



global worker

SPECIAL REPORT

BHP: show respect

FEATURE

Are unions fighting for the same thing?

INTERVIEW

Beauty Zibula

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Now more than ever, we need to come together and fight back. With hundreds of millions of unionized workers around the world, we are a force to be reckoned with.

Valter Sanches
General Secretary



Welcome to **global** worker

2019 is coming to an end, but IndustriALL continues to fight for an economic and social model that puts people first. Together with our affiliated unions we challenge the power of multinational companies, while globally, anti-union behaviour by governments and employers becomes more prevalent.

We are less than a year away from IndustriALL's third Congress, to be held in Cape Town in October 2020, where we will unite for a just future under the slogan **Amandla Awethu**.

This issue of Global Worker takes a closer look at two successful organizing initiatives; **Bhutanese students in Japan** who ended up working long hours, sometimes illegally, for low wages managed to form a union with the **support of JAM**. You can read the full story on page 9.

And home-based workers, primarily women, **fighting forward and forming a union** to claim rights for their members and winning significant victories, page 17.

Mining giant BHP has a clear policy to outsource workers, who end up working side by side with those on permanent contracts, but with less pay and more precarious conditions. After a decision in our Executive Committee, **IndustriALL launched a campaign against the company together with**

the global network of unions at BHP operations. See our special report on pages 20-23.

7 October, World Day for Decent Work, is a day of action for unions around the world, repeating the message to **STOP Precarious Work**. Page 4 show photos of union action.

Now more than ever, we need to come together and fight back. **With hundreds of millions of unionized workers around the world, we are a force to be reckoned with**. On pages 12-16 we address some of the issues central to unions' struggles in the coming period.

Nearly one year ago, at our Executive Committee in Mexico City in December 2018, IndustriALL adopted an action plan on international trade and manufacturing policies to help affiliates become more involved in talks concerning multilateral trade agreements and treaties. On pages 5-8, we delve deeper into what the African Continental Free Trade Agreement will entail. **Will it promote fair trade and create decent jobs?**

We are seeing a profound transformation in the world of work, a transformation which brings both challenges and opportunities. **As unions we need to protect workers along the way; read about the recently signed agreement with French car manufacturer Renault** on building the world of work on pages 18-19.

Beauty Zibula from South African textile union SACTWU has left IndustriALL's Executive Committee and instead taken up a seat in South Africa's parliament. **She talks of her journey from the shop floor to the centre of politics** in the Interview on pages 10-11.

This is an issue with inspiring stories; **when we come together, we win**.

A luta continua.

Valter Sanches
General Secretary

 @ValterSanches

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UNIONS CELEBRATE WORLD DAY FOR DECENT WORK

IndustriALL Global Union affiliates around the globe took action on 7 October, the World Day for Decent Work. As well as calling for an end to precarious work, unions demanded better working conditions, maternity rights, mine safety, youth rights and climate justice.

In Thailand, thousands of workers, including members of IndustriALL affiliate, the Confederation of Industrial Labour of Thailand, marched to Government House to deliver a letter to the Prime Minister demanding safe and secure jobs, and action to protect workers in the face of Industry 4.0.

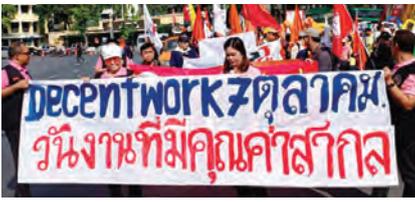
In Jakarta, women from the IndustriALL Indonesian Council held a rally urging authorities and employers to ensure decent work, healthy and safe working places and longer maternity leave.

In the Philippines, IndustriALL affiliates held a national forum looking at how to strengthen workers' rights and end the prevalence of exploitative precarious work in the country.

IndustriALL affiliates in Nigeria and Pakistan called on Shell to stop precarious work and give workers a permanent job at the oil and gas giant.

In Mauritius, IndustriALL trade unions marched through the streets with banners calling for decent work, an end to violence against women and climate justice.

In South Asia, affiliates in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan all took action in protest at precarious work, while IndustriALL affiliates from all over Latin America marked 7 October at a meeting in Buenos Aires of energy, mining and metal unions.



report

Text:
Elijah Chiwota

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THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA – WILL IT PROMOTE FAIR TRADE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND DECENT WORK?



On a continent with high unemployment, where most of the working-age population of 705 million people work in the informal sector, do claims that the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement will create decent jobs stand up to scrutiny?

We ask the continent's trade unions for their view.

“We are far away from the ideals of Pan Africanism. The AfCFTA will not make our dreams come true. There are fears that many large African economies will disproportionately benefit while others will not be able to save their domestic industries from the dumping of imported goods.”

REEAZ CHUTTO, MAURITIUS

In Africa's post-colonial landscape, dictatorships and rampant corruption thrive. Countries are underdeveloped and highly indebted. Economies have not transformed after independence. Most African economies remain primary producers of agricultural goods, oil and gas, and minerals with little or no value addition. They are heavily dependent on foreign aid. Unemployment is high, especially of the youth, and most people make a living in the informal sector. Poverty is common, including that of the working poor.

The AfCFTA is a project of the African Union (AU), designed to facilitate intra-African trade. Originally launched in 2012, its instruments have not yet fully come into force. When they do, many

argue it has the potential to transform the economy of the continent.

The support for the AfCFTA by African countries since its launch and particularly since negotiations began in 2015 is overwhelming, with only Eritrea still to sign. Nigeria, the continent's biggest economy, was initially reluctant, fearing that the country would be flooded by cheap imports, but eventually signed.

“The long-awaited solidarity between African countries is finally happening. It is time for African countries to have strategic trade agreements to bring together the resources and labour that the continent is rich in and attain strong and sustainable industrial development.”

ROSE OMAMO, KENYA

African countries trade more with Asia, China, Europe and the USA than amongst themselves. African trade unions, which are promoting the industrialization of the continent, see this as a lost opportunity. African countries are competing for the same international markets, and duplicating efforts, instead of specializing, pooling expertise and trading with each other. **However, unions are concerned that increasing trade**

will not automatically benefit people if workers' rights are not prioritized.

When it is fully implemented, many believe the AfCFTA could be a critical breakthrough to improving intra-regional trade, cross border trade and economic integration, creating jobs and contributing to the sustainable industrialization of the continent.

Although trade unions recognize this potential, they have been excluded from the consultations that led to the signing and ratification of the agreement. Trade unions, civil society organizations and communities that will be directly affected have not been given a chance to represent their interests. **They argue that this exclusion is against the people-centred approach and transparency of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, and fair-trade principles that promote partnerships based on dialogue, transparency and mutual respect.**

WHAT IS THE AfCFTA?

The AfCFTA a wide-ranging agreement that covers trade in goods and services, investment, intellectual property rights, and competition policy. The AfCFTA aims to “promote and attain sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development, gender equality and transformation of state parties.” Further, the agreement intends to “promote industrial development through diversification and regional value chain development, agricultural development and food security.”

According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, in 2017 intra-African trade accounted for only 16 per cent of total exports. The main trader is South Africa which imports petroleum products and exports maize and other items. It is followed by Nigeria and Egypt which export crude petroleum and petroleum gas and garments and textiles and import other products.

Globally, African trade only accounts for 2.6 per cent and mainly trades with Europe. Trade with India and China is also growing.

