



## ITF INFORMAL TRANSPORT WORKERS PROJECT 2013-16

# EVALUATION REPORT



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## FOREWORD

This is the evaluation report for the Informal Transport Workers Project, undertaken by the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) from 2013 to 2016.

The ITF is committed to the building of strong unions for all transport workers, regardless of their employment status. ITF affiliates have been encouraged to carefully examine their own structures, strategies and working methods and take the necessary steps to ensure that informal workers are effectively covered by legal and trade union protection. Mobilising mass membership relies on both formal and informal workers acting collectively.

This project helped the ITF to look at successful strategies and methods which have been used by some ITF affiliates, and to share these with other affiliates committed to organising informal workers. A major strength of this project has been the use of mentoring methodology, which has encouraged peer learning and union networking.

Many valuable insights have emerged from this project. In particular, recruiting informal workers is only the first step. Once this has been done, unions need to adapt and change in order to represent the interests of these new workers – in union structures, collective bargaining and leadership. And we also need to explore how the ITF reflects the issues and problems of informal workers in our programmes, priorities and activities.

This project has highlighted the need to raise the visibility of women transport workers. We have learned that even within the informal transport workplace, there is occupational segregation and discrimination. Violence against women emerged as a major and serious issue, a stark reality for both formal and informal women workers.

We are immensely grateful to Dave Spooner and Jessica Whelligan of the Global Labour Institute (GLI) based in Manchester who coordinated and implemented this project. Their knowledge, skills and commitment contributed to the project's rich and deep outcomes.

Thank you to Chris Bonner, the external evaluator for the project, for her energy and expertise in drawing together the key messages from numerous documents and conversations to form a final report that offers such valuable insights, recommendations and encouragement.

We are also grateful to the unions who participated in the project, particularly the mentor unions and those who attended the Evaluation Workshop in Kampala in July 2016.

The Informal Transport Workers Project would not have been possible without the generous financial assistance of FNV Mondiaal.

Alana Dave  
ITF Education Officer and Our Public Transport  
Programme leader

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Transport workers in the informal economy make up a significant and diverse section of transport workers globally, particularly but not exclusively in developing countries. They are an integral part of the transport industry.

The ITF Informal Transport Workers Project, implemented over three years, has demonstrated that they can be organized using varied and innovative strategies, are able to bargain collectively, and have the power to take action to back up their claims if necessary. It has also shown that informal transport work, although dominated by men, is by no means a male-only activity. Women informal transport workers are significantly present, but mainly in the lower segments of the industry and in service roles.

The Project was particularly successful in reaching informal workers engaged in urban passenger transport through selected ITF affiliated unions in Africa, Asia and Latin America. It has also made some inroads into the long distance goods transport section in Africa.



More than 60 000 informal transport workers have been newly organized or joined the trade union family over the Project period, the biggest increases being a result of the affiliation of existing informal transport workers' associations. It was also especially successful in reaching out to women in informal transport and making them more visible.

Organising women into the unions -approximately 3,500 in total-, forming women's committees and electing women into leadership positions has given women confidence and a voice in the unions and in some cases with authorities and/or employers.

The Project introduced a number of method innovations, the most striking being the idea of working with and through 'mentor unions'. This not only made good use of existing union experience and capacities and was an effective use of resources, it also introduced new skills for both mentor and mentored unions. This was an experiment and the participants all testify to the power of the learning and sharing that has taken place as a result. Although success has been varied in different countries and regions, for a number of reasons, it has the potential to be a powerful methodology and warrants further development.

Other important innovations are the use of mapping to introduce union leaders to informal transport workers as well as to encourage their recruitment, especially of women transport workers; the setting up of the Informal Transport Workers Blog and the adoption of the Informal Transport Worker's Charter, providing a potential and focus for continuing activities and networking.

Overall the outcomes of the Project have exceeded expectations, achieving the anticipated result as well as some that are unexpected. Notable is the highlighting of, and linkages made with, existing ITF priorities such as BRT and violence against women.

The Project has been important in raising awareness of the effect of BRT on informal transport workers' livelihoods. It has also shown how violence and discrimination against informal women transport workers is rife. An additional "unexpected" outcome for the ITF is how the Project has helped to enhance the reputation of, and loyalty to, the ITF.

There are a number of ongoing issues and opportunities that still need to be tested over a longer period to assess the impact and sustainability. For example, can the unions successfully make the transition to full and equal democratic representation in structures and leadership of informal transport workers? Can the organising process be extended creating a "mass membership" that can be activated in line with the ITF levers of power?

## RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure these can be followed through it is recommended that the ITF find ways to extend the project for a further three years. Regardless of whether a new project is possible, organising informal transport workers should continue to be a priority and be integrated into the strategies and activities of the ITF:

1. Include informal transport workers in current ITF priority activities, especially BRT and violence against women. Actively seek opportunities to do so in other strategic areas, with resources appropriately allocated.
2. Provide opportunities within the ITF for informal transport worker leaders to demonstrate the importance and potential power of organising informal transport workers, and the need for support and resources. Disseminate information widely amongst affiliates and beyond.
3. Positively promote the inclusion of informal transport workers in affiliate leadership positions (where informal worker members) and within the ITF structures, with special attention to women leadership.
4. Support networking between informal transport workers by providing practical support on communication and sharing experiences, and especially tracking and sharing how the Informal Workers' Charter is being used as an immediate focus.
5. Be pro-active and take up opportunities to showcase the Project and work with other Global Union Federations (GUF), the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), the ILO, informal worker networks and supportive NGOs, on issues of workers in the informal economy.
6. Include representatives of informal transport workers in delegations and activities, for example, at the forthcoming ILC (2018-19) standard setting negotiations on Violence against Women and Men in the Workplace.

## ACRONYMS

<b>ATGWU</b>	Amalgamated Transport & General Workers Union , UGANDA
<b>BRT</b>	Bus Rapid Transit
<b>COTWU-T</b>	Communication & Transport Workers' Union of Tanzania , TANZANIA
<b>EDU</b>	E-Rickshaw Drivers' Union, NEPAL
<b>EW</b>	Evaluation Workshop
<b>FESYTRAT</b>	Fédération Syndicale des Travailleurs des Transports du Togo, TOGO
<b>GLI</b>	Global Labour Institute
<b>IDEA</b>	Independent Democracy of Informal Economy Association , CAMBODIA
<b>ITF</b>	International Transport Workers' Federation
<b>ITWAN</b>	Independent Transport Workers Association of Nepal , NEPAL
<b>KAMBA</b>	Kampala Metropolitan Boda-Boda Association , UGANDA
<b>KOTSA</b>	Kampala Operational Taxi Stage Association, UGANDA
<b>TAWU</b>	Kenya Long Distance Truck Drivers & Allied Workers Union, KENYA
<b>MCU</b>	Matatu Workers' Union, KENYA
<b>NCTU</b>	National Confederation of Transportworkers Unions, PHILIPPINES
<b>NETWON</b>	Nepal Yatayat Mazdoor Sangh, NEPAL
<b>PUTON</b>	Public Transport Operators Union, KENYA
<b>SNTT</b>	Sindicato Nacional de Rama y Servicios del Transporte de Colombia , COLOMBIA
<b>URS</b>	Union des Routiers du Sénégal, SENEGAL
<b>USTN</b>	Union des Syndicats des Travailleurs du Niger, NIGER

# SECTION ONE: BACKGROUND

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Transport workers in informal employment<sup>1</sup> are present in large numbers in low, middle income and least developed countries. The baseline study conducted prior to the start of the Informal Transport Workers' Project noted that:

"Precarious work is a global and growing phenomenon in the transport industry, most prevalent in low income and least developed countries. 74% of all responding unions and 100% of unions in low-income and least developed countries note an increase of the number of informal workers in their countries". (Spooner: 2013, 2)

Many informal transport workers are highly visible, such as those providing urban public transport: drivers of mini-buses, tricycles, motorcycle taxis together with conductors, despatchers, security guards, loaders, porters and booking clerks. Others provide services to transport workers and passengers such as those selling food or operating public telephones. Often they coalesce in urban transport "hubs"<sup>2</sup>.

Many others are informally employed as long-distance drivers and support staff by formal or informal businesses. They are also found in traditional occupations such as fishing, as well as in "newer" forms of informal or precarious employment<sup>3</sup> resulting from the casualisation and "informalisation" of formal jobs such as in the ports, at the airports and on the railways (Spooner: 2013).

