

NEGOTIATIONS AND STRATEGY TRAINING FOR LEADERS/ORGANISERS OF INFORMAL TRANSPORT WORKERS

WORKSHOP REPORT



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23-25 February 2016

Sandton Palace Hotel, Nairobi, Kenya



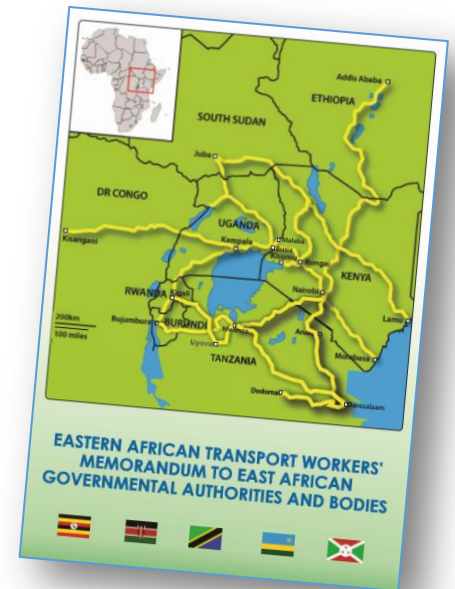
Summary

The workshop was organised to provide collective bargaining training to leaders and organisers of informal transport workers in Kenya and Tanzania.

The workshop concentrated on the Kenyan matatu (minibus) industry, as the practical example of bargaining issues and processes.

Key issues and recommendations highlighted by the discussions included:

- The importance of the matatu workers, not just in passenger transport, but as key players in the cargo distribution system, distributing goods from distribution points in the cities – important hubs in the Northern Corridor. Hence the major participation of the matatu workers’ unions in the development of the ***Eastern African Transport Workers’ Memorandum to East African Government Authorities and Bodies***, which raises issues and demands that are of direct relevance to the discussions in the workshop.
- The potential for **activating mass membership** of Matatu workers¹. The National Transport & Safety Authority (NTSA) estimates a workforce of 40,000 – almost certainly an underestimate. Organisation of a significant proportion of these workers would be a major source of power and is realistically achievable.
- It is essential that the Matatu unions immediately engage in the planning processes for the introduction of **Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)** to maximise the possibilities of a system design that benefits transport workers through decent work, and mitigates against the dangers of mass unemployment or increased precariousness for Matatu workers. It was noted that the vehicle owners, through the Matatu Owners Association (MOA) are already engaged, with a view towards having a stake in BRT operations. Recent violent protests against Uber in Nairobi is a foretaste of things to come if workers are not fully included in BRT policy and planning processes.
- Collective bargaining cannot be undertaken in isolation, but has to be rooted in a clear organising strategy, with strong internal union democracy and engagement by the members.
- Each participating union urgently needs support in providing stage one trade union **representative and organiser training**. As the unions expand, more new members come forward willing to be active representatives, but they need some basic skills.
- The unions face a major problem of **lack of visibility**, whether in the eyes of employers, transport authorities, the media, or indeed with the transport workers themselves. This requires urgent attention and ‘re-branding’, and the organisation of large visible meetings and demonstrations that seize public attention.
- **Women activists** need particular support, if they are not to be side-lined or excluded by male leaders.



¹ The ITF’s strategic plan, adopted at the 2014 Congress, identified four levers of power: *Consolidating hubs and corridors, *Influencing lead industry players, *Activating mass membership, *Following geographic shifts



- There is widespread ignorance of the **law and regulations** relating to the transport industry, much of which would be highly beneficial to workers, if implemented. The unions, perhaps with the support of the ITF, should produce a “Workers’ Guide” to transport regulations.
- There is an urgent need to undertake some action-research around the question of **employment contracts** from vehicle owners and employers for matatu workers, which (in theory) are legally obligatory. If implemented, these contracts could be a major step forward in the transition from informal to formal. On the other hand, it is recognised that many workers – at least in the short-term- are resistant to formal employment contracts, preferring to remain self-employed. For these workers, unions may have to consider providing support in the development of **service contracts** with vehicle-owners to restrict the highly exploitative and dangerous practice of daily financial ‘targets’ (de facto vehicle rental).
- When unions are able to achieve **recognition** (implied or formalised) and a **bargaining forum** with employers or authorities, it is essential that they maintain momentum and develop the relationship, rather than neglect the process and lose credibility.





