

EVALUATION REPORT

"Strengthening research capacity in the trade union movement in Africa" (Afro 3: 1999 - 2004)

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1 Introduction, background and mandate

The African labour movement confronts major challenges. Massive and increasing poverty, fragile or limited democracies, vast un- and underemployment, as well as weak or absent bargaining systems and organisational weaknesses undermine organising, mobilisation and power towards employers and the state. On that background, the investment in research and competence building could be seen as an important base for organisational development and capacity building in many African labour movements.

In 1999, LO Norway therefore committed itself to support a three-year ICFTU programme to strengthen the capacity of some of its member organisations regarding economic and social issues through research activities. The overall stated objective of the programme has been to promote research activities of trade union movements in Africa at both leadership and rank-and-file levels, in order to increase the capabilities of national trade union centres in handling economic and research related issues. The overall programme concentrates on the following activities: training of national officers and research officers; undertaking research activities on specific issues and publishing and disseminating research findings. The project was extended and run until the end of 2004 with approximately USD 70 000 per year. The following report evaluates progress to date and recommends future steps to be taken in order to improve the programme.

Background

The current LO Norway funded programme builds on a previous broad-scale ICFTU programme, which was started up in the late 1970s. The ICFTU programme was organised into three projects in the Employment Campaign 1977 to 1980; the Employment Promotion Programme 1980 to 1989 and the Research Development and Training programme from 1980 to 2002.¹ The programmes aimed at capacity building in several trade unions in the south such as India, Ghana, Philippines, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The programme received funding from a wide group of donors, such as the FNV (Netherlands); FES (Germany); LO/TCO (Sweden), and LO Norway. Several seminars were organised through the programme (national, regional and international). Furthermore, research was conducted in order to support policy development by the unions in specific areas, such as employment policy, structural adjustment programmes, responses to the IMF/World Bank et al.

The ICFTU programme preceding the current LO funded programme trained a number of researchers linked to the national union federations' main centres. Yet, two evaluations² of the first two phases of the programme (until 1990) concluded that the officials representing unions in negotiations and consultations did not have a broad enough technical knowledge in order to effectively influence government policies (Bo Jonsson 2002). The last phase of the programme (RDTP) hence had a focus on a more limited number of unions who jointly agreed on a common research platform. According to

¹ The program was supposed to end in 1997, but was extended to 2002 when the last report was submitted to donors.

² While the evaluation conducted for LO Norway by P. Myklebust concluded that the capacity building supported through the Employment Promotion Programme had an impact in several cases, a separate FNV evaluation of several ICFTU projects found that the focus on employment issues was not effective with unemployment raising everywhere and unions hardly having any influence over government policies.

the project manager³, several experiences were gained by the ICFTU programme: the need to maintain close contact with the unions, the need to support union relevant research, which is written in a language and form which makes it relevant and adaptable to union needs and the need to give considerable attention to incentives and structures to maintain the trained researchers in the union movement. When project funding expired in the late 90s, several donors were approached to continue the project to which LO Norway responded favourably.

Evaluating the LO programme

The LO funded programme that we will evaluate in the following hence built on precious experience and capacity built up by the ICFTU. Yet, due to limited funding, the programme became more targeted and with a limited number of participating countries.⁴ Previous experience also indicated a need for concentration and focus in the training programme. Against this background, LO Norway proceeded with a regional programme composed of beginner countries (Malawi and Mozambique) and more “advanced” countries in terms research capacity (Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia) who had previously benefited from the ICFTU programme.

The subregional research planning workshop held in Nairobi March 1999 appraised the beneficiary organisations about the project, reviewed past activities, formulated the programme priorities, and outlined expectations to each of the parties. At the project steering committee meeting in 2001, the decision was made to extend the project further until the end of 2004 in order to consolidate the achievements in the previous years, after which the project was to become evaluated before further decisions to continue were to be made.

The following evaluation report was finalised in January 2005 on the basis of interviews conducted in Uganda, Kenya and Zambia during November 2004 as well as extensive documentation from the project (progress reports, accounts and budgets et al). Interviews were done with both political leadership of the national centres, affiliate unions, shopstewards and educators being trained and research coordinators of the programmes.⁵ Considerable time was also spent going through the project documentation with ICFTU coordinators and leadership.

The mandate for the evaluation asks us to review the relevance and external impact of the program as well as the efficiency and sustainability of the programme. Hence, that is what we set out to do, and on which basis the final recommendations are made.