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<sup>1</sup> Informal employment includes self-employed workers in informal economic units and waged workers in informal jobs (i.e. without employment linked social protection).

<sup>2</sup> For a comprehensive list of occupations of workers in informal employment at transport hubs, including country specific names for different occupations, and the different employment relationships, see D. Spooner, "The Informal Transport Workplace. What have we Learned?" presentation made to the Informal Transport Workers Project Evaluation Workshop, Kampala, 26-28 July 2016

<sup>3</sup> Precarious employment refers to agency and temporary work, short or 'zero-hour' contracts, casual work, disguised self-employment etc

Informal employment is one feature of the changing industry, alongside and linked to the growth of multi-national logistic supply chains, privatisation and de-regulation of public transport, amongst others.

The changes and the challenges posed for transport workers and for their unions is extensively documented by the ITF in Congress, Sector and Women's Committee reports. The ITF is grappling with the new situation and is committed to adapting to the "new realities".

In 2014 the ITF Congress adopted a strategy based on strengthening "four levers of power": consolidating key hubs and corridors; influencing lead industry players; activating mass membership; and following geographic shifts (ITF:2014).

Whilst the levers do not explicitly include a focus on informal transport workers, the potential power of activating mass membership of informal transport workers is something that cannot be ignored, and the plan of action adopted by Congress features the work of the Project in different countries.

Additionally, areas of priority for the ITF, in particular violence against women and young workers, are cross cutting issues and very relevant for transport workers in informal employment.

The Project itself arises out of a growing recognition by the ITF of the importance of informal transport work as a source of livelihoods; that informal transport workers need and can be organized despite challenges in doing so; that many informal workers are already organized in associations and some into affiliated unions.

In 2006 the ITF Education Department commissioned case studies and an overview report on organising informal transport workers (Bonner, 2006), and in 2011 a further study on the livelihoods of informal transport workers was completed (Spooner: 2011).

In 2010 the ITF Congress declared:

"...there is a need to recognise and work with other forms of worker organization which precarious workers have developed among themselves, and to link them to the trade union movement. The ITF will develop a

2011-14 strategic plan to develop networks of organizations, which could include both unions and associations, which act on behalf of workers whose livelihoods come from precarious or informal work in the transport sector” (ITF: 2010, 4)

In 2012 first steps were taken towards implementing this decision. A preparatory baseline study was conducted. This expanded on information contained in the 2011 study, and began to identify unions that would participate in a new project. This led to the development of the ITF Informal Transport Workers Project, launched in September 2013.



## 2. PROJECT OVERVIEW

The ITF Informal Transport Workers Project was a three-year project running from 1 September 2013 to 31 August 2016. It was supported by the FNV, which provided the major part of the £537,220 GBP budget. ITF contributed 26% of the funds, with FNV and a few small donations making up the rest. FNV also agreed to provide funds for a four month Project extension which seeks to engage the ITF and its affiliates as well as a broader audience in the international trade union movement, development agencies and supportive NGOs.

The ITF Education Department had overall responsibility for the Project including financial management, overseen by the ITF Finance Department. It worked with a Steering Committee, which included, in addition to the ITF Education Department and Project Coordinator, representatives from the mentor unions (see below) and the ITF Women’s Officer.

The Global Labour Institute (GLI), Manchester, a service organization to the labour movement, managed the Project on behalf of the ITF. The Project Coordinators from the GLI coordinated the day to day project work, including planning and organising activities, providing narrative reports and media, communication with partners, as well as ongoing monitoring and evaluation of progress.

### **Project Objectives, Expected Results and Beneficiaries**

The overall (development) objective of the Project was “decent work for women and men working in the

informal transport industries”, and the specific objective was to improve the capacity of unions to organise and represent informal economy transport workers. The expected results were:

- 1) Increased visibility of women workers in informal transport
- 2) New inclusive union policies and agreements between unions and informal workers’ associations
- 3) Improved capacity of unions to organise informal economy transport workers

The primary beneficiaries were activists and elected representatives of six unions in five countries: Nepal (two unions), Uganda, Niger, Philippines and Colombia. These are the mentor unions with responsibility for providing support, advice and training to other unions in their respective regions/ sub-regions. Secondary direct beneficiaries included organisers, activists and elected representatives of unions in Africa, Asia, and Latin America with a need to organise and develop collective bargaining power for informal economy transport workers. Priority was to be given to women and young activists.

### **Project Design**

The Project had three main strands to be delivered primarily through a sequence of regional seminars and workshops, with country or local follow up activities implemented by the mentor unions:

- Visibility of women workers in informal transport: mapping and raising the visibility of women

workers in the informal transport economy, and increasing their participation in unions

- Leadership education and dialogue: raising awareness and mutual understanding between leaders and members of trade unions and transport workers in the informal economy

- Organising skills, training and technical support: providing training for activists in organising by and for informal transport workers, and technical advice in the design of union constitutions, procedures and structures for active participation by informal workers

### 3. EVALUATION PURPOSE AND PROCESS

The purpose of the evaluation is to “assess the success and understand the challenges of the project”<sup>4</sup> (excluding the extension noted above).

This report presents the findings of the evaluation with the purpose of supporting organizational learning in the ITF, the participating unions and the wider union movement, and to give feedback to the ITF, FNV, GLI and other contributors on the effectiveness and efficiency of the Project. It also seeks to inform and influence future work with transport workers in the informal economy within the ITF and its affiliates.

Throughout the Project there have been six-monthly reports to the funder, informed by reports received on each activity, and monitoring of how participating unions implemented activities and their outcomes. This final evaluation draws on a reading of these reports and other materials that record activities and results. It also draws on relevant ITF reports and research carried out prior to, and in preparation for, the project.

Additional information was obtained from conversations and e-mail correspondence with GLI and ITF staff over the period of the project. The evaluation workshop (EW) held in Kampala, Uganda 26-28 July 2016, which the evaluator helped plan and facilitate, provided rich information on results and lessons from the project, and is the key source for the analysis that follows. In the workshop were 34 participants from mentor unions and “mentored” unions (unions being mentored) from East Africa (Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania), Francophone West Africa (Niger, Togo, Senegal), Asia (Philippines, Nepal, Cambodia), Latin America (Colombia), together with GLI Project Coordinators and ITF Staff members: Education Officer, Assistant Women’s Coordinator, Inland Transport Section Secretary and Africa Education Coordinator. There were 21(62%) men and 13 (38%) women participants.

This is not a technical evaluation of the Project but one that focuses more on the content of the work, its

effectiveness and lesson learned. Section Two that follows looks at the activities and results of the Project; examines some of the innovative methods used and lessons learned together with some practical considerations (efficiency). Section Three provides an overview of the key successes and challenges; what the future of this work might be; and provides some recommendations for the ITF.



<sup>4</sup> ITF. Terms of Reference for external evaluator



# SECTION TWO: FINDINGS

## 4. THE ORGANISING STORY: ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

### Background

“There is nothing special in history about organising informal workers, for the simple reason that in the beginning all workers were informal” (Gallin, 2011)

Dan Gallin goes on to describe how, through organising into trade unions and bargaining for wages and working conditions, especially in the mass production and transport industries in the industrialized world, work became formalized.

Mac Urata, in reviewing the history of the ITF noted that those organising in the informal economy are “pioneers, like those in 1896”, referring to the ITF founders.

As we can see the story began many years ago, and the historical pattern identified repeats itself in parts of the transport industry today. Whilst in some countries and sections of the industry – for example some urban passenger transport in Nepal or fishing in Tolú Colombia- transport occupations have essentially remained informal; in many others (including in developed countries) formal transport work has become increasingly precarious and/or informal.

The collapse of regulated and state owned passenger transport in many African countries has seen the transport industry taken over almost entirely by informal transport operators.

As mentioned above, informal transport workers in developing countries have in fact been organising themselves for several years, into associations and also into unions.

Amongst Project participants, the National Confederation of Transport Workers’ Union (NCTU) of the Philippines is a confederation primarily of informal

and precarious workers and was started in 2003, drawing in existing associations of drivers.



The Independent Transport Workers Association of Nepal (ITWAN) was established 37 years ago (ITWAN: 2016) and organises mainly informal transport workers, as does Nepal Yatayat Mazdoor Sangh (NETWON), formed in 1990 (NETWON:2016).