The AfCFTA aims to achieve transformation through implementing existing continental initiatives, including the Industrial Development Africa, Programme for Infrastructural Development of Africa, Action Plan for Boosting Intra-African Trade and the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme. Other projects include the Single Africa Air Transport Market and free movement of people.





With support from the AU and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the AfCFTA is driven by ministers and heads of states and government. The agreement has a secretariat which will be based Ghana.

The AfCFTA will create a single market for goods and services for a population of 1.2 billion people and a combined gross domestic product of US\$3.4 trillion. The single market will create free movement of people, traders and investments leading to the establishment of a common customs union. According to UNECA, the AfCFTA will become the world's largest free trade area since the formation of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

When fully functional, the AfCFTA aims to boost intra-African trade by over 50 per cent through the development and promotion of regional and continental value chains. The agreement, which is one of the strategies of the AU's Agenda 2063 programme for transformation and development, will lead to the achievement of some of Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030.

Benefits of the agreement include increased manufacturing and diversification in emerging economies including Ethiopia, Morocco and Rwanda that are implementing policies that promote manufacturing and industrialization. This means small countries will take advantage of the economies of scale and the huge market provided by the AfCFTA.

The agreement also has provisions that have allowed the struggling economies of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Malawi, Sudan, Zambia and Zimbabwe to benefit from reduced tariffs. According to the

Global Manufacturing Competitive Index most of the manufacturing on the continent currently takes place in South Africa, Egypt and Nigeria.

The AfCFTA aims to improve coordination and facilitation of trade across the regional economic blocs. Integration will include bringing together regional economic communities – Arab Maghreb Union, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, Economic Community of West African States, East African Community, the Community of Sahel-Saharan States, and the Economic Community of Central African States, Intergovernmental Authority on Development and Southern Africa Development Community. **Among other things, the AfCFTA wants to end competition between the regional economic communities and replace it with cooperation.**

The AfCFTA compliments other strategies of the AU including the African Mining Vision (AMV). The AMV identifies **sustainable development corridors** as a tool for promoting trade and investment, optimizing the use of infrastructure, encouraging value addition, and enhancing the competitiveness of African economies.

The corridors are geographical areas where resources are pooled together to achieve maximum impact.

“The African Spatial Development Programme provides a means to facilitate integrated economic development platforms based on the production of key large-scale anchor (usually in mineral beneficiation) investments and related upstream and downstream investments. They also provide a strategy to catalyse sustainable sectors (agriculture, tourism and resource-processing) and in doing so, provide a tool for introducing a spatial focus to planning for Africa's infrastructure and economic development.”

The AMV also makes a case for artisanal and small-scale mining to be recognized by governments through policies and regulations. In most countries artisanal miners are criminalized with little or no effort to recognize and formalize their operations. **How minerals mined by artisanal and small-scale miners can become part of the mining value chain is also important for the AfCFTA.**

The operational instruments of the AfCFTA are rules of origin, the online negotiating forum, the monitoring and elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers, a digital payment system and the African Trade Observatory – a platform for policymakers and the private sector to make data-driven and evidence-based trade related policies and decisions.

WILL IT WORK?

Is the AfCFTA charting a new path? Africa has never been short of economic and policy documents. The African trade and investment policy landscape is littered with failed grand plans and ambitious policies that have not succeeded in bringing about much-needed trade. The Organization of African Unity, which became the African Union in 2002, was formed in 1963 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, with great emphasis put on economic co-operation. There were claims that Africa should not depend on aid from the Global North, but develop through trade and investment. Hence ideas of developmental states. Despite this, very little has changed on the ground.

The AfCFTA recognizes existing trade agreements, making it possible for them to complement the AfCFTA rather than compete with it. These include the African Growth and Opportunity Act, Economic Partnership Agreements, and agreements with the WTO. However, existing trade policies have failed to provide the impetus required for industrialization and economic development to take off in Africa.

Further, economic policies sponsored by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have not led to sustainable growth, with structural adjustment programmes bringing the worst results. Trade liberalization saw the collapse of most local industries as their products could not compete with those imported from other countries. The privatization of public entities made public goods and services expensive for the continent's poor.

It remains to be seen if the AfCFTA can transform the economies of the continent from the dependency on primary commodity exports. According to the UNCTAD, this dependency makes African economies vulnerable to the unstable prices on the international market. For instance, the low international oil prices have adversely affected the Nigerian economy while low uranium spot prices have led to the mothballing of Langer Heinrich mine in Namibia, leading to the loss of hundreds of jobs.

WHAT DO UNIONS SAY?

Rose Omamo, the general secretary of the Amalgamated Union of Kenya Metal Workers, which is affiliated to IndustriALL Global Union remarks:

“The long-awaited solidarity between African countries is finally happening. It is time for African countries to have strategic trade agreements to bring together the resources and labour that the continent is rich in and attain strong and sustainable industrial development. The AfCFTA is very promising. If the conditions are conducive, then I believe that the transfer of skills, classification of labour and compensation of African workers will be guaranteed. However, I am not sure if there are clear policies to address the labour issues.”

She continues: “A policy must be developed to guide labour migration. The question of who invests in what country must be addressed to guide foreign direct investment. The movement of labour must include social protection across borders. In case of work injury, compensation should be clearly stipulated within a well-structured occupational safety and health policy.”

Reeaz Chutto, president of the Confederation des Travailleurs des Secteurs Publique et Prive, in Mauritius, also affiliated to IndustriALL, urges a cautious approach: “The creation of the AfCFTA will inevitably boost trade within the African Continent but will bring opportunities and threats at the same time.

“We should not get into an overwhelming feeling that by increasing trade, this will bring more prosperity to a vast majority

of Africans in all the countries that have signed the agreement. Only capital, goods and services will be free to move from one country to the other, not human beings.”

“We are far away from the ideals of Pan Africanism. The AfCFTA will not make our dreams come true. There are fears that many large African economies will disproportionately benefit while others will not be able to save their domestic industries from the dumping of imported goods.”

“The creation of the AfCFTA cannot exist in absolute terms to eliminate trade barriers. The main reason remains that countries will not play on a level field. Some larger economies have the infrastructure and resources to produce good quality goods at lower production cost as they have access to the latest digital technologies. Unfortunately, other countries do not have the proper inland infrastructure to ensure connectivity even inside the country.”

Jane Ragoo, the general secretary of CTSP says trade agreements should cater for social needs: “Should we close our frontiers, or should we open them according to supply and demand as dictated by market forces? **We need to conduct trade that put people first and not the greed of the capitalist system. Trade cannot be free without considering our social, cultural and traditional contexts.**”

“We need to protect and value our traditional and artisanal products. Exports of food and agricultural products should be done only after satisfying the local demand and prices should be affordable for all.”

“It is important to focus on land connectivity among African countries to favour a more ecological and affordable transport system of human beings and goods. This will ensure that small and medium sized producers also benefit from the AfCFTA. Better connectivity among African countries will enhance regular migration. Further, it is important for the AfCFTA to promote fair trade which guarantees an equitable livelihood to small farmers through income distribution in the supply chain.”

Unions argue that most of the documents signed so far – the agreement establishing the AfCFTA, the Kigali Declaration and the protocol for the establishment of the African economic community relating to the free movement of persons, right to residence and right to establishment – should include workers’ rights and decent work as protected by International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions, especially Convention 87 on the freedom of association and the right to organize and Convention 98 on the right to organize and collective bargaining. Most African countries have ratified and domesticated these conventions into their national labour laws.