Participants

	Name	Union	Country
Mr	Samson Okon'go	Matatu Workers' Union	Kenya
Ms	Vivianne Oketch	Matatu Workers' Union	Kenya
Ms	Caroline Osongo	PUTON	Kenya
Mr	Meshack Sarota	COTWU-T	Tanzania
Mr	Michael Ngugi	Matatu Workers' Union	Kenya
Mr	Henry Omoga	Matatu Workers' Union	Kenya
Ms	Winfred Maine	PUTON	Kenya
Ms	Elisa Luvigo	COTWU-T	Tanzania
Mr	Joseph Ndiritu	PUTON	Kenya
Ms	Ann Wanja	Matatu Workers' Union	Kenya
Mr	Mbuthia Gakere	PUTON	Kenya
Mr	John Mark Mwanika	ATGWU	Uganda
Mr	Stephen Abima	ATGWU	Uganda
Mr	Deogratias Birihanyuma	ITF	Kenya
Mr	Dave Spooner	GLI	UK

Three further Tanzanian participants were unable to attend due to last minute logistical problems.

The workshop was organised by AT&WU Uganda, the mentor union for East (Anglophone) Africa in the ITF Informal Transport Workers' Project, assisted by the ITF Africa Regional Office. Stephen Abima and John Mark Mwanika facilitated the discussions.

Introductions

John Mark Mwanika opened proceedings with a description of the ITF's Informal Workers' Project, an explanation of the role of 'mentor unions', the active learning methods used in project activities, and the major project components, particularly the 'visibility of women' strand of work.

Dave Spooner explained the role of mentor unions in other world regions, and the support that the project received from FNV and the Dutch government. He also introduced the proposed international 'charter' of informal transport workers.

Joe Katende, ITF Africa Regional Secretary welcomed participants, and confirmed that all three unions (Matatu Union, PUTON, COTWU-T) were ITF members. He stressed that the key issue was the development of *power*. After workers become aware of, or join a union, they continually reassess the achievements of the organisation, to determine whether they are delivering what had been offered. Some who join will subsequently leave. Why?

- expectations had been raised that couldn't be realised
- they regarded the union as something like a firm of lawyers hired to represent them
- they didn't realise that the union is the collective voice of the workers themselves, not just the leaders – that real power rests with the membership

Power comes from organisation, not just recruitment, and is the key to successful collective bargaining, otherwise you are merely engaged in *collective begging*. Successful bargaining is when you have power and know how to use it.



Looking ahead to the negotiations with the **National Transport & Safety Authority (NTSA)** later in the workshop programme, Katende urged participants to ensure that they thoroughly understood NTSA regulations, programmes and policies. It is essential that leaders prepare themselves well through reading.

He forewarned participants to expect the NTSA management to challenge the unions' authority to represent the workers, when they have only 3-4,000 members (at best) out of a total Matatu workforce (according to NTSA) of 40,000.

Joe drew attention to the importance of the recently published *Eastern African Transport Workers' Memorandum to East African Government Authorities and Bodies*, to which the Matatu unions contributed. Among the demands and issues contained in the memorandum, there are some that particularly relevant to Matatu workers, including:

- The need to urgently organise meetings between transport unions and the relevant government bodies, and to “establish dialogue structures and technical working teams to assist in forestalling the escalation of insecurity and poor working conditions”. In particular -
 - Intimidation and harassment by police
 - Inadequate education and training on traffic laws, for both the drivers and the police
 - Long hours, fatigue and road safety
 - Lack of employment contracts

BRT (Bus Rapid Transport). He urged participants to take the tasks ahead far more seriously – particularly with the inevitable arrival of more BRT systems in the region. He warned them that the Matatu Owners Association (MOA) were already advanced in organising themselves to become the operators of the impending BRT system in Nairobi.

