

The Trade Union Co-financing Programme 2021 – 2030

The Trade Union Co-financing Programme (TUCP) is a Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs undertaking aimed at strengthening the trade union movement in low- and middle-income countries. It has been in existence since the 1970s, and its goal is to improve labour and trade union rights through, for example, strengthening the capacity of unions and umbrella organisations. The TUCP focuses on the company level as well as on the sectoral, national, and international level. Mondiaal FNV is receiving TUCP support for the period 2021-2030.

Our core activity

Mondiaal FNV's core activity in this new period remains to support partners (trade unions and labour organisations) in defending labour rights, representing workers in social dialogue, and creating a favourable environment for decent work and conditions. As in previous periods, the objectives and actions are based on an analysis of our partners and their needs.

The foundations of our TUCP activities

Our activities within the TUCP are based on ILO conventions on trade union rights and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We are committed to SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), SDG 13 (climate action), and SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions).

New emphasis

In consultation with partners in the countries where we work, we have changed our emphasis somewhat compared to the previous period. For example, we are now paying even more attention to equal rights for women and LGBTI people. We are also strongly committed to establishing social dialogues and exerting influence on all parts of the international value chains.

We have three thematic spearheads:

- Social dialogue

Many countries do not yet have an organised, structured dialogue with employers and the government. According to The Global Deal Partnership, established by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), such a dialogue is ideally suited to create jobs and improve business performance. In addition, our experience is that social dialogue is an important driver with regard to decent work. We help trade unions to set up and develop this type of social dialogue, which can be at the local, regional, or central level; bipartite (with employers or the government); or tripartite (with all parties). We are also increasingly involved in cross-border dialogues: for example, within regional

consultative bodies or with multinationals. Climate change and the transition of energy are more frequently on the agenda. Together with social organisations, we are working on a *just transition*: namely, an energy transition that encompasses respect for workers.

- **Value Chains**

Our work is most effective when we focus not only on workers on the plantations or in the factories but also on other players in the value chain. The rights of workers are often determined higher up in these chains, especially by multinationals. That is why we focus on auctions and large Dutch growers (in the flower sector), supermarkets, and purchasing organisations (in the fruit and vegetable sector), as well as on companies that process palm oil, such as Unilever. We also influence chains by participating in or exerting pressure on initiatives related to corporate social responsibility. We do this, for instance, in the fruit and vegetable sector. We also connect players within chains, such as Dutch seed-breeding companies and Asian trade unions.

- **Gender**

Women worldwide are worse off than men when it comes to work. Their jobs and working conditions are more difficult, they have fewer promotion opportunities, and they earn less. In addition, they more often carry a double burden, because they also do most of the domestic work, and, like LGBTI people and migrants, they suffer more from violence, intimidation, and discrimination. Because women are overrepresented in the informal sector – in South Asia they make up 80 percent – they have relatively few rights and little security. That is why we work on achieving gender equality and safety in the workplace. In this regard, it is crucial for women, migrants, and LGBTI people to have a stronger position within the trade union movement, especially at the top. Among other things, we urge governments to ratify ILO Convention C190 against violence and harassment in the workplace.

We focus specifically on five sectors:

- **Construction**

Construction work on metros, power plants, and dams in low- and middle-income countries currently accounts for an average of one-eighth of the employment. Construction companies often attract low-skilled people from poor rural areas. Far from home, they carry out heavy and dangerous work, such as construction of the football stadiums being built for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, which resulted in countless deaths. International financial institutions usually finance these types of projects. An important part of our strategy is to encourage these institutions to make work conditions decent, safe, and healthy. Our partners also conclude Global Framework Agreements with multinationals, which include minimum standards, control mechanisms,

and complaint procedures. An important partner is the global building association Building and Wood Workers' International (BWI), which operates in 125 countries.

- **Flowers**

The Netherlands is a hub in the international flower trade. And there is an increasing rise in Dutch companies having their flowers grown in low-wage countries such as Africa, where the women do the heavy and monotonous work. They earn too little to meet even basic needs, and suffer a great deal of sexual harassment. In these countries, in particular, we are working on strengthening trade unions and improving the representation of women. In our fight to achieve a decent living wage and a safe workplace for workers, we also put pressure on flower companies, auctions, and supermarkets. We urge governments to ratify ILO conventions C184 (for health and safety in the agricultural sector) and C190 (against violence and harassment in the workplace), and to establish better supervision.