There remains a window of opportunity for a union voice to be heard in the operational phase of the AfCFTA, which was launched on 7 July at the Niger Summit of the African Union, and in negotiations for future protocols. In the operational phase, in which countries develop their implementation plans, important topics such as the future of work and Industry 4.0 can be included.

INDUSTRIALL
ACTION PLAN
ON TRADE



At the Executive Committee in Mexico City in December 2018, IndustriALL adopted an action plan on international trade and manufacturing policies to help affiliates become more involved in talks concerning multilateral trade agreements and treaties.



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1 Nkana Mine, Kitwe, Zambia. *IndustriALL*

2 Ayka Addis Factory, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. *IndustriALL*

3 Cullinan Diamond Mine, South Africa. *IndustriALL*

4 Oil Libya, Port Gentil, Gabon. *IndustriALL*

BHUTANESE UNION ESTABLISHED WITH JAPANESE SUPPORT

With the assistance and solidarity support of the Japanese Association of Metal, Machinery and Manufacturing Workers (JAM), affiliated to JCM, the International Labor Union of Bhutan (ILUB) was established in Matsuyama, Japan, on 1 September this year.

Lured by unscrupulous labour agents in Bhutan, 700 young Bhutanese students came to Japan with the hope of earning Nu 1.1 million (US\$15,500), working part-time while enrolled in a Japanese language school.

Japan has an ambitious policy of increasing international students to 300,000 by 2020. The Learn and Earn programme is handled by Bhutan Employment Overseas (BEO), a licenced agent appointed by Bhutan's Ministry of Labour, in collaboration with Japanese brokers.

However, in December 2018, the Anti-Corruption Commission of Bhutan urged the government to revoke BEO's licence over allegations that it had illegally received registration certificates without submitting key documents. In addition, BEO's representatives in Japan were not accredited by Bhutan's Ministry of Labour.

Although the Bhutanese government offered a Nu 700,000 (US\$9,800) loan with an 8 per cent interest rate, after paying Nu 130,000 (US\$1,840) for the agent and the tuition fee to Japanese language school, the Bhutanese students were almost out of pocket.

Jobs available to Bhutanese students were limited due to their lack of Japanese. Many ended up working late-night shifts in warehouses and factories.

The students were not allowed to work more than 28 hours per week, and with low wages of US\$9 per hour, many were forced into illegal work.

The pressure that followed was enormous and in 2018 one young student committed suicide.

"When we started to receive calls from the students seeking assistance, we were moved by their courage to overcome their plight. We set up a meeting with the students on 29 July and helped them to register a labour union with Japanese authorities," says Katahiro Yasukochi, JAM president.

Triggered by the support from JAM, the Bhutanese students decided to set up a trade union to protect their rights in a foreign country.

"We did not know about trade unions until we got to know RENGO and JAM, two of Japan's biggest unions. The process to register a trade union was complicated, and JAM helped us with detailed guidelines," says Sharma Robin, ILUB Vice President.

"We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to JAM. Many young Bhutanese were cheated and trapped into financial debt. As ILUB, we will work hard to protect the rights of vulnerable people and low-skilled workers. We will work hard to find stable and decent jobs for our young friends so that they can start a decent and normal life," says Jaganath Koirala, ILUB President.

profile

Union: **The International Labor Union of Bhutan (ILUB)**

Country: **Japan**

Text: **Yap Hwa NG**

A policy adopted by the Japanese government to address a shortage of labour is part of the problem, where foreign students end up in precarious work, not earning enough to sustain themselves. There is very little social support for these students, as they do not even have the status of migrant workers.

Explaining the challenge ahead, Yasukochi says that JAM has a comprehensive action plan to tackle the problems faced by Bhutanese students.

JAM will collaborate with ILUB to campaign for the refund of unfair fees charged by brokers and entrance fees to Japanese language schools. JAM will also demand that companies improve working conditions for the students.

And JAM will assist ILUB in setting up a branch of the union in Bhutan, as well as to obtain the permission to operate a labour supply business in Japan. This measure will eliminate intermediaries and avoid exploitation.

"Bhutanese young people are extremely talented, highly motivated and idealistic, just like at the beginning of Japan's labour movement. This is the first trade union created by Bhutanese. We must make sure we nurture it and help it grow; we will do our best to make their dreams come true," says Yasukochi.

Japanese and Bhutanese unionists. *JAM*

interview

Union:
The Southern African Clothing and Textile Workers Union (SACTWU)

Country:
South Africa

Text:
Elijah Chiwota

1

BEAUTY ZIBULA

From factory to parliament

After 41 years as a sample machinist, Beauty Zibula was elected as a Member of Parliament for KwaZulu Natal province in South Africa in the country's national elections in May 2019. The election ended her four decade long career as a shop steward, which saw her assuming many leadership positions in her union, the Southern African Clothing and Textile Workers Union (SACTWU).

At the time of the election she was the second Deputy President of SACTWU, which has over 108,000 members in the textile, garment and leather sectors. Zibula was in her teens when she got her first job in a garment factory in Durban, South Africa in 1978.

What was it like to be a trade unionist under South Africa's apartheid regime?

"I got my first job at IM Lockhat at the height of the struggle against apartheid. It was a difficult period for South African citizens, workers and trade unions. As activists for democracy we were always under surveillance by the notorious police special branch of the repressive apartheid regime. I was arrested and detained many times as I was not only a trade unionist but also campaigned for the African National Congress (ANC), which at the time was a banned organization. Some were jailed while others were killed. Nelson Mandela and our leaders from KwaZulu Natal – Dullah Omar and Harry Gwala - were in prison on Robben Island.

"It was under these tough conditions that I started organizing workers, who were reluctant to join a union. Moreover, the employers discouraged workers from joining the union. Wages were segregated according to race, with the black African workers earning the lowest compared to white, Indian and coloured¹ workers. Unionists were always seen by employers with a lot of suspicion. But my unionist had explained to me that my important task was to unify workers at the factory; and I managed to bring many Indian and African workers into the union."

Describe your 20-year experience at Prestige apparel. What would you describe as the main challenges after the democratic breakthrough in 1994?

"The ANC and other liberation movements were unbanned. Mandela and other ANC leaders had been released from Robben Island in 1990s, and freedom was in the air. There was the democratic breakthrough in 1994

 www.sactwu.org.za

¹ *IndustriALL*

² Beauty Zibula supporting *IndustriALL*'s campaign in the textile sector. *IndustriALL*

1. This is a South African term referring to mixed race people.

and the ANC won the first democratic elections. I was thrilled. There was freedom at last after years of struggle. Then the new Constitution guaranteed workers' rights; workers' rights including the right to strike became constitutional rights.

"I moved to Prestige Apparel but was still employed as a sample machinist, but this company was different. The machines were new and better. The company really tried to update to new technologies unlike the old machines that we were used to at IM Lockhat.

"As unions, we started campaigning for the Labour Relations Act and when it was passed it was a victory for workers. The benefits of the LRA are still felt today. It gives organizational rights to trade unions, promotes collective bargaining, and provides for the resolution of labour disputes through conciliation, mediation and arbitration and labour courts. The law also provides for a simplified procedure for the registration of unions.

"Another victory was on maternity leave, as found in the Basic Conditions of Employment Act. We fought hard as unions for this to happen, and it was sweet victory for women when we got maternity leave benefits."

Describe your rise through the union ranks from a factory shop steward to a second Deputy President?

