



## MID-PROJECT MENTOR MEETING



KATHMANDU, NEPAL, 25-27 FEBRUARY 2015

### Meeting Report

Special thanks to all the participants, and to NETWON and ITWAN for their support and hospitality.



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## INTRODUCTION

The mid-project meeting was held in Kathmandu, Nepal, from 25-27<sup>th</sup> February 2015. It brought together 20 representatives from the project's six mentor unions: NETWON and ITWAN from Nepal, SNTT from Colombia, SYNATRA from Niger, AGTWU from Uganda, and NCTU from the Philippines, as well as staff from the ITF, and the project coordinators, the Global Labour Institute (GLI).

The objective of the meeting was to allow project participants to share their experiences of the project so far, to evaluate its progress, and to revise plans for the next year of the project (2015-2016).

During the meeting, participants from each union gave interviews on video. These can be found on the project blog <http://www.informalworkersblog.org/>

## PRESENTATIONS ON 2014 ACTIVITY

To begin the meeting, mentor union representatives made presentations to the rest of the group, which were then each followed by lively question and answer sessions. Mentor unions were broadly asked to cover the following areas in their presentations:

- outline activities associated with the project undertaken in 2014;
- highlight specific challenges/achievements/results associated with the project;
- offer general reflections on the project.

The *Suggested Guidelines for Mentor Union Presentations* which were given to each mentor union can be found in the Report Appendix. Some mentor unions produced power point presentations and written reports which can be found on the <http://www.informalworkersblog.org/>

The presentations from each union can be summarised as follows:

### Colombia (SNTT)

In Colombia, the challenge of organising informal transport workers is substantial. There are 1.7 million people working in the transport sector and 1.4 million of these workers are in the informal sector. This means that informal workers vastly outnumber their formal counterparts. The political context for union organising is dangerous, and the exercise of the right to freedom of association is limited. Trade unionists face continuous threats and many trade unionists have been murdered.

Despite this, SNTT is an active union which is able to mobilise people and bring them onto the streets. SNTT has been the only union in the transport sector to take the issue of informality seriously and has had two recent notable successes in organising informal transport workers: one involving informal taxi drivers and the other involving outsourced



Taxi drivers protesting in Bogata



workers of the Colombian national airline, Avianca.

Since 2009, SNTT has been campaigning to improve working conditions of the 600 000 taxi drivers estimated to be working informally in the transport sector. These taxi drivers operate privately owned vehicles and have no access to social security benefits or a steady salary. In 2014, SNTT successfully lobbied the government to introduce a decree which established access to social security for taxi drivers.

For the vast majority of informal taxi drivers this has been an important and significant step towards the protections and security of formal employment, though a minority of drivers have opposed the implementation of the decree due to short-term economic concerns related to social security deductions from their income. The challenge now for SNTT is to make sure that this decree is actually implemented and that social security “becomes a reality” for those taxi drivers previously excluded from its provisions

Another achievement for SNTT has been the reinstatement of some of the 300 workers who were dismissed by Avianca Airlines in 2014. SNTT continues to lead the struggle in demanding that all of these 300 workers, whose jobs had been outsourced and essentially “informalised” by Avianca, be reinstated as formal employees of the company.

SNTT aims to build on these successes by introducing reforms within the union to make it easier for informal workers to become members of the union, and to take an active role in its structures. The SNTT aims to introduce such reforms, including constitutional amendments, at its General Assembly due to be held in May 2015.

SNTT currently has 600 members who are informal workers. The union aims to increase this number to 7000 informal members in the next year, with the objective of transitioning these members into the formal economy as soon as possible.

Organising women workers has been particularly difficult for the SNTT because of societal customs in Colombia which generally expect women to stay at home and look after children rather than earn an income through paid work. The majority of transport workers are men, but in the minority of cases where women do work, husbands often do not allow their wives to join unions.

Despite these cultural barriers, which exacerbate the difficulties of an already challenging organising environment, SNTT have recruited 25 women from the informal transport sector. SNTT aims to engage more women through workshops, and is planning to hold outreach activities across four cities in Colombia on International Women’s Day (March 8<sup>th</sup>).

## Philippines (NCTU)

In the past year, NCTU has focused on two campaigns relating to the project, both of which have been successful. The first of these campaigns was a campaign against the Filipino government’s plan to phase out mini-buses without offering job transition provisions for the many drivers who are informal workers in the sector. As a result of the NCTU campaign, and the resulting dialogue with the Department for Transport, the plan has been scrapped by the government.

The second of these campaigns has been against the government’s introduction of new excessive penalties and fines for violations of minor rules on transport workers, most of who work in the informal transport economy. These penalties will disproportionately hit those earning the least - for example a driver on a low daily wage could be fined up to \$60 for wearing an incorrect uniform. NCTU

has successfully mobilised resistance, and has submitted a petition to the Supreme Court demanding that the new law be nullified on the basis of it being “illegal and unjust”.

During the ITF Action Week (October 2014), NCTU successfully lobbied for the government bodies responsible for land transport – the Land Transport Office (LTO) and the Land Transport Franchising Regulatory Body (LTFRB) – to introduce a memorandum regulating the operation of UBER taxis. NCTU picketed the LTO and LTFRB offices to draw attention to the illegal operation of UBER and GrabTaxis (a similar mobile-phone based service) in the Philippines, which are a source of unsafe and unfair competition for existing taxi drivers.