- **Fruit and vegetables**

Many fruits and vegetables in Dutch supermarkets come from low- and middle-income countries. The farm workers there do heavy work with little or no protective equipment. Mondiaal FNV is focusing on three special fruit and vegetable export zones in Peru. Constructive consultations were set up with a number of large companies there, which, among other things, resulted in better collective agreements. We are urging the government to lift the special regime that applies to the agricultural export sector in Peru, as it reduces the rights of workers. We have already succeeded in having Peru ratify ILO convention C190. We are working together with British importers and supermarket chains that are pursuing concrete steps for improvement in the sector, and are working hard to get Dutch importers and supermarkets to do this as well.

- **Palm oil**

Serious abuses are taking place in the palm oil sector, such as child labour, forced labour, discrimination, unethical recruitment practices, low wages, lack of freedom of association, excessive work pressure, unsafe working conditions, and the ill-treatment of women. In addition, forests are being illegally cut down and land is being grabbed for the plantations. Mondiaal FNV is focusing on workers on plantations in Indonesia and Colombia. However, in order to improve the workers' position, we are also emphatically targeting other parties in the chain. These are often large companies, such as Wilmar, which controls almost half of the world trade, and Unilever, which, among other things, processes palm oil for use in soap and cosmetics. In addition, we are focusing on financiers such as Rabobank and investors such as Robeco.

- **Seeds**

Seed breeding is becoming increasingly important for the global food supply. Dutch companies play an important role in this by having vegetable seeds tested and produced in Asian countries. The land on which this is done often belonged to small farmers, but because they were unable to make ends meet, they sold the land to large companies, who then hired them as contract workers. The work is heavy and poorly paid, and excesses exist, such as child labour and unprotected spraying with dangerous pesticides. We help to increase the level of organisation of agricultural workers and small farmers so that they can negotiate better terms and conditions of employment. We encourage companies and industry organisations to act in a socially responsible manner.

We use five different strategies:

- **Forging alliances**

We encourage alliances at the local, national, and international level by, for example, engaging with environmental groups. Together, we are working on a just transition: namely, an energy transition that is not at the expense of workers. Local alliances can result in a stronger position with regard to a company, and national alliances make it possible to lobby more vigorously for an increase in social legislation. Alliance formation has also proved to be of great importance at the international level. One of the most compelling results is the ILO Convention against Violence and Harassment in the Workplace. Together with others, we are also working on certification and agreements regarding corporate social responsibility.

- **Strengthening capacity**

You can only be forceful in negotiations or social dialogue if you have a strong foundation. With a special tool, the 5-C organisational capacity assessment workshops, and together with our partners, we take steps to ensure that basis remains solid. We help our partners with membership recruitment campaigns and with handling financial management as well as getting internal organisation in order. We also provide training to improve skills, including in the field of negotiation. This gives unions a stronger position at the negotiating table, and allows them to press harder for better working conditions. Together with the Dutch Employers' Cooperation Programme (DECP), we are helping to lay the foundation for an effective social dialogue in several countries.

- **Lobbying**

Effective lobbying is important locally in order to advocate for inclusive legislation, for example, but also internationally for the purpose of drawing attention to the position of workers within an international value chain. It takes specific skills to do this well, and Mondiaal FNV ensures that partners become

better at it: for instance, by means of training. In addition, we help partners to recognise lobbying opportunities. We also lobby ourselves, and establish relevant contacts for our partners, both nationally and internationally. We always do this on the basis of shared ownership, because, in the end, our partners have to be able to do it themselves.

- **Doing research**

Knowledge is a prerequisite when it comes to lobbying, negotiations, and social dialogue. You have to know how the production process and the market work, what the relevant regulations are, and where the benefits go. Mondiaal FNV helps the partners to gain more knowledge in this regard, through research, training, expert meetings, and e-learning. We pay particular attention to social dialogue and international value chains. In addition, we facilitate internal research and reflection, asking ourselves about what is going well, what are the risks, and does the strategy need to be adjusted. In this way, we help with an action-oriented and, if possible, participatory learning agenda.

- **Gender mainstreaming**

Women worldwide are in a very poor position. They earn less than men, even for the same work, they have fewer rights, and they are more likely to experience violence and sexual harassment. In the current TUCP, we have therefore placed even greater emphasis on equal rights for women and LGBTI people. This is done through a separate programme aimed at South Asia, the MENA region (the Middle East and North Africa), Indonesia, and Ethiopia, and by taking equal rights for women and LGBTI people into account in each programme: gender mainstreaming. To this end, we provide our partners with a checklist of possible steps and goals. Gender mainstreaming is always tailor-made, because the circumstances, sensitivities, and possibilities differ greatly from one country and region to another.