The Kampala Operational Taxi Stages Association (KOTSA) and the Kampala Metropolitan Boda-Boda Association (KAMBA) in Uganda are examples of large, well-established, self-organized associations only recently entering the union movement by affiliating en bloc to the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union (ATGWU).

In the Evaluation Workshop, participants from Africa highlighted their efforts to organize informal transport workers prior to the Project start up.

The relatively new union Public Transport Operators Union (PUTON) in Kenya outlined its struggle to achieve registration as a union, only succeeding through winning the case in court in 2013. Not all organising has been successful, and women transport workers have not featured strongly in earlier accounts of informal transport workers organising.

## Implementing Activities

“ The results were spectacular in second phase of the Project – so imagine the results which would have been possible if we’d started with this method from the beginning.” (Emmanuel Agbénou, Fédération Syndicale des Travailleurs des Transports du Togo FESYTRAT)

**Table 1: Numbers and Patterns<sup>5</sup>**

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Totals
<b>Activities</b>				
Global	1	1	1	3
Regional	4	2	0	6
Sub regional		2	1	3
Visits		5	3	8
National/local		3	50	53
<b>Totals</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>Participants</b>				
Men	53	72	558	683
Women	43	208	1344	1595
<b>Totals</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>1,902</b>	<b>2,278</b>

Source: Annual Report 2015-2016

The figures in Table 1 above capture the extent and range of activities, and the implementation pattern over the 3-year-Project period. What is clear from this, and what was pictorially represented in the time-line developed during the Evaluation Workshop, is that the activities in the unions took off slowly and momentum built up following the Mid-Term Mentor Meeting in February 2015.

What also emerges strongly is the high level of activity on increasing the visibility of women, and that considerably more women than men were direct participants in the Project. This does however disguise the fact that three events in Nepal account for 972 of the women participants. Without this the numbers participating directly would be roughly equal for men and women. This is an achievement given that a large majority of transport workers are men.

Activities in Year 1 were mainly regional workshops as planned with a few delays. However, later activities did not fully follow the pattern in the original Project plan due to challenges in understanding what was required and changes in agreed method of mentoring, training

and support for organising skills decided upon in above mentioned meeting.



Preparing a time-line of project activities; Evaluation Workshop, Kampala, 26-28 July 2016

Instead of the original plan for a series of sub-regional workshops on organising in phase two, mentor unions took responsibility for more intensive training and support activities for a smaller number of unions in their sub-regions.

This change meant that, although there was a narrower reach in terms of numbers of unions involved, activities and active participants in the Project exceeded those in the original plan.

With the new strategy resources were directed more to lower cost national and local activities in a limited number of countries, with closer support from mentors, making for their more effective and efficient use. It is not known if the unions involved in phase one (regional workshops) and not included in phase two have in fact now prioritized organising workers in informal transport, and in particular women.

This new strategy also allowed for more flexibility in the Project application, responding to on-the-ground realities, including needs, opportunities and context.

For example, in Nepal the presence of two “rival” unions in the Project, aligned to different political parties, meant that some efforts were directed to building unity and joint activities, especially amongst women where a joint committee was established. In addition, methodologies to reach large numbers were adopted there, such as study circles and local workshops with women transport workers.

In Latin America the mentoring programme in Venezuela did not take off due to the political situation and union political allegiances, whilst in Costa Rica the successful launch of a new union of informal workers facilitated by the mentor union Sindicato Nacional de Rama y Servicios del Transporte de Colombia (SNTT)

<sup>5</sup> Participant numbers are incomplete for some activities and in others distribution by gender is not given. Figures are therefore indicative.

was marred by internal democracy problems. In this case it was agreed to direct efforts to extending the SNTT informal worker organising into three areas in Colombia.

It is important to note that the context is deeply important in implementing plans. Projects such as this, which have broad objectives and common activities have to be flexible enough to accommodate the differing contexts and events –expected and unexpected- that occur in the life of a country and a union. In this the Project was very successful.

Notable is the earthquake disaster that struck in Nepal in April 2015, putting the Project on hold for several months, but which then saw activities move very fast from November 2015 onwards. Election time also disrupts activities as attention is focused on electioneering, with informal transport workers often targeted by politicians for their support.

During the Ugandan election campaign November 2015-February 2016, ATGWU activities were limited and it was hard to hold meetings. More generally ATGWU has found that informal worker associations are often heavily influenced by political parties which makes organising politically complex.

In Senegal the political standoff with the President of Gambia, who closed the border between the two countries following human rights violations and protest action, also affected cross border transport workers and thus union activities.

And in Cambodia, the Independent Democracy of Informal Economy Association (IDEA) was a victim of the repressive policies and actions against unions by government, but was able to increase its membership and carry out successful activities.

An important output of the Project is the series of publications produced, and the setting up of a dedicated blog.

Attractive reports have been produced in soft and hard copy versions. These include annual funder reports and well-written and illustrated reports of workshops, exchange visits etc, some in three languages (English, French and Spanish). In this way information was shared amongst participating unions, with the ITF, funders and other interested parties, and a record is provided of success and challenges that can assist in future organising work in the transport industry and beyond.



In summary, the Project has had a wide but focused reach, exceeding its targets as regards number of activities, informal transport worker participants and the gender breakdown.

Although the quality of some of the interventions is not always clear (perhaps not capturing the nuances, or understanding limited by language), the systematic and well-presented information from reports and other media has provided a record of impressive Project outputs.

The flexible and responsive way in which the Project was implemented has been critical to achieving the outputs and the results below. The Mid-Project Mentor Meeting identified some weaknesses in the Project plan and charted a new strategy to overcome challenges. Often rigid project planning imposes activities on a union/organization, which detracts and distracts from its core work. The more flexible approach adopted has supported the mentor unions to organize (more) informal transport workers into their unions, whilst at the same building new skills, and a sense of solidarity and sharing with mentored unions.

## 5. THE RESULTS: SUCCESSES, CHALLENGES AND LESSONS

“We thought we would not achieve much with this Project. But we have managed to organize informal sector workers. We have over 97000 informal sector members now” (Aziz Kiirya, General Secretary, ATGWU, Uganda)

In other words the results in Uganda have exceeded expectations! This is true for most of the Project “expected results”, taking into account overall strategy changes made mid-Project and those specific to different countries, where planned strategies or activities did not work out due to internal or external constraints. In this section we look at how far the Project has achieved the three “expected results”, as well as identifying some unexpected or unplanned results.

**Table 2: Results Summary**

<p><b>1. Increased visibility of women in informal transport</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women leaders nationally elected to represent IWs (Uganda, Niger, Nepal, Philippines, Colombia, Cambodia) (target 5)</li> <li>• Increases in trade union membership of women (Uganda, Niger, Nepal, Philippines, Cambodia, Kenya) numbers</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. New inclusive union policies and new agreements between unions and associations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New constitutions or regulations adopted (Uganda, Niger, Nepal, Philippines, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cambodia) (target 10)</li> <li>• New organising initiatives adopted by 11 unions/associations (target 10)</li> <li>• New agreements signed between unions and associations (Uganda, Niger, Philippines) (target 5)</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Improved capacity of unions to organize informal transport worker</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More than 200 organizers trained (target 20)</li> <li>• Large increase in TU membership amongst IWs (Nepal, Philippines, Uganda, Cambodia, Niger, Kenya, Colombia)</li> <li>• New collective agreements signed (Togo, Niger, Senegal (3), Philippines (3), Cambodia (2), Colombia (2) ) (target 10)</li> <li>• Launch of new unions in Costa Rica, Nepal, Kenya, Niger</li> </ul>

Source: Annual Report 2015-2016 and EW workshop, 26-28 July 2016

### Result #1: Increased visibility of women workers in informal transport

“Before the Project women were “just women” with no union responsibilities– but through the Project they gained knowledge of their rights and have become members and leaders in their own right” (Luis Macailao, NCTU, Philippines)

This is perhaps the area where we see the most success and impact of the Project. What was striking in the Evaluation Workshop was how the increasing visibility of women transport workers was the most discussed topic, with many successes reported and with great enthusiasm from women and men participants. Although a relatively small number has been recruited into the unions, giving the starting point (nil in some unions) the at least 3500 new members in six unions is impressive<sup>6</sup>. But the numbers do not tell the whole story.