The unions need to undertake serious research and gain a full understanding of issues and policies surrounding the introduction of BRT, and then demand negotiations directly with the mayor of the city. Katende asked participants to imagine the power of a ‘grand meeting’ of informal transport workers from throughout the city. Direct negotiations with the mayor would be a major organising and recruitment tool for the unions.

Group Activity 1

Each union was asked to work in small groups to discuss:

- What kind of transport workers are your union organising?
- What are the problems of these informal workers?
- How is the union attempting to solve these problems?
- What negotiations are the unions already involved in?

Group reports:

PUTON

1. **Occupations in which the union is organising.** Drivers, Conductors, Call-boys and Call-Girls (Kenya) Kamagiras (conductors), burners (drivers who pick up passengers before handing back to the driver who will then undertake the journey), Wapiga debes (call-boys/girls) (Tanzania)
2. **Issues**
 - a. Police harassment, arbitrary arrests by rhino squads, city council officers



- b. Harassment by customers and owners
- c. Long working hours
- d. No salaries
- e. No sick-offs
- f. No leave allowances
- g. No maternity allowances
- h. No contracts
- i. Bad working conditions – shade, toilets, security

3. Methods of addressing issues

- a. Engage the authorities to redress issues – e.g. arrests / harassment – go to city hall
- b. Should wear uniforms and have proper documentation

4. Bargaining the union is already engaged in:

Demand	Bargaining C'part	Level of negotiation	Expected outcome
End Police Harassment	District Traffic Officer	County	Positive police attitudes, and workers' respect for the law

MWU & COTWU-T

1. Occupations in which the union is organising Drivers, conductors, call-girls and call-boys, booking clerks, stage clerks, turnboys

2. Issues

- a. Unsigned contracts
- b. Harassment
- c. Discrimination of women
- d. Underpayment
- e. Harassment of Boda-Bodas (Tanzania) – barred from bus park, yet take passengers to buses
- f. Bad communication between workers and government. No implementation of regulations

3. Methods of addressing issues

- a. Involve the members
- b. Education

4. Bargaining the union is already engaged in:

Demand	Bargaining C'part	Level of negotiation	Expected outcome
Signed contracts	SACCOs	Govt. (nat. and local)	Implementation of regulations

Questions emerging from discussion

- How do we define “Formal” and “Informal” employment?
- What is employment? A contract between worker and employer? When registered? When regulated by law?
- Who has the responsibility to enforce regulations? Unions? Government? Management?
- Is our objective to formalise informal employment?

- Do workers make deliberate choices to move from formal to informal employment?
- Is 'management' defined by law? Are 'workers'?

Group Activity 2:

Field visit to meet Matatu Union/ PUTON members working for Embassava SACCO.

The purpose of the visit was to gain a mandate from members prior to collective bargaining with the management of **Embassava SACCO**. Normally, this should be done through shop stewards, or through a mass meeting of members. This will explore the issues faced by the workers, as the basis for forming a set of demands for presentation in the negotiations.

The negotiations should normally be led by the locally elected representatives or shop stewards, with assistance from union officers as and when needed. This ensures credibility to the demands put forward to the SACCO management.

Participants were asked to work in five small groups, each to meet Embassava SACCO workers and discover what were the major issues they faced. From those, they were then asked to formulate demands and identify the bargaining counterpart (negotiating partner).