As part of its project activities NCTU has conducted leadership training and leadership discussions at national and local levels. This has led to an increased level of political awareness of leaders, and at the local level it has meant greater engagement with local issues. In the province of Batangas, these leadership discussions, along with education programmes, led to the joining of 15 local associations to NCTU.

Over the past year, NCTU has federated a total of 32 new associations – mainly of Jeepney and tricycle workers/owners – and has increased its dues-paying membership base by recruiting 3,000 new members. NCTU now has a total of 27,500 informal worker members. On the back of this success, four leaders have volunteered themselves to continue to expand the work of the NCTU in engaging and working with those in the informal transport sector.



**NCTU leaders protest against unregulated Uber taxis during ITF Action week (Oct. 2014)**

NCTU has been successful in increasing women’s participation at both the local and federal levels of the union. Out of the 32 federated associations, 20 of the association leaders are women. While women are generally not the drivers of public transport vehicles in the Philippines, they often hold important positions within the local associations, such as those of treasurer or president.

NCTU has also been providing “livelihood training” to the wives of members as part of a “wives’ empowerment programme” which aims to increase the financial resilience and security of families who were previously reliant on a single income stream derived from the informal transport sector.

The NCTU has been less successful in ensuring that women are represented in the national structures of NCTU governance with only one woman – the president of a local Jeepney association – sitting on the NCTU National Board of Directors. The NCTU aims to increase women’s participation at all levels of NCTU governance over the next year of the project.

Financially sustaining leadership training and education programmes is a big challenge for NCTU, and in order to combat this it is aiming to double the amount of membership dues collected over the next year. This extra income will bolster the sustainability of such programmes, which have proven themselves to be essential for engaging and recruiting informal transport workers.

## Niger (SYNATRA)

SYNATRA is a union of 7000 informal workers from across Niger, the vast majority of who are women. As well as transport workers, its members include waste pickers, food vendors, domestic workers, carpenters, metal workers, wood workers, plumbers and electricians. During the first year of the project, SYNATRA has increased the number of informal transport workers in the union from 380 to the current level of 1608.

As part of its project activities, SYNATRA has strengthened links with FENASEIN<sup>1</sup>, the National Federation of Informal Workers, affiliated to StreetNet International and UGSEIN, the National Federation of Informal Workers Niger<sup>2</sup>. SYNATRA also hosted the Africa Regional Leadership Seminar held in Niamey in March 2014.<sup>3</sup>

Following the Niamey meeting, SYNATRA met with the National Youth Network in Niger and various associations including the Consumers Association of Niger, associations of tricycle and motorcycle (“kabou kabou”) taxi drivers. SYNATRA used these meetings to talk about the project objectives, and highlight the importance of organising informal workers in order for their voices to be heard.



SYNATRA Youth Committee

In its meetings with different associations of workers, SYNATRA stressed the importance of strengthening organising capacities and working with other groups of informal workers in order to have an impact on the authorities. In Niger, it is only unions that have the legal right to represent workers’ demands to the authorities. Therefore SYNATRA encourages the formation of unions rather than associations because unions can provide a stronger and more effective collective bargaining platform for workers.

SYNATRA offered support to all the associations it met with, and concluded working agreements with three associations: the Women and Development Action (FACDEV), Godya Womens’ Group and the Alhamdou Lila Association of Postwomen.

As a result of these agreements, SYNATRA gained 400 new women members. Many of these women work in and around the informal transport economy – for example as food vendors and telephone operators based at taxi stands and bus stations.

In its capacity as a mentor union, SYNATRA has supported the creation of two new unions: one for tourism workers and the other for dockworkers. The General Secretary of SYNATRA, Zeinabou Habou

<sup>1</sup> [Federation Nationale des Syndicats.](#)

<sup>2</sup> For more on TU landscape of Niger, see LO (Danish) Labour Market Profile [2012](#) and [2014](#). Note the activities of the non ITF-affiliated FENISPROCTAM, “The Nigerien trade union movement has extended its services to the informal sector. USTN (Union Nationale des Travailleurs du Niger) have around 50,000 members from the informal economy, mainly the union FENISPROCTAM, which organises around 23,000 motorbike-taxi riders and is the largest affiliate organisation of USTN. SYNATRA is a union for informal workers that are also affiliated to USTN.”, LO 2014, p.15.

<sup>3</sup> See [Africa Regional Leadership Seminar Report.](#)



Barma, spoke about the project and the importance of organising women transport workers at the ITF Congress held in August 2014.

SYNATRA and its partner organisations have been successful in increasing the visibility of informal workers, especially those who are women, to the government of Niger. In March 2015 the Ministry of Work and Employment will convene a workshop on collective bargaining which SYNATRA hopes will lead to improved bargaining conditions unions of informal workers.

The challenges faced by SYNATRA in organising informal transport workers have included the complexity of the informal sector, as well as the unwillingness of other unions to attempt to organise within the sector. There is also a lack of organising capacity amongst informal workers, even those who are already members of associations. For example, the leaders of existing “kabou kabou” associations do not have a trade union background, and lack the ability to effectively engage in collective bargaining.

In the next year of the project, SYNATRA aims to develop the capacity of informal transport unions, helping them become better organised, more visible, and more representative. SYNATRA aims to particularly focus of increasing the visibility of women and young workers within these unions. SYNATRA also aims to reach out to some of the unions which attended the Niamey regional workshop in March 2014, and support their work in engaging informal transport workers. In order to bring about these objectives, it is clear that more financial support is needed.