2 The challenges of labour in Africa south of the Sahara

By independence, many unions in Sub-Saharan Africa were weak and too closely allied with the political parties in order to function as independent influential bodies. Government policies in many countries included a heavy emphasis on worker discipline to achieve desirable economic development and political

³ See: Jonsson, Bo. 2002: *Experiences of the ICFTU research development and training programmes*. Paper, ICFTU, Brussels 7 October 2002

⁴ The original project proposal also had to be revised as funds did not materialise for the total intended programme.

⁵ Thanks to all the union leaders, researchers and programme coordinators who made their precious time available to us. See appendix at the end of this report for a list of the people interviewed for this report.

control. In other countries, unions were almost completely controlled by the governments and party politics. In several countries, union membership was virtually compulsory with no or limited respect for the freedom of association. With the democratisation wave of the 1990s, several regional trade union movements had to build strength and capacity almost from scratch. Even in those countries where labour virtually led the democratisation movements, like in South Africa, Zambia, Kenya and to some extent Namibia, new challenges emerged as to how to take their new roles forward independently from the political parties they in many cases helped establish. Similar challenges are confronted by labour in Zimbabwe and Swaziland, where democratic struggles remain on the agenda.

Some of the poorest countries in the world are found in Sub-Saharan Africa. At the same time, the region has experienced major labour market transitions in the past decades towards increased informalisation of labour, as well as extended use of casual and subcontracted labour. Liberalising domestic markets through for example lowering of tariffs and establishment of export promoting schemes has been seen as important measures as part of economic reform strategies in many of these countries. However, Sub-Saharan Africa today is still challenged by low growth in the formal sector, huge wealth disparities, limited job creation and labour market segmentation. Unemployment is high and pervasive. Large majorities are employed in subsistence farming in the rural areas and in informal activities in urban areas. Typically for African countries, most people work in the sectors contributing less to the regional GDPs, namely agriculture and the informal sectors. Low skills levels, child labour, AIDS, migration and poverty pose further challenges for the labour movements. And while approx. 40 percent of those in the regional formal sector employment are organised, industrial relations systems and bargaining structures are weak, labour regulation have several loopholes and the implementation and respect for labour standards leaves much to be desired.

Union density rate in southern Africa in the mid 90s (Tørres 1998 & 2002)⁶

Country	Population	Labour force	Formal employment	Union membership	Union density ⁷
Botswana	1 533 000	528 108	288 165	58 700	20%
Kenya	31 500 000	7 000 000	1 800 000	600 000	33%
Lesotho	2 022 890	825 022	250 000	36 000	6%
Malawi	10 016 000	4 848 445	558 000	75 000	14%
Mauritius	1 134 000	476 642	466 410	101 059	22%
Mozambique	18 028 000	9 145 260	450 000	190 000	42%
Namibia	1 584 380	434 678	260 000	106 260	41%
South Africa	43 000 000	16 000 000	6 680 000	3 202 431	56%
Swaziland	926 100	327 104	157 283	69 000	44%
Tanzania	33 700 000	15 552 232	1 000 000	317 716
Uganda	22 100 000	8 000 000		102 000	
Zambia	9 214 890	4 600 000	478 000	212 375	60%
Zimbabwe	11 247 950	4 948 554	1 497 600	350 000	23%

Under such circumstances, it is also hard to build sustainable trade union strategies. Several of the national centres in the SADC region have had stagnant or declining membership over the last few years, following formal sector job losses due to economic restructuring and changes in the political frameworks.

⁶ Reliable and updated statistics on the labour markets in southern Africa are hard to come by. Trade union figures are even more difficult. The statistics included in the table are gathered for the Tørres (1998) publication on the basis of government statistics, union documentation etc. For some countries, union figures have been updated since (Tørres 2002).

⁷ Calculated on the basis of formal sector employment.

In some countries, such as Zambia, Malawi, Kenya, Uganda, Botswana and Mozambique, political divisions and splits have also undermined membership developments. Furthermore, collective bargaining systems are fragmented and under major pressures. With membership losses, several trade unions have started restructuring processes, “back to basics campaigns” and investigations into possibilities for informal sector organisation. Under such circumstances, the search for new solutions to trade union organising and for new balance lines between politics and markets has taken on heightened importance internationally.

3 Developing trade union strength through research?

The research programme aims at strengthening the capacity of labour in order for them to develop economic and social strategies through improved documentation et al. On that basis, the labour movement is expected to become stronger, organise members more effectively and become a more powerful partner and opponent to employers and the state in collective bargaining and social dialogue fora. The programme has involved national trade union centres in five countries: Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

The programme is co-ordinated at the regional level by the Economic and Social Policy Department of the ICFTU-Afro in Nairobi. A regional Research Steering Committee was appointed comprising the ICFTU-Afro, beneficiary trade unions and collaborating partners. The committee meets annually, reviews project progress and activities, recommends revisions of activities and debates priorities for future research activities and training. Before funds were to be released from ICFTU-Afro to national activities, national centres were to submit detailed programmes, venues, provisional lists of participants, resource persons and budgets etc. (for training programmes) and outlined project proposals for research activities. At the end of the project, each national centre was obliged to conduct a self-evaluation and planning seminar for all national affiliates evaluating the progress against objectives originally formulated in the programme description.