On return from the visit, the groups reported:

	Issues/ Problems	Demands	Negotiating Partner
Group 1	Inadequate parking	Parking space	City Council
	Abusive passengers	Discipline on the road	The union (?)
	Harassment by owners, low payment, long working hours	Contract	SACCOs
Group 2	Harassment by police	Stop harassment	District Traffic Officer
	Long working hours	Limit working hours	NTSA
	No maternity leave, no sick pay	The right to leave	Ministry of Labour
	Lack of contracts	Contracts	SACCOs
	Non-enforcement of regulations	Enforcement	NTSA
	Low salaries	Better salaries	SACCOs
Group 3	Pay cash daily for social protection to SACCO, but not paid		SACCOs
	Harassment by police	Stop arbitrary arrests	DTO
	Harassment of women by drivers	Security measures	SACCOs
	Long working hours	Shift patterns	SACCOs
Group 4	Traffic congestion – due to non-observance of traffic rules	Education for drivers	SACCOs
	Police bribery	End corruption	DTO
	Poor road conditions – vehicle breakdowns etc.	Better maintenance	County Government
	Bad pay	Higher pay	SACCOs
	Inadequate parking, wasting time and fuel	Fair allocation of parking lots	County Government
	Poor working conditions – long hours, missed targets	Cut hours – shifts?	NTSA
	NSSF NHF Funds not handed on		SACCOs

	to authorities by SACCOs		
	Some SACCOs do not employ women	Equal opportunities	SACCOs
Group 5	Long hours		SACCOs
	Low pay		SACCOs

Some of the Embassava members are already organised in small associations, such as the “Tiwamba Self-Help Group which they managed to register in 2015 with 32 members. Similarly, the ‘Chini Ya Mnazi’ self-help group now has 380 members (of which 10 are women). There are probably more such self-help groups among the 500 or so Embassava workers, which may provide a good starting point for organisation. [Thanks to Vivianne Oketch].

Some of the workers approached were reluctant to provide the information. They were fearful that they may have been gangsters (“cartels”).

Discussion revealed the need for the unions to have clarification of the different roles between NTSA, SACCOs, Ministry of Labour, City government, and the different approaches required when engaging in negotiation.

The issue of contracts: SACCOs are widely regarded to be the employers of drivers and conductors, and therefore should have employment contracts. But in reality, the workers are self-employed. The drivers’ income is fares collected from passengers; from which they pay a large daily fee to the vehicle owners (the notorious “targets”), fuel, conductors’ wages, police bribes, social protection costs and other expenses. If there were to be a formal contract, it would be perhaps better understood as a **service contract** to rent a vehicle. This might include the length of contract (how long a driver has the right to drive the vehicle); the rental fee to be paid by the driver to the owner; the respective responsibilities of owner and the driver (maintenance, insurance, police fines, etc.); responsibilities for payment of NHIF/NSSF² contributions; and procedures in cases of dispute.

Group Activity 3:

Field visit to bargaining counterpart (NTSA/SACCO)

The group was divided into two teams to negotiate with the Embassava SACCO and with NTSA. Each group formulated an agenda for discussion, elected a spokesperson, and discussed negotiating tactics.

² National Hospital Insurance Fund / National Social Security Fund



REPORTS FROM COLLECTIVE BARGAINING MEETINGS

Group 1. Meeting with Embassava SACCO

Embassava SACCO
Matatu Workers' Union (MWU)
Public Transport Operators Union (PUTON)

Meeting 24 Feb 2016

Embassava SACCO office, Nairobi

Proposed Agenda

1. Does SACCO know about the union?
2. How is the SACCO organised?
3. Do the drivers have contracts
4. What challenges are faced by the SACCOS
5. Is the SACCO willing to work with the union?
6. What is the SACCO's relationship with NTSA?
7. How does the SACCO tackle discrimination against women?
8. What are the SACCO concerns on the introduction of BRT in Nairobi?
9. SACCO Code of conduct for drivers

The group met the SACCO General Secretary and three board members.