## Uganda (ATGWU)

ATGWU has successfully used the model of recruiting already-existing associations (rather than individuals) to join the union as a method of engaging with and organising informal transport workers. In order for an association to become affiliated to the ATGWU, it must be registered with the government. It must also have a constitution, a list of members, a bank account, and an office location accessible to the ATGWU. So far, ten associations of informal transport workers have been affiliated to the ATGWU, adding 4,357 informal workers to the union membership which now stands at 10,338. These affiliates include associations of taxi drivers, “boda boda” motorcycle taxi drivers, market vendors who work alongside the road and airport workers (casual staff, airport taxis and cargo handlers).

Out of the 4,357 new informal sector members recruited to the ATGWU during the project, 730 are women. Given that before this point there were only three women transport workers who were union members, this represents a huge success in increasing women’s membership in the union.

ATGWU has formed an informal workers’ committee to ensure that their concerns are represented in the union structures. This committee is currently comprised of four women and five men. There is also one member of the executive from the informal sector who represents their interests at the top level of the union. This number is set to increase following a planned constitutional amendment which will allow more informal sector workers to sit on the executive board. ATGWU has also held two leadership training workshops for informal sector leaders, which has resulted in the training of 40 leaders.

A key lesson learned by the ATGWU has been that informal workers are often already organised, although not in union structures. Therefore the methodology for organising these workers must be flexible, and able to work with the associational structures that are already in place. ATGWU has found that members of informal sector associations are often unaware of the negotiating role that unions are legally able to play in Uganda, and have been educating informal workers about this.



ATGWU has found that workers in the informal sector have immediate and pressing problems which the union needs to deliver quick solutions to. In the case of airport taxi drivers, ATGWU was able to quickly tackle a parking problem at the airport by negotiating with the police on behalf of the drivers. As a result of this negotiation, there are now designated areas at the airport for taxi drivers to park.

Despite successes, ATGWU has faced multiple challenges in organising informal transport workers. In general, effective organising in the informal sector is hampered by the high level of mobility in the sector, low levels of literacy, a lack of capacity amongst leaders and a lack of resources – both in terms of time and money - available to informal workers for organising amongst themselves.

On a political level, ATGWU have found that the informal worker associations are often heavily influenced by political parties, which means that organising these associations can be politically complex. On a policy level, the national law pertaining to formalisation in the informal transport sector is still in the process of being ratified. ATGWU also faces the problem of the Ugandan union movement being divided between two national centres.

In the next year of the project, ATGWU aims to recruit 15 new associations from the informal transport sector to the union, train more volunteer organisers, and further increase the visibility of women activists in the sector. It also aims to take a pro-active mentoring role in working with unions from Kenya and Rwanda.

In order to achieve these goals, the ATGWU needs additional financial support from the project. These financial resources will be channelled into developing and producing educational materials, funding transport, buying equipment such as public address systems and covering the cost of maintaining international relationships between unions.

## Nepal (ITWAN)

In Nepal there are at least 600,000 informal transport workers. These workers face the common problems of having no social security, no legal protection, no fixed salary or working hours and no job security. Transport workers are also often seen in a negative light by the public. ITWAN is trying to mobilise workers to help them overcome these multiple challenges.

Women workers face further problems because of the high levels of discrimination that exist within the transport sector in Nepal. For example, women drivers are generally not allowed to drive four-wheeled vehicles such as mini-buses or taxis, and are discriminated against by vehicle owners who favour hiring male drivers.

ITWAN believes that this unfair discrimination against women needs to be combatted and has been lobbying the government to provide employment opportunities for all, both women and men, in the transport sector.

In the past year, ITWAN has been focusing on developing the capacities of women workers in the sector. In June 2014 ITWAN and NETWON co-hosted the Asia Regional Women's Workshop in Kathmandu. Following the workshop, ITWAN was able to recruit 25 new members from the heavy transport sector.

In January 2015, ITWAN convened a Women's Conference. Since this conference, ITWAN has provided training to 40 women who are transitioning from three-wheeled vehicles ("tempos"), which are being phased out by the government, to heavier four-wheeled vehicles.

ITWAN has formed a women's committee for women workers in Kathmandu, in order to increase the capacity of these workers, and make sure their voices are heard within the union. Youth committees have also been formed in different districts in Nepal to encourage youth membership and participation in the union.

ITWAN has also been campaigning against new laws which have introduced unfair and disproportionate punishments for drivers who are involved in traffic accidents. On the back of this campaign, ITWAN has recruited 100 new members from the informal transport sector. These new members include 40 women and 50 young people. ITWAN aims to continue recruiting more members to the union, making sure that existing members renew their membership.

## Nepal (NETWON)

NETWON has focused its project activities on mobilising and organising women activists in the informal transport sector. It has formed a new Regional Women's Committee in the union, and has convened three meetings of the National Women's Committee to discuss project objectives and strategies. It has also included discussions about the project in its latest trade union education programme.

Following the Asia Regional Women's Workshop, co-hosted in Kathmandu by NETWON and ITWAN in June 2014, NETWON women activists employed methodologies learned at the workshop to reach-out to women street vendors from the Kalanki, Bagbazar and Lagankhel areas of Nepal. This exercise resulted in the recruitment of 35 new women street vendor members, and a special committee for these new members is now under formation. On the back of this success, NETWON is now trying to organise women garbage cleaners and women who work in private sector companies.