"Being a union shop steward is hard work which requires dedication. As a union leader you learn a lot along the way through the meetings, representing workers when there are grievances with employers and when you sit in collective bargaining councils to negotiate for collective bargaining agreements. When you succeed in your work in the union, it is rare that you do it alone, but you work with others as a collective. In SACTWU we worked as a collective and participated in the activities of our federation, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).

"I learnt a lot as the regional chairperson of COSATU because I worked with trade unions that organize in other sectors, thus giving me an opportunity to learn and understand what those unions were doing.

"I also gained valuable experience by sitting on the National Bargaining Council for the clothing industry – an important council for the garment sector in South Africa from where we have negotiated better wages and working conditions for the workers."



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How do you find your union experience useful in the National Assembly?

"I have not been on this journey alone, I have walked with others as well. And would like to use this opportunity to thank IndustriALL and all the comrades that I worked with in the regional women's committee. I will miss the union but will cherish the valuable experience that I gained.

"After my studies at the Workers College in Durban, and my experience in the union, I have learnt to appreciate unions as organizations where you learn."

To build a better South Africa we need strong unions, and these unions should be involved in social struggles.

"Again, from my experience I can conclude that unions gained a lot though struggle during apartheid when they gained their mobilizing skills and post-apartheid where they fought for workers' rights and benefits including minimum and living wages.

"As part of the working class the union has power through its numbers, its social role and in its struggles for social justice. Its campaigns to end the triple crisis of poverty, inequality and unemployment are an example. The union should therefore continue to fight against exploitation and oppression of the workers and for social justice. It should also continue to build national and global solidarity. The union should continue to withhold labour power from capital as it fights for workers.

"Unions should continue to struggle for the society that we want, based on freedom and equality in the communities where we live and at our workplaces.

"This is what will inform my work as an MP. The values that we fight for in the union are also the values that we should fight for in parliament as we serve the same society but in different capacities. This is like wearing a different leadership hat.

"As trade unions, and as politicians with a union background, we all want a better world and to be involved in transforming societies. We are committed to ending the triple crisis of poverty, unemployment and inequality."

What are your comments on gender-based violence and femicide in South Africa?

"The levels of gender-based violence and femicide in South Africa are shocking. Working women are raped and killed in their homes, at workplaces and in the mines. At workplaces women are raped and killed by their male colleagues. Women are also killed by their partners or ex-boyfriends. Children are raped and killed. This is unacceptable and shouldn't be allowed to continue. Therefore, as MPs we are supporting President Cyril Ramaphosa's five-point plan against gender-based violence and femicide. This plan includes prevention, strengthening the criminal justice system, enhancing the legal and policy framework, ensuring adequate care, support and healing for victims of violence and economic empowerment of women.

"As an MP, I am taking this campaign to my constituency and am visiting communities to sensitize them and to get an understanding why this is happening and how we can stop it. We are carrying out this campaign together with various government departments.

"I have been involved in discussions that have been taking place within COSATU structures to deal with gender-based violence, sexual harassment and femicide.

"As SACTWU we have been involved in this campaign for some time now, and through IndustriALL Global Union we have been campaigning for the signing of the IndustriALL Pledge and took part in the recent marches against gender-based violence and femicide in Cape Town."

WHAT ARE WE FIGHTING FOR?

There are hundreds of millions of unionized workers around world. Do we share a common vision?

feature

Text:
Walton Pantland

1

In August 2019, workers at Harland and Wolff in Belfast, Northern Ireland, occupied the shipyard that built the Titanic. The owner was broke; the UK government refused to step in to save the yard. It was threatened with closure.

The workers occupied their workplace to demand that the yard be saved, and used to build platforms for offshore windfarms and tidal power installations. They defended their jobs and their industrial heritage, but also looked to the future. What was missing was a comprehensive Just Transition plan – a Green New Deal – to save their yard and create green jobs.

After a nine week occupation, the yard was saved when a buyer was announced in October.

There are 170 million members of unions affiliated to the ITUC globally. There are also rival internationals, such as the WFTU, and smaller unions that don't belong to federations. Altogether, hundreds of millions of workers worldwide belong to unions or some form of workplace organization. **This makes the union movement the world's biggest democratic membership movement.** These unions defend rights at work, negotiate pay and conditions, and develop relationships with political parties, governments and business.

Is there a common thread that unites us all?

Same same, but different

Different countries have different industrial relations systems. Continental Europe favours social dialogue, with Works Councils and workers' seats on company boards. In this power-balancing model, workers' conditions are tied to the success of the company, the industry as a whole, the national economy and a healthy global trade environment.

The Anglo-Saxon model tends to be more oppositional from both sides, sometimes descending into a zero-sum game: what's good for the workers is seen as bad for the company, and vice versa, and in the media, unions are presented as saboteurs undermining the public good and conspiring to protect privileged positions.

Politically, Western unions generally support social democracy, and are closely aligned to the centre left political parties that promote social dialogue.

For unions in the global south, anti-imperialism is often a feature of union politics, with calls to support local capital against foreign exploiters. Some unions in Turkey and many other countries are explicitly nationalist. In India, Africa and Latin America, unions sometimes use the language of Marxist-Leninism in their critique of capital.

In the Middle East and North Africa, unions like our Algerian affiliate SNATEGS are engaged in a primary struggle for basic democratic rights, such as freedom of assembly.

And of course, the biggest workforce in the world, in China, has no free unions at all.

Beyond these differences in political vocabulary and style, are unions fighting for the same things globally?

The first recorded strike in human history was by artisans building a mortuary

complex for Ramses III at Deir el Medina in 1128 BCE. **Since then, workers have taken collective action on many occasions, usually around the same issues: a living wage, working time, health and safety, dignity, and security of employment.**



2

From stonemasons in ancient Egypt to platform-based workers in the pulsating megacities of today, the struggle is essentially the same: for enough to live on, for free time, for a reliable income and an end to precarious work. But we live in interesting times: given the peculiar nexus of crises facing the world today, how do we frame those demands and make them part of a pathway to a better future?

Psychological warfare

Open any newspaper or social media feed, and you are likely to despair. The world is sleepwalking into a multifaceted crisis. **For workers, there is a global crisis of employment, with 60 per cent of workers in the informal economy.**

This is likely to grow as automation spreads. **There is a wage crisis in almost all sectors**, with the majority of working families living on the edge, just one mishap away from disaster. We have a stagnant economy, threats of war between the US and Iran, and a trade war between the US and China. A No Deal Brexit – Britain leaving the EU without concluding an agreement – could lead to 700,000 job losses in Europe.

Then we have the **climate crisis: urgent action is needed right now**, today, to prevent catastrophe, but the Amazon is burning and the leader of the most powerful country in the world is a climate change denialist.

There is a crisis of multilateralism, with no ambition from world leaders to find collective solutions. IMF structural adjustment programmes have torn up the social contract, and deindustrialization and austerity are undoing the gains of social democracy.

People's lives are being destroyed and the outlook is bleak.

Despair, however, is a weapon of the right. People who have lost hope, or who are angry, are easy to recruit to illogical reactionary politics. The unions' task is to provide hope, vision and a plan for a better future.

The parade of despair is a form of psychological warfare: there are vested interests who want us to believe that resistance is futile, that we are powerless, that we have no hope of changing things. Credible solutions, like Just Transition, the living wage or a Green New Deal, are ignored or ridiculed in the media, while right-wing nonsense like austerity is treated as gospel.