1. They have very little knowledge about the union. They know an association. The unions explained difference between associations and unions, stressing that unions are stable and sustained organisations compared to informal associations.
2. The SACCO belongs to the vehicle owners, who elect the management. The owners directly employ 500 drivers, not the SACCO. But the SACCO have seven of their own vehicles, which employ their own drivers, and do who have their own employment contracts. Copies of contracts were not available.
3. The SACCO is responsible for discipline for all the drivers – whether employed by owners or SACCOS themselves.
4. Challenges:
 - a. they have no control over parking space
 - b. the SACCOS also suffer from police harassment
 - c. the unions are too weak and disorganised (!) - the invitation to meet was the first time they became aware of the union(s)
 - d. 'migrant drivers' – moving from SACCO to SACCO; competition between SACCOS to attract drivers – offering better terms, or bribing the police more effectively.
5. Work with the unions? SACCOS have tried but failed to organise drivers, so want to see the unions organise them. They can identify the influential drivers, who should be the first to recruit.
6. NTSA. There is a problem of enforcement and implementation of the regulations. They don't see NTSA doing it.
7. Women are "very stubborn". Women "don't want employment contracts" preferring to take cash home each day. (When asked, the women agreed).



8. SACCOs don't want BRT – they believe that the government are going to hand the operations over to a Chinese company, but they want the opportunity to run BRT operations.
9. Code of conduct. The drivers have no say in code of conduct. Who represents them? The role of the union in disciplinary hearings.

Subsequent demands, after discussion:

- Seek recognition for PUTON
- PUTON to recruit Embassava workers.
- 200s are paid daily to the SACCO by each worker for their NHF and NSSF contributions, but are they then handed on to the authorities? PUTON should demand a monthly statement of who paid what to NHF and NSSF. They should also propose that they also collect union dues in the same process.

Group 2. Meeting with NTSA

National Transport and Safety Authority (NTSA)
Matatu Workers' Union (MWU)
Public Transport Operators Union (PUTON)

Meeting 24 Feb 2016
NTSA Headquarters, Nairobi

Proposed Agenda

1. The East African Memorandum – key issues relevant to informal urban transport workers
 - a. Police harassment
 - b. Awareness and understanding of traffic laws
 - c. Excessive working hours
 - d. Poor road safety
 - e. Bad pay
 - f. Contracts of employment
 - g. Trade union representation

More specifically:

2. What is, and what should be, the nature of the contract between a vehicle owner and a driver?
3. Working hours – has enforcement been curtailed?
4. Does the NTSA have a role in BRT planning?
5. Establishing regular dialogue and consultation

The meeting was held with **Samuel Musumba, NTSA Manager County Road Safety.**

After introduction of the two unions, the unions were asked “where do you hide”? Musumba stated that **the unions are invisible**. SACCOs tell NTSA that there are no problems – but there are no unions visible to counteract. The unions were urged to become more active and prominent in the media. The NTSA experience is that unions oppose regulation, and that there has been a bad history.



According to NTSA, the work of the union is to tell the drivers to demand contracts, and to report when there are no contracts. NTSA regulations demand employment contracts, salary-based, with limited hours. There is an urgent need to analyse and fully understand the regulations relating to employment contracts and their implications

*After persistent questioning Musumba made a clear statement that drivers need to be formally employed, and that **it is illegal for drivers to work without employment contracts**.* He suggested that unions should refuse to work in vehicles that don't meet the regulations.

Musumba proposed to establish an “**engagement platform**”, for regular consultation and discussion. This is de facto recognition of the unions as the democratic representatives of the workers in the PSV industry in Kenya? Unions were asked to write formally with request to establish the engagement platform.

Musumba suggested that the unions could organise public forums jointly with NTSA. He also stressed the importance of engaging in the NTSA training agenda, and noted the East Africa Memorandum demand for adequate professional training schools for transport workers.

He stated that he had no knowledge of BRT.

Discussion:

- It is not clear whether or not the regulation demanding contracts applies to *all* workers (drivers and conductors), or only the small minority that are directly employed by the SACCOs. Are the regulations avoided by workers being employed directly by the owners?
- Be wary of different departments in NTSA, perhaps different attitudes towards unions.
- NTSA declares itself to be “pro-worker”, yet shifts blame onto the unions for failure of workers to observe the regulations, rather than the NTSA taking responsibility.
- There should be a tri-partite negotiating body, with representatives of NTSA / Labour Ministry, the SACCOs and the unions.