NETWON has also been supporting women tuk-tuk or "tempo" drivers in resisting and responding to government plans to phase out these three-wheeled electronic vehicles in the Kathmandu valley area. Tempos, which are seen as "culturally acceptable" for women to drive in Nepal – unlike four wheeled vehicles, have historically provided many women with a source of income in the transport sector. There are estimated to be over 1000 women tempo drivers in Kathmandu who will lose their livelihoods if the government plans go ahead.



**NETWON National Women's Committee**

On a policy level, NETWON has been working in partnership with ITWAN in lobbying the government to provide loans for women transport workers to buy their own vehicles. This is a strategy to reduce the reliance of women drivers on vehicle-owners who are likely to discriminate against them. NETWON has also been lobbying the government to implement social security programmes for informal transport workers.

NETWON is predominantly a union of informal transport workers, and faces many challenges organising in this sector. Problems include the low levels of education and rights-awareness amongst workers, a lack of factual data on the sector and an inadequate set of legal protections for informal workers. While there is a statutory minimum wage in Nepal, this law is poorly implemented, and international standards and guidelines are ignored.





Over the next year of the project NETWON aims to continue its work of mobilising and organising informal transport workers, with a particular focus on women. Further financial support is needed from the project in order to support activities such as training women to drive four-wheeled vehicles. This training would help women transition from tempo tuk-tuks to larger vehicles.

## WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

### SHARED ISSUES

From the presentations of the mentor unions, and the group discussions which followed, the following characteristics of informal transport sector and key issues facing the workforce were identified:

**Lack of access to social security:** the vast majority of informal workers are not covered by even the most basic of social security schemes<sup>4</sup>. This means that they are unlikely to receive an income if they become sick or pregnant and have limited access to basic healthcare and income support in old-age. Promoting formalisation and ensuring access to social security benefits for informal workers is a major challenge for unions organising in the informal sector.

An example of where unions have had success in this area is the SNTT's successful lobbying of the Colombian government to introduce a decree allowing informal taxi drivers to join social security schemes. However, the SNTT is now faced with the difficult task of ensuring that this formal right to social security is translated into reality for taxi drivers.

**Lack of legal protections:** informal transport workers generally work in unregulated environments, where health and safety standards and minimum working conditions are either not applicable or are not enforced. This means that workers often work long shifts in dangerous conditions, and have no access to legal redress if they are underpaid, forced to work overtime, or are involved in accidents at work.

In response to these challenges, unions tend to adopt the twin strategies of providing their own internal mechanisms of mutual support and protection for workers (providing financial support in the case of traffic accidents for example), whilst also lobbying the government to implement minimum working conditions for all workers.

**Punitive legal regimes:** while informal transport workers enjoy few legal protections, they are often subject to harsh and disproportionate punishments by government authorities. Both NCTU in the Philippines and ITWAN and NETWON in Nepal have been campaigning against new laws promulgated by their respective governments, which the unions feel introduce excessive punishments for drivers who commit minor traffic offences (Philippines) or are involved in traffic accidents (Nepal).

**Poor working conditions:** related to the issues outlined above, informal transport workers often work long hours in poor conditions, and are rarely provided with adequate paid rest or holidays.

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<sup>4</sup> See ILO (2012) definition of basic social protection floor which includes: a) access to essential health care, including maternity care; b) basic income security for children, providing access to nutrition, education, care and any other necessary goods and services; c) basic income security for persons in active age who are unable to earn sufficient income, in particular in cases of sickness, unemployment, maternity and disability; and d) basic income security for older persons.



Workers rarely have access to facilities such as toilets which is a particular problem for women who require toilets, especially when pregnant or menstruating.

**Job and income insecurity:** again related to the issues outlined above, work in the informal transport sector is characterised by a high degree of insecurity. Workers are often paid daily, and incomes can vary substantially from day-to-day. Even in countries where there is minimum wage legislation in place, such as in Nepal, this is rarely enforced in the informal sector.

Workers are unlikely to be paid if they take time off work due to illness, injury, pregnancy, or caring responsibilities. This lack of income security disproportionately affects women who may become pregnant and who are most likely to take on caring responsibilities.

The lack of job and income security makes organising in the informal sector particularly challenging for unions because workers are often unwilling to sacrifice a day's pay in order to involve themselves in organising efforts. ATGWU stressed the difficulty of asking workers who are surviving on a day-to-day basis to become involved in union activities, and argued that funding was needed to cover the expenses of potential organisers in the informal sector.

**Violence and harassment:** workers in the informal transport sector are vulnerable to violence and harassment, especially from the police. Police harassment often results in the extortion of bribes and fines from transport workers. The daily threat of violence and harassment disproportionately affects women workers who experience endemically high levels of sexual violence/harassment from the police, passengers and fellow workers.

**Discrimination against women:** there is widespread discrimination against women in the transport sector. In Nepal, for example, women drivers are discriminated against in favour of male drivers by companies and vehicle owners, and are generally not "trusted" to drive four-wheeled vehicles. Women are faced with widespread cultural/societal barriers to accessing employment, and even to joining trade unions, due to the expectation that they should be "staying at home" rather than engaging in paid work and union activism.

**Urban transport policy/modernisation programmes:** across the board, informal transport workers are faced with "modernising" urban transport policies that do not take into account their interests or potential loss of livelihoods. The roll-out of neoliberal inspired "private-partnership" Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) systems in many cities, and the planned phasing out of tempos in Nepal and jeepneys in the Philippines are clear examples of this.