Before and during the course of the Project it was confirmed that women in informal transport mainly occupy positions at or towards the base of the pyramid, at best being conductors or despatchers and more often in service roles such as cleaners, clerks, parking attendants, food vendors at urban transport hubs. They have been largely “invisible” to unions, despite efforts made by the ITF Women’s Committee.

As reaffirmed in the Evaluation Workshop, patriarchy and discrimination is rife in the industry. There is a strongly held belief and practice that jobs such as that of driver are “men’s jobs” or, as in Nepal, women are limited in the type of vehicle they can operate. There women are not “trusted” to drive four-wheeled vehicles being restricted to 3-wheeler “tempo”- something the unions are challenging.

This is pervasive amongst male transport workers, employers and government officials, for example those responsible for issuing licenses, leading to active discrimination against women taking up better paying /higher status jobs in the industry. This is aggravated by the high rates of violence and sexual harassment against women working in the industry.

<sup>6</sup> Not all unions have reported on the increase in women members.

The Project has made this more visible, with women now gaining more confidence to voice out the discrimination and violence they face in the industry and beginning to change the mind-set of union leadership. In particular the women's committees formed in five countries provide a safe space for women to share their experiences, build their confidence and strategize how to take up issues within their unions. These are small but important steps forward in the ongoing struggle for gender equality that can be built on, especially in the light of the ITF campaign on violence against women transport workers.

### **How has this impact been achieved and what are the lessons?**

Firstly, the mapping workshops for women, and mapping in the leadership workshops, proved to be a trigger for increasing the unions' awareness and understanding of women informal transport workers and their issues amongst (male) leadership.

Secondly, it provoked confidence and enthusiasm for reaching out and organising women transport workers in various occupations- many previously not seen or understood as part of the industry-, and gave women the confidence to go out and seriously recruit.

Thirdly, there is an increase in the number and reach of women members. Although the increase in numbers is not huge, it is significant enough to have (a) led to the formation of women's committees in five countries (Uganda, Nepal, Cambodia, Philippines, Niger) and the election or appointment of women into leadership positions in six countries.

Fourthly, the formation of these women's structures in the unions and embedding women into the leadership has provided the base to sustain and expand the gains.

Fifthly, the on-going documentation of the processes and gains, and the linkages with the ITF Women's Committee, serve to highlight the presence of women in what is considered a male industry, their concerns and organising successes, beyond the participating unions.

### **Result # 2: New inclusive union policies and agreements between unions and informal workers' associations**

"It has made informal workers legitimate. They now belong somewhere-in the family of workers" (Dorothy Nandera, AGTWU and ITF Board member)

As the Project developed, with field visits to urban transport hubs playing an important role, a new and expanded understanding of an informal transport worker emerged, including of women informal transport workers. The regional leadership seminars were important in bringing union leaders on board. As the unions started to expand their recruitment targets, so they had to change their policies and/or constitutions to accommodate these groups and adapt to their situation.

In thirteen countries organising policy and/or constitutional changes were made, differing according to local circumstance. These include:

- expanded definition of transport worker in the constitution of the NCTU and in some of its affiliated associations, extending membership beyond drivers
- formation of women's committees for informal women transport workers in Uganda, Nepal (ITWAN and NETWON joint), Philippines, Niger and a Women's Chapter in IDEA, Cambodia
- constitutional amendment to allow for informal transport workers' membership and changing dues structure in SNTT, Colombia
- constitutional amendment to provide for informal transport worker members and the formation of an Informal Sector Committee in ATGWU, Uganda. This committee "is the buffer that allows the informal sector to speak clearly to the Union", remarked David Musoke, Committee Chair.
- resolution by IDEA for 30% representation of women leaders on executive committee and general council

These changes are important as they confer recognition and legitimacy on a wide range of informal transport workers by the unions, on women informal transport workers, as well as acknowledging changes that need to be made e.g. level of dues, to ensure their inclusion.

### **Result #3: Improved capacity of unions to organise and represent informal economy transport workers**

"We have so much more power as a union if we organise informal workers."  
(Francisco Mora Guerra, SNTT, Colombia)

The rise in membership amongst informal transport workers, and developments such as the formation of the new E-Rickshaw Union (ERU) in Nepal, has shown that it is possible to organize those previously seen as

impossible to organize into unions, and that the capacity to do so in the mentor and mentored unions has greatly improved.

Membership growth during the course of the Project is not well recorded, but from available information it would at a minimum have exceeded 60,000. There are differing levels of success in recruiting new members: ATGWU claims at least 57,523 new informal worker members, Nepal E-Rickshaw Union 1671 on its formation, NCTU 3000 and Colombia 2250.

It has also shown that there is a large potential for membership expansion if a strategic and well thought out approach is used. For example, the estimated number of Matatu workers in Kenya by the National Transport and Safety Authority (NTSA) was 40,000 (probably an underestimate), whilst the unions PUTON and MWU together have a membership of only 3-4,000 (GLI: 2016).

Growth has been achieved by applying different strategies:

- recruiting en bloc existing associations of transport workers where individual membership was previously the norm (ATGWU)
- opening up membership to groups previously excluded (or not even seen as transport workers) (NCTU, Philippines and SNTT Colombia)
- recruiting a whole new sub-sector such as the E-Rickshaws drivers in Nepal leading to the formation of a new E-Rickshaw union (NETWON)
- targeting recruitment of women, including those not previously thought of as transport workers, such as those in service roles e.g. food vendors.

Where unions have been based on individual membership, the strategy of reaching out and bringing into the union existing associations and their members en bloc has yielded quick results in term of rapid membership growth.

This result has been most spectacular in Uganda where informal worker membership of the ATGWU grew from 765 members to a massive 57,523<sup>7</sup>, with formal agreements with the twelve associations concerned.

In other instances, where association membership was already in place, new associations have affiliated, as in

<sup>7</sup> The Annual Report, 2015-2016 notes a figure of 57,523 informal worker members, up from 765. The General Secretary of the Union reported in the EW an increase in total union membership from 6000 to 97000.

the Philippines where 32 new associations joined in the space of one year, representing 3,000 additional members.

Through the joining of associations en-bloc into unions both sets of members benefit: unions increase their bargaining power through the increase in membership (the power of numbers- perceived or real), and any collective action has a wider impact (such as taxi strike, blockages and demonstrations).

The associations achieve legitimacy and voice through the established union “bridges” to decision makers. In Uganda for example when KOTSA joined ATGWU there was an immediate demonstration of power. When police tried to interfere and stop elections happening in KOTSA, the union was able to use its political power (and increased numerical power) to get the police to back off. The benefits of joining hands with the union were immediately obvious to KOTSA members (see Spooner and Mwanika: 2016 for more details and an exposition on different forms of power).

Outside of urban transport, Colombian women working in the informal fishing sector in Tolú were earning low and shrinking incomes. Although they were organized in an association they had been unable to gain access to government funds that were ostensibly available for women.



Through the Project the SNTT started to recruit members from amongst workers in informal transport whereas before they had only members in the formal economy. Working with their existing 10 members in Tolú they recruited more than 2,000 new members, thirty per cent being women. The union was able use its power to connect the women with the Ministry of Labour, enabling them to access the government resources. The Ministry helped them set up a home-based industry, processing readily available fruit to

make jams and other products, and thus enabling them to increase their incomes.

The increase in membership- and that of a different type- brings new challenges to the unions. “Organising is double edged – you can increase membership, but it can pull you down if members aren’t given services”, warned Aziz Kiirya, ATGWU.

In the case of the ATGWU, with the incorporation of twelve associations over three years, and a twelve-fold increase in membership in 2015 through affiliation of two sizeable associations, the process of change is still unfolding. As yet there have been no leadership elections in this period, and the leadership elected by the small and formal transport workers’ membership is still in place, with one informal economy representative only. As informal workers now outnumber massively formally employed workers, the elections due next year at Congress could herald a big change in leadership with informal worker representatives taking over.

In the Evaluation Workshop, leaders expressed the view that they did not see this as a problem and would be willing to step aside if membership so decided through elections, but power battles are common in unions and this may not be a smooth ride.

Additionally, the union is planning to join up members from the affiliated associations as individual members. This will be a huge undertaking and there is no guarantee that all the members of the associations will do so, even though a collective decision is taken within the associations’ structures.

Other issues likely to arise are differential dues for informal and formal workers as adopted by SNTT (although there were no reports of a problem in this union) and two tier unions developing with formal workers as first class members and informal workers regarded as having lower status.