Activities and output from the programme

National coordinators and research committees were set up in all the participating countries. Training was set out in three-year circles, with training organised twice a year with the same people going through four phases of training, focussing on different subjects. Each of the training sessions was usually set up in workshops/seminars stretching over 5 days. The following table below reports on the activities that took place in the various national centres⁸:

	<i>Malawi</i>	<i>Mozambique</i>	<i>Tanzania</i>	<i>Uganda</i>	<i>Zambia</i>
1999	Research training workshop, June 18 participants (5 women)	Training workshop, July & October, 25 participants	Training workshop, July & November, 25 participants, 7 women	Training workshops June & October, 13 participants	Training workshop, June, 14 participants (one woman)
2000	Two training workshops, August and October, 22	Two reports (full and shorter popular version) on trade union membership	Report on Industrial Practices during Privatisation (draft)	Study on Trade Union membership Leadership	Survey on Trade Union Membership and Profiles finalised

⁸ The information is based on annual reports of activities.

	participants (4 women)	and organising. Five dissemination workshops (leadership and provinces) Two research training workshops, June & October, 30 participants each (11 & 9 women)	Training research workshop, May, 20 participants (5 women). TFTU dissolved July 2000 ⁹	dissemination workshop & workshop on popular version of report for rank and file Two training workshops, June and December, 19 participants each (4 women in first and 5 in second).	Two leadership dissemination workshops Two Popular dissemination workshops for branch and district level unions Two research training workshops, June & December, 15 & 13 participants (5 & 3 women)
2001	Research Leadership Workshop, 29 participants (7 women).	Two training workshops, 31 participants with 22 percent women		Two research training workshops with 20 participants, 5 women participants	Two training workshops, 17 participants, 29 percent female
2002	Research workshop, December, 24 participants, 2 women	Update publication on Membership Profiles Dissemination during Congress Two training seminars, 33 participants, 13 women	Refresher workshop for researchers and educators, July, 27 participants, 7 women	Update publication on Membership Profiles Two training seminars, 20 participants, 6 women Workshop for researchers on PRSP and NEPAD	Update publication on Membership Profiles Two dissemination seminars (60 participants) Training seminar, September, 16 participants (phase I), 3 women
2003	Two research training workshops	Two research Training seminars, 25 participants Leadership workshop on NEPAD	Two research training workshops, July & November, 26 researchers & educators Survey on Membership and Trade Union profiles	Two research training workshops, 24 participants, 7 women (phase III & IV)	Training seminar, February, 16 participants (phase II), 3 women Training seminars, July & September, 17 participants (phase III & IV), 3 women Research report on the Impact of Globalisation
2004 ¹⁰			Dissemination seminar (Wages study), February	Study on Minimum Wages in Uganda	

Uganda was one of the beneficiaries of the first three-year research programme (1999 to 2001). The objectives of the training programmes at NOTU were to equip participants with knowledge about economics and research and its role in the labour movement and impart abilities to understand and analyse the socio-economic environment that trade unions are operating in. A national committee was set up to determine the priorities of the research and training programme and a national co-ordinator appointed to run the programme and workshops. In the first phase of the programme (1999 to 2001),

⁹ Following the enactment of the Trade Union Act of 1998, requiring trade unions to be registered in their own right.

¹⁰ Reports of activities and progress for 2004 were not yet finalised by the time of our fieldwork and interviews and are hence not complete.

NOTU started training researchers and economists through six training programmes and two dissemination workshops. A total of 24 researchers were trained with topics covering: introduction to research, research methodologies, introduction to economics, labour economics and structural adjustment, research proposals writing; dissemination, price theory and inflation, basic accounting, the structure of the economy; statistics and questionnaire design as well as several other topics. A survey of trade union membership was also carried out through the programme followed by two dissemination seminars for union leaders and members. The same group was finally trained in basic trade union subjects such as collective bargaining, organising and recruitment, occupational health and safety, ILO standards etc. in 2001. With the renewal of the project from 2001 to 2004, NOTU trained another group of 18 researchers according to the same model as in the first phase and research was conducted on wages and salaries in Uganda with dissemination seminars etc. to follow.¹¹