## ORGANISATION

Mentor unions have developed two distinct methods of organising. One has been to recruit and organise workers directly, as in the case of ITWAN, NETWON, and SNTT. The other has been to affiliate existing associations of informal workers, as in the case of NCTU and AGTWU. SYNATRA employs both of these methods, though it mostly recruits members directly.

Unions have formed special committees of informal workers and/or women informal workers, to make sure that their concerns are represented in the union structures. Informal workers have also gained seats on the executive or directors' boards of unions. In cases where there have been institutional barriers, some unions have initiated reforms and sometimes constitutional amendments to overcome them.

Some unions, such as ATGWU, have allocated organisers to specifically work with the informal sector, and include information about the project and its objectives in trade union education programmes.

## SNTT experience of Bus Rapid Transport (BRT)

SNTT does not think that BRT systems are inherently bad: they could be inclusive and fair, but there are major problems with implementation.

The union estimates that 50-60% of workers in the bus system lost their jobs with the introduction of BRT, forcing people into ever-more precarious and informal work. The BRT operators are fiercely anti-union, and trade union activists were sacked.

Only 4% of the profits of the BRT goes back into improving the system - developing the infrastructure and benefitting the city. It was the city which built the infrastructure in the first place, but the profits go to private companies. Small vehicle owners were displaced, removed from routes where they were working, and there was no programme to help them or the drivers make the transition.

At the time when BRT was being introduced, there were very few unions in the transport sector. Those that did exist were largely corrupt. With no effective union representation, there was no opposition to BRT, and no negotiation to ensure that the implementation just and fair.

The BRT is only useful for the middle classes. The fares are very expensive. The 1.5 million users generate huge profits for the system owners, controlled by just nine families. The mobility of citizens is not prioritised with lengthy queues and insufficient parking at terminals.

The system was justified on environmental grounds, even though the fuel that is used by BRT is the same as any other. BRT is simply a business promoted by the IMF/World Bank.

## THE ROLE OF MENTOR UNIONS

From the outset, the project has been based on the idea of 'mentor unions'. These were invited to lead the project, due to their experience in organising and developing collective bargaining power for informal economy transport workers. They were to work as a network, capable of providing support, advice and training to other unions in their respective regions/ sub-regions.

It was hoped that they would identify and develop trainers from among their officers and representatives capable of supporting organising initiatives in other unions and associations. They would provide support and advice on the organisation of precarious and informal workers, host workshops and training seminars, and contribute to a global inter-regional exchange of experiences, techniques and policy proposals.

This was a relatively new approach in the ITF, 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.

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 "mentoree" 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.

By the time of the mid-term meeting however, a collective understanding and appreciation of the role of mentor unions had begun to emerge, which led to some fresh thinking about planned activities for the remainder of the project.

## PLANS FOR 2015-16

The original project design had assumed that the major part of second year of project activities would be a sequence of sub-regional workshops designed for local organisers from four or five unions in the region, each workshop to be hosted by the mentor union for the region. Each workshop was to “Train union activists in organising skills specific to the needs and issues of informal economy workers, and to overcome constitutional and procedural constraints to the inclusion and democratic participation of informal workers in trade union governance.”

At the same time, the teams of women activists who had participated in the regional women’s workshops would be undertaking local information gathering / mapping to build a picture of informal women workers’ livelihoods and issues in preparation for local organising initiatives. Based on the plans of action developed in the regional workshops, the teams would attempt to: “Estimate the numbers of women workers employed in the informal transport industry, identify the major transport-related occupations employing women and their employment relationships, potential collective bargaining counterparts, and key priorities as potential issues for collective bargaining”.

While these objectives remain the same, the meeting proposed that a revised programme should be developed that concentrated on a day-to-day mentoring process, rather than large (and expensive) training events involving many unions at once.

Instead of the mentor unions hosting regional organising workshops involving unions from five or six different countries, it was agreed that the mentor unions work directly and more intensively with one or two unions in their region where there is clear potential and capacity. This would vary from region to region, depending on the relationships already in place, the specific groups of workers targeted, ease of travel and communications etc.

At the same time, it was agreed to give support to the teams of women established in the women’s workshops to undertake mapping and organising (see below).

Following a group discussion it was agreed that the revised programme for 2015-16 should go ahead. Participants were enthusiastic about working on a one-to-one basis with other unions, and agreed that this would be a more effective mentoring strategy.

The group were then asked to split off into their respective unions to discuss and produce a draft mentoring plan for 2015-16, including a proposal for which union(s) they would be looking to work with, and a breakdown of activities to be undertaken. These were subsequently integrated with proposed activities in support of the Visibility of Women strand of the project (see Appendix II).

## VISIBILITY OF WOMEN

The participants were split up into one group of women, and one group of men. These two groups were asked to reflect on the Visibility of Women strand of the project, and to make proposals for strengthening the activities associated with it.

### WOMEN'S GROUP

The women's group included women from Nepal, Niger and the Philippines. The women discussed current problems facing women in their sector, and then talked about strategies to tackle these problems and plans to strengthen the visibility of women strand of the project.