Group Activity 4:

Follow-up and next steps for PUTON and MWU

Participants were divided into two groups – PUTON and MWU (with an observer from COTWU T in each), and asked to consider the following questions:

1. Of the 600-plus registered **SACCOs, which should be targeted** by the union for organisation, with the objective of 50%+ union density and a CBA? How to undertake **mapping** of the SACCOs?
2. What research and analysis is needed, particularly on NTSA regulations with a specific focus on **employment contracts**?
3. What should be union policy on **formalisation of employment**? Do some workers and members prefer to **remain informal**?
4. How will the union **report back to the membership** on the outcome of the collective bargaining exercise?
5. How will **PUTON and MWU cooperate**: in negotiations with NTSA (and other bodies), and in dividing forces in organising within SACCOs?



Group Reports:

The presentations of group reports and the subsequent discussion was joined by **Anna Karume, ITF Deputy Regional Secretary.**

PUTON & COTWU-T

Target SACCOs	Responsibility for mapping activity
Embassava	Abdul Owuor, Joseph Nderito, Dorah Atieno
Hannover	
Super Metro	Mbuthia Gakere, Winfred Maine
City Shuttle	
Kimao	Mbuthia Gakere, Juma Wycliff
Kiragu	
Killeton	Caroline Anyango, Mbuthia Gakere, Wambul Rahab
KMOS	Peter Kimani, Michael Ngugi, Joseph Nderito
NTA	

The group explained that their choice of target SACCOs was based on where they are already organising, or where they know that there will be some support from the SACCO management.

The mapping activity would be undertaken between March and September 2016, In each case, the focus would be on service contracts, surveying the workers, SACCOs and relevant NGOs / CBOs³. PUTON is already working with a local NGO, which provides assistance with facilitation.

Each team would report monthly to the membership, the union and the ITF.

The group proposed that PUTON-MWU cooperation should start immediately, meeting on a regular (perhaps monthly) basis.

MWU & COTWU-T

The group proposed to undertake mapping within the **Pelican SACCO**, which includes three ‘company brands’: Otange, Kisii Classic and Sterling Rand. They would approach the SACCO, then meet the workers to determine the issues they face, and select representatives.

The group stressed the importance of providing education to the workers on the relative benefits and drawbacks of formal or informal employment, and stress the benefits of formal employment, such as

- Retirement income
- Time off work (maternity leave, sickness leave etc)
- Medical cover (NHIS)
- Reduced working hours
- Respect for workers’ rights.

There should be regular report-back to the membership, through communications with the elected representatives.

³ Community-Based Organisations.

The group proposed regular joint meetings between PUTON and MWU, and ensure there is frequent dialogue to avoid duplication or dispute in the choice of target SACCOs.

Discussion

Dave Spooner congratulated the groups on the clarity of the reports, and recommended the following:

- Ensure that ATGWU is kept informed of progress (or setbacks) as this will assist the planning process and prioritisation of future training provision.
- Think carefully about the criteria to be applied when choosing target SACCOs for organising:
 - their size (number of workers)? Choose a few or many?
 - which are the strategic routes, and therefore strategic SACCOs for organising?
 - the potential of mapping as a strategic organising tool – where are the SACCO stages? where are the current members and activists? where is the other union already organising?
 - where SACCO management are sympathetic in assisting access to the workers?
- The need to engage with the media, and become visible to members, workers and bargaining counterparts.
- Don't approach SACCO management for recognition or a CBA before engaging with the workers. Preferably organise a majority of workers first. Enable them to elect their own representatives, and ensure they are represented in the meetings.
- Develop a full understanding on the question of employment contracts v. service agreements; employed v. self-employed; formal v. informal.
- Ensure that false expectations are not raised by the prospect of immediate formal employment (salaries, working hours, benefits, social protection etc.), but education and awareness on the objectives, but the likely long hard struggle to achieve them
- Continually communicate with and engage the membership, primarily through elected representatives, but also through other means - SMS, newsletters, posters – and the media.