"This is an age of anger, and there is a foment in the world. But we are disciplined. We are not distracted by every crisis," says ITUC general secretary Sharan Burrow.

"I am optimistic for the union movement, which has always been on the front line, and can now step into leadership."

The unions' task is to provide hope, vision and a plan for a better future.

Moving beyond defensive struggles

Unions have often been characterized by “rational luddism” – the justified belief that new technological developments threaten jobs and relations of production. This hasn’t worked: from the original Luddites of the 19th century who smashed textile machines to the present, we have not succeeded in halting the dynamic of economic progress.

Our hope lies in shaping the future, not holding on to the past. Automation means that routine jobs will be first in line to be replaced by robots. The workforce of the future will be highly educated, working alongside sophisticated robots. Work is likely to become more specialized and artisanal. **We need unions that reach these specialists, as well as precarious, platform-based workers, many of whom hustle between multiple apps and are legally defined as independent contractors.**

Chaos under heaven; all is well

There is a global crisis of democracy. The success of the Chinese model of a capitalist economy under authoritarian control suggests the end of the link between capitalism and democracy. But democracy, at best, has only ever gone half way: every four or five years, we’d get a vote on who manages the economic system, but very little say in what the system compromises. Democracy stops at the workplace, and the needs of capital define political priorities.

This is why people have lost faith in parliamentary democracy: it is not improving their lives.

An old Chinese proverb says “Chaos under heaven; all is well.” It means that disorder and disruption is the best time to bring about major social and political change. The liberal economic and political order is falling apart, and the right is taking advantage of it, in what Naomi Klein calls “disaster capitalism” – using chaos to push through political changes, such as privatization, which would be rejected in more stable times.

Instead of restoring the liberal order, we can also use the brokenness of the system to push through change and bring democracy to economic life too. There is a gap in the political market for ideas about justice, equality, dignity and redistribution. The world is ready for bold ideas to address inequality, poverty and climate change.



3

The global economic order was broken by the financial crisis. Centre right parties, major proponents of the small state, free market model, turned to culture wars and populism to deflect popular anger from their failed economic policies.

They use right wing nationalism, racism, homophobia, misogyny, climate denialism and a host of other bigotries very effectively: working class people, who have seen their living standards collapse over the past decade, have sometimes irrationally grasped at the targets offered to them.

One of the strengths of trade unionism is that it develops progressive politics for practical, rather than ideological reasons. Instead of convincing workers that racism and homophobia are morally wrong, we show how employers divide us by playing workers off against each other.

You don’t have to personally like workers in other countries and from different religions and cultures to recognize that it is in your interest to work together. **And when we start working together, we build trust. Solidarity erodes bigotry.**

This neatly sidesteps the culture war that the right is using.

The right has reached the end of the road, and has nowhere else to go: they have had to become increasingly extreme and radical to deflect popular anger, leading to existential political crises in the US, UK and elsewhere. These crises threaten democracy, and also the global economy and the wealth that they have sought to protect.

It is our turn now. We have the ideas to address the crises, and we need to boldly proclaim them. **The best way to deliver**

economic and industrial democracy is to give real power to unions. If unions could make a substantive material difference to people’s lives, more people would join and be active.

We need to be bold. The political and climate crisis facing us is too great for timid, incremental change. Our role is not to promote a singular vision for the future, and attempt to rally people around it, but to develop a process that allows people to participate in imagining, designing and building a better future together.

The union movement is not the place for an ideological civil war between rival visions. Our first function is to bring workers together. But bringing these debates into the union movement empowers our members to be part of finding solutions.

We can use the brokenness of the system to push through change and bring democracy to economic life.

Developing a vision

In the West, a political consensus is coalescing around the form of social democracy proposed by Bernie Sanders in the US and Jeremy Corbyn in the UK. Proponents argue for public ownership of essential resources, state investment in

economic development, and free access to healthcare, education and so on, funded through a tax on the rich.

This is a capitalist-socialist hybrid that treats capitalism like nuclear power: dynamic, but dangerous, with important safety checks needed to prevent it from blowing up the global economy and destroying the planet.

Whether we agree with this vision or not, it is hugely useful, as it provides an alternative narrative to the neoliberal one that has dominated since 1994. Democratic capitalism has failed. The democratic socialist vision is still developing. Unions need to shape the debate. Many of them have begun, like our Australian affiliate the CFMEU with its “Goodbye Neoliberalism” report.

There are many radical ideas for the future which deserve serious consideration. Space constraints restrict us to a rapid sampling: one which doesn't really align with the labour movement, and two which do.

Basic income

Basic Income is a twist on Keynesian economics that has received a lot of attention over the past few years, and city-level experiments have generated significant media attention. It aims to stimulate the economy, and deal with job losses, by giving everyone a guaranteed amount of money, enough to live on, without the requirement to work.

Unions are suspicious of this idea, because it breaks the link between work and pay, and the withdrawal of labour as a source of workers' power. It risks rendering a vast part of the population politically powerless, recipients of funds that they rely on, but with no influence on production.

Another objection is that it amounts to a huge public subsidy for the private sector: instead of giving people free money to buy things at market rates, why not use those funds to make things like education, health and public transport free?

The UN Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals are a multilateral attempt to build a better world by 2030. The plan aims to end poverty and reduce inequality, promote gender equality, address climate change and more. All UN member states have signed up to the goals – but unless countries take action, we will miss the targets. The goals fit with a lot of union ideas, like Just Transition. We should all pressurize our national governments to take action to meet the targets.

Green New Deal

The Green New Deal is modelled on the New Deal that pulled the US out of the Great Depression with massive public investment. The policy was copied in other countries, and people today benefit from dams and hydroelectric schemes, roads and infrastructure built in that period.



A Green New Deal aims to spend trillions of dollars to address climate change, creating hundreds of thousands of jobs in renewable energy, public transport, environmental cleanup, rewilding and more.

This seems politically impossible, but it has been done before: with the original New Deal, and with the Marshall Plan which reconstructed Europe after the Second World War and facilitated the golden age of social democracy. And much more recently, the financial crisis. It is a question of political will: if we can bail out the banks, we can bail out the planet.

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We need to unite, in solidarity, in defence of workers' rights. We need an open and respectful debate about the future.

At the conference of the UK Labour Party in September 2019, the party adopted an ambitious Green New Deal policy, with the support of seven trade unions, including IndustriALL affiliate Unite. The policy calls for zero carbon emissions by

2030, massive investment in renewable energy, a Just Transition to unionized, green jobs, public ownership of resources and enhanced public transport.

Applying union solutions at global scale

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These ideas work, and unions have a successful track record of applying them at local level. In **Germany**, IG Metall successfully argued in a collective bargaining round in early 2018 that workers should benefit from the productivity gains brought about by new technology, and won an agreement giving workers the right to reduce their hours to 28 per week for up to two years.

And in **Spain**, unions representing coal miners won a landmark Just Transition deal in 2018 that will see large scale investment in mining communities, with reskilling, the development of new industries and more.

We need more victories like this, and we need them at scale.

We need to defend democracy – in our unions, and in society – and create a new, global social contract.

We need global multilateralism, such as that promoted by the Sustainable Development Goals. We need state-lead approaches, such as the Green New Deal, with a push towards public ownership and investment in sustainable

industry. But not all change can come from the top: we also need grassroots initiatives, such as unions negotiating collective agreements that address these concerns.

Workers needs differ in different times and places, as the balance of power between the state, business and other actors shifts. Unions need the freedom to respond to local conditions. The solution is not to develop a single vision, but an inclusive process, through which a vision emerges through practice.