Problem	Comments
Job insecurity	<b>Nepal:</b> workers earn money on a daily basis. This means that if you're sick, then you don't get money on that day. This is worse for women because there is no agreement on issues relating to pregnancy.
Poor working conditions	<b>Nepal:</b> The lack of facilities available to workers in the sector affects women more than men because women need access to toilets – especially during pregnancy and menstruation.
Long working hours	<b>Nepal:</b> the working day is very long. On an average day, tempo drivers work for fourteen hours because they must make at least ten trips in a day. Rest time is limited; workers are entitled to only four days off every month. <b>Niger:</b> working conditions are better in Niger; workers are entitled to eight days off per month.
Societal discrimination	<b>Nepal:</b> society is conservative and generally expects women to stay at home rather than work. Vehicle owners discriminate against women drivers, and women are more likely to be illiterate, which marginalises them further. Even if women are educated, they are still often not taken seriously in society.
Violence against women	<b>Nepal:</b> women face the threat of violence both at home and at work. At work, women are subject to violence, which can include sexual harassment and rape, from the police, passengers and other workers. Women who experience violence often do not share this experience with others because they feel ashamed to speak out. They also think that they would not be believed or taken seriously if they tried to report a case to the police or another authority. <b>Philippines:</b> women in the Philippines are subject to violence at home and at work.
Lack of legal protection	<b>Nepal:</b> there are a lack of laws protecting women from violence, in particular laws relating to rape and sexual harassment. There is also a general lack of legal protections for workers in the informal sector, for example there are no laws stipulating minimum working conditions for all workers.

Violence against women was highlighted as the most serious problem facing women workers. The group agreed that laws were needed to protect women from violence and to provide them with avenues of redress if they were victims of violence. It was also agreed that unions needed to work with other organisations to provide support, counselling and legal advice for women who experience violence. It was agreed that men need to be educated and sensitised around issues of gender-based violence, and that these issues should be included in trade union education programmes.

The group proposed that the Nepalese unions, NETWON and ITWAN, should form a joint women's committee which would allow women from both unions to work together to undertake activities tackling violence against women. The women from Nepal suggested that the provision of self-defence training could be one of the activities incorporated into the project.



Women's discussion group

The women from Niger proposed organising a forum on violence and harassment against women in the informal economy. This forum would allow women to identify common problems, formulate a plan of campaigning action and to come out with a declaration at the end of the event.

In relation to the problems of job security and lack of legal protections, the women from Nepal proposed that women could lead lobbying campaigns. For example in Nepal, women could demand minimum working conditions for women workers in the absence of any current protective legislation.

In order to strengthen the Visibility of Women strand of the project, it was agreed that further mapping of women in the informal transport sector was needed. This mapping would facilitate a deeper understanding of women's role in the informal transport economy and therefore make unions more responsive to their needs, and better at recruiting them as members.

The women from Nepal said that they wanted to focus on mapping women electric rickshaw drivers, as this is a new and currently unorganised section of the informal workforce. The women from Niger said that they would undertake mapping at the local level, and focus on the women working in auxiliary roles, such as ticket sellers and those working at petrol pumps. This mapping would be followed by organising and activist development for new members.

## MEN'S GROUP

The men's group included men from Nepal, Colombia, the Philippines and Uganda. The men discussed the activities related to Visibility of Women strand of the project that had been undertaken by their unions so far, and proposed plans for the future. The group agreed that unions must adopt a broad definition of "transport worker" in order to engage and organise women effectively. This is because women are generally not drivers in the transport sector, and instead work in auxiliary roles, which can often be the most precarious and insecure jobs in the informal transport economy.



The men from SNTT explained that the union is planning to use the forthcoming International Women's Day (March 8<sup>th</sup>) as a platform for mobilising and organising women workers in Colombia. In particular the day will provide an opportunity for the SNTT to campaign against the fear associated with union organising by many women. The need for such a campaign became particularly apparent during a mapping exercise undertaken as part of the Bogata Women's Workshop held in October 2014, where activists found a high level of fear related to unions and organising amongst women workers.

The men from Uganda shared their experiences of affiliating associations of women workers to the ATGWU. These associations include GALEMA, an association of female roadside vendors, and the Association of Entebbe Women Taxi Drivers, which has recently begun to organise.

The men from ITWAN and NETWON explained that there is some potential for organising women porters in rural parts of Nepal, however the greatest potential for organising women workers in the transport sector lay in organising the tempo drivers of Kathmandu, as this is the area of the sector with the most women workers.

In the Philippines, the NCTU has mainly mapped women working in a terminal in Manila. NCTU has found that there are female jeepney and tricycle operators, but women mainly work as vendors. The NCTU has also been supporting the wives of the jeepney drivers to develop skills<sup>5</sup> which allow them to secure their own income stream, thus improving the overall family income of jeepney drivers. NCTU aims to share these ideas with its potential partner union, IDEA in Cambodia. It also aims to develop more women leaders in the union.

## INFORMAL WORKERS & ITF STRATEGY

Mac Urata and Alana Dave from the ITF both made closing presentations to the group which stressed the need for unions and the ITF to not only oppose unfair policies and practices, but to present and fight for an alternative agenda which prioritises the rights of *all* workers, the public interest, and the environment, above private profit. In other words, unions need to know what their position is before they get to the bargaining table with the authorities.

In particular, Alana highlighted the need for the ITF and its affiliates to think about what decent public transport systems would look like, how they might be transitioned to – i.e. what would fair and inclusive programmes of formalisation look like - and make coherent policy proposals on this basis. She suggested that public transport systems need to be environmentally friendly, provide decent jobs and be accessible to all, including working class commuters.