In **Malawi**, a training programme was started up in 1999 with one workshop training 18 participants in economics, labour markets, structural adjustment programmes, research methodology & data collection, methodology et al. The target group was predominantly the top leadership of the MCTU and its affiliates. However, several problems were experienced with the Malawi programme thereafter. The research coordinator of the programme resigned in 1999 claiming not to have been paid a salary, only to be replaced by a new coordinator¹² who took charge of the training in the years to follow. The national research committee was initially composed by ten members, who after pressure from Afro (for budget reasons) was reduced to five members. With regard to research topics, the MCTU wanted to focus on collective bargaining (strengths and weaknesses). However, no research ever materialised from the Malawi side of the programme. While the original proposal had been convincing, the annual activity reports state that MCTU used a bulk of the funds for other expenditure for meetings, accommodation, travels etc. allocating only 20 percent to field activities. While the new project coordinator seemed satisfactory, management of the project was not and the new coordinator also left the project in 2003.

In **Zambia**, training workshops were started in 1999 with 14 participants focussing on economics, statistics and company performance. A national committee was also set up to determine the priorities of the research and training programme and a national co-ordinator was appointed to run the programme and its workshops. In the first phase of the programme (1999 to 2001), the ZCTU started training researchers and economists through training programmes and dissemination workshops. The participants in the first training workshops were national officers from affiliate unions. In 2000, the report on Membership profiles was presented in two leadership workshops and two further workshops disseminating the results in a smaller more popular version to branch and district trade unionists. A total number of 91 trade unionists participated in these workshops. The ZCTU organised another two research training workshops with a focus on globalisation, economic reforms, regional integration, statistics etc. The participants were the same as in the 1999 group, 15 in the first workshop and 13 in the second. The report

¹¹ *Study on Wages and salaries: the Minimum Wage in Uganda*, NOTU 2004

¹² The General Secretary of the Malawi Broadcasting Workers' Union.

on membership profiles was updated in 2002, another report on the impact of Globalisation drafted in 2003 and dissemination seminars as well as research training continued as planned.

In **Mozambique**, training workshops were also started in 1999 with 25 participants focussing on the concepts and importance of research, research skills, collection and analysis of data and data bank creation. The programme was continued in 2000 with 30 participants in each workshop. The course content included issues of wages, economic and social indicators, productivity, inflation, collective bargaining agreements etc. Reports on membership profiles were published in 2000 and updated in 2002. Dissemination seminars as well as research training continued as planned. A national committee was also set up to determine the priorities of the research and training programme and a national co-ordinator was appointed to run the programme and its workshops.

In **Tanzania**, training was also started in 1999 with workshops in July and November where 25 participants took part with a focus on economics, structural adjustment programmes, company profiles, basic accounting, ILO labour standards etc. and as the only country: gender and equality issues. The TFTU education committee monitored the programme. One training workshop in research skills, statistics, company performance etc. was conducted before the TFTU was dissolved in July 2000 and the project hence discontinued.¹³ After 12-13 months, the programme was continued when the new federation, Trade Union Congress of Tanzania – TUCTA) was established and started off with a researcher “refresher course” in 2002. All in all, reports on industrial relations as well as a survey on membership profiles have been conducted through the programme. Dissemination seminars as well as research training continued as planned (except for the project break when the union movement was restructured). A national committee was also set up to determine the priorities of the research and training programme and a national co-ordinator was appointed to run the programme and its workshops.

In addition to the national activities reported above, sub-regional activities, seminar and visits took place throughout the period.

Relevance of the programme

Priorities of research activities and training programmes are selected at the annual meeting of the project steering group. However, national centres, on the basis of internal discussions, hold considerable influence in setting the agenda for the programme. At the same time, there is a fairly high degree of overlap in priorities selected for research in all national centres, with a focus on membership profiles and wages (with the exception of Tanzania and Malawi). The training programmes have concentrated on topics which are all highly relevant to labour struggles in Africa with a predominant focus on economics and research methodologies while the subjects range from issues of globalisation and structural adjustment, labour markets and wages etc.

Reflecting the relevance of the programme, trade unions in their self-evaluations highlight several benefits from the project. In Uganda, NOTU highlights that some researchers have assisted their unions with

¹³ The project steering group decided that as soon as a successor to the TFTU regularised its contact with the ICFTU – Afro, project activities would resume.

research before negotiations, while others have become appointed on a fulltime basis by their unions. At the same time, they also underline that in some cases, affiliate unions do not consider research a priority, set aside budgets for such activities and do not utilise the researchers trained. While the lack of funding and priority may be a consequence of limited resources, it may also be a result of lack of interest or unions not seeing the relevance and benefits accruing from the programme. Yet, for the first time, NOTU has been able to ascertain its membership base and accumulated information on various socio-economic and political issues. In the ZCTU in Zambia, they have experienced increased demands from the unions for research information and also affiliates who increasingly wish to establish research offices. Trainees have also often been used in collective bargaining and negotiations. Similarly unions report of having attracted considerable interest from members and affiliate unions for the various research reports being published. The report on membership profiles in the ZCTU served as a basis, unions argue, for more aggressive organising, union mergers, counteracting violation of workers' rights, networking and more accountable union leaders etc. Likewise, the unions in Mozambique report considerable interest for their material developed on membership in paving the way forward for more aggressive trade union organising.