We need to unite, in solidarity, in defence of workers' rights. We need an open and respectful debate about the future. With hope in our hearts, and solidarity and mutual respect as our guides, today's unions can navigate the interesting times that we live in, and open the doors for mass participation in building a better world:

A future that works for all.

- 1 Harry McFarland at Harland & Wolff, Belfast. *Bobbie Hanvey*
- 2, 3, 5 A demonstration in Detroit, USA, for a Green New Deal, July 2019. *Becker1999, Flickr.com*
- 4 "Time is life!" IG Metall members demonstrate for a better work-life balance. *Bodo Marks / IG Metall*





FIGHTING FORWARD: HOME-BASED WOMEN WORKERS ORGANIZE IN PAKISTAN

Due to hidden and unregulated work, home-based workers in Pakistan are largely unprotected. The Home-Based Women Workers Federation (HBWWF), affiliated to IndustriALL in 2019, has played a critical role in organizing the scattered and isolated group, articulating their rights and winning significant victories for its members.

The working conditions for home-based workers in Pakistan are very poor, and include repetitive and hazardous work. The hours are usually long, sometimes up to 16 hours a day, and wages are low. At the bottom of the production chain, the workers lack access to and knowledge of the market.

Initially, seven cooperatives for garment and bangle workers were started in the Sindh province. These cooperatives provided a platform for women workers to share problems, build solidarity and take steps to address their issues.

A key demand was that the government formally recognize home-based work, set legal minimum wages and extended the coverage of social security legislations to benefit home-based workers. These workers also wanted their concerns to be treated as workers' issues, rather than being considered gender issues.

The home-based workers decided to form a union in order to gain collective strength, and bargain for higher wages and better working environment with contractors and investors, and to engage with the government to achieve their demands. The home-based workers also decided to play an active role in making the government of Pakistan ratify ILO's convention on home-based workers.

Organizers established contacts with home-based women workers across the country to understand the problems they were facing. They organized study circles to create awareness of their rights and created home-based women workers groups in different cities in the Sindh, Punjab and Baluchistan provinces.

During this process, home-based women workers engaged with labour department officials, the social security institute and Workers Welfare Board, raising their concerns in series of meetings.

"These events underlined the need for an effective organization to take forward the workers' concerns," says Zehra Khan, general secretary of HBWWF.

Members were recruited on the basis that they were engaged in home-based work, piece-rate workers and self-employed. Anyone can be a member of the union, regardless of religion, colour and caste.

After a series of orientation meetings a core group of ten workers was formed. They received training on labour law and trade union practices by the legal team of National Trade Union Federation (NTUF), an IndustriALL affiliate.

In 2009, the first home-based all women workers' union was registered, made up of embroidery workers in Quetta. Another union with women bangle workers was then registered in Hyderabad. The HBWWF was registered the same year with a membership of about 1,000. The HBWWF currently has 4,500 members in Sindh, Balochistan and Punjab.

The federation can legally negotiate on the behalf of these workers. Together with the relevant authorities, the HBWWF is working on solutions for covering the workers under government social security schemes.

profile

Union: **The Home-Based Women Workers Federation (HBWWF)**

Country: **Pakistan**

Text: **G Manicandan**

The home-based workers cooperatives have become a nucleus of activities, as well as a place where women workers from different parts of the city meet union representatives. In some areas, workers are getting better rates due to bargaining by union representatives.

Many women have taken skill and capacity building training, which has empowered them to discuss their issues and to negotiate with investors and contractors on wages.

"This year, the Sindh province announced minimum wages for glass bangle workers, thereby formally recognizing them as home-based workers for the first time. The minimum wage is a significant increase from existing wages. But an announcement alone is not sufficient; we are working to create awareness among workers and taking actions to implement it," says Zehra Khan.

A key achievement of HBWWF and its members is the successful lobbying to achieve the Home-Based Workers Act, passed in May 2018, which formally recognizes home-based workers in Sindh. HBWWF is working to replicate it in other provinces as well.

"Now, the HBWWF is lobbying the government and legislators on both federal and provincial levels for social protection for home-based women workers, as well as the ratification of ILO convention on Home Work, C177," says Zehra Khan.

Home-based workers discussing workers' rights.
HBWWF

report

Text:
Georg Leutert

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“IT’S NOT A TRANSFORMATION, IT’S A MASSACRE” WHAT WE DO TODAY DETERMINES THE FUTURE OF WORK

The dramatic heading quotes a French trade unionist trying to describe the current process of deep restructuring in the auto industry. Others compare current developments with when horse-drawn carriages were replaced by automobiles at the beginning of the last century. Irrespective of how we characterize this time of change – as an inhuman act or as just another technological evolution – it is highly unlikely that we can stop it. Instead, we need to focus our resources on managing the change and making sure it unfolds according to our rules: based on a human-centred approach and in a spirit of solidarity, and therefore collectively.

When trade unions demand that human beings should be the focus, it is to avoid this massacre. **In practice, this means that the first step taken together with employers, politicians, scientists and others should be to analyse how any changes based on digitalization impacts people.**

As trade unionists, we have a responsibility for our current members as well as future generations, and in particular, for the unorganized. Our core target is that we want the employees of today to be the employees of tomorrow. We also need to be relevant for new generations and for those who either cannot or do not want to join a union.

Our vision of trade unions that are able to move the masses must remain intact.

Two major convictions guide us:

- ▶ **the best solutions are found in collective bargaining and social dialogue**
- ▶ **lifelong learning needs to become a reality for all employees, no matter where they work or what position they hold**

Both aspects are central to a global agreement recently signed by IndustriALL Global Union and French car manufacturer Renault, named Building the World of Work Together.

On the topic of reskilling and upskilling, the agreement gives all employees the right to an annual review with their supervisor to identify skill deficits and develop a suitable training plan.

As unions, we need to pay particular care to those who find it difficult to adapt to the changes that digitalization entails, whose abilities to learn and upskill are less developed. These colleagues cannot simply be left behind, even if paid decent compensation. No society can afford more citizens who are not fully integrated.

Special attention also has to be given to managers and supervisors. In many cases, they have the necessary technical skills to manage the transformation but their skills to deal with change from a human resource perspective are often lacking. Ensuring that staff in leading positions are adequately trained is crucial, or the whole process may fail.

The end of blue- and white-collar definitions?

When looking into the details of future work schemes, we must be careful to not just condemn the future. There is both good and bad, challenges and opportunities.

Digitalization may lead to a better work-life balance, less hazardous work places, fewer hierarchies (and maybe a more democratic workplace), and possibly shorter working hours for everyone. **At the same time, unions need to protect workers and the bargaining agenda should among other things reflect:**

- ▶ **New working time arrangements that seem better adapted to the needs of employees and companies can easily develop into uncontrolled overtime, leading to stress and so on. In the future, collectively agreed and/or legal requirements on working hours need to be respected and protected.**
- ▶ **A digital work environment allows online access to work at any time. A right to disconnect is therefore indispensable.**
- ▶ **Data protection is crucial, as the creation and use of immense data pools is a key principle of every future business model and production system and must not be used against workers.**
- ▶ **Rethink schemes of premium payments. Today premiums are paid for overtime, night work, noisy work places and so on. New premiums should allow space for all those workers who cannot benefit from reformed work schedules, remote working and so on, because they have to work in a traditional shift model at an assembly line for example.**

When IndustriALL initiated negotiations with Renault on the new agreement, the company had less focus on the aspects mentioned above. Their main concern was to maintain their attractiveness as an employer for younger generations, which is why the introduction of more participative management and leadership structures is a top priority for them. As maintaining large scale industrial manufacturing is also in the unions' interest, unions also need to take into account how young people think and how they set their priorities.