There are signs of such a problem in Uganda where members of the Informal Women’s Committee reported that there is virtually no contact between the formal and informal women leaders and the elected (formal workers) National Women’s Committee. In addition they complain that some of the National Women’s Committee leaders adopt a superior attitude towards women working in the informal economy.

An important aim of the Project was to strengthen the collective bargaining power of informal transport workers. The Project therefore envisaged that not only

would unions recruit and build organization amongst transport workers in the informal economy, but that this would lead to progress in achieving collective bargaining agreements covering informal transport workers.

This is hard to achieve given that informal transport workers (and indeed most workers in the informal economy more generally) are excluded from current collective bargaining arrangements and therefore need to develop new arrangements.

Collective bargaining, as currently defined by the ILO<sup>8</sup> and as still understood by most trade unions, takes place only between an employer(s) and workers (employees). However, workers in the informal economy, including transport workers, many without an employer or in disguised or unclear employment relationships, need to negotiate not only with employers (where an employer exists) but with many different “adversaries”. These are often government departments at local (transport, police, planning, economic development etc) or national level. Informal transport workers do negotiate, often in response to a crisis, and the negotiations are most often on an ad hoc basis rather than as a right enshrined in agreement or law.

In Uganda, Kenya, Cambodia and Niger mentor or mentored unions ran training workshops on collective negotiations to enhance the capacity of organizers and leaders to negotiate effectively. In Uganda, StreetNet International facilitated the training, and the ATGWU used the methodologies and learnings from this in the training held in Kenya that followed- and important example of collaboration of informal workers across sectors.

During the course of the Project at least 12 negotiations took place influenced and/or enhanced by new or increased membership strength and/or the increased capacity of the unions to organize and represent informal workers.

The negotiating counterparts were diverse and included: local and national governments, informal economy employers, Savings and Credit Cooperatives (SACCOS) (cooperatives widespread in the transport sector in East Africa, whose members are often vehicle

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<sup>8</sup> ILO, Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 [No.154]. Geneva, [http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_INSTRUMENT\\_ID:312299](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312299)

owners or a mix), shopping mall owners, hotel chains and successes were recorded.

This is a challenging but vital area requiring struggle and successes on the ground, whilst at the same time expanding the conceptual and regulatory frameworks governing collective bargaining. The ITF could play an important role in this in future.

#### **Result # 4: Unexpected / Unplanned Results and Burning Issues**

As in most organising work and projects there were unexpected outcomes. Participants in the Evaluation Workshop noted that in many ways the results of the Project were unexpected because they had exceeded expectations, and in particular the awareness of women transport workers and their organising into the unions.

Apart from this, they gave examples of specific unexpected results attributed directly or indirectly to the Project. These include:

- In Togo the government now consults with FESYTRAT on relevant matters. Negotiations have led to petrol price reductions.
- In Senegal, the Union des Routiers du Sénégal (URS) has negotiated an agreement with a private company for medical cover for truck drivers.
- In Niger, the Project helped to raise the profile of informal transport workers in the media and has also contributed to the election of the first women Assistant General Secretary of the Union des Syndicats des Travailleurs du Niger (USTN). She is also the Secretary General of SYNATRA the mentor union. USNT is one of the larger trade union centres in Niger.
- In Nepal a new E-Rickshaw Union was formed.
- In Nepal two rival unions, with different political affiliations, were able to overcome their difference and work together to form an active joint women's committee.
- In East African participating unions were invited to attend a regional government-sponsored transport policy conference - a step towards inter-governmental recognition of the validity of trade union representation of informal transport workers

An important outcome for the ITF is how the Project has helped to enhance the reputation of, and loyalty to, the ITF. EW participants pointed out how their association with the ITF, as an international organization, has helped them to gain the trust of workers and given them a sense of power. Others noted that workers feel proud to be members of the

ITF and that membership helps breed solidarity, citing the example of truck drivers who hold ITF cards and have stickers on their vehicles and connect whilst they are moving along transport corridors.

Mention was also made of direct interventions by ITF in support of struggles of workers in Uganda and Gambia /Senegal that have been important in profiling the ITF and enhancing its reputation.

Perhaps the most significant “unplanned” result is the emergence of two burning issues that link into existing ITF priorities, and a determination to deal with these: the extent of violence against women in informal transport (see above) and awareness of the effects of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) schemes on informal transport workers' livelihoods. The potential for pro-active responses in collaboration with the ITF is an important result and is already beginning to be implemented. A planned Africa regional workshop on BRT in September 2016 will include representatives from unions organising informal transport workers.

BRT has been identified as a priority issue for the ITF and now for informal transport workers. Through the Project, participating unions have become aware of how far-reaching are plans to implement this system especially in Africa and Asia, and the negative implications for their members' livelihoods unless they can be pro-actively involved in participating in negotiations on its implementation. In Bogota for example, “The introduction of the BRT led to the elimination of small vehicles under pretext of bringing order to our cities. It was a bitter experience”, noted Francisco Mora Guerra, SNTT, Colombia, in the EW. He went on to explain that before BRT there were 26,000 small vehicles, each with one owner, but “ 16 years later we have 15,000 vehicle and we have one person who owns them all”.

The Project has therefore played a key role in ensuring participating unions and their informal transport worker members have prior knowledge, and the opportunity to share experiences and develop pro-active strategies.

In the Evaluation Workshop we heard different scenarios from different countries: from Bogota, Colombia where BRT was implemented without input from the unions; from Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania and Philippines where it is currently been implemented with union input but which is not “taken seriously”, and from Dakar, Senegal where it is planned but work has not yet started.



This common threat provides an opportunity and incentive to continue networking and sharing experiences; a common mobilizing and solidarity building issue and a way to link into the broader campaign of the ITF. Momar Diagne, URS, Senegal spoke passionately on the subject.

“I’m scared about what I hear of BRT. In my country, Senegal we will get it soon in Dakar. All the informal transporters will die. What will we do to feed our children in future? There is no positive impact for the workers – I’m scared.”

And Emmanuel Agbénou, FESYTRAT, Togo, noted the importance of prior knowledge through the Project:

“It has opened our eyes and we must be prepared before it comes. We in the informal sector we will disappear from the scene. We must organize ourselves before it comes into play and inform our colleagues so we get a multiplier effect. If we don’t do that it will have a negative effect on us. We cannot oppose technological development”.

## 6. METHOD INNOVATIONS: WHAT DID WE LEARN?

In this section we address four areas of innovation in the Project: mentoring, mapping especially of women transport workers, the Informal Transport Workers’ Charter and the Informal Transport Workers’ Blog.

### #1: Mentoring

“The mentor union takes us from high school to university. The mentor union is the university.” Henry Nyabuto, Matatu Workers’ Union (MWU), Kenya

“Being a mentor has helped us to build a lot in understanding how the informal sector is operating and we learned that so many young people and women are joining the informal sector.” Dorothy Nandera, ATGWU, Uganda



NCTU (Philippines) working with IDEA (Cambodia)

The Project embarked on an innovative method – mentoring- to make maximum use of existing informal economy transport worker organising “expertise” and to maximize resource use. It was aimed at shifting the focus of leadership from international and regional staff in the delivery and development of capacity building programmes towards a more organic “horizontal” network of support and encouragement between the unions themselves, albeit with central ITF support (GLI, 2015, 11).

The mentor unions were selected from amongst ITF affiliates that had demonstrated valuable experience in organising and developing collective bargaining power for informal economy transport workers. Each mentor union was expected to provide support, advice and training to other unions in their respective regions/ sub-regions, and work together as a global network to share experiences.

**Table 3: Mentor and Mentored Unions: how successful?**

Mentor Union	Mentored Unions	Successful interventions?
SYNTRA, Niger	USTN, Niger	Successful
	URS, Senegal	Successful
	FESYTRAT, Togo	Successful
	UCRB/FSTAB, Burkina	Successful
	URS (Union des Routiers du Sénégal)	Successful
ATGWU, Uganda	MWU, Kenya	Successful
	PUTON, Kenya	Successful
	COTWA-T, Tanzania	Partially successful- leadership resistance
NCTU, Philippines	IDEA, Cambodia	Successful
	WWU/SEETWU, Thailand	Not successful -?
NETWON/ITWAN, Nepal	NUS-SL, Sri Lanka	Not successful- earthquake disruption
	TBJARVW/NUIW, India	Not successful- earthquake disruption
SNTT, Colombia	Venezuela	Not successful- politics
	SINATA, Costa Rica	Not successful- democracy issues in union

The methodology overall produced differing results as indicated in the table above. However, this conceals the important difference between the early phase of the process and phase two when a revised strategy was implemented based on an assessment and lessons learned at the Mid-Project Mentor Meeting, February 2015.