While priorities overall seem to have been in accordance with the needs of the national unions and affiliates, priority setting becomes difficult with limited funds. As a consequence, the programme struggles with an overload of subjects and priorities for the training programmes. Hence, much would have been gained by more focus and tighter priorities in order to facilitate central development of training material and even more importantly, regional synthesis and strategies on the basis of the research focus and training conducted at the national level.

External impact of the programme

Developing trade union strength in bargaining and social dialogue fora has been a stated objective of the programme and there are several examples of impact in this respect. NOTU states that the programme has helped their researchers to become able to represent the labour movement in several national and international workshops. The ZCTU in Zambia likewise argues that it has become stronger in social dialogue fora with a focus on the national budget, and general social and economic issues. Also in Mozambique, the programme has, according to the union movement contributed to union strength in collective bargaining and negotiations with the state. The improved, or in some cases first-hand knowledge of membership figures, wages etc. may generally also be assumed to have contributed to more self-critical assessments of organising and bargaining strategies, which in turn may impact on the strategies labour adopts towards employers and the state.

At the same time, the external impact of the project seems to have been more limited in Tanzania and definitely in Malawi. While more limited success in Tanzania than in the other countries may be explained by union restructuring and the union movement being dissolved, legitimate explanations are harder to find in Malawi. In Malawi, limited success of the programme is probably connected to the generally weak leadership structure and organisation of the MCTU, which in turn points to the need for relatively strong union organisations in order to be able to take advantage of such programmes.

All in all, it is hard to argue that the overall project has improved the performance of labour as assessed by its' contribution to more collective agreements or better labour legislation. With the general challenges confronting labour movements in Sub-Saharan Africa, we need to rather assess whether labour would have been weaker *without* this research programme. While this evaluation argues that labour has clearly benefited from the programme, it also sees the need for more focus in the programme and a general strengthening of dissemination etc, in order for external impact of the project to be improved.

Efficiency of the programme

The programme has been administered by the Afro office in Nairobi and overseen by the regional project steering group meeting regularly. In terms of the day-to day administration of the programme, the Afro economist has paid regular monitoring visits to each of the beneficiary organisations.¹⁴ In several cases, visits have been planned to coincide with training workshops in order for the Afro economist also to assist in the training. The Afro economist has also assisted in the editing of the research reports conducted by the national centres. All in all, the performance of this part of the Afro project administration seems satisfactory and performed by highly qualified staff.

The more "political" dimension of the regional project administration would however have gained by some tough decisions being made concerning focus, and beneficiary organisations. The Malawi case illustrates the problem with regular large-scale problems being reported throughout the programme period, mismanagement of funds and bad management of the programme.¹⁵ The project progress in Malawi was slow at best. While funds had been allocated to the programme in the first two years of the programme, by the end of 2004, no research had yet been finalised and published. At the same time, training continued and new funds were allocated to that throughout the project period until 2004. While decisions to exclude countries are difficult and the need to do so more often realised in hindsight than at the point of having to make the decisions, Malawi should probably have been excluded from the project much earlier. Training researchers within weak organisations should also be expected to have limited value when organisations are too weak to absorb the benefits.

At the same time, reports from the ICFTU to LO seem to be slightly contradictory and unclear concerning Malawi, which to some extent may be explained by the Malawi reports themselves being unclear.¹⁶ In the 2001 proposal, the ICFTU advises that confidence in the leadership in the MCTU needs to be increased and further states that establishing a research centre should be an integral part of short-term objectives for the project in Malawi. In the 2002 proposal however, it is recommended to drop Malawi from the project in the second phase of the operations. At the same time, activities, i.e. research training, take

¹⁴ To ZCTU November 1999, Tanzania November 1999; Mozambique August 1999 & Malawi December 1999. Two visits to Malawi were done in 2001 in order to follow up lack of project progress. In 2002, missions were undertaken to Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia.

