
- Adjusting the level of commitment to the value added of particular alliances and partnerships.

Fostering DEAR in the trade union movement

While many trade unions and Solidarity Support Organisations have been actively engaged in DEAR for decades, the domain remains unexplored for many others. Given the relevance of DEAR for the global trade union agenda, it should be fostered and mainstreamed in the trade union movement through:

- engaging members as well as union leaders of all levels;
- developing DEAR strategies within the national centres, SSOs as well as the regional and international platforms;
- fostering cooperation between communication, training and international cooperation units;
- improving the coordination and cooperation in campaigning (esp. on the topics related to Decent Work)
- supporting for affiliated organisations in financing and delivering DEAR programmes;
- engaging in active advocacy with relevant national ministries/agencies as well as regional structures (including the European Commission) in order to foster the recognition of trade unions as DEAR actors and ensure the access of trade unions to adequate sources of funding for DEAR activities.

The Trade Union Development Cooperation Network (TUDCN) commits to further supporting trade union engagement in Development Education and Awareness Raising through facilitating networking, exchange and coordination on DEAR among the members and advocating for putting DEAR higher on the international trade union agenda.

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About the TUDCN

The Trade Union Development Cooperation Network (TUDCN) brings together national trade union confederations from South and North, Solidarity Support Organisations (SSOs) and Global Unions Federations (GUFs) as well representation from International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) Regional Organisations, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (TUAC).