In the early stages the mentor unions had an imperfect understanding of their role, and had had little or no prior contact with, or knowledge of, their prospective mentored unions. The Mid-Project Mentor Meeting concluded that:

“The experience of the Project’s initial stages however demonstrated that it took considerable discussion and experience of the Project activity before the real role of the mentor unions evolved and became understood. Across the board, there has been little communication between unions, either between the mentor unions themselves, or between mentor unions and their mentored unions in their respective regions. There had been only limited financial support from the Project to maintain international relationships, and a lack of clarity regarding what the role of the mentor union should be”. (GLI, 2015, 11)

This led to fresh thinking about activities, and a revised plan was adopted. Whilst the objectives remained the same, instead of the envisaged sub-regional organising skills training events hosted by mentor unions, it was agreed that the mentor unions work directly and more intensively with one or two unions in the region where there was clear potential and capacity.

It was also agreed to focus on mentors providing support for the teams of women established in the women’s mapping workshops to undertake further mapping and organising. This more focused but flexible approach has yielded powerful results especially on organisational development, leadership and visibility of women in informal transport (see above) internally and externally.

It has provided the flexibility and focus to deal with the differing needs of mentored unions, resulting in several tangible gains. Additionally as John Mark Mwanika from the ATGWU noted, the union learned a lot in terms of project management and “smart organising”.

#### **What are the lessons?**

- Working with a smaller number of unions allows mentor and mentored unions to benefit through developing a deeper understanding of the local

contexts, with more flexibility and responsiveness in activity plans and implementation, more opportunities to share and learn from each other and an increased likelihood of follow up and a sustained relationship.

- It is important to make sure that mentor unions understand the purpose of the programme, the mentoring approach and especially their roles in a very practical sense. There should be clear guidelines developed.
- It cannot be assumed that unions affiliated to the ITF in a particular sub-region are connected or even know of each other. So, it can be a challenge identifying mentored unions and in understanding the internal dynamics and context.
- It is therefore important to do some prior “research” on the potential unions, the context and the culture etc.
- Mentored unions need to be approached carefully, following protocols, and bringing the key leadership into the process. Ensuring they have a clear understanding of the objectives, how the mentored unions can benefit and especially the role of the mentor unions is necessary.
- Establishing the mentor-mentored relationship is likely to be a slow and delicate process, and may need to overcome leadership suspicions and fears.
- The ITF regional offices can play an important bridging and support role.
- Giving responsibility to manage the programme to the mentoring unions and making this the subject of a formal contract can build the project management and other skills of the mentor.
- There needs to be sufficient resources allocated: travel to other countries is expensive and ongoing support is often needed, especially with new unions of informal transport workers.
- Coordinating and collecting information is more challenging for project coordinators (in this case GLI) as there are multiple activities in different locations. Budgeting is also more complex.

## **#2 Mapping and Field Work**

“Some of the most successful fieldwork trips involved getting the union leaders to talk to informal workers personally.” (Dave Spooner, GLI, Project Coordinator)

“Mapping” of workers in informal transport at their workplaces was an integral part of all the regional leadership workshops and workshops with women in informal transport. The objective was to identify the major transport-related occupations of women and

men, their employment relationships, key issues for organising around and for negotiating, and potential collective bargaining counterparts.

During the workshops most often these mapping visits were to transport hubs where a cross-section of the many types of women and men informal transport workers was gathered. This was not only a successful research and fact-finding exercise but an important way of putting leaders directly in touch with the wide range of informal transport workers and their realities, and motivating them to act. It was a powerful experience for many participants.

It was also a training exercise so that participants would return home and repeat the process in their own locations. Several participants did just this, especially the women. And this often turned out to be a first step in recruiting new members into the union from amongst occupations previously unacknowledged as transport workers.

The mapping was not without challenges. In Colombia when women from the regional workshop visited a transport terminal in Bogota, management called the police who harassed and chased them.



Mapping a bus terminus, Africa Regional Training Workshop, Kampala, 2014

In Togo, workers were distrustful when approached and did not want to give interviews nor be videoed. “They think that you want information so you can exchange it for money – maybe you’re being paid by an NGO or something” reported Emmanuel Agbénu, of FESYTRAT, Togo.

In the Philippines it can be challenging to talk to women at the workplace. Often they are scared to talk. One-to-one contact at their homes (when their husbands are out) has proved to be the most

successful way, noted Angelica Kanindot, NCTU Philippines.

Mapping and organising is difficult because of patriarchy. Women are dependent on their husbands. We needed to go deeper and visit them in their homes to understand the barriers and educate them about their rights.

#### What are the lessons?

- Although research and fieldwork is necessary for any union recruiting drive, it is an essential pre-step when planning to organize informal transport workers. Many unionists know relatively little about informal transport workers’ occupations, their concerns, challenges and the culture of existing organisations.
- Visiting transport hubs provides a quick and practical way of identifying many different informal transport worker occupations, their employment relationships and the gender divisions.
- For women it can sometimes be more productive to meet them one by one in their homes (when husbands are not around).
- Mapping is necessary in order to identify potential leaders, for seeing organising opportunities and developing appropriate organising and negotiating strategies.
- Planning before mapping is very important. Often workers are distrustful so it is a good idea to identify in advance people to approach, “those who can sell the idea to others. You need to identify the ‘change agents’, an entry point”, noted David Musoke, ATGWU.
- Planning what to say and the questions to ask is also important.
- Timing must be chosen carefully so that it coincides with a time when workers are free to speak.
- It is a mistake not to follow up on field visits and mapping. It is necessary to revisit the workers within a reasonable period of time and report on any developments. If not, there is likely to be resistance to any future approaches.

### #3 Informal Transport Workers’ Charter

“The Charter will give us strength to fight back”

In the final year of the Project, the ITF and mentor unions developed a draft Informal Transport Workers’ Charter, which was discussed and amended by

members in participating unions, with a final version unanimously adopted at the EW.

The Charter sets out international demands for rights, recognition, working conditions etc, drawn from the common experience of mapping and organising in each participating country.

It is also influenced by the adoption of ILO Recommendation 204 on the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy<sup>9</sup>. During the course of the Project a group of representatives from mentor unions participated in the tri-partite discussions at the International Labour Conference (ILC) under the banner of the ITF, cooperating with other groupings of informal economy workers there.

The Charter is an important and concrete outcome of the Project, which the unions can use as a mobilizing tool amongst informal transport workers, in negotiations and as a vehicle to garner support within the ITF itself. It is an important first step towards the formulation of a global strategy in representing informal workers to national, regional and international inter-governmental institutions, employers' organisations, governments and the international trade union movement itself.

This will be challenging as documents "come and go" and will require active advocacy at grass roots levels as well as through the ITF.

#### **What are the lessons?**

Given the recent adoption of the Charter the main lessons are still to be understood, based on how they Charter is used. The following are some tentative lessons based on discussion and observations in the Evaluation Workshop :

- It promotes enthusiasm and a sense of solidarity amongst participating unions.
- Making the link with broader international developments, in this case the ILO Recommendation 204, promotes solidarity with the wider movement of informal workers.
- It also underscores the unifying role of the ITF
- Having a set of clear and globally applicable demands at the end of the Project provides a focus for continuing action by the Unions around a common theme

- It has multiple uses: for educating and mobilizing members, for raising awareness of the challenges and needs of workers in informal transport amongst ITF, other unions and movements, amongst the public and to add weight in negotiations with employers, local and national governments.
- For wider participation by union members in developing a Charter a longer and more active process is needed. The Project-end timing was a limiting factor.

#### **#4 Informal Transport Workers Blog**

In 2014 the Informal Transport Workers Blog<sup>10</sup> was launched to provide a distinct online space for Project materials to be made available, and for updates to be shared. It was modelled on the ITF's already existing Climate Change Blog and allowed the GLI to post directly to the blog rather than having to pass through ITF communications staff.

It features up to date news and provides access to the full range of Project reports. It also houses a series of video interviews with informal transport workers from different countries and occupations. Although this is not included as one of the activities in the Project log frame, it is a valuable addition.