¹⁵ In early 2000, the ICFTU-Afro had to send reminders for proposals to come through. By the end of December 2000, no research had been conducted and in January 2001, the message was received that the researcher had "disappeared". At the same time, no meetings of the research committee in Malawi were reported to have taken place. In spite of advice from the Afro economist, lack of self evaluations, and concerns by the project steering group of unsatisfactory project management, the programme continued, with funds disbursed for research training to the MCTU in the while project period thereafter.

¹⁶ The annual report for 2000 argues for example that the MCTU report on Collective Bargaining Agreements had never been finalised, while the 2001 proposal written in July 2000 argues that the research has been conducted and presented to MCTU leadership. Self-evaluations were reported to have taken place for 1999, yet never materialised.

place and are funded in 2002 and thereafter. This being noted, the steering group did finally make some tough choices about withholding funds for Malawi, reallocation of funds to other participating countries etc. The role of the regional project steering group has also been strengthened after meetings started to be organised in March annually, in time for debates about next years' budgets and activities and before finalising last years' programme reports and accounts.¹⁷ The reporting from the steering group meetings has generally also improved during the project period. All in all, however, it is up to the ICFTU leadership, which is responsible for the programme, to make the tough decisions about whether beneficiary organisations should remain in the programme or not.

In general, the project administration by the regional coordinator seems satisfactory with regular reports being made, and followed up, on proposals, self evaluations and activities. The coordinator has also assessed and commented on research reports and given input to the research activities and training programme itself. All in all, hundreds of trade unionists have been trained in key subjects for the trade union movement and core material has been developed for union strategies. As such, the programme has achieved impressive results on the basis of limited funding. At the same time, project implementation and the training programme in particular has been far too broad to achieve satisfactory capacity building, which limits the success and satisfaction of objectives set out in the co-operation agreement and also limits the potential role of the regional coordinator. If tighter priorities had been made for example for the training, the role of the regional coordinator in developing training material etc. would also have been much easier.

Sustainability of the programme

The ICFTU programme preceding the current LO funded programme trained a number of researchers linked to the national union federations' main centres. Yet, it was highlighted that academics often leave the unions for better-paid employment after being trained by the unions. With several unions not utilising the research capacity being built up, the likelihood of trained researchers leaving the unions increases. Several researchers in national centres are also often caught up in the day-to day running of the unions. While this may maintain and assure a close relationship with core union issues, it may also risk alienating researchers from the tasks they were meant to perform and make it difficult for them to keep up to date about methodologies, new literature, economic trends etc. which is needed in the performance of their job. In Uganda, NOTU points out that the loss of trained educators and researchers is one of the main challenges to the programme with several trained researchers having left the unions since the programme started. All the national centres and affiliates underline the same challenge. High turnover in the trade union movement in Africa necessitates continued and extensive training, but it also necessitates concentration and better utilisation of the existing resources as we will return to later (see recommendations).

Will the national centres and affiliates be able to continue the programme on their own? Confronted with massive external challenges and limited resources, most unions depend totally on donor assistance to be

¹⁷ Annual project steering group meetings were held, but often too late in the year in order to be able to adjust activities and budgets as also pointed out by LO in 2003 meeting

able to continue such programmes. In the long-term however, a well targeted programme with close international cooperation partners and with collaboration established with academic institutions at the local and regional level should be able to provide the basis for both trade union strength locally and sustainable institutions apt to conduct research for broader groups. NOTU has for example been able to build relationships with academic institutions like the University of Makerere, the Makerere Business School etc. which may provide a basis for longer-term institution-building, and co-operation partnerships around workshops and training etc. Several of the trained researchers have also become stimulated to further their training in various fields and hence build on the broad capacity contained in the union movement. Many researchers have also taken up leadership positions in their union contributing to strengthening knowledge capacity at leadership levels and hence also capacity in collective bargaining and negotiations.

In order to develop and maintain improved sustainability through the programme however, unions and affiliates have to make more, and more strategic, use of the capacity developed. Women researchers in particular, are, according to NOTU hardly ever being asked to do follow-up research work for their unions. There is also an inadequate numbers of women in the participation of the project. While the project steering group has pointed this out, they could have insisted in maintaining the target for affirmative action set by the ICFTU in the programme. The project steering group stated initially that unless participating countries managed to meet the ICFTU quota of 30 percent women, they would not have funds released. In practice however, few national centres have maintained more than 20 per cent women and the majority have had less.

Issues such as increased networking among the participating countries, workshop materials to be developed into educational manuals and more focus in the training would also contribute to improved sustainability and to existing resources more effectively contributing to the establishment of functional research units. These issues have continuously been pointed out also by the steering group. At the end of the day, sustainability is all about contributing to the overall goals of the project which is to strengthen the labour movement. In other words, if labour becomes stronger on the basis of strengthened research capacity, the likelihood of the research capacity being sustainable is also much higher. Hence, rather than focussing only, or mainly, on how to build research capacity, far more attention needs to be given to the needs and capacity of labour to utilise research. The following section gives concrete input and recommendations as to how the project can be strengthened in this direction.