In the case of BRT, Alana proposed that unions who have experienced the introduction of BRT in their countries should share their experiences with unions who are likely to face the introduction of BRT in the future. She suggested that the ITF could facilitate a sharing of BRT case studies from across the world, with the aim of raising awareness about BRT amongst ITF affiliates, as well as strengthening the bargaining power of unions looking to resist and/or shape BRT implementation in their countries.

Both Alana and Mac highlighted the potential for the project to be linked up with other strands of ITF campaigning and activities, for example with its Violence Against Women campaign and Climate Change campaign, as well as with its internal structures including the ITF Women's Committee, and

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<sup>5</sup> Rug making for jeepneys.



the Road Transport Sector. Mac stressed that organising in the informal sector is one of the key priorities for the road transport sector over the next four years.

Mac concluded by drawing attention to the upcoming International Labour Conference of the ILO due to be held in June 2015 which will include a “standard-setting” discussion on “facilitating transitions from the informal to the formal economy”. This discussion aims to produce a formal recommendation on transitions to the formal economy, and Mac urged the informal workers present at the meeting to apply through their national centres to become members of the Workers Group at the ILO, in order to positively influence the discussions in this area.

## REPORTING AND PROJECT EVALUATION

The meeting ended with a final group discussion about the project, and in particular about how communications could be improved. Alana from the ITF stressed the need for mentor unions to report activities back to the ITF so that their experiences and insights can be fed back into shaping and improving ITF strategy, campaigns and education.

The group agreed to continue to send updates to be posted on the project blog, and there was a general consensus that it would be easier for mentor unions to update the project coordinator by video call rather than by written report. It was agreed that both mentor unions and the project coordinators would make better use of visual materials such as photos and videos in documenting and communicating project activities, because these mediums are more widely accessible and do not necessarily rely on people being able to read.

Mentor unions also highlighted the need for more project materials to be made available in their native languages, and some also requested to have the option of reporting back to the project coordinator in their native language.

Following the end of the meeting, some participants took part in video interviews in which they shared some reflections on organising informal workers. These videos are now available on the project blog.



## CONCLUSIONS

It was agreed that:

- The project plan and budget for 2015-16 will be revised so that mentor unions can undertake their new mentoring plans. These plans focus on the intensive mentoring of one or two unions in their region.
- Mentor unions will send regular updates about relevant news and activities to the project coordinator.
- ITF, GLI and mentor unions will all make better use of visual materials to communicate information, news and activities about the project.
- More project materials will be translated into different languages.

It was suggested that:

- The ITF should collect BRT case studies from mentor unions, conduct further research in the area, and disseminate relevant information related to BRT to affiliate unions.
- The ITF should link up existing campaigns – including its campaign targeting Violence Against Women – with project activities.
- Mentor unions should try and send informal workers to the upcoming International Labour Conference in June 2015 so they can be party to the discussions on transitions from the informal to the formal economy (though unions with minimal financial resources will need support to do this).



Mid-term meeting participants

## PARTICIPANT LIST

Name	Union	Country
Juan de Dios Badillo Reyes	SNTT	Colombia
Francisco Mora Guerra	SNTT	Colombia
Arjun Aryal	ITWAN	Nepal
Maya Bega	ITWAN	Nepal
Rajib Ghimire	ITWAN	Nepal
Bidur Karki	ITWAN	Nepal
Dil Kumari Pradhan	ITWAN	Nepal
Tejasal Aryal	ITWAN (translator)	Nepal
Dharma Raj Bhandari	NETWON	Nepal
Jagnath Gautam	NETWON	Nepal
Ajay Kumar Rai	NETWON	Nepal
Bishnu Rijal	NETWON	Nepal
China Budhthoki	NETWON	Nepal
Satya Devi Timsina	NETWON	Nepal
Zeinabou Habou Barma	SYNATRA	Niger
Salamatou Moukaila	SYNATRA	Niger
Jose P Aguilar	NCTU	Philippines
Levie V Santiago	NCTU	Philippines
Azizi Kiirya	ATGWU	Uganda
Stephen Abima	ATGWU	Uganda
Dave Spooner	GLI	UK
Jess Whelligan	GLI	UK
Alana Dave	ITF	UK
Mac Urata	ITF	UK
Nishi Kapahi	ITF	India

**Informal workers blog** 

**Informal Transport Workers' Blog**

<http://www.informalworkersblog.org/>



# APPENDIX I

## SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR MENTOR UNION PRESENTATIONS

Each mentor union will be invited to make a half-hour presentation to the meeting on the activities in their region. Please do not read from a prepared speech. You may wish to simply talk about your experiences, perhaps using photographs, video, PowerPoint presentations, or examples of materials that have been developed as part of the project. Brief written notes on your key points for circulation to the other participants after your presentation would be much appreciated .

We hope that your presentation might include:

### General reflections on the project

1. What have been your most valuable or productive experiences or achievements of the project so far?
2. What important lessons have been learned?
3. What have been the most difficult problems you have faced in the project?
4. How do you think the design or delivery of the project could be improved?
5. Have the action plans developed at the conclusion of each seminar and workshop been developed further? Have you made progress in their implementation?
6. Has there been formal discussion about the project within your own union (e.g. in your executive committee or union conference)? If so, what was discussed and what were the conclusions?
7. Have you kept in contact with other unions in your region after meeting them at seminars or workshops? If so, who? What has been discussed?
8. Have you kept in contact with the other mentor unions? If so, who? What has been discussed?
9. What would you most like to achieve in the project over the next 12 months?
10. What additional support from ITF do you need to make the project a success?