It provides resources for participating unions, funding partners, the ITF and its affiliates and others interested and/or working on or with informal workers in the transport industry but also in other sectors. As new materials are posted, e-mail subscribers are automatically notified and can then via a link access the materials. This ensures that the posts are not passively sitting on the web site awaiting someone to check from time to time, but rather makes the posts more likely to be accessed immediately.

As one would expect with a new tool, and with the limited familiarity and access by informal transport workers to the technology, most posts have been by the GLI, such as news, reports and videos. In a minority of cases mentor unions have sent information to GLI and requested for this information to be posted on the blog.

The ITF has also been active in providing information to be posted onto the blog. The blog was discussed in the Mid-Project Mentor Meeting and mentor unions

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<sup>9</sup> ILO. Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (R 204), [http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:1210:0:0::NO::P12100\\_INSTRUMENT\\_ID:3243110](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:1210:0:0::NO::P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:3243110)

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.informalworkersblog.org/>. Information on the blog and communication more generally was provided by Jess Whelligan, GLI, August 2016

agreed to send up-dates regularly. This has proved to be a challenge.

Amongst the mentor unions the Nepalese unions have been the most active in sending GLI updates to be posted. ATGWU, Uganda, has also sent along a few updates, as has SYNATRA, Niger. SNTT, Colombia, has been the least active contributor to the blog. There has been some interaction with activists involved in the Project using the “comments” feature of the blog. The majority of comments have come from Project participants in West/East Africa, with a minority of comments coming from the Philippines and Nepal and zero from Colombia/Latin America.

What emerges from the site statistics is that the blog is being used primarily as an access point for Project materials and blog posts rather than a place for unions to directly share information. It has been well used in this regard having received 3737 views and 2208 unique visitors. Had there been a systematic attempt to speak to each union about how they used the blog (or indeed a discussion in the Evaluation Workshop), there would have been clearer indications as to if and how the blog could be used as a more active horizontal communication tool for the unions as well as a store of materials and Project archive.

Language has been a challenge as most blog posts are in English, and a minority in French and Spanish, making the blog less accessible and interesting for non-English speakers. Additionally, the blog is not easy to find from the ITF Global homepage, although on the GLI site it can be found much more readily. However, for continuing active use it would be important that it features much more prominently on the ITF site.

#### What are the lessons?

- It is important to be clear what the purpose of the blog is: an information repository, an active communication tool, a way of ITF communicating about informal transport workers?
- The blog works well as a repository of Project materials and for communicating updates for those who are happy to receive information by e-mail, for example mentor and mentored union leaders, ITF staff, funders.

- It makes the Project materials and information publicly available on the web sites of GLI and ITF (with reservations regarding its visibility and accessibility).
- It is less useful as a way of unions communicating directly with each other as information has to pass through the blog administrators (GLI/ITF).
- It is inaccessible to those not confident with the written word or illiterate or those without or limited access to, and/or skills to use, a computer or smart phone.
- To encourage unionists to provide regular news posts more active support and follow up, and tools such as a standardized up-date template, may be needed.
- Language limitations are barriers to access and active use of the blog, and attention needs to be paid to this for future.
- The blog needs to transition away from being a Project archive to being an online space for the ITF to communicate to affiliates about informal transport work, and to provide a platform on which updates from across the world can be shared and learning/campaigning materials can be made available.
- A mix of communication tools is needed. The blog provides one important tool, whose usage can be expanded. However, as noted, it has limitations, and additional ways of communicating with leaders and members both vertically and horizontally need to be explored.



## 7. PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS: EFFICIENCY

### Coordination and Accountability

The Project appears to have been well-managed overall, with efficient planning, coordination, monitoring, resource usage and financial accountability. For the most part reporting by mentor unions was timely, with some exceptions. This is reflected in the overall effectiveness of the Project in meeting expected results and achieving its objectives.

As noted in Section One, overall responsibility for the Project lay with the ITF Education Officer working with a Project Steering Committee consisting of relevant ITF staff members and the Project Coordinator from the GLI, with the ITF Finance Department overseeing all aspects of Project accounting including auditing. This combination of ITF oversight and financial responsibility, practical implementation by GLI working closely with mentor unions and a Project Steering Committee appears to have worked well, and could be replicated in future Projects.

There were some challenges when the mentoring strategy changed. Given the resultant increase in decentralized activities monitoring became more complex with reliance on mentor unions to report accurately on their increased activities. Not all mentor unions provided the detailed information required, especially on the metrics, and so there is no accurate figure for increases in membership overall or for new women members.

This is not unusual, as accurate membership figures are notoriously difficult to capture, especially without the advantage of check-off facilities for individual members. However, in future activities of this nature perhaps more attention should be paid to helping the unions to develop a way of more systematically keeping records.

Budgets were more complex as well. And as activities were taking place in the field payments could not all be paid directly by the ITF as designed and as implemented in the first phase of the Project. However tight systems were put in place: contracts were signed with partner organizations; financial transfers were made in several tranches and only made on receipt of satisfactory financial reports and receipts. All the unions have produced very good financial reports with receipts that the auditor has been very happy with .

### Communication

Communication between the GLI and the ITF was good, and with mentor unions generally worked well, but with some challenges. It proved far more difficult for the Project Coordinator to communicate with French and Spanish speaking mentor unions and to keep up to date with activities and developments than for those speaking English. Although there were written reports from Niger and Colombia that were translated, it proved more difficult to understand in detail some of the contextual issues and details of activities. There were also some difficulties with Nepalese. For example, during the EW Nepali translation was not arranged and participation of the Nepali participants was limited.

To overcome some of the difficulties with e-mail communication, phone and Skype calls were used from time to time. However, especially in Niger, telecommunications are very poor (internet, telephone), and so communication remained difficult throughout. In some cases, where people have been hard to contact by e-mail, WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger have been used successfully. Some participants have indicated that these, together with Facebook, are preferred forms of communication. Initiatives were taken amongst East African participants where a WhatsApp group and a closed Facebook page were created.

Whilst on the whole lines of communication were adequate, using alternative forms of communication accessible and favoured by participants is clearly something to be further explored for future projects. This would apply to coordinator-participating union communication as well as using the potential of such tools to encourage union-to-union and member-to-member communication. Language is also something that will need more attention in future projects, with more resources allocated for translation and interpretation.

In summing up the practical implementation of the Project, the ITF officer with day to day responsibility for Project administration and financial aspects stated:

“I think the ITF really benefitted from working with GLI on this Project. There were good lines of communication between the ITF, GLI and the unions involved in the Project. This meant that we were able to make informed decisions collectively to support the affiliates and the Project in the best possible way”.  
(Ali Howes, Education Assistant, ITF)

# SECTION THREE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 8. KEY SUCCESSSES AND CHALLENGES

The following is a summary of the some key successes and challenges of the Project over its 3 year life-span:

### Successes

- The understanding of who is an informal transport worker –including women- and who can and should be organized has been deepened and expanded.
- The Project was particularly successful in reaching informal workers engaged in
  - urban passenger transport, with inroads into the long distance goods transport
  - sector in Africa. More than 60 000 informal transport workers have been
  - newly organized or joined the trade union family through their associations.
- Women in informal transport have become more visible with at least 3500 new women members. Women’s committees have been formed in five unions and women elected to leadership positions in six.
- Unions have changed constitutions and policies to include the range of informal transport workers and to ensure provisions respond to their situation.
- The Project introduced a number of method innovations, the most striking being that of mentor unions. This allowed for good use of existing experience and capacities within unions and for resources to be used effectively.
- The adoption of the Informal Transport Workers’ Charter provides a focus for continued activity and the Informal Workers Blog a rich record of Project activities.
- The Project has enhanced the reputation of the ITF amongst participating unions.
- It has demonstrated how to manage a successful collaboration between the ITF and a supportive NGO (in this case the GLI).

### Challenges

- External events such as the Nepal earthquake or political upheavals delayed or necessitated adjustments to plans.
- Insufficient preparation of mentor (and mentored) unions meant that the role of mentor unions was not well understood until a more focused approach was adopted.
- This change to the delivery of the mentor programme meant that coordination was more complex, especially the collection of detailed information.
- Language and poor communication channels have proved to be barriers from time to time and would need more resources in future activities.
- The structural, policy and mind-set changes needed to ensure full integration and democratic rights for informal worker members is still “ work in progress”

## 8. THE FUTURE: INFORMAL TRANSPORT WORKERS AND THE ITF

9.