4 Recommendations and conclusions

Trade union density is generally regarded as a main marker of union strength. However, the differences in density figures in our Southern and Eastern African countries alone would indicate that membership figures can hardly provide the basis for assessing strength alone. We also need to give attention to the political conditions, and alliances with political parties. Furthermore, the labour market and demands/supply of labour provide yardsticks of political power. Most importantly and often overlooked, however, are the internal conditions, organisational structure and capabilities of labour movements. Strong shop-floor structures, gained through local bargaining has provided the basis for labour power and given unions a continuous reservoir of new leaders in several countries. Labour gains power in

social dialogue and collective bargaining most effectively if the opponent knows that labour can mobilise against them. Hence, mobilisation, militancy and collective strength are the most effective labour tools. In order to be able to mobilise members effectively, leadership depends on strong shop-floor structures and internal democracy. It has particularly been through the existence of strong bargaining systems and internally strong organisations that labour movements in many countries have gained the ability to mobilise and on this basis also the collective strength versus employers and the state. If research can broaden the realisation of these issues, and contribute with information which strengthens the organisation and success of labour in areas of collective bargaining and negotiations particularly, it has achieved its goals. Research alone, and in itself, will however not be valuable in this respect. For research to contribute to the development of trade union strength, it has to strategically address the core problems of the labour movement, provide the information about how to deal with them and assist in the strategising in order to address them.

Strengthening the research capacity of labour is seen by the national federations involved in the project as having a direct effect in developing trade union strength. The self-evaluations of the national federations report that the project objectives have been met and that output is feeding into mainstream trade union work. The project has, in their view proved vital for trade union decision making and educational materials. In Zambia, it is noted that output was critical for effective trade union participation in the PRSP and national budget processes. In Mozambique, the OTM leadership reports that the project has contributed to improving the perceptions of the role of research and also directly contributed to decision-making on strategies, bargaining and organising etc.

The overall objective of the programme has been to promote research activities of trade union movements in Africa at both leadership and rank-and-file levels, in order to increase the capabilities of national trade union centres in handling economic and research related issues. Rather than aiming at promoting research in itself however, research should be seen, and evaluated, as a *tool*. If research contributes to strengthening the organisation and core of the labour movements, i.e. the ability to bargain collectively and mobilise, it is successful. A reformulation of goals in this direction does, however, require a rethinking also of the instruments and the organisation of the project. While there is no doubt in our view that the project is valuable and should be provided with the resources to continue, the following factors should be addressed in order to maximise the value of research in building trade union strength.

- Project steering group meetings should be held early in the year in order to be able to adjust activities to budgets and funding. The steering group should also more effectively prioritise subjects for training and identify the criteria, and delivery goals, for beneficiary organisations. In addition, the project steering group should be setting, and following up, on strict demands for gender quotas. The steering group could possibly also be gained by participation of resource people from relevant external organisations such as the ILO and/or relevant research bodies in the region. Furthermore, while in practice, all meetings have been held in Nairobi, regional meetings should circulate, and not all be held in one country.

- A relatively large part of the budget for the programme goes to the regional ICFTU office. It is important to keep regional administration at a minimum and refocus the role of the regional office towards providing *research leadership*. Regional labour market information and union statistics, as well as baseline information for negotiations with SADC etc. may be compiled by the regional office on the basis of the national research reports and will give valuable additions to the work currently conducted by the national researchers.
- In terms of the *selection of participating countries*, relatively strong national centres should be selected for participation in the project. The value of research to the union movement will depend on a relatively strong trade union movement, and not the least strong leadership, which is able to order, digest and strategically use the information developed. Hence, “advanced” countries should be selected with the weaker unions rather being welcomed into national programmes and seminars in neighbouring countries at a later stage.
- More focus and attention should be given to a research and training agenda which *strengthens the collective bargaining agenda* of the labour movement. For the research projects, that would imply more, and regular, focus on wage statistics, union profiles, gathering of relevant information about national budgets etc. For the training in particular, there is an even more apparent need to concentrate on less topics, and topics directly relevant to collective bargaining and negotiations agenda of the unions, such as wages, membership profiles, macro economic information, etc.
- *Training should furthermore be more focussed* on issues of relevance and value for labour, the value and techniques of applied research etc. While academic and methodological issues are important in order to assure quality information on which basis the labour movement can base its’ strategies, issues of relevance, presentation and the role of the labour movement are often overlooked issues for the training of labour researchers. At the same time, these dimensions are crucial in order to assure any value of research for the labour movement and legitimise why unions should invest in own research departments and resource people.
- At the same time, *workshops should be organised also for union leadership*, which give attention to the possible value and relevance of research with the aim to make union leaders conscious, strategic and offensive “customers” of research. Without union leaders being able to provide the critical “customers” of research, the value and benefits of research to the union movement will be restricted.
- The programme needs to be carefully designed to fit into, and not overlap, with other international programmes. Several relevant programmes are in function or currently starting up: the Global Union Research Network, the Global Policy Research Network, etc. In several cases, training can hence be organised in organised or funded by other sources while the LO programme gets more targeted and organised around a “collective bargaining agenda”.