### Specific project results

Please give a brief indication of specific achievements on each strand of project activity. Do not worry if you have little or nothing to report on some questions at this stage.



## Visibility of Women

11. Have women leaders representing informal economy workers been newly elected to serve on the national executive committee of (a) your union (b) other unions that have participated in the project activities in your region?
12. Has there been an increase in the number of informal women worker members in (a) your union (b) other unions that have participated in the project activities in your region? If so, very approximately, what has been the percentage increase?

## Leadership Education & Dialogue

13. Has your union, or other unions in your region, introduced amendments to the union constitution, rules or procedures to be more inclusive of informal workers? If so, please give details.
14. Has your union, or other unions in your region, adopted new policies on the organisation of informal workers? If so, please give details.
15. Has your union, or other unions in your region, reached new agreements with informal workers' associations? If so, please give details.

## Organising Skills, Training & Technical Support

16. Have organisers in your union or other unions in your region received training in organising methods and approaches for informal transport workers? If so, please give details.
17. Has there been an increase in membership of informal transport workers in your union or other unions in your region? If so, can you give an approximate idea of the percentage increase?
18. Has your union, or other unions in your region, signed any new collective bargaining agreements covering informal economy transport workers? If so, please give details.

## APPENDIX II

# REVISED PROGRAMMES OF ACTIVITY

### Latin America

CNTT to develop a programme of exchange visits and common activities with ANATRAT IN Costa Rica, including:

- A meeting of women informal vendors , Ubate, Colombia
- SNTT delegation visit to Costa Rica, to participate in ANATRAT seminar, and to undertake mapping exercises with the union in San Jose and the surrounding municipalities.
- ANATRAT delegation visit to Cartagena, Colombia to participate in SNTT meetings, and work with local activists and organisers to gain first-hand experience of organising methods.
- Organising initiatives in Costa Rica
- Second SNTT delegation visit to Costa Rica, to provide support and advice
- Second ANATRAT delegation visit to Bogota to review progress and participate in SNTT meetings

In addition, SNTT will facilitate further mapping and organising work of the women's teams in Colombia and Costa Rica, as established at the women's workshop in Bogota in 2014, followed by organising activity, campaigns, meetings, and other 'dissemination events' to report on the findings of their research.

### SE Asia

NCTU to develop exchange visits between NCTU and Independent Democratic of Informal Economic Association (IDEA) in Cambodia, each of which to involve delegations of four leaders and organisers. Each visit would include:

- a Social Movement Unionism seminar
- a Leadership Training seminar
- visits with local organisers to informal transport workplaces
- meetings and interviews with workers' family members and others in their communities
- Joint evaluation activities/meetings (including union leaders)

In addition, NCTU will facilitate the establishment of a small team of women activists to undertake some mapping and organising among women informal transport workers within the Philippines, followed by organising activity, campaigns, meetings, and other 'dissemination events' to report on the findings of their research.

### West Africa

SYNATRA to concentrate on work with the unions in Togo , Burkina Faso and Sénégal, as well as within Niger:



- Senegal: Capacity building workshop in Dhaka - mapping work with Union of Road Transporters in Senegal .
- Togo : Study-visit to Togo Motorbike Union/National Federation of Transport Unions (these are well established): exchange of expertise – learn about how they have dealt with municipal bargaining etc.
- Niger: Capacity building workshops in two regions: Zinder/Maradee. Workshops will focus on organising and managing unions.
- Niger: Niamey - leadership training workshop for women informal sector (around 30 women). Targeting union women’s committees, maybe include women from Senegal, Burkina Faso and Togo
- Niger: Niamey – Conference for women in the informal sector, to be held during ITF Action Week.

In addition, SYNATRA will facilitate the establishment of a small team of women activists to undertake some mapping and organising among women informal transport workers within Niger, followed by organising activity, campaigns, meetings, and other ‘dissemination events’ to report on the findings of their research.

## East Africa

ATGWU to work with unions in Kenya and Tanzania (as well as within Uganda):

- An ATGWU delegation to visit Kenya and Rwanda to initiate the activities
- A further ATGWU delegation to both countries to follow-up
- Capacity building workshop aimed at leadership, with 5 participants from all three countries - Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda
- A sequence of ten meetings of informal women transport workers in Uganda.

In addition, ATGWU will facilitate further mapping and organising work of the women’s teams in Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya, as established at the women’s workshop in Kampala in 2014.

ATGWU will liaise closely with the teams in each country to agree a programme of activity, including a 2-day seminar for informal women workers by COTWU in Tanzania. The work of each team will continue and expand the team’s work in the final year of the project, to include organising activity, campaigns, meetings, and other ‘dissemination events’ to report on the findings of their research.

## South Asia

ITWAN and NETWON have limited capacity to engage with other unions in South Asia, and both face the need to concentrate on building organisational strength within the country outside the Kathmandu valley. After discussion at the mid-term mentor union meeting, it was agreed that they should concentrate on developing membership and representation within Nepal in the Organising Skills Training strand of the project. Other unions in the region will continue to be supported by the ITF regional office in Delhi.

The recent earthquake has obviously caused catastrophic problems for the country as a whole. ITF staff are monitoring the situation closely and are in regular contact with the Nepalese mentor unions. It is still too early to assess the impact on the project activities, but activities may have to be curtailed, at least for the foreseeable future.