The lines between traditional blue- and white-collar jobs have already started to blur and this will continue to a point where it will be impossible to make that distinction. Trade unions who still function along these lines will face severe challenges in the future.

Digitalization, new mobility concepts, green technologies and so on will also create a lot of new jobs, many of them in the IT and service sectors. How can unions make sure that these new jobs will provide decent pay, decent working conditions, health care and the like? How do we stop the trend towards more and more precarious jobs? How do we organize crowd workers?

These questions require a bargaining agenda, but more importantly they require new trade union strategies ensuring that these employees choose unions as their representatives because we speak their language and because we know what their issues are, and because we know how to effectively defend them.

We are seeing a profound transformation in the world of work, one which needs pro-active support from governments. States which have not started to develop relevant industrial policies act irresponsibly, increase future unemployment levels and risk being left by the wayside with all the negative consequences associated with this.

BUILDING THE WORLD OF WORK TOGETHER WITH GROUPE RENAULT

In July 2019, Groupe Renault, its Group Works Council and IndustriALL Global Union signed a global agreement on quality of working life. The agreement, signed by the ten trade union federations or unions represented in the Group Works Council, provides a basis for structuring social dialogue, both at Group and local level. It offers the possibility and encourages the launching of new initiatives, as well as finding relevant pragmatic solutions to improve employees' lives at work, through the negotiation of local agreements.

Through a sustainable approach, the new agreement addresses many aspects of life at work, and particularly those that enable employees to combine performance and well-being.

This approach, which involves all the Group's employees, is based on five fundamental principles:

- ▶ **A dialogue on the evolution of the world of work**
- ▶ **A collaborative management system**
- ▶ **A sustainable commitment to inclusion**
- ▶ **Work-life balance**
- ▶ **Adaptation of the working environment**



THE AGREEMENT



1 Royal IHC shipbuilding plant, Rotterdam, the Netherlands. *IndustriALL*
 2 IndustriALL signing the agreement with Renault, witnessed by the ILO. *IndustriALL*.

BHP



MUST #SHOWRESPECT FOR WORKERS' RIGHTS

BHP is a world-leading company in the minerals, oil and gas sectors, claiming “to gather people and resources together to build a better world.” But according to their workers around the world, the reality on the ground does not match the company’s claims.



special report

Text:
Kimber Meyer
Laura Carter

BHP has been in the eye of the storm for five years, due to one of the worst environmental disasters in Brazil's history, when the Samarco tailings dam broke on 5 November 2015 in Mariana, Minas Gerais. The tailings dam belonged to Samarco Mineração, a joint venture between two of the world's biggest mining companies, Australia's BHP and Brazil's Vale SA.

Nineteen people died in the tragedy, **700 families lost their homes** and more than **2,000 workers in the mining, construction, commerce, electricity and agriculture sectors lost their jobs.**

The collapse of the tailings dam unleashed a deluge of toxic sludge, spilling over the Dolce river, a source of drinking water in southern Brazil, obliterating towns along the stretch as the wave of mud travelled kilometres down the river into the Atlantic ocean.

In 2018, the Building and Wood Workers' International (BWI) and IndustriALL Global Union filed a complaint against BHP and Vale S.A., under the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. The specific complaint sought to address the conditions that contributed to the collapse of the tailings dam, in particular the extensive use of outsourcing, failure to respect the collective bargaining agreement, violations of trade union rights and inadequate health and safety.

Trade union representatives from IndustriALL's BHP global network from Australia, Brazil, Canada and Colombia met in London in October 2018, together with the London Mining Network, to address the rampant violations of union and human rights, as well as environmental destruction. The network took the issues to BHP's annual general meeting, demanding accountability from shareholders and justice for the victims of the Samarco disaster, and remediation of the environment.

WHAT ARE TAILINGS DAMS?



INDUSTRIALL LAUNCHES A GLOBAL CAMPAIGN AGAINST BHP

Following the tragedy of the Samarco tailings dam in 2015 and failed attempts to establish global dialogue with BHP, IndustriALL's Executive Committee agreed in 2018 to launch a campaign against BHP.

"Why a global campaign? Because the same practices exist in all of BHP's operations: a policy of outsourcing to cut labour costs and a disrespect for the fundamental rights of its workers and

communities. There have been crimes against the environment and there are risks of new ones happening. We continue this campaign for the dignity of BHP workers and those who died in mining accidents," said IndustriALL assistant general secretary Kemal Özkan, during the BHP network meeting in Santiago, Chile, in September 2019.

OUTSOURCING AND LOSS OF RIGHTS

BHP is the world's largest mining company in terms of its market capitalization, valued at just under US\$100 billion. The workforce has been significantly affected by one of the main elements of BHP's strategy to boost labour productivity; outsourcing employment. The result is a very high proportion of temporary employment through the use of precarious contracts.

In 2018, BHP reduced its labour costs by 23 per cent and achieved a 29 per cent increase in material moved per employee. **From 2000 to 2014, outsourcing increased exponentially. Figures from the company's 2019 Sustainability Report show that contractors constitute 60 per cent on average of BHP's global workforce.**

In terms of BHP operated assets, the 2018 Sustainability Report figures state that in Australia it has 16,504 permanent employees and 21,267 subcontractors, that means that 56.3 per cent of its workers are outsourced.

IndustriALL Australian affiliate CFMEU Mining and Energy national secretary Grahame Kelly says:

"There are 450 permanent workers at the BHP mine in Queensland, 95 per cent of whom are unionized. In addition there are 6,300 workers hired on a temporary basis, who earn 30 or 40 per cent less than the permanent workers. From the point of view of unionized workers, it is very difficult to carry out collective bargaining for improvements because there is already a workforce that is outside the equation. In addition, there are examples in Australia where they have not employed a permanent worker in a BHP mine in more than 7 years."

In Chile, BHP has 6,729 permanent employees and 12,521 subcontractors, i.e. 65 per cent of its workers are outsourced. BHP has an extremely high labour turnover, since subcontractors are considered a second-class workforce. It is also almost impossible for these workers to form a union because they are employees of different contracting companies, and it is difficult for them to exercise their union rights.



The president of the union Patricio Tapia at the BHP Escondida mine in Chile says:

“Chilean legislation unfortunately prevents subcontracted workers from making use of the right to strike, because it states that if they do strike, the company can replace them.”

In the case of the Cerrejón mine in Colombia, which is part-owned by BHP, outsourced workers far outnumber those with permanent contracts.

“Out of a total of 12,000 workers, only 5,000 have permanent contracts; the rest are outsourced. Outsourced labour is subject to precarious conditions of work, and they do not earn a large salary. But we have managed to affiliate these workers and improve their working and social conditions,” says Igor Díaz, president of IndustriALL affiliate Sintracarbón.

In 2017, a parliamentary investigation in Australia found that there had been a failure on almost all levels of the regulatory system designed to protect workers.

In Chile, BHP workers in the Escondida mine went on strike for 44 days in 2017 after the company refused to negotiate in good faith with its workers. The union was asking the company to discard its plans which involved reducing wages, increasing working hours, and discriminating between long-standing and new employees.