- *Training material* should be the same in all countries, developed by the regional co-ordinator for slight national variation thereafter. Such training material can be made available on the internet on designated web pages for the Sub-Saharan labour movement or linked up to other African research network (see below).
- Resources for *web pages* should be included in the budget in order to facilitate the spreading of training material and research publication. Another option may be to spend resources adding on to the existing web pages of the Labour research Africa (LRA) administered amongst others by NALEDI in South Africa.
- In order to maximise success with limited funding, *unions should concentrate their base* before spreading. In other words, resources should rather be invested in developing viable national resource centres and in training researchers linked to the national centres before spreading resources to union affiliates. While aims of decentralisation and development of union affiliates may be good, investments in training of one or two individuals in each affiliate may have limited effect on union strength when unions themselves have limited resources and interest in research. Hence, concentration and development of strong cores at national centres may be necessary requirements for the later possible development of research capacity amongst affiliates.
- Following from the above, attention should be given to *the development of documentation bases* and centres at the national centres, providing background information, data bases, statistics, newspaper cuttings relevant for union collective bargaining etc. as background material for negotiations and bargaining at both the central level and amongst affiliates. Such a model could also provide added benefits for the collective strength and identity of the union movements.
- Experience from the previous ICFTU project indicates that there has to be *tight contact between researchers and unions*. Far more attention should be given to this issue and what it entails. Development of research does not automatically lead to labour leaders seeing the value of research. Only if researchers provide useful, targeted and well disseminated results in order for labour to gain in negotiations or organising efforts will labour leaders see the value of research. Hence, annual evaluations should be conducted where labour leaders should be expected to give concrete examples of how research benefited them in these areas.
- With a reorientation of resources towards research and union relevance, greater responsibility should also be put on the national centres to make use of research. Unless research is used effectively by the national centres, and documentation is provided to that effect, trade unions should not be part of the research programme.
- In consequence of the reorientation of the programme, less people will be trained, but hopefully also with more value for the labour movement per trained researcher. Furthermore,

more research may be allocated to conduct research and hence put into practice the skills being developed. At the same time, unionists may also be trained by the Global labour University and through other sources. Hence, co-ordination and the development of feed-back systems and value to labour should get focus for coordinators and the development of national research departments.

The political and economic setting has changed dramatically for all the regional trade union movements in the last decade. The majority of the national centres have had stagnant or declining membership over the last few years, which is partly an effect of general restructuring, but structural adjustment programmes have also taken its toll. In some ways, however, unions are more powerful today than what they were 10 years ago, in that they have found a larger degree of independence, the gap between leadership and members internally has shrunk in many unions and they are more oriented towards workplace issues and the shop floor. At the same time, unions are in search for new platforms for independent trade unionism. Several studies document the constructive effect of trade unions and collective bargaining on sustainable economic developments. There is also no doubt that strong structures of collective bargaining will provide a basis for labour strength in other respects. If this focus provides the background and focus for research, the likelihood of research contributing to the strengthening of labour movements will also increase.

Appendix: interviews conducted during the evaluation¹⁸

Meetings Uganda:

NOTU Secretariat and general secretaries of affiliated unions; members of the Research Project Committee; team of researchers trained by the NOTU/ICFTU Project; The Research project Co-ordinator Rose Nassanga; Federation of Ugandan Employers; Visit to Transport and Education Union

Meetings Zambia:

ZCTU Research Coordinator Austin Muneku; General Secretary Sylvester Tembo; Steven Mumbi & leadership; LO adviser Robinson Sikazwe; research director at National Union of Commercial & Industrial Workers

Meetings Kenya:

Research coordinator ICFTU office Lawrence Egulu; ICFTU-AFRO - Andrew Kailembo & COTU research coordinator Noah Chune

¹⁸ The evaluation team also benefited from the discussions around general trade union challenges in Sub-Saharan Africa conducted as part of the evaluation of the HIV/AIDS project.