“Projects have beginnings and ends – but this work will continue”. (Alana Dave, ITF Education Officer)

“Organising in the Informal Economy is our Future” (Mac Urata, Inland Transport Section Secretary)

### Mass membership and power

The Project has highlighted the potential for growing and activating mass membership - one of the identified ITF levers of power - amongst transport workers in informal employment is large, particularly in the Global South.

As we have seen, in many of those countries most of the transport industry is informal, and without organising informal and precarious transport workers the unions are likely to find their power and relevance decline, or have already done so.

This is also true of some unions in industrialised countries of the North, and along the supply chains, where precarious and informal employment relationships are on the rise.

Whilst informal transport workers are often seen as less powerful than those in formal employment, in fact they have the power to disrupt passenger and goods transportation affecting the public, business and government. This is true locally and nationally, and may well be increasingly important across borders, in transport hubs and along global supply chains where formal and informal transport workers need to join hands to ensure maximum power can be exerted.

For this power to be realized organising amongst informal transport workers needs to be sustained within those unions already organising, and expanded to other unions and other countries, building on the learnings from this Project.

### Sustainability: organising momentum and unions in transition

During the EW unions agreed that the Informal Transport Workers' Charter will provide a focus for continued awareness raising and mobilization by the unions amongst informal transport workers and amongst formal workers and unions, as well as providing a tool for use in negotiations with government, employers and on other platforms. They committed to taking this forward in their unions as an

immediate continuance of the Project work and a way to maintain organising momentum.

However, this clearly is not enough to sustain and expand organising activity in the long term. A number of questions will need to be worked through. Integrating associations into the unions so that the structures are democratic and reflect the nature of the membership without creating conflict between informal and formal workers poses a challenge, as in Uganda. Making structural changes and setting dues at an affordable yet financially necessary level for union sustainability, whatever form membership takes applies to all unions. This is beginning to be tackled.

For example, in Colombia workers in the formal sector pay two per cent of their salary to the union, but informal workers pay one US dollar equivalent to facilitate their entry into the union. This was a constitutional change made by the SNTT reasoning that as informal workers earn on a daily basis and have irregular earnings, contributions cannot be based on a salary. But differences in dues payments can also be a point of discord if not handled carefully, and paying dues means that a service must be provided. And continuing attention to class, status and gender relationships within the informal transport sector itself, and with those in formal employment will be necessary to overcome discrimination and build a unified movement.

Realistically continuous support, either direct e.g. training, financial, or indirect e.g. through recognition and promotion, will be needed to reach a critical mass of organised informal transport workers so that this becomes a norm, providing legitimacy and a direct voice within and outside of the trade union movement. In this regard, the EW participants agreed that it was important to continue to raise awareness of the nature, extent and importance of workers in informal transport within the ITF itself.

If, as noted by Mac Urata, “organising in the informal economy is our future” then it is crucial that the message is disseminated and understood as widely as possible within the ranks of the ITF and beyond. There is now a general acceptance in the ITF that informal transport workers should be organised, but with questions as to how it can be done, and whether or not it is strategic to do.



As Stuart Howard (ITF Assistant General Secretary) asks, does the mass organisation of informal transport workers generate more power, or does it simply further increase demands on the ITF for services, training and support, and financial resources? (Spooner and Mwanika, 2016)

## Opportunities for continued work

### Amongst Informal Transport Workers

The Informal Transport Workers' Charter provides an immediate tool to mobilise around on the ground, to present within the ITF and to use to support multiple activities such as negotiations, advocacy and alliance building. At the Evaluation Workshop it was suggested that during the 2016 ITF Action Week the Charter could be used to lobby governments, and this could be publicised on the internet and through other media.

This will now form part of the Project extension work currently underway (September-December 2016). The extension is designed specifically to prepare information and advocacy materials with wide usage, but especially for presenting to important forums within the ITF, and should enhance the process of information sharing, advocacy and building support.

The Informal Transport Workers Blog provides another possible avenue for continued networking and communication amongst participating unions and others organising informal transport workers.

This could be supplemented through the use of appropriate and accessible other tools such as WhatsApp. This would of course require some limited resources from the ITF for coordination and technical support, including making it more accessible on the ITF web site. Interestingly, when the Global Alliance of Waste Pickers wanted to continue their networking processes as project funds dried up, with the assistance of WIEGO a web site and blog was set up to share stories from the grassroots on a regular basis.

Consideration is currently been given to how other media tools can be used to reach a wider audience and to encourage horizontal networking i.e. direct communication rather than all being mediated through a central web site/blog. Sharing experiences and learning from and with other global networks and organizations of informal workers could be helpful in taking things forward as noted in the collective bargaining training with StreetNet.

### Within ITF Strategies

As we have seen, there are strong synergies between many current ITF priorities and the issues facing informal workers. This serves to reinforce the view that informal employment is at the "lower" end of a continuum of employment relationships within the transport industry, and is not separate but an integral and linked-in part of the whole.

The introduction of BRT in an increasing number of cities affecting both formal and informal workers is a case in point. This is an area where work with informal transport workers is already underway, and which can be used as a focus for continued information sharing, joint campaigns and linkages with formal transport workers in the cities.

Violence and discrimination against women transport workers affects women in informal employment, as much as if not more than women formally employed, as testified to in the EW. The plans by the ITF Women's Committee for active participation in the ILO processes towards a standard on violence against women and men in the workplace, and the Women's Advocate Programme for example provide opportunities to proactively include informal women transport workers in all elements of the Committee's work.

This will help ensure that women informal transport workers are able to build on the recognition and organising momentum established through the Project, and also help to build solidarity between those informally and formally employed, thus giving them a bigger voice throughout the industry.

Whilst the four levers of power do not all appear directly relevant for informal transport workers, there may well be as yet unrecognised linkages.

Activating mass membership of informal transport workers certainly is of major importance. The focus on hubs could well be extended to include the transport hubs identified by the Project as important nodes of activity with linkages into the formal economy, across borders and with power to disrupt economic activity locally and beyond.

## 10. RECOMMENDATIONS

Ideally the Project should continue for at least another 3-year period, consolidating the gains made so far in the mentor and mentored unions and extending the support to a limited number of new sites.

This would allow for the implementation of lessons learned; for completion of and building on processes already started such as union restructuring and collective bargaining; for the realization of gains made and for the assessment of sustainability.

It would also mean that networking, sharing and learning amongst informal transport workers could continue and expand, as could informing and influencing ITF affiliates and structures, the union movement more broadly and international agencies, especially the ILO.

For future projects, drawing on the lessons learned, the following practical recommendations are made:

1. For mentor unions ensure that they fully understand and are given training and support on their roles, including the provision of a written guideline.
2. Support the identification and preparation of mentored unions by a pre-implementation of scoping and relationship building activities with the mentor union. The ITF regional offices could be pro-active in this regard.
3. Continue to develop the Informal Transport Workers Blog, ensuring it is accessible and give support to the unions to use the blog pro-actively.
4. Experiment with different communication forms to encourage horizontal communication and networking amongst unions.
5. Ensure enough resources are available for translation of documents and day-to-day communication as well as interpretation at meetings.
6. Ensure sufficient budget for international travel (mentor/mentored unions).
7. Build in stronger links with other informal worker organizations/ networks, and international agendas such as the ILO.
8. Include informal transport workers in current ITF priority activities, especially BRT and violence against women. Actively seek opportunities to do so in other strategic areas, with resources appropriately allocated.
9. Provide opportunities within the ITF for informal transport worker leaders to demonstrate the importance and potential power of organising informal transport workers, and the need for support and resources. Disseminate information widely amongst affiliates and beyond.
10. Positively promote the inclusion of informal transport workers in affiliate leadership positions (where informal worker members) and within the ITF structures, with special attention to women leadership.
11. Support networking between informal transport workers by providing practical support on communication and sharing experiences, and especially tracking and sharing how the Charter is being used as an immediate focus.
12. Be pro-active and take up opportunities to showcase the Project and work with other Global Union Federations (GUF), the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), the ILO, informal worker networks and supportive NGOs, on issues of workers in the informal economy.
13. Include representatives of informal transport workers in delegations and activities, for example, at the forthcoming ILC (2018-19) standard setting negotiations on Violence against Women and Men in the Workplace.

Regardless of whether a new project is possible, organising informal transport workers should continue and be integrated into the strategies and activities of the ITF:

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