“We are proud of the strike against BHP because it proved to us that we have a strong union ready to fight. We have one of the best collective bargaining agreements for miners in Chile,” says Jorge Schumacher from the union in the Escondida mine.

Unions at BHP operations have said that the company often has an anti-union attitude and refuses to engage in collective bargaining. CFMEU in Australia claims that the company uses an island strategy with the unions, i.e. **avoiding trade unions and turning union members into an island in a sea of non-unionized workers**. Instead, BHP often prefers their prerogative as management at the expense of consultation and negotiation with the unions.

POOR HEALTH AND SAFETY

Health and safety continues to be a problem in BHP’s operations. The coordinating committee for BHP unions in Chile said that they face longer working hours than what the law allows and a lack of transparency in how bonuses are calculated. In addition, in Cerro Colorado, doctors are under pressure not to identify work-related injuries.

Marcelo Franco, of Union 1 CMCC in Cerro Colorado, says:

“Health and safety conditions are very poor. Workers have problems with shoulders, arms, hands and the spine. One colleague injured her arms and the doctor gave her medical leave due to work-related illness. But upon receiving a call from the company he immediately cancelled the certificate, telling her the problem was the result of a congenital malformation.”

Meanwhile, workers at Minera Spence operations, owned by BHP in Chile, report on health problems due to toxic gas emissions produced by the company.

“To speed up the process of obtaining copper from leaching basins, sodium chloride is added. When coupled with sulphuric acid, this results in high emissions of hydrochloric acid. As a union we had to go to the regional secretariat of the Ministry of Health (Seremi) to make the request for inspection of gas emissions.

“Seremi told BHP that without the appropriate equipment to curb these emissions they would have to stop until there was improvement. Seremi also requested environmental and nutritional reports because workers had suffered gastric poisoning from hydrochloric acid emissions,” says Nidia Johnson Esquivel from Minera Spence.

In 2017, a parliamentary investigation in Australia found that there had been a failure on almost all levels of the regulatory system designed to protect workers. The committee identified serious failures in industry-led health examinations, from poor X-ray readings to poorly executed lung tests and unqualified personnel.

“One worker said it took two and a half years, three specialists and several doctors to get an official diagnosis. Doctors told him he had bronchitis, and he continued to work underground in dusty conditions while his condition remained unidentified. In March this year, BHP workers affected by black lung disease were denied a meeting with the company,” says Laura Carter, IndustriALL assistant regional secretary.

INDUSTRY 4.0 AND THE NEED FOR A JUST TRANSITION

BHP wishes to transform all its operations through the application of technology by 2025, implementing mining technologies to improve productivity, producing zero damage and lowering the structural cost of mining operations. **BHP’s goal is to reduce human labour to a minimum.**

In some of its operations it has already begun to make technological innovations. For example, in Pilbara, Australia, operations are carried out from Perth, Australia. Operations in Spence, located in Chile’s Atacama desert, are run from Santiago. Workers say that in the case of Spence, BHP failed to mention in the negotiations that they were planning to relocate the control centre to Santiago.

BHP has an overall plan to invest US\$3 billion to reduce costs through the use of technology in Australia, announcing plans to spend just under US\$800 million on adding 500 autonomous trucks to their





GENDER BALANCE BY 2025: REALITY OR UTOPIA?

BHP wants to achieve gender balance by 2025. Currently, 80.19 per cent of BHP employees are men and 19.81 per cent women.

Women with permanent contracts represent a disproportionately small part of the BHP workforce in South America and Australia. In South America, 85.34 per cent are men, but only 14.66 per cent of those are women. In Australia, 80.30 per cent are men and 19.70 per cent are women.

Women represent a small percentage of those working as operators and in general support services, and a disproportionately small percentage of full-time employees. Women earn less than men at all levels in BHP, and the discrepancy is most noticeable among operators and general support staff.

It is to fight for a Just Transition for both permanent and subcontracted BHP workers, and to defend safer and fairer labour practices in all of the company's operations, that IndustriALL reaffirms its campaign against BHP and insists on the following:

1. That BHP engage in meaningful dialogue with trade unions worldwide
2. That the company take responsibility at global level for the treatment of workers at the local level
3. That the company adopt a less antagonistic and less oppressive approach to workers and industrial relations
4. That the company should not oppose the formation and growth of trade unions

- 1 IndustriALL BHP global network met in Chile in September 2019. *IndustriALL*
- 2 Marcelo Franco in front of BHP's annual general meeting in London, October 2019. *IndustriALL*
- 3 Igor Díaz. *IndustriALL*
- 4 Jorge Schumacher. *IndustriALL*
- 5 Tchenna Maso. *IndustriALL*
- 6 Laura Carter. *IndustriALL*
- 7 Grahame Kelly. *IndustriALL*
- 8 Nidia Johnson Esquivel. *IndustriALL*
- 9 Kemal Özkan. *IndustriALL*

fleet in Pilbara. If BHP goes ahead, these will be rolled out over the next three years, and the new lorries will be deployed in the iron mines of Western Australia, and later in the coal mines in Queensland. **BHP largely refuses to consult or negotiate with workers on these issues.**

“As IndustriALL, we will fight for the transformation to be fair. We need a series of strategies and actions, especially in the face of multinationals like BHP that don't respect workers' rights,” says Kemal Özkan, IndustriALL assistant general secretary.

In Colombia, the franchise for mining in Cerrejón expires in 2034. According to the unions, BHP has yet to disclose a plan for the closure, causing great uncertainty for the workers and the population of La Guajira, which depends on Cerrejón for its economy.

Igor Díaz, from Sintracarbón, says:

“According to Colombian legislation, a decommissioning project must be defined 20 years before closing the mine, which has not happened. The government should provide alternative work for the 12,000 workers who will be affected, as well as for the region that is dependent on the mining operations.

“With the support of IndustriALL, the FNV in the Netherlands and the IGBC in Germany, we have held forums on energy transition to explain how these countries undertook the transition from coal. Unions, companies and governments took part in these discussions.

“The situation is complex for all workers, but mainly for outsourced workers who do not belong to a trade union. We want a Just Transition for them as well.”

Although BHP claims to be committed to making a “positive contribution to society”, with a “responsible and ethical

business” and that it wants to “work with society to create a sustainable future”, it seems it must try harder.

Colombia's Cerrejón mine is located in a dry region, with only one river, called Ranchería, crossing through the middle of the mine. BHP wanted to move the river as there are 500 million tons of top quality coal underneath it. The move was opposed by Sintracarbón and the local communities.

“Faced with opposition, the relocation of the riverbed was suspended. But the project, called P500, had already been designed and huge investments had been made, and instead an important tributary of the river, called Bruno, was diverted,” says Igor Díaz of Sintracarbón, Colombia.

In Brazil, after the collapse of the Mariana dam in 2015, the communities say that BHP still has an awful lot to do to remedy all the damage it caused.

Tchenna Maso, member of the Movement of those Affected by Dams (Movimento dos Atingidos por Barragens - MAB), says:

“Four communities were totally destroyed by the mud and not a single house has been rebuilt in the four years since the tragedy. The environmental damage is huge and we are engaged in a court fight to achieve recognition of the contamination.

“In addition, women are not recognized as affected by the disaster. Social contributions are usually made by men, the breadwinners, and women have informal jobs. So there is no way to prove that they lost their jobs. Only 15 per cent of women are recognized as breadwinners. The companies have effectively taken away women's financial autonomy.”

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