Anna Karume made some further observations, based on the presentations:



- The PUTON organising plan is perhaps over-ambitious in the time-frame given, given the impending election processes in Kenya. On the other hand, perhaps the MWU plan is too modest. It is better to concentrate on three or four, and take one at a time.
- She reminded the group that PUTON's organising base is primarily among the short city Matatu routes, whereas MWU is among the longer buses and matatus working on long-distance routes. They therefore have different strategies and different mandates, so there should be no conflicts of jurisdiction in reaching agreement on organising priorities.
- Anna stressed that both unions have now been registered for four years and that, by now, both should have high visibility and recognition. Both unions showed now move out of their comfort zones, and reach out beyond their current membership base.

Stephen Abima concluded the session by introducing some of the principles of negotiation, based on the checklist included in the Negotiating Skills manual included in the workshop packs (based on TUC (UK) Negotiating Skills Course).

Women in Transport

Naomi Mwauwa, Founding Director, FLONE Initiative, asked participants to take part in an interactive exercise, demonstrating issues around the lack of power experienced by women. This was followed by a group activity based around three key questions:

- What positions do women hold in your workplace?
- Why do women leave the workplace?
- What strategies can the trade union adopt to encourage more women to join the union and to work in public transport?

Participants identified transport occupations employing women, including secretaries, office tea girls, stage clerks, supervisors, cleaners, as well as drivers, conductors, controllers, call-girls, and managers. The group then discussed the reasons why women are not more numerous in transport employment, in lower status and with worse conditions, and what unions should be doing to fight these inequalities.

Discussion included the predominance of women as passengers, and the importance of recognising this when building alliances with passenger and community groups.

BRT and Uber

Anna Karume provided a briefing on Uber and BRT, and led a discussion on the organising opportunities (In Nairobi) presented by BRT, and the struggle for unions to be included in negotiations around the planning processes.

- Prepare workers to get BRT jobs
- Education awareness-building, explaining advantages / disadvantages of informal to formal.
- Campaign for decent work in matatus – they will not be going away, but should be modernised and part of an integrated system alongside BRT, with good conditions for workers.



Workshop Statement

At the conclusion of the workshop, participants agreed to issue a press statement through the ITF in response to newspaper articles in Kenya on a crackdown on police corruption in the matatu industry, and to highlight the demands for employment contract and safe working hours:

Transport trade unions welcome crackdown on matatu police corruption

Transport union officials from Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, meeting in Nairobi 23-25 February, welcomed newspaper reports that the Kenyan National Police Service Commission (NPSC) will crack down on police harassment and corruption in matatu (minivan) public transport.

Union members are urged to submit evidence of wrongful arrests, detention of vehicles, and police bribery to their unions for submission to the NPSC before 12,000 officers are vetted by the authorities, beginning 12 March 2016.

The officials also welcomed proposals to ban traffic police from owning matatus, which creates a clear conflict of interest, and a major source of harassment for operators and workers.

The meeting which was organised by the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), in recognition of the growth of unions in the informal transport industry throughout East Africa, was attended by representatives of the Matatu Workers Union (MWU) and the Public Transport Operators Union (PUTON) in Kenya, along with their counterparts from Tanzania and Uganda.

The unions held talks with the National Transport and Safety Authority (NTSA) to establish a permanent "engagement platform" for consultation with workers' representatives in the matatu industry. Top of the agenda will be workers' demands that the regulations under NTSA legal notice 219 of 2013 are rigorously enforced, with particular reference to formal contracts of employment for drivers and conductors, and an eight-hour limit on working hours.

Joseph Katende, ITF Africa Regional Secretary, told the meeting that "the root cause of harassment and corruption, lack of safety, and poor working conditions in the matatu industry is the failure of the authorities to enforce their own regulations, and the absence of labour rights".

The unions also agreed to step up their cooperation to ensure that informal transport workers were represented in the planning and delivery of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) systems in the region, to avoid consequences such as those that have been witnessed in Nairobi and globally with Uber, where workers have been injured, with some losing their lives.

Leaders further agreed to take common action to eradicate violence against women in the matatu industry – affecting women drivers, conductors and other workers, as well as women passengers, which again is worsened by the lack of decent work.

Dave Spooner
7 March 2016